



## The Year of the Lord

# Swedenborg's "Oneness" Teaching on the Trinity

BY JIM LAWRENCE

Though some Trinitarian formulations in the history of Christian thought involve a complex unity within the "threeness," Swedenborg's oneness of God is much more radical than orthodox Christian dogma. The main branches of Christianity hold to irreducible differences of kind among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and see a discreteness among the entities of the Trinity.

Swedenborg believed, however, that such "tri-personalism"—the view that there are three persons in the divine Trinity—projects a confusing image of God that hinders comprehension of the nature of God. So weighty did he believe this inaccuracy in historical Christian doctrine that in his final work, *True Christianity*, he treats "tri-personalism" as rivaling "faith alone" for becoming the most damaging doctrine permeating the Christian era.

Carefully describing the "three essentials" of the Trinity as functional dimensions of the One God, Swedenborg hewed against understanding them as persons or as in anyway different constituent elements of God. In fact, Swedenborg also argued that the Son was not eternal (contra the Nicene Creed) since the usefulness of the incarnation happened in historical time for a specific intervention. The potentiality of incarnational activity is eter-

nal, but the Son *per se* through the life and work of Jesus is not. It came into being for the redemptive movement by God to re-situate the world's spiritual freedom. And the Holy Spirit is likewise not a person or an entity but simply a way to perceive how the Divine operates continually and everywhere in our creation and in our lives.

To conceive the Divine as constituted by three persons is a disfigured picture of the true profound oneness of God. For example, Swedenborgians never conclude prayers with "through Jesus's name we pray" because the

**Indeed, Swedenborg is actually profoundly Trinitarian, and he ardently affirms the power of a right understanding of the threeness of God's nature . . . .**

prayer is already to the Lord, the essential aspect of God whom we can picture and relate to as one divine person. As such, Swedenborgians have often been labeled by historians of Christian theology as "anti-Trinitarian." In Great Britain, the General Conference of the New Jerusalem has been denied admission to their British Council of Churches (BCC), established in 1942 for the promotion of common action and fraternity among Christian churches, ev-

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ery time they have applied, due to being deemed insufficiently Trinitarian.

There are a few other contemporary Christian denominations that share in superficial ways a non-Trinitarian Oneness doctrine of God, such as United Pentecostalism and Jehovah's Witnesses, but these have not shaped a deeper understanding of the Triune nature of the Divine as does Swedenborg. (Unitarians, who arose in England in the same historical context as Swedenborgians, have evacuated Trinitarian thought in a much more non-Christian way and do not consider themselves a Christian denomination.)

Indeed, Swedenborg is profoundly Trinitarian and he ardently affirms the power of a right understanding of the threeness of God's nature; God's essence is triune: purpose-cause-effect; heart-head-hands; good-truth-power; love-wisdom-use; and repentance-reformation-regeneration provide the genius of how everything works. But these are not something to pictorially shape as a being. Rather, the triune nature of God is an unfolding into being that involves love, wisdom, and

[Continues on page 14](#)

## The Editor's Desk



### Thank You

It's time to go, or rather relinquish the reins. I am stepping down as editor of *the Messenger*. Beginning with the February issue the editorship will be in the capable hands of Beki Greenwood (see page 3). I offer my blessing and my good wishes to Beki. May it be as rewarding for her as it has been for me. I am confident that you, dear readers, will find her craft, skills, and insights to be outstanding.

These twelve years as editor, from January 2008 through January 2020, have proved the most rewarding of my career life. I have met many wonderful people, strengthened relationships with other Swedenborgians, learned so much about Emanuel Swedenborg, Christianity, humanity, and the Swedenborgian Church, and gained wisdom in the process; as well, I have felt that my work has been useful to the Swedenborgian community and be-

yond. Aside from the pressure and (sometimes) panic of putting out the monthly issue, I have experienced mostly joy and satisfaction working on *the Messenger*.

I thank the late Carol Lawson and the Communications Support Unit for having faith in me and recommending hiring me as editor; Jim Lawrence for providing advice and insight; presidents Chris Laitner, Ken Turley, and Jane Siebert for supporting and encouraging me; all the people who have contributed to *the Messenger* too numerous to name, especially "serial" contributors Kurt Fekete, George Dole, Dave Fekete, Jim Lawrence, Rich Tafel, and many more; proofreaders and copy editors Robert Leith<sup>1</sup>, Beki Greenwood, Renée Helenbrecht, Samantha Johanson, and Trevor; Central Office personnel Martha Bauer, Renée Helenbrecht, Samantha Johanson, and Gina Perrachi; editors of church newsletters; and most of all, I thank you, dear reader, for valuing my work and the work of the Swedenborgian Church. Forgive me for failing to name everyone who has helped make *the Messenger* a success.

I am retiring from compensated work but not from productive life. I have so many plans and ideas that I will be as busy as ever. (In fact, I will never

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Rev. Carla Friedrich for asking Robert to assist. With no compensation, and connected to the Swedenborgian Church only through his long friendship with Carla, he has worked tirelessly and cheerfully to make *the Messenger* more professional.

get around to all of them.) Editing *the Messenger* gave me the sense that I was useful to a degree that was difficult to achieve in earlier careers, and I intend to continue being useful in my retirement. I hope to read more; to do some writing and painting; to relearn playing my guitar; to do more traveling, attending plays and lectures, and visiting museums; and to continue serving the church as a volunteer.

My first project is "death cleaning." That may sound a little morbid, but I look forward to a long and satisfying project of going through a life-

*Continues on page 14*

## Contents

The Year of the Lord: Swedenborg's "Oneness" Teaching on the Trinity .....	1
The Editor's Desk.....	2
Welcome the New Editor of <i>the Messenger</i> , Beki Greenwood....	3
Prayer for Australia .....	3
2019 SCYL Winter Retreat .....	4
Book Review: How a Swedenborgian Influenced the Abolitionist Movement.....	6
Reflections: Looking Back on FNCA 2019 .....	8
Living an Authentic Life .....	10
offTheLeftEye Offers Scholarship .	11
2020 SCYL Officer Elections .....	12
Rev. Eric Allison and His Caring Community.....	13
Passages .....	15
Gathering Leaves: Swedenborgian Women's Event.....	16

## Church Calendar

- **April 25–26:** SHS Board of Trustees meeting • Burlingame, CA
- **May 9:** General Council Spring conference-call meeting
- **June 27–July 1:** Swedenborgian Church Annual Convention • Bridgewater, MA
- **August 28–31:** Gathering Leaves • Purley Chase • England

## the Messenger

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## Welcome the New Editor of *the Messenger*, Beki Greenwood

**T**he *Messenger* welcomes its new editor, Beki Greenwood. Beki is a longtime member of the Bridgewater New Church, in Massachusetts. She is a seventh-generation Swedenborgian whose maternal grandmother is descended from two founding families of the Bridgewater Church; her 5x great-grandfather, Dr. Cyrus Benson was a signatory to its charter, in 1833. She lives in Carver, Massachusetts, with her husband, Jason and their children, Serena and Nate. Jason teaches middle-school math and is the director of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) summer camp.

