

THE MESSENGER

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December 2001

"Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."
Hebrews 13: 1-2

Angels in Action: Squad #1

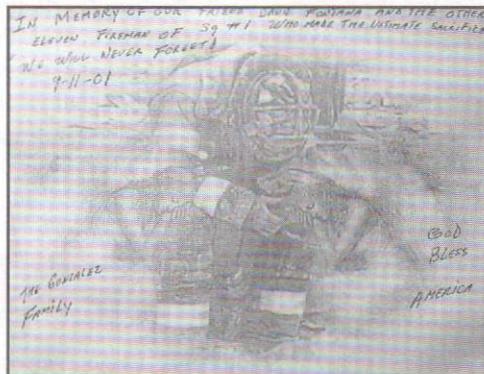
Mona Diane Conner

When I moved into Park Slope, my neighborhood in Brooklyn, it was 1977, and I had just gotten married. During those first eight years in Park Slope my husband, Mike, and I often saw the firemen from Squad #1, our local fire department, entering the grocery store, as two or three of them decided what to cook for dinner during their long shift. You always knew who they were, because they generally came in wearing their black waterproof jackets with the yellow stripes—just in case of a last minute call, I suppose.

They were also conspicuous because they would carry on audible and humorous discussions about what they knew—or more often what they didn't know—about cooking. Laughing, shifting their weight as they spoke, and seeming a little out of their element, yet taking great pleasure in their little expedition all the same—"Hey!! How 'bout linguini with clam sauce?"—nine times out of ten they wound up with burgers or steaks. Every time we saw them we would say, "The firemen are cooking again," and share a smile over their discussion, or place bets about their menu plans.

After my divorce in 1990, spotting firemen at Key Food remained a silent affectionate tradition of mine, as it still does. My local fire Squad #1 in Park Slope opened its doors at 788 Union Street in 1907, seventy years before my arrival, and has had a long, proud tradition in our beloved neighborhood. It typically employs about thirty men. Most of the occasions when I saw the fire truck pulling onto my street it would turn out to be a false alarm, but as a New York City Special Unit, Squad #1 has seen some serious action. "Special Unit" status means that, rather than serving only their own neighborhood, Squad #1 can and does go to any fire in any borough of New York City, including Manhattan.

Since 1994, I have done most of my food shopping in the local food cooperative. Park Slope Food Coop is right next door to Squad #1's fire department door. I have passed by the fire door several times each week for the past seven years and have often seen the firemen going about their business or just hanging out during their shift. On warm sunny days they would usually be out in their fire shorts, leaning against their shiny red fire truck, smiling at passers-by



A drawing of Fireman Fontana with the angels.

and shooting the breeze while waiting for their next call. One evening earlier this year I found their fire door open, with a circle of firemen and pedestrians surrounding a bagpiper they had brought in for what appeared to be a celebration of one of the firemen's retirement, promotion, or transfer, and a bit of a party was in progress.

Late this summer I noticed a glorious new sign on their door, with large colorful insignia and flames surrounding the words "Squad 1." It was REALLY COOL, or as my niece and nephews prefer to say, TOTALLY AWESOME! On one of those beautiful summer days when I came out of the food coop, the fire door had just been opened, and about six firefighters were leaning against the truck in their shorts, a very handsome bunch, smiling at me. I asked them where they got their beautiful new sign. They explained that one of their men who was being promoted and transferred recently gave the sign to Squad #1 as a special gift. "Well, it sure is incredibly beautiful," I said, "really, really great!" We smiled again, and I continued on my way up the sloping sidewalk of Union St., swinging my groceries, and thinking what a great summer this had been. It was Monday, September 10th.

We all know what September 11 brought. Within two days of that pleasant exchange, notices were posted in every storefront stretching up and down Seventh Avenue, the main drag in Park Slope, and people were pausing to read them. They



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- J. Appleseed Announces New Editor
- New Church of Southwest Florida Update

Mid-Season President's Report

Ron Brugler

"Everything has changed."

Ever since the events of September 11th, the above words have become a very common sentiment. The truth they express resonates around our world, continent, and country. It is also felt within our churches and members on a deep and significant level. As I shared in my letter to our spiritual leaders the week following those terrible events, this is a time when ministry is needed. This remains a current reality. Ministry in the Lord's service is, after all, the reason why we exist.

September 11th Responses

I am so very proud of the way our denomination has responded to these terrible events. Our attention to the Titus family has been a beautiful thing to behold. Similarly, our churches have held numerous (I am aware of 30) community prayer and healing services and we have opened our doors for private reflection. In several communities we have led the way in this response. In the weeks since September 11th I can also report that at least ten of our churches have used worship services as an opportunity for Muslim speakers to offer insights into their religious beliefs and practices.

As president I have received over 150 phone calls and emails from convention members and clergy seeking support and pastoral care during this time. I have done my best to respond to this need, but also must admit that I feel drained as a result. I have also had ongoing communication with the leaders of the General Church and the British and Australian Conferences. On September 20th I participated in a conference call with 22 other denominational heads to discuss our responses to these events and ministry to our members.

This was also an important theme during our Cabinet conference call on September 22nd. The Cabinet supported three ways that our denomination is

responding to these events. First, a significant portion of November's *Messenger* is devoted to the tragedies. Second, a special issue of *Our Daily Bread* came out in late October. And third, COMSU is rushing a book to press titled *God in the Midst of the City* which will include many contributions from our members. Cabinet is also urging that a convention theme for 2002 be selected that will allow for further reflection on this in a flexible way. "God Bless the World" and "Living in Peace" were suggested.

Travels, Meetings, and Activities Since Convention

- July 13-15: Western Canada Conference meetings
- July 22-28: British Conference meetings
- August 23-27: Wayfarers Board meetings and Board training session
- September 6-9: MINSU meetings
- September 9-13: Assisted our fallen vice-president
- September 15-17: Alicia Titus memorial service and attended the Urbana church
- September 22: Cabinet conference call
- September 28-30: Verda Winter memorial service and attended the Cleveland church
- October 5-8: Led a retreat with the St. Louis congregation and conducted worship
- October 12-14: Chaired the EDSU Youth Minister interviews and conducted worship for the Detroit church at Almont
- October 18-21: Swedenborgian House of Studies Board meetings
- October 25-29: General Council meetings and Central Office work

Upcoming Meetings

- November 2-5: Convention Planning at Fryeburg Church
- November 8-11: Investment Committee and Central Office work
- November 16-18: New York church

- January 3-13: Wayfarers Chapel Board meetings and preaching during Marlene's Laughlin's absence.
- January 31-February 3: COMSU meeting at Wayfarers Chapel
- February 9-11: meet with Ft. Myers congregation
- February 28- March 3: Joint Cabinet\ General Council Meeting at Delrey Beach, Florida
- April 7-10: Peer Supervision
- April 25-28: Swedenborgian House of Studies Board
- May 2-5: MINSU
- May 16-19: Wayfarers Chapel Board
- May 24-26: Edmonton—John Maine Installation
- May 31-June 2: St. Louis—Kit Billings Installation



*The Editor and the
Communications Support Unit
wish you a joyful and peace-filled
Christmas Season.*

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Patte LeVan, Editor

Editorial Address:

The Messenger
P.O. Box 985 TEL: (760) 765-2915
Julian, CA 92036 FAX: (760) 765-0218
E-MAIL: messenger@jinet.com

Business & Subscription Address:

Central Office
11 Highland Ave.
Newtonville, MA 02460

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Angels in Action: Squad #1 (Continued from cover)

all said the same thing: twelve out of thirty firemen were missing from Squad #1, and there was to be a candlelight vigil for them that Friday evening, on September 14th. When Friday came, I purchased a red votive candle. I had been looking for a flag for several days, but all were sold out in my neighborhood. Right before the vigil, a street vendor appeared with all varieties of American flags. I bought one to hang in my window and a smaller one on a stick to carry in the vigil march.

I wrapped a prayer paper around the red candle and hastily made a small sign with red and gold paint. It said inside a red heart: "Our Squad #1, Our Angels in Action."

Running late for the vigil, I hurried toward Seventh Avenue. On the way I saw many lit candles on stoops because it was the day a popular internet message prevailed upon everyone to "stand outside your door with a lit candle at seven p.m. in an expression of unity and peace."

Approaching Seventh Avenue, normally a bustling noisy street, I saw and heard what I had never experienced in my neighborhood or likely ever will again. Thousands of people moving in a sea of lit candles marched in absolute silence. The only noise gently punctuating the silence for the next thirty minutes or so was the crowd singing very softly any patriotic song they could think of, including "If I Had a Hammer." I joined them about six blocks away from Union Street where we were all headed. My candle kept going out and I re-lit it on someone else's—then another person pulled out matches for me. There were children as well as adults, and one person carried a huge flag. It was obvious that everyone in Park Slope had come out to honor Squad #1. The 100% response, the silence, and the sea of candles made this a very overwhelming experience to be in the midst of—wonderful, yet poignant and emotionally exhausting.

As we neared Union St. the crowd converged from all four sides of the intersection and could move no further. In silent unison we raised our candles up as high as we could, so that the firemen could see them from further down Union at the fire door, even though we couldn't see that far from where we stood. People just stayed there, suspended, candles raised, for what seemed a very long time. Then we heard an engine, and the crowd parted, as a symbolic empty fire truck pulled into the intersection. Two members of Squad #1 stood on top of the truck, waved to the crowd and held up a large flag. The crowd cheered and raised their candles high again and chanted, "Squad One! Squad One!" "N-Y-F-D. . .N-Y-F-D!!!" and sang more patriotic songs. Finally we started to move out of the intersection and I headed down to the fire door to place my sign and votive amongst the large memorial of flowers and candles growing in front of the fire door. It took at least 20 more minutes to break through the shoulder to shoulder group surrounding the memorial area itself. I walked home feeling completely whipped. Before going to bed I managed to find two contained candles to light, and placed them under each pillar on

the front stoop of One Montgomery Place for the night.

In the days to come I found out that Squad #1 was among the first on the scene at the World Trade Center, rushing inside the shattering towers and suffering one of the heaviest losses in fire personnel, along with two crushed vehicles. Our Food Coop donated food and supplies to the firemen. A local citizen offered her services as a community liaison for the squad—which was still completely engaged in rescue and recovery work—stationing herself at a card table at the building's entrance and serving as a buffer between thousands of community well-wishers and the firemen.

