



## The Divine Humanity

*The following article first appeared in the December 24, 1955, New Church Messenger.*

BY BJORN JOHANNSON

Christmas will be a time of gladness and rejoicing in most American homes. This statement is based on the simple observation that in the past this has generally been the case. There is something about the Christmas spirit that induces charity, kindness, and gladness. True, there will be some who, in the spirit of Scrooge, will exclaim, "What does the world have to be merry about? Half of it is hungry, more than half of it is under the rule of a cruel tyranny, and even over nations that are rich and free there hangs a pall of fear."

However true these things are, Christmas induces gladness because it commemorates that unique event in human history, which now lies at the very heart of that history, the birth of the holy baby who was to become and now is the Divine Humanity. In His birth lies the hope and the promise for the children of men of freedom from hunger, tyranny, and fear. In that birth is the assurance that evil is not built into the structure of things, hence destined to endure forever and possibly prevail in the end. Evil is the perversion of a life that in its root-purpose is good, and the Divine Humanity came to earth to rescue men from that perversion.

In an ancient prophecy we read,  
The wolf also shall dwell with the

lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. (Isaiah. 11:6)

Few people today look for any literal fulfillment of this prophecy. They do not look for zoological gardens where predatory and grass-eating animals live together in peace and accord. A much more important spiritual meaning is here indicated. This is a promise that the wild drives of aggressiveness, selflove, greed, the lust-for-pow-

**In His birth lies the hope and the promise for the children of men of freedom from hunger, tyranny, and fear.**

er and hostility that dwell in the human breast, can be controlled and directed into channels where they will bear fruit for the welfare of man and for the kingdom of God. But man by his own strength cannot tame the wild beast within. However, he can achieve this end with the help of the Divine Humanity. Therefore we are told that a little child shall lead them—the child born in Bethlehem.

Christmas carries us back to this wonderful event of the birth of the Holy Baby, in whom were to be blended in perfection both humanity and divinity. To stress either of these last two terms at the expense of the other is of no value. Jesus was and is God-Man. He is the Creator, who, to carry on

the redemptive aspect of creation, was the Word made flesh, was the teacher who went about doing good and living the perfect human life, thereby uniting it with the "Divinity of which it was begotten." He is "God manifest" in terms of human experience and in a manner within the comprehension of the human mind. Certainly we must stress the human aspect of Him who was born in Bethlehem, but not overly much. Learned books have been written stressing the humanity of the Lord to the point where they seem to reject his divinity. There are churches that stress only his humanity—indeed, openly and frankly deny the idea of his divinity. Against this tendency, the follower of the Lord has constantly had to fight. That the Lord's humanity was real is made abundantly clear in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Inasmuch as the New Church asserts the sole deity of Jesus, and we often meet with such statements as "Jesus is God," it may seem that we can never overstate this. Perhaps not, but it must never be forgotten that the humanity of the Lord is not to be ruled out. There would have been no need for that birth in Bethlehem if the humanity assumed by the Lord had not been necessary in the work of redemption. Certainly God was not born in Bethlehem on that first Christmas. Such an assertion would be an obvious absurdity. God is from everlasting to everlasting, and no one can assign to Him as his birthday a certain day in human history. On Christmas day there was born a tiny infant, just as helpless as any infant

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## The Editor's Desk



### Fear and Loathing

Recently, a young couple in California amassed an arsenal of military weapons, ammunition, and homemade bombs, dropped their six-month-old baby off, and went to a place that assists those with developmental disabilities where they slaughtered fourteen people and injured seventeen more. They were Muslim and apparently acting on their own to support the self-described “the Islamic State,” or ISIS.

The response is sadly predictable: Many politicians, political candidates, and media outlets are whipping up fear and calling for revenge. Rather than conquering fear and loving our enemies, many of us succumb to fear and loathing.

The following letter appeared last week in the *Portland Press Herald*:

All is not well within ISIS. There is growing discontent, including revulsion at the relentless brutality. ISIS is motivated by rage at its enemies, and as Ram Dass observed, anger may be great for starting your engine, but don't let it get hold of the steering wheel. ISIS is running on road rage, which is inevitably self-destructive.

We will not defeat terrorism by killing terrorists. We must limit their capacity to do harm, but we must recognize that every terrorist we kill becomes a hero, a martyr. I was in grade school during World War 2, and remember the gold stars on the windows of the homes of slain servicemen. They strengthened our willingness to sacrifice, to buy war bonds, to plant victory gardens, to accept rationing, to recycle tin cans and newspapers. I applaud our effort to limit civilian casualties (so different from the carpet bombing of WW2), but deplore our blindness to the powerful side effects of the necessary killing, limited as it is. How can we offset it?

Terrorism is a state of mind, so to defeat it, we must win minds. Baal Shem Tov offered the parable of a deaf man who saw people dancing in the streets to the music of a violinist. He thought they had gone mad, because he couldn't hear the music. Hearing my wife and daughter delightedly laughing in the next room yesterday, I was struck by the thought that this was music that a terrorist may never have heard.

There is profound, practical wisdom in the gospel command to love our enemies. Once they hear the music, they will become our friends. Impossible? No, the “filthy Nazis and dirty Japs” of my boyhood are now, unthinkably, among our staunchest allies. “Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.”

—George Dole

We would do well to examine our reactions to terrorist acts in light of Jesus' teachings and the writings of Swedenborg. Let us conquer fear and act not out of unreasonable fear and desire for revenge but rather with love and wisdom.

—Herb Ziegler

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## Church Calendar

- **December 27–30:** SCYL Winter Retreat
- Almont Retreat Center, Michigan
- **January 15–18, 2016:** SPLATz Retreat (10–13 year-olds) • LaPorte New Church, Indiana
- **April 16, 2016:** General Council Conference Call meeting
- **April 22–23, 2016:** CSS Board meeting • Berkeley, California
- Pre-Convention General

## the Messenger

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## Letter from the President



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

Dear Friends,

Fall is here. In fact it has fallen most of the way! There are only a few remaining leaves stubbornly clinging to the trees, but most have already been raked and piled up ready to be mixed into our compost pile along with the steady flow of scraps from our kitchen. It was a satisfying feeling this past summer to use a substantial amount of rich dark soil that came from our compost pile to fertilize our blueberries and the several little trees that I had transplanted. To think that nutrient rich soil was once old salad, avocado peels, coffee grounds, and onion skins!

