the Messenger

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Manna from Heaven and the Refashioning of *Our Daily Bread*

By Jim Lawrence

Our Daily Bread emerged from the inspired vision of the Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Sr., pastor of the Philadelphia Swedenborgian Church for a half-century. His dream was to publish a monthly devotional magazine of sermons, Bible readings, excerpts from Swedenborg's writings, and daily prayers, as a source of spiritual inspiration for general readers and as a worship service resource for ministers and for churches without clergy support.

As a member of the American New Church Tract and Publication Society on theological and spiritual matters, he brought to them his dream of a new publication to replace *The Helper*, a longtime Swedenborgian small magazine of sermons and Bible lessons whose staff had decided to shut down. Rev. Tafel wanted to revitalize the concept and the vehicle, and his proposal was accepted. Appointed as editor of the new publication carrying the name *Our Daily Bread* (*ODB*) and greeting the world in December, 1949, Rev. Tafel published it continuously until near the end of his life, when the editorship went to his son Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr.

The American New Church Tract and Publication Society was an incorporated body run by members of the Philadelphia Swedenborgian Church. Its purpose was "to publish books by Emanuel Swedenborg and tracts by New Church writers." On February 1, 1986, it dissolved, assigning its assets to the General Convention (the Swedenborgian Church) to establish a restricted fund whose income was to be used, first for the publication of *Our Daily Bread* and second for other church publications. A further provision was that the editor be selected by General Convention's Council of Ministers. Since that time, *Our Daily Bread* has enjoyed an incredible run of outstanding editors: Rev. Dick Tafel, Jr., Rev. Lee Woofenden, and Rev. Kevin Baxter with his spouse and Harvard Divinity School graduate, Rev. Leah Goodwin.

Thom Muller

Rev. Dave Fekete

Our Daily Bread *co-editors*

Over time, however, the changing world of publication, including content production and consumption, led to a sense that *Our Daily Bread* might need to be refashioned and transformed. Though still serving an important use for an appreciative readership, the number of paying subscribers had been dropping steadily for many years, and production of content in the traditional manner of fully written-out sermons was becoming much more difficult. The Council of ministers decided to suspend publication of *ODB* and reassess how to achieve its mission.

An ad hoc assessment and evaluation committee was appointed in the summer of 2014 by the Council of Ministers to take the next year to study the *ODB* ministry and make a recommendation at the 2015 meeting of the Council of Ministers.

To begin, the committee undertook some research to examine the new exploding world of virtual publishing. It determined that the paid subscriber base of *ODB* would continue to shrink and that a large quantity of *ODB* sermons were available online. We knew that some churches were using these online sermons for their worship support needs. In addition, the committee studied the rapidly evolving communications technologies that have led to effective web presence for content distribution. The Swedenborg Foundation and the General Church are notable among Swedenborgian organizations that have developed effective strategies prioritizing electronic publishing.

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The Editor's Desk

Muhammad Ali

Recent news of the death of Muhammad Ali spurred reflection and praise from the famous and not-so-famous worldwide through every medium.

Beginning life as Cassius Clay in a poor section of Louisville, Ali knew his use in life from an early age: he would be a world champion boxer, a proud black man, a friendly man, a prankster, a poet, a loving man, and a man of peace.

At first regarded by the press as a bit of a joke, a loud-mouthed clown whose braggadocio outpaced his ability, he quickly proved them wrong. Many people were confused when he converted to Islam and changed his name to Muhammad Ali, discarding Cassius Clay as a slave name. This action perplexed the mainstream that had come to appreciate his boxing prowess and entertaining persona. In 1967, he refused to be inducted into the army, claiming religious exemption. This action cost him his heavyweight title and kept him from the boxing ring for three years while he appealed a conviction for draft dodging.

During this period, he was routinely demonized in the mainstream media for his draft refusal, embrace of Islam, friendship with the likes of Malcolm X, and outspoken promotion of black pride and racial equality.

By 1981, after winning and losing the world heavyweight title three times (a record), he retired, and in 1985 he revealed that he had Parkinson's Disease. Perhaps it was because his fists and, it seemed, his militancy were silenced, or perhaps because his message of love of mankind had finally been heard that the world began to regard him as a promoter of world peace and understanding between nations and peoples. Although unable to speak without extreme difficulty and, eventually, to speak at all, and although severely compromised in movement and control of his body, his pride, dignity, and love shone through. I was deeply moved when he appeared at the 1996 Olympic Games opening ceremony in Atlanta. He lit the cauldron with the Olympic torch and then stood ramrod straight, regarding the stadium full of cheering people, slowing turning and seeming to make eye contact with each person in the stands. His face was motionless but his eyes glowed with love and appreciation.

