

Spirit Without Walls: Spiritual Entrepreneurship in Budapest

Part 1: A new Home and a New Ministry



BY HUNTER ROBERTS

When I tell people I am developing an entrepreneurial ministry without walls in Budapest, Hungary, their mouths fall open. Why ministry in this remote secular and Roman Catholic culture? Why did I pick Budapest? How on earth did I get here?

It certainly wasn't in my plan when I arrived here in the spring of 2010. I came to Budapest to save my own soul, not anyone else's.* Events of the previous few years had persuaded me I needed a fresh start, somewhere far from everything familiar. I feared such a move meant leaving my ministerial dreams behind, but, as I had not succeeded in previous efforts to get support for the edgy, post-modern ministry to the secular to which I felt called (and had en-

visioned since before my ordination), I saw no reason to belabor it. While I continued to fulfill the necessary requirements to keep my name in good standing on the roster of the Council of Ministers, I gave up my hopes for a career as a church planter, and moved on to Plan B.

Plan B had been in the background for many years, since I returned to the States from my long, post-grad trip through Europe in a VW van. I had long thought: "If someday I have nothing more 'important' to do, I will find a way to move to Europe." I felt oddly at home here. I liked the old build-

... I was still a minister in my being and in the community of people I encountered, filling priestly, prophetic, and pastoral roles.

ings, the cafes, the covered markets, and the way of life, which did not seem so rushed and transactional. One day I awakened and realized I had nothing more important to do, like saving the world from nuclear war, or starting a new church. I could do what I was doing, writing and seeing clients on SKYPE, from wherever I was and live wherever I wanted. I chose Buda-

pest because it was beautiful, it was affordable, and I had one old friend who had settled here in the mid-1990s, so I would not be completely alone.

I had been here several times since my first trip behind the Iron Curtain. Budapest holds a mysterious blend of East and West. One can sit in dark wood-paneled cafes with old lace curtains and write in the shadow of Hungary's great poets, meander down cobblestone streets, and look at Art Nouveau buildings with statuary and balconies, on streets that have survived their own traumas. Walking down streets of its inner city, it is possible to see elaborately crafted statuary of La Bell Epoque, built during Hungary's legendary heyday as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and gateways and doorways of the Art Nouveau period, juxtaposed with boxy, utilitarian offices and apartments built by the Communists, now crumbling. If you look closely you will see bullet holes, and wreaths, splattered with red paint, commemorating the deaths of Hungarian patriots, especially in the failed 1956 Revolution. I wanted to breathe in beauty to heal my aching soul.

And so I set out to do just that, filling and enlivening my spirit with art and music, Hungarian food and wine,

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* Roberts, W. Hunter "Notes of An Expat, Epilogue: the First Year," Huffington Post, 11 Nov. 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/w-hunter-roberts/taking-life-risks_b_1078164.html.

Reflection

Being Human

BY ALISON LANE-OLSEN



The fall weather has been beautiful lately; I could hardly bring myself to come in from the outdoors to put a few thoughts on paper. (But here I am, of course!) I'm sure you've noticed too, the leaves that have turned a gorgeous yellow or red—even the temperature has been perfect. I always look forward to the loveliness of October!

We still need our pumpkins, but we are ready for Halloween at our house. That is to say, we have the essentials: we have one very important fairy costume and one very important Optimus Prime costume for the big night. (In case you weren't aware, Optimus Prime is a cartoon character that can change from a robot into a semi-trailer truck.) I guess no one wanted to be a normal human being this year. Al-

though, I must say, being human isn't too bad. . . . I just watched Felix Baumgartner safely land a twenty-four-mile jump from the stratosphere; they say the distance he jumped from is three times the cruising altitude of a commercial airplane. I imagine we will be forever surprised at the way some keep pushing the limits of what we think is humanly possible.

Human beings are capable of so much . . . , and yet isn't it interesting that we commonly hear the phrase, "I'm only human!" Even at church, I catch myself during a sermon saying something like, "(insert Bible character with flaw) shows us his human side (saying this with flaw in mind)." Why do I do this? Why should we say, "I'm only human," when it is our humanness that allows us so much?

Recently, while reading through portions of Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Wisdom* and *Divine Providence*, I realized that perhaps this is a phrase I should abandon.

For example, in *Divine Love and Wisdom*, Swedenborg writes that God is the essential person, "from whom we are human by virtue of our acceptance of love and wisdom." It is our acceptance of love and wisdom that truly makes us human!

Furthermore, "to the extent that our spirit or soul actually accepts love and wisdom, we become human after the

death of these material bodies"

Or consider this incredible thought in *Divine Providence*, ". . . every desire for what is both good and true is human as to its form." I'll just let you ponder that one.

In his commentary on the opening creation story in Genesis, Swedenborg even writes that in the Most Ancient Church, no one was called "man" but the Lord himself; neither did these most ancient people call themselves "men" but only those things in themselves—the love and truth—that they perceived they had in themselves from the Lord.

From these words, it sounds like

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Church Calendar

- November 1–4: General Council Fall Meeting • Temenos Retreat Center, West Chester, PA
- November 9–10: SHS Fall Board Meeting • Berkeley, CA
- November 10–December 30: *In Company with Angels* exhibit • Urbana University • Urbana, OH
- December 27 –30: SCYL Winter Retreat (ages 13–18) • Almont New Church Assembly and Retreat Center • Almont, MI

the Messenger

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the real truth of the matter is that we are working to become human. And if God is the essential Person or Human, then our humanness relates more to our potential to be vessels than to

our limitations. I guess the next time I'm tempted to say, "I'm only human," when I make a mistake, I'll have to say something more like, "I guess I'm not human enough!"

FYI: Trying to be a good human also makes for a great, easy Hallow-

een costume for an adult! (Although I doubt the kids will find it much fun.)

Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen is pastor of the Pretty Prairie (Kansas) New Jerusalem Church. ☩

This article first appeared in the October 2012 *Plains Banner*.

Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

We are deep into the travelling season. It began with flying from Maine to Seattle to visit the Puget Sound Church and then to Los Angeles for the Wayfarers Chapel Board meeting and back home. Then last month, I found myself driving to Michigan for the PUSH meeting and then visiting the Royal Oak Church, followed by a short visit in Cleveland along the way back home. Tonight I'm in Los Angeles to help with the Wayfarers Chapel leadership transition, then to San Francisco for the Pacific Coast Association annual meeting, then to Temenos for the fall General Council meeting. After a few days rest, I am travelling to Urbana University to present a program with Rev. Susannah Currie on *In Company With Angels*—the seven Tiffany angel windows from the old Cincinnati Church—this year's annual Swedenborgian Scholar-in-residence program and—at last—home for the winter.

