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# The Messenger

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SWEDENBORG SCHOOL OF RELIGION

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## The Messenger

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## Moving Toward the Light

### From the Editor

We honor mothers in the month of May, and we also honor those whom we have lost in the wars.

In "Between Yesterday and Tomorrow," Rev. Gertrude Tremblay writes of her 50th high school reunion, "a thousand years is like yesterday, once it has passed into history." And 1942, which seemed long ago in the sixties, now seems like yesterday. The years between now and then have telescoped. Events that bring people and living memories out of a shared past can do that.

In my continued cleaning-out efforts, I came across a battered brown envelope containing the scraps of verse my mother wrote during the war years. They had been filed away following her death in 1977, to be looked at "later," when we had time. There weren't many; the envelope also contained rejection slips from various popular magazines of the day. None had ever been published. Most were written on the backs of yellow parts-memo sheets, composed on her lunch hour after she went to work for Lockheed Aircraft in 1942. I sent copies to my daughters, who work at their own writing now and were happy for a glimpse into this unknown aspect of their grandmother.

Fifty years collapsed as I read over these faded, fragile offerings. I was once again back in our kitchen in Burbank watching anxiously as my grandmother combed black dye through my mother's long hair, in an effort to cover the gray, make her appear younger than her 35 years, and prepare her for the world of outside work she must enter when my father left. But it turned out that Lockheed was hiring women even older than 35—unheard of then, and a godsend to our survival.

Many hands were needed for the war effort. My mother and thousands of other women left home and children to enter the workforce out of personal necessity, feeling good about doing their bit, worrying about the children; most not aware that they were helping change the course of world events, including the status of women and work. They were troopers, doing what was in front of them to do.

Fifty years later, it gives me great pleasure to publish this little poem of my mother's, and I dedicate it to her and her courageous sisters.

### Mama Works in Aircraft Now

Mama works in Aircraft now  
Home will never be the same  
She wears long pants and  
carries lunch  
And signs her checks with  
her full name.

When she used to speak of  
gussets  
We knew she meant her  
sewing  
But now it's Vega fabricated,  
Lockheed stock—or Boeing

She allots us certain jobs to do  
Our playtime has been rationed  
Menus and schedules are  
written and signed  
And she calls this—  
"organization."

We're proud of Mom's new  
knowledge  
Of nuts and bolts and screws  
But life will be much more  
peaceful  
When she returns to pies,  
cakes and stews

*Evelyn Wheat*  
September, 1942

# NECESSARY LOSSES

Rachel Rivers

There is an idea held by some scientists that infants are merely a bundle of physical instincts. We turn to mother to satisfy our physical hunger first and foremost, and it is only after we have learned that mother will feed us that we begin, as a side effect, to love her.

And then there is an alternate view that the need for love and human connection is planted in us as the very purpose in life. It is, of course, this second view to which the church ascribes. Mothers are special to us right from the start, not merely because they see to our physical survival needs, but because it is through them that we seek our first human connection with life and begin our long journey of learning to love.

Salimbene, a medieval chronicler, narrates a story about Frederick II, the scientifically curious despot who ruled the Holy Roman Empire in the 13th century. Frederick wanted to find out what kind of speech children would have if they never heard anyone else talk. So he instructed foster mothers and nurses to look after their newborn infants, feeding them and caring for them, but never holding or cuddling them, never making eye contact and playing with them, and never speaking to them. He wanted to learn whether they would speak the Hebrew language, which was one of the oldest, or Greek, or Latin, or Arabic, or perhaps the language of their parents of whom they had been born.

But he labored in vain because the children all died. For they could not live without the affection, joyful faces and loving words of their foster mothers. Although this is very likely a legend, Frederick's findings could have been accurate. The psychologist Spitz found that many infants raised in an orphanage under good hygienic conditions but completely impersonally, without love and affection,

gradually wasted and died.

