

LIVING COURAGEOUSLY

new
church

connection

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Look inside
the new Journey
Workbook

p.14



27 ideas to help you
take a *courageous* step on your
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Breaking Bad Habits

Trying a new tactic may help p.20

**“I became inspired
about faith again.”**

*A mother's journey: seeking a school
and finding new spirituality* p.6



New Church Connection makes the connection between religion and life. Every issue features relevant, inspiring content that highlights the personal nature of spirituality, providing applicable ideas to support your journey with insights from the New Church (Swedenborgian) faith.

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cover photo by:
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WELCOME

Live with
compassion, integrity,
strength, humility and trust
that God has a plan and He
is working to unfold it
through you.

If only caterpillars could talk. I've heard it postulated (for who could know for sure) that the caterpillar really freaked out during the cocoon stage thinking, "This must be the end!", when in fact he was becoming a butterfly. Does this happen in my life? More often than I'd like to admit.

Turns out God has bigger plans for my life (and the caterpillar's). That is why I believe He calls each one of us to Live Courageously. Don't misunderstand me—I don't mean 'Live Recklessly.' I mean live with compassion, integrity, strength, humility and trust that God has a plan and He is working to unfold it through you.

In this issue we explore this theme as it pertains to our spiritual life. On p. 4 Rev. Sylvain Agnes addresses several issues, including the fact that living courageously is sometimes a lonely path. Deb Alrutz shares about her experience about leaving her comfort zone by trying out a new school for her daughter and a new church for her family, and feeling grateful for that decision (p.6-9). It would be nice if living courageously was something I could check off my to-do list, however the mixed blessing is that we must choose each day to live courageously and follow the Lord. Rev. Martie Johnson explores the dynamic nature of our spiritual journeys (p.10). The inspiration for this issue is a new program of the same title, which provides a path to energize your spirituality and help build community and accountability along the way. Check out a preview of the Living Courageously New Church Journey program on pps. 14-19. Be bold. Look within. Take the step. Make the call. Accept the unknown. And find support along the way.

Bronwen Henry

Bronwen Henry
General Church Outreach



After every spiritual temptation there is consolation, and as it were newness of life.

—SECRETS OF HEAVEN 8567

What's next?
Look for these upcoming issues:

Letting Go: Dealing with Fear and Worry

Finding Balance: Handling Stress

Grieving: Accepting Loss

Recovery: Overcoming Addiction



SEEKING ANSWERS

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How do I grow closer to the Lord? Is spiritual growth relevant to current events? How do I keep on the path I have chosen? **Rev. Sylvain Agnes** responds to these questions and more.

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In the search for a new school for her daughter, **Deb Alrutz** finds more: a new spirituality. She shares her journey and the impact it has had on her and her family.

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27 ideas to help you take a courageous step on your spiritual path

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Unlock a Bible story with everyday lessons by **Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Sr.** and discover inner peace in an activity by **Star Silverman** (p.18)

BREAKING BAD HABITS

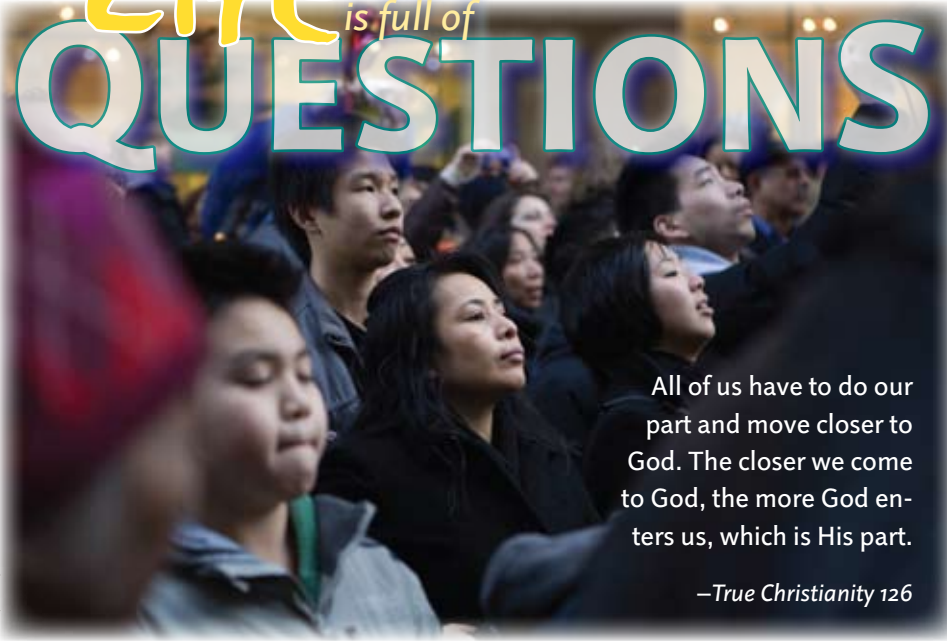
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If you are feeling stuck in an unhealthy rut, **Rev. Derrick Lumsden** shares how a new tactic (or two) may help.

