



Social Justice Reigns in the New Jerusalem

BY JIM LAWRENCE

Swedenborgian theology tenders a trove of material for bumper sticker spirituality, such as, “You can have whatever you want,” which throws back onto a person the essential Swedenborgian question of “What will you come to love most?” Whatever that is, not only can you have it, but you will become it. Or, another one, “Influx is as to efflux.” That would start innumerable conversations at red lights—Google searches constantly flashing whenever you’re tooling around! It means that the quality of our spiritual sight is affected and adjusted by how we live.

How we live reconfigures interior doors and windows of our consciousness. How we live is our efflux: that which flows out from us. That living effort in turn produces an energy that either opens more or closes more the higher hatches in our consciousness through which the brighter spiritual light might flow into us (influx). Spiritual strength and vision is causal, not casual. Influx is as to efflux.

Swedenborg Might’ve Been Crazy

One of my favorite Swedenborgian bumper stickers is a segue to my thesis. The bumper sticker is, “Swedenborg might’ve been crazy, but every sane person prays he’s right.” The Nordic visionary has written some pretty wild stuff about how the Big Reality works,

has some whopping wonders about where this is all going, has an enthralling travel guidebook for what it’s like to go to the New Jerusalem. (Is that a fantastic place or what?) Even the fiercest skeptic, if she or he is healthy, hopes he’s right. All aboard, indeed.

The New Jerusalem is quite a contrast to the earthly Jerusalem, which in a certain way continues to be a riveting symbol for the trials and tribulations of the natural world. But, in traveling to the New Jerusalem, a radical transformation occurs. Gone is animosity,

... in comparative studies of denominations, dozens of other traditions put much more emphasis in social justice foci and projects than has been true of all branches of the Swedenborgian faith.

gone is oppression, gone is inhumanity. If we yearn to love justice and goodness more truly and nearly, it is right there for the having in a place that is wall-to-wall with the qualities of transparency, trust, creative caring, and joyful building of ever new spaces of love and wisdom.

It is no stretch to imagine perfect justice reigns in the New Jerusalem, a justice that involves our relationship with each other as well as with and based on the One who is the source of all being and relationship.

Justice is a relational word, and in

the history of Swedenborgianism there has been a marked tendency to keep the relational spirituality questions in the personal family and work spheres. We haven’t been too much of a social justice oriented tradition—not that we haven’t had our committees and our occasional projects, not that we haven’t had numerous individuals very engaged in their lives in outward social justice activities. But in comparative studies of denominations, dozens of other traditions put much more emphasis in social justice foci and projects than has been true of all branches of the Swedenborgian faith. Our strength has been as an “ideas” church, and religious historians have often observed that our reach into culture far outstrips our numbers.

In social justice matters, however, we have a predominant tradition of encouraging people to take their own stands in their individual lives for social justice application, using spiritual insights from the faith. But we have shied away from striving for a more collective voice in the public square on matters that have political implications in our world.

Push for a More Socially Engaged Discourse in our Church

There is a rise currently happening in this denomination, the General Convention (the Swedenborgian Church), to challenge our longstanding tradition

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Advent Message

In the Gospels, Jesus is sometimes addressed as son of man and sometimes as Son of God. It is generally accepted that “son of man” describes the ministry and state of Jesus as a human, and Son of God the ministry and state of Jesus as the Divine. He was fully a human, yet, at the same time, fully divine.

In my understanding, the ancient Christians invented the Divine Trinity to explain and bridge the common belief at the time that divinity and humanity are not compatible. It was a common belief among Jews that Jehovah is eternally transcendent from humanity. Greek and Roman mythology held that complete divinity is only given to those who are born of divine

parents. If one parent were human, the child would be a demigod who is mostly human. Seen through this context, the ancient Christians could not have conceived of Jesus as Incarnation of the Creator, yet they would still need to explain the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Emanuel Swedenborg strongly insists, “Jehovah God came down and took on a human manifestation in order to redeem people and save them. (*True Christianity* §82)” In essence, this means that Divinity and humanity are not only compatible, but also that humanity is made up of that which is divine.

Thus, Divinity is present in all humanity as a whole *and* as an individual, because the life of humanity is from Divinity. We can read this in the teachings of Jesus. “On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and

you in me, and I in you. (John 14:20)”

Among many good qualities to cultivate, love is the most essential and life-giving, simply because it is the essence of the Divine, thus the life-giving core of humanity. Consequently, the coming of Christ, and his salvation, is nothing but enlightening and enabling humans to be able to love what is not of and for the self. And, the most important nature of love is that it becomes real and alive when given unconditionally.

—*Blessings, Rev. Junchol Lee*
Senior Pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church

Gina Peracchi Honored

The Investment Committee honored Gina Peracchi for fifteen years of service as

accounting manager of the Swedenborgian Church at a dinner during their fall meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts. President Rev. Jane Siebert, and treasurer, Jennifer Lindsay, thanked Gina for her dedication and excellent work. ☩



Gina Peracchi shows her certificate of appreciation

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Church Calendar

- **January 18–21, 2019:** SPLATz Winter Retreat, Laporte New Church, LaPorte, IN
- **January 29:** Emanuel Swedenborg’s birthday

the Messenger

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Published monthly except July and August by the Standing Committee for Communication and Information 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.

December 2018

Volume 240, No. 10, Whole Number 5435

Editor, design and production: Herbert Ziegler

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Printing: Gnomon Copy, Cambridge MA

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Subscriptions: free online subscription at <http://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.

May You Have a Blessed Christmas

Letter from the President



The Year of the Lord: 2018–19 —The Primacy of Spirit

But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant.

"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him.

"Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read,

"From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise" (Matthew 21:15-16 [NIV]).



The SCYL worship service dramatized a difficult choice for one teen.

Dear Friends,

Let's give to get more kids involved in our General Convention of the New Jerusalem (the Swedenborgian Church)!

I am asking for your donation to help defray the cost for families, teens, and children to come to our annual meeting (convention). This year, it is hosted by the LaPorte New Church and the Illinois Association, at Valparaiso University, in Valparaiso, Indiana. With Midwestern small-town quaintness and the beautiful "singing" sand dunes of Lake Michigan just a few miles away, both Valparaiso and LaPorte offer many fun, educational opportunities for youth and adults alike—recreation, antique shops, lakes, museums, and sunshine!

