

E-READ

The General Conference of the New Church **Articles and Letters**

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Replies to Recent Articles *by Gemma McLean*

We have received some lovely replies to the recent E-Read articles, and I would like to share them with you in this special edition.

Are You Lonely? Part Two! *by David Brooks*

In E-Read, Issue 63, Geoffrey Bentley reported that his neighbour asked him if he was lonely during the Covid19 lockdown. A quite understandable question, as Geoffrey had lost his wife eighteen months previously.

Geoffrey ends his article by saying, "So the answer to my neighbour's question is a resounding 'No!'"

However, for me, I cannot entirely agree with Geoffrey's viewpoint.

My wonderful wife, Elisabeth, whom I love dearly moved to the spiritual world in 2015 and I AM LONELY. I am well aware that our Lord has assured us that He is always with us, yet for much of the

time we are not aware of it.

I talk to Elisabeth every day and hope that she is aware of my love for her even if she does not know my particular circumstances of the moment.

Of course, when I am busy with the many activities associated with this natural life, such as cleaning, washing, shopping and cooking, there is not much time to be so aware of loneliness. On a lighter note, I sometimes think if she could see my attempts at cooking, she would be in hysterics!

I can also feel lonely in a crowd of people, particularly when many of them know each other. An example of this is our Annual Meeting at the Hayes Conference Centre where I am surrounded by lovely like-minded people. I confess to being a little envious of the couples who have their lifelong partner at their side. I will be there again this year but aware that she cannot be with me physically, holding my hand.

I thank the Lord for the comfort I derive from the teachings of the New Church. I know that when my time comes to leave this world I can be reunited with Elisabeth. My constant hope is that she loves me as much as I love her and will accept me as her eternal partner. Whatever happens, the Lord will ensure we both have what is best for us.

Let me finish by agreeing with this comment from Geoffrey's article.

"Now I live alone, I can feel that my Lord is very near to me and will never desert me whatever happens to me. This presence is not with me all the time. It is never intrusive nor does it order my thinking. It is loving and gentle."

Recent E-Read Articles

by Revd Ian Arnold

The articles by Rita and Alan, remembering Sunday School days, have been really enjoyable to read.

Also, in this latest issue, Geoffrey Bentley's "Are you lonely?" It is beautiful.

And Scripture that came to mind is Isaiah 41: 6,

"Fear not, for I am with you;

Be not dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you,

Yes, I will help you.

I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Warm greetings and very best wishes, Ian

Sunday School Memories

by Revd Bruce Jarvis

I have always counted myself very fortunate and blessed to have had such a wonderful Christian upbringing amongst the Brightlingsea New Church community.

I could name the various teachers who dedicated themselves to the weekly classes but names wouldn't mean much to readers of E-Read. However, I did have the added blessing of growing up in a small town, surrounded by several members of my mother's family who were devoted to the New Church. It was my aunt Margaret Lord who, assisted by others, ran the Primary Department of the Sunday School, and this class met in what was called the Minister's Parlour, overlooking the Church garden. What a delight those Sunday afternoons were, and how we loved to walk between the rows of little wooden chairs singing

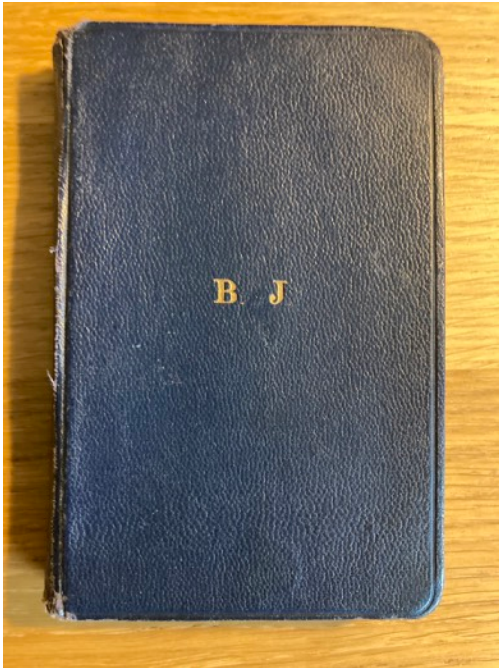
"Hear the pennies dropping, listen while they fall,
every one for Jesus, He shall have them all...."

"Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear" was indeed a truism as we absorbed the simple and graphic stories from the Word.

