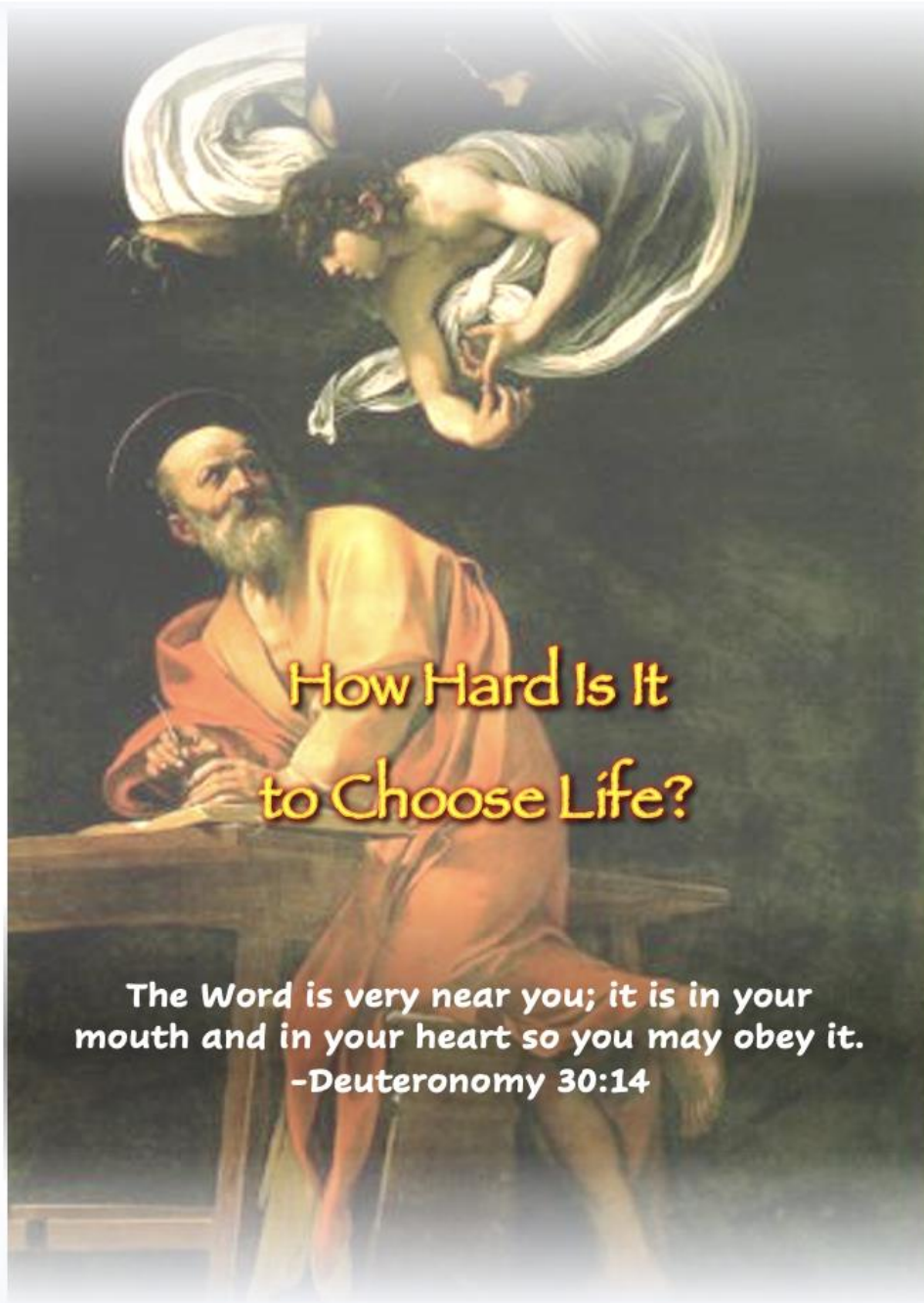


February 12, 2023

Rev. Dr. Dave Fekete



**How Hard Is It
to Choose Life?**

**The Word is very near you; it is in your
mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.
-Deuteronomy 30:14**



In all of us there is a sense of what ought to be, which will not let us rest until we do give ourselves to its demands. It bids us rise above our lower nature and to seek the worth and meaning of life in our endless spiritual possibilities. It stirs our concern for all people and for a better world. Where does this yearning come from, if not from a God whose love dwells in the inmost recesses of our souls and is drawing us to himself, refreshing us in his image and likeness? We see this image and likeness in our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, risen and glorified, who has come again in the truth, power and glory of his holy Word as He promised He would.

from the 1982 Book of Worship

*Cover Art: The Inspiration of Saint Matthew (1602)
Michelangelo Amerighi da Caravaggio (1571-1610), Oil on canvas
San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, Italy*

WELCOME TO THE NEW CHURCH OF MONTGOMERY



Where love
unites, faith
cannot divide.



PRELUDE

Amazing Grace / My Chains Are Gone

-Pentatonix

WELCOME

INVOCATION This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!

RESPONSE (BASED ON PSALM 119:1-8)

Voice 1: Happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD.

Voice 2: **Happy are those who keep his decrees, who seek him with their whole heart,**
Who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways.

You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently.

O that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!

**Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your
commandments.**

I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous ordinances.

I will observe your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.



