

THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

December 2004

Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey Inducted into the Urbana University Hall of Fame

Betsy Coffman

On Saturday, October 9th, friends, former colleagues and well-wishers joined together to honor the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey as she was inducted into the Urbana University Educators Hall of Fame, at the Urbana Swedenborgian Church. The Hall of Fame recognizes both Educators and Business Professionals for their contributions in each area. A plaque with Dorothea's name and photograph now hang in the permanent Hall of Fame exhibit in the newly renovated Barclay-Bailey Hall, just outside the Johnny Appleseed Museum.

Dr. Mary Kay Klein and Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, both former Urbana College faculty members and colleagues of Dorothea, were nominees. Mary Kay was later president of the Swedenborg School of Religion, during which time Dorothea taught courses on a part-time basis. During her tenure at Urbana (1968-1988), Dorothea participated in the development of a philosophy/religion major and the University's first women's studies course. In 1975, she was the first woman to be ordained in the Swedenborgian church and became the minister for the local church as well as the college chaplain.

Dr. Barbara Mackey, also a nominee and a long-time friend of Dorothea, introduced her at the ceremony. It became a personal interchange in which Dorothea's great love of learning and the tremendous impact she has had on those she has taught, both formally and

informally, was very apparent. Dorothea spoke of her enjoyment in trying to learn about and truly understand subjects she taught, in order to convey the ideas to her students. She also spoke of the fun she had learning about customs and foods of the many foreign students who attended Urbana College during her tenure. Many of us in the audience recalled with pleasure the meals she held in her home at which we were able to enjoy foods from all over the world and learn about other cultures' cuisine.

A bulletin board at the entrance to the church was adorned with congratulatory e-mails and cards, as well as photographs of past classes and get-togethers led by Dorothea at her home. It was fun to identify our younger, usually slimmer, selves from days of old!

On Sunday, a number of people who were unable to attend the Saturday ceremony attended the church service where Dorothea gave the sermon, followed by a potluck luncheon. What a wonderful time we had, renewing old acquaintanceships and enjoying fond recollections of classes in Dorothea's home after church, sharing meals together and growing spiritually. Approximately 50 people joined the celebration over the weekend.

Many of us who have known Dorothea over the years credit her own love of learning, her enthusiastic way of teaching, her deep spirituality and her wonderful way of taking personal interest in each individual, with influencing so



Dorothea Harvey

many students. A number of ministers in our own denomination credit their exposure to Dorothea as students with their ultimate decision to become ordained. For me, Dorothea has been a true spiritual mentor, helping me to grow as a person in ways I cannot truly describe, but for which I am deeply grateful. For those of us who have had the great fortune to be part of Dorothea's life, I think we can all say unanimously that she has been a deeply positive influence. As far as I—and I believe many others—are concerned, "to know Dorothea Harvey is to love her." I don't think anyone could be more deserving of the "Hall of Fame" award she has won and I consider myself blessed that she has been such an important influence in my own life.

Betsy Coffman is the lay leader of the Urbana church in Urbana, Ohio, and is on the board of Urbana University.



IN THIS ISSUE:

Swedenborgian Parish Action Team • Letting Heaven Create Your Life
• Ministries Support Unit Report • FNCA 2004

The Mexican Connection

Some years ago, my younger daughter was having a difficult time, and was in deep grief. I couldn't be there in person for her, so it occurred to me that I might send a Teddy bear, or some comforting token. I went into a department store, without much hope of finding just the right thing, but there in the toy department was, indeed, a large brown teddy bear. He looked as if he was just waiting to be picked up and loved. I bought the bear and sent it to her. For some reason, I couldn't get him off my mind. Then I realized he was a token of comfort that I needed also. I went back to the department store, hoping there might be another one left for me. There he was, looking lonely as the other one had, waiting for someone to claim him.

It seemed like a lot of money, \$25. But I loved him. He graced the guest room for years, and I brought him with me when I moved from Indiana to Julian. My daughter Kelly, meanwhile, had passed her bear on to a child who was begging to have it.

For several years, the United Methodist Church here in Julian has had an annual blanket drive to gather used or new clean blankets, as well as toys, to take to Mexico before Thanksgiving—Mexican babies were freezing to death for simple lack of an adequate blanket. I donated a blanket each year, but this year I didn't have any left that weren't in use.

Julian is a little over an hour's drive from the border at Tijuana. I haven't been over the border for ten years. I don't speak the language, and I've seen the stark poverty there up close and I don't want to see any more of it.

In the mid-nineties, a friend gave me a book, *The Tortilla Curtain* by T. Coraghessan Boyle. In the guise of a novel, it told of the incredibly punishing and often hopeless struggles of an illegal immigrant and his young wife trying to find work here, living like frightened animals in a canyon in the L.A. suburbs,



being exploited and ill-used by employers because they knew they could get away with it—certainly the Mexicans had no legal recourse; they were afraid of being deported. Reading about the contrast between their grinding existence side-by-side with the affluent lifestyle of the people they worked for was sickening. Many of the affluent weren't conscious exploiters; they were "bleeding heart" liberals who wanted to do the right thing but didn't really want the situation impinging on their lives in any tangible way, and weren't in touch with their own cruelly demeaning attitudes.

As I was reading, I remembered a plumber I had called in when I first moved here. He didn't want to do the filthy digging in mud to get to a broken pipe outside; he told me to find a Mexican with a shovel, and then call him and he would finish the job. "There's plenty of 'em around," he assured me.

We have a Mexican population in Julian, and two popular Mexican restaurants of course owned by Mexican-American families. When we're stuffing in carne asada or enchiladas and refried beans, followed by terrific flan, it's doubtful many of us are thinking about some of their relatives still in Mexico that they're likely sending money to, or their horrendous struggle to establish themselves here and learn the language and take care of their families. Reading *The Tortilla Curtain* made me look at them differently, or perhaps actually see them for the first time, and think, occasionally, about the painful stories of friends and relatives that are likely behind their smiling faces as they

bring us our food. The desperate illegals who flee over the border in winter and freeze here in our own mountains aren't just a brief story on the 6 o'clock news.

