



The Swedenborg Colloquium: Observations and Reflections

BY ROSLYN TAYLOR

(WITH THANKS TO ANNA WOOFENDEN AND CHRISTA BEDFORD)

The year 2010 may well go down in the annals of Swedenborgian history as the year of healing, the year when the work of healing our denominational schisms came into the forefront of our consciousness. The Swedenborg Colloquium in Pennsylvania on October 9, 2010, was an important watershed event in the shift towards our collective healing.

The healing process started in 2004, when the first Gathering Leaves retreat for Swedenborgian and New Church women brought the women of our branches together to celebrate intentionally our unity as a faith community. It has continued biennially in a variety of locations, including England. The theme has remained “The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Rev 22).

But three events in 2010 have widened the scope of that beginning. In July, the opening session of Gathering Leaves was open to women and men of all New Church and Swedenborgian denominations and focused on experiences of cooperation between the branches. The final event of Gathering Leaves again brought women and men of all the North American branches together in a worship service. Finally, in October, two hundred men and women from the three North American

branches of the New Church/Swedenborgian faith community again gathered together, this time at the Swedenborg Colloquium at the Philmont Country Club in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. Dr. Gerald and Mrs. Emily Jane Lemole and the Lord’s New Church jointly hosted the event, and they deserve many thanks and much gratitude for what they brought to our faith community.

This day-long event brought together lay and ordained leaders, male

The colloquium was challenged to answer a question grounded in Revelation: “Behold I Make All Things New.” How?

and female, from organized branches as well as independent organizations, to speak to the question of “The Future of the New Church.” The colloquium was challenged to answer a question grounded in Revelation: “Behold I Make All Things New.” How? Twelve speakers, divided into a morning and an afternoon panel, each had twenty minutes in which to respond to the question. A question and response period followed each panel’s presentation. The Rev. Susannah Currie (General Convention) and the Rev. Jonathan Rose (General Church) artfully moderated the program.

Energy ran high throughout the day. The audience was clearly very engaged by how each speaker approached the question—and there was a wide variety of responses from the speakers. Participants in both panels and the audience sustained an atmosphere of loving willingness to listen and be entertained. I felt that at times some speakers and audience members used humor to deflect the potential discomfort of facing the real differences between the branches and the pain and wounding that have resulted from those differences. But as Rev. Susannah Currie wisely suggested in her opening remarks, this colloquium could only be a starting point, a place to sow seeds that can come to fruition in the near or distant future with nurturing and care. My speculation is that there will be a time and a need to heal the painful places, but the colloquium’s joyful collaborative work in envisioning our joint future will bring us a long way in our healing journey. Participants in the colloquium described it afterwards as epic and ground breaking, as well as usefully disturbing. They found it very inspirational and moving, and hoped for action on the suggestions they had heard.

The Rt. Rev. Tom Kline of the General Church (www.newchurch.org) started the presentations with a slide show demonstrating the phenomenal international growth of the General Church, particularly in Africa and Asia, and the promising future there for the New Church. Rev. Dr. Reuben Bell, whose independent Swedenbor-

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The Editor's Desk



Small World

I only met Alice Skinner once, and I have been looking forward to seeing her again for longer conversations. Alas, I will not see her in the material world (obituary page 138).

Around the time I became aware of Emanuel Swedenborg and his writings, my wife and I spent some weekends in St. George, Maine, with good friends who had a summer house there on the St. George River. They moored their sailboat in the river near the dock of their next door neighbors, Wick and Alice. We went sailing several times, rowing a dinghy from that dock to the sailboat. Our friends, Jenn and David Mumford, hoped we would get to meet Wick and Alice, but they were never there when we were.

One night I selected a book from their bookcase to read at bedtime. I cannot remember the title, but it was a book by an Englishwoman, a scholar in ancient religions who wrote about reli-

gions and religious practices in the ancient Middle East. The book intrigued me because it postulated some possibilities that resonated with Swedenborg's writings about the Most Ancient Church. My friends gave me the book. Lending it to someone a few years later, I saw Alice Skinner's name—the book had originally belonged to her.

Completing a Gift

As a trustee on the board of the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS), I represented it in managing the sale of the Rev. Dorothea Harvey's former home. The school (when it was known as the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, Massachusetts) had received the property from Dorothea in 1992. She continued to live there under a trust agreement whereby she could make her gift to the school but reside there until her death.

The house is located on a beautiful site in the village of Annisquam, Massachusetts, a short walk from Ipswich bay. (See the April 2010 *Messenger* for a description of the house and its surroundings.) Because Annisquam is an extremely desirable area, we were able to sell the house by listing with an online broker for a small fee, which provided us with an MLS listing. After several months of showing the house, waiting patiently for the right buyers to appear, and being told by some real estate agents that it was a tear-down, and thus worth less than we thought, a couple in the area looked at it for its architectural interest and fell in love with it. They made an offer and we quickly agreed on a price of \$650,000, the sale being completed at the end of September.

