

The Concrete Church

The former New Church building at Anerley, South London, was built of concrete [see picture left].

Richard Lines, Secretary of the Swedenborg Society and Chairman of the Norwood Society has revised an earlier account of this church he wrote in 1994. His revised article starts with these words:

One of the more unusual buildings in the Norwood area is the former New Church (Swedenborgian) in Waldegrave Road, just off Anerley Hill and a short walk from Crystal Palace Station ...

To read Richard's article in full please visit this web address:

www.norwoodsociety.co.uk/review/theconcretechurch.shtml

Lifeline

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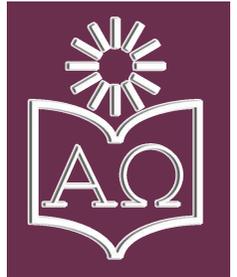
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new church

Lifeline



And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:8-11

December 2011
Number 404

Our mission is to express, share and experience with others in life an inclusive, non-judgmental vision of God's kingdom.

A child at heart

There is simply too much to do at this time of year, and we are all so busy. So how can we find time for spiritual contemplation on the meaning of Christmas, and how can we prepare to change our life styles? Christmas is all right for the children - that's what really Christmas is all about.

OUCH! Have you heard anyone saying that? Perhaps you have even said it yourself. My head says, 'Rubbish,' but my heart agrees. Christmas is special if you are a child. So what are we to do? Do we just carry on as usual? Can we revert to childhood? Of course not. Physically we cannot. Yet in Matthew 18:3 Jesus clearly tells us:

Assuredly I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

In Mark 10:24 He calls His disciples 'children', and says:

How hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God.

So perhaps to be able to look at Christmas differently, and to enjoy it, we must become children again.

(Continued on page 3)

Contents

A child at heart	2	Loving others - reciprocal love	12
From the Writings ...	3	New Church Children's Society	15
New Church Historical Society 2011	4	The Concrete Church	16
"For God's sake, and your own, get it right!"	5		
Questions on Ordination	9		

For the current issue of Lifeline, back issues and other resources visit:

www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

New Church Children's Society

We need another person to become a member of the Board of Management. This rather old-fashioned sounding title come from the Society's foundation as the New Church Orphanage in 1881.

The Board meets twice a year, usually in November and June. The meetings are held in the home of the secretary, Geoffrey Bentley. They take place on Saturday mornings starting at 10.30 AM. and last 2 hours.

What do we do? We consider the needs of the families that we support in the UK and the families and organisations that we support overseas. New applications are always welcomed. We review the grants made and the finances of the Society.

All the details MUST be kept private within the Board.

Any one who is interested should contact Geoffrey Bentley.

The Society has a fund to help children wishing to attend schools at Purley Chase and elsewhere. The travelling expenses for parents can also be met but not the cost of the parent's attendance at a school. Applications should be made to either the family visitor or to Rev Rita Russell.

Anyone can become a member of the Society for £60 either in a lump sum or in payments spread over 3 years.

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

all our relationships; with those we count as friends or strangers the same considerations apply. It requires us to have self control, restraint and discipline as we work to keep our thoughts towards mutual consideration and love rather than falling into judgemental and overly critical mindsets.

Experience and Meditation

Recall times when you have experienced the joy of reciprocal love; sharing fully in another's joy and realising they share the same delight in your happiness too. It may be an apparently trivial moment that unites you; it doesn't have to be a hugely significant event and we can look for the mutual love and joys of heaven in the most ordinary of situations.

These verses from 1 Corinthians are from Young's literal translation; perhaps these less familiar phrases may highlight different aspects of what is here called "the love".

The love is long-suffering, it is kind, the love doth not envy, the love doth not vaunt itself, is not puffed up, doth not act unseemly, doth not seek its own things, is not provoked, doth not impute evil, rejoiceth not over the unrighteousness, and rejoiceth with the truth; all things it beareth, all it believeth, all it hopeth, all it endureth. The love doth never fail ... and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13: 4-8, 13

Spend some time thinking of your special times and 'reciprocal love' moments. Are these things you would remember to offer thanks for, to acknowledge the value of such special events in your life and prayerfully ask for more such moments? The Divine is found in the ordinary, the everyday events of our life; looking for aspects of "the love" around us can be a daily task of awareness and searching for what is good.

Editor's Note: Don't forget the online copy includes pictures.

