

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

MAY/JUNE 2026



Challenge and Reward _____ _____ *in Reading the Word*

The Revs. Scott Frazier and Grant Odhner talk about the importance of reading the Word – and what happens within us when we do. (Pages 188 and 194)



Support the General Church

Every June the General Church calls on our members for financial support. Our fiscal year ends June 30th and your gift, of any size, will help us reach a balanced budget and plan for the future.

Please give *locally* to a congregation and *centrally* to the General Church Annual Fund.

Your gift to the General Church Annual Fund supports *New Church Life*, ministers and teachers, outreach, online classes and church services among many other uses.

Make a gift at www.newchurch.org/donate or mail a check payable to the General Church:

General Church Advancement

PO Box 708
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania
19009 USA

(memo line "annual fund" or name of the congregation)

Thank you

Mark H. Wyncoll | General Church Advancement
484-809-4022 | mark.wyncoll@newchurch.org

*... Everyone whose willing spirit moved him,
should bring the Lord's offering for
the work of the tabernacle*

Exodus 35

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

Bruce Henderson, Editor | bruce.henderson@newchurch.org

Rev. Jeremy Simons, Spiritual Editor | jeremyjsimons@gmail.com

Tess Taylor, Layout Designer

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

newchurch.org/newchurchlife-subscribe

To order: 267-502-4990 or susan.wright@anc-gc.org

Postmaster: Send address changes to:

New Church Life, PO Box 708, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

or e-mail: datacenter@anc-gc.org

New Church Life

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

155 In This Issue

157 Editorials: *We the People* • *The Academy's 150th Anniversary*

165 Letters to the Editors

171 The Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough: A Memorial Address

The Rev. Derek P. Elphick

180 A Tribute to the Rev. Dan Goodenough – *Chancellor Peter M. Buss Jr.*

182 The Two Witnesses and the Birth of the New Church

The Rev. Coleman S. Glenn

188 Reading and Understanding the Word: Seeking Truth,

Discovering Falsity – *The Rev. Scott I. Frazier*

194 Wrestling with Reading the Word – *The Rev. Grant H. Odhner*

197 To the Next Generation of New Church Entrepreneurs

Curtis Childs

202 From the Bishop's Office: The Church's End in View

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

207 A Shared Strategic Direction for the Academy

From the Board of Trustees

211 Life Lines

222 Church News

230 Announcements

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

In This Issue

Editorials (page 157) include:

- *We the People*: The formation of the New Church, descending from heaven since 1770, and the launching of the United States 250 years ago, are both unique in putting faith in the people to secure their destinies. And “we the people” have a distinct role in their being and their future.
- *The Academy’s 150th Anniversary*: It is no small coincidence that both the nation and the Academy of the New Church – and with it the beginning of the New Church on earth – celebrate their bicentenaries this summer. Both share bold dreams, bold challenges, bold destinies – and a common calling.

In a touching Memorial Address for the Rev. Daniel Webster Goodenough, beloved former president of the Academy of the New Church, the Rev. Derek P. Elphick offers a colorful portrait of Dan’s boundless life: “When someone retires, we tend to think of his life winding down but this was not the case for Dan. In many ways, he was just getting started. This cowboy, sailor, preacher, teacher, scholar, musician, counselor, mentor and friend, was only beginning to find his stride.” That stride – and that enthusiasm – will not let up in heaven. (Page 171)

As Chancellor of the Academy, which Dan led so memorably, Bishop Peter M. Buss Jr. shares a tribute to all of his many contributions as a priest and educational leader. And in light of all the accomplishments he lists, “which scratches the surface of the impact of this one well-lived life, we can reflect on the perception of Dan’s character through the testimony of others. He was much more about you than himself, much more invested in your success than his, always caring, generous with his time, positive and affirming.” (Page 180)

In a sermon for the 19th of June – *The Two Witnesses and the Birth of the New Church* – the Rev. Coleman S. Glenn notes that we don’t celebrate “a denomination or an earthly organization but a spiritual reality that is

breaking forth into the natural world.” And in living our faith – living the Ten Commandments, “not just as a set of rules but as the means by which we may experience love for our neighbor, then we experience heaven.” (Page 182)

In striving to read and understand the Word, says the Rev. Scott I. Frazier, we may discover falsity while seeking truth – and that’s all part of the process. “We all fall into thinking that happiness and peace come from getting our way, from choosing our own path and our own rules of happiness, and an enormous amount of human misery flows from these very ideas. Instead, the Lord asks us to seek humility and His will, unrelated to our own sensation or desire or perspective.” (Page 188)

The Rev. Grant H. Odhner offers his own perspective on *Wrestling with Reading the Word* – often a challenge for even the best intended. He cautions: “We should not be preoccupied with the form of the Bible. Rather, we should focus on what happens to us when we engage with it.” (Page 194)

Writing From the Bishop’s Office, the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. focuses on *The Church’s End in View*. What is our end in view, what is the church’s end in view, and what can we learn to adjust and attain our goals? “It matters that all of us, or a majority of us, are on the same page as to why the church exists, for then we contribute to and draw on the energy of others.” (Page 202)

Curtis Childs, known for his innovative *offTheLeftEye* YouTube videos about the faith of the New Church, offers advice *To the Next Generation of New Church Entrepreneurs*. It is the inspiring story of New Church business leader Glenn Bostock who struggled with formal schooling but developed a highly successful company, with a framework rooted in the heavenly doctrines. This is the epitome of “*Education for Use*.” And, “What better way to live your religion,” Curtis asks, “than to be useful starting a business?” (Page 197)

The Academy of the New Church Board of Trustees offers *A Shared Strategic Direction for the Academy*. “This work reflects a clear conviction and faithfulness to our values. Each plan reflects clarity of purpose, disciplined stewardship and Academy-wide collaboration that are essential if the Academy is to remain a vital center of New Church education for generations to come.” (Page 207)

Church News (page 222) includes:

- Highlights of the March meeting of the General Church Board of Directors
- Election of the General Church Board at the annual Corporation meeting
- Highlights of the Academy Board of Trustees meeting from last September
- European clergy meetings in Sweden
- Living Waters Family Camp, with the theme: *Evangelization for the New Church*

Editorials

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

WE THE PEOPLE

It has been called the greatest sentence ever written by man – and the most revolutionary:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

This was a declaration of faith as well as independence – faith in God and faith in the people:

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

And it was “*with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence*” that they solemnly pledged to each other “*our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.*”

It is no small coincidence that in the arc of the Lord’s providence the creation of this new nation coincided with the creation of the New Church in heaven and its descent upon earth. This was also a revolutionary change in the sense that this was to be an entirely new church, surpassing all that have gone before because of the newly revealed spiritual sense of the Word.

Citizens of this nation – and members of this church – are blessed with both natural and spiritual freedom, and are charged with the responsibility to pursue these singular and joint destinies: as a herald of freedom for the world, and as “the crown of all churches that have hitherto existed on the earth.”

The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution which followed 13 years later were not religious documents but were written by religious men who believed that a government of “we the people” must reflect their faith and values.

Benjamin Franklin, one of the most clear-eyed among the Founders, was asked by a woman in Philadelphia when the Constitution was finally adopted, whether we would have a monarchy or a republic? He famously responded: “A republic – if you can keep it.”

The Founders clearly put their trust, and the faith of this new government, in the people. It is our duty to “keep it.” American poet Walt Whitman later summed it up with profound simplicity: “America is nothing but you and me.” As is the church, in the sense that it lives within each of us and depends on each generation to renew the commitment.

British statesman Edmund Burke commented after the French Revolution – and it could just as well have been addressed to citizens of the emerging America: “The effect of liberty is that it gives people the freedom to do whatever they like. We should wait to see what it pleases them to do before we risk congratulations.”

We could accept congratulations on many fronts but as we celebrate our 250th anniversary on July 4 our challenge to secure the dream endures to this day and extends into a boundless future. It is a cause we take to freely. As citizens we elect a government designed to serve us through the will of the people. We strive each day to be worthy of the trust, the opportunity, and the responsibility. We act jointly in electing our representatives, but speak for ourselves in setting the example for all that we want this nation to be.

And so it is with our church. We have an organization, a structure, churches, schools and people charged with leadership, but it all comes down to each of us and all of us. The church descends into our own hearts and minds and ultimately lives within each of us. That is a special responsibility and choice: to live what we believe or without that foundation and example.

So, would the Founders “risk congratulations” for all we have accomplished – or despair that we still fall short of their vision and our responsibility? Would Swedenborg – and the Lord – be disappointed at the slow growth of the church over this same time period?

Winston Churchill once said that “democracy is the worst of all forms of government – except for all others.” It is imperfect because we are imperfect. But it always has the potential and incentive to improve because of our freedom. And our hopes are ever aspirational.

“Jesus wept” before His crucifixion because the people did not understand why He came on earth, what He was teaching them and where He was leading them. But He – and Swedenborg – would remain patient, trusting, confident and optimistic. So would the Founders. That is our great blessing – that we will always strive to live up to what is asked of us. This is the enduring challenge of individual liberty and personal responsibility – in our democracy and in our church. It really is up to us.

Our Founders were religious men. They were not united in their faith or practice but believed that good governance should be informed by basic principles of faith – beginning with the Ten Commandments and the Two Great Commandments, to love God by serving Him and our neighbors.

They blessed us with their convictions and vision:

- John Adams: *“Our Constitution was made for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.”*
- Benjamin Franklin: *“I have lived a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth – that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, it is probable that an empire cannot rise without His aid.”*
- A Resolution of the Continental Congress: *“True religion and good morals are the only solid foundations of public liberty and happiness.”*
- Patrick Henry: *“The great pillars of all government are virtue, morality and religion. That is the armor and this alone that renders us invincible.”*
- George Washington: *“Every man, conducting himself as a good citizen, and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience.”*
- Alexander Hamilton: *“The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.”*
- Washington: *“It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.”*

Despite all these lofty ideals, this was not a perfect nation when it was founded – and still is not today – but from the outset the Founders saw its destiny in the Sermon on the Mount: *“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.”* (Matthew 5:14)

America has always aspired to be a beacon of freedom for the world – sometimes beaming, sometimes flickering, as we struggle to respond to our calling, but always a light to safe harbors. Just as we know in our private lives that we always must strive to shun evils and repent, “we the people” are forever challenged to make our nation – and our church – all that they can and must be. Each is only as strong as we are – individually and together – and as we educate and set the example for generations to follow.

We also have warnings from the best of our leaders.

George Washington cautioned: *“The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained.”*

And this warning from Abraham Lincoln still resonates in our consciences from a proclamation in 1863 – in the heat of the Civil War – which says in part:

*We have been the recipient of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation ever has grown. **But we have forgotten God.** We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserves us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated of our own success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.*

And for the Church and the Academy, this caution from Bishop N.D. Pendleton on the 50th Anniversary of the Academy:

We have been guarded from any grave disappointment by our Academy training which forbids grandiose expectations. Besides, we believe that the thing we are engaged in building can best grow slowly, can only grow slowly, and under Providential guiding, rather than by our forcing. So we are content, not to rest from our labors, but wait on Providence with the steady conviction that an adequate and protective basis of reception, a fit containant, without which spiritual influx cannot be held, and natural growth will be in vain.

We pray daily for a world *“as it is in heaven.”* And we know we have a long way to go.

Building on the promise and the dream – for the country and the church – is the work of a lifetime and an enduring test of trust and patience. The nation was not perfect at its founding, and our hopes are ever reaching, as we challenge ourselves to live up to the pledge of “liberty and justice for all.” And amid the persistent fallout from the Last Judgment we struggle every day to fulfill the destiny of this “crown of all churches.”

It took centuries of civilization for the Lord to come on earth to save a fallen world and bestow the promise of heaven. Then another 1700 years and more – through the Dark Ages, the Reformation, the Enlightenment – to bring about the Last Judgment and to create that New Church descending

upon the earth. And now all these years since struggling to build our church in a needy world.

As we commemorate the nation's birth we must hope the founding principles keep showing us the way to secure the dream – for the nation, for the world, for the church.

As the Founders put their faith and trust in “we the people,” so the church depends on each of us for how it grows and radiates in the world. We are privileged to live between dream and destiny, given both the opportunity and the responsibility to answer the call: “Here I am, Lord. Send me.”

George Washington gave us an enduring and insistent challenge: *“Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair.”*

The psalmist proclaims: *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”*

Blessed are “we the people” – to embrace, to serve, to be grateful.

The revolutions go on.

(BMH)

THE ACADEMY'S 150th ANNIVERSARY

Our celebration in the United States of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence almost coincides with our celebration of the beginning of the New Church, being only six years and two weeks apart – July 4, 1776 and June 19, 1770. As noted in the previous editorial:

“It is no small coincidence that in the arc of the Lord's providence the creation of this new nation coincided with the creation of the New Church in heaven and its ongoing descent upon earth.”

Even closer is the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Academy of the New Church, which took place on June 19th, 1876. This anniversary is also especially relevant to what is happening in the General Church today.

The event happened in the summer of 1876 in Philadelphia. The United States was celebrating its centennial with a Great Exposition in Fairmount Park on the banks of the Schuylkill River. It was attended by almost 10 million people from all parts of the country.

This made it convenient for the New Church to have its annual Convention there. Among those who took part in it were those who had met in Pittsburgh two years previously to plan the launch of a reform movement in the church: William Henry Benade, John Pitcairn, Walter Childs and Frank Ballou.

On June 19th they came together again, along with eight others and

four of their wives at the home of Dr. Felix Boericke at 222 Franklin Street in Philadelphia. At the meeting Benade presented a Declaration of Principles for the formation of the Academy of the New Church. These principles had been the subject of discussion among them for several years. They then signed the document, formally founding the Academy. The document reads in part:

“We who have hereunto subscribed our names . . . do hereby covenant together and constitute ourselves into a body of the Lord’s New Church . . . to the end that by mutual counsel and assistance, and by united action, we may be the better prepared . . . to engage in those uses of spiritual charity which have respect primarily to the growth and development of the spiritual church.”

They put this in the form of a charter and sent the application to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which granted it the following year.

The term “academy” was used in the sense of being a “*society or institution of distinguished scholars that aims to promote and maintain standards in its particular field.*” While they did eventually start schools, their purpose was not so much about education as about the reformation of the church, which had come together 60 years earlier with the first Convention in 1916, also in Philadelphia. The church had grown considerably in those 60 years, but those who formed the Academy were greatly disturbed by what they saw happening in it.

The founders of the Academy felt that the church was not adequately devoted to the Heavenly Doctrine and that it did not take seriously the idea that the previous church had come to an end. They were concerned that the clergy was poorly trained and poorly educated and that the children born within the church seldom remained in it. They were frustrated that their congregational form of government meant that the votes of the laity often outweighed the teaching of the clergy, and the Heavenly Doctrine itself, in the formation of church policy. They believed that the current trajectory would lead to the church’s demise.

The Academy’s principles rested on two main features, with the rest following as their logical consequences. They were:

- First of all was that the works of Swedenborg were Divine Revelation and therefore the last word in the resolution of all spiritual questions.
- Secondly, that the Christian Church had come to an end, that the New Church was to be a completely new and distinctive body, and that the culture of the former church was therefore a negative influence in the life of the church.

These two principles led to several other conclusions:

- One was the need for an independent and well-educated clergy that would be reliant on the Heavenly Doctrine and would not be overruled in doctrinal matters by the popular opinions of the laity.
- Another was the need for day schools where the children of the church could be taught from the Word from a young age.

There were others as well, and the Academicians devoted themselves to publicizing these ideas throughout the church and proposing them at Convention and other meetings. Unfortunately, these concepts were not accepted by the church as a whole, and the friction caused by them led to the Academy group's separation in 1890 from the Convention Church and the formation of the General Church.

Now, 150 years after these events, the brilliance of the Academy's founding document should be clear to us. They realized that the miracle of the Lord's Second Coming would not bring about the reform of America's Christian churches, that evangelization alone would not bring about the growth of the church, and that the key to their growth and stability would be their devotion to the Heavenly Doctrine. They also saw something that is clear today in church growth literature,

According to the Pew Research Center the growth of virtually all religions depends on their fertility rate and rate of retention, and not evangelization.

