

THE MESSENGER

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Theholycity.net Global Mission for the New Church

Eric Allison, David Brown, Cristy Clarke, George F. Dole, Jeff Goldsmith, Russ Jennings, Jim Lawrence, Mark Lewis, W. Hunter Roberts, Alan Thomsen, John Vodonick

When the about-to-be Revs. David Brown and W. Hunter Roberts boarded their flight last June to Urbana, Ohio, to attend Convention 2006, they had never met. By the time they landed in Dayton, Ohio, *theholycity.net*, an emergent New Church of the airwaves, had been conceived. Since that day, a group has been hard at work forming a launch team and a plan to use the Internet to disseminate Swedenborgian values and doctrine to thousands of people around the world, while bringing revenues into the church.

Rev. Roberts has dreamed for years of a media ministry able to reach out and embrace "spiritual but not religious" people worldwide. She followed the growth of media ministries through broadcast media and, more recently, on the web. Her doctoral classes at Pacific School of Religion (PSR) on the use of electronic media in the church convinced her that the Internet has the potential for leveling the playing field, giving small churches the same access to the public (especially the younger public) as large, wealthier churches.

"Many of us are discouraged that so few people come to our churches, or learn about God's love through the beauty and generosity of our faith. Consider that maybe we're upset because

"People in our world are hungry for values and meaning. The Holy City can provide meaning, by using accessible language, and a highly visual presence, as a bridge into contemporary culture and media. We can bring value and hope to people who may feel isolated, looking for some spiritual center."

they haven't crossed a bridge we haven't yet built!" said Rev. Roberts. She intends to use Internet Ministry to build that bridge. It will appeal to seekers, using contemporary language and God's poetry, to unravel the world with

visual correspondences in the design. Intimate videos shot at coffee shop and kitchen table, with the minister(s), will speak directly to the watcher about the concerns of his or her life. Visitors and members will have the opportunity to interact with others sharing similar concerns, at their own level of interest and involvement.

When she shared her dream with Rev. Brown of Wayfarers Chapel, she found he not only resonated with it, but he possessed some of the key skills and background needed to make it successful, through his experience in a new field called "search engine optimization," which deals with driving Internet traffic to web sites. They began visioning, and together they imagined a website that looks and feels like The Holy City. Of course, we know The

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Celebrations

Historic Event

The Lansing Swedenborgian Church, Lansing, Michigan, was received into the Michigan Association as an active church society when the Association met at the Almont Retreat Center October 6-8, 2006. A formal service of reception took place October 7.

LaPorte Website

The LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana, now has a website: www.laportenewchurch.org

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Remaining Flexible

Eric Zacharias

All of us are constantly reminded of the necessity to remain flexible, to be open to change, to look at life as a grand and, at times, complicated adventure. It's been all of that for me. But now, no household chores, no meal preparation, no yard work beckoning. Here, at Elm Grove Estates, waiters carry meals to tables in a lovely dining hall, the cleaning lady quietly goes about her duties, the libraries are well stocked with books and the latest magazines. What a life!

Last Sunday, September 17th, the congregations, Pawnee Rock and Pretty Prairie, met in a picnic area about halfway between our two centers, for worship—a big dinner and fellowship. If, in our hearts and minds, we hold the perception that the Holy City New Jerusalem calls us into citizenship only as we depart this earthly realm, if we hold to the perception that this vision of the Holy City is, indeed, unattainable and finds its place only in the imagination of John's rampaging mind, it's time now to change that perception. The Holy City, with its gates always open, invites us to discover, to appreciate, all the glory and the beauty of its sacred halls here, now, this moment. Such a moment was last Sunday. It was that for me. I hope it was as such for all who participated in our gathering of friends.

Following our worship service, Aletha Loving, longtime member of the Pawnee Rock Church, and I were in conversation in which she questioned the wisdom of taking

the name, "The Swedenborgian Church" for our denomination. I responded to her by saying that I, too, have always been a little uncomfortable with this. I understand the reasoning for this choice. However, on reflection I have long felt that if Swedenborg were here with us he would not favor this choice. By this choice, it seems to me we somehow limit ourselves. Swedenborg, the man, the theology he revealed, became ours. We are Swedenborgians. The theology, the revelation he proclaimed, was universal in its application and scope.

My residence in Elm Grove has offered the opportunity to respond to comments and questions related to our Church. "What denomination are you minister of?" "Are you a minister in the Methodist Church?" "Where is your church located?" "Are you still preaching?" Sometimes I say, "I'm a minister in the Swedenborgian Church." Sometimes, "I'm a minister in the Church of the New Jerusalem." Both responses bring—silence! Then, one of my new friends will say, "I've never heard of that Church." I, then, may respond by asking, "Have you heard of Helen Keller . . .?" or, "Swedenborg was a theologian who lived . . ."

Then, one day recently, a lady, in a conversation unrelated to "church talk," said something about the Holy City with its open gates. This started me thinking.

I wondered! There is objection, I know, to calling ourselves the New Jerusalem Church. It's arrogant. The Holy City is an ideal we will never attain. To think that

we are the Holy City New Jerusalem is assuming a whole lot that is not true. It leaves us open to ridicule by the larger Christian community. In reality, we are few in number making a huge claim to divine favor.

In the future when one of my fellow Elm Grove residents asks, "What Church are you the minister of?" I'm going to say, "I'm serving a Church of the Holy City New Jerusalem." My Church is a Church of the Holy City New Jerusalem. Not *the* church. *The* church implies exclusiveness. A Church implies inclusiveness. We are one Church with the vision of the Holy City leading us. There are others—many, I trust.

My response now to those who ask about my ministry is Scripture-based. Christians know

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Remaining Flexible

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of John's vision of this wonderful city. It's part of our legacy. We all hold this in common, and each of us relates to this vision in some special way. I'll be happy to talk with my new friends about the contribution their church is making to the wonder of this Holy City—and, I will share with them the contribution that Swedenborg makes to our universal theology and to growth of the spiritual dimension within us.

The Rev Eric Zacharias is retired, living in Hutchinson, Kansas. He was formerly the pastor of the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas. His email address is eazach@mycidco.com

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Theholycity.net

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Holy City is not a place in the literal sense, but a state of being we can embody on earth through God's uses—in other words, charity.

Upon returning from Convention, Rev. Roberts got to work. She wrote a Statement of Purpose, vision, and identified ten core values (see p.133), which would characterize a movement of *Active Holiness* performing acts of charity across the globe. These would be the values and purpose *theholycity.net* would stand for and promote. She wrote: *Be the Holy City. Live God's Dream.* She sent what she had written to her Swedenborgian theology mentor, the Rev. Dr. George Dole, to make sure they were doctrinally sound. Then she recruited a diverse team to develop this ambitious global ministry, theologically and technologically. She called colleagues and friends, both within and without the church, sharing her vision and enrolling them in the possibility of a ministry without walls that would both facilitate people's spiritual journeys, and connect them in uses.

