



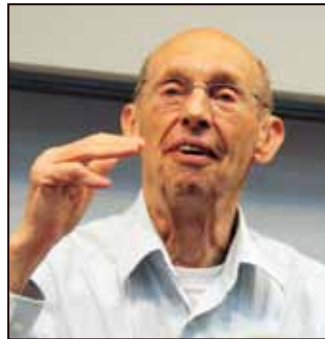
Toward a Newer Church part 1

On Second Thought . . .

BY GEORGE DOLE

In this first of six columns in the series¹, “Toward a Newer Church,” you will follow Rev. Dole to a high vantage point from which he surveys the contours of an essential feature of the New Church—framed as a “lost theology.” What was that lost theology? Rev. Dole finds its clearest expression in the inter-chapter material in the exegesis of Exodus: “It was one that made one [church] out of many; for they acknowledged as [people] of the church all who lived in the good of charity, and called them [kindred], however greatly they might be at variance in the truths which at this day are called the truths of faith.” (Arcana Coelestia 6632)

It is worth the effort to climb with Rev. Dole to the top of this first mountain from which you may see something valuable that has been lost, and that ought to be reclaimed. Read on. —Gard Perry



[To assure you that what I’m about to offer isn’t just some [NewCE-fangled stuff](#), I’ve used either Standard Edition or Potts’ Concordance translations of Emanuel Swedenborg’s works as often as I could. I’ll let you know when I don’t.]

I can recall being told that “It’s all there in the [Arcana](#)³,” and I suspect that this was and may still be a widely shared feeling. Its basis is the remarkable consistency of the theology from that first published work through the last, *The True Christian Religion*; but in recent years I’ve become increasingly aware that it just isn’t so. The first hint came when I noticed the statement in AC 3900:9 that “The [second]

coming of the Lord is not according to the letter, but it is His presence in every one; which happens whenever the Gospel is preached, and thoughts turn to what is holy.” At that point in his jour-

... the Arcana has nothing to say about “the New Church.” It speaks of a series of new churches, yes, but not of a new one to be founded in Swedenborg’s own time.

ney, Swedenborg had not yet witnessed the last judgment.

By the same token, and presumably for the same reason, the *Arcana*

has nothing to say about “the New Church.” It speaks of a series of new churches, yes, but not of a new one to be founded in Swedenborg’s own time. If we look closely, in fact, we find himself anticipating the reformation of the old one. In §6628, he gives a very brief definition of the theology of “the Ancient Churches.” In §6630 he laments the loss of that theology; in §6632 he expands on the true theology by equating it with the Two Great Commandments; and in §6633, he summarizes by saying,

As the doctrine of charity is at this day one of the lost things, and as the doctrine of faith is consequently much alienated from the truth, this doctrine may of the Lord’s Divine mercy be delivered before the several chapters of the *Book of Exodus*, and thus restored to the church (emphasis mine).

What was that lost theology? It was one that “made one [church] out of many; for they acknowledged as men of the church all who lived in the good of charity, and called them brethren, however greatly they might be at variance in the truths which at this day are called the truths of faith.” As if to underscore this, he later described the duty of priests as to teach people “according to *the doctrines of their church* (emphasis mine) and lead them to live according to it” (§10794, see also *New*

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1 An article introducing this series in the November 2014 *Messenger* was erroneously identified as the first of six columns in the series.

2 The New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg (NCE) provides new translations with scholarly introductions and annotations, published by the Swedenborg Foundation (<http://www.newcenturyedition.org>).

3 *Arcana Coelestia* (AC); *Secrets of Heaven* (SH) in the New Century Edition.

The Editor's Desk



Christmas

As Christmas approaches each year, I remember Christmases from childhood, not so much in specific details or events; rather, I am suffused with feelings of joy, warmth, anticipation, excitement, and love. Christmas holidays were a time when extended family got together to share those feelings. What a time that was! Of course, most children in the Christian world share in these feelings year after year, and most adults (probably including you, dear reader) recall these memories and impressions as I do.

But the memories are tinged with sadness. Part of the sadness comes from the tensions that accompanied Christmas, stemming from holiday preparations and family issues, but mostly the sadness inheres to the memories because they are past, almost within reach but forever just beyond. Brazilians express memories of this mixed feeling of joy and sadness, of times, events, loved ones, and fleeting youth as *saudade*—a

useful term with no equivalent in the English language.

Christmas was conceived of and celebrated as a religious holiday to mark the birth of Christ some time in the fourth century. The actual date of Jesus' birth is unknown, and the date was probably selected because it was a traditional date of celebration in pagan religions and secular societies to mark the winter solstice. Over the centuries, the way Christmas was observed and celebrated (and whether it was celebrated at all—Puritans did not observe it) has varied from time, place, and religious identity.

