

Homes for Herons

Sarah Orne Jewett, George Inness, and Swedenborgian Ecology

BY DEVIN ZUBER

As some readers of *the Messenger* might already know, I am completing a book that explores the impact of Emanuel Swedenborg's ideas on American environmental imaginaries—the collective ways that a diverse group of nineteenth century authors, painters, and poets imagined and depicted nature as a location for spiritual experience. This reading of the spiritual within the natural—facilitated by adaptations and creative responses to Swedenborg's well-known doctrine of correspondences—patterned a substantial body of literature and painting that carried, and continues to carry, particular environmental import. The last time that I wrote for *the Messenger*, I shared my research-in-progress in the John Muir Archives at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, where I was tracing how Muir—that quintessential icon of wilderness conservation—responded to Swedenborgian thought. My study of Muir's notations and marginalia in various Swedenborgian texts included the discov-



borders of the pages where Swedenborgian theories of “the language of nature” were being propounded: a fit-

[A]t the heart of both Jewett's short story and modeled in Inness's canvasses is a personalized spiritualization of nature imbued with Swedenborgian overtones . . .

ting example, I believe, that illustrated how Swedenborgian theology came to braid emergent American ecological thought and environmental conservation.



George Inness, “The Home of the Heron” (1893), Art Institute of Chicago

ery of several unknown sketches that Muir had done outdoors, in-situ, of Sierra Nevada mountain peaks and alpine lakes, delicately positioned in the

My book proceeds more or less chronologically, and the chapter after Muir turns towards a group of paintings and short fiction created in the decade that followed Muir's illustrative annotations of Swedenborgian literature. This current chapter in-progress examines a famous story written by the regionalist author Sarah Orne Jewett entitled “A White Heron” (published in 1886), and a group of paintings of the same birds created by the Swedenborgian land-

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The Editor's Desk



In this month of the holiday honoring Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he will speak to us about the meaning of love in a way that echoes what Emanuel Swedenborg says about love.

Rev. Dr. King believed it was not enough to be non-violent. He preached that you must love your enemy as well as your neighbor. In 1961, he spoke to the Fellowship of the Concerned.

"Those who adhere to or follow this philosophy [of non-violence] must follow a consistent principle of noninjury. They must consistently refuse to inflict injury upon another. Sometimes you will read the literature of the student movement and see that, as they are getting ready for the sit-in or stand-in, they will read something like this, 'If you are hit do not hit back, if you are cursed do not curse back.' This is the whole idea, that the individual who is engaged in a nonviolent struggle must never inflict injury upon another.

"Now this has an external aspect and

it has an internal one. From the external point of view it means that the individuals involved must avoid external physical violence. So they don't have guns, they don't retaliate with physical violence. If they are hit in the process, they avoid external physical violence at every point. But it also means that they avoid internal violence of spirit. This is why the love ethic stands so high in the student movement. We have a great deal of talk about love and nonviolence in this whole thrust.

"Now when the students talk about love, certainly they are not talking about emotional bosh, they are not talking about merely a sentimental outpouring; they're talking something much deeper, and I always have to stop and try to define the meaning of love in this context. The Greek language comes to our aid in trying to deal with this. There are three words in the Greek language for love; one is the word *eros*. This is a beautiful type of love, it is an aesthetic love. Plato talks about it a great deal in his *Dialogue*, the yearning of the soul for the realm of the divine. It has come to us to be a sort of romantic love, and so in a sense we have read about it and experienced it. We've read about it in

all the beauties of literature. I guess in a sense Edgar Allan Poe was talking about eros when he talked about his beautiful Annabelle Lee, with the love surrounded by the halo of eternity. In a sense Shakespeare was talking about eros when he said,

Love is not love / Which alters when
it alteration finds, / Or bends with
the remover to remove / O no; It is
an ever-fixed mark, / That looks on
tempests, and is never shaken; / It
is the star to every wandering bark.

"(You know, I remember that because I used to quote it to this little lady when we were courting; that's eros.) The Greek language talks about

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Church Calendar

- April 18: General Council Spring Conference-Call Meeting
- April 24–25: SHS Spring Board Meeting, Berkeley CA
- June 4–7: Gathering Leaves—a Swedenborgian Women's Retreat, Cincinnati OH
- June 27–July 1: Annual Convention 2015, Bridgewater MA

the Messenger

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Letter from the President



2014–15
*The Year of Regeneration:
The Way of Change*

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to everyone! To begin the new year, a brief personal reflection and then a look back in order to look ahead.

Snowblowers are for wimps. After four hours of shoveling snow yesterday I'm feeling good and am not even sore. However, I say that with the full realization that it is only a matter of time before I resign myself to being a wimp!

Either that or I move to Alabama. Still, today I look out on the sun shining on the frozen lake, enjoying the wood stove's gentle warmth with the knowledge that things change. Things that were, fade; things that are not yet, await emergence.

I realize that my relationship with the natural world is in transition. I spend far less time in the woods and much more time exploring the undiscovered realms of musical composition. While the former is without question better for my body, it is not at all clear which is better for my spirit. Perhaps I need to cultivate a better balanced and gradual transition. . . .

With that thought in mind, I share a bit of writing I just discovered from my past, a kind of meditation on change. To provide the proper context, you must imagine yourself bundled up in the cold, sitting in the woods in the pitch dark of a 5 AM winter morning. It is anything but quiet.

"Good morning, God," I whisper in the dark to the wind. It sounds eerily similar to, and returns as much notice as, a subway train rushing by. Yet, as I think on it, while the train itself seems to give no

notice, there are usually eyes inside remarking on all that is being passed.

In this darkness, with the wind so loud, the clouds fleeing and the trees bowing to keep from having their heads taken off, I too bow. I offer my timid greeting, like a newly hired secretary might summon the courage to hesitantly venture a greeting to the top boss breezing by—filled with inner terror, not so much fear of being destroyed as simply being disregarded as insignificant. But as the wind passes by, seemingly oblivious, as does the boss, I'm filled with a strange joy at being so close to such power—to my mind, the wind possessing a power to which no boss can ever compare.

I simply sit huddled, small in my own quietness, while the darkness breathes all around me. I feel like a tiny seed wedged in the teeth of a runner whose breath is rushing by in gigantic rhythmic waves. I hold to the earth a little closer, fearing to be dislodged and swallowed at any moment. Time passes, the earth continues to draw in huge gulping breaths, pausing in silent suspension and then expelling great drafts that shake the trees. This breathing continues until, finally, the darkness begins to lift. My eyes probe ever deeper into the space between the trees. The landscape becoming a weird collage of blacks and whites and grays. I have the odd sensation of watching a bad Italian film from the 50s. The alders looking like marble pillars in moonlight amidst scattered puffs of snow that will soon become the light green of moss.

I so admire the slow, steady, inevitableness of the dawn. You cannot actually see it happen and yet, it does. No power on earth can stop it. Color creeps into the scene before me with infinite patience until, finally, with the memory of pitch black still fresh in the background, the subtle, soothing luminescence of the forest warms to life, fills my senses, touches my spirit, and leaves me on the verge of tears. It is so beautiful that it almost hurts: wonderfully shaped rocks, their sharp angles softened with moss; the deep blood-red brown of an ever so slowly decaying log; the paisley pattern of fallen, yet still dancing leaves, filling the spaces between the

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Toward a Newer Church, part 2

Briefly, . . .

BY GEORGE DOLE

Why didn't Swedenborg give us a brief, clear summary of the theology of the New Church? Wrong question. The right question is, "Why haven't we taken advantage of the brief, clear summaries of the theology of the New Church that we have?" Case in point:

There are three essentials of the church: the acknowledgment of the Divine [nature] of the Lord, the acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word, and the life which is called charity. (*Divine Providence* 259:3)

Want a less abstract version?

The whole Sacred Scripture is nothing else than the doctrine of love and of charity, as the Lord also teaches, saying,

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God from all thy heart and in all thy soul and in all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment: the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; on these two commandments hang the law and the prophets (Matthew 22:37–40)." "The law and the prophets" are the whole Word in all and each of its parts (*Arcana Coelestia*¹ 6632.)

Notice how nicely the three essentials match the Two Great Commandments. The acknowledgment of the divine nature of the Lord equals the love of the Lord, the life which is called charity equals the love of the neighbor, and the acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word equals the reference to the Law the Prophets. What could be simpler?

Then we have three much more extensive overviews. That quotation from

Arcana Coelestia (AC) 6632 comes from the introduction to a presentation of a "theology of charity" first laid out in separate sections between the chapters of the exegesis of Exodus, later fairly lightly edited and published as *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* (1758). This consists of a preface, an introduction, and twenty-three very brief chapters, mostly between three and six (Standard Edition) pages long, each followed by a more detailed exposition in the form of brief excerpts from the *Arcana Coelestia*. In a way, we have in one volume a booklet overview and a significantly longer version of the same. I'll be looking at that next month. It takes a very unorthodox approach to "theology" itself.

The second overview we are offered is the little series known as *The Four Doctrines* (1763), which have to do with the Lord, Sacred Scripture, life, and faith. This seems to take us a step

The acknowledgment of the divine nature of the Lord equals the love of the Lord, the life which is called charity equals the love of the neighbor, and the acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word equals the reference to the Law the Prophets.

beyond the three essentials, but eventually, Swedenborg makes it very clear that it does not. He does this in *Apocalypse Revealed* 668:

That the Word is now opened, and that it testifies that the Lord alone is the God of heaven and earth, and that one ought to live according to His commandments, and that the faith of the present day should be removed, may appear from the Four Doctrines just pub-

Leading up to our 2015 Annual Convention, readers of the Messenger are invited to participate in the conversation about a Newer Church through this second of six columns by the Rev. Dr. George Dole. In this installment, he brings our attention to summaries of our theology, noting that there are those who lament that there is not a simple way to talk about our teachings. George points to a very basic summary and encourages us to ask ourselves: "Why haven't we taken advantage of the brief, clear summaries of the theology of the New Church that we have?" Please join the conversation!

—Gard Perry, chair, 2015
Convention Planning Committee

lished . . .

"That the faith of the present day should be removed" hardly qualifies as a "doctrine," so we wind up with the essential three.

Of particular interest (at least to me) is the order of presentation. "That the Word is now opened" is a reference to the second of the four works, *The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*. A major assertion of this work is that doctrine is to be drawn from and confirmed by the sense of the letter of the Word (§§50–61), and that is precisely what Swedenborg does in the presenting the doctrines of the Lord and of life. Section 4 of the former cites no fewer than 101 Scripture passages mentioning the day of the Lord and twenty-one on the coming of the Lord, while §2 of the latter cites forty-one texts enjoining obedience to divine commandments and identifies six parables on the same theme. None of these is given a "spiritual meaning" or inner sense.

That is, Swedenborg does not rely on individual "proof texts," but looks instead for evidence of pervasive prin-

Continues next page

¹ *Heavenly Secrets* is the title in the New Century Edition translation (Swedenborg Foundation Press).

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ciples; so *The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture* explains what he has just done concerning the Lord and what he is about to do concerning life. By the time he has begun to talk about life, then, the stage is set for that first assertion, that everyone who has any religion knows that people who live aright think aright not only about God but also about the neighbor (there are those two great commandments again), but that this is not the case with anyone whose life is evil. The little work on faith comes as a kind of appendix whose affirmative message is that a true doctrine of faith is implicit in a true doctrine of charity—that is, of life.

In discussing “appearances of truth” as signified by the veil with which Rebekah covered herself (Genesis 24:65), Swedenborg offers some examples. All are saying much the same thing: the first two will serve our present purposes.

1. Man believes that he is reformed and regenerated through the truth of faith; but this is an appearance; he is reformed and regenerated through the good of faith, that is, through charity toward the neighbor and love to the Lord. 2. Man believes that truth enables us to perceive what good is, because it teaches; but this is an appearance; it is good that enables truth to perceive for good is the soul or life of truth (AC 3207:5).

We could memorize the entire theological corpus: if we were not trying to live by its principles, we would have no idea what it was talking about.

The third and last major overview is of course the one we have known as *The True Christian Religion* (1771), which will be the focus of my attention week after next. For now, all I want to do is to explain and appreciate Jonathan Rose’s translation of the title as *True Christianity*. By way of explanation, Latin has no definite article.

Martin Luther King

Continued from page 2

philia which was another level of love. It is an intimate affection between personal friends, it is a reciprocal love. On this level you love because you are loved. It is friendship.

“Then the Greek language comes out with another word which is called the *agape*. Agape is more than romantic love, agape is more than friendship. Agape is understanding, creative, redemptive, good will to all men. It is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. Theologians would say that it is the love of God operating in the human heart. So that when one rises to love on this level, he loves men not because he likes them, not because their ways appeal to him, but he loves every man because God loves him. And he

rises to the point of loving the person who does an evil deed while hating the deed that the person does. I think this is what Jesus meant when he said, ‘love your enemies.’

“I’m very happy that he didn’t say like your enemies, because it is pretty difficult to like some people. Like is sentimental, and it is pretty difficult to like someone bombing your home; it is pretty difficult to like somebody threatening your children; it is difficult to like congressmen who spend all of their time trying to defeat civil rights. But Jesus says love them, and love is greater than like. Love is understanding, redemptive, creative, good will for all men. And it is this idea, it is this whole ethic of love which is the idea standing at the basis of the student movement.”

—Herb Ziegler

Excerpted from *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Whether or not to use “the” is up to the translator, and in this case, to refer to the work as the true religion smacks of dogmatism. By way of appreciation, the work was written when the theology was being attacked as heretical, and I would insist that its main purpose is to argue that it is truly Christian.

It strikes me that if we set the three overviews side by side, *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* is the most pastoral, *Four Doctrines* the most biblical, and *True Christianity* the most academic. There is surely merit in all three approaches; but we would do well to use each for the task for which it is designed. ☩

The Rev. Dr. George Dole is a Swedenborgian minister who teaches part time at the Swedenborgian House of Studies at the Pacific School of Religion.

He is a past pastor of churches in Maine and Massachusetts and taught at the Swedenborg School of Religion. He lives in Bath, Maine, with his wife, Lois.



Will They Recognize Me?

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writings. These ideas flooded my brain, and at once I felt compelled to dissipate Elizabeth’s fears. Yes Elizabeth, your parents love you very much. They will be happy to reunite with you and to be together with you forever; you will never be an intruder. She smiles with the bright grin of a happy child.

We got back into the car and drove home. Every minute of that trip brought memories and elicited stories of happiness and love. This was our last visit to the cemetery.

Before we departed, looking at the headstone, Elizabeth said, “My middle name [Anne] is spelled without an ‘e’; it needs to be changed when my days are over.” She stood quietly for a few minutes before we turned away. ☩

Ilia Gonzalez is a former member and friend of Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge.

SCYL Teen Winter Retreat at Almont

The Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) gathered for their winter retreat at Almont Retreat Center in Michigan, under the guidance of youth director Kurt Fekete. Two teens share their thoughts on the event.

The retreat was really fun, and the people were great. The sessions were very interesting. I will most definitely try to go as long as I can.

—Freya Montesanto



Birthday girls, Rev. Renée and Scout

I have been to only two winter retreats. I am, in a sense, a newbie. However, I am not a newbie to the sense of family that is exposed in retreats and the togetherness that is found.

This winter retreat's theme was "Regeneration," and a thought-provoking



Teens and adults at the SCYL Winter Retreat

discussion was started during this retreat. Are we regenerating, repenting, reforming? Are we a combination of two of them, three of them? Are we not even on this stage, but rather in a "blissful ignorance?"

And I am left wondering where I am on this scale of the three R's. Thinking about this has led me to realize that I am nowhere near regenerating. I doubt I will regenerate in this time that I am alive, simply because I am only just beginning to repent. I am only now beginning to repent, realize my mistakes and my errors, and make the necessary preparations to change these things.

But I have learned something much more profound at winter retreat, and it is shown in this one as well as all previous ones in existence. I am not alone in this repenting, reforming, and regener-

ation. I have many friends—practically family—to help me through learning my errors, and they can teach me



The writers' table

more than any book can about how I am to better myself. I have felt alone in crowds of friends at school but never once have I felt alone at SCYL retreats. And I believe that is the most important lesson learned at retreats: you are never alone.

—Riley Tishma



The artists' table



Break time with the Frisbee

2015 SCYL Officers Elected

The 2015 Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) elections of officers and chaplain took place at the Almont Winter Retreat this past December. The results are

- President: Rebekka Lange
- East Coast and Service Officer: Freya Montesanto
- Midwest and Fundraising & Finance Officer: Tony Kalinowski
- Canada and Public Relations Officer: Xavier Mercier
- West Coast and Activities Officer: Skylor Daisy
- Editor, *Clear Blue Sky* (CBS) and Communication Officers: Savannah Ellsworth and Riley Tishma
- League Chaplain: Rev. Renée Machiniak

Because a younger slate of SCYL officers was elected in 2014, our newly elected 2015 team of officers remains nearly the same. Six of the seven officers, Bekka Lange, Skylor Daisy, Xavier Mercier, Riley Tishma, Tony Kalinowski, and Savannah Ellsworth return for another year of service. We say goodbye to one of



(l to r) Tony (Midwest Officer), Bekka (President), Skylor (West Officer), Bailey, and Liv; Xavier (Canadian Officer) in front and Bryce and Will photo bombing in the back

our CBS editors, Natalia Castillo, and thank her for her service in helping to set up our new *Clear Blue Sky* page on Facebook.

A few of our returning officers move to new positions: Bekka continues in her second year as the very capable and organized league president; Tony remains as Midwest and finance officer; Skylor slides over to West Coast representa-

tive and continues as our activities coordinator; Xavier is now our public relations officer along with representing all the provinces of Canada; Savannah remains a *Clear Blue Sky* co-editor; and Riley moves out of the West Coast representative slot to join Savannah as a *Clear Blue Sky* co-editor. Riley is an amazingly gifted writer and, like most teens, knows how to navigate the social

media scene. I know Savannah and Riley will do a great job presenting the SCYL to the world.

We welcome Freya Montesanto as our new East Coast and service officer. Freya, elected at her first Almont Winter retreat, is no stranger to Almont as she has been going to Almont Summer Camp for quite a few years. The teens all know her and love her. We welcome her intelligence and quiet confidence to our leadership team.

We welcome back Rev. Renée Machiniak for her third year as league chaplain.

Renée joined us for the beginning of the SCYL Winter Retreat and led the opening session with the teens. Unfortunately, her schedule did not allow her to be with us for the entire retreat. Renée is a caring and insightful chaplain and has talked and listened to many of the teens at Almont Summer Camp, SCYL Winter Retreats, and Swedenborgian Church Annual Conventions. We are so thankful to have Renée as our teens' loving spiritual leader.

Please join me in congratulating all of our 2015 SCYL officers and our league chaplain. We have a young, energized, and now seasoned team of teen leaders this year. Their care for our church and for each other will help make the SCYL brighter and better. I am blessed to be working with this group and I hope that you get a chance to get to know them all.

—Kurt Fekete, youth director



Will with East Coast Officer, Freya



Clear Blue Sky co-editor Riley

Pretty Prairie Church Is Online

You can enjoy worship services with the Pretty Prairie (Kansas) Church. If you need a positive message, pick-me-up, scriptural food for thought, or just can't get enough Swedenborgian insight, go to YouTube and search for "New Jerusalem Pretty Prairie," or go to <http://tinyurl.com/pmb5ukl>, where the videos are posted on Facebook.

Start your Amazon shopping at <http://tinyurl.com/n9e3eto>, and Amazon will give a percentage of your purchase directly to the Swedenborgian Church.

COMSU Says Hello

BY KATIE RIENSTRA PRUIETT
ON BEHALF OF COMSU

Hello everyone! The Communication Support Unit (COMSU) has been given an assignment by General Council “to oversee the regular, at least quarterly, communication of useful material between support units and local ministries.” We have sent out invitations to all support units to submit either “what they are up to” or some useful information. How many of us really know what the support units do? I didn’t. I’ll admit I had absolutely *no idea*—even when I accepted the nomination to serve on COMSU—I only knew it had something to do with . . . *communications*! Since my career background was in communications, I figured I’d be okay.



This is what I found out about COMSU from the Bylaws of the Swedenborgian Church:

Article X, Section 3

There shall be a Support Unit for Communication consisting of three members, whose central focus shall be on coordinating, initiating and promoting communication both within and across the boundaries of the denomination in all variety of media. It will seek to foster coordination among the Swedenborgian Church’s publishing activities. This Unit will be alert to the climate of opinion both within and beyond the boundaries of the Swedenborgian Church, and will also be alert to developments in communication technology. The official organ of the denomination, *the Messenger*, shall be under the supervision of this Support Unit.

For many years, COMSU produced a series of pamphlets and other forms

of written communication and oversaw the production of *the Messenger*. *The Messenger* continues under COMSU’s supervision, but the world has changed drastically in the past twenty years, and something interesting has happened. I have discovered a breakdown of communication within General Convention and even within our support units. Why is it so hard to stay connected? We live in the age of computers and instant communication. Is it that we feel that those instant communications via Facebook or Twitter are silly? They aren’t, and I have proof.

I recently responded to a Facebook thread in regards to a recent event. My response was a quotation from Swedenborg, one of my favorites: “Every moment in time has a series of consequences that extend to eternity.” This quotation struck a chord with a friend of a friend, who wanted to know more about this man I had quoted. My initial reaction was to panic: I couldn’t direct this person to our denomination’s website; I was afraid he would “get lost,” as that was what happened to me. Instead I provided the address of the Swedenborg Foundation’s YouTube channel “Off The Left Eye” (<http://tinyurl.com/ncgabq4>) and their website, www.swedenborg.com.

This, however, brings to light one of COMSU’s main projects, a newcomer’s packet that can be distributed electronically in printed form. COMSU has sent an appeal to all churches as to what they provide to newcomers. Wouldn’t it be great to have a newcomer’s packet that you could provide—electronically or printed—to any inquirer? We are in the process of compiling one. Do you have information that you feel would be useful? Please let us know.

Our second major project is a new website—a website that is up-to-date

and easy to navigate, a website that is relevant and easy to find. I have had to learn (sometimes the hard way) to stay connected to people and things I care about—I need to be current with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, LinkedIn, etc.—otherwise I will be missing out. As a church, we also need to stay current and relevant. COMSU’s job is to facilitate that effort—that is what we are beginning to do. We welcome any and all ideas. Please feel free to contact us at erikatenkids2@sbcglobal.net. ☎

COMSU members are Kristina Madjerac, chair, Kathryn Pruiett, Sue Ditmire, and denomination president, Ken Turley (ex officio).

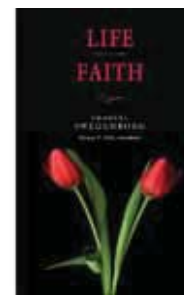
Foundation Releases Swedenborg’s *Life / Faith*

Emanuel Swedenborg published the short works *Life* and *Faith* separately, but he makes it clear that the two topics are intertwined.

Life refers not to the life force that sustains us but to the way we live our lives. This short piece focuses on the concept of regeneration, or spiritual rebirth, as a process of consciously rejecting our own destructive impulses and internalizing love and goodness.

It argues that the choices we make and the reasons we make them have everything to do with our salvation. Swedenborg includes a brief overview of the inner sense of the Ten Commandments as a way to understand the nature of the choice between good and evil.

In *Faith*, Swedenborg rejects the notion that faith can be a choice to believe things that make no rational



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Diverse Faiths Coming Together in Edmonton

BY DAVID FEKETE

In June of 2014, I was elected president of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action. It is a delight and a privilege to lead this organization with such a meaningful mandate in this world. The Interfaith Centre comprises fifteen faiths. Muslims, Jews, and Christians all meet at the same table at our board meetings to plan events and transact business. There are Zoroastrians, Eckankars, Hindus, Buddhists, Catholics, United Church, Unitarians, Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews, Muslims, and a Swedenborgian. In our world, in which the name of religion is misused for acts of violence, the Edmonton Interfaith Centre is a powerful testimony to peace and harmony among differing religions. In fact, the Interfaith Centre has published a statement, signed by representatives of our diverse religions, decrying violence in the name of religion. Our fellowship shows that people matter first, and that different religions can coexist in harmony.

Our past president, Rabbi David Kunin, spoke eloquently about his vision of interfaith relations. He spoke against attempts to find a harmony that may not exist among different religions. In fact, forcing harmony where it doesn't exist does violence to the integrity of religions. Rather, he urged us to respect and honor different faiths and to embrace differing beliefs. In the post-modern world, there may not be one single truth. And it is unlikely that any one religion will have the complete truth, even if there is one. At the Interfaith Centre, we are united by good will and we listen to each other's faiths without imposing our own constructs on each other. And it works.

As president, I have the delight and honor of bringing greetings from the

Interfaith Centre at the "launches" of different religions in City Hall, an event called Celebrating our Faiths. Once a month, a different religious tradition puts up a display in City Hall that remains standing for the entire month. Usually, this religion is celebrated in a ceremony featuring speeches and informative talks about the featured faith. What is striking to me is



(l to r) Rev. David Fekete, Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson, and past Interfaith President Nasim Kherani

that these launches take place in the public room inside City Hall. So City Hall—a secular institution—is showing support of the diverse religious complexion of Edmonton.

In a related event, as president of the Interfaith Centre, I was invited to give a prayer for the opening of a session of City Hall. I was introduced as the minister of the Church of the Holy City, and several members of the cabinet made the inevitable comment, "I've never heard of the Swedenborgian Church." This gave me the opportunity to give my three minute introduction to Swedenborgianism. In the council chambers, I prayed for the council to show wisdom in transacting business, and love for the city of Edmonton and for harmony among councillors despite potential differences in political stanc-

es. In response to my prayer, His Worship, Mayor Iveson replied, "What he said!"

One of the regular events that I particularly enjoy is what we call, "Faith Explorations." We visit the worship space of one of the religions in the Interfaith Centre bimonthly. The religious leader of the church, synagogue, mosque, or temple gives a short talk about their faith and shows us around the facility. Often, the institution prepares food for us, which can have an ethnic taste. When we visited an Egyptian Orthodox church, we were served a vegan eggplant dish that would make me a vegan could I eat like that regularly. We were served that dish because we were in Lent, and for the Orthodox it was a time of fasting. Other memorable experiences were an Orthodox Jewish synagogue, a Sri Baba temple, a Buddhist temple, a United Church of Christ church, a Baha'i temple, and the Swedenborgian Church, in which I gave a talk on the seven stages of regeneration.

As a member of the Interfaith Centre, I also had the delight of being invited to a Muslim wedding. We removed our shoes and sat on the carpet in the mosque. Since this was a family from India, many of the women wore brightly colored saris. The actual service was in the form of a business contract, as marriage is not a sacrament in the Muslim religion. The ceremony included cultural customs from India. For instance, the bride was given as much jewelry as she could hold on her person. And at the conclusion of the service, the bride and groom each stomped on a plate given to them. Whoever broke their plate first would be master of the family. (The bride was unable to break her plate.)

We have an annual interfaith con-

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Homes for Herons

Continued from page 1

scape painter George Inness, including his “Home of the Heron” (1893), which is widely regarded as one of Inness’s greatest Tonalist masterpieces.

My chapter argues that with both Jewett’s short story and Inness’s paintings, neither production is extricable from the background context of a looming environmental crisis that coalesced at the end of the nineteenth century: the prospect of wholesale destruction of entire species of birds. In particular, plumed, long-feathered waterfowl like herons and egrets were being decimated by the women’s fashion industry, literally pushed to the brink of extinction by millinery tastes. In other words, the birds at the center of Jewett’s story and Inness’s paintings were not just any fine feathered friends but species whose fate was being much contested and debated in newspapers and periodicals around the country. By the time Inness painted his first heron painting in 1891, the first Audubon Societies for the protection of birds had already come into existence—the very first, in fact, appeared in 1886, the same year that Jewett published her “White Heron” story—and such societies were actively and noisily agitating for the preservation of birds.

If we acknowledge how the American public sphere became charged with this new concern for ornithological conservation, what does that mean for how we read Jewett’s story or look at Inness’s paintings? The questions are not so easily answered. Neither her fiction nor the paintings by Inness function as didactic agit-prop—they do not thunder at us to sign a petition or send a message to our senators, as our email and Facebook threads in the twenty-first century so incessantly do. Instead, at the heart of Jewett’s short story and modeled in Inness’s canvasses is a personalized spiritualization of nature im-

bued with Swedenborgian overtones: a moment of rarified, transcendent perception that blurs categories of distinction between viewer and the objects perceived, between figuration and atmospheric abstraction. While this effect creates rhetorical and visual am-

... it is important to remember the demonstrable ways that the millinery industry’s rapacious slaughter of herons and other waterfowl had been moving more and more into the public sphere

biguity, it also sharpens, by contrast, a clear message from Jewett and Inness about what their nature is not: that it is not simply dead matter available for commercial extraction and exploitation, and that a higher use—beyond the utilitarian calculus of markets and profits—may lie in our ecstatic connec-

tions with something larger and non-human in nature, that draws us out of ourselves. This spiritual value, my chapter argues, is strikingly different from both the laissez-faire economics of the Gilded Age that saw the natural world largely in terms of resource extraction, and the cornucopic optimism of nineteenth-century Progressivism that assumed advances in technology would ensure an endless supply of goods for all our material needs.

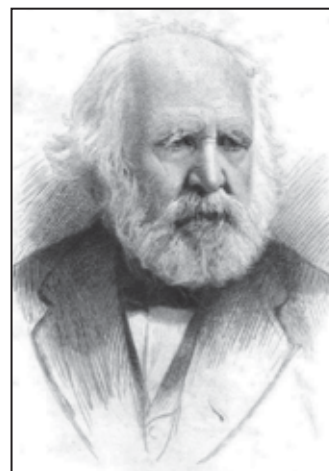
Sarah Orne Jewett’s engagement with Swedenborgian ideas was primarily through her deep friendship

and, one is tempted to say, intellectual apprenticeship with the Swedenborgian Theophilus Parsons. Parsons was part of that fabled 1818 class at Harvard University that included Sampson Reed, another significant Swedenborgian, and the Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson’s older brother William. Sampson Reed and Theophilus Parsons became the Swedenborgian vanguard in antebellum Boston, and Parsons went on to become a successful lawyer and law professor. By the time Jewett met Parsons at a seaside resort in Maine, in 1872, Parsons had become dean of Harvard University’s Law School.

Between 1872 and 1881, over an eleven-year period, Parsons and Jewett maintained an extensive correspondence, and Parsons passed on a number of works by or about Swedenborg to his young female protégé. Jewett, in her turn, regularly sent to Parsons her burgeoning fiction, and regularly asked



Sarah Orne Jewett



Theophilus Parsons

for his input and advice. The importance of Parsons and Swedenborgian thought for Jewett in this period is unmistakable: “nobody has helped me to think more than you have,” Jewett enthuses to Parsons in a letter from 1881. We can find this debt apparent in Jewett’s most well-known example of Regionalist fiction—her “White Heron.”

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As one reads this story, it is important to remember the demonstrable ways that the millinery industry's rapacious slaughter of herons and other waterfowl had been moving more and more into the public sphere. For example, the same year that Jewett published "A White Heron," George Bird Grinnell had established in New York City the first Audubon group that was explicitly dedicated to ending the mass-slaughter of birds and wholesale destruction of their habitat.

The short story is fairly straight forward. The protagonist, Sylvia—a name that immediately evokes the Roman woodland deity, Silvanus—is a young nine-year-old girl living with her impoverished grandmother in rural New England. Her parents appear to have abandoned her to seek their fortunes in California. Sylvia and her grandmother's poor but harmonious pastoral life is interrupted by a young ornithologist tramping through the countryside who is shooting and bagging bird specimens for his collection. When he learns that little Sylvia has a deep affinity with "wild creatures," he suspects that she may know where to find the elusive nesting ground of the white heron, a rare bird he had recently glimpsed in the area. Sylvia feels a budding attraction to the young man with a gun, and wrestles within herself, for she indeed knows where the heron is likely to be found. Late one night, in the strangest part of the story, while the visitor is still staying with them, Sylvia wanders out into the moonlit forest in her nightclothes to an old-growth pine, the largest tree for miles around. She climbs it as the dawn begins to come up, and as the sun rises "bewilderingly bright," she catches a glimpse of the elusive heron near its mate and nest, in a moment of transcendentalized perception and spiritual epiphany. She scales down the tree, exhausted, covered in pine-sap,

[Innes's] most overtly Swedenborgian [landscape] . . . dovetailed with his deep engagements with political questions of social justice, even in ways we might call consistently radical.

imagining what the young man would say when she revealed where his object of desire lay. But then, in a reversal of reader expectations, once Sylvia is back at the farmhouse, she refuses to speak, and the story ends ambivalently with the young girl retreating into silence.

What is it that suddenly forbids her and makes her dumb? Has she been nine years growing and now, when the great world for the first time puts out a hand to her, must she thrust it aside for a bird's sake? The murmur of the pine's green branches is in her ears, she remembers how the white heron came flying through the golden air and how they watched the sea and the morning together, and Sylvia cannot speak; she cannot tell the heron's secret and give its life away.

You might be wondering, what is "Swedenborgian" in Jewett's story that turns its back on an opportunity to transform nature into profitable science—this young man who could, in Jewett's words, "make them rich with money," if Sylvia were but to reveal the home of the heron? One Swedenborgian thread is certainly found in the text's locating of spiritual authority in nature. Through a correspondent lens, nature is made to speak and teach and instruct. A paradigmatic moment of this in Jewett's fiction is in the earlier novella *Deephaven*, published in 1877, which among all of Jewett's works probably bears the imprint of Theophilus Parson's thinking and Swedenborg's ideas most strongly. One of the female characters has been meditating on the close proximity of the spiritual world to the natural one, and

exclaims how

the more one lives out of doors the more personality there seems to be in what we call inanimate things. The strength of the hills and the voice of the waves are no longer only grand poetical sentences, but an expression of something real, and more and more one finds God himself written in the world, and believes that we may read the thoughts that He writes for us in the book of Nature.

Like the angels of heaven that Swedenborg describes in *Heaven and Hell* 489, who learn spiritual truths from the pleasure of looking at their beautiful gardens, the characters of *Deephaven* locate the truths of God in the voice of the waves and the strength of the hills.



George Innes

The painter George Inness—who, as far as I have been able to discern, had no measurable professional or personal contact with Jewett—adhered to similar Swedenborgian beliefs about the presence of the spiritual within the natural. The story of Inness's sustained engagement with Swedenborgian theology has been detailed by many others (including the art historians Rachel Delue, Adrienne Baxter Bell, and Sally Promey), with no need for substantial rehearsal here. What is

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Homes for Herons

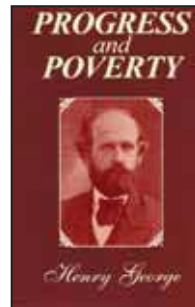
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worth underscoring is that rather than Inness's increasingly subjective and dreamy landscapes signaling a corresponding detachment from the real, as has been sometimes suggested, Inness's later career in the 1880s and 1890s—his most overtly Swedenborgian, we might say—dovetailed with his deep engagements with political questions of social justice, even in ways we might call consistently radical. For Inness, Swedenborgianism and a critique of the bourgeois status quo went hand-in-hand. When Inness first encountered Swedenborgian ideas and underwent a sort of conversionary experience, it was when he was living at the utopian commune of the Eagleswood Military Academy—a motley group of artists, writers, and poets dedicated to the Abolitionist cause, who lived together and offered an unusual curriculum to young soldiers in training.

Drawing any direct connections between Inness's paintings and his cultural and social contexts is tricky, however, as almost all his manuscript papers and correspondence were burned in a fire that destroyed the Inness family home in New Jersey in the 1940s. We do nevertheless have a record in nineteenth century periodicals—news-papers, pamphlets, brochures and the like—where Inness occasionally raised his voice in overt political ways that have led one recent art historian to call him a quintessential “artist-activist” of the nineteenth century. And while it is certainly true that I have found no “smoking gun” evidence in the newspaper archives (yet, anyway) that Inness ever publicly voiced an overt opinion about ornithological conservation, his engagement with the economic ideas of Henry George has specific environmental corollaries. George's critiques of modernity get particularly interesting when they are situated be-

hind Inness's heron paintings.

Though not well known today, Henry George was a wildly popular nineteenth-century economist and journalist who published a book called *Progress and Poverty* in 1880. It was an excoriating critique of the growing wealth inequality in the United States, and argued that the so-called advances made by modern technocratic civilization had actually financially crippled individuals more than it had helped them. George's critique of capitalism shares much with concerns over the divisions of labor and class structures articulated by his contemporaries Karl Marx and William Morris, as its par-



Henry George found a particularly fertile reception amongst Swedenborgian congregations on the East Coast and in the Midwest . . .

ticularly American concerns with inequality distinctly anticipate the recent work of Thomas Piketty. Whereas Marx and Morris were, and in some cases still are, anathema to a broad swath of the American population, George's book became (somewhat incredibly) one of the most reproduced, reprinted, and translated American texts of the post-Civil War period.

Henry George found a particularly fertile reception amongst Swedenborgian congregations on the East Coast and in the Midwest, and the early reception of his ideas was accompanied by speculation that George “was largely permeated with Swedenborgian thought,” as one 1884 reviewer put it. A group of Swedenborgian congregants that Inness was part of formed a Georgist group in 1889, the

New Churchman Single Tax League, and began publishing a radical periodical, *The New Earth*, that had an eleven-year publication run. According to the church historian Marguerite Beck Block, “George was impressed with the fact that more of his followers in proportion belonged to the New Church than to any other. They said it was because they found in his teaching a sound economic basis for Swedenborg's *Maximus Homo*, the greater social Man.”

George offered several concrete proposals for economic and social reform which we know that the painter Inness directly, viscerally responded to. One was a call for the eventual transfer of privately owned land into the public domain, and a revival of the pre-modern notion of the commons. Like air and water, George argued, no one could privately own land, as it was inherently a public resource. At a charged rally for Georgist reform in New York City in 1890, Inness gave a dinner speech to great applause, sounding not a little like the later Aldo Leopold (the progenitor of the “land ethic”) when he concluded by saying “the individual has rights to that which he pays for or makes; that which he does not create himself belongs to the whole community, and that is the land.” The art historian Leo Mazow has forcefully demonstrated how that after Inness began reading George in 1880, his canvases become preoccupied in new ways with depicting labor and work. Mazow has also uncovered a previously unknown article written by Inness in 1894, published the month before Inness died—perhaps the last thing Inness ever publicly wrote. It stridently argues for labor reform and the necessary regulation of an eight hour workday, and decries, in Inness's words, “the tyranny of wage bondage” created by “capitalists and corporations”—a rhetoric not unfamiliar to anyone listening to the

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recent street protests raised by the Occupy Movement, beginning in 2011. Besides such pro-Georgist speeches and articles in newspapers, Inness was quite active in the New Churchman Single Tax League. Such tax “leagues” advocated for legal reform of the tax code that would abolish all taxes apart from property tax, and attempt to end land and property speculation (a nineteenth-century harbinger of our more recent housing bubble crisis).

This context, my chapter argues, is critical background for Inness’s coterminous paintings of herons. Why did Inness create three unusually distinctive bird paintings at the end of his career? They are unique in his oeuvre: there are no other singular treatments of animal species in this specific way—no homes for buffaloes, or eagles, or the like. Cows, sheep, horses, and dogs certainly make their mark throughout Inness’s career, but they are wholly subsumed in the pictorial iconography of pastoral landscape painting as a genre. The titles Inness affixed to these bird paintings—“The Home of the Heron”—is furthermore striking, as it draws our attention not only to the heron species *per se*, but its larger natural biota and ecological home.

In addition to the bird populations themselves, the habitat of herons at the end of the nineteenth century was acutely distressed. Inness’s heron paintings have been variously located by art historians as having a specific geographical locus in Florida—starting in 1890, Inness had been spending winter vacations with his family there in the gulf coastal community of Tarpon Springs, a sleepy fishing village established by Greek immigrants. The 1890s witnessed an emerging public debate about Florida wetlands, especially around the Everglades. While the Everglades were not federally pro-

tected as a national park until 1916, there was considerable clamor much earlier over various civic projects to drain the swampy wetlands and turn them into private real estate. A frenzy of land speculation in Florida opened up in the 1880s and 1890s, as thousands of square miles of land became viable not just for Florida’s burgeoning tourist industry that the Inness family was participating in, but also for industrial-scale agriculture that fed growing northern and Midwestern appetites for exotic southern citrus fruits.

What would Inness have felt about the transformation of Florida wetlands, their incorporation into land speculation, and the privatization of public property? His clear and emphatic Georgist economic stance suggests one possible answer, and perhaps in these late heron paintings from the 1890s lies another. Like the young Sylvia of Jewett’s short story, who resists the appropriation of the white heron for capital, these paintings visually circumscribe a home that belongs not to humans, but resolutely to herons. We, the viewers, are on their turf. As we perceive the figures of the herons bleeding and blending into the twilight shadows and atmospheric colors, the charged ephemerality of the canvas invokes “a higher spiritual world, glimmering behind the natural,” in the words of the art historian Adrienne Baxter Bell. The aesthetic experience of seeing these works by Inness—squinting at the canvas, looking to make sense of the barest suggestion of form—may be akin to that affective moment in the climax of Jewett’s short story where Sylvia ecstatically sees the heron from the top of the pine tree. Boundaries are blurred; a rhetorical ambiguity opens up. Perhaps such aesthetic experiences of reading, and of seeing, have something spiritual to offer our environmental ethics, at least in more substantial ways than we traditionally give the aesthetic credit for. ☛

Swedenborg’s Life / Faith

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sense. He defines faith instead as an inner recognition of what is actually true. He explores the complex relationship between faith and knowledge and emphasizes that true faith can occur only in people who love others and treat them well.

Life / Faith (www.swedenborg.com/archive/products/life-faith/) is translated by Rev. Dr. George Dole and is part of the New Century Edition (NCE) of the works of Emanuel Swedenborg. The NCE series incorporates the latest scholarship and translation standards for a more accurate and accessible rendering of Swedenborg’s works. Traditionally titled *The Doctrine of Life* and *The Doctrine of Faith*, these short works are often published together with two others—*The Lord* and *Sacred Scripture*—under the title *The Four Doctrines*. These four titles will be published together in the forthcoming NCE hardcover annotated volume *The Shorter Works of 1763*. ☛

This article is an abridged text of a public address—“Homes for Herons: on Birds, Swedenborg, and Eco-poetics”—delivered at Bryn Athyn College April 24, 2014.



Dr. Devin Zuber is assistant professor of American Studies, Literature, and Swedenborgian Studies for the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) at the Pacific School of Religion

and the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, California, where he also serves as core doctoral faculty for the GTU’s PhD Programs in Art & Religion and Interdisciplinary Studies. He was recently nominated for a 2015–2016 Fulbright award at the University of Stockholm, Sweden, where he intends to develop a new manuscript on Swedenborg, Romanticism, and postsecular literary theory.

Diverse Faiths: Edmonton

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cert in February. The concert features music from the traditions that compose the Interfaith Centre. Last year there was Indian music with tablas and sitars, prayers and Buddhist chants, gospel music, and Native songs. This year I am told there will also be dancing.

I feel blessed to be a part of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre. It educates us in mind and spirit as we come together to plan and enjoy the events we organize. Swedenborg teaches that if only religions would put charity first, the dissensions between the differing faiths would disappear.

In the Christian world it is doctrinal matters that distinguish churches, and from them men call themselves Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists, or the Reformed and the Evangelical, and by other names. It is from what is doctrinal alone that they are so called; which would never be if they would make love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor the principal of faith. Doctrinal matters would then be only varieties of opinion concerning the mysteries of faith, which truly Christian men would leave to every one to hold in accordance with his conscience, and would say in their hearts that a man is truly a Christian when he lives as a Christian, that is, as the Lord teaches. Thus from all the differing churches there would be made one church; and all the dissensions that come forth from doctrine alone would vanish; yea, all hatreds of one against another would be dissipated in a moment, and the Lord's kingdom would come upon the earth. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1799).

The Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action is a powerful witness to this teaching, a witness from which the world could well learn. ☩

Rev. Dr. David Fekete is pastor of the Edmonton (Alberta) Church of the Holy City.

Fear, Ebola, and God

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the air, only by direct contact with bodily fluids, and this only after an infected person is very sick, presenting with fever and other symptoms. The man from Liberia who died in Texas did not infect fellow passengers on his flight to the US as he did not yet present symptoms. He did not infect his son or wife or others he came in contact with in the US, only the nurses who took care of him when he was deathly sick.

I began to realize we are becoming a fear based society, or maybe we always have been, but I don't think so. This fear causes us to buy more guns for protection from the unknown. This fear separates us from those who are different. This fear causes us to pull in and worry only about ourselves, that we won't have enough and not share with those in need.

We are told in the Bible to seek the truth and "the truth will set you free." The truth doesn't bind us or blind us. Swedenborg writes in *Divine Providence* 139,

... fear takes away freedom and reason or liberty and rationality. For love opens the interiors of the mind but fear closes them, and when they have been closed, the person thinks but little, and only about what then presents itself to his conscientiousness or senses. All fears that invade the mind have this effect.

When we succumb to fear spread by the media or uninformed friends and don't take time to investigate for ourselves, we are imprisoned in fear. This fear does not affect just us but many around us. Fear is what is contagious. ☩

Rev. Jane Siebert is a member of the Pretty Prairie (Kansas) New Jerusalem Church.



Reflection

How Would My Parents Recognize Me?

BY ILIA GONZALES

Her physical body caught up with her chronological age, and her mind wandered in the direction of her affections. On January 12, 2015, she separated from that physical body. (Elizabeth Wisdom's obituary appears on page 15.)

It is a warm and sunny spring day, May 3, 2011, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The sun is shining and a balmy ocean breeze is keeping the temperature in the sixties—very pleasant. The birds are returning from their winter grounds, the sun has warmed the soil, and the bulbs have sprouted. Elizabeth Wisdom and I are on our annual spring drive to Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Why do we go to the cemetery to admire spring flowers? The answer is simple: as a child Elizabeth grew up visiting her departed family who all are buried at the Mount Auburn Cemetery, a spectacular landscape filled with some of America's most beautiful species of trees, shrubs, and flowers.

On this trip, the only time Elizabeth got out of the car was when we arrived at her family plot. We read the names of the family aloud, beginning with her paternal grandparents. After reading her own name, Elizabeth asked "Will I be an intruder between father and mother? They have been together for such a long time. How will they recognize me?"

How do souls recognize one another? Divine inspiration shed some light and helped me to understand the ageless nature of our souls. The departed are not affected by physical things or time; they live in a spiritual reality described by Emanuel Swedenborg in his

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Passages

Births

Amy Blanchette, a member of the Okanagan Chapter of the British Columbia New Church Society, and Grant Blanchette, announced the arrival of **Ada Brynn Blanchette**, born September 14, 2014.

Kevin and Kristyn Degi happily welcomed **Elliot Jacob Degi** to their family on December 12, 2014. Grandparents are Greg and Sandy (Siebert) Degi of the Pretty Prairie, Kansas, Church.

Deaths

Margaret (Marge) Elaine Pardue passed away on November 11, 2014, at age 78. She was active in the life of the New Church in western Canada from the time she was a child, serving church boards, the Western Canada Conference, and Paulhaven Camp. Marge was predeceased by her husband Ray on March 17, 2014. She is survived by her children Brian Pardue, Kathy Card, and Susan Bergman, six grandchildren, two brothers, and a sister.

Linda Reed of the Edmonton Church of the Holy City led a celebration of Marge's life at the Balmoral Bible Chapel in Red Deer, Alberta.

Lifelong member of the Cambridge Society of the New Jerusalem **Elizabeth Anne Wisdom** passed fully into the spiritual world January 12, 2015. She was born May 16, 1917, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her parents were Arthur Edward Wisdom and Mary Cook Wisdom, a founding member of the Cambridge Society. Her uncle, Chester Cook, was the treasurer of the Swedenborgian Church for many years. Elizabeth graduated from Lasell Junior College and worked for thirty-five years at Harvard Business School. She was a volunteer for over twenty years at the Mount Auburn

News from SHS

The Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) is conducting an intensive course titled "Swedenborgian Rites and Sacraments" during the last week of January in a retreat-like atmosphere at Hillside Community Church (Swedenborgian) in El Cerrito, California.

All-day sessions will explore the theology behind, the articulation of, and the practical skill enactments for communion, baptism, confirmation, weddings, and memorial services. Bay Area clergy Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers, Rev. Junchol Lee, and Rev. Kathy Speas are each helping to anchor one of the days, and Rev. Jane Siebert and Rev. Ken Turley (both on the Committee on Admission into Ministry) are co-instructors with the dean of SHS, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, for the entire week. Almost all ordination-track and licensed pastor students in our programs have been able to enroll, so it has all the makings of "deep community" in theological education.

Dr. Devin Zuber, assistant professor of American Studies, Literature, and Swedenborgian Studies, is co-teaching a January intensive local-arts immersion course with the religion and arts professor, Rossitza Schroeder, at Pacific School of Religion. They will take students to Bay Area museums, galleries, pop-up art and performance spaces

Hospital gift shop. She was a lifelong member and supporter of Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, led by every minister there except the first, Rev. Theodore Wright. Rev. William Worcester was her pastor from childhood to early adulthood.

Elizabeth sat in the same pew every Sunday her whole life. She was a vital member of the Cambridge Chapel community, and they will sorely miss her smiling presence. ☩

(including churches, mosques, and synagogues), and artists' residences to experience how the arts have incubated both transcendence and social change. The class quickly filled up, leaving a number of students sorely disappointed not to be able to participate. ☩

Letter from the President

Continued from page 3

smooth grey tree trunks so firmly rooted; and black and shiny sticks, twisted and fragile, overlaying it all.

Again, I notice the silence of the earth's breath suspended in that moment of fullness before the noisy exhale. But this time the silence is shattered by the indignant screeching of a red squirrel just ten feet over my head, shocked and offended at finding me in his domain. I am glad squirrels are as small as they are; from the tone of his voice, he would gladly tear me limb from limb, if he only could. "Go pick on someone your own size," I think, "and good luck to whoever that might be!"

I give thanks that this particular squirrel has other things to do as he moves off tossing invectives over his shoulder, leaving me to my rocks and logs and gently waving ferns. The sun is up, the earth is warming, even if ever so slightly, and I prepare myself to return home having witnessed the eternal transition of night into day. While I may not take notice, it will happen again tomorrow. And the day after and the day after. In fact, perhaps as some sort of metaphorical reassurance, it dawns on me (pardon the pun) that this majestic transition from cold and dark to warmth and light is happening somewhere in the world always, in every given moment, without pause or end. It is as if God would remind us that transformation is the way of the world, and of life itself.

—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 questioning 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.

In his theological writings, Swedenborg shared 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.

Ebola, Fear, and God

BY JANE SIEBERT

Recently I returned from an amazing mission trip to South Africa. We worked with church members from Simon's Town near Cape Town to develop a garden around the church, complete with greenhouse. Many of the residents are poor and live in tenement housing, so this project offers them a place to grow vegetables to eat and share with others.

This article, however, is not about the trip, but rather the reaction of friends and acquaintances when I told them

I was going to South Africa: fear. Fear that I would be exposed to Ebola. Fear that I would bring it back with me. And fear that they would get it from me.

At first, I didn't understand their reaction. My husband, Ray, and I lived in Sierra Leone more than thirty years ago while serving with the Peace Corps. We had the wonderful opportunity to travel around this vast continent of Africa, as large as China, India, the United States,

and most of Europe put together. And South Africa is a long, long way from the Ebola-stricken countries of West Africa: Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. In fact, it is a longer distance from Cape Town, South Africa, to Sierra Leone (3600 miles) than across the US from

the tip of Maine to the shores of California (3200 miles). South Africa has not had a single case of Ebola, while the US has. And South Africa was one of the first countries fighting this devastating disease.

When I explained these facts, the next fear expressed was that I would be fly-

ing with people from Africa. The mission group flew from the US to Amsterdam and from there non-stop to Cape Town, the reverse on the return trip. Yes, we flew with Africans. Over one billion people live in Africa. We cannot live with the fear that all Africans are carriers of Ebola.

And then there is the unfounded fear of Ebola. It is not transmitted through



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