



Gathering Leaves 2015—"From Root to Fruit" Swedenborgian Women Gather in Cincinnati

BY JULIE CONARON

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from her roots a Branch will bear fruit; The Spirit of the Lord will rest on her—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and she will delight in the awe of the Lord.

—Isaiah 11:1–3

The New Church of Montgomery, Ohio, hosted the sixth biennial Gathering Leaves from June 4–7, a retreat for Swedenborgian women of any Swedenborgian affiliation, at the Transfiguration Spirituality Center in Cincinnati.

What a wonderful event! As a very small part of the team shepherding the event "from root to fruit," I was inspired by the love and dedication given to this event by the women who were its backbone: for example, those women from the New Church of Montgomery (Cincinnati area), especially Gloria Toot, the primary organizer there, and her wonderful spouse Pete, who picked some of us up from the airport. I can't name all the wonderful people who put lots of love and hard work into making this a success, but I so appreciate them for it.

The Transfiguration Spirituality Center was indeed a spiritual one. No matter how rushed and hurried we

might have been to get there on time, the sphere and beauty of the center enabled us to breathe deeply and leave our worldly cares behind.



Thirty women from different Swedenborgian traditions attended!

To appreciate the amazing way the event flows and why it is so heart-centered, here's the mission statement of Gathering Leaves:

We are gathering again to promote harmony among women who are associated with the various Swedenborgian organizations around the world. We acknowledge our

common beliefs, explore our differences, develop respect for one another's contributions, create a healing atmosphere, and celebrate our spiritual sisterhood. We promote charity and goodwill so we might say "No matter what form her doctrine and external form of worship take, this is my sister; I observe that she worships the Lord and is a good woman."

This mission statement surely reflects the heart of all New Church organizations, or could do so. Surely Emanuel Swedenborg's writings over and over again speak of the necessity for goodwill to be at the heart of all religions, and this is what unites people.

The schedule consisted of three time slots over the course of the weekend, with several workshops from which to choose in each slot.

The first evening focused on the

Continues on page 153

The Editor's Desk



More than Sunday

Organized religion and Christianity are welded to the notion of “church” on Sunday mornings, but most church attendees extend their group activities beyond that weekly event.

Swedenborgians have a long history of creating opportunities for assembling communities in many different configurations other than Sunday service. In this issue of *the Messenger*, we have reports on a handful of those communities.

We reported on the annual convention in the September issue, a community of Swedenborgians that assembles only once a year.

Gathering Leaves (page 141) is a biennial event, and it just completed its sixth retreat. This community

A group of Michigan New Church women met for a retreat at Almont Retreat Center April 18–19, led, in her amazing way, by Rev. Renée Machiniak. Our theme was “HOPE.” We created masterpieces in an “uncorked” painting session led by Heidi Neuenfeldt Barnaby.



of Swedenborgian women from several denominations, General Convention, General Church, The Lord's New Church, and General Conference (others are welcome as well), has become a twenty-first century tradition.

Our summer camps have been a mainstay of remixing Swedenborgians from different churches and denominations, plus some non-Swedenborgians, in annual pilgrimages to beloved places. Some grow up in the camps, some come as teenagers, and some as adults. The camps, Paulhaven (Alberta, page 146), Almont New Church Assembly (Michigan, page 148), and Fryeburg New Church Assembly (Maine, page 150), have distinct personalities. Almont and Fryeburg are family camps, offering traditional camp activities plus religious instruction and exploration for the young and old. Paulhaven caters to teens, with a staff of volunteers. The landscapes and the programs

vary, but they all are well loved.

We value and reflect on these communities as we look for ways to worship and share our faith with the world.

—Herb Ziegler

Contents

Gathering Leaves 2015—“From Root to Fruit”: Swedenborgian Women Gather in Cincinnati	141
The Editor's Desk	142
Letter from the President	143
Parliament of the World's Religions: Five Days of International Interfaith Glory	144
Highlights of Paulhaven Camp 2015 ...	146
Almont Tradition Fosters Faith and Family for the Future	148
Second Annual Dole 3-Miler Hosts 99 Runners	150
Sabbatical in Stockholm	151
Free Books—Last Call	151
Revelation of the Spirit Opens Wellness Centre in Cambridge, Ontario	152
Op Ed: God Cares About Truth and Justice	154
Passages	155
In Memoriam: Remembering Cameron	155
Reflection: “I Used To . . .”	156

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Church Calendar

- **December 27–30:** SCYL Winter Retreat Almont Retreat Center, Michigan
- **Jan 15–18, 2016:** SPLATz Retreat (10–13 year-olds) • LaPorte New Church, Michigan

the Messenger

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Letter from the President



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

*2015–16: The Year of Spiritual Uses:
The Call to Be a Blessing*

Dear Friends,

The winter chill has settled in overnight. Days are clear and crisp. But in the early morning, the outside thermometer is the harbinger of things to come as it barely sits above twenty degrees. But the residual heat from last night's fire in the wood stove still keeps me warm and cozy as I look out across the lake. Still and smooth, the few clouds are reflected in the surface of the water. In a few short months it will be very different. That thought occurs to me as well as I consider my last year as president. I have begun to mark a few things off of my "last time" list even though there is still a lot to be done in this coming year.

