

# THE MESSENGER

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November 2005

## Angels and Uses

Donna Larsen

On Friday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the Temenos Retreat Center and the Swedenborg Foundation hosted *Announcing the Angels*, the premier event of *In Company with Angels*. The room was packed as we unveiled Ephesus, the first of the seven Tiffany stained glass windows. People gasped. The window, framed by a beautiful 10-foot wooden light box, was magnificent. After spending almost forty years communing with old tires and tools in various sheds, garages and basements between Ohio and Southeastern Pennsylvania, one of the angels was once again transferring light. Ephesus has come back to life and is commanding attention.

The lecture was titled *The Spiritual, Historic and Artistic Significance of Louis C. Tiffany's Stained Glass Series Angels Representing Seven Churches*. The speakers were wonderful. Frank Vagnone, executive director of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral, began the event with an overview of the Arts and Crafts movement that inspired the windows. Carol Lawson, a Swedenborgian historian, Foundation Board member and editor of *The Chrysalis Reader*,

shared information about the history of the Cincinnati church where the windows were originally installed. We couldn't take our eyes off the angel as Arthur Femenella, the artist in charge of restoring the windows, closed the lecture, lavishing us with details of the innovative techniques used by Tiffany and indicating where each was used on our window. At one point during the question and answer period an audience member asked if we could lower the lights. We sat silently bathed in the light and beauty of Ephesus.

Everyone worked so hard to make this event a tremendous, collaborative success—the Angel Committee and other members of our Temenos congregation, the Rev. Susannah Currie, and members of the Swedenborg Foundation.

For months we have been working on the publicity, planning and fundraising necessary to begin touring the angel windows. When we developed the mission statement for *In Company with Angels*, we did so with our interfaith ministry in mind: *Our mission is to share these Tiffany angel windows as messengers of peace, healing and connection among all people.* We certainly have many financial and

logistical obstacles to overcome but for me, the real question has been, how do we achieve our mission statement? Our mission is a tall order even for priceless

*In Elser, I had finally found a religious concept that felt relevant and worthwhile, something concrete that I could believe in and practice. These artists were the perfect example of the Swedenborg quote from Divine Love and Wisdom: "Notice affection for us and the immediate reward: they are happier and wiser than others."*

spiritual art. But at our event, in that quiet moment with the lights dimmed, it felt as if Ephesus could blaze a new trail. I felt a sense of peace, a connection with those around me and a renewed hope in this project.

I know the world today needs messengers of hope and now I am beginning to see how these windows might be able to fill that need. As Frank Vagnone spoke about his newly created charity organization, Charity in Action ([charityinaction.org](http://charityinaction.org)), he described a church in Louisiana that had been destroyed by the storm. The first floor was entirely washed away leaving only the beams that supported the tottering steeple. In my imagination I placed our windows amongst the rubble as angels of hope creating a church without walls. In a later conversation with others at the event we excitedly tossed around touring possibilities. Although we have only begun to explore possible ideas and

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(L-R) Arthur Femenella,  
Rev. Susannah Currie,  
Frank Vagnone, Carol Lawson

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# Peace to the Neighbor

Jacaranda Street was part of a tract built on a dry riverbed on the North Hollywood-Burbank border in the forties. There were no sidewalks, so the kids in the neighborhood walked Indian-style along the curb. When both street and curb heated to cooking temperature in summer, we walked on the edge of the neighbors' grass.

Nobody cared about that except Mrs. King. Mrs. King shouted at us from her front window to stay off her grass. Mrs. King and Mrs. Lee, both widowed, were unofficial rivals for neighborhood garden splendor. Mrs. King had shocked the neighbors earlier that summer by shearing off Mrs. Lee's sweetpeas at the top of the fence between their properties just because a few were hanging over on her side. We knew that nobody liked her, so we paid no attention to her threats to call our parents if we didn't walk in the street. We were sure our parents wouldn't want us to blister our bare feet to save Mrs. King's precious grass. My mother said that part of it belonged to the city, where the sidewalks should have been, and it wasn't hers anyway.

Then one evening in late August, we noticed that Mrs. King was digging holes along the edge of her grass, furiously planting little bushes right at the curb, about two feet apart. Once planted, they formed a hedge, so that we could no longer walk on her grass strip.

Some research has been done about the bizarre things people do in August—not unlike full-moon happenings—and I suppose our escapade would fall into that category. I called Ginger and PJ, my two best friends, and we hatched the scheme that, until the plan was actually carried out, was referred to by the code name of Barrier Removal. The preparations would take several days, but the actual deed, obviously, must be done in one night. The holes were dug in the vacant lot at the end of our street. We dug them early in the morning, and of course nobody paid any attention to

holes in a vacant lot.

The three of us did a sleepover at Ginger's house on the designated evening, because her aunt was hard-of-hearing and wouldn't likely detect our midnight exodus. Shovels and boxes and flashlights had been gathered in Ginger's garage as well. Her aunt never took notice of anything in the garage as long as the car was there, and my mother hadn't used a shovel since her double hernia operation.

It was tougher work than we'd anticipated. We had to be deathly quiet, and as each bush was dug up, one of us had to carry it to the end of the street and replant it. By three a.m., there were ten bushes planted neatly among the tall weeds in the vacant lot, and ten gaping holes at the edge of Mrs. King's lawn.

We debated in whispers whether to fill in the holes and in the end decided to make the extra effort, so that it would seem at first sight as if the bushes had simply vanished or had never even been there. We smoothed the dirt over the holes and cleaned ourselves up with Ginger's hose and an old towel on the clothesline and were back in bed by four a.m.

Of course we were caught. Actually, we were bullied into a confession by my mother. "Mrs. King called me and said her bushes were missing and you're the *only* ones who could have done such a thing and she threatened to call the police. If you destroyed her bushes you're going to pay for them out of your allowance!"

"We didn't *destroy* her bushes."

"WHERE ARE HER BUSHES?"

"They're...repositioned. You said that strip wasn't hers anyway. So...aren't the bushes really...*public property*?" It seemed like a brilliant defense, especially since it was made up on the spot.


When my mother talked through her teeth, it was time to listen. "Get her bushes, wherever they are, and replant them. And apologize to Mrs. King."

We began the sweaty, humiliating task

of repatriation. But when we went to replant the bushes in Mrs. King's yard, we were stunned to see that Mrs. King had already dug new holes, and the new holes were set back about two feet from the curb. Mrs. King sat thoughtfully watching our labors from her front porch swing.

"We're sorry," I said when we'd finished. Hearing my own words, I realized I actually felt bad about what we'd done. She nodded and disappeared into her house. She re-emerged carrying a tray with three glasses of lemonade for us, watched silently as we drank it, then collected everything, went back inside and shut the front door.

She never smiled, or greeted us, or offered us lemonade again, but for the remainder of our time in the neighborhood, we walked in peace on the two feet of grass strip she'd tacitly allotted us. We also, out of gratitude, stopped ringing her doorbell at night and running.

—Patte LeVan 

## THE MESSENGER

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# Religion in America and in the Swedenborgian Church

Stephen Koke

Religion in America is changing dramatically. In a survey reported by *Newsweek Magazine* in conjunction with Beliefnet.com (August 29, 2005) by Jerry Adler, many conventional Christian churches and groups are now borrowing styles of worship and practice from religious movements they had traditionally regarded as rivals because too oddly different, foreign, or boorish. At the core of this shift of attitude is a strong interest in meditative, contemplative practices, as found in Buddhism, on the one hand, and ecstatic, shouting, foot-stomping services, familiar from more enthusiastic sects, on the other. Dependence on traditional doctrine and the conventional church service to convey the reality of God is declining while a need to invoke and feel the presence of God in oneself is increasing.

