

# THE MESSENGER

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## Ethics and War

Ted Klein

Growing into early adult life, I came to hold beliefs that can be described as part of a just-war ethic. A powerful force helping to shape those beliefs was hearing about World War II as necessary. Another powerful force was growing up in a Swedenborgian environment and becoming familiar with teachings in Swedenborg's theological works about war being necessary in some situations.

What is involved in a just-war ethic? Each of the following beliefs seems central for the view that in some situations wars are just:

- ▶ It is just for a nation to go to war when attacked.
- ▶ In some instances, it is just to go to war in defense of other nations who have been attacked.
- ▶ War is just as a "last resort" when all other alternatives are exhausted.
- ▶ War is just if there is strong evidence the harms resulting from not going to war will be greater than the harms resulting from going to war.
- ▶ As part of acting justly in war, a nation's actions should never be directed at non-combatants.

These beliefs all seem to be either implied or stated somewhere in Swedenborg's theological works. For example, wars in defense of one's country are described as in harmony with charity (*True Christian Religion*, no 407).

It is said to be allowable to defend one's country and fellow citizens, but not to make oneself an enemy without cause (*Divine Providence*, no. 252:2). The idea of war as acceptable in defense but not attack supports the need to

seriously consider if a "pre-emptive strike," as is being discussed in relation to Iraq, is just or ethically acceptable.

When I moved from Pennsylvania to Boston in 1964 to do graduate work in philosophy, I firmly believed in ideas of just-war ethics. But during the turbulent times of the mid and late 1960s, I was deeply affected by the Civil Rights movement and became interested in the idea of nonviolence. I came to question the Vietnam War and wondered if it was possible in the modern world for wars to be just. Yet I was uncomfortable with an absolute pacifism which would rule out all wars and perhaps even use of force in defense of self or others.

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wonder if there is a way to combine, or develop an alternative to, just-war ethics on one hand and pacifism on the other. I think that in some situations war has been the "least bad" option, but I also believe that in many situations alternatives to war have not been pursued strongly enough before engaging in war. The terrible events of September 11, 2001, with the loss of Alicia Titus and many others, along with the "war on terror" and a possible war with Iraq, add much urgency to seeking alternatives to war.

Some teachings in Swedenborg's theological works give support to seeking alternatives to war. For example, a heavenly community is described as one in which each person is nurtured and contributes to others and the whole (*Heaven and Hell*, no. 64). This can be taken as an ideal for communities on earth. The idea of a community among individuals can be extended to the idea of communities of communities and a world community of nations.

We could develop an ethic of alternatives to war, drawing on the following principles.

- ▶ Support the least degree of force necessary, and use violence only defensively and when alternatives to violence have been exhausted.
  - ▶ Whenever possible use protective force (example: separating people who are fighting), and not force involving violence.
  - ▶ Do all possible to further cooperation among individuals, among groups, and among nations.
  - ▶ Work for community at all levels, from families and individual relationships to world community, with the ideas that "all matter" and "all count."
  - ▶ Work to change great disparities, such as those in resources and power, these being unjust and connected with war.
  - ▶ Work for ways of living in harmony with nature and sustainably on the earth (conditions which relate to peace among peoples).
- What might looking to such principles mean for day to day life? Locally people can make efforts to address needs of those who are disadvantaged, efforts to build cooperation among diverse people and

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## The Other Side of Loss

When the small black cat jumped onto the table in the midst of our study group in 1992, I asked who he belonged to. He'd shown up there at Jan's Art Barn a few days before and nobody seemed to have a clue where he'd come from. He was flirting with me, I was certain of it; was he answering the silent wish I'd had for the past few months that a cat would come into my life? Was he the one? I waited a week, and woke to the realization that I would be devastated if he had wandered off with somebody else while I was trying to make up my mind. A frantic call to Jan's brother Bob: Is that black kitty still hanging around? He is, Bob said—Do you want him? I drove over to Jan's immediately and took him home, and named him Julian, hoping that naming him after the town where I wanted to be would hasten and bless my move.

I flew with him from Indiana to L.A., then drove down to move into my house in Julian in late May of 1993. Julian Cat weathered many crises and changes over the next ten years. He grew to fourteen pounds, developing a panther-like swagger, a bit of an attitude, and a keen sense of humor. He was shy with strangers, but so affectionate with me that he would hug my arm with his front paws and tuck his head into my shoulder when I picked him up. I have written before about his extra-sensory talents; we were bonded on some kind of psychic level. When I asked him about lost things, or another lost cat, he usually knew where they were. I would listen, concentrating in silence, and his answer would come into my mind. "Your keys are in your robe pocket," I'd tell Steve. "Julian just told me." We would laugh. But indeed, that's where the keys were. Julian would switch his tail and look amused.

In early May of this year, I gave a farewell party for a good friend and neighbor who was moving. It was

typical of Julian to make himself scarce when there was a houseful of strangers, so I wasn't concerned when he didn't show up until the next night. He came in about 8:30 to eat his supper. I barely glimpsed him, and before I could shut the cat door, he hurried back out again, as though he were on a mission.

I never saw him again. At 9:30 the next night I sit on the low garden wall, surrounded by the balmy, lovely scents of a May night. Everything's in bloom. My favorite month. I'm sobbing. "He'll come back," Steve says, "he's only been gone for 24 hours." But I know he's not coming back. I can't feel his energy. I pace the road, looking for the familiar figure hurrying over the rocks, meowing that he is on his way home. My cat, gone after eleven years. The feel of him is written in my flesh. I sit there for hours, crying for him and every other cat friend our family has lost over the years. I post notices all over town, though I know it's futile. As I'm doing this, I keep seeing a notice that a cat with the funny name of Walter needs a loving home. I write down the number, but I don't call.

My older daughter sends me a homemade, hand-decorated Wish Box for Mother's Day, a week after Julian has disappeared. I write out two wishes and put them into the box. One, that Julian will come back, even though I'm sure he has long since become some coyote's dinner. The other wish: that I would be healed of the chronic, debilitating cough that I'd had for nearly two years that no doctor could seem to diagnose. I put a photo of Julian into the Wish Box. My friend Janet sends me a lovely children's book about cats going to a special heaven, and their spirits watching over the homes of the people who loved them.

A month later in early June I'm at the Optimum Health Institute in San Diego for a long-anticipated week of internal cleansing. I no longer have much enthusiasm for it, but I'm trying to convince myself it's important to juice, eat all-raw food, do the program. Maybe if I'm very diligent the cough will leave. At the end of the week I'm feeling lighter, stronger, I've made new friends, but I'm still coughing. Then,

within an hour I'm very sick. Steve drives me to the emergency room of what I'm told is the best hospital in the area. A ruptured appendix. Black, gangrenous, the surgeon later tells me—lucky I was only ten minutes away from the hospital when this happened. I'm dozing in the recovery room after the appendectomy when a seven-foot 200-pound nurse comes in at one a.m. and insists on turning me onto my incision side. I'm comfortable as I am, I protest, but she's adamant. I'm pleading for mercy and yelling for someone to rescue me from this bionic nightmare when I realize that the cough is gone. Probably just a fluke, I think—it will return. But it never has. The cough is gone. I'm healed.

When I return home, something tells me to call the number of the person who's looking for someone to adopt Walter. We have a great conversation. He has eight cats, he explains, or he'd take Walter himself. Really a NICE cat. He says he'll send me photos. I get four pictures of a long-haired cat with tiger stripes and big eyes. In one he's bowing deeply,

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Town & Country  
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Patte LeVan, Editor

Editorial Address:

The Messenger

P.O. Box 985

Julian, CA 92036

TEL: (760) 765-2915

FAX: (760) 765-0218

E-MAIL: messenger@julianweb.com

Business & Subscription Address:

Central Office

11 Highland Ave.

Newtonville, MA 02460

E-Mail: manager@swedenborg.org

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# Building Community Together

The Pacific Coast Association as a community stretches nearly two thousand miles along the Pacific Ocean, encompassing a variety of communities, churches and centers, the latest being the Swedenborgian House of Studies at the Pacific School of Religion.

