



The Hidden Roots of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly And the Summer Session Lecture Program

BY GARD PERRY

Many who have attended the Fryeburg New Church Assembly know that the morning lecture program is a long standing feature of every two-week August summer session. I had long wondered why that antique phrase, “The Lecture Program,” was accepted as apt, with no hint of being out of step in today’s increasingly interactive speaking and listening style. The answer lies in the Assembly’s hidden roots that began to grow in Michigan, and later in the Boston area, yielding their first fruit in the summer of 1921.



Fryeburg New Church Assembly

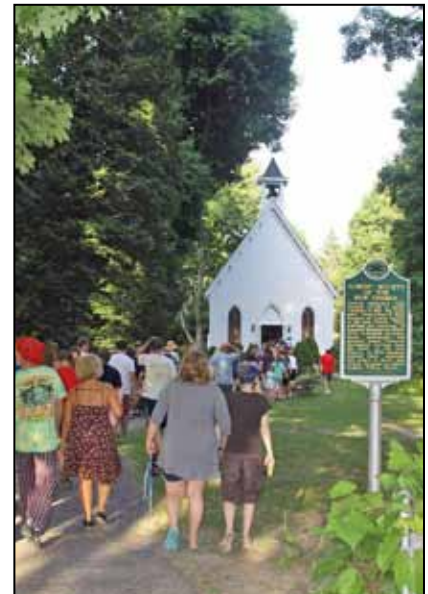
There are five dates by which I locate the roots of that hidden history: February 8, 1831; the summers of 1898 and 1902; June 19, 1919; and a September day in 1920.

The first date can arguably be said to mark a burst of life in the growing lecture movement in New England. On

February 8, 1831, Ralph Waldo Emerson’s young wife died. The loss led her grieving husband to question his faith and the teachings of the church he served. He left his position as minister of a Unitarian Church in Boston to begin his legendary lecture tours in the Boston area and beyond. He spoke from a lectern over 1500 times between 1833 and his death in 1882. “The lecture” entered the vocabulary of nineteenth century New England by providing a new form of educational engagement and social entertainment.

The next of the five dates is the summer of 1898, which registered a visit from the pastor of the Detroit Society of the New Church to Almont, Michigan, a New Church Scottish settlement some sixty miles north of the city. Rev. E. J. E. Schreck was there to conduct a funeral. Noting the need for other pastoral services, Rev. Schreck returned later in the summer (and subsequent summers) to conduct Sunday services, make pastoral visits on his bicycle, and teach classes that were to become the Almont New Church Summer School (later renamed Almont New Church Assembly).

In the summer of 1902, after a rapid expansion of summer school attendance, Rev. Schreck left for Chicago, and Rev. John Whitehead (who is this



Going to chapel at Almont New Church Assembly

writer’s great-grandfather) and his family moved to Detroit. Rev. Whitehead came as both pastor of the Detroit Society and director of the Almont Summer School, where a summer lecture program began to thrive.



Rev. Whitehead

Though the Whitehead family moved back to the Boston area in 1907 (so that his children could be educated at the New Church School in Waltham, Massachusetts), Rev. Whitehead began in earnest to develop the

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The Editor's Desk



October

This month's *Messenger* is packed with articles for every interest. Gard Perry takes us on

a brisk journey through the history of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly. Jim Lawrence shares some of his recent research into the Swedenborgian doctrine of uses and Wilson Van Dusen's role in popularizing it. Dave Fekete takes us on a most interesting and rewarding trip to Guadalajara to a conference on sacred spaces. Susannah Currie introduces us to Ian Thompson, who explores spirituality and quantum physics. John Maine shares his experience discovering a new food and way of eating while serving a family of newly-arrived refugees. And Jane Siebert previews the 2017 Annual Convention by introducing the keynote speaker, Diana Butler Bass.

Don't forget to take the survey about General Convention (right).

—Herb Ziegler

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The Future Is in Your Hands! Please Take the Survey by October 25

The General Council has tasked the Structure Review Committee with compiling thoughts and feelings from around our denomination on the usefulness of our overall General Convention structure.

The committee's job is to "design, adopt, and maintain an organizational structure that is directly responsive to General Convention's purpose and needs, and that includes provisions for its own self-evaluation and growth" (Standing Resolution 1, Objective 9, July 3, 1986).

The survey is being distributed to individuals, support units, committees, and boards to determine if changes to our organizational structure might enhance its future usefulness to our churches, Convention bodies, and constituents.

Thank you for taking a few minutes out of your day to fill out the survey. Your name is *not* required, but you are welcome to provide that information. The link to the survey is <http://tinyurl.com/h54ejnp>

Responding will enter you in a drawing to win a paid registration fee to the 2017 Annual Convention.

If you have any questions, you can contact the Structure Review Committee chair, Rev. Lisa Solwold, at ljsolwold@aol.com.

Please take the time to participate; your voice matters! 🗳️

To subscribe to the *Messenger* online, scan this image with a QR reader on your cell phone or tablet.

Church Calendar

- **October 14–16:** Pacific Coast Association Annual Meeting, Mosswood Hollow Retreat Center, Duvall, WA
- **October 14–16:** Cabinet meeting, Chicago
- **October 28–29:** Investment Committee meeting, Cambridge, MA
- **November 3–6:** General Council fall meeting, Framingham, MA

Correction

The September 2016 *Messenger* was incorrectly identified as No. 9 of Volume 238. It was No. 7.

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



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

When I write these letters, I must write what is in my mind and on my heart, and right now it is the upcoming presidential election in the United States. I was just in Canada, visiting our Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, and it is interesting to see how they are watching what is happening in the USA and concerned about the effect the results might have on the rest of the world. They have looked up to the USA as a country that looks out—looks out to help the rest of the world, looks out for what is best for the entire world. Concern now grows as they witness some Americans as only concerned with what happens within our borders, building walls to keep others out, selectively limiting immigration, seeing our wealth as just for “us.”

I was reminded of a favorite Swedenborgian quote: “Before anything is brought back into order, it is quite normal for it to be brought first into a kind of confusion, a virtual chaos” (*Heavenly Secrets* §842(3)). It sure feels like we are there, experiencing confusion and chaos and yearning for order.

This quote is from the section explaining the inner meaning of the story of Noah and the flood, when Noah has all the animals and his family in the ark and the flood has covered the earth for 150 days. “But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark and he sent a wind over the earth and the waters re-

ceded” (Genesis 8:1).

Knowing that all of the Word is about us, as Rev. Dr. George Dole reminds us, I find comfort in the explanation of this verse. God has not forgotten us. Sometimes it has to get really dark for the light to break through. Sometimes we have to feel lost, confused, and the world around us chaotic, but God does not forget us. Order can be brought out of the chaos.

We know water signifies truth, and waters in the opposite sense (floods) can relate to falsities. Floods are destructive. Temptations and desolations are compared to floods. God brought order out of the chaos with a wind which Swedenborg explains is the Spirit which caused the waters to recede. The Spirit caused the falsities to be exposed.

And this is another interesting explanation about floods from Swedenborg. The flood which the serpent cast out of his mouth in Revelation 12:15 “signifies reasonings in abundance grounded in fallacies and appearances, which if they are confirmed, appear externally like truths, but conceal within them falsities in great abundance” (*Apocalypse Revealed* §563). The earth relates to those who live a life of faith which is charity, or love: “. . . and the earth swallowed the river” (Revelation 12:16).

