

Zina Hyde: Builder of the Bath Church (Part One)



BY ROB LAWSON

Bath, Maine, 1856. A funeral service at the Church of the New Jerusalem. You climb the steep steps from Middle

Street, looking up at the beautiful white building without a steeple. Built on the lines of a Greek temple with its four Doric columns in front supporting a low pediment and wide entablature, the building's elegant proportions are aesthetically pleasing. You enter the vestibule, where the body of Zina Hyde lies in its coffin. Inside the sanctuary, a hymn is being sung, the service performed by the Reverend Samuel F. Dike. In the front pew, the widow, Eleanor Hyde, wears a white shawl, an unusual sight when widows customarily wore black for a year. You notice no

mourning emblems are displayed anywhere. Zina Hyde, under whose direction the building was constructed a decade earlier, would have wanted it this way.

Born in Lebanon, Connecticut, in 1787, Zina arrived in Bath as a teenager in 1802, where he joined his father who had settled there three years earlier. Zina was apprenticed to his half-brother, Jonathan, who owned a retail store. In time, Zina established a general merchandise and ship chandlery business, Zina Hyde & Co., supplying the burgeoning shipbuilding business of Bath. Zina served as a brigade major for the Bath Light Infantry during the War of 1812. He is credited with riding through town to give the alarm on the morning of June 20, 1814, that the British were coming up the river to sack the town: Zina Hyde, Bath's Paul Revere! As it turned out, the British landed elsewhere and were repulsed. Shortly after the war's end, Zina married Harriet Buck, the daughter of Colonel Jonathan Buck, founder of Bucksport on the Penobscot River. Harriet was well educated, an accomplished painter, affectionate, and attractive, but having a frail constitution, her health rapidly declined. She

died within a year of their marriage.

Zina had become familiar with the writings of Swedenborg through contact with readers, or "receivers," within his Bath circle of friends. Despite being a member of the orthodox Old North Congregational Church, Zina easily moved back and forth between his church and the more liberal Old South Congregational Church. Its pastor was the Harvard-trained and enlightened Reverend William E. Jenks. Having



The Bath New Church, Bath, Maine

learned about Swedenborg while in Cambridge in 1803, Jenks actively circulated the writings when he took up his Bath pulpit in 1805. Jenks asserted that he found Swedenborg's revelations not at odds but in support of the primary doctrines of Christianity and of the Congregational Church. This advocacy no doubt placed Old North Church officials in a difficult position, having examined and declared the Writings heretical a decade before, forbidding members to read them.

A transcript of Zina's 1811 diary details the young man's interest in

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

You are invited to the Corporation meeting of the Swedenborgian House of Studies at the annual convention, where you can meet the board and some of the faculty, ask questions, and hear more about your seminary

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The Editor's Desk



Justice and a Caution

The news that Edward MacKenzie has been arrested and indicted (page 86) is good news for members of the Swedenborgian Church, which has attempted, unsuccessfully, to wrest the assets of the Boston Swedenborgian Church from his hands. Accused of a long list of crimes, which amount to a systematic looting of the Boston Church, MacKenzie has at long last been forced to confront justice.

Although the damage he has inflicted never can be completely undone or compensated, we should be thankful that our government, the FBI and the Justice Department—the FBI has been building this case for at least three years—has seen fit to devote the time and energy required to bring this case. We can battle evil on our own, but we need the goodness and wisdom of others to assist in cases of egregious wrongdoing.

There is a cautionary tale for us here. We know there is evil in the world, and sometimes it takes the form of predators

who can smell large assets and money sitting in weak organizations. When a church's assets and income are out of all proportion to the number of members, the danger of looting is acute. Although state attorneys-general often take action in cases of egregious misuse of funds and outright criminality in non-church charitable organizations, they usually are reluctant to step into church matters because of the American tradition of separation of church and state. Thus, if we don't protect ourselves, we are vulnerable.

Churches are places of welcome and friendliness, and what church is not delighted to welcome a new member? Sociopaths are particularly good at being friendly and helpful—they are glib and unfettered by moral compunction that would prevent them from saying whatever their new friends clearly want to hear. We like to think the best of people; we like to forgive them their past transgressions and accept them the way they present themselves; we like to lower our guard against deception and welcome those who enter our churches just as they present themselves.

How can we guard against this very real threat, in our churches and in our larger organizations? There are no easy answers. The best we can do at this time is to engage in continuing conversations, within our congregations and our larger organizations. We can become more informed, more creative,

and more aware by coming together. Seeking legal advice can be helpful.

As if the anxiety engendered by the Boston Church experience is not enough, we experience more from the fact of our shrinking membership and the decline of organized (non-fundamentalist) religion. David Fekete explores the meaning of the New Christian Church in light of New Church Day, June 19 (page 82).

A phrase from popular culture is apt here: the protagonist of the film *The Big Lebowski*, known as "the Dude," through many tribulations, repeats this tag line, "The Dude abides." The New Church abides.

—Herb Ziegler

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Church Calendar

- June 19: New Church Day
- June 26–30: 189th Annual Convention • Urbana U • Urbana, OH
- July 20–28: Almont Summer Camp • Allenton, MI
- August 3–18: FNCA Summer Camp • Fryeburg, ME
- September 12–15: Gathering Leaves • FNCA • Fryeburg, ME

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.

Wilmington Church Seeks Minister

The Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, is seeking a full-time Minister to start as early as September 1, 2013.

A formal call letter with job description and Church details has been submitted to the placement committee.

Questions or requests for more information should be directed to Jeff Eissinger: jeissinger@gmail.com.



Letter from the President



Dear Friends,

Spring has sprung, even up here in Maine! Laurie and I have been working on a garden—vegetables expanded from last year—and planting flowers here and there just for their beauty. We hope for some delicious meals as the summer progresses, and if all goes well, we'll have some raspberries and blueberries to freeze for winter. The potential harvest is motivation for all the work we've put in. But I have discovered something in the past month or two. While the ultimate goal is indeed the harvest of fruits and vegetables, we have been getting benefits from the work itself that we never expected: working in the garden is cultivating an inner state of peace and fulfillment and accomplishment just by doing the work itself.

