



Anita Dole and the *Bible Study Notes*

BY GEORGE DOLE

I have a story that needs to be told, a story that no one else now living can tell. The frontispiece should be a picture of my parents' spacious bedroom at 887 Middle Street, Bath, Maine, looking from the door past the bed on the right to the far wall. Mother, arthritic fingers and all, at her typewriter in the far right corner, and in the far left corner her state-of-the-then-art A.B. Dick mimeograph waiting patiently for her next set of stencils. I did not see this often, since I was away at college most of the time, but it was a scene reenacted repeatedly for four straight and strenuous years.

Mother, with the devotion of a convert, had contributed to *The Sower Notes*, a set of Swedenborgian Sunday School lessons that took students straight through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. It was a four-year course, and Mother, having taught Sunday School classes since Dad's first pastorate, knew all too well that by the time a child reached Revelation, the creation story would be forgotten. She was inspired to design a curriculum that would cover the same ground in a single church year by periodizing the biblical narrative and following the same basic sequence through the Old Testament and Revelation each year for four years and taking one Gospel per year, so that not only would students get a rich assortment of biblical stories, they would inevitably get a strong and subtle sense of the coherence of the whole narrative, from the



Lois, Stuart, and Anita Dole in early 1960 during the time when Anita was hard at work on the Bible Study Notes.

George's high school graduation photo from 1948 appears in the top right corner.

garden of Eden to the descent of the New Jerusalem. I don't know when she got this idea, but she clearly felt called to act on it, deciding not only to write the material and to self-publish it, but also to offer it for use. At some point she felt that she had enough in print to recruit subscribers, and from then on, she kept ahead of demand by producing a full year's set each year for four years.

Both her competence and her stamina were incomparable. Each "lesson" was treated separately for six age levels: Beginner, Primary, Junior, Intermediate, Senior, and Adult. The eventual hardbound edition comprised six

volumes of over 400 pages each. That's a lot of keystrokes, and typing stencils is fussy business. A former English teacher with a BA from the University of Chicago (in an era when few women went to college at all), she had a rare gift for writing clear and concise prose—never showy or wordy or elusive, wasting none of the reader's time. She wrote not directly to children but to their adult teachers. Her experience in the Bath church was of weekly "teachers' meetings," and of a Sunday program in which there were Sunday school sessions for all ages. She was profoundly determined that the children should, Sunday after Sunday, see that their parents and grandparents were studying the same lessons as they themselves. The Bible would always have something invaluable to tell them.

As the lessons gained more subscribers, it was decided to have them job-printed, and she was finally relieved of the immense responsibility she had assumed. Eventually, they became virtual classics, and it was decided to publish them in hard cover. She had died before that happened, and the chosen editor, her son-in-law William Woofenden, decided to publish them not as a curriculum, but as a resource work for academic research, taking the chapters in strict biblical order. In this form they remain in continued use and well-respected, though I doubt that much attention is given to the notes for the little ones.

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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.

November 2020

Volume 244, No. 9, Whole Number 5459

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Subscriptions: free online subscription at <https://swedenborg.org/newsletter/>. 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.

Submissions are accepted at any time. Submissions must be received by the third Monday of the month to be considered for the next issue.

The opinions and views expressed are those of the authors, not of *the Messenger*, the Standing Committee for Communication and Information, or the Swedenborgian Church.

Editor's Corner



Reaching the Fullness of Forty and What I am Thankful For

This can be seen from the symbolism of forty as fullness.

Forty symbolizes fullness because four means what is full or complete. (*Secrets of Heaven* §9437)

I know most people seem to gravitate towards Christmas as their favorite holiday, but I have always found it more stressful than fun. But I do love Thanksgiving. It could be the thirteenth generation Mayflower descendant in me, but I doubt it. It is typically the only time of year my whole family is able to get together. We try to make it a several day event, rather than just one meal. We see each other at other times throughout the year, but never all together. Actually, last Thanksgiving was the last time I saw one of my brothers and my sister—still pretty strange to think about. About a year ago, we were discussing what we would be doing this year as my fortieth birthday actually lands on Thanksgiving Day. At this time last year, I did think this Thanksgiving might be different.

I was hoping to find myself somewhere tropical with some of my best girlfriends, or in New York City getting the cheap seats for whatever Broadway shows had last minute spaces to fill—alas, the universe had different plans. When researching what forty means, it seems that one can't reach the fullness of forty without some element of struggle. I'd certainly say 2020 was successful with that. I've been noticing lately that the inability to do the things that normally charge my batteries has started

to wear on me. Weekends away with my girlfriends are one of the things that keep me going—and always having a plan on my calendar to look forward to is something I need. I am so thankful for all of the women friends that I have collected over the years, and I live for spending time with them. Though we don't have any active plans on the calendar, we still discuss what we'll do the next time we get together.

I would not be who I am without the friendships I have made over the past forty years. And though we have not been able to see each other in person, the pandemic has brought us closer. Some friends that I only got to see a couple times a year, I now can see on video calls multiple times a week, and sometimes even every day—a true pandemic perk! I am so thankful for the unapologetic realness they offer me, virtual support when things feel out of control, and knowing somehow when just the right cat picture needs to be sent.

So, as I am about to reach the fullness of forty, in the middle of a pandemic struggle, I am reminded to be thankful for the friendships and spiritual connections I have been fortunate to have over the years—both old and new. Thank you to all of you, you know who you are. I look forward to a time when I can celebrate in person the *fabulous forty* and enjoy the time with family and friends that have brought me so much fullness throughout my life.

—Beki Greenwood

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Letter from the President



The Year of the Spiritual World: 2020–21

Dear Friends,

My thanks to the ninety-eight members and friends who registered to join in the Zoom series “Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism.” It speaks well of our denomination as to the dedication and interest in social justice reform and action.

When the large group was divided randomly for small group discussions led by a host of volunteers, the variety in our predominantly White denomination was encouraging. The group I was in had first-generation and multi-generation Swedenborgians, as well as new seekers, coming together to see how Swedenborgian theology and its adherents address this pressing issue of racism. There were long time ministers and new ministers and one looking at pursuing the ministry. We had Black, Asian, Hispanic, and White people in attendance. There were West and East Coasters, Middle Americans, and Canadians. I am looking forward to critical discussions in the following four sessions, as we look at racism in ourselves, our country, our denomination, and what to do about it.

On another note, Professor Devin Zuber has been offering a free Zoom course on Swedenborg and Pandemic theology through the Center for Swedenborgian Studies. This, too, has drawn a wide variety of

people searching for deeper understanding of what is happening in our world and how to make sense of it all.

