



# New Church Canadian

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter of General Church in Canada

Issue 219

## CHRISTMAS CHANGES AS YOU GROW OLDER

By Rev. James P. Cooper

Christmas is the best time of year. At least it should be. Unfortunately, many people find themselves feeling lonely, or depressed, or just generally out of sorts at Christmas time. In part, this is because we contrast our actual responsible, grown up states with idealized memory of Christmas celebrations from when we were children. The wonder of Christmas first registers with us when we are very young, and then as adults we find that it's never quite the same. We don't see the world and the people in it with the same wonder and innocence any more.



Christmas is such a special time of year that we have run out of words to describe it. It's more than "magical." It's more than "wonderful." Somehow the word "special" just doesn't do it. It's just "Christmas" and that conjures up all kinds of feelings that are unique to this time of years. The doctrines of the New Church tell us where those feelings come from. They are "remains" or "remnants" of states of love and delight that we experienced in the innocence of childhood, when our lives were not yet burdened by adult concerns and responsibilities.

Thinking for a moment about "remains," we know that freedom of choice in spiritual things is essential so that we can use what we know to be true from the Word to help us decide to do what we know is right, even though we may not

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want to. We also know that from our heredity, we have inclinations to evils of every kind. These inclinations are powerful and we could not fight against them using our knowledge of truth alone, so the Lord gives us powerful loves of things that are heavenly to balance out the pull of the hereditary evils. When the upward pull of “remains” of heavenly love balance out the downward pull of hereditary evils, then we can use our own power of freedom of choice to “move the pointer” as it were.

We read in *Arcana Coelestia*, “... Remnants ... are all the states of affection for good and truth conferred by the Lord on a person from earliest childhood right through to life's end (AC 1906).

Not every nice thing that we experience is stored away by the Lord in this way. Just those things that will serve the purpose of balancing our own particular set of hereditary evils. But, we kind of like to think that certain special, wonderful things remain with us more than others. Things like the tender love expressed in a mother's caress of her newborn child: for the child it's their first feelings of love and safety. For the parents, there are states of wonder and holy fear, and the incredibly strong desire to protect and guard that fragile innocence. As we move out of our infant states we may be touched by a simple kind word that is unexpected. Or we may be moved by a fictional character in a book. Or the first day at school. I still vividly remember my first day of grade one. We met in the chapel for an opening worship, and then marched in a line to our classroom. I found my place and looked up at the chalkboard. The only thing on the board was the word, **LORD**. I don't remember anything more about that day, except my sure and certain knowledge that this was the most important thing in the world to know about.



And to bring us back full circle, so many of the things that touch us with a kind of inner glow are things that relate to the celebration of Christmas. A scene from the *Tableaux*. Setting up the nativity figures in a special place in the house. Having a special meal with family and friends. We know, from our own deep feelings, that Christmas, more than any other time stirs our deepest affections, our "remains" and give us a sense of well-being and happiness.

Again from the *Arcana*: “The more remnants he acquires therefore during his lifetime, or the more good and truth he acquires, the happier and more beautiful the rest of his states seem to be when they actually return (AC 1906).



If we aren't getting the same enjoyment that we used to out of the Christmas season, we have to ask ourselves what is preventing us from enjoying those early states. Here's another passage from the *Arcana* that suggests a reason: “Later on, when he grows up, this good, innocent, and peaceful state of early childhood departs from him little by little; and insofar as he is introduced into the world, he enters into its pleasures and delights, and so into evils, and the heavenly things or the goods of early childhood start to be dispersed (AC 1906:2)

First impressions seem to be the strongest, so our earliest Christmas memories are the best because they were novel and innocent. As children we are not so much aware of all the preparation and work that goes on in the background to make all these things happen. Children see the cake, they don't see the time and effort involved in making it. They are not involved in the planning, shopping, cleaning, preparing, or the anticipation of paying the bills are soon to come.

