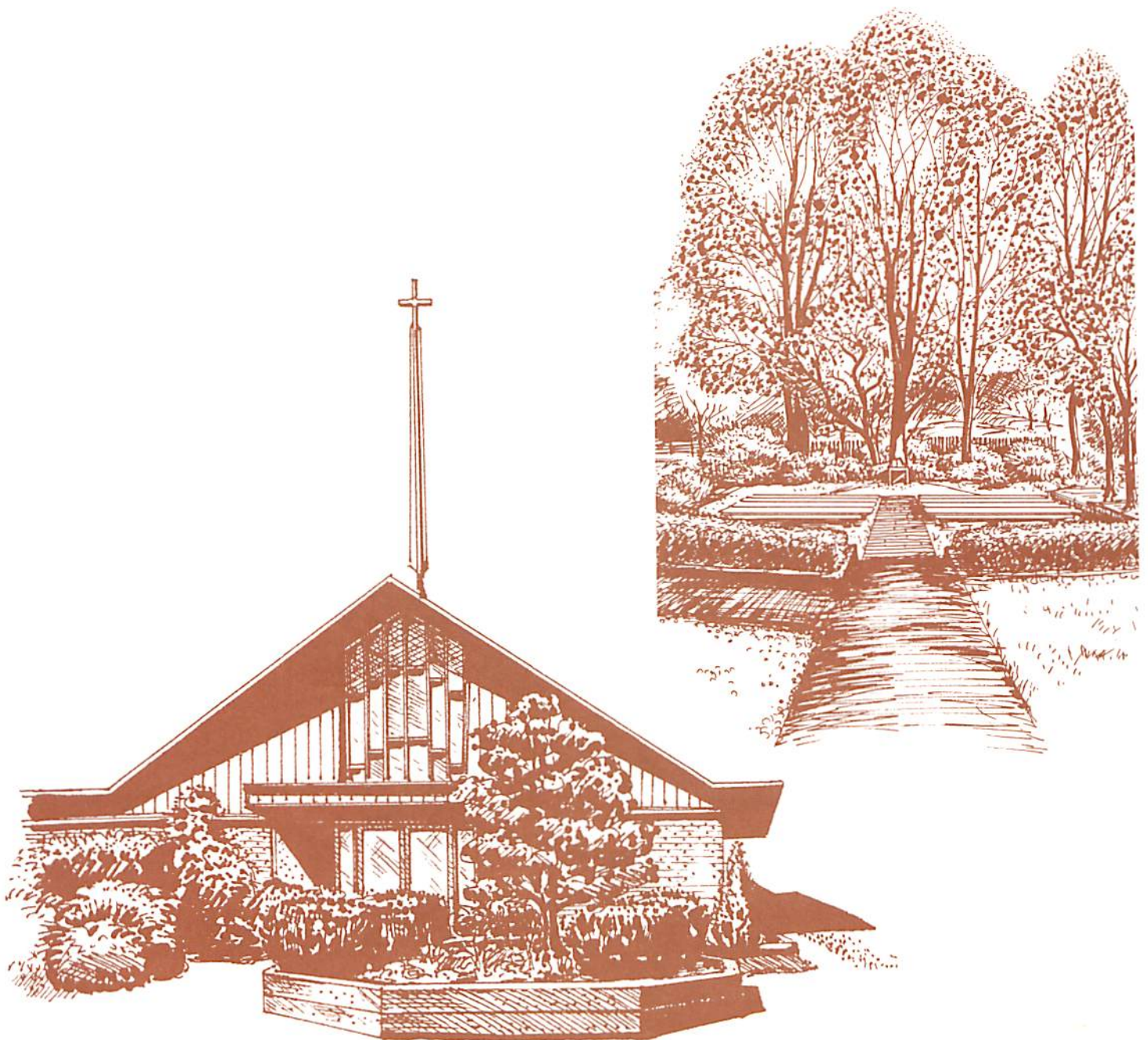


Official
Publication
of the
Swedenborgian Church

The Messenger

June 1990



If you have not yet told us you wish
to continue receiving *The Messenger*, this is your last copy!
(Ministers, Associations and libraries excepted)

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Our Cover: The Cincinnati church and outdoor wedding chapel at Kemper Road Center, Montgomery, Ohio, one of several Swedenborgian churches providing unique wedding ministries. (See Guest Editorial)

The Messenger

June 1990
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Guest Editorial

Moving Toward the Light

*Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr.
Kemper Road Center
for Religious Development,
Cincinnati*

What place does a wedding ministry have in the Swedenborgian Church? A good question! An intriguing question! Obviously there are as many answers as there are wedding ministries. Not right or wrong—just different. The purpose of this article is to share one perspective from the Swedenborgian community of Kemper Road Center.

Any program, ministry or building use at our local church must fall within the guidelines we have established in order to be performed or permitted at our church. These guidelines are the vision and statement of purpose for our church. Briefly stated: The purpose of Kemper Road Center is to facilitate the spiritual well-being of people by providing an atmosphere of acceptance and support where people may participate in the exciting journey of their own regeneration. One of the most important theological concepts is that we are all part of God's family and, therefore, we stress the worth and dignity of all people.

In light of the above, when we began exploring the wedding ministry question in 1971, we pursued additional questions and answers because, for us, this ministry fell within our guidelines. The additional questions and answers dwelt on commitment to the couple, counseling, marriage enrichment, follow-up and any requirements we would want to make.

Our wedding ministry was established to reflect the concepts in keeping with our belief that there is a harmony between the physical world and the spiritual world, our faith stance of marital love, and our understanding of the creative force of Divine Love and Di-

vine Wisdom. We also felt that our congregation should be involved in this ministry. So, when we wanted to build our outdoor chapel as a unique perspective to our wedding ministry, the members of the church rolled up their sleeves, rolled out the wheelbarrows, and brandished their hammers.

The end result is a beautiful outdoor chapel which complements the indoor sanctuary. The care and feeding of couples was done by deciding to meet with couples and work out their own, unique ceremony. This underscores our belief in welcoming people of all faiths. Because of our ecumenical theology, respect for where people are in their life's journey is foremost in our planning. Pre-marital counseling is available, not mandatory, but what often emerges are informal counseling sessions arising out of our discussions with couples as to the kind of ceremony they want to have. For instance, they may choose a traditional ceremony with the word "obey" left in, and we may ask, "What does 'obey' mean to you?" And then we can work in a natural, unthreatening way on what comes out of that awareness. We offer a weekend marriage enrichment program at Beside-the-Point Retreat Center, with \$25 of each total wedding donation credited to the retreat. This is a fine opportunity for people to examine and deepen their relationship. It is our hope that more couples will take advantage of it. Additional nurturing and acceptance of people are fostered through the work of the wedding coordinator and the office staff. We average about two weddings a week, with two ministers performing the services. Counseling, baptisms and new members are a direct result of implementing this ministry. Over half of our active membership married here at KRC, attracted by our wedding ministry.

Intimacy...

Developing and Maintaining an Intimate Relationship

Lorraine Sando

Intimacy is achievable. I have felt it myself and witnessed it in others. In relationships, I define intimacy as the ability to be emotionally open and physically close. By emotionally open, I mean being able to confide anything to your partner—feeling safe, and trusting. By physically close, I mean just that—body to body—satisfying our need for comfort, bonding, affection, sensuality and sexuality. These are the necessary components of intimate relationships.

