



## Transitions Winter Retreat 2016 Science v. Religion

BY ALICE HENDERSON

*"Transitions" is a self-organized group of young adults associated with the Swedenborgian Church. Most of the participants, also called Transitions, have been involved with some aspect of the Swedenborgian Church in their youth: at local churches, church camps, or SCYL (the Swedenborgian Church Youth League).*



"As we grow from our teenage years to life beyond, Swedenborgian Transitions aim to continue our presence in each other's lives and in the General Convention. We meet as a community of young adults to regenerate, to rest, to share experiences, to explore our religious heritage, and to expand our understanding of religion as a force affecting our world today."

—*Transitions Statement of Purpose, December 2015*

This past December, the Transitions held their Winter Retreat at Manna House in LaPorte, Indiana, for the third consecutive year. Led by Tammara (Tam) Mounce and Rev. Elizabeth Blair, we spent three days sheltered from physical and mental storms, enjoying the company of friends old and new as well as discussing intersections of science and Swedenborgianism. In sessions with Rev.

Blair, we grappled with themes such as the scientific and religious Enlightenment, Swedenborg's spiritual awakening, religious fundamentalism, and how we know truth. Beyond these structured sessions, conversation, music, laughter, art, rest, and good food abounded.

Looking to the future, we hope to encourage individuals interested in Transitions to meet with us this coming year. We stay connected primarily through our Facebook group and have plans in the works for adding a September retreat. The following snapshots from others in attendance attest to the importance these gatherings hold—some serious, others more humorous. Enjoy!

It has been a few years since I've attended a Transitions retreat. It can be difficult to make time as a young adult. I feel truly blessed to have returned to Transitions to find that all the same people were there to support me. Of course they've been there for me throughout the years, at camp and just a phone call away, but walking into the Transitions Winter Retreat again for



Swedenborgian Transitions at Manna House in LaPorte, Indiana

the first time in four years and having everyone sitting there knitting, coloring, and laughing just like before was consoling. I've moved six times since

my last retreat. I'm about to graduate college and join the "real world."

Experiencing so much change and tumult can be frightening and exasperating, but Transitions retreats put a pause on all the stress and allow us an opportunity to reflect with a clear mind. I know no other group of people who try to help each other with such alacrity. Whether it is a professor we are worried about or an identity crisis, everyone will give genuine, thought-out advice with the most pure intentions.

*Continues on page 36*

It's time to register for the  
**192nd Annual Convention of  
the Swedenborgian Church**

**June 29–July 3, 2016  
Urbana University  
Urbana, Ohio**

[Registration Form Inside](#)

## The Editor's Desk



### Wayfarers Chapel

President Ken Turley reports on the recent Board of Directors meeting at Wayfarers Chapel on [page 32](#). There is much exciting news there as Wayfarers culminates a long and thoughtful process of reorganization and announces a comprehensive rebuilding plan for the future.

We, the Swedenborgian Church, and the world are fortunate to benefit from the visionary church leaders who conceived of the Chapel and engaged Lloyd Wright to bring the architectural manifestation of their vision to fruition. Wayfarers Chapel is a spiritual inspiration to multitudes of visitors, regular Sunday service attendees, and wedding couples.

We often have heard it said that church buildings are not important to the life of a church, that spiritual and religious matters are not dependent on physical edifices, that our churches drain our energies and our coffers. But Wayfarers Chapel demonstrates how a thoughtfully conceived, designed, and

executed chapel can be a vital part of a religious community of caring and mission and that the goal of ministering to the world at large in this way cannot be achieved without the physical manifestation.

Wayfarers Chapel has been a great and ongoing success in its mission. And, although we should guard ourselves against pride, self-satisfaction, or smugness, we can be thankful that we have been able to put some of our resources to such use in the world.

Fortunately, the benefits of this effort have added to the church mission without additional financial burden. Apart from the initial infusion of capital and "startup" money, the Chapel has been able, for the most part, to sustain itself through wise management and careful planning and execution.

Several years ago, the Chapel recognized the urgency of the need to replace the original visitor's center (due to soil movement from landslides) and to address rot issues at the base of the structural posts that frame the walls of the chapel. A successful fundraising campaign and careful management and execution resulted in a wonderful new visitors center, which has helped stimulate even more interest in the Swedenborgian Church and Swedenborg's writings. This was accomplished

without direct funding by the Swedenborgian Church.

The Board of Directors of the past six years, under the leadership of Rev. Rich Tafel, has undertaken the next giant step in securing the future of Wayfarers Chapel. After many years under the able leadership of Rev. Harvey Tafel, the Board has reorganized management with an eye to sustainability and initiated the long-term plan to accomplish it, as President Turley details in his report. This new stage of rebuilding is a noble challenge for the Chapel and its supporters, and for all of us who care about it. Let the fundraising begin!

—Herb Ziegler

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## Church Calendar

- **April 1:** Association membership lists due at Central Office
- **April 15:** Annual reports due
- **April 16:** General Council conference-Call meeting
- **April 22-23:** CSS Board meeting • Berkeley, California
- **June 29-July 3:** Annual Convention • Urbana University, Urbana, Ohio

## the Messenger

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The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of *the Messenger*, the Communications Support Unit, or the Swedenborgian Church.