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Each year as we get older the cares of daily life in the world take up more and more of our attention. Some of the shine and novelty of Christmas wears off. Doing the same thing over and over again is good when it brings back happy memories, but can become onerous when you're just going through the motions because that's what you have always done. And the thing about gifts. At its heart, giving gifts is a great idea, based on the gifts that the Wise Men brought to the infant Lord. It's fun to think about what other people might want and then finding something that would delight them. There's nothing more fun than watching little kids open gifts. But elements of greed can sneak in when we are encouraged to think about what we want for Christmas. And then there's the stress and worry about finding the "perfect" gift when you have to guess what it might be, figure out how to acquire it in secret, and then pay for it.

It can also be hard when those cute little children grow up and move away. They get married, start their own families and invent new and unfamiliar traditions (just like you did when you moved out of your parents' home).

Perhaps you have figured out where this is going. The core things that make Christmas a wonderful time of year are still there. They have always been there. The stresses come from external things that we have added over the years. We should ask ourselves what we might change to help us bring back those innocent states that we cherish?

We could try to think less about the external things that have been added on, the dead shell, and instead try to concentrate on the essentials qualities, the reasons that lie behind all these decorations and traditions. What is the spiritual truth that underlies it all, what is that gives the celebration of Christmas such staying power? Perhaps, we could allow ourselves to be more childlike.

"Yet they still remain, it being by means of these that the states are moderated which a person takes to himself and acquires later on" (Arcana Coelestia 1906:2)

We could try to leave all our troubles and criticisms outside. We could listen to the beautiful words that describes the Lord birth on earth. We could sing the familiar hymns that allow us to communicate and share our deepest affections, to watch with innocent, childlike wonder as those words come to life before us.

*"But Jesus called them to Him and said,  
    'Let the little children  
        come to Me,  
and do not forbid them;  
for of such is the  
kingdom of God"  
(Luke 18:16).*





# CHRISTMAS LIGHT

## A Family Talk

By Rev. David R. Simons



Have any of you children ever been lost on a dark night? Can you imagine what it would be like to be out alone on a starless night—not sure where you are, uncertain what direction you should take, wondering if you are going to bump into something, or stumble and be hurt? If you have ever felt like that, if you have ever been lost, then you know how wonderful it is to see a light, even if that light is away off in the distance, and how much more secure you feel if that light is pointed in your direction. How grateful you would be if someone brought the light to you! — especially if it was someone who knew who you were, someone who knew where you lived, a friend who could take you by the hand and lead you home.

You may not have thought of it, but this is the Christmas story. For people, all people, were in darkness. And they were in such danger of being hurt that the Lord Himself had to send a light, and had to bring that light to them in person. He had to come as a friend, to save them and lead them home.

But to understand this, to understand why the Lord had to come and bring light on earth, you must know that there are two kinds of darkness. There is natural darkness, and there is spiritual darkness. There is the darkness that comes when the sun goes down and it is night, or the darkness that brings its shadows when thick clouds get in the way and hide the sun. And there is the other kind of darkness, the darkness of the mind which we call ignorance. This kind of darkness comes when people do not know the truth, or when dark clouds of mistaken or false ideas stand in the way of the truth.



As the darkness of night mixes us up, making it difficult for us to find our way home and sometimes causing us to stumble, so does the spiritual darkness of ignorance in our minds. When we do not know the truth, or when our minds are filled with false ideas we are in danger of becoming confused, getting lost, and even being badly hurt. And it was because the spiritual darkness of ignorance and falsity brought such terrible dangers that it was necessary for Christmas to happen—for the Lord, “the true Light,” to be born among people.

