



## Transformation Underway at Urbana University

BY BETSY COFFMAN

**M**embers of our denomination who attended our annual convention held last year at Urbana University (UU) in Urbana, Ohio, were able to witness some significant changes on the campus of the only institution of higher education

that is affiliated with the Swedenborgian Church. Many participated in a spiritual heritage tour, which celebrated our rich history through visits to the Johnny Appleseed Museum, the Swedenborg Memorial Library, the “Dorothea Harvey Tree,” and the historic former home of Rev. Frank Sewall, an early president of Urbana College and the designer and minister of the beautiful church that is home to the local Swedenborgian congregation. The visionary founders saw an opportunity to provide a comprehensive education to students based on the theological and philosophical perspectives of Emanuel Swedenborg.

One of the most noticeable changes on campus that attendees enjoyed was the Student Center, which was in the final stages of completion the previous time the convention was held at Urbana University, in 2006. Most activities and events were held last year in this functional and attractive facility with

glass-lined walls overlooking the campus and its beautiful old trees. It has become a focal point for students, faculty, and staff as a much-needed addition to campus life. The other major addition has been the impressive football

stadium with artificial turf that finally has given student athletes and UU fans an on-campus venue for home games. These wonderful improvements were made possible by dedicated supporters

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### Annual Convention 2014

#### Gateway to Providence: Being Led By The Lord The Year of Regeneration: the Way of Change

The 2014 Annual Convention will be held on the campus of Webster University in St Louis. The planners are seeking the following:

- Churches and groups to share highlights of what year four in the seven-year cycle has been for them. Contact Rev. Sherrie Connelly ([stillpt@sbcglobal.net](mailto:stillpt@sbcglobal.net)) with anything you would like to share at the convention.
- Musicians and singers who would like to offer their talents for worship and chapel services should contact Rev. Kit Billings ([revkitbillings@comcast.net](mailto:revkitbillings@comcast.net)).
- Anyone who would like to offer something at the Friday evening open microphone gathering should contact Paul Deming ([pdeming@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pdeming@sbcglobal.net)).



The convention outing will be on Saturday afternoon and evening following the Convention Communion Service at 3 PM. Conventioneers will travel to downtown St. Louis for the annual 4th of July celebration, a kind of street fair event, with displays, booths, and special events, culminating with the Ralph Butler Band, featuring our own Paul Deming on lead guitar, and a massive fireworks display.

Mornings will offer meditation movement, singing, and chapel services. Evenings will offer the President’s Welcome, The Swedenborgian House of Studies Annual Meeting, the ordination service, receptions, open mic gathering, and vespers. The general schedule offers business sessions and mini courses. Good fellowship will be available and plentiful at meals and between events.

Find all the details and the [registration form on page 57](#).

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**The Editor's Desk**



**Behavior**

Some recent research into the behavior of individuals according to their economic or social status provides provocative material for self-reflection. Paul Piff, at UC Berkeley, has been conducting experiments over the last few years, described in a paper in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* titled "Higher Social Class Predicts Increased Unethical Behavior," to quantify that behavior.

His data, from experiments replicating socioeconomic class differences, show that higher status can make individuals less ethical, more selfish, more insular, and less compassionate than others. In experiments, high-status individuals

- Were more likely to take candy from a bowl of candy designated for children
- Were the most likely to cut off other vehicles at an intersection
- Were fifty percent less likely to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks than lower-status individuals
- Were less likely to tell the truth and more positively predicted to have fa-

- vorable attitudes towards greed.
- Were more likely to cheat to increase their chances of winning a prize
- Were more likely endorse unethical behavior in the workplace.

Such information is not a surprise. After all, Jesus tells us that it is harder for a rich man to get into heaven. But correlation does not imply causation, and this information tells us nothing about the behavior of any specific individual, so of what use is it to us as Christians, as Swedenborgians, as ethical beings?

Our behavior is governed by the complex factors that relate to the physical and social environment and the brain's adaptation to those factors, evolutionarily and individually. Our brains lead us to behaviors that promote physical survival and comfort, so it is easier to follow our natural tendencies here in the natural world than it is to struggle with them as a path to our redemption.

Self-reflection is a critical component of regeneration, the lifelong pro-

cess of becoming more like an angel in heaven by accepting the influx of good and truth from the Lord. It takes enormous effort to continually search our own behavior for information that can help us regenerate, but we sign up for that effort when we aspire to be ethical beings, to accept influx from the Lord.

Others—friends, family, ministers, philosophers, scientists, artists—can serve as resources to assist us in this process. Perhaps this information can be of some use to us.

Find the complete study (for a fee) at <http://tinyurl.com/n4hmreh> or at a college or university library.

—Herb Ziegler

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**Church Calendar**

- April 25–26: SHS Board of Trustees meeting • Burlingame, CA
- May 2–4: SPLATz Spring Retreat Almont Retreat Center • Allenton, MI
- May 8: Massachusetts Association Annual Meeting • Bridgewater (MA) New Church
- May 23–26: West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat • Sonoma, CA
- May 23–26: SCYL Memorial Day Retreat • FNCA • Fryeburg, ME
- June 7–8: Western Canada Conference Annual Meeting • Church of the Holy City • Edmonton, Alberta
- July 2–6: 2014 Annual Convention St. Louis, MO
- July 26–August 3: Almont Summer School • Allenton, MI
- August 2–17: FNCA Summer Camp Session • Fryeburg, ME

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.

April 2014

Volume 236, No. 4 Whole Number 5389

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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,

We are fast approaching the turning point in the General Convention's seven-year theme cycle. As we celebrate the Fourth of July at this year's annual convention in St. Louis, the theme of which is "Gateway to Providence: Being Led by The Lord," we will transition from our Fourth year, "The Year of Providence: The Assurance of Purpose" to our fifth year, "The Year of Regeneration: The Way of Change."

Swedenborg has said that God's overarching purpose is the creation of a heaven from the human race. And also that salvation is accomplished through regeneration. If we indeed are holding trust in Divine Providence and committing ourselves to the relentless pursuit of regeneration, I feel confident (a word I rarely use and have very little use for) that we are, as an organization and as individuals, on the right track.