The buyer is an architect and build-

er in the Cape Ann area who has done work in Annisquam. Like me, the couple perceived the house as a clear expression of the principles espoused by architect Christopher Alexander in *The Timeless Way of Building*, *A Pattern Language*, and other books. They appreciate the character and details of the house and also the spirit and history of Dorothea and her father that still reside there.

Thus, Dorothea's gift is now put to use. It has been invested in the Common Fund and generates income that supports the Dorothea Harvey Chair of Swedenborgian Studies, held by Dr. Inese Radzins at SHS and the Pacific School of Religion. Thank you Dorothea.

—Herb Ziegler

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Church Calendar

November 5—6: General Council fall meeting • Duxbury, Massachusetts

the Messenger

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Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

It has been quite a month! Closing in on the end of my second two-week trip, I'm now sitting in the airport in Tuscon, Arizona, with a couple of hours before my flight to LaPorte, Indiana, and the PUSH meetings. I'll finish this trip sharing worship with Rev. Freeman Schrock and the folks at the LaPorte church and then catch a plane back to Maine.



Yesterday, I shared a wonderful day with Rev. Sky Paradise learning all about Silver City, New Mexico, the mix of Anglo, Hispanic and Native cultures that are struggling with the effects of the downward spiraling economy there, and meeting a number of the wonderful, creative and committed folks that make up the community of the New Church of the Southwest Desert. We had a "coffee conversation" in the afternoon, and then Board Members and a few friends and spouses met over a delicious homemade dinner that evening. I spent the night up in the mountains at a member's house admiring the Milky Way spread across the open night sky and contemplating the stories of missions and miners and mountain lions. The closeness of Rev. Sky's community and the spiritual explorations and works of service to the local community that they are engaged in were truly moving. One of only three church plants (along with Lansing, Michigan and Southwest Florida) we have managed in quite some time, it is well established and taking root in a small western city, recently called a new center of arts and music, that has much to offer and at the same time has deep needs.

At the beginning of this week, I was the guest of Rev. Carla Friedrich and the San Diego New Church. There too we have a vibrant, committed

community of diverse and creative souls. Patte LeVan and I arrived the night they were presenting a lecture presentation on the early origins of humanity in southern Africa, the evidence of life from other earths, and the promise of new sources of energy that are now being discovered and explored. The next morning I was one of a number of people who combined to present a moving and inspiring worship service. This service included beautifully played piano prelude and hymn accompaniments, an anthem of guitars during my setting of Psalm 1, a soprano soloist singing an Amy Grant song entitled "Better Than a Hallelujah," and an original song by a duo of teen guitarists. The sermon I gave was followed by "talk back time" when the congregation could engage the worship theme by asking questions and sharing comments and experiences. They were not shy, and a fascinating and moving conversation had to be cut off so we could move to coffee hour. The church building is used for concerts, rehearsals, meetings, presentations, and a natural food coop distribution. It is becoming a well-known neighborhood center. It was good to see the multi-generational congregation that included young families with children, single people, the current leadership, and Eldon Smith, lay-leader for many years, all taking part in the evolving life of this church.

This trip began with the board meeting of the Wayfarer's Chapel, a truly bright and shining light within Convention. It is well-known both locally and world-wide for its beauty as a sacred site, for the spiritual quality of its weddings, and recently for its programs and growing congregation that gathers for worship on Sundays and special holidays. What people feel when visiting, admiring the lush landscaping, and talking with the folks at the visitors center, is the deep caring and cooperation between all levels of employees generated and maintained by the ministry of the Revs. Harvey Tafel, Jonathan Mitchell, and David Brown.

So now the PUSH (Promoting Usefulness, Sustainability and Health) committee is finishing the

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Sun, Moon and Stars: The LaPorte Tween Retreat at Manna House

BY KURT FEKETE

Seventeen energetic tweens from Michigan and Indiana aged 10–13 descended on Manna House in LaPorte, Indiana, in late September. They joined youth director Kurt Fekete, the Rev. Jennifer Tafel and youth leaders Lori Steinhiser and Rachael Sbrocco in a celebration and quest for knowledge about the sun, moon, and stars. The retreat got started on a beautifully clear early Friday evening with the sun, moon and stars shining brightly overhead.

The first session began with some science. We discussed facts about the heavenly bodies and how far science has taken us in knowledge about our neighbors in the sky. I was astounded by how much these children knew about the sun, moon, and stars. Galileo Galilei would have been proud. Then we left the world of facts for a more emotional and poetic activity where the tweens made three lists of the words that come to mind when we think of sun, moon, and stars. After this opening session the tweens played ball games in the parking lot (which pretty much happened every free play minute of the retreat) and worked on outer space mosaic posters.

