



New Church Canadian

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter of General Church in Canada

Issue 218

THE FEAST OF INGATHERING

BY REV. JON LEE

We enter this season and the house of the Lord with joyful shouts; and come before His presence with singing. I hope you make enough shouts. There are several public holidays on the calendar. Is Thanksgiving a civic or religious holiday? Although Parliament proclaimed the observance of the second Monday in October as “a day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed” (The Canadian Encyclopedia), this holiday is mostly celebrated in a secular manner. Yet, the origin of the celebration of Thanksgiving is derived from the Word of the Lord.

Have you seen the Feast of Thanksgiving in the Word? Perhaps not! This feast and celebration have different names in the Word such as Feast of Tabernacles, Booths, or Ingathering. Jehovah commanded the Israelites to celebrate the seven-day feast on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. All these feasts fell on the same day. The

Lord combined a few meaningful occasions together. As part of the celebration of the feast, the Lord added the Feast of Ingathering which is a celebration of the autumn harvest.



The feast was celebrated in the Divine order and sequence. What was the first thing the congregation did?

On the first day, there shall be a holy convocation. It is an assembly, a gathering of people as we gather together at the house of the Lord for worship. The Lord needs to be acknowledged first in all we do because He is the source of life and the Creator. If we place the acknowledgement of the Lord first, all other, trivial and mundane matters fall into orderly place.

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Then, the Lord commanded the children of Israel not to work during this holy assembly, saying “You shall do no customary work on it” (Lev.23:35). During the Thanksgiving holiday, we don’t go to school and work. When we are involved in labour and work, then our minds are engaged in our subjects, tasks, and various earthly things (AC 7868). We need to turn back from earthly and worldly things at this moment while we are in a worshipping state.

The Lord wants us all to convene before Him; this assembly pictures the Lord’s heaven. In heaven, angels, as we usually sit on the pews, “continue to live household by household, family by family, and nation by nation, similarly to the way they had lived on earth” (CL 205). The feast was also called the ‘Feast of Ingathering.’ The Hebrew seventh month, *Tishri*, is our September or October and the time of harvest. The children of Israel harvested and gathered in grains and fruits from the field.

As they enjoyed, we enjoy the bounty produce of the land and give thanks to the Lord for the blessing of the harvest. This is a special and universal celebration. In most cultures, this feast has been celebrated since ancient times.



Let us think about things we receive from the Lord. Do we receive only the

blessing of the harvest? What blessings, what gifts, do we receive from the Lord? We receive our life from the Lord, our wonderful church, Holy New Jerusalem, our parents, our precious children and grandchildren, and our country, besides all materials. We receive these wonderful gifts from the Lord. At this harvest time, besides the produce of the land, there are more we need to gather in. Let us lift up our minds and think about our spiritual ingathering.

From our early childhood, we receive the Lord’s goodness from the Lord. This appears as innocence, and this childhood innocence forms the beginning of the new will in a person. This tender and weak goodness will need to get stronger, bigger, wider, and eventually fruitful. Did you hear the word fruit-

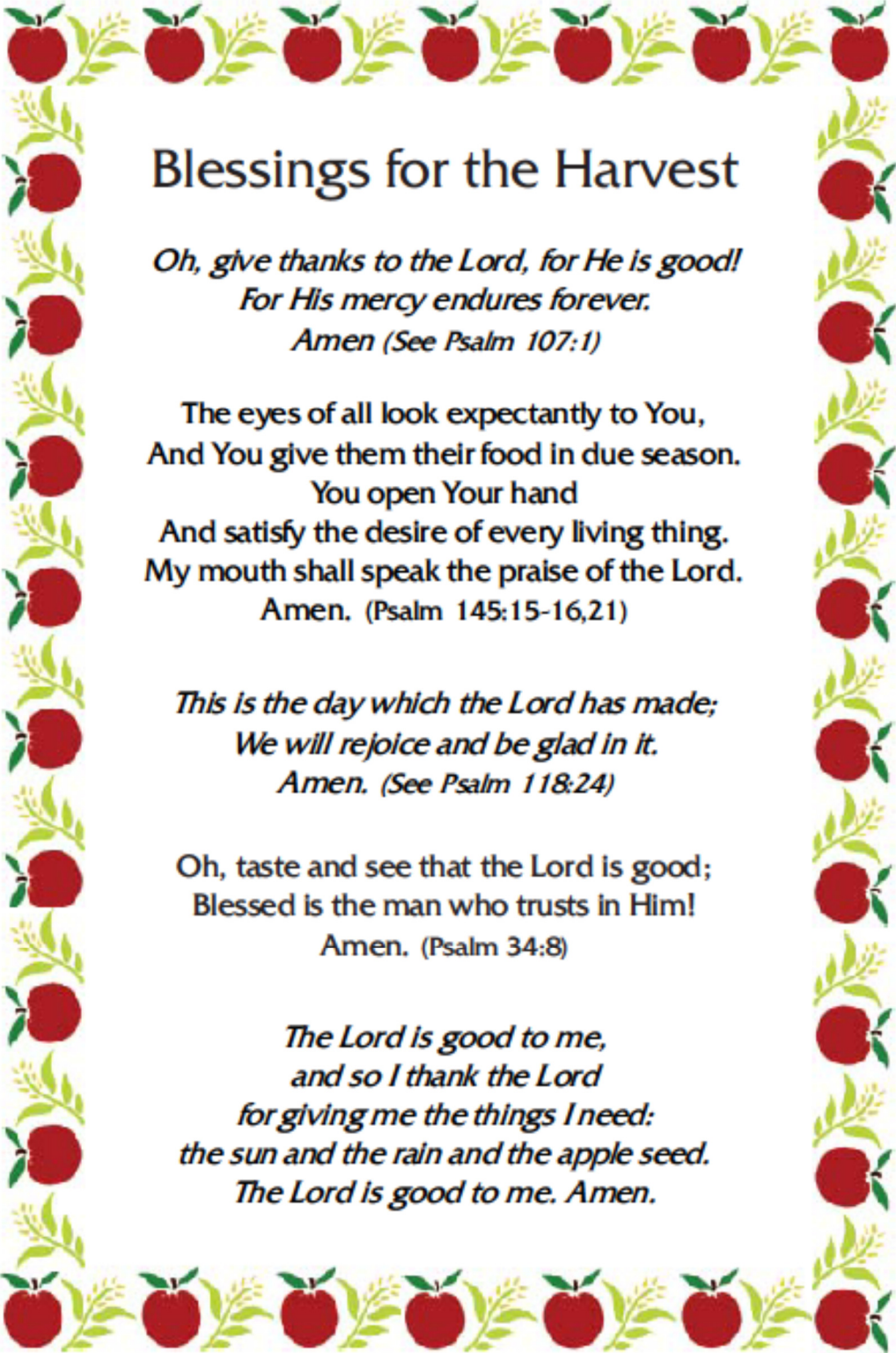
ful? The children of Israel were commanded to offer to the Lord the fruits of beautiful trees, palm branches, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook. “The fruit of a fine tree which they were to take on the first day meant festivity and joy because good had been implanted, which is why the words you shall be glad before Jehovah follow; fronds of palm trees meant internal truths of that good, 8369; the bough of a thick (or tangled) tree meant relatively external truths of good, or known facts...and willows of the brook meant rather more external truths, which belong to impressions received by the bodily senses” (AC 9296:6).

As commanded, let us come before the Lord’s presence from thankfulness and joy. Let us separate our minds and thoughts from earthly and worldly things and matters. In this season, the farmers harvest and gather in all the produce of the land they planted and grew. We know and appreciate their hard work and great efforts involved in this farming and growing. The Lord has implanted His goodness in us. We need to grow and cultivate what the Lord implanted in us with thankfulness. It requires our care, effort, and hard work. The best way of growing healthy and sound fruits, goodness of ours, is turning from our evil desires and false ideas.

The Lord can come into us and inspire us so that we may wish for more goodness and love as much as we stop doing evil. Turning from our sins and offering our goodness to the Lord is the proper way of worshipping our Lord and the best way of expressing our gratitude for the blessings we receive. We read,

“Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you” (Deut. 9:17).





Blessings for the Harvest

*Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!
For His mercy endures forever.
Amen (See Psalm 107:1)*

The eyes of all look expectantly to You,
And You give them their food in due season.
You open Your hand
And satisfy the desire of every living thing.
My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord.
Amen. (Psalm 145:15-16,21)

*This is the day which the Lord has made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
Amen. (See Psalm 118:24)*

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good;
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!
Amen. (Psalm 34:8)

*The Lord is good to me,
and so I thank the Lord
for giving me the things I need:
the sun and the rain and the apple seed.
The Lord is good to me. Amen.*

THANKSGIVING TO CHRISTMAS: AN INSPIRATIONAL TIME



by the Rev. Mark E. Alden



"I Will Give Thanks to You, O Lord...and Sing Praises to Your Name"

(Psalm 18:49)

What a marvelous thing that our giving thanks for spiritual and natural bounty comes so close to our commemoration of the Lord's birth on earth. It seems the first sets us in an appropriate frame of mind for the second. The last words of Psalm 18 speak of our thankfulness and praise to the Lord for His great deliverance from our enemies. And the internal sense of these words is the celebration of the church because the Lord has come and redeemed us. So, at the time of the harvest, we turn our hearts, minds, and voices to the one "Who gives food to all flesh, for His mercy endures forever" (Psalm 136:25). As we do this, we know that we are near to Him; we have made Him our King; and we prepare for His coming to us when He will enlighten our understanding and purify our will.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, was the Divine truth present and active on earth. From the power of the Divine love within His soul, He brought spiritual light to the earth again. He cast out the interfering hells and established a state of freedom in which people could again thank the Lord for His love and wisdom. We can now see Him as our King, as is represented by King David in Psalm 18.

It is a spiritual fact that whatever rules our lives we call good and true. We place our life's principles above us, in a place of honor, and we are obedient to them. In just this way should the Lord's Divine truth be our King. The Lord, being the Divine truth, governs the universe. His laws are the laws that rule all creation. To make these laws our life's principles is to live in the order of God's creation. If we live as though we can lead ourselves to salvation and eternal happiness (not to mention the earthly happiness that flows from it), we demote the Lord from His rightful place. We are not wise enough to guide our own steps to heaven. The Lord will do that for us if we make Him King in our lives.



And what a marvelous provider He is! The progress of the seasons are testimony enough that the Lord is caring for us. He provides all means of our physical sustenance and pleasure. Yes, we sow the seeds and care for the young plants. We protect the fruits and pick the harvest. But we do not direct the growth of the plant, much less provide its life. We don't cause the cells to live and multiply in exactly the right way, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. The Lord does that with infinite care and attention.

Spiritually, this describes how we open ourselves to the Lord, who is the Sower of goodness and truth. Our work is to flee from the states and situations that arouse evil in our consciousness. We should do what is good, hoping

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that we can help our neighbor and trying not to cloud our joy with thoughts of merit. In the end, the delights of heaven are ours for the picking. The fruits of usefulness come to us as an internal joy, a spiritual celebration of the Lord and His gift of life and love.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to earth to show us His royalty, to free us from the possession of the hells, and to give us a picture of our God. Remembering that He did these things so that we may enjoy His gift of life, and enjoy it more and more abundantly as we grow spiritually—these thoughts give Thanksgiving and Christmas a depth of meaning no other season has.



Our preparation for these celebrations can be given significance, and we can escape the hubbub and commercialization of the holidays, if we remember that the Lord provides for our natural— and spiritual—harvest. His Divine truth orders the course of the seasons—and our regeneration. His leadership and royalty are constant and reliable. It is up to us to become His subjects, honoring Him by a life of thanksgiving, praise, and usefulness (see *Apocalypse Explained* 205).

From the GCIC EVP / Regional Pastor

by Rev. James Cooper

News from Toronto

Rev. Dr. Jong-Ui Lee agreed to serve as the interim pastor in Toronto for two years. His time will be up in June of 2024, so it is time for the Toronto Society to begin working with the Bishop's office to find the next pastor for Toronto. It's a complicated process because there are so many variables and the need to match the skill set of a pastor available to move with the needs of the congregation with an opening. Needing to cross international borders makes things even more interesting. But it's early days and we are optimistic that a good fit will be found.

Travel

Our congregation in Johannesburg, South Africa is currently being served by the Rev. Glenn Alden, part time, in retirement. That means he gets to go home to Washington for a few weeks every so often, and other ministers get to take over for him. This time the Rev. Michael Cowley was delighted to be invited to be the one to visit Johannesburg for 7 weeks. He is expected back at the end of October when he will resume his regularly scheduled program of visits to Dawson Creek and Grande Prairie. In the meantime, Rev. Justin Schorran and I will be visiting Dawson Creek and Grande Prairie.

There is also a live (as opposed to Zoom) visit planned for Sunday, November 12 in Vancouver at the home of Mark and Julie Friesen. Further details about that visit will be provided by email to the group closer to the date.

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Thanksgiving



The Thanksgiving holiday reminds us to think about our blessings, and to think about people we know who just do lots of good things for others without making a fuss, or expecting anything in return. Parents who make a home, provided food, shelter, and education. Children who take part in the home by doing chores and helping care for their brothers and sisters. Teachers, and those who volunteer to help them. First responders who will come to help any time of the day or night, sometimes risking their lives to protect the life of a stranger. People who work very hard to raise money for different charities. People who collect food to give to people who have none. People who volunteer to help out in hospitals and hospices. People who notice when things aren't going so well and who give words of friendship and encouragement.

Thanksgiving is a day that has been set aside specifically for the purpose of having us reflect on our lives, and to look for the many blessings that we have been overlooking during the rest of the year while we go about our busy schedules. It is my hope that we will think about the many people, family, friends, and complete strangers who freely give of themselves to make our lives safer and happier.

And then, once we have thought about the many blessings that have come into our lives through other people, remember that this is all in God's order, all His plan. It is His will that we prepare ourselves for the life of heaven by being His agents for good while we yet live in this world.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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Through the annual National Youth Remembrance Contests, the Legion National Foundation, in partnership with The Royal Canadian Legion and schools across the country, invite Canadian youth and children to honour Canada's Veterans and foster the tradition of Remembrance through visual art, writing, and video.

The Following Poem, the **Long Watch**, by Kieran Watson,
Grand Prairie Christian School, AB, received First Place in the Intermediate Division

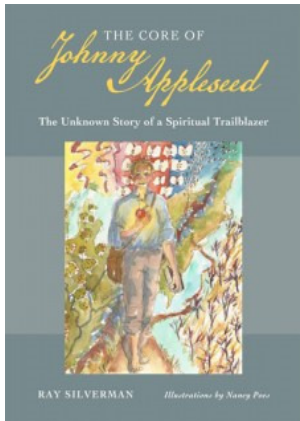
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Book Review

The Core of Johnny Appleseed: The Unknown Story of a Spiritual Trailblazer

By Ray Silverman

From Swedenborg Foundation—SwedenborgFoundation.com



In *The Core of Johnny Appleseed: The Unknown Story of a Spiritual Trailblazer*, Ray Silverman shows how we can better understand the myths and facts of John Chapman (aka Johnny Appleseed) by understanding his Swedenborgian faith. We sat down with the author to get a perspective on what it was like to delve into the life of a legend.

SF: What was your first experience of Johnny Appleseed?

RS: I encountered Johnny Appleseed for the first time when I was a child—perhaps in elementary school. Johnny always struck me as a happy-go-lucky sort of person who loved nature and went about doing good for others. I suppose I was influenced by Walt Disney’s animated cartoon, *Melody Time*, which came out in 1948 when I was around four years old.

By the way, the cartoon is available on YouTube under “Melody Time Johnny Appleseed.” It is beautifully done, and includes the now-famous song “The Lord is Good to Me”—written for that film.

SF: How did you get interested in writing a book about him?

RS: Joanna Hill, executive editor at the Swedenborg Foundation, asked me if I would be interested in doing a book about Johnny Appleseed from a Swedenborgian point of view. She was thinking of a book that would be similar to the one I did last year for the Foundation, Helen Keller’s *How I Would Help the World*. I was interested.

But after I began to read the current research on Johnny Appleseed, I was more than interested: I was raring to go! I realized that a new book that saw Johnny *from the inside out* was absolutely necessary. In fact, I saw that an accurate portrayal of Johnny’s Swedenborgian faith could be a touchstone for clearing up inconsistencies, dispelling myths, and giving readers a clearer picture of this remarkable man. I also saw that Johnny’s light-hearted spirit, deep religious interest, and useful life could be a powerful and important model for contemporary readers.

SF: As you were doing the research for this book, what surprised you the most?

RS: My answer may surprise you, but here it is. As a child growing up in the traditional school system, history and geography were my least favorite subjects. To me, they seemed to be little more than memorizing long lists of names, dates, battles, and places. This had very little interest for me.

But when I began to study the story of Johnny Appleseed, history and geography came alive! I began to realize that Johnny’s story is inseparable from the America’s coming of age. Everything became interesting and significant, whether it was the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775 (Johnny’s father fought in it), the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 (it enabled Johnny to expand his apple tree business into Ohio and Indiana), or a petition for a New Church minister in Mansfield, Ohio, in 1822 (organized and signed by Johnny Appleseed).

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Similarly, geography came alive. I traveled to many of the places where Johnny had traveled, walked the trails, sat by the rivers, and imagined what Johnny had done in those places. As I crossed the rugged but beautiful Allegheny Mountains, I imagined Johnny and the wagon trains crossing as well.



My most vivid experience was in Franklin, Pennsylvania, the site of one of Johnny's earliest nurseries. There I was, at the confluence of the Allegheny River and French Creek, marveling as I watched the current run swiftly southward toward Pittsburgh. I knew that at one time Johnny had been on that river, perhaps floating downstream on a raft, on a sunny day, reading Swedenborg. And I loved the idea that the swiftly flowing Allegheny River would eventually join the Monongahela to form the powerful Ohio River, which in turn would become the mighty Mississippi, flowing south to the Gulf of Mexico.

Yes, I surprised myself with my newfound love for history and geography!

SF: How much do we really know about John Chapman, and is it difficult to separate the historical facts from the legends about him?

RS: For the most part, the stories about Johnny Appleseed have been handed down from generation to generation in a form of "whisper down the lane." Some say he never married because he was expecting to have two wives in heaven. Others say that he never married because his true love died before they were married and he expected to be together with her again in heaven.

Which story do you go with? How do you know? Since there is no written record of what Johnny actually said about his love life, we cannot know for sure. But when we realize that Johnny was a Swedenborgian with an ardent love for the teachings of the New Church—and this can be documented—it becomes clear that the story about expecting to be reunited with his true love in heaven is more plausible.

Another story involves Johnny's love and respect for nature. It is said that he had such a great reverence for nature that he wouldn't harm a fly or kill a mosquito. On one occasion when mosquitoes were attracted to his campfire and dying in the flames, he put out the fire and slept in the cold rather than see a mosquito die. Johnny had a great respect for nature, but he did not worship it. As a Swedenborgian he worshiped the Creator—not the creation. So, again, seeing Johnny from the inside out—first and foremost as a Swedenborgian—becomes a way of discerning between historical facts and legends. In other words, the story about Johnny saving the mosquitoes is most likely a legend.

Beyond the legends, there is precise documentation of Johnny's land holdings and nurseries—all of which we have carefully recorded in the book. It becomes clear that over his lifetime Johnny owned at least twelve thousand acres of land and planted numerous nurseries in nineteen counties (in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana). This kind of documentation helps to demonstrate that Johnny was not just a wandering, good-natured vagabond, but rather a skilled businessman and visionary entrepreneur who anticipated people's needs and filled them. At the same time, it should be remembered that business was not Johnny's primary love—it was the heavenly doctrines of the New Jerusalem.

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All in all, there is a great deal of information about John Chapman, but it needs to be carefully analyzed in the light of Johnny's faith. Swedenborg says that our faith is the essence of who we are and influences everything we do. That's why this book is called *The Core of Johnny Appleseed*.

SF: What was Johnny Appleseed's connection to Swedenborg?

RS: The story of Johnny's connection to Swedenborg begins in 1784 when James Glen, traveling by sea to his sugar plantation in South America, stopped over in Philadelphia to give a lecture about Swedenborg. Among others who attended that lecture were Francis Bailey, the official printer of the United States Articles of Confederation; Hester Barclay, the first female convert to the New Church in the United States; and John Forrester Young, a twenty-two-year-old apprentice studying to become an attorney. These three people became the first receivers of the heavenly doctrines in America.

