

# THE MESSENGER

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April 2005

## REFLECTIONS ON HEAVEN

Ernest Martin

Fifty-some years after my seminary days, I keep up to date on timeless issues such as immortality by reading magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, and a dozen others rather than learned tomes of theologians or journals from the seminaries.

In *Time*'s television column, I read: "You know something weird is going on in the afterlife when the dead get their own show. But there they are, twice a day, on Sci-Fi's new *Crossing Over with John Edward*, using the host, a regular-Joe medium, to greet, reminisce with and bust the chops of loved ones in the studio audience. Nor do the dead walk only on basic cable. On series as disparate as *Providence*, *McBeal*, *Soul Food*, and *The X-Files*, apparitions of departed loved ones offer advice and solace."

James Poniewozik concludes for *Time*: "When pop culture raises the dead, it also raises a tension between faith and logic. Even for the secular, accepting death often involves a belief, absent proof, about the undiscovered country beyond life. These programs fill a hunger, sneered at by the hip media insiders, for soul food, but they also risk oversimplifying an eternal conundrum. Offering easy evidence of something beyond, however heart-warming, runs counter to faith. And faith—religious or otherwise—is all most of us have to make do with in the end."

### Reticence about Heaven

Between the academic world and the world of the institutional church,

and the people in the pews, there seems to be a great gulf fixed. It's perfectly understandable to deal with angels, spirits, and heaven on TV, in the movies, and in books like Mitch Albom's *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, and Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*, but most of our theologians say they can't believe in heaven, except in a symbolic sense. Ministers, priests, and rabbis confess they don't feel comfortable talking about life after death unless it's a passing reference in funeral and memorial services.

**While theologians and clergy are reluctant to talk about heaven, lay people who tend to believe in an after life are inclined to hold a Swedenborgian view that the soul continues to journey in some sort of conscious state immediately upon death, rather than waiting for some distant judgment day.**

Writing in *The Christian Century* magazine in December 2004, the United Methodist Church minister Mark Ralls admitted his reluctance to speak of heaven. He said that he can't remember the topic of heaven ever coming up in his years at seminary: "As mainline

seminarians enter the parish, they take with them the assumption that heaven is not a topic worthy of serious discussion."

Church historian Martin E. Marty says, "I can recall from my (Lutheran) childhood many sermons on what used to be called the geography of heaven and the temperature of hell. Now the only time you hear of heaven is when somebody has died." David Wells, a professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, notes: "We would expect to hear of it in the Evangelical churches, but I don't hear it at all. I don't think heaven is even a blip on the Christian screen, from one end of the denominational spectrum to the other. The more perplexing question is, What explains this?"

While theologians and clergy are reluctant to talk about heaven, lay people who tend to believe in an afterlife are inclined to hold a Swedenborgian view that the soul continues to journey in some sort of conscious state immediately upon death, rather than waiting for some distant judgment day. At the same time, readers of the *Left Behind* series of novels are expecting at any time to be swept up into the sky in the Rapture and taken into heaven by the Lord.

### Funeral of Princess Diana

Illustrative of the gulf between laity and clergy, I recall the impact made upon me by the funeral service for Princess Diana. The service was televised from Westminster Cathedral to more than a billion viewers. On the following Sunday, I asked my congregation what stood out in their memory of the service, for nearly all of them had witnessed it. The overwhelming response was: the music of Elton John, and the reading of the hymn to love

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# On Aging and Ageless

**A**t a recent Pacific Coast Association board meeting, during our time of informal sharing, problems of aging and some of the infirmities we were encountering came up. Every one of us has a close friend or family member who is struggling with health challenges, mental and physical, as well as recent accidents, surgeries, or illnesses we ourselves have survived. It seemed like a bleak picture of the inevitable downhill slide, with a few triumphs and the occasional miracle.

A few days after I returned home, I received a note from Manon Washburn McGee, a longtime member of the former Los Angeles Society, (she goes all the way back to the old Split Mountain group!) who has organized the PCA-sponsored yearly retreats in Orange, California, which Perry Martin has facilitated for years. Perry Martin was moving, and starting a whole new chapter of her life, and would likely not be facilitating the retreats anymore. There was a great deal of poignance in Manon's report of their last get-together.

"We are closing the curtain on our Perry Martin retreats in southern California. Once again, this February, we held our yearly, weekend retreat in Orange; thirteen devotees showed up. We felt like a family coming together as we gathered in the warm and inviting library of the Center for Spiritual Development. There were two new people who joined wholeheartedly in our sharing of our lives and feelings. Our connections to one another were so strong that we decided that even if Perry is moving away, we would keep the group together and continue on our own, so we have met and begun to plan next year's gathering."

**I**ncluded with Manon's letter was an item written up in the Torrance Art Guild newsletter about Manon herself. She was to be honored on April 9 at the Golden Awards Banquet at Pickwick Center in Burbank for her 50 years as a Motion Picture Screen Cartoonist. She has screen credit on all the Charlie Brown Specials and features. She has worked for all studios on all cartoon characters in her career as an artist

(inker and special effects) in animation. Her credits include "The Secret of NIMH," Bakshi's "Lord of the Rings," Wylie Coyote at Warner Bros., Tom and Jerry at MGM, Jiminy Cricket at Disney, and "Tony the Tiger" and "Mr. Clean." She worked on everything Hanna-Barbera did. She is to be presented with a trophy, pin, and a picture book of her work.

When I first got acquainted with Manon about a dozen years ago, she was 70-plus, and looked about 58. She was (and still is) tall, gorgeous, slim, and blessed with the merriest of dispositions and a sunny spirit that shines forth even when she's undergoing difficulties. She mentioned at that time that she was a retired cartoonist and had worked in animation, and was currently concentrating on her fine art as well as teaching art. She didn't make a big deal of her former career, and I had no idea that she had worked on all those famous features.

**A**fter I read the notice, I phoned her to congratulate her on her upcoming award.

"What took them so long?" I asked her.

"Good question," she laughed. "We're finally being honored—I'm being honored with 50 other older artists in cartooning, so I won't get a chance to say anything. I wanted to express regret that our kind of art is dead—of course, animation isn't done the way we did it back then, it's digital. Like so many other things, technology has replaced the hand work that we did, and the figures look more human—I guess it's still art, but a different kind of art."