“Conversion will have little impact on the size of religious groups. Pew projects that religious people will increase by 2050 due to increasing fertility rates in religious countries and decreasing fertility rates in less religious countries.”¹

“It is projected that birth rate – rather than conversion – will prove the main factor in the growth of any given religion. While according to other various scholars and sources Pentecostalism – a Protestant Christian movement – is the fastest growing religion in the world, this growth is primarily due to religious conversion and denomination switching among Christians.”²

¹ Pew Research Center “The Future of World Religions” (PDF). Archived from the original (PDF) on 29 April 2015.

² “Key Findings From the Global Religious Futures Project”. Pew Research Center. 21 December 2022.

The General Church has often compared its evangelization efforts and rate of success with Christian mega-churches like North Point, Saddleback, Willow Creek and Calvary Chapel. These churches often claim to be truly converting the “unchurched” and not simply “denomination switching” as this article states. But in a place like North America, where Christianity is so historically dominant, this claim is doubtful. They are mostly attracting people of Christian backgrounds through charismatic leadership, community programs and effective organizational work.

The founders of the Academy and General Church made plans 150 years ago “*to engage in those uses of spiritual charity which have respect primarily to the growth and development of the spiritual church.*” They saw their efforts to develop a distinctive culture based on the Heavenly Doctrine as the Lord’s Word, and to raise their families within that culture, as the key to that growth and development. This is not an easy task but it remains the best path for continued existence and growth within the culture of former Christianity.

(JFS)

Letters to the Editors

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

The Case for Building Bridges

To The Editors:

In response to the article by the Rev. Derrick Lumsden, *Not as the World Gives*, *New Church Life*, March/April 2026:

The overarching message in this article is that the church has made an error in embracing the communities that have surrounded the church over the years. That the attempt to build bridges and connect with “outsiders” has resulted in watering down of church doctrine. In describing what he calls a “negative cultural world,” Rev. Lumsden cautions that bridge-building may lead to doctrinal compromise: “*However, in a negative culture these attempts to build bridges will primarily result in being pulled further and further away from the core of Christian beliefs.*”

I can see how, without strong moral and spiritual guidelines, social pressure may lead some to compromise their values, but I am unsure how reaching out to try to understand our differences can lead to losing the core of Christian beliefs. To be Christian is to be a Christ follower, someone who learns from the Bible and tries to live out the example it gives. Building bridges seems to me to be exactly what Christ taught, exactly what we are asked to do when we are asked to love our neighbor.

When Jesus told us to love our neighbor, He didn’t add a caveat to it. He didn’t say that we only had to love people like us, or love those who think like us or make us feel good. He told us to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us. How does turning away from connection achieve that?

It is hard to imagine that what is being described in this article aligns with the example given to us by the life of Jesus. Jesus’ message to us is one of connection, forgiveness, compassion and active faith. His message to the Scribes and Pharisees of the time was that the Lord’s Word was not to be used to divide and judge, but rather to bring healing.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a clear message about building connection across barriers. The Samaritan and the Jewish people were at odds with each other. They lived divided, both believing that they were right and

had the truth. Jesus' message through this parable is that both should live together, blessing each other.

The idea that we should move away from reaching outward is saying that living isolated, in a silo, is the solution to facing the struggles of the world. Pretending they don't exist hardly does anything to contribute to bringing peace and love into the world.

I am sure that there are people who enjoyed their time living in the country, building homes and community. There are many people with wonderful childhood memories playing in fields all day and being free to roam. But that is not the same as isolating oneself in the name of preserving doctrine.

What doctrine is it that we are aiming to preserve? It seems to me that the message of New Church doctrine is one of self-examination and repentance, learning to love the Lord and our neighbor. That can't be done if we hide away because we are afraid of what is happening in the world. We can stand strong in our beliefs and our values, while reaching out and making connections.

I think that if we want to have a positive impact on the world as a church community, we have to be a part of it. Is it pretty? No. But it never was and never will be. The Lord's New Church can only come into the world if we choose to become the conduit that connects the Lord with others. We can only share the beauty of the Writings with people if we connect, if we learn what they need and share what is spiritually helpful. The Lord can only bring His church to people if we are willing to build bridges.

Karen Allais
Caryndale
Ontario, Canada

Wrestling with Doctrine

To The Editors:

In the March/April edition of the *New Church Life*, a letter from the Rev. Mark Allais very cogently addressed the subject of doctrine. His presentation was well done and very helpful. However, there was one area that still seemed uncertain.

Rev. Allais said: "Doctrine . . . is the form the Word takes in the human mind so that it can be understood and lived." That seems almost axiomatic. But there was an earlier statement that: "One of the confusions in recent discussions is the idea that doctrine and revelation might be the same thing. They are not."

Could that be more of a postulate rather than an axiom? Swedenborg

calls several of his Writings, “Doctrines.” And is it not common for New Church ministers to refer to the Writings as the “*Heavenly Doctrines*”? Yet, it is well understood in the church that Swedenborg’s published Writings are a “revelation” – a discrete degree of the *Word* itself.

Also, the question was proposed: “Why would the Word itself teach that doctrine must be drawn from it?” Could the answer be: that the Word so teaches to ensure that we can *trust* that the Lord’s *doctrines* are indeed a Divine *revelation* simply because Swedenborg meticulously supports all of the Lord’s revelations with copious references to the Word?

The main thrust of Rev. Allais’ letter seems to be that nothing is “doctrine” unless it has been assimilated and applied with charity in an individual’s personal life. Well, enough! But it appears that New Church people may have somehow considered that “the church” has an ability to pronounce “doctrine” (as the clergy has *derived* it) from the three-fold Word.

Are the Writings through Swedenborg the Word, or are they doctrine, or are they both? Is “understanding doctrine” the same as “creating doctrine”?

As a revelation, the Writings are full of truths. If we approach them with love, don’t we gain perception? And doesn’t that form our personal doctrine?

Anyway, might the Rev. Allais’ first axiom be re-stated as: *For us, our understanding of the Word is formed by the **revealed doctrines** that we apply in our lives?*

Martin E. Klein
Huntingdon Valley
Pennsylvania

Friendships of Love

To The Editors:

True Christian Religion 446, 447, 448 and 449 have come to my attention. In summary, they draw the distinction between friendships and friendships of love, the former being natural and the latter, spiritual. They go on to say that friendships of love, if not based on the same spiritual values – for example if the values of the one are based on evils (e.g. love of self) while those of the other are based on good – then after death they will both end up in hell and it will take quite a time and effort before the one in good is able to free himself and be taken to heaven. At least, that is how I read these numbers.

I find them quite direful, particularly when # 449 ends with “*only let him guard against a friendship of love with anyone.*”

I also find these numbers most perplexing as they raise, for me at any rate, a number of questions even while I accept the truth of what they say since they are from the Lord in His Word.

True Christian Religion 446 states: “*A friendship of love means interior*

friendship, which is such that not only is the man's external man loved but his internal also, and this without scrutiny into the quality of his internal or spirit, that is, into his mind's affections." So, a friendship of love is the love of another's spiritual values, without scrutiny, yet # 449 also says: "No one is able to explore the interiors of the mind of those with whom he sociates."

We also are told many times elsewhere in the Word that no one can know the spiritual values or states of another: only the Lord knows this. In fact, in *Conjugal Love*, we are also told that with a married couple, it is possible for the one to have conjugal love but the other not to have it. We are also told in the Word that a person may be outwardly in evils and yet, although also interiorly, he has seen them and be striving to overcome them, thus actually being on the road to regeneration.

For such a warning in the Word by these numbers it is apparent that friendships of love do occur. But how does anyone form a friendship of love with another and how do we see the spiritual affections of another in order to avoid them or to accept them? How does one form a friendship of love and how does one avoid doing so, and in a true marriage do not the husband and wife automatically form a friendship of love?

Obviously, we can see the external evils of another and can even tolerate them for the sake of friendship, but how can we avoid friendships of love when we cannot see another's internal affections? Is it that we only form friendships of love with our spouses and they just happen because of the nature of any marriage? But then *True Christian Religion 449* gives examples of friendships of love which are not between married partners. In fact, these numbers in *TCR* nowhere mention married partners.

I have heard it said that the danger of friendships of love is the reason why people in the New Church should marry partners also in the church – to ensure that they have the same values. But do they have the same values? We may have an idea of the external values of a spouse – e.g. belief in the Word of the Second Coming – but that doesn't mean that a married couple will have the same internal values and the Word confirms that, for in *Conjugal Love* we are told that one partner may have conjugal love and the other may not have it.

When a man and a woman fall in love and then marry, they tend to assume that they will love each other forever, and, if in the New Church, they usually hope and believe that they will become conjugal partners. When they fall in love and commit to each other are they not then forming a friendship of love, even while not knowing whether or not their spiritual values are the same? So where does this take our marriages?

Similarly, what of a couple who late in life fall deeply in love and see each other as partners to eternity, but because of only age or financial constraints are unable to marry? Are they forming a friendship of love? Where does one

draw the line between what is genuine love and a friendship of love when the latter is defined by spiritual values which cannot be known to the involved two?

To me, there is a serious anomaly between what is being said in these numbers – that we must not form friendships of love unless our spiritual values are the same while at the same time we are told that we cannot know the spiritual values of another. We are also not told how a friendship of love might come about.

True Christian Religion 448 seems to imply that both partners need to die together; if not, say they die many years apart, the one in good going first, would he have to wait for years for the other to die before he can go down with the other to hell and then be lifted up to heaven?

If a person's spiritual values are also visible in his natural, external behavior, then of course it is possible for another to love them or shun them. But doesn't the same problem remain? One doesn't know the other's spiritual values. A person may exhibit evils externally and yet inwardly be fighting those evils and actually be in the process of regeneration. On the other hand, a person may be in evils internally, yet is able to pretend that, externally, he is in goods.

Take, as an example, a friendship of love between two brothers or two friends. Does that love come into being because the one might take the view: "I love you and come what may I will stand by you; I love what you have done even though I see it is evil"? But even so, one would only be seeing an external act, and not the internal spiritual value of the other. I don't see that as being defining because *True Christian Religion* says that a friendship of love is based on loving the spiritual values of the other, something it also tells us we cannot know. Always, I come back to the point that friendship of love is about loving the spiritual values of another, something we cannot know!

Unfortunately, letters to the editors of *New Church Life* usually get no response from "the church" giving its doctrinal position. Letters often contain interesting thoughts, yet are left hanging. I have rarely, if ever, seen a doctrinal response to letters to the editors from the General Church clergy or Bishop, which is to be regretted, as *New Church Life* could be and should be a lively doctrinal platform, but perhaps the Bishop might respond to the questions I raised above.

While not specifically related to friendships of love, I raised issues about marriages in a letter in the November/December 2024 issue, *What Do the Writings Really Say?* Sadly, there was no response from the church.

Barrie Ridgway
Canberra
Australia

I Saw Him on the Wave
(Matthew 14:25-290)

My little boat
launched into the middle
of a troubled life

I sailed by
no guide and overlooked
the dark sky and white caps

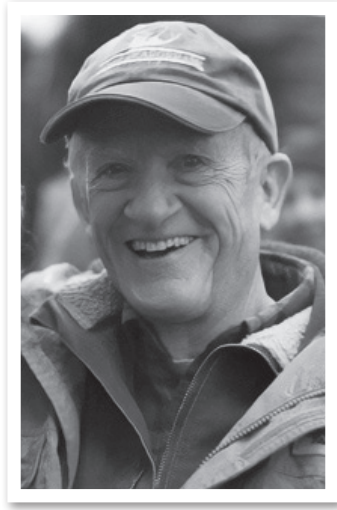
Soon a storm
turned my boat into a trap
on the choppy sea

Then curtained clouds
pulled back and the sun
touched those waves

And in the sunbeam
walked the Son of God
saying, "Fear not

Walk with Me, leave
that little boat and
walk with Me."

James O'Neil
Portland, Oregon



The Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough

A Memorial Address

The Rev. Derek P. Elphick

“But what will you do in the end?”

Dan Goodenough asked this question, a question posed by Jeremiah the prophet (5:31), at the 30th General Assembly here in Bryn Athyn in 1987. Dan used this probing question to launch into an expansive, memorable address on the subject of “expectations,” doing so in front of an international audience over a thousand strong.

His talk was full of wisdom and practical insights, a historical and spiritual narrative, an odyssey if you will, describing the struggles and promptings and longings of the human heart. What will you *do* in the end? How will you live your life? What should you expect along the way? Who will you serve? These types of questions were the guiding lights throughout Dan’s full and active life, a life lived with faith and purpose, and with an unwavering commitment to the people and uses he loved.

Dan was born in Detroit, Michigan on January 22, 1939, to Daniel and Margaret Goodenough. He grew up with two younger sisters, Pixie and Liz, with whom he shared a lifelong closeness. Life at the family home in Grosse Point, Michigan, was full and active, with many happy times.

Raised Episcopalian, Dan and his sisters were encouraged by their parents to discuss and talk openly about important issues and topics which gave them a strong moral compass and an early awareness of how they might serve society. In childhood, Pixie, who was two years younger than Dan, did a lot with her brother. They played baseball together, rode their bikes, went sledding, and even though she was the only girl in the group, Dan included his little sister in many of the organized activities with his neighborhood friends.

Some of Dan's strong character traits began manifesting themselves at a very early age. His sisters said he was "always curious about everything." He wanted to *understand* everything! For example, one time Dan hit his friend on the head with a hammer to see what would happen. He was too young to know it was dangerous (and the neighborhood friend was fine) but when asked why he did it, he innocently replied that he wanted to know what would happen!

Another time, when six-year-old Dan joined Pixie in Florida while she recuperated from an illness, he became intensely interested in the Second World War overseas. Every day he wore his soldier suit and learned everything he could about the war, and when he saw a real soldier on the street, he enthusiastically stopped the man in uniform to ask him many questions! And Dan's life-long love for the West, for adventure, for horseback-riding, and his intense desire to learn about, and honor, Native American history and culture were no doubt kindled by the summers of his youth when he got to stay at the Teton Valley Ranch in Wyoming and experience the life of a cowboy.

Dan's enthusiastic, inquisitive, intelligent mind served him well and he excelled in academics and was fortunate enough to get an education at some of the best schools in the country. He also loved sports and dreamed of becoming a professional athlete but then something serendipitous happened. Dan's sister Liz recalled the event. Dan was 15 years old and at a Christmas party, a dinner dance. He was recovering from knee surgery and wandered into the library of this grand home in Grosse Point, Michigan, where the party was taking place and met a 13-year-old girl sitting by the fireplace who, it turned out, was an

What will you do in the end? How will you live your life? Who will you serve? These questions were the guiding lights throughout Dan's full and active life, lived with faith and purpose, and an unwavering commitment to the people and uses he loved.

out-of-town guest of the host. Her name was Marcia Pitcairn. They struck up a wide-ranging religious conversation and this was when Dan first learned about Swedenborg and the New Church.

Dan continued his education, first receiving a BA from Princeton University and later receiving a master's degree (MDiv) from Lutheran Theological Seminary. His private, independent study of the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg led to another life-changing event. After being accepted into the Theological School here in Bryn Athyn, Dan met and fell in love with Ruth Parker from Toronto, Ontario. They married in 1963 and then two years later, Dan graduated from Theological School and was ordained into the General Church ministry in 1965.

Dan served for two years as assistant pastor in Toronto. His passion for New Church education then brought him back to Bryn Athyn in 1967 where he began a highly respected and impactful 25-year teaching career at the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church and its Theological School. He also served as Dean of the Theological School from 1990-1992 and then was called to be President of the Academy for 10 years from 1992-2002, a position he held with loyalty and dedication.

During this period of his professional working career, Dan contributed to the life and thought of the Church and the Academy in a remarkably rich and varied way. Some people fondly remember specific courses he taught, like Conjugal Love, or Church History, or Divine Providence – but no matter what the subject, Dan tackled it (both verbally and in written form) with careful, measured words. He took his time. If he wasn't sure about something he would say, "*Let me think about that,*" lest he offer an undigested thought or knee-jerk reaction.

He didn't flaunt his knowledge, even though he likely had something close to a photographic, encyclopedic memory on subjects as diverse as obscure forgotten dates from early Christian Church history to powerful quotes from Russian literature about God and religion, freedom of choice, and the nature of good and evil.