So what can we do with all this? There have been many difficult times in history when those living through the time must have wondered, what is this world coming to? I believe that we are in a difficult time, and it may get worse. I also believe that God’s Divine Providence will prevail, and our responsibility at this time is to live the best we know how according to our faith and to love our God and our neighbor and trust that God will bring order out of chaos and confusion.

Blow, Spirit, blow! Fill our hearts with gladness!
Come, Spirit, Come! Set our hearts on fire!

—Rev. Jane Siebert

How Usefulness Became a Cornerstone Swedenborgian Spiritual Growth Method

BY JIM LAWRENCE

When Wilson Van Dusen's 1981 *Uses: A Way of Personal and Spiritual Growth* was republished as a pamphlet, it rapidly progressed into a runaway favorite in all quarters of Swedenborgiana. Without doubt, *Uses* is the most beloved short work in Swedenborgian spirituality of the last half-century. Though the terms "uses" and "doctrine of use" held a discernible position in historical Swedenborgian discourse, "usefulness" staked out new prominence in practical Swedenborgian spirituality. Analysis of terminology usage in Swedenborgian publishing history via article and book titles dating to the late eighteenth century bears this out.

Swedenborg never features the term "uses" or "usefulness" in book, chapter, or section titles within works. Potts's six-volume *The Swedenborg Concordance* (comprehensive with respect to ideas but not to total examples) presents 206 instances of the term "uses" (Latin: *usus*) in works that Swedenborg took to press and fifty-two cases in posthumously published works. It appears that Swedenborg explored publishing a separate volume prominently featuring "uses" from the looks of an unpublished notebook composed during 1761 that was discovered in his papers after his death. In that notebook, Swedenborg frames use as an integral component of a functional trin-

ity along with love and wisdom: love works through wisdom to produce a useful end.¹ He elected instead to incorporate this perspective in the 1763 *Divine Love and Wisdom* where uses is shaped for several pages in Part IV.

Early Swedenborgian Discourse on "Uses" Primarily as a Metaphysical Concept

The first era of Swedenborgian discussion on uses largely emphasizes its philosophical and metaphysical foundations. A few articles in *The Intellectual Repository*, the longest running early Swedenborgian journal, shape the initial conversation on uses near the end



Diagram by Karen Connor

of the eighteenth century, which continues in a very modest number of articles throughout the nineteenth century. The only two books on the topic both appear well over a century after Swedenborg's last work; they are slender volumes comprised entirely of selected passages from the Swedish sage, though both contain short introductions.² Of the two, B. F. Barrett's treatment will prove instrumental for Van Dusen.

The extant discourse on uses throughout the first 120 years of Swedenborgian publishing is quite modest compared with the avalanche devoted

to other major themes in Swedenborgian spirituality: correspondences in biblical interpretation; the oneness of the Trinity; a gradualist regeneration in contrast to immediate salvation by conversion or confession; the nature of the afterlife; the laws of divine providence; the true nature of faith; the Last Judgment; and eschatology in general. For example, of the eight most widely used overview volumes in Swedenborgian thought from the late nineteenth century up through the splash made by Van Dusen's essay, seven do not even mention uses as a topic.³ In two overviews published after Van Dusen's essay, both include uses as a Swedenborgian category.⁴

Yet the distinctive theory of uses was very much in play in the organized Swedenborgian movements before Van Dusen, and the Swede's thoughts on the metaphysics of uses penetrated somewhat deeply into serious philosophical currents. Swedenborg is distinctive for seeking a metaphysics to house theology; he wants a cosmos that works as functionally as would any mechanical science, his earliest love. Usefulness—or empirical results—plays a striking role of necessity for Swedenborg's theological universe: the only reason why anything exists is that it provides a use. Its ability to be con-

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1 The notebook carries no title, but *The Doctrine of Use* was affixed to its posthumously published form 140 years later in 1901.

2 See *Ends and Uses*, ed. B. F. Barrett (Philadelphia: Swedenborg Publishing Association, 1887) and *The Useful Life: A Crown to the Simple Life*, ed. John Bigelow (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906).

3 See Parsons, *Outlines of the Religion and Philosophy of Swedenborg*, 1893; Buss, *What the New Church Teaches*, 1897; Ager, *The Path of Life*, 1913; Smyth and Wunsch, *The Gist of Swedenborg*, 1920; Pendleton, *Topics from the Writings*, 1928; Spalding, *An Introduction to Swedenborg's Religious Thought*, 1966; Synnestvedt, *The Essential Swedenborg*, 1970; Wunsch, *Outlines of Swedenborg's Teachings*, 1975.

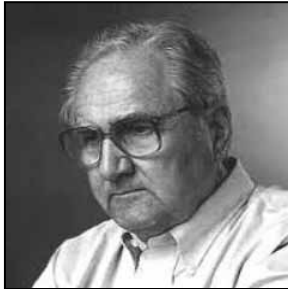
4 See Stanley, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Essential Readings*, 1988; Kirven, *A Concise Overview of Swedenborg's Theology*, 2003.

Usefulness

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cretely functional is the reason for its existence. John Haller, scholar of nineteenth-century American thought, in a recent article, “What Do American Pragmatism, Swedenborg, and Zen Hold in Common?” (<http://tinyurl.com/h8hdzwz>), provides compelling evidence for the importance of Swedenborg’s philosophy of uses in the development of American Pragmatism in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries via Emerson, James, and Peirce.⁵

Older Swedenborgians testify that a functional understanding of uses in spiritual living was common in the life of the churches, even if the published discourse is scanty. Overall it seems just to conclude that Swedenborg’s so-called doctrine of use played a serious if understated role in Swedenborgian discourse before Wilson Van Dusen’s revitalization (and some would say transformation) of it in the latter twentieth century.



Wilson Van Dusen

The Story behind Van Dusen’s “Uses” Essay

Van Dusen’s development of a spiritual growth method anchored in usefulness created a dramatic surge in the popularity of usefulness in contemporary Swedenborgian practice, and the story of Van Dusen’s late adult entrance into Swedenborgian thought is worth telling. Growing up in a non-religious household, he yet fondly regarded his spiritualist grandmother. She had pulled him aside one day when he was still a young lad and pointed to the set of ruddy gilded volumes adorn-

ing her mantle. In an earnest tone that long remained with him, she averred that everything important to know in life was in those books. She was leaving them to him as a very special legacy. His parents, however, had other ideas. Deeming the literature inappropriate for their son, they disposed of the books following her death a few years later.

