

Translating Swedenborg Forward

BY JAMES LAWRENCE

A quarter millennium after Swedenborg published his first volume of the *Arcana* [*Secrets of Heaven*], to what extent are the seer's



writings still useful for creating vibrant ministries today? Counting all the branches, I see three attitudes currently in worldwide Swedenborgianism.

Many ministries stick closely to careful renderings of Swedenborg's teachings, often put forth within traditional doctrinal categories. Some ministries, especially in Convention, are straying from working with Swedenborg's ideas and are not trying to engage them anymore. Some ministries seek to creatively engage Swedenborg's spiritual teachings in dialog with the frameworks and questions that people are asking today. I call this third way translating Swedenborg forward and believe it is not only the most exciting way of being Swedenborgian today, but also the most promising for effective outreach.

This third way has been around for a long time and has been fruitful. In fact, as a teacher of history and of contemporary ministry practice, I have come to realize that many of us in the current context are not aware of how

effective the method of translating Swedenborg forward has been. Some of the best perspectives produced from translating Swedenborg forward have been so successful that most people think that they have always been a part of Swedenborgianism. But they were in fact results of translating Swedenborg forward. Three Swedenborgian history lessons will illuminate what I mean.

History Lesson #1: Swedenborg's 19th Century Fame

A tour through the research library at the Swedenborgian House of Studies in Berkeley tells a story about how our church ancestors first worked with Swedenborg's revelatory works (hereafter called "the writings"). Two hundred linear feet of nineteenth-century books, pamphlets, and sermons produced during the first century of the organized New Church reveal a Herculean effort to correct doctrinal thought in the established denominations. The *per capita* amount of literature is astonishing for such a small denomination, and some wag long ago cracked that Swedenborgians believed in salvation by publication.

But another kind of conversation was also happening in the same century in America with Swedenborg's thought, as the Swedish sage became

so well known that he was close to a household name for a few decades in the period of 1870–1900. Most historians of the nineteenth century would agree that Swedenborg's reach into cultural thought was probably greatest not from the church doctrinal presentations but from some potent parachurch movements such as

- the utopian movements in nineteenth-century America and late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France which were inspired by Swedenborg's writings on the Holy City and on his views of egalitarian relations between the sexes and classes of people;
- the intense conversations generated by Swedenborg's writings on the afterlife and the reality of the spir-

Some ministries seek to creatively engage Swedenborg's spiritual teachings in dialog with the frameworks and questions that people are asking today.

itual world that led to spiritualist activities and changes in what people believe about what happens at death, a major contribution still in force

today if we accept the annual Gallup Polls on American religious belief which, show that about seventy per cent of Americans are closet Swedenborgians on this teaching;

- Romantic poets and artists (whom we proudly cite on our famous names lists) galvanized by Swedenborg's writings on the spiritual un-

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In This Issue:

A Missing Chapter—A Preliminary Sketch • From Long Island to Fryeburg Maine
Remembering September 11 • Shift: Small Changes. Big Difference
Be Careful What You Say • Successful Shoestring Ministry!

The Editor's Desk

An Omission

In the September issue of *The Messenger*, I failed to recognize volunteers 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 for their service to the Church. They selflessly gave their time to watch over the children who came to the annual convention in Cincinnati and engaged them in fun and engaging activities. I compounded the omission by failing to publish (because I did not take) any photographs of the children and the volunteers. My apologies to all.



Exploring Swedenborg

In this issue of *The Messenger*, two of our respected scholars give us articles on approaches to Swedenborg.

Jim Lawrence presents an analysis and a challenge (p. 121). In the past, Swedenborgians have adapted to evolving culture by searching the writings to

find how they might apply to modern issues and challenges, using new insights to present Swedenborg's Christianity to the world. We can do the same.

George Dole's article (p. 124) provides insight into Swedenborg's spiritual grounding through a close reading of his writing, particularly earlier writing. He proposes an outline for conducting a thorough investigation of the influence of Swedenborg's religious upbringing on his mature writings that will interest many *Messenger* readers, both within and without the academy.

Budget and Deficit

No, not the federal government's money problems, rather General Convention's. As the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit prepares a budget proposal for General Council (GC) to consider at its fall meeting, we should remember that although GC has cut expenditures by a significant amount over the past few years, we have continued to operate at a deficit for those years. This year will likely see another deficit budget, albeit smaller. It will be difficult to cut further without significant impact on outreach, administration, programs, and services. Now is a good time to consider a year-end donation to General Convention.

—Herb Ziegler

Letters to the Editor

Spirits and Revelations

I was surprised to see no letters concerning the article about the 2010 SCYL Winter Teen Retreat in the February 2011 *Messenger*. I read that Rev. Alison [Longstaff] gave a Tarot card reading and "Rev. Jenn [Tafel] explained that . . . as a working medium she struggles to make sense of and find peace in communications from the spiritual world." The practice of contacting spirits has been controversial among Swedenborgians through much of their history. It seems from this that the General Convention branch now accepts communication with the

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Church Calendar

October 21–22: SHS Board of Trustees meeting • Earlham School of Religion • Richmond, Indiana

November 4–5: General Council meeting • Almont Retreat Center • Allenton, Michigan

November 4–5: SCYL Veterans Day weekend retreat • Pine Hill Retreat Center • Duxbury, Massachusetts

the Messenger

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Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

Well, it has been a wild ride as of recent with lots of ups and downs and sudden moves. But, as you can see in the picture, I'm holding on and staying on top of things! Laurie and I rode out hurricane Irene here on the lake in Bridgton. There was much rain and wind and flooding all around us, and we were without power for four days, but by cooking over the campfire and lugging water from the lake we made it just fine. Getting emails at the library in town and charging the cell phones when we drove the car made keeping up with the outside world a little tough. But we are managing to get caught up slow but sure. The upside of all the wind and rain was that we had all the kindling for firewood we could gather! All we had to do was go outside and pick it up.

There is a lot of activity around Convention as churches and ministers look to find mutually compatible relationships. I am pleased to announce that Rev. Gabriella Cahaly has taken the minister's position at the Southwest Florida church recently vacated by Rev. Nadine Cotton. Rev. Dick Tafel, who started that ministry many years ago, is still there and will be a support as Gabriella begins a new chapter in the life of that ministry.

Other churches, including New York City, Silver City (New Mexico), El Cerrito, San Diego,

Cincinnati, Newtonville, Pawnee Rock and Portland (Maine), are seeking ministerial leadership.

MINSU held its meeting up at the Kitchener Church awarding some grant requests and turning others down. Due to an unfortunate incident I was recovering from, I was not able to make the trip and attend the meeting in person. I'm doing fine now, and the results of that meeting should be officially communicated to the affected parties by the time you read this.