It gets me thinking how, with a little planning and perhaps a little extra effort, one can substantially reduce the amount of “garbage” that gets sent to landfills. Certainly, composting is one thing. But recycling is another. I know it can get annoying, all this harping on recycling, but with energy costs rising and energy sources diminishing, it only makes sense to see if we can’t be just a little more efficient in how we live, consume, and discard. And while it may on the surface seem unimportant and too small a thing to make a real difference, when you look deeper into the subject of trash in general, you find that it is in fact a big deal, and that these small efforts on our parts as individuals, when combined in numbers, actually makes a big difference.

But perhaps more important than the aforesaid is this thought: we are charged in the beginning of the Bible with being stewards of God’s creation. The earth, far from being something evil to be overcome and disdained, is the handiwork of the very God we profess to honor and serve. As stewards of that creation, how we live—what we take and consume for our own use and what we do with what is left over from what we have consumed—is an expression of our relationship with God and the creation that has been provided for us. It is an opportunity to develop a sense of spiritual practice, a way to express our gratitude and our honoring of God. It is a way to be of use in the world. And when those thoughts are put together, and in light of Swedenborg’s statement that “True worship is the life of charity,” how we throw out the trash becomes an act of worship!

Don’t scoff. Communion, the most sacred of our spiritual sacraments, is contained in the most mundane and commonplace activities in all of life—the sharing of food and drink. It is no coincidence. Our deepest spirituality is to be found, experienced, and practiced in the most common, everyday aspects of daily life. Worship services are great. They are important for many reasons. But they are intended to inspire us to greater understanding and a deeper commitment to worshiping God and seeking the divine in all aspects of our life. They are not spiritual life in isolation. Worship services are only spiritually useful to the degree they influence who we are in “real life.”

So when it comes time to throw out what we think we don’t need anymore, perhaps taking a second thought might be in order. Perhaps this that I think I have no need for, could serve a useful purpose put to use in a different context. Perhaps this material that I consider not worthy of consuming myself, when placed in the right situation, can actually become the source of new life. Of course, we are all free to choose, but perhaps there are ways we

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# General Council at Temenos for Fall Meeting

The General Council (GC) of the Swedenborgian Church (General Convention) met for its fall meeting at the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos in West Chester, Pennsylvania, on November 6–7, 2015.

## Review and Evaluation of Convention Employees

The Church has been developing a written review policy for employees who report to support units. President Ken Turley reported that he received employee evaluations for the youth director (reports to the Education Support Unit) and for the *Messenger* editor (reports to the Communications Support Unit) and that he will share these with the Executive Committee. The Council established the following employee evaluation policies:

- The support unit supervisor and employee fill out evaluations separately.
- The support unit supervisor integrates the evaluations and submits the result, including goals and objectives, to the Executive Committee.
- The Executive Committee reviews the evaluation and submits a summary statement, including goals and objectives for the coming year, to General Council for its fall meeting.
- General Council notes receipt of the evaluation in its minutes, reviews the goals and objectives, and communicates its response to the support unit supervisor. The response may include comments, suggestions, and recommendations. Goals and objectives may be revised by the Council and then presented to the employee.

## Churches

President Turley reported on the fol-

lowing churches:

- The Washington DC Church has called Rev. Rich Tafel as their minister ([see page 171](#)).
- President Turley has clarified with the Temenos Church what constitutes confirmation. He has offered to conduct confirmation classes.
- The San Diego Society has given notice that it intends to disband. They are asking for guidance from the denomination in dealing with their assets. General Council authorized the treasurer of Convention, in consultation with the Executive Committee, to negotiate with the officers of the San Diego church to develop a clear definition of the dissolution process, including Convention's role in the dissolution.
- The Cleveland Society has sold their church building and are looking for another space from which they hope to go forward. Rev. Nadine Cotton remains with them as part time minister.

## Annual Conventions

The 2016 Annual Convention will be held at Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio. General Council will take responsibility to organize the convention in lieu of a local host. The Convention Planning Committee is looking for ideas for presentations. The Council voted not to have a second phase of the program presented last year.

The 2017 Annual Convention will be in Philadelphia to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the founding of General Convention there. Site selection is in the works.

The 2018 Annual Convention is expected to be in Chicago.

## Digital Presence

General Council voted to form a committee to define, plan, and im-

plement a strategy for digital presence for General Convention. Chris Laitner was contacted, and agreed to oversee the committee as project manager. Polly Baxter will serve as the General Council representative on the committee. The Communication Support Unit, the Information Management Support Unit, the Swedenborgian Community Online, the Council of Ministers, and *Our Daily Bread* will be invited to have representation on the committee.

## Appointments

General Council confirmed the appointment of Betsy Aldrich as assistant to the treasurer.

## Budgets

General Council approved the proposed 2016 budget of Wayfarers Chapel and the proposed 2016 budget of the Swedenborg Community Online.

General Council passed the 2016 Swedenborgian Church Budget as proposed by the treasurer and approved by the Executive Committee. It shows a \$115,216 deficit in unrestricted funds. ☪

## Letter from the President

*Continued from page 159*

can make our consumption more efficient. Perhaps there are ways of putting to use that which we don't want. And, perhaps most challenging of all, perhaps the financial support we provide through what we purchase, and choose not to purchase, can exert some influence to move our society, even if it is just an incremental amount, to a more caring, conscious and reverent approach to living the life that God has given us.

—Blessings, Rev. Ken



# Theology School BOT First Meeting as CSS

The Board of Trustees of the New Church Theological School, doing business since 2001 as the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) at the Pacific School of Religion held its fall meeting as the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, California. (See page 146 for more details.)

## Moving

Dean Jim Lawrence reported that the buildings that SHS inhabited on the campus of PSR are to be gutted. Therefore, the CSS Swedenborg Library and offices must be relocated sooner than expected, probably by summer, 2017. The Board authorized a task force that will see to the needs of space for faculty, staff, and the library collection.

## Finances

Treasurer Jennifer Lindsay reported for the Finance Committee that SHS underspent its budget for fiscal year 2015, leaving a surplus of \$11–12K. Some changes to the budget will be necessary, including a stipend for the scholar-in-training's moving expenses and the cost of medical and retirement benefits, web page design and construction, and moving offices and the library collection. All of this might add up to a considerable amount, but it would be premature to present an updated budget at this time. It will necessitate changes to the FY 2016 budget, resulting in deficit spending for 2016.

Acting on a recommendation of the CSS accountants that the Board have more insight and participation into how its endowment is invested, the Board appointed Jennifer Lindsay to attend meetings of the Investment Committee of the Common Fund, the investment vehicle of the Swedenborgian Church.

gian Church.

## Scholarship Hour

Rebecca Esterson, CSS scholar-in-training, spoke to the Board about her doctoral dissertation. She explained that “the project will demonstrate, via the example of Emanuel Swedenborg, the persistence of Biblical allegory in eighteenth-century Christian thought, and its interaction with both the development of scientific revolution and the figured discourse of Jewish and Christian religious identity.”

## Meeting with the GTU President

The board held a conversation with Riess Potterveld, GTU president. He reiterated the commitment of the GTU to emphasize and develop its growing interreligious thrust. He detailed the chairs that continue to be endowed, including Jainism and Sikh, and hopes eventually to be able to offer a MA in Interreligious Studies. In addition, two schools are interested in joining the GTU, one of which is Zaytuna, an Islamic college.

## Meeting with the Web Team

Wendy Nog and Jacqueline Gilman, who are with the web design firm Future Bright Interactive Media, met with the Board. They conducted an exercise to help the Board identify the audience for the website and different ways it could usefully be accessed.

## Fund and Board Development

Karen Conger reported on fundraising ideas for the Fund and Board Development Committee:

- Highlight the one-time increased giving in the year-end appeal.
- Explore foundation grants for library expenses.
- Reinstitute an online giving capability.

- Look into social media funding, such as Indiegogo and GoFundMe or the Helen Brown Group.

## Academic Committee

For the Academic Committee, Bob Reber presented tenure, sabbatical, and salary issues for discussion.

The seven-course certificate for ordination is renamed the Certificate of Swedenborgian Ministry Studies, and there will be a six-course GTU Certificate of Swedenborgian Studies for resident MA and PhD students. ☩

## The Divine Humanity

*Continued from page 157*

born that night. He could have been slain by Herod but for the fact that Divine Providence watched over Him. In that tiny infant there were all the potentialities to make Him the perfect instrumentality for God's revelation of Himself. In Him were the potentialities which were to bring about his glorification and his union with the “Divinity of which He was begotten.”

And yet that humanity that came into the world as a little infant, that was adored by wise men from afar as well as humble shepherds in a nearby field, that was feared by King Herod, was not lost when it became one with the Divine itself. It remained with us, not as a speculative idea of a great cosmic power, but as a warm abiding presence that we could worship. In other words, that humanity became, for man, God visible, who would strengthen him in temptation, comfort him in sorrow, bring him out of darkness into light, assure him of God's love, and give him the life eternal. ☩

The late Rev. Bjorn Johansson served as editor of the *New Church Messenger* in the 1950s.

# SPLATz Look to the Heavens: Sun, Moon, and Stars Retreat at the LaPorte New Church

BY KURT FEKETE

Fifteen energetic adolescents aged 10 to 13, from Michigan and Indiana, gathered in late October for a SPLATz (Super Powered Lovable Almost Teens) retreat at the LaPorte New Church Manna House in LaPorte, Indiana. Rev. Jennifer Tafel and Heather Oelker diligently drove the van full of kids from Michigan to join Lori Gayheart, Rachael Sbrocco, and me. The theme for the retreat was a celebration, appreciation, and quest for spiritual knowledge about the Sun, moon and stars.

The retreat got started on a pleasantly warm Friday evening. We spent most of our first session talking about the ancient view of the sky and heavens and how different it was from what we now know about outer space. We then discussed some scientific facts about our own solar system and galaxy, and the distant stars. I was thoroughly impressed by how much these young children knew about the sun, moon, and stars. One child even brought up



*The SPLATz retreat group takes a break in the LaPorte New Church garden.*



*Julia and Joline craft their mobiles.*

how string theory relates to the Big Bang! After some late night snacking, we all retired for the evening.

After breakfast on Saturday morning, we left Manna House to walk over to the church for a session where we talked about ancient religion and mythology based on the sun, moon, and stars. We discussed many sun gods of many cultures, including the Egyptian god Ra, the Hindu god Surya, and the Aztec god Tonatiuh as well as moon gods, including the Greek god Artemis, the Egyptian god Isis, the Mayan god Ix-Chel, and the Hindu god Chandra. Then Lori and Rachael led the SPLATz in starting their craft project of making a sun, moon, and stars mobile. When they finished painting their celestial bodies, the SPLATz ran around outside, climbed trees,

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*Rachael Sbrocco explains the sun, moon and stars, the universe, and everything.*



*Jaylen is wary of his creation and its intentions.*



*Victor shows off his fine mobile craftsmanship*



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and played Capture the Flag.

After lunch, we took a look at the creation story and read the Genesis story of the fourth day, where God created the sun, moon, and stars. We explored Swedenborg's correspondences of the sun, moon, and stars and learned how the sun was a representation of God's love and wisdom, the moon related to our faith and understanding of God, and the stars are little good and true things that collect in our minds to guide us towards heaven. The SPLATz finished the afternoon by making beautiful glow-in-the-dark space pillowcases.

After dinner we held our Saturday evening closing worship service, where our thirteen-year-olds are welcomed into the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL). This October we had four teenagers (Nathan, Angela, Jaylen and Kristofer) go through this wonderful rite of passage where they light a candle, are given a sacred anointing by Rev. Jennifer Tafel, and receive their special handcrafted (lovingly by Rachael) bookmark. It is a special time for everyone, especially our teens that are moving on to the SCYL.

On Saturday evening, we joined the Halloween party held by the local Yana Club. The kids enjoyed music, dancing, a bonfire, and loads of snacks and treats. It was a fantastic night, and we are so thankful for Tammara Mounce and the folks at Yana for inviting us to this party each year. After our busy day, we were exhausted. It wasn't long before we were all back in bed and sleeping at Manna House.

We awoke Sunday morning for the LaPorte New Church worship service. During Sunday school, we reviewed what we had learned at the retreat and

*Angela, Kelvin, Keara, and Joline paint the earth*



*Kristofer and Nathan are proud of their glorious sun, moon and stars.*



*(l to r) Nathan, Conner, Kristofer, Oliver, Victor, Paolo, and Wyatt crafting around the table*

then took some time to talk about future retreat topics that might be interesting to explore. The SPLATz assembled their mobiles that they painted the day before, and then we closed the retreat with a prayer circle and yummy potluck lunch.

We left the church and our retreat time together with the radiance of the sun in our souls, the shimmering of the moon illuminating our times of darkness, and the stars directing our way to the Lord's heavenly kingdom. ☸

Kurt Fekete is the youth director of the Swedenborgian Church.



*Nathan receiving spiritual enlightenment. Divine intervention?*



*Tree SPLATz Kristofer, Wyatt, and, up higher, Nathan*



*Angela creates the heavens.*

# GTU Welcomes the Center for Swedenborgian Studies: CSS Launches New Era

*The following article was written for the Graduate Theological Union publication Currents, Fall 2015.*

BY JAMES LAWRENCE

**T**he Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS), a graduate program for religious training and scholarship that has operated continuously since 1866 in four successive locations, recently became the Graduate Theological Union's (GTU) newest Center of Distinction.

CSS provides academic and vocational studies for students affiliated with or interested in the Swedenborgian tradition, functions as a think-tank for Swedenborgian studies globally, and is the official seminary of the Swedenborgian Church of North America. The Center's offerings are multi-disciplinary, emphasizing theology, the arts, spirituality, history, and biblical studies while also giving significant attention to interreligious engagement, cultural studies, and personal spiritual formation.

The Center seeks to develop Swedenborgian studies in both a ministerial-formation framework and cultural and historical frameworks. Though these dual objectives will routinely involve fruitful intersections, a crisp distinction between them is planned. Many of the vocational students served by CSS are in schools and programs elsewhere in the world and are supported via distance learning with local intensive courses, whereas support for students in the MA and PhD programs at the GTU will occur locally.

The Center features three core full-time scholars: Devin Zuber, assistant



professor of American Studies, Literature, and Swedenborgian Studies; Rebecca Esterson, scholar-in-training, and PhD Candidate at Boston University; and James Lawrence, dean of CSS and assistant professor of Spirituality and Historical Studies. Additional adjunct faculty in practical theology support students preparing for vocational ministry paths.

For more than a century, Swedenborgian scholarship in seminary settings has related Swedenborgian thought to the standard array of classical and practical fields in theological education, including theology, biblical studies, ethics, spirituality, and pastoral care. Yet the approach of the GTU's Center for Swedenborgian Studies includes opportunities for scholarship in a wide range of other fields, such as literature, art and architecture, science and spirituality, pluralism, and new religious movements.

Swedenborgian thought draws on the spiritual insights of the Swedish Christian mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). The tradition that has developed from Swedenborg's work has followed two distinct channels—one via Western artists, poets, novelists, and philosophers and the other via several sectarian church movements. As to the first channel, Swedenborg's most significant cultural influence can be located in nineteenth-century England, Germany, and the United States, as his metaphysics was appropriated broadly by Romance writers and artists, Transcendentalists, Spiritualists, utopian communitarian groups, and healing theorists, as well as by Christian clergy and laypersons of many denominations.

The denominational tradition that arose from Swedenborg's influence began within a generation of his death. Though Swedenborg confined his reforming activities to a largely anonymous ministry of publication, a church movement in England devoted to his vision of Christianity arose among enthusiastic readers of his works, mostly from Anglican, Methodist, and Baptist backgrounds. A separatist controversy in 1787 led to a new ecclesiastical structure that was distinctly Swedenborgian: the General Conference of the New Jerusalem. Other Swedenborgian denominations formed in the subsequent century in the United States, Canada, Switzerland, and Australia; over the second half of the twentieth century organized Swedenborgianism took root with some vigor in sub-Saharan Africa, Japan, and South Korea. Today, five Swedenborgian denominations worldwide total 60,000 members. The oldest Swedenborgian denomination in the United States—the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, formally organized in 1817—is the tradition connected to the Center for Swedenborgian Studies.

Swedenborgianism embodies the commitment to interreligious dialogue that is a hallmark of the GTU. The landmark 1893 World Parliament of Religions was the brainchild of a Swedenborgian jurist, Charles Carroll Bonney. In his keynote address to the Parliament, Bonney lifted up the ideal of an “absolute respect” toward all traditions, quoting passages from several of Swedenborg's works. The first Buddhist publication in the United States, *The Buddhist Ray*, was conceived and published in 1888 by a

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## Executive Editor Sought for Online *Our Daily Bread* Ministry

### Job Description

The Council of Ministers of the Swedenborgian Church is seeking an executive editor for creative manage-

ment of *Our Daily Bread* (ODB), an online ministry through social media and a primary web site.

The editor (or joint editors) will create, oversee, and manage day-to-day social media efforts (such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, and G+) and also will build and manage ODB's website. The website will function as an organized archive of sermons and worship resources as well as an interac-

tive forum in support of selected spirituality themes via comments, experiences, blogs, YouTube videos, audio clips, etc. The ODB ministry goals are to reach the world outside the church in compelling ways and to serve the existing church as a conversation and resource center. Responsibilities therefore include continual reader engagement via daily postings in social media and tracking detailed analytics on one hand and development of content for web publication on the other, with the former hopefully leading traffic to the latter.

