

In Company with Angels at Urbana U **Scholars-in-Residence Introduce Exhibit**

In *Company with Angels* was the title, theme, and focus as Rev. Susannah Currie and Rev. Ken Turley traveled as scholars-in-residence to Urbana University (UU) in Ohio to celebrate the opening weekend of the traveling exhibit of seven stained glass windows. The presentation, entitled *In Company with Angels: Seven Rediscovered Tiffany Windows*, was on display at the Swedenborg Memorial Library at UU from November 10 through December 30.



Betsy Coffman, Susannah Currie, and Ken Turley with the Angel Windows at Urbana University

On Saturday, November 10, at the Swedenborg Library on the campus, Rev. Currie gave the opening presentation with a brief explanation of the history and artistry of the Tiffany legacy and then covered the restoration and creation of the windows as an exhibit and their subsequent travels.

On Sunday morning, Betsy Coffman, consecrated lay leader of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church, invited both colleagues to join her in leading the service, with Rev. Currie preaching on “The Seasons of Spiritual Life” and Rev. Ken Turley leading the congregation in singing, including two original songs. All shared in a time of reflection

on what “seasons” they are experiencing in their lives, and many of the congregation joined for lunch afterwards at a local restaurant. A lot of positive energy and enthusiasm flowed freely.

Sunday afternoon, Rev. Ken, composer and producer of the music, gave a presentation on the commission and the inspirational process of composing and recording the music heard on the CD “Meditations on the Seven Angels.” He discussed the relationship of the seven angels to the seven modes and the correspondence of instruments, such as voice and winds to the heart and strings to the mind. There followed a question and answer period

and then a reception.

At the invitation of Dr. Stephen Jones, president of Urbana University, and his wife Judy, Susannah and Ken spent Sunday evening in pleasant company dining on excellent fare in their home.

On Monday, Susannah and Ken presented at various classes on subjects ranging from religion to business to Johnny Appleseed, the common thread holding it together being “Swedenborgian theology.” At a brown bag lunch, Ken and Susannah led a discussion with students, faculty, and

staff on the topic of “Swedenborg 101,” which some said gave them the most concise and useful summary of Swedenborg’s life and teachings that they had heard to date.

Monday evening, they jointly presented the Scholar-in-Residence Lecture entitled, “The Spiritual Significance of Seven.” They outlined the occurrence of seven in a variety of areas in natural life and presented the correspondences of the seven days of Creation, the seven transformations of the Covenant, and the series of seven symbols that open the Book of Revelation; the seven candlesticks, the seven

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Songs of Innocence

BY KEVIN BAXTER

It has been about eight years since Missing Rachel, a philanthropic *a capella* ensemble, released its 2004 first album, *The Thundered Word*, to benefit the restoration and ministry of Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It has been a busy and blessed eight years since: several weddings, a few professional transitions and career advances, new homes, new academic heights, six kids (and counting!), an epiphany or twenty, and of course lots of laughter and tears and singing and living. Although most of the group's members no longer reside in the immediate Cambridge area, in July of 2011 they gathered at Swedenborg Chapel to record a new album.

Songs of Innocence is a collection of beloved hymns, lullabies, and children's songs written by New Church musicians Lori and John Odhner; the album also includes a setting of the Lord's Prayer by the late Heather Childs. The album's title is derived from William Blake's poetic anthology *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and the album includes a setting of Blake's poem "The Lamb." *Songs of Innocence* offers the same ethereal harmonies and clear voices that characterized Missing Rachel's first album.

Missing Rachel is devoting the

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Proposals Sought: Bridge Book Awards

The General Church of the New Jerusalem and the Swedenborg Foundation are pleased to announce the third annual Bridge Book Awards competition.

The Bridge Book Awards were created to encourage new and experienced authors to write about the ideas of Emanuel Swedenborg. If interested, submit a query letter, outline, and sample chapter.

Up to three winners will receive a \$1,500 prize, be honored at an award ceremony, and have their entries considered for publication by the Swedenborg Foundation Press.

The deadline for proposal submission is February 1, 2013. Winners will be announced in April 2013.

funds generated by this album to the protection of innocence; the proceeds will go to several organizations that aid and protect children. These organizations vary in their mission focus: some are orphanages, while others assist children within the family setting. Visit <http://missingrachel.baxtonia.com> for more information, track samples, and ordering details. ☩

Correction: The author of the article "2012 Annual Meeting of the Pacific Coast Association" in the December *Messenger* was John Robert Gwynn.

Church Calendar

- January 18–21: SPLATz Retreat (ages 10–13) • LaPorte New Church • LaPorte, IN
- January 29: Emanuel Swedenborg's birthday
- April 13: General Council Teleconference Meeting

We are looking for fresh, contemporary ways of understanding God's deep wisdom as revealed through Swedenborg's works and its relevance to everyday life. A "bridge book" helps readers connect with that wisdom through seeing it applied to other disciplines and to everyday life. In addition, these books provide a "bridge" to understanding the deeper aspects of Swedenborgian theology.

The book proposals might be philosophical, personal, fresh, fact-filled, inspiring, creative, funny, ironic, smart, or engaging but, above all, filled with honesty and a search for truth.