Beki has attended the FNCA sum-

mer camp since birth (following in her mother's (Merrilee Phinney) footsteps; she has been registrar there since 2017 and on the Board of Directors, since 2008.

Beginning with her B.A. from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where she studied Humanities and Fine Arts, majoring in Classical Civilization and minoring in Greek Language and Literature, her academic and career arc has provided her with the skills and knowledge to edit and produce *the Messenger*. Her career experience includes design coordinator for Disney Hyperion Books (children's, middle grade and young adult



Jason, Beki, Serena, and Nate

titles), administrative assistant at *Disney Adventures Magazine*, and library assistant at Lakeville (Massachusetts) Public Library.

Beki says, "Being able to gather information, discern the truth, and understand the needs of the community while prioritizing what should be communicated are paramount to the mission of *the Messenger* in the life of the Swedenborgian Church."

We look forward to her success.✚

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## Prayer for Australia

### A note from Jane Siebert

I am in Australia visiting New Church (Swedenborgian) churches and members. The fires are devastating for the whole country and our world. Please use the following ceremony to help as you would like. It is written by a friend in Pretty Prairie (Kansas), Chris Smith.

1. May Australia and all its people, animals, trees and plants, and environment be surrounded with love and light. May the energy that has created the crisis of wildfires be mitigated and replaced with love, light and healing.

2. May each individual person, their families and friends, feel that many individuals across the world are sending love and healing. That prayers are being made on their behalf to help them through this difficult time.

3. May each animal, tree, and plant, as well as the whole ecosystem feel the

love and energy that is needed to heal and recover from this fire crisis.

4. May the leaders of all countries realize the tremendous effects of global warming and take immediate action to mitigate this and help those drastically affected.

5. May all individuals across the globe realize they can also affect global warming and the huge fires it causes, by how we live our lives, who we support as leader, how we run our businesses and how we send help, through financial support, but also through our prayers and love.

6. May the people and animals of Australia not give up hope, may they not be overcome with despair, may they feel the love that is surrounding them from so many people across the world, and may they know that they can find the inner and outer resources to survive and flourish again.

7. This must feel like walking

through the fires of hell. May the words of Psalm 23 also be in your hearts:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies [the negative effects of fire and those who promote climate-change denial]; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

I soaked the paper I had printed with these prayers in water that had been blessed. I put it into the fire in my wood stove, asking that the element of water help to balance the elements of wind and fire so that harmony and balance can again come to Australia.✚

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## 2019 SCYL Winter Retreat

BY KURT FEKETE

The 2019 SCYL (Swedish Church Youth League) Winter Retreat at Almont by the numbers: Twenty teens and seven staff representing eight states and two countries joined together for three days with three ministers to study the seven deadly sins. But in the words of the teens in their retreat evaluations it was, “Everything was amazing.” “I just want to stay forever.” “One of the best in the books.” “I love this place.” “I love everything about retreats.”

This loving community of teens gathered to discuss the seven deadly sins: lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride. The seven deadly sins, also known as the capital vices or cardinal sins, is a classification of vices that were originally used in early Christian teachings to educate and instruct followers concerning fallen man’s tendency to sin. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great revised the list to the popular version we see today (<https://psychology.wikia.org/>). While Emanuel Swedenborg’s portrayal of damnation is quite different from the Catholic Church’s, he would certainly agree that a fondness for one or more of these seven deadly sins clearly can lead you down the path to hell.

These vices are extremely tempting and very dangerous, and we chose to explore them to recognize their negative influences and challenge them before they take root within us. Each of these sins has an opposing heavenly virtue (purity, self-control, generosity, dil-



The “silly” 2019 SCYL Winter retreat group

igence, peace, kindness, and humility), and by learning about and embracing the virtues we can better guard ourselves from becoming prey to the al-

(habit vs addiction), and how love is all about pleasing your partner and lust is all about pleasing yourself.

The next day, Rev. Renée Machin-



League chaplain  
Rev. Renée Machiniak



Kurt Fekete gets a snuggle from  
his daughter Ava



Rev. Kit Billings



Youth leader Holly Bauer

luring and attractive draw of the sins.

After a review of the schedule and rules, teenager Ava led a great evening icebreaker where she asked yes-or-no questions related to the seven deadly sins, as we lined up according to our responses.

Then I held a session on lust before we retired for the evening. I contrasted love with lust by discussing their differences, where they light up the brain

iak led morning and early afternoon sessions on gluttony and envy. She explained how the Bible speaks of many destructive consequences of gluttony (see Proverbs 23:20–21). She suggested, “Perhaps the most damaging aspect of overindulgence in food is how it harms our health. The Bible calls us to take care of our bodies and honor God with them” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). She went on to explain how the virtues of

*Continues on page 5*

## 2019 SCYL Winter Retreat

*Continued from page 4*

self-control and self discipline are key to controlling gluttony. In Renée's second session on envy, she quoted Proverbs 14:30, "A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot." She followed with points to ponder like, "Envy blocks us from the blessings we have right in front of us." She then went on to discuss how the virtue compassion (the feeling of joy one has experiencing another's joy) can combat envy. "Feeling the joy of another as our own is Swedenborg's definition of love."

Rev. Catherine Lauber led the late afternoon session on sloth vs. diligence. The teens talked about how they are slothful when they put off school work and how this leads to a cycle of procrastination where they grow less and less motivated to do their work. In Rev. Kit Billings' evening pride session, he talked about how we can have an all consuming sense of "I am of supreme importance to everyone else." He went on to moderate a discussion on healthy and unhealthy pride and how we can temper pride with the antidote of humility.

Between these intriguing sessions the teens had ample opportunity for recreation, games, and quiet conversation. Oliver set up his virtual reality console, and many people were excited to try the system out. The group also enjoyed playing cards and es-



*Kristofer practices his clarinet*



*Kitchen crew buddies Nathan and Jack*

pecially liked circle games like Signs and Werewolf. One thing the teens did not

like was bedtime. However, after I led a relaxing guided meditation, they reluctantly went off to bed.

We awoke to a bright, breezy morning and, after a hasty breakfast, gath-

er games party, diligently staffed by Holly Bauer! to these two incredible young women and then we all gathered for a beautiful communion worship service led by Rev. Kit and Rev. Catherine. Teens participated in the service by contributing music: Ava's prelude on the ocarina, Jack's interlude singing and playing the guitar, and Kristofer's postlude on the clarinet. The burning of the Yule log, where we sent our concerns and challenges up to God, is always a mov-

ing and meaningful highlight of the worship experience.

