

THETA ALPHA JOURNAL



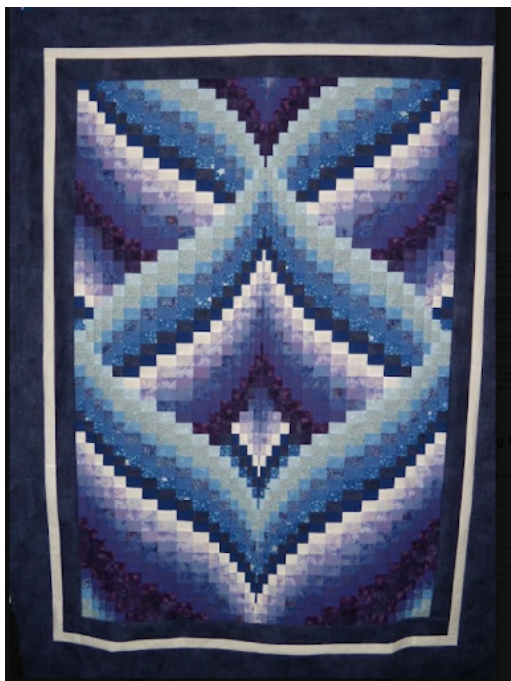
OCTOBER 2026

*Quilted artwork by
Karen Cooper*

*See Artist's Statement on
page 8*

*Canadian Quilt - Quilts
of Valour (on cover)*

*Blue and Purple Bargello
Quilt—a wedding gift for
Coleman and Anne Glenn*



*Orange and White Quilt -
Quilts for Survivors*

Theta Alpha

“Daughters of the Academy”



Named From the Greek:

Θυγατέρες Ακαδημίας

Thugateres Akadémias

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

Non Nobis Solum ~ Not for Ourselves Alone

Theta Alpha Journal

Volume 21

Number 1

Editor: Kris Heinrichs Earle

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Cover Artwork by Karen Cooper

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Home

Editorial

Kris Heinrichs Earle

Perhaps some of you are familiar with the gospel hymn *Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling*. It starts out like this:

*Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
calling for you and for me;
see, on the portals He's waiting and watching,
watching for you and for me.*

*Come home, come home;
you who are weary come home;
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, O sinner, come home!*

This beloved hymn touches many hearts with the image of the Lord beckoning each of us home. In this issue of the *Journal* we explore the idea of home.

I happened to see the May 19 *Off the Left Eye* post on Instagram where Curtis Childs and Jonathan Rose talked about loneliness and Jonathan said, “When you get there, to your community [in heaven], you feel like you’ve known these people your whole life, you feel tremendously at home. I think that there are a lot of people in this world who don’t really feel at home.”

That statement struck me. For some of us the word *home* might evoke a special feeling. Others may feel a sense of longing, wondering if the feeling of being at home is something they will ever attain. Exactly what is feeling *at home*? In Swedenborg’s Writings we are

able to explore teachings that open up our minds to what home truly is. In *Arcana Caelestia* we read that our home is being built as we live our earthly lives:

Heaven exists within a person, and the place a person has in heaven is determined by the state of life and faith that is his. (Arcana Caelestia 9305)

We are also told we need to neaten our house so the Lord's goodness can flow into our life:

...the only thing required of us is to clean house, or in other words, to reject evil cravings and the distorted convictions they spawn. When we do, we are filled with goodness, because goodness is constantly flowing in from the Lord. What it flows into, though, is a house (a person) scoured of everything that could block it – that is, that could deflect, twist, or smother the inflowing goodness. (Secrets of Heaven 3142)

Many of us are taught from a young age that it's a good idea to keep our "house" clean by consciously choosing to follow the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments. By doing so we make room for the Lord's goodness to enter our thoughts and actions. Of course we all know that struggles and hardship arise along the way. We stumble, make selfish choices (often without even realizing it!), but the discomfort we feel after poor choices is a reminder that we must move forward, make amends, and then we will feel more at home again. We all are constantly being offered spiritual homecoming gifts of love, faith, hope and endurance, as the Lord patiently leads us to our true home, the home that is being built as we live our earthly lives.

On the cover of this issue we feature a quilt Karen Cooper made to welcome a soldier home. Being Canadian the quilt's colors and design integrate their beautiful flag. The inspiration that went into the creation of this quilt, the effort of bringing the task to completion and then how the veteran must have felt when receiving and using

this welcome-home gift is truly a heartwarming process. I can only imagine all the work and love that went into such a gift. On the inside cover are two more of Karen's quilts. You can read the descriptions of these quilts after Karen's Artist Statement: *I Love to Quilt*.

In years past Theta Alpha International has sponsored an essay contest for 15-16-year-old girls called 'Laws of Life'. The Academy of the New Church participated this year and Luciana Ewing wrote *The Importance of Work at a Young Age* which was chosen as the winning essay. You will read how leaving the comfort of her family home to work gave Luciana important skills and confidence. Following Luciana's essay is a call for all 15-16-year-old New Church girls worldwide to participate. We welcome all submissions from near and far!

Printing is a Real Art takes us on a journey to Antwerp, Belgium to visit a printing museum. In this article Dale Morris shares why the written Word found its home on Earth. "...[T]he reason the Word was given to this planet, of all those in the universe, was because eventually PRINTING developed here." Dale had originally published her article in *New Christian Woman*, and reached out to me to see if the *Journal* would like to share it too. I am more than happy to pass this gem along!

Mary Valentine tells us how she discovered Swedenborg and the Writings in *Led Home: My Journey to Faith, Purpose, and Joy*. In her enthusiasm for all the new ideas and concepts she was learning she began participating in online New Church communities. Mary says she felt as though she had come home! I have the pleasure of being in an online group of women with Mary and through this connection I asked her to talk about her personal "homecoming" to the New Church.

Suzy Laidlaw writes about searching for purpose and desiring to be useful at her current stage of life. In *Becoming a Mary Rather than a Martha* Suzy describes recent struggles with physical limitations brought on by natural aging. Additionally she mentions the discomfort of moving away from the home she knew most of her life. Suzy comes to terms with these obstacles and looks forward to new uses saying "we usually need to trade speed for depth, and physical strength for

relational and intellectual presence. Those who make that trade continue to be useful – not as relics of a former self, but as active participants in the ongoing spread of love.”

Fittingly, Helen Kennedy shares a very practical way she currently volunteers while in her 80’s and in her home. In *Volunteering* Helen describes her relationship with Iryna, a Ukrainian woman she talks to twice a week through Zoom. Although ostensibly Helen is helping Iryna practice her English, Helen describes the reciprocity of their online meetings and friendship. This form of volunteering could be easy enough for many of us to consider.

It is an honor to share Gwen Asplundh’s memorial in this issue. Gwen was a dynamo in the many ways she served others during her lifetime. Besides creating a loving home for her husband and family, Gwen was a noteworthy force in Theta Alpha International. In looking back through old issues I saw Gwen’s name appear forty times in the span of over twenty years! In the 70’s and into the 80’s Gwen served first as vice president and then as president. Alice Fritz, the outgoing president, wrote, “Gwen Asplundh, our vice president and coming president, took my place with efficiency, zeal and grace, and we should all be as grateful for her as I am.” Gwen was a strong leader and was not always satisfied with the status quo. She traveled to TA chapters around the globe and enjoyed the many people she connected with. She was proud of how Theta Alpha served to keep connections between our members vibrant. Gwen wrote in her 1981 President’s Report, “I have enjoyed the fact that more and more groups of women have decided that they like what they see in Theta Alpha so much that they wish to form their own chapters – four in the last few years. But most of all, I have enjoyed giving away your money! If my name goes down in Theta Alpha history at all, I am sure it will be as that president who suggested giving away the most money – sort of a New Church “Dialing for Dollars” game!”

One of Theta Alpha’s past roles was the creation and distribution of religion lessons to families who were not living in New Church communities. Theta Alpha is no longer involved in religion lessons,

but New Church Vineyard, located on the website newchurch.org, provides myriad resources. One of the most in-depth offerings there is the Dole *Bible Study Notes*. Anita S. Dole, one of our New Church sisters from the Convention Church, created an extensive four-year Sunday School curriculum. In this *Journal* I wanted others to get a sampling of her work. For example, in *The Burning Bush* Anita writes: “The Holy Land represents heaven or a heavenly character, and that is the true home of everyone of us.”

Following the excerpt of *The Burning Bush* you’ll find Anita’s memorial. One of the beautiful characteristics Anita possessed, in addition to being a scholar of the Writings, was her understanding of our need for connection. In her day Anita was known as Mother Robin. Before modern technology, round robin letters were popular. These were circulating letters sent from person to person. A recipient added her own stories and news to the round robin and then sent it on to the next person on the list. Anita kept a round robin letter going to the isolated women in the Convention Church to give them a sense of belonging, a home in the Church.

It’s with a tinge of sadness to say that we’ve come to the last of Vera Glenn’s memories of growing up in Bryn Athyn. In *Looking Back: Some Memories of Growing Up on the Old Academy Farm*, Vera recounts her life during World War II and what she terms as “The Heritage Years – My Mother and Dad.” Her conclusion brings a lump to my throat as she lovingly writes:

My life was different from my classmates’. I think I was the only one raised on a farm-turned-orchard. It gave me a closeness to the land and the history of rural America in a special way. I was part of my father’s occupation, part of the family livelihood in a way few modern children are. I loved the farmhouse and the other farm buildings, but most of all I loved the orchard.

