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God, grant me
serenity
to accept the things
I cannot change,
courage
to change the things
I can, and
wisdom
to know the difference.

Contents

129 In the Presence of My Enemies**131** Swedenborg and the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous,
*Wilma Wake***133** What Brings Alcoholics to AA?,
Karen Paley

Departments

136 The Family Connection**136** Families and Non-Violent Communication, *Ted Klein***137** The President Reports**137** September 1990 Activities**138** Outreach**138** Bradshaw on the Family - Two Success Stories,
*Gloria L. Toot and Patte LeVan***140** Opinion**141** Commencements**142** On Fundraising**142** Ask and Ye Shall Receive,
*Rev. Jerome Poole*Cover: *The Serenity Prayer, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services*

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Linda Mahler,
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Editorial Address:

The Messenger
1592 N. 400 W.
LaPorte, IN 46350

Business & Subscription Address:

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Guest Editorial

Moving Toward the Light

Twelve-Step Programs
Regeneration in Action

As a guest in this space, let me begin by thanking Editor Patte LeVan for devoting two articles plus this page to the subject of Alcoholics Anonymous and other Twelve-Step programs that have been modeled after it. As a member of AA, I rejoice to see members of my church learn more about this program that means so much to me. As a minister of the Swedenborgian Church, I am glad to see articles in the *Messenger* about this concrete illustration of how Swedenborg's doctrine of Regeneration works in the lives of people today.

The first stage of Regeneration, called Repentance, is a process of recognizing the need for change in life, combined with a commitment to making that change. For alcoholics (or over-eaters, or those addicted to drugs, or those in need of any of the 12-Step programs), that process is framed in specific terms by the first three Steps of the Twelve Steps of Recovery.

The second stage, Reformation—the hard work of acting as if the change were really in place—is guided by concrete, realistic directions in the next five Steps. The final stage, also called Regeneration, is partly described in the last two Steps, and partly realized in the renewal of life that comes from following the Steps.

The process of Regeneration, as described in the ninth and tenth chapters of *True Christian Religion*, draws our attention because it makes so much sense. The Twelve Steps of Recovery draw our attention to the same process because they have worked visibly in hundreds of thousands of lives.

Alcoholics Anonymous includes Catholics, Jews, and all manner of Protestants, but it includes a number of agnostics as well (particularly among newcomers). Respect for this

diversity leads to a lot of talk about "A Power Greater than ourselves," or "Higher Power." However, almost everyone who has been in the program for long, and has come to say, "It works!," has a strong personal relationship—involving a commitment well beyond "belief"—with that power. Many speak of "...my Higher Power, whom I choose to call God."

I have met clergy of many denominations at AA meetings, and a majority of them—including Swedenborgian ministers in AA or other Twelve-Step groups—speak of deepening their relationship to God as a result of the program. Like the author of "In the Presence of My Enemies," I joined AA after several years' experience in the Swedenborgian ministry. Others found the particular Twelve-Step program they needed before they were ordained, and some of our ministers were in AA before they found Swedenborg. Whatever direction we have come from, all of us have seen Swedenborgian theology and the Twelve Steps as strong reinforcements of each other.

The emotional intensity of "In the Presence of My Enemies" is neither exaggerated nor unusual among stories of AA members. For example, I joined AA after hospitalization for internal hemorrhaging, caused by alcohol—severe enough that there is little question AA saved my life. But it seems even more important to me, that after AA saved my life, it gave me a better life. It taught me "to the life" (to use one of Swedenborg's vivid phrases) the practical value of the doctrine of Regeneration, and led me to a moving experience of the presence of God.

The respective authors of our guest editorial and "In the Presence of My Enemies" wish to remain anonymous, in keeping with the tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous.

In the Presence of My Enemies

I will never forget the first time I realized just what this line of the 23rd Psalm is talking about. I was in a state of desperation and internal pain; a very real hell. I didn't know who I was. I knew parts of me—those that hurt and simmered constantly with a hidden rage. The parts of me that had once known joy, peace and meaning had been lost somewhere along my life's journey. Every day I felt like a puzzle that was missing more and more pieces. And those pieces that remained didn't fit together. I knew I was losing my mind, and the thought of doing so was starting to seem like a pleasant alternative to my anguish. I prayed that insanity would bring relief. If it didn't, at least I knew that then I wouldn't care anymore.

I had been in therapy for six months while this internal hell continued. My therapist admitted that my progress was painfully slow, and with words that seemed like a knife through my heart, he told me that I would have to feel worse before I could get better. I sat in his office and cried. I asked if he had anything to drink. He asked what I meant, and I told him that the only way I could face this agony was if I could drink myself into a state of oblivion. He asked how often I did this. Not caring what he thought, I admitted that I did this almost every day. He asked if I had ever considered joining Alcoholics Anonymous. A seed of hope had been planted, although I was unaware of it at the time.

With therapy going so slowly, I tried to get help by other means. I took my private hell to several ministers in our church. Every one I spoke with was sympathetic, but in retrospect I am stunned by one common thread. When I admitted my feelings, they were accepted. But when I spoke of the quantity of alcohol I was consum-

ing, most of the responses I received were in the vein of: "No one can drink that much." "I don't blame you for drinking so much with what you're going through!" And even, "Well, if it will help you open up, let's have a couple together." (I don't report this to point fingers or make accusations, but rather to bring it out into the open. We must confront our ignorance of this disease.)

Finally, after an evening of privately consuming three bottles of Schnapps, in spite of my intoxication I called out for help and was answered by a voice that understood my hell. I dialed the AA hotline. Without knowing it, I had taken the first step. "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and

◆
*The church has taught me
about spirituality.
AA teaches me
how to use it.*
◆

that our lives had become unmanageable." I was asked if I needed for someone to come to my house. I declined. I was then asked if I could make it to a meeting the next day. I promised to attend. The last words that person said to me were: "I know the pain you're going through and I want you to remember that you don't have to ever feel that way again." A spark of hope began with those words. At last, my enemies weren't lurking in the dark corners of my mind. God had brought them to a table and was sitting me down to take a good look at each and every one of them. I was in their presence.

The next night was a miracle. I walked into that meeting and was greeted more warmly than I had ever been welcomed anywhere before. Complete strangers hugged me and offered me coffee and a place to sit. They introduced themselves. They laughed. I sat there and saw people who didn't hurt, who admitted that they were alcoholics without turning their heads or looking at the floor. I looked around the room and noticed a large banner on the wall that proclaimed the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. My eyes immediately went to Step two, "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." I turned to a woman sitting beside me and asked, "Is that true?" She took my hand and responded in one word. "Yes." I believed her.

These two steps began an amazing change of course in my life's journey. Through the Twelve Steps of AA I have learned about life, about God, and about serenity. Each of the Twelve Steps is a treasure chest of wisdom and truth, but today, for me, it's still the first two that are the cornerstones of my recovery. The journey from hell to heaven is no longer an impossible feat—it's but twelve steps long. Even though I was frightened at first to take those steps, and still am on occasion, I also know that by the grace of God and AA, I never have to take them alone. Someone will always be there to walk with me.

