

Staying in Touch without Touching

BY SUSANNAH CURRIE

It has been a tough time, and I know you're at home and we're all looking for some guidance and help in these difficult times. So I want to talk about staying in touch—without touching, and how we can do that with one another. I want to start by offering a reading from the book of John 15:12–15:

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

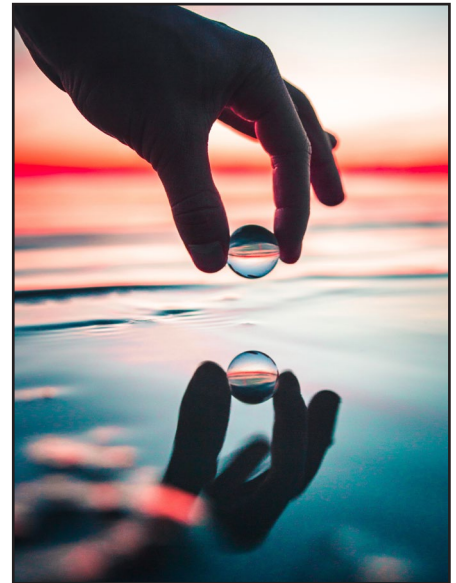
This commandment is a good inspiration, letting us know what it is we are asked to do in this time of disease transmission with so many fears and concerns. In talking to my chaplain colleagues and others, one of the things that has come forward is that so many have expressed their concern that they might possibly infect someone else, and they have this fear more than any fear for themselves. This is that kind of love! As Emanuel Swedenborg wrote in his book *Divine Love and Wisdom* §47:

“Divine love and wisdom cannot fail to be and to be manifested in others that it has created. The hallmark of love is not loving ourselves but loving others and being united to them through love. The hallmark of love is also being loved by others because this is how we are united. Truly, the essence of all love is to

be found in union, in the life of love that we call joy, delight, pleasure, sweetness, blessedness, contentment, and happiness. The essence of love is that what is ours should belong to someone else. Feeling the joy of someone else as joy within ourselves—that is loving.”

We are called today to bring our hearts and minds together to figure out how to express that kind of love. How do we respond to the need to slow the spread of the virus, but also to deal with our own need for love and our desire to share love with others?

I want to speak directly to fear, there is a lot of fear right now, and fear has two immediate reactions; a “fight or a flight” reaction, and in this case both are appropriate. When we want to fight, we want to recognize that we can take positive action. When we feel the need for flight we need to consider when we should self-isolate. Sometimes it is appropriate to take positive action and sometimes we need to simply stay home and care for ourselves. But this emotion of fear can either contribute to or hinder our considered responses. We need to sit with our fear, and not simply react. We need to sit with it long enough to have a considered response and not let our fear hinder us in what we are called to do. The emotion of fear actually inspires many professionals who experience stage fright and then perform to the best of their ability. They have a performance anxiety that leads them to do a better job. Professional athletes have a way in which they channel their fear into a greater emotional energy to fuel them in what



they do. So we can use our fear to bring positive action, to be of help in whatever way we can, but also recognize when our fear is telling us it's time to self-isolate—that also should be respected.

During these times, there are many people who are at-risk. We know that the risk of isolation and loneliness is real, the risk of panic is real, and there are things that we can do; each one of us can respond in our own way. For those who are feeling isolated and alone, we can think of others who are living alone and perhaps call or send cards to our neighbors and friends or colleagues, and if we can, deliver meals or groceries to them. And if we're in need of meals or groceries, we can reach out and ask someone for help.

In the case of panic, I want to remind us that our most vulnerable population are our elders. When we feel a sense of panic, one of the things we

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The Editor's Desk



The Struggle is Real...

This is something you will hear me say pretty regularly. It's usually in some sort of snarky, sarcastic way, and typically, I don't really mean it. But now, I think that we are all riding the struggle bus. I don't know about any of you, but I am having trouble focusing on just about anything for too long. We're all in a very uncomfortable holding pattern while we are trying to adapt to doing everything remotely. (Even now, it took me about ten minutes to write two sentences, while making sure children have their lunch, are set up with their new online educational tools, and doing something besides just rotting on YouTube or Roblox on their tablets.) We are all flailing about, doing our best to keep cabin fever at bay; trying to remain functional workers and students, but also keep the family having fun, and teach the kids things they wouldn't normally learn in a classroom. The struggle is *REAL*.

I had a plan in my head about what I wanted to write about this month; it was going to be a great combination of being excited about Convention registration opening, and the release of Anna Woofenden's book *This Is God's Table*, how church for me has always been beyond the walls. As we all are rapidly learning, we must exist in a current state of flux, and embrace what comes our way. We now have to think about 'church' in new ways. We all physically cannot be together right now, but we surely are still all 'together.' Our spiritual community is really embracing the social distancing that we are all dealing with. Church is proving to truly exist beyond the walls. Every

day that I open up Facebook, I am seeing videos and postings of church communities coming together digitally: Facebook Live, Zoom, Skype, and many other creative ways to keep the community connected. I am loving this. It is proof that church truly is more than just the Sunday services, the camp sessions, the retreats, and the conventions. It is all of us.

The struggle is real right now, for everyone. But with the technology we have, we can still support one another, and be together—in spirit and on video chats. Be patient with one another, be patient with your family, be patient with yourself, and be patient to all the support people out there adapting to this new distance community as we all work together to make it thrive, even after we can all be together once again.

—Beki Greenwood

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the Messenger

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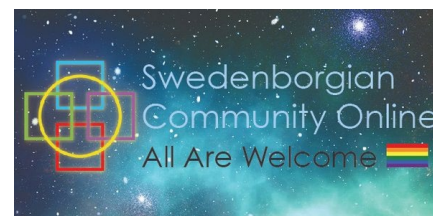
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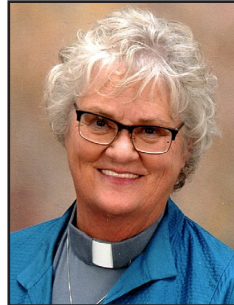
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Letter from the President



The Year of the Lord: 2019–20
—*The Primacy of Spirit*

Dear Friends in the midst of chaos,

In the March issue of *Sojourners*, an article caught my attention, “Desert Moments” by Adam Russell Taylor. It was written before the coronavirus outbreak in the US, but we are in the midst of desert feelings right now—lost, disoriented, confused, parched, and exhausted. Mr. Taylor writes:

Deserts are not simply physical places—they are also spiritual and emotional seasons in our lives. What the physical desert does to the body, the spiritual desert does to our soul, making us feel drained and depleted.” St. John of the Cross talks about times when “we feel a spiritual drought and estrangement from God.