The General Council meeting is scheduled to take place at Temenos the first weekend in November. It will be a great opportunity to reconnect with the people of that society and the natural beauty of one of Convention's most versatile sites. It won't exactly be a reunion, as a number of General Council people will be seeing Temenos for the first time, and the people of that society have changed considerably since the last time we were there. But it is a strong and healthy society. And although many are new to the teachings of Swedenborg, they and their pastor, Christine Campbell, have an intuitive affinity for our fundamental ecumenism, spiritual connection to nature and open-minded and open-hearted spirituality.

General Council will be looking at a number of important issues, as is always the case. After a long and somewhat frustrating process, we have decided

to hold this summer's annual convention at Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio. The focus of that convention will be set in motion, as will plans for the 2017 Annual Convention celebration of the 250th anniversary of General Convention, set to take place in the Philadelphia area.

Wayfarers Chapel, named one of the twelve most beautiful churches in the USA by Budget Travel and others, has become a spiritual landmark in the Los Angeles area. Not only is it well known for beautiful and spiritually moving weddings, it has a rapidly growing reputation as a center that offers classes, speakers, and programs of depth and relevance to the spiritual aspect of daily life. But every physical form that contains a spiritual essence needs attention and maintenance. So it is with the Chapel. We are facing a major task as the current minister's offices are built on the brink of a hillside which is already beginning to slide. Those buildings will need to be "deconstructed" and replaced by a new building that will house offices and space for the growing number of activities that take place there. The Wayfarers



Wayfarers Chapel

Board of Trustees is working with the Chapel's leadership team to develop a long-term plan to address the design and funding of this project and will be presenting first steps to the Council at this upcoming meeting. This project will need widespread support, so keep your eyes and ears open for more news in the future.

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

Parliament of the World's Religions: Five Days of International Interfaith Glory

BY DAVID J. FEKETE

We drove twenty hours straight through, over winding mountain roads under construction past midnight. My traveling companions were an Eckankar cleric and an artist. As the sun was setting, we found ourselves in the high plains, the Badlands, scenery out of a Clint Eastwood movie. We rolled into Salt Lake City around 6:30 AM as the final tones from Beethoven's *Mass in C* played from my iPod. We sat in a Starbucks, getting our heads together, finding our bearings.

We located the Salt Palace Convention Center, registered for the Parliament of World Religions (PWR), and received the glossy 369-page program guide. Seminars were grouped according to twenty-six categories, encompassing nine religions. There were seminars on social issues like "Wealth Gap," "War/Hate/Violence," and "Climate Change"; practicums such as "Religious Observance and Training"; and experiential presentations on drama, music, and film. Several presentations were offered at the same time, so one had a great variety of choices. Sometimes, one wanted to attend two or more meetings at the same time. (www.parliamentofreligions.org)

We went to the opening ceremony. It began with First Nations' drumming as a procession of the Ute elders and chiefs entered the space. The Ute Chief welcomed us onto their tribal land. The Muslim chair of the Parliament of the World's Religions gave a stirring address punctuated with the recurring question, "Are you with me?!" A Rabbi, a Latter-Day Saints Elder, the Governor of Utah, and a Baha'i Parliament of the World's Religions board



Tibetan Monks construct a mandala from colored sand.

member all gave inspiring talks about sustainable earth, women's rights, poverty, the misused name of religion for violence, peace, and interfaith understanding. Prayers by a Buddhist monk, a Catholic woman, a Jain cleric, and a UN ambassador concluded the opening ceremony. The 2015 Parliament of the World's Religions—"Reclaiming the Heart of Our Humanity"—all 9,500 of us, had begun!

Vast convention space was devoted to exhibitors. These included schools like the Graduate Theological Union, Claremont School of Theology, and Chicago Theological Seminary. There were other schools of vaguer substance, largely of New Thought movements such as Love Now, School of Metaphysics, Living Miracles, and Science of Spirituality. There were crafts, jewelry, clothing, and curios from different ethnic traditions such as First Nations and Tibetan. Numerous book publishers exhibited their works. (I did not see the Swedenborg Foundation.) An equally spacious room was devoted to rest and gathering. Couches and benches were set in the carpeted room.

The whole experience was intense. Tibetan monks were creating a mandala out of colored sand. A Jain temple was erected in the front foyer. At one seminar, I was somewhat surprised to see a Hindu swami, dressed in tra-

ditional saffron robes and cap, with a beautiful smile, lecturing from a smart tablet. As I listened to this particular lecture about religious identity, sacred singing and chants wafted into our room from next door.

Presenters at the PWR were university professors, chaplains, religious leaders, Jews, Hindus, Christians, Wiccans, Muslims, and more, from religions I could not count. All shared their messages in harmony and with respectful collegiality.

A sacred fire was lit at the entrance to the convention center through the Parliament by First Nations representatives. One morning, as we were about to enter the Salt Palace Convention Center, we found First Nations women drumming and singing a chant in their native tongue as we all formed a circle around the sacred fire. This was a prayer of welcome and they "gifted" it to us.



