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Patte LeVan, *Editor*
Lorene Lederer, *Design,*
layout & typesetting

Editorial Address: The Messenger
1592 N. 400 W.
LaPorte, IN 46350

Business & Subscription Address: Central Office
48 Sargent Street
Newton, MA 02158

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From the Editor

Moving Toward the Light

There's a dear man in our *Course in Miracles* group who laughs and giggles and says we are in the now moment, in a state of grace, when we are laughing and giggling. I believe it.

My mother and I often laughed till we couldn't stand up. Our ability and willingness to laugh at ourselves, to be downright silly, was a strong bond between us. Some of the most hurtful disagreements and crises were dissipated when one of us said something outrageously zany that dispelled anger and threw the whole thing into proper perspective.

Laughter even dissolved some of the agonies of early adolescence. I discovered the humor writers in the library, and was asked to leave when I laughed too loud. That was all right. I had become kin with these brave, funny people between those book covers and I could take them with me wherever I went. Their philosophy was the real world. For years I carried a saying in my wallet, something about there being religion as well as humanity in laughter because the lower animals can't laugh and the devil won't.

When I was seven, a nine-year-old girl and her family moved next door. She had a confident, dramatic way of talking that commanded attention, and she called me "kid" from her vantage point of two years' seniority. She verbally put down the neighborhood bully, and began coming over to help me finish my household chores so that I could get out and play. Our pretend world became as elaborately plotted and subplotted as any modern TV soap opera. Lengthy scenarios and casts of characters lived in our heads. Enemy spies, harem tents, forts, million-dollar-pretend wardrobes; garages became settings for Murder in the Dark and people returning from the dead; the family dogs

and cats stood in as cobras, panthers, or werewolves, whatever the script called for that day, heavily influenced by the latest movie we'd seen. But what cemented our friendship so that it has lasted to this day was the shared laughter. Her father and my grandmother were loud and frightening at times, but we could see them as caricatures of themselves, and giggle at them, putting them in comic perspective so that we could survive.

Impressive as she was, it was her laugh that was the most memorable. I can still see her face contorting, the vain attempt at control, then the total breakup, the helpless snort, hoot, seizure of mirth; nobody laughed the way she did. Crying, gasping, trying to choke out a few more outrageous observations that only served to bring on a fresh wave, another spasm.

By the time she read my first comic novel years later and recognized with great glee some of my thinly disguised family members, I had already become involved in the field of child abuse. She never understood why one with a bent for comedy would choose such seemingly depressing work. It's true, there's not much funny in child abuse. Yet I found in the parent support groups all over the country that it was the shared laughter that was one of the significant marks of healing and fellowship—the ability not to take oneself so seriously, to be able to step back from the situation and see the funny, ridiculous side in the ongoing struggle for strength, for survival and salvation.

It was my family, childhood friends, and those hours in the library that helped me discover, love, and create humor. But it was those tough years of being a parent myself and being in contact with people who had lost and regained their ability to laugh, that taught me how important it is not to lose it.

Awareness

Living in the Now

George Dole

The wording of our new theme was chosen with some care—"Eternal life has already started." Karl Marx and others rightly faulted Christianity for using the idea of life after death to minimize the importance of justice here and now. Any system of thought that leads people to live in the past or the future diminishes their ability to live well in the present; and any theology that teaches personal immortality is susceptible to that misuse.

I hasten to add that this is a fine line in some respects. "The present" is not easy to define, and the necessity of "living in the present" must not be used to justify shortsightedness. I suspect all of us have vivid memories of times when we came to grief because we did not look ahead, did not consider what the longer-range consequences of our actions might be. There seems then to be a kind of dilemma—we are somehow to look to the future without substituting it for the present, just as we are to learn from the past without living in it.

The most direct way out of this apparent dilemma is to recognize that we ourselves transcend time. How long is "now"? A second? A minute? An hour? A day? A year? It can be any one of these, depending on our state of mind. If you've watched any of the teenagers playing hackysack, you have seen some very short "nows." Things happen very quickly, and the whole attention is focused on the instant. What happened three seconds ago is irrelevant. But if we want to look at the other extreme, we can look at the word "nowadays." There are contexts in which it makes sense to speak of the age we live in as "now," of the twentieth century as "now." I've just been reading a book in which the author refers to this as "the post-metaphysical

age."

"Now" is not a matter of some fixed length of time. It is a matter of the span of time we see as "belonging together." There are nows inside of nows, so we can look at this (Fryeburg) camp session as a whole, enclosing today as a whole, enclosing this lecture as a whole, and so on. Or I may have a long-term project that I complete during this session, so that a

larger now comes to a close in the middle of a shorter one. It seems to be a feature of the human mind that we can shift from one focus to another, and see ourselves simultaneously as being at the beginning of reading a book, the middle of knitting a sweater, and the end of recovering from a cold.

In regard to our ability to shift focus, let me share an illustration with you that

may turn out to be helpful someday. Bill and I commute together between Sharon and Newton through the school year, and sometimes the traffic is a problem. I find that there is a way of looking at rush hour situations that eases things considerably. If I focus on the little "now"—on the fact that the car isn't moving—then time drags, frustration mounts, and the whole experience is unpleasant. If I focus on the longer "now," it is quite different. That is, if I start with the assumption that we are going to make it at some point in time, then I realize that even when we are standing still, that arrival time is getting closer. We are making just as much progress as though we were moving.

I'd particularly call your attention to the fact that opting for frustration does not get us there any faster. That depends on specific decisions made along the way, like choice of route or choice of lane; and actual effect of

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those decisions is uncertain at best, and rarely involves a major difference. I wish I had a count of the times someone has cut out from behind us into a lane that was moving faster for the moment, and then has receded in the rearview mirror.

Heavenly Time, Hellish Time

We often talk about the way time sometimes seems to fly and sometimes seems to drag. This is largely a matter of two factors—whether we are enjoying ourselves or not, and how long a “now” we are focusing on. In general, the longer the now, the faster time passes. If you are attending to particular words in this talk, it will seem long. If you get caught up in its meaning, it will seem short. If you really want it to last forever, try analyzing my pronunciation, or counting the words that begin with “m.”

For Swedenborg, the most inclusive “now” is the one we experience when we focus on our regeneration. Not to mince words, it is eternal. No matter what specific span of time we look at, if we focus on the issues of regeneration, we find that their roots go back to our conception and their consequences reach to eternity. There is not a moment in our lives, here or hereafter, when we can say, “Well, that’s that. It’s time to move on to my next project.” We are currently involved in living forever, currently involved in eternal life.

Every age we pass through has its potential contribution to our eternal life. One way of looking at it is to say that heaven combines the best of every age, and hell the worst. Heaven blends the innocence of infancy, the lively energy of youth, the purposefulness of maturity, and the wisdom of age. Hell blends the egotism of infancy, the heedlessness of youth, the ambition of maturity, and the debility of age. Seeing the world as a meeting place of heaven and hell, we find that we can

focus on either in any stage of our earthly journey.

Outreach

I hope all this awakens a sense of present participation in eternal issues, a sense that immortality is not something that starts happening after we die. That is the context in which I want to discuss a particular issue, which I could label either “awareness” or “sensitivity.” I’d like to begin this section with a quotation from *Heaven and Hell* (n. 203).

To the extent that we are in the form of heaven . . . we are involved in intelligence and wisdom. In fact, . . . all the thinking of our discernment

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and all the affection of our intentionality reach out into heaven on all sides, according to its form, and communicate marvelously with the communities there, and they with us. There are people who believe that thoughts and affections do not really reach out around them, but occur within them, because they see their thought processes inside themselves, and not as remote from them; but they are quite wrong. As eyesight has an outreach to remote objects, and is influenced by the pattern of things seen “out there,” so too that inner sight which is dis-

cernment has an outreach in the spiritual world, even though we do not perceive it.

I want particularly to stress Swedenborg’s clear statement that this outreach happens whether or not we are aware of it. There are people who deny it, but they are wrong. They are misled by the appearance that their thought processes are private, are happening solely inside themselves, and do not realize how much the thoughts of others interpenetrate their own, or how much theirs interpenetrate the thoughts of others.