I don't ever want to forget who I am and will always be—an alcoholic. But I thank God that I don't ever have to be a drunk again. AA has taught me that picking up that first drink means death for me. It's a miracle that I've been able to go over two years without picking up a drink.

(continued on page 130)

Alcoholics Anonymous

(Statement Read To Open Every AA Meeting)

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

The 12 Steps of AA

1. *We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.*
2. *Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
3. *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
4. *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
5. *Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
6. *Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
7. *Humbly asked Him to remove all these defects of character.*
8. *Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
9. *Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
10. *Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*
11. *Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him.*
12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

In the Presence of My Enemies . . .

(continued from page 129)

I can only do this by each and every day asking God to keep me sober, for in reality I have very little to do with it. God, my higher power, is what keeps me sober. I ask God to sit at my table every day. Booze's chair is still there—always will be—but for today it's empty. The disease, after all, is Alcohol-*IS*-m, not Alcohol-*WAS*-m.

Has my Higher Power restored me to sanity? Perhaps the answer to this question lies in the fact that I seldom wonder anymore if I am going crazy. AA taught me a long time ago that being normal was one problem in life that I would never have to face. As long as I work the Steps I know that I'm open to God restoring me to sanity. But that's God's choice, not mine.

Though I've focused thus far on the first two Steps, each of the Twelve Steps represents an essential aspect of recovery. Each Step is a gateway, a door that must be approached, looked at, felt, touched, opened, and passed through again and again. As one of our slogans states, "The elevator is broken, you've got to use the Steps." And yes, we AA's thrive on slogans—One Day at a Time, Keep it Simple, Don't Drink Today, Let Go, Let God, Keep Coming Back, etc. These slogans convey the Steps in simple language that all alcoholics can understand.

As an alcoholic who is also a Swedenborgian minister, there is something else that I want to touch upon in this article but have struggled with just how to go about it. I've decided that the best way will be to honestly share another aspect of my disease. When I joined AA, drinking and religion had become so intertwined that when I finally wrestled with confronting my disease I seriously thought of leaving the ministry and the church. After all, when I was an active drinker my affinity to alcohol was a real plus in terms of being accepted into the church. We Swedenborgians have a deep love affair with proofs of all kinds! My relationship with Convention had relied heavily upon drinking the night away at meetings and feeling as though I had

finally attained success when asked to certain parties. I know that I'm not alone in this, even though we are reluctant to admit it.

Part of me feared that by joining AA I would no longer be accepted by people in the church—and another part of me recognized that certain behavior was now unacceptable to me. It was a two-way conflict. When I finally admitted these feelings to a member of our church who is in AA, she replied, "Yes, this church enabled my disease, but I thank God that now it is also helping me in my recovery. First, it was a church that helped me get sick. Now, it's helping me get well." With those words I decided to stay.

How is this church helping me to recover? First, in the acceptance that it is not the primary source of my spiritual growth! The church has taught me about spirituality. AA teaches me how to use it. AA has enabled me to finally understand what our teachings have to say about life and spiritual growth. It is as though in each of the Twelve Steps, aspects of our teachings come to life! I've yet to find anything in the AA program that contradicts our teachings. The compatibility of these two approaches is amazing. I understand my relationship with God so much better. I accept spirituality as a given in my life. And I now understand how my life is portrayed in scriptural images and parables. Through AA, I've found a church of the heart instead of the brain.

A second way that this church is aiding my recovery is in accepting the fact that although the two organizations share compatible approaches to spirituality, that is as far as the relationship can go. I have often heard other Swedenborgian members of AA express similar feelings about this. We acknowledge to ourselves that the Twelve Steps lead us through a process of regeneration. There is even somewhere in my mind a hazy recollection that Lois W. (wife of AA co-founder Bill W., and founder of Al-Anon) was a member of our church. Even though we dream of shouting this compatibility from the rooftops, even though we've all been tempted to pound the

(continued on page 141)

SWEDENBORG AND THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Wilma Wake



I first heard about the connection between Swedenborg and the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon in the spring of 1986 as I

was nearing graduation from a Boston seminary with a Master of Divinity degree. I had no idea what I would do with the degree or my life, and friends had strongly urged me to read Emanuel Swedenborg and look into the Swedenborgian Church. As part of that search I called Mary Kay Klein to request a visit to the Swedenborg School of Religion. I was invited to attend a core seminar, where a student would be giving a presentation. The student was Deborah Winter, and her presentation suggested that there was a theological similarity between the 12 Steps and Emanuel Swedenborg. Having long been interested in the 12 Steps as a spiritual growth process, I was utterly fascinated, and began at once reading and talking with people about it. With the help of Dr. Robert Kirven, a faculty member at SSR, I put together a research project on the subject. Although the research has not really ended, I'd like to share what I have learned to date about this possible connection between Emanuel Swedenborg and the 12 Steps.

Two ways in which Swedenborg and the 12 Steps could be related are historically, in terms of a direct or indirect influence of Swedenborg on the development of the Steps, and theologically. Whether or not he may

have historically influenced the Steps, there is a strong correlation between Swedenborg's concept of regeneration and the spiritual growth process of the Steps. I'd like to look first at the historical evidence of Swedenborg's influence on the Steps and then consider the theological similarities.

The Historical Evidence

The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous were put together by Bill Wilson, founder of AA, in the late 1930s. There is some evidence that Bill W. could have known about Swedenborgian concepts and may have incorporated them into the 12 Steps. The strongest bit of evidence comes from the memoirs of Bill's wife, Lois. She says in her autobiography:¹

"Dad's father, Nathan Clark Burham, practiced law and medicine and was also a minister of the Swedenborgian Church in Lancaster. He wrote a book, *Discrete Degrees*, about the relation Swedenborg had found between the spiritual and the natural life."²

So Lois' grandfather was a Swedenborgian minister, which suggests Lois may have had considerable background in Swedenborgian theology. An additional link comes from Dr. George Dole, a faculty member of SSR. He reports that his wife Lois' parents had a summer cottage near the cottage of Lois Wilson's parents. Lois Dole's father, John Seekamp, was a friend of Lois Wilson's father, Dr. Burnham. Dr. Burnham was the physician for the Seekamp family and a devoted Swedenborgian. In fact, Lois Seekamp (George Dole's

wife) was named after Lois Burnham (Bill W.'s wife) who was 15 years older than she.

To get more clarity on this subject, Rev. Jim Lawrence wrote directly to Lois Burnham Wilson in 1987, prior to her death. He asked her for her opinion on whether Bill was influenced by the Swedenborgian Church. She wrote back: "I don't believe being a Swedenborgian had a direct influence, but it did much to make me ready for the message of the Twelve Steps, which were based on the Six Principles of the Oxford Groups. As for my husband, he had a great deal of respect for the Swedenborgian Church, but I doubt he knew enough about it for it to have had an influence on him."²

There are also some indirect ways that Swedenborg may have influenced Bill. One is through the works of William James, particularly his

(continued on page 132)

Recommended Reading

Unlocking Your Spiritual Potential
A Twelve Step Approach
by Grant R. Schnarr

General Church pastor and founder of the Chicago New Church Grant Schnarr writes, "*Unlocking Your Spiritual Potential* is a back-to-basics approach to personal spiritual development. Based on the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, this nonsectarian program will set you on a solid road to spiritual progress. By working through these Steps, you will find a new freedom from the destructive power of guilt, fear, anger, want, and resentment. Living by the insights the program awakens, you will discover a new relationship with God, self, and others—a relationship that is knowing, loving, heartfelt, and free."

In addition to very clear and helpful explanations of each of the Twelve Steps, Rev. Schnarr openly shares his personal feelings of initial fear and anxiety as he worked the Steps in his own spiritual growth. The author is also co-founder of the Twelve Steps Fellowship for Spiritual Growth.

Highly recommended.

Paperbound, 11 pages, \$4.85.
Abbey Press, St. Meinrad, Indiana 47577.
May be ordered from the General Church Book Center,
Box 278, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009.

Swedenborg and 12 Steps

(continued from page 131)

Varieties of Religious Experience.

William's father had at one time been in a period of deep depression, and he was only able to work his way out of it by reading Emanuel Swedenborg. It is unclear how much his experience influenced his son, but one biographer of William James quotes a letter he wrote to his father shortly before the latter's death. In it, William expressed a desire to talk with his father about Swedenborgian theology, and said he was sure it had informed his own thought in ways he was not aware of. James' *Varieties* certainly has a Swedenborgian flavor. And when Bill W. was in the hospital for his last detox before sobriety, he had a powerful spiritual experience that left him convinced of the existence of God. In order to help him make sense of that experience, his friend Ebby brought him a copy of James' book to read in the hospital.

Another way that Swedenborg may have indirectly influenced the development of AA and the 12 Steps is through Carl Jung. In fact, it was in Jung's consulting room in Zurich that the idea of recovery from alcoholism as a spiritual experience was first espoused and documented. An alcoholic named Rowland H. went to consult that famous therapist in 1931, hoping for a cure for his drinking. Jung said that only a spiritual conversion experience would work. Rowland found such an experience through the Oxford Group,³ an evangelical religious group that was a precursor to AA. And he passed the good news on to his alcoholic friend Ebby who passed it on to his alcoholic buddy Bill W.⁴

Bill Wilson, after his retirement, felt it was time to acknowledge his debt to Carl Jung and wrote him: "This concept (of spiritual experience) proved to be the foundation of such success as Alcoholics Anonymous has since achieved. This has made conversion experience . . . available on almost a wholesale basis . . . as you will now clearly see, this astonishing chain of events actually started long ago in your consulting room, and it was directly founded upon your own humility and deep perception."⁵

Jung acknowledged in his

autobiography that he read Swedenborg, although he never admitted any particular influence from him. In fact, he was rather critical of some of Swedenborg's experiences. However, Dr. Robert Kirven of SSR quotes Aniela Jaffe, Jung's secretary, as saying that Jung was unwilling to acknowledge an influence from Swedenborg because the latter had had more psychic experiences than he did. Jaffe made this comment at the Eranos Conference in 1984.⁶

It is possible to surmise, therefore, that Swedenborg may have had a direct or indirect influence on the development of the 12 Steps. He may have had an indirect influence through William James or Carl Jung. It also seems likely that Bill was influenced to some extent by his wife and her Swedenborgian relatives and friends. However, even if there was no historical relationship, the fact remains that there are strong parallels between the 12 Steps and the concept of regeneration. Of most significance here is that theological—as well as philosophical and psychological—similarities do exist.

Theological Similarities

Swedenborg's concept of regeneration has three stages: repentance, reformation, and regeneration. The first stage, according to *True Christian Religion*, (TCR)⁷ involves self-examination, supplication, and confession. This incorporates much of the first three or four steps of AA, which involve acknowledging one's powerlessness, coming to believe in a higher power, turning one's life over to this power, and then starting to make an inventory of one's shortcomings. Swedenborg also wrote in other places about the relationship between a recognition of powerlessness and the need for behavioral and attitudinal change, such as in his concept of operating "as if of self"—assuming that we are responsible for changes, although in fact they are from God.

The second stage of regeneration is reformation where, according to TCR, one's actions begin to exemplify a life of charity. These correspond roughly in the 12 Steps to numbers four through nine. In these steps, one is admitting

the nature of his/her wrongs, asking God to remove the shortcomings, and then starting to make amends to those one has harmed in the past.

The final stage of the regeneration process is that of regeneration itself. Here, one attains a spiritual rebirth. One has a new will and new understanding which exist together in the spiritual region of the mind and bring order to the parts controlled by the old will. This corresponds in the 12 Steps to numbers nine or ten through 12. In these steps, one continues to take personal inventory, to acknowledge when one has been wrong, to meditate and pray regularly to improve contact with God, and to carry this message to other alcoholics.

So, then, there are basically four primary points of similarity between regeneration and the 12 Steps of AA:

- Beginning with a sense of hopelessness, powerlessness; a recognition of one's sins.
- A confession of those sins or wrongs to a God or Higher Power.
- An attempt to behave in a different way; to make amends to others (12 Steps).
- A concept of being changed—either being regenerated or having had a spiritual awakening (12 Steps).

It seems to me, therefore, that through the spiritual growth possible in 12 Step programs, one can develop in a way that both enriches Swedenborgian theology and is enriched by it. Whether or not there was ever a link between the two historically, there is certainly a similarity in concept which perhaps says something about the universality of Swedenborg's regeneration, as well as about the deep spiritual insight in the 12 Steps.

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Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake became an ordained Swedenborgian minister in June, 1990 (see August, 1990 Messenger). Dr. Wake is a social worker working with addictions in Franklin, New Hampshire. She is also working on a Dr. of Ministry degree, with the 12 Steps the subject of her thesis.

What Brings Alcoholics to AA ?

Karen Paley

Ten years ago I was an inexperienced social worker who allowed a client to pull out a pint of whiskey and drink during our sessions. I am embarrassed to admit it. To my credit, I did question his behavior, but was easily put off with "Would you rather see me sit here and shake?" What could I say? I did not have a clue. My supervisor did. "You don't believe your clients can stop drinking." And what could I have said to that? I could not even rise to my own defense because *I had never met an alcoholic who stopped drinking.*

Nine years later it was suggested that I might pick up a few clinical ideas if I sat in on open AA meetings. At my first meeting I was shocked—so great was the disparity between the denial and hopelessness that I had become accustomed to from my clients and the open admission of the intimate details of members' drinking careers.

This meeting was so emotionally powerful that I found myself going back for more. After some time I realized that I had been unconsciously asking what motivated these people to join Alcoholics Anonymous? I reviewed the literature and found much professional praise for the organization but no clear study of precipitative factors to attendance. I began my own study.

I carefully listened to each speaker's self-report, later writing it down, with special attention given to what motivated each person to come to that first AA meeting. Members referred to the experience as "hitting bottom" a point at which they become so destitute that they wanted to either die or get help.

I wanted to know more about this process of hitting bottom. Was it a reaction to an external stimulus like losing a job because of drinking or losing a spouse and children when they walk out the door saying they have had enough? Or was it a totally internal process wherein the alcoholic became paralyzed with acute anxiety and fear?

My initial hypothesis was that there may come a particular moment when, as in a solar eclipse, the external pressure and the internal pain intersect, and the alcoholic becomes open to getting help. Ned is a good example of this kind of synchronicity. He talked about going through "the most painful days of [his] life" when a friend in AA came to talk with him. Hearing the man's "drunkalog," Ned did not think he was "that bad" but went to his first meeting anyway.

I now realize that help-seeking is actually the end result of a long process, incorporating both internal responses and external forces. Each difficulty encountered makes drinking more and more uncomfortable to the alcoholic. Yet at what point does the individual actually seek help?

AA asks itself this question every three years. In 1986 the General Service Office of AA carried out its seventh triennial survey of its membership. Out of a reported U.S. and Canadian membership of 804,000, the sample studied was 6,977: 73 percent credited their coming to the influence of others (AA members, rehabilitation programs, counselors, family members, doctors, or correc-

(continued on page 134)

What Brings Alcoholics to AA?

(continued from page 133)

tional institutions); 27 percent indicated that they came on their own. If they came on their own, then there was no one else involved. *Another person helped the alcoholic get into AA 73 percent of the time.*¹

With permission from an AA General Service Board staff member, I attended open meetings and collected 63 drinking stories. The results of my own small sample exactly matched those of AA's 1983 and 1986 surveys. I too found that another individual was a significant motivator 73 percent of the time.

I have taken the liberty of gleaning from the stories what the recovering alcoholics themselves found most helpful or effective from the friends and relatives who were concerned. All names have been changed and identifying data deleted.

Three Categories

The 63 stories fall into three categories pertaining to the most salient factor in getting the alcoholic to AA. These categories are: *external* pressure (22, or 35 percent); *confluent* experiences of external and internal pressure, the *simultaneous* cases (24, or 38 percent); and, *internal* dynamics (the 17, or 27 percent that got to AA on their own).

The *Externals* were not hard to detect:

Leslie: "One day my husband was packing his bags to move out with more determination than he had ever shown before. This time I knew that he meant it. I begged him to stay. I said, 'Don't leave. I'll take your advice. I'll go to AA.'"

Joe: "My wife was calling my father with 'intelligence reports' on me. One day he just flew to my home, walked in, and announced that I had to call AA right then and there or move out. He said, 'I'm not going to see my grandchildren affected by your drinking.' My dad was a big cop who had walked some pretty rough beats. I was afraid if I didn't do what he said, he was

going to kill me."

The message from the other person was communicated to the alcoholic in such a way as to make it clear it was no idle threat, nothing that could be expected to blow over within a day or two.

I classified an alcoholic as a *simultaneous* case if, at a time when he was experiencing personal discomfort or insight, someone confronted him or offered help. In other words, precisely when there was a weakening of the denial system—those defenses that had previously allowed the individual to believe he was not an alcoholic—a significant other was there focusing on alcohol as the problem.

Shirley's marriage broke up and she was alone in an apartment with two babies. "I was trapped on a merry-go-round of drinking and smoking dope because of my fear of being alone, and terrified that I would lose my children because I was drinking and smoking dope. I was very upset and tried to talk to my mother . . . she suggested I go talk to this other woman who happened to be in AA. My mother didn't even know about my drinking, she just thought this other woman was kind and helpful."

When asked what got them to AA, most members will answer "the grace of God." God may be the mystery ingredient, one that cannot, as far as I know, be scientifically documented. Whether fortuitous or divine, however, we can deduce the most effective behaviors, what Emma Stokes has called "the influence style," of the significant other.

In her 1977 study of alcoholic women in treatment she was able to classify two approaches. A positive influence style openly acknowledged the drinking problem and showed an acceptance often combined with an element of coercion. A negative influence style could be either covert or overt depending on whether the significant other spoke openly of the drinking problem. With or without the reference to alcohol, the approach was negative if it conveyed shame, guilt, anger, or avoidance of the alcoholic.²

Healthy Decisions and Positive Intervention

Based on what I heard from the alcoholics who made it to AA partially or totally through the help of others, I would like to offer some suggestions. As is said in Al-Anon, an organization for relatives and friends of alcoholics, take what you like and leave the rest. I did not get my clients to stop drinking before I knew of AA. When I did begin to refer people there, I made AA a requirement for continued therapy. Some preferred to endlessly analyze or avoid talking about their drinking altogether. Since these clients chose to discontinue therapy rather than couple it with AA meetings, I do not know what happened to them and, therefore, have no statistics on my own rate of success. I write here not from professional expertise, but simply as an observer.

- *Make a decision that you feel comfortable with.* A "decision" is not something that arrives full-blown in a flash of anger. That is only impulsive rage, not the substance out of which healthy choices are made. *Give yourself time.*

In my study it can be seen that friends and relatives had made some sound decisions about the alcoholics in their lives. Leslie's husband eventually packed his bags to leave with conviction. Joe's father heard many reports about the effects of his son's drinking before he gave his ultimatum. The friends and relatives had come to this point after much consideration, and retaliation for injustice was *not* a dominant impetus. *The decisions were primarily motivated by the urge to help themselves or other family members, not the alcoholic.*

Simplistic? The reality is that most significant others have developed an unhealthy parallel process called co-dependency, often unconsciously continuing the dysfunctional attitudes and behavior modeled in their own families of origin. Alcoholism is a family disease, with the biochemical predisposition and psychological dynamics passed from generation to generation. In other words, significant others are often adult children or

grandchildren of alcoholics.

Co-dependents need help and time to build their own self-esteem and make healthy decisions. The Al-Anon Family Groups are a good place to start. There you will hear it suggested, "No major decisions for a year."

• When you feel obsessed with the alcoholic's drinking, *busy yourself with researching the best available alcohol rehabilitation programs in your area.* Find out what your health insurance will pay for or what you can afford. Or call AA and request a meeting list. *Then do nothing. Wait until the alcoholic is in emotional pain, and ask him if he wants help.*

When Shirley was depressed over a divorce, a friend of her mother's suggested AA. *In this and every such case, the alcoholic was hurting when the suggestion was made. Offer help on the alcoholic's timetable, not your*

on whether the person has been drinking.

Although the problem drinker needs to hear that not everything he does is wonderful, sometimes it is more powerful to leave the obvious unstated and let him draw his own conclusions about what caused the offensive behavior. Al-Anon calls this letting the pressure build up inside the alcoholic.

Getting Out of the Way

Twenty-seven percent of the AA members I heard, indicated that they came on their own. Influential factors were physiological, emotional, or involved cognitive or spiritual awareness. As Betty Ford put it, "You can take a bottle away from a man a thousand times, but he only has to put it down once."³

When actively working as an

If you can't stop drinking on your own, you need to go into the hospital. Unless you are willing to do that, I can't talk to you anymore." I asked her if she wanted to know some places to go and she said that she did. I gave her two names and numbers and ended the conversation.

