



Clowes' Clue (to Church Growth)

(Note: Clowes rhymes with clues)



BY GEORGE DOLE

I recall from high school physics (*late* in the last millennium) that with a supersaturated solution, all it takes is one added crystal, and the whole solution will crystallize. It feels as though something like that is happening with me. The supersaturated solution is the information overload from working on two potential books (with the lure of a third), concerns for the state of the church both denominationally and here in Bath, and a new second semester course in biblical exegesis for the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS).

It is this last and most recent that has provided the single crystal, in the person and personality of John Clowes. The CSS course is pushing the envelope a bit by trying to look systematically at what Swedenborg has to say about

the Gospels. He wrote at length about Genesis, Exodus, and Revelation, but Christian though he undoubtedly was, apart from a seriatim treatment of the “little apocalypse” in Matthew 24–25, he gave no sustained attention to any of the Gospels. One look at an index of his Scripture quotations is enough to assure us that he did not ignore them, but what would we find if we gathered the scattered references and put them together? Stay tuned. This hasn’t crystallized for me yet.

What it has done is lead me to Clowes, who wrote the first set of Swedenborgian commentaries on all four Gospels, going through them verse by verse and using passages from the writings to determine what their spiritual meaning might be.

I had known of Clowes as the Anglican cleric who had been a prodigious translator of Swedenborg’s works, and who had come to London from Manchester to try to dissuade Robert Hindmarsh and his followers from forming a separate “new church” organization. I had envied him the immense advantage of never having had to read the writings in translation, and this envy had been intensified as I realized how badly our pedantic translations (sometimes transliterations) obscured the

extraordinary simplicity and clarity of Swedenborg’s Latin. My vague wish to know more about him never gathered strength enough to generate action, though.

In the course of preparation for the course, I discovered that I had a copy of a relatively rare volume, *Memoir of the Rev. John Clowes*. It begins with a brief but thorough and fair-minded autobiography that was a page-turner

for me. To cut to the chase, a major turning point in his life came when he read William Laws’ book, *Christian Perfection*, and found himself inspired by a con-

vicition that true Christianity was not primarily a matter of true doctrine, as he had always assumed, but a matter of life. In pursuit of this principle, he was introduced to *True Christian Religion*, and his first reaction was negative—it was nothing but doctrine. A profound mystical experience some months later, though, a vision of ineffable divine glory, called to his mind Swedenborg’s phrase, *Divinum Humanum*. He identified this instantly with the glory that had just overwhelmed him, went home, plunged into the book, and found that it was all about life. He never looked back.

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[A] major turning point in his life came when he . . . found himself inspired by a conviction that true Christianity was not primarily a matter of true doctrine, as he had always assumed, but a matter of life.

It’s time to register for the
**192nd Annual Convention of
the Swedenborgian Church**

June 29–July 3, 2016

Urbana University

Urbana, Ohio

[Registration Form Page 49](#)

The Editor's Desk



Convention in Urbana

Winter has turned to spring and before we know it—summer. Although Annual Convention is over two months away, now is a good time to make your plans to attend.

The associations that comprise General Convention send delegates to the annual conventions. Anyone interested in attending should check with their church societies and association on the process of becoming a delegate. Many associations provide some financial assistance for delegates.

The convention will be held at Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio. We have held many conventions at Urbana over the years, reflecting our longtime affiliation there: The school was founded in 1850 by Swedenborgians, and retained a formal relationship with the Swedenborgian Church until recently, when Urbana became part of Frank-

lin University. The Swedenborgian Church and Urbana continue an active informal relationship.

Successive conventions at Urbana have seen improvements in the facilities, accommodations, and services, and this year should prove no exception. At our latest convention there in 2013, we enjoyed the new dining hall and the new student center, where we met for business sessions, worship services, and socializing. The Swedenborg Memorial Library offers an interesting venue for quiet time. The charming town center is a pleasant walk away, and offers restaurants, taverns, stores, and other amenities.

Teens will gather at the convention, under the able leadership of youth director Kurt Fekete, where they will explore the area, enjoy organized recreational activities, and create and present a worship service for the convention. This Youth League activity is always a wonderful bonding and support activity. All teens are welcome. If a teen's parents are not attending, a responsible adult sponsor will be arranged.

There are organized activities and day care for children age three and older.

See you in Urbana!

—Herb Ziegler

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Proposed Bylaw Amendments for the Corporation of the New Church Theological School

At the Annual Meeting of the New Church Theological School to be held during the Annual Convention at Urbana University on June 30, 2016, the following amendments to the bylaws will be moved: to replace all instances of "Swedenborgian House of Studies" with "Center for Swedenborgian Studies" and in Article 1, Section 2, to replace "11 Highland Ave., Newtonville, MA 02460" with "50 Quincy St., Cambridge, MA 02138."

the Messenger

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

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

Church Calendar

- **April 16:** General Council conference—Call meeting
- **April 22–23:** CSS Board meeting • Berkeley, California
- **June 29–July 3:** Annual Convention • Urbana University, Urbana, Ohio
- **November 3–6:** General Council meeting • Framingham, Massachusetts:

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Letter from the President



*2015–16: The Year of Spiritual Uses:
The Call to Be a Blessing*

*2016–17: The Year of the Word:
The Power of the Holy Scriptures*

Dear Friends,

Today I sit in my kitchen, in the place I have sat and sipped my coffee for years now, looking out on a view of the trees and the lake, a view that is beautiful and more than familiar. Yet it is different today. I have changed and I know that change is coming. I have one child teetering on the edge of the pit of hell and another child secure in the loving comfort of a family that is now larger by one. Talk about the equilibrium within which we must make our choices! Laurie and I wake up each morning and face a life that will never be the same. And yet we wake up, prepare ourselves and go out into the day together, the bond of love between us made even stronger by the crucible of life. Our relationship held in the fire of pain and anguish until it is glowing red hot and must surely be consumed and then dipped in the cooling and soothing pool of reassuring love and support till it comes out, strength renewed and shining bright. The extremes are equally intense, and yet together we find a kind of constancy and struggle to support each other and maintain our balance in the center. If it is true that “God never gives us anything we can’t handle,” then God must think very highly of us, indeed.

Of course, that statement, which rolls so blithely off the tongues of those who know not of what they

speak, is complete and utter BS. I have seen firsthand those who have been cruelly broken and remorselessly crushed into the ground by the circumstances of their lives and a combination of bad choices and the actions of other people. So don’t blame it on God. God doesn’t “give us” the hard things that come our way. Permits them, yes. Causes them? *NO!* Nonetheless, we are required and expected to deal with what happens to us in our lives. And so it is we make choices, informed and self-aware, or unconsciously and in ignorance. The more we know, the more responsible we are for those choices. And in the end we all do the best we can with who we are and what comes our way.

