



## Divine Influx Saves the Day Zina Hyde and the Bath Church: Part 2

BY ROB LAWSON

*This is the second part of a three-part series about the early years of the Bath (Maine) New Church. Part 1 appeared in the June 2013 Messenger.*

For the young Bath Society, founded fourteen years earlier, 1843 was a watershed year. It was a time of growth—of new members swelling its ranks and of the construction of its first, and still today’s, house of worship. But it was also a year of discord and dissent within the New Church community. During this critical time, Zina Hyde, working effectively behind the scenes, averted disaster.

Sunday morning, May 14, 1843:

**... in April 1843, the society was shaken to its core by the indiscretions of two of its members . . . .**

The Reverend Samuel Fuller Dike, youthful pastor of the Bath Society, baptizes four infant girls, including his own daughter, in the society’s rented church space on the corner of Centre and Washington Streets. There would have been a fifth baptism, but the family arrived too late for the ceremony. These baptisms indicate a vibrant,

young congregation; in fact, the new and quietly effective young minister had doubled the size of the

Bath Society in less than three years. Under the “pleasurable” guidance of Dike, there would be sixty-five baptisms, many of them adults and new to the church, before the decade was over. Imagine the electrifying effect on a visitor unfamiliar with the teachings of the New Church upon hearing the pastor declare:

When a man goes out of this world, he comes directly into the spirit world, and there the light is very penetrating. We can read each other there. There can be no hypocrisy, no deceit. We can read the faces there, can read a man’s motives and hopes. The light is the living Word of God.

While Zina and Eleanor Hyde had been honeymooning in Europe (1840–41), William and Rachel Sewall—



Courtesy of E. Sargent and Jane Legard

Samuel Fuller Dike

key players in the new society—had learned of a theology student in Boston with great promise. The student, Samuel Dike, had become captivated by the writings of Swedenborg the summer after his graduation from Brown University. During the next two years, Dike studied Swedenborg’s theology in Boston under the tutelage of the Reverend Thomas Worcester. So, in the spring of 1840, the Bath Society’s ecclesiastical committee invited Dike to come to Bath to test his ministerial skills. This being Dike’s first church, the job would be on a trial basis. Dike arrived in Bath on June 13, 1840, less than a week after his ordination, and enthusiastically took up his duties.

A year later, having just returned from Europe, Hyde at last experienced Dike’s preaching and recorded in his diary, “Heard Mr. Dike preach for

[Continues on page 136](#)



The Bath Temple

### More Inside:

[Building Stoves and Community](#) • [A Swedenborgian Perspective](#)  
[SPLATz Youth Descend on Laporte in Record Numbers](#) • [Almost Memories 2013](#)  
[Evidence of Tears](#) • [Swedenborgian Transitions](#)

**The Editor's Desk**



**Giving, Thanking, Shopping**

As Christmas approaches each year most of us suffer some inner turmoil over conflicts between the religious significance of the celebration of the birth of Jesus and the runaway commercialism of gift giving, the starting gun fired each year in the United States on “Black Friday,” when retail giants and media outlets whip us into a buying frenzy on the day after Thanksgiving. (These days, Black Friday starts on Thanksgiving Day in most states.)

Of course, I don't want to be a curmudgeon. (Scrooge was the ultimate curmudgeon, disdaining not only the notion of celebrating Christmas with gifts but also the very idea of charity.) And it is easy for me to avoid the commercial aspects of Christmas—I have no children nor nearby relatives. I imagine it would be crushing for a child to hear parents saying, “This year, instead

of giving gifts, we're going to explore the real meaning of Christmas.”

But perhaps I ruminate too much about a problem that doesn't need solving. After all, I grew up with a festive, child-centered, gift giving (mostly receiving, actually) celebration on Christmas Day (in addition to thorough grounding in the significance of the birth of Jesus). The month leading up to Christmas was a time of building excitement and absolute joy. And despite this, I can honestly tell myself that I understand and appreciate the true meaning of Christmas, and I assume most others do as well.

After all, each Christmas Eve our little Cambridge Swedenborgian Chapel swells (as do most churches all over the world) with people who find no place for church or community worship in their lives. What are they doing there? I assume they find something essential and true at a deep level about the Nativity story that they want to share and reaffirm as important in their lives, whether or not they are believers or consciously base their behavior on lessons from Christian religion. Part of it for some is, of course, nostalgia or the memories of a sweeter and more innocent time in their lives. Nevertheless, they have not abandoned the true, deeper, meaning of Christmas in wholesale embrace of the consumerist, happiness-through-shopping culture in which they must live and, at least to some degree, participate.

Children are dependent on those who take care of them, and in most cases love them, for all of their worldly needs (except for children unfortunate enough to have to care for them-

selves). It is no wonder that gifts mean so much to them, and it's no wonder that adults take such joy in giving to them. Emanuel Swedenborg teaches us that children are born with a total focus on self, and as they grow and mature, they learn to enlarge their focus to others and the Lord's influx.

My most vivid memories of Christmas are not the gifts but these: attending the Christmas Eve Service at our church and coming downstairs on a dark Christmas morning to behold the spectacle of a bedazzling Christmas tree, put up and decorated by my parents while my brother and I slept.

—Herb Ziegler

**Contents**

[Divine Influx Saves the Day](#) ..... 149  
[The Editor's Desk](#)..... 150  
[Letter from the President](#)..... 151  
[Building Stoves and Community](#) ..... 152  
[A Swedenborgian Perspective](#) 153  
[SPLATz Youth Descend on Laporte in Record Numbers: Theme Biblical Food!](#)..... 154  
[FNCA Banner Display Tour](#)..... 158  
[Almont Memories 2013](#)..... 159  
[Excerpts from NCC Bylaws](#)..... 161  
[Evidence of Tears](#)..... 162  
[For All Who Love Making a Difference](#)..... 162  
[Bicentennial Committee Needs You](#) ..... 162  
[Passages](#) ..... 163  
[Swedenborgian Transitions](#) ..... 163  
[SwedenborgianCommunity.org Connecting & Learning in 2014—Wherever & However!](#)..... 164

**Church Calendar**

- December 27–30: SCYL Winter Retreat • Almont, MI
- Jan. 17–20: Preteen (SPLATz) retreat • Manna House • LaPorte, IN

the Messenger

© The Swedenborgian Church of North America  
 Published monthly except July and August by the Communications Support Unit of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (founded 1817, incorporated 1861 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America), Ken Turley, president.

