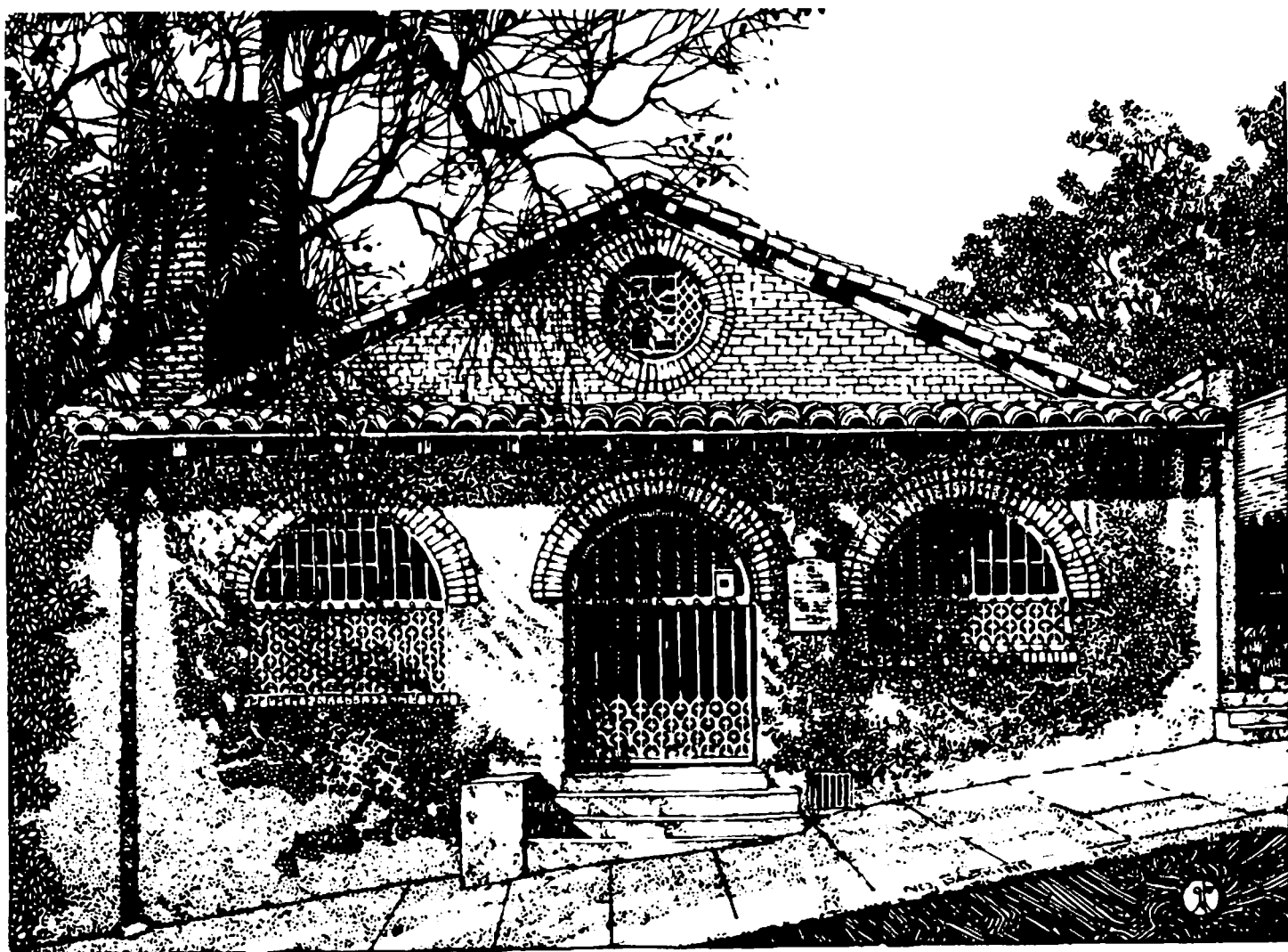


Official
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of the
Swedenborgian Church

The Messenger

September 1990



The San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, heart center of a memoir spanning 60 years (Read "Coming Home," p. 115).

From the Editor

Moving Toward the Light

The Messenger's Mailing List

Although this space is usually devoted to what we hope are inspirational messages, some *Messenger* administrative problems arise periodically, like the recent purge of our mailing list, which we want to tell our readers about. The idea behind the long overdue move to clean up the list is to ensure that only the people who want *The Messenger* receive it. The cleanup will cut mailing and printing costs and thus help to balance the Swedenborgian Church's budget - and help to cut down on national paper waste.

We were overjoyed and thankful for the generous outpouring of contributions and messages of support received. Several letters, however, indicated that some folks thought because their subscription had been paid for through Central Office, they did not need to send in the form. Members did not need to send money with the form, nor did paid-up nonmembers, we simply needed the forms returned to indicate continued interest so we could delete the names of any individuals who did not want *The Messenger*.

The deletion process began with the August (convention) issue. No ministers or Associations were deleted, but most people who did not send in their forms were taken off the list. The convention issue was mailed late due to production and schedule problems, so many of you have assumed you were deleted from the list when actually you were not. *We want to make it clear that*

anyone who has been deleted who still wishes to receive The Messenger, should please write and let us know.

We will be happy to put you back on the active list and also send you, for the price of postage and handling (\$1), the issue you are missing. All Swedenborgians are entitled to a free lifetime subscription to *The Messenger*, but donations are much appreciated.

Ministers, please acquaint your new members with *The Messenger*. Send us their names to be put on the subscription list. It is good to have extra *Messengers* on hand for outreach, especially in view of our emphasis on church growth. We have available extra copies of most back issues dating from August 1989 through August 1990, again for \$1 each, postpaid. Please write for extra copies as soon as possible after receipt of the current issue. We trust it is important for our members to receive *The Messenger*. Our aim is to reflect in these pages the Swedenborgian Church's programs - programs that are helping many of us move toward personal, emotional and spiritual growth.

The Messenger

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Patte LeVan, Editor
Marcia C. Porter, design,
layout and typesetting

Editorial Address:
The Messenger
1592 N. 400 W.
LaPorte, IN 46350
Phone & Fax: 325-8209

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

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Our cover:

The Swedenborgian Church at Washington and Lyon, San Francisco. Designed by architects Arthur Page Brown and the Rev. Joseph Worcester, 1890.

Swedenborg and the Age of Aquarius

Michael Stanley

Swedenborg taught in the 18th century that a new revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the spiritual world and in the spiritual sense of the Word was ushering in a new church of the Lord, symbolized by the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation. In the late 20th century a whole host of thinkers, visionaries, spiritual leaders and movements are declaring that a new age of spirituality is commencing, sometimes referred to as the Age of Aquarius (the Zodiacal water bearer). Is there any connection between Swedenborg's 'New Church' and the new age of spirituality, and has this so-called Aquarian Age any relevance and importance for New Church organizations?

