

February 2020

ECHO ECHO

Newsletter of the Washington Church of the New Jerusalem

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### From the Pastor

*"I never liked jazz music because jazz music doesn't resolve. . . I used to not like God because God didn't resolve. But that was before any of this happened."*

- Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz*

I love this quote, although it's not quite accurate. Jazz *does* resolve, just not when and/or how the listener often initially expects

it to. What do we mean when we say a piece of music “resolves”? Think of it as “returning home”. Take any piece of western music that you enjoy, listen to the beginning, and then skip forward and listen to the end. Hear how the two ends of the song fit together? In the middle of the song all sorts of things will happen to move you away from the feel of the opening, but by the time you get to the end, you feel like you are home again. (Music theory nerds have a more technical explanation but we don’t need to get technical just yet.) Also, even in the midst of the song, there will be little moments of the music moving away from home and then back toward home. There are chords that are more dissonant, that make you yearn for “resolution”, and the satisfying feel when the phrase comes back to the root chord. Likewise, individual notes in the melody will sometimes do funny, unexpected things, but they will always come back to the expected and familiar.

This pattern of *tension* and *release* exists in all music. What makes jazz special in this regard is that often in a piece of jazz the tension is followed not by release but by a new level of tension. Layer after layer gets built up so that sometimes the listener isn’t just yearning to go back home, but has in fact lost track of where home even was to begin with. Perhaps one of the most famous jazz performances to powerfully demonstrate this is John Coltrane’s “Giant Steps”. I’m listening to it now. Go ahead and look it up on Spotify or Youtube or somewhere and listen along with me, if you like. Hear that tension? Listen to it build and shift. Like it’s never going to resolve. Coltrane is deliberately messing with your musical intuition.

Some people don’t like jazz. That’s fine. Some jazz makes some people uncomfortable. It can be confusing to listen to. It doesn’t *satisfy* the way a lot of other musical forms do. But for me, that’s part of what I like about it. It’s messy, and complicated, and doesn’t go where you expect, and doesn’t give you everything you want when you want it, and yet it still makes a subtle kind of sense. It’s like life: full of ambiguity, complication, and patterns you think you can almost comprehend that then slip out of your mental grasp, daring you to go chasing after them again. Jazz is postmodern in this sense.

But good jazz *does* resolve. It just takes longer. Again, like life.

All of life, in fact, is a sequence of tension and release, over and over again, nested within larger sequences of tension and release, all the way up and down the scale. This is expressed to us in the Word many times over. The very first story in Genesis is a story of six days of labor and one day of rest: tension, then release. The book of Revelation taken as a whole is a persistent ratcheting up of tension, followed by the grand resolution of the Holy City New Jerusalem. Prophecy is followed by fulfillment. Crucifixion by resurrection.

Great storytelling is all about building dramatic tension, and then resolving it in some way that provides a cathartic release. Joke writing uses the “rule of three”: a joke is two statements that create a pattern and an expectation followed by a third statement that forces the listener to reevaluate that expectation in a sudden and

surprising way. Magic tricks do the same thing.

*We are meant to strive for resolution, and not endlessly dwell in tension. But the tension is there for the sake of moving us forward to the next resolution.*

The interaction of muscles and bones that allow humans and animals to move about the world is, boiled down to its abstract form, tension and release. Feel the next breath you take in, sensing the tension in your diaphragm, followed naturally by the exhale of release and relaxation of the body. During

childbirth, the expectant mother experiences waves of contractions, interspersed with small breaks--Sabbaths, if you will--leading to a final resolution: new life. Tension and release are everywhere.

Many people prefer rest over labor, peace over combat, victory over temptation, resolution over tension, answers over questions. But sometimes there is value in lingering in the tension. Dwelling in the ambiguity of it all. Becoming comfortable with uncertainty. Being uncomfortable, and just noting that discomfort and allowing it to be.

