

## On the Trail of John Muir: Adventures in the University of the Pacific Archives

BY DEVIN ZUBER

As some readers of *the Messenger* might know, ever since I came on board the Swedenborgian House of Studies in 2011, I have been busy working on a book manuscript that looks at Emanuel Swedenborg's influence on American environmental thought. The book comes out of my curiosity around the same set of questions that drove me into writing my doctoral dissertation in the first place: how was it that several of the writers who were



ferent engagements with Swedenborg and their formative ideas about nature that so significantly shaped the subsequent conservation and preservation movements?

I was particularly intrigued by what seemed to be echoes and traces between their absorption of Swedenborg's theory of correspondence and their various projects to spiritualize natural experience outdoors: to turn the mountains into "sermons written in stone," in John Muir's memorable phrasing, and locate spiritual truths in an aesthetic encounter with wilderness, almost as if nature were a divinely written text that had to be descried and decoded.

Some of this work has been



John Muir in his beloved Yosemite Valley

seen as foundational for American environmentalism—such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and John Muir—were also readers, to one degree or another, of Swedenborg? Were there connections and symmetries between these figures' dif-

ferent engagements with Swedenborg and their formative ideas about nature that so significantly shaped the subsequent conservation and preservation movements?

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### Dr. Zuber to Speak at WA Luncheon

Professor Zuber will speak at the Women's Alliance luncheon at the annual convention. All are invited to share a lovely meal and this in-depth talk (sign-up: p. 52).

#### "Sufficiently Large and Noble": Swedenborg and Nineteenth Century Feminism

What role did Swedenborgian theology play in shaping 19th-century feminist thought? Swedenborg was read and received by three iconic women of the 19th century: Margaret Fuller, Lydia Maria Child, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning—one an essayist, another a novelist, the other a poet. All three took Swedenborg seriously and reflected deeply about the import of his thinking for the looming "women question" of the times. Explore

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

**Turn to page 51 for detailed  
convention information  
and registration form.**

### More Inside:

Nominees for Elected Positions in the Church • Life Balance and Self-Care • God's Power  
Annual Convention Registration Form • Learning Opportunities at Convention 2013  
New Programs at Temenos Retreat Center • Pastoral Opportunity at Bath, Maine

## The Editor's Desk



### God and the Environment

Dr. Devin Zuber has devoted much of his research and creativity to discovering, understanding, and explicating the interrelationship of the environment, God, spiritual reality, and theological interpretation. On the front page of this issue, he shares an example of the kind of adventures he has in deep research to discover evidence and clues that point to a clearer understanding of the connections between Swedenborg's revelations, writings, and thought and personages in American Transcendentalism, environmentalism, and the Arts and Crafts movement in the nineteenth century. His excitement is palpable as he discovers a tantalizing clue and encounters long-hidden direct connections to John Muir and others in the movements.

Many Swedenborgians are active or interested in the environment and tie that activity and interest to their religious and spiritual beliefs, and quite

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## Letter to the Editor

### Rev. Nussbaum-Strutt

There were several errors in the February *Messenger* editor's comments about the Curepipe Church of the New Jerusalem in Maritius.

The Rev. Charles Nussbaum-Strutt was a Swedenborgian minister of the General Convention until 1914, when

a few Swedenborgian ministers include the connection between the spiritual and the natural as revealed in the environment in their ministries.

Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen, pastor of the Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem Church, has been learning about, preaching, and teaching spiritual connections to the environment since her student days. She has begun teaching a monthly class called "The Spiritual Side of Nature: A Swedenborgian Perspective" at the Dillon Nature Center in Hutchinson, Kansas. In her first class, she focused on connections between birds and the spiritual, based on analogies in the Bible and correspondences revealed by Swedenborg.

Rev. Carla Friedrich is deeply involved in teaching and practice in unified action for the environment, sustainable communities, and care of children in need. (She will be teaching a mini-course at the annual convention: see page 54.)

—Herb Ziegler

## Church Calendar

- April 26: SPLATz pre-teen retreat Almont Retreat Center • Michigan
- 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 U • Urbana, Ohio

he transferred to the Curepipe Church from Portland, Oregon. In 1916, he married Hilda Collins, and they had four children, all born in Mauritius. I was the third child. My youngest brother was only a few weeks old when my father died of a heart attack in 1922.

Rev. Nussbaum-Strutt was a medical student in Austria when he attended a medical convention in Paris, where he met Dr. Lucien de Chagal, who introduced him to the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. Although a trained M.D., my father decided he was more interested in the soul than the body.

—Alix D. Williams,  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

## the Messenger

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The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the Communications Support Unit, or the Swedenborgian Church.

## Letter from the President



Dear Friends,

For those who have not yet heard, or have been hearing rumors spoken in hushed tones, I want to let you all know that General Council has appointed a visioning committee, and the committee is working up a vision statement for presentation at the upcoming annual convention. The committee is made up of ministers and lay people, spanning a range of generations. What we have been working on is almost to the point of sharing with *the Messenger* and those active in the life of General Convention, and then presenting what we have developed for discussion and feedback at this June's gathering. If we are able to adopt something that speaks to us as a church, then we begin the process of nurturing the means for pursuing the fulfillment of that vision in our various churches and communities. So if you are interested, curious, concerned—that is good, I just ask you to be patient and trust the process!

It was almost two weeks ago that I set out driving from Maine on my way to Urbana, Ohio. Along the way I stopped in and visited Rev. Nadine Cotton at the Cleveland church. I arrived just as she was meeting with a local resource person and planning out the creation of a community garden in the unused lawn space behind their church. The plan is to create a sense of community by working together on a source of fresh vegetables that community members can work and harvest together. This is a great project for being of use and community building, creating a bit of heaven on earth. Little did I know it was a perfect foreshadowing of what I would encounter at the end of my trip!

From Cleveland, I drove on to our church in Royal Oak, just outside of Detroit. Rev. Renee Machiniak and her church family welcomed me in. That evening I was blessed to witness in person a

concert by Renee's husband and singer par excellence Joe Machiniak, backed up by a great band of local pros. His song list ranged from 50s rock 'n roll, jazz standards, country ballads, and popular musical numbers all the way to classical opera! To put it simply, it was phenomenal. Joe's singing, including some duets with Renee, was a true reciprocal sharing of God's blessings. The building was filled to standing room, and the evening was warm and wonderful, a perfect example of a church creating heaven on earth.

The next morning at 8 AM I was sitting in a room at Urbana University for a meeting of the Board of Trustees. For those who may not know, Urbana College, now University, was instigated by none other than Johnny Appleseed, who convinced a couple of local, wealthy Swedenborgians to donate land and establish an institution of higher learning based on Swedenborgian principles of regeneration, the balanced marriage of heart and brain (art and science), and study and learning fulfilled in practical and useful service in the material world. It was Rev. Frank Sewall as president of the college and his family, most notably his daughter, Alice Archer Sewall James, who gave rise to the Urbana Movement. You will have an opportunity to learn more about this at the convention in June.

