

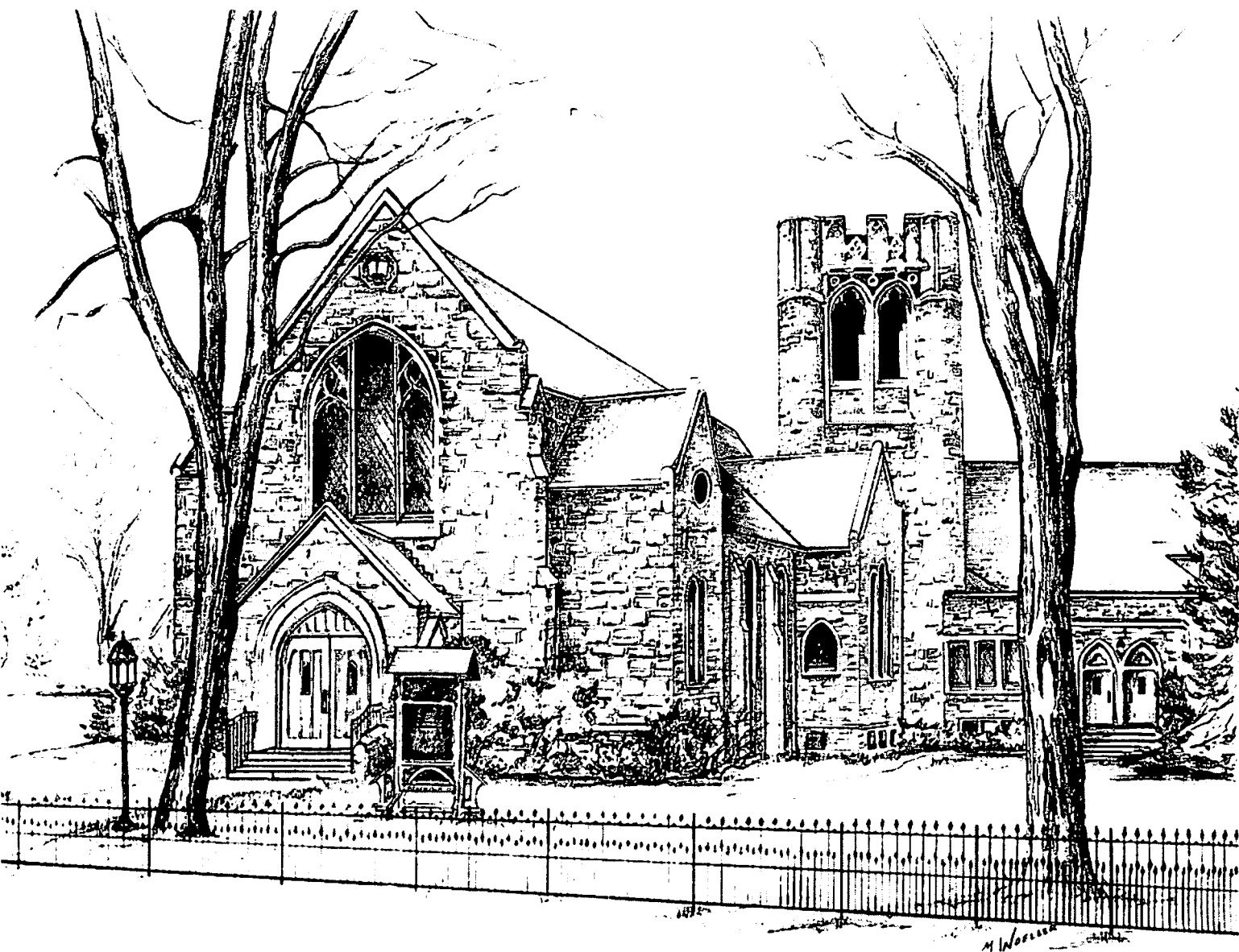
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North America

# The Messenger

March 1991

SWEDENBURG SCHOOL OF RELIGION

48 SARGENT STREET  
NEWTON, MASS. 02158



*Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada,  
Hosts of Convention '91. (See p. 40-41.)*

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Cover: Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. The church was founded in 1833, and the present building was erected in 1935.

## The Messenger

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## Moving Toward the Light

### The Reality of New Life

*Guest Editorial*  
*Paul Zacharias*

*He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Matthew 28:6.*

Those of us over fifty can recall a time when a strong belief in personal life after death was the very center of the Christian faith. Perhaps one reason for this was that we saw so much more of death firsthand. Usually people died in their homes. The natural cycle of life was accepted with equanimity.

We almost always associate Easter with the idea of life after death, but this is a secondary feature of the resurrection story. The Romans who lived in the world before Christ was born had souls, and when they died their spirits awakened in the spiritual world. The Lord's resurrection reinforces and confirms this teaching that personal life goes on forever—but immortality did not begin with that first Easter.

The main lesson of the Lord's resurrection speaks to us of the glorious power of the Lord God . . . the sheer wonder of God coming into our midst in the person of Jesus Christ . . . and subjugating the forces of darkness . . . and establishing a new type of religion in the world . . . and reordering the heavens and the hells . . . and giving new hope and promise to all people everywhere . . . and showing us how to live—all of this is symbolized by the empty tomb. The grave could not hold him . . . life is always victorious over death . . . light chases away the darkness . . . love is the only reality—this is what Easter is telling us.

But the men and women who were there at the time were not aware of all this. They were too close to the scene; it would only be later when they could look back and begin to appreciate the awesome events surrounding that first Easter. Then, as now, it is impossible to understand everything about Easter. We are told that the risen Christ ate fish and honeycomb with his friends on the beach; He asked Thomas to touch the wounds in his body; He was able to pass through closed doors and through walls; He was seen simultaneously by different groups of people who were miles apart. There is mystery here. The only answer I have is that for those forty days after Easter the Lord's body was obviously not made of physical substance, nor was it completely glorified or spiritual—it was made of a substance beyond the realm of our experience. But those first Christians didn't stop and analyze how this could be; they felt and they believed. And the entire New Testament was written in the light of the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. And the whole life of the newly established Church took shape around this personal experience. It is this that explains the vitality and growth of the Christian movement over 2000 years.

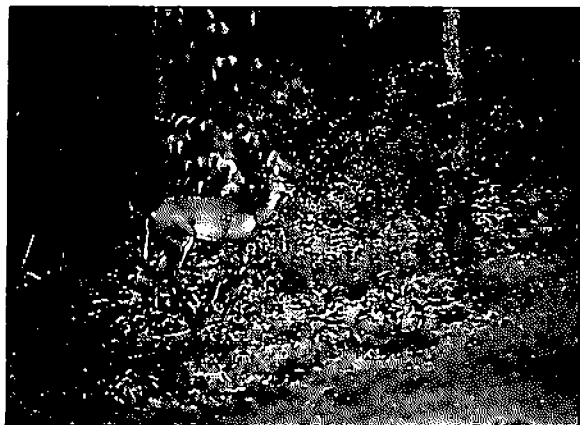
I rather doubt that we can really understand Easter until we are willing to go through something of the same process that Jesus Christ went through—and by that I mean Gethsemane and the cross—gradually giving up those parts of us that are contrary to the spirit and will of God—and accepting new life from the risen, glorified Christ. This matter of spiritual development is an ongoing process that requires some conscious involvement on our part. And one feature of this process is conquering the fear of death—even as Christ at first flinched, then said, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." The only way we can achieve true freedom and inner peace is to face and overcome our fear of death. People react to death so differently. One of the world's most powerful men, William R. Hearst, decreed that the word "death" should never be spoken in his presence. Dag Hammarskjöld had a positive view. He wrote: "In the last analysis it is our concept of death which decides our answers to all the questions that life puts to us." Exactly! If we can feel our way through this approach, and really trust it, then life becomes eternal for us here and now . . . and every day becomes a little Easter.

