

# THE MESSENGER

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## *A Sacred Path — Living Our Oneness*

*President's Address ~ Convention 2006 ~ Urbana University ~ Urbana, Ohio*

Chris Laitner

In the first decade of the twentieth century, a man named Julian Shoemaker of the J.B.



Lippincott publishing company felt that there should be a compact version of the most central of Emanuel Swedenborg's writings. John Curtis Ager created the compilation, and Lippincott published the book, called *The Path of Life*, in 1913. I have the small leatherbound (well-used) copy that was my grandfather's. The book's title comes from Psalm 16:11 "You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures evermore."

The path of life, the sacred path, is a journey toward wholeness, a journey to the true self, a journey of regeneration. Its overall purpose is growth. The path is not straight. I concur with William Butler Yeats that paths of growth are moving spirals which move in cycles again and again. They are fraught with places to slip back or places of detour. I remember reading in Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*, which is his account of hiking the Appalachian Trail, that

the trail is not too clearly marked in some areas of its hundreds of miles, nor are the trail maps always accurate. The author spoke with a man who made a mistake that he referred to as a "thirty-seven mile detour" — a pretty long detour if you're walking! This certainly could be a metaphor for the path of one's life journey — and the detours can be equally long.

Spiritually we are each on a journey of regeneration. Robert Kirven outlines three related meanings of the Swedenborgian concept of regeneration this way:

First, it is the name of a life-long process of spiritual growth. That process is marked by cycles, recurring throughout the course of life cycles that Swedenborg describes in terms of three or seven stages. When he speaks of three stages, as he often does, they are called repentance, reformation, and regeneration.

Secondly, regeneration is a recurring stage in the overall process of regeneration.

Thirdly, the cycles move in a general direction (as a bicycle pedal goes around and around, while going forward along the road at the same time), and the destination or goal of that total direction and process is called regeneration. (*Concise Overview*, 37.)

Thus, as we move continuously through the regenerative process, we are moving toward the purpose of human creation — toward heaven, living our oneness with God.

What of the Church? Looking at *The Path of Life*, we find an orderly progression:

First that there are three things that make the Church: truth of doctrine, good of love, and worship stemming from these. (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 486). Then we see that a person of the Church begins to be an individual church when acting from charity, which is the essential doctrine of faith. (*Arcana Coelestia*, 916).

We next find that unless people are individually churches, there could be no church in general because to be the larger Church, each part must also be a church individually. (AC 4292). Finally, because we are so far flung that

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*Walking the Labyrinth*

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# Dog Day Morning, A Happy Tale

Our neighborhood has gradually shifted from dogs to cats, and one of the welcome side effects is no barking dogs at night. In the old days one dog would start up on a Saturday evening and inspire the other dogs into intermittent duets and choruses until the owners returned, often late, sometimes not until the next day. (As all of us cat people know, cats can do some pretty unsettling things, like depositing the head of a small rodent on your pillow, but thank God, they can't bark.)

Then one night a few weeks ago that all changed. A dog began barking at 11 p.m. and kept on. And on. This is an area of large boulders and the sound reverberates off the rocks so that it's hard to tell exactly where it's coming from, and one dog can easily create the effect of a three-dog night. By one a.m. we had reached that point of madness where one becomes reckless.

"Let's go see where he's located," I said to Steve, "and leave a note or call the animal control in the morning. The dog's obviously been left outside or it wouldn't be that loud." Off we went up the road in our pajamas, with flashlights. About a half mile up, we located him on the porch of a darkened house. Obviously nobody was home. Steve made his way through some bushes and up the long dirt driveway. "Be careful," I hissed. "He can legally attack you as a trespasser." Steve shined his flashlight on the dog, which appeared to be chained on the porch. We noted the address and made our way back home. "What kind of dog was it?" I asked him. "Well, medium size, it was hard to see it that well." The dog continued to bark, finally giving it up around 4:30 a.m. Of course we'd gotten no sleep.

In the morning we walked up the road to pick some apricots at a friend's house and leave a note on the door of the supposed dog owner. On our way, we passed our neighbor Dan's house. There was a dog sitting behind Dan's trash barrels, beside a dish of food and a bowl of water. He began to bark at us. I backed up and got a good look at him. "It's a pit bull," I said. "That's really strange—Dan's never had a dog; he has cats." But Dan also feeds every stray animal that wanders in.

We picked our apricots and went home. In the midst of breakfast I realized I'd forgotten to leave the note at the other house. I called animal control and couldn't get through the maze of bureaucracy, and was just leaving to walk up the road and leave the note when there was a knock at my door. A very attractive young woman with a baby on her back, a rustic walking stick, and a boy around six years old at her side said, "I'm sorry to bother you, but we've lost our dog, he somehow broke his chain and got loose late yesterday, and we've been looking everywhere, and wonder if you've seen him."

"He's a pit bull," the little boy volunteered eagerly.

"I think I've seen your dog," I said.

He launched into a passionate description of the dog. "His name is Chubbs, he has a perfect heart on his chest and a mushroom shape on his side, and he's really nice, and he doesn't bite..."

"He's very gentle," the mother added.

"Yes," I said, "I know where your dog is, or was. I have to confess I didn't go close enough to note the heart and the mushroom, but I think it's your dog. Let me take you to

where I saw him this morning."

We all made our way up the hill. The dog was still sitting behind Dan's trash barrels, and he was, indeed, the lost Chubbs. "Chubbs," the boy shouted, hugging him. The dog wriggled and whined with relieved delight. The young woman crooned, "Oh, that nice man gave you food and water." Even the baby was crowing happily.

As we walked back down the hill with Chubbs in tow, I described the barking dog that we'd seen on the porch the night before. I began to realize it was, of course, the same dog, undoubtedly trailing a broken chain and sitting on the porch of a vacated house, barking all night, then wandering over to Dan's house.

"Yes, he was calling me, and I couldn't hear him, poor dear, and he just kept calling." She described

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## Dog Day Morning, A Happy Tale

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where she lived, about a mile down the highway. She introduced herself. "I'm Carla Grant."

"And what's your name?" I asked the boy.

"Ulysses," he said.

"Your name is *Ulysses Grant*?" I asked. He nodded emphatically.

"Yes," his mother explained.

"Ulysses S. Grant the Seventh. He's a direct descendant of Ulysses S. Grant. His father is Ulysses S. Grant the Sixth. Thank you so much for your help. The spirits are with us, always."

I pondered the irony that it was two former Confederate soldiers who had founded the town of Julian following the Civil War.

"This is a magical morning, Ulysses S. Grant the Seventh," I said. "I hope to see you again. I know we'll all sleep better tonight, now that Chubbs is back home."

Patte LeVan

## A Sacred Path — Living Our Oneness

President's Address ~ Convention, 2006

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sometimes we feel very much alone, it is good to note that Swedenborg states that the Church in general is constituted of those who are churches in particular, no matter how remote from each other they are. (AC 6637).

Each of us, then, is an essential element in the life of the larger Church, as we journey through life toward the heaven for which we were created and as we learn and begin to live the goodness and truth of the Divine that gives us life.

Our church is also on a path, and I trust that it is a sacred one. The denomination, to be able to offer support to our ministries and to our membership, needs to be a good caretaker of its resources. We continue on the journey of trying to find the most helpful and least cumbersome operation and also of creating a solid culture of good stewardship — of giving and using wisely and well. With prayerful consideration and openness to the Lord's good guidance, we are committed to financially support such things as a new Internet-based outreach ministry, a denominational youth program and leader, professional church consulting where helpful, part of the excellent ministry of Rev. Rich Tafel as he facilitates groups to identify mission, values, and goals; the majority of the editing and publishing costs of *The Messenger*; the basic meeting requirements of all units, committees and councils of the denomination except the Investment Com-

mittee but including the Council of Ministers and its auxiliary committees; the ongoing good work of the Central Office; and some of the requirements of those students on the ordination path.

It is my hope that we can, as a denomination, keep walking our sacred path mindfully, and to continue being prayerful in our work and intention, knowing that the Lord—not we—is in charge of what the larger Church can accomplish.

