



New Church Canadian

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter of General Church in Canada

Issue 213

“HE BOWED THE HEAVENS, AND CAME DOWN”

Psalm 18:9

By Rev. Michael Cowley

As we prepare for and celebrate the Lord’s birth at Christmas we look to the Word for further instruction and lifting up.



This is the season of lights, some say, because it comes at the darkest time of the year. We don’t actually have a definitive day to mark on our calendars, based on the Word, when it was that Baby Jesus was lain in a manger. We just have the knowledge that shepherds were summoned and arrived. We love to sing the songs about the vision they beheld, ‘hark, the herald angels sing’, while we also know that a lot is made up about the

time of the Lord’s birth, including the actual day itself. (In fact the Catholic Church “stole” the day and celebration of Yule from the heathens. If the natives were going to celebrate at this time anyway it seemed better to celebrate something to do with the Gospel. We can speculate that the heathen celebration was based on celebrations of the Most Ancient and Ancient Church... but that’s another article!)

Did the angels actually sing? “Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and SAYING, ‘Glory to God in the highest,

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and on earth, peace, good will toward men.” Not to burst anyone’s bubble, but no singing is actually mentioned in these verses. Mary didn’t sing the Magnificent. Elizabeth did not sing her prophetic words: “she cried out with a loud voice” we read. Simeon blessed Jesus at the Temple, and the prophetess Anna found Jesus and gave thanks and spoke to everyone about Him - to everyone who was looking for redemption in Israel. Nothing is said about words of the Wisemen as they presented their gold, frankincense and myrrh.

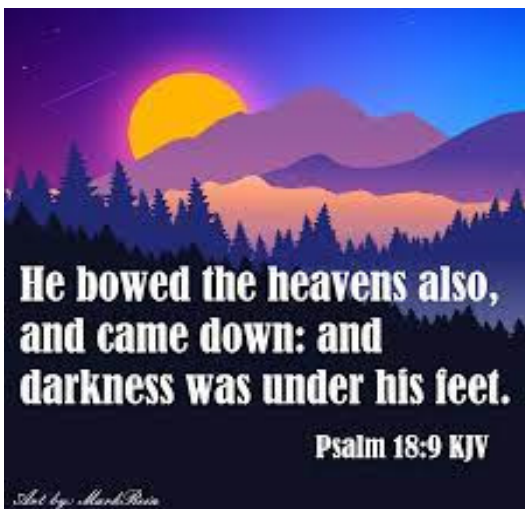
However, if you’re like me, you love all the songs which reverently put to music each aspect of the Christmas story. What a blessing it is to be able to pray and praise the Lord through the hymns and sacred songs of the season. These too make this season one of Light when the affections are stirred through song and the heart and mind are lifted up toward heaven.



Our quote above is taken from the Book of Psalms, or, in other words, the Book of Songs. Through the years, each has been sung and chanted by the Hebrew and Jewish people, and then the Christians. Sacred Psalms are Sacred Songs which bring us closer to heaven and bring heaven and the Lord closer to us.

This song, or Psalm 18, tells us that Jehovah came down through the heavens to be born on earth. There are varying thoughts related to this passage and this idea. In order to be conceived in Mary’s womb, the Divine, passing through the heavens, clothed Itself with the qualities of the heavens and angels, and thus the Divine seed which began the conception of the baby brought with it a covering, or clothings taken from all of the angels. Others believe that nothing of the angels was added, and the Holy seed of conception was purely Divine, as was the Divinity of the “Transflux” which filled the heavens from creation until the time of the Lord’s birth. The Divine “bowed” the heavens or passed through the heavens to be born on earth.

We can leave those theological questions for another time, and focus on the need for the Lord’s birth. The Divine in the Heavens which blesses the angels with conjugal love, which makes the life of heaven a paradise, which keeps order through justice and judgement, had reached a point and could go no further. Hearts on earth had grown cold, truth and Divine Light was blotted out. People on earth were not able to be reached by God.