If you peruse the internet, you will find endless accounts of actions he took to help individuals and promote peace between nations. He seemed a paradox, this braggart who got rich and famous through a brutal sport, who became an icon as a gentle person who stood tall against hatred and conflict for people of all ages, colors, religions, nations, and walks of life. In the end he was selfless, transcendent, and a lesson for us in how to live a life of use.

—Herb Ziegler

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Church Calendar

- **June 29–July 3:** Annual Convention • Urbana University, Urbana, OH
- **June 30**: Annual meeting of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School
- **July 3**: General Council Post-Convention meeting
- **July 16–24**: Paulhaven Summer Camp,Upper Mann Lake, AB
- **July 23–July 31**: Almont Summer Camp, Allenton, MI
- * **July 30–August 14**: FNCA Summer Camp, Fryeburg, ME
- **August 15**: Application deadline for 2016 Augmentation Fund and Mission Fund grants
- **October 7–9**: Mass New Church Union East Coast Retreat, N. Andover, MA

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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,

Ruling Love: hold that thought . . .

Well my friends, here we are, the first of many lasts we will share in the next few weeks. This is the last "Letter from the President" I will write—the last time I will share my thoughts from this office and this perspective. I am not going to spend any time at all talking about "what it was." I am so much more interested in "what it is becoming." And in this I refer to our church as a denomination; the individual societies; the various support units; the committees and boards that make it work; and most important of all, the individual "churches," the individual human beings, who are the life and love that makes the Swedenborgian Church what it has been, what it is, and what it is becoming. And of course, I refer also to my own personal launch into retirement.

And this is where the concept of "ruling love" becomes not just relevant, but all-important. In my personal journey as I retire from professional ministry, I am moving into a stage of life where my ruling love, the ruling love that led me into ministry in the first place over thirty years ago, will fully emerge as the guiding force in in my life. It is with joy and eager anticipation that I approach this transition into the next chapter of my life. I intend to let my love of music blossom into playing and some performing, but in the "maine" [*sic*] I intend to immerse myself in composition and maybe some song writing on the side. For me, this most ethereal of arts is where my ruling love is fulfilled. I can't explain it. I can't justify it. And I can't apologize for it. It is just who I am, and it has been a lifetime coming to fully understand, acknowledge, and embrace that.

But here is why I speak of ruling love. First, in the thirty years that I have been a parish minister and finishing my run as president, I have seen this denomination go through an enormous transformation, certainly in size as an external indicator. But looking past that outermost sign of drawing in, we are witnessing a complete transformation in how people relate to God and the search for spirituality in their lives. When I came into the ministry, teaching the writings through preaching, Sunday school, reading groups, and writing was how people's search was responded to. And up until that time, that was perfectly appropriate. Today, people are far less interested in being taught in an academic format and far more interested in a hands-on approach to learning by doing. With information so readily available in so many different formats on the internet, the idea of heavy reading and academic sermons and lectures is simply of very little interest to the up-and-coming generations. The ruling love that motivates people in the spiritual search has changed dramatically.

Second, when I came on to the Council of Ministers there were three recently ordained women, which made a total of five in the company of forty or so men. The tenor of the discussions at our meetings was for the most part adversarial; discriminating the right from the wrong and establishing who was going to impose his perspective as the dominant viewpoint were both the method and goal of our "discussions." Now, typically, there are more women than men at our council meetings, and the tenor of our meetings has changed dramatically. As we engage the issues before us, there is first, information sharing, then questions and answers, then a sharing of observations and perspectives, and when we come to a vote, it is, more often than not, unanimous or

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Exploring Images of God with Aurelia, Age 10

By Shada Sullivan

The journey that I have undertaken to be ordained in ministry is one that I have not taken alone. My family has taken this journey with me and they have been affected in different ways. It was not until recently, however, that I began to notice something rising in my daughter, Aurelia.

Aurelia has always been of a reflective, stubborn, sensitive, and oppositional mind, and so the specifics of the road we were all taking together could not fail to be working in her. In this case, I was noticing an increased sense of anger towards the church and toward God. In my being denied ordination due to gender in the church of our community, Aurelia rightly discerned an injustice, one that she could not ignore because her own gender implicated her in the judgment. The anger and alienation that she has been feeling is complicated due to her day to day context: we, as a family, remain in place within the withholding community. We are forced to confront the dissonance, while simultaneously attempting to create a counter-narrative for ourselves. This is a very complicated endeavor for a ten-year-old. As I realized this, it became clear that the following exploration of feminist theology and images of God was a project that we should do together.

