



## Successful Gathering Leaves at Fryeburg: There Was Something in the Air!

BY JOANNA HILL

While at Fryeburg, as we experienced the last warmth of summer changing to crisp fall temperatures, it seemed that the weather matched the theme of this fifth meeting of Gathering Leaves: Changing Seasons, Changing Lives. Held at

the Fryeburg New Church Assembly September 12–15, the meeting was attended by over fifty women who came from England, the West Coast, Southwest, Midwest, and East Coast, in addition to Maine and Massachusetts.

The opening event was a panel discussion. [Continues on page 143](#)



(From top, clockwise) Joanna Hill (co-chair), Rachel Odhner, Roslyn Taylor (co-chair), and Nancy Schnarr Bruell on the front steps of Fryeburg Camp

## Gathering the Harvest of Gathering Leaves

PAGE MORAHAN AND JOANNA HILL

On Friday afternoon, September 13, 2013, Page Morahan led a productive session identifying the harvest of Gathering Leaves. Participants shared the ways in which our meetings have had an impact and listed the projects or events that have been directly or indirectly influenced by the event. We then discussed aspirations for the future, particularly the need to stay active between meetings. Here are some of the outcomes we listed:

### The Impact of Gathering Leaves

#### Two book projects initiated at Gathering Leaves

- [How I Would Help the World, by Helen Keller](#), was proposed by Laurie Klein at the 2010 Gathering

Leaves meeting, based on an out-of-print pamphlet. A book based on this essay was proposed to the Swe-

denborg Foundation by Joanna Hill, with a new introduction by Ray Sil- [Continues on page 144](#)

## The Compost Heap and the Church

BY ANNA WOOFENDEN

*Presented at Gathering Leaves  
September 14, 2013, Fryeburg, Maine*

### The Compost Heap

I have come to believe that a compost heap is beautiful. Decaying leaves. Crumbled eggshells. And yes, even that slime oozing off a banana peel. I love a good compost heap. I cannot say that I've grown to



love the odor—that sharp, putrid smell that reminds us of death as part of the life cycle. But I do love a good compost heap, and I do believe that it is beautiful.

I believe dry leaves are beautiful. Dry leaves hold a set of unique colors. Looking out the window over the Saco River today, we see that the leaves are beginning to turn. And in the next month, thousands of tourists will come to New England. And what will all these people flock here to see?

[Continues on page 138](#)

## The Editor's Desk



### Coming Together

Events in the life of the Church have conspired to provide somewhat of a theme for this issue of *the Messenger*. The latest session of Gathering Leaves (the biennial retreat for women of all Swedenborgian denominations: [article, page 133](#)) and the fall meeting of the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) Board of Trustees were opportunities for members from different Swedenborgian denominations to come together in person and spirit.

### The New Church

There are three denominations in the USA that base their Christ-centered theology and doctrines on the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg and the Word (the Bible minus some Old Testament books and Paul's epistles). The General Conference of the New Church was founded in England in 1787, fifteen years after Swedenborg's death. The General Convention of the New

Jerusalem was founded in the United States in 1817, The General Church of the New Jerusalem was formed by some congregations that split from The General Convention in the late nineteenth century, and The Lord's New Church Which Is Nova Hierosolyma was formed by people who split from the General Church in the 1930s. The General Convention, the publisher of *the Messenger*, is known as the Swedenborgian Church, the General Church is known as the New Church, and the Lord's New Church uses that shortened name.

This sharing of terms in the names of the denominations can be confusing, especially for non-Swedenborgians. (The confusion for General Convention is furthered when members refer to both their denomination and their annual convention as *Convention*.) There is an irony, noted by many members, that Swedenborg heralded the age of the New Christian Church, when denominational differences would fall away and there would be a single church in the world.

### Bryn Athyn

The above excursion into Swedenborgian denominations and semantics is by way of introduction to a word about my recent trip to Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, for a Swedenborgian House of Studies Board of Trustees meeting. (Jane Siebert relates this ex-

perience on [page 148](#), and a report on the meeting appears on [page 145](#)).

Visiting Bryn Athyn, the home of the General Church, where its bishop, offices, cathedral, school, college, and seminary are located and where many of its members reside, and where the Lord's New Church's bishop, offices, and main chapel are located, I was impressed with the beauty (and in the case of the cathedral and the facing Glencairn Museum, grandeur) of the buildings and the community. I felt a sense, unusual for a Swedenborgian, of comfort, being in a community where the largest church, the largest denomi-

[Continues next page](#)

## Contents

<a href="#">Successful Gathering Leaves at Fryeburg.....</a>	<a href="#">133</a>
<a href="#">Gathering the Harvest of Gathering Leaves.....</a>	<a href="#">133</a>
<a href="#">The Compost Heap and the Church.....</a>	<a href="#">133</a>
<a href="#">The Editor's Desk.....</a>	<a href="#">134</a>
<a href="#">Letter from the President.....</a>	<a href="#">135</a>
<a href="#">Youth Retreat: Fun and Learning in Edmonton .....</a>	<a href="#">136</a>
<a href="#">Launching the Edmonton Youth Retreat .....</a>	<a href="#">136</a>
<a href="#">SHS Trustees Meet in Bryn Athyn .....</a>	<a href="#">145</a>
<a href="#">Passages .....</a>	<a href="#">147</a>
<a href="#">Essays on Swedenborg's Thought and Influence .....</a>	<a href="#">147</a>
<a href="#">Swedenborg Foundation Welcomes New Editor.....</a>	<a href="#">147</a>
<a href="#">A Warm Welcome.....</a>	<a href="#">148</a>

**Correction:** In the October 2013 *Messenger*, Tom and BJ Neuenfeldt's home is on the western shore of Lake Huron, not the eastern shore of Lake Michigan.

## Church Calendar

- December 27–30: SCYL Winter Retreat • Almont, MI
- Jan. 17–20: Preteen (SPLATz) retreat • Manna House • LaPorte, IN

## the Messenger

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[Continued from preceding page](#)

nation, and the largest number of residents were of my church. I was delighted to meet many New Church members from both denominations (trustees were hosted in the homes of members). It felt somewhat like meeting unknown cousins at a family reunion—we shared much without having to mention it and conversed with the ease of people who share a world view. It seemed—in that person-to-person

context—rather foolish to think about those things that divide us as denominations—differences in doctrine and polity.

One of those differences is how admission to the priesthood is defined and regulated. The General Convention does not discriminate by gender or sexual orientation in requirements for ordination. The General Church trains and ordains only men for the ministry, and openly gay applicants are not accepted. Another difference is the Gen-

eral Church's emphasis on educating its children in church schools, an essential element of their *raison d'être*.

Although members of the denominations can get together with harmony and delight, as demonstrated by Gathering Leaves and the SHS Board meeting, the differences mean that uniting the denominations lies beyond the reach of the benefits of coming together in a spirit of cooperation and sharing.

Coming together in a spirit of co-

[Continues on page 147](#)

## Letter from the President



Dear Friends,

Here's one thing I have noticed as I make my way around to churches and affiliates of the Swedenborgian Church: all over, within various churches and within many individuals, a renewed interest in, and commitment to, getting involved in social service activity. "Charity," if you want to be theological about it; "just helping out" if you want to be neighborly about it; "ah shucks" if you want to be, well, never mind. The point is, there is a turning outward in the expression of our inward commitment to God and a growing understanding that finding the good and true of heaven here in the world involves going out into the world. And being open and letting the world into you. It's not that we are turning away from study of the Word and the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg and inner spiritual practice, but looking for a balanced engagement with the world. The engagement with people and events and sharing of what is gained from one's good and solid inner connection with God is where the spontaneous combustion of life happens.

This turning outward as an inner expression of

wanting to help, which is a form of love, honoring, and revering, is also resulting in a sharper focus on our impact on and caring for the natural world in which we live. It is, after all, the creation of God, given to us for a home during our stay here. You gotta admit, in spite of all the harsh and ugly and cruel things, there is immense beauty and wonder, not to mention some pretty wonderful things, provided for our nourishment. I will confess, I am somewhat in wonder that every life here on earth lives on some other form of life. But in acknowledging that, we may find motivation for gratitude and reverence for what we consume. The point being, that the growth of "eco-spirituality" is growing and advancing us as a culture toward a more caring and efficient relationship with the world from which we draw our sustenance.

Meetings are happening at a pretty quick pace this time of year, and there is a lot up in the air, and there is a lot that will be answered in the next month or two. So in a sense, there is not much to say that isn't speculation. I can report a very enjoyable and productive meeting of the Swedenborgian House of Studies Board of Trustees. The meeting was hosted by members of the Lord's New Church in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. Some wonderfully engaging presentations by people active in the General Church were part of our agenda. It was a very rewarding opportunity to build bridges between our congregations. Regeneration *does* happen!

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

# Youth Retreat: Fun and Learning in Edmonton

BY DAVID FEKETE

Recreation, crafts, and spiritual discussions mingled to make the fall youth retreat at the Edmonton Church of the Holy City a

resounding success. Twelve youths participated, which we thought was a fine showing as this was the first teen retreat held at the Church of the Holy City. Many of the youths had attend-

ed Paulhaven Camp, and said that the retreat was like a short slice of Paulhaven. Indeed, some Paulhaven traditions found their way into the retreat programs. Some teens brought their friends to this retreat. Competent staff

## Launching the Edmonton Youth Retreat

There are many wonderful aspects of my work as your youth director. I get to teach our theology to interested adolescents and watch them take this wisdom and create something beautiful. I get to travel to churches, camps, and retreat centers and meet fantastic people. I get to experience a wide variety of worship services and styles. I get to facilitate youth working and playing together to create a harmonious circle of love. I get to see the seed of a spiritual idea take hold in a child and then grow and blossom into deeper understanding and active living. But the most fulfilling and exciting part of my job has got to be launching new youth groups in new places. And every youth group should be launched with a big, loud, full weekend retreat. The joy in the youth, the buzz of energy in the room, the caring service of the leaders, the happy eyes and smile of the minister, the appreciation of my talents and labors, all make for an electric atmosphere of excitement and togetherness.

I just love helping new youth groups begin. Every startup is beautiful in its own way—uniquely individual like the very youth that attend. I remember each and every one fondly. Such was my experience on a bright sunny weekend at the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta. Except in this case the level of attention, experience, and care was astounding.

The expertise of Paulhaven Summer Camp certainly was evident, and I was truly in awe of the youth leaders the entire weekend. Ardith and Linda were the warm, hard working, and accommodating staff in the kitchen, who grounded the whole event while consistently and continually providing delicious and satisfying food. Leah provided the punch of energetic youthfulness and spirited leadership. Susan blessed us with a calm unflappable sense of reason and reliable responsibility. Pastor Dave's thoughtful instruction and patient listening helped the teens feel appreciated and heard. And support staff, like Barry, who provided assistance, service, and support throughout the retreat, helped everything run smoothly.

Most importantly, we have the young people who attended. Varied in age, from 9 to 16, these twelve kids were so much fun to work and play with! They ran, jumped, cartwheeled, giggled, tumbled, and sang throughout the entire retreat. Yet they also sat in careful, deliberate contemplation. They thought deeply. They learned about God and discussed the nature of religion and the Divine in their lives. They engaged. Each individual came away from this experience a little different, a little better, a touch more whole and complete. This is why I love to help start new youth groups. This is the true delight of my work. At this weekend retreat in Edmonton that I was privileged to be a part of, something quite beautiful was born.

—Kurt Fekete, youth director



Youth Leader Leah assists with the heaven and hell collage craft.

ensured that food, fun, and teachings were on an exemplary level. Swedenborgian Church youth director Kurt Fekete led the retreat, Pastor Dave was responsible for religious programming, Linda and Barry Reed and Ardith Francis cooked, Leah Francis helped with recreation, and Sue Hulcher chaperoned throughout the retreat. By its conclusion, the youths were thanking the staff for holding the retreat.



(l to r) Playtime! Jordyn, Jonah, and Justice on the swings

The retreat opened with an icebreaker game that helped the youths get to know one another. They threw wadded up sheets of paper at each other with information about themselves written on them, then they introduced the person whose paper they caught in

[Continues next page](#)

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the “snowball fight.” Following this, the first spiritual discussion session commenced.

The spiritual instruction was a series of four discussion sessions, each based on a question. The first question the youths were asked to ponder was, “What things have you heard religion ask people to do or not to do that are extreme or strange?” They came up with an insightful list: not ordaining women; judging people; thinking their God is the only God; forbidding holidays; wars and terrorism; the process of writing the Bible.

The evening ended with a creative and delightful event: campfire on the church altar! Staff placed a metal bowl with sand in it holding up candles in the center of the altar. We turned out the sanctuary lights and lit the candles. The glow emulated a campfire excellently. Leah Francis led the youths in singing campfire songs from Paulhaven. Campfire concluded with “Kumbayah” sung as we all joined hands.

Rise and shine Saturday and the youths found a wonderful pancake breakfast prepared by Linda and Barry Reed and Ardlith Francis. We all sang a grace from Paulhaven as we did for all the meals. The craft project for this retreat was to make a collage that reflected heaven and hell for the individual. Youths



The Edmonton Retreat altar campfire and sing-a-long

were asked to cut out pictures from magazines that reflected things they liked and things they did not like. One would be their heaven the other their hell. The second spiritual discussion was the question, “What kinds of things does religion ask you to do or not to do that makes sense?” Again, the teens came up with an impressive list: holidays for family time; baptism; community; Sunday school; prayer;



The Edmonton Retreat group

love; believe and respect God (Pastor Dave added the Ten Commandments and the two great commands.)

The group took afternoon recreation at a community swimming pool, highlights of which were a water slide, diving platform, hot tub, and rope swing, which featured the “Fekete Flop.” The afternoon discussion was a way of thinking about heaven and uses. Teens were asked, “What kinds of things do you like to do that benefit others?” Their list showed the kind of beautiful diversity of which the retreat was com-

posed: being friendly, listening, mentoring, volunteering, complimenting, and sharing.

At the evening session we asked, “What things do you find important in life?” What impressed me was that most of the things the youths came up with were spiritual, not worldly and materialistic: God, the company you keep, happiness, love, respect given and received, home, laughter, being the best you can be, hope, faith, family, friends, and life.

Saturday night rocked the church basement by a band led by Clinton, a former Paulhaven teen. The evening ended with a game of sardines and campfire.

On Sunday morning the teens explained their heaven and hell collages to each other. Kurt led the group in a closing session. Then it was church service in the sanctuary. As part of the sermon, youths read the lists they had created in spiritual discussions. Pierre, one of the teens, played solo clarinet in the service. The worship service and the retreat concluded with the retreaters singing a Paulhaven Camp song, “Linger.” This song brought tears to the eyes of many in the church service.

The young people and staff found the Edmonton fall retreat meaningful and fun. We all look forward to our next retreat. ☩

The Rev. Dr. David Fekete is pastor of the Edmonton Church of the Holy City. He is Kurt Fekete’s brother.



The Edmonton Retreat staff (l to r): Leah Francis, Ardlith Francis, Susan Hulcher, David Fekete, Kurt Fekete



## The Compost Heap

[Continued from page 133](#)

Dying leaves! Millions of beautifully shaped colored flags proclaiming in unison the changing of the season and the decay of their little corner of the nature-scape.

This sense of cycles is evoked by the Gathering Leaves 2013 theme, “Changing Colors, Changing Lives.” As are the seasons of nature, so are the seasons of our lives, of our communities, and of our churches. I believe that the cycles and the seasons—like any spiritual principle—do not just apply to their literal manifestations. These cycles in the natural world correspond, or mirror a spiritual process, something that is going on internally. Emanuel Swedenborg talks about the idea of the microcosm and the macrocosm, and that any one principle is true on various levels, leading me to believe that not only do the season and life cycles show up inside an individual, but also in collections of individuals. What we know about death and life, birth and resurrection, in a human setting, can also be true within a community, within humanity as a whole, within nature, and in the church.

And so within this context of seasons and change, I’d like to consider the following questions: What are the spiritual principles of a compost heap? And how does that apply to the church? What does it mean to be part of an organization that is moving through decomposition, fertilization, and new growth?

### Intergenerational Conversation

This morning at Gathering Leaves we have an opportunity to engage intergenerational conversations around the future of our church. My experience is that it takes effort and is often uncomfortable to talk about the church between generations. I walk in many circles, and I often end up in

conversations about church with various generations. I’ve noticed that particularly from the generation that’s most prominently represented here—those over fifty-five—I hear these types of questions: “What’s happening to the church?” and “What’s the future of the church?” And I hear the questions, some tinged with expectations or disappointment, “Where are the young people? Why aren’t they taking over?” Or the laments of, “What are we doing wrong?” “Why didn’t this work? I raised my kids in the church and now they’re not interested.” This is a tender and often difficult subject, and it can be very personal for all of us. I hear and honor these questions.

### What does it mean to be part of an organization that is moving through decomposition, fertilization, and new growth?

I want to reframe the questions. I believe there’s great power in how we frame our questions, and I’d like to suggest other options. For example, what about these questions: “What might church look like for different generations?” “What is feeding the spiritual lives of the young people of today?” And the question that is driving my call to ministry, and the reason I’m here today: “What does it mean to be faithful today? What does it look like to be ‘church’ in this generation?”

### Change

This word *change* is not a comfortable word. And it often makes for uncomfortable conversations. But, maybe being comfortable is not the point of spiritual life or church or being human. Maybe the church really isn’t about what our needs are and having our needs met. Being the church is about following the movement of God and community. Being the church is

about being a collective embodiment of the two great commandments—loving God and loving the neighbor.

When the Lord was on earth, he certainly didn’t preach comfort or stability, feeling good, or that it’s about what we want. That was not Christ’s message, though I often want it to be. But that’s not the message the Lord taught or demonstrated with on earth or that we read about in Scripture. The Lord preached that we should sell all we have and give to the poor and follow him. Jesus’ call is to take up our mats and walk, to lay down our nets and follow.

It’s so tempting, especially perhaps as Swedenborgians, with our ideas of the internal sense of the Word, to spiritualize these phrases and to push them away into intellectual concepts to keep ourselves comfortable. But I have come to believe that these are direct teachings—God’s call on our lives. I don’t know what it means in your life to sell all you have and give to the poor; but there’s something in there about sacrificing our own comfort and stability to be part of following God and a community. Following the Lord probably doesn’t look like physically putting down fishing nets for most of us, but it might involve letting go of that which has been core to our daily existence and trusting and following and being changed—taking up our mats, these things we’ve learned and know, and actively engaging in the work of our lives of faith even when it’s not comfortable or how we’ve always known life to be.

It’s God then, who seems to be all about change—process, transformation, death, life, letting go, and rebirth. And it’s God who says, “I’ll be with you through it.” Isn’t that the beauty of the incarnation? God coming to earth in human form, taking on this life process of being born, living, struggling, having joy, being in community, teaching, serving, dying, and then being res-

[Continues next page](#)

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urrected, glorified, and coming again. Is this not the call to us individually, this call to the repentance of spirit, to transformation, to death and rebirth, to change? And if this the call to us individually, is not this the call to us as a church?

I think it's easier to be present to the process of change by looking at the life cycle of an individual. I've heard some beautiful stories this weekend about aging gracefully, as people shared about having the courage to let go in a different way in these stages of life. There is a deep wisdom that the generations in their second half of life hold about aging, and that wisdom is needed in this conversation. If I'm standing here speaking as a "voice for the next generation of the church," it's important for me to honor and say clearly, this is not about the young people wanting everything to change, getting rid of the old, and swooping in with the new. No, the message is, we need to have some dialog between generations because the church is changing, and I believe we all need to be present to each other and the conversation.

### **Giant Rummage Sale**

I'd like to zoom out for a moment, and think about not just our local churches or denominations, or even the churches in our neighborhood, but to look at the greater swaths of movement in this cycle. Phyllis Tickle, a scholar of religious history, wrote a book called *The Great Emergence*. In it she offers a theory that in the sweep of Christian history, every five hundred years there is a giant rummage sale, where things are thrown up in the air and questioned, and then it settles back down, and the church is changed in the process.

Tickle posits that the last time this happened was the Protestant Reformation. There was upheaval against the

Catholic Church of the time, reformers such as Luther and Calvin wrote and preached, and radical break-off groups formed, such as the Quakers and the Methodists, Anabaptists, and a bit later, the Swedenborgians. That was the last giant rummage sale. These rummage sales don't happen overnight, they stretch over decades. She suggests that we're in another one of these giant rummage sales in Christendom as a whole. This idea resonates with me within a Swedenborgian framework and the concept of the Second Coming moving into the world. Maybe what we're seeing is the actualization of a New Christianity, alive and working in the world. When I look at what's going on in Christendom as a whole, around the world, something is happening. Something is changing.

And we're all in the same boat. From each of our denominations, we have story after story about declining membership and churches closing. So something is changing around us. The way we've always done church is not how church is happening. Something is dying—and beginning to decompose.

### **Decomposition**

It seems in general that we're more comfortable with changing seasons than we are with change in our own individual lives. We are more comfortable with the leaves dying while displaying their vibrant tones than we are with facing our own mortality, or the mortality of those we love. And then when we move from our own mortality, or the mortality of those we love, to the death of our churches, it brings up another collection of responses. The idea that our churches are dying stirs up emotions and reactions for all of us, and I believe it's important to recognize and name that.

I've spent much of my career in outreach and evangelization, and I was often the person who would come into a congregation or denominational set-

ting and say, "There's hope! Try this, try that!" And I do believe there is a place for that. There are positive things that are happening and there are good places to put our attention. I have come to believe that in order to be healthy organisms, we also need to be able to see and name the places that are dying and where things need to end. It gets confusing when the cycles of life and death are going on in our churches and our denominations at the same time. Within a community, it's not always clear what part of the life of the church is on hospice and what part is coming to life.

### **Church Hospice**

Being aware of what is going on in our churches and having the courage to name it is a call to all of us. When a hospice chaplain walks into a room with a family, often the job to be done is to name the thing that no one is going to say, which usually is, "Your loved one is dying." This is a hard and painful job, but I find that often this honesty is the greatest gift you can give. To name what everyone in the room is thinking and feeling—and not saying.

And so I invite us—collectively—to be hospice chaplains for each other, and to acknowledge and say, "There are things in our church that are dying." Aspects of our churches are changing—whether it be a congregation, a way of doing things, or an idea we've held onto. We are called to acknowledge that some of our congregations have died or are going to die in this season, in this giant rummage sale that we are going through. We can be honest by acknowledging that this movement and change is held within the Divine cycle of life.

I believe that one of our callings in this time of change is to be hospice chaplains. A good hospice chaplain is present with the cycle of death, not rushing it and not prolonging it. Some-

*Continues on page 140*

## The Compost Heap

[Continued from page 139](#)

times the loving thing to do is to come in and say, “Let’s celebrate and then let go.” To be able to say together, “You know what, we’ve always done our worship service this way, and we know it’s time to change.” It doesn’t need to be an abrupt cutting it off, and it also doesn’t need to be drawn out on life-support. We could say, “For 100 years we have said that same litany, with those same words. Let’s celebrate that . . . and then let it go and see what is waiting to be created anew.” This gets harder when it’s our congregations and our buildings—these places and communities we love. I know some of you have been through this, where you’ve had to let go and say goodbye. Let’s be good hospice chaplains together. Let’s celebrate, let’s look at the legacy, let’s claim the memorial, and then let it die.

I believe we need to be open to the possibility that our denominations hold this process of death as well. I do not know what next season is going to look like. I’m not predicting whether our denominations are going to disappear or not. But what I do know is that something is changing in them, and that there are ways of being—systems, concepts, and cultures—within all our denominations that need to die. How can we be present to that? How can we differentiate between the new growth that is alive and from the Lord and the things that we’re clinging onto, trying to survive?

How can we accept that death is part of the cycle and remember that death is not a failure? When our elders die, do we criticize them on their deathbed, telling them how they should have lived longer? No, we celebrate their lives, and then lay their bodies in the ground to decompose and go back to be part of the dust from which we all come. Could we not treat our church-

es, our worship services, or dwindling programs with such dignity and respect? Could we celebrate the years of legacy, the people, the pastors, the buildings, the events, the marriages, the deaths, the service to the community, the heritage of worship; grieve the loss of something we love, celebrate life well lived, and accept that our churches have a life cycle. Death is not a failure. Death is a part of life.

### Fertilization

The second concept of the compost heap is fertilization. Fertilizer, no matter how we cut it, is rarely pretty. It doesn’t smell good. Fertilizer is not what you take and put in a beautiful crystal vase or gorgeous pottery bowl in the middle of the table—you want those fresh flowers or tomatoes there.

**Something is pressing to be born, and we don’t know what it is or how it will come. But we can be called to be midwives to it.**

But fertilizer is incredibly important, and can be something we intentionally cultivate with our dying leaves.

Leaves can just fall where they do; our churches and programs and ways of being can just slowly fade away. Or we can ask, “How can we purposefully use this thing that is dying to be the nutrients for what is going to grow?” This is the fertilizer. This is what I believe we all can be called to, to purposefully put the leaves on the compost heap to decompose into useful fertilizer. And we can stop and remember that fertilizer is what we’re all growing out of. We are all here, being the branches of our denominations and our spiritual heritage because of the people who have put fertilizer on in the past.

### Legacy

Personally I can stand in this room and I can think about my ancestors.

I think about my great-grandparents, Anita and Louis Dole who were part of the founding of this camp, my great-grandma who wrote the *Dole Notes*, a rich resource in Swedenborgian Bible study. My grandparents, Bill and Louise Woofenden, pillars in the church and this camp. My maternal grandparents Dave and Shirley Gladish dedicated their lives to Swedenborgian scholarship and translation—Shirley Gladish, my last living grandparent, who’s still doing working on the New Century edition in her late eighties. And I’m humbled, truly humbled by this legacy and how my ancestors gave their lives to the church and how they were that active fertilizer that we are growing out of.

When we talk about this compost heap, it’s not about throwing out the old. It’s not about how the younger generation wants to come in and change everything and blow off the older generation. That’s not the point. The point is we are each fertilizer for the next generation, so how do we do this purposefully? Rather than throwing out the old in the trash, can we let it be recycled, composted, and become the nutrients for the next generation?

Both of my Woofenden grandparents died recently. They had faded out of active life in the church over the last number of years when their bodies and minds began to slow down. But their commitment and faith to the Swedenborgian Church was still central to the ethos of their home.

When I went to visit over the last few years, the way that Grandpa would connect with people was through showing us things around the house and telling their stories. We talked a lot about the paintings on the wall, the little squeaky things that made bird sounds, and inevitably, he’d show me the most recent book from the Swedenborg Foundation. And then he would show me with great pride the book-

[Continues next page](#)

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stand that the Swedenborg Foundation had given him to honor his work with them. Grandma, even when she was struggling to fully communicate, would still have her Greek New Testament out, which she had read her whole life. And every day, at lunch or dinner, depending on the schedule, Grandpa and Grandma would read a chapter from the Bible, slowly working their way from Genesis to Revelation, and back again. They were faithful to their spiritual tradition in their generation.

What does it look like to be faithful in my generation? I am called to be faithful to God and to walk in the Swedenborgian heritage in my generation. And I, and my generation, know that we cannot do it alone. We are able to be the church for our generation, because of the fertilization that has been, is, and will be done by the generations that have come before us.

### **Building or Gardening**

“Built on” is often the metaphor we hear when we talk about generational shifts. Or “stand on the shoulders of.” I appreciate these sentiments. I hold a deep regard for those who have been living the life of faith, and leading and sustaining and innovating the church for each generation. And I know I would not be standing here without that. However, I’d like to offer the idea of fertilizer as an alternative metaphor. “Building” quickly becomes a linear or hierarchical metaphor. And it is very bound by form. This generation bought the land and built a small chapel, the next generation built on that by adding a larger sanctuary and fellowship hall, the next the parking lot, playground, and a new roof on the original chapel. Now it’s up to my generation to build on that by getting the new carpet and wiring the fellowship hall with technology—and don’t forget that the

playground equipment needs to be updated. Being the church takes on the feeling of another thing on the to-do list or an uninvited expectation.

### **Intergenerational Support**

Things have changed in how each generation relates to church, and with this change, we have an opportunity to re-imagine the metaphors. Involvement in church is not the assumption that it was fifty years ago. As someone who is called to be a leader in the church I can speak for some and share that it is hard to be a faith leader in this era. Gone are the days of community respect, assured job security, and predictable employment. In this era, we are charged with re-imagining church and ministering to a generation that holds no assumption around the need to be part of church. This work is not easy, and we need each generation to play its part.

We need the coming generations to be proactively trained, equipped, and empowered and our organizations to consciously make space for new voices. We need our systems to be courageous around change, and cultivate creative and present conversation among all of us. To give voice to the legacy that has been written, and to honor the way that compost can be given for the next generation of leaders. To take the time to ask the generations above and below, “What does it look like to fertilize purposefully? How can we make organizational choices, financial choices, building choices, cultural choices, in a way that makes fertile rich soil for the next generations and for new life to grow?”

### **New Life**

Decomposition and fertilization lead us to the third message of the compost heap: new life. If we learn anything from what the Lord shows us in nature, in the Word, in our own lives, it’s that things work in cycles, and there is new life. We see God is a God of resurrection, cycles, rebirth, and new life.

Friends and sisters, something is trying to be born. The Divine Parent, the Divine Womb, is rich. Use whatever words resonate with you—a new era, a new consciousness, the Second Coming of the Lord, the New Jerusalem descending to earth—something is active and present and urging to be born. The signs of the giant rummage sale are the contractions. Something is pressing to be born, and we don’t know what it is or how it will come. But we can be called to be midwives to it. New shoots and plants are pressing their way through the dirt and make their way into the light. We can notice and we can be present to the hope and the pain, the mess and the beauty, and then we can celebrate the new life.

### **Look for the Pumpkins**

I believe that by staying present to the contractions and expansions, being a non-anxious presence in times of change, and keeping our eyes out and celebrating the new birth when we see it is a call for all of us. We can actively be on the look out for where the church is being reimagined and born in the world.

We might be tempted to say, “That doesn’t look like church to me. I don’t even recognize that as church. That’s not what I’m used to church looking like.” It’s easy to miss or dismiss these new expressions of life. Maybe because we’re so focused on a nice neat row of lettuce, because that is what we’ve always done—plant lettuce. But, look up and there’s a pumpkin growing out of the compost heap! Where are these new expressions of church happening in our churches, our congregations, our world? How can we recognize and re-imagine what it means to be church?

Because here’s the thing to remember about the compost heap—what comes out of the compost heap is rarely the plant we expect. You can take the fertilizer and spread it around your

*Continues on page 142*

## The Compost Heap

[Continued from page 141](#)

nice rows of lettuce, and it can help. We continue to maintain the things that are working in our churches and that serve the world. But when we open our eyes for the new signs of life that are being born as church is re-imagined, we see new life. These are the gifts of the compost heap. Not the things that we planted in straight rows, but it's that pumpkin! And it's the biggest pumpkin in your entire garden, because it emerged from the fertilizer that came before, and grew in its freedom and became new life on the back corner by the shed.

### Re-imagining Church

Last Friday I was at my internship, at Saint Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco. I go on Sundays for worship, and it's beautiful and creative; then on Friday's I go to be part of the worship that is the Food Pantry, because on Fridays there's a different congregation there. There's a different way that church is done.

By noon, four hundred families line up outside the doors of a steep San Francisco street. They walk in the front doors of the sanctuary and around the communion table, where they find piles of rice, fresh celery, bread, watermelons, and strawberries. Four hundred families, who are hungry, come in and they take communion. And people are worshipping. And passing around piles of carrots. And loaves of bread. And looking each other in the eyes and seeing the face of God.

This is church: to be able to love each person who walks in the door. Many of them I can barely communicate with because I have yet to learn Mandarin Chinese, or Russian, and only know a little Spanish. But I can greet everyone with a smile and say, "Welcome, I'm glad you're here" and when they walk out the door, "Have a good day,

see you next week." The Food Pantry is one of those pumpkins from the compost heap, it is church.

### God is on the Move

I don't know what the church looks like in this next season. My suspicion is that it is going to look many, many different ways. It is going to be creative and the variety is going to be wide. I don't know what the models are going to be, but what I do know is that it's not going to look how it looked for my great-grandparents or my grandparents, or even my parents, or even how I thought it would look. Something is moving and shifting in the world. The church is changing.

I believe God is on the move. God is hovering over the face of the waters, continuing to create and move and breathe into all that is. And this is not our creation. This is God's creation that we are privileged to participate in.

I don't believe this new life is born of strategic plans, or any one of our specific ideas of what our denomination's next steps are, though these can be helpful at times in our processes of preparation. I believe this new life is of, from, and will be birthed by the Holy One. We are called to be midwives and hospice chaplains and gardeners.

We are called to be that non-anxious presence in the midst of decomposition to celebrate lives well lived and to grieve change and loss.

We are called to honor our ancestors, to notice and name the way their lives and work fertilized all we are today. We are called to be fertilizer, to consciously make choices and changes based on what is pressing to be born.

And we are called to witness new life. Not new life that we quickly fabricate within our desire to survive. But new life that comes from God—and grows out of what has been. New life that arises after we've been broken down, our dreams have died, we've let go, we've released our holds, we've

sat—quiet and still—through the cold of winter awaiting the new life of spring. In closing, I offer us these words of sending out and of blessing:

O Holy One,  
Who stirs over the face of the waters,  
Who created at the beginning, the  
garden,  
Who gives us this vision of a heavenly  
city,  
With a garden in the middle of it.

May we, each individually and  
collectively,  
be present,  
with the journey of compost.

May we be present with the  
decomposition,  
to grieve,  
to celebrate,  
to let go.

May we be courageous and active  
to being fertilizer for the next  
generations.

May we be purposeful and bold,  
making choices not out of survival or  
comfort,  
but from our love for all that is good and  
true.

And may we be curious, engaged, and on  
the lookout for new growth.  
May we be delightfully surprised, and  
touched to the core of our heart,  
When we see how you, O Holy One, are  
birthing Your New Church.

We see a garden ahead of us,  
The garden of the New Jerusalem,  
with the river that flows through the city,  
giving truth and quenching thirst,  
to all who seek it.

The trees with leaves that heal the  
nations.

We see twelve gates,  
welcoming all to enter and  
come and take the water of life freely.  
This garden,  
where there is no temple,  
where God is the center of the city.  
And in this garden,

[Continues next page](#)

## Gathering Leaves

*Continued from page 133*

discussion about aspirations for the church in its many forms, from women who represented various branches of the Swedenborgian/New Church, including groups from Australia, British Conference, and the US branches of General Convention, the General Church, and the Lord's New Church. What came through was a need for community in ways that support families and spiritual growth. Some ideas presented were new types of programs for non-traditional spirituality, short events that bring young people together, and home-based study and worship groups. The lively discussion that resulted from this sharing continued over a lovely wine and cheese reception that was donated by Rev. Emily Jane Lemole.

Friday morning we woke to a plenary session led by Rev. Jane Siebert on honoring seven sacred pauses throughout the day, a Benedictine practice. We followed this practice throughout the conference by having each blessing—before meals, at morning worship, and

at breaks—reflect the sacred pause for that phase of the day. This practice of mindfulness reinforced the idea of cre-



The Women of Gathering Leaves

ating sacred space in our lives for positive change to occur. Throughout the rest of the day, we had the option to attend two of six possible workshops led by attendees, choosing from topics such as understanding the significance of the seven angels of the seven churches, feminine images of worship, growth of female role models, new ways of ministry, twelve-step and Swedenborg, and understanding correspondences. Of course, there was always a choice for conversation on the porch or a walk through the lovely woods overlooking the Saco River.

That evening we continued the idea of sacred space with various forms of guided meditation after an insightful summary session led by Page Morahan about the fruits of our labors, the outcomes that have been generated so far by Gathering Leaves meetings. This summary is the focus of a separate article in this issue, "Gathering the Harvest of Gathering Leaves," and provides many concrete results and aspirations for the future (page 133).

On Saturday, the fun continued with a plenary session led by Anna Woofenden about the symbolism of compost as a necessary component for physical and spiritual growth (page 133). We then chose among four compelling workshops on art, redemption, education, and the decision to ordain women, before setting off on a side trip to the White Mountains of New Hampshire. There we were able to hike and

enjoy the crisp mountain air while digesting much of the rich spiritual food we were being fed. The day concluded with sacred circle dancing back at the camp, led by Rev. Mary Duckworth. It was a toss-up as to who enjoyed it more or laughed more—the dancers or those watching.

On Sunday we joined the congregation of the Fryeburg New Church, where the Gathering Leaves contingent began the service with a flash-mob version of "Blessings of the Morning," as we continued the observance of the morning sacred pause. The fun and spontaneity of the sharing of this beautiful blessing song was representative of the level of sharing, caring, and laughing that we experienced.

The next Gathering Leaves is scheduled for 2015, and we are considering Cincinnati, Ohio, for the next meeting. We will let people know when more details are available. One of our goals is to keep communication open during the two years between meetings by keeping the website active, so one option would be to check for updates at [www.gatheringleaves.weebly.com](http://www.gatheringleaves.weebly.com).

Having a common spiritual heritage made this event powerful and meaningful to those who attended, and leads one to believe that the future of the church, within and without, looks very healthy. ☩

Joanna Hill, publishing consultant in Santa Fe, New Mexico, was most recently director of the Swedenborg Foundation. She is a member of General Convention through the Temenos Community in West Chester, Pennsylvania, where she used to live.

Page Morahan is an independent leadership development consultant and career coach, founding director, ELAM (Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine) program for women, and co-director, FAIMER (Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research) Institute. She is an active member of the Swedenborgian Online Community.

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I do believe,  
there probably is a  
Compost Heap. ☩

Anna Woofenden is a Masters of Divinity Student at Earlham School of Religion and the Swedenborgian House of Studies and an ordination candidate with the Swedenborgian Church of North America. She has fifteen years of ministry experience on both a denominational and local level.

Anna has a passion for spirituality, justice, beauty, compassion, and community and is driven by a calling to re-imagine church and work with the question: What does it mean to be faithful in our current cultural context?

## Gathering Leaves Harvest

*Continued from page 133*

verman. It was published in 2011.

- *Creating an Orange Utopia: Eliza Lovell Tibbets and the Birth of California's Citrus Industry*, by Patricia Ortlieb and Peter Economy, was proposed to Joanna Hill by Carla Friedrich at the 2010 meeting. The book was published in 2011.

### Support for women's call to formal and informal ministries

- We have seen an increased number of women entering educational programs for formal ordination in the General Convention and Australian Swedenborgian branches and in interfaith ministry
- We encourage unique approaches to ministry, such as Rev. Carla Friedrich's call to earth-based ministry by creating Biblical mandala gardens and sustainable communities.
- We support the various Facebook dialogues about women in ministry
- We recognize the importance of role models and a supportive community as women begin to realize their greatest wishes.

### Cross-fertilization among the Swedenborgian denominations

- Five volunteer-produced gatherings have been held since 2004.
- A chapter in the book, *Sing a New Song*, by Helga Childs, presents the history and mission of Gathering Leaves and recognizes its impact. This book was written to tell the story of the Swedenborgian denominations, from splitting apart to starting to work together again.
- Colloquia organized by Rev. Emily Jane Lemole to encourage greater understanding among the branches of the church were inspired by the Gathering Leaves model.
- The Swedenborgian House of Stud-

ies (General Convention) board meeting was held recently in Bryn Athyn, home of the General Church and the Lord's New Church.

- The Logopraxis Process for reading Swedenborg's Writings, presented at the 2010 Gathering Leaves, is now being used with groups in at least five denominations worldwide.
- An author, Sue Ditmire, learned about the Bryn Athyn Archives through Gathering Leaves, and she now uses this for historical research.
- The general view of participants at Gathering Leaves is that they now see other branches in a more joyful way and can envision new ways of working together.

## Future Goals

### Develop a more robust website for information

- Prepare list or map with websites and contact information for all Swedenborgian congregations in North America, so people can learn whether there are other Swedenborgians near them.
- Share information and links for initiatives and events of all the denominations.

### Foster academic exchange and projects developed by women

- Develop a website for to share research across the branches.
- Encourage women to turn their papers and ideas into publications, both scholarly and general interest.
- Initiate project on the history of the churches from the perspective of key women living at the time of major events (e.g., splits).
- Make available more images of the divine feminine.
- Strengthen Swedenborgian feminine spirituality with activities such as workshops, books, uses.
- Support distance learning and on-

line courses.

### Sponsor face-to-face and virtual events

- Initiate an offspring event that includes both men and women.
- Increase the number of, and cross-publicity about, short events (weekend, day long) that bring people from all branches together, or provide regional meetings for Gathering Leaves and other women.
- Initiate small groups online for personal growth and study.

### Develop ways to engage youth and young families—the future of the church

- Increase the number of, and cross-publicity about, new types of programs that represent non-traditional spirituality, particularly for support in the transition from adolescence to young adult. These might be short events (weekend, day long) that bring youth from all branches together, such as Spiritual Adventure, service projects, camps, and the UK Easter Rally.
- Initiate connecting projects that are not time or place bound—social media connections, study groups, online resource for youth to connect and discuss topics.
- Initiate projects connecting youth and charity, such as a permanent Biblical garden with frankincense trees and a practical arts academy.
- Initiate projects for practical application of our spirituality by showing up in a tangible way. We could envision all branches working on one agreed-upon project of use in the USA, either of direct action or by raising money to support other organizations outside Swedenborgian churches, such as Habitat for Humanity.
- Raise funds for more youth and young mothers to come to Gathering Leaves events. ☒

## SHS Trustees Meet in Bryn Athyn

BY KAREN CONGER & HERB ZIEGLER

The Board of Trustees of the [Swedenborgian House of Studies \(SHS\)](#) met for its fall meeting in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, home of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem (The General Church or the New Church) and the Lord's New Church, both denominations that base their theology and practice on the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. The Board meets twice a year, usually at SHS in Berkeley, California, but from time to time in other locations to make contact with Swedenborgian churches and their members in other parts of the country.

Present were trustees Rev. Jane Siebert, chair; Tom Neuenfeldt, vice-chair; Jennifer Lindsay, treasurer; Karen Conger, clerk; Rev. Ken Turley; Terrie Crenshaw, Herb Ziegler; Bill Coffman; Dr. Bob Reber, and John Titus. Also present were the dean, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, and scholar-in-training Rebecca Esterson (Saturday). Rev. Sage Cole, Rev. Carla Friedrich, and Rev. Kathy Speas were unable to attend.

Rev. Chuck Blair, the pastor of [New Church Live](#), a contemporary worship movement within the General Church that's "doing church differently" addressed the board. New Church Live embraces a critical shift from the pastor "serving the congregation" to the pastor and the congregation "serving the first time visitor." Among the sayings that enlighten their ministry are Charity unites, doctrine divides, and people are not interruptions. Chuck observes that most churches are answering questions that people are not asking. Unfortunately, people seem much more interested in being auditors than in being partners. The Board felt that Chuck's energy and sense of

commitment to pastoring the people of God in this way is inspiring.

Dean Lawrence updated the Board on the progress of the Pacific School of Religion (PSR) reorganization. It's



SHS trustees in Bryn Athyn Cathedral, (l to r, top row) Karen Conger, Tom Neuenfeldt, Jennifer Lindsay, Herb Ziegler; (middle row) Terrie Crenshaw, Ken Turley, Bill Coffman, Jane Siebert; (bottom row) Jim Lawrence, John Titus, Bob Reber, and Bryn Athyn host Emily Jane Lemole.

looking like the changes will be more in terms of additions to, rather than subtractions from, the current programs, at least in the short term. A new center has already been created for entrepreneurial social transformation (churches, startups, non-government organizations, etc.), using high level, well known educators and leaders to bring people in from the community; all this while PSR continues to be what it's always been.

Rev. Lawrence is on the Value Capture Property Committee. Several campuses of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), including PSR, have a greater real estate capacity than what is necessary for current programs. The committee is exploring options for converting property to liquid investment capital while pursuing collaborative efforts within the GTU. It could be that when the dust settles GTU will be a more tightly efficient consor-

tium, but the status of SHS would essentially be the same. The endnote is that at this point nothing has changed in such a way as to call for a new affiliation agreement.

On Friday afternoon the Board welcomed the dean of the Academy of the New Church Theological School, Rev. Dr. Andrew Dibb, who presented an overview of theological education in the General Church. Their academic emphasis involves three legs: theology, pastoral skills acquisition, and experiential learning, the latter a six-term course.

Treasurer Jennifer Lindsay reported that the audit report has been drafted and will shortly be finalized.

Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan, director of the Master of Arts in Religious Studies (MARS) program at the New Church College, gave the board an overview of the program. It was established in 1996 to provide laity with a way to systematically study doctrine as a basis for understanding life and culture. It is interdisciplinary, enabling students to apply a New Church framework to a discipline of study of their own choosing, including theology. To date, two thirds of the graduates have been women; at present, ten students are enrolled. There ensued a discussion between Dr. Williams-Hogan and Dean Lawrence comparing the MARS program and courses with those at SHS, including ways in which those courses might be shared to benefit the students of both institutions.

Dr. Williams-Hogan then provided the Board's educational moment, an overview of her work-in-progress, a biography of Emanuel Swedenborg. She has conducted extensive research

[Continues on page 146](#)

## SHS Meeting

[Continued from page 145](#)

over the past several years, including in Swedenbog's childhood hometown. Her biography will differ from other biographies in several ways, including being organized topically, rather than chronologically, and exploring the influences from his childhood that were so important in shaping the man.

The idea of fundraising development outside of General Convention was broached. Convention's educational process is very much "in the world," unlike all the other expressions in the world based on Swedenborg's writ-



Bryn Athyn Cathedral

ings. Also, Convention is very inclusive, unlike the others, ordaining all people who are qualified and called to ministry, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

Rev. Lawrence reminded the Board that SHS has file cabinets loaded with contacts from large companies. He posed the question, how do we interface with companies that might be interested in investing in SHS? How does Swedenborgian theology itself contribute to traction in appealing for grants from foundations? Bob Reber added that we must never send a proposal cold; any solicitation of funds must be preceded by an effort to develop a personal relation-



The Lord's New Church Chapel  
in Bryn Athyn

ship with the potential giver. In other words, our potential givers must be cultivated. In addition, everyone who comes on the board must not only be willing to give but be willing to solicit. The importance of board development cannot be overstated.

Bob Reber, who is a former dean of Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City, spoke of three current trends to pay attention to in theological circles:

- 1) There are too many theological schools in this country for the demand. SHS is well positioned as the only seminary for our church and as a center of theological research and writing in addition to offering the MDiv degree in Partnership with the Pacific School of Religion.
- 2) The increasing religious pluralism of American society is being reflected in theological education. The real interest is in how this is being addressed at the local level.

Horizon Prison Ministry in Ohio, where Bob volunteers, recently received a grant of \$150,000 from the state attorney general's office, made possible because Horizon is multi-faith with respect to inmates, staff, and board. Because PSR represents a diversity of faith traditions and individual faith journeys, it puts SHS in a prime position for interreligious education and work.

3) Increasingly, institutions in our society are showing interest in interfaith ministries

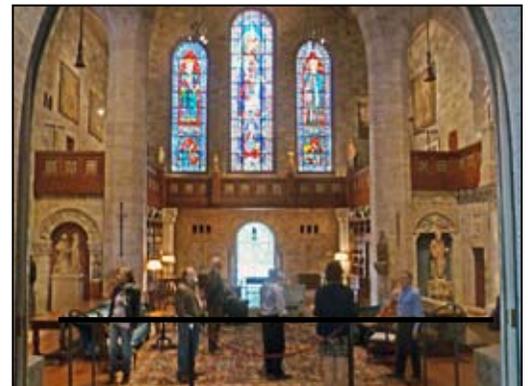


The altar at Bryn Athyn Cathedral

and the different spiritual journeys that are being pursued by many people, including the so-called *nones* (those who answer "none" when asked for religious identification in surveys or the census)."

According to a study that's about to be released from the Alban Institute, this is the third decade in a row in which student indebtedness will be seen to have doubled. This is a huge challenge for all seminaries, and must be addressed in some fashion.

In the afternoon the Board welcomed Michael Shone, senior partner



SHS trustees at the Glencairn Museum

at Peirce Park Group, investment advisors of the Common Fund. He educated the Board on our history with the Common Fund and outlined a way forward. The Common Fund is a collective pool for groups affiliated with the General Convention, and a way for them to invest their funds. As of June 30, 2013, the value of the SHS fund was about \$10.5 million, which is approximately thirty percent of the total invested in the Common Fund.

Later in the afternoon, the Board was invited to a closing devotional service at The Lord's New Church Chapel, with Rev. Hugh Odhner officiating and Ken Turley playing a beautiful

[Continues next page](#)

## Passages

### Marriages

**Gloria Lipsky** and **Pouya Hamidi** were married at the home of Gloria's parents Hartmut and Lorrie Lipsky, in Olds, Alberta. A celebration ceremony was held the next day at a lake in the foothills near Sundre.

### Deaths

**Doreen Anne Polutnik** of Cranbrook, British Columbia, passed away March 13, 2013, at age 78. She is survived by her children Dale, Brenda, and James Polutnik; siblings Donald, Loretta, and Gary; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her husband Terry.

**Brent Clements**, long-time member of the Calgary (Alberta) Church, passed fully into the spiritual world on August 13, 2013. ☩

*Continued from preceding page*

Bach guitar solo.

The Board was treated to a tour of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral, a Gothic wonder that was built by craftsmen working in shops on site to cut stone, create stained glass windows, forge iron fittings, and craft woodwork and furniture, and to a tour of the Glencairn Museum, a castle-like former home on a hill facing the cathedral filled with treasures and marvelous spaces with exquisite details.

The Board discussed whether or not to decrease the number of trustees, given the small size of the school and the expenses incurred by meetings. The discussion was continued to the next meeting.

On Saturday evening, trustees held a discussion with area residents interested in SHS at the home of Emily and Gerry Lemole. ☩

### Essays on Swedenborg's Thought and Influence

*Philosophy, Literature, Mysticism* is the title of a new anthology of essays on the thought and influence of Emanuel Swedenborg, edited by Stephen McNeilly and published by the [Swedenborg Society](#) in London.

This volume contains a collection of essays by leading writers looking specifically at Swedenborg's place within the history of philosophy, literature, and mysticism. It is key textbook for undergraduate and postgraduate research into eighteenth- and nineteenth-century studies, and also a good general introduction to Swedenborg.

The contributors are Czeslaw Milosz, Inge Jonsson, Anders Hallengren, H. J. Jackson, Gregory R. Johnson, Anna Maddison, Saori Osuga, Devin P Zuber, Hazel Hutchison, Eugene Taylor, Gary Lachman, Michelle Gilmore-Grier, Ariel Hessayon, Keri Davies, and Richard Lines. ☩

### A Warm Welcome

*Continued from page 148*

Academy of the New Church Theological School, where theological education is open only to men; and Dr. Jane Williams Hogan, professor of social science and coordinator of the Masters in Religious Studies (MARS) at Bryn Athyn College, which is open to men and women.

I am still feeling the glow of our meetings and the deep appreciation for our board meeting that we experienced in Bryn Athyn. After the worship service at the Bryn Athyn New Church Cathedral, we gathered with many attendees for casual conversation and coffee; it was announced that the SHS board was present, and we were warmly welcomed. I do not know where this might lead, but it felt promising.

—Rev. Jane Siebert, SHS chair

### Swedenborg Foundation Welcomes New Editor

The [Swedenborg Foundation](#) has hired Lisa Lapp as its new editor. She brings to this position an extensive background as a communications specialist and editor as well as experience with print and digital media.

Before joining the Foundation, Lapp worked as a writer and editor for both nonprofit and for-profit organizations and institutions. She also volunteers as a museum docent and publications copy editor for the Wharton Escherick Museum in Paoli, Pennsylvania, where the wood sculptor's studio and residence became a National Historic Landmark for Architecture.

Lapp will manage the Foundation's editorial program, a role previously held by Morgan Beard who was appointed operations manager of the Swedenborg Foundation earlier this year.

Other Foundation staff members include Curtis Childs, multimedia writer/producer; Matthew Childs, animator/videographer; Alexia Cole, online media coordinator; Karen Connor, art director; Brian Mann, membership and development coordinator; Valerie McLaughlin, business manager; and Carol Urbanc, marketing assistant. ☩

### The Editor's Desk

*Continued from page 135*

operation and sharing is, however, a laudable goal for good people aspiring to love their neighbors and be of use. There is no good reason to hold members of a different denomination with disdain or to treat them with reserve or avoid them because of doctrinal differences. Although our differences are essential, our similarities and agreements are manifold and a basis for further intercourse and cooperation.

—Herb Ziegler

### 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.

### A Warm Welcome

The ground-breaking meeting of the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) trustees in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, home of the General Church (GC) and The Lord's New Church (LNC) grew out of requests from area people for more information on the path to ordination through General Con-

vention via SHS. Rather than asking them to come to Berkeley, we decided to have our fall board meeting in Bryn Athyn. The purpose was multi-faceted: to meet the women and men interested in ordination; to reach out to leaders in theological education in the General Church to talk about avenues of collaboration; to worship with our brothers and sisters within the General Church and the Lord's New Church; and to educate the board about General Church history, structure, and possibilities to come together. It was a successful meeting.

We met in the beautiful headquarters of the Lord's New Church, hosted by Rev. Hugh Odhner and his wife, Denise. Ros Taylor arranged housing for all the board members in area homes. Rev. Emily Jane and Gerry Lemole opened their home to board members for dinner and conversation and to over twenty people who came to meet the board and learn about paths to ordination and about General Convention, and to show support for women in the ministry.

We met with Rev. Chuck Blair, minister for [New Church Live](#), sharing trends for new forms of ministry in the General Church; Rev. Dr. Andrew Dibb, dean of the

### From [Secrets of Heaven](#) §1285:3b (NCE)

A doctrinal view is united when everyone loves each other, or displays charity. Mutual love and charity bring such people together into one despite the variety among them, because it draws unity out of variety. When everyone practices charity, or loves each other, then no matter how many people there are—even if they number in the hundreds of millions—they share a single goal: the common good, the Lord's kingdom, and the Lord himself. Variety in doctrine and worship are, again, like the variety of senses and organs in the human body, which contribute to the perfection of the whole. When doctrine or worship varies, then the Lord, working by means of charity, affects and acts on each of us in a way uniquely suited to our personality. In this way he fits each and every one of us into the order of things, on earth just as in heaven. Then, as the Lord himself teaches (Matthew 6:10), his will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

—Emanuel Swedenborg