

“Let Go and Let God:” A Worrier’s Rebuttal

BY REBECCA ESTERSON

Is worry a sign of spiritual failing? If we are worried, does it indicate a lack of trust in God’s providence? Should we do what we can to stop worrying, cultivate a posture of equanimity, keep calm and carry on? And if so, how does one do that, exactly? In religious and spiritual circles, we often hear the prescription to “let go and let God” or to “live in the present.” These truisms are most often offered in a spirit of comfort or guidance in difficult times. But I have found that they can have the opposite effect, by suggesting a spiritual standard that is difficult or impossible to measure up to or by implying that *holding on* and *concern for tomorrow* are ill-intentioned, futile, or destructive activities. For a worrier, such as myself, such philosophies can be hard to understand. “But the world is on fire!” I want to respond. “We must seek justice! We must cry out! We have work to do!”

Do our scriptures encourage a practice of letting go? We certainly hear God’s reassurance in the prophets and in the gospels:

Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? (Matthew 6:25–27)



The practicalities of living a life in the world dedicated to the wellbeing of the creatures in it requires a kind of forethought and concern that can be hard to reconcile with a posture of complete trust.

The message is clear. And yet, the practicalities of living a life in the

world dedicated to the wellbeing of the creatures in it requires a kind of forethought and concern that can be hard to reconcile with a posture of complete trust. All over the world people of faith are wrestling with this question as it relates to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Can’t we trust God above all else, let go of worry about the virus, and get on with our lives? Or does our faith require urgent planning and action? Does taking precautions indicate a lack of faith or love of the neighbor?

When weighing these perspectives, I often remember back to a time when my church community in Cambridge was in crisis. All hope was lost, and we were facing the reality that our building would likely be sold within months. I remember clearly a meeting of the church council called to discuss our dire situation, where opposing viewpoints were expressed by two of our wisest and most respected members. One member said that we should trust in God completely. God is in control, and there is nothing we can do to alter the direction of things. What will be, will be. The other member disagreed passionately. Our teachings tell us that in order for providence to do its work, the Lord requires us to act as if we have the capacity to determine our own future. Therefore, in addition to prayer, we have the responsibility to organize and come up with a plan to resist the

Continued on page 54

Contents

"Let Go and Let God:" A Worrier's Rebuttal.....	49
The Editor's Desk	50
Letter from the President	51
Here I Am, Lord: Journey of the Licensed Pastor Program.....	52
Does Consensus Equal Truth or Fact?.....	55
When Swedenborg Broke a Quarantine	56
Where Can Wisdom Be Found	57
Swedenborg's Final Words About the Lord.....	59
Cairwood Village Retirement.....	60
"Lalla's Garden" Quilt Raffle.....	61
Online Sparks Games for Kids.....	61
What's Happening.....	63
Church Calendar	63
Perenia (What Time Reveals)	64

The Editor's Desk



Same Storm, Different Ship...

We're another month into our new reality and we are figuring out how to weather this pandemic storm. It has exploded in our country more than we ever could have imagined—even just three months ago. Certainly three months from now, it will be different again. In most of our lifetimes, we have not experienced something of this magnitude. The coronavirus has affected all of us, and at this point we likely either know someone who was diagnosed with it or we know someone who knows someone who has.

The more time that goes on, harder choices and decisions are coming to the surface. Some big choices: Keep schools closed for the rest of the school year or not; whether we cancel large

summer events or not, and do we recreate them virtually? Just how long is this storm going to go on—there really is no way to know for sure. We'll just keep sailing in our boats the best that we can.

Have you heard that, over and over? "We're all in the same boat." We're really not. I would definitely say that some of us are riding in similar boats, but I don't think any two ships are the same in this situation. The storm is rocking these boats all over the ocean, and we're each trying to keep ourselves, and our families, afloat. My ship: middle school math teacher husband adjusting to remote education; part-time editor mom with high-risk health concerns; and a first and a third grader who love school and desperately miss their friends (plus three cats, who seem very content to have all their people here, all the time). The day-to-day stresses of this are different than, say, for my best friend, who works full-time and lives alone with her cat, or one of my brothers who has similar health concerns as mine, but whose wife is a doctor, working in a hospital, and risks carrying the virus home every day. These are just a few examples of a million different ships trying not to capsize.

So how do we weather this storm? Do the work, the school, the chores, and all the Zoom calls. But don't let that be all you do. Bake something new, go outside, play a board game with your kids, have a video chat with a friend, crochet a couch for your cat—whatever it takes. Find the time to do something for yourself, that makes your heart happy, every day. We are all stressed, tired, and anxious; self-care has never been more important. Give yourself a break, feel the tough feelings, just don't let yourself get stuck there. Meditate, paint, start that show on Netflix you've been told to watch, read your favorite book again, get that high score in Pac-man, call your friends....

Pandemics do end, history tells us that. We just have to keep trying to find the ways to keep ourselves going, cope with the difficult decisions that are made, find daily happiness, and keep the ship sailing until the storm subsides—whenever that may be.

—Beki Greenwood

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© The Swedenborgian Church of North America
Published monthly except July and August by
the Standing Committee for Communication and
Information of the Swedenborgian Church of
North America (founded 1817, incorporated 1861
as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem
in the United States of America), Rev. Jane
Siebert, president.