That doesn’t quite sound right, does it? That the Lord, Jehovah God, has limitations? Jesus had to be born on earth because not violating peoples’ freedom is an important aspect or limit to Divine Love. And the fall of mankind, from the time of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit right down to the Jews making the laws of God of no effect, meant that freedom was on the brink of being lost so completely that no human could be saved from hell. And the Divine Light passing down through heaven was all but totally blotted out.

This is a story of accommodation. The Divine Love and Wisdom of Jehovah God will not go beyond the bounds of people’s freedom, but will do everything possible to accommodate Itself to human needs up to that point. And humanity reached a point where the Lord could no longer reach us.

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“He bowed the heavens and came down, with thick darkness under His feet” the verse continues. The thick darkness could be penetrated no longer in the same way God had been reaching “down to us” before. Something was very broken and the old way of keeping it working had reached its final end. The Word had been given, all of the books of the Old Testament, one by one, each reaching further into the darkness. The Word had been providing both the angels and people a pathway to maintain their freedom and choose heaven according to its teachings. And then it didn’t work anymore.



We have situations like this, don’t we? In both little and big ways, some things that used to work for us before don’t seem to work that way any more. It is very much the way of natural things like roads, houses, machinery, appliances, shoes, computers, phones and books. Its definitely the way it works with food. It can be good for a long time and then it spoils. It’s past its “best by” date. It’s also the way of our own minds and bodies. After a while we reach a point where we can’t remember things the way we used to, and we can’t manage physical tasks like we did in our youth. There are limits to the human condition, and Christmas was the answer!

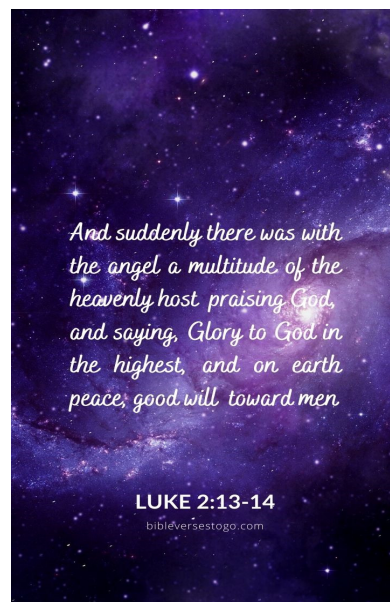
So its a matter of accommodation. When we have things that break down, we either keep fixing them or get a new one. If we can’t remember things we start writing stuff down, if we can’t walk so well anymore we get crutches, a cane or a walker. We make accommodations to get around and function. The path to heaven is like that too.

On a spiritual level that is what the Lord’s Advent did. It cleared a new path because the old way wasn’t working. It brought us a new ride, or “lift” to higher ways. The Lord accommodated to our brokenness when that brokenness couldn’t be fixed any other way.

“He bowed the heavens and came down, with thick darkness under His feet. He rode upon a cherub and flew, and He sped upon the wings of the wind.” So the prophetic verse goes on to say. The Lord accommodated to the state of fallen man. “And I, if I be lifted up, I will lift all to me.” We are gifted with new wings, a new lift up.

Christmas is a story of such Divine mercy, such compassion, such accommodation to our needs. We, even today, can block the Lord’s path to us, but the Lord will try every means possible to be with us and draw us toward Him, short of depriving us of our freedom. But the freedom is restored over and over in ways we can not see. This is especially the case since His Second Coming. The new revelation of the Gospel of Second Advent restored the light in heaven seven fold, and glorious light shows take place in the heavens which help both us and the angels understand new things about the Lord, and to appreciate in new ways how much He loves us.

When one of the books of the Writings was published, we are told that “the angelic heaven, from east to west and from south to north, appeared purple coloured with the loveliest flowers...on another occasion it appeared as if it were on fire, and beautiful” Swedenborg tells us. (Ecc History 7) And we now know clearly from the Word that the angels sing every day about the Lord’s Advent. (TCR 625) And they probably DID sing to the shepherds, too, when the sky was filled with Glory!



