



*The mission of the General Church is to help people live a heavenly life through the teachings of the Lord God Jesus Christ in His Second Coming.*

Dear members and supporters of the General Church,

**Welcome to the first of many General Church e-newsletters.** We hope to connect with you, as a supporter of the Church, a few times throughout the year to share the wonderful projects and programs that the General Church and its staff are diligently working to produce. In the e-newsletter, you will find updates from General Church Education, the Journey Programs (Office of Outreach), news from the Bishop, a section highlighting one of our New Church congregations, and more.

**News from the Bishop's Desk:** One of my delightful responsibilities as Bishop is to visit congregations around the world. We recently returned from a visit to Australia. It was wonderful to see how the Rev. Todd and Jen Beiswenger have embraced the **Hurstville congregation** and been warmly received in turn. We attended the summer camp which includes General Church members and the New Church in Australasia. It was a glorious weeklong event – worship and instruction in the mornings for all ages, afternoons filled with recreational activities, and evenings with social interactions – a reflection of heaven! On the way back I was able to visit the **New Church in the Philippines**. This independent New Church body has a rich history and a strong connection with our San Diego congregation, where many Filipinos have taken up residence. Rev. Mark Perry, pastor in San Diego, was also present.

We hope you enjoy the news that we share as we work to achieve our mission.

Thank you,

Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith



New Church summer camp organized by the Hurstville congregation held at a retreat center located about an hour south of Sydney, Australia.



GENERAL CHURCH EDUCATION

### **Early Childhood Gift Mailings**

A few times a year, about 400 families with children ages 0-6 receive gifts from General Church Education (GCED). In the past, gifts have included puzzles, June 19<sup>th</sup> scratch-off calendars, Easter songs, books, and more. This past Christmas, our gift was a small wooden nativity set for young children to paint and play with. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. Do you know a family who would enjoy receiving these gifts? If so, we invite you to contact Sarah Odhner at [sarah.odhner@newchurch.org](mailto:sarah.odhner@newchurch.org) to be added to the list.



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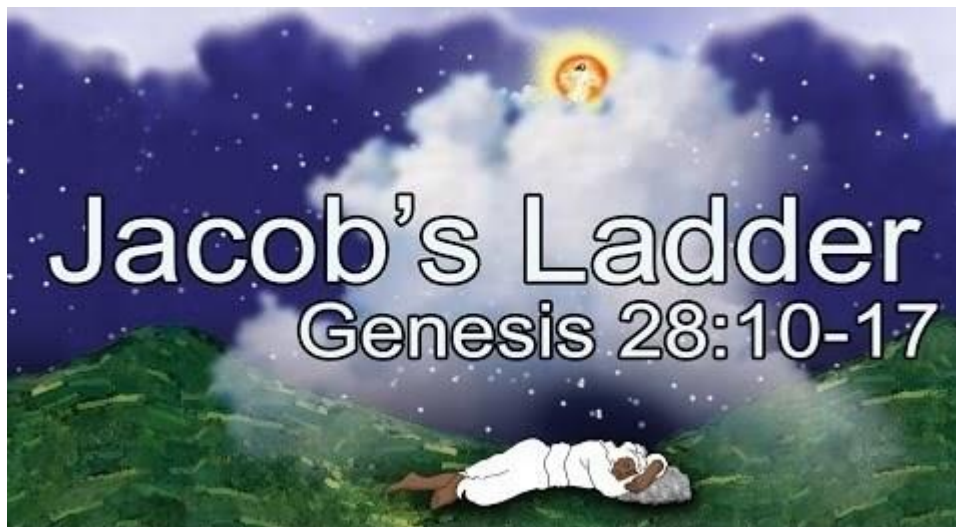
### **1,000,000 views and counting**

The GCED YouTube channel has reached over 1,000,000 views!

This resource offers 80+ videos illustrating stories from the Word, songs, and lessons.

Would you like to help us reach 1,000 subscribers?

[Subscribe to find out about new videos.](#)



## Happy Birthday Swedenborg!

Born January 29, 1688

View these videos from General Church Education to learn more about the life of Swedenborg:

[Swedenborg | Childhood](#)

[Swedenborg | Scientist](#)

[Swedenborg | Revelator \\*NEW\\*](#)



Stay connected with GCED through the [New Church Sunday School Facebook](#) page.



