

# THE MESSENGER

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October 2001



Alicia Titus  
1973-2001

Alicia Titus, 28, eldest daughter of John and Bev Titus of Michigan, formerly of Urbana, Ohio, was a flight attendant aboard United Flight 175, the second hijacked plane that crashed into the World Trade Center Towers on September 11, 2001. The family visiting hours and the memorial service on September 16 and 17 drew over a thousand people to Urbana. Our heartfelt prayers and thoughts are with the Titus family, and all who are grieving the loss of loved ones. (See p. 135.)

## SWEDENBORGIAN HOUSE OF STUDIES

*at Pacific School of Religion*

**We're Up and Running: Progress Report as of August 30, 2001**

*Jim Lawrence*

### Five Students Begin Full-time Study

Five full-time students have arrived to begin the journey of theological education for ministry. No active ordination-track students remained at any level of progress at the former SSR, unfortunately, but we are heartened by the number of serious prospects responding to the new vision of theological education. Now at the end of PSR's official orientation week for new students, we are celebrating our new SHS community of five full-time beginning students. We christened the "house" with a pizza lunch on Monday, as all five students, plus program director Kim Hinrichs and I, crowded around our conference table in the largest of the three rooms that comprise the Swedenborgian House of Studies on a beautiful campus overlooking San Francisco Bay.

I participated in the annual all-day PSR faculty retreat (approximately 20 professors in attendance) where a "fresh from the press" roster of incoming students was part of the packet of materials.

Out of 68 beginning students, the Swedenborgians show up nicely among the variety of denominational affiliations. But the best news is the caliber of our inaugural junior class of seminarians. Let me introduce them: **Kevin Baxter** and **Alison Lane Baxter** (respectively, son of Polly & the late Rev. Dick Baxter and granddaughter of the Rev. Eric and Betty Zacharias) who have arrived from Urbana, Ohio (both are recent Urbana University grads); **Carol Anne Fusco**, of the Portland, Maine Swedenborgian Church, who is just completing an M.A. in spirituality studies at Matthew Fox's University for Creation Spirituality in nearby Oakland; **Kathy Speas**, who is a marketing professional of many years and an active lay person in the San Francisco church; and **Karl Parker**, who was a longtime educator within the General Church (teaching in the Bryn Athyn schools) and is now living in nearby St. Helena and active in the local Methodist church (he feels bringing Swedenborgian spirituality into close

community with other major Christian traditions is "where he's at").

All five students are registering in the full-time recommended course work plan that our curriculum committee has put together in consultation with PSR that will enable a student to graduate in three years. In this plan, SHS-affiliated students will take two accredited Swedenborgian courses most semesters and will take at least one and frequently more unaccredited Swedenborgian tutorials as well as their classes with top scholars in such fields as worship, Christian church history, homiletics (preaching), ethics, and basic Bible. We are in dialog with at least eleven more prospective students interested in beginning next year.

### SHS FACULTY THIS FALL

In addition to Introduction to Theological Education (taught by PSR president, Bill McKinney), Introduction to Old Testament by the well-known Norman Gottwald, and a 1.5 credit unit of biblical interpretation, our students



*Pacific School of Religion Chapel.*

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### In this Issue:

- Convention Theme Talks, Continued
- September 11 Reports
- Van Dusen's New Book

**Editor's Note, as we went to press:**

*The following message went out from the Rev. Ronald Brugler, president of our denomination, on the day after terrorists attacked and destroyed the World Trade Center in New York and damaged the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. by crashing hijacked domestic airliners into these targets, killing thousands of people, on the morning of September 11, 2001.*

September 12, 2001

Dear Ministers, Lay Leaders and Worship Leaders,

Today we remain in a state of shock and sadness as a result of yesterday's tragedies in North America. We find ourselves longing for God's comfort and guidance. We open our minds and hearts in prayers for all those whose lives have been lost and shattered. We seek God's wisdom in order to gain a deeper understanding of the hatred that would cause people to act in such an evil fashion and ways that this hatred might be overcome. We ask that God help us to refrain from racial prejudice in a quick rush to judgment. Truly, we pray that God be our refuge and strength, and be present with us in this time of trouble.

We especially turn to God, asking that his love and comfort be with John, Bev, Zach, Shenoa and Eli Titus as they mourn Alicia's death. We pray for our members in the Manhattan, Brooklyn and Washington churches. And, we ask that God be with our members across North America who remain concerned about family and friends.

Indeed, this is a time when ministry is needed. For some in our churches there is mourning; for others, anger; for others, a sense of safety and security has been lost. Therefore, as president of the denomination I am requesting that all of our churches dedicate this week's worship service as a time for prayer, reflection and sharing in response to these needs. And although we might wonder what words we can say and what form such a service might take, we must lay these feelings aside and allow the Lord to lead our preparations.

I would also urge our congregations to explore additional ways that we might

work for peace in our communities, countries and world. I hope that in the weeks to come we will exchange ideas for accomplishing this goal in real ways. Again, ministry is needed, and we must respond to the call.

May God be with you all,  
Ron Brugler

**From Washington, D.C.:**

The Rev. Jonathan Mitchell reported that their church administrator knows someone who worked in the WTC and is unaccounted for. Members of the congregation okay. "Life in D.C. has been eerie these last few days as you might imagine....my heart goes out to the Titus family. I believe I met Alicia once when the SSR Board met in San Francisco."

**From New York:**

Member Mona Conner, chair of COMSU, said that as far as she could ascertain, all members of the New York church were okay. The Rev. Robert McCluskey, pastor of the New York church, held the church open all day on September 12<sup>th</sup> for prayer.

Member Pamela Selsensky, a teacher at a Brooklyn elementary school related this story: "We have about 1100 kids, and by about 2:00 p.m., all but 80 children had been picked up from school. A mother arrived, very shaken, who had been in one of the Towers, and who had to walk across the Williamsburg Bridge in order to get to her daughter's school. About 30 minutes after she had picked up her daughter, another woman arrived in tears asking for the same child. She was the mother's best friend, and she was convinced that her friend had perished, so was coming after the daughter. Luckily we were able to let her know that her friend was okay, and had already picked up her daughter. In Brooklyn here, we could smell the smoke all day as it drifted across the water."

From A. J. Geddes, a member of the New York New Church who has been a conductor on the PATH system for 32

years (for non-New Yorkers, PATH is the Port Authority Trans-Hudson Subway between New York City and New Jersey):

**Last Train Out of WTC**

On Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001, I left Hoboken, New Jersey, at 8:38 a.m., arriving on track 2 at the World Trade Center PATH station in downtown New York at around 8:48 a.m., discharging maybe a thousand passengers.

At first, nothing seemed out of the ordinary as I watched the passengers disappear up the escalators. Gradually I became aware of a smell that was familiar to me from long ago. As a little boy, I lived in flats without central heat. We relied on sheet metal kerosene heaters (Don't run in the house! If you knock over the heater, the spilled kerosene will go up like a torch!) How did it get here? We have several diesel-powered work vehicles, but it was still the rush hour. Why would they be out now?

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**THE MESSENGER**

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## SWEDENBORGIAN HOUSE OF STUDIES

(Continued from cover)

will be taking Introduction to Swedenborgian Thought, taught by me, and Spirituality and Healing, taught by Robert Keck (an author working closely with the Swedenborg Foundation in recent years who will be writing a book on the subject of his class for the Swedenborg Foundation).

Students will be supported in their beginning biblical work through a distance tutorial with George Dole, who will be following their readings in Old Testament and will be in dialog with SHS students as questions arise; and students will attend a weekly SHS tutorial led by me called Swedenborgian Contexting Seminar. This segment is designed as a general forum covering denominational perspectives relating to the full spectrum of theological education and is envisioned as a one-hour weekly forum continuing all through a student's PSR M.Div. program. I hope a regular feature will be participation of Swedenborgian leaders (clergy and lay) in these discussions. Several active and retired clergy reside in the area, and others will be visiting from time to time.

For lay education, Ted Klein, in Boston, will be offering "Introduction to Swedenborgian Concepts" and "Swedenborgian Concepts and Life Issues" online. He is in charge of distance education this year. Wilma Wake is also offering online studies in spirituality subjects. For course details and schedules, contact the program director Kim Hinrichs (khinrichs@shs.psr.edu) or consult your September *Messenger*.

### THE TEAGLE GRANT

One of our first indications of strength and support in this historic collaborative venture in theological education has come in the form of a two-year \$404,000 grant from the Teagle Foundation to fund four positions: a program director, who is Kim Hinrichs, to oversee the smooth integration of our school's operations into the framework of PSR. Kim is herself a PSR graduate and has been involved from the beginning with the coordination of the move from Newton to Berkeley and has been doing a

fabulous job of representing our institution's program and working through numerous administrative and organizational pieces of the new picture.

