

THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

May 2006

Making Spiritual Art



Mona Conner

The drawing above, done in charcoal and pastel on blue paper, titled "Study #1 for 'The Divine in Arlynne'," 24 1/2 inches wide by 18 inches high, is part of a series of portraits of women and men that I am presently working on to try to portray the divine as it is expressed through each person.

Arlynne Miller, the model for this drawing, has been a friend of mine for about 26 years. This particular study was also created as a donation for a silent auction called, "Drawing the Line Against Domestic Violence," which is being held at the Helen Mills Theater on 26th St. in New York City on May 8, 2006. This auction is raising funds for the programs of Brooklyn's Center for Domestic Violence which oversees three homeless shelters in Manhattan and Brooklyn for abused women and children. The show and auction will also include a show of artwork by children from the Center for Domestic Violence's shelters, and each child is being paid \$5 for their artistic contribution.

When I visited San Diego in January of this year, I was very fortunate to have the privilege of speaking to the congregation of the Swedenborgian Church of San Diego about my journey in making spiritual art. I discussed with them my work on my spiritual portrait series, and also my recent venture in learning to paint religious icons in the Russian-Byzantine style and tradition.

Painting icons, or icon-writing as it is officially called, is considered to be a spiritual practice, as well as an art

form. I am learning this tradition at the Prosopon School of Iconology in Manhattan (see <http://www.prosoponschool.org>), in the basement of a Russian Orthodox church called the Holy Virgin Protection Cathedral. The founder of this school is

Russian icon master Vladislav Andreyev, and my teachers in the New York City studio are one of his sons, Dimitri, and star pupil, Tatiana Berestova.

There are twenty-two steps in producing one icon, and each step and each material used in the process has a



Mona Conner speaking at San Diego Church, showing "The Divine in Arlynne" painting.

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Coast to Coast Celebrations

California

Lansing is known affectionately as 'the church that bowls' and San Diego Swedenborgian Church is soon to be the church that "hashes." San Diego hosted the 4th annual hash of the BAJA5 hash club (Heavenly Hash House Herriers and Herrierettes) on April 23rd, 2006, as a part of the worship service. (A hash is an outdoor adventure trail and part of a seventy-year-old tradition begun in Kuala Lumpur.)

Maine

The Portland New Church's Palm Sunday service was featured April 13 with photos, in the print and online pages of *The Current*, a newspaper that serves S. Portland, Scarborough, and Cape Elizabeth. A member was interviewed as to why she chose the church. Full article to appear in June *Messenger*. (The Portland Swedenborgian Church was recently renamed the Portland New Church — "we were tired of being invited to bring Swedish food to local ethnic festivals!")



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The Chicken Experiment Births Gratitude for an Egg-cellent Mom

ROY GRABER

One holiday custom I could never figure out was people giving baby chicks to kids for Easter. If you think about it, I guess you could see that young chicks symbolize new life, just like we experienced after Jesus died on the cross.


But enough about symbolism. Let's talk in terms of practicality. Baby chicks turn into chickens, and anyone who has seen Chandler and Joey's apartment on "Friends" can tell that chickens don't make good house pets. But just before Easter, my girlfriend Bobbie's son Taylor went to a church Easter party where they were giving chicks to kids. My initial reaction was "They can't be serious." Now, I'm sure right now the Krauses are thinking about Juan. Juan was a junior high science project, where we hatched eggs and raised the chicks. Remember Juan was a good friend for those few weeks. But since my family hadn't raised chickens for quite a few years and we later found out that Mom was allergic to chickens in the house, we found a new home for Juan Chicken at Vernon and Linda Kraus's. I would get the occasional Juan update from them after they took him in, and I later found out that Juan was actually a Juanita. Well, after I talked to Bobbie about Juan, the baby chick idea sounded a little less absurd. We thought it might be a good way to teach Taylor how pets are a responsibility and how they require attention and care. And, it could be a lesson that would last only a short while. After making it clear that the chick would be at their house for only a few weeks before taking it to a farm where chickens are raised, they agreed to take it.

Taylor proved to be worthy of the responsibility given to him. He fed the

chick—named Petie—regularly, kept his cage clean and all the other stuff we knew he would have to do. Then one day I talked to Bobbie and Taylor on the phone, and Taylor was telling me about some tricks he had taught Petie. *Tricks?* What was he talking about? When I went down to visit them, Taylor showed me how he had trained the young bird to jump and land on his shoulder, as well as a few other jumping tricks. I never knew you could train a chick to do anything, but maybe Juan had been just a little shy of talent.

Well, the day came when it was apparent that Petie had outgrown his cage, and it was time to take him to the farm Bobbie had made arrangements with. There was a little sadness initially when the two friends parted ways, but I think he knew it was the best place for him. (Or her; I still haven't got this chick gender thing down.) At the time of this writing, it was the approach of Mother's Day. The whole Petie experience made me think that raising baby chicks was kind of like raising a child. You care for it, you love it, you feed it, you clean up after it, you teach it a few tricks, and then it eventually moves out. Petie and Juan may not have had the capacity to thank their "parents" for raising them and raising them right, but we as humans and Christians do. We are lucky, because we can and do maintain and further develop relationships with our parents after the "raising" period is over. I know I'm thankful for the upbringing I had, and I greatly value the relationship I have with my family. Thanks, Mom, for all you have done for this baby chick.

Roy Graber is a member of the Swedenborgian Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas.

Reprinted from *The Plains Banner*, May 2003. 

A Mother's Gift


A mother's gift is to give life. But in the daily demands of feeding and forming, cleaning and cautioning, tending and teaching, her gift can get lost in the layers.

She needs to remember that her work begins with herself. To be attentive to others, she must listen to her own heart. To care for others, she must take time for herself. To teach self-love to others, she must act lovingly towards her own body and her time.

If she finds her own sparks, she will fan them in those around her. If she frees her own spirit, she will help others soar. If she focuses each moment by being wholly present, she will point the way to holiness and to God.

And if she truly lives, she will give real life to the world, not only in her children's bodies, but in their souls.

—*Author Unknown*

Reprinted from the Church of the Holy City newsletter, Edmonton, Alberta. 

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New from the Swedenborg Foundation

You Can Believe! *An Introduction to the New Christianity*



By Grant Schnarr

Swedenborg Foundation Publishers /
Chrysalis Books,
2006; \$12.95

A selection from
the Introduction:
"... I encourage
you to adopt this

principle—that there is good in all religions—and to find what resonates within you. If something doesn't make sense, don't believe it. If something seems hurtful to your inner spirit, trust your intuition. If something seems right, adopt it, try it, grow with it. And if something challenges you to change, stay with it. You and I need to be challenged. Change is the way life works. If you're not changing, you're not growing. And if you're not growing, you're dying. Embrace the challenge to live unselfishly, to strive for something higher, better, stronger, and nobler. If you begin to do this, you will soon see and feel with your

whole being that you are not alone, that there is a force for good so strong in your life that you cannot deny it. This force is gentle and loving, as if you are being carried along in a silent current toward all things good and blessed. It's there for you. Just take up that bed and start moving...

"In this book, I have written about my faith, what I have adopted in my life. This is what I believe and the roadmap I use. I have chosen to share it with you because I believe that it can help you immensely, just as it has helped me. I don't believe these things because someone told me to. My beliefs are not based on blind faith, superstition, dogma, tradition, or any man-made view. I believe them because they make sense to me. I've never found anything better, and I've looked. I also believe these things because I can and don't have to stop looking, learning, and growing. The ideas presented in this book are like a boat, keeping me safe over stormy seas. They are also like a boat that I can continue to fish from, for more knowledge, understanding, food for


thought and for life. You may find the same thing."