Amongst all of this travelling from one of our spiritual communities to another, marveling at both their differences and their similarities, I found myself thinking about our theme for the year: The Year of the Spiritual World. At one point, something I heard that had been hanging around in the back of my mind for a while finally settled down and landed. In trying to move our attention and our focus on life in general from merely the sensual, physical, material realm to that of the spirit, one has to es-



tablish criteria for deciding if that is being accomplished or not. What is material is pretty obvious. But establishing criteria for what is spiritual is a little more, well, ethereal. But here's that thing that landed: there are two kinds of people in the world, those who look at a situation and think, "What can I get out of this?" and those who look at a situation and think, "How can I be of help in this?"

If we seek to live our lives with the spiritual world as present reality, we must begin by moving our concerns, criteria, and priorities from the material to the spiritual and acting with some kind of love expressed in a form that is wise and useful. The result is that we approach life looking for what is of service to God and seeking ways, large or small, to be of benefit to others and take joy in their joy rather than feeling our own joy diminished or frustrated by the joy of others.

In all of this travelling, visiting our various churches, the sign of life and vibrancy in each spiritual community can be measured by the people who are asking themselves the second of those two questions. As a church, our value and our attractiveness to outsiders, and I dare say our usefulness in the Lord's Second Coming, is not how well we preserve ourselves, but to what degree we are of help to others.

The Year of the Spiritual World will seem only like a theoretical concept "out there" somewhere unless we do our part to make it real inwardly for ourselves and one another. One criterion to apply, as individuals, as churches, and as a denomination, to stay focused on growing in the right direction, is to keep an inner eye open for which question we are asking ourselves: "What can I get out of this?" or "How can I be of help in this?"

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

SCYL Columbus Day Retreat

"Life and Death: Goodbye Blairhaven, Hello Cedar Hill"

BY KURT FEKETE

For the last ten years or so, the Columbus Day retreat in South Duxbury, Massachusetts has been affectionately known to the teens as Blairhaven. Blairhaven was a special place to so many people. Youth summer camps and retreats were held there. Many people in the church grew up going there and have deep, long lasting, fond memories. It was special to me too. I first visited Blairhaven twenty-three years ago in October, 1989, as a member of the young adult team tasked to initiate the Transitions group (young adults). I staffed Memorial Day teen retreats there in the early 1990s with Rev. Steve Pults. I held a youth leader and minister training workshop at Blairhaven in 2006. And the Columbus Day teen retreat was always held there. By the time the 2000s rolled around, the Columbus Day retreat was the only youth event being held at Blairhaven. The place was showing its age and was sorely in need of repair and maintenance. Still, it was home, and the teens that attended called the Columbus Day retreat Blairhaven. It was always, "When are we leaving for Blairhaven?" "I can't wait until Blairhaven!" and "Blairhaven is awesome!" Nowadays, we must say Blairhaven *was* awesome. The last teen retreat at Blairhaven was 2010. Blairhaven is no more.

On Friday of Columbus Day weekend, I stepped out of the car into the crisp, salty early evening air of Kingston Bay and onto the grounds of Cedar Hill Retreat Center. I had seen pictures of this retreat center, but had never visited. Cedar Hill Retreat Center is about one quarter mile down the



Formerly Blairhaven

road from the site of Blairhaven, and finding it was quite simple, even in the dark.

My car knows the route to Crescent Road in South Duxbury, practically on its own. Cedar Hill is the closest retreat center to Blairhaven, and from the pictures, it appeared to be very similar. But pictures can be deceiving, and I was both anxious and excited to check this place out. Once I had a



President Celie at Cedar Hill

look around I found Cedar Hill to be remarkably similar to Blairhaven. An old gray clapboard Cape style house, a nice wide open green yard to play Frisbee and croquet, beach front access, comfortable sofas and chairs, bunk

beds, etc. Yes, I thought. This can be our new home. You can never replace Blairhaven, but Cedar Hill is about as close as you can get.

And Cedar Hill had many positives that Blairhaven did not. A pretty little wooded path with a little arched bridge leading to a spacious beach on the bay, fun pull out trundle beds in the rooms, an outdoor stone labyrinth, a delightfully long front porch with lots of rocking chairs, and two separate living room areas which allowed the group to spread out and have a bit more privacy. In fact, nearly everything at Cedar Hill was bigger and more spacious—the common areas, the dining room, the kitchen, the front lawn, and the TV! Cedar Hill proved to be the perfect place for our retreat. It was everything that Blairhaven was and more. You cannot replace Blairhaven, and Cedar Hill is not our own place, but I am happy here and I am so thankful that this retreat center exists.

The setting for a retreat is extremely important. If you choose the wrong location or do not have the right environment, the retreat just does not fly. Once I determined that Cedar Hill was the right place for us, it was on to bigger and better things. When we get together for youth retreats, we focus on a topic of particular importance and relevancy in the life of a teenager. This retreat centered on the theme, "Life or Death: Does It Really Matter?"

This turned out to be a perfect theme as we moved into a new retreat center and said goodbye to an old one. The topic came from teen SCYL president, Celie Bauer. She asked me at Fryeburg

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camp this summer, "Why we can't we know or decide when we die? Why can't we decide when we think we are ready for heaven?" Then she went further and asked, "Why is this life on earth necessary anyway? Why can't we just be born directly into the spiritual realm?" Rather than getting into a long discussion at that time, we instead decided to make it the Columbus Day retreat theme.

Rev. Susannah Currie wrote up this theme description: if heaven is the ultimate goal of human living, why do we have to go through a long life of frequent pain and suffering to get there? Why did God create human life on earth when so often human beings can hurt each other? Why don't people know when they're going to die, like Swedenborg did, so they can plan ahead for it? Many of Swedenborg's descriptions of heaven and hell help clarify for us what we need to do in *this* life, to grow our angel selves. He helps us to understand the consequences of choosing hellish things in this life, to assist us in discerning and choosing a heavenly path.

So, at this retreat we held sessions that dealt with the importance of our earthly existence, the lessons we need to learn here and the growth that needs to take place. This retreat was also about pain, suffering, life, and death. It was one of the heaviest topics we have taken on at a youth retreat.

We were blessed this year to have four ministers to guide us through this challenging



Rev. Kevin arriving in style

and demanding topic. Eleven teenagers attended, including four teens in a van from the Midwest.

Rev. Kevin Baxter started the retreat sessions off on Saturday morning with a discussion on heavenly communities and the physics and realities of the afterlife. He focused on our attraction for what we love and our repulsion of that which we do not love. One way he demonstrated this was with a neat little activity using small breakout groups and playing cards to concretely illustrate how members of com-

munities function and communicate thoughts and ideas.

The Rev. Susannah Currie led the afternoon session outdoors on the grass and focused on the five senses and their natural and spiritual qualities. Susannah had the teens do an activity where they moved from the earthly realm (brown and blue blankets representing earth and sky) to a multicolored heavenly blanket realm. In heaven, they gravitated to the community that suited them best according to their sensorial preference on earth.

The evening session was led by Rev. Kit Billings. Kit was new to the Columbus Day retreat scene and had not been involved in youth work for quite awhile. He jumped right in to assist Lori Steinhiser with the drive from Indiana and immediately developed a wonderful rapport with the teens. It was such a blessing to work and hang out with Kit. His session was powerful and emotional as he led us into the trying world of pain and suffering. We broke up into small groups and shared our experience of God. Together, we questioned God and how he relates to the world. Kit explained how dealing with pain and suffering led him into the ministry. He gave us permission to get angry with God if we needed to.

He prayed with us. He asked God for healing and guidance. Together, we worked through the difficulties of suffering, grieved over the cold reality of pain, and prayed for the Lord's will and understanding.

On Sunday morning, Rev. Lee Woofenden discussed suicide. Lee and I agreed to tackle this brutally harsh topic straight on, but with wisdom,

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Rev. Susannah Currie leads the teens to heaven.

Columbus Day Retreat

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care, and concern. Lee explained how suicide is not a viable solution to whatever trouble you are facing. He talked about how the spiritual world is a continuation or extension of our earthly life. Underlying problems that confront us and create turmoil in our life on earth follow us into the next life. Suicide is not an acceptable answer, and it does not solve anything. Lee added that although children that die young are raised by the highest, most loving angels, as angels in heaven they lack the hardening experience of earthly life and cannot do some of the more difficult heavenly tasks that angels who have lived a full life on earth can.

In the afternoon session, Rev. Lee led us in a topic that he called "Heaven = Earth 2.0." He talked about the similarities between a baby being born into this world and the experience of dying and being born into the spiritual world. He talked to us about the different phases of life that we go through and how essential each chapter in our life is. I particularly liked Lee's reference to how we are each like the potter's clay (Jeremiah 18:1–4). We, as clay, work on with our life on earth to form and reform our pot. We shape the clay into who we are. When we die, the pot is fired and we are set in our ways. Then, in the spiritual world, the pot becomes of use and tends to the tasks for which it was designed.

Rev. Kit Billings was our spiritual leader at the closing communion worship service on Sunday evening. Kit summarized the retreat and led us in communion. Katie, a teen new to SCYL, read scripture. We listened to a song selected by Rebecca from her iPod and enjoyed a guitar performance by Danny. The service was thoughtfully prepared and emotionally touching.

Of course, interspersed between sessions, meals, and sleep were plenty of opportunities for recreation, music,



SCYL president Celie standing where Blairhaven once stood

quiet reflection, and play. We played lots of Frisbee on the lawn, took walks down to the beach and played guitar and ukulele. A couple of girls took a meditative walk through the stone labyrinth on Saturday afternoon. One of them experienced a vision of a young David Bowie. Saturday night we all went out to our favorite bowling alley where we enjoyed rock and glow bowling! Sunday night, after our traditional spaghetti dinner and worship service, we feasted on brownies and ice cream while watching *The Avengers*.

This was a wonderful retreat. I thank the ministers, Kevin, Susannah, Kit, and Lee for their inspired leadership. I thank Lori and Kit for their dedication, time, and sheer endurance for driving the teens from the Midwest.

I thank Brittany Fleming for her help with the end of retreat cleanup. I thank the Massachusetts Association for providing the financial support so we can continue to hold retreats on Columbus Day weekend. And of course, I thank all the teens for attending this first retreat at Cedar Hill.

Monday morning after everyone else had left, Celie and I drove over to the site that was once Blairhaven. We got out of the car and spent awhile in the new park to just being present with

our memories. All buildings of Blairhaven are gone now. The wooden ramp down to the beach is gone. Grass has already solidly taken root and I found it difficult to even remember exactly where the main building once stood. I was surprised and delighted to see that the cairn that the teens built at the 2007 Columbus Day retreat remained undisturbed under a grove of trees. The outdoor sanctuary remains. Celie told me that she would like to get married there someday. The spirit of Blairhaven remains beautiful,

and it is a joy to know that we can come back and visit whenever we like. Goodbye Blairhaven. Hello Cedar Hill and the new town park.

I suppose a retreat on life and death could not be more perfectly timed. All that is finite and material must someday end. Before I drove away I snapped a picture of the sign to Duxbury's newest open space. At the bottom was printed, "Please remember this new park is a work in progress. More improvements to come!" A smile came over my face as I realized that our Blairhaven was still sharing wisdom and reflecting beauty to all who seek it. We are all works in progress. More improvements to come!

—Kurt Fekete,
Swedenborgian Church youth director

Book Review

Johnny Appleseed Gets a Fresh Look

Johnny Appleseed: The Man, The Myth, the American Story
Howard Means
Simon and Schuster

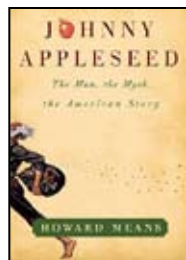
The Core of Johnny Appleseed: The Unknown Story of a Spiritual Trailblazer
Ray Silverman
Swedenborg Foundation Press

REVIEWED BY KEVIN BAXTER

Within the last two years, two new books on Johnny “Appleseed” Chapman have been published. The release of these books is notable because, unlike many popular accounts of Johnny Appleseed, they go beyond the myth to document and explore the historical man, including the religious character of this American folk hero.

Many people are unaware that Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio, founded by Swedenborgian ministers, is home to the largest collection of Johnny Appleseed materials in the world. This museum collection includes folklore as well as historical source material. The majority of the holdings are found in books and binders, but Johnny’s Bible and a variety of other artifacts are great fun to behold. It was there, while a student at Urbana, that I was drawn into the life of Johnny Appleseed. I was exposed to what we students called “The Price Book”: *Johnny Appleseed: Man and Myth*, written by Robert Price and published in 1954. (The copyright is now owned by the museum.) It is widely considered the definitive work on Johnny Appleseed, and is a worthwhile read, if a bit dry. I mention this as it informs my review of two new books about John Chapman.

In September 2011, Simon and Schuster published *Johnny Appleseed: The Man, The Myth, the American Story*,



by Howard Means, a former senior editor at *Washington Magazine*, a biographer, and an author of historical books. Means does a masterful job of

detailing the historical context of Johnny’s life. As I read, the pages stirred my imagination as they brought alive the period of Johnny’s life in a way that no other book has done. Most biographies of Chapman have focused so much on the man that the context of his life was lost.

Means ferrets out the popular stories and searches for the man behind them, sensitively honoring the myths while describing the historical man. He clearly states that the historical facts are in themselves not enough to get a holistic sense of who John Chapman was—quite possibly the mythic qualities hold the key that cannot be found in the historic records.

