

THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

November 2007

~THE LORD'S LEADING~

Coincidence?

John White

My oldest daughter came home from school one day with the comforting news that the entire third grade class of St Anthony's Catholic school was praying for my soul.

It seems the assignment that day in religion class was for each child to draw a "memorable moment." My daughter drew a picture of Dad going to church. When the young man sitting next to her saw what she had drawn, he was somewhat confused. "Why is that a memorable moment?"

She said, "My Dad doesn't go to church much, he's not a Christian."

He replied, "What do you mean he's not a Christian?"

Then she laid the bombshell on him: "He doesn't really believe in God, either."

Well, this was more than his eight-year-old sensibilities could handle. "What do you mean he doesn't believe in God? How can that be? That's not right!"

By this time, the young man had drawn the attention of the entire class with his emotional outburst, so the teacher decided to intervene. She asked my daughter and the young man to explain the situation. Once she had all the facts, she weighed the evidence and decided that the proper response for someone like myself was to pray that they might learn

to find Jesus (or something along those lines...). I have to admit, it was amusing to think that twenty-five or so little individuals were praying for my quasi-atheist soul that day.

As the school years went by, we came to know many of the children in my daughter's class, along with their families. One of the stand-outs was a young man named Taylor.

... The alternative to coincidence was what? God? Jesus?

I honestly didn't know what to think.

My first recollection of him was from one of my daughter's birthday parties. During these parties, my wife Keri and I would usually lead the kids through various games and activities. Toward the end of one particular party, I discovered a small group of kids (I believe there were four of them) who had invented their own game. It could have appropriately been named "Freeze your head off." It started out with them timing how long they could hold their hands in a cooler full of ice and water. At some point it escalated into full head immersion into the

ice water. The uncontested winner, hands down, was Taylor.

Taylor was a skinny, freckled face kid, full of life and always up to something. Both he and my daughter served a tour of duty as altar servers at the church. As altar servers, they were allowed access to the sacristy (the room behind the altar where the priest's vestments, the communion wine and communion wafers are kept). He caused quite an uproar at school one day when he was caught selling communion wafers on the playground. It seems that "Father Taylor" was charging a quarter for the "body of Christ." My wife and Taylor's mother, Maureen, became friends. Eventually, we all went out to dinner one night so the husbands could meet. Taylor's father, Nick, was a fireman.

As the years went by, I would occasionally hear stories through Keri

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Celebrations

Rev. Doug Moss, pastor of The Hillside Church, El Cerrito, Calif., announced that this year they are hosting an Alternative Gift Fair on December 1, under the auspices of Alternative Gifts International. The fair will also include Heifer International Project. For further information, Google Alternative Gifts International.

IN THIS ISSUE:

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John Billings

In this world, imitations of real love are commonplace, they can be found at every turn. But when genuine love comes, when someone truly loves another, there is nothing more beautiful. Have you been blessed in your life to have genuine experiences of this? These are moments that matter more than we are capable of realizing sometimes. The beauty can suddenly be upon you and is so deep and exquisite that a sense of genuine sacredness comes easily. When circumstances are right, such love can bring tough and hardened people to their knees and the light it brings with it can be dazzling. It is not only beautiful to the one loving, but perhaps even more so to the one being loved. It's as if the whole universe somehow begins to sing—suddenly we get a glimpse into why we were created! All the Scriptures and sages of the world herald this event. It is heaven, right here and now. The sheer loveliness and peace can sometimes be overwhelming if we allow ourselves to actually feel it. Why should it not be so? Love is God! And all the things of the church should forever conspire to help bring this about. Including *The Messenger*.

Hello. My name is John Billings, pastor of the Cincinnati New Church, and I am the guest editor for this edition of *The Messenger*. It is good to be with you in this medium and I hope we are both blessed from the connection.

At base, life is passion, of one kind or another, and my goal is to try to bring that passion into your living room so you can perhaps come closer to the experience of living more easily and fully from within the quiet places of your own inner life. I think this is important

because when we do that I think we increase the Lord's effectiveness with us. It's as if the Lord can speak more clearly then, and, even more importantly, we can listen better then. And when that happens I think we increase our ability to love more genuinely, which is really what it's all about. So come, pull up a chair and let the meaning flow, let it flow in, around and through you into more genuine connections between you and Divine Love and Wisdom, the one God of us all.

A word or two about this Messenger. It's basically divided into two sections. The first section will focus on the theme of the Lord's leading in our personal lives, whether we've moved along rather well in our spiritual journey with not too many ups and downs, or whether we've spent some time in a spiritual desert where we barely knew the Lord at all—which is what happened to me—or whether we've spent some time in some kind of spiritual slime or cesspool (in the Bible this is called having your life lifted from the pit.) What's so amazing to me about my own experience is that, as I look back now, the Lord's boundaries were so strong—He did not send any sentimental gooey kind of love, feeling sorry for me in my dry and drab faithlessness. No, instead he kept my nose to the grindstone of “no faith” for about 45 years (which can seem kind of mean) until I was truly ready to go beyond that to my own spiritual awakening—you know, the kind that can burn your socks off. Well, that's what I got and I would not trade it for anything in the world. Wow, what an infinitely wise artist! Once again, THANK YOU LORD. (Some day I'd like to give you the full version of that awakening which is so utterly beautiful

and moving, even to me. What an incredibly beautiful, wise, moving, loving God!

So clearly our journeys are not the same—the Lord is indeed infinitely creative and equally at home in any of the above venues to lead human beings to heaven or, if Swedenborg is right, the best possible hell. In either case, the Lord's unadulterated creativity is awesome to me in my life, and in the lives of others as well. It's just really neat. Perhaps it is for you too.

But these accounts will not be according to some idea or doctrine: they will be what has quite literally happened to people, what their actual experience has been. These are real life accounts of how God saves, or tries to save, if we will have any of that.

The second section is based on a simple assumption. I believe it is both useful and delightful for us to be in touch with each other; not

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Guest Editorial

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with the plot of our lives, but with the deeper, feeling level of the story of our lives as well. We want to know how each other is really doing as a human being—how we are in our feelings and heart, and not just the outer events of our lives. With this in mind I have asked ministers, in this case, (at another time I would want to ask others as well) to share what is currently moving to them in their lives and churches. What takes their breath away; what makes them cry or laugh or worry; what makes it all worthwhile. In some cases, they have written it all; in others I have interviewed them and written it myself after they have approved what I've written. I hope it is meaningful in your own life. I'd like to hear from you either way if you feel moved to do that. My email is jscincy@fuse.net and my phone is 513-248-0636. Thank you. Oh, one more thing. Don't forget that God is crazy about you.

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The Lord's Leading

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of some recent escapade that Taylor had gotten involved in. He gave his mother fits; he was constantly in trouble of some sort. While in high school, he got in trouble for bringing a "deadly weapon" to school. The deadly weapon turned out to be brass knuckles that he had gotten from some other kid. He had them in his car and was showing them off. When the school called, Maureen wasn't able to go, so Nick came to school to handle the situation. As luck would have it, he had his dress uniform on that day, so the school resource officer cut him some slack as a professional courtesy.

During senior year, Taylor got a job at a Seafood restaurant near our house. One night, my wife and I went there for dinner with some friends. He stopped by our table. During the brief conversation, I noticed that he had become a tall, handsome young man with a friendly, open smile. I kidded him about getting us a discount on food. He said he could get us free salads because he did the salad prep.

About a week or so later, Keri and I were up at St. Anthony's working their biggest annual fundraiser, the "Celebrity Waiter Auction and Dinner." We still volunteered every year, even though our girls were in high school. That evening, I ran into Maureen and Nick in the auction tent. It had been over a year since I had seen Nick. I told him it had been too long since we had seen each other and that we should plan to get together. After everyone was called into the parish center for dinner and the auction, I noticed that Maureen was still outside in the auction tent, looking at some of the items. I told her that Keri and I had seen Taylor up at the restaurant recently. I mentioned to her what a fine young man he had become. I also told her

that I knew she had been through a lot with Taylor, but I could tell what a good person he was.

While I was talking with her I had a very strong urge to put her mind at ease about Taylor. It's hard to describe, but I almost felt like it was my duty to talk to her and make her feel better about him, to reassure her that he was going to be all right.

I told her, "When I look at Taylor, I see nothing but goodness. He's a fine young man and he's going to be alright." I even went so far as to say, "I really mean what I'm saying Maureen, he's a good kid and he's going to be fine. There is a goodness in him that shines through; you can see it."

The next day, Keri and I decided to have lunch up at Cracker Barrel. We had just gotten our food when her cell phone rang. I could tell by the look on her face that it was bad news. My first thought and fear was that something had happened to one of our girls. She said into the phone: "OK, we're leaving right now." Again, by the look on her face, I could tell that it wasn't just bad news, it was heart-breaking news. Reaching across the table, I took her hand: "Keri...what is it?" Her voice breaking, she said: "Taylor and Nick were killed in a plane crash... they were in an ultra light plane that crashed this morning."

Maureen was in the kitchen. As I hugged her, she told me, "I remember what you said last night, and it makes me feel better."

Keri wound up helping out with all the arrangements to be made. Instead of going to church on Sunday, she stayed with Maureen. I volunteered to take our youngest daughter to church. But beyond just volunteering, I wanted to go to church that morning. I wanted to hear what Father Henry would say. I don't really remember everything he said that morning. All I know is

(Continued on the following page)

In the Presence of Excellence

Rev. Eric Hoffman
Virginia Street
Swedenborgian
Church



I have seen few things in life more beautiful than a human life that has been used well.

The Lord gifts each and every one of us with talents and loves, which many of us work hard to discover in ourselves during the course of our lives. It seems to me that when one of us discovers those talents and loves and decides to express them

in acts of service, putting them to use in the spirit of true charity, then heaven begins to flow through this troubled natural world.

I have recently met a few people who have inspired me in this way. Our church in St. Paul has been blessed to partner with a new bookstore in the neighborhood, Common Good Books, and its proprietor, Garrison Keillor. To date, we've hosted several presentations and book signings by authors both local and national, each of whom have had a unique message. We've welcomed authors who have researched other people and have brought to light their contributions

and personalities. We've welcomed poets who have found beauty and meaning in everyday experiences. We've welcomed first-time authors and publishers of anthologies and political essayists and historians. Each of them has spoken from their passion on a topic that they have found deeply moving or extremely intriguing, and we haven't had a single program in the past year in which that passion hasn't been evident. I've watched many people respond with their own passions and interests, and that has been a very exciting energy to have in the church.

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Coincidence!

(Continued from previous page)

that he was crying as he struggled to get the words out. After mass was over, I was standing in front of the church when my cell phone rang. It was Keri. She told me to find Father Henry and tell him that Maureen needed to speak with him. So, I went back into the church. He was standing at the edge of one of the pews, speaking with some of the parishioners. I told him that Maureen wanted him to give her a call. I reached out, put my hand on his shoulder, and with tears in my eyes, I told him that if he needed any help that week, or anything at all, to let me know.

The night before the funeral, I lay in bed and couldn't sleep. Everything that had happened settled in on me, and I honestly didn't know what to do with it or how to process it. I thought about the coincidence of seeing Nick less than twelve hours before he died after having not seen him for probably over a year. Then there was the inexplicable coincidence of what I had said to Maureen about Taylor, the urge that I had felt,

and the need I had to put her mind at ease about Taylor. I broke down, sobbing...

Keri asked me what was wrong. I told her that I was overwhelmed with the feelings and emotions that I was having. If this was a coincidence, it was one hell of a coincidence. But the alternative to coincidence was what? God? Jesus? I honestly didn't know what to think.

I've since spoken with a few friends of mine who are religious. To a person, they have no question about what happened. As for me, I just don't know. I guess the strongest thing I can say is that it feels like something happened. But can I say I truly believe in God? Can I say I believe in Jesus? I don't know...

I've spoken to Keri about it several times since. She's given me what may possibly be the best advice on the subject. Her take is, why do I have to figure it out? Maybe I won't figure it out...maybe I don't need to.

I have, however, been going to church every week with her. Beyond that, I want to go with her. And once again, it's more of a feeling than

something logical. I can't really tell you why I'm there other than that it feels good to do it.

(A postscript from guest editor John Billings, to whom this story was told: I have met and spent a week with this man and his family in Florida. Perhaps the most telling of all was a three hour or so session where John told this story in person, often with tears streaming down his face. The emotional atmosphere in that room was nothing short of sacred. Everyone was affected and moved that day--everyone. This former lineman for the power company, now computer specialist, is a soft spoken, very warm and gentle man who can cry easily when something is worthy of those deeper emotions in him. All his life he has been deeply moved emotionally by various beautiful things in his life: nature; friends, music, and more. When he asked his youngest, gifted teenage daughter what she liked best about their vacation, she said: "the cry fest." My response was and is: the incredibly subtle, creative and infinitely wise ways the Lord can lead.) ☩

The Presence of Excellence

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Working with Garrison Keillor has also been very fulfilling. Every time I hear him speak, I am impressed with his ability to make mental connections and to express them in such elegant ways. He is an extremely well-read individual and is able to draw upon a wealth of images to communicate an idea. Most of us are familiar with his stories on his radio show, *The Prairie Home Companion*, and have experienced how a storyteller can get us to forget, for a few minutes, our concerns and anxieties, and to see life through someone else's eyes. I feel the same rapt attention when he speaks about the process of writing. It is clear that he has found his love and has built a life around it that invites others to do the same. His bookstore is a reflection of his love, built upon the basic philosophy that no book on its shelves will be a waste of the reader's time. It has been a further pleasure to work with the bookstore's staff, in particular Sue, Rene and Martin, to help encourage people to read and to learn more about our gifted neighbors. That's an extremely worthwhile mission.

Mike Farrell, whom many of us know from his roles on *M*A*S*H* and *Providence*, was especially inspiring. As his autobiography, *Just Call Me Mike*, relates, his focus in life has shifted from acting to advocacy. His address this past summer revealed a person who had asked some difficult questions about his role in the world. What does it mean to be an American? What responsibility do we have toward the rest of the world? How can whatever celebrity or influence we possess be utilized to bring about what the world needs most? He spoke candidly about current events

and what we as concerned citizens can do when governments engage in activities with which we may not agree. He deeply impressed me as a person who has seen what the rest of the world is like and has decided that he is not powerless to bring about a positive change. Seeing injustice, he approaches it with a rational outlook that circumvents the emotional outrage so many of us feel, and he has become a deeply effective advocate for the disfranchised throughout the world as a result.

I think the most inspiring person I have met this past year has been Norma Miller—not a name that most people would recognize, but one that has a well-earned place in American history. Norma began as

He deeply impressed me as a person who has seen what the rest of the world is like and has decided that he is not powerless to bring about a positive change.

a dancer at the old Savoy Theater in Harlem in the 1930s, and she helped to popularize the Lindy Hop. I met her through Mary, a newcomer to our church and an inspiration in her own right, and together we organized a public showing of a documentary on Norma's life so far, *Queen of Swing*. Through the years, Norma has worked closely with Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Orson Wells, Redd Foxx, Richard Pryor, Bill Cosby, and Sammy Davis, Jr, among others. She traveled to Vietnam to entertain the American troops and in the process helped white soldiers and black soldiers to put aside their prejudices and work together more effectively. She and Sammy Davis, Jr. were the first act in Las Vegas comprised

entirely of African-American performers. She has taught swing dance most of her life, in America and in Europe, and through it all she has modeled for people not only a love for the energy and spirit of swing but also a plain-spoken attitude that gets right to the heart of the issue. When I speak with her I know, beyond doubt, that she is being genuine and true to who she is, and that makes it so easy to be deeply genuine in return, thus I move closer to God because I am moving closer to myself as a result of being near her.

True and lasting bonds are formed between people who allow themselves to be real with one another. Even though she and I live eight states away, I still feel connected.

When I meet people such as these, I am reminded of my own potential as a human being. Garrison reminds me that there are a lot of people out there with good ideas and fresh ways to express them, and that it's important to find a balance in one's life between reading and writing, between speaking and listening. Mike is a good role model for what can be accomplished when rationality and active involvement work together in a person. Norma, bless her eternal heart, reminds me that good things happen when we let our God-given beauty shine through. I truly believe that the Lord becomes manifest in the life of people who dedicate themselves to unselfish service, especially when that service is done by discovering their own God-given gifts, and the Lord becomes present to us as these people inspire us to do the same.

Garrison Keillor's bookstore and its programs, including those at the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church, can be explored further through the website, www.com-mongoodbooks.com. ☸

God's Merciful Hardball

Rev. Kit Billings,
Hospital and
Hospice Chaplain,
Alegent Health



After eleven years of parish work, it became clear to me that the time had come to develop another arena of professional ministry, hospital and hospice chaplaincy. My journey to get there, however, was far from easy. I went through many months of agony, wondering if I was doing the right thing for my life and my family's life. More than several times I felt I was in the shoes of the Lord's disciples when they saw Christ apparently fall asleep as the skies darkened and a squall whipped up, making it appear that my boat would capsize! I would have believed that for all intents and purposes I was alone. But, time and again I came to realize that the opposite was the case. As Swedenborg discovered, it is when things feel at their worst, when one enters a time of deep temptation and despair, and one is hurting severely, feeling totally lost, it is actually then that the Lord is closest to us.

"So long as temptation continues, the man supposes the Lord to be absent, because he is troubled by evil spirits so severely that sometimes he is reduced to despair and can scarcely believe there is any God. Yet the Lord is then more closely present than he can ever believe." (AC 840)

Once again the Lord had something very special in store for me and my family, which came about through entering my year-long training in Clinical Pastoral Education with Alegent Health in Oma-

ha, Nebraska.

In part, the Lord leads us through deep, spiritual "remains," states of His love and truth that get tucked away inside us. Or, if you've ever gone back and reconnected to very early experiences as a toddler, then you know how powerful these can be! They are none other than the backbone of our very lives! At key moments the Lord taps these remains, pulling them and their effects up into consciousness. Through them we are gently led to loving more softly, or grasping truth more warmly.

Also, the Lord is the Dream Maker! Using the often bizarre, symbolic language of dreams, He helps us to see into our spiritual issues and struggles. I remember when I was in college, when I was first beginning to delve into prayer, the Lord gave me an amazing and dramatic dream--a very thick bolt of purple lightning streaking its way through a dense jungle in which a band of lost hikers was trying to find the way out. I was one of the hikers. I got the point!

Another way in which the Lord helps and guides us is through His Word. As Swedenborg remarks:

"...consequently the holy Divine from the Lord flows in through the heavens into those in the world who acknowledge the Lord's Divine and the holiness of the Word whenever reading the Word; and so far as such a person loves wisdom he can be instructed and can imbibe wisdom from the Word as from the Lord Himself, or from heaven itself, and can thus be nourished with the food with which the angels themselves are nourished...."

Once in my college years I was feeling very alone, afraid, and un-

sure of what direction I was going. That night, I opened my Bible to the story in John 5 where a man had been suffering for 38 years with a crippling illness. He would stay near a pool, called Bethesda, visited by an angel who disturbed the water of the pool. Anyone who then touched the water was made well. My cripple was spiritual and psychological. I knew suddenly that with the Lord's help I could overcome any adversity, any severe crippling of my will and hopefulness, and, from that time, things just kept turning toward the good.

Another way the Lord inspires and teaches us is through His presence and power in Creation. As William Worcester once wrote, "All nature would seem to us but a veil concealing, and at the same time revealing, the presence of the Lord and of heaven." How often have you felt God's presence while walking through a garden? Or the notion that the moon aglow at night sends us a message that by faith in God we shall be able to see enough ahead, even during our dark spiritual times when God appears obscured. Also within this correspondence is the really neat idea that the moon's light is reflected light from the heat of the sun. Faith by itself is cold, as the moon's reflected light is cold. We must never forget where it comes from: the sun, with its immeasurable heat.

I have learned so much in my thirteen months working as a chaplain in training, and now as a chaplain hired to work in my hospital setting at Bergan Mercy Medical Center and with Alegent Hospice in Omaha. I have been honored to be the chaplain to hundreds of

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~THE LORD'S LEADING~

God's Merciful Hardball

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patients. I also give ministry to patients dying in hospice, either at home, in the hospital, or in a facility of some sort—as well as to the family members.

These people give me a special insight into spiritual life. I have found it so powerful to stand with dozens of adults and teens suffering with, and working hard to manage, mental illness or substance abuse of some kind. The Lord's unyielding power to allow anyone to struggle through their mental illness inspires me beyond words. I will never forget the many patients who have said to me, in effect, "If it were not for my faith in God through all this, I would not be here today." Many people suffering greatly with bipolar, major depression, schizophrenia, and the like recall various times when they were certain they should have died, yet miraculously they did not. Also, I have watched time and again the amazing, sacrificial love and devotion shown by the family of someone in critical condition or who is dying.

I remember a certain African-American, who had been shot and wounded because of his involvement in a street gang. He would never walk again, yet through his great faith in the Lord, his spirit marched forward. From him I gained an even broader grasp of how brave each of us can be when we turn to God for help. I witnessed love at its best when a 35-year-old mother of an 18-year-old young man struck by a drunken driver would not go far from his bedside; she was relentless in the pursuit of her son's health and well-being. She herself was a recovering addict of crack cocaine—but with

the Lord's help, she overcame even that adversity.

These two, and many other very difficult and tough journeys, have solidified my belief in one of the most challenging New Church teachings in Divine Providence: "given that humanity tends toward breaking up God's original state of things" (the union of will and understanding, love and wisdom), "it is the goal of Divine providence that what has been broken apart should become a whole and therefore that the marriage of good and truth should be restored." And, "The Lord's Divine providence


As Swedenborg discovered, it is when things feel at their worst, when one enters a time of deep temptation and despair, and one is lurching severely, feeling totally lost, it is actually then that the Lord is closest to us.

works things out so that what is both evil and false promotes balance, evaluation, and purification, which means that it promotes what is good and true in others." Those are nice ways of saying that we can get ground up pretty good in the process of the Lord jamming us back into His original state of things! There is no doubt that God can play hardball.

What demonstrated this most powerfully was a family whose adult brother, age 45, was in the final stage of Lou Gehrig's Disease. We knew he would not see his forty-sixth birthday. His brother, a father of three children, told me about the gradual death of his little girl (then age three), who had died a couple of years earlier from a rare form of cancer. His little girl's early death taught him what major grieving was like—yet he managed (via the help of many, and

with MUCH prayer, growth and healing) to not give in to the life-crushing anger, bitterness and pain before him. Eventually, he came to a much, much deeper trust and faith in the Lord than he could ever have imagined. I stood in awe as he talked with me.

The Lord's leading of me into this training and form of ministry has given me much more than I initially realized. I have become much less judgmental of others, preferring instead to enter into any new contact with them by simply walking side-by-side with them, discovering what any one person's own sense, feel and perception of life and their Higher Power might be—trusting that the Lord is working with them in that framework. Also, I have discovered how to listen more than to talk, to trust myself more deeply, and to try (using various tools and skills I have gained) to help my patients go in the direction they are interested in going—and doing so with faith that God always has spiritual breakthroughs, growth and healing, ahead.

The Lord is indeed master of our universe. I believe that humanity is responsible for bringing evil, cruelty, disease and great suffering into life, and that we are never condemned by the Lord for this. From God comes unconditional love, mercy, understanding and truth. He indeed uses "the dark side" to achieve balance in life. Then, the choices are ours. But the Lord, overall, is in charge of things. After 40 years of being led by Him, I can harmonize with certainty with the psalmist who prayed, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." 

A Work in Progress

Rev. Dr. David Fekete

As many in the church know, I had political and personal difficulties with this church when I first applied for ordination when in my 20s. Also, many know that I am an alcoholic--I do not need personal anonymity about this. I was so crushed by my lost vision of ministry, a vision I had devoted my college education and my youth to, that I turned my back bitterly on the Swedenborgian church. My AA sponsor asked me to make a list of

- 1) people and institutions I could forgive
- 2) people and institutions I could forgive, but it would be difficult, and
- 3) people and institutions I would never forgive as long as I lived.

I put the Swedenborgian Church on number 3--I would never forgive the church as long as I lived. Now I am an ordained minister in it. Is there a story here?

Peace,
David Fekete ☩

Spiritual Sparks

To serve as a resource template for pastors and other people working on Swedenborgian outreach, the brochure, *Spiritual Sparks*, has just been posted on Convention's website. It is an alterable file and can be customized for local use. ☩

Court Case Ends

Early in 2003, the denomination responded to a request from members of the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem, Inc., to look into some concerning events taking place in the life of that specific church. The denomination responded appropriately and, after several months of research, the General Council voted to take the concern to court.

A suit against the Society and its identified leaders was begun in the early fall of 2003, based on the "dissolution clause" in the Society's bylaws. The case opened in Federal Court and, after several months, was remanded to the Superior Court of Massachusetts where, after some more months, the presiding judge dismissed the case on all counts.

The denomination appealed to the Appellate Court of Massachusetts which, after several months, upheld our claim on the two most major counts. The Boston Society then sought a "further appellate review" ("FAR") from the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts. After nearly a year, the SJC heard the oral arguments on the case in early September, 2007, and rendered a decision on October 15, 2007, dismissing the case on all remaining counts.

Thus, after four and a half years, we are finished with this action. As a denomination, with significant financial assistance and prayerful moral support from the Massachusetts Association and New Church Union, we responded appropriately to a request for assistance from a local member church based on that church's written bylaws in effect at the time of the request. We have learned that the language of by-

laws written by church members should be carefully scrutinized by legal professionals in order to avoid years of legal wrangling based on the interpretation of specific words and phrases. In this instance, the entire case came down to the legal definitions of "dissolution," "disaffiliation," and "cease to exist." We -- the denomination -- argued the intent of the bylaw; the justices ruled on the current legal definitions of these words.

In the fall of 2003, the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem, Inc (Swedenborgian) voted to withdraw its affiliation to the Massachusetts Association and the General Convention, and it created a new set of bylaws that contain no connection to these entities. It retained its former name, including the reference to Swedenborgian, identifying itself as an independent Swedenborgian church. Its ministers, ordained by the General Convention, both resigned from our Council of Ministers. This independent church organization remains at the same address in Boston as the former denominationally-affiliated Boston Church.

We have been well and ably represented by our legal counsel through all of the years of this action, and we are ever grateful for the high level of financial, personal and prayer support from the Massachusetts Association and New Church Union. While we are disappointed by this decision, we recognize that this is all in the flow of Divine Providence.

—Christine Laitner, President
General Convention ☩

Temenos: In Company with Angels

In Company with Angels Takes Flight!

Rev. Susannah Currie

The Delaware Art Museum celebrated the opening of two new exhibits, *The Return of the Pre-Raphaelites* and *In Company with Angels*, with an elegant evening reception of music, gourmet food and drink, dancing and fireworks on Saturday, September 22nd, 2007.

The *In Company with Angels* Tiffany stained-glass windows were received enthusiastically by the crowd of local art enthusiasts and will remain on display until January 2008. For details, visit the museum's website at www.delart.org.

The Middle Atlantic Association was well represented with a number of members and friends of the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington and the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos in attendance. The Association's ministry, in the persons of the Revs. Randy Laakko, Sage Currie, Jerry Poole and Andy Stinson, Council of Ministers Chair, were there to lend their support and congratulations to Rev. Susannah Currie, secretary of the newly incorporated, *In Company with Angels* Board of Directors. The Board's President, Bill Seymour; Fundraising Chair, Beth Asplundh; and Publicity Chair, Pete Brakman were also in attendance.

The mission of the *In Company with Angels* non-profit corporation is to:

- share with the greatest number of people Tiffany's window series, "Angels Representing Seven Churches."
- provide education about their historic and artistic significance.
- archive their evolution and journey, and
- insure their safekeeping for future generations to discover and enjoy.

Learn more about the project on the web at www.incompanywithangels.org

The project, which was birthed in 2004 by a committee of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos, affectionately remembered as the 'Angel Committee,' has attracted the interest

of the local community as well as many members of sister churches around the denomination. A number of possible exhibit locations are under discussion and the creative development of the exhibition is being led by Exhibit Chair and Curator, Art Femenella.

Fundraising is underway and donations of all sizes are needed for *In Company with Angels* to meet its Phase I goal of \$300,000 by June

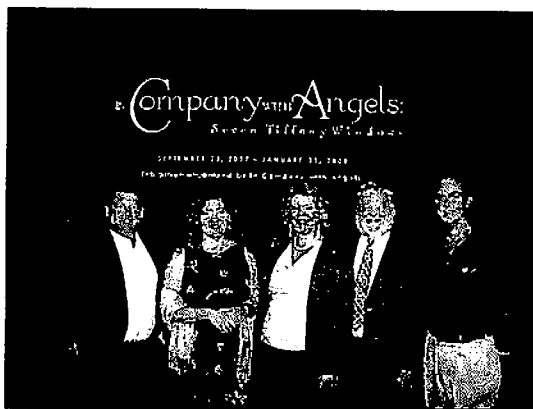
2008. To date, almost \$128,000 has been donated thanks to individuals and the generous support of the Asplundh Foundation. Donations can be made on line at www.chescocf.org

You can also support the project through purchasing 'angel merchandise' available in time for the holidays. Mugs (\$20), postcards (\$1), bumper stickers (\$5) and Christmas tree ornaments (\$20) can be viewed on the website. A CD (\$20) titled "Meditations on the Seven Angels of Revelation" composed by Rev. Ken Turley, comes with beautiful photographs of the windows in the liner notes. All prices include shipping costs. Contact sales@incompanywithangel.org to order.

Swedenborgians around the continent can benefit from association with the *In Company with Angels* exhibit and the attention it gives to the Swedenborgian theology of angels. Your ideas and inspiration are welcomed and will be

the foundation of an angel dialog. Part of the Phase II fundraising for *In Company with Angels* will be used to expand and promote this interactive aspect of the website and to encourage people every-

where to share their beliefs in angels and eternal life. For more information and to share your ideas, contact info@incompanywithangels.org.



Fryeburg, Maine

Rev. Ken Turley

Guest Editor's Note: This article is taken from my interview with Rev. Ken Turley, pastor of the Fryeburg, Maine, church. My remarks are in italics.

There is an issue here in Maine that tugs on the heart. It's basically an issue between generations. This church for thirty or more years has been kept alive by a core group of women. They've been here through four or five different ministers and kept a constancy within the church. The Women's Alliance has raised money and been a social community. But now we've reached a point where these women are looking to pass things off to a new generation and at the same time kind of hold on to things they've always known.

While there are younger people in their 30s and 40s who are ready and interested in stepping up, what serves them in terms of the church is somewhat different from what serves the older generation. And they also have different ways of relating to the church. The older generation looked at the church as a community center, a nexus for social interaction. The younger generation doesn't look at the church quite the same. They're coming for their own specific needs around spirituality and spiritual growth. Now this isn't all or nothing. Certainly the social interaction in the sense of community is a dynamic. But it's not quite the same as it was in the older generation; and particularly in the style of worship and the music. What the younger generation is looking for is very different from what has served the older generation. And so we're in this difficulty of wanting and needing to grow

and change to be more relevant to a younger generation without taking away what has been important and meaningful to the older generation which has brought the church to where it is."

That does tug on the heart!

"Yeah. It's a tough situation.

And, you know, this kind of conflict is present at a lot of different levels. The conflicting desires of the younger generation to respect and honor the older generation and what serves them but knowing that's not what turns them on, not what they're looking for. And the older generation recognizing that

Yes, the idea of doing some deeper connecting or bonding so that people look at the problem not as "you're the adversary keeping me from what I want" but rather, "we're in this together and we have a problem to solve."

the times are different, the music tastes are different, and wanting younger people to come in but not wanting to lose the old hymns, and the organ and the liturgical style of worship. And this conflict exists within individuals as well as within the church. And it's now full blown in our church. We're right at a turning point. The Women's Alliance has gone from a group that was sometimes as many as thirty, now down to six or eight. On a Sunday we have a worship group of 40 to 45 and a good portion of them want the old style of worship and a good portion are just dying to do something new and innovative. And this is not completely age-oriented either. There are some who just like a more traditional style, happy with the old hymns and the organ. And there are some who simply endure

it...they want updated music, a more energetic style, and they want guitars and drums. And we're sitting right there.

When I came here, I had two goals. The longterm goal for me was to see this church through the transition of generations. I've been preparing the ground, talking about growth and change, but we're really to the point now where the older generation is needing to hand off the church but not wanting to let go and the younger generation is ready to take it over but not wanting to have the past imposed on them.

What do you see coming?

What I have done all the way through here is what's known as blended worship, meaning we have some of everything and as a result everyone gets something of what they want but nobody gets everything of what they want. And that's served pretty well. It's certainly a spiritual practice for everybody to be tolerant and accepting of what others love and we don't. And that is one option to just keep on with that but also changing the mix a bit now and then. The other option is to do a second service at a different time that is very contemporary and leave the current Sunday morning service more traditional. The problem with a second service is that it splits the numbers and breaks up community and puts an extra load, not just on the minister, but all the support people who help lead the services, like the choir.

So at this point you're just going to keep going until something pops?

I'm not sure to be quite frank. I'm not sure what's going to happen. As I say, we're standing at this transition point.

(Continued on the following page)

Hear Your Heart Sing

Rev. Kathy Speas
Hospice Chaplain

"Do religious people make a smoother transition at the end of life than those who are not connected with a faith tradition?" I am often asked this question as a hospice chaplain. People from different faith traditions seek reassurance that spiritual beliefs can help ease the physical and emotional whirlwinds of coping with a life-threatening illness.

If only I could tell everyone what to believe in order to avoid the stresses of uncertainty and loss! If only I knew exactly which faith would bring us all inner peace! Coping with critical illness or with the loss of a beloved companion is a

time of both deep anguish and marvelous inspiration for people of all faiths—devoted faith, questioning faith, shaken or wounded faith, and no specific faith at all.

What carries us through the journey at the end of life is the same thing that carries us through all of life — the openness to love and be loved, to give and receive, to touch and be touched by something outside of ourselves.

What carries us through the journey at the end of life is the same thing that carries us through all of life—the openness to love and be loved, to give and receive, to touch and be touched by some-

thing outside of ourselves. Rabbi Rami Shapiro describes being "loved by an unending love, embraced by arms that find us, even when we are hidden from ourselves, touched by fingers that soothe us, even when we are too proud for soothing, counseled by voices that guide us, even when we are too embittered to hear...ours are the arms, the fingers, the voices, ours are the hands, the eyes, the smiles."

Faith traditions are one way that we human beings have affirmed the power of connection with something outside ourselves. It is not just the beliefs, but also the communities inspired by these beliefs that "are the arms, the fingers, the voices, the hands, the eyes, the

(Continued on the following page)

Fryeburg, Maine

(Continued from previous page)

Have you gathered both groups together and laid it on the table and said, Let's just kick this around?

I spoke with the Women's Alliance for the first time in a long time and basically we didn't delve deeply into it but I put the issue on the table. After genuinely affirming them, that this group has a long history—probably one of the most important groups in the life of the church, both in terms of generating income and being a community for the people that are involved in it—then said it's obvious to everybody that things are changing, and we talked for a while about the change happening within them and in the culture: people just don't join groups the way they used to, they don't make long-term commitments. And so I put it before them that we need to get really creative in our thinking: What new ways can we come up with to get things

done that need to get done in terms of generating income and serving the community. So it's on the table as far as that group goes. And it's a subject I'll be preaching about, probably in less and less subtle ways!

Have you perhaps also thought about doing things that would create a more tangible love between the two groups? For example, in community building, once you reach a certain level of intimacy and true connection, all kinds of external problems just kind of melt away. People getting more interior with each other and when that kind or level of love begins to flow it's amazing how people begin to solve their own problems.

Yes, the idea of doing some deeper connecting or bonding so that people look at the problem not as 'you're the adversary keeping me from what I want' but rather 'we're in this together and we have a problem to solve.' That's definitely something to be looking at.

Yeah, not only are we in this together, but my love for you is paramount. That doesn't mean I don't think about needing what I need. But that is my greatest value. People can get so creative with that degree of loving.

Yes. And this conflict is a dynamic that is taking place at the Convention level as well as in my own church. And this is nothing new. This has been going on since the time of Bach. He was nearly fired from one of his jobs as a church organist because he was playing new, modern music! And, relating to your major theme in The Messenger, I don't have any doubt that the Lord is leading here. The question is how do we follow the response of the Lord and not leave people behind or trample what is honorable. How do we move forward as a community without leaving people behind? That's my major concern here. ☛

Reflections from a Grieving Mother

Rev. Susan Gwen Turley
CPESupervisor Dept of Veterans Affairs Palo Alto, California

(Rev. Turley's son Keith was recently killed in action in Iraq. Editor.)

I am trying to learn how to understand my life without Keith, not as normal but as different. I don't know who I am without my son. I don't like my life without my son. I have to find a new reason to live, a new perspective on purpose, meaning, love, and service. I take comfort knowing that Keith is making his journey in the spiritual world with all those who have gone before him. In this, I pray and hope he finds healing and peace. I already know he has come into his angel self. Someday, I trust, I will see him again and kiss his beautiful face. I miss him more than life itself. How to live with this broken heart, with this depth of longing, this depth of loss? This is the path I am walking. I must believe it will bring me closer to my son, closer to God and to truth.

(Thank you Sue. Thank you. Ed.)

Bath, Maine

Rev. Dr. George Dole

By the time your issue comes out, I presume my latest book will be in print: *A Book about Us: The Bible and Stages of Spiritual Growth*. It has been a long time coming, and what pushed it into print for me was finally coming to a point where I had a simple view of the shape of the whole story. My hope is that it will introduce the idea of a continuous spiritual meaning in a way that makes fairly obvious sense and that helps readers get a sense of direction for their own lives.

The other thing that has just come to mind is that the failure to recognize the reality and power of the spiritual world leads to two very closely related kinds of misunderstanding of the Bible. What God was trying to say to Joshua, for example, was that Israel needed to be uncompromising in facing her own inner enemies, but because Israel didn't recognize the reality and power of those enemies, she couldn't hear the message on the level for which it was intended.

Instead, it was heard only on the external level where her own values were focused, and was then "obeyed" by slaughtering her earthly enemies.

The other kind of misunderstanding is taking the narratives of the Book of Revelation as predictions of things that are going to happen on earth even though they are clearly seen "in the spirit,"—again because spiritual reality is not taken with the seriousness that it warrants.

So the same kind of spiritual blindness leads to misunderstanding of narratives about this world and narratives about the next.

There is more than enough happening in the three main areas of my ministry (the church here in Bath, the distance education I'm doing for SHS, and the Swedenborg Foundation/New Century Edition) to hold my interest, home life is highly satisfactory, and finally being a grandpa is the icing on the cake. ☸

Hear Your Heart Sing

(Continued from previous page)

smiles." What an inspiration, to witness the end-of-life support given so generously and lovingly by the Valley's many spiritual communities—both organized denominations and spontaneous circles of care. People also open themselves to the reciprocal love that is essential to spiritual peace through deep spiritual connections with nature, by artistic expression, in celebrating our link between past and future generations, in the passions of lifelong work, in nurturing children, in civic participation and lives dedicated to social justice.

Peace seems to come in allowing ourselves to both give and receive, in recognizing that we need not go it alone. Everyone wants to bring comfort to others, but it can be difficult to let others comfort us, especially if life's meaning has always involved responsibility for the well-being of others. Nature writer Susan Chernak McElroy writes, "Hope is not a gift we can sustain simply by our own will. Hope is something we need to hear outside ourselves sometimes. Like the fire needs the help of a branch to grow its warmth, we need a voice sometimes, or a sight, or a visitor."

Where do you find the branch that grows warmth, the voice outside that gives you hope? Through the comfort of religious beliefs? In the support of a spiritual community? With lifelong friends? In watching young ones grow? In your garden? At the ocean? In birdsong? What makes your heart sing beyond its own song, in harmony with the universe? Whatever makes your heart sing, there you will find your spiritual peace.

The Rev. Kathy Speas is an ordained Swedenborgian minister serving as a chaplain at Hospice of Marin, Valley of the Moon Team, in Marin County, California. ☸

My Thanksgiving

I Thank my Grandmother for my memory of her silver head bobbing
yes, always yes! Always affirming. Never judging.
I miss you Grandma, and I still celebrate your birthday.

I Thank my Brother Russ for bringing me home.
From a fragmented family, you created a shelter. . .
a place for gathering and love.

I Thank my oldest son Justin, for his wild, wild, ways.
You tested my unconditional love and taught me
how to communicate with eyebrows.

I Thank my oldest sister Rachel for her scorn, prejudice, and greed.
I saw your painful childhood manifest
and I learned what I did not want to be.

I Thank my friend Little Hateful Steve for teaching me
how absurd life can be
and to Laugh and Laugh and Laugh

I Thank my friend Jennifer Whatifer for sharing my childhood
...sticky southern nights...
the L.A. Free Press clutched in our hot little hands...
Now how are we going to Get Out of Georgia??

I Thank my son Kyle-Robert who holds my heart.

I Thank my spiritual guide Paul for teaching me
how to Soul Travel
and how to drive across icy bridges in New Orleans.

I Thank my teacher Harold for showing me the value of giving,
and to listen to the golden-tongued wisdom.

I Thank my friend Carla for always including and welcoming me.

I Thank Tramp for healing me with brown eyes and a wagging tail.

I Thank Ellie McLendon for her advice:
Go West Young Woman Go West!

Brynda J. Cullison, Jan. 1999

San Diego Swedenborgian Church member, February 14, 2006 ☒

Fifth Sunday Project

Rev. Sarah Buteux

There is something we are doing at our church here in Massachusetts that is very dear to my heart and I trust is going to bear some amazing fruit. I've designed a website to explain it all, but briefly the idea is this: Imagine if we didn't ask people to come in to church, but asked the church to go out to the people?

Four months out of the year have five Sundays. Imagine going to church on a 5th Sunday and gathering downstairs rather than up. Imagine grabbing a cup of coffee and a light breakfast, sharing in a time of prayer and commissioning, and then getting down to business. Some people would stay and work at the church - possibly writing letters or fixing things up around the place. Others would range further a field and, in partnership with South Congregational Church in Amherst, serve lunch over at Not Bread Alone, sing at Sunbridge Nursing Home, help out over at Habitat, maybe even pay a visit to the Food Bank.

That night we'd all gather again for a service at South Church where we would worship together and share about what we have done and what we have learned. Now imagine that it's really going to happen. The next 5th Sunday is December 30. Will you join us?

http://web.mac.com/revsarahb/Fifth_Sunday_Project/Home.html

The Rev. Sarah Buteux is an ordained Swedenborgian minister who is pastor of the First Congregational Church in Hadley, Mass. ☒

The Swedenborgian Community.org

Rev. Sage Currie

An update from www.SwedenborgianCommunity.org

The Swedenborgian Community steering committee has lost one of its members to a busy fall schedule. Karen Degi served the committee well as its secretary, but conflicts with school and jobs made continuing in that capacity an impossibility. We thank Karen for her work and dedication, wish her well in her scholastic endeavors and look forward to seeing her at our chats and discussion forums.

To fill the vacant position, the General Council has authorized the appointment of Barbara Cullen of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, as the newest member to the steering committee. Being from Canada and an active member of the Kitchener Church, Barbara brings yet another set of thoughts and ideas into the mix. Additionally, Barbara is a member of the General Council and was involved with the creation of the Cyber Ministry from its inception. We are all very fortunate to have Barbara with us and look forward to working with her.

A message from Barbara:

It was so nice to be invited to join the steering committee for what I think of as one of the most exciting current undertakings of our church. I've been watching the progress of SwedenborgianCommunity.org from my position on General Council and from sitting at my monitor. And all I can say is 'wow!' As I'm writing this, I have been involved in only one conference call, but what I heard in that meeting was enthusiasm, creativity and most importantly, caring and support for one another. Because I have such a wonderful community of friends at my own local church in

Kitchener, I want everyone to have that same benefit. And now everyone can, no matter how far they are from a physical church. Please visit and support SwedenborgianCommunity.org.

Some new offerings at SwedenborgianCommunity!

Everyone from near and far is welcome to our new Friday Fellowship Chit-Chat, beginning on November 2 and then every Friday.

We will meet in the Fellowship chat room for general discussion. Hosted by Sue Ditmire, all are welcome! This will be a time when we can just talk about what is happening or what's on our minds. No homework, no subject, just coffee or lunch and a few friends sitting around their monitors.

Beginning at 12 noon until 12:15 pm for each time zone. That means there will actually be 4 chats, you can join any of them, depending on your schedule.

EST: 12:00 to 12:15 pm; 1:00 to 1:15 pm; 2:00 to 2:15 pm; 3:00 to 3:15 pm.

CT: 11:00 to 11:15; 12:00 to 12:15; 1:00 to 1:15; 2:00 to 2:15

MT: 10:00 to 10:15; 11:00 to 11:15; 12:00 to 12:15; 1:00 to 1:15

PT: 9:00 to 9:15; 10:00 to 10:15; 11:00 to 11:15; 12:00 to 12:15

Rev. Sage now has a Blog! Correspondences with Heaven: A Swedenborgian Blog. You can subscribe at <http://swedenborgiancommunity.blogspot.com/>.

You can also subscribe to receive Rev. Sage's weekly spiritual message as a podcast at www.swedenborgiancommunity.org/podcast.cfm

We're beginning to offer online courses at SwedenborgianCommunity, beginning with Swedenborgian Church 101 in October. Come visit us to check out what courses are coming up next!

SwedenborgianCommunity is growing into a lively and vibrant online community and we hope you'll join us. We have over 200 members and more are joining every week. If you haven't visited us in a while come back and see what's happening! Connect with other Swedenborgians in an instant!

—*The Swedenborgian Community Steering Committee: Susan Wood-Ashton, Sue Ditmire, Tory Henderson and newest member Barbara Cullen, and the Rev. Sage Currie.* ☩

Church Calendar 2007-2008

November 1-5, 2007

General Council • Kansas

November 2-5, 2007

COMSU Meeting • Las Vegas, NV

November 6-10, 2007

Committee on Admission to the Ministry • Berkeley

November 9-10, 2007

Retirement Committee
Central Office, Newton, MA

November 11, 2007

Installation of Rev. Andy Stinson
Washington DC Church of the Holy City

November 16, 2007

Thanksgiving Holiday
Central Office Closed

December 25-26, 2007

Christmas • Central Office Closed

January 1-2, 2008

New Year's Day • Central Office Closed

January 31 - February 1, 2008

Wayfarers Board • Wayfarers

May 28-29, 2008

Memorial Day • Central Office Closed

June 29 - July 6, 2008

Convention 2008 • Eastern Massachusetts

July 11 - 14, 2008

Gathering Leaves UK • Purley Chase UK

Baptism

Woofenden - Reilley William
Woofenden, son of Michael Woofenden and Beth Garvey, and great-grandson of the Rev. Dr. William & Louise Woofenden, was baptized into the Christian faith September 16, 2007 at home in Williamsburg, Massachusetts, the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating.

Marriage

Zacharias and Petrie - Jeanmarie
Zacharias and Paul Petrie were united in marriage in the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario on Saturday, August 25, 2007, the Rev. Paul Zacharias officiating. A very happy and emotional event.

Deaths

Billings - Guinevere T. Billings, 90, entered the spiritual world August 15, 2007, while residing with her son David and daughter-in-law Robin in Cameron Park, California. Gwen was born on March 23, 1917 to her parents Otto C. and Marjorie R. Turley in Fort Wayne, Indiana. She grew up in LaPorte, Indiana and graduated from High School in 1935. Her love of music as a vocalist and pianist began at an early age and remained a joy throughout her life. In 1936, she was a waitress in La Porte, Indiana where Rev. Rollo K. Billings frequently came for a warm piece of mince pie. Rollo hired Gwen as a vocalist in his church and soon they were married in 1936. Gwen was a vivacious, loving person both as a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and music teacher and she in turn was loved by all. Her knowledge and words of wisdom, especially the deep, integrated grasp she had of New Church theology were an inspira-

loved ones.. She is survived by her daughters Marjorie and husband Don Farmer of Brookings, Oregon; Patti and husband Earl Elam of Rescue, California; sons Rev. John K. and wife Sharon Billings of Cincinnati, Ohio; Dr. David K. Billings and wife Robin Billings of Cameron Park, California; Andrew K. and wife Terri Billings of Garden Grove, California, granddaughters Tammy Holicky and Rev. Renee Machiniak; grandsons Daniel, Matthew and Daryn Farmer; Rhett, Rev. Kit, Quint and Andrew J. Billings; 13 great-grandchildren and nieces and nephews. Preceding her passing were her husband Rev. Rollo Billings, her parents, two brothers Rev. Owen T. Turley and Rev. Dr. Calvin E. Turley, and a great-granddaughter Kaylee Renee Billings. In her honor, the Revs. John and Kit Billings and Rev. Renee Machiniak held a memorial service on the West Coast during a family gathering to remember and to celebrate her life.

Wong - Ray Wong, a long time parishioner of the San Francisco church, died peacefully Saturday morning, September 22nd, 2007. Ray's son, Alex Wong, conducted a memorial service for his father at the church Saturday, September 29th. All were most warmly welcome to gather at this service to celebrate and give thanks for Ray's life on earth, and to wish him the very best as he comes to find himself at home in the spiritual world. In the nineties, Ray was a frequent contributor of wonderfully evocative memoirs to The Messenger and the Chrysalis Reader. He will be greatly missed. He is survived by his wife Olive and his son, Alex. ☙

The Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound

Rev. Eric Allison

A Gift for Your Spirit!

Upcoming Events:

The Beauty of Holiness, Saturday, Nov. 3, 7:00 PM Third Place Books in Lake Forest Park, author Rev. Erni Martin introducing the principles of his new book with references to the internationally renowned, Wayfarers Chapel designed by Lloyd Wright. www.thirdplace-books.com FREE

Living the Stress Free Life, Saturday, 1-4 PM Nov. 10, 17, 1-4 PM Reiki Teach Melinda Kaur. Achieve Reiki Attunement 1. \$75.00 Be Reiki attuned in two weekends. tulang1@msn.com (425) 814 -8189

Transcending the "Get Even" Impulse, Friday, Nov. 16, 7:00 PM. Tom Johnston of the Body Mind Academy. A Wine, Cheese, and Spirit presentation \$5.00.

Angels and the Afterlife, Friday, Dec. 14, 7:00 PM, Rev. Eric Allison. All participants receive a free book. A Wine, Cheese, and Spirit presentation \$5.00.

These events are a gift to the community from The Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound, www.HeavenOnEarth4U.org, 425-889-4716. All events include door prizes, raffles and lots of laughter. ☙

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.

Swedenborgian House of Studies

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Dean.

Research Items Needed

The Swedenborgian House of Studies would like to announce that our students would very much appreciate donations of basic research items that are either out of print or very costly. In particular The Sower Notes six-volume set, The Dole Bible Study Notes six-volume set, the Potts Concordance six-vol set, Warren's Compendium, Searle's Index, the Sechrist Bible Dictionary, and Bogg's Glossary.

Donations should be sent to: Swedenborg Library, Attn. Michael Yockey, Pacific School of Religion, 1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709.

Rev. Kim Hinrichs is Back as Director of Outreach

With great pleasure I share the news that the Rev. Kim Hinrichs has begun a new position at SHS carrying the title Director of Outreach. This position is a vital outgrowth of the new Strategic Plan of SHS and is focused on creating innovative ways of serving the church and world from the seminary, with a primary focus on developing programs in the practical theological area of Spirituality. This position has been designed to develop new ways the seminary can support and enrich existing ministries, to contribute in new ways to the larger cultural conversation in spirituality from a Swedenborgian perspective, and to dialog and journey with the SHS faculty in deepening the formation of seminarians in Swedenborgian spirituality. Longer-range goals include the development of a certificate program in spirituality training and even towards a center that serves both the academy and society-at-large. The first phase initiatives will support continuing education and lay education. Kim will also be in dialog and on journey with the SHS faculty in deepening the formation of seminarians in Swedenborgian spirituality.

As a PSR alumna, former SHS program director, development director, and assistant dean, and as a former temporary director of alumni relations at PSR, this is Kim's fourth arrival at PSR! We feel blessed with fresh vision as we look forward to new horizons of service to the church and world.

Rev. Dr. James Lawrence
Dean, Swedenborgian House of Studies
Instructor, History of Christianity
Pacific School of Religion 510-849-8232 ☒

The Swedenborgian Church
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