I invite you to reflect on the past year and collect your thoughts, feelings, and experiences that affirm Divine Providence. During the business sessions at the convention, we would love to have you share how Providence has been present and influenced your life and the life of your church. Please contact Rev. Sherrie Connelly, the Chair of EDSU, to be included ([stillpt@sbcglobal.net](mailto:stillpt@sbcglobal.net)).

I would also invite us all to reflect on what it is that is truly valuable and important about life in this church. Yes, I still use the word *church*. But I remind us all that *church* is not just a building, not just an organization; these are only outward

manifestations. As Swedenborg has said, church is a shared state of mind and heart that is in constant worship to, and in harmony with, the Lord and heaven. In acknowledging that, I challenge us all to identify what it is about our earthly organization that is truly church and that has been, not *the* but *a*, means for heaven to manifest on earth. What is it we value about who we are as an organization? What is it about who we are as an organization that actually works, that actually accomplishes its stated goals and purposes? And of course, the flip side of that coin, and the really hard and challenging part, is daring to identify what is no longer working and what is no longer effectively serving its given purpose. It is essential we engage this process of self-reflection and self-analysis. For of course, this is really nothing more, and nothing less, than repentance, the essential and first step in the process of regeneration.

The reason I call us to engage in repentance is that change is upon us. Change is upon us the way the flood was upon the earth. Noah and his family were called to serve God. And while I have not the hubris to think we are the only ones called to serve God, within our organization there is an impending sense that if we are no longer of use to the service of God we will soon be washed away. What we choose to hold on to and what we let go of is going to have a major impact upon whether we are washed away, or whether we will float on new structures and supports and survive this flood of new information and ways of thinking.

Divine Providence is at work pursuing the purpose of spiritual regeneration. We are being challenged with the task of re-imagining ourselves so that we can effectively be of service in a new world or risk simply being washed away by a rising tide that waits for no one. Everything and everyone has a life-cycle, and nothing lasts forever—except God, of course. But speaking for myself, I may be old

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# Was Lincoln a Discreet Swedenborgian?

## Assessing Honest Abe's Engagements with Swedenborg and Illinois Swedenborgians

BY JIM LAWRENCE

The Swedenborg Memorial Library at Urbana University has been the latest participating library of 250 libraries and community centers across the country hosting a four-year traveling exhibit, "Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War." Having been invited for a week as scholar-in-residence during the exhibition's stay on the Urbana campus in the Swedenborg Memorial Library, I presented a brown bag Wednesday lunch hour talk on "Abraham Lincoln and Swedenborgianism," which gave me a chance to read and summarize the historical evidence for the faint story that still exists in our church that Lincoln—the only US president in history to never join a church—had been influenced by Swedenborg in definite ways. I want to thank our librarian at the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS), Michael Yockey, for his help in locating information in our archives in Berkeley, and the librarian at the Swedenborg Library in Urbana, Julie McDaniels, for invaluable support for my talks that week.

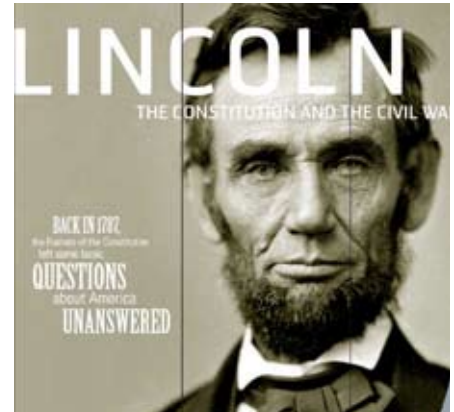
A conversation has ensued several times in Swedenborgian periodicals across a century from 1884 to 1983 with stories of Lincoln's alleged warm engagement with Swedenborgian study groups and church services and an assessment of those claims. They boil down to three sources claiming meaningful religious interactions on Lincoln's part with Illinois Swedenborgians during the 1840s and 1850s, and they all center upon the time Lincoln spent in Springfield, Illinois, where he had his law practice and political career before he headed to the White House

and also where a vibrant Swedenborgian community had grown up.

The earliest testament was published in a *Messenger* series called "Reminiscences of a Pioneer" during 1883–1884, authored by Reverend J. R. Hibbard, an important early Swedenborgian organizer in a Midwest region that included Springfield. Four decades after the fact and averring he wishes to get these reminiscences on the record before he passes on, in the January 30, 1884, installment, Hibbard relates memories of Lincoln and conversations about Lincoln with local Swedenborgians during a period of years starting in 1843—long before Lincoln knew anything of fame.

As supported by Lincoln biographers, Hibbard remarks that one of Lincoln's good friends was a jurist, the Hon. Isaac Britton, who had become a significant figure in the state education system and later became superintendent of schools for the state of Illinois. Hibbard attests Britton invited him to a Fourth of July town event especially designed for the youth and Sunday Schools. It happened that one of several speakers was Lincoln, a local attorney and member of the Illinois state legislature. Lincoln riveted Hibbard with his remarks to the children, and Britton told him on that day that he and his legal colleague had become familiar friends and often spoke of religious ideas. It is claimed that Britton had given Lincoln copies of some of Swedenborg's works, and that Lincoln's views on Divine Providence especially were influenced by Swedenborgian thought.

The second item is the most complicated and contested testimony, both



in favor and against. Bryant Higgins, an Illinois Swedenborgian who lived for a long time in Springfield, felt impelled to prepare a sworn legal affidavit that he submitted for publication in *the Messenger* in 1895 regarding a relationship he held with another Springfield Swedenborgian, Willis Johnson, who in his later years earnestly related his account of meeting regularly with Lincoln and a certain Dr. Blackburn on Saturday evenings off and on for several years in the 1850s in Lincoln's law office to study and discuss Swedenborg's writings. The *Messenger* editor saw fit to vouch for Mr. Higgins's reliability. Lincoln's son, Robert Lincoln, became aware of the published affidavit and wrote a vigorous denial of the possibility of Johnson's testimony being true. However, years later, Johnson's granddaughter, Clara Spaulding, still of Springfield, became aware of the controversy and in 1915 wrote to *the Messenger* to say that she felt perhaps her grandfather might have exaggerated the accounts of his conversations with the late president but that he had had a number of conversations with Lincoln about faith and religion was a well-known family story and not doubted. Johnson had been the owner of a large and prosperous iron and copper foundry within eyesight of Lincoln's office.