While Means does a great job of describing the historical context of a young country expanding westward and revealing the record of Johnny’s life, his lack of familiarity with Swedenborg’s writings and the New Church results in some slight misunderstandings of Johnny’s motivations and actions. In a few places he makes some unfortunate word choices describing Johnny’s lifestyle, reinforcing popular misconceptions. While his tone or words might suggest a lack of respect in several places (i.e. describing Chapman as a nutty religious mystic on the dust cover), the work as a whole shows an admiration for a person of unique character and compassion, a real human in spite of the myth.

On the heels of Mean’s book, Ray

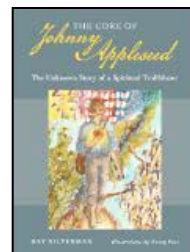
Silverman’s *The Core of Johnny Appleseed: The Unknown Story of a Spiritual Trailblazer*, released in September, 2012, seems to be to some

extent a dialogue with Means’s book, or at least a dialogue with the popular notion of Johnny depicted in dozens of books about him. Silverman is a New Church minister and professor at Bryn Athyn College (A New Church school) in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, who writes as an apologist for the New Church and Johnny Appleseed. The book is a quick read and does a good job of explicating the values that underlie John Chapman’s work.

The book is short, not nearly as exhaustive as either the Price book or Means’s exploration of the historical record. This sort of historical inquiry does not seem to be Silverman’s intention; rather, he locates Johnny alongside many other frontier characters, both mythical and historic. In this comparison, he shows the beauty of a frontiersman whose stories and life, in opposition to the popular version of the Wild West, do not revolve around violence. Johnny’s life was not about taming the wilderness, but living within it. He accomplishes this through pointing out how the stories and myths of Johnny’s life capture a romantic quality of who he was that is not found in deeds and records (though he does use journal entries to reinforce the root of his character).

The book is broken into four chapters. It begins with a romantic view of the wilderness and westward expansion, followed by a commentary on

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New Programs at SC.org

Live-Chat Thursdays Scheduled

Join us for our exciting array of new theme gatherings on Thursday evenings. 9–11 PM Eastern. These are online chats, held in our virtual [Fellowship Lounge](#).

- **First Thursday:** We discuss a portion of *Heaven and Hell* by Swedenborg.
- **Second Thursday:** This [Mini Course](#) explores an aspect of Swedenborg's teachings on life or church history, aligned with the annual denominational worship theme.
- **Third Thursday:** A [Theme Chat](#) on the worship theme of the month.
- **Fourth Thursday:** A [Book Discussion](#) in collaboration with the Swedenborg Foundation to chat about one of their newly-released books. Visit the discussion forum anytime during the month to post your thoughts.

We continue to base our worship services and sermons on the denominational worship theme for the year, *The Spiritual World*. The table below shows our monthly focus areas for the mini-courses and chats through July, 2013.

	1 st Thurs.	2 nd Thurs.	3 rd Thurs.	4 th Thurs.
Theme	Heaven & Hell	Mini-course on worship theme	Chat on worship theme	Book Discussion
Oct 2012		Swedenborg's Life and Times	Spirituality and Mental Illness	<i>The Core of Johnny Appleseed</i>
Nov	10–15	Swedenborg's Sanity	Reality of the Mind	<i>Ghost Brother Angel</i>
Dec	16–24	Angels	Angels and Demons	TBA
Jan 2013	25–31	Swedenborg's Visits to Heaven	Heaven	TBA
Feb	32–37	Swedenborg's Visits to Hell	Hell	TBA
Mar	38–42	Sin	Sin and Salvation	TBA
April	43–47	Salvation	Rebirth	TBA
May	48–51	Repentance	Repentance	TBA
June	52–56	Reformation	Reformation	TBA
July	57–63	Regeneration	Regeneration	TBA

Outreach: In September, our site had 15,259 visitors, of which 4,108 were individuals. Of the individuals, 3,425 were new and 453 were return visitors.

Contributing: We have met our minimum fund-raising goals for 2012 and we are extremely grateful to [all of you who contributed](#). Please help us now as we begin our 2013 fund-raising campaign. Consider a pledge for the year. To make a pledge or contribution, visit <https://secure8.nm-secure.com/swedenborgiancommunity/content.cfm?id=232>. We thank you for assisting this worldwide outreach for our denomination. ☩

Johnny Appleseed

Continued from page 135

how Johnny has been viewed by those who knew him and by history. Before getting to the final chapter, Silverman reviews the documented life of Johnny on the frontier. He ends his narrative with a well-crafted discussion of the fundamental values that underlay Johnny's life, something that is missing from other books.

The book is well-researched and written in a style that appeals to general readership—even younger readers. Silverman bases his account on the historical record and uses that record to draw conclusions about what Johnny meant and thought, informed by a full understanding of Swedenborg's teachings.

One of the most valuable sections of the book is an appendix of frequently asked questions about Johnny Appleseed—a must read for any follower of Swedenborg who is going to invoke John Chapman's name as a follower.

While not the authoritative biography, *The Core of Johnny Appleseed* is a must read for anyone who wants to understand the mindset of John Chapman. Moreover, I would say that it is the essential first book a person studying the life of this remarkable figure should read.

These two books bring the character of Johnny Appleseed into a richer light, rescuing him from the popular, one-dimensional portrait and placing him in the mainstream of American history and national character. Mean's book is widely distributed and may inspire people to learn more about Johnny. *The Core of Johnny Appleseed* is a treasure that I hope will be read and enjoyed by a large number of Swedenborgians as well as the general public. ☩

The Rev. Kevin Baxter is pastor of Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and co-editor of *Our Daily Bread*.

Book Review

Getting into Heaven—and Out Again

Getting into Heaven—and Out Again

Albrecht H. Gralle
Translator by Friederike Gralle
Swedenborg Foundation Press

REVIEWED BY WILMA WAKE



This book is an absolute delight. It is entertaining, short, and filled with clever illustrations. It is not easy to find a fun

read that explores Swedenborgian concepts, and this one is a gem.

The author, Albrecht H. Gralle, was born in Stuttgart, Germany. He has a master's degree in theology and has worked as a Baptist minister. He has been a lecturer and is an author with a number of published books.

In an interview, the Swedenborg Foundation asked him how he came across Swedenborg, and he replied,

In 1986 we came back from Sierra Leone, where we had worked within the Baptist Convention. I wrote a short book about a guardian angel named "Co," who started a diary when he had to supervise a man called Bertram. The book was called Bertram & Co. I was searching in the library for more information about angels. I came across Swedenborg's books and was fascinated, because the things he was writing about were logical, self-evident, and unique. As I read I said to myself, well, that's exactly what I've always thought. Since then I've tried to read as many of his writings as I could.