Our annual gathering in 2018 was a great success in San Jose, California, with forty-one first timers, sixteen teens, and ten children attending, and a grand total of 149 attendees. Twenty-one volunteers from Hillside Community Church in El Cerrito, the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, and the Center for Swedenborgian Studies helped in various capacities at the convention.

Two highlights of our annual meeting centered on the youth and children. Every year, the teens work hard to prepare a worship service for us, and this year they produced a play exploring various faith communities' teachings about death and afterlife, including music from each tradition.

They learned and we learned, and in the end, the characters elected to stick with the understanding Swedenborg offers us about heaven.

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The SCYL teens at the 2018 Annual Convention

SPLATz Discover Heaven and Hell at Manna House

BY KURT FEKETE

A small but mighty group of SplatZ (Super Powered Lovable Almost Teens) met at Manna House, the LaPorte New Church, in Indiana, on a late October weekend, to learn about Emanuel Swedenborg's writings on heaven, hell, the afterlife, and how to live the life of an angel.

We started by talking about what happens when we awaken from death. I explained how we are all angels in training, working to make our way to heaven. Angels, I revealed, are beings just like us, only more loving, more wise, and more beautiful. We discussed how our spiritual eyes are opened and how gradually our inner thoughts and desires become visible to everyone on the outside. Eventually, our physical appearance actually starts looking like what kind of person we are on the inside.

Later, though, our face changes and becomes quite different. It comes to look like the ruling affection in which the deeper reaches of our minds were engaged in the world, the kind of affection characteristic of the spirit within our body, because the face of our spirit is very different from the face of our body (*Heaven and Hell* §457).

In a follow-up activity, we made masks to illustrate how our appearance changes. Some of the SPLATz made mysteriously beautiful masks and some made masks that were a bit frightening. One made a mask that represented spiritual eyes opened when the "angels rolled back a covering from my left eye toward the center of my nose so that my eye was opened and able to see" (*Heaven and Hell* §450) which happens very early after we awaken in the next life.



Bekka (right) encourages the SplatZ on their journey across hell.

Our Saturday-afternoon session was about life in heavenly and hellish communities, and how we choose which community to live in. We talked about actions directing our path and learned that our intentions lead us to the society where we best fit in. Since ev-

related to this. In a variation of the game "hot lava," led by Bekka Lange, the SPLATz had to make their way to heaven, first negotiating through hell, by hopping island to island. They had to travel across as a community and collect love and wisdom (red and white colored glass beads) along the way. If anyone fell into hell, they had to go back and start over again. In order to be successful, everyone had to make it across. No souls could be left behind.

In our evening session, the SPLATz picked a random occupation, and we discussed different aspects of the job and how a person living in a heaven or hell would conduct themselves in their community. The youth chose writing a book, so we first wrote down all the communities involved in this work,



Ethan and Ellie paint their masks with care.

everyone in the next life does what they love to do, we live with angels or spirits of similar interests and desires. "Kindred souls gravitate toward each other spontaneously, as it were, for with each other they feel as though they are with their own family, at home" (*Heaven and Hell* §44).

Next, we went outside to play a game

like researchers, writers, printers, fact checkers, editors, and publishers. Then we talked about how two people would do their job, one in heaven and one in hell. For example, a publisher in heaven would go out to other communities and find people who would benefit from and find value in this new book

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SPLATz at Manna House

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being created, while a publisher in hell would go out and force this book on gullible people using deception, falsity, and bullying. The children really were interested in this lesson, and they energetically talked about all the differences in the communities. They came up with many ways that demons in hell could operate in evil ways to hurt others and make a profit, but they also countered with lots of things that angels in heaven could do to help others and establish a symbiotic relationship where everyone wins. We all learned so much in this session.

On Saturday night, Tamara Mounce, Heidi Potucek, and Joey Kalinowski organized a Halloween glow party at the LaPorte church, with games, snacks, and lots of candy. It was so much fun, and we thank them for leading this wonderful party.

Sunday morning, the youth led the children's talk at the LaPorte New Church worship service. Then, dur-



Zsa Zsa and Ethan peer around the door.

ing Sunday school time, we went downstairs for our final gathering. In

this lesson, we learned seven tips to get to heaven. This was followed by a craft session where the Splatz made cute little coffee-filter angels.

Thank you to Rev. Jenn Tafel for all her help driving participants, supervising, and cooking all of our delicious meals. Thank you to Bekka Lange for superior craft and game leadership. We all left Manna House feeling a little more heavenly and a little less hellish. I leave you with the seven tips to get to heaven.

- 1) **You matter.** You are here for a very important and specific reason. You were created to do something that no one else can do as well as you can. The meaning of life is to figure out what that something is and do it. When you discover it, life truly has meaning, and you are at peace.
- 2) **Be kind.** It is hard to be good. All of us have both inherited and learned negative tendencies and behaviors. Discover what yours are and work to get rid of them. This is not easy. Start by following the Golden Rule.
- 3) **Lower the masks.** Allow your inner self to become your outer self (lose the masks whenever and wherever safely possible). Live openly and honestly. Try to accept others as they are.
- 4) **Don't live on an island.** Communicate your needs and desires.
- 5) **Learn why you do what you do.** Investigate the motives behind your actions. Uncover unhealthy emotions and understand how they affect you.
- 6) **Live your love.** Discover things that you love to do that are useful to others.



Masked Splatz! Jack, Ellie, Zsa Zsa, Mack, Julia, and Ethan

- 7) **Find your community.** Seek out people (spirits) in this world that belong to your community. But don't be afraid to be friends with people outside your peer group. ☩



Zsa Zsa's little angel guides us home.

Kurt Fekete is the youth director of the Swedenborgian Church.

Help with a Search

Amy Pappageorge, of the Swedenborg Library in Chicago, is looking for a copy of a children's pamphlet, or study sheet, that was displayed on a table at Convention 2012 in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, that she thought beautifully presented Swedenborgian concepts to children. It was a sample—only one available—and was produced as a mimeograph or photocopy on legal or tabloid-size sheets, about four pages in length.