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Upon reading Mrs. Spaulding's account, Rev. C. T. Odhner wrote an article in *New Church Life* entitled "The Myth of Abraham Lincoln's Swedenborgianism," largely supporting Robert Lincoln's denial. Reading that editorial prompted a reader, Annie Bassett, longtime secretary of the Peoria, Illinois, New Church Society as well as an active leader in the Illinois Association of the New Jerusalem, to write to the editor in the March 1915 edition of *New Church Life* to relate that she knew both Johnson and Hibbard very well, in addition to another Springfield New Church member named John Billington, who all told her Lincoln was a reader of Swedenborg.

The third testimony comes from multiple accounts of Lincoln staying frequently with the Sargent family at their farmhouse in Hutton Township, which was about halfway on a route he traveled often for his law work between Springfield and Marshall. One of the members of this extended family, Jacob Harlan, served later in Lincoln's White House cabinet. After reading a 1942 article in *New Church Life* by Raymond Pitcairn (the primary builder of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral) in which he summarizes the evidence to date, a General Convention reader in the Los Angeles Swedenborgian Church, Floret Harlan Hendrickson, spoke to her pastor, Rev. Andre Diaconoff, and asked him to write up her thoughts for *the Messenger*, which was published also in 1942. Mrs. Hendrickson—at that time aged eighty-eight and the granddaughter of Stephen and Nancy Sargent, such ardent advocates of Swedenborgianism that their farmhouse became a virtual church community hosting worship gatherings every Sunday for people around a large area—added her voice to the other two long-discussed sources connecting Lincoln to a fairly serious level of reading Swedenborg.

Mrs. Hendrickson, though very young at the time, had definite memories of Lincoln, who had shown much warmth toward her and had appeared a striking figure. Lincoln stayed over Saturday nights a number of times and always attended the church service in their home. She remembered his borrowing and returning Swedenborg's books on more than one occasion. An oft-recounted story in the family regards a themed service one particular Sunday on "The Universal Christian Dispensation," which focused on the idea that the real church is not an organization so much as an internal lived reality. The ritual that day involved a baptism into that church, and the sixteenth president participated in that baptism.

The Sargent farm was in Coles County, and in 1955 a professor of history at Eastern Illinois University, Charles Coleman, devoted an entire chapter on the alleged claim of Lincoln's Swedenborgianism in his book *Abraham Lincoln and Coles County, Illinois*. He concludes that Lincoln knew many Swedenborgians, was certainly acquainted with Swedenborgian ideas, and likely attended some Swedenborgian services, but that the overall evidence does not support his being a committed Swedenborgian nor that he understood himself to have been baptized Swedenborgian (which, of course, fits the theme of the service as understood by Floret Sargent Hendrickson).

A final piece of historical evidence is found in Carl Sandburg's three-volume biography of Lincoln (1967), in which he relates a book in Lincoln's library given to him by his wife Mary Todd Lincoln that was much underlined, *The Elements of Character* by a well-known (at that time) Swedenborgian author, Mary G. Chandler (later, Mary G. Ware), who wrote several widely read Swedenborgian spiritual classics. Mrs. Lincoln's potential interest in Swedenborg is another subject of

speculation, due not only to this book being selected as a gift to her husband, but also to her well-known interest and participation in spiritualist activities, a category at that time much associated with Swedenborgian discourse regarding life on the other side of death.

Although Lincoln never joined a church, even though he was raised hard-shell Baptist, he often accompanied his wife to her Presbyterian church services. But he is also regarded by biographers to have been very familiar with the Bible and clearly a theist who tended toward a profound regard for the working of God in history. A familiar quote by Lincoln on this subject is,

I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservations, to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their Articles of Belief and Confessions of Faith. When any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the Master's condensed statement of the substance of both Law and Gospel: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself;" that church will I join with all my heart and with all my soul.

In this one statement we can see both what likely appealed to The Great Emancipator in Swedenborg's presentation of the faith (its universalism and its basis in a lived attempt to be useful and loving) and what did not appeal (the extensive explanation of controversial doctrines).

What seems most likely is that Lincoln certainly appreciated the company of some Swedenborgians and was more acquainted with Swedenborg and Swedenborgians than any president in US history. He took a reasonably thoughtful interest in Swedenborg's

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# Nominees for Elected Positions in the Church

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

The Nominating Committee is still soliciting candidates, but as *the Messenger* going to press, the candidates listed in the table at right have been nominated for election at the 2014 Annual Convention.

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

## Candidate Statements

The following candidates have submitted statements to date.

### Vice-President: Betsy Coffman

I have been serving as Vice-President of Convention throughout President Rev. Ken Turley's tenure and have felt privileged to contribute to the life



of our denomination in this capacity. As the former lay leader and now newly ordained minister of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church and chaplain of

Urbana University, I have served our church for many years at the local, association, and national levels. This has certainly increased my knowledge of "the workings" of our denomination and my ability to contribute meaningfully to the issues, challenges, and decisions required of our officers and Gen-

Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
Vice-President	1	Betsy Coffman*
Secretary	1	Susannah Currie*
Treasurer	1	Polly Baxter*
General Council layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Barbara Cullen* Lon Elmer*
General Council Minister	3	Sky Paradise
Communication Support Unit (COMSU)	3	Open
Education Support Unit (EDSU)	3	Paul Deming
Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU)	3	Jennifer Lindsay*
Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)	3	Open
Support Unit for Ministries (MINSU)	3	Dick Tafel* Open
Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM)	3	Rebecca Esterson TBA
Board of Trustees of SHS, representative class (2 to be elected)	3	Open Open
Board of Trustees of SHS, at-large class (2 to be elected)**	3	Nancy Little Open
Nominating Committee (2 to be nominated)	5	Sue Ditmire David Fekete

\* Incumbent

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

eral Council. In my capacity as Vice-President to date, I have been leading the Central Office Review Committee in its effort to make important decisions in regard to Central Office so that it can better serve the needs of our denomination. In continuing as Vice-President, I would be able to maintain the continuity necessary to complete what is now in process. Therefore, I would accept gratefully, the opportunity to continue to serve our church.