I wanted to mention that our friend, Doris Millam, was called home to the spiritual world this past summer. You may remember that in last April’s issue she expressed her gratitude for the Theta

Alpha scholarship she received in the 1950's. In this issue we have reprinted a letter she wrote to her young daughter, Karen, in 1980, a year after Karen had died. Doris' letter was published forty-six years ago in the *Theta Alpha Journal*. I think you will agree that it is very worthwhile to experience Doris' abiding love for her daughter and faith that Karen was being cared for and genuinely loved by her angel parents in her new heavenly home.

Theta Alpha has been a community of women for over one hundred years. We still provide scholarships, publish the *Journal*, support teachers in New Church Schools and hold an annual luncheon in October in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. While reflecting on some of the strong women who have preceded us, those who sought connection and wanted to forge new connections, the TA Board is looking for ways to best serve our community's changing needs. Starting on Tuesday, October 20 at 8:00 PM ET, Theta Alpha will host monthly online meetups to discuss relevant topics and connect with one another. As a Theta Alpha member, you will receive an email the week before each meetup, followed by a reminder email on the day of the meetup, including the link for the meeting on Google Meet. It is our hope that we can listen, talk and find others with whom to share important thoughts and feelings. We seek to provide a space possibly like the one Swedenborg describes:

...[T]hey are going from themselves into a community that is already actually inside them, forming a connection between the community outside and the community within, and making the community's life their own and giving their life to the community. (True Christianity 739)

This sounds like the kind of home I want to be a part of. Come join us!

Much love,
Kris

Kris can be contact at madameahs@gmail.com

I Love to Quilt

Artist Statement

Karen Jorgenson Cooper

Karen's quilts are featured on this edition's cover and inside cover.

When I was a kid, my younger sister was a talented artist (well, she still is!) but I wasn't. Since she could draw and play the piano well, I assumed that she was artistic and I was not, and by extension, she was creative and I was not.

The summer I was eighteen I was bored, so I made my first quilt: it was very simple, with one navy blue square followed by two print squares, in a recurring pattern. I didn't know how to make a quilt—no one in my family made quilts, and YouTube hadn't been invented yet. In my ignorance I layered the quilt as one big pillowcase: I sewed around three edges and turned it right side out (that's not how it's done). But I had made a quilt and I knew that I wanted to make more! I started to quilt for real when my three kids were preschoolers, and I was a stay-at-home mom. I joined my first quilting guild, took classes, and gradually learned how to make quilts properly.

Almost forty years later, I'm still not only making quilts, but I love the process even more now, and my mind (and my Pinterest folders) teem with ideas for so many more. For me, loving quilting is really a multi-dimensional thing: I love (almost) all of the steps to create a quilt; I love being able to make something tangibly warm and comforting to give to people as they celebrate

important moments or go through challenging times; and I love the friendships that I've formed with other quilters.

I know people who rue the fact that they don't have a hobby or interest that they feel passionate about; I'm very grateful for the drive (obsession?) that compels me to put fabrics

together in pretty ways. You can't make yourself love something, so I'm grateful to the Lord for implanting that desire in me, as well as the ability. It really does feel like it flows into, and through me—it certainly doesn't originate in me! And I finally feel that I actually am creative, now that my definition of "being artistic" isn't quite as limited as it used to be. I love to play with colours, and it just so happens that fabric is my medium.

I love being able to make something tangibly warm and comforting to give to people as they celebrate important moments or go through challenging times.

Canadian Quilt (on cover)

This quilt was made for the Quilts of Valour program, whose mission "is to ensure that injured Canadian Forces members are recognized for their service and commitment to our country. We give this support through the presentation of quilts to comfort our injured past and present Canadian Forces members." I've only made one so far for this organization, but I certainly want to do more. (There is also a Quilts of Valor group in the US.)

Blue and Purple Bargello Quilt—a wedding gift for Coleman and Anne Glenn (on inside cover)

From the label on the back: "{In the home of a married couple in

the Heaven of the Silver Age} While we were looking, we saw on the wall a kind of rainbow, consisting of three colors, purple, blue, and bright white. And we saw how the purple color passed through the blue and tinted the white with a purplish blue hue, and that the latter color flowed back through the blue into the purple and raised it into a kind of flaming radiance. [The angel husband] said, "The purple by its correspondence symbolizes the conjugal love of the wife; the bright white, the intelligence of the husband; the blue, the beginning of conjugal love in the husband's perception from the wife; and the purplish blue, which tinted the white, conjugal love then in the husband. This latter color's flowing back through the blue into the purple and raising it into a kind of flaming radiance symbolizes the conjugal love of the husband flowing back to the wife." (*Conjugal Love* 76, parts)

Orange and White Quilt (on inside cover)

This quilt was made for an organization called Quilts for Survivors. It was initiated by an Indigenous woman to wrap survivors of Canadian Indian Residential Schools with love, tangibly represented by quilts. The colour orange is significant to them, which is why I chose it for this quilt.

Karen Jorgenson Cooper is originally from Toronto, Ontario but has lived in Quebec, Pennsylvania, Florida, South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland in her various roles as student, Navy wife, mom, NC teacher, pastor's wife, and grandmother. She lives, once again, in Toronto with her husband, Rev. Jim Cooper. She especially loves her roles as mother to Diana, Will and Ed Hyatt, and grandmother to nine amazing young people. She can be contacted at karen.cooper@rogers.com.

The Importance of Work at a Young Age

Laws of Life 2026 Winning Essay

Luciana Ewing

I believe that working at a young age made me more independent and taught me important life lessons. I started working at the age of 14 at a restaurant. Just from working there, I learned how to speak up for myself, not let people affect my feelings, and how to problem-solve.

From working, I had to learn how to use my voice. Before I started working, I was never really good at doing that. I often would try to do something myself without asking for help. From working, I learned that asking for help isn't bad. Now I know how to do that and not be scared to do so. While I'm at work, I always have to tell the servers and chefs when there is a problem with the food, I always ask the servers when I need help bringing the food out, and I even got more comfortable talking to the customers.

Working also helped me learn that I can't let people negatively affect me. Before I started working, I always allowed people to affect my feelings, and I didn't know how to let it not affect me. Now, if any rude customers are being difficult, I know how to let it go and not ruin my day. I tell myself that it's nothing that I did wrong, but maybe just how the person is.

The last thing that work taught me was how to become a better

I always allowed people to affect my feelings, and I didn't know how to let it not affect me. Now, if any rude customers are being difficult, I know how to let it go and not ruin my day.

problem solver. At work, during holidays, it gets very busy. Especially if there's an Eagles game on that day. Sometimes there might even be a mix-up with the food. When a lot of people order the same thing, it gets very confusing. Or I might accidentally bring food to the wrong table, and I have to go ask them what they are missing. Maybe someone didn't like their food, or

it took too long to come out. I have to talk to them, the servers, and the chefs, and see how we can help them. Learning how to do this at work also made me a better problem solver outside of work.

In conclusion, working as a young teenager helped me become a more independent person. It taught me how to be more responsible, more open, and how to do things on my own. Some people may say that working at a young age isn't good for you and can take you away from living your life. To me, though, it is one of the best things that happened to me. I learned skills that I can apply to my life now and brought me new bonds I would've never gotten without it.



Call for Articles!

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

Theta Alpha Laws of Life Essay Contest 2027

Eligibility: 15-16-year-old girls worldwide (Sophomores in high school, in the US)

Prizes: 1st Place: \$200 USD, 2nd Place: \$150 USD, 3rd Place: \$100 USD

Suggested Length: 500-600 words (two pages double-spaced)

Topic: Your Laws of Life

“Laws of Life” are a set of rules, ideals, or principles by which a person chooses to live. What is important to you? What ideals do you hold deep in your heart? Think about the people and experiences that have helped you form these laws. Pick a topic to write about:

1. A personal experience/lesson learned that affects how you live/view your life now.
2. An aphorism or quote that inspires or guides you.
3. You can use an analogy, a quotation, a story, or a parable.
4. No personal romantic relationships.

Form for Submission:

1. Essays are to be in English (Google Translate can be used for this purpose).
2. No name or identification can be on the paper itself to allow impartial judging.
3. Name and address need to be included in the envelope or email.

Submissions are to be sent to: Theta Alpha International, PO Box 154, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009, USA, or emailed to scholarships@thetaalphainternational.org

Deadline: Must be received by March 1, 2027

Led Home: My Journey to Faith, Purpose, and Joy

Mary Valentine

Transcribed and edited from “Mary’s Journey” featured on the Swedenborg Foundation YouTube channel

I have been a spiritual seeker all my life. Deep inside, I always wanted something that was a perfect fit for me spiritually, but of course I didn’t know what it was. Looking back I can see how the Lord has led me.

