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Guest Editorial

Moving Toward the Light

Rev. David Rienstra
St. Louis Church

Once a year there is a day set aside to focus attention on Thanksgiving across the land. Thanksgiving is a federal holiday observed in both Canada and the United States. The day set aside in Canada is October 9, and in the U.S. it is observed on the last Thursday of November.

As a national holiday, Thanksgiving is observed as a secular or civil holiday, but there is no doubt in my mind that its roots are deeply reli-

gious. In the Scriptures, giving thanks is a divine dictate. In a sense, we are literally told to recall how our lives are blessed and give thanks to the source of those blessings. This makes good sense, especially in light of what Swedenborg writes about giving thanks. Briefly what he says is that remembering to be thankful and giving thanks is not for God's sake, but for our own. Heartfelt thanks affords us the opportunity to briefly set aside our woes and our wants, and unselfishly open our hearts to God. In doing so, we open the circuit of our being

for a greater inflow of the life-sustaining force of God's love and wisdom. A more complete statement can be found in the *Arcana Coelestia*, 5957.

Whatever the benefits, I wonder sometimes how often we would pause to give thanks if we did not have reminders such as a national holiday. In my pastor's professional research service, I came across an article that indicates that Thanksgiving observance in the U.S. is the result of one woman's persistence. It says that the official description of Thanksgiving Day is a "national holiday in the United States commemorating the harvest of the Plymouth Colony in 1621, following a winter of great hardship." The Thanksgiving holiday born in Puritan New England in the 1630s and 1640s was shaped by four traditions—the Harvest Home, Christmas, proclamations of civic thanksgiving and congregational days of thanksgiving and prayer.

However, the observance was not recognized with universal accord. It was at first a rather insignificant event with only a few eastern states participating.

But Sarah Josepha Hales was fired with the determination to have the whole nation joined together in setting aside a national day of giving thanks to God from whom all blessings flow.

She sent an endless flow of articles and letters to various journals and newspapers, and pleaded with President Fillmore, Pierce, and Buchanan during the years 1846-1856. In 1852 she succeeded in uniting

29 states in declaring the last Thursday of November Thanksgiving Day.

Then came the painful years of the Civil War. But President Abraham Lincoln heard her! In 1863 he proclaimed the last Thursday of November as the day set apart for national giving of thanks to almighty God.

Proclaimed in the midst of the war, the observance was not ordered in celebration of military victory but in gratitude for a "year filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies." Lincoln reminded the citizens that "No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the precious gifts of the most high God."

We do have the opportunity at this particular time to render thanks and perhaps we do so because of the holiday, but maybe we don't always feel thankful. Sometimes when we are facing personal, family or financial crises in our lives, we don't feel much gratitude at that time. There is a story of a little boy who was given a part in a Thanksgiving program. He was supposed to say, "Lord, make us thankful." But when it was time to speak his line, he said, "Lord, make us THINKFUL." It is easy to be thankful when goodness is coming our way, but when we are experiencing difficulty, we perhaps should be thankful. In being thankful we can call to mind all the blessings we have received. In being thankful, we will surely discover that we have much to be thankful for.

Lord, thank you for giving us the opportunity for being THINKFUL and THANKFUL.

Contents

- 179** Thanksgiving for Daily Bread, *Carolyn North*
- 181** 100 Years Ago in *The Messenger*
- 181** Increase in Number of Ordained Women
- 183** A Closer Look at Religion's Historical Role
- 185** **IMPORTANT!**
- 186** The Non-Avenging Angel of Death Row
- 188** Cleanse First the Inside of the Cup and the Platter, *Susan Turley-Moore*
- 190** Central Office Director Resigning
- 190** New Librarian at SSR
- 191** Convention Teachers Needed
- 191** Post-Christmas Teen Retreat
- 192** We're O.K., *Lorene Lederer*
- 192** Let's Get it Right, *Susan Turley-Moore*

Departments

- 182** On Fundraising
God's Work and Family Needn't Compete, *Jacqui Skinner Light*
- 184** The Family Connection
Almont Summer School "Makes a Difference," *Stephen Pulis*
The Parenting Forum, *Ted Klein*
- 187** Growing Pains: Advertising, *Eric Allison*
- 190** Commencements
- 191** Opinion

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Thanksgiving for Daily Bread

Carolyn North

The idea first came to me in 1983, three days after Thanksgiving. As I tossed out the last remnants of our feast—some crusted dressing, a bit of soggy salad, hunks of stale bread—I wondered if my Berkeley neighbors were doing the same. I began calculating: If every household on my street were throwing out even one pound of leftovers, that would amount to several hundred pounds of wasted food.



I saw an elderly man rummaging through a trash bin for his lunch. I started the Daily Bread Project that afternoon.



I thought then of all the nearby restaurants and bakeries and their daily waste, and of the local farms with their agricultural surpluses—the dumped milk, the rotting grain . . . The images were staggering. Two days later I saw an elderly man rummaging through a trash bin for his lunch. That did it. I started the Daily Bread project that afternoon.

I wrote a letter to our local newspaper, outlining my idea and asking for six people who might want to help. I received thirty calls in less than a week.

The idea was simple: Our group would collect surplus food that might otherwise be thrown out from bakeries, markets, and restaurants and bring it to local free food kitchens, pantries, and shelters. I had no idea where or how to start. I only knew that I could not go one more day without doing something. And since there were thirty other people in my community who felt the same way, we were ready to begin.

I invited the callers to a potluck supper at my house. We all liked each other immediately. As we talked over dinner, we discovered that everyone had something to offer: One person owned a restaurant, another worked in a bakery; one could investigate local health regulations, another could write a press release. I offered to coordinate the effort and the others offered an hour of their time every week. That was Saturday. On Monday the first food run was made. It was that simple.

Now, five years later, we are a loosely-knit band of more than one hundred volunteers, each of whom spends less than one hour a week picking up food from fifty businesses and delivering it to twenty-five free-food programs. Using their own cars and bicycles, the volunteers—students, housewives, professionals, retired people—transport on the average, more than ten tons of food a month.

Since no expenses are incurred, we have no budget. And since the food goes from one refrigerator to another in less than an hour, we do not need to rent storage space. The coordination is simple and can be done through my household telephone, so we do not need an office, a staff, or an administration. In fact, working as we do in the interstices of society, we may at times resemble a band of outlaws. Except that we are not breaking any laws.

To be honest, I am not sure how I came to be a community organizer. As a dancer and sometimes writer, I had no previous experience in organizing. The closest management experience I had was gained by raising three young children. As a mother, I have learned how to do things simply, obviously and directly: Complicated answers count for little with three toddlers. This approach worked well enough for a family, so I decided to apply it to Daily Bread.

Gradually, we have expanded our operations to include a produce garden, a program that provides milk for children through donations made by

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The suffering of any single person affects all other people

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shoppers at local grocery stores, and a fruit harvesting program that gathers surplus crops from backyard fruit trees. But our structure has remained simple.