Adler contrasts this with the influence of the *Time Magazine* article of April 8, 1966, which asked, *Is God Dead?* a low point in American faith:

"If he was, the likely culprit was science, whose triumph was deemed so complete that what cannot be known [by scientific methods] seems uninteresting, unreal. . . . What was dying in 1966 was a well-meaning but arid theology born of rationalism: a wavering trumpet call for ethical behavior, a search for meaning in a letter to the editor in favor of civil rights."

But religion recovered, and we now have, Adler says, 24-hour televangelism and "official presidential displays of Christian piety." Of course these represent conventional religion, but typically commercialized, packaged, supported by large corporate investments in the media and even politics. Not quite the real thing.

Adler quotes Tony Campolo, a prominent evangelist who brings up a critical point behind the search for religious experience: "You can know all about God, but the question is, do you

know God? You can have solid theology and be orthodox to the core, but have you experienced God in your own life?"

In the broadest sense, Adler continues, Campolo says that the Christian believer and the New Age acolyte are on the same mission: "We are looking for transcendence in the midst of the mundane."

Is this search for transcendence bringing crowds of people to church services? Oddly, no.

"Whatever is going on here, it's not an explosion of people going to church. The great public manifestations of religiosity in America today, the megachurches seating 8000 worshippers at one service, the emergence

*Dependence on traditional doctrine and the conventional church service to convey the reality of God is declining while a need to invoke and feel the presence of God in oneself is increasing.*

of evangelical preachers as political power brokers, haven't been reflected in increased attendance at services. . . . There has been a particular falloff in attendance by African Americans, for whom the church is no longer the only respectable avenue of social advancement, according to Darren Shirkat, a sociologist at Southern Illinois University. The fastest growing category on surveys that ask people to give their religious affiliation, says Patricia O'Connell Killen of Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Wash., is none. But spirituality, the impulse to seek communion with the Divine, is thriving."

Almost two-thirds of Americans now say they pray every day, and nearly a third meditate.

American faiths have long been characterized by creativity and

individualism; Adler quotes Alan Wolfe, director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College. "That's their secret to success," he says. "Rather than being about a god who commands you, it's about finding a religion that empowers you."

This search for transformative experience, not just creeds or dogma, promises to balance the mind with the heart. Sensation, spontaneity, variety, loosen a church service that would be too drily ritualized, too habitual, without them.

Still, there are two major problems with Religion in America as depicted by the survey.

First, the small role apparently to be played by theological education. Traditional Protestant churches have very small theological systems, and sermons are often repetitive or simply pep talks to arouse more energy and dedication for the coming week. In a way, the small theological system is an advantage, for its doctrines can be taught in the standard service over a few Sundays and educate everyone about the entire system.

Of course the church then ends up saying too little. But Christians doubt that anything more was ever given. I've discovered that anyone who claims to say a great deal more, such as intimate details about life after death and how angels live and think, is likely to be dismissed. Information about the other life is an appealing subject, could satisfy a basic curiosity, but the average Christian doesn't feel that it is a legitimate avenue of exploration. It looks like light entertainment, somewhat speculative like UFO stories, and would have had to be rather incredibly given; God just doesn't indulge people in merely curious topics like that. Christians get trained out of expecting it, for God has apparently been interested only in more immediately serious topics such as salvation, religious belief, the Bible, devotion to the Church, etc. So who is

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# Good Christian / Bad Christian

Jane Siebert

There is a questionnaire circulating around the internet called the "Religiosity Scales Project" out of Boston University. The responders are to select their criteria for a good Christian from 59 multiple choice options like: a good Christian does not question the teachings of his/her church; a good Christian opposes abortion; a good Christian takes care of the environment; a good Christian respects other religions and faith traditions. The choices range on a scale from "not at all important" to "absolutely essential."

Curious about this questionnaire, I called the person listed on the survey, Rev. Dr. Marsha Cutting. She explained there are three types of Christian congregations emerging in our world: Conservative Evangelical, Golden Rule Christians, and the Social Activists. The investigators are attempting to profile what people consider essential to be a Christian and categorize them in these three areas.

I was dismayed.

Why do we need more labels for Christians? There are already too many divisions and conflicting doctrines. Some people won't step foot in a church because Christians can't get along, even though the basis of our theology is based on the loving, accepting teachings of Jesus Christ. How can there be so much conflict in the religion that was founded on love?

Maybe the answer lies in the emergence of these three types of Christians. How could someone not be a "Golden Rule" Christian? Jesus commanded us to follow this Golden Rule: to love one another. If social activism and conservative evangelism are not colored with the Golden Rule, are they "Christian"?

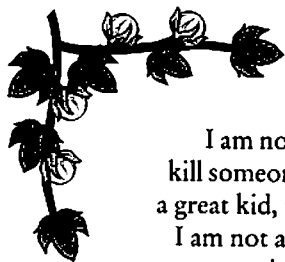
Emanuel Swedenborg wrote: "Disagreement in matters of doctrine does not prevent churches from being united IF (and this is the big IF) there is unanimity (or harmony, agreement) about willing well and doing well to our

fellow man." Paul expresses similar sentiments in his letter to the Romans: "Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another on disputable matters...let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."

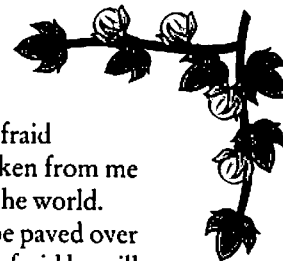
I don't think there are good Christians and bad Christians. Rather, there are Christians who do their best to live as Jesus taught and those who claim the title without living it. Only the individual knows—oh, and of course, God.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Reprinted from *The Plains Banner*, October 2005. The article was taken from the *Ninnescah Valley News*, Sept. 23. The Rev. Jane Siebert, pastor of the Swedenborgian Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas, wrote it for the newspaper and concluded with the following invitation: "Join us to worship at the New Jerusalem Church this Sunday, 11:00 a.m. We make no claims about being perfect, but we are trying to live up to the name, Golden Rule Christians." ☩



## Plea



I am not afraid he will  
kill someone. He is thirteen,  
a great kid, too clever for that.  
I am not afraid I have done  
a poor job showing him  
what I value, not afraid  
that he hasn't developed  
a strong enough conscience  
and values of his own to keep  
the dogs at bay. I am not afraid  
he doesn't know how I feel  
about guns, not a judgment  
or fear of them but a disbelief  
in their necessity. I am not afraid  
his life has bent in my hands,  
his only living parent, not afraid  
I have poorly fathered and  
mothered  
him.

I am not afraid  
his heart will be taken from me  
from us, from the world.  
Not afraid it will be paved over  
or driven out, not afraid he will  
be forced to unlearn love, made  
to follow, coaxed to see  
strength in a desert of madness,  
not afraid he will be seduced  
by the soldier's way, not afraid  
he will learn munitions,  
surgical strikes, collateral damage,  
not afraid the caliber of his spirit  
could ever bring him to kill.  
I am not afraid he will fight, be made  
to fight, choose to fight.  
He is my son. Jesus,  
I am not afraid.

—Tom McEntee

Tom McEntee is a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. "Plea" is reprinted with the author's permission from *Giving Voice, A Collection of Poetry & Prose*, a chapbook published for the 2005 Convention of the Swedenborgian Church, Berkeley, California. ☩

## But Wait, There's More!

Chris Laitner

Midland, Michigan. Balloon Fest. The Cabinet meeting. Hot air.

September 15-17, 2005, saw some remarkable events taking place in my home city of Midland! The annual Balloon Fest drew over sixty beautiful hot air balloons to our fairgrounds. The annual meeting of the Cabinet of the Swedenborgian Church also graced the city. There was plentiful hot air generating some excellent results!

