

## Into Africa

### SHS Student Bears Witness in Uganda and Rwanda

Cathy Lauber, a third year student in the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program at the Swedenborg House of Studies (SHS) and Pacific School of Religion (PSR), traveled to Uganda and Rwanda in January in a delegation from a class called, "From Immersion to Solidarity: Christian Witness in Uganda and Rwanda."

PSR requires each M.Div. student to complete one immersion class, and although Cathy completed her

**"How do I see the New Church manifest in the lives of these people who have been ravaged? Wonderful stories and ministries and churches have come out of it."**

requirement in her first year by traveling to the Samoan Islands with a class, she was eager to participate in this immersion class in East Africa as well. The class included two leaders and 12 students.

The class spent two weeks in East Africa, 10 days in Uganda and four days in Rwanda. The trip was organized and hosted by a grass roots organization called LEADIA (Leadership and Development Initiative in Africa), which provides ministries in the poorest regions of Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya. LEADIA states its vision

and mission in its literature:

"LEADIA exists to transform Africa to be a reflection of the Reign of God through training and mentoring emerging Christian leaders, social interventions and partnering with like minded agencies."

#### Uganda

The delegation traveled in Uganda to the capital city of Kampala, two displaced persons camps, local villages and a religious center, speaking with community and religious leaders and members of the communities.

In Kampala the students first registered with the United States embassy and, in Cathy's case, the Canadian embassy. They attended a presentation by the US embassy on the historical, political and cultural background of Uganda. Public Affairs Officer Lisa Heilbronn stated that one of the missions of the U.S. Embassy in Uganda is to promote industry and move people out of subsistence farming and into more cash-based farming corporations. After experiencing a portion of the life that these people lead, Cathy came to realize that the embassy was out of touch with the reality in Uganda, and that moving people off of their land would probably have disastrous results.

From the capital, the delegation went to Gulu, also known as Acholil-

and, in the north, the region hardest hit by the 20-year war between the government and The Lord's Resistance Army (see sidebar on page 36). Although both sides in this war claim



Children in the IDP camp in Uganda

to be fighting for the people of Uganda, the people are victims of the policies and actions of both sides. Ninety percent of the population of between 500,000 and one million people have been relocated by the government to Internally Displaced People (IDP)

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Meet the Central Office Staff • Dr. Oz Finds His Teacher  
Eastern Canada Conference • Convention 2008 Registration • Dispatch from Fryeburg

## The Editor's Desk



One of my favorite authors, Walker Percy, was first published in the *Partisan Review*, no. 23 (Fall 1956). "The Man on the Train: Three Existential Modes" was a philosophical essay in which he invented a typical modern commuter who is alienated and anxious.

Although he was regarded by academics as a serious philosopher, Percy

decided to express his views on the alienation resulting from modern life and the clash of science and religion as a novelist. I highly recommend any of his novels, beginning with his first, *The Moviegoer*, which won the National Book Award in 1962. In his academic articles and his books he develops a concept he calls a "rotation," which he defines as a unexpected experience that is so alien and disconcerting that it shocks you out of the "everydayness" of your life and provides an opportunity to see your life, and humanity, in a new light.

I sometimes ponder the experience of heaven as described by Swedenborg, and usually conclude that the actual experience is a rotation. We can rise above the everydayness of our lives by accepting the influx of heaven, but the experience of heaven will be beyond all that we can imagine.

We are made aware once again of the wonderful opportunities made available to students at the Swedenborg House of Studies (SHS) in the report of Cathy Lauber's sojourn to Africa. By virtue of being a student at the Pacific School of Religion (PSR), Cathy was able to make this trip as part of her required course of study.

We are reminded as well of the extraordinary talent, energy, and dedication of the students at SHS and

PSR by Cathy's fine example. I can't help thinking that her trip to Uganda and Rwanda must have been a rotation of sorts for Cathy. Read the article starting on the front page of this issue to share Cathy's discoveries.

The article on page 40, "Dr. Oz Finds His Teacher," states some simple truths about Swedenborg's writings and spiritual leading, but it is interesting to see how those writings influence a physician's thoughts and healing practice. Dr. Oz is something of a media personality, as well. It is exciting to see his acknowledgement of Swedenborg's influence widely disseminated.

Be sure to read Andy Stinson's review of *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* by Edwin H. Friedman. As Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Andy has sent this book to all the ministers.

Herb Ziegler

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I read in the *Messenger* your reference to Miss Block's book, *The New Church in the New World*. Are you aware that the book was updated by Rev. Dr. Kirven in 1984? The Massachusetts New Church Union should have it, or the Swedenborg Foundation.

Edwin Capon,  
Concord, California

Dear Editor:

Congratulations on your excellent February *Messenger*, very interesting and thought provoking. I especially appreciated the "Finding Our Way" panel, and the Ken Turley reflection on the meaning of ministry.

As I read the articles by Chris Laitner, Sarah Buteux, Kevin Baxter and Andy Stinson, I jotted down the main points of the presentation, which, for me, are as follows:

1. How can we be more effective Christian believers and doers in today's world? Where is our passion for sharing the Good News? We need to address two basic ques-

continues on page 44

## Corrections and Omissions

In the February issue:

"Continues on page . . ." numbers were incorrect.

On page 19, the first bulleted point under "Reflections" should read "ability," not "inability."

"Dispatch from Fryeburg" by Ken Turley on page 27 was reprinted from the December 2007 Fryeburg *New Church Monthly Bulletin*.

## 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. 3, Whole Number 5328

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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.

# GC Begins Strategic Planning Process

by Chris Laitner

On February 23, 2008, members of General Council, the four officers of Convention, the Central Office manager and the chairman of the Council of Ministers participated in a strategic planning process facilitated by the Rev. Rich Tafel.

