



The Sower

"Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes and look to the fields for they are already white for harvest" - John 4:35

Newsletter of The New Church of Concord

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PASTOR'S CORNER

Dear Friends,

I hope that you all had a merry Christmas and happy New Year. Join us on Sunday, January 9th at 10:30am for our New Year's Holy Supper service. Our regional pastor, the Rev. Lawson Smith, will also be visiting this weekend for my development review.

I for one am very glad that the New Year is upon us. With the New Year comes the hope for new beginnings. I must say that over the last several months I've been running on fumes, struggling to find much inspiration in my work. So this new year I'm looking forward to trying to rekindle my love for serving the Lord and His Church. Making changes in your life starts with small steps. So I'm hoping to find some little things I can do to help me in this task. I would like to invite you to join me in finding some small New Year's resolution for yourself that involves better serving the New Church of Concord and this congregation: Volunteer to serve on a committee; give a little more financially; help with the gardens this Spring; remember that even making an effort to join a class or come to church more often is a way of serving not only yourself but the congregation of which you are a part. If everybody makes a small effort in their own way, I'm sure we will all find ourselves more inspired to be a part of the New Church of Concord community. Happy New Year!

- Matthew
(new blog: www.internalsense.com)

January Recitation

"So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel answered, 'Speak, for Your servant hears.'" (1 Samuel 3:9-10)

The New Church



of
Concord

COME WORSHIP WITH US ON SUNDAY

at The New Church of Concord

Teens Sunday school at 9:30 a.m.

Worship at 10:30am

(Younger children Sunday school during later part of service)

Good **EXTERNAL** Habits

There are many examples and even warnings in the Writings about living a life that is externally good and holy, but that is internally evil and corrupt. The Writings are not shy about pointing out how both the Israelitish church and the Christian church eventually became like “whitewashed sepulchres” (Matt. 23:27) They were made up of people who lived externally holy lives and yet internally hated their neighbors and did not love the Lord. But we cannot forget that when used correctly external things and habits are actually vital. External habits are what the Lord uses to gradually lead us to what is more internal.

One example of this has to do with evil. We all know that it is not good enough to simply avoid doing evil externally: “Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matt. 5:28) And yet the Lord knows that we do not start off life with pure intentions. By more externally getting into the habit of not thinking about and committing evil, the Lord can gradually lead us to a more internal rejection of evil as well: “When anything presents itself to a man that he knows to be dishonest and unjust, but to which his mind is borne, it is simply necessary for him to think that it ought not to be done because it is opposed to the Divine precepts. If a man accustoms himself so to think, and from so doing **establishes a habit** of so thinking, he is gradually conjoined to heaven; and so far as he is conjoined to heaven the higher regions of his mind are opened; and so far as these are opened he sees whatever is dishonest and unjust, and so far as he sees these evils they can be dispersed....When he has made a beginning, the Lord performs all the good deeds with him, and causes him not only to see the evils to be evils, but also to refrain from willing them, and finally to turn away from them.” (HH 533) Notice the order of events here - We start by simply **thinking** that something is evil and so getting into the habit of not doing it; then the Lord helps us to eventually not **will** what is evil as well.

Another example of how important external habits are has to do with worship. Which does the Lord care more about, that we are physically worshiping Him or that we internally love Him and are living a good life? Obviously the later. And yet this doesn't mean that we should not externally worship the Lord. When we make a habit of doing this the result is that internal states of holiness and love are aroused. One of the most important passages I know of about worship is *Arcana Caelestia* 1618. It speaks of how a person is worshiping all the time if love and charity abide in him. However, it then goes on to say: “While a person is in the world however he ought certainly to participate in external worship as well; for it is **by external worship that internal things are aroused**, and by means of external worship external things are kept holy so as to enable internal to flow in.” (AC 1618) Again, we see an example of something that starts off as an external habit, eventually leading to something more internal.

So this new year, don't underestimate the power of getting into good external habits: Read the Word daily; take time to physically kneel down and worship the Lord; regardless of your internal state physically resist doing what is evil. An external life without an internal one is useless, dead, and even evil. However it is often through comparatively external efforts that the Lord can eventually lead you to a true internal state of life.

MLG

SOCIETY ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS

New Year's Holy Supper Service: Sunday, January 9th, 10:30am

Join us for the start of a new year by making some time for the Lord in your life. Holy Supper will be offered at the end of the service.



Regional Pastor Visit

Our regional Pastor, the Rev. Lawson Smith, will be visiting us on the weekend of January 9th. While here he will be doing a development review with Matthew. He will also be meeting with the members of the Executive Committee and the Pastor's Council after church on the 9th.

Make An Effort to Join a Class This Year!

Remember that there are many opportunities to gather with friends for great discussions on New Church teachings. Why not choose one to get involved with? If none of these work for you, talk to the Pastor about other possibilities:

Friday morning class: Weekly 9:30am - 11:00am. We are currently working our way through the Arcana, but also take breaks from this to talk about other topics.