## Letter from the President



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

*2016–17: The Year of the Word:  
The Power of the Holy Scriptures*

Dear Friends,

Here's something to consider. We say things like, "Gosh it is nice and warm outside." Or, "Wow, it sure is cold outside." This past week I walked outside thinking the first and saw people wearing sweaters and jackets saying the second. Of course, I was out in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, for the Wayfarers Chapel board meetings, and the temperature had dropped all the way down into the low sixties! Given the eighty-degree weather they were used to, it was cold. But I was thinking of back home, where we had recently woken up to ten below. The criteria for judging the weather are very different in Maine than they are in Southern California.

It got me thinking about how often and in how many ways we talk about and judge what is going on around us by our inner experiences. We might ask, "How's the coffee? Is it any good?" One person might like it just fine and another might find it too strong. The coffee is the same for both people; it is the inner response that is different. It is the same with movies, songs, places, religions . . . The thing is just what it is, but in the human experience and response, there are all kinds of variety. It is worth considering when we judge something as being good or bad that what we are really saying is whether we like it or not. Perhaps it is a bit more accurate to say, "I really like that," instead of, "that is really great," and perhaps even more importantly to say, "I don't real-

ly like that," as opposed to saying, "that is bad." Acknowledging that our judgements are based on our personal responses might make it easier for us to own our opinions without having to place a value judgement on someone else whose opinion is different.

This may seem like a rather subtle and even inconsequential change in wording and perspective, until it comes to something that has deep meaning and serious consequences. Learning to allow difference without making it an issue of judgement is a challenge. Our society is so programmed to think in terms of good-bad, win-lose, right-wrong. There is something to be learned from the Eastern philosophical approach that seeks to step outside of thinking in terms of polarity and dichotomy. For me, it is a different reason than trying to achieve "non-attachment." It is more about trying to escape the need to evaluate and judge, which is done based on a personally relevant set of criteria which, half the time, I'm not even aware I'm using.

I suppose it is one of the primary reasons I am a Swedenborgian. I can be a Swedenborgian, believe in Christ, look to the Scriptures and feel good about that and, therefore, not have to judge someone who is Jewish or Muslim as being wrong and bad. I can like classical music and not judge rock music as bad. Of course I like both, and being able to answer the either/or questions with both/and is another gift of the Swedenborgian perspective. But of all the blessings of being Swedenborgian, I hold as the highest the ability to read the Word and have an understanding of the inner sense. It is what opens my heart and mind to the power of Scripture; it is what helps me make sense of what is going on in my life and the lives of others; and it is what helps keep me oriented with a sense of my place on the long and winding road of the spiritual journey.

It is a story that never ends, as long as we are willing and able to keep turning the page. Spiritual regeneration is the inner movement from one state into another. Sometimes, it is subtle, and we barely notice; other times, it is dramatic, and we're not sure we're going to survive. Sometimes, we see it coming

*Continues on page 35*



# Wayfarers Chapel Launches Building Campaign

BY KEN TURLEY

As I approach the end of my term as president of General Convention and so also my time serving on the Wayfarers Chapel Board of Directors, I would like to share with you my observations of where things are at with this beautiful chapel and its community. The Wayfarers Chapel, located in Rancho Palos Verdes, right on the coast of the Pacific Ocean just south of Los Angeles, is an architectural masterpiece designed by Lloyd Wright (a son of Frank Lloyd Wright) and constructed from 1949 through 1951. In 2013, [BudgetTravel.com](#) called it one of the twelve most beautiful churches in North America. Since its beginning, it has been visited by thousands of “wayfarers” each year and, for much of its time, has operated as a financially self-sufficient, highly regarded venue for weddings, baptisms, and other services as well as providing a home to an active worshipping congregation, albeit without membership. Recently, Wayfarers has also become a growing and active center for spiritual lectures, programs, workshops, and study groups, providing countless individuals with the experience of a nurturing and positively powerful message of spiritual healing and unity that brings people together across the boundaries of race, religion, economics, and culture.

Recently, the structure of the ministry at the chapel has undergone a dramatic change. Nearly four years ago, Rev. Harvey Tafel retired. Harvey began as a wedding celebrant and, over time, became the director of opera-

tions and served the chapel faithfully for over forty years. With the end of his singular leadership, the Board of Directors, made up of clergy and laity appointed by General Convention, under the leadership of Rev. Rich Tafel, created and instituted a new vision of leadership, with a leadership team composed of three directors sharing the responsibility and authority: Rev. David Brown is director of ministry, Shannon Reynolds is director of finance and administration, and James Morgan is director of development. Using a consensus model of decision

the process of repentance (acknowledging where you are and where you want to be), reformation (making a plan of action and setting about the hard work of doing things differently), and regeneration (the becoming of what was at first only a vision of what might be), simply put, wonderful things happen!

So, now we are faced with a very different kind of structural problem. The National Trust for Historic Preservation supported a study of Wayfarers Chapel which determined that the Chapel itself, having been literally “built upon a rock,” has not been impacted by a series of landslides over the years. However, it did find that our office building, which is perched on a precipice at the edge of the campus grounds, next to the ocean cliffs, has been damaged by the landslides and has only a limited life of safe usability remaining. On top of that, we have discovered that the inevitable toll of time has had its impact on the Chapel itself and its surrounding grounds, and there are major repairs and rehabilitation that must be accomplished in both the building and the landscape.

The Chapel Board and the Leadership Team are taking on this crisis as a challenge

and turning it into an opportunity to renew the Chapel and replace the Annex (the ministers’ offices) with a new structure in a more secure spot on the campus. In the near term, the focus is on replacement offices and Chapel restoration.