The Saturday morning session covered ancient sun, moon, and stars, religion and mythol-

ogy. We discussed many sun gods of many cultures, including the Egyptian god Ra, the Hindu god Surya, and the Aztek god Tonatiuh as well as moon



The LaPorte Tween Retreat group

gods, including the Greek god Artemis, the Egyptian god Isis, the Mayan god Ix-Chel, and the Hindu god Chandra. We also read some of the Greek myths of stars and how the con-



The LaPorte Retreat tweens taking a break

stellations found their way into the sky, including the three constellations mentioned in the Bible: Orion, Ursa Major/Minor, and the Pleiades. To conclude the session, Lori and Rachael led the tweens in making beautiful glow-in-the-dark pillow cases.

After lunch and more romping in the parking lot, we took a look at the Swedenborgian correspondence of the sun, moon, and stars from the Bible. We learned how the sun is a representation of God's love and wisdom, how the moon relates to our faith and understanding of God, and how the stars are little knowledges of good and truth that together form patterns in our minds to guide us towards heaven. We looked at the

list of words that we came up with the night before and saw how they closely they fit with our newly learned correspondences. Then the tweens made sun, moon and stars pinhole sun catchers with Rachael.

The Saturday evening session was more personal. The tweens each selected an origami paper balloon (made by Cody Steinhiser) containing a piece of candy representing the sun, moon, or a star along with a question related to that heavenly body. A sun balloon contained a cinnamon red hot hard candy with a question like, "What makes you feel warm inside?" A moon balloon contained a mint patty and a question like, "What is your strongest belief?" A star balloon contained a Star-

continues next page

SCYL 2010 Columbus Day Retreat at Blairhaven

BY CELIE BAUER

The retreat topic this year was “Ages and Stages: Your Changing Roles in the Theater of Life,” and I got a lot out of it. As always, the sessions really made me consider things I had never really put any thought into before. We also did a lot of work with expressing ourselves. Rev. Kevin Baxter’s session had us crawling around like babies and playing games having to do with stages of life and spirituality.

This retreat at Blairhaven was really special. Seven teens from the Midwest drove all the way to Massachusetts to join six East Coast teens. It was amazing to see all of them, and especially for me to meet Danny and Emily for the first time.



The Columbus Day Retreat Teen Group at Duxbury Beach: (l to r) Audrey, Janice, Danny, Nina, Cody, Holly, Emily, Caleb, Chris, Celie, Lucas, Adam, Spenser (not pictured)



“You want me to do what!?” Rev. Kevin Baxter tells the teens that they will be acting the part of babies in this session.

My favorite moments were our kitchen dance parties, going disco glow-bowling, and the mudwalk, which this

year turned into a mudball fight. We also went to the beach where we waded and made rainbows of colored rocks. Some of the teens from the Midwest saw the ocean for the first time.

The best part of every retreat is talking to the other teens and the adults about our lives, interests and, spirituality. Whether we were just lying around, playing croquet, learning songs on the guitar, cooking, or participating in our sessions, I always felt a

huge connection to everyone there. ☦

Celie Bauer is a member of SCYL living in Maine.

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burst candy with questions like, “What guides you down positive path? What keeps you from doing things that are wrong?” The preteens had some wonderful insights and answers to these questions. They enjoyed the candy too! The evening closed with a glow-in-the-dark necklace craft led by Lori and the movie, Space Camp.

We awoke Sunday morning for the morning worship service. During Sunday School, we reviewed the inner sense of the opening verses of the Bible, Genesis 1:1-5. We discussed how “Let there be light” is particularly interesting and useful for tweens as they are at the place where they are just beginning to realize that there are bigger more important spiritual things,

like having close friends, doing good things for other people, and starting to learn about God. The retreat closed after worship with a prayer circle and delicious potluck lunch. We all departed with the warmth of the sun in our heart, moonbeams shining in our faces, and the stars to guide our way towards the Lord’s heavenly light. ☦

Kurt Fekete is the youth director of the Swedenborgian Church.

The HomeTribe Project

BY CARLA FRIEDRICH

HomeTribe is the working name of the San Diego Church project while we do the work of discovery and bringing about a home for children.

We hope that the many children who come to be cared for will finally come home to a place of love and belonging—a true family and home. The vision is for altogether sustainable

lives: a home and sustainable eco-village of sorts where the children can play again, learn, and eventually contribute to the community in which the home has context.

This future home will seek to provide the children as many opportunities as possible to stay connected to the surrounding indigenous culture wherever it may be, and to preserve and encourage interaction with the lo-

cal community, language, arts, song, dance, and food as they have known it. We will strive to create ways of living which make for and encourage sustainable relationships, sustainable land conservation and care, and using sustainable free-energy through sustainable learning.

