

New Church LIFE

A monthly magazine devoted to the teachings
revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg

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New Church Life

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO THE TEACHINGS
REVEALED THROUGH EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

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Notes on This Issue

The Sermon this month comes from London, where Rev. Fred Elphick has been the Pastor for a good number of years. The lesson is how to apply the measurement of the Holy City to our lives. Does this mean we compare ourselves with other people? There is a right way to go about it.

A second sermon we believe was delivered on board the USS Stennis, an aircraft carrier, one location Chaplain Rev. Martie Johnson has served. We don't often consider Grace or Epiphany, but it is worth reflecting on this January event so soon after the celebration itself. There is a way the wise men can lead the way for us to follow.

We have seen the passing of two ministers of the General Church, the Rev. Kenneth O. Stroh, and the Rev. Erik Sandstrom Sr. We include some cogent extracts on these loved and well known servants of the New Church.

Church News include an exciting view of the New Church in India! Reports are coming in, and we now have brethren and sisters in the Church there and it seems certain that more will come. Rev. Appelgren was the ambassador while Mr. Devassy is the actual newcomer to the New Church who is evangelizing his countrymen.



Rev. Frederick C. Elphick is the Pastor of Michael Church, London but will retire in July when Assistant Pastor Alan Lewin takes over. Fred was inaugurated into the priesthood on June 6, 1984 and ordained into the second degree on September 23, the same year. He has served as the Pastor of Michael Church since that year, as well as visiting pastor to the Surrey Circle in England. From Oct 1987 until 1989 he also visited the Letchworth Group. He has edited the UK Newsletter since January 1986, and continued visiting the group in the Netherlands in 1992. More recently, he has become chairman of the Swedenborg Society Council, and also serves on their Advisory and Revision Board. Fred lives with his wife Jane (Gill) in Beckenham, London.

ARISE & MEASURE: A PERSONAL RULE

BY THE REV. FRED E. ELPHICK

And the angel stood by, saying, Arise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those worshipping therein. (Revelation 11:1)

People must wonder, when they hear or read the Word, why so many measurements are mentioned. Spans of time, people's ages, distances, and dimensions are given, often in minute detail. As in our text from the book of Revelation, we even read of such things in the other world, where there are no space and time.

Actually though, as we can conclude from many descriptions in the *Writings* for the New Church, when it is said that there are no space and time, the meaning is that there are no natural space and time. Time and space in the other world simply have a different basis, namely, reflecting the constant characteristics of the human mind. For example, we feel close to people with whom we have things in common, distant from those with whom we have not. So things in heaven are not disconcertingly appearing and disappearing, or changing beyond recognition, but rather reflect the settled states of progress in the governing loves of the inhabitants. It is because of this that heaven is in that wonderfully organized human form the *Writings* call the Grand Man. For the Lord places everyone exactly in the community best suited to his or her function or use in life and thus to the greatest fulfillment and happiness.

And so the things around the angels, the houses they live in, their parks and garden cities, have spiritual dimensions which are a measure of their own character, in much the same way as we might say that a person has a 'big' heart, or is 'broad' minded. It is only when one is in 'a changeable state,' as for

example in the preparatory stages of life in the world of spirits, that one is aware of changes in one's surroundings.

Thus, all the measurements recorded in the Word, down to the very numbers used, correspond to spiritual realities that are the basis of human life. In the book of Ezekiel, for example, written several centuries before the Lord's coming, an angel measures a city and temple in the spiritual Israel. The complete record of his measurements, as we read in part earlier, spans no less than three chapters,— some ninety-five verses! Still it is written in such a way that when a person reads it, the angels associated with him perceive the spiritual meaning and the delight that goes with it, the Lord's love and wisdom enfolded within those verses. The same goes for the rest of the Word.

In the same way, after the Lord's coming, John records in the book of Revelation that he was given a reed like a staff and told to measure the temple of God, the altar, as well as the people in it. "Arise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those worshipping therein." He was being told to find out the state of the church. As we have seen, measurements correspond to qualities or the essential character. Applied to us as individuals, this command conveys the idea that we need to get up and measure ourselves, to carry out a survey of our lives.

As we move through the rhythms and cycles of our short time on earth, as new opportunities present themselves, we feel the need to assess our progress and to encourage ourselves to face the next challenge. Yet we know that our ability to make a true assessment is as weak as a reed. We don't know if we can handle it. But the Lord alone knows our character and what we will become, and He in fact shows us no more than we can handle. for His burden is light.

So do we have the measure of our life? Are we good people? Are we evil? Are we as good or bad as we think we are? Think of the reed that John used to measure the temple. It was like a

staff, it was strong. When the Lord is our guide and support, His strengthens our ability to make a true assessment of our character (cf. *Apocalypse Revealed* 485:3).

We know that whatever measure of good we have comes from what we choose during our life in the world (*Arcana Coelestia* 8533, *Divine Providence* 334, *Heaven and Hell* 349). As the Lord said: “Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom.” (Luke 6:38) ‘Running over’, as well as denoting abundance, implies a limit set only by the container. So we can think of the good received as the church—the real life of religion—in people. And so John was told to not only measure the temple, but also the people in it. In one sense, we can say the church is people—at least the part of them that lives and breathes in the sphere of heaven. And for this heavenly part of our minds to become a living force in our everyday lives, we need to know enough about ourselves, our strengths and weaknesses, to make progress and ourselves.

However, we must conduct this exploration with a reed that is like a staff: we must measure ourselves from the Lord’s perspective, not from ours. “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and measured the heavens with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in a scale, and the hills in balances?” asked Isaiah (40:12). Who but the Lord?

The *Writings* say that to measure means to explore the quality of something. So that when we look at our own lives, we are to make a just measurement of our actions, our thoughts, our intentions, against what we see taught in the Word. This is to measure from the Lord’s perspective. Think of the measurement described in our reading from Ezekiel. All the parts of the temple—the various aspects of our spiritual life as they appear in the mind—were measured with a line of flax and by just such a reed

as we have been describing (cf. *Apocalypse Explained* 629:3). We need to size up the present state of our character by what we know from the Word: this is to be our rule. For it is no accident that the word 'rule' involves both governing and measuring. Rules both govern and are a standard of measurement. We can think of our own rule of life in both these ways.