Kelly's friend Ricky spotted the book on my shelf several years ago when they were visiting, was surprised that I'd read it. "It's a novel," he said, "but it's really true, that and worse, going on every day."

There's a Mexican family who lives up the road. They rent from an absentee landlord who has a reputation for not fixing anything. I don't know their names. But they have a beautiful little garden in their side yard full of combinations of vegetables and flowers. The father doesn't speak English, but his little boy does, and he interpreted when I commented to them how nice the garden looks. I began to regret not speaking the language.

Finally, last month I had new carpet installed. Three Mexican workers did the job with great skill and care and stayed longer than they needed to, wanting to make sure all our furniture was back in place where it was supposed to be. At noon the Mexican-American

(Continued on page 142)

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).

December 2004
Volume 225 No. 10
Whole Number 5295

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

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.

SWEDENBORGIAN PARISH ACTION TEAM IN ACTION

Wilma Wake

In last month's Messenger, the article "The Keys to the Church" talked about some of the ways the Portland Swedenborgian Church is using our history to improve communication in the present. This article shares some of the tools we are learning to use from parish systems theory. The more we learned about parish systems, the more we felt at home. Then we realized: It's all about bringing Swedenborgian theology to life in the parish! We are presenting these concepts in the context of a little story about a little parish in the not-too-distant future—when we have a great new program for our parishes. Let yourself relax, and move slightly down the road of the future ...

It was a cold and rainy Saturday morning in early March in Anytown, USA. Parishioners were straggling into the Johnny Appleseed Church on Maple and Main in response to a request from Pastor Pete and their parish president, Mary Smith.

The conflicts in the church just seemed to be getting worse and worse. Everyone was angry at someone else, and most people were angry at Pastor Pete. He was angry at the search committee who hired him less than a year ago without telling him about all the conflicts in the parish. He had been angry at the denomination for not having fixed the problem. When he called the denominational president to complain, he was told that due to a new church grant, they had put together a Swedenborgian Parish Action Team to respond to parish problems. He was told to seek permission from his board to gather the congregation for a Saturday two weeks hence, where newly discovered secret applications of Swedenborg's theology would be revealed.

Pete sat on a hard pew that Saturday morning sipping coffee as he watched parishioners file in. He thought it was incredibly nice of the denomination to get his grant to bring a program to the parishes. He'd never before heard of this team: Swedenborgian Parish Action Team. SPAT. SPAT?? So when a parish

has a spat, it can call in the SPAT team! He almost chuckled.

As Mary Smith, the president, took her seat, she said a silent prayer for this program to help. Everyone in the church blamed someone else for something. It seemed that this had been going on for at least two years. There were disagreements with their last minister, and no one could even figure out what the argument was about. Since they couldn't figure out who caused the problem, they decided it must be the minister, and they asked him to leave.

They called Pastor Pete just a month later. She felt a bit guilty that none of them had told him about all the problems, but the board had decided it would be best to close the door and move on.

The denominational representative was taking the podium up front.

"Good morning, everyone. Some of your denominational leaders have been attending some special training. We are excited that we are learning the deep secrets on how to have healthier parishes.

"We realize we hadn't fully understood how applicable our theology is to our lives in parishes. Swedenborg said that "nothing unconnected ever occurs," and he talked about the universe as one great system. We thought we understood all of that, of course, but we didn't see before how easily we can apply this theology to everyday life in our churches!

"We are learning some incredible secrets of the whole system that can heal our parish conflicts. The workshops we have been attending are stupendous. We got a grant to bring the finest and best-known teachers to our parishes; teachers who can show us how to turn our theology into parish harmony!

"Our first presenter today will be Fritjof Capra."

All eyes turned to the front of the sanctuary as a tall, impressive-looking gentleman stood up.

"Hi, folks! I'm your first speaker today: Fritz Capra. You may have read some of my books, like *The Tao of Phys-*

ics, The Turning Point, and The Web of Life.

"I am going to give you an important secret: The secret to a harmonious parish life is understanding how everything is connected to everything else."

A voice from the back pew called out: "Hey, Swedenborg said that!"

"He did indeed! 'Nothing unconnected ever occurs.' He said. But people didn't listen much to him during his lifetime. They listened to Descartes."

Doug Jones yawned, and settled in his pew in hopes of napping through this.

"Descartes had a philosophy of dualism. He broke things up into little pieces and separated matter from spirit. Newton developed a physics based on separating out the parts of things.

"There was a major voice arguing against Descartes and Newton, claiming that the world was a whole, and that spirit and matter could not be separated. He saw the world filled with energy in motion; keeping everything all together as a system. Now, who can tell me who that was?"

"Gotta be our Swedenborg!" called a teen voice from the side, where all the teens had gathered and were quietly playing the card game Uno in one of the pews.

"Of course it's Swedenborg! Look, folks, your guy was a precursor to quantum physics, out of which these secrets emerge. You Swedenborgians have quite a heritage in this area, and you folks could be developing these ideas further! I don't know why you Swedenborgians are so shy. Sorry I didn't think to add Emanuel to my book, but I wrote about his time, the Enlightenment. Those folks got us into dividing everything into pieces. Your Emanuel was one of the big names of the day saying you gotta be holistic. Keep it together as one big happy system.

"What's really important, of course, is what happened as we moved into the 1900s. Relativity theory and quantum theory."

June Jones, sitting in the back, whispered to her husband: "Gee, the denomination says we're going to understand how to heal conflict in our parish.

(Continued on page 136)

SWEDENBORGIAN PARISH ION TEAM IN ACTION

(continued from page 135)

we're off to 100 years of physics church. God, help us!" Hey, some of you folks talk New – this is the really new stuff! Scientists had decided that the building blocks of matter were solid particles. I guess what? They found that they can sometimes be seen as particles sometimes as waves! We're talking interconnections, here. The very universe is in relationship; not static. Our world isn't "things," it's relationships! Here is my favorite quote from my book:

"Modern physics pictures matter not as passive and inert but as being in a continuous dancing and vibrating motion."

"Hey," called Jamie, one of the teens on the side, "Dancing and vibrating motion!" I like that!" Judy, another teen, picked up a guitar and started strumming. Several teens began dancing in the aisle.

"Hey, kids," called out Mary Smith, the president. "Settle down! We are in church, remember."

Fritz Capra seemed rather excited by it all. "Hey, go kids! Yes, Swedenborg's concept of God is a dancing relationship! Systems theory is all about this dance. Of course you should dance in church. Especially a Swedenborgian church. That shows the nature of the universe: continuous dancing relationship! Go, kids!"

The teens needed no encouragement. Another guitar and some drums had merged from somewhere. Soon some adults started joining in. The sanctuary became a delightful chaos of color and motion as the parishioners of the Johnny Appleseed Church danced all around and about in their sanctuary.

Pastor Pete was very uncomfortable and looked around for a way to stop things. Then he saw it: "Uh, everyone, the caterer has brought our lunch break!" As coffee urns and sandwich platters were set up in the back, people gradually stopped dancing and came back to eat.

Pete looked for a chance to have a word with Mary. "Do you really think we should be allowing this? I mean, dancing in the sanctuary!"

"Well, pastor, it is unusual. But look around. Everyone is laughing and joking together. No one is fighting! That hasn't happened in months."

Pete was thoughtful as he watched these new dynamics among his parishioners.

Soon a Tibetan bowl was gently struck and was vibrating with a deep, soothing sound. Folks began to return from the break, and they saw a new speaker up front; a pleasant-looking woman.

"It's pretty hard to follow after all the dancing, but I'm your next speaker."

**A system is people
in connection.
If you want to
understand the system,
you can't just get
to know the people as
individuals; you must
also understand the
connection.**

Let me introduce myself. I'm Margaret Wheatley. I consider my work quite important in bringing the New Physics into organizations.

"Let's start by reviewing what you have learned so far." She walked over towards a pad on an easel and prepared to write. "OK: first point that you learned from Fritz?"

Jamie, who was with the teens, who had forgotten their Uno game, called out "We're learning that we can get our folks to dance with us! And in church!" Everyone laughed.

"Yes, good point. I'll write this as:

1. Learning to communicate through music and dance.

"You are learning that you don't need words to communicate. If the universe is dancing energy in motion, then dancing together expresses this funda-

mental energy. Your Swedenborg called it the Lord, who he says is life itself. You can express life through motion and music, and can share an experience of the Divine together. Quite profound, really.

"What else are you learning?"

Doug Jones, who had been getting ready for a nap earlier, called out: "There's something here about Swedenborg and Quantum Physics."

"Ah, yes; great point!"

Doug glowed, as he sat up straight; now fully awake.

"I'll write it as the new physics."

2. The "new physics" is finding scientific evidence for Swedenborg's explanation of connection.

"So, Swedenborgians, this is such an affirmation of what your fellow wrote so long ago. It's all about connection. 'Nothing unconnected ever occurs.' The universe is a whole. And every group, every organization is a whole! "Some of us have been trying to apply these principles to organizations. This is where my work has been. My book, *Leadership and the New Science*, from 1992, is quite a classic. It is helping organizations understand that they are a whole; not isolated parts. Every part affects every other part.

"I learned a lot by reading Fritz's earlier books. I realized that there was this terrible split in the Enlightenment. Most of western civilization followed Newton's efforts to divide things into parts, and then to look at each part in isolation from the others. And to see the universe as a machine, where all the parts functioned in a certain way. But you folks followed Swedenborg out of the Enlightenment, and continued to see the world as whole.

"Our society, our organizations – including our churches – have all functioned like Newtonian machines, instead of the dancing, vibrating motion that is God to Swedenborg. Even you Swedenborgians set up your churches as if you believe in Newtonian physics, instead of Swedenborgian holism and the new physics."

"Hey, wait a minute, Margaret!"

Doug had become engrossed in the pro-

(Continued on page 137)

SWEDENBORGIAN PARISH ACTION TEAM IN ACTION

(Continued from page 136)

gram, and was upset. "How can you say that? We operate on Swedenborg's theology!"

"Well, look, keep attending the entire program and then see if you still think that."

"Here's an example for you. Newtonian machines strive for equilibrium; to have everything at a perfect point of balance. There's no conflict left. But also no creativity, no energy, nothing to do. In a system, there has to be chaos sometimes. That's how a healthy system is: every conflict between individuals has an impact on the whole system. But conflict is only harmful to the system if it's kept hidden. When it's brought out and worked through, then the whole system grows!"

"Take a few minutes to chat with the people around you, and consider whether you prefer equilibrium or chaos in your church."

Everyone laughed at what appeared to be a silly question. But soon, the discussions were quite intense and serious. After about ten minutes, Dr. Wheatley called time. "Does anyone want to share anything?"

Mary Smith stood up, looked a bit sheepish. "I'm the president here. And when we interviewed Pastor Pete, I helped make the decision not to tell him about all our conflicts, and how we had made a previous minister leave. There was so much chaos with all those feelings and that conflict! I wanted us to close the door on it, and just be a nice, stable church in balance." She took a deep breath, and sat down.

"Oh, good example, Mary! That illustrated my point perfectly. Even your Swedenborgian parishes – like most churches and other organizations in our culture – function by trying to bury conflict and return to equilibrium. But chaos pushes you out of equilibrium. If you engage with the conflict and chaos, it will release new energy, lead to great creativity! You'll move towards balance for awhile, and then new chaos will bring

new creativity, and then new balance. A system is ever-changing and ever-growing.

"Yes, this is the main point I want you to understand." She wrote again on her pad:

3. *A system is people in connection. If you want to understand the system, you can't just get to know the people as individuals; you must also understand the connection.*

"I'm going to read you my favorite quotation from my book, and then I've invited some friends in for a surprise to end my presentation."

Dr. Wheatley picked up a copy of her book and began to read: "In new science, the underlying currents are a movement toward holism, toward understanding the system as a system and giving primary value to the relationship that exists among seemingly discrete parts. Donella Meadows, a systems thinker, quotes an ancient Sufi teaching that captures this shift in focus:

'You think because you understand one you must understand two, because one and one makes two. But you must also understand 'and.'

There was a moment of shocked silence, as everyone grasped the importance of this deep truth, spoken by Swedenborg, by ancient Sufi teachings, by the "new physics," and by modern-day organizational consultants.

At that point, some dancers entered the sanctuary singing Sufi chants.

"Oh, yes, welcome!" Said Margaret Wheatley. "You had a Sufi dance group meeting in one of your rooms today, so I invited them to come in and dance their understanding of "and", which explains systems theory. The concept is beyond words, anyway. Best to dance and chant, and let the reality sink into your souls."

Most everyone got up joyfully, and tried to follow the steps and chants that the Sufis were leading. Pete looked with amazement at the sanctuary; Sufis were chanting and dancing and his congregation followed along in joyful abandon. He shrugged his shoulders and joined in.

After a while, the Sufis danced out of the sanctuary and back to their retreat in the Sunday School room. Gradually, people became quiet as they saw a new speaker at the podium.

"Hi, there! I'm delighted to be here at the Johnny Appleseed Church. I'm Peter Senge. My book *The Fifth Discipline* was used as one of the resources in creating a consensus model of decision making at your Portland Church. The fifth discipline unites all the disciplines into one. Guess what it is?"

A tentative voice called out, "Uh, could it be systems theory?"

"Of course, it's systems theory! I can help a group create a learning organization: an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future."

You here at the Johnny Appleseed Church are learning how to be a learning organization; a holistic system.

"You see, systems theory integrates everything, because the whole is always more than the sum of its parts."

"Right!" called Judy, with the teens. "We just learned that from Margaret Wheatley and the Sufis. One and one make two, but we've got to understand the 'and.'"

"Exactly! And then one and one may be more than just two."

"Sort of 'two with an attitude?'" Judy called out. The teens laughed, and then the adults joined in.

"Yeah! You guys are a church. If I go meet each of you individually for coffee, I'll get to know you as individuals. But I need to understand what happens when you create this system that is a church. It has its own personality beyond the individual personalities of the members."

"Yeah," called Mary, "Individually we're really nice people. As a system, we fight all the time!" Everyone laughed.

"Hey, you're getting this stuff! Look what you can learn as a church community:

"You stop seeing yourselves as separate from the world to see your connections. You keep learning how you create their reality. And how you can change it, together. And I love this word: I use *metanoia*: a shift of mind. To the Gnostics, this means

(Continued on page 142)

Letting Heaven Create Your Life

Eric Allison

In May 2004 I attended a four-day "Enlightenment Intensive." Mostly, the 50 or so participants did partner meditation. Sitting knee to knee we took turns asking each other "Tell me who you are!" The person who had been asked the question had a simple assignment. Close your eyes and tell yourself, *I am the object of my inquiry.. My intention is to have direct experience. I am open to whatever comes.*

From early in the morning until late each night we worked to fulfill the simple assignment. On the third day suddenly I felt a profound connection to everything and everyone. Whatever guilt I had was gone. Whatever fear or worry that stood between me and the Lord was gone. If someone had walked up to me and stuck a gun to my head I would have felt only love and connection. All the little judgments one usually makes about people we don't know or do know were gone. No one was too fat or too short or too stupid or too smart. Everyone was just a child of God and they were all magnificently lovely. Everything was truly beautiful. Somehow the crescent moon on that night was more radiant than on any other. I was in heaven. At last I felt so blissfully free of every concern that I had no desire for anything any better than just being alive in God's creation.

Yes, that rapturous feeling faded in a few days and my sarcastic jaded mug soon appeared to tell me that life really wasn't a miracle. But the strangest thing happened. I realized—no, I felt to the core of my being that Heaven was not something that came about as the result of change. I had been trying my whole life to be a better person by becoming more aware and by making plans for change that would fix me and make me more Godly, but those deep down things that never seemed to go away didn't really go away. Change didn't bring heaven. Change doesn't work. Grace does.

We Swedenborgians know that Heaven is all around us all of the time. Then why on earth (not in heaven) is it so easy to feel unheavenly and to be seduced into feeling that we are so much less than we are? Why is it so easy to feel that whatever we try is not enough, that there is always more to do. That there is in fact actually so much more that we can never quite feel at peace.

Certainly there are things to do daily which can help you create heaven wherever you go and I entreat you do so. But all the doctrine and all the king's men can't put you back together again unless you are willing to just hold onto the possibility that Heaven will come again. You can't force it or intend to "make" heaven come back, but you can hold onto the possibility that it will come as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow. God is that good and Heaven is that present. The key is to not expect Heaven to be a certain way.

Suddenly the grace of God grabbed hold of me and showed me that Heaven is something I could expect as surely as I could expect a friend to welcome me into his home when I sought

shelter. My commitment became to create Heaven with everyone I met every day and to use a variety of methods which would help to till the spiritual soil for that daily planting. Full of excitement and commitment I started making up weekly guides for Creating Heaven. Each Sunday I have handed them out to use during the week. As part of my sermon I ask people what they have done that week to create heaven. This gives people an opportunity to share their breakthroughs or their crashes. We have heard some very inspiring stories. The great part about hearing the successes of others is that it makes heaven that much more likely for us. A powerful lovely sphere is an infectious thing.

Below is a sample of just one handout.

Creating Heaven - This is your guide for the week:

The beginning of a habit is like an invisible thread, but every time we repeat the act we strengthen the strand, add to it another filament, until it becomes a great cable and binds us irrevocably, thought and act. Orison Swett Marden

Spiritual exercises for creating heaven this week.

Today

1. See God shining from the eyes of five people before you go to sleep tonight.
2. Breathe in the holy spirit twelve times.

Every Day

1. Within twenty minutes of waking up, take at least five minutes to connect with God and pray for others. Take a breath and fill yourself with light. Thank God for being alive and that you have a life to offer.
2. Remember when the last time was you felt at peace with God. Feel the feeling of that time. Really feel it. Give thanks for that feeling. Without expectations for the future, just "be" in the present in the possibility that you have heaven in your day.
3. Increase the number of positive things you say by 100%.
4. Create a "community around you." At five locations each day.

Creating Community is an important step. Here is an example of how to do that.

Wherever you are, imagine that it is the safe neighborhood where you grew up. You feel like a welcome part of that community. See a spiritual connection with the people around you. (You could be in a restaurant surrounded by people you have never met or on the subway.) Feel a spiritual connection with all of these people. Feel it. They are your little town. They are part of your community. You love them and they love you. You feel that your connection with them is feeding them spiritually. You want only to give to

My commitment became to create Heaven with everyone I met every day and to use a variety of methods which would help to till the spiritual soil for that daily planting.

Letting Heaven Create Your Life *(Continued from page 138)*

them but you feel as though you are being fed by the connection. You have some sense of belonging because God's influx is flowing through you. Do this at least five times every day. Do it at work, home, at the supermarket. In traffic, while talking with the police-woman or man who is giving you a ticket.

6. Pray for someone you don't like or are very angry at.

7. Spend five minutes reading from one of the gospels each day.

Crashing

You will not be able to be in a heavenly state all the time. A Crash does not mean you cannot change. It means that you are in the process of transformation. Crashes are part of the process. Don't fight to get back to Heaven. Trust grace. Trust God. Just hold onto the possibility that heaven will come again. Hold onto it not for yourself but for heaven itself.

What to do when you CRASH, to get back into heaven:

1. Identify the momentum that is taking you away from heaven.

2. Hold the possibility that heaven will come.

3. Take action.

Breathe

Release energy change.

Do something heavenly even though you may not feel like it - believe that heaven IS possible.

Give thanks for the possibility.

4. Re-experience heaven. Give thanks.

5. Call someone. Ask them what they do to get out of a bad mood and into a good mood. Share how you asked God to take yourself out of the negative place you were in.

The Rev. Eric Allison is pastor of the Puget Sound Swedenborgian Church in Kirkland, Washington, and is chair of the Swedenborgian Council of Ministers in General Convention.



Ministries Support Unit Report

Karen Conger

The Ministries Support Unit of the Swedenborgian Church (MINSU) was created in 1997 by a merger of the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit and the Growth and Outreach Support Unit, and now functions as the arm of the denomination that seeks to be a resource for growth & outreach within the church, and for ministry support of various kinds. To quote the current mission statement, "We seek to serve God by promoting excellence, unity, and growth in the Swedenborgian Church through the development, fostering, and support of its varied ministries."

MINSU's fall meeting consists of four full days spent reviewing and evaluating Common Assessment Form requests for funding from the various ministries of the denomination. MINSU's recommendations for same are then passed on to the Augmentation Fund Committee who then make the final decisions regarding funding. For the calendar year 2005, eleven ministries within the denomination are requesting such funding, including the newly formed Center for Applied Ethics at Urbana University, directed by the Rev. Kevin Baxter.

The members of MINSU are hopeful that more of our energy during the coming year can be spent on empowering our churches in the area of growth and outreach, an essential focus of the Unit in years past. We also hope to re-vision our mission statement in order to make it more relevant to the current concerns of our churches and ministries in North America.

Each member of MINSU is assigned several liaison churches to keep in contact with. We're hopeful that you won't hesitate to contact your liaison (see below) or myself, the chairperson, if you have any questions or suggestions. The current membership of MINSU, with liaison churches, is as follows:

Karen Nielsen Conger, Chair
314 Apollo Cir
Bishop, CA 93514
760/872-3392 home
nunclet@aol.com

Mark Allen
1106 Highland Ave.
So. Portland, ME 04106
207/741-2010 home
markallen@hannaford.com
LaPorte, Ft. Meyers, Boston,
Bridgewater, Elmwood,
Fryeburg, Newtonville.

Carl Blenkin
1114 Opal St., Apt B
Redondo Beach, CA 90277
310/792-0372
carlblenkin@hotmail.com
Deland, Pretty Prairie, St. Louis,
San Diego, Pawnee Rock,
Wilmington, St. Paul.

Barb Halle
310 Holton Rd
LaPorte, IN 46350
219/326-1707 home
219/362-1566 work
rocksprings.foliage@verizon.net
Royal Oak, Wayfarers, Bayside,
Stonehouse, New York, Urbana,
Washington, D.C., Center for AE.

Rev. John Maine
14935 72A St
Edmonton, AB T5C 0S3
780/456-0507 home
780/475-1620 FAX
jemaine@telusplanet.net
Chicago, Cleveland, El Cerrito,
San Francisco, Cincinnati,
Portland.

Rev. Dick Tafel
8065 Lagoon Rd.
Ft. Meyers Beach, FL 33931
239/463-5030 home
rhtafel@yahoo.com
Cambridge, Puget Sound, Temenos,
Little Grain, Edmonton, W.
Canada, Kitchener.



My Favorite Parts of FNCA 2004

revor Woofenden

The Fryeburg New Church Assembly is situated on 20+ acres of pine forest on the Maine/New Hampshire border between Rte. 302 and the clean, cool waters of the Saco River in Fryeburg, Maine. The FNCA runs a two-week Swedenborgian family camp in August each year as well as hosting other church-related events. Our regular daily schedule at camp begins with the Rising Bell and Polar Bear Swim followed by breakfast, chapel, lectures and classes, lunch, rest hour, free time, dinner, and various evening activities, with work day on Tuesday, outing day on Wednesday, and worship in town at the Fryeburg New Church on Sunday mornings.

Everyone has favorite activities of camp each year. Here are some of mine for FNCA 2004.

Lecture Themes

This year our themes for each of the two weeks also related directly to each other.

Week One: Geographical Correspondences. All the different countries, rivers, mountains and deserts described in the Bible represent different aspects of our spiritual state. We will examine the geographical landscape of the Holy Land and explore all that it represents in terms of the inner spiritual landscape.

And that's exactly what happened: we explored the hills and valleys, cities and deserts, mountains and rivers of the Holy Land. Every specific location corresponds to a specific trait in us, and every general type of terrain represents a general tendency in our lives.

Week Two: The Journey of Regeneration. Using the Bible as our road map and the writings of Swedenborg as our travel guide, we will explore the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the Holy Land, looking at the different dynamics and phases that we pass through as we make our way along the inner journey from earth to heaven. Our lecture themes this year often stimulated lengthy discussions during

question period, with both beginner and deeply advanced questions. The lectures were so consistently thought-provoking that time regularly ran out before the discussion was finished.

Special Evening Activities

We had several special activities this year. Three of them were travelogues, and two were even about the same area of the world. The Rev. Dr. George and Lois Dole had a fascinating presentation on their trip to Sweden last year. They visited quite a number of places on the Swedenborgian itinerary. Lois's comments about the nature of the various church people they met there were especially welcome.

We also had a colorful slide show from Colgate and Cecilia Searle on their recent trip to Scandinavia. We saw some different Swedenborg stuff than in the Doles' presentation, as well as some gorgeous scenery and cityscapes from other Scandinavian countries, and since the Searles work in architecture, a lot of buildings both old and new.

The Rev. Ken and Laurie Turley gave the third presentation about their whole family's musical participation at the Swedenborgian convention in England. Ken (guitar) and Laurie (keyboards) led us step by step through their musical journey through Great Britain and the music they were blessed to present as well as listen to. Their nearly grown children, Emily (bass) and Ethan (drums), were with them all the way—that is, until the family chanced upon a youth retreat at Purley Chase and the two younger Turleys ended up spending the night and part of the next day with a bunch of British Swedenborgian teenagers!

Jason Woofenden led a juggling workshop that was so popular the first week that he was asked to repeat it the second week. Nearly 25 people showed up each time, from rank beginners to some skilled enough to pass clubs and help teach others. Some got it right away. Some had to work a bit more. But everybody who worked hard was able to at least *begin* to keep three balls up in the air. Merrilee Phinney in particular was seen steadfast in her resolve to, as she put it, "beat this thing." And our camp director, Debbie Cook, was thrilled to discover that it was *way* easier to use



Flame and Spark: Troy Grams and Ruby Blackman.

three juggling scarves instead of beanbags because they fall so much slower!

Sales Table Auction

The annual Sales Table Auction took place the end of second week. It may not sound like much: *trying to sell* the stuff on the Sales Table that didn't sell all session, but due to a long tradition of comical Sales Table auctioneers, the auction is one of our most popular repeat events.

This year's auctioneers, Ed Schnurr and Amy Blackman, were no exception. Ed announced at breakfast to "be sure to buy whatever you really want off the sales table *before* dinner, because, as you all know, items often go for well above sticker price at the auction." And, indeed, come auction time, many fine and curious items *did* sell for significantly more than was originally marked. Through a steady line of banter plugging 'the many (and often imaginary!) benefits of each absolutely-must-have, can't-do-without item, Ed and Amy managed to get rid of a whole bunch of great (?) stuff. By the time the final item sold, they had helped to raise over \$570 that all goes directly to improving the camp.

Part of the fun is that everyone knows it's a fund raiser, so husband was caught *bidding* against wife, grandmother against grandson, and a few

(Continued on page 141)

My Favorite Parts of FNCA 2004

(Continued from page 140)

people actually out-bid themselves! The children were as involved as the adults, often out-bidding adults for certain items while their parents' jaws dropped in surprise. After one particularly heated bidding war, the winner decided he really didn't want the item and donated it to the next highest bidder. *Yes!!* That's what it's all about!

Three specialty items bear mentioning. The first by its absence. The "Carmen Miranda Fruit Compote Earrings" have been auctioned off each year since Gard Perry's first year as camp president in 1991. Bidders are given notice that they are only bidding on one year's rent, and the buyer agrees to return them for the following year's auction. We have no record of who bought them last year but they were missed by many at this year's auction. These fine (cheap), attractive (gaudy) pieces of exquisite jewelry (paste) have raised hundreds and hundreds of dollars for the Assembly over the past 23 years, and it would be a shame to lose them. Whoever has them, please be sure to return them in time for next year's auction. Thanks!

The second specialty item...was a vintage set of the inner workings of an old toilet tank from the Murdock Cabin. This unusual contraption had been cobbled together and re-cobbled together so many times that it is definitely a rare, one-of-a-kind item. The Rev. Dr.

George Dole (singer/songwriter of the FNCA-famous Tiny Tim parody "*Tinkering With The Toilets*") was remembered to have said, while working on it way back in the early 70s, that if they ever replaced this particular apparatus that he *definitely* wanted it. Well, it was the Murdock Cabin's turn for a bathroom upgrade this year. And although he dropped out of the bidding early due to a couple of real high rollers, his face lit up in huge, beaming smiles when the winning bidder donated this museum-grade piece to him in honor of his decades of service to the Assembly and his historical connection to what the good doctor himself referred to as "a real piece of art."

And the third specialty item at this year's Sales Table Auction was, believe it or not, a plain, old five dollar bill. Last year, our FNCA treasurer Bob Perry introduced us to a nifty little fund raising device he'd seen elsewhere. He donated a five dollar bill to the Auction with the stipulation that the winner got to keep the fin, but the top two bidders *both* had to pay! How's five bucks for motivation to not get stuck being the second highest bidder? I mean, hey, if you win, at least you get to keep the \$5, whereas second place just has to pay, right? This year, Bob's little five dollar donation got nearly a 2000% return on his investment, netting close to \$100 due to that tricky little rule.

The FNCA "Spruce Club"

This summer, three groups of camp-

ers who had been working separately to spruce up the camp all got together and formed the FNCA "Spruce Club" (working member dues \$5, non-working members \$20). The Curtain Brigade, headed by Wendy Schnurr, sewed curtains for windows in the Main Building and the cabins during various bits of free time all session long. And we were all very grateful for the terrific, new full-length curtains in the lecture hall on those few really hot days we had this season.

The Indoor Division, headed by Nancy Little, inventoried all the buildings for simple things such as light bulbs, lamp shades, shelves, towel racks, clothes bars—there's a whole list—little stuff that makes all the difference. They discovered a treasure trove of brand new towel racks in the hospital room and then lucked upon a gold mine of lamp shades at the Fryeburg Flea Market, so now there are plenty of places to hang your wet towel after bath or beach, and no more bare bulbs. Next year: pillows, throw rugs, window shades!

The Outdoor Division, headed by Cecilia Searle, has been planting decorative plants throughout the grounds for several years. The Bray Cabin is now beautifully fronted with a variety of colorful plantings that thrive in this northern climate. The edge of the ravine between the front lawn and the Claxton Cabin that got planted in recent years has filled in to the point that what used

(Continued on page 142)



Wishing all of you
a blessed,
peace-filled Christmas.

If you're wondering about
a specific Christmas message
in this issue, re-read
Eric Allison's
"Letting Heaven Create
Your Life." That is the
Christmas message.

My Favorite Parts of FNCA 2004

(Continued from page 141)

to look like a lot of weeds and slash now looks gorgeous! And this year, they began working around the front of the Claxton and Goddard Cabins, and intend to continue around the curve of that cabin cluster next year, as well.

Not including money members spent from their own pockets, in its first year, the FNCA Spruce Club raised \$180 on-site and spent less than a third of it, leaving a nice start on some bigger projects next year. All members received an FNCA "Spruce Club" Member pin featuring our nifty new spruce tree logo designed by young artist Myrrh Woofenden.

People at Camp

After a year's absence, we joyously welcomed back long-time Assembly member, former Swedenborg Foundation director, world traveler, and all

around terrific lady Virginia Branston and her delightful daughter Joan Flynn. Virginia shocked us with the news that she's left New York City and is now living with Joan in Phoenix.

We also welcomed back former FNCA president, the Rev. George McCurdy and his wife Lois. Ron Klein and two of his sons, Jerry "Grocer" Klein and Martin "Peachy" Klein returned after decades of absence. Those who remembered them as Flames in the 70s had a grand time getting together again. Jesse Bemier, a returning Flame, brought her friend Cassie Torres to camp with her this summer. Cassie was a welcome addition to the Flames, and it was a delight to see the two of them chumming around with the other Flame girls. FNCA assistant treasurer, Nicole O'Brien's mom, Anita Rioux, was able to spend only a weekend with us last year, but we were delighted she could spend a whole week with us this summer.

We hope everyone who attended will come back again next year. And you,

dear reader, are most joyfully encouraged to start thinking about joining our extended



Grandma Merrilee Phinney and Caleigh Crowe.

Swedenborgian family at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly family camp in August 2005!

Trevor serves on the FNCA Board of Directors, the FNCA Summer Session Committee, and on staff as the FNCA Camp Activities Director. An entertainer by trade, "TREVOR The Games Man" is a certified New Games Leader & Cooperative Play Specialist and professional stiltwalker. He can be reached at (413) 247-3322.

For more info about the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, see our new official FNCA web site at www.fryeburg.org.



SWEDENBORGIAN PARISH ACTION TEAM IN ACTION

(Continued from page 137)

awakening shared intuition and direct knowledge of the Divine! Learning is *metanoia: It's a paradigm shift!*

"Look, folks, we're talking radical stuff here. We are proposing to you that you can create a paradigm shift right here in the Johnny Appleseed Church. You can create it by turning to the radical roots of your own theology, and living out its theology of connectedness.

"When you see the connection, you realize that you are all part of the system, and that together you can change anything. But if you just blame one part or the other part for the problem, you get stuck. You have to change the whole system. If everyone takes responsibility for your roles in the system, then no one has to be blamed."

The denominational speaker who had begun the day stood up. "This has been a deeply rich day for us. But we have just begun. Today's speakers gave you an overview of the concept of systems and how it can apply in organizations. We meet again next Saturday with another group of presenters, who work

with parishes. They will give us more tools for applying these concepts in parish life."

A thoughtful group walked out of the church to return to their homes and Saturday evening plans. Mary and Pete lingered to chat. "Pastor, do you think it's really possible for us to function without blaming each other for things?"

Pete was thoughtful. "Maybe. Maybe that's the paradigm shift we need. If we see how all of us contribute to the strengths and the problems of the parish, then maybe we can change without blame. I guess that's a pretty Swedenborgian way to be a church!"

In the next seminar, Peter Stenke and Roy Oswald will appear to help the Johnny Appleseed church apply the systems theory it is learning. You are invited to attend their next seminar by reading the next issue of The Messenger.

The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is half-time pastor of the Swedenborgian church in Portland, Maine, and adjunct Professor of Spirituality with the Swedenborgian House of Studies.



The Mexican Connection

(Continued from page 134)

man who manages the carpet store in Julian came by to see if they needed anything. I told him what a great job they were doing. The manager nodded proudly. "They're terrific guys."

They live in Escondido, an hour away, and didn't get home that night until long after dark.

When they left I took Bear out of the closet where he'd been stashed while the carpet was being installed. I sensed that he'd been decorative long enough, sitting neglected on a guest bed. That he was meant for better things. "I'm going to send Bear to Mexico," I said to Steve. "I know some child will just love him, and likely drag him around and get him dirty, and he'll lose his fur, but his life will mean something." With fond recollections of *The Velveteen Rabbit*, I said, "Who knows, maybe he'll become REAL. He might even learn the language."

Patte LeVan



Parish

NEW YORK

The Rev. Ronald Brugler, former denomination president and former pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, has accepted a call to the New York New Church. His first service as their new minister will be December 5, 2004.

By a vote taken August 15, 2004, the New York church members decided to sell the Parish House, the brownstone next to the church at 112 East 35th St. On October 10, a contract was signed to complete the sale.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

The Rev. Sarah Buteux bade a sad farewell to the Cambridge Society in late September, after two vital and much appreciated years as their pastor.

She moved with her husband, Andrew Dole, to Amherst, Mass., where he has taken a position as professor at Amherst College.

PORTLAND, MAINE

The Portland church began its Non-Violent Communication Study Group again on October 21. It has continued on alternate Thursdays: November 4-18 and December 2, 16.

ROYAL OAK, MICHIGAN

Funny Fundraisers: The Church of the Holy City had a clandestine committee this past summer who sneaked around to members' and friends' homes to place a tacky pink flamingo in front yards to raise money for the church treasury. If you woke up one morning to see a pink flamingo in your yard you had the choice to: Pay \$25 to remove it. Pay \$35 never to get one. \$50 to own one. (We'll have to follow up on this one and find out how much money they brought in.)

BAPTISM

Driver—Jacob Randell Driver was baptized into the life of the New Church October 24, 2004, at the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating. Jacob is the first child of Heather and Mark Driver. Heather is the Virginia Street church's treasurer.

NEW MEMBERS WELCOMED

Currie, Quinn, Reese – Rev. Susannah Currie, Lisa Quinn and Judy Reese were welcomed into membership on October 24, 2004, at the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos, the Rev. Susannah Currie officiating.



New Chrysalis Reader Available



Letting Go: Living without a Net, the new Chrysalis Reader published this fall by the Swedenborg Foundation, unlocks the secret language of living assiduously and dangerously, of embracing life with tenacity and abandon. (Carol Lawson and Robert Lawson, editors, 160 pp.)

There are times when we feel that we must stay the course, times when we are determined to hang in there no matter what. But there are other times when fire bells are going off in our head, and we know it is essential to change plans, to venture forth, to seek out the strange and unfamiliar. How can we recognize the times to let go? The times to be consistent, to persist on a chosen path?

The authors in this eleventh annual Chrysalis Reader search for the balance point, a spiritual Rosetta Stone by which we can see the big picture, can understand why. The essays, stories, poetry, and museum-quality art in this Reader explore humankind's launching out, our attempts at flight—sometimes deliberate and disastrous, sometimes desperate and ungainly—from unwanted, unexpected release that sometimes enables us to soar above the isle of mystery and promise, to be spontaneous, to let the universe inside for a sustained glimpse at the unknown. Like a high-wire act, such a daring perspective lets life happen as it will on its own.

\$14.95. To order, call 1-800-355-3222.

Journal Can Be Ordered

The 2004 *Journal of the Swedenborgian Church* has been mailed out to a few people in Convention. Anyone who would like a copy of the full 2004 *Journal* may order one for \$15 or you can order it on a CD for \$3, as a downloadable file for free. A Mini-Journal with all directories is available for \$3.00 plus postage (free as a downloadable file).

Orders may be placed by email:
manager@swedenborg.org
 phone: 617-969-4240 or
 mail: 11 Highland Ave.,
 Newtonville, MA 02460.

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London 15 years after his death. This 1787 organization eventually spawned the present General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches. As a result of Swedenborg's own spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church today exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions. Swedenborg shared in his theological writings a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of Scripture as a story of inner-life stages as we learn and grow. Swedenborg would conclude, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.

Editor's Note: Although the following didn't come to our attention until last month, these should stand as guiding principles for any candidate or elected officials currently holding office, and provide a useful perspective on church / state relations.

Christian Principles in an Election Year

(Published by the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA, June 15, 2004)

Our Christian faith compels us to address the world through the lens of our relationship to God and to one another. Public discourse is enhanced as we engage civic leaders on the values and ethics affirmed by our faith. At the same time, religious liberty and the integrity of our democracy will be protected as candidates refrain from using faith-based organizations and institutions for partisan gain. We offer these ten principles to those seeking to accept the responsibility that comes with holding public office:

1. **War is contrary to the will of God.** While the use of violent force may, at times, be a necessity of last resort, Christ pronounces his blessing on the peacemakers. We look for political leaders who will make peace with justice a top priority and who will actively seek nonviolent solutions to conflicts.
2. **God calls us to live in communities shaped by peace and cooperation.** We reject policies that abandon large segments of our inner city and rural populations to hopelessness. We look for political leaders who will re-build our communities and bring an end to cycles of violence and killing.
3. **God created us for each other, and thus our society depends on the well being of our global neighbors.** We look for political leaders for whom a foreign policy based on cooperation and global justice is an urgent concern.

4. **God calls us to be advocates for those who are most vulnerable in our society.** We look for political leaders who yearn for economic justice and who will seek to reduce the growing disparity between rich and poor.
5. **Each human being is created in the image of God and is of infinite worth.** We look for political leaders who actively promote racial justice and equal opportunity for everyone.
6. **The earth belongs to God and is intrinsically good.** We look for political leaders who recognize the earth's goodness, champion environmental justice, and uphold our responsibility to be stewards of God's creation.
7. **Christians have a biblical mandate to welcome strangers.** We look for political leaders who will pursue fair immigration policies and speak out against xenophobia.
8. **Those who follow Christ are called to heal the sick.** We look for political leaders who will support adequate, affordable and accessible health care for all.
9. **Because of the transforming power of God's grace, all humans are called to be in right relationship with each other.** We look for political leaders who seek a restorative, not retributive, approach to the criminal justice system and the individuals within it.
10. **Providing enriched learning environments for all of God's children is a moral imperative.** We look for political leaders who will advocate for equal educational opportunity and abundant funding for children's services.

Finally, our religious tradition admonishes us not to bear false witness against our neighbor and to love our enemies. We ask that the campaigns of political candidates and the coverage of the media in this election season be conducted according to the principles of fairness, honesty and integrity.

Our thanks to the Rev. Robert McCluskey for sending the above.



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

Address Service
Requested

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