I was not expecting her palpable relief. I did not realize how trapped she felt by the masculine images that were being presented to her. I was shocked and moved to hear her say: "I want a new idea [of God] so that I can feel safe." At one point, we were working on writing together, and it just wasn't working. As we talked, it became clear that she was struggling to praise God, a God she wasn't sure she could believe in. I decided that we needed to explore her reservations and I asked if she wanted to write about the time she was angry in school, a time she felt bodily the acute hypocrisy of those in power. She immediately said yes.

As she wrote that poem with me, I realized just how closely she had conflated God and the male authorities of the church. The God that they modeled for her, the one that they prompted her to imagine, was a distant and judging God, one that does not forgive. She imagined this God not because this is the kind of God that Swedenborgian theology teaches (in fact, it teaches the complete opposite) but because that had been her experience of male authority. The male authorities of the church had deemed my gender (and hers) not good enough, insufficient, and ultimately discardable, and her anger at this treatment became anger at God, the male God in whom all authority lies. My gender (and again, hers) became something that could never be forgiven, or atoned for, and so we would forever live outside of God's approval. Better to push away this type of God, push Him away before we are rejected, as we must ultimately be.

"Aurelia named the picture 'Chinanit' for the Hebrew word meaning 'lovely' or 'graceful.'"

And so she has found refuge in feminine images of God. She describes these images in words that embrace her and hold her safe, words that put her back together again after trying to exist in a context that forces her to dismantle her own worthiness. She clings to these images in an almost desperate way, because she thirsts for an image that communicates the "primordial intimacy of the creating God," a God that created her with the intention that she, as she exists now, might be pronounced "good." And even as she clings, I try to introduce some spaciousness into her thought. I try to introduce the idea that God transcends in and through our images, that God will always be more, even as that "more" applies to images that we happen to like and enjoy.

I also did not expect to see her rising desire to change the way theology is taught in her school. She increasingly found that it is not enough for her to explore these new ideas for herself; her inherent sense of justice feels like it is wrong to perpetuate such a, in her view, limited understanding of God. Her developmentally appropriate view of cause and effect, of action and result, is still very concrete.

I will now have to help her wrestle with the challenge and mystery of activism. I will now have to help her understand the alchemy of social change, that it is not like a math problem,

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one side to be balanced with the other. I will have to help her understand that her authentic sharing of her views will likely not convince any of the authorities to act differently. But rather, that courageous acts of authenticity never simply disappear into the void; they reverberate in ways that cannot be known. I will need to teach her to plant seeds in the minds of people, and to let go of controlling how they grow, but to keep on planting because it is a sacred act of faith in the possibility of transcendence. Can that possibly be satisfying to a ten-year-old psyche? We shall see.

"The first image was from Exodus 33 and the idea of Moses 'seeing the back of God.'"

Many of the outcomes that I had hoped for were achieved. I was hoping that, in this project, and in continued other ways, Aurelia might feel empowered to write words about God, might feel empowered to put image and form to her intuitive connection to spirit, even if these images do not look like the ones she is presented with in her context. I have also noticed areas for continued exploration. Aurelia (and I) automatically drew Caucasian images when given the chance. Other fruitful avenues will involve learning about images of God that represent other ethnicities. Even further, exploring images of Jesus as black or feminine will give us an opportunity to learn about the intersection of oppression, privilege, and culture and how that relates to theology.

"She came up with the idea of Deborah having a burning, courageous heart, and God being like the air that feeds the fire."

Images of God

The first part of the project was to explore artistic renditions of images of God. We began with a simple drawing of how Aurelia imagined the feminine aspects of God. She named the picture "Chinanit" for the Hebrew word meaning "lovely" or "graceful."

We next focused on some biblical images. The first image was from Exodus 33 and the idea of Moses "seeing the back of God."

We also talked about the Deborah narrative in the book of Judges. Aurelia had some ideas for Deborah that she was finding hard to execute, so I took the opportunity to encourage her to think more abstractedly about the image of God. I asked her, "What was the relationship between God and Deborah like? How did Deborah think about God?" She came up with the idea of Deborah having a burning, courageous heart, and God being like the air that feeds the fire.