For more information and forms, go to www.swedenborg.com. ☩

the Messenger

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Central Office Needs Your Help

One of your General Council's major responsibilities is visioning and planning for the future of the denomination. For many years, our business office (Central Office) has been located in the Boston area. When the Theological School was in Newton, space was available to bring our records and staff together. Times have changed. The Theological School moved to Berkeley and Central Office moved to the Newtonville Church. Many of the reasons for locating Central Office in the Boston area no longer exist. While we have no immediate plans to relocate, it seems rea-

sonable to look at opportunities within the denomination for future planning.

Would your group have an interest in having Central Office located at your center? Do you have facilities that could be made available at a reasonable cost to house the business office of the Church? Or is there a location in your area that you might suggest?

If the Central Office were to function again as a meeting center, would your facility be adequate to hold meetings of various sizes and are there reasonably priced lodging and catering facilities nearby for larger meetings? Are you close enough to an airport to allow

people to fly into meetings easily?

Please contact us if you think there is potential for considering your facility for future planning.

Also, we are constantly looking at the functions of Central Office to determine if it is providing the maximum benefit to the denomination. If there is a service or use that Central Office could provide that you feel would add value to the organization, please let us know. Even if you are not in a position to house Central Office, your input will help us in our planning process.

If you are interested, please contact us (email manager@swedenborg.org) as soon as possible. We would like to have your initial input by March 1 2013. ☩

Letter from the President



Dear Friends,

We begin a new year, now in the dead of winter. I find it both ironic and metaphorically perfect, that the "new" finds its birth in the death of the "old." What could be a more important message for our church than this? We seem to be in the mid-winter cycle as a church. From all outward appearances the impression is one of diminishing, drawing inward, and a distinct lack of outward growth.

But just as one cannot see the life within the bare trees and bushes of winter yet has faith that as the cycle of the seasons moves forward there will be a renewal of life, so too we must have faith in the life within the churches, societies, groups, ministries and people that lives within the outward structures of this denomination. Individually and collectively we are doing intense self-reflection and soul-search-

ing. We are looking carefully at what is and courageously at what might be. We are preparing ourselves to move in old and familiar ways, and in new and adventurous ways.

Sitting here in Maine, I am well prepared for winter and already looking forward with anticipation to spring. And so also in my position as president, I am well prepared for what is, but also looking with great anticipation for what is to come. Poised at the beginning of a new year, may we recommit ourselves to serving the Lord and our neighbors of all kinds. May we look past outward forms to the living spirit within that is the life of who we are, and may that spirit build its connection to the roots of where we come from in preparation for a new blossoming and the bearing of fruits to take into the future of where we are going.

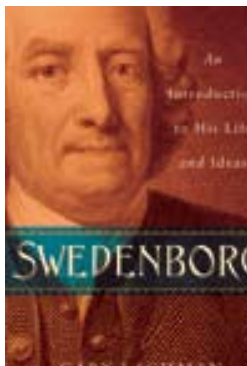
We are in our second year of our seven-year cycle, the Year of the Spiritual World. With creativity, courage, endurance, and initiative may we all find our inner strength and play our part of the divine spirit manifesting in the material realm, that phenomenon we call The Second Coming, and may it be for us all, a Happy New Year!

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

Book Review

From Blondie to Swedenborg

REVIEWED BY KATHY SPEAS

Swedenborg: An Introduction to His Life and IdeasGary Lachman
Penguin Books

For the purposes of this book review, Gary Lachman, author of *Swedenborg: An Introduction to His Life and Ideas*, will be discussed in his role as a researcher on the history of consciousness and the scholarly author of ten books on mysticism and the unseen world, not in his role as Gary Valentine, the bassist of the '70s punk band Blondie.

Gary Lachman has authored books on the mystic P. D. Ouspensky, the educator Rudolf Steiner, the psychologist Carl Jung, and the prototypical and perhaps mythical father of alchemy, Hermes Trismegistus, as well as books on mystical consciousness, politics and the occult, and two *Dedalus* collections (an *Occult Reader*, and writings about literary suicides). (As Gary Valentine, he played bass on “Heart of Glass,” “One Way or Another,” and “Call Me,” songs that have a near-mystical ability to enter consciousness and repeat themselves over and over for much of an afternoon.)

Swedenborg: An Introduction to His Life and Ideas is a short (135 pages), well-researched, easily readable study of Swedenborg, whom Lachman describes as the Scandinavian DaVinci, a figure he encountered again and again over the years in researching individual mystics and the experience of consciousness at various levels. Lachman describes finding Swedenborg wherever he turned, and draws a parallel with Swedenborg’s description of how an-

gels in heaven see God wherever they turn. He writes, “Whichever way my research went, there was Swedenborg.” The book springs from an interest in the history of consciousness, specifically mystical experience, rather than from a focus on theology and religion, and

gives a rich and interesting perspective on Swedenborg through a non-Swedenborgian lens.

There are four concise chapters: chapter one covers Swedenborg’s biography, with speculation on aspects of his life and his character that shaped his consciousness; chapter two highlights Swedenborg’s thoughts about the nature of the cosmos and the soul, and draws parallels to later intellectual discourse, including contemporary chaos theory and quantum physics; chapter three focuses on Swedenborg’s own state of consciousness; and chapter four examines what Swedenborg saw and heard in his journeys into the unseen world. This is in contrast to treatments of Swedenborg’s life and works which are either exhaustively biographical, or are focused on specific writings, and are generally from more of a theological or religious perspective. Lachman cites Signe Toksvig’s *Emanuel Swedenborg: Scientist and Mystic*, and Lars Berquist’s *Swedenborg’s Secret*, as well as Wilson Van Dusen’s *The Presence of Other Worlds*, as the sources he found most useful. Lachman draws more from Swedenborg’s *Spiritual Diary* and *Journal of Dreams* than he does from Swedenborg’s more theological writings, which he describes as “rewarding, but difficult terrain.”

Lachman begins with an apologia concerning “the occult,” which he considers as “certain phenomena that cannot be explained by our usual rationalist assumptions, but are nevertheless real. . . . an indication of just how little we know about the world and ourselves.” This understanding of the occult, in which Lachman locates Swedenborg, is in contrast to views which either dismiss unexplainable experience as superstition, or uncritically accept any non-rational experience as higher consciousness. Lachman feels that Swedenborg’s association with the occult and the focus on his clairvoyance and mystical states have been a hindrance to scholarly attention to Swedenborg’s work, which Lachman describes as “a metaphysics that transcended the limits of space and time, and put the human heart and mind at the center of reality.” Lachman also points to the cultural centrality of the Bible in Swedenborg’s time compared with our less Biblically-literate era, the changing nature of scientific inquiry, and the immense breadth and depth of Swedenborg’s work—a “gargantuan body of material” ranging from the spiritual and biblical to the scientific, political (there is speculation that Swedenborg was a spy), and even poetic, as reasons for his obscurity.

Lachman observes the intensely harrowing journey between poles of intense agony and nearly unbearable ecstasy that Swedenborg underwent prior to his intromissions into the spiritual world, a crisis of several years which Swedenborg describes in his *Journal of Dreams* and *Spiritual Diary*. Lachman is disturbed by Swedenborg’s self-reproachments and sense of sinfulness, especially related to Swedenborg’s ap-

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parently robust appreciation of sexuality. He places his discomfort with Swedenborg's obsession with sin in the context of his own social location as a reader in a post-religious, sexually liberated culture reading the works of a man writing in a culture in which biblical Christianity and its accompanying social codes were the norm. Lachman notes that the kind of change Swedenborg underwent is something of an archetypal hero's journey. "The aim of all esoteric practice is some form of rebirth, and in preparation for this, the neophyte must shed his old self, generally not a pleasant experience." Lachman's biographical summary of Swedenborg's life before his spiritual crisis includes details about Swedenborg's lifelong development of breath control and speculation about the nature of Swedenborg's apparently heightened sense of smell. Possible encounters with the Kabbalah, alchemy, and various aspects of esoteric traditions during Swedenborg's extensive travels are also presented as possibly formative experiences for his extraordinary consciousness.

Lachman cites *The Principia*, the metaphysical part of Swedenborg's earliest scientific work, as the beginning of Swedenborg's "long quest to find a scientific proof for the reality of the soul . . . that the senses would have to accept." He compares Swedenborg's speculations on the nature of the soul with the work of later writers, including Francis Crick, co-discoverer of DNA; Rudolf Steiner, spiritual philosopher and inspiration for the Waldorf method of education; David Bohm, contemporary quantum physicist; Rupert Sheldrake, contemporary biologist; and Benoit Mandelbrot, the mathematician whose work is associated with chaos theory, all pointing to the efforts of contemporary neuroscience to explain and predict consciousness. Lachman sees Swedenborg's re-

ports of encounters with spiritual beings on other planets as anticipating the "anthropic cosmological principle" of the mid 1980s, which recognizes the myriad cosmic coincidences and improbable circumstances that had to come into play in order for sentient life to exist, suggesting that "we seem inevitable." Lachman gives several pages to a clarifying discussion of Swedenborg's complex Doctrine of Series and Degrees, which the author perceives as linking Swedenborg's scientific observations (body/matter) with the reality of experience (soul/spirit).

Lachman continues to follow Swedenborg from his initial period of spiritual searching, through his quest to understand the soul, and on to his foray into his dreams. Dream interpretation in the 1740s was not the common topic of interest it is in today's post-Freudian world. There were not dream groups, dream workshops, books about dreams, or a common lexicon of dream images. Self-actualization had not yet trumped religious piety in the culture. Lachman draws upon Wilson Van Dusen's work to speculate the role of Swedenborg's dream experiences in his overall spiritual development from the seeker struggling between soul and body to the chronicler of the afterlife and unseen worlds. To Lachman, Swedenborg's (and, by extension, any seeker's) "going within" was his way of going to God. Lachman goes into great detail describing the struggles and conflicts in Swedenborg's (and, again, in any seeker's) journey into the light and dark of his own psyche as he sought unity with the Divine. Lachman goes so far as to speculate about Swedenborg's sanity, citing efforts at the time to have Swedenborg declared insane and/or heretical, but dismisses the conclusion that Swedenborg was mentally ill in light of the facts that all the while Swedenborg had these mystical experiences, he functioned in high-level positions in the government and the sci-

entific community, and enjoyed a wide range of healthy and harmonious social relationships. Lachman attributes Swedenborg's mystical experiences to an extended, controlled state of hypnogogia, the state we all experience momentarily, either consciously or unconsciously, upon falling asleep and/or waking up.