In exploring this topic, I shall first discuss what we all possess that can help us to be intimate; second, those things that block us from attaining intimacy; third, the personal qualities that are needed to develop an intimate relationship; and finally, the skills we need to ADD to our basic energies to build and maintain an intimate relationship.

God Energy, Earth Energy, Connectedness

We all are endowed with natural abilities that we frequently take for granted and can forget because they are so close to us.

Most important is our ability to connect with our God energy—with its infinite supply of imagination, intuition, and inspiration. Secondly is our ability to make contact with the earth energy and know that we can stand firmly on two feet on the earth, be supported and grounded by it, and feel its gifts of practicality and the ability to manifest our ideas and be of use in this world.

Where these two great energies meet and nurture each other, a third energy is created, our energy for connectedness between ourselves and others.

Then we have our ability to breathe,

move, see, hear, taste, touch and smell. We have our bodies, our minds, our emotions. We also have our ability to choose, to sort out and let go of things no longer needed and add what is needed now. We are indeed miracles of creation!

Family Rules, Blocks to Intimacy

If we have all of these basic abilities, what blocks us from true intimacy in relationship? The blocks are many. The primary one is all of our early learnings in our growing-up family. None of us escape early loss and deprivation because none of us had perfect parents. We are affected by our family rules of how we must be in the areas of feeling, thinking, behaving. From this come our unrealistic expectations and assumptions, our self esteem. Our attitudes and beliefs are shaped early as they are modeled primarily by parents, but also by other authorities, our peers, society and culture. Other things that block us on our journey toward intimacy are our "busyness", our excessive time devoted to job and career, and our management of time. Certainly in these times of two-career families, it is even more difficult to find the time to spend on our relationships. Intimate relationships require time and attention, just as a plant needs water, soil and sunlight to grow and thrive.

The Gift of Stress

Then **stress** brings its gift—its questions of what is meaningful in life, what is life all about, and what's missing? The

gift of stress leads us to the qualities needed to move toward learning the art of intimacy—a willingness to work, to take risks, and to feel the pain of change. Pain, because change necessitates going from the familiar into the unknown, the chaos. Here is where we are required to stand on the edge and to trust and risk to take the next step. Here is where we meet God and our goals become possible. Goethe said "The moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves, too." It's scary, anxious, exciting, confusing and much more.

For intimacy, we need to add new skills to our basic equipment. These skills are not difficult but they require work, attention, and practice.

Communication and Conflict Resolution

First, we need to learn how to communicate—to really hear, see and understand one another. Most of us have not learned how to listen empathically. Really listening and reflecting back to our partner what he/she said is simple but not easy—it begins the process of change and the move toward intimacy.

Conflict resolution skills are required. Understanding our survival communication patterns is important in resolving conflict. Virginia Satir, world renowned family therapist, described four communication stances that we all learned in our early childhood to deal with conflict. They are **The Blamer**, **The Placater**, **The Distractor**, and **The Super Reasonable**. These are coping and survival mechanisms. We con-

(continued on page 85)

The Family Connection

A Father's Day Reflection

W. Frederick Wooden

Planting peas is an act of faith in New England. By tradition St. Patrick's Day is the day to plant, for peas are the hardiest of vegetables. But up this way it's rare for the ground to thaw before April. Maybe Easter is better, but even then the weather can be cold that day you plant your peas. You turn the ground and find a few ice crystals clinging to the clods. Snow flakes from a late flurry catch an eyelash. With hat and gloves you squat down and press hard little pellets into stiff ground. To crouch there in the dirt and shiver in the cause of planting peas must be an act of faith, and may be an act of folly.

But there we were, Aaron (my four year old) and I, planting peas. I would dig a little trench beside the fence, place the seeds in the trench and Aaron would cover them with dirt. Then he watered them, rather too generously.

Some days prior, our aged gerbil had died. I saw her lying stiffly in the cage, and realized not only that she was dead but that this was a chance to broach the subject of death with Aaron. He thought she was asleep and I explained that being dead looked like sleeping, but she wouldn't wake up. I poked her gently to prove it. She didn't wake up. "The gerbil's body wore out and won't work anymore," I said. "And when that happens we say she died."

"Just like great-great-grandma?" Aaron said, remembering what happened last summer when she died.

"Just like great-great-grandma," I agreed. "And when things die we dig a hole and put them in the ground." So we solemnly carried her out back, dug a hole and put her in to bury her.

The next day Aaron wanted to go and check on the gerbil. We went out and saw that the dirt had not moved. He asked if she was still in the hole. I said



yes. He asked if she was going to wake up. I said no. At first I thought he had forgotten, then it dawned on me that he was checking to see if he remembered right.

After planting the peas he wanted to check on the gerbil again. Standing there at the gerbil grave I realized how similar planting and burying are. They are the same act. There is something mystical about the soil that it should be both the womb and tomb of life.

We scattered some grass seed and hardly a day went by that he didn't ask to go out and see the peas and water the grass seeds. He knew something was supposed to happen, and didn't want to miss the day when the peas poked above the ground or the grass began to grow. He also asked to see the place where the gerbil is.

At first I thought it was just something else to do, but now I think there's more to it. Lifeless seeds go into the ground and grow. Lifeless animals go into the ground but don't grow. The same act yet opposite results. Mysteries.

In this age of crystals and the reawakened understanding of the planet as a living entity, it turns out the earth—dirt—is pretty spiritual stuff. Despite all that science knows, the fact that little specks turn into vegetables when they lie in the dirt is still mysterious. I cannot help but wonder if we have buried our

dead in an ancient hope that they would grow back, like plants from seeds. There is power in the soil.

We are told to teach values and morality. But words ring hollow unless they're congruent with what's already been done. Not in the classroom but in the crib, the kitchen and the back yard. That's where moral thinking begins.

When we plant peas Aaron is learning about life. When we bury a gerbil he

learns about death; he also learns that life and death have something in common. Words could never convey a mystery so simply.

When his mother and I help each other Aaron learns about care. When we say 'please' and 'thank you,' he sees that affection and respect go hand in hand.

To find an earthworm or pick a tomato teaches him that life is everywhere. To bury a pet or visit a cemetery teaches him that the dead still dwell with us.

If we want our children to have morality, follow after those who were close to the soil. Remember, even Jesus taught by using the mustard seed, wheat and chaff, rain, and the lilies of the field. They understand life who live close to seed and corpse. They know that the humble intimacy of life is death. This is where religion and morality start. If we want children to reach spiritual heights, they must first touch the earth.

Fred Wooden is a Unitarian Universalist minister living in Groton, Massachusetts with his wife and son. He has worked in rural New England for ten years, preceded by doctoral studies and seminary training in Chicago. In addition to usual pastoral duties, Mr. Wooden composes new tunes for church hymns and is part of a team developing a new hymnbook for the Unitarian Universalist Association. He also keeps house, attempts to keep a garden, and writes about all these things for two local newspapers.

FROM STUFFED ANIMALS TO HONEY WAFERS

Betty Hill

"Five Smooth Stones" has 133 paid subscriptions as of March, 1990. We receive at least two subscriptions a week.

