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September 1992



Zerogee

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Our Cover: *Zerogee*. Paul Granlund, sculptor, Missouri Botanical Garden, Saint Louis, Missouri. Jack Curran, photographer. The bronze sculpture was installed in 1983. The title is derived from "zero-g" for a gravity-free condition, as suggested by the joyous whirling of the family group.

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Patte LeVan, *Editor*
Linda Mahler,
Town and Country Press,
Layout and typesetting

Editorial Address:

The Messenger
1592 N. 400 W.
LaPorte, IN 46350

Business & Subscription Address:

Central Office
48 Sargent Street
Newton, MA 02158

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Moving Toward the Light

From the Editor

Guerillas of Goodness

On returning from convention I remarked to a friend and long-time colleague that I was feeling a bone-deep weariness and longed for the days when I lay in our backyard swing in Burbank eating apricots from our tree and reading the latest Nancy Drew Mystery, with nothing on my mind but entertaining myself.

"Then you turned 30," he shot back, "and they told you it was time you found a job." His quick wit instantly catapulted me from fatigue to a belly laugh; we continued in the silly vein that puts problems in their proper perspective, releases pain-killing endorphins, and reminds us of those two "program" rules: 1. *Don't sweat the small stuff.* 2. *It's all small stuff.* His remark brought us into the "now" moment where we could simply enjoy each other's company for a bit. We didn't get immersed in my problems or his. He wasn't being deliberately kind or sympathetic, he was just being who he was, but the result was liberating.

In our spiritual growth reading and practice we hear a lot about being in the "now" moment, being balanced, being centered—we struggle with these principles, don't we—especially the business about living in the "now."

Peggy North-Jones, a psychotherapist and family educational consultant in St. Louis, was the keynote speaker at convention. She spoke of things that emotionally and psychologically healthy families of the future will be learning and relearning, in some cases rediscovering. Among them was a return to rhythms of daily living and routines that bring comfort rather than create stress. Sitting down at meals and *being with* each other. At least ten minutes of quiet nurturing time before bed. Telling stories to the children about the family and how they survived various challenges—children love to hear them: (So does the child in the adult). Sun, fresh air, shared laughter, regaining a respect for hard work, pursuit of excellence, the self-esteem that comes from doing something well—and finally, perhaps the most important, she said we need to regain our ability to celebrate—to feel those things that are wonderful in life.

I was startled to hear her quote from "Positive Anarchy, Guerillas of Goodness," an article I'd happened to read several weeks prior to convention. It told of a woman driving up to the Bay Bridge toll booth in San Francisco and informing the attendant that she was paying for herself and six cars behind her. She was moved to do this because she had read this message taped to a friend's refrigerator: *Practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty.* The phrase struck a chord and she put it into action. Another woman spotted the same phrase spray-painted on a wall a hundred miles from her home. It seems the message has spread, leaped, inspired, been acted upon, written down, and passed on all over the country. "The idea," one person

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Steve Pults

There has been a chorus running through my mind this week. It has come from Handel's "Messiah"—a beautiful passage where the soloist sings from Isaiah, "Comfort, Comfort ye my people."

This lyric and melody seems to have been a response within myself to the events of this week, perhaps God speaking to my heart. For I have never experienced a more stressful, painful convention than we have experienced here. We have wept together. We have argued. We have been caught up in pressures that pushed us into acting in ways we wished we had never acted, and in saying words we wished we had never said. All of us have been affected—adults, teens and children. I listened to one child, after being told that Daddy had to go to another meeting, run down the hallways yelling, "I hate work, I hate work, I hate work." My own three-year-old son told our childcare sitter a story about a baby zebra and the daddy zebra going away and never coming back. I had to apologize to my teenage son for not having spent even fifteen minutes with him this week. I have watched the stress and pain touching each of us in countless different ways.

I believe it was providential that our keynote speaker reminded us that, "Families are messy." We have seen the truth of that in our own spiritual family. We are a people of endless shadings of values and ideals. We are a people who I believe are really for the most part trying to do the best we can. You are my spiritual family. And I love you.

You are responsible for my spiritual salvation. People like Dave and Elizabeth Johnson, Bob Kirven, Muff

Leaving Father and Mother

Convention Sermon 1992

Scripture Readings:

Exodus 34:5-7

Matthew 10:34-39

Worden, Cal Turley, Bob Bossdorf, Ron and Val Brugler, Robert McCluskey, Ken Turley, Donna Keane, Barb Penabaker, Bill and Jo Locke—people who accepted me, who trusted me, who gave me space and empathy and confrontation and insights and gentleness allowing me to both heal and grow. I have named just a few of you. I am deeply grateful to you.

It is out of my love for you that I ask to speak honestly to the best of my ability. To share with you some of my own journey. And to ask you to honestly consider your own paths. My scripture selections seem both confusing and harsh—God's sending punishment to the children of the guilty to the third and fourth generations and Jesus' call to leave father and mother. I would like to consider how these words might be speaking to us today.

I have noted in my ten years with you the pain of witnessing you, the members of my spiritual family, suffering from physical diseases and injuries. I have felt anger and helplessness in my inability to offer more than my love and concern for you.

I have also observed my spiritual family being ravaged by spiritual diseases and injuries: divisiveness, loss of direction, fear, denial and avoidance, lack of trust, panic, loss of hope, shaming and blaming and low self-esteem. But as I have witnessed this week the words of Bob Reeves, one of the founders of the College of Chaplains, ring true as well, "Your disease is the means to your salvation."

I want to share with you a very simple idea that is and has been true for me—and I believe for all of us: *We take with us throughout our lives the unresolved personal issues and methods of coping we learned from our families of origin.*

We take them with us to our homes, our work and our church. And we witness the "sins of our fathers" revisited upon us generation after generation. Jesus calls us to "leave father and mother" if we are truly to follow him, "... for a man's enemies will be the members of his own household."

Let me give you a personal example. One of my hopes when I travelled across the country from Washington state to Boston to enter seminary was the chance to get a fresh start in life—to have a clean slate so to speak. I was leaving behind a fair number of "messes" I had made in life. I wanted to start over and do things right this time. But even though I travelled from one edge of the country to the other, even though I was interacting with new people with no history between us, I still brought with me my own coping strategies—admittedly, most of them unconscious.

I was learning the Bible forward and backward, I was learning Swedenborg's theology, but if you confronted me, I would shut down. For I had grown up in an atmosphere of conditional love. If I disagreed or expressed unacceptable feelings, love was used as a weapon and withdrawn until I returned to the pre-established conditions for receiving love. It took a long time for me to learn that I could disagree, I could get mad—and you wouldn't run away. I need to thank my wife, Kim, for that gift. And as you might have suspected, my means of dealing with others was to revert to that learned behavior and withhold love for others until they complied with my wishes.

I brought "my father and mother" with me to Boston. And I
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Leaving Father & Mother

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had to learn to "leave them." I need to say here, as John Bradshaw has pointed out, this is not a sermon shaming and blaming my own parents. They did the best they knew and that was what they learned from their parents, and their parents and so on—to the third and fourth generation.

Consider how we might be doing the same things to one another, to the most precious people in our lives, the members of our church, our spiritual family. I'd like to share with you what Thomas Frazier in his article, "Dysfunctions in Ministry" pinpoints as three symptoms of a ministry system that has become addictive and dysfunctional—in other words, ravaged by spiritual disease and illness:

1. The symptom of a sense of grandiosity in mission with philosophies so extensive in their scope that mere mortals have difficulty delivering them.

Listen to what is written about us in *The Directory of Religious Organizations*, one of the kindest and fairest reports I've found:

"Swedenborg wrote also of frequent conversations with spirits, through whom he learned that a new Christian church was to be born and that his written works would be the basis of its teachings."

Talk about pressure! Not only must we deal with being the "Dr. Pepper" denomination of the twentieth century . . . remember that jingle? "Dr. Pepper, so misunderstood, yet if anyone would try you they'd know you taste good" . . . we dance about this idea that somehow, some way, we will influence all of Christianity by bringing about a new age of spirituality to the world. Yet we pretend this really isn't up to us and speak in terms like the New Church "specific" and the New Church "universal." We kick ourselves each year for failing to grow as a church, and wonder at our numbers.

Think for a minute. What do we REALLY hope for—seeing our numbers double each year? . . . 2,000,

4,000, 8,000, 16,000, a million? Do you really want that? Are you ready to be a stranger in your own church where there are more people who don't know you than do?

Seeing other denominations one by one include the "Green 30" in their theological school's curricula? Do you really want other churches to become just like us? Are we that arrogant?