Van Dusen was crestfallen, but over time the memory faded. Decades passed, and he matured into a psychologist of some reputation, both as a clinician and as an author in the emerging human potential movement. One day when

he was nearly fifty years of age, he was browsing in a San Francisco used bookshop and spied a set of the very same books his grandmother had attempted to give him. Bearing the series title *The Swedenborg Library* and published serially from 1875–1881, the twelve volumes present more than two dozen themes central to Swedenborg’s theological works. In them, he found the world his grandmother had promised, and he did not cease its exploration for the next three decades.⁶

The volumes present Swedenborg in his own words but they grouped selected passages edited by Benjamin Fisk Barrett, a prolific nineteenth-century author who became a favorite figure for Van Dusen. When visiting a Swedenborgian library, he found catalogued right next to the impressive twelve-volume set by Barrett a little-read, single,

small tome published five years later. It was yet another selected-passages approach to shaping Swedenborgian spirituality, one not covered in the earlier series: ends and uses. He read in Barrett’s preface,

This is a doctrine of supreme moment—so regarded by angels in heaven; and no thoughtful person can fail to recognize its practical value, nor to see that it contains the very core and substance of the Christian religion. Yet no such doctrine is to be found in any creeds and treatises in Christendom prior to its announcement by the distinguished Swede.

Ends and Uses delivered a new insight to the already well-regarded human potential psychologist who was immersed in discerning methods and practices for personal transformation. His popular book, *The Natural Depth in Man*, had described spiritual growth methods then coming to the fore in the human potential movement: dream interpretation, meditation, depth journaling, accessing higher states of consciousness, and techniques for practical mysticism. In uses, Van Dusen spied potential for framing an effective spiritual growth method in Swedenborg’s spiritual philosophy that was not yet well grasped. He asserts in the opening paragraph of his now classic work, “The range and power of this method have been largely overlooked by students of Swedenborg’s writings.”

Today, usefulness rivals “correspondences” as the most popular spirituality concept in Swedenborgianism—and its prominent place is quite directly owed to the success Van Dusen had in shaping the personal spiritual growth method he believed had been overlooked. He is remembered fondly for his attendance in the summer of 1977 at the Pennsylvania New Church summer family camp, Laurel, and his program of organizing everyone into small

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5 See also Armi Värilä, *The Swedenborgian Background of William James’ Philosophy* (Helsinki : Suomalainen tiedenkatemia, 1977).

6 When Van Dusen’s library and personal papers were bequeathed to the library and archives at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies in Berkeley, the only item held back by his family was this beloved set of books. It is of further interest that his donated library included an obscure booklet, *The Doctrine of Use*, from a 1969 talk given in London by a Swedenborgian minister, Rev. Björn A. H. Boyesen.

Usefulness

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tasks for close observance in their use for the whole. He wanted people not only to have clear consciousness of how all uses large and small serve the commonweal in empowering ways but also to be conscious of the delights of goodness arising through uses, both for the ones who produce them and for those who benefit from them.

After that, Van Dusen went to work on the reverberant essay that would dramatically affect Swedenborgian spirituality, publishing “Personal Spiritual Development through Uses” in an academic journal during the following year.⁷ The piece went viral, so to speak, with numerous Swedenborg Foundation printings beginning in 1981 and continuing into the present.

The World within Van Dusen’s “Uses” Essay

The explanation of how Van Dusen’s essay lifted the doctrine of use from a moderately deployed philosophical concept into a frontline spirituality concept lies in his success at framing the topic as a spiritual practice for everyday living and as a path toward vibrant living. Interestingly, he spends about half the essay on the metaphysical foundations of the concept. As a phenomenological psychologist, he was as interested in theory and empiricism, as were William James and Emerson. The essay identifies use as central to the creation and to human life; and following Swedenborg’s own analysis, Van Dusen patiently explains that use is the function that creates existence: if bereft of any use, there is no force in being.

Also like Swedenborg, who put more time and effort into anatomical studies than all of his scientific en-

deavors, with the possible exception of metallurgy, the essay focuses on the human body as the most powerful illustration of how uses holds the whole together. The power of the whole can only operate through a myriad of efficient interactive uses, which explains why Swedenborg likens the human form to the most elemental structure of the cosmos and claims it should be viewed as the Divine-Human One (see *Divine Love and Wisdom* §21). Heaven itself functions with dynamic “correctness” through myriad contributors who know how to be useful, and the result is a whole community that has the same force of being as does a unified body.

Seeing that the effects of usefulness are joy and bliss in both social and personal ways, Van Dusen had an “Aha!” insight for a way to ground “everyday” spiritual growth: simply focus on what is useful in small and large ways. This plain framing became the doorway for an accessible and immensely popular “way” of doing spiritual formation. The essay offers several, well, useful angles on the practice of it. One angle is starting with a current love and paying attention to how it can be honed in some way to provide uses to others—somewhat like finding ways to turn your hobby into a career, but the method can be employed on much smaller scales as well. When successful, one increases joy and delight for others and for oneself simultaneously.

Another angle is noticing motivations in the uses one already provides. If we see that we are more focused on what we get out of a use, we can begin training ourselves to focus on those who are supposed to receive benefits from that use. Van Dusen contrasts the inner life of a “sales-oriented” salesperson to a “customer-oriented” salesperson and concludes that the two are as different as hell and heaven. Another angle, unsurprising to find in a psychologist, is Van Dusen’s empha-

sis on self-care: top usefulness can endure only through a healthy self. So he prioritizes being of use to oneself and enjoying pleasurable things to rejuvenate. In his conclusion, he decides that being useful is true worship.

Taken in historical perspective, Van Dusen provided a breakthrough on how uses infused Swedenborgian metaphysics and spirituality. He identified the potential of a spiritual growth method from scattered mentions throughout Swedenborg’s writings and shaped a skillful and even profound



philosophy of the good life. ☩

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies of the Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley).

Further Reading

Boyesen, Björn A. H. *The Doctrine of Use*. London: Swedenborg Society, 1969.

Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Divine Love and Wisdom*, trans. George F. Dole. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2008. The original work is *Sapientia angelica de divino amore* (Amsterdam, 1763). Part IV contains the lengthiest single discussion of uses in Swedenborg’s published works.

_____. *Ends and Uses*. Selected passages edited and introduced by B. F. Barrett. Philadelphia: Swedenborg Publishing Association, 1887.

_____. *The Useful Life: A Crown to the Simple Life*. Selected passages edited and introduced by John Bigelow. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906.

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_____. *Uses: A Way of Personal and Spiritual Growth*. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1981, 1983, 2003, 2016.

_____. *The Country of Spirit: Selected Essays*, ed. James Lawrence. San Francisco: J. Appleseed & Co., 1992.

7 Wilson Van Dusen, “Personal Development through Uses,” *Studia Swedenborgiana* 3:2 (June 1978): 3–18.

Hidden Roots of Fryeburg

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lecture as a means of conveying New Church views to a general public receptive to new theological ideas. In particular, he introduced the inner sense of the Bible, which was received by biblically literate and curious audiences as a solution to problems encountered in their reading of its literal sense.

Rather than serve a local congregation, Rev. Whitehead applied to the Board of Missions to further develop his commitment to a lecture program—beyond the churches in the Boston area. He began a more than fifteen year career as lecturer in the Boston area, giving hundreds of lectures in Boston, New Bedford, Lowell, Salem, and Worcester, explaining the Bible in light of New Church principles.

The search for the hidden roots of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly and its lecture program shifts to an event on June 19, New Church Day, 1919. On that day, Louis A. Dole and Anita Sturges were married in Urbana, Ohio. Rev. Dole was President of Urbana College, and a professor of Philosophy. Anita Sturges had left a promising career at the University of Chicago to become, at the behest of her sister Alice, a teacher at Urbana College. Alice subsequently invited her sister to join her for a week at the Almont New Church Summer School, where she heard lectures on correspondences that resulted in a change of her life direction. From a career in music, she decided to work for the New Church. Newly confirmed in the New Church, Anita Sturges promptly caught the attention of Louis Dole, and they were married within the year.