Talking with my ten-year-old granddaughter this morning she lamented, “Grandma, I am so tired of hearing about the virus. Everybody is like a zombie. It’s all anyone talks about. I feel tired and I just got up.”

After his baptism, Jesus was “led by the Spirit into the desert.” The Spirit is not leading us into this pandemic, but we can use this desert time for discernment, slowing down, listening and learning. We live in a hyped-up world with constant access to news, fast-paced games and dramatized

‘reality’ TV shows, fast food, and noisy restaurants designed to get us in and out. We don’t stay home much. We’ve forgotten how to linger, to relax without stimulation, to actually call on the phone to just say “hi.” We are not used to being alone or to spending time just with our family.

When Jesus followed the Spirit into the desert, he was tempted first with instant gratification. He had been fasting and was hungry. He was tempted to turn stones into bread. We go out and buy up food and supplies, often more than we need, and then others do not have what they need. Our temptation is to hoard for ourselves and not consider our neighbors. We will feel safe if we have enough stuff. This is temptation on our basic level, trying to quell our fears with material items.

Jesus’ second temptation was for power. We lived for a while thinking the virus was a problem in the rest of the world. Then we thought it was just like another ‘flu’ and we would be protected and cared for. We were tempted to think that we could overcome the virus because we live in the most powerful country in the world. This is temptation, to think our way out of this pandemic and put ourselves on top and better than the rest of the world. But this virus is treating all nations equally.

The third temptation was control. The hardest part in facing this growing pandemic is the uncertainty. That is what has us all on edge. How do we overcome the need for control?

We are facing the fact that we are vulnerable. Material goods will feed our bodies and sometimes allay our fears, but they must not become our gods. We do live in a blessed country, but we cannot think of ourselves as better or higher than anyone else. This pandemic is showing us how much we are connected. We cannot isolate ourselves from the rest of the world, nor should we. The world is in this fight together, and we are dependent on one another to do

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Book Review

Finding Church Beyond the Walls

Planting a Church and Inspiring Others

Editor's Note—

Last spring I was fortunate to be given the chance to be an advance reader for Rev. Anna's forthcoming book This Is God's Table. The Garden Church is something that is so special among our community, I couldn't wait to read Anna's whole journey—from inception to handing over the reins. Many of us are familiar with the public part of her journey, but now we can experience her personal, emotional quest of pouring her soul into an empty lot, transforming it into a true place of worship and inspiration. Her story will captivate any audience and will reach past our own Swedenborgian community in to the wider Christian faith and encourage others to look for church beyond the walls.

BY VICTORIA IRWIN

Anna Woofenden's new book *This is God's Table* shows a group that took the core of what it means to be a believer in Christ and focused this into a church that fed the community, both with actual food and the Spirit. This is the story of how Rev. Woofenden and volunteers created a church in an unkempt former parking lot, and through Christ it became a welcoming place for an entire community in San Pedro, California.

I should start here by saying I'm writing this article not as a Swedenborgian, but as someone who was confirmed into the Lutheran faith at the age of 15. Rev. Woofenden is careful in her book to lay out the principal beliefs of the Swedenborgian faith for those of us who have not been blessed to be involved in the community. She is careful to confess her connections to the church and those people who guided

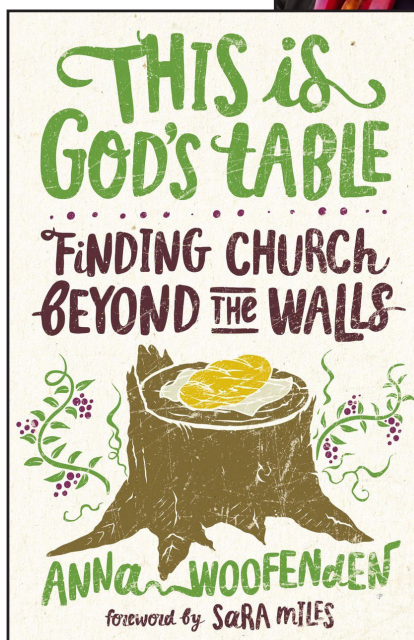
her through her first steps in faith and need for community.

Rev. Woofenden's writing is warm and unpretentious. She doesn't feel the need to add filler statements or make herself appear "holier than thou." Her book focuses on the community and the people who built the Garden Church. She celebrates individual parishioners who came forward and gave their time and talents. There are passages about the incredible meals made and grown at the Garden Church and the contributions

of younger folks who wanted to contribute something more. One particular passage focuses on a young boy who didn't want to work in the garden at the church, but was quite happy to create a full meal for weekly services.

One of the most powerful passages of the book focuses on the importance of Ash Wednesday and how going out into the community to share the message can be an incredible blessing for those who may not have the opportunity to go to a church building on Holy days. As a Lutheran, it was amazing to realize that perhaps Ash Wednesday should be more mobile and accessible to all members of the community.

Rev. Woofenden is also quite open with her own struggles and shares her



worries and fears that initially came into play during the creation of the church. She celebrates the fact that when it was time to let the church flourish without her, that it was able to do so with the spirit of Christ.

This is God's Table is an excel-

lent book for people of either strong faith or those who are taking their first steps into their spiritual journey. The book is extremely genuine and reminds the reader that no matter what their gifts are, they are useful as a member in the body of Christ. ☩



Victoria Irwin is a Texan who runs FangirlNation.com and the podcast TX Slang for Crazy. She lives in San Antonio with her husband, stepdaughter, and three cats.

This is God's Table will be available April 21, 2020. Advance copies may be ordered at www.heraldpress.com/books/this-is-gods-table

The Year of the Lord

We Are a Finite of the Infinite

BY GEORGE DOLE

The central problem of Christology is not how Jesus can be God or can be fully one with the Father; it is how we cannot be. It involves the philosophical problem of understanding how the finite can co-exist with the infinite: how I can exist as “not-God” without being a boundary or limit of God. Swedenborg, incidentally, handles this Gordian knot in good Gordian fashion in *True Christianity* §33:

There is an idea in circulation that finite things are not large enough to hold the Infinite and therefore they could not be vessels for the Infinite. On the contrary, points that I made in my works on creation show that God first made his infinity finite in the form of substances put out from himself.

That is, God is seen to be intrinsically self-limiting. In more human terms, we exist because divine love wants us to, and divine wisdom is capable of distinguishing us. I doubt that any mechanical or strictly mathematical notion of infinity can substitute for the concept of love in maintaining and dealing with the finite-infinite paradox.