How then are we to go about applying such a measurement to ourselves? To begin with, we need a manageable framework which can become our own personal rule of life—a pattern of living to which we can commit ourselves, not just for a few days, but also for life. This is rule in the sense of a measure based on what we understand the Lord would have us do. It is something He can use to order the cycles of our spiritual life. We may fall short on occasion, but we should not let this discourage us.

So the first step in beginning a new order to our life is a change in attitude—a matter of what we wish for in our will. Basically, it is to stop hankering for what is against the Lord and to wish for good affections. For it is our will that rules (*Divine Providence* 151, *Arcana Coelestia* 7342). Initially, this is more a change of intent than a change in habit. If, for example, we compare it to giving up smoking, or any other addictive habit, then the first stage is to want to stop. The dislike of one's own habit can gradually become stronger until it reaches the point when the person either cuts down or actually does stop. So it is with an evil. We have to begin the new rule by simply disliking the evil.

But when, the *Writings* say, we progress and want to “actually desist from” our evil actions (*Divine Providence* 151), at this point not only have we acquired a healthy dislike of the evil because it is hellish, but we have also begun to shun it and fight against it. And note well that this new purpose can come about simply by measuring our lives once or twice a year against the teaching of the Word. Because the Word embodies all love and

wisdom, it affects our whole life. As it says, as soon as a person deliberately and from set purpose refrains from any evil as being a sin, he is kept by the Lord in the intention of refraining from the others (*Conjugal Love* 529). Not only that, but if a person transgresses unwittingly, or from some overwhelming bodily desire, it is comforting to know that this is not made a permanent part of his character, because, as it is said, he had not intended or set his mind on it (*ibid*).

Our personal rule of life then, can be what we have set our mind on— a confirmation that we want to take a certain path in life. And it seems reasonable to build on what we are already doing. For example, it might be unrealistic for someone who at present only reads the *Writings* occasionally, suddenly to start reading two or three hours a day! On the other hand, one who is already a regular reader may decide to make a manageable increase. The same applies to all aspects of our spiritual life: to prayer and worship, to church attendance, even to the giving of financial support. If we measure these by the principles of revelation, the Lord will show us where to make manageable adjustments. The basic framework is a simple one: "Remember the Sabbath day" gives us a weekly pattern of worship, and "Give us this day our daily bread" provides a daily guide. Within these present guidelines, there is plenty of room for personal decisions about 'where' and 'when' and 'for how long.' Worship may then, in a broader sense, inspire our entire life.

So gradually developing a realistic rule of life could become a useful framework, something there in the background as a personal standard, something that we can use periodically to assess ourselves. In the face of so many pressures in life, do we not need set times at which to look at our actions and the intentions behind them? Yes, modern life has many pressures. Still, we need time for the things that matter—daily, weekly, monthly, yearly. It is our choice. At regular intervals, we can

ponder what it is that gives us the greatest delight or the most grief and use these as pointers. For example, take a person who is inclined to drink too much. That may be the one thing that gives most enjoyment but afterwards the most grief both for the drinker and for other people. By taking notice of such pointers, we can see both the direction we should take and where our intentions are in fact heading.

There is on the other hand a kind of self-measurement that can be destructive. Probably one of the most insidious forms is measuring the way you feel against the way other people appear. This is not a true measurement, and it can destroy a person's trust and confidence in the Lord. We know subjectively how we feel our disappointments, perhaps even our despair over some situation. Then we look objectively at other people, and they seem to be so much better than we are. They seem to cope with their families, their jobs, even with their health! But this is a faulty comparison. We are using the wrong basis of measurement, trusting in a weak reed instead of a strong staff. We actually know very little about the issues in other people's lives. Things may be very different beneath the surface.

So think rather of the Lord standing in the gateway of heaven, teaching us, showing us, that we can trust in what He says in His Word: its wisdom shines in its own light. For the Lord's words are the true rules of life, revealed especially in the *Writings* for the New Church. So let us take heed! For it is His voice we can hear in Ezekiel and again through John: "Look with your eyes and hear with your ears and set your heart on everything I show you" (Ezekiel 40:4). "Arise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those that worship therein" (Revelation 11:1).

Amen

Lessons: Ezekiel 40:1-6; 41:1-4, Revelation 11:1 Isaiah 40:9-14, 25-28 *Conjugal Love* 528, 529

HAPPY EPIPHANY
BY CHAPLAIN, THE REV. MARTIE
JOHANSSON JR.

*A dialogue with a Jesuit and a reflection on human prudence
and the life of religion*

“A-ha! Eureka! I get it!” This year, let’s all make sure we give the gift of grace when we do our best to love our neighbor. How do we do that?

In many other churches around us last month, folks gathered on January 6 to remember and understand the feast of Epiphany. What’s that about? The word “epiphany” means “manifestation and the dawning.” It is the “showing forth” of the Messiah, of who Jesus really is, to us Gentiles. There are many stories at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (His first miracles) that were an epiphany (a dawning) on Him and others about who He was and what His ministry would be. In Christian churches, the Epiphany season typically begins with the story of the arrival of the Wise Men. Let’s face it, “they get it” because the birth of Christ as an event dawns on them as they follow the star of the Lord’s leading.

We don’t celebrate Epiphany and it is not part of our New Church liturgy. What role could this idea and celebration have to do with me in the General Church? Nothing, really. The feast of Epiphany is simply about the three Wise men’s adoration which is why they brought the gifts, not about the gifts themselves (although the gifts have significance and prophetic meaning as well), which were all for the good. Is that an “a-ha”? Perhaps not, because we know that “the wise men from the east who came to see the Lord when He was born had a knowledge of correspondences [which] remained with many eastern people even down to the time of the Lord’s advent. That is why a star

went before them, and they brought with them gold, frankincense and myrrh. For the star which went before symbolized knowledge from heaven, inasmuch as stars in the Word symbolize concepts. The gold symbolized celestial good, the frankincense spiritual good, and the myrrh natural good - the three kinds of good from which everything of worship originates” (*De Verbo* 7).

