November 2026

ECHO

Newsletter of the
Washington Church of the New Jerusalem

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Michael Ferrells Memorial Address

Today we are remembering the earthly life of the Reverend Michael Eugene Ferrell. Michael is leaving behind many people who love him dearly. Of his family, he is survived by his wife Janet, his daughter Arree, his son Kaejae, his stepson Jonathan, his sister Julia, his brother Steve, five grandchildren, and many nieces,
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nephews, and other family. He is also being remembered today by numerous former students, coworkers, neighbors, and friends.

But we are not here to remember just his earthly life, but also to celebrate the eternal spiritual life that is the Lord's gift to him, and to every person in creation who is willing to receive it. It is a life even more real than the one we experience here. And in that new life, Michael is still Michael. Think of all the things you know about him that were good. They are still good. They are still true.

By now, Michael has woken up in the spiritual world. There he has been greeted by angels sent to ease his transition from this world to the next, and to provide comfort, and also guidance. And if I know Michael at all, he will have hung around a bit and met with folks and asked questions and had a few long conversations. Because that's who Michael still is. It's who he's always been.

His daughter fondly recalls growing up proud of her dad, because wherever they went, people knew him. This was because he would happily walk up to any stranger that caught his eye for some reason and strike up a conversation. So, you know he's still doing that on his way to his new spiritual home. It's what he does.

Michael makes friends. He somehow fits in wherever he goes. The first time he attended a big family gathering with his in-laws, everyone there felt like he'd been in the family for years. He just connected instantly. He also spent a lot of time running around with all the kids, getting sweaty and having a blast. Because that's who he was. And who he still is.

I remember when I first met Michael. He was a year ahead of me in the Theological School in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. One of the first things he ever said to me was a quote from the Gospels:

> "The harvest is plenty, but the workers are few." (Luke 10:2)

I would hear that quote from him again and again over the years. He had a passionate need to minister to people, and he enthusiastically welcomed anyone who would join him to work in the fields of the Lord.

And speaking of theological school, let me share another memory. He and I had a short period of downtime one afternoon. I don't remember why. I think maybe we had a class cancelled at the last minute for some reason. I was going to go home or maybe go sit in the library and study. But he put his hand on my arm and pointed at a vent high up on the wall. "Where do you think that goes?" he asked me. I shrugged. It's a vent. It goes everywhere, I supposed.

Then, somehow, I found myself on a weird little adventure. He brought me along as he wandered the halls of the theological school, tracing where all the vents went. It was a big concrete building, and the vent system was rather large. By the end we were laughing about the idea of students crawling around there, spying on different professors, navigating around to listen in on classes. There apparently had been stories of a past student somehow actually getting into the vents, and this had inspired him. And so, it led to a wonderful afternoon with him, laughing and talking and exploring.

"I wonder where that goes?" is a frequent question for Michael. A favorite story Arree has of her father started with "I wonder where that goes?" She was around ten. There was a creek in town that they called "the China Creek." Michael took them on an all-day adventure, tracing that creek through neighborhoods, driving around town, mapping out all the places it went. They spent hours at it. Because Michael wanted to know. And somehow, he made his desire to explore infectious. His son, Kaejae, once gave Arree the following advice about him: "If Dad wants to go somewhere, just say yes."

He has always been like this. He once shared with me a story from when he was a young boy growing up in Kentucky, on 32nd street in the Parkland neighborhood of Louisville. He and his brothers used to ride bikes all over the place. They'd ride west on Grand Avenue to Mohammed Ali's house to earn nickels doing yard work for the boxer. But one day in 1968, Michael rode east towards 28th and Greenwood Avenue because something big was going on. His family probably wanted him to stay out of trouble, but he had to go and see. At one point he got off his bike so he could sneak around

some National Guardsmen posted at an intersection. And that's how he managed to find himself in the very middle of the Louisville race riots. Something important was going on, and Michael needed to go, and see, and learn.

His desire to explore was not just about physical places. He followed creeks and vents, but also important events. And on another level, he has always been exploring ideas. He is always reading. His house has been described as a library, because of all of his books.

That's how he became a lawyer. After he completed his active service in the military, he took college classes. He also did a lot of reading. And in his reading, he discovered an interest in the law. And this led to more classes, and eventually to passing the bar and becoming a lawyer. To hear him describe it, it's almost like he just stumbled into a law degree as a byproduct of wanting to chase down ideas and see where they went.