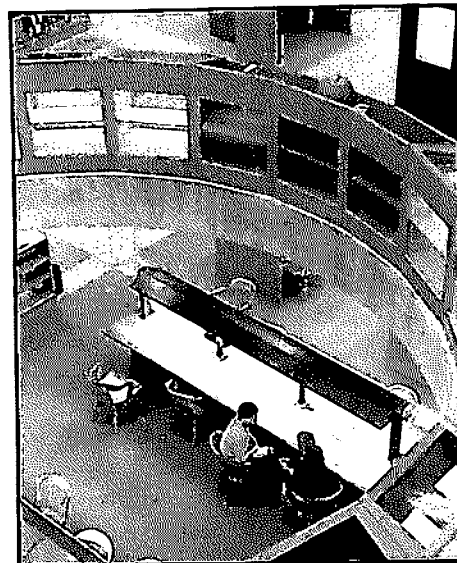
The Teagle Grant also supports the positions for two years of a librarian and two assistants to re-catalog our library collection according to Library of Congress protocols for full electronic integration into the GTU library system and with academic libraries around the country and world. For those of you who have not yet seen our new campus arrangements in Berkeley, the Swedenborgian Library and Archives will remain physically separate from the GTU library. There will be no physical merging of the two collections.

We are interviewing candidates for the librarian position and hope to have that spot filled within a few weeks. Kim Hinrichs is doing a terrific job with a dizzying array of tasks and projects. We've been meeting with many important departments and constituent parts of both PSR and the GTU: field education, financial aid, accounting and bookkeeping services, the main library, facilities coordinators, to name a few. We are also working on the support services we can provide for our Swedenborgian community.

We can thank our Board chairperson, Jane Siebert, for coordinating and writing most of the proposal, and it is worth recognizing that this is a fruit of blessing from our ecumenical collaborations: with PSR, whose president, Bill McKinney first suggested the grant, and Trustee Robert Reber, president of Auburn Theological Seminary, who is familiar with the Teagle Foundation and who helped shepherd the application process.

### MOVING IN AND SETTING UP

One of the steadiest tasks this summer has been organizing, and for the most part furnishing, three separate spaces: the Swedenborgian "house" on the PSR campus, which is three rooms in the lower level of d'Autremont Hall (one of the six main buildings that outline the campus around a main plaza with a sweeping view east to the GTU and west to the Pacific Ocean); the Swedenborgian Library and Archives, situated on the main level of the Holbrook Building (the most prominent building on campus); and the visiting scholar apartment



Graduate Theological Union (GTU) Library

adjacent to the campus.

With significant help from SHS Board trustee Alan Thomsen; my wife, Joanne Jaffe (an interior designer); incoming student Kathy Speas; San Francisco parishioners Ross Fish and Kris Boxell, and some others, Kim and I have overseen the integration of the materials shipped from Boston and carried out a plan of furnishings to be "ready for business" by Labor Day. We have had our jeans and tennis shoes on many days shopping for items, loading furniture into pickups, assembling many furniture items, and arranging the various rooms and the apartment in what we hope is an attractive presentation of our faith community.

The SSR staff in Boston had the difficult job of getting the library and the essentials of the school operation to us in great shape, and they all deserve our deep appreciation.

As of this week, there are now four tasteful signs on campus (a directional sign each for the library and for the "house," as well as the signs on the doors of the respective entrance doors) giving us an appropriate and effective visibility. A special project has been to recover the important details of the large, 500-lb. marble bust of Swedenborg (created by the significant 19<sup>th</sup>-century American sculptor Caroline Shawk Brooks) and design a new pedestal for the bust. The bust will now grace the outer entrance area of the Swedenborgian

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## SWEDENBORGIAN HOUSE OF STUDIES

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Library and Archives and will be accompanied by appropriate educational information on Brooks.

### GROWING SCHOLARSHIP

We are beginning a new chapter in our approach to training our clergy for ministry in today's world. In order to participate within a setting such as the world-class GTU in Berkeley, with its nine member seminaries and thirteen affiliate institutes, we need to be growing scholars (I see at least a triple entendre there). Swedenborgian scholars, in addition to their expertise in Swedenborgian thought, also need to be regarded as scholars in one of the nine or so recognized disciplines within the area of theological education. That is, our people need to be seen as having more than simply an immersion in the writings of Swedenborg in order to be a part of the teaching community: we need to be growing scholars in fields such as biblical studies, historic theology, systematic theology, ethics, philosophy of religion, homiletics and worship, religion and psychology, and spirituality—these are the most important relevant fields.

I am currently enrolled as a part time Ph.D. student in Christian Spirituality, which combines three rather deep anchors (the Bible, historic Christian theology, and knowledge of a major faith tradition other than Christianity), as a foundation for the second half of the program, which is the dissertation process. For my studies, I will focus on exploring what is actually distinctive in the spirituality promoted by the writings of Swedenborg, and how Swedenborgians actually implement their faith, as diverse as that might be. I am needing to spend a portion of my time in doctoral studies, therefore, which may seem to compete with my Acting Dean duties; however, I am experiencing the doctoral work as bringing me (and by natural extension, SHS) into dialog with the scholarly community of the GTU in a vital and enlivening way that would be difficult to achieve strictly on the PSR campus. I

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## CONVENTION KEYNOTE SPEECH

# The Odyssey of Life: Different Ways We Are Called To Serve The Lord

Keith Tussing

Anthony de Mello was a Jesuit priest whose hobby was collecting stories from around the world. The following is one of his favorites and one that might be a frame of reference throughout this 177th Convention.

Before China was a centralized country, it was made up of thousands of city-states. Outside of one city lived a farmer, his wife, and son. They owned a small farm and one horse. The horse was crucial to their way of life both economically and socially. The horse was used to plow the fields, plant the seeds, harvest the crops, take the crops into town to be sold, and transport the family. One day the farmer went out to harness the horse when suddenly a bee stung the horse behind the ear. The horse bolted, galloped through the gate and disappeared into the mountains. Because it was a small village, all of the farmer's neighbors knew of his loss.

"So sorry to learn of your bad luck," said his neighbor.

To which the farmer replied: "Good luck, bad luck, who's to say?"

A few days later the son looked out the kitchen window into the corral and to his amazement saw their runaway horse and five wild horses. When the neighbors heard about the farmer's good fortune they went to see for themselves.

"Congratulations on such good luck," said the neighbors.

"Good Luck, bad luck, who's to say," replied the farmer.

Pleased with their new economic bonanza, the son said to his father: "Let's break the five wild horses and sell them for a profit." Having no experience at breaking a wild horse, the son was immediately thrown from the horse. Landing on the ground, his leg broke, and he was carried to the house.

"What terrible luck!" said a neighbor.

"Good luck, bad luck, who's to say?" said the farmer.

Two days later, the city-state in which the farmer lived declared war against a

neighboring city-state. A general stopped at the farmer's house to recruit his son. Every young man, fifteen years or older, was drafted into the army.

"Too bad your son's leg is broken," said the general.

"Good luck, bad luck, who's to say?" replied the farmer.

A week later it was learned that all the boys from the local army had been killed in battle. The only young man left in the area was the farmer's son.

"You are very lucky," said a neighbor. To which the farmer replied:

"Good luck, bad luck, who's to say?"

First Observation: "Good luck, bad luck, who's to say?" Over the years I have found that story to be a wonderful frame of reference. Many times I have discovered that ways in which God was calling me turned out to be quite different from the ways I thought were God-called. I have zigged, zagged, adapted, reassessed and persisted when I really would rather have moved on in another direction. I felt certain my call was to serve as a parish minister.

Instead, I have served parishes, but spent most of my career outside the parish. I have served as an administrator in a theological seminary, as a consultant to non-profits, as a foundation executive, and presently as a vice president for a national senior health care/senior services organization headquartered here in the Twin Cities.

My career has not been a straight, narrow career, but rather one that has forced me to change direction and skills a number of times. I have been hired, downsized, out-placed, you name it. "Good luck, bad luck, who's to say?" And many of you have shared my journey. You too, have seen dreams change or fade away; you too have seen careers appear and disappear; marriages succeed and fail; children become successful and not so successful. We've all experienced the good, the bad, and the in-between.

Let me suggest that De Mello's story is

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## The Odyssey of Life: Different Ways We Are Called To Serve The Lord

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a good frame of reference for many of us here. It is also a good frame of reference for the Church. When things go right, when things go wrong, when things seem to drift along with no sense of completion or purpose, it is good to remember, "Good luck, bad luck, who's to say?" Because through it all, the good folks at the Virginia Street church have been beside Kris and me and our children. It is good to be reminded that through it all God is beside us.

