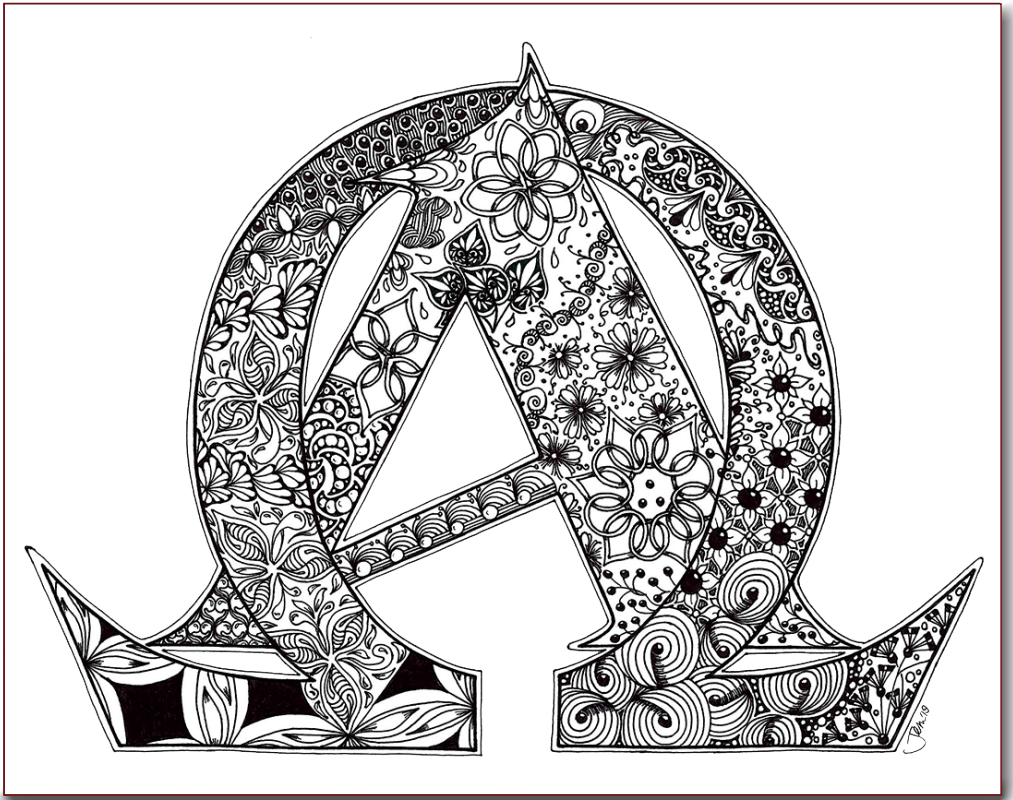


THETA ALPHA JOURNAL



APRIL 2022

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Theta Alpha

“Daughters of the Academy”



Named From the Greek:

Θυγατερες Ακαδημιας

Thugateres Akadémias

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

Non Nobis Solum ~ Not for Ourselves Alone

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Editorial

Helen Kennedy

In this Journal we begin with an article by Nadine Rogers on how Divine Providence in every instant of our lives is working toward the Lord's goal for humankind. Have you ever had your plans or desires not work out but then been astonished by some hither-to-unknown good spiritual thing that comes into your life? Two poems, one by Coleman Glenn and a second by Byron Lemky draw us into the spiritual realm, also. In addition there is a collection of poems by Charlotte Austin Klein whose spritely use of language gives us perceptions into some of the passions within her mind.

Jim deMaine, a pulmonologist and critical care specialist, gives us two stories of patients as they approach the end of their lives. The second one, *The Plan That Didn't Work*, echoes Nadine's thoughts in her essay, and shows that life doesn't always end the way we wanted it to. But Jim shares with us his long experience, giving us a list of things that can be done to help make this end stage of our lives an easier transition. End-of-life doula, Amy Jones, tells us about the important work she does and shares from her years of experience with it. Janet Krettek relates a story of a patient in her last day and how inspiring it was for Janet as a doctor.

Women and men have participated in small groups for decades in order to share things of interest to them and to develop new friends. To promote that good use, the church has set up

a website for anyone interested in finding a group, or maybe two, that fit their interests. See the articles by Nathan Gladish and Charlotte Gyllenhaal about it, both of whom warmly invite readers to explore their new website. Deborah's Tree is a website developed by Roslyn Taylor that focuses mainly on the work of female authors, scholars, clergy and artists. Its wider use, though, is to serve people on a spiritual journey of any kind who are looking for the spiritual perspectives that they might find within the Swedenborgian movement.

The final piece, *Francis*, is a fiction taking place in the spiritual world a number of years after Francis has died. Imaginative, it is meant to show the further development of a person, and that the Lord is always working on their eternal salvation.

I'd like to end this editorial with our thoughts and prayers for the people in the Ukraine, their loved ones, and those who are helping them. There is no telling what may happen to them between now when I'm writing this, and when the Journal comes out. Our prayers for peace in that area and throughout the world are always needed.



Call for Articles!

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

The following talk was given at the Loving Arms Mission a number of years ago where Kent and Nadine Rogers shared the duties of giving church. At the time both had houses for orphans, and there was a wide age range of children in them. The children in Kent's house were older than those in Nadine's. Nadine writes, "So I had lots of teenagers to address, plus Kent's interest to hold. I just picked topics that sparked my interest and hoped that a few seeds would get sown even if the topics sometimes were above the level of the smaller kids' understanding."

The Lord's Eternal Purpose

Nadine Rogers

The Israelites had prophecies about a Messiah, or Savior, for thousands of years. However, many of them were waiting for a political savior, an earthly kind that would throw off the Roman empire which had conquered them. For this reason Herod and others in power hated and feared Jesus when they realized He was fulfilling these ancient prophecies, or at least saw that the people believed He was fulfilling them. The rulers thought if Jesus was the long-awaited king, then they would lose their positions, as if it was some kind of corporate takeover. The baddies had it wrong, but the truth is, it was these same mistaken ideas that made a lot of Jesus' followers love Him.

We can see the truth of this from the story in *Luke 24: 19-21*, when Jesus appeared to two followers after the crucifixion. Jesus, unrecognized by them, starts walking along with them and asks "Why the long faces?" They look at him incredulously and ask if he is the only person in all the land who hasn't heard of all the things that have taken place. Jesus plays ignorant and asks "What things?" They reply, "About Jesus of Nazareth. He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to

death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.” These were men waiting for the yoke of the Roman Empire to be lifted off of the nation of Israel. If these, some of the closer followers of Jesus, had this belief, it must have been quite a common idea. There are some who think this is why Judas was willing to betray Him. It’s possible that Judas thought he was forcing Jesus to take a stand, start the revolution, and free Israel.

Certainly, many of the people following Jesus the day He rode into Jerusalem on the donkey thought His entry was the beginning of a new era in Israel’s history. There may have been some who looked at Him as a spiritual king, but many had an earthly king in mind. In that culture, kings used to ride on a donkey, so when the crowds saw Jesus that day, they must have thought this was the beginning of a coup. Their hero had arrived, and now they could break the power of the heathens who had invaded and bowed them into submission. They didn’t understand that Jesus was never interested in being an earthly king. He was, and is, the spiritual King.

It’s easy for us to shake our heads and think “how silly they were,” but actually, I think, we also sometimes fall into the same trap. We often want Jesus to be an earthly king, not a spiritual king. I don’t mean that we literally think He is going to seize power and set up a new government some place in this world. I mean that we often want to confine Him to concerns of our earthly pursuits. Sometimes we ask for clearly natural things in our prayers. “Lord, help me pass my exams. Lord, help me get a good job. Lord, help me get that handsome guy for a boyfriend.” If we are honest, even though we see that these are earthly pursuits, we sometimes feel hurt or resentful that God doesn’t always give us what we think we need or want.

From the details of our everyday struggles, to the patterns

of political maneuvering, to our examination of social ills, **we** often want God to prove Himself, explain His ways, intervene in the ways **we** think are best. How easy it is to doubt His love, His justice, His kindness, or even His existence if we don't see evidence that He is working things out the way we think it should go. Sometimes our personal stories take turns we don't like and we feel critical of God.

“God, why don't You find me a good job?”

“God, how can You let me get cancer?”

“God, why am I still alone?”

“God, why did You take my mother away from me when
I was so young?”

“God, why don't You care?”

Sometimes it's the bigger picture on a social or political scale that gets to us.

“God, how can You let murders and rape occur?”

“God, how can You let those dictators get power?”

“God, how can You be good if all those people do
such horrible things in Your name?”

“God, how can You let so many innocent people die,
lose family members, lose homes and livelihoods in
hurricanes, earthquakes, landslides, fires, and floods?”

All questions of this kind are saying basically the same thing: “God, fix *this natural world*, and fix it in a way I can see, and in a way I like.”