*A labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. It represents a journey to one's own center and back again, out into the world with a broadened understanding of one's self.*

We will be continuing to offer people opportunities to give to the work of the denomination. Recognizing that first gifts should go to one's local church or the ministry where one is a member, we are encouraging thoughtful giving to those ministries first, but we are also encouraging contribution to the larger Church. We need regular, solid, helpful support from our members and friends to continue to support our various ministries to bring our wonderful theology and message of personal transformation and charitable living to the world. This is the denomination's sacred path. Our path is outlined in our purpose, to help people be open to the Lord's presence and leading through the fostering of our various ministries,

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## *A Sacred Path — Living Our Oneness*

*President's Address ~ Convention, 2006  
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personal and ordained, which assist people on their spiritual journeys. Working in common with the Lord, we are following our path of purpose and possibility – that of the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem.

Life is not static. Each of us is on a journey of spiritual growth. On our Convention program cover is an outline of a labyrinth. A labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. It represents a journey to one's own center and back again, out into the world with a broadened understanding of one's self. We are fortunate to have a small labyrinth here, and I would encourage you to visit it, to read about it, and to walk it with intention.

The concept of living our Oneness can be looked at from different perspectives. It could mean that each of us throughout our lives walks a sacred path – our journey of life – in order to become the one we ought to be. To honor our sacred path we must live our lives with integrity and love, caring for the development of our spiritual selves. Thoreau said that you should “direct your eye right inward and you'll find a thousand regions in your mind undiscovered. Travel them and be expert in home-cosmography.” That's a good place to begin, and then move inward even farther to that which is truly spirit.

Finally, we are gathered here as representatives and spiritual leaders of our larger Church. From that perspective, living our

oneness is the culmination of all that we do. We are a diverse group of folks bound together by a common theological thread and purpose. We are a pretty good representation of Swedenborg's explanation of “a one” which in all cases is comprised of various principles in form which constitutes a one according to the form. (AC 4149) And, here we are, the sheer variety of us – a one, and a church!

Each of us is unique, bringing specific ideas, talents—gifts—to the larger community. Each of us is on a personal sacred path of life, of learning, of regeneration. As a church, we're also on a continuing journey of some type of regeneration, continuing to find ways to be of service to our neighbors, to our communities and to the world. In our ministries we are seeing visioning, revitalization and new plans for community connections; in our regional associations, there are new pastoral opportunities, and new mission and outreach programs. There is new vision supported by hope. We are researching and utilizing programs and concepts that are working for church life in the twenty-first century, models such as the Rick Warren Purpose-Driven five elements where church focuses on and includes worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism. We are looking at the concept of the emergent church with its attributes of authenticity, missional living and focus, narrative theology, and Christ-likeness, as useful. We are opening an Internet-based ministry to the world. With the Lord's help, we will continue to learn and to do.

As Oprah Winfrey says, “God can dream Bigger Dreams for you ... far beyond anything you could ever imagine.” We need to keep paying attention.

We are a “one” – an entity – that is comprised of so many individual paths and levels, and we are strengthened by our own diversity. Our paths cross, run parallel, diverge and join up again and again. While each journey is individual, we are still all a part of the larger community, and thus, we are participating in the larger journey, as well.

I'd like to close by sharing a passage from a small book called *Together We Walk*. I think that this represents well our honoring of individual paths and growth, and how our work together can be so very strong:

*...And though the path divides and sometimes we must move in and out of different doorways of the world and cross other vistas of experience, still we are together in the heart of things; patient as seedlings till we bloom again along the same flourishing byway. Then together we walk onward into the unknown where the path may be steep or narrow, wide or straight, in sunshine and rain. It matters not because we are secure and move toward greater wisdom, blending the glory of life and the promise of tomorrow.*

Thank you all for being part of this sacred journey. Let's enjoy and celebrate our time together here as community! ☒

### **Late Breaking News!**

The Rev. Dr. David Fekete has accepted a call to the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta.

The Rev. Andy Stinson has accepted a call to the Washington D.C. Church of the Holy City, the National Church.

The Rev. Hunter Roberts has accepted an invitation to The New Jerusalem Church in Mauritius. ☒

## Walking a Sacred Path: Living Our Oneness As We Can or, Adjusting the Bar of Expectation

John Billings

Whenever someone visits our church in Cincinnati and really begins to resonate with who we are and how we move, the inevitable question always comes: Why isn't this place overflowing with people? The question of our growth and numbers is as old as my memory of this denomination—indeed, one of my Swedenborgian professors back in 1970 said he thought we were a dying denomination!

My objective this morning is to add creatively to this ongoing dialogue and to do so in the spirit of Rev. Andy Stinson who maintains that, for deeply spiritual reasons, we can and must face reality.

I'd like to share my favorite story of loving Oneness. Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once talked about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child. The winner was a four-year-old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his mother asked him what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, "Nothing, I just helped him cry."

I want so much for this church to continue as a viable denomination here on earth, continuing to walk its sacred path and living its Oneness, for we are *not* your customary church, no matter how much we might appear to be so on the outside, or no matter how much our worship services might look like other churches' worship

services. In many ways, in this world, and in this world of churches around us, we are a fish



out of water, and our survival is going to depend on seeing and accepting that in order to survive.

In the week or so since I became 63, I've learned a couple of things—not just a head kind of learning, but as one of my favorite Swedenborgian phrases puts it, learned "to the life" — that deeper kind of knowing that probably we all know something about. It will happen because we have at one time or another fallen in love, or been sincerely in love with our wife or husband or sweetheart, or have suddenly found the beautiful, breathtaking Lord that we didn't even dream could ever exist. Then we are brought to our knees in utter, feeling surrender. We would stay there forever if we could. These are all about learning "to the life."

I've learned a couple of things in this way of learning that deeply affect our sacred path in Oneness. They illustrate the difficulty with which our denomination lives out its mission here on earth.

One of those things is how spiritually important it is to live passionately, and therefore vulnerably from our whole being and

heart. Walking a sacred path is exactly that: *deeply* passionate, vulnerable living. You can get *hurt* doing this. Among other things, living passionately means routine access to healing forgiveness or our bitterness will eat us alive. This is not an easy sell here on earth.

But nevertheless, just as faith alone is so seriously wrong, living without honest feeling is equally wrong. Among other things this means that deadwood should be pruned from our lives every time it shows up! Cut out! Intentionally! Consciously!

Why? Because deadness and evil like to hang out together—they seek each other's company like magnets! And if something isn't *truly* alive, full of heart and wisdom, it is not of God. That little boy on that man's lap was fully alive.

And I'm not just talking about living passionately with the good feelings, but the pain too. Let that shake and wrack us! If you're going to cry, then for heaven's sake, make the angels weep with you! And they will too—because they know how important it is.

But do you really think the world wants to hear all this?

I was amazed to learn one time in that wonderful "to the life" kind of learning during a spiritual experience, that one of the major engines of regeneration—what an angel actually told me—is that an inexorable path to God is to, in our living, first embrace life fully, and then, when the time is right, to let go of what you've embraced—let go of it as completely as you once embraced it.

This means there will not only be deep and beautiful joy, but also *profound* tears as an integral part of

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*Walking a Sacred Path: Living Our Oneness As We Can or, Adjusting the Bar of Expectation*

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our lives. But in that resulting vacuum, after we let go, the Lord can have his finest hour with us, can come to us in intensely pure and clear ways. There's something about deep and honest grief that blesses us.

And when an angel tells you "to the life" about embracing, about what that really means, there is no uncertainty about it. I *felt* what was communicated to me all through my spiritual body—my very life knew it then.

Now, I cannot relay that to you directly, but I have a wonderful example that might help illustrate what the angel was driving at. When my grandson Jesse was about four years old, he just adored Barney, that big purple dragon on Sesame street. He was having a birthday party at our house, and someone got him a stuffed animal-size Barney. When he opened it, he grabbed it, held it out in front of him and, literally, shaking all over, yelled out: BARNEYYYYY! Such total honesty and feeling! Such passionate embracing!