We decided to reframe that image in a feminine way. We wanted to project a sun that was burning steadily and peacefully, but also powerfully.

Next we turned to painting. The image of God as the sun is an important one in Swedenborgian theology. We decided to reframe that image in a feminine way. We wanted to project a sun that was burning steadily and peacefully, but also powerfully.

"For the second painting, we decided to depict God as a nest, gently holding and keeping safe the eggs inside."

For the second painting, we decided to depict God as a nest, gently holding and keeping safe the eggs inside. Aurelia insisted on three eggs. When I asked her why, she just seemed to think it was a good number. When I pointed out that the three eggs could represent the Trinity, she decided to name the painting "Mother, Daughter, Holy Spirit."

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Images of God

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Words about God

The second part of the project was to attempt to write words about God, to use words to embody meaning and image, to use words to express feeling. These attempts took the form of prayers and poems. The first images that Aurelia resonated with were "mother" and "shepherdess."

Mother of All

Holy Mother of all,
You have created the world
and everything in it
You give us breath and life
and love
Nourish us, ground us, and
support us
Strengthen us, embolden us
and protect us.
Be our sun, and let us shine
with your light
So that all people might be
luminous and connected.

The Shepherdess

You are my Shepherdess, and
I am Your sheep
Let me not stray from You
In the darkness, You are the
moon and the stars
You are the light and the
hope
Guide me in Your way, lead
me in the paths
Past all that would hurt,
distract or confine
Bring me to safety, to home
and to peace.

At one point, as already mentioned, the words and forms were not flowing. We moved from attempting to praise God to practicing gratitude, and then to expressing authentic feelings of anger and doubt.

Thank You for Everyday Things.

Thank you for brand new erasers
fresh fall air
blazing summer sun
the smell of smoke from a
candle just blown out.
Thank you for fire drills in school
photographs and memories
recess
the funny noises that animals
make.
Thank you for movies and
popcorn
cupcakes and the ability to
taste
Peanuts comic books
hot glue that dries on your
hands that you have to peel
off.
Thank you for inspiration, and
confidence
motivation, stubbornness and
creativity
friends, family, even brothers
Thank you for triumphs
Amen

I Was Angry

It felt like fire
I wanted to scream
I wanted to punch and hit so that
he would hear,
because I knew he wouldn't
listen or care.
I was sad that they thought he
was telling the truth,
that they thought they were
safe and in good hands.
Everyone else was listening like
nothing was wrong
But it was wrong; he was lying.
And I knew I did not want to
think about Him
because He was a man, and He
was a lie,
And that meant He wasn't real.

Finally, we explored feminine images of power.

Mighty God

Our God is a mighty God, she is
powerful, she is swift, she is steadfast.
Like a tree planted in the ground,
She shall not be weakened by forces that
push and pull.
Like lightning, she is a blinding presence
She reaches across the sky, flashing bright
in hearts and minds.
Like a lion she roars, agile and elegant,
protector of us all.
She is confident, she is ready to act on
our behalf, to act decisively, faithfully,
unswervingly.
God of Strength, shield us in our darkest,
most vulnerable moments
That you might accompany us in birthing
ourselves anew.

Shada Sullivan is an M.Div. student at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, and the Center for Swedenborgian Studies. This article was written for a class at LTSP, "Feminist and Womanist Illuminations of Christian Doctrine." Shada also works with Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. She is married to Andy Sullivan, and they have two children, Becket (age 12) and Aurelia (age 10).

Calling All Treasurers!

Our annual convention is a great time for people to network and share common interests and concerns. One area that impacts each and every ministry in our organization is that of sound financial practices. In addition to the mini-course led by the treasurer, Polly Baxter, there will be opportunities for anyone who would like to discuss trends and challenges in church financial administration to get together with her.

Come prepared with your questions and experiences, good and bad. Look for the sign-up sheets at the registration table. If you would like more information before arriving at the convention, please email Polly Baxter at treasurer@swedenborg.org.

Our Daily Bread

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The ad hoc committee returned in 2015 with a report on its findings and a recommendation to proceed with the task of replacing the *ODB* editor and establishing virtual communication strategies through websites and social media, possibly supplemented by occasional printed special issues of *ODB* to serve its traditional base. Following discussion of the report and recommendation, the Council of Ministers empowered a search and oversight committee composed of the Revs. Dick Tafel, Jane Siebert, Kit Billings, Jim Lawrence, Wilma Wake, John Maine, and Jenn Tafel to hire new editors with demonstrated expertise in both Swedenborgian thought and virtual communications strategies to re-launch the *Our Daily Bread* ministry."