The retreat concluded with the traditional big pizza party and bowling outing followed by the all-night-



*Julia enjoys a hug circle*



*Scout leads her kitchen team of Declan, Elliot, and Oliver*

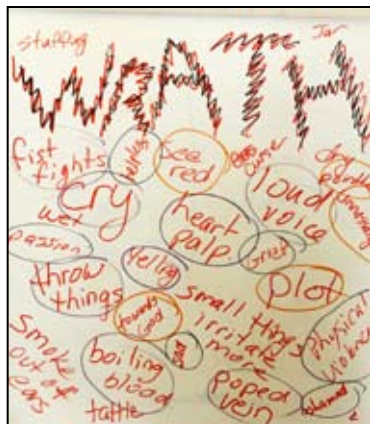
ered for Rev. Catherine's morning "Wrath!" session. The teens came up with all the ways we manifest anger. She explained how we can release wrath through practicing peace and embracing the journey of the "three Rs," repentance, reformation, and regeneration.

After lunch, Rev. Kit closed our sessions on the seven deadly sins with an afternoon presentation on greed. He emphasized how living a generous life

er games party, diligently staffed by Holly Bauer!

Thank you to Rev. Catherine, Rev. Kit, Rev. Renée, staffers Heather Oleker and Holly Bauer, and closer Becky Moore. I am so grateful for all our volunteers! Their commitment to the youth of our church makes all of this possible. I also appreciate all that the Almont Retreat Center does to host the Winter Retreat, providing room and board at a deep discount. We departed this retreat enlightened to the virtues combating these seven deadly sins and feeling the care and togetherness of this loving community.

Kurt Fekete is the youth director of the Swedenborgian Church.



*Wrath! Session in the words of the teens*

## Book Review

# How a Swedenborgian Influenced the Abolitionist Movement

***The Moment Is Now: Carl Bernhard Wadström's Revolutionary Voice on Human Trafficking and the Abolition of the African Slave Trade***

Anders Hallengren, editor  
Swedenborg Foundation, 2019

REVIEWED BY HERB ZIEGLER

Scholars gathered in London, on June 2–4, 2015, for a symposium titled *The International Conference on Human Rights and the Abolition of Slavery*, hosted by Mansion House, the official residence of the Lord Mayor of London. The symposium was planned by Anders Mortensen of Lund University and Anders Hallengren of Stockholm University, distinguished member of the Anglo-Swedish Society of London, the Swedenborg Society of London, and then-president of the Swedenborgian Society of London. *The Moment is Now* is a record of the papers presented there.

This volume sheds light on the often overlooked Swedish abolitionist, economist, author, and Swedenborgian Carl Bernhard Wadström (1746–99). In each paper, the author examines a subject related directly or tangentially to either Wadström or the slave trade and abolition or both.

Wadström was commissioned by King Gustav III of Sweden, in 1787, to investigate the possibility of establishing a Swedish colony in Africa. What Wadström encountered there changed the course of his life and career: the appalling commerce in human lives and the appalling conditions and consequences of that trade. On his return to Sweden, he stopped in London and testified to a parliamentary committee about what he witnessed in Senegal. This marked his entry into the aboli-

tionist movement, for which he wrote and lobbied until his death, first settling in England and then in revolutionary France.

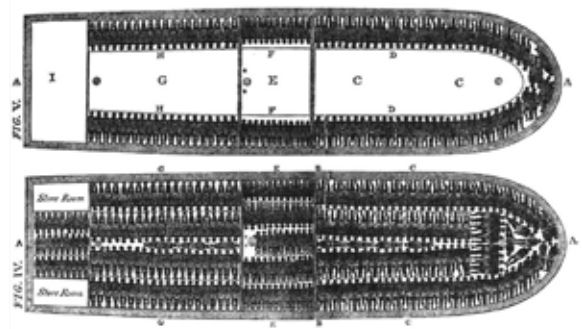
Klas Ronnbäck (University of Gothenburg), in his contribution, “Enlightenment, Scientific Exploration, and Abolitionism: . . .” details Wadström’s African exploration with his co-explorer, the medical doctor Anders Sparrman; his resulting conversion to anti-slavery; and his influence on the abolition movement in England.

Wadström, was shocked and appalled when he encountered the slaving trade and the condition of captured Africans in Senegal. The focus of the expedition shifted from suitability for colonization to documenting his experiences with the slave trade in, and the damage it caused to, individuals and society in Senegal. He recorded what he saw and experienced there in great detail, including many well-executed drawings and diagrams (see figure this page).

On the invitation of John Clarkson, the leader of the abolition movement in England, Wadström and Sparrman testified and presented their findings on the slave trade to government committees and the House of Commons. That their testimony had great impact was later verified by William Wilberforce, the leader for abolition in the House of Commons and by Clarkson in his later history of the abolition movement. Ronnbäck writes, “That both Swedes made a lasting impact was

clear to Clarkson, who summarized the importance of their testimonies: “The tide therefore, which had run so strongly against us, began now to turn a little in our favor” (p. 74). A year later, Wadström wrote and published the pamphlet *Observations on the Trade Slave*.

In the pamphlet, Wadström explicitly positioned himself as an abolitionist. He was a zealous man writ-



Wadström's drawing detailing the horrific packing of human beings in slave ships, famous in many textbooks and other publications

ing about the slave trade: “These detestable markets for human flesh, constitute the last stage of all false principles; the greatest of all abuses; the inversion of all order and originate solely in that corrupted system of commerce, which pervades every civilized nation at this day” (p. 75).

In “Labor and Money: Wadström and Nordenskiöld’s Utopian Ideas,” Ronny Ambjörnsson (Royal Swedish Academy of Science) writes that Wadström signed on as a coauthor with August Nordenskiöld to a pamphlet titled *Plan for a Free Community upon the Coast of Africa, Under the Protection of Great Britain*. . . . Nordenskiöld was

*Continues on page 7*

## Wadström and Anti-Slavery

Continued from page 6

a Swedenborgian as well and worked in secret for King Gustav III as an alchemist (surely among the last of serious alchemists). His goal was to “build the ‘New Jerusalem,’ a community created not by human endeavor but by God, through his prophet Emanuel Swedenborg” (p. 52).

The utopian community Wadström and Nordenskiöld envisioned would be established in Africa partly because of the special position Africans hold in Swedenborg’s writings that they are more spiritual than Europeans and thus more receptive to the tenets of the New Jerusalem.

In 1792, Wadström published *An Essay on Colonization*, in which he fleshed out in great detail the ideas from *Plan for a Free Community*. It is a resolutely socialist plan, with interesting and sometimes quirky ideas. As in *An Essay on Colonization*, his economic theory centers on the value of labor as opposed to mercantilism (acquiring wealth through foreign trade), which, he says, leads naturally to slavery.

*The Moment Is Now* offers many other essays, many using Wadström or just slavery as a take-off point.

Neil Kent (University of Cambridge) opens with “On Human Bondage: An Overview of Slavery and the Slave Trade,” where sets the background for the Atlantic slave trade.

