



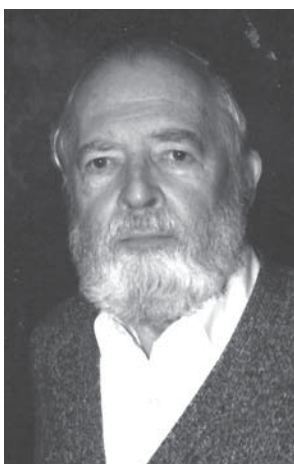
In Memoriam

The Rev. Edwin Gould Capon (1924-2009)

Edwin Capon played a tremendously important role in the modern history of the Swedenborgian Church. In terms of leadership contributions to, and accomplishments within, the life of the Swedenborgian Church in the second half of the twentieth century, very few biographies compare to Edwin's. Recognized early for his leadership potential, Edwin was not only placed on the teaching faculty but also made vice-president of the Swedenborgian School of Religion (forerunner of the Swedenborgian House of Studies) at the astonishingly young age of 31—and then made president at age 33.

He was a graduate of Harvard University, Andover-Newton Theological School, and the New Church Theological School (as the Swedenborgian seminary was then called), had already served two Boston area parishes (Bridgewater and Elmwood) as pastor with excellent results, and was viewed by many "to have the right stuff" for steering the church's way into modernity.

One of those who pegged Edwin as a hope for the future when he was young was Margaret Worcester Briggs—daughter of the long-time seminary



president, Rev. William Worcester, and a legendary Sunday School teacher who shepherded more than a thousand young people who passed through her care in her decades at the Fryeburg New Church and the Fryeburg Assembly. She knew I had worked with Edwin at the San Francisco church, and she told me every single time I visited her when she was an elderly shut-in during my time in ministry in Fryeburg, "Edwin Capon was the smartest student I ever had."

If we simply recited the litany of offices of leadership Edwin held, we would immediately ascertain his comfort with and skill in leadership: president of the seminary for 22 years (1955–1977); president of the denomination for two full terms (1992–1998); chair of the Council of Ministers for two terms; pastor of five churches, including a long pastorate in San Francisco (1979–1990); and countless vital positions on various official and special committees at all levels of the church's life.

What such an external litany does

not reveal though, is the context in which Edwin served as a church leader. He provided exquisitely wise, tough, and courageous leadership during one of the most contentious periods of the church's life. As one who teaches Swedenborgian Church history at our seminary, I am well aware of the long and protracted "culture war" that dominated the church from the mid-twentieth century through the early eighties. In a nutshell, it was the great second event of a liberal-conservative conversation that pulled fiercely at the seams of unity within the church. The first intense clash, which unfolded in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, resulted finally in the great schism that created the General Church.



Concerning this second great period of division occurring a half-century later, I have heard and read many accounts and tales from Swedenborgians who lived through the tumultuous decades of the fifties, sixties, and seventies. This period was marked by doctrinal debates and by many organizational moves that created a context for contention, such as our denomination joining the National Council of

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Behold a New Thing: New Expressions of Faithfulness • Convention Registration Form
LaPorte Celebrates Its Sesquicentennial • Resources for Church Renewal

The Editor's Desk



Stepping Up

The passing of the Rev. Edwin Capon (page 49) reminds us how much he gave of himself to the Swedenborgian Church and how much each of us benefitted from his dedication and leadership. It also reminds us that, although the Lord always provides a church (as Swedenborg tells us, and Andy Stinson reminds us on page 57),

we are the Lord's agents in the natural world, choosing whether to do good and acting on our choices by being of use. Putting aside for the moment the column inches we could devote exploring the theological dimensions of that statement, we can simply focus on how we can be of use.

We have lots of good articles that touch on that concept this month. Chris Laitner suggests a way to approach stewardship to help our churches flourish and grow (page 51). Sage Currie and Andy Stinson offer an open-minded attitude to change and putting new ideas in action (pages 56 and 57). On page 60 the Laporte New Church offers a model for connecting the history of your church with your larger community, and John Maine vets some resources for learning about church renewal on page 62. As you read about the candidates offering their time and talents to serve in church governance on page 52, consider how you might be of service to the larger church community by running for one of these of-

fices. And don't forget to register for the annual convention (page 59). Annual conventions offer a respite from our daily lives while providing a venue for church service and good fellowship. Now might be a good time to lock in some reasonable airfares as well.

Whatever you are offering or choose to offer to your church community, take a few moments to consider Edwin's contributions, what they have meant for us, and how our actions might affect the next generation and more—even unto eternity.

Speaking of contributions, after more than a year and thirteen issues as editor of *The Messenger*, I want to thank everyone who has contributed to it. I have received many kind comments about the quality and vitality of *The Messenger*, as well as helpful sug-

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Church Calendar

April 15: Annual reports due at Central Office for inclusion in the advance reports booklet

April 18: Earth Day Youth Retreat • Kitchener (Ontario) Church of the Good Shepherd

May 9: Wayfarers Board of Managers conference call meeting

June 24–28: Annual Convention Seattle, Washington

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Letters to the Editor

UU Swedenborgian Lecture

Dear Editor,

In the March, 2009, issue of *The Messenger*, I read with interest the article about the 2009 Swedenborg Lecture Series at Urbana University. ("2009 Swedenborg Lecture at UU") I appreciated the excellent information about Dr. Kim Nielsen, professor or history and women's studies at the University of Wisconsin, who will be this year's scholar.

I found missing two pieces of information that should be of interest to the Swedenborgian Church in North America. The first is that this program, more than a decade old, is financially supported by a yearly grant from the

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the Messenger

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The President Reflects

Misunderstood Stewardship: Using the Wrong Conjunction

A deep, abiding understanding basic to our theology and life practice is that we are actively involved in a process of regeneration: a God-given ability to help ourselves achieve the “heavenly life” for which we are created. Living our lives “as if of ourselves” is to feel that we are always in freedom, that we choose our own paths. While we might think that our choices occur only at big, major, life-altering decision points, the truth is that we are always making these choices and that they are based on the belief systems we have, on the “highest good we know.”



Our churches—our ministries in all of their forms—are the places where we are nurtured spiritually through worship, sermons, classes, and other experiences to create that “highest good.” Each of us as members, friends, and ministers of the church also share that spiritual nurturing with others as it shows through our lives in the world.

It is in this context that we need to think of our churches and to make the conscious choice to support them financially. Supporting our churches should be as primary as is our choice to buy groceries to sustain our physical bodies. Our church and its ministries sustain our souls, and we need to support those programs. Too often, I believe, we put *church* on the bottom of the “ought to support” pay-out list rather than at the top of the “must support” list. I have been guilty of this occasionally, and I’m trying to do better.

We need to step up to the financial

support of our churches. We each need to commit resources through regular financial giving to our churches. How else will these wonderful, warm, spiritually nurturing places continue? How else will we be able to create houses of worship and ministries of use and welcome? How else will we train a professional clergy or have opportunities to worship, learn, share, and grow together? How can we become more giving and less withholding of ourselves in supporting the work of our ministries? How can we possibly think that what has called to each of us will exist beyond us without our ongoing support?

Too many of our board meetings begin with the treasurer’s report or some sort of financial accounting. Too often our meetings start with worried statements about some potential new expense. Too often we reflect our denominational history of not asking for honest, regular financial commitment from all of our members and friends—and we must change that old paradigm. We cannot succeed in this century on organizational structures from the past. We need to provide solid, regular financial giving. It’s simple: *we need to pay for our ministries.*

If you give regularly, weekly, every other week, or even monthly to your local church (it takes an average of \$700 to \$1100 annually from each giver to support the needs of most of those churches), **thank you** for choosing to give at a truly helpful level! That’s what it takes. If you don’t have a local church, but you give regularly to your regional association programs and churches, or you give to one of our church camps, or you give to our various denominational needs, **thank you!** And then, the question is, *by how much can you increase your financial giv-*

ing next year? Financial stewardship can *never* remain static; it should always look to how it can grow to support ongoing ministries, outreach and denominational possibilities.

Financial stewardship is *not* a choice; it is a commitment of necessity. If we want to continue to have local ministries, an active online ministry, church camps, and other outreach programs, members and friends of those ministries *must* choose to give regularly at helpful levels . . . and the choice cannot be to give “the last \$10 of the month.” The hard reality that we never say enough is that if we want to see our churches, camps, the ordained ministry, and our presence in the world continue, *we need to pay for it.*

I don’t live near a Swedenborgian church, so I attend a church in my local community. Every year in that church, I’m given the opportunity to pledge and use a weekly envelope system for giving. But I also *always* give to my own Swedenborgian church of membership, to one of our church camps, and, because I am currently able to, I contribute to some of our other denominational ministries and needs. Every single General Convention ministry is supported by a relatively small number of people, so each of us has to make certain that our giving is meaningful (which is a euphemism for “as large a humanly possible”) and continuous. We need ongoing, regular financial help to support our work. *We need to pay for it.*

There is no place for “or” in the equation that we sometimes use. There is no “time, talent *or* treasure.” We need to give *all* of those things. The conjunction is “and.” We need to step up to stewardship and give our time,

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Nominees for Election in 2009

The nominating committee has nominated the following candidates for offices, boards, support units, and committees:

Convention President for 2010	Ken Turley: Fryeburg, Maine
Vice-President	Lori Steinhiser: Michigan City, Indiana
Treasurer	Susannah Currie: Providence, Rhode Island
Recording Secretary	Susan Wood Ashton: Fort Myers, Florida
General Council (layperson)	David Vigas: Michigan
Education Support Unit (EDSU)	Sue Ditmire: Maryland
Ministry Support Unit (MinSU)	Barbara Boxwell: Midland, Michigan
	Junchol Lee: Cleveland, Ohio
SHS Board of Trustees, (representative class)	Robert Leas: Fort Wayne, Indiana
	Herb Ziegler: Cambridge, Massachusetts
Nominating Committee	Wilma Wake: Portland, Maine

The nominating committee is still accepting candidates for nomination to all positions. Any member wishing to contribute to life and work of the denomination is encouraged to contact Matthew Fleming (matthewmallard@hotmail.com). The nominating committee is still seeking candidates for the following open positions:

- General Council (clergy)
- General Council (layperson)

- COMSU
- FPRSU
- IMSU
- MinSU
- Nominating Committee

Elections will be held at the 2009 Annual Convention in Seattle. Nominations from the floor of the convention will be called for before an election is conducted.

The Messenger has received the following candidate statements to date:

Vice-President: Lori Steinhiser

I am a member of LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana. My husband Alan and I have three children:



Cody (16), Scout (8), and Wyatt (4). We live in Michigan City, Indiana, and I am the administrator

at Renaissance Academy, a Montessori Preschool and K-8th grade charter school.

I began attending services at LaPorte New Church in 1994 and became a member in 2000. Since that time, I have been actively involved on the board, serving as president from 2002-2005 and secretary from 2006 to the present. I also enjoy working with our children very much, serving as the Sunday School superintendent since 2002 and youth leader since 2006. Beyond our local church, I have served on the executive committee of the Illinois Association, and I am the vice-president of ANCSSA (American New Church Sunday School Association).

I was elected to General Council at Convention 2006. On the Council, I most recently was an active member of our search committee for the new op-

erations manager and currently serve on the personnel committee.

I am particularly interested in our youth, education, resource management, and denominational structure and processes. I consider it a tremendous honor to be nominated for the position of vice-president. The business and healthy growth of our church is of great interest to me, and I intend to be usefully involved in some capacity or another long into the future. Thank you for your consideration.

Treasurer: Susannah Currie

Having served as treasurer for the past eight months, I have discovered that there is a lot to learn, and I hope to continue to grow in my awareness and expertise if elected for another one-year term.



Recording Secretary: Susan Wood-Ashton

My name is Susan Wood-Ashton, and for the fifth year I am honored to accept the nomination for the office of recording secretary of General Con-



vention. In the 37 years that I have been a member of the Swedenborgian Church, I have been on General Council, FPRSU, AFC and the

retirement committee; I've also served as president of the Ohio Association as well as board president of the Kemper Road Church in Ohio, now known as

the New Church of Montgomery. After leaving Ohio and moving to Florida in 1985, I became a member of the New Church of Southwest Florida although my distance from Ft. Myers classifies me as an isolated member. I am currently an active member of the Swedenborgian Community, the online ministry of the Swedenborgian Church, where I serve on the steering committee appointed by General Council. The position of recording secretary is one with a wide variety of duties, and I have found my four years as secretary to be both enriching and rewarding. I would be honored to serve my church for another year in this capacity.

General Council (layperson): David Vigés

I would consider it an honor to be elected to the General Council. I believe both my work and general life experiences give me the knowledge and ability to be of service to the General Convention in this capacity.



I have worked for the State of Michigan, Bureau of Construction Codes for over 34 years. My major function has been to be in charge of the bureau's \$25 million budget. I also supervise an office of eight persons who handle IT and web functions for the bureau, purchase computers, and issue construction permits.

Currently, I am president of the board of directors for the Lansing Swedenborgian Church. We are presently trying to expand and grow our church by making it known throughout the community. I also have experience being on the council of my previous church.

My wife Julie and I have four children and seven grandchildren. We both

feel that we have found a home in the Church and the denomination.

SHS Board: Robert Leas

I am a graduate of Indiana University with a Master of Divinity degree from McCormick Theological Seminary, and I am an honorably retired minister of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

In my career as a certified supervisor of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc., I taught seminary students and clergy in theology and pastoral care for 32 years. Prior to that, I spent twelve years as a pastor in three Presbyterian churches. I am married to Marjory Leas, a lifelong member of the Swedenborgian Church, and I am active with her at the Almont New Church Assembly.

As a current member of the Board of Trustees of the Swedenborgian House of Studies at Pacific School of Religion, I am completing my ninth year of service. My responsibilities on the board have included terms as vice chair and clerk.

I bring to the tasks of the board my years of experience as a teacher and administrator working with theological students, seminary faculty, and interested lay people. I would be happy to continue to serve the Swedenborgian Church as a member of the Board of Trustees.

SHS Board: Herb Ziegler

I gladly accept nomination to serve another term on the SHS Board of Trustees. I perceive that my presence on the board has contributed to its success in setting goals and priorities for management and stewardship of our small but vibrant seminary and school of theology. I have been a com-



mitted and active member of the board through the early years of adjustment to new challenges and opportunities in our California home.

We have many challenges ahead: the performance of our endowment; the hurdles to studying on campus that face many students; implementation of our long-range plan; and, of course, those challenges yet unknown that will emerge in the next three years. I feel ready to represent your interests and wisdom in facing these challenges.

MINSU: Barb Boxwell

I am Barb Boxwell, president of Michigan Association of the Swedenborgian Church. I became a member of the church through the member-at-large process of the Michigan Association in 1986, having stumbled across Swedenborg in college. I love the teachings and enjoy being a member of this church.

This would be my second term on MINSU. I have been shepherding the ministry of the New Church of the Southwest Desert since its inception, as well as being a liaison to seven other churches within the denomination. It is exciting to see the churches take on new ventures and succeed.

What I bring to this position is a background in business, having owned and operated several businesses as sole proprietorships, a corporation, and a partnership LLC. I also bring to this church a background of spirituality deeply rooted in Swedenborg.

I hope that you will elect me to a second term on MINSU so that I may continue the work we have started.

MINSU: Junchol Lee

It has been my privilege to serve MINSU this past year, fulfilling a one-year unexpired term, and I am excited about the opportunity to serve MINSU for a full term.

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Edwin Capon

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Churches, our seminary moving into a close relationship with a mainline seminary (Andover-Newton), the advent of modern psychology as an important aspect of theology and ministry, the ordination of women, and the beginnings of the conversation about ordination of openly gay candidates, all of which were played out in various ways of interpreting Swedenborg for the contemporary context.

Edwin Capon played a prominent and significant leadership role all through this period. Though identified intellectually as a “liberal,” I think most would agree that Edwin was by nature a very conservative person and very deliberate about change. At the same time, however, he had a characteristic inclination towards utilizing progressive new tools, rather than simply relying on the treasured procedures of the past. That combination of intellectually progressive but constitutionally conservative was a winning formula for effective leadership. Edwin developed a style of restraint, patience, and compassion that led to a reputation for being able to broker resolutions and compromises that could stand up and live forward in the real world. George Dole put it this way to me:

I always appreciated the extent of the burden and responsibility Edwin carried in helping the church move forward during a lengthy and painful polarization. He had a talent not only for finding the center stripe, but for finding the center of the center stripe.

The Rev. Paul Zacharias, who was Edwin’s student both in the classroom and in his field education in the Elmwood Society, offered a similar perspec-

tive to me this week in an email:

Probably the single most outstanding feature I remember is that Edwin always attempted to be fair, objective, and impartial in his decision making. He was able to look at all sides of a given situation, trying to see what was in the best interests of all the parties involved, and then decide accordingly based on the spiritual principles involved. I didn’t agree with all of his decisions, but I came to trust that he had thought about the



Edwin and Esther Capon

matter from all angles and that he had rendered an honest, fair judgment. He had high moral and ethical standards, and these were not compromised. It was a privilege to have known him, and I learned a great deal about ministry from Edwin Capon.

The Rev. Erni Martin noted to me that as the leader of the theological school, Edwin advanced a number of progressive ideas, such as moving the school to Berkeley in 1963 (though the plan fell through, it had been shepherded to a unanimous vote by both the seminary faculty and the board, and the school moved to Newton in-

stead), encouraging student formation process through the National Training Laboratory in Bethel, Maine, and developing the legendary field education program with the Puget Sound ministry in their Project Link.

As a pastor, Edwin was especially noted for his philosophical sermons on current topics, his kindly pastoral style, and his close attention to administrative detail. All of his churches, from his early days in Elmwood and Bridgewater to his latter parishes in Detroit, San Francisco, and St. Paul prospered under his leadership.

In his personal life, Edwin found happiness in his second marriage. In 1975 he and Esther began a wonderfully rich and full marital journey that would last 34 years. They jumped in together, supporting each other in their careers and running a household with their combined eight children (six with Esther and two with Edwin, most of whom were still at home at the time of their marriage). Along the way, Esther earned a law degree and then worked in a firm and performed much pro bono work in eldercare issues. After Edwin finished his tenure at the seminary and served three parishes, he served two terms in the nineties as president of the denomination, during which Esther, then retired, was able to be a regular companion on his trips. They especially treasured their July and August retreats at their Kezar Lake cottage in western Maine.

I worked with Edwin for two years (1986–1988) in a team ministry concept at the San Francisco Church, and I was also able to visit Edwin and Esther frequently over the past several years in their retirement home less than an hour away from the seminary. I learned many of Edwin’s loves over time: he was a Civil War buff; his favorite theologian

other than Swedenborg was Berdayev; he loved football but not so much other sports; he liked to hike; he liked antique rifles; and he enjoyed building a library of mostly secondhand books. Most of all, he took a deep interest in the affairs of the church. He was always eager for church news, and each piece of information that I would share he would ponder and consider.

But in the end, family was perhaps the most cherished part of his life. Shortly before Edwin passed away, as we went through items in his study that he wanted to give to the library and archives, we discovered that four years ago he had written a brief memoir. He concluded it with these words:

In my eighty years there have been many more pluses than minuses. . . . I cannot rank the pluses in order of importance, with one exception. For some thirty years Esther has been the most important part of my life. She is thoughtful, kind, loving, and wise. We have had many good times to-

gether. In marrying her I also acquired a second family which has enriched my life, as have my two boys (Peter and Jonathan) and my granddaughter.

I am acutely aware how inadequately this memorial tribute captures the extent of Edwin's uses and contributions. He touched countless lives in personal ways, and he also made a contribution of historical note to the Swedenborgian movement in North America. I am grateful to have worked with him, to have learned from him, to have shared ideas and interests with him, and to have been one of his friends along his way.

—Jim Lawrence

Stewardship

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talent *and* our treasure to everything that we hold dear in this, our beloved Church. We need to *honor* what we believe and *give* decent, consistent financial support. It's definitely worth it!

—Chris Laitner

News from the Women's Alliance

In past years, the Women's Alliance has mailed the annual appeal letter to hundreds of women and got very little response. Last year at Annual Convention, the executive committee decided to print the fundraising letter in *The Messenger* and eliminate the mailing, thus saving hundreds of dollars in postage and printing costs. In place of being mailed to you, the annual appeal letter was printed in the February issue of *The Messenger* and is being distributed to our member churches. This is your opportunity to pay your annual dues and send a donation, which helps the Alliance in our many efforts to support various programs within Convention. If you haven't had a chance to read the letter, please do.

—Nancy Little, president

Checks should be made out to: North American Alliance of Swedenborgian Women and mailed to our treasurer Jeannette Hille, 4240 Larch Place North, Plymouth, MN 55442

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Member Church/Society Affiliation: _____

Amount Donated: Dues (\$5.00): _____ General Fund: _____ Mite Box: _____

SCYL Memorial Day Retreat

The 2009 Memorial Day Weekend Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) Teen Retreat is May 22–25 in Fryeburg, Maine. Our retreats are open to teens ages 13–18 of all faiths and beliefs. At our retreats we offer life skills and spiritual sessions based on the principles of the Swedenborgian church. We strive for a safe, secure and inclusive environment to discuss and share relevant and meaningful ideas and challenges that teens face today. We work, play, and learn together as a community. We have fun!

For teens and parents new to SCYL retreats, please don't hesitate to contact youth director Kurt Fekete with any and all questions and concerns (email: kfekete@hotmail.com or call 802.345.0169). Kurt will answer your questions or, if appropriate, put you in contact with a league officer in your region to help give you as much information and encouragement as you need!

Visit us online at: youthleague.blogspot.com

The Editor's Desk

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gestions for improvement. But I could not manage this every month without the articles others so helpfully provide. I invite you to consider submitting an article for *The Messenger*—news, a reflection, theological musings, connections, poetry, photos, art, research, history, or anything you feel ready to contribute. Contact me and we can discuss your idea. The readers would love to hear from you. If an article inspires some thoughts, write a letter; we have room for vibrant exchange of ideas.

—Herb Ziegler

Behold a New Thing: Emerging

Reflections on the 2009 Earl Lectures and Lead

BY SAGE CURRIE

Every day as a hospice chaplain I meet thoughtful, loving, spiritual people who do not consider themselves church people. I work with them. I pray with them. They are my peers, my patients, my colleagues. They are nurses and social workers who, when sitting with the dying man who reaches out above speaking the names of loved ones who have passed on before him, assure him confidently that his family has come to welcome him to heaven—nurses and social workers who do not attend church or profess a particular faith, and when pressed ask the question, “What does the church have to do with me?”

I carried their question with me when I decided to use my vacation time this January to attend PSR’s Earl Lecture Series “Behold a New Thing, Emerging Expressions of Faithfulness.” Promising myself to explore this new movement that has come to be known as *the emerging*, or *emergent church*, I was intrigued, and hopeful that this conference would be a place for me to answer the questions that so many of my colleagues were asking. Where is church relevant? In what new ways is church thriving and living? And how are new churches reaching out to people who don’t understand the first thing about what church has to do with them?

I had been hearing blips about the emergent church for some time. I even had a couple of books about it on my shelf I had yet to crack open. And more than anything, what attracted me to this conference was a real excitement seeing PSR bring to its campus people who were not just theorizing or theologizing about church, but doing it. Looking at the schedule to see that Jay Bakker of Revolution Church

in New York City and Karen Ward, the “abbess” of the Church of the Apostles in Seattle, would be speaking really intrigued me. These are leaders of two emergent church communities that are living, growing, and worshipping together. I wanted to know what made what they were doing “emergent,” what made them different, and how they were reaching the many people out there who, like my friends and colleagues, had no idea anymore what church had to do with them.

So I had a lot of questions. And I wish I could report that I left the conference with a lot of answers, instead of more questions, but . . .

Well, that’s not entirely true; I did come away with a few answers.

First, the emerging church is not a specific thing, a specific way of worshipping, or a specific organization. The best definition for emerging church that I found was that we do and create emergent church anytime we listen for how God might call us to speak, create, or organize in a new way in our communities.

For Jay Bakker, Revolution Church is emergent in that he feels called to reach out to Christians who, like him, have been burned. As their fliers read:

As Christians we’re sorry for being self-righteous judgmental bastards. Revolution, NYC, A church for people who have given up on church.

His church meets in the back of a bar where people sip beer and coffee while he preaches. There is no music, which, as Jay says, is a “button” for him; there is no liturgy to speak of, and he is not what you would call a charismatic preacher. He is unassuming as he sits atop a bar stool and ponders life, scripture, and God’s grace—no amens

or halleluiahs, no fire and brimstone. This type of informal community is what has emerged as Jay has listened to what church might and could look like in his community of Brooklyn, New York—listened to how God may still be able to create church in the world for Christians who have given up on church.

Karen Ward’s call to create Apostles’ Church is just as authentic, just as emergent but has taken her community in a very different direction. At the conference, Karen and her worship team offered a prayer service like those at their community in Seattle. Multimedia images, art, ambient music, chanting, poetry, and prayer, along with strips of duct tape that worshipers were invited to place over their mouths to experience the feeling of being silenced, made this worship service a full-bodied sensory experience—nothing like Jay Bakker talking from a bar stool. From the Church of the Apostles website:

If you say go—a new way to walk that’s crazy beautiful church of the apostles (a.k.a. “cota” or just apostles) is a new church, not only in “years in existence,” but in mindset. We seek to be a real and authentic community, at home in today’s culture and in our Fremont neighborhood as “artisans of a new humanity.”

Karen Ward and the community she helped create hear God calling them to do something new by using music, media, art, and technology to bring their whole bodies and senses into the worship experience.

So it’s not just one thing, one way of worshipping, and the differences between Karen and Jay were a great re-

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Big Expressions of Faithfulness: Worship Conference at Pacific School of Religion

BY ANDY STINSON

The Lord Always Provides a Church . . .

All this is like a house and its foundations. The actual house is heaven, and it is also Divine Truth there such as the Word is in its inward sense, while the foundations are the world and also Divine Truth there such as the Word is in its outward sense. Just as the house rests on its foundations, so too heaven rests on the Church, and consequently Divine Truth in heaven on Divine Truth on earth. For through the Word a continuous link exists from the Lord by way of heaven right down to people in the world. This is the reason why the Lord always provides for the existence of a Church on earth, where Divine Truth may exist on its lowest level. —AC 9340

When I learned that the Pacific School of Religion (PSR) was hosting the likes of Jay Bakker and Karen Ward (we'll get to them in a minute) for the 2009 Earl Lectures, I knew I wanted to be there. A lot of what the New Church is about is being worked out by people on the fringes of the church, without bricks and mortar and bylaws, working to see the New Church come into a new relationship with the world. I want to begin by talking about three of the speakers at the lectures and then offer some reflections on the conference.

Karen Ward

I have been a fan of Karen Ward for a while, downloading podcasts of her worship services, messages, and talks about the Church of the Apostles for a few years now. A self-proclaimed "ab-bess," she leads a community in Seattle from the Episcopal and Lutheran traditions that gives expression to art and

music, fosters community, and launches people into faith in a profound and deep way. Her community offers a worship and art experience that offers real possibilities for what congregational life in a post-Christian, postmodern framework might look like. Karen is not abandoning old forms, but rather making them new in a way that invites people who may not know, understand, or recognize the traditional elements of worship to engage in a worship experience that is not about a person up front disseminating the "truth," but offers an experience where they might come to "do truth" in their lives. Find out more about Church of the Apostles at www.apostleschurch.org

Jay Bakker

"I'm just here to preach Grace . . ."

One of the pleasures of the lectures was the opportunity to hear and meet Jay Bakker. If the name sounds familiar, it should, as he is the son of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, founders of the PTL Club, who in the eighties disgraced themselves in scandal. Jay is both a departure from and an extension of his parents and his experience in that cauldron that was the indictment of the PTL Club and its ministries. Coming from the free church tradition, he is not seminary trained and his talks reveal a foundational grittiness.

Bakker is a rubber-meets-the-road preacher who was shaped by those early experiences in the evangelical world. He is still very much from the conservative and evangelical tradition, but with a lip piercing and tattooed sleeves he represents a new way that seeks to reach those who have seen and been burned by the excesses of the church and who have rejected the church. His greatest work has been taking a stand

for the gay community within the evangelical community, earning him a lot of hate mail.

At his core of experiencing the very best and worst of "church," he is seeking to transcend it with God's love. I came to admire him, not because he is a great thinker but because he has truly taken on the charge of living his faith in a dramatic and authentic way. When he brought his ministry front and center as gay-affirming, he lost substantial financial support and came very near to closing the door on his ministry.

When I asked him about this, he said he has come to believe that he was prepared for this ministry. Having the experiences of growing up front and center in the best and worst of the evangelical tradition allows him to speak to the 65 million Americans that identify themselves as evangelicals with an authority and conviction that is unrivaled. It's one thing to be a liberal and gay-affirming; it is quite another to come from and stand in the evangelical tradition and endure persecution from that community while proclaiming the "radical grace" of the Gospel. The walk of the prophet is a hard one, and Jay seems to be doing it with a lot of grace and humility. Find out more about Jay and Revolution Church at www.revolutionnyc.com.

Gerardo Marti

"I am not the minister, and you are not the church that I am here to serve; together we are the church and we are here to go out and serve the world." (as quoted by Gerardo Marti)

Gerardo is a sociologist from the world of academia. He is a professor at Davidson College in North Carolina, where he studies the American re-

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Reflections: Andy Stinson

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ligious scene. Truly, Gerardo was the highlight of the event for me. It was amazing to have someone from outside the church looking at the grand schema of church in America and saying “this is what I see happening,” without preconceptions or theological or philosophical biases. His scholarship is fascinating—he is following some of the most influential movements in religion in America.

He maps out a growing religious movement (and growing quite fast) that is nondenominational and based on hyper-awareness of media and culture. For the actors in that movement, the Christian message is not separate from the cultural personas of the church leaders. They are highly media focused and media savvy, and they bring to bear not the falsity of the old school televangelist, but a consciousness of the authenticity that media exposure makes possible.

I encourage anyone interested in church in America and where it is going to read Professor Marti’s books or read his blog: <http://praxishabitus.blogspot.com>.

I share snapshots of these three with you in the hope that you will be inspired to read more from them and to lay some groundwork for the observations with which I came away from the lectures.

Without a Temple

The church is devolving, and this is good thing. The ultimate vision of the church that God offers us is a place residing in people’s hearts and not in temples; as we have often heard, the Holy City has no temple. While I believe this, I also believe it’s going to be many more generations on this earth before we live that reality. And yet we are moving toward New Church structures as the old church structures de-

volve. In this movement there is a lot of goodness still to be had from the forms of the institutional church, but that church has to be ready to move closer to the ultimate forms to which the New Church points us.

Those forms are about freedom: freedom of exploration, freedom of expression, and a fundamental willingness to follow Divine Providence. The new expressions of Christianity coming from these emergent groups are nimble, responsive, and outside the confines of what “institutional church” might mean. Now I am not anti-institution and neither are these new incarnations, but they are attentive to what is wine and what is the chalice, what actually feeds and what is simply there to hold that which nourishes, and generally the chalice is very simple.

Just Do It

A lot of the talk about the church and the emergent church at the beginning of the conference settled on the idea of a “silver bullet.” Not just Swedenborgians, but every tradition in America is trying to discern how to communicate its message in a highly competitive culture. There must be something or some things that those who are flourishing are doing right—a praise band, cool clothes, proxima projectors—something that we can adopt that will allow us to attract serious people of faith.

The bold truth is that form matters much less than function. How people are worshipping, whether with a bar stool and a microphone as Jay Bakker is or with serious production values as in the Mosaic Church studied by Gerardo Marti, matters little. What matters is that they are “doing truth,” that the churches and leaders are ministering to the world and to its wounds in a myriad of ways, not any old ways, but their ways, the ways they are uniquely and powerfully called by God to bring

forward into the world.

There is not a right way, but there is, it seems, a right spirit, a spirit of radical hospitality, a spirit of God’s Love versus God’s judgment, a spirit of newness. This does not mean tradition is rejected but rather offered in a form that invites people to take part instead of ostracizing them with words that have lost their meaning and actions that no longer make sense.

The unique attribute these and other new churches and leaders share is that they are doing church their way. They are not voting on it or setting up committees to study it; they are simply finding direct and powerful ways to share God’s love with their immediate communities, the people that live to the left and to the right of them everyday.

Culture as Friend

A common concept among all the speakers was the church as an extension of culture, not opposed or appended to it—working within the cultural milieu. Bakker in New York, Ward in Seattle, and Mosaic Church in North Carolina (one of Marti’s subjects) are all friends to the culture they inhabit. They trust enough in the transformational nature of the Gospel to let it do its work in a culture that may appear hostile or distracting. Their churches are highly digital, highly conscious of their message, and they are stewards of the perception of their message in the world. They are conscious of ideas such as “branding” their churches. These are churches that are communicating to people who otherwise would never hear things of God or the Gospel preached. They craft their message to communicate God’s love to the world in a holistic way, with awareness of the highly competitive world of media frenzy.

The Gospel

Meeting these people, I found my-

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185th Session of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, June 24-28, 2009

Council of Ministers: June 21-23

2009 Registration Form

Convention 2009 will be held in Seattle, Washington on the campus of The University of Washington. To learn more about UW, visit www.washington.edu. **To learn more about the 2009 Convention and view a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**, please visit www.swedenborg.org or call the Central Office at 617.969.4240.

Lodging: Haggett Hall's rooms are arranged corridor-style with one bathroom per floor. Every two floors share a lounge.

Childcare: The childcare program will run during meetings and receptions for children ages 3–12. **If you will be bringing children to Convention, please read the Convention FAQ or contact the Central Office for details, rates, deadlines, and to obtain the necessary forms.** Note that dorm rooms will not have extra cots or cribs, so please plan accordingly.

Teen Program: The youth program runs from Wednesday, June 24 through Sunday, June 28, and is supervised by Kurt Fekete, youth director. If you want your teen age 13–17 to attend without a parent, please see the FAQ or contact the Central Office for details.

All guests staying off campus will have to pay for meals when entering the dining hall. Please read the FAQ for details.

Parking permits are available for those staying on campus. Please contact the

Central Office **before the end of the registration period** for rates and to secure a permit. Commuters must pay for parking each day when entering the campus.

Cancellations: If you do not cancel on or before Wednesday, May 27, you will forfeit your registration fee. If you cancel less than 24 hours before your check-in, you will forfeit your registration fee, as well as the cost of one day of room and board (plus tax) or ten percent of the package rate, whichever is greater. If you fail to show up, you will forfeit your full prepayment.

You may choose from the following room packages only:

1. Package A (June 21 -28, seven nights), Council of Ministers:

\$458.50 per person, double occupancy

\$602 single occupancy

Includes seven nights of lodging, seven breakfasts, six lunches, and seven dinners.

2. Package B (June 23-28, five nights), General Council:

\$327.50 per person, double occupancy

\$430 single occupancy

Includes five nights of lodging, five breakfasts, four lunches, and five dinners.

3. Package C (June 24-28, four nights):

\$262 per person, double occupancy

\$344 single occupancy

Includes four nights of lodging, four breakfasts, three lunches, and four dinners.

Name		Attending Women's Alliance luncheon?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Name			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
(on campus guests only; average cost \$12/day; contact Central Office for total cost and more details)			Will you need a parking permit?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Street		Apt. #		
City	State (Province)	Zip		
Home Church	Email	Day Phone		
Names, ages, and genders of children accompanying you				
Requests (dietary, mobility, roommate)				

Please print any additional names or information on the back or on a separate sheet

Registration	Amt	# People	Total
Adult	\$105		
Teen (13-17)	\$90		
Child (3-12)	\$55		
Under 3 years old	Free		
*Family maximum	\$300		
One Day Registration	\$40		
Local Volunteer	\$55		
Women's Alliance Lunch (on campus)	\$15		
Women's Alliance Lunch (off campus)	\$25		

Room & Board	# Nights	#People	Total
Single (see package descriptions for rates)			
Double (see package descriptions for rates)			
Grand Total (from both Registration and Room)			

Payment Information

All prices are in US currency. **If you pay with Canadian funds, please add \$5 for handling of each Canadian check. All bills must be paid in full before May 27.** No registration refunds after May 27. Bills may be paid by Visa or by MasterCard. You may call the Central Office to make a secure credit card payment at 617.969.4240.

Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Expiration Date: _____

Card Number: _____

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Send checks payable to The Swedenborgian Church to:

Central Office, The Swedenborgian Church
11 Highland Ave., Newtonville, MA 02460

*Family maximum price applies to immediate family members only.

LaPorte Celebrates Its Sesquicentennial



The LaPorte New Church in earlier times

On January 31, 2009, the LaPorte (Indiana) New Church held the first event in a yearlong celebration of its 150th anniversary.

Upon entering the sanctuary doors of LaPorte New Church, LaPorte Symphony member Florence Long whispered in a soft voice after viewing the sunlit River of Life altar window for the first time, “This . . . is heavenly.”

The Rev. Freeman Schrock, pastor since 2004, shared that while this is an old church, the theology is not “old church”; it is a relatively new way of understanding God’s message to us. Rev. Schrock spoke of the teachings that tell how we can find heaven on earth when we live spiritual lives: that our time spent on earth is our journey to our eternal life, what we choose to do here affects our eternal life, and that God in his infinite love and wisdom wants all people to choose heaven. After the program, guests spoke quietly about this message and how deeply it touched them. And they mentioned that, while unintentional, this church was the best-kept secret in LaPorte.

Ms. Long, with fellow LaPorte Symphony member Isabel O’Connell, filled the church with beautiful violin and cello baroque and classical music to the appreciation of the audience, who came to learn about the historical ties between the beginning of the New Church in LaPorte and the people who were instrumental in founding

and growing the town of LaPorte.

LaPorte feels the historical presence of many past New Church members who were influential in the forming of the city; many streets bear their names: James Andrew and Judge William Andrew, Ferdinand Roberts, George Seymour, Judge John B. Niles, Emmet Hoyt Scott and his wife, Mary Relief Niles Scott, Dr. Abraham Teegarden, Sebastian Lay, and Rev. Henry Weller. Later, Florence Andrew and the Coffeens were prominent members of both the church and this community.

Mary Hedge, LaPorte County Public librarian and New Church musician for the past ten years, presented the early history of the church, describing how the early sermons and services by the Rev. George Field were presented on the Court House lawn in 1842 and the first meeting of the New Church congregation was posted in 1850. Earlier, John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed) had been planting seeds of faith as well as those of apples in Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio by handing out “the good news fresh from heaven”—pages of the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, to those who opened their cabin doors to him. The LaPorte Society of the New Church was incorporated on July 2, 1859.

A lot at the corner of what is now Maple and Indiana Avenues was transferred to this new society from New Church member James Andrew. He and many other New Churchmen erected the building that is still used today for worship every Sunday. The building was completed in just three months, with the first worship service held on September 11, 1859.

Fern Eddy Schultz, LaPorte County historian, shared a biographical overview of six prominent members and ministers of the church who had strong connections within this community:

- James Andrew, local businessman and wise, generous donor;
- Rev. Eugene Daniel, who served the church 1893–1908 and wrote a history of LaPorte in 1904 that is still a valuable tool for researching family history;
- Sebastian Lay, local businessman and restaurant owner;
- Abraham Teegarden, physician and abolitionist;
- The Rev. Henry Weller, who served the church 1857–1868 and created Weller’s Grove, a New Church retreat center along Stone Lake near his home on Pennsylvania Avenue;
- Emmet Hoyt Scott, LaPorte mayor (1889–1894) whose children Emmet Scott and Fannie Scott Rumely donated the aforementioned River of Life Tiffany-style altar window in memory of their mother, Mary Relief Niles Scott, in 1916. In 2007, the altar window, which has four layers of stained glass, was repaired and restored to its original beauty and integrity. The sunlight filters through these layers to create a sense of peace, tranquility, and knowing.

To learn more, visit www.laportenewchurch.org. ☞

Teen Travel Assistance to Convention

The annual convention is an important aspect of church life and a wonderful opportunity for teens from all our churches to meet. Limited financial assistance for teens traveling to Convention 2009 in Seattle is available. The deadline for requesting assistance is May 1, 2009. Please contact Kurt Fekete at kfekete@hotmail.com to apply for scholarship funding for your teen. ☞

Reflections: Sage Currie

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minder of that.

But there was one common denominator that did unify them and the other emergent leaders that were mentioned at the conference. They each hold a deep commitment to authenticity and transparency. They are who they are, Jay with his tattoo sleeves and Karen with her messy hair and self-proclaimed poor fashion sense. They have brought their full selves to their ministries.

Let's return to the original question, "What does church have to do with me?" As these church leaders bring their full selves to positions of leadership within a church, they allow people to identify with them, to see them as human. It is possible to see yourself in Karen and Jay, and in seeing them walk this life with God one can more easily imagine doing the same. It's easier

to see what church has to do with me when I see people in positions of leadership with whom I can identify.

One more take-away from this conference was that when emergent church comes from people standing authentically and transparently in the world listening to God, and doing something new that speaks to them, it will speak to others—not to everyone, but to some.

As members of the Swedenborgian Church we often look for the silver bullet that will save our churches, that will bring in new members and revive us. But if what is happening in the world right now that is being called emergent church tells us anything, it is that there isn't a silver bullet. There are too many people who have been hurt differently, loved differently, and operate in the world differently. There are too many different ways to experience God. We will not find one answer that applies to

all. And the answer for one community might be almost abhorrent to another—and that's okay. Is this not our very New Church theology, that heaven is made of countless communities, each unique and different and each adding its unique qualities to the beauty and perfection of God?

For Jay Bakker, the church is emerging as the bar back room conversation. For Karen Ward, the church is emerging as a rave-like artist community. What might it be for you? If you were to bring your whole self to church, what would it look like? Maybe it would look a lot like the church you already attend. Maybe it would look quite different.

For my colleagues and friends here in Maine who I meet in my work with hospice, I wonder what it might be. A church that affirms the continuity of life, that believes in the spiritual pres-

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Reflections: Andy Stinson

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self thinking about the numerous ways Swedenborg talks about the Lord reforming the church, and particularly (but not exclusively) the Christian Church in the world. Swedenborg gives many historical examples where God's action is to work with the church to make it better by influencing it from both within and from outside, to reform it so that it might more clearly be a home for the New Church descending in the world. Swedenborg can be seen as an agent of that reform, and I think it is powerful when we find these agents of reform preaching the Gospel. Whether in the form of a Luther to redefine the church from within or the form of another religious movement to reform the church from without, the church, which the Lord provides, is constantly being guided to becoming a better receptor of the Holy City

in this world. My time spent with these emergent voices continues to open me to the reformation of the church that is currently underway.

A Final Thought

The final worship at PSR was led by the new moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PC-USA). He is a 38-year-old Korean-American by the name of Bruce Reyes-Chow. The PSR community was as excited and enlivened as I have ever seen it, as PSR, the home of deconstruction and liberal historical critical thought, whose "tradition of boldness" has been taken seriously by many of their new students who, while gay or gay affirming, come from homes in the more evangelical traditions. I saw that day a bit of what the future might look like for us in the liberal church and in Swedenborgianism in particular, a bit of the divine marriage.

The divine marriage, love and wis-

dom coming together, whether it happens in Berkeley or Tashkent, when it takes place people change and the world changes. It is the very salvation of the world. I experienced it in that worship, the stuff of the lectures becoming manifest, a deep and residing passion for God coming into relationship with an understanding of what that actually might mean, in scholarship, in living, in the church, and in the world. As we of so many different traditions worshipped together in a powerful and cohesive way, dancing, clapping, thinking, and praying, we got a glimpse of a church that is not just about ideas or old forms or new glitzy forms, but is about a heart of worship to the Lord and a preaching of the Gospel, which is the only thing that has ever changed the world and ever will. After all, the Lord always provides a church. ☩

The Rev. Andy Stinson is Chairperson of the Council of Ministers.

Nominees

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I have been the pastor at Swedenborg Chapel in Cleveland, Ohio since 2000 and this is my sixth year serving the Council of Ministers as a member

of its executive committee. With these experiences, I am fully aware of how most ministries in the General Convention are doing and what the practical needs of our ministers are. My prayer is that MINSU continues to evolve into a real center for resources and guidance for the ministries in Convention.

Nominating Committee: Wilma Wake

I was raised Baptist and Presbyterian, so it was a long journey that led me to the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg and to the Swedenborgian Church. Once I discovered this remarkable group, however, I knew I had found my spiritual home. I was ordained in 1990, and have been blessed to serve Convention in various roles since then.



Currently I am minister at the Portland (Maine) New Church and minister with the online community (www.swedenborgiancommunity.org). I love both parish ministry and cyber ministry. I especially value getting to know the isolated Swedenborgians and new seekers from all over the world who worship with our online community. If elected to the nominating committee, I would be particularly interested in finding ways to get our isolated members more involved in the work of Convention. ☩

Resources for Church Renewal

BY JOHN MAINE

The Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, is engaging in an extended process of discerning its core values, vision, and mission.

In preparing for this exercise, and to help guide our thinking about it, I have found the following four books on church renewal and transformation to be inspiring and exciting. All are relatively short and highly readable. In case they haven't crossed your desks, I want to share them with you:

Behold I Do a New Thing: Transforming Communities of Faith, C. Kirk Hadaway (Pilgrim Press: 2001), 140 pages.

I cannot recommend this book highly enough: an excellent primer on the church in the twenty-first century and the issues and challenges for transformation.

The Emerging Church: A Model for Change and a Map for Renewal, Bruce Sanguin (Copperhouse: 2008), 224 pages.

Despite the title, this is not about the "emergent church" movement; Sanguin uses "emerging" in an evolutionary, "creation theology" sense *a la*

Matthew Fox (and yet in a very Swedenborgian way, too).

Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices, Bruce McLaren, (Thomas Nelson: 2008), 214 pages.



This is the first in what is to be an eight-book series, each by a different author, on the ancient Christian spiritual practices. Foundational is the thesis—a la Diana Butler Bass—for the call to the local church to become an active "center for spiritual transformation" in the world.

A New Reformation: Creation Spirituality and the Transformation of Christianity, Matthew Fox (Inner Traditions: 2006), 134 pages.

This little book is in many (all?) ways a manifesto for the realization of the New Church. It is a fascinating read and quite incredibly Swedenborgian in scope and purpose.

I think these books have much to offer our conversation regarding the renewal and transformation of our denomination and our local churches. ☩

The Rev. John Maine is pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario.

Letters to the Editor

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General Council of the General Convention) and the second is that the scholar who is invited will be using the Swedenborgian resources available in the Urbana University Swedenborg Collection for a research project. (This is a special collection of books and other resource material that are kept in a climate-controlled setting.)

The annual Swedenborg Lecture Series is a wonderful connection of schol-

arly research, educational connectedness and ecumenical outreach—all of which are the reasons that the General Council voted a decade ago to support this yearly academic and public process through Urbana University.

—Chris Laitner
Midland, Michigan

The last line of the above-referenced article, which identified the General Convention as the funder, was inadvertently omitted. Chris Laitner is president of the Swedenborgian Church.

Passages

Deaths

Mary E. Bécherel passed into the spiritual world on February 9, 2009, in Ottawa, Ontario at age 75. Born Mary Judson, she became a member of the Toronto New Church society after meeting the late Rev. Reynolds E. Bécherel, who eventually became her husband. (Reynolds passed away on May 17, 2008.) Mary and Reynolds later moved to Ottawa, where they subsequently became active members of the Ottawa New Church (General Church). She leaves behind her daughter Jennifer and her grand-daughter Marisa.

Robert (Bob) Elwell, passed away February 9, 2009, in Andover, Massachusetts following a brief illness. Bob, a lifelong member of the Boston Church of the New Jerusalem, was the son of Ann Orr, a lifelong Swedenborgian who grew up in the New Church in Scotland, and Adrian Elwell.

Dr. Frederick Howe made his transition on February 20, 2009. He and his sister Marion grew up in the Swedenborgian Church in Los Angeles and went to the summer camp. Both of them had a keen sense of the divine and completely trusted the universe.

Harold Wiens died January 29, 2009. He was born near Chaplin, Saskatchewan, the last of eight children born to

Anna (nee Letkeman) and Peter Hepner Wiens. In 1947 he married the love of his life, Thelma Swanson and in 1948 moved to the Okanagan Valley where together they shared 58 years of marriage and raised seven children. Harold was a vibrant, strong and intelligent person who worked hard and thought deeply. He was a union leader for much of his working life, and embraced the values of socialism. Harold held fast to New Church beliefs and was especially appreciative of Rev. Erwin Reddekopp. A celebration of life took place on February 16, 2009 at Summerland United Church, the Rev. Michael Gladish officiating. ☩

News in Brief

LaPorte New Church (Indiana) is offering classes at its Manna House: "Afterlife" (reading *Heaven and Hell*) and "Women's Journey—Realizing Spiritual Freedom."

On March 28, **New York New Church** in Manhattan hosted a concert by Missing Rachel, an a cappella group comprised of Sarah Buteux, Rebekah Maddock, Leah Goodwin and Rebecca Esterson. They performed a mix of traditional hymns, spirituals, and folk songs, both a cappella and with accompaniment from guitarist Thane Glenn.

To hear two selections from Missing Rachel's 2004 CD, *The Thundered Word*, visit their website: www.swebo.addr.com/Missing_Rachel.htm.

Wayfarers Chapel Eleventh Annual Art Show is Sunday, April 26. Special guest Eric Lloyd Wright will be speaking about his father, Wayfarers Chapel Architect Lloyd Wright, as well as signing books.

The Massachusetts New Church Union has reached an agreement in principle with the Boston Church of

Swedenborg's UU Birthday Party

On January 29, 2009, the Ohio Association of the Church of the New Jerusalem hosted a birthday party in honor of Emanuel Swedenborg in the Student Center of Urbana University. This is an annual event that reminds UU students of the relationship between the university and the Swedenborgian Church. It also provides an opportunity for the students to become familiar with Swedenborg and his work. Pat and Dick Sommer, from the Urbana Church, represented the Ohio Association as hosts. They served a birthday cake and punch and provided handouts detailing Swedenborg's contributions. ☩

the New Jerusalem (unaffiliated) to settle a suit and countersuit over appointment of trustees to the **Gray Fund**, which grants funds to projects that promote the growth of the Church of the New Jerusalem in Massachusetts, the United States, and the world. Details will be available when the court approves the settlement. ☩

Reflections: Sage Currie

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ence of angels among us, and that recognizes and supports our unique vocations? Hmmm. Sounds like a church I know.

Maybe the only thing that makes it challenging is that what is authentic keeps changing. Rituals can quickly become rote and empty. What does it take to listen continuously, to risk and strike out, and to allow some things—many things—to fail? (This was another common factor, casting a wide net with the knowledge that only a few fish will be caught.) To listen some more and try again. I'd say that foundationally it requires deep faith and trust, the other common factor among these church leaders, not in themselves or their theological training, or their ideas, but in God.

I wish I had more answers. But I have taken away from this conference a renewed faith that the Lord always provides a church. I look forward to listening with all of you to how the Lord may be calling us in all our authenticity to bring the Good News to the world. Praise the Lord! ☩

The Rev. Sage Currie is a chaplain in Portland, Maine.

About the Swedenborgian Church

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

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

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

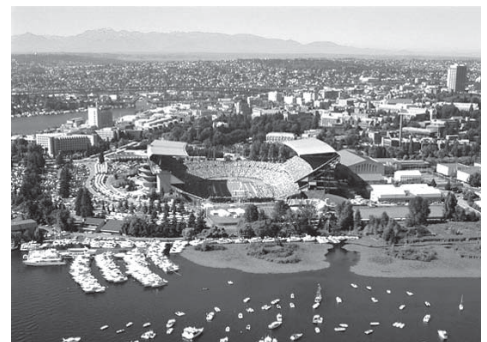
Annual Convention 2009 University of Washing- ton Seattle

Be There

**Registration
Form: Page 59**



Mt. Rainier from the campus.



Ariel view of the campus.

Spring Online Courses from SHS

Making Sense of It All: Swedenborg's True Christian Religion

Rev. Dr. Inese Radzins
April 13–June 1, 2009

Fostering a Personal Relationship With God

Rev. Dr. David Fekete
April 13–June 1, 2009

For more information, please go to www.shs.psr.edu.

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