

# THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

March 2003

## TRUTH

Stephen Koke

I once took a graduate course in Philosophy with just this title attached to it. It was simply that—an inquiry into the nature of truth. We got nowhere. Our professor thought it was a very important subject, just right for graduate students. But we couldn't define "truth" without suggesting things like "accurate statements," or "verifiable ideas," all of which employ the concept of truth in its own definition. I doubt that anyone got an A. In fact the instructor was so confused about his own course that we probably should have flunked him.

We ran into little adventures like this one: a statement that corresponds to a fact is "true." But the fact is already considered to be true by definition, or it wouldn't be considered a fact. A true statement would just be a copy or representation of a fact. So now one must ask, How does one detect a fact without knowing what truth is? At this point any number of cans of worms may pop open.

Is "truth" a circular idea, leading nowhere but back into itself?

It was some years later that I found that Swedenborg, very near the beginning of his *Spiritual Diary*, had presented an intriguing new look at Truth:

Whatever regards and leads to the Kingdom of God Messiah, is a truth; thus all the means which look thither, and tend and lead thither, are truths; but as regards the means, circumstances vary the matter. (*Spiritual Diary*, n. 60)

At first sight, this definition looks specially made for churches and theo-

logians. It shouldn't be applicable in science, for example. But it should be illuminating even in science. It would tell us that the laws and structures of the universe favor human life and spiritual growth—something would be wrong in science if they didn't.

The main point is that truth can't be defined at all except as the conception of something good, whatever points us to God. Everything in our lives, and in the universe that God created, naturally favors the journey to him, and the crown of all existence is the relationship we have with him.

***Faithfulness in a religion is not belief in its doctrines no matter what; it is adoption of its values. All truths in religion are values of relationship intellectually seen. Truth, we are told, is simply the form of good. In a true religion doctrinal formulas, as cerebral entities, amount to psychology which opens up all the possibilities for real living.***

All kinds of interesting points follow. One is that faithfulness in a religion is not belief in its doctrines no matter what; it is adoption of its values. All truths in religion are values of rela-

tionship intellectually seen. Truth, we are told, is simply the form of good. In a true religion, doctrinal formulas, as cerebral entities, amount to a psychology which opens up all the possibilities for real living.

Another one is that Swedenborg's revelation did not arrive as cold truth authoritatively stated but as a detailed awareness of divine goodness and its ways, necessarily verifiable in our own experience and trying to get us to recall and value those experiences more appropriately. He had to have experienced this in his own spiritual growth if he was going to understand as much as he did. Truth is often regarded in his writings as truth from good, and good, or "charity," expands consciousness, creates spirituality. Truth becomes more evident as self-centeredness recedes.

Still another consequence is that we won't know what our doctrines actually mean until we live the good life that they encourage. Much—especially in the inner sense of Scripture—is beyond words and requires some experience in spiritual living to sense the deeper truth of the inner sense. Swedenborg's messy manuscripts suggest a struggle to convert the wordless into dictionary language so that we could understand as much as possible. But the indescribable can simply defeat us. Describe the taste of chocolate. No one knows what it is without actually tasting it. Verbal descriptions don't take us anywhere unless there is a chocolate bar or confection in our background. The dictionary can only attach a name to it.

Consequently, we may notice that we didn't learn our theology entirely from Swedenborg's books but found

(Continued on page 35)

## IN THIS ISSUE:

National Council of Churches Report • Review: *The Lovely Bones* • The New Church's Foremost Hymnlist • Circles and Cycles • Convention 2003 Registration

## In the Right Place

He's in need of a haircut and a shave and there's the usual odor of beer and cigarettes. (Picture the Brad Pitt character in "Thelma and Louise," ten years older with a hang-over.) He's done repair and construction work for me periodically for eight years. He's built my carport, redesigned my closet, repaired the septic, installed a new hot water heater, painted the house. He usually does good work. He can size up a repair job and know what to do, how to put something together without even glancing at the instructions. He's messed up every permanent job he's had in the town. He makes a good start, people like him, then it begins to unravel, he stops showing up, things go wrong, and according to him, it's their fault, never his. He doesn't have a vehicle or his own tools. Cars and driver's license come and go in his life, mostly go. When he works for me, I usually have to drive him to pick up the material. Somebody in town once asked me if I was his mother.

I've just paid him for repair work on my deck. He's at the door asking for a loan of \$100, then confesses he's been homeless for several days, he got kicked out of the room he was renting in town. "I'll work it off," he says. It's mid-November, and despite a heavy jacket, he seems hunched against the cold. "We could go into town and get the hangers for your gutters and get those up, and then I can put in the stone steps you wanted in your garden."

"Why don't you call your folks?" I ask. "They're mad at me," he says. "Everybody's mad at me." I write him a check for the loan. I consult with Steve. We like him and want to give him an opportunity to get his life together. We offer to let him stay temporarily in the small detached guest cottage that's being used for storage. Something tells me this isn't such a hot idea, but he looks desperate and sad, and it's 45° outside. He stacks my storage boxes against one wall of the cottage and moves his

things in. On the day of trash collection there are so many beer cans in the recycle container I'm embarrassed to put it out. I give him some homemade chicken soup and a meatloaf sandwich and ask him how he expects to get a permanent job if he reeks of beer all the time. I think, No wonder I was mistaken for his mother—I sound like his mother. He says he's been sick and the beer helps him feel normal.

During the first week, he spends a little time in the morning on chores for me, then is gone uptown the rest of the day presumably looking for a job. He reports that he's picked up several days' work doing drywall for somebody. The second week he repairs two of my lamps and glues together my terra cotta lion that the raccoons smashed to pieces last year. Amazingly, the lion is restored except for one piece he couldn't find. "I used to make things like that in school," he says. I catch the wistful tone in his voice, and remember how devastated he was when his dog died last year. He had somehow pulled himself together after that and gotten a job that lasted for over six months before things went sour. He's pounding a stake into the ground beside my small crooked pine tree, one that he originally planted, skillfully wrapping green tape around stake and tree. When he's finished, it's perfectly straightened and the tape hardly shows.

At the end of the third week, I pick up my mail at the post office and discover two overdraft notices from the bank. I'm over \$800 into my overdraft protection and don't know why. I pore over the entries in my checkbook. I go to the bank and ask for a printout of all activity since my last statement. Odd numbers jump out at me, not in the current series I'm using in my checkbook. There are at least ten checks listed that I know I didn't write. I'm feeling dizzy as this information sinks in. I ask the bank manager for a copy of the canceled checks, and tell her I didn't write them. They order them but can't get them till the next day. I go home and get my box of checks out of my desk drawer. Random checks are missing, neatly

torn out from each booklet. They match the check numbers on the printout.

He's standing outside the cottage, and I hand him the large bag of Ruffles potato chips he asked me to buy for him when I was uptown. *Would you come into the house for a few minutes,* I ask him, *I need to talk with you.* I tell him what I discovered at the bank and ask him if he knows anything about it. He stares at the floor, looking miserable as he confesses that he took the checks from my office and made them out to himself at various times and signed my name. He apologizes, and says he'll pay me back.

Why. Why did you do this?

*I don't know. I don't know why I do anything. I'm just relieved it's finally over.*

Through my anger, hurt, feelings of invasion and betrayal, I begin to perceive that his act is like somebody running headlong off a cliff, a last-ditch scream for help. *You've cleaned out my checking account,* I tell him.

*I didn't realize it was that much.*

What did you do with the money?

(Continued on page 46)

### THE MESSENGER

Publisher: The Communications Support Unit  
Published monthly, except July and August, by the Swedenborgian Church of North America (founded 1817, incorporated 1861 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America).

March 2003  
Volume 224 No. 3  
Whole Number 5278

Typesetting & Layout  
Town & Country  
Press, Plymouth, IN

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

The opinions of the contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the Communications Support Unit, or represent the position of the church. Subscription free to members of the Swedenborgian Church; non-members, \$12.00 a year; foreign \$15.00 a year; gift subscription from a member, \$5.00 a year; single copies \$1.00.

Deadline for material: Six weeks before the first day of the month of issue.

## TRUTH

(Continued from cover)

that they recall old intuitions and values that had already been accumulating deep inside ourselves from a somewhat good life and its high points. Our better experiences and intuitions, normally considered rather routine, even mundane, may suddenly be seen in a higher light, like a stump in a fog when the stump is suddenly illuminated and shown to be a person. The new meanings from *our* experiences then come out and fill the doctrinal statements—much to our delight in the brilliance these statements suddenly acquire.

This happens frequently, and it amounts to personal revelation, with Swedenborg's words acting as a catalyst for advanced realizations that can take place only in ourselves. He must help us recall forgotten realities somewhat similar to his, or we will only find more dogma, more formulas to believe, their terms still trailing old definitions and connotations, and take them in like people who, as Lewis Carroll remarked, "believe six impossible things before breakfast" (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*). His authority, like anyone's, can be validated only after it has been demonstrated that his efforts are working—we are *seeing* things we haven't seen before. Living in enjoyment of a relationship with God and other people produces a perception of truth; when truth is presented, the heart, with its experiences, leaps up and says, "I know that!"

### Swedenborg's Primary Audience

Swedenborg presents a lot of arguments, but he often uses them to clarify what he is saying, not conclusively prove it, so that whatever direct perception of truth from good we have can recognize its truth more easily. That recognition, rather than logical conclusiveness or "proof," would be most likely to drive any effective theological system. That in turn demanded simple, clear language, a characteristic of his Latin.

And it would tell us who his pri-

mary audience was. It would have been the few for whom such a presentation would work, people whose hearts were still perceptive enough to resist the decline of the Church in an era of "thick darkness." After the Judgment a new heart would gradually appear and take more notice of what he was saying.

Quite early he wrote,

Nowhere is there found a life more detestable than in the Christian world. . . . the cloud of Christians is against the Lord and against the truths of faith, and this cloud is so dense as to be darkness. And when there is hatred in place of charity, then it is thick darkness. (*Heavenly Secrets* 916, 1059)

His analyses of what the darkness came from virtually portray a state of addiction, much like drug addiction, not merely uninformed thought. Merely throwing erudition at the Church would not have honored that basic fact. His arguments require that a basic spirituality be already present in the reader in order to make their point. The addicted mind, on the other hand, was killing the Church with old, seductive doctrines, institutional pressures, and self-interest. You don't argue with that effectively because the addiction won't allow the truth or a higher rationality to stick. In *Alcoholics Anonymous*, for example, the path to recovery is personal change while affirming a higher power, not points about the perils of alcohol.

Faced with such a resistant public, he nevertheless *started* to write. Why, if the market would advise anyone to *stop* such unproductive efforts? He would have loved any positive response, but his primary audience would have been not the many, but the few still basically in faith, still in some conscientious love to the Lord and the neighbor.

### When Does Argument Work?

Arguing theology with entrenched institutions committed to false ideas was likely to bog down, and Swedenborg wouldn't have tried to do that. They could always find something to confirm their position and allow another round of debate. He had to bet

heavily on the future and write for the few who were able to see the essentials of what he saw, especially in his last years when his theological mission would have to be given its last best chance to survive beyond him. From these few the future Church could grow, just as it did from the small band of twelve that the Lord spent so much time with.

I learned about the inventive entrenched mind and its inexhaustible resources for defense, or at least stalemate, in my Philosophy classes; if you want to fend off a line of argument, any line of argument, you can. Enough imagination in defense, such as a few instances of a "maybe this, maybe that" counter possibility, can stall anything for want of a logical proof. Something has to break through to a perception of spiritual truth, and for Swedenborg it had to be personal growth. In *True Christianity (True Christian Religion)* he wrote:

But you must realize that the Lord's battle with the hells was not a battle of words, like people arguing a point or disputing in a court of law. Such fighting is quite ineffectual here. It was spiritual battle, the Divine-True armed with the strength of Divine-Good (that is, the very life-force of the Lord. . . . whose strength was illustrated in my small book, *Last Judgment*). (TC 124, Translation by Robert Kirven)

His readers are still not very numerous. A lot of work is still required on our part, but it is probably helpful to realize that we are only 250 years into a new religious age. Religious ages are thousands of years long and change slowly.

*Stephen Koke is a member of the Communications Support Unit and author of The Hidden Millennium, the Doomsday Fallacy, published by the Swedenborg Foundation in 1999. He is a frequent contributor to Studia Swedenborgiana, published intermittently by the Swedenborgian House of Studies.*



# THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES REPORT

## *For the Common Good: Seeking Justice, Working for Peace*

MaryAnn Fischer

This year for the NCC conference, the Rev. Marlene Laughlin joined the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey and me as delegates. We gathered in Tampa, Florida, November 14 - 16, 2002, for worship, education, and work in community with the theme this year of "For the Common Good: Seeking Justice, Working for Peace."

During the five years I've served as a Swedenborgian delegate to the NCC, I have witnessed many changes in the Council. My first year, in Chicago, I found the Council in an enlightening turmoil, with reports of deficits and chaos in the intermingled staff, responsibilities, and monies of the NCC and Church World Service (CWS). The missions still stood strong; they had just grown out of control. With tensions mounting over fiscal and organizational challenges, the Assembly began an extended search for new leadership and gave time to the group whose task it was to "fix" the institution. There was a lot to absorb at meetings, educational forums, and worship in those few days.

The leadership styles and skills of General Secretary Bob Edgar and President Elenie Huszagh has brought the Council stability. Along with the painfully needed restructuring, the NCC finds itself out of debt and almost finished with the final constitutional changes required to complete its transformation. The Council's staff has been pared from 102 in December of 1999 to 41 in June of 2002.

Partnerships with other non-profit organizations have been formed to expand the reach and support of the Council. Bob Edgar may not have been fully aware of what lay before him when he took office three years ago, but at this year's gathering, he became a candidate for another term.

Church World Service is the international humanitarian agency of the NCC member churches. This cooperative ministry of the 36

Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations provides sustainable self help and development, disaster relief and refugee assistance daily in more than 80 countries, including the US. To learn more about the programs CWS carries out, go to: [www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)

The restructuring and accountability of the Council's financial reporting practices has restored confidence to donors, and contributions are now rising. Foundation funding is up from 3% of the budget in 2000-2001 to 12% in 2001 - 2002, and individual donations are up from 1.2% to 11%. (Seeing grants working on this large scale inspired me, and I have since attended a class on grant writing. I'm hoping this idea might bring resources for worthwhile possibilities at my church, too.) Royalties from Bible sales have also contributed strongly to the debt-free status of the Council.

The new relationship between the NCC and CWS required an overhaul to the constitution and bylaws. I won't go into the details of the 2455-line draft that was struggled with. Resolutions other than the constitution, bylaws, and audit were: A call to the state of Israel to recognize the canonically elected Patriarch of Jerusalem; Establishing an Exploratory commission on Human Genetic Technologies; and a statement expressing our affirmation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Statement on Iraq. A Resolution titled "After September 11, 2001: Public Policy Considerations for the United States of America" was debated upon at length and ended up completely rewritten, restructured, and footnoted, for it was lengthy and rich. It was based on two policy statements from 1999 titled "Pillars of Peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" and "Interfaith Relations and the Churches."

The Council's ongoing Faith, Justice, and Educations Ministries' work will now be carried out through

five commissions under the Executive Board. The Communications Commission, Faith and Order Commission, the Interfaith Relations Commission, Education and Leadership Commission, and new Justice and Advocacy Commission's chairs will serve on the new Executive Committee of the Executive Board. The changes instituted are designed to build accountability and strengthen the year-round work of the commissions and staff.

Along with the business aspects of the General Assembly, we began each day with worship and Bible study, exploring this year's theme "For the Common Good: Seeking Justice, Working for Peace." On Thursday we celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ecumenical Mission Education with a performance by the Thuma Mina Mission Theatre Company.

On Friday we took part in open discussion forums led by individuals with expertise on the subjects. They provided us with informed perspectives. The forums included:

- ❖ The History of the Christians in the Muslim Lands, and How That History Affects Christian-Muslim Relations Today
- ❖ The Church and Public Education: Challenges and Opportunities
- ❖ Ministerial Ethics and Accountability
- ❖ Focus on Africa
- ❖ Health Care for All: A Call for Justice
- ❖ Is Christian Feminism an Oxymoron?
- ❖ Making Peace in the Middle East
- ❖ Using Film to Strengthen Communities: Resourcing the Church on Issues of Diversity
- ❖ Bioethics

We learned more about each other during a game at dinner Friday night that matched the wits of each table against other tables in a race to

*(Continued on page 37)*

## THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES REPORT

(Continued from page 36)

complete quizzes of facts about the 36 member communions. It resulted in the more denominationally diverse table bringing home the winning prize. These playful interactions reminded me that it is the skill, knowledge and work as individuals of each member communion that brings about winning scenarios.