Within weeks of that first conversation on the plane, a team of high-powered media experts sat around a speakerphone on the Swedenborgian House of Studies conference table, dialoguing with team members in other parts of the country. At that first meeting was Jeff Goldsmith, user-experience manager for CARE2.org, a large non-profit using the net to connect people with progressive causes; Russ Jennings, radio producer; Brooks Cole, Internet genius web-designer and social navigational innovator; John Vodonick, high-tech lawyer; Mark Lewis, author and brander, and a variety of others, brainstorming with our own George Dole, Jim Lawrence,

Alan Thomsen, Chris Laitner, and of course, Hunter Roberts and David Brown. People were sufficiently excited that most committed to going to the next step on spec, in order to make the vision a reality.

"People in our world are hungry for values and meaning. The Holy City can provide this meaning, by using accessible language, and a highly visual presence, as a bridge into contemporary culture and media. We can bring value and hope to people who may feel isolated, looking for some spiritual center," said Rev. Roberts. "And with all the advances in technology, it's relatively inexpensive to reach tens of thousands, even millions of people with our message, connecting them with ways to contribute a stone to the City's foundation.

"This site goes beyond just teaching Swedenborgian doctrine and beliefs. The goal of our ministry is to intimately connect people all over the planet, who want a way of living that brings *Active Holiness* into their world—whether it is by helping people to be good parents, building houses in Burundi, working with at-risk children in Central Florida, or working to save the rainforest in Ecuador—whatever they're doing. We want to connect, and support them—so long as it is good informed by wisdom, embodying God's uses and purposes...in other words, charity.

"Our religion is best lived out in pursuit of truth and in actions of goodness. Doctrine means *usable* truth. Through the Net we can make our doctrines accessible for people to put to use in their lives. When you connect people under a set of commitments and values, when you educate and empower people to lead good lives, that is the Holy City made manifest. That is the Church Universal," she exclaimed.

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Theholycity.net

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The Internet is already being used to evangelize successfully by millions of religious websites. Video web casts* and downloadable* pod casts* are the hottest item on the web today, with millions of young people signing onto *MySpace** and *YouTube*.*

"If they can do it, why can't we do the same?" asked the new minister. It could well be the perfect way of attracting the young, who spend many more hours per day surfing the net than watching broadcast media. With all the advances in technology, it's relatively inexpensive to reach thousands, maybe millions of new people with our message.

The site will eventually be designed to be an interactive experience, where visitors will be able to stroll through a virtual heavenly environment with twelve gates of entry, interacting with avatars, as people are accustomed to doing on such enormously popular sites as *Second Life** and *War Craft*.* "If people can come together in real time online to kill each other in a hellish environment, why not build a heavenly environment that encourages people to love and serve each other, and then to take that service out into the physical world with *Active Holiness* projects? We can even build missions on those hellish sites to aid in their members' salvation," Rev. Roberts said.

The Holy City website will feature "Vlogs", or video blogs*, on a variety of current subjects of interest to people, from current events to children. It will have interviews, services, down-loadable pod casts of different lengths, and web casts from Africa, which Roberts hopes to shoot while on her travels as she pursues her doctoral research on diversity in

the worldwide Swedenborgian church.

The site will be built to encourage visitors to move through levels of discipleship, from tourist (just passing through), to citizen (pledging to live by the core values, learn, and be willing to contribute as a member of the city), to public servant to servant leader, at each level becoming more knowledgeable, more committed, and more connected. By the time a person becomes a servant leader they will be a pledging member of an ongoing interest-based small group that meets regularly (using SKYPE*, free voice-activate software), have completed an orientation class on *Active Holiness*, and be participating in an *Active Holiness* project of use in the world.

This development model is based on Swedenborg's doctrine of degrees of neighbor, in which personal spiritual development is interdependent with works and uses, for regeneration. As Rev. Dr. George Dole, in his forthcoming book: *THE BIBLE: A Book About Us*, says "If we take seriously the principle that the kingdom is to come 'on earth as it is in heaven,' then it virtually goes without saying that individual spirituality is essential for the formation of heavenly community and that heavenly community is essential for the formation of individual spirituality—a very different kind of "dialectic" from that of Marxism." This site can link people and help them to develop, through their personal relationships with each other, with their families, and with the people around the world.

The newest in social interaction software (patent held by Holy City's designer Brooks Cole) will allow trusted citizens to interact with one another, supporting one another's lives and works. Member pledges and contributions will support *Active Holiness* projects

and pay to train leaders to facilitate, in a combination of virtual and on-site trainings.

"Just from a fiscal perspective, this is a no-brainer," says Rev. Dave Brown. The team expects to have thousands of "hits" within their first month of operation. By the end of their first year, Internet professionals say they can reasonably expect to have a thousand citizen subscribers, (at \$8.95 monthly for individuals, \$12.95 for couples, and \$18.95 for families) generating \$138,600 in basic memberships, thus financing their next level of development. If these estimates, considered conservative in the world of the Net, are correct, the site could be generating over a quarter million dollars in revenues annually in less than five years. Rev. Roberts says it is the intention of the Holy City team to tithe back to the church, pay for its own further development, and seed a variety of works and projects consistent with Swedenborgian values.

Theholycity.net, is getting set to launch early in 2007, when an Awareness Campaign, which identifies frequently searched keywords, appearing in, or consistent with, the day's news, (such as "apocalypse," or "New Jerusalem") will drive people onto the Swedenborgian "seeker" site. The energetic group expects literally millions of impressions* on the very first day of the launch, and many thousands of visitors within the first month. By the end of their first month of web presence, by using customized, targeted, and sophisticated site-driving methods, they will have had their name in front of millions of people.

The team hopes to put up a prototype demo by year's end. They have already begun design and content development. Rev. Roberts hopes to make this a shared project bridging goals of the

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Swedenborg Foundation, the General Church, and General Convention. "Isn't the Holy City big enough to include us all?" she asks.

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*Rev. Eric Allison* is a New Church, General Convention minister serving the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound (aka Heaven on Earth), and Chair of the Council of Ministers.

*Rev. David Brown*, formerly an expert in the high-tech, financial field of Search Engine Optimization and Marketing, is now serving as a New Church Minister, General Convention, at Wayfarers Chapel, in Palos Verdes California.

*Cristy Clarke* is a mom and entrepreneur, producer of the hot new game, TableTopics, which is taking America by storm.

*Rev. Dr. George F. Dole* is the author of many books on Swedenborgian theology and a translator of the New Century Editions of Swedenborg's works. He serves on the Board of the Swedenborg Foundation and as Pastor in Bath, Maine.