### Recording Secretary: Susannah Currie

Rev. Susannah Currie, M.Div., BCC, is part-time pastor of the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church in Massachusetts and part-time administrative minister for the Portland New Church in Maine. She serves as board member

and religious program coordinator for the Fryeburg New Church Assembly. She served three terms as treasurer of



the denomination and has served as recording secretary since 2011. Her knowledge of General Convention and its bodies has

been cultivated through her past service to the Council of Ministers Executive Committee, the Retirement Committee, the Augmentation Fund Committee, the Sunday School Association, and Swedenborgian Church Youth League retreats. She was pastor of the

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Swedenborgian Church at Temenos from 1999–2008 and also served as executive director of the Temenos Conference and Retreat Center. She serves as the treasurer for *In Company with Angels*, *Gathering Leaves*, and *Wayfarers Chapel*. Susannah is happy to offer her talents to General Council for another one year term as secretary.

### **Treasurer: Polly Baxter**

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



Swedenborgian Church and treasurer of the Massachusetts New Church Union. In addition to serving on the theological school board,

the Nominating Committee, and many other denominational committees, she was assistant to the treasurer for many years, during which time she received the Layperson of the Year Award for bringing the financial records into conformity with generally accepted financial standards. She was later elected treasurer of General Convention, and in that capacity served on the Executive Committee, General Council, and as chair of the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit. She has served also as president of the Alliance of New Church Women.

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

During the past year, she has

worked extensively with the Central Office to update the accounting procedures to bring the existing practices in line with a new cost-saving accounting system she implemented. She has also done extensive research on General Convention's invested funds. Polly has a professional background in accounting, working for Fannie Mae, the federal mortgage agency. During the past year, has worked with the Central Office staff to refine General Convention's cash flow management practices, which has resulted in investment of money previously held as cash reserves. She has simplified the year-end closing materials in order to realize a savings in auditing and review fees. These and other policy and practice revisions are resulting in a smaller denominational deficit without impacting existing programs while adhering to fiscal best practices.

### **General Council (layperson): Barbara Cullen**

I'm pleased to offer my services as a layperson on General Council for another term. I have served on General Council for the last three years and enjoyed making a contribution to the Swedenborgian Church in this way. While on the Council, I have served on the Central Office Review Committee, the Committee of Inquiry, and as a trustee of the Iungerich Fund.



On the local level, I am a member of Kitchener's Church of the Good Shepherd as well as the alternative ministry, *Revelation of the Spirit*, with Rev. Catherine Lauber. I am also a registrant of the online Swedenborgian Community, where I served on the steering

committee during its inception and early days. I sat on the Good Shepherd board for many years as well.

My professional career was in the field of human resources. Now that I am retired, I love spending time with my husband John, our two adult daughters and son-in-law, and above all (sorry John and kids) our one-year-old grandson who is delightful, just like all grandkids!

I'm looking forward to our reconnecting in St. Louis this summer.

### **General Council (layperson): Lon Elmer**

After two years of completing an unexpired term on General Council, six years as treasurer of the Pacific Coast Association, stints on MIN-SU and GOSU, and several years on the board of directors of the Wayfarers Chapel, I feel I can be of use in helping our church face its challenges and opportunities by continuing to serve on General Council.

### **General Council (minister): Sky Paradise**

Rev. Dr. Sky Paradise was born and raised in Worcester and Boston, Massachusetts. She holds a Ph.D. from St. Louis University and has twenty years of experience in counseling and psychotherapy. She also holds a Master's degree from Pacific School of Religion and a certificate from the Swedenborgian House of Studies. Rev. Paradise was ordained in 2007 at the annual convention at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. She is the founding pastor of the New Church of the Southwest Desert in Silver City, New Mexico, and has served there for the past seven years. The New Church of the Southwest Desert is an emergent church that understands an evolving and transforming church population and serves a multicultural newcomer ministry based on compassion and a

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## Nominees

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deeply seeking relationship with God.

### Nominating Committee: Sue Ditmire

I was a spiritual seeker in southern Ohio since I was a young teenager. In early adulthood, when my two preschoolers were ready to begin religious education, I was introduced to Sweden-



borgian ideas at Kemper Road Center in Montgomery, Ohio. I became a member there from 1974 to 1983, when I relocated to New Jer-

sey, near Atlantic City, and have since been a member of the Wilmington, Delaware, congregation (Mid-Atlantic Association).

Throughout my time in the denomination, I have been an active member of the national organization, holding different positions and attending conventions and Gathering Leaves.

Along with several other people, I helped birth SwedenborgianCommunityonline.org.

During the past year, I am happy to report, I have had a massive turnaround in my health and am doing better than I have done in twenty years. Currently, I am busy writing a historical novel, spending time with my eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, and working on plans for the next Gathering Leaves retreat in the Cincinnati area in 2015.

I am happy to accept the nomination to a position on the Nominating Committee and I feel that my general knowledge and participation in General Convention will be a big asset. But more important, I will spend my time at this year's convention getting

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

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

will be held during the annual session of the Swedenborgian Church of North America at Webster University in St Louis in the main meeting room of the convention.

Thursday, July 3, 2014, at 7:00 PM

Please join us for a reception immediately following.

to know people who do not normally attend conventions. I am very interested in making use of not only the experienced members but of new talent that has not yet been tapped as an asset.

Please talk to me at the annual convention about the ways you feel you can help serve the Church.

(Long-time Convention people probably first knew me as Sue Harvie or Sue Weiss.)

### Nominating Committee: David Fekete

I grew up attending the Detroit Church of the Holy City. I attended Almont New Church Assembly since I was five years old. I have also attended Fryeburg New Church Assembly and Split Mountain Camp. I have served as the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) president in my youth, and later as chaplain as an ordained minister. I hold a B.A. from Urbana University, an M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School, and a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. I was ordained in 2006 and answered a call to the Edmonton Church of the Holy City, where I still



serve as pastor. I currently serve on General Council, serve as our denomination's representative to the Faith and Order Convening Table of the National Council of Churches of Christ, serve as camp pastor at Paulhaven Camp in Alberta, am a regular lecturer at Almont Summer School, and have served as an adjunct instructor at the Swedenborgian House of Studies. In Edmonton, I am the vice-president of the Edmonton Interfaith Center and I have been nominated to assume the position of president at our annual general meeting in June. I have published twenty-one articles in *the Messenger*, nine sermons in *Our Daily Bread*, and six articles in *Clear Blue Sky* (the publication of SCYL). I am interested in interfaith dialogue, while remaining deeply committed to the Swedenborgian Church. I look forward to continuing to serve the Church on the Nominating Committee. ☪

**John and Bev Titus**, members of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church and parents of Alicia Titus, who was killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, spoke on "**Forgiveness: Getting Through What You Are Going Through**" at New Church Live in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania in March. Go to <https://vimeo.com/90016686> to view their talk.