Yes, I was concerned about my friend, but I was comforted by what someone had told me: "Maybe you have been standing in the way of her finding the help that she needs." I prayed that she might get this help. I had a good night's sleep. First thing next morning, my phone rang.

"Karen, I just want to thank you. You told me what I needed to hear. I decided to put myself in the hospital."

The fact is, I told her what I needed to hear. I was ready to speak when she was ready to listen. Our timetables simply coincided.

*God may be
the mystery ingredient
that cannot be
scientifically documented.*

own.

Emotional detachment is neither indifference nor over-investment. Never expect that any particular crisis is the one that will force the alcoholic to see the light.

• *Do not accept unacceptable behavior.* I have suggested that you give yourself time before either making a decision for yourself, or offering to help the alcoholic, but this does not imply that you are to tolerate abusive situations. Take care of yourself. This means different things at different times. Say what you have to say firmly but without hostility. *Keep the focus of the conversation on how you feel about specific incidents or behaviors, and, in the absence of irrefutable evidence, avoid the debate*

alcoholism counselor I abide by a code of ethics which says, among other things, that alcoholism is a treatable disease. I have never been able to stop someone else from drinking, but I have learned how to get out of the other person's way so that he or she can become free to find sobriety. In other words, I have stopped "enabling."

Recently I had been receiving an increasing number of drunken phone calls from a friend with a problem. Following one such lengthy call, I lost a night's sleep and this was unacceptable to me. I made a decision to protect my own state of mind. When my friend called again, I told her, "I'm sorry, but I can't listen to any more of your problems.

1. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. *AA Membership Survey*. New York, 1987.
2. Stokes, E. *Alcoholic Women in Treatment: Factors Associated with Patterns of Help-Seeking*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, 1977, pp. 77-78.
3. Ford, B. Betty, *A Glad Awakening*. Doubleday, New York, 1987, p. 44.

Karen Paley is a social worker in Topsfield, Mass.

The Family Connection

Families and Non-Violent Communication

Ted Klein

Violence in families, neighborhoods and the larger world is a tragic fact of life, with some documentarians referring to the family as a "cradle of violence."

If violence in families is confronted, and children learn in families to practice good communication, this can build toward a better world that relies less on violence and more on communication. How can nonviolent communication be practiced in families?

Often violence results when we feel powerless and unable to communicate. This violence can be prevented if we learn to communicate. Communication skills enable us to make it clear to others what we feel or need, and enable us to understand what others feel or need.

Sometimes parents need to confront children. If a child is hitting or ridiculing another child, it is important to communicate to the child that such behavior hurts others and is not acceptable. However, this necessary message often becomes entangled with blaming, harsh criticism, or rigid judgments of the child's character. What is communicated to the child may be "You are doing that because you are a bad person."

Learning to assess the impact of a person's behavior without judging the person is an important aspect of non-violent communication skills. You can love and care for a person without loving behavior that hurts.

Sometimes we jump to conclusions or impose interpretations on people. An adolescent may have the stereo at a volume so loud it is disturbing to others. The disturbing of others can be confronted without an interpretation, such as accusing her or him of trying to disturb others.

It may sometimes help in your interactions to stop and ask yourself these questions:

- What am I observing?
- What am I feeling?
- What, if anything, do I want to ask for?

These questions can help us to observe without mixing evaluations with our observations. They can also help us to express our feelings, without passing judgments on others, and present clear requests when needed.

Perhaps you are upset as a family member, and view that person as being "irresponsible." Thinking or speaking of the person as "irresponsible" blocks communication. Instead you can calmly observe and state what the person is doing that is upsetting you. Possibly the person has repeatedly broken promises. You can recognize this and also recognize your feelings about it. Perhaps you feel disappointed, let down, or angry. With these understandings you can search for a positive way to let the person know of your observations and feelings, without imposing any label or judgment on the person. You can ask the person to make efforts to do what is promised or perhaps suggest making fewer promises.



Perhaps you think your child has not been listening or paying attention to what you are saying. If you ask a question and the child does not respond, you can point this out to the child without blaming or passing judgment. If one sibling is failing to listen to another, you may be able to encourage listening and aid communication, building a positive atmosphere in contrast with conflicts and hurt feelings.

Observing and stating what we observe, discovering what we feel and stating our feelings, exploring what is needed and making requests are all key areas where we can learn communication skills together, gradually, a little at a time. If adults and children are learning these skills well, they will not need to rely on aggression and violence.

As we learn to be clearer in expressing observation, feelings, and requests, adults and children can learn to better understand what others are observing, feeling, and may need to request. As adults we can help others in clarifying what they are observing, what their feelings are, and what they may want or need.

Parents can teach children not only to communicate more clearly but to aid others in their efforts to communicate. Your child may be able to aid a sibling, friend, or perhaps you, in communicating.

These basic nonviolent communication skills are important parts of "living a life of charity." If we are sincerely turning to God and seeking to turn from unhealthy to healthy, these changes are aided by communication skills. Communication skills are important for "performing uses," for better understanding and responding positively to what is needed in any situation.

Materials on nonviolent communication are available through the Center for Nonviolent Communication, 3326 E. Overlook Rd., Cleveland Heights, OH 44118.

The President Reports

September 1990 Activities

My visit to San Francisco August 17-September 13 centered around helping resolve a long-standing problem between our San Francisco and El Cerrito Groups. For many years the two churches have been operating under the organizational structure of one legal society and two parishes. This simply has not worked. I was asked to work with both groups to find a way for better implementing the goals of the church and to allow each group the autonomy and responsibility for their own programs.

After numerous meetings with each group followed by a joint meeting, a proposal for the reallocation of assets emerged. This would be accomplished by selling the El Cerrito property, which would free the eight active members of the El Cerrito church to actively pursue growth and outreach work into the community and provide additional income to both groups for programs and ministering to the needs of people. I am returning to San Francisco October 13-15 for the annual meeting of the Society, where this proposal will probably be voted on.

I also served as interim minister while the San Francisco parish awaited the arrival of its new ministerial team, Jim and Rachel Lawrence. Some of my time was spent with the treasurer and auditor of the society in pulling together all the assets of the San Francisco Society.

I also journeyed south to Palomar State Park (between Los Angeles and San Diego) for meetings of the Pacific Coast Association. One major happening was the vote of the Association to sell the remaining lot of the Yucaipa property. Approximately \$15,000 of the total received is to be given to the Swedenborg School of Religion in a restricted fund, in honor of three West Coast ministers: Andre Diaconoff, Bob Young, and Othmar Tobisch.

While in the area I visited the Riverside church property, as this is in the beginning process of being

sold. The membership has dwindled to under ten members, and Riverside bylaws call for the building to be sold if the membership drops below ten. The proceeds of the sale will go to the denomination; all bank assets go to the Pacific Coast Association for ongoing ministry.

On September 19th Linda and I were privileged to attend the meetings of the Continental ministers at a retreat center between Zurich and Lausanne. Those in attendance were Gudmund Boelsen, Copenhagen, Denmark; Claude Bruley, Lurey-Levis, France; Patrick Duvivier and his wife Eveline, Saorge, France; Friedemann Horn, Zurich, Switzerland; Jean Videl, Lausanne, Switzerland, and Norman Ryder, past president of the British Conference. We also attended the meeting of the Continental Association conducted the following Sunday in Lausanne, Switzerland. Two main items, discussed at the ministers' meetings and the Association meetings were how best could ministers be prepared for service in the European field and under whose auspices and accountability, and how best could various church groups from around the world help the emerging countries from Eastern Europe obtain Swedenborgian literature.

October meetings begin with the investment committee in Philadelphia 5-6; a Temenos board meeting on the 7th; the executive committee of the Council of Ministers, 10-12; SSR Board of Trustees and CAM, 12-14; PMSU, 14-18; the Cabinet, 18-21; a visit to St. Paul, 22-24; the Board of Trustees of Urbana University, 26-27, and on to the Cleveland church for installation of their pastor, John Billings.

Next month I hope to be able to share with you some concrete results of my present West Coast trip as well as my visit to the Continental Association in Switzerland. The cup is still half full!



Richard H. Tafel, Jr., President

Do you?

- enjoy working with people?
- have a good knowledge of Swedenborgian concepts?
- like to work with books and other resource materials?
- appreciate big-city life?

The Swedenborg Foundation is looking for a person with these and other qualities to serve on the Foundation staff as Co-Manager of its New York City bookstore. In this position, you would oversee the bookstore's operation, arrange for lectures and discussion groups, respond to an inquiring public about Swedenborg, and participate in the distribution of the Foundation's books, films, tapes, and journal.

Interested?

Send your resume and a brief letter which outlines the nature of your interest by November 16, 1990, to:

Kerry Clements, Exec. Director
Swedenborg Foundation
139 East 23rd Street
New York, NY 10010

CORRECTION

The Messenger inadvertently omitted the name of Dorothy deB. Young, Recording Secretary, from the election results in the August Messenger. We apologize for the error.

Outreach

Bradshaw on the Family —

Gloria L. Toot

Cincinnati Swedenborgian Church

At last summer's convention, Lon Elmer presented a mini-course on the John Bradshaw video tape series entitled "Bradshaw on the Family". (Two Bradshaw tapes were also featured in Patte LeVan's child abuse workshops.) "Bradshaw on the Family" is a ten-tape series about dysfunctional family systems and recovery. John Bradshaw is a counselor, theologian, management consultant, and public speaker. He is also a recovering alcoholic. He gives lectures and workshops throughout the country and his series has been nationally televised on PBS.

By attending this mini-course I was able to see how powerful his message is and how great the potential for community involvement and outreach, so when this year's programming time came around, I suggested this project to the congregation.

The program committee chose to run the tapes for ten weeks on Tuesday evenings February 20 through April 24. We began the hour-long tape at 7:30 followed by a short coffee break. Then, those wishing to stay broke into smaller discussion groups for another hour. Rev. Dick Tafel, Rev. Norm Haag and I volunteered to serve as group facilitators.

Flyers were printed with the dates, titles for each evening's tape, phone number, and other vital information. Church members took them to various 12-step groups they are involved with, posted them in the grocery stores and sent in articles to the newspapers. We displayed an announcement of the workshop on our message sign in front of the church. Most of the response was through the groups and word of

mouth.

We made sure our new church brochure was completed in time to hand out to our guest, along with the current newsletter. We also made a brochure listing the local numbers for many of the 12-step groups in greater Cincinnati. This brochure contained the Twelve Steps and a listing of some reading material suggested by committee members. We had a sheet available for people to sign if they wanted to be on our mailing list.

On the hall table we put out name tags and large bowl with a sign requesting donations. The donations were more than enough to cover the coffee supplies, utilities, and other costs. The committee members served as greeters.

TV size was a concern so we tried to get a local TV rental shop to lend us a large-screen TV. This did not work out so one of our members was generous enough to lend us their 27" TV for the duration. This size worked fine. We were also able to borrow a VCR.

We began by renting the tapes from the Stone House but found that a nearby hospital's pastoral care office had the series and was willing to lend them to us.

We had decided to limit seating to fifty because of the size of the building and the number of facilitators available. However, the response was so great, (and the office can't say no), that we ended up with over 70 registered for the first evening, and an hour before were still getting calls for directions from people who did not know they needed to pre-register.

We felt the content was so important, we didn't want anyone to miss

the opportunity—so we decided God would take care of the space problems.

As it turned out, the crowd did thin out over the next several weeks, but we had at least 30-35 people every week. Some did not stay for the discussion group, but those who did seemed to think it quite worthwhile. There were three groups with an average of 11-15 in each. As a facilitator I was able to see a lot of growth, support and insight gained in the group.

Another encouraging result of this program is that several have formed their own co-dependency support group that will continue to meet here on Tuesday evenings.

We made sure we issued an invitation to anyone interested to visit us for worship, and there have been several who have done just that. One person also entered into pastoral counseling.

There were many, many thank-you's for having held this workshop, and people were pleased to hear that we were going to run the series in the fall.

Much pain and hope was shared, and for many people, the process of recovery was begun.

Thanks to all the people at KRC who made this program possible, for your great time commitments and help. Also thanks to Convention and Lon for making it possible for us to hear about this wonderful program. This, to me, is what the church is all about.

Gloria Toot is office manager of the Kemper Road Center for Religious Development, Montgomery, Ohio.

Two Success Stories

Patte LeVan

LaPorte Swedenborgian Church, Indiana

When we at the LaPorte New Church heard from Rev. Dick Tafel in early March that the Cincinnati church was showing the Bradshaw series with resounding success, we rushed to follow suit and get our own series going in order to finish before convention in June.

Dick provided us with their excellent flyer, which we copied and adapted, (See insert), changing only the church name and dates. In our case the Alliance decided it was more expedient to buy the tapes, after exploring other alternatives that proved unworkable. With a member-donated TV and using our personal VCR, we were in

business.

The local paper mentioned the series every week in their "Things to Do" feature, we were interviewed on local radio, and two bank marquees flashed the message (along with the temperature, time and loan information.) Two local cable TV stations carried the information, and people in the 12-Steps programs already meeting in our church helped spread the word.

This was by far the most ambitious community outreach project our church had undertaken. The series began April 11, and opening night found us with pre-party jitters. Over 30 people had called to make reservations, but

would they really show up?

About 25 people did, with approximately 18-20 continuing each week. One member drove several hours from Chicago with a friend.

From half to two-thirds stayed for discussions. One couple who attended every week decided to be married at our May 12 fundraiser at the Art Barn, and have been attending Sunday services regularly. Another couple who hadn't stayed for any discussions did so on the last night, and seemed to feel very comfortable.

With the donations we not only covered expenses, but were able to purchase new paint for the church.

Many who stayed through the whole ten weeks didn't want our Wednesday nights together to end. At the close of our last meeting, we discussed ideas about future special showings. The Robert Bly-Bill Moyers two-hour interview, "A Gathering of Men" was shown the following week, with great success.

There was evidence that a great deal of healing was taking place, and as always, when we embark on a new spiritual adventure together, the love that's set in motion seems to continue working on a subtle level, creating a powerful ripple effect of gifts and connections that will unfold with time. We have since heard that the Cleveland church also did Bradshaw with resounding success. If there are other churches working with the Bradshaw tapes, please share your experiences with us!

The LaPorte church's Bradshaw tapes are available for rental. Please write or call us. (219) 325-8209 or (219) 362-1959.

BRADSHAW VIDEO SERIES: BRADSHAW ON THE FAMILY

10 TAPE SERIES BEGINS Wednesday, April 11, 7:30 PM

Offered free of charge by:

The LaPorte New Church (corner of Indiana & Maple Avenues)

LaPorte, Indiana 46350 362-1959

Please call before April 7 for reservations. (Seating limited to 50.)

Free will donations accepted.

AGENDA:

(Tape presentation 7:30-8:30 PM)

Group discussion 8:30-9:30 PM for those who wish to stay)

- | | |
|------|---|
| 4/11 | 1. The Family in Crisis: An overview of what constitutes a family in crisis |
| 4/18 | 2. The Healthy Family: How a healthy, functional family operates |
| 4/25 | 3. The Unhealthy Family: Characteristics of an unhealthy family |
| 5/2 | 4. The Compulsive Family: Compulsive behavior, the core of all addictions |
| 5/9 | 5. The Persecuted: Incest and violence within the family |
| 5/16 | 6. The "Bad" Child: Shame and guilt, moral and emotional abuse |
| 5/23 | 7. The Most Common Family Illness: Co-dependency, the most common untreated addiction |
| 5/30 | 8. Help for the Family: Dealing with resentments, getting to forgiveness |
| 6/6 | 9. Health for the Family: Stopping the denial problems, making family interventions |
| 6/13 | 10. Hope for the Family: Healing ourselves, healing the world |

ABOUT JOHN BRADSHAW:

John Bradshaw is host on two nationally televised PBS series, *Bradshaw on the Family* (presented here), and *Eight Stages of Man*. Bradshaw has worked as a counselor, theologian, management consultant, and public speaker in the past twenty years. He gives lectures and workshops throughout the country to businesses and professional, civic, and religious groups.

We welcome you to The LaPorte New Church and invite you to participate in your own growth process. We extend to you our fellowship and supportive community. If you are searching for a church home, we cordially invite you to become a member of our church family. Services are 9:00 AM. Come as you are. Sunday School during services, kindergarten thru high school. All are welcome.

Opinion

To the Editor:

I have kept the following thoughts to myself for some time now, but Shirley Sonmor's letter in the August *Messenger* helped me realize I, too, need to publicly express some deep concerns about Convention of 1990. I also want to affirm Shirley in her courage to express disappointment many of us felt.

The Council of Ministers heard from guest speaker Rev. Doug Dombrowski this year speaking on dysfunctional families. I find it ironic that his repeated theme, "Keep it secret, keep it sick" would perhaps be closer to my experience than "Walking toward the light."

Like you, I love our church and am committed to it. The criticisms I raise are meant to be constructive—perhaps "brought into the light."

For months preceding this convention, I heard again and again from people serving our denomination that the Swedenborgian Church is in deep financial trouble. I fully expected to hear these problems publicly discussed in our business sessions, anticipating how we could work together as a greater church family in solving them. Instead, I heard from our treasurer and assistant to the treasurer of Convention, that the church has plenty of money—particularly for one focus, Temenos Retreat Center. We were urged to commit millions of dollars to its completion.

In the same business sessions, we were told of Convention's top priorities in fund raising. Of the top ten, Sunday school and our youth were named. I know something about these "other" top priorities as youth minister for the New Church Youth League and as vice president of the Sunday School Association.

The League receives an allocation of about \$10,000 per year. The Sunday School Association has funds of about \$4,000. Top priorities?

I listened in our Sunday School Association meeting as we labored over the problem of spending \$800 for printing one Sunday School Activities booklet. Eight hundred dollars! In my parish in Royal Oak I am so delighted to see our Sunday school growing in numbers and enthusiasm. Yet our only resources (made possible by many people donating their time) are the Dole Study Notes, four activity books and

Five Smooth Stones published by Joyce Fekete and Betty Hill. That's it. When you have run through Series 1 through 4, you have no choice but to repeat yourself. Our Sunday school teachers and I meet each quarter to re-invent the wheel. We borrow freshly published quarterly Sunday school materials from other denominations continuously as we carefully watch for wordings about a "vengeful God" or "bad you" images. Wouldn't it be great to have someone full time at our Central Office providing new quarterly lesson plans and ideas—strictly dedicated to Sunday school? Top priority? Sorry, it's not in the budget.

What would happen if our Youth League had someone devoted full time to visiting churches and associations providing ideas and helping put together retreats for our teens. Someone who would be providing videos and information packets to our church League programs to arm our kids with the latest information on the issues they face? The N.C.Y.L. a top priority? Sorry, it's not in the budget.

Yet the "cut out the fat" budget suddenly has plenty of money for a retreat center near Philadelphia. What is fat? Please understand I have nothing against the success of Temenos. And I deeply respect Rev. Erni Martin's vision of ministry there. I am questioning what appear to be inconsistencies in what I am told about Convention's financial situation and its true priorities.

I left this year's convention discouraged and feeling disconnected with my church. I have been involved long enough now to see an "inner circle" of names who are repeatedly elected to office. Our elections present us with a list of single names for each office. We are "encouraged" to name nominees from the floor. But no one offers, either fearing to offend the person nominated or lacking information on individuals able and willing to serve.

Most of us knew of real pain existing in our midst as one minister lost her job to another at one of our parishes. This was confined to executive session and hushed discussions in hallways and at lunch tables.

I still am reflecting on the number of people who approached me wanting to talk of their discouragement about the many other ways their church had

let them down. That phrase, "Keep it secret, keep it sick" has returned to me many times. There's a lot of hidden pain we need to acknowledge and bring to light. I assure you I was not wearing a sign around my neck saying, "Tell me what you don't like about our church."

Patte LeVan reported telling the Women's Alliance her theme for *The Messenger* is healing. Well, I know that healing has to begin by acknowledging the wound. Otherwise we're just playing word games with each other. Cal Turley used to tell us seminary students that if you really loved our church, you'd stay in it and speak up about the things that needed to be changed. I love our church. And I love the people I have come to know who make up the that church. But I think we need to look at some positive changes. I think we can't pretend we're walking toward the light while we're trying to keep each other in the dark.

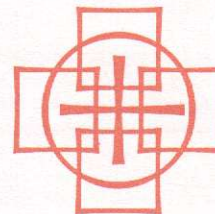
It's my suggestion that we seriously consider:

- Limiting terms of office to keep ever widening that "inner circle."
- Providing a minimum of two qualified nominees for every position.
- Never allowing one small group's agenda to negate the wider needs of the greater church.

And most important, find ways for us to openly express disappointments, issues, problems and wounds. I have been reminded that ideals of an organization and the actual organization itself can evolve to be very different things. That's not walking toward the light. That's a catchy theme at best. Remember Joseph Campbell? "If you don't get it now, you never will."

Please let our church be one place where one does not walk away feeling lied to, or worse yet—left in the dark.

*Stephen Pults
Royal Oak, Michigan*



In the Presence of My Enemies

(Continued from page 130)

table in an AA meeting and scream at the top of our lungs "Hey, that's what our church teaches," we will not do it. The desire to investigate this connection further is a temptation we will ignore. AA means too much to us to jeopardize its effectiveness by aligning our church with it in any way. That doesn't mean that we shy away from talking to individuals about the compatibility, but never will we approach AA on our denomination's behalf. We Swedenborgian AA's are thankful for your understanding in this area.

Several years ago, before joining AA, I was asked what the most important part of my life was. I had to think about that for quite some time. In my mind I juggled spouse, family, ministry, health, and a variety of other things that go into making me who I am, and weighed their overall importance. It was a difficult decision. I remember I first decided that being a Swedenborgian minister was the most important thing to me. After a few moments of guilt I decided it was my spouse and family. After a few more moments of guilt I went back to my original response. The vacillation went on most of the afternoon.

Today the answer takes no thought at all. Without hesitation I respond that the most important thing to me is knowing that I am an alcoholic. I say that with no need to hang my head in shame, no desire to look away from whoever I am talking with. This is a giant step for me, but it's just one of twelve that I'm working on each and every day.

For Christmas



Grandparents...Aunts...Uncles. Here is a meaningful gift full of stories, games, activities for the special child in your life.

Five Smooth Stories is a special New Church paper for children ages four through 12 available through American New Church Sunday School Association.

Subscriptions: \$4.00
5 issues per year
from B. Hill
115 Graham Street
Saginaw, MI 48602

Commencements

Baptism

Farrin—Leslie Farrin was baptized into the Christian faith and confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, July 15, 1990, the Rev. James Lawrence officiating.

Haas—Nathan William Haas, son of Walter and Doris Haas, was baptized into the Christian faith August 12, 1990, at the Swedenborg House Growth Center, DeLand, Florida, the Revs. Skuli Thorhallson and Deborah Winter officiating.

Confirmation

Moulton, Layne—Lola and Edward Layne and Joan Moulton were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church July 21, 1990, at their respective homes, in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. James Lawrence officiating.

Smith, Landis, Sigler—Rob and Ellen Smith, Debbie Landis, and David Sigler were confirmed in the life of the Swedenborgian Church, June 3, 1990, at the Royal Oak Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Stephen Pults officiating.

Marriage

Charest and Barnes—Donnette Marie Charest and Stephen Harold Barnes were united in marriage, August 4, 1990, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Rachel Lawrence officiating.

Eastman and Emery—Michele L. Eastman and David W. Emery were united in marriage August 11, 1990, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. James Lawrence officiating.

Grant and Friesen—Dorothy Grant and Victor Friesen were united in marriage August 29, 1990, at the Knox United Church, Saskatoon, Sask., the Revs. Ivan B. Wilson and David L. Sonmor officiating.

Hadley and Landon—Kristina Hadley and Jeffery Landon were united in marriage July 18, 1990, at Pawnee Rock, the Rev. John Bennett officiating.

Harmon and Burns—Sherron Harmon and Cliff Burns were united in marriage July 28, 1990, at Prince Albert, Sask., Canada, the Rev. David L. Sonmor officiating.

Hatch and Alleyne—Beth A. Hatch and Enrique A. Alleyne were united in marriage August 4, 1990, at the First Congregational Church, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. James Lawrence officiating.

Death

Gustafson—Robert Gustafson of Sarasota, Florida, entered the spiritual world July 8, 1990. Mr. Gustafson was a dedicated life-long Swedenborgian and member of the Swedenborg House Growth Center. Memorial services were conducted at the First Congregational United Church of Christ, the Revs. Deborah Winter and Skuli Thorhallson assisting.

Laitner—Dorothy Laitner of East Lansing, longtime member of the Detroit Society, entered the spiritual world July 21, 1990. Resurrection services were conducted by the Rev. Stephen Pults and Charles Grauer. Dorothy is survived by her husband Fred and daughters Chris Laitner and Dorie Litchfield.

Rankin—Herbert E. Rankin of Bridgton, Maine, entered the spiritual world August 1, 1990. Graveside services were conducted August 7, 1990, at Pine Grove Cemetery, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Rachel Lawrence officiating.

On Fundraising

Ask and Ye Shall Receive

At this year's convention at Olds College, Rev. Dick Tafel, Jr., told stories about two church members. One was very involved in boards and committees and even helped take care of the grounds. It was eventually discovered that he was, in fact, not a member of the church. His reason? No one had ever asked him.

A member of another congregation was also very active on church boards and committees. She celebrated her 50th wedding anniversary with the church family. She faithfully participated in annual stewardship campaigns. When she died, she left half of her estate to the Boy Scouts and half to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Four-Legged Animals. Her niece commented that she had not left any money to the church because *she didn't know it needed any.*

The Swedenborgian Church and the Swedenborg School of Religion (SSR) do need funds in order to move productively into the future. The Fund-Raising Steering Committee's presentation to convention emphasized both the need for funds and the fact that many people have already responded positively. The Rev. Jerry Poole read the following excerpt from a letter written by Carl Lundberg, which underscores both of these points:

... What it really all adds up to is that since the age of fourteen the New Church has been a very vital and integral part of my life. I am a Swedenborgian and could not be anything else—it's in my bones. I have been distressed to observe the church slowly lose its following. I am distressed to discover from your letter of January 9, 1990 that SSR and our church have had no new significant financial support since the turn of the century. So, in hopes of being a part of 'turning the tide,' I have made these two bequests to the General Convention and SSR.

I was greatly impressed by the words of George Dole in his article "The Good Old Days" which appeared in the May Messenger. "If the responsibility for the governance of the church has shifted from the few to the many, so has the responsibility for its support. We have not suddenly become just interested in money. It is a shift from assuming that someone else will take care of us to recognizing that we ourselves are the caretakers."

Carl has made a significant donation to both SSR and the church.

During the convention presentation, the Rev. Dorothea Harvey and Lucille Flagg also spoke about their gifts, and Dorothy Travers-Davies talked about a gift which is still in progress. Many others have responded as well. Our first year totals are:

Gifts and Pledges	\$535,000
Gifts-in-Process	\$250,000
Gifts to Local Churches	<u>\$200,000</u>
	\$985,000

After convention, a group of 23 individuals met to look at specific ways of making gifts—charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts—and to talk about ways of establishing stewardship campaigns within local churches. After a presentation by Jerry Poole, the group divided into four subgroups to create skits that clearly illustrate ways of developing charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts. Each group also developed a set of purposes for a stewardship committee in a local church.

Submitted by Rev. Jerome Poole, member of the Fund-Raising Committee, board of directors, SSR, and minister of the Wilmington, Delaware Swedenborgian Church.

The Swedenborgian Church
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