And this may come as a bit of an unpleasant shock, but in a certain way God probably doesn't actually care a whole lot about what you or I think the solutions to the world's problems

are. For one thing, there's a possibility that your or my finite brain's solutions might be, well, wrong. But more to the point, God cares infinitely about each person's *spiritual happiness*, and although this may coincide with earthly happiness, it *may* just as easily not. *Divine Providence* 58 tells us about the Lord's main concerns for us:

The reason divine providence focuses on what is infinite and eternal particularly in its intent to save the human race is that the goal of divine providence is a heaven from the human race. Since this is the goal, it follows that the main focus of divine providence is reforming and regenerating us, that is, saving us, since heaven is made up of people who have been reformed and regenerated. Since regenerating us is a matter of uniting what is good and what is true, or love and wisdom, within us the way they are united in divinity that emanates from the Lord, divine providence focuses primarily on this in its intent to save the human race.

In other words, saving our souls and getting us to eternal joy in heaven is the goal, and I mean saving ALL our souls and getting us ALL to eternal joy. Whatever is going to achieve that goal, that's what God is doing. And that, much to our human consternation, involves giving ALL of us freedom. We have been given freedom so we may choose the life of love and happiness that God wants to give us. We need to feel free in order that we won't feel like robots. We need to feel free in order to appreciate the gifts He gives us. But this means we also have the freedom to reject what is right, and we ALL do. It's not just murderers and terrorists and dictators. We have all taken fatal advantage of that gift of freedom to manipulate, wound, and claw our way towards our own delusion of deserved power. Recognizing this can be a sickening, devastating process and we may long for God to just rip away that freedom and "Make me good! Stop me from ever doing anything horrible again!" But blocking the possibility

of evil also means blocking the possibility of union with God. Freedom is necessary to join with God willingly. And because that is God's sole purpose, to have you and me with Him forever in happiness and love, He guards our freedom like we guard the pupil of our own eye. Taking away the freedom to sin cuts off the ability to achieve the Lord's main intent, the one He has had from the beginning of creation. He's not going to take away anyone's freedom. He never will. People are going to do bad things, but allowing this is more important spiritually than stopping it just so that we won't hurt or feel like our hearts are broken or feel like we don't understand God. Yes, He even lets us think badly of Him and misunderstand Him, and mistake His infinite love for indifference and coldness, just so He can get us all to be in heaven with Him one day.

Transforming us into beings that can be in a reciprocal love relationship is the whole purpose of God's creation and the whole aim of Divine Providence. Everything in the tiny details of our lives is geared toward this, even though we are not aware of this. This is beautifully expressed in *Secrets of Heaven* 3854: 2 & 3:

*Concerning foresight and providence in general: What we view as foresight, the Lord views as providence. The Lord foresaw from eternity what the human race and every member of it would be like, and he foresaw that evil would constantly grow until at last humans would rush voluntarily into hell. So not only did he provide the means by which we could be turned from hell and led to heaven; in his providence he is constantly turning and leading us, too. He also foresaw that **nothing good would ever take root in us unless we were free**, since what takes root when we are not free dissolves as soon as evil approaches or we are tested.*

You can see, then, how mistaken people are when they don't believe that the Lord has foreseen and now sees the tiniest details

of our life, and that he provides for and guides us in each of those details. The reality is that the Lord's foresight and providence concerns itself with the smallest possible aspects of all in human affairs—so small that we cannot in any way comprehend one out of millions. Every split second of our life carries with it a series of consequences that continues forever. Each moment is like a new starting point for another series, and this is true for each and every moment of life in both our intellect and our will.

To bring people as close as possible to Himself is clearly a spiritual purpose. And it can be seen in our story of Palm Sunday. Jesus enters Jerusalem as a king, and what is the first thing He does? He goes into the temple and starts cleaning it out. In parallel with ourselves, it is the story of God cleaning out our hearts and minds. He didn't go to the government offices or the palace. He went to the temple. He didn't come to try to make the Jews prosperous and successful and have easy lives free of Romans. He came to make them righteous. In the same way, He doesn't want to make everything nice and pretty and easy for us. He wants to make us clean and holy. We are told in the Writings that money changers mean using truth for personal gain, and dove sellers mean using good for personal gain (*Apocalypse Explained* 840:4). He wants to rid the temple of our hearts of hypocrisy. The process may be difficult and scary and painful: He used a whip and overthrew tables in the temple in Jerusalem. But if it's the way to get us ready for real love and real happiness, so be it. The Lord is willing to let us suffer for the sake of the result.

The next thing Jesus does after cleansing the temple is to wither the fig tree that bears no fruit. The Word tells us multiple times that what does not bear fruit will be cut off. When an old church is no longer useful, He lets it die and raises up a new one. If parts of us are useless, He cuts them off, too, so something new can grow. Ouch. It's no good pretending pruning will be

painless. We all intuitively know that is not the case.

All this doesn't mean that the Lord doesn't care about our feelings. I believe the Lord Jesus does very much, but He cares infinitely more about our eternal salvation. There is a beautiful, magical looking flower called an angel's trumpet. It looks like it is straight out of fairyland. But when a baby wants to pick a blossom from that delightful looking bush, a mother stops the baby because she knows that flower is a poisonous hallucinogenic. She is sad the little one is upset, but even more she wants that baby to be healthy and alive to experience things her whole life, beyond the few seconds of holding that flower. We often mistake the things of this world as being as important as eternity, just like the baby thinks holding that flower is very important. But the Lord views the eternity of all beings as the most important thing, and isn't going to be swayed by our anguish, even as He longs to dry our tears and gather us into His arms. "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. You who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. How I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing" (*Luke 13:34*).

In the end it is important to let go of our conviction that we know what is best for the universe. We have to let God be the spiritual King He is, and not try to bind Him to our earthly ideas. It's not that He won't grant us good things in this world, it's just that they will always have to serve His greater goal, which is preparing all of us to be with Him in heaven — forever.

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

The Least of These

Coleman Glenn

Teach me to feed the hungry first,
 To bring a cup for those who thirst,
 To gather migrant strangers in,
 To clothe exposed and naked skin,
 To visit homes where sickness falls,
 To go to those in prison walls.
 In all these things I seek to do,
 Lord, let me always act from You.

I long to feed on what is good,
 To taste truth not yet understood;
 I wander, needing to be taught,
 My mind stripped bare of higher thought;
 I sicken — sin constricts my heart;
 I'm snared by the deceiver's art.
 So may I in humility
 Accept the aid that's offered me.

And You, Lord — do You hunger too,
 And thirst to bless with good and true?
 No room was made when You were born;
 At death, Your clothes were snatched and torn.
 You felt the sickness of mankind,
 Endured, then broke, the chains that bind,
 Became the least to offer grace —
 In lowliness we see Your face.

Coleman Glenn is chaplain and assistant professor of religion at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. He lives in Huntingdon Valley with his wife Anne Grace and their three children. He can be contacted at coleman.glenn@gmail.com.

Jim deMaine is a pulmonary and critical care specialist. The following is an excerpt from his book "Facing Death: Finding Dignity" which was reviewed in the November 2021 Journal by Lisa Hyatt Cooper. Many stories in the book can be found on his blog "endoflifeblog.com."

Brain Dead?

Jim deMaine

Sam was late and Ella was furious. "Now why isn't that man back by now? He knows it's time to leave for church."

The hours began to pass and Ella became frightened. Sam had gone out for his usual two mile run and had simply disappeared. Ella called friends and neighbors but no one had seen him. Panic began to set in so Ella called 911 who connected her to the police, "No m'am, we've had no reports or contact with anyone by that name."

Finally in desperation, Ella began to check with hospitals which also had no knowledge of Sam. In checking Sam's dresser in the bedroom, Ella found his wallet, car keys, and cell phone. She was stunned, "Of course they didn't know anyone by that name. He had no ID with him."

With persistence she got through to the administrator of the 911 crew. That morning at 10:03 AM they had received a call from a metro bus driver that a man was down and not moving on the sidewalk. The Medics found him not breathing, with no pulse, and the heart in ventricular fibrillation. CPR and shocks revived him to the point that his circulation was reestablished. He was admitted to the trauma center as a "John Doe" and kept on life support. When Ella arrived at the hospital and found her husband, she was overwhelmed by the sight of him. A tube protruded out of his mouth, another tube was in his nose, and a

heart monitor quietly beeping plus IVs in his arms. “Is this really happening? Have I lost him?” she thought to herself while trying to be brave for her children.

It was determined that Sam had had a severe heart attack while jogging bringing his heart rhythm to a standstill. The heart, lungs, and kidney were all working once again but how about the brain?

The testing over the next few days was extensive. Sam had no significant brain activity with an EEG. Perhaps even more discouraging was the complete absence of blood flow to the higher centers of the brain. The hope for Sam to return to his prior life was nil.