Turning on your nightly news and seeing the president of the Swedenborgian Church meeting with heads of state at the U.N. or having a summit at Camp David with the President?

It's not going to happen. A sick system creates expectations and demands either explicitly or implicitly which cannot be fulfilled.

2. The symptom of encouraging idealistic roles for each other out of our idealistic mission statement.

We commit many sins here. We develop "clericalisms" and what I call "angelisms." Two points from our theology serve as examples here of just plain crazymaking:

We mentally quote inferences of Swedenborg's writings to ourselves in saying, *I am just half a person until I find my "conjugal partner."*

And we tell ourselves that somewhere "out there" is my perfect mate! I just have to find him or her.

That is a sure-fire formula for devastating consequences. You and I are made by God to be whole, complete. We bring our wholeness into a relationship. Otherwise, we are continually expecting others to fulfill our inadequacies. And as Harville Hendrix pointed out in his book, *Getting the Love You Want*, there are neither ready-made friends, lovers or conjugal partners "out there." You make friends. You make relationships. You create trust and intimacy and understanding together. God does not make mail-order brides or husbands.

We exalt "golden boys" and "golden girls" and enable ourselves to play out idealized scripts emphasizing always being "other centered" in our actions. For the individual who coped as caretaker in the family, this is a perfect fit. They are allowed to continue denying their personal

needs and issues by being praised for being the always-giving minister or board member or Sunday school teacher.

And with that comes "splitting." The parts of ourselves that do not meet the ideal are denied. When a loved one dies, we do not allow ourselves to show our grief. After all, "our loved one is in heaven anyway." We do not discuss or allow sexual or aggressive feelings. Rather they surface under stress and seek compulsive expression.

3. The symptom of a sense of self and self worth becoming enmeshed with the mission statement.

The lines become blurred. Ministry becomes enveloped in power issues, and the transforming power of ministry evaporates. Hostility and ridicule become the tools of the defense against those with different views. Our battles over the superficial are often placed on a moral plane—we question one another's ethics, integrity, spirituality—a dynamic that polarizes and eventually destroys both ministries and churches. We hide behind protecting the status quo—liturgy, doctrine, budgets—rather than ever face our own fears and insecurities.

We bring with us the conflict resolution tools (or lack of them) we learned in our families of origin:

Avoidance—"There's no problem. It's always been that way. That's just the way people are."

Triangulation—"Listen, you tell so and so that I said if they don't shape up, I'll cut their budget!"

Gossip—Anne Wilson Schaefer and Diane Fassel in *The Addictive Organization* note correctly that "the purpose of gossip is to excite and titillate, as well as to establish a base of power, promoting a false sense of bonding and intimacy."

Secrets—Powerful in creating a privileged class of members within the system. Access to secrets becomes based on conformity to the mission of ministry as perceived by its members.

(Continued on page 117)

Cruising Down the River . . .



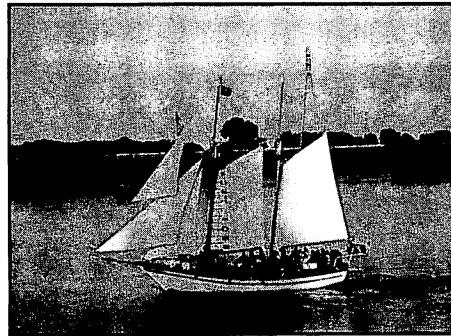
St. Paul contingent—everybody wants to get into the act! From left: Sylvia Lange, Jeanette Hiller, Vivian Kelly, Bowman Bracken.



Marty Mason wows 'em with opening number.



Connie Unger (Kansas), Pat and Dick Sommer (Ohio) enjoy the river cruise festivities aboard the Belle of St. Louis.



(Continued from page 116)

Today I call for us to begin to consciously "leave father and mother" that we might be healed—that we no longer pass on the "sins of the fathers"—that we indeed become a "new" church. I want to affirm you. I have also witnessed this already occurring among us this past week as well.

I have two good friends—one a rabbi, the other a Methodist minister. Sounds like the beginning of a joke, doesn't it? We serve as part-time chaplains at a local hospital. Over coffee one evening at the hospital we discussed our organizations' dynamics. Guess what? We discovered we could have switched names and simply described the others' experiences. Radically different theologies. Same dynamics.

To me, if you want to use imagery, the descent of the holy city does not stop at the head. It continues through the heart right down to the big toe.

If we are bent on power struggles, control issues, reverting to tactics learned from childhood yet never questioned, and seeking to live to unattainable ideals as we continue to beat each other up all in the name of the good of the organization, then I say, "Let the organization go to hell." It's already on its way. It has lost its reason for being.

Rather, let us take up our cross and follow.

Let us not only be a spiritual family, but fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters of Christ.

Let someone enter among us and say, "I have never experienced such

love and acceptance in my life."

That is the direction Christ calls us to. I believe that is the direction Swedenborg attempted to affirm as well. That is the New Church. In our own healing, we become able to heal.

A closing quote I have shared with my beloved congregation in Royal Oak. It is from Confucius.

To put the world in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must cultivate our personal life; and to cultivate our personal life, we must first set our hearts right."

The Rev. Stephen J. Puls is minister of the Swedenborgian Church in Royal Oak, Michigan.

A WALK IN THE GARDEN

*As we receive what we need, we begin
to see more clearly how to respond
to what others need . . .*

Susanne Lorraine

The questions raised by the topic of the 1992 Convention "What is Home?" and "Who is Family?" seemed simple enough to me *before* I attended. Since then the questions seem only to lead to more questions. What is my part in making a home or a family? Or, more simply put, the eternal question, "Who am I?"

I pondered these questions as I strolled through the beautiful St. Louis Botanical Gardens and found that nature provided me with some apt analogies, if not answers. Each plant in the vast gardens of flora from all over the world came from somewhere. Each has a family of origin, a species/genus/type that could be traced back through history. In a plant's history could be drought, blight, plague or other natural causes for particular mutations. In the same way, each of us has our own unique history, throughout the generations of our family, and individually. The experiences that have shaped us into who we are today make us unique and special and as beautiful as any rose, cactus or daylily. The beauty we find in the diversity of the plants in the garden mirrors the beauty to be found in the uniqueness of the people of the world. Each person came from somewhere. Each has a family of origin, a birth family/ethnic origin/religious background/nationality/race that can be traced back through the generations.

Taking another look at the gardens around me, I noticed that the recreations of natural settings not native to St. Louis had another aspect which spoke to me of the word *family*. The plants that needed similar environments, which were found together in nature, were placed together to create a garden. Their needs for certain soil, humidity, space and sunlight

are similar and they thrive together. On the earth, each plant in each family has a home, an environment where it will best thrive and proliferate. By this definition, family is the lineage into which one is born, and home is where that family can most successfully grow.

But as human beings we have more individual needs for successful growth. We have spiritual needs which often differ from the needs of others in our family. Each individual in each family may need a different home where it will thrive and grow. The human needs for food, water, air, space and shelter can be geographically specialized throughout the world's cultural groupings. Food, water, clothing and shelter, native to one culture, when there is enough for all, can create a happy, healthy community of people. To give these same conditions to people from another culture, could cause illness and unhappiness. But within cultures, all individuals have differing tastes and preferences. The physical needs being met are only one part of how we determine happiness and growth. The mind, the heart and the spirit must be fed as well as the body.

So we look beyond the special gardens to the largest part of the garden by far, made up of plants that may not have originally been found in St. Louis, but are growing nicely among the native plants with which they share their need for a temperate climate. In this environment, there can be an even more flexible concept of family. We could easily plant all daylilies together and all roses together, or for a change we could plant all red flowers together and all yellow flowers together. Each grouping would have their physical

needs met but we have formed a family for a different reason, a shared characteristic.

This speaks to me of the way in which we seek beyond our family of origin to find our true spiritual home. As travel around the world enlarges our concept of community to a global village we have unlimited access to information and experience with the history, culture and religious traditions of all the people on the planet. Our search for a spiritual home can extend well beyond our family of origin; beyond our ethnic, religious, national and race origin as well. So how do we go about finding this home? Where do we look for a place to grow? Can we find a garden of like-minded souls where we can put down roots and grow? In your community, among your friends, within your church or even outside the circle of people you already know are possible places to begin searching. What you are looking for is what you love.

We can start wherever we are now, for as God's children, we are all family. We are always at home because we are with God and God is with us. This brings us back to the question, "Who am I?" I am a life that has been planted on this earth, I am a gift from God to myself. I must be someone, if God loves me enough to give me life. Recognizing myself and nurturing myself comes from my gratitude to God for my gift of life. When you feel thankful you can freely give yourself fresh air and sunshine, food and water, clothing and shelter. A healthy gardener can work long and hard

and with great joy and will be a blessing to those being nurtured.

