

Theta Alpha  
"Daughters of the Academy"  
☺

Named From the Greek :  
Θυγατηρῆς Ακαδημειᾶς  
*Thugateres Akademeias*

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

*Non Nobis Solum* ~ Not for Ourselves Alone

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## Editorial

Education at all its levels is the main theme of this issue of the *Journal*, including Kristin King's farewell address to the alumni of Bryn Athyn College as she retired from the Presidency. Some of our readers may have already read it, but Kristin's work is always worth reading a second or third time. Sarah Bruell Odhner's article on the Religion Lessons program is inspirational and interesting, chronicling the effects that program had on children, parents and teachers. The program, sponsored for almost fifty years by Theta Alpha International and the General Church, reached families living short or long distances from a church society, keeping them connected, and creating vehicles for conversations about religion between parents and children. The educational trio is finished off by Rebekah Brock Russell, who was principal of the church school in Glenview until March of this year. She reports on the innovative ways the children were being taught. We note that there are important changes happening in the school; the present article focuses on the day-to-day workings of the school and the educational quality being provided for the students who attend.

Nadine Rogers graces us with her Earthquake Hymns. These stunning poems allow us to participate in her experience of the earthquake in Nepal last April. Another Rogers, Hilda, whose husband is related to Nadine's parents, tells us about a book of her grandmother's memories of World War II, a grandmother she never met, but who comes alive for Hilda through the pages.

Along with the current articles on education, we thought we'd revisit something from a past church publication. This small article by Lisa Hyatt Cooper, "Emotion as Inner Meaning," is from a source other than the *Journal*. We thought we'd give it more exposure and reprint it here, hoping it will be relevant to our readers. Also, we warmly invite any suggestions for poems or excerpts of articles from the *Journal* to reprint. Which ones still linger with you from your many years of experience reading *Theta Alpha Journal*?

Our previous issue (Autumn 2015) had interviews with women who are artists. In that editorial I selected representations Swedenborg gives us in the Writings, and showed how they might be painted as pictures. This issue has interviews with people who

love to do gardening. In addition to appreciating the beauty of the flowers themselves, many gardeners talk of the way the flowers and plants relax them, and allow them to commune with an inner part of themselves. Most readers of the Writings are familiar with the concept that “the whole world or whole natural order is a theater representative of the Lord’s kingdom” (SH 4889), and seems to be the way the Lord presents reminders of himself to us.

In this, and in future issues of the *Journal* we will include a page of examples of representations that Swedenborg saw in the spiritual world, ones that were puzzling, or interesting, or beautiful. These images took Swedenborg out of his thinking and reminded him that the Lord was speaking at that very moment. For more on this, see the article *You Are Not Imaginative Enough*.

### Membership Dues

Please remember that your membership dues support all of Theta Alpha International’s programs, including this *Journal*!

Dues are \$15 (U.S.)

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*You can join any time!  
If you are renewing dues are “due” by July 1st of each year.*

*Nadine lives in Nepal and the following three poems were written as a response to the earthquake in April, 2015.*

## Earthquake Hymns

Nadine Rogers

### To The Earth

We all return to you in the end.  
At last we all lie down to give back the substance we have  
borrowed from you.  
So why, now, must you leap at us,  
Clawing at our ankles,  
Yanking us down with jealous fury,  
Opening your hungry jaws?  
Are you so insatiable?  
So impatient?  
Or are you just lonely,  
Knowing the best in us was never yours,  
And can never be contained by your ash and stone,  
And will be lost to you forever when,  
Lying down, we also rise?

### Robin on a Wire

After the first earthquake  
I mistook you for Noah's rainbow,  
Trilling presumed joy over our huddle of fear,  
Notes arcing from ground to sky to ground again:  
"It's over! You're alive! Rejoice! Rejoice!"  
And then the aftershocks, random and relentless  
Drove us over earthen waves to our ark of field.  
We raced the shadows of homes no longer sweet—  
That animal fire inside commandeering our souls  
With singular mission:  
Survive.  
And every time, there you would be

Perched overhead, persistently cheerful  
But your promise crumbling with each thrust of earth.  
I'd compulsively look for you with increasing rage,  
Listening for music I loathed to hear,  
"Shut up!  
You're incongruous!  
A moot point!  
A fool!"  
But oblivious to your own obsolescence you sang  
Til one day, falling into the fields  
I looked at the wire and you were not there.

I waited and watched and strained to hear  
And silence began to retune wrath into sorrow.  
Day after day I searched for you;  
I did not find you, I heard no song.  
But lantana bloomed sunrise pink and gold  
Around the edge of our makeshift tent  
And butterflies rose from this fractured earth,  
Fluttering over piles of broken bricks  
And under the alarm-orange tarp that shouted SOS into the sky  
A baby danced his way to his mother's arms.

Come back, sweet robin.  
I can no longer hate you.  
I know now your song was never "All is Well."  
You were never a rainbow,  
But, like that other bird  
In search of a leaf or two of olive,  
A prayer rising up  
When we forgot how to pray.

Aftershock

My boy folds a paper airplane and I remember.

Five months later and it is nearly gone-  
The animal terror and human horror,  
The cringe with every helicopter and slam of door,  
The knees buckling in doubt of the earth,  
Defying my own senses and will to be sane,

The crouching in the bathroom with fist against mouth  
So my children won't hear the sound of despair.  
All of these have been washed away  
Like a cup of mercy poured over nightmare.  
I walk by rubble the same as I walk by  
The weeds that have graciously begun to engulf it.  
I no longer silently tally ghosts  
As I climb up the village road.  
I smile at neighbors over broken walls.  
"Can you believe this weather? Try to stay cool."  
I drink tea and shuck corn in my mother-in-law's tent  
And gaze lazily over her crushed house  
And see a rising bank of cloud.  
It is all that I see—just a cloud, only that.  
So ordinary I forget to be thankful for absence,  
Absence of metaphor, absence of omen.  
I have forgotten how it feels to be unable to forget.

And then he folds the plane, and it all comes back  
Because the sound of crackling paper is painfully exquisite  
And I want to hear it again and again  
And because I love that soft, busy hand  
With a power stronger than global plates heaving.  
He folds the plane, and I remember.

## You Are Not Imaginative Enough

*Helen Kennedy*

*Jehovah is creating the heavens. . . forming the earth and making it. (Isaiah 45:18)*

Have you ever thought of the difficulty the Lord has in communicating with us? He exists on another level, and *is* a Being who is much superior to us. Yet he has set himself the task of making us aware of his existence. First he speaks with the angels in whatever way that happens. The angels then communicate with us. The Writings say when the inflow or speech from angels “filters down to people in the earthly realm it expresses itself in the kind of representations and symbols that appear in the Word” (SH 3419:2). Their uniqueness comes from being “the only way anything divine can be presented to an earthly person and retain its full correspondence” (*Ibid.*). So learning how the Lord uses representations enhances his ability to be with us.

The Lord creates us, and yet we know nothing about him. We must be taught, and so he provides us with the Word. At some point we start to learn that he is more competent than us, and so we begin to trust him. Then he sets us on a path toward heaven, and we move toward a more angelic comprehension of him. This comprehension includes an ability to understand representations, for “the angels . . . exquisitely understand things of this kind” (SE 1145).

Swedenborg had a boldness about him, and never hesitated to explain deeper things, even when he knew not everyone would understand them. He was being troubled by evil spirits while explaining the correspondence of a part of the human body, but he realized these things were “not to be kept silent, for there are some who perceive and love such things, and there are others who assent to them although they do not understand, but see that they confirm universal truths” (SE 1145).

If, when thinking about representations, our minds want to discard them as just bits of imagination, Swedenborg assures us that “the representative things that the Lord gives [to spirits] are



real”(SH 1881). He explains their importance this way: “they are the source of everything that exists in the world of nature” (*Ibid.*). And it is possible for us to understand them because “there do not exist any Divine secrets which cannot be perceived and expressed naturally . . . although in a more generalized and imperfect form (De Verbo 3). The Lord’s desire is to speak with us; he becomes less mysterious when we understand more about the way he is explaining himself to us, and that is through the Word. There isn’t a lot of talk going on, but He is constantly communicating His love for us through it.

Swedenborg experienced many representations in the spiritual world in addition to the ones he explained to us in the Word. The Writings are full of examples, and I’ve enjoyed reading them and wondering what they meant.—In this and in future issues we will be including a page of examples of them. For me, they are like little puzzles that are intriguing. But see what you think. They help me to remember that Swedenborg, with all his years of experience with spiritual things, often needed to have the angels and spirits around him explain the meaning of the representations that he saw. The following examples show the Lord’s love in unspoken ways:

“Stars shining with varying intensity” (SH 1527). This represents good people. The varying nature of their good or love is represented by the different intensities (*Ibid.*). This reminds me of a woman who, while having a Near-Death experience, was able to see the people she loved all around her. She knew who they were, but they looked like candles.

Another example is when Swedenborg wrote that he was shown “the interweaving of the skins of people in whom material things are obedient to spiritual things. It was a beautiful weaving of spirals wonderfully intertwined like lace-work” (SH 5559). He added that it “is impossible to describe” (*Ibid.*).

Beautiful and delicate lacework, the handcraft of women in this world through the centuries, has been an imitation and imperfect form of this reality. “Later there was a representation of forms with a still tighter weave, finer mesh, and more intricate pattern” (SH 5559). The intricacy of the patterns and the delicacy of weavings meant something to Swedenborg. In the deceitful, though, “these

outermost layers look like jumbles of nothing but snakes" (*Ibid.*).

These examples show the living quality that is contained within the representations that Swedenborg saw in the spiritual world, and remind me of a time when I was trying to understand some little thing about the spiritual and natural worlds being bound together. The images I had weren't really making any sense, when a clear voice came into my mind saying, "You are not imaginative enough."

## Representations

*White clouds on a cerulean (sky blue) ground that move upwards at times, sideways or downwards. Also the clouds complicated themselves in various ways, showing many different forms.*

This represented consent and dissent among spirits. Clouds moving upwards signified consent; sideways showed the people were beginning to differ; downwards showed that disagreement took place (SE 3702).



*A hand took a gold coin and gave to a spirit.*

The hand represents the hand of the Lord, which gave the coin to a man. He was in the province of the mouth in the Grand Human, and was indignant about it. The coin signified that he was able to be transferred to a place in the heart, if he was found worthy. Those who correspond to the mouth “continually want to talk, taking pleasure therein. When that pleasure is purified, so that they desire to speak nothing but what is of use to their companions, the community, heaven and the Lord. . . they are raised to a more lofty place” (SE 669).



*Four trees planted in a wooden receptacle: one tall, one shorter, and two small.*

Swedenborg wrote, “Once, in a peaceful dream, I saw several trees in a wooden planter. One of them was tall, another was shorter, and two were small. The shorter tree gave me intense delight” (SH 5051). The angelic spirits bringing the dream told him it represented marriage love, with the two small trees representing children. During the dream a very lovely feeling of peacefulness filled his mind, beyond Swedenborg’s ability to describe. He said the dream showed him “the nature of the enchanting peace felt by inhabitants of the other world who had lived lives of genuine marriage love” (*Ibid.*).



*Odor of prunes.*

“The delight which married people have in lying together, that is, the delight they feel at simply being with their married partners and lying close to them” (SEm 4679).



## Interview with Danielle Odhner

*by Janet Krettek*

### **Please describe what a garden is to you.**

A garden represents usefulness to me. It is productive and of use to someone else, be it for food or beauty or enjoyment, like raising children to go out into the world. A garden represents love of the neighbor for me, my own way of nesting, and building a nest or environment for others to come into. Gardening is the slowest of the performing arts.

### **Do you go out into a garden? Or does a garden pull you in?**

Most of the time the garden pulls me in. A garden is a good balance of structure and softness. It is attractive with human activity juxtaposed with the garden.

### **How do you feel in a garden?**

It allows me to pull my evils out while pulling weeds, like cleaning when I am in a negative mood. It allows me to notice the intricacies of Divine intervention. Like with people—I don't think I've ever seen an ugly person; each is interesting with many different aspects.

### **What is your favorite kind of garden?**

It used to be ornamental flowers, and then it was exotics, but now a manicured vegetable garden is it for me. I like to see flowers and vegetables mixed and ordered.

### **If you are going to bring in flowers for your table, what do you like to look for? Do you prefer a solitary flower with accents or a whole bouquet?**

I like a mix of sheer joy. Three or four types put together with some filler of foliage. These are simpler arrangements than I would have enjoyed before.

### **Do you like to separate out types of plants, trees, bushes and flowers in a garden, or do you like to blend them?**

I like to show them off using space, or have an area with all one thing. Others are mixed to set them off, such as succulents together, so that you can get the feel of them. We have a bonsai

sculpture, one that is Rutledge-like [a bonsai designer], and it is lovely. In the past I liked a cottage garden, but now I like to see the elements shine.

### **How did you come to be the head gardener at the Bryn Athyn Church?**

About 25 years ago I volunteered for making a garden at Glencairn, then I was asked to add a garden to the Bryn Athyn cathedral on the east side. It was best use of the finances they had at the time to put in a small garden and have a “weed patrol.” It started off with ladies in their 60’s, then young moms started working there, and it has worked ever since. Everyone who works there is part-time so that they can take care of their kids or other responsibilities. About 22 years ago, the director asked me if I would be the garden manager as a paid position. I had some experience in gardening, but no formal training and there was no equipment to speak of. I learned on the job, pulling in experts whenever I needed a question answered. We built slowly, adding equipment as we could. I have tried to use correspondences throughout the building of our gardens. I used Alice Grant’s *Notes on Color*, written in her own hand, to guide my expression in gardening and use of colors. For example, the north represents ignorance. The north entrance of the cathedral is covered in greenery as green corresponds to hidden truth.

### **How old were you when you started to work with plants?**

We have an extraordinary gardening background history here in Bryn Athyn. The Glenn girls, one of whom was my grandmother, were steeped in the feminine arts of sewing, cooking, gardening, canning. I feel an obligation to continue this. Women are the ones who tie everything together. We are the ones who connect the dots. We are the mortar in the stone walls. When I was 21, I had been married less than a year. I received a Burpee seed catalog in the mail. I couldn’t put it down. I was fascinated. I found out the Burpee Outlet store was nearby in Warminster, so I went there on weekends to work and found my first gardening mentor. I asked him questions nonstop. I worked as a nurse in the hospital during the week and at the store on weekends through my pregnancies. Then when I had the twins, I realized the hours of nursing were not going to fit in. I went into gardening for residential, and also grew cut flowers and did wedding flowers and other arrangements. As my family grew and changed, so did

my gardening. I am a consultant now for the gardens, working on a part-time basis [The paid part is part-time. She works full-time.] The last five years I have been working on the Bounty [Bryn Athyn Bounty Farm Market], too. I have been beekeeping for over ten years with over 40 people who have come through the program to learn beekeeping. I have a mentor for each area we work in— bees, trees, etc. We are also teaching while we work. We currently have students coming to learn from us from the Delaware Valley University and Swarthmore College as well as Longwood Gardens. The [Bryn Athyn] Historic District is very interested in what we are doing as we are tying community together with our gardening.

**When do you start your gardening?**

We start in mid-March and go through November around Thanksgiving. The Bounty starts in May and finishes on Charter Day weekend.

**What advice do you have for a beginning gardener?**

Shadow someone who gardens. Read. Gardening is structured, yet intuitive. You can't learn it just by studying. Soil preparation is the key to the universe.

**As this *Journal* will be out around June, what advice do you have for gardeners at this time of year?**

This reminds me of June 19<sup>th</sup>, the hardest time of the year to get blooms! You are past the spring blossoms. You may or may not have any roses and your annuals have not filled out yet. I'd say, "Enjoy!" Soon the weeds will kick in. Plant any annuals. Prepare the soil for the next set of vegetables.

**What are you working on now?**

We have started a not-for-profit 503c called Friends of the Bryn Athyn Farm. It will be used to promote educational practices that illustrate the correspondence between the principles of nature and the principles of spiritual growth, as set forth in the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. It will teach all ages and those of all abilities the full range from soil development, horticulture and animal husbandry, to nutrition, cooking and presentation of food. We will be supporting the preservation, maintenance and productive use of land that is owned by the schools, and will have specific programs for all the Bryn Athyn schools from elementary

to college level, including homeschoolers, as well as adults. We will be involved in teaching sustainable agriculture methods to our community and those surrounding. We have started to rehab the soil.

Tax exempt donations can be mailed to: Friends of the Bryn Athyn Farm, PO Box 306, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 or inquire at [bafarmfriends@gmail.com](mailto:bafarmfriends@gmail.com)



### JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

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

*Tell us what you think!*



## Emotion As Inner Meaning

Lisa Hyatt Cooper

*And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this that you have done to me? Why did you not point out to me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? And I would have taken her for my woman. And now look: your wife; take her and go" (Genesis 12: 28-19).*

*The fact that he said, "What is this that you have done to me?" means that it caused him anguish can be seen from the outrage itself with which the words are said. The anguish, then, is explicitly voiced in these words. The inner meaning is such that the actual emotion implicit in the words is what makes up their inner meaning" (Secrets of Heaven 1492).*

*Secrets of Heaven*, Swedenborg's exegesis of Genesis and Exodus, offers many different methods of discovering the inner meaning of the Bible story. Most of the time it gives the correspondential meaning of several key words in a verse and then weaves them together into a coherent idea. Sometimes it refers to the general train of thought for the explanation. On rare occasions it describes the inner sense as opposite to the literal. But imagine looking for inner meaning in the *emotion* behind the words!

The word I translated as "emotion" in the quote from *Secrets of Heaven* is the Latin word *affectio*. It is related to the verb *afficere*, or "affect," and means being-affected-by. We tend to think of an emotion or feeling as something that comes from inside us and goes outward toward its object: love, affection, dislike or hatred—they all express our attitude toward something "out there." But Latin looks at a feeling as the effect that the object has on us. So the resentment that charges Pharaoh's words here can be seen less as an outpouring of anger than as a response to the loss that now touches his life.

This is a useful way to view emotions, in my experience. The more I see my negative emotions as my own private reaction to external stimuli, the more clearly I see that I have no direct control over them. And the more I give up trying to control them, the less control they have over me.

Those "affections," those indications of the effects that angels and evil spirits have on our souls, must be hiding behind every word of revelation, waiting to be discovered. What rich meaning the Word would have for us if only we could open our eyes to the emotions within it!



## Heaven Wants Us to Give Our Feelings to God

In my Near-Death experience I . . . [learned] our emotions can either direct us toward the will of God or away from the will of God. Emotions are the engine that drives us. Emotions are the force that desires to make us Christ-like or turns us into the adversary of God. We are not controlled by our emotions. Feelings of happiness, pleasure, pain, anxiety, anger and despair can lead us to greater appreciation of God and a life of thanksgiving. . . . How we use our emotions is our choice.

Anger about injustice can motivate [us] to resist evil and conquer evil. Feelings of sexual desire bond man and woman into an intimacy and trust between partners. Jesus expressed emotions when He had compassion for the woman caught in adultery, when He used anger to cleanse the temple, when He felt pleasure eating with outcasts of society, when He wept at the death of Lazarus, and when He felt power to perform miracles. During my time in eternity with Jesus, I felt His complete empathy with me.

Howard Storm, from his book, *My Descent Into Death*

*This article and the previous one are reprinted from the April 2001 issue of Voice, a Newsletter for Caritas, Volume 1.*

## Love Yourself as Your Neighbor

*Caterina Fuller*

As a child, I often wondered what heaven was like. I was taught by my parents that heaven was a beautiful place full of everything one could ever need and that one could be of constant use to someone else. I thought about that description so much that I desperately wanted to go, even though I knew I couldn't unless I died. Nevertheless, it was a comforting thought to a seven-year old. When I grew older, around the beginning of my teens, I thought of it again. This time, however, it was for a different reason. I wanted to be able to serve more use than the utter debacle I thought I was. But as I moved through these past few years, I learned that it is important to love not only one's neighbor, but oneself.

When I was twelve, I moved from nearly one thousand miles away to Bryn Athyn. Not only was it a huge cultural shift, but I had to leave all my previous friends, my house, and my childhood behind. I made fast friends with several girls in my class, but something always seemed off. I thought I was having fun, but there was always a nagging sensation of almost dullness. I couldn't connect as well with the people around me. There seemed to be some big secret that I had missed. It felt like there was a key to happiness that was right in front of everyone else but was buried deep in the ground for me. This feeling turned into a self-consciousness and even hatred of myself (because I couldn't be normal) that started showing on my skin. I hated this secret, but was afraid to tell. I hated it even more when my family found out and I spent my summer after eighth grade dreading the weekly visits to the counselor. The counselor who sat condescendingly in her plush chair, leering, it seemed, and making crude, insensitive gestures while demanding I say something, anything. This hardly helped the situation, and I was forced to pretend normalcy to get out of these terrible appointments.

Sometimes, when life gets hard, the temptation is to drag oneself down. It feels like hell itself, reaching up to you, pulling you toward it, like a hydra. A hydra with each of its seven heads pulling you towards different, terrible thoughts. One head convincing you that you are no more than a burden to those you love, another telling you you're eating too much, another saying it

isn't worth it to carry on anymore. All tugging on you, weighing you down, so much that you become exhausted. Another head appears, crying that you should tell concerned friends and family that you're "just tired" and that you'll be "fine." But it never gets "fine" and sleep doesn't seem to work the way it should. It feels like a heavy suit of mail, making it difficult to accomplish even the simplest of tasks. The hydra whispers that no one likes you and that you should just stay home from the event tonight. No one will notice, anyway. No one cares.

However, heaven and the good spirits started creeping back in, overwhelming the hellish ones within a few years. According to Divine Providence, God makes something good out of even the worst experience. The feeling of utter desolation began to pass away. The need to physically relieve emotional pain passed away. A good spirit came in the form of a teammate on my fall sport in freshman year, who shared her own story and encouraged me to stop harming myself and to start looking at the positive things in life. It was much easier to hear the words from her mouth, as she had gone through all this as well. I listened to her and began to change my habits. I have always tried to look out for others and do my best to help everyone and to give all I can, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to those who need it, but I then learned that I cannot do this to the best of my ability without looking out for myself as well. As the Biblical proverb says, "love your neighbor as yourself." Previously, I had paid attention only to the part about loving my neighbor, but I recognized that hating myself was only being selfish and feeding the evil spirits. Loving myself allows me to better love, and serve, those around me. I decided to turn life around and look only at the positive things in life.

Being an optimist is the best medication in many instances. I began to look at all the wonderful things in life instead of focusing on my own misery and on how I was a burden. I started to take up piano, reading, writing, and all the things I love again, finding healthier ways of coping with my depression. I decided I would initiate conversations and act more pleasantly to other students. I chose to make small work with my hands such as knitting or origami. This was much better for me and the people around me, as I was now once again interacting and being a useful member of society—the very thing I had craved earlier. I now feel as though I have some positive effect on the world. Loving one's neighbor is a very important part of being a functioning human

being, but one cannot be complete without a little love and confidence for oneself.

**Note:** This came in second place in the Laws of Life essay contest in 2015.



## Laws of Life Essay Contest

All High School Sophomore (or 15-16 year old) Swedenborgian girls world-wide are eligible to enter this contest. This essay is an opportunity to write about what YOU think is important in life. This is your chance to be heard—to write from the heart about one, or more, of your personal laws of life. Essays are to be in English (Google Translate can be used for this purpose). No name or identification can be on the paper itself to allow impartial judging, but have your name and address in the envelope or email.

Winners receive a certificate and a check:

1st Place: \$100 USD, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place \$75 USD, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place \$50 USD.

Essays are printed in the *Journal* with writers' permission and as room permits.

### **The essay guidelines are:**

“The Laws of Life” are a set of rules, ideals or principles by which one should live:

What do you value most in life?

What is important to you?

What ideals do you hold deep in your heart?

Think about the people and experiences that have helped you form these laws...

### **Pick a topic to write about:**

- a personal experience/lesson learned that affects how you live/view your life now.

- a quote or an aphorism that inspires or guides you.

You can use an analogy, a quotation, a story, or a parable.

