

# Theta Alpha Journal



May 2015

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Theta Alpha  
"Daughters of the Academy"  


Named From the Greek :  
Θυγατηρεζ Ακαδεμιαζ  
*Thugateres Akademeias*

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

*Non Nobis Solum* ~ Not for Ourselves Alone

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*Please Note-*

*Pictures of quilts made by the women in the Handmade article  
can be seen by going onto it and clicking on "Photos". We also  
plan to put some responses to articles and other good things on  
there.*

Archived copies of the Journal are available at:  
<http://www.newchurch.org/materials/publication/theta-alpha-journal>

The previous archived *Journal* on the website is April 2013.

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## “How Can **We** Help **You**?”

Welcome to the beginning of a new stage in the life of Theta Alpha International! Due to the unanimous approval of our bylaw changes at the annual meeting in October (see new bylaws elsewhere in this issue), we have moved forward with some of our plans for revitalizing our organization.

You are currently enjoying one of our most popular useful endeavors. Thanks to the efforts of Helen Kennedy and her editorial crew, the *Journal* has been brought back to life! This issue is being widely circulated to let you know “We’re Back” and that we would love to have you join us in our mission. (Future print issues will be sent to paid members only.) Our goal is to publish the *Journal* twice a year. Of course, in order to do this, we need your input – articles, opinions, artwork, poems, etc. We are also working to increase our presence on the web through use of a website, blog, Facebook, and/or other social media. If you enjoy working with the Internet and would like to spearhead or assist with this effort, we could really use your talents.

Other uses that are continuing include the Laws of Life essay contest for sophomore girls, the awards at graduation, baptismal packets, senior girls celebration, and, of course, our annual scholarship donation to the Academy (used by the high school and college).

In addition to the traditional scholarship donation given each year, I am very excited to announce that we are working to establish a new annual scholarship that will assist education students at Bryn Athyn College. This will be administered and awarded directly by Theta Alpha International. We will be publishing more details in the future. In the meantime, we hope to build up an endowment that will provide for this scholarship in the years to come.

As part of our efforts to raise money for the scholarship and for other uses, we have committed to at least one annual fundraiser that would go to support a specific use each time. Our first fundraiser is going to be a raffle, so be on the lookout for how you can participate. We are also looking for someone who would be interested in coordinating our fundraising and donation efforts. If this is something that would interest you, please contact us.

As you can see, we are moving forward with renewed energy and enthusiasm. In order to sustain this in the years ahead, however, we need to get word out to the younger women who believe there is value in supporting New Church education and in supporting each other on our spiritual journeys. One approach we are trying is to see where there might already be small groups with a similar purpose and partnering with them in some way. Do you know of, or belong to, such a group? If so, we'd love to hear about possible partnering opportunities.

Even if you aren't currently involved in any organized way, we would love to know what our "mission" means to you in practical terms. I have mentioned some ways (above) in which you can help us. So, let me ask, "**How can we help you?**" See the front of *Journal* for the different ways you can get in touch with us. We hope to hear from **you!**

*Melodie Greer*, President of Theta Alpha International

## Editor's Notes: An Opportunity to Continue

*Theta Alpha Journal* has longevity. For many decades past, women have poured their vitality and energy into *Theta Alpha Journal*, sharing insights, crafting poems, and pondering difficulties. In recent years, online social media have opened up new avenues for personal connection, including various forms of written discussion, but nothing quite like the experience of the worldwide network of *Journal* readers (men as well as women) receiving the latest issue in their mailboxes.

The *Journal* is waking up after a period of hibernation, and Gill Mayer, assistant editor, and I are happy to offer you a version that will appear both in print and online. As in the past, we encourage readers to submit articles, poems, and letters for publication. In addition, we are introducing two topical sections which bring together several short pieces.

We plan to devote a section to art in each issue. In this one we interview a number of women who make quilts and do other forms of quilting and handwork, including cloths used on the Holy Supper table and in church services. Pictures of some of the quilts and cloths these women have made can be seen on our Facebook page. Erin Andrews Larsen hopes that a history can be compiled of handmade textiles used in the Cathedral, and we would like to extend it to all the New Church societies. If you or someone you know has worked on cloths or robes for worship, please let us know.

In the Autumn (or October) 2015 issue, we will feature painting and those who paint and draw. We would appreciate a paragraph or two on your work and what you love about it. If you'd rather not write it yourself, we can arrange an interview.

In these pages you will also see a section called Readers Respond; the topic for this issue, "Technology: Love/Hate it," engenders strong feelings both of capability and despair. In the next issue we will follow up on the topic with as many reader

responses as possible, taken from online discussion and letters both posted and emailed. We welcome a full spectrum of contributions.

The cover of each issue will feature a work of art by a New Church artist. Laurie Curtin has done the beautiful painting reproduced on this cover. The window in the painting is in the Ezekiel Tower basement in the Cathedral in Bryn Athyn. We hope to receive suggestions for future covers.

Also in this issue, Chelsea Odhner has compiled a list of websites of possible interest to our readers. Further recommendations are welcome. In "Ten Good Things About Marriage," Lori Odhner gives us insights garnered from her experience creating events for *Caring for Marriage*, and from her own life. My article, "Empress Elizabeth," relates a true spiritual-world romance between two people known by Swedenborg both in this life and the next. Linda Odhner has written about some of the challenges associated with putting freedom into practice in educational settings, in "The Awkward Ideal of Freedom."

Contact information for *Theta Alpha Journal* appears at the front of the Journal. We offer many avenues of communication and many ways of contributing, in hopes that you readers will find ways to share what's on your minds and hearts. Thank you for your interest, support, and love.

*Helen Kennedy, Editor*  
*Legite Feliciter (Happy reading)*



## Ode to My Shoulders

I love my life, but my shoulders betray me  
—at least that’s what I’ve long believed.  
I’ve tried in vain to release their tension;  
They remain stubborn and resolute.  
“Relax your shoulders” my dance teacher would say  
In the peaking pitch of her Australian accent.  
And here I am two decades later  
Finally acknowledging: I can’t.

Who knew the tiny structures of each trapezius  
Would ratchet close together,  
Their finest threads hugging in  
To hold on tight, when she was taken.  
As if they knew in that very moment  
That they would have to take over,  
And so sweetly volunteered  
The job of picking me up.  
They were willing to love me like a mother,  
While I looked on their care with disdain.  
The truth is my body loved me  
When I couldn’t do the same.

They didn’t care that it would take decades for my mind to  
catch up,  
To finally realize love never stops holding us,  
But somehow they knew and never gave up.  
Their steadfast hold I felt as a burden,  
Their tightness as betrayal,  
But they did not hold it against me—they simply held and  
held on tight.  
Despite the emptiness they held a hope in me  
And carried me through the night.

So I’d like to thank my shoulders  
Who wouldn’t settle for my lies  
(It’s okay, I’m really happy!)

No matter how hard I tried.  
They knew there was a truer form, a spirit destined  
To take up formal residence  
In this body-house  
again.

I awoke just the other morning  
With a foreign sense of belonging.  
Only with being back did I realize  
How long I'd been gone.  
I felt a peace not unlike forgiveness  
As I lay with them in bed  
And said wordlessly to my shoulders,  
Oh now I understand!  
All these years you've—  
I'm so sorry.  
I am back now,  
I am back.

*Chelsea Rose Odhner*  
*Crodhner@gmail.com*

## From Powerful to Powerless

*"For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Amen."*

*It must be known, however, that the angels have no power whatever of themselves, but that all their power is from the Lord; and that they are powers only so far as they acknowledge this. Whoever among them believes that he has power of himself instantly becomes so weak as not to be able to resist even a single evil spirit. For this reason angels ascribe no merit whatever to themselves, and are averse to all praise and glory on account of anything they do, ascribing it to the Lord. HH 230*

“Stop whining, be tough!” This message still clings to me from my childhood. I took this admonition seriously at a very young age. Early on I adopted a positive attitude and tried hard to be resilient. Those are good and admirable qualities, right?

Much of my life I have been able to “power” my way through the toughest of times. Through difficult relationships, jobs, situations, I thought that all I needed to do was adopt a positive attitude. I would convince myself it could be so much worse—work as hard as I could, and everything would turn out fine. This formula kept on working. Things always got better, I had the key: positive attitude, try harder, positive attitude, and try harder.

Unfortunately the very things that have sustained and pushed me forward up to this point in my life are no longer serving me emotionally and spiritually. I now find that the resolve to be positive and resilient, qualities that kept me going and fueled my passion to make a difference in the world are gone. Over the last couple of years I have begun to feel more and more vulnerable and powerless. So just as the above passage states “Whoever among them (angels) believes that he has power of himself instantly becomes so weak as not to be able to resist even a single evil spirit.” I now experience states of spiritual and emotional weakness that I have no control over. It’s painful, negative, and I’m powerless.

Fortunately I have loving relationships with friends who support me in my states of extreme vulnerability. One friend and spiritual mentor gave me a Sumerian myth that has eased my

pain as I live through extreme temptation. It has helped me understand the spiritual process I am experiencing. It is the myth of Inanna's descent into the underworld. Inanna, the goddess of fertility, dresses lavishly for the descent, and at each of the seven gates of the descent, she must give up a piece of clothing or jewelry, each representing power that she gives up in her descent. As she reaches the bottom she is naked, but she still usurps her sister's underworld throne. On this throne Inanna is judged and reduced to a corpse which is hung on a meat hook. Thankfully the myth does not end there. Her faithful servant sends down help and Inanna is revived after a time.

Picturing myself as a corpse, stripped of my power, lying on the cold, hard floor of the underworld, is a rather morbid image, but it eases my emotional pain, sometimes making me smile at the irony. As a lifeless piece of meat I can do nothing but rely on His strength. God lovingly holds me as I experience the weakness that comes from my own delusions of power, while at the same time I know the Lord can change my pattern of thinking from "I can power through" to "I need to rely on His power". In this difficult process the Lord continues to gently lead me from paying lip service to "Without me, you can do nothing" to urgently praying for His power through the beautiful truths that He has given me as lifelines.

Scripture, hymns, stories sustain me in times of trouble. And now as I sing, "For I am weak, but Thou art mighty, hold me with Thy powerful hand," the song takes on a whole new dimension. The melody lifts me, and I'm more clearly seeing the Lord, who is with me in my descent of powerlessness, and the ascent of learning to acknowledge His true greatness, power and sovereignty. The voice from my childhood that repeats, "Stop whining, be tough!" is being stifled little by little. I am not tough, I don't want to be, and I am slowly learning what it feels like to know that my power is from the Lord; and that I have power only so far as I acknowledge Him as the source of all power.

*Kris Earle*  
*madameahs@gmail.com*

## Every Morning

Every morning I try to take a few minutes to set my mind to what the day will bring. I read a passage from the Word or the doctrines and think about how I could do better or be better or try more.

Every morning I watch the light through my front window. In Spring the light can be faint and in Autumn it can be brilliant and blazing.

Every morning I look into the front garden. I see plants pushing through the ground, or I see plants having a rest after a hot and demanding summer, gently letting go of leaves or their flowers slightly fading.

Every morning I see beauty. And every morning, before I hear the clunk of teenage sneakers running down two flights of stairs and demanding my attention, I remind myself: the light is beautiful without trying, the garden gives and recedes without judging its worth, and the Lord made me to be me.

