



Council of Churches and the Religious Extremist Ideology: How We Might Effectively Counter Such Narratives Together Abroad

BY RICH TAFEL

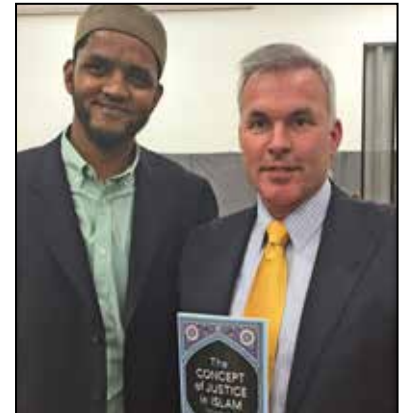
The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC), an ecumenical partnership of thirty-seven Christian faith groups with more than 100,000 local congregations and forty-five million adherents, has been the leading force for Christians in dialogue with Islam. However, due to increased tensions, annual dialogues between the two global religions were suspended for the past four years. The NCC and the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) planned a meeting to resume dialogue in 2015, entitled the National Muslim-Christian Initiative. An equal number of Christian and Muslim leaders were selected to meet in New York City on March 24–25. Organizers planned three topics for dialogue, with both Christian and Muslim presentations on each. The Swedenborgian Church of North America requested to be one of the Christian presenters. Rev. Rich Tafel of Washington DC, who serves on the National Council of Churches Intergenerational Think Tank, was chosen to be a presenter.

The two-day affair was broken into three theme areas. On the first day, leaders gathered at the Episcopal Church Center of New York. The meeting began with the Muslim call to prayer with Christian leaders quietly praying in their seats. The first top-

ic was “Anti-Muslim Sentiment and Hate Crimes in the United States.” Later that evening, the group traveled to the Islamic Cultural Center of New York, where Christian leaders were invited to observe prayers in the mosque. Several imams from the local community took Rev. Tafel under their wings and translated the prayers quietly for him in the back of the room. The spiritual energy was extremely moving. The local community hosted a dinner for their guests, where imams and ministers exchanged questions of faith and practice. While the presentations were powerful, the exchange of questions during the meal was the in many ways the most powerful experience of the sessions.

The local Muslim community packed the large gym at the Center to hear the second presentation, titled “The Intersection of Religious Freedom and Respect for What Others Hold Sacred.” The powerful outcome of this event was the intensity from the local Muslim community members, who asked that this type of presentation be done around the country. The Muslim presenter, Shiekh Safraz Bacchus, imam of a mosque in the Bronx that has over 800 members praying each day, presented Rev. Tafel with a signed copy of his own book on Islamic justice.

The following day, religious leaders returned to the Episcopal Church



Shiekh Safraz Bacchus, author and leader of a New York City mosque, with Rev. Rich Tafel

Center for the final and most controversial topic of the gathering, titled, “Religious Extremism Abroad.” Rev. Tafel, the Christian presenter, began his remarks asking forgiveness for any offense he might give on a topic so sensitive. Following his presentation, his Muslim responder, Mr. Mazen Mukhtar of the Muslim American Society, began his comments by saying, “Far from apologizing, I would say

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**It's Time to Register for the
2015 Annual Convention
Registration Form on Page 61**

**The 191st Annual
Swedenborgian Convention**

*The Year of
Regeneration*



The Editor's Desk



Haters

Rev. Ron Brugler recently posted this on Facebook: "One thing we can all agree on is that hate isn't part of any faith tradition."

It might be difficult for an alien visitor to earth to discern this bit of wisdom from observation. One can barely make it through a day without encountering news or messages of hate intermingled in one way or another with religious faith.

Television depicts Muslims denouncing the United States, the West, and their Christian and Jewish religions. Horrifying death and destruction are rained down on Muslims by fellow Muslims because one is Sunni and the other Shiite.

In their zeal to remake America and

the world in an unholy vision of unified Christian belief and practice (as defined by their leaders' demagogic interpretations of the Bible), fundamentalist Christians, spouting political hatemongering, find respectfully disagreeing with people of different faiths and beliefs to be inadequate. Loving kindness by word and deed are not enough; for the haters wrapped in religious garment, a believer must belittle and eliminate the other with vile words and deeds. For them, any means justifies their sanctified ends. Lying, deceiving, willful ignorance, and denial of truth, facts, and reason are effective and efficient weapons to achieve their religious ends.

A high school classmate of mine typifies the phenomenon. He is an intelligent, thoughtful, caring person, who guides his behavior and person-

al interactions with his Christian faith. Yet, on Facebook, he posts endless diatribes against President Obama and Muslims. He accuses the President of being a Communist, a socialist, a Nigerian, and a Muslim terrorist. He suggests that America can solve its security problems with nuclear bombs dropped on Muslim lands, thereby destroying all the children who might become terrorists.

We engage in this endless struggle against hatred by degrees. Rev. Rich Tafel and other religious leaders met recently to confront hatred in a way that Swedenborgians promote: with love and understanding (page 49).

—Herb Ziegler

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Church Calendar

- **April 24–25:** SHS Spring Board Meeting, Berkeley, CA
- **May 22–25:** The West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat
- **May 26:** Last day to register for a room and board or meal package for 2015 Annual Convention
- **June 4–7:** Gathering Leaves—a Swedenborgian Women's Retreat, Cincinnati
- **June 13–14:** Western Canada Conference Annual Meeting, Kelowna, BC
- **June 24–26:** Council of Ministers annual meeting
- **June 27:** General Council pre-Convention meeting
- **June 27–July 1:** Annual Convention 2015, Bridgewater MA
- **June 28:** Annual meeting of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School
- **July 1:** General Council Post-Convention meeting
- **July 19–25:** Paulhaven Summer Camp, Upper Mann Lake, AB
- **July 25–August 2:** Almont Summer Camp, Allenton, MI
- * **August 1–August 16:** FNCA Summer Camp, Fryeburg, ME
- **August 15:** Application deadline for 2016 Augmentation Fund grants
- **September 30:** Application deadline for 2016 lungerich Fund grants

the Messenger

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Letter from the President



2014–15
*The Year of Regeneration:
The Way of Change*

Dear Friends,

OK. Spring has finally happened for real! I can see actual dirt. In fact, mud season is well on the way, and never have I been as thankful for nearly getting my car stuck in the mud every time I leave home. Funny how perspective alters what we are thankful for.