If this description resonates with you, please email the Chicago Library: info@SwedLib.org. ☩

New Jerusalem Social Justice

Continued from page 139

as a non-political church organization: non-political in the sense of focusing to a lesser degree on issues of social justice in our larger society and world. A new time has perhaps arrived to take strategic steps to form a more holistic approach to the way we seek to embody our faith tradition collectively.

At the annual convention this summer, Dr. Rebecca Esterson and Terrie Crenshaw shaped a draft statement, which was affirmed unanimously by the delegates, to have responsible interrogations of our sacred texts such that diversity is honored and oppression is confronted. It is designed to support a year-long study and work project that will take steps to shape our voice on justice issues and to create some small groups to work on particular issues. What was so heartening was how much positive energy came back in numerous ways at the convention, with a clear impression of a feeling among the members that it is time to include social justice discourse more prominently in our church life. It is part of who we now are spiritually, and the longstanding neutrality policy doesn't quite fit in the same way anymore.

At Hillside Urban Sanctuary (in El Cerrito, California), where I am most Sundays, we have a “joys and concerns” sharing at the end of every service, and on the Sunday after convention, I shared as a joy what seemed to be an authentic burst of support on this matter at the convention. It led to a fifteen-minute discussion right then during joys and concerns, which had never happened in joys and concerns time before. Joys and concerns is quick sharing before the closing prayer, not a time discussing them. It was another piece of evidence that the time is now.

I'm all in for this, because I went through a process recently that changed my feelings on our unspoken

neutrality policy. In preparing for an academic conference, I spent over a year researching where the churches were on the slavery issue in antebellum America. Though I studied all the major denominations, I focused especially on Swedenborgians. The result is being published in a forthcoming anthology on the legacy of slavery, and the reason the study went on as long as it did—and is in fact still continuing—is that it became engrossing for me to explore my family history, in a sense.

Our Troubled History in the Rearview Mirror

Even though it is commonly implied on American Swedenborgian websites that Swedenborgians were progressive and even abolitionist on the slavery issue, that is not true for the significant

Swedenborg was not a social reformer theologian in the modern sense and did not address specific social issues in his expansive theological writings, . . .

majority of Swedenborgian leaders and congregations. You can cherry pick a few admirable voices and actions, but a comprehensive study reveals a very different picture.

An examination of Swedenborgian discourse in antebellum America in sermons, pamphlets, articles, reports, and personal correspondence up through the end of the American Civil War in 1865 bares a predominant silence up to 1850, followed by a mixed and tepid conversation leading all the way up to the outbreak of war in 1861. Even after the war commenced, when most American religious leaders and groups in the North finally swung into strong anti-slavery stands, Swedenborgians as a body in the North waited until 1864 to do so formally. As a collective voice, Swedenborgians were behind the curve for religious groups on the matter.

Swedenborg was not a social reformer theologian in the modern sense and did not address specific social issues in his expansive theological writings, and Swedenborgians were left on their own to address any and all social justice issues; in a nutshell, the viewpoint of the vast majority was that focusing on social ills was pointless as long as the world had not come to understand the true nature of Christianity. And thus the church's whole effort was needed to herald the New Jerusalem theological revolution.

There was, however, a late shift when a movement swept through the church. I call it slow conversions, and a fascinating dynamic emerged in the archives where, over the course of a number of years, three of the most prominent figures in the conversation, without a reference to either of the others, cite the same Bible passage to frame the pivot they made on standing actively against slavery. It is Isaiah 58:6, where Yahweh makes clear a divine disapproval of fasts that are entirely personal while the social dimension of life wreaks havoc on others. Here's the fast you should be doing, Yahweh exhorts: untying bonds of wickedness, undoing burdens placed on others to serve yourself, freeing the oppressed, breaking yokes that limit and dehumanize others. That is the fast that pleases Yahweh.

This study of where the churches were on slavery in antebellum America had a profound effect on me that continues today. A sinking dismay shifted my sense of where the line ought to be in addressing social justice from within the church. How will future students of our current present tense characterize us?

The Cubed City: a New Jerusalem Perspective

We might look to the New Jerusalem for clues and instructions, if that

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Looking Over and Past

BY LARS-ERIK WIBERG

Living on Cape Ann, in Massachusetts, one can't help but get to know the ocean pretty well. If you look at a map of the East Coast, you can see how our cape juts out abruptly. So Rockport, which is on Cape Ann, actually is surrounded by the North Atlantic on three sides. That gives you a good feel for the ocean's expanse and wide contrast between calm and storm.

There's a habit we get into that most people seldom have a chance to

I needed something huge that you could look out over, something much bigger than the North Atlantic. It would be a place for all of us humans to occupy

experience. We get to view the shoreline of course, but we also get the chance to look over the ocean all the way to a good slice of the horizon. That's a stretch of about three miles of uninterrupted water and space. We often see tourists just standing and

gazing into the distance. They are usually unaccustomed to seeing so far with nothing in the way, along with nothing behind but sky. Of course, the Farm Belt features expanses of wheat, corn, cotton, soy, and more, but the distances and openness don't match the ocean. So it's a treat for many tourists from wherever they hail.

Years ago, living on a tourist mecca in Rockport called Bear Skin Neck with my family, I was out on a wharf when a tourist asked me as he pointed in the direction of the ocean, "What's on the other side?"

I answered him simply, "Portugal."

His fascinated expression had the look of someone who was getting a peak experience. He asked excitedly how far that was, and I told him, "about 3000 miles." That really made his day; he was at the edge of 3000 miles of open water! He thanked me heartily. I could tell I was helping to make his trip a success.

With an altogether different idea in mind, I needed something huge that you could look out over, something much bigger than the North Atlantic. It would be a place for all of us humans to occupy. I hit upon an allegorical formation that I like to call a "sublime continuum." It is a continuum because it has extremes that are different but adjacent parts that are similar, including us humans. And it is sublime because something that big is obviously grand enough to be awe-inspiring. This symbolic, majestic area gradually moves very slowly with the spread of humanity. It is mighty impressive, as little by little it develops anew while preserving the area it previously occupied. So none of it is ever lost.

In contemplating it, what comes naturally into focus along with us consists of who we are, what we do, how

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New Jerusalem Social Justice

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indeed is our shining image. That city, writes Swedenborg, is laid out four-square. In *Revelation Unveiled* §905, we are told that a city whose length is precisely the same measurement as its width means justice itself, because its goodness equals its truth. In fact, the New Jerusalem is cubed, because when truth's vision accomplishes the fullness of its love potential, its height likewise attains the same measurement. In the cubed city, the people don't just understand truth but live it out to its full potential. It's not just a talking game, though the talking game is necessary. But seeing the truth is only preparatory.

