



A Youth Tradition—SCYL Teen Worship Services at Swedenborgian Annual Conventions

BY KURT FEKETE

Teenagers have brought energy and excitement to our annual conventions for a long time. Adults at conventions observe teens playing games on the grass, laughing at meals in the cafeteria, and gallivanting around campus like a gaggle of geese.

But it is the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) Worship Service at each convention that draws the greatest attention and appreciation from adult convention attendees. There is something magical about the raw, innocent sin-

cerity of youth-led worship. Perhaps it is the way they draw the congregation in with their emotional, unabashed, presentation style. That is certainly en-

SCYL worship experiences I have been a part of helping to organize.

There is a long history of youth worship at conventions, spanning almost forty years. I dug through old convention issues of *Clear Blue Sky*, the youth newsletter. The earliest reference I found to a youth worship service was 1979. I'm sure that young people took part in worship at conventions much earlier than this, but this is the first written record that I discovered of an entirely youth-led service.

Youth-led worship grew and thrived in the 1980s and 1990s. Rev. Jennifer Tafel recalls,

We did not have musicians among us but we all had a highly developed sense of what music we liked and what we chose to listen to. And while this may have been a limitation, the adults who attended the services (many parents but also a wide variety of attendees) took what we offered seriously. The adults were on time, respectful, and paid attention. Sometimes we offered "theater of the absurd"--though it was where we were spiritually--we had their attention. I knew it was a big deal that we had the time we did to offer our worship experience. It meant some-

Continues on page 78

Our worship service
 This year at convention the ANCL did a worship service on Saturday at 9:00 a.m. Each person either read, sang or did both.
 The reading was from Matthew chapter 13. There were readings from the writings and Psalms 67. The benediction was from Psalms 23:6.
 — Nancy Little, Elmwood, Ma.

From the Convention 1979 issue of Clear Blue Sky

tertaining and different. Maybe seeing "the future of the church" actively engaged in worship gives a warm comfort to those advancing in years. It is certainly wonderful to see youth interested in spiritual thought and action. Or is it that a newer, different form of church is refreshing and invigorating? It is likely some combination of all of this, but whatever the reason, attendance at the SCYL worship Service is always high and people tell me all the time that it is the one event at conventions that they never miss. So, as I prepared for this year's Convention in West Chester, Pennsylvania, I wondered when this wonderful teen worship tradition began and reflected upon the many uniquely creative

Register Now for Annual Convention 2017

July 5–7: Council of Ministers

July 7: General arrival and check-in

July 8: Bryn Athyn tours,

In Company with Angels reception

July 9: Opening worship, keynote address,

BBQ at Temenos Retreat Center

July 10–11: Business sessions, worship

services, ordination, mini courses

July 12: Departure, optional self-guided

tour of Delaware Valley

For registration and details,

visit [http://tinyurl.com/](http://tinyurl.com/Swedenborg2017)

Swedenborg2017.

The Editor's Desk

The Messenger is packed full of information this month, so I am turning my column space over to the youth director, Kurt Fekete, for exciting SCYL news.

—Herb Ziegler

Summer Camp 2018

We've been invited back to England to an international summer camp! Six years ago, a five day International Camp for New Church teenagers was held at Purley Chase, England. For those who came along, amazing memories were made and lasting friendships were formed.

We feel it is time to do it again and want to invite you!

Where? The camp will be held at Purley Chase Centre which is deep in the middle of the English countryside, a couple of hours North of London.

Who? Anyone aged 13–20 is invited.

When? The Camp will run from July 29– August 5, 2018 (although you will need to add on your travel time to and from England.)

What? The Camp will be led by Swedenborgian youth leaders from England and North America, and our overall theme for the week will be to explore the Creation Story and its relevance in our lives. We will also be doing a huge variety of activities such as day trips and walks in the area, campfire, table tennis, games evenings, “Olympic” sports on the lawn, and a talent show—to name a few.

Cost? Purley Chase charges just £30 for a full week’s accommodation and food. Donations are welcomed by those who are able to pay more.

Why should I come? You will have the opportunity to make friends from around the world, experience London as well as rural England, relax in beautiful surroundings, take part in new and fun activities, and renew your excitement in being part of an incredible faith and church organization.

How exciting! I would love to help teens in the United States and Canada attend. This event will be rather expensive in comparison to other retreats and camps. However, this is a wonder-

ful opportunity to visit England and meet other Swedenborgians in another country. The Church will provide some financial assistance to those requesting help. The initial plan is to depart on Friday, July 27 and take a tour of London, England, on Saturday, July 28 before heading up to Purley Chase on Saturday evening. Please contact me if you are interested in going: kfekete@hotmail.com or 802.345.0169. I will



also set up a Facebook event page, so let me know if you would like to be invited to that page.

—Kurt Fekete

Contents	
A Youth Tradition—SCYL Teen Worship Services at Swedenborgian Annual Conventions	65
The Editor's Desk	66
Letter from the President	67
Nominees for Elected Positions in the Church	68
Church and Association Statistics	69
Structure Review Survey Results	70
Iungerich Fund Requests.....	70
SPLATz Puzzle Over The Bible.....	71
Transformation Continues at Urbana University	72
Proposed Changes to the CSS Bylaws ..	74
Rev. Jenn Tafel Receives Award	75
East Coast Peer Supervision	75
A Swedenborgian View on Climate Change.....	76
“Grounded and Grateful: Searching for the Deep Structures of the Spirit”	80

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



Church Calendar

- **June 6–9:** Swedenborg and the Arts Conference, Bryn Athyn, PA
- **July 5–12:** Swedenborgian Church Annual Convention and Council of Ministers meeting, West Chester, PA
- **July 16–22:** Paulhaven Children’s Camp, Alberta
- **July 22–30:** Almont Summer School, Allenton, MI
- **July 29–August 13:** FNCA Summer Camp, Fryeburg, Maine
- **September 21–24:** Gathering Leaves Swedenborgian women’s retreat, Punslich, Ontario

the Messenger

© The Swedenborgian Church of North America
 Published monthly except July and August by the Communication Support Unit of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (founded 1817, incorporated 1861 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America), Rev. Jane Siebert, president.
 May 2017
 Volume 239, No. 5, Whole Number 5420
 Editor, design and production: Herbert Ziegler
 Copy editing and proofing: Robert Leith, Renée Hellenbrecht, & Trevor
 Communication Support Unit: Elizabeth Blair, Tammara Mounce & Katie Pruiett
 Printing: Gnomon Copy, Cambridge MA
 Editorial Address:
 Herb Ziegler, the Messenger
 2 Hancock Place
 Cambridge MA 02139
 Tel: 617.388.0252
 Email: messenger@swedenborg.org
 Business and Subscription Address:
 The Messenger, Central Office
 50 Quincy Street
 Cambridge MA 02138
 Tel: 617.969.4240
 Email: manager@swedenborg.org
 Subscriptions: free online subscription at www.swedenborg.org. Printed and mailed to US address, \$20/year; to Canada address, \$30/year; to all other addresses, \$35/year; single copies, \$2.00. Libraries & prisoners, free. Send check made out to “Swedenborgian Church” with “Messenger” on the memo line. Other requests, write or call Central Office.
 Deadline for submissions is three weeks before the first day of the month of issue.
 The opinions and views expressed are those of the authors, not of the Messenger, the Communication Support Unit, or the Swedenborgian Church.

