

189th Annual Convention: *Heaven Is Now: Living Spirit in Service*



BY KIT BILLINGS

This summer, the theme of our annual church convention in Urbana, Ohio, is *Heaven Is Now: Living Spirit in Service*. This is

one among many of the very special theological views of the New Church. Instead of primarily looking at heaven as some distant spiritual reality that is far away, something that we will only experience after death, our church sees heaven as a spiritual reality and energy of love and wisdom, which is intimately flowing into life here and now! That is, heaven's light of love, goodness, and healing (which are God) are organically flowing into life now. Yes, heaven is constantly flowing within the atoms that make up our physical reality, and the Divine Spirit remains present and available to inspire us for meaningful living. The Lord our God did say, "Yea, I am with you always, even until the end of time."

Heaven is also the spiritual home for good people after natural death, for those who lived heavenly love and wisdom while on earth, whose ruling or central love inside is good and true.

Heaven as a living, shining, healing, and powerful spiritual dimension is everywhere and constantly flowing with-



**Swedenborgian Church Convention
June 26–30, 2013, Urbana, Ohio**

in all natural life. It influences the very substance and forms of the natural universe, revealing itself through the faces of infants, in the beauty of a sunrise, or of the morning sun shining gloriously upon everyone and everything, and within the constant, warm beating of your own heart. And this energy of love and wisdom moves through life as a pure desire to be useful, to be of service to others.

Heaven indeed is *now*, and it is a deeply inspiring force that longs to make a positive difference in the lives of others. We find this spiritual reality reflected often in God's Word, for example when Christ said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). And

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Come to Urbana June 26–30, 2013

The 189th Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church (the General Convention of the New Jerusalem) will take place June 26–30 in Urbana, Ohio, on the campus of Urbana University. This is the institution of higher learning inspired by Johnny Appleseed's suggestion and the generous donations and collective work of a number of Swedenborgians living in Ohio around 1850. It was the second college in America open to women and was based on Swedenborgian principles of learning and regeneration of the whole person, including spiritual growth.

After testing a shorter session last year, the convention has been returned to its full length, with min-

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Bailey and Barclay Halls, Urbana University

More Inside:

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A Detective Story: New Contestations on Swedenborg's Biography • Angels in the Garden
Temenos Community Is Reaching Out • Borges, Swedenborg, and Mysticism

The Editor's Desk



Convention 2013

While you are fighting the winter doldrums by contemplating the coming summer, think about the pleasures of joining the annually assembled community of Swedenborgians called the Annual Convention, this year in Urbana, Ohio. Make your plans now to avoid conflicts in your schedule; registration forms will be available soon at swedenborg.org and next month in *the Messenger*.

Cuba

The Messenger is pleased to have a report from the recent New Church Swedenborgian conference held in Cuba this past January (page 29). It is gratifying to read about this effort to extend the reach of Emanuel Swedenborg's writings and revelations to Cubans and the larger (and very large) Spanish-speaking world. It is interesting

Letter to the Editor

Chrysalis

Many thanks for your fine review of *Patterns: Make 'Em and Break 'Em* in the February 2013 issue of *the Messenger*.

Your comment, however, in the second paragraph about the Swedenborgian content in *Patterns* may be misread as a shortcoming of *Chrysalis*.

True, not every poem, essay, and story explores or references "Swedenborg or Swedenborgianism directly."

and encouraging to note that an interest in Swedenborg is alive and well in Cuba, an interest that goes all the way back to Cuba's liberator, José Martí.

I have a particular interest in the report from Cuba, having been one of the fortunate members of a the delegation to Cuba from the Cambridge Church in 2000. We visited several religious institutions, and the highlights of the trip revolved around exploring Havana with Ray Guiu, a member of the Cambridge Church who was born and grew up in Cuba and then emigrated to the US, met Rev. Everett Bray and his daughter Elizabeth, married Elizabeth, and eventually settled in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts, where they now reside. —Herb Ziegler

But this is done by design. Our readership is composed of individuals who are seriously looking for spiritual resources; they are not looking for THE answer, but for many possibilities. For nearly thirty years, *Chrysalis* has tantalized these readers—both Swedenborgians and non-Swedenborgians—by raising universal issues and showing the relevancy of the New Church perspective standing side by side with other viewpoints.

On the back cover of *Patterns*, the comment by Dr. Mehmet Oz sums it up, saying these are real-life people with real-life spiritual issues as described by Swedenborg.

—Robert F. Lawson, editor, *Chrysalis*

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Church Calendar

- April 13: General Council teleconference meeting
- April 15: Reports due for inclusion in *Advance Reports*
- May 3–4: SHS Board of Trustees meeting • Berkeley, California
- May 24–27: West Coast Memorial Day Retreat • Sonoma, California
- May 24–27: SCYL Memorial Day Retreat • FNCA, Fryeburg, Maine
- June 26–30: 189th Annual Convention • Urbana, Ohio

the Messenger

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Letter from the President



Dear Friends,

Every one is formed from the harmony of many things; and such as the harmony is, such is the one: A thing which is absolutely one cannot subsist; but only a harmonical one. Every Society in Heaven thus forms a one; and all the Societies together a one; and this from the Lord alone, through love.

—Emanuel Swedenborg, *A.C.* 457

All for one, and one for all!

—Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*

It is quite remarkable how much change goes on within and under the surface, while from without all looks stable and constant. With the “harmonical one” that we call General Convention, we have existed as a constant for hundreds of years, barely noticeable now to the outside world; nonetheless, our presence and influence has been steady. Yet within that constant presence there has been constant change as ministers change from one church to another and as churches themselves grow and subside and in many cases complete a life cycle and are absorbed. The culture within Convention has changed on a regular basis as well, including a split into two seemingly entirely different organizations that exist independently; and yet to the outside world, the differences that so distinctly divide us from our inner perspective seem negligible, if even noticeable, to those looking in from the outside.

So today I reflect on this process from a perspective that is inward and yet somewhat removed as well. Several ministers with long and stable careers are retiring, moving long, stable situations into a state of flux. Personal lives change and pastors move on. Community chemistry alters and change occurs, sometimes subtle and sometimes dramatic. New ministers continue to complete training and enter into the life of the church with a vari-

ety of ministries, and a parallel constant change takes place within the membership and leadership of each of our churches and groups as well.

