

Theta Alpha
"Daughters of the Academy"
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Named From the Greek :
Θυγατηρεζ Ακαδεμιαζ
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

In this issue there is an article by Peter Buss, Jr., on teaching young children about the Lord and things of a spiritual nature. Accompanying it are the responses of people telling us their thoughts and experiences. Because everything universal is made up of details, the thoughts and experiences of these people help by filling in some detail on this important need. We warmly welcome any reader to share her, or his, responses with us also. Responses and experiences are what we are looking for, and in this issue there are two letters from readers helping keep conversations going.

A fashion show was held during the luncheon last October with models (and in one case her own daughter) wearing original dresses used by women who figured prominently in the development of the General Church. We have the text used to describe these women and their contributions. Among the things the reader might come away with is a sense of the longevity of the church and its daughter organization, Theta Alpha.

In the "Then and Now" section we are spanning time by re-printing a small article from 1973 in which Ruth Goodenough tells us of a dream she had and the insight she received from the dream. Accompanying it are some of her thoughts today about it and similar things. For poetry we have four poems by Irene Odhner written during a period of confusion for her. She was nineteen or twenty then, and is now in her mid-thirties.

On another note, Evangeline Lindrooth tells us of the finishing up of the translation of Jacob's Ladder articles into French. It is a work undertaken by the Theta Alpha International and has been in progress for many years. These translations have especially helped Rev. Sylvain Agnes

in Cote d'Ivoire with the teaching of Sunday School, as that country mainly is French speaking.

There is also a report from a vibrant and growing school in South Africa called the Kainon School. As of this writing, there are 233 children attending the school, making it comparable to the two church schools in Ghana, in Tema and Asakraka, that average 200+ children each year. Rev. Eshun at the Tema school thinks both schools could easily grow to 300.

After a recent bout of sickness and hospitalization I was left with an awareness that the only thing there is in life is loving the Lord, and loving other people because the Lord creates them and loves them. I am one of the people the Lord creates and loves, and while I was being healed I was in the stream of divine providence. The work of the doctors, hospitals, medicine providers, nurses, etc.—all of it has mutual love, or love for one another, at its core. And each person going to work each day enabled me to get the help I needed for my recovery. If there was a person here and there who didn't go to work with charity in their heart, then it was a loss for that person, but basically the Lord's love was within all that was going on to help me and others be healed. Another thing I learned was I was not to expect special privileges, like better treatment from the doctors than others, or a better hospital room, or getting better quicker because I believed or felt the Lord was with me. Everything would happen in its own good time.

Among the vast and complex system of means the Lord provides for us to care about one another, we have the Theta Alpha Journal. One of its main goals and purposes is to keep the women in the New Church connected with one another. The Board and the staff of the Journal feel the renewed vigor of our readers' interest in it, and want them to know that we deeply appreciate it.

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Parents and New Church Education

Peter Buss, Jr.

One of the things that comes along with the role of pastor is the privilege of performing baptisms. A favorite memory of mine is one particular service, during Sunday worship, where the parents handed a fussy baby to me, so that his little mouth ended up right next to the lapel mic on my robes. Needless to say the whole church heard the amplified wailing of this beautiful little person until I had the chance to adjust a bit, and continue with the service.

I have recounted that story to many a parent since, as an example of the fact that it matters not what a child does during the baptism—he or she will still get baptized, and any crying that happens is simply the child’s way of participating in the service. The reason, though, for calling baptism to mind is the power of what is happening at that moment. Parents turn to their church for a service like this because they feel inspired to do their very best for their child. Beyond the necessary physical care and daily mentoring is the spiritual dimension—introducing the little one to the Lord and the things of spiritual life.

This is an article about the use of “New Church education.” I see it as the logical aftermath of a baptism, where parents turn to their church for support in raising their children with the Lord in mind. Like any phrase that’s been around for a while, this one has some predictable associations. Some might think of a system of schools from preschool up through college. Others might consider Sunday school settings, or children’s talks, or videos and other child-related programs organized by the General Church. Others still may think of a church-sponsored commitment to education as a core use.

For the time being, I ask you to set aside all those programs and contexts in which children may learn, so that we can focus attention on the use itself as revealed in the Lord's Word. What is it that the Lord is asking us as parents and as a church to rally around, on behalf of children? Here are eight concepts to consider.

Bringing the Lord to Children and Children to the Lord

There is a famous episode from the Lord's life recorded in three of the Gospels, where parents brought children to Him "that He might touch them." The disciples, as you may recall, rebuked those parents, thinking, apparently, that the Lord was too important to be bothered with children. But the Lord said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:13-14).

This quote, perhaps more than any other in the Word, has become a focal point for the use of New Church education. It's about bringing children to the Lord. It's an intentional commitment on the part of parents that they will do what they can to ensure the Lord can influence their children's lives. So they take their children to church, or seek resources to teach them about the Lord. The church can respond by "bringing the Lord to children" in every children's talk, Sunday school lesson, video, or school classroom.

An Extension of the Home

Another key quote from the Word that speaks to this use appears in the book of Deuteronomy. After calling the Israelites to pay attention to the Lord's commandments, particularly the first and great commandment to love the Lord their God, the instruction continues, "You shall teach them diligently to your children . . ." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). So much of the imagery of that text focuses on the home and what happens in it. Many parents have correctly heard the

call to teach their children the contents of the Word—the stories as well as the do’s and don’ts from the Lord’s perspective. As children get older, it might look like conversations focused on the spiritual principles that lead to wise decisions. Again, parents will often turn to their church for assistance, so that their children can launch into life with a strong sense of what the Lord teaches. In this way the church’s educational activities are an extension of what parents are striving to support in their homes.

Success in this World and the Next

Success is a word that has many connotations, some of which lend themselves to getting ahead in this world and making lots of money. It can also capture a much more noble pursuit. Nowhere is that more evident than in the commission of Joshua. He was to meditate in the Book of the Law and do according to all that is written in it. “For then,” the Lord said, “you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

The phrase “good success” brings into the equation the Lord’s definition of achievement. It means being a good person or successfully living according to the teachings of the Word. It includes successfully raising a family, or serving in a job that intentionally makes the world a better place, or developing skills of truly wise friendship. It is for these reasons that some people have used the phrase “success in this world and the next” to capture the spirit of religious education in a New Church context.

Opening the Eyes to Spiritual Reality

In the Psalms we read, “The eyes of all look expectantly to You . . .” (Psalm 145:15). In the Gospel of Luke we learn of two disciples on a journey to the town of Emmaus shortly after the sad story of the crucifixion. The Lord joined them, but they did not know Him until He dined with them and

broke bread. Then it says, “Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him” (Luke 24:31). So it is with the spiritual dimension of raising children. The goal is to open their spiritual eyes so that they may come to know the Lord and see the things He wants to show them.

This begs the question, “What would you most want your children to see as they grow?” In amongst all the places and things we might wish to show them, wouldn’t we want them to see people worshiping on a regular basis, or praying, or opening copies of the Word and learning from them? Wouldn’t we also want them to see examples of honesty or kindness or usefulness? We answer a resounding yes to these things because we want them to see love in action, or courage in the moment, so that they may strive for those things themselves.

Helping People Become Loving, Wise and Useful Human Beings

There is a phrase that captures the goal of some of our General Church schools, namely to “feed the mind, touch the heart and prepare for life.” This three-part purpose was chosen because it describes who we are as human beings (see True Christianity 744). We have minds that can think and learn, we have hearts that can care and love, and we have bodies that are incredibly capable of useful action. And a growing desire to become a loving, wise and useful person is what makes us “truly human” (Conjugal Love 269).

The beauty of this way of thinking of education is that it accords with the coaching and guidance that most parents and teachers do on a daily basis. “Was that kind?” “What a thoughtful thing to do.” “What would be a wiser way of handling the situation?” “Can you help me?” “Hey you’re really good at . . .” And so on.

Developing Spiritual Habits

We know that we learn through repeated trial and error, or through practice (see *Arcana Coelestia* 1050). It is not unreasonable, then, to see the whole process of development as a series of habit-forming activities. The amazing thing, though, is it's not just about developing certain skills. It actually gets to the heart of character formation, and in spiritual terms, the development of a heavenly disposition. A teaching along these lines reminds us that what becomes habitual and ingrained in our character "flows spontaneously into action" (*Arcana Coelestia* 3843).

So we might ask, "What do we most want to become habitual with children as they grow?" or "What do we want to flow spontaneously into action?" The list includes such things as apologizing and taking responsibility for their actions, considering the usefulness of what they are about to do before they do it, responding with kindness, speaking truthfully, treating others with respect, being generous with their time and energy, persevering, and many other things.

The Formation of Conscience

A seventh way of viewing this use of spiritual education focuses on the internal motivation of each child. We know that parents, teachers and others provide useful boundaries for children as they grow. "No, you are not allowed to walk home after dark by yourself." "You need to say sorry for what you just said." "Now would be a great time to help your mother." But isn't the goal not to have to say these kinds of things as often? We rejoice when children choose to do the right things without being asked or corrected.

The term that the Word uses for this process is conscience. Conscience is that "still small voice" in our minds by means of which the Lord speaks to us, letting us know what is good and what is bad (1 Kings 19:12). It is

formed “from things revealed in the Word” (Arcana Caelestia 371). We know that conscience is strengthened by the use of it, and weakened by the ignoring of it. We learn that people who act in accordance with conscience experience “the quiet of peace and internal blessedness,” whereas those who act against conscience “experience disturbance and pain” (Heavenly Doctrine 133). A wise parent or teacher might say to a child, “If you feel bad about it, it’s probably a good thing,” or “The best way to avoid a guilty conscience is to be honest,” or “Notice how good it feels to do something that really helps someone else.”

Fostering Innocence

A final way we could define this use is as an effort to foster innocence. Once the Lord was asked, “Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” In answer, He set a young child in the midst of them and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:1,3).

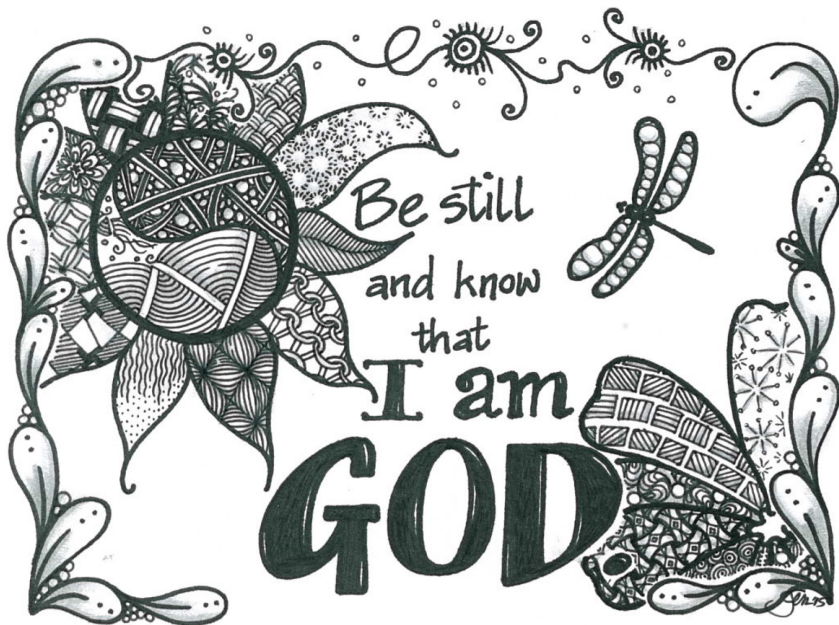
It isn’t hard to see the Lord urging those people toward internal purity, the kind of purity we see in little children. We know that children generally have an openness to learning and being taught. Of course they can be stubborn and self-centered, but more often than not they know they’re not the ones in charge, and submit to the authority of the adults in their lives. This willingness to follow those in charge, or openness to guidance, is captured in a far-reaching definition of innocence given in the teachings for the New Church, namely “a willingness to be led by the Lord and not by ourselves” (Heaven and Hell 280).

The goal in terms of education then, whether in the home or in a church or in a school setting, is to support that openness and willingness to be led—to guide young people to a “nothing to hide” state more often in their lives, and to bring the Lord into the equation as often as possible.

A number of years ago I had the opportunity to present on the subject of “families” at an international gathering of General Church members. In preparation for my talk I sent out a survey with open-ended questions to about a hundred people. I share one person’s response to the question, “What about ‘family’ as a concept inspires you most?” She wrote, “The idea that we are all the children of ‘Our Father’, parents and children alike, and that we can all look to Him together for guidance.”

What a great way to summarize the use of New Church education.

Peter Buss is currently serving as Assistant to the Bishop of the General Church, with oversight of General Church education. He is married to Teresa Farrington Buss, and they have four children, ranging from age twenty-four down to sixteen. Before his current position, Peter served as pastor of the Glenview New Church.



Responses to “Parents and New Church Education”

The following responses are to the article by Peter Buss, Jr., and bring us into the hearts and homes of some of our readers.

Justine Buss, Toronto, Canada:

The article was a stirring reminder of all the ways I can honor the commitment my husband and I made when we baptized our daughter, Rosalie, nearly two years ago. She is still a toddler so we've really only just begun delving into her New Church education. We say the prayer every night and the blessing before dinner. We strive to teach her to be nice and useful in her interactions with others and enjoy singing hymns together and reading picture books of stories from the Word.

We also take her to church, but at this point her attention is mostly on getting reactions from the people in nearby pews, her daddy up on the chancel, or the bag of tricks we've packed to distract her until Sunday School starts. She does, however, enjoy folding her hands for short periods of time and saying "Ami!" (amen) at the end of the prayer. At Sunday School, she mostly focuses on the novelty of coloring the projects.

So I suppose, considering her age, we're actually doing quite a lot. Perhaps this article was also a reminder that we're off to a good start. A lot of parents need that reminder. It's so easy to feel as though we're drowning in things that we may not be doing right. It's nice to realize that, while raising a child to love and follow the Lord and His Word is a huge responsibility, it doesn't have to be terribly complicated. There are several simple things we can do to guide our

daughter in her spiritual journey. And we're not alone. The Lord is right there, guiding us.

But the most significant thing I took away from this article is the realization that raising my children in the light of New Church teachings will, by extension, help me be a better person. The best way I can teach my daughter is by example. If I am consciously trying to apply the tenets of New Church education to my own life and to our family life, then I am not only guiding my daughter in the right direction, but am also focusing precious attention on my spiritual journey. What a gift that is—a perpetual give and take from the Lord as our Heavenly Father to me as a mother, and then to my daughter and any other children we have. Healthy education is a never-ending spiral and I am so blessed to be wrapped up in it with my family.

Justine Brannon Buss considers herself an artist parent—a theater practitioner and writer who is currently embracing life as a stay-at-home mom. She lives in Toronto with her husband, Rev. Jared Buss, and spends most of her time and energy chasing their toddler around and preparing to welcome Baby #2 in the spring. justinebbuss@gmail.com

Emily Hasen, Old Greenwich, CT:

We live far enough away from a New Church congregation that our experiences inside of any sort of formal setting mostly fall on crowded holidays. So I'm back to hoping that what I say and do in my home is enough to teach my children what I think they need to know to be a part of the Lord's heaven. It can be overwhelming. Do they know enough songs? Recitations? Have they heard that story yet? Can they compare to their peers in New Church settings? Whoa. Hold on. Stop. That is not what it's about

These eight concepts laid out by Rev. Buss are exactly

what it is all about. When I sit down and really reflect, these eight ideas are what matter most to me as a parent. Am I intentionally committed to the Lord influencing my children's lives? Am I teaching the "do's and don'ts from the Lord's perspective?" Am I honoring and valuing true "success for this world and the next?" Are my children seeing examples of love in action? Am I helping my children become "loving, wise and useful?" Am I helping my children develop strong spiritual habits? Am I helping them find and listen to the Lord's voice in their conscience? Am I supporting my children in becoming open and willing to be led?

Yes! Sometimes! I hope so! Not today! And I'm okay with all of those answers because being a parent is hard and it's a very long road: a very happy, bumpy, challenging, but still very incredibly rewarding road. These concepts are what I reflect on as I'm falling asleep at night. I resort to these concepts in moments of difficulty and they are my foundation with all of the big and often even the small choices we make. I'd love to have these concepts bulleted and on a magnet on my refrigerator door. The next time my seven year old and I disagree I can look up and say, "What do you think the Lord would want you to do?" Or weighing pros and cons of a parenting decision with my husband I can look and then ask, "Are we holding them accountable for their actions?"

These concepts are what I want and need to rally around on behalf of my children. These concepts will lead us to a useful, loving and eternal life with the Lord.

Emily Glunz Hasen attended the ANC Girls School, Bryn Athyn College, and also received a BA in history from the Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Post college she was a teacher with Teach for America, and an athletic coach. She now resides in Old Greenwich, CT, with her husband, Darryl, and their four children: Sadie, seven; Oscar, five; Otis, three; and Cash, two. emilyhasen@gmail.com

Jenn Beiswenger, Peshurst, Australia:

When I first think about teaching religion to young children, I do immediately think of church schools, children's talks and Sunday School, but where the 'rubber' really meets the 'road' is in bringing the Lord into everyday life. We mustn't just leave it to these institutions to teach our cherubs—tomorrow's adults, and eventually the spiritual world's angels—about religion—about the most important things in life. As a parent living day to day with a growing child, I'm also aware of how easily a child can slip into habits and ways that might take him in the other direction, too. We teach them through our actions. Young children are so perceptive of our every action and emotion, they're little sponges: the way we live our lives, the way we talk to each other, the way we treat others and talk about others speaks volumes in our teaching 'religion' to our children. As the Writings teach us, "all religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do that which is good" (Doctrine of Life, note 1)—it's how we live our lives, it isn't just a Sunday morning thing.

In addition to teaching religion through our actions, we can also take the opportunity to talk with children about the Lord frequently, in casual, everyday circumstances. "Sometimes I feel that the Lord is helping me when the traffic lights are all green when I'm running late!" Or, "I'm sad that Grampa has died. I'll miss him a lot, but it helps me feel SO much better to know that he's safe and happy in heaven! I look forward to seeing him again, someday!"

For my family, the General Church's Early Childhood Religion Program (ECRP) was an invaluable tool. It introduced topics we might not otherwise have thought to talk about, made the learning of these topics fun, and also served as conversation starters. I enjoyed them with my son for nearly three and a half years, from just before he was two years old through five+ years of age.

Jenn Jorgenson Beiswenger is living in Hurstville (Sydney), Australia, with her pastor husband, Todd, and their ten-year-old son, Zach. She enjoys parenting, healthy cooking, creating Zentangle-inspired artwork and spiritual growth, and especially, sharing these with others! Jenn@beiswenger.net

Jennica Nobre, Bryn Athyn, PA:

How can I teach my children to be willing to follow the Lord? This to me is the crux of the article. A willingness to turn to God with each and every decision, to surrender what they want in order to be open to God's guidance, this is what I would most like to teach my children. In my experience, regardless of what I know of the Bible or doctrine, and no matter how much I have been taught to live a life based on good morals, I can still be selfish, self-centered and living a life based on self-will. I have found that unless I bring God into my heart, let go of my personal agenda for life, and seek God's will for me in each moment, then what I do with my time, my ideas, and my opinions are irrelevant to me experiencing the "quiet of peace and internal blessedness" that Peter referred to in this article.

I grew up in a New Church community, went to New Church schools for most of my education, attended church regularly, and read the Bible and the Writings. My family was involved in the church and I have memories of my father reading the Bible and the writings every day early in the morning. However, my upbringing did not make me immune to problems nor did it make me happy. As I grew into adulthood I found myself confused and depressed and constantly anxious. Clearly something was out of order. I do not believe this was the life God intended for me.

After years of repeated attempts to fix my life myself, I finally opened my heart and let God help me. I realized that I "could not," but God "could." Today I pray each day for

God to be in charge of my day and to give me direction in every decision no matter how small. My life is happy, full of deep satisfaction and peace.

I do not think anybody could have taught me this lesson and I do not think I could teach this to anyone. In fact, I am pretty sure that ministers, teachers, and many Bible stories had been trying to teach me this exact lesson, but I didn't hear it. I had to be ready and my best teacher was my own misery and failure at trying to run my own life.

I do not think, however, that my New Church upbringing was useless. I think many of the ideas did make their way into my head and a few even made their way into my heart. Now that I have freely chosen God as the director of my life I find that the truths I learned as a child are able to connect with the good and the love that God has placed in my heart now that it is open for Him.

If I cannot directly teach this to my children is there any way to pass it on? I believe the answer is yes. I can be a living example to my children. When I act in accordance with God's will for me, and my children see it, they may not be aware, but they are learning. As children they mimic what I do but as adults when they are ready, they may reflect on experiences of my actions as I remember my father diligently reading the Word, and understand that God is guiding my life and can do the same for them.

Jennica Smith Nobre was born and raised in Glenview, Illinois and attended the Immanuel Church School, the Academy of the New Church, and Bryn Athyn College where she got a degree in Biology. She loves nature, music, and gardening, and occasionally teaches classes on wild edibles. She currently resides in Huntingdon Valley, PA with her husband Calebe and three sons Solomon, Zion, and Josiah. jnobre@nobrebackup.com

Kerry Lockhart, Tumbi Umbi, Australia:

It is a long time since I attempted teaching Sunday School, or teaching our children anything about the Lord, though it didn't seem difficult at the time. We just said a prayer before bed, gave thanks before meals and all that. Just as my parents did when I was a kid. However, I taught Sunday School for a year to the under schoolers, kids around four years, and learned something I thought was valuable. I was really disillusioned about the curriculum. At the time each class's project for four-year-olds was focusing on the internal meanings on things like rainbows, the moon, stars, water and so the list went on. The kids weren't interested. Oh, they politely sat there and did the drawings, or other activities, but it was easy to see they weren't into it at that time in their young lives. I thought then and still do that whoever put the curriculum together was out of touch with four year olds and hope they've stopped doing that.

I clearly remember going to Sunday School at around the same age as those kids and couldn't wait to go. During Sunday School our group sat around a great (it seemed great to me) sand pit, and the teacher had us do all sorts of neat things in it while she read stories from the Old and New Testaments. I remember learning about Daniel in the lions' den and that his faith in the Lord kept him safe. We also learned about Joseph and his coat of many colours, and the terrible things they did to him because they were jealous. His mercy to his brothers later on left a lasting memory for me. I could go on and on about Noah's story, and hosts of other bible stories and how they impacted on me then, and have continued to do so throughout my life. Those stories excited and thrilled me. I think the same holds true for kids of all generations. I strongly think trying to teach kids about internal meanings as early as four years old should come later when the foundation of knowing the Bible stories has been laid.

Kerry Clancy Lockhart, an Aussie girl, was married forty-six years ago to Michael Lockhart; they reside now in Tumbi Umbi, on the stunning Central Coast of New South Wales, Australia. Kerry is a retired registered nurse and worked in early childhood health, including perinatal, and infant mental health. She is a committed new church woman whose interests include helping care for her granddaughters, Riley, three and Lucy, ten months, gardening, reading and keeping in touch with friends. clanlock@hardwareone.com.au

Janet Krettek, Huntingdon Valley, PA:

Peter Buss phrased things well. My husband and I made a conscious effort to have the Lord interwoven into our marriage. We attempted to have this bond extend into our children. We homeschooled for a number of years, and though we were not always successful in having a 'heavenly' atmosphere, the children knew our intent. Having a sphere around the children reflecting the Lord's teaching is very important. Modeling how the Lord wants us to act is something we used, too, by volunteering for local fundraisers, becoming leaders in Scouts, putting the needs of others ahead of our own when we are called to do so. As a "Drag-In" and working outside the Bryn Athyn community, I see the sphere of innocence that surrounds the children and adults of the New Church societies. There is an attitude of looking to the Lord to lead us and guide us, making these societies more fresh and open.

Janet Krettek, DO, is a holistic general surgeon who homeschooled her children for over ten years. She also has experience teaching outside the home from preschool through post-graduate. jmkrettekdo@gmail.com

Renee Brunne, Brisbane, Australia:

I so appreciated reading the article by Peter Buss, Jr. I read it several times, and increasingly enjoyed it. What a blessing to parents to have this wisdom to meditate upon.

The article is about everyday life. As we open our hearts to the little ones fresh from heaven in each of our responses, interactions, attitudes, [and] the standards we set . . . much is caught, rather than taught, during those moments.

Each point in Peter Buss' article is a gem in itself—the power of habits (which is one of my favorite tools), the cultivation of conscience, the fostering of innocence. Childhood is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It is a joy to be with the little ones who are in the freedom of innocence. May we parents, teachers, and friends of young people take the opportunities provided to sow heaven's seeds in the fertile soil of their innocence. It makes me think of the passage in Deuteronomy 6:6, 7: 'These words which I command you this day shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.'

Renee Hartshorn Brunne has been married to Darren Brunne for nineteen years. She has homeschooled their seven children aged from eighteen years old down to one. Darren found the Writings as an adult, and is the minister of the Australian Conference of the New Church in Brisbane, Australia. renee.brunne@gmail.com

Sarah Walker, Perth, Australia:

I work with young kids, and have a five and eight-year-old of my own, so the subject [of teaching religion to children] is very relevant.

For me the most important thing—above all else—is the building of affections and remains for the Bible stories and some of the basic key spiritual ideas that go with them. Whether or not this connects them to the church as an organization later on isn't a focus. The more important thing is that they have strong feelings and memories of stories that the Lord can build and work with as they get older.

So with this in mind I feel like points three and four (possibly number five, too) are not really in our hands, or for us to focus on. The best we can do is lay the groundwork and point them in the directions or avenues they might take.

Also number two, which talks about "an extension of the home," might also include an "alternative view from home." Not in negative way but in a way that allows them to see that other adults have slightly different ways of approaching the Lord—still within the New Church teachings. Different personalities have different ways of looking at things, and giving the children different perspectives is especially important as they come into the teen years and are looking for role models outside of the home.

I'm not sure if this is an extra point, something that you could add in somewhere, but I really feel it important that the teachers themselves are on their own spiritual journey and constantly questioning and channeling themselves. It is through this that they will gain insights that will be useful in their teaching of Sunday School. The things they are preparing to teach the children will also be useful to them as well. The teachers may even like to share some of the ideas—in a simplified version—with the older children. For example: "Children, this week I've been trying to remember that when I am feeling overwhelmed, or like I can't do something that is too hard . . . I just need to remember that, of course I can't do it by myself. But if I remember to turn to the Lord I will then have all the strength and courage I need because it is coming from HIM. This is because all life comes from the Lord."

I feel strongly that the Lord's providence works in these situations and can ensure all relevant things connect up for the adults and children.

Sarah grew up in the Perth New Church in Western Australia. She and her husband spent four years living in San Francisco and attending the Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco, which is where she was first faced with the delightful challenge of teaching Sunday School. Whilst there is not much opportunity to do so now that she is back in her home town, she has two young children aged eight and five years, and has enjoyed exploring the bible stories again from their unique child's perspective. She also spends much of her time working with young children. She is centre owner and director of 'Music Together with Sarah,' a music and movement program for 0-five year olds, and their parents or care givers. julesandsar@gmail.com

Guillaume Anato, Benin, West Africa:

I read Bishop Peter Buss Junior's article, Parents and New Church Education with great interest. Somewhere in the article he says, '... parents turn to their church for support in raising their children with the Lord in mind.' For me, as a parent of young children, this says everything. It is about raising children with nothing but the Lord in mind. So the question is: how do we, New Church parents in Benin, raise our children with the Lord in mind? Two thoughts come to mind.

It is important to note here that, in Deuteronomy 6 :7, before God commands parents to diligently teach their children, He first instructs them to passionately love Him,

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might'
(Deuteronomy 6:5).

We develop a passionate relationship with the Lord by loving Him above all things. The first commandment God gave the children of Israel was, 'You shall have no other God before my face' (Exodus 20 :3). In the natural sense this means that no one but God, and nothing but that which comes from Him, is to be loved above all things. In the spiritual sense that God is the Lord Jesus Christ. Children see this when their parents have cultivated their own authentic relationship with the Lord and desire the same thing because they see it lived out in their parents' lives. As a parent, I think another important thing we can do is to pray to the Lord to open the hearts and minds of our little ones to the Knowledge of Himself. When we do that, the Lord will teach and lead our children through us.

Guillaume Kuassivi Anato is the New Church minister in Benin, West Africa. He was ordained in 2010. His wife's name is Stella Viviane (Dhemou), and they have three children: Emmanuela, Samuel and Louange, the youngest now six months old.

Nadine Rogers, Katmandu, Nepal:

Living in Kathmandu, where there is no church society, the formal responsibility of educating our children about spiritual matters rests primarily with me. I say formal, because of course children are learning all the time by watching and listening to what we do and say, and they can learn about how to live a life of love, which is the heart of religion, from many sources. So although their spiritual development is being influenced by many wonderful people in their lives, the more formal aspects of it fall to me, especially now that my brother, Kent, has moved back to the United States and we no longer can split the duties of our home church services. I have sometimes found teaching about spiritual matters daunting; it feels like it's too important a task to be left in an average sinner's hands. Yet, as there is no one else

to turn to, I have had to try to tackle it despite my trepidation. In my mind I have simplified it into a few basic tasks.

One is to let the kids know what is in the Word and in the Writings. There are no Nepali translations of the Writings aside from a short booklet that was translated a few years ago. It contains some of the fundamental tenets of the New Church, but the reading skill of our kids is not good enough to tackle the Writings in English. For this reason, just letting them know what the Writings say is one of my basic jobs. For example, a few years ago I went through Heaven and Hell and told them, chapter by chapter, what the Writings say about life after death. Now that our children are mostly teenagers and young adults, I am doing the same with Conjugal Love.

The second main goal is to let the children see that religion is in how we live our lives, not just in the knowledge we have. This is a tricky one because I am well aware of my many flaws. However, I try to be honest about mistakes made, and apologize when I have breached the attitudes and behaviors that I should be living. I try to point out kindness and goodness when it is shown by others, and praise the children when they are putting love into action in their own lives.

The third main task is probably the most simple and yet the most important: to let them know the Lord loves them—no matter what troubles may come, no matter what they may struggle with, no matter what mistakes they may make—the Lord's love is ceaseless. I know my parenting falls short of what they need, but I also know that they have a perfect Parent who can fill in the gaps where I have failed. I want my kids to know they have this Parent, and that He loves them both endlessly and perfectly. If this idea is ingrained in their hearts and minds, I hope it will give them strength, and a compass to guide them long after their spiritual education is out of my hands.

Nadine Rogers MD is a psychiatrist living in Kathmandu, Nepal with her husband Rajendra Budhathoki where they are parents in the New Life Children's Home, a home for orphans and at-risk children. nrogersmd@gmail.com

Helen Kennedy, Bryn Athyn, PA:

When my grandson graduated from eighth grade in Bryn Athyn, he switched to a public high school in order to participate in their automotive training program. Knowing the importance religion and spirituality has in my life, I was very upset to learn that the church in Bryn Athyn had no way for a minister or other interested person to stay in contact with children who weren't in the church school. And there are many of them.

My daughter and I agreed that her son would come to my house every other week and I would talk with him about spiritual things. The first year was hit or miss. I'd read him a paragraph or two from Heaven and Hell, or New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine, etc., and we'd talk about it. At times we even read the chapter titles from True Christian Religion or another book. In those books Swedenborg tells you the thing you need to know the most in the title. We didn't have a 'system' but we developed a rapport of mutual respect, and my daughter said he never complained about needing to go to the lessons.

At some point, I hit upon the idea that Jared and I would listen to Jonathan Rose's talks based on the literal sense of the Bible. While listening, my grandson turns the pages of the Word back and forth and reads along with Jonathan. What a plus for him to be doing something! It held added interest and enjoyment for him. In addition, there is a long list of topics that Jonathan has talked about over the years, and as time went on, he enjoyed choosing the topic for next time. A few years later his sister joined him when she started high

school in the same public school. She uses a separate Bible, and follows, too, as Jonathan switches back and forth among the chapters. In addition, other things of a spiritual nature come up to discuss, or there always are Near-Death experiences to talk about and learn something from. At some point Jared's girlfriend started coming, too. Although Catholic, she grew up with little religious training. She doesn't use a Bible herself, but helps my grandson find the chapters.

The talks by Rev. Jonathan Rose can be found at www.spiritandlifebiblestudy.org.

Helen Kennedy is a creative writer and also editor of Theta Alpha Journal. She came across the Writings as an adult. Hmkennedy98@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!



Art Editorial: Coloring Pages!

The cover of this edition is Christina Allen's watercolor from the cover of her book Momma Tree. Christina has also given us a coloring page derived from her painting "Spring Lamb" which appears in full color on the back cover. Jenn Beiswenger has given us some illustrated quotes suitable for coloring as well. Linda Simonetti Odhner's drawing of women with a child is from a set of drawings she made for a parenting newsletter. Thanks to all the generous artists who offered their work for this edition!

Then and Now.....

The following article is from the Spring 1977 issue of the Journal about a dream Ruth Goodenough had and her reflections on it, which take her into the realm of a child's resistance in learning. Immediately following it, Ruth shares with us her thoughts today on the same topic and gives us a glimpse of her personal development.

1977: Into The Wind

Ruth Parker Goodenough

In my dream I was trying desperately and in vain to pedal a bike up a hill in the dark against a strong wind.

Sometimes I was on a well-traveled road, sometimes on a deserted one. At one point a minister came along in his car, stopped, and pleasantly inquired what I was doing. I answered that I was trying to get up the hill. He replied, "Hmmm, very interesting," rolled up his window, and with a cheerful wave sped on up the hill. I resumed my futile struggle to make some headway on my bike.

When I awoke and reflected on this dream, and after my husband had a good laugh over it, I gradually realized that it was a perfect representation of how I was feeling about raising a family—in the dark, because I didn't see clearly what I was trying to do; uphill, because it was hard work; and against the wind because it seemed to meet steady resistance; the two different roads because sometimes I try to do things in standard ways, and sometimes I'm more independent; the minister's polite interest because the church can't give me an easy answer.

In the days that followed, the dominant memory from the dream was the feeling of being resisted, the wind pushing against me. I became aware that my children seem to resist

all my efforts to be a good mother. Whether the issue is eating lima beans, practicing on the piano, interrupting, putting away the Monopoly game, wearing a clean shirt, or setting the table for supper, they balk. They resist the good, ordinary things that comprise daily living. This is oversimplified, of course. They don't always resist, and some resist more than others; they're just ordinary kids. But the resistance is enough that I often feel I am heading into a small gale.

A few weeks later I read the following excerpt from a paper by the late Dr. Robert Alden:

All learning involves some kind and some measure of resistance. The basic reason for this resistance is that learning requires a change in the organism as a whole and all organisms seek to maintain an equilibrium. The problem which requires change is a threat to equilibrium and it is essential that the organism protect itself at first to see whether this change can be integrated without upset. Equilibrium can be maintained whether on a relatively healthy or unhealthy basis. Sometimes there seems to be an absence of resistance in initial learning. This may be because the individual is not going through, or allowing himself to go through, a genuine personal change but is borrowing the solution of the teacher, parent, doctor or consultant. Solutions may be borrowed also from one's group or culture. It is our view that failure to resist change, and the borrowing of others' solutions, represent unhealthy adaptations.

A very nice explanation of a child's resistance, I thought, and of the necessity for it. This positive aspect of resistance can help one's toleration of it a great deal, as can the remark, made by one of our ministers, that "raising a family is not serene and orderly; it's a hassle." But the question that remains is, just what exactly are we supposed to be trying to do as parents? What is the essence of our responsibility?

2017: Resistance and the As-Of Self

Ruth Parker Goodenough

When Helen and I talked about a “Then and Now” article, how could I resist?

Then, I felt my children were my big responsibility. Now, they are grown, with families of their own. Forty years have flown by, one day at a time, and it is clear to me now that all along they were the Lord’s children and my job was just to help Him a little bit.

Such fine adult women our girls have become! As I have watched them dealing with their children from day to day in an environment much more hostile to innocence and high ideals than we enjoyed in 1977, I am filled with admiration of their strength and resourcefulness. To me, the help and support of a New Church school and community were such a blessing. I do not mean to undermine the work of all the skilled and dedicated teachers in public schools, but having the same ideals and sphere at home and at school is surely a great benefit to children.

Years ago I recall feeling taken aback to hear at a teacher-parent conference that our children were delightful and cooperative students, while I was feeling as though I were bicycling uphill into the wind! One perceptive teacher shared with me that I should feel lucky, as it was the opposite in some families, where children behaved well at home but plagued teachers at school. She had observed that children tend to act out where they feel most secure and comfortable.

The words of Dr. Bob Alden that I quoted in the 1977 article have new meaning for me now, from my post-parenting vantage point. I realize that my resistance has played, and continues to play, a big part in my life. A part of

me still resists many of the blessings the Lord wants to pour into my life; too often I choose my comfort over consideration of others, pleasures over uses, novels over reading the Word, loving myself over loving Him. I resist good, ordinary things that comprise my daily living.

Just as raising children is not serene and orderly, neither is the slow regeneration process. It too is a hassle. It involves recognizing and dealing over and over again with the resistance that bubbles up from that troublesome love of self, and learning to make the good choices that our heavenly Parent wants to teach us.

Perhaps, in resisting my efforts to “make” them good, obedient, polite and happy, our children were learning to resist outside influences, and to decide for themselves what they would do. As we know from the Writings, the feeling of self-life is absolutely necessary in the process of internalizing anything. In fact, Swedenborg writes specifically: “... little children ... are so tempted in order that they may get accustomed to resisting, and may begin to resist falsity and evil, and also that they may learn not to think, speak, and act, from another, and in consequence may learn to permit themselves to be led by no one but the Lord” (HH 343).

Now, forty years later, a new look at my 1977 question invites me to reconsider the value of resistance, at every age. Like children, we adults also need to decide for ourselves when to resist something, or not, in our lives.

The Lord could overcome our challenges and solve our problems for us, but He knows we have to work at it our own way. So He (and His angels) stand by and let us all, young and old, carry on as if of ourselves, but always caring deeply, and gently influencing us towards good, while maintaining the universe.

Ruth Goodenough is a past assistant editor of the Journal. She lives with her retired husband, Dan, in Two Harbors, Minnesota. She has five children and eight grandchildren.



Call for Art Submissions!



As you can see from the beautiful cover art, and illustrations ranging from zentangles to line drawings 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!

Poems

The following poems by Irene Odhner were written when she was nineteen or twenty years old and coming to terms with being on the Autism spectrum. She is now thirty-four years of age.

Take Me

Take me to a place where I can see
infinity from
Take me to a time when I will not mind
what I've left behind
Take me out of my mind.

Entrance

Me, myself and I
Look out from behind the curtain.
We look out and sigh,
Nothing there is ever certain.
Here there's who am I,
But out there it's something different.
I can't tell them why
All my acting's inconsistent.

Dream

Angel, Dreamer, be beside me
Hide me from the deeper dark
The shadowed hole
Where lives the monster, flaring nostrils
Pointed chin and wrinkled skin
Breathing sharp and acrid smoke
Let me not fall in its clutches
Let me save and keep my hope.

I Grow

As I grow more normal,
I do not become less strange.
As I grow more talkative,
I do not become less silent.
As I grow more happy,
I do not become less sad.
As I grow more active,
I do not become less still.
As I grow more confident,
I do not become less self-effacing.
As I grow more aware,
I do not become less absorbed.
As I grow more wise,
I do not become less confused.

Theta Alpha Charter Day Luncheon Program **October 13, 2016**

Vera Powell Glenn & Carol Henderson

*An Illustrated Tribute to Ten Important Women
in the History of the Academy and the New Church.*

Sarah de Charms Hibbard (1836-1899)

The daughter of the Rev. Richard de Charms, Sarah was born in Cincinnati, but moved as a child to Philadelphia. There she grew up, was educated, and became a teacher. She married the Rev. John R. Hibbard, who was the pastor of the New Church Society in Chicago.

After faithfully serving the New Church in the Midwest they returned to Philadelphia where Mrs. Hibbard started a school in her home on Cherry Street for her daughter, Edith, and her friend Helen Farrington. Soon three other girls joined them: Lulu Xandry, and Augusta and Luella Pendleton. As well as domestic arts, Mrs. Hibbard taught the girls the usual secular subjects that boys learned, but with a different approach to appeal to the feminine mind. This was based on concepts she drew from her study of New Church teachings.

Mrs. Hibbard's home school was officially recognized by Bishop William Benade in 1884, as part of the Academy of the New Church. So the Girls School was born, and Sarah Hibbard was its first principal.

Alice Eliza Grant (1858-1930)

The Grants were a strong New Church family who lived in Middleport, Ohio. Their daughter, Alice, who never wanted to be anything else than a teacher, was teaching

school in Middleport when she got a letter from Sarah Hibbard. The letter asked her to come to Philadelphia and take a teaching position in the Girls School. Alice accepted, arriving in Philadelphia just three days before the Academy Girls School opened officially on February 9, 1884.

For the next forty-five years Alice Grant gave her life to New Church education. When the Academy moved out to Bryn Athyn in 1897 she came with it. She was a fine teacher and an able administrator. She was Principal of the Girls School from 1906-1920. In her Principal's report for the school year 1912-1913, she wrote: "We are strengthened by the hope . . . that each year we shall be given clearer light as to what the true education of women may be."

In 1914 she also became Dean of College Women. 'Miss Alice' particularly loved working with college women who wanted to be New Church teachers, and held the position as Dean until she retired in 1929. Alice Grant Hall, the first women's residence on the College campus, was named for her.

Lillian Grace Beekman (1859-1947)

In the early twentieth century when Lillian Beekman came to Bryn Athyn, there was a heated academic discussion going on about the validity and importance of Swedenborg's pre-theological works. Miss Beekman, unusually gifted in the sciences, joined the Academy Faculty in 1901. She taught the natural sciences in the light of Swedenborg's science and philosophy to undergraduates, theological students, and even ministers. Her ideas were embraced with enthusiasm at first. A brilliant and fascinating woman, she held center stage for about seven years when her influence began to decline.

Many people increasingly felt that a woman should not be teaching men, especially ministers, and particularly in

matters of theology and science which were then considered to be the province of the masculine mind. In 1914 she was discredited, and her support was withdrawn. Lillian Beekman resigned from the Academy and the General Church and sought sanctuary in a Catholic nunnery for the last years of her life.

Despite the sad end of Lillian Beekman's time in Bryn Athyn, her influence did bring about a more general interest in the pre-theological works which resulted in the formation of the Swedenborg Scientific Association. And the Human Body course for Secondary School seniors with its interweaving of anatomical facts and physiology with spiritual correspondences, was the sort of science course she would have advocated.

Mildred Glenn Pitcairn (1886-1979)

Mildred was the eldest of seven daughters born to Robert and Cara Starkey Glenn. After her graduation from the Girls Seminary she taught anatomy and physiology there until she married in December, 1910. As the wife of Raymond Pitcairn, she took on the role of hostess for her father-in-law, John Pitcairn, until his death in 1916. Cairnwood, the venue for much of Bryn Athyn's social life, also became the home for Raymond and Mildred's growing family.

Mildred loved babies and books, particularly children's books. For years she sent out boxes of wonderful books to Bryn Athyn families at Christmas time. And each new baby in the Church Society received a layette of Viyella nighties, a sweater, cap, blankets and other things, Mildred doing some of the knitting herself. And as her own children married and had children of their own, Mildred became a loving grandmother.

In 1939, the Pitcairn family, and the art treasures which Raymond had collected, moved into their new home, Glencairn. Glencairn became a cultural center for music and art, as well as a place to hold special events. Many remember Mildred Pitcairn in her red velvet gown, a gracious hostess at the Christmas Sing. After her death in 1979 her home became Glencairn Museum, a vibrant part of the Academy complex.

Fidelia Asplundh de Charms (1892-1976)

Fidelia, one of a large family of children left fatherless by the early death of Carl Asplundh senior, grew up in Bryn Athyn and attended the Schools there. When Fidelia and the Rev. George de Charms married, her mother decided the couple should have the Asplundh house, because a minister is expected to entertain. Mrs. Asplundh then moved into a cottage next door. Some years later, after George de Charms had become the Bishop, an addition was put on their home. Fidelia said she wanted a living room big enough to entertain the whole society.

And entertain she did --- Mrs. de Charms became the hostess for the whole General Church. A tall woman, overflowing with friendly interest in everyone she met, it was said she knew the name of every person in the Church, on every continent.

Fidelia was protective of her husband, who had been rather frail as a young man, and she often seemed to be running interference for him on social occasions. She traveled with the Bishop on his many trips to both large societies and small groups. Once, when visiting the Robert Glenn family in Kansas, Mrs. de Charms lined the children up on the couch, gave them needles and yarn, and taught them all, from littlest to biggest, to knit.

Gabriel Pitcairn Pendleton (1914-1999)

The oldest daughter of Mildred and Raymond Pitcairn, Gabriel, or Gay as she was most often called, attended the Bryn Athyn Elementary School and the Academy Girls School. In June 1934 she married Willard Pendleton, youngest son of Bishop and Mrs. N. D. Pendleton. In the fall the young couple moved to Pittsburgh where the Rev. Willard Pendleton served as pastor. After ten years, he was called back to Bryn Athyn to become assistant to the Bishop, and vice-president of the Academy. Sometime after their return, the Pendleton family moved into Cairnwood, the home where Gay had grown up.

Gay Pendleton loved the Girls School. She strongly supported New Church education for young women, and took an affectionate interest in the teachers. Gay regularly visited Miss Clara Hanlin, one of her old teachers, bringing meals, and helping her in other ways. She did a sewing project with her daughters, making warm winter capes as Christmas gifts for some of the girls' teachers.

Her love of country led her to take an active interest in government on the national level. When her father, Raymond Pitcairn, started a grassroots movement in Bryn Athyn to elect Eisenhower president, Gabriel Pendleton worked hard to bring the campaign to its successful conclusion.

Lyris Hyatt (1915-1986)

After graduation from the Girls School and the Academy College, Lyris worked in her father's office. At that time Hubert Hyatt was the Treasurer of the Academy. Finding that the job didn't suit her nature, she decided she would like to be an English teacher. She increased her knowledge and skills in this profession by getting masters' degrees at

Columbia University and the Bread Loaf School of English, at Middlebury College [Vermont].

Lyris was a woman of keen intelligence and great sensibilities (in the Jane Austen use of that word). She had a redhead's sensitivity to the sun, and took it hard that she couldn't enjoy the beach like most people. She had a poet's sensitivity to both suffering and joy that gave her an empathy with other people.

It should be no surprise that Lyris was a writer of poetry as well as a teacher of language and literature. Of all the girls from several generations that Miss Lyris taught, there are probably very few that can't recite the first eighteen lines of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, beginning with the line, "Whan that Aprille . . ." She believed in the value of learning things by heart, of making something beautiful and meaningful your own, so that you could call it to mind when you needed it.

Morna Hyatt (1918-2014)

In remembering her freshman year in the Girls School, Morna said, "We had a Latin Club, the purpose of which was to allow me to help my classmates with Latin (and Algebra) in a group instead of one at a time over the phone." The club had two rules: you had to do your homework before coming to the meeting, and the hostess had to serve refreshments.

After her graduation cum laude from the Academy College, Morna became a teacher and continued to do what she did best—help girls to learn things. She loved math and Latin, but taught almost every subject in the curriculum at one time or another, including physical education (not such a surprise when you realize she was skiing well into her sixties).

In 1959, Morna Hyatt, sister to Lyris, became principal

of the Girls School, resigning in 1971, and then taking it on again in 1976, for six more years. She had a good sense of humor, and was always calm and reasonable with the most upset student, or ruffled parent. Even after her retirement from full time teaching, she did substitute teaching, or cheerfully took study hall, or performed duties in her beloved Girls School that might have seemed tedious to others.

In all her long life of doing useful things, Morna Hyatt is probably most remembered for discovering the Benade Hall Fire in 1948.

Freya Synnestvedt King (1925-2005)

Freya was twenty when she married Louis King who was still attending the theological school. They started their married life in a small apartment over the garage at her parents' (George and Winfrey Glenn Synnestvedt's) home. Here the oldest of their thirteen children was born.

After serving for many years in the Pittsburgh and Glenview Church Societies, the King family returned to Bryn Athyn where the Rev. Louis B. King became the Assistant Bishop, and then the Executive Bishop, of the General Church. With many of the children grown and busy with their own lives, Freya began to accompany her husband on his episcopal visits around the Church. Freya, always energetic and outgoing, loved these trips. With her easily roused sense of fun she made light of difficulties, including a sprained ankle, to enter into whatever was planned.

Freya loved South Africa, the country and the African people. Once when a group of children were doing a native dance for the visitors, Freya watched for a while, and then got up and enthusiastically joined in. Beloved around the world, she and her husband became known as Bishop King and "Bishop Queen".

Mary Louise Williamson (1927-2016)

The Herbert Williamsons moved from Ohio to Bryn Athyn so that their daughter, Mary Lou, could attend the Girls School. Mrs. Williamson competently looked after the J.D. (an after-school hangout for teenagers on Alden Road) serving up ice cream cones and practical advice while her daughter was studying. Mary Lou graduated in June 1945, in a class mainly of girls as most of the young men were away fighting in WWII.