Do you want a coach who can tell you just how spiritual growth and the experience of new life works? This is as bracing as anything you might read—no-nonsense stuff.

Chapter titles: Who is God?; What Am I Doing Here?; How Can I Grow?; Am I Being Cared For?; What is the Bible Telling Us?; Does Love Last Forever?; Is There an Afterlife?; Are We Living in the End Times?; You Can Believe!

Grant Schnarr is an author, teacher, certified life-coach, and assistant pastor of the Bryn Athyn Church in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. Other works by Schnarr include *The Art of Spiritual Warfare*, *Way of Wisdom*, *Spiritual Recovery: A Twelve-Step Guide*, and *Return to the Promised Land: The Story of Our Spiritual Recovery*.

Order: (800) 355-3222, ext. 10 or
customerservice@swedenborg.com

—SPK 

Making Spiritual Art

(Continued from front page)

correspondential meaning. (How Swedenborgian!) For example, learning about the earthly symbolism of the red clay bole, and the divine symbolism of the gold leaf which is applied on top of the red clay bole entailed a 45 minute lecture. Even 'mistakes' have a correspondential meaning.


When I enter the icon studio to begin my work, I start my day by saying the icon writer's prayer before a small altar with burning incense. As I work, sacred Russian chant music is playing. In the icon studio I feel as if I am wrapped in a lovely warm cocoon. There is a tangible difference in the way I feel when I am there, especially after prayers. Dimitri says that the act of creating an icon is also the act of restoring oneself spiritually. "As we work with icon writing, we begin to change,

and sometimes others notice the changes in us before we do ourselves."

I look forward to what this process will bring out in me spiritually, and also look forward to how it will inform all the art I am creating...both inside and outside the wonderful spiritual practice of icon writing.

Mona Conner is a working artist, member of the New York New Church, and former chair of the Communications Support Unit. Some of her art series on the divine in each person was exhibited on the west coast at the 2005 Convention in Berkeley, California.

Editor's Note: Unni de Presno, Norwegian-born artist who is Ministry Coordinator and a member of the congregation at Wayfarers Chapel in Palos Verdes, California, has also donated her art to this auction: "Girl by the Window," below, which is part of her

"Women with Closed Eyes" series. (See September 2005 *Messenger*.) Unni says, "you can learn a lot about a person from looking at her face when her eyes are closed. The face will reveal where she is in life, and how she feels about it." This series is on greeting cards incorporating Swedenborgian quotes. Her art has been exhibited in a number of venues, including the 2005 Swedenborgian Church Convention in Berkeley. A former television producer/writer, Unni has received media recognition and awards in Norway and the US. She is beginning work on her website; and can be reached at unni.de@verizon.net. 



"Girl by the Window,"
Unni de Presno

Announcing the Birth of the North American Society

Cyber Swedenborgians, Part 3

Do you miss church on Sunday because you live too far from a Swedenborgian congregation? Do you long for discussions on Swedenborg's writings? Do you want to be able to discuss the Sunday sermon with your fellow parishioners? Do you want to make new Swedenborgian friends across the continent? Well, wait no longer, the North American Society is here for you!

A minister will be selected to lead this new online congregation in spiritual matters and facilitate the online community. She will be involved with the congregation through personal interaction in discussions and available through email or phone contact.

A weekly Sunday sermon will be followed by live discussion between the minister and congregation. A bulletin board will provide space for open dialogue on a variety of topics. Another feature will be a "Question of the Week" which will be posted on Monday, with a live discussion of the topic later in the week led by the minister.

This is just the beginning! As with any of our churches, the members will decide what they want to discuss, what items they want to see, what they would like their church to do for them and what they can do for their church. By


Do you want to make new Swedenborgian friends across the continent? Well, wait no longer, the North American Society is here for you!

2007, we hope to have developed this internet ministry into a place for our previously isolated members to join together in fellowship with other Swedenborgians to form a new congregation...The North American Society.

All of the content areas will be open to public viewing including Sunday

messages and the bulletin board. Membership has its privileges! Actual membership in the North American Society will be **restricted and secure** with a user name and password. This secure level of membership will allow members of the North American Society to interact through the website whether in fellowship on Sundays or posting responses to the bulletin board. Dialogue, communication, sharing with others, a personal connection is what brings Swedenborgian theology to life.

Are you already a member of a Swedenborgian Church and just want to increase your Swedenborgian experiences? **ALL ARE WELCOME!** We look forward to meeting you online and invite you to experience the newest New Church...The North American Society. Coming to a computer near you in June 2006!

—The Swedenborgian Community Ad Hoc Committee Working for Isolated Members 

The 2006 SCYL Memorial Day Weekend Teen Retreat

May 26th - 29th • Fryeburg Assembly, Fryeburg, Maine
Healthy Communication with our family, friends, neighbors and God

As members of the human race, we communicate all the time. Much of the time we do so without thinking about it. Some of the more common ways that we communicate include talking, writing, listening and reading. But conveying thoughts and feelings is far more complex than that. A brief gesture, a work of art, a jaded facial expression, a quick sketch, a slight nod, glance of eye or shrug. We have an amazing array of tools to use to share our views and opinions with the world. Compared to other life forms, we are astoundingly good at it. Other species, if they communicate at all, have a narrow repertoire of signals that they use to convey again and again things like: 'this is my territory,' 'danger' or 'I'm in pain.' Yet as humans, there are times we view communication as something difficult or even impossible to achieve.

Whether through bold, outright yelling or subtle efforts to sway, we all spend a great deal of energy trying to connect with one another.

At this retreat we will look at healthy (and some less healthy) ways we connect with our family, friends, neighbors, and God. We'll also look to Emanuel Swedenborg's writings to learn how angels converse. Hopefully, at the end of this retreat we will all be better and more informed communicators. See you there! Kurt

Cost: \$50. Scholarship funds available. If you need financial help to attend, call or email Kurt.

Questions about the SCYL and our retreats?

The SCYL is the Swedenborgian Church Youth League. Our retreats

are open to teenagers ages 13-18 of all faiths and beliefs. At our retreats we offer life skills and spiritual sessions based on the principles of the Swedenborgian church. We strive for a safe, secure and inclusive environment to discuss and share relevant and meaningful ideas and challenges facing today's teens. We work, play and learn together as a community. We have fun! For teens and parents new to SCYL retreats please don't hesitate to contact Kurt with any and all questions and concerns (email: kfekete@hotmail.com or call Kurt toll free at: (866) 333-SCYL(7295). Kurt will answer your questions or, if appropriate, put you in contact with a League officer in your region to help give you as much information and encouragement as you need!



Bonfires & Embers:

Adults of Fryeburg New Church Assembly

Nancy Little

The previous two articles in the March and April *Messengers* talked about the Sparks (children 12 and under) and Flames (teens 13 and over). This article is about the Bonfires and Embers at Fryeburg New Church Assembly family camp in Fryeburg, Maine. Bonfires and Embers are the adults at the FNCA. Originally, the cast of characters was called Sparks, Flames and Embers. About 25 years ago, someone in their twenties protested being called an Ember and Bonfires was born. The exact age where a Bonfire becomes an Ember is a bit fuzzy and entirely up to each individual.