Beyond the immediate needs, the Board’s expanded vision includes a spiritual center, built for versatility to support our ministerial and wedding

*Continues on page 33*



Front l to r: Lon Elmer, Joy Barnitz, Grace Sudden, Rev. Rich Tafel; 2nd row: Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell, Rev. Ken Turley, Liz Ferguson, Jim Morgan; 3rd row: Rev. Dave Brown, Shannon Reynolds, Lem Putnam

making in conjunction with the Board of Directors, we work together to supervise the staff and the operations of the entire project. Being part of this transition in leadership style has been one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences of my professional life. It is an affirmation of the application of spiritual regeneration in all aspects of life. When a group of people seek to serve God and the higher good and put heart and mind and hands together in

# 192nd Session of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, Wednesday, June 29 - Sunday, July 3

Council of Ministers: Sunday, June 26 - Tuesday, June 28

Convention 2016 will be held in Urbana, Ohio on the campus of Urbana University (UU). To learn more about UU, visit [www.urbana.edu](http://www.urbana.edu). To learn more about the 2016 Convention and view a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), please visit [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org), email [manager@swedenborg.org](mailto:manager@swedenborg.org), or call the Central Office at (617) 969-4240.

**Lodging:** See next page for more details. Rooms will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, and may fill up before the end of the registration period. Linen packs include a pillow, pillow case, cotton blanket, two flat sheets, twin bed sheets, bath towel, hand towel, and wash cloth. If you find that you often need extra towels or blankets, you are advised to bring some with you.

**Roommates:** If you are choosing a double room and have a specific roommate in mind, please fill in their name in the appropriate space. If not, please fill in the roommate matching section; we will try to pair you with someone with similar habits and needs. You will be paired with someone of the same gender.

**Children:** If you will be bringing children, please contact the Central Office to obtain the necessary information and forms.

**Youth League Program:** The Youth League program runs from Wednesday, June 29 through Sunday, July 3, and is supervised by Kurt Fekete. If you want your teen (age 12-17) to attend without a parent, please contact the Central Office.

**Internet:** Free wifi is available inside buildings on campus.

**Parking:** Please check the box below so we know how many cars will be parking on campus. You will need to pick up a parking pass on arrival.

**Room & Board Reservations and Payment Deadline:** No new room, meal plan, or Women's Alliance luncheon reservations will be available after **June 10 at 5PM EST**. Any room and board reservations not fully paid by this deadline will be subject to a \$50 late fee. Event registrations will be accepted for as long as space permits.

**Cancellations:** Fully refundable prior to June 10 at 5PM EST. Cancellations must be done by calling the Central Office between 9AM-5PM EST, M-F.

**Arrivals and Departures:** More information to follow.

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

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

**Ground Transportation:** It is recommended that you use Dayton International Airport. Please see the FAQ for more details on ground transportation options from either Dayton International Airport or Port Columbus International Airport. You may also sign up for a carpool list using the "Travel Information" section below. Please note that rides will not be arranged for you; this is a courtesy service to put you on an email list for you to coordinate ride shares with other attendees.

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

## Roommate Matching

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

Please indicate your gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

I am (check all that apply):

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

Anything else we should know when matching you?

## Travel Information (Dayton Airport recommended)

|  |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do an airport pickup on your arrival day. (Please specify airport with an "X": __Dayton or __Columbus.)                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do a drop-off at the airport on July 3. (Please specify airport with an "X": __Dayton or __Columbus.)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will be flying in and would like to be added to an email list for you to coordinate sharing a ride on your arrival or departure day. (Please specify airport with an "X": __Dayton or __Columbus.) |

Next page for fees ➡

### Room and Board Packages:

- » **Package A (Sunday, June 26 - Sunday, July 3, seven nights):**  
(choose this for Council of Ministers members)  
\$373 per person for a double, \$513 for a single  
Includes 7 nights of lodging, 7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 7 breakfasts.
- » **Package B (Sunday, June 26 - Wednesday, June 29, three nights):** (available **only** to Council of Ministers attendees who are only able to attend COM meetings)  
Contact Swedenborgian Church Central Office for details  
Includes 3 nights of lodging, 3 dinners, 2 lunches, and 3 breakfasts.
- » **Package C (Tuesday, June 28 - Sunday, July 3, five nights):**  
(choose this for current lay General Council members or pre-Convention arrival)  
\$288 per person for a double, \$388 for a single  
Includes 5 nights of lodging, 5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts.
- » **Package D (Wednesday, June 29 - Sunday, July 3, four nights):**  
\$237 per person for a double, \$317 for a single  
Includes 4 nights of lodging, 4 dinners, 3 lunches, and 4 breakfasts.

**Meal Only Packages:** For those **staying off-campus** who want to pre-pay for meals. Meals may also be purchased with cash or credit card at the dining hall.