*Jeff Goldsmith* is a writer, marketer, and user-experience manager of the large web-based non-profit, CARE2, and a dad.

*Russ Jennings* is an event and radio producer.

*Rev. Dr. James Lawrence* is Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies, with 15 years as a parish minister.

*Mark Lewis* is an author of spiritual books for the secular, an entrepreneur, and an Internet marketer.  
*W. Hunter Roberts* is a newly or-

dained Swedenborgian minister, General Convention.

*Alan Thomsen* is a Swedenborgian of many years, with a background in marketing. He is currently Financial Manager for the Swedenborgian House of Studies.

*John Vodonick* is a lawyer specializing in high-tech start-ups. ☒

### Core Values

1. **Diversity:** Life's variety mirrors and celebrates the many faces of the Divine.
2. **Masculine/Feminine:** God is our ultimate Mother, Father, Lover, Child, and Friend.
3. **Gospel-Based:** We follow the example and teachings of Jesus, our Lord.
4. **Respect:** We honor all paths to the sacred.
5. **Openness:** We open ourselves to Divine Revelation and guidance.
6. **Creativity:** We celebrate Creation through creative excellence expressing our love.
7. **Transformation:** The nature of Life and Spirit is transformation; we are called to grow and transform.
8. **Being of Use:** We express our faith in works, as the hands in God's vineyards, increasing in our willingness and ability to be responsible for ourselves and our world as we grow.
9. **Sacred Relationship:** All relationships in the sacred, living universe, are holy.
10. **Celebration:** We regard the Life of Life with awe and gratitude, as the divine spark unfolding at the center of all that is. ☒

### Glossary

**Webcast:** is a broadcast available over the Internet

**Download:** is to get a document or media from the Internet and store it on your own computer or storage device

**Podcast:** is a radio broadcast available over the Internet, available at the time of the listener's choosing.

**MySpace:** is website for meeting like-minded people

**YouTube:** is a website for sharing video shorts online

**SecondLife:** is a website that creates a realistic, 3D world in which people play together at imaginary lives (like a 3d electronic paper dolls)

**WarCraft:** is an interactive game played on the Net, in which participants meet in play and engage in war games from multiple locations

**Vlog:** is a video blog, in which journal entries are in the form of video shorts

**Blog:** short for "web log," is a public journal

**SKYPE:** is a website that makes your personal computer operate as a telephone, capable of sending and receiving calls to any phone in the world for free.

**Impression:** is a line item in a search engine result, or the number of times your name appears before in Internet Searcher on a search. A million impressions would mean that *theholycity.net* would appear on a page where a potential viewer is seeking information about something related a million times over the specified period of time. ☒

# The Interactive Church: A New Model

In the last two or three years several of our older North American Swedenborgian churches have become revitalized. Their new growth is coming about, participants say, because their church members are passionate and positive about our message of the New Jerusalem, understand a deeper meaning of the Bible, and are purposely becoming interactive within their communities.

*The metaphorical nature of creation is the heartbeat of a new and deeper understanding of Scripture; new meaning opened to us by reason of understanding the layers of "correspondences" (or living metaphor) between things natural and their spiritual origin. This new understanding leads to an altogether new reading of life; an enriching interpretive dialogue with Scripture, the life of Jesus Christ, the narrative of our own lives, and the world around us and our experiences in it.*

Our church near the university on Campus Street in San Diego is one place where new growth is happening. Under the Rev. Carla Friederich's leadership and following the model of an interactive church, the congregation is swelling to 30-some on many Sundays; the church was a recent venue for the University Heights Arts Open, with 20 community artists displaying their work and 300 people visiting the church on that weekend, during which Carla announced Janet S. Tiger as Playwright in Residence in Swedenborg Hall (see p144). Carla says,

"The stated mission and purpose of the new church and the Swedenborgian Church of San Diego specifically, is to share the Lord's *new* good news. The metaphorical nature of creation is the heartbeat of a new and deeper understanding of Scripture; new meaning opened to us by reason of understanding the layers of "correspondences" (or living metaphor) between things natural and their spiritual origin. This new understanding leads to an altogether new reading of life; an enriching interpretive dialogue with Scripture, the life of Jesus Christ, the narrative of our own lives, and the world around us and our experiences in it.

Our particular way of doing this is by inviting individuals into worship to share their stories: their

experiences, their loves, their interests, their work, expertise, musical gifts, skills, knowledge, and creative endeavors with us. The next step is to then put Scripture and our Swedenborgian theology in conversation with what has been said."

Some members of Convention's Communications Support Unit (COMSU) attended an interactive church Sunday in January 2006 at the San Diego Church. Based on that experience, the group has outlined the following activities basic to that church's growth. Perhaps these activities are what your own church is doing. If so, will you please write up your experiences so that we may dialogue in *The Messenger* about ways our churches can grow? In other issues we will report on these success stories.

## A Model for an Interactive Church *Understanding the Basics*

Start with your community: identify and invite those neighboring individuals, groups, or organizations to share their interests, loves, and expertise within the life of your church community.

Plan worship by inviting these individuals to demonstrate that Divine Love and Wisdom is operative in *all* of life.

### Developing a Plan Attitude

- Consider present resources (people, energy,) etc.
- Be broad-based and include a variety of topics.
- Work to generate a feeling in people that if they are not there, they are missing out.
- Recognize the divine in the secular (draw out the connections).

### General Rules

- Avoid Swedenborgian terminology obscure to the general audience.
- Redefine Swedenborg's terms and concepts in language that is accessible, understandable, and relevant.
- Know your guests and their topics. Look for connections to Scripture and Swedenborgian theology.
- Use multimedia and objects, etc. to engage the senses.

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## The Interactive Church: A New Model

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- Open the forum to full participation by encouraging comments, questions, discussions, and witnessing.
- Optimize outreach.

**Economics:** extend “economy of grace” exchanges (seeing what you can do with minimal financing)

- Free space for workshops or merchandising.
- Free publicity.
- Performance opportunities.

### Events and Activities

- Lectures
- Book discussions
- Dinners
- Concerts
- Theatrical performances
- Outdoor adventures
- Political, spiritual forums, etc.

### Public Relations

#### Press Release Guidelines:

- *A hook-line is key*—A press release has to have a well-worded hook-line which grabs the editor’s attention. This key line alone often determines whether newspapers will print your information or not.
- *Brevity is key, plus a good understanding of what is P.R.-worthy.*
- Develop an ongoing relationship with editors of local and community papers, and retain up-to-date information on their submission deadlines.
- Don’t know how to write a press release? Google *press release examples* and presto! Everything you wanted to know!
- Tools: post cards, book marks, business cards, welcome cards, mini-pamphlets, recordings (DVDs, CDs, have a movie night, with pop corn and pizza).
- Connect Swedenborgian theology with events at the church in a low-key way. Example: cooking classes with a pamphlet on “spiritual food” to take away.
- Develop your church’s website as soon as feasible and keep it user-friendly and up to date.