The current denominational structure is the result of a careful strategic process that was undertaken early in the 1980s. More than 20 years after the implementation of that structure, it is again time to consider the most helpful and responsive organization to support the continued work of the denomination and its ministries.

During the planning session, General Council reviewed its mission based on our denomination's governing documents and reiterated its role as leader of the denomination through serving the membership business, le-

gal and ministerial programs. The guiding principles of governance for the Church are democracy, free will, congregationalism and acting out of true love to the Lord.

We further recognized that the current "support unit" system is built on the premise that there is a large pool of people throughout North America with expertise in various areas who can devote large amounts of volunteer time to working as trainers, facilitators and leaders. What we have found through research and experience is that volunteerism is more and more difficult, and the current structure, based on regular gatherings of volunteers, is not efficiently meeting the needs of our ministries. It is increasingly difficult to find people with appropriate expertise who also have the time to serve on support units, remain in regular touch with one another and also respond to needs in a timely manner.

It is time to reassess how to provide appropriate support for our local ministries when needs and questions arise.

The time spent together in this facilitated planning process produced numerous possibilities. General Council will be discussing the suggestions from the planning process over the next several months. The goal is to produce a multi-year strategic plan to present to the membership of the denomination for consideration at the Annual Convention. The work done on February 23 to create a plan to allow the denomination to be quickly and professionally responsive and helpful to members' needs has far-reaching possibilities. General Council plans to present the results of the strategic planning meeting to the assembled delegates at Convention 2008 for response and input. ☛

Chris Laitner is president of General Convention

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## Wilma Wake Leads Online Community

by the Online Ministry Steering Committee

The Swedenborgian Online Community is very excited to announce that Rev. Wilma Wake has accepted the half-time position of minister to our vibrant 24/7 spiritual community.

Wilma brings us her skills and experience in parish ministry, teaching, community building and pastoral care, as well as her personal qualities of energy, enthusiasm and creativity. She also bring us her two dogs, Daisy and Kiki, and her two cats, Jasmine and Pumpkin, who live with her in Kennebunk, Maine.

Wilma will continue to work as the half-time minister at the Portland New Church in Portland, Maine, and will also be teaching an online course on mysticism and spirituality this spring for the Swedenborg House of Studies outreach program (see page 46).

We are very fortunate and truly blessed to have Wilma join us. Everyone is welcome at [www.swedenborgiancommunity.org](http://www.swedenborgiancommunity.org). Please join us. ☛

The Swedenborgian Online Community Steering Committee comprises Susan Wood-Ashton, Sue Ditmire, Tory Henderson and Barbara Cullen.

## Into Africa

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camps. Both of the camps the group visited showed how inadequate government support is. Food and clean water are in constant shortage, and defense against nighttime child-abduction raids, rape and other violence is absent. More people die in these camps from malnutrition, AIDS and attacks than die in the war itself.

Over the next four days the delegation met and talked to residents of the camps. The people are, in Cathy's words, "almost held captive. They cannot return to their homes; the land is ravaged, there are no water sources and they have no defense

against rebels and government forces who fire on them and rape them. The poverty is unimaginable."

Dr. Nsaba Buturo (MP), Minister of State, Ethics and Integrity, Office of the President, addressed the delegation about the Gulu situation. Cathy reports that he was an interesting fellow who describes his work as fighting corruption in the government and at all levels of society. He admitted that a huge percentage of foreign aid that flows into

Uganda never gets to the people. He was, however, short on ideas for dealing with corruption. At the displaced persons camp in Gulu, the delegation was greeted by a festive ritual performance of dancing and singing by the Acholi people. Cathy was struck by the power, intensity, joy, beauty and welcoming embrace of the performance. She surmised that the people seized this opportunity to continue and reinforce traditions through their children, and spent much time pre-

## The Lord's Resistance Army

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), formed in 1987, is a rebel, self-proclaimed Christian guerrilla army operating mainly in northern Uganda and parts of Sudan. The group is engaged in an armed rebellion against the Ugandan government in what is now one of Africa's longest-running conflicts. Joseph Kony, the leader, proclaims himself the spokesperson of God and a spirit medium, primarily of the Christian Holy Spirit, which the Acholi believe can represent itself in many manifestations. The group aims to establish a theocratic state based on the Ten Commandments and Acholi tradition. The LRA is accused of widespread human rights violations, including mutilation, torture, rape, the abduction of civilians, the use of child soldiers and a number of massacres.

Source: Wikipedia



Gulu villagers perform traditional ritual dances to welcome the SHS



paring and rehearsing. She realized that the youth performing a mating ritual dance had known only the camp as home for their entire lives.

After four days in the camp, the delegation toured other regions of Uganda. They visited villages and met with their inhabitants. Villages are communal. Although villagers live in community and help one another, shunning of AIDS sufferers is common. Families live together in huts, but AIDS sufferers are obliged to build their own separate quarters at the edge of the village and cease community and personal interactions. No one takes care of them. The group met an elder with AIDS who otherwise would have been chief of the village. Thus, instead of being revered, he was shamed. When he moved about, people moved away from him. If he approached the water source, people threw stones at him—they feared contamination. He had to find water in mud puddles. A daughter-in-law brought him food several times a week, but not always, and at those times he simply did not eat.

In Kumi, the delegation met



Silver and the praise band that raises money for YCVM

with a group organized by a war orphan who, although young (21 years old) himself, cared for seven or eight war orphans who regard him as a father figure. The young man, named Silver, had experienced a vision for an organization to serve youth. Acting on his vision, he founded Youth and Child Visionary Ministries (YCVM). Cathy relates that Silver is an amazing

musician, fronting a volunteer praise band that raises money for YCVM. The money sends kids to school and goes toward a fund to build a home for Silver and the orphans.