So every morning after my few minutes of trying to be better and worrying about being better and more giving I tell myself to calm down, breathe and let the Lord work through me just the way He does in the beauty I see around me.

*Meg Eynon*  
*megeynon@gmail.com*

Handmade:  
Readers' Quilting and Embroidery

*...the details adapt themselves to the general pattern...*

(TCR 47)

***When our eye sees objects, it senses something delightful and pleasurable in them, depending on their form and color and... on the beauty in the whole and in each part. In other words, their appeal depends on their design [or pattern]. The charm and pleasure belong not to the eye but to the heart and its emotions.***

(SH 4301)

*(In the following interviews, all of the women live in Bryn Athyn except for Karen Jorgenson Cooper.)*

**Yvonne Wille, 94:** "I had an aunt, Margaret Bostock, who taught me how to sew in 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade. She was a schoolteacher. I made a lot of bad things back then. I didn't get into quilting until the Bernina sewing machine came out. My husband, John, gave me an old car and said, "If you can sell the car, you can buy the Bernina." I sold it to a High School teacher but didn't get enough money, so John contributed.

"I don't think I took any lessons in quilting but just started in. I never made a handmade quilt, so I was looked down on for years. But by the time I finished my career with quilts, the sewing machine had found its way in.

"I made a cloth for the Holy Supper service and the church [Bryn Athyn Cathedral] used it. Years later someone sent it back to me. The person asked, 'Do you want it?' I said 'Sure'. But then someone else at the church said to that person, 'Why did you send it to Yvonne—she made it for the church?' So it went back. When I go to Holy Supper, I usually kneel on the left side. But the next time I went after this, I had to be in the center to see

if they were using the cloth. It was a Hardanger [a Scandinavian type of symmetrical embroidery on cloth, the embroidery having some blocks that are holes].”

Yvonne wants to tell people, “I really love that my family goes out of their way to come and see me, to talk and laugh together with me. I’ve told them, ‘You can’t understand what you’ve done for me.’ Both of my girls have lost their husbands. They both pray at night when they go to bed.” (With tears), “They both have wrapped their arms around me and prayed with me.” (Still filled with tears), “It means so much. I’ve had such a happy life. I’m grateful.”

**Postscript by Sylvia Cooper:** *Morna Hyatt made a cloth for the Holy Supper table in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral, also. Yvonne’s cloth is used to cover the table, and Morna’s, to cover the elements. In addition, Sylvia Cooper reports that two altar cloths were made in 1967 or 68. She made one, using golden thread to embroider a lamb onto a garnet or magenta cloth (depending on who you are talking to) for which Yvonne did the backing. Originally it was on the baptismal altar but is being used now in the Council Chamber for the Young Children’s service. Robert Glenn designed the lamb. The second cloth was made for the baptismal altar. It was a blue one with a gold cross embroidered on it, made by Annette (Nettie) Brown. This cloth is now used in the small chapel to the right side of the Cathedral.*

**Betty Morey:** Betty started quilting in 1989 after she moved to BA. She took a class Gail Cooper gave and has been quilting and helping quilters ever since. On Tuesday afternoons a group of women from the community come to her house to quilt, and it ends up like a quilting bee.

Betty made the quilt for the Informal Service. She was in the gym where it’s held at the same time as Tom Kline [then pastor of the BA church] and Susie Farmer. Tom asked Susie if she would make a quilt for behind the altar. At the time Susie had cancer and was dying. “She knew that I did quilting, and she asked me if I would do it. I went to the Pastor’s office and said, ‘Here I am; what do you want?’ Out of that came the quilt that is used, made

of 49 blocks, each an individual pattern. Paul Simonetti and I stood outside informal service with patterns from a children's religious coloring book, asking if people wanted them for the squares for the quilt they were going to make. Not all the people wanted a pattern. In the quilt there are 27 patterns from the coloring book and 22 original designs. I don't know who all the people are who made the squares for the quilt, but there was a man who made the center one.

"I have 22 grandchildren and 33 great-grandchildren. In April I'll have 35. They treasure the quilts I've made for them." Note: Betty manages to send birthday cards to each one of them.

*Betty doesn't remember the names of everyone who made a square for the Informal Service quilt. We are asking those of our readers who did to let us know, so we can have as complete a record as possible. See contact information at the front of the Journal.*

**Lisa Cooper:** "I have a bedroom I'm turning over to my grandchildren, and I bought a new bookcase for it. The bookcase is white and stands next to a closet with a swinging door, so I felt I needed to protect the paint job on the top and the corner that the closet door slams into. After letting the problem with the closet door percolate in my mind a while, I realized the solution to both issues was the same: I could make a patchwork runner for the top and then have a padded border hanging down over the edge.

"I love any kind of handwork, and I've done a little quilting before—primarily a queen-sized quilt that was a wedding gift for my son and daughter-in-law. I wish I did more handwork, so this was good opportunity to get some in. I think what I like about it is that it uses my right brain. I'm much too left-brained most of the time."

**Lori Odhner:** "I have been quilting for forty years, and produce about fifty a year. I am blessed to have a great sewing room and lots of beautiful fabrics. It is delightful to teach young children to



sew as well, and I have a bunch of Featherweights [sewing machines] for them to use. Some of my current favorite quilt patterns are One Block Wonders, pineapples, Dresden Plates and Irish Chains.

“A few times each year, I coordinate people who want to work together to create a community quilt in celebration of a wedding. These are efforts to bring together people who love a couple and want to sew a beautiful and warm quilt to last for years.”

**Kelley Hale:** “I made a family tree quilt for my mother-in-law for Christmas in 1999. With it, even though all of her family were grown and had children, she could still be wrapped up in the warmth and love of the people she dedicated so much of her life to. We presented this to her with a surprise current portrait of all of her children and grandchildren. Her daughter and family made a trip in secret from California for this. I did it all just to see her smile; she had a great smile.

“Currently I am working on a family tree wall hanging for the other side of the family. I will not make the family tree quilt mistake again. Within two years of presenting my mother-in-law with the quilt, her family had changed with the addition of two more grandchildren and the subtraction of a daughter-in-law. Also great-grandchildren started to be born.

“The wall hanging I’m working on now has each name on individual leaves, and things can be changed as necessary. I very much look forward to seeing the smile on my mother’s face when it is finished.”

**Dori Closterman:** “For me, the colors are the hardest decision. The colors draw my attention first, and I get to play with all the different shades. They fascinate me. Often I change the blocks, and mix the colors up, too. That’s fun for me. For most quilts it needs to be dark, medium, light, or it can get too dull; too many medium colors become bland, etc. Another reason why I enjoy quilting is that I like to change the asymmetry into symmetry. The symmetry just kind of pops out when you put the quilt together.

“Textiles have always appealed to me. I like quilts because they are useful and keep people warm. My daughter-in-law, who has run in many marathons, loves the warmth of the quilt I gave her. I made the top from the tee shirts she got from the marathons, and for the back, I used slightly heavier, fuzzy materials so it would be softer and warmer. She struggles with MS and the extra warmth next to her body really helps her.”

***Karen Jorgenson Cooper***, as interviewed by Peggy Mergen:

Karen is a self-taught quilter. Home for the summer at the age of 18, and extremely bored, she made her first quilt out of sewing scraps. Later on she received a quilting book, and loved it! Her joke is, “If I got into quilting to get rid of all my left over fabric scraps, then why does my stock pile of fabric keep expanding?”

Early in 2014, I received an invitation on Facebook from Karen. The only thing needed was to say YES to it, and agree to Pay a gift or kind deed Forward to five people. After that, at some point within the year, we would receive a surprise gift from Karen.

I dragged my feet, while my sister, Mary, and five others, said “YES”. For her part, Mary Paid It Forward by giving surprise gifts of books, and a lunch, to five others. Months later, when Karen visited from Toronto, she brought along her Pay It Forward gift to Mary—a quilt!!

It seems remarkable to a non-quilter like me that even a good natured person would make a quilt for five different people! Karen explains, “If I had my way I would make a quilt for everyone I know. I really love to make quilts (gentle laugh). ...it’s fun to do unexpected things for somebody.”

**Kay Alden**, as interviewed by Peggy Mergen:

Kay graciously spreads her “Charm Quilt” on the floor in front of me. A Charm Quilt is one in which every piece comes from a different piece of fabric. Kay asked family and friends to send her pieces of cotton cloth. The vibrancy of the rainbow rich blues and reds jump out from this queen sized quilt. Over 200 people are represented in the pieces from 66 contributors. Pieces of fabric came from 12 states and 9 countries, with quite a few pieces coming from Africa. Kay lovingly hand-pieced and hand quilted all these various fabric gifts.

Kay has a book with a brief story of each square of this Charm Quilt: one from Kinky Hyatt’s apron, one from Marge Price’s bed jacket from Glenview, bright red flannel from a nephew’s favorite shirt, Kay’s daughter’s wedding dress and on and on. When friends and family visit, they often ask to see “the quilt”. Quickly they find their special fabric, and bring to mind the pajamas or child’s dress made from that fabric. Kay describes herself as a recreational quilter, always having quilting squares on the ready to keep her hands happy while she visits or watches TV. There is a lot of heart and skill in Kay’s several quilts. Being hand sewn, the seams aren’t machine sharp and precise, but these quilts are accurate, with the balance of patterns that are very natural and beautiful. Kay says that for her, a Charm Quilt demonstrates, in vivid beauty, all the ways women find to love others through fabric, at the same time, providing snuggly warmth while reading a book.

*(At heart Kay Alden is passionate about the art and healing of pottery. Hopefully you will hear about her love of pottery in future TAJ issues.)*

*We are interested in including pictures of quilts made by our readers, and it would be great if you sent some to us. Contact information is in the front of the Journal.*

## The Marriage of Empress Elizabeth in the Spiritual World

Empress Elizabeth (1709 - 1761) of Russia was the daughter of Peter the Great. It is said that she "grew up to be a beautiful, charming, intelligent and vivacious young woman" (Encyclopedia Britannica). Elizabeth was very popular among the guards, often visiting them on special occasions and acting as godmother to their children. At 32, when she was threatened with banishment to a convent upon the death of the Russian ruler, she staged a *coup d'etat* with the help of the guards, and was proclaimed Empress of Russia.

Encyclopedia Britannica online says about Elizabeth's reign, "Rather than assume a dominant role in government as [her father] Peter had done, Elizabeth occupied herself with splendid court and church activities, and the purchase of stylish western clothing. She also encouraged the development of education and art, founding Russia's first university [in Moscow] and the Academy of Arts [in St. Petersburg]. She left control of most state affairs to her advisers and favorites, under whose leadership the effectiveness of Russia's government was handicapped by continual court intrigues. The country's financial situation deteriorated, and the gentry acquired broad privileges at the expense of the peasantry." At the same time, though, Russia grew as a major European power (*ibid.*), because of these trusted advisors.

Magnus Julius De la Gardie (1668-1741) was a Swedish general and statesman. He started his military career in the French army, but later joined the Swedish army, becoming Lieutenant General in 1717. After the death of King Charles XII in 1718, De la Gardie became a member of the Privy Council of Sweden. He was a vocal friend of the French kingdom. "Inspired by French customs, he arranged political salons, a novelty never heard of in Sweden at the beginning of the 18th century" (Wikipedia). De la Gardie died in Stockholm in 1741 (*ibid.*), the first year of Elizabeth's reign. Elizabeth died in 1762.