### Requirements

- Extensive knowledge of Swedenborgian theology and spirituality
- Excellent writing and editing skills
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Ability to make appropriate decisions with limited supervision
- Demonstrable website and social media expertise and skills

### Nice to Have

- Formal academic training in Swedenborgian thought
- Formal experience in writing and editing
- Demonstrated expertise in Facebook and other social media platforms

The position is considered half-time, with January 1, 2016, as the target for date for beginning.

To apply, submit a vision statement on how to develop an online ministry via social media and web sites; two or three short topical writing samples; and a CV/resume.

Respond to Rev. Dr. James Lawrence at [jlawrence@psr.edu](mailto:jlawrence@psr.edu). The *Our Daily Bread* Re-Start Team consists of Rev. Kit Billings, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Rev. John Maine, Rev. Jane Siebert, Rev. Dick Tafel, Rev. Jennifer Tafel, and Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake. ☪

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Swedenborgian minister, Herman Vetterling (1849–1931), who later changed his name to Philangi Dasa. The Zen Buddhist scholar widely regarded as bringing Zen to the West, D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966), considered Swedenborg an especially appropriate dialog partner with his tradition, translated several of Swedenborg's works into Japanese, and wrote *Swedenborg: Buddha of the North*.

Swedenborg and his successors have also made historically significant contributions to the discourse between science and religion. Swedenborg produced approximately 150 written works in at least a dozen science disciplines, and the sheer quantity and breadth of his work in natural science analysis is of note. The Swedish Nobel laureate Svante Arrhenius has detailed Swedenborg's importance in the history of astronomy, while Princeton's Charles Gross lists Swedenborg as a potent figure in the history of anatomical research. Swedenborg's work on anatomy and consciousness remains relevant to such contemporary topics as Altered States of Consciousness (ASCs), Near-Death Experiences (NDEs), and the mind-body problem.

The Library and Archives of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, located in Holbrook Hall at Pacific School of Religion, contains a wealth of materials for research and scholar-

ship in all areas of Swedenborgian studies. In addition to the complete works of Emanuel Swedenborg in all translations, one can explore monographs, pamphlets, periodicals, and secondary research materials by and about authors, artists, and thinkers influenced by Swedenborgian thought. For example, the collection features indexed notebooks containing more than 200 original items of correspondence to a prominent nineteenth-century intellectual sometimes called "George I": George Bush (1796–1859), an ancestor of presidents George H. W. and George W. Bush. Other archival materials include a large traveling trunk of Henry James, Sr., with his collection of Swedenborg's works annotated in his own hand, a pair of oil desk lamps that once adorned Swedenborg's writing desk in Stockholm, and rare first editions of many of Swedenborg's works. All books and monographs have been added to GRACE, the GTU library's online catalog.

CSS hosts occasional lunch conversations, lectures, and public educational discussions on a broad array of topics connected to aspects of Swedenborgiana. The Center also produces *Studia Swedenborgiana*, which published as a print journal from 1974–2006 and continues as an online journal. ☪

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies and assistant professor of Spirituality and Historical Studies at the GTU.

## Reflection

## Sawdust

BY. JANE SIEBERT

I have heard some say that to be a Swedenborgian, you have to be willing to think deeply. You have to be willing to question what you have learned in the past, as a child, as an adolescent, as a young adult, and on and on. You need to be a continual learner, as God is a continual teacher.

I like this. It works for me. *And* I believe we can think too much. We can lose the balance of head and heart. We can try to control this uncontrollable world by trying too hard to make sense out of what happens and why it happened, to justify our actions with our thoughts, and to dig ourselves into our way by thinking of it as superior.

We all know God created us with hearts and minds and, as Swedenborg explains it, with a will and an understanding. The will is our desires and the understanding our thoughts. When we were each created, God was intentional in giving us a free will. We could have been created to always follow God's will, but I believe God loved us completely and knew it would only benefit us when we chose to follow God's will. We are never forced to do so, and that is where the rubber meets the road, as they say.

No matter how well we know each other—our spouse, our parents, our children, and our friends—each has a separate will, and sometimes they clash, and conflict can ensue. Conflict is normal, but it is never fun. It hurts us and the one we are having the conflict with.



Conflict arises from differences, differences in how we understand things, how we see things, what we believe, how we react. It can break trust in one another and cause us to feel our way of thinking is not respected, valued and loved. Everyone experiences these clashes. Sometimes, it seems we have more conflict than others. I think the only way to avoid conflicts may be to hole up in a hermitage and avoid communication and interactions with anyone else. And even then, we might experience conflict within ourselves.

We have family conflicts, friend conflicts, church conflicts, neighbor conflicts, and so on. Sometimes we may just push a conflict aside, prefer not to think about it, let the dead dog lie, and eventually the stink will leave. But this is not a healthy way to approach conflicts, no matter where they are or who they involve.

We must learn to resolve conflicts. Because if it is not dealt with, if we just try to bury a conflict, we do still think about it, and the result is a split mind, what's called dualistic thinking. It creates bad guys and good guys, my side and your side, winners and losers. The balance of head and heart, of will and understanding, is off kilter. We will think about it with our minds and continue to justify our way of thinking and our decision and our part in the final decision. So often, even when we say, "I have let it go", we are still hanging onto it. We have just tried to push it away, and it sticks in our subconscious. Unless we truly address it, it is still there affecting our interactions, our thinking, even our will.

This causes a separation, a gulf between those in conflict. We are bothered by the bit of sawdust in another's eye, when we have a big piece of wood in our own. Books on conflict tell us we need to address the issue. We need tools to address the issue. We need to get out of our heads and move into our

hearts and try to understand and *feel* the other's side of things. And sometimes we need outside help with people trained in conflict resolution.

I do not like conflict. I doubt there are many that do. The result is that I tend to push things aside and try to ignore conflictual issues. That is one way of dealing with things. And it will work for a while, but the hurt is still there, and it does come up and affects how I see things and feel about others. It affects future decisions, even without our realizing it.

