



## “Now a Swedenborgian Has Popped Up”— Faith and Order Spring Meeting

BY DAVID FEKETE

The Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches in Christ USA (NCCC)



met on March 13–15 in beautiful San Juan, Puerto Rico. We stayed in a hotel in historic Old San Juan; we attended a prayer service led by a Franciscan monk in the 100-year-old Catholic church, Iglesia San Francisco de Asis; and we met to conduct the business of our study groups.

The Faith and Order Commission is divided into three study groups: 1)

Violence and Religion; 2) Divisive Issues in the Church; and 3) Contextual Theologies from the Margins. Commissionaires voluntarily join one of the three study groups. I chose the group Contextual Theologies from the Margins because I thought it reflected the place of our denomination in the larger Christian world.

In our study group, each member wrote a five-page story describing our feelings of marginalization. Some Korean-Americans felt marginalized because of their race and gender. Some felt marginalized because of old age. Some felt marginalized due to an ethnicity that didn't fit established categories, such as a Presbyterian Latino from Puerto Rico. I find myself marginalized by the obscurity of my Swedenborgian religion—i.e., the fact that very few know about us. In our stories we were to find a modality through which to express our feelings, and I chose dialogue as meta-narrative.

The study groups are supposed to present their findings to the Faith and Order Commission at large in a way that would benefit the NCCC member and non-member communions, and individual churches in general. We thought we would write a textbook of twelve chapters, each chapter being one of the stories of the twelve members of the study group. After expressing our feelings of marginality and interpret-

ing them through a modality, we were further assigned the task of choosing a Bible story for theological reflection on our narrative. Our hope is that churches can use our work to generate books of their own inspired by the content and methodology of our work. This means that one of the chapters of this book, published by the NCCC, will be about a Swedenborgian's feelings of marginalization and suggestions for member bodies of the NCCC to relate to one another with such differing doctrines. (See the accompanying article on page 62, which is my submission to the study group.)

In my paper for our study group, I wrote that different denominations would best relate to one another in an I-Thou relationship in which different beliefs would be seen merely as differences of opinion (drawing on AC 1799). However, my study group showed a keen interest in knowing about our doctrines and felt that commonality would best be achieved by knowing where each denomination was coming from. I said some brief remarks about our beliefs during my presentation to the group, which were favorably received by group members. I talked about our system of regeneration in which we are filled with God's Divine Love and Wisdom, and one enthusiastic response was, "So you have a

*Continues on page 65*

**Swedishborgian Church Annual Convention, June 26–30, 2013, Urbana, Ohio**

**Turn to pages 66–69 for detailed information and registration form.**

### More Inside:

Nominees for Elected Positions in the Church • Contextual Theology from the Margins Annual Convention 2013 Registration Form • Annual Convention Programs and Information Convention Ministers Win Bridge Book Awards • FNCA Work Weekend Improved My Life

**The Editor's Desk**



**The Fabric of a Community**

On April 15, 2013, a state holiday called Patriots' Day in Massachusetts, a day of celebration of the "shot heard round the world," on Lexington Green in 1775 that signaled the start of the American colonists' war for independence, a day when a route from the town of Hopkinton to Boylston Street in Boston's Back Bay neighborhood is lined for 26.2 miles, with hundreds of thousands of people cheering thousands of people running in the Boston Marathon, most of them for the joy of it, the fabric of a community was jolted into horror and disbelief by the explosion of two bombs left by two young men to randomly maim and kill as many celebrants as possible: men, women, and children. Pure evil reared its ugly head and the large community that includes Boston and its surrounding towns came together, much as happened in New York, Sandy Hook, and many other communities

when tragedy driven by evil struck. Of course tragedies such as the tsunami in Japan can cause horror, pain, suffering, and disbelief as well, and the loved ones of those who die less dramatically in unnecessary tragedies feel little comforted that their losses were less dramatic and less headline-grabbing. But the drama of a crowd bombing compounded by the discovery within days that it was committed by two young men who seemed to have good lives and bright futures was so incomprehensible, so inexplicable, that the community realized it had come face-to-face with the real thing—evil.

Predictably and understandably, the community came together in grief by, among other ways, praying and worshipping together, turning to a deeper commitment to their religious beliefs for comfort and understanding.

Emanuel Swedenborg helps us understand that the whole world—the whole of existence—is organized into communities. In the natural world, we exist within ever-widening circles of community that eventually culminates in the the world community: the community of mankind. That pattern follows the organization of heaven, organized into communities in the shape of the Grand Man, the master human form created by God in His im-

age. The hells too are organized into communities, defined by their ruling loves, and I suppose there must be a hell for terrorists who pervert religious beliefs into hatred for others who they perceive as the enemy because they are "other," worthy of being destroyed in the name of God. Surely, they blocked all reception of the influx of good and truth God provided for them and thus allowed evil to guide them.

We ask why and we try to divine answers, but we can never know. Our path to healing and the will to go on lies in our willingness to open ourselves to God's goodness and truth—a lifetime task best pursued within community.

—Herb Ziegler

**Contents**

"Now a Swedenborgian Has Popped Up"—Faith and Order Spring Meeting ..... 57  
 The Editor's Desk..... 58  
 Letter from the President ..... 59  
 Nominees for Elected Positions in the Church..... 60  
 On-Line Web Community News 61  
 Contextual Theology from the Margins ..... 62  
 Convention Ministers Win Bridge Book Awards ..... 65  
 Annual Convention Programs and Information..... 66  
 Five Wishes® ..... 66  
 Annual Convention 2013 Registration Form..... 67  
 FNCA Work Weekend Improved My Life..... 70  
 April 13, 2013 GC Teleconference Meeting..... 71

**Church Calendar**

- May 24–27: West Coast Memorial Day Retreat • Sonoma, CA
- May 24–27: SCYL Memorial Day Retreat • FNCA, Fryeburg, ME
- June 26–30: 189th Annual Convention • Urbana U • Urbana, OH
- July 20–28: Almont Summer Camp • Allenton, MI
- August 3–18: FNCA Summer Camp • Fryeburg, ME
- September 12–15: Gathering Leaves • FNCA • Fryeburg, ME

the Messenger

© The Swedenborgian Church of North America  
 Published monthly except July and August by the Communications Support Unit of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (founded 1817, incorporated 1861 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America), Ken Turley, president.

May 2013

Volume 235, No. 5 Whole Number 5380

Editor: Herbert Ziegler

Design and production: Herbert Ziegler

Copy editor: Robert Leith

Proofing: Beki Greenwood & Renée Hellenbrecht

Communications Support Unit: Ros Taylor, Steve Sanchez, & Kristina Madjerac,

Reproduction: Gnomon Copy, Cambridge, MA

**Editorial Address:**

Herb Ziegler, *The Messenger*

2 Hancock Place  
 Cambridge, MA 02139

Tel: 617.491.5181

Email: messenger@swedenborg.org

**Business and Subscription Address:**

The Messenger, Central Office

11 Highland Avenue  
 Newtonville, MA 02460

Tel: 617.969.4240

Email: manager@swedenborg.org

Subscriptions: free online subscription at [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org). Printed and mailed to US address, \$20/year; to Canada address, \$30/year; to all other addresses, \$35/year; single copies, \$2.00. Libraries, prisoners, free. Other requests, write Central office.

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

The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the Communications Support Unit, or the Swedenborgian Church.

## Letter from the President



Dear Friends,

It's been quite the week. I arrived in San Francisco Monday evening and made my way to the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) across the Bay in Berkeley. It was sunny and very warm. Luckily a few sunny and slightly warm days in Maine had prepared me so it wasn't too great a shock to my system. I spent the next two days, with CAM (Committee on Admission to the Ministry), interviewing current and prospective students. We met in person and via Skype, so it was great to "see" everyone and get caught up with how they are doing in their various stages of education and preparation. It was an opportunity to reconnect with Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, the Dean of SHS, and Francesca McCrossen and Alan Thomsen, the staff that keeps the operation running smoothly.

The second half of the week was devoted to the meeting of the SHS Board. This fourteen-member team of people of various relationships with General Convention met for two days and dove deep into the operational details of how things are working now and took a good, hard look at how things are headed into the future. One thing is certain: the ground under our feet continues to move. As has been said many times in the recent past, the nature of society's relationship to church and the personal and communal search for spiritual meaning is changing right along with the dynamically changing culture we live in. This change means that the nature of ministry must change in order to be rel-

evant and useful to the people we seek to reach and serve; and this, of course, means that the nature of education and preparation of those who wish to minister must change as well. The really good thing is that we have a great group of people who work well together as we seek to engage and respond to the many issues before us.

In fact, SHS has grown to become an essential part of the theological community we entered as unfamiliar strangers twelve years ago and in many ways has contributed new energy, insight, and cutting edge developments that have been valued and welcomed by the larger community. In large part, we have the leadership of our dean, Jim Lawrence, to thank for this. He has brought both the creative, innovative, and forward-looking, adventurous spirit that is necessary to continue to be relevant and effective going into an uncertain future and a deep familiarity, respect, and honoring of the tradition from which we come that keeps intact the essence of our theological identity as a church and as a people of God. As a result, SHS continues to train and prepare ministers for work "on the ground" or "in the field," if you prefer, serving our churches and developing new forms of ministry but at the same time promoting and furthering excellence and ongoing contributions to the cutting edge of theological thinking in the rarefied atmosphere of the larger academic world.

So with all of this fresh in mind as I return to Maine, flying over the expanse of our continent and the many individual churches and ministries that make up our one church denomination and also the network of connections to our many "neighbors," my thoughts turn to our upcoming annual convention to be held at Urbana University in just over a month. I hope to see many of you there!

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

# Nominees for Elected Positions in the Church

The Nominating Committee recruits and puts forward nominees for election to offices and positions in the denomination at the annual convention. In addition to the two candidates to be elected as representative-class trustees on the SHS board, two candidates are to be elected as the at-large class trustees, nominated by the Swedenborgian House of Studies Board of Directors.

The nominated candidates are listed in the table at right.

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

## Candidate Statements

The following candidates have submitted statements for this issue of the *Messenger*. The other candidates' statements appeared in the April 2013 *Messenger*.

### Vice-President: Betsy Coffman

I have been serving as vice-president of General Convention from the beginning of President Rev. Ken Turley's tenure and have felt privileged to contribute to the life of our denomination in this capacity.



I continue as Lay Leader of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church and chaplain of Urbana University. I believe that my life-long membership in the church and many years of serving at the local, association and national levels have added to my knowledge and ability to contribute meaningfully to the issues, challenges and decisions required of our officers and General Council. I would accept gratefully, the opportunity to continue to do so.

Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
Vice-president	1	Betsy Coffman*
Secretary	1	Susannah Currie*†
Treasurer	1	Polly Baxter*†
General Council layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Debbie Dolley Tom Neuenfeldt*†
General Council Minister	3	David Fekete †
Communication Support Unit (ComSU)	3	Kristina Madjerac*
Education Support Unit (EdSU)	3	Sherrie Connelly*
Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU)	3	BJ Neuenfeldt †
Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)	3	Drew Siebert †
Support Unit for Ministries (MinSU)	3	Alison Longstaff † Sharon Williams*
Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM)	3	Jennifer M. Tafel †
Board of Trustees of SHS, representative class (2 to be elected)	3	Carla Friedrich*† Sage Currie*†
Board of Trustees of SHS, at-large class**	3	Terrie Crenshaw Tom Neuenfeldt*
Nominating Committee (2 to be nominated)	5	TBA TBA

\* Incumbent

\*\* Nominated by the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) Board of Trustees

† Candidate's statement appeared in the April 2013 *Messenger*.

### General Council: Debbie Dolley

The Fryeburg New Church has been "my church" since my baptism over sixty years ago. I have been involved in the church all of my life, starting with going to Sunday School and attending church services, singing in the choir, and participating in junior and senior leagues. Then as an adult, I have taught Sunday School for forty years, been a trustee and treasurer of the church, Women's Alliance officer, and a member of the growth, worship, and search committees. I am presently the treasurer of the New Church Sunday School Association.



In my professional life, I was a school food-service director for thirty years after working as a town clerk, treasurer, and tax collector for a few years. The majority of my career was spent as a director of food service for an entire school district, where I was responsible for four schools, a staff of fourteen, and a half million dollar annual budget.

On a personal level, Stanley and I have been married for forty-four years and have two children and four grandchildren. We are retired and have recently moved to Scarborough, Maine, into a retirement community that we love.

Being asked to serve at the national level of our church is an honor and I sincerely believe that I would be doing the work of the Lord.

*Continues next page*



Continued from preceding page

**MINSU: Sharon Williams**

Over the past thirty or more years, Sharon has served on both General Council and the Nominating Committee. On an association level she held positions of president, secretary, and representative as well as president, secretary, and board member of her local church (Church of the Holy City, Calgary, Alberta).

She has been retired for the past three years after working twenty-eight years with the local school board. Her latest project is working with a group of volunteers to establish a not-for-profit company whose purpose is to provide opportunities for adult mentally and physically disabled citizens to be actively involved in their communities.

“I welcome this opportunity for my own growth while learning about our individual societies and will do my best to provide whatever support I can.”

**SHS Board of Trustees:**

**Terrie Crenshaw**



Terrie Crenshaw, a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, cherishes her experience growing up in the Detroit-area church, visiting other churches with the youth league, and summers at Almont summer camp. She brings to the board many years of professional experience in finance following an MBA, ranging from accounting manager to chief financial officer. In her personal life, she is kept busy by two lively sons, Nelson and Clark, and a budding, small specialty food business. Terrie is looking forward to assuming a more active role in the church and is honored to have been considered for the Board of Trustees. ☩

# Online Web Community News

## Thank You for Your 2013 Pledges

BY WILMA WAKE



**W**e thank all of you who participated in our 2013 pledge drive! We have received eighty-five percent of

our goal for the year. It is not too late to donate to the 2013 budget! To make a contribution, visit our Collections Plate page.

**Chats: Thursdays, 9–10 EST]**

- 1st Thursday: discussion of a portion of Heaven and Hell
- 2nd Thursday: a mini minicourse on a Swedenborgian concept
- 3rd Thursday: A discussion of the month’s worship theme
- 4th Thursday: The Unconventional Convention Church – we’ll invite guests to help us explore the future formats for worship
- Sunday live worship: 9–9:30 PM Eastern; 5–5:30 PM Pacific
- Sunday Coffee Hour: 9:30 – 10:30 Eastern; 5:30 -6:30 Pacific

We want to be a central on-line hub for other non-traditional Convention ministries; ones that are not centered in sanctuaries with formal worship services. Many, but not all, of these ministries, involve the Internet in some way. How will Swedenborgians worship in the years ahead? What forms of “church” might we create? We’ll explore these topics in the 4th Thursday chat and invite people involved in other unconventional ministries to come talk with us.

**Meet Us at Convention!**

We’ll be having a meal for all of those involved in or interested in the web community. We’ll also be leading a mini-course about the web and other non-traditional ministries (see sidebar).

**Touching the Spirit in New Ways**

This minicourse will be offered at the annual convention by the minister and Central Committee of [www.swedenborgiancommunity.org](http://www.swedenborgiancommunity.org), the entirely online, minister-led outreach ministry of the General Convention. In it you will learn not only about the process and the seven-year success story of this ministry but also will hear about other alternative ways of doing ministry in this twenty-first century. To the extent possible, examples will be drawn from ministries that are currently established or being established by denominational ministers and laypersons, as well as new forms of ministry connected to our parish ministries. We will present workable methods of reaching the new kind of spiritual seeker and church member of this time in history.

Visit our home page to see our flash box with new photographs that depict Swedenborgian key concepts—thanks to Page Morahan and Jared Alden.

There was a Bridge Book Proposal Award from the Swedenborg Foundation for submission by Rev. Wilma Wake on stories and topics from our community on mental illness and healing. Whether or not it is published, we will be encouraging our registrants to contribute personal stories of healing for sharing in our community. ☩

The Rev. Wilma Wake is pastor of the Online Swedenborgian Community.

# Contextual Theology from the Margins

## A Swedenborgian's Narrative and Reflection on Meta-Narrative

BY DAVID J. FEKETE

*"In the Christian world doctrines are what distinguish the churches; and from them persons call themselves Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists, or the Reformed and the Evangelical, and by other names also. It is from what is doctrinal alone that they are so called; which would not be at all, if love to the Lord and good-will to the neighbor were made the principal things of faith. The doctrines would then be only varieties of opinion respecting the mysteries of faith, which truly Christian persons would leave to everyone according to his or her conscience, . . . Thus from all the differing churches there would become one Church; and all the dissensions which exist from doctrine alone would vanish; yea, the hatreds against one another would be dissipated in a moment, and the Lord's kingdom would come upon the earth" (Emanuel Swedenborg, Arcana Coelestia, §1799--first published 1749).*

“What’s that?” That question is by far the most frequent response I receive when I tell people that I am a Swedenborgian minister. Along the same lines, when I attended an ecumenical gathering, one participant exclaimed, “Now a Swedenborgian has popped up and I don’t know what’s going to come out of you!” Responses like these are often the best I can hope for. After “What’s that?” comes the inevitable, “What makes your church different?” So the paradigm is constructed for argument. Then there are less comfortable responses. Once, at a Thanksgiving Day dinner, my host came up to me, half-joking, but dead on in what he said, “My daughter’s theology professors told her that the Swedenborgian Church is a cult.” I replied, “I’ve been hearing that all my life. Heretic, maybe, but not a cult.” Indeed, one can find the Swedenborgian Church listed in some books on cults.

Perhaps the most devastating response is the cold shoulder and tacit ostracizing when a person knows my religious orientation. This response is hardest and most painful because it tells me, “You are not a member of my communion.” At worst, it tells me, “I do not recognize you, your personhood, your core values, your humanity.” This response often arises after I am asked what makes my church different. It has rather become a necessity for me to learn something of other

**We can look familiar to mainstream Christianity, or we can challenge uncritically held tenets of mainstream Christianity. It depends on how the discussion proceeds, how tenets are applied, and which tenets are emphasized.**

theologies in order to begin to explain what makes us different. But I find that as I begin a discussion of different tenets, people don’t exhibit the patience or even the interest that is requisite to understand why we are different. A disinterested blank stare comes over my questioner’s face, they quit listening, walk away, change the subject. I envy mainstream Christians in their numbers and power. I think that they have the luxury of holding their tenets uncritically. Their numbers allow them, I think, to find company in others of their faith, and when they go out into the world, they have their faith’s history and contributions to society recognized in history books. Swedenborgians are always alone, unknown, and inevitably in the position of explaining

or defending their religion.

Then there are innocently curious, or pejoratively curious, persons who ask me about my choice to become a Swedenborgian minister. At times I wonder if there is a meta-text behind the apparently innocent question, “What made you decide to become a Swedenborgian minister?” The fact that Emanuel Swedenborg’s theology may offer me a reasonable, attractive, and Biblical soteriology (doctrine of salvation), spiritual psychology, Christology, and eschatology seems not to have occurred. Then I have heard the question posed pejoratively, “Why would anyone want to be a Swedenborgian minister?”

On rare occasions, people have heard of us, and have heard of our illustrious past. “Yes, the turn-of-the-century positive philosophers had a strong Swedenborgian influence—Pierce, Whitehead, James.” The list of illustrious Swedenborgians in the nineteenth century is quite impressive, and we Swedenborgians often feel inclined to list these Swedenborgians to legitimize our narrative.

So I roll with the exclamations, “Now a Swedenborgian has popped up, and I don’t know what is going to come out of you!” This individual knew enough about my church to add, “Yes, you are theologically marginalized.” For Swedenborgians, marginalization is theological. It is not due to race, ethnicity, economics, gender, or sexual orientation. This means that for me, marginalization and inclusion will turn on theological issues. During a coffee break, the individual I am referring to ran up to me and asked, “Are you Trinitarian? Are you creedal? Do you subscribe to the Nicene Creed?” I hold this up as a perfectly natural, but

*Continues next page*

*Continued from preceding page*

unfruitful way to undertake ecumenical relations. This sets up a dynamic that goes like this, “Here are my criteria for legitimacy. Do you match up?” This is almost a recipe for an argument that would result in the marginalization of smaller churches by larger, more numerous and powerful churches. I was quizzed also by a representative of another denomination who wanted to assure himself that we observe the sacraments and preach the Word—criteria for legitimacy in his Faith.

How different theologically are we? This question is important in a narrative about being theologically marginalized. Emanuel Swedenborg wrote thirty volumes of theology. He was a genius of incredible dimensions. Swedenborg’s theology is based largely on the Bible. How divisive our beliefs are depends on which passages in Swedenborg’s thirty volumes of theology a person selects to talk from or about. We can look familiar to mainstream Christianity, or we can challenge uncritically held tenets of mainstream Christianity. It depends on how the discussion proceeds, how tenets are applied, and which tenets are emphasized. It depends on whether our dialogue begins with the question, “What makes you different?”

In order for Swedenborgians to become less theologically marginalized, I ask other Christians to take the time to remain in dialogue with us, as I will remain in dialogue with you. We all identify ourselves by the name of Jesus Christ. I find my religious beliefs to be reasonable to me, as you find your religious tenets to be reasonable to you. Let us, then, dialogue friend to friend. If we meet as friends, then our doctrinal differences are but differences of opinion. We may realize what Swedenborg stated 250 years ago, “doctrines would then be only varieties of opinion respecting the mysteries of faith,

which truly Christian persons would leave to everyone according to his or her conscience.”

In reflecting on meta-narrative, I turned to a foundational essay on the topic that still defines the problem well, Jean-Francois Lyotard’s “The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge” (Manchester University Press, 1984). Lyotard rightly observes that unifying meta-narratives are fragmenting into “pragmatic valences specific to its kind” (xxiv). He asserts further that attempts at finding consensus do “violence to the heterogeneity of language games” (xxv). These remarks suggest issues for the Faith and Order Commission and, indeed, for much of the NCCCUSA. Our meta-narrative may be some construal of Christ’s life and teachings, but it appears to me that the NCCCUSA is displaying just that “heterogeneity of language games” of which Lyotard speaks. Stated in its strongest form, Lyotard asserts that, “to speak is to fight” (10). Given these observations, I’m not sure how effective dialogue can be as a meta-narrative that intends consensus.

Is legitimacy to be found in consensus obtained through discussion, as Jurgen Habermas thinks? Such consensus does violence to the heterogeneity of language games (xxv).

The willingness to engage the other, to enter into an I-Thou relationship with the other, to use Martin Buber’s term, may be a way to maintain constructive relationships in the light of the failure of an overarching meta-narrative. A contract to remain in relation, a contract of mutual respect, may provide the necessary cohesion required in the lack of a shared meta-narrative. Language games are “the minimum relation required for society to exist” (15). And they are “the object of a contract, explicit or not, between players” (9). Thus in order for relation to exist, and in order for dialogue to exist, players in a relationship need to agree on

what game will be played. The will to enter into an I-Thou relationship may be the requisite contract from which to engage in dialogue.

When reflecting on folk narratives, Lyotard observes that the stories require no extrinsic validation. They require, “no instituting deliberation, no cumulative progression, no pretension to universality” (30). They require only an introductory statement, “This is the story I received, that I am now telling you.” The teller needs no other credentials other than that he or she has heard the story. Lyotard contrasts this language game with those played by science. One move in the language of science is just that “pretension to universality” that folk narratives do not assume. In scientific language,

... there are statements for which the exchange of arguments and the production of proof constituting the pragmatics of research are considered to have been sufficient, and which can therefore be transmitted through teaching as they stand, in the guise of indisputable truths (25).

I suggest that it is the pretension to universality that leads to the breakdown of meta-narratives into competing smaller narratives. The pretension to universality leads to Lyotard’s claim that, “to speak is to fight.” For though religious tenets are not scientific language strictly speaking, it is almost constitutive of religious doctrines that they be considered ontological by their holder. So religious tenets tend to claim the universality that scientific language games do. In order for harmony to exist in the NCCCUSA, members may need to understand their respective tradition as one story in a plurality of stories. It may require a recognition that

... no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young and old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always

*Continues on page 64*

## Contextual Theology

*Continued from page 63*

located at “nodal points” of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be (15-16).

In exchange for universality, we may need more than ever the phrase that Dr. Kinneman is fond of using, “Christ’s reconciling love.” We may not believe alike, our narratives may differ, but we can recognise each other and each other’s essential Christian identity through an attitude of reconciling love. United in Christ’s reconciling love, we understand our strand as one narrative in the web of Christianity’s plural narratives, rather than being in the center, as if in touch with ontological truth. Perhaps, then, questions of marginality, locating the center, relocating the center will dissipate.

With the controlling image of narrative as existing in “nodal points” of communication circuits—a web—dialogue is a hopeful meta-narrative as a way of expanding connections in the web of narratives. Lyotard suggests that organizations will improve if they “acquire information, languages, and language games allowing them to widen their . . . horizons and to articulate their technical and ethical expertise” (49).

United in Christ’s reconciling love, denominations will widen their horizons if they acquire language games from the many diversities in the NCCUSA. United one with another in Christ’s reconciling love, we widen our own web of nodal points by constructive dialogue, learning each other’s language game in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, doctrine. Then, perhaps, Swedenborg’s dream might be realized,

. . . from all the differing churches there would become one Church; and all the dissensions which exist from doctrine alone would vanish; yea, the hatreds against one another

would be dissipated in a moment, and the Lord’s kingdom would come upon the earth.

### Theological Reflection: The Woman of Samaria (John 4:1-26).

The Samaritan woman said to him, “Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem” (John 4:20).

In the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, we find a striking confrontation of marginalization and inclusion. From an initial clash of doctrines (Samaritan and Orthodox Jewish), Jesus transcends such doctrinal and racial distinctions and speaks freely with a “marginalized” Samaritan woman. From the point of view of Orthodox Judaism, the Samaritan woman is on the doctrinal, racial, and geographic margins. Yet, John gives us the voice of the Samaritan perspective, when the Samaritan woman refers to her heritage in the lineage of Jacob, and asserts her beliefs that Mount Gerizim is the place where her faith group worships. The dialogue between the two rises up out of traditional Jewish or Samaritan doctrines into a discussion of Jesus as the Source of Living Water. This living water is offered to the “heterodox” Samaritan woman. Doctrine is transcended and the apparently marginalized Samaritan woman is moved into the Very Center in her encounter with The Center Itself, Christ Jesus.

I chose the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well as a way to reflect on my story of marginalization. The Samaritan woman stands in a marginalized place compared to the Jewish orthodoxy Jesus apparently represents. The Samaritans had a different Bible than orthodox Jews, and they worshipped on a different mountain than Jerusalem, along with other practices that alienated them from Jewish society. She does not expect Jesus to associate with her, presuming that

the doctrinal differences between her and Jesus would preclude communication. In the same way, it may surprise many—even those within our own denominations—that we in the NCCC are able to dialogue with each other harmoniously.

Jesus’ response resonates with me. He does not engage in a doctrinal discussion, nor does He attempt to convert her to Orthodox Jewish doctrines. He responds to the woman with love and engages her in dialogue despite her “heterodox” beliefs. His discussion transcends the parameters of both orthodox Judaism and orthodox Samaritan beliefs when Jesus speaks of worshipping “In Spirit and in truth.” Jesus is the living water that transcends boundaries of belief, orthodoxy, and race. His response is one of loving, inclusive dialogue that moves the marginalized Samaritan woman into a holy center with the Center of all life.

As I suggest in my story, it is unlikely that the various communities of the National Council of Churches in Christ USA will find commonalities in some deeply held doctrinal beliefs. For example, will members of the Greek Orthodox Church find doctrinal harmony with members of the Presbyterian Church? If doctrine is the basis for dialogue, we will find harmony difficult.

I do not mean to suggest that we dismiss doctrinal discussions altogether. I feel that the NCCUSA is richer for its doctrinal diversity. Lyotard suggests that organizations will function more efficiently if they, “acquire information, languages, and language games allowing them to widen their . . . horizons and to articulate their technical and ethical expertise” (49).

We enhance our capacity for harmonious dialogue when we understand the language games and information of other denominations than our own. And in doing so, we grow in our own

*Continues next page*



# Convention Ministers Win Bridge Book Awards

## First-Place Winners

Rev. Wilma Wake and Rev. Richard Tafel have been named as first-place winners of the third annual Bridge Book Award contest, sponsored by the Swedenborg Foundation.

Entrants were asked to develop proposals and submit writing samples for books that engage the ideas of Swedish scientist and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). The proposals were judged on the quality of the ideas and writing as well as their potential market appeal.

Rev. Wilma Wake, pastor of the Swedenborgian Online Community ([swedenborgiancommunity.org](http://swedenborgiancommunity.org)) from Kennebunk, Maine, won first place for



*Healing in a Hologram*, which traces the parallels between spirituality and mental illness and explores how spiritual community, especially online, can lead to healing.

Rev. Richard Tafel, of Washington, DC, won first place for *The Spiritual Diary*, a novel whose main character, a celebrity skeptic, experiences a radical transformation after a near-death experience.



## Honorable Mentions

• Gabrielle Reynolds, Tujunga, California, for *Questing Solace*, which describes the insights and personal healing the author received after giving herself a year-long challenge to read Swedenborg's work *Arcana*

*Coelestia (Secrets of Heaven)*.

• David Lomas, Whitefield, Manchester, England, for *An Absent Friend*, a collection of essays about Swedenborg's influence on the modern world.

Each winner received a cash prize and their entries will be considered for publication by the Swedenborg Foundation editorial board.

The Bridge Book Awards were created as a collaborative venture between the Swedenborg Foundation and the General Church of the New Jerusalem to encourage new writers to explore Swedenborg's thought, particularly how these ideas relate to contemporary life and concerns. People from all denominations and backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

For more information, contact Morgan Beard, 610-430-3222, ext 11. ☩

Continued from preceding page

understanding of religious truth.

However, this very expansion of efficiency is only possible in loving, I-Thou relationships personified by Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. In dialogue, Jesus lifts the discussion upward out of Jewish and Samaritan orthodoxy to talk about Himself as living water for Jew and Samaritan. He invites the Samaritan woman to partake of the living water of eternal life. The example of inclusion that Jesus depicts in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well is captured beautifully in Paul. "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" (Colossians 3:11). We are all reconciled in the body of Christ Jesus together—Greek Orthodox, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Swedenborgian.

## Reflection Questions:

- 1) With which characters in this story do you most relate: the individual whose religion is little known or others who are part of mainstream Christianity?
- 2) Have you ever felt alone and unknown or misunderstood by others? What were the circumstances? How did it make you feel?
- 3) Have you ever been in a group that ignored or kept out a stranger?
- 4) Have you ever been excluded by a group? How did that experience make you feel?
- 5) How do you relate to others who may not share your beliefs or values?
- 6) How does your religion orient you in society and the greater world around you? ☩

The Rev. Dr. David Fekete is pastor of the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta.

## Faith and Order Meeting

Continued from page 57

doctrine of theosis like the Greek Orthodox Church! Do you have a lively exchange with them?" "No, unfortunately," I replied. I let the group know that I was always available to discuss my Church. However, only one other Lutheran group member had a long discussion with me on our way to dinner on the subjects of faith and works, Bible interpretation, Paul, and Luther.

I am becoming better known among the members of the Faith and Order Commission, and befriended by some. I feel that I am representing our Church well, and in the future it is less likely that someone will burst out with, "Now a Swedenborgian has popped up, and I don't know what's going to come out of him!"—which happened during my first encounter with the Faith and Order Commission. ☩

## Annual Convention Programs and Information

### Five Wishes®

BY JANE SIEBERT

I remember many times at the hospital when the attending physician would ask me, the chaplain, to come with him into the family waiting room to ask the family how much they wanted done for their critically ill or injured loved one. At this point, family and friends are already in crisis, tired, and confused from being in a strange hospital, trying to absorb new information, and not knowing which way to turn. One time when this happened, the family pulled out the patient's Five Wishes®, which outlined what their loved one wanted. They were not blindly making these impossible decisions. At that point I vowed to share the information about Five Wishes® with as many people as possible.

This year at the annual convention you will have a unique and important

opportunity to complete your Five Wishes® in an easy-to-complete form that specifies how you want to be treated if you get seriously ill or in an accident. Once it is filled out and properly signed it is valid under the laws of most states. Even if your state does not accept Five Wishes® as a legal document, the information you complete will help your loved ones make the decisions you want in case you cannot tell them at the time.

The decisions you make when you are healthy, calm, and reflective will guide your health care team to offer you the care you want rather than just a prescribed protocol, if something unforeseen happens. It is invaluable for your family and others to know what you want rather than have to make difficult decisions for you during a crisis.

You may already have a living will, but Five Wishes® is more complete. The Five Wishes® are

1. The person I want to make care decisions for me when I can't
2. The kind of medical treatment I

*Continues on page 69*

### Technology and Church Workshop:

Are you a church who is facing a growing need for computer, audio and video technological resources? Do you need to know more about sound systems, video, computers, desktop publishing, and more? At 9:00 AM on Wednesday the 26th of June, Kevin Baxter will offer a technology forum and workshop designed to give foundational knowledge and steps toward working with all different types of technology for church purposes. People who intend on being present for the workshop are encouraged to contact Kevin Baxter no later than the first of June if they have specific questions or areas of interest they would like to see addressed.

### Delegate Registration Changes

To facilitate the distribution of voting cards to annual convention delegates, association officers or their designated representatives are asked to submit a delegate list to the Convention secretary at [secretary@swedenborg.org](mailto:secretary@swedenborg.org) two weeks prior to the annual convention. Additions or changes to the list may be made by the association representative by contacting the Credentials Committee at the annual convention. Delegates on the submitted lists will receive their voting cards at the registration desk.

### Saturday Night Coffee House and Open Mic

Saturday evening, following the worship service, we will hold our final reception and penultimate gathering. The week and work will be behind us, and it will be time to hang out and have some fun! There will be refreshments and time to socialize. The atmosphere will be an oversized coffee house and open mic. For those unfamiliar with this phenomenon, which is growing in popularity just about everywhere, it is an informal and supportive atmosphere where people gather to meet and talk, listen and perform. Anyone and

*Continues on page 69*

### Convention Art Exhibit

Do you own a piece of artwork created by yourself or another Swedenborgian artist?

In honor of the Swedenborgian artist and art teacher, Alice Archer Sewall James (1870–1955), founder of the Urbana Art Movement, you are invited to bring your art or art by another Swedenborgian with you to the convention and it will be displayed at the Urbana University Library during the convention!

Paintings should be wired for hanging (or may be exhibited on an easel). Artwork should include an information sheet with the name of the artist, date created, media used, and any other interesting information.

Works will be displayed during the convention and must be picked up by 4:30 PM on Saturday, June 29.

Please contact Linda Stevenson at 937.869.4745 or Robbin Ferriman at 937.508.1601 if you'd like to exhibit.

# 189th Session of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, June 26–30, 2013 Council of Ministers: June 23–25 2013 Registration Form

The 2013 Annual Convention will be held in Urbana, Ohio, on the campus of Urbana University. **To learn more about Urbana U, visit [www.urbana.edu](http://www.urbana.edu). To learn more about the 2013 Convention and view a list of Frequently Asked Questions, please visit the website at [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org) or call the Central Office at (617) 969-4240.**

**Lodging:** See next page for more details. Rooms will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, and may fill up before the end of the registration period. There are no special rates for children.

**Roommates:** If you have a specific roommate in mind, please fill in their name in the appropriate space. If not, please fill in the roommate matching section, so we can try to pair you with someone with similar habits and needs.

**Childcare:** The childcare program will run June 23 through June 30 during meetings for children ages 3–12. If you will be bringing children, please contact the Central Office to obtain the necessary forms.

**Teen Program:** The teen program runs from Wednesday, June 26 through Sunday, June 30, and is supervised by Kurt Fekete. If you want your teen (age 13–17) to attend without a parent, please contact the Central Office for details.

**Internet:** Free guest wireless access is available.

**Parking:** Free. Please check the box below so we can arrange for a parking pass for your vehicle, which you will receive when checking in.

**Room & Board Reservations and Payment Deadline:** Friday, June 7, by 5 PM EST. Any room and board reservations not fully paid by this date will be subject to a \$50 late fee. Meal only packages will not be available after June 7; you may buy meals with cash at the door. Event registrations will be accepted for as long as space permits.

**Cancellations:** Fully refundable prior to Friday, June 7 at 5 PM EST. If you cancel after Friday, June 7, at 5 PM EST, you will forfeit any room and board payments. Cancellations must be done by calling the Central Office from 9 AM–5 PM EST, M–F.

**Arrivals and Departures:** Check-in on arrival day is from 2–5 PM. Check-out on June 30 is from 9 AM–1 PM. Any arrivals or departures outside of this time must be coordinated with the Central Office in advance.

**Mobility:** We cannot guarantee the availability of mobility aids such as wheelchairs. Please be prepared to make your own arrangements.

**Communications:** Please provide a valid email address below if you have one. In order to facilitate faster communications, and to save money on printing and postage, we strive to provide as much information as possible via email. Please add [manager@swedenborg.org](mailto:manager@swedenborg.org) to your contact list to ensure that you receive all of our email updates on Convention 2013.

**Ground Transportation:** Charter Vans Inc. ((937) 898-4043, [chartervans.com](http://chartervans.com)) is offering a special rate from Dayton to the UU campus: \$70 flat rate each way for up to 3 passengers, or \$20 per person each way for 4 or more people (plus 7% sales tax).

Name			
Name			
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will be parking on campus			
Street		Apt. #	
City	State/Province	Zip	Day Phone
Home Church		Preferred Email	
Names, ages, and genders of children accompanying you			
Please Describe Any Special Dietary Needs and/or Mobility Issues (Not everything can be accommodated)			
Specific Roommate Request			

## Travel Information

<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do a pickup at the airport on your arrival day
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do a drop-off at the airport on Sunday
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will be flying into Dayton International and would like to be added to an email list for you to coordinate sharing a shuttle or carpool on arrival or departure day.
We are considering arranging for larger shuttle buses back to Dayton International on Sunday, June 30. Please indicate if you would be interested in taking a shuttle, and indicate a time frame below. (You will be responsible for paying the fee of \$20 plus tax per person.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I would be interested. I would like to leave between _____ and _____.

## Roommate Matching

We will do our best to match you with an appropriate roommate if you have not indicated one above.

Please indicate your gender:  Male  Female

I am (check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> An early riser	<input type="checkbox"/> A night owl
<input type="checkbox"/> A heavy sleeper	<input type="checkbox"/> A light sleeper
<input type="checkbox"/> Fragrance sensitive	<input type="checkbox"/> Fragrance-free
<input type="checkbox"/> A CPAP machine user	<input type="checkbox"/> A snorer

Anything else we should know when matching you?

Next page for fees →

## Room and Board Packages (please note that all rooms are double rooms)

- **Package A (June 23–June 30, seven nights): \$346 per person** (choose this for Council of Ministers members) Includes 7 nights of lodging, 7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 7 breakfasts.
- **Package B (June 23–June 26, three nights): \$195 per person** (available **only** to Council of Ministers members working outside of the denomination who are only able to attend COM meetings) Includes 3 nights of lodging, 3 dinners, 2 lunches, and 3 breakfasts.
- **Package C (June 25–June 30, five nights): \$268 per person** (choose this for General Council members or pre-Convention workshops) Includes 5 nights of lodging, 5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts.
- **Package D (June 26–June 30, four nights): \$221 per person** Includes 4 nights of lodging, 4 dinners, 3 lunches, and 4 breakfasts.

**Meal Only Packages:** For those staying off-campus who want to prepay for meals. If you are staying off-campus and do not select a prepaid meal plan, or do not register for one by June 7, you can pay a cash rate for meals at the door (see FAQ for individual meal rates).

- **Package X (June 23–June 30, meals only): \$127 per person**  
7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 7 breakfasts
- **Package Y (June 25–June 30, meals only): \$89 per person**  
5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts
- **Package Z (June 26–June 30, meals only): \$70 per person**  
4 dinners, 3 lunches, and 4 breakfasts

Registration	Cost	# People	Total
Adult	\$75		
Teen (13-17)	\$60		
Child (3-12)	\$40		
Under 3 years old	Free		
*Family maximum	\$225		
One Day Registration	\$30		
Local Volunteer	\$40		
Women's Alliance Luncheon**	See note**		

\*Family maximum price applies to immediate family members (i.e., parents/guardians and children) only.

\*\* \$10 for those paying for a Room and Board or Meal Only Package; \$17 for everyone else

Room & Board	Package	#People	Total
Room & Board or Meal Only Package (see package descriptions above for rates)			
<b>\$50 Late Fee (assessed on R&amp;B packages booked after June 7, 2013)</b>			

General Convention Subsidies	#People	Total Discount
Council of Ministers (for ordained Swedenborgian ministers with membership on the Council of Ministers only) —cost of Package A, Package B, or Package X		
General Council (current members of the General Council only)—cost of Package C or Package Y		
SCYL Officers—cost of Package D or Package Z		

<b>Grand Total (from both Registration and Room &amp; Board, less Discounts)</b>	
--	--

### Payment Information

All prices are in US currency. If you pay with Canadian funds, please add US \$5 for handling of each Canadian check. Please be advised that all prices are listed in US funds. Room and board reservations not paid in full by 5 PM EST on June 7 will be subject to a \$50 late fee. See “Cancellations” section for refund policy.

#### Payment Method

1. Credit card by mail (DO NOT email credit card information) - Fill out the following:

Visa      
 MasterCard      
 Amex      
 Discover

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CCV/Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Billing Zip Code (if different from mailing address): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Credit card by phone: call (617) 969-4240, Monday through Friday, 9 AM–5 PM EST

3. Credit card or bank payment via PayPal: enter an email address to receive a PayPal invoice to pay your balance below:

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Check: Send checks payable to The Swedenborgian Church to: 11 Highland Ave., Newtonville, MA 02460



## Saturday Evening

Continued from page 66

everyone who enjoys sharing, be it music, original songs, poetry, puppetry, dramatic readings, juggling, magic, or what-have-you, will have the opportunity. We will have a sound system and “house musicians” available for backing. So sign up to perform whatever is expressive of your spiritual life in relation to God and the neighbor!

To help us plan, send your offerings for short sets of one to three pieces (five to ten minutes). Depending on how many sign up and want to share the evening, everyone will get at least one opportunity, and more if there is time. The annual convention is always a safe, supportive, and appreciative atmosphere, and if you all are generous with your talents, we will enjoy a great variety of offerings over the course of the evening.

So please sign up (don't be shy) by contacting Paul Deming via email at [pdeming@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pdeming@sbcglobal.net) with your offerings, requests for musical back up, and any questions. ☩

## Five Wishes

Continued from page 66

want or don't want

3. How comfortable I want to be
4. How I want people to treat me
5. What I want my loved ones to know

The Swedenborgian chaplains hope no one leaves the convention without filling out their own personal Five Wishes®. We will help personally if you have questions after watching the short video explaining the document.

This is also something you might want to take home to your church congregation and loved ones to have them list their Five Wishes®. ☩

The Rev. Jane Siebert is member of the Pretty Prairie (Kansas) Swedenborgian Church and a former chaplain.

## The Thrill of Heaven and the Agony of Hell

2013 SCYL Teen Memorial Day Weekend Retreat

FNCA—Fryeburg, Maine

Friday evening, May 24—Monday morning, May 27

Heaven is not a place. It is not a destination. Heaven is a state of mind. And heaven is very real and present in the here and now. Swedenborg wrote in *Heaven and Hell* §438,

I may add here that even while we are living in our bodies, each one of us is in a community with spirits as to our own spirits even though we are unaware of it. Good people are in angelic communities by means of [their spirits] and evil people are in hellish communities. Actually, we are not visible as spirits in our [spiritual] communities while we are living in the world because we are thinking on the natural level. However, if our thinking is withdrawn from the

body we are sometimes visible in our communities because we are then in the spirit.”

Imagine that! We are actually in heavenly communities with angels in heaven right now! Unfortunately, hell is equally as real and present with us here on earth.

At this retreat we will discuss and play with Swedenborg's concept of heaven and hell and learn how this information can work as a tool for us to discover a new spiritual awakening in our lives. This will be a great time to hang out with friends, have some great discussions, relax on the banks of the Saco River, and uncover how the spiritual presence of God and the angels touches us each and every moment.

## Mini-Courses at Convention 2013

- Cultivating Heaven and Earth—Swedenborg & Sustainability, Rev. Carla Friedrich
- How To Read the General Convention Financial Statements, Polly Baxter, Convention treasurer and chair, FPRSU
- Treasurers' PowWow, Polly Baxter,
- Singing At The Threshold, Rev. Kathy Speas
- The Urbana Movement: Education of the Whole Person, Rev. Ken Turley and Julie McDaniel, Urbana University librarian
- Touching the Spirit in New Ways, Rev. Wilma Wake, Christine Laitner, Page Morahan, Rev. Jonathan Mitchell (description page 61)
- What Paul, James, and Swedenborg

Say about Belief and Doing Good, Rev. Dr. David J. Fekete

- Swedenborg's Spiritual World and the Near Death Experience (NDE), Rev. Gabriella Cahaley
- Slavery Has *Not* Been Abolished: The Nightmare of Human Trafficking, Lois Krebs and Rev. Nadine Cotton
- Our Image of God: The First Link on the Chain, Anna Woofenden ☩

## WA Luncheon

Professor Devin Zuber from the Swedenborgian House of Studies will speak at the Women's Alliance luncheon at the annual convention on the topic, “Sufficiently Large and Noble: Swedenborg and Nineteenth Century Feminism.”

# FNCA Work Weekend Improved My Life

BY BEKI GREENWOOD



If you had asked me ten years ago, “What are you doing Memorial Day Weekend?” I would have groaned with much disdain, replying, “I have to work.” At the time, I was working full-time in the restaurant business. Several nearby colleges frequently had graduations that weekend, making it one of the busiest times of the entire year. Three days of fast-paced, high-stress, emotionally draining work. Groan.

But if you ask me now, believe it or not, you’ll get the same answer, however the tone is completely different: “I get to work!” Memorial Day Weekend went from being one I would dread to being one of my favorite weekends of the entire year. A not-long-enough three days of great company, lots of fun, good food, and hard work. Yay!

Since I moved on from restaurant work, my family has been attending the Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) Work Weekend for the past several years. For decades, the FNCA Buildings and Grounds Committee has gathered with a team of volunteers over Memorial Day Weekend to get the facility ready for our camp session in August and non-camp events: open

## FNCA New Flame Scholarships

There’s a way for new SCYL teens to come to FNCA camp for *free* through the Flames Scholarship Program: one new flame from each association of the Swedenborgian Church each year! All the details are at [fryeburg.org](http://fryeburg.org).

Spread the word and get a bundle of new Flames at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly this summer!

up the cabins; perform maintenance; make repairs; and clean up the entire camp. That may not sound like much, but with more and more people participating each year, we put in over 400 person-hours of work! Thanks to all this volunteer help, the Assembly saves tens of thousands of dollars in labor. The Buildings and Grounds Committee does an unthinkable amount of work on an incredibly small budget each year, and this is only possible with so many people’s help.

There are plenty of projects for anyone who’s willing to help, no matter the skill level. David Richardson, the chair of the B&G Committee (or “the keeper of the keys,” as I like to call him), can find something for everyone and anyone to do. He keeps an ongoing list in his head (always a struggle to pull out of him and put on paper so we can check things off when they’re done). We do everything, from small tasks like picking up pinecones and cleaning toilets to large tasks like replacing cabin roofs and building new walls. Last fall, the roof of the Main Building was professionally replaced, and there’s enough roofing left over for volunteers to put new roofs on another cabin or two. All in all, it’s hard work, but there’s nothing like the company of good friends to get everything done cheerfully.

Any extra time that I am allowed to spend with my spiritual family, (as I’ve mentioned in past articles) is time that I am going to take. The people who attend are great fun, have a sense of hu-

mor, and love the FNCA. Although many have been coming for years, we also have been welcoming new hands each year. Plus, it’s always great to have an excuse to visit the Assembly when camp is not in session.

An annual Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) retreat shares the campus with us that weekend, which brings another twenty-five or so young people. At one point last year we had over fifty people using the FNCA off-session. And as they outgrow the League, many leaguers have grown into Work Weekend helpers. It really is another bonding experience that pulls our FNCA community even closer together.

One of the great things about Work Weekend is the food.

For many years Cecilia Searle planned the menu for the entire weekend. She was always able to feed everyone simple, creative, delicious meals for the entire weekend. Last year, when she was unable to attend, Nancy Little and I took over the menu planning—big shoes to fill, that’s for sure. It’s a tricky task accommodating everyone’s needs, but we managed to keep everyone satisfied. It’s a collaborative effort to plan meals, with many helping with the set-up and cleanup.

To top everything off, the Richardsons always host a wonderful cookout for everyone at their beautiful farm in Fryeburg. It’s the peak of the weekend, with good food and good company in a wonderful location. We are usually

*Continues next page*



Colgate Searle talks with Dawn Crowe. Emily Woofenden and Ross Grams stain the Main Building. (Not in photo: Miriam Lexie staining at the top of the ladder)

## April 13, 2013 GC Teleconference Meeting

The General Council of the Swedenborgian Church met by conference call on April 13, 2013, considering and acting on the matters following.

### Annual Convention Schedule

Convention planning is well underway. Opening, closing and SHS-related

*Continued from preceding page*

activities are as follows:

- Opening ceremony, 7:00 PM, Wednesday, June 26: Revs. Kathy Speas and Kit Billings. Reception following.
- Theological School (SHS) corporation meeting and graduation ceremony, 7:00 PM, Thursday. Reception following.
- Ordination service 7:00 PM, Friday. Reception following.
- Communion worship service, 7:00 PM, Saturday: convention preacher Rev. Jane Siebert.
- Closing ceremony, 9:00 AM, Sunday, June 30.

treated to an amazing sunset over the White Mountains, too.  
So maybe this year when someone asks you, "What are you doing Memorial Day Weekend?" you'll consider



Sunset over the White Mountains from Richardsons' Farm

joining us. We certainly hope you will. Many hands make light work, and the work is fun! **WARNING:** Participate once and you may want to come back every year!

FNCA Work Weekend 2013 runs from 9:00 AM Saturday, May 25, through noon on Monday, May 27. If you would like to join us, contact Nancy Little at [nlittle@fryeburg.org](mailto:nlittle@fryeburg.org) or visit [www.fryeburg.org/bgmessage](http://www.fryeburg.org/bgmessage) for more information. ☩

Beki Greenwood is the vice president of the FNCA Board of Trustees, Assistant Treasurer, Outreach Committee member, and camp bulletin editor. She and her husband Jason Greenwood and their children Serena and Nathaniel live in Carver, Massachusetts.

### Urbana University (UU) Matters

Betsy Coffman continues as the lead chaplain at UU, on a volunteer basis. The chaplains have had to deal with recent student and faculty deaths. President Turley emphasized our need to develop a plan for continued Swedenborgian presence on campus. UU is beginning a search for a new president.

Two new board members are needed to serve in the church class at UU. Travel expenses to meetings are not reimbursed, and financial donations are expected from board members. Anyone interested should contact Ken Turley or Betsy Coffman.

### Management Fee for SHS Funds

On a request from the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) for waiving fund-management fees, the council, in light of SHS anticipated expenses for re-establishing its non-profit status with the IRS, voted to grant SHS an amount equal to the management fee assessed for 2013 on their funds held in trust for them by General Convention. There is little support in the council for waiving fees on accounts held in

trust by Convention. The question of the future handling of SHS funds was referred to FPRSU.

### SC.org Governance Documents

The council recommended that SwedenborgianCommunity.org revise its governing documents using Wayfarers Chapel's as a model and resubmit them to the Executive Committee for presentation to General Council at its pre-convention meeting.

### Other Business

The Visioning Committee reported that it will soon circulate its recommendations to GC and the support units for comment before submitting a final proposal at the annual convention.

Upon request, the council voted to return the Common Fund units held in trust for the Hillside Church in El Cerrito, California.

The Central Office Review Committee has been seeking input for possible alternative locations for Central Office for long-term planning.

The council voted to approve a request from Rev. Sage Currie to the Adrienne Frank Fund for \$2500 for travel, room, and meal expenses for spiritual-direction education at the Hayden Institute.

Rev. Nadine Cotton and Lois Krebs, of the Social Concerns Committee, submitted a report. The council endorsed the report with some revisions, and asked that it be submitted to EDSU for accountability and resubmitted to General Council at its pre-convention meeting for final approval. The final, approved report will be presented to the delegates at the annual convention.

### Future Convention Locations

Annual Convention 2014 will be held in San Francisco. Discussions are underway with the St. Louis Church of the Open Word for Annual Convention 2015. ☩

### 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 questionings and insights, we as a church exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

Swedenborg shared in his theological writings a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of scripture as a story of inner life stages as we learn and grow. Swedenborg said, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.



## *Gathering Leaves 2013*

*changing colors / changing lives*

**September 12 to 15, 2013**

Fryeburg New Church Assembly/84 Main Street/Fryeburg, Maine 04037

For information about the facility: <http://fryeburg.org/contact>

Join us for the fifth meeting of the minds and hearts of Swedenborgian women from various branches and locations. Workshops, small groups, and outings allow for greater love and understanding to flow while we enjoy each other's company in this lovely rural setting.

Go to the web site to register and get up-to-date information about times and workshops.

For questions, contact Roslyn Taylor at 267-679-6596

**[www.gatheringleaves.weebly.com](http://www.gatheringleaves.weebly.com)**