From the GCIC EVP / Regional Pastor

by Rev. James Cooper

First of all, let me wish everyone a Merry Christmas! I certainly hope as we slowly recover from the Covid mess of the past couple of years that families and friends will be able to gather in homes - and in church services - to enjoy the special delights that the celebration of the Lord's birth on earth can bring.

Here are some worship dates for the next 3 months:

WORSHIP SERVICES

Dawson Creek and Grande Prairie:

December 4 and 18, 2022

January 8 and 22, 2023

February 5 and 1, 2023



The services in January and February will be led by either me or Justin Schorran while Rev. Cowley and his wife take a well-deserved break.

Vancouver:

November 27, 2022

I will be visiting Vancouver on November 27, 2022. That service will include the Holy Supper and feature the first effort at broadcasting the service, from the Roundhouse in Vancouver to all the members in the "Cascadia" group in SW B.C., Washington State, and Oregon. If you are in that part of the world, watch for an email from me with the Zoom link for that service. If you are not presently on my email list and would like to be added so you will get notices of these meetings, please send your information to me and I will add you to the list.

We've also had requests for visits from groups in Parry Sound and Ottawa and we are working with those groups to find a suitable time to meet in the very near future.

ONLINE

Our website, www.newchurch.ca is also a good source of information for schedules. You can find the current copy of New Church Canadian there as well as some recent editions. And there are links to our three Societies that have live links to the Society calendars. It's a one-stop answer to all (well, many of) your questions!

It is a challenge to make all these visits now that all of Canada is served by 3 full-time ministers, 1 half-time minister, and one very busy retired minister. We're doing the best we can and looking forward to the day when we can be fully staffed in Canada once again. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me by phone or email.



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GCIC HISTORY CORNER: EXCERPTS FROM THE NEW CHURCH CANADIAN
A Bi-monthly Newsletter of the General Church in Canada
From Issue 122, December 2007

THE MAGICAL TABLECLOTH - When Truth is Stranger than Fiction
by Rob Reid

The brand new pastor and his wife were newly assigned to their first ministry - to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, NY. They arrived in early October, excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set about to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve.

They worked hard repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc, and on December 16 were ahead of schedule and just about finished. On December 19 a terrible tempest - a driving rainstorm - hit the area and lasted for two days. On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster, about 20 feet by 8, feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary, just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed home. On the way by he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity, so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory coloured crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a Cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.



By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus... she missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus, 45 minutes later. She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked, and it covered up the entire problem area. Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle.

Her face was like a sheet.

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Pastor, she asked, "where did you get that tablecloth?" The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG, were crocheted into it there. They were.

These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria.

The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just gotten the tablecloth. The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria. When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. He was captured, sent to prison and she never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth, but she made the pastor keep it for the church. The pastor insisted on driving her home, because that was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve! The Church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return. One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighbourhood, continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving.

The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall, because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war, and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike. He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again in all the 36 years since.



The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door, and he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine!



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I just wanted to let you how much I appreciated your latest NCC Magazine, featuring the history of our Dawson Creek Church! I found it so interesting and totally enjoyable to read.

I remember hearing about Rev. Karl R. Alden's strong affection for the Dawson Creek Church community and his devotion to our western Church and the people there when I was young, and later, how often he returned to visit the folks out there after he had retired. I wondered at first, if his contribution and devotion to those good people was going to be forgotten!

But then, I was so pleased that Stephanie Crampton shared Ruth and Claire's 50th Anniversary reports, and you also shared Loraine's Letter to the Editor, as they filled in some early names and history of the Church and it's valued members and their reminiscences.

Just goes to show the importance of our saving articles of the past to share with future generations who missed knowing the people who came before, and how they contributed to our beloved Church. I believe I was one of the last persons who conversed with Rev. K. R. Alden when I worked for the Academy Boys' School. **I believe, he had been our Canadian Pastor at both the Carmel and our Olivet Church at one time,** and sadly, to me, the next day following our pleasant chat, I heard he had passed away that evening. Although I was very young when I knew him from his visits to our Kitchener and Toronto Churches, I always felt a fondness for him, as he took a genuine and affectionate interest in we little ones!

