

Olivet New Church

CHATTERBOX

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Over All His Works

Divine providence has been a theme at Olivet Church for a little while. A few different groups recently completed summer studies of the book *Divine Providence*, and in conjunction with these studies, the Sunday sermons for the last few months have mostly been explorations of the laws of the Lord's providence.

In this church we often speak of providence in terms of laws (as does the book *Divine Providence*), and we often treat these laws as the Lord's explanations for why things *have* to be the way they have to be. We may see something true when we view providence this way, but what we see is also somewhat hard and inflexible. We see a grand Divine order proceeding through and overmastering all things, and we, perhaps, lose sight of the humanity of the Lord's government.

But near the end of the work *Divine Providence* we find this passage:

Divine providence does all that it does out of pure mercy because the Divine essence itself is pure love, and it is this which operates through Divine wisdom, whose operation is what we call Divine providence.

This pure love is pure mercy for the following reasons:

- 1. Because it operates with all people throughout the whole world, who are so formed that they cannot do anything of themselves.*
- 2. It operates with the evil and unjust as much as with the good and just.*
- 3. It leads the evil and unjust in hell and rescues them from it.*
- 4. It forever struggles with them there and battles for them against the devil, that is, against the evils of hell.*
- 5. Therefore the Lord came into the world and underwent temptations or trials even to the last of them, which was His suffering of the cross.*
- 6. He acts continually with the unclean to make them clean, and with the irrational to make them rational.*

Thus He labors continually out of pure mercy. (§337)

The laws of Divine providence are not simply the gears that keep some mighty engine in motion: providence is the "operation" of the Lord's Divine love. Providence is the Lord's love doing what it does—in a word, saving us. And this love, we're told, is "pure mercy."

Mercy is a word most people know, but in relation to the Lord, it's not one we generally understand very well. Showing mercy is generally taken to mean "sparing someone you might have chosen not to spare," or

something like that. The word might bring to mind pictures of an abject person begging for mercy at the feet of someone powerful. To a limited extent, it works to understand the Lord's mercy this way. He is so much more powerful than we are; how could we claim to be entitled to anything that is His? His gifts are gifts of mercy.

But the Lord's mercy is so much more than just the softening of His awesome power. His mercy is tender. Where the word "mercy" appears in English translations of the Heavenly Doctrines, it is most commonly a translation of *miser cordia*—a Latin word that literally means something like "misery of heart." As we saw in the passage above, mercy is love, but it is specifically love when the object of the love is in need or is in pain. We read, "... all mercy is an expression of love, for one who has love or charity also has mercy; and his love and charity become mercy when his neighbor is poor or in misery..." (AC §6180). There's a familiar teaching that loving is "to feel another's joy as joy in oneself" (DLW §47). If this is so, then to feel another's grief as grief in oneself must also be loving. This shared grief, this compassion, this tender pain of heart, is mercy. So we also read, "mercy is love that is grieving" (AC §5480).

It is this tenderness of heart that fills all that the Lord does. The activity of this love, love moved to save and to raise up the abject, is what we call Divine providence. And providence, we're taught, governs everything in creation, down to the least details. So the Lord's mercy weaves through and bends over the whole of creation. The spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters in the darkness before creation is said to represent His mercy, which is present with us before we have anything else (Genesis 1:2; AC §§7, 19). The culmination of creation, when the Lord breathes into man's nostrils the breath of life, is an act of pure mercy—the gift of life itself to a being who in himself is no more than dust (Genesis 2:7). All we are is of His mercy. Simply put, "Everything done by the Lord is an act of mercy" (AC §9219).

If this is so, and if the mercy that the Lord is constantly showing us is indeed "love that is grieving," does this mean that the Lord is always sad for us? This doesn't seem like a useful way of understanding Him. If we picture the Lord as forever sad for us, we'll tend to be left with the impression that we're always failing Him, that we're never good enough. The image of the Lord rejoicing over His children feels far truer. He is the God of heaven and is leading all of us to it, and surely He feels the joy of His people there as joy in Himself.

Our need for the Lord's mercy really has nothing to do with our personal successes or failures. It is simply the result of being what we are—that is, merely human. Without the Lord we are dust. Left to ourselves, without His salvation, we tend towards hell. We're told:

Jehovah's, that is, the Lord's mercy includes every single thing which the Lord does towards the human race, whose condition is such that He has mercy on it, on each according to his state. ... The word mercy is used therefore because mercy rescues a person from misery and from hell, and so is used with respect to the human race whose condition is such, and it is the result of love towards all, because all are such. (AC 587.2)

All of us are "such"—all of us need to be rescued from misery and from hell. The Lord doesn't blame us for being in this condition. He's not sad because we're so small and fallible—He made us this way. He made us finite so that we would be something other than Himself. This is what makes His love for us meaningful. He took the dust, which has no life on its own, and breathed into it the breath of life; so He is able to give someone the gift of life. This is what brings Him joy. He's not upset with us for being dust. He simply sees the distance between us and Himself, and He yearns to close it. He sees what we are without Him, and He yearns to make us more.

So His mercy bends over the whole of creation. With tender mercy He bends to each of us, holding out His hand, lifting us up towards life and joy we can't yet imagine. And He never stops doing this. The ceaseless labor of this kind of love is what we call Divine providence.

"The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works."

—Psalm 145:9

From the Pastor

Another summer season winds to a close while a new church and school year gets underway. We hope you have enjoyed a good summer break, and though there is still plenty of good weather ahead into the fall, we hope the heat waves are done for the season.

Vespers Holy Supper: Please join us for this special evening service at 8 pm Sunday evening September 9.

Summer doctrinal study group: We began a new summer program on Thursdays from noon until 2 pm this July and August by offering a six-week informal reading and discussion group. We met in the lobby for lunch and fellowship. It was a quite a successful and enjoyable endeavor, with an attendance of six to ten people. This program will be adapted to be ongoing (see below).

Drop in on the Pastor: As Pastor, I will maintain this Thursday noon to 2 pm time slot as a regular opportunity every week for people to drop in to visit. Through the course of the year, I will select various topics for discussion, ranging from upcoming sermon subjects to current articles in *New Church Life* to excerpts from the book *Topics from the Writings* (one of my favourite go-to resources). People don't need to make a commitment or stay for the whole time. Please drop in to the lobby and join in!

Pastoral visits: As always, please let me (or Jared, or a member of Pastors' Council) know of individuals (yourself included!) whom you believe need or would enjoy a pastoral visit.

School opening: Olivet School's opening chapel service will be held at 11:30 am on September 4. All are warmly invited to attend.

Alumni BBQ: We will again be hosting a Welcome Alumni BBQ at West Deane Park (Martin Grove Road north of Rathburn) on Friday, September 21. See invitation elsewhere in the Chatterbox for details.

JOIN US for The Terry Fox School Run: Last year we exceeded our set goal of \$500 by several hundred dollars. We're getting excited about our Terry Fox School Run on Thursday, September 27, at 12:40 pm. Please contribute with financial pledges and/or by joining in the run/walk.

Arcana Coelestia class resumes in lobby starting Thursday, September 6, at 10 am. Please join by bringing a copy of Volume 3. This is a reading and discussion group, with no homework! (though many like to read ahead before the meetings). Please note the change in venue from the manse.

Journey program save-the-date: We will not be starting a Journey program this fall but rather after the Christmas holidays, beginning January 13, 2019. It is entitled "Love Over Ego" and draws upon the Biblical story of Daniel. In each chapter, we witness the clash between the forces of ego and the power of true, humble confidence. Through watching Daniel's responses to the vain Babylonian rulers, we see a powerful example of strength without pompousness and love without fear. We encourage your participation and we are looking for more individuals to provide leadership. This is a great opportunity to invite a friend to attend, as it provides a friendly introduction to our spiritual community here at Olivet. If interested please speak to one of the pastors.

School discussion: We have invited Dr. Soni Werner to help guide us in a discussion leading to a decision-making process concerning the future of the Olivet School. New changes, especially related to staffing, are overtaking the Society's previous plan for having this discussion in Nov 2019. In looking at the depth, complexity, tradition, and history of the Olivet society, tender feelings tempered by prudence led us to solicit the unbiased professional assistance of a trained mediator. This affords society members a wise path toward reaching the best decision. This can be compared to our use of accountants, auditors, lawyers and other professionals who aid us in navigating financial or legal issues. Soni is a trained mediator who is also very aware of our General Church culture, traditions, and beliefs concerning New Church education as a society use. Our goal as pastors and board members is to ensure that everyone is heard and that we may hold a conversation that is loving, respectful and fruitful.

Rev. Michael Cowley

From the Assistant to the Pastor

September means the return to a quicker pace of life, and I'm feeling ready for it. I'm excited to once again share the church building with schoolchildren during the week, and I'm looking forward to building a connection with the children I'll be teaching in the classroom this year. I look forward to seeing many of you more often, at events like doctrinal classes and Sons' evenings. I love the feeling of being in the midst of a busy sea of uses. I hope that for all who love this church, September and the return to the "busyness" that this month represents can serve as a call to celebrate all of the uses that are performed here. In so many little ways, we're doing the Lord's work, and that is a blessing.

Rev. Jared Buss

From the Principal

While school is not in session over the summer, things are pretty quiet during the week. We have had some tours through and these have resulted in a couple of serious enquiries and requests for a registration form, which we hope will result in new students for September.

Exciting news is that after consultation with our playground committee and meeting with some playground equipment representatives, we made our selection, presented it to the board and got approval! We have chosen one modern piece to replace the beloved tractor and a climbing structure that fulfills the request made by members of the committee. Judy Todd is now sending the information (details about the equipment and a schematic for placement in the play yard) for ministry approval.

If you're free on the Tuesday after Labour Day, please join us in the chapel at 11:30 am and, weather permitting, a BYO welcome picnic lunch in the field. It's always nice to see more friendly faces.

Gabriele Pulpan

A Message from the Board Chair

In November 2016, with Gabe Pulpan newly in her role as Olivet principal, and Michael Cowley newly in his pastorate, the society was asked to give the school three years before the benchmarks (established in 2014) would be measured and be in force. The society agreed and was due to have that review in November 2019. In the meantime, the school has continued to report in September and April of each year its enrollment numbers to the society via the church newsletter, so Olivet members and staff are well aware of the trends.

Circumstances (three key retirements—Rachel Hasen in June 2018, Gabe Pulpan in March 2019, and Sara Gatti in June 2019) are overtaking that plan of having a discussion in November 2019. We need to have the conversation now, in 2018. As you may be aware, the school year, administratively, is actually 18 months long. We have to let teachers and parents know before the end of February 2019 about the September 2019/20 school year. We need to be fair to our staff and our students and their families.

The board has discussed this issue and believes that the society needs to have outside assistance with this difficult discussion. The Olivet School is 125 years old this year, so there is institutional as well as emotional weight to this issue. There are some members who conflate the academy movement and the General Church, which complicates the issue further. It is not fair to expect the Pastor to bear the whole burden of this process and in fact, to some, it may be seen as an inherent conflict of interest for either the pastors or the board to lead the discussion. It is a challenging position for a General Church pastor and a society to be in. I know how difficult this is for me personally—it can feel like thinking about cutting off a limb. The board's hope is that a neutral, professional, and trained third-party mediator, not of the society,

not of the priesthood, and yet someone who knows and understands General Church culture and teachings, would be very helpful so that we can collectively and lovingly have the discussion amongst the membership of the Olivet Society.

To support this goal, the board has hired Dr. Soni Werner to act as a mediator during a process that will last approximately three months. Olivet members will be receiving her curriculum vitae by email. If you require a written copy, please contact the board chair.

So that is where we are today. Where we would like to be in the future as a church society is separate from the discussion around the school—we need to concentrate on this. We, as a society, are at a natural inflection point and it is time we have the discussion. The future is wide open for us to find wonderful new uses and joy—if we choose to do so—but we need to concentrate on this difficult issue now, give it our consideration and the respect our collective history is due and, *if necessary* move through grief to be honest and wholehearted with each other in dealing with just this issue today.

Soni has offered and the board has accepted a six-stage outline of how we will proceed:

- August 1 to September 1, 2018: Teachers, staff, and board members have one-on-one calls to Soni so that she can just listen and hear. As of August 12, this process has already started with the board. This announcement has been released to staff on August 14 so that they can participate before school opens. Soni is unavailable for calls from September 1 to 12 due to prior commitments.
- Third week of September: Soni will fly up and meet with the board and pastors—we would contribute \$500 to the Swedenborg Foundation in Soni's name, as well as pay her travel and hotel expenses. (The board has agreed that Soni should maintain her impartial position and appearance by staying in a hotel, not a member's home.)
- Fourth week of September to middle of October: Soni would take prearranged phone calls from any interested society members, again just to listen and hear and gather common themes. You, as a society member, would contact her directly and make an appointment to have a conversation, by phone, Google Hangouts, or Skype.
- Late October: Soni would again fly to Toronto—we would contribute \$500 to the Swedenborg Foundation in her name and pay her travel and hotel expenses, and she would meet with the society in a special meeting to perform a SWOT [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats] analysis and to report back to us some of the common themes she has heard in her one-on-one discussions.
- Mid to late November: Soni would fly up a third time—we would contribute \$500 to the Swedenborg Foundation in her name and again pay her travel and hotel expenses, and she would meet with the society to mediate a community conversation about the SWOT analysis.
- It is our hope that at some point between late November and January the society would be in a position to make a decision, by a written vote of the members, on the future of the school. Soni would also be available to help us with that process should we require it.

The board is making the ask, but the process and administration of the process will be Soni's in her role as mediator. The board's role will be to facilitate and finance her through the process.

To summarize:

1. Events are overtaking the society's previous plan for having the school discussion in November 2019.
2. The Olivet society needs the professional assistance of a trained mediator to help the society's members reach the best decision, just as we utilize an accountant or auditors or lawyers and other professionals. Soni is

a trained mediator who is also very aware of New Church culture and beliefs, as she is a member of the General Church.

3. Our goals are to ensure that everyone is heard and that this discussion is loving, respectful and fruitful.

The Olivet board and pastors believe that this is the best process to help us negotiate this situation. We urge you as an Olivet member to take full advantage of this opportunity to have a safe and loving discussion about a difficult topic with Soni. Specific dates and times for members' meetings and Soni's contact information will be announced in the next few weeks.

Yours,

Lynn Starkey
Olivet Board Chair

Kathleen McClure Fountain Memorial Award (for students in Grades 5/6, 8, & 12)

In her life, Kathleen McClure Fountain demonstrated a love of children, respect for education, and sense of service freely given. This monetary award is designed to encourage all students to embody these principles in making a positive contribution to those around them.

The following criteria will be used in selecting the student who best demonstrates these principles:

- 1) Olivet Society tie – To honour Kathleen McClure Fountain's love of children and the church, the recipient is to be a student at the Olivet School and/or a member or friend (i.e., adherent) of the Olivet Church;
- 2) Academics – To honour Kathleen McClure Fountain's respect for education, the recipient should be on the Honour Roll or Dean's List or demonstrate similarly strong academics, but weight is also given to non-academic factors. As a result, the recipient is not necessarily the individual with the top grades in his or her class;
- 3) Service – To honour Kathleen McClure Fountain's sense of service freely given, the recipient would be giving of their time to uses at the Olivet Church or School;
- 4) Personal reference – To honour Kathleen McClure Fountain's respect for a well-rounded person, the recipient would be able to provide a personal reference from the principal of their school or similar authority.

Olivet School Welcome/Alumni BBQ

On Friday, September 21, please join us for the Olivet School Welcome/Alumni BBQ to be held at West Deane Park from 4:30 – 8:30 p.m. This event gets better every year from the greater participation of our alumni classes and school parents. If you're a musician, bring along an instrument and be part of a jam session with Rev. Cowley, or if you have table tennis paddles and a ball, you can make use of the park's stone table tennis tables. Please contact the office to order a hamburger (\$3), hot dog (\$2), or corn on the cob (\$1). Salads, sides and desserts will be potluck.

New Baby

Congratulations to Laura and Marco Braam, who welcomed a baby *** Personal information removed from online version***

Occasional Olivet Security Work

Our trusty security guard is onsite three evenings a week, during AA meetings, etc., rarely missing a day. However, there are times when time off is required (including vacation) and a substitute is needed. It is fairly random and occasional work, so it's a tricky position to "hire" for. Therefore, we would like to create a "pool" of backup security guards, who can be on call (or planned ahead for vacation coverage), just like with substitute teachers. Most of what the job entails is walking through the building/premises and "keeping an eye on things," and making sure the building is locked up after events. It is primarily an evening job. If interested, please email Val at val.younan@olivetnewchurch.org

Olivet Online Volunteer Survey closes August 31

At the October 2017 Olivet annual meeting, a committee was struck to review all the various volunteer programs offered at Olivet. This review process will shape the offering and range of Church uses going forward.

Your active participation in this process is vital; we want to know what is important to you, what you will actively support, and what you value. In order to better understand the shape of the whole community vine at Olivet, we need lots of feedback—your feedback. We need to also hear from people who only intermittently attend services at Olivet. Each and every one of you matters in this process to help us to understand each other better. So, after you have taken it, remind other people about this survey.

The survey is available both in the internet and in printout form. If you have already registered your email address with us, you will have received the survey invitation email from one of the committee members, Tomoya Okubo, via the Survey Monkey website. The invitation email will likely end up in your spam/junk folder, so please check there, too. If you do not have an email address, please feel free to grab a hard copy, available in the church lobby, or contact Sandy Bradfield (416-239-3054) and ask for a printed out version to be mailed to you. An individual can participate in the survey only once (if you already have submitted the survey online, please do not submit a hard copy version, or vice versa).

This is our first survey in this project and we hope that each member of your family over the age of 15 will participate and contribute to this review process. Each response will be anonymous. We expect that this survey will take you less than ten minutes to complete. We will publish the results of this and any other surveys we initiate in the Chatterbox.

We may, based on the data generated from this survey, offer another series of questions later as we explore in more depth the kinds of volunteer activities and programs that would best respond to and represent the current and anticipated needs of our Olivet community.

Over the last 125 years, Olivet has continually evolved as times and circumstances have changed. Your participation today and in the coming months, whatever your current stage of life, will help give shape to Olivet's future. That is a gift that only you can give to future congregants and fellow laity. Thank you for taking the time to thoughtfully participate in this process! If you have additional comments, please do not hesitate to contact the church or any member of the committee.

VOLUNTEER REVIEW COMMITTEE

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Olivet Volunteer Survey participation results

(as of August 22nd)

Printed survey:

Completed: 11

Online survey:

Completed: 36

Partially completed: 8

Opened: 66

Unopened: 40

Comments: 19

Altogether:

Completed: 47

~ September 2018 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3 Labour Day	4	5	6	7	8
10:30a Worship (JJB)	Labour Day Holiday	School Opening		10a Arcana Class	7p Hunger for Healing Bus. Mtg	10a GCIC Meeting in Toronto
		11:30a School opening chapel service		12:30p Drop In On The Pastor	8p Hunger for Healing NA	
		1p Early Dismissal		8:30p Open AA Mtg		
		7p Closed AA Mtg				
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
10:30a Worship (MKC)	6:30p Beaver Scouts	7p Closed AA Mtg		12:30p Drop In On The Pastor	7p Sons' Michael Cowley Presents	
8p Vespers Holy Supper (JJB)				7p AA Business meeting	8p Hunger for Healing NA	
				8:30p Open AA Mtg		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
10:30a Worship (JJB)	6:30p Beaver Scouts	7p Closed AA Mtg	6:30p Social Supper & Doctrinal Class (MKC)	12:30p Drop In On The Pastor	Chatterbox Deadline	
12p Potluck	7p Olivet Board Meeting auditors report			8:30p Open AA Mtg	4:30p Olivet School Alumni BBQ	
					8p Hunger for Healing NA	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
10:30a Worship (MKC)	6:30p Beaver Scouts	7p Closed AA Mtg		No Drop In On The Pastor due to Terry Fox Run	8p Hunger for Healing NA	7p Young Adult Social
				Terry Fox Run Day for Olivet School		
				8:30p Open AA Mtg		
30	Notes:					
10:30a Worship - George McCurdy						
12p High School and Middle School Class						

September Anniversaries

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The states produced by this love [marriage love] are innocence, peace, tranquillity, inmost friendship, complete trust, a mutual desire of the mind and heart to do the other every good; also, as a result of all these, bliss, felicity, delight, pleasure, and...the happiness of heaven. — CL 180

Sunday Volunteer Schedule

If you are not able to come on your scheduled day, please find a sub

Date	Usher	Chancel	Organist	Sunday School 1 (PK-1)	Sunday School 2 (Gr2-4)	JOY (Gr5-8)	Greeters	Refreshments	Flowers	
Sep 2 Labour Day Weekend	*** Personal information removed from online version***									
Sep 4 School Opening	Staff	Staff	CD				Staff		NW	
Sep 9	*** Personal information removed from online version***									
Sep 9 Vespers Holy Supper	*** Personal information removed from online version***						Need Volunteer		NW	
Sep 16 Potluck	*** Personal information removed from online version***									
Sep 23	*** Personal information removed from online version***									
Sep 30	*** Personal information removed from online version***							Need Volunteer	Need Volunteer	NW
Oct 7 Thanksgiving	*** Personal information removed from online version***						*** Personal information removed from online version***			

Meal Volunteer Schedule

Date	Cooks/Organizers	Dishwashers
September 8 – GCIC Lunch	*** Personal information removed from online version***	
September 16 – Potluck		
September 19 – Social Supper		
October 3 – Annual Meeting		

Olivet Church, 279 Burnhamthorpe Rd, Toronto, ON, M9B 1Z6	416-239-3054
Olivet Church email address: contact@olivetnewchurch.org	FAX 416-239-4935
Pastor, Michael Cowley.....	647-883-3754
Assistant to the Pastor, Jared Buss.....	647-677-2600
Chatterbox Editor,	
Visitors to Olivet, Need volunteer	
Rides to church,.....	