



The Swedenborg Chapel Newsletter

A Ministry of the Swedenborgian Church in Cleveland

"Where we take the Broad View of Faith and Life"



JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2011

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Jan 16** - Annual Meeting.
Rev. Ron will lead worship. *You Can Believe* Discussion, 10 am.
- Jan 23** - Rev. Judy will lead Heaven and Hell Discussion, 10 am.
- Jan 30** - Rev. Judy will lead Heaven and Hell Discussion, 10 am.
- Feb 6** - Rev. Judy will lead Heaven and Hell Discussion, 10 am.
- Feb 13** - Rev. Ron will lead worship. *You Can Believe* Discussion, 10 am.
- Feb 16, Wed**, 7-8:30 pm—Men's Grp, Pause4God
- Feb 20** - Rev. Ron will lead worship. *You Can Believe* Discussion, 10 am.
- Mar 2, Wed**, 7-8:30 pm—Men's Grp, Pause4God
- Mar 6** - Rev. Ron will lead worship. *You Can Believe* Discussion, 10 am.
- Mar 13** - Rev. Ron will lead worship. *You Can Believe* Discussion, 10 am.
- Mar 16, Wed**, 7-8:30pm—Men's Grp, Pause4God



SWEDENBORG CHAPEL ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 16

The Annual Meeting of the Cleveland Swedenborg Chapel was held on January 16, 2011 following our regular worship service. Eight members were in attendance. Reports were received from the President, Secretary, Treasurer and Minister.

Harry Anderson presented the members with the report of the work that has been done on updating



Jack Cashin, Bergan Junge and Cliff Tahsler our constitution and operation guidelines. Discussion focused on two items. The first involved the need to list standing committees when our membership is so small. Since the Church Council acts as a committee of the whole in addressing the matters that would be handled by these committees, it was decided to leave them in the constitution with the hope that as membership increases they can be filled. The second item was a clarification that membership criteria will be taken into consideration when voting on new members as no individual could meet all that are listed. The revised constitution was then unanimously approved and will be signed at the next meeting of the Church Council.

It was with a real spirit of joy that Bergan Junge was voted into the membership of Swedenborg Chapel! This joy was increased when it was also noted that soon Cliff, Cathy, Aaron, and Allan Tahsler, and Amanda Wojcik will complete the confirmation preparation for membership. We certainly appreciate the renewed energy and spirit that each of these people bring to the life of our congregation.

Officers elected for the coming year include:

- Judith Dennis, President
- Harry Anderson, Vice President
- Lois Krebs, Secretary
- Steve Dzeba, Treasurer
- Pat Dennis, Trustee
- Jack Cashin, Trustee

There is one trustee vacancy that will be filled once new members have been officially approved.

Following the meeting we enjoyed a time of fellowship while eating hot bowls of chili, fresh salad, rolls and brownies. We left nourished in spirit and body!!!



Harry Anderson, Chuck Winter, Judith Dennis, and Shirley King

We are joyful because of the renewed energy and spirit that each of our new members bring into the life of our congregation.

ALMONT TEEN RETREAT, DEC. 27-30

I was blessed to take part in the 2010 Winter Teen Retreat that was held at the Almont New Church Assembly from December 27th to 30th. I was also especially pleased to have Aaron Tahsler from our congregation attend as a staff person. Unfortunately, Naomi Anderson, our one teenager, could not attend due to work commitments.



Aaron Tahsler

Early on in my ministry I took part in some 28 different teen retreats. However, I had not done so in 20 years, and I will admit to having



been a bit nervous about returning to this annual event. Even so, immediately upon our arrival, both Aaron

and I were made to feel welcome and were accepted by the 27 teens in attendance. And under the leadership and guidance of Kurt Fekete, our denomination's Youth Director, the three day's were filled to the brim with a variety of activities.

Along with myself, other ministers in attendance were Sage Currie (Fryeburg, ME), Alison Longstaff (Kitchener, ON) and Jenn Tafel (Lansing, MI). Jane Fullerton, a teacher at the Fryeburg Academy, also attended. Sage led a session on our personal dream lives,



Alison presented on "Animal Speak", palm readings and understanding the Tarot, and Jenn Tafel talked with the teens about her own dream experiences. My presentation focused on Dreams in the Bible and how our teachings interpret them. I was deeply impressed with how attentive the teens were to all of the presentations.