The SHS Board of Trustees will be meeting at Earlham, a Quaker school that a number of SHS students are attending. The meeting will be a chance for the board to meet with students, see the campus first hand, and strengthen relationships between our two institutions. I will be travelling on to Urbana and addressing the faculty and staff about the past, present, and future relationship between Urbana University and General Convention.

As we head into the fall schedule, I'll be making my second round of travels. I'm packed and ready to go and looking forward to seeing a good number of you in person, continuing my email and phone calls with many more of you, and anticipating an exciting year of developments both known and unexpected.

—Blessings,
Rev. Ken

New Books of Interest to Messenger Readers

A spate of recent books may be of interest to readers of *The Messenger*: *Losing Alicia: A Father's Journey after 9/11* by John Titus (Friesen Press); *The Guardian Angel Diary* by Grant Schnarr, *Stay*

by Me, Roses: the Life of American Artist Alice Archer Sewall James, 1870–1955 by Alice Blackmer Skinner, *A Swedenborgian Sampler*, *Orange Utopia: Eliza Lovell Tibbets and the Birth of the Or-*

ange Industry in Southern California by Patricia Ortlieb and Peter Economy, all from the Swedenborg Foundation; and *Johnny Appleseed: the Man, the Myth, and the American Story* by Howard Means (Simon and Schuster).

A Missing Chapter—A Preliminary Sketch

BY GEORGE DOLE



Between April 1745, when his open experiences of the spiritual world started, and December 1748, when he started writing *Secrets of Heaven*, Sweden-

borg wrote some 5000 folio pages of material that he never published. He started by drafting a presentation of deeper meaning in Genesis and Exodus, turned then to Joshua, Judges, First and Second Samuel, and First and Second Kings, then went back and went through Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, and then did Isaiah and made a beginning on Jeremiah. All this has been published posthumously, both in Latin, as *Adversaria* or *Notes*, and in English as *The Word Explained*. Later, he started systematically recording brief accounts of his experiences as they happened, his “Spiritual Diary.” The earliest entries are dated in August 1747, and while he seems to have diarized less frequently for a while after September of 1749, he recorded his experiences of the last judgment in some detail beginning at the turn of the year 1756–1757. This material too has been published both in Latin and in English.

He also wrote what have been referred to as biblical indexes, but that title is misleading. One, which seems to go from Deuteronomy through Second Kings, is more like a concordance, since it offers brief summaries of the biblical text at each entry. This, incidentally, is obviously a fair copy—very neatly written. In another manuscript, we find the beginnings of an “index” of Genesis, which has been carried only a little way into chapter thirteen. At that

point, it was discontinued, and the same folio volume was used for an “index” of Isaiah (at least as far as chapter 48 [out of 66]). Now, though, in Swedenborg’s treatment of both Genesis and Isaiah, we find not just a concordance but outright exegesis, with comments on the deeper meaning of each term in each of its listed occurrences. These “indices” (my dictionary would allow and probably prefer “indexes”) are available only in phototype volumes of the manuscripts themselves, and are clearly in first draft format.

Of all this material, only the Diary has been given much attention, and even that attention has been slight. Benz’s treatment of *The Word Explained*

It is not hard at all to believe that the emotional impact of meeting with angels reawakened a quite lovely character of heart that had been lying dormant though years of striving . . .

dwells almost entirely on Swedenborg’s comments on his spiritual experiences, which are scattered quite sparsely through that extensive work. Sigstedt merely notes briefly that “Some of the expressions—and to some extent even the ideas—of his previous works were taken from orthodox theology and embody the dogmas of the Lutheran church in which he had been raised” (p. 217). That is in fact an understatement; but even so, it surely should have opened the door to further inquiry. Instead, it seems to have closed it. This is regrettable, since there is a story waiting to be told, and while some years of work are needed to tell it well, the rough outline seems fairly clear. I am willing to share that outline because

this chapter is, I have come to believe, a vital part of the story that Swedenborg summed up late in *True Christianity* (§779), as follows: “. . . from the first day of that call I have not received anything whatever pertaining to the doctrines of that church from any angel, but from the Lord alone while I was reading the Word.” Now we can watch this happen.

To start with Sigstedt’s understatement, we may look at a few samples of what she is talking about. In commenting on the creation story, Swedenborg wrote,

The creation was done and accomplished by means of speech, or of the Word. The creation itself is credited to God the Parent, but the speech or the Word to the second Person of Divinity, his only-begotten Son, . . . while the efficient cause is the Holy Spirit” (§4).

Commenting on Genesis 29:21, he notes that

God could have saved the world by an infinite number of means, but this was the only one: that the Messiah himself should take upon himself all forms of guilt and become the righteousness that is imputed by him to believers (§ 585).

As the story progresses, we find that the devil is a fallen angel (Volume II, §136, at Genesis 37), and that the time will come for “a gathering of all in heaven and on earth, when God Messiah will come to judge the whole world.” (Volume II, §503 at Genesis 40:19)

We are told that

by faith alone we fix our minds on God Messiah, and at the same time on what God Messiah suffered. This insight is what makes it possible for us to reach him and acknowledge him, and so to reach Jehovah the Father through him

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... then God Messiah imputes his righteousness to [us] (Volume II, §527, at Genesis 40-41).

This is not just “some of the expressions”—and to some extent, even the “ideas” of orthodox Lutheranism. Page after page after page, it is the faith of Swedenborg’s own childhood, a faith that is quite appropriate to states of childlike trust. It can certainly be understood as an empirical instance of the doctrine of “remains.” It is not hard at all to believe that the emotional impact of meeting with angels reawakened a quite lovely character of heart that had been lying dormant though years of striving for recognition and success, dealing with big business and big government. This was not a faith hammered out through theological debate but a faith that he loved; and this becomes more and more evident as the story proceeds.

There is a book to be written on his exegesis of the deeper meaning of Scripture in *The Word Explained*. His methodology is explicitly typological, seeing Old Testament events as foreshadowing future events, and naming them as “types” of things to come. Cain’s murder of Abel is a “type” of the crucifixion, for example (W.E. 94). This is a mode with deep roots in Christian thought, clearly present in several of Paul’s epistles and especially clear in Hebrews. At this point, Swedenborg sees the deeper senses of the Word simply as extensions of the literal story to increasingly inclusive categories of humanity. So what Jacob does in a given passage, for example, is on a deeper level typical of what his descendants will do, on a still deeper level what “people like Jacob” in the story will do, and on an even deeper level what “people like Jacob” throughout the world will do. All this is on the earthly level. Only at the deepest level is it about “the Jacob side” of God Messiah and his kingdom, the true church.

What emerges is a history of the church, with God Messiah present from the beginning, but with humanity gradually turning away from him. The first sign of renewal was when Abram (who of course was a gentile) “trusted the Lord, and the Lord counted it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Abraham’s descendants ignored the inner law, though, so God Messiah, largely through the lavish use of miracles, kept them externally on track. He did this primarily so that he could come into the world as a descendant of

When and how, then, did the light really dawn? He had to let go of the old before he could take in the new, but some of the old was profoundly true.