- » **Package W (Sunday, June 26 - Sunday, July 3, meals only):**  
\$138 per person  
7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 7 breakfasts
- » **Package Y (Tuesday, June 28 - Sunday, July 3, meals only):**  
\$97 per person  
5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts
- » **Package Z (Wednesday, June 29 - Sunday, July 3, meals only):**  
\$76 per person  
4 dinners, 3 lunches, and 4 breakfasts

| Registration  | Cost  | # People | Total |
|---|-------|----------|-------|
| Adult   | \$75  |          |       |
| Youth League (12-19)  | \$65  |          |       |
| Child (3-11)  | \$40  |          |       |
| Under 3 years old   | Free  |          |       |
| *Family maximum   | \$215 |          |       |
| One Day Registration  | \$20  |          |       |
| Local Volunteer   | \$40  |          |       |
| Women's Alliance Luncheon (must be reserved and paid by June 10 at 5PM EST) - See FAQ for details | \$10  |          |       |

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

| Room & Board  | Package | #People | Total |
|---|---------|---------|-------|
| Room & Board or Meal Only Package<br>(see package descriptions for rates)             |         |         |       |
| <b>\$50 Late Fee (assessed on R&amp;B packages paid for after June 10 at 5PM EST)</b> |         |         |       |

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

|   |
|---|
| <b>Grand Total</b><br>(from both Registration and Room & Board, less Subsidies) |
|---|

### Payment Information

All prices are in US currency. **If you pay with a Canadian check, please add US\$5 for handling. Please be advised that all prices are listed in US funds and must be converted for payment in other currencies. All room and board reservations not paid in full by 5PM EST on June 10 will be subject to a \$50 late fee.** See "Cancellations" section for refund policy.

### Payment Method

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

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

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

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

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



## Alicia Titus Scholarship Awarded

Madison Davis, an Urbana University freshman from Nelsonville, Ohio, majoring in adolescent/young adult education, recently accepted the first Alicia Titus Memorial Scholarship, awarded by Urbana University. A 2015 graduate of Nelsonville-York High, Madison was active in her community and church as well as her school, serving as captain of both the varsity basketball and volleyball teams, editing the yearbook, and helping to lead the National Honor Society. At Urbana University, Madison is a member of the Campus Activities Board, plays on the Blue Knights volleyball team, and serves as a Presidential Scholar.

On receiving the scholarship, Madison said, "I am humbled to be the first recipient of this scholarship that represents so much to the community, the Titus family, and the University. My

goal in life is to help others, giving back because so many have helped me become who I am today."

This award reflects the commitment of the Titus family as well as countless friends and community members who have participated in the fundraising efforts of the Alicia Titus Memorial Peace Fund over the past fifteen years. Alicia Titus, a former Urbana University student, graduate of Miami University, and United Airlines flight attendant, was murdered on September 11, 2001, when terrorists flew United Airlines Flight 175 into the South Tower of the World Trade Center. As a result of this tragedy, the family has channeled their grief into good, establishing the Fund to honor the exuberant young woman whose life was dedicated to the pursuit of peaceful living among all people and loving service to others. ☩

## Wayfarers Chapel

*Continued from page 33*

services as well as our growing array of activities, events, and programs. We have obtained cutting edge consulting and intend to include efficient and ecological design in both the structures and landscape, all the while remaining true to the creative genius of Lloyd Wright's original vision and design. Imagine a second building on the grounds, different but just as beautiful in its own way, and spiritual correspondence present in the design

of the building. Even the landscaping will represent aspects of spiritual correspondence, revealing a natural beauty from local and indigenous vegetation that requires less water, can withstand drought, and will resist erosion. The



Wayfarers Chapel interior

entire campus will become an extension of the meditational and inspirational spirit of the chapel, which will remain, as it always has been, the heart at the center.

The Board, the Leadership Team, and the staff, with the Lord's help, are committed to making this happen. It will require major funding and adjustments in the

## Curtis Childs on UK Podcast

Many Swedenborgians are enthusiastic followers of Curtis Childs's YouTube channel, "Off the Left Eye" (<http://tinyurl.com/hguw68w>), short and concise, cleverly produced videos explaining pieces of Christianity through a Swedenborgian lens. He also produces and hosts the Swedenborg Foundation-sponsored *Swedenborg and Life* (<http://www.swedenborg.com/sl/>), a weekly podcast of interviews focused on Swedenborgian concepts.

Recently, Childs was a featured guest on *THA Talks*—a popular UK-based weekly podcast series for "free thought and open minds."

*THA* cohost David Parry, a renowned British poet and author, shared that he recently discovered *Swedenborg and Life* while YouTube surfing and has become a huge fan. He went on to describe Childs as "one of the best broadcasters I have ever come across." The podcast is available on the *THA Talks* website (<http://thataalks.com/edition106/>).

Later, Curtis appeared on another UK-based podcast with David Parry called *Sunday Morning Spiritual* (<http://tinyurl.com/gopyhm4>). ☩

schedule of weddings and activities—major changes and sacrifices on the part of all. In short, this project is a major undertaking, and to succeed, Wayfarers will need your help and support as well. Please consider contributing what you can to make this vision become a reality (<http://tinyurl.com/h7k2qgl>). Wayfarers has a very special place in the life of the Swedenborgian Church, and it is a very special place in this world. Your contribution will help to preserve the legacy we have inherited from the past and ensure that we are able to fulfill the Wayfarers Chapel vision for the future. ☩

# My Faith Leads to Act of Solidarity

BY JENN TAFEL

*In December, 2015, the East Lansing, Michigan, Clergy Association came together in support of Imam Sohail Chaudhry of the East Lansing Islamic Center. This was in response to the growing Islamophobia in our nation based on what some presidential candidates were saying as well as the shootings in San Bernardino, California. Members of the Association asked how they could support the Center and the community as a whole.*

*After thoughtful dialogue, the members initiated a plan of action. Rev. Jenn Tafel, religious advisor of Q-CROSS@MSU, asked Imam Chaudhry and Rabbi Dana Benson of MSU Hillel if they would be interested in doing an event at Michigan State University. The following is Rev. Tafel's address from that event.*

At the meeting mentioned above, one of my colleagues reminded us that we grow in "the tensions." This reminder has stayed with me since that meeting. I honestly don't want to be in the tensions—it can be scary, overwhelming, dangerous, and if I'm being totally honest, a place where I might not be accepted. However, shying away from these situations is not in line with my call to ministry. It's not about me. It's about our community—locally and globally.