December 2013  
 Volume 235, No. 10 Whole Number 5385  
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 Subscriptions: free online subscription at [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org). Printed and mailed to US address, \$20/year; to Canada address, \$30/year; to all other addresses, \$35/year; single copies, \$2.00, Libraries, prisoners, free. Send check with address to Central Office. Other requests, write Central Office.

**Deadline for submissions** is six weeks before the first day of the month of issue.

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,

On November 18–19, I attended the Governing Board meeting of the National Council of Christian Churches of USA, NCC for short, in Chicago. This is the gathering of the heads of communion (in our denomination called the president) of thirty-six Christian denominations, ranging from Quakers and Mennonites to United Church of Christ, Methodist, and Presbyterian to Eastern Orthodox. I attended a couple of these meetings early in my first term but, I must confess, have not been for several years. During that time, NCC has undergone a complete restructuring, resulting in what so many organizations have been striving for lately: a flatter, leaner, more efficient system of organization. Part of that process has been drastically cutting the budget and trimming expenses to the most basic.

This transition process was led by Peg Birk, an attorney and organizational consultant who was hired from the outside to come in and direct the tearing apart, analyzing, and restructuring of the entire organization. Rev. Kathryn Lohre served as chair of the board during this period. It was a dramatic process that was not without trauma and that has left pronounced shock waves reverberating throughout the organization as employees were let go, committees were re-named and restructured, and activities were, and continue to be, re-prioritized.

Nonetheless, when I walked into the meeting room it was not like returning to something strange. There were many familiar faces, many friendly and welcoming greetings, remembered past meetings, and, what was perhaps most surprising, the sincere expressions of gratitude for my being back. The NCC Governing Board is a group of diverse individuals from diverse denominations who claim their differences and share in the love and worship

of Christ and a sincere desire to be of service to the neighbor. They are quality people all, and it was gratifying to be counted among them.

I came away from the two-day meeting with some profound lessons learned. First, even a group as diverse and as intentionally ecumenical as this, an organization that has been in the front lines of social justice since before the Civil Rights Movement, that has championed the rights of the poor and the oppressed, actively naming and seeking to ease injustices of every kind, and which is supported at the highest level of each denomination represented, is still struggling with its own institutional racism and sexism and ageism. It was an important reminder of a truth we hold dear, that spiritual regeneration is never done but is an ongoing process that must reach to the deepest and most subtle levels of our being. And as Swedenborg repeatedly points out, no evil can be overcome until it is named and uncovered and brought to light. We must take joy and encouragement from our progress, but we can never settle into the smug self-satisfaction of thinking we *have* overcome. There is more work to be done at every level of life, be it each of us as individuals, our separate church societies, our common denomination, or an organization as active and intentional as the NCC. Salvation is not an event, it is an ongoing process that might begin with a transitional experience, but must continue until the Lord says our rest is won.

Second, I learned that power comes in many forms, not just size and strength. We Swedenborgians need to get over our institutional inferiority complex and accept that we are a valued part of the Lord's Holy City, and as different as we may feel at times, no less and no more than anyone else. And in our unique and, at times, seemingly insignificant way, we have something of value to offer. We do a serious disservice to the Lord, the source of all that is good and true, by devaluing and holding back who we are and the gifts God has given us, because they were given with the express intention that they be shared openly for the benefit of others. If you will, think of the larger church as a stained glass

[Continues on page 160](#)



## Building Stoves and Community

BY JANE SIEBERT

“I will never have to cook over three stones on the ground again.” It seemed like a simple response when I asked the fifty-five-year-old Mayan grandma what she liked best about her new stove, but tears streamed down her face when she said it. Guatemalan women have been cooking their beans and tortillas in little shacks made of bamboo or wooden slats apart from their one room houses to keep the smoke out of the house for centuries. This does not keep the smoke out of their lungs and eyes, however, as they kneel or sit on the dirt floor to cook for their families. Nor does it make good use of the wood hauled from the mountainsides, as it takes a long time to cook beans over an open fire.

I traveled for the second time with a Methodist mission team to this beautiful land of Guatemala last November. Interestingly, we were not far from where my husband Ray and I were Peace Corps volunteers over thirty years ago—and we were building and experimenting with stoves way back then. In fact, I had one made of adobe in our one-room house and used it for cooking and baking. It was quite an adventure and a challenge. But the Guatemalan women adapted quickly, as they were used to cooking with wood, and the stoves we were building this time were much improved from those made out of mud bricks.

The stoves we built for the village women were made of twenty-six concrete blocks, a half bag



Three village women pose proudly with their new stove.

of cement, forty fire bricks, decorative tile for the top, a metal *plancha* (stove top) and two 6-inch concrete stove pipes to direct the smoke out of the roof. The family paid \$20 and had to supply the sand to mix the cement and dirt to fill the bottom of the stove. The remainder of the cost, around \$100, was donated from churches around the mission’s church in Wichita. They did a lot of fund raising, like mission din-

ners with typical Guatemalan food and selling the beautiful artisan crafts that they brought back from previous trips. We also trained local craftsmen to build stoves, and the mission keeps money flowing into Guatemala so the trained young men can continue to build

stoves when the team has gone home. When Ray and I were in the Peace Corps, we used to think mission trips were a waste of money, as we could imagine what the money they spent to get to the country could do in this area where poverty is over fifty percent. But now that I have participated in four mission trips, I am well aware of the unmeasurable benefits. Living in the land of plenty, Americans need to experience third world countries in a non-touristy way. We traveled in the back of an open pickup. We walked along the paths where there is a good chance no Gringos (foreigners) had walked before. We experienced how the people live and came home with a new appreciation for Jesus’ words, “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat—when you do this to those forgotten or ignored, you are feeding me.” And I like to think the people in

Continues next page



The Methodist mission team—Jane Siebert is fourth from right, 2nd row.

[Continues next page](#)

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this little village have a new appreciation for Americans. We were willing to get our hands dirty. We sweated. We got bit like they do by the “no see’ems.” We sang songs and played games with the children. We laughed and shed tears with them when each new stove was dedicated with prayer and laying on of all our hands on the stove. They were so pleased, and we were touched in a special way that connects us with these people forever.

I am so glad that this Methodist mission team from Wichita allows non-Methodists to go along. Last April we went to Peru, and Steve and Pat Tukos from LaPorte, Indiana, went along. (They’ll take anybody—right Pat?)

