the Messenger

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America Volume 239 • Number 3 • March 2017

Register Now for Annual Convention 2017

July 5–7: Council of Ministers, July 7: General Arrivals
July 8: Bryn Athyn Tours, *In Company with Angels* Reception
July 9–11: Business Sessions, Worship Services, Ordination, Mini Courses
July 12: Departure, Optional Self-Guided Tour of Delaware Valley

Exciting Mini-Courses for Convention 2017

One of the most appreciated features of annual conventions is the mini-course program. Annual Convention 2017 is no exception, offering a wide array of engaging and thought-provoking mini-courses. The difficult part will be choosing which mini-courses to attend, but whichever you choose, you will be happy you attended. Following is an introduction to each presenter and a brief description of courses.

Rethinking Our Theology

Rev. Dr. George Dole *is a third-generation General Convention minister, ordained in 1960. He served as pastor of the Cambridge Swedenborgian Church for a dozen or so years, then joined the faculty of the Swedenborg School of Religion, retiring when it moved from Newton to Berkeley; he has continued teaching online courses as an adjunct professor. He served on the Board of Directors of the Swedenborg Foundation until he "aged out," and in that connection translated most of Swedenborg's published theological works for the New Century Edition—all but the first and the last, that is, the* Arcana/Secrets of Heaven *and* True Christian Religion/True Christianity. *From 1999 to 2014, he served as part-time pastor of our church in Bath, Maine. Rev. Dr. Dole and his wife Lois live in Bath, and he is still very much engaged with research and writing.*



It certainly seems to me as though the second sentence of *The Doctrine of Life* has not been given the careful reading it deserves. It says that "if we lead a good life then we think good things not only about God but also about the neighbor, which is not the case if we lead an evil life." We have tended to believe that you have to learn the truth in order to live it. If so, then we have been putting the cart before the horse. *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Teaching* presents a program that outs the horse first. After a preface about the goal of our lives, the New Jerusalem, it starts with the very simple, universal question of what we mean by "good" and "true," and then leads step by step through the process by which

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A New Initiative: Scholarships for Kids to Come to Convention—We Hope to See More Children and Youth at Convention

Thanks to the generosity of the Pawnee Rock Church, Rev. Emily Jane Lemole, and others, we have a new scholarship fund to help defray the costs of bringing children to Convention 2017. You can also help by contributing on the Convention registration form or contacting Central Office.

We have worked to keep fees as low as possible for everyone. We would love to see more kids attend. To help more families participate, there is a maximum family registration fee (equivalent to two adult registrations). Contact Central Office to apply for need-based scholarships for children.

The Wilmington Church of the Holy City, the Temenos Community, and volunteers will provide fun and learning for kids ages 3–11 during the ministers' meetings and convention business sessions and mini-courses. Please contact Central Office (manager@swedenborg.org) for more information.

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The Editor's Desk



Nominations

We had a snowy, icy mess here in the Boston area a few days ago, but we know that spring is around the corner—the sun and the calendar tell us that— and spring means we are gearing up for this year's special, 200th anniversary Annual Convention in the Philadelphia area.

One of the advantages of being part of a small organization like the General Convention (Swedenborgian Church) is that participation in leadership is within reach of anyone who feels called to serve or wants to have a hand in the direction of the denomination. Perhaps it's time for you to step up to leadership and service in the Church.

The Nominating Committee recruits and puts forward nominees for election to offices and positions in the denomination at the Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church. The Nominating Committee nominates at least one candidate for each open position, with the exception of the Nominating Committee position, where at least two candidates must be nominated.

The positions to be filled are as follows: vice-president, recording secretary, treasurer, General Council layperson, General Council Minister, Communications Support Unit (COMSU), Education Support Unit (EDSU), Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU), Information Management Support Unit (IMSU), Support Unit for Ministries (MINSU), Committee on Admission to the Ministry: Minister (CAM), Board of Trustees of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, and Nominating Committee.

If you are interested in being nominated for any position (particularly an open position), contact the acting chair of the Nominating Committee, Martha Richardson at 207.935.1217 or marthajane410@gmail.com.

Nominations to all offices and positions can be made from the floor of the annual convention as well.

—Herb Ziegler

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Peace Workshop at UU

The Alicia Titus Memorial Peace Fund and Urbana University are offering a workshop to learn and practice Nonviolent Communication©. It is offered on Tuesday, March 28, or Wednesday, March 29, and is free and open to all.

The workshop is led by Diane Diller, a trainer certified by the global Center for Nonviolent Communication. For more information, please contact Tammy Leiker at 937.772.9246, or email tammy.leiker@urbana.edu or Bev Titus at bjtitus11@windstream.net.

To subscribe to *the Messenger* online, scan this image with a QR reader on your cell phone or tablet.

Church Calendar

- **June 6–9, 2017:** Swedenborg and the Arts Conference, Bryn Athyn, PA (http://tinyurl.com/j4dbkkm)
- **July 5–12:** Swedenborgian Church Annual Convention and Council of Ministers meeting, West Chester, PA
- **July 29––August 13:** FNCA Summer Camp, Fryeburg, Maine
- **September 21–24:** Gathering Leaves Swedenborgian women's retreat, Punslich, Ontario

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Published monthly except July and August by the Communication 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), Rev. Jane Siebert, president.

March 2017

Volume 239, No. 3, Whole Number 5418

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Printing: Gnomon Copy, Cambridge MA

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Subscriptions: free online subscription at www.swedenborg.org. Printed and mailed to US address, $20/year; to Canada address, $30/year; to all other addresses, $35/year; single copies, $2.00, Libraries & prisoners, free. Send check made out to "Swedenborgian Church" with "*Messenger*" on the memo line. Other requests, write or call Central Office.

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

The opinions and views expressed are those of the authors, not of *the Messenger*, the Communication Support Unit, or the Swedenborgian Church.

Letter from the President



2016–17: The Year of the Word:
The Power of the Holy Scriptures

Dear Friends,

People keep asking me, "What's the future of our church?" Truthfully, I don't know. None of us knows. And just because I have been elected president, I'm sorry to say, doesn't give me a clearer picture of the future. But I do feel called to lead, and together we need to be confident in the direction we want to go.

I went to hear Brian McLaren, a leading voice in contemporary religion, in Wichita this past weekend. His new book, *The Great Spiritual Migration: How the World's Largest Religion is Seeking a Better Way to Be Christian*, explores three profound shifts that need to happen for Christianity to change.

It is interesting to think of these shifts in relation to our Swedenborgian teachings and how we define ourselves.

McLaren states that Christians must move from a system of beliefs to a way of life, which is the way of love. As Swedenborgians, we may not be living up to this, but it is certainly what Swedenborg expounded and upon which our tradition is built.

Second, we must have a new image of God, not the violent Supreme Being, but rather the image of God as a non-violent, renewing Spirit. Over and over, Swedenborg tells us that it is vital to have the right image of God. And that image of God is all love, certainly not violent.

And third, we must move from organized religion to "organizing religion for the common good." This entails "a dedication to healing the planet, building peace, overcoming poverty and injustice, and collaborating with other faiths to ensure a better future for all of us."

We often say that Swedenborg did not intend to start an organized religion. He wanted his teachings to help organize a new understanding of church, the New Christian Church, where denominational differences would fall away, with religion that is related to life, and shows how the life of religion can be lived to do good. He hoped for a deeper understanding of the Word, of the Lord Jesus Christ, of faith, and of life, so that we could live our Christian faith in the world.

So I ask you, how are we doing here? What do we stand for? Who do we stand up for? Are we organizing our religion for the common good, or are we organizing our religion for self-preservation?

We need to have some deep discussions. What is the best use of the funds that our forefathers, and foremothers, and current members have left to us? How do we speak out with a unified voice? What do we need to do to live our religion? What is the one thing we should be focusing on?

Clarissa Pinkola Estes, a Jungian analyst, post-trauma specialist, author, and poet, reminds us in her "Letter to a Young Activist During Troubled Times" (page 40), "Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely."

I will admit, I have more questions right now than answers. But I do believe that we have a theology that can guide us, and we have a Christian spirituality that many are searching for. And many of our churches are doing what is within their reach.

We need a renewed evangelical passion combined with a progressive social voice that reaches out to the beloved community. The question is not, "What is the future of our church?" The question is, "What good can we do as our church in this hurting world?" "What should we focus on?"

—Rev. Jane Siebert

Dr. Rebecca Esterson Joins CSS Faculty:

Parallel Journeys Intersect at the Nexus of Swedenborgian Scholarship

By Francesca McCrossan

On February 1, 2017, Dr. Rebecca Esterson became Assistant Professor of Sacred Texts and Traditions and of Swedenborgian Studies at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS). This outcome is a celebrated achievement in a journey that began in the spring of 2010 when Dr. Esterson was selected for scholar development in a faculty search process. At that time the board came to two faculty development decisions: one was to offer a position to Dr. Devin Zuber, whose focus on Swedenborg in literary history, Swedenborgian philosophy, and the arts and the environment from a Swedenborgian perspective provided energizing additions to the program; and the other was to identify Rebecca Esterson as a tremendous potential Swedenborgian scholar and enter into an agreement to help support her through a Ph.D. program at Boston University, which would culminate with her joining the CSS faculty.

In August of 2015, after stellar progress and award-winning teaching experiences as a doctoral student at Boston University, Dr. Esterson joined CSS as our scholar in training, and in the summer of 2016 became lecturer in Sacred Texts and Traditions at CSS and the GTU. She defended successfully her dissertation, Secrets of Heaven: Allegory, Jews, the European Enlightenment and the Case of Emanuel Swedenborg*, in December, 2016.*

Rebecca's personal and professional history speak to her talents and personal qualities that make her an exceptionally good fit for CSS, the GTU community of scholars and the Mission of our Center in the long term.

Rebecca recounts the story of her journey in the following paragraphs.



Rev. Dr. Rebecca Esterson

People are always surprised when I tell them that I didn't really know anyone who wasn't Swedenborgian until I went away to college. Looking back, I have a hard time believing this too, but it's true. I had a safe and happy childhood in Bryn Athyn (in Pennsylvania—a community of Swedenborgians in the General Church of the New Jerusalem), but was very ready to find out what the world had to offer by the time I transferred to Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania my sophomore year.

The student body at Moravian didn't exactly reflect all of humanity's great diversity, but for me it was a gateway to the world. I enrolled as a psychology major, but filled up all my electives with courses focussed on world religions, and quickly earned a second major in religious studies. I found that my desire to learn about other religious was insatiable, and my professors at Moravian encouraged me to consider graduate school in the field.

But it was on a trans-continental cycling tour the summer before my senior year, inspired by something in the Rocky Mountain air, that I made the decision to pursue a career in the academic study of religion. That was the first of many moments in which I felt called to this path.

Again, my journey seems to be marked by moments of surprise at discovering a world I didn't know existed. I arrived at Harvard University as a prospective Divinity School student, not knowing there was a Swedenborgian church right there in the heart of the campus, and not really knowing anything about this sister denomination, the General Convention of the New Jerusalem. Someone pointed me to a current Harvard Divinity School (HDS) student, Sarah Buteux (who was interning at the Cambridge Swedenborgian Church), who grabbed her keys to the church, took me by the hand, and gave me the whole scoop on General Convention, the Cambridge Church community, and HDS, each of which would come to shape my future in important ways.

While at Harvard, I was awarded a fellowship to attend Hebrew University in Jerusalem as a visiting graduate student. I spent three semesters in Jerusalem, where I met my husband Rafi, who was also a visiting student from the UK. It is impossible to summarize my time in Israel in just a few sentences, but the impact of being in such a beautiful country during a time of great political tension and violence (during one of the "uprisings," 2000-2001) affected me in many ways. The experience was both enormously inspiring and also heartbreaking."

Rebecca's Swedenborgian faith and worldview were changing, and so were her priorities. Those changes and choices also contributed to making her such a good choice for CSS, as the Board of Trustees and the dean contemplated.

I was faced with a few big life decisions upon graduating from HDS.

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Rebecca Esterson Joins CSS

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While I applied to and was accepted to several Ph.D. programs, I ultimately decided it was time for break. Instead, I started working at Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) and started a family. The CSWR was a fulfilling place to be for those nine years between my master's degree and my doctoral work. I was able to meet and work with faculty in religious studies and with religious figures from all over the world. And my husband, Rafi, and I were able to make a home in nearby Somerville for our two boys, Ari and Moses.

Rebecca's family is truly interfaith. Rafi Esterson is Jewish, and together he and Rebecca are raising their family to be thoroughly immersed in both of their faith traditions, to provide a spiritual foundation for their lives.

The Cambridge Church community quickly became my spiritual family. I was there through four pastors and was on search committees and leadership committees in between their tenures. I did my field education there, taught Sunday school, served as president for a few years, and took the pulpit when needed.

While I didn't get involved in the denomination on the association or national level for many years, Cambridge taught me that through General Convention, there is a different way of being Swedenborgian from what I had known was possible. I was especially drawn to the diversity of voices and interpretations, the curiosity and openness to other worldviews, and the unequivocal embrace of women in positions of leadership and ministry.

In parallel with Rebecca's life journey, the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, then the Swedenborgian House of Studies, was moving through its own journey to establish itself as an internationally recognized center for Swedenborgian scholarship. The dean, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, undertook his own Ph.D. work while scouting for faculty and students for the evolving goals of the Center. At an important point, the Center's journey and Rebecca's journey finally intersected.

I was sitting at work at the Center for the Study of World Religions one day when I received an email from Jim Lawrence explaining that the Swedenborgian House of Studies was recruiting junior faculty members. The message invited me to consider doctoral work and to consider applying to teach in Berkeley. I immediately forwarded the email to my husband with the simple message: "I think this is for me." He agreed. And fortunately, so did Boston University (BU), where I enrolled as a doctoral student in religious texts and traditions with the support of a Dean's Fellowship from the university. In addition to my studies in the history of biblical interpretation and Jewish-Christian relations, BU provided me with years of teacher training and supported me in writing my dissertation on Swedenborg. Four years and one more baby later, we were all on a plane to San Francisco.

During Rebecca's final phases of transformation into a top-trained scholar, SHS was transforming as well. While retaining a primary emphasis on professional training for ordained ministers and licensed pastors to serve in the Church and the world, the school's leadership saw that an important objective of its mission was now becoming possible in ways that had not been true before the school's immersion into the renowned Berkeley consortium of theological schools and centers for world religions. After fifteen years as a house of studies at the Pacific School of religion in Berkeley, the seminary was positioned to be on the leading edge of Swedenborgian scholarship in a new way through visibility at the forefront of higher education. In the summer of 2016, the seminary shifted in its institutional partnering in Berkeley to raise its prominence as one of the Centers of Distinction at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) and harvest the skills and talents of its newly and consummately trained scholars.

Thus, in a sense Rebecca and Convention's seminary were travelling parallel paths of transformation.

Having grown up in an environment where I was relatively isolated from the religious perspectives of other people, I am amazed to have landed in a Swedenborgian seminary that sits amidst one of the largest interreligious centers of graduate theological learning in the world. It is astonishing to me that our little church has such a place on the world stage.

Since arriving, I have primarily been involved in teaching Swedenborgian classes with our seminarians, but this semester I begin also teaching classes for Swedenborgian and non-Swedenborgian students on sacred texts in different religions and on the history of biblical interpretation. As someone who values living in the two worlds of the academic study of religion and the life of the church, the Graduate Theological Union is a stimulating place to work.

I relish having colleagues and students who are a mix of Swedenborgians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Catholics, Unitarian Universalists, etc. And while I miss the Cambridge Church community dearly, the Swedenborgian Church in El Cerrito—Hillside—has happily come to be a new spiritual family here in our new home. I have felt the hand of providence at various stages of the journey to this place, and feel blessed to have arrived.

And the feeling of Divine Providence

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Coincidence? The Rules of Life

By Jane Siebert

You never know who you'll touch or who you'll reach . . .

I had a wonderful surprise today while trawling Facebook. Nadine Elizabeth Rogers from Kathmandu, Nepal was writing a sermon on Swedenborg's "Rules of Life" and somehow came across a YouTube video from 2013 where I was preaching at Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem Church on "The Rules of Life." My thanks to Joyce Barker who videoed it and posted it on YouTube. Nadine posted about it on Facebook in the "Women in Ministry" group.

The amazing thing was, Nadine didn't know me, and yet we were connected through Facebook. She works at Loving Arms Mission in Nepal and grew up in the General Church in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. She was unaware that our denomination of the Swedenborg Church even existed. She was overjoyed to find there are two churches in Kansas and others around the USA and Canada. She said it made her cry to think that there were fellow Swedenborgians and she knew nothing about them.

I wrote back immediately about General Convention. I told her about our upcoming annual convention in the Philadelphia area, July 7–12, where we are celebrating the 200th anniversary of our first convention. This was before General Church split off from General Convention, and we were all one.

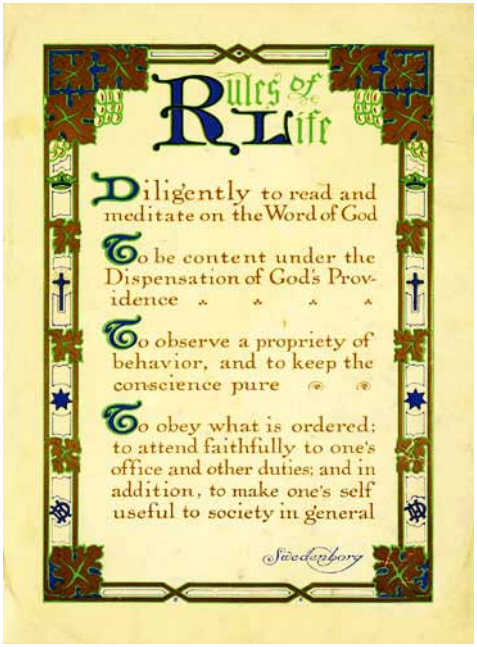
Since I posted greetings on Facebook, several women have commented, from both General Church and General Convention. I met some of them when I subsequently traveled to the Bryn Athyn area.

And all because Joyce made the effort to post my sermon on YouTube. Thank you, Joyce. Thank you, Facebook. And most of all, thank you, God.

The sermon can be found on YouTube at http://tinyurl.com/RulesLife. Following is a part of that sermon.

Swedenborg's Rules of Life

Swedenborg's Rules of Life relate to caring for our soul, not our body or our possessions or even our family. However, working on them will improve every part of our life—in this world and the next. Note they are not numbered as no one is more important than another, and they all are necessary and fit together.



Often to read and meditate on the Word of God. So how often is "often?" I think he purposefully does not say "daily" or "weekly" or even "regularly." Some translations say "diligently." I like "often." What if we were to say, "Read and meditate on the Word of God as *often as you can*." There is freedom in "often" but also precedence. And note, it is not just reading the Word; he also reminds us to meditate on the Word, that is, pondering it, eating the scroll, truly taking it in and making it our own. One verse intently read and meditated on is of more value than a chapter a day.

Submit everything to the will of Divine Providence. What does that mean? This one is more definitive. Swedenborg wrote an entire book on Divine Providence. In brief, Divine Providence is the means by and through which God governs all things in the universe. The opposite is the idea that the universe is governed by chance or fate. The term "Divine Providence" was first attributed to Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century. Thomas Aquinas, from the thirteenth century, also wrote about Divine Providence, trying to explain why evil and suffering exist in a world governed by God.

What is intriguing about Swedenborg's explanation, written in the eighteenth century, is that God is all love and goodness, not judging or causing bad things to happen, rather allowing them. Personal free will remains essential in the process of Divine Providence. Swedenborg explains the Lord's goal is the formation of a heavenly community, bringing everyone—every human being on earth—into heaven. Divine Providence is the way God works to do that. The full commitment to spiritual growth requires our understanding of the role that difficulties and evil play in our lives. That is the essence of the second rule of life; submit everything to the will of Divine Providence. Look at everything in your life through the understanding of a just and loving God, allowing us freedom and wanting only what is best

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Coincidence?

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for us and our salvation, which is beyond our understanding on this earth.

Observe in everything a propriety of behavior, and to keep the conscience clear. This covers how we act in the world. If we follow the Ten Commandments, this will keep our conscience clear, and we will behave appropriately. Don't steal, murder, commit adultery, take the Lord's name in vain; don't covet, and have no other gods before us.

Discharge with fidelity the functions of my employment and to make myself in all things useful to society. This is the only rule in which he used personal pronouns—"my employment" and "make myself . . . useful." For me, the philosophy of uses is one of the cornerstones of our theology and, appropriately, must have been anchored in Swedenborg's life. He said, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good."

When I first read through these four rules as I began to study for this message, it bothered me that there was nothing about loving the neighbor—where was the Golden Rule in Swedenborg's "Rules of Life"? And then I came upon this quote, and it became clear: "[I]f love does not become deed it ceases to be love, the deed being the effecting of its purpose, and that in which has its existence." (*DLW* 38) How do we say to our neighbor that we love them? We do things for them—take a meal when someone is sick, scoop the snow off their driveway. We make ourselves useful in all things as this last rule of life states.

As Wilson Van Dusen writes in *Uses: a Way of Personal and Spiritual Growth*:

> The simplest and most powerful method for personal spiritual development in Swedenborg's theology lies in the idea of uses. Part of its beauty is its simplicity, which permits carrying it out in the midst of ordinary duties and labor, indeed in any human act. It can be applied anywhere, anytime, by anyone. Part of its power lies in its wonderful concreteness. Much of religion has to do with masses of words and ideas. Use lies in concrete acts. Words are unnecessary. The very concrete immediacy of uses takes us out of ourselves, out into circumstances, out toward others and a larger world.

Whether Swedenborg meant these four rules of life as a complete set or he was just getting started, we will never know. But what we do know is that there is wisdom in them and powerful life lessons and it is good to follow them, reflect on them, and make them a part of our own Rules of Life.

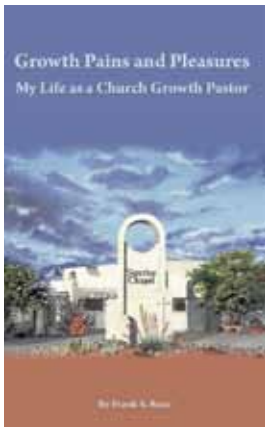
Rev. Jane Siebert is president of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian Church). She lives in Wichita, Kansas.

Book Review

Growth Pains and Pleasures

Growth Pains and Pleasures: My Life as a Church Growth Pastor
Frank S. Rose, General Church Outreach

Reviewed by Herb Ziegler



The conundrum facing churches in the twenty-first century is how to address declining church attendance and membership while staying committed to the doctrines of their faiths. The proportion of the "unchurched" in America is growing—now at the highest percentage since surveys began. The growth in the unchurched is seen mostly among millennials, young adults, and the trend is expected to continue. We in the Swedenborgian Church are no strangers to this trend; we have been asking each other and ourselves how to stem our decline in membership for decades, and answers have not come easily.

Rev. Frank Rose, of the General Church, our related denomination, is now retired, but throughout his career as a minister, this question haunted him, and he finally discovered an answer that worked well for him and his congregation. He has chronicled this lifelong search and the solution he developed in this small memoir. Although no "plug-in" solution for church growth exists (there are too many variables) we can learn from the wisdom he provides in this book.

Although Rev. Rose takes us all the way from his school days in Bryn Athyn to the present (he is 88), the book is a quick read. He documents the essentials of his journey with enough personal detail to draw us in. The focus of the memoir is church growth, his journey, and, to paraphrase the Shaker hymn, the place where he came round right.

His first assignment as a minister was in England, where he served isolated and widespread members of the General Church throughout the UK, and the European continent as well. After two years there, he married Louise Barry; they settled into their English life for eleven more years, bringing six children into the world.

Church growth quickly became a focus, and he had his first turn at it as assistant minister and church school

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Do Not Lose Heart, We Were Made for These Times

Letter to a Young Activist During Troubled Times

By Clarissa Pinkola Estes

My dear friends: Do not lose heart. We were made for these times.

I have heard from so many recently who are deeply and properly bewildered. They are concerned about the state of affairs in our world right now. It is true, one has to be exceptionally strong to withstand much of what passes for "good" in our culture today. Abject disregard of what the soul finds most precious and irreplaceable and the corruption of principled ideals have become, in some large societal arenas, "the new normal," the grotesquerie of the week. It is hard to say which one of the current egregious matters has rocked people's worlds and beliefs more.

Ours is a time of almost daily jaw-dropping astonishment and often righteous rage over the latest degradations of what matters most to civilized, visionary people.

You are right in your assessments. The lustre and hubris some have aspired to while endorsing acts so heinous against children, elders, everyday people, the poor, the unguarded, the helpless, is breathtaking.

Yet . . . I urge you, ask you, gentle you, to please not spend your spirit dry by bewailing these difficult times. Especially do not lose hope. Most particularly because, the fact is—we were made for these times. Yes. For years, we have been learning, practicing, been in training for and just waiting to meet on this exact plain of engagement. I cannot tell you often enough that we are definitely the leaders we have been waiting for, and that we have been raised since childhood for this time precisely.

I grew up on the Great Lakes and recognize a seaworthy vessel when I see one. Regarding awakened souls, there have never been more able crafts in the waters than there are right now across the world. And they are fully provisioned and able to signal one another as never before in the history of humankind. I would like to take your hands for a moment and assure you that you are built well for these times. Despite your stints of doubt, your frustrations in righting all that needs change right now, or even feeling you have lost the map entirely, you are not without resource, you are not alone.

Look out over the prow; there are millions of boats of righteous souls on the waters with you. In your deepest bones, you have always known this is so. Even though your veneers may shiver from every wave in this stormy roil, I assure you that the long timbers composing your prow and rudder come from a greater forest. That long-grained lumber is known to withstand storms, to hold together, to hold its own, and to advance, regardless.

We have been in training for a dark time such as this, since the day we assented to come to Earth. For many decades, worldwide, souls just like us have been felled and left for dead in so many ways over and over brought down by naivete, by lack of love, by suddenly realizing one deadly thing or another, by not realizing something else soon enough, by being ambushed and assaulted by various cultural and personal shocks in the extreme. We have a history of being gutted, and yet remember this especially.

We have also, of necessity, perfected the knack of resurrection. Over and over again we have been the living proof that that which has been exiled, lost, or foundered can be restored to life again. This is as true and sturdy a prognosis for the destroyed worlds around us as it was for our own once mortally wounded selves.

Though we are not invulnerable, our risibility supports us to laugh in the face of cynics who say "fat chance," and "management before mercy," and other evidences of complete absence of soul sense.

This, and our having been to Hell and back on at least one momentous occasion, makes us seasoned vessels for certain. Even if you do not feel that you are, you are.

Even if your puny little ego wants to contest the enormity of your soul, that smaller self can never for long subordinate the larger self. In matters of death and rebirth, you have surpassed the benchmarks many times.

Believe the evidence of any one of your past testings and trials. Here it is: Are you still standing? The answer is, Yes! (And no adverbs like "barely" are allowed here). If you are still standing, ragged flags or no, you are able. Thus, you have passed the bar. And even raised it. You are seaworthy.

In any dark time, there is a tendency to veer toward fainting over how much is wrong or unmended in the world. Do not focus on that. Do not make yourself ill with overwhelm. There is a tendency too to fall into being weakened by perseverating on what is outside your reach, by what cannot yet be. Do not focus there. That is spending

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Do Not Lose Heart

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the wind without raising the sails.

We are needed, that is all we can know. And though we meet resistance, we more so will meet great souls who will hail us, love us and guide us, and we will know them when they appear. Didn't you say you were a believer? Didn't you say you pledged to listen to a voice greater?

Didn't you ask for grace? Don't you remember that to be in grace means to submit to the voice greater? You have all the resource you need to ride any wave, to surface from any trough.

In the language of aviators and sailors, ours is to sail forward now, all balls out. Understand the paradox: If you study the physics of a waterspout, you will see that the outer vortex whirls far more quickly than the inner one. To calm the storm means to quiet the outer layer, to cause it, by whatever countervailing means, to swirl much less, to move more evenly to match the velocity of the inner, far less volatile core—till whatever has been lifted into such a vicious funnel falls back to Earth, lays down, is peaceable again. One of the most important steps you can take to help calm the storm is to not allow yourself to be taken in flurry of overwrought emotion or desperation thereby accidentally contributing to the swale and the swirl. Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach.

Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good. What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts—adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take "everyone on Earth" to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth gale.

One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul. Soul on deck shines like gold in dark times. The light of the soul throws sparks, can send up flares, builds signal fires . . . causes proper matters to catch fire.

To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times like these—to be fierce and to show mercy toward others, both, are acts of immense bravery and greatest necessity. Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it. If you would help to calm the tumult, this is one of the strongest things you can do.

There will always be times in the midst of "success right around the corner, but as yet still unseen" when you feel discouraged. I, too, have felt despair many times in my life, but I do not keep a chair for it; I will not entertain it. It is not allowed to eat from my plate. The reason is this: In my uttermost bones I know something, as do you. It is that there can be no despair when you remember why you came to Earth, who you serve, and who sent you here. The good words we say and the good deeds we do are not ours: They are the words and deeds of the One who brought us here.

In that spirit, I hope you will write this on your wall: When a great ship is in harbor and moored, it is safe, there can be no doubt. But ...that is not what great ships are built for.

This comes with much love and prayer that you remember who you came from, and why you came to this beautiful, needful Earth.

Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Ph.D. is a Jungian analyst, post-trauma specialist, author, and poet.

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One More Thing . . .

In an article titled "Swedenborg's Road to 'As If'" in the February 2017 Messenger, *Rev. Dr. George Dole shared his analysis of Swedenborg's* The Word Explained, *which he is reading carefully on a journey of discovery. After publication, we received this brief note from Rev. Dole.*

Chapter 2 of Judges tells of the idolaters who were left in the land after the initial conquest, explaining in verse 22 that this was in order to "test" Israel. At §3/4681 in *The Word Explained*, Swedenborg comments in terms that bring immediately to mind *Divine Providence* 278a, "Evils cannot be set aside unless they come to light." He first emphasizes the need for combat, and then notes the need of an "arouser." He continues,

> The evil is aroused and opened up like a wound, and so the man grows better and is reformed. . . . Otherwise the evil in man stagnates, as it were, whence come putrefactions, and the man would breathe his last. Evil, moreover, cleaves with good and without such an arousing, there is no separating it.

He then adds an indented paragraph 4682, as follows:

> These are the things which, by the divine mercy of God Messiah, it has been granted me to learn within a period now of sixteen months. Otherwise they would have been mysteries to me, nor could I readily have believed them.[1]

I have been discovering that *The Word Explained*, which Swedenborg started to write immediately after his call vision, records the encounter between his childhood faith and his highly disciplined adult intellect. This is the most vivid example I have come across of a new and important "belief" being granted him through his engagement with the Word.

1 The translation is taken from Alfred Acton's *The Word Explained*, Volume VI, pp. 78f., where the section numbers are 6009 and 6010.

Hillside Installation: Rev. Thom Muller

By Jim Lawrence

On January 29, 2017, Rev. Thom Muller was installed as minister at the Swedenborgian Community Church at Hillside (formerly known as Hillside Community Church and generally called simply Hillside) in a service led by visiting president of the denomination, Rev. Jane Siebert. The president of the congregation, Peter Gottschalk, gave a short talk on behalf of the congregation. Over forty people were in attendance, most of the congregation's membership including new members and active friends and a few representatives from the San Francisco church.



Rev. Thom Muller, center, white robe

Ordained in the summer of 2016, Thom Muller is a recent Swedenborgian graduate of Pacific School of Religion, who grew up Roman Catholic in Germany until the age of seventeen, when he moved to the United States on an adventure as a young adult, and he has never left. After exploring a number of other faiths, he found himself deeply drawn to the way Swedenborg shapes the Christian faith. He transferred from a local college in California to Bryn Athyn College and treasures the formation he received there from many teachers and ministers, but he also began exploring the General Convention through relationships that had sprouted and began attending the somewhat distant Wilmington (Delaware) church to experience the ministry there with Rev. Randy Laakko when he could. In a discernment process that involved a trip to Berkeley to see and experience General Convention's theological school's program, he concluded that Convention was the right destination for him.

While in seminary, he undertook field education as a middler (the middle year of seminary when most students do the required nine-month field work project) at Hillside. Since the church had been without a minister since 2012, Thom, in practice, became something like a student minister, even though a solid team of worship leaders from the church had been providing worship. Thom also got married that year to Eleanor Schnarr, an artist who grew up Swedenborgian in the branch known as The Lord's New Church (LNC). The field education year was so helpful to both the church and to Thom that he decided to undertake what is called Advanced Field Education, and he stayed on for a second year. The church continued to grow slowly and evolve its worship style—a blend of "low church" and "house church." As Thom was nearing graduation towards the end of his second year of ministry there, the congregation elected to woo him to continue seamlessly as their newly ordained minister.



Rev. Thom Muller

Hillside began as a congregation named Church of the New Jerusalem in the early twentieth century in Berkeley. They built a modest Mission style church in 1924, which still stands today as the home of a Russian Orthodox congregation. When they became one of six Swedenborgian churches moving to the new post-WWII suburbs, the ministry was renamed Hillside to embrace its new setting on the ridge of nearby El Cerrito. The church's



Swedenborgian Community Church at Hillside

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offTheLeftEye Inspires Student Thinkers

The Swedenborg Foundation's weekly webcast, *Swedenborg and Life* (http://tinyurl.com/lwhohck) and its YouTube channel, *offTheLeftEye* (https://www.youtube.com/user/offTheLeftEye), has provided inspiration for students taking a new course at Adelphi University in Garden City, New York.

The course was titled "Spirituality through the Lens of Historical Narratives." Throughout the semester, students examined texts from a number of historical spiritual figures, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Helen Keller, and Emanuel Swedenborg. "Students absolutely loved the materials that were free and on the Swedenborg Foundation website, and they were captivated by the offTheLeftEye series, as I have been as well," said course instructor Dr. Cristina Zaccarini. "They like Curtis Childs (the presenter) because he is such an enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and engaging speaker who can really relate to young adults."

She added that the course went so well that she plans to offer it again in the future, with even more Swedenborg content. "I knew these videos would be helpful, but I had no idea that they would be life transforming. One of my students was a peer advisor to other students in the class, and he said that the material was extraordinary in its impact on them."

As just one example, the following is an excerpt (used with permission) from one of the students in the class, a Muslim who wrote of her own struggles to reconcile the strict practices she was taught growing up with her personal beliefs:

> Throughout this paper, I have compared the ideas I have learned about Swedenborg and what I have been taught about Islam. I would like to emphasize that Islam is a wonderful religion that advocates for peace, and the problems I had were not with the religion but with the way I was taught. There were plenty of values that I have taken from Islam that I probably would not have taken so seriously if I hadn't learned about them through the experiences with my family and the religion classes I used to attend. OffTheLeftEye has helped me understand Swedenborg's perspectives on the afterlife and this life. It has helped me put reason to some aspects that I had questions for, which were not explained through the learning I had in my childhood. It's also increased my faith in God, because the influences [from my childhood] pushed me to believe that God was not on my side, and I had to do things that I didn't necessarily believe in to protect myself in the afterlife. As of right now, I can't say I have a specific answer regarding my beliefs, but I know that Swedenborg has influenced me and will continue to do so as I learn more about his thoughts and beliefs.

Hillside Installs New Minister

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mostly glass sanctuary offers a sweeping view of the San Francisco Bay.

From its inception in 1951, a weekday preschool named Peter Pan has operated in the lower Sunday School wing along with its impressive adjacent playground. In recent years the church has become one of the more heavily used facilities by other groups with something going on nearly every day throughout the year.

In 2013 the congregation undertook a re-organizational process under the guidance of nationally acclaimed church consultant Speed Leas in a six-month study and visioning process. The two primary outcomes were to recommit with vigor to a Swedenborgian identity and to shape the use of the property towards groups that are compatible with the spiritual growth vision of the ministry. The rebranding that came out of the process involved the new dba for the congregation mentioned in the first sentence and the new dba for the property and grounds as a whole: Hillside, An Urban Sanctuary. See our web site (http://www.hillsideswedenborg.org) and Facebook page (facebook.com/HillsideSwedenborgianCommunityChurch).

Several ministries at Hillside have flourished since 1951, emphasizing youth, interfaith, music, and small group spiritual growth programs, led ably by Reverends Owen Turley, Eric Zacharias, David Garrett, John Billings, Horand Gutfeldt, Doug Moss—and today Thom Muller.

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies at the Graduate Theological Union and a member of the Hillside Church.

Rebecca Esterson Joins CSS

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and blessing is mutual. Rebecca's reception on campus, from students to faculty and staff, has been warm and open. She is already forging faculty bonds and supporting Swedenborgian students in their journeys. We can happily say that we plan for this strong working relationship to continue well into the future.



Dr. Francesca McCrossan is the administrative assistant at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (http://css.gtu.edu). She lives in the San Francisco Bay area with her husband and daughter.

Mini-Courses

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we may join its citizens. Only toward the end does it begin to talk about the Bible, the church, and the like, and only at the end does it have a chapter about the Lord. It winds up presenting a theology that goes beyond the ecumenical to the interfaith, and one that we can share with others very effectively in the spirit advocated (presumably) by St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach the Gospel. If necessary, use words."

Making Church Useful For All

Monica McCarthy *is the community engagement director for the New York New Church. Growing up in a multi-faith household and studying world religions, philosophy, and theater at Pepperdine University, she's long been fascinated by the "big questions" and how we can live in harmony, even when we don't agree with one another's answers. Monica is the founder of Cheshire Parlour, a monthly philosophic dinner salon, and is the events impresaria for Impact Hub NYC and Holstee. She's hosted hundreds of workshops, panels, dinners, campfire chats, and roundtables that grow community while offering opportunities for more meaningful dialogues and deeper connections. (MonicaMcCarthy.net)*



Swedenborg taught us that church should go beyond a weekly sermon in an effort to be a place that also provides and promotes active community engagement. But what does that look like? The Swedenborgian New York New Church is doing an experiment based on exactly that question and opening its doors to a variety of programming outside of traditional church activities, attracting newcomers who have been looking for a spiritual home, and supporting inquisitive conversation in a nontraditional setting.

In this workshop we'll explore how to transform a church into a spiritual home via a diverse cross-section of programming and engagement with the community at large, while still supporting the current congregation.

The Five Ages of Humanity: Applying Swedenborgian Theology to Personal Psychology and Growth

Rev. Robert E. McCluskey *was born into a large Catholic family in New Jersey. An interest in German and philosophy, along with a move to Boston, led him first to explore the counter-cultural world of the 1970s and then to the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. He was ordained into the Swedenborgian Church in 1984 and has served parishes in Portland, Maine, and New York City, and now serves as chaplain at Wayfarers Chapel in Rancho Palos Verdes, California. He holds two degrees in philosophy (B.A. and M.A.). He has worked in the mental health field from time to time since the late 1970s.*



Swedenborg writes that the five ages (or churches) described in Scripture can serve as models for understanding both human history and the spiritual life of each individual. In general, the five churches break down into the stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and maturity.

This course examines the distinct psycho-spiritual qualities of each stage; how growth within each stage, and transition to the next, can be helped or hindered; and how the fifth stage represents an integration of the four previous stages into a "new person." Finally, we will look at how the fifth stage, the New Church, has been taking shape in a neglected corner of our culture: theistic existentialism.

Swedenborg's Context: Science and the Bible in the Eighteenth Century

Dr. Rebecca Esterson *is assistant professor in Sacred Texts and Traditions at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies in Berkeley, California, and a member of the Hillside Swedenborgian Community in El Cerrito.*



Questions occupying the minds of natural philosophers in Swedenborg's day included: Can we locate heaven and hell in the physical universe, based on biblical descriptions? Is matter active or passive? What underlying principles of nature animate life in plants, animals and humans? Can the origin of the universe be explained without the use of biblical or supernatural explanations? What secrets will new instruments of measurement reveal?

This session will explore Swedenborg's turn to the interpretation of the Bible after a long career in the natural sciences, against the backdrop of the European Enlightenment.

Another Great Swedenborgian: Robert Frost and Swedenborg

Rev. Dr. David Fekete *is the pastor of the Edmonton Church of the Holy City. He is author of* The Struggle and Ecstasy of Spiritual Living, *and* A Rhapsody of Love and Spirituality, *as well as articles in university journals. He holds an M.A. in Theological Studies in Religion and Culture from Harvard University, and a Ph.D. in Religion and Literature from the University of Virginia, where he wrote on Frost for his doctoral exams. He taught college courses in the fields of Humanities, Philosophy, Scriptures, and World*



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Mini-Courses

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Religions for six years.

Rev. Dr. Fekete grew up in the Detroit Church of the Holy City, earned his B.A. summa cum laude *from Urbana University, and graduated from Swedenborg School of Religion in 1986 with a special diploma in Swedenborg and Western Culture. He was ordained by General Convention in 2006 and has served the Edmonton Church of the Holy City since then.*

I was brought up a Swedenborgian. I am not a Swedenborgian now. But there is a good deal of it that's left with me. I am a mystic. I believe in symbols.

—Robert Frost

Robert Frost was raised in the Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco and read Swedenborg later in life. His literary works show Swedenborg's influence. Besides Frost's direct encounter with Swedenborg's thought, Frost indirectly encountered Swedenborg through Ralph Waldo Emerson, who, in turn, also was greatly influenced by Swedenborg.

This seminar shows Swedenborg's direct and indirect influence on Frost. Then we consider where and how Frost follows Swedenborg and where and how he diverges. Participants will come away with a greater understanding of Emerson and Frost, and Swedenborg's influence on both of these great men of literature. Consequently, we will see that Western culture is deeply steeped in Swedenborg's theological thought.

Introduction to Logopraxis



Roslyn Taylor, *M.A.R.S., has written and spoken within Swedenborgian faith communities on issues in Swedenborgian theology and community. The daughter and granddaughter of Australian Swedenborgian ministers, Roslyn is an adjunct staff hospital chaplain, leads a home church in Bryn Athyn, and is pursuing ordination as a minister with the New Church in Australia, where* Logopraxis *(a Word-based spiritual practice) was developed. Roslyn lives in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, and is a member of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos.*

Logopraxis simply means "to practice the Word," and describes a way to engage with our sacred texts as the basis for daily spiritual practice. Logopraxis not only offers a framework for personal inner work and spiritual growth through integrating spiritual truths into life but also offers a basis for cultivating a deeper sense of spiritual community through online and small group networks.

Participants will learn about the practices involved in Logopraxis, with tips on how to set up Logopraxis spiritual growth groups in their congregations or online.

Developing Skills in Conflict Resolution

Dr. Sonia Werner *is Associate Professor Emerita, recently retired. She holds a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology and taught Psychology and Conflict Resolution Skills at Bryn Athyn College for twenty years.*



She is author of four books, including the e-book Conscience. *She is an organizational development consultant and mediator of conflicts for families and church societies.*

How often do people resort to old habits of grumbling, gossiping, yelling, avoiding, diagnosing, name-calling, judging, or cursing when they are in the midst of interpersonal conflicts? There are alternative ways to handle conflict!

Participants will be shown the differences between excellent, good, subpar (too passive), and destructive (too aggressive) styles of handling verbal arguments. Over a dozen skills will be discussed, focusing on charitable ways to confront issues (not attacking people), and collaborating effectively after there has been a disagreement. This set of conflict resolution skills is one practical way to love our neighbors as ourselves.

The Word

Rev. Julie Conaron *is a second career Interfaith and Swedenborgian minister, who grew up a third-generation New Church woman in London, England. Her first career for thirty years was microbiologist and mother of four sons. Today she is a hospice chaplain, minister to an independent New Church, and grandmother of six. She is grateful to be able to share her love of bringing the Word into others' lives without mentioning the name of Swedenborg (to her hospice patients anyway) unless asked.*



How do you view the Word? Is it something with which you grew up, which you view as a support system, but you're not quite sure why? Do you feel that rote learning bits of it was boring? Would you like it to come alive for you?

Come see and hear how to do that in this interactive class. We know the Bible is all about us, but just how is that so? How can we understand that loving inner meaning that can support us when we're sad, help us when we're alone, and celebrate our loving Creator. Come with questions and passages you love or don't understand, or not.

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Did You Know? . . . FNCA, All Summer Long!

By Beki Greenwood

Sometimes, it seems that the first two weeks of August (when the Fryeburg New Church Assembly [FNCA] camp session traditionally meets) are a difficult time to schedule a vacation. You may feel the pull of the Saco River and spiritual connections urging you to head north to Fryeburg, Maine. Alas, the busy schedules of life this year, and perhaps the last, have made you unable to attend the regular camp session. But did you know there are other options available to spend time at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly?



Troy & Sarah Grams at their FNCA wedding reception, with the majestic view of the White Mountains from the front lawn.

When you become a member of FNCA, the facility is available for your use anytime between Memorial Day and Labor Day (except during the camp session, of course). Membership is only $15 per year, or you can become a Lifetime Member with a one-time $300 donation.

The beautiful grounds of the FNCA are available for member rental throughout the summer season, whether it's the use of one cabin for a weekend or the entire facility for a full week. It is perfect for a weekend getaway or a family reunion, everything from a cabin for two to a wedding celebration for 100. And the rates are low, low, low: a cabin costs only $25 a day; a three-day weekend is only $75.

For all the details about what renting the FNCA can offer you, please visit http://www.fryeburg.org and click on the blue "Renting the Facility" link on the left side of every page. By becoming a member, many options are opened up for you to visit and enjoy everything the facility has to offer for reunions, retreats, workshops, weddings, a getaway, or a gathering.

Email inquiries to the FNCA rental coordinator, Beki Greenwood: rgreenwood@fryeburg.org.

Beki Greenwood is a lifelong (and Lifetime) member of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly. She is also on the Board of Directors, the FNCA's Assistant Treasurer, and the camp's official graphics designer. Besides attending the camp session, she and her family try to utilize the FNCA facility two or three times throughout the summer and hope that you will consider using it as well.

Mini-Courses

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Social Media: What Is It Good For (And Not Good For)

Morgan Beard *is the executive director at the Swedenborg Foundation. In the four years since the Foundation launched a major new online initiative, the organization has collected a wealth of data on how people interact with social media and the types of questions and needs that they have. She draws on this experience and the latest research to share practical tips on getting the most from your online presence.*



It seems as if everyone is on social media these days. Not having a social media presence can be a serious handicap for a group seeking new members, but in a sea of media vying for people's attention, how can a small group stand out? What are the social media strategies that work best for other groups? How do you maximize your time and resources to get the most out of your online presence? How can you know if it's time to step back from your online accounts and focus on other types of networking? Bring your own questions as we explore all these topics and more.

The Seven Tiffany Angel Stained Glass Windows

Rev. Carla Friedrich *holds a M.Div. from the Pacific School of Religion (Swedenborgian House of Studies) at the Graduate Theological Union.*

Join Rev. Friedrich for music, poetry inspired by the seven Tiffany Angel Stained Glass Windows. Explore the history of the windows, their rediscovery and restoration, along with the beauty, art, and Swedenborgian spirituality to be found throughout the images and themes in the seven windows. We will end with a quiet meditation.



Passages

Deaths

Tag Hendricks, member of the Pawnee Rock Swedenborgian Church (Kansas), passed away November 20, 2016. His service was held at the Pawnee Rock Cemetery; his nephew, Pastor Matt Hendricks, officiated at his service.

Tag was born May 27, 1925, in Raymond, Kansas. He was the son of Roy Emerson Hendricks and Lottie Gable Hendricks. He married Eva J. Lackey and later married LaWanda Unruh, who preceded him in death. Also preceding him in death was a son, Michael Cate. His survivors include his son Larry Hendricks; stepsons Randy Unruh, Lanny Unruh, Doug Unruh, and Kevin Unruh; twelve grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

Tag was such a friendly person, always ready to lend a hand when he was well enough to. He loved to talk about sports and he did a lot of woodworking. When we changed the front doors on our church, he framed the stained glass lights for many of us, one of which is hanging in my house. Tag will be missed, but he is breathing better now, breathing heavenly air and reunited with LaWanda.

—Connie Helm

Children's Ministry

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ty, whether it was the printing of the Sower Notes, teacher training sessions, subscriptions to *Five Smooth Stones*, or making lamb kits for baptisms.

Over the years, the Sunday School Association has been very busy trying to meet the needs of the children in the church, a hope that began to take shape in 1818, when it was recommended to convention "the appointment of a committee to prepare and publish a catechism for the use of children with a view of establishing uniformity of instruction in the leading doctrines of the Church." We look forward to learning and sharing more about our history with you at our annual meeting at the 2017 Convention.

If you have any recent or older photographs of your Sunday school, please share them with us. (Send pictures to revlaneolsen@yahoo.com). Thank you!



Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen is pastor of the Fryeburg (Maine) New Church and the mother of two children.

Pretty Prairie News

The Christmas Eve program at the Pretty Prairie Church is always special. However, this year especially touched the forty-five members and friends gathered together in the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church. Rev. Jane Siebert connected the message of Advent to our need to accept the Christ Child in our hearts anew every year. We sang the old, familiar Christmas hymns and enjoyed a Christmas play that had a cast of seventeen! Several instrumental numbers concluded with Leslie Siebert singing "O Holy Night" *a capella*—then it was sung as a duet of angel voices as Rev. Eric stood and joined her. Their voices filled the church. Go to http://tinyurl.com/PretPrair. Eric and Leslie sing just after the 37 minute mark. You won't be disappointed!

The Pretty Prairie Church has a new face in the pulpit twice each month. Pastor B, Bernard McFarthing, a retired Methodist pastor from Wichita, comes to broaden our outlook as (I think) we do his. He is a very sweet, gentle soul and sets a good example of love in action.

Growth Pains and Pleasures

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Rev. Frank Rose

headmaster in Colchester, England. He began his growth experiments there, with limited success.

A call to the Carmel Church in Kitchener, Ontario, brought the Rose family to North America and a self-contained General Church community, where, like Bryn Athyn, the church community comprises the church, a church school, and members' homes on the same tract of land.

Rev. Rose details his experience with church camps, sharing groups, and counseling, all of which were intertwined and became prominent during his years in Canada. The story of how he, Louise, campers, and church members grew and changed from these experiences is engaging and informative. It gives the reader much to think about.

It was during his twenty-one years pastoring the Sunrise Chapel in Tucson that Rev. Rose brought his years of study, thought, and experience in church growth into fruition. He introduces this period by saying, "We arrived in Tucson after thirty years of failing to achieve much in the way of growth. For the next twenty-one years we grew at the rate of nine percent a year." That is a remarkable record.

Throughout the book, Rev. Rose recounts experiences working within the structure of the General Church, both positive and negative, his frustrations and his appreciations.

The value of this book is twofold. It is a delightful read, lean and evocative—Rev. Rose doesn't waste a word. For those concerned about church growth, although it is not an instruction manual, it provides food for thought and ideas to pursue.

Available at http://tinyurl.com/jmefphv

The Swedenborgian Church of
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Address Service Requested

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 fifteen years after his death. American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questioning 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.

In his theological writings, Swedenborg shared 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.

SCCM to Present Church Sunday School History at Convention

By Alison Lane-Olsen



Four file boxes filled with historical paperwork from the Swedenborgian Church Children's Ministry (SCCM), formerly known and cherished as the American New Church Sunday School Association, recently arrived on my doorstep. I was extremely curious about what was inside. We, the board of the SCCM, had been asked to prepare something of a history of our organization for our Annual Meeting at this year's annual convention.

These file boxes had been pulled out of storage for this occasion, and I eagerly opened the first box, picking up a file labeled "1926." Inside were reporting forms that the churches had filled out about the size of their Sunday Schools. Immediately, I was reminded that I was most certainly looking into the past, with long-gone church communities from Los Angeles, Berkeley, and Riverside, California, reporting, as well as Indianapolis, three Chicago locations, twelve Massachusetts church communities, two groups from New Hampshire and two from New Jersey, among others.

As I began to sort through more of the files, I found myself in 1933, struck by a speech offered by a Rev. Palmquist during an annual Sunday School Association meeting; Rev. Palmquist offered his opinion that "the world today is upset and threatened with disaster." The privilege I have in googling "1933" in the year 2017, reminds me that he wasn't necessarily overstating the case; in 1933, the unemployment rate was twenty-five percent (the highest it reached during the Great Depression), the Dust Bowl was underway, and Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany and opened the first concentration camp in Dachau. As I continued to look through the files, I was reminded that the Church would be affected by these world events, and it was heartening to see that, in 1945, the Young People's League was raising money for the War Relief Fund.

Making my way through other material and later years, lighter and more joyful concerns would take priori-

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