Dan had no interest in dazzling people with his sharp, scholarly mind. Instead, he approached all the subjects that were important to him as if he were approaching "sacred ground" – with a holy reverence and respect. He ended up publishing extensively, hundreds of articles, papers, letters, on a wide variety of topics. Everything he wrote, even informal email responses to colleagues and friends, was done with the utmost care, precision and sensitivity.

But it was at what the family affectionately called "2715," the Goodenough family residence on Alnwick Road, that Dan and Ruth, as husband and wife, shared their wealth, their "treasures from heaven." It was in this warm, cozy, lively and inviting home, full of laughter and adventure (and yes, heated

debate), that Dan and Ruth raised their family – five children, Mary, Vera, Katya, Danny, and Lamar, and where family, friends, students and lodgers would get to experience and witness first-hand the full impact of Dan and Ruth's love and kindness, and their thoughtful generosity. Freedom of thought, freedom of choice, were at the center of their parenting style.

Dan and Ruth taught their children to be independent thinkers, and so vigorous debates at the dinner table would take place. They encouraged the children to broaden their knowledge base with an appreciation for art, literature and history, and so wide-ranging discussions would ensue. The house was full of books, maps, artwork, music, all designed to ignite a spirit of inquiry and adventure. But what Mary, Vera, Katya and Lamar remember the most about their Dad during this phase of their life was how intentional, sincere, earnest, loyal and hardworking he was. There was some sadness and frustration that they couldn't have more time with their Dad because many people and projects captured his time and attention, but they knew they were loved and that's what mattered.

During the school year, the family stayed in town to focus on school, sports, homework, and all the social events and extracurricular activities that came from living in the small but busy, closeknit town of Bryn Athyn. Then, in the summer, the adventures began. There was time spent at the Goodenough cottage in Grand Bend, Ontario, sailing and fishing on Lake Huron or reading a book on the beach. Then from 1973 to 1991 there were the month-long backpacking trips out West, organized and led by Dan, trips that affectionally came to be known as Operation John Colter, named after the renowned American Explorer and member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

These month-long backpacking trips out West took a lot of careful planning, usually numbering between 10-12 intrepid young explorers from the college who were in their late teens and early 20s, plus a chaperone, and usually one or two of Dan's own children. Dan believed strongly that college-aged students needed to experience risk and adversity, not the reckless kind, but the kind that required careful, meticulous planning and preparation in order to equip them to, bravely and responsibly, face the harsh, unpredictable conditions of the "wild" that they would inevitably encounter – skills they would very much need for life itself.

These trips involved exploring trails in remote locations in Northwest Wyoming and Southeast Montana. The backpackers would need to be fit and on the alert for all sorts of physical dangers and it wouldn't be unusual for them to get tested to the core, individually and collectively as a group.

Each night at camp there was an informal worship led by Dan, and an invitation to "lift up [their] eyes to the mountains" to the Lord, from "whence came [their] help." Sometimes this took place under a breathtaking canopy of

stars with the mountains in the background. This quiet reflection time gave them an opportunity to have a check in, to discuss practical matters related to that day's hike, to express appreciation for each other, and to quietly thank the Lord in prayer for leading and guiding them.

The summer of 1989 marked a number of significant changes for the Goodenough family. Mary graduated from Berkeley with a master's degree, Vera graduated from the University of Michigan with a BA, Katya graduated from Bryn Athyn College with an AA, Danny graduated from the Academy of the New Church high school, and Lamar graduated from the Bryn Athyn Church elementary school.

But it was later that summer, during a backpacking trip out West, that 18-year-old Danny tragically died in a climbing accident. Dan's and Ruth's strong belief in an afterlife, and the support of close friends and family and this community, carried them through the shock and pain of that devastating loss. It changed everyone, and a few years later, some backpackers installed a memorial to Danny in Wyoming, which Dan returned to many times.

When someone retires, we tend to think of his life winding down but this was not the case for Dan at all. In many ways, he was just getting started. This cowboy, sailor, preacher, teacher, scholar, musician, counselor, mentor and friend was only just beginning to find his stride! His adult children noticed it. His "love language" was still acts of service and engaging in shared activities like working in the yard, chopping wood, sailing, horseback riding, and singing folk songs and gospel music.

Up until then, Dan had mostly kept a lid on his emotions after Danny died but as the years went by he became more emotionally present with his children, more available. His compassion and deep sensitivity (which had been there all along) became more apparent. He became more physically demonstrative, giving more hugs and checking in on people who had experienced similar pain and suffering.

In retirement, Dan and Ruth would end up spending 12 years in Big Horn, Wyoming, and another 12 years in Two Harbors, Minnesota. It would be during these new phases of their life, these new growth periods, that Dan and Ruth would get to know their children and spouses, and their grandchildren, in a new way.

Mary's children, Raj and Maya, have so many fond memories of time spent with their grandparents out in Wyoming. Dan taught them how to ride horseback in what was now his second "cowboy" era. He took them to rodeos. Of course, the grandchildren expected their grandpa to let them gallop his horses as soon as they mounted them, but Dan insisted they first learn all the methodical steps and skills of horseback-riding before graduating to that thrilling new level of a full gallop!

He also taught them fly-fishing. Steve and Vera's daughter, Amber, remembers Grandpa teaching her fly-fishing too when she was 16, and how to filet a fish. Katya and Mark's two daughters, Lamar and Cedar, have many fond memories of their Grandpa and Grandma in Two Harbors, where they lived close by. Dan loved to go with their family on "vigorous" sailing trips out on Lake Superior. He was present at all their sporting events.

The overriding and overwhelming sense of Grandpa from all the grandchildren was one of *enthusiastic* support. His cheering and careful, detailed stat recording at sporting events became so legendary people thought he was actually a sportscaster! Dan would even memorize the names of his grandchildren's teammates so that he could remember to ask about them at dinner. And Wyatt, Lamar and Barrett's son, has fond memories of going to a cowboy store in Wyoming with his grandfather, and going to the rodeo, and he also noticed the deep caring and sensitive side of Dan reflected in his love for animals, the land, and the indigenous people and way of life out there in the wilderness.

And there is so much more that Dan did in his retirement years. This included an extensive amount of pastoral visiting with isolated New Church people throughout the Western United States and into Canada. Then there were scattered and isolated General Church pastors posted out West who remember fondly the incredible support and encouragement they received from Dan, both in person and via phone calls and emails.

Back home in Big Horn, Wyoming, Dan helped cowboys move their cattle, served on the Big Horn Reservoir Water Rights Board, joined the Lion's Club, and taught a comparative religion course at the Native American Crow Rez College, and he square danced with Ruth – a tradition started when they were in Bryn Athyn.

When they moved to Two Harbors, Dan pursued additional interests and causes he was deeply passionate about. These ministries and causes were his version of "foot washing," where he engaged in restorative justice work, working with prison inmates in Duluth, Minnesota, helping victims (and perpetrators) of domestic abuse. Dan felt a deep call to be of service, to help those who had been harmed, who needed the Lord's tender mercy and love.

In the last few years of Dan's life in this world, he and a few backpackers gathered in Wyoming to complete an expedition started in the 1970s. As his daughters described it, "their mission was to definitively document the miraculous and brilliant 1877 escape of the Nez Perce tribe from the U.S. Cavalry through seemingly impossible terrain. Distilling and explaining these findings dominated the last year of Dad's life; the article he completed this winter will be published in a magazine of Western history this fall."

After Dan's beloved wife, Ruth, passed into the spiritual world in July 2025,

he continued quietly at home doing many of the things he loved – studying the Word, connecting with dear friends around the world, as well as with family. And, “After experiencing a heart attack in the fall, Dan considered his own end to be near, but never stopped raking leaves or shoveling snow, believing that the Lord would allow him to go when his greatest usefulness was no longer on this earth. Then on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, Dan died of heart failure while chopping wood – ‘with his boots on,’ as he always wanted.”

And now we can picture Dan in the spiritual world reunited with Ruth. We can picture the incredibly happy, tear-filled reunion with his son, Danny, whom he has missed so much. We picture Dan reunited with his father and mother whom he loved deeply, and with whom he had worked hard to gain mutual understanding over the religious differences that existed between them when he joined the New Church faith. (This will be a joyful reunion too because Dan’s parents grew to be so proud of their son).

Most importantly, we can picture Dan and Ruth getting back to all the uses they so very much enjoyed doing together here on earth. Dan gets to be an explorer again, this time an explorer of the Lord’s *eternal* realm, a Kingdom of Uses so vast, rich, varied and unending that even Dan with all that energy and curiosity might get bogged down for a while as he adjusts to his new spiritual environment!

But Dan has trained and prepared well for this work. And so we say farewell (for now) to our friend and trusted mentor. May he enjoy first-hand all the spiritual wonders, all the visual joys and delights, which he spent his entire life preaching about, teaching about, writing about, talking about, and singing about.

On Tuesday, March 3, 2026, Dan died of heart failure while chopping wood – “with his boots on,” as he always wanted.

“But what will you do in the end?”

This was the question Dan asked all those years ago. What will you do with your life? Who will you serve? And, true to form, Dan wouldn’t answer that question directly. Instead, he’d make you think for yourself. Of course, he had his own answer to that question! The Lord had gifted him with a remarkable set of talents and opportunities and he, like any of us, could have squandered those gifts, buried them in the ground, but he didn’t.

Dan chose to serve the Lord in as many ways as he could. He did so by “feeding” people, by “feeding” people with spiritual nourishment and support, by feeding people the navigational “coordinates,” the spiritual purpose and

direction which we all so desperately seek and which, as Dan knew, can only come from the Lord our God, our Savior and Redeemer.

As we celebrate Easter tomorrow, it seems particularly fitting to end with the Lord's own words to His disciples after He had risen from the tomb. On a beach, somewhere along the shoreline of the Sea of Tiberias, with a morning campfire crackling, the Lord asks Peter three times, "*Do you love Me?*" and each time Peter says, yes, to which the Lord responds: (then) "*Feed My sheep.*"

THE REV. DEREK ELPHICK is pastor of Bryn Athyn Church, where he lives with his wife, Gay (Hodgell). Contact: derek.elpick@brynathynchurch.org

THE REV. DAN GOODENOUGH – CONSUMMATE FAMILY MAN



Dan, Liz, and Pix, as children



Dan, Pix, Liz – grown



Dan with sister Pix at Ruth's memorial service last August



Goodenough family 1976



Dan – in the mountains or the boardroom – always pointing the way



He did like to laugh

A Tribute to the Rev. Dan Goodenough

(The following – in slightly edited form – was sent to employees of the Academy of the New Church, Board of Trustees and Corporation, by Chancellor Peter M. Buss Jr., on March 12.)

The Rev. Daniel Webster Goodenough passed into the spiritual world on March 3. He was 87 years old. Many have reflected that he is joining his wife, Ruth P. Goodenough, who died a little less than a year ago, and becoming reacquainted with his son, Danny, who died tragically in his early adulthood. There has been a wonderful outpouring of remembrances by the vast array of people who were touched positively by his life. We can imagine a great deal of greetings from friends and relatives on the other side as well.

Dan Goodenough's career was primarily focused on the Academy of the New Church. He began a 25-year stretch of teaching at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church and its Theological School in 1967. He served as Dean of the Theological School from 1990-1992, before being called to serve as President of the Academy, from 1992-2002. Upon retirement, Dan did a great deal of pastoral visiting throughout the western United States and into Canada, serving as a Regional Pastor in that area for many years.

This outline of Dan's career does only a little to convey the impact of his life and teaching on the Academy, and also on many an individual who benefited from his friendship and wise counsel. I remember well his Church History courses during Theological School, as well as an undergraduate Divine Providence course. More recently I have benefited from Dan's wise counsel on many matters that come before the Bishop's Office and note with special gratitude the unfailing support he offered me.

There are hundreds of former students, administrators, colleagues, New Church members and friends who can warmly attest to their own positive and impactful interactions with Dan – from courses to back-packing trips, visits in their homes or his, board meetings, employee consultations and worship services.

Dan was a true scholar of the Heavenly Doctrines, publishing extensively in *New Church Life* and other New Church periodicals. The breadth of interests and contributions partially reflected here is amazing:

- *Angelic Methods of Instruction* (Council of the Clergy 1977)
- *Questions about the 'New Age'* (1986)
- *Receiving the Lord's Forgiveness* (1990)
- *Choices – A Charter Day Address* (1992)
- *Can I Know If I'm Going to Heaven?* (1996)
- *Lighting the Way to a Coherent World View: A Vision for the Academy* (2001)
- *How Shall We Think of Jesus?* (2004)
- *Can We Love the Lord's Law?* (Sermon, 2005)
- *Conjugal Love: A New Concept* (2006)
- *Not 'Three Aspects' of God* (Trinity, 2008)

Among Dan's accomplishments is a book published in 1986, *Providence and Free Will in Human Action*, which has provided insight for many on how to place faith in a loving and wise God in the face of the many twists and turns of human life. He also authored a pivotal study aimed at preserving the Academy's fidelity to its mission: "*Governance to Put Light on a Lampstand*" (2000).

Dan's professional contributions listed here are augmented by his presentations at Education Council and Council of the Clergy meetings, and New Church summer camps. It is also notable that he did a great deal to support theological training in Cote d'Ivoire, using his facility with the French language to provide excellent counsel on student dissertations. He and his wife have generously supported theological training outside of the United States, signaling his love for the expansion of the New Church worldwide.

In light of all this, which scratches the surface of the impact of this one well-lived life, we can reflect on the perception of Dan's character through the testimony of others. He was much more about you than himself, much more invested in your success than his, always caring, generous with his time, positive and affirming.

It is good for the Academy community to remember and honor Dan Goodenough's significant contribution to the mission of higher New Church education. It is good for the General Church to thank him for his contribution to the use of the priesthood and the work of the church. We thank him for his faithful pastoral and personal efforts, and, in the spirit of the Lord's words in *Matthew 5:16*, reflect our gratitude heavenward: "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*"

May the Lord bless the extended Goodenough family as they reflect on his transition into eternal life.

Contact: Peter.Buss.Jr@newchurch.org

The Two Witnesses and the Birth of the New Church

The Rev. Coleman S. Glenn

*Lessons: Zechariah 4:1-3, 11-14; Revelation 11:3-12;
Apocalypse Revealed 490*

*And I will give to My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy 1,260 days,
arrayed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two lampstands,
which are standing before the God of the earth.
(Revelation 11:3-4)*

This 19th of June we will celebrate the birthday of the New Church. We read in *True Christian Religion* 791 that 256 years ago, on June 19, 1770,

The Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages; and that blessed are those that come to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

What does it mean to celebrate the birth of the New Church? The New Church is not a denomination or an earthly organization. Rather, it is a spiritual reality that is breaking forth into the natural world. The teachings of the New Church, revealed by the Lord through Emanuel Swedenborg, are detailed and comprehensive. And yet in some sense, they are quite simple. The core teachings can be boiled down to two essentials, which are described in the internal sense of *Revelation 11*, John's vision of two witnesses.

We read in our lesson from *Apocalypse Revealed* 490 that the two witnesses symbolize those “*who confess and acknowledge from the heart that the Lord is God of heaven and earth, whose humanity is Divine, and who are conjoined with Him by a life in accordance with the Ten Commandments.*” These two teachings – first, that Jesus is God, and second, that we are conjoined with Him by following the Ten Commandments – are the two essentials of the New Church. We bear witness to them when we believe them in our hearts and confess them in our lives.

These two essentials echo the two great commandments that the Lord gave while He was in the world: to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind; and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Revelation 11:3 says of the two witnesses that they are “*the two olive trees and the two lampstands which are standing before the God of the earth.*”

Throughout the Word, olives and olive oil are symbols of love, and so two olive trees represent love to the Lord and love to the neighbor; and lampstands, a picture of spiritual enlightenment, represent the intelligence and faith that spring from these two loves. In our reading from the Old Testament, the prophet Zechariah was given a beautiful vision of the way these two loves inspire wisdom, with two olive trees continually feeding their oil into a lampstand.

The two essentials of the New Church do not merely restate the Two Great Commandments – they deepen and clarify them. The first great commandment calls us to love the Lord our God. The first essential of the New Church clarifies who that God is – that He is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God even in His humanity.

To know the person Jesus is to know God. To be joined to Him, we need to turn to the second Great Commandment and the second essential of the New Church. The second Great Commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves and the second essential of the New Church is a life according to the Ten Commandments. Love to the neighbor is not merely a feeling of goodwill toward others – it is a decision to flee from harmful actions because they go against the Lord’s commandments, and more deeply, because they go against His will that people do good to each other.