Children sold lemonade later in the season than usual in order to benefit the firefighters, and weekend stoop sales (known as 'yard sales' in the 'burbs) donated their proceeds to Squad #1.

On September 24th the New York City Fire Department unbelievably suggested that it would close the 94 year-old Squad #1 and disperse its men to units throughout the city. I heard this on the evening news. Word spread in a matter of hours, and by the time an afternoon protest rally took place on Union Street, the Department had supposedly retracted its earlier statement, but

rumors still persisted. I asked a fireman about it the following day, and he told me Squad #1 would definitely remain intact. The worst that would happen was that one truck would be maintained while new men were trained for their department.

After a few weeks I noticed that a wooden sculpture of a fireman had been added to the memorial next to the front of the building, and I wondered who donated it. On October 16th I received a call from my former college roommate, Chris Donley, who lives in Rye, New York. Chris and I have kept in touch over the years, but I was surprised by her message this time. She was coming to Park Slope the next day to attend the funeral of her second cousin, Dave Fontana, a firefighter from Squad #1. We were both amazed at this unusual bit of synchronicity. Although Chris had seen Dave only a few times, many relatives with whom she was close, including her aunt and cousins, would be present at the service and they very much wanted her to be there. I wanted to attend also, so we agreed to meet the next day at St. Francis Xavier's, a very pretty Catholic church within walking distance of the firehouse.

It was a windy day, and a large crowd swelled outside St. Francis Xavier's. I stood on the sidewalk looking for Chris and watching the funeral procession pass slowly on its approach to the church. On the opposite side of the street, members of the firefighters coalition stood in dress uniforms and white hats, bearing flags. The procession included a band of drummers and bagpipers playing "Amazing Grace," several fire trucks with surviving members of Squad #1 and flowers inside, and a flag-draped coffin in an open-backed vehicle.

Isaw Chris follow the procession into the church with other relatives of the Fontana family, and I later filed into the church along with the rest of the crowd. At least three local

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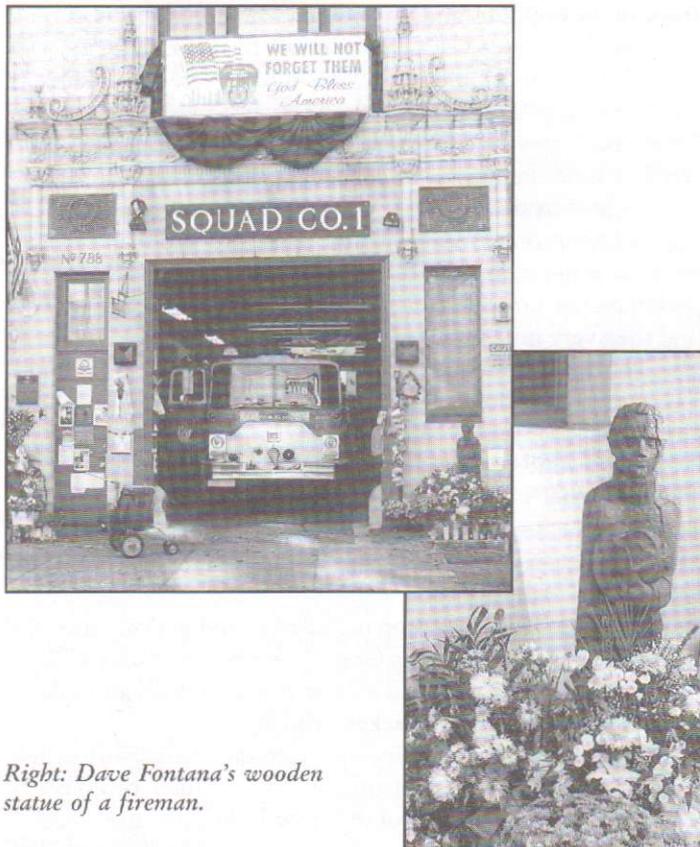
*"O beautiful
for heroes proved
in liberating strife.
Who more than self
their country loved,
and mercy
more than life..."*

Angels in Action: Squad #1 (Continued from page 159)

shopkeepers, and many from my community were there, as I was, to express our indebtedness and our gratitude. There was standing room only in the church, and from start to finish it was an amazing memorial. The entrance hymn was "On Eagle's Wings," and as I reviewed my program I could see its contents were emotionally daunting, yet offering release from the burden of grief.

A young woman with an incredible voice sang "Danny Boy," and our second hymn was "Amazing Grace." The traditional Catholic resurrection mass for F.F. David John Francis Ferrari-Fontana lasted two hours. A number of people shared poems and stories about Dave, and a beautiful photo of him sat near the two officiating priests as he came alive through the eulogies. The most wonderful eulogy was provided by Dave's wife. She told us that she chose this day to celebrate his life because it was his 38th birthday. Dave and Marian had met in college when he was 20 years old, and she was 18. September 11, 2001, was their tenth wedding anniversary. Marian said that Dave liked to tell everyone that their anniversary was "911"!

That morning Dave had called early to tell Marian his 24 hour shift was over and to meet him in ten minutes at a spot in the neighborhood, so that they could begin to celebrate their day. A few minutes later the alarm bell rang, and Dave answered the call. Marian told us he was a very enthusiastic firefighter who never refused a fire call. She and Dave have an eight year old son, Aiden. Marian's eulogy was delivered in strength, and with considerable humor, admiration, and love



Right: Dave Fontana's wooden statue of a fireman.

for her husband. Her words were very healing for the crowd, and it was clear to me that she was receiving considerable angelic support to be able to deliver such a powerful message under these incredibly difficult circumstances. She chose to recall a story about when Aiden was younger and they couldn't get him to sleep. After Aiden finally settled down in the middle of the night, Marian scolded Dave when she found him leaning over the boy again. "Are you crazy? You'll wake him up!" Dave told her he wanted to whisper, "I love you" in Aiden's ear while he was sleeping, so that Aiden would know, deep in his subconscious, how much his father loved him. We learned that Dave was also an artist and a sculptor, who kept a studio in his home. The wooden sculpture of the firefighter I had seen was his own creation.

One or two more eulogies followed, including one by Dave's superior, who told Aiden that from now on when people talked about his dad, he would be known as "Lieutenant Fontana." He had been promoted posthumously. The soloist sang one more song, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," and the two men on either side of me, one of them a pastor, both wept. My heart sank as I saw that our next task was to sing all eight verses of "America the Beautiful," the closing hymn. I heard my voice sing clear and strong until the words of verse three: "O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife. Who more than self the country loved, and mercy more than life." I sang the rest of the verses only with considerable determination to see the song through.

Outside the church a second procession with drums and bagpipes carried the flag-draped coffin on its journey down Sixth Avenue, and afterward I found Chris talking with her aunt and a cousin. We walked over to the firehouse so that Chris could see the memorial, and the wooden sculpture of the fireman that Dave had made. It has several large cracks in it, and Chris remarked that it looked as if it had been struck by lightning.

We headed over to Prospect Park (Brooklyn's version of Central Park) to the Picnic House, a newly renovated community center where a reception was being held for the Fontana family and friends. We entered in front of the Picnic House under a large flag banner suspended between two fire truck cranes. Seeing such large numbers of firemen in formal attire, we quickly realized that many of these attending firefighters had come from other parts of the country—since September 11, fire and rescue squads from all over the U.S. have come to New York City to assist with the recovery process. My mother sent me an article about Harrisburg, Pennsylvania firefighters' hard work at "Ground Zero." This constant but changing flow of national support forms the "firemen's coalition" who also attend memorials for their fellow firefighters. Spotting their place of origin by the round insignia on their shoulders, I saw firefighters from Houston; Chicago; New Brunswick, New Jersey; Portland, Maine; and Boston.

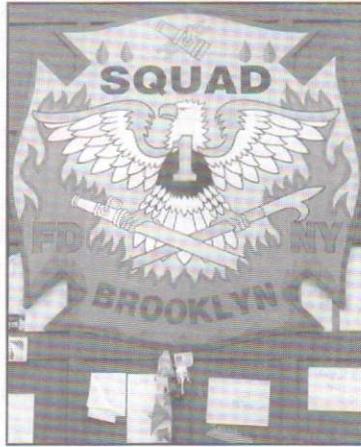
There were picture boards with wonderful family photos of Dave, Marian, and Aiden, including wedding pictures, and a condolence book to sign amidst the other mementoes. Chris began to tell her relatives about the solace booklet of prayers,

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Angels in Action: Squad #1

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quotes and other comfort, *God in the Midst of the City*, which I was helping to compile for my church's publisher, and our idea that the proceeds should go to Squad #1's bereaved family members. Her aunt provided me with a copy of a poem by Dylan Tucker, age 11, a close neighbor of the Fontanas, called "Dave's Locker", as possible material for *God in the Midst of the City*. Another cousin of Chris's told me



that she remembered having dinner with Dave and Marian soon after they got married, and how Dave broke the news to her on this occasion that he wanted to become a fireman. She said, "I was completely stunned because I thought of him as an artist, and this 'fireman notion' seemed to be coming out of nowhere...yet, he was so sincere and enthusiastic about his new occupation that everyone else began to feel as enthused about it as he was." She told me that she came to accept his life as a firefighter as part of his unusual combination of courage, skill, and talent.

After some food, wine, and good conversation with those present, Chris and I signed the condolence book and walked back out into the park. She told me how glad she was that I had joined her for the occasion, and we both said again how amazing it was that such circumstances brought us together in this particular way. As we walked with the wind whipping about us in the sunshine, I described to her that day in early September when I passed by Squad #1's entrance and asked the firefighters about their new sign. I'm sure Dave was there that day; I recognized him in the photograph at the resurrection mass.

In summer, 2001, my work was enjoyable and interesting. After a rough six months, my father's health was beginning to improve. I painted my bedroom pink, had family visits, and attended a Brighton Beach concert featuring Todd Rundgren. It had been a good summer. But the last best thing about it was that moment of chatting with Dave Fontana and the members of Squad #1 on that beautiful day—that last carefree day of September 10th—when I entertained angels, and was unaware.

J. Appleseed & Co., Publisher, has announced that a collection of interfaith prayers, poems, and quotations compiled by Mona Diane Conner and editor Ross Fish will be off the press by Christmas. This keepsake booklet of healing messages, titled God in the Midst of the City, is dedicated to Alicia Titus, honoring the love she experienced, taught, and shared. Proceeds are committed to the Squad #1 Benefit Fund for the families of the twelve firefighters who were also lost in the World Trade Center tragedy. J. Appleseed will also collect and send personal donations to this fund.