In my fifties, I became involved in Twelve Step recovery programs as I worked through codependency. Those programs were a marvelous help to me and an important preparation for the next stage of my spiritual life. But by the time I reached my sixties, I felt I had outgrown them. They had helped me tremendously, yet I sensed the Lord was leading me further. My children were raised, I was healthy, and after years of spiritual and personal growth, I found myself asking a new question: *What does Jesus truly want for me?*

Someone gave me a small self-published book by a woman who claimed to channel the psychologist William James through automatic writing. One phrase in that little book stood out to me: “Emanuel Swedenborg – the man who talks with angels”. I had never heard that name before. Something prompted me to look him up online. I found the Swedenborg Foundation bookstore and ordered a small introductory book called *Conversations with Angels*. This small book is a selection of Swedenborg’s “memorable relations” where he gives accounts of his time in the company of heavenly be-

ings. As soon as I started reading it, I experienced something powerful and deeply emotional. My heart was affected immediately. It felt like more than intuition. I had a deep perception that the Lord had led me to something meant especially for me. I remember thinking, *I'm being led home. I'm finally being led to my place.*

I became excited and hungry to learn more.

Searching online, I discovered Jonathan Rose's Bible study called *Spirit and Life Bible Study*. I started watching and after a while thought, *Well, I'm getting an advanced degree in the Bible through a Swedenborgian lens!* The Bible suddenly began opening up to me. I even transcribed Jonathan Rose's Bible studies by hand because I felt I was learning a completely new spiritual language and entering a whole new world. It felt like an answered prayer, another miracle!

For most of my life, Scripture had felt difficult and confusing so I often avoided reading it, even though I had really wanted to understand. Then, quite unexpectedly, the Lord led me in a direction I never could have imagined. I thought, *Oh, look at all of this.* Now I finally began to see what the Word was saying. I immersed myself in Bible studies and Swedenborgian teachings. I also began reading biographies of Emanuel Swedenborg because I wanted to know where these teachings came from and who he was. Soon I started reading Swedenborg's theological writings themselves. One of the first books I purchased was *True Christianity*. I remember thinking, *Yes, please – tell me what true Christianity is.*

I sensed the Lord was leading me further. My children were raised, I was healthy, and after years of spiritual and personal growth, I found myself asking a new question: What does Jesus truly want for me?

During this time I was living in a small rural town in Illinois outside St. Louis, far away from any New Church congregation. I assumed I would probably never experience spiritual fellowship in person. Still, I faithfully watched online programs and left long comments after Bible studies and lectures. Someone would respond and even that small connection meant so much to me. I told myself that perhaps someday, in the spiritual world, I would finally be together with people who shared these beliefs. Then came 2020.

During the COVID pandemic, Zoom groups and online church communities suddenly appeared everywhere. What I once thought impossible became part of my daily life. I joined six to nine groups weekly: Off the Left Eye, Karin Childs' Book group discussion, Chara Daum's Death Café, a couple of the pastors have Zoom groups, and I got to watch church services on Sunday with discussion groups afterwards too. The church had become my life. This was the next miracle – I was with people on Zoom and interacting with them! And what touched me most was that I had not even prayed for this particular blessing. Yet the Lord gave it to me anyway.

I truly feel that I have gone from blessing to blessing. Looking back now, I can clearly see Divine Providence guiding every step of my life. The Lord prepared me long before He introduced me to the Writings of Swedenborg. Today, I feel unbelievably grateful and happy. These teachings have given me a deep understanding of my purpose here on earth. To me, life is about expressing love, serving the happiness of others, being useful and helpful whenever possible, and continuing to improve my character. It is about preparing for life in the spiritual world. At first, after discovering these teachings, I thought, *Why am I still here?* Even though I was still healthy, heaven sounded so wonderful that I almost longed to leave this world immediately. But over time I realized there was still more for me to do. I could still learn. I could still grow.

I still work full-time from home in a career I have had for about forty years. I am grateful for my health and energy because they

allow me to continue serving others and helping my family. Every day I try to practice usefulness. Still, there are times when I feel deep sorrow when I unintentionally hurt someone or am misunderstood, because causing pain to others is the exact opposite of what I want my life to be. I try to practice being loving and helpful the way Jesus was. One of the most beautiful discoveries of my life has been this: the more we love people and help people, the happier we become ourselves. There is tremendous joy in kindness and service. It's unbelievably rewarding.

My life has been completely transformed – changed, improved, and blessed beyond anything I could have imagined. I see that being here today, in this happy, wonderful place, is the work of Divine Providence. A promise from the Twelve Step program comes to mind: “We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.” And I realize this is true for me. My past no longer defines me. The pain and confusion of earlier years feels distant, almost as if it happened to another person entirely. That, too, feels like a blessing from the Lord. Nothing about this journey feels accidental to me now. I can see Divine Providence in all of it.

And from the bottom of my heart, I hope others may experience the same peace and joy that I have found.

Mary Valentine lives in Houston and shares her home with her youngest son. Thanks to Off the Left Eye, all the New Church Sunday services online and zoom groups she is able to participate in an active church life from her home in Texas. For this she is very grateful. She can be contacted at marylinellevalentine@gmail.com.

Printing is a Real Art

Dale Morris

Originally published in New Christian Woman, October 2025. Reprinted with author's permission.

In May 2025 we spent a few days in Antwerp, Belgium (travelling entirely by train! Very satisfying). One reason for the trip was to visit the home and workshop (now a printing museum) of Christophe Plantin, 1520-1589. My husband trained as a graphic designer and over his career has become very experienced with the whole process of printing books. As a proofreader, I too have learned the specific details of how books are published.



This museum – a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2005 – has an exceptional collection of typographical materials, and holds

the world's two oldest surviving printing presses. And there's an extra reason for a New Church person to appreciate it: the reason the Word was given to this planet, of all those in the universe, was because eventually PRINTING developed here. Isn't that amazing?

The Word could be written in our world, because the art of writing existed here from the most ancient times, at first on tablets, then on parchment, later on paper, and finally it could be disseminated in print. The Lord's providence caused this for the sake of the Word. (Worlds in Space 115, emphasis added)

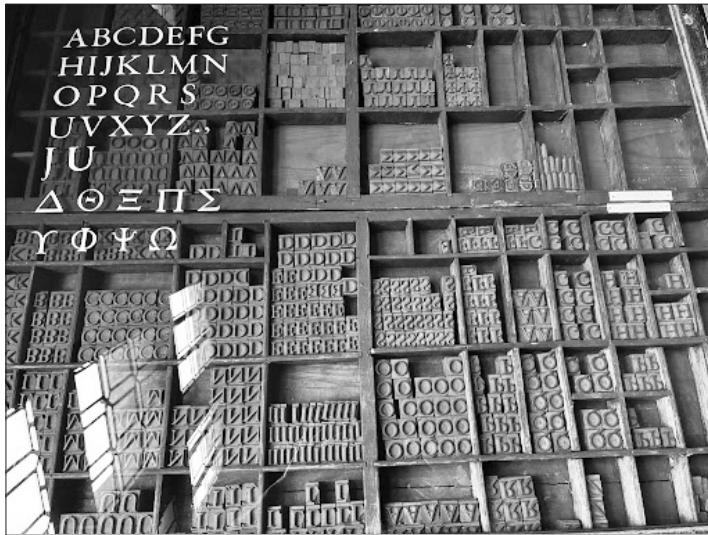
The art of printing is indeed a sort of Messiah amongst inventions. (Georg Christoph Lichtenberg)

The invention of printing is the greatest event in history. It is the mother of all revolution, a renewal of human means of expression from its very basis. Printed thoughts are everlasting, provided with wings, intangible and indestructible. They soar like a crowd of birds, spread in all four directions and are everywhere at the same time. (Victor Hugo)

The whole world admits unhesitatingly, and there can be no doubt about this, that Gutenberg's invention [the printing press] is the incomparably greatest event in the history of the world. (Mark Twain)

As we wandered through the rooms we learned more and more about what this printing house accomplished. There were replicated books we could leaf through – maps, Bibles, philosophical discourses, illustrated natural history books, dictionaries; pages showing three or more languages all saying the same thing; actual pages of very old books and documents (including a double spread of marked-up proofs: the proofreading symbols used in 1560 are virtually the same as those I have used! Despite not having a clue what

the words were, I could understand what was being corrected, and how); real typesets filled with rows of real metal type, in different alphabets, in a room full of real printing presses.



There were videos showing how metal type was made – a surprisingly detailed and intricate process – and working models you could have a go with. The tools of the printing trade are myriad, and the number of different skills needed by people working there was astonishing. Getting a leaflet, let alone a book, from idea to publication was complicated back in the 16th century: those who undertook to do that work were skilled and dedicated craftsmen and women.

By the time we finished (3 hours later!) we'd become more deeply aware that this process – printing – was a vital part of the spread of knowledge throughout the world, from the Reformation through to the Age of Enlightenment. It produced a virtual explosion of information, made accessible to far more people than verbal stories or hand-copied manuscripts could reach. Sebastian Brant, a 16th century poet, said, "What the rich man of yesterday and the king possessed are now found even in the most modest of homes, namely

a book. Thanks first be to the gods, but also immediately thereafter to the printers who master the outstanding art so cheaply through their ceaseless efforts.”

Thanks be to the gods indeed – or rather to the Lord and His providence. This inspiring visit made me feel, deep down and humbling, that the proofreading skills I used to check the digitized versions of Potts’

Concordance and Dole’s *Bible Study Notes* have enabled me to play my own tiny part – not much more than a single apostrophe – in spreading knowledge of the Word and the Lord, via the internet, throughout the world.

*...proofreading skills...
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single apostrophe – in
spreading knowledge
of the Word and the
Lord, via the internet,
throughout the world.*

Editor’s Note: To explore further the topic of the Word being given to humans in printed form see Andy Dibbs’ classes “Why Was the Lord Born on this Planet?” My friend and previous editor of the Journal, Helen Kennedy, had suggested I listen to them a while back. You can find Andy’s classes in Sermons, Talks and Classes in the resources section on newchurch.org.