Likewise, while the Word contains the Lord's divine Truth, you still often may feel some discomfort while reading it. Occasionally, it may feel like you are experiencing a little dissonance. Yes, there are parts that are unambiguous, powerful in their clarity; and yes, feeling certainty around the important truths of the universe is a powerful and useful experience. But the promise to the New Church is that it is now permitted to "enter into" the mysteries of faith with understanding--which is not to say that we should expect to see it all clearly from start to finish. The Heavenly Doctrines do not fully banish all mystery, but rather illuminate it. The finite human mind often struggles to fully comprehend spiritual matters, although at the very least, it can with guidance at least discern the truth of them. It may all be comprehensible at some point, on some level, but not all of it right now. The Word contains an infinite depth of truth that will take you an eternity to unfold.

We are meant to strive for resolution, and not endlessly dwell in tension. But the tension is there for the sake of moving us forward to the next resolution. Maybe life right now around you feels complicated, dissonant, or unresolved. And that can be uncomfortable. But trust that there's a Master Composer, and He knows where He's taking it. And maybe take a moment to step back, and appreciate the tension, knowing that even if you can't see it from here, you're being led to a resolution. The route may be an unexpected one, but the Lord is still bringing you home.

Mac Frazier, 2020-01-28

## **Eldergarden 2020**

A little over 50 people gathered for Eldergarden this year, also known as The Retreat at Boynton Beach (even though it is actually at Delray Beach) for lectures, briefings, and fellowship. Several format changes made the event more vibrant and exciting this year: instead of three speakers, four lectures each, this year there were more speakers with a variety of four, three, two, or one talk each. Meetings were moved from the chapel to the Meeks meeting room where the acoustics and visuals were vastly improved.

Our own Devin Zuber, professor at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies in Berkeley, California, gave three dynamic talks. In the first he described the Center and the past history of the Convention theological school in Boston. The church has retained a small parcel of land, which is totally engulfed and surrounded by Harvard University campus buildings – like a metaphor for the New Church in the contemporary world. The parcel contains the original Swedenborgian Church, now declared a historic landmark, so it will be hard for anyone to knock it down in the near future. It also contains a new building that houses The Helen Keller Spiritual Life Center that endeavors to keep her legacy and commitment to New Church teachings before the public. Devin’s subsequent talks focused on his new book, The Language of Things. In essence this traces the influence of Swedenborg’s teachings on various 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century figures who led the movement to engage the outdoors, nature, birds, national parks, and what we would now call ecology.

We were privileged to hear Chelsea Odhner, production director of the Off the Left Eye internet project, describe the inner workings of this growing venture. They receive over 4,000 questions and comments weekly, and they are all answered! Seven moderators plus additional volunteers take on this task. OLE is now moving to physically bring together subscribers, as for example the June 5-8 “Off the Left Eye Experience” in Bryn Athyn, which is undoubtedly a dramatic new experiment in outreach. And that’s not all. Chelsea has been engaged in a multi-year project of in-depth interviews probing religious views in a diverse population. This is a groundbreaking instance of applying sociological anthropological tools with a New Church perspective. And on top of that Chelsea is a composer and song writer and played two of her pieces for us.

Rev. Alan Cowley, another local Mitchellville product, treated us to two theologically oriented talks. He explored such issues as the distinction between loves and affections, and the operation of associate spirits. Bruce Henderson, who has done so much to professionalize New Church Life, spoke on a number of church and doctrinal topics. He advised us that Walter Orthwein plans to retire from his work with the journal.

Steve David brought us up to date on refinements in the New Christian Bible Study on-line resource. And Tim Bilger of the Swedenborg Foundation gave us a rundown on the myriad expanding ventures of the foundation.

The organizers are to be commended for all their work throughout the year to produce a successful meeting, and they clearly set a high standard with this year's event. ~ Bill Radcliffe



Plans for the celebration of the WNCs 50th Anniversary are coming along September 11 – 13, 2020. There are lots of big and

small jobs that will need to be covered. Take a chance, sign up and get to know people even better while supporting our school and community. Guaranteed to make you feel great working on a project that so many will enjoy.

The 50th Anniversary committee is seeking input on relocation of the school bell and plaque placement. There are two locations being discussed for the bell: To move the bell to the right side of the main door and properly secure it. Or to put the bell outside the east end door centrally placed, visible from the driveway, with new benches and planted trees. We are also discussing these memorial benches and trees. If you have an opinion about these (be heard now) or would like to serve on the actual BELL/Remembrance committee, please email Kathy Johns: [kcjswim@aol.com](mailto:kcjswim@aol.com)

### Things you can DO

- Join the Facebook group for updates and info: Link > <https://www.facebook.com/groups/wncsalumni/>
- Get the word out to alumni to save the date.