Saturday evening completed the three-day meeting with an awards dinner and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the publication of the Revised Standard Bible. This year's president's awards went to Her Excellency the Honorable Erato Kozakou Marcoullis, Ambassador from Cyprus to the United States. This year's General Secretary's award went to Dr. Jack B. McConnell, M.D., founder of Volunteers in Medicine Clinic in Hilton Head, North Carolina.

Scholars who had worked for years on the RSV Bible were recognized at the dinner. The highlight of my week was during the reception prior to

dinner, listening to a few of these awards recipients refer to Dorothea Harvey as "Dot." It turns out she had worked with these guys during a year she spent in the Holy Land doing archaeological work, and "Dot" was what everyone called her then. Later, back in the room, Dorothea shared stories with Marlene and me about standing in a room with the Dead Sea Scrolls spread out on tables and the type of work that was done. This was an added treat for me.

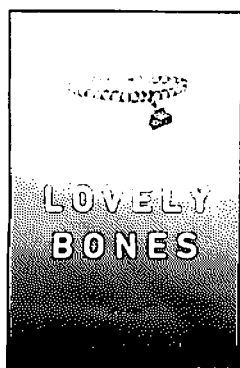
I have long ago lost my "rookie" status as an NCC delegate, but I still struggle to understand all that goes on. I have developed a deep respect for the staff and others who work hard during each November meeting. With my better understanding of the work and workings of the Council and the organizations it partners with, my appreciation deepens. My awareness and concerns regarding our human and ecological needs have widened and grown in depth. The current of great despair that could turn into a whirlpool is calmed by my inventory of how many people I've met who do care and work passionately on so many issues. My involvement has changed where I

focus much of my attention, which has made my life richer. I have never been sure how or what to bring back to other Swedenborgians, but I invite you to visit the website to find out more details on the matters in this report or to sign up to be on the email or publications list. The NCC is always looking for participants for its worship services, forums, programs, marches, boycotts or email campaigns taking place across the continent weekly. Reports of delegations overseas or meetings in New York and Washington DC are available along with announcements of upcoming events and requests for prayers and support. Bob Edgar was recently on National Public Radio and the TODAY show talking about the Council's many peacemaking initiatives. Go to [www.nccusa.org](http://www.nccusa.org)

*MaryAnn Fischer is one of our Swedenborgian delegates to the NCC, along with the Rev. Marlene Laughlin from California and the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey from Massachusetts. MaryAnn is a member of the Swedenborgian Church in Cincinnati.*



## BOOK REVIEW



### The Lovely Bones

by Alice Sebold  
Little, Brown and Company

*Reviewed by  
Kelly Mahan Jaramillo*

When you think of heaven, what comes to mind? Is it seeing a loved one again? Is it meeting thousands of people who are loving and friendly and do not act like

strangers? Is it shaking hands with God? Or, perhaps, a bit worried about not getting in at all? Some believe we have to go through a series of elaborate, often harsh questions, many hurdles, much paperwork. Some folks don't really think about heaven at all; they have their hands full right here on earth. Others believe that both heaven and hell are here in the present, to be experienced simultaneously, lived daily.

Before opening the first page of Alice Sebold's luminous story of death and life, grief and memory, think for a while about heaven. Eternity. Where do we go when our long/short journey here on earth has ended, and we step off the roller-coaster of laughter, screams, joy and breath...what next?

Whether you are in possession of firm belief or wistful hope, when you turn to the first page of *The Lovely Bones*, you have entered young Susie Salmon's heaven, a heaven she did not expect to be living in at the age of fourteen, a heaven she was thrown into because her roller coaster of life crashed, her time on earth came to an abrupt, violent and brutal end. We meet Susie in heaven, and as she explores this strange new domain, she tells us what happened to her, and she watches what is happening after she has gone, the search for her body, the piece of clothing that is found, then the small human remain that tells her anguished family only one thing—she is most certainly not alive anymore. Susie sits for hours, watching earth, seeing her family's pain, seeing the man who took her life continue to live his own—a quiet, unassuming man, a neighbor who lives right down the street from the Salmon household, a man that the people of the town are completely clueless about.

Susie's heaven is perfect. It gives her all of the simple dreams she had on earth—no teachers at school, she doesn't have to go inside for any class except her favorite, which is art class, the boys don't pinch and tease, and the textbooks are *Seventeen* and *Glamour* and *Vogue*. She has a friend, Holly,

(Continued on page 38)

## The Lovely Bones (Continued from page 37)

who is her age and has also been in heaven for only a few days. There is a guidance counselor, a woman in her mid-forties named Frannie, who helps the girls get used to heaven, and it dawns on Susie and Holly that Frannie is close to being one of the things they both desperately wish for, their mothers.

Heaven for Susie Salmon is perfect, except for one small thing. She longs to go home, and this is just not possible. Heaven is where she lives, and heaven is where she will stay, forever. She sits and watches her family for hours, days, months, years. She rarely does anything except watch, watch the toll her death takes upon her loved ones. Her sister Lindsey slowly hardens, little brother Buckley is lost, her mother abandons everyone both emotionally, then physically. And day by day her father falls apart just a bit more, because in his gut he knows it is Mr. Harvey, the neighbor, and he has not a shred of evidence to prove it.

After a year has passed, the town gathers for an anniversary to mourn the young girl, gone but for a body part. It is a huge gathering, and Susie watches with something approaching delight, not realizing that she was so well liked. It is a nice change from her forlorn daily observances, her straining to make contact, to shove the police to Mr. Harvey's house, her desire to scream, "My father's right! My father's right! Please, please listen to him. It is killing him...."

As the years go by, the anniversaries dwindle, and people grow up and carry on with their normal lives; after all, this didn't happen to *them*, they are just so heartbroken by that poor Salmon family, a heartbreak that is easily carried because after all, their own families are intact. *It was close, but it was not us, thank God*, the guilty thoughts creep in. And in order to push away the uneasy *But it could be*, folks simply go about the task of living, relatively unscathed so far. There are two people whose lives are not going on as usual, two people who are not Susie's family. Her first boyfriend, Ray Singh, (initially a suspect, of course), and a strange school acquaintance, Ruth Conners. As Susie explains to us, sitting on the swingset in Heaven's schoolyard—at the moment of her death, she brushed the shoulder of Ruth Conners, who had been standing in Susie's path as Susie's soul went bulleting and shrieking out of her body, leaving the earth. Susie, dying in violence, explains that getting away as fast as possible is what the dying one concentrates on. When you begin to go over the edge, life receding from you, you hold onto death tightly, like a rope, and you swing out on it, hoping only to land away from where you are. In her wild swinging away she grazes Ruth Conners, standing hundreds of yards from the actual event, and Susie reaches her hand out to touch Ruth, touch the last face, feel the last visceral connection she will ever have with Earth.

Being a rather odd teenager, Ruth is more aware than the self-absorbed average, and she sees what she describes as "a pale ghost coming towards me"—she proceeds to share this experience with her mother, who looks at her with a tinge of concern, and tells Ruth that her imagination is getting away

from her. No dummy, Ruth takes this as her cue to shut up, and she never mentions it again to anyone, not for many years. Consequently, there is a wisp of connection between alive-Ruth-on-Earth and dead-Susie-in-Heaven, but it is so often frustrating for Susie, as she struggles to break through and make contact. She manages, in various ways, but only briefly—enough to leave the persons she has touched shaken up, knowing that they just felt, saw, *something*. Nobody ever really talks to anyone else about these here-then-gone moments, they are much too ethereal, not to mention intensely private.

The years pass, and we follow the Salmon family, through Susie, forever fourteen, in her almost perfect heaven. As Ruth, Ray, Lindsay and Buckley become adults, they go about their lives without her presence, only the memory of her, and like most memories when years go by they can go from being a constant to an often, to the occasional. Susie is never forgotten, but there is the random rare day when a family member can have some time without thinking of her. However, enough of her memory stays with Ruth and Ray in such an unusual manner that it causes an event to happen, an event so unexpected, unexplainable and so miraculous that it can bring the reader to soaring heights of almost incandescent joy.

Sebold has managed to take the most heartbreaking of sorrows and grief and turn it as a prism, this way and that, the flashing rainbow lights reflecting back as hope, possibilities. A story of the worst tragedy a family can endure is transformed into a suspenseful, and sometimes quietly funny novel about love, memory, joy, heaven, and healing.