The need to be loved and cared for by mother is so tremendous that it is not uncommon to hear a true story such as the tragic case in which a psychologically disturbed mother doused her young son with alcohol and set him on fire. In the hospital, his body covered with third degree burns, he still cried for his mommy, even though he knew it was she who had burned him.

It sometimes doesn't seem to matter what kind of mother a child has, or whether she deserved to be turned to. The need for mother, for basic human support and nurturing is so great that the hand will reach out, even if it will get slapped.

◆

*The need for  
love and human  
connection is planted  
in us as the very  
purpose in life.*

◆

Yes, we are so designed that the connection with our mother is the most important aspect of our existence for our early years. But nevertheless, this needs to change. Even if our mothers have been absolutely wonderful, slowly the time arrives when we need to leave her as the center of our universe. As young children, our curiosity in our environment pulls our focus away from relying solely on mom. We start exploring, at first running back every few minutes, but then straying farther and staying away longer. In fact, when a daughter or son is grown up and leaves home and mom for the big world, this loss is a success for mom and grown child alike. It is a necessary loss.

## Losses Can Be Beginnings

There is a story about two brothers—twins—who were earnestly discussing their situation. "I have a strong premonition," said one, "that we are about to die."

"So have I," said the other. "I believe we shall both die together, and pretty soon!"

"What a disaster!" lamented the first. "It's all such a tragic waste, considering what progress we have made, and what we have achieved here in this place."

His brother meditated for a while. "Don't laugh," he said, "but I believe there may be a life after this—a continuation of consciousness, perhaps in another mode of existence, for which we have been unwittingly preparing during our life here."

The other twin smiled skeptically and shook his head (something he had only recently learned to do). "I doubt it," he said. "It's only wishful thinking."

"Well, perhaps you are right. But I have often wondered what has been the purpose of it all. Why have we eyes, when there is no light to see by? Why ears, when there is nothing to hear—except this eternal thump-thump, thump-thump, thump-thump? And why have we developed legs and feet, considering we have been carried all our lives?"

"On the other hand," said his brother, "If there were in fact some future life awaiting us in another sphere, surely someone would have come back and informed us? But no traveler has ever returned. Death, I believe, winds up everything. We slip away, and that's the end."

"How long have we been alive, do you think?" asked the first.

"About nine months," replied the other. "That's pretty usual, you know."

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## Necessary Losses

(Continued from page 67)

So often, we experience loss as an end, when it turns out to be a beginning. But that doesn't mean we enjoy it or even welcome it. Sometimes the loss is timely, like going off to school for the first time, and sometimes it is untimely: the loss of a home by fire. But regardless, loss hurts.

We can take comfort in knowing that God allows us to suffer severe losses only because of the larger gains. God's perspective is eternity—not in time. So we who feel limited in time feel devastated, but God knows that "this too shall pass."

God's vision for us is that we be like the chrysalis, the stunningly beautiful butterfly that emerges finally from the cocoon of slow and difficult development. It is cramped in there. It is dark. It is lonely.

Our part is to reach out toward God and trust the process. In living life on earth we are called to give ourselves to life and to love. Hopefully, our mothers instill in us from the very beginning a trust that God's life is worth reaching out to. It starts with mom, but then extends out to finally encompass all of creation, to become connected and attached to everything that can make our heart sing: our homes, the land, the mountains and rivers, our neighbors, our friends, our church, our family. Losses will occur: people move, communities change, our children leave home; we can't walk and get around like we used to; our hearing and sight fails us; those close to us pass on.

### Loving Through Losses

But God calls for us to learn to love through all of this. These are the conditions into which God puts us to truly learn about love. And so we are often called to give up what we love. Change. It becomes spiritual growth when we mourn the loss, but cherish the lessons gained and the goodness experienced. It is spiritual death when we cling too long to bitterness, blame, or guilt, and condemn ourselves or others, and shut out the ongoingness of life.

Yet through all losses there is one relationship we can always trust: there is One who will always be there to love us and to receive our love. There is One connection that will never be broken. There is One love that we can always count on and One truth that will never be twisted. There is One being who will always see the best in us and who will always know our good intentions.