#### Distribution of information

- *Deciding when and where to promote your church’s event(s)*  
Example: include tourist audiences by circulating flyers to local hotels and motels.

- *Promote church events in a timely fashion by creating an advance schedule of deadlines, including press releases targeted sufficiently ahead of the date of the actual event to draw the response you desire.*

#### Track success

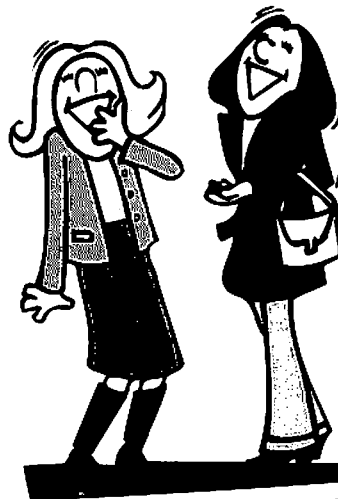
- *Attendance* (at events and on Sunday)
- *Overall response* (events and on Sunday)
  - a. Short-term (example: increase in church attendance following event)
  - b. long-term (example: someone becomes acquainted with the church because of an event, an activity, or an involvement with a group (AA, actor’s group, etc., and becomes a member).

— Mona Conner, Carol Lawson, Steve Koke, Carla Friedrich, Nancy Apple (past and present members of COMSU) ☒

## Some excerpts from Women’s Alliance meetings at Almont Summer School, Almont, MI

*Meetings of the Almont New Church Assembly Women’s Alliance occur just once a year when the ladies are assembled for the annual family camp session. As is common among ladies’ alliance groups, worthy projects and jobs that need funding or “womanpower” are taken on and accomplished for the good of the larger organization. But the long interim between meetings often caused our memories to lapse about what business we had accomplished the year before. That is, until our newly-elected secretary, Becky Shelley Moore, began recording not just the facts regarding our items of old and new business, but a humorous anecdotal telling of the comical proceedings that inevitably take place when twenty or so women of all generations circle their*

*rocking chairs in the Big House living room at Almont. These secretary’s reports have become the highlight of our meetings, and move us to tears...of hysteria! We shared a saga from our secretary’s book at the Alliance luncheon at Convention in Urbana in June. It relates the ongoing mission of two active and beloved ninety-year-olds, Ruth Brandau and Dean Trombly, who led us in a quest for new mattresses for the teen dorm.*



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# Embracing the Rice Bowl

Diane Shea

Preface Note from Rev. Carla Friedrich, pastor of the San Diego church:

*In her spiritual message on October 1, 2006, Diane Shea shared with our congregation how to apply the "Rule of 10,10,10." A pithy reminder to ask oneself the question of how something will affect you in 10 minutes, 10 months, or 10 years. Diane says "it is amazing how your perspective changes."*

*This is a concept similar to Swedenborg's idea of "remains," meaning "not much but enough." I prefer the term, soupçon, a French word which sounds better and means "a certain small something." In the Scriptures, this concept of "a certain small something" is represented by the number 5 and corresponds to small truths implanted or gifted to us at birth by the Lord. It includes a love of seeking after truth, upon which the Lord can build, to bring about our spiritual growth, our healing, and the highest good; our eternal well-being and so a Heaven from the human race.*

*"And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children." Matthew 14: 20,21*

## Embracing the Rice Bowl

Recently I spent a year in Weight Watchers, learned some portion control, lost a bit of weight, but was unchanged by the diet. I also started exercising five days a week at a gym. Whatever I ate or didn't eat, I gained or lost a

few pounds or stayed the same. Tired of the kinds of foods I used to like—even old favorites like chicken and brown rice—I often went to the store only to leave empty handed. I no longer believed in any diet I'd tried and was downright peeved at others. I had fasted, been to diet doctors and weight control groups, and spent years in a spiritually based eating program. All gave some feeling of relief, but I couldn't find any way to eat that made me feel good. My weight was high, and my spirits were low.

Last week I invited my macrobiotic teacher Donée to dinner. Though she has only recently become my teacher, she's a long-time friend who has been enticing me with tastes of Macrocentric foods for years. Donée was diagnosed with ovarian cancer over 25 years ago, which led her to study, learn and then teach others the macrobiotic way. She has been cancer-free for all of these years, without medical intervention, and attributes it to macrobiotic living. **M**y situation wasn't as urgent, but I weighed over two hundred and twenty-five pounds. For the last seven years I have been a caretaker for my mother who has Alzheimer's; five of those years I was also a live-in caretaker for someone with Multiple Sclerosis, and three years ago I tried a high-protein diet (which I took as a license to eat too much fat) which led to an emergency gallbladder operation.

One day last summer, Donée said "If you really want to lose weight, just eat Macrobiotic. I promise you, you will lose weight." I was so upset that she had challenged me; didn't she realize that I was the one person who *couldn't* lose weight?

Donée, a skilled body worker and healer, is a macrobiotic chef in addition to teaching macrobiotics. In September she prepared three meals a week for me and a friend. We both really enjoyed the menus Donée cooked, and I thought I



Janet S. Tiger, D.J. Sullivan, Rev. Carla Friedrich, and "Towel Lady" director Diane Shea, (bottom right).

could make these meals and eat this way on my own. (The diet is basically 50% grains, with the rest made up of legumes, vegetables, soups, sea vegetables, and a few other whole foods in small proportions). I knew that Donée didn't speak lightly about macrobiotics, but I managed to ignore the promise of weight loss for as long as I could. Finally, I decided to start on the first of October and commit to the macrobiotic diet and concept as perfectly as I was able, for the final 90 days of 2005.

I was busy throughout October; working on a stage show with 13 other women over 50 called "The Far Side of Fifty" and it was daunting, with rehearsals and performances, to prepare the new foods. These weren't microwaved

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## Embracing the Rice Bowl

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or frozen or easily portable meals but I managed to do the right things, and after only one month, I had lost fifteen pounds! The weight loss was apparent, and the women in my gym asked what I was "doing" that was obviously working. When I told them, they looked at me just like I had looked at Donée a year ago. Huh? Eat grains and vegetables and seaweed?

I have truly learned to love the macrobiotic diet. I am so glad to prepare it, to learn about it, and to make the effort to use the best ingredients, and to share the ideas with others.

The food, of course, is not the whole story: I honestly think that if I hadn't learned to love myself enough—to think I was worth the same kind of loving care I have given freely to others—it wouldn't have been possible for me to make the change. It is truly a lifestyle change. Sure I love the way the food tastes, but I'd eat it even if I didn't. I realize now what was meant by learning the difference between "eating to live, or living to eat."

Weight loss has been the foremost desire of my life for many years, but I am so impressed by this way of eating because of how I feel. Deep inside my body, I know that this is a healing diet. I was lucky enough not to have a deeper health issue (except the obvious one of obesity) to overcome. Even so, I was desperate and unhappy about my weight, my struggle with food, my seeming inability to take charge in some way.

Eating macrobiotic foods, I am energetic and full of life. I am on the go, being creative, seeing people, spending time with my Mom, who now lives in a home.

Friends that I've known for years are pleased by the change the diet has made. When I weigh myself, I always fear that I will have gained weight, because it has been so satisfying and easy, surely I haven't lost weight, too? But I always have.

Now after the second month, I dared to invite Donée over for dinner, and enjoyed eating the meal, as well as cooking and serving it. She has studied at the Kushi Institute in Massachusetts, and she knows lots of recipes and techniques. I'm gaining expertise and knowledge by going to her classes, and feel so lucky to have a teacher who knows how to teach and loves cooking. The amazing thing is, I love the food, I love the discipline, and I love the results. I weigh in once a month—the second month I lost another 14 pounds, then ten more the third month!

It's hard for me not to stop people on the streets to tell them about macrobiotics. I want to be a disciple and teach those who eat and eat, but never get any satisfaction or long-term gratification from the food they take in. I was like that.

I am so satisfied that I can resist, no—even better—I don't want any of the foods that were my favorites, like ice cream and cookies. I know what they taste like, and what they have done for me, and I prefer the rice, tofu, and seaweed that are nourishing me from the inside out. I'm excited to see what happens next.

