

**Groundbreaking Ceremony  
for the  
Grant R. Doering Center for Science and Research**

**May 3, 2008**

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**Charles W. Lindsay, Dean**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and welcome. We are delighted that you are here to help celebrate this important moment in the history of New Church education.

This is an auspicious day for Bryn Athyn College that marks a turning point in the history of the institution, as we gather to break ground for the Grant R. Doering Center for Science and Research. This building, and a second 30,000 sq. ft student life & admissions facility that will be built about 200 feet behind me adjacent to Pendleton Hall, signal not only an enrichment of campus life and of the student experience at the College, but a renaissance going on in New Church higher education.

With that thought in mind, I would now call on Rev. Eric Carswell, President of the Academy, to say a few words.

As an architectural milestone and an educational facility, the Doering Center will provide students and faculty with learning experiences found nowhere else in the world—specifically the opportunity to study science in the light of the Lord’s Second Coming. In the *Spiritual Diary* (5709), Swedenborg speaks about two foundations of truth, one from the Word, and the other nature. The passage goes on to say that these two sources of truth agree with each other when rightly understood; and that the sciences offer the potential to open people’s understanding, to the extent they are in good. This statement illustrates the promise and potential that New Church science offers and indicates one way that Bryn Athyn College can make a significant contribution to scientific understanding.

The Doering Center will be a space built to feed the soul and to inspire the mind—for inspiration is what drives the scientist and the student to do their best. Great spaces can inspire us to do our very best and kindle the creative process both for the individual and for a common purpose—for it is in coming together in with others in the Lord’s name that we create an experience larger than ourselves.

Bryn Athyn College’s 30-year goal is to become known and respected throughout the world for integrating spiritual life, academic discovery, and practical application. This idea is incorporated into the design of the Doering Center, which will feature state of the art laboratory facilities, gallery and display areas, classrooms, faculty offices, meeting rooms and space where faculty and students can come together outside of class to discuss the realities of the natural and spiritual worlds.

In a larger sense, this facility will help meet the needs of our rapidly changing world—in environmental science, biology, chemistry, microbiology, physics, and more; in the creation of new multidisciplinary areas of study, and especially in the discovery of new, cross-disciplinary methods of problem-solving. A special feature will be the many learning opportunities provided through our partnership with the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust.

I want to give a special thank you to Dr. Allen Bedford and the other members of the mathematical and sciences division for their work in helping to plan and design the Doering Center.

I'd now like to turn things over to Dr. Gregory Baker, retired professor of physics and mathematics, who over his thirty-seven year career, provided a great deal of energy and vision for this project.

And so, as a sign of our gratitude and affection for the commitment of Wren and Grant Doering to the study of the sciences in the light of the New Revelation, I'd like to present this gift on behalf of the College to Mrs. Grant Doering.

The inscription reads: For the earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof.

This quote from Psalm 24 is a reminder of the responsibility all of us must exercise in safeguarding the environment and exercising prudence in managing our natural resources. This quote will be a focus for science education in the future at Bryn Athyn College and one that is exemplified by the fact that the building itself will be LEED certified. LEED, which stands for leadership in energy and environmental design, is a rating system put in place by the U.S. Green Building Council to encourage the adoption of sustainable green building and developmental practices throughout the country.

We are stewards of the present, and builders of the future, who share an unbroken bond with the founders of the Academy, those for whom faith and commitment achieved the impossible. At this college, we can do no less.

So today, we break ground for this new facility—and take the next step toward our future. In recognition of the fact that the Doering Center will serve future generations of New Church scientists and researchers, we have asked four students, one from each class at Bryn Athyn College, to break ground for this new facility. Please welcome Geneva Echols (freshmen) Dale Zecher (sophomores) Shilah Rose (juniors) Annika Fitzpatrick (seniors).

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**Rev. Eric H. Carswell, President**

What do you see when you look around the campus where we are gathered today—grass, trees, grey sky, buildings and people. In the Writings of the New Church we are invited to see more. In several dozen places in those books we are told that all that we see can remind us of heaven and the Lord. For example:

. . . the whole visible universe is therefore nothing else than a theatre that is representative of the Lord's kingdom. And this in turn is a theatre representative of the Lord Himself. (*Arcana Caelestia* 3483)

. . . the whole natural order is a theatre representative of the Lord's kingdom in heaven, and therefore of the Lord's kingdom on earth, which is the Church, and consequently of the Lord's kingdom with every regenerate person. (*Arcana Caelestia* 3518)

Ideas like these were profoundly inspiring to many 19<sup>th</sup> century writers such as those known as the transcendentalists. The idea that the Lord can be seen within all things has inspired scientists with the wonderful order of the natural world, artists with the beauty that can be seen, mathematicians with the power and precision of numbers, and countless others with the qualities that make human beings what they are and how they react to their life experiences.