Second Observation: God is a God of abundance, not scarcity! We have gathered here in St. Paul because we are starving, we are a hungry people and we desire to be satisfied. We are not starving physically, but rather spiritually, and we can find nothing else in all of God's creation that will satisfy us like the meal of holy communion that we will celebrate together a number of times during this convention. As the family of God, we are going to feast on the bread and the wine or grape juice that is set before us. *Our God is a God of abundance, not scarcity!*

We should all be aware of the fact that this particular meal of bread and wine isn't just any old meal. This meal is special. To those outside the Church, it isn't even a meal, merely a small piece of bread and a small cup of wine or grape juice; and it's impossible to prepare this meal at home. It just cannot be bought, it cannot be prepared or understood outside of the Church family. This is a free meal, given to us, purchased for us by Christ himself. What is it that makes this meal so different? Packed inside the bread and wine is a story of the One who feeds those of us who are hungry today. And if you take away the story, the meal has no significance. This story is about a God who provides food for hungry people in the wilderness. In Exodus, chapter 16, we read about the beginning of Israel's life in the wilderness. Shortly after their exit from Egypt the people began to complain. Finally someone said to Moses, "Why are we here? We have no food! We

are starving! In Egypt we were slaves, but at least we had plenty of food."

God, aware of the complaints, provided manna from heaven, bread to be gathered each morning. God feeds us today with bread. We haven't reached the Promised Land, at least not yet, and we find ourselves in the wilderness. Do you know what wilderness is? It's being without resources. Wilderness is wanting to quit and die. Wilderness is not wanting to die but afraid you might. Each of us this evening is at a different place in our own wilderness. Some of us bring joyfulness and thankfulness to this meal, but others don't. There will be persons eating these elements who are dying in their wilderness, some feeling forgotten; some can't figure out what's

**God is a God of  
abundance,  
not scarcity!**

happening in the world. There will be married people who can't communicate anymore. There will be parents who are ready to disown their children. There will be children who feel disowned. There will be persons who are tired of their jobs. There will be persons eating this meal who have given up trying to find meaning in life. This is a meal for all of us, regardless of our particular situation or personal wilderness. And we are all invited to partake of these

elements because these are the only elements which can truly satisfy our wilderness hunger.

God is the One who feeds the hungry. In the New Testament Jesus is referred to as "the Bread of Life." In the eighth chapter of Mark's Gospel, the writer refers to two occasions when Jesus fed the hungry. Jesus says to his disciples, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

The disciples, confused as to what Jesus was talking about, reply, "We have no bread."

Jesus then says to them, "Don't you understand? Having eyes to see don't you see? And having ears to hear don't you hear?"

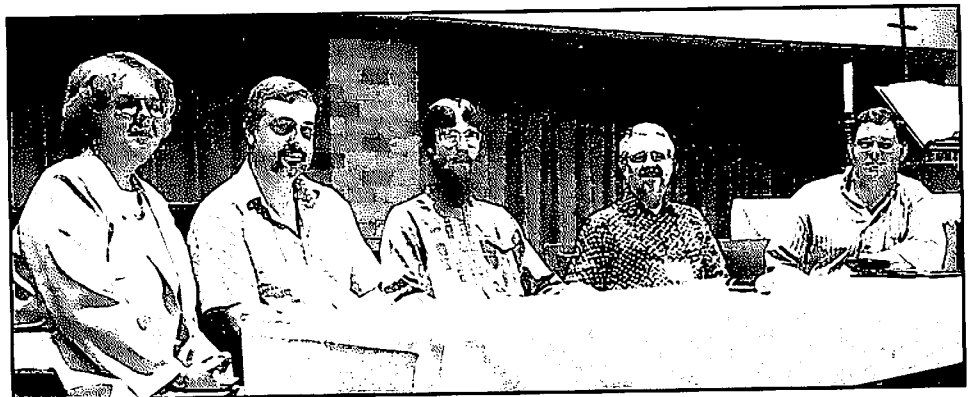
Jesus was referring to the fact that when we are desperately hungry, be careful, because we will eat anything. When we are hungry for security, for courage, for success, we gladly turn to the Pharisees and the Herods of this world. In other words, we turn to the establishment to satisfy us. We try to satisfy our needs for success by turning into ourselves and ignoring the needs of others. We'll eat anything and think that we're being satisfied.

Jesus then asks his disciples, "Why do you say that you have no bread? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets were left over?"

"Twelve" the disciples answer.

"And when I broke seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets were left over?"

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"A Swedenborgian Odyssey" Theme Panel (l-r): the Revs. Susannah Currie, Jonathan Mitchell, Lee Woofenden, Keith Tussing, theme speaker; Andy Stinson. (See Susannah Currie and Lee Woofenden's talks in the September 2001 Messenger.)

# Look to the Rock

Jonathan Mitchell

Listen to me,  
you who pursue righteousness,  
Who seek the Holy One,  
Look to the rock  
from which you were hewn,  
And to the quarry  
from which you were dug.  
Look to Abraham your father,  
And to Sarah who bore you  
For he was one when I called him,  
And I blessed him and made him many.  
[Isaiah 51:1-2]

My reflections this morning grow out of recent experience of the neighborhood of the church I serve in Washington, DC. It was brought home to me how highly secular the surrounding culture really is. It is a highly educated community that approaches religion with a great deal of skepticism, a culture that often takes it for granted that a truly educated person could not believe in God, or in the Bible as more than history and legend.

It got me to thinking: how would a church act, if it self-consciously understood itself to be part of the remnant? What if, as the Swedenborgian Church, we are part of the remnant? To be part of the remnant is not a bad place to be, if we trust Swedenborg, for it is out of the remnant that the New Church is born.

*We hold on to something precious: an understanding of the depths of the Bible, a vision of our continuing life in the spiritual world, a call to lifelong personal transformation, and the life, the experiences, and teaching of Emanuel Swedenborg. Let us look to the rock from which we are hewn!*

How then should the remnant act? I think Isaiah tells us: "Look to the rock from which you were hewn! And to the quarry from which you were dug!" In other words, look to the solid core of what you hold dear. The remnant continues to research and probe the depths of its tradition, with a view to grasping its deepest and timeless essence.

We hold on to something precious: an understanding of the depths of the Bible, a vision of our continuing life in the spiritual world, a call to lifelong personal transformation, and the life, the experiences, and teaching of Emanuel Swedenborg. Let us look to the rock from which we are hewn!

I am mindful that there are among us a generation of Swedenborgian ministers, scholars, and lay people, who in the second half of the twentieth century have watched our numbers decline. And this after having put heart and soul into the furtherance of this church—after, in many instances, dedicating entire careers to the Swedenborgian movement. I know that it was painful to watch. And I know that this can elicit a sense of having failed. But the question is: failed to do what, and in whose eyes? Because you didn't fail me. I am grateful for your having held on to this tradition, so that it could be handed on to me. For at one time I too was one of those who were too "educated" to take God and the Bible seriously. By holding onto the Swedenborgian tradition so I could receive it too, you gave me God back. You gave me the Bible back. I won't say that you gave me Jesus back—because, praise God, Jesus never entirely left me—but you did give me the incarnation back, you gave me back Jesus as God living a human life, Jesus as the Divine Humanity in the flesh. If only I could hold onto this tradition with a fraction of that love and commitment, I would have done a lot. So I look to the rock from which I was hewn. I look to the Abrahams and Sarahs who bore me.

I remember here the words that Keith spoke last night. We cannot pay them back, we can only pay forward. And that also is the task before us. In looking to Abraham and Sarah, the remnant also

looks to that which is fertile and fruitful in its tradition. While probing into the depths of its heritage, the remnant resists the temptation to become solely inward-looking and engages the surrounding culture. Because within the secular world, we find desperate spiritual hungers. The remnant seeks ways to speak the truth it holds dear to the contemporary world, in a desire to feed its hungers.

We are engaged, then, in a process of renewal. You know, the process of renewal is not cutting down a tree to plant a new one, not tearing down a house to build anew on the same lot. But it is not fossilizing you either. It is not turning your home into a museum.

I think one good model of this renewal, and it is only one of many, is the recent work of the Swedenborg Foundation. The Swedenborg Foundation looks to the rock from which it was hewn. They still keep the "Green Thirty" in print, their original mission. But look at all the other things they are doing: the New Century edition, with all the new research that goes into it. Look at the videos and the many attractive new publications on what array of spiritual topics. It is a clear example of simultaneously preserving, deepening, and renewing a tradition.

This is the task ahead of us in Convention and its centers. I am urging that we hold on to and delight in our tradition, that we approach it with great curiosity, seeking always to understand it more deeply and live it more fully, and that we engage the world around us, seeking all the ways that will allow our tradition to speak today.

In the words again of Isaiah:

For the Holy One will comfort Zion,  
comforting all its waste places.  
Making its wilderness like Eden  
and its waste places like the garden of  
the Holy One.

Joy and gladness will be found there,  
thanksgiving and the voice of song.

[Isaiah 51:3]

*The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell is pastor of the Swedenborgian Church in Washington, DC and a board member of the Swedenborgian House of Studies.*

# What We See Is What We Get

## Convention Theme Presentation

Andy Stinson

It is a good day to die! "Aho!"

This Native American cry is the cry of life. Today is a good day to die, not because they think death is great but because, unless we are willing to put the full measure of our lives, our talent, our treasure to work for what we care about in our life, we are not truly living. It is this willingness to do exactly this, to open to our own death so that we might fully engage life, that I want to suggest to you today—that not dying also means, not fully living. There is a great movie, if you haven't seen it go rent it, called *Joe Versus the Volcano*.

I love this movie, not for its great panoramas or even its great writing, but because it is THE story, the one great story. In this story, Joe is diagnosed with a brain cloud, and he is going to die in six months. He has just gotten this diagnosis when a man visits his apartment and offers him the opportunity to jump into a volcano. And Joe decides to do it. What is remarkable about this story is that the moment that he decides to do it and begin moving forward toward this goal, his life truly begins. He leaves his dead-end job and goes on a great adventure. He travels, enjoys his life, meets and falls in love with his soul mate and lives vibrantly right up to the point where he jumps into the big Wu, the volcano. His life actually begins as he says yes to his death, to the cross; as he says yes to his own demise.

The same is true of Jesus. Saying yes to the cross is not about dying but about truly and fully living. If we say yes to our own demise and to our own death we then truly and fully live. And so when Odysseus went on the Odyssey it was only in crossing with and facing death that he was truly allowed and brought back to Penelope.

Buckminster Fuller, who in his mid-thirties stood at the edge of a ruined life,

went down to the icy waters of the Great Lakes in Chicago, climbed the fence, and resolved to throw himself in. As he stood at the edge of the Lake with the water lapping at his feet, he realized that he was now free, free to completely live as he would choose, without input from all the other people and influences that would have him be something other than who he truly was. As you know, from that moment on Buckminster Fuller went out and did great things with his life.

This is not to say that I think our church is at the point of death. I don't think it is anywhere near it. I think it is at the brink of great things. I see vitality and life everywhere I turn. I see opportunity and the abundance of God all around. There is incredible promise in our church, yet what I am suggesting is that our focus is a little off. We are spending our time often trying 'not to die.' I have seen it all over our church, that we are holding tight to what we have and in holding so tightly we squeeze out the life that might emerge—that we put our assets to work "not dying" and conserving because we are afraid of dying, but also afraid of truly living. I would offer that 'not dying' is also not living.

Swedenborg tells us this again and again, that what we focus on is what we create, and what we put at the center of our lives is what we create our lives to be. It is not what we wish were at the center but rather what *is* at the center and for years the church has been focusing on 'not dying,' and well, Congratulations! The church has not died! But I also wonder if it has been fully alive.

Imagine with me for a moment, just imagine. What would happen if we took the greater part of Convention's liquid assets, which is about 17 million dollars, and instead of supporting our goal of not dying, we decide to try to fully live. If we used that money to go out and start new churches and centers. That endowment would roughly be enough to start about ten churches a year. Over ten years we would have a hundred new churches in the country... Just imagine.

Some of you might be wondering, What did he put on his Wheaties this

morning? Doesn't he know we have a shortage of ministers? Doesn't he know we are struggling to keep our churches afloat now? Of course, but heaven does not kick and punch its way into the world, it flows. It flows into vessels that are created for it. If we want abundance we must engage the world with abundance, because it is my sincere belief there are thousands of Swedenborgians out there, who simply do not know it yet.

It was ten years ago that I stumbled into the Portland church and it became my spiritual home and now here I am. Ten years ago I hardly knew of the existence of this church, and now look at me. I hate to quote baseball movies, but the truth is "if you build it, they will come." New Sarahs and Johns abound in the world, and we do them disservice by denying them the treasures that we are not sharing as fully as we might. We are called to realize the wisdom of Susannah's words about the post-modern world, "there is no we or them, only us."

In closing I want to thank all of you and echo the words of Jonathan that we must 'hold on to what is precious; from the rock which we were hewn.' Because wherever the future has taken us, those of you who have labored through this church for all your life have kept holy and alive the very sacredness which has come to save my life, and so I want to be sure to express my gratefulness for this church.

Oh, and remember Joe? He didn't die when he jumped into the volcano, the volcano erupted when he jumped and he was blown out of the volcano. And as he and his love sail off "away from the things of man" the film does not say "The End." but rather, "The Beginning."

*The Rev. Andy Stinson is pastor of the Elmwood Swedenborgian Church in Elmwood, Mass.*



***Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.***

—Matthew 5:7



## Editorials:

(Continued from page 122)

I asked one of the passengers, Was there a fire upstairs? Then I realized there were hardly any passengers going to New Jersey, and this was usually one of my heaviest trips. The passenger replied that a bomb had gone off. She said there were shoes scattered all over the place. Why she sat there and was not going to share this with anyone, I'll never know.

We left at our scheduled departure time, 8:53 a.m. As far as my motorman Harry Williams and I can figure, we were the last passenger train to leave the World Trade Center.

## Realization

By the time we reached the Exchange Place station in Jersey City, three minutes later, the two-way train radio was alive with chatter. Trains were rerouted. All service to the World Trade Center was suspended. My radio is multi-channelled, so I tuned to the police channel. The pitch of the voices became higher and more intense. Fire. Explosion. Send ambulances. Notify... Need help on ...

As passengers boarded at various stations, I learned more of what was going on: Hijacked airplanes. That explained the kerosene smell, burning JP-47 jet fuel. Rumors and fragments of information....the planes were empty ...the planes carried passengers... not planes, helicopters...hijacked from La Guardia airport...from JFK...from Newark.

We were rerouted to the 33rd Street station, down the block from New York's Penn Station, and were to return to Journal Square in Jersey City. At each station, more information. We reached what are called The Portals, where the train emerges from the tunnel and enters the daylight at about 9:45 a.m. Looking to the right, I saw the twin towers engulfed in smoke and flame. Approximately 15 minutes later, someone watching the TV at the Journal Square station told us all that the #2 Tower had collapsed. What! Impossible!

In 1945, a plane had hit the Empire State Building, and that building was still standing.

After being told we were not needed and could go home, Harry and I boarded a train going east and could see, although it was impossible to fathom, that there was only one tower standing amid the smoke. By the time I reached Hoboken, where I live, I heard that Tower #1 had collapsed also.

In 1971, mine had not been the first train to enter the WTC station but I had been there the day before on an empty train testing the signals and track circuits. Now it was gone? I stumbled along the streets of Hoboken muttering, "I can't \_\_\_\_\_ believe it." No one seemed to notice. I was not alone. The police had cordoned off access to the river. At Sinatra Park, I was able look south and east. Gone! Just a cloud of dust, like the pictures of Hiroshima. As I looked at the desolation, I recalled saying to Harry on the train to Hoboken: "It wasn't supposed to be like this."

Like most of America, I sat before the TV, mesmerized, watching over and over the images of the second plane hitting the building, the collapse; bleeding, dust-covered people. People weeping in pain and shock, as I wept.

## It Becomes Personal

After the initial shock has worn off, you begin to realize that you live and breathe but what about.....? OH MY GOD! What happened to .....? Where is .....

Usually one or two motormen or conductors are signed up to have their annual medical exams on the 62nd floor of 1 World Trade Center. Tuesday the 11, no motormen or conductors were assigned, but Terry Kelton, a supervisor was. Oh \_\_\_\_\_! My cousin Bobby worked on the 63rd floor of #1.

## From Evil, Good

My cousin Larry has not spoken to his brother Bobby in years. I call Larry, to find out if Bobby is all right, since I don't want Bobby's wife Betsy to be any more upset than she already is.

Larry is in tears when he tells me he has heard from his sister that Bobby is ok. "Maybe you should call him," I suggest. "I'll write him a letter," says Larry. It's a start. When I call Bobby to tell him I'm ok, I tell him about Larry's reaction. He seems more shaken at that than coming down 63 flights and almost having a building fall on him.

My friend Milda on Long Island hadn't spoken to her friend Terri in years because of some falling out. Milda's husband Peter was in California, but was stuck there because all flights were grounded. Terri's husband Tommy is a phone technician who often works in the WTC. Milda calls Terri to find out if Tommy is ok. No answer. Terri rings Milda's doorbell, to find out if Peter made it home ok. Tommy is working on 42nd St., Peter is staying with friends one more day. Milda and Terri cry and hug each other and promise not to indulge in silly feuds again.

In my cousin's case, it took him almost an hour to get down 63 flights and the #2 Tower collapsed when he was three blocks away. Remember the passenger who mentioned shoes? Bobby said literally thousands of women's shoes littered the stairwell. Heels are not made for racing down stairs while the sprinklers are going off. The shoes that the passenger saw were probably from women running for their lives as the debris was falling around them. Terry Kelton and the whole medical staff got out all right, as did all my co-workers in the train station.

I offer my prayers for the families of those who are dead or missing. Our ministers and politicians try to make some sense out of this. Our president has promised swift retribution. I'm waiting for Dr. Joyce Brothers to check in. The talking heads keep telling us that we will never be the same again. Maybe not. If we learned anything from September 11, it is the fragility of existence. I'm sure that the spirits of those who went before us would want us to change. To do some good to overcome the evil that seems to surround us.

We have that power.





## A VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

**Editor's Note:** Alison Lane Baxter graduated from Urbana University in May 2001, and had the honor of being valedictorian. Because she was a Swedenborgian student, Dr. Robert Head, the new president of the university, asked her to send her speech in to The Messenger, which she did. She and her husband Kevin are enrolling at the Pacific School of Religion this fall.

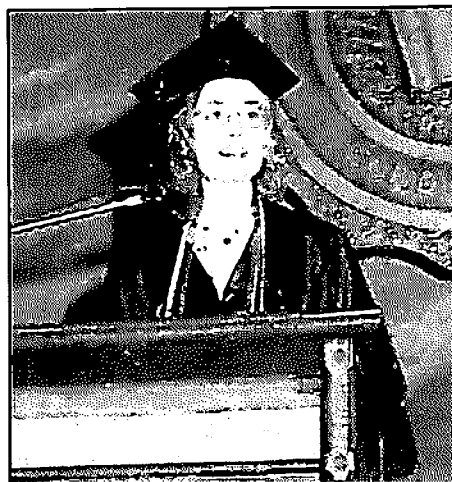
### A Valedictory Address

by Alison Lane Baxter

Graduates, Faculty, and Guests—

At the present time, I may have no earth-shattering wisdom to impart about success or happiness, but I can say that each of us here today, ready to graduate, has accomplished something important in our lives. And with every significant accomplishment, I believe, comes reflection. In my own case, I think about what brought me here to Urbana University. Even though I was born and raised in Kansas, Urbana University has always been a household name in my family. Exactly sixty years ago, my grandfather graduated from this college. Around the dinner table, he would tell stories about his time at the college, such as the times he would have to wake up at 5 o'clock in the morning, walk up the hill to Browne Hall, and shovel coal and stoke the furnace there—at that time, he said, Browne Hall was the girl's dorm.

My grandfather {the Rev. Eric Zacharias} later became a minister in the Swedenborgian church—and has always been, along with my parents, an inspiration to me. About five years ago, when I needed to make a decision about what college I was going to attend, I felt that Urbana University was the place for me. I was able to secure a good scholarship, and after I accepted it, my parents drove me out here, and as they were leaving, it was then that I actually stopped to wonder what I was getting myself into—and so far away from home! Fortunately, it turned out that Urbana University was the perfect place for me. I met some wonderful professors, faculty, and friends. I was able to become involved in theater and



had many opportunities for one-on-one learning—all experiences I would not have been able to have had I attended a larger university. And for me, as a member of the Swedenborgian Church—the denomination that founded this school—I was able to connect with those roots, as I would not have elsewhere.

At this time of my life, when I not only grew in knowledge, but as a person, my experiences here at Urbana enriched my life. I only hope I have given something back to this university. I believe my years at Urbana University have served me well, and I hope that you, the graduating seniors, and any alumni in the audience, feel the same way. This fall, my husband and I will be heading to Berkeley, California, to continue our education at graduate school, and I will be sorry to leave this place we now consider to be home. May the hard work and dedication that each of us has put into our education here at Urbana help us to overcome the challenges in our lives. And perhaps, sixty years from now, our own grandchildren will walk across this stage, and remember the tales they heard from the class of 2001.



**When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible but in the end, they always fall—think of it, *always*.**

—Mahatma Gandhi

*If you can look with compassion upon those who have suffered and those who have committed acts of cruelty alike, then you will see that all are suffering. The remedy for suffering is not to inflict more suffering. This is an opportunity for a massive expression of compassion. It is also an opportunity for a massive expression of revenge. Which world do you intend to live in—a world of revenge or a world of compassion?*

—Gary Zukav

### Important Church Calendar Dates

September 20 -23 - Cabinet Meeting @ Kemper Road Church

September 29-October 3 - CAM meeting, San Francisco

October 1- Ohio Association Meeting - 1st weekend of October each year

October 5-7 Pacific Coast Association Meeting, Duvall, Washington

October 6-7 - Retirement Committee, Newton, Mass.

October 12-14 - EDSU meeting, Almont, Michigan

October 16-18 - Mid-Atlantic Association, Temenos

October 18-21 - SHS Board Meeting, San Francisco

October 25-28 - General Council Meeting, Blairhaven, Mass.

October 27 - Urbana University Board Meeting, Urbana

November 1-4 - Kansas Association, Camp Menoscah

November 9-11 - Illinois Association

November 9-11 - Investment Committee Meeting, Newton, Mass.

# FRYEBURG ASSEMBLY: A Little Taste of Heaven on Earth

Lee Woofenden

Between the highway and the river: that is both the physical and the spiritual location of Fryeburg New Church Assembly.

Physically, the Assembly is located between Highway 302 as it passes from New Hampshire into Maine, and the beautiful, clear Saco River. In this accessible and beautiful location, over one hundred people of all ages gather for all or part of the two week camp session, starting the first Saturday in August each year.

Spiritually, Fryeburg Assembly is located between the busy, bustling "highway" of our everyday lives in the world, and the peaceful, clear, and flowing water of spiritual inspiration found in the teachings and the fellowship of the Swedenborgian Church.

For those who attend Fryeburg Assembly, it is both a vacation from often too-busy lives and a little taste of heaven right here on earth. No, we're not all angels at the Assembly. But we're growing into angels! And when people young and old, from different places and with different perspectives gather together to share thoughts, feelings, and daily life for a week or two with others who have been touched by our faith, we gain some sense of what angels must experience in their heavenly communities.

The camp schedule at the Assembly is relaxed, with plenty of time for recreation, socializing, or curling up with a good book. Five mornings a week are devoted to learning about our faith, with two lectures for the adults, and classes for the Flames (teens) and Sparks (children 12 and under). The afternoons and evenings are largely unscheduled. Attendees take full advantage of the Saco River, the woods, the front terrace overlooking the river and mountains, and the big front porch and deck on the main building.

Tuesday afternoon we have work day. Everyone, young and old, pitches in to fix, maintain, and improve our camp facilities. Wednesday is outing day; the campers scatter to many enjoy-

able locations in the area, returning for soup and salad at the end of the day. And Sundays we join the congregation of the Fryeburg New Church for worship in town.

The Assembly has become a spiritual family for many who have attended over the years. And it is a family that loves to welcome new members. When you're planning your vacation for next summer, consider spending a week or two with us in the spiritual place between the highway and the river.

Here's what a few friends have to say about the Fryeburg New Church Assembly:

Fryeburg for me is a little slice of heaven. It is wonderful to be surrounded by friends who value what I do, and who are working towards the same goal. There is a spiritual atmosphere there . . . Maybe it is sparked by the wind in the pines, or the purple mountains in the distance. The lectures feed my craving for understanding, and I love the luxury of having time to think about them, and discuss them afterward. I love to have a solid week to spend with my sisters, and with other dear friends. In short, I wouldn't consider *not* going to Fryeburg. In all my forty-seven years, I think I've missed only two or three years.

—Gloria Costello, member  
Bridgewater church, Bridgewater, Mass.

Summer camp is a high point in the year for those of us who know about it and are lucky enough to be able to get here. The content, the company, and the setting all help to make it a time for spiritual renewal. The number of young people here tells us the Assembly is alive and well. If you are unable to get here yourself, your support will help ensure that summer camp will continue for many years.

—Ron Davies  
West Palm Beach, Florida  
affiliations with Wilmington, & Deland, Florida churches

Fryeburg Assembly is important to me because it gives me a place where I can be myself and feel accepted.

—Emily Turley, Flame, member  
Fryeburg church, Fryeburg, Maine

Since 1950 Fryeburg has been a cherished part of every August for us. Those who attend become part of an extended family. All of our children could hardly wait for Fryeburg time as they were growing up. And now they have children of their own, and they are giving their kids the chance to be part of the magic that is Fryeburg.

—Rev. Bill Woofenden, member  
Elmwood church, Elmwood, Mass.

## FNCA Needs Your Support for These Special Funds:

- **Bricks and Mortar Fund:** For the immediate physical facility needs of the Assembly.
- **Scholarship Fund:** To provide assistance for individuals and families to attend camp sessions.
- **2031 Endowment Fund:** A nest egg that will move the Assembly towards self-sufficiency in the future.

Please send your tax-deductible contributions to:  
Fryeburg New Church Assembly  
c/o Todd Woofenden, Treasurer  
422 River Road  
Bowdoinham, ME 04008  
Visit FNCA online at [www.fnca.org](http://www.fnca.org)

And let us know if you would like to receive the bulletin announcing next year's camp session.



Thank You!



Sparks games on the terrace.




Young and old enjoy the front porch.



Young canoeists on the river.


# YOUTH RETREAT REPORT

*Ken Turley*

The Annual Memorial Day Weekend 2001 Youth Retreat was held in Maine at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly this year. With members from both the Youth League and the Transitions group, there was a wide age span of participants, as young people from aged 13 to well into their 30s attended. Two Fryeburg church leaguers were there, Casey Baker, and Emily Turley, and Ethan Turley came for a couple of sessions as well. The Rev. Ken Turley led sessions entitled "Sports as Spiritual Practice" and, with Laurie Turley's help, "Music as Worship." The Revs. Wilma Wake and Nadine Cotton led a combined session entitled "Basic Swedenborgian Concepts and Stumbling Blocks to Spirituality." The theme of the retreat this year was "Spiritual Practice in The Material World." The participants were introduced to a new cuisine at both of their lunch menus—a beautiful banquet of macrobiotic, natural foods was served by Nancy and Ron Antonucci, and they were on hand to talk with everyone and share their knowledge about eating healthy foods. On Sunday morning, the retreat participants provided our church service with some of the music they had been singing at the retreat. Many thanks to Sage Currie who organized this retreat. It was a weekend well spent! 

## Fryeburg Youth League Update

On Sunday, June 3rd, the Fryeburg New Church Youth League again visited Hick Assisted Living Center and took some folks there for a walk around the neighborhood. Youth met at the church and walked to Hicks, where we got some practice in how to maneuver an occupied wheelchair before taking residents for short outings. The Youth Group has begun to visit this home for the elderly once a month doing various activities with the residents who live there.

*The Rev. Ken Turley is pastor of the Swedenborgian Church in Fryeburg, Maine.* 

## Fryeburg New Church Assembly 2001 Lecture Tapes

Tapes of the August 2001 lecture series at this year's New Church Assembly session are now available. Recorded on a new sound system, the quality is excellent. Each tape has two lectures, and they can be purchased for \$5.00 apiece or \$20.00 for one week (5 tapes). Please include \$4.00 shipping and handling. Send check or money order made out to: The Fryeburg New Church, 4 Oxford Street, Fryeburg, ME 04037

### Fryeburg New Church Assembly Lecture Schedule 2001

#### 1st Week: "FNCA: What's The Use?"

The doctrine of uses is fundamental to the Swedenborgian perspective on life. This week we will examine the concept of "uses" from the context of our time here at Assembly each summer. What use does Assembly serve for those who attend? For the Swedenborgian Church at large? For the local and world community in which it exists? What use do we serve when we attend and how does attending Assembly affect the use we serve in our home communities? In short, how does a theological doctrine get put to "use" in real life and how does it serve our spiritual regeneration?

Lectures 1st Week: "FNCA: What's The Use?"		
1st week	1st Lecture	2nd Lecture
Monday	George Dole "Some Natural Uses"	Ken Turley "Givers, Takers and Users: A Brief History"
Tuesday	Bill Woofenden "Doing Truths Is Performing Uses"	George Dole "Some Spiritual Uses"
Thursday	Lee Woofenden "The Swedenborgian Church: What's the Use?"	Bill Woofenden "Use Is the Method of Creation"
Friday	The Flames (Youth) "How We See it"	Ken Turley "If Not Us, Who? If Not Now, When?"
Saturday	The Trustees/Exec Com. "How We See it"	

#### 2nd Week: "Bad Guys In The Bible"

From the Swedenborgian perspective of correspondence, we look at the inner sense of the Bible as representing the ongoing development of an individual's spiritual growth in relationship to God. There are plenty of "good guys" to relate to and emulate, but what do we do with all of those "bad guys?" What do they tell us about ourselves, our relationship with God and life in the world?

Lectures 2nd Week: "Bad Guys In The Bible"		
2nd Week	1st Lecture	2nd Lecture
Monday	Lee Woofenden "Intro to Bad Guys of the Bible"	Ken Turley "Women with Reptiles: Genesis and Revelation"
Tuesday	Andrew Dole "Should Swedenborgians Pay Attention to Paul?"	Dorothea Harvey "Jezebel: 1 Kings 16-2 Kings 9"
Thursday	Susannah Currie "The Fall of Saul"	Bill Woofenden "A 'Good' Bad Guy Named David"
Friday	Bill Woofenden "Another 'Good' Bad Guy Named Solomon"	George Dole "Jeroboam I: 1 Kings 21:1-16"
Saturday	George Dole "Manasseh: 1 Kings 17-18"	Ken Turley "Judas Iscariot"

## ALMONT REVISITED: *A Personal Pilgrimage*

David J. Fekete

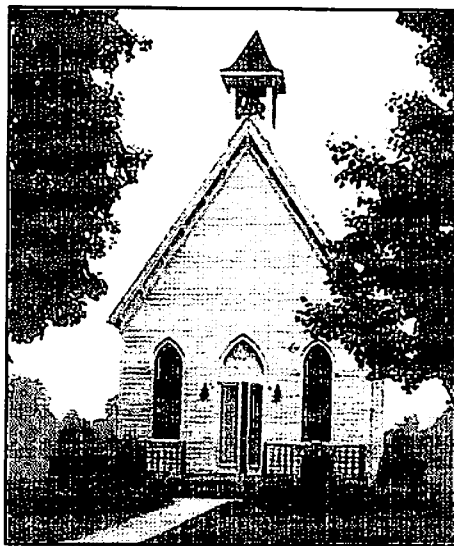
I grew up attending Almont New Church Assembly. I began in the little boys' dorm, moved up to the big boys' dorm, and then into my own room in the big house. My relationship to the camp evolved as I grew. As a child I enjoyed the crafts and games the camp provided for me. As a teen, it was a requirement that we conduct an evening chapel service, so I did. As a young adult, I printed a daily newspaper about the day's activities at camp. I also served as the big boys' dorm father one year. Later, as a candidate for ordination, I delivered lectures.

Many of my most powerful experiences of love came from camp. And most of my early systematic instruction in Swedenborgian doctrine came from lectures at Almont. For much of my upbringing, Almont was the focal point of my relationship to the Swedenborgian Church.

But I have a checkered past with Almont and with the church. I have clashed with authorities in both power structures. So it isn't too difficult to understand why I wanted a break from camp and from church.

My hiatus took place geographically and intellectually in the university. I pursued religious studies from an objective, detached, scholarly point of view at the University of Virginia. The Bible was a historical document recording the faith perspective of an ancient Near-Eastern religious community. The doctrines of Swedenborg sat in my memory alongside those of Saint Augustine and others, and none of it mattered to my soul.

I made a partial return to religion when I gave up my addiction to alcohol and entered a spiritual Twelve-Step recovery program. It was just the transition I needed. Their spirituality was open-minded, asking nothing more than the acknowledgment of a Higher Power of my own understanding, and a moral inventory. They often contrasted their spirituality with religion. They liked



to say, "Religion is for people who want to go to heaven; spirituality is for people who have been through hell." But their very open-minded acceptance of broad spiritual concepts constituted a theological problem for me. There was no structure, no systematic theology, no clearly defined faith. I needed more. It was time for me to rediscover religion. I decided to attend Almont New Church Assembly this summer.

With my clouded past and the internal hiatus from personal devotion I had been through, I wondered about attending Almont. It is said that you can't go home again. Would I be able to recover some of the personal connection with God and my church that I had known in my younger years?

I was surprised to find that Almont worked a profound effect on me. Faith was pervading my spirit almost from the time I set foot on campus. Swedenborg's wonderful teachings began to live for me again. I found myself in the library poking around in *Heaven and Hell* and *The Compendium*, searching out truths from affection. I listened and spoke in discussion groups after lecture.

Everywhere I went I experienced charity. If an empty seat was next to someone, be they old acquaintance or stranger, I was welcomed to sit down. Considering the often icy world of the university, where it seemed some took pleasure in turning a cold shoulder to their neighbor, or sharpening their wit with a surgical cut, the warm embrace I felt from every camper at Almont was striking. And infectious.

Since I still carried stress from my job during the first few days of camp, and my sleep pattern was consequently disturbed, I wasn't able to participate fully in morning activities. But by mid-week, Almont's peace filled my soul and I slept well and woke early—eager to experience another day of faith and charity. During the first few days of camp, I found myself somewhat unfairly sizing up campers by superficial criteria. But by the end of camp, external differences dissolved, and I joyfully spoke from and to the soul.

I usually spent a portion of my afternoon free time listening to my favorite classical music with my portable CD player and headphones. And again, as campers walked past me, inevitably I would receive a friendly wave, smile, or nod, confirming my humanity and recognizing my presence.

This was the way of Almont. I could see it in the many tokens of affection the young adults bathed each other with—the back massages, holding hands on the way to chapel, stroking each others' hair. I could see it in the young parents caring for their babies and receiving help randomly from friends old and young. I could see it in the elders who rocked in chairs in the Big House exchanging pleasantries and talking about the old days.

The spirit of the camp is well summed up by a quote from Swedenborg that I saw printed on one camper's T-shirt, "Angels render him all the kindly services he can desire" (*Arcana Coelestia* 314). It is summed up in the Survivor song, "Friends are friends forever if the Lord is Lord of them. And a friend will not say never, for the welcome never ends." I found Almont to be a place "on earth as it is in heaven."

I came to Almont wondering whether I could find God. Through the dear people who made up the camp, God found me.

*David Fekete graduated from Urbana and SSR, received his M.A. from Harvard Divinity School, and his Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. He currently resides in Naples, Florida.*



## SWEDENBORGIAN HOUSE OF STUDIES

(Continued from 124)

belong to a beginning Ph.D. group of about 40 scholars (across all fields), and approximately twenty professors across the GTU comprise the core faculty in my field of Christian Spirituality.

We will also be conducting a search process this year for the first Professor of Swedenborgian Studies at PSR. I feel confident of our prospects for outstanding growth for our fledgling scholarly community through this appointment. In addition to my role as a teaching Acting Dean and Professor of Swedenborgian Studies (to be installed next fall), we are in dialog with twenty or so scholars with solid credentials for aspects of Swedenborgian thought. These are individuals from around the world who are willing to come for a semester of guest teaching. The GTU, with its breadth and depth and its official

relationship with the University of California (one block away), is a scholar's dream. Our spring 2002 visiting scholar will be Gregory Johnson, a newly-minted Ph.D. whose dissertation centers heavily on Swedenborg and Kant. Dr. Johnson is a specialist on Swedenborg's impact on the 19<sup>th</sup> century in general.

Finally, thanks to Professor Jane Williams-Hogan at Bryn Athyn College, who is one of the coordinating planners, I have been invited to be a presenter at a major conference in October on American Metaphysical Movements at California State University at Fullerton. My paper will focus on the attraction of numerous 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century metaphysical movements to immutable laws and the relation of science to spirit (e.g., Christian Science, Religious Science, Divine Science, Unity, etc.) and their connections of formative influence through Swedenborg's writings. The paper is titled, "Swedenborg and the 'Science' of American Metaphysical Movements."

## The Odyssey of Life: Different Ways We Are Called To Serve The Lord

(Continued from page 125)

"Seven" the disciples reply.

Then Jesus asks them, "Now, do you understand?"

They didn't. Do we understand what Jesus meant? Probably not, at least not without thinking about it. The bread and wine are visible elements, true, but they point to the invisible purposes of God.

First, it is the Spirit of Christ, not the bread of the establishment, who will feed us and truly satisfy our hunger.

Second, people who eat this bread can trust each other and don't have to fear each other. In Christ, we are all one family.

Third, this bread and wine remind us that we are not thrown into this insane world with only our own abilities to cope with what is about us. We are safe within the care of God.

Fourth, when we eat this bread our lives are changed. This bread is God's promise of power and courage and guidance in the days ahead. Eat this meal in your wilderness. Bring your best

hurts, your greatest angers, your weakness of faith, your small visions. God will mercifully take them, break them, bless them, give them back to you, and you will be changed. When we partake of the bread and wine and are unrepentant, unable to let go of how we've been, then we shall not be satisfied. But when we come to the meal repentant, willing to let go of what we've been, what we've done or failed to do, then we shall be satisfied indeed.

To which I add the one truth I have learned: God moves straight ahead, but in winding and twisting pathways. So don't worry so much about how you're called to serve God. Just serve!

*The Rev. Keith Tussing has been involved with the Virginia Street church since 1983, and as interim pastor there, whenever needed, for nine years. His prior religious background is with the United Church of Christ. He is currently one of four senior management executives of the Walker Methodist Senior Health Care Services Co. He is working toward a Doctorate of Ministry, which is more oriented toward the academic, teaching level of ministry.*



## OPEN HOUSE

SHS hosted an Open House September 12<sup>th</sup>, 4-6 p.m. for the PSR community, Bay Area Swedenborgians, and interested friends, and a great time was had by all.

*The Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence is Acting Dean of the Swedenborg House of Studies. He is also president of the Pacific Coast Association and on the boards of the Swedenborg Foundation and Wayfarers Chapel.*



## The Rev. David Rienstra Retires

On May 20, 2001, The Rev. David Rienstra, pastor of the Church of the Open Word, St. Louis Swedenborgian Church, was honored by the congregation with a tribute to his 14 years' service to the church and the community.

An album of memories was presented to David, with letters from the Rev Ron Brugler, denomination president, George McCurdy, and the Rev. Walter Orthwein remembering seminary days. The Rev. Dr. Reuben Bell reminisced about his experience of David's influence on his life and how he became Swedenborgian and ultimately a minister. Several members of the congregation spoke of their personal experience and David's influence on their spiritual lives. Approximately 50 people attended the retirement party. Dave and his wife Diane moved to Alaska in July.

On August 29, the Rienstras sent the following e-mail message to Sue Burns and other members of the St. Louis church:

"Hi to all, Diane and I had a long journey, about 4000 miles. All went well for the most part...Hope all is well...our new address is: P.O. Box 521877, Big Lake, AK 99652. Our phone is (907) 892-6698...

Please keep us on the mailing list, we want to keep in touch. God Bless you all, David & Diane."



*Dave receives gifts from congregation members Emily Harris and Marty Mason.*



## The Design of Existence: Emanation from Source to Creation

by Wilson Van Dusen

Reviewed by Wilma Wake

I was excited to hear this past spring that Wilson Van Dusen had a new book coming out. I was so excited, in fact, that I flew to Philadelphia for a weekend in May to hear him talk about his new book at the Swedenborg Foundation and then to participate in a workshop he did the next day at Temenos. I left with a sense of being filled with Van Dusen's gentle words as well as his warm smile.

I had been reading Wilson Van Dusen long before I discovered Swedenborg. Or, to be more accurate, it was through Van Dusen's works that I first heard of Swedenborg. Other people I encountered that weekend in May said the same thing; it was his writings that brought them to Swedenborg. Van Dusen has helped me understand Swedenborg in everyday words that make sense in my life. He has helped me appreciate mysticism, and how Swedenborg's work relates to world mysticism.

He does even more in his new book, *The Design of Existence: Emanation from Source to Creation*. He states in the postscript: "My whole life has been a search for the design of it all. To me, this book is just a first approximation" [183]. In this book, he shares with us more openly his understanding of the design of it all.

He writes that "At the level of the One, which is the All, there is complete unity" [145]. This part is similar to what mystics have said before as well as philosophers of the perennialist school. They are sometimes criticized for seeing all varieties of mystical experience as the same, thereby losing the subtle differences and cultural contexts.

But Van Dusen offers us a yet deeper design by moving to the next level of existence which is the representations of

the One. Or God Incarnate. Here the many different paths provide their own unique way of connecting with the Divine, through Jesus, Muhammad, Vishnu. These representations become internalized and lead us to the One. Then there is the God within that leads us to the Divine {41}.

Van Dusen says the principle of spiritual relativity was given to him to help explain this. Religions are themselves only relative realities that come out of a culture, and can disappear just as a culture can vanish [150]. That which has reality in a religion is the quality of the lives of its adherents. So a religion filled with deep truths would be meaningless if no one were living those truths and using them to find the pathway to God.

Van Dusen shows how Swedenborg's writings illustrate important dimensions of spiritual relativity [e.g. Hell is a place filled with falsities, with illusion that leads us from God. Heaven is real, and takes us to God]. Yet there are some areas of spirituality that Swedenborg rarely discusses [e.g. spiritual disciplines]. Other religions, such as Buddhism, have more to say in that area. Some of the seeming contradictions in religions [e.g. reincarnation] come from not fully understanding the concept. His treatment of reincarnation in this book is the most complete and most understandable I have seen him do on this subject. It provides rich insight for interfaith dialog.

Van Dusen says that the final universal elements found by the world's mystics are:

- The One [given various names] is the All.
- The One created all other levels of existence out of itself, as levels of its manifestation. These levels include us.
- A moral life is an essential element of the return to the One in this life and, in heaven.
- There is a universal wish to return to and know God. Much of the return path is subtly built into our life. It is marked by a unique joy and pleasure.

Van Dusen begins his book by saying, "The design of the whole of existence is

an awesome idea" [ix]. This is certainly true! His book gives us a peek into a way of beginning this perspective. Using Swedenborg's writings is an important element of understanding this design.

Van Dusen says that he hopes others will come after him to keep developing a universal design of existence. I only partly share this hope. I would like to see Van Dusen himself continue to write in this vein, and continue to bring his mysticism, his Swedenborgianism, and his vast knowledge of world religions and psychology to publication to be shared with us all.

*The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is a part-time associate professor with the Swedenborg House of Studies, teaching online spirituality courses. She is the author of two recently published books, one with the Swedenborg Foundation and the other with J. Appleseed & Co., our denominational publisher.*

To order, call the Swedenborg Foundation at 1-800-355-3222.



## Angel of Light

Book and Artwork by Richard James Cook  
Reviewed by Renee Billings-Machiniak

I gave myself two full quiet hours sitting in a park, as children played on swings and climbed on ladders, to read the book *Angel of Light*, by Richard James Cook. The beautiful artwork, also created by the author, drew me into the life and journey of a father who found a remarkable inner peace alongside the pain and struggle of the loss of his first child, Laura Elizabeth, to a rare heart disease. The book, released this year by Fountain Publishing, offers the reader an unusual glimpse of coping with the very first moments, days, and weeks of a devastating diagnosis. It then carries us along with him in a very personal way through the story of Laura's life and the insights and experiences gleaned from his time with her, his grief, and his discovery of true happiness and love centered in the healing presence of the Lord's mercy and guidance.

*(Continued on page 135)*

## BIRTH

**Donnell-Samantha Donnell** was born July 8, to Jodie Young, daughter of Allen Young. Samantha is the seventh great grandchild of longtime Boston church member Dorothy DeB. Young and the late Lawrence C. Young.

## BAPTISMS

**Blackman-Ruby Alice Blackman**, daughter of Bill and Amy (Perry) Blackman, was baptized into the Christian faith August 6, 2001, at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating.

**Craig-Colin Steven Craig**, born January 31, 2001, was baptized into the Christian faith July 15, 2001, at the worship service in Kelowna, B.C., by his great grandfather, the Rev. Erwin Reddekopp. His parents are Donald & Lisa Craig of Almont, Michigan. His uncle, Marc Reddekopp, is his Godfather.

## CONFIRMATIONS

**Brakman, Cressman, Devereaux, De Wolf, Duffy, Hartshorne-Pete Brakman**, Richard Cressman, Tom Devereaux, Carol and John De Wolf, Janet Duffy, and Dave Hartshorne were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church July 22, 2001, at the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos, West Chester, Pennsylvania, the Rev. Susannah Currie officiating.

## MARRIAGES

**Wise and Moran-Joyce Wise and Robert Moran** were united in marriage January 1, 2001, at the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Mass., the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating.

**Keefe and Chambers-Michelle Keefe and Al Chambers** were united in marriage May 17, 2001, at the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Mass., the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating.



## DEATHS

**Peebles-Robert M. Peebles**, 83, member of the Boston Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world May 12, 2001. A memorial was held in New York May 19, and a brief service in his memory was also given at the Boston church Memorial Day Sunday by the Rev. Steve Ellis. He is survived by his wife, Trudy, and other relatives including his brother, Thomas C. Peebles, his sister, Carolyn McLain, and a nephew, Andrew McLain.

**Titus-Alicia Titus**, age 28, eldest daughter of John and Bev Titus, entered the spiritual world September 11, 2001, in New York (see front page). Her memorial service was held September 17, 2001, at the Lutheran Church in Urbana, Ohio, (our Urbana church couldn't hold the number of people attending), officiated by the Revs. Ronald

Brugler, Renee Billings-Machiniak, and consecrated lay leader Betsy Coffman. The Rev. Carl Yenetchi and other Swedenborgian ministers also participated in the service. Special memorials to Alicia will be published in the November *Messenger*. Cards may be sent to 9045 N. Territorial Rd., Dexter, MI 48130. (734) 424-9127, e-mail: jtitus@aol.com

Mona Conner, New York church member, sent us this e-mail on September 16:

"In Union Square Park a large memorial gathering goes on all day and night with hundreds of candles, pictures, flowers—with music and fellowship and singing. Soon after Tuesday's events an artist laid out an endless roll of white paper that is beginning to extend all around the outside and inside of the park, and many markers so that people could express their feelings in pictures and words and express condolences to those who lost family members and friends...This afternoon, I added a message in memory of Alicia, inside the park on the long roll of paper...words arranged inside a big heart:

*"In loving memory of Alicia Titus ("Lish"), daughter of Bev and John; beloved friend of Jenn, Missy, and MANY; sister; shining light; and stewardess on flight 175. By the members of the New York New Church and ALL, across the country. We love you...We will remember your love. Love + Wisdom."*

## Angel of Light

(Continued  
from page 134)

The reader is guided first through the sequence of events and impressions felt by his entire family and then, once captivated by the honesty and emotions of it all, the reader is graced by the paintings and reflections that followed from her passing. This is a gentle and stirring way to introduce New Church ideas in the context of real life-and-death experience. The author adds biblical and theological reflections alongside the artwork, which leads the imagination to move forward in a simple and free form.

As I read about Laura Elizabeth and her family's journey into LIFE, I recalled my dear friend, Sandy Greiner, and the



loss of her young niece. I recalled the loss of my own baby to miscarriage, and other parents I've come to know who live with the loss of a child—and I am left with a quiet knowing, an ache and longing at times, that confirms the truth this book offers. The presentation of the writing and the way the artwork flows with it encourages reflective reading and contemplation. We are given an opportunity with this book to feel the reality of our own faith, and we are left comforted and inspired by a world waiting for us all; a world of light, transformation and peace.

*The Rev. Renee Billings-Machiniak is pastor of the Detroit Swedenborgian Church of the Holy City in Royal Oak, Michigan.*

*Angel of Light* is published by Fountain Publishing, Rochester, Michigan. Order through amazon.com or contact Fountain Publishing for an order form: 1-877-736-8598, or e-mail FtnPublish@aol.com



**Unruh-Doris Elizabeth Nairn Unruh**, 84, wife of the Rev. Galen Unruh and longtime member of the Swedenborgian Church in Pawnee Rock, Kansas, entered the spiritual world July 16, 2001, in Hutchinson, Kansas. A resurrection service was conducted July 18, 2001, in Great Bend, the Rev. Eric Zacharias officiating. Mrs. Unruh is survived by her husband, Galen; two sons, Stephen and Stanley; three daughters, Janice Beougher, Carole Bowman, and Sharon Billings; and numerous siblings, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. She was known for her fine singing voice and is greatly missed by her family.

## Church Family News

The Rev. Marlene Laughlin has undergone successful surgery for cancer and has completed radiation treatment. She is recovering at her brother's home at 3808 West Ave. N., Palmdale, CA 93551. (661) 947-1741. She is looking forward to returning to Wayfarers Chapel in November, and wants everyone to know how much she appreciates all the outpouring of care and concern.





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 15 years after his death. This 1787 organization eventually spawned the present General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches. As a result of Swedenborg's own spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church today 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. Swedenborg shared in his theological writings 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 would conclude, "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.

**Editor's Note:** The following article is the author's commentary on his latest book, *The Design of Existence*, published by the Swedenborg Foundation, Chrysalis Books, 2001.

## The Design of Existence

*Wilson Van Dusen*

Is there a design to existence? Mystics are religious empiricists who explore and report back what they find. Swedenborg is one of the greatest of these. I have been exploring the world's mystics for some years. I asked myself if the overall design of existence could now be described. The basic design is that the One (called God and various other names) creates out of Itself all the levels and orders of existence. We ourselves are several levels of this creation, a spirit in a body. There is a general desire for all that is from the One to come back to the One. So the general design is from the One, into all levels of existence, to return home to the One. Heaven is the main aspect of the conscious human return to the One. But in the world's spiritual discoveries it is the heaven and hell aspect which is the least known. I use Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* as the best description of that aspect of the design. So with Swedenborg's work we can now describe the design of existence. Obviously, to be widely accepted the design needs to be stated in universal terms. In describing the Godhead I do it from a universal perspective that could be accepted by any religion.

I am well aware that this book is a daring first approximation to the overall design. Hopefully the idea of an agreed upon design could one day be taught with each religion describing the Godhead in its own frame of reference. The most critical aspect of the design is already agreed upon. Our choices here very much condition our eternity. Hell represents poor and self-defeating choices. Heaven is a hierarchy of the return to the One. With

Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* we now have all the essentials of the design of existence in place. There is some advantage in knowing the design so that we can cooperatively work with it and enjoy this fabulous aspect of our existence.

Looking across religions, I see some differences that are better cleared up. Part of the internal design of persons is that they have an internal way to return to the experience of the One. The eastern religions (especially Hinduism and Buddhism) are strong in spiritual practices that lead toward the experience of God. So I go into the process of exploring our inner life.

Another apparent difficulty is that eastern religions believe in reincarnation, whereas western Christianity generally does not. It turns out reincarnation is only a relative truth in the east. It has social uses, making people try harder. Yet any degree of the direct experience of God ends reincarnation, thus showing that it is not absolutely true. Yet, in spite of these differences, which only seem to divide us, all religions tend to agree that how we live has a direct bearing on our eternity. This book circles around a powerful idea that we can know and work cooperatively with the overall order of things. We don't know all the details of the design, but we know enough now to live and act more confidently.

*Wilson Van Dusen, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist, Swedenborgian scholar, mystic, and author of numerous books on the inner world.*

*Wilma Wake's review of his book is on page 134.*



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