

## SCYL Teens Attend International Easter Rally

BY KURT FEKETE

Where to start? How about starting with *awesome*, an over-used word, but one that fully encompasses the experience of the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) in England. Eight teens from the General Convention in North America and I participated in the International Easter Rally for Swedenborgian teens at Purley Chase Retreat Centre near Atherstone, Warwickshire, England, from April 17–21.



The International Youth Easter Rally teens at Purley Chase

two hours before us; missed signals delayed that meeting for two hours (as we wandered the airport and Cody slept

ed with kindness and generosity. Everyone was supportive and helpful. We did not experience even a hint of brashness, contempt, or rudeness. All of the folks in England were delightful, the whole lot of them as they say.

The drive to Purley Chase Centre was short. When I commented to Catherine how narrow the roads were, she laughed and replied, “These are quite wide. You should see some of the roads that wind through the rural wood.” Catherine added that our timing was just right, as the English blue-

### Day 1: Getting There

Our adventure began in three locations before we fully assembled our group in England. Cody flew to London from Chicago, Celie, Holly, Liz, Chris, and I flew from Boston, and Pamela, Jordan, Joseph, Ashleigh, and group leader Pam Kesselring flew from Toronto to Birmingham. The trip began in style as we were unexpectedly seated in economy premium (like business class). Emerging from immigration bleary-eyed the next morning, the teens experienced travel before cell phones—none of ours worked there. We were to meet Cody, who arrived

in a chair). Undaunted, we headed for a whirlwind tour of London before taking a train to Atherstone. On the Tube and on a double-decker open tour bus, we managed to take in some interesting sites, including Portobella Market.

At 7 PM, we took a train to Nuneaton Station, where Rev. Catherine Lauber and Rev. Dave Gaffney (Purley Chase program director) greeted us with smiles and waves. Weary as we were, we immediately felt cared for and loved. How blessed to be welcomed by friends in another country.

In fact, everywhere we went throughout England, we were greet-

ed with kindness and generosity. Everyone was supportive and helpful. We did not experience even a hint of brashness, contempt, or rudeness. All of the folks in England were delightful, the whole lot of them as they say.

As I stepped out of the car at Purley Chase Centre (just called Purley by most), the first thing I noticed was the lovely floral aroma that wafted through the twilight air. Inside I no-

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Swedenborgian Community Update • Church and Association Statistics  
SHS Board Spring Meeting • Bring the Kids!

## The Editor's Desk



### Apocalypse Now

As you read this, you already know whether or not the Rapture took place on May 21 at 6 PM. If it did occur, then you were not raptured and are condemned to five months of tribulations on earth. This is the prediction of a self-appointed Bible expert who has been elevated to a status of national recognition and significance by a media industry obsessed with reporting anything outrageous that is crafted for the palettes of gullible people.

The Rapture is essentially a nineteenth-century creation embraced by many fundamentalist and evangelical denominations and practitioners. It's flimsy basis rests on a single passage from the Bible, 1 Thessalonians 4:15–7, “. . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Never mind whether Paul was a

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prophet in addition to being an evangelist or whether his letters are the Word of God, the passage is clearly written in symbolic rather than scientific terms.

The Bible is filled with confusing, obscure, and often contradictory information. Emanuel Swedenborg provides us with a key to understanding the Bible that provides consistent and believable readings. There appear to be more people ready to believe risible Bible interpretations that poise them on the edge of Armageddon—for the excitement? from despair? who knows?—than are willing to open themselves to writings that make clear the wholeness of life on earth and in heaven, with a clear doctrine of living life as taught and practiced by Jesus Christ. Luckily, they still have plenty of time to read and understand the meaning of the Word right here on earth.

—Herb Ziegler

## Johnny Appleseed

*Johnny Appleseed: The Man, the Myth, the American Story* is an in-depth exploration of the life of John Chapman and the myth of Johnny Appleseed. Intrigued by the Disney animated film about Johnny, Howard Means, a well-respected biographer, felt compelled to find the real man behind the myth. He details Chapman's life and times, with proper emphasis on his Swedenborgian mission, and ponders the American myth-making process through Johnny. You can view a talk by Howard Means at Urbana University at <http://www.booktv.org/Program/12429/Johnny+Appleseed+The+Man+the+Myth+the+American+Story.aspx>. ☒

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## Church Calendar

**June 28–July 3: Annual Convention 2011 • Cincinnati**

**June 24–July 31: Summer School • Almont New Church Assembly • Allenton, Michigan**

**July 30–August 14: Family summer camp • Fryeburg New Church Assembly • Fryeburg, Maine**

## the Messenger

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## Letter from the President



Dear Friends,

The sun is shining. The daffodils are blooming. The woods have that beautiful light green hue as the leaves are just beginning to bud. Spring is here and once again we are reminded that the seasons change. And as I have been traveling this past month, I have been reminded from all sides about how things change.

I attended a meeting of the heads of communion (the technical term for presidents of the denominations) of all the major denominations of the National Council of Churches and a newly formed ecumenical group called Christian Churches Together. As we discussed the future of ecumenical relations in the coming years, one message was overwhelmingly persistent. Every aspect of the landscape of church life, across the country, across the spectrum of liberal to conservative, large to small, is undergoing change. First, the economic pressure that has been affecting our culture has not spared the churches. And as each church begins to cut back on its contributions the impact is felt at each organizational level of the denomination. Every denomination is feeling the pinch, and as a result the National Council of Churches is really feeling the pinch. But more importantly than that, the culture of our society manifested in the way people engage their spiritual search for meaning, the way people relate to organizations and traditions, and the way people communicate and form bonds of community is changing at a rapidly accelerating pace. I will attend the Governing Board meeting of the NCCC in a few days and will have more to report about

that in the coming months. And I will have more to say about the sea change that is taking place in church life as well.

With all of the dramatic change taking place, it is important to recognize that there are some things that have not changed! The need for connection with God and for answers to life's persistent questions has not changed. The need for connection with others of a like mind and common heart has not changed. The need for comfort, support, safety, guidance, inspiration, and shared joy has not changed. The external forms are being transformed before our very eyes but the essence of human need continues unchanged.

As spiritual beings who engage life beginning from a belief in God and ongoing spiritual life, who see the world through the lens of faith in Jesus Christ, the Bible and the writings of Swedenborg along with the vast variety of other spiritually inspired sources of knowledge and experience, we continue to be called to a life of love and wisdom, good and truth, faith and charity expressed and fulfilled in the performance of uses. We are still called to engage spiritual regeneration not just in the face of, but in the very engagement and overcoming of trials and temptations. We are called to be there for one another.