It seems obvious that this misunderstanding is especially likely in this material world, where our predominant consciousness of the physical nurtures the assumption that we are radically discrete beings. Physically, I seem to know precisely where I stop and you begin. There is the apparently stable boundary of skin, and there is usually no question what is inside it and what is outside it.

But once we realize that we are spiritual beings now, that we are presently engaged in eternal life, we find Swedenborg saying that as spiritual beings, we are far less discrete. Our thoughts have an outreach now. We are influenced by the mental climate in which we live—and I might call attention to the fact that “influence” comes from the same root as “influx,” and is closely related in basic meaning.

Fortress Mentality

Sometimes we see our church as standing in opposition to the rest of the world, as having a whole different set of beliefs. There probably is not as much truth to this as we would like, but there is some. There are valid reasons for being a Swedenborgian. It does involve a different way of looking at things. What we may overlook, though, is the extent to which the world around us defines or determines the basic agenda. Unless we retreat into the most remote realms of theory,

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we try to apply our theology to present issues, and we do not determine what those issues are. If we disagree with someone, the position that individual takes contributes to the definition of ours. If someone argues for reincarnation, we do not counter by advocating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Our most basic understandings are developed through interaction.

Going a little deeper, I would ask you to reflect how dependent we are on what other people think of us. It is really uphill work to believe that we have a particular talent if no one else does. It is awfully hard to believe we are right if everyone is sure we are wrong. We may be able to manage it—that is not the point. The point is that it takes effort to resist the pressure. Something within us does respond to messages “from outside.” Robert Burns wished that some power would enable us to see ourselves as others see us. I would insist that to some extent we inevitably do. Our self-image is shaped in part by the way other people react to us. Their thoughts and feelings reach out into us, and ours into them.

I chose “awareness” rather than “sensitivity” as my title because we need a distinction at this point. By way of introducing it, I would suggest that we can be sensitive to influences without being conscious or aware of them. Most forms of therapy involve making us aware of assumptions that shape our behavior at a subconscious level. This person has come to assume that he or she will never be quite good enough to satisfy those in authority. This person has come to assume that

someone will always come to the rescue. This person has come to assume that someone is always just waiting to spring a trap.

Hidden Assumptions

Therapies work in this regard because once we become conscious of such assumptions, we can decide what to do about them. As long as we are unaware of them, we are powerless to resist them. They shape our reactions in such a subtle way that we simply believe what they tell us. Having them unmasked is a tremendously liberating experience.

It is just dawning on me these days that the same holds true for our interpersonal communication. The way we think is profoundly shaped by the world we live in. One of the most common experiences of people who travel abroad is that everything at home looks different to them when they return. They tend to realize how many things they have taken for granted.

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They begin to ask whether this or that practice actually makes sense. They realize, that is, how uncritical they had been especially of the most pervasive characteristics of their own culture.

Ego Extension

I'd like to move from this general observation to one that is a little harder

to express. Perhaps I can best get at it by noting that I am both an American and a New Englander. As an American, I have some things in common with someone from, say, Georgia or Iowa. As a New Englander, I participate in a

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distinct variety of “Americanism,” with features not found in Georgia or Iowa. Beyond that, I belong to a distinct minority with the label “Swedenborgian,” another minority that consists of people with graduate degrees, and a *real* minority of people who have studied Sumerian.

This means that there are all kinds of ways for me to be parochial, all kinds of boundaries I can draw to deny that I am significantly influenced by people outside them. Psychologists refer to this, quite tellingly, as “ego extension.”

One of the most common ways we use this ability is to insulate ourselves from distress. We have a very understandable tendency to try to make our immediate environment agreeable. To quote an old, pre-inclusive maxim, “A man's home is his castle.” We tend to believe that we have the right to some space which we can shape to our own liking, and indeed, this does seem to be important to our emotional well-being. We want our church to nurture the values we hold dearest.

There is a side to this, however, that bears watching. If in fact we are
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spiritually part of the whole world we live in, we will not be wholly "at home" until the whole world is that "agreeable environment." Whether we recognize it or not, we are influenced by every form of distress, every form of injustice, by all pain, greed, oppression, and deceit. If we try to deal with this by drawing our agreeable environment more tightly around us, we simply deceive ourselves. We are then very much like people who are enslaved by unconscious assumptions. We don't know why we are angry or depressed or anxious, because we do not realize how constantly we receive anger and depression and anxiety from the world around us.

We also do not realize how much we ourselves may be contributing to such negative attitudes. We are transmitters as well as receivers. If we fence ourselves in, if we insulate ourselves from the unpleasant aspects of our world, then we contribute our bit to a prevailing sense of uncaring. To use an image, we turn up our own thermostat, and blame the high price of oil on those Arabs.

Global Transmissions

It is gradually becoming evident that this simply will not work. A couple of centuries ago, when it took weeks for a message to cross the ocean—or for that matter, the Appalachians—the functional units were relatively small. What happened in China didn't make much difference to someone in Philadelphia. Now we have all seen pictures of our whole planet as a single entity, and can see events from the opposite side of the globe virtually as they happen. Famine in Ethiopia or riots in South Korea, *apartheid* in South Africa or Christian-Moslem warfare in Lebanon, the consolidation of a government in Great Britain or the change of a government in Russia—all such events form part of our personal "influx." Whether we acknowledge it or not,

they shape our ideas of the world we live in, and of our own place within it.

In the early thirties, Carl Jung was working with his clients, paying particular attention to their dreams. On the basis of recurrent elements in the dreams of those clients, he became intuitively certain that Europe was on the brink of the greatest war in history. None of his clients was aware of this. All of them were subconsciously "tuned in" to a pervasive mood that had not yet surfaced.

In the seventeen-fifties, Swedenborg became aware of "a new freedom of thought in spiritual matters." His writings were a focal point of that freedom, but they did not create it. At the same time, for example, Jonathan Edwards in our own country, with no apparent awareness even of Swedenborg's existence, believed that the mil-

lennium was dawning, and kept notebooks on the correspondential meaning of nature and her processes.

We ourselves are currently receiving messages about what is really happening in our world, what we are up to spiritually. We are participants in that world where thoughts and feelings reach out beyond the boundaries of self. Our own attitudes are being shaped by that participation. To the extent that we deny it, we deny ourselves the freedom to respond consciously and thoughtfully, and sentence ourselves to reacting blindly. To the extent that we face the fact that eternity is now, we begin to live in that most abiding present as full and free agents for the healing of our world.



Fryeburg New Church Assembly, 1987

A Non-Sentimental Sonnet (To Eva, My Wife)

No laughing suits me now nor any bitter tears
Just simply looking with a quiet eager look
Of dimming visions aging not with years
But having seen so much and read in timeless book
And in your empathetic face that's kinder every day
Oh yes Serenity and Gratitude are here to stay
And I'll not hide that they are never less
Than greatly estimated sexual desires
I seem to take a boat on waves of rhymes that nobody
admires
Arriving at a shore where folks are selling Tenderness
(Alas forgotten now their goods not being in demand)
I'm coming back to you whose autumn is like Spring
in May
I know my Winter will be warm and never gray
The skies of Love's meek Wonderland

Ivan Franklin-Rusinsky

A Solution to Burnout:

Moving Closer*Jennifer Clements*

(Scripture reading: John 15:9
Also Arcana Coelestia n. 6392)

I want to speak about what Jesus may have meant when he said "This is my commandment to you: love one another." Or what Swedenborg had in mind when he spoke of the "heavenly happiness of genuine charity."

But first, I want to talk about people who love too much, people who exhaust themselves by caring for others.

In one of my recent psychology courses, I heard a lecture by Dr. Christina Maslach who spoke about a phenomenon she has researched at some length, one you have heard of before: Burnout. Doctors, prison guards, teachers and other care-givers experience burnout after too many years of caring for too many patients, prisoners and students.

Burnout is an emotional response to stress on the job. The symptoms are (1) emotional exhaustion, a feeling of being overloaded; (2) depersonalization, a tendency to see patients as something less than human and perhaps even to make them into objects of sick jokes; and (3) very negative feelings by the care-givers

about their own ability to do their job.

They feel depressed about their work. These are people who may have begun their work eager to love one another and to know the heavenly happiness of charity but have lost it in the process. They have loved too much and their tank is on empty. Do you know the feeling?

Now, let me shift for a minute to a different point of view, my own experience in care-giving. I work as a volunteer for Hospice of San Francisco with men and women

who have AIDS. Typically we are assigned to one patient at a time. I have worked with four so far, three men and one woman. Most patients

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come into the program about two months before they die so it is rather amazing that I have been seeing David, my current patient, for about nine months. David is exactly my age. He's very boyish, very sweet, loves to talk. He's extremely thin. He means a lot to me. So, what happens when I go to see him?

We talk about what he did last weekend.

We talk about how my classes are going.

We talk about how he's feeling today. We talk about his two bouts of pneumocystitis.

We talk about what it's like to be gay. We talk about his father who was drunk and abusive when David was a kid and who won't be civil to David's roommate. David hasn't spoken to his father for more than a year.

We talk about how David used to use people and be mean and manipulative but now realizes that there is nothing more important to him than friends. We talk about a God that lets children die.

We talk about what comes after death. Heaven? Another life? Nothing?

His eyes will suddenly fill up with tears and mine will too, and we talk about the uses of crying.

He says he really doesn't think he will die but if he does that's okay, too.

We agree to meet next week. We hug each other, and I leave.

Now, how do I feel when I get to the car? This man, who has become a dear friend, is dying. Dying is a terrible thing. Yet, almost always, when I walk out the door, and even now as I think about it, I feel full of grace. It's very difficult to put into words. I feel blessed, as though I have been in the presence of a spiritual event. I feel very happy, very empty, very calm and very grateful that it has happened again.

I give you this description so you can compare it with Dr. Maslach's description of burnout. The care-giver who loves too much. In my mind, the two are direct opposites. Let's compare the two experiences.

Where burnout produces emotional exhaustion, seeing David has filled me with energy. Burnout causes depersonalization. I feel closer to David. Burnout makes the care-giver feel low self-esteem. I feel that esteem isn't even an issue. That may be a part of the secret. For the whole time I am with David, my worries and concerns simply don't exist. I am so focused on

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being with him that I forget to be me. It's a vacation from the messy mind I sometimes carry around with me.

I must quickly admit that I have never done this for 10-hour days, for 7-day weeks or for years on end. My load is pretty light, so it would be impossible for me to make any real comparison between my brief experience and the work of a veteran caregiver.

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Still, I will suggest that perhaps there is a state equal and opposite to burnout. Perhaps it is an altered state of consciousness like dreams, or meditation, or being drunk or high or in love or enraged. A state where one is not quite his ordinary self and where the ordinary rules of what causes what do not apply. In my admittedly limited experience, this state of being aware and alive and beyond emotional attachments is common to the experiences I have had with all the patients I have seen, not just David.

I think I am being given a lesson in how we are supposed to be able to act with one another.

I think I am learning that connection with another human being is the ultimate gift and challenge on this planet.

I think that so far as we can truly connect with one other person, so can we begin to realize that we are all one.

I think that the solution to burnout may lie not in staying farther away from the patient but rather in coming closer to him.

Let me give you another example. A few months ago, David was in the hospital with pneumocystitis so I would visit him every day on my way home. One day in particular, I felt lousy. The muscles in my neck were in knots from tension about something or other. I

walked into the room and David looked like he was about to cry. He was running quite a high fever. He felt very hot to the touch. He was discouraged and scared.

We fell into our usual routine of talking about his father and his friends and God and death and before I knew it an hour had gone by and it was time for me to go home and cook dinner. After I hugged David and left the room I realized that he had been laughing, his face was cool, my neck pain was gone and that familiar state of grace was alive and well. The Lord was pouring healing energy into both of us through our connection during that hour.

In his fine little book, *Uses*, Wilson Van Dusen says, "Early in the practice of uses, it seems that one is simply trying to do the task at hand better. You are trying. Later in the series of learnings it is as though the task is being done through you. You are closer to an observer watching something being done. It goes well by itself. You begin to feel yourself to be what Swedenborg calls a recipient vessel. At first you try to do good. Later good is simply done through you. Much later the experience is of God acting through you and you find yourself involved in acts which transcend your normal capacities. Then there is but One acting through all, and you feel like an awed spectator watching processes quite beyond your limits."

That's something of what seems to be happening in my experience. Whatever is happening is definitely not of my doing. It seems to succeed precisely because I am out of the way.

The process seems to depend on the quality of the connection between us. It is as though there is a space between us. David comes to that space blasted wide open by the catastrophic events of his life and, by divine design, I have blundered to the edge of that space and see its precious potential.

The space separates and joins us like Robert Frost's good fences that make good neighbors. We can meet at the edges of that space. It is a vacuum that draws us together. It can be reached only when one is without expectations, definitions, preconceptions, past or future. I cannot come hoping that David will get well or even expecting that he will die.

My patients who are struggling with the mind-blowing issues of their very existence have shown me the way to this spiritual clearing and now,

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 only when one
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 expectations,
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knowing the way, it should be possible to find my way there on my own. I should be able to offer that meeting place to others.

Oddly enough, getting there is easy. The trick is in remembering it exists. Sometimes I am too involved with wanting and fearing and worrying. All I have to do is remember, be aware of the kind of friend I want to be, and it is surprisingly easy to achieve. I offer you this description of my experience. I don't begin to understand how it works. I am almost afraid to discuss it for fear it will go away, but I know it is a precious gift and so I feel compelled to share it with you. I want to find out more about how to use and share it.

As I mentioned earlier, I am also convinced that this kind of friendship is a model for our learning that we belong together as one people in God.

PRAYER

Remind us, Lord, to be aware of the beauty of each small moment. Right Now, this moment . . . and this moment . . . and this moment, too. Always changing. Whether you give us joy or pain or even confusion, let us remember that it is the ideal lesson, the perfect opportunity for us to come to know we are all one. There are no separations except as we allow them by choosing fear or hate instead of love. We are here to learn that we are one in and with you.

This lay sermon, submitted by the Rev. Edwin Capon, was delivered July 3, 1988, in the San Francisco Parish, where Ms. Clements has been a member for over eight years. A former architect, she is now attending the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology full time to develop her counseling skills while continuing her volunteer hospice work.)

Can We Help to Prevent Child Abuse?

Susan Turley-Moore

A commonly accepted statistic is that in the United States one out of every ten children (both male and female) will be sexually molested before the age of 18. A more current estimate is one out of four.

Perpetrators of child molestation cross all cultures, religions, geographical regions and economic status. They are usually fathers, step-fathers, boy friends of the children's mothers, uncles, babysitters, sometimes community leaders and sometimes (though infrequently) female molesters. And that is only a brief picture of one kind of child abuse.

There are social agencies set up to deal with child abuse, such as the Child Protective Service (CPS). Yet innumerable difficulties handicap their ability to respond effectively to the overwhelming reports of child abuse and neglect.

The best prevention therefore, is to educate parents, children and the community. However, not everyone who needs it has ready access to child abuse prevention education. Because child abuse and neglect continue to plague our nation, we have to assume that our government and secular communities cannot solve the problem on their own.

It thus behooves us as Christians to provide educational programs at the parish level for our members and members of our surrounding communities.

Action to accomplish this has already begun in the Swedenborgian Church. Last summer at our Convention session, the Women's Alliance decided that the Mite Box Funds would be given to the Social Concerns/Action Committee (SCAC) to establish a resource library on child abuse.

These donations will be spent to gather a portfolio of information available for all Swedenborgians and specifically for retreats, camps, and Association meetings where workshops can be developed on child

abuse prevention.

They will also be used to set up an information booth at our next Convention and a mini-course facilitated by Patte LeVan who has expertise in that area.

Educational materials will be obtained from social service agencies dealing with child abuse, from other denominations that have developed programs for their own use and from the National Council of Christian Churches. We will also try to obtain a Judeo/Christian perspective from our brothers and sisters of the Jewish faith. These materials will include brochures, films, play scripts for children, and

emergency numbers across the country. All of this will help adults teach children how to protect themselves and what to do when child abuse invades your world.

With this in mind, the Women's Alliance and the SCAC requests your generous donation so that together we can do our part to help the prevention of child abuse and provide the promise of a happy and healthy future for all God's children.

Rev. Susan Turley-Moore is chairperson, Social Concerns/Action Committee under the Education Support Unit (ESU).

Child Abuse: A History Update

Patte LeVan

A psychiatrist at the New York University School of Medicine put together a medical team which traced the life experiences of 14 juvenile

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*The team
had re-discovered
that violence
begets
violence.*
◇

offenders on death row because they committed murder. The lives of each of the 14 offenders bore documented marks of infant, child, and teen abuse. All had suffered serious head injuries as children, two in traffic accidents that

resulted in lengthy comas. The other 12 were injured, several critically, by repeated child abuse. Police records indicated that five had been sexually assaulted by relatives when they were small. Nine of the 14 were brain damaged and suffered from periodic seizures or showed serious neurological abnormalities. Seven were psychotic. Only two of the 14 had IQ scores above 90; three could read at gradeschool level; two had not been taught to read until they reached death row. Each offender had committed a murder before age 18.

The team had re-discovered that violence begets violence.¹

As some of you may be aware, a great deal of my experience as a writer/editor includes over 10 years' affiliation with the national office of Parents Anonymous, a self-help based treatment and prevention organization

(continued on page 28)

The Family Connection

Children's Pages

A Wasteful Son

Fill in the blanks in the story correctly, and the circled letters will spell a word associated with this parable. (Read Luke 15:11-32.)

A son asked his father for a of his inheritance.

The father gave it to him, and the boy left on a to

a distant land, where he wasted it all in living. He got

a job and went to the fields to . Then he realized

how foolish he had been and said, "I will back to my father and

tell him I'm sorry." His father saw him coming, welcomed him, and sent his

servants to kill a for his homecoming party. His

 brother became jealous and angry and would not come to

the party. The word is .

Questions

What did the younger son do?

What happened to him?

What did he decide to do?

How did the father receive him?

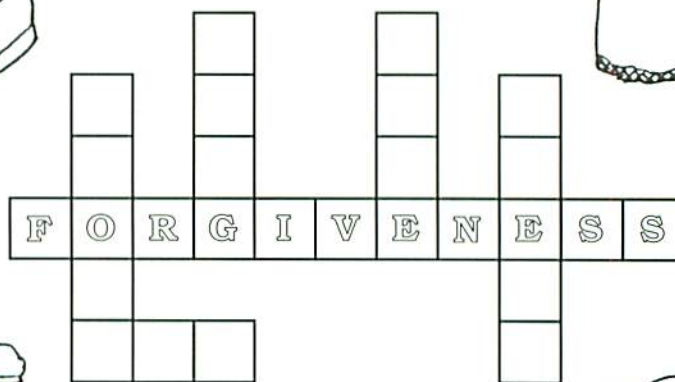
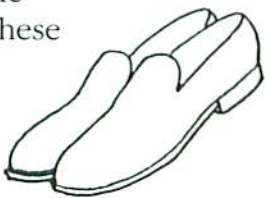
How did the older son feel?

Have you sometimes been like the younger son?

Have you sometimes felt like the older son?

The Prodigal Son

Five nouns mentioned in the story are represented by these objects. Fit them into the puzzle. Color these pictures.



Almont Summer School—'88

This year at Almont Summer School new Survivor officers were elected. The new officers are: Co-presidents, Bill Baxter and Fawn Gallagher; Secretary, Lisa Reddekopp; Treasurer, Kris Lange; Public Relations, Betsy Lau and Charly Kabrick; Liaison, Jeff Winston.

For the purpose of fundraising this year, instead of a car wash, the Survivors Acting Guild (S.A.G.) put on a play called "Life." It was a great success!

The actors were: Bill Baxter, Lisa Chalmers, Ananda Gunter, Rena Holms, Ken Jacks, Charly Kabrick, Jim Kalbfell, Kris Lange, Betsy Lau, Jeff Oelker, Jennifer Oelker, Jono Pults, Lisa Reddekopp, Becky Shelley, Missy Sommer, and Alicia Titus. The stage manager was Carl Hamilton, with help from Kevin Baxter and Gregg Godbey. Also, a great directing job was done by Rev. Steve Pults.

The Survivors of Almont were given an old building

that they could fix up and use as a lounge and gathering place. It is called "Teen Storage." This year the Survivors cleaned up Teen Storage and made up a whole set of rules to help keep it that way. They even showed the adults that Teen Storage is not a messy, scary place to be by having an open house.

Because of growing interest on the part of Survivor Alumni (ages 19-30), a reunion was organized for middle weekend. It was a

great success. People showed up from all over the country, some who had not been to Almont in ten years.

Overall, Almont Summer School was a success, thanks to the new director Rev. Steve Pults. We all learned something, and had a great time in the process.

*Betsy Lau, Public Relations
Charly Kabrick, Liaison
Almont Survivors*

In Scientific Support of Prayer

In a remarkable study that was both "double blind" and "randomized," cardiologist Randy Byrd, MD, showed that prayer is an effective form of treatment. Without telling the patients or their treating physicians, Dr. Byrd arranged for prayer groups to pray for half of the 393 patients in a San Francisco coronary care unit. Those prayed for and those not prayed for were comparable in terms of age and severity of medical condition.

The pray-ers—Protestants, Catholics, and Jews who lived in parts of California, Oregon, and the East Coast—were given the names of the patients, their diagnoses, and their condition. They were asked to pray every day in any way they chose and to include a prayer for "benefi-

cial healing and quick recovery." Patients in the study group each had five to seven people praying for them, either gathered in prayer groups or, most often, individually.

The outcomes indicated that the recipients of prayer improved more and had fewer complications than did the control group. Only three required antibiotics, compared with 16 of those in the control group; six experienced pulmonary edema (waterlogging of the lungs), compared with 18 controls; and none required intubation, compared with 12 controls.

(Medical News, 3 March 1986, reported in The People's Doctor, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 6-7) Reprinted from Mothering #49, Fall 1988. Submitted by Trevor Woofenden

Please send ideas and materials for Children's Pages to Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, Children's and Family Ministry, 273 Perham Street, West Roxbury, MA 02132. Sources for these pages: Anita S. Dole, **Bible Study Notes**, Lesson 131; Marjory A. Shelley, **Father Abraham's Fun Pages**; materials used in San Francisco Sunday school.

Care Chain Underway

The Michigan Association members have developed an organized network for keeping in touch with each other in times of need such as illness, death, or when facing any problem or crisis that they want others to know of and pray for. They're calling it the Care Chain. One call to Rev. Ron Brugler or Rev. Steve Pults sets the chain in motion that will reach everyone in the

Association. Each person has a list of names and phone numbers and each has someone to call.

Prayers are powerful, but they can't help unless they're offered. Ron has expressed his willingness to help people get their links going. If this sounds like an idea you would like to implement in your area, give Ron a call at 313-798-8487.

(continued from page 25)

for abusing parents. I worked with them from the early seventies, when there was just one chapter in California, until 1985, when I moved to Indiana. The history of that pioneering organization and my involvement with it is chronicled in *Hope For The Children*.² There are now 1,200 adult support groups nationwide, 219 structured children's programs, and 393 child care groups run in conjunction with chapters in 26 chartered states. Parents Anonymous received the President's Volunteer Action Award in 1985.³

My interest in child abuse was sparked in the mid-sixties by the infamous torture-murder of a 16-year-old girl whose parents left her for months in the care of people they barely knew. It was not called child abuse at the time, partly because the term "child abuse" was not in general use 23 years ago, and partly because the people actually responsible for her death were not family members. Heinous crimes come and go, but this case claimed national attention over a period of months essentially because

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*... her sense
of personal worth
and will to live
had been
severely
damaged ...*

♦

of the unanswered question that rose out of the crime: Why did an adolescent girl of presumed normal intelligence stay with people who were relentlessly abusing her? I began putting together a book on the case, as much to find that answer for myself as for any other reason. The answer, that her sense of personal worth and will to live had undoubtedly been severely damaged or destroyed before she was delivered to that household, was a long time coming to light.

There were few books or resources on child abuse then, and the nation was barely beginning to acknowledge that parents could and did abuse their children. Contrary to our wish to believe otherwise, child abuse was epidemic, as were dysfunctional

families. I began collecting articles and researching what little material was available, not only on physical abuse and neglect, but the psychological maltreatment that is devastating to self-esteem and numbing to spirit.

I was allowed to sit in on many of the early Parents Anonymous (then Mothers Anonymous) meetings. I

♦

*... the scourge of
child abuse
persists as stubborn
an epidemic
as ever.*

♦

listened to courageous parents baring their shame and confusion; childhoods filled with deprivation, physical and psychological violence, feelings of victimization, self-identities defined in terms of trying to please a parental figure who was never pleased.

In the late sixties, the kind of communication and parenting skills that build self-esteem and emotionally healthy families were just beginning to be formulated and put into wide circulation. Dr. Dorothy Briggs was a pioneer in the field, with her groundbreaking book in 1971, *Your Child and His Self-Esteem, the Key to His Life*. The National Committee For Prevention of Child Abuse (NCPA) was established. Parents Anonymous was federally funded in the mid-seventies, growing to hundreds of chapters in a few years, assisted by media stories and TV dramatizations such as "Mary Jane Cried Last Night" and "What's The Matter With Amelia?"

In twenty-some years there has been rapid growth in general public understanding of the dynamics of child abuse, chemical dependency and other addictions, and resultant family dysfunction. (According to the National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA), substance abuse/chemical dependency is a significant factor in up to 90 percent of child abuse cases.)⁴ The body of knowledge with respect to the underlying causes of family violence and intervention techniques continues to grow. Yet the scourge of child abuse, far from being eradicated, persists as stubborn an epidemic as ever. Recent polls and surveys taken

show that child abuse is a national problem that is "growing into a national scandal."⁵ Domestic violence has been cited by the U.S. Surgeon General as a major health problem in this country. It is the single largest cause of injury to women, affecting the lives of 3-4 million women each year and causing one million women to seek medical attention. In 50 percent of domestic violence cases, physical abuse of children is also involved.⁶

Reports of child abuse have soared in the past five years at the same time funding for protective services has been cut, resulting in a breakdown of the service delivery system that was created to protect children from harm. Between 1981 and 1985, states lost \$131 million in federal funds. The Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, headed by Rep. George Miller (D-California) found that child abuse reports increased more than 50 percent during the same period. A 24-state survey by the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse found deaths due to child abuse increased 23 percent from 1985 to 1986.⁷

In October 1985, the Board of NCPA adopted a goal and established a plan to reduce child abuse 20 percent by 1990. One of the elements of the plan is to ensure the availability of key prevention services such as parenting education, child assault prevention education, self-help groups, and services for abused and neglected children in every community across the country. An August 1988 memorandum from NCPA states that, "a significant reduction in overall maltreatment rates is contingent upon the development of comprehensive prevention service networks in all communities. In addition, reforms within the existing child welfare system, particularly with respect to the provision of services for all maltreatment victims, are necessary to break the abuse cycle. Data collected by NCPA's National Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research with respect to these conditions suggest that prevention networks are indeed evolving across the country and that child welfare administrators are finding creative ways to expand their resources."⁸

What are some things that we can do, as a church body, in our parishes, and as individuals? We can educate ourselves, surely, and a child abuse resource library is a good beginning. We can find out what needs to be done in the way of prevention, discover what the strengths and weaknesses are

in our own communities' prevention efforts. We can strengthen and build on what's being offered, and help initiate programs where there are none, plugging into existing national networks.

Child abuse, chemical and other addictions, domestic violence, invaded our world a long time ago, and there isn't a man, woman or child whose lives haven't been hurt in some way by it. I think it was Carl Sandburg who said something to the effect, "There is only one Child in the world, and that Child is All Children."

As our education deepens, the more we understand, the more we can move toward more loving involvement with families under stress. The more we truly understand, the more we find ourselves saying, and meaning "There

♦

*... the more
we understand,
the more
we can
move toward more
loving involvement
with families
under stress.*

♦

but for the grace of God go I."

The more we are willing to understand Them, the more we find out about Us, until the line blurs and fades, and there is only Us.

¹ Editorial, "Child Abuse's Tragic Effects," *LaPorte Herald-Argus*, 20 August, 1988.

² Wheat, Patte. *Hope for the Children; A Personal History of Parents Anonymous*. Minneapolis Winston Press, 1979. Harper & Row, New York: 1986.

³ Parents Anonymous National Office, 6733 Sepulveda Blvd., Suite. 270, Los Angeles, CA 90045. Tel. (800) 421-0353.

⁴ *Prevention Network Newsline*, Indiana Prevention Resource Center for Substance Abuse, Indiana University, Summer 1988.

⁵ "Child Abuse: A National Problem Becoming a National Scandal," *LaPorte Herald-Argus*, 18 December 1987.

⁶ *Action Alert*, American Association of University Women, Washington, D.C.: October 1988.

⁷ "Child Abuse Prevention Services: Partial 1985/86 Baseline: Profiles from Sample Counties," National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, Chicago.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Growing the Church

Paul Zacharias

As members of Convention we differ on some issues in the Church, but I'm certain there is one concern on which we all agree: We would like to see more people in our Swedenborgian Churches. A quick look at our national statistics over the last fifty years shows that our membership has declined from 4,000 to about 2,000. A number of churches have closed down and the buildings have been sold during that time. I believe it is fair to say that in a majority of our churches attendance at worship services ranges between 20-30 on a typical Sunday morning.

This declining trend needs to be reversed. If it is not, our future as a viable religious organization will come to an end. These hard numbers are staring us in the face. We are not interested in playing the "numbers" game; there is no special virtue in growth just for the sake of growth. Here, as everywhere else in life, we want to do the right thing for the right reasons. What are our motives, our purposes, in desiring Church growth? Very simply, we believe that the New Church message is from the Lord; that it offers a satisfying and affirming religious system that can transform human life; that it is in total harmony with the best of the New Age that is presently flowering around us. In our heart and mind we are convinced that the Swedenborgian revelation is here to stay, and that the Lord wants it to be a vital force in the lives of more people. One could easily marshal a

long list of passages from the Word and Swedenborg's theology that support this conviction.

We hear it said that the "real" New Church is spreading throughout the world in its own way, in its own time, regardless of the efforts of the organized Swedenborgian Churches. This may well be true. At the same time, those of us who have committed our lives to the institutional Swedenborgian

♦

*How is healthy
enthusiasm
and motivation
generated
at the
grass roots level?*

♦

Church really feel there is a role for us to play in the future. The Good News needs to be publicly proclaimed; appropriate publications for distribution to interested readers are essential; good leadership is necessary. There is a vital place for the New Church in the world today. Truly, as never before, "the fields are white unto harvest."

At its November meeting the
(continued on next page)

Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU) addressed some of these questions: How can we strengthen our membership? How is healthy enthusiasm and motivation generated at the grass roots level? How will this lead to Church growth? We faced the fact that our current situation is not going to improve by itself. Significant church growth will require hard work, conscious efforts, and careful/prayerful planning on the part of both clergy and laity. We believe it can be done.

PMSU looked at one Convention Church that has seen substantial growth in recent years, which is the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario. There are many contributing factors in this particular growth situation, such as: a strong core group, excellent facilities and location, good parking, an active wedding ministry, and a long and respected history in the community. But the most recent "catalyst" in the Kitchener success story is that the minister, the Rev. Eric Allison, attended a three-day Fuller Institute Church Growth session in Chicago two years ago. He returned from that workshop with a host of new

ideas and techniques in the area of church expansion. He applied them, *and they have worked.*

Vitality and growth has increased in all facets of church life in Kitchener: membership, attendance, activities and outreach have all shown substantial increases in the last two years. The Fuller Seminary program, based in Pasadena, California, offers a fundamentalist, evangelical brand of Christianity. We need not accept their theology. We can use their methodology. Over the years Fuller has developed an excellent, workable program for church growth that can be adapted and applied by any Christian denomination.

Eric Allison describes his experience with the Fuller Institute this way:

"The difference in my church has been dramatic. Our average adult attendance on Sunday mornings has gone from 60s to 90s and often we have over 100. The size of our Sunday school has tripled!! The Fuller people are *the* experts in the field of church growth. If you want to learn how to *make your church grow* you can find out how at a Fuller Workshop."

The Pastoral Ministries Support Unit strongly urges all Convention Churches to send their minister and at least one key lay member to a Fuller Institute Church Growth Workshop. To achieve this desired goal, PMSU offers this incentive: to those churches who are committed to growth, PMSU will match local funds. In other words, if you decide to send your minister and one lay person to a Fuller Church Growth Workshop in 1989, add up the total cost for transportation, tuition and housing, (which will be approximately \$500-600, depending on travel costs), and if you require financial assistance, PMSU will pay up to 50% of the total expense. The next two Fuller Growth Workshops are scheduled for Pittsburgh on April 11-13, and in Oklahoma City from May 24-26. We believe that further Workshops are planned for later in 1989, but those sites and dates are not known at this time. Talk it over with your local minister and church board members, then contact the chairman of PMSU for further details: Rev. Richard Tafel, Jr., 9035 E. Kemper Road, Montgomery, OH 45249.

How to Make Your Church Grow!

Eric Allison

Publicity, Programming, Marketing, Community building, Networking.

One of the most disturbing facts facing our church today is its declining membership. In an effort to reverse this trend, Convention has set **growth** as one of its highest priorities. Convention's leadership realizes that to simply set growth as a goal is not enough. Convention must offer specific tools for achieving growth. The Growth and Outreach Support Unit (GOSU) is

offering a two-part program to teach clergy and lay people **How to Make Your Church Grow.**

Part 1 will be a mini-course at the 1989 Convention in Urbana, led by Eric Allison. The course will be an overview of church growth methods and will teach **How to Advertise.** Part 2 will be held at the Temenos Retreat Center over the October 14-16 weekend. The weekend at Temenos will include a guest speaker from the Fuller Institute, a follow-up session on the Convention mini-course, and sessions on adapting Fuller growth techniques to the Swedenborgian Church. GOSU will be offering travel assistance for

clergy and lay persons who attend the workshop. It is not necessary for participants to attend both the mini-course and the Temenos weekend, but we urge you to do so if possible.

The October growth weekend is limited to 15 participants. If you plan to attend, please write or call Rev. Ernest Martin, 692 Spruce Drive, West Chester, PA 19380, telephone (215) 431-3883.

(Editor's Note: Joy's Journey, begun in January's issue of The Messenger, chronicles the spiritual growth of a woman in prison through the letters that she has written to her teachers and friends in the LaPorte New Church. The following letters were all written from the Westville Correctional Center prior to her transfer to the Indiana Girls School.)

Joy's Journey

April 6, 1988

I have come to love prison for the teacher it is. There are certainly circumstances other than this that I would prefer and other prisons in which I would relax more fully, but as

◇
I have come
to love prison for
the teacher it is.

◇
instruction goes, this particular place is truly efficient in its range and depth of obstacles from which to learn. Now when I feel irritable, I look to see what attachment I have that is being frustrated. Then I try to find the roots of it, how much the object of attachment adds to or detracts from my spiritual growth and how to either break the attachment, compromise or keep it (if it's healthy) and still navigate in these waters. So even though I participate in no formal school, church or community which instructs, I find much homework to do.

Since my first month in prison, I have observed inmates using religion and/or alleged spiritual growth as an argument for release. Many return to church or become "saved" as a ploy to try and convince authorities that release would be beneficial to all concerned. I shudder at the idea of becoming one of the mass who do this. It smacks of blasphemy. It is not Right Use of the gift of healing and growth I am granted. Other arguments, other reasons are to be relied on and if they prove insufficient, then my release was not meant for this year. Spiritual

insights, strengths and growth may be mentioned but only as they have resulted in concrete, observable behaviors and contributions. For my spiritual growth to stand alone as a reason is something I strongly discourage. The means influence the end and to use God as a means for release would take the shine off the end if I were set free. My inner peace, spiritual growth and relationship to God is its own end. Thoughts create the character and to think of using God as a lever for release erases all of what I have learned these 8 years. It's short-cutting; trying to make use of spiritual matters wrongly . . . as if God would drop in to promote my plan. The whole idea is to sincerely, cheerfully and wholeheartedly go along with what He's got going, not play, "let's make a deal."

April 17, 1988

The sun today is so friendly and warm, not like the winter sunshine. And the breeze is invigorating and playful. A tune keeps running through

◇
This time
is not lost
to me.

◇
my mind which Copland incorporated into Appalachian Spring ballet, probably due to a beautiful day just like this one. It's an old Shaker tune called "Simple Gifts." Although I have forgotten the specifics of where particular words go, the spirit and meaning of the song is embedded in the core of my soul . . . "Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a

gift to be free . . ." I often hum the song both in times of weariness or disappointment and also in times of ease and accomplishment. It brings freedom to me as I give praise and thanksgiving—even for the seemingly hard times—so the melody is very close to me although I've lost the words.

Someone wrote that it was sad that all this time was lost but hopefully "it"

◇
I have learned
that love and
one's faith
is not so much
something to be
believed but
to be lived . . .

◇
would soon be over. The love and concern were evident and I accepted the comments as well-meant, and later in an hour of thought and meditation, I gained a new understanding. This time is not "lost" to me. The time would be lost only if I did not know what I am living it for . . . if I were not finding out more about the world, those around me and about myself. Time is lost when one is of no help to those around her. But during these years, I test myself, find out about myself and grow. And release will not in any true sense mean that hardships, challenges or testing will be "over" . . .

(continued on next page)

my work and service will have only just begun.

I know that eventually I will be out of prison. These years of detention are meant for training and discipline—to see if I am strong enough for further use. How could anyone hold me in prison longer than was necessary for God's purpose? I reflect and see that I was called to be of service before I came to prison. But I was weak and did not accept the call. My crime was committed because I was looking outside myself, out into the world for happiness, satisfaction, peace and love, but in the wrong places and wrong ways. I felt strong bonds to the world so now those worldly bonds are broken by being brought here . . . to be trained for unworldly work when I re-enter the world.

◇
My crime
was committed
because
I was looking
outside myself . . .

◇
I have learned that love and one's faith is not so much something to be believed but to be lived . . . not profuse speech on the matter, but diligent action. That is hard and I fail daily. When I was first locked up, I found myself totally surrounded by those whose values and principles were to "get over" on others, to avoid responsibility, to show strength by using profanity and violence and to ostracize and bully anyone who dared even imply that there was goodness in one's enemies and jailers. But as the years passed, I came to see in these hard hearts the part of God who dwells everywhere. In these dark souls and misused bodies, I can now see that the spark of God is also there. It was not for my crime, my trial or my conviction that I was sent to prison, but for the correction of my path so that I may now hear The Call . . . and finally lose my will in God's will and follow . . . which I did not do before.

When I was approached by God at that time, I hardly had a living faith in Him. I was too intellectual. The skeptic in me was not yet convinced. Now, after so many practical lessons, suited to the scientist in me, I have experi-

enced the mysteries, the answers I was too willful to see and understand before. In the prosecutor was the face of God giving me a great opportunity to grow. In the judge I now hear the word of God offering me what up to now has been my greatest chance to find enlightenment and the way of Right Use. So it's finally becoming possible for me to see God being

◇
One causes oneself
the judgement
and those
in "authority"
merely mirror
what was sowed.

◇
manifested even in those whom I had earlier thought had caused me more pain than "fair." But I was, of course, mistaken. One causes oneself the judgment and those in "authority" merely mirror what was sowed.

Once it's possible to see the face of God in the faces all around us, it's also then possible to accept any circumstances with less complaint and more cheerfulness. So day by day, it's becoming easier to maintain the inner peace a bit better and make a little more progress. Yet I lose it daily, too.

May 10, 1988

I ran across an interesting statement . . . that in Greek there are two words which are translated as "in," except one means "in" and one means "into." So when Christ said "He who believes in me . . ." he was really saying to believe "into" him, to become one with him . . . an act of union rather than simply one of belief. The "devil" certainly believes in Christ. Satan knows his powers well. If believing in the historical Christ and his powers were enough, then Satan would qualify as deacon. Perhaps that's why we can feel discontented with our faith . . . because we only believe "in" and not "into."

How can one person change the world? Not possible . . . at least not for me, it isn't. So what's the answer? How do I become able to see God in everyone? As time went on, I found a way

but it's difficult to explain. Someone said I wore rose-colored glasses. It was meant as a slam but it was just perfect to help me describe the process. (I've learned to try to take whatever anyone says to me as a blessing. It may be profane or inaccurate or hostile, yet all words are teachers.) If you are especially fond of a certain color, say blue, and want everyone to wear blue, that would not be possible to accomplish. But there is a technique which works . . . that is, wear blue-tinted contacts or glasses. So even though most people would object to dressing in blue on such and such a day, with your glasses, you could see the blue. Now if we want to see the Lord's essence in everyone, all the goodness . . . even in those who would object to being loving, we may put on spiritual glasses. We already own these and the only cost is a willingness to use them. We have them with us constantly but they are scratched and dusty. By prayer and meditation we clean them. By Right Thought, Right Action and Right Mindfulness and Right Intention we adjust them and soon, we see God in everyone. It works in prison, and not just any prison, but Westville, which is quite negative, even for prison.

But as I open myself more and more to the inner life, I will be able to maintain it for longer and longer

◇
... I can
think of nothing
I desire more
than to achieve
inner peace . . .

◇
periods of time. It will take years, but I can think of nothing I desire more than to achieve inner peace, be of Right Use and contribute to the peace of others and the world.

*Keyes, Ken Jr. *Handbook to Higher Consciousness*. Marina del Rey, California: DeVorss & Company, 1972.

Joy would welcome your letters. For those who may wish to correspond, her address is:

Joy Henderson 0942 C-1
Indiana Girls School
2596 N. Girls School Road
Indianapolis, IN 46214-3498

Tools for Regeneration

"Humor is the high road into and through transformation"

—W. Brugh Joy, M.D.

The Healing Power of Laughter

William Hazlitt observed that human beings are the only animals that laugh and weep, for they are the only animals that are struck with the difference between what things are and what they ought to be.

One of the most ancient and widespread health beliefs was the therapeutic value of laughter. Doctors have known for a long time that happy patients respond more favorably to treatment than do cheerless complaining ones. Norman Cousins, author and former editor of the *Saturday Review*, is a most dramatic and well-known case in point. In his bestselling book, *Anatomy of an Illness*, Cousins chronicles his recovery from a degenerative spine disease that was considered fatal. With the cooperation and support of his doctor, he checked out of the hospital and into a hotel room

where he watched comedy films as part of his self-prescribed humor therapy. He discovered that one ten-minute interlude of laughter produced two hours of painless sleep. It was also discovered that each laughter session caused a reduction in inflammation and that the effect was cumulative.

Cousins calls laughter a form of internal jogging. It exercises the lungs and stimulates the circulatory system. Hearty laughter causes full action of the diaphragm, the main muscle of respiration. Because the resulting deep respiration increases the oxygen in the blood, the whole cardiovascular system benefits from a good belly laugh. In convulsive laughter, where the person really breaks up, the arms and legs are involved as well. The heart rate, breathing, and circulation are speeded up. When the spasm subsides, the pulse rate drops below normal and the skeletal muscles become deeply relaxed. The revitalizing result is something akin to an internal massage.

In general, the more intense the laughter, the more relaxing and the longer the effect.

Laughter, then, is a natural pain-reliever. It helps control pain by distracting our attention from the pain, by changing our perspective or

expectations, and by actually creating physiological changes that reduce pain. Recent research indicates that laughter stimulates the production of endorphins—our body's own natural pain-killers.

Humor relieves stress by allowing us to perceive the paradoxes of life from an emotional distance. In laughing and joking about a life situation, we can separate ourselves from an annoying or uncomfortable incident and reduce our consequent stress level. Laughter is especially helpful for those times when our stress is of our own making—or totally beyond our control.

From: The Laughter Prescription, Dr. Laurence J. Peter and Bill Dana, Ballantine Books, New York: 1982.

Pawnee Rock—Her Story

Marian Mull

The Pawnee Rock Church had been in existence nearly 40 years before the women of the church organized the Ladies Aid. On March 23, 1926, Helena Peters, wife of their minister, Rev. Henry K. Peters, became the first president.

Among the first projects were tying of comforters, an ice cream social, serving father-son and mother-daughter banquets, serving school banquets, food sales and paying off the church loan. The women charged very low prices for their hard work but were able to make payments of as much as \$400 at one time on the church debt. A new brick building had been erected in 1925 at a cost of \$19,000, and the women were eager to do their part in paying off the obligation. They also donated money to the Missionary Fund.

Another women's organization, the

Society of Service, began January 21, 1947, with Edna Welch as president. Members were the "younger set" after World War II, and the two women's organizations worked together on numerous projects for the benefit of the church and the Pawnee Rock community.

The Ladies Aid and the Society of Service merged January 29, 1967, with the formation of the Ladies Service Alliance. Vivian Welch Bright, Edna's daughter, was elected president.

Ladies Service Alliance meetings consist of devotions, study of a church-related book, roll call on pre-planned subjects and current business. This year the study book is *Out of This World* by Rev. Brian Kingslake.

The Ladies Service Alliance money-making projects have been serving Lions Club dinners, food sales, and serving lunch at auctions. At each

meeting we have a home market, consisting of canned or baked foods or plants. Members buy chances on the items, and winners carry home the prizes!

In the past two years the interior of our church has been completely redecorated. This has been accomplished by donated labor, funds from the Ladies Service Alliance and memorials.

Over the years the women of the church have supported the Sunday school, choir, community affairs and the National Alliance of New Church Women. Having participated in our local church's centennial recently, we eagerly look forward to involvement in its second century.

Mrs. Mull is vice-president of the Pawnee Rock Ladies Service Alliance.

Open Letter to a Kansas Church

I am sure I am but one of many in our larger beloved church who want to express warm congratulations to you, Pawnee Rock, on your one hundredth year celebration of your life and existence as a church. I, as one of the individuals who was fortunate enough to grow up under your caring and instructive wings, move, grow and live today to a large degree from the effects of your early influence in my life, even though I am many miles from you now.

Moved by the video tape my parents so thoughtfully sent to me, I deeply regret that I was not there with you in body and soul as you worshipped and celebrated your life together in the Lord's house in November. I feel the tie of deep spiritual roots with you, not as much from the point of view of things learned intellectually, but as Swedenborg says, "from the voluntary things which are from love." Love was always at the front door on Sunday mornings with cheerful greetings from young and old. Love was always moving our hearts and minds from warm, spirited, Sunday school teachers who themselves genuinely loved to try to live the Lord's teachings as an expression of their

feelings of love for Him. Love was in the pulpit, in the choir, and in the congregation as we worshipped and sang together for all the small and great occasions. And it was love that sent us young people then to the church youth camps to expand our life experience, make new friends, and increase our spiritual knowledge.

As I watched the tape, it was a painful lesson to me about a certain aspect of the life of charity. The Lord commands charity and faith in our hearts and in our living. *We are not to exclude this command as we relate to ourselves.* I sometimes do this, and this was one of those times. I should have been there with you celebrating because I love you and celebrate the church at several levels. It was simply good and right for me to be there because the Lord's love and light was being successfully and wonderfully delivered to one young girl's sometimes troubled soul, and that (the Lord's love and light) should always be brought out of its hiding place—affirmed and celebrated. This is a serious matter of choice: The Lord needs us to hold up our end of His values. And *we* need it even more! An "old tape" (bad faith) with a false idea

was playing in my mind as I contemplated the event. I didn't *seriously* discuss with John how we might manage a trip to Pawnee Rock, rationalizing that I didn't want to place further financial stress on an already strained purse. Certainly the Lord would have wanted me to go, just as John did.

So what is the point of all this? That I simply made a mistake! In closing let me say that I hope the mistake I've made is of use to someone else as they read about it. I hope so, because that would help offset the pain I feel at letting myself down, i.e., of letting heaven down inside me.

May the Lord's ministry continue to flow from your doors, through your lives.

With deep regard,
Sharon Unruh Billings

Pawnee Rock marked its centennial celebration November 6, 1988 with special services which included a continental breakfast (and choir!), a solo by Muff Worden and address by Rev. Randall Laakko, Convention President.

Spring Chrysalis to Emerge with a Bang

According to Robert H. Kirven, the Spring 1989 *Chrysalis: Journal of the Swedenborg Foundation*, will contain articles suggesting various avenues along which searches for unity between science and spirituality may be pursued. These avenues were suggested by the presentations of the panel speakers at the Foundation's August 1988 Tricentennial Symposium, "Science and Spirituality: A Search for Unity." All of the Symposium papers will be printed in the Spring *Chrysalis* and will include John Hitchcock's "The New Physics and Human Transformation," Raymond Moody's "The Light Beyond—Recent Developments in Near-Death Research," and Sir John Eccles' "Science and Human Consciousness."

"A fundamental premise of the Swedenborg Tricentennial observations," Dr. Kirven said, "is that the divergence between science and religion—a recent development in Swedenborg's time, which he strove to bridge—has served its purpose and is beginning to break down. The spectacular advances made by the physical and biological sciences, working in the sharp if restricted focus of the Newtonian model, may have justified that divergence in its time. But while science has been moving onward and upward, it has followed a spiral track; it has come to another intersection with the radius of reality's spiritual dimension. At this juncture, the walls between scientific and spiritual models of inquiry are breached at a number of points, and the Tricentennial Symposium's *Search for Unity* has illuminated some of them."

Another Swedenborgian scholar, George Dole, said that he came away from the Tarrytown Conference with a greater confidence that Swedenborgian thought has something to offer. "I have a clearer idea," Dr. Dole added, "as to

Ask Swedenborg !

by George Dole

What About AIDS?

Q: What would Swedenborg have said about a new disease such as AIDS?

A: A. There is a fair extensive discussion of disease in nn. 5712-5726 of *Arcana Coelestia* which is useful in regard to the subject of disease in general. It states in the first place that diseases correspond to "the cupidities and passions" of the hells, and are induced by infernals. It closes by saying that if we had lived the life of good, our interiors would be open into Heaven. We would be without disease, and "would only decrease to the last of old age . . . and pass without disease . . . into such a body as Angels have." This would mean that we can take the appearance of a "new disease" as a sign of the surfacing of a "new evil" in the general state of humanity, knowing from personal experience that the evil is not really "new," but has been lying concealed (see *Divine Providence* 1780.) The Lord sees that the time has come for us to face it.

The relevant chapter of *Divine Providence* begins with the statement that we are all "in evil," and the whole tenor of the book precludes our regarding disease as a punishment for sin. The violation of natural laws has natural consequences, of course. But whenever misfortune comes upon us, it is not simply because of what *has happened* in the past, but so that something better *can happen* in the future.

What good can come of such a disease as AIDS? The flu epidemic of 1918 killed more than twenty-two million people worldwide. In an article in the January, 1989, issue of *The Smithsonian*, Jack Fincher writes,

And gradually a kind of dogged selflessness, sometimes amounting to heroism, became commonplace. Businesses, hotels, fraternity houses, private clubs, even the exclusive Vanderbilt farm in Rhode Island donated their

♦
*. . . the ultimate cure
for AIDS
is that we
begin to care
more constantly
for each other.*
♦

premises for emergency hospitals. Private automobiles and taxicabs, as well as the limousines of society matrons, chauffeured medics and served as ambulances. Off-duty police and firemen drove ambulances and carried stretchers. Department stores distributed relief supplies and opened phone banks so people could make emergency calls. Volunteers canvassed house-to-house searching for those too weak to cry out for help.

Fundamentally, I believe that Swedenborg would think it obvious that the ultimate cure for AIDS is that we begin to care more deeply and more constantly for each other. It is a sign of the fact that we are "in evil" that it takes such tragedies to call forth our selflessness and our heroism, but as long as it requires disasters to awaken our caring, we may be sure that disasters will occur.

what that 'something' is." So, if you are not yet a *Chrysalis* subscriber, and want to learn about these new developments, please send \$20 *now* to the Swedenborg Foundation, 139 E. 23rd Street, New York, New York 10010. In exchange you will add to your library the classic on "Science and Spirituality," plus "The Fabulous" (Summer 1989) and "The Tree of Knowledge"

(Autumn 1989). By supporting the Foundation's journal, you will be helping to build interest in Swedenborgian thought. You will help the Foundation make friends among those seeking spiritual growth throughout all the religious traditions. You will help many of them to hear about Swedenborg for the first time and to become curious about what we have to offer.

Commencements

Baptism

Bright—Kenda Shay, daughter of Todd and Tamzen Bright, was baptized into the Christian faith November 27, 1988, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Pawnee Rock, Kansas, the Rev. John Bennett officiating.

Dinkelmeyer—Thomas John, son of Robert and Jennifer Dinkelmeyer was baptized into the Christian faith November 2, 1988, in Pretty Prairie, Kansas, the Rev. Eric J. Zacharias officiating.

Edlen—Samuel Edlen, first child of Ollie and Della Edlen, was baptized into the Christian faith, November 6, 1988, at the LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Ted LeVan officiating.

Whitaker—Jonathan Thomas, son of Alan and Corinne (Thomson) Whitaker, was baptized into the Christian faith November 27, 1988, at Fryeburg New Church, Maine, the Rev. Rachel Lawrence officiating.

Confirmation

Patana and Jacks—Lori Patana and Ken Jacks were confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches November 27, 1988, at the Royal Oak Swedenborgian church, Royal Oak, Michigan, the Rev. Stephen Pults officiating.

Simpson—Cassandra Bowyer Simpson was confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches November 13, 1988, at the LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Ted LeVan officiating.

Change of Address

Elizabeth Munger—long-time member of the LaPorte New Church would like all her friends to know that she can be reached at this new address: Mrs. Robert C. Munger, Ponce de Leon, 640 Alta Vista, Suite 137, Sante Fe, NM 87501.

Deaths

Bowyer—Bill Bowyer, husband of Isabel Bowyer, a long time member of the LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana, entered the spiritual world November 4, 1988. Resurrection services were conducted November 8, 1988, the Rev. Ted LeVan officiating.

Grover—Hannah Grover, oldest member of the Boston Church, entered the spiritual world August 24, 1988. Memorial services were held September 9, 1988, at the Burgess Funeral Home in Rockport, Maine, the Rev. G. Steven Ellis and the Rev. Donna J. Sloan officiating. Ms. Grover was baptized into the Church in 1893 and elected a member in 1912. She died at 95 years of age.

Hejny—Gary Dean, age 39 years, of Great Bend, Kansas, entered the spiritual world November 15, 1988. Gary was a member of the Church of the New Jerusalem, Pawnee Rock, Kansas, where the funeral service took place, the Rev. John Bennett officiating. Interment was at the Great Bend cemetery.

A Note from President Randy Laakko

I would like to thank everyone for all the cards, flowers, and prayers given in my behalf when I was sick during this past Fall. They were very much appreciated.

General Convention of the New Jerusalem
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