And so not for the first time in our church—because we have had many folks in many decades concerned about social justice and active in it in various ways and encouraging the church to focus on it—there is a new initiative again. May it bear new fruit and may it help us to be the Church in a fuller sense.

The New Jerusalem is cubed and foursquare. That correspondence is justice—the justice that occurs when the

goodness lived matches the truth seen. It is participating in relationship with others and with the One who gives all power to make things right actually, throughout our living, both inwardly and socially. Cubed and foursquare because social justice reigns in the New Jerusalem. Or perhaps we might put it this way: influx is as to efflux. ☩

This article is adapted from the sermon preached at the 2018 Annual Meeting worship service of the Pacific Coast Association. For anyone wishing to join in the conversation on the year-long study and work project for taking steps to shape our voice on justice issues and to create small groups for working on particular issues, please email Jim Lawrence at jlawrence@gtu.edu to receive a link to the discussion.

Rev. James F. Lawrence, Ph.D., D.Min., is dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at the Pacific School of Religion, and core doctoral faculty at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California.



Join the “130” Team at CSS

The year 2018 marks an important milestone for the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS)—our 130th anniversary since purchasing the land in Cambridge that became our first dedicated campus as a theological school. Since 1888, we inhabited two lovely campuses (Newton after Cambridge) before moving to Berkeley in 2001, in a new business model of partnering with other programs.

In 1888, the school had a student body of eight men and five part-time faculty, who held classes in theology, homiletics, ecclesiastical history, sacred languages, and advanced readings of Swedenborg’s theological works. No diplomas of completion were awarded that year. Since being on the West Coast we have graduated forty-six alumni (thirty-two women, fourteen men), with fifteen students continuing this year, and we are served by four Swedenborgian faculty. Now affiliated with the Graduate Theological Union in Northern California, we enjoy unprecedented access to many spiritual traditions and their people, knowledge, and academic resources. We endow the Dorothea Harvey Chair in Swedenborgian Studies in this environment, and our respected faculty are prominent in the country’s largest theological consortium.

This year, our students embarked on an enriching study trip to Sweden under the guidance of Dr. Devin Zuber, and plans are now being made for a trip to the Holy Land, led by our brilliant Dr. Rebecca Kline Esterson. The Winter Intensive has blossomed into an inspiring gathering, uniting students from various locations and degree programs. Our seminary now serves a broad range of learners from



traditional M.Div. students to Ph.D., D.Min., M.A., and M.T.S. (Master of Theological Studies) degree students and also to licensed pastors in a certificate program that supports small-church leaders in ministry training.

Things have changed. Progress has been made. Money has been vital!

Successful growth and development require an increase in the operating budget. We are thankful that prudent stewardship and strong markets have allowed us to operate with only a small annual deficit. Our endowment income is a perpetual gift from previous generations, for which we continue to be grateful. We are now inviting our current generation of friends of CSS to add their financial gifts in support of both our faculty and our students.

Our goal is to increase the number of donors to CSS. Building and maintaining a higher number of donors will empower CSS to seek outside grants and funding. If you are a current donor, thank you! We rely on your

contribution every fiscal year, which runs from July 1 through June 30.

If you have not donated recently, I’m inviting you to start again now. I’m asking that 130 of us commit to donating at least \$130 over the course of a year. This amounts to less than \$11 per month. You can donate this, or any amount, regularly, into perpetuity. We would love and deeply appreciate that.

—*With warmest regards, Jenny: Rev. Jenny Martin Caughman, chair of the CSS Board of Trustees*



Three Ways to Support CSS Financially:

- *Give Us This Day:* Send in your check to 1798 Scenic Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709
- *The Power and the Glory:* Make a one-time donation on our website using your bank account or credit card: <https://css.gtu.edu/stripe-payment-terminal/>
- *Forever and Ever, Amen:* Contact Alan Thomsen, financial manager: info@css.gtu.edu or 510-849-8228. (If you want to specify an end date, please include that.) ☪

Cleveland Church Offers Treasures

The Cleveland Swedenborg Chapel has sold its beloved house of worship, and we, the remaining congregants, would like to pass along, for free, some of our treasures.

- Flagpole: the American flag is missing at the moment, but if someone is interested we can keep looking through our boxes for it.
- Baptismal font: quite heavy but lovely.
- Famed painting of cherubs and a

portrait of Emanuel Swedenborg: both are 11 x 14 or so.

We also have an electronic piano in excellent condition, a black cabinet Yamaha Klavinova, with bench, reasonably priced—please make an offer.

Contact Lois Krebs at 216-272-8375 or krebslo@yahoo.com to discuss shipping options.

Also, if any readers know of another church outside our denomination in need of such items, please feel free to forward this information. ☪

Letter from the President

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And, for the first time that I can remember, we had a service with the children sharing what they had been doing in Kids' Club, a program designed and led by Holly and Charlie Bauer. They made spiritual tool kits and showed us how to use them.

It is very expensive for a family to come to the annual convention, especially if they have to fly.

This year, scholarships were given to children aged five through twelve, paying half of the cost of their flights, all of their registration fees, and half of their room and board. As you can see from the accompanying photographs, it was a big success. Kurt Fekete,

church youth director, also uses special funding to help teens come together for our annual meetings and retreats—and for a trip to England next summer to meet at a retreat with other Swedenborgian youth from around the world.

This year, we want to support as many kids and teens as possible to attend as many gatherings as possible. Please bring your kids and grandkids, and get the word out. Once again, we will have a special program centered around the children. And, as always, Kurt Fekete will make sure the teens have a memorable time.

All donations to the Swedenborgian

Church this year will go to our children and youth programs. Send your support to: General Convention, 50



The Kids Club explain their spiritual survival kits

Quincy Street, Cambridge, MA 02138. Or go to <https://swedenborg.org/>. Or, you may call us at 617.969.4240 to make a donation over the phone.

