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Contents

- 39** Our Surprising Easter, *Paul Zacharias*
- 41** Spiritual and Jogging "Highs", *George McAdams*
- 43** Dancing Sarah's Circle, *Deborah Winter*
- 45** Revisiting A.D. 33, *Sharon Unruh Billings*
- 48** 1989 Convention
- 49** Advance Convention Registration
- 51** Black Hole Syndrome Strikes Churches, *Ethelwyn Worden*
- 53** Diet For A New America
- 54** Webs of Communication, *Patte LeVan*

Departments

- 46** The Family Connection: Children's Pages
Signs of Spring
"The Promise of America" Series on NBC
Easter Crossword
- 53** Wellness
Diet for A New America
- 55** Ask Swedenborg!, *George Dole*
Dream Realities
- 56** Commencements

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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

Christmas and Easter were telescoped this year; I was planning this issue in mid-December with an environmental theme in mind, resurrection of the planet, and thinking about various kinds of deaths and rebirths. Then, two weeks before Christmas I slipped and fell down our garage steps, breaking one ankle and spraining the other.

The crises in our lives seem to produce time warps and instant changes of perspective; things of utmost importance become back-burner stuff, carefully ordered schedules are out the window, priorities switched. Christmas and Easter weren't just telescoped, they were scrambled. Even as I lay on the garage floor in a haze of pain, mentally going through the Kubler-Ross stages of dying—fear, denial, grief, anger, bargaining, acceptance—there was this strange awareness that I was being presented with a gift, an opportunity. Ankles are foundations. Was it perhaps time to examine some firmly entrenched attitude that was hindering growth? Meanwhile I had to get off the floor, and I wasn't sure I could stand. I yelled, but our study group was meeting inside at the other end of the house, nobody could hear. I dragged myself up, hobbled in and was immediately whisked away to emergency care.

There was a sensation of letting go and giving over in total trust as each of our friends poured out their love and help; one couple even produced a wheel chair.

A cast then for the first time in my life, and orders to keep the feet elevated. More fear and frustration and body thoughts trying to crowd out serenity: How would I get my work done being this immobilized? Answers were coming through: Trust. Allow. Accept. Become willing. Patience. Rest and let yourself be loved.

Then I had the dream. I seldom have vivid dreams full of rich and exotic symbolism as so many others seem to, but when I get

one, it's a wowser.

In the dream, I was mingling with people outdoors in something of a county fair setting when a young woman emerged from the crowd with a lovely baby in her arms. She smiled, and though no words were spoken she gave me a non-verbal message that I was to take the baby with me and meet her in another area later. I was already carrying two rather heavy coats, but I shifted them so that she could give me the baby. I continued on my way for what seemed like a very long time, until I finally spotted the young woman once again coming toward me. But when I went to turn over the baby to her, I discovered I had lost it. I still had the two coats over my arm, but the baby was gone. I felt an overwhelming, baffled despair. How could I have lost this child and not even be aware of it? The woman seemed sad, but not condemning. We simply went together back up the road to try and find the baby. I awoke still thinking, "It must have slipped through the coats, if I hadn't had the coats, I would have had a better grip..."

As I told the dream to Ted and later to a friend, it became clear that the baby was my "child within" that I needed to nurture more, focus on, listen to, cherish more, trust more. Or the Christ within? Isn't loving the child within loving God within? And the coats. Not one, but two of them, symbols of material, outer-world protection that I was still clinging to, and as my friend pointed out, not even wearing them! Just dragging them along, my arms so full of this burden that I didn't know when a precious living gift slipped through and disappeared.

The dream and the healing time has clarified and helped transform some things I've been struggling with for some time. But I had to become still to listen. Birth, death, resurrection. It was one of the most peaceful, loving Christmas/Easters I've ever had.



Our Surprising Easter

*"And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,
but when they went in,
they did not find the body." Luke 24:3*

Paul Zacharias

When you stop and think about the events of Easter, you bump into many surprises, even as all of life is full of surprises. Think of those three women on their way to the tomb, less than 48 hours after Jesus had been buried. They were bringing spices to anoint his body. It was Sunday, very early. The sun was just coming up. And as they walked along they had primarily one thing on their minds: the stone. That big boulder rolled in front of the tomb. They knew they could never move it by themselves. Who will help us move the stone? How can we get to the Lord's body? And the more they thought about it, the bigger the stone grew in their minds, and the more anxious they became.

Lo and behold, when they arrived at the sepulcher, the stone had already been rolled away. All of their worrying

life? And as we come to it, nine times out of ten, we find that the difficulty isn't as big as we thought it would be. Or, if we are in fact faced with a major crisis, we find that we are given the necessary strength and courage to work our way through it. The stone is rolled away.

There are many things in life we may face with a sense of dread: old age, retirement, death, insecurity, failing health. And we wonder who is going to roll away these stones for us, but when we get there, we find that the stone has been moved away, and life continues. This is one of the surprising and beautiful lessons of Easter. And there are other surprises too.

Those women entered the tomb, and they were amazed to find that the body of Christ was gone; and yet they had seen his body placed in that tomb, sealed by a large stone and guarded by soldiers. You can see why they were frightened and bewildered. Instead of a corpse they saw a young man, very much alive, dressed all in white, and he said to them, "Don't be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, but he isn't here. He is risen, even as he said he would rise again." This angel, and that is what the women saw with their spiritual eyes, was quite calm and casual in manner, as if this sort of thing happens all the time. He didn't appear to be agitated or disturbed; it's as if he expected life to rise up out of death. And something like this happens with us too, doesn't it! Things don't always work out exactly the way we expect them to. We don't always find things in the same place we left them. Recently we had a fire in the fireplace and went to bed,

◆
*All of
their worrying
was for nothing.*
◆

was for nothing. How often this happens to us. We see something up ahead in our life—a major obstacle—it may be next week or six months away—and we wonder to ourselves: How in the world am I going to get through this barrier, this problem, coming up in my

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leaving a large log that apparently wouldn't burn. It seemed dormant. The next morning I came downstairs and found that it had been burning all night long; just part of the outer shell was left. Which is a parable on life. Things—ideas—people—loves—which we thought were dead and buried are often up and about, very much alive. And this can be rather disconcerting. Generally speaking there are established patterns and laws in life, and for the most part events unfold in an orderly and seemly fashion, but every so often God skips a beat or two—that which we thought was dead becomes

◆
*... events unfold
in an orderly fashion,
but every so often
God skips a beat
or two ...*
◆

alive, and we have to deal with some new realities. Look back in your life and see times this Easter surprise has happened to you.

The Easter surprise also happens on the world scene. Twelve months ago, who in this whole wide world could have predicted these events that are coming to pass?

- USA and USSR have agreed to destroy part of their nuclear stockpiles, with further arms reductions in the works.
- India and Pakistan, longtime enemies, are now seeking to restore normal relationships.
- China, USSR and USA are now on

reasonably friendly speaking terms.

- The tragic war between Iran and Iraq has at long last come to an end.
- The PLO has recognized Israel and has renounced terrorism.
- The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan is being phased out.
- The United Nations has received the Nobel Peace Prize for its peace-keeping efforts.
- Ecological concerns are now being recognized as being critically important, and requiring action, by virtually all nations.

So, it's been quite a surprising year! Notice that organized religion has not been particularly evident in the above unfolding developments. It seems that the Lord works through a great many agencies, and I can't help but wonder where the Christian Church is on this list. More specifically, the Swedenborgian Church! Something for the back burner.

The angel told the women that Christ had risen from the dead. I wonder if they had any idea of what he really meant. From our perspective, everything about the life and death of Jesus Christ fits together—it all points to the resurrection—but from the point of view of those women, it must have been terribly confusing. What does it mean to emerge victorious over death? Think about the Lord's life, especially those last few weeks—the cruelty, the loneliness, the pain, the darkness—these are the things that can destroy—and he rose above all those inner torments that can kill the spirit. The Lord overcame the hells and glorified his entire nature, and if we can accept all of this, it is not difficult to believe that he also overcame physical death. The Lord actually swallowed up death in victory. He broke for himself, and he breaks for us, the bondage of death. Death could not hold him, and for those women, that was a very big surprise indeed.