.....
Five Essentials - Aspects of Loving - a focus for the Church
3rd Essential: Part 4: Loving others - reciprocal love
Published by The General Conference of the New Church.
Downloadable from www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

What is it that makes a little child different from any of us grown ups? Perhaps innocence and trust - there is no cynicism or world-weariness. Little children seem to have untold energy for the simple things in life. For them Jesus is born again each year. They accept without protest that Jesus is God on earth and He is with us always. They are not afraid of death because they will be with their families who have gone on before them, and Jesus will look after both them and us who are left on earth. They very rarely doubt anything, unless we instil our doubts into them. They believe in miracles.

There is nothing wrong with any of this. Miracles are happening all the time - just because we do not see them it does not mean that they do not happen.

I know that we shall all be busy before Christmas, and unlike children we have many things to think and worry about. I know that I shall find it difficult to find time and to separate myself from the hubbub around me. But surely, nothing worth getting is easy. So amid our preparations let us try to separate our minds from our tasks. Try to look at the festive time with new eyes. Find some goodness around us. Ask the Lord to help us to see through the glitz and glitter and the hustle and bustle. Feel the innocence and trust again.

Do away with cynicism. Find refreshment in thinking of the enjoyment of others. Look inside ourselves, and from the hidden depths find the wonder and joy which we used to feel at this time of year. Become as little children, so that when Christmas Day arrives we welcome our Lord with hearts which are new and young.

Pamela Ryder

From the Writings ...

All of us have to do our part and move closer to God. The closer we come to God, the more God enters us, which is his part. The union itself [between the Lord's divine and human natures] was completed by the suffering on the cross, because this suffering was the final spiritual test that the Lord went through in the world. Spiritual tests lead to a partnership [with God]. During our spiritual tests, we are apparently left completely alone, although in fact we are not alone - at those times God is most intimately present at our deepest level giving us support. Because of that inner presence, when any of us have success in a spiritual test we form a partnership with God at the deepest level. In the Lord's case, he was then united to God, his Father, at the deepest level.

True Christian Religion 126 [extract]

The New Church Historical Society 2011

During the afternoon of the 11th October twenty five friends gathered for the Historical Society's 3rd Get-Together at Purley Chase. Little were we aware of the feast of fun, laughter and learning we would experience over the next two days.

Proceedings began with the Annual Lecture delivered by Richard Lines. Richard's knowledge is awe-inspiring as he eloquently talked us through the religious life of the Rev John Clowes, Rector of St John's Church in Manchester for sixty-two years. He spent much of his time translating Swedenborg's works into English. He established groups to read Swedenborg. In 1782 he began the Society of Gentleman (its descendant is New Church House in Manchester). His life was dedicated to his parishioners and the life and works of Swedenborg. After a short break this was complemented by Maeve Hawkins' talk on the Clowes family who lived at Broughton Hall north of Manchester. Within the family there were three Reverend Johns, the Rector of St John's, the Vicar of Eccles and Rev John, Lord of the Manor of Broughton.

It is impossible to cover adequately all that was shared over the two days so I must content myself with snippets, giving a flavour of some sessions. There were diverse presentations, from Patrick Johnson on '*New Church Ministry*' and '*The Church at War*' by Pauline Grimshaw which talked of the effect the First World War had on the Church and the enhanced role of women. We heard from Angela Wilson of her grandfather, the Rev Arthur Stones, father of Harold Stones, the last headmaster of the New Church Day School at Radcliffe. John Ford spoke of '*The New Church at Kildwick*' which is a New Church Hostel where family groups enjoy short breaks taking in the beautiful countryside of North Yorkshire and one day workshops are popular with a group of local friends. Pauline Grimshaw peeped into the life of Samuel Crompton and Maeve Hawkins presented '*Bayley's Children*' whilst Jean Mrozek introduced us to Jesse Ingham Kay of Dalton. Each of these presentations enthralled us. Then Howard Turner told us of '*The Dennison Watch Case Company*' of Birmingham established by an American Swedenborgian who came to live in this country. Barbara Bentley displayed some exquisite silverware made by members of her family, still to be found today if you can afford it. Both of these talks were quite different from what we expected but fascinating in their difference. They showed



Aaron Lufkin Dennison

within us, and as recipients of that love then we have the potential to express and share it through our life.