Last Sunday someone asked Cliff Tahsler, Aaron's father, if he had enjoyed the retreat. Cliff looked at us and said, "I think he's hooked. That's all he's talked about these past three days!" I could relate to that statement. It was a wonderful experience.

-Ron Brugler



(L. to R) Rev. Alison Longstaff from Kitchener, Rev. Ron, Rev. Sage Curry of Fryeburg, Maine and Rev. Jenn Tafel from Lansing, Michigan and Kurt Fekete led the sessions.



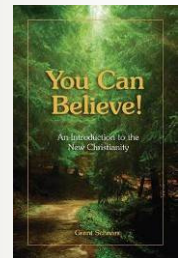
IN OUR THOUGHTS

Keep Pat Dennis in your thoughts and prayers. She has spent 10 days recently in hospital and is now at the Kingston Rehabilitation Center.

"YOU CAN BELIEVE!" DISCUSSION GROUP

We continue our discussion group on Rev. Grant Schnarr's book You Can Believe!, led by Rev. Brugler. Classes will start at Sunday, 10:00 am at the church.

The Heaven & Hell Discussion Group resumes January 23rd. Rev. Judith Dennis will lead worship services on January 30th and February 6 during Ron's vacation. ☺



CHURCH COUNCIL AT 9 AM FEBRUARY 13TH

The Church Council meetings start at 9:00 am. The coffee should be ready by 9:00 am!

GENERAL CHURCH MINISTERS VISITS FOR 2011

March 27 - Todd Beiswenger
May 29 - To Be Determined

CALLING ALL MEN

On Wednesday evening, February 16th, our Men's Group will begin what promises to me a meaningful and worthwhile journey! We will be taking part in the New Church Outreach Spiritual Growth Campaign called "Pause, Make Space for God." The program consists of seven sessions, which will be held at the church every two weeks (the exact dates are Feb. 16th, March 2nd, 16th and 30th, April 13th and 27th, and May 11th). Sessions will begin promptly at 7:00pm and end at 8:30pm. Those who want can arrive at 6:00pm and bring their own supper. Refreshments will be served after each session.

Each of you will be given a workbook to use in the classes and at home. The weekly lessons include scripture, our Swedenbor-

gian teachings, and other background materials, as well as questions for you to reflect upon. Our session time will be spent in discussing the materials, sharing about our spiritual lives, and re-connecting with God.

This is the first time that a group from Swedenborg Chapel will take part in this program. I can assure you that it will add a new and important dimension to the life of our church. I look forward to seeing all of our men on February 16th!!!!



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PASTOR'S 2010 ANNUAL REPORT

At the Annual Meeting of the Cleveland Swedenborg Chapel, held on January 16th, I submitted my Pastor's Report. Here are some of the highlights of that report. My hope is that it will fill you in on all that has taken place here over the past year.

Last year's Pastor's Report was very brief since I had been here for only one month. Now that I have completed a full year there is much more to share with you. I am impressed with all that we have accomplished. I hope that we read this and praise God for leading us onward!

In 2010 I conducted 40 worship services and prepared 3 additional services for Rev. Judith Dennis to lead. Our average attendance was 11 people each of the Sundays. Two joint worship services were held with General Church clergy officiating. We observed the Sacrament of Communion during five of the services.

Sermons were emailed weekly to 60 people and were very much appreciated.

I conducted two worship services each in Montgomery and Urbana. I conducted a Memorial Service for Alberta Theriault in February.

Thanks to the many hours spent by Val Brugler in the publication of 6 issues of our bi-monthly newsletter. Your comments indicate that you enjoy the material and appreciate the professional layout.

We will be completing our Sunday morning discussion series of You Can Believe by Rev. Grant Schnarr. We continue to study Swe-

denborg's book Heaven and Hell on Sunday's when no formal worship is held.

In February, 10 books were purchased for book sales area. We will order new books from the Swedenborg Foundation when they become available.