Richard Rohr, in *The Art of Letting Go: Living the Wisdom of Saint Francis*, points out that the ego is constantly searching for any solid and superior identity. We all have a need to be right. We tend to justify our actions and words by thinking about them over and over in our minds. There is no better way to remain stuck where we are than to baptize and bless the way we have handled things, our part in the conflict, holding to "I am right and she is wrong," or "This is just who I am. And that is that." The human ego will always try to name, categorize, fix, control, and insure all its actions and thoughts by keeping us "inside our heads." It lives out of its self-made image in our thinking instead of mirroring the image of God with our hearts and will. This makes it very hard to understand another's position, because understanding is in our heads.

The only way to get beyond this problem is to open our hearts, to let ourselves feel how others might feel, to truly try to love our brothers, our sisters, our neighbors, our fellow church members by feeling where they are coming from. By stepping back from our personal justification for why we feel the way we do, we can open our hearts to how another might feel.

When you can stop resisting suffering and actually allow yourself to really feel your pain and the pain of another,

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# Elmwood Church Rising from the Ashes

BY DONNA KEANE

After years of deferred maintenance and recognition of severe structural defects, the 150-plus-year-old house of worship of the Elmwood New Church, in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts, was demolished as a part of the plan for building a *new* Elmwood New Church on the same site.

It was surprising that it took only one day for the building to come down and one more day for all of the debris to be compacted and removed.

In usual fashion, the building permits were delayed for over a year due to administrative issues, but finally granted in the middle of October. The architect and the contractor have worked extremely well together, and the site work and foundations are now going into the ground so that the structure can be erected "tight to the weather"



*The new Elmwood New Church will rise phoenix-like from the "ashes" of the old.*

before the first hard freeze. After that, the crews can work on finishing the rest of the building and eventually the parking lot and landscaping. The estimate for completion is spring of 2016.

We are excited and filled with anticipation that the Lord's work will continue in the new building so that the message of hope and salvation will enlighten everyone's life who enters into the church.

We appreciate the hard work and commitment that so many people

have put into this transformation and hope that others will continue to pray for the continued success of the Elmwood New Church and its congregation as we enter into our new millennium with a renewed spirit. ☩

Rev. Donna Keane is pastor of the Elmwood New Church. She lives in East Bridgewater and has a counseling therapy practice.



## Online Community 2016 Pledge Campaign

Join [SwedenborgianCommunity.org](http://SwedenborgianCommunity.org) in bringing Emanuel Swedenborg's message into homes around the world.

In 2016, we will serve our community and expand our reach through BlogTalkRadio, weekly worship in multiple formats, and enhanced Facebook presence.

Our pledge goal is \$4500.

If we receive \$500 in pledges by December 31, 2015, one of our members will match it! Can you help us meet our goal?

You can contribute with Paypal at <http://tinyurl.com/zou38c6> or by credit card or check through the Swedenborgian Church Central Office at 617.969.4240.

Mail checks to:  
The Swedenborgian Church  
50 Quincy Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

Make Checks payable to The Swedenborgian Church specifying that the donation is in support of SwedenborgianCommunity.org. ☩

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it leads you into a broad and spacious place where you live out of the abundance of divine love. It may not leave quickly or easily, but it is a powerful movement.

Forgiveness has the power to lead you to your true self in God. Because the hurts of life are so great, you cannot let go of the pain on your own. You need to draw from the larger source of love and forgiveness. Forgiveness is one of the most radically free things a human being can do. When we forgive, we have to let go of our own identity at a completely different level—the divine level.

You look at the bit of sawdust in your friend's eye. But you pay no at-

tention to the piece of wood in your own eye. How can you say to your friend, "Let me take the bit of sawdust out of your eye?" How can you say this while there is a piece of wood in your own eye? You pretend! First take the piece of wood out of your own eye. Then you will be able to see clearly to take the bit of sawdust out of your friend's eye. (Jesus' words) Luke 6:41-42."

To the extent that we are engaged in what is good, the world within us is subordinated to heaven and serves it; and then the Lord is present with us on both levels as He is in His Heaven. (Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell* §57)

Rev. Jane Siebert is the president-elect of the Swedenborgian Church. She takes the office of president in July, 2016. She lives in Kansas with her husband.



# SCYL Teens Learn about Their Peers in the Bible

BY KURT FEKETE

**T**welve teenagers descended on Cedar Hill Retreat Center in South Duxbury, Massachusetts, on a Friday evening in October to attend the retreat “Teenagers in the Bible: Part 1.” Eleven of the teens came from the Midwest and were safely shuttled through wind and rain to the retreat by Rev. Kit Billings and Tammara Mounce to join one teen from Massachusetts. At this retreat, the teens looked at Bible stories involving children, teens, and young adults and discovered how these ancient stories might be useful and relevant to their lives. The teens spent three days together learning, playing, cooking, and living in community.

In addition to Tammara and Rev. Kit, we were blessed to have youth leader Holly Bauer with us on staff for the entire retreat. Holly oversaw the kitchen teams and helped out with grocery shopping, cleaning, and many other tasks. I was so grateful to have Holly at this retreat helping out. We were also delighted to have SCYL graduate Nina Sasser join us on Sunday. Nina is always a joy, and it was great to have her with us for Ultimate Frisbee and for campfire music. She also stayed with us overnight to assist Holly and me with the end of retreat cleanup.

Rev. Sage Currie joined us Saturday morning and opened the retreat sessions with the dramatic story of Cain and Abel. Sage always leads engaging sessions, and it was wonderful to have her take time out from her busy schedule



*SCYL retreat teens play in the Kingston Bay tidal pools at Cedar Hill Retreat Center.*

to join us for the day. Once Sage read us the story, she jumped into explaining the inner meaning. She shared how Cain worked the ground and represents our foundation, or our lower self and instinct. Abel, on the other hand, was a shepherd. Abel’s correspondence is a level up and relates to our moral and spiritual self. Sage explained that this story helps us recognize that our lower self doesn’t understand our higher self. Our lower instinctive, impulsive side could become frustrated and angry and seek to destroy our spiritual side. Sage said, “This story moti-

vates us to fight against this urge. God is there to help us move beyond anger.” She shared that although anger can also fuel violence and war as well as lead to stress, anxiety, sadness, and depression, it is not always bad. Anger occurs when something we love is being attacked. “It can be positive. Anger can fuel us to do better.” Swedenborg understood this and wrote that anger is love blazing. Sage illustrated this by drawing a continuum line with anger on one end and zeal on the other. She had the teens write down what they are angry about and then had them place their “anger” on the continuum. The session closed with a discussion on how our anger is rarely all the way on one side or another and that it can be beneficial to recognize how much of our anger is actually zeal.