Dale grew up in Bryn Athyn. She moved to England as a young bride with her British husband. They raised their four children in the Cotswold village where they’ve lived for 50 years. Dale fulfilled her childhood ambition to be a wife and mother, and when she finally discovered what else she wanted to be ‘when she grew up’, she spent ten years as a freelance proofreader. Now long retired, she enjoys being a grandma, still doing occasional proofreading work, being involved in her community, and helping the church in the UK. She can be contacted at dale.morris@zen.co.uk.

Becoming a Mary Rather Than a Martha

Suzy Laidlaw

*...what angels and good spirits enjoy is being useful. (Arcana
Cœlestia 5395)*

Reaching one's seventies often brings a quiet acceptance of a new way of life. My joints may ache more readily, my energy wanes faster, and my body that once carried heavy loads and walked long distances now causes me to pause, wondering if standing for a long time will bring a backache later, or even if strolling through a museum is worth it if there are no places to sit and rest. And I LOVE museums!

The question that now haunts me is how do I continue to be useful in my mid-70s while having certain limitations? Presently my ability to be useful as I age is not limited to new physical challenges, but seems to be exacerbated in my case because my husband and I chose to move to Colorado two years ago, away from friends and family. Here I find I haven't been able to find truly satisfying ways to be useful to others. Sadly, I know virtually no one locally. I now realize that I simply hadn't expected these kinds of issues—or perhaps I just hadn't thought about them before our move. Physically I was never a great athlete or even a particularly active person, but I was able to do what needed to be done without great effort. And my own role models (brother, sisters, and cousins) seemed to age much more gracefully than I. Most importantly, they have found

ways to be useful to their community.

I think that the key to feeling better about losing physical capabilities is finding ways to be useful that my older body will allow. But at the moment my older body is letting me down in so many ways: a back that needs attention, eyes that need repairs so that I can (hopefully) see without so much strain, and a digestive tract that limits what I can eat because of acid reflux. (I literally don't know anybody else with that one!) So how can I be useful enough to feel that I am living a life that the Lord would be happy with? At the moment I am much more a Mary than a Martha... is that my future? Is it enough? I need to remember that Jesus loved Mary.

People in their seventies, eighties, or even nineties possess decades of accumulated wisdom. They have lived through the hard-learned lessons that younger people have not yet experienced. A lifetime of work, relationships, mistakes, and recoveries produces a form of life-living wisdom. Sharing that wisdom and a lifetime of experiences helps a person at least feel useful long after strength has diminished. And sharing a lifetime of experiences requires presence (or a phone call) more than mobility.

I just learned that my first great-grandchild will be born in February. The joy this brings to my life seems to outweigh almost every other emotion possible. As I ponder why that is, I can think of so many reasons this birth brings so much joy. None of this joy comes from some silly idea that my own genes will continue—surely that must be only a part of some science-fiction movie! When gazing on a baby, whether family or not, a swelling of love can't help but grow. It is an emblem that life will go on. In my heart I wish the baby a wonderful life filled with love and usefulness. There is so much promise for the whole world when seeing a baby! What will they contribute? What love will they bring into the world? Can I help that child find ways to spread love and usefulness because of what I have learned in my life? I hope so!

Staying useful in one's seventies is less about inventing new

We learn from the Writings that it is God's will that we all live long and useful lives. And that as long as we are in our natural bodies, the Lord sees a use for us in this world.

roles than about refining existing ones—although if a new role becomes available that we feel we can navigate and want to try, it's always good to learn new things and keep our brains flexible. But we usually need to trade speed for depth, and physical strength for relational and intellectual presence.

Those who make that trade

continue to be useful—not as relics of a former self, but as active participants in the ongoing spread of love. Physical limitations may narrow the path we walk, yet they do not close it. The trick seems to be to find the path that our mind and body want to walk and enjoy walking. As we are typically retired sometime in our 70's we really need to enjoy our volunteer work or we will not keep up the effort. At the moment, I can think of so many things I am sure I would enjoy doing as volunteer work—but my body just won't let me go there. That is my biggest hurdle, and I am sure I am not alone in this. It is exasperating.

We learn from the Writings that it is God's will that we all live long and useful lives. And that as long as we are in our natural bodies, the Lord sees a use for us in this world. The natural body is only needed as long as it serves the spirit's journey on earth, helping us be of service and learn to love our neighbor and the Lord. As seen in *Arcana Cœlestia*, people who have lived solely for themselves and not to serve others are not fit for heaven, for “the Lord's kingdom is nothing else than a kingdom of useful services.” Of course the kind of usefulness that matters most is spiritual and not merely bodily or practical usefulness (*Arcana Cœlestia* 5395). Of course the kind of usefulness that matters most is spiritual and

not merely bodily or practical usefulness.

New Christian doctrine also explains that our purpose in living, even as our bodies grow less useful, is connected to spiritual growth, the completion of our character, and the ways we may still love and serve others—often in less obvious, but still important, ways. It is not only external usefulness, but inner spiritual usefulness and readiness for heaven that matter most, and people may continue to live physically so long as there is still spiritual purpose and learning for them to accomplish in this world.

Ultimately, the reason we live as long as we do—in spite of physical limitations—is found in the Lord’s providence, guiding each of us toward what is spiritually best for our eternal life. Sometimes the period of bodily usefulness is an important phase for spiritual completion, humility, or preparation for the next life (*Arcana Cœlestia* 5395, 1854; *Heaven and Hell* 452).

Suzy was born into a New Church family of five children all born within 6 years of each other! She says the most precious thing her parents gave them was a love of the New Church. As a junior in high school she was more than ready to be a dorm girl and attend the Academy of the New Church Girls School. Eventually Suzy would get a four-year degree from Bryn Athyn College and when she was forty years old (raising 3 kids was her full time job) went back to Bryn Athyn College to earn a Masters of Religious Studies. At one point she taught a 6-week evening class at a local public high school called: “Everything you have ever wanted to know about Bryn Athyn but were afraid to ask!” Her goal was to help normalize our religion and its small religious community. Suzy and her husband, Alan Laidlaw, have made four big moves between California and England in their thirty years of marriage. They currently live north of Denver, Colorado and attend the New Church of Boulder Valley. She can be contacted at suzy@dwave.com.

Volunteering

Helen Kennedy

As I'm now in my early 80s, I started to look for things that could be done in my home instead of needing to go out. One of the things I came across was to volunteer with an organization called Engin which stands for English in Ukraine. There is an effort in that country to break away from everything Russian, and learning to speak English better is the focus of this organization. Through Zoom twice a week I talk with Iryna, a 48-year-old woman who lives in Odessa. Turns out Iryna knows English very well and just needs help here and there with words or phrasing she doesn't get quite right. Our sessions are about 45 minutes long, and it's only two or three times a session that I need to correct her or tell her the way we in the United States say something. Sometimes she'll come to a word, and then say "A moment, please," and look the word up on her computer then say it. It might be some word like "tacit", so you see she knows English quite well. Iryna started learning English in Ukraine's equivalent of high school, and her 17-year-old son started learning it at the beginning of grade school. Through her and things she's said, I have come to be astounded at how many people in the world speak English.

An interesting thing to me is how they are choosing where Iryna's son will go to college. Two of their choices are colleges in Romania and Bulgaria, but also, they're considering ones in Slovenia and the Czech Republic. For the first two he would need to spend a year learning the language of the country, but for the

[Iryna] said life goes on and people have to go forward with normal daily activities even if they've spent half the night in a shelter. This is all incredibly sad to me but I need to keep my spirits up when talking with her.

latter two, he could attend college in English. It's the short distances between countries that interests me, the equivalent of going a few states away in the United States, but with a whole change in language.

At the beginning I was instructed not to bring up the war unless the other person talked about it first. This has been a good policy, and occasionally Iryna does talk about some aspect of it. Iryna lost her

husband two years into the war. At times when we speak, which is 9 AM East Coast time and 4PM her time, she's tired and says she spent part of the night in a shelter. She said life goes on and people have to go forward with normal daily activities even if they've spent half the night in a shelter. This is all incredibly sad to me but I need to keep my spirits up when talking with her.

At one point she lived in Belgium for a while, hoping to relocate there, but found she missed her home country too much and was having a hard time adjusting. So, she moved back to Ukraine. Though many people have left Ukraine, she says a large number of people have moved back after going to another country.

What do Iryna and I talk about? Everything you would talk to a new friend about when you're getting to know her. We've talked about the weather, things that are going on throughout the world, food we like to cook, our children and other relatives, how we celebrate Easter and Christmas, where we've vacationed, and

so on. Iryna is a very likeable, moderately outgoing person who has a lot of questions about what life is like outside her country.

I'm so grateful to have this opportunity to meet Iryna and pray for the Lord to keep her safe.

Helen Kennedy has written books, essays and poetry. Her most recent thing that she loved doing was editing the Journal, which she did for ten years. She is 81 and enjoys all the new things she is learning. Her most recent thing is learning how to play games on her phone. She can be contacted at hmkennedy98@gmail.com.



Calling Swedenborg-Inspired Creators

The Swedenborg Social Media Network (SSMN) is a growing, public Facebook group for people who are creating – or wanting to create – content inspired by the spiritual teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg. Whether you make videos, podcasts, blogs, social posts, or support this work behind the scenes, this space is designed to help you connect, collaborate, and grow.