Letter from the President



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

Dear Friends,

Change is inevitable, but that doesn't make it easy

Today I heard from our long-standing office manager, Renée Hellenbrecht, that she has accepted a wonderful work opportunity at the MIT library. The job fits her skill set, has good prospects for advancement, and is "just too good to pass up."

For those of you who have worked with Renée over the past ten years, you know the big hole this is going to create, not only in Central Office, but also at annual conventions and throughout our denomination. She is a vital part of the workings of the Swedenborgian Church. Renée knows more about General Convention than most of us even know to ask.

This has brought me to think about change. We all are in the midst of change as we age, take on new responsibilities, pick a new hair color, retire from jobs, graduate from school, experience the death of a pet, undergo separation or divorce—move. Change is hard and change is inevitable.

I hate to see Renée leave, for personal and professional reasons. She has done a lot for our greater Church, and she has helped me in my year of transition to president. I like her. I will miss her. And yet, I wish her well. This sounds like her dream job. She will be good at it. She will stretch and grow and blossom. I understand the need for her change, but that doesn't make it easy.

We have hired Katie Pruiett, a familiar face around General Convention, as a temporary em-

ployee to help us through this time of transition and change. She has jumped right in, and Renée is training her, trying to impart all she has learned about running Convention, Central Office, and this sometimes quirky denomination.

We will need your patience as we transition. There will be times you may hear, "I don't know, but I will find out." Some things will fall through the cracks, as Renée is efficient, well organized, and a vital part of the team at Central Office.

Yes, change is inevitable, and we need change to grow. Regeneration and change are inseparable. Change makes us look at how we are living our lives, what is important to us, what to keep, and what to throw out. Like it or not, change is life itself.

At this year's annual convention, we are looking at the thirty-year-old structure of our denomination. The Structure Review Committee has been working all year to help us assess what to keep and what is no longer helpful. They started with a questionnaire that everyone had the opportunity to fill out. They distilled the answers, categorized them, and in this issue of *the Messenger* are bringing their suggestions (page 70). Now it will go back to the people at the convention to reflect, add their suggestions, and distill the best way to proceed. Then General Council will take the lead and offer finalized suggestions for structural change to be voted on at next year's convention. That is how we do things in General Convention. We do our best to listen to all voices and come to a consensus that is better than anyone or any committee could design.

I feel like our denomination itself is in regeneration. This is a good thing, but sometimes uncomfortable. We like what is familiar, often the "old way." However, to serve a changing world, we too must change.

In the midst of all change we long for, what is permanent? What can we hold on to? What is the boat we can cling to when Jesus calls us to walk on water, but we aren't sure we can? In the last chap-

Continues on page 79

Nominees for Elected Positions in the Church

The Nominating Committee recruits and puts forward nominees for election to offices and positions in the denomination at the Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church. (See table at right.) To date, the candidates listed in the table above have been nominated for election at the 2017 Swedenborgian Church Annual Convention.

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

Nominating Committee:

Bill Coffman



I am pleased to be asked to serve on the Nominating Committee of the General Convention. I feel that my past church involvement at the denomination, association, and local level would be an asset to the committee. I am excited about the vision and plans for the restructuring of General Convention and the expansion of the role of the nominating committee.

I have been a member of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church since 1992 and have served on the church board for a total of twenty-five years, including twenty-three years as treasurer. In addition, I have served as president of the Ohio Association of Swedenborgian Churches for six years. For nine years, I was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Swedenborgian House of Studies.

My professional background includes thirty-two years in teaching and administration in the Ohio public school system with a B.A. in political science and M.A. in economic education. I have been on the faculty of

Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
Vice-President	1	Tom Neuenfeldt ^{1,3}
Recording Secretary	1	Karen Conger ^{1,3}
Treasurer	1	Jennifer Lindsay ³
General Council layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Lon Elmer ^{1,3} Barb Halle
General Council Minister	3	Junchol Lee ^{1,3}
Communications Support Unit (COMSU)	3	Kathryn Pruiett ^{1,3}
Education Support Unit (EDSU)	3	Paul Deming ^{1,3}
Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU)	3	Carl Helm
Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)	3	Kevin Baxter ^{1,3}
Support Unit for Ministries (MINSU)	3	Marjorie Leas
Committee on Admission to the Ministry: Layperson (CAM)	3	Page Morahan ³
Board of Trustees of CSS, representative class (2 to be elected)	3	Gard Perry ^{1,3} Alison (Longstaff) Moore ^{1,3}
Board of Trustees of CSS, at-large class (2 to be elected) ²	3	Jenny Caughman ¹ Anna Woofenden
Nominating Committee (2 to be nominated)	5	Bill Coffman Nancy Leras

1 Incumbent

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

3 Candidate statement appeared in the April 2017 *Messenger*

Urbana University since 1999 and am at present an adjunct instructor in the College of Education. Prior to retirement in 2012, I served as associate professor and chair of field studies. My responsibilities included oversight of all student teacher education and sports/health studies field experiences as well as leading the student teaching seminars. Additionally I served on the Urbana University Admission and Academic Standards Committee, the Faculty Promotion and Tenure Committee, the Teacher Education Advisory Committee and various other University committees.

General Council, layperson:

Barb Halle

I've been an active and happy member of LaPorte New Church since the



early 1990s while serving in leadership roles in the Sunday school, on outreach projects and programs, and on the Executive Board in various offices,

currently as Treasurer. I've enjoyed being part of a loving, devoted local congregation who doesn't shy away from challenges that come from an evolving ministry.