The PCA's theme at this year's meeting was "Building Community Together," hosted by the Los Angeles Swedenborgian Society. Manon (Washburn) McGee, Merle and Pat Lundberg, and the Rev. Harvey Tafel, PCA president, made up the local committee. The annual meeting took place October 4-6, 2002, at the Hilton, Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro. On Friday evening, the Rev. Ron Brugler, president of our denomination, provided a time of sharing about the larger church and PCA's relationship to the larger picture. On Saturday morning, the Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, dean of the Swedenborgian House of

Studies, aided by SHS student Kathy Speas, brought everyone up to date on the progress and vision of SHS and how SHS can affect and interact with the church communities in PCA. A video made by SHS student Kevin Baxter introduced the current students and staff members, each of whom spoke on aspects of their new roles and the inspiring experience of being part of PSR. The Rev. Eric Allison, pastor of the Puget Sound church, was introduced as the new adjunct faculty member who will be teaching Contemporary Principles of Church Transformation.

Everyone enjoyed the gorgeous weather, stunning views and walks along the harbor, and the delightful Saturday night reception held at Manon and Lee McGee's home in Palos Verdes.

During the business meeting, three new board members were elected: Patte LeVan, secretary; Paula Egan; and Steve Koke to the Nominating Committee.

Stonehouse board member Lon Elmer presented a complete update on the status of the Stonehouse Bookstore and Growth Center (see p. 152).

A lovely Sunday World Wide Communion Service was conducted by the Revs. Marlene Laughlin and Ron Brugler at Wayfarers Chapel, followed by a tour of the Visitors Center.



PCA treasurer Stan Conger and Karen Conger. Stan received a certificate of appreciation for hard work on the Stonehouse financials.

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## Ethics and War

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groups, and efforts to live in harmony with the natural environment. In situations of conflict, people can seek for each side to be heard and taken seriously, and avenues of mediation and cooperation to be explored.

A message especially relevant for people in the United States is to seek understanding of reasons for anti-American hostility in many parts of the world. Instead of writing off those with anti-American sentiments as "enemies," people in the United States can seek to understand what experiences and conditions go with those sentiments. Steps toward such understanding could lead to exploring avenues of cooperation.

Relevant to all nations is the need to mobilize resources to address hunger and starvation wherever they occur in the world. Also relevant is the need to address oppression and great disparities between those who "have" and those who "have not." Cooperation in addressing these

conditions can be vital in forming a cooperative world community of nations.

Especially relevant to developing alternatives to war is developing world peace-keeping forces together with world mediation approaches for situations where war appears to be the only alternative for one or more nations. A great leap forward would involve moderating the idea of acting in the national interest and instead seeking to act in the interest of the world as a whole and in consideration of all in the world community.

A few months ago I learned of programs that bring together people from cultures or nations taken to be enemies, such as Palestinian and Jewish peoples. One program is called "Friends Forever." Another, "Seeds of Peace," was featured in the September, 2002 issue of *The Messenger*. Thinking of programs like this can open the way for hope even in situations that can easily seem hopeless.

My suggestion for an ethic relating

to war is an ethic of most strongly seeking alternatives to war. A risk in pacifism is that it may not allow for a war that may truly be the least bad alternative. A risk of just-war ethics is leaving room for rationalizing wars when all available alternatives have not been fully explored. People inclined toward either pacifism or just-war ethics could join in seeking alternatives to war and the development of a world community.

\* Some ideas in this article were part of one or both earlier presentations: a mini-course for the 2002 Convention on "Personal and Global Peace," and a lecture at the 2002 Fryeburg New Church Assembly on "Alternatives to War."

*The Rev. Dr. Ted Klein is assistant to the pastor at the Boston Swedenborgian Church and is teaching philosophy courses at the University of Massachusetts at Boston.*



## Report on the Rose Hill Office Property—a.k.a the Stonehouse—Owned by the Pacific Coast Association (PCA)

Lon Elmer

The PCA purchased the Rose Hill Office property September 1999, to be the home of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound and the Stonehouse Bookstore & Growth Center. The vision was that rental revenues from the practitioner-tenants, the church, and the bookstore would go to the PCA in order to pay the mortgage and operating expenses of the building complex. It was agreed that the Stonehouse bookstore would not pay rent until it became self-supporting. The PCA believed that its endowment of nearly \$800,000 would sustain it through the years until the Rose Hill property could become financially self-sufficient. This never happened. The Stonehouse managed the property for the PCA. The revenues, instead of being passed on to the PCA, were used to pay operating expenses for the Stonehouse bookstore, including salaries and the building's operating expenses, leaving the PCA to pay the mortgage, loan payments and building improvements out of its endowment. Faced with a critical fiscal meltdown from a severe decline in income from its endowment and the unanticipated expenses needed to sustain the Rose Hill property, the PCA took direct control of the property late last year.

Beginning October 2001, all rental revenues and building expenses went directly to the PCA. By the end of the year, we had taken steps to optimize income and introduced basic management procedures such as: a rent collection report which showed actual monies received, records of all bank deposits; collecting late fees, bad check charges and other fees (as per lease agreements) that had not been enforced; initiated move in/move out inspection procedures, and replaced



*Lon Elmer accepting certificate of appreciation from PCA president Harvey Tafel for his hard work and long hours on the successful Stonehouse sale.*

overpriced, under-performing vendors and contracted services. We also developed an excellent relationship with Lou Orsan, the on-site manager.

The PCA treasurer was faced with the daunting task of sorting out a stack of invoices and a QuickBooks printout in order to pay overdue past bills, current bills, and ongoing expenses. He needed to create a ledger in order to begin tracking expenses.

While we were working to make the property a more efficient operation, we were also investigating the possibility of selling it. We entered into an agreement with Westlake Associates, a highly recommended commercial real estate brokerage firm in Seattle. We immediately rejected offers from developers who wanted to level the building and erect something else. That would have destroyed the church, the bookstore and the practitioner community. By June 29<sup>th</sup>, we were in discussion with buyers—two sisters—who accepted our price of \$2,550,000. The sisters want to maintain the Stonehouse community as long as the tenants—including the bookstore—pay their rent. The energy for this transaction has been most positive.



*SHS student Kathy Speas, SHS Dean Jim Lawrence, Ron Brugler, denomination president; Charlie Bush, member of the Puget Sound church; Patte LeVan, Messenger editor.*



*Ron Brugler and Paul Martin share a reflective moment.*

Everyone at the Stonehouse who has had any contact with the buyers or their representatives has had a very positive response. The sisters' lawyer's wife has attended classes at the Stonehouse. The sisters' broker, who will take over management of the property, likes Lou Orsan and will be retaining him. We are all pleased with this because of Lou's ability to attract tenants who fit in with the Growth Center concept.

Early last year, the church planted a very special tree on the property, a cutting from the last known tree planted by Johnny Appleseed. The children of the church are proud of it and, only a few weeks ago, had watering the tree as part of their Sunday School lesson. The tree is slightly taller than the tallest of the children. As part of our negotiations, we have retained possession of the tree.

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## Building Community Together

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Included in the sales agreement is a "Hold Harmless" clause that releases the new owners from any responsibility to maintain the tree. The clause also allows us to remove the apple tree to another location when, for example, the space that the church currently rents at the Stonehouse becomes too small.

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, at our annual meeting, the PCA Board voted to give a one-time grant of \$10,000 to the Stonehouse. We felt that this was a supportive way of wishing the Stonehouse well as it ventures into its incarnation as a self-supporting entity—a graduation gift of sorts. Because of the delays taken in closing, we believe that the \$10,000 will come from prepayment penalties not needing to be paid. The sale of the Rose Hill property is giving the PCA the money to not only support the Stonehouse Book Store and Growth Center this one last time, but also other programs at the other communities in our Association.

My hope was to have closed by the time of our PCA annual meeting and to have presented the check—an oversized check that would have made an excellent photo op for Patte LeVan and *The Messenger*—to the PCA at the meeting. But Divine Providence overruled Proprium.