Albrecht himself is gracious and accommodating. This book was the September book of the month for the online SwedenborgianCommunity.org. (every 4th Thursday evening, we have a chat about one of the Foundation's re-

cent releases). Throughout September, we conversed on our discussion board about the book, and were privileged to have Mr. Gralle join us. Actually, he asked us to call him Albrecht!

The book challenges the reader to consider how difficult it could be to enter a world where everyone knows what we are thinking. We might want to get out after arriving there and seek some time to adjust to the changes. The book is told from the viewpoint of the reader being the one taking this journey to heaven and then to hell, and conversing with an angel about the experience—an angel with a great sense of humor!

My one caution about the book is that, to a Swedenborgian, it has a few bumps. Some of Gralle's vocabulary and concepts seem to have a bit of a Baptist flavor.

One example is that Gralle talks about the Christian Church, without defining the term, in a very positive light.

In our conversation, I asked this question:

Albrecht, how are you using "Christian Church?" Much of the time Swedenborg used it, he meant "old church," as opposed to the "new church," which is a kind of post-Christian oneness of all traditions. Are you seeing the Christian Church today as the new church of Swedenborg?

He responded,

Interesting questions about the church. Of course, Swedenborg uses the word church in a different way from how Christians are using it nowadays. He is using it more in the meaning of "God's kingdom" where it is not just Christians or Jews who are invited.

I believe, that the new church,

that Swedenborg is speaking of, is a group of those men, women and children all over the world living in different Christian denominations and religions who practice love in action and believe in one God, according to Jesus' words: The most important law is: Love God and your neighbor.

I can only hope that will someday be a big organization on earth, where all those people gather together.

Clearly, he has a new-church vision similar to that of Swedenborg's, but it doesn't come through clearly in his book, which seems to slant towards Swedenborg's old church.

The process of getting into heaven in this book involves more reflection on what we believe about God, than whether we lived a life of usefulness.

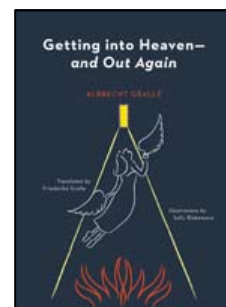
Gralle finds meaning in the suffering of Christ beyond that which most Swedenborgians do. I asked him about it, and he wrote,

So, for me, Christ's sufferings are very important because it shows that he was a real human on one side and that God can feel how it is, when people suffer. Maybe only suffering is the way of being transformed from a selfish person into a person who loves.

The book's eclectic theology is actually one of its strengths, as long as we read it with that understanding. He draws from a vast array of theology, history, and literature to explore the afterlife, and the result has considerable richness. Here is another exchange from the Foundation interview:

SF: Many of your descriptions

Continues on page 139



A Moment with Rev. Freeman



July brings us to the end of my eight-year ministry at LaPorte New Church. I have been asked to write about my experience of leaving the ministry, for retirement. To date, I have done very little writing and even less speaking about it. In a way, it all seems ineffable and beyond description in words or images, leaving one with that unutterable mix of gratitude and grief. Yes, grief—oh yes, those stages of grief so commonly known and so beautifully described by Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross.

The first stage is numbness or denial—I simply could not believe I have lived so long that I simply must retire, primarily due to my age. One can stay in denial for a very long time. My denial took the form of disbelief—I just couldn't believe it.

Then comes, two: the anger phase. While anger is expressed in many forms, what I seemed to experience mostly was akin to silent rage. I really didn't know how to talk about the pain I felt in connection with the anger and my deep sense of loss—I did not want to end my ministry.

In the third phase, commonly called "bargaining," I suddenly found myself describing to the board all the ways we could arrange my continuation of ministry. Soon, however, the awareness came that I was to move on.

Then came the fourth, depression, with all of its ramifications. For me this phase was one of a silent irritable mood. Outwardly, it seemed to me, not much had changed, but inwardly, a cross-over into another spiritual state had definitely taken place. But this was not the state I was accus-

tomed to dwelling in, nor the state I wanted. "No, oh no, not this," a voice seemed to cry from deep within. I had, it seemed, nowhere to go. I returned again and again to prayer and meditation. The words, "They that wait upon the Lord, He shall renew their strength," came to me almost as if the old prophet were speaking directly to me! So, waiting meant being honest with the denial, the anger, and the bargaining that came with it. I waited and waited, until one ill-defined day, some new light came and with it a door opened, and I walked in.

Through the open door I am finding the fifth phase, acceptance, more and more every day, sometimes in

great abundance! Life is once more as it should be. I did some very practical things, such as building a large deck out from the kitchen of my house into the great trees—a place to enjoy my morning coffee as I wait for the sun to come piercing through the trees, filling the north end of my deck in bright splashing sunshine. I am retiring, and I am happy—thanks be to God and to the good people of LaPorte New Church for their blessings.

To them and to all of you, I say "May the Lord's peace be with you, always . . . ALWAYS. . . Amen.

—Rev. Freeman Schrock

This article first appeared in the September 2012 *LaPorte Report*.

Investment Committee Sets Rate

The Investment Committee of General Convention met on October 27 in Newtonville, Massachusetts, to review and revise the investments and investment plan for the Common Fund.

The Common Fund was established to pool the investments of General Convention and member bodies (SHS, associations, and societies) in a single managed fund. The goal was to gain the benefits of investing larger sums, employing professional managers and providing a stable payout for income while maintaining growth equal to the sum of income, fees, and inflation.

The fund is managed to balance returns with risk and to minimize volatility. The risk and volatility levels of the fund are low in keeping with a conservative investment policy, but this policy presents a constant challenge to find returns that maintain a suitable level of payout and a fund balance that keeps up with inflation.

As of September 30, 2012, the year-to-date net yield of the fund is 9.5%. The performance in the third quarter (4.5%) made up for the poor performance of the second quarter.

Over time, the committee has maintained a distribution rate target of 4.5% of the fund, although in some years the committee allowed payout to exceed this. The payout rate for 2012 is 4.6%; the committee voted to decrease the payout rate to 4.5% to preserve capital in an increasingly difficult investment environment.

The fund policy is to invest 48% in domestic equity, 13% in international equity, 14% in global equity, 8% in real estate, 20% in domestic fixed income, and 2% in cash, and current investments are close to those percentages.

The future challenges include low rates of return on fixed income securities and a volatile stock market. The committee is exploring investing in some alternative instruments. ☩

Rev. Harvey Tafel Retirement Celebration

The Reverend Harvey Tafel will retire after forty years of dedicated service at Wayfarers Chapel.

Harvey, who was present at the cornerstone dedication in 1949, has been instrumental over the past four decades in Wayfarers Chapel's leadership and preservation.



The Wayfarers Chapel's board and staff will hold a dinner to celebrate Harvey's career, and everyone is invited.