Mark Florman (Centre for Social Justice, London) examines modern-day slavery and slave trading “It Happens Here: From the Slave Trade to Trafficking.” He presents shocking evidence on slavery hidden in plain sight but sounds a hopeful note describing efforts to combat it. He concludes, “A society is judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members, especially its hidden and its voiceless ones. Slavery has not been banished to the past; it is here today, now, in our midst. *But*

*it is not inevitable; its eradication must be the work of all of us”* (p. 29).

We move closer to Wadström’s context in “Knowledge, Silence, and Denial: The Late-eighteenth-century Debate on Slavery and Colonialism in Sweden,” by Fredrick Thomasson, (Uppsala University). Thomasson’s main question is, “[H]ow were slavery and colonialism discussed in Sweden during the second half of the eighteenth century?” (p. 31). It may surprise readers to read that Sweden participated in slavery during its brief colonial period as the occupiers of Saint Barthélemy (present-day Saint Croix), in the Caribbean. Swedish thought in the late eighteenth century had yet to untangle the intersection of slavery and colonialism, and Wadström’s had barely begun to sort out that contradiction. Thomasson writes, “In *An Essay on Colonization*, Wadström succinctly summarizes not only his own interests but also those of both his colleagues and royalty: ‘But the truth is, that the King loved gold, my worthy companions loved natural science, and I loved colonization.’”

The late Jane Williams-Hogan (Bryn Athyn College) examines “The Swedenborgian, or New Church, Foundations of Carl Bernhard Wadström’s Plan for Colonization in Africa.” In his version of Nordenskiöld’s *Plan for a Free Community upon the Coast of Africa* . . . , Wadström states,

The ideas presented in this section are contrary to common opinion, and thus the reader ought to weigh them carefully. The reader should also bypass the current standards of self interest and pride as the measure of duties toward the Creator and the community—these destroy all “Ties of Union” which require instead that “good Uses, Order, and genuine Conjugal Love” in fact form the basis of Creation (p. 88).

Williams-Hoagn concludes that These remarks highlight the in-

disputable fact that the central inspiration for the vision of the Plan, and the necessity to abolish the African slave trade as key to its realization, came from Swedenborg’s commentary on Africa and Africans in his religious writings (p. 95).

“In 1792, a thousand refugees sailed across the Atlantic to build Freetown, showing the way for Americans at Monrovia and Frenchmen at Libreville. . . . and in 1961, it became the Republic of Sierra Leone” (p. 113). Thus begins “Building a New Jerusalem in Africa in the 1790s,” by Jonathan Howard, an architect educated at the University of Cambridge. He details the genesis of the idea of an African colony for freed slaves and includes Wadström and Swedish thought on the subject as germane.

It is common knowledge among Swedenborgians that William Blake joined the first organized gathering of Swedenborgians at the first General Conference at the London New Jerusalem Church, in April 1789 (also attended by Wadström), and that his art is suffused with inspiration from Swedenborg’s writings. In “*The Little Black Boy*”: *William Blake, Carl Bernhard Wadström, and Swedenborg’s Africa*, Robert W. Rix (University of Copenhagen) notes that “The Little Black Boy” (from *Songs of Innocence*) finds little agreement in its interpretations. He makes the case that it can *only* be understood in terms of Swedenborg’s writings, with particular reference to Swedenborg’s reports about Africans in heaven, the primary source of Wadström’s views on Africans.

In “Swedenborg and Modernity,” Inga Sanner (Stockholm University) considers how Swedenborg’s conception of Christianity prepared the way for the emergence of modern ideas in religion, philosophy, culture, and society. For modernity to emerge, Christianity had to be made more “down to

Continues on page 9

## Reflections: Looking Back on FNCA 2019

BY TREVOR

The Opening Weekend Program at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) family camp got rave reviews from pretty much everyone this year, with a new format and a fascinating subject: “The Spiritual Legacy of Helen Keller.”

The presenter was

Rev. Sage Cole, pastor and director of Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and vision caster for the planned Helen Keller Spiritual Life Center there.



Rev. Sage Cole

On opening Saturday afternoon, Whitehead Lecture Hall was packed with campers, members of the Fryeburg New

Church, and several people from beyond our church circle for a public lecture by Rev. Cole on “The Radical Helen Keller: Deaf-Blind, Feminist, Socialist, Swedenborgian.” The lecture was streamed live on Facebook and, as of this writing, is in the top ten of all our videos on Facebook, with a whopping 241 views.

Rev. Cole then led a workshop on “Disability, Diversity, and the Divine Human” to a purposely limited group of fifteen people who had signed up for this workshop in advance. The workshop explored the connections between Helen Keller’s Swedenborgian faith and the work of disability theologians today.



FNCA 2019 campers



Star and Ray Silverman

Also very popular was this year’s Rev. Everett K. Bray Visiting Lecturer, Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman, associate professor of Religion and English at Bryn Athyn College, in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, and coauthor and co-presenter with his wife, Star Silverman, of the “Rise Above It” spiritual development seminars and books. We were delighted to have Rev. Silverman’s cheerful presence and stimulating lectures, including a special introductory lecture to “Rise Above It” on Saturday evening. We were also thrilled to have the shining presence of Star Silverman with us this year.

Speaking of visitors, many were absolutely delighted by a (somewhat) surprise day-visit by a contingent of seven parishioners from the Church on the Hill (Swedenborgian), in Boston, led by their minister, Rev. Kevin Baxter. The “Boston contingent” arrived in time to take in the second lecture; participate in the adult discussion group, lunch,



The Boston Church delegation

and rest hour; and get rained out on a planned canoe trip on the Saco River. One of them wrote a very nice article about their visit for their church’s monthly newsletter.

One of the most talked about afternoon and evening activities was the balsam pillow-making workshop led by Jesse White and Lois McCurdy on Monday of First Week, in which some Sparks, Flames, and Bonfires got to create their very own sweet-smelling little pillows.

One major difference at camp this year that was not very well received, however, was the loss of our line of trees and bushes that shielded the camp from Route 302. As part of a project by the Maine DOT, work began this past spring on raising and widening Route 302 from the New Hampshire state line, along the southeast edge of our property, and beyond to the center of town. In order to do this, they took, by eminent domain, a thin strip of land that runs along the edge of the road the full length of the Assembly. The project necessitated the removal of the narrow line of mature trees between the road and the back field, leaving the back of the Main Building suddenly in open view from the road.

*Continues on page 9*



## FNCA Fall 2019

Continued from page 8



View of the FNCA from the road before . . .



. . . and after trees removed for road reconstruction

The Assembly put in a temporary snow fence to separate the property from the highway. However, the plan by the Board of Directors, once the road work is finished, is to put in a permanent high-board fence all the way along the back field, with a twelve-foot-wide garden border on the Assembly side. It will be called Lalla's Memorial Garden, in honor of Cecilia "Lalla" Searle, who spearheaded the planting of the many flowering shrubs and flowers that adorn the Assembly grounds. This will cost roughly \$25,000, of which over \$9,000 has been raised. We urge you to contribute to Lalla's Memorial Garden Fund so we can move ahead with this much-needed project as soon as possible. (<http://fryeburg.org/lmgf>)

One evening during first week, we were treated to a wonderful slide show and travelog by Tina and Willis Wood of their recent trip to Catalonia. There was much "ooooing" and "ahhhhing" at the amazing scenery, colorful local costumes, and fascinating regional architecture.