It is our hope that these spiritual qualities will reign as the norm: love, wisdom, mercy, freedom, innocence, peace, healing wholeness, safety, and

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Dear Friends,

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. . . .” That line has always spoken to me with such poignancy. It truly speaks to the human condition. And it seems that it also truly speaks to our condition as a denomination. So many things are going on that lift my spirit: new churches taking off in Michigan and New Mexico; the Wayfarer’s Chapel success story; vital and creative spiritual communities sprinkled across the four corners of the continent, each with its own unique personality, its own style of worship and music, its own ways of serving the larger community. We have a spiritual community that meets online and a new denominational website taking shape. We have a growing cadre of chaplains working beyond our denomination. The youth programs are active, with “tweens” getting set to enter and “transitions” getting set to launch youth into the adult world. There are new faces, both students and faculty, at our seminary in Berkeley. There is a growing sense of warmth and cooperation with our sister denominations both at home and abroad. So many good things happening.

And yet, even with all of this, we continue to struggle economically in ways that get more and more serious with each passing year. Most of our churches continue to seek assistance from the denomination to pay ministers and fund their programs. Even as some of our churches are showing new life, we continue to decline in numbers as a denomination. We have protected and even grown our investments through the economic downturn which has adversely affected every area of life, and yet our yearly budget continues to struggle to keep its balance.

In all of life it seems that joy and celebration live side by side with pain and struggle. Perhaps it has something

to do with the equilibrium between good and evil in which we find our freedom. Perhaps it is the nature of spiritual regeneration and the earthly journey we undertake to find the path that leads to heaven. In any case it is our journey and we travel together as members and friends of this earthly church. There are many joys and there are many trials. There are many blessings and there are many temptations. And there are many choices. Today I ask you to consider making a choice: a choice to find a way to help support our life as a denomination. I know of the many hours of volunteer time that you give to both your local churches and to the denomination. I know of the generosity with which you give on Sundays and to the stewardship efforts of your churches. And many give to any number of the countless worthy causes outside the church which clamor for your contributions. But now your church is calling out to you for help as well. The denomination, if it is going to continue to support you and your churches, our ministers and ministries, if it is going to continue to be there in all the ways it provides resources and support, now needs your help. Will you please consider making a choice to contribute to the denomination which has preserved and promoted for so long the faith which now sustains each and every one of us? It is the worst of times to be asking you to give, I know, but perhaps it is that very fact that makes it the best of times to do so. Each and every response to this annual appeal will be put to work to help this denomination continue to be the source of strength and unity which connects us to one another in the Lord’s New Church here on earth.

“Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.”
(Matthew 6:21)

Blessings,

Rev. Ken Turley, President

Colloquium

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gian spirituality center is the Samara Center in Maine (www.samaracenter.org), used Revelation 21 as a basis to propose a new New Church as a way to enhance existing New Church organizations. Rev. Hugh Odhner, a pastor in the Lord's New Church (www.thelord-snewchurch.com), drew from Swedenborg's writings to encourage everyone in the organized New Church to accept and embrace each other from charity, and not to focus on our differences. Next the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose of the General Church and the Swedenborg Foundation (www.swedenborg.com) suggested we prepare for an increased presence of the Lord and an increased fight with the hells by repenting, reading Swedenborg and reaching out with love. He was followed by General Convention's Rev. Jane Siebert, (www.swedenborg.org) who directed us to the flow of Divine Providence and our need to trust the Lord when we envision the future of the church. The final morning speaker was the Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence from General Convention and the Swedenborg House of Studies (www.shs.psr.edu), who addressed the historical reception of Swedenborg's writings, citing the transformational impact of Wilson van Dusen's pamphlet on uses.

After an extended lunch break, during which people continued the discussion and sharing, both inside and outside in the warm autumn sun, the second panel convened. The Rev. Grant Schnarr, pastor of the independent Creekside New Church in Pennsylvania (<http://creeksidenewchurch.org>), led with a Power Point presentation about leading the New Christianity by reaching out widely with a much-needed new approach to Christianity, especially toward young adults. Another independent pastor, The Rev. Stephen

Simons, gave us a taste of his Second Advent Christian perspective (www.SecondAdventChristian.com), advocating that we build healthy Christian churches where we talk more about Jesus Christ and dedicate ourselves to doing Jesus's will. Mr. Peter Rhodes, a prominent layperson in the Spiritual Growth Movement in the General Church, pointed out that the Lord does the work, not us, so we need to get our "proprial" selves out of the way so we can make space for God to come in and lead us. Next was the Rev. Susannah Currie from General Convention, whose vision for our future involves our reaching out to a world of people hungering for connection and meaning in their lives. "Love your God and the person right in front of you" was the message from the General Church's Rev. Chuck Ebert (www.newchurchlive.tv), who also showed us a model for church congregations that look outward to include all people. The final speaker of the day was a retired General Church pastor Rev. Frank Rose, who asked "What is the Church?" and postulated that Sunday worship and denominations will eventually cease to exist and instead people will co-exist beautifully in their quest for a personal relationship with God.