As a doctor, I came into the picture when Sam was transferred to my hospital’s ICU for “on going care.” As a treating physician my obligation is first to the patient and then to the family. Sometimes this is easy, but sometimes it’s loaded with conflict. Fortunately Sam and Ella had a strong family structure with two beautiful teenagers (Adella and Isaiah).

When I went into the ICU that afternoon, I listened to their pastor coincidentally reading from the Bible in the book of Isaiah, “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater. So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

They were celebrating Sam’s life. The pastor explained, “The soul is present but the body is too damaged to further clothe the soul. The real Sam will live on.” We discussed the hopeless

situation of Sam's brain and the options of continuing ventilator support (a better term here than life support) along with a feeding tube. The neurologist had met with them and explained the complete absence of meaningful brain function. The family and pastor further met with the hospital social worker. They felt clearly that Sam would want to be removed from the ventilator and allow to die naturally and peacefully.

They were taken aback though when a transplant coordinator wanted to meet with them. Per protocol, the ICU staff had notified the regional transplant center about the potential of an organ donor. The transplant center confirmed that Sam was a registered donor (per his driver's license election). Ethically, I needed to keep a distance from the transplant team and remain focused on Sam my patient. However Ella and the children and pastor agreed to meet with the transplant coordinator to discuss how Sam could benefit many people, even more than a dozen as a donor. His organs could live on being useful and life-saving to a recipient.

Initially Ella was queasy, "Isn't this somehow disrespectful to the deceased? How can I allow my husband to be cut open when he's barely dead?" Ella said she prayed over this overnight asking God what to do. Somehow, she found the greatest peace by carrying out Sam's wishes to be a donor. They were reassured that the transplant team would treat Sam's body with great respect and that his organs could benefit many people. The children appeared bewildered but were accepting. The tears flowed.

Comment: I'm not sure how many organs were harvested from Sam. I did hear that the transplant team followed protocol. The heart was allowed to stop for 120 seconds (no heart will spontaneously restart after that) to ensure that death had occurred. This is a precaution so that organs are not removed from the living, but the need to wait these two minutes in a brain dead person has been questioned. A Scientific American issue

entitled "The End" has an excellent review of the ethical debate involved.

Out of the blue, eight years after Sam's death, I received a call from Ella, "Hi Dr. deMaine, do you remember me?" Some patients really stand out, so I immediately recalled the trials of Sam's death. Ella said she wanted again to thank me for my care, but she was really calling to let me know that the children had both graduated from college. Then she shyly added, "And you know, for the first time since Sam's passing, I've started a relationship – and am so happy!" We agreed that although the pain of the past doesn't really disappear, life (and love) does go on.

Jim deMaine is a retired Pulmonary/Critical Care doctor. He is interested in aging and advocacy for those unable to speak for themselves; in the ethics of autonomy and how that plays out in nursing homes and assisted care; in creating systems to help the frail elderly avoid unnecessary and unwanted interventions; in finding ways to document DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) wishes so that unwanted CPR is avoided. He gives frequent talks in the community about personal experiences using stories from his experiences with patients to illustrate the complexities of making our values known and respected.

Jim attended the Academy College (now BAC) from 1956-58. He married his wife, Lourdes, in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral in 1964. They have three children and seven grandchildren, and are active members of the Seattle Circle. He can be contacted at jimdemaine@comcast.net.

The Plan That Didn't Work

Jim deMaine

I got a call from the ER doc. “Jim, I’ve got a sad situation here. A patient has been brought in by Medic One after having CPR, shocks, and intubation at home. This woman’s daughter just arrived and is very upset. Her mom was ready to die.”

I was on-call for admissions to the ICU that day, and did not know this patient or her daughter. But I soon learned their story. Susan had advanced cancer and had wanted to die peacefully, in her own home. She had been considering, but had not yet contacted, hospice. A neighbor came by to relieve Susan’s daughter, Brenda, just long enough for Brenda to do some shopping.

Just then, Susan moaned and stopped breathing. Not knowing what to do, the neighbor dialed 911. The medics arrived within minutes. The neighbor identified herself as a friend saying, “I’m not sure what type of cancer she has. But I think it’s bad.”

“Are you related or do you have a power of attorney for health decisions?” the medic asked.

“Well, no.”

Not having any instructions to the contrary, the medics performed CPR, placed an endotracheal tube in Susan’s airway, and rushed her to our ER, unconscious.

The intake doctor reviewed her records, which revealed she did indeed have a lung cancer that had spread to the bones and brain. A Do Not Resuscitate order had been entered into Susan’s chart. On the phone with me he sighed, “None of this should have happened.”

I went in and met with Susan’s daughter. After conferring with her, we removed the ventilator and let the Susan die in the ER. Social

services spent time supporting Brenda and other family now arriving at the hospital. The medics were upset that they'd performed CPR on such a patient. Brenda was furious. And no one in the ER was pleased to have a patient die there, but a hospital admission seemed pointless.

Dying shouldn't happen this way. Better planning might have saved everyone pain and trauma—not least, Susan. There are steps we can take.

Advance care planning is a gift—to ourselves, our loved ones, and our health care team. The first step is to think about values. What matters most to you? What makes life worth living? I advise people to write a short essay about themselves and what the term “acceptable quality of life” means to them, then attach this document to their advance directives. It serves as a framework for working through scenarios you might not have anticipated. You might say, “I do not want to be a burden on my family. I don't want to ever be in such a physical state that my family or someone they hire must care for me 24/7.” Or: “I want to breathe naturally and could only accept a ventilator for a short time if my doctor thinks I have a good chance of breathing on my own again. If not, let me die a natural death.” Or: “Please do everything possible to keep me alive!”

The next step is the most important. Advance directives cannot address every situation. We need to discuss our wishes with someone we trust to be our spokesperson when we are unable to speak for ourselves, someone who will know what we would have wanted, even if it isn't spelled out in the advance directive. Legally, this person is called the “durable power of attorney for health care.” They should be someone special to you. Someone who knows your heart, can communicate well, and be a strong advocate—able to stand up to others and speak forcefully for your wishes. They also need to be available—ideally, at the bedside when it counts. This is the person a physician will turn to when weighing critical choices, so it's got to be someone you trust.

In considering treatment choices at the end of life, there are generally three levels of care. First is full life support. This includes all

measures to keep a person alive—ventilator, CPR, tube feedings, and such things as dialysis. Anything and everything that will preserve life, no limit. But often, patients and their families don't understand what "do everything" actually means. CPR, for example, can be lifesaving. The way it looks on television would give you the impression it's mostly effective. This is far from the truth. In reality, overall survival rates from a cardiac arrest are around 15%. And when people learn what is involved in CPR, they often gasp. It necessitates pushing down—hard and fast—on a person's chest about one hundred times per minute. The force frequently breaks patients' ribs, especially if they are elderly. For younger people, survival rates are better—as high as 50% when CPR is immediately initiated and the heart tracing shows a "shockable" rhythm. But fewer than one in twenty frail elderly people survive a cardiac arrest long enough to be discharged from a hospital. If they do, the next stop is usually a nursing home.

Tube feeding is another life-saving measure to consider. If you had a severe stroke, would you want to be kept alive by means of a tube? It's a fearful notion for many, the idea of being confined to a bed in a nursing home, unable to move or communicate, clinging to life by means of a tube. Considering that scenario, some people elect to forego artificial feeding if there is little chance of recovery.

Secondly, there is selective care, which is just what it sounds like—some of this, less of that. One could say, for example, it's OK to put me on a ventilator or feeding tube for a few weeks, but I would not want CPR. Or, more commonly, no ventilator or CPR, but I'm ok with being in a hospital for such things as intravenous medication. If you had severe Alzheimer's, would you want an antibiotic? Again, what are your hopes and what are your fears?

Lastly, there is comfort care. This is the most common choice for those with the frailty of old age, end-stage disease and on hospice. The goal is to treat symptoms, knowing there is no cure. Management of pain, emotional distress, shortness of breath, or any other discomfort is the goal. Hospice and this kind of palliative care have brought profound improvements and helped many more people to have a good death. With so many of us living longer, there is an

increasing need for physicians trained in this kind of treatment.

Any one of these three options can be selected on a Physician's Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment form, commonly known as the POLST (or, when referred to as Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment, a MOLST). The POLST was pioneered in Oregon in 1991, and since then has spread. POLSTs are now available, or under development, in all fifty states and Washington DC.

Medicare now covers doctor visits to discuss advance directives and complete these forms. They are most useful for people who want selective or comfort care and wish to forgo CPR and a ventilator. I think of the POLST as "the 911 form." It's just a set of legal orders signed by your health care team and, importantly, by you the patient. It is a bright color—difficult to miss—and very useful in critical situations when 911 is called or an unknown patient arrives in the emergency room. The POLST indicates "go" vs. "no-go" on starting CPR if you're in cardiac arrest.