- Answer your alumni questionnaire when it comes to your email.
- Join the core planning group.

## Event Planning Help Needed

Would you like to help with the Saturday night entertainment? ***WE NEED help with set up and sound.*** Outdoor games head for Friday night party. ***Can you run an online auction for fund raising?*** We need someone to coordinate drinks for all the weekend events. ***We need someone to coordinate after church food (leftovers).*** General Set up and take down head for all events - you find your volunteers. ***General Clean up Head to oversee proper wrap up for all events - coordinate with take down Head.*** Create and/or put up Bulletin Board Displays. ***Maintenance work needed to spruce up our campus before the September 11-13 weekend.*** Please contact Kathy Johns by phone or email 240-476-5058 or [kcjswim@aol.com](mailto:kcjswim@aol.com)

## Announcements



**Home for Sale in Acton Park:** Edward, Wystan, and Owen Simons are leaving their Mitchellville MD home June of this year, to get family and other supports in the care of Owen. And this means that their home ***could be yours!*** Here is some info about it:

**11910 Progress Lane** is a 5 bedroom, 2 and ½ bath home, with a 1 bedroom, 1 bath apartment attached to it. The house was designed for us by Stewart Smith, with many unique features: 9 ft. ceilings, open floor plan, 6 ft. windows with transoms, two fireplaces, and hardwood floors. The kitchen was recently renovated; the leased solar panels save over \$600 annually in electric costs. The house sits on a ½ acre lot with south-eastern exposure and established and well-maintained gardens. Acton Park offers access to trails thru woods and fields, and pretty great neighbors. A five minute walk takes you to the Washington New Church and its excellent school. We are 15

minutes from Metro, 40 minute drive from two airports, and 30-45 minute drive from four downtowns: DC, Annapolis, Alexandria, and Baltimore. The Simons hope to sell for \$600,000, but the best offer takes the cake. Please do contact us – we would love to see our home go to someone who would appreciate being part of the church community. (*Edward 240-882-6868, or Wystan 301-237-1283*)

**Boxes Needed:** Wystan needs good strong Boxes, if people have them lying around I am happy to recycle. (301-237-1283)  
Thanks!

**Electric Dryer:** Sears Kenmore 80 series dryer. In good condition but needs a new cord. Yours for a \$50 donation to the church. Free delivery to the church. Contact Eric Genzlinger.

**[eric@genzlinger.net](mailto:eric@genzlinger.net)**

### **Auto Mechanic near the Church**

Pete Peak, next door neighbor to Lincoln Smith, at 3711 Enterprise Road, is a retired mechanic with a four-car garage who is happy to serve church members with discounted prices for his labor on things like brake work and oil changes. He says, buy your own parts and let him do the work at something less than the going rate. Call him for more details and tell him Mike Gladish sent you. Just be prepared for a friendly chat about his unique spiritual perspective on life! 301-335-6869





**Giving envelopes:** For several years now WCNJ has used giving envelopes to help people to contribute to the church anonymously with cash or checks and still get a tax deduction. I started using these envelopes when they first came out and found them to be a painless way to give. Each week, whether I go to church or not I have

an envelope reminding me to give to the church. This helped me develop a better habit of giving and when the new envelopes would come in in January I would try to increase my donation by just a wee bit and it has been painless!

The 2020 giving envelopes have arrived. Please come pick your box up or have me send it to you. If you have never tried it, we have a box for you! ~ Bonnie Cowley

**Dear Theta Alpha friends and members,**



- We have a lot on the docket coming up in the next few months!
- We are looking for someone who is willing to head up gifts for pastors, organists, and teachers. This person would be responsible for sending mail a couple times a year asking for donations from the society.
- The upper school play director (Jana S), could use a prompter, especially in March. She is also looking for a sturdy, medium sized trunk (small enough to be carried, but sturdy enough to sit on).
- Valentine's Day Care Cards: We could use some help with filling these out and mailing them.
- Care packages: The deadline for donating food etc. for the care packages is February 13th, and help packing them would be nice as well!
- TAG is planning a service project for March. If you have interest in participating, let me know!