May 2020

Volume 244, No. 4, Whole Number 5449

Editor, design and production: Rebekah
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Information: Holly Bauer, Kevin Baxter & Val
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Printing: Classic GraphX, Cambridge MA

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Cambridge MA 02138

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Subscriptions: free online subscription at
<https://swedenborg.org/newsletter/>. Printed
and mailed to US address, \$20/year; to Canada
address, \$30/year; to all other addresses, \$35/
year; single copies, \$2.00, Libraries & prisoners,
free. Send check made out to "Swedenborgian
Church" with
"Messenger" on the memo line. Other requests,
write or call Central Office.

Deadline for submissions is three weeks before
the first day of the month of issue.

The opinions and views expressed are those of
the authors, not of *the Messenger*, the Standing
Committee for Communication and Information,
or the Swedenborgian Church.

Letter from the President



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

Dear Swedenborgian Connected Friends,

Yes, the entire world is connected as we endure this pandemic that has affected everyone and is changing our lives and perspectives on what is important. To stay as healthy as possible, each one of us is dependent on one another to take precautions. We are connected at a basic level of survival.

In the midst of uncertainty, sadness, and monotony, *we have a new way to connect with our Swedenborgian friends and family*. Every week we are sending out an email from Central Office with lists of virtual Swedenborgian church services you can access. You can spend all day Sunday going from service to service: from Maine to Ontario, Detroit to St. Louis, and on to San Francisco to find words of assurance. Or you can use one a day for your morning meditation.

We have received information from sixteen ministries offering a variety of virtual connections: three on Facebook, two posting on their websites, five on YouTube, and six on Zoom or another video chat platform. If you are not receiving the weekly emails, please email Angela at the Central Office and ask to be included: manager@swedenborg.org

This week I asked a few members from around the country to reflect on lessons they have learned from isolation through the pandemic.

George Dole, writer and professor from Bath, Maine, reminds us to look at *Secrets of Heaven* §842.3. “Before being reduced to order, it is very common for everything to fall into confusion or seeming chaos. This allows things that cling together poorly to separate, and when they have separated, the Lord arranges them in their place.”

Robbin Ferrimann, Licensed Pastor candidate from Urbana, Ohio, has signed up for nine different free webinars and classes as a way to stay connected to the outside world and learn something new.

Kathy Speas, retired chaplain from Glen Ellen, California, wonders if the Mobile Pet Grooming van can stop by and give her a haircut. It is okay to always have a haircut that can grow out, is one lesson she has learned.

Karen Degi, product manager for Indeed.Com from Seattle, Washington, lists things she hopes we hold onto after we emerge from this pandemic. “I like that it’s okay for people to admit that they’re not constantly busy—that there’s social permission to have empty space in my life (and the lives of those around me) so there’s more time available to connect.”

Mark Careaga, architect from Cambridge, Massachusetts, helping with the Helen Keller Spiritual Life Center project, has rediscovered his joy of home cooking and has reinvested in his daily meditation practice. He recommends the Headspace app.

Karen Conger, secretary of General Convention, living in Bishop, California, offers her personal reflection and deep questions on Richard Rohr’s meditation “You Are Not In Control.”

Their full responses are in the email that was sent out from Central Office on April seventeenth—they are a great read!

Continues on page 62

Here I Am, Lord:

The Journey of the Licensed Pastor Program in Convention



Attendees of the Winter Intensive in 2019

BY JIM LAWRENCE

At its annual convention in 2013 in Urbana, Ohio, delegates endorsed the creation of an official Licensed Pastor category of consecrated leadership in the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (Convention). The vision of the Licensed Pastor category originated from the seminary and the Advisory Placement Committee of Convention.

These bodies involved people working closely with ministry training and clergy appointments. They had become keenly aware of a widespread need in the church for an appropriate and affordable leadership structure for our smaller churches.

The very same challenge has been prominent for most mainline denominations, too—needing a category of ministry training that does not require

the full three-year Master of Divinity degree to strengthen the ministry leadership needs of their smaller churches. What is frequently true in Convention, and in mainline denominations, is that the small churches, who struggle to support a seminary-trained minister, hold within their midst someone able and willing to undertake a ministry formation program to serve in leadership in their own beloved congregation. These willing souls are the student seedbed for Licensed Pastor candidates.

A category like Licensed Pastors isn't novel for Convention. Across its history, the Swedenborgian Church has maintained similar categories of consecrated ministry leadership to complement the ordained category, such as Missionary Ministers and Lay Leaders. The vision for the Licensed Pastor path, however, involves tailoring a role that meets requirements suited to our contemporary moment. We need a path that leads to leadership skills and

Continues on page 53

License Pastors Currently Serving in Ministries



*Pastor Helen Barler,
Swedenborgian Church of
Puget Sound*



*Pastor Linda Callander,
Swedenborgian Church of
the Southwest Desert*



*Pastor Christine Campbell,
Temenos Retreat and
Sanctuary*



*Pastor Paul Deming,
Church of the Open Word
(St. Louis)*

Here I Am Lord

Continued from page 52

a pastoral presence recognized within and outside their communities as well as inside their own membership. Thus, Convention developed a journey for licensed pastors.

The training for Licensed Pastor students is overseen by the Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM) in the same way that it functions for students on the ordination path. The seminary is, of course, involved. The educational program entails eight learning units, followed by a perpetual continuing education requirement. The formation journey can be undertaken in a distance format, with the exception of required attendance at the annual Winter Intensive—where all students in ministry training gather with the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) faculty, CAM members, and local clergy for an educational focus for that year. (All expenses are paid to attend the Winter Intensive.)

As the Licensed Pastor program unfolded, however, an unanticipated use for the Licensed Pastor program delightfully appeared right away: congregations with an ordained minister also wanted to support a Licensed Pastor



journey with a chosen congregant in order to evolve team ministry leadership, thus broadening the skills and capacities of their ministry’s leadership.

Perhaps your ministry could benefit from the Licensed Pastor program, or perhaps even you notice a still small voice inside answering the same ancient call Isaiah once heard in the sanctuary: “Who will go for Me?”

For more information, contact Rev. Kit Billings, Chair of the Committee on Admission into the Ministry: RevKit123@gmail.com 219.380.4682 or Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies: jlawrence@psr.edu 510.849.8228



*Above: Constructive Swedenborgian Theology class in 2013
Below: Installation of Licensed Pastor, Gordon Meyer.*

License Pastors Currently Serving in Ministries



*Pastor Tassy Farwell,
Swedenborgian Community
Church at Hillside*



*Pastor Karen Feil,
Chicago Swedenborg
Library*



*Pastor Lorraine Kardash,
Portland New Church*



*Pastor Gordon Meyer,
Virginia Street Church
(St. Paul)*

Let Go and Let God

Continued from page 49

fate confronting us. It is, the member argued, a cornerstone of our theology, expressed many times by Swedenborg, that the appearance of autonomy is key to the process. This idea is found, for instance, in the following from *Divine Providence* §174:

Everyone knows that we think, intend, speak, and act with every appearance of autonomy, and everyone can see that if it were not for this appearance we would have no volition and discernment... this appearance is granted us by the Lord for all these functions, especially so that there may be something receptive and responsive within us through which the Lord can be united to us and we can be united to the Lord, and that by virtue of this union we can live forever.

So which council member was right? How did it turn out? Against all odds the church building wasn't sold, and to our astonishment the congregation survived and, after a time, thrived (and is thriving!). Looking back, with the perfected vision of hindsight, I have the sense, somehow, that both of these venerable voices were speaking the truth. We had no agency and every agency. Our fate was entirely in God's hands, and also manifested by the hard work of our own hands. How can these opposing streams be reconciled?

From my teachers in various religious traditions, I have learned that this is a paradox common to other religious thought systems. Islam holds in tension the ideas of complete surrender and personal spiritual struggle, or *Jihad*. Daoism teaches about *wu wei*. The common translation of "non-action" or "non-doing" can be misleading, as can the popular paraphrase of "go with the flow." *Wu wei* is a harmonious way of being in the Tao that comes from mastering a particular

discipline or skill; with skillfulness comes effortlessness. In Buddhism, we find a focus on right action, but also the idea that attachment to the fruits of our actions is the cause of all suffering.

Each of these, I would argue, has some resonance with Swedenborgian thought. But it is this last one, on releasing our attachment to the results of our action, that is most interesting to me from a Swedenborgian perspective.

Swedenborg suggests, in his work *Divine Providence*, that we are not served by accepting the credit or the blame for the things we do. This might sound either unfair or utterly liberating, depending on our perspective or depending on what it is that we have done with our lives. He is not suggesting that our actions don't matter, however. On the contrary, our actions are everything. Usefulness is realization of our full humanity. Good action in the world is the bringing down of divine influx; it is heaven's anchor. Good action in the world corresponds to the fuel for the fire of the altar of burnt offerings, which is offered to God in the Holy of Holies. In some sense, our actions are what enable the very incarnation of

Don't worry about the worry. Let it come. Breathe it in. Lift it to a holy place. Let it kindle and motivate. Breathe it out. Let it go when it goes.

God. Yet we are not served by accepting credit or blame.

What does this mean? Why is this a helpful idea?

The above quote from *Divine Providence* offers another paradoxical way of coming at the subject. It suggests that our sense of autonomy, of having control over our lives, is to some extent, perhaps to a very great extent, an illusion. It is an appearance of truth. But it is a necessary appearance. "So that there may be something receptive and

responsive within us through which the Lord can be united to us."

Many Swedenborgians are familiar with the idea that we are to *act as if of ourselves*. This suggests, outlandishly, that our life is in some sense a performance. We assume the posture of autonomy, not for the sake of merit or blame, but for the sake of connection to the Divine. It gives God something to work with, something to partner with. It is separation for the sake of union. Swedenborg goes so far as to call this a "spiritual marriage" between humanity and divinity, made possible because of and through our sense of self. This is no easier to understand than "let go and let God." But I find it somehow more comforting. Let me explain.

I don't feel as though I have the luxury of letting go, of living in the moment, of not worrying about what I will eat or what I will wear. I don't have this luxury in part because there are others who depend on me to make sure they have something to eat and something to wear, and I don't believe God wants me to be complacent. Furthermore, the work of active and engaged living, of planning for a better future for my family, my community, and the world feels right and good. Engagement and activity help me to counter the inevitable anxieties of living, working, and mothering in a troubled world. I have learned to view my worry about the future as a vehicle rather than a sign of failure. It is even a vehicle to the kind of peace and wholeness that our biblical verses evoke. This sounds illogical, but there is a practical upshot: don't worry about the worry. Let it come. Breathe it in. Lift it to a holy place. Let it kindle and motivate. Breathe it out. Let it go when it goes.

So what is this "let go and let God?" I can't let go of action, or even of accountability. I can let go of the fear and worry about my own worthiness, I can

Continues on page 62

Op Ed

Does Consensus Equate to Truth or Fact?

BY SUSAN HULCHER

Believing in God is acceptable in this society. Most people do. Whether it's understood as a non-descript flow of energy, or humanoid entity, the average magazine article would claim that 92% of our people believe in some form of an overseeing creator.

Atheists might deem this God-belief a tolerable delusion, but only because there is an overwhelming majority who share in this misguided attempt to quantify the world around us. To try and change so many minds would be an ineffective use of time. And it doesn't matter anyway: God is intangible. The parameters of an alleged existence are not defined, and people are hardly unified in their belief systems, so it's not worth the energy to dispute.

Belief that there is intelligent life, other than human, that resides on or around our planet is less acceptable in our society. But still, it's somewhat bearable to non-believers, again, because of the numbers. Some estimate that 60% of our population think there are life forms that are alien to our present understanding.

This leads me to wonder if all of our acceptable beliefs are based on consensus.

Rather than come up with my own definition, I'll defer to a Google-approved description of scientific consensus. According to Wikipedia, "Scientific consensus is the collective judgement, position, and opinion of the community of scientists in a particular field. Consensus implies general agreement, though not necessarily unanimity."

So, it seems that in science there has been an agreement to go along with a

consensus, even if one or more scientists have a differing conclusion. But if science is so black and white, and settled as some claim, then why would there even be a deviation in thought. And if there is a deviation, then wouldn't that mean that the studied outcomes are based on beliefs, opinions and perspectives rather than concrete facts?

God is intangible. The parameters of an alleged existence are not defined, and people are hardly unified in their belief systems, so it's not worth the energy to dispute.

I have always wondered about these outliers—the ones that agreed to a consensus by staying silent. Or, maybe, some aren't silent. But they're harder to hear below the resounding buzz of the swarm.

What is the outlier's point of view, I wonder, how and why did they come to a different understanding? Would it be hard to voice a differing conclusion? Would they receive a backlash from their peers? Could they lose their job for going against the grain?

Why does anyone ever speak up at all? Could it be because they know the penalty for remaining silent is much greater than the penalty for making themselves an outcast in their field—or to their friends and family, whichever the case may be?

Then I wonder about the people who have cast their vote to endorse any given consensus. Do they really believe what they claim to believe, or is it just easier to go along with the crowd? I heard a doctor joke one time, "If you think cliques in high school are bad,

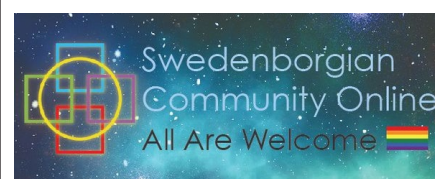
then just wait until you experience academia."

Every facet of our overseeing bodies has professionals who agree or disagree on any given subject. And when so many average Joes lazily regard consensus as gospel, is it wise to rely on the majority-rule, belief-based practices when creating regulations that apply to the whole of society?

Personally, I take notice of the few who dare to step out from the crowd. Because in a world that will take away everything for speaking against the consensus, they must have strong evidence to back their position. Either that or maybe they're crazy. But is it reasonable to think that every single outlier is crazy? Is it reasonable to believe that consensus automatically equates to truth or fact? 🙏



Susan Hulcher is a member of the Calgary New Church Society in Alberta, Canada. She serves on Convention's General Council and has spent many years working at Paulhaven Children's Camp as a teacher and yoga instructor.



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When Swedenborg Broke a Quarantine

And the Spiritual Lesson It Prepared

BY JIM LAWRENCE

Bursting for adventure on his first international trip, the eager new graduate from Uppsala University boarded a ship for England. It had taken some doing, but young Emanuel finally persuaded his father into financing a postgraduate tour of the European continent. It was to further his education through many means, but it also delivered on that promise in one significant, unanticipated way.

In June of 1710, he ventured to Gothenburg on Sweden's west coast to catch a boat for London. This would be a journey he would repeat twelve more times during his long life. As if scripted for an action film, this inaugural voyage led to three commotions in short order. First, French privateers accosted and boarded their vessel looking for contraband that could be converted quickly to cash. We don't know their precise haul, but apparently it wasn't much. The very next day an English patrol boat fired upon them, suspecting the Swedish craft held privateers! Fortunately, the ship bearing our future sage did not suffer serious damage, and they arrived with no further problems to the port of London, where they anchored at Wapping on the Thames River.

However, a much more serious misadventure now awaited Emanuel. Northern Europe had been engaged in a long war starting in 1700 that had by 1705 precipitated a plague epidemic that morphed to a pandemic covering several countries. News had reached England that the plague had hit Sweden, and so when the Swedish vessel arrived all passengers were ordered to remain in quarantine on the ship for six weeks. Youthful Swedes living in



Swedenborg as a young man in the early 1700s

London, however, heard about the arrival and broke the strict quarantine regulations. They ferried up to the vessel via yacht and managed to persuade the graduate to come along with them and see the city. He did.

The news that a passenger had broken quarantine was quickly realized, and Emanuel was apprehended. They were going to hang him for the offense, but as Swedenborg penned many years later, "I was saved from the rope, but with the reservation that no other person would thereafter escape it who ventured to do the like." It appears that powerful family connections intervened for Swedenborg, young son of a prominent Bishop carried letters of introduction to Count Carl Gyllenborg, the Swedish ambassador to England, and to Rev. James Robinson, an Anglican Bishop who had lived in Sweden for a time.

He escaped punishment, but his dangerous indiscretion left a mark on him. Thirty-four years later, the episode came back to him as a spiritual lesson in a now famous encounter he had with Christ. It occurred during another one of his trips to the lower continent. The date was April 6, 1744, and he was spending an evening in his Delft, Holland, lodging room reading the Bible. He found himself musing about the miracles of Moses in the book of Exodus and experienced a two-part self-reflection. He noticed that he was doubting the stories as factually true and then caught himself feeling pride in his intelligence. That led to a long reflection on the challenges of faith. He realized that there was a sense in which he believed in the faith of his upbringing, yet in another sense he did not.

The evening became full of lively philosophical thoughts as he struggled to integrate his reasoning with his feeling that he should assent in simple faith. He went to bed and fell asleep. Some time later, he awakened to the sound of roaring winds. It didn't seem it was a natural wind, and then he became overwhelmed by a subjective feeling of something "indescribably holy" being present. He realized his entire body was shaking, and suddenly, was prostrate on the floor with his hands folded together. He interpreted the experience in the moment as a direct presence of Christ. He prayed in the line of feeling unworthy of the Lord's presence and asked to be made worthy of being in his presence. Then he reports that he felt a hand upon his own hands firmly pressing them, and so he opened his eyes.

He seemed face to face with the Lord

Continues on page 62

Where Can Wisdom (with a capital W) Be Found?

BY MARIE MOREY

I have been reading the Book of Job, a book I find many do not usually read—too much moaning and questioning and no satisfactory answers. Coronavirus quarantine, (there is a lot of moaning and questioning with no satisfactory answers,) brought this book to mind, and I was reading along when I came to Job 28. The middle part of the reading lists all the gems and precious metals, over and over. At first, I was amused and thought of a bit in *Monty Python the Holy Grail*. Brother Maynard reads a holy book about pulling the pin on a holy hand grenade, going on and on, spoofing the way some passages in the Bible do go on and on about some minor details. So it is with Job 28. However, something about the end of this passage grabbed my attention, and I read it several mornings in a row.

Where, then, does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds in the sky. Destruction and Death say, only a rumor of it has reached our ears. God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters, when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm, then he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it. And he said to the human race, “The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding” (Job 28: 20-28).

Who doesn't want to know where Wisdom comes from? Wouldn't we all like to be more wise?

In our Swedenborgian tradition, we talk about the importance of all

three aspects of God—love, wisdom and usefulness. It does seem, however, that we like to chat more about love and usefulness, and less about wisdom. What *exactly* is wisdom is probably just as important as where it comes from. Calvin Coolidge has a great quote, “Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. It may not be difficult to store up in the mind a vast quantity of facts within a comparatively short time, but the ability to form judgments requires the severe discipline of hard work and the tempering heat of experience and maturity.” Sounds great. Spoken like a true adult—a New England Yankee of the old Protestant work ethic.

Wisdom is more than knowledge, and life experiences sure are a good teacher. I think we all recognize that, but what about, “out of the mouths of babes?” Don't children sometimes drop a pearl of wisdom that obviously doesn't come from “the severe discipline of hard work and the heat of experience?” There is such an interesting quality to the true, capital W, kind of Wisdom.

Job tells us at the end of the passage that “The fear of the Lord—that

To talk about wisdom, we need to talk about what does it mean to “fear the Lord”?

is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.” Is wisdom being afraid of God? The expression, “fear of the Lord,” shows up many times in the Bible, very often in the Psalms. From Psalm 111, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.” From Psalm 19 “The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.” From Psalm 34, “Fear the Lord, you his saints, for

those who fear him lack nothing.”

To talk about wisdom we need to talk about what it means to “fear the Lord?” Swedenborg writes quite a bit about what it means to fear the Lord. From *Arcana Coelestia* §2826 and §6997, true fear of the Lord is “not so much a fear of hell and damnation as it is of doing anything against the good of love and the truth of faith.” “For fear must precede love in order that in love there may be holy fear. For when fear is insinuated in love it becomes holy fear from the holy of love; and then it is not fear of the Lord's being angry and punishing, but lest (one) should act against good itself.”

From *Apocalypse Revealed* §629, “to fear God is to love him, fearing to do evil because this is opposed to Him; and that every love has in it this fear;” Holy fear—to love the Lord so much that you are afraid to harm the love and wisdom and gentle spirit flowing into your life, the life of others, and into all of creation. Fear can seem like a strange word to use for this feeling of not wanting to harm or lose or debase what is beautiful and loving and good: the Lord working in our life. But other words don't quite seem to convey the same alert longing, aching awe, enormous respect, or wonder of beauty that can be harmed or killed, and is so precious to us. I think that the word “fear” does express the intensity of this feeling. Holy fear. Fear has such a gripping connotation and does get our attention.

Swedenborg writes in *Arcana Coelestia* §3718,

The greater the amount of the love of good and truth, the greater is the fear of injuring them; and yet in the same proportion fear does not appear to be fear. Whereas the less the amount of good and truth, the

Continues on page 58

Where Can Wisdom Be Found

Continued from page 57

less the fear on their account, the less this fear appears to be love but appears to be fear.

This is interesting: the further along on your spiritual journey the more holy fear you actually feel; the more love and truth are working in your life, the more it feels like holy fear. Little babies are living in this state—close to the love and wisdom emanating from Heaven. When we leave the Garden, beginning our spiritual journey, and are learning to walk on our path, our early conceptions of perhaps a more punishing and strict taskmaster “Old Testament” kind of God brings on that regular fear. Holy fear does not feel like ordinary fear—it is almost beyond words to describe. This is the fear the psalmists and Job are speaking about—the fear of harming the love, good, truth, power, and energy flowing into all of creation. This is Wisdom with a capital W: to love the Lord so much that you fear you will hurt the spirit of the Lord. And with that love, you will “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

Back to our original question: where can this Wisdom be found? How do we move along our spiritual path to find ourselves in the place where holy fear reigns and wisdom infuses our lives and we live out the command to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? Job actually tells us: to shun evil is understanding. If you understand and are living in Wisdom with the capital W, you shun evil so as not to cause damage to the Holy One. To shun evil and do good is how Swedenborg put it—to shun the evil and do good out of this holy fear of the Lord, not out of the lesser fear of punishment. This way of shunning evils, to live your life in this holy fear,

is understood by the psalmists in the same way, as they tell us about this, too.

Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. (Psalm 34)

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.

The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression. (Psalm 19)

By living a life of shunning evils, I can be wise, being innocent of great transgression and entering heaven like a child.

If I fear the Lord, shun evil, do good, I will find Wisdom with the capital W. This is actually easier said than done. Living and loving in the natural world there are so many gray areas and layers of nuance, even to something basic, like the Ten Commandments. Learning the Ten Commandments in the literal sense is like having the knowledge but not the wisdom. Following the rules, shunning evil—there are so many thorny issues in the real world that seem to defy a neat and tidy or easy response.

Here are a couple of suggestions for finding our way to Wisdom.

The first is following Swedenborg’s Rules of Life:

Often to read and meditate on the Word of God.

To submit everything to the will of Divine Providence.

To observe in everything a propriety of behavior, and to keep the conscience clear.

To discharge with fidelity the functions of my employments, and to make myself in all things useful to society.

Shunning evil and doing good.

The second suggestion is from Eckhart Tolle, the spiritual teacher, from his book *Stillness Speaks*.

Do you need more knowledge? Is more information going to save the world, or faster computers, more scientific or intellectual analysis? Is it not wisdom that humanity needs most at this time?

But what is wisdom and where is it found? Wisdom comes with the ability to be still. Just look and just listen. No more is needed. Being still, looking, and listening activates the non-conceptual intelligence within you. Let stillness direct your words and actions.

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46) and Swedenborg says in *Apocalypse Explained* §338, “True wisdom is seeing what is beneficial to your eternal life, and managing your life accordingly.” Fear the Lord and shun evil, look to becoming more loving, more wise and more useful—through stillness, through prayer, through music, through art, through kindness, through work—through living your life with holy fear. ☸



Marie Morey has been an active member of both the Elmwood New Church and the Bridgewater New Church. She resides in Massachusetts and loves spending time with her grandchildren.

The Year of the Lord

His Closest Friend in London Scribed Swedenborg's Final Words about the Lord

BY JIM LAWRENCE
WITH THOMAS HARTLEY

An Anglican priest, Rev. Thomas Hartley (1708–1784), dove headlong into Swedenborg's writings in 1769 and became not only a foremost early advocate for Swedenborgian thought, but also Swedenborg's closest English friend towards the end of the seer's life. Their delightful camaraderie came about due to not only the elevated spirit of their conversations but also to their great length. You see, Hartley could converse in Latin. Swedenborg did not know English well enough to hold running conversations with English speakers (see Wilkinson's 1849 *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Biography*, p. 239), and so he welcomed such a kindred spirit as Hartley, who could venture deep into theological conversations. Their spiritual fellowship was apparently quite rich. The family and their domestic help with whom Swedenborg lodged testified that Rev. Hartley was the sage's most frequent visitor—one who often stayed for hours. He was the visitor Swedenborg requested in his final hours. Hartley did not know that Swedenborg was that close to crossing over and, due to a personal complication, could not make the hour trip in time to see him.

Hartley forever wished he had dropped the other matter but he “answered the call” in perhaps a more profound way by engaging in the earliest publication work following the prophet's passing. That effort includes a small publication called *Nine Questions about the Trinity*. (See *Nine Questions* published in *The Four Doctrines of the Standard Edition* immediately

following “The Doctrine of the Lord.”) This short text is the transcription of questions Hartley asked on Swedenborg's view of the Lord and the answers with which Swedenborg responded. Since in some of the replies Swedenborg refers to what ended up being his final publication, *True Christianity* (1771), the answers scribed by Hartley here can be regarded as the last record from Swedenborg on the Lord and the Divine trinity.

Here are three of the Questions & Answers.

Hartley: “Before the incarnation, was the Divine Human of Jehovah a Person existing anywhere in some kind of form as the body of God, or was this aspect of the Divine an angelic form that could be assumed as a manifestation when needed? It seems logical to imagine that the Divine Human before the incarnation was different from the Divine Human that now exists after the incarnation, especially when understanding that the Divine Trinity is the Lord's Personhood in all its fullness.”

Swedenborg: “Before the incarnation the way the Divine Human took any form was through a representative figure in the form of an angel whom Jehovah the Lord filled with His Spirit. But a representative figure only represents and is not the thing itself. As such, an angel representation is like a shadow cast by the real thing. After the incarnation, however, shades of evening gave way to the rising sun. And also after the incarnation, potency of the Lord to enlighten and enliven people greatly exceeds what was

possible via the former representative human forms.”

Hartley: “Is the trinity that has always existed in the Divine to be understood as Divine love, Divine wisdom, and a quickening of spirit, or the holy proceeding?”

Swedenborg: “The Divine trinity in one person is to be understood as soul, body, and proceeding operation, which together constitute one essence. The one is from the other, and therefore the one belongs to the other. In the same way there is a trinity in every human being when we understand that every person has a soul and a body through which the operation of their spirit goes forth. But the human trinity is a finite recipient of life, whereas in the Lord the Trinity is infinite and thus Divine. The Lord is life itself even in respect to the Human, as He Himself teaches in John 5:26, 14:6, and also elsewhere.”

Hartley: “In what sense did the Lord call Himself the Son of Man if He only took flesh from the mother and not a rational soul? Has the human sonship regard solely to the human flesh?”

Swedenborg: “The Lord called Himself the Son of Man because He was the Word or Divine truth even as to the Human. The spiritual sense of “Son of man” signifies the truth of the church from the Word.... This is why in the Prophets and Psalms, everywhere where the Words speaks about the vastation of truth in the church, it also says the Son of man abides not there.”

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is dean at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies. Translation from the Latin by John Faulkner Potts (1904) has been adapted for this publication.



Where Can You Live in Retirement Amid a Swedenborgian Community?

Cairwood Village, Inc. is an independent living facility, situated on the Bryn Athyn College campus located in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. You may not realize that they have been accepting residents that are over the age of sixty-five (or one spouse who is) and a member of the General Church or *other Swedenborgian/New Church denomination* for the past three years.

Residents in Cairwood Village include members of the General and Convention denominations. There are two Convention churches about an hour drive away—Temenos Retreat Center and Church in West Chester, Pennsylvania, with Licensed Pastor Christine Campbell, and the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, with Rev. Shada Sullivan. Also, there is the local Home Church in Bryn Athyn, an independent Swedenborgian congregation with Convention and General Church members, facilitated by

Rev. Roslyn Taylor. In addition, there are numerous General Church services of various kinds (formal, informal, children's, contemporary, etc.) and the Lord's New Church located within fifteen minutes from Cairwood Village.

The original buildings at Cairwood Village were constructed around 1980 to provide affordable living for retiring and independent Swedenborgian/New Church members. An addition, with larger apartments, was added in the late 1990s. The current facility has: sixteen, one-bedroom; twelve, two-bedroom; six, deluxe two-bedroom; and six, three-bedroom, apartments. Cairwood Village has on site management—the manager and several part time associates live in the building. Someone is on call twenty-four hours per day and answering calls at night for emergencies.

Cairwood Village is a non-profit under the umbrella of the General Church. To get called for an apartment, one puts their name on a priority list with a deposit that is applied to one's entry fee. Entry fees are then based on the size of apartment accepted; there are finance options available for 30% or 50% of the entry fee, which is paid on entry to the building. A monthly fee that covers the rent and *all* utilities including water, sewer, electric, phone, internet, and cable. There are no hidden fees. Even the laundry facilities are free.

Continues on page 62



Upper: View taken from the sunroom, looking out on a snowy day.

Lower: View of the Cairwood Village Apartments showing the North Wing apartments, which face a large garden area.

Lalla's Garden Quilt Raffle

Lalla's Garden is a beautiful, hand stitched quilt designed and crafted by life-long Fryeburg New Church Assembly member Julie Rankin.

In the artists own words

"This quilt was designed and created to support the [Lalla's Memorial Garden Fund](#) project at FNCA. The featured flowers are among those planted on the grounds over a span of at least two decades under the guidance of Cecilia "Lalla" Guiu Searle. Hardy perennials that thrive in New England and bloom in August when the camp is in session: day lilies, purple coneflower, bee balm, daisies, and black-eyed Susans. The colors are evocative of all that we love about being at the FNCA: the woods, the sandy beach along the river, the mountains across the way from early morning to sunset and into the night sky so full of stars. And though



they are not to scale, those tall pines that nearly surrounded the camp are still hovering around the edges, standing guard."

The proceeds will go to support

the Lalla Garden Fund to replace the trees that were cut down with gardens with natural screening. Route 302, the state road that runs the long length of the southeastern border of the FNCA property, has been widened and raised. To do that, the State of Maine took a long, narrow strip of Assembly property and, unfortunately, removed the long, narrow stand of trees that has screened our camp from the road for decades.

You can purchase tickets on our Donate page: [fryeburg.org/donate#donatenow](https://www.fryeburg.org/donate#donatenow)

- 1 ticket for \$5**
- 6 tickets for \$50**
- 15 tickets for \$100**

Please put "Quilt Raffle" on Billing Address Line 2. Your name will be put into the drawing for the quilt, which will be held at the FNCA Centennial Celebration during the Fryeburg New Church Assembly camp session in August 2021! 🎁

FNCA Presents: Sparks Games Online for Swedenborgian Church Kids Everywhere!

At the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, the children twelve and under are known as Sparks, and every evening



at 7:00, the Sparks eagerly participate in Sparks Games, an hour of mostly active, everybody-wins-style games led by master games leader TREVOR the Games Man.

Trevor has been leading Sparks Games online for a small group of FNCA kids on Thursday evenings at 7:00 EDT. Although the active running games aren't possible (yet they still start with their usual game of Tag!), they still have a whole lot of fun together, and maintain a connection with each other in the process. Now, the FNCA would like to open up this free, weekly kids activity to Swedenborgian children everywhere.

The class is for ages 5–12 and is held on Jitsi (similar to Zoom), which works best on Chrome, so if you'd like your child to participate:

1. Make sure you have the Jitsi app or the Chrome browser on your device.
2. Send a message to Trevor at trevor@trevorthegamesman.com, he will send you a link with instructions.
3. Open the link in Chrome or on Jitsi to join, put in your child's name in the option menu.
4. Turn your camera and microphone on, and have fun!

The FNCA looks forward to your child joining in on the FUN!

Letter from the President

Continued from page 51

It is amazing to me how quickly our ministers and pastors figured out ways to stay in touch, offer virtual worship for their members and others, and comfort those in spiritual distress. Although the churches are empty, our spiritual leaders are looking after the care of these sacred spaces; they will be ready to welcome you back. One thing all of us have learned, is: *there is value to online services and more will gather when we reach out virtually, even when we can gather in person for worship again.*

Last Sunday, the congregation in Pretty Prairie tried their first Zoom Easter service. We were joined by Pawnee Rock friends and isolated members from Pennsylvania and California. It was a joy to see familiar faces and just be together during this time of separation.

May the good that is coming out of this difficult time remain and guide us on our path of regeneration and care for one another,

—Rev. Jane Siebert

Let Go and Let God

Continued from page 54

let go of my fixation on whether I'm deserving or I'm enough, or whether those close to me are enough. And I can have a plan and a path but be flexible and open to the end result being out of my control, perhaps way out of my control. This is a kind of release that I find tremendously comforting: action without attachment to the fruits of my action. I wonder if it might also be what the Lord meant when he told his disciple to sell everything and follow him. He doesn't mean to get rid of all your physical belongings, or even to get rid of your spiritual baggage, but to release your attachment

Swedenborg Broke Quarantine

Continued from page 56

and later said it was the Lord appearing much as he must have looked when living in the world. His facial expression conveyed intense spiritual love, and Swedenborg says that the Lord asked him if he had a *sundhetsbetyg* (Swedish for the certificate of health issued by authorities for a ship's company at the time of leaving her port). "Lord, You know the truth better than I," was all

to how things should go, your need to write and control the plot. This kind of non-attachment has proven helpful to me. But however we come at this paradox, of struggle and surrender, action and inaction, I imagine that it's more of an art than a science and that wisdom about these things comes from experience. We likely all have different needs at different times; some of us might need to worry a little less at times, some of us a little more at times. We can even be like both the church council members, the trusting and the distressed, all at once.

What are the ways of thinking about this that are helpful to you? How can we live into our current crisis justly and humbly, not incapacitated by anxiety, but also not complacent? May we find ways to trust in providence, and may we also be motivated to make our world new. May we walk in the way of our ancestor Helen Keller, who said so wisely, "I cannot do everything, but I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do." ☩

Dr. Rebecca Esterson teaches a variety of courses at our denomination's seminary in Berkeley, California. She is also the co-editor of the journal *Teaching Theology and Religion* at the Graduate Theological Union.



Swedenborg could reply. "Well, then do," said the Lord. And it was over. Swedenborg comprehended in the moment that he was being encouraged to press on with his faith journey, and he reflected later that indeed he had been going through a process preparing him for his next work.

There is something of a universal lesson for all of us. The Lord at a pivotal, transformational moment reminded Swedenborg of a particularly dangerous sin. Indeed, our worst sins can play, ultimately, a powerful role in our own spiritual breakthroughs. It is so good to know that, with the Lord's help, "breaking bad" can be arrested and turned around. May we all dearly strive for obtaining all that the metaphor of a bill of health holds within. ☩

CSS dean Jim Lawrence is faculty associate in spirituality at Pacific School of Religion.

Cairwood Village

Continued from page 60

A resident volunteer entertainment committee schedules regular after-dinner presentations on a variety of topics that draw many non-residents. Weekly events include, doctrinal classes, afternoon tea with a program, informal resident gatherings, various card games, and chair exercise classes. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, a catering company provides a full dinner for a small fee. In addition, the manager meets monthly with residents, and the resident association meets several times per year for discussion and reports from the manager and board of directors.

If the possibility of living at Cairwood Village interests you, call 215.947.7705 or email at cairwood.village.manager@gmail.com to receive the application and additional information. If you would like to take a tour of the facility, management would be happy to show you around. ☩

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.

Perennia (what time reveals)

BY TODD BOARD

Be wide-awake and deliberate in choosing your inner-heart myths
Else you be tantalized and captured alive, by myths with a will all their
own

Travel light, though expect to suffer the arid absence of thirst
Befriend your future self as a wiser guide to troubles and their recompense

Know love as a secret, shaded spring to visit with reverence,
Not a sun-caressed mirror pond fed by the witness of flattery

Float deftly in and out of your role in the play; after all
It's not a cell, a cage, or a leash—just a sly, backlit koan

Note that while much of life's energy and intentions seem wasted
So what? Crows and ravens still cavort under the lustrous sky

Feel yourself drawn from the bazaar's thrumming tumult
By the languorous fragrance in the garden of memory

And when you finally debark at Xania, let yourself drift, wraithlike,
To a waterside café, at home at the edge of the chattering crowd

Knowing this image too shall pass, like an eclipse or a cloudburst—
But for now, dwell in beauty most prized by the hidden, ageless eye

Todd Board is the husband of Rev. Kathy Speas, a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, and member of the Wayfarers Board.

Do you write poetry or have pieces of art you would like to share?
Send it along to Messenger@Swedenborg.org.