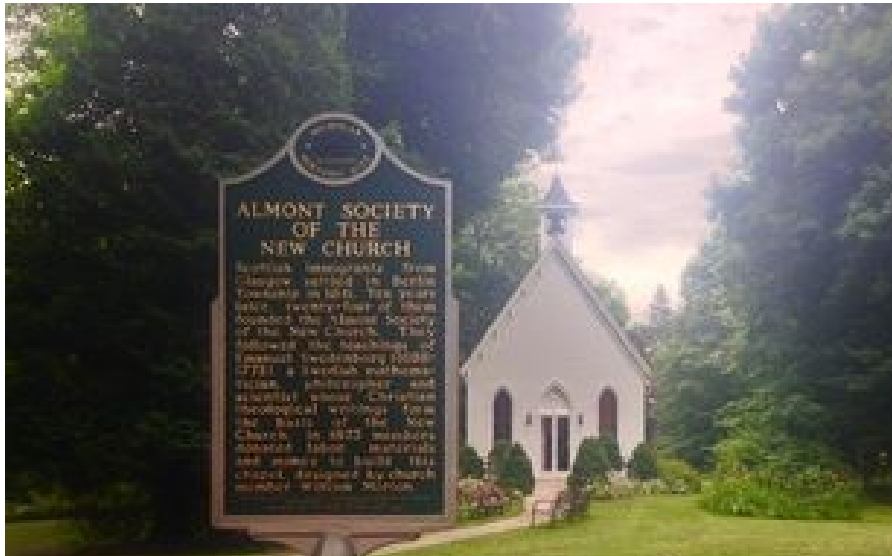




## ***Coming Down From the Mountain - Reflections from Almont New Church Assembly***

**Rev. Jenn Tafel**

**August 1, 2016**



*Exodus 24: 12-18*

*The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. To the elders he had said, “Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them.”*

*Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.<sup>1</sup>*

*Emanuel Swedenborg: Secrets of Heaven §9420*

*“And Moses went up into the mountain of God’ means in the direction of heaven. This is clear from the meaning of Mount Sinai, to which ‘the mountain of God’ refers here, as the law or Divine Truth which comes from the Lord, thus the Word as it exists in heaven, and therefore also heaven itself. The reason why the revelation took place on a mountain and why that mountain is called ‘the mountain of God’ is that ‘the mountain’ means the heavenly attribute of love, which is good, and consequently means heaven, and in the highest sense the Lord, and ‘the mountain of God’ means Divine Truth springing from the Divine Good of the Lord’s Divine Love.. For the Lord is called ‘God’ in the Word by virtue of Divine Truth, and ‘Jehovah’ by virtue of Divine Good. This is why the words ‘the mountain of God’ are used.”<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible*. copyright 1989, 1995, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Arcana Coelestia*. Translated by John Elliott. Vol. 11. London: Swedenborg Society, 1985.

Today is my first day back in the “real world” after spending 10+ days at the annual summer camp I attend. It’s a rough day. I miss friends dearly while at the same time enjoying central air conditioning and a private bathroom. It’s complicated!

Each year we study stories from the Bible together. This year we studied the life and inner meaning of Joseph—the one with the colorful coat. The over-arching theme being that God is with us no matter what we are experiencing in life. The inner meaning being how we are developing our spiritual nature in a world focused on external gratification. We had a different presenter each day—I gave my presentation on the opening day of lectures. It was a gift to hear the theology I love presented by a wide variety of people. The discussions were enriching and I will hang on to them throughout the year ahead.

We also attended morning and evening chapel services as a community, ate together, and played together. I watched young children run into the chapel “to get the best seat,” teens (30 of them!) love and support one another, my peers support our older campers, and I enjoyed giving reading to two of my elders who respect my spiritual gifts. I also stockpiled a great deal of love from my support system of close friends.

This year was difficult for me as I am STILL recovering from my sprained ankle. The camp is mobility-centric and there was a lot that I missed out on. At the same time, I have friends who made sure I was doing what I could to rest and recover. I am blessed.

One of the presentations on Joseph was about reaching out for help. We talked about how we can/cannot receive help or if we are folks who are helpers looking for a good cause/project. It was enlightening on another level for sure. I have a tough time asking for help (understatement alert!).

I was raised in the 70s/80s by a mother, who I love beyond measure, who was determined to raise “two independent and free thinking women.” Well, that’s a lot to live up to and my fiercely independent nature has been the cause of strife in love relationships and friendships. It is a wall many people don’t want to climb. I am blessed with a few close friends who climb anyway—this cracks my heart open and forces me to look at the world in new ways. I was also given the message by an older sibling that I am never to be a mooch or burden on others. Also a

detrimental message if I am interested in building relationships. For the longest time I had no idea when these two ways of operating were in charge. I now know that there are people willing and able to help me—who want to do this.

By allowing my old messages to take the driver's seat, I am not giving people the opportunity to be in relationship with me. I can sense in my body when either of these two negative programs are in charge and I have the chance to override them and create new neural pathways. Perhaps that sounds too robotic...but bear with me...I am transforming! Pretty soon, leaning on others and working in a symbiotic form of friendship/relationship will be second nature. I'm getting there and I long for this day.

The story of Joseph is one of restoration and redemption. We run in cycles in our spiritual growth between temptation, repentance/reformation, reconciliation and peace. According to the theology I love, this cycle is on an upward trajectory and even when we can't feel it we are gaining traction and new ground—assuming we are engaged in the process! We are built for change and transformation whether we acknowledge it or not. We are the catalysts in our lives—with the help of the Divine, of course. The story of Joseph is one of hope...this is what I keep in my back pocket: hope.

What is your story? The story of Joseph is one of restoration and redemption. We run in cycles in our spiritual growth between temptation, repentance/reformation, reconciliation and peace.

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