The university, like so many others, is reacting to the economic downturn and struggling with economic and administrative issues. But the spirit on campus and the opportunity to be a vibrant community of learning and spiritual development is there. Among current members and their families and ministers, Urbana University is the single greatest source of Swedenborgians we have.

Sunday morning, I had the pleasure of joining long-time Convention lay leader Betsy Coffman at the Urbana church for worship. Like so many congregations, it is a small, close-knit spiritual community with a long history owing to the shared gifts and talents of its members.

On Monday evening, I attended a presentation and panel discussion on peace through promoting the local economy and self-sustainability. Bev Ti-

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# Nominees for Elected Positions in the Church

The Nominating Committee recruits and puts forward nominees for election to offices and positions in the denomination at the annual convention. In addition to the two candidates to be elected as representative-class trustees on the SHS board, two candidates are to be elected as the at-large class trustees nominated by the SHS Board of Directors.

The Nominating Committee is still soliciting candidates, but as of *the Messenger* going to press, the candidates listed in the table at right have been nominated for election at the 2013 Annual Convention.

Nominations to all offices and positions can be made from the floor of the annual convention.

## Candidate Statements

The following candidates have submitted statements to date.

### Recording Secretary: Susannah Currie

Rev. Susannah Currie, M.Div, BCC, is part-time pastor of the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church in Massachusetts and religious program coordinator of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly. She served three terms as treasurer of the denomination and has served two terms as recording secretary. Her knowledge of Convention and its bodies has been cultivated through her past service to the Council of Ministers Executive Committee, the Retirement Committee, the Augmentation Fund Committee, the Sunday School Association, and SCYL retreats. She was pastor of the Swedenborgian Church



Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
Vice-president	1	Betsy Coffman*
Secretary	1	Susannah Currie*
Treasurer	1	Polly Baxter*
General Council layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Debbie Dolley Tom Neuenfeldt*
General Council Minister	3	David Fekete
Communication Support Unit (ComSU)	3	Kristina Madjerac*
Education Support Unit (EdSU)	3	Sherrie Connelly*
Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU)	3	BJ Neuenfeldt
Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)	3	Drew Siebert
Support Unit for Ministries (MinSU)	3	Alison Longstaff
Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM)	3	Jennifer M. Tafel TBA
Board of Trustees of SHS, representative class (2 to be elected)	3	Carla Friedrich* Sage Currie*
Board of Trustees of SHS, at-large class (2 to be elected)**	3	TBA TBA
Nominating Committee (2 to be nominated)	5	Nancy Little TBA

\* Incumbent

\*\* Nominated by the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) Board of Trustees

at Temenos from 1999–2008 and also served as executive director of the Temenos Conference and Retreat Center. She serves as the treasurer for both *In Company with Angels* and Gathering Leaves. Susannah offers her talents to the General Council for another one-year term as secretary.

### Treasurer : Polly Baxter

In the course of over forty years in the Church, Polly Baxter has served in numerous positions at the local, regional, and national levels. She is the incumbent treasurer of the Swedenborgian Church and treasurer



er of the Massachusetts New Church Union. In addition to serving on the theological school board, the Nominating Committee, and many other denominational committees, she was assistant to the treasurer for many years, during which time she received the Layperson of the Year Award for bringing the financial records into conformity with generally accepted financial standards. She was later elected treasurer of Convention, and in that capacity served on the Executive Committee, General Council, and as chair of FPRSU. She has served also as president of the Alliance of New Church Women.

Polly lives in the US Virgin Islands, but thanks to the wonders of modern technology and transportation, she has been able to properly fulfill her duties

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for the offices to which she has been elected. During the past year, she has worked extensively with the Central Office to update the accounting procedures to bring the existing practices in line with a new cost-saving accounting system she implemented. She has also done extensive research on General Convention's invested funds. Polly has a professional background in accounting working for Fannie Mae, the federal mortgage agency.

**Thomas (Tom) Neuenfeldt:  
General Council Layperson**



Filling a vacancy on General Council for the past two years has been a learning opportunity for me. Viewing the church business from a national perspective

requires an open mind. As a retired school administrator I have been able to apply those experiences to the business of the denomination.

My wife BJ and I continue to be active in the Almont New Church Assembly and as distance members of the Royal Oak Swedenborgian Church. I serve on the Board of Trustees for SHS as well.

I would be honored to continue serving on the General Council.

**David J. Fekete:  
General Council (Minister)**

I grew up in the Detroit Church of the Holy City (Swedenborgian), where at an early age I was attracted to Swedenborg's theology, which I began reading in secondary



school. In 1973, as a teenager, I served as SCYL president. I graduated from Urbana University *summa cum laude* in philosophy and science in 1980 and entered the Swedenborg School of Religion in 1981, enrolling concurrently in Harvard Divinity School. In 1985, I graduated from Harvard with a Master's of Theological Studies in Religion and Culture and in 1986 graduated from the Swedenborg School of Religion with a special diploma in Swedenborg and Western Culture. I entered the Ph.D. program of the University of Virginia, graduating with a degree in Religion and Literature in 1994, and then taught college courses in the fields of humanities, philosophy, scriptures, and world religions for six years.

Ordained in 2006, I have served as pastor of the Edmonton Church of the Holy City since then. From 2008 through 2012, I was the SCYL chaplain. It is an honor and a joy to work with the young people in their spiritual growth at such a crucial age in their development. I am also the General Convention ecumenical officer to the National Council of Churches and Commissionaire to its Faith and Order Commission.

My publications include twelve articles in *the Messenger*, four articles in the SCYL journal, *Clear Blue Sky*, one article in the academic journal *Studia Swedenborgiana*, and an article about George Dole's contributions to the translation movement of Swedenborg's works in *Principles in Play*, recently published by SHS. In addition, I have published a scholarly book and other academic articles. At the 2009 meeting of the American Academy of Religions, I presented a lecture on Swedenborg and Sakta yoga.

I love this church and am doing everything I can to bring our beautiful message to members of this church and to the outside world. I welcome the opportunity to serve the church further as a member of the General Council.

**Betty Jean (BJ) Neuenfeldt: FPRSU**

As a lifelong Swedenborgian I have served the church in many different ways, starting way back in the SCYL days. At the Church of the Holy City in Detroit, we were brought up (under the guidance of Ruth Brandau) with the idea that being of use was the key to life. We cannot sit back and wait for someone else to do the work of the church. (Have you met my friend Chris Laitner?)

My life's work was being a mom to three daughters and now Grandma to three granddaughters. I was also a teacher for young students and special needs children for twenty-five years. Life is good!