These two essentials may not strike us as particularly controversial. Is there any Christian who doesn’t consider Jesus to be Divine? Is there any Christian who opposes a life that conforms to the Ten Commandments? But in John’s vision, the prophecy of these two witnesses leads to intense conflict. It is said of them that if anyone will hurt them, fire will go forth out of their mouths and devour their enemies; that those who hurt them must be killed; that they have the power to stop the rain falling from heaven, to turn waters into blood, to smite the earth with plagues.

It is also said that despite these immense powers of the witnesses, a beast arose from the abyss, made war with them, and killed them, and that their bodies were cast on the streets of the city, where the people of the earth would rejoice over them. What is happening here? Is anyone really so opposed to these two essentials as to want to murder those who preach them?

Apocalypse Revealed explains

The two essentials of the New Church do not merely restate the Two Great Commandment – they deepen and clarify them.

that the enemies of these two witnesses refer in particular to the learned and scholarly in the Protestant world who defended the doctrine of salvation by faith alone apart from works. At the outset, it's important to note that some Protestants will speak of faith alone but believe that faith must entail faithfulness to the Lord's commandments. And *Apocalypse Revealed* suggests that even in Swedenborg's time, the common people may not have seen much to argue with in these two essentials. But the learned certainly would have.

According to the official dogma of most Protestant theologies of the time – and even today – Jesus had two natures, a human nature and a Divine nature, with the two natures being completely separate to eternity. It is only the eternal Son who is God, not Jesus as to His humanity. In His humanity, according to these doctrines, Jesus is linked to all humans who profess belief in His sacrificial death – so that when a believer prays to God the Father in Jesus' name, God the Father sees His sinless Son in place of the sinful believer, and so hears his prayers and forgives, regardless of how much sin might exist in the believer's life. God's favor relies on the person's affiliation with the Son, not with that person's way of living – it is not dependent on the person's good works.

Even at that time, Protestant scholars would not have argued against the Ten Commandments as a valuable guide to ethics, and many would even have suggested that true faith in Christ should lead spontaneously to a life more and more in keeping with the Ten Commandments. But they strongly opposed any suggestion that a person must intentionally keep the Ten Commandments in order to be saved. They argued that to do this would be to try to earn heaven, rather than receiving it as a gift – to display a lack of faith that God the Father would grant you salvation because of your affiliation with His Son, and instead to try to earn that favor yourself.

Even now, many Protestants are constantly on the lookout for any hint of legalism, any hint of “works righteousness,” and will use these criteria as the measuring stick for whether a person is truly Christian or not. We may or may not have much direct interaction with theologies of this kind, but it is important to know that they still have a significant influence in the Christian world around us, and we will face opposition if we loudly proclaim that Jesus' human nature is also Divine and that we cannot be saved without following the commandments.

But it is even more important that we realize the *spiritual* influence of those who would attack the two witnesses. We live in a culture that has historically been shaped by the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, and we are still affected by the influence of evil spirits who hate the idea of worshipping Jesus as the one God and being joined to Him by a life according to the Ten Commandments.

Those spirits will use whatever methods they can to convince us to

abandon these essentials. *Revelation 11:7* says: “*And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast who comes up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.*” According to *Apocalypse Revealed 500*, the beast from the abyss represents people in the “*internals of the doctrine of faith alone (who)*” “*will oppose them, and assault these two essentials of the new church, and will reject them, and, as far as lies in their power, will cause others to reject them.*” These are particularly people and spirits with a thorough knowledge of Scripture, who use intricate and complex arguments to make persuasive claims against the essentials of the New Church.

We’ve already looked at some of the more technical theological arguments we may hear. But if we take this beast from the abyss to more broadly represent any complex reasoning, based on truths subtly twisted, we might be able to identify more everyday voices that try to sway us from our allegiance to the Lord and our efforts to follow the Ten Commandments. These are almost true ideas that can nevertheless lead us astray.

For example, it is a truth that people of any faith can be saved – but evil spirits can twist this to convince us that we can make up our own idea of God and follow that, rather than needing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a truth from the Word that the Lord primarily cares about our intentions, what we are like on the inside rather than the outside. But evil spirits can twist this to convince us that if we generally feel positive feelings toward others, we do not need to identify any *specific* commandments we might be breaking.

This lacks the theological sophistication of arguments for salvation by faith alone apart from works, but the result is the same: we might nod toward the value of living a good life, but when it comes time to actually change our lives, we can excuse ourselves – we don’t have the time, we’re mostly on the right track, if we haven’t changed by now it’s not likely that we’ll change in the future, and so on.

Those thoughts do come, and they are hard to resist, partly because of their resemblance to truth, but also because they let us off the hook. *Revelation 11:10* says that after the witnesses are killed, “*they who dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them and shall make merry, and shall send gifts to one another; because these two prophets tormented those who dwell upon the earth.*”

When we can tell ourselves that God is whoever we want God to be; when we can shake off the pesky idea that we must be identifying and shunning specific evils in our lives; there is a sense of relief and rejoicing.

Against such strong intellectual and emotional appeals of the idea of salvation by faith apart from deeds, how can anyone stand? *Apocalypse Revealed* describes how even Swedenborg experienced the spiritual power of the enemies of the testimony he had been called to share. He writes:

I was once seized suddenly with a disease almost deadly. My whole head was weighed down. A pestilential smoke ascended from that Jerusalem which is called "Sodom and Egypt." I was half dead with the severe pain. I expected the end. Thus I lay in my bed three days and a half. My spirit became such, and from it my body. And then I heard voices about me, saying, "Lo, he who preached repentance for the remission of sins, and the Man Christ alone, lies dead in the streets of our city." And they asked some of the clergy whether he was worthy of burial. They said, "No; let him lie to be looked at." And they passed to and fro, and mocked. All this befell me, of a truth, when I was explaining this chapter of Revelation. (Apocalypse Revealed 531)

We need to know the power of what we are up against, and that there are times when we will become overwhelmed by it.

But this is not the end of the story for the witnesses. We read: "*And after three days and a half, the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet.*" (Revelation 11:11)

Apocalypse Revealed 510 gives the internal sense:

This symbolically means that at the end of the prior church, as the New Church commences and grows, these two essential elements of the New Church are made living by the Lord in people who accept them. . . . The spirit of life from God symbolizes spiritual life, and standing on their feet symbolizes natural life in harmony with spiritual life, and thus one made living by the Lord.

How does this renewal to life occur? The Lord's spirit in the Word is associated with His truth. So part of having our spirits renewed is to return to the Lord's Word for truth, to see from the doctrines of the New Church how the entirety of Scripture calls us to worship the Lord as the one God and to live according to His commandments. Then, we allow ourselves to be put on our feet – that is, we put it into practice. We walk in it.

It is here – when we take the truth and live it – that we allow that Lord to flow in and disperse the falsities that had laid us low. Because when we take practical actions – when we identify even a small sin, something we can actively choose to stop doing because it is a sin against the Lord, and pray to Him for help in overcoming it, and gradually, gradually find ways to stop, and suddenly one day find that we are free of its hold on us – when we do that, all the complicated arguments against it fall to pieces.

We have lived the truth of the saving power of the Lord's commandments. We have come to know the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to change our hearts. The truth is confirmed not just on paper, not just in our heads, but from our

hearts all the way out to our hands and feet.

At the end of the 11th chapter of *Revelation* – after the vision of the two witnesses, after John has seen those two witnesses taken up into heaven, after he has witnessed a glorification of the Lord in heaven – John is given another vision: “*And the temple of God was opened in heaven; and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant.*”

Throughout His ministry on earth, Jesus declared Himself to be the true temple; and the ark of the covenant held the two tables of the Ten Commandments. So, we read of the internal sense of this passage:

This symbolizes the New Heaven, in which the Lord is worshiped in His Divine humanity, and where people live in accordance with the Ten Commandments, which constitute the two essentials of the New Church that are the means of conjunction. (Apocalypse Revealed 529)

It is a beautiful picture, and a beautiful reminder of the need for the two essentials to work as one. Worship – even worship of the Lord Jesus Christ – is not truly worship if it is not connected to a life according to His commandments. And following the Ten Commandments simply as sound moral teachings does not connect us to God. But when we put the two together – when we live by the Ten Commandments not just as a set of rules, but as the means by which we may experience genuine love for our neighbor, which is the Lord’s own love within us, the Lord’s *life* within us – then we experience heaven.

This is what we pray for when we pray for the Lord’s kingdom to come. This is the essence of the New Church.

Amen.

When we live by the Ten Commandments, not just as a set of rules but as the means by which we may experience genuine love for our neighbor, then we experience heaven.



THE REV. COLEMAN S. GLENN is Assistant to the Pastor of Bryn Athyn Church. He and his wife, Ann Grace (Hurd) live with their family in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. Contact: coleman.glenn@gmail.com

Reading and Understanding the Word: Seeking Truth, Discovering Falsity

The Rev. Scott I. Frazier

Lessons: 1 Kings 22:3-23; Matthew 7:21-23; True Christian Religion 231-2

“Jehovah will give it into the hand of the king.” (1 Kings 22:15)

How do we see truth in the Word? Often the Word shows us truth right there on the page, as in the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount. Other parts of the Word are veiled over, the literal sense covering and containing the internal sense of the Lord’s living truth. (*Sacred Scripture* 55) These passages might describe the Lord as capricious, they might appear to justify mistreating the neighbor, or may just seem silly or nonsensical. We know they hold deep and rewarding truths, but how do we know what those truths are? We don’t even all agree on which passages are clear and which are thickly veiled.

When we try to understand this internal sense, we might find answers we like, but how can we be sure? How do we investigate the Word, avoid merely confirming or justifying what we already think and want, and instead discover truths that can change us for the better? The answer is to keep searching and inquiring until the Word shows us our own falsities.

The story of Micaiah in *1 Kings* revolves around four prophesies which show us the four steps in our efforts to understand the Word. These four prophesies can be summarized as:

- justification of self
- confusion and doubt
- falsity to reject
- freedom and obedience

Understanding the internal sense of the Word requires enlightenment, which the Heavenly Doctrine defines as “*to acknowledge the truth from an interior perception, and afterwards to see it in one’s own thought.*” (*Sacred Scripture* 58) Enlightenment is one of three ingredients needed to reveal the

internal sense along with genuine truths, (which are those truths that shine right on the surface of the pages of Word), and a knowledge of correspondences (which show us the correspondences of people and places to ideas).

Enlightenment is a quality of the will, not the intellect, and is determined by our willingness to be shaped by the truth more than by our own advantage or preconceptions. Enlightenment comes when we reject evil and the Lord inspires us with a new will that can see truths properly arranged by good. (*Ibid.* 41) We cannot know how enlightened we are. The priesthood especially is tasked by the Lord to seek “enlightenment” and “instruction” from the Holy Spirit (*True Christian Religion* 146) in order to find and share the inner truths contained in the literal sense. Everyone can read the Word and see truths in it, but a priesthood that is not bringing a deeper understanding of the Word to the church is not fulfilling its role. We cannot know, however, whether our insights are governed more by our proprium and prudence, or by the Lord.

Our story opens with Israel and Judah planning to take a place called Ramoth-Gilead from Syria. The two kings meeting represents our initial decision to try out a new idea we think we see in the Word. Ramoth Gilead is bringing thought and affection into our normal, sensory lives. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4117) Taking it from Syria symbolizes our desire to take our plan from merely theoretical to actually happening. We might win the battle, which means our idea helps us be happy in our active normal lives. We might lose the battle, which means our idea was foolish or destructive, making a mess of our lives.

Before the two kings can begin their conquest, however, they decide to inquire of Jehovah, through prophets, if their endeavor is blessed. We want assurances that we have the right idea of what the Word says, so we read and think from the Word – we consult the prophets. Do our ideas agree with the internal sense of the Word, and can we make them our plan for Tuesday afternoon or the month of March. Will the Lord bless our efforts to discover the internal sense of the Word and bring it into our lives?

Four hundred prophets assure the king of Israel that “*Jehovah will give it into the hand of the king.*” Pause and consider how convincing and powerful this would be: hundreds of experts, in person, conferring and agreeing that a course of action is the right one. Of course, the king knows they want to please him, but hundreds of people insisting your plan is great and just would tempt anybody to believe.

And “tempt” is the correct word. There are 400 of these prophets, a number corresponding to temptation, a crisis. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1847) We’ve opened the Word or called to mind what the Word says, and we find . . . unwavering support? We suspect justification. How often do we read the Word and assume it agrees with us? How often do we remember moral and theological truths

and ideas because they support our point? We look out at all those prophets telling us exactly what we want to hear, and we realize that does not make our conclusion doctrine from the Word, but what we want the doctrine of the Word to be. Our first attempt to listen to the Word has revealed the danger of justification: *“Jehovah will give it into the hand of the king.”*

In this moment of justification, while two kings sit on thrones in the gate of the city, surrounded by adoring prophets, we need to pause and identify what is going on in our minds. The assurance that we are right is symbolized by the prophet Zedekiah, the only named prophet of the 400, perhaps their leader. He is holding iron horns showing the kings how they will gore their enemies. His name means literally *“Jehovah is righteous.”* Of course He is! Shouldn't we listen to someone named *“Jehovah-is-righteous”*?

However, he is an image of our false assurances, just like the other 399 prophets. Note also his father is Chenaanah, *“one who buys and sells.”* Zedekiah is the personification of our hope and desire that the Lord is on our side, but the way we might hire a contractor or a servant. Imagine deciding on a course of action and then inviting the Lord along as a sidekick or helper. We do this all the time when we ask the Lord to bless our actions or outcomes without wondering whether those actions and outcomes bless the Lord. We need a second opinion.

Having heard the 400, the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat (which means *“Jehovah judges”*), asks for a second opinion, and the king of Israel summons Micaiah, a prophet whose name means *“Who is like Jehovah?”* Whereas Zedekiah is a picture of justification and hubris, Micaiah by his name and nature are humility. Nobody wise asks, *“Who is like the Lord?”* and answers, *“I am!”*

Micaiah's father *“Imlah”* means *“One whom Jehovah fills up,”* which is what happens if we seek the Lord in humility. The contrast could not be more pronounced. Do we think the Lord already agrees with us and will help us, or do we realize we need to follow the Lord and become a vessel filled with His love and wisdom? These two prophets stand before the kings and offer us the same stark choice: are you going to

Imagine deciding on a course of action and then inviting the Lord along as a sidekick or helper. We do this all the time when we ask the Lord to bless our actions or outcomes without wondering whether those actions and outcomes bless the Lord. We need a second opinion.

stick with your existing justification, or are you going to question it and try to follow the Lord? Isaiah's first answer to the kings might perplex us. He repeats the prophesy of the 400 exactly, word-for-word in the Hebrew: "*Jehovah will give it into the hand of the king.*" This appears to confirm the prophesy of the 400, but the king of Israel suspects Micaiah is not telling the truth, and he challenges Micaiah.

This second prophesy, the first from Micaiah, shows our second attempt to understand the internal sense of the Word, and it shows our confusion. Is Micaiah lying? Are we reading about a good prophet spreading falsity? Micaiah's first prophesy may mirror the 400 prophets, but the king of Israel it not pleased.

Our first step of seeking the truth yielded justification, and our second step, with more humility, shows us we don't know what the truth is saying. The literal sense of the Word is described as "*an ever-turning sword*" guarding the Garden of Eden in Genesis because it can be arranged to say anything we want. (*True Christian Religion* 260) By repeating the words of the 400, Micaiah shows the kings that the truth does simply reveal itself when we demand it.

Think about Micaiah's answer; into which king's hand will Jehovah deliver the battle? The king of Israel, or Judah, or Syria, or the Lord Himself? We can read passages of the Word over and over again, the words never changing, but we realize we can interpret those words in many ways. Which is the right way? We keep reading and thinking and searching.

When pressed, Micaiah then offers our third prophesy. He describes Israel scattered on a mountain, a flock without a shepherd, encouraged to go home. This is our third step: to discover the truth in the internal sense. If our first experience of studying the Word was comfortably agreeable, and our second experience prompted confusion and suspicion, our third experience reveals a falsity to reject. Going to battle against Syria will mean Israel's king will be killed. Micaiah is no longer evading or toying with the king – he is pronouncing the king's doom.

