

# THE MESSENGER

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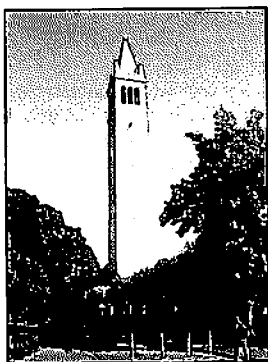
September 2005

181<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church, Berkeley, California:  
Spirituality and the Arts, Inspiring the Divine Creator Within

## Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

*John Titus*

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1973, my life was profoundly transformed; my capacity for love had been vastly expanded, my yearning for understanding became more impassioned and pure joy filled my heart. There are few things in this world that can inspire such change. The magic that inspired me that day came in the form of my beautiful newborn daughter, Alicia. My life would never be the same and my journey through life would take on greater meaning and renewed purpose as a result. The birth of a child can affect your life in so many ways, but the birth of a child whose love and wisdom were so pronounced from the beginning can be transforming and regenerating. Alicia had that affect on me and everyone she met.



*UC Berkeley's famous Campanile*

Alicia's life was over and my life had been tragically altered. In a speech I presented at Kalamazoo College in Michigan on May 17, 2003 entitled, "Finding Peace in the Midst of Tragedy and Pain," I spoke of my own journey in coming to a sense of peace after my excruciating loss. Finding peace in times of grief is not something I would think humanly

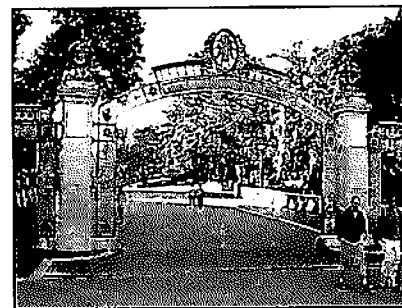


possible; but my prayers from the beginning implored God for just that; and they were answered. The transforming power of God was fully present and the seeds of hope were sown.

Our government leaders chose to react to the vicious attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, strategically termed as the "war on terror," with a vengeance, and the cycle of violence continued. I yearned for justice; not more destruction and not more innocent lives destroyed. Clarity of mind and a deep feeling of interconnectedness ensued. I knew that we had to stop this cycle of violence and I knew I had to be an advocate for change for the sake of my remaining children and grandchildren, for Alicia's sake, for my own peace of mind and for all of humanity.

In my search for peace and justice, I have come to realize that complacency was my worst enemy prior to Alicia's death. I believed in justice and peace, but too often did very little to change it. I watched in horror the genocide in Rwanda in 1994; I read about the AIDS pandemic in Africa or about the 40,000 children worldwide who die each day because of lack of food and medicine. After Alicia's death, God gifted me with greater awareness of the tragic struggle millions of people face every single day. He opened my eyes, filled me with compassion and re-directed my life. As the wrath of our military might was felt by the Afghani people and then the Iraqi people, my heart was made to feel the horror, the pain, the sadness and the loss that the loved ones surely felt as they witnessed death and destruction all around them.

Grief has the power to destroy, but I also believe it has a greater power that can lead to clarity of mind, better understanding and a deeper capacity for love. I understood



*UC Sather Gate, site of Free Speech Movement.*

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**CONVENTION ISSUE:**

Convention Sermon • Hearts of Light • President's Address • Ordination  
Why the Arts? • Swedenborgian Ministry In the Northwest

# The Swedenborgian Church and Bloom's Taxonomy

Chris  
Laitner

This year has been one of many new and primarily positive experiences, both for me and for our Church.



guest minister at several of our other churches, and he is the new director of the Almont Summer School.

Rev. Kathy Speas, working as a Hospice Chaplain, writes that one can't get much more Swedenborgian as a minister than when journeying with people as they move from the world we can see to the world we cannot see. Kathy says that her work is primarily a ministry of loving presence and faith in the God that "loved us into being and calls us home," rather than a forum for discussing theology. Supporting patients and their families during times of transition, providing services, giving support time to staff who lose people they care for, and publishing spiritual

*On days when we question, on days when  
we're weary, we need to remember  
Helen Keller stating, "I am only one;  
but still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
but still I can do something. I will not  
refuse to do the something  
I can do."*

The report that appeared in the June *Messenger* and that is also in the Advance Reports booklet is true. We continue to be a functioning, vital church at work in the world and in individual lives. Our church centers are involved in community projects, outreach activities, and partner programs with other local groups; two of our churches are employing new ministers beginning later this summer; two ministers were installed into church families this past year; and we have a good number of excellent students on the ordination path at our Swedenborgian House of Studies. There is a sense of purpose and progress within the church.

I'd like to add something to the printed report which primarily highlights the work in our various church centers. Like the old commercials advertising special offers of knives, bowls, and other kitchen helps, I need to say, "But wait! There's more!"

Four of our ministers, the Revs. Kevin Baxter, Kathy Speas, Rich Tafel, and Susan Turley provide examples of other types of vital ministries that are worthy of note.

Rev. Kevin Baxter is the first director of the fledgling Center for Applied Ethics at Urbana University. As such, Kevin regularly works with, counsels and assists students, faculty and staff of the university. He also gives presentations in the field of applied ethics and serves as an adjunct faculty member. Kevin preaches at the Urbana church once each month and, as needed, leads study groups there. He has also been a

reflection articles in the *Sonoma Index-Tribune* all constitute a comprehensive ministry. The Swedenborgian tradition supports Kathy immensely as she ministers to spirits of many faiths, spirits of no faith, and spirits of shaken or damaged faith.

Rev. Rich Tafel has committed his ministry to assisting with strategy throughout our denomination. This past year he has worked with churches, an association, and our Ministries Support Unit, facilitating the creation of mission statements, value systems, and goals for each of these groups. Rich is a professional strategist and an excellent facilitator, so his gift of time and talent coupled with his commitment to the ministry has far-reaching, positive, helpful consequences. He also is a frequent preacher for the Church of the Holy City in Washington, DC., where he serves as the church president.

Rev. Susan Turley is an Association for Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor and also a chaplain for the VA hospital system. In her work she supervises and trains seminary students and other religious leaders from all faiths in the art of hospital chaplaincy. She develops curricula, teaches classes, runs interpersonal relationship groups, and provides weekly individual supervision sessions with the students involved in her CPE programs. Sue is also an active chaplain at the VA hospital where she is employed and provides spiritual care to veterans and their families. As an ordained Swedenborgian minister, Sue is exemplifying living the life of charity and implementing the doctrine of use as she serves as counselor, teacher, preacher and minister through the various aspects of her position.

I've recognized these ministers to remind us that our denominational life in the world is so much larger than we sometimes think. We are encouraged to be in and of the world, carrying our beliefs to others through the living

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# Hearts of Light

Marlene Laughlin

What a wonderful joy to be here this morning celebrating creation and worshipping the Creator of all! We will experience together so many methods of creating. Through the act of creating, we communicate, present to the world around us, who we are and how we understand this magnificent universe.

"The light of heaven which appears before the eyes of the angels is a thousand times brighter than the noonday sun of our world. This light has life in it. It illuminates the eyesight of the angels and the sight of their understanding, for it causes the apprehension of truth, according to the quality and the quantity of the good in which they are." (*Arcana Coelestia*, 5400.2)

We are celebrating inspiration, the breath of spirit, the breath of God—inspiring creation as we understand creation anew through God's Divine Spirit and Light. Some of us may say, "I'm not very creative." But we all create all the time!

Some of us create through movement—movement through athletics, running, climbing, games for individuals, tennis or golf—Wimbledon or the PGA Open may not be our goal, or the NBA, or NFL championship may not be our team goal, but nothing is satisfying or complete unless it engages our total being. When our physical, mental and spiritual



energies are brought to bear with clarity something very wonderful begins to happen within us and to those watching the effort when we are focused upon our goal.

No satisfying goal is completed, no creation is accomplished without deep devoted focus using all that we are. It is then we experience the high moments. In these high moments, our hearts become light and even our bodies seem somehow floating, some have even expressed that their spirits

*What if each of us became a heart of light? Together we became a church of light. Will we reach out to others, reorganize for the good of the message and become the radiant hearts of light that will draw others to our light of truth? It won't happen if we sit here and smugly say, "If you are smart enough or spiritual enough you will be drawn to us." It will happen because we are out in the world telling people there is another understanding of God that is filled with love and wisdom, not fear and separation from others.*

seem to leave their body and they feel they are observing themselves engaged in that extraordinary moment of creating. At the moment, you are totally engaged in creating beyond all you or perhaps anyone else had imagined possible.

There is movement in dance that is slow, studied, and rhythmic in its expression. In Tai Chi the same movements are performed over and over and over again, until every part of mind, body and soul are joined as one. In that high moment, the heart is light and the soul is free. The liturgical dance we experienced within this very worship service provided an opportunity for each of us to enter into a point of light from which we may create within ourselves.

It is a beginning, for all of us to

witness, then allow our total being, mind, body, heart and soul, to flow into and through the creative Divine Spirit that is a gift from the Creator. The very Creator God that we come together this morning to worship, to give praise and offer thanksgiving, and to join in receiving during our Holy Communion time together. The very Creator God, who from the beginning of all time, until this moment and forever, seeks to communicate with and through us. It is a story told in the Holy Bible, the hymn

we just sang, and in our theology.

Now, before I close I would like to discuss just a few things about our understanding of this holy story of God in relationship to us: the beginning, the middle, and the end.

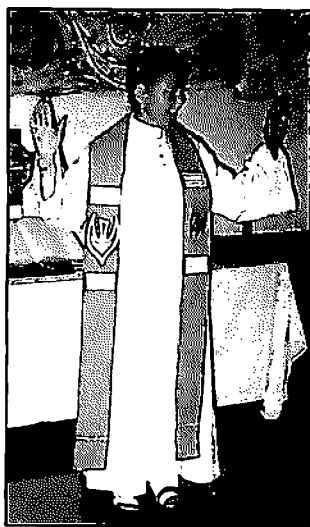
Our understanding of "The Beginning," as outlined in the Bible, is an essential perspective of ours needed in the world, needed in the United States, needed in your town, our families and ourselves. In the beginning God created the world and said it was good, not broken or essentially evil, but good.

The world and all creation, including you and I, were formed from the very Ruhah, the breath of God. Divine Spirit is our essential nature, and the two stories of Eden are *that*: stories to help us understand that we are separate from God, not God, but dependent upon God; male and female of all shapes and colors, we are made in God's image.

Listen to other Christians who believe in the doctrine of original sin. Some believe that they are essentially evil, their very own deep nature is evil, and that the world is broken far worse than Humpty Dumpty because it is spiritually so broken and can never be made whole. That is very sad, not only because of this, but what is their image of God, given such an understanding of Divine Love?