After lunch, Sage led an afternoon session on 17-year-old Joseph and his colorful coat. She explained how this is a story about becoming who we really are. “We are individually beautiful and unique.” That is the coat. The brothers in the story of Joseph represent the inner self and outer peer messages that tell us who we are and what



*The SCYL teen group with adult leaders Holly and Nina (left) at Duxbury Beach*

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we are supposed to do. These messages can throw us into a pit of despair. We need to hold on to our coats and treasure our own uniqueness. But we do need to learn to do this in community with our neighbor.

Sage then led the teens in a activity where each person chose three words that described a positive quality that they thought they possessed (i.e., enlightened, innovative, wise, etc). She then had the teens answer and discuss the questions: "What helps you to be each of those qualities?" and "What sabotages you?"

After an afternoon of beach combing, tree climbing, an intense game of Ultimate Frisbee, and a delicious dinner, the teens settled in for my Saturday evening session on Isaac and Ishmael. I reviewed the key parts of the Bible story from the Call of Abram in Genesis all the way to the descendents of Ishmael settling in the land east of



*Kevin's kitchen gymnastic routine*

Egypt chronicled in Genesis 25.

We then looked at the inner sense of the story and how we all have an Ishmael side and an Isaac side.

We learned how Ishmael's mother, Hager, was from Egypt and represents affection for knowledge and facts. The Ishmael state relates to natural or worldly thinking. Ishmael was a wild-donkey man. In a positive way, he represents our common sense, our taking action to get stuff done quickly. Ishmael is, however, our wild side that is im-



*Rev. Sage Cole recounts the story of Cain and Abel.*

pulsive and quick to act or argue without much thought or rationality.

Isaac, on the other hand, came from Sarah, who relates to a deep affection for spiritual truth. Isaac, therefore, is a thinker, not a doer. He is a contemplative, thoughtful planner. He represents the side of us that considers all the possible outcomes and carefully, deliberately thinks things through. We need Isaac in our life so that we are patient, focus on the bigger picture, and understand spiritual concepts and practices. But too much Isaac holds us back from actually doing anything productive in the world or taking useful action. "We are all somewhere on the Isaac—Ishmael continuum." I closed the session by leading a role-playing activity where teen pairs played Ishmael and Isaac and acted out scenarios such as "going on a canoe trip" or "planning a party." It was fun to watch one teen behaving overly deliberate and cautious while another teen countered with overly impulsive and thoughtless actions. Later that evening during our bowling outing, I noticed a usually sensible, level-headed teen encouraging another teen to run across a bunch of closed lanes hurdling the ball returns so she could get it on video. I went over and said to her, "Hey! Why are you egging him on?" She responded, "I don't know. I guess I'm just going all Ishmael!"

Sunday morning after breakfast, it

was Rev. Kit Billings turn to lead session. Kit focused on the book of Daniel. He told Daniel's story to the teens and explained how the Israelites kept doing things wrong, which is why God allowed bigger, tougher, warrior nations to take them away into slavery.

He then showed them a neat little video about Daniel as a teenager in exile. The video showed how Nebuchadnezzar was having

a dream that troubled him. No one could know or interpret the dream except Daniel. Kit explained that on a spiritual level this begs the question, "Who is in charge of your life, you or God? Is your selfish side or selfless side in control? Are you true to your own faith and beliefs or do you listen to peer pressure and external and internal negative influences?" Daniel was able to stand up to those in power and stay true to himself and his beliefs. Likewise, the fiery furnace of rage, selfish-



*Freya conferring' with the flowers*

ness and hatred does not need to burn us. We can cultivate the spiritual practices that will allow us to combat anger and fear.

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## SCYL Fall Retreat

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In the lion's den, Daniel showed that his God was the true God. Kit said that we all have struggles and aspects of us that are negative. He exclaimed, "The Lord will shut the lion's mouth and keep you safe if you seek help and humble yourself before your God."

Kit's afternoon session was on Esther. Esther was only eighteen years



*Freya contemplates the perfect marshmallow.*

old when, as an exiled Jew, she was appointed queen by the king. The festival of Purim is found in the book of Esther. Through Esther's story, Kit showed us how every single one of us is vitally important to God. Kit advised, "Stay true. Respect and honor your values, and you will be a blessing to many people."

Later, on Sunday afternoon, we had a fantastic time playing in the sun. We took an outing to Duxbury Beach and frolicked in the sand. Sunday evening, after dinner, we enjoyed a beautiful closing communion service led by Rev. Kit, with music played by Tony.

After the service, we had our campfire and movie night.



*Luke (hands free), Ryan (Bean), and Paige exercise on the lawn.*

We enjoyed brownie s'mores and sang songs around the campfire. Then we enjoyed a movie on the new big screen at the retreat center. We tromped off to bed in the early hours of the morning.

The van with eleven teens departed before 5 AM to drive straight through in order to get everyone home in time for school and work on Tuesday. Holly, Nina, and I worked hard cleaning up Cedar Hill before we went out to a diner for breakfast.

We all departed the retreat feeling physically and mentally tired but spiritually satisfied.

I am so very grateful to our session facilitators, Sage and Kit, along with driver extraordinaire and special support staff Tammara, along with kitchen and cleanup crew Holly and Nina. Their thoughtful service made the retreat not only possible but also extraordinary!