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*There was,
and is,
a final surprise ...*
◆

There was, and is, a final surprise. It takes a while for this one to sink in. Many people go all through life and never once come to grips with this spiritual reality. It is the realization that *we too can rise with Him*. Not in exactly the same way, because our physical body is not transformed into Divine substance when we die; it turns to dust in the ground. But *inside* we can rise with Him. If we are willing to die, that is, let go of those parts of our spirit that have no place in the Kingdom of Light, then we too will rise again. We're not just talking about "life after death." Everyone lives after their material body dies; that's not the point. The point is: are we really alive here and now? To what extent do we feel the rapture of being alive? At this very moment? That is what Easter is all about.

Perhaps someone has dealt unfairly with you, and you want to get revenge. Can you let go of that vengeful desire—rise above it? Perhaps we are entrapped by darkness, darkness of the spirit where everything seems so heavy and frightening. Can we, with the Lord's help, face our darkness and walk our way through it? Do we always follow the popular crowd, or are we willing to curb that desire, and, when necessary, stand alone for what we believe to be right and good. Obviously rising above these dark shadows in our soul is not easy, or painless, but the promise has been given. If we are serious about Easter, we cannot evade the challenge. With the Risen Lord we can rise to a new and better life.

Spiritual and Jogging "Highs"

George McAdams

About a week after Peter confessed at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus was the Christ of God and not a mere mortal like the disciples, Jesus took Peter, James and John up on a mountain. There He was transfigured before them with His face taking on an altered appearance and His clothes becoming white and glistening. Moses and Elijah appeared and mentioned His coming death at Jerusalem. Then a cloud enveloped them from which a voice spoke, *This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to Him*. That was the supreme moment in Jesus' earthly life, His spiritual high. Isn't it ironic that the Church celebrates this ancient feast of the Transfiguration in August, on the very date we dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima? On the one hand, three uneducated, astonished fishermen experienced supernatural glory on a Palestinian mountain; on the other, as we so negatively transfigured Hiroshima, the world experienced natural horror over what man had wrought in order to end World War II. So often, highs and lows succeed one another relentlessly. Our changing moods testify to this.

It happens in the story of Creation. The opening sentence of the Bible states: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*. There follows the description of the orderly processes separating light from darkness, land from oceans, the bringing into being of vegetation and fruit trees, then successively fish, birds and animals. Finally God evolved man, made in His image, the high point of creation. One estimate places the age of the universe between eight and thirteen billion years. The first chapter of Genesis ends with, *And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day*. Yes, God's creation is very good whether it took six days or ten billion years. But once man was around, he didn't take long to interfere and bring it to a low point with his first disobedience. Pridefully wanting to be like God, Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the for-



Artist: Manon Washburn

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*"This is the tragedy
 of every man:
 'to dim all wonder
 by indifference.'"*
 ◆

bidden tree of knowledge of good and evil and God expelled them from the innocent, carefree life in the garden of Eden. This old story foreshadows symbolically all that we have accomplished but also misused in God's creation ever since.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in our environment, the physical world in which God has placed us as dominant beings to enjoy but also to act responsibly. We fail most in this regard when we forget that it is God's world and not ours to do with as we please, usually for short-term gain ignoring probable long-term harm. And thus do we have acid rain destroying once pristine lakes and

forests, indestructible plastic debris on beaches and ocean bottoms forever, and chemical and other hazardous wastes polluting water supplies. And to this sorry list the increasing disappearance from the face of the earth of species after species of plants and animals that have been around long before man arrived with his neglect, indifference or deliberate selfish intent.

Twenty-five years ago Rachel Carson in her book *Silent Spring* first alerted most of us to the detrimental effects on the environment accompanying man's recent technological sophistication. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel in 1955 anticipated Carson's theme in his *God in Search of Man*. He quotes Isaiah, *Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory*. (6:3) Then he writes: *The whole earth is full of His glory, but we do not perceive it . . . we fail to wonder, we fail to respond to the presence. This is the tragedy of every man: 'to dim all wonder by indifference.'* Later in this book of Heschel's philosophy of Judaism, there is this:

We are endowed with the ability to conquer and control the forces of nature. In exercising power, we submit to our will a world that we did not create, invading realms that do not belong to us . . . By whose grace, by what right, do we exploit, consume and enjoy the fruits of the trees, the blessings of the earth? . . . Our power may become our undoing. We stand on a razor's edge. It is so easy to hurt, to destroy, to insult, to kill. Giving birth to one child is a mystery, bringing death to millions is but a skill.

Most religious leaders of today are trying to help people become more conscious of their responsibility, their stewardship concerning God's world that He has entrusted to them. My favorite of the four Rite II Eucharistic prayers in the Prayer book 1 begins:

God of all power, Ruler of the Uni-
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verse, you are worthy of glory and praise. At your command all things came to be: the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses, and this fragile earth, our island home. From the primal elements you brought forth the human race, and blessed us with memory, reason, and skill. you made us the rulers of creation. But we turned against you, and betrayed your trust; and we turned against one another.

This rebellion, our turning away from God, manifests itself in part in the old, deadly sin of sloth, the sin of just not caring enough. Apathy, indifference, laziness, callousness, all spring from sloth. We, so busy about our business in daily living, are too preoccupied to be kind or to save rather than to allow destruction of this plant or that animal in God's world. My son-in-law Bruce Hampton of The National Outdoor Leadership School is the joint author of a recent book titled *Soft Paths*, the subject being how to enjoy the wilderness without harming it. In the chapter on campsites, he deplores the thoughtless, deadly trampling of seedlings and small trees in certain areas. He speaks of such campsites as being forested by the "living dead"; they will remain forested only until the present generation of adult trees dies.

Concerning animals, human beings are sinking to a new spiritual low in their greed for the ivory tusks of elephants. How much longer will we who are supposed to be God's stewards of this marvelous planet enjoy the vision of these magnificent beasts in their natural habitat? The epitome of this type of shortsighted slaughter is that of the rhinoceros for its horn as an alleged aphrodisiac. The following excerpts are from the book *Sand Rivers* by Peter Matthiessen:

In a growth of thin saplings, at extreme close quarters, stands a rhinoceros with a small calf at her side. The immense and ancient animal remains motionless and silent . . . I am dead certain that the rhino is going to charge, it is only a matter of reaction time and selection of one dimly seen shadow, for we are much too deep into her space, too close to the small calf, to get away with it. But almost immediately a feeling comes, a knowing rather, that the moment of danger . . . is already past, and I stop where I am, in pure, breathless

awe of this protean life form, six hundred thousand centuries on earth.

. . . As we watch, the serene great animal settles backward inelegantly on her hind quarters, then lies down in the filtered shade to resume her rest, her young beside her . . . Seeing the innocent beast lie down again, it was clear how simple it would be to shoot this near-blind creature that keeps so close to its home thickets, that has no enemies except this upright, evil-smelling shadow, so recent in its ancient world, against which it has evolved no defense. Its rough prong of compacted hair would be backed off with a panga and shoved into a gunny sack as the triumphant voice of man moved onward, leaving behind in the African silence the dead weight of the carcass, the end-product of millions of browsing, sun-filled mornings, as the dependent calf emerges from the thicket, and stands by dumbly to await the lion.

What can you and I do to counteract such ruthless violations of the fragile environment entrusted to us by God? If each of us cares enough, we can make a difference as we are doing in the case of endangered whales. The Greenpeace

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*The more we take time
to perceive the beauty
in a flower,
the more we will
work to preserve such
spiritual highs.*

◆

organization is winning its battle to save the whales because private opinions have joined in a massive public outcry worldwide. Soon the whaling industry may be history. In the third-world African countries, however, there is so much near-starvation of human beings that the killing of an elephant or a rhinoceros is of little concern. Thus do we have to help these people in many ways, even as we try to educate them in saving their precious, unique environment.