The denomination's Cabinet is comprised of the chairs or their representatives of each of the five Support Units, the chair of the Council of Ministers, and a voting representative of the General Council. The Central Office Manager is an invited guest. The Cabinet gathering represents every ministry, program and project of the denomination, and its purpose is to prioritize the work of the denomination, to be an advisory board to the president, and to establish a preliminary expense budget for the next fiscal year. The budget is passed to the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit for organizing and then is presented to the General Council for final vote. The prioritization

of programs and areas of focus go directly from the Cabinet to the General Council.

In working through a process of prioritization, we identified over fifty programs and ministries that are ongoing in the denomination. Through a variety of activities, we created a list of twelve priorities. The list fell rather naturally into "internal" programs such as the Council of Ministers, the Central Office, and the General Council; and "external" program areas that included our members, all of our

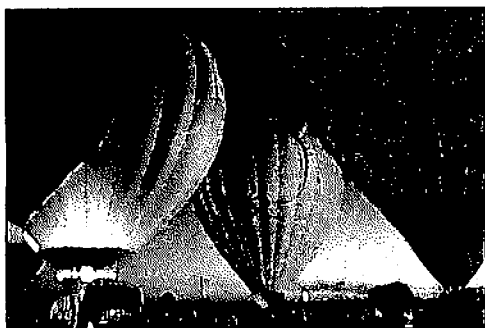
churches, our camps, *The Messenger* and *Our Daily Bread*. The combination of denominational youth director (internal) and the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (external) was the "connecting point" of the list.

Over the next several months, a series of articles will run in *The Messenger* that will highlight these areas of priority through the lens of their Support Unit or Council. While we are fortunate to have some designated funds that cover portions of several of these programs, we continue to be in great need of regular contributions to fill the large gaps that are not covered. As you read these articles,

consider how you can contribute to the ongoing good work of the Church. It's definitely more than "just hot air!" ☒



Cabinet attendees (L-R) Rev. Kevin Baxter, representing IMSU; Central Office Manager Martha Bauer; VP Jim Erickson; Secretary Susan Wood; Mark Allen; Chair of MINSU, Patte LeVan, Messenger Editor representing COMSU; Pres. Chris Laitner; Larry Conant, Treasurer and Chair of FPRSU; Katie Shelley, Chair of EDSU, and Rev. Eric Allison, Chair of the Council of Ministers. (They're doing the clam clap, introduced by Katie Shelley. It's a "you have to have been there" thing).



Balloon Festival (photo by Katie Shelley)

## Become an Official Heretic in Five Weeks

**Heretic:** Someone who holds or adheres to an opinion or belief that contradicts established teaching, especially one that is officially condemned by religious authorities.

Among its other many lively activities, Heaven on Earth (aka, the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound) has been presenting a five-week course covering all the major heretics of Christian history, at the Stonehouse Bookstore in Kirkland, Washington, from October 18 through November 15, Tuesday nights, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Led by the Rev. Eric Allison, participants have been learning the essential heresy of over thirty heretics, and students are invited to create their own heresy.

Among the thirty heretics studied are: St. Joan of Arc, Galileo, Johannes Kepler, Meister Eckhardt, Copernicus, Tertullian, Matthew Fox, Martin Luther, Menno Simons, St. Zephyrinus, Origen, John McNeil, The Beguines, The Franciscans, Hans Kung, Ivone Gebara, Arnold of Brescia, Jesus of Nazareth, Tissa Balassuriya of Sri Lanka, Henry of Lausanne, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Patrick Hamilton, IHM Sisters of Los Angeles, Lukas of Prague, The Vatican 24, Emanuel Swedenborg—of course—and others of whom you may not have been aware before this enlightening course!

At the end of the class, each student receives a World Tour Heretic T-shirt listing all of the heretics, including the names of class participants. The course cost \$65 advance registration, \$20 at the door, but if you receive this *Messenger* before November 8<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>, hurry over to the Stonehouse at 10600 NE 68<sup>th</sup> St., (phone (425) 889-4716) and catch the last classes! This sounds like one worth repeating in the future.

—PWL ☒

# Mosswood Hollow Retreat Center

## Duvall, Washington

Ernest Martin

An article in the September 2005 *Messenger* sketched the history of Swedenborgian ministry in the Northwest as it evolved

over the last fifty years, highlighting the ministry of the Rev. Calvin Turley, the innovative work of Project Link with three resident ministers, the ministry

of the Rev. Paul Martin as founder and director of the Stonehouse Bookstore and Growth Center, and the ministry of the Rev. Eric Allison as pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound.

Swedenborgian ministry in the Northwest currently includes three separate but interrelated organizations: the Stonehouse Bookstore and Growth Center, the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound (now known as "Heaven on Earth: A Spiritual Community"), and the Mosswood Hollow Retreat Center. This three-fold ministry is certainly one of the most significant Swedenborgian ministries in North America. The four ministers living and working in the Seattle area include two former presidents of Convention and two chairs of the Council of Ministers. The Rev. Ernest Martin is serving on the Board of Managers of the Wayfarers Chapel and has been asked to write a 100-page coffee table book on the Chapel, which is underway.

At seminary from 1979 to 1982, Paul Martin was encouraged to think outside the box and to envision new forms of ministry. Upon his ordination in 1982, he was employed by the Board of Missions of Convention to develop a ministry in the Northwest. There was no church building, office, or endowment of any kind. A small group of devoted people

had been meeting for worship in homes one Sunday a month, under the volunteer leadership of the Rev. David Johnson.

The September *Messenger* article described the evolution of Paul's

ministry with special attention to the incorporation of the Swedenborg Spiritual Growth Center and the establishment of the Stonehouse

Bookstore. Paul and his wife Sandra are the founders and directors of the Stonehouse in Kirkland and work full time at no pay. They also work full time as directors of the Mosswood Hollow Retreat Center in Duvall, which is also their family home. Sixteen-hour work days are routine.

Mosswood Hollow is an idyllic spot of forty acres in the foothills of the Cascades, an hour's drive east of Seattle. When Paul and Sandie bought the property in 1983, it included many evergreens, especially towering cedar trees and fir trees, acres of fields and meadows, a beaver pond, streams,

challenge!

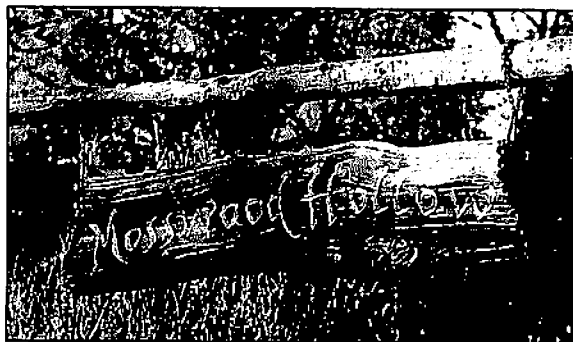
As the accompanying pictures reveal, the property has been creatively transformed over the last twenty-two years. The little cottage has become a beautiful, and cozy, three-story retreat house that will accommodate from fifteen to twenty people overnight along with gourmet meals prepared and served by Sandie and her children, aided by young people who live in yurts on the grounds. Paul handles the registrations and finances, and he and his father are available for spiritual consultation along with other practical matters.

Meeting facilities on the first floor include a spacious livingroom with stone fireplace, a library, a large dining room, and a broad covered deck along two sides of the house. The largest meeting space is a round yurt that is thirty feet in diameter with a large wooden deck. As many as 75 people have met in this yurt, and privacy is assured by adequate separation from the retreat house. A two-bedroom cottage is available when it is not rented by the month, and Ernest Martin's cedar cabin is used by group leaders when he is on vacation or away on trips or the main retreat house is overbooked.

