

THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

March 2006

Mission Trip to Pascagoula, Part 2

Editor's Note: The photos accompanying Part 2 are of devastated dwellings and public buildings, as well as mission team members performing the work of reconstruction. Photos of those interviewed were omitted to protect their privacy. (Photos by author.)

Annie Relat

As I mentioned in last month's Messenger, there were many stories from local residents that I recorded and would like to relate to you at this time. Of course the real part of any event such as this is the human story of loss of life on a scale that, while minuscule in other parts of the world, is tremendous for us. Next to this is the loss of family photos, a grandmother's ring, all the little drawings and little craft projects of one's children that once adorned refrigerators. Rich or poor, they are gone forever. The material possessions of house, furniture, appliances, autos, etc. are replaceable. Wealth matters here. The advantaged and connected could recover quickly, the poor less so, and in some cases, never. The stories of a few of our brothers and sisters follow:

Ms B.

On our short flight from Memphis to Biloxi, my seat mate, Ms. B., was returning to her family after a short visit with other family members. She told me that her family lost their apartment and possessions. However, she was more fortunate than others in that they were able to purchase a home that had sustained damage but was at least habitable. Before the hurricane, Ms. B. held an \$8.00 an hour bank job. With that job gone, Ms. B. took an offer at a

McDonalds at \$8.50 an hour and a signing bonus of \$1000 for a one-year commitment. (Another member of our team had heard of signing bonuses of up to \$6000 for other one-year commitments.) Businesses need to come back, many people want to work not only out of necessity, but also to shift attention to more mundane matters even if only for a few hours a day.



Ms. B. told me of an older woman in her same complex who was grieving over the loss of her recently deceased husband's wedding ring, family pictures and all the little mementos of two lives spent together. She finds some solace each day by part-time employment.

Mr. C.

Mr. C. had a small pool servicing business directly across the street from the church that housed the aid workers. I saw him working on his roof and went over to tell him who I was and that if he did not feel it too intrusive, I would like to hear what his experiences had been. He was glad (if that is the correct word) to tell me his story.

Before the hurricane Mr. C. had

twenty-seven clients and now has seven. However, Mr. C. feels he is one of the fortunate ones. His insurance company has already paid his claim, and he is rebuilding his business. FEMA gave him a disaster card worth \$650, good for purchasing groceries, household necessities, and building materials. He indicated that the card was very easy to obtain after he had gotten a FEMA claim number. (You may recall that nothing happens without this claim number.)

He told me two stories—one of tremendous courage and love, and the other of an out-of-the-blue act of kindness. The act of kindness is easier to convey. Shortly after the event Mr. C. was standing outside his business looking at a large tree that had fallen through the roof of the building. A van pulled up with Florida plates and someone asked if he needed any help.

In merely responding to the question he said that it would be nice if this tree was gone. He said without further word seven people jumped out of the van, one of them being a one-armed man. They had a chainsaw, and he said he could not believe it when he saw that it was the one-armed man who operated the saw. (There may be a connection here.) Mr. C. stood by while the tree was cut up. The group left and later returned to haul away all the debris. They asked for nothing—they came, they went. I for one would like to believe that this was God at work.

Mr. C., his adult son, eight-year-old grand-daughter, and ninety-four-year old mother decided to ride out the storm at the elderly mother's home. As the water kept rising, fear set in, and a

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Julian Diary

Firing Up for Another Evacuation

We'd probably become too comfortable, in the two-plus years since the Cedar Fire here in Julian. We're supposed to have rain in February. But rain's not coming, and the Santa Ana winds are moving in as if it's September. Water the garden. Keep everything moist.

It's dark, Wednesday night about 6:45 February 8; a big white SUV pulls into our driveway. I'm taking some photos I received from Annie Relat into Steve's office, which is detached from the main house, so that he can scan them in and I can finish getting the copy to the printer for the March *Messenger*. Chicken breasts are in the oven. A man gets out of the SUV and asks where the Julian Stables are. He's on the wrong road, as so often happens. I point down the hill to where Payson turns off, and tell him that the stables are at the end of Payson.

"I have to help my friends get their horses out, there's a fire up there," he says. As he backs out, I look up and see smoke coming over the hill above us. That quickly. It happens.

"Are they on it?"

"I think so, but you should probably get ready to leave."

A few minutes later, a fire truck drives up our road, a volunteer fireman jumps out with a bullhorn and advises all in the vicinity to prepare to leave the area. I ask him if it's a mandatory evacuation. No, it's an advisory, you should probably be *prepared* to leave, the fire's near Angel's Landing. The wind could change. That's the operative phrase. The wind could change.

Our two cats, Walter and Silky, are in for the night. I've put my neighbor Linda's cats in for the night. I look after Linda's two elderly cats when she's flying—she's an airline attendant with American. At the moment she's in New Delhi. My other neighbor is a teacher who is working an extra job at a market a few miles away, and I've put her cat in the house as well. It's what I do if she can't find him when she's ready to leave for work. I'm the official neighborhood Cat Caretaker.

"Start watering down the house," I tell Steve. "Garden, deck, everything you can reach with the hose. Then get the large cat carrier and we'll put Walter and Silky in it and put them in my car. Put the computers in your car. I'll call Fran and let her know that we may need to evacuate and stay with her in Hemet. I'll put our supplements and clothes and bedding and things in the suitcases in my car, and try to put the important papers together. The metal strongbox." I'm thinking out loud. I should have made complete a list of things to pack, from the last time we evacuated.

I take the extra cat carrier up the hill to Linda's house. I can't leave her cats trapped in her house, so I need to get them into the carrier, but then what do I do with them, four cats, driving them into the night, and my friend in Hemet with her dog. I'm thinking maybe the local cat boarder can take them, if she isn't evacuating as well. But when I open Linda's door, Linda's friends are there, clearing out her house. "We can take the cats, but we couldn't find her cat carrier. You have an extra one, wonderful, we'll take the cats with us." The friends are Deborah and Scott Kinney, who have produced and directed the local theater productions in Julian for 20 years. Their house was destroyed in the Cedar Fire in 2003, and their new house is just being rebuilt. Debbie laughs. "We don't even have insurance on the new house yet!"

I leave the cat carrier and go back and call my other neighbor at the market. They have already sent her home. I meet her in her driveway as she's getting out of her car. "Do you have some place to go? My friend in Hemet can take us all for the night or several days until we get it sorted out."

"Yes," she says, "I have a friend in San Diego." She is holding Chalmers, her big yellow Maine Coon cat. She has been recovering from a divorce and I can sense her trembling beneath the surface calm. But she's gutsy, and determined. "I'm going over to the school and see what's happening." The high school is the official evacuation center in all crises.

I go back to getting things together, but the whole effort is lacking in energy. I look around and realize, not for the first time, that if I lost everything in the house I'd still be wealthier than 70% of the people on the planet. Maybe 90%. "Let's go ahead and have dinner," I say to Steve.

He agrees. It's almost 8:30. "To hell with all this," I say. "I'm not leaving here until I see flames at the top of the hill." We're both exhausted. We eat our simple dinner of chicken breast, organic salad, and tomato soup. Again I'm aware, especially with Annie Relat's report of their mission in Pascagoula fresh in my mind, that many people would consider our little supper a luxurious gourmet meal, something dreamed of but unobtainable.

Our neighbor who had gone to the school returns and reports that things are apparently under control, we needn't evacuate.

I'm on the phone with my son. "It's ok, I think."

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THE MESSENGER

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Moving Forward



Chris Laitner

"Trust in the Lord
with all your
heart, and lean
not on your own
understanding. In
all ways acknowl-
edge Him and He
will direct
your paths."

Proverbs 3: 5-6

Our denominational structure is based on a process of review and evaluation. These are the processes of growth and focus. As I revisit the past nineteen months of service as your president, I find inspiring moments; myriad meetings; caring, confident ministries; and some experiences of disappointment and of sadness. In each experience there are defining moments of truth. It is impossible to move forward – to identify where we are going next – without reviewing the past, both the successes and the things that didn't quite work.