Beyond those early years, with offices in the local league and the national group, I have been on the boards of the Michigan Association and Almont New Church Assembly (serving as treasurer for over thirty years). I also served on EdSU (as chair for two years).

I am currently filling a vacancy on FPRSU (two years) and am willing to take on a full term if elected.

**Alison Longstaff: MinSU**

Answering a call to ministry, Alison came to General Convention from a General Church upbringing and is deeply grateful



to members of the Swedenborgian Church for their warm and supportive welcome to her as a female candidate.

Following her ordination in 2009, Rev. Alison Longstaff worked in an

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## Nominees

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adjunct capacity at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, serving to support the Sunday School, youth program, music ministry, and general outreach. That temporary position came to its expected end in May, 2012, at which point she returned to school to complete a Masters in Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy. She will graduate this spring and may continue on towards a doctorate.

Alison lives in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, near her three grown children, and continues to discern her path forward.

### Drew Siebert: IMSU

Andrew "Drew" Siebert, PE, is a dislocated member of the Swedenborgian Church. Drew



grew up in the Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem Church and has struggled to find a good alternative since moving away from

the area years ago. Besides being a professionally licensed electrical engineer and MBA graduate, Drew is director of sales and marketing at a medium-sized company in the Kansas City area. Drew believes his education and experiences should be beneficial to IMSU.

### Jennifer Tafel: CAM

Rev. Jennifer Tafel was born in Garden Grove, California, and raised in Washington, D.C. (as her father was minister at the Church of the Holy City), Colorado, and Southern California. She spent many summers in the Boston area, where her father lives, and attended many services at the Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge. Rev. Tafel also attended many services as well as working at Wayfarers Chapel while liv-



ing in Southern California. Rev. Tafel has a variety of educational experiences. She received a B.A. from Urbana University, majoring in Communications with a Theater minor. She received a Master of Divinity from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, and also a Certificate of Completion for Swedenborgian Studies in 2005. Rev. Jennifer was ordained in 2007 at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, at our annual church convention. She chose to answer the call to ministry because of her love of the church and respect for the theology. Rev. Tafel is currently pastor of the Lansing Spiritual Center.

Rev. Tafel is an active participant and leader in the denomination's youth program. She attends teen and tween retreats on a regular basis, providing programming, transportation, and loving support to the youth. She is a religious advisor for a queer-Christian student group at Michigan State University. The experiences at youth retreats and student ministry experiences help Rev. Tafel understand the way in which the needs of ministry are transforming and evolving as the next generation seeks a relationship with God in various ways.

### SHS Board : Sage Currie

Rev. Sage Currie has been serving as an ordained minister in the Swedenborgian Church since 2005. A graduate of SHS and the Pacific School of Religion, Sage has served as associate pastor at the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, helped launch



the online Swedenborgian Commu-

nity as their first online minister, and is finishing a three and a half year pastorate at the Fryeburg, Maine, New Church. Sage is getting married this summer and moving to Anchorage, Alaska, where she hopes to continue in ministry in new forms. Sage is excited to stay involved with the SHS Board to continue to support General Convention ministry in the coming years.

### SHS Board : Carla Friedrich

In service to my Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, I completed seven

years of spiritual arts ministry at the San Diego Swedenborgian Church in December, 2012. And in love to



Him who first appeared to Mary after his resurrection (as a Gardener on the path), I am now working at OASIS Ministries, aka "HomeTribe" in Phoenix and in Baja California, Mexico. HomeTribe works collaboratively to create a more sustainable future within three mutually supportive areas: sustainable earth (care of creation); sustainable structures (architecture, education, economy); and sustainable lives (children and community).

As administrator of Phoenix Light Workers, I convene practical arts meetups and classes in "Swedenborg & Sustainability." I am currently partnering with Fundacion Swedenborg de las Californias A.C., Proyecto Hispanaya A.C. in Tijuana-Rosarito, and Practical Arts Academy in Valley de Guadalupe, Baja California, to plant organic gardens and groves, build "cal-earth" classrooms, and teach practical spirituality, so to create learning opportunities and a brighter future for children in the area and at nearby Casa Hogar Home for Children. ☦



## On the Trail of John Muir

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signal contribution to American Transcendentalism (especially for Emerson), to the visual arts with painters like George Inness, and to some areas we awkwardly bracket today as “pseudo-scientific,” such as mesmerism, homeopathy, and the mind-cure movement. Little has been done, however, on the specific environmental contours of nineteenth-century Swedenborgian thought in America, other than Catherine Albanese’s important work that has explored Americans’ predilection for turning nature into a source of spiritual authority, a “nature religion.”

On the other hand, in the fields of eco-criticism (short for “ecological literary criticism”) and environmental studies, although many have made authors like Emerson, Thoreau, and Muir central to a “green canon” of nineteenth-century environmental writing, few have paid consistent attention to the seriousness with which these writers, to one degree or another, read Swedenborg.

The book-in-progress is a partial attempt to bridge this gap, to more strongly link the standing work on Swedenborg’s influence with newer turns in eco-criticism that sees these nineteenth-century roots as highly relevant for coming to terms with our present-day environmental crisis. After my arrival in Berkeley and encountering the particularly rich history of the Swedenborgian Church in the San Francisco Bay Area, I was struck that this legacy was an underutilized resource for Swedenborgian denominations who were concerned with environmental justice. How many readers of *the Messenger* are aware that the idea for the Sierra Club was conceived in the art studio of William Keith, the Swedenborgian landscape painter, one of John Muir’s closest friends?

I have wanted to read this image

from 1892—of Keith, Muir, and their other friends, informally giving launch to a critically significant environmental movement, surrounded by walls that were cluttered and filled with Keith’s Swedenborgian-tinged landscapes—iconic of the ways that Swedenborgian ideas could incubate progressive ecological thought: something that remains, perhaps, underutilized for our twenty-first century, which continues to view the natural world as an inexhaustible resource for free-market capitalism.

I am presently trying to flesh out the chapter on Muir and the San Francisco Bay Area Swedenborgians, such as Keith and Rev. Joseph Worcester, who were part of Muir’s intellectual orbit. Swedenborgians who have been to the landmarked San Francisco Swedenborgian church know very well how that beautiful Arts and Crafts space, with its landscape paintings by Keith, its tall madrone trees that pillar and support the nave, models a harmonious and spiritual relationship with nature. As the historian William Kostura noted, Worcester, who drove the architectural vision behind the church, “viewed the natural world as a manifestation of God, and felt that buildings should relate well to the environment rather than disrupt it. Nature was beautiful and buildings which resemble nature were the most beautiful of buildings.”

There are anecdotes in the scholarly literature on Muir and Keith, that the painter occasionally tried to get his fellow-Scotsman over to the Swedenborgian Church for a service given by Worcester, but that Muir usually declined; beyond these observations, bracketed by the context of Muir and Keith’s intense (and sometimes tussling) friendship, however, no one has consistently traced the ways Muir might have read and responded to Swedenborgian thought.

Muir’s religious beliefs have remained somewhat opaque for scholars. The environmental historian and Muir

**Zuber**—Continued from page 41

ing how a pioneering feminist like Fuller could find Swedenborg “sufficiently large and noble” for the progressive ideals of womanhood (as she puts it in her seminal feminist manifesto, “Woman in the 19th Century”) might better inform how Swedenborgian theology remains an inspirational and empowering source for women in the 21st century and beyond.

biographer Donald Worcester notes how “God for Muir was a deliberately loose and imprecise term referring to an active, creative force dwelling in, above, and around nature.” Given Muir’s occasional mystical and pantheist strains, some have tried to chart his potential engagement with eastern religions, while others have emphasized his continuity with Christian traditions of immanent theology (a view that God is not synonymous with nature, nor above it, but constantly flowing into nature through a process of perpetual creation).

Much like Swedenborg during the previous century, Muir grappled with trying to reconcile a belief in a transcendental, all-powerful and loving God with a scientific view of the cosmos. He was a deep reader of Charles Darwin, and keenly understood the devastating impact that geological “deep time” had on literalist readings of the Judeo-Christian scriptures. Nevertheless, he was able to maintain a core conviction that every mountain could still “testify to the ethical principles taught in the Sermon on the Mount.”

Muir almost certainly encountered Swedenborg first through his engagement with Emerson’s writings, which Muir began reading as a young man while he was studying botany in Madison, Wisconsin. Much Swedenborgian thought is refracted throughout Emerson’s essays, present not only in those texts by Emerson that directly

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deal with Swedenborg, such as the famous essay in “Representative Men.” As Richard Fleck notes, Muir seems to have particularly responded to the “Language” chapter in Emerson’s influential *Nature* treatise, from 1836—Emerson’s words here, rephrasing and repackaging Swedenborgian doctrines of correspondence, helped Muir see that “for the poet-philosopher to read spirit, he must first interpret the hieroglyphic language of nature . . . [and that] such an interpretation became Muir’s life work not only as a scientist but also as an artist.”

A decade later, Muir finally met his intellectual hero Emerson, their sole terrestrial encounter, during Emerson’s western trip in 1871. Muir was living in Yosemite, and though he had not yet blossomed into the renowned public advocate for conservation and environmental preservation, his reputation had reached Emerson as a canny writer on nature and western botany, someone who had seemed—like his contemporary Walt Whitman—to continue the Transcendentalist trajectory that Emerson had blazed in the years before the Civil War.

Although Muir was disappointed that he was not able to convince Emerson to leave his glitzy entourage at the hotel and come spend a wild night with Muir, sleeping under sequoias in the open air, he was somewhat consoled by the gift that Emerson had left him with: a little book called *Observations on the Growth of the Mind*, originally published in 1826 by a certain Sampson Reed.

Reed’s name might be familiar to some *Messenger* readers, but outside the circles of scholars who are doing work on early nineteenth-century American literature, he is all but forgotten (this despite the fact that his *Observations* was wildly popular throughout the

nineteenth century, going through numerous editions through 1889). Reed was one of a group of pioneering Swedenborgians in antebellum Boston, and his early work is now seen as vitally significant for Emerson and the other Transcendentalists: some critics have claimed that Reed’s *Observations* stand as one of the first Romantic manifestos published in America, with its clarion call for imagination and intuition, its rejection of mechanistic science, and its mystical desire for poets who would create a new language “not of words, but of things.” Though Swedenborg is never explicitly named in Reed’s treatise, Swedenborgian theology permeates the text on almost every page.

Reed’s book marks the first entry of a bona fide Swedenborgian text into Muir’s library collection. Muir read it quickly, and wrote to one of his intellectual mentors back in the Midwest that Reed’s book was “profound,” and “full of the fountain of truth.” Later, after William Keith’s full embrace of Swedenborgianism and Muir’s subsequent encounters with the Rev. Joseph Worcester back in the San Francisco Bay Area, several more books by or about Swedenborg came into Muir’s possession—mostly, it seems, through the auspices of William Keith during the 1890s and early 1900s.

How did Muir read and encounter these books—what tracks and trails might he have left behind in the texts themselves? These were critical questions for me, given the paucity of references to Swedenborg in Muir’s published corpus.

It was thus with great anticipation and excitement that I found myself

spending part of my 2012 fall break in the Holt-Atherton Collection at the University of the Pacific, one of the largest archival repositories of John Muir’s papers, finally able to take the time to look into Muir’s extant library and some of his unpublished manuscripts. The archive lies near Stockton, about a two-hour trip from Berkeley. According to the archive finding aid, there was nothing of significance or of note in any of the Swedenborg-related materials I was going to look at: no annotations or relevant marginalia. Nevertheless, I still held a hope that some archival digging might uncover something that prior scholars had not yet noticed.

Even research that seemed to harbor such potential disappointment is brightened by working in the Holt-Atherton Collection at the University of the Pacific. The archive is also home to the papers and collection of the legendary jazz pianist Dave Brubeck, and I found as I began to look through the boxes that had been brought out for my perusal that a gentle, steady stream

of Brubeck’s jazz was flowing out of an area by the front entryway (and for the record, the extremely helpful and friendly archivist did kindly ask me if the music would disturb me in any way—to which I responded no—as I could not have imagined a more pleasant way to read nineteenth-century materials than with some rare Brubeck quietly accompanying me in the background).

I started with Reed’s *Observations*, and as I began leafing through the familiar pages (humbled as I recalled the other fingers that had turned those very same pieces of paper, from Emerson’s, to Muir’s), I was startled with the kind of discovery that scholars of



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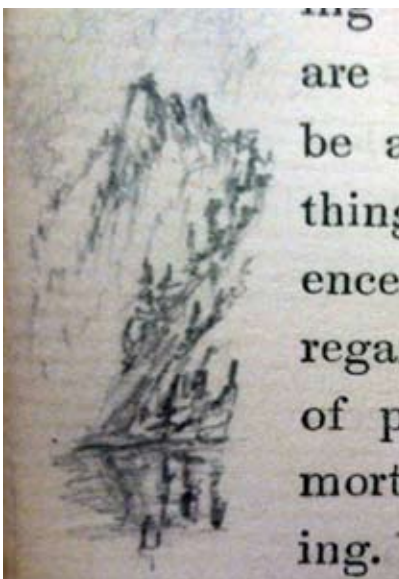
nineteenth-century literature can only dream of. Not only was the finding aid incorrect, in that there were no marginalia or things of interest in the volume—I noticed immediately, that in addition to pencil markings, several flowers had been pressed into the volume. Small, exquisite, once-white or yellow flowers, now faded brown, left behind ghostly shadow shapes in the pages that had pressed them. How long had it been since someone had opened these pages and seen these flowers, given that they were not mentioned in the finding aid?

More surprises awaited—beyond the various underlinings, clearly done in Muir's pencil, here and there came small marginal sketches: an oak leaf, then a little pine cone. In a central passage of the book, where Reed telegraphs Swedenborg's theory of correspondence and writes of "a language not of words, but of things," Muir created the most beautiful marginalia of the whole text. In a space not larger than a square inch, in light, delicate pencil, he sketched a tiny mountain peak above an alpine Sierra lake, complete with fir trees and their reflection in the lake waters.

What did this little window onto a moment of Muir's consciousness in the Sierras mean? Had he been reading his book present from Emerson under a tree by this lake, and simply stopped to sketch the scenery around him as his thoughts wandered off the page? Or, had he rather been so struck by these words about correspondence, the poetic search for "a language of things" in nature—he had, after all, written to his mentor Jeanne Carr to say this book was a "fountain of truth"—that he had stopped to diagram what such a language might look like, turning away from the book to view the mountain vista before him? I am very interested in these junctures between Reed's

book and Muir's delicate doodling, where language ends and the images of "things" in nature begin.

The other books pertaining to Swedenborg in Muir's library also contain underlining, though it is sometimes



In a space not larger than a square inch, in light, delicate pencil, he sketched a tiny mountain peak above an alpine Sierra lake, complete with fir trees and their reflection in the lake waters.

unclear if the underlining is from Keith or Muir. The passages noted seem to underscore that Muir appreciated Swedenborg's background as a scientist, and that he was keenly interested in Swedenborg's extrasensory perception as it was recounted in biographical materials. (Muir owned and underlined a copy of James John Garth Wilkinson's well-known nineteenth-century biography of Swedenborg.) Muir had experienced several remarkable episodes of preternatural awareness himself, and in his unpublished autobiographical material from 1908, he recounts three occasions of psychic phenomena that were similar to Swedenborg's.

Finally, some of the material I looked at has engendered some intriguing new questions and given me reasons afresh for returning to this particular archive (if only to hear some more rare live recordings of Dave Brubeck). I knew

from some of the scholarship I had read in advance that there was a reference to Swedenborg written in the flyleaf of Muir's copy of John Brown's *Horae Subsecivae*. Brown was a nineteenth-century fellow-Scotsman and essayist (not to be confused with the infamous John Brown of Harper's Ferry)—who had no connection whatsoever to Swedenborg—and this three-volume copy of his collected essays had once belonged to Keith, who also signed his name in the front. Muir's flyleaf notes to Brown are of interest to scholars because they show Muir working out his first sketch-draft for his short story, "Stickeen," an action-packed account about Muir's death-defying adventures on an Alaskan glacier with an eponymous dog, a creature formerly owned by indigenous peoples. The story shows Muir thinking profoundly about spiritual kinship between human and non-humans, and exploring through narrative prose some questions about perception and intuition in wilderness.

In these inchoate scrawls that contain the seeds for "Stickeen," Muir writes how his dog "was like Swedenborg a herald of a new gospel." Although this line did not end up getting published in the final version of "Stickeen," the association remains tantalizing to me. Why was Stickeen, a dog, like Swedenborg for Muir? What kind of gospel does Stickeen announce? Again, it was a place in Muir's marginalia where I could trace the language of humans—Swedenborgian theology—intersecting with the correspondential language of things, the wisdom that Muir found in his indigenous dog's preternatural, nonverbal communication. ☞

Dr. Devin Zuber is an assistant professor of Swedenborgian Studies, American Studies, and Literature at the Pacific School of Religion and the Swedenborgian House of Studies in Berkeley, California. When he is not working on his book, he's out looking for the language of things in California's surf or up in the High Sierras.

## New Programs at Temenos Retreat Center

Exciting things are happening at Temenos Retreat Center, near West Chester, Pennsylvania. The minister of the Temenos Church, Christine Campbell, who also oversees the activities of the retreat center, has been offering full- and new-moon meditations, crystal-bowl meditations, and space for other groups, such as Reiki, yoga, Tai Chi, and others. She is also encouraging use of the fifty-six acres as a special place to walk the trails and commune with nature. An ecology-based program at Temenos, Trails and Trees, encourages people to support this beautiful space. In addition, the Temenos Community has a community garden that benefits Chester County Food Bank and has created its own cookbook (see sidebar).

In June, there will be an open house for groups that may need a place to hold a corporate meeting or retreat, or for those who want to see the beautiful retreat center. Guides will be available to walk the trails and offer tours of the facilities, which include a modern retreat center with space for twenty people to stay overnight and a historic farmhouse, suitable for weddings and retreats of all kinds. Go to the website ([www.temenoscommunity.org](http://www.temenoscommunity.org)) for information about date and time.

There is a new energy at the Temenos community, whose philosophy honors all paths and includes appreciation of the natural world. For many people, nature can be the portal to the Sacred. At Temenos, they are showing us just how this is done.

For further information, contact Joanna Hill, 267-304-8521 or the Retreat Center: 610-696-8145, 1564 Telegraph Road, West Chester, Pennsylvania 19382. ☸

## God's Power

God knows all. He knows what will happen once you have known and have gotten full faith in God. Once you've loved, acted and died. Once you've passed out of the material world and beyond. He knows all.

He is everywhere. In everything. He is everywhere.

He is all-powerful. He can lift the strongest, biggest men. He can lift the earth. He can lift the universe.

He can make possible the impossible, and make the impossible possible (it doesn't matter how you say it, he can do it).

God is all-powerful. Omnipotent. Omnipresent. Omniscient.

The alpha. The omega.

He created light, the firmament, dry land and sea, the sun, moon, stars, the birds, the fish, the animals that creep or crawl, the men, the women, you and me.

God is there. You can do anything with God. Like resting on a great eagle over desert and thorn, he will help you over evil, sinister and thorny slumps, and take you to meadows and shallow ponds. For when he hears your prayer of better times, he will fly you over your troubles. Comfort you with his cushioning hand.

—Ava Dolley

Ava Dolley is the daughter of Kurt Fekete and Shelley Dolley. She wrote this when she was age 9; she is now 10 years old.



## Temenos Community Cookbook

Temenos Retreat Center has published a new cookbook entitled *Temenos Farmhouse Cookbook*. It contains favorite recipes from the community and makes a wonderful souvenir of this sacred space.

For all those who have stayed at Temenos for a retreat or church-related event, this cookbook is a useful reminder of the warm community and beautiful scenery. Some of the special features included in the cookbook, in addition to over 150 favorite recipes, are a bookstand for hands-free cooking, a conversion chart, and cooking tips. Each recipe is accompanied by the name of the contributor, which adds to the enjoyment of each selection.

You can buy the cookbook at the retreat center for \$20, or send a check for \$25 (\$20 for cookbook and \$5 shipping) to:

Temenos Retreat Center  
1564 Telegraph Road  
West Chester, PA 19382

For more information, call 267-304-8521, 610-696-8145, or go to [www.temenoscommunity.org](http://www.temenoscommunity.org).



# 189th Session of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, June 26–June 30, 2013

**Council of Ministers: June 23–June 25**

## 2013 Registration Form

The 2013 Annual Convention will be held in Urbana, Ohio, on the campus of Urbana University. **To learn more about Urbana U, visit [www.urbana.edu](http://www.urbana.edu). To learn more about the 2013 Convention and view a list of Frequently Asked Questions, please visit the website at [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org) or call the Central Office at (617) 969-4240.**

**Lodging:** See next page for more details. Rooms will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, and may fill up before the end of the registration period. There are no special rates for children.

**Roommates:** If you have a specific roommate in mind, please fill in their name in the appropriate space. If not, please fill in the roommate matching section, so we can try to pair you with someone with similar habits and needs.

**Childcare:** The childcare program will run June 23 through June 30 during meetings for children ages 3–12. If you will be bringing children, please contact the Central Office to obtain the necessary forms.

**Teen Program:** The teen program runs from Wednesday, June 26 through Sunday, June 30, and is supervised by Kurt Fekete. If you want your teen (age 13–17) to attend without a parent, please contact the Central Office for details.

**Internet:** Free guest wireless access is available.

**Parking:** Free. Please check the box below so we can arrange for a parking pass for your vehicle, which you will receive when checking in.

**Room & Board Reservations and Payment Deadline:** Friday, June 7, by 5 PM EST. Any room and board reservations not fully paid by this date will be subject to a \$50 late fee. Meal only packages will not be available after June 7; you may buy meals with cash at the door. Event registrations will be accepted for as long as space permits.

**Cancellations:** Fully refundable prior to Friday, June 7 at 5 PM EST. If you cancel after Friday, June 7, at 5 PM EST, you will forfeit any room and board payments. Cancellations must be done by calling the Central Office from 9 AM–5 PM EST, M–F.

**Arrivals and Departures:** Check-in on arrival day is from 2–5 PM. Check-out on June 30 is from 9 AM–1 PM. Any arrivals or departures outside of this time must be coordinated with the Central Office in advance.

**Mobility:** We cannot guarantee the availability of mobility aids such as wheelchairs. Please be prepared to make your own arrangements.

**Communications:** Please provide a valid email address below if you have one. In order to facilitate faster communications, and to save money on printing and postage, we strive to provide as much information as possible via email. Please add [manager@swedenborg.org](mailto:manager@swedenborg.org) to your contact list to ensure that you receive all of our email updates on Convention 2013.

**Ground Transportation:** Charter Vans Inc. ((937) 898-4043, [chartervans.com](http://chartervans.com)) is offering a special rate from Dayton to the UU campus: \$70 flat rate each way for up to 3 passengers, or \$20 per person each way for 4 or more people (plus 7% sales tax).

Name			
Name			
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will be parking on campus			
Street			Apt. #
City	State/Province	Zip	Day Phone
Home Church		Preferred Email	
Names, ages, and genders of children accompanying you			
Please Describe Any Special Dietary Needs and/or Mobility Issues (Not everything can be accommodated)			
Specific Roommate Request			

## Travel Information

<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do a pickup at the airport on your arrival day
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do a drop-off at the airport on Sunday
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will be flying into Dayton International and would like to be added to an email list for you to coordinate sharing a shuttle or carpool on arrival or departure day.
We are considering arranging for larger shuttle buses back to Dayton International on Sunday, June 30. Please indicate if you would be interested in taking a shuttle, and indicate a time frame below. (You will be responsible for paying the fee of \$20 plus tax per person.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I would be interested. I would like to leave between _____ and _____.

## Roommate Matching

We will do our best to match you with an appropriate roommate if you have not indicated one above.

**Please indicate your gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female

**I am (check all that apply):**

<input type="checkbox"/> An early riser	<input type="checkbox"/> A night owl
<input type="checkbox"/> A heavy sleeper	<input type="checkbox"/> A light sleeper
<input type="checkbox"/> Fragrance sensitive	<input type="checkbox"/> Fragrance-free
<input type="checkbox"/> A CPAP machine user	<input type="checkbox"/> A snorer

Anything else we should know when matching you?

Next page for fees ➞



## Room and Board Packages (please note that all rooms are double rooms)

- **Package A (June 23–June 30, seven nights): \$346 per person**  
(choose this for Council of Ministers members) Includes 7 nights of lodging, 7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 7 breakfasts.
- **Package B (June 23–June 26, three nights): \$195 per person**  
(available **only** to Council of Ministers members working outside of the denomination who are only able to attend COM meetings) Includes 3 nights of lodging, 3 dinners, 2 lunches, and 3 breakfasts.
- **Package C (June 25–June 30, five nights): \$268 per person**  
(choose this for General Council members or pre-Convention workshops) Includes 5 nights of lodging, 5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts.
- **Package D (June 26–June 30, four nights): \$221 per person**  
Includes 4 nights of lodging, 4 dinners, 3 lunches, and 4 breakfasts.

**Meal Only Packages:** For those staying off-campus who want to prepay for meals. If you are staying off-campus and do not select a prepaid meal plan, or do not register for one by June 7, you can pay a cash rate for meals at the door (see FAQ for individual meal rates).

- **Package X (June 23–June 30, meals only): \$127 per person**  
7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 5 breakfasts
- **Package Y (June 25–June 30, meals only): \$89 per person**  
5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts
- **Package Z (June 26–June 30, meals only): \$70 per person**  
4 dinners, 3 lunches, and 4 breakfasts

Registration	Cost	# People	Total
Adult	\$75		
Teen (13-17)	\$60		
Child (3-12)	\$40		
Under 3 years old	Free		
*Family maximum	\$225		
One Day Registration	\$30		
Local Volunteer	\$40		
Women's Alliance Luncheon**	See note**		

\*Family maximum price applies to immediate family members (i.e., parents/guardians and children) only.

\*\* \$10 for those paying for a Room and Board or Meal Only Package; \$17 for everyone else

Room & Board	Package	#People	Total
Room & Board or Meal Only Package (see package descriptions above for rates)			
<b>\$50 Late Fee (assessed on R&amp;B packages booked after June 7, 2013)</b>			

General Convention Subsidies	#People	Total Discount
Council of Ministers (for ordained Swedenborgian ministers with membership on the Council of Ministers only) —cost of Package A, Package B, or Package X		
General Council (current members of the General Council only)—cost of Package C or Package Y		
SCYL Officers—cost of Package D or Package Z		

<b>Grand Total (from both Registration and Room &amp; Board, less Discounts)</b>	
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## Payment Information

All prices are in US currency. If you pay with Canadian funds, please add US \$5 for handling of each Canadian check. Please be advised that all prices are listed in US funds. Room and board reservations not paid in full by 5 PM EST on June 7 will be subject to a \$50 late fee. See “Cancellations” section for refund policy.

### Payment Method

1. Credit card by mail (DO NOT email credit card information) - Fill out the following:

Visa ☐      MasterCard ☐      Amex ☐      Discover ☐

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CCV/Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Billing Zip Code (if different from mailing address): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Credit card by phone: call (617) 969-4240, Monday through Friday, 9 AM–5 PM EST

3. Credit card or bank payment via PayPal: enter an email address to receive a PayPal invoice to pay your balance below:

4. Check: Send checks payable to The Swedenborgian Church to: 11 Highland Ave., Newtonville, MA 02460

# Life Balance and Self-Care

BY KIT BILLINGS



**A**s I have settled in to my position as pastor of the LaPorte New Church (Indiana), my thoughts at times have gone toward a subject I have reflected on a lot over the past two years. It's the crucial issue of balancing church duties and care of others with self-care. I confess that until the past few years I did not achieve this balance very well. But after years of working things through, the light finally dawned.

Several years ago I took a deeper look at this whole subject we often call self-care. I discovered that God's love is as much for the one doing the caring as for anyone else. And, that we all have choices in life to try to manage

balancing care and concern for others (including the church and society) with care for self. The big task for some of us, however, is not to allow self-concerns and self-needs to take over and dominate. Doctrinally and scripturally, I discovered deeper truth, which I continue to meditate on. For example, the Lord's wonderful, two greatest commandments. The first reads, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as your-self" (Matthew 22:37-40). We are truly called to love God first and most of all, and then heaven or the church, society, our families, others, and the goodness and truth within those we're caring for, as well as in ourselves. We are called to love and care for our neighbor, big and little. And, how great that this includes the one who is caring, too. Then we

can remain more centered, balanced and whole.

What I have found is that it is much easier to be closer with God and one's own inner being, the part inside that's more soft and innocent, when self-care is maintained essentially. Some weeks are more challenging, of course, than others, but overall we are wise to keep self-care at a good level. I am reminded of the many times that we see in Scripture that the Lord made time to do this. We read for example, "And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone" (Matthew. 14:23).

There are so many wonderful and meaningful things we can do in life, useful things in work, the church, within family life, and more. The Lord is so full of blessings and precious soul food for us, and I am glad that this includes taking enough time to care lovingly for ourselves. ☩

The Rev. Kit Billings is pastor of the LaPorte (Indiana) New Church.

## Pastoral Opportunity at Bath, Maine

The Bath New Church is seeking a full-time minister beginning July 1, 2013. Located on the picturesque Maine coast, Bath is just forty minutes from the city of Portland.

Our building has been in continuous use by Swedenborgians since it was built in 1843. With the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg as our guide, we offer spiritual seekers a unique perspective to better understand the Bible and to better live useful lives.

Compensation is negotiable depending on experience and the particular skills and interests the

candidate has to offer.

Please submit:

- A cover letter, resume, and names and contact information for three references
- A brief statement of your approach to growing the church
- Two samples of sermons (written or electronic format) to: Bath Church of the New Jerusalem  
Pastoral Search Committee  
876 High Street  
Bath, Maine 04530

If you have questions, please contact Rob Lawson (Bath Society president) at 802-579-8585 or at robertfentonlawson@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

## Emanuel Swedenborg

Taller than the others, this man  
Walked among them, at a distance,  
Now and then calling the angels  
By their secret names. He would see  
That which earthly eyes do not see:  
The fierce geometry, the crystal  
Labyrinth of God and the sordid  
Milling of infernal delights.  
He knew that Glory and Hell too  
Are in your soul, with all their myths;  
He knew, like the Greek, that the days  
Of time are Eternity's mirrors.  
In unadorned Latin he went on listing  
The unconditional Last Things.

—Jorge Luis Borges

# Learning Opportunities at Convention 2013

**E**xciting workshops and mini-courses for learning in matters pertaining to church life and larger communities, social awareness and action, and spiritual matters await conventioners who gather at Urbana University at the end of June for the 189th Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church.

Although planning is still in process, the themes of some of those workshops and mini-courses are set. Detailed descriptions will appear in the *May Messenger*.

## Pre-Convention Workshops

One workshop is scheduled to date. Participants will gather with Kevin Baxter to explore the potential and problems of audio-visual technology in a church setting. Participants may bring their laptops or just their questions and interest.

## Mini-Courses

### Cultivating Heaven and Earth—Swedenborg & Sustainability

Rev. Carla Friedrich will lead a practical arts mini-course exploring sustainability and permaculture. The course will be grounded in Scripture and relate directly to Swedenborgian principles. You will leave with dirty hands!

### How To Read the General Convention Financial Statements

Polly Baxter, convention treasurer and FPRSU chairperson will share the basics of not-for-profit accounting and teach how to read General Convention financial reports.

### Treasurers' Pow Wow

Polly Baxter will lead a workshop for treasurers and other interested per-

sons to share questions, concerns, and successes. Among the areas that could be discussed are accounting software, the General Convention Common Fund, benefits of formal 501(c)(3) status, federal reporting requirements for churches, and denominational funding resources. The list is only limited by the attendees' interest.

## Singing At The Threshold

Rev. Kathy Speas will introduce the Threshold Choir, a nationwide network of women who gather in small groups to sing for those making the transition from visible to invisible life (and sometimes at births, too!). Men and women, girls and boys of all ages are welcome to come and sing easily-learned, inspiring, lovely songs.

## The Urbana Movement: Education of the Whole Person

Rev. Ken Turley and Julie McDaniel, Urbana University librarian, will explore the Urbana Movement, the learning and practice of art, music, theater, poetry, literature, science, and spirituality in the fulfillment of the belief that education involves the entire person and the entire spectrum of human endeavor.

## Touching the Spirit in New Ways

Rev. Wilma Wake, Christine Laitner, Page Morahan, and Rev. Jonathan Mitchell will share the model of the seven-year success story of [www.swedenborgiancommunity.org](http://www.swedenborgiancommunity.org), the entirely online, minister-led out-

*Continues next page*

## Starting Science From God

**An 8-week online SHS Outreach course**

**April 22–June 14, 2013**

**Tuition — Free**

**Course enrollment limited to 15 students**

**Taught by Dr. Ian Thompson,  
nuclear physicist and Swedenborgian author**

Many of us sense there is something real beyond the scope of naturalistic science. But what? Must mental and religious lives always remain a mystery and never become part of scientific knowledge? Can theism ever be connected with science? This course will explain a new rational approach to combining science and theism, using ideas from Emanuel Swedenborg. It presents theism as a scientific theory, explaining its basic postulates, consequences, and predictions as simply as possible and without paradox. Dr. Thompson will show how a following of core postulates of theism leads to novel and useful predictions about the psychology of minds and the physics of materials which should appear in the universe. Students will see if those predictions agree with the world as they observe it, both externally in nature and internally in our minds. In fact, they mesh surprisingly well with the structure of reality already revealed by modern quantum field theory and by theories of developmental stages in human minds. The result is a promising new rational theory encompassing theology, psychology and physics.

**The content will be based on Dr. Thompson's book  
*Starting Science From God***

**For more information email: [fmccrossan@shs.psr.edu](mailto:fmccrossan@shs.psr.edu)**

**Sponsored by the Swedenborgian House of Studies**

**[www.shs.psr.edu](http://www.shs.psr.edu)**



Continued from preceding page

reach ministry of the General Convention to explore with participants alternative forms of ministry.

### **What Paul, James, and Swedenborg Say about Belief and Doing Good**

Rev. Dr. David J. Fekete will explore the claim that Paul teaches that one is saved only by faith, not by good deeds. Swedenborg teaches a union of faith and charity, belief and good deeds. But why do other churches believe as they believe, and what do Biblical texts we don't often read have to say?

### **Swedenborg's Spiritual World and the Near Death Experience (NDE)**

Rev. Gabriella Cahaley and participants will explore human understanding of life both before and after the death of body, based on NDEs.

### **Slavery Has Not Been Abolished: The Nightmare of Human Trafficking**

Lois Krebs and Rev. Nadine Cotton will detail the buying and selling of human beings for forced labor and commercial sex, a thriving, expanding industry. While many of the victims are in far-off lands, many are US citizens. Children 12–14 years old are targeted and being forced into lives that

nobody would choose. What do we, as Swedenborgians, feel called to do to address this modern-day horror?

### **Our Image of God: The First Link on the Chain**

Anna Woofenden will ask, How does our image of God impact the way we see and interact with the world, other people, and the Divine? Examining psychological and theological writing, ancient mystics, and personal experience, participants will search for the link between how we see ourselves and how we see God. If the image we hold of God shapes how we see ourselves, inevitably it shapes how we see the people and the world around us as well.

We will explore various images of God and how they resonate with us by examining our childhood and current images of God and the ideas of God in our culture. We will create a space to examine and explore how our personal theology is unfolding around our images of God

Mini-courses and workshops are always a highlight of the annual convention experience, and this year we have a particularly rich and diverse selection of topics to explore.

Stay tuned to the denomination's website, [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org) and *the Messenger* for updates. ☩

## **Letter from the President**

Continued from page 43

tus organized and was master of ceremonies for the presentation, featuring a documentary entitled *The Economics of Happiness*. In dramatic and disturbing clarity, the event demonstrated the degree to which large-scale agribusiness has been replacing the self-sustaining and fulfilling occupations of local farmers and merchants to support a costly and inefficient system dependent on petroleum-based travel

and mass production. It encouraged us all to look to the benefits of supporting and engaging local economies and self-sufficient, i.e. local, small-scale merchants, farmers, and yes, community gardens.

All of this demonstrates one of the primary reasons I am a Swedenborgian: namely, that our spirituality, and our efforts to create heaven here on earth, are realized, not in spite of, but directly through the most mundane and essentially natural things of the material world. What is more com-

## **Passages**

### **Births**

Rev. Susannah Currie reports the following explosion of births among members of the Bridgewater (Massachusetts) New Church:

**Kaylee Susan Stuart** was born May 23, 2012, to Kerry Lynn and Kevin James Stuart. Grandparents: Susan Lemee and Mr. Lindsey Harris and James and Penny Stuart.

**Nathaniel William Greenwood** was born October 10, 2012, to Beki and Jason Greenwood and big sister Serena. Grandparents: Merrilee Phinney and Martin Vojtko and William and Cathy Greenwood.



**Malachi Rafael Clish** was born December 24, 2012, to Caitlin Costello and George Clish. Grandparents: Donald and Gloria Guiu Costello. Great-grandparents: Rafael and Elizabeth (Betty) Guiu.

**James Joseph Palermo** was born January 14, 2013, to Veronica and Jeffrey Palermo. Grandparents: Joseph and Nancy Palermo and Jeanne and Lawrence (Larry) Conant.

**Johanna Marie Sharkey** was born February 11, 2013, to Sarah-Kate and Matt Sharkey. Grandparents: Bet and Jeff Giddings. ☩

mon than eating and drinking? What is more reverent than Communion? Two sides of the same coin: the potential for the deeply spiritual in the very actions we consider the most common and mundane. God is always here and now waiting, and often not waiting, to be revealed! The spiritual world is always with us here and now.

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

### 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.

## The Super Powered Lovable Almost Teens (*SPLATz*) are having a *SPLATz* Spring Retreat: *Making Room For God*

**When:** Arrive Friday, 7 PM, April 26—Depart Sunday, 10 AM, April 28

**Where:** Almont New Church Retreat Center, Allenton, Michigan

**Who:** All youth ages 10–13

**What:** A Swedenborgian Church youth retreat for preteens. At our retreats we offer life skills and spiritual sessions based on the principles of the Swedenborgian Church. We strive for a safe, secure, and inclusive environment to discuss and share relevant and meaningful ideas that help with challenges youth face today. We work, play, craft and learn together as a community. We have fun!

This retreat is all about building our spiritual house. Using Biblical scripture enlightened by Emanuel Swedenborg we will explore the spiritual aspects of foundations, houses, rooms, furniture and decor. We will look at ways to invite God into our home and discover things we can do to make our rooms more attractive to angels. Spiritually, we are all like houses, and at this retreat we will try to make our house as welcoming to love and wisdom as we can! Swedenborgian Denomination youth director Kurt Fekete, Rev. Jenn Tafel, Lori Steinhiser, and Rachael Sbrocco will lead this retreat with other talented youth group leaders.

**Cost:** \$35. Assistance with this fee is available. Please don't let the cost keep you from attending.

**Contact Information:** To register or confirm attendance, for more information, or if you have questions, contact Kurt Fekete at (802) 345-0169 or [kfekete@hotmail.com](mailto:kfekete@hotmail.com).

**A word to parents about safety:** We want to assure you of our complete commitment to your child's safety at this event. We will 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 at least 18 years old working together to affirm our church's values and ensure an environment of physical and emotional safety and respect for your child.