In both plants and people, nurturing growth happens when there is a balance of all the needed elements. There is an advantage that we have as human beings. We can be gardeners. The plants that we lovingly care for benefit from our human ability to find that balance. We water just enough, but not too much; we test soil, we prune and weed so that plants are not overshadowed and stunted. In the natural environment, God is the Gardener, the ultimate provider of all needs, and of the natural causes that change the plant world over time. In our gardens, we work with God by providing a balance. We nurture some plants to provide ourselves with the gifts that certain plants bring, whether healing herbs, garden vegetables or the simple beauty of flowers. We sometimes nurture plants for the joy that it gives us to work in the bosom of nature. Feeling the dirt, the sun, the water and the delicate life of a seedling.

Similarly, we can be gardeners to each other as God is the Master Gardener. We have the ability to use our discernment and creativity to gather families and build homes where we nurture and inspire ourselves and others to express all that we want to be. We can honor and appreciate our uniqueness by recognizing it as what God intended us to be, our selves are God's gift to us, our growth and regeneration is our gift to God. As we improve our skill at discovering what we need, we can begin to find out how and who to ask for the nurturing that we need. As loving individuals we are resources for each other for the human needs for touch, understanding, compassion, listening and attention. As we receive what we need, we begin to see more clearly how to respond to what others need and truly the giving becomes joyful, an act of love and gratitude to God for the gift of all of creation. The garden of humanity is full of beauty and diversity, warm with sunshine and love; clear and bright with clean air, water and understanding. Come play in the garden!

Susanne Lorraine is a member and secretary of the Swedenborgian Church in Portland, Maine.

Report of General Council Pre-Convention and Post-Convention Meetings

On Wednesday, June 24, 1991, General Council met in St. Louis, Missouri. The following items were considered:

The treasurer made his report and the 1991 audit was received. A restricted gift of \$47,000 from the Philadelphia Book Association was accepted. The 1993 convention site was discussed. Also discussed were the General Council/Cabinet merger proposal to be presented on the floor of convention and the proposed changes to the Constitution and By-Laws. Amendments to the Retirement Plan were voted upon. We received an update on the sale of the Santa Cruz property and voted to write a letter directing the president to close the sale within 90 days. The remainder of business was conducted in closed Executive Session.

General Council held its post-convention meeting on Saturday, June 27, and conducted the following business:

An update on the Swedenborgian Spiritual Growth Center (Puget Sound church and Stone House) was presented by the chair of the Growth and Outreach Support Unit (GOSU). It was voted to place this growth center under the auspices of GOSU.

General Council met with representatives of the Swedenborg School of Religion and reaffirmed our intent to work with the school on the Lilly Grant. We will meet with them



Naturalist Anne Perry (Maine) inspects the goods at the Garden Chapel.

during our mid-winter meetings.

We voted, in regard to the residence building at Temenos, that the expenditure of funds first be taken from the restricted free Temenos funds for the residence house, second from the Pausch Fund, with a mortgage taken when these funds have been substantially eliminated. It was further moved that the president and secretary be authorized to enter into contract with Cornerstone Partners, Inc. for architectural work on the resident building at Temenos at a cost of \$34,000.

General Council discussed the new president's job description, hours and salary. Housing allowance was voted upon. Committee appointments were also discussed. The president has to take a little time to work on these appointments.

It was moved that General Council Executive Committee study the possibility of an organization called "Swedenborgian Youth Ministries," possibly to be an umbrella for all existing and perhaps overlapping youth programs, and to report back at the mid-winter meetings. Joe Lederman was appointed to work with this committee.

Also discussed were Kent Andrew funding for LaPorte and a Pastoral Ministries Consultant contract.

An increase to next year's budget for Communications Support Unit salary items was voted upon.

The next meeting was set for January 20 to January 24, 1993.

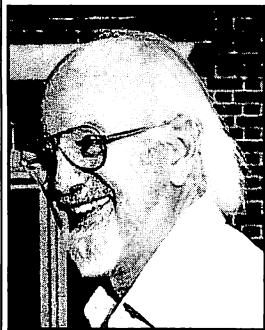
*Gloria L. Toot
Recording Secretary*



Martha Bauer, indefatigable (well, almost) Central Office Manager with smile still intact after six days of convention!

Dilemmas of Education

SSR Commencement Address



Robert Kirven

Last Christmas, my wife Marian and I took a train to the west coast and back. Passengers got on and off, the crew changed, but the train kept going, continuing after we got off. Tonight, that train seems analogous to SSR. It had been rolling along for 92 years before I got on; it continued for 34 years (over half my life!) with me as passenger, ticket-puncher, and sometime conductor. Tonight, I get off, and the train keeps going.

Looking back at the ride I've had, and gazing as far as I can see down the track, I see a landscape full of dilemmas. Dilemmas surround the preparation of ministers.

Now dilemmas are not just garden-variety problems or difficulties. A dilemma is an inescapable choice, which must be made between two equally desirable alternatives, which also are mutually exclusive. True dilemmas are not solved easily; if any solution can be found, it must be by a paradox.

Let me point out three of the biggest dilemmas. First: *Teachers teach from the past but students learn for the future.*

The "past" in this dilemma includes far more than the historical disciplines. It includes everything that teachers (or anyone else) knows. All we know is what happened in our lives, or what we read or heard happened in someone else's life. All that is in the past. Even when teaching goes beyond information to

involve connections, meaning, purpose, and values, it is limited to these factors as they have been perceived or formulated before they are taught. The remembered past is all any teacher has to teach.

The past may interest some students more than others, but all of them need to learn from it (how else would they tie their shoelaces and communicate with one another?), but none of them derive any ultimate value from it except as they use it in the future. Past and future are interlocked but incompatible values.

Secondly: *Christian ministry is a learned profession, but it is exercised through practical skills.*

This dilemma is related to the first, but differs partly by being specific to the work of theological seminaries. Neither side of the dilemma can be denied, nor can either be made secondary to the other. Religion is mediated by tradition, and Christianity—like Judaism, Islam, and others—encapsulates its traditional interpretations and applications. In the terminology of the Swedenborgian ordination service, the minister must have the Word and the teachings in order to lead people to the good of life. Having it—symbolized by the ordinand holding a Bible and a volume of Swedenborg—involves learning it. The profession of ministry requires learning.

But as the ordination service makes equally clear, the whole point of learning and having the Word and the teachings is to "lead the people to the good of life." In most basic terms, the purpose of the learning is to do something; and the Latin word for "doing," *praxis*, gives us the English words, "practice" and "practical." A learned profession would be as useless without being practical as a practical profession would be aimless without learning.

So seminaries, including SSR, teach the methods and skills of the

practice of ministry. We have a professor of practical theology, whose primary focus is on what to do in ministry and how to do it. The professors of "impractical" theology, too, have on occasion suggested ways of using what they teach in the practice of ministry. But, as walking involves losing and regaining your balance repeatedly in order to get anywhere, so the relationship between learning and doing is a dynamic one, customarily experienced as a dilemma by anyone who stops doing it long enough to think about it.

The third dilemma is: *Pastoral formation requires academic freedom but demands institutional commitment.*

The teacher's art in every subject involves selecting elements from the past which are interesting, coherent, and relevant. The teacher's selection saves the student from having to peruse all the documentation of our civilization's past in order to learn from it; but it also exposes the student to the teacher's bias.

Educators have recognized this for centuries, and as Europe was coming out of the Dark Ages, a solution to the dilemma was found. It was called Academic Freedom, and its adoption by Europe's leading universities soon made it standard educational practice throughout the world. This is how it works: Teachers are selected by other teachers on the basis of their competence. Once selected, and having demonstrated those abilities for a reasonable time, they were protected from any pressure by church, government, or school administration, which might compel them to teach any particular "line." This system protects against institutionalized bias, and lets the course of freedom provide enough counter-acting biases from various teachers that students have freedom to learn, because teachers have freedom to teach.

The system has worked and does work in the great universities from Paris to London, Heidelberg to Marburg, Harvard and Yale to Stanford and UCLA. But it's a dilemma for theological seminaries. Some, like Harvard Divinity and Union Theological, prepare women and men for a kind of generic Christian ministry; and the other horn of their dilemma is the kind of head-in-the-clouds, no-feet-on-the-ground intellectualism that can develop when neither faculty nor students share specific goals and commitments. Some schools, such as the Swedenborg School of Religion, prepare almost all their students specifically for ordination into the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church, and a majority of the teaching faculty has been similarly ordained. The dilemma here arises from the fact that the goal and commitment shared by so many of the students and faculty can unconsciously or by accident undermine academic freedom.

