

Dear Friends,

I write with some news from the General Church. Included in this newsletter are the following items:

- **Update on the timing of the next General Church Retreat (Assembly)**
- **New Priestly Leadership Positions**
- **New positions within the General Church Central Offices**

General Church Retreat—Looking to June 2023:

You likely recall the announcements about a GC Retreat 2020, which had to be canceled due to the pandemic. Ever since then we have been working toward a rescheduled session so that a good number of us can get together to focus on our shared church uses. **I am personally committed to holding a General Church Retreat and look forward to the time when it can happen. Our trajectory, however, is currently toward June of 2023—just under two years from now.**

A number of factors went into the decision not to plan a GC Retreat for June 2022. One is the availability of venues, noting that Glencairn Museum and the Mitchel Performing Arts Center are not available at the would-be time of the Retreat. We also had a wrinkle in the children's program, with a couple of the partners who had graciously offered to help in 2020 not as able to do so in 2022. Add to that the lingering concerns about international travel, vaccine availability, and a world not quite back to a *new normal*, and the prudent decision was to give ourselves a bit more time.

Fortunately, time is on our side for a June 2023 event. We aim to continue our planning and look forward to announcing a rescheduled GC Retreat downstream.

New Priestly Leadership Positions:

I also wish to draw your attention to three new priestly leadership positions within the General Church, related to our goal of improved regional leadership.



The Rev. Martin Gyamfi has the distinct honor of being our first full-time Regional Pastor within the General Church. Rev. Gyamfi has served as Pastor of Asakraka in Ghana and has tried with limited time to coordinate with pastors throughout the West African subregion. He has handed off his pastoral role to allow for the preponderance of his time to go toward supervising and supporting other pastors.



The Rev. Erik Buss has taken on the role of National Pastor for the United Kingdom. He, together with the Rev. Grant Odhner, are trying a new country-wide approach. They will work with the membership in the UK to coordinate national plans for worship and engagement.



The Rev. Jean Atta has assumed the role of Secretary for the Council of the Clergy. This position is nominated by the Bishop's Office and affirmed by the Council. Jean will help to coordinate Clergy meetings and act as a voice of the Council of the Clergy as specified in our governing documents.

New Positions within the General Church Central Offices:

The General Church Central Offices has the honor of welcoming several new people to our staff—some in new positions and some in expanded positions. Each one is related to our core strategies of communicating a shared vision and improving our organizational systems.



Freya Williams has assumed dual part-time roles of Engagement Coordinator, working on membership processes for the General Church, and Assistant Program Manager in the Outreach department.



Janet Carswell Lockard has accepted an expanded portfolio to include Donor Relations management, in addition to her valued General Church Education work. She replaces Tara Fehon who retired from her position as of June 30.



Marijke BauMadsen has been hired as our new Communications Director. This is a major step forward in our strategy of sharing a vision with the Church from the Bishop's Office, and coordinating more effectively the many communications.



Liliya Titus has joined the General Church as Assistant Controller, replacing Barb Bevan who recently retired. Liliya has worked in various financial capacities with the General Church and Academy and comes our way for this important position.

(photo withheld by request)

Sarah Grubb has expanded her role within our Human Resources Department. As a full-time HR Assistant, she will help with payroll and benefits when needed, as well as providing IT support to the department.



The Rev. Pearse Frazier has relocated to the Bryn Athyn area to take on a full-time position as Assistant Outreach Director. His function is to coordinate the Grand Human Project, and oversee content development.



The Rev. Nathan Gladish has a new part-time role with the Office of Outreach to help expand the value of the Grand Human Project by recruiting small group leaders, training, mentoring and supporting them so they can launch their own small groups in person, online, or hybrid. These small groups can significantly support building a sense of community among people who have a common interest in Swedenborg and the New Church.

We are very grateful that these people are willing to give their professional energies to the General Church and look forward to working with them in the years to come.

Teresa joins me in wishing all of you well. We look forward to resuming our visits to church centers and seeing the many people who consider the General Church their spiritual home. We pray that you are feeling the presence of the Lord and that your lives are moving along well.

With affection,



Pete

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The General Church of the New Jerusalem



New Church

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