If you have interest in any or all of this, please let me know!

Carina Heinrichs – TAG President



**This month we would like to call special attention to the USES that your church contributions support.**

First of all, please remember that the church **school** is supported primarily by endowment income and tuition payments. It is the **church** that relies on regular member contributions. And the church's uses include everything associated with public worship, adult education, pastoral support, communication and administration, not to mention service work and social life centered on our mutual love for the Lord. Any of us at any time may not be able to participate fully in all of these uses, but in order that they are available when we *or others* need them it is important that we contribute to support them.

In addition there are salaries, utility bills, plumbing and repair bills, routine maintenance and insurance bills to be paid every month no matter how many or few attend the scheduled events.

But here's the great thing: if everybody chipped in **regularly**, and contributed even a small percentage of his or her net income, we could cover all the basic costs handily. And if we all gave to the church as a personal budget **priority** we would be able to develop and expand our uses significantly.

In 2 Samuel 24 King David approaches a man named Araunah to buy a piece of land from him so that he can build an altar and worship the Lord there. Generously, Araunah offers him not only the land but the sacrifice as well, free of charge. But David answers, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing."

We value what we pay for, and we pay for what we value. Won't you please consider beginning a new habit of contributing regularly – or perhaps adjusting your contribution just a little upward?

Thank you! ~ Your Contributions Comm. - Jean, Bob and Mike

## **February 2020 Events**

Saturday, February 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:00pm – **Swedenborg’s Birthday banquet – w/ Scott Frazier**

Monday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:30pm – **School Board Meeting**

Wednesday, February 5<sup>th</sup> at 10am – **Morning Arcana Study group** at Gladishes.

Friday – Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> – **Women’s Respite weekend on Kent Island**

Monday, February 10<sup>th</sup> at 8:00pm – **Heavenly Doctrines Book Group** at Cooper’s

Tuesday, February 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm – **BoT Meeting**

Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup> – **WNCS Closed for President’s day**

Wednesday, February 19<sup>th</sup> at 10:00m – **Morning Arcana Study group** at Gladishes.

Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm

Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> at 8:00pm – **Dessert and Hors d’oeuvres Contest** at Brent & Amanda’s

Monday, February 24<sup>th</sup> at 8:00pm – **Heavenly Doctrines Book Group** at Cooper’s

### ***Looking ahead...***

Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm – **Pot Luck Supper *followed by Winter society meeting* at 8:00pm**

Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 8:00am – **Pancake Breakfast *followed by (much overdue) Work Party* at 9:00am**

## February News

### *Travel News*

**Matt and Sara Smith** flew off to sunny Palm Springs, CA the first week of January. Matt had to attend business meetings, but Sara got to play. She hiked in snowy mountains and wandered through a palm oasis in the middle of the dessert, which was pretty cool. She also toured downtown Palm Springs a bit and enjoyed the beautiful flowers there - a nice break from chilly Maryland.

**Bill and Dorothy Radcliffe** went off to the Boynton Beach Retreat once again. The lure of South Florida plus old friends and relatives plus stimulating classes were irresistible once again.

**Mike Gladish** made a pastoral trip to Seattle that included a stay with his old friend, Tom Andrews (best man at his wedding) and his wife, Lauren, and some other fun stuff. Long trip, though. While he was away, **Ginny** had a fabulous weekend with her older sister Kathy and her younger sister Gwen, who got together in Baltimore for the first time in over 20 years.

**Notice the quiet?** It was great to see our high school and college students home for the holidays. One suspects that a lot of sleep time was accomplished, but now they that they have traveled back to their respective dorms and/or other expensive digs empty nests abound. There are a couple of exceptions, where a break from distant parts seemed like a good idea, so it won't be quiet everywhere.