What is the flipside of being in the tensions? As my colleague said, growth. It begins with conversations and educational opportunities like what we're experiencing tonight. A wise person once told me that the root of the words *conversation* and *conversion* is the same. We are going to be different people when we leave this room and it's up to each of us how we are going to move forward and embody this difference.

Reflecting on my call to ministry, I think of the passage from Isaiah that reads,

"The Spirit of Exalted Yahweh is upon me, for Yahweh has anointed

me: God has sent me to bring good news to those who are poor; to heal broken hearts; to proclaim release to those held captive and liberation to those in prison; to announce a year of favor from Yahweh, and the day of God's vindication; to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who grieve in Zion—to give them a wreath of flowers instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of tears, a cloak of praise instead of despair. (Isaiah 61:1-3)"<sup>1</sup>

This passage from Scripture speaks to living in the tensions. This text from the prophet Isaiah comes when the Israelites are looking to build up



(l to r) Rabbi Dana Benson, Imam Sohail Chaudhry, and Rev. Jenn Tafel

the New Jerusalem. They couldn't go back to what was—they were called to move forward and ultimately create a new center of life and worship. Life for them was not easy—they were a diaspora people living between kings and empires. They were looking for a leader who would offer a challenge to the current system, restoration, hope, and comfort.

It's not so different today. Aren't we looking for some of the same things? While those of us who identify as

Christian believe the answer was Jesus, where can we look today? What if I boldly offered that we can look to our faith traditions and ourselves? Now, I'm not claiming to be a messiah—far from it. What I am suggesting is that each of us has the power to challenge systems, restore brokenness, and be a source of hope and comfort for others. For me, this ability comes from my relationship with God. A colleague of mine posted on social media that the phrase "I can't do it," is in itself a prayer rephrased, as "I can't do it—alone." Meaning that God is necessary in the equation. This requires faith.

In his book, *True Christianity*, Emanuel Swedenborg dedicates one chapter to faith and one chapter to goodwill (not that he doesn't expand on these topics in his other volumes of work). He says,

... the universe, and each and every thing in it, relates to goodness and truth. Therefore all aspects of the church relate to love or good will and faith, since everything that is called good flows from love or goodwill and everything called truth flows from faith. Now, goodwill and faith are two distinct things, yet they become one in us and make us people of the church—they cause the church to exist within us.<sup>2</sup>

Swedenborg uses the term *church* in a variety of ways throughout his theological writings. In this instance he is referencing humans as vessels embodying God and heaven. This is the ideal church: to be living and breathing vessels carrying out that which God has designed for us, and it begins with a marriage of goodness and truth within

<sup>1</sup> Priests for Equality (2016). *The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation* (p. 257). Sheed & Ward. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Swedenborg, Emanuel. *True Christianity* (New Century Edition), §336, Swedenborg Foundation.



# Call for Nominations

**T**he Nominating Committee recruits and puts forward nominees for election to offices and positions in the denomination at the Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church. The Nominating Committee nominates at least one candidate for each open position, with the exception of the Nominating Committee position, where at least two candidates must be nominated.

If you are interested in being nominated for any position (particularly an open position), contact the chair of the Nominating Committee, Martha Richardson, ([marthajane410@gmail.com](mailto:marthajane410@gmail.com) or 207.935.1217).

In addition to the two candidates to be elected to the Board of Trustees of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) by its representative class (members of the General Convention), two candidates nominated by the CSS Board are to be elected as at-large class trustees. Election of at-large class trustees takes place at the CSS annual meeting, which occurs within the annual convention.

To date, the candidates listed in the

| Position to be Filled  | Term (Yrs) | Candidate                                |
|--|------------|--|
| Vice-President   | 1          | Tom Neuenfeldt                           |
| Recording Secretary  | 1          | Karen Conger*                            |
| Treasurer  | 1          | Polly Baxter*                            |
| General Council layperson (2 to be elected)                                  | 3          | Debbie Dolley*<br>Open                   |
| General Council Minister<br>General Council Minister (unexpired 2-year term) | 3<br>2     | Rev. Betsy Coffman<br>Rev. Richard Tafel |
| Communications Support Unit (COMSU)  | 3          | Kristina Madjerac*                       |
| Education Support Unit (EDSU)  | 3          | Rev. Jim Lawrence                        |
| Financial and Physical Resources<br>Support Unit (FPRSU)                     | 3          | BJ Neuenfeldt*                           |
| Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)                                   | 3          | Open                                     |
| Support Unit for Ministries (MINSU)  | 3          | Sharon Williams<br>Open                  |
| Committee on Admission to the Ministry: Minister (CAM)                       | 3          | Rev. Jonathan Mitchell                   |
| Board of Trustees of CSS, representative class<br>(2 to be elected)          | 3          | Nancy Little*<br>Open                    |
| Board of Trustees of CSS, at-large class<br>(2 to be elected)**              | 3          | Open<br>Open                             |
| Nominating Committee (2 to be nominated)                                     | 5          | Open<br>Open                             |

\* Incumbent

\*\* Nominated by the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) Board of Trustees

table above have been nominated for election at the 2016 Swedenborgian Church Annual Convention.

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

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us. For Swedenborg, it is not possible to separate faith from goodwill.

When my colleagues agreed to come together for this event, we began by agreeing on a theme statement. It took some rewording here and there, but we eventually settled on how our various faiths inspire us toward solidarity. Perhaps now you can understand that I can't help but be drawn to acts of solidarity.

Hate speech is nothing new—unfortunately. When I heard that our clergy group was coming together to support the Imam and his community

## Letter from the President

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from a long way off and have time to prepare; other times, it comes in such a way that we don't see it until it has already happened. Pages are turning all the time and all around us—some small and inconsequential, others large

and profound.

Take joy in reading the story of life. And I invite you to make preparations to attend the 2016 Annual Convention, still three months off. Come and join us as we open the Word, and turn a page in the ongoing story of our lives and the life of our Church.

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

I was right on board. As religious advisor for a queer Christian organization, I know hate speech. It is directed toward the members of the community I love dearly, and me. I understand the damage it does to our core beings. My

faith directs me to act. My faith says to stand together. My faith says that when we come together in the spirit of love and support, all things are possible. ☪

Rev. Jenn Tafel, religious advisor of Q-CROSS@MSU.

## Transitions

*Continued from page 29*

How people live without the support of a community like the Swedenborgian Church, I'll never understand.

There was an ice storm during this retreat, so we were pretty much frozen



(l to r) Adam, Holly, Charlie, and Nina enjoying Adam's delicious crème brûlée

in together, and it was fun. I rarely take the time to sit down and play games anymore but I haven't laughed in years like I laughed at this retreat. The spiritual conversations continued for hours after sessions ended.

I felt connected to these people in a way I haven't felt connected to anyone in a long time. My only complaint is that it wasn't long enough. I can't wait for the next retreat and for a chance to share it with even more people.

—Holly Bauer

For me, this retreat was unlike any other. For the past few years, the group of people I always fit in with best left me behind—both at Almont and in the real world. I'm a few years behind, and that makes all the difference between being a teenager and being an adult. All of my older friends were adults at Almont and adults in real life, and more or less, didn't have time for me.

This year at Almont, I was an adult as well, but I was also a cook. Three quarters of my day was spent in the kitchen. Don't get me wrong, I absolutely loved it, but it didn't quite help

fill the void that had begun to grow between myself and the people I used to be closest to.

This retreat changed all of that. I was able to sit down and spend some quality time meeting and reconnecting with these friends all over again. It was like we were all kids again, with no care in the world. The few days we spent together felt like a lifetime: a lifetime that was better than I could have ever imagined. I came to the realization that I need these people in my life . . . forever.

—Danny Pera

It is my honor and great joy to spend time with this crowd of young adults. Their change and growth through the years truly amazes me. I am honored to assist in their spiritual search.

—Tam Mounce



Our fearless chef and leader, Tam Mounce, breaking down camp

Transitions Retreat, as always, was a much needed release. I love all of you dearly, and seeing you all again just always refreshes me. I didn't get to spend that much of the daylight hours with you, but then again I was there until about 4:00 AM every night, and honestly, I don't care how tired I was at work; I'd do it again in a heartbeat. You all are my favorite kind of people, and I'm so glad to know and love you.

—Audrey Gray



(l to r) Alice, Scotty, and Nina during some downtime

Coming back to Manna House each December has helped me feel spiritually grounded after five months of sparse spiritual guidance. Of course, I can always reach out to my Swedenborgian family between July and December when I feel lost, but it's never quite the same as sharing a physical space with those you love most—those who will listen without judgement and respond with compassion and thoughtful advice, push you, question your attitudes and actions, and help you become a better person. It is exciting to see my friends grow and change and become more complex and empathic individuals. And it is comforting to know that we face similar struggles during this transitional period in our lives.

Thank you to everyone who came and made this retreat so meaningful, and a special thank you to Tam, Alice, and Elizabeth for making it logistically possible.

—Nina Sasse

I recently had the opportunity to attend the Transitions Winter Retreat with my church family at the luxurious resort of Manna House in Indiana.

Now, this is not your average exotic vacation or cruise. For example we only had one world class chef (Tam Mounce) on staff to provide us with renowned dishes from all around the world three times a day.

If that doesn't get your stomach mo-

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## Church of the Good Shepherd Supports Refugee Family

The Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, was invited by a partnership of local churches—St. Stephen's Lutheran, Mt. Zion Lutheran, Erb Street Mennonite and Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic—to join in their efforts to bring a Syrian refugee family to Kitchener-Waterloo. This invitation was formally accepted on behalf of the Church by the Board at its February meeting.

The Church's contribution will not likely be financial in any big way—our money being in rather short supply these days—but that's okay with our partners. They are confident they can raise the funds they need (\$30,000) and they already have a house available for occupancy in mid-May.

However, there are a lot of other things we can help with and that are very important to newcomers settling here, e.g. gathering clothing and housewares, learning the city, trips to doctors and dentists, getting kids in school, learning English, buying groceries, going to government offices for health cards, SIN cards, etc. That's where the Church, along with its partners, can really help ease this transition for people fleeing the horrors of a civil war.

This partnership of churches has named itself the Ecumenical Welcoming Committee (EWC), and the hope is that we will have a refugee family here in Kitchener-Waterloo by the end of May. ☪

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tivated, Transitions also provides multiple spiritual sessions with our on-staff world class scholar of Swedenborgianism, Rev. Elizabeth Blair (known familiarly as "E"). She will provide you

with the answers to all the spiritual questions you're not really sure of yourself.

If that's not exciting for you, then kick back, relax, and enjoy time in



Scotty and Kristina: SCYL friends reunited

one of our five-star lounging areas where you may indulge yourself in many fun activities such as Cards against Humanity, reconnecting with long lost friends, rapping, or just checking your email.

Now, we understand that on vaca-

tion you might just need to get away from it all. If that happens, then just take a small trip to our majestic personal hot spa (known familiarly as "the shower"), located adjacent to our spacious living accommodations where you can just unwind and relax. With all these fun activities in a tropical paradise such as Indiana, who could stay away!

So if you're interested in reconnecting with people you care about or if you're lost in life or if you simply want to have some fun, just stop on by a Transitions Retreat; it could change the way you think about life.

—Scotty Bray

This community has changed me in so many ways. We may be a "church" but to me we are family. I have been active in the church since I was thirteen.

I was very upset at first, to be quite honest. I was about to turn thirteen and planning to go to my first Warped

## The Good of Love at LaPorte Church

The LaPorte (Indiana) New Church Board of Directors introduced a new program, the "Good of Love" teams, at their November congregational meeting, with the goal of involving everyone in creative, meaningful, and personally inspiring ways of together serving the church.

The vision for the program is to ensure the healthy longevity of the church while experiencing joy in doing the good that love does. The purpose is to be able to keep the church open to serve and touch others with God's perfect love and wisdom. ☪

tour (an annual traveling rock festival). Instead, I became thirteen and went to church camp, and it was the best thing that's ever happened to me! I've met lifelong friends who I love very much.

You all have seen me at my lowest points, and I have seen you at yours. This year, 2015, was one of my lowest points, as I think it was for many of us. But you all truly have made my year so much better. I can see things more clearly, and the retreat showed me who I was. I was lost for some time and I was getting more lost than ever before until I was around people I loved and who truly loved me. A bulb lit up, and I broke through the wall I was living behind for what felt like too long.

I'm very grateful that I feel like I have grown spiritually so much after spending the last week or so of 2015 at Manna House. Transitions is so important. This church is so important. I'm honestly blessed.

—Jack Earl

Alice Henderson grew up attending Almont Summer School and SCYL Winter Retreats. She is in her final semester at Pacific Lutheran University in Washington and will graduate in May with majors in Chemistry and French and a minor in Environmental Studies.



# The Rosthern New Church and Its Mennonite Connections

BY VICTOR CARL FRIESEN

**T**he Rosthern New Church (Swedenborgian) Society was the first such formal denomination in Western Canada, being formed a few years after the Rosthern, Saskatchewan, area was settled. There has been some question about the exact year of the Society's founding. Discussions may have begun in 1897. Not all of the early records are available: the secretary at the time worked in the town's flour mill, where he stored the church papers, and the mill burned down. The church's round metal seal bears the inscription, "The New Church of Rosthern established 1899." However, this has been found to be an error (probably denoting the year when the seal was obtained), for the first church minutes, still on record, verify that the Society was established in 1898, as the sign on the church building states.

But how did it happen? Rosthern, after all, began as a Mennonite settlement in 1891 after eleven families from Manitoba had homesteaded that spring at Gleichen, Alberta, and found the land there too stony. By midsummer, they had backtracked, then headed north to detrain at a water stop beside a creek halfway between Saskatoon and Prince Albert. (This rail line had been completed just the year before.) More Mennonites would follow in the years immediately succeeding. And in the same decade, some of these people not only formed a Swedenborgian society but, in 1899, actually erected the first church building in the town. (The Mennonite community earlier had chosen to build its church

six miles west in the Eigenheim district, in 1896, where most of its farm population were homesteading.)

Here's what transpired. The town's most prominent citizen, Gerhard Ens, arrived in 1892 to become the community's first storekeeper, postmaster, justice of the peace, and eventually, when the province of Saskatchewan was created in 1905, the district's first member of the provincial legislature. He



was also a federal immigration officer and a CPR land agent. On a winter day, a few years after his arrival, he was visited by a Peter Vogt from Manitoba. When Vogt took his leave, Ens noticed a paper sticking out of his guest's fur-coat pocket. "What have you got there?" Ens wanted to know.

It was a pamphlet on religious matters (perhaps something similar to what Johnny Appleseed, a Swedenborgian, might have handed out to Ohio pioneers along with his apple seedlings). Vogt gave assurance it was worth reading and would leave it for Ens's perusal. It gave a Swedenborgian view on a passage from the Bible.

When Ens was left to himself, he quickly read through the pamphlet, a

discussion of Elisha's miracle of raising a lost axe head from the water, as told in II Kings 6:1–7. Maybe Ens had wondered about the significance of this story before. In any case, he was so taken by the interpretation that he immediately wanted to tell his friend Abram H. Friesen about it. Friesen was one of the founding settlers of the community (and the author's grandfather), but he lived on a farm a mile east, and it had begun to snow. A real blizzard was blowing up, in fact, but Ens didn't hesitate to walk through the swirling drifts to share his "discovery."

Such was the start of the New Church Society in Rosthern.

As it turned out, some of the other Rosthern settlers, who arrived in the area after Friesen and Ens, had already had some familiarity with Swedenborg's writings. Thus a group could be formally organized. Prominent early members, besides Ens and Friesen, included Abram Klassen, William Wiebe, John Hamm, and Henry Bergen and their families.

The first church stood originally right on Main Street in the principal business block, at its intersection with First Avenue (where the town library building now stands). A few years later, it was moved two blocks north to the corner of Fourth Street and First Avenue and served the members there till 1913.

By that time, the congregation numbered more than twenty families, 150 people all told, including some from the Hague area. The group needed a larger building and so bought the vacated Mennonite town church, built in 1903, which was precisely one block

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## Passages

### Deaths

**Paula Hilbert**, 45, passed away February 10, 2016, after a courageous battle with ALS. Paula was a member of the



Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem Church (Kansas). She is survived by her husband, Brad; son, Adam Hilbert; daughter, Brooke Hilbert; parents, Vernon and Linda Kraus; brother, Rick Kraus; and sister, Karen Perry.

A Memorial service was held at First Church of the Nazarene, Wichita. ☩

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farther north, where it served the congregation till 2014. It received a major remodelling in 1950 and had a full basement and plumbing added in 1986. (The Mennonites, meanwhile, had built a larger church for themselves in 1912, several times enlarged and rebuilt since then.)

The original New Church still exists and has had various uses. For a short time, it was used as an extra classroom by the public school. Then a third denomination, the Seventh Day Adventists bought it, and it served as their church for more than fifty years: 1921–1973. Following that, a Seventh Day Adventist parishioner, Wes Lehmann, moved it to his farm for a storage shed. Swedenborg believed that the sincerest form of worship was a useful life, and so he would have approved of the multiple uses given this house of worship.

Something should be said of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) at this juncture. A son of a Lutheran bishop, he devoted his early life to science—producing the first Swedish texts in algebra and calculus, discovering the function of several areas of the brain,

and designing the world's largest dry dock, among other things. Then in mid-life, after some religious experiences, he became a theologian himself, writing explications of several books of the Bible.

It was never his intention to start a new denomination; in fact, he argued against doing so, feeling that his work could inform any religious thinking. Nonetheless, fifteen years after his death, the first Swedenborgian church was formed in London, England. (Poet William Blake was a charter member, although he left the group afterwards.) Five years later still, the first New Church opened in the United States, and a General Convention of churches in the United States and Canada was established in 1817.

The official name, Church of the New Jerusalem, relates to a passage in Revelation that speaks of a Holy City descending, an ideal society—something to strive for in our lives in this world as we do our best to love our Lord and to love one another as He has loved us. Helen Keller, a noteworthy Swedenborgian, wrote a book about the faith in 1929, entitled *My Religion* (now retitled *Light in My Darkness*).

The Rosthern New Church has been served by a variety of ministers, at first irregularly by visiting clergymen from Manitoba and the United States. Then Gerhard Ens became lay minister for many years. Rev. Peter Peters was resident minister from 1934–42; he also organized the “famous” Rosthern Band. When he left, Rev. John Zacharias was visiting minister from Vancouver. From 1947–80, Rev. Henry Reddekopp held monthly services as a “circuit rider,” serving several Saskatchewan societies. Rev. David Sonmor, onetime head of the Saskatoon Ministerial Association, filled a similar role to 1996. For the past eighteen years, Victor C. Friesen has been acting lay minister, again with monthly sermons. Organists of long service

have been Lena Ens, daughter-in-law of Gerhard Ens, and Lillian Epp of Laird, granddaughter of Gerhard's brother and great-granddaughter of Abram H. Friesen.

Recent executive members included Art Abrams of Waldheim as president (then succeeded by his daughter Lillian Epp), and James H. Friesen as secretary-treasurer for the last forty-four years.

The aging membership has declined over the last years, finally amounting to but eight people, with some driving up from Saskatoon. Each service in the last decades has been followed by a potluck lunch and good fellowship—a worthwhile gathering of scattered parishioners. However, the time finally came to end our services: “Every activity and every purpose has its proper time. (Ecclesiastes 3:17)” Thus, Rosthern (population 2,000), still a town of many churches, has seen its very first church closure. It has served the Swedenborgian New Church Society for 101 years.

The church and lot have been donated to the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Rosthern, the building (originally constructed by Mennonites) to be moved to the Museum site and so become part of a new Mennonite Interpretive Center. ☩

Victor Carl Friesen is a lifelong member of the Rosthern New Church Society. He lives in Rosthern, Saskatchewan.



**The new Elmwood New Church** in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts, is closed in and ready for interior build-out and finish!

### 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.

## Get Ready for Convention 2016 Plans Underway for Meeting in Urbana

As winter slowly gives way to spring, we are reminded that it is not too early to begin our summer plans. This year, the Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church will take place at Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio, from June 29 through July 3. We will be visiting the campus for the first time since it became part of Franklin University, in nearby Columbus.

The Annual Convention consists of business meetings, worship services, the annual meeting of the New Church Theological Seminary (Center for Swedenborgian Studies), elections, receptions, and time for meeting and making friends at meals, and recreational time. The Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) explores the area, creates and presents a worship service, and participates in group-building activities. Music is always a major component of conventions: the Convention choir, which everyone is invited to join; performances by young and old participants; and participatory singing opportunities.

As part of the convention schedule, Urbana University will be holding a dedication ceremony for the new Rev. Dorothea Harvey Memorial, honoring



Bailey and Barclay Hall—Urbana University

the first woman ordained into Swedenborgian ministry.

Return visitors will enjoy the new look of the campus—for example, the new wrought iron entrance arch on College Way. The posts are replicas of the original gates to the lane leading to campus. It was dedicated in the fall of 2015 with a time capsule buried next to one of the gate posts.

Area attractions include Ohio Caverns (ten miles from Urbana), which recently opened a new area to the public, and the National Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, which opens a new hangar with added exhibits on June 8, 2016—just in time for our visit. ☛