If you feel drawn to this you are warmly invited to join the Swedenborg Social Media Network on Facebook. Once you are in the group, you can also opt in to our event announcement email list at swedenborgsmn@googlegroups.com by sending your preferred email address to Swedenborg Community Victoria or to David Moffat via Messenger. Together, we can help many more people discover living spiritual insights for today's world.

In Memory of Gwendolyn McQueen Asplundh

January 17, 1931 – October 31, 2025

Jeremy Simons

This memorial was written by Jeremy Simons and edited for the Journal.

On Hallowe'en children go from house to house in costumes collecting treats. According to superstition they are playing the parts of spirits visiting the earth on the eve of All Saints Day, November 1st. People put out lighted pumpkins to scare away the bad spirits and attract the good ones. But at Gwen Asplundh's house that evening there were no bad spirits, only angels, who were there to lead Gwen into the next life. She had taken to her bed a little more than a week before, and had been put on hospice a few days after that. As her daughters gathered around her and as neighborhood children could be heard happily trick-or-treating, she began making her transition from this world to the next. We are told that when this process begins the highest angels come near to a person, and "*when the celestial angels are present...spirits perceive this (and) cannot approach; and in this way evil spirits are kept away from a person's spirit when they are being introduced into eternal life*". (Heaven and Hell 449) This process takes some time and is said to be completed on the third day, although it varies. As we go through this transition, though, we have no sense of time, but only a sense of heavenly peace.

Gwen was born in Glenview, Illinois, on January 17, 1931, the fifth of six children. She said that she had the best childhood ever despite growing up in the 1930s during the Great Depression. She had close friends and classmates at the Immanuel Church School and a caring family. She loved to skate on the Park Lake in the winter and play baseball in the summer. Occasionally they would be invited to Linden Hills, Michigan in the summer. One winter she remembered celebrating her January 17th birthday with a hayride on a sleigh with all her family and friends. A lifelong lover of dogs, she used to bring home strays to her parents and beg to be allowed to keep them. She also loved horses.

Her early teen years were dominated by the events of World War II, and when it ended she came to Bryn Athyn to school in 1946, following her older siblings. She said that in some ways her life began when she moved into Glenn Hall, the girls' dormitory at the Academy of the New Church. There Gwen was suddenly surrounded by many friends and actively became involved in campus life. She was president of her Junior class, Dekka (her sorority) song leader, Factores (Student Council) secretary, and graduated in 1949. Her ambition at that point, according to her yearbook, was to become an airline stewardess and then a housewife. After graduation, she returned to Glenview and worked for a year before coming back to Bryn Athyn to attend college.

At the College she started dating Ed Asplundh, and when he went off to school at the University of Pennsylvania they wrote letters to each other. Their relationship developed, and by the time he graduated from the Wharton School of Business in 1954 they were engaged. As an Air Force ROTC cadet, he was to begin his military service several months after graduation. They were married in Glenview that summer, he was 21, she was 22. In January 1955 the two of them drove to Texas, where Ed reported for duty at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio.

In their early marriage they moved from one US military base to another. Their first child, Jacquie, was born about a year after their wedding. These years were quite challenging for Gwen, but after Ed's military service ended the young family happily returned home to Glenview where Jill and then Barbie were born. Ed went to work for the Asplundh Tree Company there, and Gwen loved raising their three baby girls with the help of family and friends.

Before long, Ed was asked to move back to the Bryn Athyn area to continue working for the family tree company, having proved himself in the Midwest. In 1960 he and Gwen moved back to Bryn Athyn for good with their three daughters. They built their home on the family farm at the end of Sycamore Road where they would stay for the rest of their lives. They would soon add Jennifer and Bethany for a total of five.

Her years in Bryn Athyn with her family were the happiest of her life. She loved her five daughters and loved even more the eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren that were born over the course of the sixty-five years they lived there. Their adventures growing up, with their trips, family vacations, their homes in Maine and Palm Beach, their ponies and horses, schooling and friends, were all a joy to her. Gwen was the glue that held the family together and made everything enjoyable. Each of the children, and each grandchild, was so very special. Unfortunately not all the years were so happy: in 1968 the family received a terrible, crushing blow when their little daughter Jenny passed away from encephalitis at the age of five. It was almost more than they could bear. Thankfully, Ed and Gwen are now seeing her as an angel in heaven, and Gwen's face is lighting up just as it did whenever she saw her grandchildren in this world.

Always preferring to stay involved, Gwen fit right into Bryn Athyn with its wide variety of activities and New Church social

She spent many years as vice president and president of Theta Alpha, being especially happy to be able to visit the many Theta Alpha chapters all over the world.

life. Gwen's peace and satisfaction were connected not only to the joys of raising her family and life with Ed, but also to the work that she did for the church, schools, and community. She spent many years as vice president and president of Theta Alpha International, being especially happy to be able to

visit the many chapters all over the world. She loved gardens and gardening and supported various botanical gardens, horticultural societies, and arboretums, besides making beautiful gardens at her home. She loved art museums and New Church art, and collected nativities. She worked hard on Friday suppers, assemblies and other committees. She and Ed especially worked to support the church, New Church education, and health care in the Philadelphia area.

Throughout all of their years Ed and Gwen enjoyed a happy and loving marriage. Ed's love of Gwen as the star of his universe, and hers for him, has been the constant refrain of their lives. She held close to her heart the teaching about eternal marriage and never doubted that she would be with Ed again soon. The five years after his passing were a trial for her. But she kept a happy home, with her daughters and grandchildren in and out, wonderful helpers assisting her in many different ways, and her good dog Dapper by her side. She kept driving well into her nineties, and continued to volunteer at church, greeting people for tours and visits up until her death. In her 94 years in this world, Gwen had a happy and productive life and was a blessing to those of

us who knew her. Now she is moving on to a life that will be an even better one as she and Ed reunite and find eternal happiness in the Lord's kingdom.

Married partners (who love each other) think of and yearn for eternity in their marriage, and eternal happiness for them is founded on that idea. In consequence of this they are no longer two but one person, that is, one flesh. Such a oneness cannot be sundered by the death of the other partner... The two are not actually separated by the death of one; for the spirit of the deceased continues to dwell with the spirit of the one not yet deceased, and this until the death of the other, at which time they come together again and are reunited, loving each other even more tenderly than before, because they are in the spiritual world. (Conjugal Love 321)



New Church Resources

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

Help Me Remember

Sylvia Montgomery Shaw

Lord, when I am too frail
to walk to the lake,
or bones turn brittle as eggshells, or
when the world blurs behind
macular degeneration's veil,
or the theft of cognitive decline,

Help me remember to thank you
for the soaring days of youth,
or decades of joyous times,
for grief that taught valuable lessons,
and for sun-sparked mornings bursting
with You—You who flows into all good things.

Sylvia Montgomery Shaw discovered the Writings when she attended the Academy of the New Church College from 1968-1970. Decades later, with a doctorate in English and teaching experience in Boston University, she returned to the same campus - now renamed Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. It meant a two-year separation from her husband, Holland, and her life in Massachusetts, although he loyally visited her every weekend during that period. Sylvia is retired and has just completed her third nov-

el, *Planting Eden*, which she hopes to self-publish when she launches her imprint, Tamburnia Books. The other two novels, *Paradise Misplaced*, and *Flight of the Trogon*, are available at Amazon. All three novels incorporate New Church ideas as the characters face the difficult challenges of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). Sylvia can be reached at montshaw3@gmail.com.



Book Recommendation

Kim de Chazal

The Language of Parable by William Worcester is a lovely little book about correspondences between natural and spiritual things, originally written for high school-aged Sunday school students. The Word is written in the symbolic language of correspondences, with deeper levels of meaning within the literal stories. In easy-to-read text, each short chapter talks about one correspondence (light and darkness, horses, cities, childhood/youth/old age, sun/moon/stars, ivory and pearl, trees, clothes, etc.). The reader begins to see how each thing in this world is an outward manifestation or correspondence of something spiritual. This little book can change the way you understand the Word and the way you look at the natural world around you. Read online at NewChristianBibleStudy.org/LanguageParable or keep an eye for a used copy on Amazon or Addall.com (used book consortium).

The Burning Bush

Exodus 3
Bible Study Notes, Volume 2

Anita Dole

Editor's note: Through the years, depending on where my family called home, I have taught Sunday School both in the New Church and the Methodist Church. These days I primarily go to New Church Vineyard on the newchurch.org website when I prepare Sunday School. New Church Vineyard offers a wide variety of lessons, activities and support materials for a range of developmental levels. One resource in particular has touched me deeply: Anita Dole's Bible Study Notes. In this issue I have included both an excerpt from one of her lessons and also her edited memorial, which is found in the last volume of her Bible Study Notes. She had the talent, skill, knowledge and insight to distill weighty theological topics and make them understandable and applicable to all stages of life. It is a true delight to share some of her work. -Kris

Excerpted from Notes for Parents

The children of Israel, who had gone down into Egypt to live during the seven years of famine in the time of Joseph, had become too well satisfied with their ease and prosperity there, and had forgotten to go back to their own country. So in time they got into difficulties with the Egyptians and were made slaves. When everything is going well with us, we are likely to forget that we are created not just to enjoy the good things of this world, but that the Lord has a place for each one of us and a work which we should be doing for Him. The Holy Land represents heaven or a heavenly character, and that is the true home of everyone of us. All our occupations

are really our opportunities for serving the Lord and the neighbor, and if we think of them in this way, we shall come to love our work not for the money or acclaim it brings us but because it is useful to others. This is the only way in which we can really find happiness in our work.

