

Encountering the NCC Faith and Order Commission: Representing the Church

BY DAVID FEKETE



On October 13–14

I represented our church at the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Christian Churches in

the USA (NCCCUSA or NCC). This was a very important meeting, and I brought our church's doctrines and life to the attention of commissioners from an extremely diverse body of denominations. As a result aspects of our theology were written into a document titled "The Nature and Mission of the Church." While meeting with and befriending theology professors and church delegates, I distinguished between our church and the General Church, provided some background about us, and made further progress in dispelling that lingering connotation of us as a cult. I came away with the conviction of how important it is for us to be represented on the NCCCUSA, as I did last year.

The Faith and Order Commission

The Faith and Order Commission is different than the Governing Board and General Assembly meetings; I felt less mutual affection at the Faith and Order Commission than I have at oth-

er meetings of the NCC for several reasons.

First, commissioners at Faith and Order are there to represent the theology of their denomination in an ecumenical setting. While commendable respect is shown for each denomination, it is the responsibility of commissioners to see that their church's doctrines find voice. Friendly disputes and even sharp exchanges sometimes arise.

Second, the Faith and Order Commission is divided into three study groups that each take on a specific

"And now a Swedenborgian has popped up, and I don't know what's going to come out of you."

project. This session the study groups were 1) Nature and Mission of the Church; 2) Salvation and Justice; and 3) Unity and Mission. Commissioners meet with one of these groups, so most of the time one experiences only one study group and its project. At the conclusion of the study-group meetings, all three groups reported back to the general commission, but the time allotted was so brief that real understanding of what went on in the other groups wasn't possible. The result was that we met and got to know primarily the members of the group we attended.

Third, there are commissioners on the Faith and Order Commission who are not members of the NCC. Two such examples are Roman Catholics and Seventh-Day Adventists.

Making Connections

One meets such interesting people in this gathering. For instance, I met an Irish Methodist theology professor—a long-standing member whom everyone referred to as Billy. He was so familiar to everyone that I never got his full name. But in my mind, Irish and Methodist were a combination I wouldn't have imagined!

I formed an instant and remarkable connection with a sister of the Franciscan Order. She had done her early work in Edmonton. When I asked her about it, she said she worked at a children's shelter that had since evolved into a women's shelter. I asked her what it was called, and she replied the Lurana Shelter. I told her that our church donates gifts to the Lurana Shelter every Christmas, and that Sister Lucinda comes to gather the gifts and give our church a talk about the shelter's mission. My new friend said that she had met Sister Lucinda at a training seminar in Italy sponsored by the Vatican. We were happy to meet one another—a bond formed in Los Angeles, via Edmonton and the Vatican!

As a new member, I received several

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The Editor's Desk

A Rotation



As I shared in a previous issue of *The Messenger*, the author Walker Percy defines a rotation (in his 1962 novel,

The Moviegoer) "as the experiencing of the new beyond the expectation of the experiencing of the new." On a short side trip following the fall SHS Board of Trustees meeting, to my delight, I experienced a rotation.

Several years ago my brother, whose name is the same as my father's, received an email from a man in Lancaster, Ohio, asking whether he was the son of RW Ziegler, who raced a Doretti at sports car races in Watkins Glen, New York; Put-in-Bay, Ohio; and Cumberland; Maryland, in 1955. The answer was yes, and this was the car that my brother and I drove through high school in later years. Thus began a long series of emails between Tom Householder, my brother, and me. Remarkably, Tom had, through long hours of research, amassed documentation and details of the provenance of many of the 276 Dorettis made (in 1954–5 by



RW Ziegler racing his Doretti at Put-in-Bay

Swallow Coach Builders in England) and was seeking more information on car number 1065. (He is ninety-nine per cent certain it was our car.) Tom, who is himself a Doretti owner and restorer, sent us many photographs and documents on race entry and finish standings that included our dad and his Doretti.

I determined that the next time I could get to Ohio I would find a way to visit Tom and his Doretti. (From his emails I had gotten the notion that his Doretti was our very car.) I was unable to take a side trip after the our annual convention in Cincinnati this past

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Omissions

The poem, "Hardening," on page 134 of the October *Messenger*, was written by Miriam Lexie during the opening weekend program at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly during a Bible study of Jeremiah (Chapters 1–31). Miriam is a young woman from the General Church who served as dorm mom for the camp sessions.

The author of the poem, "Recognition," on page 149 of the November *Messenger*, Bette McDonnell, is a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.

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Church Calendar

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

Letters to the Editor

SCYL Care for Teenagers

In response to David Keating's letter to the editor in the October 2011 *Messenger*, I want to assure all parents of teenagers in the church of the utmost attention I pay to all aspects of safety in our church youth events and programs. I applaud David's interest in what we are teaching our youth and his concern over their safety; however, I want to make sure that it is perfectly clear that the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of the youth of the church is at the forefront of all of my work. Whether David's statement, "... the General Convention branch

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the Messenger

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Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

"On the road again, I just can't wait to get on the road again . . ." (to be sung not too fast with a heavy country twang like



Willie Nelson). Another month of travels with activities again as varied as the scenery and the weather. The month began with the return to Maine from the PUSH meetings held in LaPorte, Indiana. A week at home and SKYPE calls with CAM was quickly followed by a drive back out to Richmond, Indiana, for the SHS Board meeting, which was held near the campus of Earlham College, a well respected Quaker seminary with which SHS has a reciprocal agreement and where several of our seminary students on the path to ordination are studying. I then drove back to Urbana, Ohio, to attend the Urbana University Board of Trustees meeting, where I spoke about the rich history of the relationship between UU and Convention.

If this intrigues you at all, I highly recommend ordering from the Swedenborg Foundation a recent publication entitled *Stay By Me Roses* (by the late Alice Skinner) a biography of Alice Archer Sewall James, daughter of Swedenborgian minister and one-time president of UU (then Urbana College), Rev. Frank Sewall, a multi-faceted character himself. "Archie," as she was affectionately known, was an internationally known artist and the central force behind the Urbana Movement, which promoted and explored the arts as spiritual practice. The influence of Swedenborgian thought was an essential part of the creation and development of Urbana University and a major contributor to not only theology but also the theory and practice of education as well. It is well worth educating ourselves about the traditions we are carrying on and, I might add, for which we now bear the responsibility.

My talk, including the idea of renewing our relationship and ministerial presence on the campus, was most warmly received. It is my hope that soon we will again have a Swedenborgian chaplain active in the university life and augmenting the church life of the Urbana Society, now so capably led by Betsy Coffman, one of Convention's two trained and active lay leaders.