Then came advancement to the Junior Department, where Margaret Lord's younger sister, Marian Underwood, who was Sunday School Secretary, was one of the teachers. The Juniors met in the large hall, and we would sit on benches in year groups, each with a teacher. One of those was my uncle Arthur, a brother of Margaret and Marian. As we progressed, we acquired much knowledge of the Word, simply and lovingly taught by people who knew how important this work was for our eternal salvation.

Lastly came the Bible Class for the older scholars, which met in the afternoon before the Primary and Junior classes, and we sat in the choir stalls in the Church. Frances Ellis took us through the Senior Sunday School lessons, which introduced us to some of the principles of the inner sense of the Word.

Frances is better known to those who attend annual meetings of Conference, and more recently the Zoom Services, as Frances Fisher. When our time was up, she would pop round to the Minister's Parlour to help with the Primary class. What a wonderful job she and all those other teachers did, and what a debt we owe to them. What a joy it is to look back and reflect upon how those weekly classes laid down such a store and foundation for our adult lives. How I look forward to one day meeting up with those people who lovingly devoted themselves to our spiritual education.



Yes, we did have the old SSU exams to deal with. But there were the annual Sunday School “treats” to compensate, with summer coach trips to neighbouring resorts. And Christmas parties and presents. And - wait for it – prizes for attendance, both Sunday School and Church services. Among a series of book prizes presented over the years, I attach two photos of one presented to me at the age of six years.

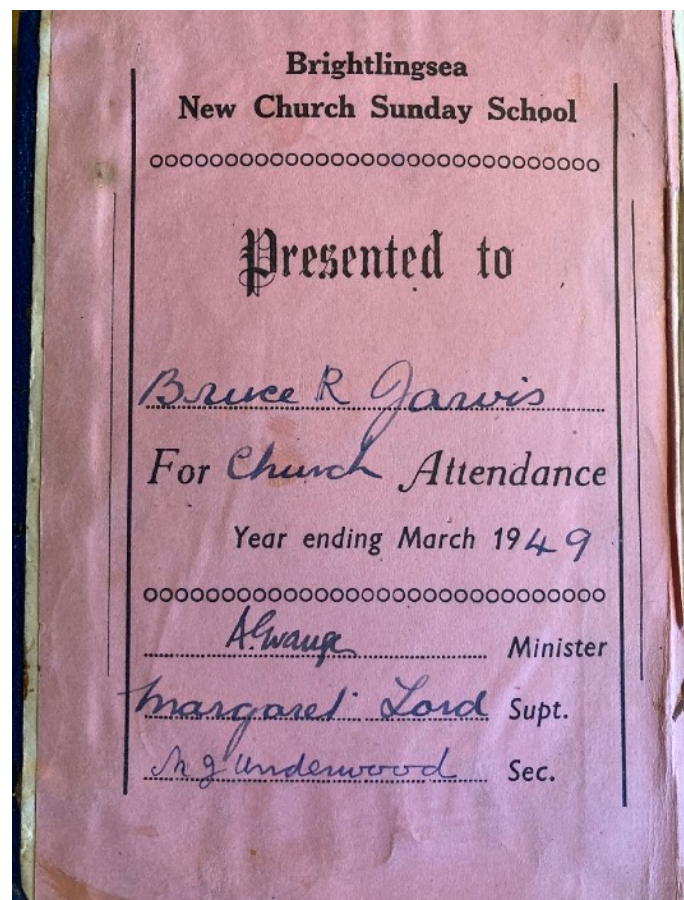
What is it? It's a leather-bound copy of the Liturgy in use from 1946-1972, when the red Book of Worship was introduced. A revised version of the earlier Liturgy, my blue book has my initials in gold leaf on the cover. Note that it

was presented for attendance at the morning service. Yes, I was six years old. Morning service followed by Sunday School in the afternoon. A few years later, there would also be a service in the evening. The organ music, the prayers, the lessons (as readings from the Word were then called) and teaching – and the hymns, both in Church and in Sunday School.

I loved it all then, and I still do today.

What a privilege and a blessing. Praise be to the Lord!