* * *

I have spoken of three dilemmas faced in theological education: past vs. future, learning vs. doing, freedom vs. commitment. At the outset, I mentioned in passing that the only possibility of resolving a dilemma is a paradox. Now, let me restate the three dilemmas, replacing the "buts" with "ands."

Teachers teach from the past and students learn for the future.

Christian ministry is a learned profession, and it is exercised through practical skills.

Pastoral formation requires academic freedom and demands institutional commitment.

There, in place of three dilemmas, you have three paradoxes—three units, or wholes, each composed of incompatible parts. That is more than a trick of words: it is a change in purpose. Instead of an attempt to choose between irreconcilable values, it is a willing endeavor to find a working synthesis which includes both of them. It is a picture of teachers and students together challenged to relate the past to the future, to relate learning to doing, to relate freedom and commitment, in ways that are constructive, satisfying,



Newly-ordained SSR graduate Rev. Eric Hoffman with his wife, Norma. Eric has answered a call to the LaPorte, Indiana church.

and valuable.

I have three points to make about that set of paradoxes. First, a "both/and" paradox in preference to an "either/or" dilemma is a distinctively Swedenborgian resolution to a dilemma. It is not logical, in the way of thinking that Aristotle taught the Renaissance, and our teachers taught us; but it is characteristic of Swedenborg. His resolution of the Christological Dilemma, defining the Glorified Lord as All-that-is-Divine-Joined-Together-as-One-with-All-that-is-Human (a reasonable translation of his term, *Divinum Humanum*) is the most prominent example of how he thought this way. In courses and in print I have described several more that also were original contributions to the history of ideas.

Second, those three paradoxes together form a pretty good picture of direction of curriculum development at SSR for several years. George Dole once said the process resembles inertial navigation: every so often you take a reading, adjust your course, and hold that heading until the next reading. I'm not sure that at the time, he thought the analogy was a compliment; but I don't know of a better way to steer a course between equally prized, but incompatible values.

My third point is that such an enterprise is especially subject to criticism, both from within and without. From

within, at faculty meetings, there is a continual reassessment of the balance achieved in this complex juggling act, and frequent readjustments. Also, attempts to balance incompatible opposite values often look like—or veer toward—neglect of one of them; so there are criticisms from without. Commitment to the church, as well as to excellence, demands serious consideration of these criticisms and—in many cases—more adjustment.

As Emanuel Swedenborg said in another memorable paradox, resolving the dilemma between learning and doing; "There is a knowledge of the way from walking in it, and a walking in the way from knowledge of it." (*Divine Providence* 60)

Sometimes, SSR's theories have been better than their execution; and some of our best accomplishments have been at least partially unintended. But tonight, sharing the platform with Eric, and looking out at some former students who are beautiful in their practice of ministry, I want to say after thirty years I am proud to have been part of the faculty that has preserved the paradox so well.

The Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven was honored on the evening of this address for his 34 years as a professor and a former president of the Swedenborg School of Religion. He is retiring to Phoenix, Arizona as of August 1, 1992. (See Commencements, Change of Address).



Chris Leitner, GOSU Chair, shares a giggle with Paul Martin-Grumman, newly elected to PMSU, at reception for Eric Hoffman and Bob Kirven.

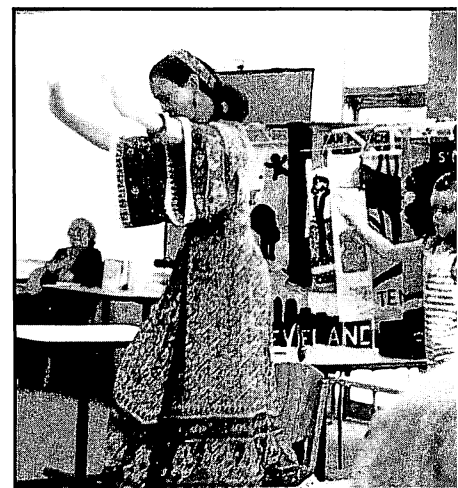


*A History of The
Alliance
Of
New-Church Women*

compiled by Ethel V. Rice

Women's Alliance past and present officers, from left: Martha King, Round Robin Chair; Carole Rienstra, Nominating Committee Chair; Nan Paget, Secretary; Nezera Mrozinski, Church Women United Rep.; Elizabeth Gutfeldt, former Religious Chair; Barb Penabaker, former President; Phyllis Bosley, new President; Nancy Perry, Treasurer. Current officers not in photo are 1st

Vice President Leone Dyer; 2nd Vice President Mary Crenshaw; Mite Box Chair Pamela Selenski (New York). Alliance President Bosley holds a copy of A History of The Alliance of New-Church Women, compiled by Ethel V. Rice, recently printed and available for \$12.00 postpaid. To order, contact: Phyllis Bosley, 3931 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94118.



Children's Program led by Donna LaRue.

“What is Home And Who is Fam



*Keynote speaker
Peggy North-Jones.*

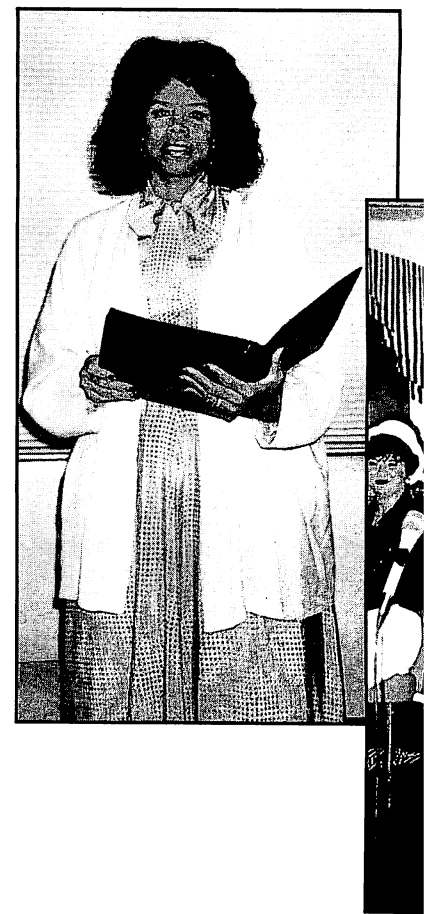
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Glimpses of Convention 1992

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The Funds Drive Committee entertains with skit demonstrating charitable remainder trusts. From left: Dave Johnson, Margaret Krause, Randy Laakko, Peter Toot, Mary Kay Klein, Duane Beougher, Wilma Wake.



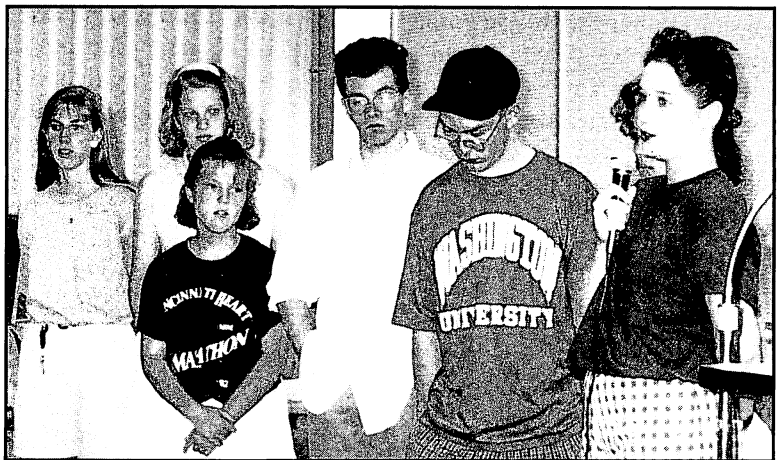
Versatile Christine Chase (St. Louis) met choir director, to jazz singer aboard the .



Convention Planning Committee, St. Louis, Missouri, 1992. From left: Duane Beougher (chair), Carole Reinstra, David Hollweger, Emily Harris (child care director), David Curral, Brenda Hollweger, Rev. David Rienstra, Marty Mason. "Well Done, Team!"



Dr. Francis Hazard, newly appointed president of Urbana University.



New church Youth League reports.



ses from
St. Louis.



Newlyweds Gard and Marianne Perry of Fryeburg, Maine.

Images of Women in Family and Society



Donna Keane

In connecting with the theme of convention this year, "What is Home . . . and Who is Family?", I am moved to share with you some images of women in family and society.

Recently, I came across an article by a male archaeologist on the remains of an early, traditional society. One of the interesting items he unearthed was the central area where women who were to give birth were taken by other women. There was a circle drawn around this space about 40 feet from its center, to keep the men away. The superstition was that the act of creation was so sacred and holy, men would profane and defile the moment. What an image of creation and birth as "sacred space." And, of course, we all learn in subsequent history, it somehow got reversed and women in birth, after birth and monthly cycles were perceived to be "unclean."

Another comment pertinent to women in society is the idea that females were often the shamans of Native American culture, often stronger and more powerful in their medicine and healing roles. As shamans, they were often the keepers of the myths, stories and traditions of the tribe and society.

Women are the keepers of family traditions and history in our society. And those traditions and histories are so important for the successful function of our families. I would like to

use an example from my family. There was, as I was growing up, something veiled and "unspoken about" in the family; but it was never admitted to or discussed. I knew my grandmother was involved and was angry and critical of me, but I never knew why. It was only when, eight years after her death, I spoke to her cousin and learned the truth about my grandmother's life, that I was able to let go of my confusion and say goodbye to her. I learned that Priscilla, her cousin, was the designated "keeper of the family Bible," as well as pictures and stories written by family members in Rhode Island from as far back as the 1700s. And I thank God for the ability to learn of my family stories and truth.

I find it interesting that the patriarchal society of ancient Israel was changed by the Diaspora or dispersion of the tribes after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. As the tribes were sent into exile in other countries, and intermingled for hundreds of years with the foreigners, it was impossible to trace tribal heritage through the father's family, since there was no way to guarantee the paternal identity! Thus, the Jewish population was only able to guarantee its heritage

lineage through the mother's family. Again, birth and creation became the women's role in maintaining the lineage of the houses of Israel.

Finally, I would like to share some thoughts on parenting. I believe that if we, as Christians, want to learn how to parent, we should not look at Jesus, but to Mary and Joseph. They knew the child they received was a gift from God, and did not "belong" to them. As they nurtured and lived with their child, they watched as he did things they did not understand. Instead of being angry, they asked him to explain, and when he did, they believed him and accepted him and his reality. They asked him what he needed from them as parents, and listened to his needs. And when the time came, they let him go to his reality and the fulfillment of his life.

And so, I applaud us all as women, as sacred spaces, and as keepers of the family traditions. I would urge you in the Alliance to continue to do the wonderful work you do for our church and our communities.

Keynote speech delivered at Women's Alliance luncheon, Convention '92, St. Louis. The Rev. Donna Keane is minister of the Elmwood Swedenborgian Church in Elmwood, Massachusetts, and is the newly-elected chair of the Council of Ministers.



Ann Westerman and assistant Eileen Kinsella lead Spouses Group in logotherapy and integrative body movement. (See page 131 to order Ann's cassette, "Guided Imagery on Home and Family.")

*"What if earth be but the shadow of heaven,
and things therein, each to the other like,
more than on earth is thought?" —Milton*

MAKING IT SO

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE READERS OF THE MESSENGER:

In the "President Reports" section of the April *Messenger*, we were asked to think about and respond to the questions on the direction our church should head in the 1990s, in order to provide input for our church's five-year plan. I have also been following a number of pleas over the past year in the "Opinion" column for our church to become more involved in social action and charitable causes—most notably a patient and persistent series of thought-provoking letters by Marilyn Turley, the latest of which asks, "Can't We Help?" (May, 1992 *Messenger*).

With Marilyn Turley's letters in mind, I scanned some *Messenger* issues of the past few years to review the opinions of others. Here are some random observations that we have made about ourselves:

Susan Turley-Moore lamented that SACC's resources in the 1990-91 calendar year "were consumed in the fight to rescind a freeze put on the committee's budget by the Cabinet" (December 1991) . . . Bob Kirven observed that "attracting people to join us in our efforts requires that we be making some efforts for them to join" (January 1991) . . . Skuli Thorhallsson felt that we need to put the mysticism back into our church (April 1992) . . . Paul Martin Gruman formulated the purpose of the Stone House Bookroom and Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound: "We, therefore, trust people to know what they need for their own growth . . . our task . . . is not to sell them, to judge them, or to convince them, but merely to support them on their inner journey to love and truth." (January 1992) . . .

Robert McCluskey concluded his report on the reorganization of the NCC of which we are a part: "I am confident that *Messenger* readers realize that religion should relate to life, and that political and social change are very much a part of life" (November 1990). At the 1990 convention, which I attended, emotions and personal feelings ran quite high both for and against allotting significant funds to Temenos.

Let me add a story of my own to these varied observations and then give you my thoughts on how we might envision a more coherent future. In February of this year my friend Margaret, who is a Unitarian, invited me to help her Brooklyn church host a Valentine's Day party for church families to come together with families from a homeless shelter. Although I have been known to complain that Unitarians have no real theology, and little Bible reading, I was struck by the fact that while I was busy trying to 'describe my religion' to Margaret, she quietly and purposefully showed me how to put together a special day that some homeless children will remember. I might add that even apart from her church involvement, and unacquainted as she is with Swedenborg's theology, Margaret is the most useful person I know. On the back of the *Messenger* these days is a statement about Swedenborg, ending with his belief that "the sincerest form of worship is a useful life." So how am I different from Margaret?

Suppose we stop the ongoing debate over whether to place our focus on growth programs or social action concerns, and attempt to look more closely at how the legacy

Swedenborg left us increases the complexity of what we ask of ourselves as a church? This would not excuse the current abysmal and troubling lack of charitable programs Marilyn Turley notes within our denomination. It would simply remind us of our accountability to do more, with smaller numbers and less money than the average denomination even seeks to address.

In the preface to *Introduction to Swedenborg's Religious Thought* by John Spalding, Richard Tafel, Sr., noted:

"The person who begins to read Swedenborg is . . . plunged, usually without warning or preparation, into a new thought world, and is asked to think within an entirely new frame of reference. For Swedenborg, the human being is a *two-world citizen*, a creature of spirit and matter, born into a two-world universe . . . Feeling powerfully the influence of both worlds . . ."

What I know that my friend Margaret does not know doesn't make me superior to her spiritually, it just causes me to view both the world and my sense of spiritual self from a different frame of reference, leading me in several potentially competitive directions. A new sense of the concrete reality of my spiritual body leads me to pursue my inner search more seriously through personal growth efforts, but if I become too self-absorbed or too fascinated with my new frame of reference from an academic standpoint, I risk not putting my beliefs into action. So, I

(Continued on page 126)

Making It So

(continued from page 125)

try somehow to convey the value of this new frame of reference to others, incorporate it into my daily life as often as possible, and still manage to blow up the balloons for that all-important Valentine's Day party of Margaret's.

David Reinstra tells us ("New Directions", January 1991 *Messenger*) that "as a denomination we have been blessed with knowledges that are vital to the world, (that) really do serve as a means to facilitate the spiritual well-being of people." But we must first fully comprehend the complexity and enormity of our task combined with our small size and limited funds. This comprehension will increase our commitment to make our financial choices more prudently, and more inclusively, remembering that as two-world citizens we are accountable to balance our priorities; and to **never allow ourselves to forget one world at the expense of the other.**

In Steve Koke's review of *Swedenborg and His Influence*, (July 1991 *Messenger*), he illumines one of the difficulties we experience as 'two-world citizens' when he quotes Jane K. Williams-Hogan's observation that a limitation of Swedenborg's writing is the paradox of attempting to address visionary material and a rational treatment of it *in the same package*. On some level we know ourselves that this is *not* a paradox, but in terms of church growth and outreach, we have a tendency to appear needlessly eclectic, forgetting that Swedenborg was not only a visionary, but also a scientist, recording his observations about the spiritual world as only a scientist would. Isolated from the full body of his work, some of the 'Memorable Relations' are enough to make heads spin. It is we who are left with the difficult task of sorting out how to convey this vision to others as the denomination of a church.

Robert McCluskey noted in the 1991 convention sermon that, "Our mission is to forge a new church, to go where no church has gone before. This is why it is difficult to say what we should be doing." He is correct

that our theology presents us with a unique challenge. But only when we have begun to take this aspect of being Swedenborgian more seriously, can we begin to make better choices, and move into our future more at peace with our decisions.

I personally believe that we continue as a denomination to live too much in our own sheltered world, out of touch with the realities of the larger church scene outside in a way that is detrimental to our own growth and usefulness, and I am frustrated by this feeling after only six years of involvement. I know there must be others who share this feeling. And while retreat centers and growth groups are wonderful efforts to be creative with our faith, they may also convey to others a scattered impression of what we are actually about.

CAN WE "GO WHERE NO CHURCH HAS GONE BEFORE"?

For example, I read with interest in the Temenos update (June 1992 *Messenger*), about other denominations and groups that have used the facilities. I am also aware that this project is the realization of a dream for some very good people in our church. But can someone who loves Temenos un-baffle me as to the relevance of Native American sweat lodges, the importance of the development of what appears to be an exclusive community there, and why we need to put \$10,000-a-piece Tiffany windows in its chapel, when some of our critical churches, including my own New York New Church (the **only one left in a key tri-state area**) are literally falling down around us? And if I'm not able to understand this, how can I explain to those visiting my church, why we have been living for two years now with a condemned sanctuary in a major city?

By making a more conscious effort to remember that the very beauty of our theology and the different framework it provides could be keeping us preoccupied with it ourselves instead of sharing it with others, church growth may begin to happen on a more general, natural level than

isolated or artificially induced programs can generate.

I'm sure I will be amongst those arguing the case for more social action as we struggle with our identity crisis in the years to come. Yet I also believe that in the higher analysis, our two-world identity commits us to diversity and balance rather than a singular focus on either internal concerns or social action, even when this means creating two smaller budgets instead of one larger one. And obviously, due to our small size, whatever we undertake as a group, while still significant, is on the symbolic level, compared with larger denominations.

Involvement in social action must become an essential part of the commitment in individual churches as well as nationally. A party like my friend Margaret gave only required about ten church members to organize it, but the gesture it represented was of use to the world just as much as a national budget for a major cause.

Re-fashioning our vision of ourselves isn't easy. If we change the world with our vision, it will currently be on a smaller scale than we would prefer, but it's no less important for us to try because of our size. Without a doubt, we will continue to argue over how to do it; but with diversity and balance in mind as higher goals, perhaps our differences needn't continue to paralyze us. Can we "go where no church has gone before"? As responsible citizens of two worlds, I believe we can. Swedenborg left a legacy which asks more of human beings than we ourselves have so far been able to address as a church. If we want to not only survive, but thrive as a denomination and indeed, if we truly love our theology, we must pay more attention to how we are living out the legacy.

In all I write, I hold much hope for the future of our denomination, and much love for my church. I hope my letter will invite others to share their thoughts and ideas about our future in a similar and ongoing fashion, since *The Messenger* exists as a valuable vehicle for doing so.

Mona Conner
New York

Swedenborgian Church Election 1992

The following persons were declared elected by Vice-President Betsy Young.

PRESIDENT: Rev. Edwin Capon
(3-year term)— Minnesota

VICE-PRESIDENT: Betsy Young
(1-year term)— California

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gloria Toot
(1-year term)— Ohio

TREASURER: John Perry (1-year term)— Maine

GENERAL COUNCIL:

Rev. David Rienstra—
(Minister, 3-year term)— Missouri
Betsy Ledingham—(Lay Person, 3-year term)— Ohio
Perry Skinner Martin—(Lay Person, 3-year term)—
Pennsylvania
Sharon Reddekopp Slough—(Lay Person, 1-year
unexpired term)—Alberta, Canada

COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT UNIT

Rev. Dr. William Woofenden—(3-year term)—
Massachusetts

EDUCATION SUPPORT UNIT

Lorraine Sando— (3-year term)—Washington

FINANCIAL & PHYSICAL RESOURCES SUPPORT UNIT

Rev. Harvey Tafel—(3-year term)—California

GROWTH & OUTREACH SUPPORT UNIT

Robert Smith—(3-year term)—Kansas

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SUPPORT UNIT

Fay Roberts-Frechette—
(3-year term)—Massachusetts

PASTORAL MINISTRIES SUPPORT UNIT

Rev. Paul Martin-Grumman—(3-year term)—
Washington

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Duane Beougher—(5-year term)—Missouri

COMMITTEE ON ADMISSION TO THE MINISTRY

Rev. Marlene Laughlin—(Minister, 3-year term)—
Massachusetts
Elizabeth Johnson—(Lay Person, 3-year term)—
Washington

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN SCHOOL OF RELIGION

Nominated (Later elected by General Council)
Dr. Edward Bohlander—(3-year term)—Kentucky
Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey—(3-year term)—
Massachusetts

Sunday School Association Annual Meeting June 26, 1992

The Sunday School Association meeting was scheduled to convene at 9:45 a.m., but the president, the Rev. Ted Klein, voluntarily relinquished the time for uncompleted business on convention floor. The meeting was held during breaks in the business session, and though hectic, accomplished a number of things.

The secretary's and treasurer's reports were read and accepted. The president reported the year's activities, including articles in *The Messenger*, publications (two books are now available: *Come Unto Me, a Child's First Book about God*, and *Rainbow Colors in the Word*, and the magazine *Five Smooth Stones* continues with 17 Sunday schools subscribing), and the new teacher's letter. He spoke of possibilities for the future:

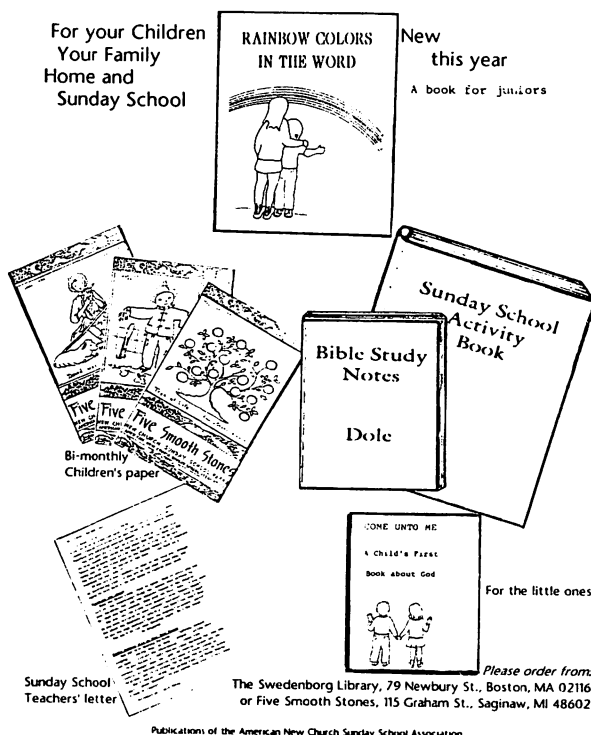
- the Association working under the umbrella of EDSU as a separate entity.
 - merging with EDSU but drawing on separate designated funds.
 - remaining an entirely separate organization.
- He suggested the coming year as a time to reexamine our purpose and make decisions.

Comments from the floor stressed the importance of our children's religious education and the need for more support from the denomination. There need to be better ways for Sunday schools and for our Associations to connect with Sunday School Association.

The following officers were elected: Gertrude Tremblay, president; Louise Woofenden, vice president; Lorrie Lipsky, secretary; Adrienne Frank, treasurer. Nominating Committee members for the coming year are Maria Korsten, Margaret Kraus and Martha Richardson. Joyce Fekete is chair of the Teaching Aids committee.

The new president invites comments and suggestions from all interested persons. Address letters to: Rev. Gertrude Tremblay, President, Box 2448, St. Paul, AB, Canada TOA 3AO.

Louise Woofenden



Opinion

In this section of the *Messenger* we are pleased to present the varied views of our readers. Letters published here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editor, the Communications Support Unit or the General Council of the Swedenborgian Church. Published letters may be edited for brevity and clarity.

When you see an opinion with which you disagree please send your own views to the Editor so that *The Messenger* can be a forum for individual viewpoints. We welcome letters on all pertinent topics.

Sunday School Association Slighted

Dear Editor:

Once again the Sunday School Association has been deprived of a decent time slot at convention, proving again that our children are low on our priority list.

We consistently put other business matters first. Granted, there were extenuating circumstances.

What was our excuse in past years?

What is the excuse of those who leave when a Sunday School Association meeting is announced? *What are our priorities?*

I ask our convention president, conventioners, ministers, Sunday School personnel, the Education Support Unit, all officers of convention and the Convention Planning Committee to change focus and stop the neglect of this most important part of our church.

Could our talented, highly-motivated, business-trained PR people use their high-powered tactics for the Sunday School or is the focus only on money?

No one has done this purposely, we have all let this happen. Let us take responsibility for it and change things.

Let's turn this squeaky wheel until it is fixed.

Muriel Bennett
Pawnee Rock, Kansas

English Identity Crisis

To the Editor:

Regarding the *Country of Spirit* book review, (July *Messenger*, p. 110) reviewer Pat Bowen's difficulties with *he* and *him* in general literary

references to mixed company might be resolved by just applying the rule that these terms are *not* supposed to be masculine unless they refer specifically to men.

When reading these general statements we are really not supposed to have any thoughts about men only. These terms are only signs, and a language can shift the meaning and implications of any word or sign arbitrarily as long as people agree to use the language.

If we nevertheless do think of men in all cases where we find *he* and *him*, or *his*, that is a problem for one to confront inwardly, not something for authors or the English language to correct.

Ironically, this can even be seen as working against men. Women always have their feminine pronouns. We men get only changeable ones. Maybe we should protest that English weakens our sense of identity.

Steve Koke
Rough 'N Ready, California

When Was the Last Time . . .

To the Editor:

Dear Members of the Swedenborgian Church:

When was the last time a Swedenborgian church was opened?

It seems that some of our church leaders are becoming quite proficient at closing down churches. The Bridge-water church is currently under attack. General Convention has cut off the financial support they have given us for many years. The Massachusetts New Church Union has repeatedly refused our pleas for financial help on various projects and programs. Our church has a very healthy and active society. The attendance at Sunday services is generally in the 20-25 person range. We also have a very solid church building to meet in. Then why on earth is the national and state management of the denomination trying to close us down?

When was the last time a Swedenborgian church was opened?

The argument given to us is that there are two other Swedenborgian churches in other towns that are

reasonably close to us. One is in Brockton (12 miles) and the other is in the East Bridgewater village of Elmwood (6 miles). We are told that it is too costly to have three churches when one may be able to do the job. This is one of those ideas that may look good on paper but will never work in the real world. All of these churches are community societies that were formed separately and have been run separately for many decades. They just plain do not interact. In the late 1800s there were Swedenborgian churches in many of the local towns in this area. I have done a little research and have found that the Catholics, the Lutherans, the Congregationalists, the Methodists and the Baptists all have churches in these three separate towns. Why can't the Swedenborgians? Instead of closing the churches we have, why don't we consider opening new ones in other neighboring towns. Does someone think we have too many churches?

When was the last time a Swedenborgian church was opened?

For the church leaders from out of state who think this idea looks good on paper, we invite you to come and see the operations of our churches. Come and attend a Sunday service in each one of these churches. Meet the people and see how the societies are run on a daily basis. Maybe you can help us expand our membership. To make plans to close a healthy church is, in my eyes, a very strange decision to make.

When was the last time a Swedenborgian church was opened?

Frankly, I cannot remember. I can remember several that have closed: Manchester, Mansfield and Newtonville. Who is in charge of the growth committee? Where might I expect to see a new Swedenborgian church? Do we have any theological students that would accept the challenge of moving into a town and starting a new society? How about established ministers?

I live in a town where there isn't a Swedenborgian church within 35 miles. How about saving a few of the churches that are on the brink of closing down? Brockton and Yarmouthport are two good examples.

(Continued on page 129)

Opinion

(from page 128)

Brockton has a good society but needs help in building a new facility. Yarmouthport has an old but nice church that can only be run in the summer. If a heating system or other improvements were put in then you could send a full-time minister down there to work together with the retiring minister to rebuild a society. I am sure there are many other churches that could be saved.

When was the last time a Swedenborgian church was opened?

• There is one basic point that seems to have gotten lost in this debate. We (the churches) are not here to serve the General Convention or the Massachusetts New Church Union. They exist to serve and help us. We should not be forced out of business because the invested funds are doing poorly. That is their problem and they should work to correct it. If the General Convention Common Fund is doing lousy (which it has since the mid 80s) then the funds should be taken out of it and put somewhere more advantageous. That is simple business logic. To abandon their duty of supporting us because someone did not make a proper return on their funds is not, in my eyes, justifiable.

On June 9, 1992, a meeting was held at the Bridgewater church to discuss the possibility of closing down and combining with the other two local churches. After much heated debate the proposal was soundly defeated. I commend the members for their vote. Even without the financial or moral support of the denomination and others we are assured that the Bridgewater church will be there for many, many years to come. Congratulations!

Brian D. Lemee
Pocasset, Massachusetts

Church Administration Changes



Executive Committee: Rev. Edwin Capon, Betsy Young, Gloria Toot, John Perry.

The General Council regrets to inform you that the Reverend Richard H. Tafel, Jr., resigned from the office of president on Saturday, June 27, 1992.

Following regularly scheduled elections, the Reverend Edwin G. Capon was installed as our new president on Sunday, June 28, 1992. In accordance with the provisions of our Constitution, this term begins immediately and will last for three years.

Mr. Capon and his wife Esther have moved to the St. Paul, Minnesota, area in response to a call from the St. Paul Society. He has the following message for *The Messenger* readers:

My nomination and election to the office of President of Convention was as great a surprise to me as to any member of the church. I agreed to

my name being put up because I felt my wide experience in Convention might enable me to serve in a constructive way. I have served twice on General Council and twice on the Augmentation Fund. I was chairman of the Council of Ministers for more than ten years and a trustee of Urbana University for at least that number of years. I was president of the Swedenborg School of Religion for twenty years. I have served parishes on both coasts as well as in mid-America and have been president for two associations.

I come to this office with the sole purpose of encouraging and supporting all promising efforts to increase the influence of the church and further its mission. I need your prayers and will welcome your ideas.

—Edwin G. Capon

Moving Toward the Light (Continued from page 114)

said, "is that anything you think there should be more of, do it randomly." And so the vision of guerilla goodness becomes a contagion of positive anarchy, as someone drops coins in a stranger's parking meter that's about to run out, someone else plants tulip bulbs along an ugly strip of roadway, a teenager shovels the snow off a neighbor's driveway when no one is looking. There are no limits except those of the imagination.

I think healthy families and individuals are rediscovering a celebration of those things that are wonderful in life, refining the best of the past and finding more joyful, spontaneous ways to express God's love that were undreamed of in the past. This health is filtering into our organizations, our church families.

To live in the "now," to be able to create and respond to those wonderful moments in life seems to boil down to the ability to value the state of our own consciousness, to understand that the most important decision we can make from moment to moment is to choose love over fear— each time we are tempted to live in our problems, let our problems define us, envelop us, bury us; each time we are tempted to take ourselves too seriously. Convention this year was full of pain but also full of the strength, awareness and healing that emerges out of facing problems, dealing with them, moving through them, and *letting go*. Love creates anew out of chaos and the void. They are part of the process of becoming.

Meanwhile, have fun practicing *random kindness and senseless acts of beauty*, and may the ranks of the guerillas of goodness swell.

Council of Ministers Report

Thirty-seven ministers and guests Mary Kay Klein, Pat Bowen, Eric Hoffman and Pavel Heger, all of the Swedenborg School of Religion community, attended the 1992 annual meetings of the Council of Ministers.

Saturday, June 10, we arrived at the campus of Washington University. On Sunday we joined together with the members of the Church of the Open Word, who welcomed us by conducting tours through their beautiful flower gardens. Our thanks to the Building and Grounds Committee and others who have helped transform the Garden Chapel into such a wonderful testimony for our denomination in greater St. Louis! Following our tours, David Rienstra, Robert Kirven, and members of the chapel conducted a worship service followed by lunch and an open house at the Rienstras.

Sunday evening we gathered for our first formal session, which was an informative and thought-provoking presentation by the Rev. Jane Clark on our convention theme. In subsequent reflection on this address, we all agreed that the church is challenged in these times to re-examine our ministries to families in the many different forms that these important units now take, and to deepen our understanding of scriptural and doctrinal teachings concerning family relationships, and to allow this understanding to impact upon our church programs and ministries.

Monday morning our business sessions began. I must share with you that words cannot convey how painful, difficult, and trying this year's meet-

ings were. We have seen our humanness. We have seen our ugliness. And it must be acknowledged that the hells have been among us in ways that we will probably never fully understand. But we have also experienced the truth of the 139th Psalm. "Even if we descend into the depths of Sheol, GOD IS THERE." And this has enabled us to see our love and concern for the ministry that can only help us in the future.

We are thankful for that. We want you to know that we are confronting head-on our—and we own it—reluctance to develop clear, definitive procedures for responding to conflicts, both of ministers with each other, and church members with ministers. We are confronting head-on our past reluctance to agree to a clear code of ethics. We pledge to our church, to you, our employers, that we will take the necessary steps to correct these deficiencies.

Further, we want you to know that our 1993 sessions will include as a primary focus issues relating to professional sexual ethics, gender in ministry, and other related topics. Qualified professional leadership will be employed to lead these workshops. We pray that God will guide us as we struggle with this process.

* * *

In other actions, the Council of Ministers:

- Voted to approve the request of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church that Pamela Shuttleworth be authorized by the ordaining minister to serve as probationary lay leader for three years in

accordance with the provisions of Article XIII, Section 1, of the Constitution of the General Convention.

- Affirmed a recommendation of the denomination's Retirement Committee that ministers who work at least 20 hours per week in ministries approved by the Council may be included in our Group Term Life Insurance Plan.
- Amended our by-laws so that starting in 1993, the chair and secretary of the council will be elected to three-year terms.
- Approved a motion mandating that grape juice will be included as one of the elements for all convention session Communion services.
- Reaffirmed our policy that all COM events shall be alcohol-free.
- Took steps toward establishing a substance abuse sub-committee, with the goal of eventually turning it over to EDSU.
- Began a process that will lead to a revision of the manner in which the Council conducts its meetings.
- In addition, we received reports from:

The Joint SSR/COM Recruitment Committee
J. Appleseed & Co.
The National Council of Churches
The Pastoral Ministries Support Unit
The Swedenborg School of Religion

Our elections resulted in the following officers:

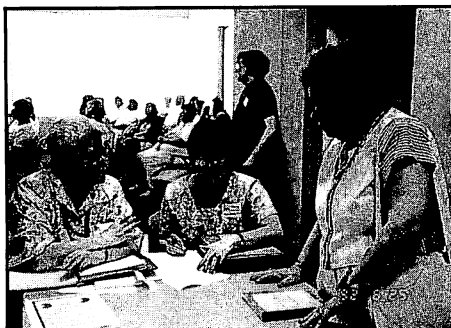
Chair—Donna Keane
Secretary—Ron Brugler*
Executive Committee—Wilma Wake*

And, following a suspension of the rules,

Convention Preacher, 1993—Dick Baxter, with George Dole agreeing to preach in 1994.

Ron Brugler
Secretary

**Note: At close of convention, Ron Brugler resigned as secretary of COM. And Robert Kirven was elected to take his place. Also Deborah Winter resigned from the Executive Committee, and Skuli Thorhallsson was elected to fill her unexpired term.*



Muriel Bennett (Kansas) and Shirley Sonmor (Sask., Canada) register delegates.



Passing out ballots for the vote. Seated in foreground is Rob Smith (Kansas) newly-elected GOSU member.

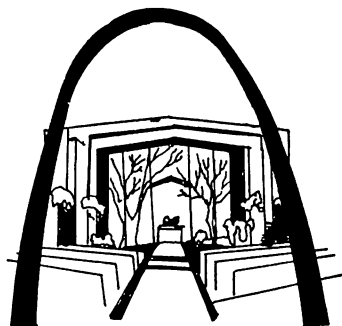
Changes of Address

Rev. Eric Allison and Cathy Gregory
The Manse
New Jerusalem Church
Remono St. & Curepipe Rd.
Curepipe, Mauritius
(after Sept. 1, 1992)

Betsy Coffman (formerly Ledingham)
437 Hickory Dr.
Marysville, OH 43040
Phone: (513) 642-2108

Rev. Dr. Robert and Marian Kirven
2922 West El Caminito Dr.
Phoenix, AZ 85051-3957

Karen Duffey
c/o Earle Family Farm
P.O. Box 27
Baird Hill Road
Center Conway, NH 03813
Phone: 603-447-6641



Available By Request
Ann Westerman's
Guided Imagery
On Home And Family
Featured at
The Opening Worship Service
Convention '92
Washington University

This cassette, containing the beautiful guided imagery done at convention is now available for purchase. On the other side you will find a meditation done for World Peace Day, December 31, 1991 at Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis, Missouri. The tape is \$8.00 postage paid. Proceeds will go to the Garden Chapel Outreach Program. Send check or money order to The Church of the Open Word, 1040 Dautel Road, St. Louis, MO 63146.

(Ann Westerman is a logotherapist and member of the St. Louis Church. She facilitated the spouses group at convention this year.) See photo, page 124.

Commencements

Baptisms

Burke, Martin—Harley Burke and Nathan Martin, children of Cherie Martin, were baptized into the Christian faith May 10, 1992, at the Fryeburg Swedenborgian Church, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

Fiske—Loren Nicole Fiske, daughter of James and Mary Jane (Wheaton) Fiske, was baptized into the Christian faith June 14, 1992, at the Fryeburg Swedenborgian Church, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

Thurston—Brianna C. Thurston, daughter of Irving and Lisa (Kiesman) Thurston, was baptized into the Christian faith May 10, 1992, at the Fryeburg Swedenborgian Church, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

Tillinghast—Danielle A. Tillinghast, daughter of Tony and Angela (Holt) Tillinghast was baptized into the Christian faith June 7, 1992, at the Fryeburg Swedenborgian Church, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

Confirmations

Costello—Shannon Costello was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church June 14, 1992, at the Bridgewater Swedenborgian Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, the Rev. Marlene Laughlin officiating.

Erickson—James E. Erickson was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church April 19, 1992, at the Virginia Street Church, St. Paul, Minnesota, the Rev. Edwin G. Capon officiating.

Watson—Mrs. Astrid Watson was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church March 15, 1992, at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Alberta, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Deaths

Lawrence—Pauline Roberts Lawrence, 95, entered the spiritual world June 28, 1992, in Lisbon Falls, Maine. A gifted teacher, actress, and community worker, Mrs. Lawrence was a lifetime member of the New York Swedenborgian Society and a 65-year member of the Bath Swedenborgian Church, and was the oldest living member of the Lisbon Shakespeare Club. She is survived by a son, a daughter, 12 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Peebles—Mrs. Elinore Peebles, 95, dedicated member of the Boston Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world July 13, 1992. She leaves her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to carry on the Peebles tradition. A memorial service will be conducted in the fall. Interment was July 18 in Forest Hills Cemetery, Jamaica Plain.

Sommer—Christopher Sommer, 20, son of Pat and Dick Sommer of Urbana, Ohio, entered the spiritual world August 15, 1991. The Rev. Ron Brugler of Kitchener, Ontario performed the celebration of life service written especially for Chris by his parents.

Wanner—Mabel Wanner, long-time member of the Virginia Street Church (Swedenborgian), St. Paul, entered the spiritual world December 4, 1991, in Duluth, Minnesota. Services were held in Duluth.

Ward—Bernice Ward, longtime member of the Virginia Street Church (Swedenborgian), St. Paul, entered the spiritual world February 7, 1992, in Menominee, Wisconsin.

Ask Swedenborg

By George Dole

Q. Where in the doctrines of charity and use is guidance found to meet the needs of the poor, the ill, the helpless, the handicapped within society? Does Swedenborg speak of an effort on the part of organized groups to meet these needs?

Marilyn Turley, Tumwater, Washington

A. In *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrines* 85, Swedenborg states that "It is the common opinion at this day that everyone is equally the neighbor and that benefits are to be conferred on everyone who needs assistance." In *Divine Providence* 326:8, he mentions people who "endow rest homes and hospices, give alms daily, and help widows and orphans," and in *True Christian Religion* 459:8, there is a similar reference to "rest homes, hospitals, orphanages, and hospices" as endowed or organized charities. A negative reference to beggars as "for the most part" living impious lives (*Arcana Coelestia* 3688:3) may be

somewhat offset by explicit mention of "advantageous benefactions," especially giving to the poor and to beggars (*TCR*. 426:2), but this seems to assume giving by individuals, rather than by groups.

It would take a far more specialized historian that I to gather data on the societal structures for care for the disadvantaged in eighteenth-century Sweden. It is generally relevant that Swedenborg drew a strong parallel between "charity" and justice (see *Heaven and Hell*, 535) and we may suspect that if pressed, he would urge a total restructuring of society along heavenly lines.

Please send your questions to the editor or to George Dole, Swedenborg School of Religion, 48 Sargent Street, Newton, MA 02158.

Large Group Photo Available

The 8 x 10 large group color photo from the 1991 Kitchener convention is available from the Central Office for \$10.00 including postage. Profits will go to offset childcare expenses at the 1992 St. Louis convention.

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 28, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London 15 years after his death. This 1787 organization eventually spawned the present Swedenborgian Church.

As a result of Swedenborg's own spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church today exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

Swedenborg shared in his theological writings a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of Scripture as a story of inner-life stages as we learn and grow. Swedenborg would conclude, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.

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