REV. SYLVAIN AGNES EXPLORES CORE QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO GROW SPIRITUALLY AND HOW THIS FITS IN WITH OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS.

Life is full of QUESTIONS

photo by RACHEL GARDAM



All of us have to do our part and move closer to God. The closer we come to God, the more God enters us, which is His part.

—True Christianity 126

FINDING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND CURRENT EVENTS

Q HOW DO I GROW CLOSER TO THE LORD?

a Growing closer to the Lord doesn't happen spontaneously. It takes time, commitment and love. Here are three steps that can help you continually grow closer to the Lord: first, acknowledge and love Jesus Christ as your God and personal Savior; then, examine yourself to shun all evils as sins before the Lord; finally,

pray to the Lord to give you a new understanding and a new will to help you love and obey His Word. As you grow closer to the Lord, you gradually become a receptacle of His love and wisdom in order to become a spiritual person. As a spiritual person you may enjoy "all blessings, felicities, delights, gratifications and pleasures, which could ever have been conferred on humankind by the Lord the Creator" (*Married Love* 68).

Q HOW IS SPIRITUAL GROWTH RELEVANT TO CURRENT EVENTS? IF I WORK ON MYSELF, DOES IT IMPACT WARS, POVERTY AND CRISES AROUND THE WORLD?

a We live in the midst of all kinds of sufferings, diseases, wars, poverty and deadly crises. These calamities reveal the spiritual state of the world. People separate themselves more and more from all connection with heaven and so from the Lord. The Lord provides His Word which contains "the leaves for the healing of the nations." If you dedicate yourself to loving and obeying the Lord's Word, you will be healed spiritually and also positively influence people around you.

Q MANY OF MY FRIENDS ARE APATHETIC TOWARD SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION. HOW CAN I MAKE MY WAY ALONE?

a We are all created to become receptacles of the Lord's influx as well as responders to His influx. And we are all so different. The Lord leads all people: good and evil. He is leading each person according to his spiritual state. The Lord does not interfere with our choices. If you have made the choice to respond to the Lord's love and wisdom and strive to keep His Word and yet your friends have not,

then pray that the Lord might help you to stay focused and keep your commitment.

Q I RECENTLY MADE A PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO WALK A SPIRITUAL PATH, AND RIGHT AWAY TEMPTATION AND DIFFICULTY STRUCK. DOES THIS MEAN I AM NOT APPROACHING MY SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE RIGHT WAY? HOW DO I KEEP ON THE PATH?

a If temptations occur after you have made a decision to walk a spiritual path, do not be disappointed. Continue your spiritual journey with the Lord. You are on the right track. In that journey, trust the Lord who helps you shun evils and falsities in order to make possible the conjunction of good and truth in you. Know that "all the conjunction of good with truth is effected through temptations" (*Secrets of Heaven* 4341).