So now my thoughts turn to the work of the church, our garden of spirituality. We have been working on getting our church to grow for many years. The hopes for a successful gathering in of harvest has been our motivation, and we have put much time and effort into the pursuit of that goal. But it occurs to me that for us to register real success the work itself must be a reward in and of itself. Whether we are serving in one of our local church-

es or on a committee or support unit, or maybe as one of the officers in a church, association, or Convention, without losing sight of our ultimate goal, we need to bring the attitude to the work itself that cultivates an inner state of peace and fulfillment and accomplishment in the doing. This is the true purpose of our church: that being part of doing the work cultivates the heavenly spirit within and among us. The ultimate goal, however noble, is not reason enough. The means themselves must cultivate within those of us doing the work the very state we are hoping to bring others into. In one sense, the means does not justify the ends, the means must *be* the end. For if we are able to cultivate the heavenly spirit in the doing the work of the New Church then we are entering into the Holy City as well as contributing to its manifestation. On the other hand, no matter how noble our ultimate goal, if the means are not in harmony with the goal, then our efforts are, at best, counterproductive.

So we gather soon at our annual convention to share our experiences of the last year, look to the business at hand, envision the future, and make our plans. While it has been said, "if you want to make God laugh, make plans," well, we will still make our plans. But let us commit ourselves to pursuing our goals with the right attitude, that we may cultivate the blessings of heaven in the doing, not just in the accomplishing of the goal. It is how we fulfill our name sake, the General Convention of the New Jerusalem.

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

SPLATz Make Room for God at Almont

KURT FEKETE

In April, a record setting twenty-one young people aged ten to thirteen traveled from five states to Almont Retreat Center in Michigan to join with friends at the SPLATz (Super Powered Lovable Almost Teens) Retreat. Beautiful warm sunshine, high energy outdoor play, games, delicious food, and interesting spiritual sessions combined to make this gathering memorable and exciting for all. What a joy to hear laughter and see so many great kids playing and learning together in community at Almont. This was also the first retreat for my ten-year old daughter Ava (wow—where did the years go?). It was wonderful for Ava finally to be old enough to participate in a retreat after spending her entire life listening to me talk about how amazing these youth gatherings are!

Our theme for the retreat was “Making Room for God,” so discussions centered on houses, rooms and décor. Swedenborg writes about a house relating to the inner mind where good is with truth (*Secrets of Heaven* (SH) §7560).

Homes essentially correspond to our essence, and the rooms represent aspects of our self that combine to make us spiritual beings. In our sessions we

talked about all the rooms in a house and how they relate to our thoughts, delights, qualities, and character.

Once everyone arrived Friday evening and the kids made quick work of the pizzas, we assembled for an ice-

ing into a quiet, settling meditation to prepare them for sleep (which remarkably did eventually happen).

Quite a few of the boys at the retreat were up early Saturday morning, and they made their way downstairs look-

ing for food. (How do these kids stay up so late and manage to get up so early?) After the dedicated leaders and I revived with coffee, we launched into our next session.

At this session we discussed all the rooms in a house and what questions the rooms invoke for us. Questions like, “Who are we allowing through our door?” “What guests are we inviting and entertaining in our living room?” “What are you serving your friends in your dining room?” “Are you getting rid of the unhealthy waste in your life in your

bathroom?” (The kids loved the correspondences in the bathroom talk!) and “Is it time that you bring some of the dark, scary memories stored in your basement into the light, or is that too frightening right now?” All of this discussion really got the kids thinking about themselves and how they are living their lives.

The Saturday afternoon sessions focused on the room that kids relate best to, the bedroom. This is the one room in the house that teens and tweens consider their own. The bedroom is the place of privacy, intimacy, and rest. Spiritually, as the innermost room, it can represent our relationship with God. We talked about our spiritual bedroom and addressed the questions, “How long do we let God stay in

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The Splatiz retreat group sailing to Almont



Heather and Natalia, BFFs

breaker and began our spiritual discussions. At the opening session, we talked about the famous Bible story from the Sermon on the Mount about the house built on the rock (Matthew 7:24–27) and how important it is for us to have a strong foundation built on truths from the Lord so that we can withstand storms (temptations). After this session, most of the kids were still very energetic and excited to be at Almont so we gave them some time to run and play before mov-

Continued from preceding page

our bedroom?" "Do we send him away sometimes?" "Is our bedroom filled with love and wisdom?" and "How do



The boys working on their "man caves"

we make our bedroom more inviting to the Lord?" Then the tweens got involved in a craft activity that was really fun. They made their own shoebox bedrooms, completely furnished with a bed, table, lamp and chair and decorated with pictures and words of all the positive, affirming, and useful things that they love. When complete, the bedrooms became little representations of their best angel-selves—bed-



Kirsten, Cory and Ava doing "house work"

room models that showed the good qualities and characteristics that make up the beautiful souls of these young people. The shoebox bedrooms came out wonderfully! In the evening ses-

sion, each of the tweens got their time "on stage" to show, share, and answer questions about the room they made. Each of the bedrooms was creatively crafted with thoughtfulness and care. I felt blessed to just be able to sit back and listen to the tweens share.

We closed our sessions with a discussion of which room each individual felt they needed to spend more energy on or which room they felt drawn to. Many of the youth shared dur-

ing this time. One tween felt she needed to work on the closet and better understand and develop the clothes (outward masks) that she wears. One youth mentioned the need to spend more time in the attic trunk (blessed remains) appreciating the cherished memories and gifts that her grandmother who had passed on left her with. The understanding and insights that the tweens shared surprised and delighted me. They never cease to amaze and astound me. The evening concluded with a guided meditation where the youth journeyed to a moonlit beach where they could safely and silently contemplate all that they did over the busy, exciting day of learning and playing.

On Sunday morning we rose quite a bit more sluggishly than the previous morning and finished off all the remaining food (Boy, can those kids eat!).

As parents arrived, kids and leaders cleaned the retreat center and prepared the vehicles for departure. We man-

aged to click off a couple group pictures on "the boat" before saying our goodbyes. Ava and I packed up our belongings, "broke down" her shoebox bedroom for transport, and loaded up the car.

As we drove away from Almont I reflected on all the fantastic activities, conversations and warm community I experienced over the weekend. Ava enjoyed her experience. That is deeply satisfying to me as both a youth director and a father. Our church youth are blessed to have this safe environment and loving community of friends to learn and grow in. I offer my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to youth workers Rev. Jenn Tafel, Rachael Sbrocco, Lori Steinhiser, and Becky



The finished bedrooms

Moore for their time and devotion to our SPLATz. Our tweens certainly are super-powered and lovable—as are our youth leaders. Now that I am back home, I am already counting the days until we can gather again to learn and grow closer to one another and closer to God. ☩

Kurt Fekete is the youth director of the Swedenborgian Church. He lives in Fryeburg, Maine.

Farewell to Fryeburg

BY SAGE CURRY

“Have you considered candidating in Fryeburg? It’s such a great church, you should think about it!”

Back in the summer of 2009, I was asking all of my clergy colleagues this question. Comfortable in my job as a full-time hospice chaplain in Portland, Maine (though not always fulfilled), I wasn’t looking for something new. I was excited about the opening at Fryeburg New Church (FNC) for everyone else. After spending a good deal of time trying to talk others into applying, it dawned on me, “Could I be interested? Why not?”

I had practical reasons why not. Being single would be hard, knowing this wouldn’t be a metropolis full of other people my age. What would I do with myself in that big parsonage? Would this small town church be able to handle a minister formed in Berkeley, California, the heart of liberal thinking and theology? Hmmmmm. While at first these “fears” felt practical enough, once I stepped into the church and heard the pitter-patter of little feet as children ran into the sanctuary, the gathering of elders arriving early to catch up with each other, the spirit-filled voices of the choir, love displaced all that fear. I fell in love almost immediately with the Fryeburg New Church, and over my three and a half years that love has only deepened.

What are the things I loved about serving as pastor of the Fryeburg New Church? In no particular order: our choir director Greg’s whistle as he bounding into church with at least



one, often three, instruments in tow early Sunday mornings; Billy and Gail Holt bringing six little beagle puppies into the office for me to cuddle, hoping I would take one home (I resisted, but it was hard!); the many Thursday Bible studies where a won-

derful fabric of deep spiritual insights and the latest town news were deftly interwoven; the way I would come home to the parsonage in the summer to find the gift of a bag of fresh garden vegetables hanging from my front door; Worship Committee meetings full of laughter, love, and excitement for all that we were planning; the wonderful shared experience of preaching at FNC, when I would be continually amazed at how my plans would evolve into the wisdom and sharing emerging from the congregation; my monthly worship services at the Fryeburg Health Care Center where I was always show-



Rev. Sage addressing the children

ered with great love and couldn’t leave without many hugs, a prayer from Bill, singing “How Great Thou Art,” and several invitations to lunch; the music



The Fryeburg New Church

of the FNC choir, their energy and talent; and the children! Oh, they say the wisest things.

FNC’s commitment to children’s ministry was such a joy to be a part of. The wise and loving teachers are so devoted each week. While I’m sure there are amazing kids everywhere, we seem to have some extra special ones in Fryeburg—creative, insightful, helpful, caring, generous, sweet, and so much *fun*! I loved each opportunity to sit and talk with our FNC kids, to go carolling with them around the neighborhood, to play water balloon toss at our church picnic, and so much more. Whether they were challenging me with a deep spiritual question, testing my knowledge of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, or showing me their latest craft project, each moment spent with this diverse crew was a delight. And I can’t leave out Fryeburg Fair time, that alternate dimension that we enter towards the end of September where everything halts except for pie rolling, chowder making, and a thousand other tasks mi-

raculously completed every year like clockwork with the huge force of volunteers that come together to stock

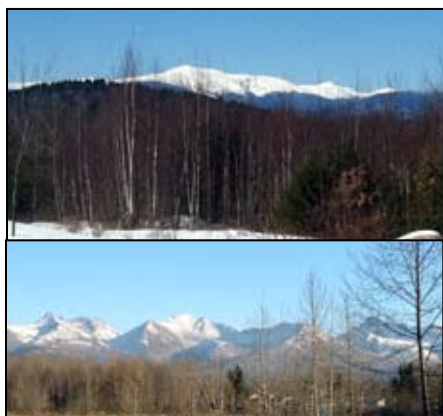
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and operate the FNC food booth. The effort that goes into operating our New Church booth is massive, and it is that hard work, that commitment, and that willingness to serve that has helped FNC thrive through its many years. It really is something to see. If you've never been able to take a shift in the New Church booth, consider a vacation to Maine in early October and come on down! Try the breakfast shift when we feed the local vendors, that's my favorite!

I write this farewell to honor this special place and to say thank you for the wonderful experience I've had falling in love with everyone in the church. It had to be something pretty special to draw me away; meeting the man I am going to marry was on the short list of things that could do it. Some people have already heard this story but I almost didn't attend the spiritual-direction training where Ted and I met. I had originally been planning on attending a workshop given by the Alban Institute entitled "The Long Pastorate." Staying in Fryeburg was always my intention, but God sometimes has other plans.

I leave the White Mountains of Frye-



Top: the White Mountains, Maine
Bottom: the Chugach Mountains, Alaska

burg, Maine, for the Chugach Mountains of Anchorage, Alaska. I leave with a heart full of grief and joy. I leave tak-

A Message from the FNCA Camp Director



It's that time of year

To start thinking of Maine,

Sitting in the sunshine

Or playing games in the rain.

You should register for camp today.

Take a dip in the Saco

Or canoe down the river,

Take a plunge with the Polar Bears
(Yeah, it may make you shiver.)

You should register for camp today.

Sit out on the porch

And catch up with old friends.

Enjoy all the lectures

From beginnings to ends.

You should register for camp today.

Take in evening activities

And late night games,

Watching Sparks trying

To run and catch Flames.

You should register for camp today.

Whether a first time camper

Or you join us each year,

Whether a Spark, Flame, or Ember,

It's really quite clear...

You should register for camp today!

—Jason Greenwood

For more information or to register, for summer camp at Fryeburg New Church Assembly, go to the website, fryeburg.org.

If You're Coming to the Annual Convention . . .

in Urbana, Ohio, please consider bringing new items for donations in conjunction with the mini-course, *Slavery Has Not Been Abolished: The Nightmare of Human Trafficking*, presented by The Collaborative Initiative to End Human Trafficking. Donations will be distributed by The Salvation Army of Central Ohio to victims of trafficking.

Bring such items as deodorant, shampoo, soap, tampons, shaving cream, toothbrushes, nail polish, hair brushes, snacks, (especially ready to eat, shelf stable meals, such as ravioli that can be opened and eaten from the container), granola bars, juice boxes, any small item that might make a survivor of trafficking feel loved and appreciated, gift or gas cards, materials for our social entrepreneurship program with survivors (teaching the women to make fabric belts and sell them to raise awareness about trafficking), including fabric, crafting rings, thread, scrapbooking materials (stickers, cards, paper, glue sticks, Sharpies, markers, etc.), and items for our short-term safe housing (including twin bed sheets, twin blankets, pillows, bath towels, kitchen towels, pots, pans, toilet paper, paper towels, cleaning supplies).

ing so much with me from my time in Fryeburg. I go with so many wonderful memories. I go with a solid sense of what amazing things God can do. I go with a heart expanded so wide by love,

at least as wide as the 4,396 miles from Fryeburg to my new home in Anchorage. Thanks be to God for bringing us together, and may the Lord continue to bless us all on our journeys. ☩

SHS Trustees Meet in Berkeley

BY TOM NEUENFELDT & HERB ZIEGLER

The Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) Board of Trustees (BOT) met May 3–4, 2013, in Berkeley, California.

Academic Matters

Dean Lawrence serves on a Swedenborgian Church committee to recommend an alternative path to leadership training; the M.Div. degree (or equivalent) is the current requirement. Current thinking is to create a status that is not ordained but is an upgrade from lay leader, a licensed pastor restricted to a specific pulpit, requiring acceptance by CAM. There would be a tailored certification program with mentoring, good for two years. SHS would be integral in the training. This would open another channel of study and create another path to serve the church.

The BOT approved a policy and process for SHS research fellows. A research fellow must be approved (for a three-year appointment) by the BOT. SHS will provide a disclaimer that SHS does not necessarily endorse the work product of SHS fellows.

SHS will be responsible for tenure decisions of its faculty and will continue the current tenure process. The Dean of SHS will follow current policies, practices, and time lines for tenure decisions.

Finance and Budget

SHS is still working through the process of reinstating its nonprofit status with the IRS. This has been a labor intensive process, but it will provide foundational information on the school at the IRS, as the original paperwork was vague about whether the school is the denomination's seminary, triggering the requirement for a reinstatement process.

SHS has about \$250,000 in Con-

vention-held funds on which General Council (GC) has imposed a service charge of 1.0%. In response to a letter requesting the service charge not be levied, GC voted a one-time grant in the amount of the 1.0% assessment to SHS for 2013 in light of extraordinary expenses for the fiscal year.

For the 2012–13 fiscal year, revenues exceeded expenses by \$4,137. The 2013–14 budget shows expenses exceeding revenues by \$29,761. A number of factors affect the changes in rev-



Rebecca Esterson, scholar-in-training

enue and expenses. More personnel are participating in health care benefits, resulting in an added expense of \$38,000. The Common Fund payout has been reduced by 0.1% to 4.5%, reducing estimated total payout from \$512,699 to \$495,842. (For operating purposes, SHS regards payout as endowment income.) The payout estimate is based on the 2012 fund corpus, but the actual value of SHS investments will be determined by their performance in 2013. Expenses incurred by non-profit-status reinstatement are estimated at \$25,000. The budget has been reduced in the areas of adjunct faculty, publicity, and board expenses.

PSR Strategic Redirection

Dean Lawrence elaborated on the recommendations of Pacific School of Religion's (PSR) Commission on Strategic Directions (CSD) report. (SHS

professor Devin Zuber was a member of the three-member commission.) The large annual deficits at PSR were the initial impetus for the review; fundamental changes in churches and theological education were other factors in PSR's desire for a new direction.

It is estimated that the real estate and facilities at PSR are valued at approximately \$50 million. The desired change desired must come from the sale of some of the real estate. PSR is investigating two or three scenarios for selling assets.

The commission recommends a change in the PSR's focus on preparation for clergy. The goal will be to educate students to be change-makers for social transformation. This change-making may occur in the church but also in business or nonprofit settings. The M.Div will be revised to be distinctive in skill building for social justice issues. The focus of training will be more on formation and less on academic theory.

The CSD recommendations challenge SHS to plan how to protect its assets and traditions. The relationship between SHS and its denomination is unique. Dean Lawrence asserted that SHS must protect its faculty, scholarship, and faith traditions throughout the change process. SHS has gained respect within the GTU over the past twelve years by playing by the rules, being flexible, and gaining recognition in the world of theological education.

PSR President Reiss Potterveld

PSR president Reiss Potterveld joined the board to discuss PSR and the status of the CSD.

Over the past year, PSR has reduced expenses by \$1.8 million. The PSR endowment has increased from \$31 million to \$34.2 million during President Potterveld's three-year tenure as president.

PSR sold an underused property to

Continues next page

Church and Association Statistics for 2012

Article I, Section 3, of the Constitution of the Swedenborgian Church states that it is composed of “Constituent bodies . . . which . . . unite with the Swedenborgian Church in performing the distinctive uses of a church.” The constituent bodies are the associations listed in the table below. The constitution continues, “The members of the Swedenborgian Church shall be those persons who are adult, active

members of a constituent body or who have been accepted as members at large through Rite of Confirmation and by vote of the Swedenborgian Church.”

Article IV, Section 2, states, “Every constituent body of the Swedenborgian Church shall be entitled to two delegates and an additional delegate for every ten members.” The table below displays statistics as of December 31, 2012.

Association (Conference)	Churches		Ordained Ministers		Lay Leaders	Members			Number of Delegates
	Active	Inactive	Active	Retired		Active	Inactive	Total	
Eastern Canada	2	0	3	0	1	107	25	132	12
Illinois*	6	0	4	0		89	14	103	10
Kansas	2	0	2	1		80	0	80	10
Maine	3	0	6	0		144	118	262	16
Massachusetts	4	0	9	1		76	73	149	9
Michigan	2	0	3	0		66	19	85	8
Middle Atlantic	3	0	4	0		64	36	100	8
New York	2	0	1	0		33	27	60	5
Ohio	3	0	3	1	1	50	23	73	7
Pacific Coast	6	0	17	3		232	95	327	25
Southeast	2	0	3	0		29	3	32	4
Western Canada	6	0	1	2		116	7	123	13
At Large	0	0	7	0		5		5	2
SCYL									2
Totals	41	0	63	8	2	1091	440	1531	131

*Norway (Iowa) Society did not report for 2010–2012

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Zaytuna College, the only Islamic college in the United States, and Zaytuna will soon apply to join the Graduate Theological Union.

A major goal of the PSR reorganization is to create new streams of revenue in addition to cutting expenses. Training people who want to be change-makers and critical thinkers in a variety of fields and “third age” programs for senior citizens will establish a more sustainable model. PSR will maintain academic excellence and continue to support scholarship.

President Potterveld affirmed that SHS is an independent school and is not bound to the future of PSR. SHS

has kept its own identity and sense of mission while successfully integrating with PSR. He credited Dean Lawrence with keeping SHS focused and integrated. The awareness and knowledge of Swedenborgian thought by PSR faculty has increased dramatically in the last few years.

Education Component

SHS scholar-in-training Rebecca Esterson presented the educational component of the board meeting. Her focus is to share what she is learning, will be learning, and researching for her dissertation. She is focussing on the field of comparative religion, engaging in a morphological study of the intersection of Jewish and Christian religions,

with a steady focus on how Emanuel Swedenborg fits into this history.

Esterson is comparing Swedenborg and Jewish mysticism through the concepts of divine marriage, divine influx, the human shape of heaven (Hebrew being the language of heaven), and the secrets of the Bible. In addition, she is investigating comparisons between the writings of Swedenborg and Menachem Nahum of Chernobyl, founder of the Chernobyl Hasidic dynasty and a contemporary of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Through examination of documents from both the Christian and Jewish traditions, she showed the board ways in which the Jewish and Christian traditions follow similar paths. ☙

The New Church Is Coming and Is Come

BY DAVID J. FEKETE

"After this work was finished the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that THE LORD GOD JESUS CHRIST reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages, according to the prediction in Daniel (vii. 13, 14), and in the Apocalypse (xi. 15). . . .

"This took place on the nineteenth day of June, 1770 . . . (True Christian Religion" [TCR] 791).

Swedenborg claims that a new Christian church has been formed in heaven, and that it is even now descending onto the earth. It is a new way of thinking about God, and a new way of living. It is a movement among all of humanity, so by a church, Swedenborg does not mean a denomination.

The New Church is predicted in various parts of the Bible. It is especially predicted in the beautiful concluding passage in the book of Revelation. There, the New Church is compared to a bride adorned for her groom, and it is said to be descending from heaven. It is also in the prophet Daniel. There, the New Church is said to be looked after by the son of man, and that his rule will be "an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will ever be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14).

This New Church will be the crown of all the churches that have existed in the past. There have been four churches in the past.

Four churches in general have existed on this earth from the beginning, one before the flood, another after it, the Israelitish Church third, and that called Christian fourth (TCR 786).

The New Church will be the final,

the last, and the eternal church. It will be distinguished by the way it envisions God. The New Church will see God as the Divine Human whose soul is the Infinite Creator God.

This New Church is the crown of all the churches which have hitherto existed on earth, because it will worship one visible God in whom is the invisible, like the soul in the body (TCR 787).

Worshipping a visible God in whom is the Infinite Invisible God is crucial in Swedenborg. It is at the very heart of his theology. The whole reason for creation itself was so that God could have someone to love and who would love God back. So the purpose of creation is to form a mutual relationship between God and humans. Swedenborg claims that humans can be conjoined only with a visible God. He states,

Thus and not otherwise can there be conjunction of God with man, because man is natural and hence thinks naturally, and the conjunction must be in his thought and thus in his love's affection, which is the case when he thinks of God as a man. Conjunction with an invisible God is like that of the eye's vision with the expanse of the universe, of which it sees no end; it is also like vision in mid ocean, which falls upon air and sea and is lost. But conjunction with a visible God, on the other hand, is like seeing a man in the air on the sea, spreading forth his hands and inviting into his arms. For all conjunction of God with man must also be reciprocally of man with God, and there cannot be this reciprocation on the other part except with a visible God (TCR 787).

Swedenborg makes the unique claim that the very incarnation of God in the form of Jesus Christ was so that we could visualize the Human God in Jesus. So not only did Jesus come to

save us, He also came to give us an image of God we could relate to in love.

the one God who is invisible came into the world and assumed the Human, not only that He might redeem men, but also that He might become visible, and thus capable of conjunction (TCR 786).

This New Church worships the one Human Christ in whom is the invisible Creator God. That form of worship allows for conjunction.

That is Swedenborg's claim. Is it ours? For me, the image of the Divine Human stretching out His arms for an embrace is beautiful. It certainly gives me a God with whom I can relate in love. But when I pray, I can't say that I form a mental picture of God. It is more a kind of communication of my heart to God's loving presence. I know of some Swedenborgians who even think that God can't fit into a Human form. They think God is too big for that. As for that, I find no particular difficulty. Then there are Swedenborgians who think that this is all so much theological niceties, and that how a person pictures God doesn't much matter—just so they believe. Here, I respectfully disagree. I do think it matters how a person pictures God. A person's concept of God fills their whole mind and orients their theology. It forms their consciousness. I think it does matter.

Swedenborg wrote much about how the people of the New Church believe. Much of his book *The Apocalypse Revealed* is about the doctrines of the New Church and how the doctrines of the Old Church differ. Primarily, two basic doctrines distinguish the Old Church from the New Church. The first is the nature of God. The New Church worships the One Divine Human in whom is the Infinite Invisible God. The Old Church worships the God called the

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trinity. There are various ways to understand the trinity. But the Nicene Creed, by far the most universally applied creed throughout Christianity, states that God is three persons who have one essence. The understanding of the trinity from the Nicene Creed is as follows:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. . . . And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; . . . And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

Notice the triple use of the word “and.” What I mean is the passages that say “we believe in the one God, the Father . . . *and* in the Lord Jesus Christ . . . *and* in the Holy Ghost.” This triple conjunction leads some to think of three beings. Notice, too, that the Holy Ghost is worshipped “with the Father and the Son together.” Language like this implies three persons. I think it is fair to say that many Christians think of three gods when they think of the trinity. It takes a supremely subtle reasoning to hold the idea of one God along with the statements from the Nicene Creed that sound like three persons.

Another doctrine that Swedenborg says the New Church will not hold as true is that of faith alone. The doctrine of faith alone says that no good works matter in our salvation. All that matters is faith, or belief, that Jesus died for our sins. In the New Church, faith and charity are united. This perfect union of faith and charity is symbolized by the Holy City being in the shape of a

square “as long as it is wide” (Revelation 21:16). The length signifies charity, or good works, and the width signified faith, or truth.

When Swedenborg wrote, the New Church was just being born. Since then, I see many examples of its presence here on earth. One such example is the utter separation of church and state in the Christian world. Think of it! In Swedenborg’s day, a person could be brought to trial for the beliefs they held. Swedenborg himself was brought to trial in Sweden, and convicted of heresy. The ruling Lutheran Church forbade him to publish in the country of Sweden. Worse still might have happened had not Swedenborg been friends with the Queen. Today, in North America and many parts of the world we can think and speak as we please without fear of religious persecution. As far as faith alone goes, I spoke with a Lutheran minister at the last Faith and Order Commission. She told me that today, the official Lutheran doctrines speak not of faith alone, but of faith leading to good works. This in the Church that invented the doctrine of faith alone. And in the National Council of Churches I find a moving spirit of charity, love, and mutual acceptance among different religions. These are religions that in the past have spawned wars and separation. Now we are sharing common meals and we relate to each other as friends. This is remarkable progress.

Some of the old ways of thinking are fading. And, unfortunately, so are many of the old institutions that held them. I mean the churches themselves. Maybe the passing of organized religion is a stage in the New Church and its new way of viewing the life of faith. Maybe it is how the old doctrines will be erased. Maybe the old ways need to disappear before the new ways of the New Church can descend to earth.

One final note about this denomination. There was a time when we

thought that our denomination was that New Church. I grew up being told that my religion was, “The Church of the New Jerusalem”—that we were actually named after that vision in Revelation and actually were that New Jerusalem descending from heaven. It was in the late sixties, I believe, that we came to our senses, and realized that it was presumptuous to claim to be that New Church. As we are based on the writings of Swedenborg, we decided it made more sense to name ourselves after his theology. We are now Swedenborgians, with all the inconveniences that that clumsy name brings with it. But I think it is still easier to deal with than Church of the New Jerusalem, and all that that name implies.

I don’t know what the future holds for the churches we now know. But I firmly believe that the New Church described in Revelation and that Swedenborg speaks of is a fact. I have complete trust that this New Church is descending and is here in many ways even now. When we look out at the world we can see many things. Depending on how we wake up, I think, we can see either glorious progress in the world, or dismal decadence. It can very well be both. It is a central teaching that evil can only be dealt with and eradicated when it is seen. We should not be surprised to see cultural decay as we see great progress.

The Bible ends with that beautiful image of the Holy City descending from heaven as a bride prepared for her groom. In this Holy City, God himself dwells so there is no need even for an altar. In it is the tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of nations. This is a beautiful vision of the way things will be in the end of time. I suggest that it is also a vision of the way things are now and are becoming for those who have eyes. ☩

The Rev. Dr. David Fekete is pastor of the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta.

Zina Hyde

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the heavenly doctrines and his delight in discussing them in detail with not only Jenks, but anyone who was so inclined. One evening, Zina had an engaging conversation with Jenks at the minister's home, in the course of which they were joined by a certain Dr. Stockbridge. The subject turned to "the Doctrines of Mr. Swedenborg, on which Dr. S. is very inquisitive," Zina records,

To me this conversation gives pleasure, not so much for being a rehearsal of the most sublime Truths, as for its leading to a clearer discovery of their beauty and moral excellency, in comprehending them with the written Word (from which they are deduced), the nature of things, and the character of God exhibited in natural creation with his dealings toward mankind, all which appear to be designed by God for man's use.
...

Zina's inquisitive mind is clearly evident in these entries. His enthusiasm for Swedenborg's work spilled over the following day when he had a further conversation with Dr. Stockbridge on the writings of Swedenborg.

Other early readers of Swedenborg's work were Captain Horatio Gates Allen—who settled in Bath in 1795 and served with Zina in the Bath Light Infantry—and his older brother Cushing Allen, a shoemaker. The Allen families would prove to be one of the four "pillars" of the Bath Society. Cushing's daughter Elizabeth married Benjamin F. Barrett, who would be ordained as a Swedenborgian minister in 1840 and become nationally known as an articulate advocate for the church. Cushing's other two daughters, Lucy and Hannah, would be teachers in Bath's Swedenborgian Sabbath School. And his son John would become a New York publisher.

In May 1817, Zina—recently wid-

owed—attended the first Swedenborgian Convention at the newly consecrated gothic-style temple in Philadelphia. Three years later, in 1820, he helped form a reading circle in Bath to study the heavenly doctrines. This may have been an informal gathering that met irregularly, for it was not until 1827 when regular reading meetings were held. In September 1829, the Bath Society of the New Jerusalem was formed. A month later, with the Reverend Thomas Worcester of Boston officiating, the Bath group, consisting of thirty-five members, became a constituent member of the New Church body.

Making this break required great courage. Zina Hyde, William and Rachel Sewell, John and Catherine Swanton, Cushing and Horatio Allen, and others, were severing ties with the church of their parents and New England forebears. A telling note preserved in Zina's papers from October 17, 1829, states his receipt of a letter from his Old North Church pastor informing him that he had been excommunicated from the church "on ac't of my leaving them and joining, as they say, a Swedenborgian church." Rachel Sewall's letter of excommunication charged her with having "embraced the doctrines of Emanuel Swedenborg and given countenance to dangerous if not fatal errors." During the following decade, the Society grew without dynamic or charismatic leadership, but with the steady conviction of its courageous, independent-minded members.

In April 1840, after nearly a quarter century devoted to building up his chandlery business as well as the Bath Swedenborgian Church, Zina remarried. His wife, Eleanor Little, also a widow, has been described as a lady of great elegance and grace. Zina and Eleanor sailed for Europe for an extended honeymoon. Their travels eventually took them to Florence where their first child, Thomas Worcester Hyde

was born in January 1841. Thomas was named in honor of the Swedenborgian pastor who had officially brought the Bath Society into the world a little over a decade earlier. Years later, during the Civil War, General Thomas Hyde would earn the Medal of Honor at the Battle of Antietam, fight at Gettysburg, lead the final charge at the fall of Richmond, and was present when Lee surrendered at Appomattox. He returned home and, in time, founded Bath Iron Works, which continues to build ships for the Navy to this day and is Maine's largest private employer.

The newlyweds' December, 1840, trip by hired carriage over the Alps and then through the Apennines was a trial. Eleanor was eight months pregnant and the weather was terrible. They made poor time on rough roads. Some nights were spent in crude cottages with little or no amenities. Why Florence? Florence was of particular interest to them for there was a contingent of Swedenborgians living there as well as dozens of expatriated artists, intellectuals, and writers from England and America.

Florence had a centuries-old reputation for welcoming educated and gifted men and women from around the world. During Zina's time, the city had hosted the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson; James Fenimore Cooper; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; the painter Thomas Cole; New Orleans sculptor and former slave Eugene Warburg; Mary Shelley, widow of Percy Bysshe Shelley; Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning; and the American sculptor Hiram Powers, who lived with his wife and children near the studio of American sculptor Horatio Greenough. Considered the leader of the American colony, Greenough, like many others there, championed Italian liberty. At this time, Italy was beginning a twenty-year struggle led by Giuseppe Garibaldi and his army of Red Shirts towards inde-

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pendence from foreign rule. The Hydes made the acquaintance of both Powers and Greenough. Before long, they were visiting Greenough in his studio where he was completing his well-known statue of George Washington, commissioned by the U.S. Congress.

Settling across the Arno, in the section of Florence called Oltraarno, Zina and Eleanor rented a house near the beautiful Renaissance church of San Spirito. The Hydes were surrounded by magnificent buildings as well as the art and sculpture of such Florentine notables as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Donatello, Ghiberti, and Brunelleschi. On the hunt for paintings to be brought back with them, Zina notes a painting by the Renaissance artist Pietro Perugino of the Madonna in glory. "The Father above and many hosts of angels around . . . This painting is most beautiful and for sale at the price of \$75 dollars! A very fine painting," he muses, "which, wanting cleaning, a monk ordered it scrubbed with a coarse broom which left its marks." His Yankee mind might have added: No extra charge for the marks!

In March 1841, while his wife and infant son remained in Florence to convalesce, Zina, the inveterate traveler, journeyed to the south of Italy, sightseeing and purchasing paintings to be shipped home. He traveled overland to Pisa, and from there took a steamer to Naples. One of the first stops made after settling into the New York Hotel was at a bookshop where he purchased maps and guidebooks. Then it was off to the Royal Museum (now called the National Archaeological Museum), considered one of the premiere museums "with antiquities in the world." He also engaged as his guide for his stay in Naples a young English-speaking Italian. After eight days of intense activity—making social calls on locals and fellow travelers, visiting museums

and churches, climbing to the top of Mt. Vesuvius, exploring the ruins of Pompeii, checking out recent excavations of ancient ruins, and examining subterranean vaults or prisons of Nero by torchlight—Zina traveled to Rome to see St. Peter's and more sights.

His energy was contagious. At one point while sightseeing near Naples, he and a fellow traveler timed themselves to see how fast they could climb the 440-foot peak of Mt. Nuovo. (They did it in 8 minutes.) Then, like mountain goats, they descended into the extinct volcanic cone and then back up to the top and down. Fellow travelers found Zina's business-like approach in lining up transportation, hiring guides, getting from point A to point B a great



San Francesco di Paola in Naples

asset. Coupling this practical bent with his intelligent observations, boundless energy, and humorous wit made him indispensable to the group. At the end of March, Zina returned to Florence, finding Eleanor and his infant son well rested. In April, they traveled back across the Alps, through France, made their way to England, and took passage for America.

Of all the sights of antiquity and of modern Italy Zina experienced, one architectural gem stood out for Zina: the church of San Francesco di Paola in Naples. It was directly across from the Royal Palace and had been recently constructed. His March 10 diary entry states: "Indeed, the whole appeared to me as possessing more neatness, good taste, and real magnificence, taking it as a whole, than any building either ancient or modern of sacred charac-

ter which I have yet met with and not surpassed by St. Peter's at Rome." Zina was struck by the building's front façade—a grand pediment supported by large columns—and its colonnade on either side of the building. San Francesco di Paola's tasteful proportions must have resonated somewhere deep within him, for they would repeated on American soil.

The Hydes' arrival home in spring 1841 was well timed. This would be a momentous year for the Bath Society. Up to this time, services had been held at Cushing Allen's spacious mansion on Washington Street and then at the Music Hall at the center of Washington and Center Streets. Here also, the growing Bath Society conducted a private sabbath school attended by children of the congregation as well as by other neighborhood children.

Visiting ministers were normally housed and fed by the Sewalls. Four pastors had served the society between 1829 and 1840. In 1841, the Sewalls insisted on calling Samuel Dike to be the settled pastor. It proved to be a good choice. Ordained in October, he would serve the congregation faithfully for the next fifty years. Besides the Allen family, there were now three more "pillars" of the church, representing a younger generation: the Hydes, Swantons, and Sewalls. This triumvirate purchased the lot between Middle, Winter, and High Streets with the intention of constructing the Society's first church building.

The Hydes' trip to Europe, and to Italy, in particular, was about to pay off for the Bath Society. With his Italian "field notes" in hand, Zina would supervise the construction of the Bath temple. ☩

[Part two of this article will appear in the October, 2013 *Messenger*.]

Rob Lawson is president of the Bath Society of the New Jerusalem. He is retired from the Maine Public Broadcasting Network.

Former Swedenborgian Church Raided by FBI Director of Operations Indicted in Boston

BY HERB ZIEGLER

On May 2, 2013, the FBI raided the Church on the Hill in Boston (Boston Society of the New Jerusalem, or BSNJ), a former member church of the Massachusetts Association of the New Jerusalem and the Swedenborgian Church. They seized records from the church office and sealed off the church.

On May 22, the FBI arrested the church's director of operations, Edward MacKenzie, indicted by a grand jury on charges of racketeering conspiracy, sixteen counts of racketeering, two counts of mail fraud conspiracy, money laundering conspiracy, extortion, and eight counts of wire fraud,

MacKenzie joined the BSNJ in 2002; in 2003, he became the church's "director of operations," a salaried position that was created especially for him and which he held until fired after his arrest. He also became an officer of the Boston Church and a director of the Boston View Corporation (BVC), an eighteen-story, 145-unit apartment building atop the church, wholly owned by the Boston Church. Before joining the church, MacKenzie was a career criminal, a self-described "enforcer for Whitey Bulger¹ and the South Boston Irish mob," as detailed in his autobiography, *Street Soldier: My Life as an Enforcer for Whitey Bulger and the Boston Irish Mob*. (See the October 2010 *Messenger*, page 123, "Boston Magazine on The Sad Tale of the Boston Church.")

According to the indictment.

... from at least as early as in or before September 2002, and continuing through at least in or

about December 2012 . . . Edward J. MacKenzie, Jr., . . . and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury being persons employed by and associated with the Church . . . did unlawfully and knowingly conspire, confederate, and agree to . . . Conduct and participate, directly and indirectly, in the conduct of the affairs of the enterprise through a pattern of racketeering activity. . . conduct of the affairs of the enterprise consisted of multiple acts: . . . wire fraud, mail fraud, money laundering, [and] extortion . . . involving bribery.

The indictment alleges that the goal of the conspiracy was

for MacKenzie and his co-conspirators to become members of the enterprise and obtain power and influence within the enterprise so that MacKenzie and his co-conspirators could defraud the Church of its considerable financial holdings and profit from transactions involving the Church.

Once MacKenzie and his co-conspirators were in positions of authority within the enterprise, they carried out a scheme to defraud the Church and to obtain money and property from the Church by means of false and fraudulent pretenses, representations and promises, to enrich themselves and others at the expense of the Church, and to personally enrich themselves by soliciting and accepting bribes and kickbacks from vendors doing business with the Church.

The indictment alleges that MacKenzie and co-conspirator Thomas J. Kennedy knew that the church had only a small number of voting members, many of whom were elderly, and that shortly after joining the church they devised a plan to gain control of

the church so that they could defraud it of its considerable financial holdings and profit from transactions involving the church.