I read this novel while I sat holding my dying father's hand—he had called me last August on my fortieth birthday, told me he had cancer, and there was nothing to be done. He never stepped foot into a hospital, simply sat in his chair when he wished, slept when he wished, lost the ability to eat, then drink, and finally talk. My brother and sister and I sat with him those two weeks, doing whatever he would allow us to do, bring him water, juice, give him a hand out of the chair, counting out the pain meds. We were there while the lifelong barriers crumbled a bit, and we could all say things that we were not able to when he was roaringly, ragingly alive and healthy. I think we were so very lucky, in spite of the fact that he had to be dying in order to say and allow himself to hear the words "I love you." And the word *goodbye*. So many people don't get the chance to say goodbye. Susie Salmon's family did not. Alicia Titus' family did not. Thousands of people do not get to say goodbye, and sometimes I wonder if it is one of the most important gifts the dying can give the living. We were so very lucky.

As my father lay sleeping, his breathing harsh and laborious, I sat quietly by his bed, holding his hands, and in my hands was this book I had picked up about a month before, *The Lovely Bones*. To the rhythm of my father dying, I opened the first page and read these words:

*Inside the snowglobe on my father's desk, there was a*

*(Continued on page 39)*

## The Lovely Bones

(Continued from page 38)

*penguin wearing a red-and-white-striped scarf. When I was little my father would pull me into his lap and reach for the snow globe. He would turn it over, letting all the snow collect on the top, then quickly invert it. The two of us watched the snow fall gently around the penguin. The penguin was alone in there, I thought, and I worried for him. When I told my father this, he said, "Don't worry Susie; he has a nice life. He's trapped in a perfect world."*

Unaware that tears were streaming down my face, I looked at my father, and wondered if I would rather be trapped in a perfect world, or here, where the pain and surprises and joys and sadness give us no warning of what is going to happen day by day, minute by minute. Having already gone through the death of a husband and the death of a best friend of twenty years, I thought I had a small handle on death. I squeezed my father's hand, realizing that I had no idea what this was going to feel like. This was brand new. As many of you out there already know, the death of a parent is different. I am now up to three gone, and I cannot begin to imagine losing a child.

For any reader who has already gone through death and the trail of emptiness it leaves in its wake, this book may be for you. For those of you who have yet to experience the finality of this kind of loss, you will someday, and this book is also for you. I cannot recommend it highly enough, especially for that most heart wrenching audience out there: those of you who have lost a child. *S/he sees you. S/he loves you.*

This review is dedicated to Bev and John Titus, whose daughter Alicia died on United flight 175 September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

*Kelly Mahan Jaramillo has worked on a number of feature films and has recently turned to writing. She lives in Venice, California, and is an avid reader of The Messenger.*



## The New Church's Foremost Hymnist

Carl  
Yenetchi

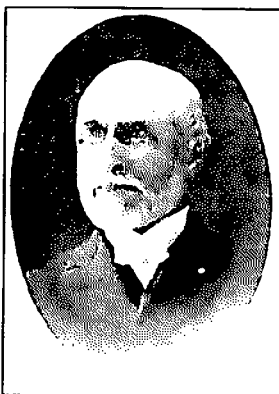
The New Church has counted among its members some of the finest hymnists of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries.

Many of these hymnists, however, have not been associated in popular culture with the New Church. Among these are: George Frederick Root, Mary Artemesia Lathbury, George James Webb, and William Wallace Gilchrist. The work of those who have been thus associated has been, for the most part, published only in Swedenborgian hymnals. Among these are John Westall, Frank Sewall, Jonathan Bayley, William Mason, Julian K. Smyth, James Reed, John Worcester, and Joseph Proud.

Among the finest and best-known New Church hymnists, we can count George Frederick Root (1820-1895). George F. Root was born on August 30, 1820, Sheffield, Massachusetts. From an early age, he showed remarkable musical abilities, mastering no fewer than thirteen different instruments by the age of 12.

In 1838, Root moved to Boston, Massachusetts, where he studied under another well-known New Church hymnist, a member of the Boston New Church Society, George Webb, composer of the music used for George Duffield's hymn, "Stand up, Stand up for Jesus." Webb (along with Lowell Mason, with whom Root also studied, later becoming his assistant) was the co-founder of the Boston Academy of Music.

Root joined the Chicago New Church Society in 1864 at the height of his fame for composing several well-known and well-loved patriotic Civil War songs, "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp the



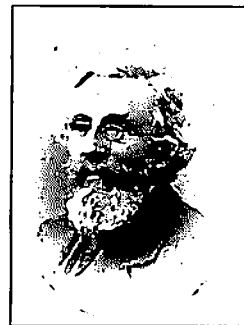
George Fredrick Root

Boys are Marching," "The Vacant Chair," "Just before the Battle, Mother," and "The Battle Cry of Freedom." Both of his brothers, who were his partners in a music publishing business, and their families, also joined the Chicago Society some years later. As a hymnist George Root is best known for composing the music for the hymns, "When He Cometh" aka "Jewels," "Ring the Bells of Heaven!," and "Jesus Loves the Little Children." You may recognize that the music for "Jesus Loves the Little Children" is the same as "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp the Boys are Marching." He also wrote words and music for such well-known hymns as, "Come to the Savior," "Clear as Crystal," and "Why do You Wait?" These hymns are well published, even today, in the hymnals of many denominations and, "Jesus Loves the Little Children" is still among the best-known and loved hymns in America, and indeed in the world.

His work with New Church hymn writers is less well published but some of these tunes are among his best works. Songs such as "Jerusalem, Thou City Bright," words by Frank Sewall and "Let Little Children Come to Me," words by James Reed, have been published exclusively, as far as I can determine, in New Church hymnals.

The tune used for "Jerusalem, Thou City Bright," is "Shining Shore" although in New Church hymnals it is often called "Shining City." Lydia Avery Coonley tells the story of how this tune came about:

One day when writing at Willow Farm, his mother passed through the room and laid a newspaper clipping before him, saying, "I think that would be good for music." The poem



George Webb

(Continued on page 40)



(Continued from page 39)

began, "My days are gliding swiftly by;" and as he read it a melody sang itself in his mind. He jotted it down and went on with his work. That was the origin of "The Shining Shore." Later when he took the theme to harmonize, it seemed so commonplace that he hesitated about setting it, and it was not printed till some months later. Of this song he says:

"When in after years it was sung in all the churches and Sunday Schools of the land, and in every land and tongue where our missionaries were at work, and so demonstrated that it had in it that mysterious life of which I have spoken, I tried to see why it should be so, but in vain. This little song is an illustration of the fact that simple music may have vitality as well as that which is higher, and that the composer knows no more about it in one case than in the other."

"The Shining Shore" was the pioneer of the type of songs known as "Gospel Hymns." Few are so universally sung as this; and though neither analysis nor criticism reveals the secret of its power, it testifies to the inspiration of its composer.



James Reed

Both "The Shining Shore" and "Jerusalem Thou City Bright" were published by the New Church Board of Publications in their 1910 hymnal, *The Magnificat*.

The 1950

*Book of Worship* and 1980 *Book of Worship* have both retained "Jerusalem Thou City Bright," but have omitted "The Shining Shore."

Although Root, as with "The Shining Shore," would set music to the religious poetry of others, his own style as a hymnist was clearly based on the Bible. He would basically set a chapter of the Bible to music without

attempting to expound on its meaning. This may be the result of his study of Swedenborg's writings, and Swedenborg's teaching on how children come to understand spiritual things. Most of the hymns that George Root inscribed, as opposed to those that he set to music for other writers, were meant to be published in Sunday School hymnals.

Swedenborg wrote:

All the details of the historical tales contained in the Word are truths more remote from the actual matters of doctrine that are Divine. Nevertheless they are of service to young and older children in that by means of those tales they are led gradually into more interior matters of doctrine concerning what is true and good, and at length into Divine ones; for inmosty those tales hold what is Divine within them. When young children read them and in innocence are filled with affection for them, the angels present with them experience a delightful heavenly state, for the Lord fills those angels with affection for the internal sense and so for the things which the events of the historical tales represent and mean. It is that heavenly delight experienced by angels which flows in and causes the young children to take delight in those tales. *Arcana Coelestia* 3690

Root's lyrics fit perfectly with Swedenborg's vision of how children read the Word, and surely his lyrics still delight the angels when they are sung. We see this style of biblical lyrics in Root's, "Art Thou He that Should Come," "Behold the Bridegroom Cometh," "Clear as Crystal," and "Inasmuch." Root composed over 300 hymns and gospel songs.