Currently, most churches are experiencing the effects of the new 'new age spirituality', including, of course, our New Church movements themselves. And more and more are raising the question, "What is this so-called New Age? Are its teaching and practices Christian? Are they good or bad for the life of the church?" Those who merely catch whiffs of terms such as Eastern, occult, mystical, pagan, etc., may well be forgiven if, in such paucity of knowledge, they are wary or dismissive. The truth is that the New Age movements are so many, and so diverse as to teaching and practice, that to get to know them all to make an informed judgment, to label the whole New Age phenomenon as good or bad, true or false, is impossible.

Inner Level of Awareness

It defies classification in the old clear-cut dogmatic terms of Old Church thinking, dogmatic sectarian Christian theology. The New Age is much more of a new spirit, a new consciousness, a new atmosphere, a new experience, an inner level of awareness that refuses to be pinned down in one tight, sharply defined system of theology. It reminds one of those first heady decades of the new Christian movement, when an evergrowing number of people, feeling the mental and spiritual release, the new dynamism of spirit released by the acceptance of Christ's spirit, expressed their faith in numerous ways and varying doctrines. It was as if a dark heavy atmosphere of blind acceptance of scriptural literalism and theological dogmatism had suddenly been blown away, enabling new health-giving rays of life and light to be felt and expressed in one's own unique way. "The Christ lives!" is perhaps, the shortest way to express the new Christian experience.

Today, many are saying it is now happening again (in their own experience). The Christ spirit, which died at the hands of orthodox dogmatism and blind adherence, has suddenly re-emerged, alive and radiant again, healing and regenerating body, mind and spirit.

Christ Spirit Re-emerging

What may be confusing to the Christian observer however, is that not all will refer to the re-emerging one as the "Christ." For some it is the Buddha, Krishna, the New Man, the Maitreya, the Inner Light, High Self, or one of many other titles. But, did God incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth to witness to Jesus the individual historical person, or to 'the light of the world', the universal eternal "Christ" spirit of God, the divine human?

The Letter Kills, but the Spirit Gives Life

So, are the New Age movements really so diverse after all? If we take each literally, we will be confused by a babble of tongues - as has happened in Christianity when the Bible has been understood dogmatically and exclusively in so many different ways. In New Age thinking 'the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life' (2 Corinthians 3:6).

The actual terms, ideas and concepts drawn on by New Age movements and thinkers are likely to have originated from various sources, ancient and modern (hence more initial confusion for the inquirer!). First, there are very old sources likely to derive from what Swedenborg describes as the 'Ancient Word' - the 'Word of God' which preceded our Bible, and was diverse in nature and widespread throughout much of the world. Here we could mention particularly the great Hindu and Taoist scriptures, but also the great mythologies of the different cultures. Then there is the great body of psychological insight in the Buddhist scriptures. Coming down to the time of our Lord, we have the spiritual philosophy known as Neoplatonism that was an inspiration to the Christian mystics. Then there are the Christian Gnostic scriptures which were taken literally, misunderstood, attacked and rejected by the dead hand of Christian ecclesiasticism and orthodoxy. And we have the spiritual sense of the Koran (perceived by the Sufis) and the spiritual level of the Jewish scriptures (perceived by the Kabbalists). To this can be added some current spiritual developments in modern psychology and, last but not least, the New Physics which is helping to destroy the previous materialistic view of the world, to reveal a

(Continued on Page 121)

The Christ lives!

The Leading Edge in Swedenborgian Theology

For years, the Fryeburg New Church Assembly Annual Lecture Series has been noted as the place where some of the best current thinking in Swedenborgian themes happens.

Finally, the 1990 sessions have been put on cassette tapes for general distribution.

Now you can listen to the leading edge in contemporary Swedenborgian theol-

ogy while driving to work, relaxing at home, or as part of a discussion group.

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Coming Home

Nan Paget

Things in my life have a way of coming full circle. For example, when I was born, my parents lived briefly on a hill in San Anselmo. Forty-four years later, quite by chance, my brother moved to a house on the same hill. Again, in college I went with a man named Fred for a couple of years; then we broke up and each married someone else. Twenty-two years passed without our exchanging more than a Christmas card; then, both free, we met again, fell in love and married.

So it has been with this church. When as a child I looked at pictures of my parents' wedding, there they were in front of the steps and the three archways. It was a wedding church even then. They were married here in 1926 but were never members of this or any church. It was only in my last year at Stanford that I became interested in religion, and just after my graduation I was baptized and confirmed at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in San Francisco.

Either I was too busy with a new job, or too shy to get acquainted at St. Luke's. I was still virtually unchurched when I met Carl and we were engaged. I lived then on California Street near Divisadero, and the church where my parents were married was nearby, so for the first time I came to the little church at Washington and Lyon, and Reverend Othmar Tobisch married us on January 20, 1951.

We bought a small Victorian on Baker near Clay, Carl started a business, and I had two baby girls. When Caroline was three and a half, I thought it would be good if she could attend Sunday school, and I would find a church for us both. St. Luke's was too big and distant, and St. Mary the Virgin was over the hill. What about the little church where I was married?

So one Sunday I trotted up three blocks, sat in the back row, sang the hymns and listened to Rev. Tobisch's sermon. After the service the choir director, a small white-haired woman with a big, wonderful smile, came up to me and asked if I might be interested in singing in the choir.

Of course that was Miss Jane Sugden, and I sang in that choir for sixteen years. Miss Jane gave me voice lessons; Caroline and then Marjorie joined the children's choir that sang in the special children's service each Sunday at 10:30. Miss Jane also directed the children's choir, prepared the Thursday night suppers, and served as church secretary.

Music was Miss Jane's joy and worship, and mine also. The choir and the church were my second home, and my friends were there. In 1970 the choir was asked to go to London for the first World Swedenborgian Convention,

Three hundred pounds of plums
helped send
the choir to England



Nan Paget



San Francisco Swedenborgian Church

a lifetime dream of Rev. Tobisch.

We were proud to be the official choir, although many others joined us to sing.

That was the year my plum tree in Mill Valley had a tremendous crop. We picked 300 pounds of plums and brought them to the church kitchen where Miss Jane and others made many jars of plum jam which we sold to help send the choir to England.

The First World Convention in July 1970 was a wonderful event, the realization of Rev. Tobisch's dream. He had worked very hard to bring it about, and afterwards, after the choir had returned home, as some of the ministers were touring in Coventry, England, he laid his head down on the table and died. It was a great shock to us all.