The Rev. Paul Zacharias is on the Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM), a former minister of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, and executive secretary of the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit.

# The Evolution of a Trail

*Everything in the natural world corresponds to something in the spiritual world.* —Emanuel Swedenborg

Anne Perry



The deer heard the whine of power equipment and crash of falling dead trees. Uneasy at this invasion of its peace it moved away toward the hill summit and lay low. It could not understand at that time that the Temenos Meditation Trail was taking shape. The shape was visible on the landscape of this sacred place (Temenos) in southeast Pennsylvania but also invisible in the hearts and minds of those involved with its planning. Later that weekend the deer put its hoofprint of approval on the new trail.

Three years ago I offered to act as consultant for those wishing to establish nature trails on Swedenborgian Church property. It had occurred to me many times how much Emanuel Swedenborg had to offer in the art of nature interpretation. Why not connect the tree, rocks, and birds with their spiritual counterparts *in situ*?

Two groups were interested in the idea: the St. Louis Church of the Open Word (a Correspondence Garden for their Wedding Chapel mission), and Temenos at Broad Run (for a meditation trail). The latter has become a pilot project for the idea. Since each property and group is unique in its needs it has been vital to work closely with the people involved.

Herein lies the fun part. On November weekends in 1989 and

1990 a stalwart group from the Philadelphia, Washington, and Wilmington Societies plus individuals from as far away as Baltimore and Maine gathered to labor on trailmaking tasks during the day and to discuss hopes and goals for the trail in the evenings. Last year the trail was brushed out and roughly outlined

the property, now made a bit more accessible by the trail. Here beech, oak and tulip trees two to three feet in diameter reach for the light. One tremendous oak succumbed to a winter wind and in falling took down a big beech across the brook. This and other jobs will continue to challenge us. A bridge across the brook, more steps at steep places, and clearings for meditation benches and outdoor gatherings will occupy future workers.



**The Trailblazing Team** with logs. I wish I could have taken a video of the scene when Randy Laakko and Gus Ebel were playing "push-me-pull-you" with a wheelbarrow full of wood chips to protect a steep part of the trail. Perhaps it is in the process of trailmaking that we find the greatest lessons and profoundest heights of the spiritual path.

Again in 1990 we gathered, this time joined by some Temenos neighbors and their children. The trail began to take clearer shape when John Perry, Gus Ebel, and Randy Laakko installed some rustic steps at the steep entrance to the trail. The rest of us worked at brushing out vine growth, and removing a major blowdown in the pine woods on the knoll. All of us were awed by the old growth forest at the south end of

The invisible part of the trail is progressing, too. This year I submitted portions of an interpretive booklet (original material and quotes) to those present. Some valuable feedback came from this session. I envisioned ten stops on the trail which would be keyed into the booklet. Three of the stops would be at meditation benches where a theme

would be offered for contemplation (Oneness and Interdependence, Diversity and Chaos, and the sense of Wonder). The other stops would consider symbols of nature (trees, water, soil and rocks, animals, birds, the sky and cosmos, and insects). Comments and suggestions were most valuable. "Encourage users' contributions to booklet." "Screen quotes for clarity and applicability." "Use good Swedenborg translations, avoid Swedenborgianese, since many users will not be familiar with terms we take for granted."

Each year the trail seems to take on a new dimension enriched by the people who work on it. You are invited to participate with ideas and/or labor, and share the joy we all feel in this beautiful place.

*Anne Perry is a Swedenborgian naturalist living in Brunswick, Maine.*

# Fruits of Adversity

James F. Lawrence

Travel agents rarely book tours to the sparse desert areas of the Holy Land. Most people aren't interested in roaming the wild wilderness around Mt. Sinai where hot, arid winds blow across inhospitable sand and rock. Yet it is in the harsh places of Palestine that God seemed to meet most dramatically the Children of Israel—or at least where they seemed to discover Him the most directly. In the rugged, climate-cruel spaces of the desert, the Judeo-Christian insights and faith developed through Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and even Our Lord. It was from the fierce places of the Bible lands where the voice of God has echoed through the ages.

The Ten Commandments did not come down to some comfortable and sophisticated scribe in Rome or Jerusalem, but rather transmitted from remote and savage Sinai, one of the most unlikely and bleak places on earth. John the Baptist heard the voice of God in the lonely expanses of the desert wilderness. And likewise, the desert was the environment Jesus sought for his forty days of fasting and prayer to begin his ministry.

"Tell me about the landscape in which you live," writes Jose Ortega y Gasset, "and I will tell you who you are." If he's speaking literally, I would chalk that up to romantic hyperbole. But if he's speaking about the landscape of our lives, the scorching heat of friction in the human community that we have had to shield ourselves from, the freezing winds of indifference in the human community we have had to protect ourselves from, the craggy mountains

we have had to climb on the way to our perceived dreams, if Ortega y Gasset is talking about the fierce landscapes of our souls, then that is another matter. That would be closer to how John Muir understood it when he commented on the hardy growth and unique beauty of those gnarled, twisted pines found near the tops of many of the Sierra Nevada Mountains: "The crueller the habitat, the stronger the character."

◆  
*The Lord has  
already placed his  
foot in every step  
that you will  
ever take.*  
◆

From time immemorial, we humans have been trying to understand why life is generally so rugged. If left to our own devices, we would've ordered up a world in which pain doesn't exist, where conflict is a non-word and tranquility is the only state we know. In watching a bird from my bedroom window this week comb over a telephone pole for bugs, it brought to mind those Wild Kingdom episodes narrated in quiet, but manly voices in which the viewer is shown all-too-graphically how nature feeds on itself—how all forms of life, in fact, feed off other forms of life for their own very life. It seems such a merciless system at times.

If we had been given the task to devise life, we would never have made it so. While we might have come up with wondrous and exotic forms of life, who would have thought of having them feed off one another? I would have had their food floating down from the sky, like the manna by which the Lord fed the children of Israel during their desert sojourn. Who would have thought up accidents, hideous diseases, and war? Not I, I don't believe, nor you. And yet this is the way we find things, and as I said, theologians, kings, and peasants alike have been grappling from the beginning of time with the fierceness of this world made by God.

Then comes Christianity, which has somehow gotten the reputation in certain quarters of being a soft religion. This is a most inaccurate perception. Jesus taught love, humility, and goodwill toward persons, but he wasn't a head-in-the-sand Dr. Feelgood. Peter is the one with our natural human instinct to shove all pain under the carpet. He, like all the disciples, would've been perfectly content with a Dr. Feelgood religion, and they tried more than once to move it in that direction. But when Peter, in his well-intentioned and certainly loving way, exclaimed to the Lord that the terrible insult of his envisioned death could never happen, note well the way Jesus answered him: "Away with you, Satan. You are a stumbling block to me. You think as mortals think, not as God thinks."