The cost? Well, it is not cheap, but compared to travel agent trips, it is reasonable. And because it is a mission trip, it is tax deductible. Our nine-day trip to Guatemala cost \$1200, which included



One of the rewards of missionary work

ed travel, great food, comfortable lodging, and a little time to shop (money for souvenirs was extra). So let me know if you might be interested and you can come along. Trips coming up are back to Guatemala in February, South Africa in June, and even a trip to Ireland later in the summer. I am not going on all of these, but South Africa is beckoning me. And, we might plan a Swedenborgian mission trip. I hear Rev. Dave Brown is thinking of leading another mission trip to Nepal. 🌍

The Rev. Jane Siebert lives in Hutchinson, Kansas, and is a member of the Pretty Prairie Church.

## A Swedenborgian Perspective

THE REV. ERNEST O. MARTIN

1. God is love. Love is life. We are created to receive life from God moment by moment, and respond wisely, lovingly, and usefully as tangible expressions of spirituality.
2. We worship a God of love, mercy, and compassion rather than a God of wrath and judgment. The streets of the Biblical Holy City (Rev. 21:21) are of pure gold, the symbol of love.
3. The purpose of life is to grow into angelhood and to realize our God-given potential, both here and hereafter.
4. Salvation is possible in all religions, symbolized by the twelve gates into the city (Rev. 21:12). We don’t all have to enter through the same gate.
5. To attain the Kingdom of Heaven, we are to follow our conscience, live up to the best we know, and honor the path of love.
6. God asks that we act as free and responsible beings, with open hearts and minds, endowed with freedom and rationality.
7. We are one in body, mind, and spirit. The world and the flesh are not to be renounced, but integrated. The body is the temple of the soul, and is to be honored and respected as part of God’s creation.
8. God speaks to us in the Bible, a major guide and resource in the spiritual journey, with an inner or spiritual meaning rather than historical or scientific.
9. The life and teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, eighteenth-century scientist, mystic, and religious reformer, are a unique resource and perspective in leading a fruitful, heavenly life in a new age that is dawning.

*We invite readers to contribute their own Swedenborgian perspectives to the Messenger.*



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## SPLATz Youth Descend on Laporte in Record Numbers: Retreat Theme Biblical Food!

BY KATHRYN  
RIENSTRA PRUIETT

I checked the time—3:25 AM—not too much later than what I had hoped for. My daughter was awake, although ready to go back to sleep. We were driving from Perryville, Missouri, to LaPorte, Indiana, for the SPLATz retreat. I had contemplated skipping this one as the night before was my son's last home football game. My daughter begged me to go; she didn't want to miss *this* retreat. The miles passed quickly in the wee hours of the morning. I looked over to my sleeping daughter and noticed the smile on her face. I smiled as well.

We arrived just in time for the morning session. We were greeted by twenty-one pre-teens, Youth director Kurt Fekete, Rev. Jenn Tafel, Rachael Sbrocco, and Lori Gayheart. Kurt reviewed briefly the previous night's session about how nomadic and early agricultural people ate, and how very different it was than the way we eat today. Then Kurt started in on the morning session about Old Testament dietary laws, what it means to be Ko-



The 22 SPLATz teens gathered in Manna House at the LaPorte Church

sher, and how to prepare and eat Kosher food. The kids then had a choice of having some free time, or helping Rachael make communion bread. Lori and Rev. Jenn prepared a wonderful taco bar lunch! In the afternoon we had several more sessions, where we heard Bible stories about important Biblical

foods and then discussed the meaning of the stories. Kurt explained about the significance of figs, dates, and olives, and the kids got samples to try as well; they learned so much! The rest of the afternoon was filled with pretzel-making and free time. It was like viewing a piece of heaven to observe twenty-two

pre-teens laugh and develop friendships. Before long we prepared dinner and had a feast of pasta and salad. We then got cleaned up for a very powerful and important evening session.

Rev. Jenn performed a very special communion

[Continues next page](#)



Session time: Kurt delivers a lesson on Biblical food.



*Continued from preceding page*



Summer making pretzels

service. The children were given the option of partaking in Holy Communion, and for many it was a decision they truly thought hard about. They asked questions and searched to make their own decisions. Watching my daughter make the choice to take communion made my heart ache and leap for joy at the same time. The second part of the service was a graduation of sorts. Every child that is age thirteen at the fall retreat gets to be part of a special ceremony where they don't say good-bye to SPLATz, but rather are welcomed to the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL). Watching my daughter

being welcomed by Kurt and Rev Jenn to the SCYL was almost too much for me! I am thankful that I had two friends (Lori and Rachael) by my side.

Saturday night was spent at the Halloween party held by the local Yana Club. They provided the kids with a hayride, music, dancing, a bonfire, and of course more food and treats. It was a wonderful evening. The day was busy and activity-filled, and before long, the kids were back at Manna House sleeping.



Saturday night hayride

Sunday morning, the children gathered their belongings and we all headed over to the church for the worship service. Many of the kids took the opportunity to share what they learned;



Jaylen, Nathan and Ava play "jump the stick" with Josh (holding stick)

this is always so special to watch. When Kurt asked how long olive trees live they all chimed in, "1,000 years!" It was a beautiful sight. At Sunday School, we gathered for a last session on the parable of the Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-17). Lori brought a long grape vine from her yard and we hung it up in the fellowship hall. We ate grapes and listened to the beautiful story of how Jesus is the vine that sustains us and we are the branches that give forth fruit. Soon after, good-byes were said, and many hugs were given and received. Although tired, I drove home energized with the confidence that my daughter has begun to make the connections with the church that I had growing up. These connections serve as my safety net that neither time nor distance can ever break. ☩

Kathryn Pruiett was born in Boston while her father (Rev. David Rienstra) was a student at the Swedenborg School of Religion. She grew up in Fryeburg, Maine; she was active in the church and was president of the New Church Youth League from 1986-1988. She lives in Perryville, Missouri, with her husband Eric and two children, Jonathon (17) and Heather (13).



Michigan van boys: The boys from Michigan safely delivered by Rev. Jenn



Koolaid girls Heather and Natalia

## Divine Influx in Bath

*Continued from page 149*

the first time from these words, ‘Freely ye have received—freely give.’ And was much pleased with his matter and manner.” The following year, Dike was invited by the congregation to be their settled minister. He would prove to be a wonderful fit, ably serving the Bath Society until 1890, a ministry of fifty years.