And so it is with our church. Do not forget that this organization we call “the Swedenborgian Church” is a larger form of the church that each of us is as an individual. And our church is just one of many that together make up the larger church which is in turn a part of the universal Lord’s New Church. As a denomination, we are faced with extremely challenging circumstances in our collective life. The world has changed around us, and what worked before just doesn’t work anymore. We have been through some extremely challenging financial times and made it through. We have struggled and continue to struggle our way through a dramatically and traumatically changing cultural landscape. We have been severely diminished in size and strength. And yet we have also been, and continue to be, galvanized into a new perspective on what it means to be and how to go about being, a “new church.” It ought to be quite apparent by now that intellectual understanding by itself is just not going to cut it. But love and generosity without the tempering guidance of wisdom is just as useless. As a church we know we have a wonderful way of perceiving and understanding spirituality in the material world. And we are also a group of deeply caring and compassionate people. And at the core we have a commitment and a deep desire to ac-

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Call for Nominations

The Nominating Committee recruits and puts forward nominees for election to offices and positions in the denomination at the Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church. (See table at right.) The Nominating Committee nominates at least one candidate for each open position, with the exception of the Nominating Committee position, where at least two candidates must be nominated.

If you are interested in being nominated for any position (particularly an open position), contact the acting-chair of the Nominating Committee, Martha Richardson, (marthajane410@gmail.com or 207.935.1217).

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

Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
Vice-President	1	Tom Neuenfeldt
Recording Secretary	1	Karen Conger*
Treasurer	1	Polly Baxter*
General Council layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Debbie Dolley* Carl Helm
General Council Minister	3	Rev. Betsy Coffman
General Council Minister (unexpired 2-year term)	2	Rev. Dick Tafel
Communications Support Unit (COMSU)	3	Kristina Madjerac*
Education Support Unit (EDSU)	3	Rev. Jim Lawrence
Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU)	3	BJ Neuenfeldt*
Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)	3	Open
Support Unit for Ministries (MINSU)	3	Sharon Williams Open
Committee on Admission to the Ministry: Minister (CAM)	3	Rev. Jonathan Mitchell
Board of Trustees of CSS, representative class (2 to be elected)	3	Nancy Little* Robert Morrill*
Board of Trustees of CSS, at-large class (2 to be elected)**	3	Open Open
Nominating Committee (2 to be nominated)	5	Open Open

* Incumbent

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

Convention.

To date, the candidates listed in the table above have been nominated for election at the 2016 Swedenborgian

Church Annual Convention.

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

Nominees for Elected Positions in the Church

The following candidates have submitted their candidate statements as of *the Messenger* going to press.

Vice-President: Tom Neuenfeldt

I am honored to be nominated for the position of vice-president of our denomination. It is a role with responsibilities that I take seriously, and with leaders before me who I respect deeply. I have had long conversations with Rev. Betsy Coffman about the duties of the office and her continued involvement as a Clergy representative on General



Council.

I have served on General Council for the past four years. Additionally, I have been on the Board of Trustees of our Seminary, The Center for Swedenborgian Studies at the graduate Theological Union (CSS), for eight years, the last two as chair. I am term-limited off the Board this year.

I believe that president-elect Rev.

Jane Siebert and I have a strong working relationship and share a high level of trust. She was chair of CSS for six of the years that I have served on the Board. For two of those years, I was vice-chair.

For over thirty years, I was a “servant leader” as a school administrator in the Michigan public school system. It is rewarding to share the benefits of that experience and temperament with the Church.

My wife BJ and I lead a very nice

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retirement life in East Tawas, Michigan. We enjoy the time that we are able to spend with our children and grandchildren. We love to travel with them and by ourselves. We are deeply involved with Almont Summer School all year long—BJ as treasurer, and me as the fix-it man.

I look forward to seeing all of you at Annual Convention this summer.

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 having served 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 accounting 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 two years, she has worked extensively with Central Of-

fice to update General Convention’s accounting procedures to bring practices in line with a new cost-saving accounting system she implemented. She has also done extensive research on General Convention’s invested funds and updated their accounting. In addition, she 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.

Polly has a professional background in accounting, working for the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae).

Recording Secretary: Karen Conger



I’m a life-long member of the Swedenborgian Church, having grown up in the Washington, DC Church of the Holy City and having been a member both

in Urbana, Ohio, and Los Angeles, California. I am currently a member-at-large of the Pacific Coast Association (PCA). I am a past secretary of the PCA, served on MINSU (Ministry Support Unit) 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 Center for Swedenborgian Studies, filling the position of clerk on that board.

I have enjoyed my first year serving as recording secretary of the denomination and would very much like to continue to serve the Church in that

capacity for another year.

Karen Conger lives in Bishop, California.

**General Council (Minister):
Rev. Betsy Coffman**



Having served as vice-president of General Convention for the past six years, I have now been asked to accept a nomination for General Council. Due to my level

of involvement in the affairs of the denomination as vice-president, I believe I could provide continuity and relevant “history” as our new president and other elected officers “take the helm” after the annual convention. It has been a great privilege to serve, and I hope to be able to continue to contribute meaningfully as a General Council member to the issues, challenges, and decisions we face as a church. Therefore, I would be honored to accept the opportunity to do so.

Betsy Coffman lives in Urbana, Ohio.

**General Council (Layperson):
Debbie Dolley**



The Fryeburg New Church has been “my church” since my baptism over sixty years ago. I have been involved in the church all of

my life, starting with going to Sunday school and attending church services, singing in the choir, and participating in junior and senior leagues. Then as an adult, I have taught Sunday school for forty years, been a trustee and treasurer of the church, Women’s Alliance officer, and a member of the growth,

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Nominees

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worship, and search committees. I am presently the treasurer of the New Church Sunday School Association.

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

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

I'm honored to be asked to serve a second term on General Council and feel that I would be doing the work of the Lord.

EDSU: Rev. Jim Lawrence



I have served in various General Convention ministries since being ordained into the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church in 1984. Across

seventeen years, I pastored three Swedenborgian congregations in rural (Fryeburg, Maine), suburban (St. Louis), and urban (San Francisco) settings. During this same period, I also worked in Swedenborgian publishing ministries as the editor of *the Messenger*, as publishing specialist for the American New Church Sunday School Association, publishing specialist on the Swedenborg Foundation, and as executive publisher of J. Appleseed & Co., contributing along the way as publisher, editor, and/or author to more than fifty

works. I received the Doctor of Ministry degree in 1992 in Spirituality and Writing from the Graduate Theological Foundation in Indiana and, in 2012, I received the Ph.D. degree from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley in Christian Spirituality.

During my congregational ministries, I often focused on the educational aspects of ministry and spiritual formation through classes and various events designed for and offered to the congregation and general public. In addition, the publishing work has always seemed to me to be connected to educational work, as it focuses on potential "content" parts contributing to the educational work in the church. Serving as dean of our seminary (Swedenborgian House of Studies/Center for Swedenborgian Studies) since 2001 and continuing my own educational journey in higher education has helped make me keen to new tools and resources that can enrich the educational ministry goals of our churches and centers. It is fair to say I love the educational aspects of the church's life and would be happy to support EDSU in its mission.