PCA Subcommittee for the operation of the Rose Hill Office property:

Rev. Harvey Tafel, president;

Stan Conger, treasurer;

Lon Elmer, Seattle board member

Editor's Note: *The sale closed October 18, 2002.*

—PWL



*The fundamental delusion of humanity is to suppose that I am here and you are out there.*

—Yasutani Roshi

Editor's Note: We have reprinted the following article in order to correct the factual errors that appeared in the first *Messenger* printing in October 2002.

## The New Church in Ohio

### A Brief History of the Swedenborgian Presence

Ken Turley

It is safe to say that the early growth of the New Church, in what was then the Ohio Territories and is now the State of Ohio, is closely linked to the life of one John Chapman. Born in Massachusetts in 1774, he came west to "the Ohio" in his early twenties where he lived and worked as an orchardist and missionary until his passing in 1845. Today he is better known as "Johnny Appleseed," the wilderness wanderer and peaceful planter of apple seeds. While that image is no doubt based in reality, Chapman's ultimate purpose was to plant, in the hearts and minds of the frontier people, spiritual seeds from the Bible and the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, what he called "the good news right fresh from heaven."

All over the world, in all realms of life, it was a time of turmoil, rebellion, independence, and exploration. Immense changes and discoveries were taking place: geographically, of course, but also in art, music, science, economics, politics, and theology. As if to prove the point, only a few years after Swedenborg's revolutionary theology entered the world and began to take on a life independent of the "old church," the Revolutionary War had just given birth to a new nation in the "new world" entirely independent of the "old world." And it was to the growing edge of this new nation that John Chapman, and many other frontier missionaries, would bring the writings of Swedenborg and the doctrines of the New Church.

Emanuel Swedenborg's theological works first appeared in the new world in 1784 through the independent efforts of Hannah Holland Smith and James Glen. James Glen was giving a series of lectures on Swedenborg at Francis Bailey's shop in Philadelphia. Bailey was a fellow printer and close friend of Benjamin Franklin. Glen had

discovered Swedenborg's writings earlier in 1781. What he read had such a profound influence on him that he dedicated the remainder of his life to sharing with others what he had discovered through Swedenborg's writings. After a number of years lecturing, he returned to his wealthy South American plantation, gave it up and freed his 6,000 slaves. He then retired to the jungle where he lived out his life as a hermit and healer to the local native tribes. Around the same time that Glen was lecturing in Philadelphia, Hannah Smith, an immigrant from Holland, was settling in New England bringing some of Swedenborg's works with her. It was most likely during the long, cold winter nights that she found time to translate them into English and then began to share them with her neighbors.

It was just five years later in 1789, the year George Washington was elected President, that John Chapman was a young man in Massachusetts. He had high principles, few means, and even fewer prospects. So, along with many other adventurous souls of his day and age, he looked to the west for a life and occupation. Somewhere between leaving home in Massachusetts and establishing himself as a provider of apple seedlings in the Ohio, he too discovered Swedenborg's writings. They had only recently been published in England and made available in the States and were just beginning to make their way out to the frontier. In them, he discovered a way of looking at Scripture, Christianity, and life that did not require that he choose between faith and knowledge. He found a perspective that brought the intellect and the emotions into balance and harmony in the spirit, the way light and heat are in balance and harmony in the flame. In these writings, so new to

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the world, Chapman found spiritual insight and a new understanding of the relationship between God and humanity, spirit and nature, the Bible and life. And so he was fond of referring to what he read and spoke of as "good news right fresh from heaven."

John Chapman, soon known all around the frontier as Johnny Appleseed, found a way to express this balance of nature and spirit as an orchardist. He went out alone with an ax to hack out small clearings in the wilderness. There he would plant apple seeds and tend them in order to provide, several years later, the incoming settlers with saplings and the fruit and stability they would bring to an often uncertain life. His travels and contact with the settlers also gave him a way to sow the spiritual seeds of love and wisdom in the hearts and minds of people. This "spiritual husbandry" took place in readings and discussions of the Bible and Swedenborg's writings. There were times when these discussions took place in church gatherings, but far more often it was after bartering for seedlings or over a shared chore or in front of a fire late in the evening in some rustic log cabin in an outlying homestead. "Appleseed John" loved the free and enthusiastic exchange of ideas and perspectives, especially about the Bible and heavenly life. And he loved making a living by providing something as beautiful and wonderful as apples, something created by God, useful to all and harmful to none. He saw a direct connection between the spiritual and the natural, in both the seeds he planted and the fruits of his labor.

But "Allegheny Johnny," as he was also called, loved as well to spend time alone out in the wilderness going one on one with God. It was in the wilds of Ohio, in his readings of Swedenborg and contemplations of God and nature, alone with heaven and earth, that he found a vocabulary expressing a divinely inspired and "God given" correspondence between things of spirit and things of nature. He found a

level of meaning in the Bible that portrays both the unfolding of the inner spiritual life of a person as well as the unfolding history of a people, coming into being in a growing relationship with God. In Swedenborg's harmony of science and spirit, Chapman found a scriptural vision of life and salvation as a growth process extending from creation to the ultimate transformation. He saw life taking place in the natural world but having its highest meaning in the spiritual world. It was this new way of seeing, this new perspective, that he most loved sharing with the wide variety of people he encountered in his travels through the Ohio.

But it was not all peace and apple blossoms. In 1812, as the war with England and various native tribes raged on, at the time of the battles of Greentown and the Copus Massacre, John Chapman volunteered to run from Mansfield to Mt. Vernon with a warning to the settlers of an impending attack. Yet even during these dangerous times, he was never known to carry a gun. He simply and quietly kept on with his work and travels and was known by all as a kindly, if not eccentric, man of God. His life is the perfect testament to the tenets of his beliefs. All of the teachings of Jesus, and the ideas from Swedenborg regarding the useful life of faith and charity, found form and statement in the life of John Chapman. His natural life was the hard but rewarding work of bringing fruit trees into being in order to provide sustenance and joy to people. At the same time, his gentle and kindly spiritual work brought people awareness of the divine presence in all of life, the wonders of Scripture and of nature, and the joys of a life that leads to heaven. Johnny Appleseed lived what he taught, both personally and professionally, and in a manner that was offensive to none, while serving both Mother Nature and Heavenly Father.

It is also true that John was not the only New Church missionary of those times. For several years, a Philadelphia merchant by the name of Michael Shlatter had been slipping Swedenborg's writings and New



Two artists' renditions of Johnny Appleseed (Urbana University Museum).



Church teachings into the bales of merchandise that he would ship out to the frontier. These were in the form of books and pamphlets printed by Francis Bailey. And there were other preachers of the New Church persuasion speaking and leading worship on a regular basis in the Ohio. At first, reading groups, and then societies, began to form as people gathered together and found community around New Church worship and the life of charity.

In the late 1790s, a reading circle was formed in Steubenville, led by David Powell. By 1809 the group had formed into what was then the second 'Swedenborgian Church' in the United States. In 1808, Adam Hurdus arrived in Cincinnati and began to preach New Church teachings, accompanying himself on a pump organ he built himself. He attracted many listeners, including members of some of the local native tribes. In 1812, a group at Turtle Creek near Lebanon gathered around the leadership of Thomas Newport. By 1817 records show eighteen different locations in Ohio with groups gathering to worship and to study the Bible and the teachings of Swedenborg. There were now enough bona fide "Swedenborgians" or "New Church folk," as they preferred to be called, to send nearly one hundred representa-

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tives from Ohio to the first General Convention of the New Jerusalem, held back east in Philadelphia. By 1818, forty-five members in Cincinnati incorporated into a "society" and in 1819 built the first New Jerusalem church west of the Alleghenies. By 1822 Hannah Holland Smith had moved from New England out to Cincinnati. She and her ten sons, all over six feet tall and called by the locals, "the sixty foot Smiths," were leading citizens and New Church folk.