Several themes emerged from both the prepared comments of the speakers and the responses and questions from the audience participants. I've listed some that I noticed, along with some relevant, non-verbatim, memorable quotes:

Unity: the potential for and efforts toward unity within the New Church/Swedenborgian Christian community that have already taken place.

"We do not have to become one; we just need to realize that we are one." (Rev. Jane Siebert)

"Charity unites." (Rev. Hugh Odhner)

Non-Western Growth (especially in

Africa and Asia, and implications for the future of the New Church/Swedenborgian Christianity):

"New churches rarely grow where old churches have been." (Rev. Hugh Odhner)

"African church leaders will be coming to us to teach us how to be a church." (Rt. Rev. Tom Kline)

People Self Identifying as Spiritual but Non-Religious (a trend that is seen inside and outside the New Church/Swedenborgian Christian community that has negatively affected church attendance and outreach):

"Sweeping the porches is my prayer to God." (Wilson Van Dusen, quoted by Rev. Frank Rose)

"Many people are on a search for their own answers about how to seek God's presence." (Rev. Susannah Currie)

Needs of Young People (for the most part poorly addressed and yet critical to our future):

"I am the youth that is leaving in droves. Why am I here early on a Saturday morning? My question is what are you going to do for people like me?" (participant Curtis Childs)

"Old church is dead to young people." (Rev. Grant Schnarr)

"Church" Is Changing Everywhere (We need to change to participant focused worship, support for what people need for spiritual growth, and models for inclusion, and empowerment of lay people.)

"Use our collective imaginations to discover what forms and structures are evolving." (Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence)

"Read Revelation 21. 'There is no temple in [the New Jerusalem].' What does that mean for the forms of the church on earth?" (Rev. Dr. Rueben Bell)

The Church Is The Lord's, Not Ours: we need to let the Lord lead us to what

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Women's Alliance Annual Meeting and Luncheon

BY NANCY LITTLE

The Women's Alliance annual meeting and luncheon took place on June 25, 2010, at Annual Convention in St. Paul. The Rev. Sue Turley led us in the opening devotional. Following a delicious lunch, the business meeting started with reports from the President Nancy Little, and Treasurer Gloria Toot. Barb Boxwell reported on behalf of the Mite Box. The membership voted that the Mite Box for the coming year will go to General Convention to support delegates attendance at NC-CCUSA annual meetings. Polly Baxter reported that the Round Robin had no "flights" this year. Rev. Carla Friedrich tearfully accepted the Mite Box donations of \$1,410.00 on behalf of the San Diego church and spoke briefly about their work with Proyecto Hispanaya in Mexico. She also told us about her recent trip to an orphanage in Nepal. The 2010–2011 officers elected are

- President: Nancy Little
- Vice President: Dorie Litchfield
- Secretary: Connie Helm
- Treasurer: Gloria Toot
- Mite Box Chair: BJ Neuenfeldt

Alice Skinner

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her biography of Alice Archer Sewall James, an artist in Ohio and a descendant of the Swedenborgian Sewall boat-building family in Bath, Maine. Alice finished this book, *Stay by Me, Roses*, in the week before her death. Its publishing has been confirmed for 2011.

"She was a person who had a glow about her, even as she weakened," said John Bird. "She was going to provide for others, and she was guided by an inner sense, of core values and principles. To be in her presence was a sheer pleasure at all times."

Her son, Charles, said it all, and simply: "She always put others first."

A service of remembrance was held Oct. 16 in Rockland, Maine. In lieu of flowers, Alice's family requests that any donations be sent to the Farnsworth Art Museum at 16 Museum St., Rockland, ME 04841. ☩

Lynda Clancy can be reached at lclancy@villagesoup.com.

- Religious Chair: Carla Friedrich
- Publications Chair: Barbara Halle
- Round Robin: Polly Baxter ☩

Bridges: Paths between Worlds

Bridges: Paths between Worlds, Edited by Robert F. Lawson and Carol S. Lawson, is the seventeenth installment of the annual anthology, *Chrysalis Reader*. It focuses on the connections that we make between this world and the next. It is available from the Swedenborg Foundation (www.swedenborgfoundation.com). ☩

Colloquium

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we need to be and do.

"What are the things that are the 'old crust' of religion that hold us back?" (Rev. Grant Schnarr)

"Behold I make all things new'. Not a question—a statement." (Mr. Peter Rhodes)

Audio recordings of the presentations at the Swedenborg Colloquium will be available soon at www.IVOT-GC.org. You can get a DVD or CD of the event by contacting Swedenborg-coll@gmail.com. ☩

Roslyn Taylor is a member of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos.

HomeTribe

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joy throughout life.

By innocence we mean a willingness to remain teachable and to be led by what is good and true so that the qualities named above become character. The understanding is that by having a humble, soft learning edge, over time by journey and process and a coming-into-being, we will arrive at that place—that there is a place of hope and inviolability in every individual and that this is the place from which healing departs and grows. Thus innocence can be restored to any indi-

vidual no matter his or her experiences or circumstances.

This name HomeTribe is selected for now because

- 1) it is fun and has both an ancient and a modern ring.
- 2) it is terminology young people use and understand.
- 3) it means bringing children together in a family from unlikely and diverse origins.
- 4) a diverse group of people who formerly didn't know each other are coming together through this common love and purpose.

5) while we make the effort to create a stable, fixed, loving home environment, the socio-historical connotations of this term acknowledges that life, true family, homecoming (be it by origin or adoption), is both a process and a journey.

Over the next six to nine months, we hope to learn what works and what doesn't from the best practices of successful sustainable homes already established; we have been witness to some already. We are learning. ☩

The Rev. Carla Friedrich is pastor of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church.

Last Service at Elmwood Church

BY DONNA KEANE

The Elmwood (Massachusetts) Society has been cautiously maintaining our church building over the years, but the deferred maintenance has finally caught up with us. Built in 1854, the building has served the people of Elmwood for over 156 years.

The town has told us that we may no longer meet in our beloved church building, and we are sad to say that our final church service in this building—a celebration of the life of our building over the years—will be held on Sunday, November 7, 2010, at 2:00 PM.

We invite all to this service to share memories, laughter, and tears with us as we move forward into our future. ☩

The Rev. Dr. Donna Keane is pastor of the Elmwood (Massachusetts) Society.

From the President

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work of analyzing and responding to the many requests for financial assistance that come from our local churches. It is deeply challenging work as we must evaluate the efforts and results of our ministers and their congregations. The needs outweigh the resources, and it makes for difficult decisions as to who gets fed and how much. It is a hard reminder that even as we are engaged in “spiritual life and learning” we must also take care of the natural level needs within which we function as earth-bound human beings who are still only angels in training.

Throughout my travels this month, during my visitations to churches at and between meetings, as well as in calls during the long open hours of driving, I have had good conversations with nearly twenty of our ministers and students, not to mention the

Dear Donna [Rev. Keane],

How sad and painful notice of the final service in the Elmwood Church must be for all those in the village who still have ties with this old, beloved house of God. Our loving thoughts and prayers surround the Elmwood congregation.

For me, this is where it all began. We were there only three years as minister, 1955–58, but what a glorious time that was. On arrival I was pretty nervous and uncertain as to what ministry was all about, but my fears were quickly allayed by the warm welcome given us by the church members. Very quickly we felt completely at home. I’ll never forget how long it took to pick up our mail—walking from the parsonage to the post office and back took an hour because one stopped and chatted with folks en route!

The Church was a going concern in those days, the hub of virtually all village activities. We had a Sunday School of twenty-five or more children, junior and senior youth leagues, two choirs, two women’s groups, and a number of special programs were held throughout the year. The church was completely filled for the Easter and Christmas Eve services. The downstairs hall was packed for delicious church suppers. Everyone pitched in and helped . . . so much vitality and fun. And we had our share of New England characters too: Marion Dunbar, Perp Churchill, Dot White, and the list goes on. I can still so easily bring to mind those wonderful faces and voices. For me it was a kind of golden age—an incredible harvest of heartwarming memories.

We would dearly love to be there on November 7, but I’m not feeling the greatest and doubt that we will make it. But please convey to everyone there our affectionate greetings and best wishes, knowing that the spirit of the Elmwood New Church will never die; and we thank the good Lord for His rich blessings to the many hundreds of people who have been sheltered and sustained by the Elmwood New Church over the past 155 years. “In the land of memories we are never far apart.”

*Much Love to you all,
Paul and Pat [Zacharias]*

meetings, interactions, and conversations I’ve had with various members and friends of the churches I’ve visited so far. I have learned an incredible amount about the people “out there” doing the work of the church, the joys they are experiencing and the challenges they are facing. It truly is tough times in many ways, and we all know the problems of money and numbers. But still, good things are happening as communities pull together and as we learn of and from one another and apply ourselves to the work and the joys

at hand. It is a new era we are living in, with many difficulties and challenges, and yet we are seeing our churches, our congregations, and our ministers making real progress in the hard and sometimes painful but ultimately rewarding process of transformation. It is what we call spiritual regeneration. And as we keep our focus and our efforts centered on serving the Lord’s Second Coming here on earth we can see and take heart in the evidence of Divine Providence at work all around us and within us.

—Blessings, Rev. Ken (Turley)

Alice Skinner: a Quiet, Principled Thinker

She Took on Harvard

BY LYNDA CLANCY

Reprinted from the Rockland Herald Gazette and VillageSoup.com.

To her family and friends, Alice Skinner exemplified a rare sensibility, caring less about her own opinions and more about drawing out those of others. She is remembered as a kind woman, hard working, curious, deeply faithful, and loving of all creatures.

And then there is this: she was also a powerful woman, a principled, independent thinker who took on the Harvard establishment and succeeded in convincing trustees at that oldest of American institutions to sail on a course she helped to set.

Alice died September 15 after suffering a stroke. She left her husband, Wickham, a devoted family, and a wide circle of friends, reflecting her community involvement in the Midcoast. Rockland's Lincoln Street Center, a building for artists, depended on her involvement, as did the St. George recycling center, which has been so successful that the town was recognized last year for achieving among the highest recycling rates across Maine, and certainly the highest in the Midcoast.

"Alice was an amazing woman," said her recycling center colleague and friend Michelle Smith. "She was devoted to getting it off the ground, and we had to convince the townspeople that it was the thing to do. She had great dreams for it, and they came true. Then, it grew. As soon as we built it, it wasn't big enough."

Michelle laughs: "She loved our slogan, 'double your garbage back if you're not satisfied.'"

At 85, Alice lived fully, and was grounded by her Swedenborgian faith, the truth that is love in action. Her father, Franklin Blackmer, was a Swedenborgian minister, president of Urbana College in Ohio, and "a man of few words," said Wick. Frank and Carolyn, Alice's mother and a student of philosophy, raised Alice, the oldest, and her siblings on the precepts of the church, loving the Lord and the neighbor and being of use.

"She had a very, very happy family experience," said her husband, Wick Skinner. "And she passed that on to her own family."

He first encountered Alice at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly summer camp in Maine.

"It was her manner that drew me," he said. The meeting was by chance; he was 17, on his way to

Somesville to visit a friend. "She was intelligent, quiet, and very pretty."

With that, a lifelong relationship began, and that autumn, they started to correspond; eventually, she traveled from Massachusetts to Yale to visit Wick, where he was pursuing a chemical engineering degree.

Her younger brother, Hugh Blackmer, remembers visiting Alice and Wick from his earliest days, first spending summers with them in Minnesota, then Maine, knowing all their dogs, sailing aboard all of their boats.

"Alice was always there and acted as my mother when I was young," he said,

eighteen years her junior. Five years ago, he retired to Maine.

He would talk to her every day on the phone, and being eighteen years younger, was in a position to help Alice finish her book and with the shopping. But there was little talk about infirmities and troubles. "She had a gift of listening to people, and she was interested in their answers," said Hugh. "She was a lifetime student of humans, but not by being critical. She was interested in how they thought about themselves. She drew the eloquence out of other people."

It was this spirit that propelled Alice to graduate high school as president of her class, graduate from Radcliffe in 1945 with a degree in psychology, pursue a master's degree in social work when she and Wick lived in Minnesota, become president of the League of Women Voters chapters in three locations across the country, and then travel with Wick back to Harvard Business School while he pursued a doctorate.

And she never slowed down, even while raising children and moving from the Midwest to Florida and back to Massachusetts. In 1977, Alice earned a Ph.D. in psychology from Harvard, writing her dissertation "Evolving Life Patterns of College-Educated Women: motive dispositions in context." She continued studying the lives of the same women in her thesis for another twenty years, while composing a longitudinal study of women's lives.

While Alice explored academia at different universities, it was Radcliffe that earned a place in her heart. For years, she was active in alumnae affairs, chairman of the Think Committee, which studied continuing education for college-educated women, and she got involved in the Radcliffe Alumnae Association, eventually serving as

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chair of the association's Study Committee on Merger.

That merger was the long and complicated combining of Radcliffe College with Harvard University, a process that began in the 1960s and culminated Oct. 1, 1999. It was a merger that required great strength on the part of the women's college, which was founded in 1879 as the Harvard Annex, specifically for women's instruction by Harvard faculty. In 1894, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts chartered it as Radcliffe College, but it wasn't until 1943 that women were even allowed to study in Harvard classrooms, when Radcliffe and Harvard signed an agreement.

To understand why women waged hard to study at Harvard—and then for Radcliffe to maintain autonomy from Harvard—is a lesson in American history, and Alice Skinner's role was pivotal in it. At one time, Radcliffe students were not allowed into Harvard's Faculty Club and could not enter the Lamont Library (for fear of distracting male students) at Harvard until the late 1960s. All that bred a healthy skepticism by Radcliffe that it must look out for the interests of female students.

When the merger of the two institutions was initiated, Alice sat on the committee and helped author communications that said while a merger might be necessary, there were academic, social and cultural factors that required deeper consideration. Alice set about detailing all of them.

In a letter to Harvard professor Jerome Kagan, she wrote, "Just as Harvard educates men who become leaders, it educates Radcliffe women who have similar abilities. Yet soon after they complete undergraduate work, women begin to encounter restrictions on their freedom to carry on study and work. Harvard cannot redesign society to remove these restrictions, but it can

order its own actions so that it helps to bring about change rather than perpetuating inequities."