Incarnation, then, or the real presence of the infinite in the finite, is a wholly characteristic divine act. The specialness of the presence of God in Christ is not a matter of kind for Swedenborg, but a matter of degree. We dimly reflect the presence of the Divine within us—some people more, some less. Jesus so completely reflected that presence that if we want to know what in us reveals and what obscures

that presence, we have an archetype to which we can look. I believe that we err if we try to make the Incarnation special by making it different in kind from all other acts of God. If it is a revelation of the nature of the Divine, it should surely be an act characteristic of that nature. ☩



This piece is excerpted from *Sorting Things Out* (San Francisco: J. Appleseed & Co., 1994), a collection of lectures and sermons by Rev. Dr. Dole, who has taught Bible, Theology,

and Languages at Convention's seminary for over forty years.

Keeping in Touch

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might remind people of is that they have been through hard times before. They have lived through wars, they have lived through the depression and illnesses and losses of all kinds. Perhaps when you speak with them, you can remind them that they managed to live through these events. Ask them how they coped and what they did and how it worked out for them. Listen. Allow everyone to have their feelings and pray with one another.

Another thing to remember in this time is the unselfish service of our retail workers and our health care professionals. It is important for us to support and thank them. You are going to be going to your grocery store. Those retail workers need and deserve your thanks. So do delivery persons, public

servants, and all of those people who are helping us to live our daily lives in the midst of this pandemic. Reach out with love; smile to one another and wave. We don't need to touch, to stay in touch and show that we care.

I'd like to suggest that we take time to think about how it is that we feel spiritually supported. Whether it's reading the Bible, reading inspirational literature, listening to music or singing songs, we can share these with one another, maybe posting to our Facebook page. Remember that we can share with one another the value of anything from which we have received spiritual nourishment, and share those experiences with others. We can also share practical things that we can do like projects, crafts, or where we might take a walk safely and not run into a lot of people. What is it that we're doing that might inspire others? For myself,

I'm going to be taking out some sewing projects I haven't worked on in a long time, and maybe even organize my photographs. All these ideas that we share with one another might help us realize how much we are all in this together.

There are so many ways that we can share the love that the Lord has taught us, so that we can lay down our lives, slow down our lives, and keep our lives safe for our friends. For it is each of us doing our part that we will feel joined together as a community of those who care about each other. And as I mentioned before, I am hearing so much more about how people are concerned about spreading this virus to their neighbors and friends and loved ones, and that is the love that is beyond the love of self. I commend you for it, and I ask that you do all you can to make

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Convention 2020 Canceled and Rescheduled for 2021 at Bridgewater State University

Can We Create a Virtual Convention?

Dear Friends,

On March 17, 2020, the Executive Committee of the General Council voted to cancel Convention 2020 and reschedule at Bridgewater State University for 2021. Although we are optimistic that by the end of June COVID-19 will be calmed down and we hope to be returning to a level of normalcy, there are many issues to consider in making this decision now.

Life for everyone is being disrupted and issues like extended school sessions into the summer, financial considerations, and health concerns will still be on everyone's mind and affecting their ability to attend Convention in June.

We have not yet signed the contract with BSU due to a variety of reasons and fortunately, we have not paid the down payment.

Our parliamentarian has checked, and while our constitution and bylaws do not spell out what happens when we cancel convention, the annual meeting is only required every three years, so we are not out of compliance. His recommendation, which we will follow, is

for all officers, general council members and committee members to remain in their elected positions for one more year. If they choose to resign, the president, with guidance from the General Council, can appoint a successor until the next convention.

We are disappointed to make this decision as our annual conventions are important to our denomination and many individuals. Dean Jim Lawrence will determine the procedure for the Center for Swedenborgian Studies required annual meeting. Rev. Susannah Currie will determine the needs for the annual Council of Ministers meeting. Kurt Fekete is notifying the SCYL. This is the first year in my tenure that there is not an ordination scheduled.

It is times like these that I realize how many people come together to make convention happen. I thank the planning committee, and next year we will have many things already in place and decisions made. Convention 2021 will be at Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts. We will still plan the following year, 2022, to have Convention in the Los Angeles area hosted

by The Garden Church and Wayfarers Chapel.

How About a Virtual Convention?

We are exploring how we can virtually get together for some aspects of convention.

- Online worship services
- Streaming Mini-courses and lectures
- SCYL video worship service
- Virtual tours of Bridgewater, Elmwood, Boston and Cambridge churches with a brief history.
- Special music
- And of course, the President's address (smile)

May each of you find a positive happening coming out of this unprecedented time. Maybe you will be the one making something positive happen for someone else. A friend from the Pawnee Rock church just brought me homemade chicken noodle soup. What a pleasant gift to lighten the day; I will savor it slowly.

May all of you be well and take care of one another. ☒

—President Rev. Jane Siebert



Convention Was Canceled Due to a Pandemic (and a World War) a Century Ago

BY JIM LAWRENCE

General Council canceled the 1918 annual convention of the General Convention during an influenza pandemic caused by an H1N1 virus originating from birds—misnamed the Spanish Flu. Disagreement continues to hold sway regarding exactly where the virus originated, but it likely wasn't Spain, nor was Spain the hardest hit. Spain became the scapegoat because it was a neutral country in the world war that had been raging since 1914. Germany, Britain, France, and the U.S. were all complicit in a disinformation campaign on the geographic origins of the virus to keep the war effort from being tainted.

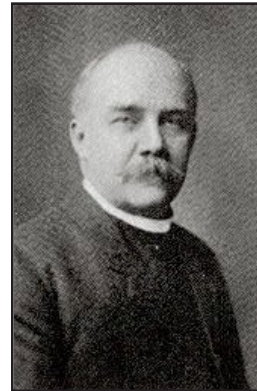
Regardless of where exactly it first began, it was almost certainly a military camp somewhere in Europe where sanitary conditions and cramped warehousing of humans was a nightmare. During the spring of 1918 it went viral, first identified among stateside American military personnel in spring 1918. Worldwide it ultimately infected over 500 million people—or one-third of the world's population—before it was over with about 50 million perishing from it. U.S. deaths reached approximately 675,000.

The year before, Convention had celebrated its centennial, just as we celebrated our bicentennial as a denomination in 2017, at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. But in 1918 there was to be no physical gathering, and instead the Convention Journal for 1918 is a compilation of reports that were sent in. Convention's president at that time, Rev. Julian K. Smyth, was one of the legendary New Church Worthies. He begins his published report recalling the high spirits of the year before:

One year ago we were celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the General Convention. I, for one, can still thrill to the memory of what appealed to us as a series of the happiest, the most inspiring, and the most largely attended meetings that the Church has ever held. To put it very simply, I think we all felt that God was good to us in giving us the encouragement of such a centennial celebration. For once, the Church seemed completely grateful—did not complain, did not find fault, did not talk about difficulties and discouragements—but, rather, she recalled with a beating heart the Divine guidance and protection under which she had lived and struggled, and the many blessings with which she had been blessed.