I have to also share my appreciation for Gwenda's "**A TOAST TO THE LORD'S CHURCH**" and say that instead of reading the words to "**OUR GLORIOUS CHURCH**", I responded to her toast by singing the words, not once, but twice!

I do remember singing the songs from **The Social Song Book** with such pleasure, and I still value my copy of that book, and the melodies and words have remained in my heart all my life! I remember visiting my Aunt Freda Roschman Stroh in her home one day, and she kindly and patiently played all the songs in that book for me, while I sat beside her and sang them. We had such wonderful and enthusiastic singers in the earlier Kitchener Carmel Church and we delighted in singing around our huge bon fire behind the Church once or twice a year, and also after other celebrations or dances in Waelchli Hall.

I do wish we could renew the use of these songs along with the wonderful mixed Social Life that we experienced in the earlier Carmel Church when I was young, and where I learned with amusement that that many of the beautiful, melodic tunes in that book, were also adapted by Rev. Geoffrey Child's father, Walter Childs, who wrote many of the words to the songs, after he and John Pitcairn took, "The Grand Tour:" through Germany a long time ago!

I look forward to reading more of Rev. Justin Schorran's sermon's and articles!

Best wishes to all,

Paula Niall in Owen Sound, Ontario!

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Dear Editor,

I have included a quote from Rev. Karl Alden's resurrection address in 1964 New Church Life magazine. Note that he was pastor at Olivet from 1919-1924, but never served at Carmel. He did extensive visiting to Canada during Academy summer holidays, as is well known.

"Karl was raised from childhood in the faith of the New Church. He attended the Academy schools, graduating with the degree of Bachelor of Theology in 1917. Immediately after his ordination he was called as minister to the Advent Church of Philadelphia, where he ultimated his great desire to spread the doctrines by instituting a neighborhood Sunday school, which attracted a considerable number of children and introduced their parents to a knowledge of the New Church. In 1919 he accepted a call to become pastor of the Olivet Church in Toronto, Canada, and earned the profound respect and affection of his congregation. In 1924 he was called to Bryn Athyn to serve as Housemaster of Stuart Hall and Principal of the Boys Academy. It was not without regret that he relinquished his pastoral work; but he loved young people and was singularly gifted in his ability to teach them and inspire them with an affection for the things of the church. He continued as Principal until 1950, completing more than a quarter of a century of outstanding service in that capacity.

After resigning as Principal, Mr. Alden continued as an Academy teacher. He served for many years as visiting pastor to the Canadian Northwest, and in addition instituted a class for beginners in the Bryn Athyn Society, thereby performing a most valuable service to the church. In September 1958 he accepted appointment as Director of the General Church Religion Lessons, in which capacity he supervised the instruction of more than five hundred children belonging to isolated families in many parts of the General Church. For a number of years he organized and conducted weekly services for New Church families at Lake Wallenpaupack during the summer months. (Editor's Note: My family was among the many New Church families who had cabins at the Lake. I fondly remember dressing up and getting into our motor boat for the long drive down to the other end of the lake to the Alden cottage for church!) In addition, his devotion to the uses of the Swedenborg Foundation, and his work as an important member of the Board of Directors of that body, are deeply appreciated. "

Rev. Jim Cooper

BLESSINGS FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

God is the Lord, and He has given us light. Amen. (Psalm 118:27)

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.
Amen. (Psalm 145:15-16)

It will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" Amen. (Isaiah 25:9)



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General Church in Canada Worship Services

Carmel New Church
Kitchener, ON



11:00am
In Person
and
Online

Dawson Creek New Church
Dawson Creek, BC



Olivet New Church
Etobicoke, ON

10:30am
In Person and Online



Editorial Deadline for the JANUARY - FEBRUARY ISSUE
JANUARY 7, 2023

We always welcome your comments, letters and articles!

Please send submissions to Sandy Kuhl, Editor NCC
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For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
(Isaiah 9:6)