An increasing number of people come to the retreat center each year, ranging from groups of 10 to 150. Some come for a day, most for a weekend, and occasionally there are five-day workshops. The center has been able to accommodate weddings and receptions for more than one hundred people. Young people often ask if they can camp in tents in the fields, or sleep on pads in

the large yurt. Most of the groups are local to the Seattle area, and many of the people commute. The ongoing resident community including the retreat house,

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wooded hillsides, gardens, and beautiful clumps of moss hanging from the trees (a veritable rain forest). There was one little rough cottage on the grounds, but not suitable for habitation. Indeed a

## REVIEW

# Woman of the Land

*Songs by Laurie Turley*

I was delighted to learn at this year's July convention in Berkeley that Laurie Turley had a CD available of her music—her first CD. The Turleys' music has lifted our spirits and made our hearts glad for many years at our annual convention, and Laurie's singing and playing is always especially welcome. I purchased "Woman of the Land" immediately and looked forward to hearing it when I returned from convention. Then I arrived home and got busy and forgot about it, until one day we were going downtown and I pulled the CD off the pile and put it in the car to listen to on the way to Escondido.

The trip was memorable because I was so caught up in the music that I didn't once fume at the drivers ahead who ride their brakes around every curve and can't find the gas pedal. It's great listening, and *terrific* road music. You could be stuck in traffic with this one and not even care. Each song tells a story or paints a vivid scene with lush music, great beat and poetic lyrics, with the BIG plus that the way Laurie sings them, you can understand every word and easily move into the feelings of the time and place and people she's singing about. Some break your heart, some leave you chuckling, you want to dance and sing along, and yeah, I wanna be a gypsy and run with the buffalo too, and I can sit in Mama's Gazebo and smell the coffee. "Gazebo," by the way, is my personal favorite, too, and I think it belongs right up there with the best that ever came out of Nashville. The whole CD deserves to go big time.

If you're looking for a splendid Christmas present for somebody special—or yourself—look no further. (See ordering information at end of Laurie's commentary on "Woman of the Land.")

—Patte LeVan 

# "Woman of the Land" How it Evolved

Some time ago, my daughter Emily came upon a notebook of lyrics I had written, some when she was a small child, some when I was still a young woman. She asked me about them and curiously wanted to know what these songs sounded like. Some of them, I had to think hard to remember...it had been so long since I had sung my own songs. I determined then to put them into listening form, if for no other reason than that my children would know the songs I had written and would have them as my legacy to them.

That was the beginning of the CD "Woman of the Land." Three and a half years later, after countless hours in the studio, with often several weeks or even a few months of inactivity (at least insofar as the CD is concerned!), my first compilation of original songs is complete and ready for sale. I never expected it to be so well received, but I am grateful and humbled by its acceptance. It has been played for several weeks at our local radio station, and I've been able to offer it for sale at several stores in the Conway, New Hampshire area, the closest thing to a metropolis where I reside! Songs that I had not sung in many years are now being offered again at local performance venues, and Ken and I have renewed our journey into the company of "original singer-songwriters" in our area.

Patte LeVan asked me to describe how some of the songs were written. I won't take your time describing every single one...I hope you can find something in them that touches you personally. Each song has its own little story, as none of the songs were written in exactly the same way or with the same inspiration. Some came out of moments of deep reflection; others just came seemingly out of nowhere. All of them have a special significance for me, as I hope they will for you.

"The Starling" is the first song I ever wrote, or at least the first one I thought was worth remembering. It is a true tale from my childhood...the awe I felt when I saw this beautiful bird up close...not



nondescript and worthless, as my elders on the farm would have me believe, but sparkling with radiant iridescent color. I held a dead bird in my hands and marveled at the preciousness of life. Years later, I saw the remains of a bird on a highway, its immense wing standing straight as if in defiance, and the memory came back. I leaned my head against window, and before the trip was done, so was my song.

"Woman of the Land" came to me in a dream...I often dream of music. Usually, in that Neverland between sleeping and waking, I hear a song clearly, but by the time I'm fully awake, I just can't recapture the melody...it's lost to the world of dreams. This one, though, woke me up in the middle of the night. I lay in the dark with my eyes wide open, my husband sleeping beside me and my children asleep down the hall, and I still heard the music as images came to me...seemingly ancient but strangely familiar. The images and the music slowly faded away and I rolled over, thinking, "Well, that was strange..." Too sleepy to rise and write down what I heard, I returned to sleep, convinced that I wouldn't remember a thing. However, in the morning, the music and images were still with me, as they were nearly a week later when I finally decided that this song wanted to be written. Hence, "Woman of the Land" was born. I can't say that I understand all the

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# New York Update

Ron Brugler

Things are in a state of transition here at the New York New Church. This brings with it a lot of excitement and anticipation for our future.

In July we were able to at last hold the official "closing" for the sale of the brownstone the New York church has owned since the 1930s. We had accepted an offer in October, but due to state regulations, several boards and courts had to approve the sale, all of which took some nine months! Our church year ended with a "goodbye" service in the brownstone. Many fond memories were shared (Did you know that a young George Dole first laid eyes on his future bride in our brownstone?).

During the months before the closing, we had to pack, sell, and sort through all of the items in the brownstone, including our library! Many items are now stored—and our fellowship hall and sanctuary are filled to the brim with those items that we have saved for future use. We have also removed the pipe organ from our balcony, and relocated our merged offices into the church.

Larry Bauer (Central Office Manager Martha's Bauer's husband) has met with us twice to offer guidance for developing our renovation plans. Within the next couple of months we will be hiring the final architect and contractors. Hopefully, by next summer, we will have a new library, two offices, book sales area, a meeting/bridal dressing room, handicapped washroom, and a kitchenette. These new facilities will be above and below the balcony, which is at the rear of our sanctuary. We will also be re-landscaping our courtyard area.

All of this is being done so that we can devote our time and efforts into building a revitalized Swedenborgian presence here in NYC. We will be launching our wedding and baptism ministries next summer, offering new outreach groups

and programs, and seeking additional groups to rent our new facilities.

And by the way, since the minister had always lived in the brownstone, I had to find new living quarters. Val and I have purchased a beautiful co-op in Queens. Our new address and other contact information will be in the upcoming *Journal* and can be accessed through Central Office or the New York New Church.



New York New Church

Our new e-mail address is [rbrugler@verizon.net](mailto:rbrugler@verizon.net)

I will try to keep you all informed of the progress we are making here. It is indeed, a time of transition, re-birth and a time of "building, daily building."

*The Rev. Ronald Brugler is immediate past president of the denomination. He was called to ministry at the New York church in late 2004.* ☛

## REVIEW

### "The Thundered Word" by Missing Rachel

I first heard the *Missing Rachel* women's quartet at the women's Gathering Leaves week at Temenos Retreat Center in May of 2003. Their sound was so ethereal and pure I was reminded of a long-ago visit to the York Cathedral in England, when I was privileged to happen onto a youth choir rehearsal and stood transfixed, not wishing to intrude but just to eavesdrop on this heavenly experience.

Missing Rachel's harmonies are exact; all their songs are a capella, and I can only describe the experience of hearing them as transcendent, other-worldly.

Missing Rachel derives its name from the fact that there are two Rebeccas,



(Rebecca Kline and Rebekah Simons) one Sarah (Buteux), and one Leah (Goodwin). Thus *Missing Rachel*. They performed at our July convention in Berkeley, and I was elated to discover that they had a CD for sale, "The Thundered Word", which I bought. If you want to give a gift of inspirational soul-healing music to special friends this Christmas, order this CD. You won't be disappointed.