As mortals think, not as God thinks. Yes, how true that must be, for I would never have thought to make the bird live by the death of

countless bugs. And then the Lord lets loose with the news nobody wants to hear: "If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, they must leave self behind; they must take up their cross and come with me."

So, in that instance and many others, the Lord marks out the path clearly enough: the way of spiritual development lies through struggle, painful experiences, even negativity. And it is best for the Christian to begin with the knowledge that the Lord has already placed his foot in every step that you will ever take, and indeed it was through this process of living through and overcoming every battle and struggle that you will ever face that the world has been redeemed. The deeper understanding of Christ's life reveals that from his earliest days he was reconciling his human nature with the divine nature of which he was begotten. Swedenborg writes that the Lord's overcoming of temptations in his cosmic struggle with Satan in the desert near the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew is but a symbolic summation of the work he had done up to that point: the work of experiencing human misery and negativity and redeeming it.

But he wasn't finished with his process at that point. He continued to experience successfully human temptation and struggle every day of his life right up to his last day on the cross, when the process was finally completed as he overcame his last temptation by praying for his enemies. That is *how* the Lord's radiance became glorified, and that glorified human nature reconciled to the divine is *how* our world and lives have been redeemed.

The way of the cross. It is the spiritual mirror of rugged terrain and hostile climates. The way of the cross does not encourage us to go seeking an exotic martyrdom, but rather, it skillfully and firmly guides us to live our own lives authentically: looking to God for sustenance and recognizing a divine purpose in all we face.

Today, let us take in and believe two messages from God's word that we are given to help us on this journey. The first, to accept that God speaks to us out of the fierceness of spiritual landscape, out of the whirl-

wind, the desolate places. We find the very essence of the divine in the shouldering of our crosses, because it is through the pain and effort that we build important pieces of our spiritual destiny. When we feel the burden is too heavy or that we can no longer bear a particular situation, if we go within and listen carefully, we will train ourselves to hear the everpresent whisper: "I am always with you; I have already gone before you."

The second message is to have faith in the sweetness of fruit at the end of the harvest. We are building a kingdom within, and while we do enjoy a great many successes and a great deal of pleasantness in this world, they are but dim colors on a shadowy canvas compared with the life the Lord is leading us toward. We are encouraged not to become discouraged, but to mush on, mush on.

◆

*God speaks to us  
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◆

And speaking of mushing on, the outcome of the debate over arctic explorer Robert Peary provides a fitting closing point. While Rachel and I were in Fryeburg, Maine these past two years, we learned quite a lot about Robert Peary, because along with Hopalong Cassidy, Peary is one of two famous Fryeburg natives, and across the street from the church parsonage is a grand New England inn known as the Peary House. You may have followed the heated debate during the 1980s over whether Robert Peary ever reached the North Pole—despite his claim of being the first. Finally, last January *National*

*Geographic* seems to have settled the dispute once and for all, proving that he did.

His initial attempt in 1898 failed. On that trip his feet froze so badly that he had to have eight toes amputated. But he tried again in 1905. This time, however, diminishing food supplies and the condition of his dogs, who would no longer mush on, compelled him to abandon the mission less than 200 miles from the goal. Then in 1909 at the age of 52, which was very old for that day and time to be spearheading such expeditions, Peary geared up for one last assault.

With impressive determination, he and his party set out over the sea ice. By the end of one month, he had gone farther than anyone else in history toward the North Pole. From that point onward, Peary and a smaller party set out with 40 dogs to cover the remaining distance. On the morning of April 6, 1909, Peary was only three miles from his goal, but he was so tired he could go no farther. After sleeping for a few hours, the remaining distance was covered, making the Peary party the first known to reach the North Pole.

I think it's fair to say that life sometimes seems like an assault on the North Pole. Peary's viewpoint on the matter is a kind of Biblical perspective. It was the harsh climate of the far north that fascinated Robert Peary. He had spent his life exploring Greenland and other regions of the extreme north. His philosophy was that the greatest civilizations would come out of northern regions, nourished by the challenges to be faced in those environments. That is how character is truly developed; that is how God brings forth the best in his creatures; that is how the creation has been designed. From North Pole assaults to severe Mt. Sinai to the cross of Christ, the message is that when life is merely comfortable and easy, there is no real achievement.

*The Rev. James Lawrence is co-pastor with his wife Rachel Lawrence at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, and director of J. Appleseed & Co., our denomination's publishing arm.*

# A Different Approach

Martha King

Over the years we have tried many different ways to grow our church, apparently with only a modicum of success. In this day of television madness shouldn't we think seriously of how to use this medium to attempt to introduce Swedenborg to viewers?

We have used the medium with talks by the local minister and someone from the community, but many of these aired in the "wee small hours." One member of the De-Land society suggested that we try spot announcements to be aired during daytime and evening TV. These would be extremely expensive but we could reach a national audience. The Mormon Church has an excellent spot ad about the Book of Mormon. Can we do the same for Swedenborg?

Any spot ad we plan to present should first take into consideration the audience we wish to appeal to. Anyone who would be interested in what Swedenborg says would need to be intellectually alert. I suspect the interested audience would be drawn from agnostics, atheists, those to whom dogma is an anathema, the anti-fundamentalists, to mention a few.

Our ads would need to be *very* carefully constructed. They should be presented by the independent Swedenborg Foundation as opposed to individual societies. Just as important as the ads should be the follow-up material we send to any inquiries. It might be possible to ask church members to send in titles or copies of material they have found useful in talking to outsiders. I envision these ads couched in the form of questions such as "Do you need to be saved?"

As in many cases, our greatest

strength is also our greatest weakness. Swedenborg tells us that *any* individual or society which lives up to the best it is taught is saved. The aspect of our teachings that means the most to me is the insistence that in the next world we will be judged solely on the motives behind our speech and actions; many of these motives we are not consciously aware of and many of them we know but deliberately hide from ourselves. This freedom to believe has little appeal for the person who wants to be told, "THIS is the truth" and that you must believe in a particular set of dogmas set forth either in the name of religion or science. All dogmas have some truth in them as well as errors since they are truths expounded by men and women. It is up to us to sort out what is true by the rational ability given us by the Lord. We must make intelligent use of the spectacularly amazing discoveries multiplying all around us, bearing in mind that the Word is our basis for judging the works of men. The Word is our source material.

All the time I was growing up in the church I heard "Why don't we grow?" We expected the next generation to do what we had failed to do. Thus we have allowed ourselves to slip into a semi-comfortable miasma while, at the same time, burying ourselves with dead men's money.

We now have Church Growth as the theme for this next year. Why do we want to grow? An obvious reason is that the money supply is dwindling along with the membership and new blood (accompanied by money) is the only way we can continue to keep the coffin out of the

ground.

As a church we have suffered from a horrendous guilt complex because we haven't grown. What are the things about our church which we want to grow? Many of Swedenborg's ideas (from many sources other than Swedenborg) have already spread throughout the world and have been passed down centuries before the coming of the Lord to the present day.

In the early days of our church it was Swedenborg's writings which attracted people. Groups of people got together to read and discuss what he had to say. They presented lectures for those interested. The formation of a church organization sprang from a need to organize those who had similar interests. Unfortunately, this organization has shifted the focus to the physical church, rather than to the *exciting ideas* that challenged the minds of the earlier followers. John Clowes, I think, saw the dangers of forming a church and claimed that Swedenborg left his writings for *all* churches. This approach ran into difficulty because the ideas were too new and startling. We have never given this approach a proper chance. Perhaps it is time to try again.

For years I have been concerned that we have seemed to grab at any person who showed an interest in becoming a Swedenborgian minister with little realistic thought about the state of the societies he/she would be sent out to serve. We keep hoping that these new recruits will magically grow the church. Instead, we find that they are gradually being experienced in the embalming process.

As a church organization we are obviously responsible for the support of our clergy. Can we make better use of ministers? Perhaps a circuit type ministry for all societies which are partially or completely supported by the Augmentation Fund might be considered, rather than supplying the individual churches with a permanent minister. In this way there would be an opportunity for new or different ideas to be shared. Church programs which need the leadership of a minister would find different input to stimulate the groups. The programs which reach out into the community but do not deal directly with Swedenborg could be continued by the laity. Perhaps some time the societies which are financially independent would even care to join the circuit.

I have long thought that we have neglected the many isolated members. It might be more feasible to service these persons through a circuit ministry. A comforting touch would be for the minister to offer communion to these people.

We need to encourage and develop further our lay leadership program where the individual leader has a means of supporting himself/herself but whose income would be augmented by the church.

Since Project Link in the late 1950s (a program in which my late husband participated, along with David Johnson and the Turleys among others) we have begun to reach out to the community beyond the Swedenborgian Church. We desperately needed the push given to us through our human relations training in those early days. But has the push produced the desired results? I doubt if we have ever taken in the amount of money we have expended on these so necessary programs. Judged on the basis of the monies received, the programs have been a dismal failure. But without these programs the Swedenborgian Church would probably have just about buried itself out of existence.

We have had much excellent scholarship and scholarly writing over the years. We now need to expand our writing to appeal to the intellectually intelligent rather than the scholarly. We need *many more* books and pamphlets on the level of *Awaken from*

*Death*, by James Lawrence; *The Spiritual Dimension*, by Brian Kingslake; *Big Questions Off Campus*, by Robert Kirven; to mention a few.

Is our purpose as Swedenborgians to grow the church (organization) or rather to introduce as many people as we can reach to the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg?

*Martha King is a third-generation Swedenborgian, a former member of the Boston church, currently a member of the DeLand (Florida) church. Her husband, John, taught at the New Church Theological School (now the Swedenborg School of Religion) until his death in 1962.*

## A Response to "A Different Approach"

George Dole

There are several thought-provoking suggestions in Martha King's article, and the first thing that strikes me is that they come not from a new member but from a lifelong Swedenborgian. This may be more typical than we realize. Some years ago, I tried to share in the *Messenger* some of my excitement about the holographic model, and received two enthusiastic letters—from octogenarians.

At present, neither the Swedenborgian Church nor the Swedenborg Foundation has budgeted any funds to engage in spot advertising, though the Foundation has on occasion had clips from its films adapted for Public Service Announcements. I think we have to look at the funds we do have for advertising, and face the fact that we often do not use them well. I am as guilty as the next Swedenborgian of deciding what *ought* to interest and attract people. Step One should surely be finding out what *does* interest and attract people. Many of the mini-courses at convention have invited us to look at what is going on "outside." We need to get out and listen.

Step Two is looking honestly at what we have to offer. We do not offer instant salvation or health or prosperity. We do offer a religion that is awfully hard to outgrow. It can be exciting for the young and questing

mind, solidly supportive through the strenuous years of family and job, stimulating during retirement, and infinitely reassuring as the time of death draws near. We do not offer a sense of superiority by putting down other religions. We do offer a way to be a thoroughly devoted Christian who is grateful for the light the Lord offers through all the religions of the world. We do not offer a simple solution to life's difficulties. We do offer a challenge to the whole person—heart, mind, and life. The list could go on and on.

Step Three is getting professional help to communicate what we want to communicate. Over the centuries, we have become experts at talking to each other (not always constructively), and do not realize how unintelligible we may be to others. Eric Allison is developing skills in advertising, and they can make a real difference. Professional help does cost money, but funds can be gradually wasted in ineffective efforts without it.

For the first time in our history, we have a church convention agency directly concerned with the majority of our constituency, the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit. We are feeling our way, I suspect, because we have never done this before. But there is real hope that we will discover how the church convention can help on the local level.

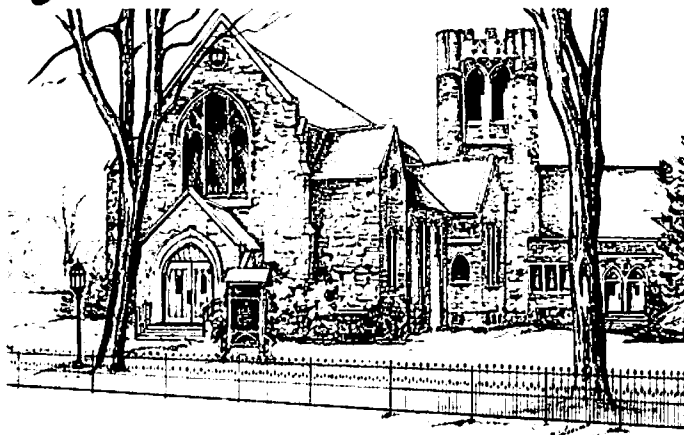
Martha's suggestions are very much in harmony with the objectives and strategies the denomination has adopted. I remain to be convinced, though, that we have taken these objectives and strategies seriously. They call for us to plan more thoroughly and to evaluate honestly what we have done, in the belief that we can learn to do things better. They are designed to give a clearer focus and better coordination to our efforts, and they look good on paper.

The trouble is, they do not accomplish anything on paper. They have a chance of working if we read them carefully and thoughtfully, and compare them with our present practices. I don't see any quick fixes, and I don't think Martha does. I believe we agree that there is no substitute for loving, thoughtful, and sustained effort; and I know we agree that this effort is supremely worthwhile.



# Convention Planner

## June 26-30, 1991



By now you've got Convention dates blocked out on your calendar and are thinking about possibly coming to Kitchener-Waterloo.

Our twin cities have a Mennonite and a German heritage, and we'll try to show you something of both while you're here. Friday night will feature dinner at a local German club serving traditional fare like schnitzel, with a German band and folk dancers. And the campus at the University of Waterloo where you'll be staying has trails for quiet walks and jogging.

Saturday morning will come alive with the sights, sounds, and smells of a local farmers' market. Saturday afternoon, a choice of four inviting activities, if you wish to sample more of the heritage and culture of our area:

### *Stratford Festival— Presenting three plays:*

#### *a) Carousel*

In Rodgers and Hammerstein's lyrical Broadway musical, carnival barker Billy Bigelow blusters his way through life and love.

#### *b) Les Belles Soeurs*

In Michel Tremblay's devastating comedy, the bitterness and jealousies of Germaine's best friends are divulged with compassion and

satire until their gall and greed are exposed.

#### *c) Timons of Athens*

In one of Shakespeare's rarely performed plays, Timon, with friends and fortune gone, discovers as a hermit man's materialism and corruption.