Jim Lawrence lives in Oakland, California.

FPRSU: BJ Neuenfeldt



so I have some practice in looking at finances. I have also learned a lot along the way from our treasurer and the other members of the support unit. In serving another term, I think we can keep this teamwork going, making better use of our church's financial and

physical resources. Paradigms shift as churches seek new ways to "do church." We are charged with both being loyal to the ancestors who bequeathed money and to the new dream seekers. It is a humbling job but one of great use to the future of our denomination.

On a personal note: I grew up in Detroit and have been a lifelong Swedenborgian. After college at Central Michigan University, I married Tom Neuenfeldt, became a special education and elementary teacher, had three daughters, lived in and remodeled two historic houses, and have now remodeled and retired to the house my parents built on Lake Huron. Besides many volunteer hours for Almont, FPRSU, and AFC, I attend a Presbyterian church and sing in their choir and I sing in a community chorus. Life is good.

MINSU: Sharon Williams



I have gone by many names in my life with the church—first as Sharon Reddekopp, then Slough, then Reddekopp again, and finally, Williams.

I always hoped my Reddekopp name would lead to recognition, but as the Bible tells us, there came a pharaoh who knew not Joseph. My dad, Erwin D. Reddekopp, my minister, my mentor, has been gone for quite some time now, and I need to stand on my own.

Because of my early life in the church I realized that it was incumbent upon lay people to serve on church boards and committees. So, for much of my life past my mid-thirties I have been doing that. I am pleased to be able to run again as a MINSU candidate. I completed an unexpired term and was elected for a full term, for a total of five years on this very im-

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portant support unit. I would like to serve another three. I bring some history, which needs to be remembered, to MINSU.

I have also served my church in the following positions: Sunday school teacher, secretary of our local society, president of our local society, provincial representative for Western Canada Conference (WCC), secretary of WCC, president of WCC, Nominating Committee for our denomination, and General Council.

Sharon Williams lives in Airdrie, Alberta.

CAM: Rev. Jonathan Mitchell



I have been an ordained Swedenborgian minister for nineteen years and I served as chair of CAM for three years as part of my responsibilities as chair of the

Council of Ministers (2010–2013). It has always been a great joy for me to work with those who have discerned a call to ministry, and I find it rewarding to bring my experience to bear on the ministerial formation process. I care deeply about the health of General Convention’s ministry as it continues to grow in both traditional and emerging directions. And so, I take seriously CAM’s responsibility to Convention to make sure that those whom CAM recommends for licensing or ordination have both the right stuff and the right preparation for effective ministry within Convention and the larger world. I would be honored to serve on CAM.

Jonathan Mitchell lives in San Diego.

CSS Board: Robert Morrill

Robert Byrne Morrill was born in 1937 and grew up in Reno, Nevada. He trained as a mining engineer at

Letter from the President

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tually *do* something useful and thereby be an active contributing part of what, in “Swedenborgianese,” we call the Lord’s Second Coming. The challenge before us, and make no mistake it is serious and imminent, is *how*. All that we have known will perhaps provide some care and support for those who are already familiar and content with what has been. But the existence of this church will not be insured by simply taking care of that consistently dwindling group. They (and more and more I come to see that as *we*) have earned the right to respect and dignity by virtue of a lifetime’s commitment to serving the church. But while care must be taken and given, it is not where we must look if we as a church are to be a vital and contributing part of life going forward.

It is perhaps ironic that at a time when we most need young eyes and youthful vision, it is the elder generation that is in the positions of power and influence. Perhaps it has always been that way. Perhaps that is



the University of Nevada and received a law degree from Harvard Law School. Bob has four children and four grandchildren.

He and his wife Mia live in San Francisco and have attended the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church since 1994 and also attend the Hillside Church in El Cerrito. Bob retired from his intellectual property law practice in 2012, but continues to serve as an arbitrator and mediator. He is a member of the board of the Great Basin National Park Foundation. ☪

the source of the necessary guiding wisdom. But at the same time, we are showing isolated signs of the new and vital energy of youthful vision. And this must be encouraged and nurtured and given the opportunity to grow into a living church that those of us over fifty perhaps cannot see, let alone understand and appreciate.

As I prepare to step down from serving as your president, I am poignantly aware of the equilibrium of temptation and trial within which this church is poised. There is the temptation to cling to and hide ourselves in the comfortable familiarity of what has been in many ways so good. And then there is the trial and test of facing into an unknown future and letting go of authoritarian control and handing the reigns over to the untested, yet younger and more vigorous individuals who have been drawn to what we are and what we can become as a church. It is indeed a trying time. We are being tested—fair or not; whether we can take it or not; whether we are ready or not—it is happening and the time of trial is upon us. Our freedom, and the answer to the question of what kind of church is this is to be answered simply in how we respond.

—Blessings, Rev. Ken

Former Boston Church Employee Sanctioned

Michael T. Snedeker, a former registered representative with Investors Capital, has been barred by the Securities and Exchange Commission from the financial industry for his part in a criminal scheme to take over the Boston Swedenborgian Church. He previously pled guilty to criminal charges of defrauding the IRS by not paying taxes on money he and friends skimmed off of funds of the Church. He was sentenced to 36 months probation and ordered to pay \$119,000 in restitution.

The Power of One

BY REV. JENN TAFEL



We live in troubling times. Consider the following issues:

- Gun violence makes the headlines daily (figures for 2014–2015 here: <http://goo.gl/Ayozel>).
- The United States has been a nation at war for well over a decade.
- The current state of U.S. politics is a sad one.
- Income equality in the U.S. has steadily grown over the past thirty years (figures here (<http://goo.gl/hx-bjf>)).
- Police brutality makes the news on a regular basis. Climate change cannot be ignored.
- Mental illness is an issue (figures here: <https://goo.gl/s6AYqL>)—most likely because of the state of the nation and the world.

Many people ask the question, “What can one person do?” As people of faith, we are equipped for the journey. It may not feel like it all the time, but we are. The passage from Scriptures that repeatedly comes to mind when reflecting on the broken world and what I am called to do is from Micah 6:8.

Listen here, mortal: God has already made abundantly clear what “good” is, and what YHWH needs from you: simply do justice, love kindness, and humbly walk with your God.¹

We are called to bring forward justice. Justice and its synonyms occur over 1500 times in the Bible. It is not just a good idea, but rather a holy com-

mand. We can argue over semantics and get lost in the definition of what justice really means—as it is subjective to many except for the people who are crying out for mercy. Dr. Cornel West reminds us, “Justice is what love looks like in public.”

But Jenn, what can one person do?