In letters to us, parents and teachers are asking for "things to do" at home and in Sunday schools. The four-volume set of the *Sunday School Activity Book* is full of games, crafts and activities. These are set for all ages from those just learning to cut and paste to

those into pageants.

There are 300 pages of basic technique—project ideas and costumes plus 158 activities and crafts to go along with Bible lessons.

- Need stuffed animals?—page 119
- Fingerpaint?—page 36
- Honey wafers?—page 4
- Rhythm instruments?—page 111

Saginaw Community Theater used the headdress from lesson 27 to dress Pharoah in their three-week sold-out production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*.

These books are available from:
The Swedenborg Library
79 Newberry Street
Boston, Mass 02116

Intimacy . . .

(continued from page 83)

tinue to use these mechanisms in the present without being aware that our survival is no longer threatened. When we are stressed, we will resort to our survival ways of communicating. The **Blamer** is critical of others and feels inadequate inside. Imagine someone pointing a finger at you and saying "you never do anything right." The **Placater** is a people pleaser and caretaker and inside feels, *I am nothing*. Picture someone on their knees pleading and saying sweetly, "I only want to please you." The **Distractor** constantly interrupts, is irrelevant, and inside feels, *there is no place for me*. Here is the person who is scattered and makes jokes. The **Super Reasonable** must always be right, is logical and inside feels very vulnerable.

Congruence and the Five Freedoms

There is a fifth stance called **Congruent**. This is the stance of high self esteem. This person's words, tone of voice, facial expression, body language, and actions all match. The congruent person practices the five freedoms as espoused by Virginia Satir. "To SEE AND HEAR what is here, instead of what should be, was, or will be. To SAY what one feels and thinks instead of what one should. To FEEL what one feels, instead

of what one ought. To ASK for what one wants, instead of always waiting for permission. To TAKE RISKS in one's own behalf, instead of choosing to be only 'secure' and not rocking the boat."

Another necessary skill is the ability to contract and negotiate. None of us can get our way all the time. Partners must give up their competitiveness, have good will for each other and be committed to the relationship winning.

An important skill in intimacy is the use of caring behaviors. These are acts of kindness toward one another. Important here is sharing with your partner caring behaviors that you like, learning from your partner caring behaviors that he or she likes, and giving them to each other on a regular basis. Also needed is the ability to accept and honor our partner's differences. Additionally, we need to understand, accept, and own all of the parts of ourself. By parts I mean emotions, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors.

Crucial to the success of intimate relationships is the ability to look at and understand the impact of early family history on the self and the relationship. Here we can become aware of the origins of our expectations and assumptions that we have about the partner and the self. We gain many resources from our upbringing, but we must also look at, feel, and heal the pain of deprivation of love. Very few of us have ever been loved enough. We each yearn to be

loved unconditionally.

Becoming a Whole Person

In intimate relationships, our sensuality and sexuality need to be understood, accepted and nurtured. We need to learn to communicate sexual and sensual needs so that we can get some of our needs met. Sexuality and sensuality encompass every area of life—body, mind, emotions, and spirit. They must not be placed in a hidden corner of a bookshelf to gather dust. Lastly, we need to be able to really bond with our partner in myriad ways—to express all of our emotional intensity while being physically close—love, joy, anger, sadness, and fears.

Intimacy can't be learned overnight. It's hard work. It requires us to be about the business of becoming a whole person. It's a process. It's probably the hardest job we'll ever have. The rewards can bring incredible meaning, pleasure and fulfillment to our lives. We can then begin to know the meaning of life.

Lorraine Sando, M.A., NCC, is a marriage and family therapist, artist, and long-time Swedenborgian affiliated with the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound (nee Church of the Good Shepherd) in the Seattle suburb of Redmond. She is also a teacher of the PAIRS course in intimate relationships and a faculty member of the Northwest Satir Institute.

Growing Pains

Dynamic Worship

Eric Allison

First of two parts

During my travels I have noticed that when I speak of the need for change in the worship service my words are sometimes received with about as much enthusiasm as my talk about the importance of increasing financial commitment to the church. Change can be a touchy subject. Even those who do want something other than the first order of service are sometimes reluctant to speak openly about what they want for fear of being put down or because they are sensitive to those who treasure the first order of service. In this two-part article I will explore the common elements present in the worship services of growing churches and make suggestions as to how you can change your worship service format.

Intimacy Out of Conflict

It is important to recognize that feelings about the worship service are often deeply-held convictions about what "ought to be." So, the first step is to respect that each person's way of worshipping is as precious to that person as yours is to you. It seems to me that most churches have three groups within them: Those who want changes in the worship service, those who will tolerate changes, and those who do not

want any changes at all. In some cases a very small minority will get its way if it is vocal enough. The healthiest situation is compromise. While everyone's desires cannot always be met, acceptable compromises can often be achieved. What churches need to be about is spiritual growth, and this means change. The greatest intimacy can come from the resolution of the greatest conflict. We know we are really growing when we can make compromises like these. When a congregation works through an issue as powerful as this it will be stronger.

A second consideration is the condition of your church. Is it growing? Is it holding its own? Is its membership declining? If the membership has been steadily declining, something is wrong. One of the main reasons a church grows—or declines—is the quality of its worship service. A church can lack many other things but still be growing if its worship service is dynamic.

This does not mean that traditional worship cannot be dynamic. There is still a market for traditional worship. Some churches with liturgies that are hundreds of years old have growing congregations. It is true that traditional styles of worship have diminished in popularity but there are still people of all ages who find the old styles of worship to be meaningful.

Great Music and Great Sermons

Many studies have been done on the format of worship in growing churches. There are common elements found in those churches that I have found to be missing in many Convention churches. Whether your church has a traditional or modern format, you should take these facts into account when considering a change in the worship service.

Generally, the two most common elements of worship found in growing churches are great music and great sermons. A church that has both will eventually grow despite other negative factors that may be present.

What makes great music? A variety of types performed by talented people and a variety of music in which the congregation can participate. The choir does not have to be splendid and the musicians do not have to be world class. Members of the congregation performing during the service is better than having only paid musicians. Paid performers on occasion balanced with your own people performing frequently is a good mix. If you do not have any talented musicians, putting out the money to pay a non-member to sing or play an instrument can add greatly to your service.

In most of our churches the hymns sung during the service were written in the last century or earlier. Some are great hymns which are indeed inspiring. However, many do not approach "inspiring." Isn't it time the "New Church" sing songs that were written in this century before the century comes to a close?

Research shows that people like to have the same type of music in church as they do outside church. If 60 percent

of your congregation likes country music, then you should have country-style religious music in your worship from time to time. If a significant percentage of the congregation enjoys baroque, blues, jazz, or show tunes, it would be a great idea to include those styles of music as part of your worship.

Elements of a Dynamic Sermon

Much research has been done on what constitutes a dynamic sermon. The sermon is as important as any other single factor in having a vital church. But one of the common mistakes is length of time. The research shows that congregations more doctrinally oriented want long sermons. The churches that really study the Bible (most of which are very conservative) expect the minister to preach for forty-five minutes. They consider the sermon to be part of their education and they believe learning about the Bible in didactic style to be part of their Christian responsibility.