And ironically the only way we have of participating in this perfect relationship which knows no interruption is through being a part of one another's lives—through caring for people who will, in one way or another, bring us pain; through loving a community which will not stay as it is—through giving our hearts to be broken.

And the only way I know to withstand the pain of the loss—of the brokenness, is to remember that the good things and the true things that have been borne through our relationships remain. Even when losses occur, the goodness and truth we value *is God* and that can never be lost or die.

Life is full of necessary losses. Mothers know this so well. They watch their children leave them a million times, and they watch their children struggle with their own pains and losses.

The beautiful silver lining is that through living our losses the best way that we can, we discover what is most important to us, what we cherish the most deeply, what we value the most highly. And then we have the opportunity to embrace these qualities and to live them in the continuing unfolding of our lives. This is how we come to know and love God, and one another, and ourselves.

And when our days on this earth are over, we are promised that we will be reunited with all that we truly love. The loss is real, but temporary.

*The Rev. Rachel Rivers is co-minister of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.*

## New Home for Swedenborg Foundation

The Swedenborg Foundation began operations out of its new home in West Chester, Pennsylvania, March 1, 1993. Please note the following address change and phone:

P.O. Box 549

West Chester, PA 19381-0549

(215) 430-3222

Customer Service:

1-800-355-3222

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### MARKETING MANAGER

Put your marketing experience to work for the Swedenborg Foundation, the largest American publisher of the works of Swedenborg, and related literature. We seek an energetic, professional book marketer who will be responsible for publicity, sales, and pricing strategies for the Foundation's publications and programs. High priority to candidates with 3-5 years relevant trade or religious book experience. Full benefits; nonsmoking environment. For further information or confidential consideration, send a cover letter stating salary expectations along with resume to: Executive Director, Swedenborg Foundation, P.O. Box 549, West Chester, PA 19381-0549.

# Nominees Selected

The Swedenborgian Church's Nominating Committee has selected the following nominees to fill national offices.

## Vice-President (1-year term)

Betsy Young  
*California*

For the past three-and-a-half years I have served as vice-president of our denomination. The tasks have been challenging, often unpredictable, and personally rewarding as I joined with other devoted Swedenborgians in the ongoing work of our church. It would be a privilege to continue in this capacity next year.

## Treasurer (1-year term)

John Perry  
*Maine*

Serving as the denomination's treasurer this past year has been gratifying. Changes made over the last three years in coordinating computer programs used for the budgetary process and year-end calculations are nearing completion. Automation of the treasurer's report has been integrated into the book-closing in the Central Office. With the new chart of accounts that has been operating well this past year, we approach the long-term goals for automation of the books.

I am looking forward to continuing this progress by working as treasurer for another year.

## Recording Secretary (1-year term)

Gloria Toot  
*Ohio*

I have been a member of Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church for about 23 years and intermittent administrative assistant or administrator for almost 11 years. I am currently working there as office manager/administrator. I have served on the board of directors at Kemper Road for many terms and as board secretary several times. I am active in the Ohio Association and have also been serving the denomination as recording secretary for two terms.

## General Council (3-year term)

Rev. Randall E. Laakko  
*Delaware*

I have been pastor of the Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, Delaware, for 26 years. Past service includes chair of the Council of Ministers for eight years, service on General Council in the 70s, and president of the denomination from 1984 to 1990. I am currently serving on General Council (1990-1993), the Temenos Board of Managers, and as a minister of the Middle Atlantic Association, ex-officio, without vote, as chair. I feel this past service and background will be a resource to the ongoing work of the General Council as the church continues to reach out in service and growth.

Sharon Reddekopp Slough (3-year term.  
Completed 1-year unexpired term)  
*Alberta, Canada*

I am currently secretary to the Calgary New Church Society and the Western Canada Conference, recently served as secretary of the Sunday School Association, and am on Convention's Nominating Committee. I am enrolled in the lay leadership course, teach Sunday School and lead several church services a year.