We are to embrace life passionately on our sacred walk in Oneness. And here's the most important part of all that the angel told me. She relayed that God is indeed Divine Love and Wisdom, which means that the very first part of God's life is about *feeling*. Love is fundamentally *not* about thoughts—though it always contains and leads to them. Therefore, when we live passionately, when we live from this kind of honest heart and true feeling—we are being led by God! And how many times does Swedenborg say how important it is to be led by God?

But do you think the world really wants to hear all this as centerpieces of a church? Do you really think the voices of materialism and self-centeredness really want to hear this?

One of the other things I've learned is that lasting quality rarely falls off a shelf and hits us in the head. It's usually blood, sweat and tears the whole way—in all areas of life. Look at what the Wright brothers went through here in Ohio—it almost killed them. It did kill several of our astronauts. Look at the history of science and technology: all kinds of loss and suffering until new and better ways of living have been found. Look at

*Walking a sacred path is deeply passionate, vulnerable living. You can get hurt doing this. Among other things, living passionately means routine access to healing forgiveness or our bitterness will eat us alive.*

the Lord's very life—now there's a struggle, and it cost him a great deal, too.

Indeed, quality in time and space is always difficult, and if we go down the road less traveled to Scott Peck's spiritual practice of community building, it is always a struggle to reach and maintain real community; but oh, the quality and depth of spiritual living in those moments! The beauty can be breathtaking and is a living glimpse into what awaits us all in heaven. The sensitivity and tenderness of how people can touch each other if they reach community is so very deep and so profoundly spiritual. I would strongly recommend that congregations, and especially our council of ministers, invest heavily in the community building experience—although, as I say, get ready for real work that lasts!

Do you think the world really wants to hear all this as centerpieces of a church? Do you really think the voices of materialism and self-centeredness *find* all of this friendly and inviting?

In addition to living passionately, and quality always coming hard, I've also learned that it is easier and often feels better to hurt and bruise myself than it does to take appropriate care of me. Talk about something that affects a walk in Oneness! It's difficult for me to love me appropriately! Some days it's like work! It doesn't feel good at all! The Lord is so infinitely clever, though. It all sounds so easy: love your neighbor as yourself. Well, I'm still scratching my head at times wondering what that really means. I know I've learned that real love can be the hardest thing to actually *feel* because it always wants to *open* me up to ever greater *feeling* states, and kingdoms of love, that make me feel vulnerable

again—there's that darn V word again—make me feel very soft inside; and once there, I actually become more concerned for others than myself! That *is* heaven, but when I'm there, I am also dimly aware that I've entered a realm that somehow makes me a disciple. Oh dear, it looks like I have to know God before I can find lasting self-esteem! Can't you just see the Lord sort of grinning right now? If it's that tough to truly love *me*, no wonder it's hard sometimes to love my neighbor as myself—He's got those two things organically connected for heaven's sake. How clever! The Lord got straight A's in basic design work!

And I've also learned some other things, things specifically about our church, that drastically affect our walk in Oneness, but

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## *Walking a Sacred Path: Living Our Oneness As We Can or, Adjusting the Bar of Expectation*

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just a moment of clarification before I get to those. In all of this, I am not concerned with the New Church as the spiritual reality that is descending out of heaven from God, because the Lord is running that one quite directly. I both see and feel its very gradual unfolding in the world. I see its beauty and I also witness the struggles and pain it is going through all the time as foretold by the seven angels of Revelation. My concern is with our Swedenborgian denomination which is also descending, but our accountants tell us it's in the wrong direction!

**W**e've got some serious built-in problems because of our theology. We are not a church of mass appeal and probably never will be, precisely because we are a deeply spiritual church trying to survive in an intensely materialistic time. We are in a world where many people are just beginning their journeys as spiritual beings. This means, among other things, that self-centeredness and materialism have a strong hold on people's hearts. Self-interest runs almost everything as you've probably noticed. We are a deeply spiritual church living very close to the enemy that doesn't *really* want a whole lot to do with us. I know. I've been on the non-spiritual side myself and know what it feels like to be afraid of the church. Before my own spiritual awakening at age 42 the church was darn scary, a *direct* interior threat. I could sense that the whole purpose of this church is to aide and abet regeneration.

Now I have no doubt that the New Church is really big in heaven—But here? Well, that's a whole other kettle of fish. I mean,

we even have a hell that is half-way nice to get into if you like that kind of thing—certainly not the horrific scenario where we will be tortured and burned alive to eternity.

**D**o you realize what this means? It means that I just might be darned interested in hell, and therefore can't project my darkness out there onto some kind of devil! Ouch! The angels love all this. But people on earth? Not an easy sell, as I say. For many of them, the light of day and the darkness of night come and go no matter what they do or feel. It's all so mechanical. It doesn't mean anything, really! "I pay my darn bills and make love every other day" says the natural man. Internal growth! What are you talking about? As one 40-year-old man said to me recently, it was only after the total disaster of his first marriage that he was even just a tiny bit *willing* to look at himself!

And with that one man's comment about being just a bit willing to look at himself after his disastrous first marriage, now we can perhaps begin to see why the Lord allows so much disaster and tragedy in our lives, and why all of that, if even a bit "favored," leads the natural man even *further* from the church. Oh yes, as a denomination, we have some built in problems here alright, especially now that the old money is drying up!

So what's the answer?

I didn't promise an answer; but I do have a couple suggestions that I hope will line up with other good ideas so we can walk our sacred path in Oneness and continue to exist as a viable denomination here on earth. We need to try and make our church more appealing to the natural man. For example, varieties of good music that people like is really important, as well as more down to earth programs that help people with their daily lives and

the problems they are *actually* dealing with there. When people are helped this way, the church becomes more credible to the natural man, and people are then more willing to help support it. After that, the deeper, more spiritual issues can be addressed. This is what Dick Tafel, and now Nadine Cotton, are doing in Florida.

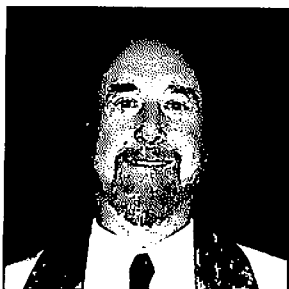
We have to exist before we can Walk A Sacred Path and Live Our Oneness. We need the *passionate* love of our church to sit in the driver's seat of finding practical solutions to our financial existence the way a mother finds solutions to her baby's needs, *no matter what*. Along with that, we need a willingness to make our church more creatively natural in its appearance to the outside world, but without losing its intrinsic, exceptionally deep spirituality. We are here to attract and minister to very natural-minded human beings, just as the Lord Himself could easily have had lunch with the local plumbing crew without their ever really knowing what hit them.

**M**y message is not that we should stop trying to reach out and grow, or stop ministering to those we actually do serve, but to get our expectations in line with a more complete sense of reality, and therefore, of course, our finances as well. May the Lord bless us in our ongoing endeavors together. And if we ever do get really big, then I will be the first to say, "I was wrong"—and will do so while doing cartwheels right along with the rest of you. In the meantime, perhaps we can become more at peace with the deeper reasons for our smallness and get on with the work at hand in greater faithfulness and devotion.

*The Rev. John Billings is pastor of the Swedenborgian Church in Cincinnati.* ☛

Editor's Note: The ordinands' speeches are important to publish in *The Messenger* so that members can get to know our new ministers. In this issue, the Revs. David Brown and David Fekete are featured. The Revs. Lana Sandahl, Freeman Schrock and hopefully Hunter Roberts will be published in the October issue.

## The Long and Winding Road



David Fekete

Ezekiel 8:1-4

The passage I read from Ezekiel used to strike me as amusing. The picture of God yanking Ezekiel up by his hair and carrying him to

Jerusalem seemed kind of funny. That is until it happened to me.

All my life I had a special interest in religion, and the Swedenborgian Church was a second home—in fact, a spiritual home. I went to the Swedenborg School of Religion in my twenties but didn't have the maturity then to enter ordained ministry. My spirituality had to ferment and develop, and I needed the maturity life brings over time. As Wallace Stevens puts it, I needed to go through "The path sick sorrow took, the many paths/Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love/Whispered a little out of tenderness."

My interest took me through 13 years of graduate study in religion. Although objective academic study of religions was indeed fascinating, it left my soul empty. Like the Israelites in Egypt, I became enslaved by the many theologies and cultures I examined. I didn't know where my own faith stood in relation to any of them. I was all theory. My soul was lonely and lost.

I ended up in southwest Florida teaching and working in the mental health field. Yet all the while, in my heart there was an aching void, an emptiness. At first I bewailed the lack of intellectual stimulation in this vacation/retirement community. But I found that that was exactly what I needed. As time passed, I sifted through all I had learned and found my way back to the Source of it all. I found my own soul again. And my own faith resurfaced from the intellectual soup I had come out of.

The emptiness lingered in my careers. When I taught religious studies at a state community college, I was prohibited from entering into discussions of faith

that my students would bring up. Furthermore, I really questioned whether I was damaging my students' faith by dismantling the Bible and putting it together according to the historical culture that scholars think generated the Bible's various literary sources.

I ran into similar problems in the mental health field. I was working intimately with people's lives, but issues of religion were outside of my job description. In both teaching and mental health work, to bring up genuine questions about religion would have put my job in jeopardy.

Time passed. Ultimately I was invited to give a chapel service and lecture at Almont Camp. That day is still engraved on my memory. After chapel and lecture I felt deeply fulfilled and an overwhelming joy yanked my soul up to God's presence at the temple in Jerusalem. I said, "This is what I want to do for the rest of my life, and this is what I've always wanted to do!"

I approached CAM, and was put on a two-year Ordination track, during which time I interned at a Unitarian Church, the New Church of Southwest Florida, and I led a retreat in Kansas. This was like wandering in the wilderness, as the Israelites were tested before entering the promised land. It was for me a time of soul searching and a trial to see if the ecstatic day at Almont would remain with me. It was a time for me to reflect on my commitment to ministry. All the while I was gaining experience in the internships I undertook. The

Almont experience never left me. It only grew stronger as I entered into the practice of ministry under the guidance of experienced pastors.

Now I am here at an ordination I have longed for for twenty years. I now feel ready, prepared and called to Swedenborgian ministry. The emptiness I felt over the years has been abundantly filled, overflowing with joy and promise. My soul is no longer lost and lonely. I have God in my life, and I know that I am now in the calling right for my soul.

But Ezekiel also found idolatry in the temple. I need always to remember that I am called to represent

(Continued on following page)



Laying on of Hands.



## The Long and Winding Road

(Continued from previous page)

God's Word, not my own private ideas. While my education and life's experiences contribute to my understanding of God's ways, I need to always refer my heart and mind to the Bible and the principals of Swedenborg's theology. I need to begin my questions about life with the Bible and with reference to Swedenborg. I need to begin my church leadership, my preaching, and my ministry with the Bible and Swedenborg's theology. We were created to choose God within the life's context in which we find ourselves. As such, my own life will always be a part of my understanding and articulation of God's Word. But if I measure my understanding of religion by what I find in the Bible and in the writings of Swedenborg, I will be practicing the ministry to which I was so emphatically called.

So it is with humility for the limitations every mortal must live with that I undertake this sacred calling. And it is with deep gratitude that I stand here to be ordained into ministry in a Church I believe in and love with my whole heart. My path has been long and meandering, but I feel with my whole being, that I have finally found my way home. ☩

### Profile: Rev. Dr. David J. Fekete

I grew up in the Detroit Church of the Holy City, and attended Almont New Church Assembly through my early twenties. I also attended Split Mountain Camp in California several times, and acted as assistant director in 1973.

I graduated from Urbana University, *Summa Cum Laude*, in 1980. I attended the Swedenborg School of Religion from 1981-1986. I attended Harvard Divinity School simultaneously from 1983-1985 and received a Master's of Theological Studies degree in Religion and Culture. I earned my Ph.D. in Religion and Literature at the University of Virginia in 1994.

I moved to Florida and have worked as a college teacher and as a mental health case manager.

I approached the Committee on Admission to the Ministry about ordination in 2004, and was made a candidate for ordination that year. During my candidacy I interned with a Unitarian Universalist Church, with the New Church of South West Florida, and I led a seminar in Kansas.

I am ecstatic about finally being ordained in the Swedenborgian Church. I am humbled by the task in front of me, and feel my call deep within my soul. It is a pleasure to serve the Church I love so dearly. ☩

## Mystic Heart

David Brown

Revelation 22: 1-8



The words of the Apostle John from the book of Revelation provide a powerful vision of what the Lord's kingdom, the holy city New Jerusalem looks like, as it is in heaven and as it will prevail here on earth. "Then he showed to me the river of the water of

life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb." As Emanuel Swedenborg translates this, it "...signifies Revelation now opened and explained as to its spiritual sense, where Divine truths in abundance are revealed by the Lord, for those who will be in His New Church, which is the New Jerusalem."

The book of Revelation is the last book in the Bible and it provides beautiful imagery for how we can help to create the Holy City, New Jerusalem here on earth. Standing here at the cusp of ordained ministry, I am deeply humbled as well as excited about the future. Humbled in the presence of the Lord, who is all-powerful, loving, and wise. Excited at the opportunity to help build the Holy City, New Jerusalem here on earth. So the big question then, how do we do this? How do we go about creating the Holy City, New Jerusalem? I will attempt to share how I see this taking place through imagery of a mystical heart that is open to transformation.

In preparing for this moment, I thought about last year's ordination ceremony in Berkeley for the Revs. Carla Friedrich, Sage Currie, and Doug Moss. What stands out for me from last year's ceremony is the imagery of the spiritual flames of our heart, leaping to one another and igniting that divine spark within us, setting our spiritual interiors on fire. This imagery of spiritual flames within our heart, leaping to another heart, resonates with me deeply. For those with an open heart, this is the transforming moment where our spiritual hearts meet with divine truth. Where divine love and wisdom come together and the course of our lives is forever changed.

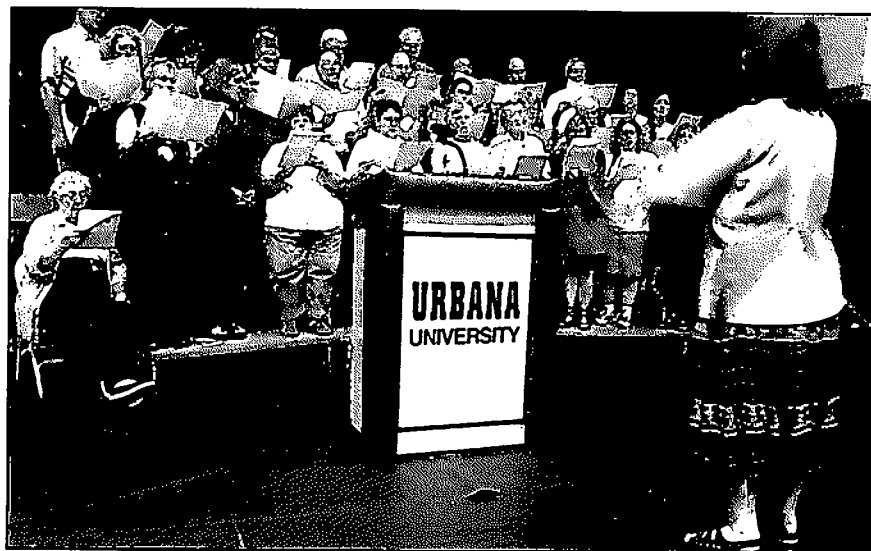
In our reading from the book of Revelation, John's life is radically changed in his direct experience with the divine. He writes, "I John am he who heard and

(Continued on page 104)

# Convention Highlights



*Graduate Dr. Lana Sandahl gets a big hug from SHS Dean Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence.*



*Convention Choir, Laurie Turley conducting*



*Saturday night powwow, Native American dancing. Presented by East of the River Shawnees.*



*SHS graduates lauded (l-r) Dr. Lana Sandahl, Rev. Freeman Schrock, Hunter Roberts, Dr. David Fekete, David Brown. (Dr. Annie Relat and Ed Sylvia were also SHS grads, but were not present at Convention.)*



# Convention Highlights



*More Music, and Dancing -  
Liturgical . . . and Gettin' Down*



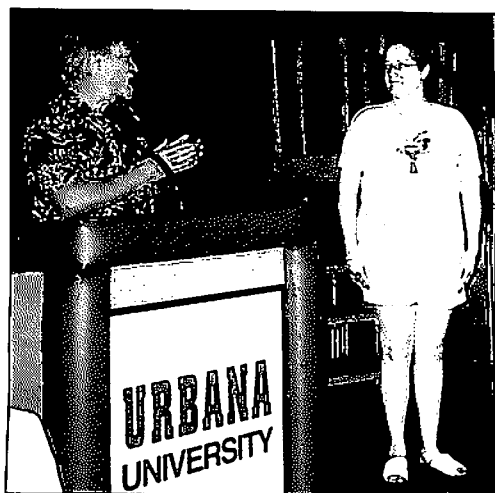
*Convention Committee chairs Betsy and Bill Coffman appreciated  
for their hard work. President Chris Laitner at left.*



*Rev. Paul Zacharias recognized for 50 years  
service as a Swedenborgain minister.*



*Urbana University Alumni and Friends*



*Jennifer Tafel is approved for ordination in  
2007. (Rev. Skuli Thorhallsson, secretary of  
Council of Ministers, at left.)*

## Mystic Heart

(Continued from page 101)

saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me." The imagery of this divine revelation to John is similar to Emanuel Swedenborg's face-to-face vision of Christ that culminates in a holy kiss. It is the evening of April 14<sup>th</sup> and into the early hours of April 15<sup>th</sup> in the year 1744 where Swedenborg describes his experience as follows:

On awakening, I had before me Jesus crucified and his cross. The spiritual came upon me with all its heavenly, almost ecstatic life, and I was ascending so high and permitted to go higher that, had I proceeded, I would have been dissolved by this veritable life of joy. It then appeared to me in the spirit that I had gone too far; that in my thought I had embraced Christ on the cross, when I kissed his feet and that I then removed myself thence, falling upon my knees and praying before him crucified... (Benz, pgs. 181-182)

It is soon after this vision of Christ that Swedenborg begins a rapid sequence of purification and transformation. From his *Dream Diary*, he hears the name Nicholas being called that he interprets to be his new spiritual name. On April 24<sup>th</sup> in Leiden, he hears the words, "Interiorescit, Integratur" which loosely translates to integrating the interiors. In essence, Swedenborg begins a process of spiritual purification.

Both John and Emanuel Swedenborg describe powerful moments with the divine that transform their lives from that point onward. These descriptions of encountering the divine have a quality to them that is timeless, eternal. The power of the divine is connect-

ing with the inmost qualities of who we are. The heart of the mystic is open to being transformed, and it reminds me of what is described in Psalm 93:

God acts within every moment  
And creates the world with each breath.  
God speaks from the center of the universe,  
In the silence beyond all thought.

Mightier than the crash of a thunderstorm,  
Mightier than the roar of the sea,  
Is God's voice silently speaking  
In the depths of the listening heart.  
(By Paul Mitchell, based on Psalm 93)

While my call to ministry was not as dramatic as the descriptions of John or Swedenborg, it is of a mystical nature that required the depths of a listening heart.

Seven years and seven months ago, I had a mystical experience that transformed the course of my life. The year was 1999 and I was living in a small studio apartment in downtown Honolulu.

At that time, I was working my way towards completing my first semester of a Masters Degree of Science in Information Systems. Technology was gaining to a crescendo in the months leading to the year 2000 and the forecast for jobs in the field was off the charts. Although the schoolwork was intellectually challenging, it lacked heart and meaning. I had already been contemplating ministry for a couple of years. However, the call had remained just out of reach and without clear definition.

Alone in my studio apartment in Hawaii, I directed my prayers to God, asking for guidance and direction in my life. "Am I called to ministry, oh God? Is this the direction I should go?" In that moment of prayer, an energetic shift took place in that room and it was filled with peace and assurance. There was an angelic presence with me in that moment that spoke to the depths of my heart, assuring me that ministry is where I am being called. That peaceful energy that filled the room remained for some time afterward and I knew the direction I must take.

As soon as I decided to follow that initial call, I was met with all sorts of resistance from the outside world. My fellow students in Hawaii could not understand why I was leaving the program after just one semester, especially in a field that was just taking off. I had been assured that it would be very profitable in the foreseeable future.

(Continued on following page)



Ordination, Urbana Swedenborgian Church

## ~ ORDINATION ~

### *Mystic Heart*

(Continued from previous page)

I left Hawaii on faith that all would be taken care of as I answered the call that was clearly given to me on that day. I moved back to the Bay Area and quickly found a full-time job in the technology field, and I enrolled in school at the Pacific School of Religion in the fall of 2000. During this time, doubts remained. Did that experience in Hawaii really happen?

Some confirmation of my call came with the technology bubble bursting. Fellow students from Hawaii had graduated and were now asking me if I knew of any job openings in the Bay Area. Although I did not have at that time the terminology to concisely explain it, Divine Providence was at work in all of this. Gently guiding me to what I needed to learn next.

I feel it is Divine Providence at work in the timing of the move of the Swedenborgian House of Studies to Berkeley in the fall of 2001. My Methodist roots did not speak to my mystical call and experience of the divine. Emanuel Swedenborg gave me permission to be a mystic and validated my experience in Hawaii. The spiritual flames leaped out from his writings and entered my heart. They continue with me to the present day. I am preparing to share this experience with others on the mystic path. The mystic heart is the heart that remains open to receiving the spiritual flames of divine truth and goodness. Of love and wisdom. It is through this process that I see the New Heaven and the New Earth taking place. Each time these spiritual flames leap to another heart, the closer we come to the realization of the Holy City, New Jerusalem here and now on earth.

This world is spiritually thirsty and will continue to seek the divine truth that the Swedenborgian perspective offers. Many people are seeking spiritual comfort in a time of unprecedented change. I believe that the divine love and wisdom, the truth and goodness that Swedenborg illuminates will increasingly be called upon during this period of accelerating change. It is an opportunity for co-creating a new reality with the divine here and now through the listening heart of the mystic. When we are able to be still, we

can hear the voice of God speaking to us.

"Revelation is now opened and explained as to its spiritual sense, where Divine truths in abundance are revealed by the Lord, for those who will be in His New Church, which is the New Jerusalem."

Oh LORD, we ask that your spiritual flames leap into and from our hearts, igniting our passion for love and wisdom ceaselessly. Bless this journey towards the Holy City, New Jerusalem. ☩

## ~ ANGELIC MUSIC ~



*Lisa Allison, Washinton  
State Church of Puget Sound*



*Rebecca Kline, Leah Goodwin, Rev. Sarah Buteux,  
Missing Rachel singing group, Cambridge, Mass.*



*Ordination attendees at Urbana Swedenborgian Church*

# Swedenborgian Church Election Results

<b>President:</b> Christine Laitner	unexpired term: Matthew Fleming	<b>IMSU:</b> Rev. Lee Woofenden
<b>Vice-President:</b> Jim Erickson	<b>General Council, Minister:</b> Rev. Dr. Donna Keane	<b>MINSU:</b> Rev. Dr. Rich Tafel, Barb Boxwell
<b>Secretary:</b> Susan Wood-Ashton	<b>COMSU:</b> Nancy Apple	<b>Nominating Committee:</b> Deane Currie
<b>Treasurer:</b> Larry Conant	<b>EDSU:</b> Katie Shelley	<b>SHS Board of Trustees:</b> Rev. Robert Leas, Herb Ziegler ☩
<b>General Council Layperson:</b> Sandi Degi, Lori Steinheiser. 1 year	<b>FPRSU:</b> Leo Serrano	

## General Council

### PRE-CONVENTION MEETING • JUNE 28, 2006 • URBANA UNIVERSITY

**Opening**—The meeting opened with a devotional which included a reading from Psalm 103 followed by some words of encouragement from the President.

**Reconnecting**—All members took a few minutes to reconnect and provide a starting point for the deliberations they were about to undertake.

**Wayfarers Chapel** – Rev. Harvey Tafel provided a report which included results of the biannual examination of the financial status of the Chapel. Due to budget constraints, full audits are done every other year. Rev. Tafel also presented a check to Council for \$3,000 and indicated that the final payment had been made for the loan on the Visitors Center. To ease day-to-day activities at the Chapel, Council approved obtaining an additional VISA card for one of the staff members.

**Minutes**—All minutes were approved, including confirmation of any email or verbal votes that had been taken the previous year.

**Tasks**—Tasks were reviewed and updates presented.

**Relocation**—It was noted that Rev. Kit Billings would be leaving the St. Louis Society in mid-July and would be taking on a Chaplaincy position outside of Missouri.

**Urbana**—Council approved that President Laitner sign the Partial

Release of Mortgage as described in a letter from Dr. Robert Head, president of the University. The document removes a very small portion of land owned by Convention and currently allocated as collateral for an existing mortgage.

### Reports

#### Vice-President:

Due to an extended and potentially dangerous illness, the Vice-President was unable to fulfill some of his duties this past year, but was confident that the worst was behind him and is eager to get back into church work.

#### Secretary:

The Recording Secretary spoke briefly on the need to increase the ability to easily retrieve minutes and information from prior General Council meetings. The technology is available and could provide quick and accurate information on prior votes and discussions, which would help in Council's decision-making.

#### Treasurer:

The Treasurer provided a detailed overview of the current status of the budget deficit. It was also noted that there is still some lack of clarity on the ownership of the St. Louis property. Council voted to have the president name a committee to set a timeframe to resolve issues and to provide a

written report to Council by Mid-October.

#### AFC/Mission Funds

Council was updated on the new Granting Process established by the Augmentation Fund Committee, and the mechanism that MINSU will be using to allocate Mission funds. Since MINSU would no longer be a part of the AFC process, Council voted to have the president appoint a committee to establish a foundation for the Support Unit to deal with both current parish ministries and the encouragement of new ministries within Convention.

#### Devotionals

Members of General Council would be providing brief devotionals to open each of the seven sessions of Convention business at the upcoming meetings.

#### Urbana Capital Campaign

A letter was received from Robert Keller of Urbana University thanking Convention for its donation of \$10,000. Convention now has a total of \$70,825 toward its goal of \$100,000 and the ability to secure naming rights for the University Book Store in the new Student Center. It was also noted that the former Boston Church had made a sizeable donation to Urbana University to be used for a sports field.

*(Continued on following page)*

## **Pre-Convention Meeting**

*(Continued from previous page)*

### **Council of Ministers**

Rev. Eric Allison proudly noted that a record 42 ministers and students attended the meetings of the Council of Ministers which had just concluded. He discussed how the Categories of membership in COM would be refined, and celebrated the 50 years of Ministry of Rev. Paul Zacharias. It was also recommended to General Council that the d/b/a name of the church be changed from The Swedenborgian Church to The New Church. Council voted to explore this possibility.

### **Electronic Voting**

Upon recommendation from Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr., Convention Parliamentarian, Council voted on a constitutional amendment to cover electronic voting that would be presented on the floor of convention for final vote by the delegates.

### **Members-at-large**

Council voted to recommend acceptance of Joan and Bobby Buchanan as members-at-large in Convention. This would be presented on the floor of convention for final vote by the delegates.

### **Appeals Court**

The president provided an

overview and informed Council that a final decision was still in process and was expected the end of July 2006.

### **Retirement**

Council voted as a formality to make the annual contribution to the ministers' retirement plan.

### **Farewell**

Everyone bid a fond farewell to Rev. Lee Woofenden since this was his last meeting after six years of service on General Council.

### **Adjourn**

General Council adjourned its pre-convention session. The next meeting would be immediately after the close of convention. ☩

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## **POST-CONVENTION MEETING • JULY 2, 2006 • URBANA UNIVERSITY**

### **Opening**

The meeting commenced immediately after the close of Convention and was held over lunch in Sycamore Hall.

### **Welcome**

General Council welcomed Matthew Fleming as a new member of the Council. Other new members, Lori Steinhiser and Rev. Donna Keane, were unable to be present.

### **Next Meeting**

The fall meeting of the General Council will be held in Framingham, Mass. at the UCC Retreat House from November 2<sup>nd</sup> until November 5<sup>th</sup> (Thursday through Sunday).

### **Investment Committee**

Council approved the appointments of Larry Conant, Bob Bossdorf, John Perry, Peter Toot and Dan Dyer to the Investment Committee for the upcoming church year.

### **Wayfarers Chapel**

Council discussed how the Wayfarers Board was selected, and voted to approve the appointments of Rev. Jane Siebert and Pete Toot to the Board for the upcoming church year.

### **Board of Mediation**

This is chaired by the Vice-President and it was confirmed that no new appointments were required for the upcoming church year.

### **Electronic Meeting Guidelines**

There was discussion on methods used to verify how members vote and it was concluded that discussions via email are authorized, but no votes may be taken and no decisions made. It was suggested that email "discussions" be limited to a single topic. Speaker phones were also suggested as possible methods of participating when a member could not be present in person. The committee was thanked for their efforts.

### **Lehnen Fund**

After considerable discussion exploring all aspects of the decision, Council approved to reverse its vote of June 20, 1955 and return to the original purpose of the fund which is for educational and religious purposes, with funds being distributed by the General Council. It was further decided that the fund be restricted to the expenditure of the interest only.

### **FPRSU**

Council voted to ask FPRSU to review past limitations placed by General Council on all funds and report back to Council at its November meeting.

### **Messenger Articles**

At the fall Cabinet meeting, Support Unit Chairs had volunteered to write articles for the *Messenger* showing what each support unit was doing and asking for donations to cover the cost of these programs in an effort to reduce the budget deficit. Giving envelopes were provided with each *Messenger* and the Central Office reported that donations are being received. Barbara Cullen and Jim Erickson volunteered to write additional articles.

### **Retirement Committee**

Council voted to approve the appointment of the Retirement Committee with no changes in membership from last year.

### **Convention Sites**

Council joyously acknowledged that invitations had been received for convention sites through 2011.

### **Treasurer**

*(Continued on following page)*

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## Post-Convention Meeting

*(Continued from previous page)*


At the request of the Treasurer, all decisions made by the Treasurer regarding financial allocations to the budget would now be approved by General Council.

### Council of Ministers

Rev. Allison discussed some of the current ministers in convention and the opportunities open to them.

## Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned with a confirmation that the next meeting would be held in Massachusetts in November.

—Susan Wood-Ashton,  
Recording Secretary 

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# Council of Ministers Report

Urbana University, Urbana Ohio

June 25—June 27, 2006

### Summary

- Rev. Susannah Currie and Bill Jones, author, consultant, well-known authority on Johnny Appleseed, led us in a pre-business workshop on “Johnny Appleseed and Evangelism.”
- Council of Ministers Chair Rev. Eric Allison called the meeting to order and led us in meditation and prayer.
- Rev. Susannah Currie gave the Retirement Committee Report: The Retirement Committee voted to supplement the 7% retirement contribution from the employing bodies of Convention with an additional .5% in the 2005-2006 plan year. Retirement plan investments performed very well. In addition to the pension fund a minister should have personal savings and investments.
- Rev. Lee Woofenden gave the *Our Daily Bread* Report: ODB has a new format and layout to give it a more contemporary look. There are 1250 subscriptions, and it is also available on the Internet.
- President Chris Laitner gave the Placement Committee Report: Cambridge called Rev. Kevin Baxter (accepted), Kitchener called Rev. John Maine (accepted), Washington, DC called Rev. Andy Stinson (pending), Pawnee Rock, Kansas, called Rev. Dr. David Fekete (pending), Cyber/Internet Outreach Ministry called Rev. Sage Currie (accepted), Wayfarers Chapel called Rev. Dave Brown (accepted), Edmonton began search in May 2006.
- Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence gave the Swedenborgian House of Studies Report: Rev. Frank Rose was brought in for the Spring '06 semester to replace Dr. Anders Hallengren of Stockholm University, who had to leave due to a minor stroke. Rev. Dr. George Dole continued as adjunct professor of biblical studies. Rev. Dr. Inese Radzins has joined the faculty and will teach Theology and Swedenborgian Studies.
- Rev. Ken Turley gave the Committee on Worship Report: ‘COW’s on the Moove’ made their first visit to the Western Canadian Conference at the end of June 2005. A visit to Puget Sound followed on the 4th of July weekend. A third workshop was held at Temenos on April 20, 2006. COW’s website is being reviewed and updated by Sage Currie.
- It was voted to recommend to General Council a vote on the floor of convention for an addition to Article XII Section 1 of the Bylaws of the Swedenborgian Church: “4. After preparation recognized by the Council of Ministers as adequate, a minister ordained in another communion who accepts the doctrines of the Swedenborgian Church and expresses allegiance to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Swedenborgian Church may be inducted into our ministry.”
- It was voted to accept the *Handbook for Ordination*.
- It was voted to approve the 2007 Budget.
- It was recommended that the Executive Committee do a cost analysis for the feasibility of holding winter business sessions for Council of Ministers.
- Rev. Eric Allison gave the Council Chair Report. To fulfill his intent to visit with different ministers around the country he visited with the Revs. Bill Woofenden, Ken Turley, and Andy Stinson. He stated that it was an

*(Continued on following page)*



## Council of Ministers Report

(Continued from previous page)

honor to be supportive of the people on the Council. Despite some discouragements there are lots of bright spots. The depth of love and caring is deeper than ever.

- Pres. Chris Laitner gave the Report of the President of Convention. She gave a brief review of her activity, travel, and study since July, 2005. She gave the background to the presentation of the Ten Common Denominators.
- Chris Laitner gave the Report from the Strategic Planning Session. Its goal is to nourish a culture of support and celebration and create a talent pool to inspire leadership. She will provide a list of useful websites.
- Rev. Dr. Rich Tafel reported on his strategy sessions with 11 church centers. They looked at goal setting, mission statements, and how to fulfill mission statements.
- Rev. Eric Allison had us go into small groups to pray and meditate for a vision. Powerful images of healing came to the surface.
- Plans of Ministry were approved for Dave Brown, David Fekete, Hunter Roberts, Lana Sandahl, Freeman Schrock; Sky Paradise's Vision of Ministry was approved.
- A Ministerial Activity Reporting Form was created and distributed. It's to be filled in and sent to the secretary by January 15, 2007.
- A request was made to have the Executive Committee prepare an annual Peer-Supervision Report.
- Lay leaders are to be part of Peer-Supervision
- Mentoring Program: Every person ordained shall have a mentor for the first two years. Rev. Alison Lane announced the formation of the Johnny Appleseed Support Unit.
- It was voted that relatives or siblings not serve on the Committee on Admission into the Ministry.
- Rev. Nadine Cotton was elected to serve on the Committee on Admission into the Ministry.
- It was voted to approve the ordination of Dave Brown, David Fekete, Hunter Roberts, Lana Sandahl and the induction of Freeman Schrock.
- It was voted to recommend to the floor of Convention that Jennifer Tafel be recognized as an Authorized Candidate for ministry.
- We celebrated Paul Zacharias' 50 years of service in the ministry.
- It was voted to refer to General Council the formation of a committee with two members from the Council of Ministers and two members from General Council to craft a sabbatical policy for ministers.
- It was voted to recommend to General Council to explore the advisability of changing the denomination's name from the "Swedenborgian Church" to its (popular) name, the "New Church."
- The Council of Ministers urges General Council to revise and update the Suggested Ministerial Salary Guide lines with all due speed and urgency. Approved by unanimous vote.
- Eric thanked the Executive Committee and the Council of Ministers for its hard work.

Rev. Skuli Thorhallsson, Secretary 


*Faculty Position in Swedenborgian Studies  
Named in Honor of Dorothea Harvey*  
(Continued from back page)

1992-2000. Thus, as a deeply engaging scholar and beloved pastor and chaplain, as well as a pioneer in new ways of appropriating Swedenborgian thought, Professor Dorothea Harvey personified a lived spirituality in her ministry of teaching.

The idea of "endowing" this position came about as we thought about the significance of the major gift that former trustee Rev. Jerry Poole arranged with Dorothea back in 1992, when she gave her retirement home to the school

as a bequest upon her death. We realized that the value of that bequest in today's market is very close to the amount it takes to endow a chair at PSR, and that realization in turn spurred our imagination to recognize the value of "booking" that asset in the form of an endowed chair in order to accomplish two important goals: raising the level of awareness of the importance of major bequests to the future of theological education for the Swedenborgian tradition; and carrying forward in our institutional memory in a powerful way the life and career of one of the great leaders of scholarship and ministry in modern-day Swedenborgianism.

We were pleased at the corporation meeting to have on the dais with us the newly hired Dr. Inese Radzins, who was introduced in June 2006 *Messenger* article. After the presentation and official announcement of the inauguration of the Dorothea Harvey Chair of Swedenborgian Studies at Pacific School of Religion, Dr. Radzins addressed the meeting as the first scholar to inhabit the named chair.

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

## Symbolic Importance of Dual Spelling

Dear Editor,

I read Cathy Lauber's letter requesting *The Messenger* to retain the use of Canadian spelling whenever it is used in Canadian-authored articles. The *Messenger* response was that an explanatory footnote might be added in the future about retaining Canadian spelling "as a courtesy."

I love and value the overall spirit of fairness and sensitivity which you always strive to be guided by in editing *The Messenger*. It is appreciated by everyone more than you know. However, in that same spirit, couldn't *The Messenger* reconsider waiving standard editorial practice just for this instance? Isn't standard

practice really just a technicality compared to the symbolic importance dual spelling has for honoring the feeling and the overall spirit of inclusiveness? It feels most loving not to distinguish by any footnote the two different spellings as a courtesy either way. My wish is for both spelling traditions to be equally enjoyed and celebrated according to author, since *The Messenger* is published by The Swedenborgian Church of North America, and, as a publication, includes both U.S. and Canadian citizens in the scope of its audience.

Mona Diane Conner

Brooklyn, New York

## And Looking Forward to Convention 2007...

A two-day, guided, scenic, Motor-Coach trip up the shoreline of Lake Michigan is being planned for next year's Convention. This pre-Convention tour is Monday, June 25th and Tuesday, June 26th, 2007 with an overnight stay in Machinaw City. Possible stops on Monday may include Silver Lake State Park near Pentwater, 'Gwen Frostic' Studios in Benzonia, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore near Empire, a visit to a vineyard with wine tasting near Traverse City. Possible stops on

Tuesday to include Machinaw Bridge, 'Cross in the Woods' near Indian River, Hartwick Pines State Park near Grayling, 'Shrine in the Pines' near Baldwin. We will look at what Swedenborg has to say about Michigan's natural wonders.

We will let you know more as this trip unfolds.

Please contact: Barb Boxwell at 989 835 8963 or [bpboxwell@juno.com](mailto:bpboxwell@juno.com) or Sandy Coveart at 989 636 7674 or [scoveart@charter.net](mailto:scoveart@charter.net)

## 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 paid part-time position. 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.

For additional details, please contact the COMSU Chair, Carol Lawson, 1745 Gravel Hill Road, Dillwyn, Virginia 23936. [chrysalis@hovac.com](mailto:chrysalis@hovac.com)

In the April and May, 2006 *Messengers*, articles referred incorrectly to the Saturday evening Native Group that was to provide entertainment at our recent Convention as the "Shawnee Nation, United Remnant Band." In fact, the group that provided the Native Dancing and Drumming was the "East of the River Shawnees," of which two members are also members of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church. The error was inadvertent and we apologize for any confusion or offense our error may have caused.

—Betsy Coffman

Convention Planning Committee

## Important Church Dates 2006-2007

September 4  
Labor Day - Central Office closed  
September 8-10  
AFC meeting, Temenos  
September 11  
Budget requests due in Central Office  
September 15-17  
Wayfarers Chapel Board of Trustees  
September 22, PCA  
September 22-25  
Pacific Coast Association Meeting  
October 1  
Rev. Freeman Schrock's Installation, La Porte, Indiana  
October 7  
Rev. Kevin Baxter's installation, Cambridge, MA  
October 9  
Columbus Day, Central Office closed  
Cabinet Conference call at 9 PM EST  
October 11  
Cabinet Conference call 9 PM EST  
October 17-20  
CAM, SHS, Berkeley  
October 20  
SHS Board of Trustees, Berkeley  
October 28  
Investment Committee, CO, Newton  
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

**Canny, Kaplan, Kuzman, Merkert—** Paul Canny, Joann Kaplan, Ken Kuzman and Hope Merkert were confirmed into the membership of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos on Sunday, June 11, 2006, the Rev. Susannah Currie officiating.

**Kesselring, Leffering, McLean, Uttley, Vincent, Vincent-Haven—** Pam Kesselring, Mike Leffering, Kathy McLean, Jim McLean, Keith Uttley, Beth Vincent and Roslyn Vincent-Haven were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church and welcomed into fellowship June 4, 2006, at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, the Rev. Paul Zacharias officiating.

**Backman, Vigés—**Rose Backman and David and Julie Vigés were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church June 18, 2006, in the home of Betsy Lau in Lansing, Michigan, with the Rev. Renee Machiniak officiating. There were 22 people present for the service, including Lansing Church Worship Leader Jennifer Tafel, M.Div. The members were confirmed into the Michigan Association as members-at-large. Their intention is to transfer their membership to the Lansing Swedenborgian Church once the church is included in the Michigan Association at the upcoming October meeting.

## Deaths

**Bosley—**Phyllis Virginia (Jones) Bosley, 87, beloved member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church and Pacific Coast Association for over 50 years, and active member of the Women's Alliance, departed peacefully for the spiritual world June 9, 2006. Phyllis also served as vice-president of Convention from 1994 to 1997, and was a board member emeritus of the Wayfarers Chapel. She was a member of the San Francisco church choir for nearly 40 years, and a staunch supporter of the Bay Area musical community. She moved from San Francisco to Pasadena, California,



about nine years ago, to be closer to her son Ted and her grandchildren. A memorial service was held July 9, 2006, at the San Francisco church, the Rev. Rachel Rivers officiating. Phyllis is survived by her son Ted, daughter Kathy, two grandchildren, and two step-grandchildren.

**Holmes—**Harry Porter Holmes, Jr., entered the spiritual world April 9, 2006, at the age of 91. He was a member of the Brockton, Mass. Society of the New Jerusalem. A memorial service was held April 13, 2006, at the Dahlborg-MacNevin Funeral Home, with a graveside service following at the Melrose Cemetery in Brockton, the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating. Porter Holmes, as he was known all his life, is survived by two daughters, Linda Foster of Pine Beach, New Jersey and Paula Langone of Bridgewater, Mass.; four grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, and by his sister, Marjorie Batson of Duxbury, Mass. He was preceded into the spiritual world by his beloved wife, Eleanor E. (Thomas) Holmes.

**Liebert—**Adolph T. Liebert passed into the spiritual world June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006, at the age of 98. He is survived by his wife Anne, his daughter Doris Ann Anderson, six grandchildren, nine great grandchildren and one great-great granddaughter.



*Ad and Ann Liebert on Anne's 100th Birthday Party, December 26, 2004*

His son, Theodore, pre-deceased him.

Ad was an active member of the First New Jerusalem Society of Philadelphia, serving in many capacities locally, and nationally as an Emeritus member of the Investment Committee. He also served as a board member of the Swedenborg Foundation. A service to celebrate his life was held at the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006, the Rev. Susannah Currie officiating. Donations in his name may be made to the 'In Company with AngelsFund', 28 West Market St. West Chester, PA 19382.

**McGee—**Captain Lee McGee, husband of artist Manon Washburn McGee, a

lifelong Swedenborgian, entered the spiritual world May 15, 2006, due to complications following bladder cancer surgery, in Palos Verdes, California. Lee and Manon were married in 2002, and continued to be active participants in Wayfarers Chapel events and the Pacific Coast Association.

Lee was a retired Marine Surveyor. He is survived by his wife Manon, his daughter Sandra Crowley, his granddaughter Anne Biarbe, and her three children. A celebration of his life took place June 3, 2006, at the Pacific Unitarian Church in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, with over 200 people attending.

**Schulte—**Sylvia Jane Brockschink Schulte entered the spiritual world April 19, 2006, at the age of 90. On April 22, 2006, a resurrection service was conducted at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Norway, Iowa, the Rev. Kit Billings officiating. She was baptized at the Lenox Township Church of The New Jerusalem in Norway as an infant and grew up in that wonderful little prairie church, becoming a lifelong member. She was past president, and a "pillar" of the congregation. She loved the faith of the New Jerusalem and was not shy in sharing it with others. Wife of Bernard Schulte, mother and grandmother, she adored family and friends, and was extremely active in her community and was given many honors. She was a homemaker, a schoolteacher, a 4-H leader, a lover of history, and much more, and is dearly missed.

**Sonmor—**John Raymond Sonmor, 75, brother of Rev. David Sonmor, passed into eternal life on Sunday July 2, 2006, in Calgary Alberta. A funeral service was held in Calgary on July 6, 2006, the Rev. David Sonmor presiding. He is survived by his wife Ardell, sons Lee and Kevin and daughter Laura, two granddaughters; Jill and Quinn, two grandsons; Eric and Spencer and four brothers: Harold, Eugene, David and Gordon. Interment of ashes will be at a later date. Ray was a lifelong member of the New Church, although for many years did not live at a location where regular services were available to him and his family. ☩

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.

## *Faculty Position in Swedenborgian Studies Named in Honor of Dorothea Harvey*

*How Bequests Can Achieve Significant Goals in the Future of Swedenborgian Theological Education*

*Jim Lawrence*



The trustees of the Swedenborgian House of Studies took the step this summer of "endowing" the faculty position in Swedenborgian Studies at Pacific School of Religion in the name of Swedenborgian scholar Rev. Dr. Dorothea

Harvey. This move was taken after consultation with senior administration at Pacific School of Religion and with Dr. Harvey, who lives in retirement in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The result is that now at Pacific School of Religion there is a faculty position called the Dorothea Harvey Professor of Swedenborgian Studies. The endowment itself, however, shall always remain with the Swedenborgian House of Studies, not with Pacific School of Religion, though the named chair will be carried through all of the official brochures and catalogs of both institutions. This is not a new position, but rather a naming of the current faculty position at PSR in Swedenborgian Studies.

The formal announcement of this development was made at the annual



corporation meeting of the school, which convened every summer at the denominational convention which happened to be held this year on June 29<sup>th</sup> at Urbana University where Dr. Harvey taught for twenty years. Feeling that the trip would be a little too much to undertake, Dr. Harvey asked to be excused from the celebration, but gave her blessing to our desire to carry forward her life work in our institutional memory in this fashion. Ironically, June 29<sup>th</sup> was the exact date in 1975 when Dr. Harvey became the first



Swedenborgian woman ordained in the history of the New Church ecclesiastical organizations in the world.

Dorothea Harvey, a graduate of Wellesley College (B.A.), Union Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and Columbia University (Ph.D.), exercised extraordinary Swedenborgian scholarship. From 1952-68 at Wellesley College she taught biblical history and literature and authored during this time the article on Amos for the prestigious *The Interpreter's Bible*. She then taught religion and philosophy at Milwaukee-Dowder College and Lawrence University, before undertaking what would become a legendary teaching career at Urbana College from 1968-88. In "retirement" Dr. Harvey bestowed her gracious wisdom upon seminary students at the Swedenborg School of Religion from

(Continued on page 109)

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