Abraham, the epitome of true faith. All this while he was actually neglecting the gentiles who were the true church (W.E. 589)—a situation typologically foreshadowed by the seven years in which Leah, the external church, was fertile, and Rachel, the true bride, was barren (see especially W.E. 765) When God Messiah did come in the flesh, the faith of Abraham was revived (see Romans 4:3), and the Christian church became openly what it had really been all along—the church of the gentiles, the true church of God Messiah, the church in whose loving arms Swedenborg had been raised.

This theme seems to fade from view, though, as the commentary progresses, and more and more attention is given to the correspondential meaning of specific terms and relationships. At this point, the primary protagonists are God Messiah and his “choir of angels” on the one hand, and “the devil and his crew” on the other, with humanity in general vacillating between what God Messiah is giving from within and what self and the world are offering from without. There is motion to-

ward the view of the inner meanings as we find them in *Secrets of Heaven*, but this is still little more than theological reflection of a relatively simplistic, childlike kind.

When and how, then, did the light really dawn? He had to let go of the old before he could take in the new, but some of the old was profoundly true. It was a difficult transition; and it seems to have happened in stages, with three critical turning points.

The first occurred while Swedenborg was working on Genesis 47. This is where the seven years of famine in Egypt begin, and where in order to buy grain from Joseph, the Egyptians give him first all their money, then all their livestock, and then their land and themselves, becoming slaves. “All the silver,” Swedenborg writes, “in the case of the individual, means all insights into earthly matters (among the Babylonians, all the things with which they buy spiritual credits [we’ll come back to those “Babylonians”]) and likewise all the skills that follow from those insights” (II, §1061). The livestock mean “all our more inward abilities” (§1062). Then it gets intense.

The actual insights are meant by the silver, and they are of no use apart from their application to spiritual matters. These are taken away first, as serving no useful purpose, which at this point has been done, for they lack relevance to heavenly matters (if I am deprived of these, as now seems to be the case, the insights thus far granted me by the divine mercy of God Jesus Christ are of no use, so my labor thus far has been in vain; as follows (§1063).

Think for a moment of all he had achieved as an engineer and scientific researcher. Add the hundreds of pages of biblical study and exegesis, and picture this fifty-six-year-old man overwhelmed by a sense of total failure.

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From Long Island to Fryeburg Maine

BY JIM LOWE

Betty and I had been attending the New York New Church for about a year when one Sunday our dear friend Adrienne Frank asked us if we had heard of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly. Since we had no knowledge of the camp, Adrienne proceeded to tell us non-stop how wonderful it was, and if we ever decided to go, could she and Virginia Bran-



son hitch a ride? Thus began our camp experience for the next eighteen years. We have loved it ever since.

This past June, we started seriously thinking about camp as we do every year, and before we knew it we were packing and looking forward to seeing our old friends and meeting new ones. The best way to describe what FNCA is like is it feels like a sustained state of relaxed enthusiasm.

The cabins are rustic and charming, nestled among tall pines. They exude an ambiance of times past and a presence that leads you to relax and reflect

while sitting on the porch. In the evenings it's fun to watch Sparks games from the porch of the main building, too, creative games led by Trevor that keep the kids running, jumping, and playing.

All the meals are family style. Meal time is a time of lively conversation and joyful celebration. There is so much to do—and not do—just sitting on the large porch and chatting with one person or joining a group or simply settling in a chair and smelling the crisp, pure Maine air and taking in the view of the majestic White Mountains in the distance.

After breakfast there is a chapel service. Two lectures follow except on Wednesday, which is Outing Day. The lecturers are usually Swedenborgian ministers (from three branches of the church) or seminary students from SHS. The topics are spiritual, well thought out, and reflect the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg. We always come away with a clearer understanding of the writings. Some stay for a discussion group afterwards, which is always interesting, lively, serious, light, and funny. This year's lectures centered on a theme each week, "Biblical Parallels: Correspondences between Old and New Testament Stories" and "Life as a Preparation for Forever."

Engaging lectures

were presented by Rev. Dr. George F. Dole, Rev. Susannah Currie, Rev. Lee Woofenden, Rev. Sage Currie, Rev. Gard Perry, Rev. Ken Turley, Rev. George McCurdy, Anna Woofenden, and Rev. Hugh Odhner.

After lunch we have quiet time when

one can rest, read, meditate, take a walk in the woods, or sign out and take a ride to town—then the rest of the afternoon one can swim in the Saco River or engage in other activities.

On Outing Day, most campers plan



trips. Some go west to the lakes region or White Mountains of New Hampshire. Others go east to historic Portland or the rocky coast of Maine. And others just meander through the small villages and country back roads. Some even like to stay around camp and go canoeing or swimming.

If you have ever wanted a little less stress and a little more fun, community, getting closer to nature, a deeper understanding of the writings, plenty

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Autumn News from SHS

SHS Scholar

Rebecca Esterson, a life-long Swedenborgian, is a graduate of Moravian College and Harvard Divinity School. After eight years on staff of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University, this fall she commenced her Ph.D. studies at Boston University as SHS scholar. Rebecca is in the “Texts and Traditions” program in religious studies and will center her work on comparing the biblical commentaries of mystical Judaism and Christianity in the eighteenth century, focusing on Swedenborg and Hasidic texts.

SHS recently conducted an interview with Rebecca.

SHS: *Does a Swedenborgian reading of the Bible hold valuable promise for future ministry?*

RE: I believe that Swedenborg’s approach to interpreting the Bible is our greatest asset as Swedenborgians. His biblical commentaries contain a richness of meaning that sustains us spiritually. They warn us against literalism, which is the death of religion, but at the same time proclaim a connection to the spiritual world that only the Word can me-



diate. The Bible is, for us, a guide to spiritual regeneration as individuals and as a church, and is therefore an indispensable tool in any Swedenborgian ministry.

SHS: *What is the importance of interreligious dialogue for Swedenborgians in your opinion?*

RE: We believe in a pluralistic heaven. Salvation is not reserved for members of any one particular faith tradition, but quite the opposite is true: “Variety in worship of the Lord from the variety of good in different societies is not harmful, but beneficial, for the perfection of heaven is therefrom.” (Heaven and Hell § 56). Rather than a threat, the existence of other religions is a reassuring sign that things are as they should be. In this church we are at home in a world that celebrates the many paths to a heavenly state of being, and are therefore uniquely suited to navigate the winding terrains of comparative theology and interfaith learning. In today’s globalized world, this is a gift we would do well to develop more fully.