In the early 1800s, quite a number of Ohio New Church folk, out of necessity, frustration, and even religious persecution, were seeking opportunities to combine instruction in spiritual matters with the elements of a good higher education. After establishing the first New Church Sunday School in America, Milo G. Williams, a pioneer educator, began to look further. He was friends with Col. John H. James who had married the daughter of Francis Bailey, (the first "new world" printer of Swedenborg's writings mentioned earlier) and who, after moving from Virginia, had settled in Urbana. In 1826, James had met John Chapman personally. Also coming to Urbana were Judge John Young, who had been strongly influenced by Glen's early lectures, and who was now married to Maria Barclay.

Other influential people who were proponents of Swedenborg were settled in nearby Cincinnati, the cultural center of the west, such as Frederick Eckstein, who had married a daughter of Francis Bailey, and was becoming a very influential artist. Alexander Kinmont, a brilliant Edinburgh scholar, had settled there and founded his own school.<sup>1</sup> So it was—some years later and in the context of this growing network of Swedenborgian influence—that when approached by the Rev. James Stuart, a local New Church minister, Col. James readily agreed to donate ten acres of land and, along with Milo Williams, helped organize the effort to build and establish an innovative new college based on New Church teachings and

values. In 1849, the idea of Urbana University came into being.<sup>2</sup> At that time, it and Oberlin College were the only coeducational institutions of higher learning in existence. Since the freedom to pursue truth was, and is, a basic tenet of the Swedenborgian perspective, the founders mandated that "any subject, secular or religious, should be open to inquiry.

By this time, the number of Swedenborgians had grown considerably and were now present in sixty-two cities. Yet political turmoil had already embroiled a growing and all too human church bureaucracy, even one carved out of the Ohio wilderness by the frontier spirit and built in the sincere attempt to know and worship God in freedom. During the Civil War, the question of slavery divided many of the independently thinking New Church Societies. The question of the authority of clergy also became an arguing point. And it was not many years later that money from successful businessmen in the glass industry entered the picture. By the early 1900s, as a result of a controversial theological split, there came to be two Swedenborgian denominations, one centered in Philadelphia called the General Church, and the other called the General Convention, centered in Boston. Yet even in the midst of these internal disagreements, it was a Swedenborgian who, demonstrating the acknowledgment and respect for the diversity of human responses to the Divine, proposed and oversaw the first World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893.

Beginning in the late 1900s, after years of rancor, an era of peaceful co existence and growing affection has settled between the two denominations.

Currently the General Convention, with 30-odd churches and approximately 2000 members in North America, is the smallest denomination in the National Council of Christian Churches. Primarily active along the two coasts, there are currently, along with the still-active Urbana University, three active congregations in Ohio, found in Cincinnati, Cleveland and Urbana. There is an active seminary, recently of Boston, that has relocated

to become part of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. Small in numbers yet large in influence, readers of Swedenborg include such historical figures as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Robert Frost, and Helen Keller. Independent, free thinking, biblically based, Christ centered, ecumenical and interfaith, conservative and liberal, faithful and charitable, politically and economically aware, artistic, practical and spiritual: all these things describe Swedenborgians. Throughout the years, their practical spirituality has played an important part in the history of Ohio. And even today they continue to live quietly useful lives, blending faith and charity, loving God and the neighbor, and expressing spirituality in the natural world.

To learn more about the "New Church" in Ohio and around the world:

- (1) *Johnny Appleseed, Man and Myth*, Robert Price, pp. 123-4 and 188, Peter Smith, 1967.
- (2) *The New Jerusalem Church in Ohio from 1840 to 1870*, Ophia D. Smith, pp. 25-32. Reprinted from the *Ohio State Archeological and Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 1, January, 1953.
- (3) *The Will to Survive*, Frank Higgins, pg 13, 1977, Urbana College.

Or feel free to contact these centers of New Church activity:

Urbana University,  
Box 840  
College Way, Urbana, OH 43078  
(937) 484-1301

General Convention  
11 Highland Ave.  
Newtonville, MA 02460  
(617) 969-4240

With contributions from Alice Skinner, Pete Toot, and Betsy Coffman.

The Rev. Kenneth Turley is the pastor of the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine.





# General Council Report

General Council held its annual mid-year meeting October 24<sup>th</sup> through the 26<sup>th</sup>, 2002, at Temenos Conference and Retreat Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania. All members of General Council were in attendance, as well as Council of Ministers' chair, the Rev. Paul Martin; Swedenborg House of Studies' representative Diana Kirven Stickney, and Central Office manager Martha Bauer.

Various reports were received, including president Ron Brugler's and vice-president Chris Laitner's reports. Diana Stickney, the representative from SHS, reported that Swedenborg's theology is becoming known on the Pacific School of Religion campus. The move was difficult, but the spirit and enthusiasm of the students is marvelous. The struggle is already bearing fruit. Their open house took place November 8-10. Paul Martin stated that there are ten people at the school currently interested in ordination, and General Council spent some time considering the interesting problem of job opportunities for new ministers. We also discussed the obligation to train a Ph.D. for teaching a Bible course at SHS and the need for future visioning to support our ministers.

The National Council of Churches was on the agenda, and we spent considerable time discussing ecumenism, judicatory level and grass roots-level issues. The culmination was that the delegates be asked to screen the issues, and items of high importance be forwarded on in their report to *The Messenger*, emailed, posted on the website, etc. As specific issues come up, they could request feedback and a stand could be taken. The president has already been directed by the Council of Ministers to sign on to important position papers. These issues will be communicated to the churches as they arise. The Rev. Robert McCluskey's motion from Convention regarding a 9/11 policy statement was also discussed. It was decided that the two statements generated by the NCC would be distributed among General Council members, ministers, etc. to ask for their theological, moral input. Lee will help Ron put results in form for the web page.

Following a plea from the Augmentation Fund Committee for a more effective way of distributing their funds, various suggestions were made, including the idea that AFC might operate as a granting foundation with the churches and centers writing proposals for grants for a set number of years, goals, etc. This discussion continued into future ministry possibilities. Various ideas like a Wayfarer's II, parallel congregation development, regional ministry, and team ministry were discussed. The Alban Institute will be contacted to see what help is available for visioning and training for planting new churches. The Executive Committee will work on this

with the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers and Council on Admission to the Ministry.

It was moved to publish two versions of the annual *Journal of the Swedenborgian Church*: One full version for limited distribution and one abridged version for the remainder of the distribution. The abridged version will contain the names, numbers and addresses of Convention personnel, the roll of ministers and the members of boards and committees. The full *Journal* will be available online (minus the addresses and phone numbers). If a body requests a full print *Journal* the central office will request payment of \$15 (US). There will be limited free archival editions.

The Nominating Committee had just announced that they had nominated Chris Laitner for president of the denomination, so General Council spent some time discussing various aspects of this new precedent.

Time was devoted to Cabinet's report and looking at the work the Cabinet had done with the budget. Following a close look at the budget and several changes, the budget was voted. A motion was made that the Financial and Physical Resource Support Unit be requested to provide an appraisal and study the best use of properties of convention and report back to General Council.

The theme for Convention 2003, to be held at Hobart & William Smith College in Geneva, New York, was chosen: "Faith of our Mothers" in celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Women's Alliance. It was moved that the collection from the 2003 Convention be used for the Alicia Titus Peace Fund.

A committee was approved which will work toward pulling together a development plan, including exploring the possibility of hiring a development person.

The next General Council meeting will be a conference call on March 8, 2003, 12-3 EST. The fall meeting will be held October 24-25, in Pretty Prairie.

The General Council meeting ended with a meeting of the National Church Trustees. The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell joined us for that meeting.

At the end of the meetings, which had an unusually full agenda and especially creative "out of the box" thinking, we celebrated by joining the Transitions in a Halloween Party, full of witches, dragons, Zorro, daffodils, clowns, retired beach bums, mice, hairy old men, and myriad other odd things. Yes, folks—this was your church leadership and future leadership hard at play.

—Gloria Toot, secretary

## General Council Members:

**Executive Committee:** Rev. Ronald Brugler, Christine Laitner, Gloria Toot, Lawrence Conant.

**Members:** Rev. Lee Woofenden, James Erickson, Margaret Kraus, Duane Beougher, Rev. Harvey Tafel, Pamela Selensky, Rev. Ken Turley, John Smailer





# The Almont Experience

Karen Degi

What started as an emotionless "Sure, Mom," because I didn't have or want to explain reasons



for not going to church camp, grew to a "Please, mom, can I go to Winter Retreat?" I also became a bit less emotionless as camp inched closer and then, finally, arrived. One of the strongest feelings before arrival was nerves. Denial and boredom were close. It was CHURCH CAMP. How could I have been so stupid? I'd never really been to a Swedenborgian church before. What made me think that I'd know what was going on? I was going to be so far behind everyone else there. I wasn't going to fit in. And besides that, I wasn't even completely sure I was or wanted to be Swedenborgian. I didn't even, for the most part, know what they believed. I wouldn't know anyone there except my cousins,\* and they'd want to talk to other people. Church camp was beginning to seem like the stupidest choice I'd ever made.

When we boarded the plane, I think my first thought was *Well, I guess I'm going now. There's no turning back. Here goes nothing.* I was headed to Michigan. To the place my cousins had described. To the legendary Almont. When we met my cousins at the airport I was very glad to see them. I knew they'd be there, but if I hadn't mentioned it before I was nervous.

I can't remember what I thought Almont would look like. But I remember the feeling of surprise when we arrived. It is small, and it felt very old and relaxed. There were grass fields, and a little tree house. There were people sitting around chatting. I was standing at camp feeling more than ever that I'd signed myself up for a ten-

day isolation from my friends. Then my cousins started introducing me to people. I was immediately accepted. It was as if I'd been with them forever, like I was already an Almonter. There was no way the feeling of isolation could have continued.

I suppose I should talk about what they said at chapel and lecture and class and church. Unfortunately, I don't remember a whole lot past the fact that they talked a lot about disciples. And I think I heard some stuff about heaven and hell. And the chapel service by the high school class in play form (with more than a few hints of someone in the class having seen Monty Python's works), and our class's chapel in which we did the whole thing in verse. The strongest message I felt, though, was love your neighbor. The air there was almost as thick with love as it was with humidity. (And a point of interest: there was actually rain!) I wish I had gotten

more, but at least I got something.

When I left for camp, I expected to go to camp and miss home. Didn't happen. I liked the people there as much or more than my friends here. I trusted the people there as much as I trust a lot of my friends at home. When I left camp, I expected to go home and miss camp. *Did* happen. Camp was unique like that. Even with most things I enjoy, I'm relieved to go home and relax at the end. And I must admit that sleep was welcome. But overall, I became quite camp-sick for quite a while.

It turns out that I was wrong before camp. It was probably one of the smartest choices I've made.

\* Karen Degi's mom is Sandy Degi, daughter of Cecil and Mary Siebert; her cousins are Leslie Siebert, and Casana and Andrew Siebert (daughter and son of Ray and Jane Siebert), all of Pretty Prairie, Kansas.

## Columbus Day Retreat

Anna Brewer

Noon...one o'clock...two o'clock...three o'clock...four o'clock... It all starts now as the old friends, and new friends to be, begin arriving at the notorious Blairhaven Retreat Center on October 11. First everyone immediately goes to find the best bed in the house and proceeds to unpack until the sound of another car pulling in and we run outside in the rain to greet the new arrivals. After the traditional Papa Ginos pizza dinner, everyone who has arrived sits around and exchanges stories about what has happened since their last encounter and, of course... plays cards. Eight o'clock rolls around and only Lee, Heidi, Merry, Katelyn, Jesse, Alec, Caryn, and myself, are officially at the retreat. Soon Emily, Nicole, Wilma, Renee, Miles, Ryan, Mackenzie, Farren, Ben C., Ben G., and Dan are all there. Teams are made, rooming is arranged, and our warnings from Ben C. and Farren to never take the bus from Pennsylvania to

Blairhaven have been issued. It is eleven p.m. and everyone has been wet and cold, but also hugged and greeted on the drizzly but exciting night.

We sit around in the living room to hear the usual do's and don'ts of the retreat such as "No girls in the guys' room and no guys in the girls' room" and "In rooms at 10:30 and lights out at 11." We do our introductions even though almost everyone knew everyone, and if they didn't they were going to REAL soon! With goodnight hugs and "Great to see you again" we all go to our respective bedrooms to of course break the rule and talk until one o'clock in the morning...at least that's what the girls do, only to wake up at 7 o'clock to go downstairs and make the pancake breakfast with team one. Yes, that is right, all you adults reading this...We teenagers *can* cook, and do dishes (though we never said well)!

After breakfast we have our time to hang out and meet with everyone. By 8 o'clock everyone was wide awake and ready to go! For our session we talked about how our bodies did different

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# Columbus Day Retreat

(Continued from page 157)

things spiritually, like your nose is especially spiritually involved with someone who likes to help one be "nosy" (no pun intended...well maybe a little). We followed this by tracing Alec, he being the shortest person there, and wrote our names where we thought we belonged. That session ended and we yet again had free time; unfortunately it was still drizzly out. Those who didn't mind went out to the beach anyway. After a brief free time we had lunch, the yummy grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup made by team two. We then reconvened in the main room and started our next discussion in which we had a guest speaker, Imam Taalib Mahdee, from a Muslim Mosque in Boston. He taught us the true meaning of the Islam religion. We asked questions and he gladly answered, one being the meaning of the word we have all become familiar with, "Jihad," the media having portrayed it as "Holy war." We learned it is really a struggle with yourself.

After that interesting lesson we all decided to go to the mall and movies! Splitting up, some went to see *The Transporter*, *The Tuxedo*, *Sweet Home Alabama*, and other movies. We also all went window shopping or actual shopping, buying things such as CDs for two cents! Once we got home we all ate dinner and chilled out, talking, listening to music, and playing cards. The day ended with a meditation by Wilma Wake where we listened to a chant and got a chance to reflect on ourselves.

At breakfast we talk about our strange dreams and any other thing that comes into our still sleeping brains. After an egg breakfast we sit around and talk about things like what we want to be like or have as a profession when we get older and reach our adult years. We all contributed, some more than others, getting questions answered and in one way or another moving into the question that ALWAYS comes up at retreat: "Heaven or hell?" After an interesting talk we continue on to the rest of the day's



Front: Alec Sheppard, Emily Turley, Nicole O'Brien, Renee Strange, Ben Currie, Miles Stroh, Mackenzie Allen, Heidi Woofenden, Jessica Bernier. Middle: Katelyn Sheppard, Ben Grams, Caryn Holmgren. Back: Dan Shaw, Ryan Cook, Mark Allen, Anna Brewer, Farren Maillie, Rev. Wilma Wake, Merry Conant. Not pictured: Rev. Lee Woofenden (photographer) Imam Taalib Mahdee (guest speaker, Saturday morning only).

activities. At 11 o'clock we are all called back into the main room for worship made up by Wilma, Emily, Nicole, Caryn, and me. It was a bunch of songs that we believed related to God, or a religious aspect in on way or another. Songs included *My Glorious* by Delirious, *Peace Flows Like A River*, *Have I told you Lately* by Van Morrison, *In the Secret* by Sonic Flood, and others. Worship finished with a prayer circle and then a game where we stand in a circle linking hands and you squeeze the person's hand to your right after the person on your left squeezes yours and it becomes like a pulse. We had lunch after that and called the bowling alley to see if they were free for 19 people to show up. Of course they were "slammed" and we got gypped out of bowling that weekend. We made up for it by getting movies from the rental place, *Shallow Hal*, *Evolution*, and *What's The Worst That Could Happen* accompanied by Friendly's ice cream, courtesy of Merry. We were all in bed that night at 11:30 and sleeping like babies after the busy day.

The weekend was nearly over. Sitting on the futons together we were not really talking but savoring the last hour or two we have left together. Inevitably the time comes that we all dread, though. The parents begin to take us away from our haven. Hugs are dealt, "goodbyes," "See you soon," and "Write to me soon." So to all you Youth reading this now I would like to send out a special "I love you guys, and see you next year!"

Editor's Note: The theme of the Columbus Day Retreat was *Our World Neighbors*. Quoting from the flyer: *As we pass the first anniversary of September 11 attacks, and there is talk of war with Iraq, our thoughts turn to the conflicts in our world. At the Memorial Day Retreat, our topic was "War and Peace, Conflict and Resolution." This Columbus Day weekend, we will continue on that theme, and explore some positive spiritually-based approaches getting along with our world neighbors.* The retreat leaders were the Revs. Lee Woofenden and Wilma Wake, Nicole O'Brien, and Imam Taalib Mahdee. Blairhaven Conference and Retreat Center is located at Howland's Landing in Duxbury, Mass.





## Christmas Promises...

As we look to the birth of the Christ-child into the world, we look to the birth of light as well. As beautiful as the fall weather can be, the shortening of the light, the way the days are growing shorter, plays on the nerves and emotions of many of us. To be in this state of growing darkness is a difficult process. It can be a time of confusion, depression, and despair. But it can also be a time of awakening to the light that is in our lives. It invites us in a new way to look at the world and to be intentional about the light and dark in it, and to intentionally go out and spend some time in the light. As the days shorten we work harder at getting outside and sucking up some of that sunshine and to enjoy the warmth on our faces and the sublime beauty of the long shadows. We arrange our lives around the waning light a little more than we normally would.

This is true of our spiritual life in this season as well. As we come into the darkening time we are challenged with all that is hard and painful in our lives. We are called to awaken to the love and light in our living and then get out there and bask in it. In each of our lives there are long shadows that we're aware of in this season. For some of us this holiday, the shadows are particularly long as we struggle with the empty chairs around the table and the angst of the holiday's stresses. But the lesson the lengthening shadows have to offer us is how we are called to appreciate and awaken, nurture and embrace, the light and love we can give birth to in our life. To do this not as an afterthought, but as the primary focus of our life as the only task that is truly worth taking seriously. Like going for that walk in the midday sun of the shortening days, we are called to intentionally awaken and give time to the joy and truth of our lives.

The waiting for and birthing of the Christ-child takes a special attention, a diligence to nurture the love in our life;

to suspend our own desires and concentrate on the coming and the growing of the light which is sure to come. What we must always remember in our walk with God is echoed in the words of Beatle George Harrison, "The dawn is good at knowing when to come."

It is my hope that you will soak up the light of the season, and not allow the obstacles to block the wonder and spirit of the glorious warmth and light of love.

—Rev. Andy Stinson

The Rev. Andy Stinson is pastor of the Elmwood Swedenborgian Church in Elmwood, Mass., currently serving as a U.S. Army Chaplain on active duty.

Reprinted from the December 2001 *Wing and a Prayer*, the Elmwood church newsletter.



I remember one morning years ago when Dad surprised my sister and me by telling us that he was going to take us to a movie that night. That was a special treat, because my father never did such things. All day long, we anticipated the big event, growing more excited with each passing hour. We sat on our front porch steps from early afternoon on waiting for him to come home from work. We sat there for hours, but Dad never came.

Our lives are deeply influenced by promises that are fulfilled and broken. We know that broken promises leave deep scars upon human hearts. But fortunately we also know that most promises are honored and fulfilled. They are a real blessing of life in which love is made real for us whenever someone is there for us, be it in friendship, support, or understanding. But a more significant truth lies in the fact that because we are recipients of promises fulfilled, we can become makers of promises to other people.

During Advent we remind ourselves of God's many promises to us. God will never desert us in times of need. God will never leave us alone. God will be with us always, and in all ways. As the prophet Isaiah proclaimed, "These are my promises, and I will keep them without fail. I will lead you and will turn your darkness into light and make

all rough roads smooth before you."

In our Lord's birth, we know that each of these promises was, is, and will always be fulfilled. And in celebrating this wonderful season, we make a promise to God in return—that through us, others will know that he has come again to all humanity. That's the real blessing of Christmas. May it be a promise that we make real in many, many ways.

—Rev. Ron Brugler, president  
The Swedenborgian Church



Reprinted from December 1997  
*The Tender*, newsletter of Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario.



The prophet Isaiah proclaimed the coming of the "Prince of Peace." In John 14:27, Jesus promises, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you." Every Christmas season we hear that great company of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." Luke 2.

What, indeed, then, is the nature of this Peace? Nothing going on? Inactivity? Certainly not! From early on, Jesus knew exactly what his mission in life was. "The subjugation of the hells." To destroy the power of evil. Body, mind and spirit were all given completely to this one challenge. Jesus was at peace with this—and there was nothing his enemies could do to deter him from this course.

The question is: Can we be that single-minded in our response to life experience? Peace is not the absence of conflict. Peace comes with knowing who we are, what our human nature is all about, coming face to face with ourselves, and with the Lord God in partnership bringing order into our lives, bringing harmony into all that goes on between body, mind, and soul.

—Rev. Eric Zacharias

Semi-retired Swedenborgian minister  
in Pretty Prairie, Kansas

Reprinted from the December 1999  
*The Plains Banner*, newsletter of the  
Kansas Association.



## Groundbreaking Events at Urbana University

(Continued from back page)

Chapman who wished to preserve his legacy. They felt it was especially fitting to find a home for the foundation at Urbana University, a place of learning which also had obvious ties to John Chapman. A specially designed area will help protect and preserve the "Johnny Appleseed Collection" of books and memorabilia, which is the largest known collection of such materials. Scholars doing research on Chapman have visited Urbana University to use this collection. During the renovation project, the museum is being temporarily housed in space donated by a U.U. trustee, in Urbana's downtown "Monument Square."

Joyce Brown, an Ohio Historical Society Trustee, spoke about the history of the founders for whom the buildings were named. Francis Bailey (1735-1815) of Philadelphia was the official printer for the Continental Congress and printed pamphlets that were distributed by Johnny Appleseed. He was a friend and neighbor of Benjamin Franklin. Bailey also fought in the Revolutionary War and was with General George Washington at Valley Forge. Bailey's daughter, Abigail, married John James of Urbana, who later would donate the original ten acres for the purpose of establishing Urbana University. Hester Barclay, after whom Barclay Hall is named, was a ward of Francis Bailey. After marrying Judge John Young, she moved to Warren, Pennsylvania, where the couple met Johnny Appleseed and became members of the "New Church." Francis Bailey and Hester Barclay were considered to be the first male and female converts to the Swedenborgian faith in North America.

## Trenching Toward Technology

There is a joke at U.U. these days that a giant mole has been burrowing tunnels all across the campus. In fact, the crisscross of trenches is a sign of the installation preparations for a fiber optic network

that will significantly upgrade the University's computer technology capabilities. The new backbone will be able to carry both voice and computer data signals when the project is completed at the end of 2002.

## New MBA Program

Urbana University will be offering their second Master's program, beginning spring semester, 2003. This will be in Business Administration and has already been accepted by the Ohio Board of Regents. Accreditation by the North Central Accreditation Association is expected in November of 2002.

Urbana is already offering a Master's Degree in classroom teaching which is highly popular in the area. Two local Swedenborgian teachers, Corina Fain and Missy Sommer, are presently pursuing this degree at U.U.

## U.U. President Honored

Dr. Robert Head was honored as the first Afro-American president of Urbana University on October 24<sup>th</sup> at the Afro-American Heritage and Historical Museum on the campus of Wilberforce Museum near Xenia, Ohio. Wilberforce is a historically Afro-American school. Also present at the reception in Dr. Head's honor, were representatives from the Ohio Historical Society, the Springfield Historical Museum, Cedarville College and Central State University. A number of U.U. trustees, administration, and faculty attended the reception. Dr. Head credited the Urbana University search committee with "looking at my experience, my credentials and my expertise, saw that

there was a match with their needs, and chose accordingly."

## U.U. Pool Reopens

Thanks to our new president, Dr. Head, the Olympic-sized swimming pool is open and being used on a regular basis. Dr. Head was able to convince Sodexo-Marriot, the food management service for the university, to contribute the funds to repair and upgrade the pool, which had been plagued with problems for many years. Those who have attended Swedenborgian conventions in Urbana probably remember the disappointment of not being able to use the pool due to disrepair. It was refitted with an aluminum liner, and the whole area around the pool was refurbished and painted, giving it a whole new life. A special pool party reception was held in October to celebrate the opening.