This book culminates in a discussion of what Swedenborg saw and heard in heaven and hell. Lachman explains correspondences as a language, and seems to have a good grasp of "the alphabet of heaven" and how the material, seen world receives the spiritual, unseen reality. Lachman's focus on the meaning of Swedenborg's images, beyond simply cataloging what Swedenborg said about the landscapes of heaven and hell, give insight into the ineffable experience of, as Lachman quotes William James, "the sudden vision of increasing ranges of distant facts of which I could give no articulate account." To Lachman, Swedenborg's accounts of heaven and hell give the most insight into the unity of the seen and the unseen, the sense of spiritual wholeness, the visceral awareness of the oneness of all life, which mystics touch upon, but are at a loss to describe in words.

As a Swedenborgian minister and a confessional Swedenborgian, I appreciated Lachman's perspective from outside of the Swedenborgian religious world as a student of subjective experiences that psychology and neurology have not yet claimed. As Swedenborgians, we learn that Swedenborg went into the spiritual world and was taught the spiritual sense of the Word, but the arduousness and extent of this psychic journey, and its concomitants in other seekers' experiences, are not often acknowledged. Lachman's linking of Swedenborg's thought with that of philosophers and scientists from Newton through Bohm is impressive, and

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In Company with Angels

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churches, and the seven angels, this latter imagery being the inspiration for the Tiffany windows on display that provided the backdrop of the lecture.

Tuesday morning, Rev. Ken accompanied a number of volunteers with the Urbana University education program to the local prison where they participate by tutoring and offering classes. Ken gave a freewheeling talk to a group of about forty on Johnny Appleseed, personal challenge and response, and Swedenborgian theology. There were good questions and some heartfelt thanks at the end. Rev. Susannah spoke that morning with three business classes on the initiation and ongoing experience of forming the non-profit organization In Company with Angels, Inc.

Throughout the weekend there was a smooth flow and feeling. Each event drew anywhere from twenty to fifty people, including Swedenborgians from Cleveland and Cincinnati, and many participants stayed after to talk and ask questions and to share their view of angels and Swedenborg's theology. It was well worth the hours of driving to hear the sincere and heartfelt comments that were shared.

One faculty member told Betsy Coffman that he believes this is the most significant and valuable program/exhibition that UU has ever sponsored, and he told Rev. Currie he was really promoting it at the faculty meeting that day, telling them "what a wonderful opportunity this is for both the Urbana University and surrounding community to experience such valuable and significant works of art."

Other participants wrote,

- "I loved the meetings where we went over how the Angels were found again, the history behind them and the restoration. Being in their presence was awe-inspiring, as I walked

along the row, I looked into each of the Angel's eyes and could feel them reaching into my soul, touching me on a subconscious level, and forcing me to look at myself through their eyes at the mortal covering that surrounds my soul, and I felt at peace with how I am and that God truly lives within me. It brought me closer to what it means to be a Swedenborgian, and 'heaven within us' has new meaning. I have always loved the quote, 'The thoughts of the Angels were perceived as rainbows,' and the vibrant colors within the stained glass really brought this quote to mind. Thank you for the time and effort put into showing the Angels to the public!!! They are truly AWESOME!!!"

- "For me, the Angel Windows experience was to become completely immersed in the transcendental LOVE, beauty, and color that radiates from each angel. This conscious immersion opened an ethereal pathway that mind, heart, soul, and spirit happily travelled . . . leading to an indescribable encounter with the peace, contentment, and joy of the Divine. Now, whenever I reflect on the angel windows . . . the angels always deliver hugs of warmth, happiness, and love to me. I'm so in love with them!"
- "The windows, as always, were inspiring with their beauty and craftsmanship. I have two favorites, *Ephesus* and *Sardis*. They touch me spiritually. The programs by Susannah and Ken were excellent, and I learned things that I previously did not know."
- "I felt a deep connection with the angels. I felt peaceful in their presence. They are almost too beautiful for words."
- "The lecture on the Tiffany window restoration process is helpful in my role as docent. It was like a detective story of lost and found."

In Company with Angels continues to move about the country. After their visit in Urbana they will be on exhibit January 19–March 17, 2013, at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts in Alabama; February 14–May 11, 2014, at the Oshkosh Public Museum in Wisconsin; and October 25, 2014–January 4, 2015, at the Munson Williams Proctor Museum in Utica, New York. To learn more about them and to keep up to date with their travel schedule, go to www.incompanywithangels.org. ☞

Kirven Book Now Online

Robert Kirven's popular *A Concise Overview to Swedenborg's Theology* is now available online in easy-on-the-eye scans. Originally published as the last book by J. Appleseed & Co. in 2003 and now out of print, Professor Kirven's admired user-friendly classic for studying Swedenborg's thought can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/8d6cby6>.

Presenting the whole of Swedenborg's theology in substantial nutshells, each of the thirteen chapters tackles a cluster of related topics by providing an introduction followed by carefully selected and newly translated passages from Swedenborg's writings. It is an ideal self-study workbook for gaining breadth and depth in Swedenborg's thought, with a list of citations for further reading in Swedenborg. In addition, useful discussion questions for each chapter render the book excellent for discussion groups in church or the home.

