



## BRYN ATHYN CHURCH SCHOOL

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August 30, 2011

Dear Parents,

We wanted to share the warm sphere of Bryn Athyn Church School's 117<sup>th</sup> school opening and some of the happenings around the school. It is hard to believe we were bracing for a hurricane just a few short days ago. Needless to say, school smoothly opened on a beautiful sunny day.

Phil Schnarr led us in opening worship, launching into our school theme for the year: "*Serve the Lord with all your heart.*" This theme defines our commitment to being a school community dedicated to useful service; both to those who are close to us and to the greater community. The Heavenly Doctrines teach that a life of charity is a life of useful service and useful service is to carry out the duties of one's occupation faithfully, honestly and diligently (see AC 997 and CL 16). To breathe life into our theme of service we will be hearing stories all year long from people who find extraordinary satisfaction in doing seemingly "ordinary" work.

Phil introduced Howard Thompson during worship. Howard shared that he is welcoming families to the school and teaching 4<sup>th</sup> grade religion. Howard and his wife Debra joined our school community 13 years ago because they believed that a New Church education would be best for their daughter. They were surprised to find that the decision they made for their daughter would have such a profound effect on their own lives. Howard's fond appreciation of New Church education is touching. We feel blessed that Howard has joined the pastor's office and our school.

Students returned to their classrooms following school opening. Over and over again we heard students sharing their excitement about being back at school and their comfort with their new teachers and class sections. We are truly blessed to have the gift of working with your children.

Immediately following school opening, parents and community members joined us in Heilman Hall for coffee and snacks. People visited with one another over light refreshments and warm drinks. The warm sense of community was palpable. We would like to thank the many people who brought this event into being, especially Julie Carr, Meg Keegan, Liz Switzer, and LynnEllyn King. Thanks to all of those who joined us for the coffee. It was wonderful to make a connection with everyone who attended. We hope to continue this tradition for years to come, so make a mental note to attend next year.

At the coffee we outlined our new volunteer program – led by Liz Switzer – and invited people to sign up for opportunities that interest them. Please be aware that Liz will welcome you at any time during the year if you would like to volunteer. It's not too late to sign up! You can reach Liz at 215-947-4086, ext. 262 or you can email her at [liz.switzer@bacs-gc.org](mailto:liz.switzer@bacs-gc.org) if you are interested in learning more. Liz's classroom has also been modified to be a space for volunteers to come and work on projects for the school. You can come any time to visit and drink coffee while doing useful work that will benefit our students. Please don't hesitate to bring a friend or help spread the word about our volunteer program.

Also at the opening coffee, Board Member Jennifer Pronesti also delivered a message from the Bryn Athyn Church Board, inviting people to participate in an information-gathering process called Appreciative Inquiry. Please watch the *Bryn Athyn Post* for details.

Bryn Athyn Church School strategic planning continues this year. Kirsten Cronlund will be leading the next phase of planning by connecting with the many constituents who care deeply about our school. She has already nurtured lively conversations with faculty. She will soon be reaching out to you with a survey and notification of meeting times, inviting you to share your hopes and dreams for our school. These and other efforts will enable us to develop strategies that will help point the school in clear, sustainable direction. We are looking to align and merge these efforts with the Bryn Athyn Church Appreciative Inquiry (AI) initiative.

A number of our teachers worked on curriculum and did professional development over the summer. Judy Soneson worked on a Grand Man Project that will incorporate other new church communities, including a school in Kenya. We also were blessed to participate in courses offered by the Bryn Athyn College Masters in Religious Studies (MARS), such as *The Human Mind*. These are just a few of ways that teachers and administrators worked to incorporate New Church teachings into their daily work.

School-wide efforts to communicate electronically are being met with strong support. We want to thank you for promptly completing electronic forms this summer. Your efforts have enabled us to save both time and money. These communications also reduce our carbon footprint. We ask that you continue to provide us feedback on these communications so that we can make them even more user-friendly.

You may also notice some changes around our building. Thanks to a generous capital gift from the Asplundh Foundation we were able to tile the intermediate unit hallway floor. This completes a tiling project that began in the primary unit two years ago. These new tiles caused one student to remark, "It looks like kindergarten all over again!"

We are excited about what the year ahead will bring for your child. We look forward to a wonderful year ahead.

Sincerely,

Ms. Kirsten Cronlund  
Elementary School Director

Rev. Phil Schnarr  
School Pastor

Dr. Reid Prichett  
Headmaster