You and I are so fortunate here amid the glory of God that surrounds us

in this corner of His creation. I hope we are the exception to Rabbi Heschel's opinion that we dim all wonder by indifference, by sloth if you will. One truth I know. The more time we take to perceive the beauty in a flower, to fall under the spell of a child's laughter, to enjoy the grace of a diving tern, the more we will be motivated to work to preserve such spiritual highs. This work will be hard and involve your time, energy, and money. But, after the uphill struggle, the view from the top is worth it. It's like my early 1980 jogging days when I struggled up Rackliff Island's hills. One particularly grueling, long steep run I dubbed irreverently the slope of Calvary because my calves hurt so. I did learn not to look up in such situations. It was not only discouraging to see how far away was the top, but I felt like those poor carriage horses in my favorite childhood book *Black Beauty*.² For the sake of fashion, owners used checkreins to hold the horses' heads up and back. They couldn't put their shoulder and chest muscles into their work. I just couldn't breathe well like that, and my neck hurt. Thus did I learn to plod along uphill with my head down, get the job done, and not worry about what lay ahead.

Now, eight years and 243,000 miles later I still have to get in my daily early morning run, come rain or shine or snow or sleet. The air is so fresh, the confusion of the day hasn't yet begun, and it has become an ideal time to pray and meditate unless I get carried away to the extent I don't see potholes! One day six years ago, jogging at 7:00 A.M. up to the park from our Connecticut home, I hit such a spiritual high listening to the liquid music of a wood thrush that, when I burst out on top of the hill and saw the vast green valley before me, I involuntarily cried out, "Oh! God, you are." This had to be the understatement of the week. You must have had similar experiences. We have to cherish them, recognize them for what they are, take the time to look for them and offer them to God in praise and adoration for His world, even as we ask Him to lead us into helping to preserve it.

¹ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1979, Eucharistic Prayer C, p. 370.

² Sewell, Anna. *Black Beauty*, G.W. Jacobs, 1910, Grosset & Dunlap, 1968.

The Reverend George B. McAdams, M.D., is a retired Episcopal priest and pathologist now living in Spruce Head, Maine. The above sermon was given last August in Long Cove Chapel.

Dancing Sarah's Circle

Deborah Winter

I knew I had really missed a special happening last year when I caught wind of how powerful the Women's Weekend had been at the Almont New Church Assembly. Life was busy and I didn't go.

This year as the scheduled Women's Weekend came near it didn't surprise me that life was still busy. What did surprise me was a phone call from my friend Carla Mason who called to enthusiastically say "Let's Go"! So one week from the date of the retreat I continued to be surprised as everything fell into place ever so easily and the trip was on. My sense that it would be a weekend of grace began with my plane trip. The route included a two-hour layover in Atlanta, just an hour from where Carla lives. She joined me there and continued the trip to Almont on the same flight. We were both so excited and talked about a mutual feeling of knowing that this trip was "meant to be."

Eight of us came together with open hearts. We "just wanted to be there" to share, to listen, to be heard. Our co-leaders, the Revs. Dorothea Harvey and Judy Dennis provided us with the kind of structure that enabled us to explore together deeply our own individual spirituality. They shared a song with us called *We Are Dancing Sarah's Circle* which we sang throughout the weekend. The melody to this song is identical to the melody of *We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder*. You might like trying it out. Here are the words:

*We are dancing Sarah's circle (3 times)
Sisters one and all (ending line sung once to each verse)*

*We will all do our own naming
Sisters one and all*



Top row, left to right: Pat Dennis, Rev. Dorothea Harvey (co-leader), Rev. Judy Dennis (co-leader), Carla Mason. Bottom row: Rev. Deborah Winter, Chris Laitner, Val Brugler, Barb Boxwell

*Here we seek and find our history
Sisters one and all*

*Every round a generation
Sisters one and all*

*On and on the circle's moving
Sisters one and all*

*We are dancing Sarah's circle
Sisters one and all*

It was a weekend full of grace.
Dancing Sarah's Circle is a graceful

dance that has been danced many times although never in the same way. It is an ancient dance that is danced through the sharing of our life stories and experiences. It is of essential importance to share our stories with each other. In the sharing we expose our vulnerability and touch heart to heart. Somehow in the speaking and telling

of ourselves there's a validity and realness that happens, there's a hush and a listening and we are left affected and touched by another human being's life and reality.

Retreats like this one in all their variety are a real opportunity for renewal and expansion of self. Ever since I was a teen in the church League they have been important to me and have often been a catalyst for personal and spiritual transformation. The Women's Retreat was a safe place to be open and vulnerable. I felt affirmed and empowered

by the bonding that took place there. I left with a warm heart and a sense of my need to find "safe" places to explore, share and learn and also to create safe places, to take the risk.

At the end of the Retreat we all wrote down a response or impression of our experience during the weekend. We identified with the lines in the song *We Are Dancing Sarah's Circle*. Here are those impressions:

We are dancing Sarah's circle
• We were 8 women coming together from many ages, life styles, and geographical areas.

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- We came together, I found friends old and new.

We will all do our own naming

- Even though we must be ourselves, and define who we are, and work through our own problems, we can also be supportive to each other, feel each other's pain, and find a peace and harmony as a supportive group of women.
- We affirmed ourselves and our abilities that allow us to take the risks in and responsibilities for our own lives.
- As we talked, one of the obstacles we identified was our need for the approval of others, letting others define what we "ought" to be as women, as daughters, whatever role. Our wording for what would help was our taking our own courage and responsibility for defining who we are. Then we found the line in the song making the same point.
- From "We will all do our own naming" to *I will do my own naming*. What an affirmation that is! Too often I find myself looking to someone else to define *my* reality instead of trusting my own gut, my own intuition.

Here we seek and find our history

- We were able to walk through our own life story to find our "her-story" and find the strength of all womankind supporting us.
- We each have our own story to tell which makes us who we are now and what we will be. But through our own story is woven a thread of similarity each to another. Though we come from different places in space and time we can and do touch each other to let it be known that we are not alone.
- We felt a lack of strong, positive role models of women to give us a source of strength and validity, compared to history's treatment of strong men. So we were each asked to think of one or more women who had been "saints" for us. We shared why these women were positive models for us, and began to acknowledge the parts of ourselves that identified with the courage or depth of our own "saints," and find our own stories as women with strength as well as caring.

Every round a generation

- Woman-strength is built upon the kind of sharing and affirmation we experienced here.

◆
*Every time I go
through the process
of feeling the pain
and joy that lets me
know I am alive,
the pain is less and
the joy is greater.*
◆

- We came back to our own mothers and the difficulties we felt relating to them, recognized *their* inheritance from their mothers, and realized that we all mess up. We can accept our right to anger for what happened to our little child within, and at the same time forgive our mothers and ourselves.
- Every time I go through the process of feeling the pain and joy that lets me know I am alive the pain is less and less and the joy greater. It seems like a never-ending spiral upward to greater life and more abundant living.

On and on the circle's moving

- And we continue to move through the cycles and through the seasons of birth, growth, death, regeneration and on to birth and life again.
- We move forward in our own lives, ever changing. We and other women move in and out of the ever-spiraling circle which is always there for us.

We are dancing Sarah's circle

- And so, for this weekend we danced Sarah's circle, moving with a dance of our own creation. It intensified our strengthened selves. We danced with joy. Thank you for being here, supportive and honest, lending a hand and renewed friendship.
- Sarah's circle is an image I find powerful for me as a woman. The covenant and promise of God was given to her as it is given to every woman, and to me the circular dance is a symbol of movement that is inclusive of what it means to be human. The themes of owning the strengths of being a

woman, to do our own naming, seeking our history and moving this loving strength outward to other women and sharing the "woman-story" is an image of a spiraling circle. Empowering up and out, grounding down and in, the reality of God's love and wisdom is an affirming reality for women.