The daily schedule for all campers starts with the rising bell at 7:00 AM. The Polar Bear Club meets at the top of the path to the river at 7:02 for a quick swim in the refreshing and invigorating Saco River. After breakfast in the main building at 7:30 the next event on the schedule for all campers is chapel in Founders Hall at 8:45 followed by the first lecture at 9:00 and second lecture at 10:00. Bonfires and Embers attend both lectures. The lectures are usually about 30 minutes long followed by a 15-minute discussion period. Often, a lively discussion will continue on the deck or porch following the second lecture. Lunch is at 12:30 in the dining room. During rest hour at 1:30 Bonfires and Embers are free to leave campus or enjoy a quiet discussion on the porch or if they really want to they can take a nap! Lifeguarded swimming starts at 2:30. Bonfires and Embers may swim in the river at any time during the day if there are 3 adults and they have permission of the water front director. Dinner is in the dining room at 6:00. Following dinner many adults sit on the porch and watch the Sparks Games on the front lawn. At 8:00 there is often an all-camp activity in the dining room or lecture hall. Sometimes it's a slide show from someone's travels or Trivial Pursuit played with teams.

Although Sparks and Flames have an official bedtime, Bonfires and Embers do not. "Quiet time" begins at 10:00. The

night owls often spend time working quietly at the puzzle table in the dining room or head out to Adrienne Frank Fellowship Hall where alcohol (in moderation) is permitted after 9PM. Adrienne Frank Fellowship Hall was built in 2003 and has been a welcome addition to our campus. There have been many great gatherings there including last summer's "Liquidation Party."

Bonfires and Embers also have their own adults-only lounge in the Main Building. The Dole Wing lounge has several comfortable chairs and a large stone fireplace that is often used on chilly mornings before breakfast. Thanks to early riser Colgate Searle, the Polar Bears have a place to warm up after their swim. The Dole Wing lounge is a popular gathering spot for Bonfires and Embers for a card game or conversation, or a quiet place to read during rest hour. The Dole Wing also has Internet connection and occasionally people have been known to connect to the Internet and do work.

On Outing Day, Bonfires and Embers pack a bag lunch following breakfast and head to one of the beautiful natural places nearby. Some people take a canoe down the river and make a day of it stopping at several of the sandy beaches for a swim in the cool Saco River. Mount Washington is another popular destination. The more athletic have hiked up Mount Washington. The summit of Mount Washington can also be reached by auto road and train. Portland, Maine is about an hour from Fryeburg where there are many shops, restaurants and museums to explore. A self-serve supper of soup and salad is available at 6:00.

Here's what some Bonfires and Embers have to say about coming to camp:

"What I like: All age groups coexisting and interacting. Excellent lectures, just enough, faculty available 24/7 to discuss questions and give guidance. Minimum of unnecessary rules, something for everyone. It's a perfect chance to share a fun & fulfilling vacation with my three-generation family. No matter where

everyone is in their spiritual journey, they find FNCA enriching." *Jim Perry, Super Ember, (72), Georgia*

"I came to Fryeburg two years ago with my husband who came here as a child and young adult. I've come back because I like the people, the feeling of belonging to a community and the peaceful surroundings. I especially like – and appreciate – that there is no pressure to participate in any activity. You can do as much or as little as you want. There is time for quiet reflection. Everyone I've met here, but especially the Assembly organization, has made me feel very welcome." *Barbara Perry, Georgia.*

"I've been coming to camp all my life and wouldn't dream of missing it. I look forward to it all year and love every second I'm here. It's time with family and friends in a delightfully beautiful location for a terrific purpose. If you come for a day or the entire session, I guarantee that you'll like it, too, and want to come back."

Trevor Woofenden, (50), Massachusetts

"I like just about everything about the camp: the people, the place, the river, the different age groups interacting and cooperating (a rarity in America today), the lectures, the whole spirit of the camp." *Cecilia Searle, Rhode Island*

"I like the cool Saco River on a hot day. I also enjoy the great food. A warm fire on a cold morning is great." *Rev. F. Robert Tafel, Massachusetts*

"This place is a natural home for seniors. There is spiritual discussion in the mornings, and free time afternoons for reflection or fun." *Rosey Lawson, Massachusetts*

"The lecture program gives me a chance to look into corners of Scriptures and doctrine that I might otherwise neglect and obliges me to put things into some coherent form. I feel both useful and appreciated. I get to hear what others are doing and thinking and to see people I have known for years but whose paths rarely cross mine."

Rev. Dr. George Dole (74), Maine

"After growing up at Fryeburg from Spark to Flame, I was absent for 24

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Bonfires & Embers

(Continued from page 69)

years. But from that I gained perspective that manifested when I returned:

Fryeburg is a safe community — safe to come and go as you please, to come as you are and be who you are, physically and spiritually, among family and friends." *Bob Perry, Massachusetts*

"Fryeburg camp how do I love thee?

Let me count the ways:

I love the calm passage of the days surrounded by the majesty of the pine tree.

I love the mixture of generation and the emphasis on regeneration.

I love the Saco so clean and clear and meeting friends year after year. The wonderful conversations on the porch

and returning each August to rekindle the torch

by Flints, Sparks, Flames and Embers.

Let's all rejoice in being members."

Tina G. Wood, Vermont

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 4-year period during WWII.

The facilities include a Main Building with dining room, kitchen, girls' dorm, 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 for swimming,

canoeing, kayaking, sunbathing, etc. Our 12 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 dcook@bacs-gc.org. If you have questions about registration contact Nancy Little, littlenancyf@yahoo.com.

Nancy Little is the FNCA Registrar. She first attended the FNCA as a Flame in 1980. 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.

The Alice F. Vigerstad Memorial Old Lady Canoe Trip

*Trevor Woofenden
FNCA Waterfront Director*

Alice F. Vigerstad was unsteady on our raft to the point of scary, and raised my lifeguarding hackles like nobody else.

Although some folks couldn't handle her over-the-topness, she's doted on me since earliest infancy and I have always loved her deeply.

One day, Alice complained she hadn't been on a boat ride

since childhood, saying (and I quote):

"Is there any way you could take us old ladies on a canoe trip? We'll be good."

The next afternoon, we had four canoes full of old ladies and their escorts down at the river, putting on life jackets,

gingerly climbing into the canoes, and just being thrilled as the dickens!

By sheer lollygagging, we took ¾ of an hour to paddle the 15-minute trip to the town beach where a crew met us with lawn chairs, wine & cheese & crackers. And we sat there for another forty-



Old Lady Canoe Trip

Back Row: (L to R) Jim Perry, Phyllis Webb, Dale Webb, Trevor Woofenden, Nancy Little, Jim Lowe.

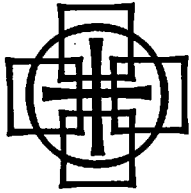
Front Row: (L to R) Barbara Perry, Rosey Lawson, Sam Webb (on lap), Lois Dole, Betty Lowe.



Canoe loading at dock

five minutes enjoying the beach scene until the van showed up for the 5-minute drive back to camp. It was the talk of the town among the Embers for days, and according to Alice, the highlight of her vacation.

Alice passed on a few years later, but each year until then she asked if I would take "us old ladies" down the river again. And thus the FNCA's regular "Alice F. Vigerstad Memorial Old Lady Canoe Trip" was born.



CONVENTION 2006 REGISTRATION

Urbana University

"Walking a Sacred Path: Living Our Oneness"

Wednesday, June 28 to Sunday, July 2, 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 General Convention. 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 dormitories, 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 multipurpose athletic stadium as well as a new Student Center. The latter two will be very close to completion by the time 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.

TRANSPORTATION:

Transportation will be available **FROM THE COLUMBUS AIRPORT ONLY ON SATURDAY, JUNE 24TH AND WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28TH.** Those wishing to fly into Dayton must provide their own.