About her experiences in Uganda Cathy says:

"I have been reflecting on the way I see the church manifesting in Uganda. What does the New Church mean? One idea is instilling the church within people. I'm seeing this in people who have a spiritual connection, being of use for love of God and love of neighbor. How do I see the New Church manifest in the lives of these people who have been ravaged? Wonderful stories and ministries and churches have come out of it."

## Rwanda

Cathy and the delegation felt an immediate shift in energy when they entered Rwanda—it was harder to find a divine connection there. They focused on the aftermath of the genocide that occurred there in 1994 and

continues on the next page



Cathy Lauber is offered and accepts the gift of a live chicken in a welcoming ceremony in Gulu.



## Into Africa

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how people are getting on. The issues are complicated, formed by history (tribal, colonial and national), culture, politics (international, national and local), and religion. In the capital city, Kigali, the delegation visited the Kigali Memorial Centre to bear witness to the genocide and the events that led up to it. The history includes colonization, government propaganda arousing ethnic passions, and government distribution of alcohol, drugs, machetes and guns.

Cathy points out that Western media in general do not do well at reflecting the subtle details of the situation. The distinction between Hutu and Tutsi, for example, is largely an artificial race distinction promoted by colonial powers.

"The distinction 'hutu' and 'tutsi' existed in the culture before colonization, but these terms were fluid references rather

than the hard and fast rules for racial distinctions which they ultimately became. The references were more utilitarian, describing the activities of a person or a group within each tribe, for example, 'farmer.' Belgian colonialists arbitrarily separated the people of Rwanda into three tribes based on the number of cattle they owned. People with the most cattle became Tutsi. Any references to physical differences between Hutu's and Tutsi's are artificially constructed distinctions."

The Kigali Memorial Centre, funded by the U.K.-based Aegis Trust, was opened on the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, in April 2004. The Centre is built on a site where over 250,000 genocide victims are buried. As victims are found, they are brought to the Memorial Centre and buried. The Centre serves as a permanent memorial to those who fell victim to the genocide, and serves as a place for people to grieve those they lost.

The delegation attended a Gacaca court, part of a system of community justice established in 2001 in the wake of the Rwandan Genocide. Inspired by tradition, the gacaca was used to settle family or village disputes at the

are no guards, fences, handcuffs or guns.

The delegation's last visit was to the Gate of Hope Ministries. They learned of the children's program, women's ministry and ministry to the community. At an uplifting Sunday service filled with praise and singing, the delegation sang "Guide My Feet While I Run this Race" and "Hale Hale Hale." They met some parishioners and local villagers, among whom was a family of five headed by the eldest daughter, who was 21. She had been head of the family since her parents were killed in the genocide.

Because Cathy and the others in the delegation had a full schedule and were bombarded with sights and

experiences, they had little time for reflection and processing their experiences until their return to campus. Cathy emphasizes the purpose of the trip: to bear witness and be in solidarity with the people. It was clear to her that throwing money at Africa was not a solution. Nor was deciding for Africans

what they need. "Africans know what they need; they want to be supported, empowered and encouraged." Invariably, when asked what the group could do for them, people said, "Pray for us."

"It was," in Cathy's words, "an incredible experience. The people we met, no matter what their circumstances, were so gracious, so lovely—so happy for us to be there. I connected so much with the people that we met there."



The SHS delegation to Uganda and Rwanda. Cathy Lauber is third from left.

local level. Sometimes called a reconciliation gathering, its purpose is to give space to the accused to admit actions, apologize and repent. They are not excused, but are sentenced to prison or community service. The accused and the community benefit from a speedier trial and disposition than a more formal court could provide. Cathy noted that the trials took place in open spaces on benches, the judges (male and female) are volunteers from the community, and there

## Meet the Central Office Staff

Central Office is the administrative nerve center of the General Convention, ably led by Martha Bauer, office manager. Assisting her with the great variety of tasks are two dedicated and capable people, Gina Peracchi and Renee Hellenbrecht.

### Gina Peracchi

Gina has been assisting Martha with the financial aspects of Central Office for four and a half years. She keeps the financial books, pays bills, processes receipts, tracks loans, monitors budgets, reconciles bank statements, manages payroll, manages the cash account, compiles information for audits and helps with the common fund. On top of all that, she assists with other tasks as necessary in a small office.

After graduating with a degree in accounting from the University of Massachusetts in Boston, Gina worked at Fidelity Funds calculating daily prices for funds, and then as a manager at the Boston Company. She also has experience in accounting at the Kendall Company and as controller of funds for Local 103 of the Electrical Workers Union.

Gina lives in Roslindale, a section of Boston, where she grew up. Her parents, both immigrants from a mountain village in the Parma region of Italy, actually met in Brighton, England. Her father, who served the United States in the South Pacific during World War II, was already a

US citizen when he met Gina's mother, who was vacationing in Brighton.

In her spare time Gina enjoys reading and cooking (and eating), and, depending on the weather, skiing, ice skating, roller blading, golfing and biking. She also manages a rental property she owns in Mansfield.

Having worked in large corporate offices, Gina loves working in a small, quiet office. She enjoys working with Martha and Renée and meeting Swedenborgians who have passed through Central Office over the past four years, and she feels she knows many more Swedenborgians by helping them through telephone calls.

She considers it a bonus that she can find varied routes to and from work that do not involve limited access highways.

### Renée Hellenbrecht

Renée Hellenbrecht began joined Central Office last October. She is assistant to the manager, performing a variety of tasks from answering the phone to improving the Convention website. She researches and compiles information, handles correspondence, organizes and assembles mailings, and does anything else that needs to be done.

