



# The Country Courier

News from The Sower's Chapel

October 2021

## BECOMING THE 'GOOD GROUND'

Looking around at the farms near The Sower's Chapel, we can see that some of the harvest has already taken place. More harvesting is yet to come. For Western Pennsylvania this looks like being a slightly above average year for our farmers. However, this will vary from county to county and farm to farm.

This type of variation also applies to us as people, especially when it comes to how receptive we are to the Lord and His influence in our lives. To this end, He uses the following farming analogy to describe the human condition.

In the three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) we find forms of the same parable that is quoted here from Matthew:

*Then Jesus spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and immediately they sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." (Matt. 13:3-8)*

In Mark's and Luke's Gospels we find the Lord explaining this parable to His disciples. The explanations there are reinforced and built upon in New Church teachings, including here in *The Doctrine of Life* 90:

*The sower there is the Lord, and the seed is His Word and therefore the truth. The seed on the ground (wayside) refers to the way the Word is viewed by people who do not care about the truth. The seed in the stony places refers to the way the Word is viewed by people who do care about the truth, but not for its own sake, and therefore not deeply. The seed among the thorns refers to the way the Word is viewed by people who are caught up in cravings for evil behavior, while the seed in good ground is the way the Word is viewed by people who love the truths that come from the Lord and are found in the Word, the people who bear fruit because their doing of these truths comes from Him.*

We find everywhere the repeated message that the Lord wants to build a relationship with us. In that relationship we become progressively more open to learning what is true from Him, while being inspired by Him to lead a good and charitable life.

However, along the way in a normal human being's life, there will be resistance. Our hearts and minds might reject Him just as the wayside and the stony and thorny ground were not suitable for receiving the seed from Him and producing the crop of the goodness of life. At

times we might not be interested in what He has to say. Or, we find excuses for not fully living up to the ideals that He has taught us.

One of the amazing things about our minds is that the ground that was once trodden down, stony, or filled with weeds can become good soil. We can become increasingly receptive. More of what the Lord is teaching us can take root and grow into a wonderful caring and useful life, filled with the Lord's love and responsive to the needs of others.

This is the point of the Lord's message. There is nothing stopping us from fulfilling our angelic potential if only we allow ourselves to be open to receiving Him.

- Garry

## 2021 NORTH AMERICAN CLERGY MEETINGS REPORT

Annual General Church Clergy Meetings were cancelled in 2019 and 2020 due to COVID. (The General Church of the New Jerusalem is our parent organization.) This year they were held in our ecclesiastical center of Bryn Athyn, PA (near Philadelphia) over two sessions to limit the number of attendees at each. The first took place on August 17-19. The second, which was attended by Revs. Garry Walsh and Chris Bown, as well as Pittsburgh Pastor Jared Buss and our Regional Pastor Mike Gladish, was held on September 21-23.

The meetings provided a chance for the clergy to consider two primary topics. The first was communication and problem solving within the clergy. The second was how we might jointly and compassionately respond to LGBTQIA+ issues within and outside of the church.

While all of our ministers share the same vital core ideas regarding the nature of the Lord and His teachings, there will always be some variety when it comes to how the teachings should be applied to life. This is especially the case when we are dealing with contentious or highly-charged social issues. A number of breakout sessions gave the church's leadership team a fuller understanding of where the clergy stands.

(continued)

*The Country Courier*

**The Sower's Chapel**

100 Iron Bridge Rd. • Sarver PA 16055

Rev. Garry Walsh, Pastor • (301) 741-6397

E-mail: Rev.Garry.Walsh@gmail.com

[Web page: www.sowerschapel.org](http://www.sowerschapel.org)

Miriam Heilman, Editor • e-mail: miriam.heilman@gmail.com

As per tradition, the three days of meetings also provided the opportunity for our ministers to reflect on important studies. This year the studies were: ‘Systematic Theology’ by Rev. Prescott Rogers; ‘States of Spiritual Growth’ by Rev. Jay Barry; and, ‘Divine Foresight and Human Freewill’ by Rev. Bruce Rogers.’ There was also a very encouraging Report by Rev. Pearse Frazier on the progress being made in developing and growing online small groups. A list of the groups that are up and running will soon be found at: [groups.newchurch.org](http://groups.newchurch.org). The temporary site is: <http://grandhumanproject.org/>.

It is anticipated that in response to clergy consultation, our bishops will work on the following six steps:

1. Feedback to the Clergy on the information gathered from the two sessions
2. Report on the meetings in the periodical “New Church Life” <https://newchurch.org/resources/publications/new-church-life/>
3. Speak to the church in the new “Bishops’ Newsletter,” the first edition of which is due Nov./Dec. 2021
4. Develop a church “Message on Marriage”
5. Talk to additional constituents at General Church Board meetings (Oct. 2-3), Charter Day in Bryn Athyn (Oct. 7-10), and at the upcoming European Clergy Meetings
6. Continuing focus on the development of worship technology

*Respectfully submitted by Rev. Garry Walsh*

#### 4 WEEK EVENING STUDY GROUP

I’m offering to lead a 4-week evening group, before Thanksgiving, to study a small book of the New Church Writings called *The Doctrine of Life* (or simply, *Life*).

It’s an exciting book to explore. The opening sentence is perhaps one of the most famous passages of the whole Writings: “All religion is about life, and the life of religion is to do what is good.” The book begins by saying, though, that, really, only God can do what is good. Then it explores how we each can work with the Lord so that He does what is good in and through our personal lives.

Elsewhere, the Writings say that the teaching in this book, about life, is one of the two basic things that witness of what is new in the “New Church.” It’s tremendously important!

I’m offering for us to start the study group later this month, on Wednesday October 27 and for it to run four Wednesday evenings through November 17 (a week before Thanksgiving and then the Christmas season). Exact start time (7pm?) and location to be determined.

You may already have the book. It’s available in many translations (even two translations in 2014), many versions, many editions. I’d be glad to help you sort what may work best for you. Mainly I’ll be using the recent version simply called *Life* – the 2014 New Century edition from the Swedenborg Foundation, available as a free PDF to download, or paperback to buy, or available completely online at Steve David’s New Christian Bible Study.

I have a set of 50 questions that I used with young people at our summer school in England and with adults since then, and that can guide your personal reading of the book (whether or not you come to the study group), as well as our collective study group discussions.

Contact me if you have any questions or suggestions. Text or call 412-352-6332 or email [chrisbown@icloud.com](mailto:chrisbown@icloud.com)

*Chris Bown*

#### OCTOBER CALENDAR DATES

- Oct. 2-4: Garry in California to lead worship in Palo Alto
- Oct. 3: Regional Pastor Michael Gladish leading worship at The Sower’s Chapel
- Oct. 5: *1 PM at 1833 Coffee* – Bible Study, Jonah Ch. 1  
*7 PM at the Church* – Pastor’s Council Meeting, open to all
- Oct. 9-10: Garry in Maryland to conduct a memorial service
- Oct. 10: Rev. Chris Bown leading worship at The Sower’s Chapel
- Oct. 12: *1 PM at 1833 Coffee* – Bible Study, Jonah Ch. 2  
*7 PM at the Church* – Board Meeting
- Oct. 17: Rev. Garry Walsh leading worship at The Sower’s Chapel
- Oct. 19: *1 PM at 1833 Coffee* – Bible Study, Jonah Ch. 3
- Oct. 23-24: Garry in Kansas City to lead worship
- Oct. 24: Rev. Chris Bown leading worship at The Sower’s Chapel
- Oct. 26: *1 PM at 1833 Coffee* – Bible Study, Jonah Ch. 4
- Oct. 31: Rev. Garry Walsh leading worship at The Sower’s Chapel followed by luncheon

#### AFTER-CHURCH LUNCHEON - OCTOBER 31

Please stay after church for social time and pulled-pork with lots of sides prepared by Bill Kronen. Sure to be both delightful and delicious! If you would like to bring something to share, or to assist with cooking and serving, we’re sure Bill would love your help.

#### NOVEMBER COURIER DEADLINE OCTOBER 25, 2021

*Please take a moment to look at the next page listing volunteers and volunteering opportunities! Let Garry know if there’s something with which you would like to lend a helping hand. If you are listed for an activity you can no longer participate in, let him know that, as well.*



# VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Sower's Chapel succeeds largely due to the wonderful efforts of our team of volunteers. Much of this work goes unnoticed. However, if you have been volunteering, please know how appreciated your contributions have been. We could not function without you.

It would be ideal if everyone had at least one regular project that they were involved in. There are important things to be gained from finding ways to be useful. The New Church work *Secrets of Heaven 7038* talks about usefulness and how we serve the Lord through being useful, and how the love of useful service allows a person to be elevated into heaven where joy is found in serving the Lord and serving others.

The following chart lists our volunteers and the activities that they are involved in. It is probably an incomplete or slightly inaccurate list. This is because, as said before, many of our volunteer tasks get done out of sight and roles change over the years without records keeping track.

Please take a look at this list. This is a good chance to review the volunteer roles. We all need to be helping to keep The Sower's Chapel vibrant. And, if there is some task on the list that interests you, please let our pastor Garry know. If you are listed as being connected with a task that you no longer do or would like to stop doing, that is good to know also. Ultimately, a big part of the success of our congregation comes down to volunteerism.

**Pastor, Board President:** Rev. Garry Walsh

**Treasurer:** Bill Kronen Sr.

**Secretary:** Dan Heilman

**Board of Trustees:** Glenn Heilman, Chair  
Alfred Brown  
Emily Fennell  
Rachel Gruver  
Bill Kronen Jr.  
Jim Lindsay Sr.

**Building Maintenance:** Alfred Brown

**Grounds Maintenance:** Jim Lindsay Sr., Coordinator  
Alfred Brown  
Jonny Hardt  
Dan Heilman  
Jim Lindsay Jr.  
Al & Travis Lindsay

**Music:** Sally Parenti, Coordinator  
Michelle Hardt, Choir Director  
Anne Lindsay

**Chancel Flowers etc.:** Carol Kronen

**Nursery:** Emily Fennell  
Rachel Gruver  
Miriam Heilman  
Carol Kronen  
Theresa Poe

**Sunday School:** Trish Lindsay, Coordinator  
Mary Lindsay  
Laurel Walsh  
Michelle Hardt  
Maureen Rodgers  
Lauren Miller  
Travis Lindsay

**Special Events:** Zarah Blair, Coordinator

**Building Cleaning:** Zarah & Ken Blair

**Sunday Refreshments:** Zarah Blair  
Marlene Brown  
Theresa Poe

**Ushers:** Alfred Brown  
Ben Brown  
Russ Poe  
Dan Heilman  
Jim Lindsay  
Travis Lindsay  
Paul Shutters  
Mike Brown

**Sign:** Bill Kronen Sr.  
Dan Heilman

**Courier, Calendar & Weekly Emails:** Miriam Heilman

**Sunday Bulletin:** Bill Kronen Sr.

**Live Streaming & Sound System:** Travis Lindsay  
Ian Heilman

**Ronald McDonald House:** Kate Kronen  
Rachel Gruver

**Memorial Day:** Al Lindsay  
Michelle Hardt  
Kate Kronen

**Golf Outing:** Steve Rogers  
Travis Lindsay  
Michelle Hardt