And more, the Church seemed to face the future with a new spirit of resolution, a new purpose to be an instrument of spiritual power and usefulness in the Lord's hands. We felt the gravity of the times in which we were living, the great issues that were looming up before us and before us all. We solemnly declared our resolve, the Lord helping us, to do our duty as a Church to our country and to our fellow people. I think that we began to realize that to be a Church of the Second Coming of the Lord with all Christendom convulsed in war, imposed vaster responsibilities, and called for more complete loyalty and consecration than we had realized before. We began to see, even if dimly, that one test that was coming to the Church was her ability to adjust herself to the new conditions, natural and spiritual, that must be met, and to fulfill her mission in preparing the way for the Lord at the very time when the Christian world seemed to be falling apart. It seems

to me that the Church during the past year has shown an increasing desire and ability to meet the new conditions and opportunities. There has been no aloofness. The Association meetings which I attended last autumn were the finest that I have ever participated in; and the spirit then manifested, to do our present duty worthily, has grown apace. It has spread to the various societies, auxiliary bodies, boards, and committees. It has found expression in practical deeds of use. It has sounded a new note in the preaching from our pulpits, and in the literature of the Church. We seem to be less self-centered; and the new spirit is one that asks humbly but earnestly for a share in the work of serving the Lord and our fellow people in this time of stress and of strife.



Rev. Julian K. Smyth

President Smyth began reflecting on what it meant to be the Church during a time not only of war but one in which Christians were fighting

Christians in a fashion that we could read as a spiritual reflection on Convention's current theme this year, The Year of the Lord:

When these evil forces have been subdued, who or what can bring order out of all this chaos? Who, indeed, but He who earned the right to say, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life?' The problem is vast, stupendous. I believe it to be a foolish dream to think that after the war has been ended, as pray God it may soon be ended, and victory won, as

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Convention Pandemic 1918

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we believe it should and must be won, and a league of nations for the enforcement of peace has been formed, as seems such a reasonable thing to do, then the world must stand secure in peace and righteousness. There is another element that must not only come in, but must be dominant, or all this fighting and the peace-parleys to follow will have been in vain. Humanity cannot create a new world. Humanity cannot insure that what we consider to be the vital principles of truth and righteousness shall have the power to stand. That is something that must come from God—after this horrible experience, will people be more ready to believe that the revealed Lord is the Divine power that can enable what is a new faith and enthusiasm as the Resurrection and the Life; or will they revert to some of the ways of spiritual indifference that they have been following?

Here, my friends, is not simply our great duty, but here is our high opportunity. Now is the time for bringing the vital truths of the Lord's New Church, not simply as a new theological system for those intellectually inclined to consider them, but as a veritable gospel of light, and life, and comfort for a needy and struggling world. May the Lord direct us in our councils, and make us capable and worthy of so great a mission!

Snapshot of Julian K. Smyth (1856–1921)

“New Church Worthies” as a way of exploring Swedenborgian history via biography must certainly include Smyth, whose impressive skills in congregational leadership, church governance, preaching, publishing, and music have few peers in the history of our denomination. In addition to being President of the General Convention from 1911–1921, he wrote books


and hymns and served three Convention churches over a period of forty-four years.

Smyth's father was a senior executive with the Goodyear Rubber Corporation, and due to corporate necessities, Julian spent his first seven years in France. Upon returning stateside while the Civil War was still raging in 1863, the family bought an estate just outside New York City that they named Boscobel. Much drawn to theatre and drama, in a family that included a stage actress of some repute who was also the family member who introduced Swedenborg into the clan, one floor of Boscobel was converted into a theatre, replete with stage settings, costumes and auditorium style seating. They oversaw such outstanding ‘amateur’ productions that even General Ulysses Grant and his top officers attended. In fact, he reflected in a memoir captured by a former parishioner in New York, that as a late teenager he had been almost equally drawn to three professions: ministry, drama, and journalism, and he was offered a staff position at the New York Evening Post. Yet, he decided the call to ministry was the deepest, and that field would find ample use for his talents in drama and writing.

Over his forty-four year congregational leadership career (dying suddenly at the age of 64 while still active), he served three congregations. In his first—the Portland church for five years—he distinguished himself by the quality of his sermons and by a number of public lectures on various topics of faith. His next ministry took him deep into the power of music in ministry, where in the Roxbury church (in Boston) he served for sixteen years that included building a large choir and a 17-instrument orchestra. A marvelous singer, outstanding composer, and a Pied-Piper for the music program, the Roxbury church gained a broad reputation in Boston as an outstanding place

to hear fantastic sacred music, and it was during this pastorate that Smyth developed a High-Church approach to the liturgy. In 1898, he was called to the New York New Church on Murray Hill in Manhattan—where his father's generation had been a charter family. In addition to continuing his abilities for church growth, he labored over many years of necessary interior restoration work. There he would serve with distinction for the remainder of his life.

Because of his musical gifts, Smyth served on the American New-Church Sunday School Association committee that compiled and edited the classic Convention children's hymnal, *The Hosanna*. He also served on denomination's Committee on Worship that produced two far-reaching worship books: the popular 1919 edition of *The Magnificat*, which Smyth was the principal compiler and editor, and the 1912 *Book of Worship*, which was the first edition to include “The Adoramus” in the First Order of Worship.

As an author, Smyth is best-known for his work with co-compiler William Wunsch, *The Gist of Swedenborg* (1920), for a long time the most widely used short overview of Swedenborg's thought in his own words. During his own time and continuing into the next generation, he was widely read through his books of sermons and for well-crafted doctrinal works suited to the average reader. The most prominent of these are *Footprints of the Saviour: Devotional Studies in the Life and Nature of Our Lord* (1886) and *Christian Certainties of Belief: the Christ, the Bible, Salvation, Immortality* (1916). Importantly, however, his legacy includes a significant voice for a Swedenborgian spiritual view on war, *The Heart of the War*, published right as WWI was erupting in 1914. 

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence has been teaching church history for twenty years at the denomination's seminary.

The PCA Celebrates 100 Years

BY MICHAEL ROBBINS

The Pacific Coast Association (PCA) of the Swedenborgian Church celebrated its centennial in Silver City, New Mexico, October 17–20, 2019, hosted by the New Church of the Southwest Desert (NCSWD). Attendees received coffee mugs and an abundance of coffee from “Oasis Coffee and Tea House,” the church’s new outreach ministry at its new location.



Oasis is right along one of the main streets in Silver City. The town has a population of about 10,000 and has complemented Silver City’s 200-year-old mining town charm with thirty-seven art galleries and Western New Mexico University.

PCA board members made their way into town a day before members-at-large to lay the groundwork for the annual meeting, which included a discussion on identifying licensed pastors in the bylaws, and the possible formation of a new Korean church in Southern California. For

updates, follow PCA on [Facebook.com/SwedenborgianPCA](https://www.facebook.com/SwedenborgianPCA).