When I was at the Parliament of

*Continued on page 93*



# Flames of Fire

Chris Laitner

Being asked by the ordinands to speak at this service is an honor, and I'm truly humbled by the request. It has also given me an opportunity to do something that I've never really done: to look carefully at the ordained ministry and its relationship to the life of the Church. My position as president of the denomination as well as being a lay person gives me a unique lens through which to view the information I've gathered, and I must say that what I've learned has been quite amazing.

If the ordained ministry were a simple choice and an easy job, an awful lot of people would go through the required preparation. It's possible that ordained clergy would outnumber the laity. However, if I've learned one thing through the investigating I did for this talk, it's that deciding to become an ordained minister is not a simple matter. From a professional preparation standpoint, there is an identifiable path of learning that requires rigorous academic work and numerous time-consuming experiential opportunities. Juggling time, money concerns, and requirements for both an advanced degree and a specialized certificate in Swedenborgian Studies while also regularly engaging in personal, spiritual reflection as to whether the ordained ministry is the right goal, makes this path of preparation a difficult one.

While there are other graduate programs that also require creative time management and a variety of experiential involvements, there's one more aspect of the ordained ministry that lifts the whole process entirely out of the mainstream of other professional preparation, and that's the CALL.

As a retired teacher after thirty-three years of service, I can grasp the professional nature of ministry, and I can understand the immensity of the ongoing daily work of this service-oriented, helping profession. I might

even have just a glimpse of the concept of being called to do such work, but I cannot fathom the depth of the call into this profession and the complete dedication not only to living a life of true ministry, but to bringing spiritual awareness to others. What a huge responsibility!

I think that my concept of "call" is more akin to understanding the passion for a particular job, but it's very possible that passion isn't equal to call. I suspect that a call transcends the realities of life. A call is visceral and spiritual. It is felt on all planes of existence and it really cannot be ignored... no matter how one might try to.

It is my privilege to know many people who have heard and felt this call and who have chosen to answer it. From my position of observing the

*And so, while we know that we are made for heaven, that we have a divine spark within us, it is imperative that we have a called and consecrated ordained ministry as part of our community; a group of people who are touched by God and are equipped to lead us, who continue to make us aware of what our purpose is, and who serve as the flames that illuminate our own spiritual lives.*

ordained ministers who have emerged from this process, I'd easily say that those who choose to acknowledge this very special call are exactly correct for whatever forms their ministries take. Here, today, in this place, we have gifted men and women who have responded to that call and offered their lives in service to it. We are also involved in the process of seeing three more God-gifted people step into the life of ministry. All of these folks, whether seasoned or novice, are exquisitely prepared, particularly gifted to help all of us recognize ourselves as spiritual beings, and to help us all see



*Chris and Eric gettin' down with the choir*

and nurture our potential uses in this world and the next.

My research also indicates that there are some incredibly difficult realities about being chosen to take on the ordained ministry as one's life work. Our denomination recognizes that "the common good of society depends on the maintenance of what is divine among humans." Thus, we have a need for an ordained ministry to lead, teach, and preach in order to assist individuals in identifying and nurturing that divine spark within each person. It is the charge of the ordained ministry to help each person keep that spark alive in order to grow in heavenly ways.

This is a beautiful concept, but there's a kind of reality check on the other side of the balance. After researching several denominations' worth of information regarding the ordained ministry, I am amazed at and eminently grateful for our ordained ministers. I created a chart with six headings on it to cover all of the aspects of the life and work of an ordained minister. The categories were Personal Faith, Personal Life, Corporate Faith and Practice, Administration and Church Leadership, Caring for Others, and Community Service, and under each heading there were at least six specifics. These lists were actually pretty frightening in their scope, and all were made even more intimidating by

*(Continued on page 94)*

## Unholy Fire

### Rev. Doug Moss's Profile

I came to seminary after a series of small business and service jobs taught me that service to others was my greatest joy. A personal crisis several years earlier had opened me (miraculously?) to the church after many lapsed years, and I came to see that a combination of my gifts and my loves might be best suited to, and quite useful in, Christian ministry.

I found the Swedenborgian Church only after I had already started studies in seminary. By that time I was already very open to the Spirit, but certain elements of conventional Christian doctrine still did not work rationally for me—a Trinity of three distinct beings, double predestination (some for heaven, some for hell), vicarious atonement (Christ paid for my sins). I thoroughly believe that Divine Providence led me to Pacific School of Religion at precisely the same time the Swedenborgian House of Studies moved in; their new students showed me a new and true Christianity that deftly resolved my questions and doubts. ☩



*Doug Moss*

In the Torah, in the Book of Leviticus, we find the short and sad story of Nadab and Abihu. *Lev. 10:1-2*

If you are wondering just how long it took me to find the strangest scripture I could concerning ministry, I certainly understand. But the truth is that I was taken by the mystery of this passage long before I ever began even to dream of seminary; in fact, this passage started me thinking about just what this thing we call “ministry” might be. Since that time I have looked forward to the day I could come back and wrestle with this passage, and this is the day that the Lord has made.

Now I realize that by the standards of our New Church we should examine the Word for natural, spiritual and celestial meaning, so here goes...

On a natural level, Nadab and Abihu's unholy demise stands as a warning to Carla, Sage and myself that much as we intend to celebrate this evening, we should not slip into the office next door, break out the communion set and use the cups as shot glasses—not a good idea. Tonight we gain no magical powers, receive no special privileges, join no secret society. I woke up this morning basically Joe Shmoe (albeit with a Masters in Divinity); I'll go to bed tonight the Reverend Shmoe, with a new stole—a badge of office. But I won't change much.

The significant change came years ago, when I began to allow my new birth in the Spirit—a path that leads us to become reformed, regenerated, renewed, quickened, justified, cleansed and at length saved. These are the words of Emanuel Swedenborg, and we believe that they describe everyone who starts off on a spiritual quest and

diligently stays with it. These words relate, I am confident, to everyone in this room tonight. To have found your way here demonstrates at the very least a seedling of genuine curiosity about the life of the spirit and the nature of the Lord.

In addition, Carla, Sage and I felt a call to serve others in their journeys.

So we sought further Enlightenment and Instruction, further changing our Perception and Disposition. These, too, are Swedenborg's words, describing priests and ministers—not in a church named after himself (for we all know he never imagined such a thing) but in the



*Carla, Sage, and Doug in benediction following ordination*

church universal.

This ceremony tonight affirms and acknowledges that the three of us have attained at least a minimal competency to be entrusted with laboring in the vineyard of the Lord, as Pope Benedict said in his own recent installation.

On a celestial level...

When I was a boy, all that most people generally needed for learning about the religions of the world was an atlas. “Here's where people read a sort of bible written by a fellow named Mohammed... here's where they worship a statue named Buddha... here's where they don't eat holy cows... and all the rest of the world is normal.”

But in our lifetimes the world has grown so very much smaller. We can no longer indulge in such simplistic thought. We very well may be on the verge of an Aquarian age of harmony and understanding, but we also realize—and recent events have reminded us—that these can be very dangerous times. And the most dangerous thing that we as humans do is when we steep ourselves in “us” versus “them” thinking. This is a falsity from which immeasurable evil flows.

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## Unholy Fire

(Continued on from page 81)

So in our little congregation in El Cerrito we read not just from the Word and Swedenborg's writings, but from the Tao Te Ching, the Bhagavad Gita, the Qur'an, the Talmud, the Vedas, the Upanishads... any words that reveal the truth, that deepen our hearts, and that draw us closer to the beings that our Creator intended us to be.

Our New Church theology is unique in Christendom for acknowledging the truth found in other faiths. We find it slightly amusing that Swedenborg contends that whenever people of good faith reach Heaven they will find our Christian Lord reigning there, regardless of their particular religion in this life. But this is not Swedenborg's idea; listen to the words of the Lord:

"I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."

I know I must exercise caution in charting this course. If I come to believe that, as the Qur'an teaches, Jesus was no more than a messenger and so was not glorified; if I come to abandon our understanding of Heaven and Hell in favor of an Eastern vision of reincarnation; if I ever conclude that intellectual understanding alone is preferable to living a useful and charitable life... well, any of these would be my own free choice. But I would not and could not then continue as a minister in the Swedenborgian church. That would constitute unholy fire, and I would fear the fate of Nadab and Abihu.

But I do not worry about that. Here I will dig my well deep. I use these writings as a tool—as in truth we use Swedenborg—to plumb the depths of this book (Bible), this magnificent Word. It overflows with marvelous stories, and there is Good News to tell.

*The Rev. Doug Moss has received a call to the El Cerrito Swedenborgian Church in El Cerrito, California, where he has been interning for the past year.* ☐

## Rev. Carla Friedrich Profile

I grew up attending the Swedenborgian Church (General Convention) in Miami once a month which was served by Rev. Ernest L. Fredericks as minister. As a child I also attended society meetings and discussion groups along with my father, Robert A. Friedrich. My family occasionally attended a national convention. I rediscovered the writings as a searching and questioning teen and began reading them on my own, which was a pretty lonely experience—so I decided to hold a meeting with 20 or so high school friends (twisting arms early) and have Rev. Fredericks facilitate them. What meant so much to me was the breadth of life that was treated of in the writings. It had it all: Inclusive of other faith traditions, science and religion reconciled, mysticism and mystery, mystery unveiled, body and health.

I had what I have come to know as a 'conversion' experience on the beach in Daytona when my minister explained to me who Jesus Christ was, what his name meant, what he did while on earth and what that meant for our freedom and salvation. At that time I decided I would become a minister so there would be more ministers and churches—in every state.

Throughout my high school years, I found this aspiration fully supported by my parents, siblings, friends, and minister but eventually got sidetracked anyway with a family of my own. Not that the passage of time or life experiences did anything to lessen the love that wouldn't go away! Then a few more events intervened to anchor my faith, my love of the church, my understanding, and my mission. But I found I still did not know how to talk about or defend my faith, so I figured it was time to give my old minister and family friend a call. Rev. Fredericks drove 365 miles to see me that next weekend to discuss matters of faith.

Then after a few more years of reading and renewed commitment, sharing my faith when given half a chance, Rev. Fredericks came again to visit. Once again, he promptly re-

sponded and traveled over 300 miles to discuss a matter of faith. That is dedication and it matters. On this visit, Rev. Fredericks was getting older and thought perhaps it would be the last time he could visit in person, so he told me of another group of Swedenborgians who were in Atlanta.

That was the first I'd ever heard of the General Church, or The Lord's New Church and I'd been reading materials from all three or four branches as well as the Swedenborg Foundation for years and never knew the difference. I was so glad to know there were others close by. As a seeker, I just decided what was true or not true depending on where my heart was at the time. This is the only compass one has, regardless of the source. So I decided to call Rev. Ray Silverman. From Atlanta he drove 200 miles roundtrip to visit with my family!