Three types of good! Well, spiritual we are, but in the natural we dwell, so what could worship of the Lord look like with natural good? We know that one of the two great commandments is for us to love our neighbor as ourself. Now, the Writings talk about all sorts of levels of the neighbor—so take your pick! Always make sure, though, that you remember to care for yourself and your family so that you can care for and reach out to others.(cf. *Heavenly Doctrine* 97) This year, in addition to thinking about a resolution, remember that our baptism or confirmation makes us a “new creation” and as such our faith helps us lead a “new life” that follows the Lord’s leading. This ability comes from the Lord’s grace, and it can elevate us from the natural to the spiritual in keeping His truths first in our hearts and minds. Rev. Roger Haight, S.J., in his book *The Experience and Language of Grace*, points out that this raises some striking questions: “Can one really know whether this or that in the concrete is the will of God? and not my will? How does one decide in this particular movement or experience that it is a manifestation of grace and that it is not escapist, involving a surrender of autonomous and solid rational judgment?” Put another way, how do we tap into more of the Lord’s grace when we know we can’t see His hand of providence until afterward? We know the work *The Divine Providence* addresses one aspect of this question by asking us to use our human prudence because “if a person as from his own prudence did not dispose all things pertaining to his function and life he could not be led and

disposed from the Divine Providence; for he would be like one standing with his hands hanging down, his mouth open, his eyes closed and holding his breath, awaiting influx. He would thus divest himself of the human, which he has from the perception and sensation that he lives, thinks, wills, speaks and acts as from himself; and at the same time he would divest himself of his two faculties, liberty and rationality” (*Divine Providence* 210).

God’s Grace as also His providence is general and omnipresent, and it is also particular to each of us. Our lives, and the experiences that comprise them, meet our faith, and when they come together, then we follow our beliefs, our star! Sometimes our experiences and feelings meet head on – as in temptation—and sometimes our experiences fit our understanding of faith like a hand in a glove. We are to use our faith, reason, and knowledge, and this gives us our best opportunity to cooperate and be part of the Lord’s purpose, which is to create a “heaven from the human race.”

Consider this: our lives are the not just the application of doctrine and reason! Our lives are the actual canvass for the Lord’s grace. Rev. Roger Haight S.J., reflecting on the thoughts of William James, states in the same book: “Reason alone cannot uncover all there is to know—theology that proceeds from abstract principles or objective formulae, that is, devoid of concrete experience or subjective life, and that deductively arrives at conclusions that are equally unrelated to human life have no significance for it.” Besides, we know from the Writings that “all religion is of the life and the life of religion is to do good” (*Life* 1). Haight agrees: “the ultimate test of religious value is not how it happens but its fruits, that is, what is attained. If a person is really born anew, this will become manifest in his life” (Haight p.21).

Our lives lived and their good or bad story, are the place to seek, find, and cooperate with God. Is this an epiphany? It sort

of was for me, but at the same time, we know that all things that spiritually exist must materialize on the “ultimate” level here in the natural world of “effects and useful endeavors” (cf. *Divine Love and Wisdom* 303).

So, being a New Churchman is to seek to live a new Christian life, and that is where the Lord’s leading or grace becomes real and actual. This is how the “life of religion” does good. Who is doing the good? We are! Just as the Wise men were led to bring gifts, so too are we to bring the gift of the grace of God, and love of charity and good in particular, to the world around us.

Is this easy? Not always. Evil is real. There is great suffering all around us, and the Lord’s grace and religion itself are in the breach of disdain and neglect every second of every day. Evil and suffering are always the biggest issue for religion because they manifest themselves in the face of the goodness of God and make us all ask: How does one know that God is good, -- given the suffering I experience or see? Rev. Haight further states, “These questions correspond to real existential problems that often exist inside or within a core of faith. The problem is real precisely because of the concrete and actual experience of evil in the world. Evil, suffering, sin and death are realities; they are the causes of doubt to faith and the reasons of atheism; and they are solid reasons constituting the challenge to any doctrine of grace. Grace must be one that is founded on equal experiences of reality” (*op. cit.*). Remember, even after Jesus’ birth, evil arrived to take His life and the family fled to Egypt. Just the same, we are the receiving vessel for the Lord’s love and grace. “Without this reception and reciprocity, [a person] would be like chaff in the wind, and would stand as if lifeless, with mouth open, and hands hanging down, awaiting influx, devoid of thought and action in regard to the things that concern [his/her] salvation. It is indeed true that [he/she] is by no means the agent in regard to these things, but yet [he/she] is a reagent as of [him/herself]”

(*Life* 107). We have to try to reflect His light because “He is the vine and we are the branches,” so we must bear fruit, good fruit that is “worthy of repentance,” as John the baptizer said.

Now, what has come from your experiences and your faith? Put another way, how do we reflect the Lord’s light and love to keep our world warm and bright to combat the things that make it cold and dark? Look for ways that your experience offers to you and follow that star. The star that you follow will include your life as it illuminates the world, just as their stars did for Dr. Martin Luther King and Benazir Bhutto. In your life, the Lord’s will can be done. The Lord’s grace can change your life and reshape your love. Why? “Love consists in this, that its own should be another’s; to feel the joy of another as joy in oneself, that is loving. But to feel one’s own joy in another and not the other’s joy in oneself is not loving; for this is loving self, while the former is loving the neighbor” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 47). So, indeed may you receive this blessing and my love: “May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ be with us all.” Amen.

U.S.S. John C. Stennis (Carrier Vessel Nuclear -74)
Priest General Church of the New Jerusalem

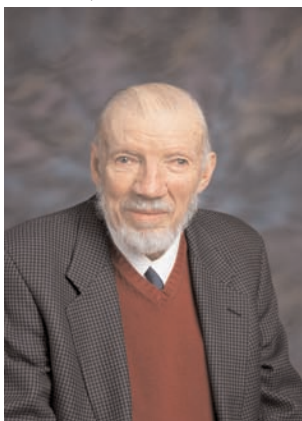


The Rev. Martie Johnson Jr. was inaugurated into the New Church in 2001 and ordained into the second degree in 2002. He served as Assistant to the Pastor in Boulder, Colorado in 2001, also traveling in the Western United States. In 2003 he became the Pastor for the Cascade New Church in Seattle, Washington, still visiting in the northwestern areas. From 2005 he has been on active duty as Chaplain in the United States Navy, and is finishing this work in the Seattle area. Martie and his wife Melinda (Simons) and family live in Seattle.