My husband had been diagnosed with diabetes earlier, and was hospitalized several times after my return. He died in September, 1970. My daughters were 14 and 16. We held a memorial service at the church, and I felt buoyed and supported by the choir and my fellow church members around me. It was not an easy time, but I think the Lord was with me and kept me from harm. And I had my church home.

(Continued on Page 117)

Growing Pains

Dynamic Worship

Eric Allison

Part Two
(Part One appeared in the June 1990 Messenger)

A welcome addition to Sunday worship which lightens the atmosphere considerably is the children's sermon. Kitchener church members often told me that this was the highlight of the service for the adults—



Eric Allison

and was the sermon they best understood. It can be the highlight of the service for everyone, including the minister, or something the minister dreads and the adults find irrelevant.

What is most important is that the children get a positive educational experience during the adult worship service. It is making the children part of the church. Because this is for the children, it can also be lots of fun. It is the time to pull out all the stops, to let the sanctuary become joyous. It is also a good way to loosen up an otherwise stuffy group.

All children's sermons need not be object lessons, but object lessons are likely the best way to keep their attention. All children's sermons do need to be brief and teach one simple concept. Many books of children's sermons contain lengthy sermons that are way over the heads of many children.

In fact, a five-minute sermon is maximum. After five minutes, I doubt that the Lord himself could keep kids' attention. So, unless you consider your preaching an improvement upon Jesus's, let the sermon be five minutes or less. If you have never timed your sermon and assume it is about five minutes, clock it anyway just to be sure.

Although you may occasionally get away with comparing two things, or bringing two simple ideas together, presenting one simple teaching is the best way to go. Even telling a Bible story can

be difficult. Often the stories are too long and/or are too difficult for young children. Giving a small part of one story or a dilemma faced by one of the characters is plenty.

Don't be afraid to be bold. Remember, kids like to have fun, be active, and offer their own words of wisdom. Don't just talk to the children. Ask them questions. An embarrassing moment now and again because one of the children says aloud the unspeakable will increase the attention span of the adults immeasurably and make worship more true to life.

Raid your home. The whole world is a children's sermon. Climb every mountain, ford every stream, clean every garage looking for an idea. I have done a fair bit of traveling and nearly every artifact, stone, work of art, and toy from my house has turned up in the sanctuary on Sunday morning.

Toy stores, novelty or magic shops are also great places to get props. The age-old axiom of starting with a scripture text and then building from there is still a good approach but it is certainly not the only approach.

There is nothing wrong with starting with an object for the lesson and then praying for inspiration. I often did this and genuinely felt that the Lord had given me the sermon to go with it. The Lord not only moves in mysterious ways but in humorous ways as well.

Intercessory Prayer and Involvement of Laity

Two other frequently found elements in the worship of growing churches is that members of the congregation are involved in the leadership of the service and that "intercessory prayer" is part of the service.

Whether it is reading the scripture, a special reading, offering a prayer, giving the announcements, extending a welcome to visitors, or giving a children's talk, lay involvement in the leadership of the service is a sign of a vital and growing church.

Intercessory prayer can be expressed in whatever way is comfortable for your congregation. Some congregations join hands and people feel free to speak up and ask for prayer, for others or even for themselves. Other churches have people write down their requests on cards which are put into the collection plate. The pastor then reads the requests during a pastoral prayer.

There are many ways of offering an intercessory prayer. An essential aspect is that people need to feel they are doing something together, calling upon the Lord as a community of believers in his power, not just sitting passively in the church.

Our churches in Washington, D.C.; Edmonton, Alberta; Fryeburg and Portland, Maine; Detroit, Michigan, and probably others have also begun using intercessory prayer as a regular part of the worship service. People have reported that they find this to be a very satisfying new addition to the worship experience.

A consistently dynamic worship service is a lot of work. It is also worth it. The minister should not try to do it alone. The minister cannot read the minds of those in the pews. One way to find out what they like most about the worship service is to ask them.

An excellent way of being sensitive to the worship needs of the congregation is to have a worship committee. This committee should have five or more members and should meet at least once each month. The minister should be on the committee, but in most cases the spouse should not. The organist and/or choir director should also be on the committee.

It is a good idea for the committee to be comprised of people who represent different audiences and age groups in the congregation.

The purpose of the committee is to help the minister in designing worship services which inspire, challenge, comfort,

(Continued on Page 120)

On Fundraising

Wreaths and Lobsters

For the past four years the Wilmington, Delaware church has sponsored a lobster and wreath sale on the first Saturday in December. Originally conceived as a simple wreath sale, the idea has now grown to include lobsters, trees, clams, mussels, crab, and new this year, tee shirts. The event has become an important new tradition at Wilmington.

How did the Wilmington church arrive at an annual wreath and lobster sale? We started by taking a look at our talents and abilities as a congregation. We found that a significant fund-raising activity would have to involve a small number of people and a minimal amount of time preparing in advance for the event. A traditional church bazaar was out of the question, because we do not have the resources to produce the large quantity of craft items needed for such an event. Therefore, we decided on selling wreaths because most of the work could be done the day of the sale. We discovered that five or six teens and adults can handle the sale. We are able to utilize the talents of our youngest and oldest members.

The first year we sold 12 dozen wreaths and about 300 lobsters. We had no sign advertising the sale, no decorations; only wreaths and the advantage of being located on a corner which provided great visibility for us. It took us two consecutive Saturdays to sell the wreaths, but we did it.

Each year we get a little better at what we are doing. The second year we posted a 4x20-foot sign on our churchyard fence which faces a heavily traveled road. In addition, we canvassed our neighbors, co-workers and friends to get advance orders for both lobsters and wreaths. Consequently, we developed a mailing list, sending out postcards about one month in advance to advertise the sale and give people the opportunity to pre-order. Fliers are distributed to members, friends and to the church neighborhood.

In 1989 we pre-sold over 200 lobsters and about four dozen wreaths. We sold an additional 100 lobsters to persons who stopped by to purchase wreaths at the sale. For the past two years we have custom-decorated the wreaths, using hand-

made bows and natural decorations such as pine cones, seashells and holly. These decorations have been very popular - most of the 18 dozen wreaths sold were custom-decorated.

This sale has grown to become a community effort with our members, friends and neighbors. We have become more visible to the area by having our church open to visitors during the sale.

Selling live Maine lobsters and fresh evergreen wreaths is a novel idea which has gradually grown more popular in the past four years. Looking ahead, our plans to increase our sales will include contacting businesses to see if they would like to buy a dozen wreaths for gifts to their associates or employees.

Wilmington church members express deep satisfaction and pride in the success experienced thus far with the lobster and wreath sale. We hope our experience will encourage other churches. Sharing ideas that work is a dimension of stewardship that cost very little.