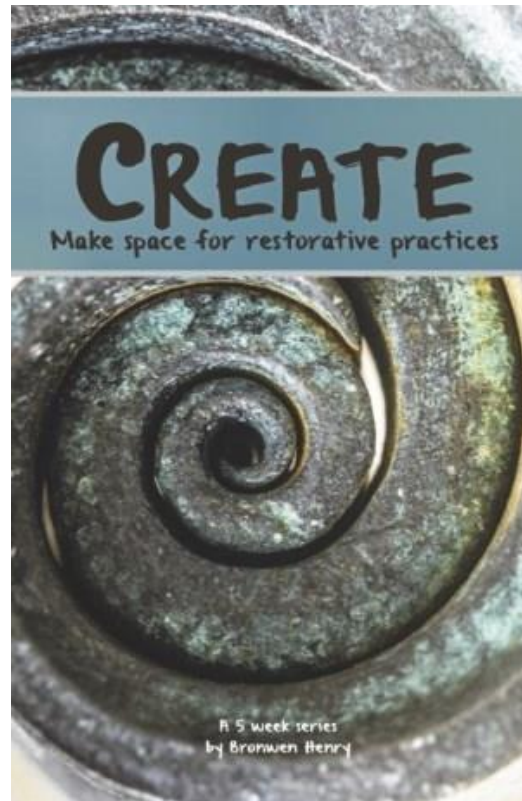
OUTREACH

### Exciting News!

Early in the new year, New Church Journey was approached by *The Dr. Oz show*, a morning television program with 3.5 million daily viewers, to provide short video content in support of a new segment of the show called "Faithful Fridays." The first show of this segment airs **February 3rd**. The Journey video team is in the production stages, and is collaborating with "NewChurchLive" and the Swedenborg Foundation's "Off the Left Eye." This collaboration is essential, and the hope is to use the platform of short videos to share spiritual insights to a much wider audience.

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## The Latest Small Group Series



*Mindful Communication Challenge* is a 5-week series about bringing love, wisdom, and use into our words to communicate more effectively. It draws on Jesus' Parables of Heaven in the New Testament that teach us how to create a more heavenly society here on earth. Last fall, we had 7 congregations running the program in North America. 10 congregations are running it internationally, including South Africa, Australia, and Togo in late winter/early spring.

*Create: Make space for restorative practices* is a new mini-series that runs 5 weeks, focusing on making an intention for those creative endeavors that help bring health and peace to our lives. In addition to scriptural readings, it features reflections from a number of New Church creative minds. Bryn Athyn Church is the first group running this, with a variety of focus-specific groups including quilting, drawing, and songwriting.

Workbooks are available to purchase at [New Christian Resources](http://New Christian Resources). Interested in organizing a small group? Please contact [campaignteam@newchurch.org](mailto:campaignteam@newchurch.org) for more information!

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## Strategic Plan Highlights | Participation

One strand of the General Church Strategic Plan ([view full plan here](#)) aims to expand participation and involvement in the life of the Church through two avenues--women and youth.

A 14-member **Women's Participation Task Force** have been exploring ways of inviting feminine wisdom and expertise more effectively into the life of the Church. We have looked at relevant teachings and considered such subjects as what "more effective listening" looks like. To be explored are the important topics of: what's happening or could happen around the church; how to work toward a more supportive culture; and ways to provide useful educational opportunities. We have a great group of dedicated individuals working toward a set of recommendations that we plan to share with board members and clergy at the clergy meetings in June. Your thoughts are important. We invite you to connect with the Task Force Co-Chairs:

Rev. Peter Buss, [peter.buss.jr@newchurch.org](mailto:peter.buss.jr@newchurch.org)

Jane Williams-Hogan, [Jane.Williams-Hogan@brynathyn.edu](mailto:Jane.Williams-Hogan@brynathyn.edu).

The **Youth Task Force** was formed to engage youth in the Church. In considering what would be useful, and in having conversations with young adults, we are looking to allocate a portion of a minister's time to work with young adults. We anticipate doing this in cooperation with Bryn Athyn College of the New Church and the Academy Secondary Schools. The goal is to provide programs for congregations who are working with young adults, develop direct engagement and communication, and create various events led by young adults, especially for those not living near a congregation.

If you have any thoughts on this, please contact Bishop

Keith, [brian.keith@newchurch.org](mailto:brian.keith@newchurch.org)

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## Meet a Minister

Rev. Samuel Lompo hails from Burkina Faso in West Africa, our only General Church minister in that country so far. He was ordained into the first degree of the priesthood in August 2013. In fact, he graduated from theological school, got ordained, and got married all in the space of two days! He has since started a church in Ouagadougou (pictured), bought a plot of land with GC assistance, and started a church building on it. He has written a book of basic beliefs of the New Church as a part of his evangelization efforts, and has since been ordained into the second pastoral degree. He and his wife, Stephanie, have a beautiful daughter named Jemima.

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## New Church Spotlight: Boynton Beach Retreat

Almost 100 participants traveled to Boynton Beach, Florida this February for a week of learning and relaxation. The week centered around an exciting array of lectures. Brian Henderson from Glencairn Museum talked about the uses of the Museum for the Academy and General Church Schools. Dr. Soni Werner addressed the dark side of humanity and altruism from both a forensic psychological and Swedenborgian perspective. Rev. Mac Frazier from Glenview shared the outcomes and lessons learned from the church plant in Austin, Texas. The week of friendship included a banquet along with fun outings. The Boynton Beach Retreat is now in its 28th year! Contact Bob Brickman, [bobbrickman@gmail.com](mailto:bobbrickman@gmail.com) if you would like to attend next year's retreat.

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