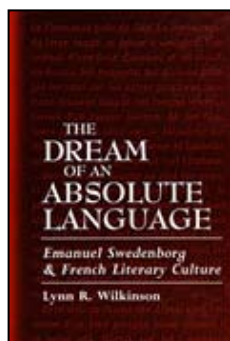
The celebration will take place at Ports O'Call Restaurant in San Pedro, California, on Friday, February 15, 2013, 6:00–8:00 PM.

RSVP: 310.377.1650 x 222 or jamesm@wayfarerschapel.org. ☩

The Dream of an Absolute Language

The Dream of an Absolute Language: Emanuel Swedenborg and French Literary Culture
Lynn R. Wilkinson
SUNY Press

Taking as its point of departure the two poems, "Correspondances" by Baudelaire and "Les Correspondances" by Alphonse-Louis Constant, *The Dream of an Absolute Language* traces the reception and popularization of several key Swedenborgian doctrines in late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French literature and popular culture, notably the doctrine of correspondences. Contrary to what Michel Foucault argued in his early *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, in nineteenth-century France, the word "correspondences" does not denote a break with "representation," at least as it was used by nineteenth-century French writers: rather it is intimately bound up with the taxonomic structures of



natural history—and also with the desire to understand the social world in terms of an ordered and controllable totality. Because it crops up in texts we now classify as canonical and also those outside the canon, and because it is so clearly related to notions of literary structure and effect, the word "correspondences" and its transformations in late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France offers a vantage point for discerning how artists and writers defined their work both within and against a context of cultures defined as elite, "popular," and even ideological.

"Wilkinson offers a thorough and scholarly treatment of an important area of nineteenth-century, mostly French thought, more particularly of the relations between mystical theories about language and poetic practice. Much of what she offers in the way of scholarship is quite new. I found it impressive not only from a scholarly point of view but also quite readable; it will be cited considerably." —Frank Paul Bowman, University of Pennsylvania

Lynn R. Wilkinson is assistant professor of Scandinavian and comparative literature at the University of Texas, Austin. ☩

Getting Into Heaven

Continued from page 137

of heaven and hell are taken from Swedenborg's writings, but there are also some things that are different—for example, the tents where people who have experienced great trauma on earth are given time to rest and recover. Where did those ideas come from?

AHG: I had a vaguely remembered idea of these tents from one of George McDonald's books. He was the spiritual teacher of C. S. Lewis. In his novel *Lilith* there is a scene where the dead lie in big, comfortable beds and rest, dreaming about their lives. I changed the scene a little bit. Instead of a huge house I used a tent and put more comfort into the individual sleeping places.

Since I work as a counselor for emergency patients—in German we call it a *Notfallseelsorge*—I always thought that there must be something in the spiritual world where people who had gone through terrible experiences could relax when they first arrive.

This is not necessarily a book to give to someone who knows nothing about Swedenborg and wants to learn about his views of the afterlife. I think this book could be confusing, since its theology spans Swedenborg, the Baptist Church, and C. S. Lewis!

It is, however, a book to share with friends—both Swedenborgians and non-Swedenborgians—for a lively discussion about the next world. It is a provocative book to use in journaling and prayer. It is perfect for a lively church discussion group.

I guarantee that you will have a pleasant time reading this little book, enjoying the illustrations, and chuckling at its humor. ☩

Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is minister of the online Swedenborgian Community, www.swedenborgiancommunity.org. She is also a social worker in private practice in Maine.

Spirit Without Walls

Continued from page 129

and the view of the River Danube.

God's grace found me everywhere I went, and so I never felt alone. I was fortunate in that the one longtime friend I had when I arrived was generous in her introductions. People I met through her invited me to events, from the local Hash to salon concerts and wine tastings, where they introduced me to other interesting people, many of them leaders in business, academic, civic and artistic life in Budapest. Here I found a community of Internationals and expats, who know what it is like to be a stranger in town and take pains to assist the newly arrived. Knowing people's tenure here can be transient, they tend to be more open to new friends than a more settled population might be.

Making it a policy to accept any and all invitations that were not prohibitively expensive or threatening to life and limb, I went to clubs, dinners, concerts, yoga classes, luncheons, hikes, shopping excursions, and parties. Within weeks of arrival I was traveling in a social circle made up of many nationalities: Filipino, Finnish, Russian, British, Scott, Serbian, German, Austrian, African, Chinese, Canadian and, of course, American and Hungarian.* One of the differences in life here is a sort of formality, which I found refreshing coming from a world of pot-lucks on paper plates. People cook, entertain, and invite, and one is expected to reciprocate, which was fine with me, as I, too, like to cook and entertain.

My blog for the *Huffington Post* also served as an entrée to opportunities. I soon began writing for a new, edgy Central European monthly, called *THINK*, thus introducing my think-

ing to a wide local audience. So I went about my days, following my quirky interests of poetry, art, yoga, classical music and jazz, food, conversation, travel, and wine, enjoying my social life and cobbling together my professional life out of things I have long done: counseling, coaching, and writing. Ministry did not seem an option in a secular community in a foreign land, far from church offices and supports.

But when you are a minister, you give your life to something that can have some surprises in store. In a church or not, I was still a minister in my being and in the community of people I encountered, filling priestly, prophetic, and pastoral roles. So as I proceeded to construct a life in Budapest, I did

Like a GPS, God was calling me back to a path and a ministry suited to my gifts and loves, which was to prove fulfilling and joyous beyond my wildest dreams.

what I love, what was and is a self-expression for me: spiritual counseling and coaching; presiding at weddings; bringing people together in community; singing God's praises; speaking my faith; talking about spiritual values and meaning; addressing correspondences; talking to and about the soul. I held dinners and salons where people could come together to talk about things that matter. Within months, I had hosted a Christmas dinner for twelve, a New Year's salon on the state of the world, and a multi-cultural tea and poetry reading, all out of my tiny galley kitchen. At the request of friends, I even began breaking bread and serving communion at dinners. People loved it, as they felt free to share goodness and truth in the tradition, but without the exclusionary baggage, of their ancestors. I held women's luncheons and teas, in my flat and then other places.

Perhaps because I had no agenda, other than loving people and sharing my love of Life Itself, the love, wisdom, and generosity of spirit, and sense of fun that have infused my life since moving here, I attracted people. They gathered around, relating to me as guide and wise woman, much like I imagine people related to priestesses of old. This is not an authoritarian position, but a position of natural authority. In the reflections of my new friends and compatriots, I began to see who I am for people: someone who listens with interest and compassion; supports people's gifts and loves without judgment; empowers the feminine; asks tough questions in a loving way, allowing people to see themselves and the world newly; creates conversations that would not otherwise happen; engenders community; critiques consumer values; lifts up the sacred in all its forms; expresses gratitude; and celebrates Life Itself, even in the face of difficulties.

I had been residing in Budapest for several months when I realized that I was doing ministry in spite of myself. People said they were having conversations that mattered, conversations they did not usually have. I began to think, maybe ministry is a form of conversation. After all, isn't that what Jesus did with his disciples? Eat, drink, and have conversations?

I was doing what was natural for me, almost as if I couldn't help it. Ministry was what I do because of who I am. Like a GPS, God was calling me back to a path and a ministry suited to my gifts and loves, which was to prove fulfilling and joyous beyond my wildest dreams.

When the opportunity arose to write a proposal for funding to expand and develop what I was already doing, I took the chance, with my heart in my throat. I had no expectations of winning the grant. But, at the urgings of a few colleagues, I wrote: "How could

Continues next page

* Roberts, W. Hunter, "Notes of a Temporary Ex-Pat #5: In Praise of Ex-Pats," *Huffington Post*, May 5, 2010 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/w-hunter-roberts/notes-of-a-temporary-ex-p_b_560788.html

Continued from preceding page

I not apply for the start-up grant for Swedenborgian Spiritual Entrepreneurship, when that is what I am?" A couple of weeks later I got the word: my proposal had been accepted by PUSH, as the first grantee under the spiritual entrepreneurship grant, and Spirit Without Walls Swedenborgian Ministry (though it had no name as yet) was born.

Now I would have to become intentional and thoughtful, instead of operating by instinct. I asked: What would ministry consist of in a secular society, when there is no church, no congregation, no Sunday morning, and no ready body of people looking for such things? And, as the grant was only for one year, I also had to figure out how to make the ministry self-sufficient financially. Fortunately, PUSH had wisely appointed Rev. Rich Tafel as my coach, so I had someone to think with about this very interesting problem: how to create a new church in the old world. It was, and still is, a challenge, starting with the location.

Hungary is caught between the forces of striving to become a modern European democracy as a recently admitted (2004) member of the EU, and regressive forces pulling to return to authoritarian values*. Twenty-five years after the end of the Russian occupation, the economy is in serious recession. People feel angry and resigned that the promise of capitalism, as seen on "Dallas," was not fulfilled, and many are just trying to survive with rising prices and a shrinking market.

The prime minister, Victor Orban, officially declared Hungary a Christian nation. So the churches, or at least the ones that are officially recognized, are supported by the State. Religion is not so much a matter of personal spiri-

tuality, as it is of institutional affiliation. Consider the gap between belief and belonging, which is the opposite of the gap in the US. Where in the US, you have far more people who profess a belief in God, or a higher power, than those who are actually affiliated with a church or denomination, in Hungary, 56% of the population register officially as Catholic and 16.8% as Protestant, leaving a mere 25.6% unaffiliated.



Rev. Hunter Roberts promoting the wedding ministry at Spirit Without Walls in Budapest

ated. Yet, when asked in a Gallop poll in Europe, "Does religion occupy an important place in your life?" 59% of Hungarians answered "No." To further confound the statistics, consider that when asked, not about affiliation (which determines what percentage of the State funds each denomination gets), but about religious identification and attendance, the figures change substantially. According to the most recent European Values Study, reported in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* (Draulans and Halman 2005), 42% of the Hungarian population was un-churched, splitting the population almost evenly between Roman Catholic (40%) and secular (42%).

It would seem to my analysis and observation that people who are religious go to church mostly by rote, rather than for meaning and guidance. Where, then, is the depth dimension?

Where do they find the ground of their being in such a world?

Budapest is a city pulled by past and future. Many of Hungary's traditions, rooted in village life, are being lost and lamented, as the younger people flee the villages and head for the city or beyond. It is noteworthy that many of them go back to their villages on weekends, and those living abroad usually return here to marry, often with their foreign-born betrothed. Thus, educated young people living in cities seem caught in fragmented identities, with strong family ties on the one hand and a paucity of economic opportunities for them here on the other, trying to cope with traditional expectations and the heightened ambitions associated with being part of the EU in a global economy. This is further complicated by the rhetoric and actions of the government raising the specter of a bygone golden age and, many people believe, attempting to return to the past, or worse, turn away from Western Democracy altogether.** After its heralded and celebrated acceptance into the EU less than eight years ago, Hungary seems to be turning away from European economic ties, and ignoring EU sanctions and mandates, going its own way.

Let me share an anecdote, which shaped my understanding of the people. On a summer evening in the outskirts of Budapest, I shared a picnic with two Hungarian women in the hills, overlooking the ruins of a castle where there was to be a jazz concert. It was the birthday of one of the women, so I asked her my standard birthday questions: What are you happy to leave behind from the past year? What did you learn in the past year? What do you want in the coming year?

She seemed baffled by my questions, unable to answer with anything beyond a circumstantial response. "Learn?" she repeated, shaking her head, "I didn't

Continues on page 142

* Gati, Charles, "Hungary's Backward Slide," New York Times Op Ed, 12 Dec. 2011

** Gati Dec. 2011, op. cit.

Spirit Without Walls

Continued from page 141

learn anything.” She had no reflection on any life lessons, nothing she would do differently if she had the opportunity, no spiritual, psychological insights or even relational reflections. This woman, a lawyer, had had a tough year. She had been unemployed, and had been dealing with various other personal and family challenges. Yet her answers indicated that she attributed her circumstances to nothing but dumb luck, and the same of her future prospects. In other words, she invested neither past nor future with meaning. In her mind, it was all random, and neither she nor any force, divine or otherwise, could change it. She was powerless in the face of circumstance and without hope. It is meaning that elevates suffering and makes it bearable. If there were no meaning, there was nothing to learn and no possibility of regeneration or spiritual evolution. The coming year would be different, or not, depending on chance and the whims of fate.

In literature and in daily life, Hungarians tend to see themselves as victims of cruel, meaningless and capricious fate, under which their nation and people have always suffered, and always will. Simultaneous with the legacy of the past, the forces and phenomena of high tech and other post-modern influences are at work here, especially in the capital city, as everywhere in the Western World, leading to a population dealing with the following assumptions and attitudes, strangely in common with other Millennials in the developed world:

- A distrust of authority, in this case, due to the legacy of forty years of Russian communism, and twenty years of corruption since
- A dependency on authority, due to a highly authoritarian educational system and society

- An especial distrust of religious authority, due to the high number of pastors who succumbed to Communist pressure to inform on their flock
- Fragmentation of identity between the traditional family, the opportunities associated with being part of the European Union, and moving into a global economy
- A legacy of atheism and Biblical illiteracy tending toward nihilism and sense of life being hard and meaningless
- Moral cynicism, grounded in the belief and evidence that everyone else is out for him- or herself
- Media and entertainment industry as a force for moral apathy and decline (Hungary is known as the pornography capital of Europe).