In my humble opinion, one person can do great things. I’ve included a photo collage of leaders, philosophers and justice-seekers in my article because we need reminders of the acts of one: one person called to make change in the world. From *Divine Love and Wisdom* we are reminded,

There is one human God who is the source of everything. All the elements of human reason unite in, and in a sense center on, the fact that a single God is the Creator of the universe.²

And from *Heaven and Hell*,

Angels engaged in similar activities form a single community. There is an infinite variety of good activities in heaven, and each individual angel is, so to speak, his or her own activity.³

And yes, as Swedenborgians, we are aware of the illusion of being one person. Yes, each of us represents a heavenly society and a church. We are not just one person; we “carry” a spiritual community wherever we go.

When asked the question, “What can one person do?” perhaps the answer comes as call for courage to take the first step. It is also a call to action when we see colleagues, friends, and loved ones take that first step. The call is to support them—we may not feel called to act but we are called to support justice in its various forms. What are you called to do? ☩

² Swedenborg, Emanuel, *True Christianity* §23, (New Century Edition), Swedenborg Foundation.

³ Swedenborg, Emanuel, *Heaven and Hell* §41, (New Century Edition), Swedenborg Foundation.



Rev. Jenn Tafel is the religious advisor to Queer Christians Reclaiming Our Sexuality & Spirituality at Michigan State University (Q-CROSS@MSU) in East Lansing, Michigan.

News from Cincinnati

BY PETE TOOT

It has been a long time coming, but the New Church of Montgomery (Cincinnati area) had real estate closings on the second and third of the seven lots we have for sale and paid off our loan from the Ohio Association with some proceeds left over—not enough to build a building or hire a minister but a great start to rebuilding an endowment. There are four more lots to sell, and if you know anyone interested in moving to a great neighborhood where there are only a few building lots available, steer them to the church.

As part of a multi-year rebuilding plan, the Montgomery New Church demolished its house of worship in 2010, added sewer lines, and subdivided the property into seven lots. The goal in selling the property is a sound financial base from which to grow.

At present, we worship at the Glendale New Church (a General Church congregation), a few miles from Montgomery. ☩

Pete Toot is chair of the New Church of Montgomery Board of Directors. He lives in Mason, Ohio, with his wife Gloria.

¹ Priests for Equality, *The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation* (p. 347). Sheed & Ward.

192nd Session of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, Wednesday, June 29 - Sunday, July 3

Council of Ministers: Sunday, June 26 - Tuesday, June 28

Convention 2016 will be held in Urbana, Ohio on the campus of Urbana University (UU). To learn more about UU, visit www.urbana.edu. To learn more about the 2016 Convention and view a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), 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. Linen packs include a pillow, pillow case, cotton blanket, two flat sheets, twin bed sheets, bath towel, hand towel, and wash cloth. If you find that you often need extra towels or blankets, you are advised to bring some with you.

Roommates: If you are choosing a double room and 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.

Children: If you will be bringing children, please contact the Central Office to obtain the necessary information and forms.

Youth League Program: The Youth League program runs from Wednesday, June 29 through Sunday, July 3, and is supervised by Kurt Fekete. If you want your teen (age 12-17) to attend without a parent, please contact the Central Office.

Internet: Free wifi is available inside buildings on campus.

Parking: Please check the box below so we know how many cars will be parking on campus. You will need to pick up a parking pass on arrival.

Room & Board Reservations and Payment Deadline: No new room, meal plan, or Women's Alliance luncheon reservations will be available after **June 10 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 June 10 at 5PM EST. Cancellations must be done by calling the Central Office between 9AM-5PM EST, M-F.

Arrivals and Departures: More information to follow.

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: It is recommended that you use Dayton International Airport. Please see the FAQ for more details on ground transportation options from either Dayton International Airport or Port Columbus International Airport. You may also sign up for a carpool list using the "Travel Information" section below. Please note that rides will not be arranged for you; this is a courtesy service to put you on an email list for you to coordinate ride shares with other attendees.

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 (Dayton Airport recommended)

<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do an airport pickup on your arrival day. (Please specify airport with an "X": __Dayton or __Columbus.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will have a car at Convention and would be willing to do a drop-off at the airport on July 3. (Please specify airport with an "X": __Dayton or __Columbus.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will be flying in and would like to be added to an email list for you to coordinate sharing a ride on your arrival or departure day. (Please specify airport with an "X": __Dayton or __Columbus.)

Room and Board Packages:

- » **Package A (Sunday, June 26 - Sunday, July 3, seven nights):**
(choose this for Council of Ministers members)
\$373 per person for a double, \$513 for a single
Includes 7 nights of lodging, 7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 7 breakfasts.
- » **Package B (Sunday, June 26 - Wednesday, June 29, three nights):** (available **only** to Council of Ministers attendees who are only able to attend COM meetings)
Contact Swedenborgian Church Central Office for details
Includes 3 nights of lodging, 3 dinners, 2 lunches, and 3 breakfasts.
- » **Package C (Tuesday, June 28 - Sunday, July 3, five nights):**
(choose this for current lay General Council members or pre-Convention arrival)
\$288 per person for a double, \$388 for a single
Includes 5 nights of lodging, 5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts.
- » **Package D (Wednesday, June 29 - Sunday, July 3, four nights):**
\$237 per person for a double, \$317 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 pre-pay for meals. Meals may also be purchased with cash or credit card at the dining hall.

- » **Package W (Sunday, June 26 - Sunday, July 3, meals only):**
\$138 per person
7 dinners, 6 lunches, and 7 breakfasts
- » **Package Y (Tuesday, June 28 - Sunday, July 3, meals only):**
\$97 per person
5 dinners, 4 lunches, and 5 breakfasts
- » **Package Z (Wednesday, June 29 - Sunday, July 3, meals only):**
\$76 per person
4 dinners, 3 lunches, and 4 breakfasts

Registration	Cost	# People	Total
Adult	\$75		
Youth League (12-19)	\$65		
Child (3-11)	\$40		
Under 3 years old	Free		
*Family maximum	\$215		
One Day Registration	\$20		
Local Volunteer	\$40		
Women's Alliance Luncheon (must be reserved and paid by June 10 at 5PM EST) - See FAQ for details	\$10		

*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 June 10 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)

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 June 10 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

In Memoriam

Paula Hilbert

On January 7, 2013, after Paula Hilbert had gotten her diagnosis of ALS, she sent me a letter telling me, “at first I felt like why me, but after I thought about it, I started thinking why not me. I have been blessed in so many ways that I feel sorry for anyone who might be going through something like this without any support or love.” I don’t know anyone who did a better job of living courageously in the moment—making a difference in the lives of everyone she met. She went on to say “I feel like you already know this, but some of my happiest moments were playing duets with you,” and later messaged me how much music comforted her and how much she missed singing and playing piano but was able to sing in her mind. She said some of her favorite verses were, “He collects every tear in a bottle” (Psalm 56:8), which goes on to say, “In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” And “He knows every hurt in your head. (Psalm 34:18)” In my Bible, the verse says, “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” God definitely did that! Much later, in an article published in the *Ninnescah Valley News* (Pretty Prairie) and the *The Plains Banner* (Kansas Association), Paula wrote these words that we can all learn from:

Throughout my ALS battle, my goal is to always find the silver lining and stay positive. But when performing simple daily tasks becomes difficult or impossible, it is so easy to think, “I used to do this easily!”