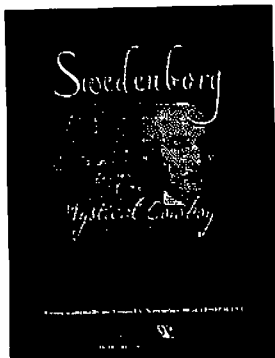
From the liner notes: "The making of this CD has been an intensely beautiful, occasionally stormy, and often hilarious experience. Our profound gratitude goes to Andrew Sciarretta, who not only repeatedly schlepped a carload of recording equipment to the chapel after a full day of work, but also patiently sat through many, many evening hours of rehearsal and fine-tuning. His devotion to the recording and mixing process has made this CD possible.

Many thanks also to Rafi Esterson whose computer savvy rescued some early recorded tracks from the cyber-oblivion of accidental deletion. Thank you also to Andrew Dole for his valuable

(Continued on page 131)



## Swedenborg's Influence in Canada



This new film, *Swedenborg-Mystical Cowboy*, documenting the history of the New Church in Western Canada, will be aired nationally on

Vision TV for the first time November 30<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 p.m. EST. In it the director, Michael Hamm, a New Churchman and professional film producer in Edmonton, presents the story in four parts:

1. Who is Swedenborg?
2. What is the context in Canada (esp. Kitchener/Waterloo, Ontario) for this documentary?
3. How did Swedenborg's influence extend westward in Canada?
4. How did World War I affect the movement, and what has happened to the New Church in Canada since then?

Since the film was paid for in large part by Vision TV, they have the sole rights to show it for the first year, but have said they *will* broadcast it 12 times in the course of the year. After that we are free to distribute copies of it as we wish. Please note that this is NOT about the General Church or the General Convention, but about the whole influence of Swedenborg and the New Church in Canada. Many individuals currently connected with both the GC and Convention are featured in short segments of the film. (Vision TV is a Canadian network).

—Mike Gladish  
The Calgary New Church Project  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada ☒

## Search Announcement for a Position in Swedenborgian Studies at Pacific School of Religion

The Swedenborgian House of Studies announces a search for a Professor of Swedenborgian Studies at Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union for a position to begin Fall 2006. Rank is open. A Ph.D. in a field of theological education is required (e.g., theology, biblical studies, church history, pastoral care, ethics, philosophy, etc.). The successful candidate will teach both in her or his academic discipline and in Swedenborgian Studies. This is a three-year contract position that is renewable. We ask for those in the Swedenborgian Church to share this information with interested parties and prospects.

Please direct all inquiries to:

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Dean, SHS,  
1798 Scenic Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709  
e-mail: [jlawrence@shs.psr.edu](mailto:jlawrence@shs.psr.edu)  
(510) 849-8232

OR to:

Rev. Dr. Mary Donovan Turner,  
Interim Dean  
Pacific School of Religion  
1798 Scenic Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709  
email: [mturmer@psr.edu](mailto:mturmer@psr.edu);  
(510) 849-8225

Full information will be sent upon request., and review of applications will begin November 1st and continue until the position is filled. ☒

## Gathering Leaves 2006 A Retreat for Women of all Branches of Swedenborgian Organizations

**The View from the Canopy**  
Historical and Personal Perspectives on  
Swedenborgian Faith from the Branches

May 19-21, 2006

Temenos Conference and Retreat Center  
1564 Telegraph Road, West Chester, PA 19382 USA  
610-696-8145; [www.temenosretreat.org](http://www.temenosretreat.org)

The Program Committee will be accepting workshop proposals through September 30th. We are looking for workshops that explore the history of theology, liturgy and community, and that share personal experiences of spirituality, worship & relationships.

To submit proposals, share ideas or receive registration materials, go to the Temenos website at [www.temenosretreat.org](http://www.temenosretreat.org). (Registration is limited)

"The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." Rev. 22:2

## Angels and Uses

(Continued from page 117)

nothing is decided, still I am comforted by the thought that perhaps a year from now these angels might be down south or at some other location truly offering people peace, healing, and connection. Spiritually, for those of faith or by pure artistic wonder, these angels might change lives. They certainly seem to have changed mine.

My relationship with the angels began in late fall of 2004 when I joined our pastor, Rev. Susannah Currie and other church members on a tour of The Art of Glass, the stained glass studio hired to restore our windows. I knew Temenos owned seven Tiffany angel windows, but I had never seen them. As we toured the studio, I was impressed by the dedication of the artists working on the stained glass pieces. They seemed so happy and talked with genuine love and interest as they explained what goes into restoring stained glass. Through their excitement I looked at stained glass in a new light. I thought of the late Wilson Van Dusen's gem of a book *Usefulness, a Way of Personal and Spiritual Growth*, the first Swedenborgian book I ever read. I underlined more than half of it and carried it with me for months. In *Uses*, I had finally found a religious concept that felt relevant and worthwhile, something concrete that I could believe in and practice. These artists were the perfect example of the Swedenborg quote from *Divine Love and Wisdom*: "Notice affection for use and the immediate reward: they are happier and wiser than others." I walked around the studio watching talented people working on all types of stained glass. Their dedication to detail was amazing. Long worktables lined the large studio, each one holding stained glass in various stages of repair. Some projects were totally dismantled with hundreds of small pieces of colored glass waiting to be leaded and assembled like a jigsaw puzzle.

Layering various sheets of opalescent colored glass created the intricate nuances of color and depth found in Tiffany glass. The beauty of our angel windows has been diffused by years of age and exposure to the elements. Arthur Femenella explained that the color would be more than twice as

intense when our windows are cleaned and restored. I see their current murky condition as a metaphor for my foggy life concepts and the hope that someday a clear purpose might be illuminated for my life. I felt the urge to stay in the studio and learn the art of stained glass but I recognized that what I really wanted was to feel a similar happiness and be of use. I was reminded of another Swedenborg quote, again from Van Dusen's book: "...the use of one person is in no case exactly like the use of another; so the pleasure of one is in no case exactly like the pleasure of an-



other..."

We recognized that these angels were treasures, but treasures can be tricky things. What do you do with something of great value that you have no apparent use for? The little Farm House at Temenos that serves as our chapel has a ceiling that isn't tall enough to house the angel windows and the planned chapel to house them remains a distant dream. Beautiful angel cards were printed up and an angel fund was started hoping that someday we might have a church for those windows. We were trying to create a use for our treasure;

we didn't yet see that our treasure was about to fulfill our needs.

When the idea was germinated to tour the windows, I felt what Emily Dickenson felt about a good poem: 'It blew the top of my head off.' Angels traveling around as our interfaith messengers...a church without walls... A church is not a physical structure but a congregation, their beliefs, values and uses. What happens when you set captive angels free?

I was so excited. I ran home, dug out a Bible and read the book of Revelation. A half an hour later I wanted to give the angel windows back. Yikes. They had always skipped Revelation in my catechism classes in Catholic school. I was at a loss to find interfaith acceptance anywhere. But something about the angels was still calling to me.

Over the next few months angels monopolized my life and nearly every conversation. One of my best friends from New York became so smitten from my conversations about the angels she felt called to film a documentary about the windows and the next thing I knew I had a film crew at my house for the weekend.

So here I am, the die-hard fiction and poetry lover engrossed in reading Swedenborg's interpretations of Revelation, the Bible and *Hidden Millennium* by Stephen Koke.

*Hidden Millennium* helped me immensely: "the reality of the Christian millennium, according to Swedenborg, is actually spiritual, in accordance with its own nature, and it is better regarded as an 'inner' event, an experience in the realm of mind." Chaos in the mind I am very familiar with. This and Rev. Susannah's ability to turn the negative images in the biblical letters to the angels into positive messages of change allow me to begin to experience Revelation in a new way.

Every day I am immersed in angels and God. Sometimes I am underlining every other paragraph in a book and dog-eared the pages and sometimes I am writing question marks and angry comments in the margins. It is hard for me to say just where all this is going. Angel images have crept into my dreams and sometimes I joke it is only a matter

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## Angels and Uses

(Continued from page 126)

of time before their images manifest in my grilled cheese. Having religious subject matter occupy so much of my day is quite a shock to me. I have not been particularly religious in many years.