While studying in Boston, Dike had been smitten by his mentor’s oldest daughter, Miriam Worcester, who had turned sixteen in the fall of 1838. Once settled in Bath, Dike began a writing campaign to win her hand. The formal salutations of their letters leave much unsaid between the lines. During their long-distance courtship, the young minister persuaded Miriam and her family to visit Bath on several occasions. The Hydes, being on long-standing and intimate terms with the Worcesters, actively promoted the budding relationship. Miriam, with family and friends, stayed with the Hydes in July and August. By October, 1841, Miriam and Samuel became engaged.

The following April the two were married in the Boston Church of the New Jerusalem by the bride’s father. Returning to Bath, they rented a house on Washington Street and started a family. Miriam would eventually give birth to eleven children, though not all of them lived to adulthood.

By late summer 1842 it was clear to the Church Committee (i.e., executive committee)—Zina Hyde, William D. Sewall, John B. Swanton Jr., and Cushing Allen—that their society, with nearly seventy members, had reached a critical mass. Three years earlier, in September, 1839, they had purchased the land where they hoped to eventually build. But they understood at that time that building community must come before the physical construction. The purchase price of \$1,050 was di-

vided equally among Hyde, Sewall, and Swanton at \$350 each. Allen had undergone a financial setback and was not expected to help defray the expense. Now, with a rapidly increasing congregation, it was time to consider undertaking construction of their own house of worship.

### Hyde’s firm, but loving, action to leave the door open for reconciliation would eventually result in benefits to the society.

The idea was first broached at John Swanton’s house at an evening party on August 31, 1842. On September 3, a building committee was formed to look into the expedience and practicality of such an undertaking. Henry Masters,



Miriam Worcester Dike

Courtesy of Samuel M. and Barbara Trot

one of the new members, was elected treasurer. Less than two weeks later, the committee met at Hyde’s house, where the host applied seven propositions as a basis on which to raise funds. On the evening of November 12, the building committee met and determined it would cost about \$5,000 to build their “temple.” The funds would be raised by subscription; one hundred shares at \$50 each were made available.

Sixty-seven shares were subscribed to at the first meeting, Sewall committing to ten shares. The Bath Temple was underway.

In the meantime, the Bath Swedenborgians demonstrated a lively interest in contemporary practices. Dancing lessons became part of the curriculum for children of the Swedenborgian day school. Besides going on outings and having dinner parties, the adults held public dances, were open to Mesmerism and séances, questioned traditional medical practices, and utilized Sunday afternoons for stimulating conversation. Instead of a second Sabbath church service in the afternoons, church members gathered to read aloud and share from various publications and their own prepared papers. They eagerly discussed new books, controversial topics, and innovative breakthroughs. According to the church minutes of January 29, 1843, Pastor Dike read section “No. 9347 from the *Arcana* containing E.S.’s views on capital punishment and the time was spent in social conversation upon the subject.”

Yet, despite being modern and open-minded, in April, 1843, the society was shaken to its core by the indiscretions of two of its members—Dr. William E. Payne and the twice-wedded Mary E. A. C. Waldron. Both had joined the church the year before. Now, due to their “transfer” of affections, they were a cause célèbre, making church members uncomfortable.

Dr. Payne was young—twenty-four at the time of the affair. With his pleasing personality, he readily won people over, including the Hydes and Sewalls. Zina records Dr. Payne’s first house call on August 15, 1841:

Our little Thomas taken with vomiting. We call, for the first time, Dr. Payne as a practitioner of Homeopathy, and a very promising, young physician, by which we seem

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to discard the older Dr. Stockbridge who has heretofore served me very satisfactorily.

Payne averaged thirty house calls per year to the Sewalls beginning in June 1840, performing such duties as setting a fractured arm, pulling teeth, and dispensing medicine.

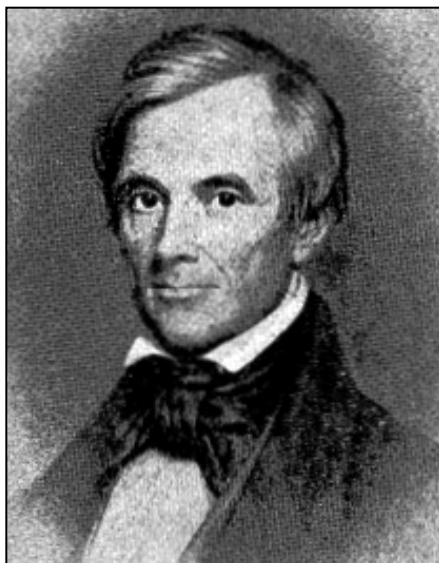
Mrs. Mary Waldron was the daughter of Dr. Benjamin Prescott, a revered Bath doctor who believed in homeopathic treatment. Moving to Bath with his family in 1825 from Dresden, Maine, Dr. Prescott had inoculated the townspeople in 1832 during a feared imminent outbreak of cholera. Prescott's oldest daughter Mary was well-connected and popular. She is described by one historian as "a fascinating woman who married younger husbands." Her most recent loss, Dr. Charles Waldron, had died at the age of twenty-four the previous spring. Within weeks after the traditional year of mourning, the widow and Dr. Payne were, no doubt, a subject of gossip in town.

Eight years older than Payne, Waldron's vivacious personality and worldly demeanor apparently ensnared the doctor. Payne jilted his fiancé, Betsy Ann Hatch, and directed his attentions to the widow. As diarist Hyde notes for April 1, 1843, "The church experiencing a severe trial in the circumstances attending [Hyde's underlining] the transfer of Dr. Payne's affections from Miss Hatch to Mrs. Waldron."

In particular, Cushing Allen and his family were incensed with Payne and Waldron's conduct, so much so that the Allens refused to attend church if either party were to be present. The church minutes for April 6 reveal the deep embarrassment Payne and Waldron's behavior engendered in their faith community:

A special church meeting was held this afternoon to take into con-

sideration the unfortunate separation between Brother Wm. E. Payne and Betsy Ann Hatch, who had been for a long time under matrimonial engagement and after hearing a relation of the circumstances which led to the result, it was acknowledged to be a subject of deep regret by the society and Brother Payne was regarded as altogether to blame and on motion of Brother C. Allen it was voted unanimously that our pastor with the Church Committee



Zina Hyde

be requested to send Miss Hatch a letter expressive of the sympathy of the Society for her painful situation and the following was accordingly prepared and sent to her.