Unhappiness always comes from thinking about ourselves, because we are never satisfied then, our work seems hard and our pay small, and we are always thinking about what other people should do for us. This is slavery, the kind of slavery into which the children of Israel fell in Egypt when they forgot the country in which they were supposed to be living.

...If you look about you honestly, you will see that the people who really are happy are always the ones who are not thinking about themselves; and we can all be such people if we will. The Lord's call to Moses at the burning bush is the call which comes to everyone of us if we are willing to listen, the call to turn our thoughts and our lives away from our own wants and toward the Holy Land of unselfish, heavenly living.

***The Lord's call
to Moses at the
burning bush is the
call which comes to
everyone of us if we
are willing to listen.***

Anita Dole Bible Study Notes Volume 2 - © 2001 by The Swedenborg Foundation. Used in the Theta Alpha Journal by permission.

Anita Sturges Dole

1889-1973

The author of these lesson notes was born on March 18, 1889 in Chicago, Illinois. She received her education in the Chicago public schools, and received the B.A. degree from the University of Chicago in 1908, having been elected to Phi Beta Kappa the previous

She was fond of telling how... she was so convinced of the truth of the doctrine of the New Church concerning the Bible that she was ready to join the New Church.

year on the basis of her academic achievement. As a child she attended an Episooal Sunday School, and was confirmed in that faith in 1902. On completing her education, she was employed first as a cataloguer in the University of Chicago Library (1908-1910), and subsequently as a secretary to Professor William I. Thomas (1910-1912), as a research Assistant in the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy (1912-1914), and as Assistant

Manager of a small publishing company (1914-1917).

During this period she studied voice and was in training under Herman De Vries of the Chicago Opera Company, considering a career in music, when in February of 1917 she was persuaded by her sister Alice to accept a teaching position at Urbana, a New Church high school and junior college in Ohio, to fill an unexpected vacancy. That summer at the end of the term, she went with her sister to the New Church Assembly in Almont, Michigan. There she heard the Rev. Dr. Thomas King give a lecture in which he traced the correspondence of the ass in the Bible, illustrating its spiritual meaning with quotations throughout the Bible. She was fond of telling how, at the end of this talk, she was so convinced of the truth of the doctrine of the New Church concerning the Bible that she was ready to join the New Church. She was confirmed by Dr. King there at Almont, in August, 1917. That fall she made her decision to give up her promising career in music and devote herself to the teaching of the New Church doctrines, and to the work of the church. Her lovely soprano voice, though lost to the world at large, enriched worship of her church to the end of her life.

She also loved to tell how, before she went to Almont, she had audited a course in philosophy being given at Urbana by its principal, Rev. Louis A. Dole, of how she had been most strongly attracted to him, and how Mr. Dole had apparently taken no notice of her at all. However, when she returned from Almont a confirmed and enthusiastic member of the New Church, Mr. Dole lost no time in becoming better acquainted with the new teacher on his staff. They were married on New Church Day – June 19, 1919.

In September of 1920 Mr. Dole accepted a call to serve the New Church society in Fryeburg, Maine, on a six-month trial basis; they stayed there for seventeen years. Almost immediately on taking up the Fryeburg pastorate, they discovered an interest among several Massachusetts New Church members who summered in Fryburg, in establishing a summer assembly similar to that at Almont. It was through the on-the-scene efforts of the Doles, coupled with the fund-raising activities of the Massachusetts group, that the Fryeburg New Church Assembly became a reality in 1921, with Mr. Dole as its first president.

Time passed, and Mr. Dole was invested as General Pastor of the Maine Association of the New Church. In this capacity he became increasingly concerned at the decline of the Bath society where his father had once been minister, and where he himself had been confirmed. After several unsuccessful attempts to re-establish worship services in Bath by other means, he accepted a call to serve as its minister. The Doles moved to Bath in 1937.

In Bath, Mrs. Dole became active in the Parent-Teacher Association, serving several terms as president of her local chapter and as chairman of the Constitution and By-laws Committee of the state organization; in the Girl Scout movement, serving as Commissioner for the Bath area for several years; in the Bath Council of Churches; in the Maine Council of Churches, serving on its Constitution and By-Laws Committee; and in the Bath Council of Church Women, which she helped to found. During World War II she was Production

She was best known... for what she herself considered her life's work: the preparation of a comprehensive four-year course of Sunday school lesson notes based on the interpretation of the Bible in the light of the New Church teachings concerning its spiritual meaning.

Chairperson of the Red Cross chapter in Bath, supervising the preparation of war relief materials sent overseas from the Bath area. Through these and other activities people of all faiths came to know and love her, and many found in her that rare combination of spiritual insight, practical advice, and personal interest which brought them again and again to her door. Many were still corresponding with her at the time of her passing on.

She was one of the most active members of the New Church, not only at the local level, but on the national

scene. She served from time to time on the various committees of the General Convention and was elected to the Board of Managers of its theological school, from which she resigned when her son became a student there. She was active in the National Alliance of New Church Women, becoming one of its presidents and an ardent promoter of its Round Robin program – a system of circulating letters among particularly the isolated new Church women. She was for some years its Mother Robin.

She was best known, and will likely be longest remembered, for what she herself considered her life's work: the preparation of a comprehensive four-year course of Sunday school lesson notes based on the interpretation of the Bible in the light of the New Church teachings concerning its spiritual meaning. Although she did the research and writing for these lessons herself, she always sought her

husband's opinion of her work, and would publish nothing which he had not read and approved. Working together, both in writing and in parish teaching, they passed on to their congregations and to their many church friends a rich heritage of Bible scholarship of a truly spiritual character, and they also achieved a degree of success rare in this century of widening generation gaps, in passing on to all three of their children not only their knowledge, but also their deep and lasting love for the Word of the Lord and for the church based on it.

In 1966, two years after the passing of her husband into the spiritual world, Mrs. Dole retired from parish work and went to live first with her son in Massachusetts and finally with her daughter in Edmonton. She never did retire from active service to the church, continuing to teach in the Sunday school and to participate in study programs, and carrying on a remarkably extensive and varied correspondence to the end.

In her old age she looked forward with increasing anticipation and some impatience to her passing into the spiritual world to join her beloved husband. This became her dearest wish, and it was granted by our Lord's divine mercy on April 7, 1973, shortly after her eighty-fourth birthday.

Edmonton, Alberta, April 13, 1973

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

Vera P. Glenn

Introduction

These are some of my memories of living in the old farmhouse and growing up among the apple and peach orchards of the Academy Farm. Part I was in the October 2025 issue and Part II in the April 2026 issue of the *Journal*. This is part III of III.

The War Years – WWII

The war didn't touch my family personally. Dad was too old to be drafted, and besides he was growing fruit. Uncle Joe was working in Honolulu when Pearl Harbor was bombed, but he wasn't hurt. He returned to California to take an accountant job with a company building warships. Uncle Ollie, ROTC in College, did go into the army. Because of his poor eyesight he never went overseas, spending his war years training soldiers for active duty. Uncle Ben was exempt for medical reasons. Ben continued living in the house with Grandmother and had a job doing maintenance with the Academy.

The most terrifying moment of the war for me was the night my dad tried to teach my mother to shoot the rifle. I had been put to bed but could hear them in the room downstairs. There was a danger America might be invaded. German submarines had been sighted off

the Jersey coast. Dad argued that if he were killed, she would have to defend herself and me. My mother was having none of it.

Dad was a good shot, had been handling a gun since he was twelve, protecting the garden from rabbits and groundhogs and occasionally hunting a pheasant. He was in the Home Guard. We used to go up and watch when they drilled on the old football field on a Sunday afternoon.

Mother showed her patriotism in other ways. She joined the Red Cross ladies who met in the undercroft of the Cathedral to make bandages. She was also very strict about rationing and food stamps, and saving bacon fat, tin cans, and newspapers for the war effort. WWI had had a huge effect on her as a young woman in Canada. Her older brother, Rupert, fought in France along with other young men from the Church society in Kitchener – and some of them died. She went to work in the munitions factory in Toronto, staying with friends. I remember her singing WWI songs: “It’s a long way to Tipperary” and “Over There” while she washed up the lunch dishes in the kitchen under my bedroom, where I was supposed to be napping.

We had a stand-on-the-floor radio in our living room/dining room, and I was allowed to listen to the “Magic Story Hour” (something like that) and when I was a little older “The Lone Ranger.” And then “Superman”. It’s a bird, it’s a plane, it’s Superman! I remember asking for a handgun one Christmas, and rather surprisingly getting a solid composition, black and white pistol – nothing like a real one – to use in one of our imaginative games playing Dick Tracy. I remember sitting on the floor in front of the radio one wintery day and hearing the war news from Europe. It was grim. The “Battle of the Bulge” was raging furiously.

It may have been that Christmas that we walked to the Tableaux Service in the Assembly Hall. Gasoline was rationed so we walked everywhere we could. There was a bitter cold wind. The stars were glittering in the black night and there was snow under foot and covering the road. It seemed a long walk up the lane and Paper Mill

It seemed a long walk up the lane and Paper Mill Road to the Assembly Hall and back home, but seeing the Tableaux was worth it. They were magical – each beloved scene under the exquisite lighting touching my heart. The Baby Lord had been born to bring peace on earth.