SHS: *What question or questions most intrigue you as a Swedenborgian and scholar as you begin this new phase of your journey?*

RE: I am very interested in how different religious traditions approach sacred texts, in their views on revelation and interpretation, and in how Swedenborgianism in its various forms fits into the scene. How did the Enlightenment in particular affect how Jews and Christians approach the biblical text? Swedenborg was writing at a moment in time when readers of the Bible were being tossed and turned in new currents of thought and discovery that would forever change the religious landscape. Did Christianity become distracted by the iconoclastic effects of science? How did Swedenborg fare in this regard? What are the strengths of

Jewish hermeneutics that allowed Judaism to so seamlessly embrace modernity and post modernity in its reading of the Bible? How do Swedenborg’s biblical commentaries compare with those of the Jewish mystics living at the same time, facing some of the same challenges and influences?

Fall Semester Courses

This semester Rev. Dr. Inese Radzins is teaching “Swedenborg’s *Heaven and Hell*,” with a close reading of Swedenborg’s text against the backdrop of classical depictions of heaven and hell—including those of Augustine, Dante, Milton, and Boehme—and alongside contemporary interpretations.



Dr. Devin Zuber is teaching “Introduction to Swedenborgian Thought,” an intensive study of Swedenborg’s

theological and philosophical writings that explores fundamental principles and insights comprising Swedenborgian thought. Special focus centers on Swedenborg’s integration of his scientific-philosophic framework into his metaphysical cosmology.

Rev. Dr. George F. Dole is teaching “Swedenborgian Biblical Exegesis” via video conference. The course focuses on fundamental principles that give coherent meaning to the biblical narrative with a view to finding coherent meaning in the narratives of students’ own lives. By the close of the course, students should have the beginnings of an exegetical methodology that appropriately blends discipline and intuition in the interpretation of the Bible for personal spiritual growth and for pastoral and homiletical purposes. ☩

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of good food family style, and a time to reflect and find a deeper meaning in your life, then this is for you. Visit the FNCA web site at: <<http://fryeburg.org>> for more about this past summer’s sessions. ☩

Jim Lowe is a newly-appointed member of the brand new FNCA Outreach Committee. He is a farrier by trade. He & his wife Betty live in Sea Cliff, NY on Long Island and are long-time members of the New York New Church.

Guest Editorial

Be Careful What You Say



BY LON ELMER

When I was an advertising copywriter, I learned that words were tools for manipulating thoughts. I also learned that repetition of a word or phrase can bring about a desired result. I trust that you are aware of positive affirmations, and how they operate, that by continually repeating them one can change, for example, one's attitude. A positive affirmation that I hear frequently is "Life is good." Repeated often enough, one's attitude shifts to see that life really is good, in spite of all that comes along to challenge that notion.

There are also negative affirmations, a common one being, "I am not good enough." Repeated often enough, one finds one's self not doing whatever, because one really believes that one is not good enough to do that whatever. I see our church practicing negative affirmations.

When I attended my first Convention in 1986, at Appalachia State College in Boone, North Carolina, I heard people in leadership positions referring to our denomination as being small, especially in comparison to other denominations. The membership then was 2,342 people—1795 active and 547 inactive—scattered among forty-seven active and two inactive societies. This year, 2011, people in leadership positions repeated the mantra of our being a small church, our membership being 1534 people—1096 active and 396 inactive—scattered among thirty-nine active and three inactive churches. In twenty-five years, we have shrunk by approximately thirty-three members a year, or, if you prefer, approximately three a month.

The conclusion that I draw is that every time we use the word small that is what we become. We are a success at becoming small. As treasurer of the Pacific Coast Association, I am very sensitive to money issues. I have observed that we are perfectly willing to throw good money at dubious endeavors to grow ministries—including hiring the latest church-growth guru—when we seem to be committed to downsizing. Perhaps our goal is to make our bank account small also.

I sense that there are church members who have dedicated their lives to the law of diminishing returns, and who will probably be offended at what I am about to suggest. I suggest that

we discontinue the use of the word *small* in describing our church and instead use the phrase, "We are a growing church." Say it out loud, "We are a growing church!" Feels good, doesn't it?

And while we are in the process of eliminating negative affirmations, how about getting rid of that phrase which we have used so casually that it has become institutionalized, isolated members. Talking about putting individuals in boxes behind fences between them and the rest of the denomination! May I suggest that folks would feel much better about being members of the church's extended community. I know that I would, especially since the church is growing. ☩

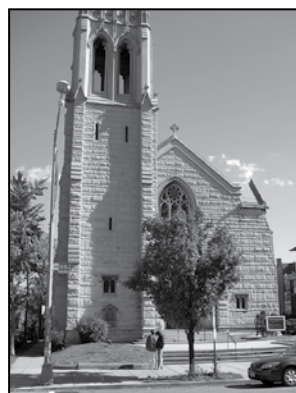
Lon Elmer is a member of the Pacific Coast Association living in the Seattle area.

National Church Receives Design Grant

The Washington Society of the New Jerusalem (Church of the Holy City) was awarded a \$5,000 matching grant by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The grant will fund design work to repair damage to the structural integrity of the church's English Gothic Revival bell tower.

The building's exterior walls were constructed using traditional load-bearing masonry components—Indiana limestone backed by coursed brick. The 95-foot tower walls, constructed 1894–1896, are tied together every twenty-feet vertically by wood-framed flooring or roofing systems. This wood, an essential part of the tower's structure, is deteriorating. The problems originated at the floor of the open belfry level.

The extent of the damage was determined using a first grant from the National Trust. The Tower framing investigation report was implemented and the recommended work completed. It paved the way for Phase 3 of the Tower Project, which will enable structural engineers to design necessary repairs to the wood structure.



"Without organizations like the Church of the Holy City, communities and towns all across America would have a diminished sense of place," said Stephanie Meeks, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "The National Trust for Historic Preservation is honored to provide a grant to the Washington Society of

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Passages

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tégé and later became a close friend of Rev. Dr. Dorothy Harvey.

Barbara grew up in Ohio, and during the time of her enrollment at SSR, she was the denomination's brightest promise for academic excellence and scholarship in Biblical studies, ethics, philosophy, and Swedenborgian doctrine. However, ministry in the Swedenborgian Church was not to be, and Barbara focused her academic pursuits in philosophy and ethics. She and her husband of many years, Dr. Geoffrey Pullum, co-published academic works in the field of philosophy and linguistics. She was an honorary fellow in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh when she died.

Barbara was a dear friend of mine since we met at UU. One day, several months after I graduated from UU and was visiting my folks, I walked into the SSR student lounge and found her, the way I would find her many times over

the years when we studied together, sitting in her favorite over-stuffed chair, coffee in hand, reading some work in advanced studies from one of the many fields in which she was interested. She invited me to sit and talk with her. We ended up talking about the ministry. We shared our stories. The next day I was moving into SSR to begin my studies for ordained ministry in the Swedenborgian Church.

Barbara was not only brilliant and kind but she was one of the best listeners I have ever encountered. She loved horticulture, art, theater, a good mystery, traveling, research, and walks through beautiful gardens. She was a fantastic cook, and very much a renaissance woman of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. When I needed a completely different perspective on any topic, personal or academic, Barbara never failed to open my eyes to a larger truth.

