



1,000 Paper Origami Cranes and the Wish for Peace

BY LAURA AYER

In Fryeburg, Maine, it was almost serendipitous that two simultaneous Peace Crane Projects were in the works during April and May to create an astounding 1,000 paper origami cranes. The project's roots are based on the ancient Japanese origami art form, where delicate and colorful kami paper is folded into ornate objects. And, according to ancient legend, "anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish by the gods." In this particular case, peace for Ukraine.

"The idea of a Peace Crane Project came as a recommendation from a friend's dad, says Jiwon Choi, a Fryeburg Academy sophomore. "I thought it would be a meaningful project [for our origami club] if we all expressed ourselves through art in our hope for peace in Ukraine and all people around the world. When I heard Dawn Crowe was leading another similar project from the Fryeburg New Church, it motivated us to reach out to join our efforts."

Approximately forty Academy students, faculty, and staff participated in the project through paper donations or assisted in the cranes' delicate folding

to create a stunning 500 paper crane art installation in the Academy's Leura Hill Eastman Performing Arts Center.

"For us at the Fryeburg New Church, the project was more of an emotional group effort rather than a physical one," says church member Dawn Crowe. "I was sitting in church one day and trying to think of a creative way to help with the events unfolding in Ukraine, and my thoughts

went to origami cranes," continues Crowe. "It was a fortunate stroke of luck that Jiwon and the origami club had the same idea and that [Fryeburg Academy faculty member] Greg Huang-Dale connected us. I love the idea of this being

a sister project as it feels broader in scope to have 500 cranes in each location."

And while the two Peace Crane Projects are housed in different locations, both share the same symbolic expression of peace. "I

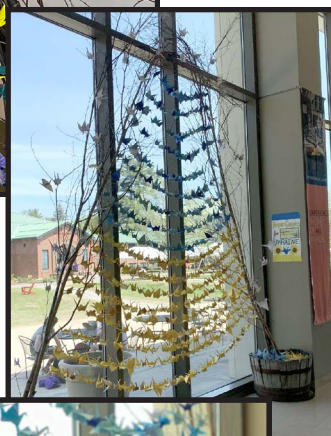
love the idea of a visual representation of peace," concludes Crowe. "It seems that each crane can represent the thoughts and prayers in all of our hearts when tragedy and injustice strike. Ori-

gami itself can be an act of mindfulness, almost like a mantra or prayer if you allow it to be. ☸

Laura Ayer is the director of communications at the [Fryeburg Academy](#) in Fryeburg, Maine.



Top Left: Fryeburg New Church's Peace Crane Project led by church member Dawn Crowe. **Right:** The Peace Crane Project installed at the Leura Hill Eastman Performing Arts Center led by members of the Academy's origami club, Jiwon Choi and Isable Macht. **Lower:** Dawn Crowe, Jiwon Choi and Isabel Macht.



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Editor's Corner



A Celebration of Love

This summer was exceptionally busy. One thing after the other, and it started off feeling shorter than usual—

our kids got out of school on June 27 and went back on August 30. That just doesn't feel like a long break to begin with. But sometimes time seems to move faster when you are looking forward to things that you have been waiting for and have been excited for. September held two of those events for me.

This month I got to celebrate marriages of important people to me twice. One for a friend I have had my entire life, and another has been my friend my entire adult life. Both of these amazing humans have supported me as much as I have them (and they don't even know each other!) and we have been waiting years for these celebrations—and even extra time with the recent covid concerns.

The first celebration was held at the



Fryeburg New Church Assembly for my dear friend Emily. (Pictured above) Not only did we get to celebrate her marriage to her soul mate Chris at the Fryeburg Church, but we also got to celebrate it at one of the most special places on the planet—the FNCA. We were able to share the beauty and magic of the FNCA with people who may not have never come otherwise. The energy of the Saco River and the natural love that vibrates from the whole property is the perfect backdrop for a special event... even if you have to pack for three seasons in one weekend!

The second celebration was held in Provincetown, Massachusetts where my friend Ken, and his now husband Chris, transformed a hotel parking lot into a glamorous venue full of anchors and disco balls for their guests to celebrate after a beautiful beach ceremony. (Pictured right) Provincetown itself is an unbelievable experience. The entire town is full of joy, beauty, and love. In a similar way to the FNCA, you cross the border into town, and you can just feel the power of the positive energy. It is more than just the refreshing Cape Cod ocean air—the town is built on being able to be yourself and loving others for who they are. What better place to celebrate marriage?

Being able to honor love in two different, but equally special locations, with people I deeply care about, and the partners they love, was the perfect way to wrap up a fast-paced summer. Congratulations to both Emily and Chris, and Ken and Chris for finding

the Messenger

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their soul mates and celebrating love in two of the most special places on earth.

—Beki Greenwood
Messenger@Swedenborg.org

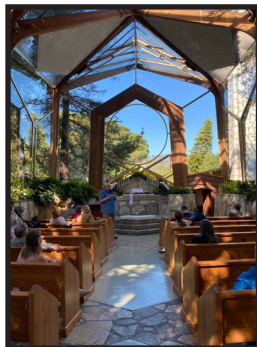
Message from the President

The First Church of Transparent Glass and an Enduring Ministry of Architecture

The Year of Regeneration: 2022–23

As [Wayfarers Chapel](#) has been successfully clearing challenging hurdles for the process of gaining National Historical Landmark status, a late-stage but still pending decision for a very difficult designation to achieve, a steady crescendo of praise for the stunning Swedenborgian glass church in Palos Verdes, California can be seen in numerous articles. Local historic landmarking and even state historical landmarking are much easier to acquire, but for national historic landmarking you must make the case that the site has national significance. Recently, [ABC Channel 7, Los Angeles](#), featured the Chapel in a segment celebrating its nomination as a National Historic Landmark, and *The Daily Breeze* in [this article](#) features the ongoing progress of the landmarking journey. The famed annual travel guide Fodor's recently published a specialty article on [the sixteen most unusual churches in North America](#), and not only did Wayfarers make this short list, but the San Francisco church did as well. Meanwhile, *The Discoverer* features [the “coolest” building in all fifty states](#) and touts Wayfarers Chapel as its choice in California.

Built between 1949 and 1951 on a seaside cliff in Palos Verdes, Wayfarers' national significance lies partly in its claim as the first glass church in the world. Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr. (or Lloyd Wright to distinguish him from his renowned father) had a vision when contemplating something radical to capture the spiritual vision the small Swedenborgian group had in mind for a contemplative space on the



spectacular setting of Portuguese Bend overlooking the ocean. But his mind turned to trees more than the ocean, and he decided to have the chapel face east away from the ocean. Swedenborg has a story of a people who worshipped in groves as a natural sacred cathedral, and it came to Wright to use glass with a plan for landscaping of trees to surround the contemplating wayfarer, and in this way recreate that same experience Swedenborg once reported. The ocean with its sense of boundless space would be the surrounding environment for this contemplative sanctuary of trees.

Many people know about the magnificent glass churches in Arkansas designed by E. Fay Jones, a professor of architecture at the University of Arkansas, but few know that Wayfarers was his inspiration. A former apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright, Sr. and admirer of what the son had done with Wayfarers, Jones decided in the late 1970s to help a client achieve “a Wayfarers Chapel in the Ozarks” outside of Eureka Springs, a resort town. Thorncrown Chapel became a reality in 1980, and now today hundreds of sacred spaces use transparent glass (in contrast to non-transparent stained glass) to create an inner-and-outer sense of location. But it all started with Wayfarers Chapel.

Seventy years later, the Chapel is as stunning as ever, but it also needs some restoration work to secure its future. The board of trustees are working hard on this, and our readers will be hearing more about this in the upcoming year.

—Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

What is Progress?

Sermon from July 3, 2022

BY GORDON MEYER

This year we celebrated the 246th birthday of this great nation. I am proud to be an American and, I'm forced to admit, there are times when I'm ashamed to be an American. But I am always very grateful to the Lord to have been born in the United States of America.

We have so much to be thankful for. Humanity on this planet has made great developmental leaps in the past few decades that have improved our standard of living immensely. But until recent events have begun to awaken us, most of us had become complacent, concerned with having things and experiencing pleasures. We've stopped teaching civics, how our government works, in our schools, and our lack of interest in what the government is or isn't doing has become a great concern to some of us. An ignorant population cannot maintain a democracy.

Most Americans probably agree that we have made tremendous progress in solving our problems but will also agree that there are more problems to solve. Some of them, like global warming, stem from our misguided solutions to other problems.

As we celebrate our nation's birth and our democracy, I want to ask the question, "What is real progress?"

General Electric Corporation was number five on the list of Fortune 500 companies in the United States in the year 2000 and had ads all over the media stating that "at General Electric progress is our most important product." As of 2022, General Electric Corporation has slipped to being the forty-eighth largest of the corporations in the United States—Walmart, Amazon, and Apple are first, second, and third. In 2000 the top companies were

General Motors, Walmart, and Exxon. Waste Management was number 178. Amazon wasn't on the list. Today, Amazon has 1,608,000 employees, over three times as many as the entire population of Wyoming, and more than any of the lowest ten states. As a facilitator of consumerism, the bedrock of American prosperity, Amazon stands out as the entity that embodies modern America's current concept of progress.

General Electric has made astounding progress over the years in all sorts of scientific and technological fields, providing improved medical applications, distribution and protection of power supplies, the defense of our nation, and many more advancements that make our lives easier, more comfortable and safer. And General Electric is only one of hundreds, if not thousands of companies worldwide that are contributing to this technological outburst in humanity's history.

The result is that we in the western world, or at least parts of it, are living as richly as human beings have ever lived as an entire society. But right alongside this wealth, extreme poverty, hunger and disease, the violence of warfare, and the rise of both the temperature of our planet and totalitarian governments are rampant in many parts of our planet and threaten us all. If we believe the advocates of technology and human wisdom, these problems will eventually be overcome by the superior intelligence of human beings.

However, if we look at the reality of the nature of our consumerism, the picture may not be as pretty as we wish it was. Progress may be General Electric's most important product, but perhaps it is time—or past time—to examine what we consider to be progress.

In the very first part of the Bible, the creation stories in Genesis, we are confronted with this question: What is progress and how do we achieve genuine progress in our lives? The story of the Garden of Eden portrays humans living in a paradise, the world as God created it, operating according to God's divine design. That design puts the love of God first, the neighbor, second, the whole world, third, and ourselves, last.

The trees in the garden represent understanding and wisdom. God's warning not to eat from the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden means that we are not to try to understand spiritual truths from our secular knowledge and that includes our sciences. We are to understand religious truths from the Lord, through the Bible, and by the perception of truth that the Lord pours into us as we seek to understand.

It is impossible for us to really understand spiritual things from natural, scientific investigation. Science only provides knowledge of this physical world, which is a part of God's creation, not all of it. At its best, science can only show us where the world fits in God's Divine Design. When we tamper with the physical world without regard for its proper place within the whole of Reality, we invariably miss the mark. We see only the immediate result and discover the true consequences of our actions only after we have acted. Global warming is a good example of this.

William Bruce, in his commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew points out that progression is the great law of life. We are to progress. That is

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What is Progress?

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what life is for. But we have to understand what true progress is. What we can be sure of is that it is not progress as General Electric defines it. Trying to solve all the problems of life by our own science and innovation does not lead to real progress.

The results of that strategy are obvious if we look at them. We are creating a society that consumes the wealth of the earth and creates pollutants at a rate that is utterly unsustainable on a finite planet. Sooner or later either the resources will run out or the pollutants will strangle us.

Yet we are born to *progress*. William Bruce also points out that hell operates on *regression*. Hell, perverts the truth, distorts it. What did the snake say to Eve? He whispered in her ear, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree of the garden?'"

And the woman replies, "We are to eat from the fruit of the tree of the garden. But from the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You may not eat from it, nor are you to touch it, or you will surely die from it.'"

And then that crafty snake, that spokesman for hell, said to her, "You are not going to surely die, because God knows that on the day when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Hell wants us to think we can overcome anything if we put our minds to it, because the goal of hell is to destroy. Hell is the exact opposite of heaven. The goal of our Lord is creation. Hell seeks to destroy what the Lord creates.

Without the Lord we can do nothing. That's exactly what devils want. They want us to do nothing that smacks of real progress. So, our minds are filled with visions of our so-called progress through science

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "you shall love your neighbor as yourself"
(Galatians 5:13).

and technology and our increased production of meaningless stuff, our politics and our media, and all the stuff we have come to believe in above God. And our feelings are full of wanting that stuff and regretting not having everything we think we want. We have put ourselves and the world first.

But we *are* meant to progress. Progression *is* the great law of life. But we are to progress *internally*.

Oh darn. That's not as *exciting*. That's not very glamorous. That's not very profitable. That doesn't make headlines with the latest breakthrough in medical science to prolong our lives *on this physical earth...* and in the process keep us from entering the heavenly world for which we are actually created.

We seek that kind of progress out of fear. We don't believe the Lord when he tells us that he is the way, the truth and the life.

We think we know better. A pound on the ground while we're still around, and forget that pie in the sky by and by. Live life to the fullest. You only go around once. Go for the gusto. Life is short, stay awake for it. I deserve a break today, because I'm worth it. These are the messages of modern progress, progress measured in profits and possessions. Seventy percent of our economy in the United States depends on consumer spending.

But the real outcome isn't more security, or contentment, or enjoyment. The real outcome is "spend more,

enjoy less." There is less satisfaction, because this craving for more and more can never be satisfied.

The Lord called upon his disciples to stay awake and watch with him in the garden in Gethsemane. While the Lord prayed for the strength to save us, the disciples were sleeping. Are we sleeping through one of the most critical times in human history? Is the future of humanity at stake? What can we do about it?

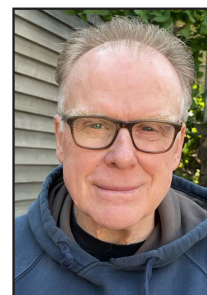
Actually, not much. Not in terms of the physical world. Without God we can do nothing.

But it's not all doom and gloom. I'm not saying we shouldn't work to solve the problems we've created. But we need to change the way we look at things. The future of the earth is in God's hands and the Lord will provide for the earth. This is recognizing the truth of what God tells us. As much as we can, we need to live so as to not contribute to the destruction of the earth, or of ourselves.

However, the reality of this society makes that very difficult. What we can do is to try to live in love to God and our neighbor. We can try to understand things not from an external perspective, but from our internal perspective. What kind of person am I becoming? Am I progressing toward heaven or regressing toward hell?

