

A Real Pro: 19 Years of Excellence

by Carol Skinner Lawson

Determined," I thought. And then, "what a professional air (for such a petite slip of a woman)," I said to myself. This was my first meeting with the courageous Patte LeVan, a relative unknown in Convention, who was being interviewed by COMSU's Gretchen Worden and myself for the job of editor of *The Messenger*.

The scene was the upstairs office at Temenos, and it was September 1988, the year Jim Lawrence was leaving Convention's newsletter editorship vacant. Patte had answered our ad.

After barraging Patte with dozens of questions, Gretchen and I knew from Patte's no-nonsense, practical responses that she was a competent, professional journalist, and well qualified for fulfilling the multiple tasks inherent in *The Messenger* editor's position.

The Candidate

What was Patte herself thinking as she answered COMSU queries upstairs in the Temenos office? Where had this gallant woman come from? What was her personal background? In a recent interview, Patte tells us:

"In 1978, following my mother's death, I was at a low point in my life when, on the advice of a friend, I went to Meadowlark, a holistic retreat center

in Hemet, California, for two weeks. The center was run by a Quaker doctor, who facilitated alternative therapies and spiritual growth. Religion and spirituality had not been part of my life up to that time, and I found myself eagerly exploring the large metaphysical library and attending the workshops, which opened up a world to me that I hadn't known existed. Although they didn't have any of Swedenborg's writings there, the resources prepared me for recognizing and understanding his writings later. The experience changed the direction of my life.

"In the early 1980s I completed a B.A. at Antioch West, got certification as an alcohol and drug counselor, and went to work part-time for South Bay Hospital in Redondo Beach, California. I maintained an abiding interest in holistic health and spiritual growth, wrote the lines for a panel cartoon on positive parenting, 'You're Getting Closer,' syndicated by King Features from 1976 to 1983, and was editor of *Frontiers*, the national quarterly newsletter of Parents Anonymous until 1985.

"In 1986 I moved to Indiana and, in 1987, through the manager of the health food store where I was working part-time, I discovered a spiritual growth group which met weekly on the shores of Lake Michigan. This group

was studying, among other things, Swedenborg's writings. It was here that I met, and later married, Ted LeVan, then minister to the LaPorte, Indiana New Church. I attended my first Annual Convention in 1988, in the Boston area, and became acquainted with the other ministers' wives in the spouses group. Soon after that, I read in *The Messenger* that Jim Lawrence was resigning as *Messenger* editor and COMSU was looking for a replacement.

"I said to Ted, 'I think I can do this. I'd like to apply.' He said that *The Messenger* editor had always been a man and a minister, but it wouldn't hurt to try."

Retrospective

Future historians will want to know that Patte was born in Los Angeles in 1935, daughter of Robert Burdette and Evelyn Allen Wheat. Patte attended Loyola-Marymount College (1970-1971) and El Camino College (1974-1975). She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1983 from Antioch University West. In 1955, she married scriptwriter, actor and producer William Mahan, and they had three children: Kerrigan, Colleen and Erin. Patte married Leonard Lieber in 1979.

Before leaving the West Coast in 1986, Patte pursued a career in the literary and social arts, serving as a story analyst for American International Pictures, a columnist for the Register and Tribune Syndicate, a staff writer for Parents Anonymous and editor of its

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New Beginnings

Renée Machiniak

Lately, I've been going through a change. With the acceptance that I am not able to conceive a baby or to adopt one, along with the physiological changes taking place in my body, I am feeling a creative urge to begin something new. Out of what feels like a dry and barren place, new life wants to emerge. I do not know exactly where this is leading me, but I do know God is in the middle of it. Right now, life and love feel a bit dry, but something is coming: something good, something new. I am in the middle of a mystery, so I listen and wait and wonder. . . .

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi suggests that there is a more accurate reading of the creation story than the one we commonly read. The Hebrew version reads: "In a beginning," as if there were endless beginnings in the cycle of life. Bible scholars agree with this understanding of the creation story, and suggest to us that "God created" would be better translated "when God began to create." So, as a result, we read: "In a beginning, when God began to create the heavens and the earth . . ." Creation, then, is an ongoing story of new beginnings, opportunities to begin again and again. The "deep" is not barren, but growing with life—a silent place we call emptiness, but teeming with promise.

The person after whom our denomination is named, Emanuel Swedenborg, wrote about the inner or spiritual sense of the creation story, as well as the inner meaning of many other stories and characters in the *Bible*. Peering in through this "window" of meaning, we see each and every day as an opportunity to begin again. It is never too late, we are never too old and we are never irreparably "damaged goods" beyond repair. Indeed, our happiness and salvation is an ongoing journey of spiritual

growth and discovery, the regeneration and transformation of the person into a being of light from the dry and broken places of the heart. "Creation continues to arise out of emptiness, it takes form, and dissolves over time, dust to dust, returning to emptiness" (Wayne Muller: *Sabbath*).

Easter and springtime remind us that we are meant to be re-born, again and again. We were created that way. When dry seasons are upon us, resurrection and renewal arise from the ashes, and we attend to the spiritual lessons at hand. The Lord walks with us through it all. He's been there. He cares. And just when it seems that nothing is coming, or ever will, something does come, an unexpected grace. ☪

Rev. Renée Machiniak is Pastor of the Church of the Holy City in Royal Oak, Michigan.

Reprinted from the March/April 2008 Church of the Holy City Newsletter.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Ken Turley's "Dispatch from Fryeburg" in the February issue reminded me of a story Randy Laakko [pastor of the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware—ed.] once told at a peer supervision session. He had received a call asking him to conduct a funeral service for someone he had never heard of, but who had apparently been a member of the church in her youth and "always wanted a Swedenborgian memorial service." It struck him (after an initial negative reaction) that it didn't matter that she had paid no attention to the church for so long. It was a good thing that the church was still here for her after all those years. This, I think, is very much in line with what Ken is saying: "The challenge is to burn bright enough and constantly, but only with such an intensity that it can be maintained over time."

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The Editor's Desk



For those of us living in the Midwest and Northeast, winter seems to turn to spring suddenly. Sometimes, in New England, we go directly from winter to summer. Just as suddenly, what seemed like the distant date of Annual Convention is coming fast upon us. It is time to make your final plans and register. Judging from my experiences at past conventions, you will be glad you did.

We also have exciting programs for teens, young adults, women, and campers of all ages on tap. Read about them in this issue, spread the word, and make your plans.

Be sure to read the statements of this year's nominees, and prepare for voting at Annual Convention. ☪

Herb Ziegler

the Messenger

© The Swedenborgian Church of North America
Published monthly except July and August by The Communications Support Unit of The Swedenborgian Church of North America (founded 1817, incorporated 1861 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America).

March 2008

Volume 229, No. 4, Whole Number 5329

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Subscription free to members of the Swedenborgian Church; nonmembers: \$12/year; foreign: \$15/year; gift subscription from a member: \$5/year; single copies: \$1.00.

Deadline for submissions is six weeks before the first day of the month of issue.

The opinions of the contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the communications Support Unit, or represent the position of the Church.

Sharing Secrets: Past and Present—Part 2

Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret* and Swedenborg's *Heavenly Secrets*

by Wilma Wake and Nanci Adair

In the January issue of *the Messenger*, we began an exploration of *The Secret*, a DVD and book by Rhonda Byrne on how to bring what you want into your life. We asked, "Is *The Secret* a modern expression of Swedenborg's theology, or is *The Secret* in opposition to Swedenborgian beliefs, or is it some of both?" We then looked at what Swedenborgians were saying in the early years of the New Thought Movement in the late 1800s.

The History

In Part 1, we reported that Rhonda Byrne's quest for "the secret" began when her life was falling apart and she was suicidal. Her daughter introduced her to a 1910 book, *The Science of Getting Rich* by Wallace Wattles. It is considered an important work in the New Thought movement, and was one of the first to say that one had to be rich

to fully develop personally and spiritually. Given that Byrne may have been inspired by the New Thought of the past, we wanted to look at the New Thought-Swedenborgian dialog of the past. Then we wanted to see if any of the same similarities and differences exist today with Swedenborgians and Byrne's beliefs.

It seemed that the ideal place to begin was in the writings of Warren Felt Evans, both a Swedenborgian and a prolific author about New Thought. Evans had learned from, and been healed by, Phineas Quimby, a healer whom many consider to be the progenitor of New Thought.

Rev. Dr. Horatio Dresser was a Swedenborgian minister (who served for a year at the Portland Church) and a historian of the New Thought Movement, who wrote extensively about the writings of Evans. Dresser agreed with the connections between the healing work of Quimby and the theology of Swedenborg that Evan made in his first book (*The Mental Cure*, 1869). Dresser felt that the two went together beautifully—divine influx was at the center of everything. Healing came about through the individual mind coming into alignment with the Divine mind. But he argued that in later works (e.g. *The Divine Law of Cure*, 1881), Evans had made the individual's mind itself the highest reality, to the point of saying nothing can exist unless we are thinking about it. Dresser felt that New Thought had gone from integrating mind and body to separating it. Mind was seen as the only reality, with the body and all matter having no existence outside of mind. Dresser, in opposition, saw Swedenborg as fully integrating spirit and matter through Divine Love and Wisdom.

Our Conversation

We promised a second article featuring conversations from Swedenborgians today in dialog with modern advocates of New Thought.

Nanci Adair served as facilitator of a dialog between New Thought Church of Religious Science Minister Rev. Linda Holmes of The Maine Beacon Center for Spiritual Living and Swedenborgian Minister Wilma Wake of The Portland New Church (Swedenborgian). She developed questions, and helped guide Linda's and Wilma's responses.

We began by asking what we share in common in our response to *The Secret* from Swedenborgian and New Thought theological perspectives. Linda found it to be a basic introduction to deeper truths, yet over-simplified. Wilma saw *The Secret* as not just over-simplified but also flawed. God didn't seem to be part of the process of determining what one wanted from the universe. Linda said her denomination had many classes to help people learn the deeper, spiritual truths behind the concepts of *The Secret*.

Nanci then asked, "Do you believe you should ask for what you want? Does the Universe (God) respond to your thought, requests, and demands?"

Linda said "yes," but added that "one needs to learn what he or she really wants in order to ask for it. People need to understand the need behind the want. For example, you could ask for a new home, but if you really wanted security and the new home didn't provide that, then your need wouldn't be met even if you got the home."

Wilma agreed, saying "the point is to go to God at the beginning and ask for guidance as to what one needs

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and how one could serve others." Linda said her church teaches students to explore deeper levels of understanding consciousness.

Nanci then asked: "Do you need to be concerned about how the universe responds to your request? Is it the responsibility of the person who asks for a boat to be concerned about the environmental impact of the boat on the ecosystem of the lake?"

Linda replied, "Yes and no. We always know that only the highest good can come forth. Members of The Maine Beacon Church always ask to receive what we want only if it's for the highest good. My good cannot be in conflict with yours; it has to be right for everyone." She added that good fulfills only as it multiplies itself. Good is not just for the individual alone. "We're all one. Therefore, we can't be in conflict with each other."

Wilma brought the conversation back to Byrnes, who seemed unconcerned about the environmental or social impact of people asking for what they want. "I had the impression from reading *The Secret* that I could sit down, make out a list, and the universe was supposed to provide whatever I wanted."

Linda emphasized that in New Thought "the individual need and the good of the larger whole are ultimately the same. We are all one."

Nanci summarized the recent comments as showing a common ground in New Thought and Swedenborgian theology. We are expressing the same belief that Divine influx is at the center of everything, and that it is through alignment with the Divine mind that we find health and spiritual fulfillment.

Linda went on to describe three levels in New Thought teaching. The first and most rudimentary level is the physical plane. The second one is mind

and the third is Spirit.

Nanci then put forth another important question: "If bad things happen to you, is it your fault? If someone in your congregation believes they have brought evil or troubling circumstances upon themselves, how would you comfort them?"

Linda saw a real difference between pastoral care and theology in her ministry. She is very sensitive to where her parishioner is emotionally in terms of

"OK, what about the Bubonic plague? Did every person who died from it have a wish to die?"

responding to them. In a theological sense, she said, "we do contribute to everything that happens to us."

Wilma asked about poverty. "Are people poor because their thinking is wrong, as Wallace Wattles said back in 1910? Or are they poor because of society's discriminatory social and economic practices?"

Linda responded, "We are all participants in the creation of our lives. One thing to be aware of is that if we are working against something, we can increase the energy that causes it to come about." As an example, she pointed out that she doesn't like programs titled "world hunger" because they continue to put energy into the concept of "hunger." She prefers a positive sounding project, like "food for everyone." "If we live in poverty, then we believe in poverty."

At that point, Wilma jumped in. "OK, what about the bubonic plague? Did every person who died from it have a wish to die? Germs and bacteria are real. Sometimes they spread and people die; regardless of their attitudes at the time. Are you saying that everyone who died of the plague had invited it by their thoughts?"

Linda said, "Yes and no. The spiritual plane is always more powerful.

"Those who didn't get the plague had a higher frequency of thinking about it—a more positive attitude. Attitude keeps us healthier. Plus there is a collective unconscious. When I was a kid, I got sick a lot. As a mother, I didn't have time for it, so just didn't get sick. And the more I learned about consciousness, the healthier I became."

Wilma said Swedenborg wrote that one's attitude about illness has an impact on their health. Society, however, has a collective responsibility as well. "Why didn't society in the 1600s and 1700s attend to the basic sanitation needs of all? Why don't we have medical care equally accessible to everyone? Why is it that those who are most stressed and vulnerable to disease may also be minority groups and people worried about getting health care? The rich person with the best medical care will get a lot more health out of their positive thoughts than the poor person who can't afford a doctor. Swedenborg's question of us was not "what do you believe," but "what actions are you taking that are useful for others?"

Nanci shared, "The greater the healer, minister, or change agent, the more challenges they seem to face." She asked, "Do you believe in being tested?"

Linda said, "I think so, but not as a test. Once you wake up to the Divine being you are, you become even more powerful, because you're aware of it."

Nanci added, "Swedenborg says that when light comes in, it's impossible not to see, including shadow aspects of the self, once hidden dark corners." Then she asked, "Are actions as important in bringing about change? It sounds as though you, Linda, are saying 'thoughts are the actions.' Is one more important than other?"

Linda said, "Well, there is a mind, body connection."

Wilma voiced her concern that in *The Secret*, Byrnes didn't put enough

emphasis on action. "In Swedenborgian theology, we have three stages of spiritual growth. The middle stage is doing all the right things, even though you're not doing them from your heart. You obey the laws of your society not because you love being a good citizen, but because you don't want the punishment for breaking a law. The actions in that stage are part of what regenerates you. In the third stage, you follow the law because that is the deep desire of your own heart. God's will and yours are aligned at that time. But it takes a long process to get there. The basic purpose of life on earth is to work towards the creation of a just and caring society where everyone's needs are met—a society Swedenborg called the New Jerusalem. It takes a lot of action to arrive

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newsletter, *Frontiers*, for many years. She co-founded Health Alternatives Institute, which provided seminars for health professionals. Patte's publications include award-winning *Hope for the Children: A Personal History of Parents Anonymous*, screenplays, teleplays and booklets for the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse.

In addition to nineteen industrious years on *The Messenger*, Patte has found time to serve the Swedenborgian community in other capacities. For several years she traveled regularly from her home in Southern California to attend meetings of the Swedenborg Foundation as a valued member of its

board of directors. She has been an officer of the Pacific Coast Association (New Church) for six years, is, as she says, "a happy member" and vice-president of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church, and has recently been elected to the board of directors of the Wayfarers Chapel in Palos Verdes, California.

Looking back, Patte says that the 19 years in which she served as our editor "brought joy, fun, and depth" to her life.

Although we will miss Patte's healing and intelligent presence as editor of *The Messenger*, we look forward to her continuing involvement at the San Diego New Church, the Pacific Coast Association, and in General Convention.

Carol Lawson is chair of the Communications Support Unit.

Nineteen Notable Years with Patte LeVan

by Chris Laitner

Patte LeVan's arrival as the new editor of *The Messenger* coincided with the earliest years of the denomination functioning under a new organizational plan, which had been adopted by Convention delegates after several years of careful study and design by a talented *ad hoc* committee. It was my good fortune to meet Patte at a cabinet gathering held at the Swedenborg School of Religion in the first autumn of her editorship, a meeting that Patte mentioned in her farewell editorial in the December, 2007 issue of *The Messenger*.

Over the subsequent 19 years of her tenure as editor, Patte attended every annual convention, gathering information, taking photographs and talking with a lot of people.

Many things have occurred during this period, including, but not limited to: a new denominational structure; a change of *Messenger* editors; the re-

structuring of the Board process for the theological school; the creation of a denominational social action committee; the arrival of a new manager for the Central Office; a change of editors for the Council of Ministers' publication, *Our Daily Bread*; many changes in local churches, including the creation of some new congregations; the transformation of the free-standing Swedenborg School of Religion located in Newton, Massachusetts to the Swedenborgian House of Studies located in Berkeley, California; a move of the denomination's Central Office; the election of the first layperson (and the first woman) to the denomination's presidency; the review and revision of the Support Unit process; the establishment of an online, connectional denominational ministry; and an entirely new means for the instant connection of all parts and people of the Church through the technology of the Internet.

Throughout all that has gone on through nearly two decades, Patte has made it a priority to present issues and news in thoughtful, evenhanded ways in the pages of *The Messenger*. She has shown excellent skills and great integrity in reporting on things and has always taken great pains to see to it that what she is including is correct. Patte has been very good about contacting people for information and allowing space in *The Messenger* for ongoing discussion. The focus of the "new structure" that the denomination had adopted shortly before Patte was hired was on the "grass roots" level of the denomination—on being able to respond to the ideas and concerns of the members and friends of the church throughout North America. Patte has lived that concept through her editorship. She has been an inviting and helpful editor who created a publication that welcomed all voices.

Chris Laitner is president of General Convention.

Fryeburg Flames: 80 Years Old and as Vibrant as Ever!

by Nancy Little

If you go up to the Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) in Fryeburg, Maine during the first two full weeks of August, you'll find a lively bunch of teenagers called the Flames. The Fryeburg Flames formed in 1928 with a group of young adults at FNCA. Many of the traditions started in 1928 continue to this day. They include canoe trips on the clear, cool Saco River, Outing Day excursions to the White Mountains, and a late-night bonfire and corn boil on the beach of the Saco River across from the camp. Anyone 13–18 years old may join the Flames to play, learn and work together.

Flames welcome newcomers into their group very quickly. Every summer there are a few new Flames who had planned to come for a few days or the first week, and then have such a great time that they beg their parents to let them stay for the second week, too. We always accommodate them.

Here is what a typical day at FNCA for the Flames is like:

Many of the Flames participate in the polar bear swim just after the rising bell at 7:00 AM before heading to the dining hall to set tables for breakfast, which is at 7:30. Anyone who wants to take a "refreshing and invigorating" swim in the Saco River before breakfast can participate in the polar bear swim. Flames provide table service at our family-style meals in exchange for a reduced rate. Following the meal, the Flames clear tables and do dishes.

Sing-along in the Lecture Hall is at 8:30, followed by Morning Chapel at 8:45. The two morning lectures are at 9:00 and 10:00 in Founders Hall.

Flames must attend one of the two lectures. At 11:00 the Flames' daily religion class is held in Chalmers Lodge, the teen rec hall. Rev. Lee Woofenden has been teaching the Flames class for many years. The teens really enjoy his classes. There's plenty of time for lively



Clockwise from the top: Dan Cook, Cassie Young, Stuart Leibson, Mary Beth Bernier, Rachel Madjerac, Nina Sasser

discussion.

Following class, Flames report to the dining hall for lunch at 12:30. Rest hour is from 1:30 to 2:30. A popular activity for Flames during rest hour is to take a canoe or two up river to "The Rock" (with permission of the lifeguard or waterfront director).

Afternoons are unscheduled at FNCA. When Flames stay on campus for the afternoon, they can often be found at the river, where lifeguards oversee swimming from 2:30 to 5:00. At least once a week they like to visit a local swimming hole, Emerald Pool in nearby New Hampshire. Emerald Pool is a 20-minute drive from camp and a relatively short hike on Baldface Circle Trail through the woods to a deep swimming hole where the more adventurous Flames can jump off ledges into

the deep water.

Late in the afternoon or just after they've finished with their dining hall duties following dinner, Flames can often be found at the volleyball net in the back field practicing for the annual Flames versus Bonfires Volley Ball game. Other popular evening activities for the Flames include Flames Games (an hour of active running games that teens just love), bowling at the bowling alley in Fryeburg, a movie at the drive-in or mall, or participating in one of the optional evening all-camp activities.

Flames must be in the dorms by 10:00 PM, with lights out at 10:30. The girls' dorm is in the Main Building, and the boys' dorm is on the eastern edge of the campus. Resident dorm parents supervise the Flames in both dorms.

On Outing Day, the Flames plan an all-day activity together. With adult supervision, Flames often go to Lower Falls on the Kancamagus Scenic Byway, which passes through the White Mountains National Forest in New Hampshire; Higgins Beach on the coast of Maine; a hike in the White Mountains or the mountains of Western Maine; or an all-day canoe trip on the Saco River.

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

Mary Beth Bernier of Bridgewater, Massachusetts has been attending FNCA since 2006. She says, "The Flames always think of things to do for themselves and it gives us all a sort of freedom we can't find at home. That's a reason why I go to camp. I can't wait for this year's camp!"

Cassie Young, also of Bridgewater, says, "I love camp because of all the people there—they're so nice to me. I keep coming back because of them too."

Nina Sasser of Portland, Maine says, "My favorite parts of camp are polar bearing, the corn boil, and the outings!"

Flames may attend FNCA without a parent by arranging for an adult sponsor before camp begins. The adult sponsor attends camp with the teen and agrees to act *in loco parentis*. If you need help finding a sponsor, please contact the registrar, (see below) who can connect you with those who have volunteered to sponsor a Flame.

The dates for this summer's session are August 2-17. If you'd like more information about the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, visit our website: www.fryeburg.org. If you have questions about scholarships for Flames, contact camp director Deane Currie at deanecurrie@msn.com or 610.430.7069. If you have questions about registration, contact our registrar, Nancy Little, at 413.247.0046 or littlenancyf@yahoo.com.

Nancy Little is FNCA Registrar. She first attended FNCA as a Flame in 1980. She lives in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts with her husband, Trevor Woofenden, and her cat of 15 years, Tiger Lily.

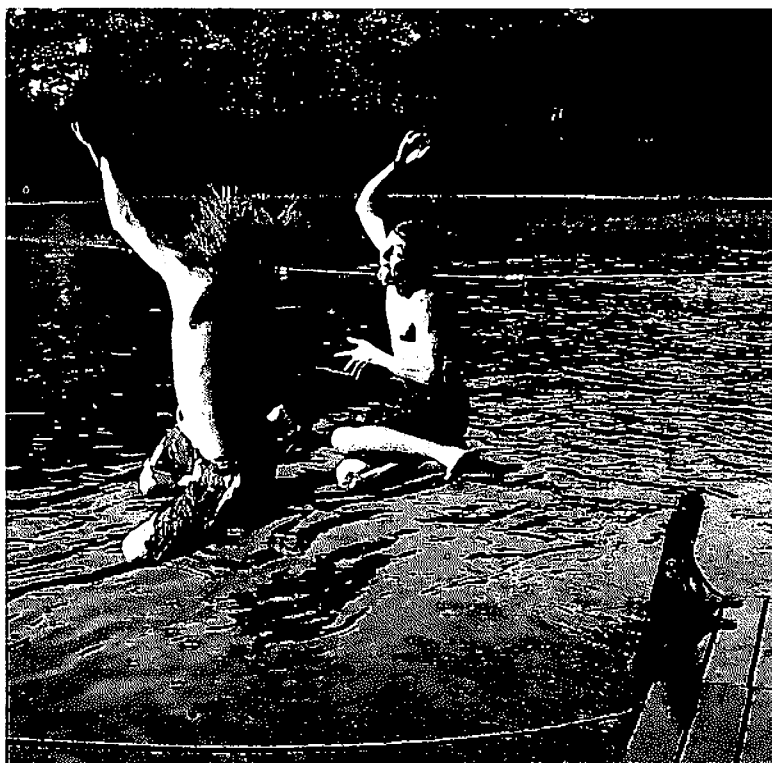


Photo by Tobin Grams

Josh Cook and Sam Reed demonstrate some of the fun the Flames have at the waterfront every afternoon.

Flames Scholarship Program: One New Flame from each Association

The Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) is pleased to announce a new scholarship program for teens to attend our summer camp in Fryeburg, Maine. In order to make the benefits of the summer camp experience more widely available, FNCA will cover room and board for one teen from each association of the Swedenborgian Church who has not attended previously. We ask that the association or local church cover travel expenses to and from Fryeburg. Interested teens should contact their association, who will select a teen to attend the FNCA.

Teens at FNCA are called the Flames. The Flames work together, learn together, play together and make life-long friends at the FNCA. The camp will appoint an adult sponsor to act *in loco parentis* for any Flame who will be attending camp without a parent or legal guardian.

The dates for this year's session are August 2-17. For more information about this scholarship program contact the camp director, Deane Currie at 610.430.7069 or deanecurrie@msn.com

For more information about FNCA visit www.fryeburg.org.

To request a bulletin, or arrange an adult sponsor contact the Registrar, Nancy Little, at 413.247.0046 or littlenancyf@yahoo.com.

Women's Alliance Annual Appeal

Katie Shelley

The gift you give to the Women's Alliance goes straight to its usefulness in the world. The return on your gift is manifest in the camps at Almont and Fryeburg, the young participant in SCYL's wonderful programs, Swedenborgian House of Studies students, the celebration over our newest congregation in Lansing (recipient of this year's mite box collection), the Gathering Leaves conference or a letter from Kei Torita in Japan. We may not save the world in a day, but by taking steps to help those close to us in some small way, we let their lights shine even brighter.

I hope you will support the Women's Alliance financially so that we can continue together in wise and loving giving, a tradition of over 100 years. I also appreciate the human gifts we enjoy when we come together in our local women's groups and at the annual luncheon. I hope to see you there!

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at this level of spiritual growth."

Linda said she felt that "if enough people change their thinking about a situation, the situation will start to change."

Wilma said "changing attitudes is one step, but action in the physical word is usually also needed to bring about change."

Conclusions

We saw many ways in which The Portland New Church (Swedenborgian) and the New Thought ideas of the Maine Beacon Center were similar. We see a oneness to all of creation, and integrate the spiritual and physical. We agree on the divine center inside everyone. The Maine Beacon Center and other New Thought churches often offer courses that elaborate on their principles and how to use them.

This exchange has been helpful, yet still leaves us with questions about the relationship between Swedenborgians and Byrne's New Thought perspectives in modern society. There are several questions in particular that we'd like to have much more conversation about:

- Is *The Secret* a basic introduction to deep truths that help people learn about the Divine? Or is it a misleading

presentation of reality that can encourage many to ignore God and the neighbor in favor of personal gain?

- How does Byrnes define the purpose of life? To what extent is it about an individual's growth, and to what extent is about collective change? They should be the same thing, but Byrnes can be read as saying "don't worry about others. They caused their situation and will have to fix it. You focus on whatever you want for yourself, and the universe will fulfill it." The Maine Beacon church seems very sensitive to the importance of people learning about the integration of individual and collective needs. But Byrnes does not clearly show such sensitivity.

- What is the relationship between one's thoughts and one's life circumstances? Some New Thought advocates imply that the victim is responsible for their suffering; they have caused it or contributed to it by the power of their thoughts. Swedenborg sees integration with the inner and outer being. He acknowledges the importance of one's attitudes, but puts the emphasis on the role of people working together to change the world. Even though Byrnes may not explicitly say this, her book can leave the impression that we don't need to address hunger, war, or violence directly. We only need to think that they don't exist, and they won't. Is

this a general theme of modern New Thought, or simply a misunderstanding of its deeper principles?

- Are Rhonda Byrnes and Swedenborg expressing the same theology? Or are they diametrically opposed? Or do they have considerable overlap, but also some differences?

What Do You think?

We'd like to encourage all of you to share your ideas. If we hear input from others, we'll do a third article summarizing the range of ideas of the readers of the Messenger. ☸

Nanci Weston Adair, MA, LCC, is president of the Portland New Church, where she is also an active worship leader. She is principal creator and owner of The GoalModel Method™. Nanci is a life coach who has delivered seminars to business leaders and corporations across the U.S. She has recently completed her book on The GoalModel Method for personal and professional achievement. Nanci maintains a home, studio and business in Portland, Maine. Her email is Nanc@GoalModel.com.

Wilma Wake has been half-time minister of the Portland New Church for five years, and is the half-time minister of the online Swedenborgian Community. She is also a social worker in private practice. Wilma is author of *Wings & Roots: The New Age and Emanuel Swedenborg in Dialog*. Her email is Wilma.wake@gmail.com.

Travel Scholarships Still Available For Gathering Leaves 2008

Travel scholarship assistance is still available to help you make the trip to England for the 2008 Gathering Leaves Swedenborgian Women Retreat.

Up to \$400 per person is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

The 2008 "Gathering Leaves" event for Swedenborgian women from many different groups is the third such retreat. The first two, in 2004 and 2006, were held in Pennsylvania. The 2008

event will be held at Purley Chase Retreat Centre in England, hosted by the General Conference. Participants will be housed in the Purley Chase Centre, and this year's gathering includes an outing to Stratford-on-Avon. The retreat will include plenary events, great workshops, exciting discussions, and sharing tea times. It will be a grand time of meeting and greeting other Swedenborgian women.

Space is still available for Sweden-

borgian women from North America.

To request a scholarship amount, you must register for the retreat with Lisa Hyatt Cooper at lhcooper@verizon.net (preferred method) or (if you have no email connection) call her at 215.947.1584. If you have already registered and, perhaps, already purchased travel tickets, contact Lisa Hyatt Cooper with that information and request travel scholarship assistance.

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SCYL Winter Retreat in Kitchener: Service and Adventure

by Kurt Fekete

Wow. What a weekend. The Church of the Good Shepherd February 8–10 weekend retreat was so much fun and so full of adventure and excitement.

We began Friday night with travelers from Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and me, from Maine, descending on Kitchener, Ontario, Canada—three vehicles filled with Swedenborgian teens coming together to create a worship experience with youth members from the Church of the Good Shepherd. We arrived late, weary from the long trip. After greeting our friends in Kitchener and taking a quick tour of the church, we settled into our bags for the night.

We awoke Saturday morning to the beckoning aroma of Lorraine Cuthbertson's fresh coffee. After a quick breakfast we started planning the worship service. We had 24 hours to pull together a Sunday service from scratch for the Church of the Good Shepherd's congregation.

The stewardship month theme was "Becoming the gift you are." We spent the morning brainstorming ideas, and decided our service would involve a series of contemporary skits about temptation adapted from Bible stories, including the forbidden fruit, Satan's temptation of Jesus and Job's trials.

We also decided that we would perform the entire service in reverse order, from the postlude to the prelude, including a "welcome benediction" and "closing invocation," along with opening the Word and lighting the candles at the end of the service—all of this "reverse order worship" done to reflect the concept that the real service (a useful, charitable life) starts after Sunday worship has ended.

After much planning, preparation and rehearsing, we were finally ready to deliver the service. The teens did a

great job and the entire worship experience was heartfelt, playful and inspiring. Everyone worked very hard on the service, and I am very proud of the youth for their attention, care and understanding.

I'm also glad we got a chance to play some games, including a round of sardines late Saturday night.

All of the people from the States (12 teens and 4 adults) left Kitchener early Sunday afternoon to return home. That's when our unexpected adventure began.

The three vehicles filled with teens and leaders from the States left Kitchener at 1 PM on Sunday. It had sleeted and snowed the night before, and the bitterly cold wind was whipping snow.

SCYL Service in Kitchener

by Cody Steinhiser

The Kitchener retreat was really awesome. They had really great food and an air hockey table, which probably saw the most use ever just on that weekend. The floors were wood, and if you only had your socks on, you could slide really well.

We were there to write a worship service, and that's what we did with a vast majority of our time. We collaborated to come up with a really great worship service. We even incorporated the air hockey table into the service. Everyone there was really friendly and we all got along great. It was wonderful to see old friends again, and we had a lot of laughs. It was great and I can't wait till next year.

Cody Steinhiser is West Coast funding and finance officer of SCYL.

The sky, however, was clear and the roads were slick, but manageable.

We merged on to the 401 (the only major highway across Southern Ontario) and began our journey home. Soon the traffic backed up and came to a stop. We faced a huge bottleneck, as far as the eye could see. A few miles later, all traffic was directed off the 401—highway closed! We took a smaller two-lane road running parallel to the 401. Wind-blown snow hit us frequently, causing visibility to drop to zero. Facing near white-out conditions in Stratford, we pressed on tentatively. Then we hit an impasse: all roads south and west out of Stratford were closed due to blinding and drifting snow.

We stopped at a Tim Horton's and met up with the other two cars. Our options were limited: make the difficult and risky drive back to Kitchener or stay in Stratford. We decided that to stay in Stratford and wait for conditions to improve. A wonderful lady at Tim Horton's recommended we consider staying across the street at the Queen's Inn.

We trekked across the street to the Queen's Inn. Another lady (angel) at the Queen's Inn really helped by providing us a large private meeting room with internet service, board games and a pool table. She also held 4 rooms for us at a discounted price (after I explained our circumstances), including a suite for the boys with extra cots so everyone had a bed.

We settled in and enjoyed the pool table, games and computer that the inn had provided for us. But we were hungry and in need of hot showers (we had been staying at the church for the weekend with no available shower). So we moved over to the hotel restaurant for dinner.

We joined the other stranded trav-

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Nominating Committee Report 2008

From the Nominating Committee:

We are pleased to present the following slate of nominees for election at our 2008 Annual Convention. I am grateful to everyone who has answered the call to serve The Swedenborgian Church as officers or as members of support units and committees. The institutional life of our denomination is a labor of love. It is kept alive by the gifts and good energies of a wonderful mix of people from across the United States and Canada.

We still have two slots to fill: we are looking for nominees for the Ministries Support Unit (MinSU) and the Education Support Unit (EdSU). We would be grateful to anyone who would like to make recommendations, or who would like to volunteer. To do so, or to ask any questions about these positions, please contact Rev. Jonathan Mitchell at 310.377.7919 x302, or

jonathanm@wayfarerschapel.org.

Please remember that there is always an opportunity for nominations from the floor. For all those who are elected this year, I pray that serving our denomination will enrich your spiritual lives and give you the opportunity to make new friends from across North America.

Rev. Jonathan Mitchell, chair

Nominees

- **Vice-President** (*one-year term, one to be elected*): Jim Erickson
- **Recording Secretary** (*one-year term, one to be elected*): Susan Wood-Ashton.
- **Treasurer** (*one-year term, one to be elected*): Rev. Susannah Currie
- **General Council Layperson** (*3-year term, two to be elected*): Deane Currie, Herb Ziegler
- **General Council Minister** (*3-year term, one to be elected*): Rev. Randy

Laakko

- **Communication Support Unit (ComSU)** (*3-year term, one to be elected*): Rev. Sage Currie
- **Education Support Unit (EdSU)** (*3-year term, one to be elected*): TBD
- **Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU)** (*3-year term, one to be elected*): Helen Sioris
- **Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)** (*3-year term, one to be elected*): Dagmar Bollinger
- **Ministries Support Unit (MinSU)** (*3-year term, two to be elected*): Gloria Toot, TBD
- **Committee on Admission into the Ministry (CAM) Layperson** (*3-year term*): Mareta Tafel
- **SHS Board of Trustees** (*3-year term, two to be elected*): Bill Coffman, Rev. Jane Siebert
- **Nominating Committee** (*5-year term, two to be nominated, one to be elected*): Mary Ann Fischer, Rev. Wilma Wake. ☪

Meet the Nominees for 2008

Recording Secretary

Susan Wood-Ashton

My name is Susan Wood-Ashton, and for the fourth year I am honored to accept the nomination for the office of recording secretary of Convention. In the 36 years that I have been a member of the Swedenborgian Church, I have been on General Council, FPRSU, AFC and the Retirement Committee; I've also served as president of the Ohio Association as well as board president of the Kemper Road Church in Ohio, currently known as the New Church of Montgomery. After leaving Ohio and moving to Florida in 1985, I became a member of the New Church of Southwest Florida, although my distance from Ft. Myers classifies me as an isolated member. I am currently an

active member of The Swedenborgian Community, the online ministry of the Swedenborgian Church, where I serve as chair of the Steering Committee. The position of recording secretary is one with a wide variety of duties, and I have found my three years as secretary to be both enriching and rewarding. I would be honored to serve my church for another year in this capacity.

Treasurer

Rev. Susannah L. Currie

I am running for the position of treasurer of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem to provide pastoral support as well as financial



acumen at a time of great change for the denomination. As we plan for the retirement of the Central Office manager in 2009, I feel that I can offer my organizational as well as creative skills and experience to the task of revisioning what will come next. I have had in-depth exposure to some of the denomination's processes, having served on the Augmentation Fund Committee from 2005-2006 and in my continuing role as retirement plan administrator since 2000. I look forward to learning more about the systems in place for accounting and record keeping so that I can be a backup and trainer for the new office manager.

Before my ordination in 1999, I was a member of the Portland New Church and participated in all aspects of its growth and development from 1990-1999. I have a BA in accounting from

the University of Southern Maine, and owned my own computer accounting company, Optimum Output, from 1986–1995. I have had experience with a wide range of businesses and am experienced at presenting accounting reports in an understandable and useful format for all types of group decision making.

I served from 1999–2007 as executive director of the Temenos Retreat Center and from 1999–2008 as pastor of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos. I am currently serving as executive director for In Company with Angels. Other roles I have fulfilled in Convention include host for Gathering Leaves 2004 and 2006, field education supervisor, member of the executive committee of the Council of Ministers, chair of the Committee on Worship, lecturer at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, president of the Middle Atlantic Association, president and secretary of the American New Church Sunday School Association, and youth retreat presenter.

I am the wife of Deane Currie, general manager of the Temenos Retreat Center and member of General Council. And I am the proud mother of Rev. Sage Currie, Grace Currie and Benjamin Currie. I look forward to a future filled with promise and possibility, and offer myself to serve Convention with all my skills, energy and experience.

Communication Support Unit

Rev. Sage Currie

I'm Rev. Sage Currie, and I am excited to be nominated to serve on the Communication Support Unit of the Swedenborgian Church. I am really committed to shaping how the message of our church is shared with the world, developing quality materials, and using updated modes of communication for the 21st century. It is so important that the life-giving message of our church get out there, and I'm excited

to help work with COMSU to discover how we can be Johnny Appleseeds of the twenty-first century, not traveling the woods of Ohio, but the links and networks of the internet.

Ministries Support Unit

Gloria Toot

I have been a member of the New Church of Montgomery for 38 years, serving at many positions there and in the Ohio Association. I served 12 years as secretary of General Convention. In 2006 I was appointed to fill a vacancy on MINSU until the next Annual Convention, at which time I was elected to fill that vacancy until the end of the term. So here I am now, running for a full three-year term on MINSU. It is my hope to serve the missions and ministries of this denomination with love and discernment as I grow in my service to the Lord.

Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit

Helen Sloris

I would be happy to serve on the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit of the Swedenborgian Church. I have enjoyed a long membership (since 1989) with the Church of the Holy City in Washington, DC, serving in all elected offices at one time or another. I am currently treasurer of that church, a position for which my background as budget/program analyst at the World Bank for 26 years provided good skills (now retired). I am honored to be nominated at the national level, and pray that, if elected, the relationship will be a mutually beneficial one, both on a practical level and a spiritual one.

Information Management Support Unit

Dagmar Bollinger

I have been a PCA member-at-large of the Swedenborgian Church for the past 10 years. I live in Redondo Beach, California, and attend services

at Wayfarers Chapel in Rancho Palos Verdes. As part of Friends of Wayfarers, I support the church's activities during regular services and for special events, including giving an occasional lay sermon.

Being an enthusiastic proponent of Swedenborgian theology, as well as an avid student of world religions and philosophies, I decided to pursue theological studies in preparation for a career as a Swedenborgian Minister. I am now in my third (part-time) semester at the Claremont School of Theology and am looking forward to my first CAM interview in April of 2008.

I work as a product education consultant at the corporate University of Toyota, where I develop e-learning courses for Toyota sales associates. I have extensive experience in web-based knowledge management, and have created a "just-in-time" learning methodology at Toyota. I am eager to use my background and experience in serving on the Information Management Support Unit.

Committee on Admission into the Ministry

Mareta Tafel

I was born and raised in Southern California, and was baptized and confirmed at the downtown Los Angeles Swedenborgian Church. I have been active in many roles in the church over the years. I have a BA in history and a California teaching credential.

I am the vice-president of the Pacific Coast Association. I plan to run a mini-course (if the program permits) at Annual Convention about using angel spirituality in everyday life. I have time to devote to CAM since I am retired after working over 25 years for AAA and the Los Angeles Unified School Dis-

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Meet the Nominees

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trict. I have worn many hats at AAA, including cartographer, editor, travel manager and trainer, and travel agent.

I am concerned about education for our ministers. It needs to include practical applications for survival in the midst of changing social patterns and demographics. I am willing, and would enjoy, serving our church by joining CAM. I appreciate your support.

SHS Board of Trustees

Rev. Jane Siebert

I would like to serve on the SHS board for one more term. We are in the process of major changes at our seminary with the strategic plan developed last year, and I would like to help with its implementation. I am optimistic about the future of the school and proud of the contributions our graduates are making to the denomination. There is more to be done, and I hope to contribute my leadership skills.

I graduated with a Certificate in

Swedenborgian Studies from SHS, and was ordained in 2004. Currently I serve the New Jerusalem Church in Pretty Prairie as part-time minister and am employed as a chaplain at Wesley Medical Center in Wichita.

Nominating Committee

Mary Ann Fischer

My name is Mary Ann Fischer and I came to know the Swedenborgian Church by way of Urbana University. As a junior in the fall of 1980 I moved onto campus, where all new students watched the Swedenborg Foundation video, "The Man Who Had to Know." My husband and I were married with the guidance and officiating of Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey, chaplain when I was at Urbana. I came across the Cincinnati Swedenborgian Church while looking for garage sales years later. Months later, I reconnected with Dorothea when she led a service at the Cincinnati Church, her first ever. I enjoyed her company again when we were both delegates to the National Council of Christian Churches, a position I have held for 12 years.

Beyond the serendipity of it all, I have come to enjoy being Swedenborgian very much. Reading and studying New Church teachings over the decades has left me wanting to read and

know more. I hope to be available to connect heaven to earth by the way of Jesus Christ, our God and creator, who brings us continuous life and direction. I can no longer imagine life without knowing God any more than I could imagine my physical existence without gravity. I hope that by serving on the nominating committee I will be available not only to do God's work for our small churches, but to connect to the souls of those regenerated in heaven, and contribute to the fruition of the New Church on earth.

Wilma Wake

I am a half-time minister at the Portland New Church and a half-time minister with our www.swedenborgiancommunity.org. I have been a member of the denomination since 1988, and was ordained in 1990. For nine years, I was director of field education at our seminary in Newton, Massachusetts. I had a chance to travel to many of our centers, and I came to know many of our congregations, ministers, and students. I value the opportunity to help us find a variety of people with the gifts and interests to serve in our many positions of service. ☿



Church Calendar

April 15-17: Committee on Admission into the Ministry (CAM) meeting • Berkeley

May 23-26: SCYL Memorial Day retreat • Fryeburg, Maine

May 24-26: Transitions Memorial Day retreat • Temenos Retreat Center • West Chester, Pennsylvania

June 29- July 1: Council of Ministers • Bridgewater, Massachusetts

July 2-July 6: Annual Convention • Bridgewater, Massachusetts

July 11-14: Gathering Leaves • Purley Chase, England

July 20-26: Paulhaven Camp

July 26-August 2: Almont Camp

August 2-17: Fryeburg Camp

Stimulate the Economy

By Lawrence Conant

The United States government has voted to give each taxpayer a check to stimulate the U.S. economy. This will be a one-time payment, with checks mailing between May and July 2008. Individuals will receive as much as \$600, and married couples \$1200.

I would like to suggest that a portion of this check be sent to the denomination or your local church. Some sources estimate that 80 percent of the prod-

ucts sold at your local store are made in China; therefore, some of the money spent in those stores will benefit the Chinese, not the U.S., economy.

A better approach is to give at least a portion to your favorite charity. While I would like to see that be our denomination, any U.S.-based charity with programs within the U.S. would spend the money in the U.S.

Donations to the denomination can be sent to Central Office, 11 Highland Avenue, Newtonville, MA 02460. ☿

Lawrence Conant is treasurer of General Convention.

184th Session of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem

2008 Registration Form



July 2-July 6, 2008

Council of Ministers: June 29-July 1

Convention 2008 will be held in Bridgewater, Massachusetts on the campus of Bridgewater State College. To learn more about BSC, browse to www.bridgew.edu.

Teen Program: The Convention sponsor program allows youths aged 13-17 to attend Convention without parents. An adult sponsor must be named who will attend Convention and agree to perform certain duties and take responsibility for the minor in place of the parent. Parents must arrange for and notify a sponsor prior to Convention. Children under the age of 13 cannot attend Convention without a parent or legal guardian. Parents must complete and mail the registration form below. A letter providing some information about the teen program, along with a sponsor information form and medical release form, will be sent upon receipt of registration. For more information, assistance or clarification regarding the youth program or logistics, please contact Kurt Fekete, youth director, at kfekete@hotmail.com, or 866-333-7295. We look forward to seeing lots of teens this year, and we're certain that the teens will discover Convention 2008 to be a fun and spiritually enlightening event. The program begins Wednesday, July 2, and is supervised by Kurt Fekete.

Lodging: We have reserved the newest dormitory. Room styles are singles and doubles in a suite configuration, all air conditioned. The most common suite configuration is one double room with two single rooms and one bath per suite. There are two elevators. This residence hall is located near East Campus Commons, which houses the dining hall. You may register for any number of days from June 29-July 6.

Name		Attending Women's Alliance luncheon?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Name			Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Street		Apt.#	
City		State (Province)	Zip
Day Phone	E-mail	Home Church	
Names of children accompanying you			
Requests (dietary, mobility, roommate)			

Payment Information

Registration	Amt	#	Total
Adult	\$95.00		
Youth League teen	\$80.00		
Child (11-13)	\$55.00		
Child under 11	\$45.00		
Family maximum	\$275.00		
Late fee after June 1	\$80.00		
Women's Alliance lunch	\$10.00		
Room & Board	# Days	#	Total
Single	\$68.00		
Double	\$52.50		
Grand total (from both Registration and Room			\$

All prices are in US currency. If you pay with Canadian funds, please add \$5.00 for handling for each Canadian check. All bills must be paid in full before June 15. No registration refunds after June 1. Bills may be paid by Visa or by MasterCard. You may call Central Office to make a secure credit card payment at 617.969.4240.

Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Expiration Date: _____

Card Number: _____

Signature: _____

Send checks payable to The Swedenborgian Church to:
Central Office, the Swedenborgian Church
11 Highland Ave., Newtonville, MA 02460

Letters to the Editor

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I don't think this is the only possible kind of ministry. I think there is certainly both need and room for crisis intervention, for example, for counseling whose success is marked by termination. I feel more and more strongly, though, that there is in this world of instant obsolescence is a profound need for long-term continuity, and that this is something the parish church can offer. They can say to people, "We may not be all that exciting, but we will do our best to be there for you for the rest of your life," and they can often back that up by simply calling attention to their own survival.

The flip side of this, obviously, is that it implies at least the hope for a similar long-term commitment on the part of those who would join, which prompts

two thoughts. One is a basic principle of sound church growth, namely that it is folly to "grow the church" by making it easier to join. The best this can do is produce a bigger, weaker church. It may seem to go against the grain at a time when there is so much "church-shopping" going on, but really good shoppers tend eventually to find the products that best suit their own needs and develop a kind of brand loyalty.

The second thought is that our theology is not something you outgrow. It has something to say to us at every stage of development, at every age, and if I may be forgiven a plug, this is the main theme of *A Book About Us*. My hope is that it helps people see that for all its inconsistencies, life does make sense once we "take it whole." To quote *Secrets of Heaven* 2343, "But the actual series cannot begin to shine

forth as it really is in interpreting individual words since they seem to be discrete units and the ongoing meaning is broken up. However, when we look at everything in a single image or take it in with a single intuitive thought, . . . then we are presented with a view of the whole process of reformation and regeneration. . . ."

For me at least, this image of the Word seems "to burn bright enough and constantly, but only with such an intensity that it can be maintained over time"—a lifetime.

George F. Dole,
Bath, Maine

Dear Editor:

I found what looks like another clue to a solution to the old puzzle of whether Swedenborg disobeyed the Lord in not publishing a book on the divine attributes (we've got to get these puzzles off the table), number nine in the list of commanded topics in his *Introduction to the Doctrine of the Lord*. It turns out that a look at these topics doesn't command that books (nine in all) be produced. It uses the word "works," instead. This is true of both the Standard Edition and the RSV. So it looks as though some misreading has taken place and then grew into a traditional problem. "Works" is an indefinite category—a work can be the length of a book or something a lot longer or more elaborate, what Swedenborg did produce in this case.

Steve Koke,
Julian, California

SCYL Adventure

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elers dining there, taking over an entire section of the restaurant. The food was quite good, and I felt comfortable, warm and happy with our circumstances.

Despite our hardships, I was blessed with excellent adult company. The leaders, Jenn, Lisa and Lori, were terrific, and their upbeat conversation and remarkable flexibility inspired me. The teens also responded wonderfully to our situation and demonstrated great patience, attitude, and understanding. I couldn't have asked to be stuck with a better group! The temperature outside dropped below zero Fahrenheit and the wind howled, but we were safe and secure.

We retired to our rooms for showers and a restful evening after the long day conducting the church worship service, traversing challenging roads and encountering unforeseeable excitement.

The following morning, we awoke

at dawn to much improved weather and road conditions. We said our good-byes to our friends in the other cars and departed early in the morning. Once we merged back onto the 401, the sky was blue and the roads were dry. I made it to Detroit Metro airport for my rescheduled flight home to Maine on Monday afternoon with time to spare.

I'd like to thank the leaders, Rev. Jenn, Lisa and Lori for their assistance, outstanding leadership, good judgment and positive spirit. I'd also like to thank all the teens for being so cooperative, patient and good-natured throughout the whole ordeal. Most of all, I thank God for looking over us, sending angels when we needed them and making sure that everyone remained safe for the entire adventure.

The Great White North certainly lived up to its name. I can't wait for my next trip to Kitchener! ☞

Kurt Fekete is youth director of the Swedenborgian Church.

Excerpted from blog entries at <http://>

Women's Alliance

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Please send donations to Jeanette Hille, 4240 Larch Place North, Plymouth, MN 55442 by April 30, 2008, and specify on the check amounts for the mite box and the general fund. ☞

Katie Shelley is president of the Women's Alliance.

News in Brief

The Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario is hosting a fund raiser on May 10—its first Charity Golf Tournament.

The Wednesday Morning Club at the Church of the Good Shepherd made a banner that it sent as a gift to the New Church of Southwest Florida for its new building.

The New York New Church in Manhattan hosted 73 people, 16 of them Swedenborgians, at its "Life Beyond Life" Symposium held March 8. Dannion Brinkley, author of *Saved by the Light*, Vaishali, author of *You Are What You Love* and Rev. Grant Schnarr, Swedenborgian minister and author, spoke about life on the other side and

Passages

Birth

Isabella Joy Titus was born December 14, 2007 to Zach & Lana Titus of Clancy, Montana. John and Bev Titus are proud grandparents.

how our loves direct the course of that life. Rev. Ron Brugler joined them for a question and answer period.

Loraine Sando was an accomplished artist, and a member of the Swedenborgian church of Puget Sound. About 100 of her paintings are available for purchase as a fund raiser for the church. Email breathofflife1@comcast.net for more information. ☛

Death

Dorothy Mowat, long-time member of the Edmonton, Alberta New Church, died at her home on February 28, 2008 at age 93. A memorial service was held on March 6.

Gathering Leaves

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Please give this some prayerful thought. It is an exciting opportunity not only to meet and share an experience with Swedenborgian women from around the world, but also to travel!

If you have questions, please email Chris Laitner at chris.laitner@swedenborg.org, or call 989.636.7674. ☛

Saved! A Swedenborgian Perspective on Salvation

The 2008 SCYL Memorial Day Weekend Teen Retreat

May 23–26

Fryeburg Assembly

Fryeburg, Maine

We have all heard of people who were saved. Perhaps friends or family members have told you they have been saved. Most religions deal with salvation, redemption or deliverance in some form or another. They offer us a road map to a better place. But religions differ vastly on how someone is saved and what sort of salvation is promised.

Even if we look only at Christianity, we see many different concepts of salvation. Emanuel Swedenborg has a unique understanding of it, but for many Christians, salvation is a process of confessing and believing. The website allaboutgod.com summarizes being saved as, "Do you understand that you are a sinner, and believe that Jesus Christ came as the one and only Redeemer of sin? Are you ready to receive

God's gift of His Son, Jesus Christ? If so, believe in Christ, repent of your sins, and commit the rest of your life to Him as Lord."

In contrast, Emanuel Swedenborg writes in *Secrets of Heaven* 6353, "The truth of the matter, however, is that the Lord does not deny heaven to anyone." Does salvation depend on what religion you believe?

If you've ever wondered what it means to be saved or how someone

becomes saved, this retreat is for you. If you've ever thought people who say they are saved are crazy, this retreat is for you, too. If you could care less about the whole idea of salvation, this retreat is definitely for you. If you believe that you've been saved, you're all set, but feel free to come and share your experience.

See you there! ☛

Kurt Fekete is youth director of the Swedenborgian Church.

SCYL is the Swedenborgian Church Youth League. Our retreats are open to teens ages 13–18 of all faiths and beliefs. At our retreats we offer life skills and spiritual exploration based on the principles of the Swedenborgian church. We strive for a safe, secure and inclusive environment to discuss and share relevant and meaningful ideas and challenges that teens face. We work, play and learn together as a community. We have fun! For teens and parents new to SCYL retreats, please don't hesitate to contact Kurt with any questions and concerns (email: kfekete@hotmail.com or call Kurt at 802.345.0169. Kurt will answer your questions or, if appropriate, put you in contact with a League officer in your region to provide you as much information and encouragement as you need!

Visit us online at: <http://youthleague.blogspot.com>

About the Swedenborgian Church

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.

American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian churches. As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church 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 said, "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.

Transitions Memorial Day Retreat

May 24 -26, 2008

What: A retreat for recent SCYL graduates, and anyone age 18 to 28. Rev. Andrew (Andy) Stinson will lead the program:

"The Sacred Story: Where We Come from, Where We Are, and Where We Are Going"

Rev. Andy will lead us in a discussion of our personal story as reflected in the biblical narrative, from Genesis to Revelation. We will look at where we have come from and where we are now, to set goals and make commitments about where we are going and who we are becoming. Emphasis will be not only on our own stories but on paying attention to how we tell them, so that we might come to understand and move into the next call that God has for us.

Where: Temenos Retreat Center. Temenos is a beautiful Swedenborgian retreat center nestled in the hills outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We will be staying in the Farm house, a cobblestone structure over 200 years old, with modern kitchen. We will do our own cooking, so any volunteers to help coordinate should contact: scyl.transitions@gmail.com

How: The retreat is free. F-R-E-E, free! Thanks to a donation by the Philadelphia Swedenborgian Church and funding from the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church, there is no registration fee for this retreat! All you have to do is get there, and if you live far away, we can help with that, too.

Register: If you want to come, we want to hear from you. Tell us how many people are coming with you, and where you will be traveling from. The registration deadline is May 1, 2008. If you want travel assistance you need to register by April 21, 2008.

Email: scyl.transitions@gmail.com.

Snail mail: 1629 Pleasantdale Road. #6, Cleveland, OH 44109

Call: Kelly Wohlgemuth at 216-403-9463

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