(No personal romantic relationships!!)

### **Submissions are to be sent to:**

Theta Alpha International, PO Box 511, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009, USA

**Or email to:** [ANCdaughters@gmail.com](mailto:ANCdaughters@gmail.com)

**Entries must be received by March 1, 2017.**

*In the Theta Alpha Journal, November 2015, the Laws of Life essay, "Going After It" was written by Clara Roth, then a high school sophomore. In that Journal it was wrongly attributed to her classmate, Caterina Fuller. We regret that this happened and wish for all readers to know its true author. So we would like to republish the essay with Clara's name on it.*

## **Going After It**

*Clara Roth*

"It is only too late if you give up. Don't give up. Dig deep and go after what you want." This is what my mom told me via text on December 4th, 2014. It was opening night of "A Seussified Christmas Carol" and I was mid-panic attack. One would assume I was breaking down because of stage fright, but acting on a stage in front of roughly a hundred of people is easy. Instead, I was panicking about my back. I'll admit this wasn't the most eloquent way for my mom to phrase this but it was effective. Her words were more effective than if she had motivated me to go after what I want. It reflects a value: not giving up.

Now, I'll be the first to admit, I am not very good at following through with things. Whether I am making a scrapbook, playing a sport, or working out, I tend to give it my all for a while, get bored, and give up. Then, I move on to the next thing.

Take piano for instance. I took piano for three years and I was pretty good, if I say so myself, but I wanted to quit. I would search desperately for excuses not to go. I'd say things like, "I'm so much worse than the other kids," "The piano's boring, I wanna take guitar" (which I ended up taking for about a month), or "The teacher is mean to me." The latter excuse is what finally got my parents to let me quit. Now I regret not following through. Who knows, maybe I'd be a piano sensation by now.

My parents and I know I tend to struggle with quitting on what I want, and we all have different approaches to dealing with it. My dad just tells me flat out, "Now, I'll let you do this, but I don't want you to quit. You tend to not follow through so well." My mom likes to say, "We'll take it one day at a time." I, on the other hand, tell my parents to give me consequences when I don't follow through, but usually they don't follow through on the consequences. I like to have these guidelines because I found I work well with deadlines. For example, in school, even if you don't feel like it, or you get bored, if you don't turn work in you

won't get good grades. Because of the expectation that I'll do my best and not give up, I do my best.

I don't want to come across as someone who quits at everything, because I am not. There are quite a few areas that I am very good at not giving up on, like friendships.

When I am friends with someone I try to be the best friend I can be, which makes it very hard when the friendship just doesn't work. During 7th and 8th grade I was friends with eight girls and we did everything as a group. But as high school came I drifted apart from them. My anxiety was intense and I truly believed that they didn't like me so I avoided them at all costs. But then I didn't have any friends. All of my old friends hated me, or at least I thought they did. I could have quit on friends, and decided to be alone, but instead I dug deep and went after what I wanted, a new friend.

It wasn't my first time being between friends, and each time I had been told by mom what her mom told her, "Look around the room. I bet your next best friend is in there." And sure enough she was.

Yujin Kim was a new girl from Korea. She was very shy but I wanted to be her friend, and I "went after what I wanted."

We were best friends until she left for Korea and stayed there. But even then I didn't quit on our friendship. We still talk over Facebook the same way we did when she was here.

My back is another thing I won't give up on. When I was diagnosed with scoliosis they said it was nothing to be worried about, but that we should check up on it occasionally. When I went back in six months they said I needed a brace. I was heartbroken. I would have to wear a plastic corset for 23 hours a day. A couple months later I went to have it made. They had me lie on this strip of fabric, suspended from what looked like a medieval torture device, while they wrapped plastic strips around me. In that moment I felt inhuman and freakish.

When I got my brace I immediately hated it. It flattened my already small breasts, and squished my butt down. Additionally, it made it hard to breathe and impossible to move. I knew there must be a better way, but the doctor said this was the only proven way to prevent progression.

Well, one day, by divine providence an advertisement for ScolisSmart popped up on my news feed. I watched the attached video and sent it to my mom. It talked about a program that not only prevented progression but would reduce my curve. We

asked the doctor about it and he said it wouldn't work, so we dropped it. But the more I tried wearing the brace the more I hated it. My anxiety was so extreme I had panic attacks every time I put on the brace. In addition, I was consumed in a feeling of hopelessness but I didn't give up. Instead I went after what I wanted and told my mom that I wanted her to look into ScolisMart again, despite what my doctor had said, and she did. Two months later we were in Lititz, Pennsylvania, working six hours a day to retrain my back. It was a lot of work and I came home every night exhausted but I still had to do all my homework. It was a big commitment, probably one of the biggest ones I've made.

Another part of the commitment is that I have to do thirty minutes of rehab and twenty minutes in my activity suit every day for half a year. Between school, homework and extra activities, it proved hard to find this time. I was especially struggling with the activity suit because it required making time to go for a walk every day.

On December 4th I hadn't done the activity suit in a while and my back hurt in a way it hadn't since before I went to ScolisMart. Soon I was in a panic and it only got worse. I was mad at myself for playing hockey, for not keeping with my activity suit and for being a quitter. I texted my mom in a whirlwind of fear and frustration. I told her I had messed up everything and it was too late to fix my back. That's when she said, "It is only too late if you give up. Don't give up. Dig deep and go after what you want."

That's when I realized I may not have been doing the best job keeping up with my rehab but that didn't mean I should give up. And yes, I may not be the best at following through but that doesn't mean I shouldn't try, or that I should just quit. Every day is an opportunity to keep continuing on. If I quit there are no good grades, no medals, no friendships, and no scoliosis-free backs. It doesn't matter what you tend to do, what matters is what you will do next. Even if you have quit at everything in your life so far, you can decide not to give up today and to go for what you want. This is what matters. That is what my life has taught me so far, and I am excited to learn more.

**Note:** *This essay tied for third place in the Laws of Life Essay Contest in Spring 2015.*

## **Dots, Lines and Colors**

*Jenny Zheng*

My first law of life is to love every little bit of life, like loving every dot and every line in a painting. Loving all the moments in life includes all the positive moments, such as receiving a box of chocolate, and all the negative moments, such as being betrayed by a friend or accidentally stepping into a box full of bugs. Specifically, the experience of coming to a foreign country taught me this law. I changed after I came to the United States as an international student at the age of 14. It was shockingly hard for me to fit into this society. Everything was very confusing. Racism, language, culture, religion and rituals that people followed were some of my biggest enemies. Believe it or not, these experiences actually taught me a big lesson.

It was very hard at the beginning. For the first few weeks in this new place, I cried everywhere. I cried in bed, in the closet, on trips, in classes, in the Clinic, in the bathroom, in front of my laptop, and many other places. Mostly I was missing my family and life in China. I lived with my mother and father, and my half-brother, who are all loving and caring to me. Life for me in China couldn't be better, although I did not realize this while I was in China. It is a luxury for me to talk to friends in my own language now. Friends here talked about different topics. Sometimes I wish I could talk about the ones I am familiar with. It was very hard for me to make friends.

Life for an international student is not easy in a high school environment. Some people laughed at my accent and they insulted my culture. I felt like I was an outsider, standing outside a bubble, trying to get in. It was even worse during Christmas time. One day, when I was shopping in a mall, I saw families shopping with great joy. I suddenly stopped and felt like an abandoned little pet, hoping my parents would call my name and take me home. Christmas always reminded me of Chinese New Year, which was the best time of the year for my family. I missed my family a lot. Each time I saw parents picking up their children from school, I paused, wishing I could be picked up by my parents. I dreamed about my hometown at night, and about going home. I dreamed that I was walking on the road planted with parasol trees that led me back to home, with all the people I love dearly. After I awoke I found my pillow wet and my eyes swollen. I felt emptiness growing deep in my heart.



I thought about all of these experiences and I was confused. *Why am I here? Why am I tolerating all of these terrible feelings?* I thought for a long time and tried to convince myself that there might be a reason why things like this appeared in my life. My conclusions were fascinating.

I realized that I have learned how much I love and need my family. For years, I did not realize this. I took everything that my family provided for granted. However, I started to be thankful for everything my family did for me. I learned how diverse the world is. I opened a thought that life is not always going to be what I expect it to be. Sometimes, some people are not going to like me, and that is actually okay. I learned that washing wool sweaters in hot water is not a good idea.

Most importantly, I've learned that sometimes, it is not too bad to say goodbye.

My grandfather got into a car accident four months ago and he is still in a coma. I hope he will come back, although it seems that only a miracle would call him back, and I understand the possibility is low. This was the first time that I was waiting to say goodbye to a person forever. I could feel the sadness and the pain from my heart slowly aching. I was scared, and I had nightmares, worrying about my other family members. Yet, after I heard about my grandfather's life story, I was relieved. I saw pictures of him in his 20s. He was tall, attractive, strong and responsible. He was born in a rich family, but during the war, he lost his family and met my grandmother. They had a rough life because China was developing with a great speed. After my grandmother was gone, my grandfather was very sad, and he was not willing to leave their house or the town for eight years.

It is absolutely a beautiful life to me. I could see a colorful picture of his life. It is like a tree or a flower. The process of living is glorious. I am sad about his situation today, but I am grateful and joyful for his wonderful life.

Most importantly, I've learned that sometimes, it is not too bad to say goodbye.

I believe that life is like a painting. Dots, just like the single moments of life, are the basics of a line. Lines are created with countless dots. Life is created with countless moments. The difference between them is that life has colors. The brush paints the color I want: the dark black, light green and passionate red are all parts of my life.

I started to draw my picture of life and felt less depressed about one single dot, which represents a moment. I started to look at life as a whole. Although it is impossible not to have some imperfect dots, all of them are part of the artwork of life. The dots, lines and colors depend on how I decide to paint it. No matter how dark it may seem now, at this particular dot, I believe that the picture will still be beyond any beauty that exists.

**Note:** *This essay tied for third place in the Laws of Life Essay Contest in Spring 2015.*

## Call for Art Submissions!



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

Please send us images you would like to share with Journal readers and feel free to write a few sentences about what you send in!

An Excerpt from Heaven in a Wildflower  
by Vera Glenn

1990

April 24

*A day of temper tantrums—a humid morning brewed up thunderstorms that rolled around the sky all afternoon, but didn't clear the air.*

The uncertain glory of an April day.  
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun  
And by and by a cloud takes all away.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

It's true, just when it seems so glorious that I feel I have to be out in the garden and start for the door, the sun clouds over and another shower comes down. But that is part of the charm that makes April my favorite month in the wildflower garden. From late January on, with the coming of the snowdrops, the garden has been waking up, yawning and stretching. By the end of March, unless we have had exceptionally cold weather or too much snow, the eyes of the celandine are wide open, and daffodils are up and taking notice. But it is the warm days of April that bring the whole garden out of bed. . . .

First walk-through: *Morning, after breakfast or even before. There's a hint of cool mist in the air. The vegetation is wet with last night's shower, refreshed after unusual dryness for early April. The wildflower garden in its yellow period has been a joy this year—more daffodils than I ever remember. Now with celandine past its peak, and the yellow daffodils mostly gone, the creamy-white ones opening and the delicate, pale narcissus, the garden has moved into the white and blue period. Lungwort, grape hyacinths, blue violets, forget-me-nots, and mertensia bring down to earth the various shades of the spring sky. The sun, just breaking through the lingering clouds, sets every raindrop sparkling, lights up the white bloodroot blooms, and touches the Dutchman's-breeches hung out on their line to dry.*

Second stop: *Noon. I've been busy all the morning, but now I escape with my lunch into the sunny garden. The first wild yellow tulip has opened and is spotlighted by a sunbeam coming through a gap in branches, barely leafed. Catching sight of it from the bench brings me to my feet, applauding. While I'm up, I inspect the epimedium, which is adding a pink accent here and there. A bee is testing the rue anemone for honey value.*

Third visit: *Afternoon Tea. For a while, I sit at leisure on the garden bench sipping Earl Grey tea, pretending to be a lady of leisure. The early white butterflies dancing over the sweet blossoms entertain me, but before long, I'm up and walking round the paths, tea mug in hand, to see what else has opened or been brought up out of the soil by the warm sun. Ah, spring beauties. And phlox. But no sign of trillium yet.*

Fourth interlude: *Drinks before dinner. We bring chairs, so we can shift around if the strong light slanting in from the west is too dazzling when we sit on the bench. On his first garden tour of the day, my husband spots several trillium leaves curling up out of the ground with buds to follow. I'm sure they weren't there two hours ago, but I'm glad that he has the honor of being the first to see them. There's wonderful backlighting on the squirrel scuttling along the top of Homer's [Greer] fence. Out on the lawn, the robins are singing for their supper, trying to entice the worms up and out of the ground. The garden is lovely in the early evening and full of fragrance. We linger over our martinis, relaxing and exchanging the happenings of the day.*

Last walk-through: *Twilight. A little breeze has come up with the sunset. The pinks, greens, and blues have gone gray in the dusk, but the white blossoms are still soft statements against the darkening background. Like mysterious will-o-the-wisps, the tall narcissus nod and beckon. It is the end of an enchanted April day.*

Some of the flowers in the April garden you have already met. I've given their backgrounds, and told stories about where they were bought, or who gave them to me. Now, the time has come to learn about the others, which were gathered locally, from woods, orchard, meadow and roadside. I must confess to violating Thoreau's good maxim: "I shall touch a hundred flowers/And not pick one." Not only have I picked flowers from the meadows and

woods, but in stocking my wildflower garden, I have also dug them up root and all. There is a zookeeper mentality that wants to preserve endangered species; that says, this flower may perish in the wild. So, carry it home, plant and nurture it, and it will survive, multiply, and fill the earth.

Perhaps it was that noble thought, perhaps it was covetousness that caused me to take a trowel and small basket and capture a clump of bloodroots I had seen on a bank along the road that runs past the cathedral. Bloodroots, like a lot of other wildflowers, seem to love banks. Unfortunately, I don't have any real slopes in my garden, but the bloodroots I dug up that day did take hold where I planted them in my garden. And I was justified in my thievery, for not long afterward a bulldozer tore away four feet of the bank where they had been growing to widen the road. If they'd still be in their natural place, the heavy blade would have annihilated them.

However, that wasn't the end of it, for this is a suspense story. After delighting the eye early each spring for years, the bloodroots were beginning to dwindle away, clogged by celandine and ivy and encroached upon by a spreading shrub. It seemed time to find them a new spot in the garden if I wanted them to survive, but it was a risky move. Many plants, like many people, don't bear too much relocating. When next spring came, there were only two frail plants still alive, one in the old location, one in the new. Reinforcements were needed. Then one day, driving north toward Southampton along the Huntingdon Pike, I was just opposite the driveway into Glenhurst, the old Glenn homestead, when a flash of pure white on the other side of the road caught my eye. Bloodroots! Determined to have them, I returned later with my small, long-handled shovel and several pots, and abducted them, black gravel and all.

Did they survive? At first I feared not, for March came round and not a sign of them. But then, one warm April day, there were bloodroots in full bloom, as if they had sprung out of hiding when my back was turned to shout, "Surprise!"

General Church Religion Lessons and the General Church  
Sarah Bruell Odhner | Adapted from a Charter Day  
Luncheon Speech, October 9, 2015

Today I will be presenting outcomes of a study on General Church Religion Lessons, a program that was Theta Alpha's primary mission for fifty years, providing weekly religion lessons for 500-600 children from 1940 until 1990.<sup>1</sup> The goal of the women who started and sustained the program was to build the General Church, *their* church, through personal contact with isolated families. My study explored Religion Lessons within the framework of New Church education, the broader context of the sociology of religion, and women's changing roles in society. I will be speaking on two topics today. First, I will present findings of sociological studies on ways in which religion is passed from one generation to the next, and then I will present research findings that shed light on ways in which General Church Religion Lessons were important for the growth of the General Church.

Friends are another important influence in the formation of religious identity. As children become aware of different ways of thinking, they need to know others who share their beliefs in order to see them as plausible and to embrace them as adults. Adults continue to need friendships with others who believe as they do. Sociologists use the number of friends a person has in a church as an indicator of whether or not a person is likely to remain a church member. The more friends a person has, the more likely it is that he or she will continue to belong. Friendship networks developed within religious organizations...support and sustain the religious values that are taught at home. Cornwall, 1998; Hargrove, 1979

**Decisions to disaffiliate from a church often have less to do with a church's doctrine than with a person's sense of social belonging and his or her recent experiences. Hoge, 1988**

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This speech is based on research undertaken for my Master of Arts thesis, *Establish the Work of Our Hands: General Church Religion Lessons 1940-1990*, Bryn Athyn College, 2015. The thesis is online at [www.bitly.com/ThetaAlphaGCRL](http://www.bitly.com/ThetaAlphaGCRL).

## Transfer of Religion from one Generation to Another— A Sociological Perspective

Sociologist Peter Berger suggests that the transfer of religion from one generation to another “hangs on the thin thread of conversation” between parent and child, teacher and student.<sup>2</sup> When conversations are few and far between this thread is weak, but when woven into the fabric of daily life it becomes strong enough to survive the challenges of adulthood. Sociologists of religion have demonstrated that a person's religious ideas are

With this in mind, I looked at New Church growth efforts. The General Church was founded in 1897, more than 100 years after the Writings were given. Reflecting on previous New Church growth initiatives, its founders observed that newcomers struggled to reconcile New Church beliefs with contradicting childhood beliefs. In light of that, they decided that the best growth would be realized by educating children in New Church schools and communities. With a view to growing the General Church W.F. Pendleton proposed, “that the sphere of the Church be in the home; that there be New Church day-schools, and thus that the children be kept in the sphere of the Church, in the home, in the school, and in their social life, until they reach adult age.” Pendleton, 1899

primarily shaped by their *family* and *friends*. Of these, family is the most important. Children witness parents practicing religion, and as they grow up they are introduced into supportive religious communities and protected from influences opposing these views. Parents monitor

friendships, choose schools, take children to church or Sunday school and encourage the development of devotional habits such as prayer. In studying how people acquire and fall away from faith Marie Cornwall says, “The more central religion is in the family, the more central it becomes in...a child’s worldview.”<sup>3</sup> Statements such as this led me to investigate whether supporting parents in

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<sup>2</sup> Berger, Peter L. (1967) *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York: Doubleday and Company.

<sup>3</sup> Cornwall, Marie. (1988) “The Influence of Three Agents of Religious Socialization: Family, Church, and Peers.” In *The Religion and Family Connection: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Darwin L. Thomas. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University. pp. 207–31.

teaching their children religion resulted in an increase in the percentage of children who joined the General Church as adults. Although lack of data prevented me from establishing a definitive answer, evidence pointed to the program having a positive impact on General Church membership.

### **Establishment of General Church Religion Lessons**

At its founding, the General Church identified "isolated" members as meriting support. Funds were designated for ministers to visit isolated members in hopes that the church would grow. In 1923 Elizabeth Simons Lungerich proposed that Theta Alpha support isolated members by developing educational resources for children. In 1940 her proposal finally sprang into existence. In fact, General Church Religion Lessons started so suddenly that families who responded to an advertisement requested lessons that were not yet written, funded or staffed. Women felt a strong call to the useful service of nurturing children and their parents, of encouraging children to develop a relationship with the Word. Almost immediately Rev. Harold Cranch volunteered to help write lessons. The General Church agreed to cover lesson printing costs from funds for the isolated. In 1946 the program was brought under the joint leadership of Theta Alpha and the General Church. It continued under joint leadership until 1990.

### **Impact of Lessons on the General Church**

In order to assess the program's impact I surveyed program participants. I received responses from 251 individuals consisting of volunteers, parents of children who received lessons, and adults who completed lessons as children. Of the 220 who completed lessons, 67% joined the General Church as adults. Of those who received lessons, 78% said the lessons had a positive impact on their choice to join the church. I looked for factors that might modify this result, for example family worship habits, church attendance, lesson routines, and attendance at Academy schools. The only factor that produced a different result was attending Bryn Athyn College, which yielded 74% membership. By comparison, main-line churches in the United States feel they have achieved a positive result if 50% of children raised in a church join as adults. Survey results revealed additional program benefits, such as



friendships among volunteers and increases in parent-child religious conversations, which we will now discuss.

### **Impact of Lessons on Volunteers**

Women who volunteered developed peer friendships, found meaningful roles within the General Church, and were connected with the international church. Volunteers reported, "I was new and wanted to help." "I was asked by someone." "I loved working with the other wonderful volunteers." "I loved hearing from the kids." "I established a real rapport with the mother of the boys I wrote to." And, "It was our lifeline to the church." They became valued contributors while caring for children at home. "I wanted to help isolated children develop a love of the stories in the Word as a foundation for loving the three-fold Word as adults." "I loved serving the church, feeling I was helping out, reaching the isolated with valuable church material for children." "I loved knowing I played a small part in a...worldwide, church organization. I felt grounded and useful." "I was helping with something important."

Religion Lessons knit together women and families around the globe. Theta Alpha chapters took responsibility for specific tasks, giving them meaningful reasons to work together. The universal nature of women's experiences allowed them to support each other despite differences of age, culture and great distance. Older women nurtured young mothers. Women said, "We... supported one another. Several women I worked with were older than I, and grew to be mentors for me." "I worked with older women who were nurturing of me as a young mother. I could bring my baby with me." "I loved receiving letters from my students." "One of the biggest benefits was feeling connected."

### **Impact of Lessons on Families**

Religion Lessons impacted the parents of the children receiving them in three important ways. Contact between leaders, teachers and parents nurtured adult friendships. Lessons reminded parents to give their children religious instruction, and also educated parents, increasing their confidence to teach. Lessons provided a springboard for family worship and church. Parents said, "We loved the time spent together." "My children enjoyed reading and discussing the stories." "Our children learned stories

of the Word through parent-child activities." "Lessons gave us support to instruct our children." And, "Lessons gave us a framework to work with." Above all, lessons *nurtured* parents, giving them the feeling of being cradled in the arms of the General Church, a church which *cared* for them, which cared *about* them even when they felt far away. As one parent said, "Receiving the envelope in the mail encouraged me to do a Word-based activity. I don't think we would have done so much based on the Word had it not been for the structure of receiving all we needed in that envelope."

One measure sociologists use to predict whether people will remain in a church as adults is the distance they live from their church of origin. People living within 5-10 miles often join as adults. Those further afield tend to disaffiliate. Theta Alpha *defied all odds* by connecting with people living an average of 219 miles from a church, and in some cases more than 1000 miles away. *This was a remarkable feat!* As one parent said, "It reminded me in a very isolated situation that there was a church out there that cared about me and my family. I decided to become an official member of the General Church at this time in my life."

### **Impact on Adults Who Completed Lessons as Children**

Religion lessons had a threefold impact on children. They occasioned religious conversations with parents and teachers, connected them with church members outside their families, and played an important role in their developing religious identity during childhood. As children grew older and attended the Academy schools they also felt secure, knowing they would fit in.

In recalling time spent doing lessons, one survey respondent remembered "hearing stories from the Word with my mother," and another testified having become a member of the church "because of those lessons and my Mom spending the time with us...and her making religion part of life." The church that meant so much to parents also "made an effort to have us participate." While conversations with parents are important during childhood, conversations with others outside the family are especially important during adolescence. One person reminisced, "I loved receiving letters from Rev. Karl Alden. He brought out an affectional side of religion which brought it alive."

Contact with corresponding teachers connected children with the General Church, which was especially important for girls,

who thrive on social interaction. The average size of families receiving lessons was four children. Teachers gave children from busy families important attention. When asked at what age they first identified as New Church, 58% of girls said before age five. For boys, 38% first identified as New Church during their teen years while reading the Writings for themselves or attending Academy Secondary Schools. Many who received Religion Lessons are active church members today and live in church communities, attend services of worship and send their children to New Church schools.