# An Older Perspective

BY GLORIA COSTELLO



**W**hen I was asked to write an article about life at Fryeburg New Church Assembly from an older

adult perspective, I supposed that my family's observations are worth noting because of their continuous years of attendance from the camp's start to the present. My grandparents, Rev. Everett K. and Ora (Hutchins) Bray, were two of the first visitors in the early 1930s. My mother, Elizabeth (Bray) Guiu, was nine years old during that first of what became yearly visits. And when she married my father, Rafael (Ray) Guiu, they brought their budding family in the forties, just as I and my sib-



14 of the Guiu clan in 2011, on the steps of the big house



Betty Guiu with her great-grandchild in 2010, when they were the oldest and youngest campers in attendance!

lings brought our own young families decades later.

Many campers return year after year to recharge their spiritual batteries. There are many hugs and smiles as they catch up on the past year's news. New visitors are greeted warmly and introduced to the camp's many (and sometimes slightly eccentric) traditions.

One such tradition is the pre-breakfast dip in the bracing waters of the Saco River by the hardy swimmers of the Polar Bear Club. Then everyone gathers for breakfast when the big bell tolls. Meals are held in "the big house"—often with a roaring fire to warm those chilly Maine mornings. Breakfast is followed by a short chapel service and then stimulating lectures. After lunch there is plenty of time for relaxation and exploring the area before dinner, which is followed by a different camp activity most evenings.

One time-honored tradition for everyone, especially for us older folk, is porch sitting. The porch is the main hub where people heading into the big house pass by. Porch sitters have at once a beautiful vista of the river and mountains beyond, as

well as a view of the "Sparks" (children) playing on the front lawn. Discussions and merriment follow into the evening.

It's fun to follow the returning generations with their progeny. Last year we realized that my mother, at age ninety-two, was the oldest person at camp, and my grandson, Malachi Clish, at seven months (the fifth generation of my family at the FNCA!) was the youngest. Whatever the age, both old and new friends can experience a little slice of heaven at FNCA year after year after year. ☪

Gloria Guiu Costello is a member of the Bridgewater, Massachusetts, New Church.



Gloria's sisters, Tina and Lalla (rest her soul) reading on the front lawn

## Lincoln

*Continued from page 48*

views on Christianity, as he did perhaps in other viewpoints and authors as well, but he certainly did not regard himself as Swedenborgian, but merely as Christian—one who might have had some perceptions on the nature of God shaped in some ways by the Swedish prophet. ☪

The Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, where he is also assistant professor of spirituality and historical studies.



The Swedenborgian Church sponsors an annual scholar-in residence program at Urbana University, an institution founded by and connected to the Swedenborgian Church.

## Urbana Transformation

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of the university who have given generously to improve the quality of the student experience on campus.

As we celebrate so many positive advancements to date, we also find that the 2013–14 academic year at UU is one of challenge and change. As a member of the church class of trustees (seats on the board reserved for Swedenborgian Church members) for the past twenty-two years, the appointed university chaplain, and an alumna, I am excited about our prospects for the future yet take seriously the real challenges that face us. It is my hope that this article will be of interest to Swedenborgians and will inspire them to support Urbana University.

Those who know something of our history are aware that our sixteen decades have been filled with challenges. Frank Higgins' book, *The Will to Survive*, provides detailed accounts of the cycles of financial stability and crisis that characterized the school from 1850 to 1975. A major issue we face is that these same patterns have continued from 1976 until today. However, the time has come to transform the university. We must abandon the mindset to *survive* and replace it with the commitment to *thrive*. How? Leadership. Organizations flourish or flounder on the strength of leadership.

We now have the leadership in place to build upon Urbana's rich legacy of personal, innovative education and enable it to achieve new levels of impact and success, not just locally and regionally but around the world. This team includes a young, visionary president, Dr. Kirk Peterson, supported by an accomplished group of higher education executives and an involved board of trustees, including new members with strong financial skills. This dynamic,

new leadership team has been intentionally put into place over the past nine months with a primary goal to "Transform Urbana University to become a thriving university in the next



The Urbana University Student Center

three years." To that end, UU has engaged university, community, and regional constituencies in strategic planning, which has yielded very specific goals and objectives. In addition, the university has re-affirmed its Swedenborgian-based philosophy statement, applying those principles in a recent revision of its vision, mission, and values statements.

### The Campaign to Transform Urbana University

We are launching "The Campaign to Transform Urbana University." We ask you to consider the following: "Life transformation" describes the impact of Urbana University over the last 164 years. Urbana University serves a wide variety of aspiring students—high-school students getting ahead, undergraduates experiencing campus life, adults seeking their first degree, and professionals pursuing graduate degrees—in realizing their educational dreams and the professional success that follows. (In addition, UU has served a unique population—that of prison inmates whose potential for successful re-integration into society on their release is greatly enhanced by the opportunity provided by UU to complete certificates and degrees.) Your

support is needed to continue to serve aspiring students here and around the globe. In terms of the lives of our students or the pressing financial needs, the urgency of this mission cannot be overstated. The transformational legacy established through your generosity will bear rich fruit now as well as in the decades to come.

Many of us in the Swedenborgian Church who have ties to Urbana University, continue to support and promote an ongoing affiliation between the school and the church, as we believe that both benefit in recognizing our common bonds of

history and heritage. In so doing, we keep alive the vision of our Swedenborgian forebears who sought to bring Swedenborg's enlightened views into the area of education in a holistic way. Urbana University's philosophy continues to reflect the Swedenborgian principles of free and rational inquiry in the development of human potential, intellectually, socially, and spiritually. As an educational community it attempts to provide an "environment in which students develop as sensitive, caring, thinking individuals and members of the community . . . while supporting an ongoing search for modes of behavior which uphold human dignity, honor human freedom, and foster individual and community resourcefulness and responsibility." (from "Urbana University Philosophy").