Your signed POLST forms should be stored in an obvious place for any emergency responders to locate. Assisted living apartments often have a specific designated location. At home, many people keep their POLST form on the refrigerator door or at the foot of the bed. Believe me, medics on emergency calls are grateful to see the POLST form. It helps them know what to do. Some states also allow certified DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) bracelets or medallions, which serve a similar purpose for those who may not have a POLST form with them when they are out and about.

Copies of your advance directives and POLST also need to be given to your advocate, physician, and ideally, scanned into your electronic medical records for access any time.

A POLST form, and hospice, might well have prevented Susan's unfortunate last moments. In the retirement community where I live now, there is a uniform policy. The POLST form, medical history, and current medications are stored in a plastic folder that hangs inside of the door under the kitchen sink. All such residences should do something similar.

End-of-Life Doula

Amy Renn Jones

Before ever hearing of an end-of-life doula, I was involved with ten deaths both in my personal life and my work doing elder care. When I did hear of it, I felt a strong calling to find out more. I began by reading “Caring for the Dying, the Doula Approach To a Meaningful Death.” Then I received my training through INELDA, which stands for the International End of Life Doula Association.

In the past almost everyone died at home. Families and communities knew how to companion and care for each other through the dying process. Practices, traditions and rituals around death were handed down through the generations. But in the last hundred years or so, death has come more under the domain of the medical field. It is rare to have a personal experience of being near someone who is dying at home. Statistics show about 80% of deaths take place in a hospital or facility such as a nursing home or hospice; the remaining 20% at home, usually with hospice support. Some end-of-life doulas are part of the hospice team, along with nurses, chaplains and social workers. Many are hospice volunteers.

What is a doula? The word comes from the Greek for a woman who serves. It is based on the model of care provided by *birth doulas* who serve women through pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum. An end-of-life or *death doula* serves by supporting the dying person and her or his loved ones through the dying process.

In the early 1990s Henry Fersko-Weiss became a hospice volunteer, and within a few years he returned to graduate school to become Social Worker. As a Social Worker, Henry observed

A message sweeps across the heart of humanity like some sweet breath from God's presence. We can meet death as nature does, in a blaze of glory, marching to the grave with a cheerful step, wearing our brightest thoughts and most brilliant anticipations, as nature arrays herself in garments gold, emerald and scarlet, as if defying death to rob her of immortality.

Helen Keller Light in My Darkness

many gaps in the care of dying people. In 2003 he developed the doula approach and its purpose was to fill in the gaps he observed and enhance the care of dying people and their loved ones. Just as there was a movement in the 70's to return childbirth from being medicalized to a more natural and conscious event, baby-boomers have especially embraced the idea of a more natural and conscious approach to the dying process. This often includes a desire to return sacredness to the dying process, especially for people who see themselves as spiritual but not religious.

It is striking to notice the similarities between birth and death, and taking a Birth Doula Certification gave Fersko-Weiss the basis for developing his course. He was able to easily transfer and apply to the dying process many of the principles and techniques used by birth doulas. Of course some did not transfer. But by spending more time, asking questions and deeply listening to those who were dying, he was able to develop a useful and very helpful approach.

Doulas focus on what is most important to the dying person. Some of the services offered by them may include: helping make a plan for the remaining time a person has; addressing any worries or issues; dealing with any unfinished business or regrets; helping to identify opportunities for increased quality of life within the remaining time; initiating legacy projects such

*We are all visitors to this time, this place
We are just passing through
Our purpose here is to observe, learn, grow, love,
And then we return home.*

Australian Aboriginal Proverb

as memory books; helping to write letters or make videos for loved ones; create guided visualizations and teach their uses in pain, depression and stress management; plan for the atmosphere and involvement of others at the bedside; demonstrate ways of touching and holding the dying person; address issues and wishes of culture and spirituality. Most importantly, perhaps, they help the dying person explore meaning at the end of life, which often comes through a life review. This happens by deep active listening to the person reviewing their life memories and encouraging the organic process of self-discovery as to what has been most important to the person. In other words what have they loved — their work, family, church, traveling, gardening? And through exploring their values what have they learned? Do they want to pass that on in some way as a legacy? Do they have things that they want to say? It may sound strange but there is often healing within the dying process. Doulas keep the door open for deeper emotional expression of thoughts and feelings, helping facilitate open discussion between the dying person and his or her loved ones.

Doulas help prepare a plan for the person's vision of a good death, and they hold space for the plan which has been developed. The plan may include music, readings, singing, touch, children, pets, guided visualization, aromatherapy, etc. My suggestion for anyone reading this is to, at times, think about what you would like the room where you spend your last days to look and feel like? Doulas call that a Vigil Plan.

After the person has died, we may help the family in a ritual washing and dressing of the body and anointing it with essential oils, if it is wanted. In this way we honor the body as the useful and beautiful vessel that held the spirit of their loved one. We help with calls to hospice and for funeral services, staying with the body and escorting it with the funeral personnel. Finally and most importantly, because we have been so closely and intimately involved, we share the loss of the loved one with the person's family and friends. It is a loss for me, too.

For a time afterward, I try to check in and reprocess with the family, helping them to deal with their grief and any other issues they may have. I have found my work more than rewarding; it has been a blessing. Birth and death have been called the bookends of life. Birth is often called a miracle. I see death as a miracle as well. It is the threshold of the spiritual world. The sphere in the room where these events take place can feel precious and holy. It is an honor and privilege to share the journey and be a witness to a person's transition from life to death. Every death I have attended has included some kind of miracle for me personally. Every one.

Amy was in the class of 1974 at ANC and also attended BAC. She worked for BACS for 18 years before doing elder care and doula care. She has 4 married daughters and 8 grandchildren. Amy can be contacted at amyjathome@yahoo.com.

The following is Taos Pueblo Wisdom¹ about dying that Amy loves to share with others:

Today is a very good day to die.
Every living thing is in harmony with me.
Every voice sings a chorus within me.
All beauty has come to rest in my eyes.
All bad thoughts have departed from me.
Today is a very good day to die.
My land is peaceful around me.
My fields have been turned for the last time.
My house is filled with laughter.
My children have all come home.
Yes, today is a very good day to die.



Join the Conversation!

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

Tell us what you think! Contact information is in the beginning of this *Journal*.

1 *Many Winters: Prose and Poetry of the Pueblos* Nancy Wood, Doubleday & Co. ISBN 0-385-02226-3.

Lord In My Eyes

Janet Krettek

The consultation was for abdominal pain in an 87-year-old woman. When I walked into the ICU room I saw a frail-appearing, elderly woman who was dozing. Her hands looked like they had known many years of hard work. However, when I placed my hand on hers she awakened quickly with bright, alert, caring dark eyes. She told me that she had some abdominal pain, but that there was no use investigating it any further as she was going to die soon. The calm in her voice and her comfortable appearance made me question that statement. We continued the interview, reviewing the onset of pain, the quality, the frequency, the aggravating and alleviating factors. Then I performed an exam, leaving the abdomen for last so as keep her level of discomfort to a minimum. Her abdomen was diffusely tender. However, she did not have peritoneal signs. No signs of an intra-abdominal catastrophe which could lead to a precipitous death. I wondered . . . why did she think she was dying? Who told her this? Then she took my hand and pulled me close to her. "I'm dying, Honey. I want you to know that there is nothing you can do to stop it. I don't want you to feel bad or blame yourself. This is not in your hands. It's in His," as she looked upward. It was a statement of fact made without a drop of fear or concern. Her faith was strong and she was confident in her maker. Then she pulled me closer and, peering deeply into my eyes, said, "I can see the Lord through your eyes. He is there for us and will give us each

comfort. You have nothing to fear.” We looked into each other’s eyes for a moment, a full, calm, richly intense moment. Then her family, oh, my! the whole gang of them, entered the room, giving hugs and talking and laughing. You could feel the love. I quietly excused myself and returned to the nurses’ station to write my report.

After a few minutes, a woman came out of the room and asked me if I would join them. Her son was going to lead a prayer and they wanted me to be a part of the prayer circle. After a devout Baptist prayer full of “amens” and “thank you, Jesus” rounds, I again felt the calm and joy. This family was not crying or upset. It was like a party going on in that room. No one asked me about her diagnosis, no one asked me how long she had. But they did say, she was in Jesus’s hands now.

That lovely lady passed into the spiritual world that evening . . . without a diagnosis. By the time I made rounds, the next morning, the room was empty, she and her family had each gone to their homes, hers in the next world.

About 5 years later a preacher came to my office to see me about an ailment. As we were talking about health and how the spirit is integral to our overall health, I related this very spiritual moment to him. I told him how touched I was by that sweet lady and her complete trust in the Lord. He told me he remembered that day . . . as he is her son.

Janet Krettek (Fuller) is a holistic, osteopathic, general surgeon, residency director at Holy Redeemer Hospital, and mother of three wonderful children. She is passionate about her gardens, home, family, and her husband, Dr. David Fuller, whilst working to make the world a little better every day. She is also President of Theta Alpha International, and can be reached at jmkrettekdo@gmail.com.