Mona Diane Conner is a member of the New York New Church and chair of the Communications Support Unit.



Editor's Note: Part I of David's commentary was published in the November 2001 *Messenger*. The following is copyrighted material and published here (abridged) with the author's permission. Those who want to further explore these and other issues may visit David's website. His latest book is *Blessing: the Art and the Practice* published by Riverhead Books.

Commentary on the Inner Meaning of the Tragedy

Part II: Personal Observations

David Spangler

Dear Friends,

...The inner being who contacted me [following September 11 events] spoke of a gift of spiritual energy given by those who died to those who live. But those who live give a gift as well. Those who have suffered grievous pain because of the loss of loved ones, work, or their own health and who, without denying or rejecting their feelings of anger and sorrow, work to go beyond that pain, affirming the power of life to heal and transform adversity, also give a gift of a living and healing spirit.

This being also spoke of sacrifice. Does that mean this event was preordained, that it had to happen in order that a spiritual gift might be made to the world? No, that is not how I understand the situation. Indeed, the greatest gifts of spirit are not made through dying but through how we live, how we engage the world, how we honor and draw forth the best that is within us. People don't have to die to create them. They contribute to them every day through the quality of their living. However, when lives are lost, particularly in a context that has repercussions for all humanity, something unique and powerful does occur. An opportunity opens.

I believe the being spoke of this event as a sacrifice as a way of describing that opportunity. It was an embrace and a channeling of a destructive energy that could have manifested in a much worse way. This being wanted us to honor these deaths as having power and meaning in the soul life of the world, as well as of our country, and as having been of service. A new closeness with spiritual forces has been opened, and in the midst of our pain, we can also feel the potential and presence of blessing.

As many of you are feeling, this event has brought many of us closer to spirit and to the sources of compassion, inspiration, and intuition in our lives. When faced with war, we discover new ways of articulating a call for peace, not only for ourselves but for all humanity. However imperfectly formed it may be as yet, there is growing within the human family a vision of our interconnectedness and interdependency. We are beginning to grasp that all acts of hatred and violence, however justified they may appear on the outside, are acts of injury against all of us. We are beginning to feel the reality of a common spirit uniting us all. This does not mean we should not take action against those

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responsible for acts of terror, but that we begin to act in a new context of vision and compassion, with an awareness of that spirit.

The issue now, two weeks later, is not so much explaining what happened. The best explanation is the one your heart can live with, probably one that you arrive at through your own thoughtful, spiritual, and intuitive contemplation.

Now each of us struggles to know what to do next. There are certainly many voices offering us helpful suggestions, vision, and ideas for next steps that can be taken both inwardly and outwardly. Hopefully in the midst of all these voices, we will each find our own voice and know for ourselves what actions we can take or encourage and support within our society as a whole.

When it comes to spiritual actions, I have a few brief suggestions which you can use or not as your own good mind and heart may dictate.

A SPIRITUALITY OF PATRIOTISM

Overlighting our country is a being that embodies the qualities of spirit that our nation seeks to embody and express in the world. I call this the Soul of America. It is a spiritual presence that works for the well-being of all humanity and all the earth through the specific instrument of our evolving American society. We do not always live up to its promise or embody its gifts, but it is there nonetheless, challenging us to rise to the highest we can be in service to our world.

I distinguish between nationalism and patriotism. The former is a state of mind that excludes and isolates; it says, "My country right or wrong, and never mind the rest of the world!" Patriotism, on the other hand, is for me the practice of attuning to and aligning with the Soul of America, seeking to embody its values and qualities in our everyday lives, seeking to discover and express the highest of what it means to be an American. Patriotism to me is the work of taking on the inner gifts of our land and its soul in ways that enhance the spirit of our country and benefit all humanity. I think of this as a spirituality of patriotism, something I have

explored in classes I call "the American Path."

The September 11 attacks have stirred us to a renewed sense of patriotism. It could falter and become simply nationalism, a feeling of us against them, Americans vs the world. But at the moment, it is manifesting as a desire to unite with our neighbors in a celebration of all that is good and strong in our country, a celebration of each other. In this newfound feeling of appreciation for our nation and the freedoms and gifts it offers, it seems to me that one appropriate service we can render is to take time to consciously reflect upon and open to the Soul of America. I do not know just how it might make itself known in your heart or mind; I have seen it in many forms. For me it is a blend of the vastness and energy of our land, the spirit of all the races and peoples who live here, the spiritual powers that nurture all humanity, and the spirit of emergence and transformation.

It graces us with the qualities of love, courage, openness, discovery, creativity, tolerance, and freedom, among others. Its calling, symbolized by the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, is to hold aloft an illumination of mind, heart, and soul that can reveal the deep values of spirit that live in humanity as a whole. In a fragmented world in which factions of humanity seek to impose their way upon all others and thus create conflict, it is the destiny of America to hold out a vision of honoring equality, individuality and difference and of using the power of these three forces to create a greater whole through willing cooperation. The Soul of America looks to us to understand it and embody these gifts as best we can, including transforming our own impulses to

separate ourselves and impose our way at the expense of others. That is a spiritual calling that seems particularly appropriate and needful at this time.

TRANSFORMING FEAR

Fear moves openly in the world on feet of violence and suffering. The events of September 11th have shattered our sense of isolation and protection from planetary fear and allowed it to rush in and dwell in our midst, even as it already dwells in the midst of much of the rest of humanity. We learn that we cannot control or manage the world to keep fear from our shores; we must embrace the world and its suffering in a wise and loving heart. We must see clearly both how we contribute to that suffering and fear and how we contribute to its transformation and alleviation. . .

People and countries do indeed do fearful things in the world that cause suffering, and for this they need to be held accountable. But are they the source of fear in a deeper way or only another manifestation of it?

. . . If I see fear as a kind of virus, then I may understand that finally the way I deal with it is by strengthening my immune system. A healthy body is ultimately the best defense against a virus. In the case of fear, my immune system is love and courage, and my healthy body is what we all co-create together through our communication and connectedness. Our immune system is our spirit which constantly produces the "antibodies to fear" in the form of creativity, vision, compassion, joy, and blessing.

Fear does not remove our creative, sacred spirit. It does not damage the inner wealth of our soul nature. It can lead us to forget these things, to deny that we have them, but it cannot remove them. So our task is to remember: remember our courage, remember our faith, remember our inspiration and intuition, remember our creative imagination, remember what we can do to be productive, remember our love and compassion—and to remember each other, to draw each other into the mutual embrace of our concern. Our task is to embrace fear with that re-

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*If I see fear
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membrance, to hold it in the fiery center of our love and burn it away in the fever of our compassion and our actions of service and support to each other and to all who suffer in our world.

AN OPEN SPACE FOR LEADERSHIP

Imagine our leaders and leaders around the world are feeling the power of fear. Not only is there the natural fear of danger to their person and their loved ones, fears we can all share, but there are what might be called the fears of history, the fears of the consequences of their decisions, the fear of making a mistake whose consequences will reverberate for years, even centuries to come. And when we fear, it is harder to do our best. Our powers of soul and imagination are constricted, and we become cut off from the larger forces of life and blessing.

So I feel we are called to hold the leadership of our country and of all countries and groups in an open space freed from fear, and in part this means not projecting my fears. . . . upon them. I want them to be at their very best when choosing actions whose consequences will define the world for children and grandchildren everywhere. So I want to surround them in my imagination and prayers with an open space in which their hearts, their imaginations, their vision can expand and flourish. . . . I want their hearts and minds to be truly unobstructed in their ability to sense the flow and presence of the sacred.

I have every right and even a duty as an American to let my leaders know whether I agree or disagree with them. But whatever my insights and opinions may be, I do want my leaders to have the same privilege I wish for myself: to be supported inwardly in a way that allows them to do their best and to act free from the constricting and devalizing power of fear.

FLOWING LOVE

I suggest we recognize the importance of keeping love flowing into and through our world. If there is something or someone in my world that, try as I might, I cannot bring myself to love, then rather than agonize over that fact and bemoan my lack of spirituality, let me shift

my focus to what I can love. My task is to keep love flowing through me and arising from within me, even if I cannot focus it towards a particular person or situation. As long as love is flowing, it has an opportunity to erode and wash away the obstacles within me; I have a chance to ride that love into a more expanded place, where I discover I can love (and in the process forgive, if necessary) someone or something that I could not love before. When this happens, genuine healing takes place.

I think of what the Colorado River did in carving the Grand Canyon. Here we see the result of the steady, persistent action of a flowing stream. If the flow of love is there, we have a chance to broaden and deepen as well.

But I believe people cannot force their hearts to be more open and accepting; love cannot be forced. It is not a "should" which we must do because that is what is expected of us spiritually. To try to love as if my heart were a grand canyon of love when it's really just a little ditch of love is to dishonor the reality and integrity of my being; it is to do violence against myself. But I equally do violence if I refuse to love at all or if I say, "Since I can't be a Grand Canyon, I won't even be a ditch, or I will only be a ditch forever." I need to keep the love flowing, if only by focusing upon that which I can love, trusting that it will erode what it needs to erode and produce a grand canyon within me one day. The miracle is that love is not regulated by time. It is not unheard of that I can be a ditch today and a Grand Canyon tomorrow, but whichever I am in the moment, that is what I need to acknowledge and honor.

I would like a world in which we are all not just grand canyons of love but a cosmos of loving. I hold the reality of that world in my heart and mind every day, but I do not get angry or disappointed at the world or at others when they are only ditches of love instead. The Grand Canyon is in that ditch, and a cosmos is in that Grand Canyon. If love can flow, that canyon will emerge, as will the cosmos of love itself.