My most recent trip, which has carried me from Maine into the beginning of November, began with a drive to the General Council meetings scheduled to be held at Almont Summer Camp in Michigan. Of course, it isn't summer, but the camp is actually used all year long by various groups, both from within and without Convention. Almont was generous enough to host our meeting, providing room and board and the space to do our work as a contribution to Convention. It was a good introduction to the camp for those who had never been there and triggered many memories and that comfortable sense of familiarity for those of us who have been there before. Along the way, I stopped as a guest in the home of Rev. Sarah Buteux and Andrew Dole in Western Massachusetts, met their young children, and crossed paths with Rev. Hunter Roberts for dinner as well. Hunter is currently developing an entrepreneurial ministry, a "church without walls" as she calls it, which is exploring building spiritual community in similar forms without defining structures, as well as entirely new forms with similar content presented in new ways. You will be able to read more about it in her reports that will appear in *The Messenger*.

The General Council meetings were not as well attended as usual, there being a number of health issues and scheduling conflicts. But we did have a quorum, and we tackled the business with enthusiasm. (See page 158 for a detailed report of the meeting.) Be it known that the issues that have been raised before us, by myself as well as many others (again both within and without Convention), continue to require we think hard and long and seek creative solutions and responses to the demanding circumstances in which we find ourselves. With income from our Common Fund investments in the market down markedly in the past few years, we sim-

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Discovering the Beauty Within

LaPorte New Church October Tween Retreat

BY LORI STEINHISER

Thirteen tweens (age 10–12) from Indiana, Michigan, and Missouri gathered at the LaPorte (Indiana) New Church's Manna House this fall for another fun and enlightening retreat lead by SCYL (Swedenborgian Church Youth League) youth Leader Kurt Fekete. The topic was "Discovering the Beauty Within," and it was a beautiful experience being part of a genuine, light-filled community of kids and adults learning, growing, and playing together.

Friday night, the kids arrived and squirreled away their belongings, became acclimated with our warm surroundings, met new friends, and reunited with old ones. The house was filled with joy, laughter, youthful energy, anticipation, and a little nervousness for first-timers that quickly melted away during the "Snowball Fight" icebreaker.

It was a retreat that helped the tweens get to know themselves better from the outside in. Each tween created a collage of pictures to illustrate his or her gifts, talents, interests, and loves that can easily be observed by others. Kurt followed this activity with a session comparing inner and outer. We played an inner and outer matching word game, e.g. smile = happy, hug = affection, etc. and discussed different layers of external (material, expression) and internal (value, essence).

The evening concluded with a highly requested meditation led by Kurt. Other than a small group of girls chat-



Tween retreat gang (bottom to top, l to r): Riley, Bekka, Skylor, Megan, Erin, Emma, Caroline, Leo, Joey, Natalia, Heather, Scout, Elias

ting until the wee hours as Scout, Megan, and Natalia got to know Heather and made her feel warmly welcomed, the house was quiet fairly early, and the gang got a good night's rest.

Saturday started with serve-yourself



Megan, Natalia, and Caroline snuggle in for a session.

breakfast, outside playtime, and a visit to the fellowship hall for a session discussing the inner beauty of the Bible and looking at outer, visible signs of in-

ner beauty. Each tween shared an outer action that demonstrated beauty within. Following that, we ran into some unplanned but oh-so-appropriate challenges breaking open geodes. Two broken church-owned hammers (oops!) later, we had to borrow a better tool (a three-pound sledge hammer) from the Reith-Reilly Street construction guys to reveal the beauty held within those hard, plain looking rocks. Often, it's not easy discovering your own inner beauty, and sometimes we need the help of loved ones, friends, our larger community, persistence, and determination to do it.

After lunch and more time playing and enjoying each other's company just hanging out, Kurt led a session where we viewed pictures of characters (real and fictional) with a less than attractive outer appearance and a kind heart (Shrek, Quasimodo, etc.) as well as characters with a beautiful outer appearance and an evil heart (Poison Ivy, Catwoman, etc.). This part of the session sparked a good deal of controversy judging the outer appearance of beauty. For instance, if you only consider outer characteristics, is Mother Teresa beautiful, or is Mystique, the super villain from the X-men, attractive? The session closed with a look at some ways to cultivate inner beauty, such as making an "I Love Me" list

and avoiding negative talk and gossip. Next, we piled into Clifford the Big Red Van (I think he runs on our love!)

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and Rev. Jenn's car and headed to the beach where the kids enjoyed the playground (whoa, Joey—that was a heck of a fall!), walks in the woods, the wa-



The tween group hunts for buried treasure.

ter, the sand, and the sights (what exactly was that fisherman doing?). The trip culminated with a dig in the sand to uncover hidden treasures made by our very own Rev. Eric Allison. The tweens really had to work at uncovering their special gifts.

After we got back to Manna House and had dinner and some more down time, the kids came together for another session on the afterlife, heaven, and the source of angelic beauty. The tweens were extremely interested in this session and offered myriad views on salvation, demons, spirits, and the nature of God.

Following the session, the tweens decorated special wooden treasure boxes with glitter, gems, pictures, and words (held on by Mod Podge, of course!) to remind themselves of their inner beauty and gifts.

The evening ended with candlelit group sharing with a "talking stick"

that was passed around the room and a closing circle prayer.

Sunday morning following the mad dash to eat and pack up, we headed to church. Bekka did a more than fine job of recapping the weekend for the congregation during the children's message, and Lori introduced all of the kids. We then tromped down to the fellowship hall to write affirming notes to one another and place them in the boxes we made—reminders of how unique and special and loved each one of them is.

Rousing games of Sardines (Leo can really hide!), Capture the Flag (Who knew that could be so exciting to watch?), Catch Phrase (always a favorite), and I Spy (Kurt reigned champion against Emma, Erin, and Lori—and I think he was trying to go easy on us!) were interspersed throughout the weekend between the thought-provoking sessions, meals, a beach outing, and craft activities.

It was a fabulous weekend full of fun, love, and learning. So fabulous and mean-

ingful, plans are in place to, we hope, add a third Tween Retreat during the winter months!