In February and March we collected over \$100 for the Red Cross and their relief efforts following the earthquake in Haiti.

In April and May, Rev. Theron Cromwell of Detroit led two workshops recommended by the PUSH Committee to help us re-connect with our congregational goals and purpose.

In April and October I attended the regional Minister's Peer Supervision meetings in LaPorte, Indiana. Rev. Judith Dennis also attended the April meeting.

Seven couples celebrated their weddings at Swedenborg Chapel and I officiated at one off-site ceremony. We continue to receive calls and emails from prospective couples and have the goal of booking more ceremonies. Two weddings, so far, are booked for 2011.

Our Men's Group continues to be an integral part of our church life. We held 12 meetings this past year in which we explored the history of the Bible, watched the film "Swedenborg: The Man Who Had to Know", were treated to a

PAUSE: MAKE SPACE FOR GOD

A "BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS" JOURNEY PROGRAM

We are excited to announce we will be participating in **Pause: Make Space For God** spiritual growth campaign. **Pause: Make Space for God** will bring some breathing room back into our day, giving us a chance to consciously renew and strengthen our relationship with God. This program asks us to designate a portion of time every day to explore the Bible and listen for God's messages, to ask meaningful questions and to experience the presence of the Lord in a new and powerful way.

The Men's Group be kicking off our campaign in February and will meet every two weeks.

Each and every one of us can benefit from being involved in this campaign.

Join us for an opportunity to actively work on your spiritual growth! Videos and journaling materials are available online at:

<http://www.newchurch.org/materials/programs/pause>



St. Patrick's Day Corned Beef dinner at Chuck Winter's house, organized the church picnic in June, had a summer cookout at Jack Cashin's house, sponsored the Halloween event that 130 community children attended and prepared a Thanksgiving Dinner for our congregation. In February 2011 we will begin in the "Pause: Make Space for God" program. We will be making plans for a spring outing to the Amish "Behalt" Center in Berlin, Ohio.

In July Lois Krebs, Naomi Anderson, Judith Dennis and myself attended the Almont Summer School. The theme focused on "The Life of the Lord" and I lectured on the birth narratives.

In October, 7 of us attended the joint meeting of the Ohio and Michigan Associations held at Almont. Judith Dennis was elected Vice President. All of us learned more about what our different churches are doing. Many thanks go to Val Brugler for preparing the display for Swedenborg Chapel, which will also be used at next summer's convention.

Our re-designed church website continues to be our primary means of promoting our church in the greater Cleveland area. We receive, on average, over 500 "hits" a month. A handful of visitors have left their names and contact information increasing our mailing list.

New curtains have been purchased for the wall behind the altar. Val and Steve Dzeba will be hanging these soon. Our carpets and sanctuary chairs were cleaned in November.

Aaron Tahsler (as staff) and I attended the

SCYL Youth Retreat at Almont from Dec. 27-30th. 27 teens were in attendance. The theme was "Dreams and the Whispering of Angels." My two presentations focused on Dreams in the Bible and How to Understand Biblical Dreams with the help of our teachings.

I also want to take the time to thank all of you for the time and effort you put into caring for this church. The Church Council keeps on top of our expenses and needed projects, Steve Dzeba does an outstanding job as treasurer, Lois Krebbs does an amazing job with our minutes and church communications, Harry Anderson is a great help with necessary tasks and in coffee hour set up, and Judith Dennis is an excellent chair and class/worship assistant. We all help in many ways, and I hope that all of you know how much I appreciate your time and effort.

And in that vein I want to thank Chuck Winter for hosting our annual Christmas Party at his home. The food was wonderful, but his incredible Christmas tree topped even that! "Thank You, Chuck!"

In closing, I want to share that I feel so blessed to be back here in Cleveland as your minister. And although we continue to wrestle with our challenges, our spirit remains high and our dedication strong.

Blessings,

Ron

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

Our Church Council wants to collect special offerings for Church World Service between now and Easter. The following article describes in their own words, "What We Do".

Church World Service works with partners to eradicate hunger and poverty and to promote peace and justice around the world.

Together we reach out to neighbors in need near and far—not with a hand out, but a hand up. So, if you're looking to help build a better world—a world where there's enough for all—you've come to the right place!

Around the world, Church World Service supports sustainable grassroots development, disaster relief, and refugee assistance, and we educate and advocate on hunger-related issues. In the U.S., we help communities respond to disasters, resettle refugees, promote fair national and international policies, and

provide educational resources.

We invite you to join our network of local and global caring through participation in CROP Hunger Walks, the Blankets+ program, and the CWS Kits program.



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

THE PURPOSE OF GIVING

"Do you love your creator?
Love your fellow-beings first"
-Mohammed

"A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity."

- Buddha

"Love thy neighbor as thyself."

- Jesus

"Every one of us has a responsibility to act as if all our thoughts, words, and deeds matter. For really, they do"

-The Dalai Lama

"People who love to do good to others not for self-centered reasons but for the sake of the good itself are people who love their neighbor, since ... the good is one's neighbor."

-Swedenborg
(Heaven and Hell #64)

Connect with us today!

- Responding to emergencies in the U.S. and around the world
- Nurturing development at the grassroots with seeds, tools and homegrown strategies
- Assisting refugees to return home when possible, and to find other viable options when it's not
- Speaking out in partnership on issues that make a difference in the lives of hungry people
- Food security so parents can reliably feed their families
- Water for all so that families have water for drinking,

household needs and farming

For more details visit their website at:
www.churchworldservice.org



Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT-Caritas

NO SURVIVORS

SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 49:1-7 JOHN 1:29-42

Good Morning everyone! Those of you who were here last Sunday will hopefully remember that our topic focused on Baptism, one of the two Sacraments of our church. I brought out the fact that our Swedenborgian teachings convey that Baptism has three primary uses.

First, that Baptism is "introduction" into the church. (And I hope that we realize that in the sense that he used the term, a church is a community of support where people nurture and foster a life of learning and use -- as opposed to a religious denomination.)

And second, our teachings stress that Baptism is to represent our commitment and responsibility to learn truths and apply them to our daily lives.

And thirdly, we learned that through engagement with a faith community, and applying truths that we learn to our lives, the Lord is then able to lead us in the process of spiritual growth, something that we refer to as Regeneration.

Both for today and next Sunday, our scripture readings and sermons will direct our attention toward pondering ways that we can fulfill our baptism commitment. We will do this by looking within the Lord's call to the disciples -- those twelve people who he proclaimed would become "fishers of men" and thus establish

his church on earth. But more importantly, we will consider the many ways that this same call comes to each of us yet today. For as was lifted up in our Old Testament lesson from Isaiah, the words are spoken to us: "I have a greater task for you, my servant. Not only will you restore to greatness the people of Israel who have survived, but I will also make you a light to the nations so that all the world may be saved."



A FAITH AFFIRMATION

Throughout our life's journey we seek to follow the way of the Spirit. This often leads to detours, intersections, and new directions. But our aim is always the same; to journey with God, guided by the light of love.

Toward this goal we seek to teach and learn, to plant and harvest, to walk and rest. Above all we seek to be open to God's presence and help other people along the way.

May we view all the events and experiences of the coming week in this light. May our words and actions help others to see it too. In so doing, may the way of the Spirit be made real within our lives.

In order to begin this process of exploration, I have a true story that I want to share with you. Several years ago, in fact, it was about 10 years ago when I still lived in Kitchener, one Sunday afternoon I was reading the newspaper and happened to turn the page to the obituaries – something that I rarely read. But the Lord knew that there was something there for me to learn, and I quickly realized this when my eyes were drawn to an obituary of a certain woman who had died at the ripe old age of 93. Her obituary stated her name and date of birth, and gave information about her upbringing in Waterloo. And it went on to note several points about her family by sharing some information about her deceased parents and siblings.

But then it said something that really caught my attention. It said that this woman had spent over 45 years as an elementary school teacher – having started her career in a one-room schoolhouse, ending up in the public school system. She had received many awards during those years, and had earned the apparently well-deserved respect of her students and peers. And the obituary ended with the following words. "In her passing, she has left no survivors."

I speak the truth when I say that those words popped out at me as though they were written in bold fourteen-point type. "No Survivors!" I actually said out loud. The author of that obituary apparently had not realized what he or she had written. I mean, here was a woman who had devoted her life to educating the youth of her community, and her devotion to her vocation had been honored and respected. In 45 years she had probably had well over 2,000 students, and it was so very obvious that she had impacted those lives in many positive ways. I read those words, "No Survivors" and realized that nothing could be farther from the truth.

I have shared these words with you because I want you to ask yourselves a very important question. If you were to wake up tomorrow morning on the other side of life, who would be the survivors that you leave behind? And

friends, I am not speaking merely of family and relatives. I am asking you to consider all those who have been influenced by your life. And then I want you to ponder something else. It is that these people are those who testify to the reality of your discipleship. Disciples leave survivors!

Even though it is easy to overlook, I really relate to the way this point is underscored in today's lesson from the Gospel of John. For like the teacher that I have just mentioned, a woman who had responded to the call of education, this is first and foremost a lesson about responding to God's call. It is about John the Baptist, a man who responded to God's call to prepare the way of the Lord. It is about our Lord, who responded to his heavenly Father's call to be the Messiah. It is about those first two disciples, who even with-



out being asked, responded to the call to follow.

And I like that response on their part. They were willing and eager to be disciples. They were prepared to jump in, feet

first, without

hesitation. Jesus asked them, "What are you looking for?" And instead of responding with a wish list for what they might do, or become or what they sought in life, they responded with another question that conveys a wonderful truth for us to remember. They asked him, "Where do you live, Rabbi?" For in wanting first and foremost to know where the Teacher lived, they were willing to discover the answer. For inwardly, if not yet consciously, they knew that he would come to dwell within their minds and hearts.

Their perspective on faithfulness and living as disciples was astonishingly insightful, yet humble. They knew that God's call was not, and never would be, about them. It was about proclaiming the Good News of the Messiah's presence. And they also knew that in all that they did, in all that they would come to accomplish, this was the only goal that mattered.

From this lesson, we are given the opportunity to ask the same question. Where is God

Here was a woman who had devoted her life to educating the youth of her community, and her devotion to her vocation had been honored and respected. In 45 years she had probably had well over 2,000 students, and it was so very obvious that she had impacted those lives in many positive ways. I read those words, "No Survivors" and realized that nothing could be farther from the truth.

living within us? How is his presence revealed in our work, in our relationships, in our daily life? But we best learn from this opportunity when we do one last thing. Remember, our Lord then issued those two disciples an invitation. He said to them, "Come and see!" They accepted that invitation. Do we?

In his work Heaven and Hell, Swedenborg placed before us the same invitation when he wrote:

"Some people believe that it is hard to live the life that leads to heaven, which is called a spiritual life, because they have heard that you have to renounce the world and give up the desires that people associate with the body and the flesh, and "live spiritually." All they understand by this is rejecting worldly concerns (especially concerns with money and prestige) and going around in constant devout meditation about God, the Word, and devotional books. But people who renounce the world and live by the spirit in this way acquire a mournful life, one that is not receptive of heaven's joy. Rather, in order to be receptive of heaven's life, we should by all means live in the world and be involved in its duties and business. In this way, we truly accept a spiritual life. There is no other way spiritual life can take shape in us, no other way our spirits can be prepared for heaven."

This teaching, when viewed in the light of our scripture lessons, encourages us to engage ourselves in a productive daily life. We are not to stay where we are, hoarding what we know and what we have. Instead, we are called to widen our circle of faith by sharing and witnessing. In this way, we understand discipleship as being reflective of heavenly life. All of us are called to be Isaiah's servants, to be John the Baptists, to be disciples in our particular time and place.

And we are called to be, and to create survivors! What I mean by this is that in our lives, we have all known times of pain and rejection. But during such times, we often experience certain survivors coming to us, taking our hands, and walking beside us – teaching us, guiding us, and encouraging us to go on. And having said this, I want you each to do something this week. Take some time to write down the names of those survivors. Note what they helped you face, and what you learned from them. And then, really offer God thanks for their presence

with you. But don't stop there because then I want you to take a much more important step toward discipleship. I want you to offer to God your willingness to do the same for others. Yes, ask that God help you to leave Survivors as a result of your life.

This is a very important aspect of our Swedenborgian faith. After all, ours is not a religion of transcendental abstraction, or of brilliant speculation. Its children are neither monks, mystics, nor stoics. For ours is ultimately the religion of loving, speaking, and doing, as well as believing. It is a life, not a creed. It has a rest for the heart, a word for the tongue, a way for the feet, and a work for the hand. The same Lord who is the source of our truth, foundation of our hopes, the object of our faith, and the subject of our love, is also the model of our conduct.

And he went about doing good, and calling disciples, people who would leave the world an example, so that even we, yet today, might follow his steps.

Martin Luther King once urged his survivors with the following words. He said, "Take the first step in faith. Even if you don't see the whole staircase, just take the first step."

"There is the Lamb of God!" said John the Baptist. The two disciples heard him say this and went with Jesus. They took that first step. So may we. Amen.

Take the first step in faith. Even if you don't see the whole staircase, just take the first step.

- Martin Luther King



SWEDENBORG CHAPEL

4815 Broadview Road
Cleveland, OH 44109

Phone: 216-351-8093

Email: swedenborgchapel@att.net

Website: www.swedenborgchapelcleveland.org

Editor: Val Brugler



A MINISTRY OF THE
SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

Even the smallest moment of our lives involves a series of consequences extending to eternity. Each moment is like a new beginning to those that follow.

-Emanuel Swedenborg

UPCOMING SERMON THEMES

Jan 23.....Discussion led by Rev. Judy Dennis

Jan 30.....Discussion led by Rev. Judith Dennis

Feb 6.....Discussion led by Rev. Judith Dennis

Rev. Ron on vacation from Jan. 25 to Feb. 11

Feb 13.....Worship Service led by Rev. Ron Brugler

You Can Believe Discussion Group 10:00

“Salt and Light” In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus declares that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. These two images speak volumes about our spiritual potential and gifts. Today we will contemplate their meaning for our lives.

Feb 20.....Worship Service led by Rev. Ron Brugler

You Can Believe Discussion Group 10:00

“A Remedy to Anger” How do we deal with times when we become upset or even angry with those who are closest to us? You will be surprised to learn how our Lord used such times as a tool for our spiritual growth and regeneration.

Mar 6.....Worship Service led by Rev. Ronald Brugler

“When the Clouds Spoke” This morning as we observe “Transfiguration Sunday” we will be reminded of the event behind this day, the impact it had upon the Lord’s identity, and how the Lord is yet today working to change each of us in remarkable ways

Mar 13.....Worship Service led by Rev. Ronald Brugler

“And When You Pray” One goal of the Lenten Season is that we each set aside time to draw nearer to God in times of reflection and prayer. But this is not always an easy thing to do. In fact, the disciples themselves had to ask Jesus to teach them how to pray! Today we will learn what insights he offered them in response.

Mar 20.....Worship Service led by Rev. Ronald Brugler

“Born Again and Again and Again” Nicodemus went to Jesus and asked what he needed to do in order to be “born again.” Jesus’ answer seemed to trouble him. What do we believe about this basic Christian doctrine and how do we apply it to our spiritual growth?

Mar 27.....Worship Service led by Rev. Todd Beiswenger

Apr 3.....Worship Service led by Rev. Ronald Brugler

“Judging Appearances” We make many judgments about people in various ways – by their actions, their beliefs, and even the way they appear to us. Today we will use an event from Israel’s history to explore what criteria the Lord prefers for us to use.

Apr 10.....Worship Service led by Rev. Ronald Brugler

“Experiencing the Miracle” The experience of Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry Bones holds an important message for us to ponder during the Lenten Season. What is this message? Join us for today’s sermon and find out!!!

May 29.....Worship Service led by General Church Minister

Discussion Group: 10 am ♦

Worship Service: 11 am ♦

Board Meeting: 9 am once a month