Over the years I've also served four denominational committees, EDSU, MINSU, FPRSU, and the Augmentation Fund, and as chair of two: MINSU and AFC, absorbing much along the way about the needs and function

Continues on page 69

Nominees

Continued from page 68

of our larger church.

I now feel honored to be nominated to General Council. I value open-mindedness and looking at new and fresh ways to meet the needs of our New Church. If elected, I will do my best to serve well and with faith for a brighter future for our denomination.

CSS Board of Trustees:

Rev. Anna Woofenden

Rev. Anna Woofenden is the founding pastor of the Garden Church in San Pedro California, Which reimagines church as an inter-



connected organism, worshiping, loving and serving together while transforming a plot of land into a vibrant urban farm and sanctuary.

Anna received her Masters of Divinity from Earlham School of Religion, a Certificate of Swedenborgian Studies from the Swedenborgian House of Studies, and is an ordained minister in the Swedenborgian Church of North America. She has a passion for spirituality, justice, food, the earth, beauty, compassion, and community, and is driven by a calling to reimagine church.

CSS Board of Trustees:

Rev. Jenny Caughman

I am a sixth generation Swedenborgian. It was not, however, until middle age that I received my calling to the ministry. I earned a Certificate in Swe-

denborgian Studies from SHS and an MDiv from the Earlham School of Religion (ESR) in May, 2012 and was ordained in Bridgewater, MA two months later. In 2012 I was also asked to serve on the Board of Trustees of the National Church because of my long-time association (it was the first church



I attended as a child as my father served there) and I happily accepted. I live in Oak Ridge, TN with my husband John and three children thus am unable to serve

a Swedenborgian congregation; instead I am the Visitation Minister at the local United Methodist Church. I occasionally preach at the New Church of

Continues on page 70

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, 2016.

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	87	40	127	10
Illinois	6	0	3	1	1	93	21	114	11
Kansas	2	0	1	1	0	75	0	75	9
Maine	3	0	7	1	0	132	115	247	15
Massachusetts	4	0	8	0	0	76	65	141	9
Michigan	1	0	4	0	0	66	20	86	8
Middle Atlantic	3	0	5	1	1	98	13	116	11
New York	2	0	1	0	0	25	15	40	4
Ohio	3	0	6	1	0	45	16	61	6
Pacific Coast (PCA)	7	0	13	3	2	225	153	352	24
Southeast	2	0	2	0	0	20	2	22	4
Western Canada	3	3	1	1	0	82	32	114	10
At Large	na	na	1	0	na	6	0	6	2
SCYL	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	2
Unknown Affiliation			14						na
Totals	38	3	74	9	4	1030	492	1501	125

Structure Review Survey Results

The Structure Review Committee (SRC) will report on the floor of Annual Convention a summary of responses from the recent survey members submitted. While a wide range of needs were submitted, we have worked to organize them into categories that can be more easily addressed. In order to proceed in manageable steps, we focused on topics that we thought would offer supportive change and not simply “change for change’s sake.”

During business sessions at the convention, the Structure Review Committee will present some ideas to address the needs expressed and facilitate focus discussion groups for input from the general membership. Your input will become part of planning for the future.

Following are the areas of proposed changes for your review prior to Convention:

1) Streamline support units

- Merge the Education Support Unit (EDSU) and some functions of the Ministries Support Unit (MINSU) into **Education & Resources for Ministries**, for development and dissemination of resources for worship, small groups, church growth, stewardship, board development, and outreach.
- Add a compensated staff position: *Ministry Resource Development Consultant*.
- Merge MINSU’s funding responsibilities, the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU), the Augmentation fund committee (AFC), and other funding groups into **Funding for Ministries**, to streamline funding, access, and coordination..
- Merge the Information Management Support Unit (IMSU) and

the Communications Support Unit (COMSU) into **Communication & Outreach Ministries**, to oversee the needs of the denomination website and provide association and church website assistance, networking opportunities, and information technology help.

- Add a compensated staff position: *Communications, I.T.& Social Media Consultant*

2) Expand Nominating

Committee role

Create **Nominating & Talent Pool for Ministries**, to develop a qualified talent pool for future support unit, board, and volunteer positions, and clear job descriptions.

3) Streamline governing processes and redundancy

- Merge the Cabinet and General Council.
- Nominate General Council members for support units.

4) Support the work of committee chairs

Offer stipends to support unit and Nominating Committee chairs.

5) Review current committees

Assess if some committees could be appointed on an ad hoc basis to accomplish specific tasks, for example, the (currently being discussed) Best Practices Working Group.

If you are not attending Convention this year, email your comments to one of the SRC members: Rev. Lisa Solwold, ljsolwold@gmail.com; Bill Coffman, bcoffman@woh.rr.com; Rev. Susannah Currie, revscurrie@gmail.com; Kurt Fekete at kfekete@hotmail.com; or Rachel Madjerac, rmadjerac@ses.psr.edu. ☒

Iungerich Fund Requests

The Iungerich Fund Is accepting requests for 2018 funding. The dates of application are June 1 through September 30, 2017.

The Purpose of the Fund

The Louis C. Iungerich Fund (The Iungerich Fund) makes grants at its trustees’ discretion for the publication or printing and gratuitous distribution of the theological writings given by Emanuel Swedenborg among the Protestant clergy of the United States and Canada, including theological students and professors of theology. Methods of distribution can include electronic means.

How to apply

Applications should be made in writing via a letter to the Trustees of the Iungerich Fund in care of Christine Laitner, chair. Application may be made by email chris.laitner@gmail.com or through the USPS: 10 Hannah Ct., Midland, MI 48642.

The application letter should clearly identify how the project fulfills the purpose of the Iungerich Fund, and should contain all relevant information about the project, including its specific financial needs and the people who would be served or impacted. Applications are reviewed in late October, with notifications sent out in November for 2018 grants. ☒

Nominees

Continued from page 69

Montgomery in Cincinnati and am grateful for the chance to connect with other Swedenborgians. Having recently undergone both the SHS/ESR experience, as well as the transition from theory to practice, I believe I will have a useful perspective to offer on the CSS Board. ☒

SPLATz Puzzle Over The Bible

BY KURT FEKETE

This was a first. We've never had a retreat like this before. Instead of spending class time discussing a specific topic over a weekend, the 10–13 year-olds at the April SPLATz retreat solved riddles, puzzles, searches, and cyphers about stories in



the Bible. Inspired by the increasingly popular escape room games, thirteen youngsters attended this adventure camp April 21–23, 2017, at Almont Retreat Center in Michigan. At this retreat, teams first had to find, then attempt to solve, a series of puzzles using only their wits and their Bibles.

There were four rounds involving four categories: Creation, Arks, Kings, and Revelation. The SPLATz were sorted randomly into three groups before each round. To start a round, each team was given a riddle to find the location of where the pages of puzzles were located. For instance, for the first round on the topic Creation, the riddle was,

Building, constructing, decorating, can do!
All of these things await you.
Glitter, paint, brushes and glue.
On this porch find puzzles too!

(The puzzles were hidden on the porch of the Craft Cottage)

Once the groups found the puzzle pages, they had fifteen minutes to solve as many as possible. Each person scored a point for each puzzle page they correctly completed. Then, at the end of the retreat, after all four rounds were complete, the three retreaters with the highest scores received prizes.

It took quite some time to find or

create sixteen pages of puzzles. My mother, Joyce Fekete, helped me write a couple of them. I was really impressed with how hard the tweens worked on the puzzles. Some were fairly simple, but some were quite tricky and required some knowledge of or from the Bible to solve. After each round we all sat together and talked about the answers to the puzzles and discussed the Bible stories referenced. I thought it might be fun to share a few of the puzzles with readers of *the Messenger*. Send me a note and let me know how you did!

- Noah set off to count the number of goats and chickens on the ark. He counted nine heads and thirty legs. How many chickens and how many goats did Noah count?
- The third king was so very wise, the brightest of all you see. Can you unlock three phrases he wrote and be as smart as he?
 - Away atteringchay oolfay omescay otay uinray
 - nehW er'uoy leurc ot srehto uoy truh flesruoy
 - 1 6 18 9 5 14 4 12 15 22 5 19 1 20 1 12 12 20 9 13 5 19
- Once a boy of Israel, was taken far away. He would not bow before this king, only to God he'd pray.

An angel and some lions fierce would determine this boy's fate. Who was this boy? Who was this king? The story will relate.

4. This puzzle is based on Psalm 23. Find and circle the following words in the letter grid:

annoints, cup, enemies, follow, guides, leads, Lord, mercy, overflow, pastures, valley

Use the letters not circled to find the mystery word (from <http://tinyurl.com/kxcb9wb>).

P	L	E	A	D	S	F	W
V	A	L	L	E	Y	O	E
M	S	S	D	H	L	L	N
E	E	I	T	F	P	L	E
P	U	R	R	U	O	O	M
G	H	E	C	R	R	W	I
E	V	R	D	Y	D	E	E

Solutions

- 6 goats, 3 chicken
- A chattering fool comes to ruin when you're cruel to others you hurt yourself
A friend loves at all times
Daniel and King Darius
- Shepherd

Transformation Continues at Urbana University

REV. BETSY COFFMAN

Urbana University/Franklin University Relationship

If you joined us at Urbana University (UU) last summer for our annual convention, then you won't be surprised to learn that the University continues to improve and enhance the campus, from facilities and technology to academics, athletics, and community engagement, UU is bursting with activity. As the only undergraduate institution of higher education affiliated with the General Convention, Urbana University is proud of its heritage of being founded by followers of the Swedenborgian faith and honors this relationship through a variety of activities.

Campus Changes and Developments

- This spring saw a change in the University's leadership, as Dr. George Lucas, who served as president for the last two years, stepped down, and Dr. Christopher Washington, executive vice-president and provost for the Franklin enterprise, was appointed as the chief executive officer for Urbana. Dr. Washington, who has been with Franklin University for eighteen years, has a wealth of experience in strategic leadership, change management, academic programming, reputation building, and community affairs, and he is a high-energy, results-oriented leader. Dr. Washington was quickly and warmly welcomed by the student body, faculty, and staff.
- From buildings, grounds, and technology, to academics, athletics, and student life, changes and enhancements that improve the students' educational experience remain the top focus. The University served more than 1,800 students this year

and graduated 233 in May, including 89 who received their master degrees. The student body is more diverse than ever and includes hundreds of traditional residential and adult commuter students. UU has one of the largest dual-credit high-school-to-college programs in Ohio, with more than fifty high schools and more than 1,000 students participating. UU also enhanced its international relationships by partnering with Franklin to create the English Language & Cultural Immersion Program, which brought twenty-four college engineering students from Mexico to campus in the fall for an eight week program, and expects many more in the coming year.

- For the fifth year, UU received a "Tree Campus USA" designation from the Arbor Day Foundation, which honors colleges and universities for effective campus forest management and engaging students, faculty, and staff in conservation goals. In recognition of this award, the university community planted two trees on campus for Arbor Day 2017.
- The Urbana University choir performed a seasonal concert in December at the Swedenborgian Church.
- The Miller Center for Visual Arts, hosted two exhibits this year, one in the fall showcasing the work of Nancy Miller and the other in the spring featuring Columbus artists John Kortlander and Julie Taggart.

Dorothea Harvey Memorial:

Last summer's convention included dedicating a memorial to Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey on the UU campus; the ceremony included an inspiring message from John Titus and cello music

by Barbara Mackey. A committee consisting of UU Advancement staff and several local Swedenborgians continues to work toward the completion of the Dorothea Harvey Memorial.

Johnny Appleseed Museum

- The Johnny Appleseed Educational Center and Museum continues to be a destination point and will participate in the City of Urbana Spring Home and Garden Tour.
- Last, summer the new Johnny Appleseed interactive exhibit was placed at Sunwatch Village in Dayton as an exhibit of the Boonschoft museum for children. Since then, there have been inquiries from organizations expressing an interest in displaying it. The Johnny Appleseed Foundation is working on travel packaging so it can be safely transported to other venues. A virtual component is being developed, which would add to the interactive components of the exhibit.
- J. Appleseed Foundation is working with the University developing the campus into an arboretum named after Johnny Appleseed. Initial plans for planting and development are in process, with the initial landscaping to be in the area around Barclay-Bailey Hall, where the museum is located. The arboretum would be developed over time, with opportunities to donate plantings.
- One of the board members is working with students to develop a You Tube video to promote the Johnny Appleseed Museum and Educational Center.

UU Interfaith Chaplaincy

- The Chaplaincy program works closely with faculty and staff seek-

Continues on page 73

Transformation at UU

Continued from page 72

ing support for events; maintains regular chaplain support hours for students, faculty, and staff; facilitates student faith organization and educational activities; and responds to emergency situations. Chaplains have provided devotional services at various times, including the start of the academic year and during Lent. The chaplaincy seeks to enhance and develop the spiritual life and character of students, faculty, and staff.

- Also under its umbrella are campus faith groups (Knights4Christ), the Alicia Titus Memorial Peace Fund programs, and the Swedenborg-Scholar-in Residence program.

Alicia Titus Memorial Peace Fund:

Bev Titus has worked closely with the Chaplaincy and Student Life staff to bring a number of worthwhile activities and programs on campus. These all add tremendous value to the student experience.

During the 2016–2017 academic year, Alicia's Fund has sponsored the following at UU:

- *Fifteen-Year Remembrance of 9/11*: which included 200 participants in the annual 5K run and one-mile family Walk for Peace on September 10, and a community program featuring the Worldhouse choir and spiritual speaker Marianne Williamson on, September 11, which drew an audience of about 400 people.
- *Student Service volunteer opportunities* in the community: city parks, local food pantry, Habitat for Humanity. This will continue into the next academic year.
- *Season for Nonviolence*: a sixty-four-day national educational campaign to bring communities together and empower them to envision and cre-

ate a nonviolent world, one heart and one day at a time. This year, the Season was kicked-off by the Great Kindness Challenge, with UU students and more than 4,500 students in Urbana and surrounding school districts joining more than ten million students at 15,000 schools in ninety countries, in performing over 500 million Acts of Kindness! The Season concluded with workshops on nonviolent communication for community members as well as high school and university students, teachers, faculty, and staff, presented by Diane Diller, a non-violent communication trainer, certified by the Global Center for Non-violent Communications.

Swedenborg Scholar-in-Residence

The chaplaincy works with a designated UU liaison to identify, contact and plan for a yearly scholar-in-residence who focuses on a particular area related to Swedenborg or Swedenborgian thought. The scholar attends classes and makes a public presentation on the chosen topic. Convention has a budget line-item to support the costs of transportation, housing, and an honorarium. This past spring the campus hosted Dr. John Haller, Jr. as the Swedenborg Scholar-in-Residence. Dr. Haller, retired professor of history and medical humanities, spoke about "America's Reform Tradition: Swedenborg, New Church, and the Doctrine of Uses," to a full house in the Swedenborg Memorial Library at UU. In addition, he spoke at a number of classes and was hosted by the local congregation for dinner and conversation.


Personal Reflections and Invitation

As an alumna and as the official university chaplain, I continue to be excited about the University's future and am inspired by the campus environment, which is open, inclusive, and understanding of how instrumental one's

spiritual life is to the broader community in which we live, work, and study. In a world where chaos seems to invade every corner, we, as chaplains, work in collaboration with university, church, and community friends who seek to bring peace and harmony to the campus environment.

As part of this vision and effort, we invite you to join us in this endeavor by supporting the expansion of the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey Memorial. The expansion of the memorial, which now consists of the steeple and carillon chimes from the prior Harvey Chapel, will add a plaza that will feature a walking labyrinth, creating a quiet place for peaceful reflection and renewal where students, faculty, staff, and the community can come to regroup and re-center themselves. Please consider giving a gift to this special project that honors Dorothea and supports the legacy of her years of teaching and guiding the spiritual development of the students of Urbana University.

Gifts to the Dorothea Harvey Memorial fund can be sent to Urbana University, Advancement Office, 579 College Way, Urbana, OH, 43078.

In the words of Emanuel Swedenborg, "Love consists in desiring to give what is our own to another and feeling his delight as our own." As an alumna, trustee, advisory board member, chaplain, and Church-UU representative, I have experienced many gifts during my years at Urbana University, most notably in the form of deep and meaningful relationships. May you delight in the gifts you give and the love you share. 

Rev. Betsy Coffman is an Urbana University alumna, chaplain, and Church-UU representative. She is president of the Johnny Appleseed Foundation Board.



Proposed Changes to the CSS Bylaws

BY JIM LAWRENCE

The Board of Trustees of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies is proposing amendments to its bylaws that will bring them up to date with modern communication technology. The amendments will be presented for discussion and a vote at the CSS Annual Meeting on July 11 at the 2017 Annual Convention. Following is the text of the affected articles and the proposed changes. Deleted text is stricken out, and new text is red and in brackets. A summary explanation follows the text changes.

ARTICLE IV: Board of Trustees

Section 6. Notice of Trustees' Meetings. Meetings of the Trustees may be called by the Dean, the Chair or any three or more Trustees by a request in writing addressed to the Clerk. Notice of the time and place of all regular meetings of the Trustees shall be given by the Clerk and of any special meeting of the Clerk or the Officer calling the meeting. Notice may be given orally, by telephone, telegraph, [email] or in writing; and such notice given in time to enable the Trustees to attend, or in any case, notice sent by mail, [email] or telegraph to a Trustee's usual or last known place of business or residence or [email address], at least ten days before the meeting, shall be sufficient. Any meeting of the Trustees shall be a legal meeting without notice if each Trustee, by a writing filed with the records of the meeting, waives such notice.

Every Trustee who attends a meeting without protesting prior thereto or at its commencement the lack of notice to him or her, and every absent Trustee who shall before or after meeting waive notice thereof by a writing filed with the records of the meeting or who shall

sign such records, shall be deemed to have been fully notified of the meeting.

[The Board of Trustees may permit any or all Trustees to participate in any meeting of the Trustees by, or conduct any meeting through the use of, any means of communication by which all Trustees participating may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting. A Trustee participating in a meeting by this means is considered to be present in person at the meeting.]

Every Trustee who attends a meeting without protesting prior thereto or at its commencement the lack of notice to him or her, and every absent Trustee who shall before or after meeting waive notice thereof by a writing filed with the records of the meeting or who shall sign such records, shall be deemed to have been fully notified of the meeting.

Section 8. Action Without a Meeting. ~~The Board of Trustees may conduct business and take action via conference call and email, provided at least 72 hours' notice of the action is given to all members, and that minutes of the action are recorded by the Clerk. Minutes and records of email votes will be printed and kept on file at the Office of the Corporation.~~ [Action by Unanimous Written Consent. Any action may be taken by the Board of Trustees without a meeting if the action is taken by the unanimous consent of the Trustees. The action must be evidenced by one or more consents describing the action taken, in writing, signed by each Trustee, or delivered to the Corporation by electronic transmission, to the address specified by the Corporation for the purpose or, if no address has been specified, to the principal office of the Corporation, addressed to the secretary or other officer or agent

having custody of the records of proceedings of the Board of Trustees, and included in the minutes or filed with the corporate records reflecting the action taken. Action taken under this section is effective when the last Trustee signs or delivers the consent, unless the consent specifies a different effective date. A consent signed or delivered under this section has the effect of a meeting vote and may be described as such in any document. The Board of Trustees may conduct business and take action via conference call and email, provided at least 72 hours' notice of the action is given to all members, and that minutes of the action are recorded by the Clerk. Minutes and records of email votes will be printed and kept on file at the Office of the Corporation.]