It's been fun planning Owen Simons' program of study with him this winter. His choice of Native American history, and European Religious history is teaching me all kinds of stuff. There was Curt Moore to direct us when we arrived at Museum of American Indian last week! Curt also pointed out the Museum of the Bible across the street, and James Roscoe was able to suggest a textbook for study of Religions of Europe. Joseph Jenkins hooked us up with a great trainer for Basketball. Lincoln Smith regularly takes him on nature walks and Jenny Smith continues to provide piano instruction several times a week, with Owen making good progress. It takes a village and you guys are awesome. XOXO –Wystan

## *Retirement and Un-retirement News*

Congratulations to **Bill Kunkle** on his retirement from the CIA. He and Sharon hosted a delightful party in honor of the occasion at their home on January 4th.

As just noted, **Curt Moore** now works as a security guard at the Smithsonian Museum of Native American history. What a cool gig! And he was there just in time to greet the Simons family on their recent trip to the museum.

## *Sad News*

Our wishes for a speedy recovery go out to **Melissa Cooper**, who is undergoing treatment for a serious illness, discovered while she was helping to care for her mother, who has been in the hospital for several weeks, and is now in Hospice care battling a similar ailment. Talk about pouring rain . . .

## *Other News*

Welcome to **Benjamin Alden**, who is working in the area for six months on an internship as a part of his studies in Electrical Engineering at Virginia Tech University. He can be reached by emailing [benjamin.alden4@gmail.com](mailto:benjamin.alden4@gmail.com). He is living at the Brian Smith apartments: 11503 Chantilly Lane; Mitchellville, MD 20721.

Mike Gladish reports that he was also able to check in with **Keith Huntley** on a recent trip to Bryn Athyn for a regional pastors' meeting; Keith is doing well at 96 years old, though dealing with various health issues. Keith, you will recall, is in charge of editing and uploading all the sermons from our Sunday services to our website.

Thanks to **Wystan Simons** for providing much-needed greenery on the Church chancel. The plants add warmth to the nave and are greatly appreciated. We will miss her green thumb, though, since the Simons family is in the process of buying John Acton's house at 2775 Quarry Road, Bryn Athyn, PA, and will be moving in about June, or so. They don't yet have a buyer for their home in Acton Park, and are really hoping to find a family who would value the church connection there, as well as the house itself.

Wystan sent out ads to all the NC newsletters -- who knows who might be contemplating a move to DC? Fingers crossed!

At last! **A new washer of dishes** for the kitchen. And even better, it is one of those new-fangled things that don't dump water on the floor at unplanned times (only on a planned schedule – that's the beauty of technology). Those responsible for this are acknowledged with glee; those who are irresponsible, not so much.

It is hard to miss the (metaphorically) bright and shiny new roof that recently descended on the **Quintero** home. It is a reminder that all those (metaphorically) bright and shiny new houses that were built in Acton Park are all now starting to feel their age, and no doubt more new roofs (rooves?) will be in our future.

And speaking of ageing: there's a new Face Book page concerning the celebration of **WNCS's 50th anniversary**, which is scheduled for September. Check it out, "Like" it and pass it on! It's going to be a BIG DEAL, with lots of guests and activities. Hopefully they will be able to answer the question of what "Like it" means while explaining where those 50 years went.

A date has been set for the late **Vera Kluss'** memorial service at the church - on Sunday afternoon, March 29th. Rev. Lawson Smith will conduct the service, so if you have anecdotes to share with him please write to him at [LawsonMSmith@gmail.com](mailto:LawsonMSmith@gmail.com).



**20<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Dessert & Hors d'oeuvres Contest**  
Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>  
8:00pm  
At the home of  
Brent & Amanda Hyatt

*College age and up!*

Enter your favorite recipe or  
just come be a judge and enjoy  
the great food!

## *February Anniversaries*

*"Truly conjugal love regarded in itself is a union of souls, a conjunction of minds, and of bodies." Emanuel Swedenborg, CL 179*



*Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> ~ John & Mary Ellen Kern ~ 43 yrs.*



Save the Date!

**WNCS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

September 11-13, 2020



**At the Washington New Church School  
11914 Chantilly, Mitchellville, MD 20721**

Join us for a weekend of reconnection and fun!  
Pool party, BBQ, soccer, banquet, memorial dedications, rekindle old  
friendships. ***More details to come!***