- Wash the pain away with the water of Divine truth. Plant the seed in the rich humus of Mother Earth. Be grounded, yet reach for the light. The bond we formed was almost immediate and close. We shared our role models, our fantasies and laughter. There are things that we cannot change, things that we cannot accept which may cause us pain, or which, if things were different, we would act upon. The role models give us inspiration and courage. Our fantasies lend our quiet desperation joy. Our regret and pain develops a burl, that gives our womanhood a texture, strength and beauty which makes us unique. We celebrated the continuity of life. We sang and danced. We looked inside and looked back. We will trust the light which we follow. The environment was a safe harbor. Our physical needs were taken care of by the staff which allowed us to focus on our task. The beauty of the country roads and the sound of the wind reinforced our connection with

◆
*Our regret and pain
develops a burl
that gives our
womanhood
a texture, strength
and beauty which
makes us unique.*
◆

nature. It was enriching and is a memory to cherish.

- Beautiful weekend thanks to our two leaders, Dorothea Harvey and Judy Dennis, plus the other special women. The sharing and getting in touch with the inner person as we moved through

the circle, seeking and finding our history was great in song, dance and communion.

• To my sisters at Almont one and all. Sisters who comprise that hologram I call myself. The love and acceptance and vulnerability that was offered at Almont Women's Weekend made it a safe place to rediscover feelings, our emotional self, our woman self and to honor those feelings and embrace that part of ourselves. I have been strengthened. Thank you Almont and my new found women friends for a safe and nurturing environment in which to risk and expand, feel and grow.

To conclude, I'll share that during the retreat, while feeling into themes of finding and affirming the feminine spirit, a poem by May Sarton kept coming to mind. For the many times I read it, it continues to move me and I find it an appropriate closing impression for the Women's Weekend:

(Untitled)

*And now we who are writing women
and strange monsters
Still search our hearts to find the difficult answers,
Still hope that we may learn to lay our hands
More gently and more subtly on the burning sands.
To be through what we make more simply human,
To come to the deep place where poet becomes woman,
Where nothing has to be renounced or given over
In the pure light that shines out from the lover,
In the warm light that brings forth fruit and flower
And that great sanity, that sun, the feminine power.*

May Sarton

¹ Song from album:

Sometimes I Wish

© Carole A. Edzler 1976

Published by Samray Music/Sisters Unlimited Bml

From a collection of May Sarton's poems: Leonard, Linda. *The Wounded Woman*. Shambhala Publications, Inc. 1982.

Rev. Deborah Winter is co-minister with spouse Skuli Thorballsson at Swedenborg House, Deland, Florida.

Revisiting A.D. 33

Sharon Unruh Billings

Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to actually be back there, when it all took place, with Peter, James, John and the living, breathing, walking, talking, flesh and blood Lord? We can get some idea right now. If the Lord had not come, been crucified and risen, we could not get the same power we get now from others who are trying to love and help us. A.C. 4727 says, "It is love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor that make man new." The disciples ultimately left their worldly occupations and walked and lived with the Lord, experiencing first hand His teaching, healing, praying, and suffering for the love of mankind. They came to love Him deeply through this intimate exposure to divine goodness and truth in human, time and space form. We come to love him too as we take some leave of our worldly occupations, and daily, sometimes hourly, walk with Him in study of His Word and in personal prayer. This "living with the Lord" can have profound consequences. The disciples, after their fears and doubts were dispelled following the crucifixion, devoted their entire lives to the dispersion of His Word.

We, to some degree, disperse His Word to the world as we place ourselves in contact with the spiritual, and experience first hand the reality and nearness of the spiritual world. Our lives and goals re-shape themselves to express Heaven's love and truth in our interactions with others.

Mary Magdelene had a real problem in her interactions with others. A relatively brief encounter with the Lord changed all that. The dynamic, healing forgiveness of her sins and the charge to "go and sin no more" turned her toward love and charity witnessed by her staying by the Lord in His suffering on the cross and her later presence at the sepulcher to minister to His burial needs.

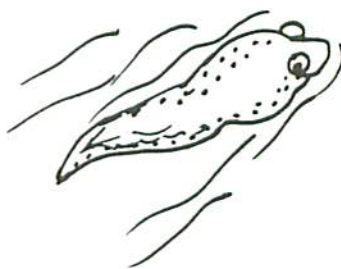
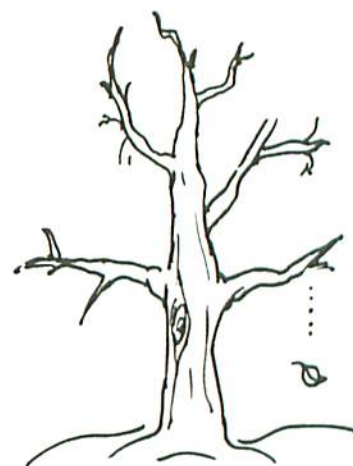
We, in our present-day lives, can experience profound change and healing from coming into contact with the Lord's forgiveness, compassion, and directives as they come through those who, from a High place, attempt to help us out of varying kinds of disordered living. This is what is so amazing about the Lord and His resurrection! His love and truth are *so* real, *so* alive, that we needn't have lived some 2000 years ago to *know* and *feel* them right now! There can be "Easters" in our own personal lives where natural, restricted living can die, and new, vital spiritual living can rise up. There can be only one miraculous source of such events, the incredible love and charity of the Lord to us! A plaque found in some Christian bookstores today poignantly captures the essence of this reality. ***I asked Jesus, "How much do you love me?" He answered, "This much." And He stretched out His arms and died.***

Sharon Billings is Women's Alliance chaplain, Brookings, Oregon.

The Family Connection

Signs of Spring

Draw a circle around each thing on the page which is a sign of spring.



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. Source for these pages: back issues of *Five Smooth Stones*.

"The Promise of America" Series on NBC

On Sunday, May 14, 1989 at 1 p.m. on NBC-TV, the National Council of Churches will introduce you to a few of the 13 million children living in poverty in the United States of America.

Narrated by Maya Angelou, the internationally acclaimed writer, "America's Children: Poorest in a Land of Plenty" exposes the hidden pockets of poverty wherein our children hide.

Lacking the basic resources to begin a healthy life, these children are

systemically denied access to proper medical, educational, and nutritional care from the cradle to the classroom. Their lives begin behind the starting line. They have inherited the misfortune of their parents and are destined to pass poverty along to the next generation of young Americans.

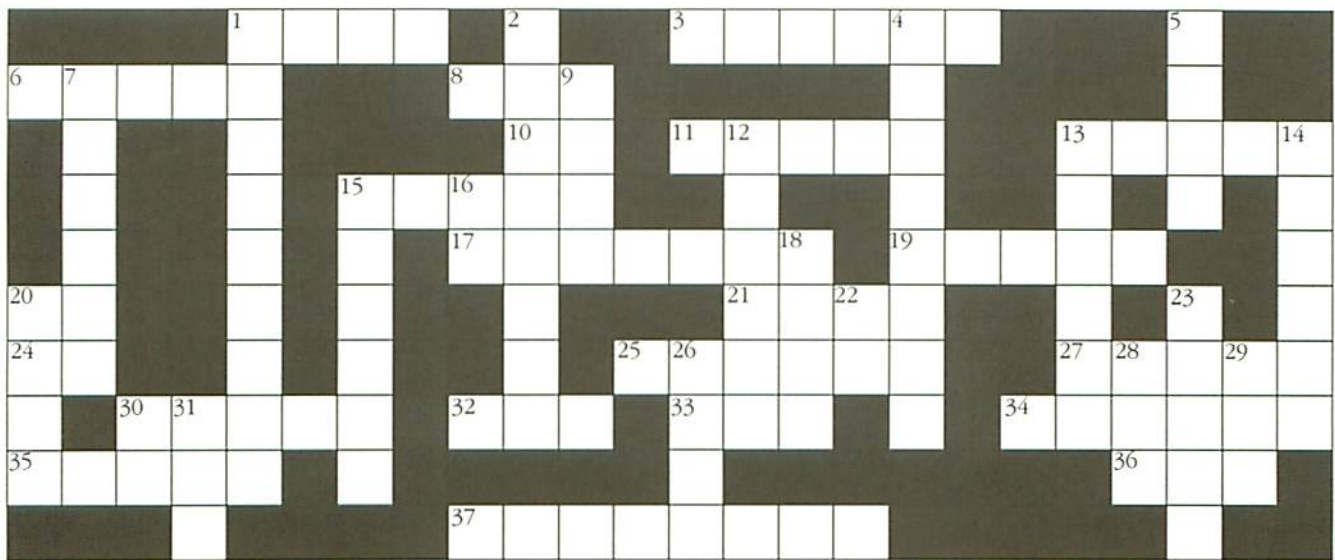
But "America's Children: Poorest in a Land of Plenty" also sheds some light on the solutions to this situation in its equally moving portrayal of those in

church and community organizations who are reaching out to give our children a future right now.