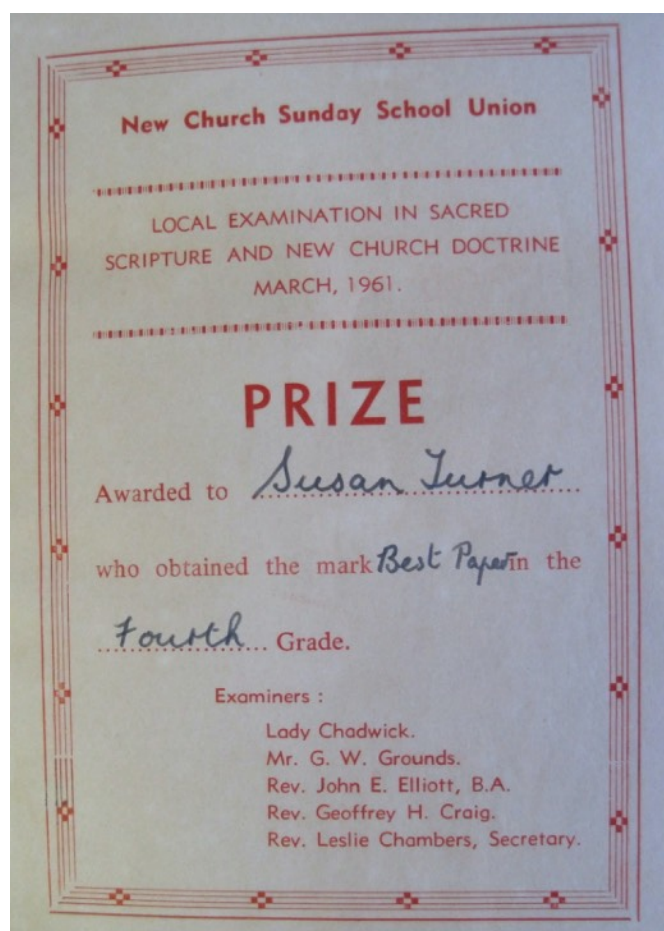
Postscript. Another blessing for us as we became young people was that, after training as a teacher, Frances returned to Brightlingsea, and was quickly persuaded by Laurence Pulsford (who had moved from London with his wife to live next door to the Brightlingsea Church) to start a Young People's Society. How's that for a 75-year-old's enthusiasm and vision! We didn't know how fortunate we were.



Re: Sunday School Articles

by Susan Friend

I have read with interest the articles on Sunday School Exam Prizes, and it jogged my memory about that time in my life. I too have a book, Compendium of Swedenborg's Theological Writings, which was presented to me in March 1961 for obtaining the Best Paper in Grade Four. How I ever managed that is beyond me! Am I right in saying that



the Revd. John Elliott is the only surviving member of that exam panel? We were a small Sunday School at Kensington when I and my two brothers attended. We seemed to pass through in families, one family at a time, which sometimes overlapped. The Lewins overlapped with us and then I ended up as a teacher to the younger Lewins. We did have other visiting children upon occasion, ones that did not live near enough to attend regularly, Houghtons, and Shuttleworths spring to mind.

In the early days we used to have outings to places like Burnham Beeches. The real excitement of those was being taken there in the back of a removals van, the firm being owned and run by one of our family members, the Vickers family.

I came across a photo recently of me on the shoulders of John Elliott at one of those outings, and I wasn't particularly small.

Now there is no more Kensington. After my children went through, and the children of other members, the Sunday School became unviable. A shame, but we still have our happy memories.

I would like to comment on Geoffrey Bentley's article too, which reminded me of one of our members of about 30 years ago. She, Jahan, came to us towards the middle of the 80's. She was a refugee from the Shah's era in Iran, but always thought of herself as a Christian. She came into the church one Sunday morning in an upset state, and upon leaving after the service, my Mum went after her. She stayed with us for quite a while, in fact she was baptised by Revd Christopher Hasler at our church. She then moved on to

a church in the local area, Notting Hill, as she wanted more contact during the week. With Kensington being a church where none of us lived locally, we found it difficult to provide that. She was baptised again into St. Peters, Notting Hill. I went to the service.

She has done wonders in the local area, under the wing of Reverend Canon William Taylor, the minister at St. Johns, Notting Hill. She translates for him for all the farsi-speaking people in the church. She attends the baptisms of children who have joined the church, and calls them all her children. You may wonder where all this is going. The way Geoffrey spoke of not being lonely just reminded me so much of how Jahan speaks. She talks to 'her Jesus', and knows He will protect and look after her. She has medical problems, but copes admirably with them. She calls me her sister and makes such a fuss of me when we meet. She still regards the folk at Kensington as her family. I

have been in regular touch with her over this Covid period, and we are going to meet up as soon as it is safe to do so. She is a remarkable lady.



Re: Sunday School Memories

by Gill Pickett

After reading Rita Russell's article in e read about Sunday school last night, lots of memories came back to me. This morning I went in search of my treasured Sunday school prizes!! Somewhere I know I have a book with the label saying Best Paper. However I think it must be in the roof space buried, but I did find these two.....

(See overleaf)