Liberal churches want shorter sermons. Twenty minutes is maximum. I recall Wilfred Rice saying, "No souls are saved after fifteen minutes." Regardless of the sermon length or the congregation's leaning toward liberal or conservative, there are common elements present in the dynamic sermon:

- People come to hear the sermon because they want insights which will help them grow—personally, spiritually.
- The Biblical text is brought into everyday life in simple language which the average person can understand.
- Anecdotes or stories illustrate the text. These may be from the life of

the speaker or about someone else. Everyone likes to hear a good story.

- Listeners feel they are being educated because they receive new information in the sermon. Not that the sermon should be a didactic lecture, but it should demonstrate command of the topic. A brief historical background of the text, interesting little tidbits which help them understand some of the key words and any information which helps them to have a greater understanding of the Bible are apparently what many people like to be part of the sermon. Academic or doctrinal sermons which stay on the intellectual level come in last as a method of reaching people.
- Humor is appreciated. People like to laugh and will even laugh at themselves. Jokes are often repeated and are their own kind of evangelism. In many ways the sermon is the heart of the service. It can lift up an otherwise rather dull service. Most people come for the sermon more than any other reason.

Many ministers will not change their style of preaching regardless of the feedback they receive. Congregations get used to their minister and the minister often lets the quality of his or her sermons slide. When I was in LaPorte, a former speech teacher stopped there for a Sunday worship service. After church she assailed me for how lazy I had become, since I had been her student. I had indeed gotten sloppy. Imagining that your speech teacher will be present for every service might help to sharpen up your preaching. It has certainly helped me!

(to be continued)

Men's Work

Skuli Thorballsson

"We are leaving our time now.
We are leaving our time now.
There are places where time moves
more slowly than here.
We honor all four directions: east, west,
north, south.
And we also honor the fifth direction,
the vertical one,
which is within us, today, here . . ."

So begins the poet Robert Bly in his Bill Moyers interview, "A Gathering of Men." I had caught it by chance one night on PBS. My spouse and partner Deborah Winter had just returned via Urbana from co-leading a women's retreat at Almont on "Nurturing Ourselves: On Healing the Inner Child." She brought the message from some of the men in Urbana that men need nurturing too! A men's retreat? I felt resistance to the idea. What would we do?

The Bly interview broke through the resistance and without much advance notice the retreat was set for March 9–11 at Swedenborg House Growth Center in DeLand, Florida. When the dust settled we were four: Bob Gustafson from Sarasota, a retired aeronautical engineer; Steve Ledingham from Yellow Springs, Ohio, a computer consultant; John Titus from Urbana, Dean of Students at Urbana University; and myself. Our ages ranged from thirty something to seventy something. And where two or three are gathered together . . .

We used fairy tales and mythology from Robert Bly and Joseph Campbell; we used an Indian dance, yoga, chanting, breathing exercises, and drumming as a form of meditation; we used prayer, the Bible, Swedenborg, and the Viking Runes, to help center us as we shared our life journey, our grief, our hope, and

our joy. We ended with the circle of affirmation and went home changed persons. Healing happened.

Bly tells us that there is a grief and sadness that men carry that is not often expressed. The models of men that males get in high school only last until age thirty-five or so when we discover that these models no longer work in relationships, in our work, or in our play. This crisis began 140 years ago with the industrial revolution when the older males left for work and were cut off from the younger males. There were no longer any male initiators for the crossover from boyhood to manhood.

Bly sees the men's movement as not a reaction to the women's movement but as a door to the male mode of feeling. For him, grief is the door to the male mode of feeling; whereas pain, the pain of devaluation, is the door to the female mode of feeling. To get through the denial of grief in our culture it is necessary to go down, to descend, not ascend.

The opening for Bly happened when he realized that, for him it was not a New Age ascent or higher consciousness—that his life was not going to be a list of accomplishments, but a descent. In ancient times the movement for the man was a descent before he became a man. It's called in fairy tales and mythology a "time of ashes." When, in his forties, Bly first got in touch with his grief and the need for healing in his relationship with his father he wrote the poem "Snow Banks North of the House":

Attendees' Impressions

"Our weekend men's retreat at Swe-

*Snow banks north of the house,
those great sweeps of snow
that stop suddenly six feet from the
house
thoughts that go so far
the boy gets out of high school and
reads no more books
and the son stops calling home
the mother puts down her rolling
pin and makes no more bread
and the wife looks at her husband
one night at a party and
loves him no more
and the energy leaves the wine
and the minister falls
leaving the church
it will not come closer
and the one inside moves back*

denborg House was an exciting and meaningful event.

Men have been and always will be in process, the process of transition, grieving, and the rites of passage from one state or event to the next.

The uniqueness of the male human experience was made clear through examination of ideas from Joseph Campbell, Robert Bly, and the men within our group.

For me the message which I carry in my heart is the power of the warrior within, the maleness that serves my King. The unique gifts and strengths of my male energy have been reaffirmed through myth, legend, fairy tale, action, and embracing the warrior-man within myself and my spirit brothers."

"... I contributed a lifetime of Swe-

and hands touch nothing and
they're safe
and the father grieves for his son
and will not leave
the room where the coffin stands
he turns away from his wife and
she sleeps alone
and the sea lifts and falls all
night
and the moon goes on through
the unattached heavens
alone
and the toe of the shoe pivots in
the dust and the man
in the black coat turns and goes
back down the hill
no one knows why he came or
why he turned away
and did not climb the hill

denborgian experience of living through a couple of generations . . . The most comforting line in the Bible is perhaps the oft-repeated 'and it came to pass'."

We started with a chant and dance to the theme of "Here and Now" reiterated as we stepped in and out of a circle, and ended with a recap and mutual appreciation before the Sunday service at which each of us shared our retreat reactions with the congregation . . . a very pleasant weekend of sharing more deeply than casual acquaintance permits."

"Our grandfathers are calling: Although young men of today are going through basically the same transitional passage from childhood to adulthood

as their ancestors once did, the confusion seems to cloud and linger much longer.

Many cultures still retain a rite of passage to enable the child to shed the old and put on the new. In modern day America we have few if any rites of passage. The consequences: confusion, fear, anger, rebellion, street gangs, drug abuse, alcoholism, sexual identity crises, etc. The list goes on as do the myriad changes that the fast-paced society perpetuates thanks to technology.

Obviously we can't and shouldn't slow technology down to allow our morals and principles to catch up. Yet, something must change to help our young men in their struggle to attain responsible adult status. Some learn vicariously while others struggle for a lifetime.

Swedenborg House put out a call for men to come together to help each man to better understand this whole process.

Campbell's message, *follow your bliss*, became the focus of the group process which unfolded throughout the weekend. We allowed for much opportunity to follow our bliss as we utilized play and joy to blend with the deep philosophical, psychological and spiritual discussions. Healing and sensual understanding prevailed."



*Men's Retreat, Swedenborg House, March 9-11, 1990.
From left: Bob Gustafson, Steve Ledingham, John Titus,
Rev. Skuli Thorballsson (and Koko).*

Ho! Ho! Ho!
Grandfather!
Beat the drums for my brothers
and me.
Play softly the ceremonial
drums and help us
face the four winds.
And sing for us, Grandfather.
Keep within us and keep us in
your heart.
We will play upon our drums
and we
will call you out into the night.
We will open our blankets to
you, that we may stand
together in the night, beneath
the glimmering
camp fires of the Above Ones.
Breathe the warmth. It flows
around us,
through us and guides us
along the sacred path.
We will beat the ceremonial
drums for you, Grandfather.
Ho! Ho! Ho!