I asked her how she managed to break into the studios in the beginning.

"I was working at Lockheed Aircraft in Burbank during the war, 1942-1943. Then I got laid off, and I headed for the unemployment office."

I was stunned. I told her I grew up in Burbank. My mother worked at



Wayfarers Chapel — Manon

Lockheed during those war years. My mother was 36 and struggling to support me and make house payments. Manon would have been a young girl, probably not more than 20. I wondered if they passed in the halls.

"So, then what happened?" I pursued.

"Well, I'd had a year of college and a year at a very good art school. The woman at the unemployment office asked me what else I could do besides what I'd been doing at

Lockheed., and I said, "well...art." She asked if I had a portfolio, and I happened to have some things put together. She said they needed an artist at the Hal Roach Studio in Culver City. The First Motion Picture Unit of the Army Air Forces needed an artist for their project, and they sent me out, and I got the job. The Captain was Ronald Reagan!"

**I** hung up the phone feeling invigorated, and, well, less aged and more ageless. Right on, Manon!

(A number of us have had the privilege of being able to purchase Manon's

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## THE MESSENGER

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from I Corinthians 13 by the Prime Minister. I asked what the venerable clergy said about the Christian promise of the resurrection, and of the reality of the spiritual world into which Diana would now enter, to continue her life of service. We were all surprised that the bishops of the Anglican Church had not one word to say about any faith in immortality!

I would have been glad to have spoken for five minutes, for my call to ministry was based on the profound conviction of the reality of the spiritual world, and that this life we begin here on planet Earth will continue to eternity in the world of spirit.

The Anglican Church, world-wide, is speaking out now, not about immortality, but on their embarrassment that the American branch of the church, the American Episcopal Church, has consecrated a confessed gay priest as a bishop of the church. Horrors!

From the most ancient times, and the earliest of religions, people have believed in life beyond the experience of physical death. This truth was impressed upon me as I entered the great pyramids of Egypt in 1998 and viewed the historic mummies in the Cairo Museum. The great American philosopher and psychologist William James wrote: "Religion for the great majority of our own race means immortality, and nothing else. God is the producer of immortality; and whoever has doubts of immortality is written down as an atheist without further trial." For James, immortality was not a proven fact, but he was im-

pressed by the evidence from psychic research, and recognized that belief in immortality was a near-universal religious conviction.

### Huston Smith

In 1898 William James presented the Ingersoll Lecture on Immortality at Harvard. These annual lectures have continued to this day, although some recent speakers have had trouble sticking to the subject. This was not true of Professor Huston Smith who gave the 2001-2002 lecture in which he featured Swedenborg's view of immortality and also dealt with the phenomena of near-death experiences. He acknowledged that the academic community as a whole is closed to the possibility that near-death experiences might be veridical and that immortality should be taken seriously. In trying to understand the doubts of the universities, Smith refers to a paper by a former student, Neal Grossman, who teaches philosophy at the University of Illinois. Titling his paper "Who's Afraid of Life After Death?", Grossman answers: "University professors are, out of all proportion to the general public. And the reason they are afraid of life after death is that they are 'fundamentalists.' To entertain the possibility that NDEs are what they purport to be would require entertaining the possibility that the materialistic worldview that dominates the academy today is false."

The academic community, including scientists, theologians, and philosophers, are aware of crude depictions of immortality held through the ages, and they don't want to be associated with such beliefs. They are familiar with cartoons in the *New Yorker* picturing angels flitting about the clouds, complaining of ill-fitting nighties and halos that slip down, and harps that are off tune. They are also embarrassed by literal interpretations of Scripture with the holy city New Jerusalem having gates of pearls, and streets of gold.

In his 1950 Boston revival, a young Billy Graham was very specific about the world to come. Heaven, he said, was a place "as real as Los Angeles, London, Algiers or Boston." It was "1,600 miles long, 1,600 miles wide, and 1,600 miles high." Once there, "we are going to sit

around the fireplace and have parties, and the angels will wait on us, and we'll drive down the golden streets in a yellow Cadillac convertible." Graham went on to a magnificent career, but he dropped the Cadillac, which nonetheless haunted him for years.

### Heaven A History

I have spoken of articles on heaven in the popular media, which appear especially at Easter time. There have also been serious discussions in *The Christian Century* and *The Harvard Divinity Bulletin* and historical studies such as *Heaven: A History* by Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, published in 1988. Their study includes a 47-page section on "Swedenborg and the Emergence of a Modern Heaven."

I will summarize their view of Swedenborg, using their own words: "Swedenborg's perspective on heaven, which we term 'modern' has four characteristics:

First, only a thin veil divides heaven from earth. For the righteous, heavenly life begins immediately after death.

Secondly, rather than viewing heaven as the structural opposite of life on earth, it is seen as a continuation and fulfillment of material existence. Heaven possesses a material character which gives it a sensuous quality.

Thirdly, although heaven continues to be described as a place of eternal rest, the saints are increasingly shown engaged in activities, experiencing spiritual progress, and joyfully occupying themselves in a dynamic, motion-filled environment.

Finally, a focus on human love expressed in communal and familial concerns slowly replaces the primacy of divine love experienced in the beatific vision. God is love not only directly but also through the love and charity shown to others in heaven."

I admit to being uncomfortable about the authors using the word *material* in referring to Swedenborg's view of heaven. They wrote: "Swedenborg shared a conviction with other theologians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: that the beyond is recognizable, tangible, and material. The material

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fine art in the form of note cards which she has sold at previous conventions, and which she will be offering for sale at this year's convention in San Francisco. The picture above is one of her watercolors of Wayfarers Chapel—unfortunately, black and white doesn't do it justice.)

—Patte LeVan



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quality of paradise described in theological writings and created in the arts in no way diminished heaven's sacred nature. Heaven, while being pure spirit, could still have sensual characteristics. Flowers could be touched and smelled, food could be eaten and bodily pleasures could be enjoyed." It may be that in using the term *material*, the authors are thinking of it as the opposite of ethereal, rather than any kind of putdown. It can be confusing, however, when so much is made of the "materialistic" world view of current science and philosophy that keeps us from a reasonable consideration of immortality. I would prefer the word *substantial*, for it is not limited to the physical dimension of reality.

