

THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

June 2006

From the President Cheers and Thank-You's

Over the past two years, I've written some *Messenger* articles that have highlighted things happening throughout the denomination, listed some of the traveling that I've done, and outlined some basic steps we need to take to be good stewards of our resources.



As this second year of my term of office draws to a close, it's time to thank and celebrate all who continue to be so involved in the life of the Church: the wonderful members and involved friends who give time and talent to our local societies, our regional associations, and our North American denominational work. Many, many thanks and a multitude of hurrahs for your care, your commitment, and your support!!

It is quite easy from my perspective to see the new people, the new programs, the new energy that is present in our various ministries. It is not as easy to see that larger view from the vantage point of being involved in the work of a local ministry. I know that there are times when those among us feel kind of worn down with the daily needs and concerns of local church work. To each of you who continues to work so hard locally, who worries about success, who figures out ever new and creative ways to help our churches succeed, I can only say (again and again), "Congratulations! You're doing wonderful things!"

Our Church, because of each of you, is here and alive; making a difference.

Our church communities are reaching out, alone or in partnership with other area churches, with service to the neighbor. Our individual members are involved in various programs through which we both teach and model our doctrines of life and use. Our youth, our clergy, our large number of volunteers at every level, all deserve special recognition for the talents they share within and without the church.

Much of our history is based on spreading our theology through participation in other venues – reading groups, seeker gatherings, other church programs, school settings, etc. This sharing and cross-fertilization process is

still very much at the heart of what we do, and my hat is off to all of you who are the modern day evangelists and modelers of the forward-thinking and inclusive truths of our Church.

We're hoping to have a "Celebration Board" up at our annual Convention at the end of this month, and, over the days we spend together, we'll add more and more information about the meaningful things that are occurring within the denomination through local church, association, and individual work.

Thank you all for your work as the church!!

—Chris Laitner 

Celebrations

North American Society Launched


The North American Society is pleased to announce the selection of Rev. Sage Currie Rohrer as the minister to lead us into new territory in service to isolated members. Rev. Rohrer brings a wealth of talent and passion for this developing ministry; we're excited to have her. Read her welcome and spiritual message on our website.

The website is ready! Visit www.SwedenborgianCommunity.com for a first hand look at Convention's newest ministry. For those of you too far from a physical church and for those of you who are seeking more...changes in technology have allowed us to create a community in cyberspace. We want and need your participation and feedback! Let us know what you think, things you would like to see. It's easy to get involved. Visit the website for details on how to become a member.

Look for a North American Society Committee member at Convention, we will all be there!

Beth Harvie, Rev. Kevin Baxter, Susan Wood-Ashton, Susan Ditmire

LaPorte, Indiana

The LaPorte New Church confirmed 14 new members in 2005, growing from 22 to 36 active members. The Rev. Freeman Schrock, pastor, will be officially ordained this month at Convention in Urbana, Ohio. 

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Of Flim-Flam and Spam

Spam has always appeared to be of dubious origin, even back in the days when it was just that porky pink loaf in a small coffin-shaped can that was sliced and put on sandwiches. (Actually it wasn't half bad if you smeared a lot of pickle relish on it. But I digress.)

Now, in addition to tons of junk snail mail that has to be recycled—some-where—most of us are being deluged with junk email, the modern-day spam, unless we have spam blockers, which sometimes work so well they block out the people we want to hear from. The stuff ranges from outrageous and inappropriate offers to enlarge, enhance, reduce or lower whatever you might want enlarged, reduced, enhanced or lowered, to scams designed for identity theft. The latter kind seem to be getting more imaginative and entertaining.

First we had the cycle of email notices from bogus banks looking like the real thing, complete with logos. They politely insisted that we update our information by going to their bogus websites and filling in all the blanks with our social security numbers, mother's maiden name, all the right stuff. Sometimes there was the veiled threat that there might be a hold put on the account if we didn't comply. (Of course, that wasn't especially worrisome if we didn't even *have* an account with that bank.) This nonsense proliferated to the extent that the legitimate banks had to set up special departments devoted to hunting down the frauds and devising ways to prevent further damage.

Now in the past month there's a rash of what can loosely be described as variations on the Nigerian fraud. It goes roughly like this: A well-respected-above-reproach bank director in private investment banking services, usually in a foreign country, has access to approximately 8 to 10 million dollars; the person who set up the numbered account with him died suddenly, and the investment banker, through an elaborate and complex set of circumstances, is *the only one who knows of its existence* and

wants to share it 50-50 with *you*, as he can set you up legally as next of kin and you can legitimately claim this money. There is always a time element involved; if this isn't done within a few months the money will revert to the ownership of the (fill in the blank) government, or some other official entity. And of course you are to send name, address, and some ask for your bank account number right up front.

I haven't received any of these yet, but Steve has received four—varying in length, complexity, sophistication, and drama—from persons claiming to be “directors” at, respectively, the Royal Bank of Scotland, the Bank of China, a Mr. Ming Yang at the Hang Seng Bank in Hong Kong, and one from an ordinary citizen in Zimbabwe, a Celine Babosa, who needs to get her dead father's millions out of the country before she's murdered. That one begins, “Hello, Dear, Greetings in God's name. I carefully read your profile, got intrigued and decided to contact you.”

“What profile is she talking about?” I kidded Steve.

“I dunno. I guess it was the *intriguing* one.”

“The email is to ‘undisclosed-recipients.’ It would appear that you aren't the only one she finds so intriguing that she'll hand over several million dollars.”


“You're just jealous because I'm getting higher class spam than you are.”

“I think you should answer it, I'm dying to know more about how these cons operate. If you could just email back and say, ‘tell me more about this,’ or something to draw them out without giving any information...”

“It's tempting,” Steve said, “but I'm afraid they'd have some way of getting personal information even if I just answered the email. I don't think I want to risk it.”

He's probably right, but my Nancy Drew antenna was way up. I wanted to catch these guys. The sad thing is, they wouldn't be doing this if somebody didn't buy into it. People fall

for this stuff. The con artists depend on hooking that part of us that wants to believe we can get something for nothing, that wants to trust we've been specially singled out for something too good to be true, that desperate part of us that's starving for real spiritual nourishment and still doesn't understand what we're really hungry for. The fellow who was convicted of perpetrating the Omega fraud is behind bars for a good number of years; it was estimated that he bilked thousands of people out of at least \$20,000,000, some believe it was closer to \$50,000,000. I wonder what he thinks about, sitting in his lonely cell at night. Probably the book he's writing that will become a bestseller. Meanwhile, Steve sits in his lonely office, not without occasional stabs of regret that he might have let 20 million bucks slip through his fingers by not jumping on such a unique opportunity that came knocking, not *once*, but *four* times.

—Patte LeVan 

THE MESSENGER

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In Company with Angels

Holds Fundraising Event at Bryn Athyn Cathedral

On Saturday, April 22nd at 8 pm, an elegant fundraising event for *In Company with Angels* was held in the Choir Hall of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral. The guest list included members of the General Convention, General Church, the Lord's New Church, Partners for Sacred Places and executives from

many local art and funding organizations. It was a historic event in that members from three of the New Church organizations in North America were called together to collaborate on

a joint effort. *In Company with Angels* is being organized by the Temenos Retreat Center, the outreach ministry of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos, and is being headed up by Rev. Susannah Currie, pastor of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos.

A group of 75 or so gathered, despite a heavy spring rain, to the preview showing of four of the seven Tiffany stained glass windows that are the heart of the planned multi-media project, *In Company with Angels*. The visual impact of the lighted windows in the darkened space was enhanced with the ethereal sound of original music composed by Rev. Ken Turley, "Meditations on the Seven Angels." The beauty of the exquisite stained glass windows and the powerfully angelic sound of Ken's music combined to create the atmosphere and the experience that we will be attempting to capture in the creation of our diverse media offerings.

After a heartfelt welcome from Rev. Jeremy Simons, Pastor of the Cathedral,

and Frank Vagnone, Executive Director, Rev. Susannah Currie spoke from the balcony of the choir hall about the vision of sharing *In Company with Angels* with the larger world. Bob Jaeger, president of Partners for Sacred Places, which jointly sponsored the event with the Temenos Retreat Center and the

Cathedral, shared his appreciation of the project's unique vision in the use of sacred art.

Sixteen members and friends of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos and the Temenos Advisory Board were on

hand as 'angel ambassadors' to greet, thank and answer questions, as well as provide a presence of support for the project at the gathering. Professional representatives Art Femenella, conservator, Kathy Jordan, restoration artisan, and Karen Simmons, Executive Director of our fiscal agency, the Chester County Community Foundation, were also on hand to show that *In Company with Angels* is being expertly guided by their expertise. Many new relationships were

built as we shared in questions and conversation.

Currently five museum curators have expressed an interest in negotiating the display of our museum exhibition. As funds are raised, the dream of *In Company with Angels* will become a reality.

"The essence of a thing cannot come into being unless it unites with a means that can express it."

— Emanuel Swedenborg

Four of windows remained on display at the Cathedral Choir Hall through May and with the public exposure of their daily tours and the distribution of informational materials, *In Company with Angels* seeks to raise \$300,000 by June 2006 to begin development of the museum exhibition, interactive website, and introductory film that comprise Phase I of this multi-media project.

Join the growing number of contributors.

Donors:	Gifts up to \$99
Friends:	Gifts of \$100 to \$499
Sponsors:	Gifts of \$500 to \$999
Supporters:	Gifts of \$1,000 to \$4,999*
Benefactors:	Gifts of \$5,000 to \$9,999*
Patrons:	Gifts of \$10,000 to \$49,999*
Angels:	Gifts of \$50,000 and above*

*A variety of named gift opportunities are available

Donations can be mailed to: *In Company with Angels* Fund, Chester County Community Foundation, 28 West Market Street, West Chester, PA 19382 (Credit Card donations are also accepted on-line at www.chescocf.org.)

—Rev. Susannah Currie



Angel Ambassadors (L-R) Paul Camy, Dave Closterman, Pete Brakman, Betsy Smailer, Dori Closterman, Rev. Susannah Currie and John Smailer



Rev. Ken Turley and Rev. Susannah Currie

Maine Association Enriched by Visioning Workshop

Wilma Wake

The Maine Association had a visioning workshop with Rev. Dr. Rich Tafel in Fryeburg on April 1, 2006. Five from Portland joined about 15 from the Fryeburg New Church. It was an exciting and enriching day, as each church developed a mission statement as well as short and long-term goals towards reaching it. Everyone left with concrete and specific goals to start right away.

We gained renewed appreciation from Rich about the unique dimensions of our denomination and brainstormed some creative ways to communicate these to our communities. The two churches came to know each other better, and are working on projects together as an Association. Here are two of our current projects:

Maine Council of Churches:

Our church in Portland has been a member of the Maine Council of Churches for some years, but just as an individual church. We are now applying as an Association for membership, so that we will be members as "The Maine Association of Swedenborgian Churches." This will give us representation on the board, and greater involvement in the Maine church community. The Revs. George Dole, Ken Turley, and Wilma Wake met with the Executive Director and Board Chair recently to share more about the Swedenborgian

faith and what we would bring to the Council. We expect to complete our membership application and be voted into membership this spring.

and perhaps with the Maine Council of Churches. In our Maine Association meeting in October, Peggy will offer a three-hour introduction on NVC.

More Portland Church News

The Portland Church recently voted to do business as "The Portland New Church" instead of "The Portland Swedenborgian Church." We were tired of being invited to bring Swedish food to local ethnic festivals!

We are working on an exciting new future plan we are calling Project Thrive; to help us move beyond survival mode into being a vibrant and self-sufficient church. As part of the plan, we have hired a consultant, Linda Kriger, to prepare the building for more community use and rentals, as well as putting out terrific publicity. Linda has completed her first major building project: Having a second exit in our sanctuary. Our one-exit sanctuary has been a hazard in case of fire, and limits our ability to rent it to other groups. Linda has arranged for the building of a new door in the back of the room, with small deck and stairs leading to the grass outside.

The congregation did a "Door Blessing" on Easter morning, and on May 6th we held a gala open house for the community (see flyer.)

Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is pastor of the Portland New Church in Portland, Maine. ☩

GALA OPEN HOUSE

at

THE PORTLAND NEW CHURCH

(formerly The Swedenborgian Church)

FREE Admission!



Bodywork & Psychics 1-5pm
FREE! No charge!

Hourly Raffle Drawings for cool prizes!

⚙

A "Guess how Many Balls are in the pot" contest!

⚙

Artistic Goods sale to benefit church improvement fund!

⚙

Kids Welcome with watchful adults. Art corner provided for fun!

⚙

Meet Rev Dr Wilma Wake at our own greeting table!



Light Lunch 1-2, Dinner Buffet 5-6
By free will donation



Silent Auction 6-9pm
To Benefit our Building Improvement/handicap bath fund



Musical Entertainment 6-9pm
Some jammin' time...
Bring your instruments!!

COME SHOW SUPPORT for LIBERAL INCLUSIVE CHURCHES!

and HAVE SOME FUN!!!

Saturday, May 6th, 2006 ~ 1 to 9pm

302 Stevens Ave, Portland ~ FMI 767-1990

Non-violent Communication:

The Maine Association is co-sponsoring a weekend workshop in November 2006 on "Non-Violent Communication", Level I, with trainer Peggy Smith. We are co-sponsoring it with the Allen Ave. Unitarian Universalist Church, with Peace Action Maine,

Interactive Approach Meets People Where They Are

Carla Friedrich



The Swedenborgian Church of San Diego has been trying to enliven worship with an interactive approach to our spiritual

message and services. We do this by inviting individuals from the congregation and the larger life of the church, and even the larger San Diego community, into our worship service.

As the minister, I invite folks to share their loves, their interests, their work, expertise, musical gifts, skills, knowledge, and (especially) art with us, then I put whatever they offer into

conversation with the Scripture readings for the day and our Swedenborgian understanding. This opens us to new influences, reduces our insularity, helps us share phenomenal New Church teachings, and best of all gets people involved and fosters community.

The difference between this and a traditional guest speaker or preacher or musician (we do that too), where the minister in charge generally relinquishes the pulpit entirely, is that this model is more integrated with the spiritual message and gives a chance to share New Church teachings with the outside world by dovetailing it directly into the topic for the day. Drawing connections like this should always be done with respect and sensitivity, never coercive or overbearing, and

should always relate something that is of interest and congenial to the faith or perspective of the speaker. It is a matter of "meeting them where they are," so to speak. This model is based on the "divine human" principle where no part of the church or community operates in isolation or under compartmentalization: "Religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do good." This helps create an atmosphere in which each activity of the church, maintains its individuality and autonomy but becomes "distinguishably one" with the others. So it is perhaps a bit more interactive, stays doctrinally sound and yet is still mutually useful and supportive.

For example, our first guest was a surfer/actor/writer/instructor and owner of a trapeze "catcher" school.

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Police Chaplaincy in Royal Oak, Michigan



Renee Machiniak

A call comes in on a Friday night. "Chaplain, we need assistance notifying the family of a suicide case. Can you

come into the station and ride along with the officers?" I stop whatever I am doing (spending time with my family, eating dinner or resting). I get dressed in uniform and drive to the Royal Oak Station praying...

What will I find at the scene? How can I help? What does God ask of me at this gut-wrenching time? I believe that the Lord asks me simply to BE THERE; to be a compassionate presence in a time of need.

In the autumn of 2004, I began my police chaplaincy service to the community of Royal Oak, Michigan. The Chief of Police was looking for a trusted female pastor in the city who would serve not only civilians on-call, but

would also serve other female officers during monthly ride-alongs, would listen and support them in a considerably stressful job. After two previous years of turning down the volunteer position, I decided to accept the call. And I am so glad that I did!

Along with three of our Church of the Holy City members, Peter Guest, Mike Numerick and Theron Cromwell, I took a Citizens' Police Academy Class to familiarize myself with the history, procedures and cases relevant to my position. During computerized laser gun scenarios presented to us in the basement of the station, I discovered that my aim was right on center. I hit the computerized target straight in the heart, and the sergeant next to me exclaimed, "Pastor, I can't believe you hit dead center!" Feeling shocked myself, I said, "I guess the Lord aims straight for the heart too, in a different way of course!" We were asked to go through different crime scene scenarios, not to use actual guns or other weapons

on call, but to get a clearer understanding of the stress and pressure the officers feel every day and to sense the intensity inherent in quick, life-changing decisions made in the snap of a second. Volunteer chaplains are not equipped with firearms, and we do not use force of any kind in our position. Prayer and compassion are our tools. We follow specific guidelines for safety with the officers and wear bullet-proof vests for protection.

Once a month, I go to the Police Station for a briefing, for scheduling, and sharing stories of the past month with other chaplains. I am currently the only female chaplain in our city. Once a month, I ride along with officers on duty to build trust and familiarity with them. One week per month, I am the primary chaplain on-call and then also back-up for another chaplain, if needed. On average, I am called in once or twice a month to give death notifications for

(Continued on page 89)

Blogging and the Emergent Church

NCC's 2006 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches Cites Two 21st Century Trends

First it was the mimeograph machine and the Ediphone. Then radio preachers. Then, in rapid succession, the television, desktop computers, e-mail, CDs and mobile phones.

Almost from the beginning, American theology and church communication have been intricately linked with emerging technologies. Preachers have often sensed God's call to spread the word as loudly and as widely as possible, and many think electronic media are divinely inspired.

Now the National Council of Churches' 2006 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches examines the latest electronic miracle—the blog—and considers its influence on the Emergent Church (EC).

No one knows how many bloggers occupy cyberspace, but chances are your teen or tween are updating their thoughts even now. Blogs are journals or personal diaries that, instead of being hidden in desk drawers, are posted on the Internet for the prying eyes of thousands or even millions of readers. Many blogs are updated daily to record the evolving insights of the blogger. Not every blog is compelling reading, but some blogs have a growing and devoted following, such as Ariana Huffington's www.huffingtonpost.com/, for left-leaning viewpoints, or Hugh Hewitt's <http://hughhewitt.com/> on the right.

When the Democratic and Republican Conventions provided bloggers with press credentials, it was a sign that the blog has become a prominent medium of 21st century communication. It was probably inevitable, then, that the blog would become an important tool of the Emergent Church.

The Emergent Church is defined by Yearbook Editor, the Rev. Dr. Eileen W. Lindner, as a "conversation" (some would say movement) birthed in 20th century Protestantism and "characterized by a robust, energetic and growing online and hardcopy literature" that

attempts to shape responses to contemporary culture.

Common attributes of the EC, Lindner believes, are an emulation of the person and ministry of Jesus, a fondness for anecdotes and stories as means of discovering truth, a focus on mission, and a stress on the centrality of worship, even in experimental forms.

Scores of EC proponents are using blogs to advance these ideas and stimulate dialogue. Lindner says it is not possible to generalize them into a predictable demographic class, but she offers examples of prominent EC bloggers: John O'Keefe, founder of www.ginkworld.net, "an emerging/postmodern site exploring what it means to be a follower of Jesus in today's world;" Spencer Burke, former pastor, founder of <http://theooze.com> Web site, "dedicated to the emerging Church culture;" Mark Driscoll, founder of Mars Hill Church (www.marshillchurch.org) in Seattle; Mark Pearson, founder of www.cityside.org.nz in Auckland, New Zealand; and Karen Ward, founder and pastor of the Church of the Apostles, www.apostlechurch.org, in Seattle.

Emergent Church has become so popular among evangelicals that an EC track appears on the agenda of the National Pastors Conference sponsored by Zondervan and InterVarsity.

"Perhaps what has made blogging particularly interesting to religious people," Lindner writes, "is that journaling is already a discipline that religious people maintain in significant numbers." What is new, Lindner says, is that personal meditations can now be "easily and economically shared with a limitless number of others."

The blog is also becoming an important tactic for institutional communication. The Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana, associate general secretary of the NCC for Interfaith Relations, maintains a blog at [http://](http://nccinterfaith.blogspot.com/)

nccinterfaith.blogspot.com/.

No one knows what future technologies will offer, but Lindner expects blogging "to remain a persistent feature of the religious landscape" for the foreseeable future. EC blogging, she says, will remain on the Internet "so long as questions remain about faith, and people ponder the ultimate questions of life."

The 2006 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches cites many other blogs that are used by Emergent Church practitioners for communication.

(The Yearbook costs \$45 and may be ordered at www.electronicchurch.org.)

Convention Mini-Course

Editor's Note: Some mini-courses were described in the May 2006 *Messenger*. This one didn't quite make it for the May deadline, and some others that didn't make the June deadline will be announced at convention. (Convention registration forms and info were published in the April and May *Messengers*. They are also on the denomination's website, www.Swedenborg.org)

Title: *Altered Books*

Presenter: *Rev. Carla Friedrich*

Description:

Participants will create an 'altered book.' A cousin to journaling, collage, and scrapbooking, *Altered Books* have elements of all three. Each person's *Altered Book* would go beyond merely recording memories, as in scrapbook pages, in that the participants would be encouraged to generate statements and short pieces of writing that reflect spiritual growth and sacred language that is related to family, community, and their Swedenborgian context.

2006 Youth Worker Conference II

September 28 – October 1, 2006

**Blairhaven Conference & Retreat Center
Howlands Landing, S. Duxbury, Mass.**

It's back!!! Whether you missed the last Youth Worker Conference or attended and are ready for the next chapter, here's the youth worker opportunity you've been waiting for. The Educational Support Unit (EdSU) is sponsoring a Youth Worker Conference this fall in Eastern Massachusetts at the relaxing and stunningly beautiful Blairhaven Conference & Retreat Center. The workshop will be an excellent chance to learn the latest in youth work and gather with other people interested in working with teens. You will come away with renewed

excitement to work with children and refreshed from an ocean front retreat in the crisp autumn air of New England on the Cape.

Swedenborgian Youth Director, Kurt Fekete and United Church of Christ Massachusetts Conference Associate for Youth and Outdoor Ministries, Carl McDonald will facilitate the Conference. Together, Kurt and Carl will lead you through training so you can confidently plan youth programs, organize youth events, lead youth activities and supervise youth volunteers. We'll cover both the basics for

those new to the area of youth work as well as the latest in cutting edge techniques and activities. The cost of this Conference is \$100. Financial assistance and scholarships are available.

The Conference begins Thursday, September 28 at 8 pm and concludes Sunday, October 1 at 1 pm. For more information or to register to attend, please contact Kurt Fekete at 207-892-4390, toll free 866-333-7295 or email kfekete@hotmail.com. Don't miss this truly special opportunity.

We look forward to seeing you there! ☩

Thank You to Messenger Donors

The Messenger and the Communications Support Unit wish to thank these individuals and groups for subscriptions and donations to *The Messenger* from April 1, 2005-May 1, 2006. We are most grateful for your support. We hope no contributor has been omitted from this list, but if your name is not here and should be, please let us know.

Anonymous	Florence Kearns San Jose, CA	Edward Schnurr Needham, MA
Bobby and Joan Buchanan. Carlisle, MA	David Keating Hamburg, NY	Hampton and Elora Schoch Greenwood, SC
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Gloria Grabin Santa Maria, CA	Derek Parker Greenfield, IN	
Joy Jepson Silver Spring, MD	Albert and Jesse Rado Orange, CA	

Alliance President's Message

Dear Swedenborgian Women "Allies,"

Two years ago, at Convention in Kitchener, Ontario, a lady named Vivian B. Kelley was kind enough to "lend" me her copy of *A History of The Alliance of New-Church Women*, compiled by Ethel V. Rice in 1992. Actually, Vivian's copy fell into my hands because her copy of the book never got delivered to her for some reason, and someone asked me to hold on to it for her until we could track her down.

Seeing the book there on my work table (now its third year in my possession) always reminds me what a short time we have together as a national body—just lunch once a year! How could we possibly get anything done in such a little time, when I can't even manage to deliver one book?

After not having found Vivian at Convention in Berkeley, I kept the book and spent the plane ride back to Philadelphia reading about the past 102 years of women working together for the good of the church and their communities. They had meetings in each others' homes, encouraged each other in the daily reading of the Word through shared devotionals and, time and time again, pooled their money (and raised money) to do great things in the church. There are many parts of our church, physical and human and spiritual, that would not be standing had it not been for our foremothers and their dedication.

I sometimes wonder if what they started is beginning to be out of date. Demands for our time, attention and finances are so many these days! There are countless outlets for our spiritual and social fulfillment as well as for meaningful charitable giving. Why look to a group of "church-ladies" for these things? Even the words luncheon and alliance sometimes seem quaint, evoking fancy hats and a small copy of Roberts Rules in a gloved hand. Yet, each time we meet at convention, I am amazed at the amount we can accomplish together! Is it that the mite-box collection fills me with a childish glee? I get the feeling that

each person wants to put just a little extra in the quickly passed basket, because there is so much power in the story of little becoming much. Or it is the inspiring grace of faithful donors who give, not impulsively, but thoughtfully, year after year? All of these gifts, big and small, form building materials (natural and spiritual) for a future that we care for deeply, though we cannot predict how it will go.

This year, I want to acknowledge the work of the local women's groups in their churches and communities. I myself have been the grateful recipient of a gift from the Swedenborgian Women at Temenos (aptly called the SWAT team!), which helped me hugely while struggling through grad school. I am humbled by the gift, but also know that that group's reach continues to extend into greater and greater circles of useful giving as they go.

- * Is the women's alliance at your church doing great things?
- * Are you doing small things that make a big difference?
- * Has your group joined forces with other groups in your community?
- * Are you helping to maintain or revive a struggling group?
- * Have the efforts of your women's group possibly stimulated a little healthy competition with a men's group or a youth group?

I think I would like you to share your stories and accomplishments as inspiration with the national alliance. So please, if you can, send a report of your local Swedenborgian women's group. (Also, please remember that we try to set an agenda for the annual meeting before Convention as much as possible—so send items you'd like us to address there as soon as you can.)

If you happen to know Vivian B. Kelley, or course, and if you get a chance, please let her know that I've enjoyed reading from her book very much and would happily return it to her. It has helped me to appreciate the rich legacy of the women of the Swedenborgian church.

The Alliance of New Church Women of North America will continue to be whatever we choose to build. What an honor to be a part of this tradition! Have a peaceful and beautiful spring—I hope to see you at Urbana.

With love,
Katie Shelley
ktshelley@yahoo.com

Alliance of New Church Women
Please tell us....

Do you want to be included in future mailings? _____

Do you want to be removed from our mailing list? _____

Would you like to be part of an e-mail Round Robin? _____

(Include e-mail address below)

Comments: _____

From: _____

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(Continued on page 89)

Interactive Approach Meets People Where They Are

(Continued from page 85)

On another occasion, an actor performed a "one-act" on "Gossip" from an award winning play. Both individuals were wonderful speakers; lively and interesting in their own right. Even though they came from vastly different faith traditions, each was very caring and sensitive toward their audience. I found and highlighted divine principles within each part of what they offered,

related them to Scripture and then a Swedenborgian understanding of it all.

The "Science of Sciences" or Correspondences, really is a unified theory of everything and is the tool I use to bring everything together! It was an awesome Sunday with multivalent lessons about finding the Divine within the natural world, our relationship with a merciful loving God, the whole human regenerative process, and all of this grounded in practical living.

Our ministers have a long history of preaching in this interactive vein and helping people to connect God with secular and natural life, but we might not often invite people to be part of that experience. With the human component, there is an element of "witnessing" as to the spirit. It seems more alive. I enjoy the dynamic involved. It is fluid and improvisational and unpredictable, like life.

We are just trying it out, and there are many improvements to make, but it is lively and just plain fun. You could call it Preaching Improv. Or is that just another name for the Holy Spirit working within us and amongst us as well as in the world?



Epiphany Sunday at San Diego church, with guest preacher Ed Sylvia, author and SHS student, speaking on Quantum Physics and Spirituality. (Rev. Carla Friedrich at right.)

I learn from talking to so many of our ministers and what they are doing. I hope this inspires you to venture out and create new organic forms of worship specific to your own culture and context!

The Rev. Carla Friedrich is minister of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church, in San Diego, California. ☩

Police Chaplaincy in Royal Oak, Michigan

(Continued from page 85)

natural causes, accidents or suicides, or to serve as support for domestic violence calls. Each situation is unique and faith-stirring, and I am deeply grateful to be of service to my community.

This ministry has brought increased exposure and good will toward our local congregation, as I am more visible within the community. I will always cherish the 2005 Memorial Day Parade riding in one of the front police cars with Sergeant John Kowalski throwing plastic police badges out to the children along the streets! While I was throwing the badges and waving hello to the people I felt that, by virtue of my position, I represented the Lord's work as protector and healer. It was then, and remains, a darn good feeling! In giving the extra time and effort it takes to serve on the police force, my thoughts often go back to the familiar Swedenborgian quote, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." (Swedenborg, *Doctrine of Life*, n.1)

The Rev. Renee Macniniak is pastor of Church of the Holy City, the Swedenborgian Church in Royal Oak, Michigan ☩

Alliance President's Message

(Continued from page 88)

form below with check or M.O. made out to N. Am. Alliance. Thank you! Please send ___ Histories to me at \$8 each (or \$12 Canadian). My check to N. Am. Alliance for ___ is enclosed.

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Absolute Faith and Absolute Works

(Continued from back page)

When I'm teaching Christian thought, my undergraduate students at Florida State University often debate the relationship between individual human action and the role of God in spurring this action. Often, they place the question in economic terms: How much is it that we control or do in our lives, and how much is it that God does to "move" us? Usually, there is one student who is adamant that we can do nothing without God and another who emphasizes that any actions are a result of the individual free human will. In theological terms, these students are raising the question of "faith versus works."

There is, of course, no easy solution to this ancient theological dilemma, but Swedenborg offers us a unique way of re-thinking the issue. His response is grounded in the idea that both faith and works, which he refers to as "charity," are "absolutely a one" (TCR §336). This means that as human beings, we are constituted by both faith and charity. In other words, to be a person is to be in relationship continually with God and with our neighbor. Faith and charity are

in a sense two sides of the same coin—a human person's life. I would suggest that Swedenborg's idea might be re-phrased as absolute faith and absolute works. Both God and human beings are absolutely active. However, the way in which they act differs.

God acts by infusing the world and all created beings with God's goodness. Swedenborg explains: "God is good itself, and in this God is omnipresent" (TCR §490). God's goodness is universal: it is present throughout the universe and within human beings. It is the divine gift offered to all creatures (TCR §491). In fact, it is this very gift of goodness which allows human beings to act freely. That is to say that God's goodness creates my freedom.

And if God creates my freedom, the only way to realize this freedom is to act in response to it. Swedenborg explains that freedom of the will "was given to the human being for the purpose of preparing them for the reception of God" (TC 110). Free will consists of believing and acting in response to God's goodness. Both acting and believing are a constant preparation for the "reception" of God. Our freedom involves receiving and actualizing God's goodness. Work, in

this context, means allowing the good that is God a place in myself and in this world.

In other words it is up to us to live out our freedom—absolutely—by allowing a place for God's goodness. This place depends upon living charitably and faithfully and recognizing that the possibility of our acting depends upon God's goodness. The more one is able to acknowledge this action of God, the better one is able to actualize their freedom. The true act of freedom is acknowledging my conjunction with God, which is "effected reciprocally when one is active by virtue of their free-will, and yet by faith attributes all activity to the Lord" (TCR n.110).

To my undergraduates, Swedenborg might say: As far as life is concerned, think existentially and spiritually, rather than economically. Life, he affirms, involves paradox: we are both completely free to act and completely dependent upon God for our action. Like the many Biblical paradoxes of Jesus (the first shall be last, the last shall be first or the rich are really the poor and the poor are really the rich), this one resounds with our experience of trying to live charitably. ☩

The Swedenborgian Church Statistics - as of December 31, 2005

Associations	Churches		Ordained Ministers			Authorized Lay Leaders	Members			Number of Delegates
	Active	Inactive	Active	Inactive	Retired		Active	Inactive	Total	
Canada	1	0	0	0	1	0	95	99	194	11
Illinois	6	0	2	0	0	0	122	32	154	14
Kansas	2	0	1	0	1	4	97	0	97	11
Maine	2	1	3	2	1	0	149	116	265	16
Massachusetts	5	0	8	0	1	0	137	65	202	15
Michigan	2	0	1	0	0	0	70	10	80	9
Middle Atlantic	3	0	3	1	0	0	96	34	130	11
New York	2	0	2	0	0	0	43	30	73	6
Ohio	3	2	2	2	0	1	66	9	75	8
Pacific Coast	4	0	13	3	5	3	335	37	372	35
Southeast	2	0	2	2	1	0	66	3	69	8
Western Canada Co	5	1	1	2	0	0	113	11	124	13
SCYL										2
SOCIETIES										
Bayside	did not report for 2002, 2003, or 2004									
Total	37	4	38	12	10	8	1389	446	1835	159

Canadian Spelling a Sensitive Issue

Dear Editor,

I have just received April's edition of *The Messenger* and I want to thank you for the wonderful layout of the Samoa article and my profile.

I did notice however, that you changed the spelling, in both pieces, where I used Canadian as opposed to American spelling. I wanted to know if this is standard practice? If this is standard practice, in the future if I write something, can I ask you not to change it (or mark it as an error) when you come across Canadian spelling. It is very important to me that my *Saviour* has a 'u' in it. It is also important to me that Canadian spelling not be seen as an error (as some of my professors do) but rather as an identifying mark that highlights the diversity among the members of this faith community. I appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Thanks again for a wonderful issue.

Cathy Lauber,
Canadian student at SHS,
Berkeley, California

Editor's Note: I answered that because *The Messenger* is printed and published in the U.S., it is standard editorial practice to use American spelling for consistency. However, it occurred to me that this might be a sensitive issue with other Canadians, and what we might do in future when we publish pieces written by Swedenborgian Canadians is to state that we're leaving their spelling intact as a courtesy. ☩

Pacific Coast Annual Meeting

September 22–September 24, 2006

- Begins with dinner on Friday September 22
- Hosted by the Congregation at Wayfarers Chapel
- Spiritual Program by Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell
- Christine Laitner, President of Convention, will be attending
- Rooms, meals and program at the lovely San Pedro Marina Hotel overlooking the yacht club and marina
- Cost is \$285.00 for two nights and five meals for single occupancy; \$368.00 for double occupancy
- There is a registration fee of \$15.00 per attendee
- Sunday service at the beautiful and inspiring Wayfarers Chapel at 10:00 a.m.
- Registration deadline September 1, 2006. Send check payable to Pacific Coast Association for \$285 for single or \$368 for double plus \$15 registration fee per person to:

Rev. Harvey Tafel
Wayfarers Chapel
5755 Palos Verdes Drive South
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275
For further information Call Rev. Tafel at 310-377-1650 ☩

~ PARISH NEWS ~

Rev. John Maine Called to Kitchener

The Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario warmly welcomes Rev. John Maine as our Minister as of July 1, 2006. After a great eighteen month interim ministry with Rev. Roslyn Vincent-Haven we are looking forward to having John, Catherine and Josh join our church community. ☩

PASSAGES

Confirmations

Cashin—Ann and Jack Cashin, Heejoung Moon and Imajean Tomaselli were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church and welcomed into membership April 9, 2006, at the Cleveland Swedenborg Chapel in Cleveland, Ohio, the Rev. Junchol Lee officiating.

Death

Graham—Helen Graham, the Rev. Dr. Donna Keane's mother, entered the spiritual world May 3, 2006, at the age of 97. A memorial service was held May 9, at the Elmwood New Church in East Bridgewater, Mass., the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating.

Tremblay—Rev. Paul Tremblay - "Uncle Paul" to just about everybody who knew him - entered the spiritual world on the morning of Friday, May 5th at the age of ninety-five years. Paul had requested that a memorial service be held at the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton. The family selected Saturday, May 27th at 11am as the date and time for the service, with a reception following. The Rev. John Maine officiated.



Paul was truly one of the "greats" in the unfolding story of the New Church in Western Canada. It was he who swapped a home-made boat for 40 acres of land on Upper Mann Lake and then sold it to the church for a dollar to create "Paulhaven." Thereafter, Paulhaven became a family and later a youth camp that touched the lives of countless numbers of people. The Spirit was, and is, in that special place, and Paul was a part of that presence for many, many years. Now we can trust he is in an even better place, perhaps sitting by another lake, this time of a heavenly blue, and gazing out upon all the beauty that mirrors all the beauty that was part of the life he shared so generously with us here. ☩

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.

SHS Welcomes New Scholar



Dr. Inese Radzins, the new Assistant Professor of Theology and Swedenborgian Studies at Pacific School of Religion.

Vanderbilt University and who has been teaching in the Religion Department at Florida State University for the past few years. She also has M.A. and M.Div. degrees from Yale University, and she has taught courses at both Vanderbilt and Yale and has twice been a Visiting Instructor in theology at the University of Latvia.

Inese (pronounced 0-néss) is an ordained clergyperson in the Latvian Lutheran Church and has served in pastoral positions in both Latvian and ELCA Lutheran churches.

Inese argues that Swedenborg brings a vital critique to the main traditions of Christianity and as such has a great deal to offer the larger Christian

world beyond the ecclesiastical movement of Swedenborgianism. Her primary scholarly focus is theology, and her approach with Swedenborg is to do close textual analysis (with a knowledge of the whole of the Christian tradition) in order to see clearly how he appropriates the Bible, how he critiques the Christian tradition, and what it is that he offers in his vision for a new Christianity and a New Church. She believes his primary criticisms of the Lutheran tradition of his day were both fair and profound (an example of her way of looking at Swedenborg can be seen in the brief reflection piece adjoining this article).

Her scholarly interests, which include the period of the Enlightenment, esotericism, cosmology, and theological analysis of fundamental Christian ideas (the Trinity, creation, etc.), provide an ideal framework for Swedenborgian coursework for our students. Her gifts as a preacher and in thinking pastorally is very evident in the way she approaches theology, which also is ideal for the formation process of those preparing for ministry.

Inese is married to a professor of modern philosophy, Dr. David Kangas, who will be Visiting Scholar at the Graduate Theological Union for the upcoming year. They have two sons: Olaf, age 4, and Sevrin, age 2. We are delighted they will be joining the SHS community this next year!

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Dean, SHS ☩

Absolute Faith and Absolute Works

Inese Radzins

"It is further to be observed, that the Lord alone is active in human beings, and that of themselves they are merely passive, but that by virtue of a continual influx of life from the Lord, they are also rendered active, apparently as of themselves: in consequence of this one has freedom of will, which

was given them for the purpose of preparing themselves for the reception of God, and thus for conjunction, which is not possible unless it be effected reciprocally; and it is effected reciprocally when one is active by virtue of their free will, and yet by faith attributes all activity to the Lord." —Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion*, §110

(Continued on page 90)

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