Gone are the days of running early in the morning before work. Gone too is singing and talking, playing piano, eating, and being completely independent. I truly miss these activities.

I felt the weight of this dragging me down. I had to put my “FINISH STRONG” mentality to work on this problem. So now, most days I can say, “I used to miss out on truly absorbing all the colors in the sunset. I used to take for granted how much strength I draw from my family and friends. I used to rush from one activity to another, not taking time to appreciate how wonderful it feels to be alive! And I used to not realize how important my faith in God is. . . .”

So, as difficult as it is to accept the changes, I think I’m finding my way down a new path, in a new way, with a fresh perspective. “Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2 Corinthians 3:17)”

What a wonderful gift God gave her that ALS couldn’t take away: to be able to see the good and find blessings in the littlest things that most of us take for granted; to see the outpouring of love from family and friends and strangers who knew this was a special lady; to

have such a deep and trusting relationship with God that she could experience the strength to carry on, the happiness that fame and power and money can’t buy and the peace that passes all understanding unless you know God. Paula is free and no doubt singing in a celestial choir and praising God, and I’m guessing He’s saying, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

—Debbie Siebert

Debbie Siebert is a very dear friend of Paula’s. Paula took piano lessons from her, and they often played piano and organ duets for special music at the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church.

Paula’s days of caring for others started young. She was five in March when her sister Karen was born in May. About a week after I was home, I was hit with back spasms—couldn’t bend or carry. So Paula was in charge of a newborn. She did all the lifting and carrying as well as gown and diaper changing (and that was in the days of real diapers and pins!) It forged a special bond between them that continued into adulthood. Overall, I would say in all the years I knew her, Paula never intentionally hurt anyone, but instead raised everyone up. I know I miss her sense of humor and her compassion.

—Linda Kraus

Linda Kraus is Paula Hilbert’s mother. Paula’s obituary appeared in the March 2016 *Messenger*.

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

(dba the Center for Swedenborgian Studies at the Graduate Theological Union)

will be held during the annual session of the Swedenborgian Church of North America

Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio.

Thursday, June 30, 2016 at 7 PM

Washington's Address to the Baltimore New Church

The following exchange of letters between the Baltimore New Church Society, the first organized Swedenborgian society in America, and President George Washington took place in 1793, on the occasion of a visit to Baltimore by the President.

An Address from the New Church at Baltimore, To George Washington, Esquire

Sir,

While the Nations of the Earth, and the people of United America especially, have in their various denominations paid their tribute to the respectful deference to the illustrious President thereof, permit, for a Society however small in number, yet sincere they trust, in their attachment to offer up in the dawn of their institution, that mark of dutiful esteem which will become the new associations, to the Chief Magistrate of America.

We presume not, Sir, to enter into a reiterated panegyric of matchless virtues or exalted character, but assuming causes with effects, we are led to believe that you were a chosen vessel for great Salutory purposes, and that both in your actions and in your conduct, you justly stand one of the first disinterested and exemplary men upon earth. Neither in this address can we, was it expected, enter into a detail of the profession of our faith; but we are free to declare that we feel ourselves among the number of those who have occasion to rejoice that the word literally is spiritually fulfilling; that a new and glorious dispensation or fresh manifestation of Divine Love hath commenced in our Land; when as there is but one Lord, so

is his name becoming one throughout the earth; & that the power of Light or truth and righteousness is in an eminent Degree, universally prevailing, and even triumphing over the powers of Darkness; when Priestcraft & Kingcraft, those banes of human felicity, are hiding their diminished heads, and equality in State, as well as in Church, proportionally to mind, are considered the true criterion of the majesty of the people. —Oh! Sir, could we, without

other Tracts, the Compendium of the New Church, signified by the New Jerusalem, as the readiest mean to furnish you with a just idea of the Heavenly Doctrines.

That the Lord Jesus, whom alone we acknowledge as “the true God & eternal Life,” will preserve you long to reign in the hearts of the people, and lastly to shine as a gem of the brightest lustre, a Star of the first magnitude of the unfading mansions above, is the fervent aspiration of your faithful citizens and affectionate Brethren. Done in behalf of the members of the Lord's New Church at Baltimore, this 22d Day of January 1793–37.

—W.J. Didier,
Secy. Protem

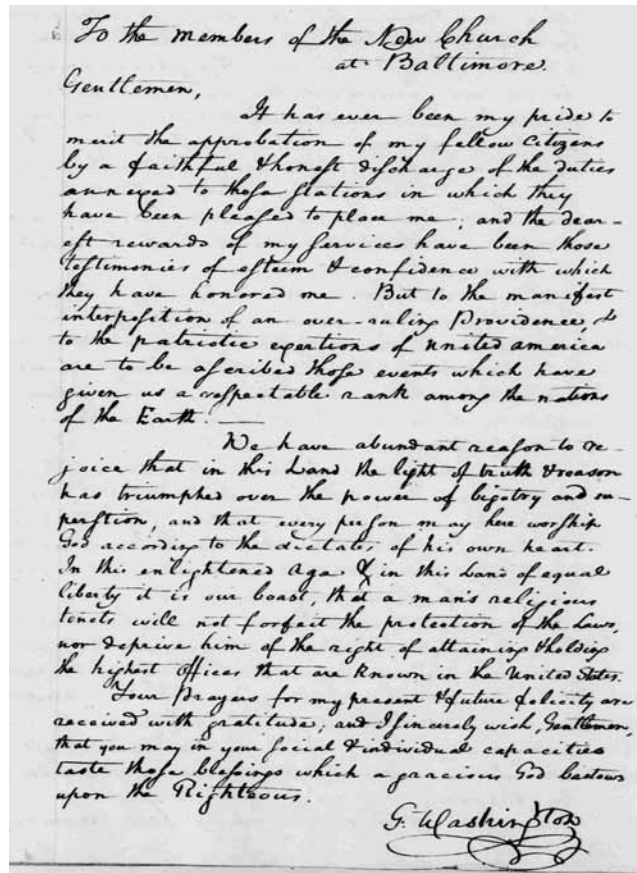
To the Members of the New Church at Baltimore.

Gentlemen,

It has ever been my pride to mind the approbation of my fellow citizens by a faithful and honest discharge of the duties annexed to those Stations to which they have pledged to place me; and the dearest rewards of my Services have been those testimonies of esteem and confidence with which they have honored me. But to the manifest interpretation of an over-ruling Providence, and to the patriotic exertions of United America, are

to be ascribed those events which have given us a respectable rank among the nations of the earth.