That the influence of George Root's pioneering efforts in Gospel Hymns was felt in the selection of music for Convention's 1910 hymnal, *The Magnificat* is evidenced in the preface to that work:

... the Committee have had in mind the wide variety of uses the Church's hymnal may subserve, not only in the formal public worship but in the home circle and in the informal and social religious meeting. Some of the most modern and

popular of the songs used in the large "revival" and missionary meetings have been obtained, at considerable copyright expense, with a view to two results: — (1) the extension of the Church's influence through its service of song as widely as possible, and (2) the prevention of the introduction into our church circles of hymnals containing undesirable words and music for the sake of these really valuable selections otherwise unobtainable. Another and substantial reason for embodying these popular religious songs is that they seem to be the utterance of a new affection in the religious world directed to the Lord Jesus in Person, in recognition of his divinity, of his redeeming Love, and of his constant presence as Saviour and Comforter.

Unfortunately for the committee they did have to pay copyright fees for Root's compositions because he had been forced to sell the rights to many of his songs in order to rebuild his family's music publishing company which had been destroyed by the great Chicago fire of 1871. Root penned several



Frank Sewall

songs about the great fire including, "Lost and Saved," "Passing through the Fire," and "From the Ruins Our City Shall Rise."

The Committee's belief that the "popular religious songs" were the "utterance of a new affection in the religious world directed to the Lord Jesus in Person," may well have been due to Root's substantial influence within the "Gospel Hymn" movement. George Root worked closely with most of the great hymn writers and composers of his era. He was a student of both, George Webb, ("Stand up, Stand

(Continued on page 41)



(Continued from page 40)



Fanny Crosby

up for Jesus,") and Lowell Mason, who composed the music for such hymns as, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "Nearer, My God, to Thee," and "Joy to the World." (Lowell Mason's son, William, married George Webb's daughter, Mary Isabella, and became a member of the Boston New Church. He contributed his tune "Oporto," to Convention's 1910 hymnal, *The Magnificat*.)

George Root taught for a while at the New York Institute for the Blind, where Fanny Crosby, who wrote the words for over 3,000 hymns in-

cluding, "Blessed Assurance," and "Beautiful Vale of Rest," was one of his students. They collaborated on several very successful secular songs. Among these are "Hazel Dell," "Rosalie, the Prairie Flower," "There's Music in the Air."

Root, at the Musical Institute in North Reading, Massachusetts, also taught both Theodore E. Perkins composer of, "Jesus is Mine," and James Ramsey Murray who later composed the tune "Mueller," which has become the most common music used for "Away in a Manger." Later Root founded the Normal Academy of Music in Geneseo, New York, and hired as a teacher William Bradbury, who later wrote the music for "Just As I Am," "The Solid Rock," "Sweet Hour of Prayer," "He Leadeth Me," and "Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us." Bradbury later worked for Root at the Root & Cady Company. Philip P. Bliss, who wrote the words and music for "Jesus Loves Even Me," "Let the Lower Lights be Burning," "Wonderful Words of Life," and "Almost Persuaded," was one of Root's many students at Geneseo. George F. Root would eventually publish Bliss'

first published song, "Lora Vale." Another of Bliss's songs that Root would publish was, "He's Gone," a tribute to William Bradbury.

Other hymnists who studied with Root include George Coles Stebbins, "Take Time to be Holy," "Throw out the Life Line!" and "Thanks to God," Charles Clinton Case, "Shining for Jesus," Daniel Brink Towner, "Trust and Obey," Anthony Johnson Showalter "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," and Edwin Othello Excell, "I'll Be a Sunbeam," and "Count Your Blessings."

Such was Root's standing in the musical world of his time, and his influence upon both Gospel and popular music, that in 1872, the University of Chicago awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Music. He was also chosen by his peers to serve as chairman of the Musical Congress at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

*The New Church and Chicago: a History*, says of George Root:

No person knew George F. Root but to love him; to those of his generation—members of the Chicago Society who so well knew him—his character is exemplified by the long life that he so successfully lived, in the sweet profession of which he was master.

For many years the attendants at sociables and affairs of the Church were the beneficiaries of Mr. Root's delightful entertaining.

Mr. and Mrs. Root were devoted New Church people; members of their family, early in life having become members of the Church, were reared within the sphere and teaching of it.

The poet, Lydia Avery Coonley, who collaborated with Root's son Frederic Woodman Root on several hymns including, "Why do Bells for Christmas Ring" wrote of George F. Root:

*He was a member of the Swedenborgian Church, and in all things an exponent of its beautiful ideals and high principles.*

George Frederick Root died on August 6, 1895 at Baily Island, Maine, and is buried in North Reading, Massachusetts.

## Sources:

Coonley, Lydia Avery. George F. Root and his Songs. *New England Magazine* Vol. 19 (5)

*The New Church and Chicago: a History*. W. B. Conkey Co. Chicago, 1906.

Introduction, *The Magnificat*. New Church Press. New York, 1910.

P.P. Bliss Biography on [www.gbgn.org](http://www.gbgn.org)

Photos from [www.cyberhymnal.org](http://www.cyberhymnal.org) (public domain)

The Rev. Carl Yenetchi is pastor of the LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana.



Philip Bliss



Birthplace of Dr. Root, Sheffield, Massachusetts

**Question:** Is there significance to the name "Garden of Gethsemane" as the place where Christ's pre-crucifixion agony took place, and what made the Lord's despair in the Garden so intense?

**Response:** Yes, there is much significance to the name of that precious garden, and much may be said about the depth, intensity and meaning of the Lord's despair and pain in the Garden.

This garden sits at the foot of the Mt. of Olives. Its eight olive trees are believed, despite all evidence, to have been part of the original grove. Our Lord went into the Garden at Gethsemane because "Gethsemane" means "olive press," and this points us toward a very sobering and deep truth: our Lord was willing to embrace the most passionate and deep evils and hatred the hellish crew could send through him.

Olives are a precious plant indeed. Their oil has been used to anoint kings for thousands of years, and it is a very healthy oil in one's diet. Olives correspond spiritually to the "the good of love." Said differently, the wonderful oil from olives corresponds to (or symbolizes) the good affections and intentions that are in God's love for us, as well as our love for the Lord and one another. And so, the act of pressing olives, crushing them to gain their precious oil inside, corresponds to the most intense kinds of spiritual temptation, as the deepest levels and groups of devilish spirits flung their passionate and vicious hatreds of humanity at him. "...for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress. Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me." (Ps. 25:17,18) In their deepest level of truth, the Scriptures speak to the internal, spiritual journey and states of being that Christ experienced while in his long, thirty-three year Glorification process, as he gradually put off the finite human and put on his Divine-Human. Thus spiritually speaking, Jesus found himself within an "olive press" that night after instituting the Holy Supper, as he fell to the ground in

## Ask Swedenborg

anguish in the shadows of those olive trees.

Our Incarnate Lord, Jesus, needed to come into our world within our human flesh in order to subdue and overcome all levels and kinds of evil, while not giving in to the false ideas and thoughts that come with evil. Christ dealt with two basic types of temptation battles and inner struggles, just as we do. When he was dealing with deep thought-level battles, where truth was being assailed by the "satans" of Hell, then the scriptural terminology and imagery for that was the "winepress." Wine represents a person's spiritual rationality. Olive oil, however, corresponds to the love and affection, or rather the will, aspect of a person. Our Lord's Divine Love for all of humanity was willing to face not only the falsities and rational manipulations we deal with, but also the affectional struggles when our will gets very weak and tempted by evils of many kinds. These types of temptations are clearly the worst. They can rip a person's gut in half, so to speak, because of their intensity.


The Lord's "natural man" gave him access to humanity's evil and its accompanying rationalizations. He waged his battle against it with the truth he had learned from the Holy Word, which he then joined with the Divine Love itself that was his very soul. These intense inner struggles are what joined the truth in his mind with the love in his heart. Yet the raw experience of it all was horrible and agonizing. And so we read that his soul was "exceedingly sorrowful and very heavy...even unto death." (Mt. 26:37,38) "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." (Lk 22:44)

Given the depth and greatness of Jesus' love for everyone, for the human race as a whole, and given that his soul was the Divine itself, he was able to

take on an intensity of hellish beings that no other person in history had before or after his time on earth. And that's why his inner turmoil was so awful, and also why his victory was so great! Now we all know the great lengths to which God will go to stay close and connected to us, and also that there isn't any depth or type of temptation we may face that our Lord hasn't as well. God's Love is so great and so strong, that nothing can overcome it.

Christ overcame all of Hell with his Divine Love and Truth, and he brings it all into your life so that your victory and growth may be beautiful and glorious, too.