*—With care and a look to the future,
Rev. Jane Siebert*

Teen Retreat in England—Summer 2019

Seven 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 Sunday, July 28th–Saturday, August 3rd, 2019**

***What?* The Camp will be led by youth leaders and ministers from England and the USA, and our overall theme will be the book of Revelation and its relevance in our lives. We will have a huge variety of activities, such as day trips and walks in the local area, camp fires, table tennis, games evenings, "Olympic" sports on the lawn, and a talent show, to name a few.**

***Cost?* Purley Chase charges just £40 (about \$55) for 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, 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.**

For more information, contact Kurt Fekete, Swedenborgian Church youth director: kfekete@hotmail.com

Looking Over and Past

Continued from page 145

we live, where we have been racially, and where we seem to be going. We continuum-natives and our institutions have a social quality that is attractive and deserves attention. This is why I suggest that, in considering it, it's important to look "over and past"—as from a shoreline to a horizon and all around as well—something that would be natural for a Cape Anner to do.

Historians' stock in trade is to do this, to look over and past what is going on inside the sublime continuum, from fairly recent to back through a recorded history of oceanic proportions and even beyond. As an example, historians will describe this or that civilization as accurately as they can based on evidence left by the people.

After a general description, they tend to focus more on the detailed nature of the evidence than on what it all adds up to—what they would learn if they looked over and past and got a total picture. As a result of this inclination they have missed two of the biggest revelations that history could possibly provide. By history I mean the whole interval, recorded as well as archeologically inferred, starting from the sublime continuum millions of years ago until this very moment.

By looking over and past, if they had integrated their varied observations, historians could have discerned first of all, that throughout history, every large government has failed. Second, they would have found something that has never failed, except to the extent that it has suffered when large governments became too intrusive. I call this something the "Noble Triad," and we'll get to it shortly.

Historians have analyzed large governments to death, whether they were tyrannical, elected, benevolent, church oriented, royal, or you-name-it. Large governments have been studied

minutely. But, if you look over their records and put them all together, you will see that they arise with great promise, slowly fade, and eventually collapse, often in war, now and again from internal unrest, bad economics, or sometimes a mix including all three.

These large governments seem to us as if they lasted a very long time. Some of them did last for hundreds of years before the inevitable prevailed, but when we compare their longevity with the million or more years of our continuum, we see that they occupied a brief interval.

We humans have used the way these three coalesce to keep us moving along the sublime continuum, very likely from close to its tiny start,

The Noble Triad

Yet, how is it that we humans have been successful in overseeing and shaping our progress? We certainly have slowly but surely improved our lot, in most cases, from tough primitive beginnings. It's all right there for historians to study. And what about this thing I call a Noble Triad? What does that fancy name describe anyway? What good is it? Well, when it comes to governance, it hasn't failed yet. It is where our human efforts excel. It is the second great revelation that historians could see if they were looking over and past in an integrative way. It consists, as you already know, of three parts. These are the family, the neighborhood, and the community.

We humans have used the way these three coalesce to keep us moving along the sublime continuum, very likely from close to its tiny start, no matter what large government, as soon as there was any, was up to. We, in our families, neighborhoods, and communities have been continuously and universally successful, most likely well

before recorded history. Shall the meek inherit the earth? Indeed we already have, and there's a reason why, which a Swedenborgian can relate to. Here's how that works.

The Eight Values

There are eight values, which can now be taken broadly as a whole to characterize our uses as they have developed in various places with varying emphases. One of them fits whatever we do. They are: theoretical scientific; applied scientific; engineering; economic; influential; humanitarian; aesthetic; religious. These are all intrinsically good, yet they are susceptible to evil, whether it is corruption that is fresh with us or passed along from our ancestors.

Of special interest is the value named influential. In its good sense it includes teaching and coaching, therapies, and all manner of interpersonal mentorships, even entertainment. In its corrupted state, which is where evil has penetrated, it embraces power. Large governments provide an ideal seedbed for power through their emphasis on rules and regulations and penalties, in short on their dominion over others through a central core of power. In such a corrupted start, evil is abetted by an environment that includes and encourages obsessive selfishness that we Swedenborgians know as *proprium*.

Both of these evils, corruptions fostered by large government, have proved unable to sustain themselves indefinitely throughout history, a fact you can easily see by examining the fate of large governments when you examine their histories. Historians have had a field day doing just this, although they have left the results in fragments.

Being of Use

The Noble Triad is, however, a bit more complex. It consists of three

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Looking Over and Past

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timeless aspects that will look familiar because we are close to them. Here they are.

- It is you and I and our kith and kin doing whatever good we need to do in support of our families, our neighbors, and our communities so they can be robust and productive.
- It is extra, voluntary effort performed individually for these close-in, personal uses and avocations and with the evil of self-absorption reduced to an absolute minimum.
- It is the example we set for the young as they grow into adult status with the gradual understanding of the truth of what it takes for them to face reality. They learn to meet the obligations of personal responsibility dependably and with success.

Any Swedenborgian can immediately see that these three functions provide an atmosphere in which the holy offshoots of God's divine love and

wisdom can thrive: will/understanding; good/truth; charity/faith; affections/knowledges—also Carl Jung's addition, feeling/thinking. These all find ample room to contribute and prosper throughout the continuum's vast expanse through the Noble Triad. It is true that there will be efforts by some to go beyond influence, which in its uncorrupted state is of great moral value, and try to exercise power, but their chances of getting away with it are close to zero compared with the power-ridden and self-interest besotted ambience of large government.

I have been elected and appointed to various boards in small government for over forty years and have seen people pop up now and then with a consuming itch to be more than merely influential. They all learn to back off, some in a hurry, others with difficulty, but they all learn sooner or later.

It is very difficult to acquire any sort of damaging power within effective small government. There are too many people and boards who have the

authority and capacity to say "yes" and "no" wisely and well. And then there are the townspeople who have the vote on a significant number of issues about which they make themselves well informed. The Noble Triad is not a good friend to power and *proprium*.

We are all living with worldwide situations that are always in some kind of agitation. There is always a large government somewhere, either in the news or close to it that is next in line along the trail to the grave. Meanwhile we always have in action countless global examples of the Noble Triad, that universal commitment by the meek, clearly seen by looking over and past, that has yet to fail. ☩

Lars Eric Wiberg is a longtime member of Cambridge Swedenborgian Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He lives in Rockport, Massachusetts, with his wife, Betty.



"Laws of Life" Essay Contest for Girls

Theta Alpha International announces an essay contest for all high school sophomore (or 15–16-year-old) girls. Girls worldwide are eligible to enter this contest.

This essay is an opportunity to write about what *you* think is important in life. This is your chance to be heard—to write from the heart about one or more of your personal laws of life. Essays are to be in English (Google Translate can be used for this purpose) No name or identification can be on the paper itself to ensure impartial judging, but have your name and address in the envelope or email. You can see last year's winning essays printed in the *Theta Alpha Journal*: <https://tinyurl.com/RulesEssay>.

Winners receive a certificate and a check: first place, \$100 USD; second place, \$75 USD; third place, \$50 USD. Essays will be printed in the *Journal* with permission of the writers and as room permits.

The Essay Guidelines

The essay topic is "The Laws of Life," a set of rules, ideals, or principles by which one should live.

- What do you value most in life?
- What is important to you?
- What ideals do you hold deep in your heart?

Think about the people and experiences that have helped you form these laws and then pick a topic to write about, such as the following:

- a personal experience or lesson learned that affects how you live and view your life now
- an aphorism or quote that inspires or guides you

You can incorporate an analogy, a quotation, a story, or a parable. (No personal romantic relationships!)

Please send submissions to Theta Alpha International, PO Box 154, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009, USA. Or email ANCdaughters@gmail.com. Entries must be received by March 8, 2019. ☩

Theta Alpha Journal is a semi-annual magazine (normally published in October and April) devoted to the furtherance of New Church education. It is the official journal of Theta Alpha International, an organization in the General Church open to all women interested in supporting New Church education.

The Curious History of God and Coffee

BY DEVIN ZUBER

When “coffee” and “religion” are placed in the same sentence, it might bring to mind that brackish watery brew of too many after-church coffee hours that still punctually occur, every Sunday, in parishes all over the United States. The first *verboten* taste of coffee I had as a young boy, growing up in suburban Maryland, was at my parents’ church. We would sneak up to the coffee urns when we thought no one was looking, pour the scalding liquid into Styrofoam cups already pre-loaded with enough sugar and powdered creamer to send a small child into a diabetic coma, and before one of the church ladies—usually an aunt or a scolding mother—could catch up with us, we’d swoop out to the playground or parking lot to quaff our stolen booty, usually burning our tongues from drinking too quickly from the fear of getting caught.

Little did I know then how this illicit pleasure of sneaking church coffee—terrible tasting as it was—echoed part of the history of this bitter drink: its origin out of a swirl of violent theological debates, fierce bans, and forbidden desires.

The roots of coffee are even more thoroughly entangled with humanity’s appetite for the divine, with forms of visionary mysticism and with the interreligious flow of people and cultural practices in early modern Europe, than I ever could have imagined as a child (even as I had been raised in that fairly exotic form of Protestantism that followed the teachings of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg).

A legend has persisted around the origins of coffee that traces the first human consumption back to a goatherd in Ethiopia. The young Kaldi, so the



story goes, became curious about the effects of a little bush with red berries when he noticed how his goats would skip and jump around with great alacrity after eating the berries. Trying some himself, and feeling the surge of caffeine energize his body, Kaldi excitedly took the berries to a Sufi monk at a nearby monastery.

The monk, however, disapproved of this apparent kind of intoxicant and threw the berries into a fire. But a delicious aroma of roasted coffee beans promptly followed. When the curious monk dissolved these beans into hot water, voila, the world’s first cup of joe was born.

As cute and charming as it is to imagine these Ethiopian goats getting all jacked up on coffee beans, this is most likely a fantasy concocted in the West, as the first references to Kaldi’s story appear in seventeenth-century Latin texts from Rome. In earlier Islamic records, the practice of drinking coffee seems to have originated in Yemen. According to these older Muslim sources, the practice of drinking coffee left its regional confines in Yemen in the middle of the fifteenth century and became mainstreamed throughout the Islamic world, specifically as an aid for wakefulness in the mystical nighttime devotions of various Sufi sects, the branch of Islam that pursued personal, ecstatic connections to the divine.

Sufis often practiced a form of communal worship at night, sometimes with trancelike dancing (of which the famous “whirling dervish” is but one form) and unison-chanting of verses from the Quran (the *dhikr*). In these

forms of worship that could go late into the early hours of the morning, coffee was communally consumed as a means for staying awake, distributed to the individual participants by the officiating sheikh. Thus, these first recorded quaffings of coffee were not for secular purposes of pleasure or individual taste, but a spiritual aid for a collective communing with God. The Arabic word for coffee, *qahwa*, implies the lessening of desire or appetite for something; the term was also applied to wine, as it was thought that wine would lessen the appetite for food. *Qahwa* as coffee, correspondingly, implied the reduced desire for sleep or rest; our modern word “coffee” etymologically descends from this Arabic term.

Seen as a dangerous intoxicant by Islamic jurists, coffee became outlawed and banned in different cities (Istanbul, Cairo, Mecca) at various points throughout the sixteenth century. There were anti-coffee polemics, riots against coffee sellers in the streets of Mecca, and outbreaks of violence in which coffee stock was burned and its purveyors beaten. The theological debates about coffee’s legitimacy prompted the first attempts to historicize coffee drinking as a cultural practice; pro-coffee writers even claimed that King Solomon was the first person to use coffee, having been instructed by the angel Jibreel (Gabriel) on how to roast and properly brew it (so it was okay, according to Quranic tradition).

These sixteenth-century Muslim debates about coffee—the first Islamic prohibition, or fatwa, against coffee having occurred in 1511—distinctly anticipated how the English reception of coffee 150 years later would rile up the religious and cultural conservatives. The first coffeehouse in England

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God and Coffee

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opened in Oxford in 1650. Called “The Angel,” it was operated by a Jewish man named Jacob and quickly became a beloved haunt for Oxford scholars. Within a few years, hundreds of coffeehouses had cropped up in metropolitan locations all over the country, especially in London. A new drinker of coffee noted in 1654 that the brew “is somewhat hot and unpleasant but a good after relish [*sic*] and caused breaking of wind in abundance.”

Not all were pleased, however, and not only for coffee’s purportedly gassy results. Coffee became caught up in a great tide of seventeenth-century Islamophobia that saw the new drink as dangerously un-British and anti-Christian. In John Tatham’s brutal satire “Knavery in all Trades; or, The Coffee-house Comedy” (1664), the play’s protagonist is a greedy Turkish immigrant named Mailoone, who cons his English coffee-drinking customers, brewing their beverage in his filthy chamber pots (the text is filled with puns and wordplays equating coffee with human waste). The play moralizes to the audience:

For Men and Christians to turn Turks,
and think
T’excuse the Crime because ‘tis in their
drink,
Is more than Magick, and does plainly
tell
Coffee’s extraction has its heats from hell.

Samuel Pepys, the great seventeenth-century diarist and coffee-drinker, saw Tatham’s play and despised it, telling his diary it was “the most ridiculous, insipid play that I ever saw in my life.”

A little later, coffee found a great exponent in visionary scientist turned mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772),

who abandoned his natural science in pursuit of a radical Christian theology based on things “seen and heard” in heaven and hell—a body of visionary work that became important for subsequent Romantics like poet William Blake. Swedenborg cut his teeth, so to speak, in the vibrant coffeehouse culture of London in the early 1700s, and later accounts take note of his copious coffee drinking: “He drank in great



abundance, both day and night, and with a great deal of sugar.” This coffee drinking was accompanied by an

equally prodigious use of *snus*, or tobacco snuff, which so caked and layered Swedenborg’s manuscripts that later archivists would marvel at how well it had preserved them. Fueled by all this nicotine and caffeine, Swedenborg’s modern form of mysticism must be seen as entheogenic—a spiritual experience facilitated by psychoactive substances—and his prolific flurry of writing while in these trance states produced the largest body of single-author manuscripts in the eighteenth century (over 42,000 folio pages, largely now housed at The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm).

Coffee and tobacco have long accompanied each other as symbiotic pleasures, so it is no surprise to find them entangled with forms of esoteric spirituality like that of Swedenborg’s. His more modern analogue may be occultist Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophy, who was infamous for both her chain-smoking (rumored to be in excess of 200 cigarettes a day) and extensive coffee drinking, and an equally prolific pen that syncretized world religions into a New Age mishmash. In Jim Jarmusch’s beautiful little 2003 film *Coffee and Cigarettes*,

the mystical dimensions of the eponymous subjects are suggested by the repetition of a line from visionary scientist Nikola Tesla—“The Earth is a conductor of acoustical resonance.”—as the characters in the different black-and-white vignettes speak over their coffee and cigarettes. More recently, Jarmusch has collaborated with Dutch musician Jozef van Wissem on two record albums that include, among other things, extensive quotations from Swedenborg’s religious writings. One wonders if coffee (and cigarettes) were essential for this joint production.

So, next time you sip (or smell) a cup of coffee, pause to consider this beverage’s complex interreligious evolution that spirals out of the Sufis and into Jewish coffee shops, and on to the modern spiritualists and mystics, spanning the angel Jibreel to the angels of Swedenborg. We may have lost a sense for this (and all that tobacco smoke) in the secular interior of a contemporary Starbucks. But coffee remains embedded in global networks that circulate other forms of religious identities: Note that many of our most popularly consumed beans are harvested from locations such as Sumatra and Yemen, where Islam remains the majority practiced religion.

As the United States undergoes its own ugly renaissance of cultural tension, coffee should remind us how weird and premodern the drinking of this energizing drink was and still can be. Even for children in a suburban church parking lot, coffee tastes wonderfully of the larger world. ☪

Dr. Devin Zuber is Associate Professor of American Studies and Literature at the Graduate Theological Union and faculty member of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies.

This article first appeared in the Fall 2018 issue of *the Bean* magazine.



43rd Annual Camp Mennoscah Retreat

BY LINDA KRAUS

The 43rd Annual Camp Mennoscah Retreat, held by the Kansas Association of the Swedenborgian Church, is in the books. It was a small group, but everyone there enjoyed the camaraderie, renewing old friendships and making new connections.

Dr. Devin Zuber, professor from the Center for Swedenborgian Studies in Berkeley, showed us slides Friday

of Swedenborg,” parts of which can be found on YouTube. He joined in all activities, as we introduced him to cotton growing, a hay rack ride, and Bingo, while he imparted his wisdom and experience.



Hay rack ride on Saturday afternoon (L to R): Joyce Barker, Wyatt Williams, Sue Harris, Brooke Hilbert Williams, Linda Kraus, Dr. Devin Zuber, Connie Unger, Rev. Jane Siebert, Roy Graber, Logan Graber, and Veneta Lane)



Roy and Logan Graber



Connie Helm preparing Sunday dinner service and had an inspiring message. It will also be on YouTube.

Our camp next year will be the second weekend in October. Our teens have figured out what the Saturday night entertainment will be, and we have a volunteer to lead a craft session in the afternoon. We continue to be rejuvenated and renewed by Camp Mennoscah. ☪

Linda Kraus is a member of the Pretty Prairie Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas.



Rev. Jane Siebert, Connie Unger, Sue Harris prepare Saturday lunch



Vernon and Linda Kraus enjoy Sunday dinner



Linda Kraus, Wyatt Williams, Noah Perry, Karen Perry, Ethan Perry, Brooke Hilbert Williams



Dr. Devin Zuber picking a cotton boll



Jerald and Karen Hadley, Noah and Karen Perry at church on Sunday

evening from the January intensive trip to Sweden that he led in 2018, showcasing Swedenborg’s summer house, library, and inventions as well as the sights of Stockholm.

On Saturday, he led our study session in the morning, “The Greening

Our crafting session was led by Joyce Barker—decorating pumpkins with flowers.

On Sunday, Jerald Hadley presented the Sunday school lesson on the connection between physical and spiritual healing. Dr. Zuber led the church

Passages

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For twenty-seven years, she worked as an operating room nurse at Howard University Hospital, specializing in open heart cases, before retiring in 2001.

Aida was active in many Philippine-American organizations, finding great satisfaction both in supporting worthy charities and in dressing up in beautiful Filipino gowns and dancing the night away.

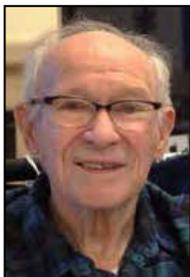
Aida attended the Washington Church of the Holy City regularly with Malcolm, in addition to attending Catholic mass.