**M**y husband and I were both raised in very religious families but for numerous reasons we drifted away from our faith. When we decided to get married two years ago, we searched for a church more for our parents than for our religious beliefs. Unlike other churches we had approached, the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos didn't ask us to become members first, or take classes or make promises other than to love each other. I expected Rev. Susannah to balk when I told her we had written a Buddhist wedding ceremony but instead she said, "How exciting, I can't wait to read it." My husband and I were accepted before we belonged. So after our wedding we started coming to

church and attending the interfaith worship services. We both loved becoming a part of the community. My husband experienced a personal spiritual revelation during one of the church's discussion groups and, as a result, the atheist that I married is now vice president of the church. I wish I could say I experienced my own spiritual blossoming but I haven't yet. I just long for it to happen.

I have a strong connection to the angel windows and to our interfaith outreach *In Company with Angels*. I feel so lucky to have the chance to research the history of the windows and talk to so many members of Convention. As head of the Angel committee, I feel useful. Through the angels, I have begun to feel a sense of community and as Van Dusen states "those who look outward in uses begin to experience the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things."

**I** think about my husband's newfound spirituality and my deep desire to

believe in the presence of God. I once again find comfort in Van Dusen: "I believe so much in the wisdom within the process that I suspect those who really look into uses will discover God or their equivalent of him in spite of nonbelief... If you consistently try to be useful and look closely at what occurs in the process, you will discover heaven and the One." Today I am feeling a great kinship with Smyrna, the angel messenger Rev. Susannah connects with perseverance. Maybe these angels will help illuminate what has been holding me back from my own spiritual freedom and awakening. I may not have begun with a belief in God, but perhaps I will end there. *Messengers of peace, healing and connection among all people...* that is a mission I can put my heart into.

For more information about *In Company with Angels*, please go to our evolving website [www.InCompanyWithAngels.org](http://www.InCompanyWithAngels.org) or contact the Temenos Retreat Center at 610-696-8145. ☪

## Religion in America and in the Swedenborgian Church

(Continued from page 119)

Swedenborg to tempt us with anything more? It turns out that *Heaven and Hell*, the most popular of Swedenborg's books, puts quite a burden on the reader and is not a sure sell outside of our own community.

**W**e Swedenborgians have the opposite problem: Instead of too little to say, our churches have a very large theological system that seems to stretch from horizon to horizon, answers more questions than we have dared to ask, and yet we feel we must communicate all this mainly in the standard twenty-minute sermon that traditional churches had invented for *their* small systems, plus *maybe* an hour study group sometime during the church week. Literature may take up some of the slack, but getting people to read theology or a book is a problem. We then have to find ways to avoid the supposedly ponderous tome. The result, of course, amounts to problems in our churches with a default lack of theological

education due to the sheer size of what we have to teach our people but cannot because of our still traditional mode of operation. We have crammed ourselves into an old closet: the conventional church week and Sunday service which was designed for Protestantism's small theologies, as if this is the only way to go, this is what churches *do*. It looks as if we didn't sit down, after Robert Hindmarsh launched the Swedenborgian movement, to contemplate any special needs we may have, including basic changes in how we should operate compared to other churches. In fact, some of our churches don't even provide the weekly study group.

*Second*, there is another serious problem for traditional churches as depicted in the survey, and therefore probably embedded in the new trends: The survey doesn't include any report of people consciously changing their lives, looking at failures to love, to be of service, and adopting new values. *Regeneration* is Swedenborg's word for it, and it is the real secret of a healthy spirituality. At least we appear to have that idea in mind.

**I**f one is to *feel* God's presence as so many Christians hope, it has to happen in an actively loving heart. Otherwise, religion in America may end up as the newest drug in a culture that is in many ways hungry for sensation—the loud, the colorful and dramatic—with God still hard to find.

Stephen Koke is the author of *Hidden Millennium, the Doomsday Fallacy*, published by the Swedenborg Foundation in 1998. He also works as an editor with the Communications Support Unit. ☪

### IMPORTANT CHURCH DATES

November 3-6, 2005  
General Council @ Newtonville, MA

November 11-12, 2005  
RETCO @ Newtonville, MA

June 28- July 2, 2006  
Convention @ Urbana, OH

## Mosswood Hollow Retreat Center

(Continued from page 122)

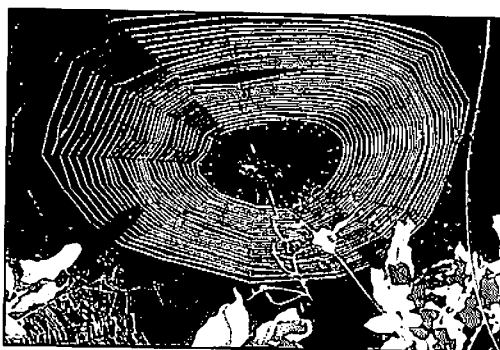
two cottages, house trailer, and nine yurts consists of twenty-one people, two dogs, chickens, deer, owls, and an occasional cougar.

Twenty-five workshops, each between one and five days long, have met at Mosswood Hollow in 2005, including: Pacific Integral Strategies (spiritual business leadership); Celtic Magical Traditions with R J Stewart; several Dream workshops with Robert Moss; several spiritual workshops with David Spangler; the Music for Healing and Transitions Program; Kabbalah; a University of Washington mind/body medicine faculty retreat; and an Antioch University Death and Dying class. Almost 500 people have attended workshops in 2005, and two weddings have been held with nearly 300 people attending.

Mosswood Hollow is owned by Paul and Sandra and is thus independent of the Stonehouse Bookstore and the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound. Yet all three organizations are integral parts of Swedenborgian ministry in the Northwest. Oftentimes a group that

Mosswood Hollow, gathered there for dinner, and on one occasion held their business meeting in the large yurt.

The Swedenborgian witness is strong, and Paul and his father are often invited to join the retreat groups at their meals. They have learned to define Swedenborgianism in thirty words or



*Spiderweb outside the dining room window.*

less, or up to an hour or more. A good supply of books is always available for serious inquirers.

Contrary to ugly rumors, it does not rain every day in the Seattle area. Retreat attendants welcome breaks in their programs so they can hike around the beaver pond (a one-mile trip), take paths through the woods, exercise on the trampoline, or split firewood. The less athletically inclined can enjoy a cup of exotic tea by the fireside, browse in the intriguing books, join in lively dialogue, or take a nap.

For more information on the fabulous Mosswood Hollow Retreat Center, consult our website at [www.mosswoodhollow.org](http://www.mosswoodhollow.org)  
Email: [mosswood@mosswoodhollow.org](mailto:mosswood@mosswoodhollow.org)  
Telephone: 425/844-9050  
Mailing Address:  
Mosswood Hollow Retreat Center  
20215 320<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE  
Duvall, WA 98019

Or better yet, on your next trip to the great Northwest, stop at Mosswood Hollow for a scrumptious meal, a tour of the grounds, scintillating conversation, and a good night's sleep. Tell them that Swedenborg sent you. ☪

## "Woman of the Land" How it Evolved

(Continued from page 123)

symbolism in it, but years later, when I sang it to my "adopted" Lakota daughter, Shirley Thunder Horse, she cried and asked me how I knew her story so well, so I trust that the images have meaning. That song, while I wrote it down, I can never fully claim as my own.

Not all of the songs are as inspirational. "Admonitions" is a kickin' blues tune, with a bit of an edge. It's got a message in it as well, of those things that we say to ourselves when we need reminders of how to live. (You'd better watch where you're stepping...you might get something on your shoes... You'd better watch what you're saying...you know it all comes back to you....!) This one was simple...I was driving to work, and had gotten to my destination and couldn't remember a thing about the trip, so absorbed had I been in my thoughts. I wondered how we can go through our lives so unaware of our surroundings and so...out came that song.

"Runnin' With the Buffalo" is just pure fun. When I first met Ken, my "rough-cut" man, he told me that his favorite animal is the buffalo. Every time we went past a buffalo farm, on our cross-country trip out West, we had to take a side trip to see the buffalo. It was an easy song to write... "he'd rather be runnin' with the buffalo" for sure...

"Coming Home to You" is my attempt at a jazz standard. I like to think that this is the song Fats Waller wished he could have written when he wrote, "You're Mean to Me." It has a similar chord progression, as do many jazz tunes, but with my own little, happier twist.

While I wrote the words and music for most of the songs, I did have some help with a couple of them. Emily was making a video about teenage suicide and asked if I would play some incidental background piano music for it. Ken came up with the words for "The Edge" and I set them to music...and Em put it in her video. We liked the song well enough to use it again. It has a hopeful

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*View from dining room porch*

gathers at the Stonehouse on Friday evening for a public meeting will want to meet at Mosswood Hollow on Saturday and Sunday, for more intensive work. At its last two annual meetings in the Seattle area, members of the Pacific Coast Association have stayed overnight at

## "Woman of the Land" How it Evolved

(Continued from page 128)

message to see us through the dark times.

"Gypsy"...well, who knows where that one came from. Ken and I were sitting around, just "jamming." I played a little chord progression, he added a riff, and out of the blue, I started singing, "I want to be a Gypsy," because the music sound a little Djano Reinhardt-ish. Ken tossed in a few lines, and I added a few more, and there it was...just for fun.

My own personal favorite, if I have one, is "Gazebo". It's the first, and possibly only "country" tune I ever wrote and it's all true. I shamelessly used an old traditional folk tune, "Shortnin' Bread", to weave in and around the original lyrics. But...it just had to be there. It fits. (And, my daddy *did* "build my mama a gazebo out in the back yard"...)

These are only a few of the songs on the CD. I'll let you find your own story to build around the rest, and I'd love to hear from you and talk about these or other songs that you hold dear to your heart. There were many people who joined me in the studio, including my own two beautiful children, to help bring this project from an idea to a finished work. People I've known a long time, and people I had only just met added their musical talents to my songs and gave them more life than I could have by just singing and playing solo. I am so very grateful to them for their gifts. I had more fun making this one than I thought I would and I feel very honored whenever anyone tells me that they've enjoyed it. I hope you enjoy it as well.

-Laurie Turley


Laurie's CD, "Woman of the Land" is available for sale.

Send a check for \$15.00  
(this includes shipping)

made out to

Apple Blossom Music, PO Box 454,  
Fryeburg, Maine 04037.

You can also check it out at Laurie and  
Ken's web site:

[www.turleymusic.com](http://www.turleymusic.com) 

## Pacific Coast Association

The Puget Sound Church (aka Heaven on Earth), Mosswood Hollow, and the Stonehouse Bookstore hosted this year's Pacific Coast Association weekend, which took place September 23-25, 2005 in Duvall, Kirkland, and Redmond, Washington. Attendees were housed and fed sumptuously at beautiful Mosswood Hollow in Duvall, the annual meeting was held at the Stonehouse in Kirkland, and Sunday services were conducted at the Danceworks in Redmond, with terrific music supplied by Lisa Allison and her voice students. The Revs. Eric Allison, Carla Friedrich, and Doug Moss shared preaching honors with short presentations, and the congregation participated with various readings.

The PCA gave small grants to the El Cerrito and San Diego churches for outreach projects, and also continued its practice, begun in 2004, of "tithing back" a percentage of their collected donations to the denomination.



Revs. Doug Moss and Carla Friedrich



Rev. Eric Allison



Lisa Allison (left) and Girls' Ensemble



Puget Sound Congregation

# Evolution and Creation

Erik Lange

One of the reasons I have maintained my Swedenborgian roots all my life isn't just because I was born into this church and never experienced anything else. As a Swedenborgian, I appreciate the concept of "freedom of choice" and take pride in our ability to question theology. These are main staying points for me.

I have experienced and appreciate other religions, including non-Christian. Some have wonderful traditions; others are appealing because of their "production-like" worship services.

But I have found in discussion with some "Christian" groups that there is a large following of those who like to be told what to think. This may be an easy way to conceptualize religion, but one doesn't need to "think"—and that, it seems to me, slows down the learning process.

Another thing I have experienced is those folks who read the Bible only in a literal way—their view is that *everything* in the Bible actually happened, and that there can be no secondary meaning for what is written. This is where people start seeing problems between the Bible and science.

As an example, if Genesis I is taken only in its literal sense, problems arise with scientific, geologic and anthropological findings. Some who believe only

in a literal interpretation of the Bible say that the earth is only 6,000 years old and others say that dinosaur bones were put on the earth by the devil to turn us away from God. I even saw a news item on CNN where a man said he could prove that there were dinosaurs on Noah's ark.

For me, questioning theology, feeling a freedom of choice, and understanding inner meanings of the Bible help me put the pieces of our worldly puzzle together.

To further this point, let me continue with evolution/creation. I have always had difficulties with a "literal only" interpretation of the "creation" story in Genesis, and feel that science and religion can both explain how the world began.

Darwin's "Theory of Evolution" was created after Swedenborg's time, so he didn't write anything about it, but he did leave us with many volumes of thought-provoking information.

Some time ago, after searching the internet for information on articles written about Swedenborg and Evolution, I came upon an article written by Lloyd H. Edmiston in 1923 titled "The Creation of Man: A Divinely Ordered Evolutionary Process."\*

Mr. Edmiston's article explains that earth's evolution wasn't just a chance encounter of matter. He states that evolution occurred in a Divine and orderly process allowing God to be present in every living thing.


He gives two reasons why God wouldn't just instantaneously create the world. First is the fact that if there was proof of miraculous creation, one would have no choice but to believe in God. This would remove our freedom of choice. Secondly, this Divine process sets up the law of correspondences where lower or earthly things are created to image spiritual things.

I was elated to find this article which brought science and religion together as I had always imagined. And if I hadn't questioned what I had heard about creation/evolution, I never would have spent time looking for answers and learning.

You may have found, as have I, that freedom and the ability to question allows us to learn throughout our lives. It is when we don't have that freedom, or don't use our abilities, that growth and understanding slows.

*Erik Lange is a member of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church, in St. Paul, Minnesota.*

Reprinted from *Correspondences*, the Virginia Street Church's newsletter.

Editor's Note: "The Creation of Man: A Divinely Ordered Evolutionary Process" can be found in *Studia Swedenborgiana*, vol. 8, #2. *Studia* volumes can be accessed full text online at [www.baysidechurch.org/studia](http://www.baysidechurch.org/studia) 

## NCC Opposes Budget Cuts to Social Programs

Washington, D.C., October 20, 2005 — The National Council of Churches USA, which opposes proposals to cut \$50 billion in social programs from the federal budget, praised Congress Thursday for delaying action on the cuts.

The proposed amendments would reduce childcare benefits, Medicaid, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, student loans and other social programs. The NCC said yesterday in a letter to U.S. senators that the cuts are "inconceivable" at a time when millions of poor people are still dealing with the devastating affects of recent hurricanes.

Congress will take another look at the budget before final action is taken.

Signed by NCC President Bishop Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr. along with other


leaders representing 17 of NCC's member denominations, the letter stated, "This is not the time for the budget reconciliation process to create greater hardships for those who are already experiencing great suffering. To do so is not only unjust; it is a sin."