We here in the Northeast are inundated with water. In fact it is backing up the drain in our basement because, while the snow and top three inches of ground are melting and draining like an overflow sponge, the ground below is still frozen and the groundwater has nowhere to go but up. So while we slog through soggy ground, I'm thankful for it. Because I know that the whole western half of the country is experiencing a very serious drought. The first of what will likely be mandatory restrictions on water use has become law. Of course, commercial water bottlers still pump away and ship their bottled water to, well, everywhere, making immense profit and contributing the most prevalent item in waste treatment: the plastic water bottle. But profit is such a powerful motivator. So I am thankful that I can turn my tap and get for free the same water that sells in a bottle for more money than—beer?

As I think of the teachings of Jesus, I am reminded of how often he speaks of our human tendency to base our priorities on a value system that is measured in money: in material things that we “have” and the societal recognition and admiration

that comes with that, i.e. “rich and famous.” And yet, at the same time, I recall a local musician who is really excellent remarking on how many times people say to him, “Man what are you still doing here?” They are imposing a value system that is based on success measured by “rich and famous.” But as he so rightly points out, if your definition of success is making a living doing what you love as part of a community of people you know and love and where you are known and loved, well then that *is* success. That is “making it.”

As a church, one of the things we might consider changing is our definition of success. If we are expecting ourselves to be thousands of churches with four or five hundred people in each one, well we are failing. If we are expecting ourselves to be thirty churches with ten or fifteen people, we can sit back and glow. Two extremes, I know, and I find neither one where I want to be. But what is important to me is that our churches are close and loving communities of people that have a shared sense of purpose and care for one another and the community in which they live. What is important to me is that our ministers are helping people discover a deeper sense of being in what is loving and wise in their own lives, and from that, as individuals and as communities, reaching out into the world in a useful way, to be and be known as a presence of goodness, healing, compassion, and service. What is important to me, to use an entirely inappropriate metaphor, is not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog. Let me translate: I do not want to measure the success of our church, churches, ministers, and ministries by how big, how financially successful, and how widely known they are but rather how consistently they are known for being loving, useful, compassionate, inclusive, and respectful, and cooperative with others. I want us to be known for the quality of our work and presence. Measured not with material but spiritual criteria.

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Toward a Newer Church, part 5

That Wall

BY GEORGE DOLE

Readers who find Emanuel Swedenborg's work The True Christian Religion (True Christianity) a difficult challenge will find great support and validation in this month's installment of George Dole's series "Toward a Newer Church." He assures us that the work was likely written to satisfy the needs of theological debate of Swedenborg's day. That it was chosen as the basis for the founders of the denomination is problematic to the extent that it promoted total separation from existing institutions. However, George doesn't stop there; for he points to the freedom we now have to see our past separation more clearly, and to thereby envision our newer church more creatively.

—Gard Perry,
Chair, 2015 Convention Program

Let me finally turn to the description of the New Jerusalem. The wall of the city is mentioned no fewer than five times; and it may come as a surprise to find it interpreted as meaning the Word *in its literal sense*. After all, we are not fundamentalists. Swedenborg understood his whole mission as revelator to be to disclose the deeper meaning of the Word.

It is, though, the literal meaning of the text that is being interpreted. The literal meaning exists only in the books of the Bible listed in *Secrets of Heaven* §10325, *White Horse* §16, and *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrines* (NJHD) §266. The spiritual meaning is inside this text as the city is within the wall. At its close, in the final verses of Revelation, we are cautioned in no uncertain terms to add nothing to it and to delete nothing from it.

Different people have found very different meanings in this text. None

of us, surely, finds the same meaning now as we found in our childhood. I find the Gospels offering us the definitive perspective in the Two Great Commandments. They crystallize the message of “*all* the Law and the Prophets” (emphasis mine). That, our theology tells us, is the “one faith.” That is what is contained within the wall, what lies more or less concealed everywhere in the literal sense.

How are we to discover it? Well, for those of the new church, “the sense of the letter of the Word . . . is translucent from the divine truth in the spiritual sense.” This suggests that we should not try to see *through* the literal meaning, but should look *at* the literal meaning with the faith that the deeper meaning will shine through. To take an extreme example, we might read the story of the wholesale slaughter of the inhabitants of Jericho and try to get involved in the story, to identify with the participants. We may well read it as trying to awaken us to the brutality of which “righteous” people are capable, but the meaning for us personally will not shine through until we “look it up in ourselves,” see ourselves mirrored in it.

This in turn requires us to bear in mind that this story is part of a far longer one. The conquest of Jericho closed the door on the years in the wilderness, for example, and opened the door to the Promised Land. If we follow the story with care, we can find it telling of an initial call to greatness and goodness and of the desire for greatness often eclipsing any desire for goodness. We can find it telling of that quest for greatness apparently succeeding, only to have the success collapse disastrously. We can find it telling of the Lord's coming into the ruins with a message

of a kingdom of goodness, and ending with the episode we are looking at this week, with that kingdom coming down to earth. I find our theology telling me, “Yes, life's like that.”

How literally should we take “the literal sense?” I have come to think of the biblical narrative as a kind of docudrama, as offering us a way to understand real events that are in fact too complex for us to understand. The biblical narrative is true in the sense that it is not simply fiction. It definitely does not meet our academic criteria for “historical fact,” but historical fact does not tell us all we need to know.

The creation story is probably the best illustration of this. In an age of highly sophisticated and detailed studies of the origin of the universe, it is scientifically indefensible, but some passionately defend it as literally true. It is not defended on scientific grounds, with proposals for alternative mathematical descriptions of the process or challenges to the data on which the scientific picture is based. That picture is attacked because it seems to deny any possibility of a creator God. I gather that Darwin was troubled by the realization that the concept of “natural selection” seemed to eliminate any need for God.

Neither of these anxieties is intellectually inevitable. There are deeply religious, intelligent people who have no trouble believing in God. The deep attachment to the creation story is not at all intellectual or abstract. It is essentially personal and emotional. Jacob Needleman wrote of his realization that in trying to deal with a very thoughtful fundamentalist, he had been a head talking to a heart.

My very favorite illustration of this

Continues next page

The Annual Meeting of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School

(dba the Swedenborgian House of Studies
at Pacific School of Religion)

will be held during the annual session of the
Swedenborgian Church of North America at Bridgewater State
University in Massachusetts, in the Moakly Auditorium.

Sunday, June 28, 2015 at 7 PM

Please join us for a reception immediately following.

Continued from preceding page

comes from a *National Geographic* article by a Native American, a Tewa from our northwest.

Consider the question of the origin of Native American peoples. Archaeologists will tell you that we came at least 12,000 years ago from Asia, crossing the Bering land bridge, then spreading over the two American continents. . . . I know of their work. I too have been to Soviet Asia and seen cave art and an old ceremonial costume remarkably similar to some found in America. But a Tewa is not so interested in the work of archaeologists.