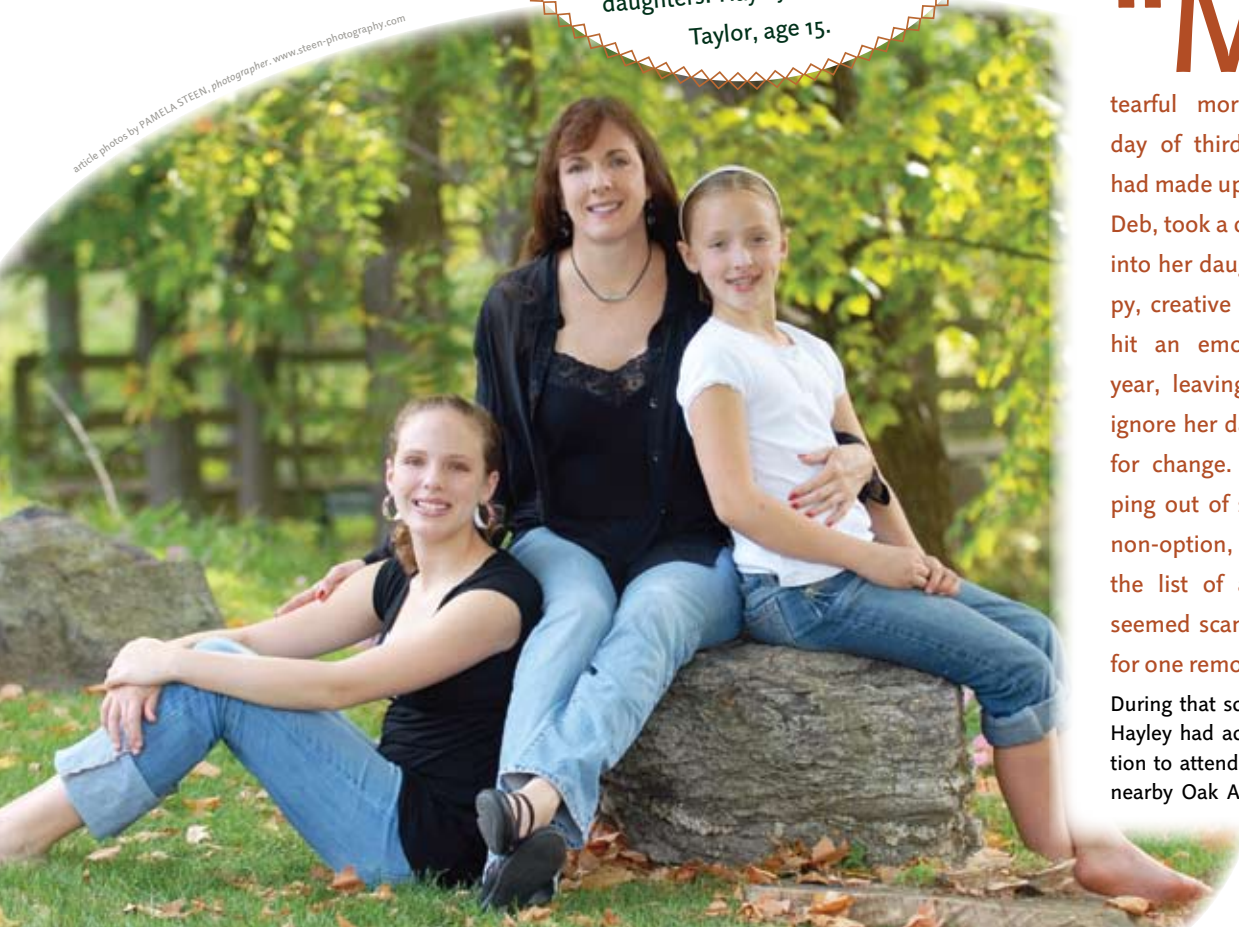
Questions Wanted
SHARE YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT SPIRITUALITY AND LIFE.
Email questions@newchurch.org and mention "New Church Connection".



Rev. Sylvain Agnes serves as pastor of Bobby New Church in Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire) and as Principal of The New Jerusalem Theological Institute in Abidjan. He can be reached at sylvain_agnes5@hotmail.com

Deb Alrutz never realized that her daughter's difficult year in public school would lead her to find the New Church, reawakening her spirituality, and enlivening her approach to faith. Deb moved to Michigan for her current full-time job as an engineer for General Motors. Though also an active Girl Scout leader and part-time ballet teacher, Deb's most fulfilling role involves raising her two daughters: Hayley, age 12 and Taylor, age 15.

article photos by PAMELA STEEN, photographer, www.steen-photography.com



“**M**om, I'm not going back ever again.” After a year of tearful mornings, dreading each day of third grade, Hayley Alrutz had made up her mind. Her mother, Deb, took a deep breath and looked into her daughter's eyes. This happy, creative little girl had suddenly hit an emotional downturn that year, leaving Deb unable to ignore her daughter's plea for change. With dropping out of school as a non-option, however, the list of alternatives seemed scant. . . except for one remote possibility.