In considering your willingness to support the University's efforts to move forward in a transformative way, you might well ask, "How does this relate to me as a Swedenborgian?" It might be helpful to know how Urbana University provides a wonderful "window on the world." The following examples show how the Swedenborgian influence is made manifest in campus life and in outreach to the wider community. For

[Continues next page](#)

*Continued from preceding page*

these to continue and to bear fruit, we need the ongoing support of all who value and wish to make known to the world our Swedenborgian tradition.

### The Johnny Appleseed Museum

According to the Johnny Appleseed Education Center & Museum, an integral component of Urbana University, it

holds the largest collections of memorabilia and written information about the life of John “Appleseed” Chapman known to exist in the world. A computer database is available for research purposes for retrieval and identification of information. A national registry of Johnny Appleseed’s relatives has been established for those interested in genealogical heritage. Visitors can experience the story of John Chapman through interpretative text panels, artifacts, pictures, music, and discovery. Topics focus on Johnny Appleseed as a (Swedenborgian) missionary, entrepreneur, pioneer, and herbal medical person. Where he traveled, his relationships with settlers and Native Americans, what is factual versus myth,” and his evolution into popular folklore are also part of the story.

### The UU Board of Directors

Over the past year, the J. Appleseed Foundation has reconstructed and revitalized its board with enthusiastic members and focused goals. Two very exciting projects are underway: the launching of a new website in April and the development of a new interactive exhibit at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery in Springfield, Ohio, opening in August of this year. This exhibit will be designed to transform into a traveling exhibit. The Foundation Board and the museum director, Cheryl Ogden, are working toward accreditation for the museum.

### The Alicia Titus Peace Fund

*The Alicia Titus Memorial Peace Fund was set up in 2002 in memory of John and Beverly Titus’s daughter, Alicia, a United Airlines flight attendant, who at age twenty-eight, was killed in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Towers in New York City. This fund has supported a variety of events that promote peace and conflict resolution.*

In September, 2013, the third annual Alicia Titus Run for Peace, themed “Give Peace A Chance,” was held at Urbana University as a fundraiser for student scholarships. There were well over 100 participants—runners, walkers, and whole families. A free public event was part of the weekend program: a wonderful presentation of “Songs for Peace” by the World House Choir. Three of our local Swedenborgian Church members sang in the choir, including Alicia’s father, John.

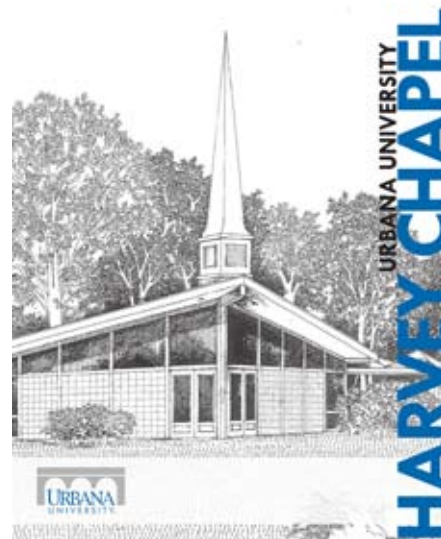
### Scholar-in-Residence Program

*The annual Swedenborg Scholar-in-Residence Program, supported with a grant from the Swedenborgian Church, features a scholar who has some expertise related to Swedenborg or Swedenborgian topics, who is resident on campus, attends classes, and gives talks. Past scholars have included Rev. Dr. David Fekete, Rev. Susannah Currie, Rev. Ken Turley and Dr. Devin Zuber, of the SHS faculty.)*

This year’s scholar is Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies. His visit was planned to coincide with a traveling national exhibit on campus, “Lincoln, The Constitution, and the Civil War.” Along with two public presentations, “Lincoln and Swedenborg” and “Apocalypse Above,” he spoke to several classes about aspects of Swedenborg’s life, both scientific and theological ([article, page 48](#)).

### Interfaith Chaplaincy Program

*The Urbana University Interfaith*



*Chaplaincy Program team is comprised of the Urbana University chaplain, Rev. Betsy Coffman, and volunteer clergy from the area who meet monthly.)*

As the university chaplain, I continue to be excited about present and future programs and events that encourage the spiritual life of all members of the Urbana University community in an atmosphere of openness and understanding. The chaplaincy offers regular support hours and responds to emergency situations, provides support and oversight to student faith organizations, and works closely with faculty and staff who request support for events they sponsor. These have included the annual Suicide Prevention Program, Domestic Violence Awareness Program, the Muslim Journeys exhibit, and involvement in a new Diversity and Social Justice student group. In addition, the chaplaincy has sponsored several film and discussion series for students, faculty, and staff, including “Faith & Justice,” “Visit to the Holy Land,” “Embracing Interfaith Understanding” and “Making Sense of the Cross.” There is much more that we can do, and we are looking forward to finding ways to expand our presence on campus. In supporting our endeavors, the Board of Trustees has committed

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## West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat

“Sharing Your Gifts; Building Heavenly Community” is the theme of this year’s West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat, to be held over the Memorial Day weekend at the beautiful St. Dorothy’s Rest Retreat Center, nestled in the redwood hills of Sonoma County, California. All are welcome to join us in a weekend of fun, relaxation, and Swedenborgian explorations.

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

In addition to providing plenty of time to relax, read, walk the forest paths, shop at the quaint boutiques in near-by Occidental, or have fun on the Russian River or at the Pacific Ocean, there will be a series of exciting workshops, including

- “Swedenborg and Celestial Sound,” with Dr. Devin Zuber, assistant professor of American Studies, Litera-

ture and Swedenborgian Studies at the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS), Pacific School of Religion (PSR), in Berkeley, California

- “Eternity and States,” with Rev. David Brown, lead chapel minister at Wayfarers Chapel in Rancho Palos Verde, California



- “Saying YES to Spirit,” with Joy Barnitz, a lifelong Swedenborgian and M.Div. student at SHS
- “Introduction to Meditation,” with Rev. Junchol Lee, senior pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church and student of Eastern philosophies

- “Sharing Your Artistic Side,” with Carey Smith, former art teacher at the Bryn Athyn New Church schools.