Years later, he decided to leave his legal practice, and again, it was because he had a path he needed to explore. He had mostly been practicing criminal law as a defense attorney, but he occasionally took on family law cases. And he found that when working with family law clients, he kept getting into conversations about the Lord. One day he realized: he needed to go on another journey. He needed to learn to minister to kids. Because the harvest was plenty, but the workers were few.

Now, his shift from lawyer to preacher didn't mean abandoning his lawyerly habits. He has been lovingly teased by his brothers in the clergy for wanting to start every theological explanation at the very beginning of the Lord's Word, with Genesis, chapter one. But if you ever tried to interrupt him and suggest he skip ahead to the "main point," he'd patiently explain to you that he was doing what lawyers called "laying a foundation." So, his explanations of spiritual things could get long, but they were always well grounded.

Before he left law, he actually ended up serving as a judge, for a single day. He was in the courthouse for another case when he was

asked to sit in on a different matter. The assigned judge was for some reason unavailable. So, they swore him in to sit for a day. This led to him adopting the stage name of "The Judge."

And I say "stage name," because Michael was also a musician. He taught himself to play music as a kid, with no formal training. He and his brothers formed a band that played frequently at school events. And wherever he went in life, he started jam sessions and ended up in bands. He played here in this church on many a Sunday, in fact. He also used music to court his future wife, Janet.

Now, when Janet first met him, she was living in Tacoma, and Michael was the First Sergeant of her Army Reserve unit. She confesses that her first thought about Michael was along the lines of, "Who does he think he is?" Michael took his job of teaching and training the men and women of his unit very seriously.

That was Michael as First Sergeant on Reserve weekends. When in civilian clothes, he was a young man determined to win Janet's heart. He was persistent. He invited her multiple times to come hear his band play. She eventually gave in, and this led to dates in the park where Michael would bring his guitar and play for her.

But while he was counting on his music being the key to winning her heart, Janet shares that an important turning point for her came when he shared his plan to switch from law to ministry. She heard him talk about ministering to kids and knew then that this was a good and trustworthy man.

He also excitedly told her about finding a book written by a man named Emanuel Swedenborg. He referred to Swedenborg's writings as "those old books." He said that what he read changed his life. It gave him clarity and meaning. And a new purpose.

You see, he had been exploring religion as well. Saying to himself, "I wonder where that goes?" he read the Word. He read other religious texts. And he visited churches of all kinds. He eventually joined a church that preached teachings that came from "those old books" of Swedenborg's. He became known as "the pied piper of the church" at the little New Church congregation there in

Washington State, because he'd regularly roll up on Sunday morning with a carload of kids he'd gathered.

And so, after a bit, he made his way east. He went to theological school and studied and became a minister. He was ordained and then came here, to Mitchellville, to the Washington New Church, as an Assistant Pastor, where he taught religion for years in the Washington New Church School. Just a year ago, he reprised his role as "The Judge," sitting as a Justice in the student-created "Supreme Court" where he wrote a careful opinion on a case of students versus the school principal, a lawsuit over a disagreement related to the uniform policy. He relied on a very close reading of the definition of "holiday" to render a decision.

And as with everywhere else he ever went, he met people. He had conversations. He made friends. He fit in like he'd always been here.

To hear Michael tell you about his life, it all sounds fun and interesting. But if you listen between the lines, you will hear that he occasionally faced some serious hardships. And of course, as we know, his final years on this earth involved a long and sometimes arduous fight with cancer. But he was always upbeat in public.

Even as he shared about being scared, or in pain, or uncertain about the future, he would also return to talk of the Lord and His providence. The Lord does not want anyone to suffer. He does not send troubles to people. But He permits troubles to happen if something good can be brought out of the struggle. Michael firmly believed this. And so, Michael would not want us to focus just on the loss we may be feeling due to his absence from this world. Even while we miss him and grieve, he'd want us to also feel joy about the place he is now going. He'd want us to lift our prayers to the Lord and thank Him for all His blessings. As he regularly reminded people, quoting from the book Divine Love and Wisdom:

> Let a person confirm himself in favor of the Divine; there is no lack of material. (DLW 357)

No one but the Lord can perfectly know the future. Nor can anyone but the Lord know the true heart of a person. But the outer life we all witnessed in him gives us reason to imagine him now exploring his way toward his new home in heaven.

The book Secrets of Heaven describes the journey of a newly revived, heaven-born person like this:

> He sees paths gently sloping upwards. These mean that he is to be led to heaven little by little, by means of ideas of truth and good. (AC 189)

And providing more detail, the book True Christian Religion paints this picture for us of an exploration we can easily see Michael embarking on:

> They leave and travel along pathways that are open between communities in heaven until they find a community that is in complete harmony with the feelings in their hearts. That is their home forever, because there they are among their own people, who are like relatives and friends that they love with all their heart because they share the same passions. There they experience the happiness that makes them most alive and their heart fills with delight because their soul is at peace. The intense pleasure of the heat and light of heaven cannot be expressed in words. Angels share that joy with each other. This is what happens to people who become angels. (TCR 622:1)

Everything good that Michael was in this life–everything good that he stood for, and everything good that he loved–is present even more fully in the next. We can happily imagine Michael finding his people in the next life, and instantly fitting in.

To finish, I want to share with you Michael's own words, spoken in a solemn ceremony over twenty years ago. When a man is ordained into the priesthood of the New Church, he is asked to make a declaration of his faith, and to make manifest his purpose in ministry. Here is what Michael said on that day:

> The Lord has made His second coming in the revelation of the Writings for the New Church. He has come, and He is coming now, and will continue to come to everyone who believes in Him and obeys his Commandments. I believe in the one God in whom there is a divine Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: The Father His divine love, the Son His divine human that He assumed in the world, and the Holy Spirit his divine use and operation that proceed from Him and sustains the universe and the life of all people. I believe further that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Lord is present in the Word, and comes in His Word, revealing Himself to everyone who believes in Him and keeps His commandments. I believe that while in the world a person should shun evils as sins, against the Lord and the neighbor, and instead should live a good life of use and service to other people. I believe that marriage is a holy covenant between one man and one woman, and proceeds from the Lord and is His free gift. All married partners who dwell together on earth and acknowledge the Lord in heart and in life, after death continue to live together as angels in heaven. And finally, I believe that there is a spiritual world, and that after death everyone who has lived a good life, according to his or her religion, continues living after death as angels in the Lord's heaven.

Michael finished by saying:

> My purpose is to be a good and faithful servant to the Lord and to you, His people. And this is my prayer:
>
> Oh Lord, teach me your truths. Help me to humble myself before You, and to submit to Your will. Help me to lead Your people, that they may see You in Your Word, and see You in their life, and that they may trust in You alone, and turn their hearts to You. You are our Lord, our God, and our Savior. Amen. (Michael Ferrell, Bryn Athyn Cathedral, June 5, 2005)

Michael, we miss you. And we look forward to seeing you again.

> "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord." (Mat. 25:23)

Amen.

Rev. Glenn "Mac" Frazier, Pastor
Washington New Church, 2026.10.25



Veterans Day Invite: The Washington New Church School would like to cordially invite all those who served in our military to join us on November 11, for worship and a flag ceremony.

…AND the first and second grade will be preparing tasty snacks for our guests. We will gather for worship at 10:40.

In Memorial of the Rev. Michael Ferrell
January 8, 1954, ~ October 14, 2026

by Mike Gladish



As many of you know, I served with Michael for the whole 10 years I was pastor to this congregation of the New Church, and when I left, I was adamant that my photo for the gallery in the hallway should not appear without my excellent friend by my side.

As tributes pour in from around the world, celebrating Michael's integrity, devotion, cheerfulness, and above all, his loving care and consideration for everyone he met, I can only add a few comments of my own about his life and character as I knew it.

He was – and is – one of the kindest, gentlest, and most generous persons you will ever want to meet. Yet at the same time he was adamant about standing up for what is true and right. And, as you heard at his memorial service, when he discovered the teachings of the New Church, he was not shy about sharing those teachings with anyone who would listen.

He was especially patience and understanding and perhaps had a special sense of mission given the situation that he was the only black person on staff and the only black *member* in the congregation at that time. His unflinching acceptance of this reality as though it made no difference to him meant that it actually made no difference to anyone – except that his cultural background was different than that of most members. This was really good for us in bringing us another perspective, and it was good for our school parents because he could share things with them from personal experience that the rest of us couldn't.

Here is what I wrote about him for his retirement party in October of 2019:

It's always tempting at a time like this to try to say something funny, or as I may be inclined, to write in verse. But today I want to say a few things plainly – and seriously.

It is no news to anyone here that Michael is and has been a good friend to just about everyone at the WNC. He is always approachable, always interested in what you have to say, always affirmative and never really critical of anyone. He is also very interesting in his own way, bringing a multitude of offbeat stories and professional experiences to any conversation, and a delightful assortment of knowledge and skills, including much in American history, music, and law, not to mention his career in the Army.

But of course, as you also know, one of his special passions has been working with the children in our little school *and, importantly, their parents,* to provide a loving, caring connection for them *through him* to the Lord. In this capacity he has had a remarkable ability to speak candidly even about disciplinary issues while still retaining the affection and respect of all concerned. In

fact, we have often called upon him, especially when challenges have arisen, and we have always been able to count on him.

For myself I would especially like to call your attention to two fundamental virtues that I have appreciated and admired in Michael over the last 10 years.

First and foremost, no matter how we have differed in our style and approach to church work, there has never been a day that I could not count on Michael to be absolutely faithful to the doctrines of the New Church – and passionate about them. In all these years I've never, ever had to be concerned about him coming up with any wishy-washy new interpretation of the Writings, or any compromise about what is plainly taught.

This leads directly to the second point, which is that despite this unwavering commitment to the truth – and a determination to live and teach according to it, he has a disarming ability to overlook other people's faults and failures, loving us no matter what, and working with us all as brothers and sisters in the human family as we strive to do the best we can, *even when we disagree.*

Coming as he did from a totally different social and religious culture than most of us, Michael has also given us all a gift of fresh insight and perspective on many things and has been instrumental in helping us to become much more inclusive in our outreach and much better integrated in the community than ever before in our history. In fact, I believe that at least in part because of him we are really the very first congregation of the General Church in America to be moving convincingly toward a multi-ethnic, multi-racial membership. This surely will be part of his legacy with us.

And in that connection, I can't *not* mention Michael's dedication to outreach in this community. Ready and willing at any time to try new methods of promoting the church and school, who else do you know who would carry a stack of school promotional cards around with him every spring and hand them out to tellers at the band or cashiers at the grocery stores - purposefully wear his school sweater hoping people will ask him about it?

And who else do you know who would get up extra early on a cold

winter weekday morning and go stand on the street corner and hand out fliers to unsuspecting commuters inviting them to check out our school? - Not me, that's for sure. I always said I would come and visit him in jail when he got arrested, but somehow, he never did. In fact, I'm not sure he didn't hand out fliers to the cops who also pulled up at the lights!

After all, this is the religion that answered all his questions when he was searching, and so he has a passion for sharing it with others who may also be searching. In this, as in so many other things, he has been and continues to be a role model for all of us.

And there was more at that time, but for now, in sum, our loss is heaven's gain. We can be thankful not only for his life with us, but for what I like to call his graduation from all the pain and turmoil of this world, and his new freedom in the health and vigor of his spiritual body. For as Paul wrote in 1 *Corinthians* 15,

> "The body is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown is weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

Michael knew this, and he believed it. More to the point, he lived it, generously sharing of that spiritual body throughout his life of service to others.

Thank you, Michael, for your unfailing commitment to the Word and for the daily inspiration you have brought to all of us.

~ ~ ~

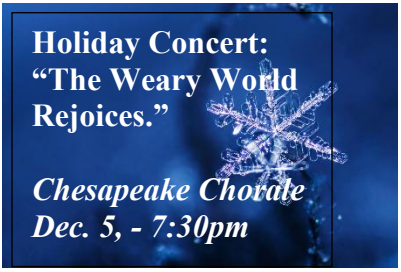
TAG Corner: Reminder: The next Theta Alpha Guild meeting will be on Wednesday, November 11, at 7:30 p.m. in the Church library and online. A Zoom link will be available closer to the date - check with Bonnie if you don't see it in your inbox. This meeting will be an opportunity to sign up for and support holiday season events at the Church and School (and school parents can get PSP hours!). We look forward to seeing you there!

Meanwhile, Raffle tickets continue on sale for a chance to win the vibrant blue and white quilt featuring "Lady of the Lake" pattern measuring 81x84, donated by Nancy Alford. You can buy tickets weekdays from Bonnie in the front office and after church service each Sunday until the drawing on Sunday, December 6, so buy yours if you haven't already, and sell to your co-workers, friends and family, to support the many active uses in our church and school community!

Thanksgiving Service:



As is our custom, the Thanksgiving Service will be held on Thanksgiving Day – Thursday, November 26th at 11:00am. This is a **family service**. All are welcome to bring a food or fruit offering. Fresh fruit will be delivered to WCNJ folks sick or in need and any non-perishable food will be delivered to a shelter or food bank in the area.



Holiday Concert: "The Weary World Rejoices"

Those who enjoy choral music are warmly invited to attend the upcoming holiday concert by the Chesapeake Chorale on Saturday, December 5, at 7:30 p.m. at Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, 1800 Seton Drive, Crofton, MD 21114.