Could this be good news? How is this third step productive and loving? It will show us a false idea that should perish. We realize that we have a false notion organizing our ideas, and if we were to bring it into our conscious life and examine it sincerely, we would reject it.

This third step in seeking doctrine is about seeing our own falsity. Only now can we see what falsity we have to surrender. Perhaps we realize that the Word does not support the idea of punishing the other drivers on the road "for their own good," or condemns pining after the success and accomplishments others share online. We all have false kings, false shepherds watching our flock. We start to see doctrine from the Word in this third step, not when we first see what we want, but when it shows us something we don't want to be true.

This is what Micaiah is showing the king of Israel – the difference between our priorities and the truth. We don't know when we begin to study what that falsity may be, and it likely won't be the one we thought we saw at the beginning.

We imagine ourselves without this governing false idea, and feel vulnerable and adrift, like those sheep left alone on a mountain. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4809) We think we need to punish other drivers because then we control them. We think we need to covet others' lives because we are avoiding responsibility for our own choices. We might even wish we had not so deeply investigated the Word, but we have. And yet the flock is fine without this false shepherd; we will have good motives and valuable ideas the Lord will preserve in mercy. (*Ibid.* 4769) And we are not done yet.

Micaiah's fourth and final prophesy concludes our search for the internal sense. He describes Jehovah on His own throne seeking an agent to bring Ahab to his doom. Yes, Ahab. Only now does the story reveal the king of Israel, the shepherd, the part of us seeking the internal sense, to be the evil king Ahab. Two chapters before Elijah pronounced a doom upon Ahab for the murder of Naboth for his vineyard, and now Micaiah is telling Ahab openly: going to battle and dying is the Lord's plan. A spirit of lying, a "*ruach sheker*" has entered the 400 prophets encouraging Ahab to attack Syria. Picture Ahab sitting there as Micaiah accuses Zedekiah and the other prophets of being lied to by a spirit from Jehovah so that Ahab will be killed in battle.

Is this good news? Ahab, our king, our prudence, our sense that we are in charge, faces an impossible choice: back down in front of the people and call off the conquest because of Micaiah's prophesy, or proceed and risk prophesied death. This is the fourth and final step in seeking the internal sense. Having passed through justification, then confusion, and then awareness of our own falsities, we see in step four freedom, obedience, and resolve.

The Lord is showing us that we have a choice, we can choose to follow Him, and may not feel good. We admit that our prudence, our evil insistence that we are right, must perish. Hear the Lord's tender and loving message to us: "*Evil is your king. I desire your salvation, and yet I value your freedom like the apple of my eye. I will not violate your freedom by forcing you to see truth. Choose either to retreat into your own prudence and justification or go out and test your idea in your life of religion.*" (*Arcana Coelestia* 5215, 8289, cf. *Divine Providence* 97)

This is a state of intense freedom and self-compulsion. The appearance that Jehovah is using a spirit of lying to trick Ahab is a picture of the Lord's loving insistence that He won't violate our freedom. He tells us that we are following falsity, but we can always believe that falsity. We all fall into thinking that happiness and peace come from getting our way, from choosing our own

path and our own rules of happiness, and an enormous amount of human misery flows from these very ideas. Instead, the Lord asks us to seek humility and His will, unrelated to our own sensation or desire or perspective. Our false idea, if it is false, will disagree and conflict with the clear and genuine teachings of the Word that already sustain us.

Remember: the Lord wanted Ahab to go into combat. It isn't certain or easy – it is a battle – but our fourth step is to test the falsity we discover against the clear teachings of the Word we follow in obedience, accepting the judgment of the Lord, not our own. This is why Ahab marches to battle with “Jehoshaphat,” which means “*Jehovah judges.*”

Ahab responds by going into battle but disguising himself as a regular soldier in an attempt to foil the prophesy. We also are tempted to keep the false idea **and** obey the clear truths of the Word. We want to use our prudence to govern our day-to-day life but disguise our prudence as obedience to the Lord. How often do we disguise our pettiness with a few complimentary sentiments about the object of our envy? How many times do we cover the small and cowardly anger in our minds by an empty cheerful laugh or carefree expression? However, once we have identified and admitted to a falsity in our lives, we should see it rejected. The king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, “Jehovah judges” survives the battle.

What are we to make of this story of four prophesies on the eve of war? They are a picture of our mind as we seek the inner truths of the Word. We start with the false prophesy of justification, hearing what we want to hear. Then we hear the ever-turning truth, challenging us to admit to our confusion and ignorance. Then the Word shows us a falsity we must remove as shepherd. Finally, we are challenged to freely choose obedience to the truths we already see and live. If we follow Micaiah, we will be granted enlightenment, asking: “*Who is like Jehovah?*”

*Good and upright is Jehovah; therefore He instructs sinners in the way.
He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble His way.
(Psalms 25:8-9)*

Amen

THE REV. SCOTT I. FRAZIER is dean of the Bryn Athyn College Theological School and is Regional Pastor of Academy priests. He and his wife, Nicole (Hill), live with their family in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. Contact: Scott.Frazier@brynathyn.edu



Wrestling with Reading the Word

The Rev. Grant H. Odhner

I picked up a book recently that caught my eye: *The Badly Behaved Bible*, by Nick Page. He writes:

We're told that reading the Bible is a Life-giving and Good Thing which Every Proper Christian Should Do with Joy in Our Hearts. And yet, instead, significant chunks of it are overwhelmingly verbose, completely irrelevant, incomprehensible or so mind-numbingly dull that we begin to lose the will to live.

With humor he shows how the Bible is full of violence, unseemly behavior, contradictory (and sometimes chilling) pictures of God. It's full of mixed messages. This (he says) easily leads to "cognitive dissonance" for the person who thinks he ought to believe and find inspiration in the Bible.

Page goes on to argue that the Bible never claims to be "God-written" but "God-inspired." The text is imperfectly written and assembled by human beings over many ages. Yet God "breathes" into it in a miraculous way. He confronts us there, challenges us, finds us, and transforms us through it. Thus, we should not be preoccupied with the *form* of the Bible. We should not expect it to conform to our modern ideas of historical accuracy, or frustrate ourselves by seeing it as a rule book to be followed literally (where that is clearly impossible). Rather, we should focus on what happens in us as we engage with it.

In the New Church we agree that we ought to read the Word. It is through the Word that the Lord meets and transforms us. And, yes, it often appears crude, imperfect and at times contradictory. (*Cf. Doctrine of the New Jerusalem regarding the Sacred Scriptures 1, 3, 8,18,51*) But we believe that its ancient text was ordered from within by the Lord (without the conscious knowledge of its earthly writers) so that its symbolic narrative conveys timeless truths about our spiritual life. In fact, there is a continuous internal meaning running

through it! This makes it easier to accept the Word as something that can connect us with God.

But do *you* find the Word easy to read?

It takes patience, doesn't it, to discern God's presence and leading in its pages? None of us (not even ministers) easily jumps to the internal sense, and "reads" that sense in any full way. So, we are all faced with the challenge of finding meaning, relevance and edification in our reading. Most of the time we must read in a spirit of devotion, with humble expectations about what we will or won't find – with the conviction that God is nevertheless there.

So, I think we'd agree that our focus in reading the Word should not be too much on the *form* but on *what happens in us* as we engage with it, over time.

Now, I want to make the point that this is true of all Divine revelation. The Writings for the New Church are similar to previous revelations in that they are written by a human being who was guided from within by the Lord. They

were written in time and space, in a culture increasingly receding into the past. And if we judge them on the surface, from our popular sensibilities, we can be put off.

In their form the Writings often seem repetitive, verbose, clumsy, scientifically and historically inaccurate. The terminology can be mind-numbing: "the internal of the external," "discrete degrees," "the celestial of the spiritual from the natural."¹ Nevertheless, when we patiently engage with the Writings, the Lord meets us there and leads us in wonderful ways. They take us to places we would never go on our own, life-giving places. The Lord's Spirit breathes into them as He does

When we patiently engage with the Writings, the Lord meets us there and leads us in wonderful ways. They take us to places we would never go on our own, life-giving places. The Lord's Spirit breathes into them as He does into all revelation.

¹ With a nod to Bruce Henderson's Life Line, *Overwhelmed by the Writings?*, *New Church Life* November/December 2025, pp. 504-506.

into all revelation.

It helps to know that everything in the Lord's Word – Old Testament, New Testament, and Heavenly Doctrine – is really about loving God and loving our neighbor. On these two things “hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (*Matthew 22:40; True Christian Religion 287; Apocalypse Revealed 903*) When we approach the Word with this (and with other clear, leading truths) in mind, its meaning opens to us. These “genuine truths” that stand out plainly in the letter of the Word are the key! (*The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem regarding the Sacred Scripture 55*)

So, let us take seriously the imperative of reading the Word – the Old Testament, New Testament and the Writings. Let us read them with patience, not letting matters of form distract us from the way the text, with our reverent and open approach, can bring life-giving sustenance and spiritual transformation.



THE REV. GRANT H. ODHNER serves as National Pastor for the United Kingdom and Pastor of Michael Church in London, where he lives with his wife, Sarah (Bruell). Contact: pastor.grant.odhner@gmail.com

To The Next Generation of New Church Entrepreneurs

Curtis Childs

Let me tell you a true story: there's a group of people who die and wake up in the afterlife. Once they get their bearings and realize where they are, they all want to see what heaven is like.

They run into a group of angels and ask if they will take them into heaven. The angels ask in return: "What do you believe heaven is like?" People from the group offer up opinions: that heaven is rest from all labors, that it is feasting and decadence, continual worship, and so on.

The angels say: "OK, then, go try that for yourself." All the newcomers get to live the heaven they've been dreaming of, until very quickly they start to hate it. They get sick of socializing and food and leisure so much that they're desperate to leave these "heavens."

And so the angels say: "See? None of those things is really heaven." You know what it is? Heaven is work. Literally, having a job or function in society and doing it well forms the foundation of heavenly happiness. If you *don't* have that, anything else you do to try to fill your time will quickly grow stale and miserable.

OK, hang on a second, that seems a little too on the nose. Where did I get that from, some big-business propaganda campaign? Some hyper-capitalist manifesto? Nope, that's Emanuel Swedenborg. The story of the "false heavens," as it's often called, is recounted both in Swedenborg's *Married Love and True Christianity*. Here's the moral of the story right from the mouth of an angel:

The only source of anyone's true happiness is doing something useful through his or her work. (True Christianity 735)

Wow! Whatever is "the only source" of happiness has got to be pretty important. Did you know that is a core tenet of the church? So, if you consider yourself a participant in any way of the "New Church" or "Swedenborgianism," that maxim is a part of your creed. And given that it's repeated so many times and with such emphasis throughout the Writings, it's a major, worldview-defining part of it. Work is heaven.

That's an elevation of the role of work far above the place it holds in any form of Christianity, or any religion or spiritual school of thought anywhere on the globe. To you, more than to almost anyone else on the planet, your work is an expression of your religious identity. You are living downtown: "work is

how we live the spiritual life.”

The New Church could even be called the “work church.” Working is how you unlock happiness and unite with the Lord.

So, what better way to live your religion than to be useful starting a business? On top of that, a business you start will also employ people who will be useful and able to experience their own heavenly happiness working at the company you start. So, as you’re setting off to build a business, you’re trying to build a heaven. And with the unique revelation of the Heavenly Doctrines, you can actually peer into heaven and see how they do things in communities there for inspiration.

That might seem intimidating, but luckily there are contemporary examples of how to do that, and I want to share one with you.

SnapCab, a manufacturer of elevator paneling systems and office pods in Warrington, Pennsylvania, and Kingston, Ontario, Canada, has a company motto: “Be Kind, Be Authentic, Be Useful.”

Something sound familiar about that? That’s right! It’s an iteration of nothing less than the grand triune of existence: love, wisdom and use. And that’s not a coincidence. Snapcab’s founder and CEO, **Glenn Bostock**, is deeply devoted to principles from the Writings and credits them with not only having a transformative effect on his own life, but on the success of his business as well.

He has built a framework based on the heavenly doctrines that is practical, effective and groundbreaking in the modern business climate. The five maxims that SnapCab runs on are:

1. Create a Foundation of Caring
2. Understand Your Ruling Love
3. Focus on Being Useful
4. Embrace Problems and Weaknesses
5. Model Your Business After the Human Form

All of these are drawn right from the Writings, and all are being used today to shape the culture and practices of a company with more 140 employees. Here’s how they implement these principles:

What better way to live your religion than to be useful starting a business?

Creating a Foundation of Caring

Guess what? “Love one another” makes for good business. Rather than being an afterthought, mentioned on a few bulletin boards around the office or in

obligatory HR statements on the punch list at the end of team meetings, SnapCab actively makes creating a kind environment core to its day-to-day operations. And it's not just about feeling good; it's about productivity and cohesion.

"All it takes is one person antagonizing you in an environment for you to shut down and offer less than you would," says Glenn.

And if we think of heaven as the ultimate series of communities/companies, there's one constant in the heavenly experience: love.

The mutual love of heaven consists in loving one's neighbor more than oneself. . . . The result is that the happiness of everyone in general is communicated to each individual in particular; and the happiness of each individual is communicated to everyone. . . . People who reciprocate the love of others find their supreme happiness in the opportunity to share with others what they themselves receive, and to do so from the heart. (Secrets of Heaven 2057)

To create an earthly version of this atmosphere in their offices and factories, SnapCab has a raft of policies and initiatives that make kindness permeate the workplace.

Understand Your Ruling Love

In *Heaven and Hell* 543 we read: "In general all in the hells are ruled by means of their fears." When Glenn came across that teaching decades ago, an uncomfortable realization hit him. He thought: "My businesses operate like hell does." By default, if not necessarily by design, he realized that he was heading a group of people who were mainly doing what they were doing because they were afraid – afraid to lose their job and income, or afraid of being berated or ridiculed. That didn't sit right. It stood in contrast with how the Lord wants us to be led: by what we love.

When we have been delivered – reborn – the Lord leads us so gently by means of angels that it is anything but a yoke, anything but domination. Through pleasure and happiness we are led and loved and esteemed. This is what the Lord teaches: "My yoke is mild and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:30; Secrets of Heaven 905)

If it's what people love that really motivates them, why not get people in the company working on what they love? SnapCab has a policy to hire for cultural fit first, then train for skills. People's "will" needs to be aligned with the company values and mission, and then the intellectual knowledge is not hard to fill in.

Focus on Being Useful

God created the universe so that usefulness could exist. (True Christianity 67)

This means being useful to the customer. For some employees the “customer” is another employee who needs whatever that employee is working on to do his or her own job. It also means having your love for usefulness on top. As Swedenborg explains, if we are to operate in Divine order, we must have our love for ourselves and love for the world both in service to our love of usefulness. In a company, that means thinking about our impact primarily, and our financial gain and personal status only as a means to achieve that impact.

Embrace Problems and Weaknesses

Many workplaces penalize mistakes, creating a culture where people don't want to report when something goes wrong. But at SnapCab, problems, or “turnbacks,” are celebrated; after all, if you found a problem, that means you can fix it!

This mirrors the attitude we are meant to have toward ourselves when embarking on repentance, regeneration and reformation. It's guaranteed that we will have evils to find and work with the Lord to rid ourselves of them:

Active repentance is examining ourselves, recognizing and admitting our sins, praying to the Lord, and beginning a new life. (True Christianity 528)

Finding some issue in yourself that you need to work on doesn't mean that something is wrong with you; it means that you're normal. According to Swedenborg, spiritual growth is about uncovering our hereditary and actual evils, not trying to act like they don't exist or penalizing ourselves when we find them. It's a purpose-filled, optimistic process that believes that the Lord can remake us into spiritual people. The same attitude can prevail in a business that is focused less on penalizing those who make mistakes, and more in using mistakes as a way to identify places where problems in the way things are done can be solved.