Women are natural experts on raising children. Under the flag of Theta Alpha, the women of the General Church used their expertise to support parents, especially mothers, in passing New Church ideas from one generation to another. The lessons developed by Theta Alpha continue to impact the General Church today as the forerunners of most children's material available today. They fostered the development of children's songs, books and pictures, many of which have been up-cycled and now take the form of YouTube videos, Jacob's Ladder lessons and Youth Journey Programs that continue to support the General Church today. I invite you to take a look at [education.newchurch.org](http://education.newchurch.org)

*Sarah has had a lifelong association with the New Church. An educator, she taught Sunday school for 30 years. She has also taught at the Oak Arbor School, and currently works at Bryn Athyn Church School and develops religious education programs for General Church Education. General Church Religion Lessons were an important part of her own education in England, and led her to explore their impact on the General Church. Sarah and her husband, Rev. Grant Odhner, have six children and three grandchildren.*

## Interviews with People Who Love Gardening

**Khary Allen**, Bryn Athyn: I think I garden for a very different reason now than at the beginning. At first it associated me with my earliest childhood memories and my grandmother. I was entranced with this blue carpet of flowers in the grass and her white sheets hanging above it. I used to sit on the flowers and play while she hung her laundry above it. Even back then I was interested in the names of the flowers and she told me they were *Veronica filiformis*, a small flower that looks very much like a forget-me-not. Grandma and Aunt Dorie would walk almost daily across the “coffee trail” between their homes. I loved tagging along behind or running ahead of Grandma as we went over the little wooded trail, spotting and naming wildflowers as we went. They would talk gardening, politics and religion over coffee. For those who might be interested, my grandmother was Winfrey Glenn Synnestvedt, and Aunt Dorie was Doris Glenn Pendleton.

I’m drawn to gardening now because it makes me feel peaceful. I like weeding and bringing things into order. I don’t go over all the thoughts in my mind, but instead, everything stops. I love the soil; I love the sunlight. The whole world stops!

For many years I was manager at Cairnwood Village [retirement apartments], and I would spend many hours gardening during the summer. I still get to take care of the Wildflower Garden there. When I’ve cleaned up an area, the biggest pleasure comes in knowing that some of the residents will really enjoy it. I think this person would like this flower, or that person would like that being done, such as when we widened the paths so a person could go through in a wheelchair and be able to see the flowers from the middle. It’s especially fun to occasionally find a young couple sitting there obviously enjoying the little garden they’ve stumbled across on a walk.

**Temmy Acton**, Bryn Athyn: I have a background in gardening and when I married John, it was evident he loved his vegetable-flower plot at the community garden in Bryn Athyn where he gardened with family members. This gardening fever appeared every spring and continued with enthusiasm throughout the growing and harvesting season.

Upon moving into our house and looking out the windows, I saw the gardens attached to the house, and that they were a sea of mud, and on a hill. I felt I could do something with them. And I did. They were in total sun, so I had to learn how to garden that way. Where I grew up living on a pond in Massachusetts, it was tall trees. Now I have some gardening guilt because, at my age, I have someone to help me.

In the gardens of the house were perennials, mostly drought-resistant plants that don't require much care. I cut them back in March, and then they grow by themselves. Those plants are mostly blues, and I wanted to have things that were soft, and with more color: pinks, yellows, etc., so I put in about twelve rose plants. I have an herb garden; some of it is medicinal, like astringents, and some herbs for cooking. I cut my grasses to about six inches every year, and inside them they have the green that they will be. Every year they grow to be huge bunches of grasses. I just think it is amazing that these plants and flowers come back each year. You take some care of them, and they lie dormant through the winter, then return to life in the spring.

We had a dwarf cypress that grew really tall. I thought of cutting it back, but it's grown so beautifully that no arborist will consider touching it. I have a whole area of transplanted irises from a friend in Mount Airy. It makes me happy to know I have them. One of my sons lives in Japan. One time when we were out for dinner, his father-in-law presented me with a Japanese light—after hauling it on a train and then a subway. It was heavy, and I had to bring it home on the plane.

In my life the Barnes Foundation was important. Mrs. Barnes was responsible for the gardens in Merion, Pennsylvania. She brought together all the distinct parts of gardening: the importance of soils, hydration, garden design, perennials, deciduous trees, etc. Pennsylvania is unique because it gets plants that come up from the south, like magnolias, and also ones that come from the north, those that need a certain amount of cold. There's a six-month growing season here in Philadelphia, where in Massachusetts it's only three months. I've found there are very many aspects to gardening in Pennsylvania, and I feel unbelievably grateful to the Barnes family for the things I learned during my three-year course in it.

**Kerry Lockhart**, Tumbi Umbi, Australia; *by Jenn Beiswinger*: Kerry began gardening when she was in primary school. She spent every school holiday in Brisbane with Lil Lil, her father's sister, who loved gardening, and Kerry 'got the bug' from her. She remembers always leaving her aunt's place armed with cuttings which she would stick in the ground at her home—some grew, some didn't, but she kept going. Also, Kerry remembers as a very young child standing with hose in hand, reaching down and washing radishes, eating them, washing beans, eating them—she remembers it as being a lovely time. And there was a dairy farm down the road from her home. When she was older Kerry went there to collect cow manure for her garden, then sold anything left over to her neighbours for pocket money.

Kerry thinks that her garden reflects how she feels: when it is looking good, she is feeling good; when weeds invade it, she is not feeling crash-hot. She likes going out into her garden, particularly in the morning, to hose her plants. This she finds very relaxing and calls it her "Matron's rounds," a flashback to her nursing days when the Director of Nursing, aka Matron, did daily ward rounds to make sure everything was shipshape.

In the evening she is in her garden again—particularly with a cup of tea or glass of wine in her hand. During her time in the garden her mind wanders onto all kinds of tracks, and she takes advantage of that time to reflect on the people who gave her plants or cuttings as gifts. Her garden is very special to her; she feels closer to God there, sometimes more than she does in church. In the garden she feels very attuned to the Lord, marvelling at the amazing details of His handiwork. One small groundcover, the little "celestial violet," readily self-seeds. It pops up all over the place and is a constant reminder to Kerry of the Lord's ever-present love.

Many of the plants in Kerry's garden were gifts from friends, and moving from her first house was difficult! She moved up the east coast from Sidney a few years ago and couldn't help but bring a few cuttings with her. For example, her night-blooming cactus. One evening around 9 o'clock Kerry remembers receiving a call from her friend, Ruth Heldon, saying, "Come over, quick, tonight!" Kerry and her husband, Mike, piled the kids into the car and drove over to the Heldons.' Once there, Ruth led them toward the back to show them a special plant which had multiple—dozens—of

blooms, and was an awe-inspiring sight.\* The delicacy and intricacy of the blooms are still marvels to Kerry. Likewise, her passionfruit vine—it bloomed like nobody's business, yielding over 100 fruits this past summer! [Jan. 2016], and brought back memories of her childhood. Kerry feels a connection to people through her plants. She learned this from her grandparents who planted something every time one of their children were born to commemorate the birth, and also other significant events. She enjoys doing similarly.

Kerry thinks gardening is a lovely lifetime practice. “You don't realise the muscles you use, and it is a lovely way of getting fresh air and exercise. I reckon more people ought to do it!” (We're conducting this interview over the phone, but I can tell she has a smile on her face while she's talking to me.)

*[\*Jenn Beiswinger clearly remembers the night—not long after arriving in Australia in 2012—when Kerry's husband, Mike, knocked on her door at a similar time of night and invited her and her husband, Todd, to come over and see their very first night-blooming cereus, continuing the cycle from the Heldons.]*

**Mary Tate**, Bryn Athyn: When I was growing up, gardening was an unpleasant chore for me. I had, however, always loved nature and flowers and was attracted to beauty. It wasn't until I was settling in my first home as a young married woman with two little ones that I really first developed an interest. Having graduated with a liberal arts degree in ceramics, I probably was seeking a creative outlet, and the purpose of landscaping my new home fit the bill. It provided me something to learn about, a creative outlet, and a mental refuge from raising small children.

From there, I was granted the opportunity to volunteer in the cathedral gardens. I was able to continue my learning, gaining further understanding of design concepts, use of color, and learning about plant material suited for this area. Eventually I was hired onto the crew, and it allowed me the freedom to be a mom, and put that first, and then work, be in the dirt, and commune with other women. It gave me a sense of community I had not had in my life and didn't even know I was missing!

As I grew to learn more about gardening, the gardens at the cathedral, the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, and the teachings

of the New Church, I came to love the correspondences I saw every day in nature. They were represented on the historical buildings I worked around in Bryn Athyn. Often, as I work, I find that gardening provides a space for things to become clear. Sometimes it is the quietness of mind that manual labor gives me, or a representation provided by nature to clarify a spiritual concept, or a conversation with my coworkers that helps to bring new ideas to light. I feel that any act of creativity or of being in nature can open a direct channel to the spiritual world. I feel that so strongly in the garden.

The community of women I have come to know on the garden crew at the cathedral has been the biggest blessing in my life. I grew up in a family of boys, and raised boys, and so never really understood what I was missing by not being in the company of women! Being in the company of strong, smart, faithful, caring women has given me such a better understanding of femininity and what it means to be a woman. Even in this I think of what this means in nature. Gardening is such a wonderful way to begin to see how the world really works, how things come together, and connect. That is what I most love about gardening.

**Anastasia Synnestvedt Show**, Bryn Athyn: My husband, Rich, and I have our own business, pruning small ornamental trees and shrubs for the cathedral gardens and other, private customers. It's specialty artisan pruning. For example, a person might have a five-foot Japanese maple by their front door. We can prune it artistically and bring out the natural beauty of its shape.

In our own garden I tend to spend more time than Rich caring for the flowers. I have really enjoyed planting berry bushes over the last few years to see what will work well. I love experimenting. It's one thing to have a plan for a garden, and put in the plantings, but it's another thing to see what actually works. Like blueberries. We planted them but weren't going to give them special treatment, so they told us they weren't happy and didn't grow. They like acidic soil and they weren't in the right place, but it's a lot of extra work to keep a plant growing when the soil is not what the plant needs. On the other hand, my brother-in-law gave us cuttings of clove currants, little purple-black berries, and they were very happy where we put them. The bees love them and they made a tasty jam. When I'm working I don't have the luxury



of watching the wildlife, but in my own garden that is what I like to do.

As winter is coming to a close [February or March in Pennsylvania], we like to get out and do dormant pruning before the buds break and the leaves come out. One plant like that is roses, and so in a few weeks we will be cutting them back.

When I'm gardening I feel fully alive. It seems to engage all my senses. I've had times in my life when I didn't do much gardening, and I always miss it. When I garden I feel very connected with the earth, very present with nature, and closer to God. A concept that gardening has taught me is how vital compost is: breakdown and decay are necessary to feed new life. The Lord uses our mistakes for good and He created nature to do the same. Seeing compost as a metaphor for how to deal with failure has allowed me to be more forgiving of my personal failings as well as my gardening mistakes.

**Wendy Barnitz Alettha**, outside Madison, Wisconsin: The place I'm most connected to is the woods. I moved to 20 acres in a rural area not too far from Madison ten years ago. At that time I knew that I loved to be outside, but my life had been mostly involved with people and ideas until that time. So the truth is that I knew very little about Nature. I knew the difference between an oak and a maple leaf from some lesson in the Bryn Athyn elementary school. I now wanted to know so much more.

At that time the woods on the land that I had moved to were so full of brambles and other kinds of invasive species that it was really almost impossible to walk. My first step was to begin to clear paths by pulling and cutting the brambles; multiflora rose and raspberry and blackberry bushes were the most obvious problem. During that spring, I got to know the spirit of my woods, and fell in love. It feels like the trees give me more energy for life. I was experiencing a lot of grief and the woods seemed to hold me, without judgment. I felt safe to feel the sorrow, the anger and the fear of grief there in the woods. Soon after I began to clear the woods of invasives and feel the healing that I was experiencing, I began to hear messages of advice and encouragement while I was working in the woods. An early message was that I needed to share this magical woods with others. I am now able to offer people their own little cabin for overnight retreats from the busy, noisy pace of daily life. I call the land "A Wilderness Nearby."

Meanwhile, I was restoring the woods by clearing invasives, which prevent wild flowers and oak trees from prospering by shading them out and/or changing the chemical nature of the soil so the native plants can't grow. I have had help from family and friends and guidance from several foresters in all this work. I also discovered that research supports my experience of joy in Nature as both the soil and the woods give off chemicals that reduce the likelihood of depression or anxiety.

I have flower gardens, a vegetable garden, a beginning orchard, a prairie patch and a labyrinth. I love all of these different expressions of the Divine in my life but my relationship with the Woods is by far the most powerful.

**Gillian Simons Mayer**, Huntingdon Valley, PA: I was asked what I love about gardening. I am thinking of all the people in my life with whom I have an association with gardens. My father's parents had a hillside in the back of their house on South Avenue in Bryn Athyn. They made it into tiers, and grew all their own vegetables. My grandfather died early in life, and my grandmother, Gertrude Simons, had the task of raising nine children on her own. During that time she was given a maple tree from a suitor, and it is still growing in the front yard of that house. She never married the man but married someone else instead.

My maternal grandmother, Agnes Gyllenhaal, had a weeping cherry tree in her back yard. As kids my four brothers and I thought the tree was tied in with her life. She lived to be very old and we loved that tree. When my grandmother died, my brother, Jonathan, made spoons from the cherry wood, and that's one of the things that started him in his business of making wooden spoons.

The first house that my parents owned was a little white box house. My mother, Zoe Simons, grew red climbing roses across the front porch, and I remember being so proud that we had such a beautiful house. In the back was a Tasha Tudor Wisteria, one like she has in all her books. My mother also grew lily of the valley—she always had the scent of lily of the valley. My dad, David Simons, would take us kids along Pennypack Creek and show us

how to find Indian licorice. It's from the sassafras tree and we would chew it.

Every time my husband and I see anthuriums, he says, "My father used to cultivate them." His father, Percy Mayer, had a big garden in South Africa, in an area that was rainy and misty on the mountainside outside Durban. The soil was really dark and rich brown. The anthuriums were his particular plant to cultivate, and he shared the garden with his wife, Berthe, who grew spectacular roses. My mother-in-law also had bushes of azaleas, taller than she was. She made arrangements with the flowers when they were blooming.

When my husband, Patrick, retired, he and I started to grow vegetables in the community gardens. We naturally fell into our own jobs, and we grow so many things. Now we also cook and freeze them together. All winter we have been eating the corn, beans, and such, from our garden.

My son, Clifford, and his wife, Leanne, have a pergola, which is in the back of their house, and they cover it with climbing plants. It creates shade for them from the Colorado sun. My second son, Hylton, gave his fiancé, Patty, his great-grandmother's engagement ring. Patty wanted to know more about her (Agnes Gyllenhaal), and found out that she loved paper whites. Now Patty has a special association with them. Hylton and Patty's son, Calvin, 9, grows cucumbers on his own special plot. My third son, Matthew, married into a gardening family, and had his wedding in their garden in Wyoming, Ohio. My daughter, Bronwen, does paintings of trees and flowers. I wonder where that love of plants and flowers came from? There must be lots of angels around who love the Lord's creation.

## ***The War and Us ~ A Review of my Grandma's Memoirs***

*Hilda Rogers*

This small book is the published version of a manuscript that has existed in the Waters family and amongst their relatives for many years. It is a document that, until now, took the form of a handful of photocopied pages, typed out and clipped together by one family member. It was then copied and passed around by many of the numerous descendants of Hilda Mary Waters, her husband Alan, and her 10 children.

Last year, quite out of the blue, I received an email from my cousin, Patrick Rose. He spoke of the manuscript and outlined his plan to officially publish it as a book, and then he asked if I would be at all interested in illustrating the front cover. I responded that yes, I would love to give it a go and that I would refresh my memory of the manuscript and have a think, on paper. As I asked him a few questions and tried to establish what he wanted, I quickly realised that Patrick himself has a strong artistic streak, and he soon provided me with a number of interesting photographic references in relation to the story contained in this memoir.

In brief, the story is of my grandparents' experiences during World War Two: covering the time of the initial outbreak of hostilities; the bombing of Colchester, UK; an outbreak of scarlet fever; and their eventual decision to evacuate their entire family of 10 kids plus two adults, as one unit, to the other side of the country. The Waters family was a large and active part of the Colchester New Church Society, and there are a number of mentions in this manuscript of other members of that congregation, other neighbors and people they knew, and an interesting account of the time the "Cooper cousins" (from Bryn Athyn) visited them, whilst based in the UK as airmen with the US Air Force.

In my process of creating the cover for this fascinating piece of my family history, I reached a new level of

understanding and appreciation for it. The most poignant moment, Patrick and I agree, is near the beginning when, having heard, on their newly purchased wireless, the chilling news that war had been declared, our grandparents were walking in their garden. Grandma, in her own words, writes, “We saw a very beautiful butterfly hovering over the flowers, a thing we never forgot, for it reminded us that Hitler had no power over these beautiful and simple things; they were ruled not by man, but by a Higher Power, the Lord who is Divine Love and Wisdom, and this was a comforting and reassuring thing to remember on that first day of war.”

I made this event the main inspiration of the cover. I decided to use a Peacock butterfly—because this particular type is also somewhat reminiscent of British fighter planes, with the roundels, or circular British insignia, on the wings. Peacocks are native to the Colchester area, if a little uncommon. I used Goldenrod for the flowers, because I know Grandma was fond of them, and I put the beloved family home, “Maydays,” in the background. “Maydays” was an interesting challenge to represent because I was trying to depict it fairly accurately, using an old family photograph with it in the background and a newer picture of it, overgrown and a bit run down—the house itself no longer exists, having burned down in 2006, though the name itself lives on attached to the new construction built in its place. In the upper right corner of the cover, I placed the outline of a (German) Dornier bomber, the menace of war, looming over this scene of tranquility.

I never knew my Grandma, having arrived here on earth three weeks after she left. But I have her first name and I have always felt close to her through stories from my Mum and her sisters. Because this memoir is in her own words, it is the closest I have ever personally been to actually hearing her voice. I sort of envy Patrick for being older and knowing her so fondly as his Grandma, in person, and it is his personal account of her in the Foreword that really makes this book complete and a tribute to this lovely, wonderful lady.



*This book can be purchased directly from [Lulu.com](http://Lulu.com) or alternatively, details on how to order can be found at [www.patrickrose.org/war.html](http://www.patrickrose.org/war.html) ; net profits will be donated to the British Academy of the New Church.*

*In the Fall 2015 issue of Theta Alpha Journal, Paula Roschman Niall told us of a number of spiritual experiences she has had in her life. She also expressed hope that other readers would write in about experiences they have had. In response to this, we are publishing the following which is included in Kirstin Burnham's book of her spiritual experiences, titled Borderlands: Angels I Have Known.*

Red Cardinal  
*Kirstin Burnham*

One early June weekend I was on vacation in the Catskill Mountains in New York State with relatives. Over the years I have spent a good percentage of my life at these mountains with my relatives. I have had countless adventures and wonderful times spent while inhaling the balsam alpine air. The weekend was no different with fun, games, walks, boating on the lake and dining out.

My grandmother, Nana, had been on my mind a lot this particular weekend. I sporadically conveyed various anecdotes to my relatives about her over the course of the weekend. This was something that I never had done before because my grandmother was not related to them; the subject had never come up before.

Early Sunday morning I was in mid-dream. I was dreaming of taking a lengthy, final breath. I woke myself up, gasping for air, which was then followed by tears. It was after two a.m., and all was motionless. I fell back to sleep, only to be woken up hours later by that dreaded early-morning telephone ring, the ring that chimes out bad news. Oddly, no one came to my room, but I knew something was not right. I could feel it. We all had breakfast, yet there were still no words of doom. I still could not quite shake the feeling. We packed up and headed back to Pennsylvania, making a detour for a fancy lunch on the way. At the lunch table, I sat across from my uncle, and I saw something different in his eyes. Something was amiss, and I felt like we were playing the card game, *Assassin*, with everyone's eyes darting here and there. I did not pose a question. I could have but I knew, in my heart, that someone had died. Even though it was strange, I

wanted these few remaining hours before hearing the life-changing news.

As we drove closer to home, I felt my whole body sink and start to numb out. My uncle drove me to my parent's home, not my apartment. As he drove up the driveway, I saw the whole family congregated in the backyard. I then mechanically left the car and ambled up the pathway to the house until I was hit with the news that my grandmother had died early that morning. (It was, no doubt, at the time I woke up gasping for air.) Somewhere in my mind, I knew this was the moment I had struggled for air; I just did not want my heart to feel it. I had stayed in that sluggish mode as long as my mind would allow; however, when the words were spoken, my heart could no longer deny the reality of bereavement. The grief hit so quickly that my knees buckled from underneath me. As I started to fall, my two sisters came to hold me up.

Nana was the quintessential grandmother, the kind who was always baking cookies, reading books, playing games, and generally spoiling her grandchildren. I am the youngest of her grandchildren. Nana had been my last living grandparent, making her loss the end of the connection to that generation.

Days later, at her interment one of her favorite songs was played, *Ave Maria*. During the song a hawk flew overhead, and cardinals perched in the surrounding trees. Cardinals were her favorite birds, a simple yet moving reminder that she is still with us.

A week after Nana passed away I was in my apartment, lying on my bed, completely immobilized with sadness and grief. I was missing her so very much, missing the loss of not only her, but of returning with her to my childhood. As adults we do not want to be treated as children, especially by our parents, but there is something special about a grandparent, especially a grandmother. Grandma's batch of freshly baked cookies can transport us back to fond childhood memories as soon as we breathe in the aroma, a warm, friendly place to return to.

Through my tears I saw an illuminating light above the staircase. A young woman came into view as a soft glow of golden warmth materialized before me. It was my niece, Shandra, who had died



in infancy. She relayed to me that it was now her time to be with our grandmother. I became peaceful at the thought and vision of my niece as a young woman, and the union of the two. The feeling in the room lifted my spirit up and I felt comforted and calm.

With the glow of her exquisiteness and a quick, beaming smile, she was gone, leaving me with the tranquility of peace to go on in the reminder of their continuing life after life.

*Note: reprinted by permission of Kirstin's father, Dave Burnham.*

Response to Interviews with Artists  
in the Autumn 2015 Issue  
*Hilda Rogers*

As an artist, I am mostly self-taught. Art has always been a part of who I am. Even when my kids were young, and putting pencil to paper without interruption was almost impossible, I drew their baby faces with my eyes, inside my head. My work these days is largely portrait and figurative, though I am not exclusive to those subjects—I love the challenge of trying to portray the essence of a person, and also the idea that drawing or painting a face in great detail is a way of loving them. I like to focus on young children and older people, looking for the deeper qualities of innocence and wisdom. My subjects tend to be candid because I tend to find consciously posed subjects are not “true to themselves.” Meetings between the very young and the very old are definitely one of my favorite themes, as is the arrival of a newborn into a family.

Painting and drawing give me deep joy and take me outside the zone of time and space. Sometimes there is also great frustration, times when things are just not working, new techniques to learn, concepts to internalize and translate onto canvas and paper, but that's part of the journey. I spend many hours on my pictures, seeking to make each one the best I ever did, because after all, each person deserves to be given the best effort I can give. It is hard for me sometimes to share the result of my labors because it feels so personal, but when someone else connects with my work, that's a great reward.

The Waiting Chair  
Marilyn Synnestvedt

The old buffet stood regal  
In its place beside the stair,  
And beside it over years  
Sat the well used "waiting chair."  
The chair was small but helpful  
For Gram, who waited there,  
For anyone kind hearted  
To transport her anywhere.

With eyesight growing dimmer,  
As limbs more fragile grew,  
Dressed well ahead of time  
Her pleasures then were few.  
There patiently she'd wait  
For some kind souls she knew,  
To take her in their car  
And acquaintances renew.

That chair was always ready  
In weather foul or fair,  
Where she could sit and wait  
For minutes one might spare  
To take her from the house  
To get a breath of air  
And offer her an arm,  
Thus keep her in their care.

Now that Gram is gone,  
The chair's no longer there,  
But as I now grow older,  
I have a "waiting chair."  
It stands by Grandpa's desk  
Quite near the doorway, where  
The young ones come to take me  
For my pleasure anywhere.

Like Gram, I'm dressed ahead—  
Don't want to make them wait.  
All are now so busy  
With so much "on their plate."  
My chair was once Aunt Elta's  
And now this is its fate—  
To hold and give me comfort  
As patiently I wait.

## Farewell Address of Kristin King to the Alumni

*At the Theta Alpha International luncheon in October, 2015, Janet Krettek made a presentation to the retiring College president, Kristin King, in absentia, to honor her leadership. It acknowledged her as the first woman president of the college. The presentation also expressed appreciation for the job done so well in guiding the college wisely and graciously through difficult and turbulent times. Her report demonstrates why we can all be optimistic about the future of Bryn Athyn College.*

*When Kristin King spoke at the Theta Alpha Luncheon a few years ago, we had the highest attendance ever and hope to have her come again. Her gift was a Theta Alpha pendant. The following was extracted from a slightly longer alumni address that went out to the alumni association in the Spring of 2015.*

Dear Alumni and Friends,

As winter term ends I reflect on the many happenings on campus this past term and past year. In four months a new president will take office, and so I reflect as well on the past five years and what a privilege it has been to witness such widespread innovation at the College, and so deep and steady a commitment to mission and values. The talent, resilience, and passion of faculty, staff, administration, alumni, and stakeholders have transformed the College.

Let me list just a sampling of the curricular and campus developments since the launch of the 2011-16 strategic plan: majors in psychology and business; minors in biology, math, public history, and English; tracks in pre-med, pre-law, and nursing; a building arts program with summer workshops, an associate's degree, and an international conference of the American Glass Guild; a student employment program offering 120 campus jobs to develop career skills, accountability, and campus pride; thriving internship, career, and service learning programs; expanded spiritual life offerings and new chapel space; NCAA Division III status with exciting new sports on campus and an energizing commitment to spiritual and ethical focus through athletics.

The College is committed to making the best pedagogical use possible of advancements in technology. At the same time we understand that a liberal arts education is today more relevant than ever because it teaches students what to *do* with the floods of

information at our fingertips. How do we filter, analyze, reassemble, and apply knowledge for meaningful understanding and worthwhile ends? How does information become wisdom?

Along with a commitment to engaging meaningfully with the digital world and harnessing its power, the College has anchored itself in its physical environment and history. We have a gorgeous campus with state-of-the-art facilities. The historic district (Cathedral, Glencairn, Cairnwood) border the campus, lending gravitas and permanence and providing visual and curricular inspiration. New walking trails draw students and community members to the 120 open acres of the north campus. An arboretum is taking root through new attention to individual trees and groves, some of which are now marked by name, history, and correspondence. The Pendleton Oak Grove by the ice rink, the Cedars of Lebanon grove at the corner of the new athletic field, and the Johnny Appleseed trees flanking the Doering Center are just the beginning. One day a variety of beautiful trees and groves will punctuate the campus, bringing botany and correspondences into fruitful dialogue. Bryn Athyn Bounty (Saturday summer market) and our community gardens won horticultural awards in 2014. Sustainability initiatives—from grass-fed poultry to honey production to deer studies in the Pennypack Park—reflect the passions of a new generation and an education tuned to relevance and to the physical and spiritual environment.

The beauty and significance of the outside campus find reflection in the powerful education within the classrooms where teacher/student mentoring and personal connection flourish. Our values and aspirations are sown into our teaching, even written, literally, on our walls.

For those who want to explore further, the College's website offers descriptions of recent developments in the nursing program, graduate collaborations in psychology and education, hockey nationals, theatrical performances, and service initiatives. The future looks more than promising as we anticipate new weavings of academic disciplines with New Church thought, and the ongoing development of programs to prepare our graduates for successful careers and meaningful lives.

As I write this, I reflect too on all the mailboxes this update will land in: recent graduates learning the ropes in new workplaces;

alumni who graduated 1-2 decades ago who are now on a second or third career, juggling work, family, and community roles; empty nesters who feel too young to have gotten so quickly to where they are; and older alumni discovering that retirement is just as active as all the other phases of life.

I imagine alumni with strings of successes and failures in professional and private life, and stores of knowledge and experience that they are too humble to call wisdom. I imagine great swathes of alumni of all ages, building homes and communities and workplaces across the country, making a daily difference by caring about quality and practicing integrity. It is inspiring to think of all you interesting, passionate, useful people "out there." Can we work together to enhance alumni pride and participation?

The value and quality of the College manifests most powerfully through the lives and influence of its alumni, which is why in my final months in office I am turning attention to testimonials from our alumni. At a board meeting last month I emphasized why we care so deeply about the ongoing development of New Church higher education, and why the College matters tremendously in the grand scheme. I projected the beautiful faces of some of our alumni and current students on the wall of the boardroom and then read their powerful reflections about the College. The trustees sitting around the table—who volunteer thousands of hours to the cause—were inspired by your faces and words. When I recapped the testimonials for faculty, they cheered like a bunch of teenagers at a home basketball game. You alumni are loved and remembered!

Please consider sending in your own testimonial and photo. Tell us what you're doing, and tell us what you value about your years at the College. Send a paragraph and photo to [news@brynathyn.edu](mailto:news@brynathyn.edu).

It's amazing how much things can change over time and yet retain a core identity and purpose. The College's physical campus and academic offerings look very different today than twenty years ago. And twenty years hence there will be other transformations as we respond to advancements in higher education and to changing markets. What remains stable, however, is the

commitment to a New Church view of moral, civil, and spiritual life. And yet even within this stable commitment there are healthy differences of opinion about *how* to read and apply the teachings of the Word, especially over time. Our church is currently going through traumatic and painful times as people see their deep values and careful interpretations of the Word diminished or countered by other people's deep values and careful interpretations of the Word. This is the time for dialogue and debate. And here's where the College plays yet another critical role.

The College brings inestimable value to the Church when it creates and safeguards an environment of intellectual life, spiritual inquiry, and yes, at times, respectful dissent. I'm not talking about politicized classrooms but rather about the genuine life of the mind and the sort of intellectual and spiritual freedom that Swedenborg espoused. When Swedenborg published each work of theology, he would send off a copy to the universities of Europe and England. The universities fostered intellectual life and disseminated new thought into the world. Swedenborg especially respected and admired the English for their freedom of speech, press, and religion. He published 71% of his 3.5 million words of theology in England, and he died there, peacefully and humbly, an old man who had spent a lifetime pursuing intellectual and spiritual inquiry, and who came around repeatedly to love as the heart of the matter.

I like to think Swedenborg would have approved of Bryn Athyn College and its emphasis on intellectual and spiritual inquiry and loving service to others. "Think for yourself; Live for others." We have a vibrant, courageous college, prepared to move forward.

Sincerely,  
Kristin King

*After completing her five years as president Kristin returned to her work as a full time professor at Bryn Athyn College. She teaches classes in literature and writing, runs the English major, pursues research, and works on a variety of committees. She feels blessed to enjoy all three areas of teaching, research, and administration.*

## **What's New at the Glenview New Church School?**

*Rebekah Brock Russell, Principal*

GNCS has been in continuous operation for over 125 years. As the school has grown and changed over the years, it has steadily been in the business of offering an education in the light of the New Church. That is still true in 2015-2016. Despite the ongoing challenges related to budgets and enrollment, the school is a warm and happy place for the students each day. What is different and new, you might ask, as the school continues its commitment to our motto “Feed the mind, touch the heart, and prepare for life”?

### **Service Learning**

Each week for an hour, our students in grades kindergarten through eight are involved in a service learning experience. During this time, our students investigate real-world needs and then design, implement, reflect on, and tell or teach others about how they met those needs. A well-designed program helps our students to meet academic standards as they have meaningful experiences that get them out from behind their desks to make a difference—in both their sense of how they can make a difference and in the lives of those they touch. Our teachers work hard to plan, implement, and make it a worthwhile experience. Sometimes our students work on school plays or shows for the community; other times the teachers will involve the students in a project-based learning experience. Many times they will reach out and support local organizations who need our help. The cumulative learning that comes from regular experiences such as these is what matters—and our hope is that the students learn life lessons along the way, even as they are learning to serve their neighbor.

For the initial project this year, the students listened to a speaker from an organization called “Feed My Starving Children”—a Christian-based program that puts together meal packs and ships them all around the world. He helped them to see the children’s needs, learn what they could do to make a difference, and, of course, tied the effort into the Lord’s message that we need to take care of our neighbor. The following Friday, we took the students to one of the warehouses where the meals

are put together and had the most wonderful two hours during which each and every student fully participated in adding soy protein powder, dried vegetables, rice, and vitamin powder into plastic bags that were heat sealed and boxed up for delivery to the Philippines. It was truly love in action. The following Sunday, they rode their bikes for an hour around a closed Park Drive during our traditional bike-a-thon and raised over \$1,800 for the organization. The last part to any unit is the reflection portion during which the students write about how they felt participating, questions they still have, and ideas this gave them.

For subsequent projects, we have the students look for needs in the community and encourage them to design a program to fill those needs. Past examples include one ingenious group who designed a contraption to catch goldfish in the Park Lake which involved math, creative thinking, researching, problem-solving (reflecting on what could be done differently because only one goldfish was caught). Another group with a love for animals created their own bake sale to help buy much needed supplies for a local animal shelter. One enterprising group learned how to crochet plastic grocery bags to make mats for the homeless which were then distributed by a volunteer. Still another creative group figured out how to make pillow cases with fun fabric for sick kids at a nearby hospital. The list goes on and on.

### **The Library becomes a Kindergarten**

Over the past few years, the books that our students are reading were labeled according to reading level, evaluated to assess their quality, and reorganized into two Reading Rooms—one for the primary and the other for the upper grade students. The old library was dismantled and a wonderful, bright, open and colorful kindergarten classroom was built. At the same time, our preschool classroom got a makeover. In addition, 2014 graduate Caleb Cole and his crew expanded the size of our preschool playground for his Eagle Scout project. The new play yard serves as an outdoor classroom and play space—an appealing combination overlooking our beautiful campus. Our teachers, Kendra Smith Paraskevopoulos and Pamela Wild, with aide Kara Smith, have made these rooms come to life with hands-on, outdoor, kid friendly experiences that are helping our students to grow and learn in a safe and nurturing space. We are excited about the



opportunity that exists for New Church education to touch the lives of many young children in the area whose parents value what we have to offer.

### **School Garden**

Another initiative that has made its way into our curriculum as a setting for both service learning and other learning experiences is our school garden—led by volunteer Roxanne Junge. All the students are involved in the process of choosing seeds, cultivating the ground, planting veggies, weeding, and finally harvesting beautiful produce that is used for school lunches, shared with parents, and donated to our local food pantry. Curriculum connections are made throughout the experience, and relationships between younger and older students are built as they work together. The garden provides an opportunity for our students to see how food grows, to observe the changes in the ground during the seasons, and to see the Lord’s creation repeat itself each year.

### **Steady Work on Best Practices**

For a number of years, the faculty has been steadily working on their own professional development, as a group, and as individuals. We have monthly spiritual professional development meetings which focus on the application of New Church ideas in our classrooms; monthly and summer meetings that focus on current district standards in curriculum; and we carefully work to integrate our New Church curriculum content with those standards. We are also studying and reflecting on books such as, “What Great Teachers Do Differently” by Todd Whitaker. In addition, we have a commitment to get to workshops when possible and our teachers have been working hard to keep themselves apprised of best practices. India Wyncoll, for example, finished her Master’s degree in Education; Pam Wild is just starting one online; Kara Smith is finishing her program this year; and Laura Barger became certified in a reading system called SLANT. Our art and music teachers regularly attend professional workshops. It is exciting to see them apply what they learn in their daily work—and even more fun to be a student in their classes.

## **The Learning Goes On After School**

Jennifer Overeem, the art teacher here for 25 years, has worked hard to create an afterschool enrichment program for children in our school and for those in other schools. Its purpose is to serve as afterschool care as well as to provide an opportunity to experience learning through the arts, movement, music, chess, woodworking, crafts, and much more. One group of students was treated to an experience they will never forget—participating in the felling of a dead tree in the Park, observing about how it was to be dried and cared for, and then using that wood with a local woodworker to create a project.

It was a learning experience they will never forget. Many of the teachers contribute to the afterschool offerings, and volunteers help out as well, such as Bonny Scheer, who leads an amazing marimba ensemble that travels around to share their music in the local area. Ever a favorite out-of-school activity are the trips that Phil Parker takes the upper grade students on in the fall and spring. Connecting with his history or science curricula, he takes them to places that bring the learning to life—and they have lots of fun along the way.

Our hope and prayer is that the combination of all that is new here, as well as the longstanding-commitment to an excellent academic education that has existed for years, will continue to “Feed the Mind, Touch the Heart, and Prepare for Life” here at the Glenview New Church School.

*Editor’s Note: Rebekah Brock Russell has just ended her service as the Principal at Glenview New Church School, Phil Parker is now GNCS Principal*

Theta Alpha International Annual Meeting  
Minutes  
October 9, 2015

Prior to the annual meeting of Theta Alpha International, Vice President Janet Krettek Fuller welcomed those in attendance to a delicious luncheon. While guests helped themselves to food she and raffle organizer Gillian Mayer conducted a drawing for a raffle basket that contained a variety of New Church books and a beautiful statue created by Dawn Barnitz Potts. The lucky winner was Christine Roth Lewin. The drawing was followed by a dance choreographed by Sarah Gladish and performed by the ANC dance team. The theme of the dance was the showing of support for one another through times of struggle and was movingly presented by the young ladies to the music of Ave Maria. Their performance was enthusiastically received—judging by the prolonged applause.

The formal meeting was called to order by Janet, who began by reading a series of numbers from the Writings that focused on a life of charity and a love for being useful. She then called on President Melodie Haworth Greer to present her report.

- 1 **President's Report:** Melodie reminded members that we were moving into the second year of re-inventing Theta Alpha International based on bylaw changes voted on last year. She noted that she has seen definite signs of change that are encouraging and hopes that we can continue on that path. She then announced the names of new members of the Executive Committee added since last year. These include Kirsten Rydstrom Rogers—corresponding secretary, Kelley Hale—data manager, Sarah Jin Wong—college liaison, Sarah Bruell Odhner—General Church Education liaison, and Helen Kennedy—*Journal* editor. You are already familiar with Helen from the fine *Journals* she put together in the spring and fall of 2015. However, Melodie noted that we need a new secretary, as Barbara Doering is retiring. She also mentioned the possibility of looking for a chair for future fund raising. She continued by mentioning various projects that TAI has supported over the past year. For specifics, please see the TAI Annual Report in the Autumn 2015 *Journal*.

Melodie announced the names of new full-time teachers in our various New Church schools who were each given a gift of \$100 to help them set up their classrooms and help with unexpected expenses. Recipients this year were the following: Beth Moraux (BACS), Kendra Paraskevopolis (Glenview), Bracken Brown and Vivienne Riley, (Kempton), Amy Dwyer (Washington), Dylan Odhner (ANC) and Perry-Jayne Bryon, Maggie Buchanan, Angelique Swain, Merryn Victor, and Tanya Woods (Kainon, South Africa).

Melodie then reported on an exciting new endeavor that TAI is hoping to launch this year—if the members vote affirmatively to accept it. The plan is to create a number of Theta Alpha scholarships available to students attending the college. She explained that TAI has supported scholarship funds in the past by donating money voted on by the membership, to be split evenly between the Academy and the Bryn Athyn College. The money then went into a pool and the institutions decided on who would receive the money. However, TAI would like to get their name “out there” in a way that students would know where the money was coming from. Therefore, she proposed two new scholarships of \$2100 each—\$700 per trimester—that would be available to students studying education as a major, minor or part of an interdisciplinary degree at the college level—one to a student entering college as a freshman and one for a student already enrolled in the education program. The name Theta Alpha International would be associated with the scholarships, and one or two representatives from TAI would be part of the team selecting the winners. Melodie also announced that TAI is actively pursuing the idea of offering specific scholarships to women studying other disciplines such as religion, or who are attending the MARS program or the college as an international student. The yearly contribution of \$5000 (that used to go into the general fund) would be used to support these additional scholarships. Melodie summarized by stating that the education scholarships would not be given this year but would be effective 2016-17. However, students would need to apply for them in the spring of 2016.

2. **Minutes:** Janet called for a motion to accept the minutes from last year. It was moved and seconded to accept the minutes as published. Motion carried.
  
3. **Treasurer’s Report:** Gillian Simons Mayer began by stating that she worked with her husband Patrick as “the woman behind the man” doing the budget. She thanked the women for their generous contributions that helped TAI carry on its various uses and to contemplate the new scholarships. She then went on to highlight four areas of the budget. 1. The actual contributions received to date for membership dues totals only \$1350. This represents about 100 people. She reminded her audience that there was a dues envelope in the *Spring Journal* and that a postcard reminder was being sent as well so that people could still pay dues! 2. The raffle raised approximately \$400—excluding what might have been raised just before the luncheon. 3. Under expenses, Gill noted \$4000 listed as “scholarships TAI.” This represents money set aside for scholarships next year. 4. Under “Scholarship ANC”—\$17,000 is held by the Academy and grows through wise investments.

Motion: It was moved and seconded to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Motion carried.

- 4 **Academy Scholarship Funds:** Janet reminded members that we would not be giving specific scholarships to students this year. She asked the membership to vote on giving a \$5000 donation to the Academy High School and \$5000 to the Bryn Athyn College. A motion to this effect was made and carried.

A second motion was made, seconded and carried to accept the two \$2100 (\$4200 total) proposed education scholarships for the academic year 2016-17.

- 5 **Memorial Resolution:** Lisa Bruell Synnestevedt, niece of Nancy Stroh Dawson, presented the memorial resolution, reminding us of the holes left in the lives of many of us with the passing of the following women. However, she also noted how comforting it was to reflect on their being welcomed into their heavenly homes. She then read a passage from *Heaven and Hell* before reading the names of those who had transitioned to the next world.

Jane Rott Alden  
Annabel Teets Junge  
Gladys Brown Betz  
Patricia Peer Kauk  
Frances Barry Blaesing  
Ann Marie Lindrooth  
Angela Cuccio Bond  
Joann "Mim" Lockhart  
Claire Campbell Bostock  
Loraine Lemky Noakes  
Bunty Ridgway Bostock  
Rachel David Odhner  
Kathleen Hannan Campbell  
Nicole Rhoads Peppleman  
Nancy Stroh Dawson  
Geneva Crockett Pitcairn  
Jane Bostock de Charms  
Jane Umberger Schroeder  
Isabel Mowbray de Chazal  
Elaine Bellinger Smith  
Marie Komansky Donnelly  
Sally Jean Smith  
Ruth Nilson Finkeldey  
Sharron Stoots Stein  
Lillemor Weise Fransson  
Jean Fuller Stevenson  
Claire Damm Glenn  
Christine Brock Taylor

Ann Hood  
Megan Kaplan White  
Marion Hasen Horigan  
Yvonne Bostock Wille

The reading of names was followed by a moment of silence.

- 6 **Special Presentations:** Janet Krettek made a presentation to the retiring College president, Kristin King, *in absentia*, to honor her leadership. It acknowledged her as the first woman president of the college, and also expressed appreciation for the job done so well in guiding the college wisely and graciously through difficult and turbulent times. Her gift was a Theta Alpha pendant.

On a personal note, I was also presented with a Theta Alpha pendant to acknowledge the years I served as secretary of Theta Alpha International. It's been an honor and a privilege to serve an organization that loves and supports New Church education, a use very dear to my heart. I'll treasure the gift and my association with TAI.

There being no more business, the meeting was adjourned to hear a presentation by Sarah Bruell Odhner—*“Establish the Work of Our Hands: General Church Religion Lessons 1940-1990.”*

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara Charles Doering  
Secretary, retired

TAI Charter Day Luncheon  
October 9, 2015  
Notes to Income statement (2015)  
& Budget (2016)

Please refer to the attached Income statement. This statement has four columns which are reporting:

- Actual for 2015, twelve months
- Budget for 2015, twelve months
- Budget for 2016, twelve months
- Actual for two months for the period ending August 31<sup>st</sup> 2016.

The actual performance for 2015 was good compared to budget. Some highlights:

- Membership increased to 227 members, compared to a budget of 160 members and 113 members in 2014
- General fund contributions increased to \$10,248 compared to a budget of \$9,200 and an actual of \$2,714 for 2014.
- Investment income from our investments in the NCIF was \$6,504 compared to a budget of \$4,000 and an actual of \$3,887 in 2014.
- \$17,000 was transferred from the ANC Fund to support scholarships. This disbursement covered two years for 2014 and 2015.
- The Journal was a great success and 2,000 copies were printed and mailed to the members who in the past showed an interest in TAI.

Some highlights for the 2016 budget:

- Membership is budgeted at 200 members. This compares to 227 members in 2015. So far we have received dues from 90 members for the first two months of 2016. It appears that we are lagging in enrollment, but we are hopeful that enrollments will pick up in the remaining ten months of the year.
- General Fund donations is budgeted to be \$6,900. This compares to \$10,248 in 2015. Current donations for 2016 totals \$2,748.
- Two mailings of the Journal are planned for 2016, with the first mailing in the fall of 2015 and the second mailing in the spring of 2016. The mailing will be to those people who have paid their annual dues.
- Due to the volatility of the financial markets the realized/unrealized gains on the NCIF investment is difficult to forecast, but for the twelve months ending June 20<sup>th</sup> 2015, the fund performance is slightly better than the benchmarks. The three year performance is approximately 8% per year. The current payout of income is approximately 4% per year and is recorded in the income section of the attached statement. So over the long term, the fund assets should increase by approximately 4 to 5% per year.

Gillian Mayer  
October 9, 2015

**Theta Alpha International**  
**Profit & Loss - 2015**  
**and Budget - 2016**

	Actual 2015 (7/1/14 to 6/30/15)	Budget 2015 (7/1/14 to 6/30/15)	Budget 2016 (7/1/15 to 6/30/16)	Actual 2016 (ytd 2 mths)
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>				
<b>Income</b>				
Membership Dues	\$ 3,415	\$ 2,400	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,350
General Fund Contribution	\$ 10,248	\$ 9,200	\$ 6,900	\$ 2,748
Investment Income (TAI funds)	\$ 6,504	\$ 4,000	\$ 5,400	\$ -
Bank Interest - Money Market	\$ 31	\$ 20	\$ 50	\$ -
Transfer of Income from ANC Fund	\$ 17,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ -
Fund raising - Raffle	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 600	\$ 336
Luncheon	\$ 1,179	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,000	\$ -
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 38,377</b>	<b>\$ 26,920</b>	<b>\$ 26,950</b>	<b>\$ 4,434</b>
<b>Expense</b>				
Scholarships - TAI Funds	\$ -	\$ 4,000	\$ -	\$ -
Scholarships - ANC Funds	\$ 17,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ -
Awards & Grants	\$ 1,300	\$ 2,000	\$ 3,900	\$ 1,277
Journal	\$ 8,727	\$ 5,000	\$ 8,500	\$ 300
Postage & Mailings	\$ 1,360	\$ 2,300	\$ 2,000	\$ 15
Luncheon	\$ 882	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,000	\$ -
Baptism Project	\$ 442	\$ 200	\$ 500	\$ -
Fund Raising - Raffle	\$ 250	\$ -	\$ 350	\$ -
Misc. expenses	\$ 483	\$ 2,120	\$ 700	\$ 35
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$ 30,444</b>	<b>\$ 26,920</b>	<b>\$ 26,950</b>	<b>\$ 1,627</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>\$ 7,933</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 2,807</b>
Unrealized Gains/(Losses)-TAI investments	\$ (3,082)	\$ 8,000	\$ 7,000	\$ -
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$ 4,851</b>	<b>\$ 8,000</b>	<b>\$ 7,000</b>	<b>\$ 2,807</b>
<b>ASSETS</b>				
at August 31, 2015				
Bank	\$ 7,860			
NCIF - TAI funds	\$ 184,002			
<b>TOTAL ASSETS (owned by TAI)</b>	<b>\$ 191,862</b>			
NCIF - ANC Fund (owned by the Academy)	\$ 252,047			
<b>TOTAL Investments</b>	<b>\$ 443,909</b>			



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