With this in mind, I eagerly look forward to our upcoming convention. It will be a chance to gather in communion, to experience one another's presence in worship, in work, and in play. It will be a time for us to gather together and refocus, renew, and re-inspire ourselves as we engage as a denomination, as individual churches, and as individuals, the changing times of an uncertain future. And while the external forms of that future may be changing and uncertain, the inner essence, the presence of God, the source of life, and the source and goal of the call to eternal life, changes not.

See you in a few weeks!

—Blessings,  
Rev. Ken



## International Youth Rally

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ticed the care that the keepers of Purley took to make it presentable and homey. Beautiful oil paintings hung throughout the building and inspirational writings and keepsakes adorned the main hallway. Purley manager Anne Gaffney cheerfully welcomed us, helped us settle in, and showed us to our rooms for a good night's sleep.

### Day 2: Getting to Know You

The teens had asked me about the quality of food at Purley early in the trip, and I did not have an answer for them. On Sunday morning I did. Breakfast was made-to-order omelets. Amazing—hands down the best retreat food I have ever had. Meals were interesting, delicious, and varied. Coffee was never stale; fruit, snacks, and biscuits (cookies) were always available, and the large vat of hot water for tea was bottomless. The food quality and attention to detail was remarkable. This was not retreat food; this was gourmet hotel cuisine.

I met with folks from the British Conference in the conservatory in the afternoon to discuss the challenges and trials of the New Church in England and how to fund and promote youth programs. It was here that I met youth leaders Jenny and Steve Jones and their wonderful children. I had emailed back and forth with Jenny and Steve for months prior to the Easter Rally, as they were the ones who coordinated much of the event and worked as the primary liaisons among North America, the UK, and Purley. Throughout the planning process, they were in-

credibly helpful, knowledgeable, and accommodating. Although I doubted it was possible, I found Jenny and Steve to be even more friendly and gracious in person. They are a lovely and inspiring couple, and their three girls (aged 8, 4, and 2) are simply a delight.

We gathered for our opening BBQ supper. (Later, I came to know this meal as tea.) Most of the teens were here now, and only the Canadian group (Pam with teens Ashleigh, Joseph, and Jordan) and

one late teen arrival (Miles) were left to join us. The groups ate at distinct tables according to countries, and I sensed a bit of anxiety and nervous anticipation in the air. Perhaps this was just I, but being an ocean apart can create a bit of unrest in the steadiest of minds. After the Canadians arrived and ate a quick supper, we began our first session.

After Anne described housekeeping and Jenny reviewed the rules and schedule, Jenny led a great ice breaker where we met people and filled in squares on a paper with their traits and talents. To close, I led an activity relating the creation story in Genesis of how we are all created in God's image and then asked the teens to create their own paper person collage in the image and likeness of themselves. I also introduced some basic ideas of heaven in the form of the Universal Divine Human.

We concluded the evening's program with a simple candle meditation and a prayer of gratitude for our safe travels and arrival.

### Day 3: Communities

On Monday morning, we gathered for breakfast and sang grace. We sang a grace at each meal and had a good deal of fun teaching each other different songs and lyrics. "Johnny Appleseed" and "Hallelu" were the only two graces that were common to everyone.

Each morning after breakfast the teens led a matins, which is a short worship service in the chapel. It turned out that we had three mornings and three groups, US, Canada, and the UK, so a different group led each matins. Monday morning, the teens from the US led. They played music, led the group in Scripture readings, and taught everyone some favorite hymns.

Rev. Jack Dunion led fabulous sessions exploring different jobs and how each of us contributes an individual use to one system in harmony with what others contribute. Jack also showed a short video clip about individuals who had near death experiences to illustrate how wonderful the next



Teens with Big Ben



Purley Chase Retreat Centre in Warwickshire

life is. For the workshop accompanying Jack's session, Pam Kesselring led an activity where the teens were given the freedom to gravitate into groups based on common interests. The breakout groups created something artistic or active, then shared their creations

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with the larger group. We got to see how we move towards others similar to ourselves and how we surround ourselves with people and circumstances according to our choices

The afternoon involved fun activities that Steve, Jenny, and Andy Leather organized, including a partner orienteering race and a silly team-Olympic games competition, with wheelbarrow races (using real wheelbarrows!), an obstacle course, balloon toss, and other shenanigans. In the evening, the teens had a disco. The Purley sound system is amazing, and everyone got up for the disco hit "YMCA!" Monday evening closed with a calming candlelit mediation.

#### **Day 4: Loves and Warwick Castle**

We awoke Tuesday morning to warm sunshine. What a beautiful week of weather, every day sunnier and warmer than the one before. The UK teens led worship on this morning. I loved the Bob Marley guitar prelude and the friendship service that they presented. Verses from Proverbs 27:1-14, 17 were read and songs about friendship were played. It was a touching experience.

At the morning session, I spoke about the four loves: love of self, love of worldly things, love of the neighbor, and love of the Lord. Then I talked about how love combines with wisdom to drive useful actions. I mentioned how this concept of love, wisdom, and use, or in applied terms, desire, knowledge, and works, applies to any intention or good. And then I explained that when a love becomes your ruling love or most important passion, it can take you to heaven or become corrupted and pull you into hell. I asked the group for a suggested ruling love and told them it could be anything at all. Cody spoke up and exclaimed "Hummus!" I answered, "Okay. Fine. Let's use hummus as our love. Let's see

### **A UK Teen's Perspective**

As I sat on the train to Purley, I wasn't sure what to expect—What would the Americans and Canadians be like? How many girls and boys would there be? Would there be many people I knew?—all the normal thoughts about Purley really. But it turns out I didn't need to worry about any of that. Everybody who came was lovely; most of my old friends were there, but the people I didn't know made up for those that didn't come! I instantly connected with everyone, including the Americans and Canadians, discovering on the very first night that we had similar likes. Obviously it helped that it was my birthday!

As the week went on, we learned many things about the heavenly community, including analogies about hummus, drawing comparisons with our own lives, and books we have read. On the first morning we voted on activities we would like, which were mostly accommodated throughout the week, including a mini Olympics and orienteering, both of which had Easter egg prizes and both of which I won!

Evening activities included a conventional disco and a not so conventional game called Lost Potato, in which we were divided into teams and made to hunt for potatoes on the grounds of Purley Chase. We also walked to Atherstone and visited Warwick Castle, where we accidentally broke the rules and incurred the wrath of a security guard or two.

Kurt and the Americans had a touch of wedding fever, being more excited about Kate and Will's wedding than most of the people who live in the UK! I made some amazing friends that week with whom I am keeping in touch via Facebook and Skype, and hopefully a few of us will be able to go to America for one of the camps next summer (depending on the cost, of course!)