Continues on page 13

## Wadström and Anti-Slavery

Continued from page 7

earth," and conceptions of humanity needed to change. Swedenborg, she posits, did this through his descriptions of heaven and his idea of the realization of the true self—self knowledge. Wadström, was a harbinger of modernism by applying Swedenborgian concepts to his vision for a better humanity. She cautions that the positioning of Swedenborg as a modern thinker might be a matter of "observing similarities between ideas of certain kinds than it is of describing various types of influence. In both cases, it is tempting to suggest that in taking the risk of being anachronistic, Swedenborg, and probably Wadström as well, were 'ahead of their time'" (p. 154).

The last contribution to this volume, "A World Apart: The American Antislavery Issue," is by the Swedenborgian minister, dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, and professor at the Graduate Theological Union, James F. Lawrence.<sup>1</sup> Lawrence asserts at the outset that "The US context [of the slavery question] witnessed the vilest experience of slavery for modern Europeans and Euro-Americans since the enslavement and owning of human beings happened on the domestic soil of white people." He then asks, "How did Swedenborgian thought perform in retrospect? And how was Wadström's work received and used in Antebellum America by the growing Swedenborgian population there" (p. 167)?

Lawrence describes the three phases, or periods, of antislavery activity in the United States and places the few Swedenborgians involved in that context. The 1850s saw the emergence of Swedenborgian clergy who wrote and spoke

<sup>1</sup> An excerpt from this piece, concerning the Swedenborgian minister Chauncey Giles and the slavery question, appears in the December, 2019 Messenger as "Chauncey Giles's Slow Conversion to His Searing Anti-Slavery Stance."

out against slavery, the most important being George Bush. Slow conversion to belief in abolition gained momentum after the Civil War began (1861), with such conservatives as Thomas Worcester and Chauncey Giles finally speaking out on the issue.

In his conclusion, Lawrence reiterates that "Wadström's influence never made it to the New World," and that a variety of factors led to a slower adaptation of anti-slavery sentiment in the American Swedenborgian Church. Foremost, unlike Europe, America was a society where slavery was present and visible in everyday life and more firmly enmeshed in the social, economic, and political culture. "Swedenborgians must be placed well behind the curve for religious antislavery work and testimony in the American context" (p. 178).

A symposium does not offer a central theme; it collects diverse views on a range of subjects suggested by their connection to the focus of the symposium. This volume is written by academics, but it is easily accessible to the lay reader; it is not written in dense, specialized, academic language.

For Swedenborgians and anyone interested in religious, cultural, and political history and the history of ideas, *The Moment Is Now* is a fascinating and rewarding read. Many Swedenborgians are readers and thinkers who have a deep interest in spiritual truths and their context in the demands of living in the natural world.

In his "A Story without End—Summary and Final Reflections," Anders Hallengren emphasizes that slavery has not been ended and that ". . . the action of the faithful completely depends on what conscience and church doctrines prescribe or allow" (p. 181).

"I sacrificed a tear on the altar of humanity."

—Carl Bernhard Wadström,  
from "*Resa ifrån Stockholm  
genom Danmark*" (1811–15)

# Living an Authentic Life

BY RICH TAFEL

Over the New Year holiday break, I attended a conference in South Carolina that has met for forty years, called Renaissance Weekend. The purpose of the gathering is to bring people with different perspectives together to learn from each other. Some call it nerd break as every one of the 500 participants agrees to lead a few panels or give a few talks.

I participated in a couple of presentations, one on Christianity and the Holocaust and another on the state of America's political debate. The third panel that I moderated was the most confusing. The title assigned was something about how to live an open life and the challenges involved with it.

While most presentations draw a room of fifty people, I knew this one was unlikely to draw a crowd, because it wasn't clear what the panel would discuss. What did "living openly" mean? Was it code for being openly gay? Did it mean leading a public life? Who knew?

As moderator, I had to research my panelists. What I learned was that the thing they all had in common was that they'd all achieved some high level of success in the eyes of the public but, more interestingly, they led what I would call "authentic lives."

The deeper I researched, the more I realized that each of the well-known public officials, business leaders, authors, poets, image makers, and teachers had suffered and sacrificed to be authentic.

In a culture that teaches us to seek pleasure, sacrifice didn't seem to be something we'd ever been taught. But it seemed to be the glue to the stories of the authentic lives lived.

When, finally, I met other panelists, I noticed something else. None

of them were in any way using victim language to describe themselves. In fact, they wore their authenticity as part of their DNA, each saying something to the effect, "If I had not been authentic, I could not live with myself. I couldn't live a lie." To a person, they were humble.

Yet, one of the greatest challenges in our world, particularly for Christians, is that we suffer from a desire to be liked. We keep our mouths shut when we see something wrong being done because we want to be liked. We believe being a Christian means keeping everyone happy.

Oprah made this part of the pop culture when she told of suffering the "disease to please." She tells about when she was a young television anchor getting her hair straightened to the point that it burned her scalp. Rather than protest, she sat quietly thinking that the way to get ahead was being silent and polite.

In our culture, we are taught that good people don't make a fuss and are agreeable. Go along and you'll get along. You may need to take parts of you and keep them locked away, but what's important is what people think about you. The key is to be liked.

Growing up in suburban America, I often joked that if you told your parents you killed someone the first thing they'd ask was, "Do the neighbors know?" Appearances are what's important.

The story of John the Baptist tells us something quite different (see sidebar). John was not shy about pissing people off. Forgiveness of sins had always been handled in the temple by the religious professional class. John moved it to a nearby lake and used water instead of animal sacrifice.

He could have been accommodating about it. "You guys have your worship

## Matthew 3

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

in town, and I'll do mine here—good luck with your ministry." Not John, he slams the religious establishment, saying, "You are a bunch of snakes!"

Try that in your next meeting.

John makes clear, "Their system is not working! I will not conform!"

John prepares the way of Jesus coming into the world with a lesson in authenticity. His truth is making a way for the Truth to come into the world.

His message was as radical then as it is now. It is something Swedenborg would teach about the power of your motives thousands of years later, "It doesn't matter what you say. It matters what you do." And then even

*Continues on page 11*

## Authentic Life

*Continued from page 10*

a step further, “It doesn’t matter what you do, it matters why you do it.” This is the definition of a healthy spiritual life. Are you coming from a truly authentic place?

Why do you do what you do?

If you are doing what you do to please others, you’ve got it wrong. Sure, we all want to be liked, but that’s not the goal. The goal is to be your most authentic and true self. Christians must be reminded that conflict avoidance is not peacemaking.