Model Your Business After the Human Form

It is a secret not yet known in this world that heaven, taken in a single all-inclusive grasp, reflects a single individual. In heaven, though, nothing is better known. . . . Since angels do know that all the heavens,

like their communities, reflect a single individual, they refer to heaven as the universal and divine human. (Heaven and Hell 59)

There's no better model for cooperation, communication and completing complex tasks than the human body. SnapCab has taken this idea and mapped its departments onto the human form. Manufacturing is like the hands. The Leadership Team is like the brain. Marketing and sales is the mouth. Understanding the different parts of the company in light of the human form model gives invaluable insight into how the different departments should relate to and communicate with one another. It's just like the arrangement between the communities in heaven:

In fact, each community plays a unique role. . . . Everyone there does something specifically useful, for the Lord's kingdom is a kingdom of uses. (Heaven and Hell 387)

Conclusion

So, it is totally appropriate and in line with the Revelation to take your New Church identity with you into business. It absolutely belongs there, and it can absolutely make your business better.

Do you want to explore these ideas in-depth? Consider joining a Human Business networking group. Visit www.glennbostock.com to connect and receive a free chapter of Glenn's book, *A Human Business*, being published by Forbes Books on June 16, 2026.



CURTIS CHILDS is a graduate of the Academy Boys School and Oakland University, with a degree in Communication Studies. He is the Director of *offTheLeftEye* YouTube videos for the Swedenborg Foundation. He lives in Bryn Athyn with his wife, Brooke (Herder) and their family. Contact: curtislchilds@gmail.com



FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

The Church's End in View

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

Our end in view. The Lord in His Word consistently draws our attention to our end in view. What are we striving to accomplish in what we say and do? Is it a noble end, or is it marred by self-interest? We read a striking passage that says: “Where a person’s end in view lies, there lies what is of first importance to him.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6936) It continues: “The end in view should not be self but others”

Continuing this thread, we learn: “The Lord regards nothing else in people but the end they have in view.” (*Ibid.* 1317) The fact is, what we aim to accomplish by means of what we do determines the efficacy of that action, and the totality of our ends or purposes or intentions determines our ultimate character. “The end which motivates a person’s actions makes that person.” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 99)

The church’s end in view. What about the church? Does it have an end in view that determines its character? Is it useful to consider the end in view of the church? How would we discover what it is, and could we change it if we wanted to?

In a recent publication on a shared direction for the General Church, we communicate an intent to do just that – focus attention on why the church exists. We read: “Faith calls us to action. . . . As each of us responds in our own lives, we might receive strength from our companionship that the Lord intended when He gave us a church community. The Church is here to inspire, equip and support people in listening and responding.” (See www.newchurch.org/sendme, “View the pamphlet”).

Do you resonate with this description of the church's end in view – to sponsor action, or to, as our mission statement says: “Help people *live a heavenly life* through the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ in His Second Coming”? Does this emphasis align with your understanding of why the Lord Himself established the Church? Does it matter?

We read in the Heavenly Doctrines many things that appear to answer in the affirmative: “*The end in view determines the true character of . . . the Church.*” (Arcana Coelestia 809) Also: “*All things of the Church [should] look toward charity as their ultimate goal and end in view.*” (Arcana Coelestia 1249)

Charity carries a dual meaning of the energy or love to serve, and the output of that energy in life. Therefore, we also read: “*Charity [is] the essential thing of the Church . . . when everyone regards life as the end in view of doctrine.*” (Arcana Coelestia 3241:4; cf. n. 3310) I love how that passage completes the thought by saying: “. . . *that is, when everyone asks, ‘How does a member of the Church live?’ rather than, ‘What does that member think?’*”

Cleansing of the Temple. The Lord during His life on earth dramatically demonstrated the intended focus of the church by a pivotal event recorded in all four of the Gospels. He rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, not to restore the kingdom to the Israelite nation, but to restore His church to its proper purpose. We recall His famous words as He stridently cast out the money changers: “*My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves*” (Matthew 21:13)

Powerful as that cleansing was, it is only half the picture. Equally instructive is what happened immediately after: “*Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.*” (vs. 14) Symbolically the blind are those who do not know what to believe, and the lame are those who wish to be good but are unable as yet to live as the Lord would wish. Their healing stands for the ability the Lord can give through His church to restore to people their ability to understand His will for their lives and to walk the paths that lead to heaven. (See *Apocalypse Explained* 455:20, *Arcana Coelestia* 7737)

With this in mind it is easy to absorb a prophecy of the Lord's coming into the world, recorded in (*Isaiah* 35:5-6):

*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
Then the lame shall leap like a deer.*

Note the parallel mention of the blind and the lame. Of that middle category, the deaf, we read: “*This means those who through the Lord's coming were to come into a state in which they accepted the truths of faith, that is,*

discerned them and obeyed them." (*Arcana Coelestia* 6989) I like to think of that in terms of listening for the Lord's voice and responding.

Taken as a three-part prophecy, we get a full picture of the "end in view" of the church, or what it is here to do for people: helping them to see the Lord's will for their lives (healing blindness), encouraging a willingness to obey (healing deafness), and inspiring a life in accordance with these two (healing lameness). This is the restoration of the Temple to "a house of prayer," and the healing of the blind and the lame, from the Lord's actions on Palm Sunday. It is the same as "the essentials of the church," recorded as follows:

There are three essentials of the Church: an acknowledgment of the Divinity of the Lord [a house of prayer], an acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word [healing blindness], and the life that is called charity [healing lameness]. (*Divine Providence* 259:3)

Within all three is the end in view of a living faith, or people putting their faith into practice. The church is here to inspire, equip and support people in *living* the life that leads to heaven.

Why do you go to church? Consider, then, the question on an individual level: "Why do you go to church?" There are many valid answers, including: "To worship the Lord" or "to fulfill a spiritual duty ingrained in me since childhood" or "to feel renewed in my faith" or "to gain a spiritual perspective that I can carry forward into my week." Thematic for today would be an answer along the lines of: "to be energized to put my faith into practice" or "to be re-inspired for a life of useful service" or "to commit again to the goal of responding to the Lord in my daily choices."

This point of emphasis, of the church's intended end in view, is borne out in many passages in the Word, which might inform our answer to the question: why go to church? Here are a few of them:

- *"What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"* (*Micah* 6:8)
- *"The Church is not the Church by virtue of matters of doctrine except insofar as these have the good of life as the end in view."* (*Arcana Coelestia* 3310)
- *"If charity occupied the first place and faith the second the whole appearance of the Church would be different, for in that case no others would be called Christians but those who led a life in keeping with the truth of faith, which is a charitable life."* (*Arcana Coelestia* 6269)

- *“The church is formed in a person by a life according to its teachings” (Apocalypse Explained 730:37, cf. n. 105, 799)*
- *“Worship itself consists in a life according to the precepts of the church from the Word.” (Heavenly Doctrine 129)*
- *“Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28)*

Can we not conclude that the Lord established His church for the purpose of inspiring people to live as He commands? There is worship, there is learning, we usefully engage in rituals and fellowship, in social gatherings and special events. All of it is for the purpose of inspiring a way of believing and living.

Why does it matter? In this we could come to a final consideration, namely the impact of this “end in view” of the church. For each of us personally, a church with this intentional focus can be a catalyst for cooperating with the Lord in our process of regeneration, for hearing His call to show up for those who are counting on us, and for living a life of useful service. But there is more.

It matters that all of us, or a majority of us, are on the same page as to why the church exists, for then we contribute to and draw on the energy of others. Our simple presence within the church amongst others can be a source of collective energy to do the Lord’s will. We gain from each other the intention and support to put our faith into action.

The Lord came on earth – twice – to reestablish His church. Through His life and teaching in the world, and in particular through His cleansing of the Temple, He demonstrated its intended end in view. It is to be a house of prayer, where blindness and lameness can be healed. In His Second Coming He has taught:

There are three essentials of the Church: an acknowledgment of the Divinity of the Lord, an acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word, and the life that is called charity. (Divine Providence 259:3)

Despite our shades of difference as to doctrinal understanding, the call is to form together a church characterized by Word-informed actions. This

It matters that all of us, or a majority of us, are on the same page as to why the church exists, for then we contribute to and draw on the energy of others.

THE CHURCH'S END IN VIEW

happens “*when everyone acknowledges charity to be the essential thing of the Church, or what amounts to the same, when everyone regards life as the end in view of doctrine – that is, when everyone asks: How does a member of the Church live?*” (Arcana Coelestia 3241)

Contact: Peter.BussJr@newchurch.org

Academy of the New Church Board of Trustees

A Shared Strategic Direction for the Academy

We are pleased to share an important milestone in the life of the Academy of the New Church. Over the past months, committee work that included Academy leadership, Board, and the faculty and staff of our organization have completed coordinated five-year strategies for our four institutional units: the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools, Bryn Athyn College, Glencairn Museum and Cairnwood Estate. These strategies are distinct – honoring the unique missions entrusted to each institution—and at the same time deliberately aligned under a shared Academy direction.

This work reflects a clear conviction and faithfulness to our values. Each plan reflects clarity of purpose, disciplined stewardship, and Academy-wide collaboration that are essential if the Academy is to remain a vital center of New Church education for generations to come. Strategy, for us, is not an abstract exercise or a document for the shelf. It is a commitment to make principled choices, to steward people and resources wisely, and to ensure that the Academy continues “to promote, share, and deepen understanding of the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church – and to encourage a life according to those doctrines” (excerpt from The Academy of the New Church Mission Statement).

Within this five-year horizon, the Board has affirmed a simple but demanding vision: that the Academy be demonstrably healthy and sustainable – capable, from a leadership, talent and resources standpoint, of delivering on its core mission. The four institutional strategies we now celebrate are the concrete expression of that commitment.

At the Academy level, these strategies are unified by three shared commitments.

1. **Health and sustainability.** Across the Academy, we are strengthening long-term financial footing – including responsible treatment of depreciation – training and attracting excellent faculty and staff,

refining governance, and aligning operations so that our institutions can thrive within real financial and organizational constraints.

2. **Content.** The Academy is intentionally investing in a New Church form of education, available to all who seek it. Across teaching, research, publication, cultural programming and priestly formation, we are deepening our focus on our New Church distinctive essence with intellectual seriousness, credibility and generosity of spirit. The Academy will continue to serve as a robust center of thought, learning and scholarship rooted in the Heavenly Doctrines as understood by the General Church of the New Jerusalem.
3. **Partnership.** The Academy is strengthening collaboration within its own institutions and with the General Church of the New Jerusalem. We are building clearer pathways across levels of education, encouraging matriculation through the schools and into the College and Theological School, and fostering mutually beneficial relationships with other New Church institutions worldwide. Within this shared direction, each institution's strategy contributes in its own essential way.

Bryn Athyn College of the New Church and the Theological School have articulated a clear and compelling academic vision grounded in the conviction that “*Choices Matter.*” Through a newly defined Ethical Foundations framework, the College will continue to form students not only intellectually, but morally and spiritually, preparing them for lives of use through rigorous liberal arts education, visible career and graduate pathways, and a community shaped by New Church teachings. The strategy emphasizes clarity of curriculum, strengthened outcomes and disciplined stewardship – meeting financial realities directly while preserving the personally engaged educational community that defines the College.

The Theological School's strategy continues its essential mission of preparing priests for the General Church, while strengthening formation through curriculum review, clearer sequencing, expanded hybrid access and regular feedback from the field. Together, the College and Theological School are advancing as a coherent whole – aligned in mission, accountable in execution, and attentive to the needs of both students and the Church.

The Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools strategy reaffirms nearly 150 years of preparing students for principled and useful lives in this world and to eternity. With gratitude for incredible generosity in terms of financial support, the schools are focused on attracting and retaining students

who value our principled approach to learning, support for faculty and curriculum, modernizing infrastructure, and ensuring long-term financial sustainability. The plan emphasizes excellence in teaching, meaningful student outcomes, balanced growth, and deeper engagement with alumni, parents and Academy partners.

Glencairn Museum has articulated a strategy that embraces its distinctive role as a historic New Church home, the Academy's museum of religious art and artifacts, and a National Historic Landmark. Over the next five years, the Museum will deepen its integration within Academy curricula through object-based learning, expand and deepen public engagement with Glencairn and the collection as expressions of religious belief and practice, including those of the New Church, and strengthen its long-term financial sustainability so that preservation and interpretation advance together. This strategy builds on Glencairn's remarkable heritage while positioning it as a notable place for reflection, dialogue and learning through art.

Cairnwood Estate continues to serve as both a treasured historic asset and a welcoming point of engagement for the wider community. It has set a clear course to become a fully restored and financially self-sustaining National Historic Landmark, recognized as a premier cultural and hospitality destination. The strategy emphasizes careful preservation, enriched storytelling and educational programming, expanded partnerships across the Academy and Historic District, and disciplined financial growth sufficient to fund long-term depreciation and stewardship.

Taken together, these strategies reflect an Academy that is choosing coherence over fragmentation and stewardship over drift. They express confidence in what is distinctive about New Church education, seriousness about organizational and financial health, and renewed commitment to partnership – within the Academy and with the General Church. The result is that students, families, scholars and visitors will encounter a living, integrated mission.

We are deeply grateful to the leaders, faculty, staff, volunteers, alumni, donors and friends whose dedication and support make this work possible. In the months ahead, we will share more as these strategies move from planning to execution, with clear priorities, accountability

These strategies reflect an Academy that is choosing coherence over fragmentation and stewardship over drift. They express confidence in what is distinctive about New Church education.

and measurable progress.

We invite you to continue walking with us – by staying engaged, sharing these stories, and investing in the people and institutions that carry forward the Academy’s mission with faith, discipline and hope.

With appreciation and confidence.

**The Board of Trustees
Academy of the New Church**

Andrew Alden

Shaun N. Buss, Vice Chair

David Cooper

Edmond de Chazal

Meghan Fraser

Owen Frazier

David Fuller

Emily Hasen

Blake Hill

Laura Hill

Lee Horigan

Brian A. Klippenstein

William Kunkle

Charles Lindsay

David Radcliffe

Ken Schauder

Esther Yardumian-Smyth

Ex officio

Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. – Chancellor

Jim Adams – Managing Director ANCSS

Sean Connelly – President, BA College

Brian Henderson – Director, Glencairn Museum

Duane Hyatt – ANC Treasurer

Elizabeth Rogers – Secretary and General Counsel

Appointed Advisors

Rt. Rev Bradley Heinrichs – Priest Advisor

Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth – Priest Advisor

Life Lines

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

THE GIFT OF DAN GOODENOUGH



Ruth and Dan, early 1990s

In his Memorial Address for the Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough (page 171), the Rev. Derek Elphick notes that Dan was introduced to the New Church as a teenager in Michigan by a new friend who lived in Bryn Athyn. Dan was a religious young man, raised in a devout Episcopalian family. This chance encounter with Swedenborg grew to be a turning point in his life, as he became a New Church minister and one of the great leaders of the Academy of the New Church. Such is the Lord's Providence.

The Memorial Address, and the following tribute by Chancellor Peter M. Buss Jr., provide rich insight into this much-loved man. I had the privilege of working with Dan through much of his presidency of the Academy in the 1990s, so a few more observations:

Dan was one of the last to lead all four schools of the Academy – the Girls and Boys Schools, Bryn Athyn College and the Theological School – before the administrations of the Secondary Schools and College were separated. He was responsible for everything and ducked nothing. He sometimes lamented – with his trademark grin – that he spent more time dealing with Academy sewers than he did on spiritual leadership. But he was an exceptional spiritual leader. One example: he made time to meet with newly hired teachers to read Bishop Willard Pendleton's iconic book, *Education for Use*, and to discuss its applications for distinctive New Church education.

He forged relationships with all of the schools and kept the leaders working together. He and his wife Ruth graciously hosted board members and spouses in their home after meetings. He was always visible – all over the campuses, at

sporting and social events, proudly showing the flag of the Academy. And you could always see him darting across campus on a basic, no-frills bicycle.

Not everyone knew that bike had belonged to their son, Danny, who died in a tragic accident on a back-packing trip out West – led by his Dad – while a student in the Boys School. Dan and Ruth dealt with this devastating loss with inspiring grace – and that bike kept up the connection until Dan’s own passing, when we all rejoice at his reunion with Danny and Ruth.

Dan leaves rich memories with all who worked with him, studied under him, and benefited from his wisdom. His legacies are boundless. Along with many sermons and articles are two most notable contributions:

- A paper written in 2006 as a warning against the creeping secularization that has weakened many religious institutions – and remains a relevant threat to the Academy: *Governance to Put a Light on a Lampstand*. I hope it still guides the leadership of the Academy.
- And a book written in 1986 on one of his favorite subjects: *Providence and Free Will in Human Actions* – a practical guide to life and its most vexing questions.