The last of the dates is September of 1920, when Rev. Louis and Anita Dole moved to Fryeburg, Maine,



Rev. Louis and Anita Dole

where Rev. Dole was to serve the Fryeburg New Church as its pastor. Louis and Anita Dole (who are the parents of Gertrude Tremblay, Louise Woofenden, and the Rev. Dr. George F. Dole) added their bright

minds and youth to the longtime desire of the now aging John Whitehead—to found a summer school in Fryeburg. The first lectures were delivered in the summer of 1921. Ground was broken on the present site in the summer of 1928, and by the summer of 1932 there was a large building for overnight accommodation, meals, and lectures. In the early thirties, cabins were built along the high bank overlooking the Saco River with a view to the White Mountains of New Hampshire beyond.

Having looked back into its hidden history, I understand that the Fryeburg New Church Assembly Lecture Program reflects a tradition of the spoken word and lectern as a cherished means



Lois and Rev. George Dole at FNCA

of conveying Swedenborgian principles that are alive and relevant. The buildings are still rustic, and the somewhat antique sounding “Lecture Program” is still quintessentially apt.

Many who have attended over the years and those who have yet to experience the mountains in the distance and the river flowing beyond the bend can look forward to an exploration of the inner sense of Scripture, inner lev-

els of the mind, and spiritual living in casual conversation and in the morning lectures.

There are those lecturers who speak for thirty minutes, and then respond to questions and comments. Others include give and take from the audience as they gradually develop their ideas. My listening tells me that both styles are welcomed, and that each grows from the hidden roots of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly and



Rev. Gard Perry at FNCA

its longstanding Lecture Program. ☩

Rev. Dr. Gard Perry is chair of the Council of Ministers of the Swedenborgian Church. He attends the Fryeburg New Church and FNCA.

Diana Butler Bass

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ing. You can hear it as the earth groans for salvation, as poets and philosophers tell its stories, as scientists search the soil and the cosmos for life, as the oppressed, poor, and marginalized push for dignity and economic justice. It is time for the church to wake up. There is nothing worse than sleeping through a revolution (*Grounded*, p. 284).

We must learn to embrace our own eighteenth-century mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg, and open the writings to speak to today’s spiritual seekers. We understand the connection of the natural world and the spiritual world, with the intimate sense of the sacred in nature. We know God is available to all and is with us and in us and all around us. This revelation is not new. People are yearning and ready to hear.

We hope to see you in West Chester next July! ☩

Rev. Jane Siebert is president of the Swedenborgian Church.

Guadalajara and the 2016 North American Interfaith Network Convocation, *Espacio Sagrado*—Sacred Spaces

BY DAVID J. FEKETE

The mellow, spacey strains of Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* carried me on the final leg of my fourteen-hour pilgrimage to Guadalajara, Mexico. What occasioned this grueling flight was the 2016 meeting of the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) and a savings of \$400. I was to deliver a seminar talk on eco-justice and spirituality, using Swedenborgian principles and the eco-theology of James A. Nash.

The customs form we received on the plane foreshadowed what was in store for me on my arrival in Guadalajara. It was written in Spanish. Between my familiarity with US customs forms, my knowledge of French and Latin, and the fact that many Spanish words look like English ones, I took a stab at filling out the form. I must have got it right, as I made it through customs without incident.

They don't speak English in Guadalajara! What I mean is, Guadalajara is unlike tourist-centric cities like Cancun. It is largely a business center for Mexico, with many companies having their headquarters in there. If you Google places of interest in Guadalajara, even after going through five or so screens (as I did), you will likely find only about three places to visit: the old cathedral, Catedral de la Asuncion de Maria Santissima, in downtown Guadalajara; Lake Chapala, Mexico's famous and largest lake; and the grass step Mayan pyramids. I wouldn't call Guadalajara a tourist destination. Much of the city is depressing, spray-painted, low lying shops and businesses. The streets are patchy and rough. It is a real Mexican city, not a spruced-up place to entertain the world's tourists.

There is reason to suspect their exclusive use of Spanish in Guadalajara. A beggar on the streets said something to me in Spanish, to which I responded, "No hablas Espaniol" (my best stab at, "I don't speak Spanish). He replied, "Hey, I speak English, brother." If a beggar in shabby clothes speaks English—and fluent English . . . ?

I made my way downtown, thanks to a cabbie who had lived in Las Vegas and admitted he spoke English (divine providence?), but who grew up in Guadalajara and knew the area well. Guillermo was to remain with me on the next days' excursions.

I went to my first site alone. It was the Catedral de la Asuncion de Maria Santissima, "Cathedral of the Assumption of Most Holy Mary." Construction for this cathedral was begun in 1568 and completed in 1610. It shows the Spanish architecture of the nation that built it. Its vast interior is lit dimly and the few stained glass windows shine brightly as a consequence. Mass was in progress when I entered the cathedral, I guessed. A microphoned woman's voice intoned and the small congregation responded. I didn't understand why I heard a woman's voice in a Catholic Church. But, to tell the truth, she could have been a tour guide and I wouldn't have known the difference.

I bought a guayabera shirt for 300 pesos (\$20), which was 55% *lino* and 45% *algodon*. I understood that *lino* was linen, but no one could tell me what

algodon was. The "godon" looked like "cotton," and I hoped it was. I wanted to buy more shirts, but my credit card wouldn't work at the store, and they wouldn't take US dollars. When I got home, I read the tag more closely, "*pais de origen China*." I didn't need Spanish to understand what that meant!

Good thing I couldn't get the other shirts I wanted.

The next day, my tour-guide cabbie took me to San Pedro, which is a charming village on the outskirts of Guadalajara. On the way, we drove past some of the old, Spanish-style mansions. They were remnants of a bygone era, and some were being converted into restau-

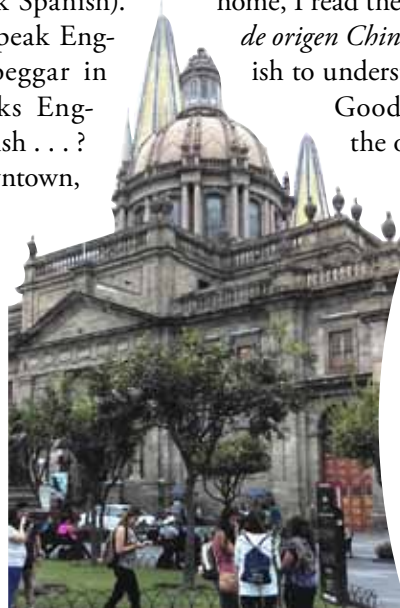
rants. Others, however, were still lived in by the ultra-wealthy.

The streets of San Pedro evoked old Spanish architecture with plaster walls and ornate iron balconies. All along the way were shops and restaurants.



For all this, San Pedro wasn't "touristy." It retained the old-world charm of its origins. In the plaza at town center there was a large gazebo, flanked by two churches on adjacent blocks. The steeples peeked above the trees sur-

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rounding the plaza.