Whatever the current challenges are that I may have in giving my love to the world, including to those who seem least

(Continued on page 164)

My First Christmas in Heaven

*I see the countless Christmas trees,
Around the world below,
With tiny lights, like Heaven's stars
Reflecting in the snow.*

*The sight is so spectacular,
Please wipe away the tear,
For I am spending Christmas,
With God on high this year.*

*I hear the many Christmas songs,
That people hold so dear,
But the sounds of music can't compare
With the Christmas choir up here.*

*I have no words to tell you,
The joy their voices bring,
For it is beyond description,
To hear the Angels sing.*

*I know how much you miss me,
I see pain inside your heart,
But I'm not so far away,
We really aren't apart.*

*So be happy for me dear ones
You know I still am near,
And be glad I'm spending Christmas
With God on high this year.*

*I send you each a special gift
From my Heavenly home above,
I send you each a memory
Of my undying love.*

*After all, Love is a gift
More precious than pure gold,
It was always most important,
In the stories our Lord told.*

*Please love and keep each other,
As my Heavenly Father said to do,
For I can't count the blessings or Love,
He has for each of you.*

*So, have a Merry Christmas,
And wipe away that tear,
Remember, I am spending Christmas
With God on high this year.*

—Author Unknown

(Continued from page 163)

deserving of it—the enemies whom Christ teaches we should also love—I do think it important that we avoid hatred, which is an active projection of hurtful energy towards another. It is a negative energy and an enslaving energy. Love and hate are not far apart in their effects, as both build bonds with their targets. When I hate, I link myself energetically with that which I hate and allow its energy into me, because I become a joined system with it, like two planets orbiting around each other. Both love and hate are transformative energies. Love transforms through liberation and sets us free, but hate transforms through binding, and it configures us to the shape of that which we do not like. Love is a true soul activity, but hate only withers the power of the soul to act in our lives.

UNOBSTRUCTED LOVING

We are often adjured to love unconditionally, but the image of unconditional love has always been problematic for me. It implies acceptance of what is unacceptable and a dishonoring of the specifics of behavior, the particularity of expression, the conditions that define how energy flows and life is shaped. It suggests to me not a co-creative balance between the particular and the universal, but the submission of the particular to the universal.

Instead, I like the image of unobstructed love. In this practice, I acknowledge that my thoughts and feelings towards another can act as obstructions in the inner life of that person. If I think or feel towards that person with negativity, with hatred, anger, disgust, and so forth, I fill their psychic environment with static, the energy of the thoughts and feelings I project. It is as if I dump debris into their river of love. Their love may be just a trickle along the surface of hard-baked clay, but if I block it, it will never flow enough to cut through that soil and begin to form a canyon. So I may not be able to love someone in an active way because of their actions and behavior towards me or others, but I can avoid obstructing the possibility of their opening to their own soul life and the sacredness within it by

making them the targets for my own psychic unrest.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF INDIVIDUALITY

Most importantly for me, I suggest we must think and feel in ways that honor our unique individuality and our particular contribution to both the outer

*I want that energy
of peace to arise
from my individuality,
from my soul life,
from my integrity,
not as a belief
but as part of my very
blood, bone, and breath.
Then it will have
a power of mindfulness
behind it.
Then it will be a
peaceful presence and
not just a peaceful idea.*

world and its inner soul life. It is through our individuality and uniqueness that we have the most creative impact on the world. Put simplistically, by being ourselves, the world soul knows how to relate to us in a co-creative way; if we are attempting to be someone else by simply wearing their ideas and feelings as if they were our own, this relationship is confused and less effective . . .

The great spiritual task of our time is to understand and manifest individuality, not just mere difference or charisma or power, but the presence that embodies the uniqueness of the sacred in a specific engagement with the incarnate world. And expressing this individuality, which requires the presence of freedom in our lives, is not just “doing our own thing.” I can act in concert and agreement, in willing co-creation and cooperation with others, and indeed need to do so if my I-ness is to grow in its expression. Again, it is not that I must

act alone or differently from you, but that we act together in ways that blend our presence and honor and sustain our individuality. For individuality is the product not only of our private efforts arising from within but of our mutual support and co-incarnational efforts as well. In effect, by recognizing and supporting your individuality, your capacity for presence, I support and enhance my own. Individuality and presence are acts of love: the more I share them, the more I have them; the more I lose myself, the more I am found.

Terrorism is the antithesis of this. It drives the individuality into hiding within us. Terrorists no longer act as themselves but as manifestations of forces of hatred and fear. While it is very possible for a sense of self built on difference, which can masquerade as individuality, to act in ways harmful to another, it is impossible for the true individuality to do so. It does not differentiate itself through pain and power and the suffering it can inflict on others but through its capacity to form a unique relationship with the whole, with the sacred, which then supports that wholeness, that sacredness within everyone and everything else. The tragedy of terrorism is not only in the destruction and fear it creates, but in the loss of individuality within the terrorist, and potentially within his or her victims as well. The deeper effect of terrorism is to diminish the presence of soul within our world. And this is true whether the terrorism is inflicted by a weapon or by words, by the bombing of a building or the abuse of a child, the killing of innocents or the killing of innocence itself.

BE CAREFUL OF MOBS

Mobs suppress individuality into a collective energy of thought and feeling. We think of mobs usually in negative situations, like a lynch mob or mob rule. But there can be positive mobs as well: a mob consciousness for peace or for love. We may disapprove of mob violence but approve of mob peacefulness, yet a mob is still a mob. It is individuals being directed not by their own soul force or mindfulness but by the energy of images and feelings magnified by collective resonance. In a mob we lose presence, we lose individuality, we lose our incarnations.

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We may not always recognize a mob as such; it may not be a mob of people as much as a mob of ideas and feelings that seem right to us. But I do not want simply to be swept up and along in the momentum of a set of ideas. No idea, however noble and spiritual, has the suppleness, the power, or the creativity of the free human heart, mind, and soul. An idea does not have vision, only direction and momentum. It is a manifestation of energy, not of soul. It can be food for my individuality, but I want to digest and assimilate my food, not be led around by it. **S**o I don't want to be swept up in either a love and peace mob or in a revenge and war mob. I do not want an energy of peace or an energy of war to engulf me and shape my inner life. Rather, if my intent is to support peace, then I want that energy of peace to arise from my individuality, from my soul life, from my integrity, not as a belief but as part of my very blood, bone, and breath. Then it will have a power of mindfulness behind it. Then it will be a peaceful presence and not just a peaceful idea.

This means that peace cannot be for me just a response to a frightening world situation. Peace must permeate my life. I don't use my leg muscles only when I want to run a marathon. I use them and train them all the time so that if and when I need to run a marathon, my legs are prepared to do it. If I want to be a force for peace, if I want it to be something more than just an idea or an image in my life, I don't use my peace muscles or my love muscles or my tolerance or understanding muscles only when some world crisis seems to call out for these qualities. I use them everyday in every relationship no matter how hard it may be. I use them with my spouse, my children, my boss, my co-workers, my neighbors, and myself 24/7/365. That is how I integrate peace as part of my individuality, part of the integrity of my soul's force. I live it mindfully in all my engagements with my world.

If I want to be part of a collective expression and energy of peace, then I want my mindful expression of a peaceful energy to connect with your mindful expression of peaceful energy in building a

collective energy that is co-creative and not mob-like. I do not want you to join with me just because you think you should agree with me, or my words sound right, or I am saying what you want to hear. I don't want to coerce you into acting with me. I don't want you to be swept up and to follow me without your cooperating from your own thoughtfulness and efforts at individuality. I may present you with ideas, images, and options about peace and peacemaking in the world, but I want you to think these through for yourself. I will encourage you to think them through, to see how they live in you, and I will help you to do so, even if it means you come to the conclusion that peace is not the direction you feel most integrated with at this time.

If you are going to be a warrior, then I want you to be a warrior with presence, with your warrior-ness alive and open to the force of your soul life. Then, I will discover an unusual and miraculous thing: that a person who commits his I-ness to being a warrior can stand without conflict with a person who commits his I-ness to peace. For where there is soul presence and not just the attraction or repulsion of the energy of ideas and images, there can be a deep communication and sharing, without fear, across the differences we may hold.

Be true to your own soul life, your own integrity, your own individuality, whatever the collective pressures may be. This is a spiritual task that transcends this particular historical moment, but in the doing of this task, we find the inner resources to answer the needs of this moment in our own unique and powerful way.

PRACTICE

Finally, this is a time to give our souls practice. The world needs thoughts, feelings, energies of love and vision right now. So it is a time for spiritual practice, whatever that means to you. I would not presume to tell you how to do this. There are so many traditions of prayer, meditation, and service. Whatever religion, faith, or spiritual or psychological tradition empowers us, and whether we practice in a church, a mosque, a synagogue, a zazen, in our bedrooms, or in a grove of trees under the stars, it is important now to link

with spirit to bring into our world the qualities and energies we want now and for our future.

In the end, all our techniques and practices lead up to the mystery and potential of what happens in each specific moment in contact with a particular other person or situation. It is in our engagements with each other and with the forces of fear and love in our world that we make our spirit real and our presence felt; that is where co-incarnation takes place, where the sacred is made manifest, and where the world we want can emerge. We are each other's sacred space; we create the practice room together.

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FROM THE RUBBLE

*We are so hurt and weary,
Burdened and bowed down
With grief untold.
No words can measure or express
The inner pain that burns and
torments,
Taking hold and blocking out the
very joy of life
We once did easily embrace.
And yet
We know that somehow
From the inner, twisted mass
Of rubble that so heavily hides
The core of our past lives,
There is still a tiny seed of life,
A green and growing fragment
That in time,
With Love's embracing light and
warmth
Can sprout and reach and grow;
And in its time of healing
Will flower anew,
Though changed forever from its
former self,
Transformed from tears and loss,
From innocence and fragility
To a beauty yet unseen,
That blooms a deeper hue
Of strength and purpose,
Rooted deeply in the earth
Of its existence,
Knowing more fully its purpose
And connection to All that Is,
And in this knowing,
Bringing fresh new beauty
That the world has never seen before.*

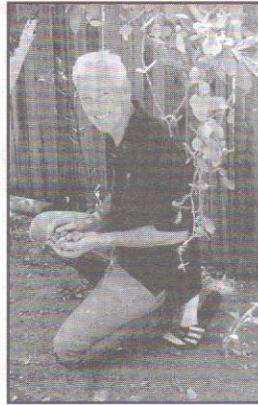
—Betsy Coffman, 11/6/01

Introducing Ross Fish, J. Appleseed's New Editor

The Communications Support Unit is pleased to announce that Ross Fish, an active and dedicated member of the San Francisco church, has been chosen from a pool of talented applicants to head J. Appleseed & Co. Publishing. Ross is a graduate of Arizona State University with a BA in journalism and a BS in advertising. He was a managing editor of State Press and a Phi Delta Epsilon Journalism Honorary. He has headed his own interior design firm since 1994, and has over thirty-five years' professional experience in creative vocations that demand sharply honed writing skills, including ad copywriter and copy chief with a number of big ad agencies—among them BBDO. (Jack Benny fans will fondly recall the agency by its full name: Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn.)

