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**About the New Church**

The New Church (General Church of the New Jerusalem) is based on the Bible, and on the teachings of the 18th Century Scientist and Theologian, Emanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg's mission was to bring Christianity into a new era of understanding, so as to prove that religion can and does make sense. In Swedenborg's 35 volumes of theology, what is set forth is the Lord's plan for a rebirth of Christianity, and a new and clear understanding of who He is in His own Word and in our own lives. The New Church teaches about a God of love and mercy, a clear path to happiness and heaven, answers about life, life after death, faith, love, and understanding. The New Church is spread throughout the world, and many important individuals have been influenced by Swedenborg's teachings. Books of or about Swedenborg and the New Church are also available to order from our book store online at [www.newchurch.org](http://www.newchurch.org).

**Basic Tenets of the New Church**

**God**

God is Love Itself, and that Love is revealed in the personage of the Lord Jesus Christ, a Divinely Human God reaching out to all.

**Salvation**

The Lord's universal church includes all people who live a good life according to their own religious beliefs. All people can go to heaven as long as they do what they believe is right in the sight of their God.

**Freedom**

People should be free to find their own spiritual path, and must not be forced to believe anything or to do anything any church teaches against their will. Individual spiritual growth and freedom go hand in hand.

**Spiritual Growth**

Spiritual rebirth is a process. The path to spiritual life is one of spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection. Faith, and a life according to one's faith, is a dynamic process of change and growth. Individuals who are growing in the Lord continue to grow forever.

### **Sacred Scripture**

The Bible is the Word of God and can be read on many different levels. There is a deeper symbolic meaning to the stories in the Bible which teaches individuals about their own spiritual lives. Swedenborg calls this deeper meaning the internal sense and reveals it in his 35 volumes of text called the "Writings" or the "Heavenly Doctrines."

### **Life after Death**

Life after death is real, and the details about that life have been explained in the teaching of Emanuel Swedenborg's book Heaven and Hell. All people who die wake up safe in the afterlife. Those who have made their life heavenly in this world find themselves in a heavenly way of life in the next. Those who have chosen to make their life a hell in this world find this reality waiting for them in the next. People freely choose their eternal destiny.

### **Married Love**

The love in marriage is a special gift from the Lord. When spiritual principles are applied not only to one's spiritual growth, but also to the marriage relationship, troubled times can be overcome, and that marriage will grow in friendship, mutual support, and happiness. Genuine marriage does not end with death, but continues to eternity.

### **Second Coming**

The second coming of Christ does not mean the destruction of all of creation and a fierce judgment on humankind. The second coming is taking place right now, in a new understanding of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the teachings of the New Church, and brought to being in our individual and collective lives. This coming of the Lord is the dawn of a new age of genuine Christianity.

### **About Emanuel Swedenborg**

1688 – 1772 Emanuel Swedenborg was first known in his time for his scientific accomplishments. At age 57, he had a major spiritual awakening and began to write books about the nature of God, the spiritual life, heaven and hell, a deeper meaning to the Bible, providence, marriage, and the second coming of Christ. He believed that his teachings were Divinely inspired and that they would be the foundation for the rebirth of Christianity.

Born in Stockholm, Sweden, on the 29th of January, 1688. The son of a clergyman and professor of theology, Swedenborg grew up in a household filled with moral, political, intellectual and philosophical dialogue. After his formal education at Uppsala University, at the age of twenty-two, Swedenborg began to travel.

Befitting a man of his intellectual strength and fervor, Swedenborg published many books on a vast number of subjects. Two subjects that he made particular advances in were metallurgy and biology. Especially impressive is the work he did in connection with the nervous system; he is generally credited with being the first to accurately understand the significance of the cerebral cortex and the respiratory movement of the brain tissues.

Throughout his education, Swedenborg was not satisfied with a purely physical approach to studying Humanity and the Universe. In particular, his ambition was to comprehend more fully the nature of the soul and to develop a new, more accurate cosmology than ever before. Based on his conviction that underlying all matter in the Universe was Divine force, he wrote of the relationships between matter and energy, between the finite and the Infinite, and between God and humanity. Among the books he wrote on these topics were: The Economy of the Animate Kingdom, The Brain, The Senses, and Rational Psychology.

Servant of the Lord In the month of April, 1745, Emanuel Swedenborg had an experience that forever changed his life - The Lord appeared to him and told him that a human person was needed to serve as the means by which God would further reveal Himself to humanity, somewhat

in the manner of the Biblical visions of the Old Testament. So began Swedenborg's life as a spiritual revelator.

From then until his death, Swedenborg studied the Bible, perfected his knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, and wrote numerous theological works in which he revealed the new Truths that have become the foundation for the New Church. In the numerous books (often referred to by people in the New Church as, simply, "The Writings"), he revealed the hidden, inner meaning to the stories of the Old and New Testaments, the fundamental nature of God, Humanity and Creation, the truth about the afterlife, the keys to our own personal spiritual growth, the real meaning of the Book of Revelation, and the beautiful inner secrets behind true loving marriages.

For the remainder of his life, Swedenborg continued to visit the other world and publish books. He also maintained an active life, taking part in political discussions in the House of Lords, of which he was a member, and writing on topics as diverse as Sweden's monetary policy and how to inlay tables. On Sunday, March 29th, 1772 at five o'clock in the afternoon, Emanuel Swedenborg entered into the Spiritual World for the final time, never to return again (incidentally dying exactly when he had earlier predicted he would). Since then, his Writings have affected countless people, directly and indirectly. The universal Theology put forth in his works has contributed to advancement of religious thought all across the world, from Christianity to Buddhism, and has inspired many well-known people, including Helen Keller, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Westley, Johnny Appleseed and more. The Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg have served as the foundation for a New Christian Church, which is growing all over the world.

#### **The General Church Incorporated**

The General Church Incorporated is a non-profit organization, incorporated in the State of Pennsylvania, for the purpose of holding and managing the physical and financial assets of the Church. The Corporation consists of any General Church member who, after three years' membership, has applied for membership in the corporation. The board of directors of the General Church Incorporated is selected from this body. It is the board of directors that is charged with assuring the legal, financial and business welfare of the General Church.

In addition, there are affiliated church Groups, Circles and Societies around the world, some incorporated in their respective locations, some not. Their bylaws will state to what extent they are aligned with the General Church Incorporated. Each local organization must be recognized by the executive bishop through formal application.

The General Church and the Academy of the New Church are separate legal institutions. They have separate boards and bylaws and separate funding mechanisms. There are connections between the two in that the President of the Academy is a General Church minister and is answerable to the Executive Bishop of the General Church. But the day-to-day affairs of operating the Academy and the General Church are, by and large, independent.

#### **The General Church Unincorporated**

The General Church is now the largest of the six worldwide church organizations that use the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg as the basis of their theology. The others are the Convention Church (headquartered in Boston, MA), the Conference Church (mostly in Europe), the Australian Association of the New Church, and the Lord's New Church which is Nova Hierosolyma (also located in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania). (A sixth organization, the New Church in South Africa, may have larger numbers, but its membership is much less structured). Note that the church organizations in Australia and South Africa are distinct from the General Church societies in these locations.

The mission of the General Church is to cooperate with the Lord in building the New Church in the hearts, minds, and lives of all people through fostering, first, the belief that the Old and New Testaments and the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg are the Lord's Word, and second, a love for and obedience to that Word.

Both the General Church, unincorporated and incorporated, are headed by an Executive Bishop, and the ecclesiastical affairs (church services, sacred rites) are performed by a clergy that must be ordained by the current (or previous) bishop. New bishops are selected by the clergy, 'seconded' by the board of directors of the General Church Corporation and, finally, voted on by the membership of the unincorporated General Church.