I never quite understood why Barbara considered me one of her best

friends. She was so much more intelligent, wise, and fantastic in so many ways. I always felt somewhat like a simpleton around her. But she loved to laugh, and I was good at getting her to laugh. We enjoyed talking about similar things—our families, world events, politics, gardening, movies and books, art, health and happiness, our husbands. Our time together was enriching, inspiring, warm, and loving. Barbara was my best friend for close to forty years.

Barbara died after a brave fight with cancer in Edinburgh with her husband by her side on May 14, 2011. While looking into her husband's eyes and holding hands, her last words to him were, "I'm so glad that we finished writing our paper together." That was Barbara, always the academician. I will never forget you my dear friend and I will always miss you. Until we meet again, enjoy your studies and your gardens in heaven.

—Susan G. Turley

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the New Jerusalem dba Church of the Holy City, which will use the funds to help preserve an important piece of our shared heritage."

About the Church of the Holy City

The dignified English Gothic style church, dedicated in 1896, reflects the æsthetic ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement, which was influential at that time. Designed by the distinguished Harvard University architect, H. Langford Warren, himself a Swedenborgian, the structure features a carved stone-work exterior, an ornate tower, and a handsome interior that conveys a sense



of serenity. The striking stained glass windows, illustrating Bible stories from creation to revelation, were produced by leading art glass studios such as Lamb and Tiffany, and add greatly to the rich beauty of the space. The church was built as the National Swedenborgian Church and is home to the Washington, DC, congregation and a recently created Emanuel Swedenborg Center for Worship and Study. The church is located in the historic Dupont Circle neighborhood directly north of the White House

on 16th Street in the nation's capital. The society is still looking for funds to match the new grant. If you would like to contribute, contact Elfa Halloway at elfahalloway@yahoo.com. ☦

Shoestring Ministry

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Your opportunities for supporting this ministry

One of our goals is to increase the amount of individual support for this ministry. We are encouraging individual giving by direct communication with registered site users and by posting information on donating via PayPal or check on the site. We encourage you to join us in continuing the work of SC.org in reaching out to the world (our registrants come from many countries) and providing a spiritual home for seekers who find truth, growth, and comfort in Swedenborgian Christian ideas. We would love to have you be part of our support base. Visit us at swedenborgiancommunity.org. ☦

Chris Laitner is member of the Swedenborgian Online Community oversight committee.

Translate Forward

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derpinnings of the natural world and the spiritual dimension for all life;

- the Mind Cure Movement pioneers, the homeopaths, and numerous physical healing and therapy people inspired to act upon Swedenborg's insights on the spiritual correspondences of human anatomy and the channels of spiritual vitality that maintain human physical manifestation.

The Swedenborgian churches reached primarily for *True Christianity*, because that was the book that Swedenborg wrote to address the churches and to directly correct historical theology. Arguing doctrine was not a wrong tack. It was one important conversation, and if done in the right spirit it is still a val-

id way of working. But history lesson number one is that while the ecclesiastical New Church heavily focused on correct doctrine, the larger reception of Swedenborg in culture was effected through creative para-church conversations that carried Swedenborg's ideas into interests and conversations then emerging. We might call such currents the live edge of cultural imagination. Translating Swedenborg forward into those live edges probably had the longer reach in culture.

History Lesson #2: Swedenborgian Pluralism

It took over a century before anyone noticed that if you read the writings specifically to engage interreligious concerns, you could build an attractive position on religious pluralism in Swedenborg. It wasn't a minister who saw

this, but the Swedenborgian Chicago lawyer Charles Carroll Bonney—the visionary now credited as the originator of the legendary 1893 World Parliament of Religions, the first great opening of interreligious dialogue not only in the United States but in the world. A Swedenborgian did this by reading Swedenborg in a fresh way in deep dialogue with the world in which he was living. Bonney saw that even though Swedenborg was insistent on the best ways to understand the great ideas of theology, nevertheless personal integrity was still the most important factor governing whether a person was actually regenerating (which meant sal-

vation in traditional parlance). A lot of people were ready to see another way than the theological hair-splitting and church-splitting that had dominated the century, and a new conversation was

started that is still growing.

Today, I find people in all branches of the New Church proudly wearing pluralism as a Swedenborgian badge of honor—and rightly so, because Swedenborg was profound on this matter and the pieces are there in the writings. But the point I want to make is a history lesson. You have to construct that position out of a small number of passages from an immense body of work to put it together. Swedenborg himself does not spell out a bold and contemporary position on religious pluralism. Yet, a hundred years after the Swedenborgian church began, a sensitive mind and heart listening to the pulse of culture translated Swedenborg forward from scattered references into an articulate spiritual vision that has not stopped yielding harvests of spiritual love and wisdom in complex human

communities.

History Lesson #3: the "Doctrine" of Uses

The bestselling and most widely received Swedenborgian short published work in the last century is Wilson Van Dusen's short work, *Uses*, written in the late 1970s. *Uses* rapidly achieved legendary status in all branches of the New Church, and when I came into Convention in 1981, it was already on everyone's tongue. The Swedenborgian teaching on uses is a consistent crowd-pleaser. Everyone gets it, and it is such a direct and powerful spiritual growth tool. Therefore, Van Dusen did a really good job of updating one of the church's classic doctrines, right?

Wrong!

Van Dusen's work on uses emerged from reading Swedenborg with fresh eyes while pondering the writings around his passion for personal spiritual growth *practices*. Yes, Swedenborg wrote about usefulness. In part four of *Divine Love and Wisdom* there are several pages on uses and usefulness. However, that's several pages in thirty thick volumes! Warren's fat *Compendium* on Swedenborg's writings, done in nineteenth century, has a paltry four or five citations on use.

But there is a little story behind the story. Van Dusen was quite fond of one of the more adventurous promoters of Swedenborg's thought in the latter half of nineteenth century: Rev. Benjamin Fisk Barrett. One of Barrett's least known and strangely neglected works was a small book published in 1887 called *Ends and Uses*. Van found himself deeply engaged by the direction Barrett took in it, and he wrote an article in 1978 for *Studia Swedenborgiana* on usefulness to work out his own thoughts for a Swedenborgian perspective for spiritual growth. "Uses" immediately struck a loud chord echoing throughout all branches of Swedenbor-

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gianism and has now become a commonly cited teaching of Swedenborg.

"Uses" has been enormously effective in connecting new people to Swedenborgian spirituality. It is indeed a teaching of Swedenborg, but not very obvious in the writings overall. It took a sensitive mind and heart in dialogue with questions being asked in the current context (such as, *how* to live a spiritual life) to see a deep principle in the writings and to translate it forward into effective spirituality.