The office is still a shoe box filled with index cards (pink for volunteers, green for donors and food programs) and an answering machine in my kitchen. A back-up list of on-call volunteers is given to all the active drivers so that they can find a substitute on their own when one is needed. A comprehensive chart of when, where, and by whom each run is being made hangs by my telephone, and each food kitchen knows when to expect our deliveries and plans its menus accordingly. As coordinator, I have very little to do on a daily basis. In effect, the project runs itself. On the average, I receive no more than two Daily Bread-related calls a day.

And those, more often than not, are calls bearing good news: a new volunteer, a donated car or freezer, a request for an interview. Once we were even offered land. (Recently, for example, we received a call from a German filmmaker wishing to document our work for Munich television; the next day, a photojournalist called, proposing a book about the people who run food kitchens. And so it goes.)

When an attorney offered her services, we accepted and, with her help, became a nonprofit corporation. That made it possible for us to receive a grant, which we used to create and print eight thousand copies of a directory of local feeding programs. When we were offered land, we used it to grow produce for the food kitchens. And whenever we are approached for interviews, we discuss our work and receive media publicity—which leads, naturally, to new volunteers, more donations, and new people with ideas and suggestions. Thus Daily Bread has become a focal point for community generosity, and we in turn have become networkers, drawing concerned people and resources together.

It has all happened so easily. Everything we need seems to come to hand as soon as we need it. Over time, in fact,

we have turned this phenomenon into something of an operating principle for our group, and our methods—while unusual—have proven a viable alternative to the customary ways of performing community service. Operating without a budget, for example—a practice born of necessity—is now Daily Bread policy. Any donations we receive are used promptly to buy food. And by not soliciting donors, volunteers, or publicity, we find that everyone who works with us or makes donations to our group really wants to help, which makes our task all the easier. (Not to mention that the unsolicited publicity tends to come from places we never would have dreamed of, such as Maltese newspapers, *Penthouse* magazine, and now, Munich television.)

Somehow it works, and people are heartened and encouraged by the fact that something this simple-minded can operate as well as it does. I myself have come to trust this almost magical process deeply, and to apply it to the rest of my life. I have found that when I do a job with ease and open-mindedness, everything has a way of working as if charmed.

Conversely, as soon as I become anxious, or try to force matters, something always seems to go wrong. For example, while walking by a new elegant bakery in town, I decided to go in and “talk up” Daily Bread. After much negotiation and many phone calls, the owners agreed to give us their daily surplus. But it had been my idea, not theirs—and that bakery “forgets” to leave out its bread for our volunteers twice a week or so. Our other donors, all fifty of whom originally contacted us, are far more reliable.

I often wonder why our unconventional mode of operation is so successful. Perhaps it is because we recognize that all people are inextricably connected, and thus the suffering of any single person in some way affects all other people. In such an interconnected world, widespread hunger and thoughtless waste are fundamentally incompatible.

Daily Bread is an attempt to help reinstate a more natural balance. But, on a very practical level, it also aims to satisfy the immediate needs of hungry men, women and children, and to educate the community about an unconscionable social problem.

By structuring Daily Bread as a no-budget, nonhierarchical, grass-roots effort, we make it possible for many people to participate, each doing a small, manageable task, and together getting an enormous job done. Thus, ordinary people with busy lives can take direct action against what seems like an insurmountable problem, without being overwhelmed.

By giving a large number of people this opportunity to help, we are creating

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We are helping to change consciousness

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a sense of community among participants as diverse as hunger activists, food professionals, students, housewives, retirees, and the clientele of the free-food kitchens.

We are also providing an alternative organization model to

other groups; a model that requires neither large grants, complex administration, nor a hierarchy of power.

And we are demonstrating the ideals of sharing and compassion in a down-to-earth, practical manner.

There are some pitfalls we have found it wise to avoid, such as growing too large and so losing the personal nature of our contact with one another. Nearby towns, therefore, are encouraged to start their own projects, rather than become a part of ours. We are careful, too, not to let individuals use us

to further their own political or personal ambitions.

We do not think of our work as charity. There is an immediate need to be met, and today we are in a position to help. Tomorrow, we could be the ones in trouble, and we would hope that, then, we could expect the same treatment from those we are helping today.

Nor do we see our work as a substitute for a fair and equitable economic system in which all people are paid for doing meaningful work. And it is certainly not a substitute for adequate government services. It is merely one way for us to help each other through a hard time.

Through the simple act of picking up food where it is not needed and bringing it where it is needed, we are reasserting for ourselves the power of hope. Despair robs us of this power; positive actions, however small, restore it.

On one level we are delivering food, but on a deeper level we are helping to change consciousness. When a volunteer enters the back door of a restaurant, he greets the kitchen staff, shares a joke, talks for a bit. Food changes hands. He goes on to the food kitchen, meets the cooks and the clients. Over the weeks, friendships are formed, synapses are made. With each meeting, people may feel a tiny bit less helpless than they did before. The whole transaction, minor in itself, has heartened everyone involved.

We feel it is this aspect of Daily Bread—the pleasure of connecting with one another—that makes all the difference.

Carolyn North is the author of The Musicians and the Servants: A Novel of India. She lives in Berkeley, California.

Daily Bread offers encouragement and advice to members of communities who would like to start similar projects. For information, call Carolyn North: (415) 848-3522.

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100 Years Ago in *The Messenger*

from the archives of the Swedenborg School of Religion

November 20, 1889
An Interesting Fact

EDITOR OF THE MESSENGER:—Your issue of November 6th, contains a notice of the departure to the spiritual world of our venerable brother, Mr. George G. Trites, who lived near Canton, Illinois. About eight years ago I spent a few days in that vicinity, preaching one Sunday and administering the sacraments for the Canton New-Church Society. And on that occasion Mr. Trites informed me that when a child he had been baptized by the Rev. Nicolas Collin, of Philadelphia, who had seen and conversed with Swedenborg, previous to his coming to America. An account of Mr. Collin's visit to Swedenborg is given in Nobel's "appeal," pages 188-190 [1855 edition]. Mr. Trites stated that in his early manhood he became a believer in the heavenly doctrines, and was then baptized by a New-Church minister. —J.E. Bowers

Submitted by Louise Woofenden

Increase in Number of Ordained Women

The percentage of women ordained to the full ministry in those denominations ordaining women in the U.S. has increased from an estimated 4 percent in 1977 to 7.09 percent in 1986, according to the "Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, 1989."

In numerical terms, this is an increase over the decade of 98 percent, from 10,470 to 20,730.

In Canada, which was surveyed for the first time in 1987, 908 women clergy were reported in those denominations ordaining women out of a total of 12,493 clergy, making a percentage of 7.3.

