

Evidence for Faith

BY MICHAEL ROBBINS

It was a life changing experience to deliver the sermon at the request of the Puget Sound Swedenborgian Church board on July 20, 2008, three weeks after our beloved minister, the Rev. Eric Allison, suffered a massive stroke. Though still in the hospital, Rev. Allison was very present and somehow knew the scripture in advance through no mortal media.

In preparation for that Sunday's talk, entitled "Evidence for Faith," I thumbed through three randomly selected sections of the Bible. I spent about a half second on the first opened page in Revelations, a second or two on the next, and quickly settled on the third, which had the word "faith" in a subhead.

The bold subhead in Jeremiah 2 was "Israel's Unfaithfulness." I read down to 2:8, and in about three minutes decided on Jeremiah 2:6:

Your ancestors refused to ask for my help,

though I had rescued them from Egypt

And led them through a treacherous, barren desert,

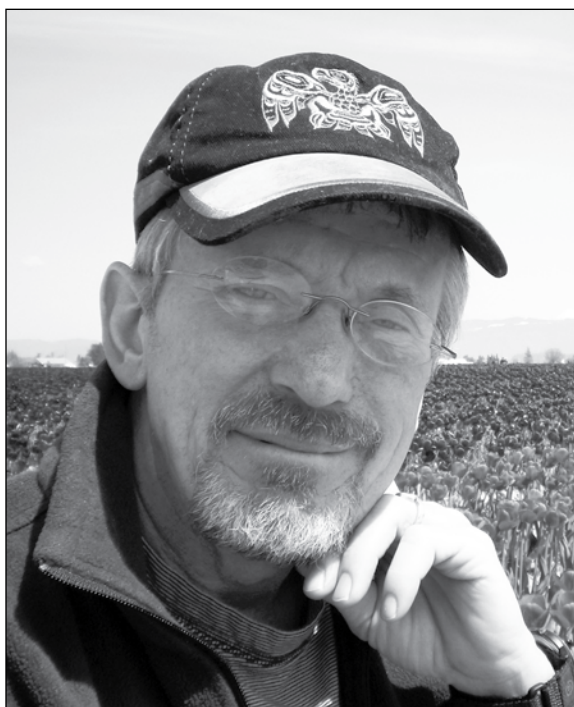
Where no one lives or dares to travel.

It was the one and only sentence from the Bible in my sermon. I was about to learn a little scripture goes a long way. We had just come back in-

side from our first church group photograph taken outside of DanceWorks

Rev. Allison, who reached for the Word, thumbed through it and pointed for John to start at the same exact verse: Jeremiah 2:6.

studio in Redmond, Washington, where we had been meeting for the past few years. Before reading the verse, I



The Reverend Eric Allison in March, 2009.

explained how casually it was selected and made a joke with the congregation that maybe I didn't have enough faith to go with the first page I randomly

turned to in the Bible.

After I read the scripture to the congregation that Sunday, John Clowry perfunctorily raised his hand. John said that when visiting Eric in the hospital at approximately 5 PM the night before, Rev. Allison directed him to read the Bible. Eric could not walk, read, utter more than a few words, and only had use of his left hand. John said he read the Bible to Rev. Allison for five to ten minutes. But the passages John read were apparently unsatisfactory to Rev. Allison, who reached for the Word, thumbed through it and pointed for John to start at the same exact verse: Jeremiah 2:6.

Standing before the congregation, I was stunned and slack jawed. This was too significant to be coincidence, but I didn't know what to do with it. I clung to my planned sermon, while my mind tried to assimilate what happened. In retrospect, I wished I had the courage to abandon my agenda, accept the miracle presented, and talk about it. Like Saint Peter, I did not have the level of faith I thought I did. I wished I had the courage to toss out my agenda and exemplify then and there God's presence.

I would later attack myself for sticking to my agenda, unable to face and glorify the Lord's actual presence in my life. However, my naïve and au-

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Reflections on East Coast Peer Supervision • Experience of Place • It's the Law
Earth Day Retreat • 175 Years at Church of the Good Shepherd • 2009 Church Statistics

The Editor's Desk



Looking Ahead

The June issue of *The Messenger* marks the end of a yearly cycle—it is the last issue before Annual Convention and the last issue before the summer publication hiatus. I appreciate the break from the pressure of the publication cycle and the chance to focus on the convention. I also enjoy time to reflect on the past year's output, think about ways to improve in the coming year, attack some ancillary tasks like indexing the past year's issues, and planning issues for the next year.

That's where you come in. I cannot produce *The Messenger* without the generous input of readers like you. We are blessed in this small denomination with many generous members and friends, who are willing to share their thoughts and labors without compensation. I doubt there is a reader among you who does not have something important or interesting to say, and that the readers would not find informative,

stimulating, interesting, or moving.

The Messenger is an eclectic publication. You may not feel qualified to write or submit certain kinds of articles, but your options are many: research articles, non-academic informative articles based on Swedenborgian history or theology, news of interesting events or developments at within your church or association, personal reflections, essays, book reviews, movie reviews, poems, and letters. If you have an idea about an article, call or write me so we can discuss and develop it. If you like to review books, let me know and I will send you a review copy of a current book. Articles and poems are subject to length limitations and editorial decisions, but authors get final approval. If you have reproducible art, photographs, or graphic elements that would appeal to the readership, submit those as well.

Turn to page 89 to read two marvelous essays by SCYL members on the subject of place. Their writing is clear and evocative. They are off to a good start at using writing as a tool for expression, creativity, and growth throughout their lives. It's not too late for any of us to develop this wonderful habit. Don't just think about it, write it down!

Thanks to all the contributors of wonderful articles for this issue, and to all the contributors this past year. We would not have our *Messenger* without you. ☩

—Herb Ziegler

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New in Brief

The **New York New Church** hosted a lecture presented by Dr. Eugene Taylor titled "William James: His Swedenborgian and Transcendentalist Legacy" on April 30. Dr. Taylor explored the early roots of James's ideas to demonstrate the widespread influence of Swedenborgian and Transcendental thought on American culture. ☩

Church Calendar

June 13–14: Western Canada Conference Annual Meeting • Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

June 19: New Church Day

June 24–28: Annual Convention Seattle, Washington

July 19–August 25: Paulhaven Youth Summer Camp • Alberta

July 25–August 2: Almont Family Summer Camp • Allenton, Michigan

August 1–16: Fryeburg New Church Assembly Family Camp Fryeburg, Maine

October 23–24: SHS Board Meeting • Berkeley, California

the Messenger

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Reflection

Finding God in the Darkness

BY JANE SIEBERT



She was brusque. She had managed a bar “in the rough part of town” for fifteen years, and there was no “foolin’ around” with her. But she admitted when it came to her “grandbaby” Olivia, she was jelly.

A single tear ran down her hardened face as she looked at the lifeless figure of her eighteen-month old grandbaby, the fair-haired chubby little girl with part of her curls shaved off where they had inserted a tube to measure the pressure in her brain. That was just one of the many tubes and catheters in place trying to give this little life enough support to stay alive.