Five years later, after Young was admitted to the bar, he set up a law practice in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, just southwest of Pittsburgh. It was there, in Greensburg, that John Chapman met John Young, the man who introduced him to the New Church and became his Swedenborgian mentor. Under the guidance of John Young, who eventually became a judge, Johnny became a receiver of what he called "Good news, right fresh from heaven." Johnny then went on to spend the rest of his life disseminating pages from New Church teachings, free of charge, throughout the frontier. In fact, his nursery business became a vehicle for enabling his larger love—propagating the truths of the New Jerusalem. *Yes, he planted apple seeds in the American soil, but, more importantly, he desired to plant seeds of truth in the American soul.*



SF: Why does Johnny Appleseed still hold such a fascination for us today?

RS: The first chapter opens with a quote from Walt Whitman: "Afoot and light-hearted, I take to the open road." I think this idea is deeply ingrained in the American spirit. For many Americans there has always been an idea of unlimited possibility, exploration and adventure. As a youngster, my favorite books were *Jonathan Goes West* and *Boy with a Pack* by Stephen Meader. Like Johnny Appleseed, Meader's characters leave their New England homes and head west traversing the rugged wilderness, floating down beautiful rivers, and encountering many adventures along the way. I think most of us have a desire to travel and see new sights, to take to the open road and have adventures along the way.

Johnny was both a spiritual and financial entrepreneur. Like Steve Jobs, he was ahead of his time, anticipating the needs of settlers before they arrived in a new location and meeting those needs with already-planted apple trees. Like Emanuel Swedenborg, he was ahead of his time, anticipating the spiritual needs of frontier folk with "Good news right fresh from heaven."

Something was happening in nineteenth century America, something beautiful and exciting. It was a time of rapid economic growth as the country expanded westward. It was also a time of rapid spiritual growth as people were willing to take on new identities and new ways of looking at their spiritual lives. The story of Johnny Appleseed somehow captures all of this beautifully and reminds us that there is still plenty of room for exploration on the inner frontier of our lives.

SF: What do you hope that readers will take away from this book?

RS: Recent biographies of John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed) have described him as a beloved yet kooky eccentric who espoused an equally eccentric religion. This, I believe, has done a grave disservice to both John Chapman and the New Church, tarnishing the beautiful ideals which Johnny incarnated. My hope is

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that people who read this book will gain a new appreciation of just how sane Johnny Appleseed was—perhaps far saner than any person of his time, yet so far ahead of them that they hardly understood him.

At the same time, I hope that Swedenborgians will enjoy seeing that a receiver of the heavenly doctrines can be a humble person who loves the earth, enjoys life, and can relate well with everyone. In other words, this book may help people understand that the New Church is not just for the intellectual elite, but for all people, everywhere, who love God, love their neighbor, and desire to do good.

Download a free e-book copy of *The Core of Johnny Appleseed* below, for more information about this American folk hero, including frequently asked questions, myths about his life, and extensive appendices concerning his travels and nurseries.

The Core of Johnny Appleseed: The Unknown Story of a Spiritual Trailblazer (swedenborg.com)

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REMEMBRANCE DAY



The Long Watch By Kieran Watson



I have bled from Flanders to Panjwail
Fought across the trench of time
I've defeated the evil of tyrants
That had no reason or rhyme

I've marched to the call of colours
I've marched to the sound of the guns
Over the beaches and into the caves
For the peace of our daughters and sons

I am no hero or statue or marker
Yet I am more than flesh or bone
I am every free breath a baby takes
And every free thought you've known

So if you value your rights and freedoms
If you hate evil's chains
If you think the future is worth the cost
And that life is worth the pain

Let justice be your lantern
Liberty will be your guide
It does not take a sword or gun
To stand bravely by my side

I am a Canadian Soldier
And I will stand on guard for you
Until all things are set right again
And my long nights watch is through



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Carmel New Church
Kitchener, ON



In Person
and
Online
11.00am

Dawson Creek New Church
Dawson Creek, BC



Olivet New Church
Etobicoke, ON

10:30am
In Person and Online



Editorial Deadline for the NOV. — DEC. ISSUE

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We always welcome your comments, letters and articles!

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