During that school year, Deb and Hayley had accepted a friend's invitation to attend a student-run play at the nearby Oak Arbor New Church School.

The flair of the young actors worked magic on Hayley's imagination, renewing her desire to express her own creativity. The positive energy that seemed to run through this school contrasted sharply with the bitter feelings surrounding Hayley's recent public school experience. After watching another play, and then another, Hayley had a gut feeling: she belonged at this school.

Deb never imagined she would find herself in this position. Her older daughter, Taylor, happily attended the public school. On top of that, this new school affiliated itself with a religion Deb knew nothing about. So that summer, to learn more, Deb began taking her two daughters to the New Church services.

As she entered the Oak Arbor sanctuary for the first time, Deb was struck by its physical beauty and majesty. “It was just the most wonderful experience,” she later mused. The wedge-shaped room took its light from the soaring windows, showing off a gorgeous backdrop of trees, wildlife and sunshine. The enormous, striated boulder that held up the Word, she later learned, had come from the very earth this place of worship had been built upon. The service, with its Christian foundation, felt very comfortable, as did the warm welcome and

To learn more, Deb began taking her two daughters to the New Church services.

personal introductions that she and her daughters received afterwards.

During this time, Deb still felt connected to her Methodist church. She loved the people there, and wanted to acknowledge her older daughter's hesitation to "abandon" such a familiar place. After a summer of busy Sunday mornings, however, rushing with her daughters from the Methodist church service to the Oak Arbor service, Deb began to gain a clear sense of the differences.

At first, she noticed the New Church's surprisingly lively vibe. While the comparatively small Methodist congregation had a majority of elderly members, this larger New Church congregation had an active youth group, and bustled with young families. Even the church services themselves seemed dynamic and vibrant, often using live enactments to portray the Biblical stories. Deb and Hayley quickly felt at home in this new environment, though the adjustment came more slowly for Taylor.

As Deb's comfort and sense of community with the New Church grew, she found herself "becoming inspired about faith again." Although she'd always considered herself a spiritual person, she found that the New Church teachings offered

As she entered the Oak Arbor sanctuary for the first time, Deb was struck by its physical beauty and majesty.



Photo by PAMELA STEEN

"incredible motivation to live a good life here." In coming to the New Church, she later reflected, "I felt like I could grow." By the end of the summer, Deb and Hayley had decided they would find a way to enroll Hayley in the Oak Arbor New Church School.

Today, three years after making this decision, the mornings in the Alrutz household buzz with a much more pleasant atmosphere. For the most part, Hayley heads off to school without resistance, without stress, and without tears. "She's turned into a happy little kid—she's really blossomed." Deb attributes much of Hayley's success to the incredible learning opportunities offered at Oak Arbor. For example, when Hayley's class studied the colonial time period, she came home with her rented spinning wheel and spun yarn for hours. Religion has also come to life for Hayley; she comes home not only able to recite Bible verses, but also able



Photo by PAMELA STEEN

As Deb's comfort and sense of community with the New Church grew, she found herself "becoming inspired about faith again."

to teach her mother what they mean.

Most importantly, Deb feels that Hayley's New Church experience has nurtured her innocence, allowing her to develop at her own rate. While many of the 6th graders in the public school now seem concerned with makeup, clothing and accelerating their "maturity," Deb notices a continuation of her younger daughter's playfulness, joy and imagination. To Deb, Hayley seems to have "come into herself" in a way that hadn't been happening.

With her daughters becoming more involved in the life of the church, Deb continues to grow in her understanding of and appreciation for the New Church teachings. As a math and engineering professional, Deb believes that religion "can't just feel good and be warm and fuzzy"; this religion, she believes, has an "intuitive soundness" to it.

While some of the teachings are very familiar to her, such as the teaching about the importance of charity, others are quite new. The way the Writings open up the symbolism of the Bible, for instance, fascinates her. They seem to "illuminate" the Bible, giving helpful guidance for everyday life. The teachings about life after death, in particular, appeal strongly to

Deb. "Before, I had no mental image of what heaven would be like. I never knew if we'd be ethereal forms, or whether angels were just winged, chubby cherubs, flying around a white-bearded old man." Now, the teachings about life in heaven have given her reassurance. When speaking of her father who has passed away, she said, "I love to know that I'll know him again and be with him." Even her attitude toward marriage love has changed in a positive way. Deb explained, "I find myself approaching my relationship with the thought that this is eternal."