We have abundant reason to rejoice that in this land the light of truth and reason has triumphed over the power of bigotry and superstition and that every person may here worship God accord-



being charged with adulation, pour out the fullness of our souls to the enlightened conduct of him who stands chief among the foremost of men, what a volume of truth might we deservedly offer to the name of Washington, on the altar of Liberty uncircumscribed! Allow us, by the first opportunity, to present to your Excellency, among

San Diego Goodbye

Continued from page 57

Such people are on the path to Heaven and that is symbolized by the gates always being open. And I also notice this detail as we are getting ready to shut down this building: In the New Jerusalem there is no temple—they don't need one. They don't need a special place of worship in the New Jerusalem; the special place of worship is everywhere. It's never dark—the gates are never closed. There is the throne of God and the lamb on the throne of God, and from the throne the streams of living water, the waters of life, with the tree of life, which bears twelve fruits for each month and with leaves that heal the nations.

It is a powerful vision and what Swedenborg envisioned is a new age, where all people from all religions are going to start to let go of the externals and sink deeper and deeper into the spiritual meaning of their traditions and cease being literalistic about it. And I think that when their traditions sink deep, they are going to find that they spring from the same source. I've been hearing that Pope Francis has been say-

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ing to the dictates of his own heart. In this enlightened Age & in this Land of equal liberty it is our boast, that a man's religious tenets, will not forfeit his protection of the Laws, nor deprive him of the right of attaining & holding the highest offices that are known in the United States.

Your Prayers for my present and future felicity were received with gratitude; and I sincerely wish, Gentlemen, that you may in your social and individual capacities, taste those blessings which a gracious God bestows upon the Righteous.

—G. Washington

ing a lot of similar things, and I rejoice in that progress. I take it as evidence that the New Jerusalem is descending.

In the 1880s, a group of San Diegans gathered together to promote the descent of the New Jerusalem. Is the San Diego Society of the New Jerusalem ending? Well, I say yes and no. At some point in the not-too-distant future the office of the Secretary of State of California will acknowledge that The San Diego Society of the New Jerusalem is dissolved. But what is a society? Swedenborg had some radical ideas about that too.

The deepest meaning of *church* for Swedenborg is a spiritual community, that is a community of people who are connected spiritually. And people are connected spiritually when they have the same love of God and neighbor in their hearts. You know, there can be two people sitting side by side in the same pew every Sunday and not be in the same church, spiritually speaking. Their hearts can be in very different places. There can be someone sitting in a very traditional style church in San Diego even, and another person in India sitting cross-legged under a tree, they don't know each other, they've never met, and yet they might be in the same church. That's a society in the deeper sense.

The descent of the New Jerusalem—you know, I think it has descended in San Diego. It is a very rich and diverse community now. There are many, many spiritual paths and traditions being pursued. There are many, many—I know it's not everyone, I know there is a lot of fundamentalism, I know there is a lot of wrangling among religions, I know that—but at the same time there are a lot of people sinking into the depths of their own spiritual traditions and coming together in dialog and exploring the commonalities of the different religious paths.

That is the descent of the New Jerusalem. Maybe it is only Swedenbor-

gians who call it that. But it is in fact the descent of the New Jerusalem. It is here. It is all around us. I don't think it is going to go away. We are living in the midst of the descent of the New Jerusalem.

I am going to end with two further quotes. A favorite quotation from Swedenborg is, "Every least action has consequences to eternity." All of the work since 1883, all the dedicated souls that called themselves the San Diego Society of the New Jerusalem, all of that dedicated work is eternal. It is continuing to have an impact.

And the other quote, the one I opened the service with, actually the very last words of the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus is speaking to his disciples after his resurrection and is about to ascend to heaven, he says, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." I know, because we are already planning it, that a lot of us are going to be seeing each other face to face after today—it's not that kind of goodbye but it is goodbye to this phase. But whether or not we see each other face to face, we are in the same spiritual community. You all are in my heart to the end of the age. I pray that I am in your heart—to the end of the age.

We're here. Our ears are open. There are people from many paths here today, but I'll just use my Christian language. We are open to the Lord's leading. We are open to the descent of the New Jerusalem. Lord, we are eager to be part of the descent of the New Jerusalem. We might be giving up this external manifestation of it, but we're not giving up our commitment to be part of the New Jerusalem. And in a spiritual sense we will always be part of the San

Diego Society of the New Jerusalem. ☩



Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell is the former and last minister of the San Diego Society of the New Jerusalem.

Clowes' Clue

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He was evidently an extraordinary individual. The obituary in the *New Jerusalem Magazine* recognized him for “a character in which all was lovely, his child-like simplicity, his singleness of heart, the elevation of his devotion, the cheerfulness of his piety, the beauty of his holiness, the charity of his zeal, his bright imagination, his lively fancy, the ease of his seriousness, the innocence of his mirth, the purity of his exuberant joy.” I have no doubt that it was this luminous goodness that persuaded his bishop to allow him to “preach Swedenborg” for the remainder of his forty-some year pastorate in an Anglican church.

Apparently he was not a circuit rider, but Jim Lawrence reports,

When I attended the 1988 Manchester conference for Swedenborgian publishers, it blew me away that there were 21 Swedenborgian societies in the greater Manchester area at that time! That’s due to Clowes’s long work in that vicinity, with the resulting irony that though a vigorous non-separatist, Clowes nevertheless was probably the most important recruiter indirectly for the new sect in his immediate environs.

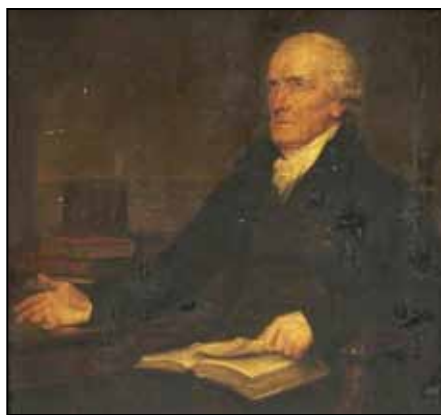
How’s that for outreach?

So many things came together for me at this point that it’s hard to know where to start. *Secrets of Heaven* (SH)¹ §3207:5 will do.

People believe that we are reformed and regenerated by the truth of faith, but this is an appearance. We are reformed and regenerated by the good of faith—that is, by charity toward the neighbor and love for the Lord. People believe that the truth enables us to tell what is good,

but this is an appearance. It is the good that enables the truth to tell, because the good is the soul and life of the true.

The higher levels of the mind are not opened by study of the doctrines. They are opened by the way we live. In the words of *The Doctrine of Life*, “Everyone knows . . . that if we lead a good life, we think good things not only about God but also about the neighbor, which is not the case if we lead an evil life.” Want to understand the trinity, to “think rightly about God?” Do your best to act thoughtfully and lovingly toward your wife, your hus-



John Clowes

band, your friends, your colleagues—and perhaps even yourself, given the “as yourself” specification of the second great commandment.

That’s all very well in theory, but “loving the neighbor” in a complex and confusing world is not easy. There is no possibility of a book of behavioral rules so comprehensive that it will tell us what to do in every situation we meet. This, for me, is where *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrines* (NJHD) §11–19 comes into its own. Some years ago, attention to Latin syntax convinced me that the word translated “good” actually means “something that is good,” and that in order to apply it to actual situations, I needed to regard it as a generalized blank that had to be filled in with something more specific. I filled it in with the sec-

ond great commandment under the guise of “caring about you,” which led to filling in the “true” blank with “understanding you,” and found that section telling me very convincingly that if I care about you I will do my best to understand you, and that the more clearly I understand you, the more deeply I will care.