One might think that this concept would have one only focus on what was good and whole. We also know that in the Gospel of Matthew the Lord invited us to see His presence in things that are incomplete or need help.

. . . for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. (Matthew 25:35–36)

Many of us have looked at this campus and seen something that was missing. Bryn Athyn College has not had its own science building. We have gathered to symbolically mark the beginning of filling in that missing quality. When we think of it, it is not the stone, glass and metal that we most care about. All of these things will exist to create a space for students and teachers to learn together. We picture the generations of students who, within the walls of the Doering Center for Science and Research will be able to be inspired with the wonder and power of science and its ability to serve us in our roles as stewards of this natural world. We want them to come to see for themselves that the universe is a theatre representative of the Lord's kingdom and of the Lord Himself. Thank you.

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## **Dr. Gregory L. Baker**

Thank you Dean Lindsay. Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. This is a great day for the College and a great day for the New Church.

### **History of Effort for the Building**

Being present at this first beginning of the construction of the college science center, and having just retired as a member of the college science faculty, I feel a bit like Moses, who never entered the Promised Land. But, I was there during the wilderness days, and for the next few minutes, I would like to give you an unofficial history that led us to this moment.

For me, the need for a college science building sprang into focus my first day on the job—a very hot, very humid, summer day in August 1970, in my office on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Benade Hall. I had just arrived from Toronto, which is at least one climate zone cooler than Philadelphia, and had been doing research in a modern air-conditioned facility. In contrast, the top floor of Benade Hall seemed positively tropical! And, aside from the lack of climate control, it soon became evident that the shared science space in Benade Hall was too small to house both secondary and college science uses. Furthermore, when the term started, it was clear that the college students were not happy about returning to the secondary school building for their college lab sessions. However, we were all pioneers in the great enterprise of New Church education, and we hoped that there would soon be a science facility *on* the college campus.

Initial progress came in the mid 1980s when the Academy president, Alfred Acton, chaired a small committee on science facilities. Burt Friesen, as head of secondary science, and I, as head of college science and mathematics, worked with Alfred on this. Ultimately, I drew up a rough plan for a modest 15,000 square foot facility on the college campus, with the idea that the secondary school would then take over the vacated space in Benade Hall. But, aside from some rearranging of the secondary school science space, no new college space was developed at that time.

Ten years later, in the mid 1990s, the Academy administration decided to look at space allocation for College programs, and hired some architectural space planners. Again, as chair of science and mathematics, I suggested to my science colleagues that we get ahead of the curve by providing the planners with our own assessment of the needs. Everyone pitched in. Dr. Allen Bedford was especially helpful in this effort, and in 1997 we presented the space planners with a document that described needed functional components. That document is well reflected in what is now going to be the final product.

Nevertheless, even at that point, there still did not seem to be sufficient political will, or financial resources, to jump-start the project. The reality of the science building became manifest only in 1999 or 2000 when Wren Doering, in memory of her husband Prof.

Grant Doering, stepped forward to offer a substantial donation toward the erection of a college science facility on the college campus. Because of this major contribution, the Academy administration started to accept other contributions to the college science building. Clearly this was a popular cause, because even without a public fund raising campaign, the number of contributors now stands at well over 200. To get on this bandwagon, please drop off your check at Pitcairn Hall!

Once the science building became an officially sanctioned project, more plans and programs were drawn up. In 2005 Dr. Sherri Cooper was involved in creating the science section of the strategic plan, and she worked to provide another version of the 1997 plan. Then, more recently, she and Dr. Bedford were instrumental in bringing forth the present program for the science functions in the building. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the work of the specialists in science buildings from SST Planners, Cory English and Malena Aquino. Their contribution has been vital to the realization of a professional science facility on this campus.

### **Fitting that the Building be Named for GRD**

The naming of this new center for Professor Grant Richardson Doering is *more* than fitting. He was my colleague for over twenty years and a good friend until his transition to the spiritual world in 1999. As a member of the college faculty for 33 years, he was admired and respected by students and colleagues alike. Grant had an easy social presence with generations of students. They were drawn to his office to discuss biology, the environment, career directions, or simply to pass the time of day in his congenial presence.

Grant was a scholar with a PhD in plant physiology and a pioneering environmentalist for the Pennypack Watershed. Prof. Doering knew that if we were ever going to have a New Church university, that we had to build a New Church College first. He would, *indeed*, have mightily applauded this new building as a major step forward in the realization of a *complete college!*

With these remarks, I would now like to turn the program back to Dean Lindsay, and thank you for your attention.