Commercial airport van service will be available at a cost of \$35/person for the one-way trip from Columbus Airport to Urbana University's Grimes Center. Vans will carry 6 to 10 passengers, and the transportation committee will be grouping folks arriving at about the same time. Please make sure you let us know if you would like to be transported and provide us with **your specific flight arrival information** so we can do the matchmaking. The local committee has also arranged for a 40% discount with Enterprise Car Rental, based on a midsize car, for several days or a week. **You must identify yourself as an attendee at the Swedenborgian Church Convention at Urbana University** to obtain the discount.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

This year's Convention begins Wednesday afternoon, June 28th and ends at noon on Sunday, July 2nd. **Mini-courses** are offered on Thursday and Friday. **Our Saturday evening entertainment** will feature a barbeque 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 Laurie Turley's *Johnny Appleseed Musical* play. If you plan to attend the **Women's Alliance luncheon** on Friday, June 30th, please indicate your intention on the registration form. *Space is limited to 70 this year so be sure to sign up!*

CHILDCARE:

Childcare for very young children as well as a structured children's program for age 5 to 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.

TEENS:

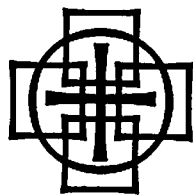
The program for teens begins Wednesday afternoon and will be supervised by the Youth Director, Kurt Fekete. *Contact the Central Office for details.*

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Housing is in air-conditioned suites (*Maple, Hickory, Blackmer, and Losch*). A suite of three double bedrooms, two bathrooms and a common area. Rooms are also available in the new traditional dormitory, *Sycamore*. If children wish to sleep in the same room (dorm or suite) as their parents and if they bring their sleeping bags (no linens provided) they may pay for meals only (\$20 per day).

JOHNNY APPLESEED HERITAGE CENTER:

Information will be available at Convention for those interested in the two hour trip to the Mansfield, OH area. More information on the Center is available on the web at www.jahci.org.



REGISTRATION FORM

Convention 2006

Urbana University

“Walking a Sacred Path: Living Our Oneness”

Name(s): _____

Street Address: _____

City and Province / State: _____ Postal Code / Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Names and Ages of all Children Accompanying You: _____

Arrival FI & Time: _____ Need Van to Urbana?: _____ How many?: _____ Departure Info: _____

Home Church (for your name tag): _____

Attending Women's Luncheon? (name): _____

Special Needs (dietary, handicapped access, roommate requests, etc.): _____

Adult Registration	\$80.00	x _____ adults	=	\$ _____
Teen (13-17) Registration	\$65.00	x _____ teens	=	\$ _____
Child (5-12) Registration	\$55.00	x _____ children	=	\$ _____
Family Maximum Registration	\$215.00		=	\$ _____
Late fee (if mailed after June 1)	\$65.00		=	\$ _____

Room and Board: Choose ONE option

FOUR DAY OPTION

Wed. June 28 to Sun. July 2	Double \$220.00	x _____ person	\$ _____
Extra Day	Double \$55.00	x _____ person	\$ _____
Wed. June 28 to Sun. July 2	Single \$300.00	x _____ person	\$ _____
Extra Day	Single \$75.00	x _____ person	\$ _____

Room and Board: Choose ONE option

EIGHT DAY OPTION

Sat. June 24 to Sun. July 2	Double \$344.00	x _____ person	\$ _____
Sat. June 24 to Sun. July 2	Single \$ 480.00	x _____ person	\$ _____

All prices are in US currency. If you wish to pay in Canadian currency, please add 20% and a handling charge of \$4.00 for each Canadian check. All bills must be paid in full by June 15. No registration refunds after June 1.

Bills may be paid by VISA and MasterCard. Provide number and four-digit expiration date.

Call in your payment if you like: 617-969-4240.

VISA _____ MasterCard _____ Number _____ Exp. _____

Make checks payable to: The Swedenborgian Church

Please send form with checks to: Central Office, The Swedenborgian Church, 11 Highland Ave., Newtonville, MA 02460

SHOULD YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT CENTRAL OFFICE AT 617-969-4240

Nominating Committee Report

President-elect:
Christine Laitner

Vice-President:
Jim Erickson

Secretary:
Susan Wood-Ashton

Treasurer:
Larry Conant

General Council Layperson
(2 full term openings)
Sandi Degi, Lori Steinheiser
1 year unexpired term: Matthew Fleming

General Council, Minister:
Rev. Dr. Donna Keane

COMSU:
Nancy Apple

EDSU:
Katie Shelley

FPRSU:
Leo Serrano

IMSU:
Rev. Lee Woofenden

MINSU:
(two to be elected)
Rev. Dr. Rich Tafel, Barb Boxwell

Nominating Committee:
(2 to be nominated, one to be elected)
Deb Wilson, Deane Currie

**Board of Trustees of SHS,
Representative Class:**
Rev. Robert Leas, Herb Ziegler

Almont Summer Camp

Almont Summer Camp takes place from July 22 thru July 30, at the Almont New Church Assembly & Retreat Center in Allenton, Michigan. No registration fee for those registered before June 15, 2006. Work & Play week is from July 17 thru July 22. For registration form & general information, contact Barb Tourangeau, Registrar, gmabarb373@aol.com

Meet the Nominees

President-Elect
Christine Laitner

In 2004, as I took office, I shared my personal mission statement: "My mission as president of the Swedenborgian Church is to motivate our members to the broad spectrum of vital ministries in our Church..."

Two years into this three-year term, I am pleased to report that this mission is working. We have seen some significant healthy changes in our ministries and in our denominational processes. Fiscal health and responsibility is a priority at the denominational level and my hope is to end deficit budgeting by 2008. I continue to encourage our ministries to implement solid stewardship programs.

During these two years, I have facilitated two "summit" gatherings to focus on particular needs in the denomination.

Summit I: Financial, created the possibility of multi-year funding assistance so that ministries that were "resurrecting" with new ministers could follow strategic plans without break. We also established the use of professional consultants for ministries where needed, and, at this point, two of our churches have received excellent guidance from the Alban Institute.

Summit II: Planning, identified ways to celebrate our uses, to create a culture of hope and encouragement, and to promote excellence in leadership throughout the denomination.

I have worked with church boards and Pastoral Search Committees in seven of our churches, and by mid-summer, 2006, most will have secured ministers. Also this summer, we will launch a cyber ministry which is an *ad hoc* committee's well-constructed response to my concern that we find a way to connect isolated members, friends and seekers to the life and work of the Church.

My promise was to be honest, fair, and quickly responsive to needs. Over these two years, I have answered a huge number of emails and spent many hours on the phone responding to questions; conferencing with consultants, lawyers and committees; having great discus-

sions; worrying, praying and mourning with people; and sharing the process of "being church together." I have made at least two dozen trips each year to meetings and to our churches. I've supported the attendance of a denominational delegation at the last two General Assemblies of the National Council of Churches, and hope to establish a Swedenborgian presence on a Council Commission next year. I have spoken in several of our churches and I've written numerous reports and articles.

It is a special privilege to help church members articulate and fulfill their plans. I am a facilitator who brings information, asks questions, explains processes honestly, and then helps new things happen. To give helpful, correct advice, I regularly read about and research current church practices, the best stewardship programs, and the way twenty-first century "church" is defined. I remain encouraging and involved as I work my mission to motivate, educate and facilitate us to useful, serving ministries for a spiritually hungry world. We need to actively reach out with service and to invite in with love.

I would be honored to serve as your president for another term as we, together, continue to create new and vital paths of service and use for our beloved Church in the twenty-first century.

Vice-President
Jim Erickson
Minnesota

I am pleased and feel honored to be a candidate for the position of vice-president of General Convention. Now in my second term as vice president and having served more than two terms on General Council I find it very rewarding to be of use in this way. I feel my work in these positions and other life experiences give me skills that will help me to continue contributing to General Convention.

Throughout my life I have worked in a variety of careers and served in a number of other roles from which I have gained leadership perspectives. These include

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Meet the Nominees

(Continued from page 73)

positions and functions in education, business, government, social services, scholarship and church positions.

Originally trained as a teacher in communications, theater, and English I taught in public schools, served as director of a private preparatory school, and was selected to participate in a federal government pilot project to improve science education in the U.S. I have also worked as an anthropology specialist in education for a science museum and currently I am involved in work for an historical society that brings history programs and information and history to the public.

Besides working in the field of education, I formed partnerships with in two business ventures, one in video and audio documentary production and the other in the technical field of holography.

My scholarly work includes serving as a consultant to authors of books such as "Artists in Exile" by Jane Katz and in lexicography to produce a supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary for the University of Minnesota.

In addition I have served as the president of a community social service and medical center, and as social service representative to the federal government Housing and Urban Development agency for a publicly operated development corporation.

If all the above and other experiences none has been more rewarding than my service to my local church in St. Paul, Minnesota as president and in other positions, or in my functions with the General Council and as Vice President. I would like to continue serving in this way.

Secretary

Susan Wood-Ashton

For the second year I am honored to accept the nomination for the office of Recording Secretary of Convention. In the 35 years that I have been a member of the Swedenborgian Church, I have been on General Council, FPRSU, AFC and the Retirement Committee; I've also served as president of the Ohio Association as well as board president of the Kemper Road Church in Ohio, currently known as the New Church of Montgomery. After moving to Florida in 1989, I became a member of the New Church of Southwest Florida, although my distance from Ft. Myers classifies me as an isolated member. It is my current privilege to be a part of the ad hoc committee for a Cyber Ministry that will be geared to serving all isolated members of Convention. The position of Recording Secretary is one with a wide variety of duties. I have found my first year to be both enriching and rewarding, and would be honored to serve my church for another year in this capacity.

Treasurer

Lawrence Conant
Massachusetts

I am seeking my seventh term as our denomination's treasurer. The treasurer's duties include accounting for the denomination's restricted and unrestricted funds, assisting in preparation and approval of the annual budget, providing guidance to General Council, chairing the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU), and serving on the Augmentation Fund Committee.

In 2004, the denomination completed its first full professional audit. This was a significant accomplishment and was only completed with the help of the accounting staff at Central Office. Beginning at this base, I would like to continue to refine the documentation of our assets. It is important that the denomination maintain the legal documentation supporting our assets. We have found that much of the history of these assets predates the people involved at both the local and denominational levels. With your support, I will be able to continue this effort.

I am a lifelong member of the Bridgewater, Massachusetts Society and have served on many boards at the association and national level.

General Council, Minister

Rev. Dr. Donna Keane
Massachusetts

I was ordained as a Swedenborgian minister in 1986 and served as pastor of the Elmwood New Church, Swedenborgian, in E. Bridgewater, Mass. from 1990 to 1997. After a six year hiatus, I was rehired at the Elmwood New Church and am again their permanent part-time minister. I am currently serving as the Treasurer of the Massachusetts New Church Union and am also on the Massachusetts Association Executive Committee. I have previously served as Chair of the Council of Ministers, on MINSU for two terms and on CAM. I have helped to structure the ethics guidelines for ministers, and drafted the job description for part-time ministry which can be used as a guide in all societies.

In addition to my ministerial duties, I am the director of *LifeStrategies!* a private pastoral counseling and psychotherapy practice in Needham, Mass. I provide psychotherapy, pastoral counseling, coaching, seminars and workshops for people who want to "discover the courage to change." I also specialize in grief and loss issues, addictions, anxiety and depression and how spirituality can help the healing process.

I have been practicing for 18 years, and work with both individuals and couples. I am a LMHC in Massachusetts and a Fellow in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

I am thrilled to be back in the active ministry again and feel that my background and skills can be used best in God's service by serving on the General Council at this time. I look forward to working on the many issues that face our church today, on the national, state and local levels.

General Council, Laypersons

Sandy Degi
Colorado

It has been an honor to serve on General Council for the past 2½ years and I am grateful for the opportunity to continue for a second term. While I have learned much about the church, both its strengths and the areas where it can improve, I find that the fiscal health of the church is my primary focus. I will continue to work towards a balanced budget if I am elected to serve a second term.

Lori Steinbiser

Indiana

I am a lifelong resident of LaPorte County, Indiana. I became a member of the LaPorte New Church in 1999 after being a regular visitor there for five years. I have served in the past as Board President for three years and am currently Sunday School Superintendent and Board Secretary. My husband, Alan, and I have three children, Cody (13), Scout (5), and Wyatt (1). The possibility of service on the General Council has coincided perfectly with my strong desire to be a useful and productive member of the Swedenborgian Church and my ability to be more involved as her youngest child gets older. If elected, I hope to both give and gain greatly from the experience.

General Council, 1-year unexpired term

Matthew Fleming,
Michigan

Hi everyone, for those of you who don't know me and those of you who know me well here is a quick little summary of who I am and what I do.

I have grown up in the Royal Oak Church of the Holy City in Michigan (also known as the Detroit Society) as did my mother and her mother before her. I have also been a regular camper at the Almont New Church Assembly. The New Church runs in my veins and I am honoured—yes, I am Canadian—to have been asked to serve on General Council.

When I'm not attending board meetings at the Church of the Holy City I am attending the University of Windsor in Windsor, Ontario currently studying Civil Engineering. I maintain an A average and am an active participant in my school's Concrete Canoe Team (I guess that's just how engineers have fun). Windsor recently hosted a national engineering student conference which I was closely involved in planning and hosting.

At this point in my life (age 21) I am on a continual search for new opportunities and challenges, working with people, finances and making things happen. I am truly looking forward to the opportunity to continue my learning and bring my current abilities to work for The Swedenborgian Church in North America.

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Meet the Nominees

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Communications Support Unit (COMSU)

Nancy Apple

Washington

I have served one three-year term on COMSU. A librarian by education with twelve years in a school library, followed by six years as a field rep for Scholastic Book Fairs, I'm currently subbing in school libraries while seeking employment in one of several fields, including school and public libraries. While still in Oklahoma, I served on the Sequoyah Committees to read and help select worthy nominees for Oklahoma's Children's Choice Awards. As a member of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound, aka Heaven on Earth - A Spiritual Community, I'm on the board of the Pacific Coast Association and recently helped update and edit their bylaws. I'm looking forward to helping COMSU proceed with their outreach programs.

Education Support Unit (EDSU)

Katie Shelley

Pennsylvania

I live in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where I teach in a first/second grade classroom at the progressive Miquon School and am completing my master's degree in Early Childhood Education. Whitewater kayaking, flatwater canoeing, and singing are my favorite extracurricular pursuits. My participation in the national church through EDSU, the Women's Alliance, and the SCYL spring from my lifelong connection to Almont New Church Assembly in Michigan. I am proud of the work EdSU has done over the years to provide excellent mini-courses for convention; to sponsor programs such as Gathering Leaves; and working with Kurt Fekete, ministers, and many volunteers in nurturing the growth of the SCYL and local youth groups. In the year ahead I hope to see some good proposals for EdSU "mini-grants" so that we can share the resources in an even broader scope.

Financial & Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU)

Leo Serrano

Ohio

I was born in Miami, but raised in Cleveland in a Hispanic Catholic family, the youngest of seven boys. My interest in religious studies began in the fourth grade, when I was hospitalized with severe asthma for 72 days. Out of sheer boredom, I read an entire volume on Greek mythology. Since then, I have had a tremendous appreciation for the Great Stories which describe the origins of things, finding the best story-telling in the Great Religious Traditions of the world.