So what can I do here, and how can such a modest effort hope to impact life in such a complex set of problems and forces? Contradictory forces are at play on all levels: a high divorce rate, in a social order in which single women are marginalized and the only accepted unit of participation and trust is the couple and family; a falling birth rate in a society with tremendous pressure to have children; strong family ties keeping young people at home, and an exodus of many of the brightest to other countries where they have greater opportunities to advance their careers.

Add to this a large group of people living here who barely speak the language, have different customs, and very different expectations of life. These are the estimated 40,000 expatriates from all over the world. Some work for international corporations, some are refugees, some are married to Hungarians, many have family ties and ancestors here, some are retired, and some, like me, just came, because we like the life here. There is art and beauty, concerts, covered markets, and little cafes. Also, to be frank, our money goes further here. On the other hand, many of

these people seem to feel cast adrift, without meaning or roots provided by home and family.

I cannot hope to begin to alleviate, or even to understand, the various causes of suffering of all these people, caught in a cyclone of social and economic factors affecting their lives and prospects for the future. Rather, what I hoped to do is to bring a sense of connection with the sacred, so that the people served by this ministry, be they Hungarians or Internationals, could come to know and experience the force of Life Itself as benevolent, a presence providing a sacred context for their lives and existential choices, and redeeming their suffering. In a society where nihilism is the norm, in which a spiritual understanding of one's situation is all but non-existent, I hoped to provide living hope and regeneration. In the truest sense, I hoped to bring faith to the faithless. It was out of that commitment that I designed the ministries of *Spirit Without Walls*. The purpose was to create a Swedenborgian, post-modern ministry serving people who don't go to church, modeling ways to minister to spiritual needs in secular society. ☩

The Rev. Hunter Roberts is a Swedenborgian minister and a D.Min. candidate at the Graduate Theological Union.

Part 2 of this article will appear in the December Messenger.

Former Home of Rev. Dorothea Harvey Wins Award

The charming Arts and Crafts home that Rev. Harvey bequeathed to SHS has won *The Boston Globe's* Best Addition of the Year award for the sensitive restoration and addition by the new owners. Go to <http://www.bostonglobe.com/magazine/2012/10/20/best-addition/ny0A1sp6ohGL310VgrpvfJ/story.html>. ☩

Minister Transitions

In late 2011, Rev. Junchol Lee was installed as the minister of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church



Rev. Junchol Lee's installation at the SF Church (l to r): search chair Robert Carr, Rev. Lee, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence (SHS dean), Judy Moran (then president)

after serving the Western Canada Conference and the Calgary New Church Society. He resides in San Francisco with his wife and two young children.

Rev. Freeman Schrock retired from ministry after eight years in the LaPorte (Indiana) New Church pulpit. (See Rev. Schrock's message and photograph on page 138.)

Stepping into the pulpit at LaPorte New Church, Rev. Kit Billings moved to LaPorte this past summer with his



Rev. Kit Billings and Rev. Susannah Currie

wife and daughter from Omaha, Nebraska, where he had been a hospital chaplain.

Rev. Susannah Currie was installed as pastor of the Bridgewater New

Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts in 2011. She lives with her husband in Barrington, Rhode Island.

Rev. Andy Stinson was called to ministry at the

Second Congregational Church of Warren, Maine, in August. The church is an independent Congregational Church that belongs to the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, a national association of independent congregations that is not affiliated of the United Church of Christ (UCC). Andy was recently in active military service as a chaplaincy captain in Iraq and remains a chaplain in the US Army Reserve. Andy lives in Woolwich, Maine. ☩



Rev. Andy Stinson

Angels Coming to Urbana University

In *Company with Angels: Seven Rediscovered Tiffany Windows*, the unique exhibit of seven stained glass windows, was created by Tiffany and Company in 1903 for the Church of the New Jerusalem in Cincinnati. In 1964, the church was razed to make room for a highway; the windows were rescued and then stored in members' homes for decades. A nationwide fundraising effort in the nineties allowed the Swedenborgian Church at Temeos in West Chester, Pennsylvania, to buy the windows and save them.

In 2005, when the windows were confirmed to be Tiffany artwork, the nonprofit organization, In Company with Angels, Inc., was formed to fin-

ish the restoration and eventually share the windows with others.

Urbana University and the Miller Center for Visual Arts will host an exhibit of the windows from November 10, 2012–December 30, 2013, in the Swedenborg Memorial Library on campus in Urbana, Ohio. The exhibit and a variety of symposia, programs, and tours are open to the public.

On Saturday, November 10, 2012, at 7:00 PM., Rev. Susannah Currie, pastor of the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, will present a program on the history of the windows and the In Company with Angels organization. The exhibit will officially open to the

public at 8:00 PM.

The grand opening weekend will continue with a public presentation entitled "Angel Music" by Reverend Ken Turley, president of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, on Sunday, November 11, 3–4 PM, in the library. Following the presentation, Revs. Currie and Turley will be available to answer questions.

A full schedule of the hours of the exhibit and programs are listed at www.urbana.edu/resources/community/angels.html.

For information, contact Julie McDaniel, director of Library Services at Urbana University at 937-484-1337 or by email at jmcdaniel@urbana.edu. ☩

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.

New Swedenborgian Outreach Website

BY LEE WOOFENDEN

You are invited to visit "Spiritual Insights for Everyday Life" at: <http://leewoof.org/>.

The goal of this website is to reach out to ordinary non-Swedenborgians with spiritual insights and inspiration that will help in negotiating the questions, issues, and struggles that we face every day during our spiritual apprenticeship here on earth.

As stated on its "About" page, "Spiritual Insights for Everyday Life" provides new material at least once a week offering:

- Satisfying answers to big (and small) life questions
- Spiritual viewpoints on current events
- A deeper look at popular culture
- How-to articles on practical spiritual living
- A Christian perspective that will engage your heart and your brain

Please stop by and browse for a while. If you like what you see, you can sign up to receive updates when new articles are posted.

Everything at the "Spiritual Insights for Everyday Life" is written as if the reader knows nothing at all about Swedenborg or the Bible. It approaches Swedenborgian and Biblical topics from the angles of media events, popular culture, stories in the news, life questions, and practical issues of spiritual living. It doesn't require readers to know a specialized Swedenborgian vocabulary. Instead of expecting people to come to us conceptually, it brings our beliefs to people where they are.

When you talk to friends and family, neighbors and co-workers, does the conversation ever turn to spiritual issues? Do you wish there were something you could give them to read, or some website you could send them to that would really click for them?

My hope is that the expanding library of contemporary articles at the Spiritual Insights for Everyday Life website will give you a place to send your friends where they can learn about our beliefs in an approachable, enjoyable, and practical way.

The Rev. Lee woofenden is a Swedenborgian minister living in Middleboro, Massachusetts.