Within days, a sympathetic letter from the congregation to Miss Hatch absolved her of any misconduct, stating that the church "unanimously regard you as the aggrieved party and see not the slightest cause for blame in you . . ." A month later, at another special church meeting, each member was asked to express his or her views on the matter. At this meeting, Sister Waldron refused to admit to any misconduct, as Brother Payne had previously done. This act of defiance as well as her insistence on attending church must have infuriated many.

Dr. Payne attempted to defuse the

situation, writing to withdraw his membership, as recorded in the church minutes, "from the society in consequence of the reproach brought upon it by his late conduct." A special church meeting was held at Dike's house. Several members were prepared to grant Payne his request. Providentially, Hyde was open to divine influx of charity and interceded, making a motion that Payne only be suspended from taking holy communion.

Hyde's firm, but loving, action to leave the door open for reconciliation would eventually result in benefits to the society. Nevertheless, two members, John Swanton and Henry Masters, felt that Hyde's resolution, moderate as it was, was too severe, and asked to be excused from voting. Swanton questioned their authority to deprive a member of the sacraments, and Masters' wife was Mrs. Waldron's sister. On the other side, Sewall wanted Mrs. Waldron, as well as Dr. Payne, punished. However, Sewall's motion was not acted on but was "laid on the table."

By July 15, Hyde was on the diplomatic offensive. He notes in his diary, "Long talk with Mr. Sewall respecting the care of Mrs. Waldron and Dr. Payne who have now broken off their engagement but not until they have the means of bringing the society into a very disturbed state." Hyde recognized the dangerous waters the church was navigating. If the society should act as his Old North Congregational Church had acted—excommunicating readers (or "receivers") of Swedenborg's work—the society's conduct would be no better than the "Old Church" they were trying to outgrow. However, there had to be order. The church must stand up to bad or inappropriate behavior.

And the presence of the Congregationalist Church and its old puritanical ways was immediate and real to members of the Bath Society. A handwrit-

*Continues on page 158*

## Divine Influx in Bath

*Continued from page 157*

ten note by Dike recorded in 1879 in a Maine Association journal, recently brought to light by the Reverend Alison Lane-Olsen, pastor of the Fryeburg New Church, testifies to the difficulties of the young Bath Society during this period. Dike, recounting the attitude of Bath residents to Swedenborgians a half century before, records,

... the Society was small but full of youthful vigor and promise. This quality was in large demand, for there was any amount of opposition and hostility to the New Church in the then town of Bath. It was generally believed in the place that the New Church was the most heretical sect that had sprung up during the days of the christian [sic] church, and therefore important above all else to blot it out of existence. . . . The books of Swedenborg were burned, the doctrines misrepresented, and the people persecuted. But as ever in the past, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. So in this case, the New Church in Bath only prospered under opposition, and this opposition has continued to this day, gradually growing more mild, less firm, more gentle, yet it has served in a measure, to increase and strengthen the life of the Church and growth of the Society in the midst of the community in which it has lived . . . .

Zina especially must have been aware of the scrutiny the Bath Society was under. In 1816, as a young widower and an enthusiastic receiver of the New Church doctrines, Zina had been the target of gossip. He notes that after the death of his first wife, a story spread in Bath that he daily set the table for her, lit a candle, and conversed with her ghostly spirit. No doubt the rumors were encouraged in people's minds by their knowledge of Zina's belief in the immediacy of the spiritual world around us. Confronting his accusers,

## 2014 FNCA Banner Display Tour

BY JON CROWE

Have you seen the Fryeburg New Church Assembly's (FNCA) banner display? It will soon begin it's third annual tour to help promote the camp. It has successfully attracted several new campers so far. Over the past two years, the tour has included many churches in the Northeast, the annual conventions, and even made an appearance at Gathering Leaves this past September.



This coming year, the FNCA Outreach Committee would like to expand the tour beyond New England and New York. Perhaps it will make it's way to Canada, the Midwest, and the Pacific Coast. Are you interested in hosting the banner? The display is two feet high by three feet wide, a self-supporting, fabric pop-up banner that comes with brochures about the camp. Please contact Jon Crowe at [jonanddawn@yahoo.com](mailto:jonanddawn@yahoo.com) for more information (please type "FNCA Banner" in the subject line). Thanks! ☩

Jon Crowe lives in Lovell, Maine with his wife and four children. He is the vice-chair of the FNCA Outreach Committee.

Zina published a letter to the contrary in the local paper. Nevertheless, based on Dike's testimony, there may have been some lingering notoriety regarding the Swedenborgians in the watershed year of 1843. After all, this was the same populace that a decade later would storm the Old South Meeting House on High Street, then being rented to the local Catholics, throw furniture and sacred objects from the windows, and torch the building.

Public outcry and gossip surrounding Mrs. Waldron, Miss Hatch, and Dr. Payne threatened to implode the Bath Society. Luckily, the volatile situation was diffused through Hyde's intercessions and diplomacy. The penitent Dr. Payne corrected his course over the summer, patching things up with his fiancé Betsy Ann. Married in

September, 1843, the Paynes stayed connected with the church throughout their lives. Their children would be baptized in the church, and in 1847, Dr. Payne became a loyal and steadfast church officer. As secretary, his rapid handwriting records in the church minutes nearly thirty years of events. But what to do with their irrepressible church parishioner, the attractive Mrs. Waldron. This remained in 1843 the church's conundrum. ☩

The third and final part of this article will appear in the January 2013 Messenger.

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





# Almont Memories 2013

## The Seven Days of Creation

### What I Love about Almont

- Connecting with dozens of like-minded people whom I only get to see once or twice a year at convention or camp
- Having quality time with the thirty-seven people who either live in LaPorte and worship with us or who have LaPorte and New Church roots (our kids and grandkids)
- Feeding my mind by attending daily lectures and discussion groups.

—Pat Tukos

Almont always gives me a chance to decompress and reconnect with family and old friends. This year was no different!

—Brad Balcerak

Hmmm, I have been coming to Almont since a small girl. I have fond memories from my childhood through my teen years and into adulthood. Now I get to share this family church camp with my daughter and grandchildren. What I like best is that a year can go by and when I come back, it doesn't feel like time has passed. There is always love abounding.