The data are published in a special Yearbook report titled, "Women Ministers in 1986 and 1977: A Ten-Year View." The Yearbook is prepared in the National Council of Churches' Communication Unit and published for the NCC by Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee.

On Fundraising

God's Work and Family Needn't Compete

Jacqui Skinner Light

I first became involved in Convention in the summer of 1987 when I went to the Fryeburg New Church Assembly. I loved it! I didn't stop to wonder how it had come to be or how it managed financially with such low rates. I just knew it was a special place for me, filling a void in my life as nothing else ever had. I found myself wanting to be an active part of this organization.

"I want to help—and what can I do? I don't have much money, but I can give my time and energy and loving interest." My offer was snapped up, and I felt satisfied that I was doing my share to make the Assembly happen.

But was I really? A niggling doubt kept crowding in. Yes, I was making some effort, but after all, my parents and grandparents had always given of themselves *and* contributed financially. They had done this when they were my age, with their families to support. They too faced world and economic uncertainties. Besides, my conscience continued, you are getting your room and board in exchange for your work, so you really aren't contributing as much as it seems. Maybe by not paying, you're taking out at least as much as you're putting in—perhaps even more.

On another level of Convention, I became secretary of the Massachusetts Association in 1988. Along with the other members of the Executive Committee (13), I put in a significant number of volunteer hours on Association business, some fifteen or twenty a month. I had been thrilled to be asked. I could afford to give my time. I love the church. I can't give much money because we feel pretty strapped, so I'll give hours of labor instead.

In 1989, I was offered paid positions on the national level as executive secretary to two support units. Great! I love my church. Although these are paid positions, I could be earning three times as much elsewhere; but I make what I need to live on. So again, I feel as though I am contributing to the church. There is so much need that I find myself spending more time than the contracts call for, and

this extra giving does my heart good. I tell myself that I am doing my fair share.

But am I? My conscience niggles me again. My parents and grandparents did this *and* still gave financially, when they were raising families and facing an uncertain world and an uncertain economy.

As I learn more and more about the workings of the church, I see clearly that the main reason it can function today is that it was given such a high priority in the lives of our parents and grandparents. We are depleting the allowance they provided us, and we are not replenishing it for our children.

For three years now I have coasted along on the feeling that giving a lot of myself was all I needed to do. I could believe that I had contributed my fair share. But at the annual convention in June I was disabused of that smugness. I was shown how we today are still "living off allowances from our parents." No more niggling conscience, but cold, hard fact! What would our ancestors think of our stewardship, if we cannot stand on our own feet?

So how do I go about weaning myself? I have a five-year-old and a sixteen-year-old. It will be years before I can do more than part-time work outside the home. My husband is a civil servant, doing what he loves to do, what he does best, for a relatively low salary. We do have some physical assets, but that is not "liquid" cash in hand that we can give. What about retirement? What about college for our children? What if one of us becomes disabled? Taxes have gone up here, and it looks as though they will have to go up even more everywhere. Where is that going to come from?

I don't know the answers today. I do know that I love my church, that I love what it teaches about the Lord God, and I know how desperately the world needs a Swedenborgian perspective to help put it on an even keel. I know that this church must have access not only to my



loving labors but also to a percentage of the financial resources that I do have.

The tools to make it happen are at hand, in the persons of the Fund Raising Steering Committee.* They have the expertise to find ways that we can husband our resources more responsibly. They can help us put our money where our mouths are, so that God's work and the care of our family are both top priorities, and do not compete with each other.

My first step in this venture of faith was to take ten percent of an unexpected and delightful gift to establish a fund at the Swedenborg School of Religion in memory of my grandparents, Franklin and Carolyn Blackmer. I felt good. It felt as though it was about time.

My second step was to make a small, ongoing, monthly pledge to the Fryeburg New Church Assembly. That decision pinched, but once it was made I felt really good that I had actually become committed to being a more faithful steward.

My third step is to find out how our assets can be utilized to benefit both the church and our little family. I feel much more at peace now, because I am seriously trying to rekindle the flame, reach out, share, and grow spiritually.

* The members of the Fund-Raising Steering Committee are: Convention representatives, Rev. Randall Laakko and Peter Toot; SSR representatives, Rev. Jerome Poole and Dr. Mary Kay Klein. Jacqui Skinner Light lives in Concord, Massachusetts and is a member of the Cambridge church.

A Closer Look at Religion's Historical Role

Teaching United States history used to be so straightforward—just a series of great acts by great men in great times. But a group of religious and educational organizations is challenging teachers and students to think critically and to recognize the contributions and struggles of all people in U.S. society, past and present.

"The only way to guarantee a healthy future for our nation is to provide our children with an education that teaches the value of justice and equality for all and that challenges stereotypes and distortions," according to the group's executive director, Melba Kgoitsile.

Toward that goal, the group—the Council on Interracial Books for Children—has published *Thinking and Rethinking U.S. History*, a teachers' manual to help identify and correct some of the biases and omissions in today's U.S. history texts.

Originally an attempt by the religious community to understand why today's young people rarely think in terms of ethics, justice and peace, the project evolved into a wider analysis of elementary and secondary school social studies textbooks. Reviewers discovered serious distortions and omissions in many of the most popular textbooks, especially on the role of religion in history.

"Dozens of studies in recent years have verified the inadequate attention to the religious and social justice causes that have influenced American history," said Margaret Shafer, a staff associate of the National Council of Churches, one of the groups sponsoring the project.

The manual evaluates the bias and omissions of 12 standard history textbooks, and provides concrete suggestions to correct them. Special attention is paid to social justice issues like milita-

rism, sexism, racism, classism, colonialism, social change movements and religious prejudice. The book also looks at the positive and negative historical roles played by organized religion on those same issues.

Attention to the role of social justice issues in history is important, according to *Thinking and Rethinking U.S. History*, because it "provides a moral basis for interpreting our history. It establishes a practical norm—the defense, protection and preservation of the rights and dignity of every human being—against which we can measure how close we are to attaining the ideals we profess.

Textbooks tend to ignore religion as an historical force, the book states, yet religion has always been a powerful shaper of our social, political and economic values. Religion has played a major role in catalyzing and shaping historical events.

"In fact," said Sheila Collins, author of the sections on religion, "rulers and social institutions have sought legitimacy through religion. Religious institutions have held enormous economic and political power. Religious leaders have inspired mass movements and have provided for much of the education available to common people.

"When the U.S. Constitution separated church and state, religious thought and institutions did not cease to influence public affairs," she observed. Yet readers of history books will find few references to the role of religion other than in the colonial era, the period of non-separation between church and state.

To avoid controversy, textbook publishers and authors give the impression that the church has always avoided social action and continues to do so today, the manual says. "This undermines efforts to help young people see themselves as participants in building a just society, free of racism, sexism, and classism," Shafer said.

Many groups have been critical of

U.S. history books in recent years, and for different reasons, the manual reports. "At first the pressure came from people of color and women (in the 1960s). These groups exposed the bias and prejudice that most textbooks had previously demonstrated against them, either by distortion of their role in history or by neglect of their participation in the nation's past.

"Then," the manual continues, "representatives of the Right, especially from the fundamentalist Christian groups, began attacking the textbooks, charging that they violate standard American principles and promote evil 'isms,' including secular humanism, socialism and evolution(ism)."

The absence of discussions of racism, colonialism, sexism and militarism, classism and social change could have a profound impact on "the future thought and understanding" of today's students, according to Gerald Horne, editor of the manual and newly named as Director of Black Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

"Although a textbook may be boring, left largely unread, or later forgotten in almost every detail, it stamps an indelible imprint on the minds of students," said Horne in the introduction to the manual. "Somehow we remain bound by those vivid first openings of knowledge given to us in school. And since history books shape the lives and thoughts of future adults, they also will influence the future of the country as students begin to make decisions, affirm leaders, struggle for right or acquiesce in wrongs," he said.

Thinking and Rethinking U.S. History is available for \$15.95 plus 10 percent shipping and handling from the Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023.

The Family Connection

Almont Summer School "Makes a Difference"

Stephen Pults

A wandering visitor crossing the Almont Retreat Center campus sometime during the weeks of July 23 to August 6 this year could have been subjected to an attack by a M.A.D. squad—and would have enjoyed it! M.A.D. (Making a Difference) squads were only part of the many fun and inventive ways campers explored this year's Almont Summer School theme.

Using the paperback book, *Charity*, and Wilson Van Dusen's booklet *Uses* as resource materials for exploring Christian living in day-to-day life, Reverends Carl Yenetchi, Ron Brugler, Dick Baxter, F. Bob Tafel, Sue Turley-Moore and Steve Pults considered the many aspects of loving the neighbor. They were joined by speakers from various organizations who give their lives to the concerns and needs of our world—from environmental issues to nuclear disarmament, from human rights to homelessness and child abuse. The two-week session was closed by a discussion of how the Almont Retreat Center and Summer School could make a difference in the next five years.

To make consideration of the theme more than just talk, however, six groups (M.A.D. Squads) were formed to creatively come up with ways to make Almont a greater giving and sharing experience for everyone. Projects such as serving the seniors breakfast, lunch and dinner at a special table for a day, cleaning the chapel and campus, and helping the kitchen crew with dining room clean-up were just a few of the ways M.A.D. Squads "made a difference."

Little and middle dormers published their own newspaper, "The Almont Noo-Noos," to keep everyone informed on how camp was progressing. And there was plenty to report! Afternoons were filled with swim times, arts and crafts, recreation and even a stop at the teens' Survivor Store for a candy or soda pop break. Evening activities in-



The 1989 Survivors

cluded such annual favorites as the banana hunt, singing around the campfire, the carnival and teens' haunted house, going to the roller skating rink, the teen—staff volleyball game, skit night and a ride on the old haywagon.

There were also some very special events during the two weeks that will remain with those who shared in them for many years to come. During a middle Sunday, a new bridge across Brandau Bay (Almont's lake) was dedicated in memory of Elinor Johnson, a longtime Almont member and supporter. The bridge was christened the Amazing Grace Bridge, recalling both Elinor's first name and a suggestion of the warmth and care felt by all who knew her. As the ribbon was cut, all present crossed the bridge for the first time singing the famous hymn by the same name. As tears filled the eyes of those who walked across, all felt a sense of the presence of love difficult to put into words.

Each year every teen is welcomed as a Survivor, which includes initiation and a closing evening Survivor service. Initiation is a time of both fun and silliness, as initiates put up with what seems endless tasks to accomplish and less than flattering outfits for a day. The closing service is a time for seriousness as the teens take time to reflect on friendship and the future before them.

One of the most beautiful sights is the closing launching of floating, lighted candles on the lake in the midst of the darkness of a country night. Each candle is carried by the Survivors in procession from the chapel, in complete silence, as a symbol of taking the light and warmth of Almont into the world.

The last night of camp, the teens provide a dinner theatre for the adults after two weeks of preparation and rehearsal. This year's presentation by the Survivor Actor's Guild (S.A.G.) was entitled, "What if . . .". Through a series of one-acts, the S.A.G. performers came up with improvisations that included, "What if there was no gravity," "What if your parents were your children," and "What if George Bush died," to name a few.

If all of this sounds like there's plenty going on at the Almont Summer School, you have been left with an accurate impression. As some 100 to 150 people joined together during the two weeks of camp, more happened and was shared than can possibly be chronicled in a single article. So the best suggestion I can make at this point is to invite you to join us next year and see for yourself! Almont is really something very special. It's a place where a theme like "Making a Difference" just comes naturally.

Introducing a New Series:

The Parenting Forum

Ted Klein

We are introducing the Parenting Forum as a regular series in The Family Connection. Parents are urged to make submissions, sharing from their experiences, struggles, and learnings. Please send submissions to: Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, Children's and Family Ministry, 278 Perham Street, West Roxbury, MA 02132.

Thoughts on Physical Punishment

What is physical punishment? I will view it as punishment which uses such aggressive physical actions as hitting, slapping, spanking, and shaking. These actions are very different from what can be called protective physical restraint. Examples of protective physical restraint are keeping a child with a wet hand from grabbing an electrical outlet, carrying a toddler away from dangerous stairs, and separating two children who

are fighting.

When I was growing up, I often heard people say that parents who love their children sometimes have to physically punish them. I have reached a point of deciding not to use physical punishment with children. I urge you to search out alternatives to physical punishment.

Use of physical punishment, even when one's intentions are the best, may indirectly contribute to rationalizing child abuse. Even severe and chronic abuse may sometimes be rationalized as "necessary discipline." As long as physical punishment is seen as necessary, perhaps even loving, (and this is still a widespread belief) it makes confrontation of child abuse more difficult. It leaves open more ways to deny and rationalize abuse.

Even in loving homes, physical punishment may be a release for a parents'

anger and frustration. Most situations in which I physically disciplined children were circumstances where anger and frustration, as it were, "boiled over." I was therefore not in a good position to perceive what a child needed. When I was not angry or frustrated, other means of discipline usually seemed readily available. Our anger and frustration need to be confronted. Healthy ways of releasing and expressing them can be found. But that does not have to involve us in using a child for the release. Such misuse can set off feelings like "I am being hit because I am not good," or "I am afraid and don't know when he/she will hit me next." Such feelings do not fit with loving and being loved.

Even where physical punishment is calmly done, and accompanied by love and teaching, there is still a "credibility gap" between words of love and actions such as hitting and shaking. It is hard for me to imagine a child feeling good while being hit or shaken. Other ways can be found to confront children with consequences of what they have done or not done. Protective physical restraint is necessary in some situations, but let us remember that the core message we are conveying by example when we use physical punishment is, "it's OK for big people to hit little people." If we are truly moving toward inner and world peace, we cannot afford to demonstrate to a future generation that violence is of value on any front.

Important!

If you wish to continue receiving *The Messenger* you must fill out the form below.

If we do not hear from you, you will be dropped from our mailing list.

- ☐ **Yes** I would like to continue receiving *The Messenger*.
- ☐ **Yes** I love *The Messenger* and here is a tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____ to help with your expenses
- ☐ **No** I would not like to receive *The Messenger*, but keep me on your mailing list
- ☐ **No** I would not like to receive *The Messenger* and please take me off your mailing list

The Messenger is sent free to all Swedenborgians who want it. However, we need to update our mailing list. This has not been done for years. We wish to continue sending you future issues of *The Messenger*—but only if you want them! *And by the way, please send us the names of any Swedenborgians we may be missing, such as your children who have moved to their own residence.*

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Area code and Phone _____

Please tear this out and mail it to: *The Messenger*, 1592 N. 400 W., LaPorte, IN 46350

The Non-Avenging Angel of Death Row

At the 1972 scene of her mother-in-law's murder, Marie Deans recalls being comforted by a well-meaning policeman friend. "'Don't worry, Marie,' he told me, 'We'll get the guy and fry him.'"

No, you won't, Deans said to herself about the escaped murderer who killed her husband's mother. One death was enough. For Deans, an opponent of capital punishment, the homicide of a family member was not a moment to alter her belief in the sanctity of life. The murderer, who killed Deans's mother-in-law in Charleston, S.C., had been on the lam from a prison in Maine, a state with no death penalty. South Carolina prosecutors, eager to revive executions, sought to extradite the killer from Maine where he had been returned. Deans and her husband promised to work against the extradition and the likely death penalty to follow. They succeeded.

Not long after, Deans founded Victims' Families for Reconciliation. Her work with the organization—more than 100 families currently are members—defies the stereotype of murder victims' families as pro-death penalty and supporters of politicians who call for more executions.

"He had a family, too," Deans says of the man who killed her mother-in-law. "If he was executed, it would be another murder. It would be worse in a way, because he would be put on death row and the family would have been told every day for 10 years—or eight years or six years or however long it takes—that he was going to be killed. I think that's worse."

Deans expanded her work in 1983 to become director of the Virginia Coalition on Jails and Prisons, a Richmond public-interest group affiliated with the Southern Coalition on Jails and Prisons

in Nashville. She has worked with more than 400 death-row men and women, and with their families. Deans recruits lawyers, agitates in the courts and in wardens' offices for medical and educational programs, and regularly visits the rows to offer forgotten prisoners the warmth and love few ever had on the way to becoming killers.

It's on the last point—how do murderers get that way—that Deans offers an opinion that only a regular visitor to death rows could form. In her office last week, she said: "I have yet to find a case where there wasn't a red flag thrown up years ago—in grammar school or somewhere—where a kid said, 'I'm in trouble, help me.' He gave us the message loud and clear and we didn't pay any attention. And he ended up, years later, going down and down and killing someone. Let me tell you something. I resent that as a member of a murder victim's family . . . These governors, these prosecutors, Ronald Reagan and George Bush all getting up and saying, 'I care about victims, I want the death penalty.' If they cared about victims, they would have taken care of that victimized kid when he was 6 years old and prevented a homicide later."

Deans, who is 49 and now a single parent, is from a monied Old South Charleston family. An early sign of unconventionality occurred when in college she organized Republican voter-registration drives. Her parents were prominent Democrats. For that and other aberrations—including putting her son into a public school that had a majority of black students—they legally disowned her, she says.

What Deans may have lost in the cutoff from her natural family, she has more than gained in ties to people on death row. Many see her as a sister or mother. Eight men have asked her to stay with them until being led off to the execution chamber. A death-row prisoner in Mecklenburg, Virginia, Correc-

tional Center, about two hours south of Richmond, has known Deans for six years and says of her: "I couldn't understand how somebody who was a member of a murder victim's family could sit down across the table from me and tell me that I wasn't evil, that the acts I did may have been evil, but I wasn't evil. I was a human being and people cared. We spent hundreds of hours talking and communicating."

Hundreds more are likely, and with no shortage of other people to work with. The rapidly rising death-row population is nearing 2,200, the highest in U.S. history.

A goal of Deans's counseling is to arouse in the individual murderer a sense of horror at what he did and have that lead to atonement of some kind: "So long as the murderer does not acknowledge his responsibility by seeing his or her victim as a human being and recognizing the humanity of his or her victim, society's punishment is a useless act of vengeance. That is not to say that some murderers do not come to recognize their victims' humanity and accept responsibility for what they have done. Some do, but they do it in spite of the death penalty and prison."

Deans, the angel of America's death rows, is aware that some people dismiss her as a saint and others as an emotional freak. She is neither. She's no more than a pragmatist wanting to decrease the nation's violence, and what better place to work than death row where violence is on the increase.

From The Washington Post, August 27, 1989, Copyright 1989, The Washington Post Writers Group. Reprinted with permission. Submitted by Bill Etue, Reston, Virginia.

Growing Pains

Advertising

Eric Allison

Research claims that 80% of new members brought into a congregation are a result of invitations to come to church given them by friends, relatives, or associates. Six percent of new members are brought in by the minister, and another six percent are brought in by advertising. By far the best way to build a congregation is by having its members excited enough about the church that they never stop inviting people to come and share in the Sunday morning worship. However, other studies of church growth indicate that advertising can play a much larger role than previously believed. Often those people who come into a church because of an ad they have seen in the paper will later bring in many more new people. Advertising results are too often measured on a short-term basis. Advertising is not a quick fix. Having used advertising both successfully and unsuccessfully I have no hesitation in saying that *it works if it is done right*. The following are some basic rules.

In advertising, *image* is everything. So, if it is a handout or flyer, a newspaper or yellow pages ad, or a full-size poster, *spend the money to make it look professional*. Nothing is worse advertising than a sloppy piece of work.

Direct Mail

Direct mail is not the advertising stuffed in your mail box. The flyers stuffed in your mail box get less than a one percent response. Direct mail is information sent in an envelope addressed directly to someone. For the best response (as high as five percent) use the following procedures:

- The first objective is to get the person to open the envelope. Most people will open an envelope that has a *hand written address* on it. Yes, it may take a long time for your committee to write out 1,000 envelopes but that is what it takes.

- Hand-write a personal return address on each envelope you send out.

- Once the person has opened the envelope you have lost them if there is not something to catch their eye. A date, time, and place announcing a special event is an eye catcher. Also, have a hand-written personal note on the flyer or pamphlet. This note should be in place so that it is one of the first things seen when the person opens the envelope. The note should be signed and should encourage the person to call you at your home phone number. The church phone number should be listed, with the address and basic information on the flyer.

- Use colorful stamps if available. It doesn't cost any more to use two or three stamps to make up the same postage rate and it is an attention getter.

- The best mailing targets are people who have just moved into the area. Call a real estate agent—they can tell you where to buy a list (for a small charge) of recent home purchases. If you do not obtain a select list and simply mail out to all the people in your neighborhood (using a voters' registration list), you may get only a one percent response. Direct mail is one of the best methods of advertising and is one of the least expensive. Under the guidelines of Rev. Steve Pults, our church in Detroit is using the procedure I have just described and their results will be reported in a later issue of *The Messenger*. One footnote to this: The minister should not sign his or her name to the personal notes which are sent out. People respond more positively to notes written by lay people.

Newspaper Advertising

- General philosophical or theological statements in the paper receive little or no response. Always advertise an event, or something you are giving away.

- Avoid the church page like the plague. It is extremely unusual to have someone come to your church because of the ad on the church page. If your ad on the church page is free you have nothing to lose by using the space, but please do take the time to make it stand out as much as possible.

- If you are spending money on the church page, you are much better off spending the same amount of money to place larger, more provocative ads in another section of the paper. A good place is the obituary page because it is one of the most-read pages.

- 80% of the readers will only read the first line or title of your ad, so make it good. Always put the name of your church in the title of your ad. For example try putting an ad on the obituary page which says: AT (NAME OF YOUR CHURCH) WE DON'T BELIEVE THAT GOD SENDS PEOPLE TO HELL. Then advertise a special lecture, a free book or just a Sunday worship. Don't be afraid to be bold. If you have not been getting new people in your church from your present method of advertising, it is clear that what you have been doing does not work. So, try something else.

- The size of your ad should be at least 3 inches by 4 inches. For those of you living in big cities the cost will be hundreds of dollars for such an ad. The cost is simply a bullet you have to bite. Remember, be creative, be bold. I have always wanted to put an ad in the business section with the headline BRINGING YOUR CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD COULD BE THE BEST INVESTMENT YOU EVER MAKE . . . AND THE BENEFITS ARE ETERNAL.

- If possible use a photo or a drawing. Ads with photos or drawings are the most-read ads.

(Editor's note: The following article is the abbreviated text of Rev. Turley-Moore's keynote speech delivered at the Alliance of New Church Women's annual luncheon, Convention '89, Urbana, Ohio.)

Cleanse First the Inside of the Cup and the Platter

Susan Turley-Moore

Mainstream religions have caught up with us Swedenborgians. Most Christians today accept life after life, are dedicated to their own spiritual journeys, and understand the Trinity as three faces of the same God, plus their religious language is reflecting our experience of the feminine Divine. The rest of the world got to this point without one of our richest treasures, the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

The diminished numbers of us Swedenborgians is a concern. We must experience a revival in our church or our place in the religious world will be forfeited for lack of energy, will and contribution. If that should happen it will have been caused by the neglect of our collective responsibility as Christians.

The combination that makes for a growing, viable and prosperous church includes: resources such as property and money; the Holy Word to be used as a theological basis for making ethical and moral decisions; and one another so we have community.

The missing element is the other half of faith. The church needs to find that other half by reviving our life of charity—the honor of being a good Samaritan, the sense of fulfillment from being a good neighbor and the mission for justice and peace for which Christ died on the cross. Without faith and charity working together there is no church and religion is dead.

Swedenborg explained charity to us in the Arcana, telling everyone to “live in charity with one’s neighbor and love the Lord above all things,” (A.C. 1408.) Charity is nothing else than loving what

is good and loving to **do** what is good.

Each of us must make ourselves a channel for God’s work. In scripture we find, “Life is only from the Lord and can only flow into us as into a receptacle.”

The church, collective, must become a successful role model in being a living example of charity. As a self-examining people who daily analyze our intentions, seek ways for self-improvement, and try to stay on the path of regeneration, we can handle the task.

Most Swedenborgians are familiar with the process of self-disclosure for the sake of inner healing and spiritual renewal. But we must go beyond such methods to the old-fashioned, old-time religious concept that makes some of us squirm in our chairs. The church needs to experience repentance in order to experience revival.

Without true remorse for our deficiencies as a denomination we won’t know why we have failed or how. When people deny illness there can be no treatment. If we deny our flaws, we will be unable to rebuild our church.

Repentance must include disclosure, sharing, giving over, confessions to God, for unless that is accomplished, all the good we think we are doing is not from God but from ourselves. Each of us must think about what our church needs to confess to God and offer it up during prayer time.

To truly repent, we must reform. We must avoid repeating negative patterns, give up destructive behaviors and attitudes and “avoid evils” as described by Swedenborg, who called the changes of behavior and attitudes reformation.

The first step is to ask our Lord to help us. This resembles the first step of the Alcoholics Anonymous program. When we acknowledge we are powerless without God and we can do nothing

without Him, we will receive help. “For the Lord in His Divine Love is constantly seeking to reform and regenerate us,” Swedenborg writes.

When we drop the negative behavior and begin to receive inspiration from God we begin to act “as if” the change has already occurred. As the old ways are replaced with renewed and healthy ways, we are regenerated. This is revival.

Self-help books are filled with talk about the power of self-imagining and they share a common strategy based on the theory that behavior follows attitude. They all suggest we should examine and reevaluate our attitudes and beliefs, de-hypnotise negative beliefs about ourselves, program positive self-concepts, image a prosperous self and act “as if” we were the prospering person until it becomes a natural part of us.

This action is similar to Swedenborg’s three-point exam to take stock of our behavior and attitudes, decide on what needs changing, act “as if” until it becomes our way.

This is the description of the regeneration process, more commonly known as the Three Rs: repentance, reformation, regeneration—the process our church as a whole must consciously be a part of.

We must remember the differences between secular self-help methods and the church’s self-help, where we are aware of why we are choosing to self-improve. We must also be aware of our personal motives in doing good.

Many people do good deeds for selfish reasons. Christian self-help meth-

ods keep our ego in check by reminding us we live a life of charity for the purpose of building up God's community and not for our own name's sake.

The distinction of intentionality, or the importance of motive is vital. We as a religious family and as individual members of this faith community can—with the Lord's help—become aware of our motives. And our motives will have an impact on the recipient of our gift. (Remember that famous Emerson quote, "What you are speaks so loudly, I can't hear what you're saying.")

Before we "take on" any given social action project, we must first know the facts and become educated before choosing a plan of action. In this knowing we will come face to face with the real reasons we wish to help and this will make a difference in the activity, the approach and the goals of the program.

As the Scripture tells us: Cleanse first the inside of the cup and the platter, so that the outside may become clean as well." (Matt. 23:26.)

We Swedenborgians need to admit we have let our life of charity slip; we must hand over to God our guilt in order to receive God's forgiveness, healing and be rejuvenated. When that is done, God will guide our decisions and actions.

Each of us must recognize our role in the church as worthy, as grounded in Scripture and as a part of life and death issues. We must support each other's gifts, leadership abilities, and our natural desire to apply our theology to real-life issues.

Faith separated from charity is simply information, and Swedenborg makes it perfectly clear there is neither church nor religion with those in whom faith is separated from charity and doctrine separate from life.

The mission of our church is not

only performing Sunday morning worship services, weddings, baptisms, memorials and meetings. The mission of our church is not rearranging its structure, publishing written materials, and discussing our individual spiritual journeys. All good and necessary works of the church, they are hardly enough.

Swedenborgians must move beyond familiar ground into worlds unknown to *spread* the Good News and *to do* the Good News. We must not just possess doctrinal understanding, we must act upon it.

Read Matthew, Chapter 25 where Jesus warns us of His intentions to "invite those on His right hand to take their inherited place in God's Kingdom."

Through the Bible, we are being compelled to be the Good Shepherd, to love our neighbor as our self. Isaiah, the prophet, explains justice as a sort of fast that pleases God: "To let the oppressed go free, to share your bread with the hungry, to shelter the homeless poor, clothe the one you see naked, and not turn from your kin." (Isaiah 58: 7-8)

Our church has much repentance to do if we are to serve our life of charity, for we have too long let other Christians take care of the poor, needy, vulnerable, addicted, outcast, sick and dying.

Other churches lose members as they lose sight of their spiritual life and their faith. They become too much like a social agency. Swedenborgians have a theology, a code of Doctrine to help us establish and keep a balance of Divine

love and wisdom, will and understanding, faith and charity.

There is no shame in dirtying our hands when we go into the caves where the lepers dwell, for we go with the Holy Word, with love in our hearts and truth on our lips. The life of charity is prudent and wise.

We must never accept the false attitude that praying with someone or having an exchange of religious ideas is somehow far more godly than offering a bowl of soup to a hungry drifter.

All of it together makes the church. Lose one component and we are not a whole church.

We must remember always the words of the prophet Isaiah:

If you do away with the yoke,
The clenched fist, the wicked word,
If you give your bread to the hungry,
And relief to the oppressed.

Your light will rise in the darkness,
And your shadows become like noon.
Yahweh will always guide you,
Giving you relief in desert places.

He will give strength to your bones
And you shall be like a watered garden,
Like a spring of water
Whose waters never run dry.

You will rebuild the ancient ruins,
Build up the old foundations,
You will be called 'Breach-mender,'
'Restorer of ruined houses.'

Your integrity will go before you
And the glory of Yahweh behind you
Cry, and Yahweh will answer:
Call, and God will say, 'I'm here.'

Isaiah 58: 9-12

Rev. Susan Turley-Moore is Associate Pastor at the San Francisco church and chair of the Social Action Concerns Committee (SACC).

Commencements

Birth

Rohrer—Ralph Rohrer and Melinda Jester, Chicago, Illinois, announce the birth of their son, Karl Nicholas Rohrer, April 24, 1989. Karl has two siblings, Frank and Freda.

Baptism

Lau—Betsy Dianna Lau was baptized into the Christian faith July 30, 1989, at the Almont Summer School, Almont, Michigan, the Rev. Stephen Pults officiating.

Wetham—Sarah Jane Wetham, daughter of Bob and Gretchen (Schneider) Wetham, was baptized into the Christian faith at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, July 30, 1989, the Rev. Paul Zacharias officiating.

Schneider—Graham Philip Schneider, son of Philip and Mandy Schneider, was baptized into the Christian faith at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, July 30, 1989, the Rev. Paul Zacharias officiating.

Confirmation

Ladra—Bill and Kathy Ladra were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church and were received into membership September 10, 1989, at the LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Ted LeVan officiating.

Sawyer—Althea (Mrs. Everett) Sawyer was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church September 19, 1989, in her home, the Rev. Rachel Lawrence, Fryeburg New Church, Maine, officiating.

Wake—Wilma Wake was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church September 24, 1989, at the Fryeburg New Church, the Rev. Rachel Lawrence officiating.

Death

Unruh—Roger R. Unruh, of Pawnee Rock, Kansas, entered the spiritual world September 4, 1989. A resurrection service was held at Pawnee Rock church, September 6, 1989, the Rev. John Bennett officiating.

Bean and Poole—Rebecca Bean and Brian Poole were united in marriage July 22, 1989, at Elmwood New Church, Massachusetts, the Rev. Judith Dennis officiating.

Hemmerich-MacTavish—Christine Hemmerich and Robert MacTavish were united in marriage July 8, 1989, at the Church of the Good Shepherd, the Rev. Paul Zacharias officiating.

Milot-Jones—Angeline Milot and Laurie Jones were united in marriage April 29, 1989, at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Canada, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Podmore-Johnson—Christine Podmore and Michael Johnson were united in marriage August 12, 1989, at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Schellenberg-Eyer—Karen Schellenberg and Tony Eyer were united in marriage August 19, 1989, at St. Margaret's Anglican Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, the Rev. David L. Sonmor officiating.

Smith-Abrams—Lynnda Smith and Peter Abrams were united in marriage July 15, 1989, at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating jointly with Father John Cunningham.

Steigerwalt-Kelley—Machael Steigerwalt and Robert J. Kelley were united in marriage July 8, 1989, at the Virginia Street Church St. Paul, Minnesota, the Rev. Keith Tusing officiating.

Whitaker-Kackley—Sheila Marie Whitaker and Stephen Kackley were united in marriage September 23, 1989, at Fryeburg New Church, the Rev. James F. Lawrence officiating.

CENTRAL OFFICE DIRECTOR RESIGNING

Ethelwyn "Muff" Worden has submitted her resignation as Director of the Central Office, effective August 1, 1990, in order to resume her music career. Her resignation was accepted by the Executive Committee of General Council with expressions of gratitude for her years of dedicated service and with an understanding of her desires for the future.

A search committee has been appointed by President Randall Laakko. The selection process is scheduled to begin February 1, 1990. Interested persons desiring information about the position should send their resume to me as soon as possible.

Betsy Young, Vice-President
Chairman, Central Office
Review Committee
3715 Via Palomino
Palos Verdes Estates, CA 90274

New Librarian at SSR

The Swedenborg School of Religion has a new Librarian, Jean Hilliard, who began working full time in September. Jean received a B.A. in Religion from Vassar College, and a Master's in Library Science from Simmons College, and is now a candidate for a Master's in Theological Studies at Boston University School of Theology.

Jean has worked in public libraries in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts and for the public school system in Newport News, Virginia. She has also organized two church libraries.

Jean brings to SSR a strong background in library work as well as an appreciation for the uniqueness of the Swedenborgian library collection. Her long-term dreams are to have a computer for cataloging and doing an inventory of the archives, and to set up a program for exchanging information and materials with other libraries, including church libraries.

In Memorium

Scott Gerhardt Dickinson, son of Walter and Carol Dickinson, residents of San Francisco, was received into the Lord's Kingdom in Heaven October 17, 1989. Scott was born July 4, 1989 and was received into the Lord's Kingdom on earth October 1, 1989, the Reverend Edwin Capon officiating.

Convention Teachers Needed

We will need at least two new teachers for next summer's convention program. Applications are encouraged from non-Swedenborgians or Swedenborgians who meet the qualifications briefly described below.

- Willingness to devote oneself full time to the children's program during pre-convention and convention (and possibly post-convention) sessions.
- A caring and nurturing attitude which encourages children to grow.
- Training, skill, and experience in working with children.
- Ability to engage children in a variety of expressive activities.
- Attentiveness to the spiritual well-being and growth of children.

If you would be interested in applying or have people to recommend, please contact Ted Klein by December 15. (Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, Children's and Family Ministry, 273 Perham Street, West Roxbury, MA 02132 Telephone: 617-325-1214).

*Looking Around—
Past, Present,
Future*

is the theme of the

Post-Christmas Teen Retreat

to be held at

**Almont New Church Assembly
Almont Michigan**

It goes from

Noon, December 27

to

Noon, December 30

Cost is \$40 (U.S.) per person.

For more information,
please contact

Steve Pults: (313) 546-7583;
or Ron Brugler: (313) 798-8487.

Opinion

Dear Editor,

I read with interest Nan Paget's letter in the July/August 1989 *Messenger*. She concluded her letter by asking two questions:

If we refuse to use the death penalty under any circumstances, aren't we saying to the victims that their lives have no value?

And aren't we saying to the murderers, too, that their victims' lives have no value?

I would answer both questions, *no*. I think the message we send when we use the death penalty is that all human life is **not** valuable. I do not believe that the taking of a life can in anyway compensate a victim's family; on the contrary, I believe that it can delay the family's healing by substituting a sense of fulfilled vengeance for one of forgiving.

In the Book of Acts we have an account of the stoning of Stephen. Stephen is referred to in Acts 6:5 as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." In Acts 6:13 we see him accused by false witnesses, and in Acts 7:58, he is stoned; his last words are:

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.
(Acts 7:60)

Here we see in Stephen's response to his unjust death a message of faith in Jesus to love and redeem his/her children. Stephen did not cry for the death of his killers, but echoing the words of

his Lord, he called for forgiveness, knowing that only this could heal him, as well as his attackers.

Standing there consenting to Stephen's murder was Saul, later known as Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul, with the Lord's help, was able to accept this forgiveness and to become the Lord's instrument for bringing the Good News of Jesus to the world.

If we take anyone's life, we devalue everyone's life. If we offer forgiveness we validate all of life.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Carl Yenetchi
Chaplain at
Urbana University, Ohio

To the Editor:

We were happy to read another of the wonderful articles entitled "Joy's Journey" in the September issue, and hope to see more of them. We were truly inspired and uplifted by these articles and felt they were among the finest ever in *The Messenger*. Many people in our Urbana group had similar reactions. Thanks to you for printing and especially to Joy for writing such beautiful words.

God Bless you.

Karen and Albert Cowen
Urbana Society.

Dear Editor:

My wife and I have long been interested in the life of Abraham Lincoln. Was Lincoln influenced by the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg? If so, are there any publications detailing his involvement with Swedenborg's writings?

As church members, we are fascinated by this subject, but live in a remote area that affords little contact with other Swedenborgians.

We receive *The Messenger* every month, and would welcome a reply to our questions through your publication.

Thank you and bless you.

David Carper
P.O. Box 6294
Brookings, Oregon 97415

(Editor's Note: In addition to its publication in The Messenger, your letter has been forwarded to the Rev. Drs. William Woofenden and George Dole for research into the matter.)

Correction

The July-August issue incorrectly listed Jacqui Skinner Light as second vice-president of the Alliance of New Church Women. She is the secretary. Betty Guiu is first vice-president, Phyllis Bosley is second vice-president. We apologize for the errors.

From San Francisco

We're O.K.

Lorene Lederer

October 22, 1989—Those of you who are concerned about how our members and our little church in San Francisco fared in the earthquake of October 17, 1989 will be happy to hear that as far as we know, no members were hurt. Our church sustained no known damage, however, as of this writing, the gas lines to the church are cut off pending inspection.

A special thank you goes to Cynthia Dawdy, our church secretary, who had the concern and presence of mind after the earthquake, to turn off the gas mains leading to the church. She had, just a few weeks earlier, inquired as to their location should an emergency strike. She ran home from the church to get her wrench rather than spend time looking for one at the church.

Howard Torpey, President of the Trustees and East Bay resident, sought refuge in the church when he was stranded on the San Francisco side of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge which had closed due to roadway failure. Electrical power was out and the city was darkened but Howard and Cynthia creatively lined the garden with spent candles due to be discarded and sat on the parish house stoop listening to classical piano being played in the parish house by a friend of Cynthia.

Let's Get it Right

Susan Turley-Moore

A lot of people seem to be under the impression that the major focus of the Social Action Concerns Committee, (SACC) is AIDS. This is not true. Two years ago the focus of SACC was AIDS awareness and education. Last year our topic was child abuse prevention and education. This year it is the death penalty.

SACC has a five-year plan culminating in the celebration of World Religions. We also have a Women's Issues and Concerns Sub-Committee. In addition we continue to respond to the situation in South Africa by working with convention's National Council of Churches representative, Rev. Robert McCluskey, and we support Linda Blosser's Agape House in Urbana, Ohio.

At convention we provide programs for all ages. For example, Rev. Gladys Wheaton and Rev. Susan Turley-Moore provided a session on child abuse prevention during the children's program which included Scriptural dialogue with the kids about Jesus's love and advocacy role for children. Wendy Little is serving the SACC Board representing the New Church Youth League (NCYL) and Bill Baxter is her alternate.

SACC exists to support the efforts of individuals who wish to respond to a

specific social concern, and help Associations and parishes start their own SACC programs. The following is our five year plan:

1989 Child Abuse Prevention and Education—It Shouldn't Hurt to be a Kid.

1990 The Death Penalty. The Final Solution?

1991 Tending God's Garden. From Pollution to Solution.

1992 Impact of Racial Bias on Women and Children.

1993 Loving the neighbor around the world—Swedenborg's Vision. The Church Universal (in celebration of World Religions)

One final note, providing mini-courses, Association presentations and programs on the parish level is not the end result of our work. SACC believes Convention should be updated on these issues and is always planning ways to keep Convention involved in these areas. Therefore, we do not drop issues after the year's activities but continue to do what we can to keep Convention actively participating in social concerns. We invite your responses and involvement.

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