Many, many thanks to the LaPorte New Church Wa-Was for their generous cash donation for food for the weekend, to the LaPorte New Church congregation for the use of Manna House, a spiritually nurturing space to all who enter, and for cleaning up af-



Leo chillin' out

ter we left (that was a big job I meant to do when I returned from the airport drop-off) to Rev. Jenn Tafel and Kate Pruiett for their

help in leading the retreat, and to General Convention for seeing the value in youth programming and providing superb leadership for these retreats. We are so grateful for the talent, love, wisdom, and commitment Kurt brings to this program. And, finally, many thanks to each of the tweens for sharing your inner beauty—the world is a better place because you are in it! ✚

Lori Steinhiser is a very active volunteer youth worker for SCYL and a member of the LaPorte New Church.

Soul Music: Singing Your Inner Song

**The 2011 SCYL Almont Survivor
Teen Winter Retreat
December 27–30**

**Almont Retreat Center,
Allenton, Michigan**

"Music takes us out of the actual and whispers to us dim secrets that startle our wonder as to who we are, and for what, whence, and whereto."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Who can imagine a world without music? It moves us—grooves us—takes us to dimensions where we would not go. It connects us—directs us—takes us to heaven from the valley below. We all see life a little more clearly, a little brighter with music.

"Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind,
read more on page 163



Elias watches the game.

General Council Fall Meeting

BY SUSANNAH CURRIE

The General Council of the Swedenborgian Church met for its fall meeting November 4–5 in Michigan at the Almont Retreat Center. The Council was hosted by the Michigan and Ohio Associations.

Budget

The 2012 budget proposed by the cabinet was discussed at length, and many revisions were made before its adoption. The denomination, like other organizations and individuals worldwide, has been affected by the decreased earnings and value of its funds. The impact has been greatest on the unrestricted funds, which have also been decreased by continued deficit budget spending. President Ken Turley and Council of Ministers chair Jonathan Mitchell volunteered to accept pay cuts. Treasurer Polly Baxter, our “live-in” Central Office volunteer, has cut costs in a number of our accounting procedures and systems. The council voted to begin a Convention-wide pledge drive, and all General Council members present said they would give donations of personal significance to demonstrate their support. (The alternative suggestion was to offer a “toss-a-pie-at-a-Council-member” booth at the annual convention for donations!) On a more serious note, the treasurer will be communicating with Convention bodies and support units to encourage fundraising and to help with cost cutting to bring 2013 budgets closer to balance.

Council of Ministers

Council of Ministers chair Jonathan Mitchell reported that the Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM) met with students this year at Earlham School of Religion, where a number of students are studying for their M.Div.

degree. Jenny Caughman is completing her ordination program, and Emily Jane Lemole is being recommended for induction into the ministry. He reported that the Placement Committee has been busy responding to churches and ministers as well as visioning future possibilities for both. He lifted up the desire of the Council of Ministers to have time during their meetings to discuss issues coming before the Convention delegates; this will be incorporated into their 2012 meetings. The Council of Ministers’ request to return to the two-day meeting format, combined with the delegates’ request for shorter meetings has resulted in a new annual convention schedule for 2012, with delegates arriving for opening ceremonies on Thursday, business sessions and other event and activities on Friday and Saturday, and closing service on Sunday morning.

Wayfarers Chapel

The Council received and approved the Wayfarers Chapel budget. Rev. Jonathan Mitchell announced that he will be leaving as a chapel minister in January 2012 and that plans are being developed to bring together a team of per diem ministers to help with officiant needs. A director of development position is being discussed to address the Chapel’s need to increase its share of the shrinking wedding market. Rev. Ken Turley affirmed Rev. Mitchell’s comments about the community building that is at the heart of the Wayfarers’ success and lauded its ministry of hospitality with its many programs and outreach.

Urbana University

Betsy Coffman reported that Urbana University’s (UU) Swedenborg scholar-in-residence scholar for 2012 will be Devon Zuber from the Sweden-

borgian House of Studies. Rev. Ken Turley made a recent visit to Urbana to speak about the historical connection between the denomination and the university and was warmly received. Betsy spoke of the reorganization of the UU Chaplaincy Program with local clergy and chaplains and her enthusiasm for the potential of the project.

Support Units

Concerns were raised and discussed concerning support unit duties that overlap and the need to clarify purposes, responsibilities, and duties. The executive committee of the General Council will begin a dialog with support unit chairs to determine if processes can be streamlined within the existing organizational structure or if revisions are needed to bring our governance in line with our practices.

Annual Convention

An annual convention planning committee was appointed, comprised of the General Council executive committee, the chair of the Council of Ministers’ Committee on Worship, the president of the hosting association (the Massachusetts Association), and a chaplain representative. (The newly formed chaplain group volunteered to assist with Convention 2012.) Responding to a last-minute need announced at our 2011 convention, the Massachusetts Association offered to host the 2012 convention.

The Logo

John Maine, coordinator of the Seven-Year Cycle of Annual Themes, submitted a proposal for use of an adaptation of the Convention logo that brought to the attention of the General Council that the existing logo, in continuous use since 1962, has never been officially adopted by Convention. A proposal for its adoption and use will be presented at Convention 2012 for a

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vote. The proposal will also allow for approval of adaptations for projects such as this.

National Council of Churches

Rev. David Fekete reported on his work and the work of other delegates with the National Council of Churches. Both he and Rev. Ken Turley expressed their experience that the Swedenborgian voice in that body is appreciated and necessary.

Central Office

The Central Office Review Committee reported on the issues of the Central Office space in Newtonville, Massachusetts, and although no changes are expected imminently, it was asked that they begin long-range planning for a denominational center for the future. Renée Helenbrecht, operations manager, has been digitizing records stored at Iron Mountain to make access more efficient and to cut the costs of maintaining off-site storage. New technology obtained this year will make it possible to take credit card charges by phone.

Convention Properties

The National Church Board of Trustees president, Chris Laitner, came as a guest to report on the need for filling the trustee appointments. A full complement of fifteen trustees will facilitate initiation of a meeting with members of the Washington DC society to determine a direction for the future.

The two days of meetings ended with an overview of church properties in which Convention has a legal or financial interest in order to make Council members aware of their fiduciary responsibilities. ☒

The Rev. Susannah Currie is secretary of General Convention and pastor of the Bridgewater (Massachusetts) New Church.

Johnny Appleseed Outreach

BY KEVIN BAXTER

About two years ago, the Massachusetts Association of the New Jerusalem executive committee decided to pursue outreach. Two projects arose from this decision. First, the outreach pamphlet project, producing twenty-five new pamphlets explaining life issues from a Swedenborgian perspective. (An example of this debuted at the annual convection.) Second, we decided to set up a booth at the Johnny Appleseed Festival in Leominster, Massachusetts, to increase awareness of our tradition and the religious life of Johnny Appleseed.

Rev. Donna Keane and Shirley Brigham scouted the festival in 2010. Following their report, the Association planned a booth representing the faith of Johnny Appleseed. Rev. Kevin Baxter, President of the Massachusetts Association, designed the display and worked with the member churches on preparing for the event. Seven volunteers (Kevin Baxter, Polly Baxter, Denyse Daurat, Paulina Mirenkova, Donna Keane, Lee Woofenden, and Mary Mitchell) staffed the booth from 8 AM to 5 PM.

The festival can best be understood as a community fall harvest festival, and they used the name of the Massachusetts folk hero who was born and grew up in Leominster, Johnny Appleseed (John Chapman). The theme of the Massachusetts Association booth was "Johnny Appleseed: the Man not the Myth." The focus was on the missionary aspect of Johnny's life, although other elements of his life were

covered.

One of the more delightful stories of the day involves the Johnny Appleseed impersonator. During setup, Rev. Baxter was in the process of tearing apart a copy of *Heaven and Hell* for the purpose of displaying a

signature similar to what Johnny might have handed out. (A signature is typically eight loose pages folded, creating thirty-two book pages that are then stacked with other signatures and bound to create a book). Polly Baxter mentioned that

the Johnny impersonator was missing a piece of his costume, so Rev. Baxter ripped an additional signature out and presented it to him. He gladly accepted it and not only did he return to the tent throughout the day but he directed interested festival attendees to our booth as well.

It was a wonderful event for outreach and education. The volunteers at the tent were able to handout information on Johnny Appleseed, Helen Keller, Life after Death, and the Swedenborgian Church. An estimated 250 people accepted cards depicting facts of Johnny's life and the core beliefs of our church, and even more visited the booth

Some of the volunteers noticed that this event helped them become better at talking about their faith. In other words, this type of event is not only about educating the public, but ourselves as well. The Association plans to create a more permanent display and return to the festival regularly. ☒

The Rev. Kevin Baxter is pastor of the Cambridge (Massachusetts) Society.



A curious seeker questions Johnny.

SHS Fall Board Meeting at ESR

BY HERB ZIEGLER

The board of directors of the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) met for its fall meeting at the Quaker Conference Center in Richmond, Indiana, October 21–22, 2011. Apart from the lovely setting, comfortable accommodations, and delicious meals, the choice to meet in Richmond was inspired by the presence there of the Earlham School of Religion (ESR), a school with which SHS has established an educational relationship (See sidebar.). Present at the meeting were Rev. Jane Siebert (board chair), Rev. Bob Leas (board vice-chair), Lorraine Cuthbertson (clerk), Ron Frostestad, Bill Coffman, Rev. Sage Currie, Rev. Carla Friedrich, Tom Neuenfeldt, and Herb Ziegler; ex-officio members present were Rev. Ken Turley (president of General Convention, present October 21 only), and Rev. James Lawrence (dean of SHS). Board members Lisa Oz, Jennifer Lindsay, and Rev. Kathy Speas were unable to attend.

The board received reports from the chair, the dean, the financial manager, the office manager, the president of Convention, the PSR board of trustees meeting, the president of PSR, and the SHS student representative.

Dean Lawrence reported that plans are in place that include himself and Rebecca Esterson, SHS scholar, for continuity in teaching, administration, and research at SHS for the foreseeable future. The technology for live online education continues to evolve at SHS with some use of SKYPE. Course schedules are now projected for three years, with all four

basic required courses offered every year, making planning for timely graduation easier for students. The Chicago Society has funded a colloquium at SHS featuring Dr. Raymond Moody, a well-known expert on the subject of near-death experiences.

The financial manager, Alan Tomson, reported that SHS is operating within budget and that its almost complete financial review will reveal no problems.

PSR president Riess Potterveld said in his report, “. . . we are deeply appreciative of the faculty that you have recruited to teach in our educational setting. Jim, Inese, and Devin are busy adding value to this school and the GTU, and we are grateful for their contributions in scholarship, classroom, formation, and development of educational mission.” He explained PSR’s plans and initial success in reducing its annual deficit. It is exploring expanded online programs and combining some functions with two other seminaries.

The SHS student report was delivered by Anna Woofenden, M.Div. student at ESR and SHS. She thanked the board for much needed financial support. She suggested SHS institute a more formal advising process coordinated with CAM (Committee on Admission to the Ministry) for both long- and short-range planning. She also expressed a desire from the students at ESR for a closer connection to SHS and the other students, suggesting an annual two-week intensive for all students as part of the solution. Many students would like to have more preparation for leading worship and sacraments in Swedenborgian settings, a sentiment repeated

Earlham School of Religion and SHS

The Earlham School of Religion (ESR) was founded and continues as the Quaker (Society of Friends) seminary. It was founded in 1960 on the campus of Earlham College, a small Quaker liberal arts college. The Bethany Theological Seminary (Church of the Brethren) is also housed there and shares some resources and activities with ESR. The Quakers and the Brethren, along with the Mennonites, are historic peace churches, conscientiously opposed to all war and intentional about working with peacemaking and reconciliation concerns.

Prompted by several students who had matriculated at ESR (as it was more convenient and amenable for them than the Pacific School of Religion, where SHS is housed), SHS arranged with ESR for cross registration of courses and communication between the deans. Like all SHS students, ESR students must fulfill the requirements for a Certificate in Swedenborgian Studies (courses taught by SHS faculty) in order to be ordained in the Swedenborgian Church.



Anna Woofenden, Carla Friedrich, and Sage Currie

in a letter to the board from Jonathan Mitchell, chairman of the Council of Ministers.

The board broke into permanent committees and then considered reports from the committees. The Finance Committee: reported that the financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2011, are not available because a business review is not

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yet completed. Trustee Ron Frostestad is now on the Investment Committee for Convention where we hold thirty-one per cent of the Common Fund.

The board also discussed the need for more transparency in the management of the Common Fund, and access to more complete and readable reports showing performance of the fund. A motion passed that a letter be sent to General Council, with a copy to the Investment Committee, voicing these concerns regarding the transparency of the reports and the sale and purchase of units, and requesting that General Council consider this issue and respond.

The board passed a motion to forego a financial review for the next budget year and charge the Finance Committee to review the need for an audit or review each year and make a recommendation to the board.

The academic committee reported on two areas, outreach and alternative paths to ordination. The committee recommended that the faculty and adjunct faculty create online courses and programming for the community-at-large, a service of SHS for its constituency. The fee would be nominal, to cover the added cost of adjunct faculty. The board asked the dean to evaluate interest.

There is discussion in the Council of Ministers about alternative paths to ordination. This is not an SHS decision but one that would be church-wide, likely passing through both the Council of Ministers and the floor of annual convention before it could be enacted. However, SHS must be ready to sup-

port such a decision with programming. The board will form a committee to prepare a report on the program and financial implications for SHS.

The development committee reported on plans for "SHS Sunday" on January 29, 2012, Swedenborg's birthday. The goals are to 1) increase awareness of SHS among our churches and centers, 2) offer a venue to highlight our professors, and 3) support the member churches. The committee suggested creation of YouTube videos featuring short lectures by SHS professors. Dean



The SHS Board of Trustees meeting with Dean Marshall

Lawrence will manage creation of the videos and produce an electronic pamphlet that will be

emailed to churches—information only, not a request for money. The administrative assistant, Francesca McCrossan, will arrange to receive appeal funds through Paypal. The board will continue to investigate other options for appeals.

The board met with Jay Marshall, dean of ESR, to discuss the relationship between SHS and ESR. Both the board and Dean Marshall expressed satisfaction with the relationship thus far, the board noting in particular ESR's willingness to work with SHS and PSR to make obtaining credits and fulfilling requirements easier for students and dean Marshall noting particularly the high quality of students in terms of enthusiasm, dedication, achievement, and leadership.

The board education component, an intriguing preview of his dissertation, was a presentation by Jim Lawrence. Although Swedenborg received the inner sense of the Bible directly from heaven, there is much evidence

Anna Woofenden Represents ESR

On Oct. 15, 2011, John David Dawson was inaugurated as Earlham College's seventeenth president. Delegates from more than seventy other colleges, universities, and institutions joined members of the Earlham faculty, staff, student



body, and Board of Trustees in the inaugural ceremonies. Anna Woofenden, SHS student at PSR, was asked by Jay Marshall, dean of Earlham School of Religion, to be one of three student speakers at the event, alongside students from the undergraduate program and the M.Ed. program. ☩

that he operated in a tradition found in all three Abrahamic religions. This is an area of new research, and it might help non-Swedenborgians see Swedenborg and his writings in a more sympathetic light.

Dean Lawrence was pleased to announce that he expects to complete his Ph.D. in Christian spirituality and biblical exegesis that has been pursuing for the past seven years while working full-time as dean and professor, serving on the Swedenborg Foundation board, and assuming other institutional commitments. He expects to defend his dissertation in January and then receive his degree.

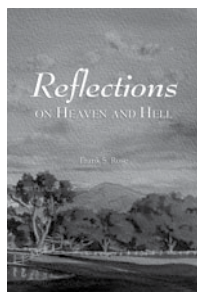
On Sunday morning following the meeting, trustees attended Sunday services at the Urbana (Ohio) Swedenborgian Church, where they were treated to lunch and conversation in the fellowship hall. ☩

Fall Releases of Interest to *Messenger* Readers

Fountain Publishing

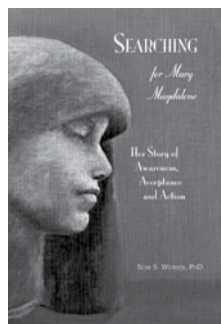
Reflections on Heaven and Hell
Frank S. Rose

What kind of life is the after-life? How does that afterlife affect our lives here on earth? How do our lives here on earth affect our future lives after death?



Rev. Frank S. Rose offers his own reflections on Emanuel Swedenborg's remarkable book, *Heaven and Hell*. Using everyday examples and conversational language, Rose takes the main topics from the sixty-three chapters of *Heaven and Hell* and demonstrates how these concepts relate to our lives. He helps us picture life in heaven and life in hell and he shows how we are continually building a spiritual home and lifestyle inside of us—one that we will fully awaken to after death.

Searching for Mary Magdalene: Her Story of Awareness, Acceptance and Action
Dr. Soni S. Werner



Who was Mary Magdalene? Reformed prostitute? Wife of Jesus? Worker of miracles? French saint? Disciple? Apostle?

Dr. Soni S. Werner was looking for a spiritual role model. She found herself drawn to the character of Mary Magdalene and quickly saw

that she was not alone in her interest. For centuries, Mary Magdalene has been the focus of multiple stories and legends. Her name has been used

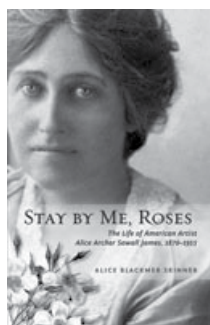
both to control others and to inspire. How can one pilgrim find the essential Mary Magdalene—the one who was privileged to be first witness to the risen Lord? As she searches for answers, Werner takes us along on her travels to holy sites in France and in Israel. She lets us journey with her through psychology, philosophy, and theology. She leads us through fascinating explorations of myths, legends, Bible scripture, Gnostic gospels, church history, art, architecture, modern novels, and the works of Emanuel Swedenborg. Through it all, Werner brings us closer to the heart of a woman who walked with Jesus and who can show us ways to open more deeply to His message.

Swedenborg Foundation Press

Stay by Me, Roses: The Life of American Artist Alice Archer Sewall James, 1870-1955
Alice Blackmer Skinner

Alice Archer Sewall James—known affectionately as Archie—lived a life that most women of her time could only dream about. Educated from a young age and encouraged by her family to express herself in all forms of art, she grew into an irrepressible woman who never stopped looking for ways to pass her experience on to others.

This biography traces her life from her childhood in Urbana, Ohio, to teenage years spent traveling in Europe, to her challenging marriage to John H. James, heir to a family fortune built by his entrepreneurial grandfather of the same name. Her father, Swedenborgian minister and educator Frank Sewall, was her greatest fan, support-



ing her in good times, as she started to build a reputation as a painter and illustrator and in bad, as poor health forced her to abandon her art and put a strain on her personal relationships. In later years, however—like the roses in the title poem—she reemerged as an artist and as a teacher, inspiring a new generation of painters at Urbana College.

While Archie's Swedenborgian heritage gave structure and meaning to her life, it was her inner creative drive that truly touched others. *Stay by Me, Roses* opens a window on the life and times of a unique nineteenth-century woman.

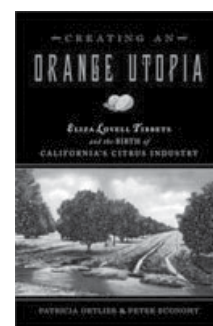
Creating an Orange Utopia: Eliza Lovell Tibbets and the Birth of California's Citrus Industry

Patricia Ortlieb and Peter Economy

California's citrus industry owes a huge debt to the introduction of the navel orange tree—in fact, to two trees in particular, the parent trees of the vast groves of navel oranges that exist in California today. Those trees were planted by a woman named Eliza Lovell Tibbets.

Born in Cincinnati in 1823, Eliza's Swedenborgian faith formed her ideals. Surrounded by artists and free thinkers, her personal journey took her first to New York City, then south to create a better environment for newly freed slaves in racially divided Virginia, and onward to Washington, DC, where she campaigned for women's rights. But it was in California that she left her true mark, launching an agricultural boom that changed the course of California's history.

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Bridge Book Awards Call for Entries

The General Church of the New Jerusalem and the Swedenborg Foundation, publisher of the theological works of Emanuel Swedenborg, are pleased to announce the second annual Bridge Book Awards competition. The Bridge Book Awards were created to encourage new writers to explore the ideas of Swedish scientist

and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg through fiction or non-fiction works.

Three winners and three runners-up will be selected. Winners will receive a prize of \$1,500 and runners-up will receive \$500. All winners will be honored at an award ceremony and have their entries considered for publication by the Swedenborg Foundation.

SCYL Winter Retreat

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**flight to the imagination, and charm
and gaiety to life and to everything.”**

—*Plato*

**“Music is universal and infinitely
diverse. It is a gift from God which we
joyously give to each other and then
back to the Lord in praise. The aim and
final end of all music should be none
other than the glory of God and the
refreshment of the soul.”**

—*Johann Sebastian Bach*

Together, we will explore the many ways that music brings God, enlightenment, joy, and heaven to humankind. Also, this year we will have a variety of workshops led by talented musicians and music aficionados where we will share with each other and learn about music, song writing, singing, and playing instruments. Whether you have incredible musical ability, a beautiful voice, or just enjoy listening to music,

we will have something interesting and entertaining for you.

Each of us has an inner song to bring to the world. At this retreat we will seek to discover and listen to the spiritual song of your soul. Come join us. Bring your instrument, your music, a song in your heart, and your friends!

**“God is a DJ. Life is a dance floor. Love
is the rhythm. You are the music.”**

—*Pink.*

SCYL is the Swedenborgian Church Youth League. Our retreats are open to teenagers ages 13–18 of all faiths and beliefs. At our retreats we offer life skill lessons and spiritual sessions based on the principles of the Swedenborgian Church. We offer a safe, secure, and inclusive environment to discuss and share relevant and meaningful ideas and challenges facing today's teens. We work, play, and learn together as a community. We have fun! Those of you teens and parents new to SCYL retreats please don't hesitate to contact me, Kurt Fekete, youth director, with any and all questions and concerns (email kfekete@hotmail.com or call me at 802-345-0169). I will answer your questions or, if appropriate, put you in contact with a League teen officer in your region to give you as much information and encouragement as you need! See you there!

—*Kurt*

The deadline for proposal submission is February 1, 2012. Winners will be announced in April.

Suggested Genres and Topics:

Genres: fiction, nonfiction, memoir/autobiography/biography, young adult, humor

Topics: 1) Inner meaning of the Bible, 2) correspondences, 3) the complementary nature of the masculine and the feminine, 4) relationships, 7) spiritual practice, 8) hospice/bereavement/life transitions, 9) giving hope in an unstable world, 10) autobiography (of a Swedenborgian)

The final selections will be based on usefulness to new readers of Swedenborg, creative interpretation, quality of writing, and contemporary relevance.

For more information, go to www.swedenborg.com or www.newchurch.org. Forms for submitting proposals are available to download. You can also request entry forms from Alexia Cole at 610.430.3222, ext 15 or pubasst@swedenborg.com. ☩

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Eliza's story of faith and idealism will appeal to anyone who is curious about US history, women's rights, abolitionism, spiritualism, and California's pioneer days. Follow Eliza through loves and fortunes lost and found until she finally finds her paradise in a little town called Riverside. ☩



Swedenborg Chapel Podcast
Available on iTunes

Sermons about life and faith from the pulpit of Swedenborg Chapel and other events of note.



You are invited to listen to the free podcast. Scan the QR code or search for us in iTunes.

Faith and Order

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formal welcomes by commissioners. One relatively young Catholic commissioner recalled when he first came to the Faith and Order Commission. He said that he had felt like an outsider because many of the commissioners had known one another for a long time. But he assured me that with an outgoing attitude, I would feel a part of the commission in due time.

Educating about Swedenborg

Some had heard of Swedenborg, some had heard of Swedenborg but knew little about him, and some hadn't heard of Swedenborg at all. In one informal discussion, I mentioned the significant influence our church had in America in the nineteenth century and speculated on why that influence has since waned. In a formal discussion on denominations and commissioners who felt marginalized, I mentioned our church. Billy said, "Yes, now a Swedenborgian has suddenly popped up, and I don't know what's going to come out of you." He and I agreed that our church, although not ethnically and economically marginalized, was theologically marginalized. I spoke with another commissioner one morning. When I mentioned that I am a Swedenborgian he said, "Oh, and your central offices are in Philadelphia? I used to live there." I knew that he was thinking of Bryn Athyn. I explained the schism and told him that I represented the other side of that schism. I assured him that they do not speak for us, and that we see things quite differently. He said that he was glad to hear that, and we went on to discuss the dynamics of fundamentalisms in the light of a book he had read that I was unfamiliar with.

Nature and Mission of the Church

I attended the Nature and Mission of the Church study group. This

group wrote a paper that began as a response to a paper of the same title written by the World Council of Churches. However, over the past three years, our study group found that their paper assumed a life of its own. As I came in at the end of the four-year cycle, a near final draft had already been generated. Over four, four-hour sessions, we went through the draft line-by-line to write it in such a way that it became clearer grammatically, theologically, and in its relation to the WCC document.

Our document was impressive in its succinct definition of the nature and mission of the church and also in its capacity to represent in an ecumenical way all the diverse viewpoints of the denominations that had a part in its creation.

There were a few passages that I had problems with. One major part described how the church is formed. The document I inherited said that the church was called into being by God alone, with no human action. This didn't sit well with me, as my understanding is that God indeed calls us into relationship, but we need to respond to God's call. I voiced my concern, and Billy immediately said, "Exactly! This is a robust theology of election on steroids!" What Billy meant was that the document represented predestination very strongly worded. An elevated discussion followed in which terms like semi-Plagianism, catechesis, and formation were brought up. The group diplomatically came up with three words to be inserted that would satisfy everyone, including me. The group responded to my concern very sensitively and wouldn't proceed in their rewrite of the fifteen-page document until I was satisfied.

During the coffee break, Billy came up to me with a big smile and shook my hand. He asked me about our view of the Trinity, which I wasn't prepared to discuss in a brief coffee break. So I moved the discussion to a contrast

between the Apostles Creed (which Swedenborg affirms) and the Nicene Creed (which he does not affirm) as a way to bring up characterizations of the Trinity.

At the conclusion of our twelve-hour rewrite, we were all satisfied with the final product. The document, "A Reflection on the Nature and Mission of the Church in the Light of the World Council of Churches' Document, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*," will be circulated among congregations of all the denominations of the Faith and Order Commission for analysis and feedback. All the names and denominations of those who worked on the document will be listed on the final page, and on that page, the page to be distributed to the congregations of all the denominations of the Faith and Order Commission, will be the name *Rev. Dr. David Fekete, Swedenborgian Church of North America*—one more way our church will be getting out to the world around us.

Looking Ahead

The next four years will have three different study groups. They will be 1) Unity, Church Polity, and the Ability to Accommodate Tensions over Diverse Issues; 2) All Manner of Violence in Society, Including that Facilitated by Religious Belief and Practice; and 3) Contextual Theologies from the Margins of Church life. I need to decide which study group I will participate in; I welcome suggestions from the readers of *The Messenger* and the Church at large. I am inclined to participate in Theologies from the Margins in an attempt to make our voice heard by the mainstream of theological discussion. On the other hand, I'm not sure I want us characterized as marginal. I would like to see us as having a voice that is equally important as are the voices of, say, Lutherans, Methodists, and Catholics.

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The Editors Desk

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summer but arranged with Tom to visit him the day after my SHS meeting in Richmond, Indiana.

Pulling up to Tom's house in Lancaster, I could not miss a dark green Doretti sitting on his lawn. But it was right-hand drive—not our car. I admired the car while Tom and I chatted for a long time about Dorettis and the Doretti in my life. At some point, Tom revealed that he had seven or eight Dorettis at another location—I was flabbergasted. Eventually he started up the Doretti—a familiar sound—and we took a short drive on winding, hilly country roads. The ride was exhilarating, top-down, wind-in-the-face roadster motoring that gave me the feeling I had ridden in the car only yesterday—I was even sitting in the familiar driver's

position as the driver here was on the right.

Tom showed me his collection—all either in the process of restoration or awaiting restoration. I was amazed to see so many Dorettis. They were packed into and around a barn and an outbuilding among some Triumphs. (His first love, which had led him to Dorettis—they share engines and many other components.) Anyone else would have called many of these junk and disposed of them, but Tom was lovingly collecting and saving these neglected cars. He patiently showed me each car and described its provenance at great length. He also explained how



Tom Householder with one of his Dorettis

he made body parts from aluminum using hand tools, a slow process requiring great craftsmanship. He showed me a form he had made over which he shaped sheet brass to make grille parts and bumpers he had made through the slow process of pounding.

Upon returning to his house, he asked me to stay for dinner. He disappeared for a time while his wife and I chatted in front of a televised football game, returning with the gift of a small pin displaying the Doretti logo—the last one of some he had had made. He also gave me a handmade doorstop, a scale-model Doretti that he had sculpted and cast. We chatted for the rest of the evening. I mentioned a mis-identified Doretti I had seen as a youth in a *Sports Cars Illustrated* magazine photo, and to my amazement, he quickly produced a copy of the photo from his vast Doretti archive.

But what of my family's Doretti, number 1065? Tom told me that it resides in the back of a garage in Pittsburgh, owned by the son of a man who was about to restore it when he died, but he will not sell it. Tom determined it was ours by comparing it with details from minute examination of photographs of our car he had discovered. He had attempted to buy the car to no avail.

Driving to my motel that night and then drifting off to sleep, my head

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The Larger Conversation

I feel that our continued participation in the NCCCUSA is vital. When I was discussing the issue of our significant contributions to American society in the nineteenth century and our diminished place in present American society, I speculated on why and how this occurred. I think that over the past 100 years we became ingrown, turned into our denominational self and theological issues, and grew self-important, fancying ourselves as The New Church. The consequence of our turning within was exactly that disconnect with the larger American society around us. If we are to again find a voice in contemporary society, we must look outside the church buildings and the categories of thought of our own denomination. I do not mean to relinquish Swedenborg's theology at all. Only by remaining true to his vision can we have a voice that is distinctly our own. What needs to be done is

to become aware of the categories of thought, ideas, and theological currents of our greater theological world and see how we can speak to these issues. We need to know who the major players in today's theological world are and what they are saying. I see our seminary, the Swedenborgian House of Studies, taking the lead in this enterprise. But it is a task for our divinity students, ministers, and interested laity as well. And our continued presence in the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA is one way to further our voice in the world even as it increases our awareness of what is going on around us. Our continued presence and voice will educate our sisters and brothers of other denominations about who and what we are. Then we will no longer hear comments like, "And now a Swedenborgian has popped up and I don't know what's going to come out of you." ☩

The Rev. Dr. David Fekete is pastor of the Edmonton (Alberta) Church of the Holy City.

Letters to the Editor

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now accepts communication with the spiritual world, despite Swedenborg's warnings" is true or not remains open to debate. The SCYL is not involved in this debate.

I can state with authority that during the 2010 SCYL Winter Teen Retreat ("Dreams and the Whisperings of Angels"), we made no attempts to conjure up spirits. There were no séances, Ouija boards, witchcraft, or crystal balls in play. Everything done in our sessions was positive, appropriate, and affirming.

Yet in the Swedenborgian Church, we do understand that angels are constantly present and active in our lives. They seek to communicate goods and truths with us. According to Swedenborg, "... two spirits from hell and two angels from heaven are present with each person; that they provide communication both with hell and with heaven and also enable a person to be in freedom" (AC 5976). The more we realize this and learn to discern the wisdom of the angels and shun the influences of the hells, the freer we are to live a life filled with peace and understanding.

In our teen retreat sessions, we often teach teens how to receive positive influx from heaven and block evil and false messages. At this particular retreat in question, during one session, Rev. Alison Longstaff used affirming Osho Zen Tarot cards to help teens find a new clarity of understanding in their innermost heart. The emphasis was on discovering the transitional and transformative power of the angels closest to us that seek to guide us to our divine purpose and loving use.

In Rev. Jenn Tafel's experiential session, she shared honestly what it's like to have the gift of mediumship, something, as she stressed, that she didn't go looking for—the gift came to her. As a teenager, Rev. Jenn experienced struggles and challenges with negative

SHS Annual Appeal

The Swedenborgian House of Studies continues to expand its outreach through the use of technology. If you go to our Web site (www.shs.psr.edu/) and click on a short video link, you will see one of our faculty members (me this time) speak about something new in Swedenborgian scholarship at SHS that can make a difference in your life and in the world. This newly regular feature is one example of our latest outreach program at SHS.

In fact, with your help in the past few years we have been able to accomplish not only a new outreach program, but also the creation of distance education support and exciting faculty development with the hiring of Dr. Devin Zuber and the beginning journey in scholarship training with Rebecca Kline Esterson at Boston University. SHS is on the move! We are working hard to build future leadership, but in these difficult financial times we still need your vigorous support to continue our mission of Swedenborgian lead-

ership, scholarship, and effective witness for tomorrow's world.

The church and the world need a skillfully engaged Swedenborgian interpretation and practice more than ever, and we believe that at the Swedenborgian House of Studies we have a precious resource and a unique perspective to help meet that need. But we need to do this together and we need your support more than ever. Last year we managed to reach our annual campaign goal of \$45,000, and in this challenging economic environment, we have set the same goal for this fiscal year.

To make supporting SHS easier than ever, we have added a new *donate* button on our web site (www.shs.psr.edu/; look for it in the left-hand column).

Please know that your solidarity with our school is of supreme importance to the trustees, faculty, students, and staff, and we ask for your prayers as well as your financial support.

—Jim Lawrence
Dean of SHS

thoughts and feelings. This is something that all teens can relate to and understand. Her session was powerful and uplifting. She talked about personal responsibility, control, and action. When teenagers hear an adult talk candidly about difficulties they experienced in their youth, a bond of trust and fellowship between teen and adult is created. Rev. Jenn offered some practical life skills on how to combat negative forces and influences that appear beyond our control. Her moving session touched everyone present and clearly helped youth deal with the plethora of charged emotions that they encounter each and every day.

Fundamental to our retreat philosophy, we offer teens life skills and spiri-

tual sessions based on the principles of the Swedenborgian Church. We offer a safe and inclusive environment to discuss and share meaningful ideas and challenges facing today's teens. Moreover, we always strive towards the positive, supportive, and uplifting. As fascinating as attempting to directly communicate with the spiritual world might be to some, it is not something that I or any staff at our Swedenborgian Church Youth League retreats teach teens to do. I find that teenagers have enough trouble communicating with other humans on the earthly level and I prefer to help them with this instead.

—Kurt Fekete, youth director,
Swedenborgian Church

Passages

Births

On September 16, 2011, Leah Goodwin and Kevin Baxter (and Ephraim) welcomed a 7

lb 11 oz. baby girl named **Magdalen (Maudie) Grace Goodwin Baxter** into their family.



Deaths

Kenneth R. Martin, age 68, succumbed to injuries November 15, 2011, as a result of an auto accident in his hometown of Easton, Massachusetts. Ken served in the Naval Reserve, Seabees and was activated to Guam and Vietnam. He worked for the Easton Department of Public Works for thirty-four years and was a faithful member of the Elmwood New Church in East Bridgewater. His purpose in life was to “Live in, love, and serve my community.”

Ken was the son of the late John J. Martin and Olive (Buck) Martin, predeceased by his brother Richie Martin and survived by his siblings, the Rev. Ernest Martin, Emily Pound, Myrtle Blaisdell, and Doug Martin and several nieces and nephews, including the Rev. Rachel Rivers and the Rev. Paul Martin. ☩

The Editors Desk

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swirled with happy memories of riding and then driving our Doretti and pleasant thoughts of my day spent with a magnanimous man.

My brother and I continue to communicate with Tom—he is pursuing information to find another Doretti about which I gave him a clue from a teenage memory.

I see Tom as a man who has found a

Letter from the President

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ply have more expenses than we have income. In all areas of Convention, we are being asked to make do with less. Amongst all the questions—How much do we cut here? What can we do without there? Where are efforts being made that warrant further support? What does the future hold in store for this situation?—one question hovers in the background that is persistent in its presence and insistent in its call for an answer. It may seem to be a fear response to our increasingly difficult financial situation or our steadily decreasing numbers, but actually it has been there all along and comes from a very different place. It is a question that needs asking and answering constantly, whatever the external situation may be. It hearkens to Swedenborg’s concept of ruling love, and I would frame the question this way: What is it about my church that I truly love? What is it that has attracted me to this church and keeps me coming back year after year? What is it about my church that I would share with others?

OK, I know that is three questions, but I maintain all three, even with different words, are seeking the same answer. Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be” (Matthew 6:19-24). We are being challenged to get clear about where our heart is, for we are being challenged as to where we are going to invest our treasure, simply because we no longer have enough “treasure” to place it where we have in the past just because that is what we

unique use in his life, joyously pursuing his passion, preserving a bit of history, and bringing some joy to a handful of people who care about his efforts.

Maybe I’ll take up Tom’s offer to inquire for me about buying number 1065.

—Herb Ziegler

have done in the past.

So, as I am being forced to do, as every member of General Council is being forced to do, as the members of PUSH and MINSU are being forced to do, and EDSU and IMSU and COMSU and the Council of Ministers are being forced to do, I am asking you to consider deeply and prayerfully what it is about this church that most effectively deepens your relationship with the Lord and fosters your spiritual well-being. What is it that most effectively accomplishes this for others in your community? And what is it that is going to most effectively accomplish this for those as of yet outside of our community?

I believe it is in the answer to this question that we will find the future of our church.

—*Blessings, Rev. Ken*

PS: One final note: on the way home from our meetings, I took a slight detour and visited the campus of Bryn Athyn College. I was warmly welcomed by Reverend Tom Kline, the bishop of General Church for the last eight years, who personally treated me to a lunch in the college cafeteria and led me on a tour of their campus. It includes the cathedral, of course, but also an educational system, recently opened to and welcoming in students from outside the General Church community, which serves students from preschool through seminary. I was overwhelmed by the warmth of my welcome as Tom introduced me to other ministers, educators, and staff and showed me the grounds, pointing out to me new accomplishments and the continuing needs of their situation. I was also so very pleased to find an atmosphere of openness and a willingness to explore any and all opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between our two denominations which, in spite of our theological differences, have far more in common than we do in difference. ☩

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.

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