I realize that I'm *not* the only one who feels a profound life change with this diet. Some talk of world peace, but I for one, have found a peace that has eluded me for all the years before—here in the rice bowl that I now embrace.

~~~~~

A minister in the Universalist Church since the 1970s, Diane Shea has specialized in performing weddings in the San Diego area. She joined the Madonna Ministry in 1998 after seeing the ministry in action; a church without walls or dogma, it embraces the feminine principle in spirit, and was a spinoff from the Catholic Church.

Diane came to the Swedenborgian Church as a director in Swedenborg Hall, and felt immediately at home, and is reading Swedenborg's writings.

She is currently caring for her mother who has Alzheimer's. She has appeared several times this year in a review performance with 13 other women in "Tales from the Far Side of Fifty" written by the participants, and with lyrics by and produced by Lonnie Berstein Hewitt.

Donée Whelan-Krause is a chef who teaches macrobiotics in San Diego. She is opening a Macrobiotic Healing Center next spring. She has taught classes at Whole Foods, Kung Foods and at the Learning Annex, and is teaching privately at monthly dinners at cost for a few—limited to eight, who contact her first. She has a website with her healing work at www.orthokinetics.org with the information on macrobiotics as well. Donée also contributed her expertise in healing energy work on September 17th and 18th at the Swedenborgian Church as part of the church's participation in a community-wide "ARTS OPEN," where University Heights artists opened their studios to the public. The Swedenborgian Church offered music, theater, and the work of 20 exhibiting artists to approximately 300 visitors, over a two-day period. ☐

What Swedenborg's *Earths in the Universe* is Trying to Tell Us — It's Not What You Think

Stephen Koke

Swedenborg's fascinating but challenging survey of the solar system and its many inhabitants was written in a very optimistic time. In 1609 Galileo built a telescope of about 32 power, a large version of what had been a small toy, and turned it on the solar system. He immediately confirmed Copernicus' theory that the planets revolved around the sun. The planets also appeared to be large earthy bodies, not just the moving stars that Bible theorists believed circled with the sun and Moon around the Earth. Earth, they had believed, was the center of the universe, especially because the Lord was born here to save the human race.

Scientists and philosophers then began to ask, Why shouldn't there be people on the other planets as well? The universe now looked much larger, and speculation about the planets that must be circling other stars excited scientific and philosophical thinkers alike. They argued that a universe so large, with bodies of earthy matter that turned on their axes and produced days and nights and seasons of the year, must also be inhabited, or they would not be meaningful additions to God's Creation. The famous philosopher Immanuel Kant added his support, concluding that every star must be a sun, every sun must have planets circling around it, and every planet must be inhabited; if some are not, they eventually will be.

Swedenborg, writing a century and a half after Galileo's discovery,

repeats these old arguments in the first chapter of his *Earths in the Universe* (or *Other Planets*, as it will be called in the New Century Edition). He adds, however, that according to angels there are people of particular types and inclinations in the spiritual world from the other planets in our solar system.

Swedenborg tells us in n.47 that no angel or spirit can see the planets. That's a bombshell. It means that directly seeing, and therefore verifying, the presence of a people on the planet they are thought to inhabit, is impossible in the spiritual world. The method of determining who in the spiritual world is from which planet is left in the realm of theory.

Most of this small work is devoted to describing their character and what they remember of their environments.

Shortly after Swedenborg's death in 1772 the evidence for the old optimism about life elsewhere began to fade. Telescopes were continually being improved, and scientists began to design whole new technologies for observing the planets. Eventually, space probes took close-up pictures and made technical observations of the planets. Three more planets, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, were added beyond the six that Swedenborg knew. (Just recently the IAU, the International Astronomical Union, adopted a new definition of a planet which eliminated one, Pluto. The new definition may be disputed.)

As the new science progressed, each planet and moon looked less

and less able to support anything as complex as a human being. Breathable atmospheres were lacking everywhere. The Moon, Swedenborg had said, has a different type of atmosphere. Nevertheless, besides the lack of sustaining vegetation on the Moon, the actual density of any gaseous envelope around it was later found to be as low as the gas inside a vacuum tube. It would be impossible to breathe by any method.

Is there any way to understand the disagreement between Swedenborg's views of life on our other planets and the findings of a sophisticated modern science?

There is.

It's important to watch the logic of Swedenborg's procedure and the limitations it had to contend with.

First, there are no claims that the book is a divine revelation. The Lord is not present giving advice or new information. Only angels, whom Swedenborg regards as merely ourselves on a higher plane, not a separate race of messengers of God whose words could not be doubted, were directing his views. This becomes a critical distinction.

Second, the angels who worked with him on the subject accepted the views of educated Europe at the time, including the six planet solar system then in vogue in astronomy and the philosophy that every planet had to be inhabited. It is quite possible, even likely, that they entered the spiritual world during that period, carrying its perspectives and interests with them; they merely try to fill in details about already

(Continued on following page)

What Swedenborg's *Earths in the Universe* is Trying to Tell Us

(Continued from previous page)

assumed inhabitants.

In paragraph 42 the angels evidently identified the home planets of people they found in the spiritual world by applying correspondences to the sequence of the planets from the sun (i.e., Mercury is the closest to the sun, Venus is next, then Earth, etc., on out to Saturn, the most remote planet known). Since the natural world corresponds to the spiritual world, these placements would correspond to different paths of spiritual development, ranging by steps from a divine mandate to live and become someone of significance (the Sun) to a primal urge to explore and to know (Mercury), through various concerns with the complexities of the self and its growth, to where the divine must be comprehended more deeply within (Saturn). From Mercury, the sun is an overwhelming sight, a great mandate to learn, to bring in light; but from Saturn it would look small and far away, suggesting calmer, more contemplative and timeless kinds of spirituality. Each of these paths to spirituality is the best for those in its community.

The angels then searched the neighboring spiritual world for planetary communities who possessed the characteristics suggested by each position in the sequence. These people were then regarded as Mercurians, Venusians, etc. This would proceed most simply and smoothly if uninhabited planets were considered philosophically unthinkable, which they were.

Third, today we have to consider the implications for Swedenborg's book if there *are* uninhabited planets—contrary to the optimism of Swedenborg's time. It's quite important to realize that a planet

with no one on it could not be detected in the spiritual world in the first place. A community of people in the spiritual world is the only evidence there of a planet's existence. Uninhabited planets therefore could not enter into the angels' cosmology even if they existed. That left our solar system impossible to describe accurately if one or more of our planets cannot support life. If in fact all the others are uninhabitable as scientists claim, the inhabitants the angels did find would have to be from other solar systems with people similar enough to us in character to be near us in the spiritual world.

In that world, Swedenborg tells us, a great fiery gulf defines the edge of our fully inhabited solar system. However, if Earth is the only inhabited planet in our solar system, that gulf may also enclose other systems somewhat similar to ours in spiritual character, including the planetary populations the angels had actually located when looking for our own. In the spiritual world, closeness implies similarity of general character, not necessarily closeness in physical space.

Fourth, no planetary population the angels discovered had developed an astronomy. None could then locate itself in the solar system, or anywhere else for that matter, and confirm or deny our picture of things. Consequently, only our astronomy could be used as a frame of reference, but it was quite sketchy—more so than the optics of the time could reveal—and certainly not powerful enough to view any surface details on a planet that could be compared with the details the inhabitants remembered.

Fifth, we now encounter the most critical consideration: Swedenborg tells us in n. 47 that no angel or spirit can see the planets.

That's a bombshell. It means that directly seeing, and therefore verifying, the presence of a people on the planet they are thought to inhabit, is impossible in the spiritual world. The method of determining who in the spiritual world is from which planet is left in the realm of *theory*.