The Rev. Dr. Robert H. Kirven (1926-2004) was a longtime professor of history and theology at the Swedenborg School of Religion.

The Communications Support Unit of the Swedenborgian Church and J.

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Book Review

The Mystery of a Spiritual Journey

Ghost Brother Angel

Grant Schnarr

Swedenborg Foundation Press

REVIEWED BY WILMA WAKE

It's rare to find a book that has a deep spiritual message and is also powerfully written. Grant Schnarr's book, *Ghost Brother Angel*, does both.

It also has an even rarer quality: the book is written in the context of Swedenborgian theology. This book has the suspense and pace of a mystery novel; you could call it a page-turner, yet the experience of reading it is spiritually uplifting.

Grant is not a new author to the Swedenborg Foundation and its readers. His previous books include *Spiritual Recovery: A 12 Step Guide*, *You can Believe: An Introduction to the New Christianity*, and *The Guardian Angel Diary*.

Schnarr begins his story with the fascinating account of the ghost that seemed to live in the family room as he was growing up. There were numerous times when he was intrigued, puzzled, and frightened. His book begins, "Yes, I was afraid of the darkness, ghosts, and the void in childhood. But that didn't mean some of those ghosts weren't real."

As he grew, he tried to leave the ghost in his past. He couldn't, however, forget about it. It was his very life that seemed to be haunted with one



bizarre coincidence after another. It seemed that the Lord was determined that Schnarr should understand some important elements of his past and present.

The story is told through the life experience of a New Church clergyman who was able to bring his considerable theological knowledge to the bizarre events of his life. Schnarr struggles to make sense of them while staying connected with his family and committed to his church.

One of books' strengths is its focus on Swedenborgian theology. He ponders his mixed feelings about ghosts. The Foundation asked him about it in an interview:

Foundation: The book opens with a real-life ghost story. Could you talk a little bit about how you view ghosts from a Swedenborgian perspective?

Schnarr: I don't believe Swedenborg talks about "ghosts," but he does talk about the reality of the afterlife, spirits, and how they are associated with not only people, but places and things. Swedenborg says, and I teach this, it is not a good idea to try to contact spirits, and you'll most likely get what Swedenborg calls, "an enthusiastic spirit" who would like nothing more than to lead you astray. This is a rare occurrence but worth heeding the warning. Swedenborg does say that there are people who do have contact with angels on occasions and loved ones, especially the elderly who are preparing for the other world. This is natural and not dangerous in any way but can often make people feel better about the passing of a loved

one or their own passing with age.

I don't necessarily believe that ghosts are actual spirits trapped in this world. There is not enough time to explain my entire views, but I believe that something in this world is attached to certain spirits, or events. The appearance or feeling of a "ghost" may be something that is more like a recording in this world associated with the spirit but not actually the spirit itself. A good example of this is visiting a Civil War battleground. Many have felt the spirits of the men who fought there, and for many, the area feels especially sacred. Are the soldiers hanging around, or is it some sort of impression they have left behind? I think the latter. But I could say more.

Eventually, the pieces of Schnarr's life fell into place in a way that he had never anticipated—and that the reader could not have imagined. But it all makes sense in the end; and one feels a renewed understanding of the Lord's faithful presence with us every day.

In the end, the reader can see the cohesiveness in Grant's life: the way God is working with him. It is an inspiration to look more deeply at one's own life for the presence of the Divine.

This book is a good read that will not disappoint you; in fact, you may not be able to put it down once you have begun to read it! ☩

The Reverend Wilma Wake is the minister and administrator for the Swedenborgian Community.org, the online ministry of the Swedenborgian Church, and the author of several books including *Roots and Wings*. She has a private therapy practice in Portland, Maine.



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Appleseed & Co. thank Kurt Simons and his Swedenborg Digital Library for his hard work to make this classic available to the world free of charge. ☩

SHS Fall Board Meeting

BY FRANCESCA MCCROSSAN,
KAREN CONGER, AND HERB ZIEGLER

The Swedenborg House of Studies (SHS) Board of Trustees held its fall meeting at the Mercy Conference Center in Burlingame, California, November 9–10, 2012. Present were chairperson Jane Siebert, treasurer Jennifer Lindsay, Dean Jim Lawrence, Kathy Speas, Tom Neuenfeldt, Karen Conger, Herb Ziegler, Bill Coffman, and Bob Reber. Unable to attend were Bob Leas, Carla Friedrich, Sage Currie, and Ken Turley. Guests for parts of the meeting were administrative assistant Francesca McCrossan, financial manager Alan Thomsen, Professor Devin Zuber, and president of Pacific School of Religion (PSR) Riess Potterveld.

PSR Visioning

PSR is experiencing financial challenges. It has established the Commission on Strategic Direction (CSD) to drive its re-visioning process to find a model of sustainability. There are a number of ways in which it could break even, but all require heroic effort. The CSD is made up of ten members: faculty, the president, students, alumni, and PSR board members. They began meeting weekly in the spring of 2012; a blog was developed to be the public face of this process at futuresofPSR.wordpress.com.