Renée graduated from Emerson College in Boston last May. She majored in radio/audio with minors in history and political communication, where she learned political analysis, public speaking and negotiation. Emerson College has a well-respected, student-run radio station with a large audience in Greater Boston, where Renée worked in production and marketing.

Upon graduation, Renée began working in sales at Newbury Comics in Boston, a music and comic book store, and continues working there part time.

Renée grew up in Waterbury, Connecticut, where her parents still live. At present, she lives in Allston (a section of Boston) with three roommates and a cat named Thor.

Although Renée is still forming her career goals, she wants to do something media related eventually. Working in public radio is an option. Technical fields in media are difficult for women to break into. While in school, Renée served as the only

female intern at a recording studio. Even clients were surprised to see a female in a technical capacity. Renée says, "Audio engineers operate like an old boys' club, but I learned a lot about office politics and coaching voice-over audio."

Swedenborg was new to Renée when she joined us, but one of her roommates, a poet and philosopher, was

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Gina Peracchi



Renée Hellenbrecht



## Swedenborg's Influence

## Dr. Oz Finds His Teacher

[This article appeared in the November/December issue of *Spirituality & Health* Magazine and is reprinted with permission.]

By Dr. Mehmet Oz, M.D., with Jonathan S. Rose, PhD. and Lisa Oz

This bestselling author and renowned heart surgeon found inspiration for his family life and medical practice through the ideas of the Swedish scientist, philosopher, theologian, and Christian mystic Emanuel Swedenborg.

Our religion was never a subject of great interest to me. I was raised a secular Moslem. My father was a surgeon. For me, science had always been the source of ultimate truth. I didn't even begin to struggle with the deeper questions of life until midway through my first year in medical school. But the disconnects accumulated briskly. The cadaver that each of us received had many subtle anatomical structures in the heart, but no "soul" was ever delineated. Brilliant teachers showed me the inner workings of the brain, so I understood how we could remember and desire and move, but I could not find the location of love. I was introduced to patients who seemed to be more than the sum total of our textbooks, and witnessed suffering on a level that I could not understand any beneficent creator permitting. I had entered medical school to better understand the world inside us, but paradoxically, I seemed to be moving in the opposite direction as I wrestled to find the soul in medicine.

I hungered for a scientific rationale to help me reconcile my newly found insights into our bodies and the deeper spiritual longings that we all possess. Help came in the form of an eighteenth-century Swedish philoso-

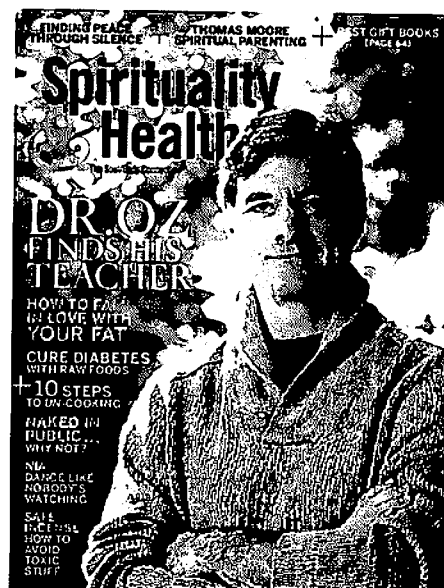
pher. As with many of the transformational ideas that would be slipped into my life subsequently, the teacher was my future wife.

Soon after I met Lisa, she introduced me to insights into heaven and hell (and marriage, of course, which should not necessarily be confused with them) that challenged my status quo. She asked what Jung, Blake, Goethe, Emerson, Dostoyevsky, Balzac, and even Helen Keller had in common. I responded that they had all died, which did not impress her. It turns out that they were profoundly influenced by the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. Lisa argued that the recommendation of these luminaries should be enough to stimulate my interest in a figure who, though rarely discussed in modern theology, might provide a spiritual light to those still searching in an often ill-lit terrain. I agreed and selfishly asked Lisa for another date.

## Who Was Swedenborg?

Swedenborg, I later learned, was a scientist and theologian whose great and defining quest was to find the nature of the relationship between the body and the spirit. In his mid-fifties he came into an altered state of awareness in which he experienced a simultaneous dual consciousness of this life and the afterlife. This sounded spooky to me at first, but as I came into contact with his many writings, I began to understand his profound insights and how they applied directly to my life.

On first glance, many of Swedenborg's teachings seem familiar: the idea of one God, infinite and absolute; the belief in an afterlife; the reli-



ance on the Bible as a source of divine revelation. These are tenets familiar to most Western faiths. His emphasis on overcoming the delusion of the self and on the profound interdependence of all things in both the spiritual and natural worlds aligns so closely with Buddhist thought that the Zen master D. T. Suzuki referred to him as "the Buddha of the North." Yet when one examines the particulars of Swedenborg's works, one finds a distinctive vision.

For example, when Lisa and I got married, there was no "til death do us part" in the ceremony. Swedenborg taught that true marriage lasts for eternity. (Although many of us feel this to be the case anyway, it is not generally part of other traditional doctrines.) According to Swedenborg, men and women are each a partial reflection of the Divine, and it is through their union that they most perfectly approach the image of God. Heavenly marriages are deep soul-bonds formed between two individuals—eternal relationships endlessly growing and being renewed. They include a level of peace, innocence, friendship, playfulness, and, yes, sexual ecstasy that is difficult for those of us here on earth to even imagine.



## Heaven And Hell

According to Swedenborg, heaven and hell are not merely places but spiritual states. We do not “go there” when we die. We are already there. By choosing a life of good will and devotion, we build heaven in our hearts. This place within us then becomes our eternal home. After death, the veil that separates the spiritual from the material world is lifted, and we continue as our true selves — either angels or evil spirits, depending on whether we have internally made a heaven or a hell for ourselves while living here.