Volunteers worked hard to provide a beautiful organic welcome dinner, followed by a lecture on entheogens by local businessman and friend of the church, Trent Bohl, who owns the medical marijuana dispensary in Silver City. Afterward, we continued celebrating our 100th anniversary with a dance party that covered 100 years of hits. Fernando Vossa brought wall-to-wall

illumination to complement DJ Light Machine. A good time was had by all! The event also attracted a couple of new volunteers for the local women’s shelter.

The annual meeting was held on Saturday morning with twenty voting members present. After lunch, visitors participated in a range of activities from napping to spelunking, and socializing to exploring Silver City. After dinner at Oasis Saturday night, Jalilla Rogers, a local coffee roaster, Sufi master and scholar, spoke on “Sufism, the

History of Coffee, Swedenborg, and Esoteric Islam.” This was followed by a Universal Dance of Peace led by Maryam Weidner who taught attendees the Lord’s Prayer in Aramaic.

The Sunday morning service given by Rev Carla Friedrich covered the changes and growth NCSWD has undergone in the last ten years. Also included in the spiritual message were a few significant features of the building and chapel retained as reminders that the Lord is never finished regenerating us, such as its rustic corrugated walls and unfinished concrete floors.

PCA provides grants to churches and ministries west of Albuquerque, in addition to supporting “Peer Soup,” where ministers from across the region have a chance to meet over a weekend. PCA is still celebrating its centennial with a special fundraiser where \$100 donors receive the antique nickel Swedenborgian cross necklace as a thank you gift for giving at least \$1 for every year PCA has existed. Other perks are available for smaller amounts.



See bit.ly/PCA100Years for more information. 📱



The PCA Board and guests: Michael Robbins, Rev. Jane Siebert, Rev. Jonathan Mitchell, Laurie Pelayo, Rev. Thom Mueller, Linda Browning Callander, Rev. Carla Friedrich, Susan Golightly, and Rev. Dan Burchett,

Paramecia, Slime Molds, and Us Where we came from and where we are heading

BY CARL VON ESSEN

Gauguin sailed to the South Pacific seeking primordial experience, escaping from his life in Paris beset by alcohol and debt. His life changed and his magnificent talent flourished. The artist's questions, which composed the title of one of his greatest paintings, are simple and child-like. They are worth heeding in these difficult times.

Where do we come from? We know a bit. Who are we? We know more. Where are we heading? No one knows, though many have tried to predict. I will give my thoughts, feeling deeply for the future of humanity, including my nearest and dearest, who will face the challenge of decades of world turmoil.

Let's start at the beginning, perhaps 14 billion years ago, with the 'Big Bang' and the transformation, over billions of years of cosmic energy from that event, to matter of increasing complexity (atoms to molecules to elements to minerals to life). Along the way, Charles Darwin introduced the concept of the origin and evolution of living species. Life evolved to include *Homo sapiens*, destined according to the Anthropic Principle to be an intelligent but flawed race that could observe, measure, and describe the very laws and processes that led to our creation.

According to the conditions of that principle, our continued existence is entirely dependent on the powerful but temporary beneficence of energy from our Sun, allowing all life on our planet to be exempt from the restrictions of the Second Law of Thermodynamics; we exist in a state of negative entropy and can bask for the next few billion years on borrowed energy. But we are subject to other laws, perhaps less formal, such as "what goes up must come

down." This includes, among other things, the stock market, rain, civilizations, and the survival of species.

Where We Came From

About 3.7 billion years ago, the evolution of life on Earth led to the emergence of the common ancestor of all presently living things. It is believed to have been an anaerobic (not requiring oxygen) bacterium. After possibly a billion more years of life in the warm soup of the cooling ocean, some of LUCA's (Last Universal Common Ancestor) descendants acquired the ability to metabolize carbon dioxide into oxygen and carbon through the process of photosynthesis, using the sun's rays as an energy source. These organisms are called cyanobacteria and thrive today as blue-green algae still prevalent in Earth's waters. Atmospheric oxygen gradually increased over another billion years to the present level of about 21% oxygen, all of it being generated by chlorophyll-containing organisms such as cyanobacteria and plants.

A more complex cell then evolved; the eukaryote is oxygen breathing, armed with many intracellular organelles, and contains DNA within a nucleus. All of present life, excluding bacteria and viruses, has descended from a eukaryotic ancestor.

Darwin's concepts of evolution through natural selection and the survival of the fittest were strongly influenced by the English geologist Charles Lyell who had written a magisterial treatise on the geology of Earth. Lyell's studies of geological time were measured in billions of years. Darwin thus thought in parallel terms of the vast time that must have been taken for the evolution of life to his era. In Darwin's day no carbon dating, genotyping, or other technological aids

were yet known. All that he had available to study were the changes in the structure of fossils found in different geological strata, and the changes in contemporary plants and animals living in differing environments and locations. The remarkable testament to his genius is the unshakeable certainty of his basic conclusions that are accepted today. There have been important additions to his theory including particularly the process of endosymbiosis, the acquisition of heritable genes through lateral transfer of information from other life forms.

When, and how, did consciousness appear? This crucial question has persisted throughout the history of evolutionary biology. It is not yet answered. How does life, plant and animal, avoid danger and destruction and find shelter, nourishment and survival? It is the Darwinian struggle for life that has led present lifeforms to survive and replicate in the sometimes hostile, sometimes beneficent environment of our planet.

A few examples illustrate the vast time and organizational complexity that has led to modern life and to that singular being, *Homo sapiens*.

Single cells were the only form of life for billions of years. A modern representative is the paramecium. You may not know much about this one-celled protozoan that is ubiquitous in the fresh waters over the world. Few people do. I saw it first under my tiny microscope at about age thirteen. I had gathered pond water and it was full of tiny creatures, algae, amoebas, rotifers, and paramecia, and I discovered a new world of wonder, the incredibly abundant and diverse life that is invisible to our mundane vision. The paramecium is a cigar shaped creature some 50 to 300 microns long that appeared to me to be constantly on the move thanks to tiny fibers (cilia) that cover its body. It seemed to know where it was going

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Paramecia, Slime Molds, & Us

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despite repeated bumping into obstructions. Did it have some kind of mind? But how could a single-celled organism have a mind? There were no nerves or brain to imagine that this creature was any sort of intelligent being.

Years later, I read something that Richard Feynman, the Nobel Prize winning theoretical physicist, wrote which recalled my observations of the paramecium's behavior. To my surprise, I read in his delightful book, *Surely You are Joking, Mr. Feynman*, that he too, was given a small microscope as a boy, and loved to watch pond life, just as I did.