Jain temple in the lobby

On Saturday night, the city of Edmontonton bought dinner for the 32 of us who made the pilgrimage from there to the Parliament. We gratefully dined on a choice of beef, chicken, or salmon. Vegan and vegetarian dishes were

Continues on page 145

Continued from page 144

available for those who preferred that cuisine.

The PWR isn't only lectures. Experiencing different religions also means experiencing different cultures. And that means different forms other than only lectures. I viewed a film made by an Edmonton filmmaker called *Brothers in the Buddha*. It is about a Vietnamese teen, living in Edmonton, who made the decision to become a Buddhist monk. The film was paced to match the life of the teen. It depicted him in school, playing basketball, and in the monastery. While high school shots were short and choppy, the film editor dwelt longer on the shots in monastery, and one felt as if we had been carried into its still serenity. When I



Sikh langar

left the film, the hustle and bustle of the PWR convention halls was jarring after the monastic calm the movie had carried me into.

My friend from Edmonton and I decided to experience the free lunch that the Sikhs provided every day for thousands of guests. At all Sikh functions, free food is served. It is a holy ritual called *langar*. The original reason for this was to dissolve the boundaries of the Hindu caste system. In the caste system, lower caste members cannot eat with members of a higher caste. In its most extreme form, if even the shadow of a low caste passerby falls on



Chinese Children Dance

the food of a high caste, the food is discarded. At Sikh meals, everyone eats together and caste lines dissolve. In North America the tradition works as well. People of different socioeconomic backgrounds mix and eat together—lawyers, business people, blue collar workers, teachers, clerics all sit on the floor and eat together. My friend and I took off our shoes and wore headpieces that they handed out to follow Sikh traditions. The bean dish and spinach were very spicy (lots of curry, I think) and one needed the rice and pita bread they served to help ameliorate the heat.

A stage was set up in the meeting area of the convention centre. We watched adorable Chinese children dance in colorful garb. They were followed by a children's choir. The choir belted out their songs with heart and soul. It was hard for me to restrain my tears to hear these children sing, "Who knows what miracles you can achieve/ When you believe."

Our last night together was rounded out in glorious fashion: an interfaith concert in the Mormon Tabernacle. After opening remarks there was a devotion by Indigenous Peoples; a Muslim intoned a call to prayer; and Jewish, Quaker, and Episcopal representatives offered invocations. A memorable line from the Indigenous People was, "You can only breathe in so much air before you have to give back." Next, stellar performances featured a bagpipe band, Tibetan song with a display of swordsmanship, Hindu dancers, a Catholic choir singing Mother Teresa's daily personal prayer, a sitar

ensemble, and, perhaps the highlight of the evening, a children's choir. Then Sikh meditation music, a Baha'i choir, Cambodian Buddhist dancers, sung Jain mantras and sutras, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Burundi drumming, Sufi "Whirling Dervishes," and closing remarks. With such a packed program, it is not surprising that the event planned for two hours actually went three.

Though there was a closing plenary session scheduled for the next day, I let this glorious musical interfaith celebration conclude the Parliament of World Religions for me. Fed spiritually, we got in the car the next day and descended from the holy mountain top experience. We talked about highlights as we drove. I was glad for the twenty-hour ride home. It eased the transition from the mountain top experience of the PRW to the mundane world.

I thought of Moses on Mount Sinai. On the mountain top, he encountered God. But when Moses descended from the mountain, he brought with him something precious from his holy encounter. He didn't come down the same person as he went up. He brought down from on high the Ten Commandments and transformed the ordinary world from his extraordinary experience. In a lesser fashion, I felt that I was bringing something back from the spiritual high of the PWR. The five days of international, interfaith harmony gave me feelings and ideas that would remain in my heart and mind. I was sad to leave it all, but in my soul, the Parliament of the World's Religions came back down with me into my day-to-day life. ☸



Rev. Dr. David J. Fekete is the minister of the Edmonton Church of the Open Word. He represents the Swedenborgian Church at assemblies and meetings of the National Council of Christian Churches.

Highlights of Paulhaven Camp 2015

BY DAVID FEKETE

The theme of camp week at Paulhaven this year was loving the neighbor. We wanted to instill loving behaviors and help the teens see how hurtful bullying can be. So Pastor Dave selected Bible passages that developed that theme. They followed a progression. Beginning with The Two Great Commandments, we learned to *Love Even People Who Are Different from Us*, then Leviticus gave us *Examples of How to Love the Neighbor*, which leads to good deeds and seeing that *Loving Jesus Means Bearing Fruit*, and we are to *Love Even Enemies*, and *When We Do Good to Others, We Do Good to God*. The teens listened reverently in chapel. We hope they took the message to heart.

One of the chief highlights of camp is meeting old friends one has not seen for a year and meeting and getting to know new friends. We had twenty-seven teens attending this year.

We were fed well. Cooks Tonya and Dennis were very creative with the meals, and the food was always delicious. One of the highlights of the meals was what is called spaghetti

night; this is the night campers choose their utensils out of a grab bag, picking anything—except a regular knife and fork—from an egg lifter to tongs, a wooden spoon, or a very large serving spoon. This all makes for a lot of laughs and a little mess.

One Paulhaven Camp tradition: the teens create skits. Each class comes up with a religious skit, and each dorm comes up with a fun skit. The skits were creative, imaginative, and very enjoyable.

Evening campfire and songs are always a hit. The songs were fun and the teens could sing as loud as they liked.



The 2015 Paulhaven campers,



Tie dye: the Paulhaven 2015 banner

Something about a campfire makes for intimate camaraderie. You could see stars and constellations you could not see in the city.

One class did something different this year. It was called KOB (Kindness of Bearer). These were notes of kindness written by the students to another camper. The notes were folded and pinned to the wall with the receiver's name on them. Everyone received a note and some received many.

For the young ladies, the Friday night dance was a highlight after a week of jeans, shorts, and T-shirts. They were able to bring out their finery, dress up, apply a little make-up,



Singing "Linger" one last time

Continues on page 147

Continued from page 146



Cousins Leah Francis and Cameron Epp



So much to talk about



Playing camp games



Last hugs



The Friday night dance

and style their hair. They all looked beautiful. Justin Runka always acts as DJ with his own equipment, sound system, smoke machine, and laser light show. Boys, girls, and staff all love the final night's celebration dance.

After the dance, there was a fireworks display that was absolutely phantasmagorical. The staff did a wonderful job.

Camp concludes with a communion service, then tears, hugs, and goodbyes, and it's back to the city and regular life. But the words of a favorite camp song fit the occasion,

Hmmm, I want to linger.
Hmmm, A little longer.
Hmmm, A little longer,
Here with you.

Hmmm, And as the years go by,
Hmmm, I'll think of you and sigh.
Hmmm, This is good night
And not good bye. ☸



Staff Ladies: Linda, Ardith, Dianne, and Tracy



Staff girls (L to R): Leah, Amanda, Britt, and Candice



Till we meet again

Almont Tradition Fosters Faith and Family for the Future

BY MARJORY LEAS

Siyahamb' Ekukhanyen' Kwenkhos! We Are Marching in the Light of God!"

During the week of the Almont New Church Assembly 2015 camp session, a daily average of 150 voices sang this South African hymn as we walked from our flagpole circle to the 1879 chapel for morning and evening services. That was a lot of people "marching in the light of God!" Our full dorms for children and youth, crammed adult housing units, and overflow tent and RV campground in the chapel yard, as well as seating for meals that filled the dining hall's capacity and extended into two outdoor areas (the norm for the past several years) were all examples of the fullness of church family life at Almont.

The circle of white buildings around a large play field in the countryside of eastern Michigan, north of Detroit, has been the setting for Swedenborgian gatherings since the first New Church folk from Paisley, Scotland settled there in the 1850s. That rich history pervades the camp grounds and is evident in the names of the places where we gather during our summer session: Heritage Hall, Pfister Lounge, Hamilton Parlor, Big House,

Little Rec, and even the less ancient, but now firmly revered Teen Storage! Almont seems to be a living testimony to the axiom "If you build it, they will come!" And come, and come and come! There is joy and a bit of amazement at the legacy of this beloved place when we gather each year. Many of us who spent childhood summers at

to return, now married and with families. New campers are common as well, and they invariably feel drawn to return. It is truly a phenomenon.

Just what is it that keeps Almonters coming back through the years? Our facilities are comfortable: much improved and modernized from earlier days, but still not at all what could be termed resort caliber.

The country setting is lovely, but not spectacular as displays of nature go. There are no nearby attractions that provide off-campus entertainment. Yet from the time the corps of volunteers arrives to prepare the facilities for the onslaught of full-camp attendance, there is a sense of excitement, friendship, and sheer happiness at the anticipation of a week where the love of the Lord will surround a rich experience not to be missed.

Each camp session has its treasured traditions, and this year we once again enjoyed the campfire, with singing for all, the banana hunt end-

ing with gooey banana splits, talent and skit night, an all-camp dance, nightly "Meet in the Middle" activities for the pre-teens, the rite of passage as teens joined the Survivors, and



Middle Dorm tweens experience the science of bubbles with Rahul Menon.



First through fourth graders lead chapel worship.

camp, alongside our grandparents, are now in or approaching the "Top Ten" age group and have adult children who bring their kids – a span of five generations, and more in some cases. Others began attending as teens and continue

Continues on page 149

Continued from page 148

Scrabble wars and lively conversation among the adults in the Big House living room. Our daily lectures, classes, and discussion groups focused on the parables of Jesus, with those well-



Almont chums Barb Halle and Pat Tukos

known stories being passed along to the young and opening up new insights for others.

A special night of fun and remembrance was a highlight of this year's session as we honored Dean our Almont Queen (Geraldine Trombly), who left our earthly family to enter the spiritual world in January at the age of ninety-eight. In the festively decorated dining hall, everyone gathered for pie (Dean's favorite), music, laughter, and memo-

rabilia of Dean's long "reign," shared stories of her life and love for Almont, and were surprised by a re-enactor who portrayed our queen in her official red robe, crown, and scepter. For the many who had been unable to attend Dean's memorial service in Detroit, this was the perfect way to celebrate her life with our Almont family.

As the 2015 session came to an end, there was the usual flurry of cleaning and closing up chores, the packing and loading of cars, the hugs and tears as friends and family said their goodbyes. For many, another meeting with these loved ones would have to wait until Almont time next year. But there is a comfort and peace in knowing that it will all happen again—old traditions, new fun, a time set apart in a special place where the words of our flag-raising song come true, "As year by year we

meet together, learning to live the Golden Rule." ☩



Marjie Leas is a lifelong Almont member and camper. She lives in East Tawas, Michigan, with her husband Bob.



Flag Team in their hilarious debut performance—these ladies grew up together at Almont.



Almont Band members play for chapel service.



Lecturer and CSS student Joy Barnitz offers insight on the parables.



Fifth-generation camper Ben Brown takes the Skit Night stage, supported by parents Katie and Julius.



Middle dorm girls learned a cool craft using old T-shirts.



Celebrating the life of Dean the Queen

Second Annual Dole 3-Miler Hosts 99 Runners

BY JON CROWE

It was a beautiful summer day, it was the bottom of the ninth, and the bases were loaded. . . . Wait!

Sorry, wrong sporting event. I was asked to report on the Second Annual Dole 3 Miler road race that was organized by the Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) in Fryeburg, Maine, on the Saturday in the middle of the two-week summer camp session.

Well, I got the first part right, it was indeed a beautiful summer day.

On August 8 at 8:00 AM, a large group of volunteers had successfully

year to honor Rev. George Dole's role as a participant in the historic 1954 race at Ilfy Field in England when Sir Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile. As a

student, George ran for Yale and then Oxford, and his personal best time was a very respectable 4 minutes 15.2 seconds. George took up running again in his forties and still runs several days a week, even at camp.

And now, back to the race.

Our honored guest, the Rev. Dr. George F. Dole, was sporting his new signature edition track shirt and shorts that Wellesley, Massachusetts, company Tracksmith designed based on the outfit that

George wore when he ran in the 1954 race with Bannister. (See sidebar.) Tracksmith generously donated two T-shirts and a pair of shorts as prizes.

Defending his title from last year, Nathan Buck approached the start line. A blast of the horn began the race with George F. Dole's eight-year-old



And they're off!



Rev. George Dole (L) with his old friend, Rev. George McCurdy



Elise (L) and Erin Richardson sing the national anthem.

assisted in getting the stage set. Numbered race bibs were handed out to ninety-nine participants. The first fifty were sporting their free, bright orange race shirts and by now had done their stretching and pre-race warm-ups. Erin and Elise Richardson had graced us with a beautiful acapella rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" and then re-joined their fellow racers.

But first, a little background: The Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) Outreach Committee inaugurated this race last



Race director Jon Crowe with Debbie Cook, former camp director and current secretary of the FNCA board

Old-Timey Meets New-Fangled



When we met George at his home in Maine, he shared some keepsakes from his Oxford days 60 years ago, including some of his patches from the junior varsity "Centipedes" club, the "Tortoises" cross-country team, and the wreath of the Oxford University Athletics Club.

He also lent us his favorite running shorts from those days, the cut of which inspired both this short and our Falmouth short. The Dole is constructed with a luxurious 2:09 mesh liner, a conservative 6-inch inseam, and it's made from a highly technical, moisture-wicking, four-way stretching, water-repelling lightweight nylon blend.

www.tracksmith.com/products/george-dole-shorts

grandson, George A. Dole, fulfilling the role of honorary starter.

This second year saw a significant increase in participants and local sponsors. The secondary goal of the race is to promote FNCA and to raise funds for FNCA, the Fryeburg New Church, and the Mountain Division Rail Trail, where the race is held, located across the road from the FNCA camp.

After Nathan Buck successfully defended his title and all the participants

Continues on page 151



Sabbatical in Stockholm

Devin Zuber, professor at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies at the Graduate Theological Union is on a sabbatical year of research in Stockholm. In his explorations he came across this graffiti. You can follow his sabbatical experiences at <https://swedenborgonsabbatical.wordpress.com>.

Dr. Zuber shares with us that University of Virginia Press will be publishing his *Language of Things: Swedenborg and the American Environmental Imagination* as a monograph in their Religion and Cultural Studies Series.



It will also get cross-listed in UVA's excellent "Under the Sign of Nature" line in ecocriticism and environmental humanities. He writes, "This has been a long road (some twenty-eight different draft proposals, one near-hit, and several closed doors, over the last two years), and whoever once told me that the whole dissertation-into-book process is easy and seamless can now take me out for a drink, or two." *A Language of Things* should be out by the end of 2016 or early 2017.

Continued from page 150

had crossed the finish line, awards were handed out. Every participant received a wooden disc with "D3" (Dole 3-Miler) branded on the front and "Official FNCA Sturdley" branded on the back. Our esteemed master of ceremonies, Dan Dyer, explained the history of the camp's mythical Sturdley: the Flames (teenagers at camp) were sent into town to find Sturdleys back in the old days. Now every Dole 3-Miler participant that crosses the finish line receives a Sturdley.

Everyone enjoyed the race that day, and we have already set our sights on next year's race, which will take place on Saturday, August 6, 2016.



James Bickford, his daughter Taylor, and George Dole display their "Sturdleys"

Free Books— Last Call

The Massachusetts New Church Union has been liquidating the closed Swedenborg Library in Boston. It still has a number of good titles left, and before closing its storage space, it is offering them for free to *Messenger* readers. (Donations for the cost of shipping is appreciated.)

Here are the titles:

- *The Story that Has No End* by Gwynne Dresser Mack
- *The Holy Center* by Dorothea Harvey
- *Emanuel Swedenborg Scientist and Mystic* by Signe Toksvig
- *Life of Jesus Little Known* by William Worcester
- *Return of the Christ* by William Wunsch
- *The Big Adventure* by Gwynne Dresser Mack
- *Glorious Words of Life* by Othmar Tobisch
- *New Church in the New World* by Marguerite Block
- *Tree of Life* by Louis Hoeck
- *Talking with God* by Gwynne Dresser Mack
- *Harbinger of a New Age* by Benjamin Worcester

To inquire, email Susannah Currie at revscurrie@gmail.com. ☩

We wish to thank all of our volunteers and sponsors, and especially our three continuing Platinum and Gold Level sponsors: Methuselah, the Searle Family, and Two Birds.

More race photos, videos, interviews, and other race information are available at www.dole3miler.com. ☩

Jon Crowe is race director of the Dole 3-Miler. He lives with his wife Dawn and their four children in Lovell, Maine. When not volunteering as race director and waterfront director at FNCA, he is a senior designer of tension fabric structures at Transformit.

Revelation of the Spirit Opens Wellness Centre in Cambridge, Ontario

BY CATHERINE LAUBER

Over the past few years, Revelation of the Spirit has been exploring a variety of options for redefining the way we do church in the twenty-first century. Our focus has been on reaching out to those who are not regular church attendees, but who have an interest in exploring spiritual wisdom and practices in an open and inclusive environment.

We recognize the importance of cre-



Barbara sprinkling holy water in four corners while Carol sounds the Tibetan chime.

ating a sustainable model for ministry and one that does not rely on charitable donations for its financial support. While the charity model has served the religious world well in the past, we do not believe it is a model that will be able to support ministry in the future. Our most recent efforts to create a sustainable ministry—one that honours the Lord, shares the Gospel, and serves others while generating enough income to financially support itself—is the Marigold Whole Life Centre.

Marigold Whole



John Cullen lighting the candle to start the blessing ceremony at Marigold Whole Life Centre.

Life Centre officially opened on September 8, 2015. Our offices are located in the downtown Galt area of Cambridge, Ontario. In recent years, Galt has been undergoing a period of revitalization, and there are a number of health and holistic health-related businesses that are establishing themselves in this area. We expect that our connec-

tions to the community and to other wellness practitioners will produce collaborative relationships of support and referral of services.

Prior to the official opening, we held a private ceremony to bless and consecrate the space. Members and friends of Revelation of the Spirit gathered in the afternoon and took part in the ceremony. Each room was blessed with prayers, holy water, and sound vibrations from Tibetan cymbals. The ceremony was opened with the reading of Genesis 1:1–3 and

was closed with the reading of Revelation 21:2–4. It was a spirit-filled afternoon that brought us all together to affirm the work that has been completed and to set the intentions for our work to come.

In addition to counselling services, nutrition consulting, and reiki treatments, Marigold Whole Life Centre will be hosting a weekly Monday evening prayer and meditation service. Our first Monday evening meditation



Revelation of the Spirit Board of Directors: Lorraine Cuthbertson, Rev. Catherine Lauber, Pamela Kesselring.

was held on September 28, with the theme of “New Beginnings.” These forty-five minute services will provide the community with a bit of sabbath time and a chance to slow down, reflect, and receive a weekly spiritual infusion through meditations, music, reflections, and prayers from a variety of sources and traditions. ☸

Rev. Catherine Lauber is the director of Revelation of the Spirit.



Gathering Leaves

Continued from page 141

foremothers of the several churches with their varied accomplishments, with each speaker actually dressing up as the person she was telling us about—very impressive! It really gave us a feel for the struggles as well as the joys these women must have encountered.

Friday morning consisted of brief reports from women who are fruitful in their branches of the Swedenborgian churches.



Rev. Nadine Cotton and Rev. Jane Siebert enjoying a coffee break

In the evening we had a guest speaker who told us about the early church in Cincinnati, which started in 1811.

Friday's workshops covered quests for a fulfilling spiritual life, music for the soul, Logopraxis, the apostle Paul, and freeing the captive spirits (those

who are victims of abuse).

Saturday's workshops covered future growth and uses, with a new un-



Page Morahan, Gloria Toot, Tammara Farsadi, Robbin Ferriman and Rev. Catherine Lauber in the gazebo for "Finding God in Nature" workshop

derstanding of gender, the second half of Logopraxis, and some ideas for evangelization.

In the afternoon, a visit to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center was organized for participants. This writer had a tough time with it: the pain of seeing the huge number of enslaved people represented, who were ripped away from their families, homes, and cultures to become slaves for greedy plantation owners. Many slaves, of course, died on the way here.

And slavery is not just a thing of the past: it is here today in the form of sex and labor slaves who are forced into living a nightmare. I was able to take some comfort in knowing that God and the angels were working hard to help them, even as I shuddered to

imagine what they went through and go through. It was a vivid reminder of people's inhumanity to others.

Sunday took us to the beautiful Glendale Church (General Church affiliation), just outside of Cincinnati, with an inspiring service led by Center for Swedenborgian Studies seminar-

ian Shada Sullivan. Rev. Clark Echols welcomed us, and we enjoyed lunch and fellowship there afterwards.

What I cannot share with you through the written word is the amazing sphere of friendship that developed over the course of the long weekend. No matter what denomination or belief system each person has, we come



Rev. Jenny Caughman leads a workshop "The Doctrine of Life and the Quest for a Fulfilling Spiritual Life." Linda Tafel on right

together in the spirit of friendship and shared love of connection, which is both comforting and uplifting. It feels as though we are able to share a little taste of heaven with each other. Even in such a short time we made friends very quickly and reconnected with those we already knew.

If you are a woman who has not experienced this connectedness, please join us for the next Gathering Leaves in 2017 and sample it for yourself! ☩

Rev. Julie Conaron is a hospice chaplain living in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. She conducts services at the Creekside Independent New Church in Southampton, Pennsylvania.



Breaking bread together (L to R): Kay Alden, Shada Sullivan, Sherrie Connelly, Sonia Werner

Op Ed

God Cares About Truth and Justice

BY KIT BILLINGS

We are in the middle of an ongoing social and cultural struggle as Americans, which is highlighted by the social unrest and protests in Baltimore, New York, and Boston over the death of Freddie Gray, a twenty-five year old African-American. Similar protests happened in Ferguson, Missouri, in August of 2014 over the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by Ferguson Police. The underlying complaint, especially from those of African American descent, is that there is systemic unfairness, brutality, and violence being committed by some police officers and that our justice system is infected by bias and discrimination.

God cares ardently about truth and justice, because the roots of the “Tree of Life” (as the Lord is called in the Bible) are Divine Love itself (*Revelation Revealed* §933), and because God loves everyone equally and forever. Thus, the Lord suffers when we suffer under injustice, violence, and oppression.

“And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” (*Revelation* 22:2) Thus, truth, symbolized by those leaves growing on all levels of life, will bring us healing. As a church, we can help our country by proclaiming the healing and regenerative Divine Love and Truth, which is God, as we know it. We can also pray fervently for love, peace, and justice to prevail, as well as take action where we feel it is needed.

The prophets were outspoken about the Lord’s passion to protect and sup-



port the poor and vulnerable, as in Isaiah 1:17, “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.” In Zechariah 7:9–10, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.” Compare this with where Jesus quoted Isaiah in Luke 4:18–19.

I have enormous respect for and gratitude toward our law enforcement and justice system in general, and yet, over and over again I hear good citizens saying that they are tired of being pushed around and oppressed. I am glad when Americans choose to protest peaceably and when law enforcement does its job to protect our rights, our citizens, and our property and businesses. I believe an overhaul of our justice system is now warranted.

The findings of the Justice Department investigation led by Attorney General Holder concerning the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson revealed startling information. I quote this from the website of the National Council of Churches:

The report revealed that the police department and the City of Ferguson perpetuated the practice of discriminatory and racial bias against African-Americans. . . . the city had “a pattern or practice of unlawful conduct within the Ferguson Police Department that violated the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, and federal statutory law.” (<http://tinyurl.com/njooegy>)

This reminds me that no one is above the law and that either intentional or unconscious evil and falsity

can spring up anywhere.

Thank You Lord, our “Tree of Life,” that your spirit of goodness, peace, and justice lives within us all. May your roots of love continue to deepen in our hearts and minds and give us the nourishment and courage we need. ☩

Rev. Kit Billings is pastor of the LaPorte New Church in Indiana. He lives in LaPorte with his wife Penny and their daughter.

Remembering Cameron

Continued from page 155

last summer, too. One evening near the end of camp I was feeling tired. Cam was sitting next to me. I said to him, “Cam, I’m tired. Do you want to do chapel for me?” Cam immediately exclaimed, “Sure, I’ll do it.” And he meant it. I didn’t expect this response because I knew that I was going to do chapel that night. I was embarrassed to have to tell Cam that I was kidding. And he was truly let down. Cam wanted to do chapel that night.

I know that Cam was having some difficulties in life. But I also know how good-hearted Cam was at heart. Even as a young man, Cam retained that childlike grin and those innocent eyes I remember from when we first met.

This church teaches, and I believe, that we live after death. We see death as merely a passing from one world to another. It is nothing more than leaving behind the material body while the spiritual body lives on forever. Cam’s childlike grin and innocent eyes are still smiling in the other world. All his difficulties in this world are over. He is surrounded by loving angels. And he is happy. As happy as he can bear. And he will live like this forever.

—Rev. Dave Fekete

Passages

Deaths

David Bowman, 55, passed away June 25, 2015, at Centerpoint Medical Center in Independence, Missouri. He was born in Larned, Kansas to Howard and Carole (Unruh) Bowman. He was a member of the New Jerusalem Church, Pawnee Rock, and was a former member of the Argonne Rebels Drum and Bugle Corps in Great Bend. Prayers go out to his family.

It is with heavy hearts that the family announces the passing of our son, brother, uncle, grandson, nephew, cousin, and friend, **Cameron David Pendree Epp**, on October 4, 2015. Cam was born August 13, 1994, in Kindersley, Saskatchewan. He attended elementary school in Saskatoon, where his mother and sisters would plant their roots. His love of the farm eventually led him to Kindersley to live with his father.

Cam had a love for speed; he and his dad restored a countless number of classic race cars, which led to many weekends at the race track. He also loved travel; he would jump on a plane or in a car any day of the week. Cam loved his family and friends, and he loved the farm. He shared with his father a passion for life.

He also loved weekends at the family cabin and church camp where he found the love of Paulhaven, where he gathered with his church family, sharing life, love, laughter, and faith. Wherever Cam was, he was always "home." Cameron will forever live in the hearts of his father Stuart (Tanis) Pendree and mother Dawna Epp (George Terlesky); siblings Aurora McBeath, Amanda Epp, Ashley Epp, Travis Terlesky, Mandy Peters, Adam Terlesky, and Marc and Callan Kitteringham; his "Uma" (Hilda) Epp; and his nieces, aunts, uncles, cousins, and

In Memoriam

Remembering Cameron

Cam made an impression on me. This is significant because I only knew Cam for one week out of the year over a ten-year period—and even that wasn't every year.

I had the privilege of baptizing Cam when I had only been a minister for one year. Cam was just a boy then. And Cam never lost that boyish innocence over the whole time I knew him.

When Cam was a young teen, we seemed to hit it off. I remember clearly a story from this time. On the last night at Paulhaven Camp, we have a dance. The music was booming, the lights were flashing, and smoke was diffusing through the lodge. All the teens were dancing. I was sort of moving my feet to the beat, but that's about all. I found myself where Cam was dancing. He had this happy grin on his face. He grabbed my arms at the elbows and got them moving up and down to the beat—all the while laughing and smiling with that joyous grin.

Cam got religion. He made his connection with faith at Paulhaven, like so many other teens who are now adults. He listened to the Bible stories and was attentive in class. Many of the Bible stories use nature imagery and even farming imagery.

There is the story about faith that uses the imagery of a mustard seed that grows into a tree. I asked Cam how small a mustard seed is, and he

countless friends.

We will forever miss your hugs, your smile, and your diamond blue eyes.

Till we meet again. ☪



responded by saying it's really small. There is a law in Leviticus about not reaping your field all the way to the edges, and not going over it a second time. The idea is to leave the gleanings for the poor. Again, I asked Cam about this. He said that he does reap his field all the way to the edges, but that

he doesn't go over it a second time. He said all these things with that winning smile.

One year at Paulhaven, Cam decided that he wanted to become more involved with the church. He told me that he wanted to get confirmed in the church. I liked Cam's enthusiasm. Of course, we had to run this by his mother. Now, the confirmation of her son is a rite that no mother on the planet would miss. The only thing was, Dawna wasn't at camp that year. To witness her son's confirmation meant that she would have to drop everything and come from Saskatchewan all the way to Ashmont, Alberta, at the drop of a hat. Exasperated, she asked, "Can't you talk him out of it?!" But there was no talking him out of it. Cam had made up his mind. He faithfully attended confirmation class, and reverently stood as I placed my hand on his head and confirmed him into the Christian Church. Cam continued to attend confirmation class even after he had been confirmed. I didn't see Cam for a few years afterward. Then he came to camp last year on staff as an adult. I scarcely recognized the fine, young man that youth had grown into. Cam continued to attend the question and answer class we held at Paulhaven last year.

Cam's interest in religion was strong

Continues on page 154

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.

Reflection

"I Used To . . ."

BY PAULA HILBERT

This seems like a fairly benign set of words; however, when combined with a negative slant, they are brutal. They begin to stack one on top of the other in a way that is difficult to live with.

Throughout my ALS battle, my goal is to always find the silver lining and stay positive. But, when performing simple daily tasks becomes difficult or impossible, it is so easy to think "I used to do this easily!" For example, people who know me are well aware that brushing my teeth is vitally important! (Even now, my kids probably wake in a cold sweat imagining me asking them, "Have you brushed your teeth?!") Now I look at my beloved toothbrush and think "I can't, it's too heavy." Using a zipper or button used to be a no-brainer! But now, most clothing gets a glare from me. I used to be able to dress myself.

I used to do so many things! Gone are the days of running early in the morning before work. Gone too is singing and talking, playing piano, eating, and being completely independent. I truly miss these activities.

I felt the weight of this dragging me

down. I had to put my "FINISH STRONG" mentality to work on this problem. So now, most days I can say, "I used to miss out truly absorbing all the colors in the sunset. I used to take for granted how much strength I draw from my family and friends. I used to rush from one activity to another, not taking the time to appreciate how wonderful it feels to be alive! And I used not to realize how important my faith in God is . . ."

So as difficult as it is to accept the changes, I think I'm finding my way down a new path, in a new way, with a fresh perspective.

"Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (2 Corinthians 3:17)

Paula Hilbert is a member of the Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas, where she lives with her husband Brad and their children.