Heaven, like the human body, is an emanation and expression of the divine form. Societies are organized according to mutual loves. Each collective group has a specific function, contributing to the whole, much like organs in the body. Every person has a special use, just as individual cells in our body are responsible for specific tasks to which they are perfectly suited, such as collecting oxygen or resolving infection. The idea that we each have a purpose associated with our unique talents and desires and the concept of a “Divine Human” were particularly compelling to me.

I have always had trouble with the idea of selective redemption. How could a compassionate God condemn his children for nothing more than being born into the “wrong faith”? How could an all-loving God choose to extend that love to only a select few? Swedenborg taught that God loves us all, and the various religions allow us to approach him in the way best suited to our needs. He argued that we are all born for heaven, and that it is what we love that determines our fate, not what we profess to believe. God is infinite. We are not. Not even the most brilliant or enlightened among us can fully comprehend the Divine, so our view of God is determined by who

and where we are spiritually. Each religion provides something unique and wonderful for its followers and, when focused on loving God and our neighbor, can lead to heaven.

Further, Swedenborg claimed that God never judges us. Through his boundless mercy, God allows us to choose where we will be happiest based on our ruling loves. If we love God and our fellow human beings, then heaven is a place of immeasurable joy for us. If, on the other hand, we love only ourselves and desire merely the pleasures of the world, then hell is where we are most comfortable. It is “hellish” there primarily because we are prevented from fulfilling our evil desires to harm others.

Angels as described by Swedenborg aren’t a separate species but people who are regenerate — literally, reborn humans. This is achieved through putting aside the selfish desires of the ego and attempting to align ourselves with divine providence.

## The Bible And Suffering

Swedenborg saw the Bible as more than a history of the Jewish nation or a collection of morality tales and ancient laws; he saw it as a detailed metaphor for the human condition. Each story — in fact, each word — represents something in our spiritual life. This is its divine essence. For example, the Children of Israel’s wandering through the desert for 40 years echoes our own periods of crisis when we feel lost and hopeless. Their enslavement in Egypt parallels our own addiction to worldly knowledge and delights. These deeper revelations are especially enlightening when the stories seem morally ambiguous or even self-contradictory.

While this gave me a welcome new perspective on Scripture, it was Swedenborg’s explanation of suffering

that I found most useful. According to Swedenborg, God permits evil only to preserve our spiritual freedom, since good which is not freely chosen is not good at all. He never wills the resulting suffering, but constantly turns it into opportunities for growth and transcendence. (I have seen patients transform their lives after a serious illness.) God, while thoughtful of our natural health and happiness, has our spiritual well-being as an even higher priority. Our struggles and afflictions in the material world are ways of reminding us of our true nature, which is pure spirit.

## Bringing Swedenborg Into Surgery

In my practice I have struggled to provide holistic healing. For example, helping a transplant recipient deal with the emotional crisis of a rejecting heart is often more of a challenge than the surgery itself. Nothing in science can address the hopelessness we feel when our hearts fail us completely, or give us comfort when we face the possibility of our own death or the loss of a loved one. As a physician, I seek to connect with my patients on both the physical and spiritual levels, since true healing is never about curing just the body. Although I rarely mention him by name, Swedenborg has made this easier for me.

Mehmet Oz, M.D., is professor and vice chair of surgery at Columbia University.

Lisa Oz is a producer, book author, and screenwriter.

Rev. Jonathan S. Rose, Ph.D., is a Swedenborgian minister and author of works about, and translator of, works by Swedenborg.

You can access *Spirituality & Health* online at [www.spiritualityandhealth.com](http://www.spiritualityandhealth.com)

## Book Review

# The Essence of True Leadership

***A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix***

by Edwin H. Friedman

Seabury Books (2007)

Reviewed by Andy Stinson

Rabbi Edwin Friedman was one of the greatest minds in leadership and systems that has lived in the modern era. If a reviewer should begin by disclosing his biases, that is mine. There are few books I have read that changed my fundamental understanding of ministry and leadership, and it is amazing that two of those books should have come from the same person.

In 1985 Friedman wrote his ground-breaking work *Generation to Generation*, illuminating how congregational systems work and the task of clergy within those systems. Reading Friedman changed how I came to understand what Swedenborg truly meant when he spoke of good and truth being present only together. He highlights leadership in community and explains how to help people and systems abandon their own dysfunction for more healthy models. It is a textbook on the work of angelic leadership, and on first read reminded me very much of the way the angels work with us.

Eleven years later, in 1996, Friedman began his work *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*. He died before its completion, and for years the incomplete manuscript has been used by the Institute for Family Process as an inter-

nal document. Finally his family and colleagues at the Institute rallied to finish the work and publish to the wider world his genius.

Seen by Friedman as the summation of his ideas on a lifetime of work in the field of leadership and congregational development, it does not disappoint. It is a testament to the truth of any book, and particularly in the age of information in which we live, that a book, when shelved for ten years, becomes truer than it was at its genesis. This is the reality of *A Failure of Nerve*.

There is much genius in it, but

**We scratch our heads and wonder why this is and in many ways hunger for leaders that will come forward to challenge and call us to face and overcome the great issues of our day.**

I want to talk about the three points that most moved me.

*Because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I spit you out of my mouth.*  
—Revelation 3:16

First, Friedman maps out some of the core temptations that the hells are offering the postmodern age. The rise of post-modernity has brought with it a host of amazing mediocrity. While the world rockets forward in its technical developments and standard of living, it seems almost stunted in the leaders and leadership that pervade our institutions. In Congress, good congresspeople are choosing not to run because of the divisive nature of the office and the simple inability to have the effect they desire.

We scratch our heads and wonder why this is so. In many ways we hunger for leaders that will come forward to challenge and call us to face and

overcome the great issues of our day.

We wonder why, while Friedman maps out why and what is happening with striking clarity. His ability to see challenges of the new age not as problems to be solved, but as dysfunctions (hellish patterns) to be overcome, separates him from other writers on this subject. He sees the leaders we promote through the challenges of modernity as well as a manifestation of the very anxiety we are carrying in our society, churches and lives.

If, as Swedenborg suggests, we (in whatever size community you want to define) are aligning ourselves with a spiritual community of heavenly or hellish spirits, and as a result are manifesting the energy and love of that spiritual community, then what Friedman suggests about the nature of the leaders that are being promoted speaks profoundly and deeply to our souls. Real leaders and leadership are not dead, we are simply oriented in a way that does not serve the health of the world or God's love for us.

*Without vision the people perish.*

—Proverbs

A leader's vision, the ability to be self-differentiated in the midst of those who would challenge his or her world view, is the bread and butter of real leadership. He begins the book with these words, "Those who wish to disrupt leadership will always frame the problem in terms of liberty and order, while those in positions of leadership will always see the problem as one of order and chaos."

Friedman holds up three fallacies generating the bulk of the chaos: the fallacy of data and expertise—the idea that we can research our way

## Last Call for Gathering Leaves 2008

The third New Church women's gathering is being held at Purley Chase Centre UK ([www.purleychasecentre.org.uk](http://www.purleychasecentre.org.uk)) from lunchtime Friday 11th July to lunchtime Monday 14th July 2008. The theme of the weekend is the Tree of Life, inspired by the new stained glass window in the chapel. An exciting, varied weekend programme has been arranged with a wide choice of workshops.

We are gathering to promote harmony among women who are associated with the various Swedenborgian organisations around the world. We are coming together

to acknowledge our common beliefs, explore our differences, develop a respect for one another's contributions, create an atmosphere for healing, and celebrate our spiritual sisterhood.

Over 40 women from USA, Canada, Europe and UK have already booked. The cost is now £130, as there are no en-suite rooms available. The closing date for bookings is May 31st 2008.

Booking forms and further information can be obtained from Rita Russell: [rita.russell@general-conference.org.uk](mailto:rita.russell@general-conference.org.uk).

into action; the fallacy of empathy—the idea that feeling another's pain will introduce change; and the fallacy of self—the idea that having a robust, healthy, and differentiated self is bad. Through mapping out these three temptations, Friedman reinforces the leader who would go forward in boldness.

While it would take too long to explain each of these temptations, my experience of his illumination profoundly changed and reinforced what I knew about successful leaders, as well as what I have come to suspect about struggling leaders.

*If God is with us, who can be against us?*

—Romans

There is much more. The holistic nature of systems and growth, the awareness of being sabotaged as a leader, the deadly nature of emotional triangles, the correspondences of these truths in nature and biology, and how these observations play out in congregational systems are only a

few of the other topics he addresses.

Throughout the book Friedman uses the focus of orientation—which way we as a people are pointed, whether toward an old world of limitations or a new world of freedom—as the defining paradigm of hellish or heavenly systems.

In short, *A Failure of Nerve* is the most profound book on leadership I have ever read. I hope each of you will spend some timewith it, and let it open and challenge the preconceived notions that we have come to hold that perhaps, just perhaps, are keeping us locked in a prison of our own making.✠

Rev. Andy Stinson is Chairman of the Council of Ministers

**Rev. Andy Stinson invites everyone to explore his newly launched blog, "View from Behind the White Horse" at [whitehorseviews.blogspot.com](http://whitehorseviews.blogspot.com)**

## Meet the Staff

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excited when he heard she was working for the Swedenborgian Church.

Renée enjoys drawing and painting, especially people as subject matter, and spent one summer at Rhode Island School of Design. She has not traveled much lately, but visited Italy when she was 13, and joined a program called People to People when she was 15, spending three weeks in England and Ireland.

Renée enjoys the friendly atmosphere at Central Office, although it took some time to get used to working in such a quiet office. She has enjoyed meeting Swedenborgians who have passed through, and looks forward to meeting more people at Annual Convention. ✠

## Church Calendar

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

**April 5:** General Council conference call meeting

**April 11–12:** SHS Board meeting • Berkeley

**April 15–7:** Committee on Admission into the Ministry (CAM) meeting • Berkeley

**May 28–29:** Memorial Day • Central Office closed

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

**July 2:** General Council meeting • Bridgewater, Massachusetts

**July 2–July 6:** Annual Convention • Bridgewater, Massachusetts

**July 3:** SHS Annual Meeting • Bridgewater, Massachusetts

**July 11–14:** Gathering Leaves • Purley Chase, England

## Welcome Eastern Canada Conference

by John Maine

As a member of the Canada Association, I am very proud and pleased to report that, at our annual meeting on February 24, members voted unanimously to change the name of the Canada Association to Eastern Canada Conference.

The change was effected to align the association with current reality. The Canada Association was founded in 1862 as the de facto national body of all Swedenborgians in this country. Since that time, however, Can-

ada has expanded westward, and our church with it. A new regional association, covering an area from Manitoba to British Columbia, was named the Western Canada Conference. So we in the East (from Ontario to the Maritimes) shall now be known as the Eastern Canada Conference. Our goal is to explore all the ways we can work, learn and grow with our fellow Swedenborgians in the West to build up our church all across Canada. ☛

Rev. John Maine is pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario.

## Letter to the Editor

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tions: "Who are we?" and "What is God calling us to do where we live?"