Some other programs in this series include, "Discovery" (Sunday, April 16, 1989, 1 p.m.) produced by The Jewish Theological Seminary of America; and "The Energies of Love" (Sunday, June 4, 1 p.m.) produced by The United States Catholic Conference.

Children's Pages

Easter Crossword



Across

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 used for a burial place | 17 clam or oyster | 32 raw material of gold |
| 3 first day of the week | 19 lament | 33 writing tool |
| 6 end of life on earth | 20 myself | 34 ancient grave cover |
| 8 hurried on foot | 21 place of burial | 35 Hebrew's first month |
| 10 thus | 24 either- | 36 seat in church |
| 11 our Lord | 25 depositing in tomb | 37 chart of months and days |
| 13 approaches | 27 glow | |
| 15 aspect of the moon | 30 banquet, celebration | |

Down

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 follower of Christ | 12 Norse goddess of Spring | 22 Mother's nickname |
| 2 celebration of escape from slavery | 13 another name for Jesus | 23 material for burial strips |
| 4 gather together | 14 substances for anointing | 26 on |
| 5 told by the clock | 15 Roman governor | 28 done by the Easter Bunny |
| 7 Resurrection Day | 16 Christ said, "I ." | 29 not old |
| 9 Christmas word | 18 piece of money | |
| | 20 gives light at night | |

1989 Convention!

June 24-July 2 at Urbana University

Reach out—share—and grow: **Rekindling the flame** is the 1989 Convention theme, according to unanimous agreement by this year's enthusiastic planning committee, who have also established a goal of *50 Leaguers at Convention this year!*

A two-day planning session has established the basic schedule, to be fleshed out as spring progresses. Convention will begin one full day earlier, Tuesday, June 27 at Urbana University, Urbana, Ohio, in order to allow uncrowded time for business meetings, mini-courses and special sessions on the theme of spiritual and church growth.

Prior to Convention's Tuesday evening opening program, the Council of Ministers and Ministers' Spouses sessions is opening with a reception Saturday evening, June 24 and continuing through the 27th.

After hearing a report from the New Church Youth League's (NCYL) mid-winter meeting at Almont (attended by over 50 Leaguers) that more Leaguers would like to attend conventions if they could afford it, the Planning Committee decided to request assistance from Associations, churches and individuals to defray room and board costs for Leaguers at Convention.

Contributions, made out to "General Convention" for this purpose will be gratefully accepted at the Central Office, 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158. Leaguers, please spread the word! Leaguers, ages 13 to 19, will pay only \$50 for Tuesday night through Sunday at Convention this year, in addition to registration fee.

Convention's opening service and business session (featuring the Nominating Committee report) will take place Wednesday morning, with a second business session dealing with questions of Conventions' name, and the one member/one vote status that afternoon. A special program will end the day in rousing fashion.

Mini-courses, about ten of them, will deal with a variety of topics, espe-

cially spiritual growth and renewal. These will occupy most of Thursday, with the evening devoted to a program and small-group discussions led by ministers.

The last mini-course, a business session and the SSR Graduation will take place on Friday, as well as the Women's Alliance Luncheon and program, and the Sunday School Association meeting.

Elections will be held Saturday morning, with the Children's Program presentation taking place during the vote count. The NCYL will present earlier in the session. The Corporation of the New Church Theological School (SSR) will take place after that. This Corporation is open to all who sign, or have signed, the Corporation book at the Registration Desk.

After lunch the afternoon is free time to most Convention-goers, while the General Council meets. The Urbana Church and University committees will provide suggestions, maps, brochures and directions to help everyone find something fun to do.

The Leaguers will have their day-long outing on Saturday as well, then everyone will return to a special dinner and dances (square and "modern") at the University.

The Convention worship service, including communion and ordination, will take place as usual Sunday morning, with lunch concluding Convention.

A special conference on fund raising will be held Sunday evening through Monday—more information will be available on this later.

Throughout the week there will be infant and toddler care provided by Beverly Titus and group. The Children's Program for 5 to 12-year-olds, will once again be in the capable hands of Yvonne Rittenhouse and her co-workers from Seattle.

This program sketch, designed by the planning committee and approved by the General Council, is being solidified throughout Spring, and will be in final form by May 1—but this preview

will give you a good idea of what to look forward to.

We hope to see everyone there! Urbana University has grown and changed since Convention was last there in 1981. All the suites have been air-conditioned and refurbished this year, and South and East dorms are in the beginning stages of that process. The new Harvey Chapel, formerly Center Hall, will be open for early morning services, Thursday through Saturday. The Administration is now housed in Browne Hall; the arches between Barclay and Bailey are gone; and The Hub (pool tables, games, Knight Club, snack bar) has just been redone. Many of you have not seen North Hall, which houses classrooms, offices and a Montessori School.

Urbana has grown, too—shopping centers and a mall (one plaza within walking distance of campus!) are new, as well as a good Chinese restaurant on North Main Street.

We know you remember the June heat in Urbana—but please remember the new air-conditioning, that the pool will be open, and the Ohio Caverns in West Liberty, 10 miles away, are at a constant 56° year-round.

Y'all come, now! Registration forms will be in the April, May and June issues of *The Messenger*, as well as this one—and for those who get their forms in by May 1, the registration fee will be only \$25.00! (After May 1, it will be \$35.00 for NCYL and adults—people 12 and under are not charged a fee).

Many thanks to President Randy Laakko, Rev. Paul Zacharias, Betsy Young, John and Bev Titus and Rev. Steve Pults, who traveled to Newton—and to Rev. Dick and Polly Baxter and Rev. Ken Turley, who kept in close touch by phone but who couldn't attend—to make these plans as representatives of the many groups who contribute to Convention programming. The atmosphere was exciting, and so will Convention be!

Advance Convention Registration

Convention, 1989 ♦ Urbana, Ohio
Urbana University
June 24-July 2, 1989

(Convention Sessions: June 27-July 2, 1989)

*Please fill out front and
back of form*

**NYCL Members between
the ages of 13 and 18
please fill this in**

Registration Fee

Transport

(Please fill-in thoroughly)

Please also complete the reverse side!

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Prov. _____ Zip _____

Accompanied by _____

Children:

1. Name _____ Age _____

2. Name _____ Age _____

3. Name _____ Age _____

☐ My parents will be at Convention. They are _____

☐ My Guardian at Convention (if no parent is present) will be _____

☐ I have enclosed a check for \$35.00 (\$25.00 before May 1) made out to **General Convention '89** to cover registration. Everyone 13 years of age and older must pay this fee. Registration is *per person* and covers some Convention costs and special events. Mail this form and your fee to:

Central Office
48 Sargent Street
Newton, MA 02158

☐ I will arrive at DAYTON Airport on: Date _____ Time _____

Airline: _____ Flight # _____

☐ I am driving to Convention on: Date _____ Time _____

My first meal will be: Date _____ ☐ breakfast ☐ lunch ☐ dinner

☐ I am a passenger in the car of _____

Arriving at Convention on: Date _____ Time _____

☐ I need directions to Urbana _____

☐ Other mode of transport _____

Date of arrival _____ Time _____

Housing

- ☐ I would like a single room.
- ☐ I would like a double room, sharing with _____
- ☐ I would like to have a roommate assigned to share my room.
- ☐ I/We would like (if possible) to have a room near _____

Special Needs

- ☐ I am a vegetarian, with no other restrictions.
- ☐ I have these dietary restrictions: _____
- ☐ I am not able to climb stairs or hills.
- ☐ I need wheelchair access.
- ☐ I am not able to walk very far without discomfort.
- ☐ I have these medical requirements: _____
- ☐ I am ☐ diabetic ☐ a heart patient ☐ other: _____
- ☐ Other physical/special/dietary needs: _____

Special Requirements for Children

(Children's programs will run during Pre-Convention days beginning Sunday, and continue through the week until after worship on July 2)

- ☐ My child/children:
- ☐ will be participating in the Children's Program for ages 5-12 beginning on: Date _____
- ☐ will need the Child Care program for age 2 and under beginning on: Date _____
- ☐ will need the Children's Program for ages 3-5 beginning on: Date _____
- ☐ special needs are: _____
- ☐ has/have ☐ has/have not attended a pre-school program

Other Programs

(We will be in touch with you to give you more information on your choice.)