But Richard Feynman—a genius, destined for the Nobel Prize—studied the paramecium much more intensively and recorded detailed observations on its behavior. He concluded by writing, “Until we see how many dimensions of behavior even a one-celled animal has, we won't be able to fully understand the behavior of more complicated animals.” As I see it, that moment has not yet come.

There is another fascinating, primitive organism that may represent the important next step in evolution: the slime mold, villain of dozens of grade C horror movies. Have you ever seen “The Green Slime,” the 1968 flick starring Robert Horton? Yes, it can invade, not the whole earth, but in real life a few centimeters of forest debris. It clearly shares, however, as does its horror film counterpart, the beginnings of structure and organization.

Hundreds of species of slime molds have existed for at least millions of years. This remarkable creature or better said, colony, lives on the floors of forests around the world. It is at times a dispersed community of single-celled amoebae foraging on the forest floor. At a certain time, evidently when the food supply becomes scarce, the

amoebae communicate to each other through chemical signals and gather together to form the shape of a slug-like creature that slowly moves to areas with more food. There the creature disperses again into a myriad of amoebae and the cycle repeats. This example of purposeful behavior has the hallmarks of primitive intelligence yet not a single neuron exists in the slime mold. What are the sources of this amazing function?

Until we see how many dimensions of behavior even a one-celled animal has, we won't be able to fully understand the behavior of more complicated animals.

Mechanisms of awareness must have existed from the earliest stages of evolution. It is intuitive that every form of reproducing life survived only through avoiding danger and seeking opportunity such as food. Thus it is not surprising to see “intelligent behavior” in primitive organisms. What is remarkable is the degree of sophistication as scientific observation and experimentation uncovers layer after layer of the nature of these beings. Recent experiments show slime molds navigating mazes successfully. The ability of these nearly immobile amoebae to signal each other and gather to form a cohesive body that relatively quickly travels to greener pastures demonstrates the amazing intricacy of so-called primitive life at the cellular level.

The evolutionary trend towards multicellular life included increasing complexity of awareness and behavior. The plant kingdom is no exception. Are plants conscious? Controversy revolves around that question but one can now dissect out the science that shows it to be true. Two great scientists pioneered the early study of the behavior of plants, Charles Darwin and Jagadish Chandra Bose, a

Bengali polymath, both physicist and biologist. They observed the amazing intelligent behavior and communication abilities of plants. Most people do not appreciate the entirely different time frame that plants live in. Modern experimental techniques including time-lapse photography and digital micro measurements can unfold the remarkable motility and sensitivity in the plant world. It is not just the Venus Fly-trap that exhibits purposeful behavior in quick time but the whole plant kingdom that can astound our cerebro centric notions. Scientists have recently formed a society devoted to the study of plant psychology, signaling, and behavior.

The evidence for the continuous evolution of consciousness in life increases as observations and experiments pour in about, among others; ants, bees, and a New Guinea crow, apparently the world's smartest bird, smarter than us in many ways, yet with a bird brain.

If tiny, primitive animalcules could perform such sophisticated acts just described, then it is possible that this represents a part of a spectrum of consciousness that extends throughout eukaryotic life. So, with another surprise, I find that Oxford's mathematical physicist, Sir Roger Penrose thinks so, too. In his book, *Shadows of the Mind*, he postulates that the pathways of consciousness traverse tiny microtubules that exist in every eukaryotic cell.

William James wrote in his *Principles of Psychology*, “The demand for continuity has, over large tracts of science, proved itself to have great prophetic power. We ought therefore ourselves sincerely to try every possible mode of conceiving the dawn of consciousness so that it might not appear equivalent to the irruption into the universe of a new nature, non-existent until then.”

In short, according to William

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James, consciousness, like every other trait of the evolution of life, evolved gradually and continuously from the very beginning. Where does this mysterious quality originate? Most believe that it arises within us, through the evolution of awareness, some of what I have described. But may there exist a source beyond our planet, in the cosmos itself?

Perhaps we are a little closer to understanding not only how, but also why we are what we are. Possibly a spark was needed to ignite the origin of life and provide the energy necessary for life's survival and continuity. To theists, that spark may mean God; to atheists it means chemistry.

A pioneer of quantum physics, Werner Heisenberg pondered this question and wrote,

If mind is a property or an action of the matter in the brain, then, according to the law of the conservation of matter, this property must unconditionally be attributed to all the atoms postulated by mechanistic philosophy, and a stone, a table or a cigar are as endowed with mind as a tree, an animal, or a man. In fact, this conclusion is inevitable if we accept the assumption on which it is based, and in more recent philosophical literature we find that it is either accepted or considered appropriate, otherwise a definite and unbridgeable dualism of mind and matter must be postulated to avoid it.

Such deep philosophical questions suggest that humanity and science have still only the smallest grasp of the reality of the cosmos. Perhaps the natural laws and the existence of consciousness are mediated through an obscure yet pervasive presence in the universe.

The examples that I described are just an iota of the biota of life on our planet Earth. The need to sense danger and opportunity and to react to them

is the key to survival and thus to membership in the evolution club. Think, too, of the evolution of our senses such as vision from the primitive bacteria (they surely sensed light) to plants to the incredible sophistication of the eyes of insects, birds, reptiles, fish, and mammals.

Such logic and evolutionary facts support the theory that consciousness in our species evolved gradually over the incredible space of time that was given us to be what we are.

But *Homo sapiens* benefited from an extraordinary change in the ordinary tempo of evolutionary changes. This change is the rapid development of our brain volume from 400 or 500 cubic centimeters (c.c.) that was found in the fossil skeleton of Australopithecus, considered to be close as our ancestor, who existed about 2.5 million years ago, to our own brain volume which is about 1,400 c.c. That sounds like a very long time but not so in evolutionary terms of classical Darwinian dogma. In that period of time the other skeletal features of hominids changed very little.

Increasing brain volume, particularly of the frontal lobe, the neocortex that mediates cognitive functions, probably led to increasing competitiveness in sexual selection and in aggressively eliminating rivals by force or wile, homicide, and war. This is not an unlikely scenario for a species that eventually wiped out many large animal populations around the world and also possibly the Neanderthals and other more obscure Homo species. The end result is that we are now a highly intelligent but aggressive species bearing oxygen hungry brains filling our outsize globular skulls.

Some pundits like Stephen Pinker think that humanity is entering an era with decreasing violence. We are enjoying the fruits of technology with increasing opportunity for leisure and creativity. Life is good. Others are not

so sure.

Where Are We Heading?

Western Civilization has led much of the world into an era of exuberant materialism. Humanity is abandoning its ancient bonds with natural life and creating a different existence based upon the technology that science has brought and that depends totally on the exploitation of our natural resources. We are in a state of hubris that threatens to exceed the limits, metron, the measure of our capacity to live a balanced life, which can invoke the Greek deity, Nemesis, to force us back to cosmic balance. We are entering the so-called Anthropocene era that is marked by a steady, inexorable change of global climate which is beginning to force large populations to migrate from regions beset by drought and famine toward more favorable regions, some already heavily populated, thus leading to political and economic turmoil, riots and war, and psychoses resulting from urban crowding that can be seen in caged rodents. The human race is more perplexed about itself than ever before. We seem to be on the verge of spiritual and moral breakdown and scarcely know who we are. Our obsession that seeks control over nature, rather than compliance may lead to havoc.

When viewed from space, Earth resembles a variegated jewel, and the numerous colors and patterns give us the sense that it is alive, which it is, the domain of the goddess Gaia, with all life within the ten mile thin and fragile biosphere, our cocoon of oxygen and water.

But come closer, say in a jetliner, and nearly every view of land will show signs of human intervention: roads, agricultural fields, factories, dwellings, towns and cities. Billions now live in the concrete jungles of the world's megapoli. We live really on a vast anthill

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Healing Our Bodies and Souls

BY KATHY SPEAS

In 2017, Sonoma County was struck by devastating wildfires, which burned 245,000 acres, destroyed 8,900 buildings, and killed 44 people. Even those of us who did not lose homes or loved ones were traumatized. In other parts of the country, people have experienced catastrophic floods, violent tornadoes, or unbearably frigid winters. And now, each of us and all of us are traumatized by a pandemic virus that is invisible, probably hasn't affected us directly, but is radically changing our lives, our relationships, our bodies, and our souls.

Trauma has both physical and spiritual impacts. Understanding the effect of trauma on the brain, and seeing this in a spiritual perspective, can help us as we begin to heal. One thing is clear—we are not just going to get past this and get back to normal, not without attention to our individual and collective healing process. And it is just that, a process.

When traumatized, the brain's amygdala registers emotions and sensations and is the center of "Fight or Flight." Thank you, amygdala for getting us up at 1 AM and grabbing what we grabbed and getting out of the house when the fires started! Our amygdala is reacting to the constant stream of news—deaths in Wuhan! An overwhelmed medical system in Milan! People testing positive after a conference in Boston! Two cases, no three, no six, no eight cases in little Sonoma County!

But when the amygdala kicks into high gear like that, the hippocampus steps back. The hippocampus is the part of your brain that explains, "We're just getting a shot, take a deep breath and sit still" when you feel a big needle sticking into your upper arm. Your hippocampus knows that quarantine

saves lives. When you flee your home into a world of flames and smoke, or see many neighbors' homes in ruins, or contemplate how a visit to Safeway could result in unintentional manslaughter, your hippocampus doesn't know how to put this in context.

The *medial prefrontal cortex*, which helps you make decisions and plan things and get them done, also slows down during trauma, which is why you may be having a hard time figuring out what to do.

So after the trauma is ostensibly over, your amygdala is still firing like mad (hence the tears, the quick temper, the panic when you hear anything about COVID-19 on the news), the hippocampus is still confused (hence the need to tell your story and process the experience, and the totally surreal feeling of these dream-like weeks), and the difficulty getting back into the swing of things, especially with a new landscape that requires some decisions to be made and some things to be planned (hence the inability to focus or approach those tasks you need to get to). In case you hadn't noticed, all of this is physically taxing (this is why you feel terrible and are tired).

So, starting on the material plane, we need nature, music, exercise, calm, beauty, love, dancing, singing, sleep, and gratitude to heal our traumatized brains. The good news is that with just a little bit of respite from human presence, Mother Nature is healing herself. Dolphins and fish are returning to clear waters in Venice. Levels of air pollution are radically reduced. Nature knows just what to do to heal.

Physical healing is also spiritual healing. Trauma can lead us to question long-held spiritual beliefs, or leave us feeling broken, not whole or complete, still ourselves—yet not ourselves. We may have dreams of searching and

longing, or dream of grieving a deep loss. In ancient Shamanic societies, it was believed that when the body and the mind split apart (as happens when we are traumatized, and our brains just can't process what we are going through), it was crucial to restore harmony between ourselves and our world. Ancient people believed that parts of the soul stayed at the scene of the trauma, and needed to be invited back and reassured that they were safe.

A gratitude practice can help bring you to this moment, away from the trauma of cataclysmic natural events or COVID-19 or the general trauma of keeping up with news, and can ground you in what you are grateful for right here and right now. This is a magnificent time of year to ground yourself in your senses. Look around at the signs of the coming spring, and its inevitable glorious unfolding. What do you see that you are grateful for? Listen for birds, or to the rain falling, or to music that makes your heart sing, or —my favorite healing sound of all—hearing children playing. What do you hear that you are grateful for? Smell the daffodils, the rain, the smoke-free air, the dirt in your garden, the aroma of this day as you breathe deeply. What do you breathe in that you are grateful for? Taste clean water, spring asparagus, Easter candy, catch the rain on your tongue. What do you taste that you are grateful for? Feel relaxed, warm, clean, feel the effects on your body of a deep breath, feel that it is OK to ask for help, feel that your body is OK, and you are safe. Please share whatever helps you in your healing process! 🙏



Rev. Kathy Speas was ordained in 2004, and recently retired from chaplaincy at hospice and also at a state facility for profoundly disabled adults. She lives in Sonoma County, CA.

Passages

Deaths

Mary Gayle Nash, R.N., died February 11, 2020, at the Tuscon Medical Center at age eighty-six. She graduated from Pretty Prairie H.S. in 1951, earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Kansas and met her husband, George W. Nash, MD, while in nurse training. They married June 16, 1956 in Texas. She is predeceased by her parents, Sigmund and Martha Siebert and by her husband, George. Mary Gayle is survived by her daughter Marti (Bill) Haskins; son, Steve (Katie); granddaughters, Riley (Justin) Romanos and Taylor Nash; and foster sisters, Charlene (Melvin) Schwartz and Sharon Lowry.

Paramecia, Slime Molds, & Us

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with our imprint on every corner of the globe that allows our exploitation of nature. Technological materialism is leading us on an increasing slippery slope toward an unknown fate.

Come closer still to see the side-effects of our "civilization," litter, deforestation, algal and chemical pollution of lakes and seas, the oceanic, terrestrial, and atmospheric pollution are all the products of the past hundred or so years.

Despite the most drastic measures proposed to correct global warming which appear unlikely to happen, the climate will steadily change to leave vast tracts of previously inhabited land uninhabitable. The immediate future for much of humanity appears chaotic while the threat of nuclear conflict hangs like the sword of Damocles over us all. The Doomsday clock now shows two minutes to Armageddon.