Although Deb never imagined stepping into this world of the New Church, she is grateful that Divine Providence has led her here. With two happy daughters, and a renewed faith and desire to live well, Deb Alrutz may just be saying of her old life, as her daughter said a few years ago, "I'm not going back ever again." ●

WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

How has your life been impacted by living New Christian spirituality? Is there a spiritual practice or message that has transformed your relationships, work, or sense of peace and happiness? Share your story. Email newchurchconnection@newchurch.org.

Some religions promote the idea that salvation occurs instantaneously.

You will find a new perspective in New Church teachings.

Rev. Martie Johnson explores salvation as a dynamic process.

Whenever I am asked, "Are you saved?", the question seems overbearing. It's often repeated, louder and more slowly when I respond confusedly. Once, at U.S. Army Chaplain School, I was looking for a chair for class and asked a fellow chaplain, "Is this seat saved?" "No," he replied, "are you?" With colleagues from a myriad of Christian denominations, relating my New Church perspective on salvation continues to be quite an experience!

Salvation is dynamic, not static. It is in constant motion that helps us continually receive the fullness of the Lord's love, and it is never fully achieved in this life. In this movement, we have been saved, are being saved, and will yet be saved because "... when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared not by works of righteousness

which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration. . ." (Titus 3:4-5).

Our redemption, achieved on the cross and communicated to the world by the Lord's resurrection, gave us the new spiritual freedom that is at the foundation of New Church faith. It is how (after baptism) we must continue to "work out [our] salvation" (Philippians 2:12) by loving and following the Lord daily.

When two people are pronounced man and wife, they are married at that moment. But they will also "work out" their marriage relationship to eternity. In Christian life, as in marriage, two wills are involved: God's will and our own. Yielding to God's will is not

done once and forgotten. Each time we work out our salvation, we are reforming ourselves into the image and likeness of God, moving from repentance to acknowledging the Lord's redemption and "becoming" saved.

In the New Church, we emphasize the more positive aspect of salvation. In place of "God sent God as a perfect sacrifice to God," we believe redemption is not only a justification or defeat of corrupt "hereditary evil" but also a renewal of God's image in humanity, recreating us as loving children of a loving God. In this way, we are "saved" by God's grace "through faith" (Ephesians 2:8).

Salvation by grace is not salvation by faith alone but by faith expressing itself through love. "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but has no works? Can his faith save him? Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:14-17).

However, we can never buy God's love, or put Him in our debt. Consider: "So, when you have done all things that are commanded you, say 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (Luke 17:10). The New Church finds the balance by uniting faith and works. Good works do not produce salvation; salvation produces good works. We are saved for good works—not because of them—and in this way we take the Word from God and become the Word to our neighbor.

In one way, the chaplain's question, "are you saved?" could be answered, "Yes, I am, on Friday afternoon at 3:00 in the spring of 33 A.D. on a hill outside of Jerusalem." But God did not force salvation on us. Because He acted from love, salvation is freedom from selfishness, worldliness, love of dominion, and especially from fearing death. Salvation is a process in which we are growing daily, moving, with God's help, to heaven where we commune with Him and each other forever.

Good works do not produce salvation; salvation produces good works.



Rev. Martie Johnson is a US Navy Chaplain aboard the Nuclear Aircraft Carrier, USS John C. Stennis (CVN-74). He is a priest of the General Church of the New Jerusalem. http://stennis.navy.mil/welcome_message.html

photo by ROSE WOODRIFORDEN

1 Decide to listen extra carefully to the next person who speaks to you.

2 Wake up ten minutes early and use the time to get centered for the day.

3 With a hand on your chest, feel your heart beat, and remember the value of your life.

4 Think of something you've been resentful about and choose to let go of your negative emotions.

5 Take a little time before going to sleep to write down 5 good things that happened today.

6 Close your eyes, send a prayer to God, and then be still and listen.

7 Think of something you've been procrastinating about, and make a plan of action.

9 Find out if your church has a group that you'd like to join.

10 Let only true, kind and useful words come from your mouth today.

11 Start going to church again, if it's been awhile.

12 Make your own Statement of Faith, listing exactly what you believe.

15 Open the Bible, pick a phrase, and focus on the message for a whole minute.

16 Next time you talk to someone you love, let your eyes shine.

19 If you have questions about religion or spirituality ask them of your friends and/or pastor.

[L]ove the Lord your God and . . . walk always in His ways.