*Note: Asterisk (*) denotes additional fee required.*

- ☐ I wish to co-register for the following programs:
- ☐ New Church Youth League Officers (June 25-28; *officers only*)
- ☐ Council of Ministers (June 24-27; *ministers & SSR students*)
- ☐ Ministers' Spouses (June 24-27; *ministers' spouses only*)
- ☐ Women's Alliance Luncheon (Friday, July 1)
- ☐ * Post-Convention Conference on Fund Raising (July 2-4 at Urbana University)

Rates for 1989 Convention Room & Board

- ☐ Dormitory
- ☐ Adult: \$35 daily; \$280 for 8 days; \$140 for 4 days
- ☐ Teen (13-19 years): \$100 for 8 days; \$50 for 4 days (*Special 1989 Rate*)
- ☐ Youth (4-12 years): Double: \$20 daily; \$160 for 8 days; \$80 for 4 days
- ☐ Child (3 and under): No charge if occupying same room as parents, and no charge for food when fed from parent's plate.

Financial Assistance

For financial assistance for Convention attendance for young people and children, please write to:

Rev. Ted Klein, 273 Perham Street, West Roxbury, MA 02132

Black Hole Syndrome Strikes Churches

Elhelwyn Worden

Imagine, if you will, the following scenario: A church group, once a thriving, energetic community of enthusiastic readers of Swedenborg, wakes up one morning to find that most of its members are elderly, that the once-large crowd of children has become a set of mid-aged parents who have moved to other towns and who might return to the church on Christmas or Easter, and that the energy to do things together—study group, church suppers, night out at bowling, Ladies' Aid—just isn't there.

The group panics. What to do? Why is this happening? Why aren't there young people or new people in the group? How will they ever pay for needed roof repairs, let alone the long-overdue raise for the pastor? Obviously they have been selfish, they say, and haven't given enough time to the church. So they resolve to do better, fast.

"We'll reinstate the monthly study group," they say. "And let's have one of those Swedenborg videos to show to a crowd, and have punch and cookies during a discussion afterward."

So three church people manage to arrive for the study group Sunday afternoon, and the same three show up for the video night, one having managed—despite severe arthritis pain—to bring and set up the refreshments. They look at each other over cookies and decide they should do more video nights and announce them in their monthly newsletter. They do, and the same two or three show up faithfully.

They feel something is wrong, so they have a long talk with the minister and find he spends much of his time visiting members in nursing homes and taking care of the church as best he can.

He suggests they might advertise Sunday services and programs in the local paper. Someone says they wouldn't want outsiders to see the church "this way," because they might be "turned off." The subject is dropped, and soon the video nights stop when only the minister shows up to run the machines. The five regulars at Sunday service, who are also the church officers, decide maybe it would be better to sell the church rather than to pay to repair and heat it.

End of scenario. Where does the

♦
*... when a star "dies"
it becomes
a black hole.
No light escapes ...*

♦
"black hole" fit in? In the analogy that when a star "dies" it becomes a black hole, with all its energy and light focusing inward and being sucked into the invisible center with increasing speed. No light escapes from the black hole.

This is an analogy that comes to mind each time I hear of complaints from one of our churches where dwindling membership has gone almost to the point of no return. It's sad, because it can be counteracted, especially if people notice that it's happening.

The tendency with any living organism is to concentrate on its own needs when it becomes sick, and like

♦
*... with potential help
and
revitalization
at the door,
the church people
lock themselves in
and are sucked into
the black hole ...*

♦
an animal, to attack or repel outside interference, even helpers. In the case of a church, its congregation may be crying for new blood to help reinstate growth while at the same time it is doing too good a job of scaring away visitors who might become regulars or even members. So, with potential help and revitalization at the door, the church people lock themselves in and are sucked into the black hole—to mix a batch of metaphors.

Now, why on earth would a church group frighten away new members when that's what they need and want? Why aren't people—new and old—coming to church, let alone regularly? Black hole syndrome. Look for it!

Clues include seeing the same very few people at church every week, and these regulars gather at the coffee hour to commiserate about what sad shape their church is in. They focus so intently

(continued on page 51)

(continued from previous page)

on that subject that they don't notice the new face, young and energetic, who has read the Sunday bulletin and has come to join the "warm coffee-hour fellowship." Then they see the visitor. "Who's that? Do any of us know him? We don't? Then we shouldn't talk to him because he wouldn't be interested in hearing about our drainpipe problem."

The minister, having closed the church after the service, arrives and immediately goes to chat with the visitor while his congregation watches suspiciously, giving the young visitor the feeling of being an intruder. Despite the minister's warmth, he decides this church doesn't want him, though he is an avid reader of Swedenborg and was excited about finding a group of Swedenborgians close enough to visit. So, sadly, he doesn't return.

In another church a visitor is intrigued by what sounds like church jargon in the sermon, and by the use of a highly liturgical "stand-sit-stand-sit" service for the few elderly people who whisper their way through responses. "I thought Swedenborgians were more New Age and contemporary than this," she muses as she follows the group to their fellowship hour. People talk to her of their need for more members, and of their problems. No one mentions any lectures, classes or programs, and she can't talk to the minister, who was whisked off to a meeting elsewhere in the building. She is sad as she goes home to see what other churches are nearby.

"Not my church!" you say? Sadly, this happens more than we care to admit, because we are inside our routine and simply don't see what is happening.

◆ *Now for the good news . . .*

◆
Now for the *good* news! While a real, stellar black hole can't be reversed, a church black hole can if caught in time and fixed with more than putty and baling twine.

The first step is to realize the in-

ward-directedness of energies and to decide to turn the energy outward, like light shining out from a live star. Plan programs or services attractive to non-Swedenborgians, advertise those programs in the local paper, on radio or local TV stations via their (free) community calendar departments, and via the posting of flyers around town. Arrange to have refreshments during or after a program. Be friendly to visitors, and remember to show your interest in *them* instead of bemoaning the lack of membership, or rusted drainpipes.

It will strengthen you to be able to discuss the church—its history, teachings, how it compares with other churches' teachings—with newcomers, since it will make you do your homework in thinking these things through for yourself, or in doing extra reading so you are clear about just why the Swedenborgian Church is different or similar to mainstream or fundamentalist churches. Your research should include asking questions of members of other churches, such as those who visit your church, friends you already know, or folks who greet you when you visit another church.

On a larger level, your church may benefit from programs offered by The General Convention at the national level: A parish consultant in the form of a minister is available to come to your church to meet with everyone and to help you decide on, and augment a program for your future; there is a new program to assist our churches in sending their pastor and one layperson to a Fuller Institute workshop on Church Growth (these have proven valuable to most people who attend them), with more information available from the Rev. Dick Tafel, Kemper Road Church, 9035 E. Kemper Road, Montgomery, OH 45249.