The 18,000-member Radcliffe Alumnae Association agreed with Alice, and adopted her committee's recommendation in 1970 not to dissolve Radcliffe, but to effect a partial merger. The stir raised, however, by the committee's opinions landed in the pages of *The New York Times*, and the Radcliffe/Harvard leaders "were furious with Alice's committee," said Wick.

"It didn't really bother her," he said. "She was mild and not aggressive, but she was a real Cliffee. When they get into something they are like bulldogs."

Quiet, firm in her opinions, and compassionate is how Mary Alice Bird of St. George remembers Alice. John Bird served on the Lincoln Street Center Board of Directors with her, and he recalls her sense of clarity and conviction—a person who was never tense nor argumentative; yet, her ideas added value to any conversation, and she never let ego overtake her reasoning.

In 1986, Alice and Wick moved permanently to their home in St. George, settling into the comfort of a warm home, which they always shared with a dog or two, or they would head out into the bay aboard a sailboat. She also tended to the birds. Her brother Hugh said she was an ear birder. "She would hear a bird song and know just what it was," he said. "Whenever she was out on an island, she would have her field glasses on."

Her faith continued to sustain her, and she was president of the Swedenborg Foundation for ten years. She helped to found the *Chrysalis Reader*, a non-religious publication, focusing on original short stories and poems with a spiritual sense. She served *Chrysalis* as its art editor.

Just before her death, she finished

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Passages

Baptisms

On August 1, 2010, the Rev. Jane Siebert baptised three children into the Christian faith at the Pawnee Rock (Kansas) Swedenborgian Church. Justin and Lacey Vieux brought their sons **Brody Lynn and Dylan Michael Vieux**, and Greg and Megan Alexander brought their son **Blake Daniel Alexander** for baptism.

Confirmations

Steve Holczer and **Kristy Lancaster** were confirmed into the Swedenborgian Church at Paulhaven Camp in Alberta in July of 2010 by the Rev. Junchol Lee.

Deaths

Robert Fawcett Cooper passed away on August 28, 2010, at age 87. He is survived by his loving wife of sixty-four years Marie Laure, his son Raymond, daughters Jeanne Phair and Elizabeth, and two grandsons. Bob was one of the founders of Paulhaven Camp in Alberta. Donations in his memory may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society or the Alzheimer's Society of Canada.

On Wednesday July 14, 2010, the Rev. **Henry Korsten** passed away peacefully at the age of eighty years, with Maria, his loving wife of fifty-six years, at his side. He is survived by Maria, his son Robert, daughter Linda Hailey, brother Theo, and grandson Liam. A celebration of Henry's life was held July 21, 2010, in Edmonton, officiated by the Rev. David Fekete. Rev. Korsten had ministered to the Edmonton Society for many years and was instrumental in the development of Paulhaven Camp. He will be missed by all who knew and loved him. Donations in his memory may be made to the Alberta Lung Association. ☛

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.

Straight from the Heart

BY PAT TUKOS

*Reprinted from the October 2010
LaPorte RePorte.*

My husband Steve and I recently hosted one of our former ministers for about eleven days of his trip back to the Midwest from his home in Seattle. Rev. Eric Allison served the LaPorte New Church from 1977 to 1980, and a well loved minister he was and is.

Despite a severe and disabling stroke in July of 2008, Eric's spirit still soars, and his desire to travel is as strong as ever. Eric loved visiting our church and community, and we so enjoyed having him with us. We loved hearing Eric's laugh, his gentle *thank you's* (said with a bowed head), and experiencing his enjoyment of food. What cook doesn't love to hear someone say *wow* all through the meal? Such appreciation!

This message wouldn't be "Straight From My Heart" though, if I didn't add that, along with our joy, we felt sorrow due to what Eric has lost: use of his right hand and most of his word association and speech capabilities. Communication was very difficult. Add to this what his wife Lisa so aptly states as "that darn right side frontal lobe stroke that changed Eric's inhibition meter." What that means is that not understanding

where Eric wants to go, or what he wants to do can make for one angry man who doesn't mind letting you know. So even though our Eric was able to manage the direct flight across the country by himself, he is just not able to manage life without full-time care.

I have another dear friend who is a full-time caregiver to family members living in her home. Her every day is difficult. Every day. My intention in this message is to remind us all to remember the caregivers and try to think of how we can give them a break. Perhaps we can provide a meal once in awhile or stay with their family member for a couple of hours, or take their loved ones for a ride. Caregivers desperately need time for renewal, and they need to know we care and have not forgotten them. They so need our support; the only thing they don't need is our judgment—our questioning their decisions as they go through a most difficult journey.

Dear Lord, please be with those needing care and their caregivers, and also with those who deal with the sadness and guilt of not being able to care for their loved ones. Show us how we may be useful in easing their burdens. Amen.

Pat Tukos is a member of the LaPorte (Indiana) New Church.