Robert Bly

*Rev. Skuli Thorballsson is co-minister
with spouse Deborah Winter at Sweden-
borg House, DeLand, Florida.*

Convention '90

Convention Workshop Schedule

Final Update!

SESSION I:
Thursday, June 28,
1:30-3:00 p.m.

New Age Spirituality, Part I

Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey

Our New Church teaching on the nature of God, persons, and human experience. Relating this teaching in practical ways to our own issues in the light of current awareness of dysfunctional family patterns; ways to know the reality of God's presence and freeing love.

Family, Self, and Healing: John Bradshaw on the Family, Part I

Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein

Explore who we are to our family of origin, and ways of healing self and relationships, using John Bradshaw's "family systems" approach. First session includes introductory discussion and videotape, second session is a group discussion in response to the videotape.

Dreams as Spiritual Messengers

Dr. Perry Martin

Share our dreams and explore methods of learning to receive their messages for our spiritual growth. Keep track of your dreams in a journal and bring that notebook with you, to share if you wish.

Creation Spirituality/ Matthew Fox & Swedenborg, Part I

Rev. Jerome Poole & Dr. Mary Kay Klein

Exploring the basic elements of Matthew Fox's creation spirituality, comparing

The following convention workshop update is in lieu of the Convention-wide mailing, which was canceled.

these ideas with Swedenborg's and sharing some experiences of celebration and workshop.

Wanting an Intimate, Healthy Relationship, Part I

Lorraine Sando, M.A.

If you are a single person who wants such a relationship, or a couple who wants to stay happily married, this is for you. The many facets of a successful relationship will be explored. Knowing yourself and your own history, communication skills, resolving conflicts so that the relationship wins and being able to express caring behavior with each other. Come alone or with your partner.

Church Growth

Rev. Eric Allison

How to get new people into your church and how to integrate or assimilate them into the life of the church. Includes experiences and insight gleaned at the Church Growth workshop in Chicago.

The Message Within the Myth

Rev. David & Elizabeth Johnson

Two interviews by Bill Moyers, with Joseph Campbell, "The Hero's Adventure" and "Masks of Eternity", are being shown in two sessions, followed by discussion. The late Joseph Campbell was an acknowledged expert on

the meaning of myth in which he saw humankind expressing its deepest beliefs and yearnings. Like Swedenborg, he saw the depth within the words we use to express our concepts. These films help us to expand and enrich our cherished understanding of the growth and development of the human spirit.

The Joy of Doctrine

Rev. Robert McCluskey

It's time to re-evaluate the important role of this much-maligned and poorly-understood aspect of the New Church. Put on your thinking caps as we rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

SESSION II:
Thursday, June 28,
3:30-5:00 p.m.

Seeking the Mission of Your Church

Rev. David Sonmor

Go through a brief brainstorming to identify the mission of your local church groups and identify the overall mission of the New Church in North America. Look at Swedenborg's vision of the New Jerusalem and see how it compares with the present situation.

Family, Self, and Healing: John Bradshaw on the Family, Part II

Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein

Parliament of World Religions

Rev. Dr. George Dole

A description of the 1893 Parliament, with attention to Swedenborgian involvement, and outline of plans for and progress toward a 1993 Parliament.

Having Fun and Raising Funds

Rev. Jerome Poole & Rev. Richard Tafel, Jr.

A sharing of a variety of techniques for planned giving and ways of identifying potential donors; how to enjoy, implement, and be creative.

Wanting an Intimate, Healthy Relationship, Part II

Lorraine Sando, M.A.

What Our Religion Means to Us

Panel of New Church Youth Leaguers

Learn from your young people how they view growing up in and being a part of the New Church.

Hearing Loss

Rev. David Johnson

The Invisible Disability is the name often given to partial and profound hearing loss. It can't be seen, it often happens very slowly, and the person walks, talks, and otherwise functions normally. However, it can be cause for misunderstanding, frustration and isolation.

Can We? Will We?

Can we make Swedenborg better known? The Swedenborg Foundation, publishers of Swedenborg's works since 1849, is trying to make more people aware of Swedenborg and Swedenborgian thought. In addition to keeping Swedenborg's works in print, we also sponsor contemporary translations, print attractive and inexpensive paperback editions, and run a fascinating bookstore in New York City.

Chrysalis, the Foundation's journal published three times a year, is, first, a continuing effort to make Swedenborg's name known to the public. Second, *Chrysalis* is a low-key invitation to its readers to become acquainted with Swedenborgian thought.

Chrysalis has made a good start at accomplishing those two goals. About 750 non-New-Church people subscribe

to *Chrysalis*, and several hundred writers have sent in candidate manuscripts. Both the readers and the writers are asking for more information on Swedenborg.

However, the Foundation can neither support, nor make full use of, this project without the help of New-Church members, and there are, in fact, only 250 New-Church subscribers. A total of 3,000 subscribers would make the *Chrysalis* project self-supporting. The Foundation could then afford to spend the money needed to market the magazine widely, thus making Swedenborg known to *many* thousands of potential readers.

Why not take a moment today to subscribe (or re-subscribe) for one, two, or even three years? Each *Chrysalis* focuses on a theme presented from vari-

ous viewpoints, and it also presents several Swedenborgian perspectives. Upcoming themes are: Home, West Meets East, The Archetype of the Wise Man, Science and Spirituality, and The Future of Human Nature. Do you not have friends who like to read and are interested in these topics? Why not send them gift subscriptions?

Let the Foundation know you support this unique outreach to the reading public. It's easy to help, and you will enjoy the outcome. Phone in your order today: 1-800-366-7310, and charge it to Visa, MasterCard, or American Express. We'll be looking forward to your call!

Kerry Clements
Executive Director
Swedenborg Foundation

Spirituality & Ecology: A Call to Awareness

Rev. Judith Dennis

Via presentation and experiential learning, we will explore the connections between spirituality and our relationship to the earth. The focus will be on our spiritual/ecological responsibility.

SESSION III:
Friday, June 29,
1:30-3:00 p.m.

New Age Spirituality Part II

Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey

Seeking the Mission of Your Church

Rev. David Sonmor

Repeat of the course given in Session II.

How Many Ways Can You Spell Church?

Christine Laitner, Chair, Growth & Outreach Support Unit (GOSU)

A presentation to promote

awareness of projects currently under the GOSU aegis; present areas in which the church is not active but perhaps should be; an explanation of the process by which projects are selected for inclusion in the GOSU baliwick, how they are funded, what the monitoring processes are, and what type of "longevity" is expected for various types of programs.

Little Lights Shine Bright

Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein & Rev. Dr. Patrician Bowen

Our church schools can be bright lights no matter how small. Explore ways to energize small church school programs and those involved in them. The Dole Notes and supplementary materials will be used.

Creation Spirituality/ Matthew Fox & Swedenborg, Part II

Rev. Jerome Poole & Dr. Mary Kay Klein

The Swedenborg Board: Convention's Electronic Bulletin Board

Steve Koke

Meet with Swedenborgians from anywhere without hopping a plane. The 'Board' is limited to Convention, but may go international. Learn what it does now and how international communication will work.

