

Reflections on a Summer of Changes

BY ANNA WOOFENDEN



It was in early February that it consciously hit me: I have a summer ahead of me with no obligations, no full-time job, no mortgage

tying me to one location, and granted, no means by which to eat and pay the bills. The opportunity of being a graduate student and having flexibility and mobility in the summer was not lost on me, having been in the cycle of year-round employment for the past decade. I began to search summer internships and fellowships and soon ran across the Beatitudes Society (thank you Google). Their mission grabbed me—"Strengthening the progressive Christian network for justice, compassion and peace"—as did the snapshots of the fellowships they've administered. I was intrigued by the breadth of organizations that were represented and found myself getting excited about a number of the positions.

Fast-forward through research and applications, interviews and paperwork, preparation and travel and I landed at Bread for the World in Washington DC, in a cubicle where I could glimpse the Capitol out the window if I strained my neck in the right direction. I was surrounded by a floor full of people who were com-

mitting their time and energy to urge our nation's decision makers to lead in a way that furthers the elimination of hunger, both in the United States and around the globe. Each person came from a different path of faith, coming together around the call to follow God by speaking up for the poor and hungry. My supervisor made the comment, "If you walked around this floor and asked everyone their theology on communion, consensus would not be found. But what we all have in common is the desire to put an end to people being hungry."

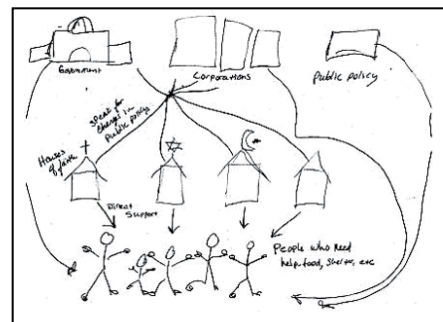
It was this laser beam pointing back to the mission at hand that attracted me to the organization and sustained and led me through the fellowship. I still have questions about how we navigate faith, policy, and politics. I found, as with any human organization, that there are flaws and frustrations. I get overwhelmed at the breadth of work to do. But the laser keeps cutting through: "What can we do so that fewer people die from hunger in our world?"

Now I can reflect on the past eight weeks and how I've been changed. Because changed I certainly have been. It feels a bit like the first time I went to West Africa in 1999—I knew within days of being there that I would never be quite the same again after seeing the faces, smelling the air, and having the rich red dirt seeping into my skin.

This past summer changed me. Pieces that have been gathering over the years found places to fit, I found

some edge pieces that give framework for the image, and the puzzle continues to evolve.

At our first Beatitudes Fellows meeting, the eight of us sat down with Anne Howard (Executive Director of the Beatitudes Society) as she shared the vision for the society and for our summer work. She pulled out a scrap of paper and drew a diagram that showed how faith and community-based groups provide direct service (soup kitchens, housing support, etc.) to those in need and that this is a good thing! But then



she talked about "speaking truth to power," saying that we must also ask the question, as people of faith, what is our part in helping to change the overall systemic issues that create a society where people are hungry, homeless, and lacking education and opportunities to thrive? What is our role as people of faith in looking at how large corporations and government and the decisions of powerful leaders have a direct effect on the levels of poverty and struggle in the world?

Now, I know this concept isn't news,

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In This Issue:

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The Eric Allison Angel Fund • Saying Goodbye to Blairhaven
Recognition • Finding a Way

The Editor's Desk



Closing and Opening

In her article on page 144, Nancy Little reports on the last days of Blairhaven and shares some memories about growing up there.

As president of the Massachusetts New Church Union, I had the responsibility of finding a buyer for and managing the sale of Blairhaven. I felt deep sadness as I engaged in the multi-year process of arranging a sale to the town of Duxbury and preparing the property for transfer at the closing. It was even more difficult for those who grew up with Blairhaven in their lives.

But I choose to focus on the oft-repeated aphorism, published earliest perhaps in the Spanish novella, *The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes*, "This proverb was fulfilled, when one door is shut the other openeth." Swedenborgians, like the world at large, have lost many physical structures and properties, but we also have added some. All things man-made eventually lose their usefulness, electronic devices in several years and some grand structures in several millennia, but our humanity and our spiritual universe remain a seemingly endless future. I feel satisfied that the wisdom of the members and leaders of the

Massachusetts Association and the New Church Union will find a use for the proceeds from the sale that will better suit the uses to which they subscribe.

This is not to say that places and buildings should be disregarded or discounted; as an expression of our creativity and spirit, they provide a nourishing space for creating community and seeking our inner beings and our connection to the Lord.

—Herb Ziegler

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Letter to the Editor

Translating Forward

I believe that James Lawrence's article "Translating Swedenborg Forward" (October 2011 *Messenger*) is spot on. My son, Curtis Childs, has been working to "translate Swedenborg forward" using his YouTube channel, *offTheLeftEye* (also accessible through the Facebook page, "Off The Left Eye"). His latest two videos have over 5,000 views each. I think if we take Swedenborgian concepts that particularly appeal to us and help us, and if we express those concepts in ways that are relevant to life today, such actions will have long lasting effect.

—Karin Childs

the Messenger

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Church Calendar

November 10–13: SCYL Veterans Day Weekend Retreat • Camp Burgess YMCA • Sandwich, Massachusetts

December 27–30: SCYL Winter Retreat, "Soul Music! Singing Your Inner Song" • Almont New Church Retreat Center • Allenton, Michigan

Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

Well, I have covered some miles this month. I write to you today after visiting the home of Stan and Karen Conger in California. Their town, Bishop, is located on the lovely high plains of the eastern Sierra Nevada with a craggy fence of mountaintops on three sides. I arrived there via a breathtakingly beautiful drive through Yosemite National Park after leaving the San Francisco Bay Area. My visit to the Bay Area was a short stop after attending the Wayfarers Chapel board meeting in Rancho Palos Verdes south of Los Angeles, and that came after a train ride from Portland, Maine, to New York City, where I attended the Governing Board meeting of the National Council of Churches. Two more days of driving from the Congers through the desolate yet beautiful mountains of Nevada with a stop in St. Louis put me in LaPorte, Indiana, where Barb Halle, in her last act as chair, hosted the PUSH meeting. So in less than a week I have rubbed shoulders with the bustling crowd of commuters on the subway in the Big Apple, held my own driving in the high intensity car culture of LA, eaten fresh avocados in the urban sophistication of the Bay Area, marveled at the quiet majesty of the redwood covered mountains of California and the desolate expanses of the Western deserts, and traversed the great middle of the USA to the shore of the Great Lakes.

The series of meetings that has brought me on this journey has been as varied and impressive as the landscapes I have covered to get to them. From the high and lofty church officials of the NCC meetings to the visionary ministry of Wayfarers to difficult decisions of the PUSH committee, each had its own unique environment, community of people, and kind of activity.

The NCC, faced with failing financials, is now engaged in restructuring its way of responding to the needs of our Christian community and the souls in



need that we seek to serve. Business as usual is no more realistic for this prestigious organization than it is for our own organization. Both of us are searching for new ways to hold to our vision and purpose and still fulfill our respective callings.

The Wayfarers Chapel as well, while the financial situation is not quite so dire, is challenged to adapt creatively to the changing cultural landscape and to developing internal changes. This very successful ministry of Convention continues to evolve from its visionary beginnings to a team concept that has developed a caring spiritual community within while running a business that serves needs far outside the bounds of Convention.

And finally at the PUSH meeting, a small group of committed and caring Swedenborgians, several of whom are “lifers,” put their heads and hearts together to make the most difficult kinds of decisions parcelling out a diminishing pool of funds to a growing number of churches that are not able to financially support themselves. It will be no surprise, however painful it may be, to hear that all from top to bottom is being challenged to re-evaluate their situations, tighten their belts, and push to find new and creative ways to support their ministries. Financially, our landscape is as desolate, empty, and intimidating as the high mountain deserts. But like the hardy souls who live there, we must find the courage, fortitude, and creativity to maintain life and even flourish with what little we have to work with. The numbers of folks who have lived for generations by accommodating themselves to austere conditions with few resources are proof that it can be done. People have found ways to adapt and accommodate to and even take advantage of difficult situations wherever they find themselves. In New York, where people mass together like bees in a hive, more and more choose to remain unencumbered by owning a car, and restaurants have become the shared living rooms for socializing by people of all walks of life who live in apartments too small for entertaining. The subways are filled with skateboarders in torn jeans and

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The Glorification

A Different Look at a Central Idea in the Writings of the Church

REV. DR. F. GARDINER PERRY

This article is a version of a paper presented at a suggestion from the Rev. Hugh Odhner of the Lord's New Church at the Academy of the New Church Theological School (General Church) in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, in April 2010.

There are three sections in this talk. In the first I will say a few words about why I believe this topic is important.



In the second section, I will name the problem I have found in currently available scholarship on the glorification and will cite Bishop Philip Nathaniel Odhner's view of the same problem. Then, in the third section, I offer my solution, with substantive support from my interpretation of the Latin text in the *Arcana Coelestia*.

Why This Topic?

When I began to examine the glorification closely, all the commentary that I could find interpreted the process as beginning with the Lord's literal birth and infancy. To be sure, the glorification *did* begin in his infancy. However, to limit my reading of the *Arcana* material to the Lord's infancy and young childhood presented a problem: the Lord's divinity was writ large, while his humanity was presented on an extremely small scale.

As a Pastoral Counselor interested in human development, I wanted to see the human side of the divine-human equation more clearly; in particular, I wanted to see what the process looked like in the life of an adult. There were two benefits that I could foresee:

the glorification would illuminate my understanding of adult spiritual development and, conversely, adult development would inform my understanding of the glorification. Thus, the desire to bring our rich theology into conversation with a contemporary theory of human development motivated me to begin this work.

As clergy in the General Convention, I am grateful for the theological training that gave me access to the glorification, and, in particular, I am indebted to the Rev. Dr. George Dole for his encouragement and for our many conversations on this topic. Among George's (many) talents is his command of Swedenborg's theological Latin, a skill that I admire. A decade ago, when I watched him working on a translation at one of our clergy retreats, I was inspired to blow the dust off my own Latin grammar (written by George), and begin to study Swedenborg's theological Latin. Later, when I opened my Latin edition of the *Arcana Coelestia*, I was delighted to see that one of my principle pleasures was to contemplate the dynamics of the Lord's glorification.

Familiar Summary of the Process

As a summary of the process, I offer the widely held and familiar view of the topic from summaries that one can find in the *Arcana Coelestia*. These come from §2033, 2034, and 1813, and I use the translation found in the Standard Edition:

The union of the Lord's Human Essence with His Divine Essence was not effected all at once, but through the whole course of His life, from infancy to the last of His life in the world. Thus He ascended continuously to glorification, that is, to union; according to what is said in John:

Jesus said, Father glorify Thy name; there came a voice from heaven: I have both glorified and will glorify it again (John 12:28) . . . (§2033).

. . . in the union of His Human Essence with His Divine Essence the Lord had in view the conjunction of Himself with the human race, and that this was His end, and this His love, which was such that the salvation of the human race, as held in the union of Himself with His Father, was to Him the inmost joy . . . (§2034.3).

When, in the Lord, the Human was made Divine, and the Divine Human, the result was an influx of the Infinite or Supreme Divine with man that otherwise could not possibly have existed . . . (§2034.8).

While He lived in the world the Lord was in continual combats of temptations, and in continual victories, from a constant inmost confidence and faith that because He was fighting for the salvation of the whole human race from pure love, He could not but conquer . . . the Lord never fought from the love of self, or for Himself, but for all in the universe, consequently, not that He might become the greatest in heaven, for this is contrary to the Divine Love, and scarcely even that He might be the least; but only that all others might become something, and be saved . . . (§1812).

Statement of the Problem

I believe the glorification is a central idea within our theological writings that ought to receive more attention than seems currently to be the case. There are difficulties, however, when one tries to go beyond a summary of the process. To see a clear picture of the whole glorification requires careful and selective reading of large portions of up to eight volumes (Standard

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Edition) of the writings—careful because the concepts are difficult, and selective because the material is embedded in volumes that cover a range of other topics.

These are not the only problems. Bishop Odhner, in *The Formation of the Church in Man*, brings up the futility of trying to see so deep a process within the infancy of Jesus. He points to the impossibility of comparing the Lord's infancy to our own, rightly observing that attempts to do so are bound to fail, because the states of Lord's infancy are too deep and too obscure for our comprehension. How, after all, can one fathom the inner life of an infant Jesus?

Here is Bishop Odhner's logic in his own words:

... students of the *Arcana Coelestia* tried to see that order of regeneration which is an image of the glorification, but without much success, and there never emerged any idea of that order which could be developed.

One reason for this was that the beginning states of the Lord's glorification, revealed in the *Arcana Coelestia* in the twelfth chapter of Genesis, start with the infancy or early boyhood of the Lord. And for many years it was thought that those things said of the Lord's infancy and boyhood also described the infancy and childhood of man. This led to the idea that the things said in the *Arcana Coelestia* concerning Abraham, in the series beginning with the twelfth chapter of Genesis, represented the things of man's [our] infancy and childhood; the things concerning Ishmael, the states of man's [our] youth; and those of Isaac, more advanced states . . .

But those ideas in no way agree with the things said about these states in the *Arcana Coelestia*, which obviously treats of far more internal states, wholly impossible for man [us] in childhood and youth.

For many years, therefore, the effort to see the successive states of regeneration in *Arcana Coelestia* came to nothing of value (pp 13–15).

Bishop Odhner's solution to the problem was to write *The Formation of the Church in Man*, which is his commentary on *Arcana Coelestia*'s treatment of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. In his book he addressed the need for our regeneration and, in particular, the activation of the internal man, as a precondition for utilizing our regeneration as a lens through which to view the glorification. However, the problem of our not seeing a clear picture of the first states of the glorification, because they lie hidden in the Lord's infancy, remained untouched.

Some have held that the innocence, trust, and unfathomable perceptivity implied in the life of the infant Jesus are sufficient to inspire our love for the Lord, and to humble us as we begin our own spiritual development. Surely innocence, trust, and a perception of divinity *do* lie at the heart of adult spiritual development, and we *can* feel those precious elements operating in our inner lives.

Yet, there is a way to read about the glorification in the context, not only of Jesus' literal infancy, but also in the context of his *second* infancy. This way of seeing the process can stand beside the classic view; indeed, there can be no doubt that the glorification did begin with the Lord's literal birth. However, the focus of this article is our reading of the glorification on the dynamics of the Jesus of Nazareth's *second* birth.

That the Lord was born as an infant in the ordinary way, and later *reborn* is not an idea I hear much about, though one can find this expression in the writings of the Church. In §2798.2, we read in the Standard Edition, “. . . that he was born of the virgin Mary is known, . . . ; but when he was born again, . . . it was from Jeho-

vah, who was in him...” And in §3138 there is this: “. . . in order that the Lord might make the human divine by the ordinary way, He came into the world; that is, it was His will to be born as a man, and to be instructed as a man, and to be reborn as a man; . . .”

The Alternative Reading

The required shift of perspective is achieved when one interprets the word *infancy* to mean *the infancy of Jesus of Nazareth's internal man*. Substantive support for this point of view is found in §1404, where one finds that the *birth* is of the Lord's *celestial man*. In the Standard Edition, one finds “Abram, who is first treated of, represents in general the Lord, and specifically the celestial man; . . .”¹

All the following quotations from the Arcana are my interpretation of the Latin text, unless otherwise specified. In §1404, I find that “Abram's arrival in the biblical narrative brings attention to the inner life of Jesus of Nazareth. In particular, it brings to mind the pure love he felt for all human beings (§1419, 1690.3) within his innermost being . . .”²

Now let's go back to §1401 and 1402, which introduce this idea:

The role played in the narrative by Abram brings to mind Jesus of Nazareth's state of consciousness as he experienced it early in his process of inner awakening. Jesus was born in the same way others are, and so he progressed from one state of consciousness to another in the same

1 See §1893 to read that Abram represents Jesus of Nazareth's internal man.

2 The reader will not find a translation of the Latin text in any of the following paragraphs; rather, the reader will find an expression of ideas that I find in my interpretation of the Latin text. In some cases, I combine ideas found in two or more sections of the Latin text and express them in one paragraph (or even one sentence) of the English text. Section numbers in parentheses within a sentence indicate this.

Reflection

You Never Know

BY M. JUDITH VANDERGRIFT

You never know what you have to share with others. Just your presence or something you say may be just what someone needed to keep going that day. You never know what God has in store for you or what you are to do each day when in the service of the Lord. Just suit up and show up, and do what is in front of you to do. Follow the prompts you get from Him—that is the spiritual path. I do not always follow the prompts that I get each day. Some part of me still doubts and yet, when I do follow them, most of the time they are a blessing to me and the people I meet along the way.



It was last February, when I read the email that Esther Capon was in the hospital and was very ill. Esther and I did not know each other even though we lived in the same city. The feeling was very strong that I needed to find out which hospital she was in and visit her. For quite a while she had been on my mind, a perfect stranger. The busyness of life got in the way, and I had not honored the prompt earlier. Now it was different; I followed the prompt and found out which hospital she was in. The nurse on the ward said she didn't know if the family would want a visit but she would connect me with them.

The nurse was right, her family wasn't sure about the visit at first because I was a stranger to them. That was all right with me, and I told them that I was there if they needed a Swe-

denborgian minister/chaplain and gave them my number to call. As I was about to hang up, Esther's daughter changed her mind, and we made an appointment for me to visit and give her mother a blessing.

I arrived that afternoon. Esther had been worried about seeing people because of the damage her stroke had done to her body, but since I was a stranger and had no preconceived ideas about her, it was okay. It was about a twenty-minute drive to the hospital from my home. I used the time to pray that God would be working through me and that I would be a blessing to Esther and her family.

There in her room surrounded by her children was a woman that glowed with the light of God. There was a softness around her, and a peace. I introduced myself to Esther and her daughter (also Esther) and greeted her other children one by one. Standing by her bed, I asked Esther if she would like a blessing and some prayers. She didn't say anything, but her daughter thought it was okay with her.

I prayed that God would be by her side comforting her through her illness. I blessed her on her forehead, and whispered in her ear to focus on God's warmth and light and no matter what happened she needed to stay with the light. She seemed peaceful as I gently ran my fingers through her hair . . . continuing the blessing quietly.

The family and I prayed together in a group circle asking for God's love and comfort to be with them and their mother, to help them with the decisions on her behalf in the future with her health. We had a group hug, and I said goodbye, offering my services in the future if they needed me.

On the following Saturday as I was working, I received a call from Esther's daughter asking me if I would come back and see her mother, as my previous visit seemed to help her, and she seemed to like it. Her daughter and I

decided I would check in with the family on Monday when I was off duty.

On Monday, Esther was too tired for a visit. We thought that my not visiting would be okay as Rev. Jim Lawrence was coming the next morning. Before he could see her, Esther Capon died. I believe that she was already with the angels and she was at peace when I visited the week before. Isn't it odd that a perfect stranger would be there to bless her and send her on her way—you never know.

A few weeks ago I visited the Southwest and met some wonderful people. Before I left on the trip, a friend, Father Franklin, a Franciscan Friar, told me that I was visiting these people to take Jesus to them and that there was one special person there I was to meet. "You won't know who that person is, so don't try to figure it out. Just go and know that God is with you." He said that things might not work the way I wanted but to remember that I was there for that one person.

In a discussion group there, we were talking about the talents we bring to each other. There was a man there that never spoke. He was quiet and reserved. It was like he was waiting for something to happen for him. I'll call him Bill. Throughout the discussion Bill listened and appeared stoic. Just as the discussion was winding down and the shares dwindling, a look crossed Bill's face and he started to speak. I said, "Yes Bill, you have something to share?" He hesitated, and then said, "All my life I have sat quietly and listened and had no friends. Here I can talk and I have friends." Then he began to cry. Because of God's love in that circle, he felt he could share himself with us—you never know. ☩

The Rev. M. Judith Vandergrift is the minister of prayer of the Swedenborgian Community on-line, and the spiritual director of Sacred Unions, a web-based wedding and service Ministry. She lives in Northern California.

Biennial Meetings

BY CHRIS LAITNER

Over past decades, minutes of General Council meetings reveal occasional discussions about holding biennial conventions.

The article in the April, 2011, *Messenger* reporting on the March 1 General Council's consideration of biennial conventions mentions some of the potential impact on terms of office, the

Council of Ministers' annual meeting, and the process of ordination of ministers.

Another consideration is how a move away from annual conventions would affect allied bodies. The Corporation of the New Church Theological School (Swedenborgian House of Studies) holds its annual meeting and graduation and the National Alliance of New Church Women and the North American Sunday School Association hold their annual meetings in conjunction with the annual convention. The annual convention provides the opportunity for these bodies to hold their annual face-to-face meetings with delegates who are already assembled.

Certainly we can say with absolute truthfulness that our annual gatherings have changed over the years. Coming to the annual convention is no longer a family vacation. Our churches and associations are not able to assist with costs of travel, registration and room and board at the levels they once could. Church and association membership has dropped over the years, and the

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The Eric Allison Angel Fund

Dear Friends and Family,

The Rev. Eric Allison's team of loving friends is putting together a plan for his continuing healing after his massive stroke in 2008. This plan includes immediate needs and medical care, and we want to let you know how you can help today.

By working together, we can make Eric's continued healing possible. It took Jill Bolt Taylor (author of *Stroke of Insight*) two weeks to speak a full sentence and eight years of extensive therapy to walk normally. Her stroke was the size of a walnut. Of Eric's two strokes, the larger one was the size of a small grapefruit. The resulting permanent brain damage makes it imperative that Eric has 24/7 assistance and continuing therapy. This need is great, and the care needed has a high cost.

Eric's new life at Ballard Landmark, an assisted living community, provides him daily therapeutic swim sessions, strength and stability classes, and many opportunities for social and language improvement. He receives transportation to his UW speech therapy program and other medical appointments. He is also cared for when the possibility of seizures or other medical needs emerge. Those of us that care for Eric can see that he is in an excellent environment for his new life situation.



All of these things are possible because of the help of Eric's spiritual community, including dear friends like you. For the year ahead, to continue to provide the safe environment Eric needs to fuel his hope, determination, and healing, there is a serious and immediate financial need.

To this end, we are asking friends and family to help by committing to a monthly donation for the next year. Any amount is appreciated. Eric's Angel Fund is set up through our local church to accept tax-deductible donations easily through automatic payment. Here

are the simple steps to donating:

How To Donate

The Eric Allison Angel Fund is hosted by Chase Bank, which has a "Quickpay" option allowing easy contributions (US bank account required). This service is free of charge and is very much like a Paypal account.

1. Send an email to EricAllisonAngelFund@gmail.com noting the amount and frequency of your donation.

2. A team member from the Angel Fund will enter this information into the QuickPay form.

3. You will receive an email from the Angel Fund account with a "request" for the funds.

4. You will be asked to follow links to register with QuickPay, filling in your banking information.

5. The funds will be transferred automatically after you register.

6. A letter confirming your donation for tax purposes will be sent to you in January.

Thank you for your gifts of time and treasure over the last several years. Eric is blessed by your generous support. His continual positive focus on his healing and his gratitude for help is inspiring. Together we can keep healing possible for Eric.

Sincerely,

Lem Putnam, Angel Fund Advisor

Rev. Paul Martin, Minister

Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound

Saying Goodbye to Blairhaven

BY NANCY LITTLE



In early June I took a trip to a place that has been near and dear to my heart for almost thirty-five years.

I drove some of the familiar roads I'd always driven to get there. When I got to the center of the village I drove through the little rotary where a flagpole marks the center, I took a right onto Standish Street and then another right at the fork in the road onto Crescent Street. This is where the tears started. I knew it was going to be one of the last times I would see Blairhaven. I'd been to Blairhaven in South Duxbury, Massachusetts, countless times: first as a camper in the late '70s; then as a teen attending retreats with the NCYL (now SCYL) in the early to mid '80s; as a camp counselor in the summer of 1982; as an adult staffing teen retreats in the late '80s to early '90s; and even as an adult attendee at a women's retreat. In addition to all those visits, we often attended the Massachusetts Association annual meeting and picnic at Blairhaven. Over the years the building and property became very familiar to me, and I truly loved being there. The sunsets on Kingston Bay were always gorgeous. Walks to Myles Standish Monument were part of the regular routine during a visit to Blairhaven.

When I first I attended Blairhaven as a camper, Lois McCurdy was the camp director. I didn't grow up in the church. I started attending the Sunday school in Elmwood when we moved there in the summer of 1975. The pastor seemed rather bland, and the Sunday School was pretty generic,

but the kids kept talking about Camp Blairhaven. My mom decided to send me there. I honestly don't know if her decision to send me to camp was a result of my nagging or if she'd talked to other moms in the neighborhood. Blairhaven was only about thirty minutes from Elmwood so it must have felt safe to her. For the rest of my life I will never forget my first encounter with Lois McCurdy. Smiling, cheerful, and welcoming are words that come to mind when I think of Lois. She was



sitting at a table on the porch near the front door of the big house. My mom brought me over to the table to check me in, and Lois introduced herself and told me to call her Aunt Lois. I immediately felt comfortable. It wasn't that I was really worried about being away from home because I knew several neighborhood kids who were also attending camp, but Lois's demeanor immediately put me at ease. In addition to being camp director, Lois taught the religion class.

Until that point, I really had no idea what religion the Elmwood New Church was associated with. I was christened at Christ Church (Episcopal) in Quincy, Massachusetts. My mom always wanted us to go to Sunday school, so we went to whatever Sunday school was convenient. As long as it wasn't

Catholic, or too weird, we went to Sunday school. When we moved to Elmwood, sending us to the Sunday school five houses down the street was really convenient. We got a basic Christian education at Elmwood New Church. It wasn't until I went to Camp Blairhaven that I discovered for the first time that the beliefs of the church that I'd been attending for at least a year, mirrored my personal beliefs about heaven and hell. I was twelve years old. You could say I was hooked. Between learning about the church, making new friends, swimming in the bay, trips to Powder Point beach, games on the front lawn, craft projects, and the camp store, the days were packed and there was little time for boredom or homesickness.

I attended summer camp at Blairhaven until I was considered "too old" at which point I started attending camp at Fryeburg (but that's a story for another time). In the summer of 1982 I was, however, old enough at seventeen to be a junior camp counselor. The camp director that year was Trevor Woofenden (now my husband). I'd known him for several years through attending church conventions and retreats with the NCYL. Little did I know then that as soon as he saw my application to be a counselor, he immediately decided he wanted me to be on staff. Junior counselor really meant dishwasher, and I washed so many pots and pans that summer that I was washing pots and pans in my dreams. As junior counselors we had to be in the kitchen after every meal for at least an hour, but for the rest of the day we were free to do whatever we wanted. Other staff members that summer included Jim Lawrence, Gladys Wheaton, Sue Tafel, and Robin Tafel to name a few. As a dishwasher, I participated in most camp activities and trips, but for me

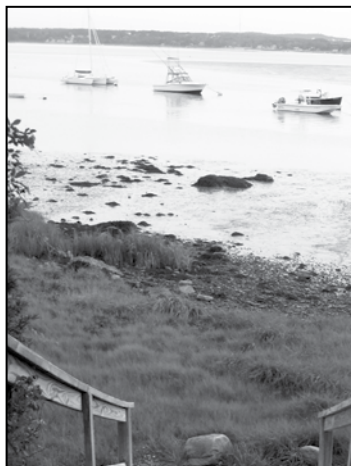
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the highlight of working at Blairhaven that summer was simply being there for the entire month of July.

I attended my first youth league retreat at Blairhaven on Memorial Day weekend in 1980. Anyone who has ever attended a youth league retreat knows how much fun they are, but what was really special about a retreat at Blairhaven was the location. Watching the sunset over Kingston Bay from the front porch, sunbathing on the porch roof, late night walks to Myles Standish Monument, and playing games on the front lawn were just some of the more memorable things we did at retreats.

In the mid 1980s the Blairhaven Committee hired their first resident director of Blairhaven, Rev. Ken Turley. Ken was also the pastor of the Elmwood Church at the time. Ken and his wife Laurie lived in the main house while the barn (which had previously been used as a boys dormitory) was extensively re-



Stripes Day at Blairhaven Camp

built and converted into the director's house. Also around the same time, the much-loved front porch was enclosed and the space added to the living room. A ramp was built which covered the much-loved front steps of the main house. Other changes to the main house included a handicap accessible bathroom on the first floor. While these changes made it possible to host larger groups and ac-

commodate people with physical disabilities, without the wide porch on two sides of the building, it never felt the same to me.

I'll admit that I have a thing for porches, and it goes back to my childhood when we would visit my great-grandparents' summer house in Chatham on Cape Cod. The house was a simple cape but it had the most magnificent porch on all four sides; three sides had a view of the ocean, with one corner glassed in, also facing the ocean. The glassed in porch was the perfect place to be when the wind on the bluff was just a lit-

tle too much. Blairhaven, with its magnificent porch on two sides, one facing the bay, was a close second to my great-grandparents' house in Chatham. I was sad to see the porch go, and even though the enclosed porch had plenty of windows it wasn't the same. The Blairhaven that I had grown to love had been changed forever.

When it was suggested to sell Blairhaven a few years ago, it wasn't the first time. There hadn't been a resident director for quite a while and the building needed some serious work. But still, just the idea of letting go of Blairhaven seemed like it would never happen. I thought that it would always be there. It was a relief to learn that the town of Duxbury would buy the property and that it would be a waterfront park.

In May, an email from Rev. Susan-

nah Currie alerted me to the fact that all of the furnishings from Blairhaven would be available and that the Massachusetts Association and New Church Union wanted sister camps to be first on the list to take whatever they could use. As registrar for Fryeburg New Church Assembly, I knew that the camp could certainly use some new-tous beds. On the weekend of June 11-12, we arranged volunteers, rented a truck, and took one last trip to Blairhaven. It was bittersweet, to say the least. It was wonderful to be there again, even in the pouring rain. We spent Saturday afternoon going through the house and packed a U-Haul truck with furniture for Fryeburg. It felt good to know that Fryeburg would be benefitting by the sale of Blairhaven, but at the same time I fought back many tears and occasionally gave in and had a good cry. A small group of people, including Ken and Laurie Turley, Gladys Wheaton, Herb Ziegler, Beki (Phinney) Greenwood, and Denyse Daurat enjoyed a delicious dinner together that evening before spending their last night in the bunk beds. We shared some memories of Blairhaven and some were surprised to learn of other's connections to the place that has meant so much to so many people. On Sunday morning about forty people turned out on a rainy morning for the final service at Blairhaven. More memories and reflections were shared—and a tear or two shed.

I was lucky to have one more visit to Blairhaven on July 4th. Trevor and I were in the area and were able to spend the night and watch the fireworks across the bay from the (now enclosed) porch. The next day we packed up our truck with more items for Fryeburg and said our final goodbye to Blairhaven. ☛

Nancy Little is the registrar of FNCA and a member of the Elmwood New Church. She lives in Northampton, Massachusetts.

The Glorification

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way we do, from a vague sense to one more lucid (§1401).

Abram is an image of Jesus of Nazareth's inner life, while his sojourn in Egypt pictures his learning process. Sarai as a wife shows what he saw in a state of pure love, while as a sister, pictures what Jesus knew about life while in that state of love. Egypt suggests the great skill Jesus brought to his contemplation of the sacred texts. Here the biblical narrative begins to tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth's progress from knowledge about the process of salvation all the way to its full realization. In accord with a divine design, Jesus joined the core of his human personality with divinity, and at the same time became Jehovah (§1402).

In the extended reading that follows, I utilize ideas found in §1407 through 1486, between §1605 and 1655, and between §1778 and 1781. Here, I present the first stage of the glorification, within which Jesus discovered his unfathomable love for all human beings, faced severe inner trials, and received the promise that his life would be crucial in the salvation of the whole human race.

The transition to this material begins at Genesis 12:1:

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." The inner meaning is when Jesus of Nazareth looked within, he saw that his personal discipline and religious practices held external meaning only, and he realized that he would need to refrain from devoting his time and energy to them. His inner life then deepened to a perception of the inner lives of countless human beings who would find salvation in a new kind of human community, held together by his own limitless love and inner knowledge about the inner states of all human beings (§1413). He foresaw that he would

play a crucial role in the birth of this new community (§1416).

Jesus awakened to the reality of his inner life, and harnessed his own personal discipline to sustain his inner development. From worship that had been entirely external, he discovered a deep feeling of holiness, illuminated by direct perception of Jehovah, whom he now worshiped as his very own Father (§1440).

While contemplating the scripture passage that Abram would be a blessing, and become a great nation, Jesus realized that the inner message was about the pure love for all human beings that was coming into his own life. This love did not strive to be the greatest, but to be the least, by serving every single human being he encountered. As he himself would later say:

It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (20:26-28).

The essence of his love for all human beings was his willingness to refrain from cherishing only his own personal existence; rather, he desired to let go into the blessing of belonging to all human beings, thereby giving to others the joy and inner freedom that was at the heart of his own precious life (§1419).

Jesus of Nazareth was the first and the only human being to tap into *Jehovah's* pure and limitless love for all human beings. Indeed, he realized that his innermost being *was Jehovah*—an utterly unique event in human history, and a necessary precondition for humanity's salvation.

Since we are reading about the inner life of Jesus of Nazareth, there is more precious treasure than can ever be conceptualized or expressed. For here, within the sacred text, we

glimpse his first shift in consciousness, the one that heralded Jesus' perception of Jehovah for the very first time. Jesus was born in the same way we are, except that Jehovah was present within his innermost being in an utterly unique way. Nonetheless, everything else was ordinary, including the human frailty that pertains to wanting good standing within one's society. It was from his personal regimen and his widely acclaimed religious achievements that he was to withdraw to see the ocean of love and illumination that was coming into view.

In this moment Jesus saw that he would unite his humanity with the divine depths within him. Every single moment of his life suddenly made sense, and he saw how even simple gestures mirrored the life of Jehovah within him. Jesus realized that he would become the quintessential human being; indeed, he would become the Only True Human Being (§1414).

Reflecting on his experience, Jesus knew that his skill with prayer, his disciplined observance of religious practice, and his own virtue could not sustain him in the task at hand. The 'famine in the land' suggested his own lack of knowledge about the new life upon which he was embarking (§1459). Whereas Jesus formerly sat at the feet of his elders to learn, he now received his teaching solely from Jehovah, with whom he was to be united as One. The scripture passages he had learned by heart came alive with meaning; he searched and saw that they spoke directly to him, and were about the life he was to lead. Every word was precious to him, and he dropped more deeply within, until he felt One with divinity (§1461).

Jesus was astonished to see how bright he was, and, while this pleased him, he knew it could distract him from his main purpose (§1472). The sole purpose for his having such a keen mind was to pre-

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pare his heart to receive more and more of the pure love (§1469) he was to bring to other human beings (§1486). In an unimaginably beautiful vision, he saw the inner states of love and trust of all human being who had ever been born, who were alive at that time, and who would ever be born (§1605).

Then, Jesus came face to face with inner conflicts and trials, which the wars in Genesis Chapter 14 symbolize (1651). During this stage of his development, he faced personal ambition and pride, and fought largely from his own strength and intelligence, though not yet realizing these only appeared to be his own (§1652, 1654). Relying on his virtue, which actually had ambition and pride within it, Jesus fought against claiming power for his own benefit. Then, he saw more deeply into his motives, and freed himself from the last vestige of desire for personal gain (§1655). Finally, he entered a blessed state of inner peace that welled up within him. Once again he experienced Oneness with divinity, and trusted in a power other than his own.

Jesus' motive for waging war against personal ambition was his love for the whole human race and, in particular, his love for faithful people he knew in his synagogue and in other synagogues. Jesus realized they were in peril, and this frightened him. To encourage Jesus, Jehovah showed him that his religious community in its present form would have to die, but would later be revived in a new condition. There would be a deeper capacity for kindness and understanding and, as a result, the heavenly kingdom would begin to expand (§1778).

At last, Jesus was comforted by pure and boundless love for the human race, and he trusted in divinity. He realized that he was to plant seeds of love and trust within a new kind of human community that was

going to grow as the result of his life (§1781).

Bird's-Eye View of the Whole Process

Having delved into the first stage of the glorification within the context of Jesus of Nazareth's second birth, it's time for a bird's-eye view of the whole process. I will recap the first stage of the glorification, followed by a peek at the subsequent stages.

As a young man on the cusp of adulthood, Jesus would have been adept in his observance of religious ritual, skillful in contemplation of the sacred texts, and able to sustain long periods of prayer. *Abram's* time in *Haran* pictures the time during which Jesus mastered the external forms of his religious practice, though he had only an inkling of their inner reality.

Suddenly, Jesus saw deeply into his own innermost being—all the way to divinity itself. Indeed, he perceived *Jehovah* within the deepest reaches of his own being. The heavens and all human beings on earth were present to his view, and his sole desire was for the salvation of the whole human race. In the biblical narrative, *Jehovah's call to Abram* is the lens through which one sees that Jesus was able to reflect upon this inner experience.

He began intense inner work, followed by the period of severe trials pictured by the *wars of the kings in the valley of Shinar* narrated in Chapter 14, after which he started to communicate with others on a deeper level. *Ishmael's* role in the narrative tells us that his early attempts resulted in one religious dispute after another.

Resolving to trust more fully in divinity, Jesus broke through to the childlike and stable core of his being: pure love for the whole human race operated at all levels of his personality. His bearing, his attitude, and his strong yet kind appearance made an impression on others. His conduct matched

his teaching, and Jesus became an immensely appealing teacher. *Isaac* suggests this stage of his development, which included the opening of his interior mind.

Precisely what did this rabbi teach? To those living in a society where dangers lurked everywhere, Jesus provided protection from harm:

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12: 29-31).

His message was deceptively simple, yet his followers were astounded to see how effective it was. Jesus gained a following of Judeans and Israelites who practiced the way of love.

Their numbers grew, and their love deepened to include more and more people, and the new community was governed by love to the LORD and love to the neighbor, a development that is suggested by the roles played by *Jacob* and *Rachel* in the narrative. Compassion was the rule of life within the Jesus community, pictured biblically by *Jacob's* name change to *Israel*.

Joseph's life in Egypt symbolizes Jesus' own need for further inner development, as well as his perception that he needed to shore up the foundation of his community with yet more basic principles. *Joseph's reunion with his father and brothers* pictures a stage of total unity between himself and his community. By this time, Jesus of Nazareth's preparation for his mission was fully underway.

Summary

In this talk I reviewed key ideas in Bishop Odhner's *The Formation of the Church in Man*, introduced a different way to read about the glorification, and offered an overview of the whole

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Summer of Changes

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and we can say, “Yeah, yeah, been there, done that.” But something struck me that morning. Suddenly I was one of the people who not only could be, but was in the process of being called by a voice from the faith community to speak up for change and transformation in our world. This was different for me. I can no longer be a friendly observer; I cannot hide behind my desire to avoid offending or disagreeing with anyone (be they my friends or people I’ve never met). I cannot quietly go about my life and be sure that “someone else” is taking care of it all. In that room that day a piece clicked—whether at the end of the day I like the fact that faith voices are intimately involved with policy and governance, the reality is that currently they are. Rather than resisting and considering myself apart, I am being moved to show up and be in the conversation. I am called as a person of faith and a faith

leader to prayerfully and humbly, confidently and clearly, speak into conversations that are integral to how people are being treated and how our society operates.

Conversations—that’s another piece that is showing up all over this puzzle. During my second fellowship week, Bread for the World hosted its biennial gathering, including Lobby Day, where we were trained, empowered, and sent to the Hill to talk to our congressional leaders. I will confess that I had some anxiety about this plan. There’s something a wee bit intimidating to think about when entering these towering buildings, through security, and sitting down with *congressional staff*. The night before Lobby Day I was walking back from the Metro (rapid transit), thinking and praying, and the Still Small Voice whispered, “It’s a conversation. You know how to have conversations, Anna.” Oh. Yeah, good point. I’ve taken that moment with me into a number of House and Senate office meetings and have had the opportunity not to only enter into conversations, but also to begin to build relationships with some of the staff of my congressional offices, including (by chance) a House rep that I’m being nudged to reach out to. Conversations. Conversations change us and when we show up and keep listening and speaking—I actually believe change can happen. I think when we can sit across a table and look at another human being, connect on things we care about, and truly engage in each other’s views, the Divine shows up and moves.

Coming together in conversation is a theme that expanded past my individual conversations to the power of witnessing large organizations, world leaders, churches, non-profit organizations, corporations, and foundations coming together around a common purpose. One of the powerful examples of this was observing a day of meetings for an international coalition

that is working on child nutrition issues (www.thousanddays.org/). I sat wide-eyed as we heard from ambassadors, presidents of NGOs (non-governmental organizations), the president of the World Bank, UN members, secretary and staff of the State Department, Melinda Gates for the Gates Foundation, and others, all coming together to discuss how to improve nutrition for pregnant mothers and children under the age of two in the twenty most undernourished countries in the world. Each group brought its own expertise, interest, and angle. All came together under the common purpose and met at the table to look at how to move this work forward. I got teary as I heard the fourth person that morning talk about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and the studies on how infant nutrition has a profound impact on a child’s ability to develop. If the voices that represent these major initiatives can come together in the same room to talk about changing children’s lives . . . anything is possible. Change is happening and we can each be part of it.

Piece number three. Food is part of my calling and ministry. I think I’ve known this over the years. It’s shown up in my deep love of gardening, in the faces of hunger and poverty I’ve seen in my travels, in the high I get every time I’m let loose to sort food at a food bank. In Swedenborgian theology, bread—and food in general—represents love, and you can quickly make a variety of connections around the importance of food, love, faith, church, and spiritual and natural hunger. Being at Bread for the World for the summer, and being exposed to the DC scene in general, has been invaluable in expanding my view of the importance of policy and advocacy around food. From the Farm Bill, to international aid, to commissions on nutrition, the core human need of sustenance is woven through policy and politics. As I grow in under-

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The Glorification

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process.

Bishop Odhner pointed out that the effort to compare the Lord’s infancy to our own was bound to fail, while I proposed that the attempt to see the glorification only within in the context of the Lord’s literal birth was itself a problem. My aim has been to present a clear picture of the glorification in the context of Jesus of Nazareth’s *second* birth, followed by a bird’s-eye view of the process.

The Rev. Dr. F. Gardiner Perry was ordained in 1979 and served churches in Royal Oak, Michigan, and Fryeburg, Maine. He is the spiritual care coordinator for the Visiting Nurse and Hospice Care Service of Northern Carroll County, New Hampshire. Gard is a frequent lecturer at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly summer sessions, and is at work on an interpretation of Swedenborg’s Latin text of the glorification.

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standing my role as a voice in the public square, I simultaneously find myself narrowing in and feeling out where specifically I'm being called to serve.

On my last Tuesday in DC I had two opportunities that helped me to see and articulate this in myself as I watched my heart jump. Bread for the World hosted a brown bag lunch with a presentation from the Food Resource Bank (www.foodsresourcebank.org/) on its work to rally people in the US to use agriculture to raise money to support agricultural efforts in the developing world. I was intrigued as I heard a woman from Kansas describe her church's coming together with two other churches in the area to facilitate the farming of twenty acres of land that raises thousands of dollars a year that then enables local sustenance farming in communities in other countries. I found myself leaning forward in my chair as Javier Ramirez and Castro Mitha, farmers from Bolivia, talked about their work to bring traditional and innovative farming techniques to their village and described how nutrition and general wellbeing have been drastically improved in a few short years due to a few simple initiatives.

Later on Tuesday afternoon I had the honor of getting a tour of Miriam's Kitchen (www.miriamskitchen.org/), an organization that provides high-quality meals and support services to the homeless men and women in Washington DC. Deputy director Catharine Crum generously came and spent an hour with us, sharing the story of Miriam's Kitchen, showing us around the facility and introducing us to their guests and volunteers. I could wax on about the various pieces of wisdom, insight, and inspiration that I gained from this hour, and maybe I will in some future post. But succinctly I'll say I saw a ministry at work that captured my heart and threw another possibility into the swirl of "What's

Recognition

Traversing the land and the seas with the light of the stars
Always present, present always—here, did you know?
Yes, and visible only when we put away the surface
stuff of day: the business of the apples stored in the barrel.
Journeying, we reach the river and stop at the bank gauging
The strength of the currents, surveying the shape of the rocks
And what they portend.

Deep underneath—what, what?
The light of a star torches the place you must enter
To part the surface and reach down to the bedrock to draw up
The gold, and hold it raw cupped in your two palms.
What will you do as you look at it?
Look at it and know it again
Your precious ore, mined from the bedrock.

—Bette McDonnell

God Calling Me To?" A soup that is simmering right now.

This question, "What's God calling me to?" might be a good one to wrap this piece up with, as it is the thread of this summer experience, and I believe of all of our lives in general. I look back across the years and see how the Lord has been leading me from conversation, to experience, to doors opening and doors closing, all building on one another and moving somewhere. It's trite but true to say the path twists and turns and doesn't look the way I'd pictured it.

But it's from this image that I can also say with amazement, gratitude, and confidence, it is clear to me that there is a loving force greater than I that is guiding and is a stream of Providence, and I can flow with or fight against it. I look at the parts of my being and calling that have been highlighted for me from my summer experience: the call to write, stepping into the faith/policy conversation, being a preacher, social-justice work, developing a Swedenborgian social-justice movement, integrating feeding and hunger issues into my ministry. At moments these seem like isolated entities. How do they fit to-

gether with my long-time callings to church planting? To pastoral work? To creating nurturing spiritual community? To raising up leaders to plant more churches? To sharing the transforming theology and spiritual work that I've been blessed to stumble upon? How can all these things be part of one human's little journey on this earth? And that's where the Divine continues to invite me to take a deep breath and feel the swirling slow down for a moment. If these pieces are all part of me, a creation of God's and an instrument of the Divine work, then it's not up to me to know what the puzzle is going to look like in the end. My job is to be on the lookout for the areas where the blue of the sky meet up with the purple of the wildflower. My work is to notice the edge piece that holds the definition of what's continued inside. My task is to wake up each day and ask, "What is it today, Lord?" and then have the strength, courage, humility, tenacity, gratitude and laughter to do it. ☩

Anna Woofenden is a M.Div. student at Earlham School of Religion in Indiana and an SHS student studying for Swedenborgian ordination. She blogs at <http://annawoofenden.wordpress.com/>.

Biennial Conventions

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ability of people to attend a convention for several days has shrunk. Costs for our venues have risen. The host associations and churches and associations cover the costs of special events, and some groups cover costs for receptions. Each of us who attends pays a fee to offset facilities costs, and room and board. The denomination covers travel and lodging costs for employees, officers, and members of General Council. If the costs of annual conventions are important to determining the wisdom of changing to biennial conventions, it would be good to see a multi-year accounting showing the cost savings that would result. I'm not entirely certain that cost is the best reason to change from an annual gathering, but if the expenses of annual conventions are taking away from more important uses for denomination funds, then it's something to consider.

Are we required to come together annually in a representative assembly? Our bylaws currently allow for the possibility that a year would be missed. The last time an annual convention was skipped was in 1970 due to the "World Assembly" of people from Swedenborgian organizations worldwide held in London. Because many of our ministers and lay people who attended the assembly had plans for special trips to Europe, Scandinavia, and the British Isles after the gathering, it was determined that there would not be an annual convention. There were no ordinations scheduled for that year and the bylaw allowing for the extension of terms of election and appointment was activated. Our structure is such, however, that barring special circumstances, we need to come together annually to vote on issues, conduct elections, affirm appointments, give voice and vote on business items, and vote on ordinations.

We come together for more than

business. Over the years we have voted on major policy items and on a lot of pretty minor things, too. We've had unique special events courtesy of our host groups and we've had many engaging speakers presenting provocative, exciting, and timely topics. Representatives of constituent and connected bodies present issues, ideas, and information on the floor of the convention. I think, though, that the most lasting legacy of our annual conventions emerges from the meeting and mingling members from other churches. We have replaced many face-to-face meetings (in a physical space) with virtual electronic meetings to reduce costs, and—pretty much—we get the work done. However, I believe that the gathering together for a few days for a denominational convention each year is healthy and necessary to weaving the fabric of our collective existence. We are spread out from Maine to British Columbia to southern California to Florida and back up to Maine. Coming together in physical community allows more than simply receiving reports and voting on motions. It allows attentive discussion, spontaneous ideas, and time for thoughtful consideration. It's a time of sharing hospitality; of learning about each other and sharing the warmth of our larger community. Meeting new people and renewing of old acquaintances at annual conventions create the connections that form the bonds that hold this huge framework together and make it stronger.

I am hoping that all members of the denomination will be part of this important discussion. This is not something that can be determined by a few. Every member of the denomination should have information and input. ☩

Christine Laitner is the immediate past president of the General Convention. She lives in Midland, Michigan.

The Messenger received this article in April but neglected publishing it until now. It is still germane.

From the President

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tattoos and business executives in suits and ties; and ladies' attire ranges from pink sweat suits with army boots to skirt suits and tennis shoes. The thing they all seem to have in common is an understanding that they are in this together and a determination to make the best of it.

As a church, a spiritual community comprised of many spiritual communities woven together by a common yet multi-faceted faith, we must respond and adapt to the changing and evolving environment we find ourselves forced to live in. And because we are intentionally spiritual people, committed to serving the Lord's Second Coming here on earth, we must draw strength from our common condition and a shared determination not to just survive, but to thrive even though, and perhaps because, times are tough and resources are scarce. It is a testament to the kind of people we are and the life affirming benefits of being committed Christians and members of the Swedenborgian faith. There is no doubt it is a time of trial. But every situation we encounter questions the stuff we are made of, the creativity of our concepts of what can be, and the strength of our faith in what is. The answer, both individually and collectively as a spiritual community, is who we are becoming.

—*Blessings, Rev. Ken*

Finding a Way

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your money aside, and at the end of this class, if you still want your money, I will give it back to you—no questions asked."

I have never wanted that money back and I tithe to this day. ☩

The Rev. Freeman Schrock is the pastor of the LaPorte New Church.

Reprinted from the September 2011 LaPorte Reporte.

Passages

Births

Ryland Matthew Harting was born May 17, 2011, to parents Brooke (Ritchie) and Matthew Harting. Ryland is the grandson of Konny Trinka and Maurice Ritchie and great-grandson of Lynn and Judi Welch.

Cecil Levi Siebert bounded into this world April 11, 2011, to join sister Camryn Ann, mom Amy, and dad Andrew (of Andale, Kansas). He is the grandson of Ray and Jane Siebert and Ron and Deb Sickler, and the grandson of Hienrich and Suzanne Hauserman and the late Cecil and Mary Siebert.

Baptisms

On September 5, 2011, **Ryland Matthew Harting**, son of Brooke and Matthew Harting, was baptized by the Rev. Jane Siebert.

Confirmations

Adam Hilbert and **Brooke Hilbert**, son and daughter of Brad and Paula Hilbert were confirmed in the Pretty Prairie (Kansas) church on April 24, Easter Sunday, 2011.

The LaPorte New Church Swedenborgian warmly welcomed **Joanie Al-lamon, KC Buell, Kathy Kidwell, Jim Kidwell, Stella LaTour, Larry LaTour, and Jessica Saboski** as they were confirmed into the faith of the Christian Church by the Rev. Freeman Schrock on June 12, 2011.

Janie Albright Shtowel and **Beth Lord Esmont** were confirmed into the Swedenborgian faith and membership in the Ohio Association on October 2, 2011, at the Swedenborg Chapel in Cleveland, Ohio. The Rev. Ronald Brugler officiated with assistance from Betsy Coffman and Linda Stevenson.

New Members

On July 10, 2011, The Virginia Street Church in St. Paul welcomed **Roy Bell** as a new member.

Marriages

Sandy McDaniel and Garland (Pete) Peterson, members of LaPorte New Church, were united in marriage there



on April 16, 2011, in a ceremony officiated by the Rev. Freeman Schrock. Sandy and Pete met and began their friendship at the church.

Deaths

Phyllis J. Hopper, 72, passed away April 18, 2011. She was a member of the La Porte New Church and a loving devoted wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and friend who will be dearly missed. Surviving are her husband, James Hopper; two daughters, Jane McFeaters and Heidi Potucek; and four grandchildren. The Rev. Freeman Schrock officiated at her resurrection service.

Stella Podmore, age 82, passed away peacefully July 12, 2011, surrounded by her family. She was predeceased by her husband John. Stella's vivacious personality will be sadly missed by her sisters, Dolly and Jill; her daughters, Barbara, Patricia (Gordon), and Christine; her grandchildren; and her great grandson. Stella also will be fondly remembered by her many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews, and many friends. Stella was a lifelong member of the Edmonton Church and a frequent delegate to annual conventions. She started the Girl Guides troop in Killarney when the church opened there. A funeral service was held on July 23 in the Church of the Holy City

in Edmonton, where attendants were asked to wear bright colors. Stella will be missed by all who knew her.

Larry B. Pike, 60, of La Porte, Indiana, a member of LaPorte New Church, passed away on March 31, 2011. Larry was a devoted trustee on



the church board and also served the church by opening and closing Manna House for community meetings. He enjoyed playing the guitar and listening to music. His cheerful smile and warm heart are missed by his church family. The Rev. Freeman Schrock officiated at his resurrection service.

Jack (Jacobus) Van Rooijen passed away suddenly at the age of 77 in his home on July 20, 2011. Jack was predeceased by his dear wife Doreen in 2007. He is survived by his six children, Lori VanRooijen, Tern Van Rooijen, Debbie Zen, Bill VanRooijen, and Jodee Belanger; his fifteen grandchildren; and his five brothers and their families in The Netherlands. Jack's family was active in the Edmonton Church; Doreen was editor of the (Western Canada) *Conference Magazine* for many years. His children will remember their dad for many things, but mostly for his passion for his family, his uncanny sense of humor, and his talent for making musical instruments. ✚

Ping Chong's **Angels of Swedenborg** will be performed by The Great Jones Repertory Company at the La MaMa Theatre in New York October 27–November 13, 2011. This is the first revival of Ping Chong's luminous 1985 dance theatre work. Find more information at <http://lamama.org/ellenstewart-theatre/angels-of-swedenborg/>

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.

Finding a Way

BY FREEMAN SCHROCK

I am not normally one to flaunt my experiences, so this brief encouragement is an exception to this rule as I attempt to speak of God, of money, and of our life together in our Lord's New Church. In the September 2011 issue of *The Messenger* our denomination's president, the Rev. Ken Turley, addressed the body of believers gathered at this summer's convention. My first response is to say, thank you, Rev. Ken, for being so forthright and honest. In my opinion you have spoken truth, even when that was difficult to do. You said, "As a denomination, we are in a race for our very lives. If you don't want this church to die right out from under you, then we must get motivated" (p. 99). To this I shall respond that *I remain motivated!*

Yes, remain motivated. So, how did I become motivated and what sustains me in that motivation? Well, here is my story. About twenty-five years ago, my financial life was dying, right out from under me. I suffered more fear than I have ever known. I had a serious cash-flow problem, meaning that when I looked at my budget there was significantly more money going out than there was coming in. I was at my wits' end, scared, alone, and facing the worst financial crisis of my life. I was uncertain

and confused about what to do, or even as to whether anything could be done. I consulted the business people for advice and was largely ignored as far as providing motivation or a plan of recovery. I was on the verge of despair, and my life was dying right out from under me!

Then one day, a friend of mine came to me and said he had heard I was in serious financial distress. Trusting him, I admitted my anxiety and my situation. He listened quietly as I spoke, then he said, with real conviction, "I know how you can turn this around and become happy with your financial resources again!" A bolt of anger shot through my body, and I felt ridiculed by his words. But he was dead serious. I wanted to know what he was talking about. And the truth is, I didn't know. He then referred me to an eight-week class on tithing; disbelieving, I went.

We were instructed to tithe from all sources of income. After the class, I stayed and talked to the instructor, informing him of my very dire situation, explaining that I could not possibly take another ten percent out of my budget and hope to recover. He listened thoughtfully and then said, "I'll make you a deal. If you want to take this class and if you tithe every week, I will put

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