My guide thought it best to stay with me in San Pedro, so we came up with a fare for the day and now I had a knowledgeable guide (his house was ten minutes from San Pedro) and translator. While taking in the beauty of the village, I was also intent on another guayabera shirt and a pair of leather dress sandals.

We looked in several stores and found one which had shirts *todos lino* and *hecho en Yucatan, Mexico*—all linen and made in the Yucatan, Mexico. I felt a lot better about this purchase, though I paid more dinero—gladly. The myth about haggling over price didn't apply here. My guide and I knew I got a good price, and the merchant wasn't going to barter. (I bought two shirts and tried to get the second one half-off. I said that in Canada that's how they do things. She said, "*Aqui no*"—not here!) I found a nice pair of leather, dress sandals for 260 pesos—\$21.

It was dinner time and we ate in an open-air restaurant. The hostess set a small flag stand on our table with Mexican and Canadian flags on it. My guide suggested I order a traditional Mexican dish called *Molcajete*. He tried to explain what it was, unsuccessfully. So I ordered it to experience, literally, a taste of Mexico. *Molcajete* is a heaping bowl of strips of steak, shrimp, cheese, and peppers in a



Guillermo and a dish of *Molcajete*

delicious Mexican sauce. If you find yourself in an authentic Mexican restaurant, I highly recommend that you try *Molcajete*. I had Mexican coffee with it. Mexican coffee is strong, sweet,

and steeped in spices. I could identify only cinnamon among the many spices that must have gone into it.

As the sun set, the streets of San Pedro filled with people out for a Friday night on the town. There were families, young couples, groups of friends. And it was a remarkably subdued crowd. No rowdies—raucous, loud party animals. The crowd was placid, almost peaceful. Perhaps it was the lit steeples of the churches watching over the plaza—perhaps the high temperatures, perhaps fatigue.

The following day we went to the vast Lake Chapala, Mexico's famous and largest lake. It was truly grand, with mountainous foothills rising up right from the shoreline. On the rising foothills were expensive houses. At first glance, Lake Chapala looked like other American lakes I knew, only bigger. Then I noticed a few differences. What looked like seaweed near the water's edge, was actually water lilies, though not blooming. While I liked the way they looked, Guillermo said that they were taking over the lake and the government was supposed to have gotten rid of them. Also, instead of the seagulls I expected, the predominant birds were large white herons, strutting in the shallows or soaring above the lake. We took a boat ride along the shore, and the crests of the several foothills reminded me of the Shenandoah Blue Ridge Mountains, covered as they were with trees and greenery. Guillermo said he liked the hills when they were green, because when it doesn't rain for a while, the hills are all brown.

We ate at an open air restaurant overlooking the lake. Guillermo ordered *Molcajete*, and, since I had had

that the previous night, I wanted something different. Fish was on the menu, and I decided on that. My guide to all things Mexican suggested *Huachinango*. I wasn't ready for what the waiter brought me. A whole fish—head, tail, dorsal fins—and I noticed that even the fish's open mouth still had teeth in it. I tore into it with my fork and peeled off chunks of flesh which tasted quite good. As we finished eating, an old woman with a dark, weather-worn face approached our table selling a dark orange fruit. Guillermo said he loves it. I tried to find out what the English word for this fruit was. "Guava? No. Mango? No." Guillermo said the old woman knew the English word. It sounded like, *Keence*. It still didn't register. Guillermo looked up the Spanish word on his smart phone and had the phone translate it into English: "quince." The old woman was right, but I still didn't know what it was. We got some anyway.

I learned even more about Mexico in the town of Chapala. Mexicans apparently don't drink coffee. The restaurant we were in didn't serve it. And neither did the other restaurant we went to. Those who knew, pointed us toward the outskirts of the Lake area. Being cynical, I imagined they were trying to point us out of town altogether. We found a coffee shop on the last block of the main drag. We told the waitress that they were the only place in Chapala that served coffee, and she nodded as if to say, "Yes, and your point is?"

As we were walking to the coffee shop, we passed a Spanish-style church with its doors opened, and mass was being said. I wasn't prepared for what I saw. First, the priest, in white robe and regalia, was standing in front of the pews—not up behind a podium—and talking to the congregation. But what amazed me even more was the packed church! Every seat was taken and there were people looking in. I knew that

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Mexico is a Catholic country, but even the great Catedral de la Asuncion de Maria Santissima in downtown Guadalajara had only a handful of people in it for mass.

Sunday was the start of the North American Interfaith Network Conference, *Espacio Sagrado* (Sacred Spaces). I moved into my new quarters—a remodelled convent, Our Lady of Guadalupe Retreat House, which was to be the conference venue. The retreat center was a fully-functioning convent. In addition to the retreat area there was a section in which the sisters lived. I was greeted at the door by a nun dressed in white who didn't speak English. She pointed my way toward the conference registration desk. As I searched for it, I passed a chapel in which people were gathering for Sunday morning worship. I found my room. I had traded a king sized bed in a four-star, air-conditioned hotel for a nun's room with a single bed, no air conditioning, and barely enough room for me and my luggage. But I wanted the total experience of the NAIN conference in a pre-eminently Catholic country such as Mexico is. I found out that for this conference, there were 120 registered participants—forty-five of whom were from the US and Canada, and the rest from Guadalajara.

Since I arrived early, I rested in my room until I heard a conch shell being blown. Then I heard loud drums. I went to the convent courtyard and found that Mayans in full native dress, with fantastic headdresses and brightly colored costumes, were smudging the courtyard and dancing. They brought food offerings which they placed in a sacred circle. Then they offered prayers to the four directions, turning toward each compass point as they did so. They invited us to dance with them. Although the steps weren't too dif-

ficult, even by the end of the dance I never got it right. It was like a line dance, only in a circle.

We all filed into the auditorium where we were given earpieces with which we would hear the translator, as with one exception the entire program this evening was spoken in Spanish. After a few short, speeches of welcome, the first keynote speaker began. He was Monsignor Raul Vera, bishop of the Diocese of Saltillo. Bishop Vera gave an impassioned speech drawing on the story of the woman at the well in John 4. His basic message was that religion can be neither too transcendental—in which case the church becomes dictatorial and controlling—nor can it be too immanent—in which case individuals and corporations crave personal power, corruption, and lust for wealth. What is needed is for the transcendent God to infuse the immanent world through work on behalf of the poor, the marginalized, and the exploited. Also, indigenous peoples will save humanity, industry is creating too much pollution, people all share common human rights, and everyone—men, women, straight, gay, different races and nationalities—all possess these basic human rights, and the international communities can enforce these rights. Monsignor Vera's speech lasted an hour and fifteen minutes.

After a short musical interlude, Gustavo Esteva spoke. His message was that no one can come from an intercultural perspective. Everyone is embedded in a certain culture. The best method for intercultural dialogue is listening. There was a biography of a person who wasn't identified very well interspersed in the speech, a brief history of colonization and imperialism in Mexico, and Mr. Esteva's relationship to his indigenous grandmother. He concluded by saying that he is not Western, not native, but, he hoped, intercultural. He, also, spoke for an hour and fifteen minutes. Another musical

act came onstage.

I listened for one song, then noticed that we had been in the conference so far for four hours without a break. I felt that I had gained sufficient wisdom for the evening and left the auditorium as had about two thirds of the audience. I realized with horror that there would be no coffee in the morning and resolved to wake up early and walk to Starbucks. My talk was to be tomorrow.