—Gail Holmes

Think for a moment of the astounding ways the world has changed in the last twenty-two years. Yet when I drive into the Almont New Church Retreat Center and begin my week-long church-camp life there, it's like the world's problems, technological feats, and political nonsense fall away because Almont Summer Camp retains its atmosphere of spiritual goodness; it remains the same steady, predictable, respectful, and loving family camp it has been since I began attending in 1991. I will say though, that the first

couple days are always a time of transition for me as I let go of the outside world to focus pretty much only on the people and events surrounding me: the Almont world. A safe haven.

—Barb Halle

Almont is a very busy place for me. I work hard, but it is a work that I love—thirty-four years of wonderful friendships, lots of love and joy, and sharing this space with my sons, daughter, granddaughter, and God's children.

—Tam Mounce



### My Precious Return to Almont

Among many others from LaPorte, I was so blessed to enjoy the week of New Church summer camp at the Almont New Church Retreat Center, about an hour north of Detroit. It has been about ten years since I have attended a summer session there, and indeed it was fabulous! Our theme this summer was "Days of Creation: Who We Are and Where Are We Going." I was blessed to be one of six lecturers and chapel leaders, which enabled me to focus in particular on day two of the creation story, where God separated the waters of the firmament, making the oceans and the sky and the waters in the clouds in the sky. We enjoyed daily adult discussion groups following lectures, and the kids all had

their classes too.

It was amazing to experience daily the feeling of community present in the camp, eating and conversing with so many people, renewing friendships and making many new ones, and having sweet moments with my family. The love and support within the Almont New Church people is simply awesome! I thoroughly loved seeing and feeling the caring spirit in people's eyes and their smiles, and I deeply enjoyed the fun and playfulness within the staff and everyone who was there. How grand it was to participate in skit night, enjoy an all-camp banana hunt, hike together to Almont Rock, visit the Candy Lady (Joyce Fekete) every day

(gosh, how I loved this!), help tuck my daughter and my niece into bed every night, enjoy playing Scrabble at night with precious friends and family, and provide a lot of pastoral support to folks who had questions or things to reflect upon, or who had a crisis or loss happening in their lives.

In addition to leading a morning chapel and offering my lecture, I participated in two worship services, which meant everything to me as one of our pastors.

What stands out also for me was being with my family, worshiping together as a caring spiritual community (singing all those precious hymns and songs in one voice), and simply connecting with so many people in many ways while there. Truly, the Lord is in that place! And, I am already looking forward with anticipation to next summer's blessing of returning again to the place that now stands out to me as my own religious and spiritual "Mecca" on Earth, Almont!

Thank you, Lord, for the infinite ways You bless, nurture, enlighten, and guide us.

—Rev. Kit Billings

## Letter from the President

*Continued from page 151*

window. We are but one small pane of colored glass, perhaps overlooked when admiring the beauty of the big picture. But if that piece were to be removed, it would leave an obvious hole and significantly diminish the perfection that is created by each individual pane of glass being fully present and in its place. And even as with the stained glass window, its purpose and beauty is only evident as the light and love of the Lord shines through and brings it to life.

Third, we simply are not so very different from other churches. I can't count the number of times I heard my counterparts from other denominations speak of how they have just finished, or are presently engaged in, or are imminently faced with changing drastically to respond to the economic, social, and cultural changes that are going on around us all. Our financial difficulties are no different, and yet we have responded as quickly and effectively as any other organization, and in a number of cases even more so. Diminishing numbers and the need to re-envision the forms of church and ministry are being experienced by nearly every other church out there. They too are looking at smaller churches and the growing need for adaptive and entrepreneurial approaches to ministry. They too are experiencing and exploring the exploding possibilities of digital communication and informational exchange, recognizing that community is no longer exclusively defined by walls of buildings and geographical proximity. And yet, even with the drastic changes swirling all around us, there seems to be a universal affirmation that spiritual community and the need to express one's love and gratitude to God must take form in reaching out in service to others and simply does not find fulfillment when limited to self-referential regurgitation of information, no

matter how spiritual that information might be.

Finally, and here is by far the most important lesson I learned: behind the various colored clergy shirts and collars, the robes and hats of various styles and decorations, the, at times overly enthusiastic "God talk," the accents from as far apart as Georgia and Minnesota, and the theological defensiveness each one of us tried our best to not let show, there are strong hearts of intense and sincere love and open minds, discerning and yet willing and eager to learn from and about one another; and each one of those hearts and minds was there in committed willingness to join with the others in unified submission

**Excerpts from the NCC bylaws appear on the next page (page 161).**

to God in heaven and in service to our neighbors who share life here on this earth. As you probably know, I am not much for sentimentality, but I left this gathering truly moved and inspired.

I wish that each one of you could have been there. It would have provided an unmistakable answer for everyone who secretly asks, "Why should I care about the NCC?" You look around that room and into the eyes of the Orthodox priest in orange robes, the short grey-haired woman in matching clerics, the rotund pastor who suffered a recent beating at the hands of local police because of his activism, the slightly tired yet still bright smile of the young fifty-something pastor who just took on the bridle of leadership, the black bishop with a slightly grizzled beard who shared his weary reminder that we must be vigilant in the ongoing battle against racism and visibly brightened as we talked about jazz finding its rightful place as a legitimate form of sacred music, the simple men and women who have labored, not

just as pastors of their own little or perhaps big parishes, but also in the broad field of ecumenism, social justice, and the ongoing battle to provide some small measure of healing and grace for the hurting and oppressed; you look around and into those eyes, and your question will be answered.

It is time, my Swedenborgian compatriots, for us to stop worrying about what we are not and step up to take our place shoulder to shoulder with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and simply do our part. It does not matter in the least how we compare to others; it only matters that we do what we can with what we have. It is not our place or purpose to judge ourselves—or anyone else for that matter. It is simply our place and purpose to put our talents to work and find out what the Lord will make of them. It is our place to share our own measly little fish and biscuits and see what the Lord will collect when we have freely offered what we have. It is time for us to leave our spiritual comfort zones and see if there is some way we can be of help in the outside world.

If I learned anything at this NCC meeting it is this: being a Christian is not about getting something for ourselves, it is about giving of ourselves. It is not about judging and keeping score, it is about loving and lifting up. It is not about hoarding what we have, it is about investing our time and energy in careful cultivation of our talents, tending the tender offshoots as they emerge, weeding out and pruning away what is not useful, and then, when God has done the inner work, sharing the fruits freely.