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR KENNETH OLIVER STROH

BY THE REV. GRANT H. ODHNER

Today we remember a man who had a high sense of calling. Kenneth Oliver Stroh dated his call to be a priest to his 12th year of life, while he was up in a tree. Throughout his long life, he



was never so happy as when he was pastoring—preaching the Word, visiting the sick, representing the Lord to people. There were to be periods in his life when he was not actively serving as a priest—or not as actively as he would have liked—but pastoring was always his calling, always his goal, and the work of his heart.

To do this work one must love the Word. And Kenneth certainly did. He enjoyed reading it and talking about it. He delighted in the science of it. For example, he cared how words were translated, and enjoyed being a consultant to translators from the Swedenborg Society while he was living in Great Britain. But more importantly, he cared about the Word’s message. He had a sound grasp of its doctrine, especially as it relates to life, and he articulated that message in a clear, caring, and sensitive way. It is hard to imagine that he will not continue in this work after death. We read.: “In heaven those are concerned with church affairs who in the world loved the Word and eagerly sought in it for truths, not with honor or gain as an end, but with the uses of life both for themselves and for others. These people in heaven are in enlightenment and in the light of wisdom in the measure of their love and desire for use.— These individuals minister in

the preaching office.” (*Heaven and Hell* 393)

Immediately after being ordained in 1948, Kenneth moved to Detroit to serve as the first resident pastor of the General Church congregation there. He actually was the assistant to Norman Reuter who was living in Ohio and traveling to Detroit only every few months. For two years, Ken did the regular preaching and teaching. This was a wonderful beginning for that group—today a thriving society. Kenneth was soon called to London. He moved there with his new wife, Virginia Blair Stroh. They served there for just two years (1950-1952). This was a difficult time of illness for both Kenneth and Virginia, and they were compelled to return to the states and recoup. They moved to Bryn Athyn. For the next nineteen years he found a niche in Bryn Athyn, where the family grew and grew up here. Virginia passed into the spiritual world in 1971.

But from about 1954, he began what would be his main work: teaching religion and sometimes other things in the elementary school and serving as the primary preacher at the children’s services at the Cathedral. For eighteen years, he did the lion’s share of these services! From this very spot he introduced a large baby-boom generation to the Sunday worship of the Lord. Many will never forget Kenneth’s gentle, resonant voice beginning his talk with the word, “Children—.”

Over the great majority of these years, since 1958, Kenneth also served as the Director of Music for the Bryn Athyn Church. He also led the Bryn Athyn community orchestra. With remarkable diligence, year after year he chose music and learned scores for the Cathedral choir and the Bryn Athyn Orchestra. (It is in affectionate tribute to his service as Cathedral choir director that we are enjoying that choir today.) It was no small job to select music and learn scores in order to lead these groups effectively. Yet he quietly did this year after year—not as his main use in life, not in his own mind. Yet what pleasure this

work gave to so many people—performers and listeners alike! Over the years, he helped organize many a memorable musical event: Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. And he gave his service to many a Glencairn Christmas sing. With remarkable patience, he worked with those enthusiastic amateurs. One professional musician who played with the Orchestra related that he did not know many professional conductors who could conduct a concerto from memory as Ken could. And on top of conducting, some here will remember him pulling a piccolo out of his pocket at the end of "Stars and Stripes Forever"—to the surprise even of members of the orchestra—to add that humorous and classy touch to the performance.

In 1976 Kenneth was asked to serve as the full-time organist for the Cathedral—to play the instrument that he had recently helped select. This was an incredible request for a 56-year-old man! It required Kenneth to learn that very difficult "king of instrument"—something he did with amazing proficiency. He did not seek or desire this job, but he took it on, and — like everything,—he accomplished it faithfully and with artistic sense.

In 1981, Ken had the opportunity to get back into full-time pastoral work. He was asked to serve as interim pastor for the Pittsburgh New Church for a year. He did this with relish, and the society there discovered one of the best-kept secrets in the General Church—a fine preacher and a lovely pastor! When that year was up he was called to the society in Colchester, England where he served happily as pastor, and ultimately as Bishop's representative to Europe, for seven more years before retirement. And it was while in England that he met and married, Janina Szymbra Stroh, who has brought great sweetness and blessing to his last twenty years.

We began this address by drawing attention to Ken's sense of

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR REV. KENNETH STROH

calling. Anyone who knows Kenneth Stroh well would recognize how central this was to him as a man. He loved the use of the ministry, and it was that love and practice that formed him. He once wrote an article about “The Life of Use” where he said: “Man becomes a form of use by regeneration, and no man need be discouraged by seeming inadequacies and failures. For uses do not depend on him, despite all appearance to the contrary, since man is but an instrument by means of which the Lord performs use. In His mercy, the Lord has given man to share in this performance so that he may receive the blessings of use. But use itself is from the Lord, indeed the Lord is use. This is why there is always hope for anyone in the world who is willing to lift up his eyes unto the mountains, from whence cometh his help. For the Lord gives help gradually, patiently, to all who ask it. All men and women who live the life of use are close to the Lord and are in the interior worship of Him. For such the Lord can open the way to interior blessedness, so that they are prepared to enter into the joy of their Lord.” (New Church Life 1962, p. 18)

Like Isaiah, Kenneth had seen the glorious vision and had been touched by its holiness: “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:2-8).

Today we honor a man who answered the Lord’s call to use, and was a good and faithful servant in that. And we rejoice in the thought that he is even now entering into the joy of his Lord. Amen.