Eye See

Byron Wayne Lemky

Green is heard,
Out on the lawn,
Quietly being alive.

See the sound of sweetness
Falling when it rains.
Taste the freedom
Of a home-cooked meal
In the house of a friend.

Smell the pleasure
Of the flowers as they call out to the bees.

Feel the quietness of the dream
Opening its eyes as you fall asleep.

Bask in the Sunlight of Heaven, and melt
Until the universe
Becomes a scented, devotional candle.

Goodnight! Godnight to all!
Godlight to all He loves!
All created things
All created beings.
The Sun of Heaven
Warms all beaches!!

Byron attended high school and college in Bryn Athyn from 1982-86. He is currently living near Grande Prairie in Alberta, Canada and drives a truck. He has some synesthesia and describes it this way, "When he sees a vehicle on the highway that is a particular shade of purple, he smells mint, or a certain shade of blue, he smells a fresh, green, rainy breeze. He also sees colors in his mind when he hears certain types of sounds." His email is byronlemky@gmail.com.



Call for Art Submissions!

As you can see from the beautiful cover art and 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! Contact information is in the beginning of this *Journal*.

Welcome to *New Church Groups*

Nathan Gladish

I believe relationship-building is the heart, the spirit, and life of our church: relationships with the Lord, with the Word, and with one another. Another way of describing this is “spiritual community,” and I am confident it is a vital part of a healthy life. Years ago on a retreat to Laurel Camp in western Pennsylvania, I boiled down my personal purpose statement to three words that have stuck with me ever since: “Encourage healthy relationships.” That exercise helped focus my ministry. It also led me to attain a degree in counseling. Now I feel honored to continue that focus in a new part-time role with the General Church Office of Outreach. My mission is to help more people intentionally experience and build spiritual community in group settings based on developing healthy relationships with the Lord, the Word, and each other.

Together with Freya Williams, John Odhner, Pearse Frazier, and others in the Office of Outreach, I am eager to encourage and support the formation and facilitation of groups throughout the church around the world. This new initiative, “New Church Groups,” has its roots in all the wonderful spiritual growth resources and Journey programs that are still available. Its trunk is the system we are developing for promoting, finding, creating, and facilitating groups. And its branches and fruits will be all the leaders and participants who will enjoy and benefit from the spiritual community that will blossom and thrive in the coming months and years.

New Church Groups is similar to the recent “Grand Human Project” but rebranded and streamlined. Instead of focusing

on developing new content, our emphasis is on encouraging, empowering, and supporting leaders throughout the year to create and facilitate groups of various kinds for various interests and needs.

Check out the interactive website www.groups.newchurch.org with two main features:

Find a group – This area helps connect people and leaders of existing groups that meet in person or online (or a hybrid of both) around the world. Groups are listed here with descriptions and easy-to-access links. We are also developing a “search by zip code” feature especially for people looking for nearby in-person groups.

Create a group – This feature of the site connects to our orientation and training pages for leaders of New Church Groups. We encourage people from all walks of life to lead groups: biologists, sales reps, musicians, homemakers, moms, dads, teachers, ministers, etc. The more people who are willing to be leaders, the more groups there will be, and the more people will benefit! We support existing leaders and train new leaders to create and facilitate new groups. We also offer mentoring to help leaders succeed in their goals.

Participating in New Church Groups is rewarding. That’s what we regularly hear from members and leaders. At the end of meetings, they often express their gratitude for the quality time spent together. If being part of a New Church Group blesses your life, please let us know! We would be thrilled to hear your story.

We envision a world with an increasing number of vibrant, enriching groups where people are actively working on their relationships with the Lord, the Word, and each other. Our prayer and hope is for more and more people to experience such groups that are meaningful and that intentionally nurture spiritual community.

We warmly invite you to search out or create a group that suits your interests and needs, and we're here to help!

Nathan was born in Glenview, IL, grew up in Cincinnati and graduated in the class of '73. He and his wife, Elise, recently moved to Bryn Athyn from Tucson, AZ, where they served Sunrise Chapel. Currently Nathan works part-time with the Office of Outreach as a trainer and mentor for small group leaders. He is also the pastor of the New Church of Boston. He and Elise are enjoying living closer to several of their grandchildren as well as other family and friends.

Note: New Church Groups: <https://groups.newchurch.org>



We Invite You to Join a New Church Women's Group!

*Charlotte Gyllenhaal, Nina Dewees,
Charis Dike, and Lori Odhner*

*"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am
there in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20*

The people in the church have been harnessing the power of small groups to promote spiritual growth for decades: Laurel Camp, which just celebrated its 50th anniversary; the Spiritual Growth Groups developed by Frank and Louise Rose, the *Journey* program of General Church Outreach; and the *Begin a New Life* program in Glenview are a few of our small group programs that have had strong followings. The Church is now taking another step forward in empowering members and friends to organize and lead small groups, with the launch of a new website, New Church Groups (<https://groups.newchurch.org>). The new site will facilitate the operation of groups that can meet online, as well as in-person groups.

Small groups are an especially powerful way for women to foster emotional connection and spiritual growth and we would like to see more New Church women become involved in them. The following is what Nina Dewees, the coordinator of the vibrant small groups program of the Bryn Athyn Church, has to say about the power of her personal group experiences:

"My own first experience with small groups goes back to the late 1980s when I joined a spiritual growth group led by Donnette Alfelt

and Ruth Zuber. It was an amazing introduction to this way of sharing the spiritual journey that we all are on, made especially rich by the loving and wise leadership that Donnette and Ruth brought. As leaders they showed humor, humility, honesty, thoughtfulness, understanding, and listening hearts. If you are considering joining or starting a group, I would suggest that some of these qualities, more than any official qualifications or education, are what you need.

“A later experience that cemented my love of, and belief in the value of, small groups was a moms’ group I attended when we first started our family. It was led by two women who were a little further on in motherhood than I was. All I had ever wanted in my life was to be a mother, and... yikes! While I loved our new precious baby, life was SO much harder than I could have ever believed. Finding a supportive circle of other mothers navigating the same waters was a lifesaver for me. As our family grew, and to this day 22 years later, I continue to lead moms’ groups to offer that life-saving community to others (and myself).

This group is a place I can show up and feel welcomed, accepted, and respected. Priceless. There is an energy of kinship present that permeates into all of our individual walks with life.

-Women’s small group member

“Groups can serve in so many life chapters. One example is Bryn Athyn Church’s monthly online group for people caring for their elderly parents. It is a place where women can listen to each other, share our experiences of this challenging time in the life cycle and witness the Lord working through each other in so many ways. Another example is Sig Sonesson’s monthly “Loss and Found” group for people grieving the loss of a loved one. In considering any given group’s focus, we can think of the essential triad of love,

All the life a person has comes from the Lord by way of communities.

-Secrets of Heaven 8794:3

wisdom and use. The focus can be on sharing, learning, or serving, with and about the Lord and our neighbor. Some groups include all three of those aspects.”

Women have long relied on their joint connections as they pass through different stages of life. Bonding over life’s trials can hold us up when it seems too hard to move forward. While in previous times it seemed easier to interact, now with most of us working, much of our communication taking place online, and the disruption of social life due to the COVID pandemic, it seems more important than ever to lean on the kind of support a group can give us.

While groups certainly provide social and emotional nourishment, a real treasure of New Church groups is the spiritual support they can provide. Check-ins, readings, and discussion can help us better comprehend our own journeys and lead to greater compassion for self and others. Groups can complement what we receive in church services as we interact with the ideas we’ve learned — sharing examples from our own lives, asking and discussing questions, exchanging insights and wisdom with other group members. This interacting helps with our understanding; it

I am eternally grateful to our leader and the many other people who have made this program available to our intrepid group comprised of women from various locales. It reminds me of the quote from the Writings: ‘Thought brings presence’ AC 6893. What a gift this group has been and continues to be.

-Women’s online small group member

encourages us to humbly face our doubts and challenges; it lets us see how God is working in each person's life.

With the launch of the New Church Groups website, the church will substantially increase its capacity to support both men and women's group members and leaders. New Church Groups will provide leader training and facilitate easy access to groups through the online platform. You can see the previous article by Nathan Gladish for more details. We see many potential uses for these groups, such as support for women who are single, those caring for aging parents or partners, those feeling battered by life's many losses and insecurities, and those just going through life's usual ups and downs. Our hope is that group members will feel spiritually and emotionally nourished by regular contact with other women gathering in the Lord's light.

We warmly invite you to consider finding or helping to start a group that would serve you and others according to your interests and life experiences. We and others are ready to welcome and support you in this rich endeavor. Check out the new website for specific details on how to get involved!

Charlotte Gyllenhaal (Indiana), Lori Odhner (Bryn Athyn) and Charis Dike (Atlanta) are members of a General Church Board of Directors committee focused on women's concerns. Nina Dewees is the coordinator of the Bryn Athyn Church small groups program.

Note: New Church Groups: <https://groups.newchurch.org>

AN INVITATION TO JOURNEY WITHIN IN 2022

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Deborah's Tree

Roslyn Taylor

Ever since attending a church Outreach event in 2012 that focused on ways to use social media and the internet, I had been ruminating about establishing an online spiritual community called Deborah's Tree. The name was inspired by the Biblical prophet Deborah who sat under a palm tree as she provided spiritual guidance, and spoke Divine messages as she led her people into an extended time of peace and prosperity.

During the initial phase of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, I had time to start bringing my ruminations into reality. By then my vision had crystalized into using Deborah's Tree to provide spiritual resources and educational materials in a variety of media within the Swedenborgian/New Church theological and spiritual movement, focusing primarily on the work of female authors, scholars, clergy and artists. My purpose was to serve the Swedenborgian movement worldwide by bringing balance through lifting up the voices of Swedenborgian women, and to contribute to the wider women's spirituality movement. In keeping with the outreach roots of my vision, I also wanted Deborah's Tree to serve people on a spiritual journey of any kind who are looking for the spiritual perspectives that they might find within the Swedenborgian movement.

To make that vision a reality, I incorporated Deborah's Tree as a non-profit organization, and started building the Deborah's Tree website (www.deborahstree.org) with much-needed technical support from Liz Kufs. Through implementing what I had learned

back in 2012, Deborah's Tree added a social media presence through YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. It has been gratifying, if not amazing, to see the activity on all those sites as we post new material weekly and interact with people in the global Swedenborgian/New Church community.

Deborah's Tree was officially launched in Bryn Athyn, PA on 3 October 2021 at a Brunch held on the grounds of the Lord's New Church, who partners with us to promote the work of Swedenborgian/New Church women. We introduced our Board, heard from some women whose work was on the developing website, and brainstormed in-person events and activities. Many of those suggestions have been incorporated into the activities of our now vibrant ministry. A video of the launching Brunch is on the website, along with many more videos on the "Watch" page.

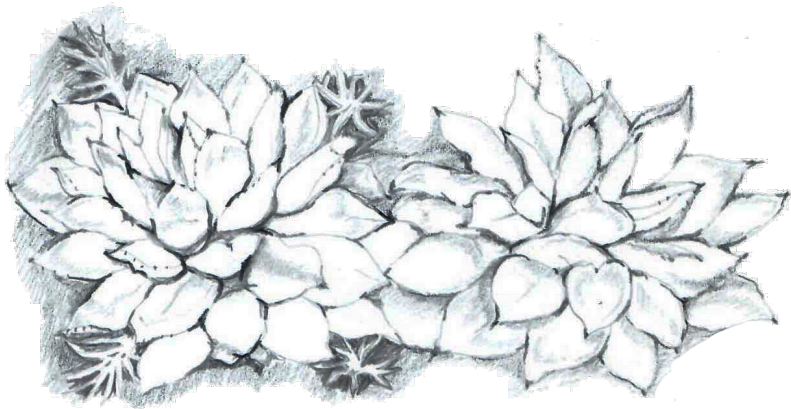
On the website www.deborahstree.org, there is an ever-growing collection of materials and resources from Swedenborgian/New Church women from several organizations around the world. There are videos, podcasts, blogs, books, and articles that are now being preserved and made easily accessible. On both the website and our social media sites, Deborah's Tree now has a weekly "Spiritual Inspiration" program. Linda Simonetti Odhner selects a written *Excerpted Inspiration* that is posted every Tuesday morning, and female ministers take turns posting a *Spiritual Reflection* every Thursday morning.

On the organizational side, the Deborah's Tree community started growing by holding an art exhibit with a silent auction to support Eleanor Schnarr's spiritual research journey. Unfortunately, an upswing in the pandemic at the time temporarily prevented us from holding more in-person events. However, we were able to hold a Zoom event to hear Sarah Walker, a candidate for ordination in the New Church in Australia, speak about "A Logopraxis Journey." Deborah's Tree will be holding a one-day Silent Retreat in early May 2022, to provide a focused day of rest and reflection.

Swedenborgians around the world can participate by clearing their schedules on the same day to observe silence wherever they are. Additionally, the Deborah's Tree community (which includes anyone anywhere who wants to participate) is invited to attend the Zoom and in-person monthly speaker Brunches held by the Home Church in Bryn Athyn. Check the website for dates and times for these and future events, which are open to women and men, and to enjoy videos and audio files from them.

The Deborah's Tree team is excited about what this ministry can bring to our global faith community, and beyond! I want to thank all of those who have helped to make Deborah's Tree a very active reality.

Roslyn grew up in the Hurstville Society in Sydney, Australia. She is a minister in the Swedenborgian Church of North America, and facilitates the Home Church in Bryn Athyn. Roslyn has four adult children, and four grandchildren, and lives in Bryn Athyn, PA. She can be reached at hrtaylor@temple.edu.



The following is a collection poems by Charlotte Austin Klein

Awakening

A dimness near,
just barely sensed;
the first breath brushes soft.
Another turning now begun,
dream ribbons
gently come undone.
Transparent realms do whirl away
and twirling dancers fade,
as through the shifting
veils of dawn,
consciousness returns.

Resurgence

A passion never really dies,
but lies, quiescent, when it must;
then, when it can, phoenix-like,
it stirs its ashes into flame,
and, lifting burning eyes,
spreads its wings and, rising, flies.

Solitude

That which beguiles the soul
can best be found in solitude.

The mind is caught amid the crowd
and feeds on facts and others' thought,
while the heart responds to others' needs
and hopes to keep good company.

The soul alone demands reprieve,
that quiet found in solitude;
for, when alone, the deeper self
begins to see . . . the inner world expands,
and unknown landscapes of ourselves
can sometimes be perceived,
as when, on high, a small bright bird
flies suddenly across an empty sky.

Reflection

Music in a minor key,
the earth's more somber tones,
mists upon an evening sea
most always are preferred by me
no blazing suns and noonday heat,
nor sudden beat of strident sound
from which the meaning soon does fade.

The brightest dream if close pursued
and found, at length, will often jade,
while sky of light we see at dawn
remains forever, softly drawn, a lovely memory.
A picture painted in pale hue,
a blurred outline of a twisted tree
return to mind, as do thin high
wind-borne wails
of far strange melody.

A life thus sensed need not confine,
for calm can sing, and passion's fires
can burn as deep and stay the longer still,
when born of gentle things —
of blues or grays —
love lingers with the years,
and never tells us lies,
when found, at first, in silent quiet eyes.

Sea Child

A young sea child
 she was, when,
 once in time,
 the Earth was fresh
 and all was good;
 each day's newness
 bright with sun,
 while she lived free
 to trace illusion's
 transitory paths.
 The sea lay bare
 its secrets to her then,
 that slender girl
 who ran the beach
 at dawn, who crouched
 beside a rock
 to see the creatures
 in a tidal pool,
 who, in young innocence,
 swam naked in the sea
 and raced the foaming
 waves to shore,
 and who, when evening's mists
 had blown away,
 Lay still, alone,
 On cool black sand,
 To drift among

A thousand starts;
 And gentle was the wind.
 The days were hers, and,
 Carelessly, she spent
 The vagrant hours in
 Childhood's hidden ways.
 Alone she saw, she lived inside herself,
 Complete, and did
 Not share that
 Luminescent self.
 She lay, long suspended
 Hours, content,
 On seawall warmth,
 Until the tide, with
 Persistent stealth,
 Crept close enough
 To hiss and wake
 Her from her rest.
 She walked beside
 The sea, and stooped
 To gather smooth and
 Flawless tiny shells.
 Now they line
 The window ledge
 In winter's quiet room,
 So far from that
 Wide sky and sea
 And summer sand,
 Each shell a perfect day;
 And gentle were those years.

Charlotte was the daughter of Bertrand Ash Austin and Virginia Synnestvedt, and graduated in the class of 1952. She married her high school sweetheart, Gerald A. Klein, and shortly thereafter moved to Massachusetts. She is survived by her two children, Stephen R. Klein and Nancy J. Klein.

The following is taken from a series of vignettes that tell of people who have been in the spiritual world for quite a while. Companion pieces to this appeared in the November 2018 issue of the Journal under the title "Meditations on Heavenly Communities." This story of "Francis" is excerpted from a somewhat longer piece.

On earth Francis was an anthropologist and worked in the islands off British Columbia, searching through caves along the coastal Pacific and convinced he would find evidence of early life. During the rare times when he let himself relax, he enjoyed gazing for hours at the magnificent stars over the edge of the Pacific Ocean and often wished he had more time for it. He took his own life during the year of his twenty-sixth birthday.