One fourth of Americans have reported that their faith has grown amid the pandemic, while 2% say it has weakened. (PEW research Center, April 30, 2020) Professor Rebecca Esterson, guest lecturer in Devin’s class last week, asked the group if they thought the world was getting better or worse. ([Watch it here on YouTube](#)) A wide majority answered “better” and she commented that Swedenborgians tend to be optimistic. I agree we offer an overall optimistic faith, with an important dose of realism.

The American Psychological Association (May 11, 2020) wrote about why some people find peace in their religion or spirituality during the COVID-19 pandemic, while others may be struggling with their faith. They listed positive and negative aspects of religion that make a difference in the ability to cope with this pandemic. Our faith tradition holds many of the positive aspects they presented: fostering a sense of connectedness and encouraging a hopeful lens for the future. We do not promote the negative: punishment by God or higher being and putting everything in God’s hands. Religious deferral causes individuals and congregations not to take the necessary steps to protect themselves and others. And knowing that God is all love, brings hope and peace.

So, I encourage you to carry on, wear masks, practice physical distancing, look out for yourself and one another. And to turn to God in prayer, look for the positive things that have come out of this pandemic, join groups to share virtually, and let the Creator lift your spirit through the gifts of nature and connectedness to one another.

With Care,
—Rev. Jane Siebert

The Year of the Spiritual World

The Spiritual World and Experiences of It

BY JULIE CONARON

Death is simply a shedding of the physical body like the butterfly shedding its cocoon. It is a transition to a higher state of consciousness where you continue to perceive, to understand, to laugh, and to be able to grow. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, MD¹

Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, someone who did not believe in an after-life but who later became an authority on grief and the dying, credits continuing to work with the dying on the following experience with a woman who had died. Elisabeth had served the latter before she died and at that time Elisabeth was considering giving up her work with the dying. She had heard stories of people having been visited by those on the other side but was unconvinced. Despite knowing the woman who visited her was from the other world and could see her thoughts, Elisabeth was still unsure, but that incident changed her life and she was reassured by the woman telling her she must continue her work with the dying, and she would receive help when she continued her work with them.²

Dr. Kübler-Ross's experience is one of the many recounted in the book *Hello From Heaven!* that we can appreciate for how much comfort and healing people receive from loved ones who have died. Like Kübler-Ross, the authors' original reactions were those of doubt, questioning if it could even be possible.³ But after many stories, they were convinced it could, especially after connecting with the International

Association for Near Death Studies (IANDS). In 1987, a poll done by the National Opinion Research Center, found that 42% of Americans felt they had had contact with someone who had died, and 67% of all widows believed they had a similar experience.⁴ Many were reluctant to share their experiences for fear of being considered crazy.

Perhaps it is time for Swedenborgians to speak up and talk about the reality of the other world.

I too have felt my deceased spouse with me since he left this earth seventeen and a half years ago. This was actually a request to him several months before he died. He initially found it amusing, but he easily and heartily agreed to it. Perhaps it is time for Swedenborgians to speak up and talk about the reality of the other world. "There is a union of heaven with the human race...good and evil spirits with every individual. We have our union with heaven through the good spirits and our union with hell through the evil ones."⁵

The Guggenheims speak of how comforting these experiences could be.

What would be more comforting for bereaved parents and the knowledge they could be reunited with their deceased children? That widows and widowers who have shared a lifetime of love with their husband or wife might be together again? That all people could once more encounter those they have loved on earth?

Marriage Love §321 covers the topic of remarriage with those who had a happy marriage; §321:7 speaks about why the one left on earth might not remarry,

Because the two are not actually separated by the death of the one; for the spirit of the deceased continues to dwell with the spirit of the one not yet deceased, and this until the death of the other, at which time they come together again and are reunited, loving each other even more tenderly than before, because they are in the spiritual world." (N. Bruce Rogers translation)

The Guggenheims' discussion then focuses on why people are leery of sharing those After Death Contact (ADC) experiences, and the main reason is the fear of appearing unbalanced. But here's another view about living our lives. Helen Keller wrote "Life is a daring adventure, or nothing. To keep our faces toward change and behave like free spirits in the presence of fate is strength undefeatable."⁶ But sometimes fear can make that hard to do.

The Guggenheims continue to cover the specifics of these experiences and how they documented them. The documentation of these events took seven years to complete, with 3,300 firsthand accounts of ADC and interviewing 2,000 people living in fifty states in all walks of life and age ranges from an eight-year-old boy to a ninety-two-year-old widower. Most contributors had a Jewish or Christian upbringing⁷ and hoped readers would benefit from

¹ *Hello from Heaven!*, Bill and Judy Guggenheim, Bantam books, Apr 1997, p. 3

² *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 12

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13

⁵ *Heaven and Hell*, Emanuel Swedenborg, New Century Edition, 2000, §291, 292

⁶ *From the Hearts of Caregivers*, edited by Patricia M. Cronin, 2005, p. 92, (Helen Keller)

⁷ *Hello from Heaven!*, p. 19

The Spiritual World

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their ADCs. They wanted to spare others the confusion and pain they had endured when few relatives and friends were willing to believe their stories.⁸

The authors estimated that perhaps 20% of the U.S. population has had one or more ADCs, and this percentage increased dramatically among bereaved parents and children, the widowed, and those who have grieved someone they deeply loved,⁹ and ADCs were significantly more common than Near Death Experiences (NDEs). In other countries the validity of the ADCs is more readily accepted than in the US, at least at that time. Do you think that has changed today since that book was written so many years ago?

Death is Not the End

Dr. Wayne W. Dyer wrote, “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, but spiritual beings having a human experience.”¹⁰ As Swedenborgians we are more attuned to the reality of the spiritual world, but we sometimes have to ask ourselves if that true in our daily lives. As someone whose spouse has already left this world, I am blessed with being daily reminded of its reality and how my spouse is with all our family in many different ways.

There are several different ways people experience their loved one who has died. The most common types are seeing or feeling their presence with them.¹¹ My experience is feeling connected as if by a cord, yet the feeling is centered mostly around my heart and chest, sometimes in my head, and when I am in deep despair or talk to him, I feel his presence more strongly. Some of our sons have felt his presence

with them, either as a hand on their shoulder when they are deeply distressed, of connecting to their dad, or just a feeling of his being with them on joyful occasions.

There are many interesting experiences in the book, and I will recount a few of them. Here is one from a hospice nurse after the death of her grandmother,

As I was standing at my kitchen sink, I felt this warmth, this presence. It wasn't physical, but more like a presence standing around me, enfolding me. I knew it was my grandmother. Nothing special was going on in my life at the time, and I hadn't been thinking about her. Bells didn't ring or anything. I just had a sense Grandma was there with me. Then, in less than a minute, it stopped. I remember feeling very cherished and loved. It was a really a nice thing to have happened.¹²

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, but spiritual beings having a human experience.