The heartbeat of the Swedenborgian Church is its ministries. Our denominational youth ministry continues to flourish, to reach out and to find new and creative ways of connecting. This ministry also utilizes and celebrates an excellent and vital volunteer force. Our various churches and centers provide warm spiritual homes to seekers, friends and members. I've had the pleasure of visiting many thus far.

A number of our churches are engaged in strategic planning, goal-setting, and finding new and different ways of reaching out, welcoming new friends, and connecting with their communities. I'm gratified that so many are also placing good, supportive Bible and prayer-based stewardship programs into place. The more the members of any group choose to support it, the stronger the ties are that keep the group together and moving forward. Stewardship is a healthy habit that needs to be indulged in more and more. Some of our churches are models of experimentation.

We've engaged the services of professional church consultants for our San Diego and St. Louis societies, and we are all learning from that work. As I write this, four of our churches have active ministerial search processes going on: Cambridge, Kitchener, Wayfarers Chapel, and Washington, D.C.

Central to our theology is usefulness and help to the neighbor. We've had opportunity over the past months to reinforce our work as helpers to the world as the larger neighbor. Through donations to Central Office or through our own local church centers, we've provided assistance to victims of the tsunami and of Hurricane Katrina. As members of the National Council of Churches in Christ, we have supported two major initiatives to help children. The "After School for All" program establishes churches in major cities as after school safe places for children who would be returning to empty houses and apartments. The "Children's Sabbath" program asks churches to make one Sunday a year fully focused on children, encouraging the creation of Sunday Schools and other programs aimed at children (some educational resources are available). We recognize the importance of both safety and spiritual learning for children.

At the denominational level we continue to be concerned about our general, unrestricted funds, and, thus, our ability to offer support and guidance to our various ministries and to our members and friends. We are working on the creation of a solid denominational program of stewardship which we hope will benefit not only the denominational level, but will be a program that individual churches can utilize if they so desire. Good stewardship is at the center of our denominational budgeting process and my goal is that we are able to establish a balanced budget by fiscal 2008.

We do not have a staff of specialists employed at the denominational level to assist in various areas of local church life such as stewardship, strategic planning, current methodologies, contract

creation, and dealing with legal issues. Thus, we need to make certain that the volunteers who so caringly fill roles on our committees and support units remain aware, current, and able to supply, demonstrate or find necessary and appropriate assistance for our ministries. This is a formidable thing to ask of a volunteer force, but I'm pleased to note that many people are stepping up to answer this need. I continue to be extremely grateful to those who serve and choose to learn all they can to provide good direction. While I wish that we could always provide necessary expertise ourselves, I understand that if we can give good, current, useful information and guidance to where expert help can be found, we're offering a useful service.

Evaluation without reflection is an empty tool for the Church's use. Our history is an important part of who we are right now. We have made our truths available through churches, camps, and centers; through radio and television; through books and group studies. We have the basic message of Bible-based Christianity to share and we add to that the gift of its application to life through our theology. The long distances between our own churches have pushed us to find creative ways to connect. My rough estimates indicate that it is 2632 miles (4192 km) from San Francisco to Washington, D.C.; 2565 miles (4085 km) from San Diego to Portland, Maine; and 2531 miles (4031 km) from Kelowna, British Columbia to Fort Myers, Florida. Being able to use electronic means to connect these ministries – and all those in between – gives us the capability to better serve the whole church and to access the world. Our ability to present ideas, to create groups, and to establish new centers of worship is unprecedented. We are continuing to upgrade our Internet use and we are also very near to establishing a brand new kind of outreach church. There are so many exciting possibilities open to us!

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Scribe of Heaven



**SWEDENBORG'S
LIFE, WORK,
AND IMPACT**
Edited by Jonathan
S. Rose, Stuart
Shotwell, and Mary
Lou Bertucci
Published by the
Swedenborg
Foundation, 2005;
580 pages.

Reviewed by Stephen Koke

This is the kind of book that should be put out every decade or so. It is a thoroughly readable overview of what is happening in Swedenborgian scholarship—how we might understand issues and turning points in Swedenborg's theological career, review the history of the Swedenborgian movement and assess his cultural impact in various countries. It is intended to be a comprehensive companion to the New Century Edition of Swedenborg's theological works, giving us a look at the scholarship invested in the NCE. In the back is a comprehensive index and list of related works.

Scribe of Heaven does not, however, try to solve longstanding puzzles in Swedenborg's thought: How, for example, to understand *Other Planets* (*Earths in the Universe*) which has been so heavily contradicted by modern space science, or address problems in *Marriage Love*, the other problem work for modern readers. Theological analysis is not the point here so much as how his manuscripts developed and how his concept of how to pursue his mission seems to have changed from time to time. This lack of attention to old puzzles may be a drawback for most Swedenborgians.

Yet studies like this do have an impact on how we see him: Was he flawless,

guided by the clear and steady hand of the Lord, or was he also bothered by rather earthy challenges and questions, having to work through complex issues and personal interests that we may need to know about? How much of this may also be a revealing look at ourselves and how well we face his complex mission and resolve our own questions about it? All of this makes the book very suggestive, and readers should feel encouraged to comment. At nearly 600 pages in length, this book will need a rather selective review. I apologize in advance

by action. . . . Yet although he emphasizes life, in many areas there is little specific instruction on how to live.

This also bothered me some years ago: the apparent lack of a detailed ethical system in Swedenborg's works that explores the ins and outs of ethical dilemmas and strategies. My own answer to this eventually settled on Swedenborg's persistent interest in addressing a Christianity which avidly continues to study the Bible in its literal sense. That apparently meant much to him.

The Swedenborgian movement, on the other hand, has seemed distracted by his discovery of the inner sense of the Bible and hasn't encouraged much expertise in the literal Bible. Yet it is the literal sense, the outer sense, which teaches ethics, not the inner sense. The inner sense concentrates on the spiritual core values that

Studies like this have an impact on how we see Swedenborg. Was he flawless, guided by the clear and steady hand of the Lord, or was he also bothered by rather earthy challenges and questions, having to work through complex issues and personal interests that we may need to know about? How much of this may also be a revealing look at ourselves and how well we face his complex mission and resolve our own questions about it? All of this makes the book very suggestive, and readers should feel encouraged to comment.

for any important ideas I don't cover.

Scribe of Heaven begins with a wonderful, and wonderfully simple, overview of Swedenborg's "Garden of Theology," centered on the imagery of Swedenborg's garden and its suggestive plan and views, by Jonathan S. Rose. "This essay is an invitation to the reader to enter the garden of Swedenborg's works and to look at them from both the long and the close perspective." (pg. 55.) It also includes a list of things that have disappointed readers or inspired skepticism. Rose doesn't try to solve all of these misgivings. On page 88 he writes,

Another asymmetry in the garden of Swedenborg's theology concerns its practicality. Swedenborg categorically opposes faith alone and emphasizes that . . . belief has to be accompanied

would encourage or discourage a life of love and effective service, what happens inside if we do live one way or the other. Concentrate on those, and we may learn spiritual psychology but miss our most practical wisdom, the literal or *action* sense, which prescribes right action and gets it moving. Both together would give us a high spiritual consciousness which also knows how to produce the most serviceable results.