My daughters and I attended church on Sundays for two years, and were received warmly by all. Rev. Silverman and family moved from Atlanta and the new minister came. That was Rev. Mark Perry of the General Church who came to Macon for nine years to hold house worship and discussion groups. This association only fueled my call, conviction, and desire to share with others this new Christianity; new ideas that transform lives.

I decided to stop wasting time and get into seminary. Jim Lawrence and Kim Hinrichs were instrumental in my decision and when I visited the Swedenborgian House of Studies, my visit to the SHS library clinched my decision. It still took a year to make it happen. God brings all things to Divine ends. So here I am, Lord...at the church in San Diego, where across town, the Rev. Mark Perry is our General Church colleague and also in town are three people who were at that first meeting I gathered in Georgia as a teen. While not Swedenborgians (yet) they are still dear friends and will be coming to church! ☐

Carla Friedrich

I love this church, so I think often about the shape of the New Church and the second coming of our Lord, both the shape in terms of its condition and the shape that this takes in the world.

I've come to think of it in organic terms—rising up organically from within all faith traditions—this second coming of the Lord. I used to be embarrassed by that phrase, but now I recognize that this is what drives me and gives my ministry life. The writings which open Scripture and that we hold so dear have the power to transform lives when lived out.

When I was four or five attending school in a largely Catholic community and elementary school in West Palm Beach, Florida, I watched a filmstrip about Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus. After watching that film I wished I could grow up to be Mary so I could be responsible for the Lord coming again. I longed for it, but I didn't know that this couldn't happen. You look back on these childish notions and recognize their absurdity. But there is a lot I didn't know then, and still don't (after three years in seminary, I am aware of a lot more I don't know). The mystery just deepens.

In 1989, just 15 years ago, I didn't know that there was a denomination known as The General Church. In 1990, I didn't know that there was another denomination known as The Lord's New Church. I didn't know, nor could I imagine, that any two Swedenborgians could disagree. I thought that anyone who heard about these new Truths of Christianity would fall over themselves to get hold of them. Somewhere in between there, I came to understand the New Church teaching that we are each, every one of us, in all faith traditions, churches unto ourselves: soft temples unto the Lord. The movement of our lives is our liturgy.

So the shape of the church is varied and changing, very dynamic. Could it be, though, that we are all responsible for the birth of our Lord?

I have come to understand our Faith, despite its progress and progressiveness, and despite its 300 years of very slow growth, as an *emerging* faith with a long trajectory and developing base

## Who Spilled the Baby?

designed for fullness and growth; like a gestation and birth of a child. This is nothing less than the Birth of the Lord and will not pass away, we are promised.

But how can this be? Can this image of the emerging gestation and birth of the Lord include all in the larger body of Christ? The writings of our church are essential, and so are other faith traditions, as well as people who have never heard of Christianity. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and grew in stature with God and Man." For those of us who believe it, the Lord didn't come as we expected the first time, and there is no reason to think that we would easily recognize the full, profound extent and promise of this Second Birth. It does not even preclude the femaleness of the Divine.

This Second Coming of the Lord, as I see it, is not merely spiritual, for the Lord tends to appear in a full incarnation of his presence and embodiment in the physical world, the outer boundaries of nature and existence.

So I imagine this: that the Lord is being birthed into the world. The whole of humanity and all faith traditions, over time, are responsible for aiding it. The Lord did not come fully grown into the world; he came as an innocent babe. So let us imagine that the writings of the New Church are absolutely essential as spiritual DNA for the birth of this innocent Babe, who is our Lord and God, Jesus Christ. And the growth of the Church everywhere in the hearts and minds of humans is an unfolding and a coming into being. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and grew in stature with God and man."

The first intellectual flourishes of our interpretation of New Church teachings are like cells in the zygote: dividing and replicating. Every time we share of our heartfelt faith represents one cell or heartbeat of our Lord. Layer upon layer of living, a body is laid down and animated. "Every action has its consequences to eternity." Ligaments form and join with muscle when nations and religions join together in peace and love toward their neighbor. A divine choreography of rising joy becomes the sound to which the infant Jesus' limbs move in concert.

In this organic form of the infant Jesus, every act of compassion and justice becomes His heartbeat and His breath; every choice for the good, every

restored bit of liberty, every espoused bit of the Truths we know, and better yet the ones we live; all acts of faith everywhere give animation to the Body of Christ. Every time we resist evil, every diligence in this pure striving toward the Divine allows this coming into being of the Lord.

This living metaphor must be expanded until it grows real and concrete in the world, until it encompasses the entire human race. Until such a time there is a complete "exaltation of love" (as my friend Ed Silvia calls it). Throughout such a time, with the help of the Lord, we as a whole earth community are living fully into our humanity. We then possess a pure striving of Love toward the neighbor, and the whole of humanity once again faces the Lord and is willing to be led.

"I abide in you even as you abide in Me."

Lest we think that what we do doesn't matter with such a long and slow growth, the Lord has given us a treasure for safe keeping. It is nothing less than caring for the Lord Himself: "If you do this unto the least of these, you have done it unto Me."

**Quick Story:** My first and only grandson, Finn, enjoys being held and leaning ever so close to the ground as if we are going to drop him. We call this game, "Who spilled the Baby?" The only reason he finds it enjoyable and can laugh is that he actually trusts who has hold of him. Indeed, his delight is that he knows we are actually NOT going to "spill" him.

The Lord also finds His Good pleasure in being safely held by those to whom He has entrusted His care; especially this new understanding of Divine truths and the church's growth in each of us as we live the Word. He trusts us to 'hold him' safely, and so my mantra for myself of late has become, "Don't spill the baby."

*The Rev. Carla Friedrich is an artist and lifelong Swedenborgian (General Convention) with more recent associations in the General Church, and Lord's New Church. She is a mother of three grown (and married) daughters. She is now the minister of the Swedenborgian Church of San Diego. (See Profile.)* ☩



## Do Not Lay a Hand on That Child

### Sage Currie Rohrer Profile

I received my call to ministry while working as the coordinator of the national SCYL and attending Urbana University. My call came in three parts, first through discovering my skills for ministry in working with the youth, secondly from a deepening love and appreciation of Swedenborgian doctrine through my personal study in the Swedenborgian Collection at the University library, and finally from a growing feeling of connection and call to serve and be a part of the Swedenborgian community.

While I plan to spend my first year of ministry working as a resident chaplain in a hospital in San Francisco, and working with the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church's Sunday School Program, I am very open and excited about participating in many types of ministry in my career including the parish, community ministry, denominational activity, further youth work, and theological scholarship. I am currently involved in a Progressive Christian Witness project at the Pacific School of Religion, where I am researching and writing on progressive Christian responses to current issues, and in a ministry to the homeless in San Francisco. I am very called to the work of doing Swedenborgian theology that is constructive and practical, and which takes the experiences of persons and our world seriously. ☩



Doug, Sage, and Carla

*Sage Currie-Rohrer*

This may seem like a very inappropriate scripture reading for an ordination service. It's kind of a downer, it's scary, confusing, violent, extreme... But I guess an extreme message is exactly what I need to hear on this extreme day—on a day when I am ordained, when I take on a new consecrated identity, committing myself to serve in this capacity for my entire natural life, and perhaps beyond if this role also suits me in the afterlife.

This story of the "Near Sacrifice of Isaac," has recently become a powerful warning and call in my life and I think it is no coincidence that this warning is making itself known on the cusp of my ordination into the ministry of this church.

Many of you are likely familiar with the Swedenborgian correspondences of this well-known passage. Anita Dole's interpretation has graced many Sunday School classrooms, as well as ministers' exegesis. This interpretation is that Isaac represents the birth of the rational and his near sacrifice at the hands of Abraham, represents that instinctual desire to want to be obedient and innocent to the wishes of God without having to mature into the murky, often confusing and difficult stage of rational reflection on our life and faith. Anita Dole uses the example of religious Fundamentalists as persons who are following the path of Abraham and not hearing that final call from the angel, who are sacrificing Isaac for a simple faith without reason.

Very few would accuse us Swedenborgians of having simple faith or abandoning the rational! But, I don't think that means that this story does not hold a warning for us as well. One of the most powerful aspects of our biblical faith is that every story pertains—that each battle, familial arrangement, call of Jesus, Psalm, all of it holds deep spiritual meaning for us all.

We as individuals and as a church are just as likely as Abraham to find ourselves heading silently toward Moriah, preparing to make a sacrifice that we mistakenly believe is desired by God, the sacrifice of our own child. While Swedenborg tells us that Isaac represents the rational, what else can a child represent? A child is born of us, and ultimately will move beyond us and out of our control. I like the image of

the creative spirit shaped by us but ultimately out of our control. Our world is enriched and sustained by the physical children that we birth and equally by the creativity we birth in our actions and work, our learning, our care, all that we bring to the table in living our lives, and acting through the inspiration of the Divine Creator within.

And each of us, in the same way, is prone to mistakenly and horrifically believe that we must sacrifice the very thing that we were created to birth into this world.

We all do it, we do it as individuals, we do it as congregations, and as a denomination.

We are all afraid. It's human to be afraid, its part of the struggle. We are afraid of our own powers of reason and knowing, the powers that God has gifted us to journey on this path of regeneration.

While as Swedenborgians we may not see ourselves as shying away from reason, what does that reason look like? Whose reason is it? Are we still asking questions? Who's asking the questions? Do we believe that Swedenborg answered all of these questions for us, that he did all of the reasoning for us and now we are left merely to the task of obedience?

It's been mentioned often that we are doing a new thing as a church, coming out here to Berkeley, and I speak as a person standing in this new place and from this place I will admit to you my own fear. I see myself at times walking towards Moriah, feeling at times like I am being called to sacrifice my child, my creative spirit, my rational, the questions that surround me in this world, as a feminist woman and as a lesbian standing in a tradition shaped by a community of persons who look very different from me.

But each time, God calls me back. The angel of the LORD calls to me saying "Do not lay a hand on that child!"

This is a warning, to stay open to being called back — into our own skin, our wholeness, our giftedness, — to speak out, to speak out in spite of our fear, to not give up our ability to discern and to reason, to take our faith seriously and to take our own experience seriously, and I believe that in this way we will as individuals and as a church walk into the light of the Holy City New Jerusalem. ☩



## COUNCIL OF MINISTERS REPORT

The Council of Ministers met from July 6 – 8, 2005 with approximately forty-two in attendance.

The meeting opened with a prayer followed by addresses from the COM Chair Rev. Eric Allison, and Chris Laitner, President of Convention.

Reports were given by Rev. Kinichi Kuniyeda on his successful ministry in Japan; the COM Accountability Committee, the Committee on Admissions into the Ministry, *Our Daily Bread*, Committee on Worship, and the Lay Leadership Program.

The Roll of Ministers was updated with the following revisions:

By request from the Rev. Edwin

Capon, Rev. Edwin Capon's name was moved to Retired Ministers. By request from the Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein, Rev. Theodore Klein's name was moved to Former Ministers. Rev. Claude Bruley, who is recently deceased, was moved to Inactive.

The following

ordinands were voted to be recommended for the ordained ministry: Carla Friedrich, Sage Currie, and Doug Moss.

Visions of Ministries were heard from the following SHS students in the ordination path: Hunter Roberts, David Fekete, Annie Relat, Freeman Schrock, and Lana Sandahl.



(L-R) President Chris Laitner recognizes the Revs. Gladys Wheaton and Susan Turley for their 25 years in the ministry. Council of Ministers chair Rev. Eric Allison at right.

### Election Results:

Convention Preacher 2007

Rev. Sarah Buteux

Executive Committee

Rev. Susannah Currie

Nominating Committee

Rev. Alison Lane

The Council participated in a morning workshop on Non-Violent Communication by Mikie Kashtan from the Bay Area Center For Non-Violent Communication.

Suggestions for Convention Theme 2006: Evangelism and Stewardship; The Good News of the Second Coming; and New Communication for a New Church — Compassionate/Non-Violent Communication.

Susan Turley, acting secretary

Editor's Note: The Rev. Skuli Thorhallsson, secretary of COM, was absent due to family illness. ☩

## Swedenborgian Ministry in the Northwest

Ernest O. Martin

### Project Link

Church stalwarts with a good memory recall those days in the 1960s when students for our ministry spent a year in Bellevue, Washington, under the direction of a team of three ministers: Calvin E. Turley, Owen T. Turley, and David P. Johnson. In 1962 a spectacular church was built of concrete and glass that cantilevered out over a steep hillside. The ministry of the church focused on small spiritual growth groups that met throughout the week and were led by all three ministers. This innovative ministry was known as Project Link, and as might be expected, it was controversial. Fuel was added to the fire when a feature article with pictures appeared in a local newspaper with the headline: "Pews removed from local church." Tradition-

alists from Maine to California bemoaned the fact that our church in Bellevue was no longer a real church!



Original Bellevue Church

The cause was not helped when a picture of the three ministers appeared on the cover of *The Messenger* after the convention in Pawnee Rock, Kansas, in 1962. The men were dressed in sport shirts, smiling, and framed with colorful Kansas sunflowers. Is there no dignity?

Eventually the training program for the Swedenborg School of Religion was terminated, the team ministry was ended, and the church building was sold. The Rev. Calvin Turley went to Claremont, California, in 1969, where he received his Doctor of Ministry degree, and then became a faculty member at the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, Mass. The Rev. Owen Turley moved to the San Francisco Bay area, and the Rev. David Johnson continued a counseling ministry in the Seattle area and led worship services in private homes one Sunday a month.

### The Ministry of Paul Martin

Upon his graduation from the Swedenborg School of Religion, and his ordination at the convention in Irvine, California, in 1982, the Rev. Paul W.

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# YOUNG ADULT PROGRAM COORDINATOR WANTED

## Job Description:

This position is for the Young Adult Program Coordinator for the national church of the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church. This is an administrative position to facilitate young adult programming, including retreats, workshops, publications, and to assist local efforts and activities. The person would work closely with, but does not supervise, the existing national young adult group (Transitions). The position pays a monthly stipend, approximately \$125 per month. Time commitment should average 6-8 hours monthly, depending on scheduled events and activities—certain months may require additional commitments. The position is supervised by the Education Support Unit, which falls within the structure of the national church.

## Job Duties:

Coordinate activities and programs  
Communicate with local and national young adults, and others as necessary  
Work with Youth Director to welcome teens leaving SCYL  
Maintain mailing list  
Provide program publicity  
Serve as liaison to EdSU and Convention  
Oversee budget

## Minimum Qualifications:

Must be responsible and self-motivated adult able to work

without close supervision

Have knowledge and experience with youth or young adult programs

Have knowledge and experience with event planning

Have demonstrated excellent organizational skills in administrative management, including budgeting, publishing, and word processing

Have demonstrated ability to work with other adults as part of a team

Have excellent communication skills with both youth and adults

## Desired Qualifications:

Two years college or more

Knowledge of the workings of General Convention

Familiarity with Swedenborgian theology

Two years experience in a youth or young adult related program, preferably Swedenborgian

Willing to attend retreats, events, and activities

## Application Procedure:

Please send cover letter, resume, and two references to Katie Shelley, EDSU chair, 6678 Lincoln Drive, Philadelphia, PA, 19119, (or email [ktshelley@yahoo.com](mailto:ktshelley@yahoo.com)) by September 30, 2005. EDSU plans to interview potential candidates at their fall meeting (or by phone) in the Philadelphia/DC area on November 12, 2005. ☒

## Eldon D. Smith Retires

Eldon D. Smith retired July 31, 2005 as pastor of the San Diego Church. Eldon grew up in the San Diego church and became a worship leader in 1956. Between 1962 and 1975, Eldon and his wife, Annella, held full-time positions at the Wayfarers Chapel, where Eldon was in charge of wedding arrangements and general maintenance of the property. In 1990, Eldon was consecrated as the first authorized lay leader in the Swedenborgian denomination, and he faithfully served the San Diego church community as pastor until July 2005.

In 1989, Eldon and Annella made a commitment to devote their lives fully to the San Diego church when a decision to close the church's doors was imminent. Eldon and Annella were commuting 320 miles each Sunday from their home in the desert to attend and conduct worship services. In exchange for a small compensation and the conversion of the Sunday School rooms to an apartment so they could live on the premises, Eldon and Annella Smith offered to take over the management of the church. Together they served as pastor, custodian, secretary and treasurer, giving themselves unselfishly to God's work.

Under their leadership, the church's weekly attendance grew from three to an average of 13 and Eldon put to use his 14 years' experience as a carpenter to make numerous improvements to the church building and facilities, and insure preservation of the historic mission style structure.

It is because of Eldon's devoted service that the San Diego church has survived and flourished. Beginning in August 2005 the congregation has called a full-time ordained minister, the Rev. Carla Friedrich, to lead the church for the first time in over 20 years. The San Diego church and the denomination as a whole owe much to Eldon and his late wife Annella, and mere words are insufficient to express the gratitude owed to him on the occasion of his retirement.

Although Eldon has retired as pastor, he continues to volunteer his time as custodian and president. Thank you, Eldon, and Happy Retirement!

Christine Stankus and Rev. Carla Friedrich ☒



*Eldon and Annella Smith in 2003 at the 120th birthday celebration of the Swedenborgian Church*

# Swedenborgian Church Election Results

Vice President:  
Jim Erickson

Recording Secretary:  
Susan Wood

Treasurer:  
Larry Conant

General Council:  
Rev. Kathy Speas  
Deane Currie  
Herb Ziegler

COMSU:  
Carol Lawson

EDSU:  
Paula (Kraus) Hilbert

IMSU:  
Kevin Baxter

FPRSU:  
Betsy Lau

MINSU:  
Rev. John Maine  
Sue Burns

Nominating Committee:  
Denyse Daurat  
Sharon Williams  
(filling in Mary Crenshaw's unexpired term; Mary Crenshaw re signed.)

CAM:  
Pat Tukos

SHS Board of Trustees:  
Rev. Jane Siebert  
John Titus

Editor's Note: Patte LeVan, who was a nominee for the nominating committee, was disqualified because of the rule that the five committee members must represent five different Associations. Patte LeVan and the Rev. Jonathan Mitchell are both members of the Pacific Coast Association. Thus Denyse Daurat agreed to be on the slate with Chuck Winter and she was elected. ☩

## Organizing the Continued Construction of Transitions

All are welcome who are at least 18 years of age! We will be focusing on the reconstruction and construction of this adult group. We would love your input! Or, you can come for the community and simply retreat from your daily routine.

**When:** October 14-16, 2005.  
Arrive Friday evening and leave after lunch on Sunday.

**Where:** Almont New Assembly and Retreat Center: 1513 Cameron Road Allenton, MI 48002

**How:** Contact Ms. Fawn Lange to register and more details:  
[fawnlange@netzero.net](mailto:fawnlange@netzero.net) or  
(517) 393-5523.



*Music and food enjoyed by Art Festival participants on the PSR Campus.*

## IMPORTANT CHURCH DATES

September 15-18, 2005  
Cabinet  
@ Midland, MI

October 4-7, 2005  
CAM  
@ SHS Berkeley, CA

October 29, 2005  
Investment Committee  
@ Newtonville, MA

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

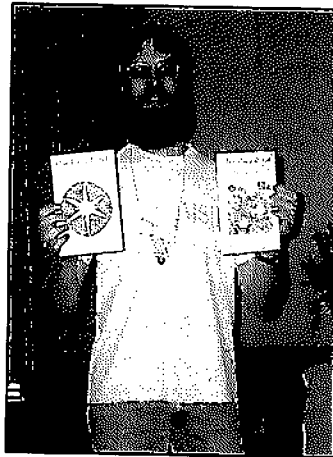
November 11-12, 2005  
RETCO  
@ Newtonville, MA

# Scenes Around Convention



SHS Board (L-R, back) Rev. Young Min Kim, Garfield Byrd, treasurer; Herb Zeigler, Rev. Sarah Buteux (newly elected); Alan Thomsen, Rev. Dr. James Lawrence, Dean SHS; Rev. Kim Hinrichs, John Titus, Rev. Robert Leas, Rev. Andy Stinson, Christine Laitner, president of the Swedenborgian Church. (Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell's term ended this year and he was recognized for his service).

## Business & Fun



Rev. Lee Woofenden displays copies of Our Daily Bread.



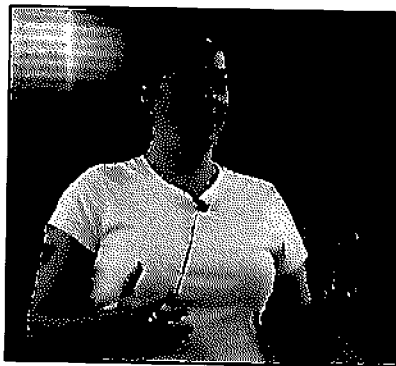
Convention Opening. San Francisco church members and SHS staff and students strut their stuff with streamers designed by Jenn Tafel. (L-R) Bette McDonnell, Alison Lane, Tom McEntee, Jim Lawrence far right; Laurie and Lisa singing and Paul Deming on guitar.



Dr. Robert Reber, retired SHS Board chair, was recognized for his 11 years of dedicated service to the old SSR Board and the present SHS Board. (Rev. Jane Siebert, not shown, was elected as the new chair).



Paul Deming, Rev. Kit and Penny Billings with baby Julia Renee, St. Louis, present closing service.



SHS graduate Jenn Tafel speaking at graduation in the PSR Chapel. Jenn will be ordained next year.