Now in one sense, “you” are not easy to understand. No one is. However, there are some very significant things that can be said about all of us. One is that we are recipients of life, and that the life that is constantly flowing in and sustaining is the Lord’s love and wisdom. In consequence, “By birth, we are all gifted with the ability to discern what is true even to that deepest level where angels of the third heaven are” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* [DLW] §258). I know, or at least should know, that this kind of intelligence is alive and well within you, regardless of your I.Q. score, your academic credentials, or your knowledge of the doctrines. I have had it happen that I said something that was rationally quite valid and have seen the hearer understand it on a far deeper and more intimate level than I had intended it. I’m sure it helped that this was someone I cared about.

It was a kind of “loaves and fishes” experience. I did not have to give this person the truth, only a clue. The larger truth was already in there, just out of reach, and eager to rush forth. All I had to do was push the button that opened the door.

The Lord’s inflowing life is revelatory.

If we are involved in something good and therefore in true discernment (especially if the good is prompted by a love for the Lord), then we have a revelation from sensitivity. . . . Genuine sensitivity arises through heaven from the Lord and influences our intellect spiri-

¹ Swedenborg’s shortened title was *Arcana Coelestia*, or *Arcana Coelestia* (AC) in the standard edition. The title is translated as *Secrets of Heaven* in the New Century Edition of Swedenborg’s works, published by the Swedenborg Foundation.

Continued from page 54

tually, leading it observably toward thinking in accord with reality, with an inner agreement from some unidentified source. It seems to be inherent in us, but it is an inner voice through heaven from the Lord flowing into the deeper levels of thought, concerned with matters that transcend the natural and the sensory—that is, matters involving the spiritual world and heaven. (*SH* §5121)

When I am in conversation with you and we genuinely care about each other, the Lord is speaking to us from within. If we are focused on doing something good, truly caring about each other, we experience this as clarity of mind; and it is really not all that hard to regard it as a gift rather than a possession. After all, we do not know where it is coming from.

This takes me to *AC/SH* §6627–6633, where Swedenborg is introducing the “doctrine of charity” that has been lost, the doctrine that needs to be “restored to the church” (§6633). This doctrine

“... conjoined all the churches, and so made one 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. In these one instructed another, and this was among their works 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 (§ 6628),

which in turn takes me to *AC/SH* §3451:3—

... if anyone 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

The first sentence in *Doctrine of Life* tells us that “Everyone who has religion knows that people who live a good life go to heaven and people who live an evil life go to hell.”

It’s not all that hard to get into hell. All we have to do is fall for the persuasive illusion that we are in control. In the words of *Heaven and Hell* §302,

... since we do not believe in any inflow from heaven or from hell and therefore believe that everything we think and intend is in us and from us, we make the evil our own and defile the good with the feeling that we deserve it.

It all fits together, at least for me. It remains only to recognize that to a significant degree, selfless living goes against the grain. It really does seem as though our virtues are our own, and it can be hard to let go of this illusion. In an index to the book of Isaiah, Swedenborg offered an outline of the process of letting go that I wish he had published. Commenting on Isaiah 43:17 (44:2 in modern Bibles), he wrote,

In its outer sense, it is for people to whom it seems as if their own efforts contribute to their reformation; in a deeper sense, for people who demand something of themselves for their regeneration; in a still deeper sense, for people who know in theory that they are capable of nothing but still think they are somehow involved, and in the inmost (or deepest) sense for people who claim no credit whatever for themselves.

It is at this last point that living the life that leads to heaven becomes effortless; and it is not hard to understand the missionary power of Clowes’ embodiment of that life.

In the history of our church, though, something strange happened. After noting in some detail the doctrinal differences between the New Church and the Old, a conference of readers at the Great East Cheap in London in 1789

Resolved Unanimously: 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 Writ. . . .

It is hard to imagine a more emphatic rejection of the notion that a doctrine of charity would “conjoin all the churches” and make one out of the many.

I have come to think that the pigeons of this decision are coming home to roost. Rather than trying to unite all who were trying to lead good lives and offering them resources to clarify their understanding of what this involved, we chose to compete with them, to build copies of “old church” buildings, to insist on exclusive membership, and to hold our services at the same time as theirs. We tied our little vessel to a sinking ship. We have chosen to regard evangelism as a matter of persuading people into “truth as to doctrine” rather than attracting them toward “truth as to life.”

I also believe, though, that we have sufficiently used the truths of our doctrine for their intended purpose, that we have, for our size, done a creditable amount of good, and I am not recommending tearing down our buildings and starting from scratch. I would suggest rather that we paste on our metaphorical refrigerators or bathroom mirrors a remarkable statement from *AC/SH* §1594: “The things that are of the internal man are the Lord’s, so that it may be said that the internal man is the Lord.”

I would then suggest that we then assume this divine presence in everyone we meet. I would suggest that we assume this same presence in ourselves, and pay attention to thoughts that just happen to come out of nowhere. I would suggest that we do what good we can every day, gather from time to

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Clowes' Clue

Continued from page 55

time to share what we are learning, and follow wherever we find ourselves being led.

We do not have to go out with all the answers. In fact, I at least have been guilty of going out with a good stock of answers to the questions I thought others ought to be asking, but sadly unconscious of the need to find out what questions they actually *were* asking. This is folly, because those are likely to be precisely the questions that the Lord is prompting them to consider.

. . . as soon as something true is presented by open experience to good spirits in the other life, something opposite is presented soon thereafter, which creates a doubt. So they are enabled to think and ponder whether it is true and gather reasons and thereby lead the truth into their minds rationally. (SH §7298:2)

This pondering, if it is done from a desire to become a better person, is what opens the door for “revelation by perception” (or better, “revelation by sensitivity”), which

. . . arises through heaven from the Lord and influences our thinking spiritually, leading it observably toward thinking in accord with reality, with an inner agreement from some unidentified source. It seems to be something inherent in us, but it is an inner voice through heaven from the Lord . . .

This happens, mind you, to people who are “in good”—focused on doing something helpful. That, after all, is what enables us to think rightly about the Lord and the neighbor.

No, I don't anticipate a church full of paragons like John Clowes. I do think there is a possibility of a church full of people who believe that the Lord is trying to speak to everyone we meet. I think that this can shift us from a rather stodgy “preservation mode” into a far more lively “discovery mode,” the

West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat—All Are Invited

“A Theatre of Uses” is the theme of this year's West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat, inspired by a passage from Swedenborg:

Love and wisdom without use are like birds flying across a great ocean, which are eventually exhausted by flying, fall down, and are drowned. Evidently, then, the universe was created by God to bring uses into existence. Therefore the universe may be called a theater of uses. (*True Christian Religion* §67)

The retreat will be held over Memorial Day weekend at the beautiful St. Dorothy's Rest Retreat Center, nestled among the redwood groves of Sonoma County, California. All are welcome, from near and far, for a weekend of fun, relaxation, and Swedenborgian conversation.