A Tewa is interested in our own story of our origin, for it holds all that we need to know about our people, and how one should live as a human. The story defines our society. It tells me who I am, where I came from, the boundaries of my world, what kind of order exists within it; how suffering, evil, and death came into this world; and what is likely to happen to me when I die. (Alfonso Ortiz, "Through Tewa Eyes: Origins," in *The National Geographic Magazine*, Vol. 180, No. 4 [October 1991], p. 7)

This points us toward the closing article in this series. It seems quite clear that one reason the separatists paid no attention to Swedenborg's description

of the church is that the description pays no attention to issues central to institutionalization. Actually, the little "appendix" of NJHD does offer some broad guidelines, but largely on pragmatic grounds rather than theological ones. John Clowes, a devoted Swedenborgian if ever there was one, thought that institutionalization was a serious mistake. Henry James Sr., who credited the doctrine of vastation with saving his sanity, wrote a book entitled *The Church of Christ Not an Ecclesiasticism*. My own conviction is that we are called to be both distinguishably different and united, that there is a tension between these two goals, and that the divine intent of this tension is that it be creative rather than destructive. ☩

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



This is the fifth part of the series "Toward a Newer Church," parts 1-4 appeared in the December 2014, and January, February, and March 2015 *Messengers*. An introduction to the series appeared in the November 2014 *Messenger*.

Letter from the President

Continued from page 51

We are small, we are humble, but we have enough to live on and we have roofs over our heads. We have much to be thankful for. Given that, how are we doing in inspiring others to be thankful that we are here in the world? How are we doing in initiating things that make people thankful that we are doing what we are doing?

The nature of people's opinions of who we are and what we are doing is more important to me than how many people have an opinion. Let's focus on taking care of one another in our interactions, working together on what we love and what we do well, and being of good and useful service to one another and to our communities. If we can continue to do that, well then, that is success!

We are, as a church, celebrating *The Year of Regeneration: the Way of Change*. As always, regeneration is about inner change. And we can be thankful that we still have work to do. For it is good work and well worth doing.

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

Calling all Voices, Strings, Horns, Drums, and Cymbals!

Convention is coming soon, and we're rounding up music makers for the 2015 Annual Convention worship services, morning sings, and vespers. If you have joy in your heart and a song to sing or play, please contact me, Greg Huang-Dale, so I can add you to choir and band pre-conference music sharing. ghuangdale@gmail.com

Coming Soon! The West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat, May 22-25, 2015, with workshops by Prof. Devin Zuber, Rev. Anna Woofenden, Thom Muller and many more! For more information and registration forms, visit <http://tinyurl.com/llnrku>.

Religious Extremism

Continued from page 49

our last presenter nailed it. He gets it, and we appreciate his frank approach.”

Following are remarks from Rev. Tafel's presentation on religious extremism.

Let me introduce myself—I'm a minister in the Swedenborgian Church. Most of you have never heard of this church. The best way to describe it might be to say it comes out of Christian mysticism. Maybe an analogy with Sufism would be closest.

Last night, our Zoroastrian brother mentioned the small size of his faith; we Swedenborgians too are small in number. In fact, this packed room makes me want to pass an offering plate.

We might be a small denomination but we have a big theology. Among the many unusual aspects of our faith is a belief that a mystic named Emanuel Swedenborg, in the mid-1700s, traveled to heaven and hell and reported that he'd seen a Muslim community in heaven and some popes and bishops in hell. It is no surprise that his books were banned and he was charged with heresy in Sweden.

One of our fundamental teachings is that it doesn't matter what doctrine you believe; it only matters how you treat others; all faith paths are good. So, I think our church's teachings make us very comfortable in inter-faith dialogue.

I have learned, based on my life experience negotiating complex situations between often warring factions, that when we risk offending each other in dialogue we are often getting to the best solutions. I encourage all of us to hear things we might not be comfortable with.

Let me mention the elephant in the room. America has two primary narratives in response to the terrorism and devastation perpetrated by ISIS and

other groups and individuals claiming the Islamic mantle.

Terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam has left observers here in the United States saying, “Islam is the problem, and the violence of ISIS is a natural outgrowth of this faith. Therefore, I should be afraid of Islam, including my Muslim neighbor who could be a sleeper cell.”

The second narrative you might hear is from our President, who, fearing the negative consequences of the foregoing conclusion, has said that ISIS is not Islamic. Rather they are anti-Islamic, and we should never use the words Islam and terrorism together.

The failure of both narratives is making the situation worse. The first perpetuates discrimination. The second, while well-intentioned, is implausible to many, leaving them to revert to the first.

The salient question is whether ISIS is a product of devout spiritual following of the teachings of Islam or a political movement invoking the power of Islam to render its cause legitimate.

I suggest that true spiritual seekers do not engage in terrorism. Violent groups are political movements using Islam to pursue earthly power.

We Christian leaders can teach our faithful that this kind of perversion is part of our own history.

While the Reformation in Christianity was motivated by a desire to reform the Roman Catholic Church, the issue of identity—are you Lutheran or Catholic—quickly became a political, tribal issue that led to the Thirty Years War. Each side couched its political goals in a tribal, spiritual language that divided Europe, with bloody results.

In the twentieth century, the Christian Church of Germany used scripture and words of Luther to support Hitler's Nazi regime and anti-Jewish violence. Hitler was not motivated by his Catholicism, but he used the power of religious belief to achieve his evil

goals. This wasn't a group of spiritual seekers moved to kill on behalf of their faith, it was politically motivated power mongers using the church to manipulate its followers.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer—who, incidentally, is a cousin of mine—led the Lutheran Church opposition to Hitler and was eventually arrested and executed. He serves me as a powerful role model for me.

When I was growing up, Protestants and Catholics were killing each other in Northern Ireland. Again, it was called a battle over faith, but the truth is that it was over class, culture, and histories of oppression.

In the 1990s I met many shrewd political strategists. When I asked them how they felt about gay rights, they responded that they couldn't care less. Most were not religious, but they knew that by playing to people's faith and stirring up their fears of “the other,” they had a political weapon that would energize voters.

We are watching a war in the Middle East not unlike the Thirty Years' War in Europe. The end of colonialism created a power vacuum filled by “strongman” dictators, exploiting either secularism or Islam as justification for why they should rule.

Educating the American public is critical, because the alternative, which I think is gaining ground, is the belief that Islam is a warrior religion.