And yet with all of this change, Convention is a constant. We exist. We as a one, and as the various individuals that make up that one, continue to do our part to contribute to the Lord’s New Church here on earth. We, together and individually, are part of the Second Coming as it unfolds. As we look at our future, readjust our vision and our goals, and make our plans and strategies and lists of things to do, I would invite us all to keep before us what it means to be part of the Second Coming. One thing is clear to me: the Second Coming, the manifestation of the Lord’s New Church on earth, is not defined by denominational labels or constrained to specific earthly organizations. It is busting out all over, all around us, and yes, even within our little band of self proclaimed Swedenborgians! It is like a wave building momentum and mass, and like a surfer on our little board in a great big ocean, we are in need of pointing ourselves in alignment with the motion of that wave and then paddling like all get-out just to keep up in the hopes that we too can be caught up in that wave and carried along for what will hopefully be a thrilling ride. When our individual and collective ride is over we can be grateful as we dive back in or accept that that is enough and call it a day. In either case, that ocean, more vast than we can take in, is still there and the waves keep coming. As lay people, as ministers, as individual churches, and as Convention as a whole, we are but a speck in the ocean of the Lord’s Second Coming. Yet we have every right, and even the obligation, to paddle our hardest and do our best to maintain our balance and make a ride that is both exhilarating and uplifting on the surfboard we call Convention and hopefully enjoyable and inspirational for those who might be watching us from the outside.

As I offer these words of encouragement to jump in the water and take part, I must also honor the metaphor and offer a word of caution. We must all

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3 Kings—SPLATz Retreat in La Porte

BY RACHAEL SBROCCO

On Friday night, one by one (or two or three) the tween SPLATz (super powered lovable almost teens) begin to arrive at Manna House at the La Porte, Indiana, New Church. You can feel the house warm up and come alive as each person joins the group. Old friends and first-timers are staking out a spot for their sleeping bags, and there are lots of laughter and LOUD footsteps everywhere. Eighteen SPLATz in all have come from near and far to attend this retreat. It always strikes me as a testament to the quality of these retreats that so many will travel so far to be here. This is a special place and a unique experience for these young people. This goes for me as well, especially this year, as both of my children now fall in the SPLATz age range.

After everyone has arrived and settled in, we gather in the living room of Manna House for our first session. We do introductions, and then Kurt suggests that the kids *briefly* describe the Old Testament, starting with Genesis all the way up to the choosing of King Saul in I Samuel! Wow, do these kids sure know their Bible! (Good job, Sunday school teachers.) It was so much fun to hear them all work as a team to put together the stories, names, and even a lot of the little details.

The next day we dug into the story of King Saul. The prophet Samuel anointed Saul Israel's first king because the Israelites were clamoring for one. We learned that Saul was a strong and stubborn man by his actions and in the company he kept. (He was out searching for his father's donkeys.) Don't you just love correspondences? Saul represents our stage in life when we know what is right, but we still continue to make decisions based on our own opinions rather than trusting in the



SPLATz group on the La Porte New Church front steps

Lord. Saul reigned for many years. After Samuel anointed a young David as Israel's next king, Saul felt his throne was threatened and made several attempts to kill David. David was a shepherd. (Sheep represent innocence and a love of being led by the Lord.) This helps to clue us in on the fact that David represents the next stage in Israel, and in us, when we better understand the Lord's will in a deeper way. We remember that David is the one who took

down the giant Goliath with only his sling and five smooth stones out of the brook. David wasn't perfect though. He coveted another man's wife, Bathsheba. David sent her husband, Uriah, to the front lines of the war. Uriah died

in battle, and David took Bathsheba for his wife. Still, David's love for the Lord made him a great king, and after many victories in battle he brought peace to the kingdom of Israel.

The third king of Israel was King

Solomon, the second son of David and Bathsheba. The Lord came to Solomon in a dream and asked him what he wanted. Solomon told the Lord that he wanted a wise and discerning heart so he could be a judicious leader.

The Lord was so pleased with Solomon's request that he not only made him wise, but also wealthy and honorable. Solomon built a magnificent temple to the Lord in Jerusalem for the

Continues next page



The Queen of Sheba and her court (l to r): Lori Steinhiser, Kate Pruiett, Rev. Jenn Tafel, & Rachael Sbrocco with "King" Kurt Fekete

Continued from preceding page

Ark of the Covenant to reside. Solomon made many wise rulings and became known throughout the land for his wisdom.

While Kurt and the kids were busy learning about Solomon and acting out skits in the living room, the other four adults whipped up a skit of their own



Kings Nathan, Kristofer and Jaylen

to surprise the kids. Complete with full costumes and a basket of gifts, the Queen of Sheba and her court made the journey to visit King Solomon. It was a lot of fun, and I think the kids will surely remember that story.

Crafts are a big event at SplatZ retreats. We do a craft after almost every lesson. This time we made scepters, crowns, and swords with our roy-

al bunch. They turned out great! There were lots of rhinestones, glitter, and vacuuming. Little did we know that paper daggers could be so sharp; we had to snip the tips off of every one of them. Also, a wonderfully new and versatile crafting material was discovered at this retreat—duct tape! In this case, gold duct tape. We are already on the search for what we can design next with it. Stay tuned!

Since the snow decided to hold off until our drives home, we didn't get our sledding trip in this time. However, the kids did get to play some Capture-the-Flag in the empty lot next door, and we made a trip across the street to the fabulous La Porte Library, which is becoming a favorite activity. I couldn't have been more impressed with how well behaved and respectful our big group was while we were there. In addition, we got in quite a few rounds of Catch Phrase, Pictionary, and Charades in our free time.

I find joy in every minute of these retreats. I love to see the kids so actively engaged in learning the Bible stories. I love all of the laughter. I love coming home to the La Porte Church, where I have so many memories from my childhood. I love working with the youth leaders who are so dedicated, creative, and talented. Thank you to Kurt Fekete, Lori Steinhiser, Jenn Tafel, and Katie Pruiett for all you do. Thanks so much to La Porte New Church for hosting us. ✚

Rachael Sbrocco grew up in the LaPorte New Church and now lives in Erie, Pennsylvania. She loves going to Almont Summer School with her two children Cade and Angela and regularly staffs SPLATz retreats as the craft director extraordinaire.