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With V-J Day – August 15th, 1945 – Japan surrendered and the war was finally over! I well remember that hot evening when we heard the news and the sirens began to blow. I got permission to join my David cousins who lived

on Alnwick Road in the middle of the action. People were out on the street cheering, delirious with joy. Cars were honking as they drove around the Loop. Somehow, I ended up in someone's open car – all of us shouting and singing and waving flags.

During the war years Dad had trouble getting help for working the orchards. Once Grandpa died, he needed steady help and took on John Sommers from Huntingdon Valley. He was an older man with an eye patch. (I think he may have lost the eye in the First World War.) He didn't drive but walked to work from his home in the Valley. He was limited in what he could do and wasn't a companion as Grandpa had been, but he worked hard and was reliable. The hardest part was getting pickers for the harvest. I remember Eldric Klein, a teacher at the Academy, spending the long summer vacations picking peaches for Dad.

After the war, Dad advertised in the newspapers for migrant workers. From then on, a lot of Puerto Ricans were hired. The

orchards ringing with Spanish chatter. Perhaps the best workers Dad ever had were Germans. Mr. Dieterle and Mr. Lampman could do everything. When Mr. Lampman retired in 1972, my dad, feeling he couldn't manage alone anymore, also retired. He set up an agreement with Solly Brothers, who had a farm stand in Bucks County, and they ran the orchard for ten years.

The War changed things in the country and on the farm. You might say my family's fortunes proverbially went from rags to riches, except that we were never poverty stricken and never became really rich, but our lifestyle (dreadful word) was definitely more prosperous. Dad was running the Academy Orchards and making a profit. During the war, the prices for apples and peaches had gone up considerably. Dad often said he wished his father had lived to see it.

Factories began to turn out goods for peacetime instead of battleships and bombers. Mother got her automatic washing machine. The most exciting acquisition was the new car, a Chevrolet. It was battleship gray, not the color we would have chosen, but you took what was available and felt lucky to get it.

For the next several years there were no big changes in the house. Grandmother's health was declining, but she "hung in there" until March 1953 when she passed peacefully in her sleep. At her memorial service we sang "Abide with Me" and "Father I Come unto Thee" which I suggested, as I remembered we'd sung them at Grandpa's service.

At my dad's suggestion, Uncle Ben and his oldest sister, Ruth, now a widow, took a house together in Huntingdon Valley. When he moved out the whole house became our home. The big front room then became our dining/sitting room. Mostly we ate our meals at the table in front of the window in what had been Grandmother's kitchen unless we had guests, or it was a holiday. The big front room was also used for times when we had a big party or Uncle Joe came home from his travels, and we had a Powell family reunion with all the aunts and uncles and cousins – Uncle Joe showed his

many slides of exotic places against the big white front door and gave us a running commentary. He also brought little presents.

Another change to the house came when the front porch was removed, decay having set in. The Academy didn't want to spend the money to repair it. Then in the fall of 2024, the farmhouse came down physically, and what I have left are photographs and memories.

The Heritage Years – My Mother and Dad

My father had the vision to give up the unprofitable old fashioned "truck farm" of his father, plant instead orchards of fruit trees that flourished, providing food for the community and us with a good living. He worked hard, but I realize now he could not have done it without my mother. She was the perfect wife for him. Raised on a hard-scrabble farm in Ontario, Canada, she'd said, "I'll never marry a farmer," and then she did.

Mother was practical, energetic, and frugal. She loved making things grow: a wonderful big vegetable garden, the flowers in beds around the house. Daffodils and forsythia in the spring, red poppies, blue larkspur, and iris in the summer. Once I tried to pass her garden off as my own by weeding it. But the judges were not fooled, and I did not get a Girl Scout badge for gardening.

Sometimes mother worked right beside Dad, like the time the apples needed a crucial insecticide and Mr. Sommers, the hired man, was sick. Mother pulled on an old pair of Grandpa's overalls that were still hanging from a hook in the barn and went out into the orchard. While my father drove the tractor, she worked behind the tank, dragging the heavy hose and directing the white misty spray on the trees. In the fall she would work long hours on her knees sorting the piles of apples in the barn. Often, she would take over the salesroom in the barn while Dad was doing something else. But if he was needed, she would ring the old cow bell to call him in from the orchard.

I never did any heavy farm work, but I did help my mother with the canning – peeling and packing the fruit into the glass jars, filling

them to the brim with syrup, and screwing on the lids. The jars were then sealed in the big pressure cooker hissing on the stove. I was always afraid it would explode and hated to be left alone to watch it.

The rainbow rows of jars of sour cherries, applesauce, ivory pears with a cinnamon stick, tomatoes, purple plums, spiced crab apples, and peaches would be set on the shelves at the bottom of the basement stairs. The bounty of the orchard and garden.

Mother was a natural hunter/gatherer. Some of my happiest memories of being with her are of foraging trips around the old farm or picking the produce from the garden. She always wore an apron over her house dress and, if she'd forgotten a pail or a basket, would gather up the corners of the apron to make a bag. Together we picked the pole lima beans – mother on one side of the vines and me on the other. Later, we'd shell out the pods, saving the smallest and tenderest beans to freeze for holiday dinners. We picked red raspberries in the prickly patch she planted on the slope behind the lilacs. Defying poison ivy (which she got badly) and chiggers (which she got once) we tramped out to the weedy brush along Schmitt's line to scavenge for black raspberries. In season we found asparagus and strawberries that had escaped into the wild from the days when Grandpa grew them in rows, picked elderberries for pies and jelly, or scrambled on the ground for black walnuts. Often, too, we brought home natural decorative things to put in vases in the house: flowering branches, bittersweet, goldenrod, brown stalks of weeds with seeds, bright autumn leaves. In the tradition of her "Granny," I used to take my daughter out into the woods and fields to gather natural things to decorate our home for Thanksgiving.

My memories of Mother mostly involve activities; my memories of Dad include sitting at the table by the sunny southwest window in the kitchen at meal time listening to tales of his school days or family, learning the history of the Academy or the Church, discussing religion and politics and daily life. In the evenings before I went to bed when I was small, he would read to me while he smoked his

pipe. From this came my own love of books and reading. Dad also nurtured my love of music.

I remember when the old radio was replaced with a fruitwood cabinet containing a long-playing record player and an am/fm radio. And then a few years later Dad bought a black and white TV. Sunday nights we watched “Omnibus” and the “Ed Sullivan Show”.

Like most little girls I was very fond of my Daddy and would rather do things with him than with my mother. As the oldest son in a big family, he had to work hard on the farm, and he didn’t want that for me. Nor did he want me in the way and getting hurt. I don’t remember ever being asked to help, but sometimes I volunteered. Often, I’d go out with him in the truck in the fall, after the pickers were gone and the orchard was quiet, to bring in a last load of baskets of apples from the orchard. He’d lift the baskets onto the tail gate, and I’d pull them into rows in the front of the truck.

We had an early apple bloom the April I was 12, and then the weather turned chilly. Dad was worried the day he heard the news of a heavy frost coming that night that the apples would freeze in the bud. Hurriedly, smudge pots were improvised and set out on the slope above the Red Delicious trees. Mr. Sommers said he would come back about 10 p.m. and help Dad and Mother keep the fires going through the night. I begged to help.

I was given two smudge pots to tend all by myself, feeding them damp grass and oily rags. I was often alone; my parents only dim figures through the drifting smoke. At dawn, Dad came to put my fires out. It had been a long night. I’d like to write that our smudging had saved the crop, but Dad opened blossom after blossom as we walked home through the cold orchard and the thread of life inside, that would have become an apple, was black and dead. With the stoic philosophy of a farmer Dad said, “Well, we did what we could” and then my reward, “Thank you for coming out, Vera; you were a big help.”

One of my favorite things to do was to go along with my

dad when he delivered the orders of apples and peaches to farm stands in the area. On the way there we would chat about this and that, but on the way home, when the load had been safely delivered, he would sing. All kinds of songs: football pep and Academy songs, hymns or psalms, old ballads, songs from the Mikado he'd learned in high school in preparation for putting on the show. Regretfully, it was cancelled when scarlet fever broke out in the school, but he never forgot the music.

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Conclusion

I grew up at a transition time. The world was about to shift into an overdrive of amazing changes and inventions, a few old-fashioned practices, like milking a cow by hand and making butter in a churn, were hanging on, but were soon to disappear. My life was different from my classmates'. I think I was the only one raised on a farm-turned-orchard. It gave me a closeness to the land and the history of rural America in a special way. I was part of my father's occupation, part of the family livelihood in a way few modern children are. I loved the farmhouse and the other farm buildings, but most of all I loved the orchard.

A Daughter Lovingly Remembered

Doris Brickman Millam

Revised from "A Daughter Lovingly Remembered," originally published in the Theta Alpha Journal, Spring 1980

Dear Kathy,

Today you would have been ten years old. During the last year of your life you were taken to your heavenly eternal home.

Your life with your parents and your brother gave them some of the happiest moments of their lives. We hold onto our reminiscences of our happy times with you as if each moment were a precious jewel.