Our modern expression of Christmas in America (similar in most Western cultures) is to emphasize secular celebration—family gatherings, parties, decorations, shopping and gift giving, and entertainment rituals, such as hearing Christmas carols and songs (everywhere we go), watching the film *It's a Wonderful Life* and the *Peanuts Christmas Special* on television. Religious observation remains for many, in the form of Christmas Eve services, family readings of the biblical accounts of the birth of Jesus, prayer, and nativity tableaux. Charity in the form of giving manifests in both secular and religious contexts.

Why do we have these strong memories of Christmas and the feelings associated with them? Perhaps because Christmas is mostly about and for children. The joy of a child receiving a gift is surpassed only by the joy of the adult giving the gift. Although I have

no children, I am melted by the pure joy and innocence of children, learning to give even as they receive, as they gradually discover in the process of becoming adults. We hold the tender moments of childhood, our own and those that we participate in and observe as adults, with *saudade*.

So Christmas is the celebration of God made flesh among humankind, arriving as an infant, destined to be nurtured through childhood and become the Christ. We celebrate the birth of that child in Bethlehem, and our childhood, our children—all the children of God—and the promise contained in that birth. Merry Christmas.
—Herb Ziegler

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Church Calendar

- December 27, SCYL Almont Winter Retreat, Allenton, MI
- April 18, 2015: General Council Spring Conference-Call Meeting
- June 4–7: Gathering Leaves—a Swedenborgian Women's Retreat, Cincinnati
- June 27–July 1: Annual Convention 2015, Bridgewater, MA

the Messenger

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Letter from the President



2014–15

*The Year of Regeneration:
The Way of Change*

Dear Friends,

Merry Christmas everyone! I'm really trying to get in the Christmas spirit this year. I was thinking that when I sat down to write this. Thought I'd do a good thing for myself and sit on the floor and stretch out my hips. Very carefully set my cup of coffee off to the side so I wouldn't spill it and began setting up my computer, I'm getting my thoughts in order and I reach around to plug in my computer and spill my coffee all over the floor. . . .

The second stage of regeneration is reformation.

The thing about regeneration is that it is hard. It is a challenge. It is filled with tests and trials. It is work, and the tests always seem to come at the moment we are least expecting and least prepared. And the more progress we make, the further along the road toward our goal we get, the more challenging it gets, the more obstacles are put in our way, the more opportunities we are given to abandon the effort and settle in right where we are, or even simply give up and turn around and go back to where we came from.

But this year I am really trying to get in the Christmas spirit. So staring at the coffee spreading out over the rug, it occurred to me that this, in fact, was a test. I take a deep breath and I forgo the thirty second string of profanity with which I am so articulately conversant. I forgo the next several hours of bitter resentment over how unfair life can be. I forgo the sense of victimhood and martyrdom which I can so comfortably wallow in for hours on

end. Oh believe me, I saw all these running to the scene of the accident like the gawkers at the scene of a road-side car wreck. I saw them coming with an eagerness in their eyes to find a home in my thoughts and emotions where they would gladly settle in and make themselves comfortable, planning on staying for a good long while. I could see them coming. . . .

The second stage of regeneration is reformation.

But today, because I have recently given two sermons on the Christmas story, and the beauty of the imagery was in the back of my mind, and because over breakfast Laurie shared with me some of the music she had planned before she went off to have her holiday concert with her bright eyed little children and the innocent joy in that image was there in my heart, and because our home has only just begun to show signs of the deep meaning of this season and I want to show more, I was and am determined to reform myself. So I slammed the door right in the faces of those would-be house sitters eagerly intending to take up residence within my soul. I looked at the coffee spill spreading out across the rug, and I laugh at myself.

How predictable the whole thing was: if I had just put the lid on the cup for which it is made; if I had just put the cup out in front of me where I could see it, instead of setting the booby-trap for myself; if I had just looked before I reached . . . if, if, if. I just had to laugh at myself, and in that choice came the realization that in all the world, this spilled cup of coffee was pretty insignificant. It would get cleaned up, I would get some movement and stretching (which, given my present lifestyle is *always* a good thing), I could always make more coffee (I'd probably already had too much anyway), and then, after no more than a few minutes, I would get back to work. To say "no" to the voices and "spirits" of negativity and self-absorption that looked to have their way with me, and instead say "yes" to simple merriment, even that

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The Year of Regeneration*

BY JOHN MAINE

You know, the expression “to open a door on a whole new world” is usually just that—an expression. It refers to those times when we have a new experience of some kind, and the impact of it expands the boundaries of our perception. Territory that was hitherto unsuspected and uncharted suddenly lies before our wondering eyes—a change in the direction of our lives, intended or otherwise, and it’s like we’re passing through a door into a whole new world.



This happens to all of us, hence the expression, but we don’t expect it ever to be literally true. We don’t expect to open an actual door somewhere and have a whole world right there in front of us. That only happens in fairy tales and make-believe. We think of the Christian writer C. S. Lewis and his famous book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, in which children open a door to an old wardrobe and discover the magical kingdom of Narnia on the other side. Well, okay, but nothing like that ever happens in real life.

Unless, of course, you go to St. Jacobs, like I did a few weeks ago.