Bryn Athyn Cathedral, PA. December 9, 2007

Charity 158. VII. ALL PEOPLE WHO LOOK TO THE LORD AND SHUN EVILS AS SIN, IF THEY SINCERELY, JUSTLY, AND FAITHFULLY DO THE WORK OF THEIR OFFICE AND EMPLOYMENT, BECOME A FORM OF CHARITY. All are born

that they may become charity; and they cannot become charity unless they perpetually do the good of use from affection and its delight. Therefore when people sincerely, justly, and faithfully do the work that belongs to their office or employment, from affection and its delight, they are continually in the good of use, not only to

the community or public, but also to individuals and private citizens. But this cannot be unless they look to the Lord and shun evils as sins; for—to look to the Lord and shun evils as sins is the first of charity (n. 8); and the second of charity is to do goods. And the goods that they do are goods of use, which they do every day, and which, when they are not doing, they think of doing. *There is an interior affection which inwardly remains and desires it.* Hence it

is that they are perpetually in the good of use, from morning to evening, from year to year, from their earliest age to the end of their life. Otherwise they cannot become a form, that is, a receptacle of charity. (Emphasis by Mr. Sandstrom)

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR REV. ERIK SANDSTROM

Rev. Erik Sandstrom was born in 1909, which is how he was able to reach age 98! His inauguration into the priesthood was in 1934, and the ordination into the second degree in 1935.

The rest can be found in the address.



**RESURRECTION ADDRESS:
REV. ERIK SANDSTROM
MARCH 21, 1909—DEC. 11, 2007**

BY THE REV. CHRISTOPHER R. J. SMITH

“Before Abraham was, I am” (John. 8:58). “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6). Divine life is the only reality. “I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). Divine life is the only reality. “I am the vine, you are the branches. Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Divine life is the only reality. Is this something we believe, really believe, in our heart of hearts? Certainly, the Reverend Erik Sandstrom gave every evidence of believing it, right to the core of his being. And during his last days, it is something he often repeated. Divine life

is the only reality.

It was not a thought that he kept to himself while others might be talking around his bedside. It was something he wanted to express, that he wanted others to hear and consider. In fact, it strikes a note that rang throughout his life. He recalled wanting to be a minister since early childhood. His mother said he had declared this goal when he was just five years old! As a teenager, he was used to giving evening worship for his scout troop. At age twenty-five, he entered the priesthood and remained there for 73 years.

Mr. Sandstrom was born in Stockholm, ninety-eight years ago. He grew up in a congregation that became the first General Church society in Sweden. The two years following high school were marked by his serving nine months of military service, successfully completing a course in banking, and meeting Dr. Alfred Acton. Dr. Acton had come from Bryn Athyn on sabbatical to find and photocopy manuscripts written by Swedenborg. He remembered attending every doctrinal class given by Dr. Acton to the Stockholm society. And when Dr. Acton learned of the young Erik's desire to become a minister, he did all he could to help.

Rev. Sandstrom had started his first pastoral assignment, in Sweden, in 1934. Looking back, Mr. Sandstrom saw the twenty-one 21 years that he served in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark as "marked by a deliberate effort to establish the authority of the Writings, not only as to doctrine but also and even more importantly as to life."

In 1955, Rev. Sandstrom was called to serve the Michael Church, in London. In England, the Sandstrom family "experienced eight years of happy and harmonious life of study and worship in the church." A visitor was always warmly welcomed and made to feel right at home. The manse at 135 Mantilla Road was indeed a happy place to visit.

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR REV. ERIK SANDSTROMIK

London was followed by a call for Rev. Sandstrom to be Professor of Theology and Religion at the Academy of the New Church. At the same time, he served parishioners living in Akron and Cleveland, Ohio and Erie, Pennsylvania. He was responsible for proposing and organizing the 1966 General Assembly in Oberlin, Ohio. He retired at the age of sixty-nine after serving six years as Dean of the Theological School. Moving to South Dakota in 1978, he was resident pastor for that area, as well as visiting pastor to the Denver Circle until he retired a second time eight years later when he and his wife moved back to Bryn Athyn. Even then, he continued to add to his long list of side jobs – giving classes and worship for small groups, acting as a consultant for the Swedenborg Society in London or for the Liturgy Committee in this country. Until quite recently, he was a senior teacher for the Asia Mission, assisting Rev. Yong Jin. And all the while, he felt privileged to be invited to give occasional classes in Cairnwood Village right up to his last days.

Rev. Sandstrom's life gives strong testimony to the fact that he never lost sight of his call to be a priest, with the solemn duty to let the Word be known and followed. He was passionate about many subjects, including the Divinity of the Writings, the nature of the Divine Human, the Additamentum, and the timing of betrothal. When he found himself at odds with others, he would write and speak fearlessly. His diligent study of the Word gave him the ability to expound on any doctrine at the drop of a hat, giving the impression that he had only just been reading the pertinent passages! Just when you thought he had lost his train of thought, that he had meandered too far afield, he showed that he was simply picking up loose ends to zero in on the question at hand! Mr. Sandstrom would point to such a passage as this: "It is to be known that the church is in accordance with its doctrine, and that doctrine is from the Word; nevertheless it is not doctrine

but soundness and purity of doctrine, consequently the understanding of the Word that establishes the church. Neither is it doctrine, but a faith and life in accordance with doctrine...” (*True Christian Religion* 245). When this happens, then we are truly thinking, not about the Writings, but from them.

What now of the future? Some people, the Word says, “are immediately...taken up into heaven” (*Heaven and Hell* 426). It is possible that the Lord will call Mr. Sandstrom to do something akin to the radio broadcasts he made while living in the Black Hills of South Dakota. He may be asked to preach in the world of spirits. The Lord may use his passion to make known why the New Church is the crown of all the churches that have existed on this earth (*True Christian Religion* 787). Mr. Sandstrom pressed us to see that “the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven” (Revelation 21:2)—is a city, not a garden. However, the city has streets and streets lead somewhere. Where does the Lord want us to go?

The answer is clear, in one of Mr. Sandstrom’s favorite passages: “A man is born to the end that he may become a charity” (*Charity* 154). “Every man who looks to the Lord and shuns evils as sins becomes a form of charity, provided that he honestly, justly, and faithfully carries out the work of his occupation or employment—from affection and its delight” (*Charity* 158). “The sole use for which a person is born is that he may perform a use to the community he is in” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1103:2).

Now keep in mind that there are several conditions for the New Church to increase from just a few until it covers the earth “as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). One condition is that it must first grow in the world of spirits (*Apocalypse Explained*

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR REV. ERIK SANDSTROM

732). Now, Mr. Sandstrom has barely arrived in the world of spirits. Death is a mere passing from this world to the next, and is sadly a fact even though the Lord said to the repentant thief on the cross, “Today you shall be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Imagine the broad smile that came across the face of the two celestial angels who had been sent to receive and protect him, and imagine their surprise. “Praise the Lord; look at what we have here!”