Monday opened with an Indigenous People's prayer. A circle of flowers was created on the lawn of the courtyard and divided into four, pie-shaped sections—each section being filled with petals from different colored flowers. The four colors represented the four races: White, Black, Yellow (the Mayans), and Red. We turned to the four directions, and at each direction, our female leader said prayers and a flute/whistle was blown. One prayer was a



Opening of NAIN 2016

reminder that we come into the world and would go out of it, and to remember this every day. We said our last prayer by touching Mother Earth

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while prayers were said to her.

That morning, I was part of a panel composed of a talk about the Baha'i Religion and a panel set up by representatives of the Interfaith Center at the Presidio, a national park in the Bay Area that was founded by the Spaniards in the eighteenth century as a fort, but is now an interfaith chapel. My talk on frugality and excessive consumer spending was well received. I made the claim that western economics are driven essentially by greed, gluttony, envy, and vanity. I brought in Swedenborg by saying that our society needs to renounce the sins of excessive consumption and production and adopt the virtues of frugality and charity. Several people had questions for me after the talk. Our Guadalajaran hosts gave each of us an Indigenous ceramic whistle in the shape of a head, and a certificate.

What really made the day for me was an afternoon seminar on sacred space. It was led by Ruth Broyde-Sharone, an interfaith Jew, and Paul Chaffee, an interfaith Christian. Being from the Bay Area, the conveners broke up the desks facing front and we sat in a circle. I thought I was in for a sixties encounter group. I wasn't far off, but my cynicism dissipated almost immediately. There were about twenty of us, and about two thirds were Catholics from Guadalajara. We introduced ourselves and stated our religious traditions. When I said "Swedenborgian," I smiled at the translator, who didn't know what to do with that word, and I offered to talk with anyone curious after the seminar. We broke into two small groups—English speakers and Spanish speakers—and shared about sacred spaces we knew personally. In the sharing, a safe, sacred space emerged from our circle. I shared that Swedenborgians carry our

sacred space in our hearts and minds. But I then added how much places like Almont and Paulhaven create a special spirit and become sacred spaces for me. We then came back to the whole group and I was in for a surprise. The Catholics from Mexico, a Catholic country, shared that their sacred spaces were in the heart when they feel a personal connection with God, with the people around them, and with family. Since this was a learning experience for everyone, I expressed my surprise, as an American Protestant, that the Catholic Mexicans didn't speak of mass, Holy Communion, cathedrals, and the priest's blessings at all. Some smiled and shook their heads—no. When the hour-and-forty-five-minute seminar concluded, no one wanted to leave the sacred space that had been created.

It happened to be my birthday that day, and several of us wanted to go out on the town. We were informed by one of the conference participants that the convent went under lock-down at 9:30 PM, and there was no going out nor coming in. "That can't be right," we said. We tried to phone Ileri, the person who lets you out and in, but there was no answer. We looked high and low for her, but she was nowhere to be found. We did finally locate her and we found out that someone had locked the back door, which we were to use, and Ileri didn't have the key. One of our party said that we need to listen to the voice of the universe, which was saying that we weren't going to go out that night. I told her that the universe was not saying that at all. She dropped out of our party. But Fred wanted me to have some kind of birthday celebration, so we waited for Ileri to find the key, which she did, finally. Then she asked us when we were coming back in; we guessed 11:30. There was some kind of problem with this. Then Ileri said we could have the key if I gave her the jade earring with jewels for the seven chakras on it that I had picked up

at the Parliament of the World's Religions. I was about to give it to her when she put her hands up and said no. Ileri gave us the only key to the convent and made us promise we would give it back by 8:00 AM the next morning. We found a club that served both beer and coffee, Fred bought a small chocolate cake for me, and we had a wonderful visit and birthday celebration. The next morning I gave Ileri my earring with the keys. She was overwhelmingly appreciative and invited me to the October *Carpe Diem* meeting to be held in Guadalajara in October. Every time she saw me that day she smiled and said, "*Muis Gracias.*" She was now wearing my earring as a pendant.

The next morning began with a business meeting. Afterward, I was conscripted into a seminar about migrants because its attendance was low. A native teacher had interesting remarks about migrating. First, he said that when natives leave their villages, they can lose their language and break their spiritual traditions. Upon returning home, if they return home, they can look upon their fellows with the same prejudice that they were viewed with in the city they had relocated to. I asked him about loneliness and alienation that a person can experience when they leave home, and I mentioned the Thomas Wolf book, *You Can't Go Home Again*—either you will change or your home will change and you can't really go home. His response was thought-provoking. He said that if you know who you truly are, you are never lonely. You can go anywhere. And you can come home. I took this to mean that we are the definers of who we are, not the people around us. I think that for an Indigenous Person, who is often the object of prejudice and discrimination, and for everyone, for that matter, this way of viewing the self is of great import. I think that we Swedenborgians can learn from it.

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I made another pilgrimage to Starbucks, having mastered the directions, and discovered that by now they knew me by name.

Tuesday night was the unofficial closing of the NAIN conference. Many people were leaving Wednesday, before the final closing words. We performed an evening devotion after supper (supper was at 8:00 PM). This one was a Buddhist devotion. A small statue of the Buddha was set on a table and wrapped in cloth. We all took a candle, lit it, and brought it to the table on which the Buddha was sitting. We lit our candle and, as we brought it to the table, we were to think good thoughts about someone we know. There were about 100 of us, and as many candles and good thoughts. It worked. For a few minutes I experienced clarity of thought and emptiness. Then we chanted a Buddhist mantra 108 times: “*Om mani padme hum.*” We were told to let our minds expand outward into the universe. Afterward we were invited to add prayers from our own tradition. We heard a Hebrew prayer; women from Guadalajara sang a song to Mary. We then chanted *Om* three times and concluded the service.

Then we celebrated. Some went into town. Some stayed in and partied. When I came back in with the group who had left the convent, there were festivities still going on. A woman took a guitar and sang a lovely Spanish song. We all fell silent. I teared up; even though I didn’t understand the words, I understood the music. The candles from the Buddhist devotion were rearranged into a cross. Selfies were taken. Hugs were exchanged—business cards exchanged. It was sacred space again. The whole conference was sacred space.

In the course of the conference, I had many opportunities to give the “elevator speech” of Swedenbor-

gianism. Some versions were long, others shorter.

Wednesday morning formally concluded the 2016 NAIN Connect Conference. There were the usual perfunctory thanks-yous and a few short words from dignitaries. But in all this, two messages stood out. The first was from Larry Greenfield, executive director for the Parliament of the World’s Religion. He said that we teach our children not to talk to strangers, but what is paramount in this world is just the opposite. “Talk to strangers,” Larry insisted. In a multicultural, international, multi-religious world, no message is more called for—“Talk to strangers.” Second, a volunteer was given a chance to talk. He said that what happened in the hallways—spontaneous gatherings, rap sessions, unplanned dialogue—this was as important as what went on in the seminar rooms. He said that if some of the conference seemed disorganized, it was disorganized by design. It is a Mexican tradition to have spontaneous dialogue, and sacred space can erupt at any time, in any place. That was for me a key message from the entire conference—like the night before. Those few of us who still remained were treated to a trip to Tlaquepaque, also known as San Pedro, where Guillermo had taken me earlier in my visit. Mey Ling, an active volunteer at the event, asked me with glee—“Are you ready for trouble?” Always.

I thought that the closing speeches were the official end of the conference, and maybe they were. We were told that the trip to Tlaquepaque would leave at 1:00 PM, but to gather at the

courtyard at noon. We did, and at noon a mariachi band made a surprise entrance in the joyous Mexican style.



Everyone started dancing to mariachi music

Everyone started dancing and yelping in that Mexican way. Even the mother superior of the convent joined in the dance. What a send-off!

I broke off from the group when we arrived in Tlaquepaque to look around

on my own. We were told to gather at the Cultural Center at 6:00 for supper. As we ate, onstage a troupe of Mexican girls in beautiful, colorful, traditional dresses danced for us for two and a half hours. They changed dresses and dance styles easily eight times. “What a send-off!” I thought. By now I was wondering how many more send-offs we were going to get. But this was finally it. Back at the convent, there were only a handful of us left.

In a short time, I had made some real heartfelt connections. I was sad to leave Guadalajara and the friends I had made. Guillermo picked me up in the morning, and we stopped at Starbucks for a final coffee. It was another sad goodbye when he dropped me off at the airport. He said it was hard. Guadalajara got a hold on me. I don’t remember visiting another place that was so hard to leave. As I thought about the heart of the place, the people, the conference, I knew I’d be back. It but remained for me to learn Spanish in the meanwhile. ☩

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



Quantum Physics for Swedenborgians

BY SUSANNAH CURRIE

The 2016 Summer Session of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly in Fryeburg, Maine, hosted Dr. Ian Thompson as the 2016 Rev. Everett K. Bray Visiting Lecturer. This program, in honor of Rev. Everett K. Bray, beloved longtime minister of the Cambridge Swedenborgian Church, FNCA lecturer, teacher, and author of *Where Heaven Begins*, was initiated in 2015 with a visit from Curtis Childs from the Swedenborg Foundation.

Dr. Thompson is a world-renowned theoretical nuclear physicist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, and has been a fellow at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies since 2013. A reader of Swedenborg since the early seventies, Ian has given talks to Swedenborgian organizations around the world. He maintains several websites on Swedenborgian topics, listed at www.ian-thompson.org.

In line with the two lecture themes of “Uses” and “The Teachings of Jesus,” Dr. Thompson lectured on “Quantum Physics for Swedenborgians,” “The Connection Between Love and Energy,” and “The Miracles of Jesus: Spiritual and Natural Laws.” These gave participants a lot to think about. Some lectures were recorded and can be listened to on the FNCA website, www.fryeburg.org.

In an interview, Dr. Thompson spoke about his Socratic lecture style and how useful the camp experience was for him. “I have various ideas which I think can be drawn out of Swedenborg’s writing, and I was keen to see how far we could get to where I wanted to go . . . to see whether this group of people would follow along

and draw things out in the same way. When people want to know, they learn more than when you just tell them.”

Rev. Currie affirmed the experiential benefit of his talks, “It was very useful for you to come in person to explain these very difficult concepts because they were presented in an interactive way. I probably will retain a little more.”

And it was useful to Dr. Thompson as well. “I choose topics to talk about because I hadn’t actually worked out how to write about them properly. I discover that when I’m talking and in-



Rev. Susannah Currie interviewing Dr. Ian Thompson on the deck at FNCA

teracting I get some ideas. You’ve been useful to me!”

Dr. Thompson shared how he was initially drawn to Swedenborg’s writings—“I was trying to understand psychology, actually,”—when he came upon a magazine article by Wilson Van Dusen in New Zealand, which led him to order copies of Van Dusen’s *Presence of Spirits in Madness* and Swedenborg’s *Heaven and Hell* and *Divine Love and Wisdom*. “My entry point was the idea of correspondences. I had sort of worked out on my own that there had to be something like correspondence between spiritual and natural things, but couldn’t see how it could work. Swedenborg appeared to be promising to give an explanation.”

But just reading Swedenborg’s thoughts didn’t bring the explanation he had hoped for. “I was trying to understand how minds worked and how

they related to the brain. I was trying to find the hidden mechanism, the secret clockwork behind correspondences.” But like Swedenborg’s search for the soul within the human body, he found that searching from a “scientific, cognitive approach” did not bring him a complete understanding. “After years of reading, I went back and re-read Swedenborg’s *Heaven and Hell* and *Divine Love and Wisdom*, trying to follow his approach. My orientation changed: It now involved orienting myself to the source of life and the focus on loves and living life. Then it became a faith journey.”

Dr. Thompson’s continuing prolific writing and presenting on Swedenborg and science, and the connections he is making with current scientific thought are on the cutting edge of today’s most intriguing insights into the Divine. His most recent book is

Starting Science from God: Rational Scientific Theories from Theism.

Dr. Thompson will be invited back to join the staff of camp lecturers, and the FNCA community looks forward to his return. Dr. Thompson said, “It was my first time in Maine. It’s wonderful! It’s green, a lot like New Zealand.” And when asked about his camp experience, he remarked, “Clearly it is a camp with a long tradition of doing things in a communal way. I met a whole lot of new people, I was put down right into the middle.”

The 2017 Rev. Everett K. Bray Visiting Lecturer will be Dr. Devin Zuber, professor at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies. For more information on the FNCA, see www.fryeburg.org. ☩

Rev. Susannah Currie is the religious program coordinator at Fryeburg New Church Assembly and minister of the Bridgewater New Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

“She’s Making Fufu”

BY JOHN MAINE

This is the “Pastor’s Corner” article from the September newsletter of the Church of the Good Shepherd (COGS) in Kitchener, Ontario. The Kitchener church has partnered with three other churches to sponsor a refugee family from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Philip made the quiet observation to me as we stood in a corner of the kitchen, waiting out the last few minutes of our shift. The two of us had just done an overnighter at the house where our family from the Congo are living. They’d come to this place straight from the airport; just two days before, they’d still been in a refugee camp in Burundi, a tiny country on the eastern border of the homeland they’d been forced to flee.

The culture shock—coming from central Africa to southern Ontario—had been immediate and enormous. Mom, dad, and five children were sweet, smiling, unfailingly polite—and completely lost. They didn’t know what light switches were, they’d never seen hot and cold running water. Appliances were a mystery to them, the gas stove incomprehensible, the house itself impossibly strange.

And this situation was compounded by the fact that, of course, none of them spoke any English, and only the dad, Shinga, spoke French. This language barrier was like being made suddenly deaf and dumb. We could certainly see one another but it was enormously difficult to make any kind of meaningful connection. In some ways, all we have are words and, when the words aren’t there, all we’ve got are anxious smiles and clumsy hand signals and, in this case, vague memories of high school French. Oh boy.

Clearly the family was going to need a lot of ongoing support just to cope with the tasks of daily living. Nor could this be left up to the nice cou-



Shinga and Esperance at home

ple who owned the home and had busy lives of their own. So morning, afternoon, and evening shifts were quickly organized, with volunteers from the sponsoring churches—including COGS—coming over to be with the family, take them to appointments, and generally teach them the basics of what they needed to know. At night, the homeowners were there to keep an eye on things.

In the meantime, I and others had raced to find every local speaker of Swahili—our family’s native tongue—we could. They made a big difference, and within the first few days, we had some kind of routine in place and a schedule for moving them forward in the whole settlement process: getting registered for SIN cards and ESL classes, school for the kids, and so on. After the initial chaos, we were on an even keel again.

And then, the homeowners announced that they were going away for a week’s holiday, which meant that our family would be left on their own at night. This just wouldn’t do, and so, for that week, night shifts were instituted. Philip—that’s Rev. Philip Mathai, pastor at Mt. Zion Lutheran—and I took two of the shifts. So there we were in the kitchen that morning, watching the mom of the family, Esperance, as she cooked on the gas stove that she had so recently learned how to use.

Now, one thing you need to know about Philip is that he loves to cook.

Rarely have I met a man who knows more about food and the preparing of it. So it didn’t surprise me that Philip knew what dish Esperance was preparing, namely *fufu* (pronounced foo-foo), but I certainly didn’t.

Well, when I don’t know something, I look it up. So later, I went online and discovered that fufu is to the countries of central and southern Africa (including, obviously, the Congo) what potatoes—mashed, fried or baked—are to us in North America. In its various slightly different forms, it is *the* basic dish for all of sub-Saharan Africa. Everybody knows fufu; everybody eats it.

Here’s how it works: You boil up cassava or yams or plaintains (if you don’t have a ready-made flour like semolina), then drain the water and proceed to vigorously pound and mash these veggies (along with a bit of salt and butter) until the consistency is thick and smooth. The result is like a big, round, doughy ball and it’s served by being placed on a platter in the centre of the table or, if no table, in the midst of those who will be eating. Around that platter are placed one or more bowls of meat, gravy or soup. Diners pull a small piece from the fufu, roll it into a ball in their hand and then press their thumb into it. The indentation made by their thumb acts as a scoop when they then dip their fufu ball into the soup or gravy.

And that’s mealtime, Congolese-style. It’s simple, straightforward, and there’s very little washing up to do. It also helps me understand something that took me by surprise that first day at the house when we sat down to eat together.

Of course none of us knew anything at that point about fufu or about the Congo or our new friends. So we had prepared a dinner for them using

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Passages

Baptisms

MacKenzie Schellenberg and **Madison Schellenberg** were baptized into the Christian Church at the Edmonton Church of the Holy City, Rev. David Fekete officiating.

Confirmations

Kurtis Schreiber, Mitch Schreiber, Dawson Dumont, Tyran Mazer, Ashley Watters, Brayden Schellenberg, Kyle VanRooijen, and Samantha Lindsay were conformed at Paulhaven Camp in Alberta on July 28, 2016, Rev. David Fekete officiating. ☩

She's Making Fufu

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ingredients that we hoped were fairly universal—rice, beans, chicken. Well, the food wasn't a problem, but it was immediately evident that the manner of eating it was. The children had obviously never seen a knife, fork, or spoon before. The idea of using metal implements to put food into your mouth was completely strange to them. When you have fufu, the food is your implement, you don't need anything else.

So now I understood. As Philip reminded me, many if not most people around the world don't use cutlery for eating. Why should they? God gave us fingers for a reason!

God also gave us a brain for understanding and making choices. In that regard, I'll confess right here that there's a part of me that resists eating dinner in this communal way, with my fingers. As an immigrant myself, but from the U.K., I was raised in a very English home. Proper table manners and the correct use of one's knife and fork were a Very Big Deal. It showed you were "civilized."

But that's just the way my family

brought with them to this country, and our Congolese friends have brought another way. It's new but it's also the diversity that we Swedenborgians cherish. We are always to be learning new things, growing in new ways. That is the way of life, the way of God, who makes all things new.

And that brings us round to this new church year we're about to begin, for it's going to be all about learning and growing. Following on in our denomination's cycle of annual themes, this will be—drum roll, please!—the Year of the Word (2016–17). That has reference not only to the Bible (aka the Word of God) but more especially to how we live its love and wisdom. That's what changes us and our world—and our world these days is in such need of change. For this work, we are each needed and loved and called to shine our light. This can happen in many ways, not least of which will be our ongoing journey with the Congolese family.

Winter Angels

BY KRIS BROWN

At night they circle around us while we sleep and hover
 Over a dark spot—a hardened heart, made-up mind or frozen feeling
 The one who carries the lute raises her chin
 Signaling the others to flutter their wings until a breeze builds up
 None is visible to us but each arrives as they lived on earth
 The lute player in red silk and gold cape, the bus driver with grey jacket and cap,
 the cowboy his spurs, the artist her smock, and so on. . .
 It isn't likely we ever knew any of them or can even claim them as ancestors
 For winter angels do not look for friends or relatives
 They simply seek the darkneses of winter
 Their gentle wind will not wake us up
 Nor will our dreams reveal where they were
 But in the morning we only have to remember they have come
 As they always do
 And close our eyes to locate that dark place
 Breathe in more air there
 To continue what the winter angels already started—
 To restore and lighten us.

Kris Brown is an artist living in Inverness, California. She is a founding member of the West Marin Swedenborgian Spirituality Group.

And in the meantime, as the apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!" Nothing beats a life lived in the Lord. You're on the right path and you've got the best friend with you. So here we go, and may this season bring you peace and joy and the promise of new beginnings. ☩

Rev. John Maine is pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd.



Online Course

Beginning October 25, *Our Daily Bread* will offer a ten-week online course, "An Introduction to the Swedenborgian Way of Life," created by Rev. Dr. David Fekete. Each week, a new lesson will be posted on www.spiritualquesters.org. Direct questions to Rev. Fekete: revdrfekete@gmail.com.

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.

Diana Butler Bass to Address 2017 Annual Convention

BY JANE SIEBERT

I know it sounds like a long way off, July 2017, but I hope you will start planning now to attend the 200th Anniversary of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, outside of Philadelphia, in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Each month in *the Messenger*, we will have a spotlight on something special about this year's convention, and one of the biggest events is this year's keynote speaker, Diana Butler Bass, author, speaker, and independent scholar specializing in American religion and culture.

I am sure many of you have read one of her nine books, including her latest, *Grounded, Finding God in the World, A Spiritual Revolution*, in which she mentions our own Garden Church (San Pedro, California) in the first chapter, "Dirt." Or you might have heard an interview on CBS, CNN, MSNBC, FOX, PBS, or NPR. Or read an article in *The Atlantic*, *Guideposts*, *USA Today*, *Time*,

The Washington Post, *Newsweek*, or *Huffington Post*.

You can catch up with Diana at her website or follow her on Facebook or Twitter. And I highly recommend one of

my favorite books, *Christianity after Religion*, *The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*. She is not saying Church is useless; she is saying Church has to wake up and catch up with the spiritual awakening. In 1962, twenty-two percent of Americans reported having had a personal experience of God—a spiritual or mys-

tical experience. In 2010, that number had more than doubled to forty-nine percent. She calls it "The Rise of the Mystics."

The spiritual revolution, finding God in the world, is an invitation to a new birth, most especially for religion. There is no better place to start than in your synagogue, mosque, temple, or church.

And that new birth is happen-

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Diana Butler Bass