### *Doon Heritage Village*

Walk along a country lane across a covered bridge to join people in a 1914 village. Experience a bygone way of life in the general store, church, woodworking shop, foundry, and accompanying farm.

Adults \$3.50 Cdn. (\$3.00 U.S.), less for seniors, students, and children.

### *Countryside Tour*

This tour reveals rural Waterloo County, stopping at the covered Kissing Bridge, the Buggy Factory, and an Old Order Mennonite Farm. It ends in the Mennonite village of St. Jacobs for some shopping.

Prices are identical for adults, seniors, students, and children—\$2.75 Cdn. (\$3.00 U.S.)

### *Elora Gorge Hike*

The 70-foot deep Elora Gorge affords one of the most scenic views in southwestern Ontario. This guided hike will take you over gently rolling, evergreen-covered rocky terrain, include waterfalls, small caves and

overhanging rock ledges. It will end with shopping opportunity in Elora, a village known for its abundance of artisans.

Adults \$2.75 Cdn. (\$2.35 U.S.), less for seniors, students, and children.

*Submitted by Fran MacIntosh and  
Bob Forrester, Convention Planning  
Committee*

## Mite Box 1992 ????

The board of trustees of the Alliance of New Church Women will be meeting at convention to decide upon the recipient of the 1992 Mite Box collection.

In the past the Mite Box has supported such projects as the SSR Library, the nature walk at Temenos, the Social Action Concerns Committee (SACC), and many other worthwhile causes. This year's Mite Box collection will go to the building fund for the Harvey Chapel at Urbana University.

All worthwhile projects will be considered for the 1992 Mite Box collection. Please send your suggestions to:

Barbara Penabaker, President  
Alliance of New Church Women  
3447 Pall Dr., Warren, MI 48092



# Advance Convention '91 Registration

CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

University of St. Jerome's College, Waterloo

June 22-June 30, 1991

(Convention Sessions: June 26-June 30, 1991)

"HEALING OURSELVES - HEALING THE EARTH"

**Please complete in full—one application per family**

*NYCL members between the ages of 13 and 19, unaccompanied by parents, please complete*

## Transportation

## Accommodation

Surname(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Given Name \_\_\_\_\_

Surname(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Given Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State/Prov. \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Accompanied by \_\_\_\_\_

Children:

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I will arrive at Toronto Airport on: Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Airline \_\_\_\_\_ Flight \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I am driving to Convention on: Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

My first meal will be: Date \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ breakfast ☐ lunch ☐ dinner

☐ I am a passenger in the car of \_\_\_\_\_

Arriving at Convention on: Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I need directions to Waterloo from \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Other mode of transport \_\_\_\_\_

Date of arrival \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Departure Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Special Parking Requirements \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like a single room. (limited availability)

☐ I would like a double room with \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like to have a roommate assigned to share my room.)

☐ I/We would like (if possible) to have a room near \_\_\_\_\_

## Special Needs

*Note: St. Jerome's College doesn't have easy access for wheelchairs in most buildings, and some stairs are unavoidable.*

*All buildings are NON-SMOKING*

## Special Requirements for Children

*(Children's programs will run during Pre-Convention days beginning Sunday, and continue through the week until after worship on June 30)*

## Other Programs

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

## Rates for 1991 Convention Room and Board

## Registration Fee

## Financial Assistance

- ☐ I am a vegetarian, with these exceptions \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I have these dietary restrictions: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I am not able to climb stairs or walk very far.
- ☐ I have these medical requirements: \_\_\_\_\_
- I am ☐ diabetic ☐ a heart patient ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Other physical / special / dietary needs: \_\_\_\_\_

My child / children: (please indicate)

- ☐ will be participating in the Children's Program for ages 5-12 beginning on:

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ will need the Child Care for ages 2 and under beginning on:

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ will need the Child Care for ages 3 & 4 beginning on:

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ special needs are: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ has / have ☐ has / have not attended a pre-school program.

- ☐ I intend to use the available recreational facilities (swimming, gym, tennis)

I wish to co-register for the following programs:

- ☐ New Church Youth League Officers
- ☐ Ministers' Spouses (June 22-26; ministers' spouses only)
- ☐ Women's Alliance Dinner
- ☐ Stratford Theatre (June 29)
- ☐ Mennonite Tour and Shopping (June 29)
- ☐ Doon Heritage Village (June 29)
- ☐ Elora Gorge Hike (June 29)

- ☐ Adult / Teen: \$45 CAN. (+ tax of 5%) daily (single room) June 22-30 (noon)
- ☐ Adult / Teen: \$40 CAN. (+ tax of 5%) daily (dbl. occupancy) June 22-30 (noon)
- ☐ Youth 4-12 years: \$32 CAN. (+ tax of 5%) daily (double occupancy)
- ☐ Youth 4-12 years: \$25 CAN. (+ tax of 5%) daily (extra mattress in room)
- ☐ Child (3 and under): No charge if occupying same room as parents, and no charge for food when fed from parent's plate.
- ☐ Other accommodation needs: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I have enclosed a check for [\$50.00 CAN.], \$45.00 U.S., ([\$45.00 CAN.] \$40.00 U.S. if mailed before May 1, 1991) payable to 1991 Swedenborgian Convention to cover registration. Teenagers pay [\$40.00 CAN] \$35.00 U.S. (Ages 13-19). Registration is per person and covers some special costs and events. Please mail this form and your fee to: 116 Queen St. N., Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, N2H2H7.

**Please bring proof of citizenship for all family members to enter Canada (i.e. birth certificate, passport)**

- ☐ For young people and children. Please write to Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, 273 Perham St., West Roxbury, MA 02132

## The Family Connection

### Family Assistance Funding For Children Attending Convention

Some funds are available to help with costs of children attending Convention. If you need additional assistance beyond what a local church or association can provide, and have not received this assistance twice before for the same child or children you are eligible to apply. By May 21, please submit names and ages of children for whom you are applying, and please indicate for how many days and nights the children will be attending. Please submit this information to: Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, Children's and Family Ministry, 273 Perham Street, West Roxbury, MA 02132 (617-325-1214).

## Opinion

### Joy Henderson's Release

Some of your readers may like to know that prison inmate Joy Henderson is now eligible for release through a Reduction of Sentence Hearing. An experienced criminal lawyer has been retained to secure the release.

William B. Getman, Trustee  
The Henderson Release Fund  
14 Coolidge Ave.  
Stamford, CT 06906  
Phone: (203) 323-6609

*[Excerpts from Henderson's spiritual-growth journal appeared in The Messenger (January and February 1989) and her memoir of her grandmother was published in the February 1991 issue.]*

## Attention Librarians

We discovered that the Volume numbers for *The Messenger* have been incorrect since the May 1989 issue, when Volume 209 was erroneously changed to 210. Beginning with the July/August issue of that year, the number was again incorrectly changed to 212, which it remained through December 1989. January 1990 through January 1991 was incorrectly numbered Volume 213. The Volume number for 1990 should have been 210, changing in 1991 to 211 with the January 1991 issue. The January 1991 issue is incorrectly numbered Volume 213, No. 11. It should be Volume 211, No. 1. The page numbers are also incorrect; they should be numbered 1-16.

We are back on track with the February 1991 issue, correctly numbering it Volume 211, number 2, and the inside front cover begins with p. 18. The editor and the Communications Support Unit wish to express regret for any confusion these errors may have caused.