There is some hope. It depends upon the next two generations stopping and reversing the factors leading

to planetary degradation and the threat of nuclear war. They will need to help rebuild after the huge and devastating changes of population, agriculture, and economy that result from climate change and pollution. One thing is certain: the world's accessible fossil fuels will someday be gone. We will no longer be able to depend on the oxidation of carbon for energy. A totally different world will challenge humanity. The remnants of the affected populations will need to circle back to regain their former coherence with nature.

There is an instinct in us that has been described by the biologist E.O. Wilson. It is called "biophilia, love of life," which can be seen in everyday interactions between human beings and plants and animals. On Cambridge streets I often see groups of smiling persons around a dog on a leash, petting and kissing the animal. Flower gardens are everywhere. We have a natural bond with most creatures and plants. A stroll in a wild place can give a sense of comfort and peace. The awe and mystery of the continuing discovery of nature and its laws is close to a religious experience. I do not try to know the meaning of life, but know that nature's realm gives me inner revelation and comfort. For me, the wonder and beauty of our natural world and the miracle of life represents Heaven.

Our understanding, through the knowledge provided by science, of this solitary planet and the vibrant biosphere in which we live, provides the ground for a spiritual connection, our union with the cosmos from where love of life can lead to a redemption of humanity's heretofore oblivious and exploitative attitude toward our environment. I hope, although with misgivings, that the world view will eventually be shorn of this destructive and nearly obsessive dependence upon technology, and return to a more natural, less materialistic life.

The long journey in time from the

Letter from the President

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the right thing for each other.


And the reality is: life is uncertain. It is time to pause our illusion of control. We are called in this desert season to turn our problems, doubts, and fears to our God. God does not promise we will not be faced with difficulties and pandemics. God does promise to be with us through this uncertainty, to carry our burden of heightened stress, to ease our unhealthy anxiety, to love us all equally, as we are to love and care for one another.

Sending love and prayers for all,

—Rev. Jane Siebert 


Keeping in Touch

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this a time of quiet Lenten reflection. That in this time apart from one another, we can find within ourselves, that connection with the Lord that strengthens us and brings us peace and allows us to know that the Lord is with us, and is always with us. 



Rev. Susannah Currie is the pastor of the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church and the Religion Coordinator for the Fryeburg New Church Assembly

genesis of our single-cell ancestor has been shared by all living things, past and present. Let us continue to live together on this tiny speck in the vast universe. 

Dr. Carl von Essen is a new member of the Cambridge Swedenborg Chapel. He began writing books after retirement from fifty years of medical practice, research, and teaching.



What's Happening

Church Calendar

- **May 22–25, 2020:** SCYL & Transitions Spring Retreat, Allenton, MI
- **July 19–25, 2020:** Paulhaven Summer Camp, Upper Mann Lake, Alberta
- **July 18–26, 2020:** Almont Summer School, Allenton, MI
- **August 1–16, 2020:** Fryeburg New Church Assembly, Fryeburg, ME
- **August 28–31, 2020:** Gathering Leaves, Purley Chase, England

A Woman's Companion to Conjugal Love

We have completed the first reading and are reviewing many responses. We are reaching out to other women also to hear their responses to the book, whether they liked or felt challenged by it. Once the responses are edited, the remarks will be anonymously published. Contact Rev. Ros Taylor, hrtaylor@temple.edu or Rev. Julie Conaron, julieconaron@hotmail.com with questions or to participate.

To subscribe to *the Messenger* online, scan this image with a QR reader on your cell phone or tablet.



The Statement Against Bias and Discrimination adopted at Convention in both 2018 & 2019, also the topic of a Convention Mini-course led by Dr. Rebecca Esterson, is supplemented by an online discussion group, 'Manifold Angels'. This online group is now moving to Facebook, which is considered more accessible to many of our constituents. If you would like to join the group as a resource, a discussion partner, or a lurker, please email manifoldangels@gmail.com. This group will be private and not searchable and a safe place to explore sensitive areas and learn more about informing our conduct in our diverse world. Members of the former group—the io platform—will also need to request addition to the new group. This is only open to those with some affiliation to the New Church and will be lightly moderated.

The Center for Swedenborgian Studies invites

YOU

to become a founding contributor to the Dole Chair by June 30, 2020!
<https://www.centerforswedenborgianstudies.org/support-the-center-for-swedenborgian-studies>

Gathering Leaves

Friday 28–Monday 31,

August, 2020

Purley Chase Centre, England

As we are sure you are all aware, COVID-19, has now been classified as a worldwide pandemic, governments around the world are requesting curbs on social gatherings and advising travel to be restricted. The Gathering Leaves Committee has decided to make a final decision and announcement about whether to proceed with Gathering Leaves at the end of May. This may be somewhat optimistic, but we should be better able to see how measures have worked to impact the situation at that time, with a fervent hope that we may be able to proceed with our Gathering Leaves event at the end of August as planned.

Registration is still open:

<https://tinyurl.com/PrlyChsBook>

Helen Keller Spiritual Life Center Lecture Tour

will be rescheduled in the Fall.

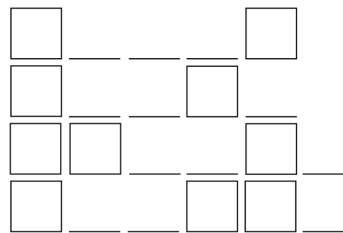
Answers to the Feb/Mar Jumble:

Yodel, Awful, Rubber, Garden
 The latest signature dinner at the FNCA is new "Fryeburger"

*Alone we can do so little;
 together we can do so much.*

Helen Keller

Calligraphy Quotes by Myrrh Brooks
 @myrrhbrooks on Instagram



ARNDI
 URGDA
 LOBEWL
 ROENWS

The newest hit movie is a crossover between church and sci-fi. The lead robotic character is called a:

Jumble by Jason Greenwood
 Answers will be printed in the next issue.

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 questioning 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.

In his theological writings, Swedenborg shared 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.

The FNCA Centennial Celebration Logo

The Fryeburg New Church Assembly Centennial Celebration Committee is proud to present the official FNCA Centennial Celebration Logo!

In 1921, a small but dedicated group of clergy and laypeople put in a lot of time, energy, and money into the very first session of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly in Fryeburg, Maine. They certainly hoped the organization would last, so it is a big thrill to announce the FNCA Centennial Celebration: two full weeks of events celebrating the Assembly's first 100 years, to be held during the annual camp session July 31–August 15, 2021.

About This Logo:

Using an historic photo from 1948 of the original Main Building from the Assembly's very early days, FNCA



graphic designer Beki Greenwood created this delightful logo that the Assembly will be using on all promotions for the event. You can look for it on tote bags, t-shirts, magnets, postcards, etc., and perhaps even a large banner.

This year's camp session is planned for August 1–16, 2020.

Registration is now open. More info and registration at fryeburg.org.