

# THE MESSENGER

*Official Publication of the  
General Convention of  
Swedenborgian Churches*

**JULY/AUGUST  
1986**



162nd Convention  Boone to the Spirit

## FROM THE EDITOR

The 162nd annual convention of Swedenborgian Churches convened at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina from July 2-6, following three days of workshops and ministers' meetings. The beautiful setting of the Blue Ridge Mountains was kept tantalizingly before us for several days as we ate all our meals in a large dining hall displaying the mountains in all their glory through a huge glass wall. It wasn't until Saturday July 5th that we had time scheduled for excursions to various scenic locales, but we were treated to pleasant weather most of the time: the 3,000 ft. elevation of the university tempered the hot North Carolina summer considerably.

The General Convention took an historic step this year by voting in a new constitution and by-laws. These documents alter substantially the manner in which Convention's ministries are developed and evaluated. Begun in the early eighties by the Ad Hoc Committee ("The Biggest Committee Ever"), this year's vote is the final step in a long series of actions moving toward this re-structuring of the denomination's operational practices. Next comes the implementation.

The new design aims at rendering Convention more responsive to creativity and initiative happening at the grassroots level. The architects of the new design envisioned an intelligent and mutually cooperative democracy as a goal, and the new avenues of communication, support and guidance are the means by which we hope to achieve it. You may write to the Central Office

at 48 Sargent St., Newton, Mass. 02158, if you would like any information regarding the new structure of Convention.

A highlight of the Council of Ministers' meetings was a three session presentation by the Rev. Sam Emerick, a Methodist minister who specializes in renewal center ministries. He focused a great deal on the relationship between inner renewal and effective outreach and service to the community. In Swedenborgianese, this may be thought of as "influx is according to efflux." Or, spiritual joy is in usefulness.

At one point, Rev. Emerick asked the Council if any of our churches have achieved an allocation toward outreach of 50% of the church's budget. I can assure you that a deafening silence ensued. We had to admit that 2-3% is the norm in our denomination, and that very few Swedenborgian churches have any focused program attempting to meet existing community needs, other than worship and study.

Many of us were inspired by his exhortation for us to develop listening skills in discerning community needs. Church is a place that can offer space, money and volunteer help in meeting appropriate needs. The energy and spirit kindled in such outward-looking activity can bring an inner renewal of profound proportions.

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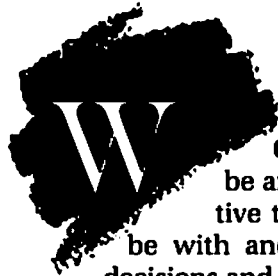
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# President's Address to the General Convention

*Randall E. Laakko*



Welcome to the 182nd session of the General Convention. We hope that this will be an enjoyable time for all of us and a productive time for the church. May the spirit of God be with and work through us in our deliberations, decisions and actions. May we all feel God's presence and be open to the Lord's calling and leading as we meet together for the business of our denomination and for the contact and fellowship these annual sessions provide us.

The theme for this session is "Learning to Live." This theme was selected by means of a process of free association and brain-storming that went on at the Convention planning meeting held on January 24 and 25, 1986. The planning committee was excited about the progress we made those days and we became enlivened as we sought to arrive at a theme which incorporated our theology and a holistic view of life. I think we found it in this theme of "Learning to Live."

I see in this theme the process of spiritual development involved in the regeneration of persons. I easily find repentance, reformation and regeneration contained in the theme. To be able to learn one has to be open to that wondrous process. To be open to new information and experience one needs the attitude of interest and humility that there is more to learn. This self awareness and appraisal is akin to the spiritual act of repentance. Exposure to new information and new experience, then taking it in, assimilating it, is what we theologically call reformation. The whole process of being educated is similar to regeneration. The educated, learned individual can be likened to the regenerate being. Such a person is now aware and open to the ongoing process of living and learning.

It is a mysterious process if we take education at its root meaning. It means to draw out, to draw forth. In learning we bring forth from within us something that is present but not consciously available to us. From the Swedenborgian viewpoint the presence of God is a given within and around everyone. God is seen to be the source of love and wisdom, good and truth.

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Life itself is from God. Life energy in its purest form is love itself that is given to us from God. Learning to live, to become truly alive, is to be aware of God's presence, and to manifest the power of love and truth that is within the very life imparted to us by God. In our working together and our playing together may we be open to all that would help us grow in love, both giving and receiving love, for in that growth we shall be learning how to be alive in God!

My task this evening is to deliver an address on the condition and wants of the Convention. This is to be a state of the church message. What would you say is the state of the church at this period? How would describe it? A few months ago while addressing the General Council at its mid-winter meeting, I spoke of the church as being at a point of crisis. In saying that I was not intending to be an alarmist, although that can be an alarming word and description. In using that image I was pointing to another reality that is true of a critical moment.

Every crisis is a pivotal point where the direction or the outcome can go in a positive or destructive sequence. The ultimate conclusion is greatly determined by what is done now, by the choices that are made. Knowledge, resources, information, rationality, decisive action, timing, and luck, or providence if you will, are among the important factors that play a part in the end result. I have in mind the image of a medical crisis that calls on the skills of a nurse, doctor, paramedic, emergency number operator, or concerned bystander. Although any crisis that is faced may involve these factors in producing the outcome. I also think of the nuclear tragedy in the Soviet Union where lack of information through concealment and inaction played a significant part in the worsening of that crisis.

I think of our church, our denomination, a being at a pivotal point because its future direction and outcome as an organization will greatly depend on what we do in this period of our existence. Many years ago I often heard that statement made to the youth in the church, and I was among them then, that the future of the church was in our hands and was up to us; that we were the future of the church. That was before there was a well developed field of study of futuristics, or at least before it was popularized. Now we know that the future very much depends on the present decisions and directions.

As biblically literate people we might have known that all along. Isn't it clear from the very earliest accounts of life upon this earth that life and death are determined by current decisions? Present actions have lasting and crucial consequences. Of course there is truth in the statement, "The future

of the church lies with the young people and the Sunday School." Yet it is up to the current living generations to ensure that there will be a future there and then. The choices we make now greatly determine whether there will be a church that is concerned with being of use to the needs of the world in which we live and to one another. The future is largely in our hands; NOW!

Is there a crisis in the church? Without repeating the statistical rundown I made last year, what are the critical indicators we have to alert us? Declining membership, smaller and older congregations, burn out and fatigue, diminishing commitment, inadequate numbers of trained clergy to fill some historically strong and established congregations: these can be cited as manifestations of the organization crisis we face. The hurting, frustrated, and depressed members who are so confused and grieved to see their church die are the more personal and painful examples. These realities don't fade away. They are real. I will not and we must not turn away from them. In fact we need to observe, understand and respond to them so as to learn what to do for them and the church at large.

I want us to learn from them and then be able to put the knowledge, resources, skills, rationality and decisive action to work in the interest of ministering and of healing. If healing to life is not possible then the healing that prepares one to die is equally important. I would not wish us to be like the priest or the Levite who out of fear or disdain, uncaring or selfishness hastened past the victim on the other side. Clearly they did not choose life. I hope that we can be like the good Samaritan who had compassion and brought his caring to bear on the crisis he

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came upon in the midst of his journey. His choice was for life.

In some crises there is no need to make intervention. Recovery or a weathering of the storm just happens. I do not believe that to be the case in our church. We cannot keep on doing what we have always done and expect that things will get better. We must take responsibility for what is and the condition we are in. As the Rev. Richard Tafel, chair of the Council of Ministers says, "we cannot keep on doing business as usual and expect that things will get better."

The time of crisis is a time of choice. The choices made will greatly influence the outcome. We need to be bold in our action, decisive. Decisions must be based on the very best information and experience that we have and can avail ourselves of. We prize rationality in our theology, "now it is permitted to enter with understanding into the mysteries of faith." Let us put that same use of reason to work as we face and work with our circumstances.

At this particular convention we will be asked to vote on a new constitution and by-laws. For several years now the Ad Hoc Committee has worked on formulating an organizational structure that will better serve the church as it attempts to be an instrument through which our Lord's active Spirit may work. The designed organization is in support of and channels the energy toward the goal of establishing personal and ordained ministries which will facilitate the spiritual wellbeing of people. When I translate this to our traditional language I understand it to mean working for the salvation of souls. The spiritual wellbeing of persons gives the kind of breath to that effort that our theology understands exists in humanity. Spiritual wellbeing can be understood to apply to different cultures and religious traditions without having to force persons into a restricted and narrow language and belief system.

Spiritual wellbeing of persons will mean that we will be concerned for people's freedom and human rights as well as their physical and material wellbeing, for without having basic needs met there can be little energy or effort left for a higher and more abstract level of need. I see this new structure as an important and significant intervention that is most timely.

The new organization has positive potential to address several of the areas of crisis within our church. I believe it will make the denominational organization better able to respond to visions for service and ministry to the communities in which we reside. We will have increased flexibility to respond. The new organization will enable us to respond more timely to needs. This hopefully will allow our resources of people, skills, information, and money to be more creatively utilized. There is built into the system a process of planning and evaluation of efforts. This internal supervision will help the church be more accountable to itself and the Lord as we seek to serve the Lord's kingdom.

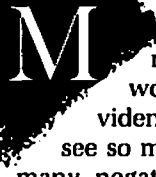
I share with you another image. I am thinking of the church as a living organism. I am thinking of the church in the image of a woman. I think of the church as that mythical bride adorned for her husband. Somewhere in the world, not at any one place only, but somewhere in the world and throughout the world there is that church the Holy Word promises will be there. Throughout the world and somewhere in it there is that experience of the church listening, touching, caring for and loving those who are hungering for contact and presence, because there is no one else offering it and giving it. There are those times and places within the organization we make up that the living expression of the church takes on reality and for a moment the church as it is promised to be is made real in us. And when that moment is experienced the marriage of the bride and wife adorned for the Lord is consummated and made real. The Lord and the church are then in union. We, too, can be made one. □

*Randall E. Laakko, president of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches, is pastor to the Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, Delaware.*



## A Challenge to the Ministry

Richard H. Tafel



My sense is that we still have not learned that this is the Lord's world and that his divine providence is in and through it all. We see so much wrong in the world and so many negatives that we lose sight of the good and the positive. Our list of the wrongs in our world might start with: Apartheid in South Africa, famine in Ethiopia, nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, terrorism around the globe, discrimination and reverse discrimination at home. And getting quite specific, we are gripped by a fear of failure for our church.

I am brazen enough and optimistic enough to firmly believe that among these negatives a new light is dawning. The current of divine providence is strong, and we can either continue trying to swim upstream against it or go with the flow! We will need to face several issues, if we are to have the benefit of the flow, however, and perhaps the major issue is not our fear of failure. It is, rather, our fear of success.

We have learned to cope with the closing of some of our local churches. We have learned to survive with few numbers. We have a decided skill for manipulating statistics so that we do not seem so small. And through it all we continue to resist new ideas and new ways.

I sense that we are spending most of our energies avoiding confrontation with the Lord and the power of his second coming. If only we would believe the message of the gospel and the application of it from our theology: For example, how would your church group handle and assimilate 35 new members? Think about that for a moment. What would that mean for the present members? Most of our churches would be outnumbered by the new people. These new people would be wanting and needing attention of the minister, and they would be deeply hurting after their spiritual well being in spiritual pilgrimages that may well be different from our own.

What kind of upheavals would be created? Most of our church members and ministers, if they were honest, would feel deep down inside that it would be better to stay small and secure in our own groups than to chance someone else "taking over" or creating a lot of work for us.

Yet, if we truly believe in Jesus' two commandments, then we need to stop and really listen to one another. We talk and share but, for varying reasons, our defenses are so strong that we do not actually hear each other very well. We triumphantly share our successes, but say little of the pain, anguish, sadness, hurt, guilt, frustration that we are feeling.

I am confident that we, this Council, can come to grips with the ingredients of success, that we can take the necessary steps of honesty, risk and openness that are required to enter the mainstream of divine providence.

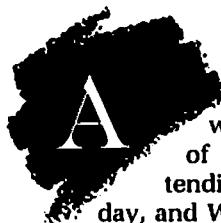
Let us keep this thought before us: divine providence is outside the door. We are looking at adopting a new constitution and bylaws this year to facilitate the implementing of new ideas and ministries. Is our spirit equal to the task? Putting it another way: How long do we expect our Lord to keep pounding on the door until we open up to him? □

*The Rev. Richard Tafel of Cincinnati, Chair of the Council of Ministers, made the above remarks in his opening address to the annual session of the Council of Ministers.*



# Ministers Move on Wide-Ranging Issues

Ernest O. Martin



Appalachian State University was host to the 1986 sessions of the Council of Ministers. Attending sessions on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, June 29 to July 2, were 32 ministers, 5 ordinands, 4 students of the Swedenborg School of Religion, and 2 visitors.

A major concern of the Council was the review of Visions of Ministry submitted by those persons recommended by the Committee on Admission to the Ministry for ordination into the Christian ministry and service in the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches. The candidates included Donna Keane, Marlene Laughlin, Henry Korsten, John Bennett, and David Sonmor. The five ordinands outlined their plans of ministry. Without a dissenting vote, the Council recommended to Convention the ordination of these persons.

The Rev. Dr. Robert E. Bossdorf, an ordained minister of the United Methodist Church, and a full-time faculty member of the Swedenborg School of Religion, submitted a vision of ministry along with his request for induction into the ministry of the General Convention. After review and discussion, the request of Dr. Bossdorf was unanimously approved and the Council of Ministers recommended his induction at the session of Convention.

The Rev. Dickson Beall, ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, was a guest at the Council sessions. He has expressed interest in serving as minister of the St. Louis Church and seeking status as a minister of Convention. He spoke of his association with Jim Lawrence and Rachel Martin in St. Louis and of his accord with the purpose and objectives of our church. The Council voted to approve Dickson Beall's employment as minister of the St. Louis Church and to include him on our Roll of Ministers.

Stephen Pults, student at the Swedenborg School of Religion presented a vision of ministry in anticipation of ordination at the 1987 session of Convention. He spoke of his interest in the parish ministry and of a

desire to focus on a program of outreach, utilizing various media.

The Council received reports from its various committees and took action on recommendations made by these committees. A particularly significant action that will involve all of our churches was related to a document on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry. The Council endorsed the request of the National Council of Churches that its member communions receive and respond to the World Council of Churches document, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, and urges all Convention members to read and consider it in the light of our theological heritage and liturgical traditions and to join in congregational discussions of it to inform the drafting of Swedenborgian response to the document. The draft will be reviewed by the Council and submitted to Convention for its approval in 1987.

Considerable time was devoted to a review of the proposed constitution and by-laws of Convention. Attention focused on the section dealing with ministry, and a number of amendments were recommended.

The Committee on Goals and Priorities reported on its study of the churches of Convention and its deep concern for the health and vitality of the church. Criteria were suggested for determining what ventures to support and how to prioritize the allocation of personnel and financial resources. Council attendees were divided into three groups to review the suggested criteria and to offer guidance to the Committee on Goals and Priorities.

The Rev. Paul Zacharias reported on his experience in the United Kingdom serving as minister to the church in Birmingham during the last year. He compared the church in Britain with that of the General Convention, pointing out similarities and differences. Both groups are passing through a critical phase in their history and it is by no means clear what the future holds.

The Council approved the following statement from an ad hoc committee on criteria for ordination: "In light of the inconclusiveness of the vision of the Holy City,



New Jerusalem, from which our theological perspective is drawn, the Council of Ministers believes that the central consideration in evaluating requests for ordination is the quality of ministry that it believes the individual is capable of providing. It is the responsibility of the Council of Ministers, using the good offices of its Committee on Admission to the Ministry, to evaluate the readiness and suitability of individual candidates in accord with the general principles outlined in Article V, Section 2 of Convention's Constitution, and in the preamble to Article XII of Convention's Bylaws."

The Rev. Sam Emerick, Methodist minister from Port Charlotte, Florida, and a nationally known consultant to renewal centers, was the leader of a one-day workshop of study and reflection. The theme was church renewal, and we were challenged in a number of ways: to identify with the poor and the oppressed, to develop a clear sense of mission, to recognize the vital need for the inner and outer dimensions of renewal, to reclaim our identity as a church, and to reinstate our mandate. Sam shared his own extensive experience with renewal centers and described the compelling reasons for establishing such centers. He declared that a renewal center can offer a vision of new

hope, an environment that brings people in from the broken world, a staff of persons who know who they are, and a program relevant to human needs.

There was enthusiastic response to the announcement of plans for the next institute for ministers and spouses. The institute will be held in Marathon in the Florida Keys in February 1987. Condominiums will be rented for a 5-day period and participants will cook their own meals. A committee of ministers and spouses has been appointed to plan the program.

Officers for the coming year are: Richard H. Tafel, chair; Gardiner Perry, secretary; Paul Zacharias, executive committee member; Richard Baxter, representative on the Committee on Admission to the Ministry. The convention preacher in 1989 is David Rienstra.

Council members were most appreciative of the hospitality and leadership provided, for the nurture of fellowship, and the opportunity to work together as a company of the committed in advancing the mission of the church. □

*Ernest O. Martin is pastor to the Church of the New Jerusalem, Philadelphia.*

## President Reports on the Alliance of New Church Women

*Doris Tafel*

**T**his has been an interesting, busy year, particularly since I am once again filling an Alliance office. However, most of my time has been given to Church Women United (CWU) where I feel I am representing you. On the local level, as president, and on the state level, as treasurer, I represent the Philadelphia women. Nationally I serve on the Common Council representing the Alliance of New Church Women.

I know some of you participate in the local CWU units and are familiar with the celebrations held and the work done. I hope more of you will become involved in the movement — not only enriching CWU, but your life as well. On May 17th Philadelphia had a Festival of Pentecost in Fairmount Park. I was fortunate to have served on the

Worship Committee for this celebration. Nina Tafel joined the choir. The idea for this event originated in the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity. It was endorsed by the Metropolitan Christian Council, and together these two groups sponsored and planned the program. All churches in the Greater Philadelphia area were invited to take part. Its purpose was twofold: 1) to come together to worship and pray that the Holy Spirit would bestow the spiritual energy to heal the many hurts and divisions that exist; 2) to form partnerships of churches across all the lines that divide them — racial prejudices and the vast differences in income and education that separate those in the city from those in the suburbs. The partners joined in worship and Bible study. (Partnerships were formed and they are continuing.)

About three thousand people came together that beautiful, sunny, hot but breezy, day. People picnicked together in four different areas of the Park. There were roving clowns and story tellers; games were played, prayers offered and lunch eaten. The groups processed into the Mann Music Center from four directions, each group led by a beribboned crucifer and on stage a choir of 300 singing. A beautiful sight and sound. The worship service was a moving spiritual experience, which both Nina and I wish had been shared by our Philadelphia Church. The Holy Spirit was present.

On May 18th a celebration of the 100th Anniversary of World Day of Prayer was held in Riverside Church, New York City. Sixty-one from Philadelphia participated. (This time *five* Swedenborgians.) To our great delight we met another Swedenborgian, Helen Jackson, who had come down from the Boston area. Divine Providence was at work. We met and spoke with a woman from South Africa who is a friend of the Mookis. She promised to convey our love to them.

The theme, "Come and Rejoice," was beautifully carried out in Bible readings, prayer, song, dance and words; another spiritual experience which I wish all of you could have shared. From June 9 through June 15 I attended the CWU Common Council meeting on the campus of Wellesley College. There were 147 women from the Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and other Christian traditions present. We participated in an in-depth study of the Feminization of Poverty issue researched by economist Teresa Amott, former Wellesley professor, and by Sr. Marjorie Tuite, CWU staff. Noting the overwhelming fact that women and children comprise 79% of the people living in poverty in the U.S. we voted to issue this action:

"To mobilize the CWU movement to address the pauperization" and "marginalization" of women and children (specifically the poor), in all its manifestations, dealing with the root causes of poverty and its linkage to other issues. CWU sees it imperative that churchwomen act now to eradicate the causes that render women and children paupers in this nation. Further, CWU challenges churchwomen (meaning each of us) to five years' action that will insure all women and children their God-given dignity and basic human rights, and to strike at the forces keeping women powerless and economically deprived, placing them on the margins of their communities."

In response to the June 12th raid on the South African Council of Churches and detention of Christian leadership by the South African government, President Sylvia Talbot issued a strong statement of protest on our behalf. She called for the Reagan Administration and Congress to impose comprehensive sanctions against South Africa and to use every political means at their disposal to influence that government to dismantle the evil system of apartheid. She also summoned the U.S. church community to support the people of South Africa in their liberation struggle and to provide immediate financial assistance to the South African Council of Churches in this crisis.

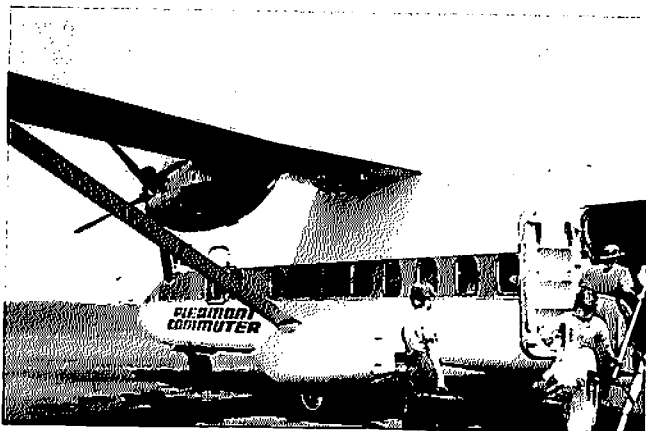
Members of the Common Council, in cooperation with the Wellesley chaplaincy office, participated in a Prayer Vigil for South Africa on the Wellesley Chapel lawn. The Common Council passed a resolution calling for South Korea to respect human rights and the democratic process and opposing U.S. support of the military dictatorship in Korea. Letters to this effect were sent to the President of Korea, Chun Doo Kwan, to President Reagan and to Secretary of State Schultz.

International guest, Julinda Abu Nasser, faculty member of the Women's Institute at Beirut University College in Lebanon, shared her experiences of providing skills and resources for women and children victims of the continuous military activities in that country.

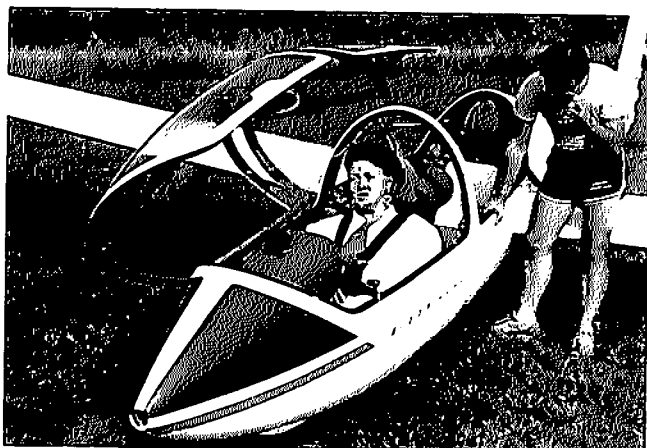
CWU would like to have more representation on Common Council of the smaller faith groups. If you would be willing to serve, please give me your name. I have recommendation forms which must be submitted to the Nominating Committee before November 1, 1986. I cannot conclude this report without thanking everyone who answered the call to "Knit Together." These blankets, evidence of our love and concern, will reach out and touch our neighbors in need. I also thank all of you and the members of the Executive Committee for the love and support given me. A special thank you to our treasurer, Mary Ebel, who has not only kept account of our funds, but advertised our pins and tie tacs so consistently and cleverly.

We all join in thanks to Carole Rienstra who is completing her term as our Religious Chair. We are grateful to Carole for leading not only the religious services at our meetings, but also for the Alliance Services prepared for all members of Convention. □

*Doris Tafel is active in the Philadelphia Swedenborgian Society.*



*If you don't believe that this year's convention was in the "Boonies," this is what we had to fly in to get there.*



*The Rev. Dr. Paul Bunnell, president of Urbana University, tells convention the good news of the university's growing strength.*



*Michael David of the Chicago Society rode his ten speed 675 miles in six days to attend convention.*



*The Rev. Dr. Robert Bossdorf (L), Canadian Lay Minister John Bennett, SSR graduate Marlene Laughlin, Canadian Lay Minister Henry Korsten, SSR graduate Donna Keane, and Canadian Lay Minister David Sonmor present themselves before the delegates of the General Convention. All were fully ordained into the Ministry of the General Convention at this year's convention, except the Rev. Bossdorf, whose ordination from another communion was recognized and accepted. He was inducted into the Council of Ministers.*

*Central Office director, Ethelwyn "Muff" Worden, planned, organized and administered the 162nd convention. Here she is squeezing in a dulcimer lesson during an "idle" moment.*

Two of the five ordinands were also graduates of the Swedenborg School of Religion this year: (left) Donna Keane and Marlene Laughlin.



Robert Kirven of Boston and Rachel Martin of El Cerrito, Calif. enjoy a lunch on the veranda at the Broyhill Center.



The guys in the bleachers seem to give their consent: SSR student Steve Pults, Wayfarers Chapel minister Harvey Tafel and David Lederman of Kitchener, Ontario enjoy the business proceedings.

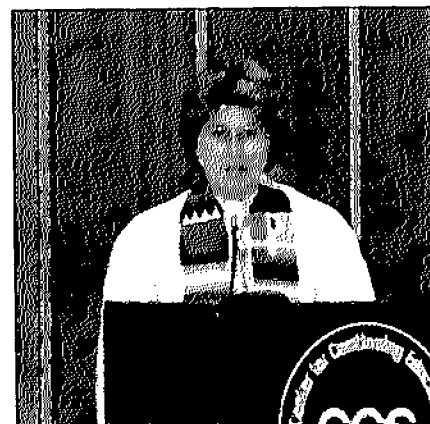


Arthur James, Margaret Schwarm, Julio Ragasa and Virginia Branston of the New York Society helped us celebrate the centennial of the Statue of Liberty.

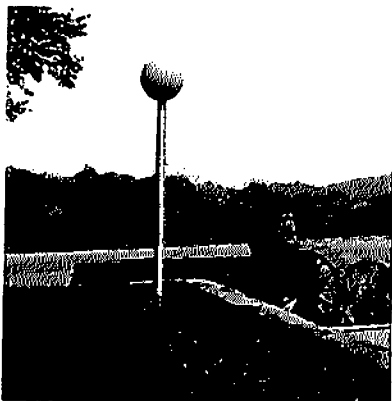


Recording Secretary Dorothy Young, President Randy Laakko and Vice President Fred Perry conduct business.

The Music and Movement Workshop participants offer a Scottish folk song as a prelude to the opening workshop service.



The Rev. Susan Turley-Moore leads the liturgy in the opening worship service.



*The surrounding scenery offered moments of serenity amid the bustle of convention activity.*



*Glen Bolick, a North Carolina artist-in-residence, regaled the convention with some down-home folk singing.*



*The Rev. Ernest Martin and son, the Rev. Paul Martin Grumman, compare notes.*



*The Rev. Dr. Rena Karefa-Smart, of the World Council of Churches, addresses the convention on Moral and Ethical concerns in S. Africa.*



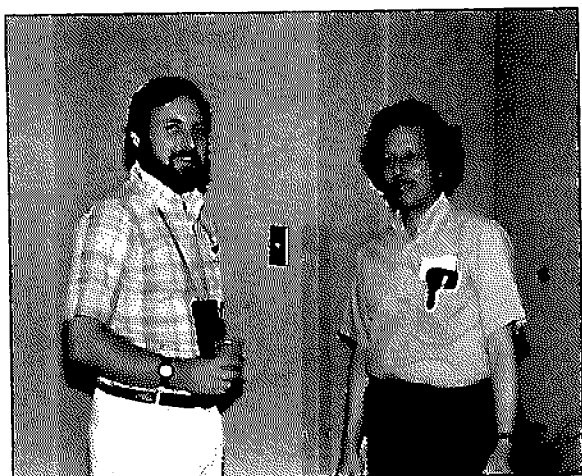
*We feasted on a wonderful barbeque before the square dance Saturday night.*



*The Central Office's staff desk was the busiest spot on campus.*



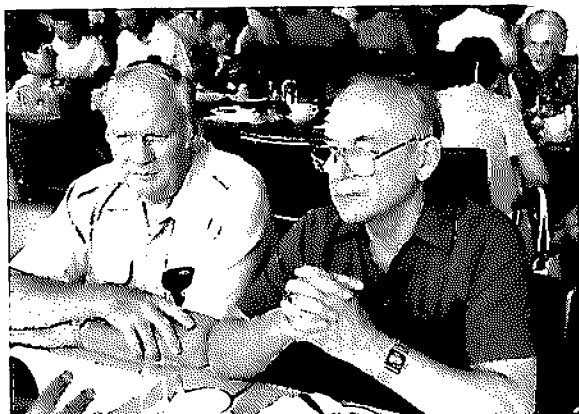
*Marian Kirven enjoyed the elegant dining at the Broyhill Center, as did we all.*



***Messenger** editor Jim Lawrence and Paul Azadian of San Francisco talk it over.*



*Win Armstrong of Los Angeles showing a brainstorming idea to Corinne Tafel and Perry Martin, both of the greater Philadelphia area.*



*Outgoing treasurer Gus Ebel (R) handed over the reins to John Perry (L) this year.*

*The Rev. Dickson Beall, at convention for the first time, is the new minister of the St. Louis Swedenborgian Church.*



# Report of the General Council

*Dorothy deB. Young, Recording Secretary*

The 1986 pre-convention meeting of the General Council accomplished many items of business, including a report from the Council of Ministers presented by the Reverend F. Gardiner Perry, secretary of the C.O.M. The Council of Ministers presented the names of Miss Donna Keane, Miss Marlene Laughlin, John R. Bennett, C. Henry Korsten and David L. Sonmor to be ordained on July 4th and the Reverend Dr. Robert E. Bossdorf to be inducted into the service of General Convention.

The 1986/1987 budget for the National Council of Churches was increased (one time) by \$3,450.00 for purchasing 1,000 new documents on *Baptism, the Eucharist and the Ministry*. These will be distributed to all our churches and societies for study and use. Ministers and Spouses Institute budget was increased from \$10,000.00 to \$13,000.00 to accommodate expenses of ten new members added this year.

General Council recommended that General Convention adopt the Constitution and Bylaws as amended. Cost projections indicate increases in re-organization, but more services will be provided and, initially, additional personnel will be required.

Treasurer Ebel told of the San Francisco Society purchasing property adjacent to the church and executing life tenancy with the former owners. General Convention gave a loan of \$210,000.00 for 30 years at an interest rate equal to the Common Fund return on investments. A provision of the loan to the Society was an agreement that the Constitution and Bylaws of the Society state that all property reverts to the General Convention.

The Los Angeles Society has sold its church property for \$750,000 and they are leasing an office in a building owned by the Methodist Church. There is a chapel in the same building available for use.

A new loan agreement between General Convention and the Church of the Open Word, St. Louis, is in process to replace an earlier loan made in 1959. The Society intends selling two acres of its land close to the church building.

The American New Church Tract and

Publication Society has been dissolved and its assets are being turned over to the General Convention.

Property in Washington, D.C., part of the estate of Dan Tyrrell, will be sold by General Convention and the proceeds invested in a fund, the interest therefrom to be used for maintenance of the National Church and for repayment of all monies advanced to the Church for recent repairs.

Mr. Stewart Poole, chairman of the Investment Committee of the Common Fund, notified General Council that investment in the Windsor Fund had been transferred to the MassCo Investment Management Corporation (MassCo). Several reasons for this action were given, initially that the Windsor fund did not give Convention an opportunity to establish its own investment philosophy, or to incorporate its moral and religious beliefs in the choice of companies owned by the Fund. MassCo will invest within the parameters established by the Investment Committee and following the Sullivan Principles. MassCo has also out-performed the Windsor Fund in each of the last two years.

*Post-convention meeting* welcomed newly elected members to General Council: the Reverend Paul B. Zacharias, Carl Dick and Peter Toot to serve four years. Mrs. Frances McIntosh was elected to serve the remaining two years of the term from which Mrs. Betty Schneider had reluctantly resigned.

The Reverend Ernest O. Martin told of the progress being made towards finalizing the purchase of *Old Mill Farm* in West Bradford Township, Pennsylvania for the location of a proposed renewal/retreat/retirement center for Convention. General Council authorized the Executive Committee to carry out any decisions to be made on the development between now and the mid-winter meeting of the Council.

John C. Perry submitted his resignation as an elected member of the General Council (due to being elected Treasurer of Convention) and the Council appointed Capt. August Ebel to fill the vacated position for one year.

Urbana University paid \$7,500.00 to Convention, said sum representing an erroneous amount for leasing the Printz farm



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property. General Council agreed to make a contribution of \$7,500.00 to the General Fund of Urbana and issued a new lease at \$1.00 per year.

The Executive Committee agreed to permit the Reverend and Mrs. Ernest O. Martin to build a residence on two acres of land at

the proposed Center in Pennsylvania after papers are passed. Details will be worked out through the Executive Committee.

The mid-winter meeting of General Council will be held February 6-9, 1987 at Marathon, Florida. □

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## Mid-Atlantic Retreat Nourishes

Donna Sekhon

The Mid-Atlantic Association's spring retreat was held at Drayton Manor, on the Chesapeake, in Maryland, the weekend of May 16-18. Attending were 28 participants from the New York, Delaware and Washington, D.C. churches. Also in attendance were Selma Swing, from Colorado, and Robert Kirven from Massachusetts.

The theme of the retreat was *Meditation and Spirituality*, centered in rainbow colors, with group meditation led by Dr. Kirven and work projects and games led by Perry Martin. The spacious mansion and the serene countryside contributed to the meditation, and opportunity was given to each person to meditate alone in a place of their own choosing.

As an introduction, all participants sat in a circle and each person introduced themselves by telling their name and preceding it with an adjective beginning with the same letter, e.g., "Persistent Perry." Each person

in turn repeated the names and epithets of those preceding them and added their own. The last person consequently repeated all names and epithets and by this time all names were familiar to everyone.

In another exercise, everyone formed a circle, then each one proceeded around the circle, as in a square dance, making hand and eye contact with all others in the circle.

One work project was crating a "Yin and Yang" mandala from crayons or colored pieces of paper, then describing the mandala by a single word befitting one's own character. Another project was choosing partners and each drawing a portrait of the other.

The Sunday morning service was led by Dr. Kirven. After meditation Dr. Kirven related two stories from scripture, and Holy Communion followed. Thus an inspiring retreat came to an end, with thoughts already in mind for another such retreat. □

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## Thoughts Inspired by the Middle Atlantic Retreat

Margaret Schwarm

For the beauty of the earth, I thank the Lord! Drayton Manor is a wonderful place for meditation renewal experience. Tranquility intersperses with the song of birds and soft breezes; the buzz of insects and the rustling of the leaves are all enhanced by the loving energy that we share as Swedenborgians.

Our commonality is not so much that we are Swedenborgians, but is rather made up of our heartfelt belief that everything comes from the Lord. Our awareness and belief in the origin of our life itself sets us free to love from our heart, to care for each other and to trust that whatever we do in this life comes from a deeper desire to do God's will.

As Thomas Merton said, "We may not always do what God wills, but the fact that we are trying pleases Him." For me, this weekend retreat has been a renewal of my spirit. I trust that I am being led by God, that I am fulfilling my life's plan. □

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## General Convention — 1986 Election Results

Entitled to vote: 156	Ballots cast: 153		VOTES
President	Reverend Randall E. Laakko	3 years	146
Vice President	Frederick G. Perry, Jr.	1 year	151
Recording Secretary	Dorothy deB. Young	1 year	148
Treasurer	John C. Perry	1 year	148
<b>General Council</b>			
Minister	Reverend Paul Zacharias	4 years	150
Laypersons	Peter Toot	4 years	109
	Carl Dick	4 years	89
	Frances McIntosh	2 years	145
<b>Board of Education</b>			
	Mildred Laakko	3 years	149
<b>Department of Communication</b>			
	Corinne B. Tafel	4 years	151
<b>Augmentation Fund</b>			
	Marian Mull	3 years	149
<b>CAM (Committee on Admission into the Ministry)</b>			
	Reverend David L. Rienstra	1 year	134
	Elizabeth Johnson	1 year	150
<b>Board of Missions</b>			
Minister	Reverend Dr. Horand Gutfeldt	3 years	146
Layperson	Doris Tafel	3 years	151
<b>Board of Managers — Swedenborg School of Religion</b>			
	Reverend Dr. Dorothea Harvey	3 years	147
	Nancy Perry	3 years	147
	Dr. Edward Bohlander	3 years	139
<b>Nominating Committee</b>			
	Reverend Ronald P. Brugler	5 years	82

### Mite Box 1986 Goes to S. Africa

This past year members of the Alliance of New Church Women have collected their "thank offerings" which are going to the Mooki College Fund in South Africa. Not only have the women contributed to help bring this dream to fruition, but during the Convention sessions in Boone an oversized "Mite Box" was circulated to give everyone an opportunity to participate. By July 6 a total of \$1850 had been raised, \$500 of which was given by the Middle Atlantic Association.

We are all deeply concerned about the situation in that country. We must continually pray for the Lord's guidance and help in finding the way to peace with justice

for all South Africans. At present we do not know how or if the building is progressing. The government had granted permission for the building. We do not know when or how we will be able to get our gifts to Rev. Mooki, but we are going ahead with faith.

It is not too late to join. Contributions may be sent to our Treasurer, Mary Ebel, at 7311 Arrowwood Road, Bethesda, MD 20817.

### Important Notice

All future *Messenger* communication should be sent to: 2107 Lyon St.

San Francisco, CA 94115

## OPINION

### Swedenborg's Sanity

Dear Editor,

In a mood of protest, I find it most difficult to understand your attitude of resignation and personal sense of accomplishment expressed in the Ping Chong interview (May issue). What amazes me is the sense with which Mr. Chong was permitted to continue eroding the illustrious character of our benefactor in a fashion of "casting pearls before the swine."