What the book describes is of course a *material* reality: people on material planets. Elsewhere we find Swedenborg asserting spiritual realities; but those can be verified in inner experience. Verifying a material reality demands here that Swedenborg's angels actually see people on identifiable planets. Otherwise, we only have a theory that they are there. A theory can have enough rational appeal to be widely accepted anyway, be regarded as a "good" theory, because it currently accounts for all of the available evidence. It is perfectly alright to believe a good theory. But to take it as *fact* before it is verified raises questions that need eventually to be answered.

The idea that all planets had to be inhabited was, for philosophical and some observational reasons, quite impressive at the time, and therefore it constituted a good theory for the time. Swedenborg certainly accepted it; it had no credible opposition. But, as mentioned, only his angels had produced a detailed picture of an inhabited solar system, not the Lord. Consequently, further research in astronomy could legitimately criticize that picture if closer views of conditions on the planets made it necessary. They did.

An old explanation of ours, reacting to the flood of contrary evidence that did arise in astronomy after Swedenborg's death, tries to defend the work by suggesting that the planets were

(Continued on following page)

What Swedenborg's *Earths in the Universe* is Trying to Tell Us

(Continued from previous page)

inhabited only in the distant past. If we let that explanation stand, the implied wave of extinctions of those billions of people would be incredible.

We do seem to be developing a meaningful picture of the solar system that gives a role to uninhabited planets. Modern research is discovering a variety of things that our planets do, directly or indirectly, for Earth. What is emerging is the idea that a solar system is an ecological whole for the benefit of one or several inhabitable planets located typically near their sun in a temperate zone, as Earth is. The other planets, typically outside that zone, will in various ways protect them and seed them with the materials they need. This research is still in progress, but it appears to be a trend.

In *Earths in the Universe* Swedenborg appears to move away from his revelatory work in order to use what was then a credible body of scientific and philosophical thought to strengthen his doctrines about the universe as the nursery of the human race and ultimately a very large angelic heaven. Borrowing credibility from respectable sources is recommended procedure in good scholarly work.

He does the same kind of thing in *Divine Providence* and *Divine Love and Wisdom* where he refers to scientific observations of things in nature that also reflect images of heaven. We also get special evidence in the book that the best religion for humanity is one based on a divine-human concept of God. He mentions widespread examples of it beyond Earth.

In these ways the work was valuable, a compelling argument

for the spiritual purpose of the universe, but it had to stop short of doctrine. In his books, he insists that his doctrines for the New Church were given to him by the Lord and not by any angel (*True Christian Religion* n. 779 and elsewhere). In this book we find only the considerations of angels.

Stephen Koke is an editor and the author of Hidden Millennium, the Doomsday Fallacy published by the Swedenborg Foundation in 1998. He is a regular contributor to The Messenger and wrote a number of articles for Studia Swedenborgiana, which is no longer published. ☩

Some excerpts from Women's Alliance meetings at Almont Summer School, Almont, MI

(Continued from page 135)

On the subject of mattresses:

July 24, 2000

It was noted that monies allocated for the purchase of new dorm mattresses had not been spent. The "Box Springs vs. Flat Boards" debate came to a head and it was decided that Val Lau and Ruth Brandau will conduct a survey to see what is needed. The date of the survey is to be determined, as Ruth must take her car into the dealer on Tuesday and will not be available.

July 30, 2001

Ruth discussed the bed situation with Dave the caretaker, who said he would make four new bed bases for the boys' dorm. Doubt was expressed by Betsy and Fawn that the new beds were actually in place, to which Ruth emphatically declared, "Heads will roll!" if the new beds are not there.

July 30, 2002

The mattresses are done and will look quite lovely in the teen boys' dorm with their black backgrounds and pink flowers.

Ruth explained that while wholesale cost was, "Ridiculous," she was able to get a reasonable deal on eight bargain mattresses. An immensely amusing sidebar regarding Ruth's last trip to the mattress factory followed. The true hilarity of this mattress adventure was revealed in both the fits of laughter that prevented Ruth from completing two sentences at once, and in the description of Dean (Trombly) testing a mattress on the floor of the warehouse, after which two men were required to help her get up.

Barb suggested that we set aside \$1000 to purchase new beds for the girls' dorm. This notion sent our Treasurer, Dean, into what appeared to be a brief period of cardiac arrest as Barb called the now highly-animated Alliance back to order.

July 21, 2003

Ruth has purchased six mattresses and one to experiment with. This statement caused the Alliance to question the exact nature of the experimentation. Ruth also reported that an extra mattress had been sent. Since the deal was not, "Buy seven, get one free," it was agreed that honesty should prevail and the mattress company will be notified of the error. Barb noted that they may not want the extra mattress returned if they find out we've been "experimenting" with it. Renee also expressed concern that the "Do Not Remove" tags may have been removed. Ruth will call the mattress company herself because, "It's good to keep in close contact with the mattress man."

July 26, 2004

Joy Zimmer, our new Treasurer, has set up a new account in her name, and has added her son, Matthew Fleming, to the account in the event that Joy is not available. It was agreed that Matthew, being the trustworthy and forthright young man that he is, will be a good choice, as he is unlikely to fritter away the Alliance's money or experiment with mattresses.

—Submitted, by request from Messenger editor Patte LeVan, by Katie Shelly, president of the national Alliance, with permission from her mother, Margie Leas.

(More "serious" Alliance news will be in December issue.) ☩

To the members and friends of the General Convention:

Over the next several months, *The Messenger* will be carrying short, descriptive articles about the work of several of the various groups that carry out denominational programs. Because our churches are scattered throughout North America, and because governance is local, many people throughout the denomination are unaware of the variety of projects, assistance, and programming that is handled or supported by people who are elected, hired, or appointed to denominational positions. So, with this series of articles, we hope to acquaint readers with the “denominational-level” processes. It is sometimes difficult, in a decentralized system such as we have, to identify just what one’s financial gift-giving is used for. We hope that this series of monthly articles will provide some useful and interesting information and that these articles might also better describe the uses of your financial gifts to the work of the denomination.

With sincere thanks,
Christine Laitner, President

Central Office

Have you ever thought about what life would be like if we had no central nervous system? If we had no connection to others? If we couldn’t remember our past? If we had no heartbeat? Without a



*Martha Bauer, Central Office Manager
and Gina Peracchi, Financial Manager*

doubt, life wouldn’t be very pleasant. Likewise, our denomination wouldn’t be alive or very effective without these things. Thanks to our Central Office, we have all this and more!

Central Office is supported financially by our general funds – that means that when we give money to our denomination, one of the things it can be used for is to keep us all connected. A small percentage of our overall budget is used to support our Central Office, but what we receive from it is huge!

If we need information or advice, we can call Central Office. If we need pamphlets, brochures or books, we can call Central office. If we need some history or information for a project, we can call Central Office. If we need financial information, minutes from meetings, a copy of the annual *Journal of the Swedenborgian Church*, expense payments – or just a friendly voice, we can call Central Office. The list goes on...I’m sure you get the idea.

So, if you’re looking for a reason to put denomination giving on the top of your priority list – think “heartbeat.” We all need one!!

*Barbara Cullen, General Council
Member* ☩

~ READERS WRITE ~

Fond Memories

Dear Editor,

I just read the *Messenger* article about endowing the faculty position in Swedenborgian Studies at PSR in the name of Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey. [Sept. 2006.] What memories it brought back.

I attended Urbana College [now University] from 1970–73. I went to get a degree in Sociology and ended up with a double degree—with one also in Philosophy and Religion, thanks to Dr. Harvey. After taking my first religion course from her I was hooked. She took such an individual interest in each person. She taught with such excitement. I couldn’t get enough of her classes. After graduation I went on to get my M.Div at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio at Delaware and became an ordained United Methodist Minister.

In 1992 after I had a congregation in Montana, my wife Tonia got accepted at Boston College to work on her Ph.D and I inquired about studies at SSR in Newton, Mass. I discovered Dr. Harvey was now teaching there along with Dr. Ted Kline who had been my philosophy professor at Urbana University. How could I not attend? We lived at SSR in an apartment during the 1992-93 school year and I received a Certificate of Swedenborgian Studies. We so much enjoyed our year at SSR. I consider myself both a United Methodist and a member of the New Church. My life was vastly changed by Dr. Harvey and Ted Kline.

Thanks for the memories!

Sincerely,
Dick Marine ☩

Swedenborgian Church Websites, as of October 2006

Denomination's website: www.swedenborg.org • PCA: www.swedenborgpca.org
 Fryeburg New Church Assembly: www.fryeburg.org • Almont New Church Assembly: www.ancarc.com
 Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS): www.SHS.PSR.edu • Urbana University: www.urbana.edu
 Swedenborgian Spiritual Growth Center dba Stonehouse Book Room: www.stonehouse.org
 The North American Society: www.swedenborgiancommunity.com

Pacific Coast

CA: San Francisco www.sfswedenborgian.org
 CA: Wayfarers www.wayfarerschapel.org
 WA: Puget Sound www.heavenonearth4u.org

Massachusetts

MA: Bridgewater www.bridgewaternewchurch.org
 MA: Cambridge www.swedenborgchapel.org

Michigan

MI: Royal Oak www.churchholycity.com

New York

NY: Bayside www.baysidechurch.org
 NY: New York/New Church www.newyorknewchurch.org

Ohio

OH: Cincinnati www.newchurchofmontgomery.net

Middle Atlantic

DC: Washington www.holycitydc.org
 PA: Temenos www.temenosretreat.org

Illinois

IL: Chicago www.swedenborglib.org
 IN: LaPorte www.laportenewchurch.org
 MO: St. Louis www.openwordchurch.org
 MN: St. Paul www.virginiastreetchurch.org

Maine

ME: Fryeburg www.fryeburgnewchurch.org
 ME: Portland www.theportlandchurch.org

Canada

Kitchener, ON www.churchofthegoodsheperd.com
 Edmonton www.edmontonholycity.com

Editor's Note: If your church or association has completed a website that is up and running that isn't mentioned here, please send the info to Central Office and *The Messenger*. We will be running an updated list in *The Messenger* every month. ☒

We Will Forgive You

"We will forgive you." This is what an Amish neighbor said while embracing the father of the gunman who killed five Amish schoolchildren and injured five others before taking his own life this past Monday morning. Immediately members of the community established funds both for the families of those killed and wounded, and for the family of the gunman, who leaves behind a wife and two young children.

The power of love is unlimited. No matter what befalls us, our church teaches, there is a way to respond that can bring healing. Deep healing. This is

love and faith in action. I am deeply moved by this love and faith made manifest by the Amish community this week. May it help reawaken in all of us the desire to live our Christian faith more honestly and lovingly in our deeply troubled world.

And may our church community be a place where we continue to learn and grow spiritually, that we may respond to the conflicts and woundings of our life—large and small—with God's healing love.

—Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers, Pastor
 San Francisco Swedenborgian
 Church October 6, 2006 ☒

Important Church Dates 2006-2007

November 2-5
 General Council at UCC
 Retreat Center,
 Framingham, Mass.

November 10-12
 Retirement Committee,
 CO, Newton

November 12
 Rev Carla Friedrich
 Installation,
 San Diego, CA

June 24-July 2, 2007
 Convention 2007, Hope
 College, Holland, Michigan ☒

Confirmations

Cullison—Brynda Cullison was confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church February 14, 2006, in Mesa, Arizona, the Rev. Carla Friedrich, pastor of the San Diego church, officiating. She was voted into membership of the San Diego church July 9, 2006.

Darella—Samantha Darella was confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church August 19, 2006, in a private conference with the Rev. Carla Friedrich. She was voted into membership in the Swedenborgian Church of San Diego September 10, 2006.

McCallum—Irv and Pearl McCallum, former members of the Los Angeles church whose records had been lost, were confirmed for the historical record into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church March 26, 2006, the Rev. Carla Friedrich officiating. They were voted into membership in the San Diego Swedenborgian Church April 23, 2006.

Death

Duren—Janice C. Duren, age 80, formerly a resident of Newburgh, New York, died peacefully April 26, 2006, at her home at Fishkill Health Center, Beacon, New York. She was the daughter of Gould and Helen Wood Capon, and grew up in Newton, Mass. She graduated cum laude from Radcliffe College in 1947 and received her MSW from Adelphi University in 1984. She was a social worker at Mid-Hudson Psychiatric Center, Poughkeepsie, retiring in February 1995.

Janice was brought up in the Newtonville New Church Sunday School with such teachers as Margaret Briggs and David Johnson. In addition to her brother, Rev. Edwin G. Capon, her great-grandfather, Edwin Gould, and her great-uncle, Lawrence Gould, were New Church ministers. She was also a descendant of Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island. Janice married a Methodist minister shortly after her graduation and raised their four sons. She was very active in the civil rights movement and opposed to the war in Vietnam and, following the peace, developed friendships with Vietnamese representatives in the UN and later visited Vietnam.

In addition to her brother, the Rev. Edwin Gould Capon, Janice is survived by her three sons, Stephen, Mark, and Thomas, and grand and great-grandchildren. Her son Paul predeceased her.

A memorial service was conducted be held June 3, 2006, at St. Helena's Convent in Windsor, New York. Interment was at a family plot in Newton Cemetery, Newton Center, Mass.

Change of Address

Manon Washburn
6868 Los Verdes Drive, Unit 5
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275
(310) 544-1943

Rev. Kit and Penny Billings
1209 Johnson Dr.
Shenandoah, IA 51601

Ph: (712) 246-1249

Email: kit_b123@juno.com
Penbill2@juno.com ☒

Call for Messenger Editor Candidates

At Convention, it was announced that Patte LeVan—your unflappable, tireless, wonderful editor—wants to retire! It is, therefore, the Communications Support Unit's sad duty to search for a new *Messenger* editor.

We are looking for individuals interested in becoming *The Messenger* editor. The editorship is a half-time position, with commensurate pay, and the editor can live anywhere in North America. The selected candidate would assist and be trained by Patte, who came to the job as a professional journalist. After the probationary period, the candidate would assume full responsibility for the editorship, with Patte remaining on call to help. *The Messenger* editor reports to the Communications Support Unit.

Job Qualifications

- A demonstrated ability to write well
- Editorial skills
- Basic computer skills
- General knowledge of our theology
- Conversant with structure and workings of the denomination
- Basic photography skills
- Ability and willingness to attend and participate in annual conventions (paid for from COMSU's budget)
- A commitment to provide a forum for all viewpoints to be expressed
- Good communication skills and willingness to work cooperatively as a team player
- Ability and willingness to meet regular deadlines

For additional details, please contact the COMSU Chair, Carol Lawson, 1745 Gravel Hill Road, Dillwyn, Virginia 23936. chrysalis@hovac.com ☒

From Blake's 'Tiger' to San Diego's Janet S. Tiger, Swedenborgian Church of San Diego Finds the Connection

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.

Coincidence or prophetic writing? William Blake—one of the original twelve who first studied the works of Emanuel Swedenborg—wrote the famous poem, "Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright" and now, Swedenborg Hall has just chosen award-winning Janet S. Tiger as its first Playwright-in-Residence, announced Rev. Carla Friedrich, pastor of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church.

"We are excited to have Janet in our Artist-in-Residency Program—next year's schedule will have San Diego premieres of Janet's work—including a world premiere of her newest play, *The End of Death*, for next summer," added Friedrich, who noted that Tiger's play, *The Towel Lady*, was one of the main attractions at last month's University Heights Arts Open and introduced many theatergoers to the new program.

Tiger, whose one-woman show, *Renny's Story*, was produced at Swedenborg Hall to sold-out houses last May, was delighted to accept the honor. "I'm so pleased to be the first Playwright-in-Residence in the Swedenborg Artists program and look forward to working with D.J. Sullivan again (D.J. was the executive producer of *The Towel Lady*). We go back many years, as my very first play was read at a local play-reading Scripteaser meeting—which took place at D.J.'s house in 1980!"



Rev. Carla Friedrich (r) presents Janet S. Tiger as Swedenborg Hall's first Playwright-in-Residence, at the production of *The Towel Lady* during the UHAO (University Heights Arts Open).

D. J. Sullivan, of Hollywood and Broadway fame, who has been involved in productions for 50 years at Swedenborg Hall (with four plays next year), added that, as part of the program, Janet will be able to use actors in D.J.'s well-known workshop to help develop *The End of Death*, a play about the future of the world—starring 6.5 billion people.

Janet S. Tiger's plays have been published and produced internationally, and her *Third Party* was a San Diego Drama Critics Circle Nominee for Best Play. Recent awards included an unprecedented 5th win in the DFAS National One-Act Playwriting Contest—the oldest independent one-act contest in the

country. Among her published plays are *The Towel Lady* and *the Affidavit* in anthologies by Meriwether Press and *Blind Woman's Bluff* by Pioneer Drama Service.

The Swedenborg Hall Residency Program's most recent artist was Patricia Parker Ortlieb, whose work is on permanent display at the Riverside Museum. "The Swedenborgian Church of San Diego has been a strong supporter of the arts since 1883. We hope to add other areas, such as film, music, and dance, to our residency program," said Friedrich, "as part of a continuing involvement in the arts community." ☩

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