Summary of Changes

The changes involve inserting a new second paragraph in Section 6 to move the standard from use of asynchronous conversation to synchronous conversation, which also ensures that people know who is voting (email identities are impossible to confirm).

There are no changes for Section 7.

These proposed amendments to Section 6 and Section 8 provide two separate and independent ways for the board to take action. Section 6 provides for a meeting in the conventional sense, expanded to allow participation by audio or video conferencing if all present can hear each other. Such a meeting could be entirely by audio or video conference, as long as a quorum is present. It would be documented in the same way as a meeting where a quorum is physically present. This addresses our recent conversations of providing a way for people to attend who

Continues on page 75

Rev. Jenn Tafel Receives Award

BY BAILEY KRESTAKOS

Every year, at the Lavender Reception and Mosaic Awards Gala at Michigan State University (MSU), the MSU LGBT Resource Center selects a recipient for its Intersection Award. The Intersection Award acknowledges outstanding contributions to improving the experience of students with multiple and intersecting identities across dimensions of race, gender, and sexuality.

This year's recipient is Rev Jenn Tafel. She serves as the advisor for Q-CROSS: Queer Christians Reclaiming our Sexuality and Spirituality. Jenn has been a tireless and thankless advocate for those who are marginalized across race, gender, sexuality, and faith. She is the longest serving advisor to an LGBT



student organization at Michigan State University. She not only shows up for events that focus on queer and trans communities but has been visible and attentive to events focused on healing and combating oppression in its multiple forms. This year, Jenn has worked with Q-CROSS to focus more on the intersections of identity and the overlapping, compounding oppressions faced by the most vulnerable on our campus. For all of these reasons and her unwavering commitment to Q-CROSS, our campus, and our greater community, we are proud to present the Intersections Award to Rev. Jenn Tafel.

Bailey Krestakos staffs the LGBT Resource Center.



(L-R): Mary Catherine Sinnamon, Chanel Redden, Rev. Jenn Tafel, Dr. Harold Cowherd. Chanel will soon be Dr. Chanel Redden (Veterinary Medicine).

East Coast Peer Supervision

BY KEVIN K. BAXTER

On April 30–May 2, twelve of our clergy met in Framingham, Massachusetts at the Edwards House Retreat Center, which was graciously provided by the Massachusetts New Church Union. The program, led by Rev. Sage Cole, focused on the examination of our calls to ministry; that which brought us into the ministry will remain as a core value of our present ministry.

Revs. Young-Min Kim, F. Robert Tafel, Andy Stinson, Gladys Wheaton, F. Gard Perry, Kit Billings, Kevin Baxter, Susannah Curry, Jane Siebert, Dr. George Dole, Dr. Donna Keane, and Sage Cole were in attendance.

The goal of peer supervision is to assist the clergy of our church in reviewing and planning both ministerial and personal goals. It is a time where colleagues support each other through the sharing of struggles, successes, and our faith in God. It is the hope that each of us will return to our ministries rededicated with a clearer understanding of what the Lord has called us to do.

We thank the Massachusetts New Church Union and the Swedenborgian Church for their support. Peer supervision is an important way for ministers to seek support and share resources. ☩

CSS Bylaw Changes

Continued from page 74

cannot get away on a trip.

The changes in Section 8 involve improving our language to be in accordance with common best practices and widely used (though not universal) language of “unanimous written consent” when a regularly called meeting is not face-to-face. Section 8 provides another way for the board to take action out-

side of formal meetings (thus, no meeting required). Since discussion is precluded in this case, each board member must consent to the proposed action in writing, and the vote must be unanimous. For example, when we changed our name from SHS to CSS, it could have been done with an email to each board member with a note explaining the need for the change, and “if you consent to change the name of the seminary from SHS to CSS, please

email back with ‘I consent’ and your name.” The change would have been effective when the last board member emailed back his “signed” consent. The need for unanimity makes the written consent a little awkward, particularly for anything complicated, or with a larger board, but it is clear that it is important to have this kind of option in our bylaws for a board that is dispersed around the continent. ☩

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is the dean of CSS.

A Swedenborgian View on Climate Change

BY DAVID J. FEKETE



Below is the text of a presentation I gave at the May Climate and Conflict study group of the National Council of Churches. It was well and enthusiastically received. After a lively discussion, I was asked about Swedenborg and

our church by members of the study group. A report of the meeting will appear in a future issue of the Messenger.

The members of the Swedenborgian Church know that climate is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. The difficulty is understanding climate as a religious issue. There are several reasons why a Swedenborgian might have trouble understanding the environment as a religious issue, and several equally good reasons why a Swedenborgian can understand climate change as a religious issue.

World View and Cosmology:

Emanuel Swedenborg has been understood as influenced by Platonic/Cartesian dualism. In Plato and Descartes, spirit and matter are sharply divided. In places, Swedenborg has called the physical world “dead matter.”

Swedenborgians and poets, philosophers, theologians, and other readers of Swedenborg know of his profound veneration of nature as symbolic of spirit. Emerson was much taken with this doctrine, as he states in “The American Scholar,”

There is one man of genius who has done much for this philosophy of life, whose literary value has never yet been rightly estimated;—I mean Emanuel Swedenborg. . . . He saw and showed the connection between nature and the affections of the human soul. He pierced the emblematic or spiritual character of the visible, audible, tangible world (Emerson in Spiller 1954: 57).¹

Emerson read deeply in Swedenborg and cites him in his essay, “Swedenborg; or the Mystic.”

In our doctrine of Representations and Correspondences we shall treat of both these symbolical and typical resemblances, and of the astonishing things which occur, I will not say in the living body only, but throughout nature, and which correspond so entirely to supreme and spiritual things that one would swear that the physical world was purely symbolical of the spiritual world. . . .²

But Swedenborg’s ideas about nature go beyond symbolism. In a difficult nature mysticism, Swedenborg asserts that the “dead matter” of the material world is infused with spirit. It can be said that nature is animated by spirit. Nature can be conceived as a container of spirit. Nature is alive not from itself, but by influx from spirit.