The problem is brains don’t handle being kicked, or thrown, or bashed, or whatever happened to this child. They are delicate instruments, encased in hard bone that is made to withstand childhood falls and mishaps. “She fell off the bed and hit her head,” the baby-sitting boy friend said. But that excuse does not fit the level of injuries that this child sustained. Experience and medical science tell a different story. Somebody’s going to jail for this atrocity, but that’s not going to bring Olivia back or make her whole again.

Grandma’s stare moved from her grandbaby to me. “Tell me something, Chaplain. You’re a real religious person, right?”

I shook my head in agreement, although her definition of “religious” and mine are probably quite different.

“Well my friend, who is very religious, just called and told me that God could fix Olivia’s brain and heal her if we just pray and pray and believe. Do you believe God can do that?”

I sighed. How I struggle with this

one. Yes, God is all-powerful. God heals. But I saw the CT scan of this child’s brain, and as the doctor said, “It is mush. It cannot sustain life.”

So with hesitation I entered into this theological conundrum with the hurting grandmother. “When God creates us, God loves us so much that God gives us freewill. The way I see it, God could make us robots, to do exactly what God wants, but that would not be a loving God; that would be a dictatorial and controlling God. And what kind of life would that be for us, God’s creation? We have a very loving God. In fact that is what God is—pure love. And along with that free will comes responsibility for our choices and the consequences of our actions. We have the choice every moment of our lives to do good and kind things

“So what good is God, if God just lets us run around hurting one another? Why couldn’t God protect her from that creep?”

to one another or to do mean and horrible things to one another.”

She was listening so intently and gently nodding her head, so I ventured on trying to think of an example she might relate to.

“If someone leaves a bar drunk, gets into their car and chooses to drive drunk, there is not much one can do about it. And if that person causes an accident in which someone dies, the deepest beliefs or prayers are not going to undo what that person did, right?”

She shook her head.

“The damage is done. Their choice to drive drunk brought irreversible consequences. That doesn’t make God any less powerful or less loving. It is just the way it is.”

“That doesn’t mean that the one who was killed in the accident did anything wrong or made a bad decision. He was just there when the drunk driver hit him. He could not get out of the way of the person that made a bad choice.”

“But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t pray. We pray that something good comes out of that terrible accident. We pray for the family of the victim and the family of the drunk driver . . . and the driver.”

She looked over at Olivia and the number that indicates the pressure in her brain—the number that the doctor had just explained was too high to allow for oxygen to get to her brain and keep it alive.

I continued, “I have been praying for Olivia since she came in. My prayers are for this beautiful child, for the best possible outcome of this horrendous abuse, although I do not know what that might be. I know you and her mom and her dad and all the family want her to live. I want her to live, but the reality is as the doctors have told you. Her brain is so damaged it cannot sustain life. And this makes us all . . . and God very, very sad.”

Another tear ran down her cheek. “So what good is God, if God just lets us run around hurting one another? Why couldn’t God protect her from that creep?”

“It goes back to our freedom. Your son’s ex-wife chose to leave Olivia in her boy friend’s care. She knew he used drugs. She had seen his ugly side. She carries deep remorse for this now and will the rest of her life. But the reality is she put her child in harm’s way. And please know this, God was with Olivia through the abuse, God never left her even while horrible things were happening to her. I know this is very, very

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Nominees for Offices and Support Units: 2009

The following candidate statements were received by deadline for this issue. The following candidates' statements appeared in the April Messenger: Lori Steinhiser, Susannah Currie, Susan Wood-Ashton, David Viges, Bob Leas, Herb Ziegler, Barb Boxwell, Junchol Lee, and Wilma Wake. The following candidates' statements appeared in the May Messenger: Andy Stinson, Ken Turley, Sue Ditmire, Andrew Sciarretta, and Karen Conger.

SHS Board of Trustees: Victoria MacDonald

Victoria MacDonald, M.A., former program administrator of San Damiano Retreat, is a Bay Area retreat pre-



senter, workshop facilitator, and spiritual director. She received her Master's in Spirituality from the University of Creation Spirituality (now Wisdom University in Mill Valley, California).

A seasoned spiritual director, Victoria brings creative and lively insights to the issues confronting our world and offers meaningful ways for people of faith to respond.

Lisa Oz

I am a producer, writer, actress, and cohost of "The Dr Oz Show" on "Oprah & Friends" XM radio telecast. Together with my husband, Mehmet,

I have coauthored three *New York*



Times best selling books, including the "YOU: The Owner's Manual" series. I am currently the President of Ozworks LLC, a media and investment consulting company, and Pine Room Pictures, a production company specializing in family-friendly media. I was raised in the General Church and educated at The Academy of the New Church. I received my undergraduate degree from Bryn Mawr College (1985) and went on to study at Columbia University's Union Theological Seminary.

I've always considered myself blessed to have been introduced to the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg at an early age. It is my heartfelt desire to apply those teachings in my daily life and to share them in an accessible way. I am interested in serving on the board in order to work with like-minded indi-

Nominees

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

Convention President	Andy Stinson†: Woolwich, Maine
	Ken Turley†: Fryeburg, Maine
Vice President	Lori Steinhiser*: Michigan City, Indiana
Treasurer	Susannah Currie*: Providence, Rhode Island
Recording Secretary	Susan Wood-Ashton*: West Palm Beach, Florida
General Council (layperson)	Carl Helm: Great Bend, Kansas
(two to be elected)	David Viges*: Lansing, Michigan
General Council (minister)**	Kit Billings: Ralston, Nebraska
Education Support Unit (EDSU)	Sue Ditmire†: Maryland
Ministry Support Unit (MINSU)	Barbara Boxwell*: Midland, Michigan
Communications Support Unit (COMSU)	Beth Harvie: Washington, DC
Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)	Andrew Sciarretta†: Somerville, Mass.
(two to be elected)	Junchol Lee*: Cleveland, Ohio
SHS Board of Trustees	Robert Leas*: Fort Wayne, Indiana
(representative class, two to be elected)	Herb Ziegler*: Cambridge, Massachusetts
Nominating Committee	Karen Conger†: Bishop, California
(one to be elected)	Wilma Wake*: Portland, Maine

The nominating committee of the Swedenborgian House of Studies has nominated the following candidates the Board of Trustees:

SHS Board of Trustees	Lisa Oz: Cliffside Park, New Jersey
(at-large class, two to be elected)	Victoria MacDonald: Mill Valley, California

Nominations

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 at matthewmallard@hotmail.com.

The committee is still seeking candidates for the positions on the Financial and Physical Resources support Unit (FPRSU), and the Ministry Support Unit (MINSU). 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.

* Candidate statement appeared in the April Messenger.

**Freeman Shrock, whose statement appeared in the May Messenger, withdrew his candidacy for General Council.

† Candidate statement appeared in the May Messenger.

Why Go to Camp?

BY KURT FEKETE

When I was asked to write up a piece answering the question, "Why go to camp?," I felt completely overwhelmed. It sounded like an easy enough assignment at first until I really started thinking about the huge influence camp has had on my life. As long as I can remember, I have been going to church camp. I have never

viduals, promoting the dissemination of Swedenborg's insights.

General Council: Carl Helm

I am extremely proud to be running for General Council. I have served as Kansas Association president for seven years and I am enjoying this position. I have attended the Pawnee Rock Church for over forty years. I have been a trustee in the church for over thirty years. My wife Connie is a church worship leader and has been an officer in the church for over thirty years.

I have spent many years as an educator in Kansas. I have enjoyed being a teacher, coach, director, assistant principal, principal, and superintendent of schools. I am presently the high school principal and superintendent of schools for a small school district in central Kansas.

I am looking forward to the challenge and opportunity of serving the church in a new way. I will use my skills, knowledge and abilities to help the church and its members meet the challenges in the years to come.



missed a year. I cannot even entertain the thought of missing a year. I cannot imagine my life without church camp. What is it about church camp that has me going back year after year? Perhaps a better question is "Why would someone want to go to church camp?"

To answer, first I'll tell you what church camp has done for me. When I was very young, I met great friends that continue to be friends to this day. As a teen, camp provided me with an open and inviting environment where I could be myself. Unlike home or school, I was able to let more of my true self shine through without fear of judgment or ridicule. I felt more peace and security at camp than anywhere else in the world. For me, it was a little slice of heaven on earth: A retreat from the daily pressures and expectations of my life as a teen back at home. As a young adult at church camp, I found a partner who I fell in love with and later married. I remain happily married to the woman I met at camp, and now we have two young daughters. Now, as an adult, I can bring my two girls to church camp and watch them learn, grow, and experience all the same joys that I did as a child.

All along the way, I continue to enjoy the company of many of the same friends I met as a child. I also meet new friends each year so my camp community continues to grow and blossom. Unlike school and the workplace, I have found church camp to be the one place where friends meet together year after year for a lifetime. Friends you make at camp often stay friends for life.

But the most important reason to attend camp is to make a connection with God. Most youth don't go to church camp to learn about or discover God. In fact, the whole church or God aspect to camp may be the biggest reason youth don't go to church camp.

Youth (and adults!) often fear the reaction from friends or family members when they tell them they are going to church camp. I understand this and experienced it myself. Teens tell me that the "church" part of church camp is still the greatest hurdle to overcome when deciding whether or not to attend for the first time.

I have heard many horrible stories from teens about their experiences at some church camps outside of our denomination. Yet, the reason church camp is different from other camps—more peaceful, invigorating, moving, and motivating—is because God is at the center of everything that you do.

When you open a door for God to enter your life, amazing things happen to you. Church camp provides an open environment to allow God's love to reach you in ways that other places simply do not. Usually, you don't notice. Similar to your daily routine outside of church camp, you go about your camp life oblivious to God's ever-present guiding light. But, at camp somehow, God's presence reaches into your heart deeper and clearer. You find your motivations are more positive, your thoughts are more caring, and your actions are more generous. You are a different person at church camp and a small piece of this different person remains with you when you depart. Slowly, over the years, church camp changes who you are. Or, perhaps better said, church camp allows more of the real you, the angel you, to come into the world. ☩

Kurt Fekete is youth director of the Swedenborgian Church. This article is reprinted from the Kansas Association *Plains Banner*. For more information about Almont New Church Assembly in Michigan, go to www.ancarc.com; for Fryeburg New Church Assembly in Maine, go to www.fryeburg.org; and for Paulhaven Camp in Alberta, write c/o Church of the Holy City, 9119-128 A Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5E 0J6 Canada or call 403.948.3667.

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Reflections on East Coast Peer Supervision

BY KEN TURLEY



"If you want to walk on water . . ., you have to get out of the boat!" That was the theme of our East Coast Peer

Supervision meeting this past April as a small but dedicated group of ministers gathered together to review their past year, take stock of where they are at now, and map out their goals, tasks, and challenges for the coming year. Making up our group this year were the Revs. Kevin Baxter, Andy Stinson, Gard Perry, George Dole, Gladys Wheaton, F. Bob Tafel, Ken Turley, Susannah Currie, and Lee Woofenden.

It was typical New England weather—meaning we had a little bit of everything—as we gathered at the beautiful Blairhaven Retreat and Conference Center located right on the water in Duxbury, Massachusetts.

On a personal note, (my first position nearly twenty-five years ago being director of a project to remodel and bring back to life the long dormant Blairhaven Summer Camp), it was with deep sadness that we heard the news that this beautiful spot and resource, with a long history of serving the church as a children's summer camp, retreat for ministers and spouses, host for untold workshops, weddings, worship services and gatherings of all kinds is going to be sold. Lack of interest from min-

isters in developing programming and the difficulty of making it financially self-sufficient have brought the Massachusetts Association and New Church Union to the conclusion that holding on to the property is just too costly to continue. In any case, the Association has pledged to continue support of the East Coast Peer Supervision program, and for this the ministers are all deeply grateful. This being said, as we settled into this familiar and comfortable spiritual safe-haven, our meeting was again a welcome oasis on the year by year journey of ministry.

We gathered on Sunday evening to

This year the Rev. Susannah Currie was our host; she prepared the outlines of our program and purchased the groceries. We all shared in the cooking and cleaning, which created another opportunity to bond in the act of being useful.

Monday morning began with devotionals followed by group discussion of the theme. We started with the sharing of the scripture passages that inspired the image. We then shared as a group how the theme spoke to our personal experience of ministry and of life. Each of us spoke to how we need to step out of our safe and familiar places if we are

to do something special, if we are to go and meet the Lord, even in the midst of the storm. We shared our dreams and our fears, examined the nature of our safe places and the difficulties in stepping into uncharted waters. We talked of the ways in which the Lord has been there for us, times he has taken us by the hand and lifted us up when we faltered, times he has led us back and helped us into the boat to take our place amongst our fellows and renew the

pursuit of our calling, perhaps changed and inspired by the experience. We shared how at times, we felt more akin to the ones that remained in the boat sleeping, and at other times how we felt there was just no going back to the same boat. As always, our discussions roamed the fields of our personal lives, our ministerial role as leaders in our various situations, and the place of General Convention in the larger



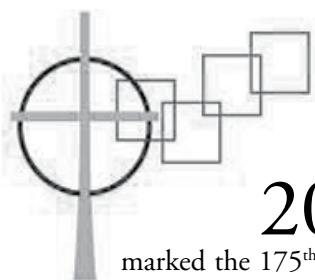
Blairhaven Retreat Center in Duxbury, Massachusetts.

meet and greet and check-in, with each minister taking a few minutes to share the personal and professional high-points of the past year. In many ways, this is some of the most valuable time as we are able to renew, and in some cases establish, connections with our friends and peers. We are able to share in the joys and be supportive in the difficulties, and all of us learn from one another as we deepen our relationships and grow our in professionalism.

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Celebrating 175 years of the Swedenborgian Church in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

BY JEAN MCDERMOTT



2008

marked the 175th year of the congregation of the New Church in Kitchener, Ontario. The Church of the Good Shepherd is housed in a lovely neo-Gothic stone church built in 1938, in the heart of Kitchener's cultural district.

The Church dedicated the entire year to celebrating this milestone. It began with a slogan and logo designed specifically for the year's journey, "Pioneers, Then and Now," paying respect to the people who came to this area 175 years ago and started a congregation in the small farming community that was known as Sandhills and then as Berlin (Berlin became Kitchener during the First World War), and grew the church through the industrial era into the technology era of the twenty-first century.

The first event to mark the occasion was the dedication of a lift to help those who struggle with stairs to access the building more easily. This project had been many months in process and resulted from the generosity of several members of the Schneider family.

Once the building was more accessible, there were opportunities to be open to the wider community, and each month another occasion presented itself.

Cooperative concerts were hosted at the church featuring the talents of the Kitchener Waterloo Symphony Orchestra. The March concert, held on

Good Friday, presented Hayden's *Seven Last Words*. May's concert was a debut performance of a newly formed group, The Bremen String Quartet, playing a selection of pieces by Mozart. Seven events in all brought the church and the community together.

Convention 2008 brought the ordination of The Church of the Good Shepherd's own Catherine Lauber. This congregation has supported several student ministers in recent years, including its current minister the Rev. John



The Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario.

Maine and an ordination candidate for 2009 Convention, Alison Longstaff.

The summer months, often quiet and devoid of activity in many churches, were very busy ones for this church. A big homecoming event planned for October required involvement from many talented church members throughout the summer.

September introduced a new version of an old fund raiser—the rummage sale—reinvented at the Church of the Good Shepherd as the First Annual Shepherds' Market. This market was a combination of yard sale, community yard sale, vendors' market and community barbeque.

Later that month the church participated in the Waterloo Region Doors Open event, attracting hundreds of

local architecture and history buffs to visit and meet with the members and learn more about the church's history.

October was Homecoming Month, and more than one hundred past and present members of the congregation joined in. The festivities started with a "meet and greet" on Saturday afternoon, then a dinner party, followed by a musical presentation by the Gilbert and Sullivan Ensemble of Waterloo. A reunion of former and present choir members prepared music to share in the worship service. The church's archives committee mounted an amazing exhibit of the church's history, open for the entire weekend for all to enjoy.

Sunday morning worship service included the reunited choir, a play that told the story of the congregation, and an address by Chris Laitner, President of the General Convention. The service was followed by a luncheon attended by local dignitaries. Following the luncheon the congregation assembled in the light rain to dedicate two trees planted in remembrance of three much-loved members. Throughout the weekend attendees were invited to share their memories for future generations in video interviews that have been added to the church's archives for posterity. The weekend ended Sunday evening with a Taizé service.

The many talents and hard work of the members of this small congregation made an amazing event and celebration year come together.

The congregation finished the year with traditional Christmas celebrations and look forward to continuing the pioneering tradition on through the twenty-first century. ☩

Jean McDermott, one of the organizers, is a member of the Church of the Good Shepherd.

Small Church—Spirited Sounds

BY GREG HUANG-DALE

Three years ago we were living in a tiny two-room apartment at the top of an old Vermont farmhouse. I was in graduate school, and my wife Jenny was calmly preparing for the arrival of our first child. After only a few weeks there, we had found a small church community with an overflowing spirit of welcoming love. The church was officially United Church of Christ but had developed a sense of community which included a spectrum of people of faith traditions come together, including long-time local residents and people from Augustine School for the Deaf, just up the hill in Brattleboro.

One particular element of their worship that seemed to draw people, old and new, was the music—music that was the current of their liturgy. From the opening hymn to the postlude, melodies and voices were the buoyancy of the spirit of God as the sign language interpreter danced to the rhythm.

Every Sunday morning I would mount my bicycle for an invigorating ride over a hill and through the woods, excited to get to the 9 O'clock Choir practice at Guilford Church. It wasn't that the singers were better trained than at larger churches that I'd previously attended nor were the singers a tight knit, regular group. Even the leadership changed from week to week. No, the remarkable thing was that on any given Sunday, nearly a third of the congregation would stand to sing with the choir. And those who chose not to stand with the choir, or could not stand, were not silent. One of the conductors even led the choir from his wheelchair. The con-

gregation was unfettered and sang with a spirit that moved us all closer together. Just as the southern sun poured in the windows, voices warmed the room as each Sunday as the children filed out of the sanctuary, and we all sang in a round, "Gloria, gloria, in excelsis deo, Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia." I could feel the church gently lifting off like a hot-air balloon.

A short year after we'd landed in the Guilford Church community, we were blown away again. I took a job as an ESL teacher at the high school in Fryeburg, Maine, and we were church shopping once more. My first impression of our small rural community was that it had lost its church center. School was

the gathering point for most of the people we knew, and the sanctuaries around town appeared holy but hollow. We were hoping for something more lively and engaging when we accepted an invitation to the Fryeburg New Church. Our neighbors and their kids had good things to say, which we took as a good sign. We sat in the back that first day, but it wasn't long before we were sitting right up front.

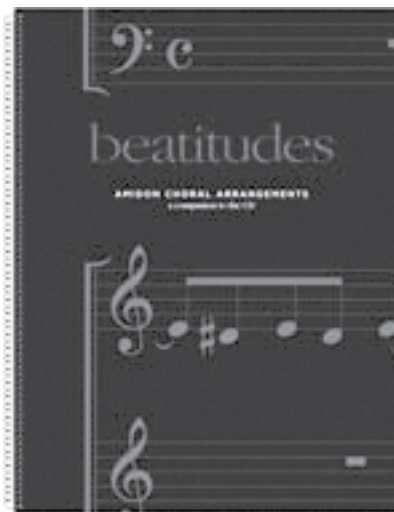
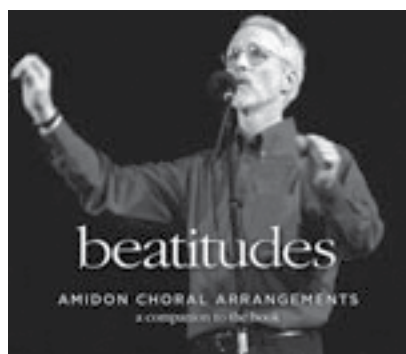
I cannot say enough good things about the honest and open spirits of our church leaders Ken and Laurie Turley. They are not only deeply spiritual people but musically gifted and generous with those

gifts. I was surprised therefore, that on our first visit to the Fryeburg New Church, the Turleys were gone, but the spirit was not. I don't remember anyone explaining their absence, but it was clear that this group of committed people could worship God without their leaders. It wasn't that they didn't need leadership, but that they felt comfortable sharing with each other even when the minister and music director weren't there. The highlight for me that Sunday was the choir's a cappella anthem with drum accompaniment. The singers reminded me of the 9 O'clock Choir—untrained, but unashamed to make a joyful noise.

Two more years have passed, and last October I was invited to lead the Fryeburg New Church choir. I gulped and said yes, then immediately went to the book of songs I'd brought with me from Guilford. After just a few numbers, the choir decided to purchase new copies of *Beatitudes*, the song book published by Peter Amidon, one of the Guilford music directors. The songs we've sung

from this book have been accessible and enjoyable for both the choir and the congregation. I reminisce as I listen to the accompanying CD on which the Guilford 9 O'clock Choir performs. In less than a year our choir has managed to sing twenty-five songs in this

book. They include Gospel numbers about Moses and the woman at the well, a cappella arrangements of old favorites like "Balm in Gilead" and "Precious Lord," and newly composed mu-



The Experience of Place

This semester Rachel Madjerac is in my English class. We were told to write about a mood piece about a place that meant something to us. The free write should make the reader feel how we felt about the place. After the silent writing time, our teacher told us to pick partners to read our work to. We usually pick the person sitting next to us because the whole class is too lazy to switch desks, but Rachel and I both stood up (because we sit on opposite sides of the room and every person that could possibly be between us is) and yelled each other's name. Both of us chose the Fryeburg Assembly to write about. I put them in this issue to show other teens how much this place means to us.

—Holly Bauer



The dry, pot-holed, dirt road that curves to the side of the old weathered brown building that could almost blend in with the surrounding

trees gently encases a small but lively valley with a few tall trees and masses of fuzzy moss and crisp green ferns. If you walk beside the wide, creaky porch that is filled with old, almost-broken lawn chairs, all with unique but absurdly ugly patterns on them, you will gaze upon a patchy, but rich, vibrant green field. Although small, it's commonly filled with people either playing childish games or just sitting.

The river moves so swiftly that the sunlight can't rest upon it—it dances through it.

Midway down the field there is a slight curve that creates enough of a slope that if you lie at the bottom, you will be unseen to others on the field and on the porch. The farther you get from the porch, the closer you are getting to the quick drop-off of the field. At its edge there are trees and plants of all sizes in every shade of green. If you

peer through the surplus of thin green stalks and wide leaves, you can see the river.

The river moves so swiftly that the sunlight can't rest upon it—it dances through it. The water is so clear and pure you can see through its miniature waves to the golden brown sand that rests at its base. Stretching across the width of the river is a long, thin, tattered and splintered yellow rope. The intense pull of the water creates a drag on the rope that transforms it into a yellow crescent resting upon the water.

If you follow the pleasant sound of soft laughter, you will be drawn to the porch. On either end there is a massive staircase with a thin layer of dust, paint chippings, and pine needles. If you enter the rugged screen door with its white casing, it will slam shut in one quick clap-like noise.

The spacious room you enter is used for a hodgepodge of things. Above your eye line lie almost a thousand cranes, each of which seems to be a different color. The strands that bind them to the ceiling dip down, but they are still way out of reach for anyone without a ladder. To your right, in the massive stone fireplace with stones the color of a gloomy day's sky, shaped in forms that can only be created by nature, burns a strong soothing fire. On the last of the crooked, wooden, brown dining tables always lies a puzzle with any picture you can think of upon it, in pieces of course. Each of the remaining tables has its own memories carved into its soft, malleable top layer.

The room that lies almost directly above the delicate maze of cranes is the girl's dorm. Every inch of the room incorporates a memory. Upon the walls are marks of many markers. The names and dates range from last year to many years before any of us even knew this place existed. Despite the great things these writings portray, there was once an attempt to cover them with large,

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sis such as the setting of Wendell Berry's poem "Great Trees" and the title songs of the collection, "Beatitudes." We are making plans in a couple weeks to revive our favorites for the annual Music Sunday at our church. But my longing for more leads me on.

This fall the 9 O'clock Choir directors, Peter Amidon, Andy Davis, and Tony Barrand will lead a weekend workshop for directors and singers called "Rethinking the Small Church Choir." Choir leaders and singers from churches in the New England area would find the music and leadership style accessible and meaningful. The three retreat leaders will be teaching music of their own arrangements, most of which are from traditional ballads, gospels, spirituals and shape note songs from early America. The songs are musical and

lyrical and "foster spirit-filled performance." I plan to attend and would love to share this music and this experience with other New Church singers. If you or your choir is looking for new inspiration to your music program, you might consider this workshop and retreat: the Star Guilford Weekend, on Star Island off the coast of New Hampshire, September 18–20, 2009.

For more information about the workshop go to www.amidonmusic.com/starguilford/ or write to Tony Barrand at tbarrand@comcast.net

Also available at www.amidonmusic.com is the book of songs *Beatitudes* and the companion CD. You can hear samples from the CD on line. ☪

Greg Huang-Dale is choir director at the Fryeburg (Maine) New Church.

Experience of Place

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obnoxious chunks of white paint. The white gobs almost give the walls more character than the things they are covering. The old metal bed frames come in every shape and size, each one an oddball. And just to keep the feel of the place going, each mattress on the creaky frames is as original as the next. Each of the long slender walls is lined with windows in a precise manner, almost as if they were men standing in a line awaiting orders from a general.

Peering between the muntins of the huge, square windows, with a not so discrete breeze making its way through its cracks, you can see the river in its magnificence and the field which is awaiting the people who are soon to come. If you make your way across the maze of beds pushed together tight with shared blankets piled on them in the center of the room and look out the opposite window, there is a narrow line of trees, undernourished and bare. They are the only things blocking out the fast paced rumble of the busy road. With its sizzling black tar and vibrant yellow lines, it accommodates the eighteen-wheelers that speed through without a care. It's the only reminder of "real life" out there.

—Rachel Madjerac

The main building is spacious and is the color of a dark chestnut, causing it to blend in with the surrounding pines. It stands three feet off the ground, so teenagers often hide under it while playing games such as man-hunt and sardines. A blanket of pine needles covers the ground surrounding the building and the numerous cabins on the edges of the clearing. One can often hear voices shouting during games of Ultimate Frisbee and the surreptitious giggling of friends while reading Mad Libs. The main building's porch, filled with old lawn chairs that

Earth Day Retreat

BY KURT FEKETE

Wow, what a weekend it was—April 18–19 at the Church of the Good Shepherd "Earth" retreat in Kitchener, Ontario! Thirty teens! Yes, 30! From Maine, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan (three vans) plus, of course, a nice large group of local teens from the Kitchener-Waterloo area.

Earth walks and shopping, sunshine and hail storms, disciples and Jesus, music and muskrats, movie night and worship morning, snakes, mice, parrots, Christmas caroling(?)—My mind is still spinning. And all this intertwined with long pockets of free time spent relaxing and goofing around with friends.

The earth poems the teens wrote were amazing! The whole retreat was wonderfully communal and also a bit chaotic and bizarre. It was a dynamic encounter with nature - warm sunshine, violent winds and hail—and a dynamic encounter with humanity—incredible expressions of love, care, thoughtfulness mixed together with random challenges and bizarre occurrences.

As part of our Earth Day retreat in

Kitchener, Ontario, the teens wrote some inspired poetry. They each chose a word related to the earth and then wrote a poem about how they are similar to that word starting, "I am like . . ." Here are three of them.

I am like the sun
I am bright
I am warm-full
I am big
I rise in the morning
I set in the evening
I am like the sun

I am like a flood
I show up unexpected
I am always exciting
I normally cause disruption
I always try to give back to the earth
I can be good or bad
I am like a flood

I am like the clouds
simply drifting
simply moving
simply existing
simply there
I am like the clouds

Kurt Fekete is youth director for SCYL. Reprinted from <http://youthleague.blogspot.com/>.

teenagers reside in while drinking their Jones sodas, occupies a portion of the back lawn.

Extending from the porch is a ramp that leads onto the vast, grassy, green lawn. The lawn's other three sides are surrounded by towering trees and bright green foliage. On one of these soaring trees hangs a bell that rings before every meal and that can be heard from anywhere on the grounds. On the side of the lawn facing away from the main building there is a very steep hill that leads down to the rushing river. The lawn slopes into a hill that is perfect for star gaz-

ing and rolling down.

Inside the main building is the grand dining hall, the girls' dorms, the kitchen, from which wonderful smells radiate, and the common area, where hundreds of multicolored paper cranes hang from the ceiling.

In the girls' dorm, many cots of all shapes and sizes are pushed together so the girls can gossip and share Ben and Jerry's ice cream late into the night. Names, dates, and inside jokes are inscribed in Sharpie all over the walls, ceiling, furniture,

It's The Law

BY ERIC ZACHARIAS

The room became quiet. What in the world was all this about? I asked the ombudsman who had brought this very puzzling message to go over it again for us. We, the residents of Elm Grove Estates, were gathered in the activity room for our monthly meeting. This was serious stuff—not to be taken lightly!

Let me go back a little . . . , well, way back. In the Old Testament, we acclaim Moses as a “law giver.” Nothing came easy in those days. On coming down from Mt. Sinai with the first tablets of stone on which the Lord God had inscribed the Command-

and rafters. Also covering the walls are patches of white paint from past attempts to cover up the memories.

In the gigantic rectangular room, the two long walls have many windows. Out of the windows on one of these walls, a field is visible on which Frisbee and soccer are commonly played. The windows on the opposite wall show the hill going down to the river, and off in the distance one can see mountains obscuring the horizon. The boys' dorms are made up of two humble cabins on the edges of the grounds. Opposite the boys' dorm, the sun peers through the trees, illuminating a small path that serves as a segue to society for the teens who wish to enter into the world of Subway and Dunkin' Donuts yet again.

—Holly Bauer

Holly Bauer and Rachel Madjerac are members of the Swedenborgian Church Youth Group (SCYL). Rachel is East Coast and Public Relations Officer. Reprinted from *Clear Blue Sky*, Spring 2009.

ments and seeing that the Israelites had begun the worship of the golden calf, Moses smashed the stone tablets to the ground. At God's request, Moses took two newly hewn stones up to him for a second writing of the Commandments. Finally! The Ten Commandments became the law of the land. However, this is just the beginning.

More laws. More laws. “If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go free and pay nothing” (Exodus 21:2). Again, “If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep” (Exodus 22). A very detailed and all-encompassing system of laws, which spoke to virtually every facet of human experience, to every tendency of human nature, evolved over time. And, punishment for infraction of the law was severe. This was a society ruled by law. Harsh! Severe!

Our troubled world has a long way to go. We are back in Elm Grove Estates. The residents meet once a month in the activity room here, without the presence of administration or staff, giving them the opportunity to express concerns, plan activities, bonding—anything for good order. It's very much a family affair. Friendships grow. In this age group, caring for one another is of particular importance. It's, all of us, working together to make this time of life more enjoyable, more satisfying.

Elm Grove Estates offers care for two specific categories of residents: those who require assistance and those who can and still live independently. These two groups have worked, played, planned together with no line of distinction separating them. We were one body—till this past week.

The state law, if I understand correctly, prohibits these two classes of residents from participating in the same residents council. They may dine at the same table, participate in the same ac-

tivity . . . but not participate together in the meeting in which both have similar concerns. This is the law.

The Law! I'm very much aware that our society, in its desire for order, requires laws. Life as we know it requires laws. Swedenborg in his work, *Divine Providence* lists the laws that speak to the Lord God's oversight of his ongoing partnership with us. “It is a Law of Divine Providence that Man shall be led and taught by the Lord out of Heaven by means of the Word . . . and this to all Appearance as of Himself.” This is one. There are others. More laws. The Psalmist wrote, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (19: 7).

I really don't like this word “law” very much, most irritatingly when enforced without taking into account extenuating circumstances—specific kinds of human situations—without taking into account long term consequences of its application. The very simple truth to do what is right—because it's the right thing to do—has a much greater appeal.

When I read, “It is a Law of Divine Providence that . . .” my mind quickly goes into its translation mode: “It is a *Truth* (emphasis added) of Divine Providence that man shall act from Freedom according to Reason.” To this I add this thought coming from the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans: “For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not bear false witness . . .’” and if there is any other commandment, all are summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“Love is the fulfillment of the Law.” (Romans 13: 9). ☩

The Reverend Eric Zacharias is a retired minister living in Hutchinson, Kansas. Reprinted from the Kansas Association *Plains Banner*.

Evidence for Faith

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thentic reaction could have been necessary for the audience to believe what happened.

The message of my sermon was that meager faith is not from lack of evidence, but stems from our inability to handle the truth. It was I who could not handle the truth. Unable to practice what I preached, I staggered on while my mind raced for a logical explanation. Rationale clicked in a recursive error.

1) Who knew of the scripture I chose a week before? Garry Kersten.

2) Is it logical Garry shared it with John? No, but if he had, Eric could not repeat orders.

3) Do I know John as someone who would lie about this? No.

My attempts to suggest John would have a motive to deceive me were futile. Of course I wouldn't want him to. I am quite fond of him and his Buddhist ways. But my *proprium* was reaching anywhere for a logical explanation. I realize suggesting John would lie is preposterous, and it demonstrates my desperation to find a way out. But just suppose, on the outskirts of reality, John made it up. Why? To yank my chain and get a rise out of me? But my dear friend John attributes the scripture synchronization to a weird coincidence, not a miracle. Thus my inane notion of his fabrication dissolves, for if he were trying to "stir me up," he would be supporting the miracle theory.

Rev. Allison and I are both fans of Star Trek. In the final episode of *Star Trek Voyager*, "End Game," the young Kathryn Janeway must concede that her older self visiting from the future isn't Species 8472 metamorphosed into an imposter. John's precious denial of the miracle was the last step of my acceptance, like when Captain Janeway assimilates the truths brought back

from her older, admiral self.

I interrupted myself later in the sermon twice and asked John if they were just similar words from a different verse in the Bible. John repeated his certainty of Rev. Allison's actions and my eyes grew misty as they often were lately. I was again taken aback—mouth agape, my gaze drifting away from the direction my head turned. There was probably a look of concern on my face, as the implications of deeper faith are immense. I also may have grinned and giggled a little.

Return to the Master

The Tuesday after my sermon, I went to the hospital with my daughter Rylie to visit Rev. Allison for the first time since his stroke. Surely Rev. Allison, who knows the Bible well, had a very good reason to choose the verse. "Was it a favorite?" I would ask him. It took a while after greeting him for me to understand how serious my friend's faculties were compromised.

There are about 31,000 verses or sentences in the Bible. Even though people occasionally win lotteries at longer odds, I continue to find the circumstance quite amazing.

In brain scientist Jill Bolte Taylor's book *My Stroke of Insight*, she discusses a cosmic connection that resulted from her stroke, which suspended the left, logical side of her brain. Rev. Allison's stroke was also on his left side, which affects the right side of the body. It should be no surprise that a holy man in a holy state of mind was moved to reveal Sunday's verse from the Holy Bible.

Rev. Allison pronounced "no" and "yeah" so clearly, I expected him to continue in elegant discourse, but those were about his only words. It

wasn't clear that he understood the story I told him. He could not begin to explain why he chose Jeremiah 2:6. He could hardly communicate in any fashion. Yet his selection of scripture was divinely prophetic.

I've reminded him about the scripture synchronicity about every other month since, and it usually seems like news. Lately, he appears to better understand what I've said, but he still cannot open the Bible to the same passage when asked.

Sharing

This miracle filled me with unprecedented zeal, and I have enjoyed sharing it with many people over the past year. The two fundamental reactions are that the incident is a sign or it is coincidence. It has been the likely and unlikely folk to interpret the incidence as a clear sign from the Lord. Einstein said, "Either everything is a miracle, or nothing is a miracle."

Reactions from others have been amusing and sometimes contrary to my expectations. Soon after the occurrence, I attended a non-Swedenborgian Bible study. When I told the retired Christian radio jockey in attendance, he slammed his fist on the table and said, "That's how He does it!" The faith and conviction was awesome. The various people who responded like this over the past year have filled me with pride and excitement. However, the response to my story from several lifelong Christians, including the leader of the Bible study was relatively muted. I assume their lack of enthusiasm is euphemism for unsaid skepticism. Do they think I am confused, or that I am misunderstanding something? Do they think I am telling a story to make myself sound special? Perhaps they are jealous. There are about 31,000 verses or sentences in the Bible. Even though people occasionally win lotteries at longer odds, I continue to find the circumstance quite amazing.

Finding God

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hard to understand. It is for me, too.” I paused and we were silent for a long while as the machines pumped and filled the air with beeps and hums.

“Where does this evil come from?” Grandma broke the silence with her question.

“We are in freedom to turn towards God and what is right or turn away from God towards what is wrong, or what we call evil. And our choices add up to make us who we are. Take the driver who chose to drive under the influence of alcohol. The first time we drive while drunk, our conscience (some call it God talking in our head) tells us, ‘Don’t do this. You might hurt someone. It is wrong to drink and drive.’ If we ignore our conscience and drive home anyway without inci-

dent, the next time it is easier to ignore what is right. Each time we chose to do wrong it gets easier and easier to do it again and again. We tell ourselves, ‘It is OK. I can make it home. I’ve done it before.’ The wrong choice gets ingrained in us, and we convince ourselves that it is the right choice.”

“I don’t know why this man hurt Olivia. I don’t know how anyone could justify in his mind that it is OK to hurt a child. We probably will never know, unless he confesses. We don’t know the pain he has suffered in his own childhood. We can only see a part of the picture.”

Grandma straightened up a bit, “I wanted to do so much for this child. I was going to shower her with my love and teach her about life. I would do anything for Olivia . . . and now there is nothing.”

“There is something more. Because of God this life on earth is not all there is. I believe that when Olivia passes from this world to the next, God and the angels will be with her, just as they are with her now. They will be there to hold her and comfort her and teach her, just as you planned to do.”

“That helps,” Grandma quietly murmured. “It really does. Thank you.”

“God right now is reaching out to you, to comfort you. With God you will be able to get through this unbelievable experience. I have seen it in my work here as chaplain. God carries us through times like this.”

“Oh Chaplain, I want to hear you pray for Olivia and for me and my son and his ex-wife. We need it so.” ☩

The Reverend Jane Siebert is a chaplain and a member of the Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem Church.

Like astral projecting, there is a certain spookiness in it. Several people I’ve told got goose bumps. My sermon referenced an out-of-body experience (OOBE) I had where I thought I woke up from an OOBE, walked across the room and turned around to face my bed. At that moment, my eyesight left me. Extreme fear escalated until I awoke with a painful jolt. I later interpreted this experience to be my mind’s inability to really accept that my spirit was separate and outside of the physical. Talking about astral projection, trying to do it, and sometimes consciously succeeding was insufficient. I still did not truly grasp it. Otherwise, when turning around I would have seen my physical incarnation lying in bed and simply acknowledged that the OOBE wasn’t over yet. Likewise, when presented with a miracle, despite talking about the abundant evidence for faith when it occurred, I went blank. I didn’t really have the understanding I thought I did.

Conclusion

Your ancestors refused to ask for my help,

though I had rescued them from Egypt

And led them through a treacherous, barren desert,

Where no one lives or dares to travel.

It could have been any sentence that both Rev. Allison and I picked, but the verse that simultaneously got our attention that weekend was a sentence about miracles. It is about how we respond to miracles. I unwittingly responded like the Word said I would.

I say that having little faith is not for lack of evidence, but stems from our inability to accept the miracles that prove God’s existence. In the same breath, I could not swallow the gift and properly acknowledge it. Only in retrospect could I laugh at how my behavior was so predictable. Whether the ancestors forgot, disbelieved, or failed to inter-

nalize the miracle of their rescue, I do not know.

Ancestors refer to those rescued from Egypt, but it is also a call for me not to become another someone’s ancestor who experiences miracles, but still lacks faith to ask for help or respect the offering.

My subsequent mental debate on the incident is just what the scripture said I’d do—think myself into a state where I’ll cast doubt. No longer. This deeper meaning could be the greatest beauty of this memorable experience—the Word itself. ☩

Michael Robbins is a member of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound. Michael discovered Sweden-



borg in the library basement at the University of Colorado in Boulder in 1992, and was delighted to find the church several years later. He is a business-plan writer by trade.

Church Statistics: 2009

Association	Churches		Ordained Ministers			Authorized Lay Leaders	Members			Number of Delegates
	Active	Inactive	Active	Inactive	Retired		Active	Inactive	Total	
Eastern Canada	1	0	1	0	1	1	97	18	115	11
Illinois*	6	0	3	0	1	0	87	37	124	10
Kansas	2	0	2	0	1	0	90	0	90	11
Maine	2	0	6	0	0	0	131	104	235	15
Massachusetts	5	0	11	0	2	0	110	42	152	13
Michigan	2	0	2	0	0	0	55	2	57	7
Middle Atlantic	3	0	3	0	0	0	63	44	107	8
New York**	2	0	2	0	0	0	34	29	63	5
Ohio	3	2	4	0	0	1	94	15	109	11
PCA	6	0	17	0	4	1	256	66	322	27
Southeast	2	0	3	0	1	0	42	6	48	6
Western Canada	6	0	1	0	3	0	114	17	131	13
Unaffiliated			2							
SCYL										2
Totals	40	2	57	0	13	3	1173	380	1553	139

*St. Louis did not report in time for publication. **Bayside did not report for 2002-2008.

Peer Supervision

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world. It was a great start and gave us much to think about as we later broke into pairings with our "peer ears."

Each pair chose a spot and engaged the topic, sharing their personal situations even more intensely. Some found a cozy corner in comfortable chairs, some sat with papers spread out over tables, some went walking, and two of us set up beach chairs at the water's edge. (This particular session ended when the tide came up around us and reached our necks. It was grab the chairs and wade for shore: no walking on the water, at least this time anyway!)

Whatever the situation, we all looked intensely at our past year's experience, our successes and defeats, our outside circumstances and self-imposed challenges, and then mapped out our goals and tasks for the coming year. Over the course of the two and a half days, we alternated group time and discussion with solo time and periods for each pair to work on plans for personal ministry in the com-

ing year. We spent some time talking about General Convention and what we saw as the important and upcoming issues as our denomination continues to find its use in an ever-changing world. We shared meals and began and ended each day with one of us leading devotionals; we shared in unstructured social time; we took some time to "just be" in a beautiful and restful place and renew ourselves.

Our time together came to an end with a simple communion service at our last meal. A brief scripture reading, the blessing and sharing of bread and fruit of the vine, a prayer, and a song brought our time of rest and renewal to an end. We parted company, each of us returning to our own home, our own ministry, yet each of us carried by the inner knowledge of the bond of friendship and companionship shared and the faith in the Lord which has been our calling from the beginning and will be our comfort till the end. ☩

The Rev. Ken Turley is pastor of the Fryeburg, (Maine) New Church.

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Passages

Confirmations

Clifford Archer, Marie Archer, Tom Barrett, Diane Choquette, Loretta Schulte, and Cathy Wood were confirmed into the Lord's New Church in a ceremony held at the Fryeburg (Maine) New Church on April 5, 2009, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating.

Mariko Jameson was confirmed into the Lord's New Church at Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on April 19, 2009, the Rev. Kevin Baxter officiating.

Deaths

Gladys I. (Priestnal) McGrath, 98, of West Yarmouth on Cape Cod died April 11, 2009. She was the wife of the late James McGrath for 44 years. Mrs. McGrath was born in Lacy, Iowa and moved to Yarmouth Port in 1914 when her father was called to serve the Yarmouth New Church (Swedenborgian). When he retired, her late brother the Rev. Clayton Priestnal filled the pulpit. Upon graduating from Yarmouth High School, she moved to Boston. After retiring in 1976, she and her husband moved back to West Yarmouth. She leaves many nieces and nephews and a dear friend, Walter Chapin of South

Yarmouth. A Memorial Service will be at 1 PM, Sunday, July 13 at Yarmouth New Church.

F. LaWanda Hendricks, 85, died April 9, 2009. A member of the Pawnee Rock (Kansas) Church of the New Jerusalem, she was born April 14, 1923, the daughter of Harry and Rose Merten Mausolf. She is survived by her husband W. H. "Tag" Hendricks; sons Randy, Lanny, Doug, and Kevin Gil Unruh; daughter Candy Conwell; stepson Larry Hendricks; sister, Marylyn Scheuerman; twelve grandchildren; and five great grandchildren. Services were held at the New Jerusalem Church, Pawnee Rock. ☩

In Memoriam

Beulah Love Unruh (Lovie), was the daughter of Walter and Adeline Knisely. After a long, useful, and adventurous life of 101 years, she died March 21, 2009. She was a devoted member of the New Jerusalem Church in Pawnee Rock (Kansas), participated in the activities of the Ladies Service Alliance and in the Retired Teachers Association. Lovie and Roger Unruh were married in 1933; the farm a little east of Pawnee Rock was their home. Lovie is survived by daughters Sylvia and Eileen, and son Roger L., five grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

I have stored within my own memory

the many entertaining conversations with Roger and Lovie in their farm home, with a warm fire in that free-standing, wood burning stove in the living room. They farmed. They traveled. They were two involved people in their community, their church, and their politics. Lovie was blessed with an insatiable appetite to learn, to think things through, to venture opinions. She was a school teacher.—taught at Radium for many years. All of this was accompanied by a good sense of humor, which, by the way, I'm sure helped carry them through the difficult years when farming was not exactly profitable and teaching in a rural school, with severely limited resources, also had its difficul-

ties. Lovie enjoyed her flower bed—she was almost surrounded with 'em. They (the flowers) found their way into her home and also into the church for Sunday morning worship. I clearly recall the celebration of her 100th birthday, when family and a multitude of friends gathered in expression of their gratitude for her service to the community.

The memorial service for Lovie was held in the church in Pawnee Rock, on March 26, with burial in the Pawnee Rock cemetery. The Rev. Alison Lane Olson, serving the New Jerusalem Church in Pretty Prairie, officiated at this service of gratitude for the long and good life granted to a dear friend.

—Rev. Eric J. Zacharias

Nominees

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Kit Billings

Kit and his wife Penny are proud parents of their four-year-old daughter, Julia. Kit has an extensive family history in the Swedenborgian Church going



back four generations. He holds a B.A. in counseling psychology from Urbana University and an M.Div. equivalency and M.A. in Swedenborgian Spirituality from the Swedenborg School of Religion. He pastored for twelve years in two of our General Convention congregations, St. Paul and St. Louis. Kit has given lectures at Almont New Church Assembly and worked on the Worship Committee and the Committee On Admission To The Ministry. In 2006

Kit and his family moved near Omaha, Nebraska to complete the twelve-month long Clinical Pastoral Education chaplaincy residency training with Alegent Health Systems. At present, he is chair of the Alegent Health Infant Bereavement Committee and works as a full-time staff chaplain at Bergan Mercy Medical Center in Omaha. Kit hopes to use his wide range of ministry experience serving our church on General Council. ☩

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.

Summer Online Courses at SHS

Relationship as a Sacred Path

with **Rev. Kim Hinrichs**

June 8 - July 29, 2009

This online course will explore the ways in which living in relationship with others—partners, children, parents, friends, colleagues and congregations—can be embraced as spiritual practice. Starting with Jesus' teachings on love, we will consider the monastic Rule of St. Benedict and selected writings of medieval mysticism before moving on to a few representative contemporary writers on psychology, spirituality, and family systems theory. Our journey will be grounded in Swedenborgian theology that considers the relational aspects of the divine-human creation. Personal reflection from the students will be welcomed and encouraged. The goal of this contemplative journey will be to integrate head and heart, and theology with lived experience.

Offered in partnership with the Center for Anglican Learning and Leadership. Tuition: \$145. Register here. (Select group rate; indicate SHS as your group.)

Registration deadline: June 1, 2009.

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Rev. Dr. Inese Radzins

June 8 - July 29, 2009

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this online class will give you a clear and systematic understanding of his thought, using his book *True Christianity* as a resource. The class will be divided into two sections. The first, called "Who is God?" will deal with the following topics: Creator, Redeemer, Holy Spirit and the Word. The second section, entitled "Who are we?" will discuss faith, charity, free will, reformation and regeneration. The goal of the course will be to provide you with a theological overview that can enhance your spiritual lives.

Tuition: \$100. Special discount: 50% off to the first 5 students to register!

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