This past weekend, I attended *The Book of Mormon* on Broadway. It was filled with humor but it was so unnecessarily sacrilegious and demeaning to Mormons that I was offended. A culture where nothing is sacred and God, by any name or belief, is mocked doesn't interest me. Muslims might have a similar feeling when they are confronted with sacrilegious and demeaning depictions of Muhammad.

The modern secular world does not offer the deep meaning and purpose

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Nominees for Elected Positions in the Church

The Nominating Committee recruits and puts forward nominees for election to offices and positions in the denomination at the annual convention. The Nominating Committee nominates at least one candidate for each open position, with the exception of the Nominating Committee, where at least two must be nominated.

In addition to the two candidates to be elected by the representative class (members of the General Convention) to the Board of Trustees of the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS), two candidates nominated by the SHS Board of Directors are to be elected as at-large class trustees.

The Nominating Committee is still soliciting candidates, but as of *the Messenger* going to press, the candidates listed in the table at right have been nominated for election at the 2015 Annual Convention.

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

Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
President	3	Kevin Baxter, Gard Perry, Jane Siebert
Vice-President	1	Betsy Coffman*
Secretary	1	Karen Conger
Treasurer	1	Polly Baxter*
General Council layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Stan Conger Open
General Council Minister	3	Open
Communications Support Unit (COMSU)	3	Open
Education Support Unit (EDSU)	3	Open
Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU)	3	Paul Martin*
Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)	3	Open
Support Unit for Ministries (MINSU)	3	Nadine Cotton* Open
Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM)	3	Open
Board of Trustees of SHS, representative class (2 to be elected)	3	Open Open
Board of Trustees of SHS, at-large class (2 to be elected)**	3	Karen Conger Jennifer Lindsay
Nominating Committee (2 to be nominated)	5	Open Open

* Incumbent

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

Candidate Statements

The following candidate statements have been received by *the Messenger* to date.

The candidate elected to be president will become the president-elect and then take office as president at the 2016 Annual Convention. There are three candidates for president: Kevin Baxter, Gard Perry, and Jane Siebert.

President: Rev. Gard Perry

I believe in the in the transformative power of regeneration, and in a new kind of conversation, where language is born between us to reveal a new future for The Swedenborgian Church. I

want to pray, imagine, feel, and think with you to see the outline of a newer church together, where we make space for the good Lord to do the real work.



newal of ourselves, one another, and our denomination. As president, my priority will be to inquire deeply into the dynamic relationship between individual regeneration and spiritual

community renewal.

The Swedenborgian Church can be transformed gradually—and from within. Creative conversation with an aim toward becoming a newer church may sound too simple and too small scale to be effective. Indeed, it is simple—and is among our most powerful human capacities. When such conversation occurs within the work of the church, it can be transformative.

Though an outline of a newer church in the twenty-first century is only dimly visible, I see it beginning to take shape. We will need a unified digital presence with effective use of social media; a growing number of small (and beautiful) spiritual communities, increasingly well-governed units of ad-

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Nominees

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ministration, continued support for our youth ministry, and an appropriately scaled platform for responding to issues of social justice.

We are already heading in that direction; and to continue the momentum, my attention goes to three areas of denominational life: good governance, training spiritual leaders, and service to others.

Good Governance: I have passion for good governance—to serve in this way is my joy. Respectful and timely communication helps those in positions of responsibility carry out their duties in accord with their own talents, skills, and deepest loves. My service on the Council of Ministers Ethics Committee, certification as a pastoral counselor, training by the Faith Trust Institute's program on "Healthy Boundaries for Spiritual Leaders," and work on the board of directors of a local non-profit agency provide the basis for my views on good governance.

Training Spiritual Leaders: There is interest in taking a fresh look at appropriate training for leadership in our churches and new ministries. In addition to the ordination track, the Council of Ministers and the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) recently launched a licensed pastor path to ministry to help meet the needs of churches for pastoral leadership. As one who currently serves on the Council of Ministers and the SHS Board of Trustees, I will continue to support the efforts of those charged with training our future spiritual leaders.

A Serving Church: Today's ministry settings are the heart, mind, and body of our denomination. Many of you receive the blessings of involvement in one of our congregations, summer camps, retreats, workshops, and at the Annual Convention. I share this with you through my participation

at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly and as one who receives the blessings of ministry at the Fryeburg New Church. I treasure and will work on behalf of our denomination's various forms of ministry.

There is, as well, a call to serve others through appropriately scaled efforts within our congregations. They take the form of service projects and, at the same time, touch larger issues of social justice. My aim as chair of the 2015 Convention program, as it will be as president, is to foster a dynamic balance between inner spiritual growth and outer change in our spiritual communities and larger society.

Our becoming a newer church means we need to start where we are. Our traditional membership is declining, and there is worry about financial resources—issues that can descend into discouragement, and to a level of fear. I believe that the kind of conversation I envision can stand up to these trends to bring healing where there are wounds, resolution where there is conflict, healthy communication where there is fear, and new life where there is stagnation.

Additional experience that I bring to the presidency includes my having served as pastor to our church in Royal Oak, Michigan, the Michigan Association, the Almont New Church Summer Camp, the Fryeburg New Church, and the Fryeburg New Church Assembly. I was ordained in 1979 and certified by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors in 2010; I write in the areas of regeneration and the glorification, and stand in a line of four generations of Swedenborgian clergy and leaders.

Our church can grow gradually—and from within. When you have a good idea that you wish to see happen in our beloved community, please share it. I want to help you help our beloved denomination become a newer church in the twenty-first century.

President: Rev. Jane Siebert

Sometimes we're just called to do something. In this case, it's to run for president of General Convention.



I was hesitant. I talked to members of Convention, members of my home church, and my family. They were encouraging, but I was still hesitant. I prayed and I waited and I tried to let the idea wear off, but it simply kept coming back. The idea that I could serve our Church and all its various moving parts in this way finally settled itself in my heart.

It all came together when I was co-teaching and interacting with the students preparing for ministry in our denomination at the SHS winter class on "Rites and Sacraments from a Swedenborgian Perspective." Once again I was reminded that God keeps calling people to leadership in our Swedenborgian ministries, to national boards and committees. And people are responding and giving of themselves and their time because what our Church stands for and believes in makes a difference in the world, and we must do what we can to expand, sustain, and live it. Its future will lie not only in the forms it has always inhabited but also in new directions that will usher in renewed hope and confidence.