Squashed SPLATz on the sofa

Swedenborg in Cuba

BY DAVID SIMPSON

During the week of January 7–12, 2013, a delegation from the New Church (General Church) conducted a conference consisting of a series of lectures and discussion groups dedicated to the popularization of the life and work of Emanuel Swedenborg in the Republic of Cuba. These lectures were combined with ministerial work: preaching and performing baptisms in the facility of the Episcopal Cathedral in Havana.

The lectures took place at four separate venues in two different cities. Three of these venues were in Havana: the Higher Ecumenical Institute of Sciences of Religions (ISCRE), an adjunct institution of the Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Matanzas (SET); the University of San Geronimo (USG), the centre for historical and cultural studies affiliated with the University of Havana; and the Centre for Martisian Studies (CEM), an institute dedicated to the editing and publishing of the collected works of the Cuban patriot and philosopher José Martí. The fourth venue was the Ecumenical Theological Seminary in the city of Matanzas.

The delegation consisted of Reverend Göran and Josephine Appelgren from Sweden, the Reverend David Lindrooth from the USA, Dr. Anders Hallengren, professor at the University of Stockholm and president of the Swedenborg Society in London, David and Vicky Simpson from Toronto, and Gunnar Borgsten, a retired physician and a long-standing member of the Stockholm Society.

The lecture topics were “Swedenborg's View of Divine Love and its Influx upon Humanity,” “The Sweden-

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Call for Nominations to Elected Positions

Candidates for positions in the Swedenborgian Church are elected at the annual convention. This year, the following positions will filled:

- **Vice-president** (one-year term)
- **Secretary** (one-year term)
- **Treasurer** (one-year term)
- **General Council** (one minister and two lay members for three-year terms):

General Council is the governing body of the Swedenborgian Church. It meets face to face at the annual convention and in the fall (travel, room, and board provided). All other business is conducted by conference call and email.

- **Communication Support Unit** (three-year term):

COMSU promotes communications both within and outside of the denomination across various media, and also oversees the production of *the Messenger*. Meetings are by email and conference call.

- **Education Support Unit** (three-year term):

EDSU facilitates activities that enhance the understanding and the skills needed for the realization of the Swedenborgian Church's purpose. This unit is concerned with

resources, personnel, and programming (specifically, annual convention mini-courses). Meetings are by email and conference call.

- **Information Management Support Unit** (three-year term):

IMSU's focus is on gathering, storing and distributing data pertinent to the fulfillment of the Swedenborgian Church's purpose. Its primary focus has been the denomination's website. Business is conducted by email and conference call.

- **Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit** (three-year term):

The central focus of FPRSU is on the wise use and development of such resources as are directly under the Swedenborgian Church's control. FPRSU oversees the management of the Swedenborgian Church's properties and investments, seeks new sources of material support, and provides consultants for the Swedenborgian Church's collective bodies and the best-coordinated use and development of the body's financial and physical resources. Meetings are usually by email and conference call.

- **Ministries Support Unit** (two for three-year terms):

MinSU is charged with facilitat-

ing ministries within the Church and activities that increase the number of individuals and groups consciously committed to the realization of the Swedenborgian Church's purpose. It meets face-to-face once a year (expenses paid) and by email and conference call otherwise.

- **Nominating Committee** (two to be nominated, one elected for a five-year term):

It is the duty of this committee to present at the annual convention nominees for the officers of the Swedenborgian Church and vacancies in the elected members of the General Council and all other boards, support units and committees. The nominating committee proposes a slate representative of the Swedenborgian Church's overall constituency. Meetings are by email and conference call.

- **Committee on Admission into the Ministry** (one clergy member for a three-year term):

This committee meets with ministerial candidates to review and recommend qualified candidates for ordination. Meetings are by conference call and face-to-face (travel, room and board provided).

- **The Board of Trustees of the Swedenborgian House of Studies** (four to be elected, two to the representative class and two to the at-large class for three-year terms):

The SHS board manages the business and affairs of the New Church Theological School. Meetings are face-to-face (travel, room and board provided).

Please contact chairperson Karen Conger, one of the other members of the Nominating Committee, or Renée Hellenbrecht at Central Office, if you are interested in serving: manager@swedenborg.org. ☪

The Annual Meeting of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School

(dba the Swedenborgian House of Studies at Pacific School of Religion)

will be held during the annual session of the Swedenborgian Church of the US and Canada at Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio, in the main meeting room of the convention.

Thursday, June 27, 2013, at 7:00 PM

Please join us for a reception immediately following.

A Low-Cost Maine Vacation and Event Spot

Attention Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) members and friends: The FNCA camp and retreat facility, located on the banks of the Saco River, is available for your group events and private vacations at significantly lower rates than most similar facilities, provided that an FNCA member is present at all times for the duration of the event.



The Main Building at FNCA

Except when camp is in session August 3–18 this year, the facility is available from Memorial Day to Labor Day to Assembly members, their friends, and groups that FNCA members are associated with for weddings, reunions, conferences, meetings, retreats, and other events, as well as for private vacations; everything from just a single cabin to the entire facility is available to you. Please visit <http://fryeburg.org/map> for a look at our facilities.

For less than \$75, you can enjoy a private cabin in the woods for a weekend, overlooking the Saco River and with a view of the White Mountains of New Hampshire—\$750 for a group in the Main Building over a long weekend, including Kancamagus and meeting rooms and the kitchen.

In addition to the serene and comfortable atmosphere, swimming, hiking, mountain climbing, local attractions, outlet stores, the Kankamaugus Scenic Highway, the White Mountains of New Hampshire, beautiful Maine beaches, and much, much more are waiting for you Down East!

The FNCA is located in Fryeburg, Maine, one hour and fifteen minutes northwest of Portland. It's about three hours north of Boston, four hours from

Hartford, five hours from Albany, six hours from New York City, seven-plus hours from Philadelphia, eight hours

from Wilmington, nine hours from Baltimore and Buffalo, and ten hours from Washington DC.

Non-Session Use Rates

Individuals and small groups:

- \$24/day per room or cabin
- \$150/week per room or cabin

Groups of 10 or more using the Main Building:

- \$300/day
- \$1600/week

Special long-weekend group rate:

- \$750 for Friday–Monday

For more information and booking, contact the FNCA non-session use coordinator, Beki Greenwood: 413-563-0091 or rgreenwood@fryeburg.org. ☩

Heaven Is Now

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in Matthew 15-16,

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

The annual convention will take place from June 26–30, 2013.