To the extent that we seriously ask ourselves that question and apply God's answers, we will contribute less to the destruction of the earth and of ourselves and be able to do more good. Progression is the law of life, but we need to remember that real progress is inside of us. 📱

Pastor Gordon Meyer is the Licensed Pastor at the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in Saint Paul, Minnesota.



The Life of Chauncey Giles

Chapter Eleven: New York Pastorate 1870–1874

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

The family spent the summer of 1870 in Poultney, Vermont, in a large house that was a boarding house for Methodist girls in winter. Its grounds were perfect for the croquet set. Dr. Newman was the head of the organization. There were prayers morning and evening, and sometimes Chauncey was asked to preach. After he had given a sermon titled “Salvation by Faith,” Dr. Newman requested to make some remarks. The family fully expected him to negate some of Chauncey’s statements. To their surprise Dr. Newman began by saying that he had always thought of God as “stern and angry at the wicked” but that his views had changed thanks to books he had read and conversations with Chauncey. He added that he would teach the “...the beautiful doctrines he had learned.”

In February 1871, Chauncey was stunned when he received a letter from Mr. Hitchcock requesting his resignation. Mr. Hitchcock had been the

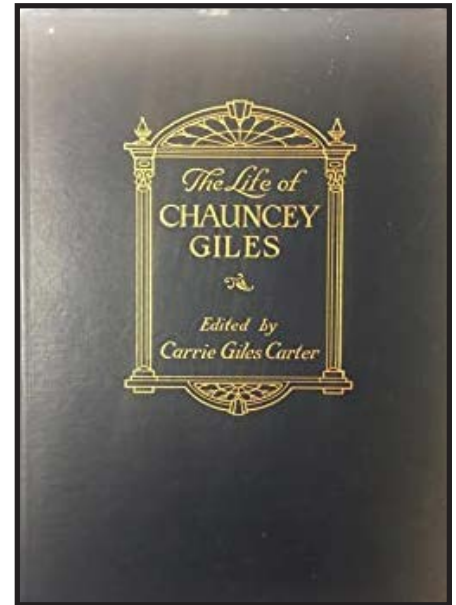
driving force in Chauncey’s coming to New York and had worked closely with him on the Messenger, though they had their differences. Not knowing if the society also wished his removal, Chauncey read the letter at its next meeting, greatly angering Mr. Hitchcock. The society was equally shocked and gave Chauncey great support and approval. Although they voted to increase his salary, actual payments were irregular, and it was necessary to take in boarders.

Chauncey wrote about that time that he was so thankful for his profession, though he wished he could be more useful.

That summer his youngest son, William, was badly burned from a firecracker explosion. Once he was on the way to recovery, Chauncey could reflect on his worries about his children. He said that he realized that many imagined calamities never happened, and that his children were not exclusively his, but were given in trust by the Lord.

In the summer of 1872, Chauncey was invited to preach in churches in the Chicago area by Mr. J.Y. Scammon, who for twenty years was a significant figure in the Convention Church. A prominent lawyer, he pioneered the Illinois railroad system as well as the public schools and was a trustee of Chicago University and of Hahnemann College and Hospital. His idea was to move the Messenger to Chicago with Chauncey as its editor, with only occasional preaching assignments. Intrigued by the idea, Chauncey decided to lay the whole plan before the New York society and to trust in the Lord’s leading.

The society’s board determined that



the Book Room and Messenger were to stay in New York until the middle of December. Beyond this no decision is mentioned, but the family remained in New York for several more years.

On the first of January 1873, Chauncey replied to a letter from the society’s elders stating his acknowledgment that the congregation had not grown as he wished, but that his only aim in life was to spread New Church doctrines and to “...lead men to live according to them....” He wrote that though he felt he wasn’t living up to his expectations he would keep trying.

Eunice writes in a letter in March of 1874, “Your dear father has worked very hard this winter. The more he does the more he seems to have the capacity for doing. I think he so thoroughly believes all he says that he derives real strength from every utterance of it.”

But Chauncey writes “...I am so tired that the whole society seems to

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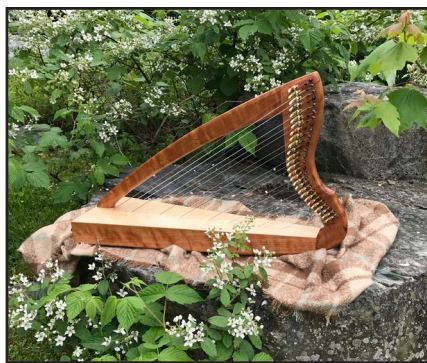
¹ See prior installments in the June 2022 issue, January/February 2022 issue, October 2021 issue, May 2021 issue, March 2021 issue, November 2020 issue and July/August 2020 issue.

The Harp in the Garden of Gethsemane

Reflections of a Harp Thanatologist

BY ROXANNE GRACE SPERRY

Under the same stars that David played his harp to soothe Saul, I play my harp to soothe the dying. As Jesus anticipated his death in the garden of Gethsemane, I wait with the patients playing my harp as they anticipate their own death in the garden at Hospice. I am a harp therapist, with a specialization in music thanatology. Thanatology is defined as the description or study of the phenomena of death and of psychological and spiritual mechanisms for coping with them. The outward expressions of Jesus' suffering began in the Garden of Gethsemane. And like my patients in the garden at Hospice, Jesus knew death would soon arrive. Waiting for death is a struggle. Jesus was distressed and filled with agitation before his death as written in Mark 14: 35 – 36.



And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want."

On a Saturday, as I walked into Hospice, I was immediately met with a request to play for a patient who was described as highly agitated and in a great deal of pain. We left the garden and went to her room where she lay down on her bed. I sat with this patient playing unfamiliar music on

the harp. Early in the visit she was asking me questions about death and how she will die—questions for which I had no answers, but the harp began to sing. There are organized patterns of sound that can be called music that came from the harp. It was possible to be in the Garden of Gethsemane with my patient and disturb, disrupt, overwhelm, and overcome her repetitive patterns of agitation that Saturday. She finally fell into sleep after speaking about the beauty of the harp and the beautiful sound of the harp.

However subtle beauty may appear, the radical nature of beauty is compelling. It is immense with power. Beauty is of the same nature as Christ. It is strong even when subtle, stunning in the complexity of its simplicity. It

can disturb and disrupt, it can break through, it can overcome, and it can replace what is painful and distressing at its own sacrifice. The notes born off the harp live briefly in the air, and as they die, they ascend into the imagination of the listener where beauty is eternal, where Christ is eternal.

Jesus left the Garden of Gethsemane and found Paradise. I do not know if the sound and sculptural appearance of the harp delivered my patient from distress and into paradise. That is a mystery with which as a chaplain I am content to live. This much I know is true: search for beauty, and you will find Christ for they are of the same radical nature. ☸

Chauncey Giles

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hang like a dead weight upon me. Sometimes the burden is too great." He continues, "I do feel, in some respects, an increase of insight and power, and if I do not break down I believe I shall yet do something better than anything I have done."

The chapter ends with a letter Chauncey writes in July of 1874 to a mother whose son has died. Because it gave her comfort, she had saved it for many years, then sent it to Carrie. He said that although he always felt helpless "...as when trying to comfort those who mourn" that there is only one Comforter who knows "how to apply the healing balm." He reminds her of the teaching that the Lord does not allow any trouble unless it prevents some greater evil. And that her son would be greeted in the other life by wise teachers who would help him achieve the goals best suited to him. He admits that it is very hard "to see the bright side of every storm of sorrow" and continues, "Go to Him, through his Word. He will meet you there and...will comfort and sustain you." ☸



Roxanne Sperry is a member of the Church of the New Jerusalem in Bath, Maine. Her passion is identifying unexpected ministries in unexpected places. These ministries

include, "The Roadside Chaplain" rescuing people and finding lost souls on the Highways and Byways of North America, "Disenfranchised Grief in the Veterinary Clinic, at Home and in the Wild," and "Harp Thanatology, Beauty as the Healing Balm for the Dying." She adores the creative process and delights in scientific inquiry which excites her imagination when she ponders Swedenborg.

The Joy of Dying

Sermon from February 29, 2004

BY GEORGE F. DOLE

For most of the people who have experienced it and have told us what it was like for them, death has been one of the high points of their life. They have found themselves bathed in light and peace, understood and loved as never before. They have gained a vision of what life is all about, a vision that has given new meaning to their lives. I'm not sure that they have been asked explicitly to recommend the event, but I suspect that if they were they would say that everyone ought to die at least once. There's nothing else quite like it, and very little that is even remotely like it.

And there we have both the promise and the problem. The promise is, of course, that everyone *will* die at least once; and the problem is that we have very little in our own life experience that tells us what it will be like. For a great many people, death is nothing but a blank screen on which they project their hopes and their fears; and at least in our own culture, it seems as though the fears are often stronger than the hopes. It is only recently that we have made some slight start at resisting the compulsion to prolong physical life as long as possible, sometimes far beyond the point where it has any perceptible meaning.

To the strict materialist, this does not make sense. If nothing but matter exists, then when we die we simply cease to exist as conscious individuals. To the strict materialist, though, the only things that stop are such incidental processes as hope, love, excitement, ambition, pleasure, sorrow, grief, envy, and the like, none of which is actually material. To delay death is simply to prolong these illusions; and the actual state of people on life support

systems has little to recommend it. Death would be primarily the decisive end of pain and helplessness. Actually, even for someone in perfect health, there would seem to be nothing to *fear*. We would have no regrets, no sense of loss, no sense of anything. Why should we be afraid of nothing?

I suspect that the answer is our own sense of self-importance, of personal significance, and this is quite understandable. After all, the whole process of growing up is a process of moving from dependence on parents and teachers to independence. We do take pride in our ability to stand on our own two feet, and we become anxious when we feel that things are getting out of control. If death is the absolute end, it is the ultimate denial of meaning, the incontrovertible statement that we do not matter anymore. It may seem cold comfort indeed to be reminded that we won't know that we don't matter, because knowing that we matter is even more important to us than mattering itself.

It makes more sense to fear death if we believe that we will continue to exist and that we will face a settling of accounts that may result in our condemnation to hell. If this is the case, then it is obviously vital that we know the rules and abide by them. Not many people, I suspect, have the self-confidence to put absolute trust in their own reading of these rules. There is an urgent need for confirmation, for a support group, which is why churches that offer absolute assurance of salvation have such a strong appeal.

Perhaps the most obvious difficulty with following this route is simply the abundance of different churches offering this kind of absolute assurance on

different terms, usually implying and sometimes insisting that other churches are in error and that only their own loyal members will be saved. There are times when this is hard to swallow, but the very fragility of this kind of belief can keep people coming back for reassurance.

Strange as it may seem, these two concepts of death, which we might label the materialist and the fundamentalist, have one very significant feature in common. They both assume that death will mark a fundamental change. To put it in accounting terms, the materialist says that all accounts will be canceled, while the fundamentalist says that all debts will become due and payable. For the materialist, then, this life becomes totally irrelevant, while for the fundamentalist, all the people who did not know the rules will be in for a huge and undoubtedly terrible surprise.

This is a good place to start looking at what is different about the view of death offered by our own theology. It insists that we are spiritual beings here and now, subject inwardly to exactly the same rules that will apply outwardly after death. If we have been honest with ourselves, then, if we have searched our hearts with sincerity, there will be no terrible surprises after death. We are much more likely to be pleasantly surprised, because the honesty itself is more important than the flaws it may disclose.

By way of illustration, I am currently in the process of revising the first draft of my New Century Edition translation of *Marriage Love* in the light of comments made by a consultant. This means that all I look at

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The Joy of Dying

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are her suggestions for improvement, going from one flaw straight to the next. Our self-examination can be very much like that and can leave us with a similar feeling that we are made up of nothing but flaws. If that were actually the case, though, we would see all these flaws as virtues. As it is, we are not just the flawed person: we are also, and more deeply, the person who sees the flaws and deplores them.

In that sense, the only real change after death is going to be that we will be able to see clearly what we can only sense dimly now. This is exactly what Paul discovered and said so explicitly to the Corinthians: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I will be known” (I Corinthians 13:12).

In reading this, it is important not to trivialize that first statement. Our inner sight may be dim now, but we can see. The dimness has its providential use, enabling us to “not see” if we do not want to and to see enough to navigate by if we try. It reminds us that we are not omniscient, that there is always more for us to learn. It reminds us that we are capable of self-deception. “Or in the night, imagining some fear, how easy is a bush supposed a bear!” (Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*). If we move beyond our fear, though, there is enough light for us to see that it really is only a bush after all.

We would do well, then, to think of ourselves as living in a kind of twilight, gradually learning by experience to see at least the general outlines of spiritual realities. We would do well to recognize the dimness of our sight and to hold our opinions with a generous measure of humility. We would do well, too, to recognize that the dimness is not really a characteristic of our sight but a characteristic of the dim light in

which we live.

Philosophical caution prevents careful thinkers from claiming that near-death experiences “prove” our immortality. From time to time, we run across what seem to be rather desperate attempts to explain these experiences in strictly materialistic terms, but for me at least, they founder on one solid fact. Many of these individuals describe having seen and heard the efforts to resuscitate them, and their descriptions are consistently accurate. Not only have their eyes been closed, they have witnessed the scene from a point outside their bodies. This says quite clearly that perception, memory, and a sense of personal identity can occur apart from the physical body; and surely this deals a severe blow to strict materialism.

For those who believe in the reality of the spirit, though, this is really rather unremarkable. The profound, life-changing dimension of the experience is its quality. It is the experience of being loved and understood, the experience of knowing fully even as we are known, and of finding not condemnation but acceptance and love in that knowledge. Studies of the after-effects of near-death experiences regularly show people finding new meaning in life here and now. Beautiful as the experience was, they have not become “other-worldly.” Life both here and hereafter, as one said, is all about loving and learning. Whether before or after death, it is about being present and engaged with each other.

There is a sadness about death, undeniably—the sadness of the bereaved. Our clinging to a sense of self-importance may lead us to fear death, but a recognition that we are important to each other is of a different quality altogether, as different as sadness is from fear. The sadness, though, cannot be the end of the story. We have only to imagine what our own lives would be like if our parents and grandparents

and great-grandparents had not died to see that death is absolutely necessary, that from a societal standpoint, there are invaluable death benefits. There is a wise kind of beauty in the way we become less useful as we age, less necessary on this earthly level. Our regret might well be tinged with relief. Aging reminds us that we are not indispensable. The world will somehow get along without us.

We can look forward to death, then, without fear. More than that, as we gradually realize that this world is a kind of twilight, we can begin to realize also that this is not just the twilight that comes at the close of the day. It is also the twilight before dawn. We may bear in mind the refrain from the creation story—“and the evening and the morning were the first day,” and put that together with the statement at the close of Scripture concerning the Holy City that “there shall be no night there” (Revelation 21:25). Evening is simply the beginning of the dawn.


The more deeply we are engaged with each other here and now, the more we have to look forward to hereafter. We have the promise that we will emerge from twilight into full daylight. Our opening hymn spoke of “peace beyond all telling” and exclaimed “What Joy!” Our closing hymn puts it more poetically:

So shall it be at last, in that bright morning

When the soul waketh, and life’s shadows flee:

Oh, in that hour, fairer than daylight dawning,

Shall rise the glorious thought, I am with Thee.

Or in the words of Isaiah, “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.” 

Retreats and Virtual Education

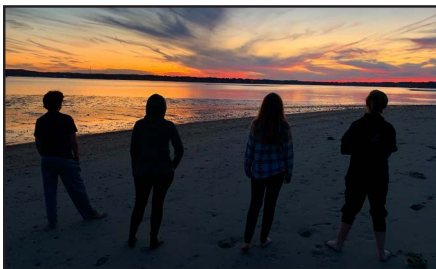
Nature of Correspondence

*SCYL Teen Retreat in
Duxbury, Massachusetts
October 7th – 10th*

The Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) is thrilled to announce an upcoming retreat: “The Nature of Correspondence.” The retreat will run Friday, October 7 at 7:00 PM to Monday, October 10 at 10:00 AM, at the Cedar Hill Retreat Center, 346 Standish Street, Duxbury, Massachusetts. All teenagers ages 12 through 19 are invited. Cost is \$50 (scholarships are available). You must be vaccinated and have received at least one booster for Covid-19 in order to attend.

We love to escape and dwell among forests, mountains, streams, lakes, and oceans. But did you know that all of the beauty of nature has a deeper inner meaning for us? At this retreat we will be exploring and discussing the concept of correspondences and representations found in nature as illuminated by the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. The gorgeous grounds, trails, and beaches of Cedar Hill will be our experiential setting and backdrop as we engage in this verdant topic. Of course, there will be plenty of time for recreation, relaxing, and hanging out with friends.

For more information or to register, please contact Youth Director, Kurt Fekete, kfekete@hotmail.com or 802.345.0169. See you there! ☸



Save the Date: Gathering Leaves 2023

Gathering Leaves, the international retreat for Swedenborgian/New Church women, will be held at the Lord's New Church in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, August, 24–27, 2023. Please contact Rev. Roslyn Taylor (hrtaylor@temple.edu) or Rev. Jane Siebert (janesiebert@gmail.com) if you would like to serve on the Steering Committee.

Pennypack Retreat for Young Adults

*Lord's New Church Retreat
for ages 18–30 in
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania
October 14th – 16th*

Attention Young Adults: You are invited to a new, interdenominational New Church retreat for adults ages 18–30. Using the first three days of the Creation story as a representational template for spiritual, social, and psychological growth, the Pennypack Retreat for Young Adults seeks to support young adults in deepening their connections with others, self, and God. Located at the idyllic 85-acre property of The Lord's New Church in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, from Friday, October 14 – Sunday, October 16, campers will stay in yurts and enjoy a wide range of activities including, games, fire-circles, workshops, sharing groups, meals, worship, and speakers. Cost: \$50 dollars. Please register here: www.thelordsnewchurchphiladelphia.org/get-involved.html

You can also register at the facebook

Encountering Others: Angels, Apocalypse, & Aliens

with Dr. Devin Zuber

*Thursdays on Zoom:
October 20, November 3 & 17,
and December 1
at 2:00 PM PT / 5:00 PM ET*

This four-part online course explores some of the more challenging (and wonderfully strange) aspects of Swedenborg's theology. How did Swedenborg deal with difference, with an otherness that lay outside the norms of the Protestant Christianity (and scientific understanding) of his day? We will engage with selections of his work on angels and the afterlife; on non-Christian religions, such as Judaism and Islam; as well as his take on the Apocalypse (that it happened in 1757), and extraterrestrial life (that yes, indeed, there is Life on Mars, as David Bowie sings). While part of our discussions will place these ideas in their broader 18th century contexts, we will also lift-up how they might help us think about difference and otherness in our increasingly pluralistic moment in the 21st century. The course features several guest speakers, and will meet on Zoom for an hour and a half four times this fall. To register and reserve a place in the class, please contact Paola Pruett-Vergara, CSS Assistant: pruett.vergara@swedenborgianstudies.org ☸

page: “Pennypack Retreat for Young Adults” or by emailing Rev. Kent Rogers at krogers@thelordsnewchurch.org. We would love to see you there! ☸

What's Happening

SWEDENBORGIANS IN ACTION



AGAINST RACISM

Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism

SAAR has a biweekly email newsletter that provides education around issues central to antiracism, ideas for actions to take, and inspiration to keep at it long-term. Email Rev. Shada Sullivan, revshada@gmail.com to join the email list.

Previous issues of the SAAR Newsletter can be found on our website: swedenborg.org/community/diversity-equity-inclusion/swedenborgians-in-action-against-racism/



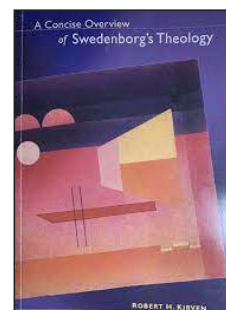
Our Daily Bread at SpiritualQuesters.org is your resource for recent sermons, meditations, reflections, lessons, interviews, and original content from within and beyond the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

Year of Regeneration

Continued from page 120

means that our inherent nature must be changed or born again—that is, regenerated.

Suggested lifted quote: “Everyone is born with bodily awareness and then comes into sensory awareness, awareness of the natural world, and eventually rational awareness; and if the process does not stall there, we become spiritually aware. The reason for this progression is that the earlier stages form planes that higher stages rest upon in the same way that a palace rests on its foundations” (*Marriage Love* §447). ☸



of Swedenborg's Theology (J. Appleseed & Co., 2003), which also can be read online: <https://swedenborgdigitallibrary.org/kirv/kirvvc.htm>.

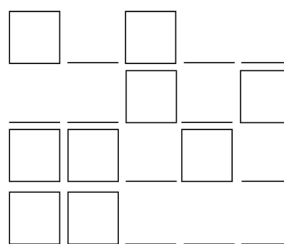
Rev. Dr. Bob Kirven [1927–2004] taught theology and church history at the Swedenborg School of Religion from 1965 until his retirement in 1992. This edited excerpt is from his popular *Concise Overview*

Spiritual Sunshine

A Swedenborgian Community Online

SwedenborgianCommunity.org

With broadcasts and written messages most weeks, *Spiritual Sunshine: A Swedenborgian Community Online* is your interfaith-Swedenborgian community—with a presence on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and your favorite podcasting platform. Join us as we seek to empower awareness of and connection to the spiritual sunlight from Divinity within all of us.



D U R N O
S O D W O
T E H F C
H R U O G

*Did you know Abraham Lincoln was a great golfer?
His personal best total was:*

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

Answers to the June Jumble:

*Voice, Enjoy, Tropic, Online
While in Long Beach, I think grammar is my favorite writing:
“Convention”*

The Year of Regeneration

Regeneration: Process, Stage, and Goal

Excerpts from *A Concise Overview of Swedenborg's Theology*

BY ROBERT H. KIRVEN, COMPILED BY JIM LAWRENCE

The concept of regeneration undergirds the entire theology and spirituality in Swedenborg's writings. No teaching from the inner sense of the Word fundamentally is *not* about regeneration, a powerful idea encompassing three inter-related meanings. First, regeneration is the name of a life-long process of spiritual growth. That process, however, is marked by cycles that recur throughout the course of life cycles that Swedenborg usually describes in terms of three stages, though he begins in the inner sense of Genesis with seven stages that correspond to the seven days of creation ("The six days or periods of time in the creation story describe the six consecutive stages in our regeneration," *Secrets of Heaven* §6). The much more often described three stages have been pegged as the Three Rs: repentance, reformation, and regeneration. So, secondly, "regeneration" is a recurring stage in the overall process of regeneration. Thirdly, the cycles of spiritual formation move in

a general direction (as a bicycle pedal goes around and around while going forward along the road at the same time), and the destination or *goal* of that total direction and process is called regeneration. Swedenborg does not always give a signal, other than the context in which the word appears, as to which of these three senses is intended when he uses the word regeneration, but the meaning seldom is unclear if you are aware of the possibilities.

Human beings are born without any knowledge of what is good or what is evil, what is right or what is wrong (true or false).

Regeneration is a commonplace Latin (and English) word that means rebirth. Swedenborg's special usage of this word, however, means something that is both more specific and more far reaching, than the lexicon definition of "rebirth" usually applied to biological processes of renewal but

also analogically applied to sociological and theological contexts as well. Swedenborg is more specific, first of all, because he refers exclusively to a spiritual process (and stage) leading toward a spiritual goal. His use of the word is more far-reaching, because his first and third usages of the term denote the total course and spiritual achievement of every human life.

Human beings are born without any knowledge of what is good or what is evil, what is right or what is wrong (true or false). Without this knowledge, they cannot discriminate between what is good and what is true from among the many choices they are free to make, and without this discernment, they cannot intend to do good. Therefore, they cannot live the kind of life that conjoins them to heaven and then become angels. Forming a heaven of angels from the human race was the point of creation in the first place. Consequently, the stage in which people are born must be changed, which

Continues on page 119