First, I need to state what correspondence is. The whole natural world is responsive to the spiritual world—the natural world not just in general, but in detail. It needs to be realized that the natural world arises from and is sustained in being by the spiritual world, exactly the way an effect relates to its efficient cause (*Heaven and Hell*, §89).

In Swedenborg’s visionary conception of the spiritual world, God is seen as a living sun comprised of love and wisdom from which spiritual heat and light shine forth. From love and wisdom, all of the spiritual world is formed, and the love and wisdom of God flows down through the spiritual world even into this world’s creation:

There is a continual influx from the spiritual world into the natural world. . . . It is something spiritu-

al, something which takes its origin from the sun where the Lord is and descends to the outmost elements of nature, which produces the forms of plants and animals and creates the marvels that exist in both. . . . (*Divine Love and Wisdom*, §340).

Paul has expressed an equally mystical and difficult doctrine in Colossians 1:15-23. There, nature was created and subsists in Jesus.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him—provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven.

While it may be clear that Jesus created all things, I’m not sure that the church has properly understood that, “in him all things hold together,” nor the words that Jesus has reconciled, “all things, whether in heaven and earth.”

1 An Oration delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, at Cambridge, MA, August 31, 1837

2 *Representative Men: Seven Lectures* 2009: 13

Swedenborg and Climate Change

Continued from page 76

Also, Paul asserts that the gospel has been proclaimed, “to every creature under heaven.” We have tended to read the Bible anthropocentrically, as if it all pertained to humans and human salvation only.

These doctrines give nature a sanctity as a form of thinly veiled spiritual reality, and even more emphatically, as in Colossians, an aspect of Christ’s body, “in him all things hold together.” From this point of view, what we do to nature, we are doing to Jesus.

Bible: Following the doctrines of the Swedish Lutheran Church in which he was raised, Swedenborg affirms the principle of *sola scriptura*; he grounds his theology in scripture. For Swedenborg, both Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament are God’s Word. Thus scripture passages that support eco-justice can be used as bases for a Swedenborgian theology of the planet. I am in the process of researching Bible passages that speak to issues of climate and eco-justice. Randy Haluza-Delay, a sociologist at King’s University in Edmonton has provided me the following excellent passages. Some of them are familiar, but have been read from an anthropocentric perspective. Read afresh from a cosmocentric perspective; they argue forcefully for climate justice.

John 3:17: Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world (*kosmon*) to condemn the world (*kosmon*), but in order that the world (*kosmos*) might be saved through him.

Romans 8:18–24: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself

will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Colossians 1:15–23: He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him—provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

Isaiah 24:4–7: The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed

laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth dwindled, and few people are left. The wine dries up, the vine languishes, all the merry-hearted sigh.

Hosea 4:1–3: Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel; for the Lord has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land. Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing.

God’s shalom includes humanity’s right relationship with God, peace in the political sphere, and fecundity and flourishing of the whole of creation. When God’s shalom reigns, all creation is in order.

Isaiah 55:2: For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Isaiah 32:15–18: The Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.

Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.

So doing injustice to creation is an affront to God’s order; it is violence, a disruption of peace, of shalom.

Ethics: Swedenborg’s emphasis is on reforming the soul. Accordingly,

Continues on page 79

SCYL Worship Services

Continued from page 65

thing, not just to me, but to the people sitting in the chairs.

My first annual convention as youth director was 2002, in Gorham, Maine. Over twenty teens attended, and past youth coordinator, Rev. Sage Currie, and League Chaplain, Rev. Junchol Lee, and I worked together to try to cycle as many teens as possible into the service. I quickly learned that pulling together a teen worship service from scratch in just a day or two was not easy. Yet from the very start it was important to me to make sure that all of the teens had an opportunity to participate and lead some aspect of the worship experience, be it big or small, behind the scenes working tech, or up front and center. This inclusive aspect of youth worship is still incredibly important to me today.

Two of my favorite convention worship service memories from my early years as youth director occurred in 2005 and 2006. Convention 2005 was in Berkeley, California. The theme that year was “Art and Spirituality,” and we were brainstorming what we might like to present in our service. One randomly creative teen girl said, “We should make an art gallery!” At first, everyone chuckled and ignored her, but we were brainstorming, so I wrote the idea down on the chalkboard, and it gained traction. The teens worked very hard, and on Monday morning they led the “Opening of the Berkeley Art Gallery Worship Service.”

The service featured an exhibition of human statues and a teen catered refreshment service outside of the created art gallery setting. The focus of the

service was that each of us is a work of art created by God. The teens staged a mock gallery opening with ribbon cutting, musical performances, a hymn, “Art and Soul,” and individual congregant commentaries describing the beauty of the human artworks among us. It was wonderful! This experience taught me how important it was to honor every thought and idea no matter how disconnected or crazy it initially appeared to be.



*Rev. Eric Alison contemplated as a work of art:
2005 SCYL Convention Worship Service*

The next year, in 2006, Annual Convention was held in Urbana, Ohio. The theme was “Walking a Sacred Path: Living Our Oneness.” The teens prepared a “Labyrinth Worship Service,” and they rearranged the chairs into a circular pattern around a forty-foot diameter cloth labyrinth. Youth attendants led congregants through the labyrinth while other teen worship leaders rotated around the outside of the worship space contributing their gifts of music, prayer, commentary and scripture. Throughout the service, the teens interpreted and shared what it means to walk the sacred path. I still get chills thinking about Alison Putnam’s beautiful and moving closing rendition of *Arms of an Angel*.

I have so many more rich and moving memories of SCYL worship services at annual conventions. Each service takes on a life of its own, and watching it come together and find life and spirit is one of the most rewarding parts of my work. Discovering hidden or unknown talents in young people and

helping them share their gifts is so important and fulfilling for them as well as the adults that participate in or witness the worship service. I see the process itself as a part of regeneration, and many adults that were a part of leading SCYL convention worship as teens still fondly recall both the excitement and the spirituality of the service. Young adult Nina Sasser fondly remembers,

I will never forget working on our worship service for Convention 2009 in Seattle. The theme was “Sailing the Spiritual Sound.” We used the metaphor of ourselves as boats and life as the sea. And we talked about how different parts of a boat correspond to different aspects of ourselves. The anchor was the positive influences and loves in our lives that help ground us when we need to feel grounded. The rudder was our passions that drive us, and the direction we take our lives. I remember having so much fun putting it together and staying up so late the night before, working on it, but it was so worth it. And I remember after we finished our service and after I gave my SCYL presidential speech, Rev. Jenn Tafel gave me a hug and said, “I’m so proud of you.” I will never forget this moment. It feels so good to give something substantial to others and, especially during your teenage years, to receive gratitude and praise from adults for something you were a part of.