Life is full of sorrows and joys, side by side and intertwined. As I ride the train from Chicago, headed for St. Louis, the question I keep asking, and that I ask you to pose to yourself, is this: "What can I contribute to all that God's creation is becoming?"

—*Blessings, Rev. Ken*



## Excerpts from NCC Bylaws

*The following excerpts from The NCC Bylaws are offered in hopes of broadening and deepening our denominational understanding of the NCC. Please study them and let me know if you find anything contrary to our Swedenborgian faith.*

—Rev. Ken

**Purpose:** The purpose of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America (the “Council” or “NCC”) shall be to live as a community of communions called by Christ to visible unity and sent forth in the Spirit to promote God’s justice, peace and the healing of the world. This purpose is served as the communions, striving to express unity by living together as the Council:

1. Further their vocation to proclaim Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord;
2. Engage in ecumenical worship and in biblical and theological study;
3. Challenge and counsel one another in mutual accountability as a witness to the unity of the Church;
4. Share resources for unity and mission;
5. Strive for peace and justice in the social, political and economic order;
6. Practice and advocate careful stewardship of God’s creation;
7. Act as responsible servants to people in need;
8. Foster education about and for ecumenism and engage in all educational efforts from an ecumenical perspective;
9. Nurture ecumenical life through relationships with local, regional, national and world ecumenical bodies, and groups and movements of Christians seeking renewal and unity;
10. Cultivate relationships and dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies;
11. Evidence their commitment to racial, gender and economic justice as well as in disability and generational concerns.

**Marks of Commitment and Regular Participation:** Each Member communion shall participate in the Council’s life in accordance with the Marks of Commitment provided by the Membership and Ecclesial Relations Committee set forth below and shall participate on a regular basis in Governing Board and Membership meetings.

Each Member Communion agrees to

1. Receive the ecumenical calling as essential to its own identity;
2. Perceive the renewed NCC as an expression of the search for visible unity and common mission;
3. Encourage all Member governing bodies, agencies and staff members to understand and live out unity and mission as integrally related responses to the Gospel;
4. Make the financial and human resourcing of the Council’s

life and commission undertaken in the Council a high priority;

5. Nurture and motivate its own and all Council constituents to engage more fully in the demanding tasks of unity and mission;
  - Each Member Communion acknowledges that membership in the NCC entails a willingness to
    1. Pray regularly for the Members and for the strengthening of Council fellowship;
    2. Share resources needed by other Members for unity and renewal;
    3. Participate on a regular basis in Governing Board and Membership meetings;
    4. Take seriously when other Members identify issues they feel are threatening to the unity and mission of the church;
    5. Take seriously differing understandings of the Gospel presented by other Members;
    6. Speak and act together in common witness to the good news of Jesus Christ, rejecting competition and implementing actions agreed upon through joint study and decision-making;
    7. Confess a “holy dissatisfaction” with present divisions, repent of complicity in them, and be challenged to greater ecumenical clarity, honesty and faithfulness;
    8. Recognize that the Council, while taking full account of differing views within and between its member churches, must make public witness on critical issues of the day, and will therefore treat contentious issues as matters for common theological discernment rather than allowing them to divide the Council;
    9. Be held accountable to affirmations made through the Council that racism, sexism, classism and discrimination against those who are disabled, are sins that divide (the) church and must therefore be opposed;
    10. Accept the inevitability of disagreement, and commit to model disagreement within the unity of Christian love;
    11. Know the other Members as fully as possible, and share as widely as possible, particularly locally and in seminaries, information about the life, witness and struggles of the church worldwide and fellowship in the Council.

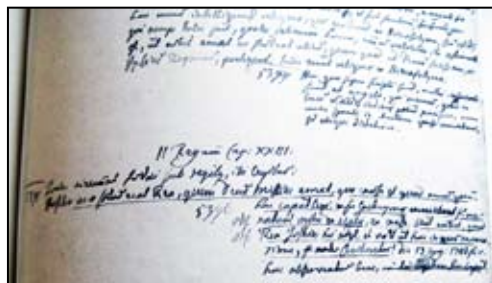
**Good Standing.** A Member shall be considered to be a Member in good standing as long as it participates in the governance and program of the NCC and contributes to Ecumenical Commitment Funding. If a Member fails to participate in the governance or program of the NCC for three consecutive years, or fails to contribute to Ecumenical Commitment Funding for three consecutive years, that Member shall not be considered to be in good standing.

**Membership Contributions.** Member communions are expected to pay an annual processing fee and an annual pledged contribution to the Ecumenical Commitment Fund.

## Evidence of Tears

In *The Word Explained*, Emanuel Swedenborg covered the books of Genesis and Exodus in detail. He dealt next with Joshua, Judges, First and Second Samuel, and First and Second Kings much more summarily. In the case of Second Kings, in fact, he treated only Isaiah's prophecy to Hezekiah from Chapter 19, and concluded with a brief note on Chapter 23, (the chapter that deals with Josiah's restoration of the temple and his death in battle) with an unexpected glimpse of the author at work. The translator Acton renders this latter as follows:

6328. Here is told the kind of life lived by the Jews under the kings. Josiah was the only king whom God Messiah loves. This is the reason why now, after<sup>1</sup> reading this chapter, tears ran from my eyes, because, as I hear, king Josiah is now present, and desires that these words be written in memory of him. 13 August 1746, Old Style<sup>2</sup>. The above should be well observed.



In the photograph of the phototype above, I would call attention to the blot on the word *legebam* in the last line. It may be that one of Swedenborg's tears left its mark.

—George Dole,

1 The Latin is *quum*, "when."

2 In the Julian Calendar. Sweden adopted the Gregorian Calendar in 1753.

## For All Who Love Making a Difference

The Fryeburg New Church is partnering with Equal Exchange to sell coffee, tea, chocolate, gifts, and more.

The mission of Equal Exchange is to build long-term trade partnerships that are economically just and environmentally sound, to foster mutually beneficial relationships between farmers and consumers, and to demonstrate the contribution of worker cooperatives and Fair Trade to a more equitable, democratic, and sustainable world.

The Fryeburg Church receives twenty-five percent of the purchase price for purchases made through this link: <http://tinyurl.com/lgfrtjl>.

Feel good about your purchases and support the Fryeburg New Church! ☪

### Fair Trade Guiding Principles

- Trade directly with democratically organized small farmer cooperatives.
- Facilitate access to credit for producer organizations.
- Pay producers a guaranteed minimum price that provides a stable source of income as well as improved social services.
- Provide high quality food products.
- Support sustainable farming practices.
- Build a democratically-run cooperative workplace.
- Develop more environmentally-sound business practices.

## Bicentennial Committee Needs You



About 197 years ago, a group of people who gathered in Philadelphia realized that combining efforts to teach, share, and live the teachings of the New Jerusalem, revealed by Emanuel Swedenborg, would be enhanced through joining with other like-minded people. From that simple beginning, what we now know as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem (the Swedenborgian Church) was born and has touched the lives of all of us.

In 2017, the Swedenborgian Church will be celebrating its bicentennial convention (200 years). General Council has established the Bicentennial Convention Committee (BC2) and appointed Rev. Kevin Baxter as chair. Polly Baxter and Rev. Kit Billings have been appointed as representatives of General Council, but we need more help. It is our desire to make this a grand celebration of our organization and our faith. Beginning our planning in 2014 will ensure a grand and meaningful celebration.

Please contact Kevin Baxter at [kevin@baxtonia.com](mailto:kevin@baxtonia.com) if you would like to serve on the committee or if you have ideas or suggestions for the Bicentennial Celebration! ☪

—Kevin Baxter



## Passages

### Baptisms

**Astrid Isidore Eklund**, born September 15, 2004, and **Hattie Violet Eklund**, born Oct. 14, 2012, to parents Erik and Kacey Eklund, were baptized October 27, 2013, at the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine. Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen officiated.



### Transitions

The Rev. **Carla Friedrich** has been called to ministry at the Wilmington Church of the Holy City (Delaware).

The Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, has accepted the resignation of **Steve Thomas** as lay leader, a position he has held for many years. His greatest ministerial love was performing weddings. Judy Pidgeon writes, "Steve shared wonderful sermons over the years and helped us through some challenging times as a church. We look forward to celebrating Steve with a luncheon in January."

### Deaths

**Astrid Watson**, long time dedicated member of the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Alberta, passed suddenly into the fullness of the spiritual world on October 17, 2013, at the age of 78. Her passing is mourned by her three children, seven grandchildren, and fifteen great-grandchildren. ☩

## Swedenborgian Transitions

### Who We Are:

**Hi, my name is Alice Henderson.** I am nineteen years old, have attended Almont Summer School every other year since 1997, and attended the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound for several years before coming to college. Since my mother and I live in Washington, retreat attendance has always been difficult, and I didn't become very involved with youth in the church until I was fifteen. Even then, I only attended three Almont winter teen retreats along with the annual convention in 2012 while serving as the West Coast and public relations officer for the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL). While my involvement with youth in the church started later than most of my friends, I feel deeply connected to them. The teen retreats I attended were wonderful, relaxing, and spiritually and physically rejuvenating.

Winter retreat of December 2012 was my last retreat as part of the SCYL. Retreat staff held a moving Exodus ceremony symbolizing the transition out of my teen years. While I felt ready to move on from the teen group, I also regretted not having gone to more retreats and worried that I was losing the community I had only recently become a part of. That being said, I eagerly awaited both the annual convention and Almont this past summer as a chance to see friends and extended family, pre-teen, teen, and post-teen alike.

**Hello, my name is Kristina Madjerac.** I am twenty-two years old and started attending SCYL youth groups at age thirteen; that led me to attend Fryeburg New Church Assembly. SCYL was a wonderful part of my life, but I aged out of the group a few years ago. While I have continued to attend summer camp, I missed having the church and the support it gives

me. I joined the Communication Support Unit (COMSU) in 2012 as the chair. Church youth director Kurt Fekete asked me to be a staff member



Kristina Madjerac and Alice Henderson

at the SCYL Winter Retreat, where I met Alice and we started talking about getting the Transitions group (young adults) back up and running. We, as young adults, are looking for a place to continue learning as well as a place to connect with old and new friends.

### What We're Up To:

Kurt Fekete told the teens at the annual convention that they're not the future of the church—they are the church. This statement applies even more to the amorphous group of Transitions, defined on Facebook as "a group of young adults connected to the Swedenborgian church through past or present church or retreat attendance." As the present and future of the church we hope to make our presence more known. Coming up this month, Transitions will be holding a retreat at Manna House in LaPort, Indiana, from December 26–30, with the theme of "gender roles in the Bible." Interested parties should contact us on Facebook (<http://tinyurl.com/m9s9ehh>) or email [alicehenderson5@gmail.com](mailto:alicehenderson5@gmail.com). ☩

### About the Swedenborgian Church

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London fifteen years after his death.

American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches. As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

Swedenborg shared in his theological writings a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of scripture as a story of inner life stages as we learn and grow. Swedenborg said, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.

## SwedenborgianCommunity.org Connecting & Learning in 2014— Wherever & However!

The Central Committee of the online Swedenborgian community, SwedenborgianCommunity.org, has prepared its 2014 budget, which has been approved by the General Council of the General Convention. We have ambitious plans to broaden the ways in which we connect and learn together—and we will need your support to do so:

- Broaden the ways we present the weekly worship, so you can access it wherever and however you prefer—on the website from your computer, smart phone, iPad or tablet; print; audio; video; and Facebook. Serving multiple platforms requires investing in a website upgrade, additional equipment, training for Rev. Dr. Wake, and our new technology consultant posting and archiving.
- Vary the ways we connect in our Thursday and Sunday "meetings"—we are exploring diverse connecting methods—synchronous chat as now for those who type; teleconference for those who prefer to talk; internet video/talk so we can both see and hear; internet blog radio; and more, since new technology is constantly developed!

Our 2014 budget is \$28,614, similar to last year.

- We are very appreciative that our denomination has recognized our accomplishments and awarded us an Augmentation Fund grant of \$19,000—sixty-six percent of our budget
- And, we are very appreciative that the Rotch Fund has awarded us a grant of \$1544—fifty percent of our budgeted revenues from grants
- We have a goal for pledges and contributions of \$6,500.  
Please make your pledge at: <http://tinyurl.com/k68k4ga>  
Please pay your pledge at: <http://tinyurl.com/oa7scx3>

An anonymous donor will give an additional \$500 if we reach \$4,000 in pledges by Dec. 20, 2013.