## Fryeburg Tape Ministry Thriving

Last year the Revs. James and Rachel Lawrence, then of the Fryeburg, Maine, New Church, launched an audio tape ministry in these pages, bringing live recordings of sermons and music to those who live too far to attend worship at a Swedenborgian church or center. The taping equipment was purchased after receiving a grant for that purpose from the Gray Fund. Paying only \$3 per month, participants usually received a tape every month. About fifteen people eventually subscribed, and the amount of support received from those people was inspiring. Many sent in financial contributions far exceeding the cost of the program, usually with heartwarming letters of encouragement, appreciation and reports of feeling as though they were a part of the church service, as if listening to the tape was the next best thing to being present. Sometimes their names and information about them were published in the local newsletter. Though unseen, they became part

of the family.

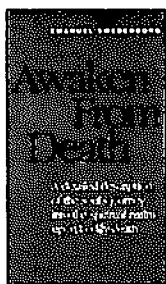
When the Revs. Lawrence answered a call to the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, the Fryeburg New Church replaced them with the Rev. Dr. F. Gardiner Perry, who has enthusiastically continued this outreach ministry. Each tape contains two sermons and music from two worship services. If you would like to become a participant in the Fryeburg New Church Tape Ministry, please write to:

Church of the New Jerusalem  
4 Oxford St.  
Fryeburg, Maine 04037

Please include \$3 for your first month's installment, or sign up for a longer time period. The program duration is 10 months (no tapes are sent July and August).

*Submitted by the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry, minister to the Fryeburg Swedenborgian Church.*

## Book Review



# A Book to Give Friends

## *Awaken from Death*, Emanuel Swedenborg

(selections from *Heaven and Hell*,  
with biographical notes by James F. Lawrence)

Boston and San Francisco, J. Appleseed & Co., 1990

For many years, I have felt a kind of frustration in connection with *Heaven and Hell*. Probably the most readable of Swedenborg's theological works, with a well-proved record as an effective introduction to his religious thought, and giving such substantial reality to the promise of life's continuation after physical death, it ought to be a valuable and thoughtful gift to give a friend who is going through the life-changing experience of losing a loved one to death.

But the high metaphysics of the theology which occupies its opening chapters have seemed to me to be a stumbling-block, an obstacle to its usefulness for that affectionately supportive purpose. I have wished I could tear the volume apart and give someone the beautiful descriptions of the soul's awakening from death, and then, when they are interested, give them some of the other parts.

Jim Lawrence has provided me—and all lovers of Swedenborg's account of the life that follows physical death—with a volume that serves the purpose more usefully. It is called *Awaken from Death*. It is a good book to give a friend—either one who is bereaved, or one who seems interested in spiritual things for any reason.

It's a good book to give a friend, first of all, because it is short. What the cover describes as "a detailed description of the soul's journey into the spiritual realm upon bodily death" occupies only forty-seven pages of rather large, attractive type. The rest of the slender volume (a total of some seventy pages) provides a brief biographical introduction to Swedenborg.

*Awaken from Death* is not to be confused with a condensation or sum-

mary of *Heaven and Hell*, or anything that might be considered a substitute for that great work. Instead, it is an excerpt, focused on the specific aspect of spiritual life which seems most likely to interest a person who is not already familiar with Swedenborg; it describes the initial states or stages of the transition from bodily life to spiritual life, and suggests how we can best prepare for a life in heaven. The advantage of an excerpt over a condensation, of course, is that while it presents only a selection from Swedenborg's thought, it presents it in the way Swedenborg did—it includes his full development of the idea.

Readability is another value of this book as a gift to a friend. Freshly translated from Swedenborg's Latin original by George Dole, it follows his translation of the whole volume with a few minor but pleasant improvements. It is as modern as Swedenborg's thought, and remarkably easier to read than the more common translations from the nineteenth century.

The final chapter of the excerpt is one of my favorite chapters from *Heaven and Hell*—in fact, one of my favorites from all the theological works, entitled, "Leading a Heaven-Bound Life is Not as Hard as People Believe." An elegantly simple concept, so logical, believable, and intuitively obvious, it is an almost irresistible invitation to consent and to wanting to know more.

The biographical section by Jim Lawrence is an attractive and intriguing introduction to Swedenborg. Arranged in brief, "bite-sized" chapters, it presents Swedenborg as someone worth knowing more about, someone whose work is worth looking into.

It fits neatly in between two types of biography which unfortunately have dominated the field—the "hero-worshipping" type, and the opposite extreme in which objectivity bends over backwards into skepticism. In itself, it would make the book valuable as a gift to a friend—even one who already had read *Heaven and Hell*.

Between the chapters of the excerpt from Swedenborg and the biography, *Awaken from Death* includes a series of quotations from prominent and eloquent individuals. I find myself somewhat surprised to recommend these, too, as almost "worth the price of admission." I have been critical of most earlier collections of such quotations, for a variety of reasons. Some of them have been too brief and out-of-context to be significant if they didn't have an impressive signature at the end. Others appear to be polite responses to a request for an endorsement, either saying little or saying something out-of-character with the rest of the author's work.

These, however, are uniformly substantial in thought if not in length, and give every appearance of being spontaneous recommendations that the author would willingly repeat and expand on—if he (or she: a quotation from Helen Keller is included) were living and were asked.

*Awaken from Death* is a book worth buying—buying several, so you'll have one left for yourself after giving copies to your friends.

—Reviewed by Robert H. Kirven

Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven is Professor of Theology and Church History at the Swedenborg School of Religion, Newton, Massachusetts.

To receive a copy of *Awaken from Death*, send \$4.00 postpaid to: J. Appleseed & Co., 3200 Washington St., San Francisco, CA 94155. (Copies are \$4.00 apiece when ordering 1-9, \$3.00 for orders of 10 or more).

## Movie Review

## Dances With Wolves

Paul Martin Grumman

"Dances With Wolves" was first brought to my attention by several Native North Americans who attend activities at the Stone House. They said it was the first movie that portrays their people accurately and fairly (of course none of them were Pawnee). The movie effectively conveys the life and values of the Lakota Sioux. Their easy friendships, devotion to family, and especially their life as community were impressive. Living in one stable community their whole lives, they had to learn tolerance, forgiveness, and how to work out their differences. In their councils each man was allowed to express his opinion, but the final decisions were left to the elders or the chief. Women, apparently, were relegated to a secondary role in both family life and community decision-making. As with most cultures, including our own, women's wisdom was evident but had to be tactfully interjected to and through their husbands.

The central Native North American value that comes through in the film is their respect and reverence for life. Here at the Stone House we have had many native teachers and elders lead classes and rituals over the past few years. The programs and books on Native North American spirituality have been very popular. I think what attracts most people is the Native North American vision of all life and the earth herself as sacred. We are finally beginning to realize that without this perspective we will destroy all life. Christianity, which has traditionally placed little value on the earth, has been scrambling to articulate an environmental theology (like Matthew Fox's Creation-Centered Spirituality). The Native North Americans lived this spirituality for hundreds of years and have much to teach us. It is very compatible with Swedenborgian

theology which also recognizes the divine within all of creation. Our challenge is to live our theology, not just understand it. In most Native languages there is not even a word for religion. Spirituality was not reduced to a belief system, but was their way of life.