All Swedenborgian churches and their members are invited to engage with this theme in some creative way, and then share what we learn about this truth and about ourselves with the rest of the delegates who will gather in Ohio. May the Lord bless us and inspire us to serve one another and our community in his spirit of love and mercy. ☩

Rev. Kit Billings is pastor of the La Porte New Church in Indiana.

Swedenborg Foundation Seeks Operations Manager

The Swedenborg Foundation is seeking an operations manager, who will be responsible for facilitating, supervising, and scheduling day-to-day operations of the Foundation and for overseeing the budget and human resources; interfaces with the Board of Directors and officers; coordinates overall Foundation activities; and supports project team personnel.

A bachelor's degree and five years of management experience are required, including not-for-profit experience. Strong communication skills are necessary as well as familiarity with publishing and online media technologies. The salary is commensurate with experience. Benefits include health, dental, life, and disability insurance, SEP, and more. To request a full position description or to submit a resume (with cover letter and three references) Email sf-jobs@digitalwave.com. ☩

A Detective Story:

New Contestations on Swedenborg's Biography



BY JIM LAWRENCE

Did Swedenborg leave unmentioned controversial aspects of his life, such as active engage-

ments with Freemasonry and kabbalah? Were his international travels spiced with intrigues involving a high-level conspiracy to restore the Stuart monarchy in England and to provide other assistance in the French-Swedish alliance, for which he received handsome compensation from the King of

France? Much of my research this past year has been involved in looking at those and other fresh questions about Swedenborg's biography. A number of scholars and writers have been weighing in recently on new claims launched primarily by longtime Swedenborg researcher Dr. Marsha Keith Schuchard, whose research on Swedenborg began in the 1970s as part of her doctoral dissertation on Freemasonry focusing heavily on Swedenborg's century. She has been writing about Swedenborg (among other subjects) ever since, gradually drawing the attention of writers both inside and outside of

Swedenborgian traditions. She has recently published a major new Swedenborg biography whose working title has been *Emanuel Swedenborg: Secret Agent on Earth and in Heaven*.

It is an important conversation because the story of Swedenborg has always been a critical element in the story of the New Church, and Schuchard advances several new tantalizing story lines for Swedenborg's life, such as those mentioned above, that render his worldly activities in a more complex light than as detailed in such works as *The Swedenborg Epic* (1952) by Cyriel Odhner Sigstedt. Schuchard's hypotheses, however, have been contested by such Swedenborgian writers as Jane Williams-Hogan and Brian Talbot. At the same time, the well-regarded but non-Swedenborgian Swedish author, Lars Bergquist, renders a positive assessment of some of Schuchard's new portrayals of Swedenborg's worldly life in his *Swedenborg's Secret* (in Swedish, 1999, English translation 2005), the first major biography on Swedenborg in a half a century. To be sure, Schuchard's claims changes in key ways the story of Swedenborg conventionally told in the church traditions.

I have been involved this year in studying these controversial areas of Swedenborg's biography with an eye to responsible historical methodology. How do we assess historical evidence? The bulk of Schuchard's work is circumstantial, though not all of it. Should we adopt a strictly forensic approach: if it cannot be proven in a court of law, it has no standing? Are there more nuanced estimations that might be constructed that better serve historical understanding? Another key question for responsible historical anal-

Continues next page



Save The Date

*Gathering Leaves 2013, September 12 - 15
at Fryeburg New Church Assembly
Fryeburg Maine*

"Changing Colors, Changing Lives"

From our mission statement:

"We are gathering again to promote harmony among women who are associated with the various Swedenborgian organizations around the world. We acknowledge our common beliefs, explore our differences, develop respect for one another's contributions, create a healing atmosphere and celebrate our spiritual sisterhood. We promote charity and goodwill, so we might say, "No matter what form her doctrine and external form of worship take, this is my sister; I observe that she worships the Lord and is a good woman."

MISSION STATEMENT
We are gathering again to promote harmony among women who are associated with the various Swedenborgian organizations around the world.

*For more information,
and to be added to our mailing list, contact our
Co-chairs: Roslyn Taylor hrtaylor@temple.edu
Joanna Hill joannavhill@gmail.com and/or
Laurie Turley, recording secretary lstwirley@yahoo.com*

Temenos Community Is Reaching Out

BY ANNE PARK

The Swedenborgian Church at Temenos in West Chester, Pennsylvania, had a great year, and we are inspired to keep our doors open and inviting to all. Our prayer life is deepening with each service. We have had several combined services with our Jewish friends, participated in the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, and have kept a steady commitment to serving our local food bank. We tithe ten percent, raise food, and collect canned goods. We anticipate being able to join in on an interfaith walk in April in Philadelphia.

This year we will be expanding our community gardens to feed more people. We will also be involving local schools in the planting, care, and harvesting.

We are committed to honoring the land here and finding ways to nourish and sustain it. We established the Trails and Trees Program that people can join to enjoy various offerings on the land. Ian Campbell, our buildings and grounds manager, is meeting with other land managers and with volunteers to find ways to open new trails and maintain old trails. Ian and Dean (a church member) are working on

plans to start building a labyrinth later this spring.

Since January we have also taken care of a family with no hot water by collecting funds and then buying and delivering to them a water heater; to another family, we provided a tankful of heating oil. We are providing meals for the next three months to a family in which the mom just had brain surgery. We are also offering some time and possibly some space to some twelve-step programs in the area. Our library, adding to our extensive Swedenborg collections, has received many new books of other faiths, and just received the beginning of a collection of twelve-step material, which is much appreciated.

We have become more involved in the West Chester religious community. We hosted the October meeting of the Council and have plans to host more meetings. Rev. Christine sits on the Religious Council and was a featured speaker at this year's Interfaith Thanksgiving Service.

On April 4 we will host the third annual Women's Seder at Temenos. Rabbi Elyse Joseph started the first seder at Temenos along with a group of women including Rev. Christine. This has be-

Dear Christine,

I've been going to the Swedenborgian Church for virtually my entire life through some combination of conviction, inertia, habit, and desire; but a new element has been added this last year. Our Temenos Community is really neat, and I do look forward to coming to Church on Sunday and being with everybody. I also wish I lived closer so that I could get more involved in some of the other Temenos activities. In closing, I do appreciate what you, Ian, Anne, and the rest of the unsung heroes of the Temenos Community have been doing.

—Robin Tafel

come a much-loved event.

Rev. Christine keeps encouraging us to apply our love and understanding by sending it out into the community. A men's group is forming, the garden is growing, and we continue to watch and see where we are called to serve. She is keeping us on task in Council as we work with a skilled strategic planner to become more accountable and delve into our operations on all levels. We are learning how to work as a team and are devoting the time and attention Temenos needs. We understand the great responsibility we have as trustees of this beautiful community. Things are changing for the good.

There seems to be standing room only now on many Sundays, and people are inspired to grow. We will have a Swedenborg reading group beginning in March. Temenos is surely a community in bloom.

A letter from long-time member Robin Tafel encapsulates the new spirit at Temenos (sidebar). ☩

Anne Park is a member of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos.

Continued from preceding page

ysis is that of bias, especially in charged discussions. For instance, scholars producing provocative new claims might be subtly motivated by making a reputation. Career advancement or simply being the center of conversation can bias a writer towards "earth-shattering" conclusions. On the other hand, those in devotional Swedenborgian movements might not welcome such views; career and life commitments could bias Swedenborgian adherents

towards dismissing radical challenges to tradition.

No matter what one thinks of Schuchard's conclusions, no one has done as much primary source research investigating Swedenborg's life since Sigstedt in the 1940s. Her forthcoming book is sure to draw new attention to Swedenborg's biography, and I am interested in addressing fairly the questions raised. ☩

The Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies in Berkeley, California.

SHS Conflict of Interest Policy

As part of its process of reestablishing 501c3 status with the IRS, the Swedenborgian House of Studies is publicizing its conflict of interest policy. Its non-discrimination policy appeared in the February 2013 Messenger.

The Corporation of the New Church Theological School (dba Swedenborgian House of Studies and referred to hereafter as SHS) Conflict of Interest Policy and Annual Statement For Directors and Officers and Members of a Committee with Board Delegated Powers.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees
February 18, 2013

Article I—Purpose

1. The purpose of this Board conflict of interest policy is to protect SHS's interests when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interests of an officer or director of SHS or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction.
2. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflicts of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable organizations.
3. This policy is also intended to identify independent directors.

Article II—Definitions

1. **Interested Person**—Any director, principal officer, or member of a committee with board delegated powers, who has a direct or indirect financial interest, as defined below.
2. **Financial Interest**—A person has a financial interest if the person has, directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or family:
 - a. An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which SHS has a transaction or arrangement,
 - b. A compensation arrangement with SHS or with any entity or individual with which SHS has a transac-

tion or arrangement, or

- c. A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which SHS is negotiating a transaction or arrangement. Compensation includes direct and indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial. A financial interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. A person who has a financial interest may have a conflict of interest only if the Board or Executive Committee decides that a conflict of interest exists, in accordance with this policy.
3. **Independent Director**—A director shall be considered independent for the purposes of this policy if he or she is independent as defined in the instructions for the IRS 990 form or, until such definition is available; the director
 - a. Is not, and has not been for a period of at least three years, an employee of SHS or any entity in which SHS has a financial interest;
 - b. Does not directly or indirectly have a significant business relationship with SHS, which might affect independence in decision-making;
 - c. Is not employed as an executive of another corporation where any of SHS's executive officers or employees serve on that corporation's compensation committee; and
 - d. Does not have an immediate family member who is an executive officer or employee of SHS or who holds a position that has a significant financial relationship with SHS.

Article III—Procedures

1. **Duty to Disclose**—In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest, an interested person must disclose the existence of the financial

interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all material facts to the Board or Executive Committee.

2. **Recusal of Self**—Any director may recuse himself or herself at any time from involvement in any decision or discussion in which the director believes he or she has or may have a conflict of interest, without going through the process for determining whether a conflict of interest exists.
3. **Determining Whether a Conflict of Interest Exists**—After disclosure of the financial interest and all material facts, and after any discussion with the interested person, he/she shall leave the Board or Executive Committee meeting while the determination of a conflict of interest is discussed and voted upon. The remaining Board or Executive Committee members shall decide if a conflict of interest exists.
4. **Procedures for Addressing the Conflict of Interest**
 - a. An interested person may make a presentation at the Board or Executive Committee meeting, but after the presentation, he/she shall leave the meeting during the discussion of, and the vote on, the transaction or arrangement involving the potential conflict of interest.
 - b. The chairperson of the Board or Executive Committee shall, if appropriate, appoint a disinterested person or committee to investigate alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement.
 - c. After exercising due diligence, the Board or Executive Committee shall determine whether SHS can obtain with reasonable efforts a more advantageous transaction or arrangement from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest.
 - d. If a more advantageous transaction or arrangement is not reasonably possible under circumstances not producing a conflict of interest, the Board or Executive Committee shall determine by a major-

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ity vote of the disinterested directors whether the transaction or arrangement is in SHS's best interest, for its own benefit, and whether it is fair and reasonable. In conformity with the above determination, it shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the transaction or arrangement.

5. Violations of the Conflicts of Interest Policy

- a. If the Board or Executive Committee has reasonable cause to believe a member has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, it shall inform the member of the basis for such belief and afford the member an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.
- b. If, after hearing the member's response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the Board or Executive Committee determines the member has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

Article IV—Records of Proceedings

The minutes of the Board and all committees with board delegated powers shall contain:

- a. The names of the persons who disclosed or otherwise were found to have a financial interest in connection with an actual or possible conflict of interest, the nature of the financial interest, any action taken to determine whether a conflict of interest was present, and the Board's or Executive Committee's decision as to whether a conflict of interest in fact existed.
- b. The names of the persons who were present for discussions and votes relating to the transaction or arrangement, the content of the discussion, including any alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement, and a record of

any votes taken in connection with the proceedings.

Article V—Compensation

- a. A voting member of the Board who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from SHS for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member's compensation.
- b. A voting member of any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from SHS for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member's compensation.
- c. No voting member of the Board or any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from SHS, either individually or collectively, is prohibited from providing information to any committee regarding compensation.

Article VI—Annual Statements

1. Each director, principal officer and member of a committee with board delegated powers shall annually sign a statement which affirms that such person:
 - a. Has received a copy of the conflict of interest policy,
 - b. Has read and understands the policy,
 - c. Has agreed to comply with the policy, and
 - d. Understands SHS is charitable and that in order to maintain its federal tax exemption it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes.
2. Each voting member of the Board shall annually sign a statement which declares whether such person is an independent director.
3. If at any time during the year, the information in the annual statement changes materially, the director shall disclose such changes and revise the

annual disclosure form.

4. The Executive Committee shall regularly and consistently monitor and enforce compliance with this policy by reviewing annual statements and taking such other actions as are necessary for effective oversight.

Article VII—Periodic Reviews

To ensure SHS operates in a manner consistent with charitable purposes and does not engage in activities that could jeopardize its tax-exempt status, periodic reviews shall be conducted. The periodic reviews shall, at a minimum, include the following subjects:

- a. Whether compensation arrangements and benefits are reasonable, based on comparable survey information (if reasonably available), and the result of arm's length bargaining.
- b. Whether partnerships, joint ventures, and arrangements with management organizations, if any, conform to SHS's written policies and are properly recorded, reflect reasonable investment or payments for goods and services, further charitable purposes, and do not result in inurement or impermissible private benefit or in an excess benefit transaction.

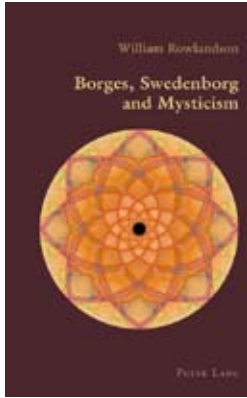
Article VIII—Use of Outside Experts

When conducting the periodic reviews as provided for in Article VII, SHS may, but need not, use outside advisors. If outside experts are used, their use shall not relieve the Board of its responsibility for ensuring periodic reviews are conducted.

ANNUAL REPORTS (for the year ending December 31, 2012) are due at the Central Office no later than April 15, 2013, for inclusion in the *Advance Reports* booklet distributed at the annual convention. Any reports submitted for *Advance Reports* does not need to be resubmitted for the Journal.

Borges, Swedenborg, and Mysticism

Jorge Luis Borges, the Argentinian poet, essayist, philosopher, and short-story writer, was profoundly interested in the ill-defined and shape-shifting traditions of mysticism. However, previous studies of Borges have not focused on the writer's close interest in mysticism and mystical texts, especially in Emanuel Swedenborg.



In a new book recently published by Peter Lang Books in England (available through Amazon), *Borges, Swedenborg and Mysticism*, William Rowlandson examines the relationship between Borges's own recorded mystical experiences and his appraisal of Swedenborg and other mystics. It asks the essential question of whether Borges was a mystic by analyzing his writings, including short stories, essays, poems and interviews, alongside scholarly writings on mysticism by figures such as William James.

The book locates Borges within the scholarship of mysticism by evaluating his many assertions and suggestions as to what is or is not a mystic and, in so doing, analyses the influence of James and Ralph Waldo Emerson on Borges' reading of Swedenborg and mysticism. The author argues further that Swedenborg constitutes a far richer presence in Borges' work than scholarship has hitherto acknowledged, and assesses the presence of Swedenborg in Borges' aesthetics, ethics and poetics. ☞

Swedenborg in Cuba

Continued from page 29

borgian Concept of Salvation," and "What Was Emanuel Swedenborg Looking For?" (Rev. Lindrooth); "The Genesis of the New Church," "The Science of Correspondences: a Key to Enlightenment," and "The Last Judgment in the Spiritual World" (Rev. Appelgren); "A Transcendental Inquiry: Martí, Emerson, Whitman, Swedenborg" and "Swedenborgianism in the Caribbean: a Social Force in the XIXth Century West Indies" (Dr. Hallengren).

Other scheduled events interspersed between the lectures included meetings in Havana with Pastor Joel Ortega Dopico, president of the Cuban Council of Churches and Dr. Reinerio Arce Valentín, the rector of the Ecumenical Seminary in Matanzas. Introductions were made with Dr. Esuebio Leal Spengler, rector of San Geronimo University and the Historian of Havana, and Dr. Pedro Pablo Rodríguez López, president of the Centro de Estudios Martianos (Center of Martisian Studies or CEM).

It was a historical event: the birth of the New Church in Cuba. Still, we know that any birth or emergence is preceded by a coming together of elements that give rise to life. The inception of a Church arises from a deep desire to know and understand spiritual truths, accompanied by a charitable longing to share those truths with others out of love for their spiritual welfare. These spiritual forces stirring in the hearts and minds of earnest seekers after the Lord come together, from which a gestation takes place, when something switches on that gives rise to the forming and coming forth of a new identity, the tender shoot of a new plant that surges from a seed in the earth, emerging into the full potential of its being to follow the sun.

What we observed in Cuba was the emergence of a new shoot, a young

plant that will no doubt become a strong tree, growing from seeds that were planted in that country a long time ago. We were simply privileged to water them. Maintaining the historical perspective and leaning toward a deeper understanding, it is worthwhile to consider some of the historical events in the causal chain that led to what we were privileged to witness.

The efforts of Leopold Calleja, Jørgen Andersen, Dionisio De Lara Minguez, and Luis A. Baralt, who have long since passed on into the spiritual world, play an important part in the unfolding of our story. We might be familiar with the beloved Cuban Patriot José Martí, if only by name. José Martí, by way of the American transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman—Emerson's chapter on Swedenborg, taken from his work *Representative Men* is the only portion of that work translated into Spanish—professed a deep respect for Swedenborg, calling him a mystic with an oceanic mind. In fact, it was more than just admiration that drew Martí to Swedenborg. As a poet, like Emerson, Whitman, Baudelaire, and Octavio Paz, Martí found an ethical harmony in Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences to counter "the mechanistic and divisive rationalism of the Enlightenment" that distressed him. This world view, an expression of a vital wholeness between the celestial and terrestrial realms, revealed to the imagination and nourished by Swedenborg, remained central to Martí's aesthetics and ethics.

Our experience in Cuba throughout the many meetings and lectures, worship services, and baptisms can be considered in terms of three distinct yet inextricably intertwined "event horizons," each of which has its own special importance. I would label each of these event horizons as follows:

- 1) Evangelical outreach (watering

Continues next page

Angels in the Garden

West Coast Memorial Day Retreat

Plan to join us for “Angels in the Garden,” this year’s West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat, to be held over the Memorial Day weekend at the beautiful St. Dorothy’s Rest Retreat Center, nestled in the redwood hills of Sonoma County California. All are welcome to join us in a weekend of fun, relaxation, and Swedenborgian explorations.