Why St. Jacobs? Because there they have this largish, old storage shed, painted a dark brown and located, not surprisingly, well off the “main drag” of shops and restaurants. It’s certainly not very lovely to look at, and you could easily go to St. Jacobs and never notice it was there.

But if you were to open the door, pay a modest admission fee to the nice lady inside, and then turn to your right—voila! There it is, inside that humble shed, a whole world of rolling fields and flowing rivers, of farms and towns, of people and cars and buses and trains—especially trains.

For yes, my friends, this is [the St. Jacobs & Aberfoyle Model Railway](#), an award-winning and internationally recognized re-creation of parts of southern Ontario in O scale (1/4” = 1’). It has been decades in the making, the work of six men and women whose hobby and passion it was to devise a model of the world as they knew it in their youth—in the 1950s.

The level of detail is stunning. Never mind the trains (if you’re not a train buff), it’s really the scenery, the feel of a whole world, of a special time and



St. Jacobs & Aberfoyle Model Railway

place, that dominates. Everything is there, from Mennonites in their buggies arriving to help with a barn-raising to a young couple hunched together over coffees inside a small corner diner. There are people at the beach, people going to work, people getting married—all of course in the style of the 1950s.

Everything has been made by hand with exquisite craftsmanship, buildings and structures faithfully modelled on what was and in many cases, I suppose, is no longer.

It all looks so real, but the truly big moment comes when the volunteers in the control booth upstairs start dimming the lights to simulate the setting of the sun. Rows of tiny streetlights start to come on as do the lights in the windows of equally tiny farm houses and shops and gas stations. We behold this lovely world resting peacefully in the “night,” with only the muted call of an occasional train whistle to break the silence.

And then slowly the dimmer switches are turned up again, the “dawn” has come once more, and it is another day in this charming, changeless world where it is always summer, always the 1950s, always good.

I have to tell you, I feel genuinely awed and deeply grateful to those six men and women and their helpers for creating this miniature world with such love and skill. It’s an honouring of what was and of all those who came before

Continues next page

*The 7-Year Cycle of Annual Themes

The recurring seven-year cycle of annual themes of the Swedenborgian Church was established in 2011 to achieve the following goals:

- Unite local ministries in a common activity and purpose
- Enhance a broader-based sense of belonging and mission
- Educate members and non-members alike in the fundamentals of our faith
- Provide a means for bringing our faith and message to the world
- Build the foundation for denominational renewal and growth

1. The Year of the Lord: 2011–12
—the primacy of Spirit
2. The Year of the Spiritual World: 2012–13
—the nature of life
3. The Year of Providence: 2013–14
—the assurance of purpose
4. [The Year of Regeneration: 2014–15](#)
—the way of change
5. The Year of Spiritual Uses: 2015–16
—the call to be a blessing
6. The Year of the Word: 2016–17
—the power of holy Scripture
7. The Year of the New Jerusalem: 2017–18
—the emergence of a new world

Continued from preceding page

us—“the communion of the saints”—and that is surely a worthy and noble enterprise. We see something like this and we know in our hearts that we are being shown what is truly good, given and handed down to us.

It is like that, I think, with church—something good, given and handed down by those who went before us. To them we can be grateful and to the God who inspires us all we can be faithful, by continuing on with the work that they began.

However, that also means change. For us the world simply cannot be “always the 1950s”, always the world of our youth. We carry that world in our hearts but around us God—the One who says “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 22: 6)—is continually providing us with new challenges and new possibilities. We are being led to discover ever new, more loving ways of being human. Made in God’s image, we’re called to be co-creators with God of something new, a new world both within and around us.

This process of recreating or rebirthing ourselves we call *regeneration*. In response to the challenges before us, we look to God and together we walk down new roads. Together we do the work of change and growth that we are being called to do.

But what is that work exactly for us who call ourselves the Church of the Good Shepherd? Some of the challenges we face are certainly familiar to us—shortages of money, people, and resources, an aging building and, yes, a world that has changed a lot since the days of our youth. Of course there are great possibilities, too—the Spirit is everywhere, doing truly amazing things these days.

Okay, so what about us? How are we called to change and grow? What might be our endings and our new beginnings?

Supporting Our Church

I am writing to appeal to you, the members and friends of the Swedenborgian Church, to give a gift to yourself, to those you care about, and to those who will come after us. We are all a part of this church because it has given something to us that we didn’t find anywhere else; because it has done for us what nothing else has done; because we have found the kind of people we don’t find anywhere else; and most importantly, because it has provided us a spiritual home and a relationship with God that we have not found in any other way.

You may be a part of this church because as a young person you found acceptance and inspiration in the youth group, which was so important to you then that you are still here now!

You may be a part of this church because you read an article in the *Messenger* that moved you and excited your curiosity, leading you to seek more, and you are still reading.

You may be a part of this church because you made your way to a church and heard a sermon that was like none you had ever heard before, met a welcoming community, and felt an affinity that led you to make it your home—

and you are still attending.

Or maybe you read an issue of *Our Daily Bread*. Or maybe found your way to the denominational website or the Swedenborgian Online Community.

Whatever it was about this church that inspired you to become part of what we are, will you consider making a gift to ensure that we continue to be, to grow, and to thrive? That when someone else is where you were, looking for what you were, in need the way you were, that they find what they need, just as you did?

We have so many people working so hard to keep this church alive, each doing their part however they can. But as spiritual as our gifts and goals may be, we also need the material fuel that helps keep it going. Please, think of what you love about this church, and make a gift to continue our work together, so we can continue to be here for those who need us.

—*Blessings, Ken Turley*

To make a donation, go to www.swedenborg.org/MakeADonation.aspx or send a check to

The Swedenborgian Church
50 Quincy Street.
Cambridge, MA 02138

Well, discerning that answer, I think, is the mission for us as a church this year and, to get us started, we are going to do two things. First, to find out what God says about change and new beginnings, we will be studying and reflecting on the Book of Genesis and its wonderful stories for the whole year. Second, your board has formed a Regeneration Committee, whose task it will be this year to facilitate a congregation-wide conversation about our future.

The St. Jacobs & Aberfoyle Model Railway is indeed a lovely creation,

but, let’s face it, it is also a “still life” in three dimensions. It cannot change and so does not live. We, however, do change and so we live. We bloom and grow; we die and are born again. That is the way of our God and of our walk in God—a love that is always growing and never ends.

So welcome back everyone, to this time of new beginnings, a time to discover where new life and energy and joy are waiting for us. And may this year bring you many blessings. ☪

The Rev. John Maine is pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario.

Where Dreams Are Made

Notes from the Annual PCA Meeting, October 17–19, 2014

BY UNNI DE PRESNO

The Pacific Coast Association of the New Jerusalem (PCA) was incorporated by the State of California on June 24, 1919, to establish a union of churches and isolated members of the General Convention in California, Oregon, Washington, and other western states. Its focus is cooperation and support of its members and approved churches and ministries, encouraging the study of the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, and promoting a living life of Christian uses as revealed therein.



Revs. Erni Martin & David Brown

The Annual PCA Meeting was held mid-October over three warm and sunny days in El Cerrito, California, at the Swedenborgian Society of the East Bay, better known as Swedenborgian Community Church at Hillside and HILLSIDE, An Urban Sanctuary. The theme for the meetings was “Dreams.” Many attended the workshops, and sixteen voting members from Washington, California, and New Mexico gathered for the business meeting.

PCA President Rev. David Brown’s Remarks

In his opening remarks, PCA president Rev. David Brown shared his excitement



Walking the labyrinth to live music

for all the work and optimism that’s taking place in our Association.

This past February, the PCA Board of Directors met in Silver City, New Mexico, home of the New Church of the Southwest Desert. We are glad we were able to see firsthand the wonderful ministry and community there.

This year we have witnessed the launch of another creative church and ministry, the Garden Church in San Pedro, California.

All of our churches are revitalizing their communities. Our ministers are recreating organic communities in new ways, and our new members are ready to engage more deeply with spirit and with the world. This new creativity we are witnessing is necessary today, where the old church model no longer is effective. Instead of looking at quantity we must focus on quality. We must listen to the Holy Spirit and let that voice be the inspiring guide for our ministry.

These are indeed exciting times for the Church; the PCA Board of Direc-

tors is honored to be a source of support.

The Weekend Events

The weekend’s success was largely due to Linda Baker of the Hillside Church, assistance from John Gwynn, the Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco, SHS, and the many volunteers who offered free workshops. Thanks to Linda Baker, for all her hard work both in front of and behind the scenes, her warmth, her food, and her music.

Thanks to Rev. Paul Martin (the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound), for Friday night’s “Dream a Little Dream” and “Sunday Morning Dreamers” workshops. The workshops renewed our interest in dreams.

Thanks to Dr. Devin Zuber, professor at the Swedenborgian House of Studies, for presenting the “Swedenborg and Celestial Sound” lecture. (Who’d have thought Swedenborg could play the organ?)

Thanks to Joy Barnitz for the “Labyrinth Workshop,” in which we went from a meditative state of mind to joy expressed in dance.

Thanks to Colin Amato of the Hillside Church for a lecture on “Dreams and Journals,” in which Carl Jung’s dream work was compared to that of Swedenborg.

Sunday worship service was beautiful from beginning to



Rev. Jonathan Mitchell checking his mail



Rev. Paul Martin (3rd from left) Leading the Dreamers Workshop

[Continues next page](#)

A Sampler of Spiritual Practices— an Experiential Workshop

BY CHRIS LAITNER

On Saturday, October 18, Rev. Jane Siebert (Kansas) and Rev. Kathy Speas (California) together presented a workshop entitled “A Sampler of Spiritual Practices” in Midland, Michigan. Information about the workshop and invitations went out to people in the Midland and Saginaw areas who are not connected to the Swedenborgian Church as well as to Michigan members, friends, and clergy of the Church. This event was the very first Swedenborgian-led workshop ever offered in Midland, Michigan.

The workshop was held at [Creative 360](#), a location that supports an environment for people of all ages and abilities to experience the creative process through ongoing classes, events, art exhibits, concerts, and outreach programs. The main area, in which



Rev. Jane Siebert Addressing
the workshop

the workshop was held, also functions as the art gallery, with paintings hung on the walls and sculptures displayed throughout the room. This proved to be a very congenial setting for the workshop. Event participants came from several areas in Michigan, and at least a third of the attendees had no connection to the Swedenborgian Church.

The gathering was a resounding success!

“A Sampler of Spiritual Practices” was generally based on the book *Seven Sacred Pauses: Living Mindfully Through the Hours of the Day*, by Macrina Wiederkehr, O.S.B. The author uses the canonical hours observed by the Benedictines as the specific times during

a twenty-four hour day to pause, reflect, and pray. She identifies the various times as the Night Watch, the Awakening Hour, the Blessing Hour, the Hour of Illumination, the Wisdom Hour, the Twilight Hour and the Great Silence. She includes readings, meditations, songs, and prayers as examples of how one can observe these times for one or many minutes.

The workshop leaders incorporated many types of spiritual practice and awareness into the event, as well as presenting various pieces of information that included specific Swedenborgian ideas. The event generated questions that presented an opportunity to discuss some of Emanuel Swedenborg’s theological concepts and to mention the denomination. The leaders encouraged other discussions during the day, in both large and small group formats.

The workshop was organized as a sort of “mini day,” first presenting the concept of each “pause hour” and then engaging the participants in a type of spiritual practice for a few moments during each “pause.” Experiences included private prayer, music and singing, “praying in color,” body prayer, a mini-experience of mindful meditation, the use of *lectio divina*, and coloring and discussing mandalas.

Each attendee received a copy of the *Seven Sacred Pauses* book as well as a folder containing a list of the day’s events, copies of the songs and information and directions for the other activities. Lunch was included, and participants used that time for informal discussions, for viewing the art displayed in the venue, for taking a short walk, or simply finding a quiet corner.

Both Rev. Siebert and Rev. Speas believe that spiritual practice needs to be incorporated into daily life. They feel that *Seven Sacred Pauses* is an excellent resource and touchstone for their personal spiritual practice.

In the information that was sent out to announce this workshop, the leaders promised “laughs, insight, sharing, and growth as we spend this special day together.” Feedback from attendees has been universally positive, with several indicating how they are incorporating the reflective pauses into their daily routines. The presenters certainly made good on their promise as the workshop was a joy-filled, creative, engaging experience! ☩

Chris Laitner is a former president of the Swedenborgian Church. She lives in Midland, Michigan.



Continued from preceding page

end. It was co-led by the Revs. Junchol Lee, Anna Woofenden, and David Brown, who, in a trifold sermon, talked about how dreams can influence our lives, how we can live out our dreams, and how dreams can be a way of experiencing the Divine. And what better worship music for the ears than listening to the divine voices in The San Francisco Swedenborgian Church Choir! Thank you. ☩

Unni de Presno, PCA Secretary, is Ministry Coordinator at Wayfarers Chapel.

Supporting Our Students

Dear Friends,

It was last year during a rather lengthy period of recovery and inactivity after a motorcycle accident when I realized I needed something more, something meaningful in my life. I'm normally a very active person who loves the outdoors and being useful in service to others. But my post-surgery recovery put a damper on that. During one of my sleepless nights trying to get comfortable in my new bed, a lounge chair, I began to pray: Dear God, help me to do your work here on earth; and help me to grow in my understanding and love (sounds rather Swedenborgian doesn't it?). As often happens when I humbly pray and ask for help, I was soon inundated with opportunities. Most significantly, I was asked to fill Bob Leas' position on the SHS Board. His were big shoes to fill; but, having served on the old Swedenborg School of Religion board through the transition to becoming the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) in Berkeley for several years, I was once again called to serve our theological school and our greater church. I have learned to trust God's Providence when I feel called, and this is how I came to be back on the SHS Board. I truly feel honored and blessed to be of service and contribute to the preparation of our ministers and the dissemination of Swedenborg theology through our school. I love our church; I love our theology of divine love, wisdom, and uses; and I am deeply comforted by God's Providence that is always with us through the ups and downs of life.

I grew up in the Presbyterian Church in rural Ohio. I remember as a



young child feeling a sense of belonging to my church family but I also remember feeling a need to know more about God and a more personal understanding of the message for me. In college, I read and studied religion and philosophy looking for answers to questions not fully formed. I derived truth from several religions, including both Christian and non-Christian, but nothing seemed to fit; that is until I found my way to Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey's class on Swedenborg. It was an answer to my prayers. Swedenborg's words were like manna from heaven. I couldn't believe that there was a religion that spoke to me at such a deep and personal level. Swedenborg, through the wise and loving presence of Dorothea, was revealing the mysteries of life and helping me see the light of truth and feel a deeper love. This was life-changing for me. It filled me with new hope and purpose and it gave me an enduring faith that would provide direction and strength through the hard times—and the hard times came crashing down like a tsunami!

As many of you know, my sweet, loving daughter, Alicia, was killed by terrorists on September 11, 2001. The deep soul pain of losing a child is overwhelming, and the sadness is lifelong. Each day that followed I would pray for strength and for clarity of mind. One morning during prayer, an amazing insight came to me: I felt with my whole being the deep interconnection that binds us all together; much like the cells of a body. I immediately understood the implications of this for our world as my compassion for those who were suffering deepened. I realized that when others are suffering, we all are deeply affected by this as well. I understood that I was being called to speak out for social justice and work towards a more peace-

ful world. I take comfort in the words of Emanuel Swedenborg on peace in *Secrets of Heaven* 92: "It is not simply an end to our struggles but a vibrancy welling up from deep-seated peace, affecting our outer being beyond the capacity of words to describe it. That state gives birth to religious truth and a loving goodness, which draw their life from the joy of peace." We, in the church, are so blessed to have the wisdom and message of love that Swedenborg gives us.

Our world needs more of Swedenborg's message of hope, so full of truth and love. My faith in a loving God and the ongoing presence of compassionate others helped me through the hard times. And I am so grateful for the truth and the message of love that comes from God through Swedenborg. Please join me in offering our financial support to our seminary, the Swedenborgian House of Studies, as we strive to build scholarship and church leaders for a world that desperately needs it. Your gift will help a student become a change agent for our world through the love and wisdom of Emanuel Swedenborg at the SHS. Our goal is to help offset the high cost of seminary education with up to fifty percent of tuition for our students. Your support will help us achieve this goal.

—*Love and peace, John Titus*

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Toward a Newer Church

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Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrines 4 and 315).

The basic principle is clearly stated in the first paragraph of the *Doctrine of Life*: “Every man who has religion knows and acknowledges that he who leads a good life is saved, and that he who leads an evil life is damned; for he knows and acknowledges that the man who lives aright thinks aright, not only about God but also about his neighbor; but not so the man whose life is evil.” Or, as it is put in AC 3451, “if any one should acknowledge as a matter of doctrine that charity is from faith, and at the same time lives in charity toward the neighbor, then indeed he is not in truth as to doctrine, but still he is in truth as to life.”

I turn then with very mixed feelings to 1789 and the meeting in London called “for the purpose of considering the most effectual means of promoting the establishment of the New Church, distinct from the Old.” The call to the meeting listed forty-two propositions to be discussed, drawn primarily from *The True Christian Religion*, identifying the principal doctrinal errors of the old church and presenting the principal truths of the new. The meeting finally came to unanimous agreement on thirty-two resolutions, the twelfth of which is,

That it is the opinion of this Conference, that a complete and total Separation from the Old Church is warranted not only from the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg but also from the Holy Word; and that this Separatism ought to commence in every individual, on being fully convinced of the truth of the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church, and of their opposition to those of the Old.

The *last* thing they wanted to do was to acknowledge as men of the church

all who live in the good of charity and call them brethren, “however greatly they might be at variance in the truths which at this day are called the truths of faith.”

The truths of faith, though, did have an important place in the Ancient Churches. “In these one instructed another, and this was among their acts of charity; nor were they indignant if one did not accede to the opinion of another, knowing that every one receives truth in proportion as he is in good” (AC 6628). This reminds me of every one of our churches that I have served, with a majority of its members saying

The last thing they wanted to do was to acknowledge as men of the church all who live in the good of charity and call them brethren, “however greatly they might be at variance in the truths which at this day are called the truths of faith.”

that they did not feel that they understood the doctrines well enough to present them to others, and willing (or often rather wistfully wishing) to be instructed. Their real focus has been on being in truth as to life, and the church would not have survived without them.

In *Divine Providence* 4:4, Swedenborg pulls things together. “The form makes a one the more perfectly as the things entering into the form, are distinctly different and yet united.” The human heart has a very distinct form and function, unlike that of any other organ in the body. It is utterly useless if it is completely and totally separated from the rest of the body.

Let me close with a story. In the late 1980s I was at a meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Chicago when an elderly fellow in a saffron robe introduced himself to me as Swami Sarveshananda. He had identified me

as a Swedenborgian, and wanted to let me know that plans were underway for a Parliament of Religions in 1993, the centennial of one that had been held in Chicago; and, he said, “We have to get the Swedenborgians involved because we owe them so much.”

I was stunned. I had no idea what he was talking about. It didn’t take much research, though, to discover that the 1893 Parliament had been the brain-child of a Swedenborgian lawyer named [Charles Carroll Bonney](#)⁴ and that it had given the West its first experience of the depth and wisdom of Eastern thought. One of Russia’s great theologians wrote, “. . . in Chicago, they have managed not only to unite all the religions, but they have exhibited them into the bargain. Nobody has ever seen such a thing before. . . . The exhibition finished so well that there was not even a single fight! Everyone was astounded.”⁵ What a stunning example of being distinguishably different and yet united! “We,” in the person of Bonney, had an immense, worldwide impact on religious thought and practice—and apparently either didn’t notice it or promptly forgot about it. ☸

This first of six articles by George Dole, explore the annual theme for 2014–15 of the Swedenborgian Church: Toward a Newer Church. An introduction to the series appears in the November, 2014, Messenger.

The Rev. Dr. George Dole is a Swedenborgian minister who teaches part time at the Swedenborgian House of Studies at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. He is a past pastor of the Bath (Maine) Church of the New Jerusalem and taught at the Swedenborg School of Religion. He lives in Bath with his wife, Lois.

4 See “From George Bush I to D. T. Suzuki: ‘The Possibility of Spiritual Pluralism’” beginning on page 133 of the November 2011 *Messenger*.

5 Vladimir Solovyov, *War, Progress, and the End of History*, trans. Alexander Bashky (Hudson, NY; Lindisfarne, 1990), pp. 110f. The first Russian publication was in 1900.

Camp Mennoscah—Annual Kansas Gathering

BY GABRIELLA CAHALEY

Everything worthwhile involves planning and lots of work. To Do lists, preparation, cooking, packing and unpacking were well worth it for the experience of the Kansas Association at Camp Mennoscah.

Family connections were the underlying motif of camp. Megan Alexander came with her children and led a craft project with Connie Helm, preparing prayer buckets. Friday night, I watched with fascination as Patty Thompson and Elaine Reichert set up for Saturday's presentation. Connie brought her granddaughter Tolli, and Karen Perry came to camp with Ethan and Noah. I enjoyed Eric's Zacharias's recollections of past camps as he pored over the pho-



(l to r) James Alexander, Connie Helm, Veneta Lane, Margaret Kraus

to albums. I heard stories accompanying pictures about Keith Mull's funny antics.

The mechanical soccer game was a big hit with the boys. Memories brought a special kind of joy, but tinged with sadness remembering those who were with us in spirit only. Roy Graber came with Logan, who brought excitement and exuberance to all our gatherings. Patty's presentation on the correspondences of the Ark of the Covenant enlightened and delighted us on Saturday morning. Margaret Kraus and Eric

were the wise ones among us.

Later in the afternoon, many of us went for a nature walk by the river. Once again, memories of past nature walks floated into the conversation as we walked along the trail. Joyce pointed out some very interesting facts about plants and crawling creatures.

The highlight, according to many, was the weenie roast, followed by the white elephant gifting. And the Bingo game lived up to its reputation; laughter echoed between Carl Helm's calls. I confessed I had never played Bingo—it's true. After the game we filled a big bag with donations for the needy. Our kitchen angels, Connie Unger, Connie Helm, Linda Kraus, and Elaine Reichert, were busy heating up prepared dishes, cooking, setting up for each meal, and cleaning up after every meal. Everyone pitched in cleaning up. Busy hands were directed by joyful spirits. I felt the congeniality in all our activities but it was most palpable in the kitchen.

Sunday morning, Roy, Carl, and Vern Kraus managed the kitchen. The



At the river: (l to r) James Alexander, Megan Helm Alexander, Blake Alexander, Carl Helm

ladies were treated to breakfast by the men.

Sunday morning worship in front of the fireplace was an inspiring experience. I treasure every memory of camp, but worship and communion stand out as the highlight of Camp Mennoscah.

The turkey dinner with all the fixings, prepared and sent by Vivian, was wonderful. It took many hands to prepare the meal and many more to clean up. The number and variety of desserts throughout the gathering, contributed by all, were delicious. Margaret's apple and cherry pies were a big hit for the pie lovers. The work was made light by a loving sphere that resided with us throughout camp. Surely angel choirs were with us. ☪

Rev. Gabriella Cahaley is pastor of the Pretty Prairie and Pawnee Rock Swedenborgian Churches in Kansas.



l to r: Margaret Kraus, Megan Alexander, Rev. Eric Zacharias

Christmas

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creating a very simple Christmas in our home. I loved reading the prophecies foretelling of the Lord's birth.

A New Church Life article published

Continues next page

Social Media—The New Frontier for the Online Swedenborgian Community

Help us complete our 2015 goal. We need \$1050 to meet our goal of \$4500.

SwedenborgianCommunity.org (SC.org) is now solidly established and

Continued from preceding page

in 1904, written by Rev. N. D. Pendleton, emphatically states that the Lord foresaw that humankind would fall into great darkness and the time would come when the restitution of humankind with God would be needed. The restoration could only be brought about by the Divine assuming the human form. The darkness and depravity into which humans had fallen could only be reformed by divine intervention, by God taking on the fragile human form. The act of salvation and ultimate victory of the Human/Divine is first prophesied in Genesis 3:15, and then “the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14).

Early Christians understood that prophecies revealed certain aspects of the Lord’s life throughout the scriptures. Some of these prophecies became lost as the sacred light shining through the scriptures became obscured. Music brings it back into our hearts. Think of the glorious message in Handel’s *Messiah*. It opens with Isaiah’s prophecy 1:46, “Comfort ye my people.” Of the many Christmas carols, *Carol of the Bells* is one of those pieces of music that fills me with awe and joy. Oh, but there are many more.

As the Christmas gifting season approaches, I think of gifts that would bring joy to someone in need. There are many wonderful ways to give gifts that nourish the body and the soul. The Pretty Prairie congregation will be gifting a family in need. I recall when

moving into social media. Your pledges will help us achieve the following:

- 1) Develop a more active Facebook presence with new features that allow you to stay up-to-date on SC.org through your Facebook page and connect with others in a new way.
- 2) Begin Internet Blog Radio and Google Chat rooms for some of our programs and worships. Blog Radio will allow small groups to meet “face-to-face” on computer screens, and to hear guests being interviewed with a chance to call in your questions and comments. We are using Google Chat with the Journey Program of the New Church to connect with them on a small group program this winter.
- 3) Provide worship in whatever format fits you. We’re expanding our technical capabilities to give you video or audio options for our messages.

We have kept our 2015 budget at the 2014 level.

We are appreciate that our denomination has recognized our accomplishments and awarded us an Augmentation Fund grant and that we have received awards from the Rotch Fund and the New Directions Award, which with \$4500 in pledges will balance our 2015 budget.

To pledge and watch our progress, go to <http://tinyurl.com/k68k4ga>.

Rev. Doug Moss in El Cerrito, California, introduced the congregation to Heifer International: www.heifer.org. He did it with great flare and ingenuity. Many of us brought gifts of healing and hope to impoverished families.

I wish you a joy-filled Christmas. May you find peace and comfort in the message of the holy birth.

—Rev. Gabriella Cahaley

Passages

Confirmations

On November 2, 2014, **Vanessa Bumgardner** and **Barbara Clark** were confirmed by the Rev. Betsy Coffman, and joyfully welcomed into the life of the Urbana, Ohio, Swedenborgian Church. ☪

Letter from the President

Continued from page 153

born of irony, and to the resulting inner peace and subtle joy that followed, that bit of the Christmas spirit that the birth of Christ was intended to bring to us all—this choice was my gift to the Christ child, but also to the world, to my family, to my household, and to myself. It was an act of reformation in that, given the test, I would choose the spirit of Christ over the spirit of self-absorption. These seem such dramatic terms for such a small and insignificant act.

And yet that is how it works. In all that was going on in the wide world, the birth of one tiny baby in a barn out back of an inn in a small town in the backwaters of the Roman Empire has had a greater impact on the world than all of Rome and all its armies and all its Caesars. The spirit of God, for the most part, works its power through countless unseen, seemingly insignificant acts—by all outward appearances—of seemingly unimportant people. And that is why none of us is unimportant. That is why, while consequences may be too subtle to see and appreciate, every moment is a test, and in that moment rests an opportunity to offer the gift of ourselves to the wisely loving spirit found in the birth of that infant. May we give the gift and in the giving share in the blessings.

Merry Christmas everyone.

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

About the Swedenborgian Church

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London fifteen years after his death. American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questioning and insights, we as a church exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

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

Christmas, a Sacred Season

At this writing, preparations are on their way for the Community Thanksgiving Dinners in Pretty Prairie and Pawnee Rock, Kansas.

Lots of work goes into preparing a meal for a family and much more for a community meal. I am very happy to see the collaboration among the churches for these events.

While thinking about the message for Thanksgiving this Sunday, Christmas is already moving to the forefront of our attention, no doubt fueled by commercials, enticements to get in on great savings on Black Friday, and Christmas displays in every store. We must not let ourselves fall prey to the hype that surrounds Christmas nowadays. Not that the bright Christmas packaging of all manner of merchandise, light strands, street decorations, Salvation Army jingles, and Christmas carols in stores do not entice us into the "giving" spirit.

No, I am not immune to it, but I am redirecting my focus. You may be as susceptible as I am to dropping an extra dollar or two into the red bucket by the bell ringer or sending a donation to St. Jude's or another worthy cause. This is good, but I have become aware of how easily I



lose my focus about Christmas as a sacred season.

A sacred season is what my heart longs for as Christmas Eve approaches—a season for decorations, Christmas lights on trees and in windows, and especially music that tells

stories of Jesus' birth.

In my childhood home, Christmas was free of twenty-first century commercialism. There was no Santa Claus in our home. Mysteriously, angels brought gifts and the good news of Christmas. It all began on Christmas Eve when I was led into the living room glowing in candle light, where a beautifully decorated Christmas tree had magically appeared with candles flickering on the fir branches. My family was standing around the tree waiting for me, the youngest in the family. My father read the Luke account of the holy birth, then we sang *Silent Night*. After a fish dinner, we opened presents.

When our children were young, I became addicted to shopping. As the years passed our children became adults and the furious shopping and gifting became less and less a part of our Christmas. In the past decade, I gravitated towards

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