Ross has created prize-winning ad and publicity campaigns for many non-profit organizations; in 1996 he designed and edited the newsletter for the Rev. Susan Turley's Living Waters HIV Ministry. In addition to talent and skill, Ross brings high motivation and infectious enthusiasm to his new position, and we look forward to working with him.

COMSU wishes again to thank founder and former J. Appleseed editor Jim Lawrence for his ground-breaking concept, vision, hard work, and the many tangible fruits of his labor over the past twelve years.



stature of human nature is the Lord.”

Vision? O.K., I'm only human; so, let's tackle it. Let's talk about your ideas and mine. Let's talk about how J. Appleseed & Co. can provide Swedenborgian publications and materials that support all of our ministries and stimulate our personal spiritual growth. First, this office can't operate effectively without input from every Convention member. A clear line of communication is essential to maintain J. Appleseed as a significant resource center for Convention. Questionnaires mailed recently to *The Messenger* mailing list are an effort to get started. It's an easy "test" with only two questions:

- 1.) What do you see as most important to the materials available now?
- 2.) What new materials would you like to see our Swedenborgian publishing house provide?

Here's your chance to be resourceful and creative—or, point out the obvious that's been overlooked. Your answers will be appreciated, studied and, perhaps, molded as this office and Convention's Communication Support Unit determine both immediate and long-term projects. There are numerous J. Appleseed projects in the works and on the back burner that need to become active or be sent back to the drawing board. Bob Kirven, former editor Jim Lawrence, Susan Poole, and Mona Connor each have books nearing completion. At last summer's Convention 2001, COMSU's J. Appleseed brainstorming workshop produced a long list of inspiring visions. (These have not been given attention since the editor's desk was empty for several months.)

The workshop proposals included:

- A pamphlet on the Swedenborgian connection to homeopathy;
- Materials on spiritual mentoring, correspondences, spiritual emergencies, nourishing the creative spirit, and the basics of our theology;
- A Swedenborgian drama;
- Videos updating the Foundation's selection;
- Children's picture books;
- Teen-oriented materials;

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New Vision for J. Appleseed

Ross Fish

Our power of positive thinking got put on "HOLD" a couple months ago after we witnessed Manhattan skyscrapers tumble and a cast of thousands run for their life. The reality of those few minutes of intense TV drama broke our hearts and affected all our perspectives. It brought us closer to everything important; while, at the same time, it tore at our confidence as it nurtured insecurity and fear about things we never believed possible. Now, searching for understanding, we wonder when the wonder of our lives will be back.

Today, I sit at a new workstation as editor of J. Appleseed & Co. The chair is comfortable. The view is paradise. The first task on today's agenda is to send *The Messenger* a description of my vision for what this office can produce next year. Vision? Vision! Look ahead to next year? But, but, I'm still healing from September 11—and you're still healing. There's a war going on! Who cares about how many brochures J. Appleseed gets

to press?

There's a pause. My thoughts drift away from "the task" to my view of the morning sun making its way through ancient coastal oaks whose twisted branches serve as a playground for the neighborhood squirrels. There is God—right there in front of me. We talk. And, talk. A few minutes ago, it seemed insensitive to turn our attention away from today's news and discuss goals and priorities for J. Appleseed. The reality is that it's insensitive to lose sight of the fact that we are only human—that we have both spiritual and physical strengths to pull ourselves up and look at tomorrow. Because, it will come. And, we want to be ready.

In Bob Kirven's course outline for an "Overview of Swedenborgian Theology," he states, "The phrase, 'I'm only human,' usually refers to what is weak, evil, and false in our nature. But that is only a part of Swedenborg's concept of human nature. In that concept, 'only' is almost never applicable to 'human': for the only true measure of the potential

Kurt Fekete New Youth Director

The Education Support Unit of the Swedenborgian Church is proud to announce the hiring of our new Youth Director. Kurt Fekete was chosen from a pool of excellent and talented candidates. We are very excited about Kurt and his vision for the youth of our church. Kurt lives in Winhall, Vermont, has been a longtime member of Almont New Church Assembly, and has been active in the Swedenborgian Church Youth League, Transitions, and the National Church. Kurt began his position November 1, 2001.

Micelle Huffman, for EDSU

Greetings from Kurt Fekete

I have just been offered, and have accepted, the position of Youth Director. As our church's Youth Director, my responsibilities include providing guidance, programming, group organization and coordination, and hands-on interaction directly with the local and national youth and teen

leagues of the church. I will also be personally providing and recruiting youth leadership training for our youth leaders and retreat/camp staff.

My professional background includes work in the manufacturing industry involving staff supervision, process improvement, and management and engineering support. Here I learned valuable skills of organization, prioritization, and project management.

Although my interest in science and technology has remained, my true passion has never rested in the world of manufacturing and industry. I found myself most intrigued and engaged when I was involved in the human side of my job. I discovered that I was fulfilled and energized when I talked with employees and helped them solve problems and get through challenging times in their lives, or simply assisted them with their day-to-day struggles.

I spent much of my free time participating in Swedenborgian church retreats, camp sessions, and local church youth activities. Inevitably, I saw myself losing the fight against Divine Providence and decided to instead allow God to help me rediscover myself and lead me down a different path. I was thrilled to learn that our church had finally reached beyond the vision stage and laid the groundwork for the Youth Director position. I had



watched, waited, and anticipated the birth of this position for years, and I felt a deep, strong pull in my heart to apply for this job. I am extremely grateful to the church and the Youth Director selection committee for giving me the opportunity to chase my dream and live my passion.

I begin my new career realizing that I need to advance my formal religious education and gain specialized training in this field. I look forward with anticipation to building an energized, enthusiastic youth volunteer community. I am eagerly planning my visits to our local churches to speak with our youth and youth leaders to discover their vision and dreams. I charge into this position with hope, care, and an honest understanding and love for serving the Lord and the youth of our church and greater community. Thank you God for allowing my participation in this new and dynamic extension of our church family! 

New Vision for J. Appleseed *(Continued from page 166)*

- A series of pamphlets addressing life's transitions; and posters with eye-catching graphics.

The jappleseed.org website needs graphic doctoring and internet marketing. It needs visitors to make sales. At present, it has neither. Watch for big improvements here.

Vision. A few paragraphs later, it has a better ring. The vacationing J. Appleseed & Co. is back, ready to dive into projects and eager to take on your vision. What you can expect from me is cooperation and hard work. That includes a lot of listening to you, listening to Convention ministers and officers and listening to those curious about Swedenborg and our churches.

Together, we can take J. Appleseed up a notch. We can enhance our objectives to become a more vital resource center. We can strive for improvements at every level of creativity and production. We can target our marketing and distribution so that sales increase. We can make this be something!

I guarantee this vision-talk is more than cheerleading. The truth is, it will take considerable planning, energetic determination, and dedicated work to accomplish the above. I have made my commitment to COMSU to give them proof that my passion for editing is genuine, proof that quality workmanship inspires quantity, and proof that a new J. Appleseed & Co. will grow from our vision. 

Without your wounds,
where would
your power be?
The very angels
themselves cannot
persuade the wretched
and blundering children
on earth as can one
human being broken in
the wheels of living.
In love's service,
only the wounded
soldiers can serve.

— Thornton Wilder

This story was originally written for, and presented at, a Christmas party at the New York New Church in 1998. It has been slightly modified for a more general readership.

This is a true story. It takes place in Jersey City in 1954. I would prefer that it took place in the South of France in the late sixties, but then it would be fiction.

The relationships between the characters can be quite confusing. I will try to explain who is/was married/related to whom. Our story unfolds with my mother and stepfather (who was my father's best friend in the Army, my mother's best friend's ex-husband, and my godfather) and me living in a three-family frame house that they had purchased a few months before. They had basically sold everything they had to meet the down payment on the purchase price of \$5,400. This was gonna be a really lean Christmas. In fact, if my grandmother (my father's mother, my mother's ex-mother-in-law) hadn't come through with a bicycle and a Robert the Robot, all of my presents would have come from John's Bargain Store where the most expensive item would have been 98 cents. Now, the catalyst, or McGuffin, as Alfred Hitchcock called it, that would set these events in motion was the visit of my stepsisters, Janice and Jean (named after my mother) at Thanksgiving. There Jannie, as she was called, announced that she had a Sunday school project.

Right here would be a good time to talk about the religious affiliations of the characters in this story. All of them, including my grandmothers on both sides, were devout Roman Catholics, with a big problem. They were all excommunicated. This is because all of them were divorced and remarried, except for Kitty's sister Peggy. (Kitty was my stepfather's ex-wife, my mother's best friend, and my godmother.) Peggy was excommunicated because she married a Lutheran. As the kids got older, and it was time for them to get in the habit of going to the local parish church, the excommunicants would stand bitterly in



their Sunday best, while their neighbors partook of the Communion host, (which tasted *exactly* like the box that Nabisco Cheez-Tid-Bits came in. Trust me! I've eaten both). The upside of this was that once the kids were old enough to take themselves to church, the excommunicated went back to bed for another hour or so.

Which brings us to Jannie's Sunday school project. Rather than drag herself and the girls the six blocks or so over to St. John's Roman Catholic Church, Kitty, who was living with her sister Peggy, her brother-in-law Ray, and her niece and nephew Karen and Raymond, had her in-laws take Jannie a couple of blocks over to St. Paul's Lutheran Church. There she was enrolled in Sunday school.

The project was fairly simple and practical. Cut off the scenes from old Christmas cards, paste them on construction paper, and *voila!* a homemade Christmas card. Simple, you say? We had just moved a few months before, and although my mother had transported a can of vegetables from her first marriage (that's another great story, for later), we had been able to leave behind a metric ton of dreck, including old Christmas cards.

My parents asked Jannie, "When do you need them?"

"SOON!"

"Why us? Can't your aunt and uncle help you?"

"NO!" She explained that Karen and Raymond had first dibs on them. A later phone call to Kitty ascertained that the cards were needed on the Sunday before Christmas, in approximately three weeks.

So, my mother trudged off to the nearest five-and-dime and picked up a **giant economy-sized supervalue** Christmas assortment for about \$1. At the time, this could buy the average daily working class diet of a quart of milk, a loaf of bread, a quarter pound of cheap cold cuts, and a pack of non-filter cigarettes, so there was great resentment, parting with that buck.

When Jannie returned in two weeks for her scheduled visit, she was presented with the cards. Mission accomplished. Case closed. Well, not quite.

"They're *new!*" said Jannie.

"Yes, they are," said my mother. "And they cost a dollar."

"But they gotta be **OLD!**" cried Jannie, "Mr. Ferguson said so!" Mr. Ferguson, the Sunday school teacher, was called a filthy black Protestant (expletive). Not aloud, but loud enough in my mother's head so you could hear it. "Black" referred, of course, not to Mr. Ferguson's race, but the state of his soul.

Since children—and Jannie was only about five at this time—are extremely literal, no amount of coaxing or cajoling or bribes could shake her of her conviction that these cards had to be "old" or used. Phone calls to Kitty were to no avail. Who would want to put themselves in the middle of this situation? Finally, it was agreed that a batch of "old" Christmas cards would be delivered to Peggy and Ray's house before the Sunday deadline.

My parents viewed the approaching task with all the enthusiasm that one would show in cleaning a filthy oven, in my mother's case, or changing a gas meter in a rat-infested cellar, in the old man's case. Come Friday night, after the supper dishes had been cleared, the packet of cards that had been sitting on the dish cabinet like Poe's raven were taken, opened fountain pens produced, and the onerous task begun.

My old man (so-called by this time) also produced a bottle of Schenley's whiskey and a pitcher of ice water. A word about Schenley's: This was nasty stuff. Cheap and effective. Known locally as "rotgut" and other more explicit and picturesque terms. My old

(Continued on page 172)

THE NEW CHURCH OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Update

Dick and Linda Tafel

This new church planting, The New Church of Southwest Florida, is almost five years young. It was started from scratch: no pre-existing congregation, no building and no funds. As a matter of fact, there were no denominational plans available for how to start a new congregation, a new church. So, we basically used the old church model of starting with a core group and holding Sunday morning worship, hoping to grow this into a self-supporting congregation. We gathered a small group of interested people, found worship quarters, and held regular Sunday morning worship.

But our church group has never really grown very large. Dedicated? Yes! Standing room only on Sunday? No. So if we were to develop into an exciting, open-minded Christian action faith group, what would we have to change? The answer for direction had always been right before our eyes, but we did not see it at first.

Our Lord in his earthly ministry spent most of his time and energy among the people—healing, teaching, leading, loving and forgiving. It was only every so often that he would go to the temple in Jerusalem or to a local synagogue. What better model for the church! And so we made a major tactical change. We began looking for areas of ministry and service that were not being met. This is how our Kids' VIP Programs came into being, and with them our ministry of "Community Presence" was launched.

Helping Kids

Our five Kids' VIP Programs have received a lot of commendation and support from the community, and recognition from the Lee County Department of Juvenile Justice. Our

emphasis is on prevention. The mission statement for these programs says it well: "Implement spiritual ecology by saving and protecting our natural resources—our children." We think you will see that these programs overlap in many ways, flowing into and reinforcing each other. None of them exists in isolation. Briefly, these five Kids' VIP Programs are as follows:

The Kids' After-School Program is perhaps the best known in the community. Now in its fourth year, this program provides an adult-supervised gathering place for kids during after-school hours, where homework assistance, tutoring, crafts, and constructive play are available.

This year 36 kids are registered, with an average daily attendance of 22. Besides Rev. Dick, who is there every day, our own Joyce Fekete works three days a week. Community volunteers provide the rest of the staff. Denise Loomis and her teenage son Harry work three days a week. Two parents, Mary Harrison and



After School Program, kids with Joyce Fekete.

Jackie DeMilia, each volunteer one day a week. Two other women, Christina Fernandez and Unity minister Rev. Ann, also help one day a week. And teenagers Stephanie Samsky and Megan Elliott work one day a week to help fulfill the community service requirement at their high school.

Middle School Kids' Incentives encourage older kids to work in community service projects while earning a little pocket money. This provides a source of independence and pride, and helps deter destructive behavior such as stealing, drugs, or gang activity.

A few kids have taken advantage of this opportunity to become involved in the community and earn a little spending money at the same time. As an example, two kids worked several hours in our thrift shop to help with their share of the cost of going to Almont this past summer. Another kid needed money to attend a middle school dance and worked cleaning up around the beach. The pay for this work comes from Kids' VIP funds, or occasionally another community organization, business, or individual.

A Support System for Teens who have been placed in the juvenile justice system but not yet adjudicated affords an opportunity to work with teens, their families, and the court. Sometimes these teens can be rehabilitated without sending them to a residential program. Prevention is the key, but the state keeps cutting back on prevention programs. Their main thrust has been toward detention, punishment, and incarceration, which have all historically had high failure rates.

Rev. Dick has worked with a number of kids in trouble with the law. He accompanies them and their families to court appearances; intercedes with the judge for alternative sentencing options where appropriate; and is a contact for the ongoing support the church can offer families dealing with unpleasant events. For although a teenager may have shoplifted clothes from a store, or whatever other offense he or she may have committed, he/she is a child of God, and forgiveness and rehabilitation start in the here and now. Whether or not the child goes to jail, a positive relationship has been initiated.

Family Intervention Works. Sometimes family systems do not function as they should. Outside intervention can help families discover new ways of dealing and interacting with each other. Families gain strength as members understand and accept their responsibilities to each other and to the family unit.

The most common request for help Rev. Dick receives comes from the single-parent family. Or a referral from the school about a kid may lead to a family intervention. Meeting with parent(s) and kids, together or separately, usually starts the work. Rev. Dick works closely with school administration and teachers to get insights into issues affecting the kids. Enrolling a kid in the after-school program can provide a structured setting that reinforces positive behavior. Sometimes it may be possible to connect the family with outside resources—health care, financial assistance, legal help—that can help reduce the stress level. Basically, what the child (and parents) want and need is what we all want and need: love and acceptance. We work to discover new ways of expressing and reinforcing this.

(Continued on page 170)

THE NEW CHURCH OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

(Continued from page 169)

Update

Summer Programs for youth are essential to their well-being. We try to tie into existing local programs such as the day programs at Bay Oaks Recreation Center, or the Florida Sheriff's Ranches and other day and residential camps. However, we believe that the most effective program is our own church's summer camp in Almont, Michigan. Last year Rev. Dick and Linda took five kids to Almont. This past summer they took seven kids. This inter-generational camp afforded these kids the opportunity to see a different dimension of the spirit and to actually participate in their own growth. Five of these kids come from single-parent homes, and one lives with grandparents. One could almost see change in these kids by the end of the week. We deeply appreciate financial help from our Boston Church, Almont, and the denomination, that enabled us to make this trip.

Building Community Awareness

Community presence" is probably our biggest asset. It is best described as community-focused ministry. It started with the kids' programs, and expanded to other fronts. Rev. Dick's pastoral presence has had a lot to do with building it.

Our fledgling wedding ministry is one such example. Even though we don't have our own church building, we began a wedding ministry anyway. We work with couples to develop their own unique wedding ceremony and then celebrate it in the setting of their choice: beachside, country club, public park, private home, or wherever.

Through the after-school program and youth intervention work we have a close relationship with the Beach Elementary School. Teachers request us to lead programs for their classes—on topics ranging from "dealing with anger" to "taking responsibility for the safety and welfare of the school environment."

Since February, 2001, Rev. Dick has written a 750-word weekly column for *The Island Sand Paper*, a local paper. Most of these articles are inspirational/spiritual; some are thought-provoking editorials; a few are humorous. These have been well-received by the community at large, and afford yet another channel for reaching out into the community.

Because of his active involvement as chaplain for the Fort Myers Beach Fire Control District, Rev. Dick is often called for family emergencies, memorial services, baptisms, and just plain listening. Impromptu counseling sessions and a "listening ear" have resulted in informal sites for counseling being established in local bars. During the recent tropical storm and flooding, our thrift store gave away bedding, clothes, furniture, and food to people who had lost possessions. We continue to give away stuff to the truly needy.

But this story would not be complete without describing our free daily bread distribution program. This came about because of our already visible community-focused ministry. A new Publix supermarket opened on the Beach late last fall. When they first opened, they were throwing away their unsold bread. A supermarket employee who knew about our community work sug-



Dick playing soccer with the kids.

gested that we might arrange to get this bread. Rev. Dick immediately contacted management and worked out an agreement to get the leftover bread each day to distribute to those in need. Since then, we have delivered bread every day, except when no leftovers are available. We identified distribution locations where the poor, the homeless, and those living on the edge gather, work, or live, and have a regular "delivery route."

This ministry is much appreciated by many. It has given a new meaning to "Give us this day our daily bread." We as a church group are truly blessed to be able to do our part to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and bring comfort to the distressed.

A Space Challenge

Since our beginning, we have been a church without our own walls. We use negotiated space at the Fort Myers Beach Funeral Home for worship and meetings. We use Rev. Dick's car or a volunteer's car for our daily bread distribution. We use the rented thrift store for meeting the public, raising funds, and office space. The After-School Program uses negotiated space at the local Baptist Church.

Now, the funeral home where we worship is for sale. The asking price of \$385,000 is beyond our means. When it is sold, we must vacate. The conditions of sale include that it not be used as a funeral home. Thus negotiating use of the space will not be an option.

This is not all bad. We are spread out too much. The thrift store and church office need more room. We need space for the bread distribution program - and to add fruits and vegetables. The after-school program needs space better suited for homework and tutoring. We need space for worship, groups, weddings, senior citizens' programs. And new ventures not yet dreamed! So, we continue our search for facilities — either leased or purchased — to meet all our needs under one roof.

(Continued on page 173)



Virginia Street Church Announcement

It is with great regret that the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul announces the resignation of our beloved minister, the Rev. Kit Billings. Kit has been with our church over the past six years and has become not only a well-loved minister, but a valuable addition to our congregation. While Kit has grown with his experience of being a parish minister, the congregation at VSSC has also grown by his presence. He has given us a stability that has allowed us to grow on the earthly plane by doubling our weekly attendance at services, and to grow on a spiritual level by his enthusiastic support and leadership of discussion, prayer, and study groups.

When Kit announced his calling to St. Louis and his decision to go there, we did our best to convince him it was a wrong number, but putting aside our desire to keep Kit with us we wish him well in his new calling. I'm sure the St. Louis congregation will quickly realize the treasure that we are passing on to them.

At least with Kit remaining in the Illinois Association we will continue to see him on a regular basis.

Kit, we wish you well, God-speed, fair winds and following seas.

The Board of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church



A Fond Farewell to the Virginia Street Congregation

Kit Billings

It is with a sad, yet faithful heart that I announce my new call to minister with our St. Louis congregation south of us. This means that I must begin a process of saying goodbye to all of you here at the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church. There are certain duties we ministers have that tend to rend our hearts in two...and this is one of them. We've been through a lot together. We've grown very close. You have become a part of me, just as I know from many conversations with many of you over the years that I've become a part of you. Real love and *loving* tends to do that.

We've worshiped and prayed together within the Lord's Spirit of love. We've served and worked together...putting in many hours of good work in service of God's church. We've laughed and cried together; we've broken bread. We've sung many songs and shared many personal stories. In short, we've *truly done* Christian ministry together...and whenever parishioners and pastors do God's work as we've done, a heavenly blessing occurs: God carefully and tenderly knits our hearts together. And through this blessing the Lord has been able to renew us, heal us, support us, and *regenerate us*.

There is a great deal for us to celebrate as I look back over the past six years of ministry here in St. Paul. Perhaps the highest note of all was being host to our denomination's annual convention this past summer, which was a *first* for this congregation. And then I think about our annual Christmas pageants, our annual retreats, but most of all, weekly worship. It's been a *deep pleasure* for me to lead worship with you these past six years.

But as we all know so well, *change* is a regular part of life. Our Lord said, "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit." The Lord's spirit, like the wind upon the earth, effects movement and change. Change is a regular part of life, and now the "spirit of change" is blowing upon all of us in a significant way.

It was God's will that brought me to all of you six years ago here in Minnesota, and now it is his will that calls me to serve our brothers and sisters in Missouri. My time here as pastor in St. Paul has blessed me beyond words. You are all very gifted and talented men and women and children, and you have much to offer your future pastor.

But now is our time of severing and ending...a time to die in a sense, just as the leaves outside are ending their time of fullness. *Ecclesiastes* reminds us of these realities: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:...a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;...a time to tear, and a time to sew." But like the ebbs and flows of the seasons, you and I will be renewed and reborn. Christ spoke of the inevitable encounter of rebirth in life for all who embrace God's will as he had his moving nighttime interlude with Nicodemus. With every heartache God brings transformation; with every major change is an opportunity for growth.

God *always* has our highest good in his heart and mind, and so very bright days are ahead for all of us. I will move to Missouri in mid-January, 2002. Let us be real with our feelings as our journey of ministry together moves toward closure. Let us trust in God's will and leadership as he shepherds us always to the green pastures of heavenly growth on earth...to the places beside still waters. Let us be reminded of the Lord's protection and safekeeping as he stands near us with his rod and staff. A new chapter will soon unfold. I ask for your kind blessings when I begin my new post with our brothers and sisters in St. Louis, and may you always know that my love for you will never change...only the *means* through which it serves will change.

God bless you all my friends. Amen.



A Funny Christmas Story

(Continued from page 168)

man drank it usually in a bar at 25 cents a shot. The bottle was an economy move, since, as I mentioned, money was tight at the time.

"Care for one?" he asked my mother.

"Well, I guess," she replied, not being much of a whiskey drinker at that time.

So, a drink down the hatch, and the grim chore was underway. It started off as slow and tedious work, each card saying basically, "To Tom & Jean, from Joe & Mary," and on and on and on. However, a few more shots of Schenley's and the task seemed not too bad. In fact, it seemed to loosen the creativity hidden under all that resentment.

"How about," one of them ventured, "To Tom & Jean from Tom & Jerry?" That produced a snicker. "How about Dean & Jerry?" A giggle. "Tom & Jean, Here are two tickets to *Picnic*, Merry Xmas, Josh Logan." Heady chuckle. "Ike & Mamie." Loud guffaw. "Desi & Lucy." Roar of laughter.

I was in the living room watching *The Life of Riley* but soon came to the kitchen, lured by the gales of laughter.

"Whatcha doon?" I asked in our native tongue.

"Makin' out cards," I was told.

"Can I do some?" I asked hopefully, wanting to do something "adult."

"Sure!" I was told.

So, I scrawled on the remaining cards "John Wilkes Booth," "Walt Disney," "Joe Louis," and whatever names famous or infamous that my seven-year-old brain could dig up.

The cards were duly dispatched on Saturday afternoon. Operation complete. "Well, King, this case is closed! Woof!" Uh-huh.

The next day, Jannie arrived in Sunday school with her stack of "old Christmas cards" and set to work with safety scissors and library paste creating new and original art. As Mr. Ferguson walked by the tables, checking the

progress of his charges, he happened upon Jannie working on cards from the more "creative" period of Friday night's work. The Schenley's had helped add some variety to the scrawled signatures, so they did not look as if they were from the same hand. "Does your father *know* these people?" he asked as he riffled through the famous names. Jannie could only read a few words at this time. She was filling out the cards using a model posted on a board, such as, "To Mom and Dad" and she could sign "Janice." Also, any child, asked anything by an adult usually says: "Yes."

Mr. Ferguson fit the profile that the Catholic majority had constructed of the Protestant "Sunday School Superintendent." Naive, other-worldly, out of touch with the real world. (This was in contrast to the Catholic Sunday School instructors—drunks whose wives threatened to leave them unless they volunteered, or single women in their 50s and 60s, pressed into service only when there were no worldly and sophisticated nuns available.) So Mr. Ferguson informed the pastor of St. Paul's about Janice McDonough's father knowing all these famous people.

Come Christmas day, the minister greets the worshipers after services, and greets Kitty, who is attending services with her sister and brother-in-law. Curious, he asks, "Does your ex-husband really *know* all those people whose names were on those old Christmas cards?" Kitty, having been involved in a really intense romance these past months, and having no idea what has been going on, or what people the good reverend is talking about, says, "Uh, yeah! Sure!"

As she walks away the minister shakes his head. After all these years, you still can't tell about a person. He could have sworn that somebody had told him that Kitty's ex-husband works for the gas company in Jersey City.

A. J. Geddes is a member of the New York New Church. His story "Last Train out of WTC" appeared in the October 2001 Messenger.



The Healing Power of Dreams

Renee Billings-Machiniak

We now enter the season of dreaming. Winter brings frosty air, sparkling snowflakes and cozy evenings for reflection and deep slumber. We all have a choice to either ignore our dreams or to pay attention to them so that we can harvest greater understanding of God, ourselves, and others in our lives. Heightened awareness of our emotional and spiritual issues is available to us through understanding our dreams.

God teaches us through our dreams. We dream in images and symbols—and messengers, actual beings of light, reach into our dream states to enter into dialogue with us. Loved ones who have passed on send messages to us through our dreams, angels tending to our spiritual well-being serve the Lord's will for our lives, and at times certain aspects of ourselves "talk" in our sleep when our resistance, our barriers, are down.

There are many examples in the Scriptures of ways that God moves through our dream states. A good example is found when Joseph faced the question of whether or not to leave Mary when she was found to be with child. Joseph slept on it. God sent an angel to back up the dream and divine guidance led Joseph to act with wisdom. It is important for us to trust our dreams; God is in them, trying to move us.

Participating in dream work, i.e., journaling, dream classes, prayer, etc. builds deeper sensitivity and awareness to discern God's call for our lives. Dr. Margaret Dwyer suggests certain basic assumptions that we can remember as we dream into the winter:

- Dreams are always for our benefit
- Dreams show up in physical form
- We can cross over to past loved ones
- We can match dreams in a group
- Dreams can reach before birth and after death
- We can consciously interact in them
- **Harvest your dreams; miracles follow.**

The Rev. Renee Billings-Machiniak is pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of the Holy City in Royal Oak (Detroit) Michigan.

Editor's Note: The above article is reprinted from their church's December 1999 newsletter, but it seems especially appropriate for this Christmas season, when we need more than ever to listen to our inner selves and heed the guidance that is always there for us.



SCRIPT AND MUSICAL CD NOW AVAILABLE

Song of Spring *the story of Johnny Applesseed* a musical play for children of all ages

by
Ken and Laurie Turley

featuring
Mark Strange as Johnny Applesseed
with
Laurie Turley and the Ponside Chorale
and

Bruce Hobart and the Late Night Back Porch Orchestra

An entertaining, yet easy to perform musical play that tells the story of John Chapman, the Swedenborgian missionary and orchardist who traveled the Ohio Valley from 1790 until the mid 1800s. Through dialogue and song, the influence of Johnny's love, wisdom, and faith in God are portrayed in the midst of life on the frontier and how he

sought to help even those of differing cultures live in harmony.

The script and original songs were written by Laurie Turley with additions from Eli Dale and Ken Turley. The songs from the play are professionally recorded on CD, both with vocals and as instrumentals that can be used to accompany singers.

The entire CD also makes for wonderful listening. The music is played with skill and authenticity and sung with a joyous spirit by voices of all ages. It is an infectious collection of songs that ranges from a quiet meditation to a lively square dance, all with an upbeat sound and a caring, down to earth message. It's a joy to hear and, with the descriptive liner notes, a history lesson to boot! Order yours today, using the Order Form in this issue. (Be sure and include your name and return address!) Please send completed order and check or money order made out to:

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If you have questions or comments we would love to hear from you!

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Email: revken2001@yahoo.com



THE NEW CHURCH OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

(Continued from page 170)

Update



Thrift Shop

Paying for It

A few words about finances. We are in our second year of sunsetting, reducing the support we receive from the denomination for the minister's compensation. We have managed to raise locally funds needed for our operating budget, including the increased amount needed for sunsetting. In addition, we have raised funds for new facilities. Our first \$50,000 campaign was successful: About \$39,000 was raised locally and \$11,000 from around the country. We have now embarked on our second \$50,000 "new facilities" campaign. We have raised about

\$17,250-\$33,000 more will put us in a stronger position to negotiate for building space. We have also raised about \$20,000 for an endowment, as well as funds designated for kids' programs and a memorial fund. So we have been busy here!

Looking Forward

We do not know what the future may hold, especially in light of the events of 9-11. But we do know that our church has much to offer to this community—in terms of both speaking to the evil perpetrated upon us that day, and addressing the need for change in the spiritual environment. For instance, we initiated the community memorial service on Fort Myers Beach. Again we speak of our "community presence."

As he announced this past spring, Rev. Dick is ready to retire as soon as someone else can take the helm. As you can see, the New Church of Southwest Florida is still evolving into the kind of ministry it will become. The possibilities are endless.

As you read this story, we will be preparing for our fourth annual Christmas Eve service out on the beach, which attracts hundreds of visitors. In this Advent season, we send our greetings to our sister Swedenborgian churches and join with them in working to become "the New Church for the New Millennium."



When a group of professional people asked a group of 4-8-year-olds, "What does love mean?" one replied, "Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen." —Warren McLaren

Apple Blossom Music

works by
Ken and Laurie Turley

Musical Plays

"Christmas 2000" a contemporary setting of traditional carols Music from the children's pageant that puts the Christmas story in a modern setting and features a collection of Christmas classics with a whole new spirit that is both familiar and completely original.

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
CD recording	\$12.00	_____	_____ .00
Script of the play with lyrics	5.00	_____	_____ .00
Musical Score for pa/gtr and voices	10.00	_____	_____ .00

"Song of Spring: The Story of Johnny Appleseed" a musical that brings a myth to life. This is a children's play with an historically accurate script and wonderful music that has the down home feel of a back porch jam session with all the skill and expertise of experienced studio musicians. With original songs, wonderful singing and traditional folk music, the seeds of Johnny's loving spirit are in full bloom.

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
CD recording	\$12.00	_____	_____ .00
Script of the play with lyrics	5.00	_____	_____ .00
Musical Score for pa/gtr and voices	10.00	_____	_____ .00

"Sam and Dee" an original rock musical (STILL IN FINAL PRODUCTION) A new look at the Samson and Delilah story, that by asking the question, "What if?" explores through dialogue, dance and music, the issues of love and hate, war and peace, pride and prejudice, race, religion and gender. The music is rock-jazz and stands quite well alone or as the highly effective score of the play.

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
CD recording	\$12.00	_____	_____ .00
Script of the play with lyrics	5.00	_____	_____ .00
Musical Score for pa/gtr and voices	10.00	_____	_____ .00

Musical Recordings

"Revelation" an oratorio based on The Revelation of St. John the Divine. This double CD is 90 minutes of original music setting the challenging and dramatic text of the last book of the Bible in musical styles that range from gospel to rock to jazz to wholly original. Not for the faint of heart!

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
Double CD recording	\$20.00	_____	_____ .00

"Songs for the Journey" music for worship Published by Sacred COW Music, this is the first in an annual installment of twelve songs for choir and/or congregation and two anthems. The recording features the singing of Laurie and three original pieces by Ken. Wonderful for performing in church, wonderful for listening at home.

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
CD recording with vocals	\$10.00	_____	_____ .00
CD recording instrumental	10.00	_____	_____ .00
Musical Score for pa/gtr and voices	15.00	_____	_____ .00

Sheet Music

Psalm 19 "The Heavens Proclaim" A duet for soprano/alto or tenor/baritone with piano accompaniment. A quietly moving celebration of the beauty of creation.

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
Sheet Music	\$ 4.00	_____	_____ .00

Psalm 23 "The Lord is my Shepherd" A setting for solo voice or children's choir with piano accompaniment.

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
Sheet Music	\$ 4.00	_____	_____ .00

Psalm 42 "As the Hart Longs for Flowing Streams"
A moving meditation for solo voice and piano.

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
Sheet Music	\$ 4.00	_____	_____ .00

Psalm 51 "Create in Me a Clean Heart, O Lord"
For soloist and choir with piano. A moderate gospel feel with a message of repentance and renewal.

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
Sheet Music	\$ 4.00	_____	_____ .00

Psalm 113 "Praise the Lord!"
Two part (for duet or choir) with piano/guitar accompaniment. A joyous celebration that works well as a processional.

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
Sheet Music	\$ 4.00	_____	_____ .00

Psalm 121 "I will Lift up my Eyes unto the Hills"
A meditative solo with classical guitar accompaniment.

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
Sheet Music	\$ 4.00	_____	_____ .00

Psalm 139 "O Lord, You have searched my Heart"
An up-tempo duet with piano in contemporary style.

ITEM	PRICE	NUMBER	SUB-TOTAL
Sheet Music	\$ 4.00	_____	_____ .00

SUB-TOTAL of all ITEMS indicated above \$ _____ .00

POSTAGE AND HANDLING _____ .00

\$2.00 per order

plus \$1.00 per CD and/or Script and

\$.50 per item of sheet music

TOTAL PAYMENT FOR THIS ORDER _____ .00

(Be sure and include your name and return address!)

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c/o Apple Blossom Music
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Fryeburg, ME 04037

If you have questions or comments we would love to hear from you!
Phone (207) 935-4500

Email: revken2001@yahoo.com



Marriage

Lange and Driver—Heather Lange and Mark Driver were united in marriage August 25, 2001, at the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Rev. Kit Billings officiating. Heather is the daughter of Sylvia Lange, the church's longtime organist. The couple is residing in the Twin Cities.

Deaths



Calder—Paul B. Calder, 62, member of the Royal Oak, Michigan, Church of the Holy City entered the spiritual world August 26, 2001, due to a sudden heart attack. He is remembered as a very kind, intelligent, gentle man. The funeral was conducted August 31, officiated by the Rev. Renee Billings-Machiniak.

Heath—Nancy B. Heath, a member of the Fryeburg Church of the New Jerusalem, entered the spiritual world October 8, 2001, in Fryeburg, Maine. She is survived by her husband, Dale, and her two children, Randy and Shawn. The resurrection service was conducted October 12, 2001, at the Fryeburg church, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.

Osgood—Rachel Osgood, age 3, daughter of Timothy and Gretchen (Krim) Osgood, entered the spiritual world

September 29, 2001. Rachel attended the primary class at Fryeburg New Church; besides her parents, she is survived by her brothers Jacob and Joshua Osgood. The resurrection service was conducted October 3, 2001, at the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, the Revs. Kenneth Turley and Father Ralph Boisvert officiating.

Rice—Ethel Rice, age 91, longtime member of the Cambridge church, widow of the Rev. Wilfred Rice and a former secretary of the denomination, entered the spiritual world September 29, 2001, in Cambridge, Mass. Ethel served a lengthy and distinguished term as recording secretary from 1968-1984, managed the New Church Book Room in Boston for several years, edited and published a book of her husband's sermons entitled, *A Lamp Unto My Feet*, and wrote a history of the New Church Women's Alliance, as well as serving on numerous church boards and committees. Her husband served, among others, the Fryeburg, Brockton and Cambridge churches for years. The memorial service was conducted October 2, 2001, at the Cambridge church, the Rev. F. Robert Tafel officiating. Mrs. Rice is survived by her son, Dennison, three daughters, Miriam Marra, Ellen Burt, Dr. Caroline Barnes; seven grandchildren and one great grandson.

Change of Address:

Mary Crenshaw recently moved to Nevada. Her new address is
2153 Point Mallard Drive
Henderson, NV 89012
(702) 492-0923

Jenn Tafel has completed her cross-country odyssey and arrived at her Mom's—Mareta and Harvey Tafel—where she will be staying for awhile.

Her address is:
25837 Oak St., # 10
Lomita, CA 90717
Phone: (310) 539-0125
(She will be getting her own phone, but meanwhile this number is good.)
email: wendywonton@hotmail.com



Stonehouse Property to be Sold

With a great sense of disappointment, the Board of Directors of the Pacific Coast Association voted to sell the Rose Hill property, home of the Stonehouse and the Church of Puget Sound. The Board found it necessary to take this step because of the dire financial condition of the PCA. If this action had not been taken financial reserves would have been exhausted within six months. Since early this year, the Board has been exploring all possible avenues to keeping the property. But with dwindling reserves and the severe financial downturn, the Board found the sale the only responsible option it could take.

Nearly two years ago, the PCA undertook this financial investment so that the Stonehouse and the Church of Puget Sound in the Northwest could have permanent homes and develop their ministries. At that time the PCA had sufficient financial means to support these ministries. However, events of the past year forced a reevaluation of the project. The Pacific Coast Association is committed to ministry in the Northwest and trusts that it will be in a financial position to help in the near future.

—Rev. Harvey Tafel, President
PCA Board of Directors



Paul Martin Departs Stonehouse

The Rev. Paul Martin, founder and longtime director of the Swedenborg Spiritual Growth Center, a.k.a. the Stonehouse Bookstore and Growth Center, was removed from his employment by a vote of the Stonehouse Board of Directors on October 2, 2001.

His mailing address is now: 20215 320 Ave. NE, Duvall, WA 98019. His phone number is 425-844-9050. E-mail paul@pscs.org.

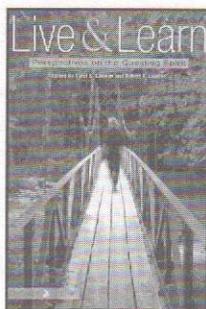
The Rev. Ernest Martin, assistant to Paul at the Stonehouse for the past two years, is no longer associated with the Stonehouse. His address is the same as Paul's and his phone number is 425-788-6916. E-mail erni@pscs.org.

Paul, Sandie, and Erni will continue to sponsor and host workshops, retreats, programs, and services at Mosswood Hollow, the family's 40-acre retreat center in Duvall, Washington.

—Paul Martin
October 30, 2001

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 15 years after his death. This 1787 organization eventually spawned the present General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches. As a result of Swedenborg's own spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church today 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. Swedenborg shared in his theological writings 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 would conclude, "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.

The new Chrysalis Reader, *Live & Learn: Perspectives on the Questing Spirit*, explores the trait that makes our species special: a desire to find answers. From the confessions of a professional student to the search for the miraculous, this collection of original essays, short stories, poetry, and art wrestles with the question of what brings forth a questing spirit.



This latest Chrysalis Reader looks at how learning and teaching take place, as experienced in, and sometimes in spite of, the classroom. A teacher learns a truth from what becomes for him an absurdity—the assigning of grades. A Midwestern community is forever changed by the courage of one student.

Symbiotic relationships between living and learning take readers on a literary pilgrimage to Virginia Woolf's neighborhood, where, at an abandoned railway station, the significance of a diary entry brings a writer's past into emotional focus. A writer learns how to give the perfect dinner party by dining with the family of John Dos Passos.

A literary smorgasbord, *Live & Learn* presents

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