*The Rev. Kit Billings is pastor at the Swedenborgian Church of the Open Word in St. Louis.*

*Rev. Billings wrote "Ask Swedenborg" as a regular feature in the Virginia Street church newsletter when he was pastor in St. Paul. The doctrinal questions arose from conversations he had at various times with his congregants. The above article is reprinted from their March 2001 newsletter. Readers are invited to send doctrinal questions to The Messenger editor, and they will be given to Kit or another of our knowledgeable ministers for response. Lay persons and ministers are also invited to send comments on the responses for discussion in The Messenger.* 

### From J. Appleseed—an Offer You Can't Refuse!

The Communications Support Unit is offering copies of any of our J. Appleseed 2002 and earlier titles free to Convention ministers—you pay postage only.

This notice is a follow-up to the offer sent out by letter to all ministers in late February, accompanied by a J. Appleseed catalog. COMSU also requested that ministers make your own recommendations on the J. Appleseed titles that you like and wish us to keep in print and those that you feel are no longer useful or should be updated.

To place orders and/or request another catalog, please contact:

Margaret Culver, Executive Assistant  
COMSU  
3820 22<sup>nd</sup> Street  
San Francisco, CA 94114-3204  
Phone (415) 282-1312  
Email: mculver@pngusa.net

Please respond by April 15, 2003. 

# CIRCLES AND CYCLES

## *In Reflection; in Life*

Diane Gates

"The one thing we seek with insatiable desire is to forget ourselves, to be surprised out of our propriety, to lose our sempiternal memory, and to do something without knowing how or why; in short, to draw a new circle."—From Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Circles"

Watching the kids spinning in circles reminds me of when I was little. I remember spinning so fast and so long that my ears would ring, my stomach would turn and my legs would finally forfeit on their promise to hold me until I became a simple heap on the ground. I'm sure you've all done this before (but in case you haven't, I strongly urge you to try it!). I can remember that feeling of continued spinning in my heart and mind and body even after I'd collapsed.

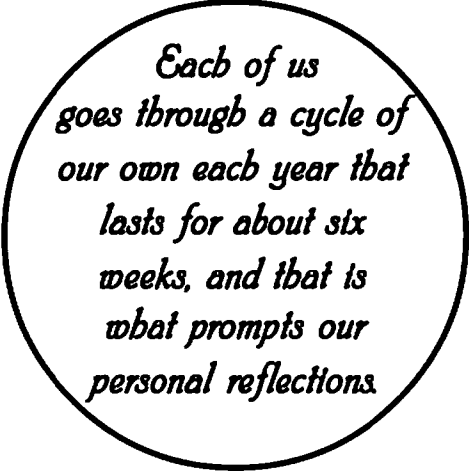
Reflecting on this, it becomes interesting to me that even as children in such a simple example, we're filled with conflicting emotions and reactions to this experience. Our eyes deceive us by trying to capture a stable object on the horizon to steady us in our dizziness. Yet there is a strong compulsion to stay in that dizzying state where our bodies have stopped and the world keeps moving; in circles.

What's interesting here is that while we might not pretend to be whirling dervishes as in our youth, we still encounter the dizzying frenzy of the circles and cycles of life; and especially the conflict that goes with those cycles. Like the children, we all have things in our lives that have become cycles of our days, weeks, months, years, and even life. Some of these cycles have become so well known to us that we don't even recognize them as cycles. They become second nature, and their consequence is that we forget to say hello to our neighbors, tell our loved ones how much they mean to us, participate in our communities, and even pay attention to ourselves. We are constantly reminded, however, that we must con-

sider our cycles and how they affect us.

I remember when I was a

technology consultant, I used to say to my clients, "Regardless of how good the implementation plan is, the most important part of the process is to review its effectiveness after it's been implemented—we call it a reassessment." I often sensed frustration in their expressions—they were hoping, after all the work of putting the project together, it would just be complete and they could forget about it. Unfortunately, that's not the case. As with everything in life, it's a process—or as the old adage goes, "It (whatever It might be) is a journey, not a destination." In technology, in business, in love, in relationship, there is no completed project. We constantly have to reexamine what's working and what's



*Each of us  
goes through a cycle of  
our own each year that  
lasts for about six  
weeks, and that is  
what prompts our  
personal reflections.*

not working and what adjustments, if any, must be made. In spiritual terms, we call this reviewing process *reflection*.

This season is called Lent; a time for reflection. For me, this is an important spiritual cycle. Over the years I have approached Lent in a variety of ways. One year, I gave up chocolate and potatoes (two things which I adore). Another year, I made a promise to go to church every week. And this year, I took up writing letters to my loved ones (as I'm a notoriously bad correspondent.)

Being raised Catholic, this practice is just part of what I do; it's just one of my cycles. The year I gave up chocolate and potatoes was probably the first

year that I actually kept my Lenten promise for the entire duration of Lent. Every time I was offered chocolate or potatoes, I declined and said a quick prayer.

Recently, a friend who converted to Catholicism after years as a Presbyterian, told me a story about her experiences of Lent as a new Catholic. Shortly after her conversion she found a nun who has become her spiritual counselor. When she first started to go see this woman they would meet and talk, and then when she was getting ready to leave, she would ask, "What should I read? Or what should I study?" For over a year, the little nun would send her away empty handed and just tell her to *be*, and think about her relationship with God.

I can see how that must have been very difficult to grasp for her. For years, her spiritual tradition had been based on scripture and readings as opposed to living and receiving God into her middle.

At the time of Lent, my friend went to see this nun. She asked her, "Well, what do I do for Lent? What do I give up?" The answer the nun gave her will stick with me for the rest of my life. The nun told her that she had already been through Lent for the year and to just enjoy the beauty and blessings of Easter. Her explanation was, "You see, the annual celebration of Lent in the church is to remind us that we all go through our own Lent each and every year. The obligation of the church is to provide us with the paradigm for Lent. Whether we *happen to be* going through Lent at the same time as the church is, is irrelevant. The fact remains that each of us goes through a cycle of our own each year that lasts for about six weeks, and that is what prompts our personal reflections."

Pondering this idea, I am amazed at its accuracy. Each year I know that invariably, even in the best of years, I've been challenged to look deep inside myself and discern what's what. Sometimes I coincide with the church, and sometimes I don't. Sometimes catastrophe strikes when I am the most vulnerable. Sometimes things happen that couldn't have been anticipated or

*(Continued on page 46)*

## Alliance of New Church Women: Annual Appeal

2003 marks the Centennial Year for our Alliance, which will be celebrated at Convention this July at Hobart Smith College, Geneva, New York. We hope you will be with us for this celebration, and we invite you to respond to our annual appeal. Thank you!

Membership \$5.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Mite Box \$ \_\_\_\_\_

General Fund Giving \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make check to North American Alliance of Swedenborgian Women (or N. Am. Alliance). Thank you!

MAIL TO:

Margaret Kraus, Box 264, Pretty Prairie, KS 67570

From: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return by May 15, 2003*

### ***A History of the Alliance of New-Church Women***

Order the beautiful *History of the Alliance* now for \$7 (postage/handling included). Celebrate the Alliance in its Centennial Year! Send me the form below with your check made out to N. Am. Alliance. Thanks for your order!

Nan Paget, Publication Chair, Women's Alliance

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ histories to me at \$7 each.

My check to

N. Am. Alliance for \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Send to:

Nan Paget  
155 Elm Ave.  
Mill Valley CA 94941.

Ph 415-388-4823 (email [fredrick@well.com](mailto:fredrick@well.com)) 

## Kids Intervention Program Recipient of Mite Box 2003

The Women's Alliance has selected as recipient of this year's Mite Box Collection the **Kids Vision and Intervention Program of Southwest Florida**. This program, which was begun by the New Church of SW Florida, is a joint community effort, and has as its mission to "implement spiritual ecology by saving and protecting our natural resource—our children." Please send your contributions, made out to the Women's Alliance, to:

Margaret Kraus, Treasurer  
229 S. Park Ave. Box 264  
Pretty Prairie, KS 67570.



## Swedenborgian Discussions Run on Beliefnet

Did you know that *Beliefnet*, one of the largest interfaith spirituality sites on the internet, has several running discussion boards on the topic of Swedenborg, and Swedenborgian theology? While there are a number of interesting Swedenborgian discussions available on the net, the presence of the discussion threads on Beliefnet is particularly noteworthy because of the greater public arena they afford for discussing Swedenborgian concepts with newcomers, with friends, and with those of other faiths and spiritual backgrounds whose interests intersect with ours. One of the longest running, most invigorating Swedenborgian threads on Beliefnet, *Swedenborg 101*, was initiated by Lorena Costello of the Bridgewater Swedenborgian Church (Mass.) on January 28, 2001. *Swedenborg 101* continues to thrive, and is frequented by those new to Swedenborgian concepts who are eagerly seeking more information, and respondents who enjoying sharing and comparing what they know, or are learning about.

The term "thread" simply means "topic." Each 'thread' contains one original message, and all subsequent messages post as "replies" in an ongoing conversation which changes and develops within the general topic as it progresses. These discussions do not post to your email, and you must sign in on the Beliefnet site in order to participate in them. Beliefnet is a large, elaborate site, so please try the following specific links in order to easily locate Swedenborgian discussions—then bookmark them for subsequent access. And who knows? Perhaps you might even like to start a Swedenborgian thread of your own. Join in the pleasure of dialog, sharing, and just having fun!

To reach the thread "*Swedenborg 101*" go to:  
[http://beliefnet.com/boards/message\\_list.asp?boardID=3770&discussionID=26634](http://beliefnet.com/boards/message_list.asp?boardID=3770&discussionID=26634)

To reach the thread "*Gay and Swedenborgian: Mutually Exclusive?*" go to: [http://beliefnet.com/boards/message\\_list.asp?discussionID=209619](http://beliefnet.com/boards/message_list.asp?discussionID=209619)

To reach the full list of threads on all Swedenborgian topics go to: <http://beliefnet.com/boards/search.asp> (Then type "Swedenborg" into the search window.)

—Mona Diane Conner, member  
New York New Church



# CONVENTION 2003 REGISTRATION

## HOBART & WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGE

### *"Faith of our Mothers"*

**Saturday, July 5 – Wednesday, July 9, 2003**

Hosted by the Swedenborgian Church in the United States and Canada.

**Transportation:** The nearest airports are in Syracuse and Rochester, each about one hour's drive. Transportation from the airport to Hobart William Smith is not provided, but Central Office can match arriving delegates with one another to share rental cars. If you are renting a car anyway, you might investigate fares to Buffalo which is reputed to be less expensive.

**Children's programming:** We will provide separate care for children ages 0 to 4 and a more structured program for children from 5 to 12 during scheduled activities from Saturday evening through Wednesday morning.

**Social Events:** Free time will be scheduled when individual outings in the area can take place. Hobart is on beautiful Seneca Lake in the heart of New York's famous Finger Lakes district, known for its wineries and lovely scenery. This part of New York State has been a popular vacation destination for generations.

**Payment:** All registrations and full payment must be received by June 1, 2003.

**Accommodations:** The weather in upper New York State during Convention may be anywhere from cool to downright warm. Come prepared for both. Housing is in new townhouses, each with four single rooms and two full bathrooms, plus a kitchen. We suggest that anyone who drives to convention bring a fan in the car just in case the weather is warm the week we are there. For the handicapped, accessible accommodations can be arranged. There are several pleasant motels in Geneva for those who wish more private accommodations.

..... (Detach here) .....

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Names and ages of children accompanying you: \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_ city and state: \_\_\_\_\_ zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Arrival: \_\_\_\_\_ Departure: \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_ Home Church (for your name tag) \_\_\_\_\_

*For transportation match-ups, please tell us when you will arrive at the airport and on which flight:*

Adult registration	@ \$65.00	x adults	_____	=	\$ _____
Teen registration (13-17)	@ \$50.00	x teens	_____	=	\$ _____
Child 5-12 registration	@ \$35.00	x children	_____	=	\$ _____
Registration family maximum	@ \$180.00			=	\$ _____
Late fee if mailed after May 15	@ \$35.00	x adults	_____	=	\$ _____

#### **Room and Board (Please take one option)**

July 2 through July 9 (seven nights)	@ \$266.00	x persons	_____	=	\$ _____
July 4 through July 9 (five nights)	@ \$195.00	x persons	_____	=	\$ _____
July 5 through July 9 (four nights)	@ \$156.00	x persons	_____	=	\$ _____

**Total** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*All charges are in US dollars. All bills must be paid in full by June 1. No registration refunds after June 1. Bills may be paid by VISA and MasterCard. Provide number and four-digit expiration date.*

VISA      MasterCard      Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to **The Swedenborgian Church**

Send Form with checks to: Central Office, The Swedenborgian Church, 11 Highland Ave., Newtonville, MA 02460

Special needs: (dietary, handicapped access, housemate requests, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Should you have any questions please feel free to contact Central Office at 617-969-4240.

## CIRCLES AND CYCLES *In Reflection; in Life*

(Continued from page 43)

avoided. They happen when they happen and I am called to the table to address the situation at hand and reflect on the consequences. Reflection occurs in cycles.

September 11<sup>th</sup> is a good example of a grand scale situation that calls us to the table. What was profound for me were the statements made by the people who witnessed the terrible event. They were the products of deep reflection. The warp and weft of our moral fabric could be seen in the enormous love and energy of a people uniting, honoring, and remembering the people who perished that day. While I know that we all believe we would be much happier had that not happened, it did happen,

and upon reflection, we looked deep into ourselves and found strength, community, and beauty, in the spirit of love.

While preparing this talk I looked up Lent in my theological terms dictionary and found out that the word itself is derived from *lente*, which in Middle English meant *spring* and in Old English meant *lengthening daylight*. I think it is fitting. In the springtime we have more light and more light is hopefully the result of our spiritual reflection.

We must consciously reflect on such events in our lives and choose our responses carefully. So, even when things seem to be ever so challenging, I challenge you to remember that the work of God in the universe works through us and with us in every situation. The circles and cycles of life are just that—

circles and cycles. So with reflection comes growth, with death comes life, with love comes beauty.

To the extent we all are touched by happy and challenging cycles, we're reminded of the promise of Easter in its annual celebration, and that the beauty of the circle is the symbol for eternal life.

As a commitment to reflection and life, I ask that you reach out in front of you and with your hand, draw a new circle for your awareness and your life and may you come *full circle*.

*Diane Gates is a friend of the Portland, Maine, Swedenborgian Church. This is her first appearance in The Messenger.*

Reprinted with author's permission, from the Portland church newsletter, *The Applesced*, April 2002.



## St. Patrick

Very little is known about St. Patrick, whose memory is honored by "Shamrock Day," traditionally observed on March 17. The date of his birth is recorded as about 389 and his death as about 463 A.D. He was known as "the apostle of Ireland," his birthplace probably in southwestern Britain, and his British name was Succat. At sixteen years of age, he was carried off by Irish marauders and served as a herdsman. He escaped, but later returned. As recorded in church legends, he "found all Ireland heathen and left it wholly Christian."

It is legend that, when asked to explain the "Trinity of God," this apostle pointed to the shamrock, stating that, as this plant had three petals but only one stem, so the one God expressed himself to mankind in the three forms, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This illustration was no doubt helpful to St. Patrick. But Swedenborg's writings have explanations which seem far more rational: The light, heat and power from the one sun and the soul, body and mind of the one person. Shamrock Day may give us something to think about in connection with the Doctrine of the Divine Humanity of the Lord.

—from *The Helper*, March 17, 1943

Reprinted from the San Diego Swedenborgian Church newsletter, March 2002



## EDITORIAL ~ MOVING TOWARD THE LIGHT

### *In the Right Place*

(Continued from page 34)

*I don't know.*

Even then, I can't turn him out. It's early evening, and getting cold. He returns to the cottage. I call the sheriff, a deputy arrives in a few minutes and I'm instructed to collect the copies of the canceled checks from the bank and turn them over to the deputy the next day. They can't make an arrest until they have hard evidence. I phone his mother. I don't know her well, but I need to let her know what happened and what I had to do. *You did the right thing*, she says. *I hope this is the wake up call he needs to turn his life around. I love him dearly but I told him we can't be supportive of his lifestyle... and we're not going to bail him out.* She's demonstrating tough love, a term people talk about but aren't usually able to practice. I know it hasn't been easy for her to arrive at this. He turns himself in to the sheriff the next day, confesses on tape, and is taken directly to jail.

I tell his mother that I need to clear his things out of the cottage, and she agrees to pick them up and store them for him. I go out and start

bagging up his belongings. More beer cans. Porn videos. Drug paraphernalia. Two copies of the New Testament, and a ragged collection of baseball cards.

At his sentencing, as the victim of the crime, I'm allowed to make a statement to the court. I strongly urge the judge to mandate residential alcohol drug treatment and at least 90 days of AA meetings. I cite eight years of observing his lifestyle and my professional background as an alcohol drug counselor. I state that his crime appears to be a cry for help. He is sentenced to six months and put on a waiting list for inpatient treatment. My testimony corroborates the court's findings, and he's granted the opportunity for rehab. It's over. His mother squeezes my arm as we're leaving. There are tears in her eyes. "Good job," she whispers. I think about the two sides of him, battling it out. Which one will win? I think about why we're in each other's lives. It's seldom for the reason we think we are. But now and again, the fog lifts, and we see—maybe *that's* why, *that's* what I was supposed to do, and I was in the right place at the right time.

—Patte LeVan



## MEMORIAL

**Saul**—A memorial service for Mareta Poole Saul (1910-2002) will be conducted at Wayfarers Chapel on Sunday, April 6, 2003 (her birthday) at 11:30 am by the Rev. Harvey A. Tafel (son-in-law) and Jennifer M. Tafel (granddaughter and future Swedenborgian minister). All are welcome to attend. There will be a light luncheon reception following the service at Mary and Phil Sabol's (dear friends of Mareta and her family). Mareta was a lifelong member of our church, and we look forward to honoring her life here on Earth.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

**Kurt Fekete**

38 Great Falls Road  
Gorham, Maine 04038  
Home: 207-892-4646  
Cell: 802-345-0169  
Work: 207-892-4390  
SCYL Toll Free business line:  
866-333-SCYL

**Rev. Jonathan Mitchell**

1114 Opal St., Apt. B  
Redondo Beach, CA 90277  
(310) 792-0372

## PASSAGES

### CONFIRMATION

**Matthew Fleming and Don Craig** were confirmed into the life of the Royal Oak Church of the Holy City on Sunday, December 22nd, 2002. Matthew is the son of Joy Zimmer from Romeo, Michigan. Don and his wife, Lisa Craig and their son, Colin, live in Almont, Michigan. The Rev. Renee Billings Machiniak officiated.

### DEATHS

**Eggebrecht**—William Eggebrecht passed into the spiritual world September 27th, 2002, at the Georgian Bloomfield Nursing Home in Bloomfield, Michigan. A memorial service will be held for him at the next gathering of the Almont Summer School the week of July 19th-27th, 2003. God's peace be with you, Bill.

**Fischer**—Adelheid (Heidi) Johanna Ursula Fischer, age 71, entered the spiritual world January 2, 2003, in Fryeburg, Maine. A memorial service was conducted January 5, 2003, at the Fryeburg New Church, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating. Heidi was a great

friend of the Fryeburg New Church and many of its members.

**Gould**—Marilyn K. Gould, age 76, entered the spiritual world January 1, 2003, in Fryeburg, Maine. A memorial service was conducted January 6, 2003, at the Fryeburg New Church, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating. She is survived by two sons: David A Gould and Stephen F. Gould, and a daughter, Patricia A. Bove.

**Torpey** - Howard Torpey, age 60, longtime member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, peacefully entered the spiritual world November 10, 2002. He is survived by his wife, Linda Baker, and his daughters Annamarie and Christina. A memorial service was held December 15 at the San Francisco church, the Rev. Rachel Rivers officiating.



## IMPORTANT CHURCH DATES:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| March 8        | General Council Conference<br>Call, 12 PM, EST              |
| March 13-16    | MINSU meeting at Wayfarers, Palos Verdes, CA                |
| March 17-21    | CAM at Wayfarers and SHS                                    |
| April 3-6      | SHS Board Meeting, Berkeley                                 |
| April 25-27    | Transitions Retreat at Almont, MI                           |
| April 26-27    | Retirement Committee, Newtonville, MA                       |
| May 3          | Investment Committee Meeting, Newtonville, MA               |
| May 16-18      | Wayfarers Board Meeting                                     |
| July 2-4       | Council of Ministers, Geneva, NY                            |
| July 5-9       | Convention 2003 at Hobart William Smith College, Geneva, NY |
| July 5         | EDSU, Geneva, NY  |
| July 28-Aug. 3 | Camp 2003 at Temenos  |

## SHORT TAKES

### ST. PAUL

The Rev. Eric Hoffman has accepted a call to full-time ministry to the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. Eric, his wife Norma and their newborn Eiryn Mariah are moving to St. Paul from LaPorte, Indiana, with an anticipated start date to be April 1, 2003.

### ROYAL OAK, MICHIGAN

Swedenborgian House of Studies seminarian Sage Currie is studying parish ministry part-time with the Rev. Renee Billings Machiniak at the Church of the

Holy City in Royal Oak from January through July 2003, as well as studying full time through June with Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital in the Clinical Pastoral Education program.

### ELMWOOD, MASS.

Eli Dale, member of the Portland, Maine, Swedenborgian Church and seminary student at Andover Newton Theology School, is serving part-time as interim pastor at Elmwood New Church in Elmwood, Mass., through June, while the Rev. Andy Stinson is serving in the Army as a chaplain.

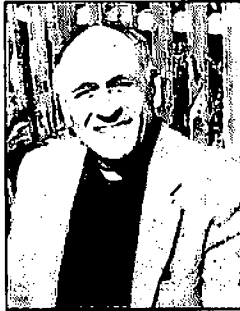




Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London 15 years after his death. This 1787 organization eventually spawned the present General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches. 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.

## Adjunct Minister Joins San Francisco Church

The Rev. Gerry Caprio joined the pastoral staff of the San Francisco church on February 1, 2003, as Adjunct Minister to work with the Rev. Rachel Rivers. Rev. Caprio has been serving the San Francisco congregation on an as-needed basis for the past two years through leading worship, providing pastoral care, and conducting wedding and memorial services. The congregation looks forward to Gerry's increased involvement in the life of their church now that he is serving them half-time. They especially appreciate his warm, energetic spirit; his knowledge and understanding of the Bible, education, comparative religions and the process of spiritual growth; and his openness and respect for all people.



Rev. Gerry Caprio

Rev. Caprio was ordained a Roman Catholic Priest in 1970 in New Jersey. He moved to the Bay Area six years ago and is presently affiliated with The White Robed Monks of St. Benedict. He has two graduate degrees from Seton Hall University—an M.A. in theology and an M.A. in education. He taught high school for eight years, has done consulting in Telecom for twenty years and was in information technology for five years. Gerry lives in Mill Valley, a town just North of San Francisco over the Golden Gate, with his wife, Alison, and their two daughters—Jennifer in college, and Lauren in high school. They also have a dog named Daisy!

Gerry comes to his position at the San Francisco church with a solid understanding of and respect for Swedenborg's teachings, and he looks forward to increasing his knowledge of Swedenborgian theology and to working and growing with the congregation.

## Grandmothers and Grandfathers

A novel by Helen Kennedy  
Reviewed by Lisa Hyatt Cooper.

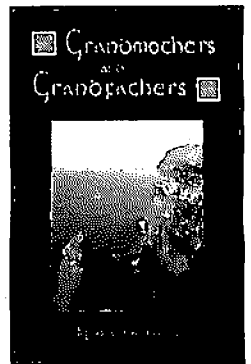
A collection of serialized short stories, a history book, a cultural study, an examination of human nature. Helen Kennedy's new novel-length book is all of these and more. A young woman of modern times has a baby, and as she tries to work out her place in her new world, her Irish ancestors from a hundred, a thousand, even tens of thousands of years back come to visit her from the other world. Some offer advice, some offer love, but all of them share the gift of their stories with her.

The style of writing is as unpolished in places as most of the characters, but the personalities are complex, the stories are compelling, and the answers are not easy. Extensive historical research has given the work a rich, authentic feel. The author is Swedenborgian, and Swedenborgian thought makes itself felt throughout the volume, but more in an organic than an explicit way; it tends to be interwoven into the actual tapestry of the book rather than embroidered on the surface.

I found *Grandmothers and Grandfathers* an absorbing, moving book. I hope you will too.

Lisa Hyatt Cooper works as a translator for the Swedenborg Foundation. She is currently working on the New Century Edition version of *Secrets of Heaven*.

*Grandmothers and Grandfathers* is available at [www.fountainpublishing.com](http://www.fountainpublishing.com), or at Trade paperback, 375 pages, \$14.00.



The Swedenborgian Church  
of North America  
*The Messenger*  
11 Highland Ave.  
Newtonville, MA 02460

Address Service  
Requested

\*\*\*\*\*ECRLOT\*\*C-043

CENTRAL OFFICE  
11 HIGHLAND AVE  
NEWTONVILLE MA 02460-1852



Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Plymouth, IN  
Permit No. 105