Wednesday evening class: Every other week 7:30pm - 9:00pm. We are just finishing up the book of Revelation and hope to pick another topic soon.

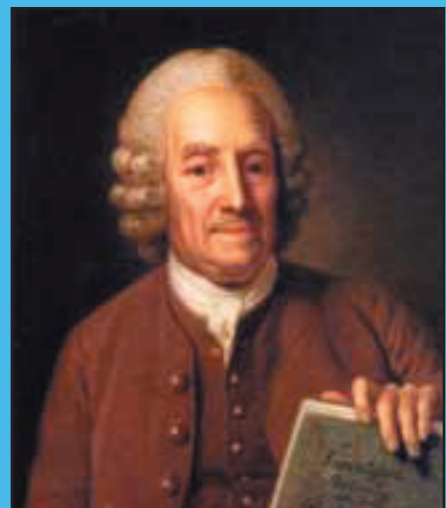
Young adults: Wednesday, monthly at 7:00pm. Currently discussing minor prophets.

Disciples Sunday School: Sundays at 9:30am. Currently reading through The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine.

Monthly Friday or Saturday Evening Classes: Various topics.

Swedenborg's Birthday Dinner and Talk

Please be sure to join us on Saturday **January 29th at 6:00pm**, for our Swedenborg's Birthday dinner and talk. We will start with a potluck dinner at 6pm at the church followed by a talk and discussion across the parking lot at the Harvey Wheeler Center at 7:30pm. Our guest speaker will be Mr. Bruce Henderson. Bruce will be talking about Swedenborg's call and our similar call to be disciples in spreading the Lord's Word. He will also be specifically talking about the topic of his new book, **Why Does God Let It Happen?** While the dinner is more for our current congregation, please feel free to invite friends and family to the talk afterwards (and to the dinner if you would really like to).





Join us on Sunday, February 6th, at our 10:30am service as we begin a seven week spiritual growth program called PAUSE. This program is all about slowing down and making your spiritual life a priority. The program will run from February 6th through March 20th. During this time you will have the opportunity to come to weekly worship service focused on the topic of making space for God; join a weekly class or discussion group; and/or individually read through a workbook with daily readings and applications. If you would like more information on this program or to order a workbook please contact the Pastor.

Week #1 (Feb 6): How does God speak to me?

Week #2 (Feb 13): Why did God create me?

Week #3 (Feb 20): Who is Jesus and how does He relate to my life?

Week #4 (Feb 27): How does the Lord work in my life?

Week #5: (Mar 6): What does the Lord want from me?

Week #6 (Mar 13): How do I follow the Lord?

Week #7 (Mar 20): How does the Lord want me to serve others?

Integrating Science and Spirituality

George Gantz is heading up an exciting effort to put on a series of lectures and discussions on the topic of integrating science and spirituality. If you are interested in this topic and/or would like to help with this project please contact George (gantz1@mac.com). The New Church has many teachings to add to this conversation!

New Offertory Envelops

New offertory envelops are now available at the church for 2011. Please note that you will most likely be getting a new number this year as we are starting a new filing system. Please contact Jane (admin@newchurchconcord.org) with any question or to request a pack of envelops.

Bishop Selection Input

The council of the clergy is in the early stages of selecting our next Executive Bishop. As part of this process each Pastor is asked to take council from those he serves. During the next several months I will be asking for this council at various committee meetings and also finding a time for input from anyone who would like to give it. In the mean time, please feel free to contact me with any questions or input you would like to give about this process.

General Church Assembly 2011 - Save the date!

The Bryn Athyn Society, in conjunction with the General Church, is happy to announce the next General Church Assembly, which will be held in Bryn Athyn, PA, from June 23rd to June 26th, 2011. The theme of this Assembly is, "To help people grow closer to the Lord God Jesus Christ in His Second Coming." If your interested in getting involved or have any questions, please contact the Assembly Committee at 267.502.4864 or hannah.lermitte@anc-gc.org

Community Corner

If you have anything you'd like to share with our church community please let us know!

Two Baptisms



Matthew and Leigh Albrecht had their daughter, Gabriele Grae, baptized into the New Church on November 27th, 2010.

Matthew and Eliza Genzlinger had their daughter, Clara Evelyn, baptized into the New Church on December 26th, 2010.

Congratulations to both families!

A New Baby Is On The Way!

Kevin and Jessica Duda are expecting their first child in early June 2011! Congratulations to the family!

Hans and Inga are overjoyed to be back in the congregational fold once again!

We would like to thank all of you for your thoughts, prayers, cards, emails, phone calls, personal inquiries, and offerings of delicious foods and rides. In addition, thank you to all who took care of all the churches musical needs during our prolonged absence.

David Graham Moving

David Graham is moving to Burlington Vermont. We wish him all the best and hope to see him if he is ever in the Concord area visiting. I will be sure to share his new contact information when I get it.