In addition to Malcolm, she leaves behind her son John, sister Consolacion Lopez, and many cousins, nieces, and nephews. ☪

Passages

Deaths

David Garrett, formerly a minister in the General Convention (the Swedenborgian Church) who served the St. Louis, Wilmington, and El Cerrito Churches over a span of seventeen years, entered the spiritual world on September 9, 2018, in Santa Rosa, California, at the age of ninety.



David leaves behind his wife of sixty-six years, Priscilla Alden Garrett, and five children, eleven grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren. A graduate of Harvard Divinity School and New Church Theological School, he was ordained in 1954 and began his ministry in St. Louis.

He spearheaded the move of the St. Louis congregation from a midtown church, founded in 1846, to its current location in the Creve Coeur suburb. Known as the Garden Chapel, its delightful architecture was inspired by Wayfarers Chapel (located in Rancho Palos Verdes and designed by Lloyd Wright), and David's leadership in a difficult move and transition was remarkable.

His nine years of ministry at the Hillside Church in El Cerrito (1960–1969) were notable for the “experimental” ministry programs, in addition to traditional formats. These included many small groups based on various theories of inward and social work. Many of his experimental programs at Hillside explored the nexus of psychology and religion, drawing students from the University of California and other adventurers.

In his self-published 184-page memoir (2008) entitled *Labyrinth: Awakening, Descent into Unknowing*,

Transformation, he writes of his increasing frustration with Swedenborgian theology alongside his growing appreciation of Jungian psychology. Trained at the Guild for Psychological Studies in San Francisco, he made the decision to become a Jungian analyst full-time, officially relinquishing his ordination credentials and building a private practice as a licensed Jungian psychotherapist (MFCC), which he maintained for twenty-six years. He became especially known in the Jungian world for his leadership (with others) for a twenty-year series of seminars usually held at Asilomar in Carmel, California, called “Psyche and the Sea.”

Though having departed from the Swedenborgian Church's ministry in the early seventies, he and Priscilla retained many Swedenborgian friendships. His last appearance in a Swedenborgian setting, organized and hosted by the Swedenborgian House of Studies in Berkeley, was a day-long workshop, in 2004, on psychology and religion. David also continued to write well into the new millennium occasional articles for the Swedenborg Foundation serial publication, *Chrysalis*.

—Jim Lawrence

Margaret Jane Kraus, Born May 26, 1929, passed on to the spiritual world on July 8, 2018. Margaret was a longtime resident of the Pretty Prairie, Kansas,



community and a lifelong art educator, teaching at several schools and retiring from Pretty Prairie High School. She was also a championship girls basketball and track and field coach and, in addition, coached tennis and golf.

Margaret was a member of the New Jerusalem Church of Pretty Prairie, had served on the General Council of the Swedenborgian Church (General Convention) and had been a board member of the Reno County Farm Bureau, women's chair of the Reno County Republican Party, a member of the Kansas delegation to the 2004 Republican National Convention, a member of the Hutchinson/Reno Arts & Humanities Council, chair of the Board of Supervisors of the Reno County Conservation District, and chair of the standing committee on Stewardship for the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, among other volunteer and community service.

She graduated *Magna Cum Laude* with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Drury College, Springfield, Missouri, where she was a member of the Kappa Delta sorority, and later earned a master's degree in Art from Wichita State University.

On July 19, 1952, she married Lee Kraus, Sr., who predeceased her on August 4, 1973. Survivors include daughter Nancy LaVerde of Richardson, Texas; son Lee Kraus of Greenwich, Connecticut; brother, Don Abernathy, of Springfield, Missouri; and two grandchildren. She was also preceded in death by a sister, Mary Powell.

Aida Ravelo Peck, transitioned to the spiritual world on November 10, 2018, at the age of 79. She was born in the small town of General Luna, in the Philippines, one of seven children of Fidel and Epifania Ravelo. She earned a diploma in nursing from the University of the Philippines in 1962.

In 1965, she came to the United States on a nursing exchange program, to work and study at Temple University in Philadelphia. Work as an RN followed at hospitals in Jersey City and Brooklyn, where she met her husband, Malcolm Peck.

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About the Swedenborgian Church

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London fifteen years after his death. American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questioning and insights, we as a church exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

In his theological writings, Swedenborg shared a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of scripture as a story of inner life stages as we learn and grow. Swedenborg said, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.

Michigan & Ohio Associations Meet

BY BJ NEUENFELDT

The Michigan and Ohio Associations of The Swedenborgian Church have made a practice of meeting together every four or five years. This year, the two groups gathered once again at Almont New Church Assembly and Retreat Center in Allenton, Michigan, on October 5–7, 2018.

Friday night began with a group of thirteen meeting at a local steak house for a wonderful dinner and a fun time of fellowship. Michigan folks went back to the Retreat Center and Ohio folks stayed at an Imlay City Hotel.

On Saturday, we joined together for breakfast and then the start to the weekend themed discussion, based on the book *The Spirituality of Age: A Seeker's Guide to Growing Older*, by Robert L. Weber, Ph.D. and Carol Orsborn, Ph.D.

The presenters were clergy from Michigan: Rev. Renée Machiniak, Rev. Jenn Tafel, and Rev. Dagmar Bollinger. The group gathering in Pfister Lounge was



Enjoying dinner at the annual meeting



Revs. Dagmar Bollinger,
Renée Machiniak, and Jenn Tafel

about forty-strong; all seats and some floor space were taken—good problem to have!

Later in the morning, a discussion break was taken and the two associations held their annual business meetings.

After lunch, we held another discussion session and then took a break for fall fun. Some folks just walked around the camp to enjoy fresh

air and fall colors, while others drove to a local apple orchard and enjoyed cider and donuts.

After supper, we watched parts of a documentary film called *UP*, a longitudinal study of English children taken in seven-year increments, following them as they age.

Sunday found us gathered in the historical Almont Chapel for a closing worship service, with participation by Rev. Ron Brugler and Rev. Betsy Coffman, from Ohio and Rev. Renée Machiniak and Rev. Jenn Tafel, from Michigan. ☪

BJ Neuenfeldt is a member of the Royal Oak Church of the Holy City in Michigan.