The annual Memorial Day retreat is a great opportunity to make new friends and reconnect with old ones. St. Dorothy's Rest is aptly named—a perfect setting to unwind from work-

mode of the church's initial explosive growth.

I believe that if we become more alert to the reality of the Lord's presence, we will keep trying to get in touch with it and will from time to time find ourselves unexpectedly dialing the right number. ☩

Rev. Dr. George Dole is Professor of Biblical Studies for the Center for Swedenborgian Studies.



day stress and reconnect with your spiritual self.

The schedule accommodates plenty of time to relax, read, walk the forest paths, shop the quaint boutiques in the nearby town of Occidental, and have fun on the Russian River or the Pacific Ocean

The retreat offers a series of exciting work-

shops, including

- **Understanding the Grand Human** with Rev. Junchol Lee, Senior Pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.
- **Play Is Useful Too!** with Carey Smith, former art teacher at the Bryn Athyn New Church schools.
- And more in the works!

Other offerings of the weekend include

- Child care and programs for children
- Matins and Vespers services created and led by retreat participants
- A campfire sing-along with marshmallows and s'mores.

The retreat starts with a light dinner on Friday, May 27, and ends after lunch on Monday, May 30.

For more information and to register, go to <http://swedenborgretreat.wordpress.com>. Be sure to click the *follow* button to obtain updates about this and future retreats.

There are a limited number of travel grants for participants from outside the San Francisco Bay Area. To apply, contact Rev. Junchol Lee at 415.346.6466 or revjlee@sfsweborgian.org.

We'll see you in the trees! ☩

The San Diego Society: a Goodbye Reflection

BY JONATHAN MITCHELL

The San Diego Society of the New Jerusalem. That's its legal name, and today I am going to reflect on the meaning of that name.

In the 1880s a group of receivers of the heavenly doctrines that were revealed to Emanuel Swedenborg started gathering in San Diego. And I am using that language on purpose, because that is how what today we call "Swedenborgians" thought of themselves in the 1800s: receivers of the heavenly doctrines that were revealed to Emanuel Swedenborg. As we are planning to gather together groups of people meeting in homes, I

point this out: they gathered together in the early 1880s and met in each other's homes. And in 1883 they became legally incorporated as the San Diego Society of the

New Jerusalem. They built a church on this lot in 1907, and this building in 1927.

"The San Diego Society of the New Jerusalem:" what is that? What is a society of the New Jerusalem? In the book of Revelation the next-to-the-last chapter, John says,

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had passed away and the seas were no more. And I beheld the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, descending from Heaven from God, adorned as a bride to meet her husband.

The "New Jerusalem"—that is the

verse from which comes the name "Society of the New Jerusalem."

Emanuel Swedenborg was a true Renaissance person. He was brilliant, he studied all kinds of science and engineering, and he had a spiritual breakthrough in his fifties. He can be thought of in many ways. My favorite way of thinking of him is that he was a prophet. And what he prophesied was the descent of the New Jerusalem, as described in that passage from Revelation.

What is the New Jerusalem? Well for Swedenborg, who came to believe that the Bible has an inner meaning, beyond its literal meaning, the New



The San Diego Church

Jerusalem is a new age in the spiritual and religious history of humankind. The New Jerusalem descends from the sky. It has three gates on each of its four walls, for the twelve tribes of Israel. But symbolically, the heavenly life, the life that leads to Heaven can be approached from many directions. It doesn't count so much what religious tradition you grew up with, what religious tradition you come from, as that you practice the best of what you were taught, and live a life of love of God and neighbor, and are generally concerned with being a helpful presence in the world.

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Passages

Marriages

Lawrence Dunham Conant and **Mary Alice Herman** were married on March 19, 2016, at the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church, where Larry is a lifelong member. Rev. Susannah Currie officiated. The couple resides in Piedmont, South Carolina.

Closings

After a goodbye service on February 7, 2016, members of the **San Diego Society of the New Jerusalem** voted to dissolve upon transfer of its property to the General Convention. The sanctuary and attached hall are now closed and unoccupied, and as of this writing the legal paperwork required for transfer of title and for formal dissolution as a not-for-profit church corporation is still in process. Convention plans to put the property on the market.

In accordance with the dissolution clause of the San Diego Society and a memo of understanding with Convention, proceeds of the sale will be used to establish the "San Diego Fund." This fund will be held for twenty-five years for the use of a new Convention ministry in the San Diego area. Some of the income of the fund will be reinvested to maintain the value of the principal. The rest of the income will be dedicated to the support of new ministries.

In the meanwhile, members of the reading group that previously met before Sunday services have been meeting weekly in a private home. A start-up meeting for a new spiritual community met on March 14 and is planning to meet monthly. This new community includes members of the former congregation and other interested parties. The pastor of the former society, Rev. Jonathan Mitchell, is planning to remain in San Diego to promote the growth of these and other groups and classes. ☪

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.

Enjoy Spring with the Online Community

The SwedenborgianCommunity.org, the internet-based ministry of the Swedenborgian Church, invites you to join us in bringing understanding and application of Swedenborg's writings into homes around the world. We serve our community and the world through

- Blog Talk Radio
- Chatzy chat room discussions
- Weekly worship in multiple formats
- Enhanced Facebook presence

Our donation goal is \$2500 and we have raised \$500 so far. You can help us with your contribution through our donation page: <http://tinyurl.com/htf3v3r> or by calling Central Office at 617.969.4240.

Celebrate Earth Day with us and join us in exploring the worship theme of bringing our love into the world!

We have a chat or radio broadcast every Thursday from 9 to 10 PM EDT, where you can call in and chat with us on Chatzy. Our radio programs are broadcast live on Blog Talk Radio.

Chat Topics for April

- 4/7: Discussion on Chatzy, *Secrets of Heaven* 14–63
- 4/14: Mini-mini course on Blog Talk Radio, "Swedenborg and Earth Day"
- 4/21: Chat on Chatzy, "How can we best honor Earth Day 2016?"
- 4/28: Interview on Blog Talk Radio, Topic TBA

Sermon Topics for April

- 4/3 "Heaven in a Wild Flower"
- 4/10 "All God's Creatures"
- 4/17 Creation and Earth Day
- 4/24 Swedenborg and Earth Day

Volunteers Needed!

SwedenborgianCommunity.org could not exist without the generous contributions of time from volunteers, and we are looking for volunteers interested in serving on the Central Committee. If interested, please look at our website, www.swedenborgiancommunity.org and our Facebook page. Interest and experience in fundraising, grant writing, budget monitoring, and internet/website/social media would be helpful. For more information, contact Dr. Page Morahan, psmorahan@att.net. ☎