—Dr. Wayne W. Dyer.

I too have felt my grandmother's presence. She and I shared a room for about seven years, after the death of her spouse. She left this world about forty-two years ago. For several years after her death I felt as though she was one of the spirits with me.

When someone's body can no longer perform its functions in this natural world in response to the thoughts and affection of its spirit (which it derives from the spiritual world), then we say that the individual has died...the person, though, has not died at all. We are only separated from the physical nature that was useful to us in this world. The essential person is actually still alive.¹³

In my experience, both as a hospice chaplain and being with my spouse as he crossed over, it almost seemed as though the spirit was pulling away from the natural body before the heart stopped. Perhaps it was a shutting down of the natural organs? But in *Heaven and Hell* §446 and §447 Swedenborg gets to experience death in order to tell us about it. He remarks,

The reason the deepest communication of our spirit is with our breathing and our heart is that all our vital processes depend on these, not only in a general way, but in every specific.... After this separation, our spirit stays in the body briefly, but not after the complete stoppage of the heart, which varies depending on the cause of death. In some cases, the motion of the heart continues for quite a while, and in others it does not. The moment it does stop, we are awakened, but this is done by the Lord alone.

Swedenborg then goes on to describe each phase of the dying process and the succession of angels that sat with him as he awakened into the spiritual world. I have noticed there is a special sphere around people who are dying, or have died, and at these times it feels as though I could reach up and touch the spiritual world.

A Few More Unique Stories

One mother was driving when she heard Eric Clapton's song “Tears in Heaven.” She had lost her two-year-old son from AIDS three months earlier. While listening to the words she had the sense of her son's presence. Tears welled up in her eyes and she started crying. She felt his presence all the way through the song and felt an overwhelming sense of peace. Then he left. Since that time, she has felt comforted.¹⁴ Others have also felt their deceased children with them and

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23 (Dr. Wayne W. Dyer.)

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 24

¹³ *Heaven and Hell*, §445

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¹⁴ *Hello from Heaven*, pp. 27–28

The Life of Chauncey Giles

Chapters Three and Four

SUMMARIZED BY LOIS DOLE

Somewhere I found a small pamphlet by Chauncey Giles titled “The Blessedness of Death,” and I found it so comforting. When rearranging a bookcase, I came across his biography, written by his daughter Carrie Giles Carter; I thought I would look into it. I found it so fascinating: it’s mostly letters written to and from him that tell how important finding New Church teachings were to him, but also capture the feelings of the times about church beginnings in this country. This is the next installment of my summary.¹

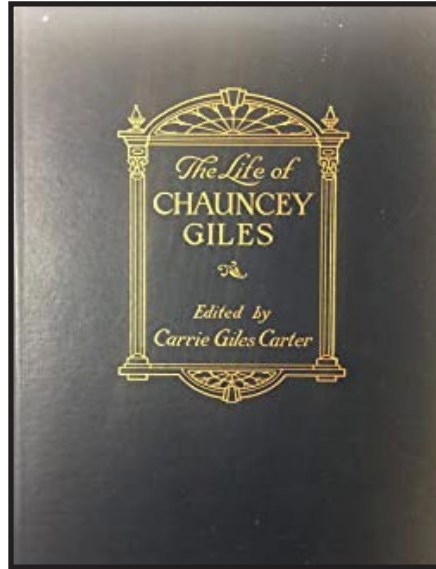
Chapter Three: Life at Hamilton

Hamilton, Ohio, was connected to Lake Erie by a canal, and canal boats and the Cleveland stagecoach led from there to the outer world. In December 1841 Chauncey wrote that he was pleased with his school of sixteen pupils but was worried that there was a new public school in town.

His diary entry recorded his happiness in being married: “I did not think it possible that anything could affect me so much, or that so much happiness ever be shared by me in this world.” He continued on in that vein for some pages before once again writing of worries about the future and his unworthiness.

He and Eunice lived in a boarding house for a year, until they moved into their own home in April 1842. He said that now they “seemed to be drawn closer together.” However, they soon took in two boarders.

Chauncey appeared content with his school and also took up gardening, and Eunice was busy with house-keeping. In May he wrote to his brother-in-law, Dr. James Lakey, about his vegetables and the wonderful milk and



cream from their cow. He found working in the garden a pleasant change from the “fatigue and anxiety of the schoolroom.”

In late summer Chauncey described Eunice as “delicate.” She developed a high fever and the next week was delivered of a boy who was stillborn. She was ill for some time afterward, but “she has borne all her pain, sorrow, and disappointment nobly.”

His school was progressing well. He felt the need for a teaching assistant and called on his sister-in-law Rowena Lakey, who arrived in September. Though he continued to be unhappy with his own mental and spiritual progress, he strove to imbue in his pupils the love of learning.

Rowena Lakey had this to say:

The first thing I observed in his school was the perfectly good understanding between teacher and pupils, and the courtesy and kindness manifested in their intercourse with each and all.... His object seemed to be to cultivate a love of knowledge, to form a habit of acquiring it; and

at the same time, he tried to make it practical in every possible way.

Always interested in learning new theories of teaching, Chauncey corresponded with educator Horace Mann, who in turn mentioned some journals that might interest him and invited him to visit, should he be in the Boston area.

In early 1843 Chauncey’s whole family came for a visit, staying until June, greatly taxing Eunice’s strength. It is noted that there were no modern conveniences to help her, but she “met it bravely and conscientiously.”

The situation of Hamilton engendered unhealthy conditions that led to illnesses for the next two years, worrying Chauncey. He still looked forward to a good school, “if the trustees do not interfere with me.”

In December he wrote:

If there is anything in the history of the last year worthy of notice it is that I have become interested in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. They have opened up new views of life for me. The world wears a new face. Whether they are true or false they will exert a most important influence upon my life.

And in January:

The idea that a kind Providence watches over and directs all things for our good, an idea which has now become part of my life, will do much to strengthen me in remedying some of the greatest defects of my character.

That spring the Gileses had an enjoyable visit from Dr. Lakey, who suggested that Chauncey might go into law. He is uncertain about this proposal, as he is poor and has a family. On

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¹ The summary of chapters 1 & 2 may be found in the July/August 2020 issue of the Messenger, p. 96.

Life of Chauncey Giles

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the one hand, he thinks that very few fair decisions are made in the court of law. On the other, he feels that his attempts at teaching are often thwarted by parents and administration. So he started to study law, with misgivings as to his ability to thoroughly master its complexities.

On May 26, 1844, a daughter, Lucy, was born, who “appears healthy and quiet.” Chauncey hoped the baby would help Eunice overcome her grief over their son’s death, and that her health would improve. He wrote, “May we who have now taken upon us the training of an immortal soul for life have patience and wisdom to perform our duty aright.”

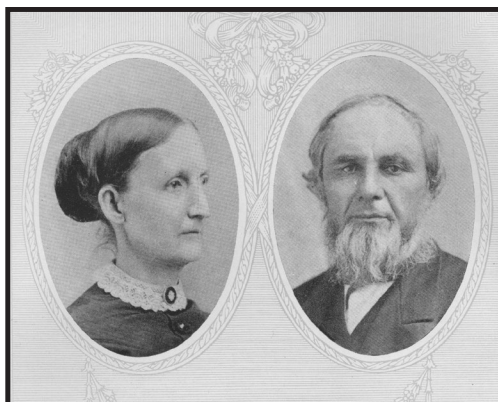
In June, Eunice was gravely ill but was recovering. Chauncey said that he felt the weight of sadness had been lifted due to his belief in God’s infinite love.

But in the fall the whole family was sick, Eunice especially so. Chauncey was teaching but felt weak and by March was afraid that the school would fail due to illnesses. Although he didn’t regret being in Hamilton, he felt it was time to leave.

There was a New Church family in Hamilton with whom they held Sunday meetings. In future years they would remember particularly that it was there that they gained the blessing of finding the New Church. Chauncey and Eunice would speak only of the kindness and friendliness of the people with whom they shared the trials of establishing a new country.

Chapter Four: Lebanon and Yellow Springs

September 1, 1845, found Chauncey and family in Lebanon, Ohio, where a new school had opened. He was encouraged to apply for the position of principal by a New Church person



Mr. and Mrs. Chauncey Giles from approximately 1873, taken during the New York Pastorate

there and remained until 1848. Rowena Lakey came as well.

Six weeks after arriving there their second child was born, a son named Frank Warren Giles. Frequently ill, Eunice not only cared for her family but also boarded teachers and pupils. Later in life Chauncey said about her: “Oh, I would never have been anything without you!”

In November he wrote to James Lakey of his hopes for the future of the school and said, “The clouds which for so long have darkened the horizon seem to be gradually breaking away, and the light of hope dawns upon my pathway.”

1846 was a good year for the family. The children “grow finely and bid fair to be intelligent and active.” In May he wrote to Dr. Lakey that although there were some who wished to drive him from the school, it was a pleasant and orderly establishment and was actually making money.

He was much cheered by the preaching of a New Church person, Mr. Prescott. He writes:

It is impossible for me to believe as I once did. The doctrines of the New Church have thrown light upon the Word, upon life, upon everything, and I hardly know what my duty is with regard to an open profession of adherence to those doctrines.

In July of 1847 Chauncey was ill with sciatica and pleurisy, and the baby was also ill. Eunice wrote a disheartened letter to Dr. Lakey. She wanted to take in boarders to take some of the burden off Chauncey.

On his part, Chauncey wrote a heartfelt love letter to her acknowledging their hard times but looking toward a bright and sunny future even if it was in the next life: “if we lose all we possess we cannot lose what we are, we cannot lose our love for each other.”

In September his illness made him gloomy “but I shall get along somehow,” and “I must make the best of what I have.” He resumed teaching, his lameness requiring his students to come to his room at home.

About that time Eunice gave birth to a baby girl who died almost immediately. Chauncey wondered if she was able to recover from the ordeal. They also had two boys boarding with them and hoped for more.

Sister-in-law Rowena Lakey, who was assisting Chauncey, wrote about his theory of teaching and the students’ response. One day he took the students to the woods and had them dig up saplings to plant on the school grounds, telling them that someday they would bring their children to sit under the trees.

In January of 1848 Chauncey decided to give up the school due to his illnesses and to try for a boarding school for boys that would be more profitable. It was a move mostly opposed by his relatives.

He and Eunice joined the local New Church. James Lakey wrote his approval,

...as it will extend your acquaintance and gain you friends. I am sorry that the “New Jerusalem” is so small and is not likely to increase much. It requires too much study and an advanced cultivation

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Life of Chauncey Giles

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of intellect than exists at present, to understand its doctrinal mysteries.

Chauncey reflected on his inclinations; he thought that he read too much and didn't spend enough time with his family. He worried about money and was unsure of his future. In view of the prospective move, Rowena advised him to mingle with the society of the place where he planned to establish a school "and not let first impressions tell of a misanthrope or ascetic."

In April Chauncey's health improved and they moved to Yellow Springs to start the new school. He described the start of the school: despite the promise of pupils, there were none for the first two weeks, until he went into the city with his last ten dollars in his pocket. He came back with four pupils and an advance of fifty dollars, enough to get them by.

The family's health improved.

Then in May Chauncey was thrown from a horse, injuring his leg. An infection set in that rendered him almost helpless for months. There were ten scholars in the house and by August he was teaching from his bed in great pain. Rowena Lakey tried to take over teaching but found it too difficult, and the boys were sent home. Finally the leg was lanced, and he gradually recovered. All but two boys returned to school.

In December he wrote to James Lakey, describing the start of the school:

I do more than I wish. I engage in my duties cheerfully, for I believe labor not only the lot of man but the best possible thing for him.... I look to the future without any misgivings or doubts or fears. I expect neither wealth, ease, or honor in this world, nor any exemptions from the cares and trials of life.

In February of 1849 he and Eunice were again ill. He had been thinking about moving to Pomeroy, where there was a move afoot to open a new academy; the offer of pay there was a deciding factor. But he was depressed for a while about the breaking up of his school in Yellow Springs, which occurred in April.

But then he wrote, "Those divine realities which constitute the true life of the soul are taking a deeper and stronger hold on me." Eunice also reported that she was feeling happier, and their two children, Lucy and Warren, were doing well and were happy.

He was reading a life of Swedenborg and was struck with how little Swedenborg concerned himself with his own merit: "...who seemed to await with so little concern or with so much faith for the time when [his doctrines] should be received."

In March Chauncey received a letter from Rev. J.P. Stuart suggesting that he preach New Church doctrines. He would love to do this if he were "free from debt and qualified,"... as they "meet every want of the human heart, they embrace every idea that is rational concerning God and the spiritual world." He reveled in the doctrines that show the beauties of the world as tokens of God's love, at the same time despairing that his usefulness was small. But he was sure he could do more.

His daughter, reading this letter, smiled at his worry, remembering his noble example to his family.

In mid-March Chauncey was reading *Heaven and Hell*. He said, "What a wonderful book! The wildest romance couldn't be more interesting."