2. Personal and institutional transformation requires intentional strategies and actions. Transformation begins from within and at the local level; it can't be imposed from the outside. Spiritual transformation is God's plan and promise for everyone, but our active involvement in this growth process is essential.
3. Meaningful worship, prayer, meditation, Bible study, paying attention to God—these elements form the beating heart of the Christian faith.
4. In our church life, keep the best from the past, but be open and inviting to new, exciting possibilities re: Christian service and worship.
5. Central to everything else in the articles: Being in touch with the Power and Presence of the Living Lord in our daily affairs. How do we best live out the Risen Christ's love in the world? These aren't just theological words; this is what life is all about!

Put this all together and it makes for a very appealing call to action! Aye, there's the rub! What do we do about it? What are the implications, and applications, of these five points?

Wouldn't it be great if small groups in all of our local churches, and at Convention, would spend some time wrestling with the fine ideas expressed in the "Finding our Way" presentation! Who knows where it might lead us!

*Paul Zacharias,  
Kitchener, Ontario*

## News in Brief

**Inese Radzins**, Dorothea Harvey Professor of Swedenborgian Studies at Pacific School of Religion and 2008 Swedenborg scholar in residence at Urbana University, gave the annual Urbana University Swedenborg Lecture titled "From Bush to Suzuki: The Possibility of a Pluralistic Society," on March 14, 2008. She explored Swedenborg's approach to spirituality as seen by George W. Bush's distant uncle George Bush (1796–1856), and Buddhist philosopher D. T. Suzuki. She applied their writings to an understanding of contemporary discussions of religious pluralism.

The annual Swedenborg Lecture is funded by General Convention.

The **New Church of the Southwest Desert** held an open house on February 24.

The **Glendale New Church** in Glendale, Ohio (a suburb of Cincinnati) was featured in a documentary about the architectural legacy of area churches on CET, public television in Cincinnati, on March 2.

Although the Glendale Church is now part of the General Church, it was built in 1847. Rev. Frank Sewall (See "Historical Notes" on page 46) began his ministry career there during the 1840s.

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### The Annual Meeting of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School

(dba the Swedenborgian House of Studies at  
Pacific School of Religion)

Will be held at the Annual Convention of the  
Swedenborgian Church of the US and Canada,

Bridgewater State College, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

on the Evening of Thursday, July 3, 2007

All are welcome.

# 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 see more about BSC, browse to [www.bridgew.edu](http://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 material. For more information, assistance or clarification regarding the youth program or logistics, please contact Kurt Fekete, youth director, at [kfekete@hotmail.com](mailto:kfekete@hotmail.com), toll free at 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 East Hall. Room styles consist of 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 next to East Campus Commons, which contains 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		
<b>Grand total</b> (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

## Historical Note

### Arthur Sewall: 1896 VP Candidate

Many Swedenborgians are familiar with Rev. Frank Sewall. As a young president of Urbana University, he revived that struggling institution from 1870 to 1886. He was active in Convention for many years, wrote *The Christian Hymnal*, and pastored the National Church in Washington, D.C. for 25 years.

Frank Sewall's brother, Arthur

Sewall (1835–1900) was a wealthy shipbuilder, ship owner and bank president from Bath, Maine. In the presidential election of 1896, the Democrats selected him as William Jennings Bryan's running mate.

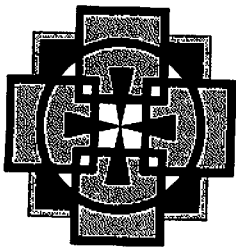
Arthur Sewall was apparently chosen to win votes among conservative and New England members of the party, who were opposed to the "free silver" platform of the populist William Jennings Bryan. The choice was odd, as Sewall had nothing in common with Bryan and the populists other than a dislike for the sit-

ting Democratic president, Grover Cleveland.

The *Los Angeles Times* headline of July 12, 1896 shouted:

"Tail Stronger than Head. Millionaire Arthur Sewall of Maine Placed at the Rear of the Ticket. The Last Mad Cry of the Moon Worshipers Has Died Away Among the Rafters of the Coliseum. From Every Point Comes News of Bolting Democrats."✠

Arthur Sewall remained a lifelong member of the Bath, Maine Swedenborgian Church.✠



SWEDENBORGIAN  
HOUSE OF STUDIES

at Pacific School of Religion

## The Swedenborgian House of Studies is pleased to announce...

### Online Courses and Study Groups starting in April!

Would you like to learn how to live with more acceptance of yourself and your life journey? Would you like to discuss with others the real purpose of your life and of creation itself? Would you like to deepen your understanding of Swedenborg's thought and how it applies to your life? Then come and learn with us!

#### Everyday Mysticism April 14–June 2

Explore the meaning of mysticism and spirituality and find out how they are present in our everyday lives, potentially opening us to new realms of growth and understanding. We'll look at Swedenborg and other mystics through history, and then look at what mysticism means in today's world and in community with others. Throughout the course, we will balance head and heart to relate the ideas to our own spiritual journeys. *Teaching Minister:* Rev. Wilma Wake. Fee: \$175, or \$135 if 3 or more register together.

#### Introduction to Swedenborg April 14–June 2

This course will offer an accessible and comprehensive introductory step for those not familiar with Swedenborg or those who would like to deepen their understanding of Swedenborg. We will learn about Swedenborg's own spiritual journey and then examine some of his core ideas: the spiritual meaning of the *Bible*, the centrality of love, heaven, spiritual growth and the dawning of a new age. *Teaching Minister:* Rev. Jun-chol Lee. Fee: \$175, or \$135 if 3 or more register together.