After high school graduation, she went on to the Academy College (now Bryn Athyn College) and studied to become a teacher. For a while she taught in the Glenview School, and then came back to Bryn Athyn and taught Kindergarten for years and years. With loving kindness, she made every child feel special. Each one knew he or she was Miss Mary Lou's "favorite child." She loved theater, and for many years enjoyed directing plays and musicals, particularly in the College, as a sort of sideline to her classroom teaching.

In 1969 or 70 she moved up the educational ladder to teach English and American History in the Girls School. She also taught Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* as a part of the Great Books Course to both boys and girls. With her quirky sense of humor and flair for the dramatic, she could liven up the dullest class. After her retirement from full time teaching, Miss Mary Lou put her love of reading and books to use in running the Media Center in Benade Hall.

During the original presentation a photograph of each woman was projected as the text about her was read. In addition a young woman representing each person and wearing clothing appropriate to her personality and time in history circumnavigated the room. The photographs to accompany this article are inside the back cover.

Report on the Sunday School Translation Project

Evangeline Lindrooth

Momentous news on the progress of the translation project! Level three of the Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons finally has been translated into French. Rev. Sylvain Agnes will shortly see to its publication and distribution throughout West Africa. Level three has been in progress since May of 2011. All the credit for its completion goes to a very active, determined Divine Providence!

Some of the newer Journal readers may wonder what the translation project is. The current Sunday School Translation Project might be called an extension of Theta Alpha International's (TAI's) original efforts to provide isolated children with religion lesson. Perhaps you remember Sarah Odhner's carefully researched paper, *General Church Religion Lessons and the General Church*, which she described in a talk given on October 9, 2015, during the TAI Charter Day luncheon. She noted that for fifty years, since 1940, it had been the main purpose of TAI to serve families considered isolated by sending them weekly grade level religion lessons. Sarah commented, "The lessons developed by Theta Alpha continue to impact the General Church as the forerunners of most children's material available today." Using these lessons as a base, General Church Education has refined and developed them to create a new, colorful program called Jacob's Ladder.

This project has translated the English version of Jacob's Ladder into French so as to supply French-speaking Sunday school teachers in West Africa with a strong, sequential program of religious instruction to use with their students. At this time the countries using these lessons include Ivory Coast (twelve groups), Togo (three groups), Benin (two groups), and Burkina Faso (one group). Based on

the request for lessons, I estimate approximately four hundred children are being served. These church groups have experienced rapid growth since 2004. In Ivory Coast alone New Church members have risen from none to approximately 825.



Because Sunday school teachers in West Africa are generally very new to New Church teachings, it is important to provide these professionally conceived lessons to support their efforts. This series of religion lessons follow the same curriculum as is taught in English-speaking General Church schools. Rev. Sylvain Agnes, who is the Bishop's Representative for French-speaking Africa is planning a Sunday School teachers' seminar to assure that the religion

lesson materials are being used to fullest advantage. TAI is covering the cost of the lessons so they are available for free, as was true during the fifty years of TAI's original program. French-speaking West Africa is limited financially and would not be able to afford these religion lessons without this support.

In the process of preparing this report I found an article written by Rev. Fred Gyllenhaal in 1954 expressing gratitude to TAI for helping isolated families by sending out grade level religion lessons. He says, "The first language [TAI religion lessons] were translated into, and the first place they were used and continue to be used, was Arabic, the place being Nablus in the Hashimite Kingdom of the Jordan, formerly Shechem in the land of Canaan.

By providing these lessons TAI is following the Lord's call, given by means of Moses, "Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth and that they may teach their children" (Deuteronomy 4:10). I think TAI's efforts are well spent!

Evangeline Lindrooth is the widow of both Douglas Wright and Dan Lindrooth. She has lived in the Huntingdon Valley-Bryn Athyn-Abington area for all but three years of her life which made it possible for her to attend the church schools from kindergarten through four years of college. Professionally she served as a reading specialist for thirty-nine years. After retiring she took on the work of administering the translation of Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons from English into French. This effort was her way of supporting outreach, a matter that had always been of strong interest to her.

*

The following is from the letter by Rev. Fred Gyllenhaal which Evangeline refers to in her article. It was originally published in the Theta Alpha Journal, 1954, pp. 7-8.

Excerpts from the Report of the Director of the General Church Religion Lessons Committee

“ . . . Theta Alpha has most zealously and loyally done the work of religious education for the boys and girls of the Church isolated from our Societies and especially from our Day Schools. But probably few of you know as yet how widely the Lessons are spread over this earth. They go not only to boys and girls of parents who are members of the General Church, but also to many whose parents are members of the General Convention, to some whose parents are not members of any New Church organization, to children of different nations, and even to children . . . [in] Africa. This year I also had inquiry of the cost of sending forty complete sets of these Lessons to an Indian school outside of Bombay, India. They are also used in some of our New Church Day Schools and Societies. The Bryn Athyn School has used all of the Joshua and Judges Lessons and Outline Pictures for the last two years and, of course, has paid for them. But the first language they were translated into, and the first place they were used and continue to be used, was Arabic, the place being Nablus in the Hashimite Kingdom of the Jordan, formerly Shechem in the land of Canaan.

“Pictures are independent of language, but I foresee the time when these Lessons will be translated into many other languages and distributed in bulk to different countries. Possibly someday space-ships will carry them to the children of other earths in the universe!

“So I humbly salute Theta Alpha for having inaugurated a truly wonderful use that has possibilities of endless expansion.”

Frederick E. Gyllenhaal
Director

Kainon School Westville South Africa

Jane Lumsden Edmonds

Kainon School in Westville, South Africa is flourishing and thriving. Kainon is ninety-three years old but with the . . . upgrade done in 2010 we look modern and are sporting beautiful facilities. To give you a picture of this beautiful school, Kainon has nine classrooms (one for each grade from Grade R to 7) and an Aftercare Classroom. All have glass doors, a large expanse of windows and high ceilings, allowing the natural light to stream in, and all classrooms open onto sunny courtyards where group work can take place. This year (2017) we have 153 children in the school from Grade 1 to 7 and there are another 80 children in our Pre-Primary which also has upgraded classrooms and a wonderful, shady, playing area covered in astroturf. Our campus is a very busy one! Kainon has a beautiful media centre with multi-seat computer stations, a swimming pool and a sports field. Situated in the wooded area of Westville overlooking the Palmiet River gorge, and facing the craggy gorge cliffs, we enjoy an abundance of bird and animal life including the vervet monkey and dassies (rock rabbits).

How blessed we are to be the only Christian Independent School in the Westville area! This means that Kainon, with its New Church perspective on living a good and moral life, is filling a much needed and vital niche for parents who want their children to be taught in a nurturing environment that also supports parents in helping establish a good, strong moral foundation for their children.

Kainon's focus is on education with high academic standards being taught from a New Church perspective. All parents are interviewed by the Pastor (Chaplain) and Principal and discussions on our perspective and what is

different and distinct about the New Church approach takes place. New parents applying are asked to research Swedenborg on swedenborg.com and are encouraged to understand the perspective from which we teach before making their final decision.

As an Independent School we belong to ISASA (Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa). It is through this association that our teachers and I get to network with educators and principals of other independent schools, helping to keep standards high and teaching and learning progressive. Kainon is evaluated every six years by IQAA (Independent Schools Quality Assurance Agency). We had our second cycle last year (2015) and were the most improved school in the six year cycle, which is most encouraging!

Kainon is also a Green Flag ECO School, which means that we are focused on the environment and belong to the Green School ECO School Association. Last year (2015) we were awarded our international flag as we had achieved a certain level in five years. The ECO focus is included in lessons and whole school action projects throughout the year. Our themes of focus are: healthy living, local and global issues, biodiversity, resource use and recycling, heritage and community.

Kainon has a beautiful veggie garden and vegetables are planted, picked and packed by the children and sold to parents. The funds raised buy more vegetables for planting or are used to buy fruit for the underprivileged outreach projects that Kainon supports: The Westville Baby House—a home for abandoned babies, and The White House—a home for the needy.

We are delighted that all our classrooms now have SMARTBOARDS as a result of some excellent fundraising done by parents! These really lend themselves to exciting

visual, auditory and tactile kinesthetic learning in the classroom!

Our staff complement includes our classroom teachers, a media centre teacher, a learner support teacher and Afrikaans specialist teacher, Zulu specialist teacher, three New Church ministers (two from Westville and one from our sister society in Claremont) teaching Bible Study each week to Grades 4 to 7 (each class has two hours of Bible Study a week). We have a sports coordinator and coaches as needed depending on the sports for that term, a marketer, school secretary and bursar. Daphne Plug, our pre-primary headmistress, also plays an important administrative role as head of our junior primary. Two of our senior phase teachers have administrative coordinator roles. We also enjoy the luxury of a junior primary assistant teacher, an aftercare supervisor, and homework centre supervisor. One of our full-time teachers will begin studying for her MARS degree [Master of Arts in Religious Studies] thanks to the new Theta Alpha Scholarship program she was awarded.

Kainon is a busy, happy place to teach and learn in, and we feel incredibly blessed to “work” at Kainon every day. In addition to all the usual academic and sporting activities, including sports matches and practices, we have a myriad of extramural activities happening on campus—some organized by our teachers: chess, little chef, acrobatics, mini sports and study skills, and others sourced out to private tutors: guitar, ballet, speech, drama and science club.

Every term we enjoy Ttak (Teacher training at Kainon), which is led by our chaplain and has a focus on New Church learning and development. In addition, every year there is an important staff development program. The highlight this year was having my daughter, Candice Edmunds, lead the staff in the Myers Briggs MBTI personality development. Candice is a past pupil at Kainon, and is now a psychometrist.

We have a beautiful website recently created by a past pupil Chelsea (Foord) Micklewood and I urge readers to go and take a look! www.kainonschool.co.za

Past pupils are passionately involved in their old school and it is delightful how they grow up and then stay connected, and keep coming back to add value in whatever field of expertise they are in!

I sincerely hope that you have all enjoyed reading about this treasure of a growing New Church school in South Africa, and if you ever get the opportunity to come to South Africa, do come and visit!

Jane Lumsden Edmunds, MARS, Bryn Athyn College
Principal, Kainon School





Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I have just read Mary Margaret Zathey-Agboga's article, "The Minister's Wife" (Nov. 2016) and am compelled to respond! I find myself really appreciating the fact that she wrote this introduction to the *Osofomami* for us westerners, as well as the 'huge task' she and her fellow ministers' wives in Ghana undertake upon marrying a man who is a minister.

I, too, am a minister's wife—presently in Sydney, Australia—and my experience, while similar in some ways, is more different from Mary Margaret's than I had anticipated. I am not scorned for wearing trousers, shorts or mini skirts, or for applying make-up, fake nails or hair extensions. I am not criticised for not covering my head before praying! I am not expected to give up my own pursuits in favour of my husband's career, and while I do wholeheartedly support it and our congregation, it is not assumed that I will act as co-minister, gospel singer, praise & worship leader, Sunday school teacher, marriage counselor, women & youth leader, etc.

I distinctly remember, when my husband began theological school, the first time I met with fellow theologs' wives and three lovely ministers (and college/theological school professors') wives who guided us through the "expectations of ministers' wives." We examined what our own expectations might be, as well as what we might encounter as expectations from our congregations. Before that moment, it had never occurred to me that I might be expected to play the piano for weekly church services! I became quite concerned, and determined not to let on too easily to any future congregations that I had any musical talent whatsoever, lest they assume me into the accompanist's seat. This, I now can see and appreciate, pales in comparison to what is really and truly expected of African

ministers' wives: I am developing a profound gratitude for the freedoms which we western ministers' wives are granted. Thank you for this perspective, Mary Margaret.

At the same time, I am reminded that there are no coincidences, and that there are two sides to every scenario. While Mary Margaret's situation sounds undesirable to me in some ways, I do also envy her: personal interest in Christianity and the New Church in Africa is miles beyond that which I am presently experiencing in Australia! We struggle to get twenty individuals into our church on a given Sunday morning, and even more so to get new people through the door. We advertise, we've made changes to our worship services and added various social events to our calendar, and while we are fortunately keeping our steadfast members, those newcomers who do occasionally show up seem to stay for a while and then disappear as suddenly as they came. Additionally, having the opportunity to co-minister, lead and counsel various people and groups in our church sounds like an answer to my own question of what use I should be serving in what feels like an idle life!

In her article, Mary Margaret mentions that she and her fellow Osofomami "can't complain to anyone. If we do then we will be judged as not praying enough, and told to 'do fasting and pray harder, and then things will be alright.'" I appreciate that sentiment, and also appreciate the opportunity to air my thoughts, as I have here, without worrying too much about reproach. I recognise that these are challenges that we are apparently meant to face right now, as we serve the Lord in this role. Each of us—in any situation, ministry-related or not—is presented with opportunities to think creatively and consider how to overcome the obstacles we face. With prayer and perseverance (and maybe fasting?!), we can rise above them.

Sincerely,
Jenn Beiswenger

Dear Editor,

The November 2016 edition of the Theta Alpha Journal arrived a couple of months ago, much to my happy surprise since I had not heard from the Theta Alpha for several years.

Today I finished reading and re-reading it, and was thrilled to see so much of it around a subject so near and dear to my heart—fiber and sewing. I plan to submit my own thoughts and experience about creativity in the same area, but that will take much longer than a few minutes. The poems and all the articles were thoughtful and fascinating, giving me a deeper insight into the authors, some of whom are old friends of mine. Everything about the issue was a delight and I look forward to receiving them.

Having moved to Utah six years ago from Hatboro, PA, I am ecclesiastically isolated—there are only five or six New Church members in all of Utah, and we are spread out over such a large area, making it difficult to get together. Therefore I've come to depend a great deal on New Church Life, cathedral services online and the Bryn Athyn Post in keeping close touch with my Church and its incredible teachings. I'm so very happy to add, now, the TAJ!

I also send you—the staff, contributors and members—my deep appreciation for reviving this valued and valuable instrument of needed communication. Bless you all!

Very sincerely yours,
Midje Kerr



**Theta Alpha International
Profit & Loss - 2016
and Budget - 2017**

	Actual 2016 (7/1/15 to 6/30/16)	Budget 2016 (7/1/15 to 6/30/16)	Budget 2017 (7/1/16 to 6/30/17)
<u>Ordinary Income/Expense</u>			
Income			
Membership Dues - (\$15/member)	\$ 2,654	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,800
General Fund Contribution - (great than dues)	\$ 9,154	\$ 6,900	\$ 10,000
Investment Income (TAI funds)	\$ 6,709	\$ 5,400	\$ 6,000
Bank Interest - Money Market	\$ 24	\$ 50	\$ -
Transfer of Income from ANC Fund	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,000
Fund raising - Raffle	\$ 695	\$ 600	\$ -
Luncheon	<u>\$ 970</u>	<u>\$ 1,000</u>	<u>\$ 1,000</u>
<u>Total Income</u>	<u>\$ 20,206</u>	<u>\$ 16,950</u>	<u>\$ 25,800</u>
Expense			
Scholarships - TAI Funds	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ 4,200
Scholarships - ANC Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,000
Awards & Grants	\$ 1,004	\$ 3,900	\$ 2,500
Journal	\$ 17,690	\$ 8,500	\$ 18,000
Postage & Mailings	\$ 335	\$ 2,000	\$ 600
Luncheon	\$ 906	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
Baptism Project	\$ 157	\$ 500	\$ 300
Fund Raising - Raffle	\$ 445	\$ 350	\$ -
Misc. expenses	<u>\$ 720</u>	<u>\$ 700</u>	<u>\$ 500</u>
<u>Total Expense</u>	<u>\$ 21,757</u>	<u>\$ 16,950</u>	<u>\$ 32,100</u>
<u>Net Ordinary Income</u>	<u>\$ (1,551)</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ (6,300)</u>
Unrealized Gains/(Losses)-TAI investments	\$ (11,395)	\$ 7,000	\$ -
<u>Net Income</u>	<u>\$ (12,946)</u>	<u>\$ 7,000</u>	<u>\$ (6,300)</u>
<u>ASSETS at June 30th 2016</u>			
Bank	\$ 10,641		
NCIF - TAI funds	\$ 164,317		
<u>TOTAL ASSETS (owned by TAI)</u>	<u>\$ 174,958</u>		
NCIF - ANC Fund (owned by the Academy)	\$ 234,685		
<u>TOTAL Investments</u>	<u>\$ 409,643</u>		

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