*Submitted by Nancy Piorkowski
Church of the Holy City
Wilmington, Delaware*

Coming Home

(Continued from Page 115)

When two years later, Fred came from Massachusetts and we met for the first time in 22 years, we became engaged, and I knew I would be leaving the Bay Area for some time. We were married by Rev. Erwin Reddekopp in my brother Tom's garden in San Anselmo, and Miss Jane and the choir came to sing at the wedding. Then Fred and I drove off into the sunrise, to his home in Rockport, Massachusetts, forty miles northeast of Boston.

Though I met the three Rockport ladies who were Swedenborgian and I sometimes drove with them to the Boston church, it was too far to go often, and I joined St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Rockport. After all, I was confirmed in the Episcopal Church, and I often think of myself as Episcopoborgian.

For thirteen years I sang in their choir, and I love that little white church in New England, as I love my little brown church in California. But whenever we came back to the Bay Area for a few days visit, I would slip into the choir room, put on my robe, and sing with the choir here as if I had never left. I had come home.

I think being in St. Mary's gave me some perspective on our church here. For instance, stewardship there was very important.

They did not have the advantage of invested funds that our church has had in the past. Stewardship Sunday was taken very seriously. Were we going to be able to cover the church budget?

It was always a cliffhanger.

In 1985, Fred and I both retired, he from GTE and I from my job as a teacher assistant for special-needs children. We followed our plan to sell his house and move back across the country to my house in Mill Valley. So in August of 1986, we returned, and I came home to my little church, full circle again after 13 years. I entered the door and met Rev. Edwin Capon, with whom I had had a correspondence over the years, though we had not met before; he was always going East when I was coming West.

And I came back into my little choir, all different now, but with friendly faces, new friends. And since then old friends have come back to the choir, we are singing some of the wonderful old music, the memories are all around me.

But there are new things too, new for me and for this church, and a bright future. As I see the parish house take on a bright new look, and many new faces in the church, I thank the Lord that He has once more brought me full circle, has brought me home.

*Nan Paget, a long-time member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, is also editor of the Pacific Coast Association Newsletter.
Submitted by Rev. Edwin Capon.*

Beyond the Walls

David A. Spieler

Everyone knows the story of Jonah — thrown off a ship, swallowed by a whale, three days in its belly, and spewed out on shore unharmed. For years, interest in Jonah centered almost exclusively on the whale. Debate raged over whether a person could be swallowed by a whale, spend three days inside, and emerge unscathed.

Two cases recounted in Ripley's *Believe it or Not! Book of Undersea Oddities* (1977) offer positive support. One episode involved a sailor named Jenkins who, in 1771, was swallowed by a whale and rather quickly spat out uninjured. Another episode concerned a Mr. Bartley who, in 1891, was swallowed by a whale which died of wounds three days later. Mr. Bartley then floated to the surface and was rescued. The seaman's skin had been bleached white; his initial unconsciousness gave way to delirium and eventual recovery (though he continued to be haunted by nightmares).

The Real Story of Jonah

When — as in the case of Jonah — a minor detail is blown up out of proportion, the story's main point is obscured if not lost altogether. No whale is mentioned in the text. Mythology turned the "great fish" into a whale (as it changed Eden's "fruit" into an apple). The fish figures directly in just three of 48 verses — a mere six percent. Jonah's encounter with the great fish/whale is peripheral to the author's main point, which was that God had called Jonah to prophesy. Perhaps that didn't surprise Jonah. But learning where God wanted to send him certainly did. Jonah was to carry God's message to Nineveh — capital city of the hated, feared and despised Assyrian Empire. God acted and Jonah reacted. God pointed east and Jonah headed west. To say that Jonah was "unhappy" with his commission would be a vast understatement.

Why did Jonah run away? Because he was afraid? Yes, though not for the reason we might imagine. Jonah wasn't afraid that the people of Nineveh would turn against him when he delivered God's condemnation. On the contrary, Jonah was afraid that the people would heed his words — and turn to God.

Jonah would willingly, even eagerly, have gone to Nineveh proclaiming its doom. But Jonah was fearful that if he went, the folks would repent . . . and God would relent. Destruction — yes. Salvation — no. So, hoping against hope that his absence would result in punishment for Nineveh, Jonah tried to avoid God's summons.

However, ignoring God's summons proved difficult. A storm and

a fish combined to bring Jonah back home. Jonah then decided, albeit reluctantly, that he'd better be God's spokesperson in Nineveh. Yet his hostility toward "those foreigners" remained undiminished.

Upon reaching Nineveh and announcing God's judgment, Jonah's worst fears were realized. The Assyrians repented and received God's forgiveness. That was the "last straw!" Against his will, Jonah had been the agent of his enemies' good fortune, so he sat outside the city gate sulking and pouting. The story concludes with God using an "object lesson" to show Jonah how foolish he was being. (Unfortunately, the text provides no clue as to Jonah's response.)

Jonah and Ourselves

God called Jonah beyond the walls of Jerusalem, beyond the walls of Israel, beyond the walls of race and clan, beyond the walls of prejudice, hatred, suspicion, and mistrust. God called Jonah to a larger field of service, a more inclusive fellowship. We too are called beyond the walls. But it is no easier for us than it was for Jonah.

What are these walls? The walls are not of stone, brick, or concrete. Some are visible; others are tangible; most are neither. Yet those walls are far from imaginary; they are, if anything, all too real.

Such walls are many and varied. They exist between black and white, young and old, male and female, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, skilled and unskilled, liberal and conservative, white-collar and blue-collar. They come between the pros and the cons on divisive social issues. There are walls based on location (city, suburb, town, or rural) and geography (north, south, east, or west). There are walls between religious and ethnic groups as well as between nations.

In truth, there seems no end to the walls we would erect. Perhaps this is testimony to humanity's ingenuity — its ability to detect, magnify, and solidify differences which might otherwise be considered inconsequential! The walls also reflect insecurity. For, in effect, walls separate people, places, things, and ideas into homogenous enclaves — thus ridding our vicinity, if not the world, of whatever is unfamiliar or unlike ourselves. Why should we venture beyond these walls? For some, it may be enough to simply repeat what was said earlier — that God calls upon us to do so. Yet one can discern several other imperatives.





First, we should go beyond the walls because that which binds us together is stronger and more important than that which divides us. The differences among us ought not be allowed to obscure our much greater similarities — for we all are both limited, fallible creatures and valuable creations made in the image of God.

Second, we should go beyond the walls because such barriers prevent our mutual enrichment and hinder realizing our potential. By shutting either people or ideas out of our lives, we lose what good they might have contributed. Moreover, by closing ourselves in, we avoid challenges that might be the catalysts necessary for growth.

Third, we should go beyond the walls because the prejudices which those barricades enshrine have brought ugly consequences — violence has erupted; property has been destroyed; individuals have been threatened, harassed, assaulted, and murdered; and justice has been perverted. Prejudice is costly — to everyone!

How can we move beyond the walls? This is a vital question. Four steps are required. We begin the process by viewing every person as part of our family. Jesus' Parable of the Good Samaritan settled the issue about how large our circle should be — none should be excluded! This is what we call "the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God." We're all God's children — each and every one of us. And the walls start crumbling when we commit ourselves to that principle.

We follow up by reaching out to those new "brothers and sisters" in love and service. As Jesus said: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Right thoughts must lead to right actions. As a minimum, this involves helping the lonely, the homeless, the bereaved, the hungry, and the hopeless — in spite of the old walls. Everyone deserves just and equitable treatment.

Next, we need to put ourselves "in the shoes" of those who dwell beyond our walls. We need to appreciate their understanding of life — emotional as well as intellectual. Turning our preconceptions "on their heads, so to speak, is useful in showing how absurd some of our walls are. For instance, a cartoon depicted several Indians watching the Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock and saying, sadly, "Well, there goes the neighborhood." A similar cartoon showed a rough-looking motorcycle gang approaching two women stranded by a flat tire; one gang member remarks, "Think they'd panic if we stopped to help?" A third cartoon pictured a heavenly gathering; a white fellow is clearly horrified by the presence there of two smiling

blacks. In recent years, television has offered documentaries and other programs that enable us to catch a glimpse of what life looks and feels like to those "on the other side." They help break down stereotypes — whose influence is often pernicious.

The final step is crucial — getting to really know persons from the other side of the wall. This involves more than standing in the same line, sitting in the same room, or working in the same office. To reduce tensions and build bridges of understanding, we need to do more. People living across boundaries need to encounter each other in meaningful ways. They need to establish mutual respect, then mutual trust. They need to reach a point where sharing occurs — the bad with the good, the anger with the joy, the fears with the hopes — honestly and openly. Creating true fellowship is the key. When that happens, the walls separating us will crumble and fall.

Life Beyond the Walls

Suppose the walls come tumbling down. What then? Insofar as we have a vision, it may well be connected to the historic American dream of a "melting pot" — where differences are eliminated. Whether this representation of the dream is historically accurate or not, it certainly fails to capture what a substantial number of people today mean by life-beyond-the-walls. Contemporary movements such as Black Power and Women's Liberation should have taught us that! Blacks, on the whole, don't want to be turned into whites . . . nor do women wish to become men. Life beyond the walls should not be thought of as overlooking or obliterating the differences between us.

No, life without walls must be seen as recognizing and tolerating those differences. But even that is not enough! The goal of life without walls must involve our coming to the point where we can genuinely appreciate and enjoy those dispositions, characteristics, and heritages which make each of us unique.

We are being called to set aside our fear of differences, our suspicion of strangers. We are called to become part of a world-wide fellowship in which the whole is enriched by the presence of its parts.

David A. Spieler is assistant professor of philosophy at Claflin College, Orangeburg, South Carolina. The author of some fifty published articles, Dr. Spieler is a former minister of the United Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ. He is married and has three children in college.

Love to the Lord cannot be separated from love towards the neighbor, for the Lord's love is toward the whole human race. . .

Emanuel Swedenborg

Freedom-Based Spirituality

A Workshop

Val Brugler

On May 19, 1990 the Urbana Society presented a one-day workshop, "Freedom-based spirituality." Half of the 12 participants had either started coming to church recently or had never attended our church at all. The rest were the members who organized the presentations, baked the cakes, cut the vegetables, set up the chairs and were elated that it was such a great workshop from beginning to end. It was happy and fun for all of us. One person said, "Wow, this turns me on!"

Betsy Ledingham, Barb Mackey and Ron Brugler led the sessions. What a great opportunity to express how we (Swedenborgians) strive to live - without dwelling on Swedenborg's language or even "the church." For those of us who have been asked "how is your church different from...?" this workshop gave me the ammunition - certainly painless and even good feeling bullets - to cut through to the heart of the meaning of life.

Betsy compared three ways we can look at life:

Law and Order - God makes the rules; I need the list!

Chaos - who's in charge; let's party til they show up.

Seed Model - God made the acorn which has in it the potential to grow to be the mighty oak. It is what it is and that is all it can be. Each tree in the forest is so blessed.

Ron presented an exercise which put our spiritual quests in the form of a classified ad:

Executive Position Open (what is our God),

Position Available (how do we function in the Grand Corporation), **Garage Sale** (one used suit of armor slightly dented),

Wanted to Buy (some nurturance, a stress-o-matic and a Milky Way every now and then),

Rather than being humans having a spiritual experience
we are spirits having a human one.

Situation Wanted — (perhaps the spiritual equivalent to a condo in Florida),

Transportation — (what could move me there). This put our beliefs into perspective.

After lunch, we each took a walk to find something in nature which was meaningful to us personally. The magic was working. Each individual shared a unique experience which struck cords in everyone around the room.

We watched the film, "Images Of Knowing," which is simply the best. It is a testament to George Dole's artistry. The words and visual images are so interrelated that the effect is like faerie dust. Do we hear the words or do they float into us?

Barb presented her love of the cello with humor and her music which gave everyone in the small room a stimulating internal massage. As she played, a dance popped into my head in which I saw the stage, the seven dancers and the dim shadows. It was the spiritual dilemma of freedom-based spirituality. We must accept ourselves as we are.

The things we like and the things we don't like or have been taught to suppress mingle and are organic. What we are given makes the whole person. We need and bless the good and the unfortunate, unlucky other inside ourselves. We are locked in the balance. The last seated actor on the stage is forever caught in both the divine influx coming from above and the alternate tie to the ground and the "forces" below.

Val Brugler is an artist, mother, and wife of Rev. Ron Brugler.

Dynamic Worship

(Continued from Page 116)

and bring together the congregation as a community of believers in the goodness of God.

The committee can give the minister honest feedback on his or her sermons, style of presentation, etc. While the minister is certainly the leader of the congregation and should be treated as such, the minister also has to be willing to grow in his or her ability as a worship leader and not just talk about it.

Having a worship committee can really take the pressure off the minister. When five or more people get together regularly to talk about and plan the worship, creativity is generated. New ideas and ways to improve the service continue to come up at each meeting and the service continues to get better and better.

Is Ritual Meaningful?

There is something comforting about ritual. Rituals give a continuity to what otherwise may be a chaotic life. I personally find rituals to be potentially very powerful symbols which may indeed help us to open our hearts and minds to God's presence. However, it's important that they have some present-day significance.