They devised a scheme to gain control of the church by, among other things,

- 1) inducing the then-minister Steve Ellis to endorse their plan to take control of the church by promising, and subsequently granting him substantial remuneration and autonomy within the church
- 2) Recruiting and using friends and family, some of whom had no interest in, or awareness of, the church and its teachings, to become members, and creating phony membership applications for other new church "members" who had no idea they had "applied" for membership in order to establish a voting majority to elect themselves into positions of authority within the church. At the annual church members meeting in May 2003, MacKenzie and Kennedy assembled a sufficient voting bloc to take control of the church. Once in control they and their co-conspirators began consolidating and fortifying their power by removing certain incumbent trustees and church officials who were perceived as obstacles, seceding from the General Convention and Massachusetts Association in order to obtain greater autonomy;
- 3) Amending the church's by-laws to give themselves greater authority and control; and
- 4) Creating the salaried position of director of operations, a position for which MacKenzie was hired in 2003 and continued to hold as of May, 2013, and giving the director

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¹ Whitey Bulger is at present on trial for conspiracy to murder and other crimes in Boston Federal Court..

Passages

Deaths

Minor H. McLain, former member of the Boston Church of the New Jerusalem, passed away on May 7, 2013, at age 88 in Melrose, Massachusetts. He was husband to Carolyn Peebles McLain, whose parents Elinor and Waldo Peebles were mainstays of the Boston Church.

Minor served in Europe during World War II; he was awarded a Silver Star, Bronze Star for Merit, Purple Heart, and Prisoner of War Medal. Minor was a passionate professor of history at Salem State College for thirty nine years. Minor received the Knight's Cross of Polonia Restituta honoring his outstanding achievements in education after hosting a visit from the Prime Minister of Poland.

He is survived by his children, Susan Saunders and Andrew H. McLain, two grandchildren, and a great-grandchild. ☩

Position Available at Swedenborg Open Learning Centre, Manchester, UK

Swedenborg Open Learning Centre (SOLCe) is looking for one full-time person or two or three part-time people to fulfil two roles leading and developing spiritual growth and education within the context of its spiritual centre, work-based training and dispersed learning programmes.

- Leader of studies supporting people who want to explore their vision of ministry, and responding to the individual training needs of those who want to use Swedenborg's teachings; especially those who are called to reach out to others, e.g. in ministry, leadership, writing, workshops and worship leading.
- Spiritual centre leader encouraging new ways of reaching out to spiritual seekers and new ways of coming together to connect in spirit and to share a spiritual pathway

Further information is available via Melanie Bennett: tel. 0161 766 2521 or email melanie.bennett@solce.org.uk. Enquiries will be kept strictly confidential.

You can read the job description and person specification documents at <http://www.swedenborg-openlearning.org.uk/Stoppress.htm>

Whole time equivalent salary is in the range of £25000–£29000 per annum (negotiable).

Any person who can fulfill a part of the total package will be considered favourably.

Closing date for application is July 31, 2013.

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of operations authority for changes to the physical plant of the church.

MacKenzie and his co-conspirators began voting to provide themselves and their associates with substantial financial benefits, including the purchase of at least four new vehicles for, among others, MacKenzie, Kennedy, and a relative of MacKenzie; cash awards for MacKenzie's family members; a \$50,000 "loan" to MacKenzie to pay his personal legal bills; and tuition grants to family members of Kennedy.

In 2003, the church entered into a five-year employment agreement with MacKenzie to be the church's director of operations, a position that had not previously existed. The agreement provided MacKenzie with a starting sala-

ry of \$100,000, annual salary increases, performance bonuses, a retirement plan, health insurance, and four weeks of paid vacation. In 2006 the church board agreed to renew MacKenzie's employment agreement for another five years, continuing through December 2013. In 2012, MacKenzie's annual salary and compensation was approximately \$200,000.

Once in power, MacKenzie began to systematically loot the church of its considerable financial assets through a combination of fraud, deceit, extortion, theft, and bribery. Moreover, MacKenzie intimidated and threatened individuals who were employed by and did work at the church by, among other things, providing them with signed copies of his 2003 autobiography, *Street Soldier*. In the book, MacKenzie admitted to a lengthy criminal history,

including burglary, robbery, armed assault, and narcotics trafficking.

The Grand Jury charges that, if found guilty, MacKenzie forfeit all illegally obtained property, worth approximately \$1 million or more, or forfeit other property to compensate.

In 2003, General Convention, the Massachusetts New Church Union, and a member of BSNJ sued BSNJ under the federal RICO conspiracy statute. The judge dismissed the case because the pattern of racketeering had not persisted for two years (a requirement of the statute).

The three parties then sued in state court for control of BSNJ's assets, losing in district court, winning at the appeals court, and ultimately losing at the State Supreme Court. ☩

To download the complete indictment, go to <http://tinyurl.com/o4cx2e8>.

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.

Changes at the Swedenborg Foundation

The Swedenborg Foundation has reorganized staff responsibilities to further the strategic goals adopted last year by the board of directors. The goals include increased digital presence and products, free or at-cost distribution of products, expanded membership offerings, and supporting an international engagement with Swedenborg's writings.

The position of operations manager was created to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Foundation, and Morgan Beard was selected to fulfill the role. She joined the Foundation staff in 2007 as the editor. In addition to her new duties as operations manager, Beard will continue to fulfill the Foundation's editorial functions until a job search is conducted to hire a new editor.

To implement more of the Foundation's strategic goals, there has been some shifting of staff responsibilities and the creation of two other new positions. These new positions are (1) online media coordinator and (2) membership and development coordinator.

The online media coordinator manages and grows the Foundation's website, Facebook pages, and Twitter accounts, and will work to implement new technologies and expand online presence. Alexia Cole, who most recently served as administrative coordinator, will fill that role.

The membership and development coordinator works with members, develops new programs to support and increase membership, assists with fundraising initiatives. This role will be filled by Brian Mann, who will also perform customer service duties and who will coordinate the Foundation's attendance at conferences and trade shows.

After the successful launch of the Foundation's popular and ever-growing Heaven and Hell Facebook page in October 2011, Curtis Childs was hired full-time at the start of this year as multimedia writer/producer. Matthew Childs was hired as animator/videographer. Together, they have created and continue to produce videos that introduce Swedenborgian concepts to a new and expanding audience.

Morgan Beard can be reached at mbeard@swedenborg.com or 610.430.3222, ext. 12.