Teens know how seriously I take their worship preparation, and they often ask me what my favorite service was or they ask me if this year’s service was the best ever. I honestly cannot answer either of these questions. Each worship experience has its own beauty, its own character, and its own spiritual soul. Some services have come together better and more polished than others, but they all have moved me and inspired me in some way.

Each and every time I work with the teens on preparing a convention wor-

Continues on page 79

Swedenborg and Climate Change

Continued from page 77

Swedenborg's ethics would be considered virtue ethics. His theology speaks of the soul's purification as it merges with God—a doctrine much like that

Letter from the President

Continued from page 67

ter of the Old Testament (Malachi 3:6), God promises, "I the LORD do not change." This is what I believe and what I hold to as change is all around me.

Please join me, the General Council, and all of us that know and appreciate Renée in our fervent thank you for all she has given to the Swedenborgian Church and best wishes for her future job and the opportunities it opens for her.

And join me in welcoming Katie. She is on the ground running and learning and seems to be fitting in and enjoying the challenge.

—Rev. Jane Siebert

SCYL Worship Services

Continued from page 78

ship service, I grow a little bit more in love and understanding. Our teens are amazing, and I cannot wait to gather with them again in a couple of months in West Chester. Here, we will start all over again and put together a new and original worship experience to share. No matter how the worship service comes together or what it looks like, I know that our youth will have the love and support of the adults in the congregation. For this, I am eternally grateful. I wonder what the teens will think up this time? Come to Annual Convention this year and find out! 📱

Kurt Fekete is youth director of the Swedenborgian Church.

of Orthodox *theosis*, or Protestant doctrines of sanctifying grace. Historically, Swedenborgians have been concerned with transformation of the heart and mind. The world would then be transformed as individuals in it become regenerate. A principal Swedenborgian tenet is that in order to be saved, a person needs to repent of sin, which allows good to flow in from God (influx). By turning from sin, a person's heart is filled with the Spirit and all one's works then become works of love. So in order to make issues of climate theologically relevant in the context of Swedenborgian ethics, they would need to be articulated in terms of personal morality. A quote central to the Swedenborgian faith is, "All religion relates to life, and the religious life is doing good" (*Doctrine of Life* §1). I believe that climate change can be understood in terms of personal morality.

Articulating Climate Issues in Terms of Sin: If environmental injustice can be articulated as sin, then it is especially relevant for Swedenborgians. I believe that pollution is the result of excessive consumption and production. In the Western drive for bigger; better; more; and more exclusive and prestigious, more, better, and greater material possessions can be seen in the light of the medieval Seven Deadly Sins. I believe that Western patterns of excessive consumption and production can be seen as vanity, pride, and greed. These would be sins that individuals, and society collectively, would need to repent of. In turn, individually and collectively, people in the West need to embrace the virtues of moderation and frugality, as James A. Nash suggests:

Another way of viewing the issue is in the light of love for the neighbor. Polluting harms others (obviously). We do violence to near or distant neighbors by polluting the environment. Making air unfit to breathe or water unpotable or food inedible is doing violence to the neighbor.

More generally speaking, as theologians are now beginning to say (including Pope Francis), harming the environment is doing violence to God's sacred canopy. If polluting can be seen as the product of a violent disposition, it is sin of which to repent.

Other Spiritual Traditions—Indigenous: Finally, for Swedenborg, faith is truth. Faith is the complex of truths that a person acquires from various sources—the Bible and church doctrine first, but also philosophy, literature, experience, dialogue, science, and whatever systems of knowing confirm God's kingdom. Also, Swedenborg is ecumenical about non-Christian faiths—a remarkable stance for his time (eighteenth century). So as a Swedenborgian, I can accept truth wherever I find it, even in other traditions than Christianity, so long as they do not conflict with Christianity.

From the very little I know about Indigenous ways of life, I have found a profound veneration of nature among Indigenous articulations of spirituality. Discovering a world-view that is not constructed in a dualistic model may go a long way in making climate justice a religious issue. While Platonism found its way into Christianity early on, I do not believe that it is necessarily Biblical, nor a necessary orthodox Christian world view.

As I continue to learn about Indigenous spiritualities, I have encountered two works that have been instructive and which I commend to the general bibliography we are compiling:

Randy S. Woodley. *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*—creation care from an Indigenous perspective by a Bible scholar.

David Young, Grant Ingram, and Lise Swartz. *Cry of the Eagle: Encounters with a Cree Healer*—Study of an individual Cree healer describing a non-Cartesian world-view.

Continues on page 80

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.

"Grounded and Grateful: Searching for the Deep Structures of the Spirit"

is the title of the keynote address by Diana Butler Bass at the 2017 Annual Convention. She will explore a tension between the decline of institutional religion in the United States and the larger reality of spiritual longing in our culture. Drawing off her recent book, *Grounded*, she argues that old structures of faith are now found wanting. But, at the same time, new patterns and forms of spiritual life are emerging. Join her for honest and hope-filled vision of what we are letting go and what we can let come into our communities in a time of change. ☩



Swedenborg and Climate Change

Continued from page 79

Conclusion

The world-view put forth by Swedenborg, with matter being held together by spirit, makes nature more than simple matter. It is a symbol of God; it is spiritual reality thinly veiled by material substances. In Paul, nature is held together by Jesus, and so can be considered part of the body of Christ. Doing damage to nature is doing damage to Jesus.

Polluting is caused by the sins of vanity, pride, and greed. Individually and collectively, persons and society need to repent of these sins and turn to the virtues of frugality and moderation. Environmental injustice is also doing violence to the neighbor, and directly harms others. Polluting can also be conceived as

a form of violence—violence to God's sacred canopy. Violence stands as a sin opposing neighborly love, and especially love for God. All forms of violence are to be shunned in Swedenborg's theology, and I presume for all Christians.

The Bible itself is a source denouncing environmental injustice. It affirms harmony with nature as *shalom*. There are passages that say pollution is the result of humanity's broken covenant with God.

For Swedenborg, faith consists of truth, wherever it is found. Perhaps truths from Indigenous Peoples can inform our understanding of nature and the way the cosmos is formed and related to humans. ☩

Rev. David J. Fekete, Ph.D. is the Swedenborgian Church representative to the National Council of Churches and pastor of the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta.