

Sharing Secrets: Past and Present

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

by Wilma Wake and Nanci Adair

"People around the world have been talking about a movie so powerful that it can change the course of your life. This movie, The Secret, was created by Australian Rhonda Byrne, and she says that if you follow its philosophy, you can create the life you want—whether that means getting out of debt, finding a more fulfilling job or even falling in love."

This quotation from Oprah Winfrey's website (www.oprah.com) shows the excitement that has been generated by the DVD, and then book, called *The Secret*. We in the Portland New Church are wondering whether *The Secret* is a modern expression of Swedenborg's theology, or whether it is something quite different, and perhaps even in opposition to it. Or is it some of both?

We will explore these questions in two articles. This first is about conversations that Swedenborgians had with similar ideas in the past. Many religious historians see Byrne's book as a recent expression of the New Thought Movement, considered by many to have started in the late 1800s. In this article, we'll look at what Swedenborgians were saying in the early years of the New Thought Movement. In a future issue, we'll share conversations from Swedenborgians today and from modern advo-

cates of New Thought.

First, we will look at why many writers are viewing *The Secret* as part of the New Thought Movement.

Rhonda Byrnes, an Australian, had an emotional breakdown in 2004. Her father had recently died. She was producing a true crime series

To understand the "secret" that Byrnes discovered in 2004, it's important to go back to that book that changed her life, *The Science of Getting Rich*, by Wallace D. Wattles.

and ran into severe financial difficulties, leaving her almost broke. The final straw was a call from her mother who was feeling suicidal. In an effort to help, her 24-year-old daughter introduced her to a book published in

1910, *The Science of Getting Rich* by Wallace Wattles.

Byrnes immediately put the principles into practice, and her life was transformed. She thought she had discovered something new, then learned that the "concepts could be found in almost every religion and field of human endeavor throughout history." (www.thesecret.tv) She felt compelled to put together a TV program about this transformational information. It was made available at first, not on TV, but on the web via video streaming. It became immensely popular, and became the best-selling book, *The Secret*, in 2006.

To understand the "secret" that Byrnes discovered in 2004, it's important to go back to that book that changed her life, *The Science of Getting Rich*, by Wallace D. Wattles. Wattles

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Celebrations

The ministry of the Korean New Church (KNC), under the pastorate of Rev. Young Min Kim, will commence on January 1, 2008. The Church of the Little Grain will become the Korean New Church, which will minister to Koreans in Manhattan and all of New York City.

Beginning April 1, 2008 the KNC will offer Sunday worship services and Bible study classes regularly at the facilities of the New York Society of the New Church in the Murray Hill section of Manhattan. The e-mail address is koreannewchurch@ycpoo.com. The telephone number will be 718-316-8296.

In This Issue:

LaPorte Youth Retreat • Fall General Council Meeting •
The New Church of Southwest Florida • Book Review: *The Hunter's Trance* •
Reflection: Regrets • President's Mid-Winter Report • Dispatch from Fryeburg •

The Editor's Desk



I have taken the tiller from the hands of able and steadfast captain Patte LeVan as I stand at the helm of this sturdy and well-piloted ship called the *Messenger*. I am both honored and daunted to be made its captain.

When I joined the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church Patte was the editor, and Jim Lawrence, in the San Francisco pulpit, was the immediate past editor. I was pleasantly surprised to find this little gem of a publication delivered to my door in subsequent months. I took pleasure in the mix of news, commentary, reviews, and personal essays that comprised the *Messenger*. Through the *Messenger*, I began to know faces and names, personalities and connections before I arrived at my first annual convention.

For a small denomination, we have an engaging and, at times, provocative monthly newsletter. For 19 years Patte has painstakingly planned, managed, written for, and edited that vital communication vehicle in our far-flung church. I want to personally, and on behalf of the *Messenger* readership, thank Patte for a job well done.

Therein, of course, lies the problem for me. As the new editor I want to do even better. I want to improve the *Messenger* and build on its success, but taking over something of such high achievement leaves but little room for improvement, and that little room requires great effort.

Patte noted in the December, 2007, issue that she led the *Messenger* through its transition from typewriter input and photo typesetting to computer input and electronic

typesetting. It is time to forge farther ahead into the electronic age in three steps. I am assuming desktop layout responsibilities, which means I will lay out the *Messenger* on my computer and email a printer-ready PDF document to the printer for printing and mailing. Beginning with this issue, I will post a full copy of the *Messenger* (not including personal phone numbers or email addresses) on the denomination website (www.swedenborg.org). I will email a PDF version of the *Messenger* to all who request it. The emailed *Messenger* will be more timely than the printed version, arriving weeks sooner in some cases.

You will notice some changes in the design of the *Messenger*, most of them subtle or minimal. The *Messenger* was already well designed and readable, but I hope you find my changes enhance its readability and give it a cleaner look. The *Messenger* is dense with content, so it will always be loaded with columns of text.

Even though the editor selection process seemed to take forever, I am thankful that I had an opportunity to be guest editor for one month. I am still discovering how much work it takes to craft a monthly issue of the *Messenger*.

As editor, it is my job to ensure that the *Messenger* gets published in good form every month on time, but I cannot do it alone. Already, many people who provided content in the past have contributed to the January issue, and who appear for the first time. I will be soliciting articles and interviews from many of you over the next year. I hope you feel inspired to offer your reflections, short poems, reviews, photographs, art, and ideas for articles. We have limited space, and I cannot promise inclusion, but I will work with you to get your voice

heard.

This month the *Messenger* explores spirituality. We begin with Wilma Wake and Nanci Adair's article, "Sharing Secrets." They explore the connections and differences in some concepts of spirituality between the New Thought Movement and Swedenborgian theology. Eugene Taylor reviews a book that examines the personal experience of spirituality and nature, a subject of great interest to Swedenborgians.

Catch up on the news and comment from SCYL, General Council, President Chris Laitner and others, and read about those we honor in "Passages."

Remember, I need your comments, criticism and suggestions to continue the success of the *Messenger*, so send me an email or a letter, or give me a call. Full speed ahead. ☛

Herb Ziegler

the Messenger

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LaPorte New Church Youth Retreat: October 26–28, 2007

Dying for a Weekend

by Kurt Fekete

Death was on my mind. Halloween was approaching. Trees were losing their leaves and the green of summer was fading into shades of brown and gray. I always feel a touch of melancholy loss when the sharp scent of autumn strikes the air. The teens in the Fryeburg and Portland Maine youth group selected death, dying and the afterlife as their yearly theme. I got the email from youth leader Lori Steinhiser in LaPorte, Indiana. "The teens are all jacked up about Halloween-themed (spirits, afterlife, whatever) sessions." It was then that I knew I'd be dying for a weekend.

I arrived in LaPorte for the weekend retreat on a very dark, rainy Friday night. Have you heard the tales about the spirits that haunt the LaPorte church? Apparently the church organ plays without an organist. Perfect, I thought on my ride to the church. It's a rainy night five days be-



fore Halloween and I get to spend two nights sleeping in the sanctuary of a church full of spirits (and spirited youth). I was elated!

When I entered the church, it was dark. I heard muted murmuring coming from the basement. As I descended the stairs, faint flickering light emanated from below. Was anyone here still in their earthly body? I had prepared very little material for those already in the afterlife.

I found Rev. Freeman Schrock—very much alive. What a relief. I found the downstairs room dimly lit with numerous candles. Freeman was surrounded by teens attentively listening to a story from his past. When Freeman was a young man, he was in a serious truck accident and had a near death experience. The youth were very interested in his traumatic event and had lots of questions. We enjoyed this opening discussion while awaiting the visiting Royal Oak

A Weekend to Remember

by Cody Steinhiser

The Retreat at the Church was amazing! More Junk food than...well, you get the message. And, our very own Tammara supplied us with some tantalizing fudge. But getting back to the actual retreat, I had a great time. Mr. Kurt Fekete himself was there and led the whole situation. We went to Tina and Dwayne's for a fiery cook-out and tractor ride in the woods, the beach for some windy Frisbee shenanigans, involving yours truly pelting a car with my cheap Hacienda Frisbee (*quite* unfortunate), and we generally hung out at the church (I made paper claws!).

Well, as for the religious aspect, we were talking about death, which overall is a really cool topic to talk about. We all worked with suffering (grief), the afterlife, and some other stuff that I can't quite remember, all thoroughly interesting all the same. After that last night we were all sad to leave and who knows, maybe it'll happen again next year.

Cody Steinhiser is SCYL regional West and fund-raising officer.

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Michigan church youth group teens and leader Lisa Lucka. Freeman left and we launched into the rest of the program.

One of the first things I said was, "Okay, no one here is allowed to actually die over this weekend." We explored questions about preparing for the end of earthly life, learned how to cope with the loss of a loved one, read from Swedenborg's writings concern-

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2007 Fall General Council Meeting Report

by Chris Laitner

The General Council met at Camp Mennoscah near Murdock, Kansas November 1-4, as guests of the Kansas Association at their annual retreat. Members of the Kansas Association provided shuttle service, lodging and wonderful food and fellowship. It was a wonderful opportunity for members of General Council to interact with members of the Kansas Association. The groups joined for the Association worship service.

General Council discussed remaining closure steps related to the denomination's suit against the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem, now unaffiliated. (See the October *Messenger* article regarding the suit.)

Wayfarers Chapel, whose Board of Managers is appointed by the denomination's General Council, presented its 2008 budget and some bylaw revisions for confirmation. The budget was approved, and a member of General Council will be in contact with the Chapel Board for specific background regarding the bylaw revisions.

The committee appointed to work with the president of Convention to establish a basic president's job description submitted a final draft for the Council's consideration. While General Council has chosen to ponder this concept for awhile, all of the responsibilities listed in the constitution and bylaws for this position have been codified along with the "things

that usually occur" into a basic job description format.

The General Convention has been a member communion of the National Council of Churches in Christ, USA (NCCCCUSA) for nearly fifty years. For many years the denomination had at least three ministers and one layperson who attended annual meetings and who also served on various NCCCCUSA commissions, which are specially focused work committees. In recent years it has been a bit challenging to do more

pointed Investment Committee, and some growth in contributions to the general work of the denomination from member associations, ministries and individuals, our deficit budget continues to improve. The General Council is charged with approving an annual budget each fall, so significant time was spent on this process. We are working with a very lean budget already, but the Council made some hard decisions to decrease the use of general, unrestricted funds even more. It is difficult to budget in a

structure where no regular annual giving occurs from any of the denominationally connected ministries. General Council acknowledges with deep thanks the contributions that do come in.



Members of General Council search for messages at Camp Mennoscah.

than send a delegation of ministers and laity to the NCCCCUSA's annual General Assembly.

At this General Council meeting, at the request of the president of Convention, she and the chairman of the Council of Ministers will appoint a specific ecumenical officer who will attend the NCCCCUSA's Governing Board meetings, and who will also attend the annual General Assembly meetings as part of our denominational delegation. General Council approved travel funding for this position.

Over the past few years, due to careful work by our denominationally funded bodies, the excellent work of the denomination's ap-

Since its summer, 2007, meetings, General Council has been working to set up a professionally facilitated strategic planning process for the best use and focus of denominational resources over the next five years. At this meeting, the General Council affirmed this decision and will hold a facilitated strategic planning meeting in the late winter of 2008. Results will be published and will be presented at the 2008 Annual Convention with implementation beginning in the fall of 2008.

The denomination's internet ministry, www.swedenborgiancommunity.org, is led and overseen by an *ad hoc* committee called the Steering Committee that is appointed by General Council. Council received

interview

The Lord's Leading: The New Church of Southwest Florida

Editor's Note: This article is based on an interview Rev. John Billings, guest editor for the November, 2007 *Messenger*, conducted with the Rev. Nadine Cotton.

What's new is my embarking on spiritual healing. I mean many things by that—physical healing from the spiritual side, emotional healing from the spiritual side—all kinds of healing from the spiritual side. I took a short sabbatical this summer, and during that time I was praying for answers to what directions I needed to take. I pretty much got my answer; that I need to focus more on healing. The focus at this church has been mostly on community ministry, helping people with their immediate needs. That has been a wonderful journey, getting me to really use my charity, to physically act it out and not have it too much in the head only. Doing service in the world from a spiritual place—that's what's been happening here up to now. The mes-

sage I received this summer was that now I'm at a place where, because of that firmer foundation, I can do more to address the spiritual wounding of people as well—and doing that primarily through spiritual and energy healing work.

Our spirit is all encompassing, so anything that attacks our spirit attacks us most directly. My first thought is the Amalakites. Whenever we are at our weakest they attack with great precision. Perhaps our thinking has become corrupted, either our own or from some hereditary source within us or from our living in dysfunctional families—indeed I'm surrounded by that on a daily basis. It is wounding people spiritually. So the first step I am taking is starting a 12-step spiritual recovery group open to the public. I'm putting out the notices right now

The other thing I'm starting is a healing service, but having it at another time than the regular worship services. The focus will be on healing the spirit rather than worship. It's a subtle difference, but an important difference for people right now who are defended and not happy with the

idea of church. The outreach work to the community will go on as it's always been. My husband is a huge help at home. It's the healing work that I have the most energy for, as opposed to the things that I have to get done.

I have gone back to not using my written text in preaching—getting up there and letting the Lord move me after lots of preparation. Doing that totally zaps my energy. I think the Holy Spirit works through me in that action, so I feel drained immediately afterwards. But the overall experience is more moving for me.

The other thing that moves me is something I have not figured out where to start, a youth ministry or youth group. Some of the kids who took part in the after school ministry and camp and who were in the elementary school, are now in middle school. Well, I don't want to let go of some of those kids and I haven't quite figured out what kind of program to start to get them re-involved. I don't know how to start a youth league, so I will have to pick youth director Kurt Fekete's brain on this one. ☞

The Rev. Nadine Cotton is pastor of the New Church of Southwest Florida.

a report about the upcoming end of the Rev. Sage Currie's tenure as the charter "cyberminister," and voted to post the position, asking the Steering Committee to conduct the search. The growth and good work of this eighteen-month-old ministry was affirmed, and its continuance and financial support was approved.

Martha Bauer, office manager, presented the Central Office report. She also announced that she would be retiring on November 1, 2009. General Council will begin a search

process in the spring of 2008, recognizing the need for a period of training and transition. The many years of Martha's fine service and leadership make this a difficult task. (Although members of General Council knew that this announcement would come, it is certainly a difficult concept to absorb!)

A conference call meeting was held later in November to vote on a \$2500 contribution to support Urbana University's 2008 Swedenborg Lecture Series. This is a multi-day

event where a Swedenborgian scholar comes to the campus, conducts research in UU's excellent Swedenborg collection, meets with classes and presents a public lecture. The 2008 Swedenborg Scholar is Dr. Inese Radzins, professor at the Pacific School of Religion and the Swedenborgian House of Studies, holding the Dr. Dorothea Harvey Chair of Religion. ☞

Chris Laitner is president of General Convention.

Sharing Secrets

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was born in 1860. He considered his life to be filled with failure for many years. Later in life, he began reading the works of great thinkers such as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Swedenborg, and Emerson. He particularly studied the healing work of Phineas Quimby, a famous mental healer. Wattles' most successful book, *The Science of Getting Rich*, was published in 1910, the year before his death. Wattles did acquire great wealth in his final years.

His book began with the words:

Whatever may be said in praise of poverty, the fact remains that it is not possible to live a really complete or successful life unless one is rich. No man can rise to his greatest possible height in talent or soul development unless he has plenty of money; for to unfold the soul and to develop talent he must have many things to use, and he cannot have these things unless he has money to buy them with. . . . the basis of all advancement for man must be the science of getting rich.

To understand Wattles, we need to understand the man who may have his biggest influence, healer Phineas Quimby. Quimby is often considered the progenitor of the New Thought Movement, and Wattles' *The Science of Getting Rich* is considered one of the movement's classics.

Members of the Portland New Church are reading about Phineas Quimby. His healing took place in Portland, Maine; many historians consider Quimby's Portland healing the start of the New Thought Movement.

Quimby was a well-known New England healer from 1847 until his

death in 1866. He was a self-educated clock-maker from Belfast, Maine, who heard a lecture on animal magnetism, an early form of hypnosis. He was inspired to develop his mental healing techniques. Quimby is best known for some of his famous patients who also became students.

Warren Felt Evans is of special interest to us. He had been a Methodist minister in New Hampshire who discovered Swedenborg's writings. Then he heard about Quimby and went to him for healing. He became a Swedenborgian, and saw Quimby as practicing healing that demonstrated Swedenborgian theology. He became a prolific writer. He is one of the earliest writers about New Thought, and he began with a perspective that intertwined Quimby and Swedenborg.

Dresser believed that in Evans' later writings, such as *The Divine Law of Cure* (1881), he wandered away from Swedenborg by explaining Quimby's healing from philosophical idealism instead of from Swedenborg's theology.

Julius and Annetta (Seabury) Dresser became famous in the years after their healings and instruction by Quimby. They met in his waiting room and later married. They were devoted students of Quimby, and spent their lives teaching and healing. They founded the Metaphysical Club, considered by some historians the true founding of the New Thought Movement. Two of the Dresser sons, Paul Seabury and Horatio Willis, became Swedenborgian ministers who are known for their parish ministries in Maine. We proudly claim Horatio Dresser as the

minister of the Portland New Church in the year 1919–1920.

Horatio Dresser was the first editor of Quimby's writings and wrote *A History of the New Thought Movement* in 1919. He was well versed in Quimby, Swedenborg and Evans' books about Quimby from a Swedenborgian perspective.

Dresser believed that in his earliest work, *The Mental Cure* (1869), Evans did an outstanding job of using Swedenborgian theology to explain mental healing. However, Dresser believed that in Evans' later writings, such as *The Divine Law of Cure* (1881), he wandered away from Swedenborg by explaining Quimby's healing from philosophical idealism instead of from Swedenborg's theology. Dresser noted sadly that the New Thought Movement seemed to emerge from Evans' *The Divine Law of Cure* rather than the earlier *Mental Cure*, with its Swedenborgian perspective. Dresser felt that because of the later work of Evans, the New Thought Movement was not grounded in a Swedenborgian spirituality. Dresser wrote:

Mr. Evans' first book, *The Mental Cure*, Boston, 1869, is important for our purposes for several reasons. . . . Although the author . . . branches out freely and expounds Swedenborg's views in his own fashion, he is still largely dependent on the teachings of the Swedish seer and his interpretation is more sound. . . . in the volume ordinarily referred to as his best book and the one which had most to do with giving shape to the New Thought, *The Divine Law of Cure*, 1881, Mr. Evans shows that he has been reading the philosophical idealists, and that he has changed his views to some extent, as we shall presently see.

Dresser is pleased with the extent to which Evans relies upon Sweden-

borg's concept of influx, the relationship of mind and body, correspondences and the conception of causality as essentially spiritual in *The Mental Cure*. He summarizes Evans' early explanation of Quimby this way:

The starting-point of all reason is with the idea of God, regarded as the source of all life in the universe and in the soul of man. . . . In short, there is an inextinguishable divine spark which may be fanned into flame, despite all appearances to the contrary.

Many New Thought historians would consider this a summary of the spiritual method as developed by Mr. Quimby. However, Dresser claims that much of New Thought had become about transferring thought.

But Evans always shows the superiority of the love-element, the divine influx into the heart. The right directing of the will seems to him more important than the use of such an affirmation as "I am strong." For he sees clearly that the disease springs from the inner life in general, not from mere belief; hence the cure must touch the whole spirit. To address oneself as a spirit to the spirit of the patient is indeed to rise to our highest privilege as a human being.

Here Dresser is marking a crucial distinction between Swedenborg and most of the early New Thought writers after Quimby. Many leaders focused on only the use of one's thoughts to change one's health and life in other ways. Swedenborg placed the emphasis on the Divine influx. Dresser is arguing that a Swedenborgian healer would strive to align the patient's soul with Divine influx. From alignment with the Divine, healing can happen on all levels. However, Dresser despairs of New Thought leaders claiming that a healing comes from sim-

New Donors' Gifts Doubled

Would you like to take an online course in Swedenborgian spirituality next year? Do you support the expansion of Swedenborgian scholarship for future generations? Do you support the education of individuals who can minister to a world in need from a Swedenborgian perspective?

If so, then we sincerely ask you to consider making a gift to the Swedenborgian House of Studies annual campaign. If you've never given to SHS before, this year is a wonderful opportunity because your gift will be doubled! A board member has made a matching gift

SHS is Seeing Double!

offer to match any gifts from brand new donors up to a certain amount, so anything you can give will have twice the impact.

Your gift is tax-deductible (US residents) and can be mailed to the Swedenborgian House of Studies at Pacific School of Religion, 1798 Scenic Ave, Berkeley, CA 94709.

We thank you for helping SHS to shine its lamp of love, wisdom and use to the world!

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ply changing a thought or using an affirmation.

Dresser tries to give Evans an out in his *Divine Law of Cure*. He says Evans probably is not using words with the same meanings as in New Thought, but that Evans and New Thought are using some dangerous words.

Neglecting his former emphasis on the human spirit as recipient of power and life from the spiritual world, Mr. Evans now says, "Mind is the only active power in the universe." . . . Having restated the entire theory of the origin and nature of disease with the term "thought" as central, Mr. Evans proceeds to a restatement of the mental cure.

One might neglect the bodily conditions of disease and almost come to believe that nothing exists save when we are thinking about it, if one were to take too seriously Evans' statement that a "thing, a world, a disease, comes into our consciousness only when we think

of it." He seems to forget for the moment that our thinking about it has nothing to do with the existence of the world, that our consciousness is for the most part involuntary, and that nothing ceases to exist when we cease to think about it.

Therefore, according to Dresser, Evans' 1869 book, *The Mental Cure*, explains Quimby's healing technique with Swedenborg's theology. At this point, Dresser says that New Thought was firmly grounded in theology. However, by Evans' later book, *The Divine Law of Cure*, in 1881, most of Swedenborg's theology had been jettisoned in favor of healing based on idealism.

Swedenborgian responses to New Thought became even stronger after Mary Baker Eddy founded Christian Science. Eddy was healed by Phineas Quimby. Later, there were incriminations (and even a court case) about whether Eddy had taken Quimby's

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News in Brief

The Wayfarers Chapel launched its redesigned website at www.wayfarerschapel.org, and invites everyone to visit it.

The "In Company with Angels" display at the Delaware Art Museum has been extended to February 24, 2008.

Visit www.delart.org/view/exhibitions/company_angels.html for museum hours and directions.

For more information about the seven Tiffany angel windows and their upcoming tour, visit www.in-companywithangels.org.

The St. Louis Church of the

Open Word had its annual candle-light service accompanied by a trio of orchestra musicians performing original compositions. A DVD will be available for a small donation. Clips of some of the performances will be available on YouTube sometime in January.

Paul Deming's CD, "Wise Men Still Seek Him," is still available at the church and on the internet at www.wisemenstillseekhim.com. Proceeds benefit Garden Chapel.

The church website, www.openwordchurch.org, has been updated and will continue to be improved thanks to the generous contributions of Dr. Annette Vaillancourt of Girl-

Geek.com.

The New Church of New York is hosting "A Life After Life Symposium—A Discussion at the Edge of Life and Death and Beyond." Dannon Brinkley, author of the #1 *New York Times* bestselling book *Saved by the Light* will join near death experiencer Kathryn Brinkley, radio talk show personality Vaishali and Rev. Grant Schnarr, Swedenborgian expert, for the symposium on March 8, 2008, 12–4 PM at the New Church of New York, 114 East 35th Street. Tel. 212.685.8967.

The Ohio Association held its annual meeting October 5–7, 2007, in
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Sharing Secrets

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theory as her own without acknowledging it. There are many debates, still, about Quimby's influence on Christian Science and Christian Science's connection to the New Thought Movement. But even without sorting all of that out, it is interesting to note some of the things Swedenborgians said in the early days of Christian Science. One Swedenborgian, Willard Hinkle, was quite critical of the concept that only thought creates disease in his book, *Modern Theosophy, Christian Science, and Spiritism*. He insisted that disease involves the body, and cannot exist solely in the mind.

The mind acts upon the body and the body reacts upon the mind. They are not independent of each other, but intimately connected. Matter, therefore is not the opposite of spirit, as Mrs. Eddy affirms.

These early New Thought works focused on using the mind to heal the body. By 1910 a new element

had been brought to the forefront: that mind controls all the circumstances of our lives. Wattles wrote in his book, "the fact remains that it is not possible to live a really complete or successful life unless one is rich." It was Wattles' book that had the greatest impact on Rhonda Byrnes and *The Secret*.

We will bring the conversation to the present in Part II of this article, which addresses the current conversation between Swedenborgians and modern-day representatives of New Thought, including Rhonda Byrnes.

We close this article with a list of some of the questions that were being debated between Swedenborgians and early advocates of New Thought.

1. To what extent do our thoughts impact our health, and our lives in general?
2. To what extent do our thoughts impact the physical circumstances of our lives, including wealth or poverty?
3. How does Swedenborg see the rela-

tionship between thought, health, and wealth? ☸

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

Nanci Weston Adair MA, LCC, is president of the Portland New Church, where she is an active worship leader. In February she will have been a member for ten years.

She is principal creator of The Goal-Model Method™. She brings 30+ years of dedicated service in the holistic health field together with a lifelong passion and study of people who inspire. 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 e-mail is: Nanci@GoalModel.com.

Wilma and Nanci hope you will discuss the final questions with others and email your thoughts to either of them to be part of the discussion in Part II.

Youth Retreat

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ing the shedding of the body and entrance into the afterlife, created art illustrating the birth of your soul into the world of spirits, reviewed the process of how we gravitate toward our ruling love, and closed the retreat sessions with some tips for what we can do now to better our chances of a successful life after death.

Death can be a deeply solemn and emotional subject to discuss. Especially when talking about the loss of a loved one. We made certain to in-

Opportunity

Associations and churches are invited to host SCYL for a retreat weekend. The experience will benefit the hosts as well as the youth.

tersperse lots of play between the sessions to lighten the mood. The group took a trip to the park for Frisbee and frolicking. On Saturday evening we enjoyed a campfire with hot dogs and s'mores as well as a full moon hayride at the home of local church members Tina and Dwayne.

Sunday we awoke early to clean and prepare for the worship service. After an inspiring worship experience we said our good byes at an absolutely delicious potluck lunch (I now have first hand evidence to support why the LaPorte church is known as "the church that eats!")

This weekend youth retreat was a wonderful experience. With more than ten teens participating, the sessions were quite lively and interesting. The youth were engaged in the subject and formed into a tight group of friends by the end of the weekend. Aside from a few unusual late night

Dispatch from Fryeburg

Random Thoughts Upon Returning Home.

by Ken Turley

I spent a week visiting in the San Francisco Bay area. I was visiting our seminary there, beside the UC Berkeley campus. It is part of the Pacific School of Religion (PSR) and the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), which is a conglomeration of seminaries from various denominations that share classes, teachers and resources.



The Committee on Admissions to the Ministry (CAM) was meeting, and I have just begun a three-year term serving on that committee. It is our task to twice a year interview students, monitor and evaluate their progress both academically and personally, and assist and guide them in their development and formation of a plan of ministry. It is also our responsibility to make initial recommendation to the Council of Ministers that they be ordained as ministers of our denomination, or not.

I have been twelve years here in Fryeburg, and twenty years in Maine. I love it here. The small town familiarity, the rural culture of wood

clunks and hisses (from the boiler pipes?), I encountered no paranormal phenomena or glimpses beyond the veil. But I can confidently report that the LaPorte New Church is full of playful spirit and heartwarming, soulful individuals, both young and old, serving the church with gladness. ☿

Kurt Fekete is the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) director

stoves and pickup trucks, hunting season, the accessibility of local politics, the family connections that wind throughout the community, canoeing in summer, the colors of fall, the snow of winter, OK, not the mosquitoes and black flies of spring, but other than that I pretty much love it all.

But this recent trip to the West Coast reminded me that we here in Fryeburg are definitely rural America and that there is a great big world out there that is changing rapidly. Granted, most of us are hooked into contemporary culture to some degree. If not via the internet, certainly by TV, radio and the newspapers; at the very least by the young people in our family circles.

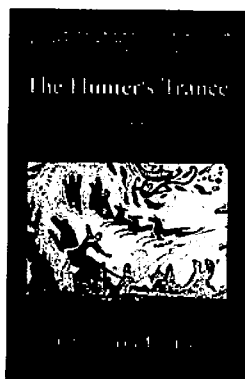
Today, in seminary, there is a similar "liberation theology" that is the hot topic, only now the issue is gender equality and acceptance of sexual orientations that have in the past been marginalized and discriminated against.

We are aware of how much our culture is changing. Because of technology and increasing levels of interaction, the variety of different ethnic cultures is beginning to blend together like the variety of ingredients that make a soup. It's not all good, but it is by no means all bad. Granted, some young men wear their pants hanging down below just about anything that would keep them up (one of the modern mysteries of physics), and tattoos and piercing jewelry are commonplace.

continues on page 13

book review

The Hunter's Trance: Nature, Spirit and Ecology



The Hunter's Trance: Nature, Spirit & Ecology
by Carl von Essen
(Lindesfarne Books, Great Barrington, Massachusetts: 2007)

Reviewed by Eugene Taylor

Here is a book for all Swedenborgians—a call for each one of us to cultivate a renewed reverence for nature, written by a distinguished friend of the Cambridge Society of the New Jerusalem, Carl von Essen.

Von Essen is a physician who has worked in many nations and served the World Health Organization. He is, as well, an avid angler, having written *The Revenge of the Fish Gods: Angling Adventures Around the World*.

It all began in his childhood, he tells us, when he saw life in tidal pools and streams against the magnificent backdrop of mountains, forests, and starry skies. Von Essen represents the physician as naturalist in a world where many physicians have become mere chemists. His view is large, holistic, reverent, and filled with awe. Earth, air, fire and water pervade every page. The narrative breathes life.

The book's title deserves a word. When we become absorbed in nature we are called upon to enter into a deep interior reality. To see nature in its divine aspect, we have to change ourselves. We have to change our state of consciousness from tending to the mundane, to seeing the mundane under the eye of eternity. This is

the opening of the internal spiritual sense. And it is the author's intention to suggest that as we become entranced with nature, in this state we are healed. As we come closer to nature, we enter into the presence of the divine, and in this all infirmities fall away. And each time we are immersed in nature, we emerge as changed persons, renewed.

Nature, in other words, expands and deepens our consciousness. We complain when there is no sun. But even a rainy day is a miracle. A fierce and wild storm, with huge bolts of lightning, my mother used to tell us when we were young, is just God moving some furniture around upstairs.

We need to remember that the coldest day of winter is the first day of spring. I always know, if I can remember to look up the sky, when that last hot day of summer has come. It is always followed by that first, faint wisp of fall air. If we talk to the birds, they will talk back. If we sit still enough on the rock, a but-

His view is large, holistic, reverent, and filled with awe. Earth, air, fire and water pervade every page. The narrative breathes life.

terfly may come and light upon us. We are transported at that hour of the pearl, before the sun comes up, when it is neither light nor dark. We see the forces of nature that are much larger than we are at the moment of first light. And then there are those days when the entire sky is ablaze as

the sun disappears over the horizon, and a moon rises to light our way. Is this merely more nature mysticism, the return to a more primitive, pagan condition? I say no, it is evolution by way of the expansion of our consciousness. It is where we are going as a species—to a higher, more evolved, and discerning state.

Reading the book, I thought of Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences—that everything in nature is somewhere reflected in the life of the soul. That is to say, spiritual truths can be found in all observed objects. "Each leaf, rich in poetic memory, each twig a light toward self-knowledge." In this way, God speaks to us through nature. The soul in the spiritual world and the body in the material one interact in a dance that is intersubjective. Each is infused in the other. Soul and body exist as a duality in the natural world, the natural being derived from the spiritual and not the other way around, so the duality is only apparent; but in the spiritual world they are one, interfused, wound around each other in a glorious intersubjectivity. The one always implies the other.

I put the book down halfway through and had a vision. I saw a long procession of wild animals of all kinds, walking two-by-two. There were the ground dwellers, the squirrels and rabbits, the small game, followed by the large birds of the ground, the hens and roosters, the wild turkeys, and these were followed by the deer and elk, and the bears and lions, the cheetahs and the tigers, and in front of them the gorillas and large apes, and in front of them the giant

rhinoceroses and bison, and then the elephants, and in front of them the magnificent mountain goats and gazelle, and in front of them all manner of other animals of the wild, until the line, two-by-two, came to the very front, where more wild animals were gathered together, carrying a large palanquin, upon which rested the dead hunter, dressed in full hunting regalia, his ammunition and gear about him, his giant hat, and fantastic weapon, which he had used to hunt all that

game behind him, by his side.

They had now all gathered to honor his life and celebrate his passing. They were, after all, intertwined in a dynamic relation, a cosmic matrix of intersubjectivity. Fitting that the prey should be the pallbearers of the great hunter—that the hunted should pay their last respects to the one who pursued them. Oh, that he had known how it would all end. There was something so terrible and confusing, yet so majestic about it—the hunted honoring the hunter.

But in this image of my vision is also the great, disquieting note of the book. Amidst all that beauty, there is something not right going on out there, von Essen tells us. In the blessed peace of nature, where God reveals himself to us for our spiritual edification, a tree is ripped from the earth for timber. An oil rig stands in the midst of a vernal lake in which everything used to grow but now no living thing is in the water. A coastline is covered with foul, black slime, a thick oil slick from a ruptured tanker. Thousands of birds lie dead, millions of expired fish float upon the water or flap about in a last gasp. The coral reefs are dying, and the snows are melting in the highest mountains, depriving those below of drinking water and robbing the vegetation at lower altitudes of its liquid life. The air is heating up and the storms are

becoming more fierce. Even the cold is colder. This is not evolution, but devolution, and all at the hand of man. Our hubris—that we are at the top of the food chain—has got the best of us.

The stages of creation, Swedenborg said, are the stages in the evolution of spiritual consciousness. And when God gave man dominion over all the earth, the internal meaning was that man had dominion over himself. For the destruction of the earth is not merely an environmental problem, but a psychological and spiritual one as well. We have come so imperceptibly to believe that the spiritual is just an invention of our own minds, and that the spiritual must then be derived from the natural world, not the other way around. This is delusion on a mass scale.

As I read him, Dr. von Essen counsels recovery through love, wisdom, and use. Love the earth and reason that she is here to protect us. She is the vehicle of our enlightenment. “Together, this love and this reason are the necessary ingredients for action to avert the looming catastrophe.”

No greater tribute to an author can be offered than to buy his book. We should all buy this one. ☸

Eugene Taylor, PhD, is a member of the Cambridge Church and a lecturer at Harvard Medical School.

Online Purchases Benefit Convention

You can purchase *The Hunter's Trance* at Amazon.com. When you buy books or other items from Amazon.com through a link on Convention's website, swedenborg.org, the Swedenborgian Church receives a commission from the sale.

Here is how to do it:

- 1 Go to swedenborg.org on your web browser.
- 2 Click “Bookstore” on the right side of the menu bar.
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 - Powell's Books

You will be taken to the familiar entry screen for that site.

News in Brief

continued from page 8

Cleveland. The theme was “Seeking and Finding Leaders and Leadership in Church Community. Rev. Junchol Lee, pastor of the Cleveland Swedenborg Chapel, led a workshop referencing the book *Good to Great*, which states that all truly great leaders have a combination of fierce resolve and

radical humility.

Rev. Lee presented awards to:

- Pat Dennis for lifetime service
- Norman and Jean Bestor for lifetime service and generosity
- Chuck Winter for dedication and leadership

After a dinner-dance cruise on Lake Erie, the Annual Meeting ended with a worship service and lunch. ☸

reflection

Regrets

by Jane Siebert

Sometime ago I attended the Swedenborgian Church in San Francisco. After the service the minister, Rev. Rachel Rivers, and I were walking around the block on which the church has set for 114 years. We passed a lady in her seventies carrying a bunch of flowers going the opposite direction. As we neared the church after walking around the block we noticed her again and stopped to ask if she was lost. "Oh, no," she said. She was going to a piano recital for a friend and had some extra time. She mentioned that she likes to walk around the church as this is where her grandfather was baptized—her grandfather, Robert Frost.

We had a brief visit and invited her into the church. She said, "Oh, I don't have time now, I regret that I never have taken time to come inside. I have heard so much about this church."

I have thought frequently about this chance encounter with the granddaughter of Robert Frost. Her words have reverberated in my mind, "I regret I never have taken time to come inside." Here she had been basically "killing time," walking around the church, waiting for the recital, and she could not come inside.

I thought about the famous poem by her grandfather, one of my favorites, about the road not taken. The first stanza goes:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent down in the
undergrowth;

This could be seen as a poem of regrets as one stands looking longingly down the road not taken and wondering what might have been. We are good at conjuring up the "what ifs," the "if onlys," the magically perfect world that lies down the road not taken. Unfortunately, this often leads us to trash the road we did take: the one we married, the house we live in, the job we have, the way our kids act. People we might have been can take on grand images when we play the game "what if." Regret can sour us to the "what is."

Regret imposes impossible demands upon situations, people in our lives and our own selves. It decreases our potential for satisfaction and harmony in our lives.

Regret steals from the present. It takes us from the present where we have choices to the past where power is taken from us.

We all have regrets. I would be leery of the person that doesn't, because they must be looking at themselves through rose colored glasses. It is not the regrets that hurt us. It is what we do with them. Do we go on inside the church and see what we might be missing? Or do we just keep walking around it, wondering and regretting what we haven't done? The problem with regrets is when we get stuck in them, either replaying the past or ignoring the future.

And this is what leads us to the last stanza of Robert Frost's poem.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence;
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And this has made all the difference.

This is not a poem of regrets not acted upon. This is loving what is, giving power to the roads we have cho-

2007 Journal Available

The 2007 *Journal of the Swedenborgian Church* is ready for distribution. You may order the *Journal* in one of three forms from the Central Office:

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sen, not regretting what might have been, but loving what is because:

"Every single moment of a person's life is a new beginning."

—Emanuel Swedenborg ☿

Reprinted from the *Plains Banner* (Kansas Association Newsletter), May, 2007. The Rev. Jane Siebert is a hospital chaplain and the pastor of the Pretty Prairie and Pawnee Rock Churches in Kansas.

Dispatch from Fryeburg

continued from page 9

My own attitude toward the new styles and the new music is alarmingly similar to the attitude my parents had toward my generation's styles and music. But along with that, I can see that young people today have a kind of familiarity and, if not appreciation of at least tolerance for, the different kinds of people and cultures that make up our world that has grown significantly from when my own generation was young. The technology of our modern era is bringing the far corners of the world into our living rooms, even here in little ol' Fryeburg.

Twenty-five years ago when I was in seminary, along with Biblical theology, the politics of political and economic oppression was the hot topic. "Liberation theology" was cutting edge thinking and was mostly centered around responding to the dictatorships of South America and the cold war with Russia. We boycotted grapes and marched against what we understood to be a war of economic colonialism.

Today, in seminary, there is a similar "liberation theology" that is the hot topic, only now the issue is gender equality and acceptance of sexual orientations that have in the past been marginalized and discriminated against. PSR is one of the more liberal seminaries in the country, located in one of the most liberal cities in the country, and they have opened their doors to those who in the past have been shut out. There is a growing number of gays and lesbians entering in and moving through seminary, and now the "oppressor" is not identified as the male dominated realm of politics, but rather the male dominated realm of business. Straight,

white males are the minority at PSR, and if they happen to be masculine, successful, and assertive, it is too often assumed they are oppressors, religious bigots and sexual discriminators. And sadly, they are often dealt prejudice and pre-conceived assumptions about who they are and what they believe. This, ironically, is the essence of racism and gender bias that is so offensive to those who have suffered bias and discrimination because of their gender orientation.

So after spending time with our students, with students from other denominations, meeting gays and lesbians, having a very nice chat with a black, six-foot five, two hundred pounds of muscle seminarian who spent twenty-two years in the navy as a male, but now calls herself Monica and is a sweet and sincere dear heart, I come away with my belief confirmed that even though we have made progress as a society, there is still a wide spectrum of oppression, discrimination, struggle, freedom, accomplishment, inspiration and success in all areas of human endeavor. And when it comes right down to it, people are still just people, as we have always been and always will be. Each one of us, whether male or female; white, black, Hispanic, oriental, mid-Eastern, Asian gay, straight, bi- or transgender (does anyone ever consider celibacy anymore?), omnivore or vegan, Republican, Democrat or independent, we must all make the journey of spiritual growth for ourselves, from beginning to end. And all of these categories we use to try to understand our differences are pretty superficial and have very little to do with our spiritual essence. More often than not the categories that some of us seek to see beyond and yet are the source of so much conflict be-

tween us serve to obscure our view of who the other person really is. And at times they serve to obscure our view of who we really are.

Whoever we may be, and whoever we may encounter, it is our relationship with God and how that translates into our ability to love one another (whether we understand one another or not) that defines our humanity. It is still a struggle and there is so much room for growth, but it is in this that we define who we are becoming spiritually. And in this, we are all equally childish in the eyes of God. It was good to learn this again, and I am grateful for the experience. I look forward to my next visit out west, and I'm glad I'm home here in Fryeburg. ☸

Reprinted from the Fryeburg New Church Monthly Bulletin, December, 2007. The Rev. Ken Turley is pastor of the Fryeburg New Church.

Church Calendar

January 31–February 1: Wayfarers Board • Wayfarers Chapel

February 23: Strategic planning meeting • General Council and invited guests • Las Vegas

March 17: PUSH (Augmentation Fund Committee) conference call meeting

April 11–12: SHS Board meeting • Berkeley

April 15–7: Committee on Admission into the Ministry (CAM)

May 28–29: Memorial Day • Central Office closed

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

The President's Mid-Winter Report



From the vantage point of the president of the denomination, the months between the close of our annual Convention and the celebration of the New Year could be called "the meeting months." The president attends several meetings as invited guest, as voting member, or as facilitator or presiding officer. Much of the work of the denomination is

based on the calendar year, so autumn is the season of review and preparation for the next year's work. There are also some church visits and, this year anyway, a special event or two. Since the closing of the Bible on Sunday, July 1, 2007, signaling the end of our 2007 Annual Convention to the December day that I'm writing this article, I have participated in the following:

- ▷ The August meeting of the Ministries Support Unit where liaisons report on the activities and life of several of our ministries, and also receive and act on requests for 2008 Mission Fund grants.
- ▷ The September meeting of the denomination's Augmentation Fund Committee where requests from various ministries for funds to support specific needs are reviewed and acted upon.
- ▷ The September meeting of the Wayfarers Chapel Board of Managers.
- ▷ The October meeting of the Swedenborgian House of Studies Board of Trustees.
- ▷ The celebration service for the newly renovated Manhattan New York New Church with its minister, the Rev. Ron Brugler. This visit also included a special meal with the Rev. Young Min Kim and members of the Church of the Little Grain.
- ▷ Electronic and conference call communications for the denomination's Cabinet meeting where all Support Units and other denominational bodies meet together to identify and outline goals and budget needs for the following year.
- ▷ The November General Council meeting, hosted this year by the Kansas Association, who gifted us with airport shuttle transportation, lodging and meals as guests of the annual gathering of the Association at Camp Mennoscaph, near Murdock, Kansas. Excellent fellowship and a great trip to the Kansas salt mine museum

were also part of this experience.

- ▷ The Committee on Admission into the Ministry (CAM) at the Swedenborgian House of Studies.
- ▷ The Sunday service at the Cleveland Swedenborg Chapel, where I enjoyed a community potluck meal and spent some quality time with Rev. Junchol Lee.
- ▷ A conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts, hosted by the Harvard Divinity School, where I heard presentations by, and was able to talk with, Marcus Borg, Diana Butler Bass and Brian McLaren, all people who are looking at ways the church can be most relevant in our time. The conference title was "Finding Our Way."

An organization cannot remain static and live. There is a vital undercurrent throughout our denomination; one that's been bubbling away for awhile. As I write this report, there is a new gathering of people, a sort of study group on a journey toward becoming a house church in the El Paso, Texas area, spearheaded by the Rev. Sky Paradise. There are other areas poised to begin new meeting groups. We also have a few established churches that are creating committees to look into the possibility of hiring new ministers. The Swedenborgian House of Studies has created a clear strategic plan for its next five years, and has begun to implement it with the creation of new position, director of outreach, for which the Rev. Kim Hinrichs has been hired. Our connectional Internet ministry, www.swedenborgiancommunity.org is saying farewell to its charter minister, the Rev. Sage Currie, and is working with multiple applicants from which a new "cyberminister" will be selected.

In a couple of months, I'll be in Florida to dedicate the worship and work center of our New Church of Southwest Florida with its minister, the Rev. Nadine Cotton. So many of our local ministries have found and are finding ways to connect with their surrounding communities in ways that invite people into the churches and also strengthen the bonds of community both locally and within the congregations.

The General Council is nearer to the goal of creating a balanced budget than it has been for several years, and special thanks is directed to the denomination's Investment Committee for its excellent, careful work. The General Council members will gather in February, 2008, for a professionally facilitated strategic planning session to outline the focus and best use of resources for the next

Passages

Births

Leah Goodwin, member, and **Rev. Kevin Baxter**, pastor, of the Cambridge Church of the New Jerusalem proudly announce the birth of their first child, **Ephraim Gray Goodwin Baxter**, on October 27, 2007.

Rebecca Kline Esterson, president of the Cambridge Church of the New Jerusalem, and **Raphael Esterson** proudly announce the birth of their first child, **Aaron Kline Esterson**, on November 19, 2007.

Baptisms

David Cole Dupuis, the son of Shelley Klassen and David Dupuis, was baptized into the Christian faith on December 9, 2007, at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Rev. Dr. David Fekete officiating.

Kellie Marie Courtney, seven, **Robert Logan Courtney**, four, and **Rose Lynn Bostick**, five, were baptized into the Christian faith on November 20, 2007, in Macon, Georgia at Pine-

Hinge Outdoor Sanctuary, Rev. Carla Friedrich officiating. Grandmother Gena Courtney is a member of our online church community at www.swedenborgiancommunity.org.

Audrey Gray, **Nathan McCrudden**, and **Ashley Pera** were baptized into the Christian faith at LaPorte New Church on December 9, 2007, Rev. Freeman Schrock officiating.

Confirmations

Jim Frykdahl, was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church at Hillside Community Church, El Cerrito, California on November 18, 2007, Rev. Douglas Moss officiating.

Geena Franz, **Audrey Gray**, **Nathan McCrudden**, and **Ashley Pera**, youth of LaPorte New Church, were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church on December 9, 2007, Rev. Freeman Schrock officiating. All four young adults were warmly welcomed into membership.

George Bennett, **Stacy Binns**, **Marcy Larson**, **EJ Read**, and **Elizabeth and Greg Sondern** were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian

Church of San Francisco on November 18th, 2007, Rev. Rachel Rivers officiating.

Associate Members

Mickey Frykdahl and **Lesley Garcia** joined Hillside Community Church, El Cerrito, California.

Marriage

Casana Rae Siebert was married to **Jason Paul Brunton** on October 27, 2007, in Hutchinson, Kansas. Casana is the daughter of Ray and Jane Siebert. After an interesting honeymoon in Costa Rica, the couple is back at work as family practice residents in the Via Christi Health System in Wichita. They will finish their residencies in June, 2009, and plan to practice in a rural community in Kansas.

Death

The St. Louis Church of the Open Word held a funeral service for beloved member and friend **Dennis Taylor**, who passed away suddenly in his sleep on December 10, 2007, at age 54.

few years for the overall work and health of the denomination.

Over the three and a half years as your president, I've read several good, helpful books, most published within the last five years, that cover the nature, practice and vitality of churches at this time in history. A few things are very clear. Society has changed in ways that significantly impact traditional church practices, including service times and formats and the methods and needs of people gathering in groups. It is also clear that people who profess a religious faith must practice it in their lives, both personally and as communities. The

concept of belonging to an organization has changed dramatically with a sense of fluidity replacing the older model of committing to an organization for the long term. The vital church of this century is hospitable, community-aware, participates in its locale and is structurally malleable while also being very true to its fundamental doctrines and honoring its own story. Today's church must "walk the walk," "talk the talk," "walk the talk" and "talk the walk" while it offers an affirming community that provides structured, contemplative spiritual experience and growth through a variety of settings: small

groups, corporate worship and community service.

We are doing pretty well. Throughout our various churches, ministries and affiliated groups, there is continued good work and momentum toward ongoing growth, exciting and fulfilling worship, creative programming and service. Our 2007 Annual Convention theme of "Crossing the Jordan" provided some impetus for our forward journey, and with the Lord's good help, we'll keep on moving. Thank you all for your care, your hard work, and your support for our beloved Church. ☸

Chris Laitner, president

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.

Shout With All Your Might!

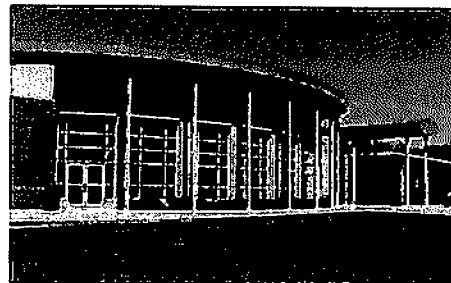
Convention 2008—July 2-6

While snow is falling and cold winds blow (in some places), we struggle to remember that this summer's convention is just around the corner. At last year's convention the Massachusetts Association invited you to attend Convention 2008. I would like to re-extend that invitation and let you know about some of the things we are planning. We will be hosting Convention 2008, "Shout With All Your Might," at Bridgewater State College in Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

The 2008 Convention session is July 2-6. At Annual Convention last year in Holland, Michigan we celebrated crossing the Jordan. This year, we celebrate the proclamation of who we are, which includes both what we are doing and, most importantly, our message of love and truth in this world. The fireworks display in Bridgewater on the Fourth of July will be a poignant moment to remind us what a small group of dedicated people who are proud of their message can do.

This year, the Council of Ministers will be meeting from June 29. Others who would like to come early can ex-

plore eastern Massachusetts. Bridgewater is within an hour of historic Plymouth and Cape Cod. Boston and Cambridge are within an hour by commuter train, whose Bridgewater station is right next to the campus.



Dining Hall at
Bridgewater State College

The campus is flat, our buildings close together, and our rooms air conditioned.

Information updates and registration forms will be posted as they become available on the Massachusetts Association webpage: www.swedenborgma.org, or click on the Swedenborgian Convention link.

I hope you all will join us!

Kevin Baxter

The Rev. Kevin Baxter is president of the Massachusetts Association of the New Jerusalem.

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