

# THE MESSENGER

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May 2003



## Holding Up Hands

*The View of a Swedenborgian Army Chaplain*

Andy Stinson

I have often used this scripture to define what it is I do as a chaplain. I have found it a source of strength and clarity as I sometimes try to remind myself what my role and calling are to the soldiers and the God that I seek to serve. This scripture is one of the first instances of chaplaincy in the Bible, where the religious person, Aaron, contributes to the survival and the success of the Israelites in battle. As a Swedenborgian, I look to this text not only in its literal sense but as a mode of operating for me as a chaplain.

*So Joshua fought the Amalekites as ordered.*

Joshua, the war fighter, goes to battle against the Amalekites as ordered. The chaplain is not the war

*"So Joshua fought the Amalekites as ordered and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Israel held up his hands, the Israelites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it, Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword." Exodus 17:10-13*

fighter, the one acting on and for the battle. But note that the war fighter moves as ordered. This is not simply the hierarchy of the army but, looking inward, it is the call of every soldier to live up to those words of honor, duty, patriotism, and self-sacrifice. Most soldiers join the Army for a mix of reasons, but at the core for most soldiers is the call to service. People make the sacrifice of Army life—and trust me, for most it is a sacrifice on many levels because they are called—ordered—to this life of service—but that is the ruling love which undergirds all of their actions. This order comes from God through his man Moses, the very hands Aaron is called to hold up.

Many of you may not be familiar with the Army chaplaincy. The Army chaplaincy is one of the oldest branches of the United States Army. Commissioned by Gen. George Washington in 1775, from the very beginning chaplains were ordained clergy with the task of ministering to the people in uniform; they have been doing it since the beginning. Chaplains are non-combatants and are prohibited from carrying weapons. We do not engage in the act of fighting or combat. Instead we have three tasks which are the mainstays of the chaplain's call.

**Nurture the Living.** Chaplains are responsible for facilitating the religious life and worship of everyone within their command's scope. This means making sure everyone who wants to has the opportunity to observe his or her faith, whatever that

may mean. The Army is a microcosm of the nation. People from every faith group and tradition are represented. As chaplains, we are called to safeguard those traditions and ensure that each person gets to come to God in his or her own way. We are also called to minister squarely and firmly out of our own tradition. Chaplains are responsible for providing pastoral care, counseling, religious education, rites and sacraments, all of the things that any other clergy person would provide.

**Care for the Wounded.** Rather than fight in a combat environment, the chaplain is called to care for the wounded. This encompasses support to the dying, some medical aid, ministering to the trauma of combat or injury, and other tasks. On a wider scope, the wounded are not simply those who lie on the battlefield, it is our calling to minister to all of the hurt, pain, and grief that life has to offer.

**Honor the Dead.** For those who have given their lives, whether in the line of duty or through the course of a lifetime of service, our task as chaplains is to ensure that their legacy is honored. The Army is based on tradition and values. Keeping holy the passing of those who have served is one of the high honors an Army chaplain has.

*When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it.*

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At this writing in mid-April, we approach another Easter, another Mother's Day. Hope and salvation for mankind, blessing and honor.

The man who is building new kitchen cabinets for me is a Vietnam veteran with two Purple Hearts, two Silver Stars, and post-traumatic stress syndrome. His stomach is a medical miracle rebuilt of some kind of mesh. He hates the war and can't endure watching the "America at War" news for long. Yet he's a great admirer of General Patton. "If it weren't for Patton, there'd likely to be a swastika flyin' over Julian," he says, in his thick Tennessee accent. He left an abusive home in his mid-teens and lied about his age to join the Marines. He sees nothing illogical in his seemingly contradictory views; he believes in a just war and duty to our country. He did his part. In his fifties now, he is the only one still alive from his original company. His last surviving war buddy committed suicide in the V.A. hospital.

My kitchen has been torn apart for ten days now, without water downstairs and a gray film of dust over everything. Canned goods and dishes are out of the cupboards and drawers, all covered with a blanket on the table, a tarp on the floor; we're eating on paper plates and frequently buying takeout entrees from the local restaurants and assembling simple breakfasts and salads on the washing machine. I can't find anything, and we're doing dishes in the bathroom sink upstairs. Our level of hardship is absurdly luxurious compared to the chaos we're seeing on the news. But psychologically, I picked a bad time to have my home in shambles. It seems to echo a war zone, and I can't blot out the agonized faces on TV, in Baghdad hospitals that have been looted and haven't even water left to offer the dying. I can't pull myself back into my habitual comfort and order, shut off confusion and insanity. I watch the President visiting and warmly commending some wounded troops, then I hear the next day that the budget for vets' benefits will likely be slashed by billions of dollars. I look around and I can't seem to find anything from which to draw reassurance.

The war was over in three weeks, my son is saying, and we've only lost a hundred men...and 25,000 Iraqis were killed—numbers—25,000+ human beings wasted in three weeks. A record. I've just returned from a weekend visit with my youngest daughter and my son; we're helping my son and his girlfriend pack to move to his house in Morro Bay, on the beautiful mid-coast of California. Tommy Mack, his beloved orange tabby, was run over and killed in January, just a few blocks from his house in Los Angeles, four months after his father died. *That finished me, he said, I can't deal with L.A. anymore. Too much traffic, too many crazy people.*

We spend a few days visiting our friend and former neighbor who moved to a nice double-wide in Hemet last year. She needed a bigger place to live since she was taking care of her 92-year-old mother. Her mother has dementia. She can't be left alone. She no longer remembers how to dress herself, mistakes the neighbors for her grandchildren, and routinely complains that someone has stolen her sewing machine.

My friend calls a neighbor to sit with her mother while we go to the movies to see Jack Nicholson in "About Schmidt." Warren Schmidt is a man who has been a middle-class automaton until the crisis of his retirement. He impulsively responds to a Childreach ad on TV and sponsors Ngudu, a six-year-old African child, to whom he begins pouring out his lonely musings in correspondence. When Schmidt's wife dies suddenly, he's forced further into the scary task of examining a life that doesn't seem to add up to much. Achingly well done, but perhaps not the greatest film choice for our collective mood. (When Nicholson later accepts the Golden Globe award for best actor, he says he didn't expect the award and has taken a Valium, then adds, "I thought we were making a comedy.")

We return to my friend's home; her mother is sitting on the couch looking angry. The sitter leaves. Her mother says the sitter was mean and she never wants her to come again. "Mama, you know that's not true," my friend says patiently. It's obvious they've had this

exchange before. She helps her mother to bed, then returns to the living room to talk awhile before we all turn in.

"I've missed you and missed the good times we used to have together," she says. "It's just such a luxury to be able carry on a normal conversation." We say our goodbyes that night; in the morning she will be taking her mother to daycare before we get up, then she'll attend an Alzheimer's care givers' support group.

Before we head home, I step out the kitchen door to look at the new plants she'd wanted me to see in her small backyard, something we didn't get around to during our visit. On the other side of the fence facing the street, two Hispanic gardeners are chopping and raking out dead fronds from a row of palm trees. I hear the soft murmur of their Spanish as they organize their work together. Then one of them begins to sing. Moments later, the other man picks up on the melody. I stand listening, letting the sound of their song fill me up, like a sweet prayer of thanksgiving.

—Patte LeVan



## THE MESSENGER

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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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## Holding Up Hands

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Sometimes when in the midst of life's conflicts, people need a truth to rest on. A huge part of my pastoral work is telling the truth of people's lives, hearing the stresses and difficulties, validating their experience, and reflecting back to them their better selves. Our visionary and called selves often need help in the midst of challenges, as Moses did when trying to support his arms alone. Whether it is the challenge of keeping healthy a marriage separated by months and a thousand miles, the grief and trauma of a sudden death, or making a decision about the welfare of soldiers, I attempt to offer people their truth on which their divine selves might rest, and from that Divine source act to win the battle.

Being an army chaplain has allowed me to fully embrace my belief in the power of honoring the diversity of God's presence in the world. As an Army chaplain I have been called to minister to Muslims, Jews, atheists, evangelical Christians, liberal Christians, Wiccans, Seventh Day Adventists, just to mention a few. Seeing holiness and Divine Providence working in each of these lives has been one of the most wonderful ways of living my Swedenborgian faith. When a call came in for someone to meet with a Wiccan soldier who was struggling with the grief of having recently lost a close friend, I as a Swedenborgian was able to step up and honor his journey and tradition in ways other chaplains were unable to do. Getting the opportunity to truly live out my belief and faith in God's presence in each tradition has been a gift for me.

One of the questions I have been asked most often by Swedenborgians is, How can I participate, as a clergyperson, in an organization whose trained job it is to kill people and destroy property if called upon. Each chaplain has to come to terms individually with this stark reality, but for me it is about access to the abundance of God's love. As clergy we minister to all types of people, prisoners, sick people, healthy people, rich and poor.

If we are to begin discriminating who gets to be ministered to, who gets to openly express their faith, then are we being faithful to God's call? For me, it is not that the Army is a culture and a people who may be about completing a distasteful (or, if you like, an immoral) task—that of managing violence for the protection of the nation—it is about whether they are a people deserving of God's love and deserving of

*The most powerful thing I seek to do is to hold up the hands of the spirit in the midst of battle.*

ministry. Soldiers, like all others, are a people who hurt and need to be nurtured, are a people who need to be fed hot bread straight from heaven, and are people who are in need of someone to remind them of the love that God has in store for them and to honor their story. I believe that they are deserving as we all are deserving; an imperfect people deserving of God's love.

Lastly, Swedenborg certainly saw the profession of arms as having the possibility of being a noble profession. In *The Doctrine of Charity* (nn.164, 166) Swedenborg lays out what it is to enter as a soldier, whether a commander or private, into the life of charity and use. He sees conflict and defense from it not as something beyond the pale of our human experience. Defense of one's nation is considered one of the higher forms of a life of charity. Swedenborg clearly recognizes that, at least in his age there are evils that require resisting even to the point of the bayonet.

*Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset.*

The most powerful thing I seek to do is to hold up the hands of the spirit in the midst of battle. Whether they are battling with substance abuse or the trials that come from the sacrifices of soldiering, I help to support

their authentic selves, not simply change their actions, and whatever changes take place may never be seen by others. The goal is to support the very divine nature within, which informs what they do that they may remain steady till sunset.

Nine p.m. on a Saturday night I got a call from a worried squad leader about one of his young soldiers. They were at the hospital, and the soldier's wife was in labor with their first child. The 20-year-old soldier was scheduled to deploy to Kuwait the next day and was having serious misgivings about possibly missing the birth of his child. His squad leader had been concerned because he had heard him talk about missing the movement, which would have had serious legal repercussions and could even have resulted in his going to jail. I went to the hospital, and through the course of the evening sat with him and his family reflecting with him what it meant for him to be deployed, to miss his new child and his wife, and what it meant to be a father. He wanted to deploy with his unit; he had trained for it and was committed to seeing his duty through, but in the midst of his grief and fear, he was losing his nerve. In hearing and validating his grief around leaving, the impact of becoming a father, and the deployment into harm's way, this soldier was able to spend the next twelve hours (his daughter was born around midnight) with his family and did deploy later the next day with his unit.

The ministry was not in getting the soldier to do what the institution wanted, but it was in being able to hold up his hands in the midst of his own inner battle and let him decide who he would become. In being able to hold up his hands for a few hours, in responding to his grief and fear and weariness, he was able to become the soldier and father and husband that he wanted to be in his higher self.

## A Day In the Life

On the personal level, my day varies greatly. Rarely do two days look alike. I am usually up and out by

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six a.m. to hit the gym. I am into the office sometime around 7:30-8:00. Some mornings we will have a staff meeting where I will be asked to brief or advise the command on a variety of issues concerning morale and welfare. Sometimes I am engaged in providing religious services, anything from conducting a memorial service for a retiree or a prayer for the opening of a change of command. For a while I was spending a lot of time traveling, visiting soldiers who were working in isolated sites all over the United States. My visits were seeking to alleviate effort to and isolation that they were encountering. Last week I conducted a wedding with about four hours notice. A couple who had been engaged for some months discovered the groom was to be deployed within 48 hours and they wanted to be married before he left.

There are regular meetings for professional development and training, often coming together with other chaplains to discuss counseling techniques, case studies, or other tools that we find helpful. I have done work with the Myers Briggs Type Indicator and the primary staff of the battalion, working to help increase their work together as a team.

A good part of almost every day is spent visiting with soldiers and hearing their joys and concerns. Regardless of tradition, my presence reminds everyone I meet that there is something higher that each of us serves and aspires toward, and I consistently try to offer them a stone to sit on or a little help holding up what they consider important. Often I will also advise the commander on decisions that he is making when it has an ethical or morale component. Some weeks I will participate in or offer Sunday services at the main post chapel as a part of the general protestant worship. It has become apparent to me over these months that simply being present is more important than anything I actually do. My presence among our soldiers as a religious leader being God's representative among these people has power beyond

what I could imagine. Every day the Divine Providence gives me the opportunity to touch a life and hopefully be an ally for the angels.

*So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.*

It has been said that the definition of a hero is simply a person who knows what should be done, genuinely doesn't want to do it, and does it anyway. If this is true, I am surrounded by heroism every day by the men and women of the United States Army. I am consistently awed and humbled by what soldiers sacrifice to do what they believe is important, to live out of a Value, a Truth, in their lives. They are a remarkable breed of people.

I am aware that as I bring this article to a close it is the end of March. By May when it makes print, our world could well look different from the way it does now. And so it is with a bit of anticipation and trepidation that I offer it. Anticipation, as I have long wanted to share with my brothers and sisters in our church the work I have been doing since being called to active duty last June. Anticipation, because of a real desire to share the pride and honor each member of the denomination should have in supporting and ministering to the men and women of the United States Army. Trepidation, because emotions run high around the

current conflict in which our nation and fighting men and women are engaged.

It is my hope that I offer a vision of Swedenborgian chaplaincy, of holding up hands, that all in the church can embrace holding up hands, and that it is a vision that resonates with you. I have been entrusted with the sacredness of the ministry that our church brings to a diverse Army and how our visions of ecumenism, usefulness, and interfaith charity are lived out everyday. I pray that God will grant me the strength and courage of my convictions in the ministry that each of you and God have entrusted to me. Earnestly it is my prayer everyday to be of use to those whom Providence conspires to bring to my door. It is my hope you will continue to pray for our world, and for the descent of the Holy City into all peoples everywhere.

*Chaplain (Cpt.) Andy Stinson is the pastor of the Elmwood New Church in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts, and a chaplain in the United States Army Reserve. He has been on active duty since June of 2002 when his battalion was called to active duty. He is presently stationed in Fort Eustis, Virginia. He can be reached by email: stinsonad@aol.com*



## CONTRIBUTE TO OUR CELEBRATION OF WOMEN!

The Alliance of New-Church Women of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches is celebrating its 100th anniversary on Sunday, July 6th at our annual convention in Geneva, New York. We will gather with worship, enjoy a slide presentation and unveil a 'Wall of Women' photo & essay display. A reception will follow. How will this come about? It will happen if YOU send in photos and short essays about women and Alliance chapters and how their influence has contributed to the past, present and future of their churches. ALL contributions will be displayed! We want to celebrate as many women and women's organizations as we know of. PLEASE send your offering of photos and essays to the Rev. Susannah Currie, 1564 Telegraph Road, West Chester PA 19382, by May 30th to be included in this event.

Email: revscurrie@yahoo.com

Information may also be sent to Chris Laitner (see p. 74)



# Swedenborgian House of Studies Update

Jim Lawrence

## Professor Johnson To Un-pack Boxes, Hang Curtains

We are happy to announce that Dr. Gregory R. Johnson, Ph.D., has been offered a three-year extension on his teaching contract at Pacific School of Religion for the position in Swedenborgian Studies. After teaching for a year as a Visiting Professor, Greg's sparkling style as a seminar leader and his talent for explaining Swedenborgian concepts have been greatly admired and appreciated. As well, his commitment to Swedenborgian scholarship is impressive, as a fountain of published works has been flowing from his pen this year. These include: the Swedenborg Foundation's just-released *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, by Immanuel Kant, which Greg translated and annotated (Swedenborg's influence on Kant was central to Greg's doctoral dissertation), the introductions and notes for Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Wisdom* and *Divine Providence* (forthcoming in the New Century Edition), and two essays in the newly released *On the True Philosopher and the True Philosophy*: "Schopenhauer as Reader of Swedenborg" and "Swedenborg's Positive Influence on the Developments of Kant's Mature Moral Philosophy."

If you're in the Philadelphia area on Friday, May 16th, 7:30 p.m., you can catch Greg offering a public talk at the Swedenborg Foundation in West Chester entitled, "Reading the Bible with Swedenborg." Greg will also be offering a mini-course this summer at convention on the current state of scholarship on Swedenborg.

## Rosemary Radford Ruether Meets with SHS Community

Rosemary Radford Ruether met with the SHS community in February for a special seminar session on feminist theology in general and with respect to Swedenborgian theology in

particular. Considered by many to be the foremost foundational theoretician of modern feminist theology, Dr. Ruether, a Roman Catholic, drew upon Swedenborg in her 1983 landmark book, *Sexism and God-talk*, as a potentially liberating theologian for feminist concerns. She notes there that Swedenborg described an androgynous complementarity in the *divine esse* which suggests a liberating view of the necessity of feminine and masculine qualities in the church. SHS in its weekly all-community Contexting Seminar has taken on a special study module this spring in Swedenborgian feminist theology, led by Program Director Kim Hinrichs. Dr. Ruether currently holds the Carpenter Chair of Feminist Theology at Pacific School of Religion.

## Dr. Wilma Wake Joins Adjunct Faculty

Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake, pastor at the Portland, Maine Swedenborgian Church and Spiritual Ministries Consultant for the



Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake

denomination, has been hired as Adjunct Professor at SHS and PSR. Her course, "Spiritual Renewal in Parish Life," has been approved for next January's Intersession. The practical, experiential course on spirituality in today's parish ministries will be open to clergy and laypersons in the denomination. It will be offered January 12-16, 2004. On-campus housing will be available.

## Professor Eric Allison's Course Halted

Adjunct Professor in Leadership Training and Church Growth, Rev. Eric Allison, offered an Intersession

Course in January at PSR entitled, "Contemporary Principles of Church Transformation." SHS students, students of other denominations, and Swedenborgians from Cambridge participated in the class. Jackie Lageson of the Cambridge church wrote an article in their local newsletter on her experience. Her three words best describing her experience: "WOW—EXCEPTIONAL—INSIGHTFUL!" The course brought students into contact with the latest research on congregational dynamics and formation, as well as with practical tools for developing programs that work.

## Studia Swedenborgiana Founding Editor Retires

Rev. Dr. William R. Woofenden, longtime professor at the erstwhile Swedenborg School of Religion and founding editor in 1974 of the academic journal, *Studia Swedenborgiana*,



Rev. Dr. William R. Woofenden

has put away his packet of red pens for good. At the age of 81, Bill seems to feel he is due an extended tea break. He oversaw the planning and production of 48 issues and in the process has created an invaluable research cache for many aspects of Swedenborgian thought. In addition to being indexed in ATLA, the entire collection is available online at <http://www.baysidechurch.org/studia.cfm>. Though there will be a proper tribute in the next issue of the journal, we wish to note here: "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

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## Swedenborgian House of Studies Update

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### Student News

Alison Baxter is a second-year student taking courses and doing field education at the San Francisco church; Kevin Baxter is a second-year student taking courses and doing both field education and Clinical Pastoral Education at San Francisco General Hospital; Kathy Speas is a second-year student who completed CPE under the supervision of the Rev. Susan Turley and is doing field education at the S.F. church and taking courses; Doug Moss is a second-year student taking courses and doing CPE and field education at Mt. Zion hospital in S.F.; Sage Currie is a second-year student doing an eight-month field education internship at the Royal Oak, Michigan church, as with CPE in Detroit; Jenn Tafel is a first-year student taking courses; and Carla Friedrich is a first-year student taking courses. We are grateful to the Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers and the San Francisco parish for accepting two students this year in field education. By all accounts the SHS students seem to be thriving, growing in their professional ministerial formation, working hard, and even having a little bit of fun.

### News Flash: Growing Pains

In addition to these seven full-time students on the ordination track, another six prospective students are considering beginning studies next year. Five are participating in a special weekend April 11-12 at Pacific School of Religion for those considering ministry as a vocation.

*The Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence is Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies.*



## MEET THE NOMINEES FOR 2003

### PRESIDENT-ELECT

Chris Laitner

Michigan Association

It is with deep humility that I have accepted the nomination for president-elect of Convention. I recognize that this is a new paradigm for the Swedenborgian Church of North America, and I, in accepting this nomination, have chosen to represent my Church in the best way possible to its members, its constituent bodies, and to those national and international organizations to which it belongs, as faithfully and knowledgeably as possible. The skills I would bring to this office are based on my experience, both inside and outside of the Swedenborgian Church.

I live in Midland, Michigan, a little more than two hours north of the Royal Oak Church of the Holy City, the congregation in which I grew up. For thirty years I've been active in the larger denominational work of the Church, serving on:

- \*General Council (two different times)
- \*Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM)
- \*The (old) Board of Managers of SSR
- \*GOSU - chair for five of six years
- \*Vice president of Convention for the past five years

This current position has included work with the National Church in Washington, DC; Central Office oversight committee; and Convention's Board of Mediation. It has also allowed me to serve as the president's representative on the Urbana University Board of Trustees, and to participate in the ongoing work of

the Cabinet and the General Council of Convention. I have also held trustee and officer positions on both the Almont and Michigan Association boards, and have participated in the Michigan "Satellite Group" for Swedenborgian fellowship and instruction.

My formal teaching career began in 1969. My B.A. and teaching credentials show majors in English and Music, and a minor in Latin. I also hold a Master's degree in Music Education. Over the past thirty-two years, I have taught elementary and intermediate general music, junior high music appreciation, senior high English, Latin, and choral music, and directed junior and senior high choirs. For seven years I chaired the high school English department, working with curriculum organization, departmental communications, and budget planning. I have served as a certified facilitator and mediator for our Student Assistance program, working with troubled teens in both group and individual settings. I have also been an online visiting instructor for a humanities program at Oakland University, presenting Swedenborg's influence on the Transcendentalists. I retired from teaching in June, 2001, but was hired as chair of my district's curriculum oversight committee for a two-year period.

Distance has precluded my regular attendance at our Royal Oak church, but I have served a local United Methodist church in the capacity of music director for the past twelve years. I've also participated in four years of a formal Bible study program. The pastor of the church is cognizant of Swedenborg's philosophy and influence,

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*Rev. Eric Allison (center) conducting "Contemporary Principles of Church Transformation."*

## MEET THE NOMINEES FOR 2003

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and it has been a good partnership.

The constitution of our Church does not outline the job of president other than to list various duties. Over the past years the position has been defined by each individual president and the helping boards and committees. We have a fine Council of Ministers that works diligently to keep current on the best ways in which to serve our various communities and to share the theology of the Church. We have the Cabinet, General Council, and well-defined Support Units, who, as elected voices of the Church membership, continue to identify and facilitate the various focuses and programs of the Church. We have a voice in outreach education through Urbana University, and we have an excellent seminary education through the Swedenborgian House of Studies at the Pacific School of Religion. We have a strong base of involved, caring, capable members. Personally, I believe that the main gift a president can bring to the denomination is to be the "living connection" of the various structures of the body of the Church in the sense of maintaining regular communication through visits, phone calls, and other formats. As president, I would continue my current work with the Urbana Board of Trustees, increase my involvement with the work of SHS, work in depth with the various boards and committees of Convention, and maintain regular contact with church centers and members.

These are the things I'd bring to this office: a listening ear; a compassionate heart; a background of leadership and organization; a willingness to work with the various boards and committees; and, most importantly, an ongoing care and abiding love for this, the Church we cherish. A president's platform should be a living thing in the sense that it must be able to respond to, and change in relation to, the needs of the Church. We have ongoing ministries with excellent goals, but we also must always search for ways to expand our overall ministry and to respond to the world's needs. We also must work at continuing to connect our whole Church community, and to that end, I'm anticipating more focus on our members who are not close to our churches and centers, utilizing the various forms of communication available in this time of advanced technology. Along with connecting our Church community, we must continue to reach out with our care and our message to a world that needs both.

The following are the goals that I have initially established for a possible three-year term as president:

- \*To continue the good work of visitation and communication that President Ron Brugler has established

- \*To interface with the denomination's Youth Director to facilitate the continuing work with the Youth and churches of the denomination

- \*To meet with as many individual ministries as possible during the term of office

- \*To meet with each Association at least once, and each Support Unit at least once each year during the term of office

- \*To establish a center that will connect the Church's outlying, isolated members and friends via electronic and audio-visual media formats

- \*To establish one new ministry of the Church based on our experience and background of successful small-group outreach ministries

- \*To honor our tradition of small group ministries and to implement ways to continue, enhance, and enlarge our various programs

If the honor of this office should be bestowed on me, I'm hopeful that we, as members of the Swedenborgian Church, will work together to help this church be a connected, communicative, and vital force in the twenty-first century.

### VICE-PRESIDENT 1-year term Christine Laitner

For the past five years I have served as the denomination's vice president. During that time I have chaired and participated in the work of the Board of Trustees of the National Church, the Board of Mediation, and the Central Office Review Committee.

I have also regularly attended General Council meetings and participated in executive and General Council conference calls. When invited and when time permitted, I have also attended meetings of the Cabinet and of the Ministries Support Unit. I've attended some Urbana University Board of Trustees' meetings as the denomination president's representative, and I've traveled to several Association meetings and churches as an invited guest and occasional speaker. The best part of this position is the interaction with the various members of our church and to witness firsthand the dedication, creativity, and love that is apparent in the Church.

The time has been fulfilling, and I would be pleased and honored to serve for the 2003 - 2004 term.

## SECRETARY

Gloria Toot

Ohio Association

I have been a member of Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church in Cincinnati for over 30 years and have served on Kemper Road's board of directors many times, as well as being active in the Ohio Association. I have been privileged to serve as secretary on General Council for about seven years and would like to serve another term in this position. I think that clear communication is one of the most important aspects of working towards a common goal. I also feel I get along well with people and that I still have some energy for this job.

### TREASURER 1-year term Lawrence Conant

Massachusetts Association

I am seeking my fourth year as our denomination's treasurer. Over the last three years I have continued a program of simplifying our bookkeeping and budget presentation. The Support Unit structure combined with many restricted funds results in a very complex accounting system. In addition I have helped many of our churches and centers make financial decisions.

I am a lifelong member of the Bridgewater, Massachusetts church. I currently serve as treasurer of that church and the Temenos Retreat and Conference Center in West Chester Pennsylvania. Over my long history with the Swedenborgian denomination, I have served on many committees at the Association and national levels. I believe this experience uniquely qualifies me to serve another year as your treasurer.

### GENERAL COUNCIL 3-year term Rev. Lee Woofenden

Massachusetts Association

My primary goal for this term on General Council will be to help steer our church toward policies and practices that will improve our denomination's overall effectiveness in growth, outreach, and spreading the teachings of our church far and wide. A specific example: I favor moving AFC and MINSU toward a policy of awarding grants to churches and ministries based on their achievement of numerical growth in membership and finances. This would involve phasing out the old sunseting policy, which rewarded churches not for growth, but for hiring new ministers—resulting in high ministerial turnover

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## MEET THE NOMINEES FOR 2003

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and very little growth. As the old saying goes, "You get what you pay for." I look forward to working with other members of General Council in generating and implementing this type of new policy aimed at directing both our people and our money toward the greater growth and wider usefulness of our church.

### **Sandy Siebert Degi** *Kansas Association*

I am a lifetime member of the Pretty Prairie New Church and a graduate of Kansas State University where I earned my B.S. in Mechanical Engineering. After graduation I worked for Hewlett-Packard for six years in production engineering where I was responsible for computer workstations assembly, the production of plastic computer case parts and molds, and purchasing case parts. I then left the workforce to become a full-time mom which has led me into such various activities as crafts director for a branch of MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers), five years as a kindergarten Sunday School teacher, chair of the playground equipment replacement committee for our elementary school, soccer team treasurer, and school parent volunteer for 11 years doing everything from grading papers to supervising the chess club. As an isolated member (in Ft. Collins, Colorado) I have stayed in touch with the Pretty Prairie Church and helped with the 1998 General Convention in Kansas.

My family ties include my parents, Cecil and Mary Siebert, my husband, Greg, and our two children, Kevin (17) and Karen (15). I enjoy spending free time with my family, reading (especially mysteries, science fiction, and fantasy), crocheting afghans, gardening, and sewing.

### **Jim Erickson** *Illinois Association*

As a member of General Council I wish to serve for another term for a number of reasons. One is that serving in this way is an important part of my philosophy of life. I feel it is important to give back to that which feeds and nourishes me. Long ago I pledged to give back to the community and have volunteered time in service to various causes throughout my life. At this time I feel my most important commitment is to my local church in St.

Paul, to the New Church, and to the governing structure of General Convention.

At the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul I served for four years as president of the board of trustees and currently serve as a trustee. I am very active in many committees, teach junior level Sunday school, and lead a class in the study of Swedenborg.

I am president of the Oral History Association of Minnesota. I also have held offices as president of a district education association, representative to the state legislature of Minnesota for a school district, was a social service representative to the federal government for community development, director of a private school, and president of a community health center.

As an entrepreneur I have helped to start two partnership businesses. One of these was a documentary film company and the other a business that produced laser images known as holograms. I have a sense of what it means to run a business.

Currently I work as historian for the Ramsey County Historical Society in St. Paul. My duties include the development of historical materials and programs on the indigenous Dakota community and other local history, for use at the Society's museum site, to incorporate into school curricula, and for materials disseminated to the general public. I also work in exhibit design, in evaluation, and curator duties.

At this time, I feel ready to bring together many of my experiences and skills for an increased level of involvement and commitment to the General Council. I hope for the opportunity and ask for support to carry it out.

### **COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT UNIT (COMSU)**

(All support units are 3-year terms)

### **Nancy Apple** *Pacific Coast Association*

I have a Masters Degree in Library and Information Sciences and was a public school librarian in Oklahoma for 12 years. I moved back to Washington State in 1999 where I first learned about the Swedenborgian Church when I met Rev. Eric Allison shortly after his arrival. As a school librarian, I was selected to be on both of the Oklahoma Children's Choice book award committees to read and recommend quality books for the list from which the students read and vote for their favorite. I made a name for myself by pointing out the editing errors in the books that the others seldom seemed to notice. Currently I work for Scholastic Book Fairs,

so I continue to do lots of reading and let the selection folks know about poor editing, which seems to be more common these days.

I have been the president of the board of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound since spring, 2000. I am also the church photographer, as I seem to be at most events with my camera.

I have attended the last two national conventions and met many wonderful people. During my summer drive-about I have visited several of the Convention churches and have been fortunate enough to attend services in both Washington, D.C. and San Francisco. I look forward to the opportunity to work with COMSU and the staff of the various inspiring Swedenborgian publications. Thank you for your consideration.

### **EDUCATION SUPPORT UNIT (EDSU)** **Katie Shelly**

*Mid-Atlantic Association*

I grew up spending one or two precious weeks at Almont New Church assembly in Michigan each summer. It is a place where everyone helps out and does their part so that the community as a whole can focus on the main task of fostering spiritual growth and enrichment.

Over time, I've found that the service part and the spiritual growth part are quite inseparable.

Being involved in church life extended from summer camp to an annual array of national SCYL and Transitions retreats (I have been both a retiree and staff), which has built up my sense of the Swedenborgian church as one community without borders. I am 24 and currently live in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, where I teach at the local art center and plan to jump further into the educational world through graduate study. I take part in the community of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos. The church as a national body, and EDSU, have supported my journey by providing a spiritual home for me into adulthood, so I would be honored to do my best to continue that legacy by serving on EDSU.

### **FINANCIAL & PHYSICAL RESOURCES SUPPORT UNIT (FPRSU)**

### **Leo Serrano** *Ohio Association*

I was born in Miami, but raised in Cleveland in a Hispanic Catholic family. I am the youngest of seven boys.

My interest in religious studies began in

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## MEET THE NOMINEES FOR 2003

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the fourth grade, when I was hospitalized with severe asthma for 72 days. Out of sheer boredom, I read an entire volume on Greek mythology, which belonged to an older brother who was a senior in high school. Since then, I've had a tremendous love and appreciation for the great stories that describe the origins of things, finding the best story telling in the great religious traditions of the world.

Graduating with high honors from St. Ignatius High School, I accepted a TRW engineering scholarship to Cleveland State University. The engineering department required all students to study three humanities classes. I chose Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, and quickly changed my major to religious studies. I became the first student to be awarded an outstanding scholar award by the religious studies department, and upon graduation went to Harvard Divinity School, where I received my Master's degree, with a concentration in Eastern Religions.

Proving that a religious studies degree will pay off in the long run, I have spent the largest part of my adult career in the non-profit sector, where my story telling skills were put to great use as a grant writer. I have spent the past four years in the insurance field, gaining extensive experience in investment and financial planning. I am currently the executive director of the Spanish American Committee, the oldest and largest Hispanic nonprofit in Ohio. In this capacity, I have expertise in philanthropy, donor cultivation, and understanding how public support works.

Recently, I have led the Swedenborg Chapel of Cleveland through a comprehensive strategic plan, guiding the organization to reevaluate its mission, analyze its strengths and weaknesses, and generate a plan to determine which direction the church wants to go in. I also serve as vice-president of the church council, and serve on the church finance committee as well. I am interested in serving on the Physical and Financial Resources Support Unit because I believe that my expertise in investments, strategic planning and nonprofit leadership is a solid asset that will be of great service.

Spiritually, I recognize and honor the truth in all spiritual paths, but admit that if my car were falling off a cliff, I would probably scream OH JESUS! I enjoy being a husband and father the most; have the most wonderful wife in Nela, love to read to my two-year-old daughter Leonela, and am excitedly expecting a second child.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SUPPORT UNIT (IMSU)

Lee Woofenden

Massachusetts Association

I have served on IMSU, with one brief break, since it first initiated Convention's website at [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org). I was also involved, along with fellow IMSU members Philip Bae and Bob Hinrichs, in initiating the current major upgrade to our website. My goal for this final term on IMSU will be to complete the initial process of implementing IMSU's plan for the upgraded website. This includes the new Online Swedenborg Library, a planned online edition of *The Messenger*, and upgrades to the online edition of *Our Daily Bread*. Another goal for IMSU will be to provide for the ongoing maintenance and improvement of Convention's website. My hope and plan is that our website will become an increasingly effective means of outreach for our church and its teachings, and an increasingly useful source of information about all aspects of the church.

## MINISTRIES SUPPORT UNIT (MINSU)

Mark Allen

Maine Association

I am running for my second term on MINSU. I'm a nine-year member of the Portland church, having served three one-year terms as president since 1998. I am currently serving as church secretary (my third term, having served twice in the mid-nineties). I am also serving as secretary of the Maine Association.

My family (wife, Miriam; son, Mackenzie) lives in South Portland, Maine and I currently work as a store planner for a large northeast grocery chain.

The past three years on the Ministerial Support Unit have been a challenging and joyful experience. In this unit I have found a meaningful way of serving the denomination while enjoying the companionship of a group of caring, thoughtful Swedenborgians. I look forward to being able to serve for another three years by helping to support the ministries of the denomination.

Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr.

Southeast Association

I believe I have extensive experience that will help the Ministries Support Unit in its work. I led the Cincinnati Swedenborgian church (now Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church) through its relocation in the 1960s from their old building, construction of a new building, and development of new programs there. I was also

instrumental in building and developing "Beside the Point," Kemper Road's camp and retreat center.

I have served on the Board of Missions and two terms on the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (forerunners of MINSU). I have also served on many of the church's other boards and committees, including Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit, Augmentation Fund Committee, Committee on Admission to the Ministry, and General Council.

Currently I am pastor of the New Church of Southwest Florida in Fort Myers Beach, which we founded in 1997 with help from the denomination and local people. We have developed a community-focused ministry of service here that draws support for its programs and budgets from the community. We have obtained our first government grant and are working on others. "We walk amongst the people" is the by-word of the ministry here, and "feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the afflicted" describes our daily commitment to the community.

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

(5-year term (2 nominated, 1 elected))

Patte LeVan

Pacific Coast Association

I have been editor of *The Messenger* since 1989, and have attended every annual convention since 1988, 15 conventions to date. This position has afforded me a unique opportunity to become acquainted with Swedenborgians all over the U.S. and Canada. As editor, I've made efforts to get to know both old and new members and encourage them to contribute articles to *The Messenger*. (Those folks I've nagged on a regular basis for years will attest to that!) I served on the Swedenborg Foundation Board for five years and am currently secretary on the Pacific Coast Association Board. In the course of my job, I've been able to visit most of our church centers. I believe that this background would prove very helpful in serving on the Nominating Committee, and it would be a privilege to serve in that capacity.

Jonathan Mitchell

Pacific Coast Association

I have been an active Swedenborgian for over 15 years, serving as an officer of the Elmwood, Mass. church, a member of the executive committee of the Mass. Association, and as a member of the Blairhaven committee. After my ordination in 1997, I served for five years as pastor of the Washington D.C. church, and am currently a

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## MEET THE NOMINEES FOR 2003

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Chapel minister at Wayfarers Chapel. I have served on the SSR and SHS board for five years.

Throughout my years as SSR student and as a Convention minister, it has been my pleasure to visit many of our centers throughout North America, and to meet many talented and dedicated Swedenborgians. I would consider it an honor to serve on the Nominating Committee.

### COMMITTEE ON ADMISSION INTO THE MINISTRY (CAM) 1-year term

**Rachel Lyn Rumson**

*Maine Association*

I have always had a passion for helping people actualize their dreams, and I feel that my nomination to CAM is a blessing. Serving on the committee for the past year, I have enjoyed helping ministers clarify their vision, plan their ministries and plot the course to get there. I have been deeply affected by the meetings this past year and by gathering with other Swedenborgians at the Swedenborgian House of Studies on the PSR campus to talk about ministry, theology and guide the future ministers of our church. If given the opportunity to serve again, I will continue to do so with humil-

ity and joyful enthusiasm.

I have been a member of the Portland Society since 1999. I love the church and I am interested in Swedenborg's theology. My involvement in the church is about dedication to community and the denomination. I am presently serving as vice-president of council at the Portland church and vice-president of the Maine Association. I manage the building rental at Portland, and I am a lay preacher. I am former president of the church council; my past stewardship started with cleaning the church and has included: newsletter editor, Fellowship of Abundance (pledge drive) co-coordinator, altar steward, property pod coordinator, and chair of the committee to candidate the Rev. Wilma Wake. I have also implemented several building improvement initiatives for Portland including painting the church and refinishing the beautiful hardwood floors.

I wear several hats in my working life as well. I am a business consultant, coaching owners and executives in effective communications, facilitating organizational change and implementing marketing projects. I am also partner in Useful Hands, a small painting company I started with a friend this year. I have a degree in Sociology from the University of Southern Maine and plan to enter a masters program in Applied Behavioral Science this year.

## SWEDENBORGIAN HOUSE OF STUDIES (SHS) BOARD

(3-year term, 2 to be elected)

**Herb Ziegler**

*Massachusetts Association*

I joined the San Francisco Society in 1997 and transferred to the Cambridge Society later that year. I have been an active member in the Cambridge Society and the Massachusetts Association of the New Jerusalem since then. My redesign and expansion of the Cambridge newsletter that made it more readable and more informative has received many positive comments. My service includes the Executive Board of the Massachusetts Association and, since 2002, the board of SHS. This summer will mark participation in my fifth annual convention.

I am seeking re-election to my board seat to continue exploring ways to coordinate church and school growth. As well, I hope to contribute to improved communication between SHS and the societies to explore and achieve our common goals. I hope to continue assisting in the successful conclusion of the transfer of the Cambridge Chapel.

**Robert Leas** (3-year term, 2 to be elected)

*Illinois Association*

Currently serving as clerk for the Board of Trustees of SHS, I am an ordained clergyman in the Presbyterian Church USA. I have served three congregations as head of staff and for 31 years was a Clinical Pastoral Education Certified Supervisor (ACPE, Inc.) In 2002 I retired from my position as CPE educator in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where I worked with graduate students in theology. I regularly attend the Almont New Church Assembly, have been able to visit three other New Church retreat centers, and have been a participant in the last two annual conventions. My interest in the Swedenborgian denomination prompted me to take the online course, "Introduction to Swedenborgian Theology," taught by SHS Dean James Lawrence. Because of my background with theological students, I have particularly enjoyed the opportunity to serve on the Board of SHS for the past three years, and would be very pleased to continue serving the church in this way.



## "Faith of Our Mothers" Convention, 2003

Can you help us?

*To the wonderful women in the Swedenborgian Church:*

It is my pleasure to be involved in the gathering and presenting of information about the wonderful women who have impacted our Church over the years. I'm writing this letter to you to ask for your input. We want to identify those women who have left lasting legacies to the Church through their vision, their work, and their care.

I'm working with Rev. Susannah Currie, who is preparing the presentation that will be made at this year's Convention where we will be celebrating the one hundredth

anniversary of the Women's Alliance. However, the women whose names and experiences we wish to gather need not all be members of the Alliance. The bigger picture here is the impact and wisdom of the *women* who have loved, cherished, worked in, and grown this cherished Church of ours over time. We want to honor all these wonderful women who have contributed.

Thus, I need your help (please) in identifying the women who have impacted you, your church, and your area in regard to the Church, and I also need to have you identify someone who could write a brief statement about each woman. It should be no longer than one page, preferably a bit less. That writer might be you—or it might be someone you identify. I thank you in advance as you think about the "wonderful women" in the Church through the past one hundred years, and convey those names to me. Please send the information to

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# 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 are 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	_____	=	\$ _____

**Pre-Convention Workshop 7/2 to 7/4 (see description in April Messenger)**

#### **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.

# TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I'd like to add a footnote to Steve Koke's excellent article (March 2003 *Messenger*) on the nature of truth, essentially to say that it works both ways. Yes, truth is what shows us what is good—heaven's light shows things as they really are, and in the light of hell, evil looks pretty good—see the story in *Apocalypse Revealed* 926.

The other side of the coin is that the good is what opens our minds to the truth. The chapter on "Good and Truth" in *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrines* starts by saying that nothing is more important than knowing what they are and how they are related to each other. After years of discontent with the fact that Swedenborg then proceeds to define neither one, but spends the whole chapter talking about their inseparability, it finally dawned on me that this is precisely the point. They define each other.

The one step that I think has to be taken, then, is to stop thinking about "truth" as nothing more than the doctrine that we read in books and start thinking about it as our perceptions and understandings of ourselves and each other. Truth is whatever points out what is really good for us, and good is whatever opens us to that truth. If I really care about you, I want to understand you, and if I understand you, I see what that caring entails. I sometimes think that we might translate "the affection for truth" as "loving honesty."

Rev. Dr. George Dole  
Bath, Maine

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my discomfort in your editing of my article, "War or Peace?—a New Churchman's Search" in the February 2003 *Messenger*. Had I known that space was a problem, I may have chosen to withdraw the article rather than have several of the most salient points omitted. The main areas of concern are:

1. The footnote on New Church pacifism in World War I was removed. This can leave the impression that the Church was unanimous in its support. (See Below)

Not all Swedenborgians were in agreement with the 1917 resolution. Helen Keller

## Wilma Wake Installed at Portland Church

On March 9th, 2003, the Swedenborgian Church of Portland, Maine, experienced the joyous occasion of installing our new part-time minister, the Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake. The Rev. Ron Brugler, president of Convention, joined us to conduct the service. We were also joyful hosts to many new friends from the Boston church who traveled to share in our special day. It was a wonderful service with brief sermons by both Ron and Wilma (what a treat!) I know many were greatly moved by the beautiful ceremony and the official culmination of the journey begun last spring. It was such an exalted day for all involved. For early March it was actually quite warm, and with the bright early spring sunshine, it felt like a perfect Easter day.


Although a month early, I saw it as a kind of Easter for our church—lots of joy, love, and enthusiasm for the rebirth of our community as a



Wilma & Mickey Moose entertain children at installation.

growing, active spiritual presence for both Portland and the denomination.

We are thrilled to welcome Wilma into our community, and we look forward to sharing in Wilma's grace and wisdom for years to come. Congratulations Wilma, and Welcome!

—Rebecca Eliot, president  
Swedenborgian Church of Portland 

wrote, "Strike against all ordinances and laws and institutions that continue the slaughter of peace and the butcheries of war. Strike against war, for without you no battles can be fought. Strike against manufacturing shrapnel and gas bombs and all other tools of murder. Strike against preparedness that means death and misery to millions of human being. Be not dumb, obedient slaves in an army of destruction. Be heroes in an army of construction." Source: Helen Keller, *Helen Keller: Her Socialist Years* (International Publishers, 1967).

Andrew Carnegie was president of the New York peace society, and had recently created the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In 1900 he funded the building of the Peace Palace in The Hague.

2. The section on the possible influence of Swedenborg's involvement in the Great Northern War on his thoughts about war was removed. I think this involvement is important in helping us understand his writings about war. (See below)

Perhaps we need to look to the life of Swedenborg to better understand his writings on these points. During Swedenborg's youth, Sweden under King Charles

XII was engaged in The Great Northern War 1700-1721. It was during that war that Swedenborg invented a way of transporting war ships over land. Charles XII ennobled him for this service in 1719. Sweden lost this war, and with it, her ascendancy in the Baltic. Swedenborg's generation would have been fully engaged in this war. Swedenborg himself was involved as an engineer. Maybe he was too close to the subject. Maybe that is why we can find no reference in his works that states that war, any war is just, nor any direct statement that condemns war and calls on it to be eschewed.

3. The sentence on the salvation of the soldier, and how it manifests the Divine Mercy was removed. (See below)

I trust that Swedenborg's understanding of the salvation of the soldier was based on conversations with their spirits later in his life. I am comforted by this as it shows the mercy of the Lord.

4. The footnote on (*Romans 12:20-21*) was removed. This opens the quote to serious misinterpretations. (See below)

Here the image of burning coals means to create a warm home rather than a form

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# SPIRITUAL SPARKS



is COMSU's new introductory pamphlet for newcomers to our churches. It explains the basic beliefs of the Swedenborgian Church in a brief and attractive format. The front view is shown to the left; it opens up to eight panels, four on each side of the pamphlet, that describe our

beliefs about God, the life that leads to heaven, the Word, and life after death. On the other side is a brief biography of Emanuel Swedenborg, a history of the Swedenborgian Church, and an illustrated list of our retreat centers, educational institutions, and resource centers.

A section titled "Small Answers to Big Questions" responds to simpler questions people are likely to ask about whether we are Christian, Swedish, worship or hold sacred Emanuel Swedenborg, or consider other faiths to be on the wrong track: To the latter it says, "No. We honor all who pursue their beliefs with passion and strive to be useful and loving to others." It emphasizes our inclusive ministries: "Our intention is to be genuinely inclusive in our thoughts, speech, writings and action by including people of all ages, colors, sexual preferences, religious beliefs, and cultures."

And more. We can send as many copies as you would like to put, say, in the back of your pews or in some conspicuous place. All you need to do is pay the postage.

To order, please contact:

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Executive Assistant to COMSU  
3820 - 22nd Street  
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Website: [www.japplesced.org](http://www.japplesced.org)



## "Faith of Our Mothers" Convention, 2003

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Chris Laitner, 10 Hannah Ct., Midland, MI 48642; phone: 989-636-7674; email: [kiplingcat@juno.com](mailto:kiplingcat@juno.com), or to Rev. Susannah Currie (see p. 74) The sooner you can send the information, the sooner we can begin to put the information, the "Wall of Wonderful Women," and the slide show presentation, together. As you know, the earlier the better... The final cut-off date for accepting names will be May 30.

Thanks for your help, and please feel free to call with any questions! Incidentally, if you should have a picture of your "wonderful woman," it'd be great if you could include it. In this day and age, copies of photos can be made at nearly all photo-finishing places, and it'd help us. We have people searching through archives, but if you have a photo, it'd be grand!

Thanks so much for your help! Hoping to hear from you.

Chris Laitner



## TO THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 76)

of execution. Coals, in New Testament times were often carried from home to home in a specially designed clay pot that was carried on the head. To heap burning coals on someone's head was to share with them from your abundance.

5. Most of the conclusion was removed which left the last sentence unsupported. What does "Put away the sword of Peter" mean when it is taken out of context? (See below)

Let's explore the idea a little further. In the Bible we find the following passages.

Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered. He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment." The disciples said, "See, Lord, here are two swords." "That is enough," he replied. (Luke 22:35-38)

*This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me." Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (John 18:9-11)*

Swedenborg wrote: "a 'sword' signifies truth fighting and destroying falsity." AC 7456. Are these the swords that the disciples were to buy? Were they to use truth as their weapon in the fight for Christian charity? Had they misunderstood the inner meaning of the Lord's words again? Is this to be our weapon? Truth! Yes; we are to go to war, not with literal weapons, but with truth. To be soldiers of the cross is to be armed with the weapon of Truth. The truth is that Jesus said:

- But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matthew 5:39)
- Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of

the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. (Luke 6:35)

- But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. (Luke 6:27)
- Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:44-45)

Put away the sword of Peter and take the sword of Christ. Let us destroy falsity with truth and thereby find peace.

I feel the article was substantially changed, and I wish that I had been consulted before this was done.

Rev. Carl Yenetchi  
LaPorte, Indiana

**Editor's Note:** Due to time and space constraints and monthly deadlines, we do occasionally edit a piece heavily without consulting with the author. It is important to the editors to maintain the integrity and main points of the articles we publish, and we feel that this was done in this case—thus we disagree that the editing changed the article in a substantial way. We regret any discomfort this has caused.



## The Devil in the White City

(Continued from back page)

ture as a business; for devising the Chicago Plan, buildings such as the Flatiron Building in New York, and the earliest skyscrapers in Chicago. John Root, Burnham's partner for eighteen years until Root's premature death at age forty-one of pneumonia, was known for his uncanny ability to visualize building designs in his head, and for the quality of his designs. In the early years of their partnership, Burnham's chief role was to land the commissions, oversee the construction, and manage the firm.

A charismatic man, Burnham proved able to spark the cooperation of the age's leading architects to work on the Columbia Exposition, and in doing so, inspire the generations that built the fair and those fortunate enough to have visited it. He advocated ideas revolutionary for his time, such as insisting that a woman architect be selected to design the Women's Building for the fair. (Burnham had the committee hold a contest to select a woman architect for the Women's Building. The winner was Sophia Hayden of Boston—she was 21 years old and her fee was the prize money of \$1000.)

The fair's landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, wrote of the process of the fair's construction:

"Really, I think that is a most satisfactory and encouraging circumstance that it could be found feasible for so many men of technical education and ability to be recruited and suitably organized so quickly and made to work together so well in so short a time. I think it a notable circumstance that there should have been so little friction, so little display of jealousy, envy and combativeness, as has appeared in the progress of this enterprise."<sup>3</sup>

Olmsted attributed these conditions to Burnham—"too high an estimate cannot be placed on the industry, skill and tact with which this result was secured by the master of us all."<sup>4</sup> Burnham overcame disheartening challenges to deliver a World's Fair that

paid off its debts and was the stage for many "firsts" for the U.S.—from the Ferris Wheel to the first Parliament of World Religions that was held on the grounds. Larson credits Burnham for literally evoking the Ferris Wheel into existence by challenging America's engineers to outdo the Eiffel Tower. George W.G. Ferris, sitting in the meeting of the Saturday Afternoon Club, a society of engineers, recalled that he quickly received an inspiration for his completed Wheel after Burnham "rebuked the group for failing to rise to the same level of brilliance, saying 'The engineers had contributed little or nothing either in the way of originating novel features or of showing the possibilities of modern engineering practice in America.'"<sup>5</sup> This is one of many anecdotes in *The Devil in the White City* that have a transcendent quality to them.

Larson's gift to Burnham is the increased respect that modern readers—especially anyone who has managed an event—will have for the man and his fair when yet another disaster tips the scales more toward complete public humiliation and embarrassment than toward success. Burnham overcomes the sudden death of his partner, destruction of fair buildings by capricious winds, fire, rain and snow, a court-ordered arrest, the slowdown of new commissions for the firm of Burnham & Root, the collapse of the bank used by his firm, and more. When, TA-DA, the fair opens to the public on May 1, 1893, the stock market crashes the next day, banks close, and the nation slides into a recession, dashing high hopes for attendance. Larson is adept at filling the gaps in the story—especially in presenting a thrilling "will he get away with it" story of Herman Webster Mudgett, alias Dr. Holmes, a psychopathic personality from the small farming village of Gilmanton, New Hampshire, who moves to Chicago in time to use the lure of the 1893 Exposition to gain victims for his obsession.

*Devil in the White City* is both an entertaining story and a scholarly work that draws us into the not-so-smooth realities of a major civic undertaking of its day. It's the reality of Evil working

at the fringes of Good. It gives you new appreciation for the courage of the young women of that era—with train transportation making it easier to make a move to the big city and to an independent life—women who also faced the dangers that lurked for the naive, and for those who responded to appearances rather than to their instincts. (Mothers—press this one on your teenage daughters!) As a Swedenborgian, you'll feel a tinge of pride to bear with Burnham as he stays the course and remains optimistic in the face of daunting circumstances, political pressures, and loss.

One word of advice—don't start the book until a day when you expect to be undisturbed. Once I started reading, I couldn't put it down.

*Karen Feil is a member of the Chicago Swedenborgian Church. She gives thanks frequently for Burnham's vision and role in helping to secure Chicago's open lakefront, to inspire future generations of Chicagoans and those who visit the city.*

All of the quotations are from "Devil in the White City"

<sup>1</sup> p. 15, quoted from the May 13, 1889 *Chicago Tribune*.

<sup>2</sup> p. 19

<sup>3</sup> p. 283, Olmsted's formal critique of the Columbian Exposition.

<sup>4</sup> p. 283

<sup>5</sup> p. 156 Larson quoting Burnham from his Saturday Afternoon Club speech.



## GATHERING LEAVES: A Gathering of Women who Read Swedenborg's Writings

May 5-8, 2004,  
at Temenos Retreat Center,  
in West Chester, Pennsylvania

A steering committee of women from the General Church, the Lord's New Church and General Convention is planning a unified gathering of women from all branches of the Swedenborgian Tree. Our goal is to explore the use of our differences and

(Continued on page 79)

## BIRTH

**Moore**—Joshua Isaac Moore was born February 23, 2003, in Saginaw, Michigan. His proud parents are Becky and Marcus Moore. Becky is Marjie Leas's oldest daughter. Both parents are active in the Almont Summer School and good friends of the Michigan Association.

## BAPTISM

**Ferguson**—Seth Robert Te'o Ferguson was baptized into the Christian faith March 23, 2003, at the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating. Seth's parents are Scott and Dawn Ferguson of Lovell, Maine; his Godparents are Melinda Lawrence and Charles Lawrence.



## CONFIRMATION

**Ferguson, Potter**—Dawn and Scott Ferguson, and Lauren and Robert Potter were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church March 23, 2003, at the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating.

## CORRECTION

The baptism notice in the April *Messenger* for Emily Ruth Milne, p. 63, should have read "daughter of Michael and Kelly Milne." The Rev. Lee Woofenden apologizes for the error.



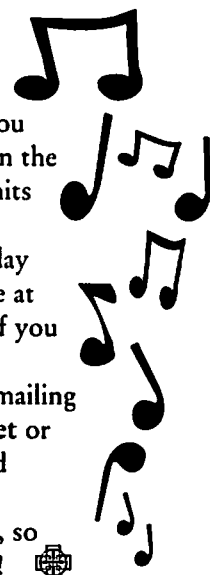
## IMPORTANT CHURCH DATES:

- 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 1-2 COMSU Meeting Friendship, Maine
- 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



## Call for Singers

Calling all singers! Do you want to participate in the Convention choir this summer? We'd love to have you join us! This year, like last year, the main service will be on the second day of Convention, rather than the last, which limits the amount of practice time the choir has, so we have to adjust our practice schedule. We will be practicing every day during pre-Convention, so for those of you who are there at that time, you'll be able to join the rehearsals. However, if you won't be there until Convention opens, you may want to practice at home with a tape. Please send your name and mailing address to: **Laurie Turley**, email: [laurieturley@pivot.net](mailto:laurieturley@pivot.net) or call (207) 935-4500, and we'll send you a practice tape and copies of the music we will be performing. All music and practice tapes must be returned at the end of Convention, so please remember to bring them with you when you come!



## GATHERING LEAVES:

(Continued from page 78)

celebrate our similarities. All interested women will be invited. We are hoping to have representatives from the British Conference, also. A call for papers and workshops will be sent out in the fall of 2003 and a registration brochure will be mailed early in 2004. There will be more information in future *Messengers*.

The following is our mission statement:

We are gathering to promote harmony among women who are associated with the various Swedenborgian organizations around the world. We are coming together to acknowledge our common beliefs, explore our differences, develop a respect for one another's contribution, create an atmosphere for healing, and celebrate our spiritual sisterhood. It is our intention to promote a sense of charity and goodwill so that we might say, "No matter what form her doctrine and her external form of worship take, this is my sister; I observe that she worships the Lord and is a good woman."

We are in the process of garnering funds to help offset the expenses. We are optimistic that costs can be contained by offering accommodations at the homes of area women, for those interested. The interaction offered by this interchange would be an added bonus. If you would like to contribute, please send your donation to Jane Siebert, Treasurer, 21007 S. Whiteside Road, Pretty Prairie, Kansas 67570.



## Swedenborg Rocks

Ever have trouble coming up with a short-but-intriguing Swedenborgian message for your wayside pulpit?

Or...are you a creative or clever soul who can put Swedenborg's great insights into a few words that might spark the interests or touch the hearts of passersby?

If either of these apply to you or your church, let's work together.

*The Messenger* will publish at least one message in a special section per issue that can easily be used on our churches' wayside pulpits—or in our newsletters. Wouldn't it be interesting to have all of our churches sharing the same Swedenborgian concept at the same time across North America?

Please e-mail your thoughts about this idea and/or your wayside pulpit gems to *The Messenger* at [messenger@julianweb.com](mailto:messenger@julianweb.com)

—Barbara Halle, member LaPorte New Church

chair, MINSU

Editor's Note: *The above headline is not an example taken from an actual wayside pulpit, nor is it necessarily intended to be an example of a pithy pulpit slogan. Just an editor's wayside/wayward whim.*





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.

## The Devil in the White City

by Erik Larson  
Crown Publishers, 2003

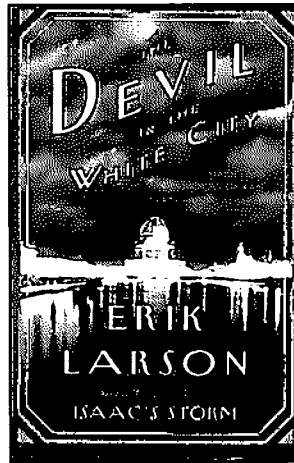
*Reviewed by Karen Feil*

In the Gilded Age of 1890, Chicago's bid to outdo the 1889 World's Fair in Paris was made a matter of national pride—to "out-Eiffel Eiffel." The *Chicago Tribune's* Paris correspondent had criticized our nation's appearance in the 1889 Exposition Universelle:

"Other nations had mounted exhibits of dignity and style, while American exhibitors erected a mélange of pavilions and kiosks with no artistic guidance and no uniform plan. The result is a sad jumble of shops, booths, and bazaars often unpleasing in themselves and incongruous when taken together."<sup>1</sup>

Awed by the Parisians' success with the 1889 event, U.S. cities bid for the honor to host the 1892-93 World's Fair, as a national tribute to the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing of Christopher Columbus.

*The Devil in the White City*, the latest work by author Erik Larson, picks up the remarkable story of the building of the 1893 Columbia Exposition from the moment Chicago wins the toss. He has created a gripping historical novel by combining a heroic tale of civic leadership—starring the



Swedenborgian Church's own Daniel H. Burnham, Chicago architect and overseer of the "White City," as the 1893 Columbia Exposition was called—with the frighteningly true serial murder mystery that came to light the year following the close of the fair. Scores of out-of-towners who visited the fair in 1893 were never heard from again. From chapter to chapter, Larson maintains the suspense, either to ask "will he pull it off?" (Burnham) or "will he get away with it?" (serial killer Holmes).

Daniel Burnham was brought up in the church and joined the Chicago Society of the New Jerusalem in 1872, at the age of twenty-six. His parents were tireless supporters of the church in an era when the Chicago Society consisted of several churches and the Western New Church Union (now the Swedenborg Library).

When Burnham grew weary of trying to raise his five children in the gritty Chicago of the 1880s, he and his wife Margaret moved north to the quiet town of Evanston, into a home on Lake Michigan. Burnham was known to hold study sessions with friends and family in his Evanston home, and would read aloud from Swedenborg's writings. "Daniel Hudson Burnham was born in Henderson, New York, on September 4, 1846, into a family devoted to Swedenborgian principles of obedience, self-subordination, and public service," Larson acknowledges early in the book.<sup>2</sup>

The offices of Burnham & Root were in the top of the Rookery Building in downtown Chicago, where you may visit his library today. In his professional life, he was known for building the first large-scale architectural firm, i.e. treating architec-

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