As our nation continues to grow deeper and deeper into contempt for one another, we need leaders who teach that disagreement is healthy. Our country was founded on a debate. Healthy tension is okay. Hatred is not okay. We need to love those with whom we disagree and speak out what we see as true.

Today our culture is teaching just the opposite saying, go along with our group to be liked and hate our opponents to prove it.

Even most who call themselves prophets today are seeking applause from their side.

A few weeks back, the comedian Ricky Gervais gave a monologue for the Golden Globe awards. I’m not a fan of self-indulgent Hollywood award shows, but his monologue went viral, so I saw it elsewhere. It was brutal, and he used bad language that got bleeped, but it was clear that he didn’t need to be liked. For me, that made it refreshing. He spoke truth to power, and I’m sure he’ll never be invited back.

The church can take a lesson from comedians. We need to rediscover our prophetic voice. We need to be free of the desire to get applause from our tribe as we lambast the other side.

We all need to examine our motives. Why are we doing what we are doing and saying what we are saying?

## offTheLeftEye Offers Scholarship

The Swedenborg Foundation is accepting applications and essays for the offTheLeftEye Experience (OTLE) 2020 Scholarship, sponsored by Bryn Athyn College. The scholarship will make it possible for one of our loyal supporters with limited resources to attend the OTLE Experience 2020 conference by receiving lodging, meals, and a weekend pass to the Experience free of charge. All other expenses, including travel to and from the event, are the responsibility of the winner. Two runners-up will receive a free item of their choice from the Swedenborg Foundation store on <https://tinyurl.com/SFGoods>.

### What Is It?

The OTLE Experience 2020 is an immersive multi-day exploration of the spiritual content we cover on our YouTube channel, featuring the hosts and online community viewers have grown to love, taking place June 5–8, 2020,

We need to say “no” when it is easier to say “yes.” We need to follow our intuition when we are being asked to go down a path that doesn’t seem right.

It doesn’t always go well for truth tellers who live authentic lives. John the Baptist was beheaded, and Jesus crucified. The people I met over the holiday all suffered in some way. Most of us won’t face that brutal a death, living in the United States, but truth tellers around the world are still executed.

But there’s no way to speak truth without risk.

But the greatest risk is living a life that carefully pleases everyone, except God.

This is the risk of never really living our life at all. ☠

Rev. Richard L. Tafel is pastor of the Washington, DC Church. He can be reached at [revtafel@holycitydc.org](mailto:revtafel@holycitydc.org)

on the campus of Bryn Athyn College, in Pennsylvania. Attendees can expect a transformative weekend with group bonding exercises and workshops, expertly guided meditations, and master class presentations from Curtis Childs, Dr. Jonathan Rose, Chelsea Rose Odhner, and other offTheLeftEye team members, as well as professors from the Institute for Swedenborgian Studies at Bryn Athyn College.

### To Enter

Complete the online application form at <https://tinyurl.com/OTLE2020>. If you have questions about the scholarship or the form, please call Gwen Williams at 610-430-3222 ext. 109. There is no fee to enter.

### Essay Criteria

Write and submit a 500–700 word essay describing a favorite video from the offTheLeftEye channel or an idea from the videos that has had an impact on your life. What about it was especially meaningful to you? How did it speak to your life experiences or what was happening with you at that moment? Submission Deadline: February 14, 2020.

Essays can be uploaded in Word or PDF format or entered as text in the form on the website. All essays should have a title that is included in the text file; however, text files should not include the name of the entrant or any other identifying information, including contact information.

### Winner Selection

Essays will be judged by a panel that includes professors from Bryn Athyn College and staff of the Swedenborg Foundation. Winners will be chosen based on the quality and passion of the ideas expressed.

Winners will be notified by email

*Continues on page 13*

## 2020 SCYL Officer Elections

BY KURT FEKETE

The 2020 Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) officer and chaplain elections took place at the Almont Winter Retreat this past December, with the following results:

- President: Josh Moore
- East Coast and activities officer: Jack Cadden
- Midwest and service officer: Nathan Hamilton
- West Coast, fundraising, and finance officer: Ronnie Viges
- *Clear Blue Sky* (CBS) editor, public relations, and communications officer: Ivy Little
- Canada officer: Open
- League chaplain: Rev. Renée Billings-Machiniak

We have two new officers and three returning officers for 2020. We thank Lauren, Gillian, and Liv for their service this past year.

Josh Moore, our new president, has served as Midwest and PR officer. He has been very active in retreats and camps and attended his first annual convention this past year. We welcome his organizational skills, determination, and innovative perspective.

Jack Cadden begins his second term as East Coast officer. Jack, who first met SCYL teens at Fryeburg New Church Assembly, attended every retreat last year as well as the annual convention and Almont Summer Camp. When not playing tennis, he is motivated to serve SCYL and assist with determining future outings and activities.

Nathan Hamilton, our previous West Coast officer, was elected to be Midwest and Service officer. Nathan grew up attending Almont summer camp. He loves technology and has been the tech person for SCYL worship services at Convention for the last



Ronnie, Ivy, Nathan, and Jack, with President Josh in back

few years. If you've got a tech issue that needs solving, talk to Nathan!

Ronnie Viges is our new West Coast, fundraising, and finance officer. Ronnie, a long time Almonter, has attended many retreats. He is extremely thoughtful and insightful and is an expert Catchphrase player. In his first year as an officer, Ronnie looks forward to improving the SCYL.

Ivy Little was elected editor of *Clear Blue Sky* (CBS). In this position, Ivy is also responsible for PR and communications. This is Ivy's first year as an officer. She enjoys tennis and loves retreats and camps. She also likes photography, so she is a natural for the CBS position.

We welcome Rev. Renée Billings-Machiniak as the elected returning league chaplain. Renée has served in this capacity for several years and is very dedicated to working and caring for the youth in our church. Although very busy, Renée loves spending time with the teens whenever she can and always looks out for their spiritual and emotional health and well-being. She is honored to serve them again as chaplain in 2020.

Please join me in congratulating all of our 2020 SCYL officers and our League chaplain. Under Josh's leadership we have an energetic and excited group of fantastic teens guiding the League through 2020. They care a great deal for each other and for their church. I commend them for their service to SCYL. Please join me in praying for their success in the coming year. I'm looking forward to working with them in 2020 and I hope that you get a chance to say hello to them and perhaps get to know them better. ✚

### Passages

*Continued from page 15*

tie regeneration into many popular approaches to spiritual formation. We spoke often about his work on the book, but a few years ago he informed me he simply couldn't manage it; he had to give it up. I agreed to receive all of his materials on the project, and presently, two banker's boxes filled with clippings and notes arrived—an amazing breadth and range of frameworks that gave testimony to his lifelong quest for meaning and wholeness.