Before the Lord came, spiritual darkness reigned everywhere. People no longer knew right from wrong. They no longer knew what true love of the neighbor was. They no longer knew the way to their spiritual homes in heaven. They no longer knew or cared about the Lord. Concerning this sad state, the prophet Isaiah wrote, “The people...walked in darkness...dwelt in the land of the shadow of [spiritual death]” (9:2); and John wrote in his gospel, “Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds

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were evil” (3:19). As this darkness increased, it grew to the point at which it would have resulted in the total destruction of the human race. Therefore, in His Word, the Lord sent promise after promise of His coming, of the light that He would bring. More than a thousand years before His birth, He prophesied His advent as the coming of a star, the Star of Jacob. Through Balaam, a wise man from the east, He said: “I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult” (Numbers 24:17). And later, through His prophet Isaiah, the Lord declared, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined” (9:2).

These promises of a “light” were fulfilled when the Lord was born into the world. For He Himself was “the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world” (John 1:9). “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). And He Himself said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8: 12). “Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not where he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light” (John 12: 35,36).



This Christmas light was what was seen by the wise men in the east as a star. However, it was no ordinary star, for no star has ever acted as it did. What kind of a star could be seen only by a chosen few? What kind of a light could lead first to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem, to the place “where the young child was”? The wise men, who treasured the wisdom of Balaam, knew this. The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church tells us that “they knew that the Lord was to come into the world and that a star was then to appear...[in the east] because the Lord is the east” (*Apocalypse Explained* 422:20)—that is, He is seen in the east in heaven.

And from the Christmas story in Luke we learn just what kind of a star this was. “And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them [the shepherds]....And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host...” (Luke 2:9,13). The Heavenly Doctrine explains this further, for it tells us that it was an angelic society reflecting the glory of the Lord which made this light. For, we are told that a society of angels in heaven, “in the sight of those who are in heaven, sometimes shines like a star” (*True Christian Religion* 160). And it also reveals that the very homes of the angels sparkle with the splendor of stars (*Arcana Coelestia* 7988:4).



But you must remember that the true wonder of Christmas is not only that it happened long ago, but also that it can happen in our own lives, if we will allow it. For each one of us is born in spiritual darkness. We all begin life ignorant of the truth. We all have mistaken and false ideas in our minds. We are all spir-

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itually lost and in great danger. Each one of us desperately needs the Lord to come, to bring His light to save us.

The Lord knows this, even as He knew it years ago. And for this reason He has given His Word as a light to guide our lives and as a “lamp unto our feet.” When we know this, then Christmas, the eternal Christmas, can occur in us. For the Lord tells us in the Heavenly Doctrine that His coming takes place when we acknowledge Him with our whole hearts. From that time on, our understandings begin to be enlightened, and we advance from darkness into light (see *True Christian Religion* 766).

At first the truth of the Word will seem to you like a distant star. But if you study and learn, you will come nearer to it—to see angels, and your own spiritual homes, shining above you. And if you draw still closer to the light, you will see the holy city, New Jerusalem, and then, lighting that city, the very source of heavenly light, the spiritual sun, “the glory of the Lord.” And, finally, you will be led to see the Lord in that sun—the strong ardor of His love, which burns to give light and life to all people.



And when you see these things, when you think about them and ponder them in your hearts, then something wonderful will take place inside you. The infant Lord will be born in your minds. He will grow into a Man, into the Lord Jesus Christ, teaching and working miracles for you. And He will be transfigured before you, as He was before Peter, James and John; so that His face will “shine as the sun” (Matthew 17:2), and you will see Him as a Divine Man in glory, as the glorified Lord of heaven and earth.

*Amen. Readings: John 1:1-14; Heaven and Hell 129.*



## A PRAYER ON WAITING FOR THE LORD

By Rev. Andrew M.T. Dibb

*Lord please  
hear my  
prayer*

Lord, as we celebrate Your birth this Advent season, we pray that You will help us focus our minds on the real purpose and meaning of Christmas. Help us to think of Christmas not only as a time of giving and receiving natural gifts, but a time to give spiritually as well. May we learn to give the gifts of love and wisdom, of faithfulness and sincerity, and as You gave yourself to us, may we give ourselves to others. We recognize that in giving spiritual things we are not giving things that are our own, but things in us that come from You — for without You we have nothing good to give. Help us, then, to open our hearts with joy so that we might become channels of Your eternal qualities, for as we do so, we give in the true spirit of Your advent. Amen.



## CHRISTMAS CANDLES

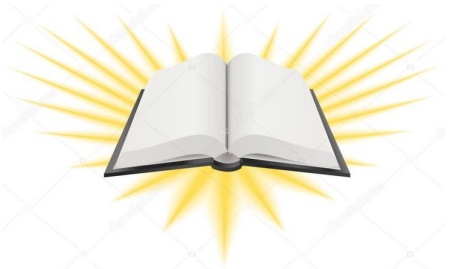
A Family Talk for Christmas

By Rev. Lorentz R. Soneson

*THE GLORY OF THE LORD SHONE AROUND THEM (Luke 2:9).*

When we want to have a party or a special celebration we often decorate. At a birthday party we usually have a cake. At Christmas time we trim a tree and set up a representation of the manger scene. When we prepare our living room for family worship we may set the Word on a pretty cloth and put flowers around it. For a wedding we decorate the altar with ribbons and blossoms.

Now, there is one thing we use at all these celebrations to make them even more wonderful—**lighted candles!** We put candles on a birthday cake. We burn candles on Christmas or Christmas Eve. We use candles at family worship. And candles are set up at weddings to make everything more beautiful. So candles remind us of happy times. They help us remember festivals of the past with many lovely thoughts. But candles are also used to remind us of something more important than parties. There are words in the Christmas story that give us a clue about what candles can mean. These words tell about the angel who first appeared to the shepherds: *“And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.”* What shone or glowed all around them? The *glory* of the Lord! But what is that? What is the glory of the Lord that could shine brightly enough to frighten the shepherds? It was the light of heaven! It was the light coming from the Lord! The shepherds were able to see into heaven for a few moments. And the brightness was so strong that it frightened them. Now that same light can shine on us today. Today it does not come from an angel of the Lord. It shines in the Lord’s Word. It is a spiritual light. It is a light pouring into our minds from the heavens. We can even feel it! It is a warm glow, a glad and joyous gleam. It brings love as well as brightness.



Something that is like this glimmer in our minds, something we can see in this world, is the flame of a candle. Candles remind us of happy things, of holy things. And the fire from candles gives warmth as well as light. Candles glow. They give us a glimpse of heaven. When we place candles beside the Word, they help us think of worshiping the Lord and of His love for us. Christmas candles bring the story of the Lord’s birth into our thoughts. We can see and feel what the shepherds felt—the “glory” of the Lord. The glory of the Lord can fill our minds with understanding. And it can swell our hearts with love as well.



**So, whenever we see candles burning we can think about the glory of the Lord.  
And this will remind us of the glad tidings that the angels brought to the shepherds -  
that Christ the Lord was born among us on Christmas Day!**

# FROM THE REGIONAL PASTOR / GCIC EVP

by Rev. James Cooper



## Christmas Greetings

Karen joins me in wishing all of you a happy Christmas season. It's a pleasure to be able to travel around Canada and meet so many of you. If you are not near a church centre, remember that many of our special Christmas programs are available online through Facebook or YouTube. You can find links to our Canadian programs from Kitchener and Toronto on [www.NewChurch.ca](http://www.NewChurch.ca), and links to other services in the rest of the world through [www.NewChurch.org](http://www.NewChurch.org).

## Welcome home to Rev. Michael Cowley

As you are probably aware there are several retired pastors who continue to serve the church part-time. Rev. Glenn Alden is currently serving the Buccleuch Society in Johannesburg in retirement. Because he is part-time, Glenn and Mary get to go home once in a while – and others get the opportunity to cover Buccleuch in his absence. Michael Cowley is the latest minister to have that opportunity and he has just returned from a seven week visit to South Africa, just in time to hop on a plane and head to Dawson Creek and Grande Prairie!

## Scholarship Reminder

I'd like to remind everyone that the General Church in Canada has a generous scholarship fund available to assist students who are *bona fide* residents of Canada and who wish to attend the Academy of the New Church Secondary School, or the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. Even if you are just considering the possibility, get in touch with me and let me tell you how we can help.

## Travel Calendar

As we all know, the minute you write down something on the calendar something unplanned happens and adjustments have to be made. But, with that in mind, here are our travel plans for the next few months:

**November 26** - Dawson Creek/Grande Prairie – Michael Cowley

**December 10** - Dawson Creek/Grande Prairie – Michael & Gwenda Cowley

**17** - Dawson Creek/Grande Prairie – Michael & Gwenda Cowley

**2024**

**January 14** - Dawson Creek/Grande Prairie – Justin Schorran

**28** - Dawson Creek/Grande Prairie – Jim Cooper

**February 11** - Vancouver – Jim Cooper

**11** - Dawson Creek/Grande Prairie – Justin Schorran

**25** - Dawson Creek/Grande Prairie – Justin Schorran



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## NEW CHURCH TEEN WEEKEND IN KEMPTON, PA

By Naomi Reid

This fall's 2023 New Church Teen Youth Weekend was held in scenic Kempton, Pennsylvania which is situated amongst rolling hills with their colorful fall leaves, Hawk Mountain, The Pinnacle and Leaser lake. Even the long drive to Kempton from Canada was beautiful as the fall leaves were out in full color!

The youth weekend actually started on Thursday Oct 26<sup>th</sup>, for those teens and drivers who were able to make it early. On Thursday, the teens and their chaperones got to hike up Hawk Mountain, enjoy a go-kart outing and go on a tour of the Kempton New Church High School. The school was renovated to include a fully outfitted science lab and large classrooms. There were a number of ceiling mounted projectors and smart boards in some of the classrooms and a community room which is sometimes used for children's services and other functions. The money for this school addition was made possible through fund-raising efforts of the Kempton New Church society.



A total of fifty-four young people attended the youth weekend along with their ministers, chaperones and drivers from seven New Church societies in the United States and Canada. Twenty-seven teens attended from **Kempton, PA** with their Ministers and hosts (Rev. Brett and Karla Buick and Rev. Calvin and Liza Heinrichs). Seven teens attended from **Kitchener, Ontario** with their Minister (Rev Justin Schorran) and Drivers (Rev. Justin and Denali Schorran and Laura Hill). Six teens attended from **Pittsburgh, PA** with their Minister (Rev. Jared Buss with his wife Justine and their four children) and chaperone/driver (Burgundy Smith). Six teens attended from **Bryn Athyn, PA** with their drivers (Brooke Brown and Emily Hasen). Three teens attended from **Mitchellville, Maryland** with their chaperone/driver (Gillian Frazier). Three teens from **Toronto, Ontario** attended with their driver and chaperone (John and Naomi Reid) and two teens from **Glenview, IL** attended with their school principle/chaperone (Phil Parker).

The religious theme for the weekend was “**Discriminate Charity**”. Each of the ministers who were helping with this weekend (Rev. Brett Buick, Rev. Jared Buss, Rev. Calvin Heinrichs, Rev. Justin Schorran) took turns teaching and holding discussions on the religious theme through their Doctrinal Class, Evening Vespers Services and Sunday morning worship service. This helped us to think through what it means to be prudent when it comes to charity. We were taught what the Lord's Word as well as the Writings given through Emmanuel Swedenborg teach on this relevant topic. The story from the Lord's Word of the man who was robbed and left for dead was used to think about who was willing to help the man who was robbed and injured.

To help us think through what it means to exercise discriminate charity we were given a quote from the writings which states that “It is a common opinion at this day, that every man is equally the neighbor, and that benefits are to be conferred on everyone who needs assistance, but it is in the interest of Christian prudence to examine well the quality of a man's life, and to exercise charity to him accordingly (NJHD 85). When we are considering what it means to act prudently (wisely) when it comes to being charitable, Rev. Brett Buick shared this quote from TCR 459:14 where it states that, “A man may do evil by deeds of kindness... For example,... if one rescues a robber from prison and shows him the way to a forest, saying to himself, it is not my fault that he commits robbery, I have given assistance to the man”. Another point from TCR 120 that was highlighted was that “if one lives for a time with robbers and pirates, he finally becomes like them, or if one lives with adulterers and harlots he soon thinks nothing of adultery; or if he mingles with outlaws he

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soon thinks nothing of doing violence to anyone. For all evils are contagious". This is clearly an idea that is important to consider when deciding who we choose as our close friends.

After the doctrinal class on Saturday morning, everyone went to the Kempton Community Center to help trim and remove the plastic protective casing from young trees. Because there were so many hardworking teens, the work was finished earlier than expected, so the teens played volleyball or went for a walk on the grounds. Fortunately, we were blessed with warm "summer" weather, even if the actual time of this weekend was late into the fall.

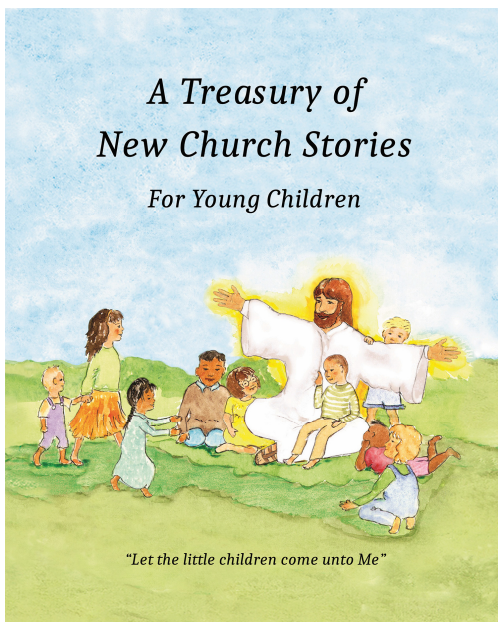
In addition to the sound ideas that were shared from the Lord's Word and the Writings, the weekend was packed with fun activities including "get to know you" games as well as a variety of fun team competitions led by Rev. Calvin Heinrichs, canoeing, kayaking, volleyball, walks and a BBQ at Leaser Lake, wonderful breakfasts from our host families (the Buicks and Heinrichs) and on Friday for dinner we had the largest pizza ever (30 inches; nearly a metre in diameter!) which was not only huge but delicious. On Saturday after dodgeball and showers, the teens had fun decorating a variety of cigar boxes. The end results were impressive!



On Sunday morning the Kempton church as well as the overflow seating was packed with people! As I sat there in church after experiencing this wonderful youth weekend, I thought to myself, wouldn't it be nice if all of our New Churches could experience being packed every Sunday morning. Perhaps someday, this will be our reality!

## NEW BOOK FOR CHILDREN FROM GENERAL CHURCH EDUCATION!

### *A Treasury of New Church Stories for Young Children*



Favorite stories for ages 0-6, with titles including "What Is Heaven?", "The Little Lost Lamb", "The Lord's Prayer", and "Becoming an Angel".

Questions and prompts provide ideas for introducing children to simple spiritual concepts. This hardcover book makes an ideal Christmas gift at \$21.95.

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**General Church in Canada Worship Services**

**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 JAN. — FEB. ISSUE**  
JANUARY 7, 2024  
*We always welcome your comments, letters and articles!*  
Please send submissions to Sandy Kuhl, Editor NCC  
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