What does Christmas look like when viewed from the ground up? The Weary World Rejoices explores themes 15of home, belonging, creation, and renewal through music ranging from beloved carols to contemporary reflections on the natural world. Rooted in the imagery of the earth itself, this concert invites listeners to find wonder in the ordinary and hope in the places we call home.

The program features works by Gustav Holst, Ola Gjeilo, Morten Lauridsen, and Kyle Pederson. Tickets: $20 adults; $15 seniors and military; $5 students.

For more information, visit www.ChesapeakeChorale.org. Please contact Pat Sweeney with questions or to purchase tickets in advance.

ANC Report

The Glencairn Special Award Committee is pleased to announce that on October 09, 2026, the Chancellor disclosed the names of the 2026 Glencairn Award recipients:

Goran & Josephine Appelgren (Sweden) • Andrew Bruell (England), • Cynthia Glenn (Pittsburgh), • Murray Heldon (Australia), • Lynn Ellen King (Florida), • Steven Morley (Bryn Athyn, PA), • Marilyn Stroh (NY, NY).

The Committee received many written nominations for the award, demonstrating once again that the Church has many amazing and extraordinary people selflessly serving the Church and community without expectation of reward in so many rich and varied ways.

The Committee will begin accepting nominations for 2027 after the first of the year. Details on how to make a nomination will be provided at that time.

Phillip R. Zuber, Esq. - Secretary for Glencairn Award Committee

Academy of the New Church
P.O. Box 711 / Bryn Athyn, PA 19009-0731

Pre-winter News Notes:

School Days:

October found the school in full swing once again, with a new Principal, some new and some old students and their families, and some changes in the teaching staff creating another exiting year. Back-to-School Night saw a large turnout of new and old (or perhaps “experienced” would be better) parents showing their

support for the school and boding well for a continuing strong partnership between parents and teachers.

While the 7th and 8th grade science class was theorizing about creation, the kindergarten was practicing it by creating stuff. Actually, the stuff was bread, and the theory involved baking, but it was a great start.

Sadness:

We were saddened by the death of our longtime friend and Assistant **Pastor Michael E. Ferrell** on October 14th after a long battle with cancer. A beautiful Memorial Service was held at the Church on Sunday afternoon, October 25th, with pastor Mac Frazier delivering a moving memorial address. The service included a military flag ceremony in honor of Michael's 32 years of service, as well as several musical selections in memory of Michael's lifelong love of music. Our condolences to his wife, **Janet,** and to the rest of his family.

The memorial service overflowed the sanctuary and was followed by a repass – a buffet of everything from appetizers to desserts lovingly prepared and donated potluck style - which overflowed the lobby and multipurpose room with family, friends, former students of Michael as well as their parents. It was obvious that Michael touched many, many people.

Bonnie Cowley noted: " Though I love planning, especially events like this, none of the planning would have succeeded if it weren't for the army of helpers who arrived just before the service to plate the food and an army of volunteers that cleaned up at the end. Thanks to all who helped!" And thanks to Bonnie for a marvelous repass.

Pancakes:

The annual pancake breakfast work party managed to avoid the rain by waiting for a while until the drizzle stopped and the coffee was mostly gone. The pancake-fueled crew (and others) then spent the morning (and more) beautifying the gardens around the church, so everything was spiffy when the sun started to shine. Thanks to

all you hard-working folks for doing all that hard working. It looks great.

Ghosts?

As of this writing, Acton Park has been devoid of ghosts for almost a year, although rumor has it that a gathering of apparitions is planned for the near future. Be wary.

Lost Time:

Somehow in the scramble of changing the calendar from October to winter, someone displaced an hour. We are assured that it will be found in time for spring – or maybe summer – so stay tuned while enjoying afternoon sunsets.

Lost Memory:

Mary Cooper reports that she has a nice made-to-order crib for a Nativity set that belongs to somebody whose name has escaped her. Could it be you? If so, she would appreciate a reminder.

November Anniversaries

"The inclination to marriage of one man to one woman is the jewel of human life."
Emmanuel Swedenborg - CL 457

Nov. 1st ~ Dan & Jeanine Federline ~ 13 yrs.

Nov. 3rd ~ Bob & Bea Newkirk ~ 64 yrs.

Nov. 11th ~ Court & Elaine Lee ~ 54 yrs.

Nov. 19th ~ (Barry) & Erin Stillman 32 yrs.