Another example of the influence of Swedenborg's perspective on heaven was the tradition of funerary art that developed in the nineteenth century and extended through the United States and Europe. Professor H. S. Janson, for many years chairman of the Department of Fine Arts at New York University, described and illustrated cemetery sculpture of that period, showing souls rising and being welcomed by heavenly spirits. The souls are pictured in human form, which was a basic teaching of Swedenborg, and represented a revolution in funerary sculpture.

McDannell and Lang conclude their treatment of Swedenborg with these words: "This modern notion of heaven surfaced in the eighteenth century with the writings of Swedenborg, peaked in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and faded in the mid-twentieth...It is the modern heaven, so vividly experienced by Swedenborg, which eventually loses its power of persuasion in the late twentieth century. The degree of our incredulity at his visions reflects how far we are from finding comfort in such heavenly hopes." (pp 183-184) David Van Biema of *Time* says that "late twentieth century America had little patience for detailed, literal views of heaven. Two world wars and the prospect of nuclear disaster made the idea of a comfy progressive afterlife seem suspect."

Swedenborgians would have much preferred that McDannell and Lang had

made a ringing endorsement of Swedenborg's "modern heaven" as the perspective for the twenty-first century. BUT... there is little evidence to support such a conjecture. Swedenborgianism was at its peak in numbers and influence at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A Swedenborgian lecture on immortality at Cooper's Union in New York attracted more than a thousand people. Sermons, lectures, books, and pamphlets on basic Swedenborgian doctrine, and especially life after death, reached hundreds of thousands of people, and New Church "temples" were erected in many of the largest cities of the land, to accommodate the many new inquirers.

The times...they are a changin'. In *Heaven: A History*, McDannell and Lang offer a challenge. They write: "We have not written a history of heaven. We have written a history of the images Christians use to describe what happens after death, when time ceases and everlasting eternity begins... We hope that our research will spur others to search their own special fields of interest and competence for more definitive answers to the question, 'what next?' *Heaven: A History* is a starting point."

### Swedenborg Foundation

The Swedenborg Foundation has embarked upon a most ambitious venture, to retranslate and republish Swedenborg's basic theological works in The New Century Edition. *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell, Drawn from Things Heard & Seen*, was the first publication in the new series. It includes a brilliant translation from the Latin by George F. Dole, the translator's Preface, a 70-page Introduction by the historian Bernhard Lang, and 30 pages of Notes by George Dole, Robert Kirven, and Jonathan Rose. The Foundation wants to continue to make Swedenborg's writings available to the scholarly world and other serious inquirers.

My own view is that it is not enough to retranslate and republish a book that was written in 1758, even with a modern Introduction and End Notes. I'm sure the Foundation would agree, for they are engaged in a number of other ventures, including the Swedenborg Channel, cutting edge technology on the Web enabling viewers with high-speed internet and a

PC to see all seven Foundation videos free of charge on

[www.newcenturytv.com/Swedenborg](http://www.newcenturytv.com/Swedenborg)

Several of their videos relate to the reality of the spiritual world. They have also published a novel on life after death: *The Arrivals*, by Naomi Gladish Smith, Chrysalis Book.

### A New Perspective

It sometimes appears that Swedenborgians think the Lord hasn't revealed anything new about heaven and hell since 1758. Given the information explosion of the last 50 years, and acknowledging that all truth is from the Lord, the resources available to us in developing a perspective on heaven for the twenty-first century are almost limitless. We can make use of the 1758 work, not as the final word, but as a springboard to a new paradigm. How to enliven a perspective on life after death is indeed daunting. We are so limited in our thinking and our imagination by the world around us that it is almost impossible to reach an audience that includes the universities, the churches, and the average home.

Swedenborg wrote that heaven is very much like earth, except for the absence of the physical body. For people who are caught up in a miserable marriage, or reliant on drugs to combat constant depression, or couch potatoes in front of the TV every day, how inviting is it to think of more of the same? If life is boring here, what is it that would promise joy and excitement hereafter? One little girl asked her mother if she were good in heaven, could she go to play in hell on Saturday afternoon. If extended families hardly endure Thanksgiving and Christmas, or a weekend at the shore, how attractive is it to anticipate continual family reunions in heaven?

It is not enough to exploit an exploding technology to try to portray an irresistible perspective on heaven. We must draw on specialists from all walks of life to embark on the creative exercise of setting forth a vision of what life can be. If we believe there is an intimate correspondential relationship between life here, and the life beyond, we can gain insight into the potential world of the spirit as we learn the secret of significant living here and now. In his

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Ingersoll Lecture, Huston Smith said: "Once we grasp the parameters of Heaven and Hell we see that they are anticipated in our earthly lives. Persons destined for Hell are already wrapped up in themselves and the inner quality of their lives is hellish. Conversely those who are destined for Heaven already enjoy a wider sphere of family and friends." We speak of the purpose of our church as "facilitating the spiritual well-being of people". What does this mean, and how do we go about it? Millions of Christians look to the "Rapture" as a cure-all, or the ultimate escape. There must be a better way, more in keeping with the Providence of the Lord, and respecting our liberty and rationality. What do you think?

### References

*Heaven - A History*, Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1988, 410 pages, \$17.95

*Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell, Drawn from Things Heard & Seen*, Emanuel Swedenborg, Swedenborg Foundation, West Chester, PA, 2000, 536 pages, hc \$ 49, pb \$15.

"Psyche in Stone: The Influence of Swedenborg on Funerary Art", by H. W. Janson, pp 115-126, *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision*, Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., NY, 1988, \$75.

"When I get to heaven: Picturing paradise", by Carol Zaleski, from *The Christian Century*, Chicago, Ill., April 5, 2003.

"Reclaiming Heaven: What can we say about the afterlife?", by Mark Ralls, from *The Christian Century*, Chicago, Ill., Dec. 14, 2004.

"Intimations of Mortality: Three Case Studies", The Ingersoll Lectures for 2001-02, by Huston Smith, *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Cambridge, MA, Winter 2001-02

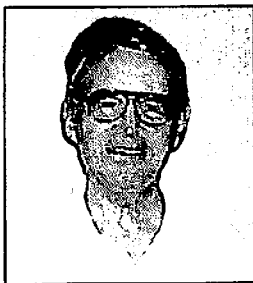
"Ghosts in the Machine" by James Poniewozik, *Time Magazine*, August 28, 2000.

"Does Heaven Exist?" by David Van Biema, *Time Magazine*, March 24, 1997.

*The Arrivals*: by Naomi Gladish Smith, A Chrysalis Book, The Swedenborg Foundation, West Chester, PA, 2004, 352 pp. \$15.95

*The Gates Ajar* by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1964 (first published in 1868).

*The Rev. Ernest O. Martin is a retired Swedenborgian minister, founder of Temenos, a Swedenborgian Conference and Retreat Center in Pennsylvania, and a former president of the denomination. He lives in Duwall, Washington, assisting his son Paul and their family in running Mosswood Hollow, a conference and retreat.*



## CHURCH OF THE NEW PARADIGM

### Resources for Healthy Congregations

Wilma Wake

*This is the sixth and final article in the "Key to the Church" series on applying systems theory to achieve greater congregational health. In this article an array of resources is suggested; many of them were cited in the series. A proposal is made here for a regular column in The Messenger devoted to the sharing of ideas and resources on congregational health.*

Hey there, Church of the New Jerusalem! If Swedenborg were writing today, might he call us the *Church of the New Paradigm*? He wrote about letting go of the *old church* and embracing the *New Church*. Perhaps we say the same thing when we talk about letting go of the *old paradigm* about church and embracing a *new paradigm* about what church could be.

Throughout our history we have attempted to embody a new concept of church. We were alone on many parts of that journey, but now the time has come for us to share resources with other churches and religions journeying on a similar path. We have received a dynamic theology from Swedenborg. Science and culture are just now catching up with some of what he wrote 300 years ago. This theology is so comprehensive and complex, that we have barely scratched the surface of how to apply it in our lives and in our congregations.

Certain areas of study have embraced some of the concepts we call "Swedenborgian" and have developed them in significant ways that could benefit us now. As science moved into the twentieth century, innovative researchers discovered quantum physics, showing the wholeness and interactive nature of our world. These concepts had already been understood by Swedenborg and other great mystics. "Wholeness" was already a part of some faith traditions, such as some Native American and Eastern belief systems. Being embraced by science allowed the "wholeness" perspective to elucidate our understanding of groups, and systems analysis was born. It revitalized family therapy and now is a dynamic tool in congregational studies.

This new world of systems theory in the congregation can help us to find practical tools for moving towards new paradigm churches in a way that is consistent with our theology.

This article contains a small kernel of some of the resources available to us.

#### A Practical Proposal:

Perhaps *The Messenger* would provide space for a column on the sharing of resources for a new church paradigm. We can share ideas about what is working well in our settings, and what resources we have available to loan to others. If we share our resources, then our various budgets can add to the materials already available in the denomination, rather than duplicate them. This series has focused on the importance of using systems theory to revitalize our parish relationships in a model of "wholeness." There are many other aspects of a new paradigm church, and I look forward to helping to share the stories on this journey from around our Swedenborgian world.

Please contact me with resources and ideas [wilwake@adelphia.net], and I'll put them into a column for *The Messenger*.

To begin: here is a list of a few of the many resources available to us. Those with a star are available for loan from the Portland Church.

#### A Website

An extremely valuable website is the "Congregational Resource Guide: Resources for Congregations." This project is a joint effort of the highly-respected Alban Institute and the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. It is funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Please take some time to browse here. Topic areas covered include building issues, congregational vitality, leadership, spirituality, and worship. They offer "hundreds of annotated resource recommendations free and at your fingertips: articles, websites, news sources, organizations, books, periodicals, special reports, online topical explorations, learning pathways, and more. Chosen by resource experts with the specific needs of congregations and their leaders in mind, the site contains

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### Resources for Healthy Congregations

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more than 800 annotated resources organized into 10 major categories."

<http://www.congregationalresources.org>

If you press the topic "specialized ministries," you will then have these sub-topics to choose from:

- Adult Education
- Adult Ministry
- Children's Ministries
- Disabilities
- Faith and Money
- Family Ministry
- Health Ministry
- Marriage
- Media Ministry
- Religious Education
- Small Groups
- Youth Ministry

[http://www.congregationalresources.org/ShowCat.asp?CN=35](http://www.congregationalresources.org>ShowCat.asp?CN=35)

Try the category "congregational vitality." You will then find this sub-menu:

- Change
- Conflict
- Congregational History
- Congregational Renewal
- Congregational Redevelopment
- Congregational Spirituality
- Declining Congregations
- Diversity
- Evaluation
- Generation Theory
- Growth
- Inclusion and Welcoming
- Marketing for Congregations
- New Congregation Development
- Outreach
- Rural Congregations
- Size Transitions
- Small Membership Congregations
- Systems Theory
- Urban Congregations

[http://www.congregationalresources.org/ShowCat.asp?CN=84&SCN=86](http://www.congregationalresources.org>ShowCat.asp?CN=84&SCN=86)

Of particular interest is a series of study units that are well adapted to workshops and small groups in the church.

Here are some of them:

Vision and the Church

<http://www.congregationalresources.org/LearningPathway/VnCWelcome.asp>

Adult faith formation:

<http://www.congregationalresources.org/adultfaith/p1.asp>

Peacemaking without Division:

<http://www.congregationalresources.org/PWD/p1.asp>

Spiritual Strategic Journey:

<http://www.congregationalresources.org/Bullard.asp>

There is a focus topic, currently "lay leadership," which provides a lively discussion of this vital field.

<http://www.congregationalresources.org/LayMin/home.asp>

### Workbooks

Workbooks are a great way to engage a group or the entire congregation in a pre-prepared study program. A number of excellent ones are readily available. All of these can be ordered from The Alban Institute, and a link is provided to the site for ordering each item. The starred items can be borrowed from the Portland Church.

### Discover Your Conflict Management Style

Speed B. Leas, Author. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1997.

"Author Speed Leas, an Alban Institute senior consultant and well known expert on congregational conflict, developed the 45-question self-administered 'conflict inventory' included in this book to help people learn about their styles of managing conflict."

This material is made available in the form of booklets so that each person can have her/his own. We did a fascinating Saturday workshop with this material at the Portland Church, making a grid of the range of our preferred conflict modes. It led to a fascinating discussion and was the start of finding creative ways to express disagreement.

ISBN 1-56699-184-6; paper; 44 pp.  
(1997) \$6.95 (\$5.21 for members)

<http://www.alban.org/BookDetails.asp?ID=989>

**Congregational Systems Inventory (CSI) (package of 10) No. AL147a**  
by George D. Parsons and Speed B. Leas

"The CSI is designed to sample the perspectives of church staff, governing board, and key lay leaders. It enables you to assess where your congregation falls in a continuum between two behavioral extremes for each of the key areas. Sold in packages of 10, each CSI covers all seven areas in 36 pages and takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Note: This instrument works best in stable situations and is not recommended for use in conflicted congregations. Be sure to order *Understanding Your Congregation as a System: The Manual* along with the CSI."

ISBN 1-56699-118-8a; 29 pp. (1993)  
\$29.95 (\$22.46 for members)  
<http://www.alban.org/BookDetails.asp?ID=952>

**Understanding Your Congregation as a System: The Manual No. AL147**  
by George D. Parsons and Speed B. Leas

"Parsons and Leas have created an important tool for congregational leaders in this application of systems theory to evaluating a congregation's life and readiness for change. Church leaders can explore the forces at work and examine the systemic implications in seven key areas: strategy, process, pastoral and lay leadership, authority, relatedness, and learning. The Manual provides an overview of systems theory, complete instructions for administering and scoring the Congregational Systems Inventory (CSI), and guidance for interpreting and explaining the inventory results using sample scores. Be sure to order some packs of the CSI along with this valuable resource."

ISBN 1-56699-118-8; paper; 142 pp.  
(1993) \$20.00 (\$15.00 for members)  
<http://www.alban.org/BookDetails.asp?ID=951>

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### Resources for Healthy Congregations

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#### **Making Your Church More Inviting: A Step-by-Step Guide for In-Church Training No. AL134**

by Roy M. Oswald

"If you've read the book or viewed the course, now lead your church in study with this workbook approach to Alban's Inviting Church materials. Its fifteen sessions are designed to help clergy or lay leaders guide committees or study groups through a dynamic exploration of their congregation's IQ (invitation quotient). Discover how well you invite, welcome, and incorporate new members. As participants uncover the inviting elements of your church, they develop a personal witness style that emerges comfortably from their individual gifts."

We have this book in Portland, but can't loan it out anytime soon, as we are currently using it. We're excited about the clear format of 15 sessions; each of them targeted to issues we want to know more about.

ISBN 1-56699-055-6; paper; 119 pp. (1992) \$16.00 (\$12.00 for members)  
<http://www.alban.org/BookDetails.asp?ID=969>

#### **Books**

Most of these books can be ordered from the Alban Institute, and the web link is included. A few of the items are not available from Alban, and a link is provided to Amazon.com. These are the materials that were relied upon extensively for the previous five articles in this series on the application of systems theory to parishes.

#### ***Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue***

Edwin H. Friedman, Author. New York, NY: Guilford Publications, 1985.

For twenty-five years, Rabbi Friedman served a temple congregation, as well as being a family therapist and consultant on systems theory. This book is a classic for taking concepts from family systems therapy [esp. Murray Bowen] and apply-

ing it to congregations. Much of the work of Steinke is based on these theories. Available from Amazon.com:

[http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0898620597/qid=1109397306/sr=2-1/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_b\\_2\\_1/102-6838950-3220903](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0898620597/qid=1109397306/sr=2-1/ref=pd_bbs_b_2_1/102-6838950-3220903)

#### ***How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* No. AL142** by Peter L. Steinke

This book is now a classic on the application of Friedman's systems approach to congregations. Steinke provides a wealth of experience and suggestions that can be applied right away.

ISBN 1-56699-110-2; paper; 128 pp. (1993) \$16.00 (\$12.00 for members)  
<http://www.alban.org/BookDetails.asp?ID=955>

#### ***Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* No. AL175** by Peter L. Steinke

This is the sequel to the previous books. He provides ten principles of congregational health, and compares systemic dysfunction to a virus. It is an excellent follow-up to his previous book.

ISBN 1-56699-173-0; paper; 118 pp. (1996) \$16.00 (\$12.00 for members)  
<http://www.alban.org/BookDetails.asp?ID=922>

#### ***The Fifth Discipline*** by Peter M. Senge

Peter Senge founded the Center for Organizational Learning at MIT's Sloan School of Management. Through personal spiritual experience, he came to understand the concept of a "learning organization" that used "systems thinking", integrated with spirituality, to transform organizations of all kinds. We have used it extensively in Portland, even in the development of our consensus model for church council decisions. It is available from Amazon.com. Price: \$12.89  
[http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0385260954/qid=1109399300/sr=2-2/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_b\\_2\\_2/102-6838950-3220903](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0385260954/qid=1109399300/sr=2-2/ref=pd_bbs_b_2_2/102-6838950-3220903)

#### ***The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook***

Peter M. Senge, Art Kleiner, Charlotte Roberts, Rick Ross, Bryan Smith

This book is filled with practical ideas and exercises to bring alive the "learning organization" in your parish. Available from Amazon.com. Price: \$23.10; 159 used & new from \$9.64

[http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0385472560/ref=pd\\_bxgy\\_text\\_1/102-6838950-3220903?v=glance&s=books&st=\\*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0385472560/ref=pd_bxgy_text_1/102-6838950-3220903?v=glance&s=books&st=*)

#### ***The Systems Thinking Playbook: Exercises to Stretch and Build Learning and Systems Thinking Capabilities***

Linda Booth Sweeney, Author. Durham, NH: The Institute for Policy and Social Science Research, 1995.

"The Systems Thinking Playbook contains over 30 various group and individual exercises to illustrate the five disciplines outlined by Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline*: Mental Models, Team Learning, Systems Thinking, Shared Vision, and Personal Mastery. The activities illustrate one or more of the five disciplines by translating otherwise complex theories into understandable, applicable learning modules."

We have this on-order in Portland, since we have made extensive use of Senge's books. Maybe we'll consider loaning it out after we've played with it for awhile.

Price: \$59.50  
[http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0966612779/qid=1109397482/sr=2-1/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_b\\_2\\_1/102-6838950-3220903](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0966612779/qid=1109397482/sr=2-1/ref=pd_bbs_b_2_1/102-6838950-3220903)

#### **Organizations**

**The Congregational Resource Guide** has already been cited. It is sponsored in part by the Alban Institute. <http://www.congregationalresources.org>  
**The Alban Institute: A Resource for Congregations**

The institute is highly respected for its workshops, books, and consultations. There is a wealth of information on their website. From the website: "Good

(Continued on page 46)



**Editor's Note:** *Straight from the Heart* was begun about two years ago when the LaPorte church no longer had a minister to write a message on the front page of their newsletter. Various members of the congregation stepped up to the plate to share their stories.

Barb Halle says, "I believe we've grown closer because of this sharing, of telling stories about our spiritual journeys, both past and future. I am always grateful and mildly surprised when people so willingly agree to be 'front page news.' Thanks to all of you who have written and I encourage everyone to take a turn because, as we know, everyone has a story to tell. And Freeman [Rev. Freeman Schrock] is totally for this since he believes the church is about the people; every month we are blessed with his sentiments of love and wisdom as well, and humble man that he is, he's happy to be tucked somewhere else in the newsletter."

The story below is reprinted with the author's permission, from the February 2005 *LaPorte Report*.

## Straight from the Heart

Barb Halle

As a child, I didn't go to church except on rare occasions with my grandmother who took me to the Methodist church on Michigan Avenue. The only things I recall from those very few visits were that my grandmother was proud to show me off and she was so pleased the one time I must have been listening to the sermon because I laughed out loud when the minister said the word "ass" (I'm sure in reference to those four-legged beasts of burden). Well, that was the extent of my formal religious upbringing. (Just maybe my thought of what was funny made her think twice about inviting me again?) But I found that I had what was important inside of me nonetheless.

I grew up in a woods, in those kinder, safer days when I was able to roam my parents' two hundred acres by myself or with friends all day long. I found the most incredible peace there looking for mushrooms or making tiny fairy villages with tree moss and sticks, listening with my face to the sky as the

wind blew through the tops of the thousands of tall pine trees my father had planted by hand many years before.

But the most peace I found was one that I first came upon while sitting alone with my dog on a log on a myrtle bank overlooking the lake. I was somehow so still (for a ten-year-old) that I became almost out of myself, feeling very close to something else. Everything seemed clearer in my head, my heart was full of love and warmth, and I found myself talking to God for probably the first real time in my

life. That changed me. Later I was able to duplicate those moments in other locations in the woods, often when I was distressed (the teenage angst), and it never failed that I would come away refreshed and content and ready for more of life. Unfortunately it's been harder and harder these later years to find those special quiet moments since there's so much to do and so much busy-ness in my head and fewer places to go safely alone.

But then, there's this wonderful church of ours. I guess I wasn't ready for 'formal' religion until my late thirties. I came here and was immediately grateful that such a place existed. Was it the teachings? Was it the beauty and warmth of the sanctuary? Was it the total acceptance of the people who welcomed me, without any judgment on my un-educated religious past, just as I was? All of these. But also I have been able to find, all alone in the sanctuary, a few rare moments of sitting quietly, communicating in my heart, often through tears, with the God who shared my childhood and finding some of that inner peace I felt in my younger, innocent days.

Now I will zoom forward to today, the early morning of Wednesday, January 26, 2005. My mother-in-law, Daisy Halle, mom to Daisy, Pat, and Dan (and to each of their spouses), is at her home struggling to die, not to live,

but to let go. She is ready to go, having said her sweet goodbyes on Monday morning, three weeks after her heart attack. Daisy is one of those people whom I suspect has, for a very long time, accepted the gift of inner peace from God

that I have just spoken of, and I know that she has kept it alive in her heart and soul. She has been the most selfless and giving person that I have ever known. She's had little in life that amounts to much monetarily but her gifts to others have been huge. Her wisdom and humor continued until her last lucid moments

*I came here and was immediately grateful that such a place existed. Was it the teachings? Was it the beauty and warmth of the sanctuary? Was it the total acceptance of the people who welcomed me, without any judgment on my uneducated religious past, just as I was? All of these...*

yesterday morning, smiling and giggling as her children talked and laughed with her and touched her. It has been my honor and privilege to know her and to be part of her family.

I have been reading a bit of *Awaken from Death* to help me try to understand this dying process. Swedenborg says that angels come to help the dying by sitting by their head, being silent but having their angel thoughts communicate with the person. When the thoughts are accepted, the angels know the person's spirit is in a state to be led out of his body. How comforting to know that Daisy is in such good care.

Daisy, our earth angel, was also surrounded by her other three angels last night, Pat on her left, Daisy on her right, and Dan at her head, holding her hands and stroking her hair so tenderly. So loved and revered.

And I feel so loved and cared for by my church family. When Pat and I have been too choked up to sing lately on Sunday mornings, I just listen to all the rest of you singing to us, comforting us. This is peace.

Thank you all for enriching my life these last 15 years and helping me to find that special peace again.

*Barb Halle is an active member of the Laporte New Church in Laporte, Indiana.*





# The Information Management Support Unit

Lee Woofenden

The Information Management Support Unit (IMSU) of the Swedenborgian Church has the job of gathering, storing, and distributing information relating to our Church. IMSU has always focused on technological means of doing this. In recent years this has meant an increasing focus on the Internet and Convention's presence on the Worldwide Web.

Since the late 1990s, IMSU's primary project has been maintaining and developing the Church's website at [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org). Our website offers, among other things:

- Information about the history and faith of our church
- A directory of our local congregations and retreat centers
- The Online Edition of *Our Daily Bread*, with a growing collection of Swedenborgian sermons (500 and counting!)
- The Online Swedenborgian Library, a searchable index of Swedenborgian books, periodicals, and websites throughout the Worldwide Web (currently over 400 listings!)
- Our goal is to make [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org) a primary hub for information about Swedenborg and the Swedenborgian movement. And with up to 24,000 visitors per month, we are already having a lot of success! This heavy usage is thanks in part to an overhaul of the website last year aimed at increasing its ranking and visibility in the Internet search engines.

This year, IMSU has continued to develop and enhance Convention's website. By the time you read this, we expect to have launched our new Swedenborg Virtual Bookstore, which will enable people to find Swedenborg-related books offered by many different publishers and online booksellers, while financially supporting the Swedenborgian Church through commissions on most online book purchases. To get to the Virtual Bookstore, go to [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org), and click on the "Bookstore" menu item. Your purchases through the bookstore are also a donation to the Church!

We are also beginning a new initiative, taking advantage of recent developments in publishing technology.

This year, with the help of a \$4,500 grant from the Iungerich Fund, IMSU has been steadily adding online editions of out-of-copyright Swedenborgian books to the Online Swedenborgian Library. Yet even though the Internet is becoming a primary resource for research and reading, most people still prefer to read book-length works as printed books rather than online. With this in mind, IMSU is starting a new program of bringing back into print selected Swedenborgian classics via Print On Demand (POD) technology.

Unlike traditional publishing, in which several hundred to hundreds of thousands of copies of a book are printed and warehoused until sold, in POD publishing the book remains in a computer file until someone orders a copy. At that point the file is fed to a machine that prints and binds one copy at a time, which is shipped to the purchaser. This saves a lot of money on books that are not likely to reach best-seller status.

Through a new division of labor between the Communications Support Unit (COMSU) and IMSU, COMSU will continue to produce new books and pamphlets for the Swedenborgian Church, while IMSU will take responsibility for reprints of titles over twenty-five years old, with newer titles occasionally being reprinted by arrangement with COMSU. IMSU initially plans to reprint titles in three general areas:

- Swedenborgian Theology
- Bible Interpretation
- Classic New Church Fiction

For these three categories, our first reprints will be:

- *Outlines of the Religion and Philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg*, by Theophilus Parsons (first published in 1876)
- *The Sower*, by William L. Worcester, 6 Volume set (second edition, published 1940–1951)
- *The Evening and the Morning*, by James Spilling (first published in 1878)

The inaugural title under our "New-Church Classics Library" imprint will be *The Evening and the Morning*, an absorbing nineteenth-century novel about a young man who overcomes his rational skepticism—and the barrier between himself and his beloved fiancé—through his encounter with the teachings of Swedenborg.

We are also bringing out, on behalf of COMSU, a POD reprint edition of *Sorting Things Out*, by George F. Dole, under the J. Appleseed & Co. imprint. This will be the first of several planned reprints of selected J. Appleseed titles that would otherwise go out of print.

As we re-publish these and other titles over the coming years, they will become available for purchase at online booksellers such as Amazon.com, and by special order through bookstores. And the beauty of it is that once we make the titles available, our work is done. All order fulfillment is handled by the POD publisher and various booksellers. Further, we will receive royalties for all copies sold, thus helping to recoup some of our costs.

Though a full-scale advertising and publicity campaign for these titles is beyond our present means, the new Swedenborgian Virtual Bookstore at our website will provide a place to offer all of our published titles to the public without requiring us to hire extra office staff to handle the orders.

IMSU has continued to work hard this year to get big results from a very small budget. We hope that you find Convention's website useful and that you visit it often. If you have ideas for further improving the site, please let us know!

Most of all, we hope [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org) will increasingly be a place where the wider world can find our church, so that people's lives can be transformed by the wonderful insights, teachings, and spiritual community of the Swedenborgian Church.

IMSU members 2004–2005:

Lee Woofenden, Chair

Philip Bae

Robert Hinrichs



## BIRTHS

**Cox**—Victor Shannon Cox was born January 5, 2005, to LaPorte New Church friends George and Alecia Cox.

**Steinhiser**—Wyatt Henry Steinhiser, son of LaPorte New Church members Lori and Alan Steinhiser, was born November 12, 2004. Cody and Scout joyfully welcome little Wyatt as their new baby brother.

## CONFIRMATIONS

**Schrock, Gray**—The Rev. Freeman Schrock and Jodi Gray were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church at Almont New Church Assembly in July, 2004. The Rev. Renee Machiniak, pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of the Holy City in Detroit, officiated. Freeman and Jodi were officially and warmly accepted as

members of the LaPorte New Church at its annual meeting January 13, 2005.


## MARRIAGE

**Halle and Balcerak**—Amy Elizabeth Halle, daughter of Dan and Barbara Halle, and Bradley Balcerak shared their wedding vows on September 25, 2004, at LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana. The Rev. Junchol Lee, pastor of the Swedenborg Chapel in Cleveland and long-time family friend, officiated. Amy is a member of the church, and the newlyweds are now living in Noblesville, Indiana.

## DEATHS

**Menkes**—George Randall Menkes (Randy) entered the spiritual world November 27, 2004, after serious struggles with physical challenges for

many years. Randy was a member of LaPorte New Church and served faithfully on the executive committee. In the mid-1990s his family relocated to St. Mary's, Georgia. He is survived by his wife, Tammy, and son, Matthew.

**Halle**—Daisy Mathilde Halle peacefully entered the spiritual world January 26, 2005, at the age of 84. Daisy was a member of LaPorte New Church since the 1960s and served on its executive committee and Women's Alliance. Daisy was warmly loved and respected by all who knew her and was a faithful servant of the Lord. Her mission was to be lovingly useful and to share generously her delicious baked goodies. She is survived by her three children Daisy Ebert, Patricia Tukos, and Dan Halle, seven grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. 

## CHURCH OF THE NEW PARADIGM

### Resources for Healthy Congregations

(Continued from page 43)

**Advice:** The Alban Institute started as a research and consulting organization, and our consultants are known as the best in the business. If you are a congregational leader facing thorny problems involving conflict, transitions, planning or crisis, we can help. Please call 703-964-2700 and ask for Kathryn Palen, x 227."

[www.alban.org/](http://www.alban.org/)

### Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation

They say on their website:


"The Shalem Institute is an ecumenical organization dedicated to supporting a deeper spiritual life in individuals and communities. Drawing especially from the resources of the Christian contemplative tradition, Shalem has been enriched by the grace present in other faith traditions and welcomes all who seek to learn from the Christian contemplative way. .. Six major extension programs, lasting from 12 to 20 months, are offered for clergy and lay persons. ...Shalem's extensive website features a current directory of programs and

numerous resources for the spiritual journey, including articles, Web links, and ordering information for books and tapes by Shalem authors. Shalem is a valuable resource for persons who seek to enrich their own and others' spiritual lives."

I have taken several of their programs and highly recommend their approach to spirituality, which is extremely compatible with Swedenborgian theology.

Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation  
5430 Grosvenor Lane  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
(301) 897-7334  
Fax: (301) 897-3719  
<http://www.shalem.org/>

**In Conclusion:** I hope that these resources will prove useful to others. I look forward to hearing from you about the resources that you recommend, and will share them in our new *Messenger* column.

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

## 2005 Nominating Committee Report

Vice President: Jim Erickson

Recording Secretary: Susan Wood

Treasurer: Larry Conant

General Council:  
Deane Currie  
Rev. Kathy Speas  
Herb Ziegler

COMSU: Carol Lawson

EDSU: No nominee yet

IMSU: Kevin Baxter

FPRSU: Betsy Lau

MINSU: Rev. John Maine  
1 Lay Person needed

Nominating Committee:  
Chuck Winter  
Patte Levan

CAM: Pat Tukos

SHS Board:  
Rev. Jane Siebert  
John Titus

# CONVENTION REGISTRATION

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

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

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

City and province/state: \_\_\_\_\_ postal code/zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

<b>REGISTRATION:</b>				
Adult registration	\$95.00	x adults _____	=	\$ _____
Teen registration (13-17)	\$85.00	x teens _____	=	\$ _____
Child 5-12 registration	\$75.00	x children _____	=	\$ _____
Registration family maximum	\$275.00		=	\$ _____
Late fee if mailed after June 1	\$75.00		=	\$ _____
<b>PRE-CONVENTION WORKSHOP (see description on page 48)</b>				
Per day	@ \$10.00	x adults _____	=	\$ _____
<b>ROOM AND BOARD: Choose one option</b>				
<b>FOUR DAY OPTION</b>				
Sat. July 9 – Wed., July 13	Double \$220.00	x persons _____		\$ _____
Sat. July 9 – Wed., July 13	Single \$300.00	x persons _____		\$ _____
<b>EIGHT DAY OPTION (Ministers and those attending preconvention workshops)</b>				
Tues. July 5 – Wed. July 13	Double \$440.00	x persons _____		\$ _____
Tues. July 5 – Wed. July 13	Single \$600.00	x persons _____		\$ _____

*All prices are in US currency. If you wish to pay in Canadian currency, please add 20% and a handling charge of \$4.00 for each Canadian check. All bills must be paid in full by June 15. No registration refunds after June 1. Bills may be paid by VISA and MasterCard. Provide number and four-digit expiration date. Call in your payment if you like: 617-969-4240.*

VISA \_\_\_\_\_ Master \_\_\_\_\_ CardNumber \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration \_\_\_\_\_

**Make check payable to The Swedenborgian Church**

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

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

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

## University of California at Berkeley Foothill Campus

**"Spirituality & the Arts:  
Inspiring the Divine Creator Within"**  
**Saturday, July 9 to Wednesday, July 13, 2005**

This year's convention sessions are being hosted by the Swedenborgian House of Studies and the Pacific Coast Association. Convention is a special time for us to come together as a denomination, to take stock of where we have been and where we are going, and to reflect on how our faith tradition can be of use in today's world. We hope you will come and be a part of this conversation.

The convention theme will focus on creativity as an expression of the divine working within and among us. There will be many artistic creations throughout the week and a gala arts festival on Tuesday with live outdoor music, barbeque, art displays, performances and games. This is the convention you must attend!

### Pre-Convention Workshop: Interplay

You are invited to come to convention early to attend a special two-day workshop led by Cynthia Winton-Henry, co-founder of Interplay ([www.interplay.com](http://www.interplay.com)) and the recipient of the 2005 Pacific School of Religion Distinguished Alumni award. InterPlay is easy, fun, and life changing. It is based in a series of incremental "forms" that lead

participants to movement and stories, silence and song, ease and amusement. In the process, we unlock the wisdom of our bodies and the wisdom in our communities. Interplay brings body, mind, heart and spirit together again at last. It is an invitation to see that life can be easier, less stressful, fuller, more satisfying and more fun. InterPlay is devoted to fun. It teaches the language and ethic of play in a deep and powerful way. Come and see how these practices can transform your life and your community!

Our rooms at UC Berkeley are apartment-style in two to eleven-bedroom suites featuring comfortable living rooms, shared bathrooms (two for the larger suites), and partial views. Spacious single or double occupancy bedrooms have large windows overlooking courtyards and patios. No need for air conditioning in this mild climate! The furnishings are solid oak, and each room has wall-to-wall carpeting. There is a telephone in each bedroom. Ethernet connections will be arranged for our group. Laundry rooms and vending machines are available. To see more, go to [www.housing.berkeley.edu/conference/accommodations/foothills](http://www.housing.berkeley.edu/conference/accommodations/foothills).

For those driving to Berkeley, maps will be provided to you once your registration form has been received. Parking at the University is \$7 per day or \$45 per week if purchased in advance. For those of you who choose to fly, we suggest that you arrive at either Oakland or San Francisco. More information about airport transportation will be sent after registration as will information regarding child care and the children and teen programs.

(Continued on page 47)

The Swedenborgian Church  
of North America  
*The Messenger*  
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### CENTRAL OFFICE

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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.