He attended a church service and wrote that he thought the preacher erred exhorting his hearers to "get religion," as if it could happen in a moment. "Religion, it has been well said, is a life." He was much moved by Swedenborgian tracts and felt that he

was "getting glimpses of higher and nobler truths" that would influence him the rest of his life. At the same time he wondered if they could possibly be true. However, he went on to say that the doctrines have removed the darkness which enveloped many subjects and have made them a matter of reason, when heretofore they were only cognizant to the eye of faith.

The school closed in early April, and they were making preparations to move to Pomeroy when Eunice fell ill, and in midmonth gave birth to a boy who lived only an hour. Since Eunice seemed comfortable, "and bore it with wonderful fortitude and composure," and all their furniture had been loaded, Chauncey went on with it to Pomeroy. Rowena Lakey stayed to help Eunice. ☩



Lois Dole grew up attending the Church of the Neighbor (Swedenborgian) in Brooklyn, New York. She currently resides in Bath, Maine, with her husband George.

Bible Study Notes

Continued from page 137

As a footnote, I would mention that Mother made little effort to present a spiritual narrative, the "story of regeneration." It was on the foundation of her work, though, that I eventually (2007) came out with *A Book about Us: The Bible and Stages of Our Lives*, and this little article is an expression of my gratitude. ☩

The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole, after serving as pastor of the church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, joined the faculty of the then New Church Theological School, serving it through its several name changes until his retirement in 1999.



Meditation on Forgiveness for Our Times

With Insight From Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

BY STEVE SANCHEZ

Let us reflect on forgiveness. I, like a lot of people, have had to deal with the muddy waters and gummy thorns of forgiveness. I was once in a severe cult (It is a long story for another time). Let's just say it was very unjust, damaging, and abusive.

Forgiveness. Forgiveness is a process, sometimes a long one. I think of it in the way Alcoholics Anonymous describes getting over being an alcoholic—we can make great progress but it never entirely goes away, and we can easily fall back. The healing of forgiveness becomes effective by looking to be right with God in life. In the muddled mess with people, there is humiliation, shame, anger, and competition. The opposite of forgiveness is seeking revenge, and God told us to leave revenge to him. Taking it to God brings the problem between ourself and Him, and in Him we can trust and feel safe. God is just. It is very important to understand this because we have to take the step of being vulnerable to him, to humble ourselves to Him. When we feel the blessing of connecting to God from our core self, we can begin to forgive others.

Some people just give willy-nilly forgiveness. They say, "Oh, I forgive you," by which they mean, "you were the one who was wrong."

Like faith (and compassion), forgiveness is not blind. Forgiveness is the union of compassion and discernment. Blanket compassion is a false trap; it is like painting over a dark smudge; the smudge looks better, but it is still there. Only now, it is worse, because it is hidden, and God does not want lies, deception, and evil hidden. Evil can only be removed if it is seen—which is God's constant effort, but

humans all too often do the opposite. In forgiveness we have our eyes open to what happened and we go through the process.

Blanket compassion is a false trap; it is like painting over a dark smudge; the smudge looks better, but it is still there. Only now, it is worse, because it is hidden...

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s non-violence helps us understand forgiving in a powerful way. King's non-violence was the union of compassion and strength; it was not passive nor avoidant but brought the power of presence. By being present and addressing the truth of what was going on, he awakened people's consciences to the issue of racism. The end goal of his mission was forgiveness. Rev. Dr. King brought the focus of being right with God, not the intent to be better than others, and demean others; and thus it possessed the potential virtue of winning others over, who, deep inside, yearn for the relief of being honest with themselves and God. His mission didn't seek or settle in being above or below others. Being present in this way guided and/or forced people to face their conscience, a conscience that they had been avoiding—it also exposed how they had been colluding with others to avoid. Seeking this path effectively aligns a movement with the power of love and wisdom and allows God's providence to work through it. Jesus said it in many ways, here is one: "He who is without sin let him throw the first stone." In saying this people were convicted by their own conscience

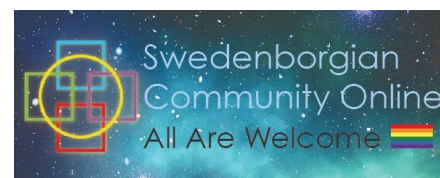
from within, which leads to a perception of their own sin, contrition—and hopefully—forgiveness.

Jesus never dissociated from anything, but was present to every situation and person, no matter how great the conflict or how intense the intimacy. We can't do as he did; we are human and we don't have to be perfect, but we can learn from His example. Jesus also said, "The meek shall inherit the earth." This means that humility is not weakness but is the very source of strength—for God can only be approached in humility. ☩



Rev. Steve Sanchez is an ordained pastor in the Swedenborg church and graduate of the Pacific School of Religion. He works as a full-time hospice chaplain, and is a writer, and composer of spiritual songs

for church and healing. He is the author of *Spiritual Perversion and Rethinking Redemption: Revitalizing our Relationship with Jesus*. His music is at stevesanchez.bandcamp.com



SwedenborgianCommunity.org

With broadcasts every Thursday & Sunday, Swedenborgian Community Online is your affirming, interfaith, community—with a presence on YouTube, Facebook, and your favorite podcast platform. We seek to uplift God(dess) in all people's diverse ways of living.

The Culture Tree

BY EMILY WOOFENDEN

For those of you who don't know me, I am a lifelong Swedenborgian who works in the field of special education. I've been a teacher in so many different contexts; from teaching religion classes at Fryeburg New Church Assembly to elementary classrooms, all the way up to the college level. Part of what we have to understand and learn as teachers is how to reach every individual student in the context of their own sociocultural experiences. We call this "being a culturally responsive educator." I spent a portion of my experience navigating this and trying to figure out how to do it—and now I spend a ton of energy helping the new prospective teachers I mentor and teach understand how to do that. It's ever evolving and requires a flexible mindset that allows the teacher to reflect within themselves in a healthy way. These are skills that come naturally to some and can be fostered and supported in others. This was originally a blog post I shared on my website¹ that I felt was incredibly relevant to the current conversation about cultural awareness and the divides we are seeing in society today.

I want to talk about a concept I discovered in the past few years, introduced by Zaretta Hammond in her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*.² One of the things that I love about this book is that it draws on the science of the brain and human psychology while giving practical

suggestions and solutions for the classroom that are implementable right away.

The assumption that what currently exists must necessarily exist is the acid that corrodes all visionary thinking.
—Murray Bookchin

If you are a teacher, as I am, there is no avoiding the fact that teaching and learning in this country need to be adjusted from what they have always been. The US is an extremely diverse country, and our teaching force is made up of a pretty homogeneous set of individuals. However, the way that problem should and could be fixed is a can of worms that I am not interested in opening at this time. I don't even fully understand it myself. Also, just because someone doesn't look like me, that doesn't mean we have nothing important in common. Engaging with Hammond's work helped me see this on a much deeper level.

that what they are currently doing is not as effective as what they *could* be doing.

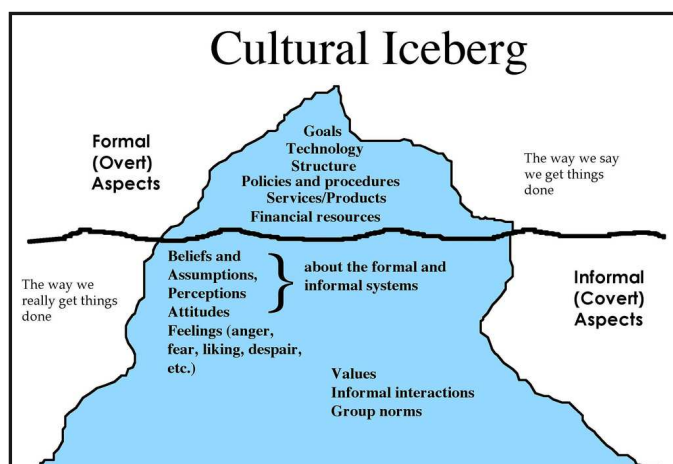
One of my favorite quotes comes from Murray Bookchin, an American social theorist, author, orator, historian, and political philosopher, "The assumption that what currently exists must necessarily exist is the acid that corrodes all visionary thinking."

Humans tend to do what is known, what is easy, what is there. If it's *working*, why fix it, right? These are basic functions of human behavior. *When it is assumed the way things are is the way they have to be, it stops innovative thinking and paves the way for mediocrity and stagnancy.* Something we obviously don't want. I think that Zaretta Hammond's book is a tool that could be used to help stop the stagnancy of thought and allow people to see another way to think about things. I know that it did that for me. I don't know Zaretta, but I would be willing to guess she would agree with that quote.

I will use myself as an example. For a long time, I was stagnant in my thinking and I probably made some pretty poor decisions based on a warped worldview. This is why I want to talk about Hammond's Culture Tree Concept.

A few years ago, I started teaching an introductory undergraduate course about special education and educational systems in the US, and part of the course was centered around cultural competency in education. It was something I had never

taught before, and I was unsure where to start and what to say to my class of



The Cultural Iceberg, created by Stanley N. Herman, TRW Systems Group, 1970

Progress happens when people are shown another way. And not only shown, they need to *buy in* to the fact

¹ www.independentwoof.com

² <https://crtandthebrain.com/>

The Culture Tree

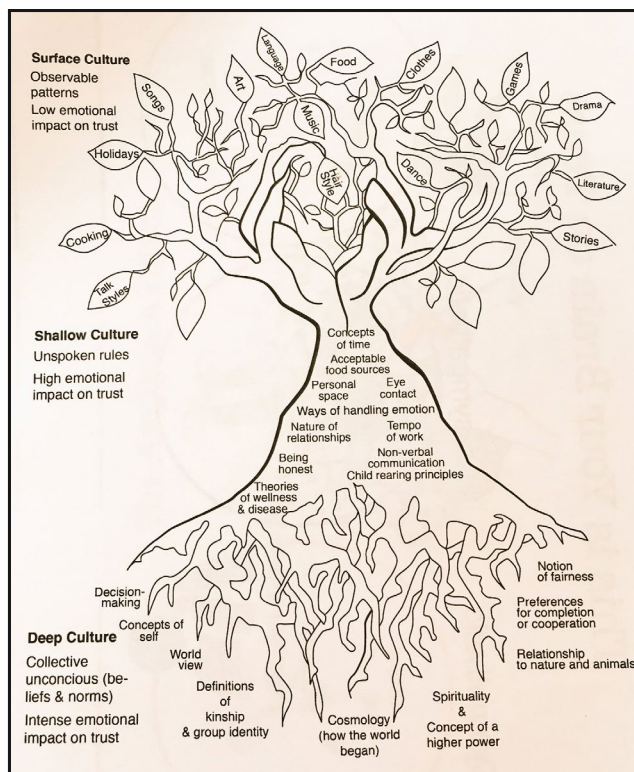
Continued from page 146

young college students who had the desire to become teachers. I wanted to step outside of the assigned textbook, at least supplement it with *something*. There are many ways to look at culture, and it has shifted and changed over the decades. The most common model that I had encountered before I discovered Hammond's book was the iceberg (see image). This was where I started, and what I focused on the first few semesters I taught the course.

It's an okay model, and it was a heck of a lot better than the old and outdated "melting pot" assimilation literature that pervaded my searches. I did an activity with my class where we all drew our own icebergs and shared them with each other, and it was okay. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't all that earth-shattering. The iceberg doesn't really highlight the nuances between cultures, and it certainly didn't really allow us to highlight that many commonalities that were actually meaningful. Then last year, I discovered Hammond's work, and found the culture tree.

Rather than use the metaphor of an iceberg, I like to compare culture to a tree. A tree is part of a bigger ecosystem that shapes and impacts its growth and development. Shallow culture is represented in the trunk and branches of the tree while we can think of surface culture as the observable fruit that the tree bears. Surface and shallow culture are not static; they change and shift over time as social groups move around and ethnic groups intermarry, resulting in a cultural mosaic just as branches and fruit on a tree change in response to the seasons

and its environment. Deep culture is like the root system of a tree. It is what grounds the individual and nourishes his mental health. It is the bedrock of self-concept, group identity, approaches to problem solving, and decision making. (Hammond, 2014, p. 24).



The Culture Tree: Levels of Culture, by Zaretta L. Hammond, 2014

This was a new way to think! And it made sense to me. I'm a nature girl, and my beliefs about spirituality are all intertwined and connected with correspondences to nature. The rest of the text was also a great read; it has a plethora of resources that are quite useful in every aspect of teaching and learning. But the culture tree hooked me. I wanted to use it immediately, somehow.

The first time I did the activity with my class, I put it up on the projector and gave them each a blank one. I instructed them to fill it out. They followed my directions, and each tried filling it out, and then I asked them to share their trees. I wish I could say that it was demonstrably better than the iceberg activity that first time. But

it wasn't. It was still a surface level conversation, and I couldn't put my finger on it, but something was missing. It felt like we were just going through the motions to fill in blanks that weren't connecting.

The next time I taught the class, I did it a different way. Rather than just asking *them* to fill it out, I spent a good chunk of time creating my own extended and detailed culture tree presentation. I wanted to model for them what it might look like to examine your own culture through this conceptual model. This was one of the hardest things I have ever done as a teacher: I exposed parts of myself that previously I *never* would have told my students. I shared with them each aspect of the tree as I saw myself in it. I always have been very guarded with my students, not sharing personal things and keeping a wide gap between what they knew about me and who I was inside. I have always done this, even in personal relationships, from since I was a very small

child; there are a million psychological reasons for doing so.

I made a tree and then I went into the classroom on that day and yanked off the Band-Aid. I showed them my tree and shared my culture with them. I was nervous, terrified—if I am being completely honest—and I am sure that my voice was mechanical as I went through the slides and told them all sorts of personal details about myself and who I was. It was hard for me even to look at them, because I was so out of my comfort zone and I knew if I didn't just keep going, I would stop. And then, after I shared with them my culture tree, I asked them to create their own. And they did. Each of

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The Culture Tree

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them, with the packet I had created to scaffold their thinking, filled in details about their own culture and background. The difference was, I told them that we didn't need to share them, and that whatever they wrote on their packet was only between the two of us. I think this, plus the fact that I had shared first, was a catalyst the activity needed to become meaningful.

They turned in their packets, and I took them home with me. As I read through their responses, I used a colored marker to circle and star things that were the same as me. I wanted to highlight commonalities, to see for myself (and for them) what was the same about us. My class was extremely diverse, and 80% of them did not look like me or come from where I came from. The exercise for me as a teacher was eye-opening. I noticed two major things that are worth saying here. Overall, there were more things that were similar between myself and each of my individual students than things that were different, and the things that were similar usually came from either deep or shallow culture, which are the things that have a higher emotional impact on trust. Very few similarities happened in the surface culture portion of the tree.

I realized in that moment, that even though the majority of my students looked totally different than me, came from a completely different type of culture than I had come from, and at a glance one would assume there's no commonality—we actually weren't that different when it came down to the trunk and the roots of the tree. I think as humans, we do this a lot. We look at surface culture, things like the color of our skin and the color of our hair, or the way that we talk, the way that we dress, where we live—and we make assumptions. We do it without

even knowing it (the technical term for it is implicit bias), and that changes the way we view the world and the way we view each other.

Fast-forward to the next week and I passed back the culture trees. Instead of asking them to share out the deep details in front of their peers, I gave them the option to share something that they had in common with me (something I had starred or circled on their packet). That got the conversation going, and then I gave them time at their table groups to share with each other and find at least two or three commonalities within their small group.

There were more things that were similar between myself and each of my individual students than things that were different.


I'll tell you what: after we did this activity, I saw a noticeable change in my class. Students who had never shared a single thing or participated in any discussions up to that point began to seem more comfortable in class. I always have my class do a five-minute free write at the end, just reflecting on the day's activities, and I got an overwhelming response of positivity that day. I'll never forget one of those comments, it sticks in my mind to this day: "When I started this class, I'll admit I didn't think I was going to learn much. I didn't think I had anything in common with you. But after seeing your tree and hearing about you, I now realize that we are more similar than we are different." Doesn't that just say it all?

I tell this story about the culture tree because it's one of the many things I've encountered through my studies that has fundamentally changed the way I think about myself, the way I think about other people, and the way I think about cultural divides in society today.

In a society with so many different

cultures, it's easy to get lost in the differences and forget the commonalities. The tree helped me to push past that, and it wasn't easy to share it with strangers. Anytime you share something deep about yourself, you are taking a risk. But what's life without a little risk? The payoff could be well worth it. I will leave you with this quote from a recent lecture I gave:

The tension between our separateness and our togetherness—our distinctiveness and our oneness—obviously can set the stage for disordered emotions and behaviors, as well as conflicts among groups on nearly every issue (Kauffman & Landrum, 2018, p. 98).

We are all enmeshed in a system that focuses on differences and deficits—it's no surprise that conflict abounds. We can reduce tension and create community by finding commonalities. Bridge the gap between two people that on the surface, seem incredibly different, but at the trunk and the roots, you'd be surprised at how similar we all really are. 



Emily Woofenden is working on her PhD in Educational Psychology and Methodology with a focus on Special Education. She is a mentor for preservice elementary school teachers and

an adjunct instructor for the University at Albany in New York. She serves on the Board of Directors for the FNCA and is a lifelong Swedenborgian. She currently resides in the rural mountains of upstate New York with Sir Edgar the Cat.

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Virtual Offerings from the Swedenborg Chapel

in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Seven Minutes for the Spirit

*Zoom Morning Prayer,
Monday–Friday at 8:00 AM EST*

It is looking to be a very long winter, friends—as parents and pastors, Rev. Shada Sullivan and I (Rev. Sage Cole) have been musing about what little bit more we could do to sustain ourselves and our communities over these upcoming months of continued isolation and uncertainty. What’s been born from these musings is daily Zoom Morning Prayer and we hope you may choose to join us in this practice for your own spiritual grounding, too.

This service will truly be only seven minutes long. It will be a liturgical service of prayer drawn primarily from our Swedenborgian Book of Worship. You will be able to see into one another’s eyes as we worship but there won’t be a time for chatting or fellowship. This is intentional to make this service as accessible as possible to very busy people, to newcomers, and to those up-tight about punctuality—like me.

These Zoom services will begin on Monday, November 2, 2020 at 8:00 AM EST. They will be held Monday–Friday indefinitely, with a break on the weekend to attend Virtual Sunday Worship with your own communities.

We will get through this, friends—it will be so good to start our days together in prayer. If you’d like to receive the Zoom link and a calendar invite to this service email me at revsagecole@gmail.com.

Virtual Taizé Service of Prayer

Every Tuesday at 7:30 PM EST

A new offering is already underway from Swedenborg Chapel.

We’ve retooled our Virtual Taizé Service of Prayer to meet these difficult times of pandemic brain, including being unable to keep appointments in mind and Zoom fatigue. (See image below of the former in-person Tuesday Taizé Services of Prayer.)

We are now offering our Taizé Service of Prayer *every* Tuesday, not just once a month, (who can keep track?) at 7:30 PM EST over Zoom. Services will run about twenty minutes.

We continue to have the leadership of our cantor Stephanie Hollenberg, and musician Luke Concannon. Join us, for what we are calling a weekly soul refresh!

Request the Zoom link on the front of our webpage swedenborgchapel.org.

Hope to see you there. ☩



Global Pandemic Stone

The Swedenborg Chapel recently hosted the inaugural blessing of a Global Pandemic Stone, commissioned by The Peace Abbey Foundation (www.peaceabbey.org) to honor those who have died of COVID-19 around the world. This stone will be traveling the country and globe, pulled by volunteers on foot, as a “touchstone to humanity,” honoring the beauty and worth of each individual who has died. Find out more at the Peace Abbey’s website, and consider inviting the Stone to visit your community!



Spiritual World

Continued from page 141

experienced that peace and comfort from them.

Needless to say, there are many more examples of the way those in heaven connect with us on earth. Most of the messages seem to provide comfort, but there are some which actually change people's lives. While unable to find the source of the following two stories I had read, I will narrate them anyway:

I have noticed there is definitely a special sphere around people who are dying, or have died, and at these times it feels as though I could reach up and touch the spiritual world.

A young woman had just had a baby. One night an angel came to her, looked at her and remarked she was not the one. The woman was sad, as this man appeared to be total love and she had had a sad and difficult childbirth. A week later, her baby died, and she was relieved to know he would be well loved and cared for.

A man's whole family were killed in a tragic car accident. Several times he tried to kill himself as he was so devastated by the loss. In the last attempt he made, throwing himself in front of a truck but being rescued by the driver, he saw his whole family in front of him. They did not say anything, but just looked at him with love. This completely changed his life: he decided to devote his life to telling others the good news about the spiritual world.

Sometimes people experience the loved ones with them right as they are dying. This was written by a bereavement counselor for an ALS patient (Lou Gehrig's disease). "I was at home when the nurse from hospice called to tell me Howard was actively dying—a

process that can go on for hours. His wife was having a really difficult time and wanted me to come over and be there with her.... While in my walk-in closet I experienced Howard's presence with me all of a sudden...there was a lightness of being—a joy and a sense of freedom. He was there for just a short time, and it seemed he was saying goodbye in my heart and thanking me for being there for him." That visitation occurred at the exact time he died.¹⁵

Anyone who thinks things through carefully can see that it is not the body that thinks, because the body is material. Rather, it is the soul, because the soul is spiritual. The human soul, whose immortality has been the topic of many authors, is our spirit; it is in fact immortal in all respects, and it is also what does the thinking in our bodies.¹⁶

...as soon as we arrive in the other life, we are all recognized by our friends and relatives and by people we have known in one way or another. Further we talk with each other and continue to see each other in keeping with our friendship in the world. I have heard many who had just come from the world overjoyed to see their friends again, and their friends overjoyed they'd arrived.¹⁷

Love will go with us on our journey home. Knowing that all is on loan enables us not to fight too much when we are asked to let go, because we realize that those we cherish, while a wonderful blessing to us, cannot be kept from going home. The focus is on life and love, not on death and disaster, because the Christian pilgrim knows that the one thing that does last forever is love...our faith assures us that all those we hold dearly in our hearts will meet us on the other side and together we will celebrate

the wonder of this treasure. It is joy, not sorrow, that Christian pilgrims carry in their hearts, because they know they are on their way to their home in this God who is love.¹⁸

As a trained interfaith minister, I would like to add that many faith traditions, not just Christianity, believe in a spiritual world also. And it is no surprise to me that the work *Heaven and Hell* is one of the most well-read books of Swedenborg's writings. ☸

Rev. Julie Conaron is an interfaith and Swedenborgian minister, after more than twenty years as a microbiologist. Now officially "retired," she has served as a hospice chaplain for eight and a half years, an occasional minister for five years, and a volunteer in a local hospital in Pastoral Care and Hospice for two and a half years. She now provides short, virtual services for two facilities and others.

¹⁸ *Praying our Goodbyes*, Joy Rupp, Ave Maria Press, 1988, p. 52

Save the NEW Date! Gathering Leaves 2021

Gathering Leaves, the international retreat for all Swedenborgian/New Church women, has been rescheduled for August 27 – 30, 2021 at the [Purley Chase Centre](#) in England. All the generous donations from 2020 to cover Purley Chase costs are still in place. If you had already booked your space, please let Purley Chase know if you want your booking transferred to 2021. Information about new bookings will be available at a later date. Please contact Alison Southcombe for more information: alison.southcombe@purleychasecentre.org.uk



¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 26–27

¹⁶ *Heaven and Hell*, §432

¹⁷ *Ibid*, §494,

What's Happening



Our Daily Bread at [SpiritualQuesters.org](https://spiritualquesters.org) is your resource for recent sermons, meditations, reflections, lessons, interviews, and original content from within and beyond the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

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Visit the website for details: swedenborg.org/the-messenger/

Name That Church!

We've recently acquired several photos of churches likely dating back to around 1910. We need your help identifying them. Do you recognize this one? Send an email to Messenger@Swedenborg.org and let us know!



*Love is the essence that not only
forms all things but also bonds
and unites them to each other.*

Emanuel Swedenborg

Calligraphy Quotes by Myrrh Brooks
@myrrhbrooks on Instagram

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When asked what type of community they wanted to live in, the couple said, "I love the farm life, but I think I need to move somewhere a little more

”

Jumble by Jason Greenwood
Answers will be printed in the next issue.

Answers to the October Jumble:

Feline, Defied, Flight, Toybox

Where does the cat most frequently scratch its owner? "Off the Left Eye"

**Do you write poetry,
create puzzles or games,
or have pieces of art you would like to share?
We'd love to see them! Send it along to
Messenger@Swedenborg.org.**

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



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.

The Gray Fund is Accepting New Grant Proposals

The trustees of the Wesley N. Gray fund announce that they are accepting funding requests on a rolling basis from now through the calendar year 2021. Any Convention-recognized organization can request financial aid from the Gray Fund. Grants do not exceed \$3,000 and are limited to single-year requests. A request should be mailed or emailed to the secretary of the Gray Fund, accompanied by a detailed description and a budget indicating a breakdown of expenses and any other grants or anticipated income for the proposed programs. We request this background information because proper stewardship of a will trust such as the Gray legacy should not be used by organizations as a "reserve fund" to be tapped in order to protect current assets.

The request for funds must come from a General Convention recognized

organization, and the funds will be sent to the organization, not to an individual. However, the funds can support the work of an individual on behalf of the organization. The fund does not support the remuneration of staff working for the organization, but can be used for staff expenses related to the programming or mission of the organization. The fund does not support the repair and maintenance of facilities.

The Gray Fund instructs the trustees to spend the net income for "such church and missionary uses preferably in Massachusetts, then in the United States of America, Canada, and the whole world as it seems to them most deserving and most useful towards the growth of the New Jerusalem Church" and to render a report of the fund each year to the General Convention for printing in its journal. ☩

Trustees:

Rebecca K. Esterson, Secretary
Herb Ziegler, Treasurer
Nancy Little, Trustee

Please submit all requests for grants to the secretary:

1798 Scenic Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94709
Email: resterson@gtu.edu