How to Translate Swedenborg Forward

One of George Dole's consistent encouragements as a teacher of Swedenborgian thought has been to take an idea in the writings and follow its arc as far and as deeply as you can. In dialoguing with the world and with your own life, where does the live edge of the idea lead? Professor Dole did this himself in a great number of ways as a creative scholar.¹ I am working on one of George's inspirations that I first started thinking about when I was his student long ago—namely, bringing current developmental theory into dialogue with Swedenborg's teaching on the process of regeneration. Many Swedenborgians have been working on this third path of not abandoning Swedenborg and not merely quoting Swedenborg, but of translating Swedenborg forward. I think of Grant Schnarr's work in coordinating an engaging Swedenborgian conversation with the 12-Step program. I think of Peter Rhodes and subsequently Frank Rose of the Spiritual Growth Group Movement coordinating an engaging Swedenborgian conversation with the personal spiri-

¹ You can purchase a book on his life-work and thought, *Principles in Play: Essays in Honor of George Dole's Contributions to Swedenborgian Thought*, ed. by James Lawrence, by sending \$20 to the Swedenborgian House of Studies, 1798 Scenic Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709.

Remembering September 11

Immediately after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, an interfaith group representing millions of citizens drafted a religious response to terrorism entitled, "Deny Them Their Victory." The group expressed bitter anger at the attacks that killed so many but pleaded with government decision makers to avoid reactions that would accelerate the indiscriminate loss of life. The statement was signed by 4,000 people.

Its eloquence may not have significantly slowed the momentum to war, but it remains a historic expression by people of faith who were deeply pained by the attacks, and deeply committed to expressing the love of God to halt further bloodshed. Ten years later, the

tual growth techniques of the Fourth Way. I think of Bob Kirven's book *Angels in Action* during the amazing angel enthusiasm of the 1990s. These are all examples of being sensitive to the live edge of spiritual thought in the current cultural conversation and going to the writings for vision.

You don't have to write a book or start a historical movement to gain great benefit from this technique. You might simply get a powerful new way for you to feel engaged in your own living. And you don't need to know Latin to translate Swedenborg forward. You just need to pay close attention to the live edge in culture and in your own life and let the divine guide your devotional reading in the amazing body of spiritual writing that comprises not only the foundations of our tradition, but hopefully its growing branches and its flowering fruit. ☩

The Rev. Jim Lawrence is the dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies at the Pacific School of Religion.

words ring as true as they did in the stinging aftermath of September 11, 2001.

The statement was written by Jim Wallis of Sojourners, Rabbi David Saperstein of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, then general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, and the Rev. Bob Edgar, then general secretary of the National Council of Churches.

To read the statement go to <http://www.nccusa.org/news/interfaith-statement.html>. ☩

Shift: Small Changes. Big Difference

New Church Journey, a program of the General Church, is offering *Shift*, a new course of study for the fall and spring. The course targets internal struggles we encounter as we approach a big life change—financial concerns, bad habits, or relationships—just about anything in our daily lives.

In the story of Jacob from the Old Testament we can follow his life on a similar path as he encounters deception, frustration, and painful struggles—and through times of hope, inspiration, and love. Through Bible study and inspiration from the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, we can discover that at each stage of Jacob's journey, he undergoes shifts: in his awareness, perspective, and focus, as well as in his expectations, motivations, and priorities. Each shift brings him a little closer to fulfillment and peace.

New Church Journey will be supporting two launches of the Shift program: September 25, 2011, and February 5, 2012.

To learn more about the program and how to participate, visit www.newchurchjourney.org. ☩

Missing Chapter

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When he came to publish his volumes on the deeper meaning of Scripture, he would present the meaning of this passage as applying to humanity in general. He experienced it as aimed directly at himself. He continues:

The livestock and such, along with the horses, are likewise deeper insights—the horses, for instance, pleasures and desires of the world (these too have been taken from me, so that I dare nothing, I know nothing, where I am headed). (§ 1064).

Then,

The earth is the understanding itself, of the mind, which is taken away at the same time, so that I understand almost nothing, for evil spirits are so beclouding me, and what I am able to write is given me in bits and pieces. (§ 1056).

And finally,

That is my state today, exactly as foretold for the Egyptian person. What else these things may intend, I do not know. I await your salvation, God Messiah! (§1066).

Swedenborg, in other words, identifies completely with the Egyptians who have step by step given up their wealth, their livestock, and their land, and finally themselves.

The rest of that page is blank. It is almost as though his own slate has been erased. The word *vastation* comes to mind.

Some years later, he would write that

It is common knowledge that there are many people in the church who are influenced by the Lord's Word and devote a great deal of labor to reading it. There are few, though, who do so with a view to being taught about the truth. Most of them actually stay within their dogma and just work to confirm it from the Word (*Secrets of Heaven* 4368:2).

Swedenborg had certainly been “influenced by the Lord's Word.”

He had certainly been devoting a great deal of labor to reading it. He had been finding confirmation of the faith that he loved. He had, though, been doing all this with a view to being taught about the truth, and now he found himself at the parting of the ways. It was telling him things he did not want to hear, and he was listening.

What could he do? He did what was really the only thing he could, picked up his quill again and got back to work; and while a cursory scan of his treatment of the Bible shows interesting changes in approach (in Judges, for example, he pays very little attention to the narrative but dwells at some length on the Song of Deborah

It is hard to imagine how Swedenborg must have felt when he realized that this whole transformative process was vividly imaged in the first chapter of Genesis.

in chapter 5), there seems to be no crisis of similar importance until he gets to what we can identify as the second turning point. This came as he was working on the laws for the year of jubilee in Leviticus. Leviticus 25:24 reads, “Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.”

This prompted the following series of cryptic “one-liners” (from Tafel's *Adversaria* Part 2):

- 6305. So the land must be redeemed, that is, what is meant by the land, namely the slaves (see verse 55).
- 6306. Because we are wanderers, that is, cast out of the kingdom, so we need to be redeemed.
- 6307. If we were native inhabitants of heaven and had not been cast out, we would not need to be redeemed.

- 6308. The “possession” is heaven, but it is not a possession of anyone as personal property. That is why it says, the land is God Messiah's, and we are wanderers and aliens, and need to be adopted.

- 6309. It is only the fruit, because it is not personal property.

- 6310. It follows most clearly from this that no mortal can sell heaven, for it does not belong to anyone but God Messiah.

No problem so far—this is perfectly good Lutheran doctrine.

- 6311. The produce or the fruit, though, is what comes from heaven—that is, from the possession, and therefore from the Possessor, God Messiah.

- 6312. [The fruits] are then faith, charity, and the works of charity.

- 6313. Anyone can sell this as produce, for we do seem to be able to distribute this, that is, to teach it.

Now we're on dangerous ground. This seems to be saying that our “works of charity” are in some way our own.

- 6314. “The poor” are said to be those who either sell these things or go into slavery; so the possession too, or the land, which is the same as the person, can go into slavery. Slavery is working and meriting a salary under the banner of God Messiah.

But even what we do “under the banner of God Messiah” is slavery if we think we merit a salary for doing it.

- 6315. Redemption has to do with the produce, not the possession.

- 6315. The produce is charity and the works of charity: we are redeemed and saved depending on these.

So his childhood faith was dead wrong and dead right at the same time. Our salvation depends on our works, but our works do not earn us heaven.

- 6316. These matters are most obscure to me so far, and there is no way I can understand them. So I lay them aside, for I have never

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been so distressed, so perplexedly distressed.

The fact that this was a landmark event is underscored by the fact that it is one of the very few that is dated. It happened on July 22, 1746.

We should not take this distress lightly. It is the deepest he has ever experienced. That depth is due to the fact that this seems to run counter to the very heart of his beloved childhood faith, the beauty of simple trust in God Messiah. It teeters on the edge of the “Babylonian” or Roman Catholic emphasis on works, the way they use them to “buy spiritual credits,” the whole scorecard system of sins and penances. This feels like nothing less than the death of innocence itself, and Swedenborg can see no way to think his way free.

Again, he kept at it. It seems that at the third turning point, the resolution, came over a year later; and as we might expect, it came in the course of his further study of the Bible. At some point he started the new index of Genesis mentioned at the beginning of this article. While there is no direct indication of why he discontinued it, at the top of the first page of that index there is a most intriguing sentence: “A change of state in me, into the celestial kingdom, in an image.” I cannot help but assume that what prompted the change of course was the change of state.

It may not be coincidence that he abandoned his Genesis index shortly after finishing Genesis 12, in which Abram is commanded, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:10). What would that have said to him about his loyalty to his father’s faith? What expectations might it raise concerning the land that the Lord was promising to show him?

This introduces the conclusion of “the missing chapter,” which is signaled

right next door to the statement about his change of state. At the top of the basically blank page facing that first page of the index is another sentence:

How our regeneration is expressed in the outer, inner, still more inward, and inmost sense of the Word of God Messiah, and how it is believed by people who are outer, inner, still more inward, and inmost; so how outer things are lifted up step by step to the inmost. See *adjuvare* Isaiah 43:17 (44:2 in modern Bibles).

This is radically different from the levels he had identified at the beginning of *The Word Explained*. It sounds very much like the enlightenment that comes when the inner is opened so that we see “from within” (*Secrets of Heaven* 10551:2). The verse in question reads as follows: “Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you.”

This of course sends us to the entry for *adjuvare*; and when we do we find the following:

Adjuvare [“to help”], for providing assistance so that we may be reformed. In its outer sense, it is for people to whom it seems that their own efforts contribute to their reformation; in the inner sense, for people who demand something of themselves for their regeneration; in the still more inward sense, for people who know in theory that they are capable of nothing but still think they are somehow involved, and in the inmost sense for people who claim no credit whatever for themselves.

We could not ask for a more beautiful resolution of Swedenborg’s perplexity. The heart of his childhood faith is completely intact, but it is now the seed of a goal to be reached, the seed that must fall into the ground and die. It is the innocence of infancy that foreshadows the innocence of wisdom, and step one is leading a moral life, the neces-

sary foundation of a spiritual life. Then and only then comes the gradual opening of deeper levels of the mind. It is hard to imagine how Swedenborg must have felt when he realized that this whole transformative process was vividly imaged in the first chapter of Genesis. Incredibly, all that intense meaning will get compressed into three little Latin words, one of the most frequent phrases in the theological works, one that occurs over one hundred and fifty times—*sicut a se*, “as if of oneself.”

To summarize, Genesis 47, with the Egyptians selling themselves into slavery, rased the slate. Leviticus 24:25, the redemption of the land, pinpointed the heart of the matter. Isaiah 43:17, with its contrast between God’s power and our powerlessness, was the dawn of a new day; and with *adjuvare*, the clouds finally parted and he could see the path to “the heavenly kingdom,” to the innocence of wisdom.

The unwritten chapter of Swedenborg’s life seems to be saying that *sicut a se* is not just a clever solution to a theological problem, something given to us through Swedenborg’s extraordinary mind. It comes to us also and perhaps even primarily through his heart.

It is one of the loveliest phrases in the doctrines, with a depth of meaning that we will never exhaust. ☩

The Rev. Dr. George Dole is an adjunct professor at the Swedenborgian House of Studies.

A longer version of this paper was presented at the 2011 Annual Convention and at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly.

The Messenger On Line

An free online subscription to *The Messenger* is available at www.swedenborg.org. A PDF of current and past issues can also be accessed at swedenborgiancommunity.org

Letters to the Editor

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spiritual world, despite Swedenborg's warnings, but is that a safe activity for teens? I saw no explicit mention of the dangers.

The May 2011 *Messenger* contained an article by Rev. Jane Siebert. The deacons of a Mennonite church objected to her participating in a service because of "significant theological differences with the views of the New Jerusalem Church." Difference number four was her church's "belief in added revelations from the church's founder, Emanuel Swedenborg," to which Rev. Siebert replied "We do find help in the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg in understanding the Bible for use in our lives. The misunderstanding that this is considered 'added revelations' as in your letter stems from a more conservative branch of the Swedenborgian Church that broke away from our branch over 100 years ago." The eleventh edition of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines revelation as "an act of revealing or communicating divine truth . . . something that is revealed by God to humans." I believe that exactly defines Swedenborg's work. And yes, they were added (thank God) to this world's understanding of the Bible and God. It appears that she denied Swedenborg's revelations so that she could participate in the service.

Also, though both Emanuel Swedenborg and Menno Simons had churches named after them, I don't believe that either founded a church.

—David Keating
Conway, New Hampshire

A Thank-you

Following the convention I received a lovely card signed by so many of you in attendance. I have also lost count of the emails and phone calls wishing me well. I also received a neat card signed by those of you at Almont. To each and every one of you, *Thank You!*

I had my surgery on August 1. I ended up being in hospital eight days. Recovery seems to be going well, and I will find out more in mid-September when I get evaluated by the surgeon. I am able to walk using a walker, but only for short distances. Healing will take a long time, but I am blessed with a wonderful nurse. Val is awesome!

Again, thank you all for the loving thoughts and prayers!

—Ron Brugler
Cleveland, Ohio

Church of the Holy City

I read with dismay Rev. Ken Turley's remarks about the National Church [Church of the Holy City in Washington, DC] in his presidential address to the 2011 Annual Convention [September 2011 *Messenger*]

As the noted Harvard professor and U.S. senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan once famously observed, people are entitled to their own opinions, but not to their own facts. The characterization of the Church of the Holy City as a "physically failing building" is a misstatement of the facts. Under the stewardship of our church administrator, Elfa Holloway, the urgent physical needs of the church are being seriously addressed for the first time in many years. A Tower Restoration Fund has been established and work on the tower is proceeding. In 2010, our application to the national Trust for Historic Preservation for a \$5000 grant met with success. The Trust has awarded the church a second grant in the same amount, something rarely done and a clear mark of that distinguished organization's confidence in our capacity to carry through the work that has been initiated. Neighbors and friends of the church have been giving generously to

the Tower Restoration Fund; we hope that Swedenborgians across the country will also contribute to the important work that has been undertaken.

The definition of "a few events" in the course of a year is, I suppose, a matter of opinion. I would only observe that the Church of the Holy City, which has long regarded its Wedding Chapel as an important part of its missionary outreach, has made its space available for more weddings in the past year than in any other year during the three decades I have been a member of the church. It has sponsored more musical events in the past two years than ever before, together with lectures on Swedenborgian subjects, spiritual healing programs, worship services with visiting Swedenborgian ministers presiding, and a Tuesday evening reading group, currently working its way through *Divine Love and Wisdom*.

The other two "devoted individuals" and I have clearly been stretched close to the breaking point, but we intend to persevere.

—Malcolm C. Peck, president,
Church of the Holy City

Hardening

If it is true,
and human freedom is soft like clay,
then how do we measure its drying out?
Do my choices cake to me
and harden in the sun?
Are you a marred but malleable
vessel, and can you be smooshed
into a new shape?
Whose hands can reshape you?
Can yours? Or God's, if you consent?
All I know for sure is
Mine cannot.
Let me then submit myself
for wiser
reinvention,
before I pass through the fire
and become something
eternal.

—Miriam Lexie

Passages

Baptisms



Teagan Robbins, daughter of Michael and Jennifer Robbins, was baptized June 16, 2011, the Rev. Jonathan Mitchell presiding. "As the water poured from an heirloom christening spoon, I was moved as an influx from the Lord came down into baby Teagan. Never before have I felt a baptism like this—something happened—we asked for God's blessing and the spirit delivered." —*Michael Robbins*

At Almont (Michigan) summer camp, the Rev. Jennifer Tafel celebrated the rededication of **Adam Wiatrowski's**



baptism by full immersion in Brandeau Bay on July 27, 2011, and the bap-

tisms of **Oliver Bertrand Hamilton** and **Charlie Daniel Oelker** in the Almont Chapel on July 28, 2011.

Confirmations

Jeff Oelker and **Adam Wiatrowski** were confirmed into the faith of the Christian Church at Almont Summer School, Rev. Jennifer Tafel presiding.



Deaths

Phyllis Hopper entered the spiritual world April 18, 2011. She leaves two children, Jane McFeaters and Heidi Potucek, four grandchildren and a great-grandson. Phyllis was a member of the LaPorte (Indiana) New Church and was a fun-loving soul and a beloved mother and grandmother. She is greatly missed by all who knew her

Dr. Fred C. Laitner, of East Lansing, Michigan, entered the spiritual world peacefully August 23, 2011. He was a life-long Swedenborgian and lived 99 years! Fred is the father of Chris Laitner and Dorie Litchfield and stepfather of Robert and Tom Linebaugh. He will be remembered also by many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. A memorial service was held for Fred September 12, 2011, at Burcham Hills Resident Center, officiated by the Rev. Renee Machiniak, the Rev. Jennifer Tafel, and SHS student Dagmar Bollinger. Contributions can be made to Almont New Church Assembly, c/o B.J. Neuenfeldt, 206 W. Center, Ithaca, MI 48847 in Fred's memory.

George August Raabe died May 15, 2011, at age 89. Born in San Francisco and raised Catholic, George was an active member of the Los Angeles Church. He joined their Stitch and Study Group, where the ladies would do needlework and study the writings. Sometimes he was the lone man in the group besides the minister. He never joined the church officially, although active for many years. When the Los Angeles church was sold, he joined the La Crescenta General Church for worship. Again, he did not become member, but you could find George at every church event.

George had been in the Navy; earned an electrical engineering degree from the University of Colorado at Boulder; married Susan Carter Conlon, with whom he had thirteen chil-

dren; played the French horn; loved to square dance; was a member of Mensa; and loved to write poetry.

His daughter, Patricia Raabe says: "How much George appreciated being in your [church's] midst and, thoroughly enjoyed sharing concepts and ideas, a mind-enhancing dialogue."

In June 2005, due to declining health, George moved to Santa Barbara to live in an independent-living retirement community near his children.

Dr. Barbara Scholz was the first female seminarian to grace the smoke stained walls of the Swedenborgian School of Religion (SSR) in Newton, Massachusetts, during the mid 1970s. Dr. Scholz was a graduate of Urbana University (UU) where she was a pro-

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Mary Ann Fischer Day

The New Church of Montgomery board has named Sunday, August 28, Mary Ann Fischer Day in appreciation for her almost single-handed design and assembly of the New Church display at the University of Cincinnati College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning Library. The large display presents church items and memorabilia from the Cincinnati New Church, even though many are at present on display at the Taft Museum of Art. The display is based on the topics of design and architecture from a historical standpoint, and it uses the church as a focus for illustration and for identifying artists and architects with Swedenborgian connections. It provides a showcase for students and faculty to be introduced to the church's role and influence in the arts movement in Cincinnati; students have shown great interest. The display was Mary Ann's idea, made possible through her networking with folks in the world of academia. Thank you, Mary Ann! ☩

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.

Successful Shoestring Ministry! SwedenborgianCommunity.org



BY CHRIS LAITNER

In its first six years of existence, www.swedenborgiancommunity.org (SC.org) has proven itself as a venue that people come to for information on Swedenborg; worship experiences; weekly sermons and live chats about the sermons or the Thursday question of the week; downloads of *The Messenger*; prayers and spiritual direction; and discussion forums. Our statistical information demonstrates that this ministry serves over 500 registrant-members, generates nearly 2000 log-ins in a six-month period, and that another 1800 visitors stop by to see material that does not require logging in. (Contact psmoran@att.net for a copy of the PowerPoint presentation about SC.org made at the 2011 Annual Convention.)

What SC.org does with its shoestring budget?

SC.org is a vibrant, Web site based faith community that offers things like live chats and audio and video presen-

tations to support our programs in historic or real-time formats. The Web site requires technical assistance and allows for upgrades as technology advances.

Unlike the Web sites of many other communities, SC.org has a dedicated part-time minister who serves as the spiritual leader, consultant, preacher, counselor, main outreach person, and technical (IT) administrator. The minister and oversight committee meet regularly to keep things fresh and moving forward.

Communication goes out to SC.org registrants regularly. (We offer both weekly and monthly updates.) Look for upcoming surveys to gather input from those who visit the site and participate in the ministry offerings.

Annual budget and sources of support

SC.org has an annual budget of just over \$26,000 in 2011. We are pleased to have received a grant from the denomination's Mission Fund to support our minister and some support from the denomination's unrestricted funds. We also receive financial contributions and gifts from individuals.

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