LIGHTING OF THE COMMUNITY CANDLES

**We light the first candle to honor the good and truth to be found in all
spiritual traditions.**

**We light the second candle to honor the Earth and all of life
as the creation of the Divine, God of us all.**

**We light the third candle to honor and support the variety of our
individual paths, which together make our one spiritual community.**

**We light the fourth candle to honor and provide an open and safe place for
all who seek greater understanding and a life of deepening spirituality.**

ANTHEM

Sanctuary

- Jacy Velasquez

READINGS

DEUTERONOMY 30:15-20



See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess.

¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

MATTHEW 5:21-37

"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire.

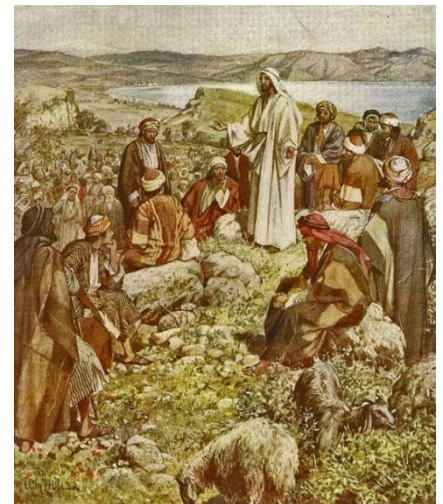
²³ So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹ "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' ³² But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. ³³ "Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' ³⁴ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one.



Christ Preaching to His Disciples and Others (1900s)
William Brassey Hole (1846–1917)
Oil on canvas, Private collection

PASTORAL PRAYER & PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

HYMN

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah - Joslin Grove Choral Society

MESSAGE

“How Hard Is It to Choose Life?”

Rev. Dr. Dave Fekete

OFFERTORY / REFLECTION

Breathe On Me, Breath of God

- Masterpiece Piano

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

BENEDICTION

CLOSING SONG:

Go Now in Peace

- Peter Shaw



Detail, *Old Man Wearing a Beret* (1648),
[also called *Old Man Thinking*]
by Salomon Koninck (1609 - 1656)
Oil on panel, Private collection



February 12, 2023 Announcements

Church History Buffs are all invited to a meeting at Glendale New Church **Monday, tomorrow! February 13, at noon.** Sue Ditmire and Pastor Robbin Ferriman are coming from Urbana, and with Mary Ann have arranged for a few local historians to discuss books, archives and the history of some early church members who were abolitionists. Early members also had connections to regional institutions, some that still exist today. GNC is a fabulous sacred space and it's an honor to share with our guests the wood carvings and windows, along with Johnny's bench, Preston Powers' bust of Emanuel Swedenborg, and the mystery of the Fry-carved Mission Box from the Oak and Winslow Church that is nailed to the wall. The archives group is considering moving the Swedenborgian Library and historical records from the New York City Church, along with other historic records of General Convention, to Cincinnati. If you are interested but don't think you are available to join us, let Mary Ann know to include you in update emails. This project requires energy and insight and planning – such a move will be a big project.

Rev. Dr. Randy Woodley Presentation. If you are signed up, also on **tomorrow! February 13, at 7:30-9pm,** Dr. Woodley will be speaking on "Learning From Our Past, Healing Our Future: Dismantling Colonial Dominance in Western Christianity", on a free Zoom event presented by Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism, the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (our seminary), and [Born Brown](#). Rev. Woodley, farmer, author, activist, scholar, distinguished speaker/teacher and wisdom keeper, using the lens of indigenous spirituality will speak on how Christianity can be disentangled from the precepts of colonialism and returned to its core message. Get more information and register [here](#).

Race and Racism in Cincinnati, The last 2 parts of the 3-part Docuseries presented by the International Justice and Peace Center will be on **Wednesdays, February 15, and 22, from 2-4pm.**

Board of Directors meets on **Thursday, February 16th, at 4:00 PM**

Coffee & Conversation This NCoM social and support group meets **Friday evenings at 5-6:30pm** usually at a local McDonald's for a bite to eat and in-person community. Contact Pete or Larry to get on the reminder list. Venue du jour is announced just-in-time

Swedenborg Study Group completed the book *When Tragedy Strikes* and will be on hiatus until **the beginning of March.** We looked at about a dozen books and have tentatively picked out two front-runners for the group to select from for when get started:

- *Mindful Communications Challenge*, written by Sasha Silverman and John Odhner, and
- *How to Think Like an Angel*, a collection of writings and reflections similar to *When Tragedy Strikes* from the Swedenborg Foundation, edited by Morgan Beard.

Let us know if you're interested in one of these and can consider joining!

NEW CHURCH OF MONTGOMERY



WORSHIP & EVENT SCHEDULE

FEBRUARY

- 2/8 ❖ Race & Racism in Cincinnati Part 1
2/12 Rev. Dr. David Fekete
2/13 ❖ Dr. Woodley Zoom Presentation
2/15 ❖ Race & Racism in Cincinnati Part 2
2/22 ❖ Ash Wednesday – Start of Lent
2/22 ❖ Race & Racism in Cincinnati Part 3
2/26 Rev. Catherine Lauber

MARCH

- 3/5 GNC Service
3/12 Rev. Dr. Sherrie Connelly
3/26 Rev. Julie Conaron (tentative)

APRIL

- 4/2 GNC Sunday Rev. Clark Echols
4/9 Rev. Ron Brugler - ❖ Easter
4/23 TBD Guest Minister
4/30 Pete Toot

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Mail Address

New Church of Montgomery
P.O. Box 42466,
Montgomery, OH, 45242

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