We could also take a lesson about prejudice and war from the movie. Because the U.S. was at war with the Native North Americans, the main character, a white soldier, considered the Native North Americans "the enemy." They were seen as wild and dangerous savages who had to be conquered and subdued. This misperception stemmed in large part from a lack of contact and understanding. Through personal relationship they came to respect each other and establish friendship. The white man came to personally identify more with the Native North Americans than with his own race. The white people's prejudice came across powerfully because it was displayed against a white man for being too much like the Native North Americans. This demonstrated clearly that the issue was not merely a matter of skin color or nationality, the prejudice was against the Native North Americans' whole value system and way of life. Only after a century has passed are we as a culture even beginning to see objectively who the Native North Americans were, how we stole their land, and how much they have to teach us. It seems ironic that we destroyed their way of life and now they are helping us to keep from destroying ours.

*The Rev. Paul Martin Grumman is minister to the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound and is director of the Stone House Book Room and Spiritual Growth Center in Redmond, Washington.*

## Almont Auxiliary



The Almont Auxiliary was first started in the mid-1930s by the women attending Almont Summer School. The purpose of the auxiliary was to furnish and maintain the buildings of the summer school.

As a child I remember the ladies meeting for tea wearing dresses, hats, and gloves. Today we meet in the evening wearing sweats, jeans, or shorts and drink pop and eat munchies. Our purpose is the same.

The Almont Auxiliary is unique in that it is one of the largest groups in the denomination and yet it meets only once a year during the summer school session. Every woman attending the summer school is eligible to join so we have as many as 20 to 25 members.

In recent years the women of the Auxiliary replaced the windows in the Big House and are now replacing the ones in Little Rec. They also furnished the bedrooms in Heritage Hall. Besides raising money for these projects, the ladies have spent many hours painting, cleaning, and repairing.

The main source of income for our projects has been the bazaar table where handmade items, Almont tee-shirts and sweatshirts, and various white elephants are offered for sale during the summer school session. The table is run by Dean Trombly who gave it its present name of "A-MART." Dean has done so much to improve and expand the A-MART that we now have an annex in another part of Big House and a HEAVEN ELEVEN in Phister Lounge which sells tee-shirts and sweatshirts to our retreat center clientele.

Ruth Brandau has been the person responsible for carrying out our many projects, spending many hours and putting many miles on her car. For years she conducted an ongoing rummage sale to raise money for Almont. Without Ruth there would be no Almont Auxiliary!

*(continued on page 47)*

# Small Groups, A New Strategy

*Eric Allison*

Recent research in church growth and management has clearly demonstrated the importance of having "small groups" or "cell groups" as part of the church.

A small group is defined as any group of less than thirty-five people who meet for a shared purpose at least once each month. The purpose may be social, spiritual, educational, or task oriented. Thirty-five is the maximum number for a small group. Even very small churches have a Sunday school, choir, doctrinal class, men's club, women's club, and various boards and committees. These small groups and new ones which you create can be a key to your church's growth. A cell group has a maximum of twelve people and meets at least twice each month. The purpose of a cell group is for spiritual growth, support and prayer.

It is important to invite a new person who has come into the church to be a member of a small group or cell group. This will help integrate him/her into the life of the church. A 1990 study by Church Growth, Inc. stated that if new people, after three months in a church, can name seven people as their "friends in the church" chances are 90% that they will not leave the church unless they die or move away. However, if after six months the newcomer can name only three people as their "friends in the church," they are probably already on their way out of the church. It is likely that their Sunday attendance has dropped off. If they are still coming to the church after nine months chances are about 90% that if they do not have seven friends in the church by the end of the year they will leave the church and will not come back. With small groups or cell groups new people will have a "place" in the church where they fit

in and feel nurtured.

Most churches in our denomination expect the minister to be the only spiritual leader of the congregation, and tend to identify the minister as the hired hand who does everything from the sacraments to shoveling snow. Talk of training others to perform ministry is often greeted with suspicion. Small groups or cell groups are almost always led by the minister. This is a sure recipe for burnout. Members of the congregation are not expected and usually not encouraged to be lay leaders. In growing churches lay people are trained to minister to the spiritual needs of the congregation. The minister trains and supervises the lay leaders and is the pastor to them. If the minister does not feel able to train the lay leaders adequately there are often local places with training courses to assist.

Many people lose interest in a church because they do not feel that they are making a contribution to the spiritual life of the church. One of the most common practices is to put a new, excited, talented person on a board or committee. We usually do this because we want to encourage the person, and we don't have any other place for them. This is often the worst thing to do because the person's real spiritual talent is not being used.

As individual churches and as a denomination we need to make a major commitment to training both clergy and lay people to be spiritual leaders of "small groups" and "cell groups." No matter how small a church, if it is committed to developing groups which nurture the spirit (and thus attract others to join these groups) the church will grow. Small groups are the model used by the early church, and as we know,

they grew rapidly without compromising quality. From what the scriptures tell us, we can be assured that it was not the apostle Paul's preaching which caused such devotion to the church.

People drop out of a church because they are not expressly valued. Although we do not know very much about the ministry of the disciples, we do know that Jesus trained them and sent them out to do their own ministries. This model is one that we must take to heart. The Swedenborg School of Religion does offer a program for lay leaders, but people who are qualified and want to lead a small group in the church do not necessarily need to be in a lay training program to effectively lead such a group. With few exceptions denominations train lay leaders and lay ministers to imitate the pastor rather than train them to minister to a specific need and thus broaden the effectiveness of the church.

In the book *20/20 Vision*, Dale E. Galloway tells us how his wife Margi and he built the New Hope Community church from zero to 5,000. Rev. Galloway coined the term "cell groups" to describe his adaptation of Exodus, chapter 18:17-23. Jethro said to Moses:

"You are not acting wisely." His father-in-law replied, "You will surely wear yourself out, and not only yourself but also these people with you. The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me, and I will give you some advice, that God may be with you. Act as the people's representative before God, bringing to Him whatever they have to say. Enlighten them in regard to the decisions and regulations, showing them how they are to live and what they are to do. But you should also look among all the people for able and God-fearing men, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain, and set them as officers over groups of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. Let these men render decisions for the people in all ordinary cases. More important cases they should refer to you but all the lesser cases they can settle

themselves. Thus, your burden will be lightened, since they will bear it with you. If you do this, when God gives you orders you will be able to stand the strain, and these people will go home satisfied."

Galloway's church continues to grow using this model. The Sunday morning service is not the glue that holds the church together nor is it where most of the spiritual growth of the congregation takes place. These cell groups may be the "little flocks" to which Jesus referred.

Training is available for either the pastor or lay person who wants to lead small groups or cell groups. The Fuller Institute will be offering "Small Groups: A New Strategy" in Toronto, Ontario, March 5, 1991; Vancouver, B.C., March 8, 1991; Columbus, Ohio, April 9, 1991; and Atlanta, Georgia, April 12, 1991. Also offered by the Fuller Institute is "Small Groups: Training Lay Pastors To Lead Home Groups" in Chicago May 15-17.

The New Hope Community church of Portland, Oregon, offers a three-day workshop for lay and clergy on leading cell groups. This is offered every year, on February 7,8,9, May 2,3,4 and October 4,5,6. The cost is \$85 for clergy, \$60 for the minister's spouse and \$60 per person for groups of three or more. *Remember, the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU) will help pay for the cost of the transportation, tuition, and lodging.* If a minister and one lay person attend, 50% of the cost of both will be paid. If two lay people attend with the minister, two-thirds of the total cost of the three people attending will be paid. If the minister attends without a lay person, no financial assistance is available from PMSU.

*The Rev. Eric Allison is the Swedenborgian Church's Pastoral Ministries Consultant on church growth.*

### **Almont Auxiliary**

*(continued from page 45)*

Our present officers are: Barbara Penabaker, President; MaryLou Jerritt, Vice-President; Amy Carson, Secretary; Dean Trombly, Treasurer.

*Submitted by Barbara Penabaker, President.*

## **Commencements**

### **Baptism**

**Peebles**—Kristina and Angela Peebles, daughters of Elaine and Jamie Peebles, long-time friends of the church, were baptized into the Christian faith November 1, 1989, at the Boston Church of the New Jerusalem, the Rev. G. Steven Ellis officiating.

**Hartley**—Jessica Hartley, daughter of Donna and Steve Hartley, long-time friends of the church, was baptized into the Christian faith April 22, 1990, the Rev. G. Steven Ellis officiating.

**Chapin**—Arianna Chapin, daughter of Melissa Chapin and granddaughter of Joan and George Chapin, was baptized into the Christian faith October 21, 1990, at the Boston Church of the New Jerusalem, the Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr., officiating.

### **Confirmation**

**Loewen and Camilleri**—Alberta Margaret Loewen and John Paul Camilleri of Calgary, Alberta, were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church and welcomed into membership of the Calgary New Church Society and the Western Canada Conference December 23, 1990, at Airdrie, Alberta, the Rev. Erwin Reddekopp of Kelowna, British Columbia, officiating.

### **Marriage**

**Warren and Chasteen**—Hannah Warren and Lewis D. Chasteen were united in marriage December 29, 1990 at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Gardiner Perry officiating.

### **Death**

**Day**—Georgia B. Day, long-time member of the Boston church, entered the spiritual world January 26, 1990, in South Yarmouth, Massachusetts. A memorial service was conducted at historic Kelley Chapel in Yarmouthport March 10, 1990, the Rev. Clayton Priestnal officiating.

**Perry**—Stewart S. Perry, long-time member of the Boston Church of the New Jerusalem, entered the spiritual world May 5, 1990, at the Normany House in Melrose following a lengthy illness. A memorial service was conducted at the Boston church May 9, 1990, with burial at Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Mass., the Rev. G. Steven Ellis officiating.

**Pierce**—Mary Evelyn Pierce, born February 1, 1895, entered the spiritual world April 22, 1990. She was a long-time member of the now-defunct Mansfield, Massachusetts church. A memorial service was conducted July 1, 1990, by the Rev. Raymond Patch of the Congregational Church in Mattapoisett, Mass. Survivors are sons Elliot S. Pierce and Victor M. Pierce and daughter, Clerna E. Hill.

### **Change of Address**

**Brugler**—Rev. Ronald Brugler and Valerie  
75 Tecumseh Crescent  
Kitchener, Ont.  
Canada N2B 2T5  
(519) 578-4373



## The President Reports

After Christmas, I had the privilege of participating in the New Church Youth League teen retreat in Almont, Michigan. About fifty young people from around the country (Washington, D.C., Boston, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Kitchener, and elsewhere) converged on the Almont Retreat Center by rented van, air and car. It was quite an experience!

The theme for the four-day retreat was "Our Spiritual Selves." Specific sessions dealt with, "Is there such a thing as heaven or hell?" "Near-death experiences—are they a look at the other side?" "Life after death" "Why do I have to die if I live forever?" "Is taking a life ever justified?" "Can we—should we—ever contact those who have died?"

What was so impressive to me was the depth of sensitivity, the eagerness to explore and the great compassion displayed by these young men and women. These sessions provided a safe forum to explore in depth the profound question of the continuity of life as understood from the Swedenborgian perspective.

Yet, there was also ample time for visiting, socializing and fun, for snacks, music and sharing. We also saw two powerful movies on the ongoingness of life: "Field of Dreams"\* and "Resurrection."

I wanted to report to you on this retreat so you can hear about the interest of our young people in their spiritual selves. If the character of other young people in our churches reflects those at this retreat, we can be proud of what this generation has to offer our church and the world.

The cup is a little more than half full!!

Richard H. Tafel, Jr., President

\*See "Swedenborgian Reflection on 'Field of Dreams,'" a fine review of the film by the Rev. Paul Martin Grumman in October 1989 Messenger.

## Exploring the Connections Between the War and The Environment

Kenneth Turley

I can't escape the uneasy feeling that our consumptive lifestyle and its impact on our environment is somehow directly tied into our presence in the war in the Middle East. While there are other issues to be considered, we must entertain the idea that the extent of our presence, in fact our real interest in Kuwait is directly proportional to our interest in oil and oil-related business.

We have begun to recognize the detrimental effects of pollution from the use of fuel oil, gas, cars, plastics, other non-biodegradable products, and from the production processes of these products, including such things as oil spills. Serious problems we all agree, but do we consider that oil is the source of all these products? Do we consider just how pervasive our cultural dependency on oil has become? We assume the right to drive whenever, wherever and however much we want. The entire automotive industry is based on oil products, from the plastic interiors of our cars to the tires we ride on, to the gas we pump. Our entire economy, both the workplace and most forms of recreation, are dependent on or involve plastics and driving gas-fueled machines. We also heat our houses with oil. Synthetic furs and clothing materials are oil-based products. All plastics are oil-based products. Packaging for food and other products, much of it to satisfy our culture's avid desire for sterility, often are made of, or incorporate, oil-based products. Our present way of life as individuals and as a society is totally dependent on oil. And every one of

these products in itself, and in all stages of production, produces environmental damage.

If you would like to do something to ease the situation in the Middle East, to ease the destructive pressure upon our planet, to clean up and most likely economize your own personal lifestyle, take a good long look at your use of oil-based products and begin finding, using and promoting ecologically sound, conservation-oriented, labor-intensive, recyclable and reusable alternatives. Use your car less and walk and ride your bicycle more. Spend more time with your friends and family and make the effort to carpool whenever possible. Do not purchase (and recycle when you do) any plastic packaging. Wear clothing made of natural materials that come from renewable resources. Weatherproof your homes and regulate the rate at which you heat your living space. Make maximum use of the sun. Lower your thermostat and put on a sweater. Buy locally-produced products that have not been trucked long distances. These are the most obvious of suggestions. We all can, and must, get even more creative.

To live ecologically is an offering of self-sacrifice for the betterment of all. It is loving God and loving your neighbor as well as yourself. In the long run, it will reduce the reasons for war on this planet. We will not be so desperate in our desire for oil, and we will find that we can live on a lot less than we thought, and that leaves more to share with those who do not have. The next time you stick the key in the ignition, or start to throw away a plastic milk jug, or buy the six-pack of individually wrapped popitons, remember that there are people preparing to die so that you may continue doing what you have always done.

*The Rev. Kenneth O. Turley is minister to the Portland Swedenborgian Church. Reprinted from the Portland church's January 1991 newsletter.*

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