According to NCC's General Secretary Rev. Dr. Bob Edgar, who also signed the letter, "We are thrilled that Congress is not acting on plans to further cut social programs. These proposed budget cuts were appalling and it seemed as if we were supplementing tax cuts for the wealthy on the backs of the poor," said Edgar.

The National Council of Churches is composed of 35 Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, historic African American and peace communions representing 45

million Christians in 100,000 local congregations in the United States.

The letter also stated that the proposed cuts violated all the fundamental Christian principles of loving thy neighbor, caring for the poor, and showing mercy. "As religious leaders, this violation is unacceptable to us. How is it that we show mercy for oil millionaires and not hurricane survivors? We urge you to change this destructive course of action for the sake of our nation and for generations to come," said the letter.

In addition to sending the letter to the Senate, NCC and several of its member denominations sent out electronic alerts asking people to call their Congressional representatives and urge them not to support the \$50 billion in cuts to programs for those most in need. 

# TO THE EDITOR

Dear Patte and all my Swedenbuddies:

I am writing to tell you that I have decided to end the pursuit of ordination as a minister in the Swedenborgian Church.

I would like to pass along my appreciation of many fine, supportive people whom I have come to think of as friends and companions. It is sad for me to let go of these associations which I had hoped would deepen into ever-richer relationships. When I began this process, I promised to follow God's call, believing it would lead to ministry in this denomination; but my path is taking a turn now.

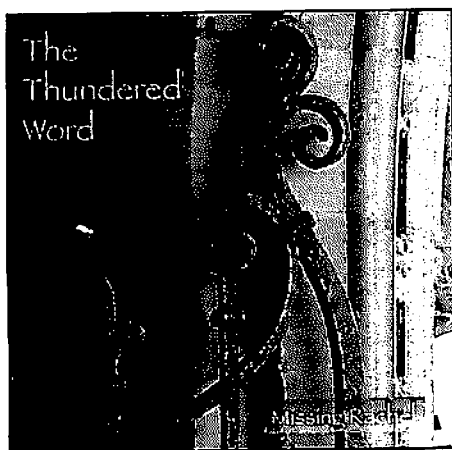
By way of closure, I want to thank the many people who have brightened my journey thus far and wish you all God-speed as we go our separate ways.

May the Lord bless you. Keep a song in your heart.

Eli Dale  
Portland, Maine ☩

## "The Thundered Word" by Missing Rachel

(Continued from page 124)



help with the design of these liner notes and for his early encouragement to us to record our music.

Special thanks are due as well to the congregation of the Swedenborg Chapel; to the women of Gathering Leaves; to the people of the General Church,

## BIRTHS AND BAPTISM

**Cox**—Victor Shannon Cox, 8-month-old son of Alecia and George Cox, was baptized into the Christian faith August 14, 2005, at the LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Freeman Schrock officiating.

**Moore**—Amalia Kathryn Moore. Born May 29th, 2005 in Saginaw, Michigan, Amalia ("Molly") Kathryn (after her Aunt Katie!) Moore, daughter of Becky (Shelley) and Marcus Moore, sister of 2 1/2-year-old Joshua, and granddaughter of Marjie Leas. Amalia was baptized into the Christian faith July 24, 2005, at Almont New Church Assembly, the Rev. Kevin Baxter officiating. Molly's family is active in the Michigan Association and at Almont.

**Steadman**—Georgiana Grace Steadman, daughter of Martha James Steadman and Kenneth Austin Steadman II was born May 15th, 2005, at Maine Medical Center in Portland. She was baptized into the Christian faith September 5th, 2005 in a service performed by the Rev. Ken Turley at the Steadman residence.

General Conference, the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, and the Lord's New Church, to the musicians and poets spanning nine centuries, whose awe at God's beauty led to the writing and composing of these songs.

And thanks be to God, whose providence brought the four of us together at the little gray church called Swedenborg Chapel. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, our Rock and our Redeemer."

Ordering information:  
Missing Rachel  
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All proceeds from the sale of the CD go to the restoration and ministries of Swedenborg Chapel. ☩

## PASSAGES

### CONFIRMATIONS

**Cox, Franz, Johanson**—George Cox, Mary Ann Franz, and Jodell and Gordon Johanson, were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church August 14, 2005, at the LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Freeman Schrock officiating.

### DEATHS

**Antonucci**—Nancy Heath Antonucci entered the spiritual world August 1st, 2005 in Fryeburg Maine. A memorial service was conducted August 21st, 2005, in the gardens of her home for family and friends with the Rev. Ken Turley officiating. Nancy was born in 1940 in West Fryeburg, Maine, and had been an active member of the Fryeburg New Church. She is survived by her husband of 47 years, Ronald, and three sons, Scott, Kevin, and Neal.

**Haley**—Mary Elizabeth Haley entered the spiritual world September 12, 2005, at her home in Fryeburg, Maine. A graveside service was held September 16, 2005, at Pine Grove Cemetery, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating. She was an active member of the Fryeburg New Church for many years. ☩

## Shining Soul: Helen Keller's Spiritual Life and Legacy

(Continued from page 132)

*Splendors of the Spirit* for the Swedenborg Foundation.

The new documentary will be previewed in mid-December. Call the Swedenborg Foundation to play a 2006 showing at your church or for a group to which you belong: 800-355-3222 (extension 10). ☩





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.

## *Shining Soul: Helen Keller's Spiritual Life and Legacy*

A new film, to be released in December 2005, documents Helen Keller's lifelong commitment to Swedenborg's spiritual vision.

To commemorate the 125th anniversary of Helen Keller's birth, the Swedenborg Foundation has commissioned Emmy Award winner Penny Price to produce a film to explore Helen Keller's life, a frontier that has remained surprisingly unknown despite its paramount importance in understanding Keller's phenomenal contributions and achievements. Her spiritual autobiography *My Religion* (republished recently as *Light in My Darkness*), testifies to her deep and abiding gratitude to Emanuel Swedenborg. It



was Swedenborg's vision that deeply inspired and informed Helen Keller's character and life.

*Shining Soul: Helen Keller's Spiritual Life and Legacy*, tells the story of Keller encountering Swedenborg's works, how she reacted to them, what they meant to her, and how they contributed to determination to live a useful life dedicated to improving the lives of other individuals suffering from society's fears and prejudices related to the severely disabled.

The one-hour documentary comprises archival footage and stills, historical re-enactments, and contemporary expert interviews with renowned writer and human empowerment teacher Jean Houston; CEO of the American Foundation for the Blind Carl

Augusto; the first blind man to climb Mt. Everest Eric Weihenmeyer; the first deaf Miss America Heather Whitestone-McCallum; Helen Keller's great grand-niece Keller Johnson-Thompson; scholars Roger Shattuck and Kim Nielsen; and Swedenborgian ministers and scholars Jonathan Rose and Ray Silverman.

By her example, *she demonstrated what was possible*. *Time* magazine named her among the one-hundred most influential people of the twentieth century. Her life proved inspirational to many people she met or to those who learned about Keller—from severely disabled and socially deprived individuals, to luminaries who befriended her, such as Mark Twain, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Martha Graham, as well as American presidents and foreign heads of state.

In the contemporary world, however, the majority who are acquainted with Helen Keller know her only through a superficial introduction in elementary or middle-school or through seeing *The Miracle Worker* at the theater or cinema. Those who have deepened their knowledge of Keller are invariably astonished by her inner radiance, beautiful disposition, emotional depth and staggering intellectual accomplishments, and most of all by the courageous character that allowed her to triumph over the limitations of sight and hearing disabilities. This new documentary explores a major source of that inner strength.

Penny Price's career in television as producer/director/writer spans twenty-five years. She helped launch many national talk and magazine shows, including *Geraldo*, *NBC Magazine*, and *Good Morning America*. Her shows have earned her both Emmy and Maggie Awards. In 2000, she produced and directed the multi-award-winning documentary

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