This quest began in a Swedenborgian environment suffused with profound spiritual formation ideas and continued in a journey that circled back to Swedenborgian community in new and deeper ways. The church that had nurtured him was a blessing he grew to appreciate more and more over his many years, culminating in his realization that he never left the Swedenborgian Church, because the church had never left him.

—Jim Lawrence

## Rev. Eric Allison and His Caring Community

*Rev. Eric Allison suffered a stroke in 2008, which compromised his ability to function at a level to take complete care of himself. He was the pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound at the time. His congregation has pitched in over the years to see that he is well taken care of, physically, emotionally, financially, and spiritually.*

Rev. Eric Allison has just moved to a lovely apartment in a new part of town: Apartment 207, Brookdale Arbor Place, 12806 Bothell-Everett Hwy, Everett, WA 98208. It's a new "heaven on earth," and there are folks from the church in the neighborhood: Michael Robbins, Helen Barler, Garry Kersten, and Fred Davis. The grounds are parklike, and there are lakes, shopping centers, and parks nearby.

Kudos and waves of appreciation go out to all the people who helped make this happen. From the moment we heard (from his speech therapist Jill) that it was critical for Eric to move ASAP (in November), to this very moment today, We are washed with gratitude for the many who pulled together to move *all* of Eric . . . every artifact, every photo, every piece of art—so much of a life well-lived.

Ruth, as his lead caregiver, has been amazing. She helped clarify for Eric what an important step this was. If Eric stayed at Ballard Landmark, a private pay facility and his home for eight years, when he would run out of funds in the next two years, he would be forced into a less-than-heavenly situation. With the money he has left in retirement and his Social Security, he had enough to move into Brookdale Arbor Place, which is a spend-down Medicaid assisted living facility. In two years, when all of his funds are spent, Medicaid will pay for his assisted living apartment.

The effort to move Eric was . . . shall we say . . . *epic*. Dr. Marshall helped occupy Eric for the two-day moving pro-



*Eric in the lobby at Brookdale Arbor Place, his new home*

cess. Rev. Paul, Ian, Michael, Anna, Lisa, and Ann carefully packed up all of the Ballard Landmark room on Saturday. Special thanks to Ian for renting, driving, loading, and unloading the truck. Wow. Sunday's unload included John, Bettina, Linda, Michael, Michael, Ian, Ben, Joe, and Lisa.

Eric's helpers are very important to his safety and well-being. Moving for-

ward, the team has a challenge. How do we keep Eric cared for at his current level while his funds barely cover the new monthly cost of Brookdale? We're hoping for the generosity and love of anyone who can help. Can you offer a tax deductible love offering for the next twenty-four months that will help cover things like dentist visits, caregiver services, and eyeglasses? Even a little bit helps. Ongoing monthly donations, which we can set up, are particularly helpful.

The address for snail mail donations is Angel Fund, P.O. Box 2366, Redmond, WA 98073-2366. Make out checks to The Angel Fund." For more information email [ericalisonangelfund@gmail.com](mailto:ericalisonangelfund@gmail.com) or call 425.890.0609.

Please know that Eric is doing well and feels the love. He was not very excited about the move at first but got on board eventually. And now, he is full of smiles and appreciation.

We hope to hear from you and continue the Angel path of helping Eric, with love as our guide.✚

—The Angel Team, Lisa, Diana, and Ruth, and so many more

### FNCA Fall 2019

*Continued from page 9*

We had a multi-faceted, eclectic, and ultimately entertaining roster for our (somewhat) annual stunt night on Friday of second week that included more than a dozen campers offering live entertainment to a rousing audience in Whitehead Hall.

Trevor wears several hats at FNCA: activities director, chair of the Outreach Committee, member of the Board of Directors, webmaster, and two-time winner of the Lalla Searle Memorial Scrabble Tournament.

Please visit our website at <http://fryeburg.org/>.

### offTheLeftEye Scholarship

*Continued from page 11*

or phone within one month after the deadline for entry. If we are unable to reach the winner after multiple contact attempts, the prize will pass to one of the runners-up.

If someone who has already registered for the event wins the contest, we will refund their registration fee. We will also extend the early-bird registration discount to anyone who enters the contest so that they won't be penalized for waiting to register until after the winner is announced.✚

## Gathering Leaves

Continued from page 16

maybe song, dance, readings, a body prayer—all are precious offerings and our own “fruits.” Being together, sharing, and learning from one another in a heart-centred way brings a fruitfulness and joy to our Swedenborgian understanding. Our program includes the following:

### Worship

Worship in all forms, including a holy supper service and more informal worship featuring music and song, Taizé chant, body prayer, and sacred dance as well as meditation, reading from scripture, and poetry.

### Choice Sessions

Choice sessions so far include: craft, sacred dance, and a workshop about color. We invite suggestions and leaders for more sessions. If you would like to lead a session, please contact Rev. Alison Southcombe: [alison.southcombe@purleychasecentre.org.uk](mailto:alison.southcombe@purleychasecentre.org.uk).

### Activities

*Day Out, Baddesley Clinton:* In the morning, we will visit Baddesley Clinton, a beautiful and historical moated manor house, the origins of which stretch back to the thirteenth century. This is a great opportunity to visit a house steeped in history and secrets! Further information: <https://tinyurl.com/BadClin>. We will have lunch near Baddesley Clinton.

*Day Out, Lichfield Cathedral:* In the afternoon, we will visit Lichfield Cathedral, the only medieval English cathedral with three spires (<https://www.lichfield-cathedral.org/>). There will be free time in Lichfield to look around the city and have an afternoon tea.

*Free Time and Sisters Circles:* Free time has been built into the program to allow for walking in the grounds and surrounding countryside, sisters

circles, prayer, and reflection.

*Evening Activities: Games and Quizzes*

*Staying at Purley before and after Gathering Leaves:* As some visitors to Gathering Leaves will be coming from afar, Purley offers the chance to stay before and after the Gathering Leaves event at a separate cost. Please indicate if this will be a requirement on your booking form and give us your dates.

*Home stay before and after Gathering Leaves:* Here is the chance to stay with people from the UK in their homes before and after the event. Please indicate on your booking form if you would like to take up this offer.

### Shepherdess Program

We want everyone coming to Gathering Leaves to feel welcome and to be able to reach out to someone from the UK and ask questions about travel or the event. If you would like to connect with someone ahead of Gathering Leaves, please add this to your booking form, and the organizing team will pick this up and get in contact with you.

### Cost

The cost includes accommodation at Purley, meals, refreshments for the event dates, day-out entry, travel, and meals. Accommodation at Purley before and after the event is not included and should be booked with Purley.

From May 1, 2020, the cost will be £254 en suite and £218 dormitory.

All bookings will require a £40 deposit, which secures your place.

### Early Bird Special

£229 en suite, £193 dormitory, paid in full by April 30, 2020, to take advantage of the Early Bird offer. Contact Purley about foreign currency.

### Registration

To register, follow instructions at <https://tinyurl.com/PrlyChsBook>.

## Swedenborg's Oneness Teaching

Continued from page 1

manifestation.

It is possible that Swedenborg, as one of the great mechanical engineers of his time, experienced stronger emotions than the average person over a design idea that misunderstands the nature of a power source and how it flows through an operation. But that he believed a “tri-personalist” idea of God operated widely in people’s minds there is no doubt, and he took considerable pains to describe the oneness of all divine reality, even as to its triune unfolding into power. ☩

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies at the Graduate Theological Union, in Berkeley, California.

## The Editor's Desk

Continued from page 2

time of collected stuff, some valuable and some not, some of value only to me and some of value to others, some of monetary value and some valueless—just lying around for too long.<sup>2</sup> Since Judy, my wife, died over two years ago, I have been struggling with managing storage and disposition of her “stuff.” Many of the material possessions can go to good homes as I relinquish sentimental attachments, but I have quite a few of her artworks (she was an accomplished professional artist), framed and unframed, that I must curate, manage, and hang, store, or dispose of by sale or gifting. The challenge is clear; the task is daunting. I will be a busy man.

I treasure my tenure as editor, my church communities and friends, and the twelve-year journey I have completed. Keep the faith and keep in touch!

—Herb Ziegler

<sup>2</sup> Death cleaning is a Swedish concept and practice, *döstädning*. <https://time.com/5063275/death-cleaning/>

## Passages

### Baptisms

**Xander Kade Stout**, son of Kaitlin Walker and Eldon Stout, grandson of Roy and Tricia Prescott and great-grandson of Vivian Bright of Pawnee Rock (Kansas) Swedenborgian Church, was baptized on Sunday, December 29, 2019. Rev. Jane Siebert performed the Sacrament of Baptism. May God bless this precious little boy with a wonderful life.



### Marriages

**Cody James Steinhiser**, son of Lori Gayheart and Alan Steinhiser (LaPorte, New Church members) all of Michigan City, and Jing Qi “Jessica” Wang, Chicago, daughter of Daqi Wang and Jing Zhou, of Beijing, were wed at the LaPorte New Church, in Laporte, Indiana, on December 27, 2019. Cody is in the United States Air Force and Jessica is an art student. May they be blessed with a lifetime of love, happiness, and adventure.



### Centenarians

A reception will be given by the family of **Rev. Eric Zacharias** in celebration of his 100th birthday. This will be held at the Prairie Sunset Home, 601 E. Main, Pretty Prairie, KS 67570, from 2:30–4:00 on February 16. Eric—the eldest of six children—was born February 18, 1920, to the Rev. John and Mary Zacharias, in Herbert, Saskatchewan. Cards may be sent to him at the above address.



### Deaths

**Rev. Dr. Forster (Foss) Freeman**, recently of Lake Oswego, Oregon, entered the spiritual world November 5, 2019, at the age of ninety-two. He was the son of Esther and Forster W. Freeman, Jr., longtime legal counsel for the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church. He grew up as an “every Sunday kid” in the New Church of Paterson, New Jersey, a General Convention church now dissolved. He married, in 1948, his beloved Julia Morford Parker, who predeceased him in 2009 after sixty-one years of marriage.

Foss took his undergraduate degree from nearby Princeton University, in 1947. Desiring to pursue ministry, he considered staying with General Convention but felt that he could continue to be Swedenborgian in all the important ways and yet pursue ministry in a larger denomination. After a visit to the New Church Theological School, in Cambridge, he elected to attend Union Theological Seminary, in Manhattan, graduating in 1950 and becoming an ordained Presbyterian minister that same year.

A creative spirit throughout his career, he first founded three “new starts” of Presbyterian churches in New Milford, NJ, DeWitt, NY, and Amherst, NY. After fulfilling years of starting churches and building them to vibrancy in congregational leadership, Foss took action on a long-held desire to go deeper into spiritual formation and, in the early 1980s, he moved to the Boston area to pursue the Doctor of Ministry degree in the specialty of Spiritual Direction from Weston School of Theology, completing the degree in 1984. He turned his doctoral thesis into a book that has been used in seminars: *Readiness for Ministry through Spiritual Direction* (Alban Institute, 1986).



During his Boston years he developed strong relationships with the United Church of Christ (UCC) and gained dual standing. His final two ministries were in UCC churches, first in Concord, Massachusetts, and finally as minister of spiritual direction at First Congregational Church of Berkeley, California.



I met Foss Freeman while I was in seminary in the early Eighties during his Weston year. It proved to be the beginning of a friendship that would have some long legs. Two decades later, when he was in his last ministry in Berkeley and I was serving at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, we reconnected. In his Berkeley church office, we had good conversations. He believed he had always remained a Swedenborgian, and you could look around his office and spy a great deal of Swedenborgian literature. He professed to consult regularly the *Dole Notes* when constructing sermons.

In retirement from ministry, Foss honored his growing reconnection with his Swedenborgian roots and followed his father’s path of service at the Swedenborg Foundation, including three years as president of the board. I, too, was on the Foundation board during the years Foss served and can attest to how appreciated he was. His grounded, clear-eyed leadership and care for the whole of the board is why he was chosen as president.

Blessed with “a radio voice,” it was always a treat just to listen to him speak, but even more compelling than his deep, dulcet tones was the gentle yet firmly discerning spirit coming through his pacific presence. In his later years, he wanted to write a book on the Swedenborgian concept of regeneration. He worked on it for a couple of years but he felt his stamina was waning, and the project had become too unwieldy. He kept at it, trying to

*Continues on page 12*

### About the Swedenborgian Church

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London fifteen years after his death.

American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches. As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

Swedenborg shared in his theological writings a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of scripture as a story of inner life stages as we learn and grow. Swedenborg said, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.

## Gathering Leaves Swedenborgian Women's Event

### Purley Chase Centre Atherstone, England

### August 28, 11 AM–August 31, 2 PM, 2020

The ninth biennial Gathering Leaves program seeks to draw women from all denominations of the Swedenborgian Church and from all quarters of the world together to share in Christian fellowship. For the 2020 Gathering Leaves event, we gather at Purley Chase Centre in England (<https://tinyurl.com/GatheringLeaves>).

The theme for Gathering Leaves 2020 is "The Fruit of the Spirit"—this phrase originates in Paul's letter to the Galatians 5: 22–23: "[T]he fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

The theme also links to Matthew 7:20:



"Therefore by their fruits you will know them."

In *Arcana Coelestia* (*Secrets of Heaven*), Sweden-

borg talks about leaves and flowers and then the budding and development of fruit on a tree that represents the rebirth of a person. The fruits are those things seen in a person's life, the kind of person

we are, and what we bring in being fruitful and useful in life. This shows forth in the gifts and talents we can bring to the world.

This idea of fruitfulness in the life, gifts, and talents will form the background narrative to our com-

ing together at Gathering Leaves and the things we can share with each other,

*Continues on page 14*



The Alpha-Omega sculpture at Purley Chase