Devin Zuber spoke about the work of the CSD. The PSR campus may not be suited for the sort of innovation that is being considered. Alternative delivery systems are going to necessarily be a part of this process, including an online presence and possibly a “portable PSR,” an East Coast temporary center for an intensive week or two.

New kinds of degrees and certificates would better equip people to work outside the formal ordination de-

grees. The CSD would like to keep the option open for a small group of on-campus M.Div. students who would receive significant funding.

They’ve discussed the vision that the campus would become more of a hub than an incubator, so that alumni would be a much more regular presence as guest lecturers or guest entrepreneurs who would be on campus for varying periods. Spaces on campus could host conferences, which have the potential for a dependable revenue stream. Current infrastructure doesn’t lend itself to conferences.

There are reservations about how research might suffer with this model. What happens to critical thinking? What happens to in-depth work on tradition? In response to a question about how SHS’s focus on cutting edge scholarship will continue to be accommodated in a new model, President Potterveld responded that leadership and scholarship are closely intertwined in many areas even in non-degree certificates, so there isn’t a conflict.

Tenure is under consideration by the CSD. Is tenure a thing of the past? It might be desirable to be “nimble and flexible” in order to change gears to address shifting needs. In practice this means a teaching staff of adjunct and contractual faculty. Lean faculty staffing will make leaves and sabbatical difficult, putting additional constraints on scholarship.

Professor Zuber sees a lot of exciting potential that has him looking forward to a different type of model of where he might be teaching and researching. He feels very strongly about the latter.

Riess Potterveld explained that the goal of the CSD is to improve the

old and bring in the new, to broaden the network of groups with which PSR serves and works to include lifelong learners and those in the third age (people past fifty). Programs will include CEUs and D.Min. options that encourage returning to PSR regularly to update or broaden skills. PSR will reach out to professionals in other vocations and fields with programs in various forms: face-to-face, hybrid, blended, and vocational.

There is a possibility of partnership with the University of the Pacific in Stockton, a historically Methodist university, which has been positioning itself in the lifelong learning community.

There is a group focusing on physical plant consolidation possibilities including: divesting PSR property beyond the campus and rebuilding the campus to accommodate new models of teaching, learning, and research; and selling the campus and then building a new comprehensive facility in a downtown Oakland location.

Another group is focusing on shared faculty and curriculum within the GTU.

PSR’s financial picture is improving; the deficit has been reduced every year since Riess Potterveld became interim president, but it continues to demand reduction for long-term stability.

More of the student body is comprised on people not affiliated with a single denomination; they are often nonprofit professionals who want to find or deepen a spiritual approach to their work.

There are secular forces pushing back against the idea of change as pedagogy, tenure traditions, etc. do not change easily. Yet the future must be

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Devin Zuber explaining the CSD to the Board

Online Web Community in 2013

Here at SwedenborgianCommunity.org, we have lots of New Year's Resolutions!

The most important is to continue to be your online Swedenborgian community. We are a spiritual community with an ordained Swedenborgian minister and registrants from all over the world.

Another is to be a central online hub for other non-traditional Swedenborgian ministries; ones that are not centered in sanctuaries with formal worship services. Many but not all of these ministries involve the internet in some way. How will Swedenborgians worship in the years ahead? What forms of "church" might we create? We'll explore these topics in the fourth Thursday chat and invite people involved in other unconventional ministries to come talk with us.

Another resolution is to explore the latest technology to enhance your experience of the site. We are looking at a range of live-streaming formats that

will allow you to hear our prayer service live as you participate in a chat window. We continue our commitment to keeping maintaining low bandwidth for easy access.

Weekly Schedule

We'll be providing more variety in the scheduling of chats to accommodate people from various time zones.

1st Thursday: discussion of a portion of *Heaven and Hell*

2nd Thursday: mini-course on a Swedenborgian concept

3rd Thursday: First hour—anyone who has joined in the previous six months to talk about getting to know the community. Second hour—anyone who would like to discuss the worship theme of the month

4th Thursday: "The Unconventional Convention Church." We'll invite guests to help us explore new forms of worship and spiritual growth.

Sunday: live worship and coffee hour

And our stretch resolution is to provide our minister with some much needed internet technology (IT) support. We'd like our minister to be able to devote more of her twenty hours per week to these exciting new programs and pastoral care. Dr. Rev. Wake could use some IT support in her many tasks, including checking web links, writing and sending out our newsletters and weekly updates, keeping contact information up to date, keeping track of our registrants, and providing the metrics to show we are meeting our mission. With technical help in these areas, our minister will have more time to spend with our community and its programs.

We need your help to meet our resolutions. We are now accepting donations and pledges for 2013. Please consider a pledge. We have already received \$2500 in pledges and \$3000 in a grant from the Gray Fund. With your help we will be able to increase our IT capabilities to enhance serving our community. Visit our collections plate page at swedenborgiancommunity.org. ☩

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lean and flexible in order for PSR to survive.

During the ensuing discussion Jane Siebert commented that though we at SHS are certainly in partnership with PSR, we are not married. She shared her concern that we protect our faculty resources. We would be interested in what would be for us a first: a greater opportunity to write rules for our own students, faculty, and staff as our way of "playing the game."

Chair's Report

Jane Siebert addressed the issue of envisioning the future of SHS. She shared her thoughts about how SHS should relate to PSR's visioning process

and the perspective she is getting from Devin Zuber's online course, "The Greening of Swedenborg."

We are part of PSR's visioning process, but PSR's vision need not be SHS's vision. Our vision must be uniquely Swedenborgian. Core questions for going forward are 1) Who are we? 2) What do we stand for? 3) What are our unique gifts? and 4) Why does it matter if the Swedenborgian Seminary continues or if the Swedenborgian Church survives? 5) What is our contribution to Christianity? Spirituality? Religion? The Earth?

In "The Greening of Swedenborg," Devin's historical overview shows Swedenborg as a person who liked to get his hands dirty in the garden and in the mines, which opened Jane's think-

ing of him as a real person. Emerson's idea to stick to who you are to be successful and useful; stick with the vision and gifts God has given you, is an idea that should guide SHS. This quote from the first paragraph of Emerson's introduction to *Nature* has resonance for her:

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed

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SHS Board Meeting

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for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship.

Dean's Report

Dean Jim Lawrence focused on three important issues.

SHS has become a highly-valued member of the PSR community, not tangential as it was for several years after the move. It had been seen as only metaphysical and theosophical, not an integral part of PSR's social justice world view. We now have an honored place at the table as a strong partner. The process that PSR is going through presents us with opportunities and challenges. SHS needs to determine what its own road is in this changing landscape coming out of the CSD. Riess Potterveld is an excellent organizational thinker and has a good perspective on the process. Devin Zuber, who was recruited early to be a faculty member on the CSD, is highly valued at PSR. He is an outspoken internal critic of the process so far and has been one of its most forceful challengers, never hesitating to share his concerns.

Where are we now? We are committed to a path of growing scholarship and cultivating faculty for the future. Our talents, in addition to training for the ministry, include scholarship and visibility in the world of ideas. Is that in danger of being muffled in the new directions of the future PSR? Where do we fit in PSR's larger process? The first part of the process has

been fast and intensive, resulting in the PSR board approving the proposed methods and giving their blessing to go forward with the next phase. The CSD is taking a step backward and moving into a more intensive market research and testing phase to focus in on what will actually work.

The IRS revoked the 501c3 non-profit status of SHS without giving proper notice of requirements to maintain it. The IRS requires that we pursue a costly reinstatement route, noting it is likely that we will easily get approval once the process is complete. Graduate Theological Union controller Ellen Peterson is helping by providing information being sought by the IRS.

SHS has been advised to think about bringing a legal challenge against the IRS since it was their mistake—SHS, under various legal names, has been in existence longer than the IRS and was granted tax exempt status so long ago, in the pre-electronic era, that they lost track of us. We are clearly a church school and never should have been dropped or challenged. We never received written notice that we were to be dropped, and it is not clear when and how the rules were changed and how organizations were to be notified. The Association of Theological Schools, of which we are a member, may be bringing a class action suit as many schools have been affected by the same process, but this is unclear at present. In terms of time, effort, and cost/benefit analysis, it doesn't make sense for SHS to bring suit on its own.

Anticipated student ordinations next summer are Dagmar Bollinger and Elizabeth Blair.

Financial Issues

Alan Thomsen reported that spending and revenues are in line with the budget. He noted that the new cost of administering Convention-held funds imposed by General Council is 22% of the income SHS receives since it is

based on 0.5% of held funds (rising to 1% next year), even though administering SHS's funds is a negligible cost to General Convention. The board's finance subcommittee will draft a letter to the president and treasurer of General Convention requesting a waiver of the fee and will review donors' original documents to determine if they can be transferred to SHS.

The annual appeal is on hold until reinstatement of 501c3 status.

Academics

An alternative path for ordination is under consideration by the Council of Ministers.

Dean Lawrence emphasized the ethical need to be honest with potential students about vocational prospects in pulpits, which are not good. The current cost of an M.Div. versus income earning potential is high. There was discussion about how much debt our student body was experiencing compared to the national average. We have been encouraging avenues such as chaplaincy, as well as providing information regarding vocational futures working in denominational structures.

The attrition rate for students of the online classes remains at approximately fifty percent, and it's a challenge to fill the classes in the first place.

Classes are being taught by SHS faculty. Would it be possible to expand SHS faculty involvement without putting an additional burden on them? Jim has arranged for Devin Zuber to swap one of his Swedenborgian graduate school-level classes for the current online class. A discussion ensued on the pricing of courses. It's been the thinking that charging a fee for the classes would encourage participation, as students might feel more invested in the process. There seemed to be more "buy-in" when the online courses were costing around \$150. Is there some method, other than Moodle or blog-

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Passages

Confirmations

Nick Leras and **Kristi Dixon** were confirmed into the faith of the Swedenborgian Church in San Francisco on December 9, 2012, the Rev. Junchol Lee officiating.

Marriages

Nick Leras was married to **Nancy Foegelle** (now Leras) at the San Francisco Church on November 11, 2012.

Deaths

James W. Reynolds passed away May 13, 2012, at age 88. In 1949, after serving in WW II, he moved from his native Maine to La Porte, Indiana, where he met and married Constance Sayles, his wife of sixty-two years. Jim enjoyed fishing, hunting, and camping. The Reynolds's moved to the Boston area, in 1973, to Morriston, Florida, and in 2007 to LaPorte.

Jim is survived by his wife, Connie, his son, James, ten grandchildren, ten

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ging, that would be less time consuming for the instructors? What about cohort groups in various areas, including churches, where people could meet face-to-face to watch video lectures (which are in use for the first time in Devin's class) then engage in discussion? Possibly even YouTube could be utilized in this way. It is desirable that we broaden our capacity to reach more people, particularly the underserved. It was noted that there are other schools, including Stanford, that offer free online courses as a way to create new relationships and build public relations. Might that plan be worth trying at SHS? SHS being unaccredited, all those fees come to SHS, while the accredited course fees go to PSR. ☩

great grandchildren, and two brothers. His daughters Gloria and Joan predeceased him.

A graveside service was held May 19, 2012, Rev. Freeman Schrock officiating.

Connie Reynolds wrote in the *LaPorte RePorte*,

Words are hard for me to find these days, for any words seem insignificant to the love I have received these past three weeks, during my husband Jim's illness and death. It is hard to really understand death until it comes home, as the saying goes. . . . it is only one's faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and knowing that marriage with true love continues on into the spiritual world. Jim awoke in heaven full of peace and happiness and free of the pain that

so haunted him those last three days of his life.

Although it too might not have come immediately for him, when he did awake he was met by all those he loved, ones who had gone before and new friends would soon come, for he made them easily. He will await the ones who will come when they are called.

I will love him as much and more than before. Three days before Jim's passing I saw an angel child on the ceiling above me looking down as I lay in bed, and then it was gone. Must have been watching out for me. I tried to find it again, but I couldn't. Let me never doubt: I now know that when the angel appeared on the ceiling, it was telling me of things to come. And I really did know, but had not been sure. ☩

Blondie to Swedenborg

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makes Swedenborg less of an isolated figure in scientific and philosophical conversations over the ages. Though Lachman's book does not center on Swedenborg's theology, he acknowledges that the revealing of the inner sense of Scripture was Swedenborg's mission and central theme. This acknowledgement keeps Lachman from treating Swedenborg simply as an extraordinary clairvoyant.

Though Lachman demonstrates a clear understanding of Swedenborg's perspective, he ends the book with a bit of a lament that Swedenborg did not leave instructions on how others could achieve the higher consciousness that gave him such a grand vista on the cosmos. He notes somewhat offhandedly that Swedenborg "warned his readers against trying to follow the path he had taken," without reflection on why this was so.

Lachman concludes the book by saying, "Having discovered Swedenborg, I am now inclined to follow him

on that journey within and to find out just how much I can see and hear for myself." It is regrettable that Lachman seems to have missed this one key point of Swedenborg's work, that the journey to God is less about seeking florid visions than about preparing ourselves to receive all that flows in from God.

I would recommend this book for those who want to be introduced to Swedenborg in the context of consciousness studies. It would be a useful book to include in a class that included other mystics, such as Rudolf Steiner, William James, and Ouspensky/Gurdjieff. Lachman does an effective job of positioning Swedenborg in history as a credible and influential thinker with a wide reach into modern psychology, philosophy, religion, and science and answers the question, "Why should anyone want to know more about Swedenborg?" ☩

The Reverend Cathy Speas is a hospice chaplain in Northern California.



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.

3 Kings: A *SPLATz* Retreat January 18–21 at LaPorte New Church, Indiana

What: A Swedenborgian Church youth retreat for *SPLATz* (super-powered lovable almost teens), pre-teens aged of 10–13. Long before Jesus and those other three kings (you know, the ones who brought gold, frankincense and myrrh), the Israelite people had three kings, Saul, David, and Solomon. A new people in a foreign and often hostile land, the Israelites relied on their kings to keep them safe, guide them forward and negotiate the complex territory in which they lived. At this retreat we will look at the life of these three kings and transform ourselves into kings and queens. The discussions and activities will be lively and fun. Come to this long weekend royal retreat and while enjoying great food, sports, and free time with friends you will discover how the power, wisdom, and glory of the ancient kings can help you figure out how to rightfully live your life. Swedenborgian Church youth director, Kurt Fekete, Rev. Jenn Tafel, and Lori Steinhiser will lead this retreat with other talented youth group leaders.

Cost: A donation of \$35 is suggested to help offset retreat expenses. Assistance with this fee is available. Please don't let the cost keep you from attending.

Bring: Sleeping bag, air mattress or sleeping pad, PJs, towel, personal items, musical instruments, camera, and a friend!

Contact Information: For more information contact Lori Steinhiser at (219) 872-1814 or loristeinhiser@comcast.net.

Registration: All tweens attending must complete a youth registration and medical release form and bring them to the retreat. A word to parents about safety: We want to assure you of our complete commitment to your child's safety at this event. We maintain a ratio of one staff to every seven youths. We follow the safe practice of securing a minimum of two adults in the immediate area during all youth activities and interactions. This retreat is staffed with responsible adults working together to affirm our church's values and ensure an environment of physical and emotional safety and respect for your child.

When: Arrive Friday, 7 PM, January 18, 2013, depart Monday, 10 AM, January 21, 2013 .

Where: Manna House Spiritual Growth Center at LaPorte New Church, 905 Maple St. LaPorte, Indiana. ☩