Then can you see the twinkle in Mr. Sandstrom’s eyes. “I’ve been looking forward to meeting you.” “*You* were expecting *us*?” “Not only you but my wife Bernice also. I know she is close by. There are many friends I am keen to see again. Already my heart is singing with gratitude to our Lord.” We read “After death man is possessed of every sense, and of all the memory, thought, and affection, that he had in the world, leaving nothing behind except his earthly body” (*Heaven and Hell* 461).

Now he is no longer here in the flesh, for he has risen. He has been raised as the Lord promised. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all to Myself” (John 12:32). So we have gathered to remember him and to see something of the Divine Providence in his life. And just being here is an expression of our gratitude to the Lord for having given Mr. Sandstrom many talents and a long, full life in which he used them so very well. May the Lord bless him with an ever-growing awareness that Divine life is indeed the only reality. And we pray that he and his wife may enter into the joy of our Lord, who says, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6). Amen

Message from the Sandstroms

Dear friends,

Our beloved friend and colleague, Erik Sandstrom Sr., entered the spiritual world this afternoon, Tuesday December 11. He passed peacefully from one world into the other. He retained his remarkable clarity of thought and purpose right to the end, discussing with us the essentials of the church, as well as expressing his warmest love.

The family hoped we might communicate to you one or two of his final thoughts on this earth. As he thought of moving to the next life, he said that “the Lord’s life is the only life that is life, and we are life from life.” Then “We will see each other once again, when the invisible world becomes visible to us all.”

His final spoken thoughts on doctrine were that charity is the only thing of the church, but he added quickly that only from the Writings can we now establish that charity. For, he added, charity is not good deeds, but the interior affection that moves you all the time from within, referring to Charity 158. “This is what the New Church is for,” he added. “The Second Advent has the power to create this charity in the human heart.”

When someone asked him what was the most important truth the New Church needed to emphasize, I suspect you all know his answer: “To worship the visible God, the Lord Jesus Christ – to see Him in our understanding, to have a picture of Him in our minds when we worship Him, to feel His presence, His power and His love when we turn to Him.” This last message is his prayer for all of us to continue our service, to allow our Visible Lord to be present, that His New Church may prosper in human minds and hearts. And we can feel sure that this is what he will do into eternity.

With warm affection from the whole Sandstrom Family.
Peter M. Buss Sr.

Editorials

The History of the Word on Earth: The New Testament.

Let us recall that the Word is given on earth several times: “The Word has existed in all times, but not the Word [of] this day. There had been another Word in the Most Ancient Church before the flood, another Word in the Ancient Church after the flood; then the Word written by Moses and the prophets in the Jewish Church; and lastly the Word written by the Evangelists” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2895) i.e. the New Testament. This last started when the Lord made His advent, for He Himself was the Word made flesh (John 1:1, 16). Thus, He was already omniscient, knowing “all truth previous to learning” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1469). Nonetheless, the Lord “introduced Himself by successive steps” into Divine Order, because the Divine Love in Him consisted of a “desire to save the whole human race” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2500). Moved by that love, but “from His own power,” He introduced himself into a “super-eminence of all wisdom and intelligence” (*ibid.*). All of this happened “gradually.” Although the Lord was born and grew up as any other child (*ibid.*), yet He grew “more quickly than other boys” (*True Christian Religion* 89).

Now, the entire Old Testament prophesies every detail of His actual life and work on earth, “such as it was to be in the world, even as to perceptions and thoughts, for these were foreseen and provided because from the Divine” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2523). Consequently, the Lord from infancy willed to “imbue” or “instruct Himself with no other knowledge’s than those of the Word, which was open to Him—from Jehovah Himself, His Father.” It was an urgent undertaking for Him, because “nothing is said in the Word that does not in its inmost have regard to Him, and that has not first come from Him” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1461). Not only was the whole of the Lord’s life “such as it was going to be” already written, but in addition everything He read had to do with Himself, and had indeed first come from Himself!

He saw Himself as both the subject and source of the text. Here then was the Lord as a boy, from “His infancy onwards” acquiring the factual knowledge of the Hebrew texts, the Divine meaning of which He already knew within Himself. This learning He accomplished by “revelations from Himself—and speaking with Jehovah as with Himself” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1999), thus by a “continual communication and internal conversation with Jehovah” His own soul (*Arcana Coelestia* 1791). “The Lord from His own power conjoined His external man with His internal and filled His cognitions with celestial things...according to Divine order and finally in the celestial things [stemming from His] infancy—As the Lord implanted cognitions in celestial things, so He had perception” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1616:5).

By instructing and leading Himself in this way, He came into such a power “when He was [still] a boy” that “by it He conquered and subjugated the most direful hells” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1401, 1434). These were the “giants” or Nephilim in Genesis 6 who claimed God existed only in themselves (*Arcana Coelestia* 1268). The Lord who alone did have God in Himself, could as a boy conquer them, without which it would have been “all over” with man, and “none could be saved” (*Arcana Coelestia* 582, 1266, 7686).

The Lord made Himself outwardly the Word, which He already was inwardly from eternity by fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies: “The Word was made flesh, and we beheld His glory.” That is why the Gospels so often say, “that it might be fulfilled.” As a result, however, “people treated Him as they had treated the Word, which they did because He was the Word” (*Lord* 15). Those who had already crucified the Word now treated the Lord the same way! The process reached its culmination when “the Lord said I thirst, that it might be fulfilled—He received the vinegar, [and] He said, It is finished” (John 19:28, 30). Here the New Testament Scripture “it is finished” means the Lord’s completion of fulfilling the Old Testament Scripture (cf. *Lord* 11, *True Christian Religion* 262). That is what the Lord accomplished on earth: fulfilling the Old

Testament.

However, while He was doing this, He Himself also taught, His teachings becoming the New Testament for the coming Christian Church: “The reason why it is said that ‘the Holy Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified,’ is that while the Lord was in the world He Himself taught Divine truth” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9818). The duration of the Lord’s life on earth lasted anywhere from the year 6 b.c. to 36 a.d. Pilate’s tenure as Prefect was from 26 to 36 a.d. During this era, and prior to the eventual composition of the Gospels from about 66 to 90 a.d., the risen Lord Himself spoke, but this was not yet the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit was “not yet” for “Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). Thus “much” of the Gospels were “from His own mouth” (*Sacred Scripture* 2), for it “was from the Divine itself [and] all the particular things that He said were representatives and significatives of Divine things, and so of the heavenly things of His kingdom and Church” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2900).

The Gospels are therefore “from the Lord’s own mouth,” and “the rest” of them came came “from the spirit of His mouth, which is the Holy Spirit” (*Sacred Scripture* 2). The arrangement of the four historical narratives was by His Holy Spirit. However, there was a time prior to the composition of New Testament, and that was while the Lord Himself was speaking on earth. Thus the “new covenant” (*True Christian Religion* 730) was at first an oral tradition, kept in followers’ memories. Writing it as a text did not occur until “after the resurrection, by the Holy Spirit either apart from or by means of angels and spirits” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9818). The words from the Lord’s own mouth were then recollected by “the spirit of His mouth,” inspiring the Evangelists to “Bring to your remembrance” and “Recollect everything I said to you” (John 14.26, 16.4) in order to actually write the Gospels. The earliest fragment of such writing is the Egerton fragment, from ca. 90 a.d., and the Codex Sinaiticus containing the earliest complete four Gospels as we have them now, dates from 350 a.d.! Before that, there was the Muratorian Canon version, ca. 200 a.d.

What was the very first “event” of writing the Gospels? We know that the Lord Himself never “wrote” anything. Or did He? Yes, when they brought the woman caught in adultery, we read,

“Jesus stooped and wrote in the ground” (John 8:2-11). About this event, we read “The Lord's writing twice in the earth in the temple signified their condemnation for adulteries in the spiritual sense; for the Scribes and Pharisees were those who adulterated the goods and falsified the truths of the Word, thus of the church” (*Apocalypse Explained* 222:7). It is interesting to think that the Lord Himself wrote a condemnation long before the writing of the Gospels. Is that a similar sequence to the Ten Commandment first being written with “the finger of God,” being the “first of the Word, being promulgated from Mount Sinai before the Word was written by Moses and the Prophets” (*Apocalypse Explained* 939)? Did the Lord Himself on earth also stoop down twice to write words of condemnation before the writing of the texts of the New Testament? In both Testaments, the Lord's own “finger of God” performed the very first act of writing.

Can we therefore put the writing of the New Testament into a similar sequence as we did with the Old? 1. The Lord at His Advent already knew the Word, but studied it in order to fulfill all scriptures of the Old Testament. 2. During His ministry, He Himself spoke Divine truth starting an oral tradition. 3. He stooped and wrote in the ground, twice. 4. After the resurrection, He as the Comforter or Holy Spirit enlightened His followers to repeat the words He had spoken “from His own mouth,” as on the road to Emmaus. 5. The authors of the Epistles wrote from enlightenment to express main doctrines in plain language. (N.B. the “epistles of Paul, which have not an internal sense,” were permitted to become central for the Christian Church, “lest,” we read, “the Church should work evil to the Word of the Lord, in which there is an internal sense” *Spiritual Experiences* 4824. The Epistles became a “decoy”). 6. The Lord as the Holy Spirit or “spirit of His mouth” inspired the recollection of His own words, and the collation of all Gospel materials. 7. He used the society “Gabriel” to inspire the Qur'an to be drawn from

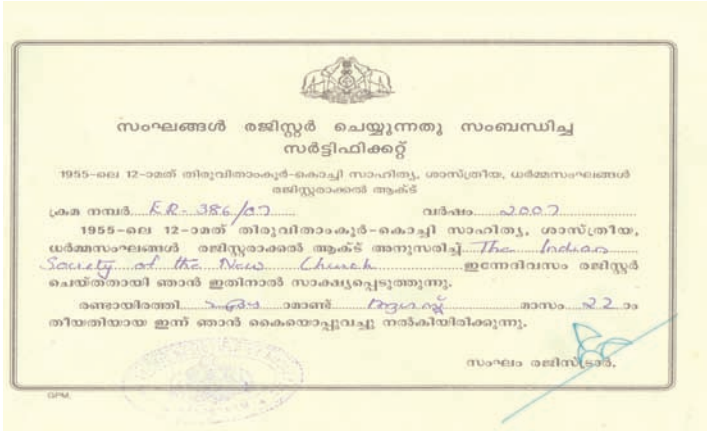
“both testaments” (*True Christian Religion* 833:4). The Qur'an replaced the Christian Word among Arabs in the sixth century a.d. just when Christian councils were creating dogmas on the Trinity. (cf. *Divine Providence* 255, *True Christian Religion* 833). 8. The Lord's providence preserved the New Testament until the Second Advent, which is another story!

Let us recall that “in the beginning” the Lord taught and led the first human beings on this earth “face to face,” a practice that continued all the way up to the Most Ancient Church. “Face to face,” meant that the Word to them “was not” anything other than Lord Himself! And when at the Advent the “seed of the woman had trampled the head of the serpent,” now “He Himself taught Divine truth” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9818) “face to face” once again! There was at first no other Word than the Lord's own mouth! The people “heard Him gladly” (Mark 6:20) for “no man ever spoke like this man” (John 7:46). That was the oral era of the new gospel truth, lasting until the destruction of the Temple, 70. a.d.

By around 66 a.d., they think Mark wrote his Gospel, followed around 80 a.d. by Matthew and Luke, and 90 a.d. by John. Both Matthew and Luke incorporate most of “Mark” in the same sequence, but interspersed by shared material not found in Mark,—the mysterious source “Q” of modern scholarship. Whatever may be the case, this written New Testament was “sufficient cause” for 2000 years of Christian history. Although the first Christians saw this truth as in a “morning light” (*True Christian Religion* 109), they were *not* yet “Christian” enough to form a New Heaven (*Coronis* xxxi). They were mostly very “simple people” so the full truth “could not be revealed to them, since, had it been, it would not have been understood and would have been of no use to them” (*True Christian Religion* 206). There were already predictions of Christianity destroyed by their initial heresies and schisms later augmented during Church councils (*True Christian Religion* 378, 163, 177, 206, 632, 634, 640). All the prophecies of a New Jerusalem descending and of the Second Coming when “the Spirit of truth shall guide you into all truth...for He shall receive of Mine, and shall declare it unto you” (John 16:13-14) were taking center stage. What historical rumbles initiated that event?