Carol Lawson accepts check for \$1000 from Rev. Jonathan Mitchell, a contribution from Wayfarers Chapel to the Swedenborg Foundation toward the making of the new Helen Keller film, to be released this November. (Wayfarers Chapel also donated \$2000 to the denomination).



Rev. Kim Hinrichs, chair of the Convention planning committee (L) chats with Rev. Ken Turley and his daughter Emily.



Sam McBride, a Mormon and longtime Swedenborgian emissary, lends his merry presence to the festivities.

## Scenes Around Convention

# Music, Schmoozing & Fun



*Lisa Cole Allison feels a song comin' on.*

Photography in this issue by:

Steve Koke  
Mona Conner  
Patte LeVan



*Rev. Kinichi Kuniyeda, minister of the Tokyo New Church, chats with Estelle Giamboi at the Swedenborg Foundation book table. It was Kinichi's first convention in seven years. (He has invited Rev. Dr. George Dole to be keynote speaker in Tokyo next fall, 2006 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Japan Swedenborg Association).*



*Turley family jamfest at Art Festival  
(L-R) Ethan, Ken, Emily, Laurie.*

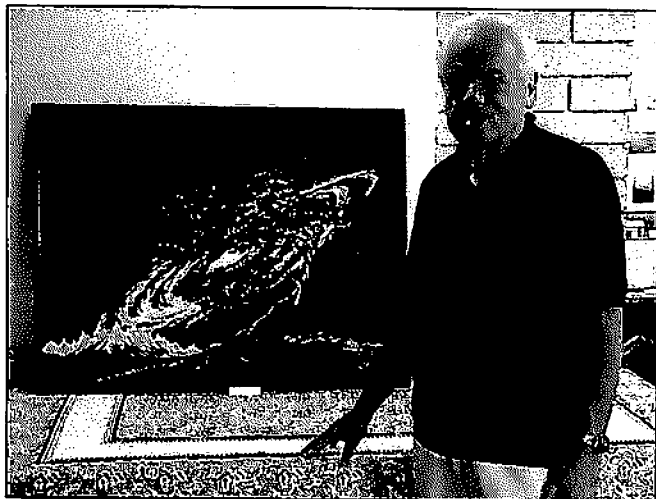


*Missing Rachel quartet from Cambridge and environs (L-R)  
Rebekah Simons, Rebecca Kline, Leah Goodwin, and Sarah Buteux.*



*Ethan Turley, SCYL West Coast Officer, and Ben Currie, SCYL President, pound out their endless finale following worship service.*

## Art & More Fun



*Steve Koke with his large painting of galaxy and tree.*

*Card by artist Uni De Presno, part of her Women with Closed Eyes series. Uni is on the staff at Wayfarers Chapel. (A poem by Uni was also included in Giving Voice, a Collection of Poetry & Prose, a chapbook by Swedenborgian writers given out at the Festival. We plan to re-print a number of these excellent writings in future Messengers).*



*A way stands open into heaven,  
but none can enter the way  
except those who have heaven  
within them.*

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG CL 100



*Larry Conant auctions off rare "funny" George Dole trading card to anonymous bidder for \$1000. (The SCYL made \$2000 on trading cards they designed featuring ministers' mugshots. If you missed getting your set, they're available next year).*



*Mona Conner, New York, readies her painting for display, part of her "Mary" series.*



*Madera Hill, Rev. Carla Friedrich's daughter, making and displaying her stunning jewelry, one of the most popular offerings at the art show.*

## Families for Peaceful Tomorrows.

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this as I addressed loved ones and friends at Alicia's Memorial Service; and I understood it throughout my journey of pain and sadness as I strived to regain a sense of equilibrium in my life which seemed so out of control. My faith in a loving God continued to grow with each passing moment and I strongly felt the interconnection with all of life. The words from the past: love thy neighbor as thyself; do unto others as you would have them do unto you; blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God. And other messages from childhood flooded my thoughts; even though I felt deceived and let down by America's leaders who used my daughter's and others' deaths to justify the attacks that would kill thousands of innocent people. These Afghani children and others who had nothing to do with the killing of my daughter would soon feel the wrath of America, and the world would be made to see how superior our military might was.

The sad reality behind this is that justice was not being served; we were only creating more injustice, more animosity, more hate and more violence. We had become a greater part of the problem, not the solution. It became abundantly clear to me that we as a human race must learn how to relate to one another without the senseless killing of innocent people; and, I must help lead by example. As Derrill Bodley from Peaceful Tomorrows who had lost his daughter, Deora on September 11<sup>th</sup> so astutely stated, "I have no more moral authority than anyone else; it's just they haven't awakened to it yet."

After the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, we were in position to demonstrate justice with compassion based on a higher level of wisdom. The whole world reached out to us and would have joined America in a concerted effort to work toward peaceful co-existence and eradicate terrorism and the conditions that fuel such desperate acts in a just and humane way. Instead, arrogance

led us down the path of more violence and injustice. We are further from peace and justice than ever, and thousands of innocent people lie dead as a result.

I began speaking out to anyone who would listen. I realized that my situation was unique and that people were more receptive because of that. Early on in my grieving I spoke with reporters from newspapers, TV news commentators, magazine journalists and others seeking a story. Many of them probed for a story that would justify our military action and filtered out some of my message that refuted this, but I persisted. I started sending articles to different newspapers around the country and several of them were published. Some would follow up and do a story on our family and feature pictures of Alicia and us in our grief. I spoke out against the adolescent actions of our leaders as they manipulated the

*Grief has the power to destroy, but I also believe it has a greater power that can lead to clarity of mind, better understanding, and a deeper capacity for love.*

media to justify the killing of innocent people and destructive actions abroad.

In the fall of 2001, a Hollywood producer approached us about doing a documentary that would expose the truth behind the cause of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the resultant actions. Although this didn't come to fruition, in our discussions with them, they told us about a group of September 11<sup>th</sup> family members who were organizing around issues of peace and justice. Upon making contact with David Potorti, Colleen Kelly and others in the early spring of 2002, who were organizing under the theme of "turning our grief into action for peace," I felt as if I had found my family; compassionate souls who understood my pain and my driving need to make a difference. I felt a deep kinship with these people.

Prior to this, Bev and I had briefly

attended a grief group of other September 11<sup>th</sup> families in Michigan in the early winter of 2002 but, it didn't meet our needs. The grieving families we met were wonderful, but they weren't ready to look at some of the issues that were behind the attacks that killed our loved ones. After a session in which we got onto issues of religion and politics, the leader gently chastised me afterwards with, "now, you know that in grief groups, we don't talk about religion or politics." That may be true in most grief groups but these were the issues that were paramount to understanding why and how my daughter was murdered. Although we kept in contact with some of the families, we didn't go back.

I felt as if a light were shining on my pathway. Doors began to open; people came out of the blue who were connected with peace, justice and nonviolence movements; opportunities availed themselves to speak, to write, to demonstrate, to act...and we did, in spite of our overwhelming grief and fits of depression. And, it was healing. I could hear Alicia's sweet voice of strength and conviction urging us onward and I could see her smiling face lighting the way. I knew this was what I needed to do and it was divinely inspired.

Throughout that year and into the present we have continued to speak out. I've written articles and/or letters to the editors in the *Detroit Free Press*, *Ann Arbor News*, *Dayton Daily News*, *Springfield News and Sun*, Noe Valley paper, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Bellefontaine Examiner*, *Urbana Daily Citizen*, *UK Guardian*, Sydney and Melbourne (Australia) newspapers and others. We've done several TV appearances in Michigan, New York City and Ohio and documentaries for Public Access Channel entitled: "Critical Issues-Alternative Views, (twice); American Civil Liberties Union, speaking out about the Patriot Act; a European news broadcast and others. Speaking engagements include, but are not limited to: Memorial Services in Michigan and Ohio; Kalamazoo College; Schoolcraft College (numer-

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## Families for Peaceful Tomorrows.

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ous), classroom presentations, college-wide events, Season for Non-Violence activities, Middle Eastern educational series, etc., Urbana University-Alicia Titus Memorial Peace event (Nonviolent Conflict Resolution) for the community and the University; Unitarian Church of Kalamazoo (twice); Unitarian Church of Ann Arbor, along with Military Families Speak Out and Iraq Veterans for Peace; New York City's Union Square, Churches in Harlem and Chelsea along with Dr. Bob Edgar, National Council of Churches, Kathy Kelly of Voices in the Wilderness and others; The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Global Conference on Nonviolence held in Detroit; Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice's Nagasaki commemoration (60<sup>th</sup>) Candlelight Vigil; Families for Peaceful Tomorrows' book signing event.

We've also attended peace rallies and anti-war protests with hundreds of thousands of people, the most notable include the New York City march prior to the Iraq War and during the Republican National Convention. During these events we interviewed with numerous newspapers, magazines and TV reporters from all over the world. I also serve on the Steering Committee for September 11<sup>th</sup> Families for Peaceful Tomorrows.

September 11<sup>th</sup> Families for Peaceful Tomorrows formed in the fall of 2001 with a march from Washington DC to New York City prior to speaking out against the war in Afghanistan. Family members who had lost loved ones on 9/11 and believed that war would not solve the underlying cause and would only produce more civilian casualties, began finding one another.

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2002, at a press conference in New York City, David Potorti and others announced the official beginning of "Peaceful Tomorrows." After hundreds of speaking engagements all over the United States and the world; numerous events to raise awareness and promote peace; media ops, talk show appearances and docu-

mentaries; several trips to Iraq and Afghanistan to meet with victims' families and to raise money for the victims' families in Afghanistan; participation in world conferences; traveling on the Peace Boat which traveled around the world with a message of peace; organizing a Stonewalk from Boston (Democratic National Convention) to New York City (Republican National Convention) to raise awareness of the civilian casualties of war; and, now in Japan along with victims of the nuclear bombs; publishing our book in four languages; serving as activists in policy and decision-making at all levels and direct work with legislators; and tireless dedication by a core group of the 180 family members who form "September 11<sup>th</sup> Families for Peaceful Tomorrows," our group is gaining momentum. We have over 4000 supporters and funding is materializing as our message of peace and hope resonates throughout the world. I am honored to be a part of such a wise and caring group of people and together, we can make a difference.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." *Margaret Mead*

For us, "Peaceful Tomorrows" has become an intricate part of who we are and gives us hope that our children's children may someday live in peace without the threat of war and the disturbing reality of blatant injustices. Let there be peace on earth and goodwill to all. Idealistic? Absolutely! What is the alternative?

"The past is prophetic in that wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows..." *Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

September 11<sup>th</sup> Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

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

*John Titus is on the Swedenborgian House of Studies Board of Trustees. He and his wife Bev and their children live in Dexter, Michigan. This article is a summary of a talk he gave on the floor of Convention in July.* ☒

## The Swedenborgian Church and Bloom's Taxonomy

(Continued from page 78)

of our lives. It is a gift to see the variety of ways that our ministers, local churches, church members and friends are joining with their communities to work in useful, helpful ways. I'm certain that I haven't covered the extent and the variety of the ways in which we represent our beliefs to the world.

Creativity is inherent in our tradition. As we have seen, we have a multiplicity of creative connections to the world through our individual and our corporate ministries. We may not be wearing cooking pots designed by Disney on our heads, but we can be the descendants of Johnny Appleseed as we live the life of charity. We are our own best evangelists as we offer ourselves and our talents, supported by our beliefs, to others in an amazing variety of ways.

Our Convention theme, "Spirituality and the Arts – Inspiring the Divine Creator Within," focusing on specific, creative gifts and processes, connects with so many members of our denomination. As a body, our members are committed, hardworking, caring, creative, talented folks who find truly unique and wonderful ways to express the Church's ideas to the world and to demonstrate how our beliefs impact on individual spiritual growth. As members of the New Church, we recognize various paths to the truth of God, and so we respect and celebrate the variety of ways in which our members pursue acknowledging the Divine in all of humanity.

A taxonomy is a scheme that partitions a body of knowledge and defines the relationship among the pieces. It is used for classifying and understanding that body of knowledge. In 1956, Benjamin Bloom headed a group of educational psychologists who developed a classification of levels of intellectual behavior important in learning. Six levels of intellectual behavior within the cognitive domain were identified, from simple recall or recognition of facts through increas-

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## The Swedenborgian Church and Bloom's Taxonomy

(Continued from page 92)

ingly complex and abstract levels, to the highest order, identified as evaluation.

The six levels of Bloom's taxonomy, from least to most complex are: knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Each of these levels represents a particular type of learning. Knowledge is based on recall, being able to name, label, describe or define something. Comprehension requires the ability to summarize, predict or discuss something. Application includes using information and solving problems. Analysis is the first step of deeper connection where the student begins to recognize pattern and organization and can discern meanings that are beyond the immediate. Synthesis uses old ideas to create new ideas. Finally, evaluation indicates the ability to assess the value of theories and ideas, to make choices based on reasoned argument, and to verify the value of evidence.

What does Bloom's Taxonomy have to do with our New Church beliefs? ("But wait! There's more!")

Bloom's taxonomy begins with the learning of a specific fact, process or belief and then moves to describing or explaining the new concept in terms that make sense to the specific individual. This is the recognition stage. This stage is followed by practicing and demonstrating the knowledge in one's own life. It's possible to do something before one actually chooses through appraisal to make it truly one's own, so this early implementation of information has a sense of artificiality because it is not yet an integral, automatic part of one's self. As the new belief or practice is analyzed and absorbed into one's life, it is synthesized to the extent that it becomes part of the total being of the individual. Evaluation takes place through reflecting on one's self as transformed by a newly learned and internalized truth.

This process of moving from the least complex reception of information to the deepest internalizing of it is basic to our teachings. In

AC 3175 – and I'm using Kirven's translation from *The Concise Overview* – we read:


*Human beings are born into no truth at all; everything has to be learned. The learning occurs through external paths – hearing and sight – by which true perceptions have to be led into memories and implanted there. But so long as it is in memory only, it is merely data. For true knowledge to become part of a person, it must be called from memory, examined, and placed more deeply inward.*

Bloom's Taxonomy can be seen as similar to the process of humanity's reception of the truth of God; the influx of Divine love and wisdom into our lives. On the largest scale, this taxonomy represents our taking in church belief and doctrine, assessing it, choosing in freedom to make it part of our lives, and, finally, living the life of Charity. It is also the life of each of our ministries: founded on a set of beliefs, acting in the light of them, and sending the truth of these doctrines into the world – transforming it – through life and act.

I offer grateful thanks to God that as a denomination we are able to bring our spiritual truths into the world through so many venues and applications. We are the synthesis of the Lord's Divine love and wisdom, and it is up to us to animate that through our choice to live the life of religion by doing good and loving the neighbor.

On days when we question, on days when we're weary, we need to remember Helen Keller stating: "I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do."

And, for me, it helps to add a thought from Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Thus, at the end of my first year as president, I thank you for sharing your gifts and talents in the life of our beloved Church. We have exciting days ahead! 

## Hearts of Light

(Continued from page 79)

World Religions in Barcelona last year, I was fortunate to have a wonderful roommate from Southern California. She had been in councils and projects and working relationships with many panel members from different faiths and cultures who together were working for the good of humanity all over the world. I was introduced to one such person, who I knew had edited a series of books and worked with Dr. George Dole on the inclusion of Dole's book written specifically for this series on mysticism, "The Universal Human." It was a new translation of what some of you know as "The Grand Man." Fortunately the new translation shows so clearly the misunderstandings resulting from the old translation that did not reflect Swedenborg's desire to describe the Divine and heaven itself as both male and female in form. This gentleman was aware of the power of this message of the Universal Human form of God within the present theological dialogue.

After we were introduced, he asked if we Swedenborgians were still giving our view to the theological world. I said, "Yes, sir we are. That is why I am here." He said, "Good, the world needs the Swedenborgian view. Never stop sharing yourselves and doing good."

He told us to never stop giving our theological perspective, for the world needs the Swedenborgian view. Our understanding of God and humanity, and the relationship between us, is essential not only to theological dialogue, but living in this world. We are needed to lend our light to the new world view now in the process of creation. And he said, "Never stop sharing yourselves and doing good." He understood our language. He knew what "doing good" means in Swedenborgianese. He knew that "doing good" meant the combined efforts of truth and love being useful in our world.

This leads us back to the story. Okay, so things aren't perfect. We all know there is evil in the world and in

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## Hearts of Light

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our church and in ourselves. That's where the middle of the story comes in. God made a middle of the story and said it is good, again. In fact, being Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, God became Divinely Useful and arrived here to do Divine Good, in the humble form of one of her creation. Yes, there was a nearly insurmountable amount of evil due to our separation from the one living God. So, Jesus had to work at a spiritual level to clean up the mess, as the Messiah was expected to do. The Messiah was going to come and save us and did.

For many years our understanding of faith and works that we call regeneration, a personal journey toward salvation crowned by the Grace and love of God, was new stuff. This is no longer the case. As Jim Lawrence stated last evening, you, the grassroots of this church, and representatives to the NCCC and local clergy Groups, have had an effect upon mainline Christian Churches. Of course we can't take credit for the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutherans joining together and saying, "We always meant that both faith and works were needed for salvation, with ultimate salvation the gift of God." It took twenty years to clear the details but the proclamation is now signed. So we are not the only church affected by the spiritual presence of the Divine. In fact in many ways we are not the new church but an old church needing to catch up.

So we need to move on from the middle of the story, where much has been accomplished, to the end of the story, where our knowledge of God's love for all creation comes to fulfillment. We say that the goal of creation is to make a heaven of angels from the entire human race. That, folks, is still good news straight from heaven, and it needs to be heard, lived and spread by hearts of light. In the beginning of the story where all humanity is created by God to be equal, female and male, red, yellow, black and white, of all cultures and faiths, the foundation for the end of the story, Universal Salvation, can be

found.

As we move toward the middle of the story we realize that salvation is a personal choice in deciding if you are willing to take the darkness out of your heart to become a heart of light, an angel on earth. We need help for our personal journey toward salvation and wholeness and we only need to ask. God will provide the light and strength because moving toward the Heart of Divine Love and Mind of Divine Wisdom brings us home to the city, the New Jerusalem, the Holy City of God, which is God's goal for us.

This message of Universal Salvation guided by, and given by grace through, the Divine Love of the Universal Human is the message of value which we have for today's world. The world needs us. We can see so clearly through the bombing in London this week the negative impact of radical conservative theology, as a few people wishing power and filling others with an ideology of, "My faith or no faith, my way or no way." So few can generate so much fear and terror.

What if each of us became a heart of light? Together we became a church of light. Will we reach out to others, reorganize for the good of the message and become the radiant hearts of light that will draw others to our light of truth? It won't happen if we sit here and smugly say, "If you are smart enough or spiritual enough you will be drawn to us." It will happen because we are out in the world telling people there is another understanding of God that is filled with love and wisdom, not fear and separation from others.

It will take a strong effort from all of us, creating in our different ways to recreate this church so that it is new again. Then we will be telling everyone who will listen a simple statement of truth as we see it. Even if they disagree they will think about it. After a clergy panel discussion in which I participated, a very stalwart Lutheran minister who participates on the panel came to me and said, "Tonight was nearly enough to make me a Swedenborgian. If I become disheartened I know where I will go."

The smaller individual light we could shine upon the path to the formation of

new goals will begin to join with others, and a greater light, a greater energy, a greater focus, will begin to emerge. Toward this newness, this process of creation and communication, is the Divine Creative Spirit leading.

In this larger deeper light we are seen as a unity, a church of earth like the communities of heaven who are joined by their shared love and seen at a distance by the angels as one. When we become Hearts of Light, joined together as a true church, for the overall and longer spiritual goals of the Church, we will radiate in extremely powerful ways. We can radiate the goodness that we say we are by doing the useful work of sharing the truth to all people, giving hope and joy and laughter. God Bless each and all of you.

*The Rev. Marlene Laughlin is a Swedenborgian minister who, due to health problems, recently retired from many years service at the Wayfarers Chapel in Rancho Palos Verdes. She now lives in Carlsbad, California.* ☸

## Flames of Fire

(Continued from page 80)

the fact that the ordained ministry is a very public profession. Ordained clergy, probably even more than public school teachers, are watched by nearly everyone...as well as by God. This truly is a profession that is taken on through Divine help and nudging, because it most certainly isn't for the faint-hearted! One doesn't choose it so much as one is chosen for it.

In chapter one of the book of Hebrews, the seventh verse speaks of angels and ministers, stating that God's ministers are made as "flames of fire." Doctrinally, I'm coming down on the side of fire as representative of divine love, and seeing it as a perpetual presence of God's care in the heart of the ordained ministers who, supported by the divine love and wisdom that is God, seek the best ways to minister to all, preaching, teaching and leading. Vincent Van Gogh once wrote to a

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## Flames of Fire

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friend that "...one must never let the fire go out in one's soul but keep it burning." While this quotation is aimed more at the passion one brings to his or her life's work rather than being a spiritual statement, it certainly connects with the ordained minister as a "flame of fire" whose purpose is to ignite and assist in the process of spiritual growth in all humanity.

**W**e are a community, and it is a truth of community that we are influenced by the attitudes and lives of members of the community. The ordained ministry in our denominational community is charged with facilitating the spiritual well-being of people, helping them to live useful lives. Sometimes, according to author Joyce Rupp, our individual prayers are not enough to keep our passion for God alive in us. At those times, we need to draw close to others whose hearts are on fire with God. Simply by being with them we can often catch a spark that will renew our own lost radiance. Fire leaps from heart to heart.

And so, while we know that we are made for heaven, that we have that divine spark within us, it is imperative that we have a called and consecrated ordained ministry as part of our community; a group of people who are touched by God and are equipped to lead us, who continue to make us aware of what our purpose is, and who serve as the flames that illuminate our own spiritual lives. Our ordained clergy, God-chosen flames of fire, who are empowered through the moment of laying on of hands to facilitate the spiritual well-being and journey of people, are our hearts of fire. They are our guides through the twists and turns, the hazes and shadows of life. They are the igniters and often the re-igniters of our souls' journeys.

Thus, my charge and prayer for each of these ordinands, Carla, Doug, Sage, is that you become "flames of fire," radiant, and dedicated to your God-given call. Amen. ☸

## Swedenborgian Ministry of the Northwest

(Continued from page 85)

Martin was employed by the Board of Missions at a salary of \$12,000 a year to develop a Swedenborgian ministry in the Northwest, including the area from Portland, Oregon, to Vancouver, British Columbia. It was time for a new start!

**T**here was a nucleus of church members in Portland, Oregon, and Paul offered to visit on a regular basis to lead worship and provide pastoral services. When he asked for travel expenses and a small honorarium, the treasurer of the Portland church reported that there were no funds. A denominational inquiry revealed that the treasurer had embezzled all the funds, over \$130,000, and there was no legal recourse!

Paul visited Vancouver several times, but the group was limited to four elderly members who eventually decided to disband and transfer their endowment to the British Columbia Society. He met in Olympia, Washington, a number of times with a group of people from the Turley family.

### The Stonehouse

**P**aul had a dream for establishing a Swedenborgian Spiritual Growth Center in the greater Seattle area where there was a nucleus of church members, although there was no church building or even funds for an office. Like Abraham who left Haran, "not knowing whither he went," Paul went to the state capital in Olympia in October 1985 to incorporate the "Swedenborg Spiritual Growth Center." In December 1985, with the support of the Board of Missions and financial assistance from Convention and the Pacific Coast Association, a small house was leased in downtown Redmond (home of Microsoft). It was a historic building known in the community as "The Stone House." The largest room was used for

a Swedenborg library and reading room, visiting with people who dropped in, classes, programs, and worship services. Paul worked in the center five days a week by himself, taught all the classes in the evenings and led the worship services.

**I**n summer 1989 church members met to deliberate on their future. In November 1989 they began holding weekly worship services in Stonehouse, and a children's program was organized by Peggy Stansbury and Sandie Grumman. Attendance and membership increased quickly, and soon the

space was outgrown. As a venture of faith, "The Swedenborg Spiritual Growth Center" moved into larger quarters a block away in November, 1991, still doing business as Stonehouse. A bookstore was opened, programs expanded, and a regular worship-

ing congregation developed. Alas, the lease was terminated, and it became necessary to move again. In August 1993, Chris Laitner and Barbara Boxwell visited the site and recommended to the Growth and Outreach Support Unit of Convention that the Center move down the street into a much more expansive setting in the same block and that programs be increased. The move took place in December, 1993.

**B**y 1998 income from sales of books and gift items increased to more than \$250,000. Gross income from classes and workshops was just under \$110,000. From fifteen to twenty classes a week were sponsored, amounting to more than 750 for the year, and there was an average of two weekend workshops per month. Participants in the classes and workshops were well over 7,500 for the year. Program brochures were sent out to more than 7,000 people on the mailing list. When these statistics were reported to Convention leaders, they were received



*Original Stone House,  
Paul and son Beau on steps.*

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## Swedenborgian Ministry of the Northwest

(Continued on from 95)

as idle tales, "and they believed them not."

Richard and Peggy Stansbury took Rclasses in Swedenborg, led by Paul, and they joined the church. (Dick Stansbury is now the president of the Swedenborg Foundation.) Lisa Cole and her twin sister, Linda Sebenius, were attracted to Paul's ministry, and they offered to lead the music program on Sunday mornings. One consequence of their involvement, as you may have heard, is that Lisa Cole became Lisa Grace Allison in March 2005

upon her marriage to Eric Allison, present pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound. Paul and Erni Martin officiated at the surprise wedding service which had been publicized as an equinox celebration.

### Full-time Minister

In fall 1993, inspired by the marked increase in the worshipping congregation, the church asked Paul to give up his directorship of the Stonehouse and become their full-time minister. Paul was reluctant to give up his dream of a spiritual growth center and bookstore, and also felt that the growth of the church was dependent on Stonehouse. He also was convinced that it was not economically viable for the church to employ a full-time minister at that time.

When the Los Angeles church made a pledge of \$100,000 for Swedenborgian ministry in the northwest, church leaders earmarked the whole amount for ministry of the church and employed the Rev. Steve Pults for a three-year term as minister beginning in January 1994. Although bookstore sales increased dramatically and programs expanded, church attendance did not

increase, the endowment was depleted, and it was voted not to renew the contract with Steve Pults.

### Purchase by the Pacific Coast Association

When the lease on the Leary Way property expired in 1999, the landlord demanded an impossible increase. It was time to move again!

Convinced that the future of the Stonehouse Spiritual Growth Center was bright, and that it could be self-supporting if it could purchase its own building, the Pacific Coast Association offered to invest Association funds in such a build-

ing. After extensive research, it voted to purchase a 15,000 square foot complex in Kirkland, two miles away.

The move was made in October 1999, and the building was renovated to provide space for a bookstore, worship center, programs, and office space for health practitioners. Renovation costs were higher than anticipated, and the best space for the bookstore, at the front of the building, was not available for a year. Book sales for that year were severely limited. These factors, plus a severe downturn in the stock market, led to panic on the part of Association officers that they would not be able to continue the mortgage payments for the purchase of the building, and they voted to sell the building for \$2.5 million in November 2001.

At the same time, dissension within the Center's Board of Trustees led to the abrupt firing of the founder-director, Paul Martin, in October 2001. His father, Ernest Martin, was also relieved of his full-time \$1 a year position as assistant to the director. Part of the Board's reasoning was that in fall 2001 the denomination had voted

to withdraw all financial support for Stonehouse, and the Board was under pressure to reduce expenses.

Without going into the gory details (wait for the movie, "Stonegate"), the fortunes of Stonehouse under the new leadership declined precipitously. Within three months the store was on the verge of bankruptcy. Within a year, the trustees resigned and turned over operation and management to Paul, along with the accumulated debts amounting to more than \$200,000. The new owners asked the Stonehouse to vacate, and soon afterwards also asked the Puget Sound church to move out.

### The Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound

The drama was heightened by the involvement of the church. In January 2000, the church voted to employ the Rev. Eric Allison as minister of "The Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound" for a three-year period. In December 2003, his contract was renewed for a second three-year term. Eric had been the denomination's consultant on church growth for over ten years, and he saw a ministry in collaboration with Stonehouse as offering exciting possibilities for growth. He also valued working daily as part of an unofficial team with two other Swedenborgian ministers, Paul and Erni Martin. Eric had an office at Stonehouse and enjoyed interacting with book store customers and program participants.

The Sunday morning congregation grew under Eric's leadership, and he instituted a number of new programs. The Ministries Support Unit of Convention was encouraged by the church growth in evidence and voted to continue financial support for the church, although on a declining basis. The church now meets for worship at a dance studio in Redmond (Danceworks), and its association with Stonehouse is limited to the minister's office.

### What Next?

A number of people, especially friends, advised Stonehouse to declare

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*Rev. Paul Martin and wife Sandra Grumman, co-founders and directors of Stonehouse Bookstore and Spiritual Growth Center, in their new location in Kirkland*

## Swedenborgian Ministry of the Northwest

(Continued from page 96)

bankruptcy and wipe the slate clean of all debts. But many of the debts included loans from family members and friends, unpaid bills from longtime book vendors, and salaries accrued to Paul, but not paid. In a leap of faith, a new Board of Trustees was elected, Paul was elected president, and he signed a personal five-year lease at \$54,000 per year, plus taxes and utilities, on a new building for Stonehouse in the Houghton Village shopping center in Kirkland. Doing business as "The Stonehouse Bookstore and Growth Center," the Center is open seven days a week: Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Following is the Mission Statement which has evolved: "The Stonehouse Bookstore and Growth Center is a non-profit learning community which facilitates the integration of spirit into everyday life. We provide resources and programs for fostering the personal development, health and healing, and spiritual growth in order to bring harmony to our relationship with the Earth and with each other."

For the last two years Paul and his wife Sandie have been working long hours as co-directors at the Stonehouse for no salary, deeply committed to the realization of their dream. Income from sales, programs, and office rental in 2004 were 50% greater than in 2003, and income in 2005 is 75% higher than corresponding months in 2004. Gross income for 2005 is budgeted for just under \$300,000. Contributions have also been received from friends and foundations, but considerable money has been borrowed to replenish the inventory. The Center is self-supporting now, except for any salary for Paul and Sandie. It is expected that modest salaries will begin to be paid in the second half of 2005.

In addition to the sale of books and gift items, Stonehouse hosts programs and classes in the two meeting rooms. Over thirty programs were held in April alone. On the weekend of April 22-23, the Stonehouse was invited to

have an exhibit at the Northwest Convocation of Catholic Women in the Seattle Convention Center; it was attended by more than 2,000 women. Paul and Sandie spent two 14-hour days at the center, sold more than \$3,000 of books and gift items, and reached hundreds and hundreds of people with news of the Swedenborgian Spiritual Growth Center.

The Stonehouse is respected as the most prominent spiritual bookstore and growth center on the east side of Seattle. Its mailing address is 10600 NE 68<sup>th</sup> Street, Kirkland, WA 98033. A newsletter is sent out via e-mail each month. The e-mail address is [paul@stonehouse.org](mailto:paul@stonehouse.org). The website is [www.stonehouse.org](http://www.stonehouse.org).

*Note: In the November Messenger we will describe the role of the Mosswood Hollow Retreat Center in Duwall, Washington, as part of the Swedenborgian Ministry in the Northwest. Paul and Sandie are co-directors of Mosswood Hollow, a 40-acre site in the foothills of the Cascades, which is also the residence of the Martin-Grumman family and the retirement home of father Ernest Martin.* ☒

## Why the Arts

(Continued from Back Cover)

classes the roll call of theologians: Carlyle, the Brownings, Coleridge, Blake, Goethe, Poe, Conan Doyle, Flaxman, Page, Inness, Pyle, Powers, Keith, Strindberg, Lindsay, Markham, Yeats, Borges, Milosz, to name some.

The radicalness of the critique Swedenborg executed upon the Christianity of his day is the clear culprit for his widespread rejection in the corridors of religious power. He was too totalizing in his condemnation of basic Christian doctrines that were formulated as far back as Paul, and so his vision threatened the powerful in religion. But the artists who embraced Swedenborg as the sane savior of a meaningful Christianity almost to a person were not folks of standing in the institutions of religion and were freer to pursue a purer idealism.

One reason why Swedenborg was

denounced as a heretic in nineteenth-century America is that his traction among a certain zone of the intelligentsia in American culture was peaking simultaneously with the popularity of a new spiritualism that was creating havoc in the religious sensibilities of the established churches. And a central spiritual question on the minds of many was whether the realm of spirit really existed, and if so, what was its significance and what was its relationship to our lives in the manifest world. For so many, Swedenborg was the spokesperson for seeing deeply. He saw new realities that made sense.

And these new realities held immense appeal to many artists. So it was that Inness and Page could, via Swedenborg's vision of the equilibrium of spiritual forces, understand how to paint landscapes in a new way based on what they called the middle tone. So it was that Keith could, via Swedenborg's vision of correspondence between the spiritual and natural worlds, understand how to lay his paint on the canvas differently in order to portray the spiritual base of nature. So it was that Goethe, via Swedenborg's vision of the soul's journey after death, could return to his masterpiece *Faust* after laying it aside for years and finish it.

But you know what? Swedenborg's inspiration for artists isn't merely a historical story. Swedenborg's inspiration of artists is still going on today. We have many in our church: Ken and Laurie Turley, Lisa Cole Allison, Mona Conner, Jennifer Tafel, Carla Friedrich, to name a few—who consciously use Swedenborgian spiritual insight when creating their works of art. And you will see this week the artwork of many, many more contemporary Swedenborgians! This convention is an invitation via Swedenborgiana to embrace the realm of religion and the arts—to frolic in their cross-fertilization and to explore the mutually-enriching gift each has for the other.

May our time be blessed with God's loving power through beauty: the beauty of God's creation and of God's creativity—in us.

*The Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.* ☒

# General Council Report

## Pre-Convention Meeting

On Saturday, July 9, 2005, General Council met from 9 A.M. – 5 P.M. for their pre-Convention meeting at the Foothill Campus in Berkeley, California. During the meeting the officers made their reports, as did the chair of the Council of Ministers. The minutes of the fall General Council meeting and the December conference call were approved. There was discussion regarding the Augmentation Funding process and the work of the Ministries

Support Unit in regard to this issue. General Council talked about wanting to make the Augmentation Fund Committee a true granting body. Another idea that will be discussed further in the fall is whether there continues to be a need for both a Cabinet and General Council.

General Council, as members of the National Church Trustees, met and heard a report from the Rev. Rich Tafel, the church president, and church member Beth Harvie. Then, as members of the Iungerich Fund Trustees, the Council made several grants totaling \$10,510.

General Council accepted the appointment of John McIntosh to the retirement committee and in order to fulfill a legal requirement of the retirement fund, they passed a resolution enabling the contribution for the



*Gloria Toot hands over official Corporate Seal to Susan Wood. Gloria was honored for 16 years of service.*

year ending April 30, 2005, to be invested in the fund.

And last, but not least, the Council allocated \$4000 from the prior year's income in the Ministers Foreign Travel Fund to enable the Rev. Dr. George Dole to accept the invitation to attend the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting of the Japan Swedenborg Association.

*--Gloria Toot, outgoing secretary*

## Post Convention Meeting

The meeting opened on July 13, 2005, with President Chris Laitner welcoming newly-elected General Council members Deane Currie, Herb Ziegler, and Rev. Kathy Speas. The newly-

elected Secretary of Convention, Susan Wood, was also welcomed. Gloria Toot, retiring Secretary of Convention, has turned over the Corporate Seal to Susan Wood for safekeeping.

A budget adjustment was approved for fiscal year 2005 to add \$2,000 to cover the two-year project for the indexing of *The Messenger*. When complete, this process will make it possible to research all information ever printed in *The Messenger*, back to its original issue published in 1895.

Council had extensive discussion on the current deficit budget and spoke about increasing income, in addition to decreasing expenses. It was also agreed that budget prioritization would be a major goal at the next General Council meeting in November 2005 at which time the budget for 2006 would be approved.

The president formally confirmed the appointments of the Rev. Susannah Currie, John McIntosh and Gretchen Henn to the Retirement Committee.

The president formally confirmed the appointments of Larry Conant, Rev. Robert Bossdorf, Dan Dyer, John Perry and Peter Toot to the Investment Committee.

The president is still working on finding a PCA member to appoint to the Wayfarers Board. When the person is found, General Council members will be asked for an email vote of approval. This appointment will be made by September 15, 2005.

All documents were completed granting signing approval of Convention's legal documents to the members of the current Executive Committee, per authorization in the bylaws of the Swedenborgian Church.

The next meeting of General Council will be held at the Walker Center in Newton, Mass., November 3-6, 2005.

*--Susan Wood, incoming secretary* ☩



*Gloria feels lighter!*



*General Council members in a huddle at executive table. (L-R) Gloria Toot, secretary; Chris Laitner, president; Sharon Williams (background), Jim Erickson, vice-president; Larry Conant, treasurer; Bette McDonnell, Deane Currie, Rev. Renee Machiniak, Sandy Degi, Herb Zeigler, Barbara Cullen*



## Baptism

**Penabaker**—Nicklas Ford Penabaker was baptized into the Christian faith on Father's Day Sunday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, at the Church of the Holy City in Royal Oak, Michigan, the Rev. Renee Machiniak officiating. The congregation sends our love and prayers to his mother and father, Cindy and Scott Penabaker and sister, Maija.

## Confirmations

**Prescott, Ritchie**—Kaitlin Walker Prescott, daughter of Tricia & Roy Prescott, (grandmother, Vivian Bright) and Brooke Ritchie, daughter of Konny & Rick Trinka, (grandparents, Lynn and Judi Welch) were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem in Pawnee Rock, Kansas, on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the Rev. Jane Siebert, officiating.

**Zion**—Clarence Edward Zion was confirmed into the faith and life of the Swedenborgian Church in Urbana, Ohio, June 26, by Lay Leader Betsy Coffman

## Marriages

**Currie and Rohrer**—the Rev. Sage Currie was united in marriage to Megan Rohrer July 4, 2005, at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. The Revs. Alison Lane and Joseph Blotz officiated.

**Sickler and Siebert**—Amy Lynn Sickler and Andrew David Siebert celebrated the uniting of their lives in marriage June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The bride's mother, Debbie Sickler, and the groom's mother, the Rev. Jane Siebert, were honored to officiate the wedding. Amy and Drew are living in Kansas City for six months while Drew completes training for his job as an electrical engineer with Logic Control Sales. Both the bride and groom graduated this spring from Kansas State University and will be employed in the Wichita area..

## Deaths

**Imhoff**—Betty B. Imhoff, 90, entered the spiritual world July 13, 2005, after a brief illness. Betty is now with her beloved husband, Bob, and a host of family and friends who welcome her. She is survived by her three children and their spouses, Christopher J. Imhoff (Eloisa), Alison Merrill (Rodman) and Carolyn Picciotti (Ronald), as well as three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Betty was a third-generation Swedenborgian, who lived her faith and provided insight and loving support and guidance to her family and many friends. She was instrumental in the relocation of the Philadelphia Church to Temenos in West Chester, Pennsylvania, as well as the establishment of the Temenos Retreat Center. A memorial service was held July 31, at 3:00 PM at the Temenos Retreat Center, the Rev. Susannah Currie officiating.

**Seekamp**—John R. Seekamp, 85, an integral part of the Swedenborg Foundation for over 50 years, entered the spiritual world May 28, 2005. He served as president of the Foundation from 1981 to 1990, and was key in

revitalizing and transforming the organization in the early eighties, and envisioning and organizing the tricentennial celebration of Swedenborg's birth, in 1988. He recognized that it offered a unique opportunity to promote awareness of Swedenborg's life and works. The result was a highly successful symposium on Science and Spirituality; *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision*, a pictorial biography and anthology focused on his influence, edited by Robin Larsen; and a traveling museum exhibit featuring Swedenborg and models of some of his inventions. In the opinion of the staff and everyone who knew him, John "radiated kindness and goodness and treated everyone with respect and dignity. His humanity was never eclipsed by his professionalism." Prior to his passing, he held a dual role at the Foundation—on staff as executive associate, involved in fundraising for the Foundation and the New Century Edition, and as treasurer on the board of directors. He is survived by his wife Diane and several children in their blended family. He will be sorely missed. ☩

## 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

# Why the Arts?

Opening of Convention  
July 9, 2005

*Jim Lawrence*

It all started with Ken Turley's suggestion at last year's convention that this Berkeley convention, amid the atmosphere of one of the leading academic programs in religion and the arts, might be just the year to go all-out and not just celebrate the potentially powerful and facilitative role the arts can play in spiritual awakening, spiritual expression, and indeed even in spiritual formation, but maybe this is the year to go all-out and DO the arts while we're together.

So, as much as possible that's what has been planned, and we hope everyone will find pieces of this year's theme lifting your spirit, deepening your spiritual reflection, and creating a strange warming in your heart.

It has become abundantly clear to me that in scholarship circles Swedenborg's influence in the arts contrasts in one dramatic way with his influence in religion. Swedenborg's influence on American Christianity most certainly exists, but it didn't come through the Who's Who of historical theology. Though the inspiration for formulations of Christian thought would over time attain broad assent in North American Christianity, Swedenborg was nevertheless taken very seriously by not a single major theologian and somewhat seriously by just a few theologians of reputation: Oetinger in Germany during his own lifetime; in the U.S. Bushnell and Channing to a modest extent in the nineteenth century, Walter Marshall

Horton in the twentieth. But overall Swedenborg's influence in American Christianity (and it is in the U.S. where his reach has been greatest) came through from the bottom up.

I have for some time hung on my office wall a Xerox of the first page of the preface of Benjamin Worcester's 1883 biography of Swedenborg, called *The Life and Mission of Emanuel*

*Swedenborg*. The book opens with these words: "The good name of Swedenborg is no longer in question. In place of being denounced as a heretic, he begins to be recognized by Christian students in all denominations as a pioneer of the advanced theology fast finding its way into the thought of all Churches." We can document scores of parish clergy of many denominational stripes and thousands of lay seekers reading Swedenborg in the nineteenth century and re-shaping their understanding of the Christian faith due to Swedenborg: beliefs about after-life, beliefs about charity as integral to faith, beliefs about the oneness of God. We can thank the publishing societies of the New Church for much of that work of evangelism.

But also, we have another class of shapers of thought to thank. If you want to talk about the leading lights of cultural thought over the past 300 years, it hasn't been the name theologians who have taken Swedenborg earnestly. The movers and shakers of a new culture of thought who recognized the potency of Swedenborg's Christian theosophy were *artists*. That roster of cultural notables utterly out-

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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.