Reciprocal love requires each individual to be unselfish and generous. Putting the things we know to be good and true into practice in our life, using the knowledge we have to discern and discriminate between what we should and should not do is one very down to earth way our spiritual development takes place. By prioritising others above ourselves and seeking to be of use and service rather than expecting others to meet our needs, then the direction of our life become less self-centred and more aware of those around us.

The essence of love is that what is ours should belong to someone else. Feeling the joy of someone else as joy within ourselves - that is loving ... divine love cannot fail to be manifested in others whom it loves and who love it. *Divine Love and Wisdom 47-48*

Bible

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. *Matthew 7:12*

Jesus spoke very clearly about the way we should be showing love in our daily life and many scriptures and faiths have words very similar to this 'Golden Rule' of considerate living at their heart. His original listeners would have understood Jesus to mean the historical books of Moses by 'the Law,' and the Prophets were part of the Jewish scriptures too; so these words encapsulate the essence of all that we need to understand in terms of being loving to others, loving the neighbour. The desire for reciprocal love has to be within each person for it to truly happen and we are also given warnings against harsh and unkind dealings with one another in our decisions and actions.

Things can be manifested as an unpleasant opposite of love and kindness too. Although it is wonderful to think of the pleasant life we could all share if everyone was gently disposed towards showing love and tolerance, the sad fact is our existence is also marked by the times we and others fall into the states indicated in the words below. Rather than an outpouring of love we find we have encouraged narrow minds and unsympathetic feelings within us and been rewarded in similar ways. All too easily we can find ourselves encouraging malicious thoughts and these aspects of our character will also tend to expand their own unpleasant qualities to be shared more widely. Hence the warning to be on our guard: **Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.** *Matthew 7:1-2*

These words from Jesus remind us of the way we ought to be aiming to conduct

3rd Essential: Part 4 - Loving others - reciprocal love

We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19

The way we live is a key indicator of how our faith, our belief, our sense of right and wrong really impacts in daily life. Relating to others, working together to generate constructive, positive, useful and productive outcomes can give all parties a sense of joy and fulfilment.

When we find satisfaction in a united purpose or shared understanding then it may not be too hard for us to feel something of heavenly joy within those circumstances, to be aware of real delight and to know that the feeling is mutual. Finding times when our joys are truly shared and reciprocated in this way is a little taste of the deeper spiritual delights we are all made to enjoy.

Our experience of life is that we can generally choose our friends and those we wish to be close to; where this affection is mutual and reciprocated there is the potential for stronger and closer relationships to grow. Friendships change and develop and we know that some will persist and strengthen over time while others diminish. Being with someone else who shares a similar delight means our joy can be shared and communicated - it really does become even nicer and more enjoyable to know the feeling is mutual, shared and appreciated.

We understand that in marriage a couple make a commitment to work towards mutual happiness, sharing love and understanding as they go through life together. The love of husband for wife is also used by the Lord to express the His love for the human race; Old Testament prophets speak of the faithless Israel deserting her God and of the constant, unending love the 'husband/God' for the 'wife/Israel' through all circumstances. A happier marriage is within the vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 is of the "Holy City ... prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband."

Teaching

Reciprocal love really begins with the Lord; the author of John's Gospel and Revelation is also the author of three New Testament letters and he makes it very clear to his readers that "**God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him**" 1John 4:16 and in verse 19 at the head of the first page "**We love because he first loved us.**" His love is the starting point for all that is good

industrialists who lived their New Church faith in their approach to business and care of their employees.

Slides of the Convocation to celebrate the Centenary of the New Church in Australia were shown by Gordon Kuphal who stepped in at the last moment to replace Norman Ryder who sadly could not be with us as he had a funeral (not his own I hasten to add!) In addition we enjoyed a short but nostalgic film of the marriage of Ian Arnold and his wife Margaret at Kensington which Howard had copied to a DVD.

Throughout our stay we had time to chat, reminiscing about the past we have shared within the Church. Such fellowship is heart-warming, binding us together in our love of the teachings of Swedenborg and our endeavours to live them out in our lives.

It is impossible to speak of a stay at Purley Chase without mention of the warm welcome which we receive from Anne and her team. The food served is legendary and I'm sure there were others like me who arrived home to find their clothes had sadly shrunk! As we reluctantly said goodbye to each other, we eagerly anticipate our fourth Get-Together in October 2013.