Joseph Campbell Film "Masks of Eternity" and Discussion

Rev. David & Elizabeth Johnson

On Forgiveness

Rev. Kathleen Easton

What forgiveness is/is not; stages of forgiveness; the work of Jesus related to forgiveness and healing.

The presentation is designed to be an experiential time of self-examination, prayer, meditation, sharing and giving of information. The objective is to stimulate and allow people a newer understanding of themselves, how they think and act around the subject of forgiveness.

Earth Day Follow-up: How You Can Make a Difference

Susan Poole

An informal discussion on how you can make a difference personally, spiritually, and practically in the quality of life on the earth. Learn about air, water, stream pollution and acid water and ozone depletion. A variety of literature will be available. Share what you are doing in this general consciousness raising and idea sharing forum.

SPECIAL OFFERING
Friday evening
6:00-7:00 p.m.

Marian Mull, a member of the Pawnee Rock, Kansas Swedenborgian Church will present a slide show, *New Zealand Revisited*, showing the changes over the 20-year span since the family's first visit in 1969.

Of Rummage and Junque

Patte LeVan

Along with Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, graduations, weddings, and the feast of blossoms and greenery, spring and summer bring the glad shedding of many things—winter clothes, outworn attitudes. And the mounds of possessions that at one time we thought we couldn't live without, transformed by a simple decree into *rummage*.

I'm not sure why we had high hopes for our last church rummage sale. Somehow the thought of fresh rummage quickens the pulse of some of us, the heart beats faster, imagination leaps. Visions of unearthed treasures dance in our heads, not to mention the promise of catharsis. The piles of tired polyester, the plethora of fake flowers in noxious green plastic that will never die, the immortal stained orange drapes that stubbornly reincarnate every year are quickly forgotten in our euphoric recall of the cherished finds of rummage sales past. Those beautiful 75-cent purple beads that go with everything, the lovely set of Japanese trays for only \$2, the 25-cent leather purse that was just right, and the big one that got away, the \$5 armoire with one leg missing that somebody else snapped up before I could get across the room.

The Alliance called it a sidewalk sale this last time. It presented a more lively image than rummage. But we got rained out, and had to carry everything down to the basement. The pre-sorting excitement had come and gone. We had discovered the best stuff and sold it to each other. ("That jacket is your color, get some shoulder pads for it and it will look brand new." "Those earrings are the perfect match. For 50 cents you've got a whole new outfit!" You know the dialogue.) We each had our little stash of goodies to take home for ourselves and our unsuspecting spouses and relatives.

Quite a few customers showed up in the morning despite the rain. We were so eager to see them that we lowered the already rock-bottom prices. Even so, some folks were planning aloud to return after 3:00 p.m. when they knew we would reduce the 10-cent items to 5 cents.

The long damp afternoon wore on; Marcia and Kathy and Marge and I were cocooned in the basement exchanging

confidences, swapping rummage stories. Marge and Kathy discovered a slide projector which would be good as new if they could just figure out how to get it back together. They sat cross-legged on the floor, intensely occupied with that challenge for the next two hours. A woman who had made three trips and was loading up for a fourth asked again how much the set of drapes were (orange, yes, but *no* stains and nearly new!). We conferred and quickly cut the previously quoted price in half. She staggered up the basement stairs with them, delighted with her bargain. We were delighted that she was delighted. *What fun.* Money wasn't everything. Turned out it wasn't much of anything when we began counting our profits. The dread hour had come when we must decide what to do with the remains, all of which must be hauled back up the basement steps and disposed of somehow. Desperate calls to the Salvation Army and two thrift shops yielded only one out of three who would agree to accept anything; there had been many ill-fated rummage sales that day, all heading for the same overloaded burial grounds. The county home would accept the clothes, thank heaven. Two more exhausting hours and we were finished, amid vows of "Never again!" Rummage, we decided, was a glut on the market, we couldn't even give it away; we needed to develop better fundraisers.

Some weeks later my husband Ted read aloud an item from our local newspaper. "The Women's Society of the Winnetka Congregational Church in Illinois raised \$170,139.76, breaking a record it set two years before with sales of \$157,378.74 for a one-day rummage sale." They had made the Guinness Book of World Records several times, and were billed as the largest one-day rummage sale in the world. I read and re-read the item. It couldn't be possible, but there it was. A church less than two hours away had made close to \$200,000 on a one-day rummage sale. *How did they do it? What were they selling?* The question haunted me. Finally I couldn't stand it any longer. I phoned the Winnetka Congregational Church and spoke to Jane Gardner, the publicity chairperson for the annual event. She was

friendly and helpful.

"We get calls all the time," she laughed. "This is our 58th year for the event. It's a wealthy community, so we get many nice things donated, and of course we give all our net proceeds to local charities." (Among the nice things she mentioned were four signed Norman Rockwell prints and a grand piano—which undoubtedly had all its legs intact.) "It started out like any rummage sale does," she said "and evolved into a year-long operation, with 33 departments, a mailing list of 4,000 people in six file drawers, our own covered pickup truck, a drop-off area open 365 days a year, and of course the sorting goes on all year. Would you like for me to send you some literature?"

"Yes, thank you," I said. Several days later a packet arrived containing 14 pages of information: A yearly timetable, press releases for all media, instructions to volunteers and chairpersons and a listing of over 30 departments that include furniture and home furnishings, TVs and electronics, sporting goods and toys, appliances and hardware, antiques and jewelry, plus clothing of all sorts, a French Room that contains nothing but designer clothes, and a book department that alone took in \$10,000 last year. Books are also sorted all year long, by title and author.

Their first event was a White Elephant Sale in 1902 that netted \$138. In 1989, 10,000 to 15,000 shoppers spent over \$181,000. More than \$142,000 was given to about 50 charitable agencies, many of them in Chicago's inner city. Over 700 community volunteers work yearly to make it a success.

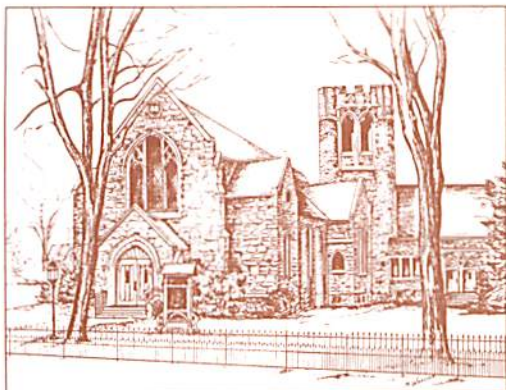
Like anything else, success depends on organization, marketing, publicity, attitude—and, well, let's face it, maybe a better grade of rummage doesn't hurt. I mean there's rummage and then there's RUMMAGE. But seriously, the packet contains a wealth of organizational tips for any church wanting to build bigger and better rummage sales.

For a copy of this information, send \$2.50 for postage and handling to The Messenger, 1592 N 400 W, LaPorte, IN 46350.

A Career Challenge!

The minister's position is open at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada as of August 15, 1990.

A once-in-a-life-time opportunity for a growth-minded minister! Our church is one of the most active and thriving churches in Convention, with about 150 regular and associate members and friends, a choir, a youth ministry, a well-staffed Sunday school, service groups, interest clubs, a substantial



wedding ministry, and an able Board of Directors.

We have more important facts to give you. Call the president of our board, Mrs. Joyce Heck at (519) 888-0665 or the church at (519) 743-3845.

Books of Worship Needed

The Bridgewater church in Massachusetts is interested in obtaining any new and used copies of the dark red, regular bound books of the *Book of Worship* from any Society, family, or individuals who may want to sell or donate them. The original printing was by the New Church Board of Publication, 59 Orange St., Brooklyn, New York. The second printing was in 1960; 674 pp., 6-1/2 x 8-3/4 x 1-1/4 thick. Anyone willing to part with any of these please contact Mr. Albert Lemee, 815 Bedford St., Bridgewater, MA 02324.



On Sale at Convention '90

- Needlepoint Kit
- Counted Cross-stitch Kit

*of the emblem of the
Swedenborgian Church*

by the San Francisco Parish Club

The Sharing Spirit

In the September 1989 *Messenger*, Bill Etue, on behalf of Social Action Concerns Committee, submitted the Thanksgiving Survey to find out which churches have a Thanksgiving project to collect food for the needy. The following three responses were sent in.

From the Elmwood New Church, Massachusetts Association:

"(We) donate cash to St. Paul's Soup Kitchen. Canned good collection is picked up by our Cub Scout Pack and given to the Public Health Agency in town for distribution."

From the LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana, Sunday School Superintendent, Patricia Tukos:

"Several years ago I would take our food collection boxes to the Salvation Army, but to be truthful, they acted like I was really putting them out if I asked for someone to hold the door open while I carried all those bags and boxes in, so I started looking for a need family on my own. I have had good luck in locating such a family through an elementary school. They seem to know which families have had illness or unemployment. We usually receive some generous money donations from the congregation, enabling me to include a ham or turkey, milk, eggs, fresh fruit, etc." (Postscript: This year the LaPorte congregation "adopted" one family for Thanksgiving and Christmas, with presents for the children as well as food.)

From the San Francisco church Social Concerns Committee:

"We continue to collect food for the S.F. Emergency Food Box, an organization that provides food for the homeless, especially women and their children. We also collected clothes for the homeless, and sent over 20 bags of winter clothes to the Tom Waddell Clinic. We also responded to the Earthquake Relief Fund with a cash donation and open our parish hall for support groups dealing with reactions to the quake."

Although these are the only three who responded to the survey, there are undoubtedly other churches in our denomination that have holiday projects to collect goods for needy families. Let us hear what and how you share at your church.

Opinion

Swedenborg Anti-Semitic?

To the Editor:

George Dole's answer about anti-semitism is a good one to clip and file carefully. This subject comes up periodically.

It is helpful to get above the concept of one person or one group of people being better or worse than another. But before getting to that, let's consider the level on which "better" or "worse" can apply.

People who know a lot are usually categorized in divine revelation as worse than those in honest ignorance. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah might be regarded as the epitome of the worst people. But Jesus says they are better off than people who know more than they knew (Matt. 10:15, and 11:24).

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, the poor beggar is obviously "better off" than the rich man, who symbolizes those with a wealth of knowledge. The Jews were rich in knowledge but were contemptuous of those in ignorance. (See *Sacred Scripture* no. 40).

But this brings us to the question: Who is worse? The Jew or the Christian? The Christian has to be worse by this standard. And this is what Swedenborg says. Christians are the worst. (See *Arcana Coelestia* (AC) 1886:3 and *Spiritual Diary* 480.) "The worst of all come from the so-called Christian world" (AC 1032). Swedenborg is far more often critical of Christians than he is of Jews—hardly typical of anti-semitism! (See AC 2596, 3957, 4689 etc.) "A Gentile thinks about God from religion in life more than a Christian" (*Divine Providence* 322).

How would it feel to be one of the worst? Well, Swedenborg encountered beings who had lived on planets other than our own. You and I are characterized as worse than they. But would it be wise to take offense and charge Swedenborg with

being "anti-earth"? No, register the information and benefit from it. "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee," says the proverb.

But let's get to the real point. Who are the best? Why, the angels are, of course. And who are the very best angels? The celestial angels are. These are the angels who see clearly that of themselves they are nothing but filthiness, and they sincerely implore the mercy of the Lord (AC 981).

Like the Lord's disciples, we can become preoccupied with the matter of who is greatest. But the Lord called attention to a little child (a Jewish child, remember) to lift us out of such preoccupation.

Rev. Don Rose

Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

A Conflict of Introversion and Extroversion?

To the Editor,

Eric Allison's article in the March issue, "Attitude—The Hidden Enemy?", confirms my own impression that we are not doing well. But we need to look closely at the reasons why so many of us may not have an active interest in church growth.

In my article, "The Lonely Church" (*The Messenger*, May 1981), I suggested that at the bottom of our problems is the fact that Swedenborg's writings do not mix well with an extroverted program. Many of our churches were founded by students of the writings who gathered together at first in intimate study groups and then developed a deep bond with each other. Then they decided that they would like to worship together, and eventually organized churches were formed, either by them or by descendents who carried on the old group spirit. The critical step was the transition from the private group experience to the corporate structure with its very different life and requirements for success. It perhaps looked natural and logical at the time, but we haven't survived it very well.

Swedenborg's writings *in practice* draw people inward, immersing them in hitherto secret knowledge of spiritual ideas; they open up our inner lives and fascinate us with another realm. They do urge us to turn outward and live creative lives, but they are essentially private and contemplative, inward, in their actual im-

pact. Churches, on the other hand, are by nature extroverted, outgoing, and require more of an active, businesslike attitude, for they must achieve outward success. The clash of these two forces, one pulling us into ourselves, the other pushing out, has taken away much of our energy and created uncertainty about how to run our churches.

The question of whether an organized church should be formed at all was debated as early as the 1780s when Robert Hindmarsh, who founded the church, and Rev. John Clowes of the Episcopalian Church took very different courses—Clowes believed fervently that the Swedenborgian message should be passed on within existing churches, not enshrined within one another one as its exclusive interest. That was also Swedenborg's strategy.

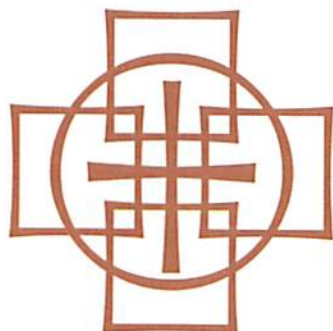
Still, I'm with Eric's intentions, for we have made our choice and opted for a church life, and we are now committed to live with that decision. I think that we can work it out if Swedenborg's teachings are part of a larger church culture moving us closer to practical and creative living. But the problems in attitude that Eric writes about may need more analysis before they can be solved effectively.

For example, it is sure that if you have a business, and people don't come in, you would start right away to make changes, advertise, and so on. But that argument presumes an outgoing and generally market-oriented thinker who is not deeply involved in introspective interests and merely needs a change of habits, commitments, or operating philosophy. Of course, we can change our attitudes by one technique or another if we are basically social and outgoing to begin with and just need to mobilize ourselves or turn in a new direction. But if we are mainly of a different sort altogether and got into the church business by a not quite natural way, then what is required is deep change, a whole shift in outlook that may require a lot of time and perhaps even a new generation to accomplish.

I wish I had more answers, but it looks to me as though the problem comes from deep-running differences in character type and experience between those to whom an introspective religion is most natural, and those to whom a more social and corporate religious life is most natural.

Steve Koke

Rough and Ready, California



Dear Fellow Readers of *The Messenger*:

There is an increasing imbalance in the content of *The Messenger*. Interesting as they may be, too many reprints, articles, points of view and narratives are not really sufficiently relevant to the Swedenborgian perspective to warrant our attention; at least not in a publication that has for its purpose assistance in knowing, understanding, and applying the teachings of the church in our daily living and relationships.

Of course we should welcome such contributions with respect to what's going on in the larger religious community and in other areas, but hopefully they would be accompanied by (preferably brief) commentary on how they confirm, or are at variance with our chosen system of thought. But should they be allotted the major space and emphasis? . . .

It has been said that one reason we do not see as much New Church material is because we do not have the scholars and talented writers we once had. If this is true it is equally true that these devoted New Church men and women have left us an astounding legacy. Perhaps it would be desirable to reprint some of this material. Some of our most precious, in my opinion, books have been long out of print and I am told by representatives of a couple of our publishers that it would just be too expensive to make them available again as there is not the market for them. I guess I write this at a moment when I realize that we who call ourselves Swedenborgian are few in number and largely ignored by the world but we have a great message, have we not?

The road we have chosen because we feel it seems to offer the shortest, safest and most direct route to that Holy City New Jerusalem is also very lonely. We need each other. We need the understanding, support, encouragement, and yes, even affection of those who are traveling along with us.

It is my impression that General Convention has intended for *The Messenger* to be one such vehicle to do just that. Maybe you (readers) feel it is just fine as is and that's that. But just maybe, you will be moved to respond to this line of thinking and together we can offer suggestions to the editor and members of COMSU to demonstrate our interest in helping them to keep as many of us as possible happy! Write to them!

Adrienne Frank
New York Society

Commencements

Birth

Mounce—Robert and Connie Mounce announce the birth of their son, Alexander Michael, born April 17, Aviano, Italy. (Robert is a member of the LaPorte New Church, currently in the U.S. Air Force.)

Baptism

Holden—Kelsey Daniel Owen Holden, son of Dan and Wendy Holden of Calgary, Alberta, was baptized into the Christian faith September 24, 1989, in Airdrie, Alberta, the Rev. David L. Sonmor officiating.

Larivee—Sarah Catherine Larivee, daughter of Peter and Debra (Farris) Larivee, was baptized into the Christian faith April 22, 1990, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Rachel Lawrence officiating.

Payne—Raquel Barclay Payne, daughter of David and Marlene Payne, was baptized into the Christian faith April 11, 1990, at their home in Saskatoon, Sask., the Rev. David L. Sonmor officiating.

Loewen—Erin Marie Loewen, born in Edmonton, Alberta, January 15, 1990, was baptized into the Christian faith at the home of her parents, Garry and Patricia Loewen in Calgary, Alberta, on Easter Sunday, April 15, 1990. The godparents are: Robert and Heather Rennebohm. The great uncle, the Rev. Erwin D. Reddekopp, officiated.

Confirmation

Edlen—Oliver and Della Edlen were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church April 22, 1990, at the LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Ted LeVan officiating.

Overmyer—Deanna Overmyer was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church April 29, 1990, at the LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Ted LeVan officiating.

Winter—Charles Winter was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church April 1, 1990, at the Cleveland church, Cleveland, Ohio, the Revs. Deborah Winter and John Billings officiating.

Death

Valladares—Mary Valladares (Mrs. Joseph), Winter Haven, Florida, entered the spiritual world April 13, 1990. Resurrection services were held in Florida; graveside services to be held in Fryeburg later. Mrs. Valladares was a cook at Fryeburg Assembly for several years.

Warren—Mrs. Mavis P. Warren, Farmington, Connecticut, entered the spiritual world April 30, 1990. Resurrection services were held at the church May 5, 1990, the Revs. James and Rachel Lawrence officiating. Mavis was secretary of the trustees for many years and served as treasurer of Maine Association for a long time. She was an active member of both church and Women's Alliance.

Change of Address

Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr., and Linda
8065 Lagoon Rd.
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
Phone (813) 463-5030
(As of August 1, 1990)

Ask Swedenborg

by George Dole

Q: Do prophecies of the Word re: the material world have expiration dates? Are prophecies now in effect—or unexpired—in a spiritual sense only? For example, in Luke 21, the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem were foretold and came to pass in the material world; however, some of that chapter seems to foretell other events. Are those other future events destined to be only spiritually fulfilled? (Submitted by Melinda Jester, Chicago)

A: It helps, I think, to set the question of prophecy and fulfillment in the general context of providence and foreknowledge. The first "law" of divine providence is that we should act from freedom according to reason (*Divine Providence* 7–99), and foreknowledge would function destructively (*ibid.* 175–190). The whole effort to use prophecies to figure out what is (inevitably) going to happen next, then, is likely to be misleading.

The more primary function of prophecy is to help us to understand what is going on *now*, so that we can act as constructively as possible. The attitudes that led to the destruction of the Temple were present when Jesus prophesied its destruction. If they had been observed and changed, the destruction would not have taken place as it did. The "prophecy" would still have been true as a commentary on the attitudes themselves.

The central role of our freedom also makes it important that prophecies not

always come true literally, or *always* fail to do so. There must be an open-endedness to the future if our lives are to have any significance. In a way, there is much less open-endedness on the spiritual level; the inner consequences of our choices are far more predictable than the outward ones. But this "inevitability" is balanced by the fact that we can close our eyes to what is going on inside. Only if we choose to do so do we discover that a "prophecy" has come true spiritually.

We can also note Matthew's use of prophecies. It is a recurrent theme that this or that happened "to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet," but rarely if ever is the fulfillment a literal one. In virtually every case, the fulfillment

comes in a form that one would not expect from a literal reading of the prophecy. It requires new eyes, and opening those eyes may be the primary purpose of the prophecy.

Lastly, there are many prophecies which simply cannot be taken literally, perhaps the most obvious being that stars will fall on the earth. These are clearly images, graphic ways of saying that our whole inner world will be shaken to the core, that our fundamental certainties will be dethroned. Again, the primary usefulness of such images is to help us understand and deal with times of total doubt and confusion, whatever outward form such times may take. In summary, I would suggest that the main purpose of prophecies is to enable us, if we wish, to see the principles at work under the surface of events, and therefore to cooperate with the Lord more freely and effectively.



At least two of our church folks have graduated from Olds College in Alberta, site of Convention '90: At left, the Rev. Erwin Reddekopp of Kelowna, B.C., with his wife Lisa, who are familiar faces at conventions, and Hart Lipski, of Olds, whose face and that of his wife Lorrie are becoming familiar beyond Western Canada this year, as both have been very active with the local committee in setting up convention. (See Convention '90 Final Update on page 90.)

Since Olds College has turned out two such stellar folks, it must be quite an excellent institution, as many of us are happily discovering for ourselves this June!

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