



Beauty and the Anthropic Principle

BY CARL VON ESSEN

On a keyboard, other instrument, (or a smart phone app), play the following notes:

Middle C
 Middle C plus C
 Middle C plus G
 Middle C plus E
 Middle C plus F

The musical chords you hear were once plucked on ancient lyres, 2500 years ago. It was about 590 BC, in the Greek colony of Croton, on the southern coast Calabria where disciples of the philosopher Pythagoras had gathered. One of the goals of these Pythagoreans, shrouded in the mists of time, was to study the relationship of musical sounds with each other. By varying the lengths of vibrating strings and hearing the relationship between sounds thus created, they found that certain combinations that we now call chords were pleasing to the ear, what we could call beautiful. The lengths of the strings producing those chords were found to be simple ratios of whole numbers, such as 1:2, 4:3 and 3:2.

The Pythagoreans considered that these and other numbers possessed a function of order and beauty that composed the laws governing the whole universe. They believed that, like musical harmony, there was a harmony of the spheres. This belief has now been verified multiple times by science, for example, by the discovery of the

harmonic resonance of atomic structures. The physicist, Paul Dirac states that, “There is a fundamental harmony connecting the way nature runs and general mathematical principles.”

The concept of a universe in beautiful harmony has captivated the imagination of poets and philosophers through the ages. Swedenborg, too, describes a certain most beautiful harmony, a very lovely wave-like movement toward oneness, and the beauty of the melodic progression ending up in unity being beyond all description.

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The harmonic studies by the Pythagoreans formed the beginnings of the science of mathematics, which has led to the discoveries of the laws of nature. The Pythagorean belief of the relationship between nature’s hidden codes and God’s mind strongly influenced Plato’s thought and eventually the world of science and religion. The musical harmonies that were pleasing to our ears add further to the understanding that our senses are effected in a strange and sublime way by something we call beauty.

It has been said that without beauty, there would be little point to existence. What is it? The sensation of beauty is entirely subjective and largely indescribable. Beauty is truly in the eyes of the beholder, but also in the ears, nose, tongue, and skin. Beauty is a basis of sexual selection as well as part of the fabric of daily existence not only by humanity but evidently also by animals and plants. The bioluminescence emitted by archaic marine bacteria is a shining example. This life phenomenon is reflected in the sight of our night sky, blazing with light, a cosmos that evokes awe and epiphany, its beauty perhaps exceeding all else.

There are also forms of intellectual beauty. For example, Bertrand Russell wrote that, “Mathematics rightly viewed, possesses not only truth but supreme beauty—a beauty cold and austere.” Herman Weyl asserted that mathematics “lifts the mind into closer proximity with the divine, the beautiful, and good than is attainable through any other medium.”

The creation of poetry and figurative and musical art represents forms of beauty derived from nature but expressed through the power of human imagination. For example, recall the ancient paintings found in incredibly remote parts of caves in France, Spain, and elsewhere. What were our ancestors trying to create? Beauty?

It is possible that we have tried to

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Guest Editorial



Surviving Our Stress Culture

You probably didn't need the World Health Organization to tell you this, but stress from work has moved from "burnout" to a "syndrome" in the book they just released that categories disease. The reason for the change in name is to highlight the growing challenge for humans to handle their stress at work.

I am a co-founder of the Workplace Wellness Council of Mexico. What has surprised me most is that Mexicans work longer hours than Americans. And the biggest spike in health issues there are among people under thirty-five, who report stress as impacting their health.

This past week, I did something odd for me. After work, a reception, the gym, and then coming home and eating dinner, I felt incredibly sleepy. I lay down at 9 PM for what I thought

would be a minute and woke up the next morning. My body is trying to tell me something, and I was barely listening.

Caregivers, including doctors, nurses, teachers, and pastors, appear to suffer this stress intensely. In each of these lines of work the demands rarely stop.

I have learned as a caregiver that other people will never really protect you; you've got to set up boundaries and take down-time. Often, the person who lectures me about working too much is the person who calls me on vacation with "just one quick question."

We can only imagine what it was like for Jesus and his team. But the gospel writers go to great lengths mentioning that Jesus slipped away from the crowd occasionally to get some down-time.

The fact that God rested and taught us to observe a Sabbath is another profound teaching. We are supposed to take time off.

I love this modern rendition of Jesus speaking in Matthew 11:28.

Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

Use this summer to find down-time. Don't wait for it to happen. Put it on your schedule. It doesn't need to be an expensive trip somewhere, just find time for yourself and to be with those you love.

Happy Summer 2019.

—Rev. Rich Tafel

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Church Calendar

- **June 29–July 3:** 2019 Annual Swedenborgian Convention, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN
- **July 13–21:** Almont Church Camp, Al-lerton, MI
- **July 21–27:** Paulhaven Summer Camp, Upper Mann Lake, Alberta, Canada
- **July 28–August 3:** International Summer Camp for Teens, Purley Chase, England
- **August 3–18:** FNCA Family Summer Camp, Fryeburg, ME
- **August 28–31, 2020:** Gathering Leaves, Purley Chase, England

the Messenger

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Letter from the President



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

Dear Friends of the Swedenborgian Church,

I just returned from the Western Canada Conference (WCC) Annual Meeting, held in Calgary, Alberta. It was a wonderful time to unite with Swedenborgians from this vast region, who hold tight to their roots. We enjoyed meals together, studied angels, worked through business decisions, worshipped together, shared communion, and even had a wonderful baptism. And we shared stories of golden days of the church in Canada, how things have changed, and their hopes for the future.

Western Canada Conference encompasses over one million square miles. It stretches from Vancouver Island in British Columbia through the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. People flew in from the farthest provinces, Manitoba and British Columbia. The meeting was held in Calgary, which is centrally located, about a thirteen-hour drive for Swedenborgians East and West. Gordon Shellenberg flew in from Manitoba and Amy Evans Blanchette flew in with her family from Vancouver Island.

To fully understand how large the territory is, Sharon Reddekopp Williams noted it lies above the United States from the Pacific Coast to North Dakota. Sharon, the daughter of the late Rev.

Edwin Reddekopp, is the president of the Western Canada Conference. Rev. Reddekopp served in Edmonton for many years and retired to Kelowna, British Columbia. His wife, Lisa Reddekopp, turned 100 last November and still attends the Edmonton Church.

There remain three churches in the Western Conference: Calgary and Edmonton in Alberta and Okangan in British Columbia. Rev. David Fekete serves full time at the Edmonton Church and offers services in other locations as requested when possible. The society in Calgary meets in homes monthly and is a combined General Church and General Convention group. The Saskatoon Society still meets for special occasions. They gave their house of worship in Rosthern to a Mennonite Museum for use as an interpretative center.

I find it interesting that many of the original churches in Western Canada started from Mennonite roots. The same is true of the two churches in Kansas.

The highlight of our two days together was the baptism of eighteen-month-old Jett James Blanchette. The young family of four flew all the way from Vancouver Island to have their child baptized in the Swedenborgian church family. That is a good representation of the commitment the members of WCC have to their mother denomination. Grandmother Nancy Tatlow Evans also flew in from British Columbia, and her presence was greeted warmly by all. As Hilda Epp from Saskatoon said, “We are all like family.”

This year, Susan Hulcher, from Calgary, has been nominated by Rev. David Fekete to serve on General Council. I hope this connection, if she is elected, will offer more opportunities to unite with our brothers and sisters in Western Canada.

—Rev. Jane Siebert, President

Nominations for Elected Positions in the Swedenborgian Church

The Nominating Committee nominates at least one candidate for each open elected position. Elective offices and nominees to date are listed on the chart at right. Elections are held during the Annual Convention, this year at Valparaiso University in Indiana.

The balance of nominees' statements appeared in the April *Messenger*.

In addition to the nominee to be elected to the Board of Trustees of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) by its representative class (members of the General Convention), two candidates nominated by the CSS Board are to be elected as at-large-class trustees at the CSS Annual Meeting, which will convene at 7:30 PM on July 1, during the Annual Convention in Valparaiso, Indiana.

General Council (Layperson):

Carl Helm

I am honored to be a nominee for General Council as a layperson. This role in the church is very important, and I am looking forward to this challenge. I have served as a trustee in our Pawnee Rock Church for over twenty-five years and as the Kansas Association President for seventeen years. At present, I serve on General Council and also as a trustee for the National Church in Washington DC. For forty-six years I served as an educator in the state of Kansas, and three years ago I retired from Education. I have served in three communities as a teacher, coach, director of federal programs, principal at



Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate	
President	3	***	
Vice-President	1	Tom Neuenfeldt*†	
Recording Secretary	1	Karen Conger*†	
Treasurer	3	***	
General Council layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Carl Helm* Susan Hulcher†	
General Council Minister	3	Rev. Betsy Coffman*†	
General Council Minister	1††	Rev. Thom Muller†	
Standing Committee for Communication and Information:	3	***	
Standing Committee for Education and Resources for Spiritual Community:	3	***	
Standing Committee for Financial Responsibility	3	Stan Conger	
Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM): clergy	3	Rev. Sage Cole*†	
Board of Trustees, Center for Swedenborgian Studies	Representative class	4	Jennifer Lindsay*
		2††	Robert Carr,
	1††	Lewis Shaw	
	At-large class**	4	Terrie Crenshaw*
Nominating Committee	5	BJ Neuenfeldt†	

* Incumbent

** Nominated by the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) Board of Trustees

*** No candidate to be elected this year

† Candidate Statement in April Messenger

†† Unexpired term

both the middle and senior high levels, and director of finance and superintendent of schools. In these jobs, I have worked in very diverse cultures and very diverse economic groups. I have always tried to base my decisions that I made on what is best for the good of students, staff, and parents. I believe these experiences will help me do the best job possible if re-elected as a General Council member. My wife Connie and I are looking forward to spending more time with our children and their families. It is nice to be free to go and see the kids and grandkids. Connie is serving our church as president and as a lay leader.

Stan Conger: Standing Committee on Financial Responsibility

My name is Stan Conger. I grew up in the Los Angeles Church, and I am now a member-at-large in the Pacific Coast Association. My past service in the Church has included president, vice-president, and treasurer of the Los Angeles Church; treasurer of the Pacific Coast Association, and member of FPRSU and MINSU. I am currently a member of General Council.



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Nominations

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I am the past treasurer of Playhouse 395, the local community theatre in Bishop, California where I am a director on the board. I am a retired Santa Monica Police lieutenant, with administrative experience as executive officer in three of the four divisions within that police department, including budgeting responsibilities.

Robert Carr: CSS Board of Trustees

I have been an active member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian church since 1995, twice serving as council president. I am married to Andrea



LoPinto and we are blessed with two adult children, who we raised in the S.F. church. My day job for several decades has been managing software development. My passions

include outdoor sports, reading, and living a life of uses. I would be honored to serve on the board of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies.

F. Lewis Shaw: CSS Board of Trustees

Lewis Shaw, a retired Episcopalian minister living in Superior, Colorado, became interested in Swedenborg about fifteen years ago through a friend who was active in a General Church congregation. His search for



conversation partners on studying Swedenborg from a critical theory approach led to conversations with the faculty at CSS and subsequently several years of service on

the Swedenborg Foundation board. In that capacity, Dr. Lewis was especially

We Are Building, Daily Building!

Boy, are we ever! With help from many of you, we were able to make many improvements to the Almont New Church Assembly and Retreat Center: new roofs, dorm showers, sump pump upgrades, and replacement of broken chapel windows are just a few things you helped make possible. Thank You.

Thanks to our churches and associations, we are now able to get new gutters, our sanitizer up to date, and have funds for youth-related needs.

We Are Building Day By Day, We Are Building For Eternity

To that end, we want to renovate our rental house at the end of the lake. We plan to open the doors for small group rentals, reunions, and retreats. Most excitedly, we would like to be able to rent our lake front property as a

involved with “serious and scholarly” publishing projects. He holds a Ph.D. in the history of ideas from Cambridge University, where he studied currents of thought that included Swedenborg from several perspectives. He is interested in inter-religious dialog and in recent years has explored Buddhism as a spirituality dialog partner.

Dr. Shaw would bring to the CSS board not only a knowledge of academics at the highest level but also a vision for the pluralist setting of CSS within the Graduate theological Union, now considered a leader in inter-religious studies.

As an undergraduate at the University of Oklahoma, Dr. Shaw pitched on the varsity baseball team, and as a fun sideline in retirement he has been a pitching scout for the Colorado Rockies, Texas Rangers, and Pittsburgh Pirates. He holds a membership at-large in the Pacific Coast Association. ☪

vacation option for other families, via HomeAway or AirBNB. This would allow us income while providing us with needed space during Summer School.

We Are Building SERAPHIM SPRING!

This is the name we have chosen to call our beautiful property. *Spring* because our lake is spring-fed. *Seraphim* for all of you, the angels who build our camp.

Without your donations we will not be able to make this happen. We will need at least \$30,000 to get the house into rentable condition. We need you, Almont Angels. Whatever amount you are able to contribute helps.

Oh, to have our building, tall and strong and fair...

To donate, send a check made out to ANCA to Betsy Aldrich, 3416 Kissman Dr., Austin TX 78728.

For more information, visit our website: almontretreats.com.

Building, praying, trusting in His mighty power!

Let's build a building together, Seraphim Spring!

—Charly Tishma, secretary of ANCA

New Publications from the Swedenborg Foundation

The Swedenborg Foundation is reprinting classic works on Swedenborg and his writings, now with redesigned covers and small editorial enhancements, including *Freedom and Evil: A Pilgrim's Guide to Hell* by Rev. Dr. George F. Dole, *Observing Spirit: Evaluating Your Daily Progress on the Path to Heaven with Gurdjieff and Swedenborg* by Peter Rhodes, and *A Swedenborg Sampler*.

A Short History of the Swedenborgian Church of North America: Part 1

BY JIM LAWRENCE

Rev. Lawrence, dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, wrote this piece for "World Religions and Spirituality" (WRSP: <https://tinyurl.com/SwbrgChrchHstry>). Established in 2010 at Virginia Commonwealth University, the mission of WRSP is to provide objective, reliable, and comprehensive information about the world's diverse array of religious and spiritual groups.

Timeline

1784: James Glen, a young Scotsman with plantations in Guyana, visited Philadelphia and gave the first known public addresses on Swedenborg's writings in America. Boxes of Swedenborg's books from England led to reading circles, which proliferated considerably and grew into congregations along the upper seaboard (Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts).

1817 (January): The Philadelphia Swedenborgian congregation opened the first Swedenborgian-designed church building in North America, the New Jerusalem Temple, modeled after a temple Swedenborg claimed to have seen in heaven and described in *True Christianity*, since razed.

1817 (May): The first American gathering, or convention, of organized Swedenborgian societies, met in the new Philadelphia temple with representatives from seventeen congregations. The final order of business was to hold the next summer's convention in Baltimore, an annual tradition that has continued unbroken to the present time. A constitution was adopted, thus marking the collective organization of what became the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

1850: Swedenborgians in Ohio founded a denominational liberal arts college, Urbana College, in Urbana,

Ohio, which became Urbana University in 1985 and was acquired as a branch of Franklin University (Columbus, Ohio) in 2014, while yet retaining its historic identity as Urbana University.

1861: The denomination formally incorporated in Illinois as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem. Though the Swedenborgian Church of North America is its formal title, the denomination has always been referred to as "Convention" among Swedenborgians worldwide in other branches.

1890: The historic peak of number of Swedenborgian churches was achieved in the U.S. at 187 societies and 111 ordained ministers.

1890: A formal schism occurred when the erstwhile Pennsylvania Association seceded from Convention to become a separate denomination, the General Church of the New Jerusalem, today located in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania.

1893: Swedenborgian attorney and layperson Charles Carroll Bonney proposed and presided at the first Parliament of the World's Religions at the World's Columbian Exposition, hosted in Chicago, bringing considerable prominence to the denomination; Bonney is credited as the first pluralist interpreter of Swedenborg.

1894: The Swedenborgian national cathedral, Church of the Holy City, was completed and opened in Washington D.C. and remains in operation today within sight of the White House.

1895: The Second San Francisco Society of the New Jerusalem (today the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church) opened with widespread architectural acclaim and became the

only nationally landmarked house of worship in San Francisco.

1896: Arthur Sewall, a prominent industrialist and Swedenborgian in the Bath, Maine, Swedenborgian Church, ran as the vice-presidential candidate on the Democratic Party ticket with William Jennings Bryan.

1897: The first Swedenborgian multi-generational summer religion camp opened in Almont, Michigan (still in operation). Others followed this distinctive approach, most notably the Fryeburg New Church Assembly in Maine in 1921.

1900: A high mark in total denominational legal membership was achieved, tabulated at about 7,000 members.

1904: The National Alliance of New Church Women was established.

1967: The denomination was admitted into the National Council of Churches despite being far short of the required minimum membership threshold of 50,000.

1975: The first female minister was ordained, the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey, a professor of religious studies at Urbana College.

1997: The first openly gay ordinand, Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell, was ordained and later voted by colleagues to the office of chair of the Council of Ministers for several years.

Founder/Group History

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) was a prominent Swedish natural philosopher who took a mystical turn in mid-life and published an extensive body of spiritualist theosophical books that harshly critiqued the prominent branches of Christianity and presented

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an alternative spirituality he called the New Church.

Swedenborg assumed his reformation of Christianity would eventually change the major branches of Christendom and took no action in word or deed to establish a separate ecclesiastical organization. Nevertheless, a separatist controversy broke out among the enthusiastic readers of his books in England where he had lived for a total of thirteen years, and some adherents organized in 1789 as General Conference of the New Jerusalem, a Nonconformist sect (Duckworth 1998:7–5; Block 1932:61–73). The Swedenborgian church organizations in both England and the United States are considered new religious movements not only due to fundamentally heterodox elements in their beliefs but also because they were not schisms from other denominations. In England, those who organized a new ecclesiastical religious movement came from several other Christian traditions, and the Swedenborgian Church of North America itself was not connected to the new Swedenborgian Church movement in England but was also a local and domestic movement whose earliest organizers came from several Christian denominations.

There are approximately seven Swedenborgian denominations internationally with a total membership of 50,000, the largest groups being in West Africa and South Africa. The American Swedenborgian Church of North America (incorporated as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem) is the second oldest, after the English movement. All Swedenborgian



Emanuel Swedenborg by Carl Fredrik von Breda

denominations use the phrase “New Jerusalem” or “New Church” in their incorporated name, and most self-describe simply as “the New Church” and use the phrase New Church in local church names. The Swedenborgian Church of North America, however, widely altered its public identity during the second half of the twentieth century with many ministries self-describing as Swedenborgian, including the current title of the denomination. This trend towards at least colloquial identification as “Swedenborgian” is becoming widespread.

The American movement dates to the summer of 1784, when James Glen, a British plantation owner in Guyana, brought copies of Swedenborg’s theological writings to Philadelphia and gave public lectures. Reading groups for these books began organizing soon thereafter, with some reading circles evolving into churches with religious services and consecrated leadership. Though early on, the church in Baltimore had the most members of a single church, Philadelphia remained ground zero for the first quarter-century, with the largest number of groups. The Quaker strength in Pennsylvania proved useful as both movements share similarities in discussing the inner light, and both have been grouped by some religion historians in what has been termed “the spiritualist option” in Reformation currents (Gutierrez 2010:249–58). Quakers, in the earliest phase, provided the most significant channel of conversions into the new fledgling Swedenborgian societies.

The first church building commissioned by Swedenborgians was in Philadelphia and opened on New Year’s Day, 1817. It was modeled after the *Nunc Licet* temple described in *True Christianity* (2006:508):

One day a magnificent church building appeared to me; it was square in plan with a roof like a crown, with arches above and a

raised parapet running around . . . Later, when I got closer, I saw there was an inscription over the door: NOW IT IS PERMITTED [*nunc licet*]. This meant that now it is permitted to enter with the understanding into the mysteries of faith.

In that same year, since many societies had cropped up around the eastern seaboard, the idea was sprung to have a general convention of representatives from the groups, and they met on May 15, 1817 (the Day of Ascension in the Christian calendar), in the new *Nunc Licet* temple. Their closing piece of business was to set the second annual meeting also for the Day of Ascension, 1818, to be held in the Baltimore church, and the denomination has continued to hold an annual summer convention to this day.

The first significant active Swedenborgian in America was Francis Bailey (1744–1817), a prominent printer in Philadelphia to whom the Founding Fathers turned to publish the Articles of Confederation (the first American constitution). He had started the first Swedenborg reading circle and began printing the earliest American Swedenborgian tract literature; he later became the first American printer of Swedenborg’s writings. His political radicalism helped his printing business thrive, but his religious radicalism severely damaged his membership base over time. The most colorful Swedenborgian in the early history of the new movement was one of Bailey’s adherents, John Chapman (1774–1845), also known as Johnny Appleseed. In the early westward expansion, the itinerant nurseryman was also known as a proselytizer for Swedenborg’s version of Christianity. His hallmark was occasional open-air preaching and handing out small batches of Swedenborgian literature to settlers from whom he would collect them when coming back through

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to give to others and leave something new.

A foremost challenge the new movement faced in its first half-century involved the push-and-pull of whether to adopt a more centralized government or maintain complete autonomy for local “societies.” Established in 1817 as the General Convention (of the New Jerusalem), the loose federation functioned under the congregational form of polity (local groups owned and operated their own ministry). A broad desire for more coordination and shared standards, partly to increase identity and presence in the public square, vied with commitments to freedom and fears of coercion by the stronger regions running roughshod over smaller ones. The Boston-centered New England region, led by Rev. Thomas Worcester of the Beacon Hill church, was the most powerful in both numbers and personalities. Worcester ended up serving as president of the denomination for more years (thirty-four) than any other.

In 1838, Worcester tried to impose an episcopal form of church government upon the diffuse gaggle of Swedenborgian congregations. In what infamously became known as “the squeezing rule,” at the twenty-second annual convention, Worcester engineered an edict requiring all societies to become organized according to a new Rule of Order by the following year or be dropped from the rolls of General Convention. Furor erupted outside of the upper seaboard. Resistance took two forms: against centralization in the Midwest and against Worcester in a Mid-Coast region, anchored



Thomas Worcester, 1851, by Hiram Powers

by Philadelphia. Breakaway regional Conventions called the Western Convention and the Central Convention subsequently organized to resist the New England-centered General Convention, called by some the Eastern Convention. The Western Convention represented the least interest in centralized government, while the Central Convention represented an ever greater interest in an episcopal form of government, but not under the power of Worcester. It took decades for it all to settle down. The Western Convention came back into the fold and accepted some aspects of General Convention governance, such as the path to ordination, and the General Convention settled into a decentralized congregational polity over a centralized episcopal one. The core of the Central Convention, however, became a sprouting root that led to the eventual secession in 1890 that became the General Church (of the New Jerusalem), with an episcopal form of government (Block 1932:170–204).

There has long been a commitment in the Swedenborgian Church of North America to ecumenical and pluralist relations. A Swedenborgian, Charles Carroll Bonney, conceived of the first Parliament of the World’s Religions for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and he presided over



The first Parliament of the World’s Religions for the 1893 Columbian Exposition, in Chicago

the now legendary event that first formally introduced Buddhism and Hinduism, among many other traditions, to the general American public. In 1966, the denomination was admitted into the National Council of Churches (NCC) despite having a membership

total less than the usual threshold of 50,000 members and continues to be active every year in the meetings. The Swedenborgian Church has been identified as the only esoteric or new religious movement to have been included in the NCC (Booth 2007:27). In 2001, the denomination’s seminary left Boston after 135 years of operations and re-established as an integral part of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, the largest pluralist academic consortium in North America.

Doctrines/Beliefs

The Swedenborgian movement has clearer parallels in belief constructs to historic Christian orthodoxy compared to such later nineteenth-century American Christian new religious movements, such as Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Christian Science. This is due to Swedenborg’s hope to renovate the major branches of Christendom. Outside of the occasional enthusiastic reader among the rank and file clergy of American mainline traditions, however, Swedenborg never gained much traction in the large standard-bearer traditions of Christianity. His longest cultural reach came through Romance artists and poets who found potent visionary material in his sweeping cosmology and pantheistic metaphysics (Williams-Hogan 2012).

Despite deep critiques of such major orthodox Christian ideas as the vicarious atonement, Trinitarian theology, salvation by faith through grace, and focus on the plain sense of scripture, Swedenborgian churches nevertheless have promoted familiar Christian narratives. These include a high Christology, a focus on biblical approaches to understanding spiritual formation, and a public worship pattern following the typical Christian calendar year. Such general similarities, however, should not obscure the

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extent of alternative positions on major issues.

Consistent with Swedenborg's role in the rise of modern spiritualism, Swedenborgians have been active in publishing much detail about the future beyond death. Swedenborg's runaway bestseller from his own lifetime on into the present moment has been his spiritualist tome, *Heaven and Hell*, which is replete with spiritualist information (Swedenborg 1758/2001). Swedenborgians have been active in the near-death studies movement, publishing numerous works in support of surviving death and hosting groups in their churches that feature speakers who claim to have had experiences with "the other side" in a near-death occurrence.



Equally at the top of the best-known features of Swedenborgian beliefs is the idea that the Bible contains a hitherto unknown code to the literal text for breaking the seal on its real meaning. Nearly half of the total pages of Swedenborg's published theosophy that runs to approximately thirty volumes (depending on which edition) involve verse-by-verse commentary that provides the "inner sense" meaning of the literal text. The interpretive move on the text happens through a style of symbolism Swedenborg called "correspondences," through which the nouns and verbs of the plain sense are read in a spiritually allegorical way that consistently shape a particular Christian theosophy, conveying a perspective on the three themes of God's selfhood and relationship with humanity, the spiritual history of humanity, and the reader's personal soul journey. Swedenborg's interpretive technique is

considered by a number of scholars to be related to the long-standing earlier *sensus spiritualis* methods of biblical allegoresis once practiced by dozens of significant figures in Christian history (Lawrence 2012).

Another prominent belief involves a far-reaching Oneness metaphysic that results in a unitarian (small "u") characterization of the Trinity in such a heterodox way that Swedenborgians often have been labeled by orthodox Christians as anti-Trinitarian. Also central is a redefinition of faith from the orthodox formulations. Swedenborg attacked "faith alone" ideas of salvation with such ferocity that the church movements have always emphasized language of spiritual growth and regeneration, which are actual processes of formation and the only "way" to a positive destination in the afterlife. When answering his heresy trial charges with his final major work, *True Christianity*, Swedenborg composed a litany of his doctrinal reformations utilizing the structure of a typical Lutheran systematic. For each doctrinal category he describes "the old church" view and the "New Church" view (Swedenborg 1771/2006).

Despite the claims of most sectarian adherents that Swedenborg had no earthly sources for his revelations on the true meaning of scripture and the theology and theosophy it contains, numerous religious historians characterize Swedenborg as influenced by and resonant with several inter-related historical currents of thought: Neoplatonist, Augustinian, theosophical, hermetical, kabbalist, Pietist, and Neo-Cartesian (Lamm 2000:50–122; Jonsson 1971:41–118; Larsen 1984:1–33; Lawrence 2012:147–233). In addition to constructions of the complex interdiscursivity in which Swedenborg was embedded, considerable primary source evidence establishes him as knowledgeable of concepts and frameworks from these historical currents

that are basic to his mature system of thought. These materials include numerous notebooks found in his papers and the catalog of his library estate sold after his death (Lawrence 2012:114–17, 130–36).

In terms of Swedenborg's reception and influence for his ideas, a number of historians of religion assess Swedenborg's role in shaping Western religious thought as noteworthy, especially in nineteenth-century England and the United States (Ahlstrom 1972: 600–04, 1019–24; Schmidt 2000; Albanese 2007:136–44, 170–01, 303–11; and Goodrick-Clarke 2008:152–78). ☩

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Supplementary resources will be listed at the end of Part 2 of this article, to appear in the June Messenger.

The Anthropic Principle

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create beauty from the very beginning of human existence. But why should the sense of beauty be limited to human experience? Does not all life participate?

The simplicity of these natural laws that allow phenomena to convey to us sensations of beauty leads one to wonder what it means.

Henry David Thoreau, in his winter wanderings around Concord, pondered this when he observed an unusually heavy hoar frost one morning. He wrote that, "Every tree, shrub, and spire of grass . . . was covered with a dense ice foliage, answering, as it were, leaf for leaf to its summer dress. . . . It struck me that these ghost leaves, and the green ones whose forms they assume, were the creations of but one law; that in obedience to the same law as vegetable juices swell gradually into the perfect leaf, on the one hand, and the crystal-line particles troop to their standard in the same order, on the other."

Thoreau reflected that other phenomena or "natural rhythms" could

"imply an eternal melody, independent of any particular sense."

An eternal melody of nature? Played by what organist?

Human discovery brings us closer and closer to our awareness that our universe is a living being, throbbing with an energy that governs all, an energy that we have not been able to completely measure, even comprehend, but which may include a consciousness which is shared by all life and matter.

What connects our subjective perception of the beauty of nature and art with the cosmic order? Such an experience happened to the physicist Heisenberg when he exclaimed, "I had the feeling that, through the surface of atomic phenomena, I was looking upon a strangely beautiful interior, and I felt almost giddy at the thought that I now had to probe this wealth of mathematical structure that nature has so generously spread out before me."

That "mathematical structure" is the fundamental order of nature that lies beyond the grasp of our sense perception. Heisenberg claims that even Plato could not have realized the beauty of the simplicity and holistic symmetry of the laws of quantum physics.

How then does that feeling of beauty come about? Does it relate to the idea of "truth" and our connection to nature? The poet William Blake saw the world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower. His 240 year old vision resonates in my thoughts. It is in harmony with the world view of Plato and Heisenberg.

Nature indeed reveals a never ending scale of order in complexity. Our feeling of beauty is inspired by the harmonious arrangement of order and disorder as it occurs in natural objects—in clouds, trees, mountain ranges, or snow crystals. Jackson Pollock's abstract expressionistic drip paintings are beautiful as forms of fractal geometry, a fundamental quality of nature and

source of beauty.

Beauty, of course, is instantly recognized and needs no definition to be appreciated, but surely must be a thing in itself, something that is transmitted to the senses deep within us through inherited pathways. Life, as we know it here on Earth, evolved in an environment of tumultuous forces as our planet was being shaped, so to speak, under the feet of our forebears. The archaic memories that are transmitted into the human brain date back billions of years. The perception of beauty may be based upon such memory.

Einstein, throughout his life, believed in an order in nature that was deeply ingenious and elegant. This is apparent in recent studies showing that the conditions leading to the origins of life lie within extremely narrow limits. If any of the physical forces, such as gravity, electromagnetism, and even the nuclear cross-section of carbon had been slightly different, it is doubtful that any sort of life would have been possible nor could evolution lead to a being such as *Homo sapiens* that observes and records these conditions. This hypothesis has been called the Anthropic Principle.

Luckily for us, life did appear and evolved to a primordial cell that is called the "Last Universal Common Ancestor" that is believed to have existed about three and a half billion years ago. Every single living thing now on our planet is descended from that cell. Over these billions of years living things on Earth have evolved into a complex homeostatic organism that has been called Gaia, named after the Greek Earth goddess. The condition for this incredible blossoming of life and beauty is called biophilia, the love of life, the concept developed by Harvard's own E. O. Wilson. The bee is attracted to the flower which is beautiful to the bee, as the flower surely senses beauty in the bee. The bowerbird

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FNCA Work Weekend: Lessons in Preparedness and Flexibility

BY NANCY LITTLE

I got involved with Work Weekend at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA: <http://fryeburg.org/>) in 2005. Work Weekend is an event that the FNCA's Buildings and Grounds Committee (B&G: <http://fryeburg.org/bgmessage>) holds every Memorial Day Weekend, when the camp is opened up for the season. The buildings and property are prepared for the upcoming camp session in August. Work like putting a new metal roof on a cabin, fixing winter damage, and plumbing repairs, are among some of

the routine projects that get accomplished during the weekend. Cleaning the cabins and rooms in the Main Building, and dealing with surprises (Yikes! A mouse spent the winter in the walk-in cooler in the kitchen!) keep everyone busy all weekend long. Grocery shopping, cooking, and cleaning up after meals is work, too, and just as important as building a new railing for the ramp from the front porch to the lower deck. We generally have somewhere between twenty and thirty people



come for the weekend. Some people come a day or two early to help with grocery shopping (it's best with at least three adults), and some come for a day or just a morning. We appreciate

all the help we can get. As we say when we invite people, "We have projects for all skills and abilities. No special skills required!" In exchange for their work, we feed them for the weekend and give them a place to rest their weary bodies after a full day of work. Work starts at 9 AM and often doesn't stop until dinner at 6 PM.

In the beginning, I helped clean cabins, prepare meals, and shop for groceries. When I started attending, the weekend was organized by Colgate Searle and his late wife, Cecilia. Cecilia was an excellent cook and would arrive at camp with recipes she found in *Bon Appetit* or *Gourmet* magazine and then go to the market in North Conway with her sister Tina Wood to buy the ingredients. She even made us gourmet desserts! Tina and Cecilia did all the cooking back then, and the meals were amazing. At the end of the weekend, Dave and Martha Richardson would invite all of us to their farm for a barbeque. Their farm sits at the top of Stanley Hill in Fryeburg, with views of the White Mountains and gorgeous sunsets. It was an excellent way to end the weekend.

At Work Weekend 2011, shortly after I joined the B&G committee, Dave Richardson (chair of the B&G), handed me "the list" and told me I was the official holder of the projects list. This meant that I had not only earned

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The Anthropic Principle

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of New Guinea assembles a beautiful array of colored stones and elaborately thatched structures to attract the female.

The conditions for life on this planet according to the Anthropic Principle may apply equally to our perception of beauty. The strictly defined forces that allowed life to appear included those that eventually shaped the colors, shapes, sounds, and textures that impart the sensation of beauty. Life and beauty are integral, one cannot exist without the other.

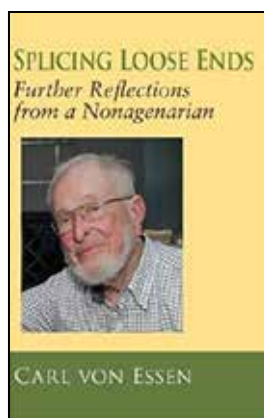
The classic philosophers believed in beauty and truth as forming part of the soul. Plato writes in the *Phaedrus*, "The soul is awe stricken and shudders at the sight of the beautiful, for it feels that something is evoked in it that was not imparted to it from without by the senses, but has always been already laid down there in a deeply unconscious region."

That "deeply unconscious region,"

one can surmise, is the inherited archetypal memory accumulated for over billions of years of evolution from our primordial cell.

Indeed, it seems reasonable to me to think that the appreciation of beauty, a source of deep pleasure, is inherited, that it began with the origin of life, and manifests itself through every level of life as a perception of our place in the universe. ☩

Dr. Carl von Essen is a longtime friend of, and participant in the life of, the Cambridge Swedenborgian Church. Carl began writing books after retirement from nearly fifty years of medical practice, research, and teaching all over the world. Throughout his years of professional life, he pursued also the love of travel, of angling, and of our natural world. He has written six books since retiring.



Lessons in Preparedness

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Dave's trust and respect but, more importantly, it meant that I had to keep everyone busy and learn who had what skills. Do you have plumbing skills? What about electrical skills? Are you afraid of heights? Ladders? Do you like cleaning? I kept track of the list on the large whiteboard in the dining room, and assigned people to projects, crossing them off when they were completed. Sometimes Dave knew who he wanted to work on which projects ahead of time and would let me know.

Cecilia Searle was diagnosed with cancer in 2011, and as much as she wanted to be at Work Weekend in 2012, it was looking very unlikely that she would be able to attend that year. After discussing it with my dear friend Beki Greenwood, I contacted Cecilia and offered to take over the responsibility of organizing the weekend. She was relieved and grateful to hand it off to Beki and me. Sadly, Cecilia passed away on June 23, 2012.

For the 2012 Work Weekend, Beki and I worked together to create a new menu that would appeal to our regular attendees, and started using an online form (Google forms) as a method of having people sign up to attend Work Weekend. We used, and continue to use, Facebook and email to promote the event. Beki and I used Google Docs for the shopping list and menus. After each Work Weekend, we would meet virtually (usually via Google Hangouts), to review the menu and shopping list to tweak it for the next year. If it was clear that the crowd didn't like pasta, we took it off the menu. If we didn't buy enough coffee or half-and-half, we made a note of



Trevor and Jillian repair the braided rug made by Trevor's mother and Jillian's great-grandmother, Louise Woofenden.

that on the shopping list for the next time. When it was clear that this was a seltzer crowd and a not soda crowd, we bought more seltzer, and skipped the soda. If we didn't make enough BBQ Slow Cooked Chicken, we noted to make more the next year. When Herb Ziegler offered to make his famous waffles, we said, "Yes! You bring your recipe and waffle irons and we'll buy the ingredients!" Over the seven years that Beki and I have worked together on the menu and shopping list, we have tweaked and perfected it to the point

that there are very few leftovers at the end of the weekend.

In my role as keeper of the list, I would contact Dave Richardson sometime in early May to find out what big projects

he had in mind for that year in addition to the usual cleaning jobs. I would then share the projects list with whoever needed it so that they could bring their own power tools if they preferred. We are fortunate to have regular attendees with architectural, construction, carpentry, electrical, plumbing, and painting skills.

In 2018, I decided it was time for me to "step back" from my role as keeper of the list both at Work Weekend and on Work Day (a two-hour version of Work Weekend during the camp session). I began training Sarah Grams, wife of our nephew Troy, who also serves on the B&G committee. Troy and Sarah have been helping Dave to open the camp and turn on the water system prior to Work Weekend for a few years now, so I know that they are very familiar with the facilities. Initially, I told Dave Richardson that I was just going to hand-off some of my responsibilities to Sarah who would manage Work Day. By May

of 2019, however, two committees of which I am chair (the denomination's Library and Documents Committee and FNCA's Centennial Celebration Committee) were needing more attention. I decided that I would fully resign from B&G, and pass the baton to Sarah Grams who, with her excellent organizational skills and charming British accent (she's from Wales), will do an excellent job as the new keeper of the list and enjoy working with Beki as much as I have.

As I pass the baton to Sarah and Beki as the new coordinators of B&G's Work Weekend, I wish them well in their work. What I've learned from fifteen years of Work Weekends is that it's important to be prepared and have a list of projects and people with the right skills to work on them. It's also important to be flexible because the outdoor projects can only get done if the weather cooperates and the materials are available. Having plenty of indoor projects on the list is essential. If it rains all weekend, people can still work. Prioritizing the projects list is also important. Some things (usually smaller projects) can wait until Work Day during camp session in August.

I always knew we'd had a successful Work Weekend when Dave was almost smiling by Sunday evening. Work Weekend *is* work but it's also a great time to be with our camp family that we normally only see in August and to enjoy being at our "little slice of heaven" in Fryeburg, Maine. ☪

Nancy Little is a librarian and lives in Western Massachusetts with her husband Trevor and her tuxedo cat, Whitney. She serves the FNCA on the Outreach Committee and the Facilities Rental Committee, and as chair of the Centennial Celebration Committee. She is also chair of the denomination's Library and Documents Committee.



The Lord Cares For Us and About Us!

BY SUSANNAH CURRIE

Rev. Currie delivered this message to the Bridgewater New Church in Massachusetts at the Easter Sunday service.

I was a bit under the weather during Holy Week. Laid low with congestion, I had to care for, and about, myself. *Care about* meaning showing myself compassion, and *care for* meaning finding methods to bring myself to greater health: liquids, rest, and medications. I came to realize that this correspondence, of showing love and understanding how to make that love real, helps me to see why the Lord insists there are two great commandments: to love God, or to open our hearts to God's love, and to love one another, to find ways to make that love real in the world. It also seemed appropriate to have a small taste of suffering as I had been reading about Jesus's last week in preparation for Easter Day!

Today is the 20th Easter service I have celebrated as an ordained minister, and now more than ever, Holy Week has become a time that I focus my attention on the struggle of living with the pain and suffering that many people face daily, and I have been praying for those facing ongoing health challenges and shocking new diagnoses, and mourning with those who grieve. I care for and about them and look for ways to show them. This week my act of caring for my son and daughter-in-law was a fruit basket. Love can take many forms!

This is the correspondence of death and resurrection that we celebrate today. Death, or trauma, illness or accident, any "death" of what was, brings our attention to the love in our hearts, and we look for the ways we can help the Lord to "turn all things to the good," to midwife a rebirth.

The recent fire at Notre Dame

Cathedral in Paris brought emotional suffering to a lot of people. It too was a death of what was. Yet, even before the last flames died out, hopes were being shared for rebuilding, resources and plans were being offered, and the message of the hope of resurrection was spread. A group experience of a death and its subsequent outpouring of hope engaged people all around the world. And I, for one, see some divine providence in the timing of this.

Death and resurrection is the message of Easter morning. We heard the story of Jesus' death and burial, and we heard the story of the empty tomb and Jesus' reappearance in a bodily form. We experience the suffering of loss and

It is a hard story for our finite human brains to believe, to imagine, or to relate to ourselves, no matter whether read, enacted, or sung, and yes, I did take home *Jesus Christ Superstar* and watch the whole thing!

the hope of renewal. Why do we need to hear this story again and again, year after year?

Because it is the essence of humanity—we live, die, and are resurrected as angels in heaven.

Death is something most of us are aware of but don't usually relate to ourselves, and Resurrection is difficult to believe, even as we read the story of Jesus, risen from the dead, announcing by his appearance to the disciples that we will all experience life after death. It is a hard story for our finite human brains to believe, to imagine, or to relate to ourselves, no matter whether read, enacted, or sung, and yes, I did take home *Jesus Christ Superstar* and watch the whole thing! The basic black and white story line is life-death-life.

What brings that story color and depth are the stories of people we can relate to in the Easter morning story. Some of us run to the tomb with Mary, we are astonished with her when Jesus speaks to her. Some of us are with the disciples in the locked room, in awe as Jesus reveals his wounds.

Over the years we feel different about this story each time we hear it; our experiences color our feelings and thoughts, also known as faith and belief, about how Jesus' resurrection applies to us in our lives. Perhaps for you, this year, you see it in the destruction and hope for rebuilding of Notre Dame Cathedral, or in your own experience of the death of a loved one and your sense of their continuing presence in your life, or in the loss of one way of living and the beginning of a new way.

And therein is your faith.

Faith is the belief in a future we cannot predict, that we all will live-die-live and that during that whole journey, the Lord cares for us and about us. In Jesus' ministry, he showed people that he cared for—and about them. He was always present to whatever situations he faced. He cared for everyone, and when he was with them, he cared about them and did what presented itself to him, with the aim to teach the lessons of love each person was ready to hear—about compassion in the heart, acceptance, and understanding in the mind—inspiring them to acts of loving service to one another. He showed everyone by loving them how to love each other.

I met an older gentleman recently who was a church musician for over sixty years, and he had heard sermons from numerous ministers over the decades. He told me about hearing a sermon he didn't like. I asked him what he felt was missing, what did he look

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Resurrection Pageant at Pawnee Rock

BY CARL HELM

Several members of the Pawnee Rock (Kansas) New Jerusalem Church were involved in the produc-

tion of the beautiful Resurrection Pageant hosted by the Pawnee Rock Ministerial Alliance. The pageant, held every other year since 1936, includes a play entitled "The Way of the Cross," which church members wrote in 1934.

The story begins with a stranger reading his Bible and wondering if there really was such a thing as the resurrection when he sees an angel who asks him why men have to see to believe. The stranger watches from the side as the resurrection story unfolds.



We see Mary Magdalene, Mary, mother of James and Salome, the disciples Peter and John, two Pharisees, two soldiers, Joseph of Arimathea, two mothers, and three children who complete the cast.

Jennie Wilson of the New Jerusalem Church led a great choir and Trisha Prescott, also a member of the Church was the coordinator. The play was directed by Dan Heath. ☩

Carl Helm is the president of the Kansas Association.



Hello Lovely Folks

I looked for God in my apartment the other day. I kept reading that God dwells with us, feeds us, and uplifts us, so I figured she must be close. I eyed our dog, Ghost, hoping that she might help or that she might be the Holy Ghost in disguise. As she yawned, I thought, "No, surely just a dog." I then poked at our cat, Shiva, who immediately attacked my finger: "Nope, a cat."

I searched everywhere, but no luck! Exhausted, I collapsed into a chair and, as I drifted off to sleep, a small voice spoke, "Behold, I am with you always. Look no further and see that I Am." I had heard that God spoke in parables, but this was getting out of hand.

*Peace and blessings,
Pastor Cory*

Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts leads Church of the Open Word in Kitchener, Ontario, and the Swedenborgian Online Community.

The Lord Cares for Us

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for in a 'good' sermon? He gathered himself to talk, and finally shared this, "I want to feel the minister cares about me!"

And that is the black and white about each of our stories, that we long to have faith in our lives. We all need to know that we are cared for and cared about, and that the Lord is offering this to each of us, every moment, forever! It is we who bring the color to the story of our faith journey, how we attempt to love God and love our neighbor. In fact, the journey and the goal are the same.

Your pain and suffering, as well as your joy, is unique to you, and how you live it and how you come to acknowledge that the Lord is living your life with you is your personal faith journey narrative. Whether your faith came alive years ago, or is just beginning to grow, it is the Lord in you that you are opening up to, the Lord caring for you and about you, and he has breathed the Holy Spirit of useful love on us all.

The Lord's resurrection is a call to "love one another as he has loved us," and the Lord will bring resurrection to us all, in this life, and the next. ☩

Rev. Susannah Currie is minister of the Bridgewater New Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts.



"Reading Swedenborg" Podcast Debuts

Pastor Thom Muller, has a new podcast, "Reading Swedenborg," starting with episodes on Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Wisdom*. You can listen at Spiritual Questors (<http://spiritualquestors.org/?p=966>) or at Soundcloud (<https://tinyurl.com/RevThomE1-DLW>)

Passages

New Members

Sue Harris and **Noah Perry** joined the Pretty Prairie Church (Kansas) on Easter Sunday.

Centenarians

Lisa (Elsie) Reddekopp celebrated her 100th birthday October 28, 2018. She was married to the late Rev. Erwin Reddekopp and has four children: Ron, Sharon, Wayne, and Brian. Her parents migrated to Winnipeg from Russia in the early 1900s.

Deaths

Audrey Milot passed fully into the spiritual world October 17, 2018. Audrey was a vital member of the Edmonton Church of the Open Word, where she served in many capacities. A memorial service was held October 27, 2018.

Rev. David Lee Rienstra entered the fullness of the spiritual world on November 10, 2018. He was born March 7, 1939, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the youngest of the five children of August and Gertrude Hoozeboom Rienstra, Dutch immigrants.



A Marine from 1956 to 1962, David returned to Grand Rapids where he married Carole J. Bahre (deceased, 1996). They had three children, David Jr., Sherilyn, and Kathryn. In 1970, he went to work for General Motors as a tool and die-maker. He found his calling and enrolled at Boston University, continuing to work days while attending evening classes, graduating with a degree in religion and philosophy.

He attended the Swedenborg School of Religion and was ordained in 1978

at the annual convention where he gave an address, "Heeding the Call," to commemorate the occasion. He had already been leading the Fryeburg Church as a student pastor for a year while concluding the last of his studies and began ordained ministry there, serving for ten years. The family moved to St. Louis in 1987 to take up the ministry at Church of the Open Word, which had adopted the tag "Garden Church" due to its Wayfarers-inspired glass chancel that looks through to a walled garden. Already popular for weddings, David and Carole spearheaded a multi-year project renovating a large-scale outdoor garden surrounding the church to enhance the garden theme and beautify the neighborhood.

In addition to his congregational leadership ministries, David served Convention in numerous capacities. In 1993 he was chosen to be one of three theme speakers on the future of the church, giving an address entitled, "Who Are We and Where Are We Going?" He also answered the call to serve stints as Chair of the Council of Ministers, on General Council, the Sunday School Association, the Ministerial Placement Committee, the Growth and Outreach Committee, and as an officer for both the Maine and Illinois Associations.

David married Diane Wuestenfeld LaFevers in 1997. The couple moved to Alaska, where she practiced as a physical therapist and they both worked with special needs children in public schools. David volunteered his time with hospice patients as a minister and therapy assistant. They hiked mountains, mushed their dog, and fished.

They moved to Jerseyville, Illinois, in 2004, and built a cabin on property overlooking Bryant Creek near Tecumseh, Missouri. For the next few years the Rienstras divided their time between the cabin and Jerseyville and, in 2015, they moved to their beloved Bryant Creek cabin permanently.

David is survived by his wife, Diane; his children: David Rienstra, Sherilyn Rienstra, and Kathryn Pruiett; his stepsons Rick LaFevers (Traci), Scott LaFevers (Mandy), and Martin LaFevers (Liz); four grandchildren eight step-grandchildren; and brothers, Bill and Pete Rienstra. He was preceded in death by his brother, John and sister Alice Decker.

David believed in being useful; hence, his body was donated to Washington University in St. Louis for medical research. Rev. Rienstra's Memorial Service will be held 1:30 PM Sunday June 26 at the Garden Chapel, Church of the Open Word 140 Dautel Rd. St. Louis, MO. 63146. Pastor Paul Deming will be officiating.

Charles Wickham (Wick) Skinner, Jr. died on January 28, 2019, in St. George, Maine. He was born on February 20, 1924, in Cincinnati.

Wick, a longtime member of the faculty at the Harvard Business School, grew up in the Cincinnati New Church. He was the husband of Alice Blackmer Skinner, longtime president of the Swedenborg Foundation; brother of Perry Martin and Carol Lawson; and uncle of Revs. Paul Martin, Rachel Rivers, and Jenny Caughman, and



Rob Lawson (active in the Bath church and currently on General Council).

Widely known for innovating manufacturing approaches focused on practical effects and for his ardent opposition to diversification for increased profits, he was guided by his belief in putting all effort toward what a company can do with excellence. The Swedenborgian ideal of true usefulness became integral to his business philosophy. Late in life, he self-published a memoir entitled, *Making Things Better* (Amazon). ☩

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.

Weaving Americans Together

BY RICH TAFEL

We had a wonderful turnout for an awesome celebration at Church of the Holy City in Washington DC (the National Church) when our denomination president, Rev. Jane Siebert, preached and offered the blessing on the renovated dining room.

In addition, she had a surprise for us: she formally installed me as pastor. Thanks to all who joined us and to Rev. Siebert for her support.

This week, I'm attending two conferences. The first organized by the New York Times writer, David Brooks, who just authored *The Second Mountain*. He writes about the importance of getting beyond the ambitious life to your

spiritually-based purpose life. I attended a conference that he, with the Aspen Institute, organized for Weavers—people across the country who are rebuilding social networks in America. It was an amazing couple of days, meeting 250 people seeking to do good

Also, I attended Citizen's University's Collaboratory. This is a network of civil society leaders who gather annually.

At both events, I had a chance to share our church's unique vision for spiritual entrepreneurs. I'm amazed how well received this idea is received. People always want to hear more.

Church of the Holy City is leading an important movement, and I thank our entire congregation for helping make that vision come to fruition.



Newly installed Rev. Rich Tafel and Convention president Rev. Jane Siebert