General Convention also offers a variety of mini-courses at its annual convention (this coming June in Urbana, Ohio), some of which deal with specific church issues and problems. Titles are usually published ahead of time, so you may look ahead to which would be most helpful. Convention itself, the annual meeting at the end of June, permits time to visit with members of other churches across the country and Canada, to compare notes, and to get an idea of what is working for other groups. Your church itself could

◆ *Convention itself permits time to get an idea of what is working for other groups.*

◆
sponsor a workshop beneficial to your group and to others in your community, with a Swedenborgian or other leader, addressing the topic of your choice; and proceeds from the donations for attendance at the workshop would be geared to cover the expense of putting it on.

To get anything started is really easy—you need to decide that you want something to happen, and then put in a call to the Convention Central Office in Newton, Massachusetts, at (617) 969-4240 or to the national president, the Rev. Randall Laakko in Wilmington, Delaware., at (302) 654-5014. They will be able to put you in touch with the right person, people or group to help you develop your plan.

And there are still more resources available to you nationwide and through the Swedenborg School of Religion, all accessible via a phone call to the above two numbers.

Don't be afraid of small beginnings. You can, with only one or two people, involve your church as a participant in community events just by being there. If you participate actively, so much the better. The more positive visibility your church folk have in the community, the easier it is for strangers to be interested in, and enter your building. And this is just a beginning.

It takes energy and time to pull away from the inward magnetism of the "black-hole syndrome," but once the light is allowed to shine outward again, and one tends to the Swedenborgian concept of uses, good things begin to happen. Promise!

Ethelwyn Worden directs the Central Office of The General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches located in Newton, Massachusetts.

Wellness

We are part of the biosphere,
interconnected to all of life in a
single living whole. How and what we
eat affects not only the way we feel
and function, but the whole web of life.

—John Robbins

Diet For a New America

John Robbins, author of *Diet For A New America* and only son of the founder of Baskin-Robbins ice cream company, declined his father's offer to step into the family business and headed for a tiny island off the coast of British Columbia, where he studied yoga and meditation, trained as a psychotherapist, learned to grow his own food organically, and founded and operated a healing center.

He had early become aware of the health implications of eating too much frozen butterfat and sugar, and went on from there to ultimately make the difficult decision not to make his living selling a product that failed to contribute to genuine health and well-being.

Diet For A New America, nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1987, describes impact of U.S. eating habits and practices of the Great American Food Machine on our health as individuals, and also on the life-support system itself.

Robbins is now president of the EarthSave Foundation, an organization that exists, as he describes it, "to help people be aware of and fulfill our highest potential in peace and friendship with the other creatures on earth. . . . We discover and disseminate the knowledge as to how all people can be fed, housed, clothed, and made capable of meaningful work without damaging the biosphere or any of its inhabitants. Our vision suggests that this is not only possible, but indispensable for the survival of life on earth. Accordingly, the EarthSave Foundation endeavors to raise human consciousness from separation and fear into a

positive, co-operative and compassionate appreciation for our ability to live harmoniously with ourselves, each other, and the natural world."

EarthSave advocates a low-fat vegetarian diet and cites the following diseases which are commonly prevented, consistently improved, and sometimes cured by a low-fat vegetarian diet:

- strokes
- heart disease
- osteoporosis
- kidney stones
- breast cancer
- colon cancer
- prostate cancer
- pancreatic cancer
- ovarian cancer
- cervical cancer
- stomach cancer
- endometrial cancer
- diabetes
- hypoglycemia
- kidney disease
- peptic ulcers
- constipation
- hemorrhoids
- hiatal hernias
- diverticulosis
- obesity
- gallstones
- hypertension
- asthma
- irritable colon syndrome
- salmonellosis
- trichinosis

The only man to win Ironman Triathlon more than twice is Dave Scott (4-time winner) who is a vegetarian. The world record holder for the

24-hour triathlon (swim 4.8 miles, cycle 185 miles, run 52.5 miles) is Sixto Linares, who is also a strict vegetarian. The athlete who most totally dominated Olympic sport in track and field history was Edwin Moses (undefeated in 8 years, 400-meter hurdles) also a vegetarian. Other notable vegetarian athletes are: Stan Price (world record, bench press), Robert Sweetgall (world's premier ultra-distance walker), Paavo Nurmi (20 world's records in distance running, 9 Olympic medals), Bill Pickering (world record—swimming English Channel), Murray Rose (world records—400 and 1500-meter freestyles), Andreas Cahling (winner—Mr. International body-building championships), Roy Hilligan (winner—Mr. America body-building championships), Pierreo Verot (world's record for downhill endurance skiing), Estelle Gray and Cheryl Marek (world's record for cross-country tandem cycling), James and Jonathan deDonato (world's record for distance butterfly stroke swimming), and Ridgely Abele (winner of 8 national championships in Karate, including U.S. Karate Association World Championships).

Diet For A New America is available from The Stone House Book Room, Swedenborg Spiritual Growth Center, 16244 Cleveland St., Redmond, WA 98052. Tel. (206) 883-7825

For more information and a copy of *Project EarthSave* newsletter, send \$5 to EarthSave Foundation, P.O. Box 949, Felton, CA 95018-0949

Webs of Communication

Patte LeVan

It was one of those mornings when I stand in front of the open closet hoping that the task of deciding what to wear will be taken out of my hands, that something will magically emerge as just the right choice for that day without my actually having to think. I got my wish when a fat and hairy brown spider about the size of a quarter ran up my yellow blouse and came to rest at the top of the hanger, where the cross bar joins the hook. My decision was made, not in the way I'd hoped, but my choice had narrowed to whatever was at the other end of the closet. Now I would have to take the time to get two drinking glasses from the kitchen and somehow get the spider to enter the glass enclosure so that he could then be transported to the yard.

My unwillingness to kill spiders goes back to my first husband, who never failed to remove spiders from the house in this fashion because that was what *his* father had done. When he taught me and our children to do likewise, he was passing on to us a solemn family duty—this was how all spiders were to be dealt with, no matter how huge or hairy. As I began making a habit of gathering out-of-place spiders into drinking glasses and depositing them in the yard, I gradually lost much of my fear of them.

So I wasn't terrified of this large spider, but on the other hand I didn't want him running around disappearing into the depths of the closet, suddenly to pop out at me from a shoe or a sleeve.

He hadn't moved from the middle of the hanger, and as I looked at him I realized that it was going to be very difficult to get him into the glass.

Then my mind flashed back to a conversation I'd had in my kitchen with my friend Marcia, a member of our congregation, president of the local Audubon Society and a lover of nature. It was late August. She had arrived early for a Course in Miracles meeting, and I was complaining about

one persistent fly in the house that I couldn't seem to get rid of. She began telling me about the author of a book called *Kinship with All Life*, a man who opened up communication with a fly that came to visit him every day. Over a period of several weeks he had actually made friends with the fly. Marcia's story was interrupted when other people started arriving for the meeting, and I had forgotten about it until I stood now pondering the spider challenge. It occurred to me that I was going to need the spider's help if I was to be successful. I could angle the glasses in only one awkward position, with probably a 1-in-20 chance that he

◆
*I wasn't prepared
 for how
 utterly foolish I felt
 when I actually
 cleared my throat
 and said,
 "Um, Spider . . ."*
 ◆

would go in. *Unless he wanted to go in.*

I decided to talk to him. It couldn't hurt, and it might work. There was nobody else in the house. Still, I wasn't prepared for how utterly foolish I felt when I actually cleared my throat and said, "Um, Spider, I'm going to go to the kitchen now and get some drinking glasses so that I can take you outside where you belong. You'll be safe, I won't hurt you. Please stay there till I get back."

I stood for a few moments listening to the silence in the room. My sense of awkwardness had gone by the

time I finished communicating my intentions. I also noticed that I was somehow feeling more confident, more in tune with myself.

I returned with the glasses and went up close to him. He made no move to get away. When I began talking to him again, I didn't feel any more self-conscious than I would if one of my children were in difficulty. "I'm going to hold the glass up now, and I want you to go in; you'll be outside in no time, you'll be all right."

The words were incidental. The spider and I seemed to be breathing together in a cooperative effort. I hadn't gotten the glass positioned well at all, but the spider was slowly putting himself inside and I was sending him love and encouragement. For one drawn out second we were one, and the task was accomplished.

The trip to the front door was quick, out to the porch, shaking him gently into a bush. "It's a little wet," I said to him, "but I think you'll be ok." I watched as he drew in his legs and put them out again, then settled deep into the bush. All was well.

As so often seems to happen when we embark on new territory, something unforeseen had taken place within me that I didn't understand at once. I just knew that I felt more serene, at peace. I was, as they say, in a different space.

I called Marcia and told her about my experience. She was delighted. I wanted to know more about the man who communicated with the fly.

The man, she said, was a former Hollywood writer named J. Allen Boone. His special journey apparently began when he took on the job as caretaker for Strongheart, billed as the smartest dog in the movies. One of Boone's duties was to read the classics to the dog. At first he felt like a fool when he had to sit down and read to this dog, but he tried to get in tune with him. Then he began to notice that the dog always seemed to be tuned in to his thinking. He learned to approach

◆

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◆

the dog with respect. There began a quiet interaction between them. He discovered that the dog meditated. When Boone allowed his mind to go blank in meditation, ideas flooded in, and he realized that he and the dog were communicating on a universal superconscious level. Boone's ego was no longer in the way.

This experience opened the way for him to communicate with a fly who began to visit him every morning. Boone began by admiring the fly, noting all the wonderful things it could do—walk on walls, fly backward and forward and straight up. The fly would sit on his finger. He would put marks in color on his hand, one color for him, one for the fly. When he tossed the fly in the air, the fly would invariably land on his own designated color. The fly was not talking in words, but tuning into the author's thought patterns. At one point he even called the fly out in the dark when a friend was visiting, and the fly appeared, in total trust. When he asked the fly not to crawl on his bare skin, the fly complied and Boone was never again bothered by any other flies. The author stressed the

humility involved in achieving this communication. He needed to become willing to let go of preconceived notions of superiority or supremacy or control, and approach this life form with the respect due an equal.

It occurred to me that of course I hadn't needed to talk out loud to my spider, he could have tuned in to my thought patterns. But then I realized I *did* need to speak aloud in order to hear myself doing this, to help move me past the notion of separation.

A few days later I went out to the front porch and noticed that a huge web had been built. It reached from the porch roof down to the raised flowerbed. In the center was a fat brown spider, about the size of a quarter. He ran to the top of the web at my approach. I told him comfortably not to worry, I was not going to sweep down his web, that was his home. I stood for a while in the warming sun and enjoyed our communion. I don't know if it was the same spider, but I'd like to think it was.

I'm still working on my attitude toward flies. That's a toughie.

Religious Educator Needed

The Blairhaven Committee and Director of the Blairhaven Conference Center is seeking to fill a position of Religious Educator for two weeks during the summer of 1989. Those qualified please apply in writing for further details to:

CAMP BLAIRHAVEN
c/o Swedenborg Library
79 Newbury Street
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Ask Swedenborg !

by George Dole

Dream Realities

Q: What can we glean from Swedenborg's writings about understanding our dreams?

A: There is a convenient inter-chapter section on visions and dreams in nn. 1966-1983 of *Arcana Coelestia*. In n. 1976, Swedenborg distinguishes three kinds of dreams—mediated from the Lord, from angelic spirits, and from the spirits who are near us when we are asleep—the first only being described as “prophetic.” He adds that “fantastic dreams come from a different source.” Perhaps the salient features of this treatment are the consistent assumption that dreams are a means of instruction, and that they are “representative and significative”: they are not referred to as “correspondential.” The same holds true for references to dreams scattered through the writings.

Several times in these references, Swedenborg speaks of having a dream and talking with spirits or angels about it, discovering that the dream had a direct connection with events or conversations in his spiritual environment.

In the *Journal of Dreams*, from just before his call, we find Swedenborg interpreting his dreams in ways that evidently helped to prepare him for his mission. Significantly, he seems to have assumed that all the characters in his dreams referred to aspects of his own mental and emotional being, and he related them directly to his workaday life. If he developed any kind of system of interpretation, he apparently did not put it in writing.

The “two” aspects of dreams (their connection with our spiritual environment and their relationship to everyday life) are by no means at odds with each other. As to our spirits, we are constantly in the World of Spirits (cf. *True Christian Religion* 475.3), with our own thoughts and feelings determining the particular company we are in.

We are left then with a good deal of latitude in our efforts to understand our dreams, given the knowledge that they are informative, that they may not be directly correspondential, and that their meaning rests in both the particular images they provide and the feelings associated with them.

Commencements

Baptism

Charles—Molly Lynn and Ryan Scott, twin children of Scott and Rebecca (Heath) Charles, were Baptized into the Christian faith January 8, 1989, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. James Lawrence officiating for Molly Lynn and the Rev. Rachel Lawrence officiating for Ryan Scott.

Cocksburn—Rebecca Elaine and Douglas Adam, daughter and son of Doug and Leanne Cocksburn, were Baptized into the Christian faith December 23, 1988, at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Penabaker—Erika Lynn, daughter of Greg and Debbie Penabaker and granddaughter of Don and Barbara Penabaker, was Baptized into the Christian faith January 22, 1989, in Warren, Michigan, the Rev. Stephen Pults officiating.

Schreiber—Kurtis Jacobus, son of Patti and Cam Schreiber and grandson of Jack and Doreen VanRooijen, was Baptized into the Christian faith November 20, 1988, at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Confirmation

Dyer and Mills—Daniel Mark Dyer and Karen M. Mills were confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches January 15, 1989, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Rachel Rivers Lawrence officiating.

Marriage

Bland and Dowdall—Amy Laurel Bland and Stephen Richard Dowdall were united in marriage, November 17, 1988, in Riverside, California, the Rev. Dr. Ivan D. Franklin officiating.

Samsel and Jacobs—Cheryl I. Samsel and Alan H. Jacobs were united in marriage, November 26, 1988, in Pasadena, California, the Rev. Dr. Ivan D. Franklin officiating.

Euker and Klemmer—Emily Euker and Joseph Klemmer were united in marriage, December 10, 1988, at the

New Church (Swedenborgian), New York City, New York, the Rev. Robert McCluskey officiating.

Gould and Nicholson—Fiona Mary Gould and John Adam Nicholson were united in marriage, November 19, 1988, in San Diego, California, the Rev. Dr. Ivan D. Franklin officiating.

Burke and Spencer—Darlene Burke and Mark Spencer were united in marriage, December 30, 1988, at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Deaths

Olinski—Gladys Olinski, once caretaker at the Church of the Good Shepherd for ten years, entered the spiritual world July 10, 1988, at the age of 79. She will be remembered as a hard-working, generous and caring person. The resurrection service was held at the church July 14, the Rev. Paul Zacharias officiating.

Schneider—Ethel Schneider, 94, entered the spiritual world on Friday, September 23, 1988. She was an outstanding member of the Church of the Good Shepherd for many years and greatly contributed to the life of the church. A memorial service was held Monday, September 26, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating. Our thoughts and prayers are with her son Herb, her daughter Brita, and the Schneider family.

Selee—Jessie Selee, a long-time member and devoted officer of the New York Society of the New Church, entered the spiritual world December 15, 1988, at St.

Peter's Hospital in Albany, New York. A memorial service was held early 1989 in New York City. Resurrection services were conducted by the Rev. Robert McCluskey. Jessie had been living at a nursing home in Albany, near family, after a serious injury last year. She was a life-long resident of New York City.

Tuck—Dorothy Tuck, 78, a long-time member of the Church of the Good Shepherd, passed into the spiritual world October 7, 1988. A memorial service was held at the church October 11, with many in attendance offering prayers for her husband, Ted, and all members of the family. The Rev. Eric Allison officiated.

Watt—Warren Watt, a member of the Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, Delaware, entered the spiritual world November 26, 1988. Resurrection Services were conducted December 3, 1988, the Rev. Randall E. Laakko officiating.

General Convention of the New Jerusalem

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