#### Start a Reading Group with A Book About Us!

Rev. George Dole's newest book, *A Book About Us: The Bible and Stages of Our Lives* takes us on an accessible journey through the most widely read book on the planet. Along the way he invites us into relationship with the text as we reflect on how its core narrative corresponds to our own life journeys. We invite you to start a local reading and spiritual discussion group in your church or neighborhood. George will act as a resource person to the group leaders. Free.

For more information, please go to [www.shs.psr.edu](http://www.shs.psr.edu).

# Passages

## Baptism

**Javier David Maldonado**, one-year-old son of **Christopher David Slates** and **Vania Maldonado**, was baptized into the New Christian Church at San Diego Swedenborgian Church on February 10, 2008 (his birthday), Rev. Carla Friedrich officiating.

## Deaths

**Rev. Erwin D. Reddekopp** died on February 8, 2008 at the age of 92. His life was celebrated at a ceremony held at the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta on February 15, Rev. Dr. David Fekete officiating.

Erwin began his ministry as an itinerant minister for the Mission

Board in 1948, serving first in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and then Yorkton, Saskatchewan, followed by Edmonton, Alberta. He was instrumental in building the church in Edmonton as we know it today. Paulhaven Camp is also a legacy as he, along with many other church people of that time, cleared the land and started the construction of the buildings.

In 1963 he answered a call to the pulpit in Detroit, Michigan, where he stayed until 1970, then moved to the San Francisco Church. At age 64 he left the United States and returned home to Canada, settling in Kelowna, British Columbia, where he ministered to the far-flung Swedenborgians living in the Okanagan Valley. When his health and that of his loving wife, Lisa, began to fail,

they moved to Edmonton, where he ultimately died.

Lisa and Erwin were united in marriage for almost 67 years. Their relationship has been a benchmark for many other couples.

Waiting to see him in the future are his dear wife, Lisa (Elsie), his sons Ron (and wife Dianne), Wayne (and wife Therese), Brian (and wife Fawn), and daughter Sharon Williams (and husband Alan), as well as many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**Mrs. Marion R. Spring** of South Berwick, Maine entered the spiritual world on December 27, 2007, Rev. Donna Lee Muise of the First Parish Federated Church in South Berwick officiating. A graveside service will be held in the spring in Fryeburg, Maine. ☿

## Dispatch from Fryeburg

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the Lord. And it is the perfect time to look for ways to express the love of God in our relationships with others in the world—because it is times like this when nothing special is happening, that it will truly come from the heart. And it is actions that come from the heart that are like the coming of spring: the sun rises early, and with the light comes a warmth that brings new life.

Speaking of warmth and new life, I saw in the news today that the conservative side of Christianity has taken up the issue of global warming and our responsibility to be stewards of the garden we call Earth. Do we really need a special event, let alone a crisis, to take seriously our effect on the earth? Must we be forced into appreciating the world God has so generously given us and our part in caring for it? Who in their own household does not take proper care of

their waste? What farmer would take crop after crop without returning something to the soil? Who would dump pollutants into their own water source?

It is time for us all to extend the care and concern we hold for our own immediate living spaces to the community around us, to the country we are so blessed to live in, and to the world which supports us all.

The number of people on the earth has grown so much since even a few hundred years ago, and the demands and stresses we put on the earth, which hasn't gotten any bigger, have also grown so much more. It is not surprising that the effects are beginning to show. What is surprising is that so many seem so unwilling to consider what we might do to lessen the impact of our presence.

During WW II we recycled extensively, we rationed what we had, and went without many things because we considered it a matter of survival.

The time is fast approaching when our concern for the environment and our need to alter our habits will also be a matter of survival.

If you are thankful to God for creating such a beautiful earth, and thankful for the opportunity to spend some time here, why wait for a crisis? Why not live in a manner that expresses that gratitude before we are forced to it, Simply as an expression of love for the earth as God's creation? ☿

Reprinted from the February, 2008 *New Church Monthly Bulletin*. Rev. Ken Turley is Pastor of the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine.

## News in Brief

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ing the Civil War.

The Chaplaincy Institute of Maine hosted an Interfaith Service at the **Portland New Church** titled "Emerging from the Darkness of Winter" on Sunday, February 17th. ☿



## 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.

## Dispatch from Fryeburg

# Caring for Earth with Love and Wisdom

by Ken Turley



It is sunny and bright, but very cold.

And I am reminded of how often Swedenborg talks about faith in

God without love to the neighbor and compares this to light without heat. This kind of light allows us to see what we are doing, but it gives very little comfort, and nothing grows and bears fruit.

So it is with faith in God without love: it allows a person to comprehend and understand many things, but without love in the heart, it brings very little comfort to the person or to others, and it does not foster growth or bear fruit in action. For our faith to grow and prosper and bear fruit, our comprehension and understanding must be coupled with compassion and affection for others.

And what is more, these two seemingly different and yet inseparable inner qualities must be joined together in action. Then information and knowledge becomes wisdom and caring and passion become love and, joined together in our actions, they become

the path and the means for spiritual regeneration.

The joy and celebration of the Christmas season is behind us. The celebration of Easter is ahead of us. And in this rather quiet time in the church year, we have an opportunity to look inward and upward. It is a time to renew our relationship with the Lord and infuse our relationships with our family and friends and neighbors, and even the stranger we meet in passing, with the devotion we have toward God. There is no special event, no specific reason to do anything special, and yet that is all the more reason to make an extra effort.

I once heard it said that "ethics are what you do when no one is looking." And there is a certain truth to that. For when no one is looking, the only person you are accountable to is yourself, and then it is your values, your priorities, and ultimately your loves that come to the surface and are expressed. This is the time of year when there are no special reasons to motivate us. And so it is the perfect time to look inward to our relationship with

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