During the memorial service we sang *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* and you could just see Dan, leading the procession on Charter Day or a back-packing trip in his beloved Wyoming – the zealous epitome of “*His truth is marching on.*” Whether he was leading in the boardroom or the mountains he was comfortable, confident, kind and focused – always his own man.

The last hymn in the service also perfectly matched his calling and his mission: “Here I am, Lord.” He personified the current vision of the General Church – to accept the call of the Lord’s Church on earth: “*Here I am, Lord. Send me.*” And because of Dan’s leadership – his faith, his character, his devotion to the cause – we enthusiastically and gratefully followed.

Rev. Elphick closed his Memorial Address with the Lord’s question to His disciples: “*Do you love Me?*” When Peter says, “Yes,” He tells them simply: “*Feed My sheep.*” Dan Goodenough’s whole life was feeding His sheep – a guiding principle he carries with him.

So, thank you, Dan, for the example you set with your faith and character, for your resolute cheerfulness and sure leadership, and for the inspiration of your absolute trust in the Lord and His providence.

And thank you, Lord, for this good man – the gift of Your providence.

(BMH)

ONE NATION, UNDER GOD

Calvin Coolidge, the 30th President of the United States, was known as “Silent Cal” because he was a man of few words – anything but a verbose politician. He chose his words carefully, often with great wisdom and power, and people listened.

As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of America, it is worth recalling what Coolidge said 100 years ago on the 150th anniversary because of how much he appreciated the religious roots of the nation and felt we must forever be growing from them.

In the company of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, Teddy and Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy and Ronald Reagan, this is considered one of the great presidential addresses of all time, and it is worth revisiting.

Coolidge spoke on July 4, 1926, in Philadelphia – which he called “a holy shrine” – in grateful acknowledgment for what a few inspired men then rendered to humanity, “that is still the preeminent support of free government throughout the world.”

A few excerpts from this heartfelt tribute to the religious foundation of this nation:

“Amid all the clash of conflicting interests, amid all the welter of partisan politics, every American can turn for solace and consolation to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States with the assurance and confidence that those two great charters of freedom and justice remain firm and unbroken.”

“It is little wonder that people at home and abroad consider Independence Hall as hallowed ground and revere the Liberty Bell as a sacred relic . . . They have long been identified with a great cause. They are the framework of a spiritual event. The world looks upon them because of their associations of 150 years ago, as it looks upon the Holy Land because of what took place there 1,900 years ago. Through use for a righteous purpose they have become sanctified.”

“The American Revolution represented the informed and mature convictions of a great mass of independent, liberty-loving, God-fearing people who knew their rights, and possessed the courage to dare to maintain them.”

“It was not because it was proposed to establish a new nation but because it was proposed to establish a nation on new principles, that July 4, 1776, had come to be regarded as one of the greatest days in history. Great ideas do not burst upon the world unannounced. This is especially true of the principles laid down in the Declaration of Independence. Three very definite propositions were set out in its Preamble regarding the nature of mankind and therefore of government. These were the doctrine that all men are created equal, that they

are endowed with certain inalienable rights, and that therefore the just powers of government must be delivered from the consent of the governed.”

“We should search these charters in vain for an assertion of the doctrine of equality. The principle had not before appeared as an official political declaration of any nation. It was profoundly revolutionary. It is one of the cornerstones of American institutions.”

“When we take all these circumstances into consideration, it is but natural that the first paragraph of the Declaration of Independence should open with a reference to Nature’s God and should close in the final paragraphs with an appeal to the Supreme Judge of the world and an assertion of a firm reliance on Divine Providence coming from these sources. It is no wonder that Samuel Adams could say, ‘The people seem to recognize this resolution as though it were a decree promulgated from heaven.’”

“These great truths were in the air that our people breathed. Whatever else we may say of it, the Declaration of Independence was profoundly American.”

“If all men are created equal, that is final. If they are endowed with inalienable rights, that is final. If governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, that is final. No advance, no progress can be made beyond these propositions.”

Finally, of the Founders, he said: “They were a people who came under the influence of a great spiritual development and acquired a great moral power. No other theory is adequate to explain or comprehend the Declaration of Independence. It is the product of the spiritual insight of the people.

“We live in an age of science and abounding accumulation of material things. These did not create our Declaration. Our Declaration created them. The things of the spirit come first. Unless we cling to that, all our material prosperity, overwhelming though it may appear, will turn to a barren scepter in our grasp.

If we are to maintain the great heritage which has been bequeathed to us, we must be like-minded as the fathers who created it. We must not sink into pagan materialism. We must cultivate the reverence which they had for the things that are holy. We must follow the spiritual and moral leadership which they showed. We must keep replenished, that they may glow with a more compelling flame, the altar fires before which they worshipped.”

(BMH)

THE NEW CHURCH IN UKRAINE

Our readers may or may not be aware that there are several groups of readers of the Heavenly Doctrine in Ukraine, including groups of the Lord’s New Church

in Lviv and Kharkiv led by the Rev. Alexander Vasiliev and Rev. Dimitriy Rogovoy, and others who are in contact with the General Church, especially Swedenborg Society in Dnipro and in Yalta.

Their work of translating the Writings is supported by CUCIS – the Committee for Uses to the Commonwealth of Independent States (former Soviet Union countries) – a fund established by Duncan Smith a number of years ago. The Rev. G ran Appelgren has made several visits to Ukraine, the last being in 2009, and is in frequent contact with them.

Kharkiv and Dnipro are cities that have been on the front lines of the war with Russia and our contacts there write about how challenging their lives have been. A letter from Svetlana Manayenkova, who is a member of Swedenborg Society in Dnipro and is translating the Writings, said this at the end of November:

“Our war has been going on for four years now. We are shelled and bombed on average every day or two, sometimes every day. Mostly, and often, at night. The nine-story building where I live shakes each time from the explosions. There is often no water and no light. We have light and electricity for three hours, and then it is turned off for seven to eight hours. Since heating depends on the boilers, and the boilers rely on electricity, our heat is also turned on for three hours, and then it is turned off again. How can the room warm up in three hours if it is then without heat for seven to eight hours? That is why it is 15 degrees Celsius in my apartment.

You asked how we are coping with all this. In all this dark time of our life, we pray to the Lord and trust in His protection to help us. This is all that we live for. Everyone seeks connection with God in their own way.

For example, I continue to translate Arcana Coelestia as much time as it is possible, and I also do the editing of the translations of Rustam from Crimea. Elena checks our translation finally, which is also very valuable.

The Society decided to distribute the quarterly donations, which we receive through the General Church from the CUCIS Foundation, in that way the translation work is paid, even if it is in a minimal and purely symbolic account.

The translations provide spiritual nourishment for every one of our Society. And we, as translators, are very grateful to the Lord for the inspiration, guidance, and wisdom to fulfill this service.

Furthermore, some members of our community also work on voice-over. Since there is generally no light, it is very inconvenient to read with a flashlight, but it is very convenient to listen to the voice-overs of the chapters of Arcana Coelestia. Preparing the texts for voice-over and the voice-over itself, of course, takes time, effort and money, but it is very much in demand, so we work in this area as much as possible.

Whenever we can meet together we are very happy to discuss inner spiritual matters – this gives us inner strength and helps us overcome the temptations we face, and the Lord helps us through them.

We understand that this is a very difficult time – a time of temptations and trials that purify us and lead us to the Lord. Therefore, we learn humility, meekness and submission to the Lord’s will, and we hope for His help and protection during temptations.

The Lord protects us, teaches us to endure difficulties and trust Him! And we believe that He will protect us!”

As of April 2026, Dnipro remains a heavily targeted strategic hub, experiencing intense, frequent Russian missile and drone strikes targeting infrastructure and residential areas. Hopefully by the time that you are reading this the situation will be better.

Our prayers are certainly with our friends in Ukraine, and of course there are many ways to send financial help there. The CUCIS fund mentioned above is one way that we can do this through the General Church. Contributions should be designated “Translations for Ukraine.”

(JFS)

SECRET OF SECRETS

Reading Dan Brown’s popular thrillers – *The Da Vinci Code*, *Angels and Demons*, *Inferno* – I have often thought he must have read Swedenborg – or needs to. *The Lost Symbol*, particularly, is a page-turning search for the Ancient Word and the hidden, internal meaning of the Bible that was known to the ancients. Some New Church people have joined that search.

Brown’s latest book, *Secret of Secrets*, tells of a CIA plot set in Prague, about a breakthrough in consciousness that could change the world – and also threaten it. Much of the story dwells on life after death: is there really such a thing, what might it be like, and how could such belief affect the way we live?

Robert Langdon, the Harvard professor of symbology and protagonist of all Brown’s books, confesses that he is a materialist. Brown writes: “The notion

of the afterlife was a comforting story, a coping mechanism” and near-death experiences to him were just hallucinations.

His partner, a brilliant woman in the field of consciousness, tells him: “The true nature of death is the secret we all yearn to understand – across every culture, every generation, and every era. Unlike most of life’s unknowable mysteries, however, this was a secret that was guaranteed to be unveiled to every one of us – yet only at the end.”

Langdon finds hope in the ancient teachings of Asclepius:

Far too many fear death and regard it as the worst disaster that can befall them: they know nothing of what they speak. Death comes as a dissolution from an exhausted body. Just as the body leaves the mother’s womb when it is mature in it, so also does the soul leave the body when it has come to perfection.

Langdon is reassured by the universality of the promise of life after death – “the lone, unswerving assurance offered by every single religious tradition that has survived the test of time.”

His partner assures him: “I believe our views on death are about to change” – because of both science and faith, and that “the human mind will function under an entirely different premise: the belief that death is not something terrifying after all. Just think about that: the one universal fear that drives so much of humankind’s destructive behavior would evaporate” and “then our species may well turn a philosophical corner that ushers in an unimaginably peaceful future.”

Well, Dan Brown is on to something, and I was both pleased and surprised to find among his many Acknowledgments his appreciation for “the indomitable Emanuel Swedenborg.”

Secrets of Secrets is the perfect title. But Brown may just be discovering what the Lord has revealed to all of us. And it isn’t a secret. As his protagonist Robert Langdon comes to proclaim: “We should be shouting this from the rooftops.” Indeed.

(BMH)

AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Like Dan Brown, many writers and artists have been influenced by Swedenborg. The Swedenborg Foundation lists some of them on its website, including William Blake, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Butler Yeats, George Inness, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Robert Frost and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Another name that might be added is American novelist John Steinbeck, with religious themes coursing through many of his books. The opening

chapter of his classic *Grapes of Wrath*, for example, seems an analogy of the Children of Israel wandering – and searching – in the wilderness.

One of the characters in *East of Eden* says she could not even conceive of a heaven where angels are not being useful. And in *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*, Steinbeck lists Swedenborg in his Index, and adds some personal ruminations.

Many other writers may know nothing of Swedenborg and his revelation but have keen perceptions about the nature of God, His providence and His leading. Among them is popular Irish novelist Niall Williams. I quoted from his lilting story, *This is Happiness*, last year, which captures the beauty of heavenly happiness in pure and simple lives.

Another magical book with an intriguing title – *As It Is In Heaven* – opens with:

There are only three great puzzles in the world: the puzzle of love, the puzzle of death, and, between each of these, the puzzle of God.

This is the story of a simple Irish teacher, in love with a brilliant and complex Italian violinist, who comes to appreciate the puzzles and the wisdom he finds in his humble life. Through 310 pages this improbable couple work through the puzzles of life and come to this conclusion:

As the music rose, within him and around him, he saw that the world fit together, each piece in its proper place, like the pieces on a chessboard, and that though the patterns that emerged were complex and difficult and grew more so all the time, there was a design nonetheless, for though we live in the impotency of our dreams to make better the world, the earth and its stars spin through the heavens at the rate of our loving and is made meaningful only in the way in which we give ourselves to each other.

Within all of this are intimations of conjugal love, the purpose of life, and the promise of heaven.

In a Q and A at the end of the book, Williams says he took the title from the Lord's Prayer for several reasons:

(The father) Philip's dream of his wife in heaven and on earth as a spirit within him, the link between heaven and earth in (the son) Stephen's life, the heavenliness of the music of Vivaldi, etc. Most important – perhaps because it answers the puzzle of God in the opening line, sometimes a kind of loving can exist that is only imagined by those who have felt lost and abandoned and have closed down their dream, and who, when it arrives, feel in that loving a reunion not only with the flesh but with the spirit too. Life on earth can sometimes be as it is in heaven. Time does not necessarily diminish us; it simply changes our form.

Another magical book by Williams – *History of the Rain* – also has an intriguing beginning:

The longer my father lived in this world the more he knew there was another to come. It was not that he thought this world beyond saving, but rather that he imagined there must be a finer one where God corrected his mistakes and men and women lived in a second draft of Creation and did not know despair.

Niall Williams, like Dan Brown, like John Steinbeck, like so many others, may not be blessed as we are with revelation about God and heaven, but they perceive it and feel it. And while we may be discouraged that our “Church Specific” is not growing fast enough, the “Church Universal” is growing all around us. And we can be sure the Lord is smiling.

(BMH)

WHAT WILL BE ‘THE TIPPING POINT’ FOR THE CHURCH?

Twenty-five years ago Malcolm Gladwell wrote a surprise best-seller – *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Make a Big Difference*. It was a fascinating study of how “social epidemics” sometimes reach “tipping points” that explode into public consciousness.

One example was the children’s TV show, *Sesame Street*, which shot from humble beginnings to whole families suddenly riveted on Kermit the Frog, Oscar the Grouch, Bert and Ernie, and Miss Piggy. Another was the “broken windows” theory – that if you immediately replace broken windows instead of letting them signal that no one cares, police could turn around a crime wave stalking New York City.

On this 25th anniversary Gladwell has produced a sequel, *Revenge of the Tipping Point*, in which he confesses that the original proved his thesis, rising from a quiet, unheralded publication into an overnight sensation. He reflects in this sequel:

The Tipping Point is the biography of an idea, and the idea is very simple. It is that the best way to understand the emergence of fashion trends, the ebb and flow of crime waves, or, for that matter, the transformation of unknown books into best-sellers, or the rise of teenage smoking, or the phenomena of word of mouth, or any number of mysterious changes that mark everyday life, is to think of them as epidemics. Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do.

And the book proved the thesis – that change comes “at first gradually,

then all in a rush.”

So, when might that “tipping point” come for our church – destined to be “the crown of all churches” – firm in its foundation and commitment, but still struggling to make an impact in the world?

We have always tried to spread the church – from passing out Epsilon Society brochures to hosting services for visitors, now producing sophisticated videos, and always with the hope of New Church education, but still await the breakthrough. Maybe the seeds are being sown with *offTheLeftEye* YouTube videos and the New Christian Bible website, both attracting viewers and inquiries all over the world. Or maybe the New Age of Artificial Intelligence – at once fearsome and fascinating – will flip that magic switch.

It may not happen in our lifetimes. Or maybe it is happening already – “at first gradually, then all in a rush.” Just keep leaning into it: there’s a “Tipping Point” out there somewhere.

(BMH)

WRESTLING WITH THE MEANING OF LIFE

Fans watching the National Collegiate Wrestling Tournament in March probably did not expect what happened on the mats to be eclipsed by a spiritual message. But that’s what they got from Penn State champion Mitchell Mesenbrink.

He had just dominated his opponent to win the championship in his weight class. He would be named the tournament’s Outstanding Wrestler and later be awarded the Hodge Trophy as the best college wrestler in the nation. Still smothered in sweat and the exhilaration of victory, suddenly a microphone was in his face, and he was asked to describe what it all felt like.

We know the drill: praise your coach, your teammates, your family who has stuck with you through all the years of pain and sacrifice. It’s not unusual for some to “give all glory to God.” But Mesenbrink took it to another level.

He summed up his whole undefeated season with: “Sometimes it takes obtaining the goal to realize that the goal was not the thing to be obtained.”

He explained: “I feel like sometimes we think that becoming a national champion, or an Olympic champion, or whatever your goal that you set out to be, making X amount of money or whatever, it’s truly never as fulfilling as you think it is. And it definitely can’t be the thing that you fill your soul and your cup with.”

Yes, he said, he did want to enjoy this “but I did not come to do my will. I came to do the will of the One who sent me.”

This was all unscripted, but asked to elaborate, he said: “I think we’re

meant to serve. We're meant to serve something greater than ourselves."

This is something he had been thinking about in the past two weeks while preparing for his ultimate test as a wrestler. "When you give up control and you surrender to God and you understand it's not your will and it's another plan, you actually gain all the control. When you're constantly thinking it's got to be my way or the highway, you're actually making a prisoner of your own mind."

To those who tell him just to stick to wrestling, he says: "I'm way more than just a wrestler. It's about who I am, not what I am. There are so many things in life that can be important, and I just think we're trying to chase after these finites, these things that will never ever fill our cup, the way that God and Jesus Christ will."

He reflected that some of the most important times he had spent during this pressure-filled week were with his parents and people in his life who are so much more important than a wrestling match.

In that moment he was not thinking of himself reaching the pinnacle in his sport but remembering something his Dad had shared with him – "that our legacy is not in our triumphs. Legacy is not our fame but our faith."

Mitchell Mesenbrink is a champion wrestler to be sure. He's even more of a champion off the mat.

(BMH)

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

GENERAL CHURCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Highlights of the meeting of March 2026

President's Report

Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

Bishop Buss outlined objectives for the fiscal year and their alignment with the churchwide theme of willingness to be sent by the Lord. He shared plans to develop a course to help people within the General Church community engage with the goal of writing their next chapter with the Lord.

In addition to ensuring that core mission operations like church and school continue, the shared church direction of “*Send Me*” and other strategic efforts are important aspects of building the future of the church and inspiring people to raise their hands and serve.

Communications Director **Marijke Bau-Madsen** noted highlights from the most recent communication effort of *Send Me: Seven Years of Willingness*, especially suggested forms of participation like taking advantage of General Church resources, sharing a faith pillar, and telling your story about the role that willingness plays in your spiritual life.

Theological Resources: Recruiting and Developing Priests

Rev. Scott Frazier and Baird Kistner

Dean Frazier reviewed the strategic focuses within the clergy pipeline plan, including increasing the number of applications to the Theological School, encouraging professional development activity among current ministers, creating more structure in the residency program for new ministers, coordination between theological schools, and increased attention to

succession plans.

Baird reported on recruiting efforts, especially the completed clergy directory and new society outreach to better connect with high-potential candidates.

Vice Presidents' Report

Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs and Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth

Bishop Heinrichs commented on the recent cycle of regional clergy meetings and the value they bring to the clergy as a means of academic engagement and collaboration between colleagues.

Bishop Lindrooth shared support for “*Send Me: Seven Years of Willingness*” and the importance of finding and speaking to the sincere motivations of church members. He also noted that the General Church is seeking a pastor for the United Kingdom.

Executive Director

David O. Frazier

Dave gave an overview of regional treasurers' meetings recently held across North America, Africa and Europe. He also shared plans to improve the quality of financial reporting across the church, which can help increase the efficiency and impact of spending.

Real Estate Finance Committee

David Frazier and Wayne Wadsworth

The Board voted in favor of a motion to repatriate proceeds from the Colchester Manse sale to the United States.

David and Wayne presented findings from the committee's research into options for housing General Church headquarters. The presentation provided a comparative cost analysis of three directions under consideration:

1. Maintaining Cairncrest with three different variations of investment
2. Modifying and leasing space at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church
3. Constructing a new dedicated headquarters building.

Outreach

Chuck Ebert and the Rev. Pearse M. Frazier

Pearse introduced two key efforts in the Outreach department:

1. Sophisticating contact management to better follow up with individuals interested in participation and membership
2. Improved communication education among ministers

Human Resources

Jamie Uber and Karen Stoeller

Jamie reported that the Human Resources Committee recommends a salary increase for employees in FY27, keeping with the practice of applying an inflationary figure.

Nominating Committee

Jamie Uber

Seven current Board directors are renominated, and the committee has recommended three new directors for the election ballot.

He requested assistance from Board members in contacting unincorporated General Church members about joining the Corporation. The only requirement for Corporation membership is a minimum of three years of General Church membership.

The Board rejected the proposed bylaw amendment to have the Nominating Committee automatically create a contested election each year and declined to submit the proposed bylaw amendment to the Corporation.

General Church Education

Tanya Woker, Greg Henderson and Rachel Glenn

Greg reviewed GCED goals anticipated for FY27, including recruiting efforts such as Bryn Athyn College teaching internship and continuing education for New Church teachers.

Sarah Odhner shared an overview of the proposed partnership between

the General Church and Bryn Athyn College focused on offering a Graduate Certificate in New Church Education. The purpose of this program is to provide a continuous flow of high-quality trained teachers in distinctive New Church principles and practices of education.

Rachel shared FY27 goals for the Religious Educational Programs, including updates to the New Church Vineyard website and continuing dissemination of GCED resources.

Global Healthy Congregations

John Berridge and Jane Enis

John shared his appreciation for two full years of Global Healthy Congregations work to support congregations in renewal efforts.

Jane reported that the department is moving beyond the initial pilot phase into a structured, repeatable model designed to support congregational health. In FY27, the focus will be on strengthening consistency across the six participating congregations through congregational engagement in 90-day priority cycles.

This work includes the continued development of the Congregational Health Journal, a tool designed to help congregations observe patterns in their own life and ministry over time. It will also involve further defining renewal toolkits and facilitators to support congregations in this work.

As additional congregations express interest in engaging with the department, the Global Healthy Congregations Department anticipates phased expansion of staffing to support this growing work.

Investments

Jesse Cole

Jesse noted highlights from the investment report, including growth of \$76 million in investments over the last few years and a five-year return of 10.5%, which outperformed the NCIF benchmark by 1.2%. Annual payout increase has remained modest in the last few years.

Advancement

Brynna Carswell Smith and Mark Wyncoll

Mark drew attention to the March international church appeal, which focuses

on raising funds for Korean translation of the Heavenly Doctrine.

He walked the Board through planned giving trends since FY16, illustrating the positive impact of planned gifts as well as the difficulty of predicting their influence year over year.

He also reviewed draft plans to create endowments for African societies that would result in more sustainable congregations and increased local ownership.

GENERAL CHURCH CORPORATION

The annual meeting of the General Church Corporation took place May 2, 2026, in the Benade Hall auditorium of the Academy of the New Church.

Included was the election of the Board of Directors:

Seven incumbents willing and eligible were elected to three-year terms:

Annette Baltz	Rydal, Pennsylvania
Greg Clay	Rochester, Michigan
Robert Heinrichs	Boynton Beach, Florida
Keith Hyatt	Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania
Ethan King	Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania
Sharon Kunkle	Mitchellville, Maryland
Erik Odhner	Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

Three new nominees were elected to three-year terms:

Rachel Layton	Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania
Sarah Leeper	Abington, Pennsylvania
Nina Reipert	Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

Departing Board members:

Chuck Ebert, Lafayette, Colorado, has served a maximum of three terms.

Cathy McQueen, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, has completed two terms, and **Kelly Niall**, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, has completed an unexpired term. Both declined renomination.

The Nominating Committee was chaired by **Jamie Uber**, with **Rene Johnson** as vice chair, plus **Cheryl Buss**, **Scott Frazier** and **Blake Hill**.

ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Highlights of the meeting of September 6, 2025

Chancellor

Chancellor Peter M. Buss Jr. announced that the **Rt. Rev. Bradley Heinrichs and David Lindrooth** would serve as Advisory members of the Board. The **Rev. Scott Frazier**, Dean of the Theological School, serves as a standing guest of the Chancellor.

The Human Resources Committee was approved as a new standing committee of the Board. A new, unifying Academy Mission Statement was also approved by the Board.

Vice Chair

Shaun Buss discussed the work of the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee and the Board approved three documents related to coordinated Academy-wide strategic planning for each Academy unit, along with milestones for the completion of individual unit strategies and strategic plans.

Bryn Athyn College of the New Church

President Sean Connelly reported a successful orientation week, provided an enrollment update and presented a shared vision and trust building statement. He is looking toward increasing engagement with faculty and staff, while also increasing shared governance with faculty.

(The following occurred after the board meeting: The Middle States Commission on Higher Education on March 12, 2026, reaffirmed the accreditation of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. The next Self-Study Evaluation is scheduled for 2029-30.

Academy Secondary Schools

In the fall there were new student tours and a parent back-to-school event. Chapel engagement has increased, partly due to an annual presentation on the purpose of chapel.

The new Compass Program, led by **Mary Williams**, was launched with hopes to expand in the future.

A generous estate donation funded new field lights and a commemorative

plaque was placed to recognize the donors.

The Secondary Schools have seen an increase in summer camps, including sports, performing arts and specialty camps. The parents' organization has also been revived.

TREASURER

Duane Hyatt reported on the current deficit, the line of credit and ERC funds. Our current financial systems are inefficient due to understaffing, manual processing and outdated software. With board support he will form a team to review financial systems solutions.

ACADEMY LEADERSHIP TEAM

The team (ALT) was formally reconstituted earlier in the year. It consists of the executives of the Academy units and is charged with acting as the collective executive of the Academy. It meets regularly. While focused primarily on finances, ALT is working on reviewing and coordinating unit missions, strategy documents, and assuring alignment of missions and strategies across all Academy units.

EUROPEAN CLERGY MEETINGS

Rev. Grant and Sarah Odhner attended the European Clergy meetings in Stockholm the second week in March. The meetings and events were organized by the **Rev. Göran and Josephine Appelgren**, and the **Revs. Eric Sjodin and Thomas Floyd** (our Scandinavian clergy).

Other attendees were the **Rev. Alain and Jeanne Nicolier** from France, Candidate **Frits Bot** and his wife **Natalya** from The Netherlands, the **Rev. David and Anne Gaffney** from Derbyshire, plus **Bishop David Lindrooth** and **Bishop Brad Heinrichs** and his wife **Cathy** from the United States.

The ministers each presented a topic. Sarah also was given a session to talk about her thesis topic. It was useful to share about our work, support each other, and worship and socialize together. It was also nice to meet with the Stockholm Society one evening for a meal. Good things are happening there in the church and it was great to rejoice with them in that.

LIVING WATERS FAMILY CAMP

Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs

Now is a great time to start a family tradition where grandparents, parents and children can all go to a summer camp and worship, learn, pray and play together. These family camps provide a fantastic opportunity for the Lord to store up some cross-generational New Church “remains.” Every good church camp has the Lord at the center of it, and the opportunity to learn about Him from His Word and to worship Him with thankful praise!

The theme for our camp this summer is “*Evangelizing for the New Church.*” There are many different ways to look at what “evangelization” really means. One very concise and clear passage from the Heavenly Doctrine: “*Evangelization is annunciation about the Lord, His coming, and the things that are from Him which belong to salvation and eternal life.*” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9925) It is interesting to note that it mentions not only about teaching about the Lord but also of His coming, which in the context of the New Church would be His Second Coming! And then, of course, we have the exhortation of the Lord when He gave this great commission to His disciples: “*Go forth into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*” (*Mark 16:15*)

The camp is located near Paisley, Ontario, Canada, on the Saugeen River and is called Hidden Valley Christian Camp. It is 194 kilometers from the Olivet New Church and 154 kilometers from the Carmel New Church. It is also an easy trip across the border for our Southern neighbors from the United States. Canoeing and fishing are available, and the camp is just 20 kilometers from a beautiful beach on Lake Huron. There are cabins, rooms and service hookups available for campers.

The General Church in Canada has been wonderfully supportive of this venture and, there are scholarships available to ensure that the camp is affordable for most everyone to attend. If you would like to register online, please go to: <https://livingwatersfamilycamp.wordpress.com/> and sign up.

If you would like more information about Living Waters Family Camp, you can email LivingWatersFamilyCamp@gmail.com or call Brad Heinrichs at 215-870-0591. Ministers on staff are **Bishops David Lindrooth** and **Brad Heinrichs**, who will be assisted by some of the young theologs. It promises to be a great camp once again!

Announcements

BAPTISMS

Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say unto you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. (Matthew 18:10,14)

Abere, Emmanuel

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, January 11, 2026, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

Adams, Beau Henry

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, February 1, 2026, son of Michael and Beth Kindred Adams, Rev. Jeffrey O. Smith officiating.

Amase, Ebikonbowei Ethan

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, January 11, 2026, son of Isaac Amase and Faith Brutus Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

Amase, Ebimotimi Yves

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, January 11, 2026, son of Ahangra Amase and Faith Brutus, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

Amase, Tamaruntari Aaron

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, January 11, 2026, son of Ahangra Amase and Faith Brutus, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

Assiobo Kouglo, Kokou Godwin

At Vogan, Togo, March 22, 2026, son of Leopold Assiobo Kouglo and Affi Yoholou, Rev. Ayi Segno-Kodjo officiating.

Ayankpele, Oyinmiesindor

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, January 11, 2026, son of Daniel Assor and Kemebradikumo Ayankpele Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

Buick, William Taavi

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, March 22, 2026, son of Bennett and Alison Cole Buick, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

Buss, Renée Gloria

At Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 28, 2026, daughter of Jared and Justine Brannon Buss, Rev. Erik J. Buss officiating.

Cole, Iyrina Shiri

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, March 10, 2022, daughter of Nathan and Vera King Cole, Rev. Andrew J. Heilman officiating. Delayed report.

Dan, Oscar

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, January 11, 2026, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

Emmanuel, Margaret

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, January 11, 2026, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

Fritch, Chaslyn Frey Christman

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, March 7, 2026, Rev. Lawson M. Smith officiating.

Fritch, Warren Elijah

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, March 7, 2026, son of Oliver and Chaslyn Christman Fritch, Rev. Lawson M. Smith officiating.

Gyllenhaal, Lilah Leigh

At Glenview, Illinois, May 11, 2025, daughter of Randy and Leigh Lesniak Gyllenhaal, Rev. Mark D. Pendleton officiating. Delayed report.

King, Brooklyn Ryan

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, February 26, 2026, daughter of Jesse and Cassandre Schauder King, Rev. Coleman S. Glenn officiating.

King, Natalie

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, February 21, 2026, daughter of Adam and Aven Schorran King, Rev. Scott I. Frazier officiating.

Kunkle, Tristan Joseph

At Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March 22, 2026, son of John and Rebecca Uber Kunkle, Rev. Jared J. Buss officiating.

Maddock, Esme Herb Myrrh

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, March 17, 2026, daughter of Scott and Rebekah Simons Maddock, Rev. Malcolm G. Smith officiating.

Moore, LaWanda Gayle

At Grass Valley, California, March 18, 2026, Rev. Calvin B. Heinrichs officiating.

CONFIRMATIONS

I will meditate on Your precepts and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your Word. Give me understanding and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

(Psalm 119:15,16)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hauptmann, Ib Nicolai Nobre

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,
February 15, 2026, Rev. Scott I.
Frazier officiating.

Ockia, Tamaraubrakemi Doris

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, January
11, 2026, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-
Metta officiating.

MARRIAGES

The origin of love truly conjugal is from the marriage of good and truth. All conjunction of good and truth has joy within itself because this conjunction is the heavenly marriage within which is the Divine. (Arcana Coelestia 4572)

Burrows-Conroy, Thomas James

Burrows and Shannah Grace Conroy

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,
January 31, 2026, Rev. Scott I. Frazier
officiating.

Hauptmann-King, Olaf

Hauptmann and Annina King

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,
February 15, 2026, Rev. Brett D.
Buick officiating.

IN MEMORIAM

Those who are in heaven are continually advancing to the spring of life, and to a spring so much more delightful and happy the more thousands of years they live, and this to eternity, with increase according to the progressions and degrees of their love, charity and faith. (Heaven and Hell 414)

Goodenough, Rev. Daniel Webster

March 4, 2026, of Two Harbors,
Minnesota. 87

Pitcairn, Clark Darrel

February 14, 2026, of Mount
Pleasant, Pennsylvania. 68

Parker, Gillian Eva Wyncoll

March 23, 2026, of Etobicoke,
Ontario, Canada. 92

Walter, Ted Graham

January 12, 2026, of Glendale,
California. 78

Become a member of the General Church

Join in two minutes or less with our online form!



Expand your ability to
serve and be served at
newchurch.org/join.

Not sure whether you're already a member? Email freya.williams@newchurch.org

New Church Life

Published bimonthly by
the General Church of the New Jerusalem
Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 U.S.A.
www.newchurch.org | www.newchurchlife.org
May/June 2026

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LANGHORNE, PA
PERMIT NO. 81