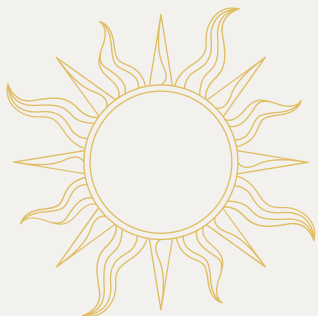




New Church

JULY 2023

BISHOP'S NEWSLETTER



"Divine Providence is present within the smallest details of all, and people in the stream of providence are being carried along constantly towards happier things, whatever appearance the means may present."

Arcana Coelestia 8478

Friends,

Among the many images in the Word for the church is this one from the Psalms:

Even the sparrow has found a home, And the swallow a nest for herself, Where she may lay her young— Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, My King and my God. (Psalm 84:3)

My reflections have returned over and over again to this concept of a nest—the church as a spiritual home for each of us where we and those we love can be nourished and kept safe.

We learn from the Writings that a nest is a symbol for a way of living (Apocalypse Explained 411:23). It is a home base to which we habitually turn. It is figuratively where we are fed, where we are refreshed, where we go out from to do all that we do.

The invitation is to see the church as that home base. It is where we habitually worship the Lord, where we receive guidance from Him as to how to live, where we are supported in becoming better human beings, and where we are safe from the powers of evil (Apocalypse Explained 391:11).

Certainly, there is an aspiration here—a state to strive for rather than one we can claim to have attained. This goal of a nourishing home base does not imply that the church, or at least the earthly organization, is perfect. But we can rejoice that the church brings us before the altars of the Lord. The church can be that spiritual sanctuary for us where new spiritual states can be born, and it can be such a place for others.

I invite you to reflect on this powerful psalm about the Lord's church, and then to consider a few additional ways of choosing to live within the sphere of the church, to nest near the altars of the Lord.

With affection,

Pete

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CONNECT TO SCRIPTURE

When the Lord's prayer is being said, which embraces all heavenly and spiritual things within it, so much can be poured into every least detail that heaven itself is not great enough to contain it all, and this of course depending on the capacity and use of each individual.

Spiritual Experiences 1790

[The Lord's Prayer] contains “all celestial and spiritual things” (Spiritual Experiences 1790). But where, exactly, are these things to be found? Certainly they are not hidden behind the ink on the printed page? Nor are they hidden within the sounds of the words. These things are within the mind, within the ideas which enter the mind as the Lord’s Prayer is recited.

Now the mind, and the ideas it contains, are far more complex than appears on the surface. On the surface, one idea or thought in our minds might appear very simple. Contained within it on a deeper level, though, are far more things than we could imagine.

Take the beginning words of the prayer: “Our Father.” As we say these words we usually quickly pass on to the rest of the prayer. We have, perhaps, only a very brief, seemingly vague, idea in our mind: the Lord is our Father. But within this simple idea of “Father” are contained countless associations and feelings. It serves as an anchor, a base, for all kinds of other ideas and affections. Beyond our awareness, deep within the mind, these affections, thoughts and perceptions are brought into play. And in these deeper regions of our mind, associations with countless spirits and angels are formed.

The Heavenly Doctrines talk of ideas being transformed as they ascend upward. For example, the natural idea of bread, “our daily bread,” is associated with all kinds of thoughts and feelings relating to nourishment, energy, enrichment—all that is good. And the angels who are with us when we pray are then keenly aware, not of natural food, but of the way in which all that is good constantly comes from the Lord alone. This is how correspondence works—natural ideas unfold as they ascend, presenting spiritual ideas before the angels and, indeed, before the deeper degrees of our own minds as well. Truth from the Lord flows down, filling natural ideas from within, filling them with a myriad spiritual truths.

Read more about how the Lord works with us through the Prayer in [Rev. Patrick Rose's sermon "The Lord's Prayer."](#)

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION | GCED

GENERAL CHURCH

EDUCATION CONFERENCE More than 80 New Church educators gathered on the Academy of the New Church Secondary School campus this past June for a two-day education conference hosted by General Church Education. This was the first education meeting of this scale since 2010 and included attendees from all six US General Church schools as well as guests from the Secondary School, Bryn Athyn College, and Glencairn Museum.



It was natural after so many years for one of the goals of the conference to be reconnection, and it was satisfying to see old friendships reconnect and new networks form. The other goal was rejuvenation. The teachers participated in workshop sessions, plenary talks, daily worship services, and a whole group review of the General Church schools. Their comments afterwards affirmed this opportunity to work together, and discussing the use of teaching in New Church schools energized preparation for the new school year.

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESOURCES Are you planning for next year's Sunday school program or looking for religious educational resources for your family? GCED's updated [New Church Vineyard](#) website has lots of new materials for ages 3-adults.



- Browse through our [Collections](#) to find a series that will work for you!
- Check out this [overview](#) on choosing a Sunday school curriculum.
- Subscribe to our [monthly highlights](#) to learn about more resources.

WHAT WE'RE CHEERING FOR | COMMUNITY NEWS

- The next **General Church Assembly** will be held in Bryn Athyn, PA, USA from **June 27 to June 30, 2024**. All members, family, and friends are warmly invited to attend and enjoy the wide variety of programs and worship that will be offered.
- In June we welcomed the following **new General Church Board members**:
 - Wendy Baker (Summerville, SC), Annette Baltz (Rydal PA), Greg Clay (Rochester MI), Robert Heinrichs (Boynton Beach, FL), Keith Hyatt (Bryn Athyn, PA), Andrew Martz (Rochester, MI), Erik Odhner (Bryn Athyn, PA).
- **This year's clergy meetings** are arranged in seven regional groupings worldwide, allowing for more communication amongst priests and a region-specific focus. The two most recent sessions, in Stockholm, Sweden and Bryn Athyn, PA, took place in June. Two more sessions will happen in September for Midwest and Canadian priests, and Western US priests.