I graduated from St. Ignatius High School with high honors and accepted a TRW engineering scholarship to Cleveland State University. The engineering department

required all students to study three humanities classes. I chose Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, and quickly changed my major to Religious Studies. I was the first student to receive an outstanding scholar award by the Religious Studies department, and upon graduation went to Harvard Divinity School, where I received my Master's degree, with a concentration in Eastern Religions.

I have spent most of my adult career in the nonprofit sector, where my story-telling skills were put to great use as a grant writer. I was formerly the Executive Director of the Spanish American Committee, the oldest and largest Hispanic nonprofit in Ohio, and am currently the Program Director of Northeast Ohio Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the country's largest nonprofit development corporation.

Spiritually, I recognize and honors the Truth in all spiritual paths, but admit that if my car were falling off a cliff, I would probably scream OH JESUS! I enjoy being a husband and father the most; have the most wonderful wife in Nela, love to read to my two children, Leonela, age 5, and Victor Hugo, age 2. I am a member of the Cleveland Chapel Swedenborgian Church.

Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)

Lee Woofenden

Massachusetts

I have served on IMSU most of the years since the early 1990s. During this time on IMSU I have been actively involved in planning and developing all aspects of the Swedenborgian Church website at www.swedenborg.org, especially the Online Swedenborgian Library, the Swedenborgian Virtual Bookstore, and the Online Edition of *Our Daily Bread*. In my final term on IMSU, I look forward to ensuring that our website's current offerings are solidly established, and to making a smooth transition to new leadership on IMSU, who will develop Convention's Internet presence in new directions.

Ministries Support Unit

(MINSU)

Rich Tafel

Washington DC

I am an ordained minister in the Swedenborgian Church. I grew up in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, son of Louis and Mary Tafel and grandson of Reverend Leonard I. Tafel of the Frankford St. Swedenborgian Church. I graduated from Harvard Divinity School in 1987 and took classes at the Swedenborg School of Religion during this period. I was ordained in the American Baptist Church in 1988 and served as Assistant to the Minister for Special Projects at the Memorial Church at Harvard University until 1991. I was appointed by Governor William H. Weld as Director of Adolescent Health Services where I served until 1993. I left Massachusetts and went to Washington DC as founding Executive Director of Log Cabin Republicans and Liberty

Education Forum. In 1993 I started my own strategy company where I coach corporate leaders and provide training and lobbying for non-profits. I spend a great deal of time working on corporate social responsibility projects in Latin America. I have been president of the Church of the Holy City in Washington DC where I often preach. As a part of my ministry I have done six day-long trainings for Swedenborgian groups around the country.

Barb Boxwell

Michigan

The nominating committee has asked me to run for a position on the ministries support unit. I have gladly accepted. My own personal spiritual journey began as a young person in my early teens, and has grown deeper and more vital through the many ensuing years. I have been a member of the Swedenborgian Church for twenty years and a friend of the church for 15 years prior. Currently, I am serving as president of the Michigan Association where we are giving birth to a brand new society (church) in Lansing, Michigan.

I hold an active CPA license. For the past ten-plus years, I have managed my family's manufacturing business. Part of my job as president/CEO of the business was to oversee and direct an onsite management team that ran the business on a day-to-day basis. It was my job to find the best resources and analyze the best business practices to support the onsite team. Before managing a business, I taught in a junior college for ten years - training students for jobs in business.

I believe in supporting our ministries in every way possible. I have long been acquainted with the ongoing work of MINSU and its mission to assist and support the work of local churches and ministries. It is through the strong support of our churches that we will grow and continue to be a vital force in the world. With my background in business, my teaching experience, and most important my own spiritual journey, I believe that I can be a positive asset to the work of MINSU and the denomination.

Nominating Committee

Deane Currie

Pennsylvania

I am a member of the Temenos Swedenborgian Church in Pennsylvania. I am the proud papa of three fine young adults. I am serving on General Council going into my third full year. I enjoy listening to people, finding out about their loves, talents and how to be of Use. I offer my name to serve on the Nominating Committee.

Nominating Committee

Deb Smith (formerly Wilson)

Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

I'm a member of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener and have been since

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Meet the Nominees

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1993. I have served in a variety of capacities throughout the years, such as a Sunday School teacher, Youth Leader for ten years, a church board member, a member of the choir, the co-chair of Convention 2004, and most recently co-chair of the Search Committee (for a minister for the Church of the Good Shepherd). I am employed full time at the Region of Waterloo, Social Services Children's Services Department, working there for 19 years. I have three children, Lyndsay 21, James 21, and Stephanie 16, who keep me busy when she I am not involved with the church or my job.

Additional comment by daughter Lyndsay: "She is an outgoing and down-to-earth person, she captivates everyone she meets!"

**Swedenborgian House of Studies Board
Representative Class**
Rev. Robert Leas
Indiana

I have been a Board of Trustees member for the Swedenborgian House of Studies at Pacific School of Religion for the past six years, five of which I was the Clerk and a member of the Executive Committee. I am a graduate of Indiana University and McCormick Theological

Seminary. As an ordained Presbyterian clergy I served twelve years as pastor in three congregations and thirty-two years as a chaplain and pastoral care educator in the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. Currently, I am History Manager for ACPE, and writing a biography of the founder of the clinical pastoral education movement, Anton Boisen.

In my chaplaincy and faculty capacity I have been a teacher, pastor, and department head serving hospitals in Park Ridge, Illinois; South Bend, Indiana; Saginaw Michigan; and Fort Wayne, Indiana. I am currently retired.


I am currently active in the Almont New Church Assembly with my wife, Marjory. To get a firsthand experience of being a student, in 2002 I took the *Introduction to Swedenborgian Thought* online through SHS. I believe in the creative direction the seminary has taken in becoming a House of Studies at the Pacific School of Religion, offering students an accredited degree with the M. Div. program and a dynamically and functionally contextual learning environment. I look forward to continuing to serve the New Church as a member of the Board.

Herb Ziegler

I have been an active member in the Cambridge Society and the Massachusetts

Association of the New Jerusalem since 1997. In that time I have been an enthusiastic participant in governance at the society, association, and Convention levels. I have been honored to serve on the boards of both the Massachusetts Association and the Massachusetts New Church Union, of which I am president. I have served as treasurer of my society and serve as its president. I am a member of General Council as well. In 2002 I was elected to a seat on the board of SHS and have been an active participant in supporting its growth and renewal.

My professional experience and education are varied, but I bring a wealth of knowledge and experience that enables me to contribute wise council to issues of financial, legal, programmatic, and spiritual importance.

I am seeking re-election to my board seat to continue exploring ways to coordinate church and school growth. I will continue to contribute to improved communication between SHS, the members, societies, and associations of General Convention in pursuit of our common goals. I hope to contribute to the long-term sustainability of SHS in my next term by focusing on issues of financial security and student financial aid, as well as improved ties between SHS and the members, societies, and associations of General Convention. 

The Art of Teaching

Grumpy all day, grumpy all week, most kids don't know it, most don't care.
Some Sophomore boy telling me what I should already know and I tell him tersely to keep his mouth shut.

Teacher as the video master.
History as a form of entertainment.
Not what they need, but what I need.
Is it June yet?

Sparks are there, in spite of myself.
"Here's my sister Kaitlyn. . . Meet Mr. Holt, my favorite teacher."
Lauren's big dark eyes, honest bearing, with new tan and hair cut look good.
She even show's me her sunburned belly, spontaneous and real.

Suddenly, in mid-day, an art history course with few students having done their homework.
Screw it, I say, and instead ask them "What's your favorite formal element and why?"

They respond . . . slowly at first,
yet there's mostly a ponderous quiet.
God I love the quiet.
Why can't kids shut up?

"Line," he says. "Light" she says.
"Space is more important" replies another. "Color" lurks for now,
but says nothing.


How about Caravaggio's
single light source?
Ah, *The Entombment* . . . we all agree.
What a masterpiece! What tenebrism.
What foreshortening. A specific work.
A specific artist. Wonderful!

"Let me show you some of my own
drawings on slides, Mr. Holt."
We appraise his two works and marvel.
Amazing . . . some kid, instead of me,
running the show.
Another student runs the slide projector.
Students as "lesson plan."
More wonderful!

Many of them speak and I am grateful because a little bit of art history has indeed rubbed off.
Caught in a moment of adulthood, each responds in his own way.
The flow is there. It is why I'm here.

Thank you, for reminding me.

—Jeff Holt

Jeff Holt has taught history and art history for 27 years at Ramona High School, in North San Diego County. He was recently named teacher of the year, with many testimonials from former students about his positive influence on their lives and career choices. He writes poetry in his spare time. This is his third appearance in The Messenger. 

Mini-Courses, Convention 2006

Editor's Note: Below is a partial list of mini-courses being offered this year at Convention. We hope to have more listed in the June *Messenger*.

Title: *Peacemaking in a Troubled World: How Our Faith Informs Our Commitment to Social Justice*
Presenter: John Titus

Description:

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God." We are also taught to "love our enemies" and "Do unto others as we would have done to us." In all major faith traditions there is an equivalent of the Golden Rule. One of the challenges facing each one of us is to personally understand the tenets of our faith as we strive to understand God's truth and apply that truth through our love and our actions.

Throughout my journey of healing, after the violent murder of my daughter, I have been given many gifts that have allowed me deeper insight, greater compassion and a stronger connection with God. I am more acutely aware of the social injustices in our world and how the precarious balance of world peace is tied to these issues of poverty and injustice. I strongly feel the interconnection with all people and believe that the Golden Rule is quintessential in our healing as we journey together toward a peaceful co-existence.

In this workshop we will lay the groundwork for peacemaking while exploring issues of social justice, and how each of us finds our own use as we grow in love and wisdom guided by our faith. We will explore ways that we can and do make a difference in our troubled world.

Title: *What Color is Your Halo? Exploring Theological Education at SHS and PSR*
Presenter: Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Dean, Swedenborgian House of Studies

Description:

Do you hunger for greater theological understanding of our world? Do you thirst for the deep meanings that

Swedenborg brought to Christianity? Do you feel a call to serve God in ministry of some form? Then please join us for a discussion of call and discernment and the options for study at Pacific School of Religion and the Swedenborgian House of Studies. All are welcome.

NOTE: SHS will be presenting a second mini-course which will be a theological discussion. Topic, faculty presenter, and description TBA, hopefully in the June *Messenger*.

Title: *Drumming Circle*
Presenter: Jennifer Tafel

Description:

...It is a hot summer day in the farmland of the Midwest. Your curiosity is piqued by the sound of drums. The beat of the drums begins to pulse through your body...or is that your heartbeat? Your body begins to move to the pulse and you aren't sure of your destination, but you find yourself in the shade of ancient trees and surrounded by familiar souls. God is present as the constant beat unites these souls and suddenly you realize you are one with the souls surrounding you.

Jennifer Tafel, M.Div., will lead a drumming circle as one of the mini-courses offered at this summer's annual Convention. She will briefly speak about the meditative effects of drumming circles and then spend the rest of the time drumming with those who join her circle. There will be sheets, towels, etc. for people to sit upon, but feel free to bring your own. There will be a few extra percussion instruments provided; and you are encouraged to bring your own drum—and maybe one to share. You are also invited to join the circle and simply meditate...you are welcome to the circle.

From Rhythmweb.com

"A drum circle or rhythm circle, simply put, is a group of people gathered into a circle for the purpose of making music with percussion instruments. A commUNITY drum circle... grows out of a realization that rhythm is a lan-

guage that can unite the diverse elements of humanity. Rhythm succeeds where words fail. The same principles (of rhythmic entrainment) always apply, even in a culturally nonspecific context. Specific religious references are AVOIDED, so as not to alienate anyone based on religion, but to allow all to experience the liberating forces of rhythmic entrainment. As in the drum circle, so in life. It's vitally important to return now to what music is supposed to be all about; healing the spirit - When the circle works as a team, everyone benefits, because we all hit THE GROOVE, where the energy flows, time stops and we all evaporate....that bliss only occurs when the circle works as a team. Those principles carry over into everyday life." <http://www.rhythmweb.com>

Title: *Musicals For Church and Sunday School Two Parts*
Presenters: Ken and Laurie Turley

Description:

In this two-part mini-course we will learn by doing! In the course of preparing a Sunday School musical entitled "Song Of Spring: The Story of Johnny Appleseed" for performance at Convention, the Turleys will equip *you* to begin using performance of music and musical plays in your church and/or Sunday School for education and edification. Everyone participating in the mini-course will have a part (on stage or back stage) in the play. Bring a simple costume and/or props for a frontiersman, Indian, farmer, etc.

Part One: Setting the Scene: John Chapman and Swedenborg; Gathering and assessing resources; simple staging, scenery and costumes; loosening up with singing and theater games.

Part Two: Blocking, and grappling with the difficulties of group scenes; cutting and adding; being creative with auditions and parts assignments; raising the invisible curtain; leaving a good impression.

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Mini Courses, Convention 2006

(Continued from page 77)

Title: *Exploring and Experiencing the Johnny Appleseed Museum, Past, Present and Future*

Presenter: Joe Besecker, Director of the Johnny Appleseed Museum, Urbana University

Description:

Joe Besecker, Director of the Johnny Appleseed Museum will relate the history of the early founding of the "Johnny Appleseed Collection" by descendants of John Chapman, an early follower of Swedenborg. He will describe how the collection eventually came to be housed in Bailey Hall at Urbana University and will guide participants through the various items in the collection. The stories behind the memorabilia and how they were acquired, are often very interesting and illustrate the myriad ways in which Johnny's legacy has become so much a part of our culture. One cannot hear these stories without recognizing within many of them connections to our own Swedenborgian roots.

Participants will learn about the Johnny Appleseed Foundation, whose mission is to advance the legacy of Johnny Appleseed through educational activities, publications, media and the JA Museum learning center. Joe will explain the many ways in which the Johnny Appleseed Society is reaching out to the public around the world and its vision for the future. Participants will be treated to apple cider and apple cookies.

Note of Interest: Joe Besecker has been awarded the DAR Conservation Medal "for his efforts in the founding and development of the Johnny Appleseed Society, Museum and Educational Programs at Urbana University and for his contributions to the conservation of the Johnny Appleseed Collection..."

Title: *Cultivating a Daily Spiritual Practice*

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers

Description:

Let us explore together how we can find time for God in our busy daily lives. The focus will be on contemplative prayer practices, including physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions of our being. A goal will be for each one attending to create a plan for their own daily spiritual practice. ☒

My Vision of a New Church

Andy Stinson

The men and women of the United States Army do not think in terms of elections and geopolitics but in terms of phone calls to home, loved ones missing birthdays and soccer games, and the simple joys of knowing that the person you care most about in the world is safe for at least one more day.

As an Army Chaplain, I have been given the chance to bring our church and our message into the world. I have had the opportunity to bring our church's beliefs into the lives of soldiers and their families and it has been amazingly well received. Our teaching and our doctrines have literally transformed the lives of soldiers and civilians to whom I have ministered. The way people have opened up to the realities of spirit, the way they have drunk from the well of our scriptural interpretations in Bible studies, and the way my presence as one who brought a God of love instead of a God of judgment was transforming. I have learned how to bring our message into the world and I feel committed to helping us do it.

I have found that the power of our tradition is not just intellectual for me, though I have great love for that. The power in our tradition is its ability and authority in the everyday matters of life. How I am to 'follow my bliss' and become useful in the world not out of sacrifice but out of my highest joy. How it informs me of the loving God that is actively working in my life and how that God is constantly inviting me to be in relationship and joy with him. How it tells me where I am from, and where I am going. How it offers me a map to my own spiritual progress that has never failed me in both its accuracy and power. And how it, more than any tradition I have ever encountered, meets me in the grittiness of my life, in the dark places and the light, in the practical and the theoretical, to lead me toward my highest self. Being a Swedenborgian is not just a word to me or an intellectual experience, it is a practical way of living and moving through the world that, when practiced at its best, makes a space for heaven to descend into my life and the lives of the people I touch.

At some level and in some way each of us has had the transforming experience that brought us to this tradition and

excited us about this church. We have had those glorious moments of connection, of understanding, of witness and power that have transformed us, experiences that changed each of us to the point where we would take on the awkward social mantle of describing our church by answering the age old response "Sweden—WHAT?". My hope is for us to return to that place where we were once excited about a God and a church that, in my case, has saved my life. All the distractions of dwelling on the fickleness of the stock market or the money and members that we no longer have are unimportant. Let us worship the divinity that shines out of one another. Let us become joy-filled in the bread of heaven which led us into this tradition in the first place.

If we are a part of the New Church that is descending into this world, if we are making a place for heaven to flow into this community, then we must come back to those original, defining moments. No, I am not suggesting we abandon the work of the church, but to remember that it is not the labor that is primary, but the enjoyment of the fruit that comes from it. We must feed one another and feed the world with the spiritual bread of heaven yet again. We have all as individuals felt that feeling, that excitement of knowing, and I suggest it should be a part of our corporate experience once again.

Let us all go on a journey into our hearts and souls, into the true repository of the Spirit. I have seen what is possible when we abandon the worries and fears that the demons would heap upon us. I have seen the majesty and power that God is calling this little community to bestow upon the world. It is a great and grand expedition ahead. Bringing with it sages and scholars, mystics and spiritual warriors, prophets and enthusiasts, all with the common goal of creating a sacred space for the Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, to make its home in the hearts of its people.

The Rev. Andrew Stinson was formerly a minister at the Elmwood church in Elmwood, Mass. A Captain in the Army Reserves, he answered the call to the Army Chaplaincy after 9/11. He has been serving the transportation corps soldiers of Fort Eustis, Virginia, for the past four years. ☒

Katrina Help

I just thought I would share with you that our daughter Nancy, a Licensed Practical Nurse, who lives in Roanoke, Virginia, and who suffers from Fibromyalgia and has had to quit work several years ago, has made two trips to Mississippi to small cities on the coast to assist in whatever way she could. With a friend she has driven south in her car and spent a week each time. The first time sleeping in a tent and this last time

in a building with dorm-like accommodations. The first time they did very simple helpful things and the last time helped to restore a home. The appreciation expressed for even simple things was in the form of "We couldn't do without your help."

Blessings,
Rev. Dave Johnson
Bellevue, Washington ☩

Update on Boston Church Legal Issue

On Friday, March 3, 2006, the appeal we placed in the Massachusetts Court of Appeals in relation to the dismissal of the Boston Church matter over a year ago was heard. The lawyers from both sides were allowed fifteen minutes each to present arguments to the panel of three (of five) Appellate judges. The judges were able to ask questions of each lawyer as the presentations were made. The decision of the judges who heard the appeal will be made at a "later date." Our lawyers tell us that it could be within this month, or over a period of many weeks.

—Chris Laitner, President
General Convention ☩

Mite Box Donations

Mite Box donations this year will go toward scholarships for Gathering Leaves 2.

Please send donations to:

Jeannette Hille
7000 Magda Dr. – Apt 315
Maple Grove, MN 55369-5652

Please mark these donation for the Mite Box. Thank you.

Barb Boxwell, Mite Box Chair ☩

Baptism

Randall—Sandy Randall was baptized into the Christian faith November 27, 2005, at the New Church of Montgomery, Ohio, aka the Cincinnati Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. John Billings officiating.

Confirmations

Gardner, Knodle—Suzie Gardner and Marjorie Knodle were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church January 15, 2006, at the New Church of Montgomery, the Rev. John Billings officiating.

Randall—Sandy Randal was confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church November 6, 2005, at the New Church of Montgomery, the Rev. John Billings officiating.

Death

Smailer—Helen Tafel Smailer, 97, entered into the spiritual world March 11, 2006. Beloved wife of the late John M.. Smailer; loving mother of John T. and Ralph M. Smailer, grandmother of 5 and great grandmother of 9. A Memorial Service was held Saturday, March 25th at the Temenos Retreat Center, the Rev. Susannah Currie officiating. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the "In Company with Angels" Fund at 28 West Market Street, West Chester, PA 19382. ☩

Introducing Teri Torchia, New Assistant in Central Office



Hi everyone! I have taken what was Kim Fenol's position at the Central Office assisting Martha and Gina. My life and experience have been fairly eclectic, most recently developing

a community service program for high school students as a VISTA volunteer and prior to that much other work with education and non-profits. I have a degree in Poetry and Transformation from Boston College and an abiding interest in providing the tools of poetry writing to people in some form of life transition. I consider

myself very fortunate to be working with and on behalf of such a unique and diverse group of individuals and look forward to speaking with you as you have a need to contact us at the Central Office. Thanks for your warm welcome.

—Teri Torchia ☩

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.

~ BOOK REVIEWS ~

New from the Swedenborg Foundation

Embracing Relationships

Volume 12, Chrysalis Reader, Swedenborg Foundation 2005, \$14.95

Original Essays, Poetry, and Short Stories



"*Embracing Relationships* seeks a spiritual perspective on our partnering with life. This collection of writing and art offers new insights to such questions as: What leads to longevity in a committed relationship? How can we keep the spring in our step to the office? How does one read a series of remarkable coincidences? How do the complexities of life impact our partnerships?"

The 2005 volume of the Chrysalis Reader wasn't published until early in 2006 due to circumstances beyond everyone's control, but the anthology is well worth waiting for. It always is. It's perfect summer reading, because you can savor small bits at a time, put it down, pick it up, and if you're like me, re-read a story or poem you read last month and get something fresh from it that you didn't see the first time around. It's fun to pick it up, new, and browse through the Contents pages to see which intriguing title jumps out—which one will I read first? Will it be "The Man in the Pinstripe Suit"? "Making Peace with the Turks"? "Rosa's Offer"? "Stretch Marks"? "The Gnostic and the Atheist"? "What a Cute Little Psycho Dog"?

I used to feel there was too much poetry in the Reader, but I read it all anyway because I didn't want to miss anything—it would be a whole year before another Reader came out, so there was time to get around to the things I thought I might not enjoy as much. But gradually I began to realize that the poets published in the Reader, as well as poems in *The Sun*, had given me a deepened appreciation of poetry and even inspired me to want to write some. Poetry is a different way of thinking, of observing, another realm of spirit. And then a poem comes along that breaks your heart a little, as did Sylvia Shaw's poem, "When the Words Blur," on the last page.

So, I urge you to embrace the 2005 Reader, *Embracing Relationships*, and let yourself in for a long summer spiritual treat. To order, call 1-800-355-3222, or email customerservice@swedenborg.com.

—PWL 

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