You claim that Mr. Chong knew perilously little about the chief character in his play, yet he was allowed full freedom to express the monstrous allegation that this distinguished son of an Archbishop at the age of 55 suddenly became a pathological psychotic. Thought from the eye, said Swedenborg, closes the understanding, and thought from the understanding opens the eye. Following this line of thought, what Mr. Chong spuriously ventured to be a case of pathological degeneration of the body, turned out to be a theologically inspired opening of the spiritual sight of the greatest revelator and servant of the Lord of all time.

There remains one gratifying aspect of Mr. Chong's choice of the Angels of Swedenborg; he chose "The Angels of Satan," since the Angels of Swedenborg are heavenly beings, who do not go for each other's throats, as depicted in *The Messenger*, they go for each other's hearts. For more than 60 years of my devotion to our Lord's inspired writings given to our great benefactor Emanuel Swedenborg, I have learned to feint with the punches of skepticism; a worthy defense and credit to our revelator whose exemplary life of inspiration is in a sense, comparable to the great prophet Isaiah, who, when in vision, cried, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips"; which brings to mind the profound expressions of humility and unworthiness of our servant of the Lord, when he lay prostrated before him in vision.

John Powerly  
St. Petersburg, Fla.

(Of course, Mr. Chong specifically addresses Swedenborg's spiritual crisis on p.106 in the interview. Not only in those comments, but in the very creation of his play, Mr. Chong shows an admiration and fascination with Swedenborg's transition into his spiritual work.

I would agree that "The Angels of

Swedenborg" is not an apt title, but would not agree that "the Satans of Swedenborg" is. Mr. Chong's play rather portrays the intermediate world of spirits, where the beings exhibit a wide range of positive and negative inclinations. In Mr. Chong's play, there is a clear sense of progression and decision indicating that the "angels" are still very close to worldly experience. — Editor)

### Swedenborg: Scientific Visionary

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your excellent editorial in the May *Messenger* on Swedenborg's truth being both scientific and spiritual. I have had several copies made to send to friends. There is much we can offer to the religious and spiritual community in this area of science and spirituality. And, perhaps, there is also much more for us to learn!

Bessie Behrendt  
Great Bend, Kan.

### Swedenborg and the Founding Fathers

Dear Editor,

Could you, or perhaps could you induce someone else, write on Swedenborg and the Founding Fathers? America and the New Church came into existence at roughly the same time. Didn't the founding fathers of our nation live by the same principles taught by Swedenborg?

George Kessler  
Maywood, N.J.

## COMMENCEMENTS

### Baptism

**Adams**—Emily Kendra Adams, daughter of Kimberly Poole Adams and Randall Adams, was baptized into the Christian faith on May 16, 1986 by her grandfather, the Rev. Jerome A. Poole, at the home of her grandmother, Jacqueline B. Keiser, in Southfield, Michigan.

### Confirmations

**Warren**—Mrs. Jean C. Warren was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church on May 18, 1986 at the Fryeburg New Church, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

**Whitaker**—Corinne J. Whitaker was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church on May 4, 1986 at the Fryeburg New Church, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

## Deaths

**Cole**—Leonard Cole, 94, of Goderich, Ontario passed into the spiritual world on June 8, 1986. Mr. Cole was an ardent supporter of the Swedenborgian Church, distributing hundreds of copies of the writings throughout southern Ontario. Resurrection services were held in Goderich on June 11, 1986, the Rev. Paul B. Zacharias officiating.

**Diaconoff**—Evelyn Diaconoff, wife of the late Rev. Andre Diaconoff, passed into the spiritual world in May, 1986. Resurrection services were held on May 31, 1986 at the Los Angeles Church.

**Heuss**—Henry Heuss, 56, passed into the spiritual world on March 26, 1986. Mr. Heuss was the caretaker of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario. Memorial services were held at the Ratz-Bechtel Funeral Home in Kitchener on March 29, 1986, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

**Maier**—Miss Hilda Maier, 95, passed into the spiritual world on March 25, 1986. She was a lifelong member of the Kitchener Society. Resurrection services were held on March 27, 1986 at the Schreiter-Sandrock Funeral Home, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

## Marriages

**Kiesman-Thurston**—Lisa C. Kiesman and Irving F. Thurston were united in Christian marriage at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, on June 7, 1986, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

**Poole-Kempisty**—Leonore Katherine Poole and William Kempisty were united in Christian marriage at Mary-Martin Chapel in Greenfield Village, Deerborn, Michigan, on May 17, 1986, the Rev. Jerome A. Poole officiating.

**Schmidt-Meggs**—Kathleen Schmidt and Dennis Meggs were united in Christian marriage at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, on January 17, 1986, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

**Zietsma-Parkhill**—Charlene Zietsma and Stephen Parkhill were united in Christian marriage at the Church of the Good Shep-

herd, Kitchener, Ontario, on April 26, 1986, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

## New Members

Tom Hall, Charlene (Zietsma) Parkhill, Stephen Parkhill, Carolyn Frid, Dennis Meggs, Winnifred Ykema-King, Wayne King, Katrena McFarlane, and Catherine Ykema were welcomed into the fellowship of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario on Palm Sunday, March 23, 1986, Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

Edward Morey, Marie Morey, Cheryl Sloate, Roland Locke, Jr., Jonathan Mitchell, and Laurie Turley were welcomed into the fellowship of the Elmwood New Church, Elmwood, Massachusetts, on June 15, 1986, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating.

## New Address

Los Angeles Swedenborgian Church  
1010 S. Flower St., Suite 404  
Los Angeles, California 90015

## Thank You!

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