Other activities include

- Child care and programs for children
- Matins and vespers services created and led by retreat participants
  - Campfire with sing-along and s’mores.

The retreat starts with a light dinner on Friday, May 23, and ends after lunch on Monday, May 26.

For more information and to register, see <http://swedenborgretreat.wordpress.com>. Be sure to click the “follow” button to obtain updates about this, and future, retreats.

There are a limited number of travel grants for participants living outside the San Francisco Bay Area. To apply, contact Rev. David Brown at [davidb@wayfarerschapel.org](mailto:davidb@wayfarerschapel.org) or 310.377.1650 Ext. 223.

Hope to see you there! ☪

## Urbana Transformation

*Continued from page 55*

ted to providing a permanent space for the chaplaincy in the Harvey Chapel, dedicated to the memory of the late Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey, who was a long-time and beloved faculty member at UU. At present, there is a group working on creating a plan to make this possible.

### The Challenge

As in most areas of life, it is only by our own commitment, dedication, and investment that we keep vital and alive the things for which we care deeply—relationships with our loved ones, our

church, causes that inspire us. For those who feel inspired to be more involved in the promotion of Urbana University, there are many ways in which you can provide support.

First and foremost, we hope you will consider giving a gift or pledge to our Campaign to Transform Urbana University.

Urbana University and the Campaign to Transform Urbana University directly correlate to the philosophy and principles of the Swedenborgian Church. The challenge is to raise five million dollars by December 31, 2014, to alleviate the university’s debts. We, as Swedenborgians, have been challenged to support this effort with an

immediate goal of \$25,000 by April 30, 2014, which cannot be achieved without your involvement. Please prayerfully consider making your gift commitment by visiting [www.urbana.edu/give](http://www.urbana.edu/give). And remember to note “Swedenborg” in the *special instructions* box so that your gift can count toward our goal. If you have any questions or would like to make a pledge toward the campaign, contact Jan Hillman, UU vice president of university advancement, at [jhillman@urbana.edu](mailto:jhillman@urbana.edu) or 937.484.1297. Thank you for your continued support of Urbana University and its mission. Stay tuned for updates on the Campaign to Transform Urbana University! ☪

# 190th Session of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, July 2 - July 6, 2014

Council of Ministers: June 29 - July 1

## 2014 Registration Form

Convention 2014 will be held in St. Louis, MO on the campus of Webster University. To learn more about WU, visit [www.webster.edu](http://www.webster.edu). To learn more about the 2014 Convention and view a list of Frequently Asked Questions, please visit [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org), email [manager@swedenborg.org](mailto:manager@swedenborg.org) or call the Central Office at (617) 969-4240.

**Lodging:** See next page for more details. Rooms will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, and may fill up before the end of the registration period. **All rooms are doubles.** Rooms include one standard linen and towel pack. If you find that you often need extra towels or blankets, you are advised to bring some with you.

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

**Childcare:** The childcare program will run July 2 through July 6, during meetings, for children ages 3-12. **If you will be bringing children, please contact the Central Office to obtain the necessary forms.**

**Teen Program:** The teen program runs from Wednesday, July 2 through Sunday, July 6, and is supervised by Kurt Fekete. If you want your teen (age 13-17) to attend without a parent, please contact the Central Office.

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

**Parking:** Free. Please check the box below so we know how many cars

will be parking on campus.

**Room & Board Reservations and Payment Deadline:** No new room or meal plan reservations will be available after Friday, June 13 at 5PM EST. Any room and board reservations not fully paid by this date will be subject to a \$50 late fee. Event registrations will be accepted for as long as space permits.

**Cancellations:** Fully refundable prior to Friday, June 13 at 5PM EST. Cancellations must be done by calling the Central Office between 9AM-5PM EST, M-F.

**Arrivals and Departures:** Check-in on arrival day is between 2-5PM at your assigned dorm. Check-out on July 6 is between 9AM-11AM. **Any arrivals or departures outside of this time must be coordinated with the Central Office in advance.**

**Mobility:** We cannot guarantee the availability of mobility aids such as wheelchairs. Please contact the Central Office for more information and help with local arrangements.

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

**Ground Transportation:** From Lambert St. Louis International Airport: <http://tinyurl.com/2014Transport>. Go Best Express Airport Shuttle will service the campus for \$24 one-way, \$44 round-trip. You must book online at <http://tinyurl.com/2014Shuttle> to receive discounted rate. Please see the FAQ or contact the Central Office for more details.

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

### Travel Information

<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do a pickup at the airport on your arrival day
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do a dropoff at the airport on Sunday
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will be flying into Lambert International and would like to be added to an email list for you to coordinate sharing a ride on your arrival or departure day.

### Roommate Matching

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

Please indicate your gender:  Male  Female

I am (check all that apply):

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

Anything else we should know when matching you?

Next page for fees

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

1. **Package A (June 29 - July 6, seven nights):**  
(choose this for Council of Ministers members)  
\$283 per person  
Includes 7 nights of lodging, 7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 7 breakfasts.
2. **Package B (June 29 - July 2, three nights):**  
(available **only** to Council of Ministers members working outside of the denomination who are only able to attend COM meetings)  
\$139 per person  
Includes 3 nights of lodging, 3 dinners, 2 lunches, and 3 breakfasts.
3. **Package C (July 1 - July 6, five nights):**  
(choose this for General Council members or pre-Convention arrival)  
\$231 per person  
Includes 5 nights of lodging, 5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts.
4. **Package D (July 2 - July 6, four nights):**  
\$185 per person  
Includes 4 nights of lodging, 4 dinners, 3 lunches, and 4 breakfasts.

**Meal Only Packages:** For those staying off-campus who want to buy meals. If you are staying off-campus and do not select a pre-paid meal plan, you will not be able to eat most meals in the dining hall. Only weekday lunch may be paid for at the door.