The committee determined that the search would not be limited to General Convention clergy, though deep knowledge of Swedenborgian thought and spirituality was considered imperative. The committee also consulted with individuals experienced in web-based publishing to understand better the skills and knowledge necessary for effective, wide outreach and to think through an accurate job description. After shaping the job description, the committee advertised the search announcement in late autumn of 2015 through numerous channels, including *the Messenger* and emails throughout General Convention.

The search announcement yielded numerous applicants. During the interview process, the committee was inspired to explore a team approach due to the complementary strengths and gifts envisioned with two applicants in particular. This possibility led to subsequent and fruitful conversations with these two, who indicated eagerness for a team approach given the complexity of the new publishing vision. The committee next signaled its intentions to both the executive committee of COM and to the Executive Committee of the General Council that it was ready to make an employment offer to Rev. Dr. David Fekete and ordinand Thom Muller. After receiving approval of their recommendation, the oversight committee finalized negotiations with the new team.

Since February, the new *ODB* team has been working with website designers and readying content for the launch, which will have taken place before the end of June, 2016. A mutually reinforcing network of social media sites that link with the *ODB* website, with content relevant to worship support materials, is shaping up as the transformed *Our Daily Bread* ministry operated by the Council of Ministers.

Rev. Jim Lawrence is chair of the *ODB* Study Committee and dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies.

Letter from the President

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close to it. In summary, the Council of Ministers meetings are a very different experience now than they were thirty years ago. What has changed is the ruling love. It is now less about being right in the definition of "truth" and more about being conjoined in the service of loving community. In my observation, it is a much healthier balance of love and wisdom then ever before.

What gives me hope for this church, even as we face the most diminished numbers in our history, is the evidence that the change in ruling love has taken hold at all levels and is starting to show in how we are approaching the "doing of church." We have begun to respond in the forms of media and communication that are now the norm for our society. We have an online church. We are moving *Our Daily Bread* into an online format. Our churches have websites that are engaging. The denomination is finally getting some traction in organizing and upgrading our denominational presence on line. And what is, perhaps, even more important, our ministers and our churches are beginning to alter the ways, including time and format, in which worship is engaged. More and more we are beginning to see Swedenborg's definition of worship being realized: "true worship is the life of charity." The ruling love as a guiding principle is changing: changing from learning information about God and spiritual growth through study to learning about God and spiritual growth through experiencing, sharing, and the practice of charity.

It is an amazing time that we are in. We are watching, experiencing, and participating in a most dramatic transformation. We are witnessing and experiencing the essence of spiritual regeneration. We are learning and growing and changing. And because at our inmost the intention is to honor and serve God and all that is heavenly, we are being led through this unfamiliar wilderness towards the Promised Land, that heavenly state of being with God at the center, our identity defined by that holy presence and our state of being and interactions with the world around us led by, and in service to, the love and wisdom of God. We are leaving behind us a rich and wonderful chapter in the ongoing story of the Swedenborgian Church. We are, right here and now, turning the page and entering into the next and new chapter in that story. We are not just entering into it though; we are in fact writing that chapter. Be inspired! Be courageous! Be creative! The final outcome is not for us to see at this point. But what is undeniable is that, as we seek to follow the path of a useful loving wisdom, we are being made new!

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

SCYL Retreat

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our rooms and drawing in the cooler evening air, we were able to begin our first session together. Once we got the rules, schedule, and general housekeeping out of the way, I launched into our retreat topic of color.

In our Friday evening introductory session we discussed how the longstanding perceived purity of white light was shattered by Sir Isaac Newton with his double prism experiment in 1666. The first to understand the rainbow, in 1672 Newton stunned the Western world by publishing his finding that white light contained all colors. He called the rainbow the color spectrum. The world would never be the same again.

On Saturday morning after breakfast, I continued discussing the science of color with the teens. We took a look at the whole electromagnetic spectrum and discussed where humans see visual light. We discussed how we see light and color with rods and cones in the back of our retinas. Then we explored color blindness and listened to a podcast on *Radiolab* called "Colors" (http://tinyurl.com/l5dqegn) that explained how different animals see color. We heard about how dogs have two cones, blue and green, humans have three cones, blue, red and green, while butterflies have up to six cones, and the incredible mantis shrimp, which sees a fantastic ultraviolet rainbow spectrum, has sixteen cones!

We were blessed to have Rev. Renée Machiniak join us Saturday afternoon. Renée started our spiritual exploration of color by leading a wonderful session on the correspondence of the warm "love" colors, red, orange, and yellow.

Rev. Jenn leads the color healing session.

She also explained how color fits into the three layers of consciousness: reality, symbol (where color exists), and words.

Rev. Jennifer Tafel led a special color healing session on Saturday evening. She presented a beautiful tribute to color in which she put a series of slides to music. Then she reviewed the powerful energy of aura, chakra, and *feng shui* colors and led the teens through a guided color meditation. Following the meditation, the teens participated in a color ceremony where they traveled around the room and selected one of six rainbow colors that they were drawn to. At their chosen color station, they selected a fabric ribbon and received a personal blessing for that color.

We closed Saturday evening with a colorful art class, where the teens created original paintings exploring love and wisdom. (Thank you, Heidi Barnaby, for the project idea!)

Cade and the red fruiting body of slimy mold found on the colors of nature scavenger hunt.

On Sunday morning, I led a session exploring the rainbow. I started with a discussion on diversity and unity referencing *Divine Providence* §4.4, "A form makes a unity more perfectly as its constituents are distinguishably different, and yet united." This concept relates directly to the rainbow, with its distinguishably different colors remaining united to white light. We talked about the difficulty of increasing diversity and maintaining unity, and how heaven is more perfect through the variety of its varied and distinct heavenly communities.

I explained how the color spectrum relates to the human regeneration life cycle. We are born into pure celestial love (red), move into simple charitable acts of kindness in our preschool and elementary school years (orange), then into a love of spiritual learning (yellow) in our years of higher education.

Kurt displays the teens' tickets to ride.

We then spend the majority of our life in our years of living truth (green). Green is the most prevalent color in nature and the most intense color to the human eye. Green is also the color of day three in the Genesis creation story as dry land appears and plants sprout and spring up across the land.

As we enter into our later "retirement" years, we reach a level of heavenly intelligence and knowledge (blue). All of the experiences that taught us in our "green years" lead us to a place of greater understanding and a richness of wisdom. Blue relates to the color of day five in the creation story, where we find the fish of the blue sea (memory knowledges) and the birds of the blue sky (spiritual truths).

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Finally, as we become elderly, we grow into a union or merging of love (red) and wisdom (blue) to a royal violet. In our "purple years," we have come full circle on the color wheel to the place where we began, only now, instead of the innocent love, we have reached a wonderful place of wise love. And the color spectrum continues to spiral around when we die and are born again into celestial love in the next life of the spiritual world.

Ronnie, Luke, Paige, and Kurt put on their game faces while waiting out the storm.

This is the macrocosm of our life, and throughout our years we continually spiral through and around the colors in the microcosm of days, hours, and even minutes of life. We constantly traverse the colors throughout our regenerative process.

On Sunday afternoon, Rev. Jenn lead a session on color in nature. She shared another set of slides featuring the brilliant colors found in our natural world. Then the teens were given a paper sack and sent outside on a scavenger hunt to find an item in nature for each color of the rainbow, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. When they returned they had a chance to share what they discovered with the group.

Outside of sessions, the teens had fun with recreation and games. They spent a lot of time outside playing Frisbee, basketball, and swinging in the hot afternoon sun and stayed cool by running through the sprinkler. Inside, we played Spoons, Uno, Heads Up, and Catchphrase.

On Sunday afternoon, we had our big outing. We traveled to Lake Nepessing Golfland. We expected a hot and very crowded activity park on the busy holiday weekend. However, I watched the sky grow darker and more and more ominous on our drive, and right at the time of our arrival, we were pelted by a tumultuous thunderstorm. We watched from the safety of our cars as people at the park scattered and ran for the exit. Ten minutes later, the rain stopped, we stepped out into the emerging sunshine and enjoyed an empty park! We played a round of mini golf, and then we rode the go-karts. It is always a blast to race around the track in those speedy cars. Try as I might, I was unable to pass the self-described "non competitive" Rev. Jenn Tafel.

SCYL grand prix drivers waiting for the green light.

Retreat staff rainbow: Rev. Renee Machiniak (pure white light) diffused into Lori Gayheart (violet), Rev. Jennifer Tafel (blue), Rachael Sbrocco (green), Heather Oelker (yellow), Kurt Fekete (orange) and Tammara Mounce (red).