The late Miriam Pavey, president of the Saskatoon Society of the New Church, told me a true story of a Jewish temple whose membership had the habit of bowing while walking across the worship area. When people got to the center they always stopped and bowed before continuing on. A new member asked why this custom was followed. After some investigation it was disc-

overed that a large chandelier had been bequeathed to the temple many years before. The chandelier was so large that people had to duck when walking across the room in order to avoid hitting their heads on it. The chandelier had been removed years before, but the custom remained! Ritual must not be held up as valuable just because it has always been done. Worship in whatever form should be spiritually uplifting and meaningful.

Resources:

Schaller, Lyle E. 44 Ways To Increase Church Attendance, Abingdon Press, 1988.
Injoy Life Club, Vol. 3 No 12, 1985. Dr. John Maxwell (tape).

Fuller Institute, "Breaking the 200 Barrier," Chicago, 1987.

Fuller Institute, "Leading and Managing the Local Church," Buffalo, N.Y., 1989.

Rev. Eric Allison works with the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit as the Swedenborgian Church's consultant on church growth.

The President Reports

As you read this, Linda and I should be in Europe meeting with the Continental Association and representatives from the British Conference and the General Church.

The purpose of this meeting is to explore ways of being more effective as ecclesiastical organizations in Europe. With the tremendous political changes of the last nine months in Europe, new opportunities for ministry appear constantly. This time together will be used to see how we might best help.

Linda's and my move from Cincinnati is complete. Our house sold while we were attending Convention in Olds, Alberta. We are more or less "moved in" to our new home here in Florida, and the president's office is up and running.

The reorganization of the central office in Newton, Massachusetts, is complete, and the new office manager, Martha Bauer, stands ready to assist you. Martha and I trust that the functions of the Central Office as received and accepted by General Council on June 30, 1990, will make for better communication, faster and more efficient service, and dollar savings

for you and the entire church.

Since the beginning of August, I have been at the Central Office twice; attended the Fryeburg New Church Assembly during its middle weekend and preached that Sunday; spent three weeks working with the San Francisco and El Cerrito churches, visited some isolated members on the West Coast; made some presentations on behalf of the combined funds drive for the church and the theological school; attended the meetings of the Pacific Coast Association and preached that Sunday; flown to New York for a two-day meeting of the National Council of Churches; then to Massachusetts to preach in Yarmouthport on September 16; attended meetings of the Executive Committee of General Council and of the Physical and Financial Resources Support Unit in Newton September 16-19. I was finally back home after six and a half weeks on the road, before catching a plane to Europe.

I am looking forward to talking with you all again next month. The cup is still half full!

Richard H. Tafel, Jr.

We Thank You!

Once again, The Messenger and Communications Support Unit wish to thank all of you who sent contributions with your subscription renewals from April, 1990 to August, 1990. And again, if we inadvertently omitted your name, please let us know. Subscribers who contributed between November 1989 and April 1, 1990, were acknowledged in the May 1990 issue. Our heartfelt thanks to the following:

Charles J. Bandmann, Pt. Roberts, WA
 Gustave J. Bischof, Lititz, PA
 B.D. Brackin, Minneapolis, MN
 Irene D. Brock, Kitchener, Ont., Canada
 Alice M. Ford, Downing, WI
 Dr. & Mrs. Edward Hackett, Cincinnati, OH
 Mr. & Mrs. Carl Heck, Waterloo, Ont., Canada
 Gilbert T. Haddaeus, Pittsburg, PA
 Ruth Ingard, Kincardine, Ont., Canada
 Pierce Johnson, Claremont, CA
 Hunter J. Jones, Clifton, NJ
 Mrs. Allen May, Seattle, WA
 Mr. and Mrs. Charles McCormick, Carlsbad, CA
 Daniel Negra, Los Angeles, CA
 Jimmy Parham, Asheville, NC
 Katherine Shaw, St. Paul, MN
 Valerie Thompson, LaMirada, CA
 Susan Weiss, Somers Point, NJ

Swedenborg and the Age of Aquarius (Continued from Page 113)

holistic world consonant with the deepest insights of the mystics and visionaries of the past.

Swedenborg's Insights Bridge East-West Divide

In giving this partial list of New Age sources, I am aiming to show the breadth, depth and ancient spiritual rootedness which lies behind its words, teachings, and practices. Swedenborgian scholars are increasingly discovering that Swedenborg was drawing on this rich vein, as well as anticipating much that has been developed since his time. Some are also discovering how Swedenborg's insights bridge the old East-West divide in thought and life, even though, in the main, his teachings are expressed in Western quasi-systematic theological form. Could it be that the Lord Jesus Christ who reveals Himself afresh through the writings of Swedenborg and the spiritual sense of the Word is also revealing Himself and His spirit in other forms, through aspects of the New Age movements, for example?

Lest the genuine understanding of the Word should perish, it has pleased the Lord now to reveal the spiritual sense of the Word. . . and to many other revelations by means of which the almost extinct light of truth from the Word may be restored.

Emanuel Swedenborg

Michael W. Stanley is currently principal of the New Church College (Swedenborgian) in Manchester, England. In addition to teaching, the Rev. Dr. Stanley leads groups in spiritual development and lectures on the importance of Swedenborg's teachings for gaining a true spiritual understanding of the New Age phenomenon. Reprinted from Lifeline, February 1990.

I am My Church

David P. Johnson

You have heard the expressions, "You are what you eat," and "You are what you think." I would like to add, "You are your church."

Early in my ministry I read a very helpful book on preaching. Among the useful thoughts expressed by the author was that a minister cannot preach other than from his or her doctrine, beliefs, faith — no matter what form the message takes. I am convinced he was right.

Likewise it is my conviction that a person cannot live his or her daily life other than from the basis of that person's beliefs. As I thought about this further I became aware of the many ways my life has been richer, more peaceful, more satisfying and less fraught with fears and anxiety because of my understanding of life as a Swedenborgian Christian. It has made me a more caring, loving, concerned person.

I am who I am because of what our church has provided me. In the last few months, my awareness of the depth and breadth of the treasure I have through my church has grown even more keen. The value of what the church has made available to me and which I have through the years made mine brings tears to my eyes as I feel its impact upon me.

Peace of Mind, Spiritual Freedom

Just a few examples: From as early as I can remember, I was encouraged to think about, question, explore whatever was taught me about the Bible and our church's teachings. What spiritual freedom this has provided!

The world of our spiritual being has been as real as when I asked my mother at age four or five what heaven was like and she said, "If you want to be with someone you love, then you will be with them."

And somehow, even then, I knew what that meant because whenever I thought of my parents, in my mind they were with me. Also, though I want to live as long as I can, I have no fear of death itself. Of course, I am human enough that I hope it will be without too much stress. (Woody Allen put it nicely — "I'm not afraid of death, I just don't want to be around when it happens.")

Treasures Passed On, or Lost?

Still, these examples hardly touch the surface of what my church has given me through the years. What I have come to realize is that I want this church to be available to untold numbers of people so that they can say with similar enthusiasm, "I am my church!"

For that to happen I have to change a number of my attitudes. Yes, I am thankful that many early Swedenborgians gave of their financial assets, and I have benefitted from and depended on their generosity to maintain the organization. But it is time I stop depending on them and become a part of the new generation of givers. The church just won't be there to provide the things I have received if it cannot extend and expand the availability of those things to a needy, waiting world. I can't sit back and just let things be. I am responsible for the future.

For forty-seven years when asked where I obtained my theological degree, I could only say I had a diploma. Now many graduates have degrees from other seminaries, but not from our own. It must become a degree-granting institution so future ministers can proudly say, "My degree is from the Swedenborg School of Religion!" That will take time, energy and money.

So I am deeply concerned and willing to put forth as much time, energy and thought as I can to try to help all of us be aware of how essential it is not only to perpetuate but to extend the treasure our church offers. If I fail, or fail to inspire others to support its work with financial resources, then what has been given to me, what has made it possible for me to be what I am, feel as I do and experience life as I do, will not be available to others. That thought is more than my conscience can tolerate.

Lives and Teachings Shared

I am overwhelmed with the realization that who I am has only been possible because of many fellow Swedenborgians, past and present, who have shared their lives and teachings with me.

Charles Harvey, Antony Regamey, Frederick Crownfield, Horace Blackmer, Andre Diaconoff, George Pausch, Louis Dole, Richard Tafel, Louis Hoeck, John King, Amelia Dutt, Mabel Smith, Caroline Blackmer, Pearl Pausch, Cecile Weben, Winifred Armstrong and Leonore Poole are among the many who have enriched my life and now continue life's journey in the spiritual world. Then there are the current host of colleagues and friends in the church who continue to share their spirits with me today.

What they have shared has been deeply influenced by the Christian life opened by the message of our church. That heritage must live on and I want to do my best to support every effort our church can develop to make that a reality.

Take a Giant Step!

At the beginning of my convention sermon I told of a childhood game we used to play called "May I?". The leader would say to a player, "Take a baby step." That meant one foot directly in front of the other. But if he didn't say, "May I?", he had to go back to where he was. Or the leader could tell someone to "Take a giant step." With that the player could leap forward just as far as he possibly could.

Now is the time to take a giant step and leap forward in our thinking, our attitudes and our giving if we are to be able to continue sharing the treasure of our church with future generations.

Yes, "You are your church." And it is only you who can spread forth its treasures.

Rev. David Powell Johnson is Pastor Emeritus and Pastoral Counselor at the Seattle church.

Opinion

Dear Editor,

I have received quite a number of responses to my article ("They Have Taken Away My Lord", April Messenger) and it seems that I need to try to clarify my position. Let's recap a little.

I believe there is one divine being — one God who is perfect, absolute, love, wisdom and power. God is the source of all life and love. This same God adapted himself to our level — our understanding — in the person of Jesus Christ. But, strictly speaking, even this adaptation must have been a unique appearance of God because Swedenborg says over and over again that what is infinite cannot be completely adapted to, or understood by, finite creatures. We need to keep this thought on the back burner. We are told that even in the highest heaven the wisest angels do not see God as he actually is in himself. They see the sun, or an angelic being passing by in the distance, but they never see or know God as to his total being. If this is the case in heaven, how much more must it be true here!

So, Jesus Christ was real — he was the form, the vehicle, by which God expressed or manifested Himself to humanity. Because Jesus' soul was divine he lived a pure, blameless life on earth; he performed miracles, and during his lifetime on earth the grandest miracle of all took place — the glorification of his human nature — so that now we can see him and follow him as the Risen Glorified Lord. I believe that most Swedenborgians in general would agree with the ideas stated above.

My difficulty, or wonderment if you will, is that as time goes by it becomes increasingly more clear to me that, spiritually speaking, we do ourselves and our church a disservice when we focus most of our attention — in our meditations, sermons, hymns — on the historical Jesus and in so doing, tend to overlook or minimize the presence of the contemporary Glorified Christ in our lives and in our world. I don't see how we can have it both ways. (Intellectually we can and do hold both views, but eventually one takes precedence.) One view or the other is going to be pre-eminent in our lives, and, it does make a difference. This is not just abstract theology. It is not just a matter of semantics. It makes a difference.

For example, when we over-emphasize the historical Jesus, then we can very easily slip into a rather exclusive, narrow "Christian" point of view; the implication being that the "Christian" way is the

only "right" way and should be followed by all people. This attitude puts up barriers and has caused a lot of past and present trouble in the world. We might recall that about 20 percent of the world's population call themselves Christian, and this percentage is gradually but steadily declining. And how many of that 20 percent are authentic Christians is another, much more critical question.

On the other hand, when we spiritually shift gears and look to the Glorified Christ, then we have an all-inclusive, universal view of life, which embraces and includes all people everywhere. This provides a unified, holistic concept of life and creation. You remember Swedenborg saying that the labels Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist could be done away with if there were genuine love in all human hearts. Could we carry this thought a step further? Why not discard the labels of Christian, Jew, Hindu, Muslim, and simply look upon one another as sons and daughters of the one living God! That ideal is still a long way off, but can we start to walk in that direction?

Some food for thought from Swedenborg's writings:

"The human mind is by no means capable of seeing the infinity of God, as it is in itself, thus God...It is vain to want to have knowledge of what God is in His Esse or in His substance . . .

True Christian Religion

"No angel is allowed to think of the Lord's passion, but of His glorification . . ."

Apocalypse Explained

"Since no one can be conjoined with the Lord, as He is in Himself, therefore He appears to the angels at a distance as a Sun."

Divine Providence

"Since the Divine cannot be apprehended by any created thing, therefore the doctrinal things that are from the Lord are not truths purely Divine, but are appearances of truth . . .

Arcana Coelestia 3364

"When the Lord presents Himself in any society, He appears there according to the quality of the good in which the Society is, thus not in the same way in one Society as in another . . ."

Heaven and Hell 55

Paul Zacharias
Kitchener, Ontario

Dear Editor:

I would like to add my second to Dr. Bell's letter in a recent Messenger (April, 1990). He may state his case a bit stronger than I would, but I find myself in general sympathy with the points he is making.

I personally regret any attempt to associate us with the so-called "New Age" movement. Too much in it conflicts with the *Christian* faith. There may be a relationship, but I would hate to see us too enthusiastic about elements of the "New Age" movement which may well be little more than passing fads.