Jean Chambers

"For God's sake, and your own, get it right!"

A few days before last Christmas I heard a high churchman (he may have been a Bishop) mention in passing that the three Wise Men (the Magi) were at the stable, offering their presents to the baby. Something in me just snapped. Why are we so ignorant about the details of the Lord's nativity?

Do we all know that only two of the Gospels really describe the Lord's birth? They are Matthew and Luke and they give us very different descriptions. What of the other two Gospels? Mark begins, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;" but then it goes on to describe the mission of John the Baptist who was baptising people in the river Jordan as a preparation for the coming of the Messiah. And Jesus does not appear in Mark until He is about 30 years of age.

John's Gospel speaks about the Word : "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . .**" but very soon it again goes to John the Baptist who was sent to prepare people to recognise the incarnate Word.

(Continued on page 6)

We are therefore left with Matthew and Luke who deal directly with the Annunciation and the birth of Jesus. But they tell different stories and Luke begins with the aged priest Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth. A childless couple, but an angel announces to Zacharias, while he is serving in the Temple, that their prayer has been heard and that Elisabeth will have a son.

Is it not strange that three Gospels place such importance on the birth of John the Baptist who was born specifically to prepare the nation for the appearance of the Messiah some 30 years later?

When we separate the story into those two main sources: Matthew and Luke, then we shall notice that they both tell different tales. After the priest Zacharias received the promise of having a son, the Gospel turns to Mary. She is visited by an angel who tells her that she will have a son. Now that is the wonderful story of the Annunciation in Luke 1. 26-38. Please read it.

Mary then visits her cousin Elizabeth who is expecting her son John and there is the description of how the baby in her womb leapt for joy in recognition of the presence of the coming Messiah. Mary then responds by saying the words of the Magnificat: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." One of the loveliest poems in the Word! (Luke 1. 46-55) But Mary stays only about 3 months, so does not see John's birth. This first chapter in Luke continues to describe the birth of John the Baptist and the prophecy that he will become a prophet of the Highest.

Luke chapter 2 returns to the birth of Jesus. Explaining that people had to pay a tax in the town of their own birth. Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem. Joseph was reconciled to Mary's pregnancy because Matthew (1.18-25) explains that an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him that Mary's baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that when born, he should give him the name 'Jesus'.

So heavily pregnant Mary has to journey to Bethlehem from Nazareth. And as you know, they cannot find a room in which Mary could give birth, so they are forced to find a lonely stable where the infant Jesus is born. It is this Gospel (Luke's) which describes the visit of the shepherds. This is where it gets a bit complicated in most people's minds! An angel appears in a burst of glory to some shepherds in a nearby field and tells them not to be afraid because he is bringing wonderful news to them: **"I bring you good tidings of a great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ, the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; You shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."**

And suddenly, a great number of angels appears singing glory to God and peace on earth and good will to men. Now listen carefully! Having sung their praises, the angels go back to heaven and disappear from view completely. The

of my life.

The second part of ordination for me is linked to the organisation and is the 'person-made' part of this ceremony/role. It is an outward sign by a religious group that someone has undergone the necessary training and personal spiritual development to be given the role of ministering to others in their tradition. In this vow taking I am accepting the organisations rules for the role, which gives the role boundaries and professional safeguards. As most religious organisations have their own theology, an acceptance of this is included in the vow taking. It seems to me that it is not possible therefore to be ordained as a practising minister in two different denominations of Christianity or different faith traditions at the same time because it is the theology which is the key difference e.g. I couldn't be an Anglican minister and a New Church minister. This is not the same for the interfaith organisation however as it is not a church or a faith tradition with a specific theology. By its nature it is all encompassing and to use the metaphor of a tree, it could be seen to be like the roots which are fed by key universal truths from which people then choose their own trunk and branch of faith, in order to find their God. Although I would be the first New Church minister to be ordained as an interfaith minister I would not be the first interfaith minister who is already ordained and practising in their own faith tradition.

In practical terms what might your ministry look like?