We all gained so much and grew so close together in this loving community. We advance from this retreat with

new tools to better understand our self and others. We return to our daily lives with the powerful reminder that the strength of God's wisdom and the warmth of God's love reside in all of us each and every day. ☸

## Metamorphosis

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but must be faced over the next year.

We are now at the stage of gaining strength and expanding our wings. We need the grace of God and the nectar of each other and those around us to grow and flourish. The school has thirteen students with varying journeys from on-campus studies for ministry to distance learning for ministry and licensed pastor training. Your financial assistance provides the necessary support to help the students grow and fly through the world, sharing the beauty of our religion, and laying eggs for future generations to benefit from our religious thoughts and actions.

As we celebrate The Year of Spiritual Uses, I ask you to spread your butterfly wings and contribute to the life cycle of the Church with your financial support and prayers for our theological school. You can contribute by going to <http://tinyurl.com/zlqtjkw> and looking for our donation button.

May the blessings of the Lord and all of His creation be with you, as we all grow the Church in every form it takes.

—Tom Neuenfeldt, chair,  
CSS Board of Trustees



*SCYL President Bekka surveying the Cedar Hill grounds*



## Passages

### Confirmations

**Erin Ferrari, Luiz Ferrari, David Larsen, and Rosa Labue** were confirmed in the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church November 15, 2015.

### Moving

**The Swedenborg Chapel of Cleveland** has sold their house of worship and is embarking on a divinely guided adventure of finding a new space. They

have their current building space until the end of this year.

A special farewell worship service

and potluck luncheon will be held in December to say goodbye to their home for many years.

The congregation is looking for another space from which to move forward. Rev. Nadine Cotton remains as their part-time minister.

The congregation asks us to hold them in our prayers, asking the Lord to send extra angels to continue guiding them on this journey. They may be contacted at [swedenborgchapel@att.net](mailto:swedenborgchapel@att.net) or [revnadine@gmail.com](mailto:revnadine@gmail.com). ☛



## DC Church Calls New Minister

**T**he Church of the Holy City in Washington, DC, the National Swedenborgian Church, has called Rev. Richard L. Tafel to be its minister.

Church Committee chair Malcolm Peck announced the appointment, noting “We’re looking forward to growing our community with the help of Rich’s leadership.”

Following graduation from Harvard Divinity School, he served as assistant to the Minister of Harvard’s Memorial Church under the leadership of Rev. Peter J. Gomes. Later he was ordained as a Swedenborgian minister and, at present, represents the Swedenborgian Church on the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches. He also served as chair of the Board of Directors of Wayfarers Chapel in Los Angeles, a national landmark designed by Lloyd Wright.

Rev. Tafel’s strong religious faith inspired his leadership in the arenas of social justice and public policy. As founder of Log Cabin Republicans, he was an early advocate for gay marriage. He played a major role in combating the AIDS crisis and in fighting for equal rights for gays.

In 2003, he created his own strategy company, offering leadership coaching to world-changing leaders on important issues such as AIDS programs for Africa and civil rights programs in Latin America.



In 2013, Reverend Tafel helped launch the nation’s first statewide social entrepreneur competitions with a focus on rebuilding Detroit. He is a regular guest contributor on the Melissa Harris Perry show on MSNBC.

Rev. Tafel summed up this opportunity saying, “Church has gotten a

bad reputation among the rising generation and often for good reason. We hope to build something new—a welcoming community of people inspired by their faith who are active in making much needed change in our world. We want to be a home for a next generation of spiritual entrepreneurs.” As he seeks to realize that goal, he cites his experience in bringing together parties with seemingly intractable differences toward positive change.

Chairman Peck noted, “Church of the Holy City is proud to have served as the a place where Helen Keller, a Swedenborgian, preached, challenging Christians to become active in changing the world. We look forward with excitement to the leadership of a pastor who shares that vision and provides his own uniquely relevant array of talents and experience to the challenge of fulfilling our mission.”

The first Swedenborgian congregation in Washington, DC, gathered in 1846 and built its church where the Senate Office Buildings now stand. Its present iconic English Gothic structure at 1611 16th Street, NW was dedicated in 1896, with the Dupont family as part of the original founders. ☛

### 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.

## Metamorphosis

The life cycle of a butterfly is a beautiful and miraculous thing. Monarch butterflies migrate from Michigan to Mexico and back again every year. This year my spouse BJ decided to leave some milkweed in our flower garden to attract the monarchs to our yard. Milkweed is the only food source for the monarch caterpillar.

The mature monarch butterfly lays its eggs on the leaves of the milkweed plant. The eggs then hatch into a caterpillar. The caterpillar grows and eats the milkweed leaves. After a couple of weeks the caterpillar leaves the plant and attaches itself to a branch or some other sturdy structure—in our case our deck overlooking Lake Huron. The caterpillar sheds its skin and forms a chrysalis.

After another week or so the butterfly that has been forming inside the chrysalis works its way out. As it sits in the warmth of the sunlight, its wings dry out and unfurl, and it is able to fly! It feeds on the nectar of the flowers and plants in its surrounding area. The new butterfly then begins its migration to Mexico and subsequent return north to continue its cycle of life.

Our theology school has undergone a similar metamorphosis. We migrated from Boston as the Swedenborg School of Religion, becoming the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS), laying our eggs on the inviting plant of the Pacific School of Religion (PSR). We took in the culture and grew to be strong with a vitality and purpose of our own. We have now outgrown the need for, and have left, our PSR home.

We are hanging on a new branch as the Center for Swedenborgian Studies of the Graduate Theological School (CSS/GTU). We have shed our caterpillar skin, formed our chrysalis and are working our way into new life. Our development from caterpillar to a new butterfly at the GTU has taken effort and risk, but the faculty and staff are now more available to meet the needs of our students and denomination. When you have a moment, take a look at the new CSS website. It's revamped, refreshed and designed to draw in the experienced Swedenborgian and the casual visitor to find deeper and more interesting content, or broader resources for contemplation and study.

Our library is housed in a facility that will soon be converted to other uses. A task force has been created to find a suitable place for our library and staff and faculty offices. The financial implications of this move have not yet been determined,

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