5. **Package X (June 29 - July 6, meals only):**  
\$172 per person  
7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 7 breakfasts
6. **Package Y (July 1 - July 6, meals only):**  
\$120.50 per person  
5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts
7. **Package Z (July 2- July 6, meals only):**  
\$94.75 per person  
4 dinners, 3 lunches, and 4 breakfasts

Registration	Cost	# People	Total
Adult	\$110		
Teen (13-17)	\$100		
Child (3-12)	\$50		
Under 3 years old	Free		
*Family maximum	\$330		
One Day Registration	\$40		
Local Volunteer	\$50		
Women's Alliance Luncheon	\$11.75 for those paying for a Room and Board or Meal Only Package; \$20 for everyone else		

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

Room & Board	Package	#People	Total
Room & Board or Meal Only Package (see package descriptions for rates)			
<b>\$50 Late Fee (assessed on R&amp;B packages paid for after 5PM EST June 13, 2014)</b>			

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

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

All prices are in US currency. **If you pay with a Canadian check, please add US\$5 for handling. Please be advised that all prices are listed in US funds and must be converted for payment in other currencies. All room and board reservations not paid in full by 5PM EST on June 13 will be subject to a \$50 late fee.** See "Cancellations" section for refund policy.

**Payment Method**

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

Visa                       MasterCard                       Amex                       Discover

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cardholder's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CCV/Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Billing Zip Code (if different from mailing address): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

4. **Check: Send checks payable to The Swedenborgian Church to: 50 Quincy St., Cambridge, MA 02138**

## Passages

### Confirmations

On, February 23, 2014, **Terri Halliwell** was confirmed by Rev. Betsy Coffman and joyfully welcomed into the life of the Urbana (Ohio) Swedenborgian Church.

### Deaths

**Iva Hatch**, a member of the Fryeburg New Church for more than fifty years, passed into the spiritual world on March 14, 2014, at the age of 94.



Her greatest joys were her children, fifteen grandchildren, twenty-one great-

grandchildren, and two great-great-grandchildren. Iva was well known for riding her bike around town, delivering her “famous” homemade apple jelly to friends and neighbors. Iva belonged to the Women’s Alliance and made countless pies for the church booth at the Fryeburg Fair. She was always giving to someone in need and lending a helping hand. She is greatly missed by family and friends. A service to celebrate Iva’s life was held on March 22, 2014, officiated by Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen.

On March 26, 2014, our member and friend **John Dunne-Brady** passed from this life to the next. He was an extraordinary painter, writer, botanist and loving husband. He was an extraordinary mathematician and mandala designer as well as a loving friend. John was someone who loved each of

the members and served The New Church of the Southwest Desert in grace and love. We remain grateful for his time with us in community and send him peace. ☩

## Swedenborg Studies Series Now E-books

The Swedenborg Foundation has announced that its popular Swedenborg Studies Series is now available in e-book format as well as the original print editions. For the first time, all twenty-one volumes are available for the Kindle, iPad, Nook, and other devices. Prices for e-books in the series range from \$2.99 to \$4.99.

The Swedenborg Studies series presents outstanding scholarly analysis of Emanuel Swedenborg, his works, and his influence on Western culture. The series spans eras of scholarship from classic works like Ernst Benz’s acclaimed biography, *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Visionary Savant in the Age of Reason* to contemporary research such as John S. Haller’s *The History of New Thought*.

The Swedenborg Foundation is constantly expanding its selection of e-books. To see their current offerings, visit their online bookstore at [www.swedenborg.com](http://www.swedenborg.com). ☩

## Letter from the President

*Continued from page 47*

but I ain’t dead yet! And neither is this church. I for one would like to see this organization regenerate! I would like to see it successfully transition from the ways and means of my generation, considered by the young to be bound by tradition and stuck in our ways, to the ways and means of those who most of us my age consider to be too young and inexperienced.

Well, both sides are right! And it is going to take the cooperation and collaboration of both sides working together to make the successful transition. It is going to take being willing to share perspectives, and the willingness to listen to what we don’t want to hear. It is going to take waiting for what we want now and letting go of what we think we can’t do without. It is going to take, not just compromise, but giving over and letting go of how we think it should go, and discovering togeth-

er how and where Divine Providence will take us. The process of regeneration is cycles of death and rebirth. And we are in the midst of some intense labor pains right now. As we gather for the upcoming annual convention, let’s take hands, look in each other’s eyes, and breathe! Let’s see if we can not only survive the pain and challenge of loss and transformation but emerge reborn, renewed, and re-enlivened in form and in spirit. This will take courage and trust in God and in one another. It will mean letting go and losing some things that have been dear to us. And it will mean taking hold of and learning to embrace some things that are new and unfamiliar. But, my friends and companions, this is life as we have always known it! God did not ask Noah’s permission. And I don’t hear anyone asking our permission. But in both cases we are faced with a transformation of the world as we know it. And in both cases we are given the means to ride out the storm and emerge with new life

before us. And in both cases it did and will depend on whether we are willing to say “Yes!” and do the work, or not. Noah had never built an ark, probably didn’t know what an ark was. I’m still asking, “What the heck is Twitter?” But I am willing to learn. And I am willing to do the work. I am willing to leave familiar ground behind in the full expectation of discovering new horizons. How about you? Are you willing to get on board?

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

### About the Swedenborgian Church

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

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

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

## SPLATz (Super Powered Lovable Almost Teens) Spring Retreat Finding Your Way!

Friday, 7 PM, May 2–Sunday, 10 AM, May 4

Almont New Church Retreat Center, Allenton, Michigan

For everyone from the age of 10 to 13

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

We all get lost sometimes. We don't know where to turn. We cannot find our way. This can happen traveling to a destination, and it can also happen to us spiritually, morally, and emotionally. We can feel confused, turned around, or lost in our own minds. We can lose our direction and not know where to go. At this retreat we will discuss what to do when we are lost and where we might look to find direction.

Swedenborgian Church youth director Kurt Fekete, Rev. Jenn Tafel, Lori Gayheart, and Rachael Sbrocco will lead this retreat with other talented and supportive youth group leaders.

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

To confirm attendance, for more information, or if you have questions, contact Kurt Fekete at 802.345.0169 or [kfekete@hotmail.com](mailto:kfekete@hotmail.com).

A word to parents about safety: we want to assure you of our complete commitment to your child's safety at this event. We will maintain a ratio of one staff person to every seven children. We follow the safe practice of securing a minimum of two adults in the immediate area during all youth activities and interactions. This retreat is staffed with responsible adults at least eighteen years old, working together to affirm our church's values and ensure an environment of physical and emotional safety and respect for your child.