In his article, "Swedenborg's Modes of Presentation, 1745-1771," George Dole comments on Swedenborg's timing in producing *Apocalypse Revealed* (NCE title: *Revelation Unveiled*). He writes on page 110 about a divine commission given Swedenborg in *Marriage Love* 522:

The commission for this work was apparently quite specific . . . "Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Go

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Focus on Youth

2006 SCYL Officers

2006 Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) Officer and Chaplain elections took place at the Almont Winter Retreat this past December. The results are:

President - Erika Penabaker
21545 Curie
Warren, MI 48091
penabaer@students.udmercy.edu

East Coast and Service Officer - Alec Sheppard
16 Roxanne Sq
N. Attleboro, MA 02760
508-699-8847

Midwest and Activities Officer - Cody Steinhiser
6403 W. Hemlock Dr
Michigan City, IN 46360
219-872-1814

Canada and Fundraising & Finance Officer - Stephanie Wilson
38 Activa Ave
Kitchener, ON N2E 3R2
Canada
gorgeous_steffie17@hotmail.com

West Coast and Public Relations Officer - open

Editor, Clear Blue Sky (CBS) and Communication Officer - Kristina Madjerac
211 Holm Ave.
Portland, ME 04102
mad4greenday@yahoo.com

League Chaplain - Rev. Kevin Baxter
14 Skehan St. Apt 2
Somerville, MA 02143
Cell: 978-604-8226
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2006 SCYL Officers (top l-r) Stephanie Wilson, Alec Sheppard, (bottom l-r) Kristina Madjerac, Erika Penabaker, Cody Steinhiser

This year we experienced a big turnover in our SCYL Officers with five of the six youth league representatives exiting their positions. We say a fond farewell to 2005 officers Ben Currie,

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Sparks: The Youngest Generation of Fryeburg New Church Assembly

Nancy Little

At the Fryeburg New Church Assembly family camp in Fryeburg, Maine, the different generations have names: Sparks, Flames, Bonfires and Embers. The youngest generation, the Sparks, are kids 12 and under. Sparks stay in cabins or in the main building with their families or sponsoring adult.

The rising bell for all campers is at 7:00. The Polar Bear Club meets at the river for a quick swim in the refreshing and invigorating Saco River before breakfast. After breakfast in the main building at 7:30 Sparks can usually be found sitting in front of a roaring fire in the large stone fireplace playing a game of cards. Senior Sparks are in charge of raising the flag at the beginning of the day. Sing-along in the Lecture Hall is at 8:30 followed by morning chapel at 8:45. Supervised childcare in the Goddard Annex playroom is provided from 9-11:00 while Flames, Bonfires and Embers attend lectures in the

lecture hall. Children's religion classes start at 11:00. Lunch in the main building is at 12:30. Sparks usually play quietly in their cabins during the rest hour from 1:30 to 2:30. Life-guarded



Trevor Woofenden (far right) leads Sparks in games.

swimming in the Saco River starts at 2:30. Sparks who pass the swim test may go swimming without a parent or guardian. Sparks often stay at the river jumping off the dock, splashing in the water and swimming until swim time ends at 5:00. Dinner in the main building is at 6:00 followed by an hour

of Sparks Games on the lawn starting at 7:00. Afterwards, the Sparks lower the flag. Sometimes there is an optional evening program for all campers starting at 8:00. It might be a slide show from someone's travels, a musical presentation, or even board games. After a busy, active day Sparks are usually ready for bedtime at 9:00.

Outing day is on Wednesday and families of Sparks often plan an excursion together to one of the many beautiful natural places nearby. Among the popular destinations are White Lake State Park, Lost River, Lower Falls and other sites along the Kancamagus Highway National Scenic Byway, and Diana's Baths - a delightful swimming place.

Here's what some Sparks have to say about camp:

"I like to come to be with friends I have made but only see once a year or even every other year. Favorite parts are: playing ping-pong with big kids,

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Death to Isolation!!!

The North American Society is becoming a reality

Our church is small. There's no denying that fact. We have very few churches, although we have many dedicated members. But more importantly, the number of churches we have is decreasing! Members move; they change jobs; they get transferred; they relocate to be near loved ones. Some have even been known to just get cold and move to Florida. These active members, with their very active lives, have created a category of Swedenborgians known as ISOLATED MEMBERS, and this group is growing way too fast. As a denomination, we need to pay attention to this increasing group—it's one of the few groups within Convention that *is* growing.

Chris Laitner, our president, as an isolated member herself, saw the need and brought the matter before General Council meeting at the last convention in Berkeley. A committee was formed to study the problem and to explore some ideas to help people be active Swedenborgians even if they do not live close enough to a church to participate in person each week. So many of us keep in touch via email and other electronic means, it was time we brought our church into the 21st century

and started an electronic church that had no physical restraints. One that could provide a community for isolated Swedenborgians regardless of where they live. The online church was conceived.


"We have the technology." Yes we do! And after the investigative process got underway, the idea was determined to be not only feasible, but necessary. We found the Unitarian Universalist Church and their online congregation called the Church of the Larger Fellowship. This online group is a highly active presence in their church and is in fact, the largest group of Unitarians in the denomination. This is the kind of thing we were looking for. Yes, this is what we want and definitely what we need.

A proposal was written and submitted to General Council at their fall meeting and they wholeheartedly approved the project and voted for funding to pay for the first year of operation. An Ad Hoc committee was officially created with Beth Harvie (Falls Church, Virginia) as the chair, and members Sue Ditmire, (South Jersey) Susan Wood-Ashton (Palm Beach Gardens, Florida) and Kevin Baxter (Somerville, Mass.). The project is now

in the final stages of gestation and we're expecting the birth of our newest church at Convention in June.

The website will be called swedenborgiancommunity.org and will operate as a real church. A call has gone out for a ¼ time minister and the committee is working on many details of what we hope will be a huge step in the growth of the Swedenborgian Church. This new New Church will start out being called the **North American Society** and will have a Sunday Message/Sermon which will also include a live discussion/chat with on-line members. There will be a "question of the week" posted each Monday, and a live discussion will take place the following Thursday. The minister will also be maintaining an ongoing contact with members through emails and phone calls and be the spiritual leader of the group.

This is just the beginning—so much is possible and we're still discovering what all those possibilities are. Please look forward to an update in next month's *Messenger*, and get prepared for an exciting Convention this June in Urbana, Ohio.

—the Cyber Swedenborgians 

~ MOVIE REVIEW ~

What the (Bleep) Do We Know?

I enjoyed watching this highly imaginative movie that tackles the question of reality and issues of consciousness based on the findings of modern quantum physics. The movie challenges us to not take this world for granted; that paradoxical forces are at work underneath the visible spectrum of classical physics. But it was more than just the creativity of its producers and director that made the movie entertaining to this Swedenborgian reviewer. It offered me a unique view of how the Lord's providence and new doctrines are perpetually flowing into, and penetrating, the world-paradigms of today's best scientific minds. Let me share with you

some of their new thinking and how it is in line with the doctrines of the New Church.

- Cutting edge physicists now believe that on the most fundamental level everything is unified (this is Divine Love, folks—the doctrine of love states that all conjunction is through reciprocation. Existence is relationship! Also, everything in the universe is organically patterned after the unified functions of the Grand Human).

- This unified field consists of pure consciousness (Divine Love & Wisdom emanating from the Spiritual Sun).

- On this fundamental level, matter is not made of matter, but flowing

patterns of information (God's influx).

- Quantum physics is the theory of infinite possibilities (similar to Swedenborg's notion of God's Divine action finding its first boundary in the infinite curvature and perpetual tendency of pure effort to become determinate—collapse the wave function).

- The future and the past are somehow created by, and altered by, the mind and its choices (time has its mutability grounded in the hierarchical substructures of the multidimensional mind and its various changes of state).

- Neuropeptides are molecules of emotion. That is, the brain creates

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A Swedenborgian Church in Lansing, Michigan? What a Capitol Idea!

The Lansing Swedenborgian Church's inaugural Confirmation Class was launched January 29, 2006 to celebrate Emanuel Swedenborg's birthday. There are three people involved in the class who are eager to help the Lansing Church in its endeavor to become a legal entity as well as being recognized by the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church. Rev. Renee Machiniak has been gracious enough to agree to come over to Lansing (from Royal Oak) to confirm the new members on Sunday, June 18, 2006. This is one way the Lansing group would like to recognize New Church Day (June 19th). We are excited to welcome Dave and Julie Viges and Rose Backman into the class and look forward to their active participation in the Lansing Swedenborgian Church.

The Swedenborgians in Lansing worship in the home of Betsy Lau, a member of the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU). We have had a regular attendance of five to ten people each month. We have received donations from several supporters who are members of the Michigan Association. With some of the monetary donations we have purchased a folding table which serves as an altar for each of the services. We have also received a collection of Swedenborg's

writings and a bookshelf—to serve as the first installment of items into the "library" or "reading room" in Betsy's home.



(l-r on couch) Rebekka Lange, Kristofer and Kris Lange, Bill Prout, Julie Viges and Betsy Lau. (l-r behind couch) Jennifer Tafel, Fawn Lange and Dave Viges.
Photo taken in Betsy Lau's living room.

The most lively or active participants in the Lansing congregation would have to be the children—hands down! Donations to the Sunday School include: two pew cushions from Almont New Church Assembly and Retreat Center, as there were new cushions put into the church last summer; coloring book crayon bags handmade by Sue Blotz.

The coloring book bags were a big hit when introduced to the children in November, 2005. One of my good friends from seminary, Joe Blotz, has a mom who loves to quilt. Joe and I drove

together across country from Berkeley to the Midwest last summer. While at his mother's home (Madison, Wisconsin) I saw some coloring book/crayon bags in her living room as she and Joe were going through all of her latest quilting projects. I asked half-jokingly if she'd like to contribute some to the Lansing Swedenborgian Church's Sunday School. When I went to Joe's ordination in November she gave me three bags! The children definitely make the church come alive and we are lucky to have such wonderful support.

At the time of this writing we have worshiped together on the following dates: September 18, October 23, November 20, December 18, in 2005, and January 22, 2006. Communion was celebrated during the worship services in September and January. Upcoming worship dates are: February 19, March 19, April 16, May 21, June 18 at 2:00 p.m. Communion will be celebrated on April 16 in honor of the Easter holiday.

All of us in Lansing would like to thank everyone for all your love, support and various donations. Many blessings to you and your families.

With gratitude,

—Jennifer Tafel, M.Div. ☩

Sabbath in Gilead

Simply light
Sometimes water
Shimmering in a child's hair in sunlight
Sometimes that brief incandescence you see in people
When the charm of a thing strikes them
Sometimes a bell pealing extravagance
Beyond anything we might actually need.

Catch that!
Yes
Got it?
Yes
I'll string you on my bow and shoot you far
Yes

Simply light
Sometimes water
Streaming from beneath my feet
To just beyond where I can stand
Shimmering in a child's hair
In sunlight.

—Anonymous

Reprinted from *Giving Voice: A Collection of Poetry & Prose*. Published 2005 for the 181st Annual convention of the Swedenborgian Church, Berkeley, California. ☩

Church Growth and "Cleansing" Articles Lauded

Dear Editor:

I just got the January 2006 issue of *The Messenger* and have a hard time putting it down in order to complete my work for the weekend.

Last summer when I went to my first Convention I was surprised to find out that our church, Wayfarers Chapel, has one of the largest congregations in the Swedenborgian denomination, and that's even without having a "real" congregation. I had thought our numbers were very low. So naturally my interest in the topic of church growth was awakened. I was very pleased to open *The Messenger* and find that most of the issue is devoted to aspects of church growth, and I hope it won't be the last. I find Erni Martin's research ("Further Reflections on Heaven") important.

I think that when we are able to compare Swedenborg's views to that of other known sources, we have a better chance of gaining attention from non-Swedenborgians. Ken Turley's report from the Christian Music Summit reminds us that, "People are not attracted to churches for the entertainment value of the worship....they are attracted by authenticity and access to God and spirituality." Jane Siebert gives a practical rundown of what their church is doing to grow. And Rich Tafel is offering his expertise in the name of church growth. I am sure a lot of good things will result from these efforts and inspire others to share and be more creative.

I also found your editorial refreshing and helpful. My husband and I are kind

of in a similar situation as we are contemplating adding another room or just doing other major renovation projects. Cleaning out is therefore big on my agenda. And since I live with a "collector" I have been looking for ways to "reach him" with words like yours—that "You have to clear the old stuff (mental, physical, and spiritual) in order to make room for the new to come in." So your article came right on time and I think I'll simply read it to him!

Thank you for all your good work.

Unni de Presno, Ministry Coordinator
Wayfarers Chapel
An Ecumenical Ministry of the
Swedenborgian Church
Rancho Palos Verdes, California ☩

Call for Nominees

The Nominating Committee is seeking qualified candidates for the offices listed below. If you have any suggestions or questions, please notify your minister or a member of the Nominating Committee immediately. Please know that the Nominating Committee encourages you to consider individuals who have talent and abilities in particular areas, but have not served within Convention. Swedenborg wrote that "the sincerest form of worship is a useful life." Serving on one of these committees is performing a valuable "use."

Thank you for your prayerful involvement in this process.

President-Elect: will become president at close of session in 2007.

Vice-president: elected for one-year term.

Recording secretary: elected for one-year term.

Treasurer: elected for one-year term.

General Council: three persons elected for three-year terms. One minister and two lay people.

Communications Support Unit (COMSU): One elected for three-year term.

Education Support Unit (EDSU): one elected for three-year term.

Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU): one elected for three-year term.

Information Management Support Unit (IMSU): one elected for three-year term.

Ministries Support Unit (MINSU): two elected for three-year term.

Nominating Committee: two nominations for one elected five-year term.

Board of Trustees, Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS): two elected for three-year terms.

The Nominating Committee submits names for vacated unfulfilled terms on any/all of the above positions. Occasionally a person in a current position may be nominated for another position. In such event the Nominating Committee should have a backup nominee to account for any position vacated by election to another support unit or board.

Laurie Turley, acting chair
22 Elm St. Fryeburg, Maine 04037
207 - 935 - 4500
laurieturley@pivot.net

Nominating Committee:
Sharon Williams, Western Canada
Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell, PCA
Michelle Huffman, Georgia
Denyse Daurat, Cambridge, Mass ☩

Christ the Lord, Out of Egypt



Kxoph Publishing
Group 2005, 336 pages.

Review by Jane Siebert

There is a new novel out by Anne Rice, *Christ the Lord, Out of Egypt*. I picked it up at the bookstore because of an

interview I heard on the radio. I have not been drawn to any of the other twenty-five Anne Rice novels with titles such as *Interview with the Vampire* or *Servant of the Bones*, from reading reviews and the author's statement at the back of the book. These first twenty-five novels portray decades of her own search for a personal God. Her latest book, *Christ the Lord*, has captivated me. Through this novel Jesus comes alive in a new way that is deepening my anticipation, joy and sensitivity. I feel it inside, a fresh connection with the Lord, a desire to know more, like when you meet a new friend.

Anne Rice has given us a historical novel of the early life of Jesus. It is as historically accurate as possible based on the gospels and the most respected New Testament scholarship. She has dedicated her life to reading and researching since 2002. As Jesus has become real for her in her life, he becomes real for the reader. Jesus tells his own story. Through the perspective of a seven-year-old he questions what happened in Judea that

caused his family to hide in Egypt for seven years; why Joseph is his mother's husband, but he is not to call him father, only Joseph; and the meaning of his unfolding powers and deep understanding that belie his age. And yet, the story teller, Jesus, is every bit a little boy.

The Gospels tell so little of the life of Jesus. Even his last three years of healing, teaching and preaching focus primarily on what he did and said with little about Jesus, the person. This book helps to fill in the gaps. As the jacket cover assures; "Anne Rice has indeed found a convincing version of him (Jesus); this is fiction that transcends story and instead qualifies as an act of faith."

Our Swedenborgian teaching emphasizes the deteriorating state of the world at the time of Christ's birth. The balance between good and evil was in jeopardy. This sets the stage for God to come to earth as the Divine Human and overcome the hells and restore the balance so that we might remain in freedom. In *Christ the Lord*, reading about the violence, debauchery, treachery and corruption through the eyes of the seven-year-old Jesus brings the brutality and inhumanity of the people into an understandable milieu. Something had to change or people were going to destroy themselves.

Another Swedenborgian tenet that is borne out in the book is the true human nature of Jesus that was united with his divinity through the process of glorification. The question has bothered me,

How could Jesus actually be tempted when he was Divine in nature? In order for Jesus to be tempted as we are tempted, would he have to be able to separate from his Divine inheritance? In this book we find a very human little boy who is in fact Divine. He is struggling to understand who he is. He does not understand the stories of his birth, tales about an angel, and why some people look at him strangely. He feels anger and sadness and fear. We watch his temptations and they become real.

For me this is what is so incredible about this riveting novel. Swedenborg talks over and over again about how important it is to have the right idea of God as the Divine Human. This book, *Christ the Lord*, brings out the human side of Jesus; it brings a new revelation of what his early life might have been like as he was coming to terms with his Divinity; and it opens up the path to a closer personal relationship with our Lord.

As this young Jesus experiences the connection of his humanity with his Divinity, readers have the joyous opportunity to experience their own new connection with the Divine.

The Rev. Jane Siebert is the minister of the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas.

Reprinted from the December 2005 *The Plains Banner*, the Kansas Association of the New Jerusalem Church Newsletter. ☩

Poetic Fragments of a Divinity Graduate

Definitions:

Some hold that a transcendent and intimate Power moves
All physics: sub-atomic string, planet, star, galaxy
And human souls, pacifying ego walls, wills, elevating loves
To dear mutual companionship and spiritual ecstasy.

Transcendence would mean not trapped
In the mire of illusion, wandering, lost, blind,
Seduced by tangibles—selves with themselves enrapt.
Immanence would mean to enter illusion, enlighten, and find.

Propositions:

Ancient systems can confuse—
Oppression, suppression, and myth held as factual
Occlude unearthly imagery and the inspired theological muse,
Freeze sympathy—emotional and intellectual.

Too much brilliance can blind the sight—
A dazzling array of systems diffuses choice.
Alone with Reason, the soul gropes as in night.
Lost in theories, lost, the inner voice.

A Tentative Destination:

Having studied much, wondered, wandered, loved and spat out
My broken spirit
It happened circumstance enforced a manner of quiet solitude
Alone with my soul
My soul alone
Of its own accord
Turned
Turned back
Back to its Source
Buttressed by a simple maxim:
I can love.
And that is enough.

—David Fekete

Reprinted with author's permission from *Giving Voice: A Collection of Poetry & Prose*, published July 2005 for the 181st Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church, Berkeley, California. ☩

Mission Trip to Pascagoula, Part 2

(Continued from front page)

decision was made. The adult son left the house and waded through the water "down a piece." He returned with a boat, and the little girl and mother were put in the boat. The son got back in the water, which contained rats and snakes, and pulled the boat until he reached the fire station, which had a second floor. The mother and little girl were hoisted by rope up to the second floor.

Mrs. O.

A very lovely lady with a very pronounced southern accent, Mrs. O approached me one afternoon while I was writing my notes. She just said how very thankful she was that so many people have come to help them. While doing kitchen duty one afternoon I had the opportunity to speak more with Mrs. O. She and her disabled husband live down the street from the church. They lost everything and the house sustained much damage. Teams work on her home, and the one across the street from her. Meanwhile the couple lives out of a small trailer that has a very narrow closet. But laughing, Mrs. O. said that it was OK because they didn't have any clothes to put in it anyway.

Mrs. O. spends every day volunteering at the church to prepare meals for the workers. She is one terrific lady always laughing with much heart.

Mr. R.

Mr. R. stopped by one day while our team was working on our second assigned house. He was a friend of the owner and used to live nearby. His own home was condemned and was awaiting the wrecking ball. Meanwhile, he is living with eleven other people at a rental some blocks away. He said that every month since the storm he has gotten his regular gas and water bill from the city. Remember—there is no gas, no water, no electricity, no house. I said that surely there was no real expectation of payment. He was quick to respond, "Oh no, of course I paid it. It is a bill. I pay my bills."

Airport Personnel

Our team arrived at the Biloxi Airport for our return trip home and proceeded through the routine processing. I have always experienced airline personnel to be competent and professional as they move huge numbers of people toward their destinations. But they are not a chatty bunch, and humor is clearly not in the job description. Quite understandable, but when one experiences the opposite; it is noticed.

The Biloxi personnel, also competent and professional, were friendly, and more than once I heard someone say Thank you for coming to help us. Perhaps I should not be surprised, but I find myself surprised at many things all the time.

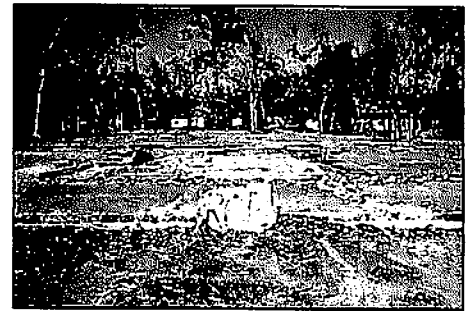
Some Final Thoughts

As just an ordinary citizen I am privy to no more information than most others. What we do know is the following:

- The worst loss was suffered by African-Americans of whom one-third live below the poverty line, and do not own cars.
- Disasters are local events that spark national attention only as long as TV coverage lasts, which is usually until the next event.
- In 1998 a plan called "Coastal 2050" was proposed in Louisiana to preserve wetlands and strengthen the levees. There was "no money."
- The computer model "Hurricane Pam" told officials last year that the more than 100,000 people who did not have access to private transportation would need government help to evacuate. There was "no will."
- The cost of government continues to rise with the burden falling more on individuals and families. Corporate taxes are shrinking from about 40% of federal revenues in the 1950s to about 11% in 2004. Corporate subsidies abound in addition to many no-bid contracts.
- Most of us are in favor of tax cuts, but when they are cut infrastructures erode, schools fail, public transportation breaks down, hospitals overcrowd, city services diminish, and public safety is threatened. The poor have more lost opportunities and less hope.

We all have our own thoughts about root causes and possible solutions. We cannot do everything, but we can all do something. What each particular "something" might be can only be known in each individual heart. It might not be much, but then again, it might be everything. It might not be for us to know.

Dr. S. Annie Relat is a student at the Swedenborgian House of Studies on the ordination track. She will graduate in June 2006. (See Profile, and Part I of this article in the February 2006 Messenger.)



Firing Up for Another Evacuation

(Continued from page 34)

"Don't unpack the car yet, you don't want to be doing this again in the middle of the night," he advises. "Keep me posted, but it looks like you're probably ok."


Another fire truck drives up the road. It is after 10 p.m. We get the word that the fire is under control, the wind has changed, we're ok. For now. The next morning, helicopters are non-stop over the area, dropping water on the remaining hot spots for five hours. It sounds like a scene from *Apocalypse Now*.

My neighbor Linda is returning my cat carrier, thanking me, and telling me about New Delhi. "We rode around in this tiny rickshaw, in these hard seats,

this skinny little Indian man pedaling; it was amazing. We were taken all over the city, for hours, with stops at various sites, for the equivalent of \$15 in rupees." She names some places she saw, but the sights that lingered most were those of extreme poverty. Like the worst parts of Tijuana, she says. I picture the skinny little Indian man pedaling large Americans around the city day after day for \$15. He doesn't even get to keep all of it, unless he owns the rickshaw. And he probably counts himself among the more fortunate.

"Well," I say, "I'm glad you didn't come home to rubble. We're blessed once again."

"Yes," she says. "We are blessed."


—Patte LeVan 

Moving Forward

(Continued from page 35)

Throughout these next months, I'll be working with our support units and committees to review the work that's been done and to look with careful consideration to the best uses of our resources, including our teachings and the gifts and talents members and friends have in contributing to our vision and mission for the next five years. We will engage in a five-step process of strategic planning that will cover analysis, visioning, planning, funding and implementation.

Everything we do is driven by our basic purpose of helping people be open to the Lord's presence and leading, facilitating the spiritual well-being of people, and working for the Lord in bringing in the New Age, the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem.

Our best resource is ourselves and our good stewardship as we live lives of good and of useful service to the neighbor. We need to identify and implement a variety of avenues by which to reach out and welcome in all people. We cannot do this alone. As the recipients of the Lord's love and life, we need always to listen and prayerfully discern our direction. God is love; love is life. Our current task is to explore all the ways we can invite people to join and learn with us on the journey. 

Scribe of Heaven

(Continued from page 36)

to your room and close the door. Get down to the work you started on the Book of Revelation. Carry it to completion within two years."

Revelation Unveiled was in fact published in 1766, two years after the publication of the work previous to it, Divine Providence.

One has to wonder why the publication date of *Divine Providence* is mentioned.

In Rudolf Tafel's *Documents Concerning Swedenborg*, Doc. 313, we find Swedenborg starting RU "soon after" his return to Sweden in August of 1764 and telling his close friend Dr. Beyer, "I have at last brought the book of Revelation to a close" on April 8, 1766, for an elapsed time on the project of less than one year and eight months.

Swedenborg was out of the body and in the spiritual world when he heard the instruction from heaven. Anything said to him there is likely to be spiritual in its use of words, not the language of material time.

Our literature has often shown a tendency to not fully incorporate the inner sense of things coming to Swedenborg out of the spiritual world. If we stay away from the literal habit, we get more interesting information about

the quality of *what* is to be produced and more of an understanding of *why* it was ordered. How *long* then to work on it becomes rather vague in contrast to the importance of attitude, the state of mind, necessary to do a good job.

In the spiritual world one's sense of time is tied to his affection for the work to be done. For example, the "two years" scheduled for RU in ML 522 recommends an effort to explain Revelation that is centered on the good of life, now seen in the other world by Swedenborg as fields newly plowed and planted by husbandmen. Only after he sees the new spirituality actually commencing does he get his instruction, and with its visual content a sense of what values would finally unravel the book of Revelation. A problem with commands understood only to take so much time is that they look mysterious; they lack a rationale. Why not a few months more, or a few months less? We have no idea. In Potts' *Swedenborg Concordance* under "Time" there are extensive references to time in the spiritual world and how it reduces to states of mind and heart, not the calendar.

Other problems arise a little further on where George argues that Swedenborg seems to have aimed *True Christianity* at the Lutheran community.

First, the subtitle of *True Christianity* is "The Universal Theology of the New Church." The immediate implication is that the work is intended for all who would be open to the New Christianity. No denomination with this book specifically aimed at it would like to be told that it is about to be replaced in God's eyes by another movement called a *new church*. That would bring instant defensiveness. And any sense that the work has a special audience would limit its appeal to a broader audience.

Second, there is no mention of the words "Lutheran" or "Lutheranism" in TC. That is quite strange, if he is addressing Lutherans. They would not feel addressed. TC looks less like a special message to a single denomination than like an address to European Protestantism anywhere. Hence, of course, its rather suggestive subtitle which does point clearly to

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Scribe of Heaven

(Continued from page 43)

Swedenborg's theology as the message to be delivered, with no audience specified.

Third, George argues that Swedenborg addressed himself to Lutherans by placing his doctrines in good logical order as the Lutherans did, with a top-down logic starting with the highest ideas, ideas of God, followed by more subsidiary doctrines in descending order.

However, this is recommended for an overall understanding of any system. Both *Heaven and Hell* and *Marriage Love* have the same top-down order. Should we argue that they are therefore covertly Lutheran? It is just good sense for arranging any large system for clarity and logical coherence.

Fourth, Swedenborg's attention to the Acts, the Epistles, and to creedal statements would have been recommended commentary for European Protestantism generally, though with an understandable omission of an explanation of the spiritual world. His spiritual world would have looked at least dubious in a Christian community looking for a literal Second Coming and the resurrection of the body as one's hope of life after death. The switch from an instinctual material literalism to spiritual thought is not easy. What does look advisable for us here is a survey of other denominations to see if they virtually fell into the same general categories as Swedish Lutheranism. Otherwise, it does look strange that he does not actually address a specific denomination.

Fifth, early in *True Christianity* (n.4) he tells his readers that the Lord had called together the disciples who had followed him in the world and told them to go throughout the spiritual world declaring the gospel anew, for its vision of one God had died. Note the words "throughout the spiritual world."

TC is apparently more universal in its outlook than focused on Lutheranism. The Lutheran Church had in fact already seen and rejected Swedenborg's doctrines. A return engagement would not be very effective, for argument *per se* is not what converts people; it is

always possible to argue back, and Lutheran theologians could be counted on to do so even more vehemently in order to put down an aggravating new assault on their views.

A Lutheran target for TC therefore lacks a broad practicality. Only a change of life and attitude would establish the New Church, and that would have to be a gradually evolving change across the Christian world, not just the Lutheran Church.

We would seem to need a larger perspective that concentrates on Swedenborg's future impact and its very important prospects after his death. What does a man do when the end of his life is near? Swedenborg would die about a year after *True Christianity* was published in 1771. He wouldn't limit his final work to local, already known and deeply entrenched resistance. Would he not try to reinforce his life's work as much as possible in one fortresslike publication that would sum up his entire mission for everyone? What would have been more natural? And wouldn't that be primarily intended for his customary audience, his most dependable successors in the new faith, reinforcing them as much as possible against the time when they would be endlessly without him? The Lutheran Church would always consider it a sacred duty to criticize him, threatening only to waste the time he had left.

Finally, on page 115 George writes, "We see [Swedenborg] first as a person profoundly committed to a Lutheran view of the exclusive centrality of Scripture."

Lutheranism taught *sola Scriptura*, Scripture as the only source of revealed truth. One had to believe it as written. It was arguably the central doctrine of Lutheranism. But to tie Swedenborg "profoundly" to such a narrow and literal view of Scripture would make him a traditionalist—in thrall to that doctrine merely because of his early environment. Swedenborg was anything but traditional, or we would have a lot of trouble accounting for him. Actually, he had very early in his life disavowed, along with his father, the Lutheran doctrine of salvation by faith alone. He therefore could, and did, disagree with

Lutheranism on a critical teaching when needed.

Much later he tells Dr. Beyer about his providentially slow start in studying *anyone's* theology: "... I was forbidden to read writers on dogmatic and systematic theology before heaven was opened to me, because unfounded opinions and inventions might therefore have easily insinuated themselves, which afterwards could only have been removed with difficulty; wherefore, when heaven was opened to me, I had first to learn the Hebrew language... which led me to read the Word of God over many times; and as God's Word is the source whence all theology must be derived, I was enabled thereby to receive instruction from the Lord, who is the Word. ("Theological Extracts," *Posthumous Theological Works*.)

He had recently come out of a severe spiritual crisis (1743-1744) after which he said for the first time, "Ignorance is the first state of instruction." His theology, somewhat thin earlier, was being remade, and the Word was no longer just a book but its Author.

Early in his *Spiritual Experiences* (*Spiritual Diary*), n. 1464 (dated March, 1748), as he began *Heavenly Secrets* (*Arcana Coelestia*) he comments critically on a belief that looks very much like *sola Scriptura*:

"I also spoke concerning those in the world who will simply say that they have the Word and have no need for a new revelation, thus rejecting these things which come out of heaven and descend; when nevertheless it here treats of the genuine sense and understanding of the Word and the quality of faith..."

Swedenborg thereby argues for personal revelation and guidance and the riches of the inner sense of Scripture widened out to a full transformation of consciousness beyond the traditional literalism. It could with some imprecision be called an expanded version of the old *sola Scriptura* doctrine, but we may note that it was certainly no longer *Lutheran*, neither in its spirit nor in its origin.

This review of *Scribe of Heaven* will be continued in a later issue. What remains

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Scribe of Heaven

(Continued from page 44)

consists mainly of articles on Swedenborg's cultural impact in Scandinavia, Continental Europe, Great Britain, and the United States; the impact of Swedenborgian organizations in Great Britain, the US and Canada; examples of internationalization, the New Church in Africa; and the power of three selected ideas on Swedenborg's influence. ☩

2006 SCYL Officers

(Continued from page 37)

Miles Stroh, Ethan Turley, Brittany Fleming, and CBS Editor, Brendan Dzeba. Ben proudly led the SCYL for four years, his last two as our inspiring president. Miles represented the east for two years and we thank him for his fine service. Ethan held the position of ambassador to the west last year and although he did not get an opportunity to attend the Pacific Coast retreat he was able to visit with teens from the west at last year's convention in Berkeley, California. Ethan still has several years left as a teen to run as a SCYL Officer in future elections. Brittany served as an officer for two years as our Canadian representative and we are grateful for her impassioned leadership. We commend Brendan as he departs his one year assignment in the challenging position of *Clear Blue Sky* editor where he published one superb issue in 2005. Thank you Ben, Miles, Ethan, Brittany and Brendan for your outstanding and caring leadership in the SCYL.

Returning for her fifth year of service in the SCYL we congratulate our 2006 SCYL President, **Erika Penabaker** on her election to this important position. Erika hails from the Detroit area and has been extremely active in the church league for all of her teenage years. She regularly attends our annual conventions, SCYL retreats and local church overnights and is pretty much a permanent fixture at Almont Summer Camp.

She started college at the University of Detroit Mercy this past fall. We wish her success at college, are so grateful for her active service in the church and look forward with great anticipation to her intelligent leadership as SCYL President.

We greet four first-time officers for 2006. First, we welcome newly elected East and Service Officer **Alec Sheppard**. Alec resides in North Attleboro, Massachusetts, and is actively involved in the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church. He has attended several retreats over the past year and we look forward to his determined direction this year.

Cody Steinhiser, our Midwest and Activities Officer from Michigan City, Indiana, was elected to his position at his first teen retreat! Cody has attended Almont Summer Camp on and off for a number of years and we are so pleased to see him extend his church activity

into the SCYL now that he is a teenager.

Our 2006 elected Canada and Fundraising Officer is **Stephanie Wilson**. Steffie, who lives in Kitchener, Ontario, has been to numerous retreats at Almont as well as being active in the Kitchener Church of the Good Shepherd. Steffie's enthusiasm is

contagious and we know that she will bring a high level of positive energy to her new responsibilities. Our West Coast position is open so far this year as we did not have any teens available from this region at the elections.

Kristina Madjerac is the new Editor of the youth publication *Clear Blue Sky* (CBS) and also serves as the Communication Officer. Kristina resides in Portland, Maine and has attended three



Newly elected SCYL President, Erika Penabaker strikes a commanding presidential pose.



SCYL Chaplain Rev. Kevin Baxter, returning for 2nd year.

SCYL retreats in 2005 as well as Fryeburg Assembly Summer Camp. She is active in the Portland Youth Group as well as helping with childcare in the Portland Swedenborgian Church. We are thrilled to have Kristina, an avid music lover, in the editor position and wish her much success.

Rev. Kevin Baxter was elected to his second year as League Chaplain. Kevin, a past SCYL Officer, grew up actively participating in youth league activities and retreats. He recently relocated to the Boston area and has now completed his first year as Director of Almont Summer School. We are honored to again have him as our spiritual advisor and we eagerly await his insightful reports in *Clear Blue Sky*. Please join me in congratulating all of our 2006 SCYL Officers and our League Chaplain. This is a wonderfully new and energetic team. I look forward to serving with them and I hope that you have a chance to get to know some of them in the coming year.

--Kurt Fekete
Youth Director ☩

Sparks: The Youngest Generation at Fryeburg New Church Assembly

(Continued from page 37)

swimming in the river, meals, and the [Sales Table] Auction." **Joshua Webb, 10, Connecticut**

"I like making new friends. My favorite activity is Sparks' games. I like having so many activities to participate in. Another favorite is Colgate's village [of miniature wooden buildings]." **Benjamin Webb, 8, Connecticut.**

"I like Sparks' games, going to the river, Colgate's village, and the playroom." **Samuel Webb, 5, Connecticut.**

"I like to come and stay [at camp]. I feel connected. I like the different age groups. I don't like being the only girl." **Liz Dyer, 10, Maine**

"I like coming to Fryeburg because I see my friends." **Josh Cook, 11, Pennsylvania**

(Continued on page 46)

Sparks: The Youngest Generation at Fryeburg New Church Assembly

(Continued from page 45)

"I like coming to Fryeburg New Church camp because I can only see Josh Cook this time every year." *Sam Reed, 11, New Hampshire*

The following is reprinted with permission from *The Chris & Caleb Chronicles* (November 2005) by Chris (age 10) and Caleb (age 8) Woofenden, Massachusetts: "Fryeburg New Church Assembly is a church camp in Fryeburg Maine. We go every August and stay for two weeks. It takes us three hours to get there and the ride is really boring. But when we get there it's SOOO fun! Lots of nice people go there including tons of our relatives. Every day we have chapel and classes in the morning, then we go swimming in the Saco River in the afternoon. Uncle Trevor does awesome games with the kids. On Outing Day we get to go somewhere special like a lake or a mountain or a stop along the Kancamagus Highway. It's a pretty big camp with lots of cabins and woods and last summer we even saw a black bear."

About the FNCA:


The Fryeburg New Church Assembly is a Swedenborgian family summer camp located in Fryeburg, Maine on the banks of the clear and cool Saco River on the state line of New Hampshire. The purpose of the camp is the study of the Christian religion as revealed in the Lord's Word and explained in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. Since 1921, the camp has continuously held summer sessions during the month of August with an exception of a four-year period during WWII.

The facilities include a main building with dining room, kitchen, an attached lecture hall, and nine private rooms. The White Mountains of New Hampshire can be seen from the porch of the main building. The Saco River is very popular with campers of all ages for swimming, canoeing, kayaking, sunbathing, etc. Our twelve family cabins all have a porch with a view of the Saco River. The camp also has an adult lounge with Internet connection, dorms and a rec

hall for the teens, and a playroom and fenced-in play-yard for children.

The dates for this summer's session are August 5-20th. If you'd like more information about the Fryeburg New Church Assembly visit our website: www.fryeburg.org. If you have questions about scholarships or staff positions contact Debbie Cook dcCook@bacs-gc.org. If you have questions about registration contact Nancy Little, littleNancyf@yahoo.com.

Look for more information about Flames, Bonfires and Embers in future issues.


Nancy Little is the FNCA Registrar. She lives in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts with her husband, Trevor Woofenden, and her cat of 13 years, Tiger Lily. She can be reached at 413-247-0046 or littleNancyf@yahoo.com. 

HELP WANTED

FRYEBURG NEW CHURCH
ASSEMBLY
Fryeburg, Maine
AUGUST 5 – 20TH, 2006

Summer Session Staff Positions (for adults 18 yrs. and older)

Available positions include dorm mother, dorm father, Flames advisor, child-care provider, dining room supervisor, and 2 qualified lifeguards. If interested contact Debbie Cook, summer session director, as soon as possible! Some positions go very quickly. Compensation for these positions is free room and board. If you would like to be a lifeguard and are not certified, contact me about financial help in training costs.

dcCook@bacs-gc.org
or 215-657-2220 

What the (Bleep) Do We Know?

(Continued from page 38)

molecules that are the geometrical analogs of our intentions. (This is getting real close to Swedenborg's discovery in the spiritual world that love is ultimate substance, and as such, adapts form to *itself* — to create a body for itself through similitude.)


- Scientists (with spiritual leanings) now reject the notion of a judgmental God and are sensing that our ideas about God (especially those given to us by the dogmas of traditional religion) are hopelessly inadequate.

Another surprise for me in the movie "What the (Bleep) Do We Know?" was that it featured two physicists whom I have personally spoken to about religion and God. Their names are Amit Goswami and William Tiller. Both men are deeply spiritual. In fact, I shared many of Swedenborg's ideas with physicist William Tiller, who found Swedenborg's ideas of the spiritual world quite compatible with his physics.

This is why I have great expectations for a new book in the works entitled, *Proof of God: Swedenborg's Remarkable Quest for the Quantum Fingerprints of Love*. It will show how Swedenborg not only addressed the issues of 21st-century physics, but how relativity theory, quantum physics, and superstring theory are all expressed within the words and stories of Holy Scripture! The scientists in this movie are absolutely correct in their thinking that most of the world's ideas about God are inadequate. But even they are in for a surprise when they find out that God knows what quantum physics is.

—*The Unknown Reviewer*

Reprinted from the February-March 2005 *Branching Out!* the bi-monthly newsletter of the St. Louis Swedenborgian church, Church of the Open Word. The review was signed *The Unknown Reviewer*, who, we assume, wishes to remain...unknown.

What the (Bleep) Do We Know is on DVD or Video and can be rented at local video stores or libraries. 

Coretta Scott King Remembered

On January 31, 2006, the President of the National Council of Churches USA, the Rev. Michael E. Livingston, issued the following (excerpted) statement on the passing of Coretta Scott King:

We are deeply saddened by the news of the death of civil rights leader Coretta Scott King. She was an unwavering advocate of civil and human rights and a champion of nonviolence. Her strength and fortitude are to be admired and emulated. We will forever be grateful for the legacy that she leaves behind.

Coretta Scott King, widow of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was a beacon of light and defender of truth and righteousness. She touched many lives and we will never forget her tireless efforts to advance the dream and vision of equality and justice for all people. . . may we all do our part to honor her life and legacy with our words and actions. ☩

Don't Miss Out! Highlights of *The Messenger* are Available Online

Going away for awhile? Or do you want to recommend *The Messenger* to a friend? Highlights—feature articles, commentaries, photos—from our magazine are available to everyone on the denomination's website at Swedenborg.org. ☩

PASSAGES

CONFIRMATIONS

Koke—Stephen Koke, a former member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, was confirmed into the life and faith of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church February 5, 2006, the Rev. Carla Friedrich officiating.

LeVan—Patricia LeVan, a former member of the Swedenborgian Church in LaPorte, Indiana; subsequently a member-at-large in the Pacific Coast Association, was confirmed into the life and faith of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church February 5, 2006, the Rev. Carla Friedrich officiating.

Silvers—Jamie Silvers was confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church at the San Diego Swedenborgian Church January 22, 2006, the Rev. Carla Friedrich officiating.

Death

Schnieder—Herb Schneider, 79, died very suddenly on Sunday, January 29, 2006, while visiting his wife Betty in her nursing home. The memorial service celebrating his life was held in the Swedenborgian Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, on Sunday afternoon, February 5th, with the Revs. Roz Vincent-Haven and Paul Zacharias officiating. The church was filled to overflowing, including the downstairs hall, with a number of local dignitaries and business leaders in attendance. Herb was an active and devoted member of the Church of the Good Shepherd during his lifetime, having served several terms as church president. He will be sorely missed by all in our church and in the larger community. "Well done, good and faithful servant." ☩

Meeting

Deborah Winter

The sun shines on his face as we talk. Two steps behind and one to my right walks my friend, as if nothing has changed, just as I remember him. His voice sounds so familiar, his presence so real that for some time I forget that he has died as we converse. I steal glances at him at opportune times, somehow aware that if I look directly at him he would slowly fade, and this surreal opportunity would retreat back into the realm of impossible things. He asks about my life and how I am doing since his death. Answers creep up, but I am unable to put them to words. I know he already knows them anyway. He asks about Tracey, and how she is handling things. Instead I respond with a query of my own. He answers, "I bought her a ring only a few days before it happened." We share a silent moment of tenderness and concern for our friend. A stark blue sky contrasts with intense, compassionate brown glistening eyes. The content of the remainder of our walk lingers just out of thought, but the feeling, and perhaps meaning, still resides within my reach.

As we approach the end, I stop him mid-sentence, and for the first time fully face my lost friend. Our gazes lock, and for a timeless moment we communicate without words. I ask him, "What is it like?" He smiles a gentle, inward smile and slowly looks around with a serene reverence that I have never seen. His silent response is moving indeed. I ask, "Is it anything like we thought?" He tilts his head to the left, and with the same knowing and empathetic smile, meets my gaze and shakes his head, as if to say, "We had no idea." This time he does fade. I watch full of mixed emotions as sunlight and empty air take his place. I try to say something powerful and profound as he departs, but silence is the only farewell that passes my lips. I awake in my bed, my pillow wet with a new kind of tears. His voice still rings in my ears.

The Rev. Deborah Winter is a Swedenborgian minister and psychotherapist serving The House Next Door Children and Family Ministry in Deland, Florida. ☩

Correction

A recent email from Deborah Forman, Executive Director/Publisher of the Swedenborg Foundation, thanked us for the article in the February *Messenger* announcing the release of the Helen Keller DVD, *Shining Soul*, but pointed out the following two errors: Penny Price is both producer and director, and Penny Price co-wrote the script with Deborah Forman, as can be seen on the DVD credits. Deborah writes, "It would be highly improper to leave the erroneous impression out there that I was the sole writer."

We agree, and we apologize for the error. ☩

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.

Convention 2006 Preview

"Walking a Sacred Path – Living Our Oneness"

Urbana University – Urbana Ohio

Wednesday, June 28th – Sunday, July 2nd, 2006

Convention 2006 is being hosted by the Ohio Association. It will be held on the campus of Urbana University which was founded in 1850 by followers of Swedenborg, and has had a long association with our denomination. This is an exciting time in the life of the University, which will be evident to all who have attended previous conventions at this site. Since the denomination's last visit, the University has added two new dorms, completely renovated two of the oldest buildings on Campus (Barclay and Bailey Halls) while maintaining the beauty of their original historic architecture, and is in the process of completing a multi-purpose athletic stadium as well as a new Student Center. The latter two will be very close to completion by the time of Convention and attendees will have the opportunity to tour the new and restored facilities, including the Johnny Appleseed Museum. You may also want to check out several models of Swedenborg's inventions, on display in the lobby of the new Moore Math Science Building.

Childcare for very young children as well as a structured children's program for ages 5 thru 12 will be part of this Convention's offerings. Parents will need to complete information forms to register their children in either of these programs. Our Saturday evening entertainment will feature a cookout followed by entertainment by the local Shawnee Nation Remnant Band, including storytelling and native dancing. We are also hoping to be treated to a performance of Rev. Ken and Laura Turley's Johnny Appleseed Musical play.

While visiting Ohio, some of you may want to plan a

special trip to the Johnny Appleseed Heritage Center to see an outdoor performance of the story of Johnny in a beautiful setting near Mansfield, Ohio. If you decide to take advantage of this opportunity, plan on a 2 to 2 ½ hour trip from

Urbana. Informational materials will be available at Convention, but you can check out upcoming performance schedules and other information through Google. Just use Johnny Appleseed Heritage Center to bring up the website information.

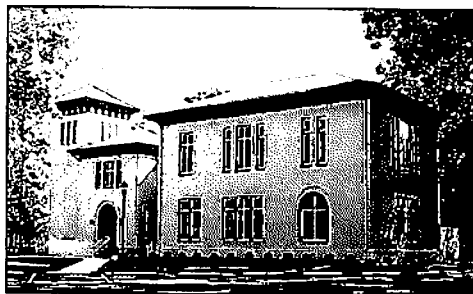
Please note that Convention will begin in mid-week and end on the following Sunday about noon, which is a change from recent previous years.

Another change from past years will be holding our main worship

service on Saturday morning, making it possible for everyone to attend. Detailed registration information and forms will be available in the April and May issues of *The Messenger*. You may also want to keep checking the church website at www.swedenborg.org, where the registration form will be available as soon as it is completed.

—Betsy Coffman, chair
Convention Planning Committee

Note: Ministers arrive on June 24. COM meets June 25, 26 and 27. General Council meets June 28 and July 2. Convention begins June 28 and ends on July 2. ☩



Historic Barclay and Bailey Halls, renovated in 2003, used primarily for classrooms. Bailey Hall also houses the Johnny Appleseed Education Center and Museum.

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