I also regret seeing the word *esoteric* applied to us. There may be some truth in it in terms of our historic behavior. In fact I think it was Walter Marshall Horton, professor of theology at Oberlin, who suggested that Swedenborg's teaching might have had a wider influence if we had not clutched them to us so closely and insisted on an all-or-none acceptance of them. It seems obvious to me that Swedenborg intended as wide a spreading of his teachings as possible and never expected or wanted a small group to press them to its bosom haughtily.

Edwin G. Capon
San Francisco, California

Here's How We Did It

Recycling

The Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, organized a campaign in 1988 to address environmental concerns. Since these problems are now global, we have outlined the steps we took so that other congregations may adopt whatever is useful in our procedure.

The first thing we did was a general temperature taking, consciousness raising, brainstorming — to establish a level of awareness in church members, and suggest ways to activate their concerns. The goal we decided to focus on was getting 100% of the congregation actively recycling.

Interested persons obtained approval from the pastor and the board and a committee was formed.

We announced in our church bulletin and from the pulpit that all interested persons call one of these committee people.

We held two planning meetings two weeks apart — the first to discuss structure, publicity, budgeting, and goals, the second to decide details of these functions — who does what, frequency of meetings, were subcommittees necessary, etc.

An ongoing progress report was in each church bulletin, including names of contact persons and dates of meetings. We encouraged a letter-writing campaign to local and federal politicians and to polluting companies — Texaco, the fast-food

outlets — and included addresses. We published information about polluting practices in our homes and communities with suggestions of environment-friendly alternatives.

Each household in Kitchener has a "blue box" from which the city collects cans, bottles, and newspapers weekly. In addition, for apartment dwellers who do not have blue boxes, the committee has established garbage cans at the church to which parishoners bring rigid plastics, cardboard, paper, cans, bottles, and newspapers. These items are taken to a recycling depot north of the city in reusable burlap bags.

We wrote a letter to the Board requesting operating funds. We developed a resource center at the church for periodicals, pamphlets, and announcements. An eye-catching poster was made by the Sunday School.

We are currently phoning all church members to inquire about their progress and to encourage everyone to continue toward our

goal.

We have also established ongoing liaisons with other environmental groups in the community.

We're practicing what we preach — making our church (and our homes) environmentally friendly (And yes, we've banned Styrofoam cups in the church!)

*Submitted by Joan McGavin, member
Kitchener Swedenborgian Church Recycling Committee*

*We have not inherited this earth from
our ancestors
We have borrowed it from our
children.*

This is the first in a series of "How To" articles, sponsored by the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU), to be published in *The Messenger*, which will address many practical features of parish life, such as: recycling programs, wedding ministry, lecture series, stewardship, church maintenance/grounds, child care, Sunday schools, use of space, integrating new members into the church, more effective church boards/officers, Bible study groups, church publicity, finding resource people, church calendar, hiring a new minister, sharing Swedenborg's teachings, etc.

Commencements

Baptism

Currie — Grace Helene Currie, age 8, and Sanborn Currie, age 2, children of Deane Currie and Susanne Lorraine, were baptized into the Christian faith January 7, 1990, at the Portland Society of the New Jerusalem Church, Maine, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.

Logan — Jonathan Louis Logan, infant son of Christopher and Susan Wheaton Logan, was baptized into the Christian faith July 8, 1990, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. James Lawrence officiating.

Klassen — Derek Edwin Klassen, son of Duncan and Rhonda Klassen, was baptized into the Christian faith June 10, 1990, at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, the Rev. Henry Kosten officiating.

Ritchie — Brooke Leigh Ritchie, daughter of Maurice and Konny Ritchie, was baptized into the Christian faith June 3, 1990, at the Pawnee Rock Church, Kansas, the Rev. John Bennett officiating.

Confirmation

Currie and Lorraine — Deane A. Currie and Susanne Lorraine were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church January 7, 1990, at the Portland Society of the New Jerusalem Church, Maine, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.

Marriage

Sargent and Rogers — Laura L. Sargent and John W. Rogers were united in marriage, July 1, 1990, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Rachel Lawrence officiating.

Death

Antonucci — Brian Irving Antonucci, infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Scott Antonucci, was born and entered the spiritual world June 18, 1990. Resurrection services were conducted in Manchester, New Hampshire, the Rev. John Chapman officiating.

Chaplin — Joyce M. Chaplin entered the spiritual world June 30, 1990, as the result of injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Resurrection services were conducted July 3, 1990, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Rachel Lawrence officiating.

Wright — Mary Catherine Dickinson Wright entered the spiritual world October 31, 1989, at her home in Centerbrook, Conn. Mrs. Wright, poet, musician, and lifelong environmentalist, was a devoted member of the Connecticut Association of the New Church. The Rev. Clayton Priestnal, Yarmouthport, Mass., conducted the resurrection service.

Change of Address

Revs. James and Rachel Lawrence
847 33rd Ave.,
San Francisco, CA 94121
(As of September 1, 1990)

Rev. John Billings and Sharon
4728 W. 20th
Cleveland, OH 44609

Rev. Obed Mooki Memorial

Rev. Obed Mooki, Soweto, South Africa, entered the spiritual world June 3, 1990, with memorial services conducted by the Rev. Andrew M.T. Dibb on June 10, 1990. More than 3,000 people came to pay their last respects to the veteran community leader and beloved Swedenborgian minister.

From the time he was a young man, Mr. Mooki was impressed with the truth of the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, with the comfort they gave to people and the hope of salvation for all who live a good life no matter what religion they are. He was impressed by the teaching that in the next life the people of Africa "are liked very much, for they receive the goods and truths of heaven more easily than any others. . ." (AC 2604). Some of the wisest angels are Africans, because of their willingness to learn what the Lord teaches. In later years, Mr. Mooki was to discover that some of the earliest outreach in the New Church had been to Africans, and that two hundred years ago these first black New Churchmen received the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem with love and faith, as he himself had done.

At the time of his death, Mr. Mooki led the largest group of New Church people in the world. He knew that if he was to be effective in reaching out to the people of South Africa, he would have to teach others to teach as well. So he founded the Mooki Memorial College, a theological training school dedicated to training ministers in the New Church. Mooki's community involvement included active membership in the A.N.C. and the Johannesburg City Council. He was president of the Advisory Board and of the Transvaal Interdenominational African Ministers Association, and was also on the committees of two schools for handicapped children. Mr. Mooki is survived by his wife, Eulalia, his children and grandchildren.

Excerpted from Rev. Andrew M.T. Dibb's memorial address, Lifeline, September, 1990.



Photo by Tom Hawley

Forty persons attended the New Church Youth League Memorial Day Retreat at Blairhaven, Duxbury, Mass., on May 25-29, 1990.

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