Rev. Jenn led the closing communion service on Sunday evening. It was a very moving worship experience, filled with music, scripture, and meaningful reflection. We heard together the familiar message of God's covenant from Genesis 9:16, "Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth." I provided the worship service message about the red ram skins covering the tabernacle (Exodus 26:7–14). Both the ram and the color red correspond to celestial love, and I reminded the teens how important it is to surround and protect our truth (the Ten Commandments) with sacred love.

Three amigos, Kristofer, Jaylen and Nathan

So we began our retreat with the science of red light collected by Newton through a prism and ended our retreat with the sacred red love that protects the most holy. At the worship service, each teen returned the color ribbon selected Saturday evening and received back a ceremonial rainbow ribbon honoring the diversity, love, and friendship of this, our Swedenborgian Church Youth League group. The differences of our hues, infinitely varied and beautifully united, form our rainbow covenant. Together, we pledge to be friends forever and work in unison to diffuse love into the world.

Kurt Fekete is the youth director of the Swedenborgian Church.

Exciting Expansion of Bryn Athyn College

By Sasha Silverman

With its gorgeous buildings and immaculate green landscaping, the Bryn Athyn College campus offers a sense of rest for the soul and deep spiritual grounding. In the past decade, however, this peaceful little school has become one of the most exciting, up-and-coming college scenes in the Philadelphia suburbs. When I attended the college back in 1997, it was a whole different world. Most of us stayed a couple of years and then transferred to other colleges. We had about six degree options, we walked to the high school dining hall to eat, and our sports had a casual, club-team feel.

Over the years, and especially recently, I have watched with awe as Bryn Athyn College has exploded with life and possibilities. First came the beautiful new buildings to house the expanding student population. Now, in addition to the original Childs Hall and Grant Hall dorms, the campus has three high-end, suite-style dorms—Brock Hall, Gladish Hall, and King Hall—and four stunning stone cottages, each with a large central kitchen and vaulted ceilings: Alden Cottage, Gyllenhaal Cottage, Hyatt Cottage, and Woodard Cottage. As the student population continues to grow, plans are in the works for new dorms in 2017. Other new structures around the campus include a science center with soaring glass walls, a central fountain, wide brick paths and patios, stone archways, and various architectural gems that reflect the college's spiritual roots. Inside the buildings, students from all over the world take classes in thirteen majors, ten minors, and three pre-professional programs (nursing, pre-law, and premed).

There is a joyful sense of camaraderie and energy brought to the campus through initiatives by athletic director Matt Kennedy. In the past five years, Kennedy has brought the college up to the NCAA Division III level, adding new sports for men and women such as basketball, cross-country, golf, and tennis. In 2016, one of the favorite teams on campus—men's hockey—earned the number one seed in the Atlantic Division in 2016. The hockey team has benefited from a "team chaplain" from the community who prays with them, sends them emails of encouragement, and reminds them to treat each other and their competitors with goodwill. Upgrades for athletics continue; one highly anticipated change includes a turf field to be installed in 2017.

Bryn Athyn College Campus

Beyond the great sports and academic offerings, there is ample opportunity for artistically-minded students to express themselves. Bryn Athyn students have the benefit of making art in a town founded in artistic inspiration—a town that in 2008 was recognized for its incredible buildings and was designated a National Historic District (http://bahistoricdistrict.org). Bryn Athyn students can take part in summer programs that draw elite artisans from around the world (http://tinyurl.com/jjukne6). In fact, Bryn Athyn College stained glass professor Kenneth Leap told me that Bryn Athyn College has the "all the right tinder to become a world center for the building arts."

One of the wonderful things I've noticed is that with all the new energy, the college has remained grounded in its Swedenborgian tradition. From the classroom to the sports fields there is an emphasis on charity and sportsmanship. A uniting principle for the school is that "all religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do good." This central purpose of charity is reflected in the college motto: "Think for yourself. Live for others."

While all students are required to attend a worship service once a week, worship is no longer limited to a traditional chapel talk. For example, on Fridays, chapel involves a student from the college offering his or her own spiritual perspective. These student talks have proved inspiring to students and professors alike. Students are also welcome to attend morning devotionals, as well as lively spiritual discussion groups and Bible studies.

In all classes, students are challenged to think about the topics from a perspective of charity to the neighbor. Yet there is not a sense of religious elitism; the college welcomes students from all walks of life, and from many different religious paths. One Catholic newcomer to the college said, "Being here, I've been inspired by New Church teachings—they strengthened my own faith." In fact, over half of the students who come to the college are new to the teachings of Swedenborg. Professor Ray Silverman, who teaches religion, said he is "constantly amazed at the depth of his students' questions, their willingness to engage with New Church teachings, and their passion for bringing their beliefs into real life."

So, if you or someone you know is looking for a college and you want a place where the teachings of the New

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Passages

Confirmations

PJ Buehler was confirmed into the Swedenborgian faith at the Cambridge Society of the New Jerusalem on Easter Sunday, March 27, 2016. Rev. Sage Cole officiated.

Deaths

Rev. Judith Dennis passed unexpectedly into the next life on May 12, 2016, at age 62. She had been an ordained minister since 1988. Judith was a very caring person and a dear friend to many. She persevered with overcoming addiction and helped others do the same. She was an active fourth-generation member of Swedenborg Chapel in Cleveland, held brief pastorates in Urbana, Ohio, and Elmwood, Massachusetts, and loved attending the Almont New Church Assembly in Michigan. Judith is survived by her loving partner, Rosemary Johnson, her sister Melody, and several nieces and nephews.

A memorial service was held on June 11, 2016, at a Baptist church near their home in Norwich, Connecticut, that Judy and Rosemary attended.

Bryn Athyn College

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Church are not just discussed but lived, it's worth taking a look at Bryn Athyn College: it is different; it is small, yet open-minded; and it's got an amazing, dedicated faculty, excellent sports programs, and a wonderful variety of interesting students from different beliefs and backgrounds—all on one of the prettiest campuses you'll see. Check us out at www.brynathyn.edu. We hope to connect with you!

Sasha Silverman is a mother of two, living in Meadowbrook, Pennsylvania. She writes spiritual growth books for New Church Journey (www.newchurchjourney.org). She attended Bryn Athyn College and graduated from Gettysburg College. She taught English in Ghana and Japan before teaching at various places in the US, including CSC Institute in Philadelphia and the Academy of the New Church High School in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania.

Church and Association Statistics

Article I, Section 3, of the Constitution of the Swedenborgian Church states that it is composed of "Constituent bodies . . . which . . . unite with the Swedenborgian Church in performing the distinctive uses of a church." The constituent bodies are the associations and groups listed in the table below. The constitution continues, "The members of the Swedenborgian Church shall be those persons who are adult, active members of a constituent body or who have been accepted as members-at large through Rite of Confirmation and by vote of the Swedenborgian Church."

Article IV, Section 2, states, "Every constituent body of the Swedenborgian Church shall be entitled to two delegates and an additional delegate for every ten members." The table below displays statistics as of December 31, 2015.

Association (Conference)	Churches		Ordained Ministers		Licensed Pastors	Members			Number of Delegates
	Active	Inactive	Active	Retired		Active	Inactive	Total	
Eastern Canada (ECC)	2	0	2	0	0	88	40	128	10
Illinois	6	0	3	1	0	93	21	114	11
Kansas	2	0	1	1	0	76	0	76	9
Maine	3	0	7	1	0	128	115	243	14
Massachusetts	4	0	8	0	0	76	65	141	9
Michigan	1	0	4	0	0	65	20	85	8
Middle Atlantic	3	0	5	1	0	83	13	96	10
New York	2	0	1	0	0	20	15	35	4
Ohio	3	0	6	1	0	43	16	59	6
Pacific Coast (PCA)	7	0	13	3	1	215	153	342	23
Southeast	2	0	2	0	0	21	2	23	4
Western Canada	3	3	1	1	0	82	32	114	10
At Large	na	na	1	0	na	5	0	5	2
SCYL	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	2
Unknown Affiliation			14						na
Totals	38	3	74	9	1	995	492	1487	122

The Swedenborgian Church of
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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.

Teens Show Their True Colors at the SCYL Memorial Retreat

By Kurt Fekete

Twenty teens traveled to Almont New Church Retreat Center to explore the colors of the rainbow through science, art, theology, nature, and music at the 2016 Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) Memorial Day Weekend Retreat.

The SCYL teens at Lake Nepessing Golfland

We arrived Friday afternoon to blistering sunshine and extreme heat. We certainly picked the right weekend to discuss the details of sunlight! High temperatures hovered around ninety degrees for the entire weekend. This, of course, did nothing to slow down our energetic teens, who immediately on arrival ran outside to play basketball, swing, and run. Adult staff, on the other hand, went straight to the room called Little Rec to retrieve the large summer camp dorm fans in an attempt to cool down Upstairs Heritage, where we would be sleeping. After a quick pizza dinner, and with the fans driving the hot air out of

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