Church News

THE FIRST OFFICAL MEETING OF THE NEW CHURCH IN INDIA



The registration certificate for the New Church in India requires an official address, which is in the city Cochin in Kerala District,

The Statement of Purpose: "The object of the NEW CHURCH IN INDIA IS TO WORSHIP The Lord Jesus Christ as the One God of heaven and earth, to live a righteous life as it has been set forth in the Sacred Scriptures and in the theological *Writings* of Emanuel Swedenborg, and to spread the NEW CHURCH IN INDIA to all people in India who embrace the faith of the NEW CHURCH IN INDIA."



Here is Mr. Peter Devassy, with Rev. Goran Appelgren. We may call Mr. Devassy the Founder of the New Church in India.



After a Church Service at the New Church in India Conference.



A larger group at the Conference. There were eight baptisms and Rev. Appelgren administered the Holy Supper

A NEW BOOK PRESENTING CONTENTS
OF HEAVEN AND HELL

Back in 1766 a man in Europe printed a book on the afterlife made of quotations from the *Writings*. Alas, the book was confiscated. Swedenborg told the man not to be discouraged. Swedenborg himself had printed a volume of the *Writings* in small installments to reach people “in an easier manner than in whole volumes.” Ed Cranch suggests that Swedenborg was then “perhaps looking for ways to make this precious gift from the Lord available to more people” (*NCL*, 1999, page 259).

In 1938 the Swedenborg Society of London produced a considerably shortened version of the book: *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*. The many quotations from the *Arcana Coelestia* “have been omitted in this edition, which accounts for the gaps in the numbering of the paragraphs.” This resulted in a handy paperback of only 112 pages which proved popular and was reprinted a number of times. In 1990 a new translation was printed with a striking cover.—Well, I have put together a book in certain respects similar to the one confiscated in 1766. It is called:

“AFTERLIFE, a Guided Tour of Heaven and Its Wonders.”

It was published by the Swedenborg Foundation in September.

I would like to mention a useful paperback published by Seminar Books of London in 1993. It was called, “The Shorter Heaven and Hell”. It is about the same size as “Afterlife”.

Don Rose

THEY WERE NEW CHURCH.

BY THE REV. ROBERT COLE

A gathering, which included clergy, nurses and physicians, was listening to the gentle words of a very distinguished dying Swedish Nobleman and author. "What time is it?" he asked. The date was March 29, 1772. His attending nurse replied, "5:00 o'clock" (Greenwich Time). He said, "That is good!" A Lutheran minister present for the last rites of the Christian Church asked, "Is what you have written about Religion and Theology true?" The great Swede replied (in effect) "I aver in truth that all I have written and published regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, His Coming and the New Church now being established by Him on the earth, is the truth itself and only the truth." Emanuel Swedenborg passed quietly into the spiritual world at the age of eighty-four, this time not to return. Earlier that year, John Wesley, the Founder of Methodism had received a Letter from Swedenborg, who understood from the spiritual world that Wesley had wanted to meet with him. This was true! When Wesley had suggested meeting after his return from a trip in April, Swedenborg had indicated that would be too late, as he was going to go to the spiritual world on 29 March, "never to return." Emanuel Swedenborg had been born on another twenty-ninth, that of January 29 1688!

The Founding of the General Church took place on February 6, 1897, at about 3:00 p.m. Sunday afternoon in the Library of Rt. Rev. W.F. Pendleton at 2701 Alnwick Road, then Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, now Bryn Athyn. I was there today, as also many times in the past. Five courageous and dedicated Ministers came to Bishop Pendleton at that time and asked him to form a new General Church and be its Bishop. He apparently was one of those who felt that a new religion directly from the Lord should reflect a great historical city of origin, as a reminder of

the Golden age, the Most Ancient Church, and the Celestial and Spiritual heavens, now once again achievable by all who follow the Lord Himself in their life and faith. This City was Athens, Greece. The Lord Himself spoke highly of the good Greeks, who asked Him for His help in spiritual matters. (cf. John 12:20) William Penn, (who seems to be in heaven), in encouraging settlement by Welsh British people, had apparently set apart this highest area of Montgomery County to reflect their new homes in America to resemble the highlands of Wales from which they had come to begin a new life. Bryn Athyn in "Americanized" Gaelic Welsh means—"Hill of Cohesion," or perhaps in a more general way —"Hill of Friendship."

***MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE
GENERAL CHURCH***

DAILY READINGS LIST 2008

Due to a change in personnel and duties, there has been a delay in providing the daily reading list for 2008. The list is now being prepared and will begin with readings for February 1, 2008.

If you were on the mailing list for the 2007 daily readings, we will mail you copy of the 2008 list when it is ready. Otherwise, those who wish to receive the list please contact Susan Wright at the Federal Church Database office; PO Box 711, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 (tel: 267-502-4990, e-mail: susan.wright@anc-gc.com).

POSITION AVAILABLE

The Los Angeles New Church, a developing General Church congregation, seeks a Development Administrator who is enthusiastic about promoting New Church ideas and spirituality, as well as develop and manage a variety of projects as a means for accomplishing the mission of the congregation. Our goal is to find and manage a gathering place, so that we can host all sorts of services and events that enhance people's spiritual living and builds community.

We are looking for a self-starter who is capable of working with little direct supervision. The successful candidate will be a "people person," who is systematic, computer literate, and available part time until the project itself can sustain full employment. Wage is negotiable commensurate with prior experience. The minimum term is for nine months, with significant performance reviews relative to specific benchmarks. Subsidized housing is available. The complete job description is available upon request. Email: info@newchurchla.org

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An on-line family magazine from
the G.C. Office of Education
featuring materials for all ages
focused on a new theme every
month.

Love of Children—February, 2008
The King of Kings—March, 2008
The Way to Heaven—April, 2008