



Exciting Lineup of Mini-Courses for Annual Convention 2019 in Indiana!

At every annual convention of the Swedenborgian Church, in addition to business sessions, worship services, the annual meeting of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, and ordinations, mini-courses are offered. There is always a variety of exciting and interesting courses to choose from, and Annual Convention 2019 is no exception. We have thirteen offerings for your consideration.

The New Church in Nigeria: History, Challenges, and Prospects *Bishop Tosin Ogunbodede*

A large New Church body in Nigeria was founded in 1935 by Africanus Mensah, a West African. It flourished remarkably for many years, sponsored by the General Conference of the Swedenborgian Church in Britain, but suffered severely from the effects of the Biafra Civil War. It has been an independent Swedenborgian branch known as “The New Church in West Africa” since the 1980s.

In this illustrated presentation, we will look at the growth of New Church in Nigeria, the remnants of what we were left with when Africanus Mensah slept in the Lord, and where we are now in our ministry work. What were the challenges of the past, and what are they now? We will discuss disappointments and celebrate successes.

This course will provide a rare opportunity for General Convention people to glimpse the world of African Swedenborgianism in one of its important story lines.

Rev. Tosin Ogunbodede received a B.A. from the University of Ibadan and an M.A. in Public Administration from Ladoké Akintola University, Ogbomosho. Upon completion of the Diploma in Theology from The New Church College of Theology, Owo, he was ordained in 2005 at The Lord’s New Church Cathedral, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria, by the late Rt. Rev. L. W. Wariboko. He is a member of Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN) and National Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) and is the business service manager of Unity Bank Plc, Igbokoda Branch, Ondo State, Nigeria, as well as a self-supporting minister of the New Church since 2005. He is happily married to Mrs. Abiola Ogunbodede; they are blessed with two young children (a boy and a girl).



When Scripture Discriminates: How Our Church Interprets Difficult Texts

Dr. Rebecca Esterson

Our church, like many churches and religious organizations today, is grappling with how to understand and account for things in our scriptures

that, when taken literally, discriminate against or negatively stereotype groups of people based on race, gender, religion or other generalized categories. This session will discuss some of these texts, the history of their interpretation, how other churches and religions have thought about these issues, and our denomination’s official response, which will be voted on this Convention. Members of the informal committee who have been studying the issues, who operate under the title “Manifold Angels” will be available to share their thoughts.

Rebecca Esterson is Assistant Professor in Sacred Texts and Traditions and Dorothea Harvey Professor of Swedenborgian Studies at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies. She earned her Ph.D. from the Graduate Division of Religious Studies at Boston University and her Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School, with a focus in world religions. She also studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem as a visiting graduate student. She is a member of Hillside Community Church, the Swedenborgian Church in El Cerrito, California, and lives in Berkeley with her husband and three children.



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The 4th Day of Creation

BY JUNCHOL LEE

Rev. Junchol Lee's exegesis of the first three days of creation appeared in the February 2019 Messenger.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." -Genesis 1:14&15

For Emanuel Swedenborg, the fourth day of creation is a clear sign from the Creator that we should not understand the creation story literally. As far as we know, there cannot be any vegetation without light and warmth from the sun. However, Genesis tells us that the vegetation was created on the third day, while the sun, the moon and stars were created on the fourth. Swedenborg explains that the light sources (the sun, the moon, and stars) symbolically describe both the progress and state of our faith.

Stars, as the smallest lights in our sky, symbolize the first stage of faith within us: acquiring and learning spiritual concepts and principles. The

moon symbolizes the second stage of faith: understanding the meaning of the acquired spiritual concepts and principles. The sun, the greatest light, symbolizes the third or last stage of faith: implementing the learned spiritual concepts and principles as one understands them. This interpretation might be based on two expectations or assumptions regarding human nature that were somewhat popular in the eighteenth century: 1) humans might desire to seek higher knowledge, concepts, and principles; 2) humans might be willing to live by the acquired higher principles if and when they fully understand the meaning of spiritual principles and expected benefits from living them. The sad truth in the twenty-first century—247 years after the death of Swedenborg—is that knowing higher principles and understanding them are entirely different matters, and living by acknowledged higher principles is yet another matter.


Why is it that we are often unable to live what we already know to be true and beneficial to us both psychologically and physically? For this, Swedenborg advises us to seriously

examine what we truly love the most, which is often deeply concealed under what we feel obligated to love. Unless one truly knows and admits what one truly loves, knowledge will never become truth in one's mind. Meaning, if there is no real acknowledgement of truth, then there is no union of truth with goodness in one's spirit. In other words, we will never be able to live what we believe to be true unless we love to live in such a way!

Rev. Junchol Lee is the senior pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.

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Church Calendar

- **May 24–27:** SCYL Memorial Day Retreat, Almont New Church Assembly, Allenton, MI
- **June 29–July 3:** 2019 Annual Swedenborgian Convention, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN
- **July 28–August 3:** International Summer Camp for Teens, Purley Chase, England
- **August 28–31, 2020:** Gathering Leaves, Purley Chase, England

the Messenger

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Published monthly except July and August by the Standing Committee for Communication and Information 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 2019

Volume 241, No. 3, Whole Number 5438

Editor, design and production: Herbert Ziegler

Copy editing and proofing: Robert Leith, Samantha Johanson, & Trevor

Standing Committee for Communication and Information: Kevin Baxter, Elizabeth Blair, & Val Brugler

Printing: Gnomon Copy, Cambridge MA

Editorial Address:
Herb Ziegler, the Messenger
2 Hancock Place
Cambridge MA 02139

Tel: 617.388.0252

Email: messenger@swedenborg.org

Business and Subscription Address:
The Messenger, Central Office
50 Quincy Street
Cambridge MA 02138

Tel: 617.969.4240

Email: manager@swedenborg.org

Subscriptions: free online subscription at <http://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



The Year of the Lord: 2018–19
—*The Primacy of Spirit*

Dear Friends,

This week, with the United Methodist's conference in St. Louis and their narrow vote to retain and strengthen the church's "traditional" ban against LGBTQ clergy and marriages, I am once again reminded how glad I am that we addressed this issue at the 1997 convention in Kansas with the approved ordination of Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell. Jonathan was known within convention after his four years of study at the Swedenborg School of Religion. He was being recruited by the DC Society to be their minister. He had shown his teaching and preaching skills and was well equipped to be a Swedenborgian minister.

The Committee for Admission to the Ministry and the Council of Ministers recommended Jonathan's ordination after extended discernment; it then came to the delegates gathered for a vote on the floor of the convention. There was discussion; not all agreed. I remember it well as it was my first convention. I remember watching Jonathan, his partner Carl, and his mother and his sister as the meeting progressed. President Rev. Capon had two microphones set up and allowed alternating comments (pro and con) to continue as long as someone had something they wanted to say. There are advantages of being a small group; as I recall

there were around 200 people who attended the Kansas convention, and many spoke up.

I remember (now Rev.) Jenn Tafel speaking about her uncertainty if she wanted to continue to be a part of this organization if we did not treat all people equally. I remember Susie Baumgartner standing up with a young child on her hip, begging the members to ordain Jonathan as he was the one she wanted her family to have as their minister in DC. I remember overcoming my own hesitancy to speak and telling the gathering it would be a privilege to have this momentous occasion be affirmed in conservative Kansas. I hardly remember anything of the negative comments that were based on doctrine and questions of theology.

When it came to the vote, there was overwhelming support for Jonathan's ordination. While for many, the principle of equality was important, what resounds in memory is how powerful the personal level was. We were voting for the individual, not his sexual orientation, but the fine person he was and the good pastor he would be.

In the same way, the ordination of women in 1975 came down to a personal vote to ordain Dorothea Harvey, a woman well known in our organization, a professor steeped in Swedenborgian theology, a woman who had touched many lives and helped them find direction and purpose for their lives at Urbana University. Dorothea was already a pastor, and the vote to ordain her was just the affirmation of her as minister. The group was approving the ordination of Dorothea; she just happened to be a woman.

Roughly midway between Dorothea and Jonathan, the Council of Ministers, in 1986, passed a standing resolution on ordination. The resolution refrains from commenting on any external aspect of personhood and focuses only on internal

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Singing Prayers

Rev. Kathy Speas

Singing benefits your well-being. From stress release to improved oxygen flow to the brain, there are a myriad of reasons that singing makes us joyful. And the angels seem to love it too! Swedenborg wrote, “It has happened two or three times that I have listened to singing in harmony, and the spirits were so delighted by that singing that they were almost dumbfounded. Its sweetness penetrated their inward parts” (*Spiritual Experiences* §2090).

Let’s savor the joy of singing and make the angels happy. Rev. Kathy Speas will share a dozen sung blessings that are easy to learn, can be shared with your congregation, are useful at tender times that are beyond words, or will just keep you calm and centered. Come, make a joyful noise unto the Lord!



Rev. Kathy Speas was ordained in 2004. She worked as a hospice chaplain for ten years and then ministered in a facility for profoundly disabled adults for four years. She has sung with the Thresh-

old Choir (“Making Kindness Audible”) since 2005, singing at bedsides for people in transition. Her present ministry consists of singing at bedsides and supporting the disabled adults who were moved to the community when the facility was closed.

Bringing Swedenborg to the Masses

Rev. Julie Conaron

Fewer people today attend church, yet many feel spiritual but not religious. They may be looking for answers

to life’s thorny questions. How can we bring the writings of Swedenborg to others without becoming “Swedenborg bashers” or putting people off? Rev. Julie Conaron has some ideas and stories



from her work as a hospice chaplain and interfaith minister.

Rev. Julie Conaron is a second career interfaith and Swedenborgian minister, having spent twenty years as a microbiologist and growing up in England. Julie is proud to be mother to four grown sons and grandmother to seven children

Bird’s Eye View of the Word

Rev. Robert McCluskey

Walk into any Swedenborgian Church and you will see a Bible on the altar. The same goes for many Protestant churches. Walk into any synagogue or temple, and there are the Hebrew Scriptures, front and center, safe in the tabernacle. Without the Bible or the Hebrew Scriptures, things like Jewish temples and Christian churches simply would not exist. It’s that important, that central.

But before we can learn what the Bible means, we need to know what it says. The Common Lectionary provides a three-year cycle of weekly readings, which cover just about all of the significant events of the Bible. But even if you followed this cycle on a weekly basis, I think it would be hard to gain a clear sense of the story of the Bible as a whole.

This course will provide a bird’s-eye view of the literal story of the Bible. Through all the myth, history, law, and poetry we will trace a common thread tying it all together—the story of the Covenant. We will also look briefly at the underlying, and unifying, spiritual sense that lies beneath the surface of

this diverse, often confusing story.

If you wonder how the Bible’s different parts fit together, or how this strange and ancient text speaks to us in the here and now, then this course is for you!

Rev. Robert McCluskey holds a B.A. and M.A in philosophy, and is a graduate of the Swedenborg School of Religion. Ordained in 1984, he has pastored Swedenborgian churches in Portland, Maine, and New York City. For seventeen years he served as the Swedenborgian representative to the National Council of Churches, with specific attention to the work of social justice and religious freedom. He serves at the Wayfarers Chapel in Rancho Palos Verde, California, and chairs the Social Justice Committee of the Swedenborgian Church.



Emerson, Swedenborg, and Eco-justice

Rev. Dr. David J. Fekete

There is one man of genius . . . whose literary value has never yet been rightly estimated:—I mean Emanuel Swedenborg. (Ralph Waldo Emerson, ‘The American Scholar’ in *Essays By Ralph Waldo Emerson*)

Ralph Waldo Emerson held Swedenborg in high regard and was deeply influenced by Swedenborg. He mentions Swedenborg by name in three places: his essays “Nature” and “The American Scholar” and in an entire essay devoted to Swedenborg, “Swedenborg; or, the Mystic.” The essay “Swedenborg; or, the Mystic” is striking. It is found in Emerson’s collection *Representative Men*. In that collection there are only six representative men written about: Plato, Emanuel Swedenborg, Michel de Montaigne, William Shakespeare, Napoleon, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. So, Emerson places Swedenborg in most elite company.

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Emerson was largely attracted to Swedenborg's Nature correspondences. Nature and eco-justice are pressing contemporary issues, so looking at Emerson and Swedenborg in the light of Nature doctrines will illuminate our own society's understanding of Nature.

Emerson may not have rightly understood what correspondences are and how they relate to Nature and spirit. In this mini-course, we will look at the specific places in Emerson's essays where Swedenborg is mentioned and explore Emerson's appropriation of Swedenborg's Nature correspondences. Then, we will compare Emerson's use of Swedenborg with Swedenborg's own doctrines. This comparison will illuminate how each writer understood Nature, and help us in our own understanding of Nature and eco-justice issues.

Rev. Dr. David Fekete grew up attending the Detroit Swedenborgian Church of the Holy City, and Almont New Church Assembly. His educational training includes a B.A. at Urbana University, an M.Div. equivalent at Swedenborg School of Religion, an M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School, and a Ph.D.



from the University of Virginia. He has served the Church of the Holy City, in Edmonton, Alberta, since ordination in 2006. Keenly interested in interfaith dialogue and education, he has served as

president of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action, has attended the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) seminars in Guadalajara, San Diego, and Edmonton (co-chairing the Edmonton planning committee for the NAIN conference) and has attended the Parliament of the World's Religions in Salt Lake City and Toronto. David is deeply involved in music, writing, and recording original compositions.

Re-Create Yourself

Kurt Fekete

In this gathering, we will look at the first story in the Bible, the Seven Days of Creation, and discover how it provides a path of positive, personal growth for us. Did you know that, according to Emanuel Swedenborg, each day of creation represents an important period of growth in our own lives? However, not only does the Creation story relate to our stages of development from infancy to old age, it also can be used as a practice to help us actively battle a temptation, challenge, or trial. Our lives can become brighter with more capacity for love and wisdom as we complete each day and move into the light. Come to this mini-course, unlock the mysteries of the creation story, and discover the power to re-create yourself and the world around you.



A Swedenborgian from birth and trained as a chemical engineer, Kurt Fekete found his divine use as the youth director for the Swedenborgian Church in 2001. He finds delight both in the sharing

of our uniquely meaningful theology and learning spirituality from the adolescent perspective.

Family Training: the Lord's Glorification and Our Regeneration

Rev. Terry Schmarr

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) "In the beginning, was the Word... and the Word was God... all things were made through Him. . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory. (John 1:1,3,14)

Not only did the disciples see God's physical body, they also saw the glory of His transfiguration and resurrection.

And He said to them, "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself "that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And "He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures"(Luke 24:26,27,44,45).

Far better than the disciples, we can see and know how and why God, our creator, came into the world and what the transformation, His advent, accomplished in Himself, in the spirit world, and for all human beings. The Scriptures the Lord expounded to them become, through Swedenborg, a diary of His inner life. Understood through the spiritual sense, the scriptures unfold every aspect of His spiritual, mental, and physical life, consciously and rationally guiding Him through life. God reveals to us the intimate details of His diary, His life in the world, opening up the secrets of the development of His spirit, the kingdom of heaven within Him. He now shows us how He was "born again," "regenerated," or "glorified." He invites us to know Him and follow Him. Let's explore.

Rev. Terry Schmarr is a fifth-generation Canadian Swedenborgian now "snow-birding" between Canada and Florida with his wife Kathlyn in their camper and hybrid camping trailer. He retired from pastoral work with the General Church after twenty years, from hospice chaplaincy after ten years, from chaplaincy in retirement homes after five years, and from care-taking duties at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario after seven years. Inducted into the ministry of the General Convention a few years ago, he



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spent this past winter helping with the revival of the Swedenborg Chrysalis Center in Deland, Florida.

Helen Keller's Spiritual Legacy

Rev. Sage Cole

Helen Keller was one of the most famous people of her generation: a writer, an advocate for economic justice and international peace, an opponent of WWI, deaf and blind, and totally devoted to the theological vision of Emanuel Swedenborg. In this mini-course we will explore Helen Keller's faith—what inspired her most about Swedenborg's theology—and her life—the ways that she lived out her faith in action. We will look to Helen as an example of lived Swedenborgian spirituality and consider how we can learn from her example and bring her legacy forward for a new generation.



Rev. Sage Cole is the pastor and director of Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she is currently casting a vision to create The Helen Keller Center for Spiritual Life. She lives in Boston with her husband and two young sons.

Spiritual Entrepreneurs Are the New Church

Rev. Rich Tafel

Swedenborg describes the New Church, or the next evolution of Christianity, as integrating three areas: our moral life, our civil life, and our spiritual life. For centuries, religious leaders have taught us that church meant coming together to worship within a community. Not only did this worldview divorce itself from civic life, but it often looked down upon and criticized

church members who spent their lives engaging in business or politics.

Swedenborg argues that it impossible to lead a spiritual life if you are not engaged in the world, running your business, showing up for work, managing your family, and engaging in political life. The “old church” is crumbling as two hundred churches in America close each week. At the same time, Americans have never been as alienated from each other. An epidemic of loneliness is spreading throughout the industrialized world. Young people find they have few places to develop their spiritual life.

Spiritual entrepreneurship is a solution. Here, churches seek to develop the inner life of those who participate, while they also help them develop their business life. Johnny Appleseed makes for a great example of someone who engaged in the world through a business that improved the world, and this business allowed him to spread the insights of Swedenborg.

Church of the Holy City is beginning to use the church as a spiritual entrepreneurial hub in Washington DC. It offers itself as a place where young entrepreneurs can develop their inner lives as they get expert coaching and learn strategies to launch their business or nonprofit.

In this session, Rev. Tafel will share the theory of spiritual entrepreneurship and share case studies of what has and has not worked in the DC church. The final part of the session will invite entrepreneurs from the audience to come up and get some hot seat coaching live from Rev. Tafel and the wisdom of the gathered group.

Rev. Tafel is pastor of Church of the Holy City in Washington DC. He is the director of Social Capital Advisers at Marcum, one of America's leading accounting consulting firms. In this role he prepares nonprofits and social entrepreneurs for investment and helps impact-investors identify potential social entrepreneurs to work with. Rich is also



the director of the American Project of Pepperdine School of Public Policy, which seeks to find a way forward through the polarization in American politics. He is organizing a social capital summit in Washington

DC in 2019, examining the role policy can play in rebuilding American community. Rich has coached over 200 social ventures, working on projects in Africa, Latin American, and the United States.

Transcendence: The Power and Purpose of Prayer

Rev. Dan Burchett

Prayer is a common practice in all religious teaching and foundational in importance. The thinking behind the practice of prayer takes those praying in many different directions. A person quotes “believing, ask anything” and wonders why their answer never comes. Others hound God with a request based on The Unjust Judge that “fears neither God nor man” but grants the request to stop the annoyance. Is God fickle or irritated at our asking? Is God too busy to be bothered? Or perhaps prayer has little to do with changing life situations but rather changing me. We pray for healing, provisions, relieve from suffering, etc., things that have to do with improving the quality of life in form and material. Emanuel Swedenborg and Scripture have much to say about the power and purpose of prayer. It may be different than what you think.

Rev. Burchett serves Wayfarers Chapel as director of finance and administration and has served as well



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Proposed Amendments for Annual Convention

The following amendments will be introduced for consideration by the delegates at the 2019 Annual Convention in Valparaiso, Indiana. Strikeout indicates deleted language, and underline indicates added language.

Bylaw Article XXIII, "Amendments," states, "These Bylaws may be amended at any session of the Swedenborgian Church by a three-fifths vote of those present and voting, provided that the proposed amendment shall have been first referred to the General Council, and public notice of the substance thereof shall have been given at least three months before the time of said meeting."

Building Fund Amendment

At the November 2018 meeting of the General Council of the Swedenborgian Church, the following motion, amending Bylaw XIX, Board of Trustees of the Building Fund, was passed.

Section 1. The Board of Trustees of the Building Fund shall consist of the Treasurer plus three trustees who shall be appointed by the General Council, to serve initially for ~~one, two, and three~~

~~years, respectively from July 1, 1956; their successors~~ three years. One of the trustees, including the Treasurer, shall be a member of the General Council. They shall make loans from time to time from the Building Fund as heretofore provided, or as hereafter provided from time to time by the Swedenborgian Church. In case of a vacancy on the Board, the General Council may fill the vacancy for the unexpired term.

Add new sections 2 and 3.

Section 2. The Board of Trustees shall review Building Fund loan applications. Loans of up to \$50,000 may be funded by the Board of Trustees of the Building Fund. Loans over \$50,000, but less than \$100,000, shall be reviewed by the Trustees, with a recommendation referred to the Executive Committee of General Council for final approval. Loans in excess of \$100,000 shall be reviewed by the Trustees, with a recommendation referred to the full General Council for final approval.

Section 3. General Council may periodically adjust the dollar amounts based on governance oversight.

Standing Resolution Amendment

Procedural Note: Amendments to Standing Resolutions are handled under the guidelines of Robert's Rules of Order, as the Constitution and Bylaws of the Swedenborgian Church are silent concerning the procedure to be used for these. We have adopted Robert's Rules in the absence of rules of order provided in the Constitution or Bylaws. Robert's Rules establishes that an amendment to standing resolutions passes with a simple majority in the event of prior notice and a two-thirds majority without notice.

Standing Resolution 10, adopted by General Convention on June 30, 1983, conflicts with current federal and state law. Therefore, to remove that conflict, the General Council moved that Standing Resolution 10 be amended as follows:

Delete the entire first sentence of the resolution.

~~The Building Fund may make low-interest loans to any minister on the Active Roll of the Council of Ministers, for a down payment on a residence, provided there is demonstration of practicality and need under criteria adopted by General Council. Should such minister cease to be on such Roll, the balance of the loans shall be due and payable within ninety days.~~

Add the following sentences:

General Convention no longer provides ministers personal loans through the Building Fund. Outstanding loans that remain in good standing will continue as agreed until fully repaid. Ministers with outstanding loans from the building fund, who cease to remain on the Active Roll of the Council of Ministers, may have their loan called in and due and payable within ninety days. ☩

Letter from the President

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qualities. Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence shared with me that the Rev. Dr. George Dole, who was key in the original draft, rephrased the gist of it in his serious but light-hearted way, "We (General Convention) don't ordain women or gay people, nor do we ordain men or white people or people of color. We ordain people who are properly prepared to be ministers in our denomination."

So be it. Amen.

—Rev. Jane Siebert, President

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on the pastoral ministry team at Wayfarers Chapel for many years. His history of over thirty years of ministry includes senior minister for two Southern California churches. During that time he also served as a hospice chaplain for four years. He is a student with the Center for Swedenborgian Studies as part of his process to have his ordination recognized for full standing as a minister in the Swedenborgian Church at the upcoming annual convention. He is a musician and musical director as well. ☩

The Creatress

BY BIRRELL WALSH

I was raised in Catholicism, a religion where God and all the priests were male, yes. But more people spent time with a rosary clutched in their hands than prayed before the crucifix. The presence of Mary was everywhere.

I remember the story of Mrs. Guarnaschelli, who was praying in the sanctuary when she heard the voice of Jesus. “Mrs. Guarnaschelli,” he said, until she interrupted him. “You’ll have to wait a moment, Lord. I’m talking to your mother.”

Later, with Tantric Buddhists I again found women, as Tara, Prajnaparamita, Kuan Yin.

I mention this because Swedenborg followed his Lutheran ancestors in largely emphasizing the male and ignoring the female in his understanding of divinity. Not in his understanding of angels, for which we can be grateful. And he did often use neuter, genderless words like *Divinum* in his theology. Largely, I said, *largely*. There is one passage in *Divine Love and Wisdom* (DLW) in which it is very different. In it, Swedenborg almost shyly speaks of God as *creatrix* (creatress), and gives us a practice.

All human feelings and thoughts arise from the divine love and wisdom that constitute the very essence that is God. The feelings arise from divine love and the thoughts from divine wisdom. Further, every single bit of our being is nothing but feeling and thought. These two are like the springs of everything that is alive in us.

They are the source of all our life experiences of delight and enchantment, the delight from the prompting of our love and the enchantment from our consequent thought.

Since we have been created to be recipients, then, and since we are

recipients to the extent that we love God and are wise because of our love for God (that is, the extent to which we are moved by what comes from God and think as a result of that feeling), it therefore follows that the divine essence, the Creatress, is divine love and wisdom.¹

Latin has a grammar with genders, and sometimes the gender of one word can force another to take on that same gender. It is not so in this case, George Dole said in his note 31 to DLW. Swedenborg could have as easily used the word “Creator.” Instead he said “Creatress.”²

What might that mean?

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Genesis 1: 27).³

We know from Genesis that humanity was created in the image of God, and that both male and female are in that image and always have been. But a careful scholar might ask, is it fair to Swedenborg to take this one quotation and rely on it? And will it grow, until there is some sense of balance in male and female presence in this tradition?

He told them another parable:

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches. (Matthew 13: 31–33)⁴

He told them still another parable:

The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed

into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.⁵

The New Testament speaks of small things becoming great in their time. The mustard seed grows. The yeast leavens a wheelbarrow’s worth of flour. Small things grow. Let it be so for us.

Is this an attempt to replace the male language of Lord and Father? No, not for me. It is to make available to us, based on Swedenborg’s own words faithfully translated, an image of God that may nourish us. The male words are to remain present, for those who love them. It is an “and” thing, not an “or” thing. I do not think the God “who cannot even frown” will be annoyed by our having more choices.

I think it is also an individual thing. For some people, it is simply easier to open to an image of God who is a woman. The choice of God-as-female is to enable more of us to accept the divinity. That “and-ness” is part of the generosity of the Holy, it seems to me. There is a Sufi tradition that God under the name Ar-Rab al Alamein, the Nourisher of All the Worlds, turns to each being a face that is for them specifically, and gives them what their temperament needs. Those who are comfortable with femaleness can turn to the Creatress. Those who prefer the male can turn to God-as-Lord. And both will be received.

As Swedenborg says in *Heaven and Hell* § 18,

For love is receptive of each and all things that are in harmony with it; it longs for them, seeks them, and drinks them in as it were spontaneously, for it desires unceasingly to be enriched and perfected by them.

As in the afterlife, as Swedenborg tells us about it, what we love is available

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1 Swedenborg, Emanuel, trans. George F. Dole. *Divine Love and Wisdom* §33. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2010.

2 Ibid.

3 Holy Bible: King James Version . Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012.

4 Holy Bible: New International Version . Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005

5 Ibid.

The Creatress

Continued from page 40

to us. God provides dark clothing for Puritans, and bright clothing for revelers; and he offers to us the face of God we can most easily accept.

The Practice, What is the Practice?

Swedenborg did not believe in creation from nothing. For him, God created the universe out of God—as a woman creates a child, from her own substance. It is not something that ends with birth. For Swedenborg we are forever attached to God, receiving. That is what we are made for. Not just to be receivers—Swedenborg says it in a way that underlines the current, present-ness of it. We are created to be receiving. Our only choice is whether to accept what is offered to us, or to refuse it.

What is it that is offered? From these two paragraphs in *Divine Love and Wisdom*, we get a sense of it: delight and enchantment are offered. They come to us like the milk of our mother, and they are better food than anything artificial.

But what is our part? What is the practice implicit in this text? The emphasis in today's readings is on receiving, on allowing the Divine to enter us. Our practice is receptivity. It is a life-long practice, different for each of us. There are as many faces of feminine divinity as there are of male. India teaches this, and the ancient Greek Hymn to Isis says so.

All mortals who live on the boundless earth, Thracians, Greeks and Barbarians, Express Your fair Name, a Name greatly honoured among all, but Each speaks in his own language.⁶

I think this section of *Divine Love and Wisdom* invites us to turn toward

the Sun of divine essence.

At the end of Graeco-Roman times, Proclus was one of the last pagan philosophers. He regarded the sky-blue heliotrope as praying because it always turned to look towards its source.

In *The Priestly Art*, Proclus said,

It sings the praise of the leader of the divine order to which it belongs, spiritual praises, and praise which can be apprehended by reason, touch and feeling. And since the heliotrope is also moved toward that to which it readily opens, if anyone hears it striking the air as it moves about, he perceives in the sound that it offers to the king the kind of hymn that a plant can sing.⁷

If we follow the energy-fountain across the sky, with attention and receptivity to what is given, then, maybe that is our offering to the Creatress. We provide a place for her to come, and she seeks that. In *True Christianity* §766 Swedenborg says, “[*Dominus*] *urget et instat ut recipiatur*,” “urging and pressing to be received;” with a text *Dominus* could be translated with either “he” or “she.”

The benefits of this opening to the Creatress seems to be many: *Heaven and Hell* §522 says,

Qui caelum in se recipit, is in caelum venit. Whoever accepts heaven [into himself] enters heaven.⁸

By accepting heaven, we come into heaven. There is a promise that we will be carried to our goal.

Quod illi qui recipiunt, per infinitas ambages sicut per maeandros ferantur ad sua loca. Those who receive are conducted to their places through an infinite maze of winding paths (*Divine Providence* §164:6)⁹

In *Heaven and Hell* §15, Swedenborg uses male language to say the most curious thing. “In heaven loving the Lord

does not mean loving Him in respect to His person, but it means loving the good that is from Him.” Swedenborg here uses the idea of being moved by the good and thinking from the moved-ness. The good affects us as do the rays of the sun.

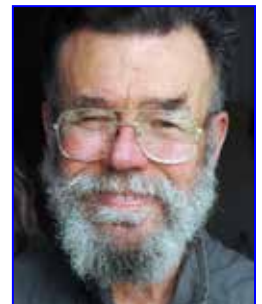
Please, help us to understand if this is what Swedenborg is saying. One loves the Creatress by loving what comes from Her. What comes are delight and enchantment. One loves the Creatress by turning toward these. One takes them as the gift that the Creatress, the Divine Essence, intends for us. They are light and rain for the flower.

The practice for me is like locating the sun on a cool day, and sitting so it can warm me. One acts like the heliotrope. So far, that is what I notice—an unspeaking warmth coming into my upper body: comfortable, comforting, bringing no new commandments. One of God's many faces is turned to us, and we sit in the sunshine of the Creatress, being eased and warmed.

A Prayer

Creatress, who makes us out of yourself so we can love and know, first of all, thank You. And as You pour us forth with all our various loves into this curious and meandering world, You cannot ever be far away. And as we go home, to whom could we go but You, to abide with you as we always do? We are made to be receiving. May we receive You and pass You on. Oh You of so many names, thank You. ☩

Birrell Walsh, Ph.D., is a writer and scholar. He is a member of the Swedenborgian Community Church at Hillside in El Cerrito, California, where he delivered this message.



6 Vanderlip, Vera Frederika. *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis*. Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972

7 Chlup, Radek. *Proclus - an Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.

8 Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Heaven and Hell*. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2010.

9 Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Divine Providence*. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2010.

Asking the Right God Question

BY GEORGE F. DOLE

(This article is a slightly modified version of chapter 6 from *The Universe and I: Where Science & Spirituality Meet*, which is available from the Swedenborg Foundation: www.swedenborg.com.)

Most readers will not be familiar with the sources I refer to. This means that the article may raise at least as many questions as it answers, which is not necessarily a bad thing.

This post above all must be understood in the context of the Swedenborgian concept of appearances of truth, which from a scientific point of view can be thought of as model-dependent realism. My experience of walking face-first into a plate glass wall (dating back to about 1950) remains my textbook example of the fact that it is possible to be at one and the same time quite certain and quite wrong about some particular thing; and I extend this fact to a belief that if there is no necessary correlation between certainty and truth, then the quest for either is likely to lead away from the other.

The obvious theological place to start such a quest is with a definition of *God*: “the creator and ruler of the universe, regarded as eternal, infinite, all-powerful, and all-knowing.”¹ I would stop at the word *infinite* and note that practically speaking, it is the ontological equivalent of the epistemological term *undefinable*—to define is to delimit. [It is] my opinion that the atheists and antitheists are quite right in their insistence on the inadequacy of commonly held concepts of God, but I believe they are seriously wrong if they hold these concepts to be anything more than models of reality. Richard Dawkins seems to intend as derogatory his observation that “Einstein was

using ‘God’ in a purely metaphorical, poetic sense,”² but he shows no awareness of his own use of metaphors (such as “midwifed a new origin of life”³) or of the omnipresence of metaphors within his own discipline. After all, “emergence” and “evolution” are metaphors. Models are metaphors. When Einstein said, “I think the most important question facing humanity is, ‘Is the universe a friendly place?’”⁴ he was using a metaphor to convey something he saw to be of supreme importance. Dawkins would do well to recognize both the need for and the power of metaphors as well as their susceptibility to misuse.

The word *infinite* tells me that I should at least try to think in “meta” terms. Stuart A. Kauffman is on common ground with Einstein in his capacity for awe. He proposes “a worldview beyond reductionism, in which we are members of a universe of ceaseless creativity in which life, agency, meaning, value, consciousness, and the full richness of human action have emerged.”⁵ I am moved by his willingness to be stunned and overwhelmed. In contrast, I am turned off by Lawrence M. Krauss’s reaction to the “miraculous” appearance of snowflakes. Apparently, the best our scientists can do when faced by this miracle is “revel in [their] ability to explain,”⁶ which has every appearance of an ego trip. To the best of my knowledge, too, the revelry is unjustified, since science does not know

how a snowflake develops around its center with such precise symmetry, with the arms managing to copy each other. We are left with an elegant description “in which efficient material causality is nowhere to be found.”⁷

A less obvious place to start is with ourselves, with how we have come to understand the presentation of reality. Based on the quantum principle that particles form only when they are observed, we must infer an observer of *some* sort for the inexplicable emergence of the first particles. This argument is pursued with some rigor at the close of George Greenstein’s elegant *The Symbiotic Universe: Life and Mind in the Cosmos*. While Greenstein is unwilling to “accept the notion that it was God Himself who so carefully crafted the cosmos,” he also states that “it is the observation itself that brings the physical world into existence” and that “only a conscious mind is capable of performing such an observation.”⁸ If so, then given the omnipresence of particles in the universe, we must endow our observer with the characteristics of omnipresence and omniconsciousness. Could this be the type of God that Kauffman is looking for? The “fully natural God [who] is the very creativity in the universe”?⁹

This suggests that Terrence W. Deacon’s frequent association of “life and

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1 Webster’s New World College Dictionary, s.v. “God (n.)” accessed October 17, 2017, <http://www.yourdictionary.com/god#websters>.

2 Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2006), 18. His dismissive attitude toward poetry is surely open to challenge.

3 Ibid., 137.

4 From “Reflections on September 11,” accessed October 17, 2017, http://www.nlpu.com/Articles/Sept_11.html.

5 Stuart A. Kauffman, *Reinventing the Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason, and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 2.

6 Lawrence M. Krauss, *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather than Nothing* (New York: Atria, 2012), xi.

7 “As Richard Feynman said, ‘The more you see how strangely nature behaves, the harder it is to make a model that explains how even the simplest phenomena actually work, so theoretical physics has given up on that.’ Quantum physics forsakes genuine explanations for amazingly accurate mathematical descriptions in which efficient material causality is nowhere to be found” (Bruce L. Gordon, “Hawking irrational arguments: Theoretical physicist takes leave of his senses,” *The Washington Times*, October 1, 2010).

8 George Greenstein, *The Symbiotic Universe: Life and Mind in the Cosmos* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1988), 197, 222, 223.

9 Kauffman, *Reinventing the Sacred*, 6.

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mind”¹⁰ needs much closer attention than I have given it. If conscious mind was present that early, perhaps our search of the universe for signs of *intelligent* life is too limited, too parochial. Perhaps life has been present far, far earlier than we had thought, and we simply have not realized what it looks like. If “only a conscious mind is capable of performing such an observation” (of what we take to be physical reality), then mind has also been present in some “obscure and primordial way,”¹¹ and it may indeed be that what we now identify as mind is no more than a prelude to mind that is yet to come forth.

All this calls to my mind a sound bite that has often served as a motto for Swedenborgians: “We are now allowed to use our intellect to explore the mysteries of faith.”¹² With this, however, I may be parting company with Kauffman. He sees the “web of life” as “partially indescribable by natural law,”¹³ whereas I, following Swedenborg, do not. I am right there with Kauffman when he writes,

I believe we need a domain for our lives as wide as reality. If half of us believe in a supernatural God, science will not disprove that belief. We need a place for our spirituality, and a Creator God is one such place.¹⁴

10 Terrence W. Deacon, *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2012), 146.

11 In the Big Bang model, I find an analogue of my own nature as a human-type being in an evolutionary process of becoming more fully human, though perhaps only in some “obscure and primordial way,” to use a phrase of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s (*The Phenomenon of Man* [New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008], 71).

12 *Nunc liceat intellectualiter intrare in Arcana fidei* (*True Christianity* §508:3). The translation takes *arcana* to be related to *arca*, “a chest,” in the same way that *urbanus*, “a citizen,” is related to *urbs*, “city”; and therefore, *arcana* connotes both the hiddenness and the value of what one would keep in a chest

13 Kauffman, *Reinventing the Sacred*, xi.

14 *Ibid.*, xii–xiii.

I am no longer with him, though, when he continues,

I hold that it is we who have invented God, to serve as our most powerful symbol. It is our choice how wisely to use our own symbol to orient our lives and our civilizations. I believe we can reinvent the sacred. We can invent a global ethic, in a shared space, safe to all of us, with one view of God as the natural creativity in the universe.

This may well be no more than a matter of wording, but for me, careful thought calls for careful wording. We do not invent God. We can be said to invent our models of God, and those models can and should be evaluated. They should grow as we learn. Childish models are not only appropriate for children; they are necessary. If childhood models of God are truly appropriate, they serve as foundations for the ones we adopt as we learn how to be more fully human. So the foundations for understanding quantum mechanics need to be laid in kindergarten or even preschool, perhaps with hide-and-seek games.

When we come up with models that work, we do tend to attribute to them “the quality of reality or absolute truth.”¹⁵ We invent ethical systems, too, and I would regard these as efforts to model something of critical importance. I welcome Kauffman’s call for a wider “domain for our lives,” and I would bring attention to such similar metaphorical phrases as “*areas* of concern” and “*fields* of study”; I find myself both “at home” in Swedenborgian theology and “lost” in higher mathematics. Swedenborg explored the *domain* of the sacred with exemplary intelligence and integrity; he found it to be coherent and eminently practical, and he worked ceaselessly to communicate what he had discovered. But, of course, these are “only” metaphors.

15 Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010), 7.

Very simply, I hold to a model in which an awe-inspiring creativity has shown itself to be not random or lawless but inherently principled, pressing constantly in one discernible direction at all times and on all scales. Charles Darwin envisioned natural selection as “daily and hourly scrutinizing, throughout the world, the slightest variations”¹⁶ (the theological names for such a phenomenon are “omnipresence” and “omniscience”). The biosphere “remains a coherent whole even as it diversifies,”¹⁷ because creativity is always and everywhere differentiating and integrating. We can invent all the ethical systems we choose, but if they do not foster societal differentiation and integration, they will prove self-destructive.¹⁸ According to my model, Edward O. Wilson’s “eusociality”¹⁹ works not because we have done such a good job of inventing it but because it is in accord with the “creativity in the universe.” The domain of values is a spiritual domain, and it is indeed awesome. It is outright beautiful, stunning.

Another reason I find Kauffman’s path running parallel to my own is that he allows for different ways of “naming” God. What I miss is the recognition that for the growing individual the concept of *God needs to keep changing*. *Anthropos* is a process. James W. Fowler’s *Stages of Faith*, building

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16 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 42.

17 Kauffman, *Reinventing the Sacred*, 6.

18 This is intended as a prediction. For a trenchant examination of the “differentiation” extreme, see Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010). “All active mass movements strive, therefore, to interpose a fact-proof screen between the faithful and the realities of the world. They do this by claiming that the ultimate and absolute truth is already embodied in their doctrine and that there is no truth nor [sic] certitude outside it” (p. 79). Dialectical materialism wore all the trappings of such a mass movement, and scientific materialism may very well be running the same risk.

19 Edward O. Wilson, *The Social Conquest of Earth* (New York: Liveright Pub. Corp., 2012).

The New Bible Study Project

BY STEVE DAVID

It's hard to convey the scope and power of the New Bible Study Project project in print. We really hope that, when you've read this article, you'll grab your smartphone or tablet or computer, and go to www.newchristianbiblestudy.org and have a look around. And then, if you like it, make it one of your favorites, and get a free account, and . . . come back often!

The Big Idea

There are 2.4 billion Christians in the world. That's a lot of people! When they turn to the Bible for help in their lives, it's helpful . . . but it's confusing.

The New Church has the ability—with the knowledge of the internal sense of the Word revealed by Emanuel Swedenborg—to make the New Church Bible Study Project (NCBSP) the world's best, most helpful, Bible study site. If we can do that, then when people come to the Bible looking for help, they will readily find the most real, most useful truths.

How's the project going so far?

The scope is wide: we're working hard to provide global visitors with four key things in their own languages, to be able to "get" the New Church truths:

1. A User Interface—we're up to twelve languages now.
2. The Word—we offer eighty-four translations in forty-two languages.
3. Swedenborg's writings—we have forty-five Latin texts and now 289 translations in twenty languages.
4. Explanations—these are still almost all in English, but the structures are ready to support more languages. We plan to use machine translation and crowd sourcing to ripple them from English into other languages.

Traffic is great. We're one of the biggest, fastest-growing online "ventures" in the New Church, with 2.5 million visits per year now, and more than 6 million page views.

Content has been growing strongly, too. We're up to 9183 explanations—of spiritual topics, books of the Bible, chapters, stories, verses, words, and phrases.

Collaboration is thriving.

- We now link to seventy-one "Off the Left Eye" videos with Curtis Childs and the Bible and writings references that are made in those episodes.
- We link to 280 of Jonathan Rose's "Spirit and Life" Bible Studies, with 4000-plus references.
- We have added content from authors in all branches of the Church, and we're working with the churches, seminaries, schools, publishers, photographers, translators, and librarians.
- We have data for 448 New Church organizations and we link to 209 of them in forty-nine countries on our live map that helps site visitors find congregations nearby.

Finances are both challenging and promising. NCBSP is a 501c3 non-profit organization. It has no endowment yet, but we raised \$234,000 in the most recent fiscal year and spent \$262,000 in the same period. Only \$8000 was spent on overhead, most of that for accounting services and server fees. Other spending drove the work of adding new functionality and content. We have been encouraged by a gradual broadening of financial support, both from institutions and from individuals.

What's Coming up Next? Lots of Things! Broadly, Here's Our Strategy.

1. Be a site that people find so valuable that they keep coming back to find out more.
 - Get really good at explaining the internal sense of the Word, so that people start to "get it" even on a brief visit.
 - Be an encouraging, helpful place.
 - Offer new, fresh content often.
2. Help people connect with other people, including mentors or coaches, who can help them on their spiritual journeys.
 - Some of this will be online.
 - Some will be connected to New Church congregations worldwide.

Here's One Thing that We're Working on Right Now

Around eighty-five per cent of visitors read a few Bible pages and then move on. They aren't exploring the internal sense very much yet. How do we encourage that? Well, if you've tried to read the vast New Church commentary that is out there, you'll know that it's not an easy read—not what you would prefer to lead with for new online users. So, we're ramping up this initiative: explain the Word by June 19, 2020, the 250th anniversary of the New Church.

We're asking the New Church clergy and laity to pitch in to help write modern, easy-start summaries of the internal sense of each chapter. It's doable. It takes a few hours per chapter. We've gathered lots of resources to work from. It's educational. And . . . it sure will be useful, reaching a lot of people who need to know it. Would you like to help? If so, we can show you how to do it.

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FNCA Centennial Celebration

Save the Date

You are most cordially invited to join us in celebrating the Fryeburg New Church Assembly's (FNCA, in Fryeburg, Maine) 100th anniversary at a gala two-week celebration July 31–August 15, 2021! Plans include an historic look at the past and a peering eye into the future, a reunion of long-ago friends and a grand making of new ones, and a celebration of tradition and a rejoicing for the contemporary.

There will be the usual excellent lecture schedule in the mornings and a special evening activity each night, swimming in the clear waters of the Saco River and marshmallows roasted over a camp fire, as well as Stunt Night and a Round River Canoe Trip. There will be stimulating conversations with a wide variety of people and reading of

good books on the porch in the afternoon, some mighty good camp food at mealtimes and food for thought in Adult Discussion Group, as well as Polar Bear Swim at the rising bell and panoramic sunsets over the White Mountains in the evening. There will be religion classes for all ages and social gatherings in Adrienne Frank Fellowship Hall, a crackling fire in the granite fireplaces in the Dining Hall and the Dole Wing every morning and folks hanging out on the front porch



and deck every evening, as well as the fresh scent of pine and the joyous voices of children and teens.

Although we are only in the very beginning planning stages for this momentous event, here's just a small taste of the various special events that members of the FNCA

Centennial Celebration Committee have proposed:

- Guided tours of the grounds
- A full-length, hardcover book of the history of the FNCA
- Getting to Know You activities
- Historical presentations about the buildings, people, and processes that make the Assembly what it is today
- Worship with the congregation of the Fryeburg New Church in town on Opening, Middle, and Closing Sundays
- The Dole 3 Miler Road Race in

honor of Rev. Dr. George F. Dole on Middle Saturday

- Special lectures by the Rev. Everett K. Bray Visiting Lecturer
- A large display of historic photographs dating all the way back to our very first session in 1921.

Call for FNCA Photographs

Although we already have a fairly substantial collection of camp photos, we know that many of you who have attended the FNCA in the past (no matter how long ago it was!) have a cache of camp photos hidden in a drawer, box, envelope, attic, or photo album that nobody has seen for a long, long time. There are a *lot* of unseen FNCA photos out there, folks. It is our deep hope you are willing to spend the time needed to dig them out and share them with us . . . the older, the better.

We are sending out this call for FNCA photos early because we would very much like to include selections of your camp photos in our Centennial Celebration

plans from the very beginning. Some will make it into the book. Others will be included in the historic photo display. And even more will be added to our already extensive photo collection on the FNCA website,



The Goddard Cabin, built in 1931, was the first cabin on the FNCA grounds.

<http://fryeburg.org/>.

If you have old FNCA photos to share (even if you haven't found them yet), for more information about how to proceed, please put "FNCA Photos" in the subject line and contact Trevor, FNCA historian:

trevor@trevorthegamesman.com. ☎

New Bible Study Project

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There are lots of other things afoot, too. We're working to get word and phrase explanations rippled across twenty languages. We're importing translations of Swedenborg's writings thick and fast. We're adding tools like notes and bookmarks. We plan to add podcasts. We're cleaning up the Latin texts. It's a fun project, and we think it's one of the most promising New Church outreach efforts going. And . . . it's good for your own spiritual growth. What's not to like? Come take a look!

www.newchristianbiblestudy.org
sdavid@newchristianbiblestudy.org

Steve David is the project manager for the NCBSF. He is a member of the General Church from Western Pennsylvania. After attending General Church schools he earned a degree in economics and political science from Yale. He is the CEO of SkyMark, a Pittsburgh-based software development firm.

Presidential History Snapshot for the Swedenborgian Church of North America

The original Constitution of the denomination in 1817 declared that the four officers (including President) “. . . shall hold their offices until their successors are chosen.” In practice, election of officers occurred every summer for the upcoming fiscal year until 1945.

At the 1945 convention, delegates amended the Constitution by setting the office of president as a single four-year term that could not be succeeded immediately by the outgoing incumbent.

Just six years later, at the 1951 convention, delegates once again amended the Constitution, this time setting the office of president as a three-year term and limited to two consecutive terms. There have been no further amendments since 1951 for the office of president.

—Jim Lawrence

Roster of Presidents 1817 to the Present

Elections for President occur midyear on the calendar; thus, terms straddle calendar years. To simplify the history timeline, dates indicated are the year in which the person was elected president for the upcoming church year.

Rev. John Hargrove, 1817–1820
 Rev. Dr. Lewis Beers, 1821
 Rev. John Hargrove, 1822–1827
 Rev. Maskell M. Carll, 1828
 Rev. Dr. Lewis Beers, 1829
 Rev. John Hargrove, 1830–1831
 Rev. Dr. Thomas Worcester, 1832¹

Rev. Dr. Lewis Beers, 1833
 Rev. Charles I. Doughty, 1834–1838
 Rev. Dr. Thomas Worcester, 1839–1849
 Rev. Maskell M. Carll, 1850
 Rev. Dr. Thomas Worcester, 1851–1874
 Rev. Chauncey Giles, 1875–1893
 Rev. John Worcester, 1894–1899
 Rev. Samuel Seward, 1900–1911
 Rev. Julian K. Smyth, 1912–1920
 Rev. William L. Worcester, 1921–1927
 Rev. Paul Sperry, 1928–1931
 Rev. Fred Sidney Mayer, 1933–1942
 Rev. Everett K. Bray, 1943–1945
 Rev. Leonard I. Tafel, 1946–1953
 Rev. Franklin H. Blackmer, 1954–1955
 Rev. David P. Johnson, 1956–1961
 Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Sr., 1962–1967
 Rev. Ernest O. Martin, 1968–1974
 Rev. Eric Zacharias, 1975–1980
 Rev. Calvin E. Turley, 1981–1983
 Rev. Randall E. Laakko, 1984–1989
 Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr., 1990–1991
 Rev. Edwin G. Capon, 1992–1997
 Rev. Ronald P. Brugler, 1998–2003
 Christine Laitner, 2004–2009²
 Rev. Kenneth O. Turley, 2010–2015
 Rev. Jane Siebert, 2016–³

total in office: thirty-four.

² The first woman and only layperson to be elected president

³ The first female clergy person to be elected president

¹ Thomas Worcester holds the distinction of having served the most years

Asking the Right God Question

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on the work of Piaget, Kohlberg, and Erikson, proposes six stages as “logically and empirically sequential and invariant,” moving “in the direction of greater internal differentiation, complexity, flexibility and stability,”²⁰ because each stage “incorporates and

builds on the structures of the previous stages, integrating them into a more comprehensive and versatile new stage.”²¹ This could quite effortlessly be translated into a description of the evolution of the cosmos. While Fowler’s

²¹ *Ibid.*, 79. I would note in particular Fowler’s observation that “in many ways religious institutions ‘work best’ if they are people [sic] with a majority of committed folk best described by Stage 3” (p. 164). A significant feature of Stage 3, “Synthetic-Conventional Faith,” is the sense of security found in willing conformity. “Religion,” “faith,” and “religious institutions” are not synonymous with each other.

recognition of the functions of differentiation and integration shows indebtedness to Piaget in particular, it should be noted that his book relies heavily on the solid empirical grounds of an extensive series of interviews of individuals of all relevant ages.

Kauffman takes what is to me a major step in the right direction, with the statements that “agency and value bring with them what philosophers call teleological language, that is, language involving a sense of purpose or

²⁰ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: HarperOne, 1995), 49.

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Asking the Right God Question

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‘end,’ as in our common explanations for our actions based on our reasons and intentions,” and that “agency is emergent and real, but not reducible to physics.”²² This adds the final touch to Greenstein’s conscious observer, making the “metahuman” metaphor virtually inescapable.

I may have missed it, but I have not found Kauffman dealing more explicitly than this with the relationship between creativity and agency. For my part, I find it impossible to conceive of effective creativity apart from agency. . . . Such a conception points beyond my actual mental reach; and if I take seriously the finite nature of my own mind and the infinite nature of God, it always will. It *demand*s that I think in “meta” terms. As Swedenborg puts it,

When we know how to raise our minds above images of thought derived from space and time, we pass from darkness into light and taste things spiritual and divine.²³

What I experience as purpose, then, would be infinite creativity dumbed down to my level of comprehension, an immense simultaneity distinguished into “me-sized” bits and laid out along a temporal axis—hence, perhaps, the wondrously restless, creative paradox of determinism and free will. ☩

Rev. Dr. George F. Dole holds a B.A. from Yale, an MA from Oxford, and a Ph.D. from Harvard. Now professor emeritus, Dr. Dole taught ancient languages, the Bible, and theology at the Swedenborg School of Religion. He has served as a translator for the New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg, and he is also the author of *Freedom and Evil*, *Sorting Things Out*, and *A Book about Us*. He lives in Bath, Maine.



²² Kauffman, *Reinventing the Sacred*, 12.

²³ *At qui scit elevare mentem supra ideas cogitationis, quae trahunt ex spatio et tempore, ille transit e caligine in lucem, et sapit spiritualia et Divina (Divine Love and Wisdom §69).*



Sunday 28th July
to
Saturday 3rd August
2019



Seven years ago, a five day International Camp for New Church teenagers was held at Purley Chase, England... for those who came along, amazing memories were made and lasting friendships were formed.

We feel it is time to do it again and want to invite you!

The Camp will be led by youth leaders and ministers from England, Canada and the USA and our overall theme for the week will be to explore the book of Revelation and its relevance in our lives. We will also be doing a huge variety of activities such as day trips and walks in the local area, camp fire, table tennis, games evenings, “Olympic” sports on the lawn and a talent show to name a few.

You will have the opportunity to make friends from around the world, relax in beautiful surroundings, take part in new and fun activities and renew your excitement in being part of an incredible faith and church organization.

The camp will be held at Purley Chase Centre which is deep in the middle of the English countryside, a couple of hours North of London.

Anyone aged 13-20 is invited.

The International Summer Camp 2019 for teens in England

Deadlines!

Here’s some more information about this great trip.

We on the planning side are getting very excited! Please send your check made out to “Swedenborgian Church” for \$600 to: Attn: Gina Peracchi, Central Office, 50 Quincy Street, Cambridge, MA 02138 or call Gina at (617) 969-4240 for credit card payment by the April 1 deadline. Make sure you include your child’s name with your payment.

Then email me (at kfekete@hotmail.com) your child’s full name on passport, birth date and year, passport number, and passport expiration date.

Airline tickets will be purchased the first week of April. After April 7, I cannot guarantee your reservation, price, or camp accommodations. Sorry for the lack of flexibility, but airfare prices are already going up, so I must purchase tickets soon to make sure everyone can go on this trip!

Please contact me if you have issues or concerns with this deadline or have questions. We may be able to make other arrangements for you and your child(ren) however the price you pay may be higher if the ticket price increases or the flight may no longer be available.

—Kurt Fekete, Swedenborgian Church youth director

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.

Save the Dates 195th Annual Convention Saturday, June 29–Wednesday, July 3, 2019 Valparaiso University LaPorte New Church with Illinois Association welcomes you to Northwest Indiana!

At Valparaiso University we'll enjoy the Resurrection Chapel and labyrinth, a modern residence hall and lounges, a comfortable dining area, and spacious meeting rooms. The town of Valparaiso offers a quaint but lively town square with great restaurants and pubs.

The Newcomers Reception on Saturday, 3–5 PM, open to all.

The opening on Saturday evening will feature the keynote speaker, Matthew Fox, a well-known pioneering theologian, educator, author, activist, mystic and proponent of creation spirituality.

Participate in mini-courses, the ordination service, the CSS Annual Meeting, worship services, business sessions, receptions, and good fellowship.

There will be programs for SCYL (ages 13–18) and children (ages 5–12) as well as childcare (ages 3–4).

Enjoy an afternoon social outing on July 2 at the LaPorte New Church and Manna House, and then it's just a short ride to Stone Lake Park for a catered picnic.

Registration information will be available in the April *Messenger*.

The Annual Meeting of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School (dba the Center for Swedenborgian Studies of the Graduate Theological Union)

will be held during the annual session of the
Swedenborgian Church of the United States and Canada,
Sunday, June 30, 2019 at 7:30 PM,
Resurrection Chapel, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana