



## Building A Daily Spiritual Practice Based on Swedenborg's "Rules of Life"

BY JIM LAWRENCE

### A History Chase

Though Swedenborg's "Rules of Life" have been in Swedenborgian published discourse since as early as his memorial service, disagreement exists on whether Swedenborg literally penned the Rules of Life. The only extant claim of seeing them

heresy trial and, despite having many prominent friends, he was the subject of much ridicule, even to the extent of published cartoons questioning his sanity or honesty, since many thought he was fabricating his spiritual world stories.

The now legendary Rules of Life occur in Sandels's eulogy, immediately following a paragraph where he acknowledges some of the public perception issues associated with his colleague. Interestingly, in 1784, just twelve years after Swedenborg's death, Robert Hindmarsh in England published an edited translation of the eulogy in which he excised language addressing problems in Swedenborg's public image, and this abridged version of the eulogy has had a far greater reception in history than the full text, which was not published until 1826.

In the full version, the rules come right after Sandels broaches the controversy around Swedenborg. The rules form the basis of his

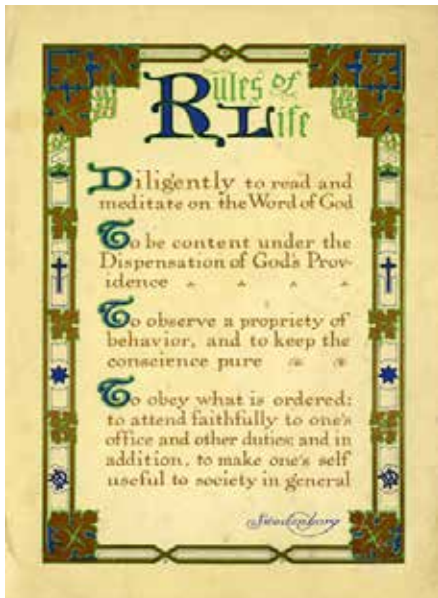
defense of the character of his much older colleague. Sandels describes Swedenborg's healthy psychology and his conscientious approach to living as a refutation of any notion that Swedenborg was crazy or had suspect motivations. Sandels claims to have seen scribbled in the margins "in several places" in Swedenborg's manuscripts these rules that Swedenborg set out for himself as evidence of his sincerity and honesty.

The problem with this claim of several instances of these rules appearing in Swedenborg's manuscripts is that those same manuscripts were all carted to the

Royal Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, and they have been painstakingly examined by a great many scholars and researchers. The rules have never

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**... he was the subject of much ridicule, even to the extent of published cartoons questioning his sanity or honesty, since many thought he was fabricating his spiritual world stories.**



is the eulogy delivered at his memorial service by Samuel Sandels, a colleague from the Board of Mines and the Royal Academy of Sciences.

Swedenborg had become somewhat controversial by the end of his life. He was still involved in an unresolved



*Why are the SCYL teens lined up just so? See page 88.*

## The Editor's Desk



### Small World Redux

In the October 2013 *Messenger*, I related an encounter from my 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion that I had with an acquaintance I had not seen since those days. In that encounter, he learned that I was editor of *the Messenger* and then related that he was a great-grandson of Rev. Frank Sewall. His father had left Swedenborgianism as a young adult, so my friend relates to the Church and its teachings only on a genealogical and historic basis. In a gesture of extreme generosity, he later sent me a small watercolor by Rev. Sewall.

I attended my 50<sup>th</sup> college reunion in May, and recently received a note (handwritten!) from a college friend who had not attended the reunion but nevertheless read the short bio I had contributed to the class memory book. (We attended Oberlin College, in Ohio.) He was responding to a sentence that mentioned that I am the editor of *the Messenger*, the Swedenborgian Church monthly newsletter.

In his note, my friend Andy stated his surprise and delight upon discovering my connection to the Swe-

denborgian Church. He revealed that he is a great-great grandson through his mother of John Hough James and Abby Bailey James, and that he himself was born in Urbana. (His family moved from there when he was an infant.)

Abby Bailey James was the daughter of Francis and Eleanor Bailey from Pennsylvania. For those readers who need a refresher, Francis Bailey was the first printer of Emanuel Swedenborg's writings in America, and Bailey Hall at Urbana University (formerly Urbana College) is named for him.

Andy's mother's father was Rev. Russel Eaton, a minister of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church and a president of Urbana College. Rev. Eaton grew up in the Bridgewater Swedenborgian Church in Massachusetts and ministered in the Brockton, Massachusetts, and Kitchener, Ontario, Swedenborgian Churches as well.

John Hough James donated the land for the establishment of Urbana College as a Swedenborgian institution in 1850. (To this day, Urbana University, although independent, maintains a meaningful connection with the Swe-

denborgian Church.)

Interestingly, my friend Andy Thomas from college and my friend Carl Weller from high school are related through marriage. Carl's great aunt was Alice Archer Sewall James, (a significant figure in the history of the Urbana Church and the University and the subject of Alice Skinner's biography, *Stay by Me, Roses*), and her husband's grandfather was none other than John Hough James.

I will share their information with them and put them in touch with each other. Further genealogical exploration may reveal a blood relationship.

—Herb Ziegler

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## Church Calendar

- **July 5–12:** Swedenborgian Church Annual Convention and Council of Ministers meeting, West Chester, PA
- **July 16–22:** Paulhaven Children's Camp, AB
- **July 22–30:** Almont Summer School, Allenton, MI
- **July 29–August 13:** FNCA Summer Camp, Fryeburg, ME
- **September 21–24:** Gathering Leaves Swedenborgian women's retreat, Punslich, ON

## the Messenger

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## Letter from the President



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

Dear Friends,

As I prepare to lead my first ordination service at this year's convention, I am struck by the opening verse that leads into the Ordination Ceremony. "Jesus said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few; pray ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest'" (Luke 10:2).

I asked myself and I ask you, do we feel the harvest is plentiful? Are we sending out disciples, ministers, licensed pastors, into a bounteous harvest? And if we read on in the Gospel of Luke the verse immediately following, Jesus said to his beloved disciples, "Go, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves" (Luke 10:3). This is not very comforting to new ministers.

The disciples did not have an easy journey and we must be honest that ministry is a hard and rewarding job. As we read in Acts of the Apostles, even when the Holy Spirit came upon the crowds at Pentecost and they could hear the disciples message in their own language, some were "utterly amazed" (Acts 2:7) and "Some, however, made fun of them, and said, 'They have had too much wine'" (Acts 2:13). This brings a smile to my face.

Our Swedenborgian ministers and pastors follow their call. We go, not knowing what task the Lord is calling and sending us to do. Ministry is

a paradox. Traditional members prefer things the way they have been, as it is comfortable and serves their needs. Younger people are looking for something different from the way their parents accepted religion. They often do not consider religion an important part of their lives. This is the harvest of the spiritual but not religious that is an essential key to our future. And we must balance the desires of our faithful members with those we are trying to attract and find a way to serve both.

We currently have seven in the ordination path to ministry. I am struck by the number "seven." Seven is the "holy" number. It is a blessed number that signifies "all, in a universal sense" (*Dictionary of Correspondences*). The number signifies to me that this is a holy time; God is calling Swedenborgians to lead, to teach, to preach and to heal in this hurting world. It is a sacred call and it takes courage to answer in the uncertain future of religion today.

As we look over our landscape of ministries, we know the harvest has changed: the continual decrease in regular church attendance, the rise of the spiritual but not religious, the backlash against corruption in churches and church leaders, and the over-arching questioning of millennials that do not find value in churches. And yet, all people, including young people, are hungry for community. A connection with the Divine is a deep, inherent need in individuals.

The way of harvesting has changed. We need new ways to make our buildings/spaces come alive; new, easily accessible electronic resources; new ways to identify and retain members; and a social justice and service outreach that puts us front and center in this hurting world.

Yes, the harvest is plentiful, may the Lord open us to the paths to move forward.

—Rev. Jane Siebert

**Historic Celebration: 200th  
Anniversary of the First Convention  
Held in Philadelphia May 15–17, 1817**

# Conflict Resolution: Learning from Psychologists and Angels

BY SONI SONESON WERNER

Conflict can be good. It all depends on how we handle the people with whom we disagree. Both psychologists and theologians offer concepts that can shape our behavior, so that we can communicate in a mutually respectful manner. Let's first consider some examples of people in conflict who are not admirable role models. I think I am not alone in disliking the social behavior of the Anglican

clergyman named Rev. Collins, who was a character in *Pride and Prejudice*.<sup>1</sup> In this nineteenth-century British novel, Rev. Collins repeatedly ingratiates himself with the pompous Lady Catherine de Bourgh. No matter what she states, he bows and agrees in order to win her favor. Readers are left without any clue of what he really values, as his desire to continue keeping Lady Catherine as his benefactress takes precedence over any desire for mutual respect or understanding. She is verbally aggressive, and he is hopelessly passive. They resolve conflicts, but they do so at a price: she always wins.

Then, there is the example of the Baptist clergyman, Rev. Nathan Price, who is a character in *The Poisonwood Bible*.<sup>2</sup> In this twentieth-century

American novel, Rev. Price is an evangelist who becomes a missionary worker in Africa, bringing his family along with him. He is intensely devoted to converting to Christianity natives in the Congo, and he refuses to admit any

Price is an example of some aspects of the pattern that I call *destructive*, or aggressive behavior.

As a psychologist, I recommend that my clients learn nine specific skills that are designed to show mutual respect to all parties involved.

“There are five basic confronting skills and four advanced confronting skills included which could be used individually or sequentially to resolve interpersonal conflicts and prevent future aggression.”<sup>3</sup>



doubts or weaknesses in his manner of handling conflicts. Rev. Price is certain that he can do no wrong because God is on his side. He assumes that he should never negotiate with the na-

**Both the psychological perspective and the theological perspective offer compelling reasons why people should learn how to resolve their conflicts . . . .**

tives. While he and the natives resolve conflicts, they, too, do so at a price: the reverend always wins.

Even though these two literary characters are both illustrations of members of the clergy handling conflicts, they differ in their behavioral styles. According to an analysis made by some organizational psychologists, Rev. Collins illustrates the pattern of *sub-par*, or passive behavior, while Rev.

Each of the skills is described at four levels of behavioral style. For example, one of these nine conflict resolution skills is called *Remaining firm, fair, and friendly when resolving conflicts*, and the spectrum of skills associated with the different levels of behavior looks like this:

## Excellent

- Protects the basic corporate values but is open to creative methods
- Respectfully explores value of improving levels of performance
- Uses “partner-to-partner” tone; assertively pushes for progress

## Good

- Keeps sense of balance while reiterating key issues and impact
- Clarifies standards of behavior and

*Continues on page 85*

<sup>1</sup> Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London: T. Egerton, 1813).

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible* (NYC: Harper, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> See Soni Werner, *Conscience: Forensic Psychology* (2015), especially Chapter 1.C.

## Conflict Resolution

*Continued from page 84*

addresses need for change

- Uses “adult-to-adult” tone; stays professional with use of words

### Sub-Par

- Gives in to the slightest pressure; is gutless and wimpy
- Is passive; fails to represent those affected-but-not-present
- Uses “child-to-adult” tone; becomes overly deferential to power

### Destructive

- Goes ballistic all at once; blows up at the slightest provocation
- Treats other person like the enemy; is overly hostile and suspicious
- Uses “parent-to-child” tone; is overcontrolling and disrespectful

Originally, these skills were designed just for professionals in the corporate environment, but they have been adapted recently for a broader audience. The principles work in human relations, generally. For example, these skills can be used when other efforts to coach someone have failed, when people’s behavior falls short of what has been promised, when a chronic problem has continued for too long, or when someone’s behavior is contrary to the values of a group. Ideally, people can learn to use each skill assertively at the *excellent* or *good* levels, and avoid using them at the *sub-par* (passive) and *destructive* (aggressive) levels.

### How Do Angels Do It?

In addition to learning how to handle conflicts from the perspective of organizational psychologists, we can also derive inspiring concepts from the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. According to the Swedenborgian philosophy scholar Dan Goodenough:

Angels turned the conversation

away from a self-pitying concern for one’s own problems, to the true ideas which could remove the problem. They respect freedom and listen well . . . . Angels delight in teaching, discussion, debating, even confrontation, because these are the arenas in which they can accommodate the truth they love to human states. . . . The angels meet negative attitudes . . . by calm, patient instruction in the truth. . . . Sometimes the angels question, sometimes the learners question, but one purpose always seems to be to arouse and maintain interest.<sup>4</sup>

Angels also pause in the middle of conflicts to allow everyone the chance to quietly reflect on what has been heard and then incorporate the ideas into their individual minds.<sup>5</sup>

Swedenborg described what he saw during his mystical experiences of the spiritual world. He saw vivid images that represented spiritual struggles (*Heaven and Hell* §105). When he saw scenes involving fires, these corresponded to people who were willfully cruel, revengeful, and aggressively hateful to others. In hell, “each has the wish for supremacy and wants to take from the other the things he [or she] has by hidden or open devices” (*Secrets of Heaven* §6832:9). Fire and flame signify evil desires arising from the love of self and the love of the world, respectively (*Apocalypse Explained* §504). Swedenborg saw how fire from the will breaks forth into a person’s understanding and kindles a flame there, which is called anger. Then the person becomes heated and commits evil actions against others. When Swedenborg saw smoke, this corresponded to false ideas, often near the flames of anger and evil desires (*Secrets of Heaven* §§1861, 7575, 9143, 9144). The worst

<sup>4</sup> Dan Goodenough, “Angelic Methods of Instruction—A Survey of Memorabilia,” *New Church Life* (1977): pp. 80, 81, 85, 86.

<sup>5</sup> See *Secrets of Heaven* §§4172, 7812; *True Christianity* §§335, 503, 661; *Conjugal Love* §§267, 355, 356; *Divine Providence* §§150–3.

kind of fire was the love of self, involving dominion over others for selfish reasons, such as to gain wealth or higher positions in a community (*Secrets of Heaven* §10038; *Heaven and Hell* §571).[6]

Swedenborg described another image:

When any small division of opinion occurs among those spirits they see a thin bright flash like a streak of lightning, or else they see a belt of sparkling stars. These are signs indicating division; but the division among them is quickly healed. Sparkling stars which wander are not a good sign, whereas stars sparkling but motionless are a good sign (*Secrets of Heaven* §8112).

Both the psychological perspective and the theological perspective offer compelling reasons why people should learn how to resolve their conflicts, and certain organizational psychologists give specific suggestions on how to do it in mutually respectful ways. Although vivid fictional characters (e.g., Rev. Collins and Rev. Price) may be fun to read about, they may not always engage in the most effective styles of conflict management. So we should aspire to be more like the angels or to adopt the kind of exchange of opinions that is represented by the motionless stars. ☸

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Werner’s e-book entitled *Conscience: Forensic Psychology* is available for download at <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/590834>. To see all nine conflict resolution skills, read Chapter 1.B. For a summary of a Swedenborgian perspective on preventing, intervening, and rehabilitating people who have been in serious conflicts, read Chapters 1.C., 2.C., and 3.C.



## Rules of Life: a Daily Practice

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been seen. Few archives have been as thoroughly vetted as Swedenborg's. Without mentioning their names here, I have asked a few people who, I believe, have the best knowledge of those archives, and all of them agree there is zero chance that several scribbles of the rules in margins exist in those twenty thousand pages.

### How the Rules Came to Be: A Surmise

Here's what I think happened (and I've given many eulogies). Sandels wanted in his eulogy to present his friend's life in the best possible light. It is clear from the tone of the eulogy that Sandels did not expect Swedenborg to become an inspiration for a worldwide religion and that those very same piles of papers going from Swedenborg's house to the Academy would be painstakingly pored over by scholars and devotees in the centuries to come. The most believable hypothesis is that Sandels creatively shaped the Rules as a rhetorical device to convey fairly and justly his friend's integrity in the way he lived his life. Sandels would have been bowled over if he had been informed that in the centuries to come his rhetorical device would adorn plaques hung on countless walls all over the world. But he might have been pleased that he nailed the spirituality of his beloved colleague so truly.

Indeed, I have hung the rules on my wall for thirty-five years and felt from my earliest days after my young adult conversion into the faith that they are true to Swedenborg's spirituality. Their continual presence since the inception of organized Swedenborgian activities has established them as part of the lived tradition of Swedenborgian spirituality. But I am unaware of any serious attempt in any Swedenborgian tradition to turn them into a practice.

I began shaping a daily spiritual practice of Swedenborg's Four Rules via an incorporation of them into the forms of *Lectio Divina* and the *Examen* about a year ago and have been using and revising the practice on a daily basis since. It has worked for me better than any other spiritual practice I have tried, probably because I really do regard it as Swedenborgian and believe it is a profound way to efficiently engage spiritual principles for the kind of regenerative living to which Swedenborg constantly points. Below I share the framework I have been using.

### What are Swedenborg's Rules of Life?

In Sandels's Swedish there are six statements, which traditionally have

**I began shaping a daily spiritual practice of Swedenborg's Four Rules via an incorporation of them into the forms of *Lectio Divina* and the *Examen* about a year ago . . . .**

been combined to create four rules. The six statements are as follows:

- 1) Diligently to read and reflect on the Word of God
- 2) To be content with God's providence; to submit everything to the will of Divine Providence
- 3) To observe a proper behavior
- 4) To obey what is commanded and keep your conscience pure and clear
- 5) To attend faithfully to your office and duties
- 6) To be useful to society in general

The two most common renderings on websites and plaques are first,

- 1) Often to read and meditate on the Word of God
- 2) To submit everything to the will of Divine Providence
- 3) To observe in everything a propriety of behavior, and to keep the con-

science clear

- 4) To discharge with fidelity the functions of my employments, and to make myself in all things useful to society

And second,

- 1) Diligently read and meditate on the Word of God.
- 2) Be content under the dispensation of the Lord's Providence.
- 3) Observe a propriety of behavior and keep the conscience pure.
- 4) Obey what is ordered; attend faithfully to one's office and other duties; and, in addition, make one's self useful to society in general.

### A Suggested Practice for Swedenborg's Rules of Life

After receiving a Ph.D. in the field of spirituality and being asked to teach an introductory course in spiritual disciplines and practices multiple times at Pacific School of Religion, I have become increasingly acquainted with a broad spectrum of spirituality practices.

A couple of years ago, for the first time I noticed that Swedenborg's Rules of Life incorporate the essence of two of the most popular Christian spirituality practices from a far back history: *Lectio Divina* and the Ignatian *Examen*. The first rule is a version of *Lectio Divina* or *Lectio Spiritualis*, which are structured ways of "praying the Word" (or possibly even Swedenborg's writings). The rest of the rules are easily shaped into performing a daily *Examen*. In my interest in shaping a practice that is doable on a daily basis, I prefer the option in the rules that says "often" for praying the Word, which is not necessarily daily. The first rule might be done a few times a week, whereas "praying" the rest of the rules should be done daily.

### Brief *Lectio Divina* Primer

Using the Bible or Swedenborg's

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writings, one reads a selected passage slowly four times with a space of time placed between each reading. A different focus or spiritual mindset is employed sequentially across the four times through the selected text. Those

are each described below. Some people, however, like to “go with” a focused movement within once they have identified the word or phrase or thought that has arrested their conscience and heart. Instead of proceeding with the customary sequence, they remain with the movement that has occurred and “pray it through” to a finished con-

versation with the One to whom they pray. You can experiment a little with it either way, but let’s know that the classic method is to read through four times slowly so that the work of each step can take place in its structured process. Slow the reading down if you feel it is passing you by.

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## A Daily Swedenborgian Practice Based on Swedenborg’s Rules of Life

### Find a comfortable spot where you are not likely to be disturbed.

I) **Recall that you are in the presence of God:** As you quiet yourself, become aware that God is present with you, that God is always present in the creation that surrounds you, in your body, in those around you. The One who brought you forth into being unwaveringly loves you and is present working with you to reach your fullest potential. “The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth” (Psalm 145:8).

II) **Swedenborgian Lectio Divina:** If this is a day that you will do *Lectio*, spend fifteen minutes or more reflecting in a journal on a small amount of text from the Bible or from Swedenborg’s writings. Read the text as if it is being spoken to you personally, and let yourself be in dialog with it. The main objective is to feed the heart, soul, and will through the mind. Each session’s passage should be brief enough that the scope will not overwhelm you. The goal is to go deeply, not widely. After you have taken a few minutes to quiet your mind, turn your attention to the passage you have selected.

### III) **Swedenborgian Examen:**

A. Spend a moment looking over the past day or recent experience first with a spirit of gratitude for the gift of life that you are here with the opportunity to co-create your life with God.

B. Petition for the Light of Insight. Ask God to help you examine what is important in recent experience, to notice in recall your actions, attitudes, and motives with honesty and patience. Ask God for inner light that you may see what God would have you see.

C. Let events and experiences of your day come forth in your memory. Sense what comes forth as most important, whether big or small. Let come to the heart’s mind experiences that seem most significant, whether “negatively” or “positively.” That is, let experiences come to mind that seemed to bring you closer to a conjunction with God or that seemed to separate you from a feeling of conjunction with God.

D. Swedenborg’s three foci: Once you have brought the recent framework of life experience into consciousness with a noticing both of joys and concerns, ask yourself in the presence of God each of the following three questions:

1. What do I need to submit to Divine Providence? What is too big to handle or solve or resolve? Hold it up to God and hand it over. Allow yourself to trust in God to manage the unfolding process and receive the peace in releasing this concern to God. Allow yourself to receive the blessing of spiritual contentment that comes with trust in Divine Providence.

2. Is anything troubling my conscience? In recent experience or newly recalled experience is there something I need to amend? Is my conscience sending a message for attention to something needing repentance? Are there new actions to undertake or recommitments to take to clear my conscience?

3. With what is upcoming in the day or the morrow, how can I be most useful? Of the many possible matters to which I can attend, which situations come to the fore as most important for creating a use for others? What do I need to prioritize to effect maximum usefulness for the next day?

E. Response: Review for a moment what has arisen in your Swedenborgian *Examen*. Give thanks for the connections experienced with God in bringing to light your experience. Identify the one, two, or three matters that came to you as responses to live out. Ask God for help in moving forward and return full circle to the spirit of gratitude for the gift of life.

# SCYL Teens Discover Unity Among Diversity

BY KURT FEKETE

Seventeen teens gathered at Almont Retreat Center for the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) Memorial Day Weekend Retreat to discuss polar opposites, unity and diversity, and how to better understand how they play out in our lives and in our daily relationships and interactions. The retreat theme was theologically based on *Divine Providence* 4.4: “A form makes a unity more perfectly as its constituents are distinguishably different, and yet united.” We know from Swedenborg that heavenly communities are more perfect as individual angels are free and love the other members of their community on the basis of their own affection. It seems that God’s providence is guiding us to learn to live together in increasingly diverse environments, as difficult as that may be.

After dinner on Friday evening we got together in Pfister Lounge and went over the retreat schedule, introductions, and conduct. Following that, we launched right into our topic by playing the game Continuum. In Continuum, a string is strung across the room. At one end of the string, a sign reading “True” is hung and at the other end a sign reading “False” is hung. Then the teens heard statements read, such as “I like broccoli,” “I love school,” or “I think there is a God.” They position themselves along the string according to whether they think that statement is 100% true, 100% false, or some-

where along the string continuum, with the middle being neutral or indifferent. This game is always a hit, and I enjoy seeing how honest the teens are,

that was diverse. The list was extensive and included lots of examples from nature such as flowers, rocks, and trees. The teen list also included interesting examples of diversity in stars, poetry, personalities, mental disorders, and tacos! Renée then went on to explain why diversity exists. She told the group that diversity exists so that love can happen. “Love has to love and care for that which is differ-



The SCYL gang (Page 81 photo: The teens line up for a privilege walk.)

ent than itself.” The nature of love is to grow, and love cannot remain static but instead must expand outward.

Saturday mornings session was led by Rev. Renée Machiniak. Renée began by talking about what diversity was. Then she had the teens construct a list of everything they could think of

with themselves and each other, and how thoughtfully and seriously they respond to the statements.

SCYL league chaplain, Rev. Jennifer Tafel, led the Saturday afternoon session. Jenn presented a session on intersectionality. Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Jenn presented a slide show, then engaged the teens in a guided mediation where they could discover a place of peace and acceptance.

After a fun afternoon of play and recreation, I led the Saturday evening session. My session with the teens involved strategies for dealing with diversity and how to handle difficult situations with polarized viewpoints and interactions. Next I had the group do an activity. The teens were paired up and asked to identify one



Alex, Seth, and Josh work on their paper chain links.

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## Teens Discover Unity

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thing that they both liked, or disliked, or agreed on and one thing they did not agree on. Then each partner had the opportunity to talk about why they liked or agreed with their chosen differing item or idea. The other partner practiced active listening by not judging or commenting during the communication. The objective of the activity was to help the teens learn that careful, considerate listening, understanding, and increased knowledge can help diffuse conflict amid diversity.

Sunday morning, Rev. Dagmar Bol-

tivity called a privilege walk. The teens assembled in a straight line, and Jenn asked them a series of questions where their answers had them step forward or backward. (For more information on how to conduct privilege walks visit <https://tinyurl.com/y9u7el86>). At the end of the activity, those most privileged end up at the front, and the less privileged in-



*L to R: Nathan, Jack, Colin, Joey, Gillian, and Lauren golfing with style*



*The teens getting ready to race!*

linger joined us. Dagmar's topic was, "Finding Unity in Religious Diversity." She started by asking several questions including, "Is unity the same as uniformity?" and "Is America a religiously diverse country?" Then she asked the teens to tell her where they might find a prominent example of unity in religious diversity. They answered, "the Golden Rule!" She next gave the teens a handout with sacred writings that each religion uses to express the unifying concept of the Golden Rule. The teens were asked to read them and share the sacred writing that spoke to them with the most clarity or touched them deepest. Examples were, from Hinduism, "One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself. This is the essence of morality," and from Jainism, "A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated."

In the Sunday afternoon session, Jenn lead the group in a powerful ac-

dividuals are in the rear. A rather emotional discussion followed the privilege walk exercise as the teens expressed their feelings about what they have and don't have as well as what they have experienced in their lives.

To close the session, we created a "chain of community." To do this the teens wrote on construction paper strips groups that they identify with, such as athletes, writers, nerds, or vegetarians. They then looked for ways to link the groups together, thus creating a paper loop chain of connected communities.

Interspersed throughout the spiritual workshops and sessions were plenty of opportunities for kids to bond, play games, listen to music, and hang out. Our Sunday outing to Lake Nepessing Golf and Country Club gave us a fun round of mini golf and a taste of go-kart racing! Numerous freeze pops were consumed throughout the weekend, and Sun-

day evening the teens went out in a late night rainstorm and hunted for glowing bananas (bananas wrapped in glow sticks) followed by brownie banana splits.

The spiritual programming of our teen retreat ended with a communion worship service that Jenn and I led. Eighteen-year-old Alex played the saxophone for the prelude and postlude. The worship service theme highlighted the need to continue to love in the presence of diversity, with the band Rush providing the lyrical message from the 1980 song "Entre Nous" (Between Us): "The spaces in between leave room for you and me to grow." 🙏

Kurt Fekete is youth director of the Swedenborgian Church. He will be leading the SCYL teens at the 2017 Annual Convention.



*Alex and his sax*

## Kitchener Celebrates Rev. John Maine's Service

BY CHRISTINE MACTAVISH

A retirement party was held for Rev. John Maine at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, on Sunday, April 23, honoring him for his eleven years of service to us and our community. Special music and glowing tributes were expressed in our thanks to John and his wife Catherine. It was a joy-filled time as well as a tear-filled time.

Twenty-five years ago, when John, Catherine, and little Josh first came as visitors to our church, we had no idea what a blessing they would be. They had found a church which would become their spiritual home, and soon they became active participants in our church community. We were delighted when John began his training for ministry with the local university and our Swedenborgian School of Religion. Many of us attended his ordination at the 2001 Swedenborgian Church Annual Convention with our heartfelt support. He then accepted the "call" from our Edmonton, Alberta, congregation, where he served for five years.

In 2006 came the opportunity for us to issue John a call of our own, to return to Church of the Good Shepherd (COGS) in Kitchener. He accepted and arrived back at COGS at a time when we had been through some trying times. John stepped right up and got us thinking about our mission and purpose.

A man of many talents—a gifted writer and an educator on many aspects of history—and always ready to lend a helping hand and a listening ear, John

brought us his knowledge of Swedenborg and the Bible as well as the great mystics and our current spiritual writers. His awareness of the latest books available enabled us to experience new ideas and growth for our lives.

Being an organization gifted with a house of worship in the center of a growing city gave Pastor John the chance to welcome various community groups to find a home with us. Whether they were involved in the creative arts, healing arts, home schooling, or other areas, these groups were always more than just tenants of the building. They helped to manifest our Swedenborgian values and raise the profile of our church in the city.

However, Pastor John not only helped us bring the community into the church, he also led our initiative to take the church into our commu-

nity. Through his leadership, COGS built partnerships with the city's soup kitchen, women's shelter, food bank, and other agencies. We also recently partnered with three local churches to sponsor a refugee family from the Congo. With Pastor John's support, even our Sunday school children got



into the act, adopting a little "Jerusalem donkey" at the National Donkey Sanctuary outside of town (we think we are the only church to have its own donkey!)

Meanwhile, John has been active in ecumenical affairs locally by representing us at Interfaith Grand River (IGR), our regional ecumenical forum. He is the co-chair and emcee for the annual Interfaith Community Breakfast and serves on IGR's anti-hate crimes task force.

We also know that John has been very active in our denomination, the General Convention, too, serving as chair of the Sunday School Association, where he led a project to provide easily accessible materials for Swedenborgian Church Sunday schools, and on other church bodies. He expressed his vision and creativity through the development and establishment of the Seven Annual Themes campaign. (See page 90.)

We will miss his presence, his messages on our church sign, his thoughtful sharing, his well-delivered worship services, and his delight in all our various lunches and outings. Thank you, Pastor John, and God bless! 🙏

Christine MacTavish is a member of the Church of the Good Shepherd.

**Passages**

**Tobias Garrett Brugler** was pronounced dead on May 16, 2017, in his Astoria, New York City, apartment from a recent illness. The specific cause and date of death are still being determined by the NYC medical examiner, but the cause is believed to have been sepsis.



Toby, 34, is survived by his parents, Ronald and Valerie Brugler of Cleveland and his sister, Jessie Brugler, also of Astoria.

Toby, born in Pittsburgh, graduated from Eastwood Collegiate and Conestoga College in Kitchener, Ontario, and Per Scholas, the Bronx, NYC. He was an excellent computer technician, having worked at the United Nations, Newedge Group, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Turn-

**Rules of Life: a Daily Practice**

*Continued from page 87*

1. *Lectio.* Read a short passage of text that you have decided upon in advance. Read slowly, letting your awareness rest in turn upon each word, savoring it. As you read, be alert for any particular word or phrase that draws your attention in a special way.
2. *Meditatio.* Meditate on this word or phrase or thought, allowing it to

around for Children.

He loved science fiction, physics, and advanced computer games. He was a kind and gentle giant of a person. He believed in seeking happiness and living kindness. He was loved and will be greatly missed.

A memorial service begins at 4 PM on July 21 at the Almont New Church Assembly, Almont, Michigan. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to the American Museum of Natural History in NYC, <https://tinyurl.com/y8o4gext> or <https://tinyurl.com/yclmhtdd>. ☪

become more fully formed. What comes to you as a spiritual answer to something going on in your life? As you hold this dialog and insight in your mind and heart, let yourself become aware of any answering thoughts, images, or memories that arise for you.

3. *Oratio.* Respond to the word that has especially spoken to you. Your heart may call out in thanks, or praise, or joy. If the word has been painful, your response might be one of remorse or anger or supplication. Seek direction for new life through the insights given.
4. *Contemplatio.* Rest in God’s presence, content simply to be with God.

**Brief Examen Primer**

The *Examen* is shaped from the sixteenth-century classic Spiritual Exercises by Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) and forms the core of Ignatian spirituality. Many different versions of the practice exist, though the similarities are much more prominent than minor differences. The *Examen* is the first “rule” in monastic history that was shaped for the general laity in contrast to those who had taken vows and who followed much more elaborate and rigorous rules. The fact that it has become so widely used across many Christian (and other) traditions is owed to its simple and effective approach to daily prayer. It is structured enough that you can’t do it in a couple of minutes, but simple enough that a powerful and complete experience of praying through recent experience can be achieved in as few as a dozen minutes. ☪

Jim Lawrence is dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California.



**The 7-Year Cycle of Annual Themes**

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

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

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

### 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.

## Gathering Leaves 2017

# Waters of Life ♥ Spirit of Love

September 21–24, 2017



*Crieff Hills Retreat and  
Conference Centre  
Puslinch, Ontario, Canada  
[www.crieffhills.com](http://www.crieffhills.com)*

**JOIN OUR FACEBOOK Group:  
Gathering Leaves Swedenborgian**

**Website: [http://  
gatheringleavesweebly.com/](http://gatheringleavesweebly.com/)**

A Swedenborgian women's retreat.  
Crystal Clear Expressions of Faith Through the  
Creative and Healing Arts.

### In the September *Messenger*

Look for a full report on the 2017 Annual Convention in the September issue of *the Messenger*. Full transcripts of speeches, reports on business sessions, mini-courses, and outings, and plenty of photos of the people and the venues. This is the 200th anniversary of the first Swedenborgian Convention, and a large and enthusiastic turnout is expected.

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