De la Gardie had been married to Hedvig Catharina Lilje, and was the father of Eva Ekeblad, a scientist who is known for making alcohol out of potatoes. This freed large quantities of grain which had previously been used for making alcohol. It became available for the people to eat, and the effect was to greatly reduce hunger among the peasants.

De la Gardie's grandson, Axel von Fersen, fought under Rochambeau in the American Revolution, distinguishing himself at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781. In addition, he became a close friend of Marie Antoinette of France. In 1791, after the French Revolution, he arranged the unsuccessful escape attempt of the king and queen, and himself drove the coach in which they left Paris.

All of the following is from SD 6027 and is what Swedenborg wrote about the spiritual marriage of Elizabeth and De la Gardie. The story, of course, takes place over the spiritual equivalent of time, and some parts, which are digressions, are left out.

Before anything much could happen between Elizabeth and De la Gardie, each one had to separate from the people on earth they had had romantic attachments to. Swedenborg writes that the Empress "came to speak with the Bishop in Lubeck to whom she had been engaged; but she was not pleased with him, particularly as there appeared with him a pretty-faced woman who was his mistress, whom he loved much and whom he had not abandoned in the world." She then saw "where his home now was, which was down in hell, where it looked bad, and he had low work to do, as is usual there. In this way her fancy for him was dispelled."

"She afterwards spoke with one from Holstein and Mecklenburg who had courted her, [and she] observed him. But she found dissimilarity, and would have nothing to do with him, as also was the case in the world."

In the spiritual world "De la Gardie was separated from his wife with whom he had sometimes had intercourse, but latterly seldom. He referred, however, to the council to get a divorce.

They examined and found that there was no similarity as to affections, and so they were divorced."

After all this, Elizabeth "traveled round and came far from her place; and then, as often happens [in the spiritual world], she did not know where she was, nor who she herself was. On the way she met Count De la Gardie and accompanied him, both unknown to one another, when they...found pleasure in each other." For a second time she traveled, and Swedenborg reports he did not see what happened to her. "A third time she traveled the same way as the first; and then, also of Divine Providence, she met De la Gardie. And then, they saw, as is usual, that one was destined for the other, loved each other well, and were then carried home each to his [or her] own society.

"The Empress was placed at the head of the best society of Russians [in the spiritual world], who loved her well." De la Gardie came also to govern a fine society.

"Then De la Gardie came to her palace, and it was decided between them about the marriage, they having been together long enough. When it was decided on, an angel, in beautiful white garments, was sent from here up to heaven to get a priest from there to marry them, which was done in this way, simply... he asked both if they consented, and when he had heard that, he wished them the grace and blessing of God. Nothing more. This happened on the 5th day of March, 1762."

Then De la Gardie traveled with Elizabeth "behind four pair of horses, splendid. Afterwards congratulations were received: from small children who were brought from heaven to speak to them, and it so moved [Elizabeth] that she went into another room and wept from heavenly joy over their speech. When she returned, eight older children came and made a very pretty congratulation. When they went away, she kissed them all. Afterwards, adults [came] who had died as children and been reared in heaven. Lastly came such from the Russian nation as also had been reared in heaven, and brought their congratulations. Finally, there were heard short congratulations from the societies in

heaven one after the other; although [short, they were] pretty, according to the number of provinces there; and were continued to [the number of] from one hundred to two or three hundred, one after the other. And there were yet many who wanted to congratulate, but as it took a long time, many together made one congratulation, and so on. Music was also heard accompanying the affections of the children who had been there.

“A feast was afterwards held, which was splendid, at which were thirty persons. In the morning, after they slept together, they sat down together in a carriage,” and Elizabeth traveled with De la Gardie to his home. “When they reached there, the house was changed into a beautiful palace with many rooms, at which he wondered much. They went about these [rooms]. It was beautiful everywhere. Afterwards, they went into the upper story and found servants who belonged to the society, whom she at once recognized. And there were many rooms in which, as yet, nobody was, a kind of sign that the society was likely to increase.

“They then traveled to her [home]. Their love grew so strong that she desired to be one with him even as to body, which also took place, and they found it agreeable that it can be so when desired. Then they seemed to be lifted up, as it were, from the mass [of people]. Thus they can be one, and be two as to body, yet with one life.

“De la Gardie has been of such a mind that he always used to speak of useful things discursively, both carefully and vivaciously, and of many spiritually—to speak understandingly, and not from memory only.

“Afterwards, they were round in a carriage within the society to show themselves, as is done in the world. She was seen afterwards, and was thoroughly good-looking.

“Afterwards came Queen Ulrika with her consort to visit them...She made her speech at first simple, afterwards more and more interior, which was answered in order, and somewhat more.

"On the 25th of March both were in a state of innocence together, and went about, and were seen as small children by many." (SD 6027)

This story has uplifted me for years, helping me realize that heavenly married love happens for real people, if not in this life, then in the next (CL 49). As in the story of Ulrika, most likely Elizabeth and De la Gardie did not know each other on earth; he died the year she ascended to the throne. De la Gardie and his wife must have had some form of attraction when they were in the spiritual world, enough to meet, have intercourse at times, and eventually realize they did not belong together. In addition, De la Gardie needed to apply to a Council to become divorced, similar to here on earth where a judge in a courtroom declares the divorce.

Elizabeth had to meet her past romantic partners, also. The story tells about Elizabeth meeting two of them, a Bishop in Lubeck, and an unidentified suitor from Holstein and Mecklenburg in Germany. With both she saw that a relationship would not work, especially with the first because he always had a mistress, presumably even on earth when he was engaged to Elizabeth. This is an extremely serious spiritual wrong, and the Bishop was paying the price for his wrong attachment, because his home was "down in hell, where it looked bad, and he had low work to do, as is usual there" (SD 6027). Perhaps seeing him in that condition was what was needed for any lingering romantic feelings in Elizabeth to be dispelled.

Startling in its simplicity was the marriage between Elizabeth and De la Gardie, making beautiful sense once I grasped that the declarations of intention were all that was needed, so unlike our endless preparations and irrelevant detail. An aspect that added sanctity was the priest from heaven coming to bless the marriage. He probably was only a witness while the two married one another. In addition, he made known the Lord's presence through the blessing for the couple. The wedding feast was stark in its simplicity, also, attended by thirty people, not hundreds as might be expected for rulers in a society. Instead of a huge



crowd, the wedding dinner seemed warm, intimate and enjoyable, a meal attended by only the spiritually closest friends and relatives. But not Elizabeth's father, Peter; Swedenborg reports that he was somewhere else.

There was celebration with large numbers of people, though, happening before the wedding dinner. And it all seemed spontaneous, happy and beautiful: children from heaven whose innocence and sincerity moved Elizabeth to tears; adults who had been born in Russia raised in heaven; heavenly societies of two, three hundred and more, all wanting to congratulate the couple, so many that they had to send their congratulations all at once. To have that many people happy for you is a reminder that there are never-ending surprises and joys awaiting every one of us when we live to eternity.

Swedenborg says of Count De la Gardie that he, "used to speak of useful things discursively, both carefully and vivaciously, and of many spiritually" (SD 6027). These qualities make me think of a man with many interests, given to careful detail, and the enthusiasm in his conversation giving life to the things he is talking about. Swedenborg includes the fact that many of them were spiritual topics, which must have served him well when he went into the next world.

The story of this happy couple ends with Swedenborg saying they rode in a carriage "within the society to show themselves, as is done in the world." The social nature of this is appealing and shows that social considerations have a place in the next life, too. They're not something we shed because of the more important things there.

I loved reading this story with all its facets, filled with so many fairy tale elements, yet knowing these people lived real problem-filled lives on earth, worked through their regeneration, and were brought to a real kind of spiritual life. The people were not disembodied or separated from who they were, yet it is a vast improvement over who they were on earth. The book, "Elizabeth and Catherine," about the two Empresses of Russia, tells of

Elizabeth being sickly in her last decade on earth, desperately trying to stay young, and wasting vast quantities of money on clothing. Though intimate details of De la Gardie's life may be hard to come by, he was a general in the army, fighting in wars, and presumably sending many men into battle. Somehow the Lord brought the two of them through all their natural states, and "fitted them for heaven to live with Him there." The reason why the line from the children's Christmas carol is so fitting is that, twenty days after the marriage, heavenly qualities filled the couple to the point of innocence, and they "went about, ... seen as small children by many" (SD 6027). The endearing qualities of happiness, sincerity and playfulness, in addition to others, give a picture of the couple's inner states, showing they were filled with an innocence from the Lord making them [and eventually us], able to live in a marriage that is continuously joy-filled and happy forever.

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*For a picture of Empress Elizabeth and Count de la Gardie, please see our Theta Alpha Journal Facebook page.*

## *Ten Good Things About Marriage*

One of the wonderful attributes of marriage is the willingness to make sacrifices for someone else. Not only are we gifted with a love from the Lord that fuels our devotion to our partner, when we are given children we find ourselves capable of more generosity than we could have imagined. The love of children makes one with a love of marriage.

Another miracle about marriage is that we look to eternity in a new way. Looking toward an eternal partnership inspires us to work harder to get over ourselves and be worthy of a heavenly partnership.

Marriage can bring companionship, which makes all of life's struggles less painful. Even when the intense feelings of new love subside, just having someone to share life's responsibilities with can be a blessing.

Having someone who cares about us can be a motivation to be our best selves. Even on the level of physical health, married people have a better chance of staying healthy. There are many theories about why this is. Perhaps it is because someone nudges us to eat better, and maybe it is because stress can be reduced by a happy marriage.

Sharing skills is another aspect of marriage. One may be good at fixing the dryer, while another keeps food on the table. One may be good at keeping a budget while another keeps spontaneity alive.

All of us are born egocentric. There is no way around it, kindness is a learned skill. Marriage can be an impetus to keep trying to consider the needs of another when it is inconvenient to do so.

Marriage is a practice ground of forgiveness. While it may be tempting to give up on relationships where someone hurts us, or

annoys us, when we have made a commitment to a relationship we are drawn back into the arena to apologize, ask for forgiveness and try again.

Touch is a human need. Marriage is a good way to get our touch needs met in a healthy way.

Shared history can be a good thing. Someone who knows where you have come from, and where you hope to go can be like a guard rail to keep you on the path.

God wants to bless each of us. He is creative about finding ways, from the beauty in nature, to the music we listen to, to the plot of a good book. Marriage is one of the avenues He uses, by sending someone to put their arms around us and listen when we are hurting. It does not always work, since we are basically made of mud, but it is His intention.

*Lori Odhner*  
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### *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*. We will settle for less than every reader writing an article, but still be cognizant of the fact that everyone has something absorbing, interesting, thoughtful or humorous to share. Contact information is in the front of the *Journal*.

## Between

At last your skull bruised through  
and you lay wet, as limp as seaweed  
in the doctor's hands.

They whisked you to the waiting table,  
slapped your grey heels,  
suctioned your halted airways,  
jabbed the drug-full needle in your thigh.

Through the swim of molecules that parted us  
who'd never been apart,  
I saw your legs flop  
two air-drowned eels in a stranger's arms.

I strained to see, while the midwife stitched  
the flesh torn by your coming, another opening,  
a gash into that other world where angels reached  
their greedy arms to snatch you  
to their feather beds.

I willed it closed, the red sea un-parted  
and you, drowning to life in thick air.  
The clock faltered,  
even the buzzing atoms froze  
as the pediatricians, the angels, and my wild will  
strove above your stillness.

And then—the little bleating—the tiny moan  
that switched the halted universe back on  
and placed you on this dark side of the veil  
as they placed you, living, in my arms.

Amanda Leigh Rogers

## When Does It Go Wrong?

A two-year-old girl raises her hands in benediction, mirroring  
The pastor's actions, during Sunday worship.

We quietly smile and give her hugs.

A six-year-old girl learns to read and reads aloud from the Bible.  
We smile. What joy.

A ten-year-old girl does a study on a biblical story illustrating it  
and delighting in the Lord's presence.

Our heart feels warm. What joy.

A sixteen-year-old girl focuses her oratorical speech on her  
understanding of the Lord.

We are inspired. What wisdom.

A female college student LOVES the Lord, the Bible, and the  
Writings and wants to major in religion.

We begin to worry. What will she do next?

A woman feels called to ministry and wants to study the  
doctrines further.

We furrow our brow, and point her to the MARS program.

A woman keeps reading the Bible, keeps feeling inspired.

We tell her to join or start a new church; there is no room for her  
there.

A woman gives birth to a girl, and weeps.

Where will her daughter worship? How will her daughter follow  
the call we each have to follow the Lord?

A woman grows older and increases in wisdom.

And weeps for all that was lost, for the hearts broken.

A woman dies.

And the Lord restores her heart, her hope, and her place in His  
Kingdom. Serving alongside all the children of the Divine.

Bronwen Henry

*becomingbronwen.wordpress.com*

## The Awkward Ideal of Freedom

*Linda Simonetti Odhner*

*When my youngest daughter started high school, I hoped that she would enjoy the atmosphere and thrive on the challenges as her two older sisters had. But she soon realized that her mental well-being was at risk in a setting she experienced as (in her words) “out of sync with the rhythms and freedoms of functional learning,” and started an intense process of convincing her elders that she really needed to leave school. (She wanted to continue with two of her classes, but part-time attendance was not an option.)*

*When I got how serious the problem was, I had to search my soul to find out if I really believed the things I said about trusting children to shape their own learning, and if I trusted my own child enough to leave the beaten track and voyage into the unknown with her. The answers were yes and yes. So I gave her my support.*

*Most of the people we spoke to about her decision expressed a lack of confidence in her that surprised me. Instead of insight into her particular needs and qualities, I got cautionary tales about others who had left school, and claims that teenagers change their minds from one day to the next. These responses gave me added perspective on what was troubling her.*

*My daughter's departure from school was a sound decision that neither of us has ever regretted. She was finally free to learn as she wished; this involved, among other things, independent reading, reading aloud, creative writing, and tutoring in math and science from her older sister with the aid of high school and college textbooks.*

*The sister who tutored her had relished her years attending high school; she too had been free to learn as she wished, and probably would have been horrified to be taken out of classes. The same school was an excellent fit for one and a bad mismatch for the other.*

Absolute freedom doesn't exist in this life. Everybody deals with boundaries and constraints; everyone is subject to rules. We live in limited bodies and defined surroundings, with other people in the same boat. Some things people wish they could do are simply not an option for them. But if we think about it and work at it, we can bring genuine freedom even into settings defined by strict demands and requirements.

People hold differing opinions about how to approach the issue of freedom in educating children. In W. B. Curry's jewel of a book, *Education for Sanity* (1947), he describes his experience as headmaster of Dartington Hall, a progressive school in England. He observes: "Those who love power, and have not come to realize its dangers, will always be finding excuses to exercise power. They will allow freedom only when the case for freedom is overwhelming. Those, on the other hand, who dislike or distrust power, will always desist from interference except when the case for interference is overwhelming. In practice the matter is one for judgment, but one's judgment is inevitably affected by whether one's bias is for or against the exercise of authority" (pp. 4-5). Later in the book Curry says, in his quietly trenchant way, "Any fool can wave carrots and wield sticks, and education is not a job for fools" (p. 92).

Here is an axiom I have found useful in thinking about freedom:

**Structure creates space: spontaneity fills space.**

The ribcage and diaphragm create space in the body for the heart and lungs to function; the heart and lungs in turn create space for the pumping of blood and breathing of air. Some anatomical structures, like bone, are relatively rigid; others, like muscles, are more flexible. Human constructions work in similar ways. The hanging buckets of a mill wheel catch and release water to drive its rotation. Architecture creates spaces for living and working, privately and in community, with enclosures that keep out wind and weather, doors and windows that open and close, and stairs for moving to different levels.



Some of the structures used in learning settings include: purpose, goals, rules, limits, focus, options, beginnings and endings, agreements, cooperation, schedules, academic requirements, games, competition, lesson plans, examples, tests, papers, and grades. Some of the forms spontaneity takes are: flexibility, adaptation, being in the moment, flow, creativity, originality, individuality, connection, insight, passion, laughter, play, noise, chaos, and mess.

Freedom arises from a fruitful balance between structure and spontaneity, with space as the fulcrum on which that balance turns. Philosophy and theology tell us that form creates space and substance fills space; wisdom creates space and love fills space.

When selecting structures to guide living and learning, we might try asking, "What kind of space does this create? Does it make room for life to unfold and expand?" Some structures don't create space, or create cramped space, or make space for fear, shame, anxiety, and worry to flourish. Order and cleanliness generate wonderfully nurturing spaces, but if they exclude chaos and mess they can become stiff and oppressive. The same child will use the freedom afforded by different environments differently, depending on what options are offered, and what raw materials are available for creating their own options. Children's play, even when it appears aimless, is often highly structured.

Some activities can be micromanaged to the point of complete rigidity, like pouring concrete into the ribcage to give it "more structure." I once attended a meeting that brought together people from vastly different parts of the world. We were sent off to gather in groups, to make connections and hear each other's views – and given a schedule with intricate tasks broken down into ten-minute increments. This made me a little nutty, and I led a mutiny in my group, suggesting that we keep the goals but scrap the schedule – which we did. I wanted space to give my full attention to the group members themselves, not the clock or even the tasks.

The Ten Commandments are a structure that creates space. Most of them tell us what *not* to do. Even the commandment about keeping the Sabbath doesn't mention anything about going to church or how to worship – it simply says don't do any work. The First Commandment puts much emphasis on not worshipping *other* gods. This suggests that if we turn away from idols, and empty ourselves of worldly work on the Sabbath, we create a space for living worship of the true God to enter in. The Ten Commandments are in some ways an easy yoke and a light burden: “Just don't do these few things, and you can do whatever else you like.”

### **Compulsory Schooling and Changing what Doesn't Work**

Children are not the only ones who are coerced by the US school system. Schools and school districts are subject to state laws, and make teachers responsible for student achievement. Teachers assign homework, which ropes parents into an agenda they may not agree with. As a parent, I valued the ability to recognize what wasn't working (like the flash cards my kids brought home) and try something different. I've talked to at least one mother who spent hours every afternoon with her little boy, trying to get him to do a fifteen-minute assignment. Were we ever told, “Feel free to change what doesn't work”? As I write, schoolteachers in Philadelphia are being questioned for informing parents of their legal right to remove their children from testing that may not benefit them. Those who make decisions are often not the ones carrying them out and seeing their direct effects. Grace Llewellyn in *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* (1998) describes how hard it was for her as a teacher to hide her true self with her students (pp. 30-34).

Compulsory schooling can distort the balance of life as a whole. Something as simple as part-time schooling may be out of the question. The concern that children will become one-sided from pursuing what they love, and neglecting what they don't, may reflect a narrow conception of well-roundedness. Studying a half-dozen academic subjects at once doesn't always harmonize mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development. It may instead encourage a preoccupation with

completing external tasks at the expense of first-hand experience and deep understanding.

### **Different kinds of wanting**

Freedom is about doing what we want to do and not what we don't. But wants compete with one another inside us, and come in different flavors. Curry tells us, "Too many people believe that in progressive schools the children are encouraged to think of life in terms of momentary whim, or passing impulse, or short-term gratification, and when we say that the children learn because they *want* to learn, we are using the word *want* with only this connotation of momentary whim or immediate pleasure. This isn't true, and most of the children wouldn't thank you for it if it were true. They develop a sense of purpose, of things that need to be done and to be learnt, of goals to be achieved. And they welcome help in getting these things clear in their minds. ... There is a psychological truth to the story of the progressive school child who is alleged to have inquired plaintively, 'Do I *have* to do what I want to do today?' But in the story, the word *want* has plainly the unsatisfactory short term meaning which I have been discussing" (*Education for Sanity*, pp. 79-80).

### **Choice and Decision Fatigue**

The discussion of momentary whim as contrasted with longer-term goals relates to the issue of decision fatigue. I have never found that the more choices I have, the more freedom I have. Continually making conscious choices gets exhausting after a while and can actually block the flow of becoming absorbed in an activity. Taking a walk in the woods, do you want to be confronted by one fork in the road after another, perhaps exploring a new terrain, or to allow your feet to follow a path unheeded while you lose yourself in the contemplation of natural beauty? These are two very different experiences. Choice is one of those structures that can create space for spontaneity, but a constant diet of choices doesn't add up to freedom. Offering trivial choices while withholding important choices is one way of creating an illusion of freedom. I have read that people whose work involves critical decisions about the fates of other people

(judges, for example) experience burnout if they have to keep at it for long periods without a break.

I don't want to be constantly asking myself, "What do I feel like doing now?" I like planning parts of my life ahead of time, crafting a varied menu of solitude and social life, physical and mental activity, effort and relaxation, serving others and treating myself, making messes and cleaning them up, and of course, the freedom to modify the routine if I wish.

### **Children (and adults) find out what they want by resisting.**

This is an idea I found in John Gray's book *Children Are from Heaven* (1999) (pp. 73-74). He speaks of parents leading by suggestion, and letting their children say, "No, I don't want to do this, I'd rather do that." One mother told me that this idea helped her understand why her teens would so often ask for advice or input and then do the opposite. John Holt, in *Teach Your Own* (1981), points out that it helps to be clear about offering choices, to avoid saying, "Would you like to go now?" when we mean, "We're leaving now." This gives children a better idea of when it works to resist suggestions and assert their own preferences.

We live in a fixed natural world partly so we can learn what we love, often by resisting what we don't love. People look at the way things are and crystallize their visions of the way things might be. We experience our "as of self" by pushing back against the "as of self" in the universe. The resistant quality built into creation creates space for the flowering of human individuality.

### **Learning Rhythms and Cycles**

Cycles in life combine stability and change. Goodwin Watson, in *Summerhill: For and Against* (1970), points out: "Intensity of learning effort normally rises and falls. Any adult writer or scholar or thinker or artist knows that for days at a time he may be unproductive, but then suddenly finds himself taking hold, digging in, grappling with the problems and making extraordinary progress. The formal school takes no account of this natural rhythm in learning. It assumes that each morning

when the bell rings, pupils will be able to put out the standard quota of learning effort required to progress at a standard rate through the standard curriculum" (p. 179).

We can see this rhythm in the turning of the seasons: spring budding and flowering lead to summer leafing and fruiting; autumn ripening and harvest give way to winter death and dormancy. Gardeners know that a dormant period is necessary before forsythia cuttings will consent to bloom indoors. Do traditional schools allow for periods of learning dormancy?

Although many children adapt well enough to the artificial day-to-day rationing of school requirements, some do not; generally the students are expected to adjust, rather than the system. When my daughters were in elementary school, their naturally slow-paced flow of learning and doing was repeatedly cut off just as it was beginning to gain momentum. At the end of the year when all the papers came home I saw numerous art and writing projects that the girls hadn't gotten time to finish, or even get well started. This might be one of the main reasons they came home so depleted every day.

### **Freedom in the Classroom**

Barbara Shiel's account of offering more choice to the students in her sixth-grade classroom, presented in *Freedom to Learn* (1969) by Carl Rogers, gives a vivid picture of some of the tensions involved in putting freedom into practice, among them the balance of individual choice with the well-being of the group. Shiel was an experienced teacher, dealing with one of the most difficult classes she had ever taught, and decided to try a more flexible approach. She started by giving the students several free days in which they could decide for themselves what to do in the classroom, and took it from there. It proved to be quite a stretch for all of them, but the effort paid off handsomely.

Commenting on her process, Rogers observes that if teachers offer their students more freedom than they can wholeheartedly give, they may be setting themselves up for failure (p. 23). Freedom is not a technique or pedagogic method for getting

predetermined results; it requires a basis of trust in students' capabilities. Shiel experimented, worked out a structure on her own, and modified it as needed to address problems and concerns, facing her own (and parents') doubts and uncertainties while staying committed to the principle of self-directed learning.

The class worked within the school's academic requirements for sixth grade; the students wrote contracts at the beginning of each day, planning what work they would cover, and they kept folders of completed work which they could share with their parents. Shiel gave extra support to students who needed external direction and wanted to be told what to do. She showed students how to work with textbooks on their own, and allowed them to decide whether to work alone or in groups. When students appeared unproductive, she reminded herself that they had not done any better with the old classroom format. She conferred with each student about their individual work, and met with the whole class to work out conflicts and make plans.

Barbara Shiel's journey may inspire confidence in those who hope to create spaces for freedom to thrive, even in the context of required structures and curricula.

### **Transformative learning**

Michael Rossman tells us that “every act of learning involves a crossing into unknowable space, not yet structured into order. To face the unknown is to embrace incoherence: it invokes a primal fear of chaos” (*Summerhill: For and Against*, p. 147). He adds that “the live face of chaos is one with the existential crisis of freedom and choice. The crises of encounter and confrontation open up rich social and psychological space. When it denied chaos, our culture was forced to provide a substitute, and it chose the tools of coercion. ... Our institutions efficiently condition us in ... those skills which impose the strictures of operating within limits. **Our problem is to learn to use these skills as tools rather than as tyrannies**” (151-2, emphasis mine). Choosing to work within the strict sonnet form, I have found a tool to liberate my poetic powers, not a tyranny to stifle them.

*Learning freely doesn't always feel comfortable, as any ballet dancer could probably tell you.*

*A few years ago I asked my unschooled daughter, who had studied math with her happily schooled sister, to tutor me in algebra and analytic geometry. I wanted to brush up so that I could tackle more advanced math and physics. She needed the money, and it was a pretty sweet gig for her, since I did most of the work. I learned with her for about five years.*

*I got to know my daughter in a teaching role, and she related to me as a student. We got a taste of each other's mathematical thinking. She has a natural aptitude for algebra that I simply don't share, and for a long time I struggled with the simplest things, felt stupid, and didn't like it. I wasn't used to buckling down to mental effort that I wasn't naturally good at, and it took months for me to start enjoying the process. Of course doing only an hour a week of math with no homework is not a recipe for rapid progress. I took breaks when I needed them. It helped to know that I could call the whole thing off at any time.*

*I eventually got a bit more fluent in a language that still felt foreign. Instead of approaching my textbook problems as school assignments, I had leisure to look at them in terms of a wider field of math relationships, manipulating them, generalizing from them, solving them in different ways, thinking about why those particular problems were chosen and not others.*

*I reflected on the purity of the tutoring relationship, involving just the two of us – no external motivations, requirements, deadlines, or assessments. I wasn't prepping for an exam or course. And I myself was employing my tutor, so ultimately I called the shots, yet also put myself in her capable hands. I still haven't started trigonometry, but the journey has been rewarding and delightfully awkward.*

The basic freedom of not being compelled is a bud that may bloom into the transcendent freedom of unlocking human powers and soaring to the heights. In the next two articles in this series, about academic standards and spiritual aspects of education, I plan to go into greater depth about the unpredictable and transcendent nature of genuine learning.

Linda Simonetti Odhner is planning at least three more articles in the "Awkward Series"; this is the third. She is self-taught in areas such as geometry, embryology, harmonic theory, and educational philosophy. Her three daughters range in age from 32 to 23. Additional quotes will appear in our Online Journal. The web address can be found in the front of the Journal.  
lsiodhner@verizon.net

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Bibliographical Note: Readers may wonder why some of my sources are so old. I find that the passion and clarity of vision expressed by writers on education in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century still speaks to the educational issues of our time.

**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 members 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!



*Clarinda Alden Koenig wrote this poem after being in the hospital and having three brain tumors removed, then finding she had three pulmonary emboli in her lungs.*

## In This Place

Dimly...through my sleep

Little by little, the

Rhythmic hum of hospital  
Life begins to seep in

I hear a tiny riff of sounds  
Coming from someone's iphone,  
A door closing  
Squeaky wheels coming past my room,  
Early morning coworkers  
Exchanging greetings,  
Down the hall, a moaning.

I begin to slowly wake in  
Anticipation of what's to come,  
Feeling the life-force of this  
Place as somehow part of my own  
I have a feeling of belonging  
To something much bigger than myself.  
It encompasses all of those I love,  
My family, even the universe.

And now laughter, hurried  
Conversation, hustle and bustle  
I hear down the hall

But when the doctors come in  
With their pressed white coats  
And serious faces

I know healing what is wrong  
With me is their important goal.  
It is 7:30 AM.

Cheerfully, my day nurse greets me.  
With her practiced eyes  
And discerning questions  
She learns how my night  
Has passed and how I am now.  
My nursing assistant has  
Already been in to reassure me of her presence.  
"I'm here for you," she says,  
"If you ever need anything or  
Any assistance."

But as I lie in my bed I am troubled.  
Last night something happened  
After nearly blacking out  
In the bathroom I find  
I might have a pulmonary embolism.

"I know I should have faith,"  
I am thinking, "That all will turn out well."  
But as I wait, as the hours pass by  
I can't seem to talk to God  
And I don't know why.

I am lost, feeling so alone  
Then I hear her.  
"Are you alright?" my  
Nurse asks in a gentle concerned tone.  
I try to answer, then the flood-  
Gates open, wracking my body with sobs.  
Now I'm embarrassed and humiliated.  
Somehow when I look at my life  
It just doesn't look like my own.

With gentle prodding and kind words  
My nurse encourages me to verbalize my fears.

“There is a God who loves you,” she affirms.  
“Have faith in His power and trust in Him.”

I must have fallen asleep  
For a while and my doctor came silently in.  
“We have dodged a bullet you and I,” he said.  
“Your anticoagulant therapy is soon to begin.”  
And I realize my life is in his hands yet again.

Momentarily I struggle with my feelings.  
With gratitude and humility I am thanking Him  
For sending everyone who has cared for me.  
I am beginning to feel a profound sense of peace.  
Once again I sense the life force around me:  
People ministering to others  
From the love in their hearts  
And I know I have experienced  
A microcosm of heaven in this place.

Clarinda A. Koenig  
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## Readers Respond~ Technology: Love/Hate It

***I Have Loved and Lost:*** Do you ever fear sliding off the edge of a bridge into an icy river and not being able to get out of your sinking car because you have power locks and windows? Just the thought of it makes me shiver, but I sure do love being able to open and close the car windows on the passenger's side of the car while I'm driving. Like many of you, I have a love-hate relationship with technology.

Most of us over forty know the pain of writing a term paper late into the night, and then having to explain to a teacher that the computer lost it. "I really did write it!" These kids today, they just don't have the same excuses we did (no, I really did write it). Students now write their papers in Google docs which automatically saves every second or so, and which can be accessed at any time from any location: home, school, library, smartphone, or whatever the latest technology is that I haven't heard of yet. It's great, especially for us teachers! No more excuses.

Technology hasn't always been great for teachers though. The one year I taught sixth grade at BACS, I was using a program called Grade Pro for recording and averaging students' grades. It seemed like a dream watching averages shift with each new assignment recorded, until the weekend before they were due to be sent out. I had a trip planned to Massachusetts with my cousins, and the computer lost all the grades for all the subjects I taught. Fortunately, since I had recently taught in Kempton, where everything was done by hand, I had also kept a written record of it all. I spent much of my weekend away doing the work that had been done and then undone by the computer.

I'm using a different program now, Excel. It's not really made for tracking grades, but with a little coaching from those who know how to make it do what they want, I have found that it

works quite well. I was excited when Greg Henderson engineered a way of getting Excel to take all the course averages for all the students and enter them with names, grades, attendance, and lots of other details into a very professional-looking report card. Whew! What a relief, not having to type every grade in by hand anymore. In some schools, teachers even choose comments for each student from a list, but not at BACS. We still like a personalized message. Phil Feerrar, my new co-teacher in eighth grade, tells me our system is antiquated compared to ANC's system. I don't doubt it, but then I've always been a bit behind the technological times.

Though I do prefer a color screen to the original amber one I had on my first desktop computer in 1985, I don't generally like change. Many years ago, my husband bought a laptop for the kids and me to use mainly to keep us off of the desktop he used for his business. That was all well and good until the laptop crashed, and I lost over two years of family photos I had taken. Yes, I'm still bitter. I know, I should have had them backed up. Now I back them up in prints and old fashioned photo albums.

I resisted using a laptop for a long time, until the combination of sleepless nights and two puppies ("let sleeping dogs lie") caused me to start working and playing on one in my room at 3:00 and 4:00am. The laptop turned out to be a great thing, I discovered, when I had to drive my daughter over an hour each way to her synchronized swim practices. Since I wasn't coming home during practice, I got a lot of work done in the hours spent at Starbucks.

My latest upgrade is a smartphone. It's only as smart as the person using it.

*Brita Conroy*

**Cozy With Technology:** I LOVE technology. I am not sure how I survived without it. I read that 74% of twenty-somethings check their phone as the first thing they do upon awakening in the morning. Well, of course. Doesn't everybody? How do you

know what the weather will be like today? Or who contacted you via email or text, etc.? That is how I check my schedule, my list of things to do today. I am not ahead of the curve with technology, but at 52, I am especially enjoying the benefits.

Communication: I am so glad that I can contact my children at any time. Ok, maybe they don't answer right away, but most of the time it is within the hour. My poor mother worried about me throughout my teen years. Though I was a pretty good kid, my biggest mistake was forgetting to call if I was going to be late. I'd realize as I was coming home that it was much later than I said I was going to be. Sometimes, I thought I could just creep quietly into the house and maybe pretend I got in earlier. It never worked because Mom was right there by the door. I would come into the kitchen and she would just look up from the newspaper, look at the clock, and then at me. The technology of today could have saved me. A quick text of "Where are you?" from Mom and all would be saved.

I am not sure how my profession worked before cell phones. As a surgeon, I depend on others being able to reach me should there be any change in the status of my patients. I need to be able to be reached at any time, any place.

Information: I am an information hound. So, I guess it is no surprise that my family is too. The world stops so that I can find out the answer to a question that came up in conversation, reading a book, seeing something in a newspaper, seeing a bird on the birdfeeder. I used to search encyclopedias to find the answer, or look in multiple books. Now I can just Google the answer. Okay, sometimes it is a little harder than that, but not by much. I so enjoy being able to find information on most any medication, surgical procedure, disease process, right at my fingertips. I have libraries of books at the office and at home. It is not that I don't still use them, but if I want the latest theories, it is so useful to be able to look it up online. On the other hand, I am often given too much information with all the journals, organization e-mails, and product information I receive online. There is only so much one can read in a day.

Photography: When I was 9 my mother gave me her camera. I looked down into this box and could take a picture, then have it developed at the drug store. It cost a few dollars to buy the film and a few dollars to develop the film, neither of which I readily had. So I made sure I really wanted a certain picture and didn't waste my precious film. Now I can readily take not only thousands pictures, but also videos with my phone, at no cost. And now I can afford the film! I can catch my daughter's dance performance or even a quick picture of a flower I pass during the day that I want to share with her when she gets home from school. At work, it is grand to be able to document a lesion or watch its progress and make sure it is not growing. One patient looked at the picture of a lesion on his back and said, "Oh, I can see why you recommend taking that off!"

Electronic medical record systems are interesting. They can be much more difficult to use from a physician standpoint, but have a lot of promise. Communication between physicians, pharmacists, labs, radiology, and patients may be improved in the future. Right now I can check to see what medications my patient is on (depending on what pharmacy they use) so that I do not prescribe something that will interact negatively. The pharmacist can see what allergies the patient has when they receive my prescription. Someone can send me a message or make an appointment at any time of day through the patient web portal and I can answer at any time.

Global positioning systems are incredible. I lived in Chicago which is built on a grid, a reasonable, easy to use system. People were amazed how I could go anywhere in the area with just an address. I traveled to many parts of the country with my set of maps. What a good sense of direction you have, I was told. But moving to the Philadelphia area has been a challenge. Someone took deer paths and made them into roads, then changed the names of the streets every mile or so just to keep things interesting. Ah, but I moved when there was GPS technology available! If I want to go somewhere that I haven't been, I can find any number of roads to circle around to where I want to go

and see the current traffic as well as the length of time it will take.

Recorded music was not that important to me before I met my husband. He recorded several songs on a cassette tape for me. We were “just friends” when he gave me the tape and after listening to the words of each song (“My Brown-Eyed Girl”, “5000 Miles”) I realized that maybe there was more than just friendship. There is more than just the radio, too. I now have my own playlist on my phone of recorded music that I can listen to wherever I am, consisting of my own personal favorite tunes. And if I want to listen to a certain genre of music, say accordion music, I can just make my own station on Pandora or another type station, old or new or a mix. Obscure artists can be found. I can even catch the singing telegrams that ANC clubs have if I miss the live production.

My dog is not unaffected by technology either. She has an electronic wireless leash at home and it is portable. Saved me on fencing and puppies!

I am typing this on a computer. I don’t write much on lined paper anymore. I rarely write letters. I am so far from the high school years of learning how to type on a manual typewriter with the correction tape. If I didn’t type perfectly, the whole world would know. Now you can’t tell. My errors are autocorrected or highlighted for me to correct without a trace for you to see. I could even dictate into the computer. I love it!

Do I complain about how slow the electronic connection is today at the office? Do I get frustrated by today’s electronics? Does waiting on hold for 30 minutes to get assistance for my technological problem from someone half a world away drive me nuts? Yes, yes, and yes. However, by and large, I am so glad to be able to have our current technology and look forward to how it is going to improve our world in the future. See y’all there!

*Janet Krettek*  
*jmkrettekdo@gmail.com*



***In From the Beginning:*** I cut my teeth on digital computing in the 1950's. I was a programmer and systems analyst for Univac I, one of the earliest commercial computers, when software was first being developed. I loved it. There were all kinds of problems to be solved, and I was being paid to play with the puzzles and come up with the answers! In those days, programming was an unforgiving endeavor. A misplaced space or comma could foul up everything. I was really good at nitpicking (otherwise known as debugging). Now, as software has developed, it is forgiving of just about anything – misspelling, upper or lower case, different ideas about what you might be looking for. The software gives helpful suggestions: “Did you mean \_\_\_\_?” Sometimes the software doesn't even ask – it makes assumptions and corrects mistakes automatically for you. But an unwanted autocorrect can change a meaning **DISASTROUSLY**. I **DON'T LIKE IT!** This is too much flexibility! Give me back a little more structure! Give me back my job as a nitpicker!

We have an iPad. You just touch it and it goes places and does things. How do you make it do what you want? Computer people tell me “Oh, it's intuitive.” Maybe for my four-year-old grandchild, but not for me. **WAIT – WAIT –** Where did that email **GO?** It was here and I was reading it a second ago, but my finger grazed the surface of the screen and – **POOF**. Gone. I don't like it!

I have to admit that this new technology has lots of advantages. Need a phone number? A map? An answer to a hotly debated question at the dinner table? A weather forecast for the place you'll be going to in a couple of days? It's all there at your fingertips. We have access to all the information we could possibly use on the internet. I remember a few years ago when my nephew Robin Kendig told us with great excitement that Google would change the world. He was right. We flit from one thing to another on Google and check on 200 of our closest friends on Facebook, but we hardly get to interact with human beings except by texting them.

George Gantz is writing an intriguing survey of present technology called “The Human Race – and the Technology Race.” (You can find it on the internet.) He talks about the ways that technology is messing with our brains. He cites studies that show – among other things -- that social networking may be anti-social, multi-tasking is an illusion, and that reading text on a computer screen leads to poorer reading comprehension. Personally, I prefer reading a book printed on paper rather than reading on a screen. I like making penciled marginal notes – and being able to find them again! (I think sticky notes are among the finest inventions of the past 30 years!)

About communication, George observes: “At one time the human race relied primarily on auditory processing and memory for learning and communication – indeed, Greek philosophy itself was born in an oral culture. So perhaps these auditory capabilities were a universal human cognitive strength that slowly lost its privileged position after the invention of the printing press.” I prefer to interact with people face-to-face in their actual presence. Is this too much to ask? In the history of human beings there have been several transitions away from communicating in person. First there was the invention of the alphabet and writing. We could communicate from a distance if we were among the few who learned to write things down and could interpret the meaning of those strange new symbols. Then printing was invented, which gave access to written information to most people, not just a few elites. Now we have digital access to information – you don’t even have to use books or a library. We have gained a world of information – all you could possibly want – but do we really want it? We are increasing the span of our comprehension, but we may be weakening our capacities for deep processing, critical thinking, imagination and reflection. If I must give up those things, I don’t really want ALL that information. I would rather be a cave woman sitting around a fire telling stories in a small group of friends. If that cave woman could see into the future she might wonder if the printed word and the world of ideas it could bring to us were going to remove us from real communication with each other. Now with digital technology we have new opportunities for keeping our distance

from other people. I have mixed feelings about how fast things are changing. I wouldn't want to give up the internet and email and word processors, but I also can't imagine giving up personal face-to-face relationships. Skype, anyone?

P.S. George Gantz's last chapter in the series (not yet published) is called "Practical Advice for Responding to Technological Change." I'm looking forward to reading it.

P.P.S. In *Spiritual Diary* Swedenborg says that there is writing, books and whole libraries in heaven (SD 5999). I wonder how the heavens for people used to digital communication will be different from these other ones?

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**Love My Apps:** I use my phone every day, all the time, and to some people that seems like way too much, but the majority of people don't know what I do on my phone. Most people with cell phones have the common apps: Twitter, YouTube, Google Hangout, Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, Tumblr, etc. I use every single one of those apps every day. However, people would be surprised at what goes on. Twitter is my most used, go-to app. Twitter is amazing: there are videos, links to other apps, pictures, comments, you name it—it's probably on there. On Twitter I can talk to people halfway around the world. I was once on Twitter and there was a girl from Spain or Portugal who didn't know English very well, so she asked me if I would teach her more English. I didn't really know what to do at first but I wanted to help her, so I said yes. We never got around to it because of time zones and I had school and homework at the time, but we are still friends today.

My phone has MMS [Multiple Messaging Service] group chats. In that I can send messages to several people at one time. The other group chat I go to is Google Hangout where I can talk to my friends whose phones can only handle one message at a time. One of my friends is our school principal's daughter, and so through those group chats she lets me and other girls know

whether we will have school that day due to weather. My mother picks up my phone and reads the texts whenever she wants to, so she knows who I'm talking to.

On Instagram I post pictures of where I am or a fun time that I've had. I use it as a memory or a virtual scrapbook. People would be surprised at how amusing Snapchat can be. So many of my friends and I have personal jokes that have been created through Snapchat. On Snapchat I can create a story, almost a Snapchat story that people can watch as many times as they want within 24 hours of posting, and it is mostly used for memories and fun times with friends. After 24 hours it disappears.

Vine is an app where I can watch repeating video. Most of the vines are comedic and give people something to talk about with each other and laugh. I use Tumblr as a means of information, although that wasn't its original use. Tumblr is meant for pictures and text posts. Pictures on there have a "Tumblr" feel to them because they're filtered and focused in a certain way. Every app has a deeper use or meaning to someone other than just to rot the brains of teenagers and young adults. I wouldn't be the same person I am today if I didn't have my electronics and apps.

*Virginia (Ginny) Hale, 15*

We are looking forward to hearing from our readers about their experiences!

## Websites of Interest

*Compiled by Chelsea Rose Odhner*

[www.newchurchperspective.com](http://www.newchurchperspective.com) – New Church Perspective (NCP) is an open space for thoughtfully considered and respectful discourse about the Word, the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, and our lives. We offer weekly content that explores current and relevant ideas. It is a space free from personal attack that allows for the variety of experience, opinion, confirmation, and negativity that occurs in our widening community; it is a collaborative forum for ideas that can be put to use. All contributors are valued.

[www.newchristianbiblestudy.org](http://www.newchristianbiblestudy.org) -- a website where you can "read the Bible and explore the New Christian perspective on its inner meaning."

<https://www.facebook.com/HeavenAndHellSwedenborg> -- The Swedenborg Foundation's Facebook page; it "hopes to create a respectful, compassionate, interesting discussion around a broad range of spiritual topics and experiences."

<https://www.youtube.com/user/offTheLeftEye> -- The Swedenborg Foundation's YouTube channel. It has a rich library of entertaining videos which explore many of Swedenborg's teachings and hosts a live broadcast weekly on Monday nights.

[www.newchurchconnection.org](http://www.newchurchconnection.org) -- a predominantly online magazine that connects New Christian spirituality to everyday life. The most recent issue was about prayer as more than words.

<https://becomingbronwen.wordpress.com/> -- Bronwen Henry's blog "Even Here, Even Now" where she offers "reflections on life, motherhood, marriage and the experience of God in it all." She shares many of her paintings and the spiritual insights that inspire them as well.

[annawoofenden.com](http://annawoofenden.com) -- Rev. Anna Woofenden's blog; "explorations of faith, theology, social justice, paradox, humanity and this beautifully messy thing called life."

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/goodandtruth/> -- Rev. Coleman Glenn's blog where he shares "sermon cuts" and other thoughts and reflections.

# Chapter Reports

## Carmel New Church Theta Alpha Annual Report 2013/2014

The ladies of the Carmel New Church's Theta Alpha had a fun and rewarding 2013 and 2014 year. With a variety of fundraising projects and special activity nights, President Jan Hill has brought a fantastic energy to TAG this year that we all enjoyed.

Vice President Sally Tait continued to guide the worship portion of our monthly meetings. Sally chose some wonderful topics to focus on this year, such as gratitude, practices in flexibility and fortitude, and keeping perspective in our daily lives. Sally always brings a variety of Scripture teachings, music and modern fictional excerpts to her worship.

The ladies of TAG kicked off the fall season with a Neighbor to Neighbor garage sale. There was also a number of crafting nights held at the home of Laura Hill. These evenings provided an opportunity for members to work on Christmas gifts for our Christmas Eve service. TAG also helped to fundraise for the purchase of a number of new Christmas greenery swags for the chancel. In November, our member Gloria Stumpf held a Christmas craft sale at her home with 25% of her sales being donated to Theta Alpha. Ladies also participated in Operation Christmas Child for the 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year. Volunteers helped put together the shoeboxes that are donated to children worldwide. We ended 2013 with our annual Christmas party and gift exchange. A wonderful evening with treats, games, and carols.

We rang in the New Year with pizza, popcorn and a movie night at our January meeting. The winter brought more evenings of Christmas crafting among members and the opportunity to put together some dish gardens during our February meeting. We were happy to utilize our miniature gardening skills as a TAG fundraiser. In March, Jan Hill put together a fabulous Family Fun Night for the church community. The fun night included a BBQ supper, a jail, a large maze, and numerous carnival games for kids of all ages to enjoy.

Theta Alpha welcomed a long-awaited spring with an informative presentation on archeology by Alyssa Riepert. The last event on the TAG calendar for the 2014 year was a Teddy Bear's Picnic hosted by Katie Hill. The picnic featured snacks, treats and games for society little ones. We adjourned the year with an annual BBQ and some great plans for the coming year. These included a rummage sale, a plant sale and another opportunity to be crafty with a Christmas birch tree planter that we hope to use as a fundraiser.

We are looking forward to another great year with our President Jan Hill.

Respectfully submitted,  
Katie Hill  
Theta Alpha Secretary 2013-2014

## Hurstville Society Report, October 2014

### Hurstville Society' Theta Alpha Chapter 1984



**Back row:**

Gwen Asplundh's 4 daughters, Kerry Lockhart, Lori Heldon, Margaret Heldon

**Second row:**

Nell Simmons (seated) Lynn-Del Sandstrom, Gai Kennedy, Liz Keal, June Kirsten

**Front row:**

Lenore Sandow, Patricia Walsh, Gwen Asplundh, Laurel Brettell, Dot Heldon, Rhonda Hall

### End of an Era *Margaret Heldon*

It is with some sadness that I announce the closing of our Hurstville Theta Alpha Chapter last month due to there being no ladies able to stand as office bearers. However there is also a sense of achievement for 51 years of service by many dedicated women. As outgoing President I'd like to take this opportunity to present a brief history of our Chapter, highlighting its importance and usefulness not only to the Hurstville Society but to isolated New Church people in Australia and New Zealand.

Before beginning I'd like to stress that even though our Chapter has disbanded this does not mean that the parent body under which we served has also dissolved. We can still remain Theta Alpha International members by paying our dues and supporting the cause. TAI has been struggling itself in recent years to adjust to modern times but there is a brighter future ahead. To find out more about this read *Theta Alpha International Lives On!* in the latest edition of New Church Life July/August 2014 which is also online at <http://www.newchurch.org/materials/publications/nc-life>

Theta Alpha (Daughters of the Academy) was founded in the early 1900s by graduates from Bryn Athyn New Church Academy in USA who wished to promote "the uses of New Church education in its many forms. The truths as given in the *Word* are the basis and guide for the performance of our use" (from *What is Theta Alpha?* Pamphlet). By 1947 membership was broadened to include any women interested in New Church education. Mora White, who was an early member of the Hurstville Society, had attended the Academy from 1928–30 with the prime purpose of setting up a New Church Day School when she returned. This she did in October 1930 but unfortunately it had to close in 1934 when she married Frederick Fletcher. This gentleman was a widower with three children, one of whom was Ruth who as it happens married Norman Heldon, now my father-in-law! Being a graduate of the Academy Miss White had joined Theta Alpha, and years later in 1953, now Mrs. Fletcher, she was the force behind the beginning of the Hurstville Chapter. Here are some excerpts from that first meeting:

*The inaugural meeting of the Hurstville Chapter of Theta Alpha was held in the Church at Dudley Street, on Jan 13<sup>th</sup> 1953 at 12 noon.*

*Only three ladies of the Society attended, Mrs Stella Taylor, Mrs Ruth Heldon and Mrs Mora Fletcher . . .*

*It was agreed that although so few in number we could gather each month for mutual instruction in the doctrines of the Church, that we could support the work of Theta Alpha in the uses to isolated children and give much practical help to our own Sunday school. This decided, we asked Mrs Taylor to be president and Mrs Fletcher to act as Sec. Treas. The limit for office bearers to be twelve months.*

*The Secretary was asked to write to Mr. O [Ossian] Heldon, the Sunday School superintendent asking him to meet us to discuss ways in which*



*we could co-operate with him in Sunday school social life and in any other ways.*

*A tentative programme was drawn up for the following six months.*

*February: The S. S. picnic. Suggest Theta Alpha do the catering for same. Offer to sell meals to adults attending. National Park or Como pleasure grounds proposed for picnic.*

*March: A dress up party for children. Adults of Society invited, also, prizes for best hats, etc.*

*April: Easter. Floral offerings at the children's service. Mrs Taylor offered to make a representation.*

*May: Hold a children's fair. Children to dress and sell articles to suit their characters. Suggested to invite 'Sons' [Men's group] to give songs and choruses suited to fairs.*

*June: To cater for the children's luncheon.*

*For our study during February we took the subject of Truth, concentrating on the aspects as in the correspondences of Water, Rock and Wine. Mrs Taylor chose Water, Mrs Heldon, Rock and Mrs Fletcher, Wine. These subjects to be briefly reviewed in a five minute talk during lunch. After which we are to discuss these things given.*

This first meeting embodies the vision of Theta Alpha – promoting New Church education in its many forms, not only for our children but for ourselves. Through the years, even though the Chapter remained relatively small, its uses stayed strong and expanded. June 19<sup>th</sup> gifts were made for New Church children Australia wide, and the Religion Lessons program was organised in both Australia and New Zealand wherever there were families who wished to participate (see following article).

Time and space does not permit me to do justice to the Chapter's rich history or honour the many women who served but the photo on the front cover is a record of one of the highlights of our Chapter. The occasion was the visit in 1984 from Bryn Athyn of the TAI president at that time, Gwen Asplundh and her four daughters. A special meeting was held at the home of Lenore Sandow and Gwen gave an inspiring speech about all the wonderful things that TAI was achieving.

Perhaps sometime down the track someone will be writing another article for this Newsletter called *Beginning of an Era*. Who knows what the future holds? As long as there are people passionate in promoting New Church education they will find ways to do this.

## The Lighthouse Ladies of Buccleuch

Dear Theta Alpha Executive Committee,

Thank you for your vigorous and purposeful letter. From the Southern tip of the African Continent we extend our congratulations to you on your vision and energy in deciding to re-ignite the flame of a splendid organization. For many years now our branch has been stimulated by the challenging fare of the *TA Journal* which we have used for discussions at our spiritual growth "Martha" meetings. We hope to continue to mine the *Journal* for further wisdom.

When we were informed that the TAI would probably be terminated, our Guild had a brainstorming session which resulted in our renaming ourselves "the Lighthouse Ladies" for obvious symbolic reasons. We aim to protect, enlighten, and stand as beacons of hope in our society. Our uses include:

Supply our Sunday school and Children's Church with necessary project materials.

Make or buy approximately 40 gifts for the Sunday School to celebrate June 19<sup>th</sup> including lions, lambs, knitted red balls, baby mobiles, creation banners white horse banners, swords of truth, colouring books, copies of The Word, and so on.

Contributing towards costumes and necessities for church festivals

Provide food parcels for needy, unemployed families in the church.

Support The Village Safe Haven Orphanage with groceries and special parties and Christmas gifts for 28 children.

Supporting the Alexandra Feeding Scheme for the poorest of the poor

We also hope to contribute to funds to support those in the church who cannot afford to join the yearly spiritual growth campaigns.

Sending flowers to the very sick or bereaved members of the society

We do not charge membership fees but raise money by holding monthly rummage sales which provide cheap clothing for the needy and funding for our projects. These are efficiently run by Heather Allais and Christina Moyo.

If we were to support a translation initiative it would be Mo Zungu's brilliant translations of the Writings into Zulu.

As you can see we have numerous pressing calls on our limited funds so items like Charter Day Luncheons are a far cry from our priorities.

After discussion, therefore, we felt that our group would like to contribute R500 (\$50) a year to help with TAI uses. We would be grateful if you could send us 4 Journals to the church for circulation:

Verna Brown President, Kathleen Wallis, Secretary, Helen Harding, Treasurer and Heather Allais, Outreach and Funding. You will find the names and addresses in your files.

We wish you well in your new venture and know that the Lord will guide all your ways. Bless you all!

With much love and gratitude from  
The Lighthouse Ladies of Buccleuch.

THETA ALPHA INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING  
MINUTES

October 10, 2014

1. The meeting began with a welcome from the acting Vice President Janet Krettek and a reminder that this year TAI was bringing a proposal before the members to either dissolve the organization or to move ahead with changes that would re-energize it. She announced that the executive committee has chosen to move forward, a decision that was accepted with applause. She then asked Kira Schadegg to start the formal meeting with a reading from the Word. Kira chose a selection from *The New Jerusalem*, numbers 241-245 concerning the church. "For a church to exist, there must be teaching from the Word...But it is not teaching alone that makes the church in the case of a person, but living in accordance with that teaching."

2. Acting President Melodie Greer then gave an abbreviated version of the PowerPoint presentation that she had prepared for last year but was unable to deliver because of a power outage. It traced the history of Theta Alpha, highlighting key changes that have been adopted throughout its history, and also outlining key uses TAI performs. When she mentioned the very popular *Journal* which is synonymous with TAI, she also announced the new editor, Helen Kennedy, who will be assisted by Gillian Mayer and Kris Earle.