Through God's leading in my journey I feel I bring well-suited aptitudes to the role of Convention president. Looking back I can see the flow of Divine Providence in the various phases and forms that my professional life has taken. It is tricky to list one's experiences and qualifications without feeling a bit uncomfortable, but how else are you to know if I'm right for this job?

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Following my completion of degrees in psychology and pharmacy, my husband, Ray, a mechanical engineer, and I spent four years in the Peace Corps in Africa and Central America. We learned about persistence when dreams don't easily become reality, about teamwork with those culturally different from us, and about the rewards of helping people survive and improve their lives. And we learned a lot about ourselves. Through God's good grace we are still married.

Next came a career in pharmacy and two children. As all know, children offer their own learning curves, and we were blessed by Casana, currently working in Indiana as a physician, and Drew, an electrical engineer who has just purchased his own business. He and his wife, Amy, live in Kansas City with our two delightful grandchildren.

The pharmacy career changed from hospital pharmacist to retail pharmacist, where I moved up to director of pharmacy operations, in charge of fifty pharmacies and 200 pharmacists. This experience helped me to develop operations management and budgeting and planning skills. It was important to me that each pharmacist and pharmacy technician enjoyed their work and felt they were a part of the decisions affecting their workplace. After fourteen years with this company I realized I was getting burned out, so I "retired" early, expecting to step back, serve our Church, enjoy artwork, and volunteer with Hospice.

God, however, seemed to have other plans. While serving on the board of the Swedenborg School of Religion, I was chair when we orchestrated the move of our seminary to California, and soon afterwards while still on the board at the new Swedenborgian House of Studies I experienced a call to ministry and entered my own path to

ordination in 2004. I also found that I love hospital chaplaincy, and worked for seven years as chaplain at a large hospital while also serving as minister to the churches in Pretty Prairie and Pawnee Rock on a part time basis between contracted ministers.

My experience in General Convention includes serving: fourteen years on the Swedenborgian House of Studies board, twelve as chair; six years on the Wayfarers Chapel Board of Directors; three years on the Investment Committee; nine years on the Council of Ministers Committee on Investigating Misconduct; as a non-voting guest of General Council while the school was changing locations; and currently on the Committee for Admission to the Ministry and as chair of The Garden Church board, the newest ministry in Convention.

As a part of the initial committee of women (2002–2004) that created Gathering Leaves, a retreat to bring Swedenborgian women of all the branches together, I have been blessed with deep friendships and understanding of the various branches of our tradition. Through work within the Swedenborgian House of Studies, we have created a welcoming home for all Swedenborgian women that feel called to ministry. Gathering Leaves will meet for its sixth time this summer in Ohio, and I continue as part of the planning committee.

Locally, I support the Swedenborgian churches in Pretty Prairie and Pawnee Rock, organize and continue to serve on the Food Pantry board, and volunteer weekly at the local Hospice House, helping to care for dying patients.

Retreats and workshops warm my soul, and I love to present new and old pathways of spiritual growth to groups. I have led ten retreats in various churches and camps throughout the US, for both the Swedenborgian Church and other denominations. I

have also had wonderful opportunities to travel with four missions of the Methodist church throughout the world and would like to develop a Swedenborgian mission group.

I have talked in depth with former president Chris Laitner and Rev. Ken Turley about the important responsibilities of the office of president of Convention. As mentioned before, it is not a decision I take lightly. I do feel I bring certain qualifications that will help me with the job: I have a head for numbers and understand budgeting; I have good time-management skills and respect the need to respond to people quickly; I have served the church as lay leader prior to serving as ordained minister and understand the value of both; I have served as a minister in a variety of roles for eleven years; I have learned the importance of listening with both an inner ear to the individual and an outer ear to the implications of the greater good; I have been an active member at our annual conventions (seventeen out of the last eighteen); and above all, I love the Swedenborgian Church and believe in our future together.

We have work to do, and I would like to help lead us to the new New Church. We know there are twelve gates into the City in order to be accessible to a variety of people via many paths. We have congregation-based ministries with different forms of services, church-based camps, regional gatherings for learning and fellowship, workshops and retreats, an entirely online ministry to the world, a newly-begun community-based ministry, a beautiful outreach to all through the Wayfarers Chapel ministry, and more that I hope to find out about as I travel as president.

This year's convention theme is "Regeneration," and next year's is "use." What a perfect transition. We need to look at the connection between indi-

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Nominees

Continued from page 57

vidual regeneration and the regeneration of our local ministries and of our denomination. This is driven by all the ways to be of use and service individually and within our church, and such a way of being the church will bring new people in for the fellowship of community and spiritual growth.

We need to upgrade our methods of getting our message out and investigate and clarify how we can best reach and interact with a variety of people. We have the message; we need to revitalize the voice.

I know I will have a lot to learn if elected and feel fortunate that there is a year's training for the president-elect. I will have the time to devote to learning and growing to be the best president I can be, with the Lord's help and yours.

Vice-President: Rev. Betsy Coffman

I have felt privileged to contribute to the life of our denomination as vice-president of General Convention during President Rev. Ken Turley's tenure. As the former lay leader and now ordained minister of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church and chaplain of Urbana University, I have served our church for many years at the local, association, and national levels. This has certainly increased my knowledge of "the workings" of our denomination and my ability to contribute meaningfully to the issues, challenges, and decisions required of our officers and General Council. In my capacity as vice-president, I serve as chair of the Central Office Review Committee, the Conflict Resolution Committee, and as General Council's liaison



on the board of the Swedenborgian Community Online. As Rev. Turley completes his last term in office and we prepare for new leadership in 2016, I hope to assist General Council and our Executive Committee in supporting a smooth transition process. Therefore, I would accept gratefully the opportunity to continue to serve our church in the upcoming year..

Recording Secretary: Karen Conger

I'm a lifelong member of the Swedenborgian Church, having grown up in the Washington DC Church, a member of both the Urbana Church (Ohio) and the Los Angeles Church. At present, I am a member-at-large of the Pacific Coast Association (PCA). I am a past Secretary of the PCA, served on MINSU for several years, as well as the Board of Directors of the Wayfarers Chapel, and am currently a member of the Board of Trustees of the Swedenborgian House of Studies, in the position of clerk. I am delighted to have been nominated to fill the position of secretary of the denomination, and would very much like to serve the Church in that capacity.



Stan Conger: General Council



the Church has included president, vice-president, and treasurer of the Los Angeles Church; treasurer of the Pacific

Coast Association; and member of FPRSU and MINSU.

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

Treasurer: Polly Baxter

In the course of over forty years in the Swedenborgian Church, Polly Baxter has served in numerous positions at the local, regional, and national levels. She is the incumbent treasurer of the Swedenborgian Church and treasurer of the Massachusetts New Church Union. In addition to serving on the theological school board, the Nominating Committee, and many other denominational committees, she was assistant to the treasurer for many years, during which time she received the Layperson of the Year Award for bringing the financial records into conformity with generally accepted financial standards. She was later elected treasurer of General Convention, and in that capacity served on the Executive Committee, General Council, and as chair of the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit. She has served also as president of the Alliance of New Church Women.

Polly lives in the US Virgin Islands, but thanks to the wonders of modern technology and transportation she has been able to properly fulfill her duties for the offices to which she has been elected.

During the past year, she has worked extensively with the Central



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Office to update the accounting procedures to bring the existing practices in line with a new cost-saving accounting system she implemented. She has also done extensive research on General Convention's invested funds. Polly has a professional background in accounting, working for Fannie Mae, the federal mortgage agency. During the past year, has worked with the Central Office staff to refine General Convention's cash flow management practices, which has resulted in investment of money previously held as cash reserves. She has simplified the year-end closing materials in order to realize a savings in auditing and review fees. These and other policy and practice revisions are resulting in a smaller denominational deficit without impacting existing programs while adhering to fiscal best practices.

FPRSU: Paul Martin

Rev. Paul Martin graduated from the California School of Professional Psychology in 1976 and the Swedenborg School of Religion in 1982. He moved to the Seattle area in 1982 to become the minister of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound and to start the Stonehouse Bookstore and the Mosswood Hollow Retreat Center. Paul served for six years on MINSU, including three years as chair, and for six years as chair of the Council of Ministers. He has served as president of the Puget Sound Community School, treasurer of the Careth Foundation for World Peace, and on the board of the Wilderness Awareness School. He is completing his first term on FPRSU and would be honored to serve a second term. ☩



Convention 2015 Mini-Courses

An annual Convention 2015 offers an exciting selection of mini-courses, always a favorite highlight of convention activities.

Traditional and Emergent Ministries, Summer Camps, Workshops, and Retreats

There are growing, exciting ministries throughout our denomination, and we will celebrate them. Church camps are swelling out of their long-standing buildings with adults bringing their kids back, people returning with renewed enthusiasm, and new campers.

Offering workshops and retreats in our traditional churches brings Swedenborgians and others in the community together to grow in their spirituality. New forms of ministries are emerging, and whole new communities are established to work and worship together and study the wealth of knowledge from the Bible and Swedenborg applicable today in individual lives.

It is an exciting time to be a Swedenborgian. Our tradition offers freedom within our forms of regeneration/spiritual growth, and now our responsibility is to learn how to reach out and share what we have.

Join **Rev. Jane Siebert**, who will highlight these developments and facilitate an idea-sharing session.

Denominational Digital Presence for the 21st Century

We've seen the success of organizations as they redesign and refine their Internet presence. Moving forward as a "newer church," we need to review, redefine, and revitalize how we present ourselves digitally. Today, people receive information from *all* digital (non-paper) sources anywhere and at any time. We need to strengthen our presence, communicating who we are

via multiple digital platforms.

Join **Chris Laitner** and others for a creative, substantive conversation on being a more visible, connected, and impactful presence on the internet. We'll look at our current status, we'll talk about how to portray who we are, and we'll share ideas for making the creation of a newer, powerful digital presence an ongoing denominational priority.

Our Denomination's Response To Issues of Social Responsibility

Today, not-for-profits, public/private initiatives, celebrities, brands, corporations, and churches all contribute to the social good. Integrity is the watchword among the younger generation—what marks would they give to the Swedenborgian Church based on what can be seen in the wider world? To what current opportunities are we well suited to contribute?

Join **Rev. Robert McCluskey** for conversation and an update on the church and social responsibility initiatives.

On the Relationship between Individual Regeneration and Spiritual Community Renewal

Regeneration of the individual is the primary goal of this life, and among Christian theologians, Swedenborg motivates us onward—and inward—with some profound reflections. For those involved in doing the work of the church, there is a relationship between individual regeneration and spiritual community renewal.

Join **Rev. Jenny Caughman** as she reviews and explores some of the key components and processes involved in regeneration, through the lens of how our personal regeneration both influences, and is influenced by, our spiritual community. ☩

New Church Brings Swedenborg Teachings to Grant County

New Church of the Southwest Desert shares teachings

BY SHANNON SEYLER

Reprinted from the February 25, 2015, Silver City Sun-News (New Mexico)

What do Helen Keller, Robert Frost, Dr. Oz, and a church in Silver City [New Mexico] have in common?

They've all been influenced by Emanuel Swedenborg.

"One of Swedenborg's teachings that I find most meaningful," says Suzanne Toupin of Mimbres, "is the acceptance of other people, perspectives and religions."

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) was a Swedish scientist, author, mining engineer, and theological pioneer whose religious writings have inspired generations of spiritual seekers. Swedenborg didn't form a new religion, but eventually religious organizations arose based on his teachings. The existence of the Swedenborgian Church (sometimes called the Church of the New Jerusalem, or the New Church), is evidence that many people find Swedenborg's writings just as relevant today as when they were first published.

In Silver City, the New Church of the Southwest Desert shares the hope and joy found in Swedenborg's teachings. They meet on Sunday mornings at 11:30 a.m. at 1300 Bennett Street.

Founded by the Rev. Sky Paradise, the church provides area residents with an opportunity to learn about Swedenborgian perspectives. Following the Rev. Paradise's retirement, the church is seeking a new pastor. On Sunday,



visiting minister the Rev. Carla Friedrich administered the rite of Confirmation to several congregants, receiving them into the Swedenborgian Church. The Silver City congregation is aligned with the Swedenborgian Church of North America. Advertisement

One unique aspect of Swedenborgianism is its approach to the Second Coming. As a church brochure states, "We believe that the Second Coming spoken about in traditional Christiani-



Members of the New Church of the Southwest Desert study the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish scientist, author, mining engineer, and theological pioneer whose religious writings have inspired generations of spiritual seekers.

ty is already here, that is it taking place in our lives now, and that we are free to create our own future by our choices."

Because it's a lesser-known denomination, some people don't know what the Swedenborgian Church is. Some see "Sweden" in the name, and assume it's an ethnic organization. Linda Callander remembers initially seeing the church sign and wondering how many Swedes could possibly be living here.

"But then," she said, "I met Rev. Paradise, and began learning about

Swedenborg's teachings. I was drawn to the church's inclusion and openness. I kept waiting for red flags to arise, but none did. So here I am."

Dug Sitowski, a local Vietnam War veteran, pulls out his military dog tags. In the space reserved for religious affiliation is printed "Swedenborgian." After reading Swedenborg, he came to realize that some personal spiritual experiences he'd undergone lined up in profound ways with Swedenborgian thought.

Friedrich offered several presentations at the Bennett Street church last weekend.

"While guided by Swedenborg's teachings," Friedrich explains, "we do not, in any way, exalt him as a deity. We're Christ-centered and based in Scripture, yet we look toward underlying meanings of Scripture, just as in Christ's parables. We are ecumenical and interfaith, and view science, nature, dreams, and all of life, as relevant to the spiritual journey. We seek an internal sense of Scripture."

"God's word is the ultimate container for intuitive meaning and messages." She adds, "This is a radically welcoming church that offers an open invitation to visitors."

Suzanne Toupin agrees about the welcoming nature of the church. "For me," Toupin says, "this church is about community, learning and fellowship."

"Today's presentation was wonderful," said Ed Lawrence, who attended with Friedrich. "I can't help but thinking that if I continue attending such an amazing church, I'll keep on growing and learning." ✚

191st Session of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, Saturday, June 27 - Wednesday, July 1

Council of Ministers: Wednesday, June 24 - Friday, June 26

Convention 2015 will be held in Bridgewater, MA on the campus of Bridgewater State University (BSU). To learn more about BSU, visit www.bridgew.edu. To learn more about the 2015 Convention and view a list of Frequently Asked Questions, please visit www.swedenborg.org, email manager@swedenborg.org or call the Central Office at (617) 969-4240.

Lodging: See next page for more details. Rooms will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, and may fill up before the end of the registration period. Rooms include one standard linen and towel pack. If you find that you often need extra towels or blankets, you are advised to bring some with you.

Roommates: If you have a specific roommate in mind, please fill in their name in the appropriate space. If not, please fill in the roommate matching section; we will try to pair you with someone with similar habits and needs. You will be paired with someone of the same gender.

Childcare: Please contact the Central Office for details. **If you will be bringing children, please contact the Central Office to obtain the necessary forms.**

Youth League Program: The Youth League program runs from Saturday, June 27 through Wednesday, July 1, and is supervised by Kurt Fekete. If you want your teen (age 13-17) to attend without a parent, please contact the Central Office.

Internet: Free guest wireless access is available.

Parking: Free. Please check the box below so we know how many cars will be parking on campus. See the FAQ for more parking information.

Room & Board Reservations and Payment Deadline: No new room, meal plan, or Women's Alliance luncheon reservations will be available after May 26 at 5PM EST. Any room and board reservations not fully paid by this deadline will be subject to a \$50 late fee. Event registrations will be accepted for as long as space permits.

Cancellations: Fully refundable prior to May 26 at 5PM EST. Cancellations must be done by calling the Central Office between 9AM-5PM EST, M-F.

Arrivals and Departures: Check-in on arrival day is between 2-5PM at Weygand Hall. Check-out on July 1 is between 11AM-1PM. **Any arrivals or departures outside of this time must be coordinated with the Central Office in advance.**

Mobility: We cannot guarantee the availability of mobility aids such as wheelchairs. Please contact the Central Office for more information and advice on local arrangements.

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

Ground Transportation: Please see the FAQ for more details on ground transportation options from Logan Airport.

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

Roommate Matching

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

Please indicate your gender: Male Female

I am (check all that apply):

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

Anything else we should know when matching you?

Travel Information

Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do a pickup at Logan Airport on your arrival day.

Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do a drop-off at Logan Airport on July 1.

Please check this box if you will be flying into Logan Airport and would like to be added to an email list for you to coordinate sharing a ride on your arrival or departure day.

Room and Board Packages:

- » **Package A (Wed. June 24- Wed. July 1, seven nights):**
(choose this for Council of Ministers members)
\$431 per person for a double, \$536 for a single
Includes 7 nights of lodging, 7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 7 breakfasts.
- » **Package B (Wed. June 24 - Sat. June 27, three nights):**
(available **only** to Council of Ministers attendees working outside of the denomination who are only able to attend COM meetings)
\$189 per person for a double, \$234 for a single
Includes 3 nights of lodging, 3 dinners, 2 lunches, and 3 breakfasts.
- » **Package C (Fri. June 26 - Wed. July 1, five nights):**
(choose this for current lay General Council members or pre-Convention arrival)
\$313 per person for a double, \$388 for a single
Includes 5 nights of lodging, 5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts.
- » **Package D (Sat. June 27 - Wed. July 1, four nights):**
\$254 per person for a double, \$314 for a single
Includes 4 nights of lodging, 4 dinners, 3 lunches, and 4 breakfasts.

Meal Only Packages: For those **staying off-campus** who want to buy meals. If you are staying off-campus and do not select a pre-paid meal plan, **you will not be able to eat in the dining hall.**

- » **Package W (Wed. June 24 - Wed. July 1, meals only):**
\$180 per person
7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 7 breakfasts
- » **Package X (Wed. June 24 - Sat. June 27, meals only):**
\$70 per person
3 dinners, 2 lunches, and 3 breakfasts
- » **Package Y (Fri. June 26 - Wed. July 1, meals only):**
\$128 per person
5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts
- » **Package Z (Sat. June 27 - Wed. July 1, meals only):**
\$101 per person
4 dinners, 3 lunches, and 4 breakfasts

Registration	Cost	# People	Total
Adult	\$110		
Youth League (12-19)	\$100		
Child (3-11)	\$50		
Under 3 years old	Free		
*Family maximum	\$320		
One Day Registration	\$40		
Local Volunteer	\$50		
Women's Alliance Luncheon (must be reserved and paid by May 26 at 5PM EST)	\$5 for those paying for a Room and Board or Meal Only Package; \$14 for everyone else		

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

Room & Board	Package	#People	Total
Room & Board or Meal Only Package (see package descriptions for rates)			
\$50 Late Fee (assessed on R&B packages paid for after May 26 at 5PM EST)			

General Convention Subsidies	#People	Total Discount
Council of Ministers (for ordained Swedenborgian ministers with membership on the Council of Ministers only) - cost of Package A (double), Package B (double), or Packages W or X		
General Council (current members of the General Council only) - cost of Package C (double), or Package Y		
Swedenborgian Church Youth League Officers - cost of Package D (double) or Package Z		

Grand Total (from both Registration and Room & Board, less Subsidies)	
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Payment Information

All prices are in US currency. **If you pay with a Canadian check, please add US\$5 for handling. Please be advised that all prices are listed in US funds and must be converted for payment in other currencies. All room and board reservations not paid in full by 5PM EST on May 26 will be subject to a \$50 late fee.** See "Cancellations" section for refund policy.

Payment Method

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

Visa MasterCard Amex Discover

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____
 Cardholder's Name: _____
 CCV/Security Code: _____
 Billing Zip Code (if different from mailing address): _____
 Signature: _____

- 2. Credit card by phone - call (617) 969-4240, Monday through Friday, 9AM-5PM EST**
- 3. Credit card or bank payment via PayPal - enter an email address to receive a PayPal invoice to pay your balance below:**

- 4. Check: Send checks payable to The Swedenborgian Church to: 50 Quincy St., Cambridge, MA 02138**

Passages

Confirmations

On April 19, 2015, **William and Jan Hillman** were confirmed by the Rev. Betsy Coffman and joyfully welcomed into the life of the Urbana, Ohio, Swedenborgian Church.

Deaths

The **Rev. Matthew Samuel Pritchard Glowe** passed fully into the spiritual world on Feb. 13, 2015, at age 88. ☩

Religious Extremism

Continued from page 54

of religion. Faced with a false choice, many young people choose purpose, even if it is offered by terrorist organizations. We need to let the next generation know that there is *purpose* and *meaning* and *faith* without violence.

I'm glad to be here these two days. I've never been to Islamic prayers before. I had informative conversations last night. I have learned much from my Muslim brothers. I'm well educated in theology, I'm engaged in public policy, and God is the most important relationship in my life—yet I am ignorant. So I do need to talk and listen.

What action can we take? As religious leaders we can counter the demagoguery by revealing to our religious adherents how politics is leading faith in destructive political movements.

The solution to the crisis of ISIS, of future war and peace, is in this room. Muslim leaders in the United States, who have practiced and taught their faith in a difficult, pluralistic world can offer the way to understanding the true identity and beliefs of the Muslim world. You are a global treasure. For our part, Christian leaders must in turn protect and support you. We need to coordinate with you our responses and ignorant or hateful perceptions of

On Eve

BY REBECCA ESTERSON

The Hebrew word for *bone* is the same word for self: my bone, my self—*atmi*. Swedenborg uses this in word play when interpreting the second chapter of Genesis and the creation of Woman. The creation of Eve from the rib of Adam is not a statement of who women are or should be in this interpretation, but a description of what happens to individuals, men and women, when we move from being “spiritual” to being “celestial”—when we move from being intellect-driven to being perception-driven. In short, we gain selfhood. “Even though they do not seek autonomy, The Lord gives it to them. . . . Such is the autonomy or selfhood present in angels, and its presence brings them the highest peace and tranquility.” Heavenly marriage is described in these numbers in *Arcana Coelestia* as the creation of the whole self, the marriage of love and wisdom. What was hard and inflexible, a rib bone, becomes a new life, a partner and wife. A living proprium is created from a dead one. This celestial state is available to anyone in any age,

Islam and Muslims. We must speak up for your teachings about Islam. We must live our faith by supporting yours.

Together, we can create a new narrative, revealing the false narrative of ISIS. We can lead the way to shared understanding and tolerance between Muslims and Christians.

God is great; let us join together in serving God by supporting each other. ☩

Rev. Rich Tafel is the founder and president of Public Squared, an organization that bridges the gap between social innovation and investment. <http://thepublicsquared.com>

isn't limited to the most ancient or a future age (AC 84) and isn't limited to one gender or one race. It is the seventh day, the sabbath, the whole fullness of spiritual regeneration. Those in this state “acknowledge no other faith than one that springs from love; and love is also what moves them into action.” ☩

Rebecca Esterson is the scholar-in-training at the Swedenborgian House of Studies and a PhD candidate at Boston University. She lives in Somerville, Massachusetts, with her husband, Rafi, and their children, Ari, Moses, and Miriam.

Rev. Fekete Visits Chicago and Urbana U

Rev. Dr. David Fekete visited the American Midwest February 19–26.

At the Swedenborg Library in Chicago, he led a study group on *Divine Providence*, by Emanuel Swedenborg, then delivered a lecture on Swedenborg and Blake the following day. While there he participated in the deliberations of the Illinois Association.

His next stop was Urbana University (UU) in Urbana, Ohio, where he was the 2015 Swedenborgian scholar-in-residence, an annual program sponsored by the Swedenborgian Church. He gave a “Swedenborg 101” talk to the Urbana faculty and visited with several sociology classes. He gave his lecture on Blake and Swedenborg at the London Correctional Institution and then again at the UU Swedenborg Library to the greater Urbana community, where it was well received. Finally, he met with the interim president of UU, visited a World Religions class and met with a Personal Philosophy class.

Rev. Fekete says it was wonderful re-visiting his alma mater as a pastor and scholar. His lecture on Blake and Swedenborg appeared in the March 2015 *Messenger*. ☩

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.

Girls Just Want To Have Funds!

Mite Box Donations

Have you shaken your Mite Box lately? Do you hear the happy sound of jingling coins or the ruffle of folded bills? Is your box getting too heavy to lift?

Well, with the Annual Convention fast approaching, it's time to make a final push toward your giving goal for this year's Mite Box recipient: The Garden Church.

So be sure to save room in your suitcase to pack that donation, or if you're not traveling to Bridgewater, mail your contribution to the Women's Alliance treasurer. (Make checks payable to National Alliance of New Church Women)

Chris Laitner
10 Hannah Court
Midland, MI 48640

Together, our individual mite can be mighty!

Women's Alliance Dues Due

Women's Alliance members are reminded that annual dues of \$5.00 are due and can be sent to treasurer Chris Laitner (to avoid the luncheon line rush) or are payable at our Annual Convention Luncheon meeting on Monday, June 29.

Fiesta Time For Annual Luncheon Meeting

Our annual luncheon and meeting at the Annual Convention this year in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, will be held on Monday, June 29. All women attending the convention are welcome to attend and just need to sign up on the Convention registration form. Notice the extra cost for this event is minimal this year (only



Lois Dole

\$5.00 for those with a Convention meal plan), as the Alliance treasury will cover most of the room rental and additional charges—your dues at work!

We will enjoy a festive taco bar and dessert and then be treated to a conversation with Lois Dole, who will speak on her life and work as a Swedenborgian woman. We know of her loving and supportive partnership with Rev. Dr. George Dole, and there is much more to learn about this wife, mother, career woman, artist, and longtime contributor to the life of our church. This event is for all Swedenborgian women, friends, and guests. ☪