Francis

Helen Kennedy

Francis loves to study the stars, each one inspiring in him a feeling. He lives to be out on a starry night, listening. Their waves and particles are glimmers on the edge of Francis' abilities to comprehend. Each one radiates a different feeling of love for what is good. Infinity draws Francis to his gentle studying, each inspired feeling radiating a soft glow of color.

Infinite stars are the endless reflections of God, each one appealing for its likeness of the Human glorified with the Divine. For God is light, constantly enlightening the world in Francis' mind. He is not bored by living to eternity because of this learning. In fact, at times he is so overwhelmed with joy and happiness, that he feels he may burst and become a star himself.

It was hard for Francis to be regenerated away from believing all the good and true things he did were from himself. But now he has learned their true origin, and he is blessed to be continually

learning by seeing examples of the Creator's abilities.

But these things cannot be described immediately by Francis to his fellows because, as he tries to speak, no words come out. When he returns from his night-sky-watching, he is aglow with the wonder his spirit is experiencing, yellows blending with pinks, or blues with lavenders and greens. Only later in the day do his glimmerings of feeling turn into thoughts. Others in his community wait for the return of Francis' ability to speak with them, and gather in the late morning for his voice to return. They long also to become aware of more of the unseen ways the Divine is loving them.

For instance, one time Francis returned home his skin glowing a daffodil yellow. As dawn approached that morning he became aware of a hurt he had done on earth to his brother by stubbornly insisting Matt not marry his fiancée. This because of an offense Becky had committed in the past. Francis listened only to the voices of gossiping friends on social media but failed to see that Becky had repented and moved on from the issue. Now, re-experiencing the arguments and the accusations, his stubbornness about his sister-in-law felt like a rock, and that he had only the consciousness of a rock. He lacked humanity in his attitude toward her. Suddenly he felt immersed in the earth's mantle, hard fast in his imagined protection of his brother. Unable to move to the right, or up, or in any direction frightened Francis. But staying still allowed the Lord to open a way for him to see that Becky had worked hard to stop using cocaine and even harder to stay off it. This all occurred before his brother had met her. Freed from his rock consciousness about the matter, Francis' perception opened to the evolution of the natural earth as mirroring the evolution of the human mind. The Creator was not satisfied with an amoeba consciousness, a rock consciousness, a flower consciousness or even a cow consciousness. The tender

hand of the Lord continued on creating until there was Adam, a human who could consciously be aware of Him.

Francis' stream of perceptions continued and he perceived when the molten rock from many, many volcanos was creating granite, the foundation of continents. He thought of the granite becoming solid, and then of his intransigence, and could hear hellish voices in his head urging him on to arrogance, just like they had when he was on earth. They had been the underpinnings driving him on while "discussing" religion and morals with his Christian relatives at birthday gatherings and Thanksgiving dinners. He realized in this moment that he adamantly had not believed in God — not just 'a god,' but 'God.' This was hard for him because God was all he lived for now. His eyes filled and for a long time Francis wept.

The opposite

Opposite Francis' spiritual society is a hell that enters deep within the human mind. It is subtle, carefully avoiding the light that comes from thinking and enters only into affections. Its tiny irritations distort the ego with things so trifling that at first they can be ignored. They grow into annoyances, though, and the person starts to view the people around him as their source. He becomes irritated with a person's annoying ways. Now he is doing what the hell wants. It rewards him by flowing in with anger and restlessness, so that he is unable to be still, and also grants him an impulsiveness that is impossible to control.

An example is the impulse of conceit that came to Francis one time during his work on earth as an anthropologist. It was the trickle of a feeling whispering that his intuition about which caves to search through was better than the one his fellow workers picked out. Escalating quickly, the impulsiveness fed on memories of people in the past opposing him. Then power came

when he started thinking that God was leading him to certain caves. Uncontrollably delighted, he believed he was seeing things the way God does. He became giddy and left his team. During his time alone he saw promise for exploring a cave up high that could only be reached by rock climbers setting up ropes. He told the two other members of the team about it, but they insisted there was promise in the cave they already were working in. Francis argued his reasons persuasively, he thought, but the other two couldn't see any reason for halting what they were doing and waiting until a rock climber came in by seaplane to set up the ropes. Furious, Francis suddenly kicked a bucket with a fibula in it, splintering the bone as the bucket hit a rock. All hell broke loose as the two others reacted to his sudden aggrandizing and destruction. They were tired of his unpredictability and wanted him off the team.

In his meditation now, Francis' focused on the unknown that had made him kick the bucket and splinter the bone, and the passion that caused it. For a long period nothing entered his mind. Then rising from deep within came the burning need for his thinking to be followed immediately — by others. No one should escape doing his will. His ego ballooned upward, high and mighty until he felt bigger and more important than even the sun. Thoughts flooded his mind about the important part he played in God's will being done. No, not God's, but his own will needed to be done. There, the truth was seen. Francis giggled in delight with himself — until he felt a tremor in his heart. His face grew long and his delight faded as a thought trickled into his mind. He stopped breathing. A long minute later, his chest started moving, then heaving — in laughter. How could he possibly believe that? How could he compare his will to God's? All his meditations had taught him that God's thoughts were unattainable to humans. Francis started for home chuckling, and glowing an azure blue that had silver, coral, bumblebee yellow, crimson and shamrock

sparkles electrifying within it.

The heavenly society Francis and his friends are being prepared for corresponds to parts of the human brain which aid in interpreting visual information. The need of the people in Francis' society for understanding is vital for the continued deepening of their wisdom. His house is spacious, the size of the glass-enclosed living room changing to accommodate the number of people who gather each Saturday to hear Francis' new experiences and share with the others the colors they experienced during the week. During the discussions that follow, each person sees how some of other people's colors may or may not be compatible with the ones in their lives. Some, though, remain quiet. For most the colors are absorbing and beautiful, but for some a color can be so off-putting and disorienting that its meaning for their particular life can't be easily assimilated, even after a lengthy meditation and possible explanations from friends.

The haughtiness of Francis' pride which had plagued him and left him lonely while on earth was being changed through his experiences and the Saturday meetings into a love of sharing his findings and insights with others.

He works in his garden

Behind Francis' house was an extensive garden, and during the next day Francis sat in silence in it for a while, then decided to transplant some peonies that reminded him of his mother. He put them on both sides of the two steps leading down from the back door of the house. While doing so he felt a bit dismayed, remembering transplanted peonies took a few years before they would bloom again. Next, he walked toward the back of the garden towards the right and dug up gladioli corms that, when they bloomed, fell forwards into a run of water dribbling over low stones. As he was digging he wondered, "Gladioli like well-

drained soil, so why would one put them by the water to start with?" He worked at resisting the instant urge to think how dumb it was to do that, and instead thought the only times those flowers stand upright while blooming is when the sun is strong on them. He looked up, seeing the thinning clouds over the sun and agreed that most days the sun is weak. He finished digging up the corms to replant next spring, then went to work on five straggly rose bushes near them that struggled, too. They had to come out from under the trees, and besides, why would they even be there? Roses needed all the sunshine they could get, and Francis fretted that, since it was three in the afternoon and the sun still was behind thin clouds, most days this yard would not get enough sun for them.

While working at moving the rose bushes to the open nearer to the steps but beyond the peonies, Francis had a vague memory that told him he put the rose bushes in himself. He stopped his work for a moment to consider the memory. Looking around, it seemed so many things were misplaced. As the work went on, Francis picked up steam, getting to a trio of lavender azaleas he had wanted to move closer to one another to augment their scent. When out of the ground, he further decided to move them nearer to a white stone bench so when they bloomed he could sit there and enjoy their light perfumy scent. A little ways to the left was a marble statue of a horse rearing, and he moved other azalea: vermilion, magenta, and cherry drop, to surround the statue and to concentrate their blaze of color.

Next, his attention led him back to the run of water. Once it left the low stones from where he dug up the gladioli corms, it meandered toward the back of the garden and could barely be seen. Without thought, he went to it and started digging to redirect the flow away from the wall toward an open area more towards the center of the garden. But it wound up pooling behind

the statue, so he redirected it to the left a bit of a ways. Then he dug a pond so the water would be doing something. For the outflow he made a little trench so that the water meandered through the back left of the garden. When finishing he stood and looked, realizing the water was cleaner now, not murky, like it had been a few days before. He remembered watercress from the pond in his mother's garden when he was young and could see how the green leaves of that water-loving plant would enjoy growing in this clean water, too. So he made the pond a little longer. Then he wondered if fish could live in a pond that had watercress, or if watercress could live in a pond with fish? His memory about it was vague, so he mentally noted to find someone in town who loved gardening and ask him, or her. And to go to the library to look up plans for building a footbridge across the water because he might make the run a little deeper.

Before long Francis was wondering what flowers would go good around the pond, or maybe behind it where he had piled the dirt? He could fashion a smallish hill there, and put in wildflowers that would blossom before the elm tree near to its leaves. He could put some iris in, too, he thought, because he loved their vibrant colors. While all this was going on, Francis had the distinct sense that things in his mind were being rearranged, too. He had often watched his mother while she was gardening when he was a kid, because he was grounded so much, but she never let him help her. He could still hear her soft but stern voice, "You'll wreck the flowers!" Instead of continuing along that sad line, memories of various ways she cared for her garden were coming back. Francis thought he must have absorbed more than he realized. Or, she was with him now, somehow, helping him. He had been thinking of her strongly, and usually thought brings presence in this world, but maybe she had hesitations about him still. He hadn't seen her except for a brief time when

he first came into this world because of the nature of his death. But the sun was shining brightly now, so he knew his work was good, and if she would like to visit, he'd rather the garden was in full bloom. He wasn't even sure if all the things he'd done were right, a feeling he always had when with her. But this young man had to start trusting that his instincts could be coming from the Lord and be taking him to good things, and he may as well start now. All in all he hoped he hadn't made any serious mistakes in rearranging the garden.

Helen joined the New Church in the late 1970s. She has written many stories, essays and poems over the years, and is also editor of the Theta Alpha Journal. She can be reached at HmKennedy98@gmail.com.



Minutes from the Charter Day Luncheon

Oct. 8, 2021

Janet Krettek, President

Janet welcomed members into the room, invited them to get their lunches, and led a blessing.

The ANC dance team delighted the room with a performance.

Janet reviewed the difficulties presented with the continuing pandemic; however, everyone was pleased to be meeting in person this year. Janet was pleased in particular that the new members of the TAI Board are young women in their 20s: Rosemary Fuller, Vice President; Sarah Jackson, Secretary; Rebecca Synnestvedt, Membership Secretary. With new and younger members, fresh ideas are coming forth, including ways in which TAI can become even more international by reaching out in more areas. Les Alden reviewed the finances and informed us that our books are in good order, thanks Melodie Greer! Janet reminded us of the scholarships we are sponsoring, including the newest ones for the graduate programs at Bryn Athyn College, all the scholarships totaling \$18,200. She thanked Helen Kennedy for the marvelous job she is doing with the Journal. The Journal is an expense that is not covered because so few pay dues at this time. The Executive Committee is examining the issue to see if it necessitates having publication of one issue online and one in print.

There was a presentation by Rachel Glenn on General Church Education updates and projects.

Treasurer's Report:

- Dues are down this year and expenses remain, particularly for the Journal, which comes out of operating expenses. To be clear, though, the scholarships come out of a different fund than the Journal.
- The Treasurer's report and budget were accepted by a voice vote.
- A copy of the Treasurer's report is included on the following pages of the Journal.

The 2019 Minutes were accepted by a voice vote. 2020 had no annual meeting due to the pandemic and not meeting in person. A video was sent out to update the membership.

Nina Cooper Dewees gave the Memorial Resolution.

The President's Award was given to Carol Bongers Buss for her 40 years of service to Theta Alpha International on the Executive Committee, having served in almost every position.

Our keynote speaker was Shannon Good, and the title of her talk was "Not What I Expected." In it she talked about, as a young woman, she expected her life to go a certain way, but in reality it was full of twists and turns that she hadn't anticipated. It was very engaging to hear about how she navigated unwanted dilemmas.

Following the presentation, Janet closed the meeting, saying good-bye to all the women gathered, and encouraged future participation in Theta Alpha International.

TAI Treasurer's Annual Report Charter Day 2021			21-22 Proposed Budget
	20-21 Budget	20-21 Actual	
Income			
43400 Direct Public Support			
43470 General Fund			
Contribution	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 2,987.50	\$ 7,000.00
Total 43400 Direct Public Support	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 2,987.50	\$ 7,000.00
45000 Investments			
45040 Bank Interest - Money Market	\$ 6.00	\$ 3.59	\$ 6.00
Total 45000 Investments	\$ 6.00	\$ 3.59	
46400 Other Types of Income			
46420I - Scholarship - TAI		\$ 2,000.00	
46430 Miscellaneous Revenue			
Total 46400 Other Types of Income	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	
47200 Program Income			
47230 Membership Dues	\$ 2,200.00	\$ 1,428.17	\$ 2,200.00
47250 Journal Contribution		\$ 334.00	
Total 47200 Program Income	\$ 2,200.00	\$ 1,762.17	\$ 2,200.00
49000 Special Events Income			
49010 Fundraising			
49030 Luncheon ticket sales	\$ 1,300.00		\$ 1,300.00
Total 49000 Special Events Income			
Total Income	\$ 10,506.00	\$ 6,753.26	\$ 10,500.00
Expenses			
60300 Awards and Grants			
60310 Scholarship - TAI	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	
60320 Cash Awards and Grants	\$ 700.00	\$ 300.00	\$ 700.00
60330 Noncash Awards and Grants	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 977.32	\$ 1,500.00
Total 60300 Awards and Grants	\$ 2,200.00	\$ 3,277.32	\$ 2,200.00
65000 Operations			
65010 Books, Subscriptions, Reference			
65020 Postage, Mailing Service	\$ 100.00	\$ 106.00	\$ 100.00

	20-21 Budget		20-21 Actual		21-22 Proposed Budget	
65030 Printing and Copying	\$	50.00			\$	50.00
65040 Supplies	\$	300.00				
65060 PayPal Fees	\$	30.00	\$	14.19	\$	30.00
Total 65000 Operations	\$	480.00	\$	120.19	\$	180.00
65100 Other Types of expenses						
65090 Journal Expense	\$	9,500.00	\$	9,854.87	\$	9,800.00
65120 Luncheon Expense	\$	1,300.00			\$	1,300.00
65125 Fund Raising Expenses			\$	1,616.00		
65130 Baptism Project	\$	300.00			\$	300.00
Total 65100 Other Types of expenses	\$	11,100.00	\$	11,470.87	\$	11,400.00
Total Expenses	\$	13,780.00	\$	14,868.38	\$	13,780.00
Net Income	\$	(3,274.00)	\$	(8,115.12)	\$	(3,280.00)
						4%
ANC Fund Ending Net Assets			\$	327,523.99	\$	13,100.00
ANC Fund Scholarships	\$	12,000.00	\$	11,000.00	\$	7,000.00
ANCSS 1 (Katherine Stein 20-21; Deirdre Bongers 21-22)	\$	2,500.00	\$	2,500.00	\$	2,500.00
ANCSS 2 (Natasha Carvalho 20-21; Angeliese Wahl 21-22)	\$	2,500.00	\$	2,500.00	\$	2,500.00
BAC General 1 (Jordan Brunne 20-21; 21-22)	\$	2,000.00	\$	2,000.00	\$	2,000.00
BAC General 2 (Denali Heinrichs)	\$	2,000.00	\$	2,000.00		
BAC General 3	\$	1,000.00				
BAC Graduate 1 (Sarah Odhner)	\$	2,000.00	\$	2,000.00		
						4%
TAI Fund Ending Net Assets			\$	225,942.55	\$	9,038.00
TAI Fund Scholarships	\$	6,200.00	\$	6,200.00	\$	2,100.00
BAC Education New (Jade Deibert)	\$	2,100.00	\$	2,100.00		
BAC Education Continuing (Carolyn Erb 20-21; Jade Deibert 21-22)	\$	2,100.00	\$	2,100.00	\$	2,100.00
BAC Graduate 2 (Jessica Baker)	\$	2,000.00	\$	2,000.00		
Current Checking Account Balance			\$	3,167.85		

Theta Alpha International Board

April 2022

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Websites and Blogs of Readers

*If you'd like your blog or website included here,
please send the information to the editor.*

Jenn Beiswenger – artist, wordsmith, carer: *beiswenger.net/renjenn*

Eva Björkström – her lovely gardens can be seen on YouTube by searching her name

Karla Buick – directory of artists who create specifically New Church-themed art: *silverbrancharts.com*

Jim deMaine – a doctor's thoughts and stories from his 32 years of practice: *endoflifeblog.com*

Diana Hasen – author children's books *stevieandharley.com*

Chandra Hoffman – writer: *chandrahoffman.com*

Helen Kennedy – writer: *hmk98.blogspot.com*

Kelly Lucero – Children's book author and storyteller:
KellyLucero.com

Lara Muth – writer: *twitter.com/lyramariner*

Abbey Nash – writer: *abbeynash.com*

Tiffany Perry – poet: *naturepoetrysite.wordpress.com*

Hilda Rogers – artist: *dailypaintworks.com/Artists/hilda-rogers-8286, hilda5462.wordpress.com*

Kerstin Sandstrom – artist: *kerstinsandstrom.wordpress.com*

Wystan Simons – blogger: *https://embracingchaos.net & suburbangrowing.com*

Roslyn Taylor – Deborah's Tree website *www.deborahstree.org*

Small groups – New Church Groups: *https://groups.newchurch.org*





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