—DEUTERONOMY 19:9

24 Make a decision to come clean about a lie you've been concealing.

25 Accept the fact that today's best-laid plans may not go as hoped.

26 Think of one good quality about a person who's been getting on your nerves.

27 Make eye contact and smile at the people you pass today.

20 Make a list of your spiritual goals.

17 Imagine meeting your future self at age 90, and what advice you might hear.

18 Call a friend who's been having a hard time.

21 Circle three things on this list that you will definitely do before the day ends.

22 Take three deep breaths, then smile.

23 Decide that the next time you feel angry, you'll try step # 15.

27

Ideas

to help you take a step on your spiritual journey. . . . We hope these ideas help you get started on a spiritual path or take a step forward on an existing spiritual path.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
—JOHN 13:34-35

8 Make a commitment to make time in every day for some kind of spiritual reflection.

13 Consider sharing your statement with a friend who is searching for faith.

14 Choose a whole Bible chapter to read, and then spend time reflecting on it.

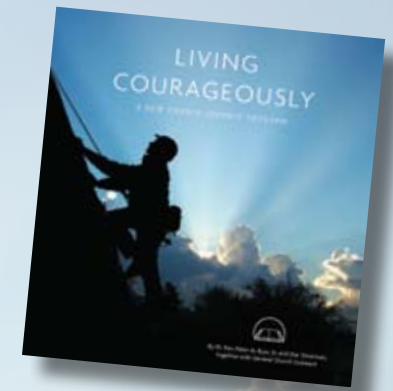


Living Courageously

One of the most courageous things we can do in life is look within, discipline our mind, and strengthen our connection with the Lord so that we can serve others.



Overview of a new spiritual growth program



Order a New Church Journey Program book online at www.newchurch.org

Use the Program Overview below, order a workbook online (www.newchurch.org) and get some friends together to encourage one another on to live courageously!

Discussion Questions (to use in weekly meetings)

What surprised you? What concrete idea/lesson can you take from this reading?
Is there an idea you struggle with or resist?

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7
FOCUS	Becoming Aware <i>Notice your thoughts and behaviors</i>	Serving God First <i>Practice genuine kindness</i>	Finding New Truth <i>Read and meditate on sacred scripture</i>	Making a Choice <i>Determine your higher purpose and live it with passion</i>	Finding Courage <i>Listen for the still small voice of the Lord</i>	Convicted by Conscience <i>Flex your spiritual muscle—strengthen your will to follow the Lord</i>	Living Courageously <i>Go forward living courageously with strength and purpose</i>
READINGS from the old testament	I Kings 16:29–33; 17:1–7	I Kings 17:7–15	I Kings 17:16–24	I Kings 18:1–2, 18–46	I Kings 19:1–18	I Kings 21:1–20 and 29	II Kings 2:1–18
INSPIRING QUOTATIONS	Recognition of sin and a person's self-examination are the beginnings of repentance. —True Christianity 525	To feel the joy of another as joy in oneself, this is loving. —Divine Love and Wisdom 47	Your word has given me life. —PSALM 119:50	No one can serve two lords, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will adhere to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon. —MATTHEW 6:24	I know the plans I have prepared for you, says the Lord, plans of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. —JEREMIAH 29:11	If you love Me, keep My commandments. —JOHN 14:15	Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. —Deuteronomy 31:6

Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Sr. explores how the ancient Biblical story, of Elijah the prophet helps us to see that making time for God can be the key to our wellbeing and survival.

WEEK 2
in depth

Serving God First

Elijah's Story is Our Own. His strengths are ours, and so are his weaknesses. Each time the Lord gives Elijah a miracle, it tells of a miracle He performs in our lives, allowing us to turn from selfishness and find the courage to transform our spiritual lives and prepare for heaven.

1 Kings 17:8-15

THE WIDOW:

She grieves the fact that she is without a husband. She represents our wish for truth (represented by her husband), that we don't have at the moment. This is a period of searching for pure truth.

ELIJAH ASKS FOR WATER:

This represents a longing for a better kind of truth, a purer truth than the merit-seeking kind.



SHE SAYS SHE HAS ONLY A LITTLE OIL AND FLOUR:

Our present motivation is just about to run out. Imagine the widows quiet misery as she anticipates starvation, for herself and for her son. We think that if this is all the happiness that being good brings, it won't be enough to sustain us. We'll starve if we have to live for these mixed motives for the rest of our lives.