Melodie also noted that this year we had a full slate of candidates up for election provided the bylaws are passed. These include Melodie Haworth Greer as president, Janet Krettek Fuller as vice president, and Gillian Simons Mayer as treasurer. She also announced the appointment of Kirsten Rydstrom Rogers as the new corresponding secretary. She continued her report with a resolve to involve new and, hopefully, younger members in a variety of new uses, as many of the past uses are no longer being served by TAI. She also mentioned the changes in the world over the past generation and the growth of technology and its uses for communication that have created major obstacles for the organization. She asked, "How could we make TAI something that people would

want to volunteer for?" She then noted that to move forward, a vote to accept the bylaw changes was needed. She reminded members that though other changes might be required as we move forward, the mission of TAI was not changing. To conclude her report, she asked Janet to enumerate some of the changes that were being considered, many of them garnered from suggestions made at last year's annual meeting. Following this, members were asked to vote by ballot for the bylaw changes. **Later in the meeting, after the votes had been counted, it was announced that the vote to accept the bylaw changes was unanimous.**

3. Vote on Acceptance of Minutes of Annual Meeting 2013

It was moved, seconded and carried to accept the minutes as distributed.

4. Treasurer's Report

In the absence of the acting treasurer Gillian Mayer, Tina Bartels, Director of Finance at ANC, gave the report. Tina first talked about the two funds invested in the New Church Investment Fund (NCIF). The first was established in 1932 and is to be directed by TAI - to be used for the Scholarship Fund which is shared by the Academy and the College. Only the interest and dividends from this fund may be used in order to preserve the investment. A total of \$256,329 is in this account which is owned by the Academy. The second was created in 1972 with money owned by the Theta Alpha. This fund may be used at their discretion. Last year \$90,000 was transferred into this fund from a Money Market account to NCIF where it can earn higher interest. There is now \$170,579 in this account. Tina then went over the profit/loss statement from 2013-2014 and the budget for 2014-2015 which is published elsewhere in the *Journal*. She noted that we have \$23,737 in the bank and this plus the funds owned by TAI give us a total of \$194,316 in assets. The general message is that we are doing well financially this year.

Vote: It was moved, seconded and carried to accept the treasurer's report and the budget for 2015.

Melodie then presented a proposal to donate \$10,000 to the Scholarship Fund, to be shared 50-50 between the Academy and the College.

Vote: It was moved, seconded and carried to donate \$10,000 to the Academy Scholarship Fund to be shared equally between ANC and BACNC.

5. Memorial Resolution:

Caira Bevan Bongers, the great-niece of Morna Hyatt, read the names of members who had passed away since our last annual meeting.

Johanna Paul Arrimour  
Frances Johnson Kutz  
Jane Forfar Birchman  
Anna-Lisa Wessblad Loven  
Margaret Robinson Evans  
Ruth Stole Maseko  
Edna Doegen Gotsch  
Louise Brickman Pollock  
Charlotte Smith Holtvedt  
Eileen Gyllenhaal Rogers  
Trudy Price Horigan  
Greta Acton Stahl  
Margaret Howard  
Evelyn Klein Stephens  
Morna Hyatt

She then read from the 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm, "To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in you...", and followed this with a moment of silence.

6. Honoring Retiring Executive Committee Members:

Janet thanked various people who helped make the luncheon and meeting possible and then presented gifts to those who were retiring from various positions on the executive committee. These included Rachel Glenn who was the liaison for the Office of Education (now General Church Education), Sue Adams who was the Circulation Manager, Kris Earle who stepped in as college Liaison when Angela Rose had to step

down, and last but not least, Claire Bostock who was the Corresponding Secretary. Claire was presented with a gold Theta Alpha pendant to honor the many, many years she has served in one capacity or another on the committee.

7. Results of the Bylaws Vote:

As noted earlier, the bylaws were passed by a unanimous vote. This announcement was greeted with cheers and applause and the singing of "The Lord upon us send His blessing."

8. Vote on the New Officers:

Janet gave a little background information on each of the officers standing for election. They were Melodie Greer – President, Gillian Mayer – Treasurer, and Janet Krettek – Vice-President. She then asked Kira Schadegg, Girls School Liaison, to call for the vote, as it was inappropriate for her as a candidate to do so.

Vote: The slate of officers was elected unanimously.

9. Sharing Thoughts/Ideas:

Luncheon participants were asked to contact officers and committee members with suggestions, thoughts and ideas to help the organization move forward. They can be written down, e-mailed, called in or expressed in passing, but TAI wants to hear from you. To re-invigorate the organization, we need your help.

Two suggestions made from the floor were the following:

- Jane Hogan made a plea for financial support for international students who are finding it increasingly difficult to afford transportation and tuition. She thought as an international church we need international students to come here so that we can continue to develop the international church. There is no funding for this at present, so she would like to see TAI start a fund for that.
- Gretchen Keith echoed Jane's concerns about international students requiring support. In her travels with her husband, Bishop Keith, she has met students who would like to come to Bryn Athyn but are finding it almost impossible to manage financially. These are people who might become New

Church teachers or ministers or who might return to their countries to train others to be teachers and ministers.

Janet mentioned that TAI is considering creating a scholarship in its name for the college and possibly other educational programs.

Other comments included a thank you from Gwen Asplundh for saving TAI, and Linda Odhner, a past *Journal* editor, spoke of her delight that the *Journal* would continue. She noted how useful it's been in the past in presenting a variety of opinions in a respectful way, and since it's separate from the Academy and the General Church, it has a special and unique place in the Church. Another spoke of her delight in receiving the Journal, and the attendees were reminded by the new editor that they need to write for the Journal if it is to exist! The final speaker asked that TAI go back several years to the membership list to contact people who may have been inadvertently dropped from the list because they were behind in paying their dues. She was assured that this will be done.

In closing, members were reminded that there were cards on the table on which to write suggestions and a box for feedback at the back of the room where they could be deposited.

The new president, Melodie Greer, thanked the ladies for coming and renewing Theta Alpha.

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara Charles Doering  
Secretary



## **BYLAWS OF THETA ALPHA INTERNATIONAL**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of Theta Alpha is 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.

The truths as given in the *Threefold Word* are the basis and guide for the performance of our uses.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

I. Women who are at least 18 years of age and wish to support the purpose above are eligible for membership in Theta Alpha International. Written application shall be submitted to the Executive Committee of Theta Alpha International for acceptance.

II. Women interested in the uses of Theta Alpha who are not yet 18 may become associate members. Associate members may not vote, become chapter presidents or hold office in Theta Alpha International.

### **CHAPTERS**

I. Members desiring to form local chapters of Theta Alpha shall, after preliminary organization, apply to Theta Alpha International for recognition, to be granted by the Executive Committee.

II. Every chapter shall send an annual report to the Executive Committee.

III. Chapters shall notify the President of Theta Alpha International promptly of changes in presidents.

### **OFFICERS**

I. There shall be a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Each shall perform the duties usual to that office.

II. The President shall be ex-officio a member of all committees except the Nominating Committee.

### **ELECTIONS**

I. Terms of office:

A. Each officer shall be elected to serve for a three-year term.

II. Elections shall be held at the annual meeting.

III. Vacancy in an office other than President shall be filled by appointment of the President with the approval of the Executive Committee. The appointee shall fill the unexpired term of office. If the office of President becomes vacant, the Vice President shall automatically become President, and the office of Vice President thus vacated shall be filled by appointment in the manner prescribed above.

IV. Officers of Theta Alpha International shall assume their duties within one month after election.

V. The President shall appoint a member of the Executive Committee to chair a Nominating Committee of three members. This committee shall obtain the consent of prospective candidates and place their names in nomination at the annual meeting.

VI. Elections shall be by ballot when there is a choice of candidates for a particular office.

VII. Absentee ballots are permitted, including via electronic means.

VIII. Pending elections shall be announced at least one month prior to the vote.

#### **FINANCES**

I. Full members shall be notified annually of membership fees due. Any change of dues shall be made by the Executive Committee.

II. Funds shall be disbursed by the Executive Committee.

III. Contributions to scholarship funds shall be recommended by the Executive Committee and presented for approval by the membership.

IV. A budget committee, consisting of the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, and any other appointee deemed necessary by the President, shall meet annually to submit a budget. This budget shall then be approved by the Executive Committee and voted upon by the Theta Alpha International membership.

#### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

I. The Executive Committee shall consist of:

A. The officers of Theta Alpha International

B. The following may be appointed by the President after consultation with the Officers:

1. On-line Communications Coordinator
2. Membership Coordinator
3. Corresponding Secretary
4. Liaison from the Girls School
5. Liaison from Bryn Athyn College
6. Liaison from General Church Education

C. Other liaisons and committee members appointed annually as needed

II. The President of each chapter is invited to participate in all Executive Committee meetings, and may vote on any issue(s) that may arise during said meeting(s).

III. All matters of membership shall come before the Executive Committee.

IV. The Executive Committee shall have the power to recommend purchases and sales of securities for Theta Alpha; the President and Treasurer shall have power to make all transactions concerning securities.

V. Minutes of the proceedings of the Executive Committee shall be kept by the Secretary.

### **MEETINGS**

I. All meetings, including electronic meetings, shall be held at the call of the President.

II. There shall be an annual meeting of the membership, notice of which shall be communicated at least one month in advance.

III. One-twelfth of the total membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at meetings of the membership.

### **COMMUNICATION**

I. There shall be communication with members at least once annually regarding proceedings, reports and other material of interest to Theta Alpha.

### **AMENDMENTS**

I. The bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote at any meeting of Theta Alpha International, provided the total number of votes represents a quorum of the membership and the amendment(s) have been presented for discussion. All Theta Alpha members must be advised in writing of the proposed change(s) at least one month in advance of said voting.

### **PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

I. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., shall guide in all procedure.

*These bylaws were most recently revised by vote at the annual meeting of Theta Alpha International held in October 2014.*

# TREASURER'S REPORT

**Theta Alpha International  
Treasurer's Report  
January 31, 2015**

***** Balance Sheet *****		***** Income Statement *****		
	Jan 31, 2015	Jan 31, 2014	Actual 7/1/14 to 1/31/15 (7 MONTHS)	Budget 2015 (12 MONTHS)
<b>ASSETS</b>			<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>			<b>Income</b>	
Checking/Savings			General Fund Contribution	10,169
TAI - Checking	2,990	1,232	Bank Interest - Money Market	18
TAI - Money Market	12,108	103,522	Interest/Dividends - NCIF	3,279
NCIF	180,449	69,694	ANC Fund - (Transfer in)	17,000
<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	<b>195,547</b>	<b>174,448</b>	Membership Dues	3,280
			Luncheon ticket sales	1,179
<b>Other Assets</b>			<b>Total Income</b>	<b>34,925</b>
Theta Alpha ANC Fund	(246,465)	(212,732)	<b>Expense</b>	
Theta Alpha ANC Fund	246,465	212,732	Scholarship - ANC Funds	17,000
Total Other Assets	0	0	Scholarship - TAI Funds	4,000
			Cash Awards and Grants	800
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>195,547</b>	<b>174,448</b>	Postage, Mailing Service	1,360
			PayPal Fee / Supplies	22
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>			Journal	5,000
<b>Equity</b>			Luncheon Expense	882
Opening Balance Equity	103,511	103,511	Baptism Project	110
Additional Paid in Equity	69,694	69,694	Miscellaneous	1,920
Unrestricted Net Assets	11,000	(2,131)	<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>20,174</b>
Net Income	11,342	3,374	<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>14,751</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>			Unrealized Gains and Losses	(3,409)
<b>&amp; Equity</b>	<b>195,547</b>	<b>174,448</b>	<b>Net Income</b>	<b>11,342</b>
				<b>8,000</b>

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS – 2014-2015

### **Melodie Haworth Greer**

#### **President and General Church Education Liaison**

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#### **Membership Secretary**

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