During your last year of life you seemed to really come into your own as a unique person with a distinct personality and character. You emerged from a shy, introverted little girl to an outgoing, vivacious young girl. You were enthusiastic and joyful with new ventures in your life. Your eagerness to please showed itself in many helpful ways, in doing things for Daddy and me. But more importantly, you gave us your warm, loving spirit by sharing your delight in life and your unrestrained affection.

We miss your physical presence so much because you were always giving of yourself to us with close affection. You were also sensitive. You didn't like arguments, or seeing one of us or your playmates upset. Because you didn't like us to be displeased with you, we seldom found a need to discipline you. You were so open in your love – you used to say to us, "I love you best of all,

but I love the Lord most of all.”

Even at your young age you showed your love to the Lord by your enthusiasm with church and school, and you were just starting to learn the joys of being useful to others by doing little jobs. I remember how you enjoyed helping me with preparing Friday Suppers. I know you would have found many joys in church and school duties as time went on. You showed so many times how happy you were when you gave of yourself.

Is it true, as Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross states, that little children who die have an innate sense of their imminent death? Your final words meant so much to me and seem to indicate this could be true. When you were told that it was getting dark earlier those fall evenings, and that you would have to be home earlier, you said, “That’s all right, Mom, because I just love being home with you as you’re the best Mom in the world.” Little did I know when I sent you across the street that these would be the last words you would ever say to me. And that morning when your father went to work you made a point of saying as he left, “I love you, Daddy.” These sentiments were not commonly expressed verbally, although you showed your love to us constantly by your cheerful willingness and pleasing manner.

When the telephone call came from a neighbor saying you had been hit by a car while crossing the street, it seemed like an unreal dream. The paramedics arrived, and you were taken, unconscious, to the hospital.

While driving myself to the hospital I felt the Lord’s presence very closely. I found myself saying aloud, “Thy Will be done.” I felt His protection over you.

All mortal means possible were tried to keep you alive but within two hours we were told your head injuries were too grave and you had succumbed.

We think you probably never saw the car that hit you, and we

feel grateful that you were spared conscious suffering.

Your mind would probably never have been bright and clear again had you lived. I'll never forget our final look at you. Your face had a gentle, sweet half-smile as we kissed you good-bye. "You are going to make a beautiful angel," -I whispered to you, and that is how I always think of you.

I know your life is happier than it ever could have been on this earth. I imagine your joy and wonder in seeing the marvels of heaven, of growing up with your angel mother. In a few years you will be prepared to take your place in a heavenly society, and you will meet your conjugal partner.

Kathy, I am so very happy for you as I know your life will be beautiful forever. The qualities you showed on this earth will continue to develop as your love and intelligence increase. I often wish that I could have you back for a visit just to touch and hold you and to tell you how much we love and miss you. I know you wouldn't even feel comfortable in the natural world anymore, but your Dad and I miss you so much that our selfish desires beg to see and touch you again.

It is true that the pain of losing one you love lessens in time. Life is very precious and the desire to survive and carry on is strong. It is God's will that as you are brought closer to His sphere, we are able to feel less pain in separation. We are fortunate that our memories of you are so beautiful, and our memories of our life together will always be locked into a special part of our minds.

Your face had a gentle, sweet half-smile as we kissed you good-bye. "You are going to make a beautiful angel," -I whispered to you, and that is how I always think of you.

So on your birthday, Kathy, we will always remember you even more specially, with such deep love and gratitude that we were honored to have you as our daughter. We thank our Lord that we were privileged to share your life for nine wonderful years. If it be God's will, we will see you again, not as the darling little girl we knew, but as a beautiful young woman in the spiritual world.

So often I find myself feeling grateful to have the beliefs of life after death that our religion teaches. I do not know the reason you were taken from the world at such a young age, but I feel no bitterness or anger, as I know the Lord loves us all the more because He understands our loss.

The Lord never fails us and our gratitude is never more felt than when we receive His blessing and help at the loss of a loved one. God's help and the memory of your beautiful spirit have given us the strength to cope with losing you. It is these memories that will keep your spirit alive with us always.

Love,
Mom



Call for Art Submissions!

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

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

Scholarships

Celebrating Our Scholarship Recipients

Theta Alpha International is delighted to announce the recipients of this year’s annual scholarships. We are pleased to support these outstanding students as they continue their educational journeys. Each recipient was awarded a \$2,500 scholarship.

We extend our warmest congratulations to all of this year’s recipients and wish them continued success in their studies and future endeavors!

Academy of the New Church Girl School

Penny Brown
Theresa Vandergrift

Bryn Athyn College of the New Church

Margaret Stine	Education
Makenna Lindsay	Education
Ashley Klippenstein	Religion

Academy of the New Church Girls School Scholarships

Two annual scholarships are now offered for the 2027-2028 school year in the amount of \$2,500 for up to two young women who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. The Scholarship may be used toward tuition, books or fees. These are annual mer-

it- and need-based scholarships and may be applied for yearly. Applications are due April 1, 2027.

To apply: email scholarships@thetalphainternational.org

Bryn Athyn College Scholarships Available

Two education scholarships will be offered for the 2027-2028 school year. This annual award is for the purpose of supporting women attending Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who desire to become New Church teachers and declare education as a major, minor or Interdisciplinary Degree.

The annual scholarship award amount is \$2,500, paid directly to the College at the beginning of each trimester, for up to two recipients. One award is for an incoming first year woman student and another award is for a current Bryn Athyn College woman education student. May be used toward tuition, fees, and/or books. Applications due March 1, 2027.

Three scholarships are available to women students of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who have a 3.0 GPA and are studying Religion (major, minor or ID) or are international students. The \$2,500 scholarships are awarded to eligible recipients who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. These are annual merit-based scholarships that can be used for tuition, college fees, books or supplies. Applications due March 1, 2027.

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

Upcoming Retreats

Inflow

A weekend of slowing down, turning inward, and reconnection with your inner life.

Oct 16 - Oct 18, 2026 Ludlow VT, United States

Inflow is a 3-day, 2-night immersive, experiential weekend designed to bring Swedenborg's teachings into lived, transformative practice. It's led by Chelsea Odhner, a Swedenborgian teacher and IFS Level 2 practitioner. Explore the depths of your inner life through body-mind practices: guided movement, meditation, intuitive drawing, and reflective exercises rooted in both Swedenborg's spiritual insights and the therapeutic framework of Internal Family Systems.

Information for the next retreat swedenborg.com/inflow-retreat.html

Gathering Leaves 2027: Be Still and Know

A Swedenborgian/New Church Women's Retreat

May 6-9, 2027 Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, United States

The mission statement for Gathering Leaves: We gather to promote harmony among women who are associated with the various Swedenborgian organizations around the world. We acknowledge our common beliefs, explore our differences, develop respect for one another's contributions, create a healing atmosphere, and celebrate our spiritual sisterhood.

Information for this retreat is found on the Gathering Leaves <https://gatheringleaves.weebly.com/>

Women's Weekend in Australia
April 2-4, 2027 The Tops, Stanwell Tops, NSW, Australia

Contact Carolyn Heldon for more information nciaretreat@gmail.com

Please continue to share New Church retreat information to editor, Kris Earle, madameahs@gmail.com



Book Recommendation

Kim de Chazal

The most well-known of the books of the Writings and often the first one people read, ***Heaven and Hell*** lays out how the dying process works and how a person finds their place in the other world, beginning in the intermediate World of Spirits and then finding their way to a place where they feel at home, either in heaven or in hell. Daily life in the other world and the relationship between that world and this one are also described, including a lovely little chapter on correspondences. Available at newchurchbooks.com (standard edition) or “Heaven and Hell: The Portable New Century Edition” on amazon.com. Also available as an audiobook on the Swedenborg Foundation website at swedenborg.com or for free at newchurchoaudio.org. Note that a companion volume, ***Reflections on Heaven and Hell*** by Frank Rose, with brief reflections on each chapter of Heaven and Hell, is available at amazon.com

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Save the Date!

Theta Alpha Online Meetups

Beginning Tuesday, October 20, 2026, at 8:00-9:00 p.m. ET, Theta Alpha will host online meetups on the third Tuesday of each month. We plan to discuss a variety of topics as we connect with one another. As a Theta Alpha member, you will receive an email the week before each meetup, followed by a reminder email on the day of the meetup, including the link for the meeting on Google Meet.

It is our hope that we can listen, talk, and find others with whom to share important thoughts and feelings.

Future Google Meet Discussions & Topics

- Tuesday, October 20, 2026 – **Volunteering:** Inspired by articles by Suzy Laidlaw and Helen Kennedy
- Tuesday, November 17, 2026 – **Creative Outlets:** Inspired by Karen Cooper's artist statement on quilting
- Tuesday, December 15, 2026 – **Advent Conversation:** Inspired by Mary Valentine's article, *Led Home: My Journey to Faith, Purpose, and Joy*
- Tuesday, January 19, 2027 – **The Written Word in Our Lives:** Inspired by Dale Morris's article, *Printing is a Real Art*
- Tuesday, February 16, 2027 – **Children in Heaven:** Inspired by Doris Millam's article, *A Daughter Lovingly Remembered*
- Tuesday, March 16, 2027 – **Theta Alpha Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow:** Reflecting on how Theta Alpha has been useful and how it can continue to serve in light of our community's motto, *Non Nobis Solum* ("Not for Ourselves Alone")

We hope you'll join us!



Bryn Athyn, PA 19009



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