This is the sixty million dollar question which I don't feel able to answer very clearly at the moment! I am self employed as an interfaith minister and I may be the same as a New Church minister or it may be that there is a role and the finance within the Church for me to be employed part-time. These discussions are currently taking place. Whatever happens I know that I am called to work with people where they are, to help them to connect to what is of the Lord and heaven within them. I hope to be able to use a combination of the teachings of Swedenborg with approaches which people feel comfortable with and are meaningful to them – a balance of head and heart methods. To be more specific I envisage myself continuing to do things I am known for doing in the Church such as running workshops, leading retreats at Purley Chase, facilitating small groups, creating resources like cards, course material, short films and internet material, the difference being for me that I feel I have developed further in my own spirituality and people skills during my ministerial training. I will also enjoy creating worship ceremonies that are meaningful for a diverse range of people. Whatever the outcome of the current discussions on my future ministry, I trust that if I remain open to the Lord, His Spirit will guide me along the path I am meant to tread for the greatest good.

If you have any further questions then please do contact me. In addition, as part of my fieldwork this year it has been suggested I visit some of our local churches so people can get to know me better and find out at first hand more about what I might be able to offer. If you would like me to visit you then please contact David Lomax at SOLCe.

Helen Newton

God. Throughout my training I did not find any inner conflict with my own New Church theology, in fact it was the opposite and I was continually amazed with how much of what we think of as Swedenborgian ideas for the new age are out there, accepted and being used in amazing ways in this new individual, less organisational spirituality. I believe this is why I felt I wanted to be ordained as an interfaith minister.

Why do you want to be a New Church minister as well as a One Spirit minister?

The first response to this is because I have a deep and abiding love for the truths of the New Church which for me are about this new spiritual age we are in. Whilst I love the heart-centredness of the new spirituality, I also need the balance of my head centre which is met for me by the teachings found in Swedenborg's writings. Nowhere else can I find such a broad and deep set of ideas which satisfy my need to understand the world and my reason for living. I feel the desire to share these ideas with others, in particular with those who are seeking a deeper connection with their God. My experience is that these seekers are not generally coming into church but are exploring the range of spiritual ideas and experiences which are 'out there in the world' so I wish to be 'out there' too in order to meet them where they are. In order to be able to really communicate in a way they will understand it seems to me that I will need to use Swedenborgian ideas expressed in ways they can connect with which are usually psychological and life based rather than the theological language Swedenborg used in his day. Working with what are sometimes termed 'non-churched' seekers may also require the use of teaching and practices that are relatively new to our organised church's tradition; skills which I have gained from my wider experience with people involved in the new spirituality.

Could I work in this way as an interfaith minister with my Swedenborgian background without being ordained by Conference? Yes, I could so why do I want to be ordained in the New Church too? I find this hard to answer as it is something coming from deep within me. I love our Church and the people in it; it is the faith tradition I have been in all my life and I believe there is a reason why I have been given this privilege. I see the struggles of our organisation to cope with the changing world and the spiritual culture of the individual and whilst I don't have many answers, I still feel my calling to minister as a Swedenborgian minister, to hopefully offer some of the amazing detail in our teachings to help people in their own inner spiritual explorations.

Can you be ordained twice?

From talking to people it seems that our understanding of ordination, rather like our faith, is unique for each of us. Here is my take on it: For me there are two parts to the meaning of ordination. Firstly I see it as a private and public commitment of myself to live, as far as I am able, in the Lord's life and to minister to people with this life of love and truth wherever this is needed. In one sense this is done only once, in another sense I do this every day

shepherds went to the stable on their own and there was no angelic host around the stable singing heavenly praises. Just the shepherds and they are excited and soon leave to spread the news in the town. But they probably had little effect on the population. After all, they were only the local shepherds! What would they know?

How many people, including those in religious orders realise this? At the stable, no angels, no Wise men – just the shepherds!

Joseph and Mary had things to do, to arrange for the circumcision of the child and then travel to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice for the birth of the first son. It was in Jerusalem that the holy man Simeon recognises the babe as the promised Christ and he blesses him and Mary. The prophetess Anna also recognises the child as holy. But no one else is aware of it the baby's divinity. Which was just as well, as the news would soon spread to Herod. Perhaps Simeon and Anna were the local oddities and no one took much notice of them? So what about the Wise Men? That is another story which people do not seem to read with enough attention. Their visit is described in Matthew and we need to give attention to every detail. They came from a long distance, following a new star that appeared in the sky. They knew that it heralded the birth of a divine king. How long were they on the journey? Weeks or months? But if you read the Bible with care you will get a strong hint.

Naturally, they made for the royal palace in Jerusalem - where else would a new king be born? But no one had any knowledge of such a birth. So nobody knew the time of the baby's birth. Matthew makes it very clear that Herod questioned the visitors about the exact time when the star appeared. But the Jewish Scriptures give the place where the future king was to be born, as the Jewish priests pointed out:

“And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art by no means the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall shepherd my people Israel.” Matthew 2.6

Now there is something which appears to be usually completely missed by readers of the Bible and yet it is most important! So pay special attention to see if you can pick it up in Matthew 2.9-12:

After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over a place where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and

(Continued on page 8)

myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they returned to their own country by another way.

So that is another very clear indication that the Wise Men were not at the stable, but clearly, Joseph must have found a house in which they were now living and the baby is now a young child. The Bible presents to us the scenes one at a time and we should keep them separate in our mind. They are not all mixed up in the Word, so they should not be mixed up in our thoughts.

Let us spend a few moments considering the shepherds at the manger. Dark and quiet and in a sense very private. There were no choirs of angels, no rich Magi on camels. Not a whisper of noise except perhaps their own breathing. In years to come, would they not remember this as the most wonderful moment of their whole life? To be the first to see the Messiah? Was it their moment of conversion?

These days we seem to think that numbers at religious festivals can qualify as successful (or very successful) if they attract thousands. How would you like to be converted? Almost alone, in the dark, but sensing quietness and peace which penetrates your heart and mind and there is just a glimmer of light to reveal a new born child. Can you not feel closer to your Creator, the source of life? Can you experience a holier moment? In a large crowd, you are more likely to be carried by mass hysteria and have no possibility of thinking clearly or think at all.

That precious moment of the simple shepherds was not ruined by a host of angels singing their hearts out, neither by the rich men taking over the scene as they offer gold and frankincense and myrrh. In that very simple scene the Lord is telling you something, so do not spoil it by adding what some might feel is enhancing the scene.

The Lord wants you as you are. A shepherd is someone who leads and feeds and cares for the sheep and those are fine qualities: selfless, ready to give away everything so that the new lamb (or a new baby) might survive and be well. If we are parents, we have all experienced this to some extent. It is a holy moment not to be drowned by the world's controlling pollution of noise and wealth. Let us be content to see the new life which the Lord Jesus Christ is offering to us. Leave the picture as it is - you cannot improve it!

Rev Christopher Hasler

Questions on Ordination - by Helen Newton

How can I be a New Church minister when I am also a One Spirit interfaith minister?

My path to serve in the role of minister has taken me on a route which is new to our Church and not surprisingly, many people have questions and concerns. In an attempt to bring more clarity, I have written some responses to those questions I am aware are being asked.

What is One Spirit interfaith ministry?

It is an awakening of an inclusive global spirituality, in ourselves and in the world. Perfectly in tune for me with what Swedenborg refers to as the universal church. It is remembering that we are loved by the Lord and that when we allow this love to flow through our hearts and influence our thinking, then we live our lives with compassionate, non-judgemental hearts and have a desire to help others to find this connection with what is of God within them. For some people who undergo the very experiential training of the interfaith seminary, the greater self awareness and connection to God is the end in itself and they continue with the work they love. For others it leads them into a life of service as a minister where they are usually involved in two main areas. The first is spiritual counselling, helping people to find the truth they know from life and to reconnect with the Lord's love. The second is leading personalised ceremonies, often for rites of passage such as the birth of a baby, marriage and death and also worship ceremonies which are as inclusive as possible for people of a range of faith traditions or of no particular path. No two interfaith ministers are the same; they all work in their own unique way.

The interfaith organisation is very small, is not an organised religion and has no theology of its own other than recognising the truth that the Source of all life is Love itself. It accepts all faith traditions, seeing them as pathways for individuals to connect with God in their soul. An individual minister will keep his or her own faith tradition whilst honouring the path of others. Those who are working as interfaith ministers are self employed with people paying for the services they receive from them.

Why did I want to undertake the One Spirit interfaith training and be ordained?

I am drawn to the deepest essentials of faith in the mystical tradition which for me is about connection to the Lord. As this is an experience rather than a head process alone I have been interested in the practices of a range of different faith traditions for many years which culminated in my contact with the interfaith seminary. Their training is experiential; the teaching using participant's own life experiences to allow each person to renew and strengthen their own connection to

(Continued on page 10)