—Abby Morell

how deep love for hummus combines with profound wisdom and knowledge about hummus to bring forth a meaningful (and tasty) action. We'll see how our hummus can end up being a heavenly or hellish love depending on our intention and use." Then we discussed love, wisdom, heaven, hell, and community in terms of hummus. I'm not sure any of us will ever again be able to dip a pita chip into hummus in quite the same nonchalant way. It was fun, and I hope it was enlightening and interesting for the teens.

We travelled to Warwick Castle around noon, entered the grounds, and gathered on the lawn outside the castle to eat our picnic lunch. I couldn't help but think about peasants, princesses, and knights sitting in this very field outside the castle ramparts sev-

eral hundred years ago, eating picnic lunches very much like ours. After lunch, everyone set off to explore the castle. It was a glorious, warm, sunny day, and it was great to have free time to wander around the inner court, traverse the castle halls and passageways, and climb the spiral stairs of the towers. There were demonstrations of battling knights, birds of prey, and the Arthurian tale of the sword in the stone. Kings, queens, princesses, and peasants were in period costume milling around the castle chatting with visitors. The whole afternoon was a delight.

In the evening, we gathered to discuss what it feels like to be in a community or organization. We looked at qualities that define the members of a group and how people on the inside

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## International Youth Rally

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and outside of that group might view the members differently. We discussed Swedenborg's concept of how a society becomes more perfect as it is diverse yet united (*Divine Providence* 4.4).

The Tuesday night activity was a game Steve created called Lost Potato. Two teams crept out into the dusk collecting hidden potatoes to deliver to their home base while sneaking around and then running and dodging opposing team players attempting to steal away their potato treasures. When time was called, the team with the most potatoes won. It was spud fun for all!

Abby, an exceedingly pleasant and intelligent teen from England, orga-

nized a beautiful vespers service in the chapel to close the evening. We all retired for the night feeling tired and fulfilled after a splendid day of new insight and discovery.



The SCYL group at Easter Rally. Top (l to r): Kurt Fekete, Joseph, Jordan, Ashleigh, Liz, Bottom (l to r): Chris, Celie, Cody, Holly

### Day 5: Last Matins and Talent

On Wednesday morning I awoke with the painful realization that this was the last day of Easter Rally. Over so quickly, yet I was amazed at how

much we packed into our short time in England. But it wasn't over yet! We had a full day ahead of us to learn, explore, and grow together in community.

The Canadian teens led our last morning matins worship—it was a service of thanksgiving and gratitude. They passed out Canadian flag pins, and Jordan played guitar and sang “The Lord’s Prayer.” It was nice.

The morning session was led by Andy Leather. Andy projected a series of thought-provoking pictures of images and people around different themes, such as natural disasters, being alone, and being in joyous community. We broke into smaller groups to talk about how “real” we are and how we deal with isolated or difficult people that we encounter. We talked about how we can help others in need and what we can do to make the world better in our own communities, small and large. In our workshop, Andy charged us with a mission to develop our own “life book,” an artistic profile representing the real person, not the Facebook person that we put out for the whole world to see. Andy helped us examine the masks that we wear and discover qualities and traits that we may need to let go of or reconsider. He really helped us apply the theology that we learned about in previous sessions.

After lunch we gathered outside for a walk to the nearby town of Atherstone. The walk took us along a pretty trail and where I discovered my first kissing gate. The path wound and then widened onto a golf course, which we followed along into the quaint English village. We arrived back at Purley in the late afternoon, and the teens had a bit of time to relax and prepare an act for the evening social (talent show and

## Purley Reflections from an SCYL Teen

Before I go somewhere I've never been before, I always try my hardest to think about what it will be like. I try to envision what it will look like and what experiences I'll have there. I'm never even close to right, of course. From the plane ride to London all the way to the plane ride back to Boston, there wasn't a single sight or a single event that didn't soar above my optimistic expectations of what this trip to Purley Chase had in store for me. After a wonderful day of touring London and exciting sight-seeing, I was eager to see Purley Chase; I had images swirling in my head of what the complex could look like, and I couldn't wait to actually see it.

When we pulled into the driveway and I laid my eyes on the beautiful building, I instantly fell in love with it. My feelings towards Purley Chase only strengthened as I became more familiar with it and saw all of it in the glorious light of morning. The place came to life as people of different cultures began to arrive. It wasn't long before they were intermingled and having a great time with each other. The staff was incredible; everyone was extremely nice and amicable. The sessions and services were also fantastic, full of energy and life. It was wonderful to see the way people opened up in this heavenly community.

Living in a heavenly community was the theme of the retreat, and what better place to talk about living in a heavenly community than in the wings of the exquisite Purley Chase with all the extraordinary people who make it what it is? The Easter Rally was a magical experience for me, and I can't wait to have another one like it.

—Chris Woofenden

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skits) to be held after supper.

At dinner, we ate the potatoes that we hunted the night before. I met with interested teens from each country to talk about future international youth activities and the formation of an international Swedenborgian youth group.



UK leaders Steve and Jenny Jones going through a kissing gate.

There was much excitement and energy in the group, and we agreed it was an effort worth pursuing.

After a short break, we gathered for the social, where we were treated to a variety of acts and talents, including a funny skit with Pam and Joseph, a card trick by Jordan, a beautiful cover of "Landslide" sung and played by Celie, a song by Abby, and the big closing act of the very talented Miles performing an amazing musical juggling act with glowing balls in the dark. After the social, Steve introduced some fun indoor circle games for us to play.

Once full darkness settled in and the stars were sparkling above, we walked down to the campfire. Catherine and Jack created a truly sacred and inviting space. Jordan played the guitar and led us in the hymn, "Seek Ye First." Rev. Catherine led the service, speaking about how our differences in saying the Lord's Prayer build united diversity that strengthens our community. Rev. Jack offered communion. A teen from each country joined me around the campfire, and together we held a paper chain linked in a circle, representing our diverse, yet united community. We dropped the chain into the fire, releasing it to heaven with a prayer to keep our travels safe, our friendship

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## The Top 10 Things We Loved about the International Easter Rally 2011

1. **The People, the People, the People!** We could have met these same people anywhere in the world and would love them just as much. We're thrilled to have new friends from the US, England, and Scotland, and we hope we will see them again some day.
2. **The Nature.** We were struck by the beauty of it all—the trees, the flowers, and even the animals (sheepies!). We loved the scent of the bluebells in bloom, and hearing hundreds of birds chirping in the trees. To be able to spend the week at Purley Chase, with such beautiful weather, was a real treat.
3. **The Hike to Atherstone.** Taking a long walk through the country to town let us see more of the surrounding area, chat with new friends, and spend a while shopping in the unique stores looking for treats and souvenirs.
4. **Warwick Castle.** A real castle with over 1000 years of history! Loved the shows, the exhibits, and the views from on top of the castle towers.
5. **Campfire Communion Service.** The closing worship service, lead by Rev. Catherine and Rev. Jack was really special to be shared outside around a campfire. Jordan played guitar and led the music. Later we got a chance to say our good-byes and stay around the fire singing camp songs and all four national anthems.
6. **The Games.** Every day we had a chance to play and spend time making new friends. Often a spontaneous game of football on the soccer pitch would start up. Outside, we had "crazy Olympics" with a very creative scoring system, and we did some orienteering and played Lost Potato in the dark. Inside we enjoyed games like Chocolate Egg and G'Day Bruce, and spent some time in the games room playing billiards and table tennis.
7. **Leading Morning Worship (Matins).** Each morning a different group of youth led the matins. They chose the theme, readings, and music themselves, and led the group in worship. Jordan, Joseph, and Ashleigh chose gratitude as their theme and shared their talents with the group during their matins.
8. **Embracing Our Differences.** We had lots of laughs learning the British terms for things, such as *tea* for supper, or *trainers* for running shoes. We started an English translator list to keep track of the different words in English, Canadian, Scottish, and American. During the few days there, Joseph picked up a British accent, and the youth from the UK decided that Ashleigh has the most "Canadian" accent of us all.
9. **Sessions on Living in Heavenly Community.** Each day we had a couple of sessions where we learned more about our theme, "Living in Heavenly Community." We enjoyed having chances to break into smaller groups and have discussions about the topic in the session and using our talents make creative pieces related to the theme. We'll all remember Kurt's lesson on "Living Your Love" with Love-Wisdom-Action applied to love of hummus!
10. **The Social (Talent Show).** The last evening we shared our talents in making a performance for the group. Joseph and Pam performed the "Shredded Tweet" bit from their Vicar of Dibley skit, and Jordan shared a great card trick and story. No one will forget our new friend Miles performing a juggling show, in the dark, with glowing juggling balls, or the beautiful songs performed by Celie and by Abby. It was a great time for all.

There are more things we could add to the list, as the entire trip was an adventure. We were thrilled to be able to make this journey, and each one of us has been changed for the better because of it.

—Pamela, Jordan, Joseph, and Ashleigh  
Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

# Taking Hold of Our Future

## EDSU Proposes a Unified Long-range Plan

BY JOHN MAINE

It is part of the Lord's Providence that in every challenge there is an opportunity, and the bigger the challenge, the bigger the opportunity. That's a good thing for us, not least because, as a church, we are facing a very big challenge indeed. The Education Support Unit (EDSU), which I chair, has proposed a way to meet that challenge, and I believe it can offer us a considerable opportunity to grow and move forward as bearers of a new message of hope for the world.

### The Challenge

First, let's name the issue we're facing: the church's future as a vital and dynamic part of a new age is in doubt. The fact is, our denomination consists primarily of a few small and widely-dispersed parish ministries plus isolated, individual receivers of the doctrines. This wide dispersal and isolation have been consistently reported by both clergy and laity as a considerable burden to bear, both psychologically and spiritually. Our need for support, recognition, and affirmation is not being adequately met and neither is the need for feeling part of something larger, greater, and more compelling—the movement to build the New Jerusalem in our world. In turn, these unmet needs are a major block to the effectiveness of the church as a whole, both nationally and locally. Rather than a sense of energy and mission, there is more often a sense of our relative powerlessness, of not having enough (money, people, etc.), of not being enough. Implicitly or explicitly, the primary focus tends to become institutional survival.

### The Opportunity

We need to turn this situation

around, and in the Lord, we believe we can by using what is perhaps our greatest strength, our traditional love of learning. Swedenborgians have always placed a high premium on study, reflection, and a deeper understanding. Education, insight, and a changing outlook in dialogue with a changing life are what we're all about.

We at EDSU propose that we take this love of learning and celebrate it in a systematic and intentional way across our whole denomination. This would be a program or campaign for everybody—young and old, longtime members and newcomers, and those inside the church and outside. It will provide a common theme and direction for the widely dispersed ministries of the church and help to strengthen and unite them in a common faith, activity, and purpose.

### The Proposal in Detail

Here's how it works. The program would be built around a seven-year cycle of annual themes, each featuring a key Swedenborgian doctrine, and all of them arranged in a logical sequence, with one year's theme leading naturally to the next. They are The Year of the Lord, The Spiritual World, Providence, Regeneration, Spiritual Uses, the Word, and The New Jerusalem (see the detailed list at the end of this article).

Now let's be clear: the plan is not to promote some kind of traditional (and boring!) religious instruction. The intent, rather, is to encourage and facilitate the celebration of each of these truths and in ways relevant for each of our local ministries.

For example, the theme of the Lord could be further defined as "The Lord—Our Hope in Tough Times."

Each of our ministries would then be invited to explore, in worship, service, and special projects, what that hope is and what it means for them in their time and place. The annual theme would guide or colour, either a little or a lot, what they do as a congregation for that year.

Following on from the above example, this theme of "The Lord—Our Hope in Tough Times" would also be supported and celebrated as a regular feature in every issue of *The Messenger* for that year, with contributions by different clergy and laity. It would appear prominently on our website, in *Our Daily Bread*, and elsewhere.

The annual theme would have all the appearance of a campaign, with its own easily-recognizable logo and the president as its leading spokesperson. Everyone in the denomination would know what "year" it was, as would more of the general public (through press releases, electronic and social media, public events, community service projects, etc.).

In effect, the annual theme would give greater focus and definition for that year to the overall mission of the church, the building of the New Jerusalem in hearts and minds everywhere, both inside and outside the institutional body.

The net result of the year's actions and activities would then be celebrated at the annual convention. Here is another challenge: our annual gathering has shown signs of drift and loss of energy and direction in recent years. There has been a steady decline in attendance; families with children no longer come.

In the context of this proposal, Convention would have a new pur-

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pose, beyond the usual mix of business meetings and outings. The year's theme would be celebrated by the representatives of all the churches present. Attendees would be invited through small group discussion and other activities to share their experiences and thoughts around this theme in the past year. Mini-courses and other activities could at least partly be oriented toward helping them experience and learn more. Particular projects by local ministries related to the annual theme

would be lifted up. Convention would be a time for affirmation and renewal.

It would also be at Convention that the theme for the coming year would be announced by the president. The general focus for that theme would have been chosen as the result of canvassing the local ministries in the past year, plus consultations with other bodies. Thus, continuing with our example, after "The Year of the Lord—Our Hope in Tough Times," we might then have "The Year of the Spiritual World—Finding Our Angels."

With the conclusion of the cycle of all seven years of annual themes—i.e. with "The Year of the New Jerusalem"—we would have a special convention to mark the occasion. In the long term, after seven cycles of seven years(!), the convention would celebrate, in the biblical tradition, a jubilee. The jubilee would be a very significant event and serve as an opportunity to reflect on both past and future.

## Advantages

We see these advantages in becoming a learning and celebratory body: it would

- unite disparate local ministries in a common activity and purpose
  - enhance a broader-based sense of belonging and mission
  - educate members and non-members alike in the fundamentals of our faith
  - provide a means for bringing our faith and message to the world
  - build the foundation for denominational renewal and growth
- and
- no new capital outlay would be required, new assets purchased, new structures created, or any other costs incurred, financial or organizational. This proposal calls for a shift in activity and focus to release new energies and potential for growth. No new funding is needed.

## Summary

We believe a regular cycle of thematically-unified, denomination-wide programming, built around the key beliefs of our faith, will go far in restoring our church's confidence and capacity to play its proper part in the building of the New Jerusalem. As Swedenborgians we are blessed in many ways but especially with a love of learning. This is our strength and our opportunity. Let's learn and grow into a new future. ☩

The Rev. John Maine is chair of EDSU.

## The Cycle of Annual Themes

### 1. The Year of the Lord

#### —the primacy of Spirit:

- the one Lord, love & wisdom, creator & life
- the unifying truth, hope and power, known by many names
- revealed for us in Jesus, as friend, mentor, model

### 2. The Year of the Spiritual World

#### —the nature of life:

- the diverse, multi-dimensional & eternal nature of life
- the reality of the spiritual world; heaven, hell & world of spirits
- our journey with angels & demons, from this life to the next

### 3. The Year of Providence

#### —the assurance of purpose:

- the universe makes sense and we have a special, angelic purpose
- the laws of Providence are love & wisdom at work for us
- our call to "choose life" and become who we (really) are

### 4. The Year of Regeneration

#### —the way of Change:

- spiritual life as intentional, committed, relational
- the journey of transformation & the second birth
- the work of repenting, reforming & regenerating

### 5. The Year of Spiritual Uses

#### —the call to be a blessing:

- true faith as the life of charity, what we actually do, not just think or say
- discerning our gifts through love in action (charity)
- becoming our true use for the building of the New Jerusalem

### 6. The Year of the Word

#### —the power of holy Scriptures:

- correspondences & the Lord's presence in the Word
- the story of our lives in the Word
- the sacred character of all holy texts

### 7. The Year of the New Jerusalem

#### —the emergence of a new world:

- the second coming in the spirit now
- the new world & new consciousness emerging now
- building the future: the unity of the human family in justice and peace

# Church Planting with Swedenborg

BY HERB ZIEGLER

Mac Frazier was smart and ambitious as a young man. Together with his good friend Andy Sullivan and ten other friends, he started a company. Since the first decision they made was starting the company, the next decision they had to make was what the company would do. It was the mid-nineties, and the Web-related technology landscape had not yet exploded. Mac and his friends saw the potential of the Internet and began working on Web development. They found success, and for eight fulfilling years Mac worked in his company. Ascertaining that the company was stable and safe, he revived an old dream that led him on a new path—he entered seminary at the New Church Theological Seminary in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania.

After graduating from seminary, Rev. Frazier took his ministerial training to The New Church in Pittsburgh. (Ministers are assigned to churches by denominational processes in the New Church [General Church of the New Jerusalem].) He spent several years there as an assistant minister and as a traveling minister serving small groups of outlying members as far away as Erie, acquiring invaluable experience in ministering to an established congregation and isolated members. He also learned about shrinking churches, especially in Erie, and like the pastors and members of many shrinking churches, devoted much thought to this phenomenon. He was eventually reassigned to serve the New Church at its headquarters in Bryn Athyn. There he worked in research, plan-

ning, and development with the Office of Outreach.

At seminary, Rev. Frazier had been drawn to the challenge of church growth. He felt that the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg deserved to be more widely known and that more people should have the opportunity to be Christians in the light of the teachings from those writings. Churches tend to be culturally fixed, he reasoned, so he had two options to make the church grow: ask existing congregations to change or start a new congregation—he determined the latter was more realistic.



The Rev. Mac Frazier

He presented a formal proposal to the General Church Board in line with provisions of its strategic plan, which calls for the planting of new church societies on an ongoing basis. His overall goals were to plant a self-sustaining church, provide a model for church planting within the General Church, and ultimately to support the planting of churches in other locations. He asked for half of the startup money to plant a church and support it for four years. The board approved the plan and agreed to provide the requested funds, and Rev. Frazier commenced a fundraising campaign for the other half. He was gratified that so many stepped forward to offer financial support, and he achieved his financial goal.

Rev. Frazier is well-read in the literature of church planting—there has been an explosion of books and Web sites dedicated to the subject in the last decade. He chose the model proposed by Nelson Searcy in his book *Launch: Starting a New Church from Scratch*. With pledges of financial support in hand, he took the next steps in

his plan, picking a site and moving his family (a wife and four children) there. He reasoned that a growing city with a high level of well-educated citizens, a reputation for innovation and forward thinking, and a base of church members in the region to call on for support would be ideal. On the personal side, he and his wife had long wanted to experience living in a more benign climate than that offered by Pennsylvania, and his wife, who grew up in Atlanta, felt good about returning to the South. Thus, in July, 2010, the family moved to their chosen location, Austin, Texas.

Church planting is an entrepreneurial activity, and so Rev. Frazier was immersed in work from the moment he arrived in Austin. Meanwhile, he and his wife were establishing a home and building a community network for themselves and their children. (Their children are home schooled.) Two young people joined his team, Ethan Daum, who serves as the staff assistant and music leader and Kristen Coffin, who is the part-time administrative assistant. His to-do list was long and complex; many tasks were dependent on the outcomes of others. He had several hours of weekly conference calls with supporters and enablers, but from there he tackled new and ongoing tasks. During the early phase, he engaged in market research of the area his church would serve, began constructing the church Web site, established a presence in social media such as Facebook, and introduced himself and his mission to as many people as he could meet.

Traditionally, a congregation forms and solidifies, begins a building fund campaign, and eventually buys property and builds a church. Most of us subscribe to the commonplace that a

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church is not a building, rather it is a community. Rev. Frazier had observed over the years that many church structures had become inadequate to their congregations after they were built. Church size—the capacity of the nave and Sunday school rooms—became either a limitation to growth, or a financial burden that either never reached capacity or experienced a decline in attendance. As do some societies in the General Convention—the Swedenborgian Churches of Puget Sound; Silver City, New Mexico; and Lansing, Michigan, come to mind—Rev. Frazier planned for his church to meet in rented space. This would allow for flexibility and concentration of energies on ministry rather than building finance and maintenance. In the early phase, he began looking for a suitable venue for Sunday worship, and he found it at a dance studio that fit his church's needs.

Now the church had a name—the New Way Church—a staff, and a location. Next it needed participants. Church start-up models recommend a pre-launch phase to build interest and participation before the formal launch phase. In preparation for the first pre-launch Sunday service, Rev. Frazier and his team contacted people in the Austin area who had some connection to or interest in the New Church and asked if they were interested in contributing to the church's success. They also received a list of contacts from Mike Goodenow, who lived in the Austin area and knew some General Convention and "independent" Swedenborgians in the area.

On August 1, 2010, Rev. Frazier led the first pre-launch Sunday service of the New Way Church. With no outside advertising, attendance numbered in the mid-thirties. Many were well wishers and supporters that the church had contacted, including some from Houston and Dallas, but a few in-

trigued newcomers showed up as well. The pre-launch agenda continued with services once a month, social events once a month, and community service events through the end of 2010.

While continuing with pre-launch services, Rev. Frazier continued to get the word out, using Facebook and Twitter to announce meet-ups at local cafes, where he engaged the curious in long conversations about faith, spirituality, and Swedenborg, answering lots of questions along the way.

February 27, 2011, was set for the official launch. In preparation, Rev. Frazier and his staff mobilized an intense marketing campaign. In addition to a vibrant Web site and Facebook and Twitter announcements, they sent two mailings of postcards two weeks apart to every address within three miles of their worship location (33,000 postcards) and purchased ads on the Google Ad Network.

Between fifty-five and seventy people attended the inaugural service. This number included quite a few friends and supporters—only twelve were new to the New Church. Subsequent Sundays have seen smaller numbers, but some new participants attend regularly, some sporadically, and there are always several new attendees. Because Austin has a fluid population, the church sends a postcard to every new resident in the defined area.

Rev. Frazier continues to meet with people, individually and in groups, who are intrigued by the offerings from the New Church. Many are seekers, some who have had negative experiences with other churches, and Rev. Frazier finds he needs to assure and convince some that he does not want to poison their minds, that the New Church encourages the individual to experience and respond to the Lord's influx. Some of his meetings involve pastoral counseling as well.

To stay in front of events, Rev. Frazier planned his services for a whole

year. New Church ministers do not use a lectionary, and until the Journey Program came along, did not usually preach a series of sermons on a theme. He has arranged sermons in series to begin in early fall, in February, and at Easter, as research shows these are the points when most newcomers come.

Facebook has proved to be an effective low-cost marketing tool. Every week a newcomer who read of the church on Facebook comes to church. A big challenge is integrating newcomers into the culture that is already forming, and Rev. Frazier devotes the necessary time to follow-up conversations.

To deal with the potential problem of scaring off newcomers with too much writing, too much doctrine, or perceptions of complexity leading to confusion, Rev. Frazier emphasizes the basics of Swedenborgian theology. He agrees with Rob Bell in his recent book, *Love Wins*, emphasizing the centrality of love in Christianity and spiritual growth. He employs a post-modern approach, not asking for a full commitment from those who want to become part of the church community; he simply invites them to join the conversation. Some don't understand this approach at first because they don't expect it, but many eventually get it and are pleased that their personal freedom is respected.

The New Way Church is a bold initiative, and Rev. Frazier appears to have the resources, energy, faith, determination, and skill to bring his vision to fruition. When asked how he would measure success, he said that when the New Way Church sponsors five new church plants, his goal will be met—it will then be time to set a new goal.

*The Messenger* will check in with Rev. Frazier from time to time to see how the New Way Church is doing, and how Swedenborg's teachings are affecting his Austin community. ☛

For more information and related blogs go to <http://newwayaustin.org> and <http://macfrazier.com>.



## 2011 Council, Committee, & Board Nominees

The candidates in the chart at right have been nominated for election to office at the 2011 Annual Convention. In addition to the two candidates to be elected as representative-class trustees on the SHS board, two candidates are to be elected as at-large class trustees. The following candidates have submitted statements for this issue of *The Messenger*:

### Barbara Cullen: General Council

I am very pleased to be given the opportunity to run for General Council. Here is a little bit about myself. I served for six years on General Council in the past and enjoyed making a contribution to the denomination in this way. I continue to serve the denomination as an Lungerich Fund trustee and as a member of the Committee on Inquiry.



I have been a member of Kitchener's Church of the Good Shepherd for over twenty years. For the majority of those years, I have sat on the Board of Directors. I am currently the secretary on the

board and also sit on numerous committees (doesn't everyone?).

I was a member of the Steering Committee for the Online Swedenborgian Community for several of its formative years.

My professional life was in the human resources field, and I feel that the skills that I developed in my working life are helpful in my church work and

Position	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
Vice-president	1	Betsy Coffman†
Secretary	1	Susannah Currie*
Treasurer	1	Polly Baxter†
General Council layperson	3	Barbara Cullen Tom Barrett†
General Council minister	3	Randy Laakko*
Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM)	3	Nadine Cotton Diana Piermattei
Communication Support Unit (COMSU)	3	Roz Taylor†
Education Support Unit (EDSU)	3	John Maine*
Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPSRU)	3	Jennifer Lindsay†
Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)	3	Kris Lang
Support Unit for Ministries (MINSU)	3	Dick Tafel Gloria Toot*
Board of Trustees of SHS, representative class	3	Jane Siebert† Bill Coffman†
Board of Trustees of SHS, at-large class	3	Kathy Speas† Jennifer Lindsay†
Nominating Committee	5	Barb Boxwell

\* This candidate's statement appeared in the April Messenger.

† This candidate's statement appeared in the May Messenger.

other volunteer positions. My husband John and I have been coming to conventions for over ten years and enjoy taking part in the denomination's business as well as its celebrations.

### Nadine Cotton: Committee on Admission to the Ministry

Jesus said unto his disciples, "You did not choose me, I chose you. I ordained you to go on and bear fruit, fruit that shall last. . . ." (John 15:16).

Walking alongside of and doing what I can to help the people that God chooses for the ministry is a wonderful privilege that I look forward to doing once again. I served on CAM from 2006–2009. I found it to be a labor of love and rewarding to work with our students. It is a joy to see their energy and commitment to working through their requirements and challenges

to being accepted into our ministry.

I have been an ordained minister in our denomination since 1997, serving two of our ministries since my ordination, the most recent being The New Church of SW Florida. I am completing a year-long chaplaincy residency program in Toledo, Ohio, at a level I trauma hospital. I served on the SHS board while it was transitioning from the East to the West Coast, and on the Nominating Committee. I was co-chair of our Social Concerns Committee from 1995–97, and I have taught the young adult class at our Almont Summer School for several years.

### Kathy Speas: SHS Board of Trustees

I am honored to be asked to serve another term on the SHS Board. I have served one term and have represented SHS at the PSR Board. It is such an exciting time for SHS! The addition of Professor Devin Zuber and the plans to add Rebecca Klein Esterson to those bringing Swedenborg's writings into conversation with contemporary academia opens a new chapter of high-quality scholarship for our denomination. SHS, PSR, and all seminaries are engaged in ongoing discussions about the future of clergy education in an era of the changing face of the church. With our new scholars in place, we are embarking on discussions about outreach and support to our churches and to potential new communities. Thank you for considering my offer to serve SHS for the next three years.

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### **Diana Piermattei: Committee on Admission to the Ministry**



I've been a lifelong Swedenborgian, fortunate to be a child in a Swedenborgian Sunday school. As a teenager, I benefitted from meaningful teen retreats. I have al-

ways had an inspirational Swedenborgian church nearby—I'm a member of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound at present. I'm looking forward to participating in IMSU and hope my perspective will be helpful.

### **Barb Boxwell: Nominating Committee**

Barb Boxwell has been a member of the Swedenborgian Church through the Michigan Association (member at large) since the 1980s. At

present she is serving a second term on MINSU. She has served on FPRSU and the Augmentation Fund Committee (PUSH) and she has been president of the Michigan Association where she currently serves as treasurer.



She holds a CPA license and is self employed as a Certified Massage Therapist practicing therapeutic massage. ✚

### **International Youth Rally**

*continued from page 87*

strong, and our love useful to the larger communities that we would soon rejoin. After the service, we sat around the fire and sang traditional songs from our respective countries—the perfect closing to a great day and a fantastic Easter Rally at Purley. The teens got to hang out in the upstairs hall for a while, and then everyone hugged, said good night, and headed off to bed in the wee hours of the morning.

#### **Day 5: Farewells and Reflection**

Early Thursday morning we said a sad goodbye to Purley and our new friends. The Canadian group would be getting a ride to Birmingham to fly out in the afternoon. We Americans caught the train back to London and then the Tube to Heathrow. Our flight was on time and boarding was easy. The four teens with me got to sit together in the middle seat row, which was nice for them. I must note here how well all the teens that traveled with me did. I did not hear one single complaint the entire trip. They were in all ways helpful, thoughtful, and considerate to me and to everyone they encountered. When we ran into difficulties or uncertainties, which we certainly did, Celie, Chris, Cody, Holly, and Liz were confident, positive, and relaxed. I am proud of

them all, as well as the three Canadian teens, Ashleigh, Joseph, and Jordan. Although I did not travel with them, I found them to be very polite, gracious, and friendly throughout the time at Purley. All the SCYL teens were great companions, good travelers, and fun to be around. These are teenagers that everyone should be proud of.

As a final reflection, I can see some real positive and noticeable changes in our SCYL youth program. The new International Swedenborgian League of Youth has been formed and has an active Facebook page. I know that teens are Skyping and chatting with each other on both sides of the pond. Conversations are already taking place about future retreats, teen camp exchanges, and other visits. The teens are more aware of the Swedenborgian faith in other areas of the world and are less likely to feel isolated as members of a small denomination. I personally feel hopeful for and actively present to our friends in the Swedenborgian community in the UK. I can see how they struggle to make their youth group function and succeed, but I also see the beautiful youth leaders and teens in the UK who are excited and energized to be a part of such an incredible faith and church organization. And it was wonderful for me to be able to exchange youth work ideas and methods

with Swedenborgian Church youth workers outside of North America. I learned much, both about youth work and about the British Conference and its challenges and successes.

I close with gratitude to all those who helped make this trip a reality. There are too many to mention, and I will surely forget some that should not be forgotten, but some need to be acknowledged: In Canada, Pam Kesseling, Rev. John Maine, and Rev. Alison Longstaff along with the members of the Church of the Good Shepherd board; in the United States, Joyce Fekete (who assisted with funding) and Steve Bauer; in the UK, Rev. Jack Dunion, Rev. Dave and Anne Gaffney and their fine staff at Purley, Andy Leather and Steve and Jenny Jones; and Rev. Catherine Lauber, who had the faith, confidence, and belief that this event was both possible and worthwhile when we first spoke about it over a year and a half ago at Convention 2009 and then again at Convention 2010 when we decided to see if we could make something happen. I am honored to have been a leader of this International Easter Rally event and blessed to be a part of this exciting new group of international youth that from all perspectives, appears to be quite the glorious and heavenly community. ✚

More at [youthleague.blogspot.com/](http://youthleague.blogspot.com/)

## SwedenborgianCommunity.org

*What are some ways that the SwedenborgianCommunity.org provides outreach for the General Convention?*

The Swedenborgian Community.org (SC.org), our denominational online ministry, serves as one part of the outreach of the General Convention in a number of ways.

- This online ministry provides a welcoming place for all who are interested in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, without pressure to “join a church.” The success of this strategy is shown by the over 200

registrants who are serious seekers and students of Swedenborg—these registrants are welcome whether or not they are members of a formal church.

- The SC.org minister, Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake, responds to over a hundred communications each week—either by email or telephone.
- Various opportunities are available for individuals to ask questions, share ideas, and participate in one-on-one or community conversations.

The programs and activities of

www.swedenborgiancommunity.org are offered without cost. However, funding is critical to the presence of a Web minister as well as to the maintenance and regular upgrading of the Internet site. Contributions toward the continuance of this ministry can be made via PayPal through the site itself, or by check or credit card through the Central Office of the Swedenborgian Church at 11 Highland Avenue, Newtonville, MA 02460 (phone: 617-696-4240). Contributing to the ongoing financial support of this ministry is a useful act of living the life of charity in the world. ☩

## Church and Association Statistics

Article I, Section 3 of the Constitution of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem (the Swedenborgian Church) is composed of “Constituent bodies . . . which . . . unite with the Swedenborgian Church in performing the distinctive uses of a church.” The constituent bodies are the state, provincial, and regional associations listed in the table below. The constitution continues, “The members of the Swedenborgian Church shall be those per-

sons who are adult, active members of a constituent body or who have been accepted as members at large through Rite of Confirmation and by vote of the Swedenborgian Church.”

Article IV, Section 2 states, “Every constituent body of the Swedenborgian Church shall be entitled to two delegates and an additional delegate for every ten members. . . .” The following table displays statistics as of December 31, 2010.

Association (Conference)	Churches		Ordained Ministers			Authorized Lay Leaders	Members			Number of Delegates
	Active	Inactive	Active	Inactive	Retired		Active	Inactive	Total	
Eastern Canada	1	0	3	0	1	1	107	18	125	12
Illinois**	6	0	4	0	0	0	83	20	103	10
Kansas	2	0	2	0	1	0	82	0	82	10
Maine	2	0	6	0	1	0	130	100	230	15
Massachusetts	5	0	10	0	0	0	82	74	156	10
Michigan	2	0	2	0	0	0	70	15	85	9
Middle Atlantic	3	0	3	0	0	0	58	49	107	7
New York*	2	0	1	0	0	0	30	41	71	5
Ohio	3	2	4	0	0	1	53	22	75	7
PCA	6	0	15	0	3	1	245	87	332	26
Southeast	2	0	3	0	1	0	36	3	39	5
Western Canada	5	1	2	0	2	0	113	9	122	13
At Large	0	0	5	0	0	0	7	0	7	2
SCYL										2
Totals	39	3	60	0	9	3	1096	396	1534	133

\*Bayside Society did not report for 2002-2010

\*Norway, IA Society did not report for 2010



## SHS Board Spring Meeting

After several years of planning for new directions, recent developments at the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) are bringing the plans to fruition. At the SHS Board of Trustees meeting (April 29-30), the board and SHS staff addressed issues resulting from those changes and issues presented by its host school (Pacific School of Religion [PSR]) and the larger world.

The transition from a fully-staffed library to an on-demand library has been completed as part of the plan to add and fund a new faculty member. In exchange for a new professor, PSR eliminated library rent. The space was reduced by one-third, and non-essential and non-Swedenborg related material is being deaccessioned. The SHS librarian was laid off in January. Michael Yockey, the SHS librarian for ten years, has done an outstanding job of organizing and cataloging the collection and providing professional library service.

The process of moving and housing Dr. Devin Zuber and his family from Germany to Berkeley was long and complicated but ended with the Zubers happily ensconced in faculty housing near the school. Dr. Zuber is the youngest faculty member at PSR, and faculty, administration, and students have responded positively to his presence.

Rebecca Esterson has been accepted at Boston University for a PhD in Religious texts and traditions and was awarded the Dean's Fellowship, which pays her degree expenses and provides a stipend. A memorandum of understanding has been negotiated with her in which SHS pays her a supplemental stipend, and she agrees to focus on Swedenborg in her studies and begin teaching at SHS once her comprehensive exams are completed. When she

completes her thesis, it is expected that she will join the PSR faculty as an SHS professor.

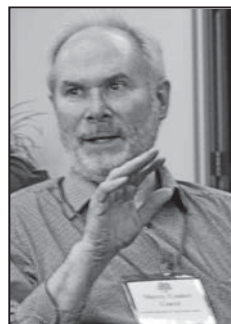
SHS is slightly under budget as income and expenses are following projections. Scholarships have been increased in an ongoing effort to provide more student assistance.

The first day of meetings ended with an educational moment provided by Devin Zuber; he provided a glimpse of Swedenborg's influence on German, English, and American Romanticism and Transcendentalism, both of which profoundly influenced today's ecology movement.

The development committee proposed establishing an annual SHS Sunday to increase awareness of the work of the school, give members an opportunity to reflect on the notion of being called to ministry, and provide an opportunity to contribute. A packet of information including brochures and worship materials will be sent to each church by the end of November. January 29 (Swedenborg's birthday) will be suggested as SHS Sunday.

The board met with Dr. Reiss Potterveld, the president of PSR. He spoke about the financial pressures at PSR and the steps the school is taking to address the situation. The budget has been significantly reduced through two faculty positions not being filled and from six staff position eliminations.

PSR is exploring and implementing alternative paths and models for theological education to address the changing landscape of students and minis-



Dr. Reiss Potterveld

## New Releases from the Foundation

The Swedenborg Foundation has published two new books.

In *The Guardian Angel Diary*, the Rev. Grant Schnarr draws together the voices of young people he has met and counseled to weave a fictional tale of love, fear, and hope. A teenager begins writing a journal that becomes a vehicle for her to communicate with her guardian angel. As she approaches the date of an operation that may either save her life or end it, her inner and outer worlds collide and combine to give her a new understanding of family, friendship, and life.

*A Swedenborg Sampler* is the first compilation of excerpts of Swedenborg's writings from the New Century Edition. The book is aimed at those unfamiliar with the writings so they can begin with an overview. ☩

tries. The school is seeking and establishing partnerships, beginning with the Beatitudes Society to provide programs in leadership development for non-profits and with the Center for Progressive Renewal specializing in revitalization of congregations.

Dr. Potterveld shared a model of outreach used at Lancaster Theological Seminary, where he was recently president, that benefits a wider base of learners beyond the seminary. It includes youth and lay-leader training, expanded degree programming, congregation training, and continuing education for ministers. There was discussion around how similar initiatives might work for SHS. In addition to providing greater revenue over expenses, the programs provide synergy for greater interchange between participants and programs.

The board concluded with an exploration of ideas for the future, especially in the area of recruitment. ☩

### 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.

## Bring the Kids!

The 187th Annual Convention, "Behold, I Make All Things New," would not be complete without a kids program. So many early New Jerusalem Society of Cincinnati members were educators that it would be insulting to them not to find a space for our youngest membership. We are sure to be in the company of angels if you bring your under-12 group to Cincinnati and have them join our local youth in crafts, games, and other activities. A program will begin fifteen minutes before each business meeting and mini-course to keep everyone on schedule.

Kids will be supervised and taught by Shannon Fischer, a Montgomery New Church member and senior majoring in Education at Urbana University and Ali Fisher, a Miami University graduate and teacher in the Little Miami School District.

In case you haven't heard, the Tiffany Angel windows will be on exhibit here at the Taft Museum for our Friday outing. Rev. Ken Turley and Rev. Susannah Currie will be our special docents for the exhibit, but that's not all. The Taft has included historically and artistically important pieces from the New Church of Cincinnati's furnishings and archives. On Saturday evening, Muse Cincinnati Women's Choir will entertain and move

## Fryeburg Family Summer Camp

Registration is now open for the Fryeburg New Church Assembly family camp from Saturday, July 30 to Sunday, August 14. Registration information is online at <<http://fryeburg.org/register>>. Kids and teens may attend without their parents via the Youth Sponsor Program <<http://fryeburg.org/youthsponsors>>. Teens who have never attended the Assembly session before may apply to their Association for the FNCA Flames Scholarship Program <<http://fryeburg.org/financialaid>>. Some staff positions are still available, too <<http://fryeburg.org/staff>>.

The first week's lecture theme is "Biblical Parallels: Correspondences between Old and New Testament Stories," and the second week's theme is "Life as a Preparation for Forever." Last year's successful Opening Weekend Program will continue this year. New this year is the Afternoon Book Club, discussing Wilson Van Dusen's *Returning to the Source: The Way to the Experience of God*. ☩

us as they perform a special concert. It will be a special evening. We hope you're planning to come—there will be good times in the Queen City June 29–July 3. ☩