ELIJAH SAYS TO FEED HIM FIRST, A VERY DIFFICULT CHOICE TO MAKE OUT OF HER MEAGER SUPPLIES:

Here feeding Elijah the prophet indicates putting the Lord first. When faced with any decision or problem or opportunity in life, ask yourself, "What does the Lord expect of me in this situation?" This is something we do consciously at first, and slowly it becomes a habit.

Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah, saying, ⁹ "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." ¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a **widow** was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please **bring me a little water** in a cup, that I may drink." ¹¹ And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." ¹² So she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a **handful of flour in a bin, and a little**

oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a **couple of sticks** that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." ¹³ And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but **make me a small cake from it first,** and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son." ¹⁴ For thus says the Lord God of Israel: "**The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry,** until the day the Lord sends **rain on the earth.**" ¹⁵ So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days.

THEN THE OIL AND FLOUR DON'T RUN OUT:

The miracle is that when we put the Lord first He brings strength and delight into what we are doing. He inspires just enough for that day. So we keep going, day by day, and we make real progress.



GATHERING A COUPLE OF STICKS:

Gathering sticks for a fire represents taking the credit for the good things we do. We think, "I'll pile each good deed on top of the other, hoping to be recognized for them, and I'll make the fire of love in my heart by these good deeds. It will be my work alone." But that's not how love is created; it is a gift from God. (Note that we tend to pile up these deeds, and remember them, and others don't remember them nearly as well as we do).

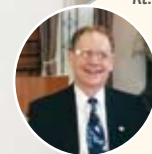
IT WON'T RUN OUT UNTIL RAIN COMES TO ISRAEL:

Later there will be even more, truly satisfying and productive truths—the rain which makes everything grow.



ABOUT ELIJAH THE PROPHET

Elijah was a courageous leader. At that time, the King and Queen were deeply into idolatry. They had killed all the prophets of Jehovah. The people were confused. Should they serve Jehovah, the God of Israel, who had strict laws of moral behavior? Or should they serve the gods of their rulers, gods who allowed all sorts of wicked (but appealing) acts, supposedly in the name of religion? Elijah confronted the King and Queen and through a series of miracles turned the nation back to the worship of Jehovah.



Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Sr. is a retired Bishop of the General Church, living in Boulder, Colorado, and helps with preaching locally as well as other projects.
www.bouldernewchurch.org

Listen *for the* Still Small Voice

The program includes many ideas bringing spirituality into life. *Here is one example:*

WEEK 5
featured activity

Whenever you find yourself "in the cave" with a disempowering emotion, use these steps to help change the emotion, come out of the cave, and courageously go forward.

- ◆ FIRST, IDENTIFY THE EMOTION. THEN ASK YOURSELF, "WHY AM I HERE?"
- ◆ "WHAT IS THE FALSE GOD THAT IS RULING IN MY LIFE?"
- ◆ "WHAT IS KEEPING ME IN THE CAVE?"
- ◆ If you have experienced this emotion before, you already know where it takes you. Is this where you want to go? What has this emotion cost you in the past? What damage has it done? How has it hurt you and your relationships?
- ◆ Next, identify the source of this emotion. What is it really? Is it a desire to get attention, be right, feel superior, or get sympathy? Then ask yourself, "Is this who I really want to be?"
- ◆ Next, ask yourself, "What would I have to forget in order to believe the false messages surrounding this emotion?" For example, "I would have to forget that God is with me even now, and that I am not alone." "I would have to forget

that I am a child of God, and that God cares for me at all times."

- ◆ Next, change your thoughts. Shift your focus to what you want to remember. For example, "I want to remember the love and care in my relationships." "I want to remember that I am blessed in so many ways."
- ◆ Now let the inner dialogue become quiet. In this holy silence, listen for the still small voice of the loving God.
- ◆ Pray for the Lord to renew your strength so that you might have the courage to move forward.

- ◆ With this new light, describe how your life will be changed by moving beyond the disempowering emotion. What will it feel like? What thoughts will you be thinking? What actions will you be taking? Imagine yourself feeling new emotions arise in you as you continue with this new focus.
- ◆ What new emotion or qualities do you want to cultivate in your life? With these new qualities as part of your life, how will your life change? These empowering emotions are God's presence with you.
- ◆ One at a time, imagine yourself filled with each of these qualities. Use courage to prayerfully summon these qualities when you need them. Put them into your life with focus and passion.
- ◆ Acknowledge all that the Lord is giving you, and let gratitude fill your heart and soul. Go forward.



Star Silverman continues to develop spiritual growth programs with a special emphasis on marriage. www.riseaboveit.org

Photo by ROSE WOOFENDEN

Overcoming *Bad Habits*

We all have patterns and habits we'd like to remedy or improve.

Rev. Derrick Lumsden explores two concrete ways to make positive changes in your life.

In this crazy, beautiful life of ours, it is important to realize that we are not alone.

realchallenges

I'm feeling stuck in a pattern of bad habits. I've been here so long, I'm not sure what to do.

How do I get unstuck and move forward on my spiritual path?

realsupport

Beating a bad habit is tough. It's frustrating. And it is also an important part of our spiritual journey. Two of the lessons we can learn from our struggles are to ask for help and to try different tactics.

In this crazy, beautiful life of ours, it is important to realize that we are not alone. We cannot succeed without the help of God and friends. If you can let go of your need/desire to figure life out on your own, it may free you to see the resources you have to move forward.

The greatest power you can call upon is the power of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the God of heaven and earth. There is a simple, four step process for receiving help from Him: 1) seeing what needs to change in our life, 2) taking responsibility for our part in our bad habits, 3) praying to the Lord for help and strength, and 4) committing to making the change. It's important to recognize that all of these steps are necessary to receive the Lord's help. Don't jump to committing to change without praying for the help you need. Don't jump to prayer before taking the time to explore how this problem is bigger than you and requires Divine help.

Calling on friends can also be useful. Ask them to hold you accountable to your commitment. Ask them to check in with you regularly and to gently push you. A

word of caution: a gentle push can be useful, but brow beating rarely is.

Getting help is important and so is trying different tactics. It may not be best to tackle an ingrained bad habit head on. This military analogy explores the problem. During the American Civil War at the battle of Antietam, General Burnside was ordered to cross a stream and capture an enemy position on the other side. So Burnside sent his men across the only bridge in the area. The first, second, and third attempts failed with high losses, but Burnside kept trying the bridge. Burnside was focused on the bridge because he knew he had to cross the stream. In reality the stream could be waded in several places. Burnside had limited his options unnecessarily.

In attempting to tackle this bad habit, are you rushing at it across the only bridge? For example, when I find myself falling into a bad habit I have found that I need to look at my sleep patterns and exercise habits. Raising my energy levels improves my ability to make decisions and helps me tackle a bad habit indirectly. Be sure to look for alternate ways to cross the stream and defeat your bad habit.



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New Church TEACHINGS

The perspectives in this magazine are based on the teachings of the New Church found in the Old and New Testaments and the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Here are the core teachings of the New Church:

- There is one loving, personal God, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. His providence is powerful and unending. God guides each person's spiritual path, from the smallest things up to the biggest things, and His angels are with us every moment.
- The Old and New Testaments have a deeper meaning, revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which help people lead happy and useful lives to eternity.
- Spiritual growth is a process. Through recognizing our sins, prayer, shunning evil and living a new life we are transformed and united more closely with God.
- All religions have goodness in them. People of every faith are saved if they live sincerely according to their religion.
- Each of us continues life as a complete person immediately after the death of the body.
- While people are free to choose to live in hell, God wants everyone to live with Him in heaven to eternity.
- Marriage can last forever for God blesses people with a special love in marriage that goes on after death, even to eternity.

About Swedenborg and Works Cited

Emanuel Swedenborg was an 18th century scientist and philosopher who continually studied the Word, later devoting his life to the revelation of the New Church. In the New Church we believe his later works are a divinely inspired revelation for the modern age, touching on all the different aspects of religion with a rational and common-sense approach. In this issue, the following works of Swedenborg are referenced: *Divine Love and Wisdom*, *Secrets of Heaven*, and *True Christianity*.

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Your power is limited, and when temptation stretches you to the absolute limit of your power you cannot stand up to anything further and start to slip. At that point. . . you are raised by the Lord and thereby delivered from despair. . . you are then brought into a bright state of hope and the comfort this brings, and also into a state of bliss.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 8165