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## The Other Side of Loss

(Continued from page 150)



showing a winsome profile. Really cute. He looks a great deal like one of the cats pictured on my favorite coffee mug.

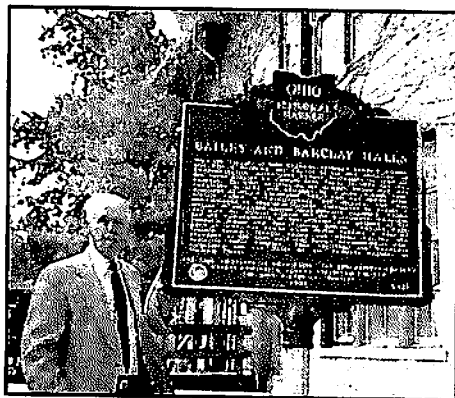
When I'm sufficiently recovered to be back in my kitchen fixing meals, a juice bottle I've put in the dish drainer falls against my cat mug and knocks a chip out of it. This is too much. Then, suddenly, I understand the significance. "I think Julian is trying to get our attention, to tell us that Walter is supposed to be in our lives," I tell Steve. He agrees. We complete the adoption of Walter Kitty in late August.

I tell my friend Janet all this and she says, "Oh, I'm getting the doodly-doods." It's her code word for the crawly feeling on the back of her neck when other-worldly things are happening.

I'll continue to put important concerns and wishes into the Wish Box, nestled down with Julian's photograph. I believe now that he's around in a different form, still working his magic—and he certainly hasn't lost his sense of humor.

*Wishing you all a blessed and peace-filled Christmas.*

—Patte LeVan



John Keller with historical marker.

## Groundbreaking Events at Urbana University *(Continued from page 160)*

### Update on the Alicia Titus Memorial Peace Fund

Since the establishment of this fund, founded as a joint venture of the Ohio Association of Swedenborgian Churches and Urbana University with an initial contribution from the Boston Swedenborgian Church of \$2,000, the Ohio Association voted to contribute \$5,000 and the Michigan Association, \$2,000. There have been additional individual donations to date totaling at least \$2,000. Friends of Alicia who had planned to develop a foundation in her name which could provide scholarships, decided to combine their efforts and donate proceeds they raise to the Memorial Peace Fund. Alicia's friend and former roommate from San Francisco held a benefit dance and fashion show, raising another \$2,200 which she would like to designate for scholarships. At this time, John and Bev Titus continue to work with the Memorial Peace Fund committee in planning for a kickoff event, as well as fully developing plans for the use of funds. Proceeds will be used annually to support peace-promoting programs of various kinds, both on campus and in the larger community, but plans are also underway to provide contributors the option of designating their gift to be used for scholarships.

Our faith tells us that each and every action we take has consequences to eternity. We hope that we can honor Alicia's life by making small but meaningful efforts toward a more peaceful world in which love and service are valued above power and personal gain. We invite each individual, church and association to consider donating to this fund. Donations may be made to: Alicia Titus Memorial Peace Fund, 579 College Way, Urbana University, Urbana, OH 43078.

Betsy Coffman is a member of the Urbana University Board of Trustees and the lay leader of the Swedenborgian Church in Urbana, Ohio.



### *A Christmas Prayer*

*May all who work for a world of peace and reason be granted the gifts of strength and courage...may the good that dwells within every human heart be magnified...may the blessing of truth and understanding be ours...may the joys of the Christmas season dwell within all of us... and as we grow and build for tomorrow may we live in sympathy with all others.*

—author unknown. Reprinted from  
*The Plains Banner*, December 1997



## Outstanding District Educator Award



Corina Fain

On October 20, 2002, Bill and I were honored to be at a state PTA luncheon in Columbus, Ohio, where my daughter, Corina Fain, received the "outstanding educator" award for her Ohio PTA district, which covers eight counties. She first won the local award, which is given by the PTA in her own school district (Urbana), then her name went into the regional district along with over a hundred other teachers' names, who won awards in their own local school districts. She was chosen from all those candidates to receive the award for her state district. There are 18 state districts in Ohio, so she was one of 18 teachers in the state who won this award. She was nominated by a former president of the Urbana PTA, who had two children in Corina's class and who described her children as having had a wonderful experience of both learning and feeling "loved" in Corina's classroom.

Here is the description Corina submitted of her philosophy of teaching, as it was printed in the award program:

*Children are individuals. They come to us with varied backgrounds, values and experiences. We cannot assume that our experiences or values are the same. Nor can we assume that they live in what used to be considered a "typical" family. Our children are as diverse as snowflakes that fall in winter; no two are the same. It is with this knowledge that today's teachers must be willing to take a true interest in their students.*

*Certainly academics is the ultimate goal, but for some students, school must be even more. It must provide safety in an uncertain world, it must be consistent and unwavering, it must make them feel wanted and accepted, and it must provide them with a sense of peace.*

*It is within my classroom that I attempt to create this type of environment. I promote a hostile-free environment, no ridicule, no judgment. We are who we are, and we are always seeking to be the best that we can be. I also make it a priority to find out what each student likes to do both inside and outside my classroom. I ask about the soccer game last night or mention the new hair cut. I ask how nights with the new baby are and if they think babies ever stop crying. I want to know what their dreams are and most importantly, I listen. I want them to know and believe in their hearts that I will be there for them if they ever need me. I truly believe that children cannot learn in an environment where they don't feel safe, accepted or cared for.*

To me, this is such a heartfelt expression of the person that Corina is, that my heart bursts with pride that she is my daughter. I wanted to share this with others who know and love her because I know she wouldn't necessarily do so herself.



# Sam's Christmas at the County Jail

Connon Barclay

One of my favorite memories of the holiday season would likely never make the evening news, but it still lingers warmly for me after many years:



Working in a prison for well over a decade, I saw many prisoners who used religion as part of their personal agenda. It wasn't difficult to spot the phony convert or the manipulator who toyed with the volunteer staff's gifts of good intentions. It wasn't unusual to see prisoners kneel by their bunks when an officer made his rounds, pretending to be in meditation in order to increase the chances of good reports or maybe being overlooked in routine chores.

Nevertheless, I was a witness to a number of men locked away from family and friends honestly seeking communication and communion with God. These were prisoners one might observe kneeling by their bunks with hands folded in silent prayer when an officer wasn't scheduled to make rounds and

when all other prisoners were sleeping. Many of these prisoners did attempt to lead better lives even within institutional settings. My story is not about the remarkable changes some men and women make when they sincerely turn their lives over to God when confronted with tough times. No, my story is about a regular everyday kind of guy—I'll call him Sam—who is easily lost in a crowd.

Sam said his prayers with little notice. He served almost a year in a county jail before he completed a short sentence in a state prison. Sam was like many felons in that he never received money to make bail, so he served a long time in jail before he was sentenced.

Sam was one of those lost souls who discovers he has no real friends or even family after he is arrested. Sam thought he had dozens of friends, and he counted on a hometown group of family. Still, every Saturday when visits were announced, Sam's name was never called. He can tell of those nine months of Saturdays spent on his bunk hearing every other prisoner's name

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## Essay Contest for Camp 2003

*What an Opportunity!!*

The Swedenborgian Church will select two young adult Swedenborgians between the ages of 18 and 24 to attend Camp 2003 with all expenses, including travel, paid. Camp 2003 is a worldwide gathering of young adult Swedenborgians, ages 18 - 24, that will be held at Temenos (in West Chester, outside of Philadelphia) from July 28 - August 3, 2003. The two attendees will be chosen through an essay contest which will be judged in March, 2003.

Rules: If you are interested in becoming involved in the process, please submit a one to two-page essay describing what you would have to offer to this gathering and what you hope to gain from it. You should write from both personal and spiritual points of view. Your essay should be accompanied by a letter from a church leader that indicates from that person's viewpoint what you will bring to this gathering of young adults from around the world. The essay is due by Feb. 1, 2003.

These documents should be sent to the Church's Central Office, 11 Highland Ave., Newtonville, MA 02460, attn: Martha Bauer. Martha Bauer will then send the essays, with no names attached, to the two selected readers who will choose the two most outstanding. The readers will not communicate their choices to one another until they have been returned to the Central Office. If necessary, a third reader will be involved to make the final choice of two denominational representatives to Camp 2003.

The two winners will be contacted no later than April 1, 2003.

Questions? Please contact

Chris Laitner,  
10 Hannah Ct.  
Midland, MI 48642  
(989) 636-7674  
kiplingcat@juno.com



## A Gathering of Young Adult Swedenborgians from Around the World

**Location: Temenos Retreat Center**  
**Dates: July 28 - August 3, 2003**

Theme: FREEDOM: A Celebration of Diversity and Acceptance (DP: 4.4)

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Dr. George F. Dole

Staff: Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake  
Rev. Jun-chol Lee  
Rev. Lee Woofenden  
Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell

The Swedenborgian Church in North America is excited about hosting this wonderful event! The success of "Camp 2000" held at Purley Chase, England, generated such enthusiasm in the young adults who attended from the Swedenborgian Church in North America, that the concept of "Camp 2003" was a logical outcome. We are delighted to be

organizing it!

Camp 2003 promises to provide some excellent and thought-provoking discussion, outstanding fun and camaraderie, and a couple of wonderful excursions. Initial information was sent out "to the world" in the spring of 2002, and the registration packets will be sent out in the early fall.

The Swedenborgian Church will sponsor two young adults (ages 18 - 24) to this gathering (see related essay article).

For further information, please contact Chris Laitner or Kurt Fekete, P.O. Box 1221  
Manchester, VT 05255.  
(802) 287-2735.  
Email: klf@mack.com



## Confirmations

**Frost, Holt, Light**—Deneane and Stewart Frost; Lorraine Holt, and Jacqui Skinner Light were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church October 20, 2002, and welcomed into membership at the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.

**Meyer**—Gordon Meyer was confirmed into the life and faith of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul and welcomed into membership October 20, 2002, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

## Marriage

**Shoupe and Bair**—Judy Shoupe and Bob Bair were united in marriage September 21, 2002, in Portage, Indiana, the Rev. Carl Yenetchi officiating. Judy is a member of the Laporte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana.

## Deaths

**Lewis**—Charles C. Lewis, age 78, longtime member of the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, entered the spiritual world October 16, 2002. A memorial service was conducted October 21, 2002, at the Fryeburg/Lovell VFW Hall in Lovell, Maine, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating.

**Lutz**—Jean E. Lutz (Mason), 74, entered the spiritual world Oct. 14, 2002. She was a longtime Swedenborgian who lived her faith every day. She was a member of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church before transferring membership to the Church of The Open Word in St. Louis. Her memorial service was officiated by the Rev. Kit Billings November 3, 2002, in St. Louis. Memorials may be sent to Church of The Open Word. She will be greatly missed by her sister, Martha "Marty" Mason, cousins and friends.

**Perry**—Elizabeth Claire Perry, age 78, entered the spiritual world October 12, 2002. A memorial service was conducted October 19, 2002, at the Chatham Center Church, Chatham, New Hampshire, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating.

**Seavey**—Earl Everett Seavey, 76, a member of the Fryeburg New Church and lifelong resident of Fryeburg, Maine, entered the spiritual world September 28, 2002. The memorial service was held October 2, 2002, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating.



sued regulation socks called "booties," counting on family to give them shoes.) All the other prisoners had visitors bring them whatever soft sports shoes were allowed. Having no visits, Sam was forced to walk on the cement floors in his socks. One pair of socks.

Although his feet ached and his pride suffered, Sam washed his lone pair of sweat socks every night at the cell's drinking fountain. He told me his socks ended up more gray than white, but they were clean. Many days he felt anger that others had shoes. His anger was so consuming he had to start including a call for patience in his nightly prayers.

Then he told me what happened to him in the jail at Christmastime. One Saturday, long after visits were over, an officer called him to the bars. Sam stood in shock as the officer gave him one brand new pair of socks. The only explanation Sam ever received was that the socks were left for him at the front desk.

The gift was not shoes. Socks! Sam insists it was his best Christmas ever—even to this day—because he received them anonymously without any demands.

Sam eventually returned to his home town, and he lived a good and honest life with a heart filled forever with goodness.

Wouldn't it be a present of worth if those of us who had completed family and community needs had something left over—and we helped out some of the thousands of Sams? Imagine that another county jail prisoner turns his or her life over to God one day at a time just as Sam did. . . and it takes only a very small gift for the spirit of Christmas to work its magic again.

Whoever gave Sam the Christmas socks helped a man erase his bitterness, and the gift provided good footing for his continued faith.

*Connon Barclay is a retired corrections officer and freelance writer living in Holland, Michigan.*



## Sam's Christmas at the County Jail *(Continued from page 162)*

called for visits at least a few times during a month. He never received even one visit.

Sam had landed in the county jail without any money, and therefore could not receive a weekly order of snacks and stamps and such. His time was spent in twelve-man and six-man cells, and he recalls the struggle he waged against the daily stress of incarceration without support. When he describes how it was to go every day from 5 p.m. to 6 a.m. without any munchies, you want to laugh and cry at the same time.

Sam admits he never had the courage to get on his knees and pray in front of his cellmates, but he did start a regular nightly ritual of silent praying. I asked him what he prayed for, and his response was interesting.

He said, "I turned my nights and

days over to God and simply asked for forgiveness, for strength, and for the ability to make good Christian decisions for one more day."

I had expected to hear his prayers filled with lots of foodstuffs or clothes or new friends because it is so easy to ask for things when you have nothing. But if you knew him today, you wouldn't doubt that Sam asked only for mercy and guidance.

He had never felt ridicule like what he received from cell mates because he had no visits. Everyone assumed he was some bad character. In reality, Sam was just the typically totally selfish person . . . and it caught up with him sooner than with some others.

The worst part of Sam's journey to repay society was that he had no shoes. (In county jail, inmates were is-



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.

## Groundbreaking Events at Urbana University

*Betsy Coffman*

There are many exciting things happening at Urbana University, the only institution of higher education affiliated with the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches. Those of us who have been intimately involved in these changes would like to share them with members and friends of our church. Urbana University is very grateful to the individuals, Societies, Associations, and General Convention, who have contributed over the years to the survival and growth of Urbana. There are many among us who, having attended Urbana University as students, feel strong personal ties and a desire for it to flourish. We as a church have much to be proud of in the history of this institution, which was founded by people who were well-respected in their time and whose lives of service have given us a legacy worth preserving and carrying on into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### Barclay-Bailey Hall Renovation Groundbreaking

On September 14<sup>th</sup>, about 100 people attended the ground-breaking ceremony outside Barclay and Bailey halls, the first and third buildings constructed for the University. The project will restore the buildings' Italianate style architecture, which is rare, especially on college campuses in Ohio. Bailey Hall was designed by Russell West, who also designed the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus. Urbana University was founded by a group of Swedenborgians in 1850 and was the second co-ed institution of higher learning in Ohio. The festivities also included the



(L-R) John Keller; former U.U. president, Dr. Francis Hazard; U.U. student representative, Dwaine Maxson; Ohio Bicentennial representative, Cindy Schillaci; and unidentified participant.

dedication of an Ohio Bicentennial Historical Marker, which explains the historical significance of Barclay and Bailey halls, and their namesakes. Among those present for the groundbreaking were former longtime U.U. trustee and board chairman, John Keller, also a member of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church, his daughter Kristin, and several local Swedenborgian church members. John Keller took up the offer to "break ground" following the initial action by U.U. president, Dr. Robert Head, and present chair of the U.U. trustees, Bill Edwards. Along with providing additional classroom and faculty office space, Bailey Hall will house an enhanced Johnny Appleseed Education Center and Museum, which originally opened in 1996 after the University was asked to take over the Johnny Appleseed Foundation from a group of descendants of John

(Continued on page 160)

The Swedenborgian Church  
of North America  
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