The retreat is a great time to make

new Swedenborgian friends and reconnect with old ones. St. Dorothy’s Rest is the perfect setting to unwind from work-a-day stress and reconnect with your spiritual side.

The program includes

- Interesting and exciting workshops, including “The Art of Angels” with Prof.

Devin Zuber, “The Seven Angels of Revelation” with Rev. Junchol Lee, and “Experiencing Angels” with Mareta Tafel

- Programs for children



West Coast Retreaters at Dorothy's Rest

- Matins and vespers created and led by retreat participants
- Campfire gatherings with sing-alongs and “s’mores”

There is plenty of time to relax, read, walk the forest paths, shop at the quaint boutiques in nearby Occidental, or have fun on the Russian River or at the Pacific Ocean.

The program starts with a light dinner on Friday, May 24, and ends after lunch on Monday, May 27, 2013.

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/d989nlk> for more information, including how to register. Once there click the “Follow” button to keep up to date with the most recent retreat information.

The West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat is sponsored by the Pacific Coast Association and the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. Additional support is provided by the Swedenborgian House of Studies, Hillside Community Church, and *In Company With Angels*. ☩

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seeds): uses for the church universal (teaching, relationship building, translations of the writings, baptisms).

2) Ecclesiastical/ecumenical connections (opening doors): uses for the General Church in particular (interdenominational exchange, contact with the Cuban Council of Churches, contact with the Ecumenical Theological Seminary).

3) Philosophical/political/cultural (social connections): uses for the nation of Cuba (University of Havana—Dr. Eusebio Leal Spengler; Centro de Estudios Martianos—Dr. Pedro Pablo Rodríguez López; unveiling Swedenborg’s hitherto unrecognized contribution to Cuban philosophical, political and cultural foundations).

For some reason, and maybe for reasons that are altogether different than

From the President

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take care of our health and well-being by measuring our involvement so as to avoid spending too much time in the bright light and risking getting burned out by overexposure. We must also engage in ways that are safe for our own strength, endurance, and abilities. We

anything that has been said here, Providence has brought the Heavenly Doctrines and the New Church to the people of Cuba. Whatever the reason, it’s a good one. ☩

David Simpson is a life-long student of Swedenborg who lives in Toronto, Canada with his wife and two children. He has dedicated himself to seeing Swedenborg’s writings made available in the Spanish speaking world.

don’t want people to drown because they get in over their heads with no accompanying help at hand. It is best to play in the water with others rather than alone. Nor do we want to get too far out from the shore where we can’t get our feet on the ground and rest and reflect and evaluate how we are doing. But even with these concerns, playing the waves of the Lord’s Second Coming and riding on the surfboard we call Convention is a quite a ride!

By the way, perhaps you’ll understand my choice of metaphors if you know that I’m writing this back in Maine, with a foot of snow and temperatures topping out in the low twenties, dreaming of the past week when I was out at Wayfarers Chapel in Southern California with sunny days in the seventies and the expanse of the Pacific Ocean as my daily view!

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

The Harvard Connection

BY F. ROBERT TAFEL

Eugene Taylor (obituary, page 39) became connected with the Cambridge Church through Rev. Wilfred Gould Rice, who supported Eugene's exposition of William James's spiritual psychology and whose (Rice's) interest in psychology and religion is what prompted the Swedenborgian Chaplaincy at Harvard to inaugurate an annual memorial lecture on psychology and religion in his honor on the Tuesday of Harvard's Commencement week.

Eugene had been lecturing at both the Swedenborg School of Religion (precursor of the Swedenborgian House of Studies) and Swedenborg Chapel since at least 1980. Rev. Gladys Wheaton cohosted Eugene's lectures at the Chapel when she was on the scene as Rev. Rice's assistant.

When I began my ministry in 1982, Eugene began to formulate a strategy with me on how Swedenborg Chapel with myself as chaplain could become part of the United Ministry at Harvard. One purpose was to overcome possible speculation that Swedenborg Chapel might be a destructive religious society that the United Ministry was warning students about (the caveat being that members of the United Ministry could be presumed not to be). Eugene spoke at a fall meeting of the Massachusetts Association (I believe in 1985), in which he addressed the potential appeal of Swedenborg to new audiences, one of which was college and university communities. The Chapel sought grants from the Gray Fund as well as a three-year grant from the denomination, for the purpose of sponsoring lectures that would lead to developing

a constituency at Harvard that would fulfill the United Ministry's requirement for membership. Membership was attained in May of 1991, with Dr. Eugene Taylor as advisor to an undergraduate Swedenborg Society of Harvard and myself as founding chaplain.

Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge (Church of the New Jerusalem) was dedicated in June of 1901 with an express purpose being to establish a meaningful relationship with the surrounding Harvard University community. The founding pastor, Rev. William Wright, began this by being a Harvard College graduate, later graduating from the Divinity School, and eventually receiving a Ph.D. from Harvard. Rev. Rice and many members of the Cambridge Society were also Harvard graduates. A stained glass window at the rear of the chapel is dedicated to a Harvard student. These informal connections, however, were fully realized and made firm once the Chapel became part of the United Ministry. Eugene Taylor spearheaded and led the effort to realize this along with the Society officers and with the assistance of the Wesley N. Gray Fund and the General Council of General Convention. ☩

Rev. F. Robert Tafel is pastor emeritus of the Cambridge Society.

Come to Urbana

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isters' meetings beginning on Sunday, June 23. Opening ceremonies commence on Wednesday evening, June 26, followed by a reception. Along with the usual business sessions, there will be a full array of mini-courses, including several offerings presented by the university, highlighting Alice Archer Sewall James and the "Urbana Movement" and Rev. Dr. Dortha Harvey, who was so influential in so many people's lives while she served as professor and chaplain there.

All are welcome at the annual convention, but only registered delegates may vote. If you are thinking about attending the convention, make your plans early and inquire with your pastor or association to get information about becoming a delegate and the possibility of partial funding.

The annual meeting, i.e. business sessions, as stipulated in the Constitution of the Swedenborgian Church, shall receive reports, consider unfinished business and new business, and hold elections.

The annual meeting and graduation ceremony of the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS, incorporated as the New Church Theological School) will occur on Thursday evening, followed by a reception hosted by SHS.

There will be a short chapel service each morning, this year presented by our ministers who serve as chaplains. The major worship services are a memorial service, a service presented by the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL), an ordination service on Friday evening, and a formal communion service on Saturday morning, with Rev. Jane Siebert giving the sermon. A short closing service will take place on Sunday morning. ☩

Passages

Continued from page 39

He was finished with us.

And now, if karma is to be believed, his soul has been released again, and maybe William James as transmitted through Eugene Taylor will take root again in another sensitive soul, perhaps upon discovering the lectures "On Exceptional Mental States," and lead to a new pilgrimage toward a spiritual pragmatism.

You're not finished, Gene, and we're not finished with you. ☩

Passages

Birth

Introducing **Connor Scott Robbins**, born February 9, 2013, 6lbs 12.6 oz, 19 inches long, 13 inch cran-



ium and in perfect health! He will be baptized at Wayfarer's Chapel like his sisters, Rylie and Teagan. Mother Jenna and father Michael are members of the Puget Sound Swedenborgian Church.

Deaths

Louis F. Baum passed from this life to the next on December 14, 2012. He was the treasurer of the New Church of the Southwest Desert. Louis was a counselor and coach in northern California before relocating to Bayard, New Mexico. He was the mayor pro tem and a business owner. He will be greatly missed.

Our long-time, faithful church member **Mary Crenshaw** entered the spiritual world peacefully in her sleep on Tuesday night, January 29th. She was a beloved member of the Royal Oak Church of the Holy City, served our denomination in many useful capacities, and lived near her daughter, Terri, and two grandsons, Nelson and Clark, in California at the time of her passing. We keep her daughters Terri and Renee in our prayers, as well as her grandsons. A memorial service will be held in her hometown in Tennessee on Thursday, February 7, as well as a memorial during Almont Summer School in the chapel, Rev. Renee Machiniak officiating.

Dr. Eugene Taylor died January 30, 2013, at the age of 66, with his children, Guy and Lilly, in attendance. He was a longtime member of the Cambridge Society of the New Jerusalem, serving on the executive committee there and at the Massachusetts Association of the New Jerusalem. He had given the Annual Rice Memorial Lecture on Psychology and Religion, always connecting his subjects to Swedenborg's ideas and Swedenborgian influences on figures and movements in psychology—particularly William James—at Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge for over thirty years. The lectures were always lively, informative, provocative, surprising, and entertaining.

While attending Harvard Divinity School, Taylor discovered unpublished notes for a series of all but forgotten lectures that William James had delivered in 1896 at Harvard's annual Lowell Lectures: "On Exceptional Mental States." He identified the very books James had used to write the lectures (they had been dispersed in the Harvard libraries after James had bequeathed them to Harvard) and went through all the markings and notes in the books to reconstruct those lectures. He published the reconstructed Lowell Lectures and then, in 1978–79, delivered them at Swedenborg Chapel. (See "Harvard and Swedenborg," page 38.)

Taylor was a leading figure in the existential/humanist psychology world, a prominent historian of psychology, and the author of many books, including *Shadow Culture: Psychology and Spirituality in America*; *The Mystery of Personality: A History of Psychodynamic Theories*; and *William James on Consciousness Beyond the Margins*. He was a research historian and lecturer at Harvard Medical School, the curator of Gordon Allport's papers, on

the executive faculty of Saybrook University in San Francisco, and an internationally renowned scholar on the work of William James. He founded the Cambridge Institute of Psychology and Religion, was a board member of the Philemon Foundation, and a founding member of The New Existentialists. He held degrees from Southern Methodist University, Harvard Divinity School, and Boston University (Ph.D. in the History and Philosophy of Psychology).

His interest in humanistic psychology, spirituality, and Eastern religions developed into a scholarly interest in the study of consciousness itself, which he placed at the center of the psychological experience. Psychology, he emphasized, is a "person-centered science," in which the subjective experiences of everyone involved are at the center of best practice. He held that there is no empirical way to study consciousness without involving radical subjectivity. To take that subjectivity into account as central to understanding rather than futilely trying



to dismiss it was, he said, the essence of good science. "There is no science anywhere that does not involve someone's personal consciousness somewhere," he wrote.

His friend Dr. Nassir Ghaemi¹, in a *Psychology Today* blog, related the following encounter with Eugene:

"I'm finished, thank you," he said to me and his close friend, psychologist Ed Mendelowitz, in his final days. "I'm finished, thank you," he repeated. I put down a glass of water. He was finished with the water.

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¹ Dr. Nassir Ghaemi, "Eugene Taylor in Memoriam: The Karma of William James" (<http://www.psychologytoday.com>)

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.

News from the Online Community: SwedenborgCommunity.org

Thank You for Your 2013 Pledges

We thank all of you who participated in our 2013 pledge drive. We have received eighty-five percent of our goal for the year with pledges, other contributions, and two new grants. It is not too late to donate to the 2013 budget. To make a contribution, visit our Collections Plate page at swedenborgiancommunity.org.

New Chat Program Times in March

Beginning in March, our Thursday chats will transpire from 9–10 PM Eastern and 6–7 PM Pacific (one hour instead of two). This will give us time to offer some new programs.

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

2nd Thursday: a mini mini-course on a Swedenborgian concept

3rd Thursday:

- 8–9 PM (5–6 Pacific): for anyone who has joined in the previous six months—getting to know the community
- 9–10 PM (6–7 Pacific): for anyone—discuss the worship theme of the month

4th Thursday: The Unconventional Convention Church—we'll invite guests to help us explore new and potential styles of worship and spiritual renewal.

Sunday live prayer service: 9–9:30 PM Eastern (5–5:30 Pacific)

Sunday Coffee Hour: 9:30–10:30 PM Eastern (5:30–6:30 Pacific)

Non-Traditional Convention Ministries

We are striving to become a central online hub for other non-traditional General Convention (Swedenborgian Church) ministries—ministries that are not centered in sanctuaries with formal worship services. Many, but not all of these ministries, involve the Internet in some way. How are these currently working? How will Swedenborgians worship in the years ahead? What forms of "church" might we create? We'll explore these topics in the 4th Thursday chat each week and invite people involved in other non-traditional or alternative ministries to share their experiences with us.