As a minister's daughter who grew up in the denomination, I feel I have a perspective on our particular concerns from both a layperson and clergy viewpoint. Western Canada has members living great distances apart and therefore, while sharing a common theology with General Convention, has unique needs and concerns. Through my participation in denominational activities, I hope to bring my people closer to our fellow Swedenborgians in other parts of Canada and the U.S.

Lawrence C. Young, Sr. (3-year-term)  
*South Easton, Massachusetts*

Mr. Young is a fourth generation member of the Boston church. He is currently serving on the board of trustees at Urbana University, is chair of the Boston Society Board of Trustees, secretary/treasurer of the Wesley N. Gray Trust, a trustee of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, and is co-chair with the Rev. F. Robert Tafel for the 1993 Convention Planning Committee.

Past service includes nine years as former president of the Boston Society, and member of the Board of Directors of the Swedenborg School of Religion.

Mr. Young is married to Dorothy deB. Young, is a retired engineer and licensed real estate broker and father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

## Communications Support Unit (1-year unexpired term)

Rev. Ernest O. Martin  
*Pennsylvania*

I have served in the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church for 40 years including three parishes, the presidency of the denomination, staff of Wayfarers Chapel, and currently director of Temenos. I served on the Department of Communications, directed the publications and advertising at the Wayfarers Chapel, and am responsible for all the publications at Temenos.

Ethelwyn (Muff) Worden  
*Maine* (3-year term)

I am a lifelong Swedenborgian and member of the Boston church, with a long affiliation with the Philadelphia church, including three years as secretary to a former president of the denomination, the late Richard H. Tafel, Sr., during which time I became involved with the church on a national level. Since then, I have served as faculty for the Leadership Education Institute for several years, and was on the Board of Publications. While serving as director of Central Office from 1984 to 1990, I was on the boards of Ur-

bana University and the Swedenborg Foundation. Since 1963 I also helped organize the annual conventions.

I am a professional musician, with a long history of teaching and performing in various capacities. In Maine since 1990, I am a legal secretary with an insurance firm, a board member of the Geneva Point Center in New Hampshire, a teacher of Elderhostels, and still active as a music professional.

I continue to focus on the church at the national and international levels, and look forward to being involved in my favorite area of communications. I am at home with the written and spoken word, and I feel my experience and interest would be of use to the Communications Support Unit.

## Education Support Unit (3-year term)

Nancy McBride  
*B.C., Canada*

My husband, two children and I live in the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia, where for the past three years we have been part of a small but dedicated and enthusiastic New Church group. I have assumed the role of Sunday School superintendent and thoroughly enjoy serving the needs of our church in this capacity. Prior to our move west, I was a life-long active member of the Kitchener, Ontario church where I served on the church board.

I believe that we are living in an exciting era where the choices we make now are of paramount importance for the future of our children and our children's children in the life of the church. Education plays a monumental role in meeting these challenges. I am enthusiastic about the future of our church and serving on the Education Support Unit would be a privilege.

## Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU) (3-year term)

Polly Baxter  
*Washington, D.C.*

I have become intimately acquainted with the financial position of the Swedenborgian Church during the time I have served as assistant to the treasurer and while I redesigned the Chart of Accounts for the Swedenborgian Church. Professionally, as senior manager in the Mortgage Operations Division of the Federal National Mortgage Association, I have gained extensive experience in long-range planning. I would like to be elected to FPRSU in order to allow my abilities to better serve the church.

## Growth and Outreach Support Unit (GOSU) (3-year-term)

Rev. Steve Pults  
*Michigan*

I am presently pastor of the Royal Oak Swedenborgian Church, youth minister for the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL), and director of Almont Summer School. Having served one term on GOSU, I'm excited about the possibilities this support unit has in working with new forms of ministry and new ways our

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church can connect with people throughout the U.S. and Canada. We are asked to be experimenters and consider what might be effective throughout our denomination as prototypes for growth.

As a member of GOSU with Chris Laitner and Rob Smith, I am excited about our various perspectives coming together to look at important questions for the future of our church. I believe we are finding answers through the fine ministries connected with Growth and Outreach—in the Pacific Northwest, New Hampshire, Portland, Maine; British Columbia and San Francisco.

#### **Information Management Support Unit (IMSU) (3-year term)**

Fred Hille  
*Minnesota*

Fred is a Senior Systems Analyst with 3M Information Technology Division. He has 25+ years experience in data processing, both in main frame computers and more recently involved with Personal Computers, local area networking, and telecommunications. He has extensive background in administration and management of data processing including software evaluation and design as well as hardware selection. Fred is a member with his wife of the St. Paul Virginia Street Church. He participated in the 1992 convention in St. Louis and attended the PMSU training workshop at Almont, Michigan in August.

#### **Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU) (3-year term)**

Rev. Ron Brugler  
*Ontario, Canada*

I am currently serving as minister of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener and as church representative to the Urbana University Board of Trustees.

My past service includes minister of the Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Urbana churches, religious education consultant for the Board of Education, administrator of the Almont Retreat Center, and secretary to the Council of Ministers.

Having served on PMSU for the past three years, I have come to appreciate the important function that PMSU fulfills in our denomination. We have worked hard to provide extensive support to our churches in the areas of board training, church growth, advertising, and development of new programs on the local level. These efforts are bearing fruit in many of our church centers.

In accepting nomination for a second term, I pledge that if elected I will continue to devote many hours toward overseeing the programs we have instituted and expanding our support to clergy and laity in the areas of spiritual growth, assimilation of new members, and new forms of ministry that evolve within our churches.

#### **Committee on Admission into the Ministry (CAM) (2-year term)**

Marilyn Turley  
*Washington*

I have been active in our church since entering Sunday School at the Sheridan Road New Church in Chicago. I have served on various local and national boards and committees, most of them concerned with education. I have been involved with SSR as a student's wife, faculty wife and mother of two graduates, as guest teacher and member of the board. I remain interested in supporting SSR students' education so that they are prepared to the highest possible level to

meet the needs of ministry in today's world.

My professional life has been public school education, both in regular and special education on the elementary level. The last 14 years have been as a coordinator and consulting teacher for children with special needs. I received my Master's degree in Education from Lesley College, Cambridge, Mass.

#### **Board of Trustees, Swedenborg School of Religion (SSR)**

(2-year unexpired term)  
Karen Laakko Feil

I became aware of the Swedenborgian Church through my brother, Randall Laakko, and became a member of the Chicago Society after moving to Chicago from Connecticut. Service to the church includes 10 years participation on the Chicago church board, presently serving as treasurer; facilitation of an Illinois Association strategic planning session in 1991, member of the Communications Support Unit 1987-88.

Professionally, I have 20 years experience in marketing and business management and am currently employed as the senior director of planning for The Bradford Exchange, a giftware and artworks company. I have served on several other business-related boards and have been director of The Collector's Information Bureau since 1991. The aim of my participation on the SSR Board is to contribute to SSR's success in attracting leaders/teachers with the entrepreneurial spirit needed to establish new churches and build existing ones.

Rev. Horand K. Gutfeldt, Ph.D.  
*California (3-year term)*

I was born in Latvia. My parents belonged to a New Church group there, but I was uninterested in religion until my late teens when a section from Swedenborg on regeneration struck home and I prayed that my life might be directed by that ideal.

Our family fled Latvia, and after a time as prisoner of war in Belgium, I was privileged to study at Marburg University in Germany, where I enrolled with Tillich, Bultmann and Benz, who was deeply impressed by Swedenborg.

Before graduation, I came to the New Church Theological School in Cambridge (now SSR), where I completed ministerial studies and obtained a Master's degree in Education at Harvard. I served as assistant, later as second minister to our church in Berlin, Germany, and ten years in Vienna, Austria, where I obtained my doctorate. I made many visits to our church groups behind the iron curtain in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and East Germany. In 1968 I became assistant professor of Behavioral Science at Urbana University, also working as part-time chaplain there, and was involved with the accreditation of the institution. After eight years, I was called to the Hillside Community Church in El Cerrito, California, where I served until retirement. I became adjunct professor at the J.F. Kennedy University in Orinda, teaching a course in Egyptian mythology.

I have twice served our churches on Mauritius, worked on the Board of Missions, was president for six years of the Berkeley Area Interfaith Council and six years as president of the Pacific Coast Association.

I look forward to serving on the SSR board, offering input from a wide range of unique experiences in various countries serving the Swedenborgian Church.

Rev. Jerome Poole  
*Delaware (3-year term)*

I am a lifetime member of the Swedenborgian Church, the last 36 years by personal choice. Following ordination in 1965, I served the Wilmington and Philadelphia churches in team ministry with Randall Laakko until 1967, and joined others in guiding adolescents through the experience of the Leadership Education Institute. From 1968 until elected to the Board of Trustees of SSR Five years ago, I served for two terms on the SSR Board of Directors and three terms on the Board of Managers. For the last five years I have chaired the Board of Trustees and have been actively involved in fund raising for both the denomination and the theological school.

I am married, with three children. I believe deeply in the value of the prophets, old and new, and want to be one of the many who contribute to SSR's continuing evolution as a prophet center.

#### **Nominating Committee (5-year term)**

Karen Nielsen Conger  
*California*

I am a third-generation Swedenborgian currently living in California's Eastern Sierra. A Pacific Coast Association (PCA) member-at-large, I will begin my second three-year term as secretary of PCA this autumn. I am a past director of the PCA Board and I have served on the Wayfarers Chapel Board of Managers for the last three years. I am also a member of the nominating committee for the SSR Board of Trustees.

The PCA, and the denomination in general, are still rich with talent largely untapped. My election to the Nominating Committee would fill a gap since there is currently no one serving in that capacity from the western United States. I would find it very rewarding to help the Swedenborgian Church realize its potential by helping to find people who are ready, willing, and able to serve the church and the world.

## **Don't Forget To Register For Convention!**

Your tear-out two-page registration form is in your April 1993

*Messenger*. If you have misplaced your April *Messenger* and need a registration form, please contact Central Office at 617-969-4249, or Patte LeVan at 219-325-8209, and we will be glad to send you one.



## Book Review

# Free Play

*Free Play: The Power of Improvisation in Life and the Arts.*

Stephen Nachmanovitch. Los Angeles, Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1990.

I thought it was a strange assignment: *Free Play: The Power of Improvisation in Life and the Arts*? By a musician! Will *Messenger* subscribers read such a book? What has this to do with a small church that is struggling to stay alive?

As I started reading, I was a little bored. It seemed that the author was talking about creativity in a rather intellectual way. Surely that is the opposite of the spirit of improvisation, where one, having mastered technique and skill, opens to the spirit and allows the music to be played. The author acknowledges, "Knowledge of the creative process cannot substitute for creativity." But the rest of the paragraph points out that knowing the challenges and the pitfalls may encourage us to persevere in the struggle which generates "incredible pleasure and joy." And so I persevered, finding myself drawn farther and farther into the heart of this book.

Nachmanovitch is a violinist; what has this subject of improvisation to do with you and me? The creative process is a spiritual path. As we engage our creativity, we become more truly who we are, moving eternally toward our unique potential. As God is creator, creatrix and we are created in that image, we are creators also.

We need not be musicians, actors or artists to improvise. Every time we speak, we are improvising sentences out of words and rules of grammar. "Every conversation is a form of jazz." If we learn to bring inspiration into all our daily activities, enjoying each process without always focusing on the outcome or completion, our life would indeed be a work of art. If we learn to connect with each other person, whether in friendship, work, or teaching, interacting with live bodies in that moment, our lives would take on new

excitement. Our churches, peopled by second and third generation Swedenborgians, loyal and comfortable with familiar services and ideas, have often put out the message, "We have the answers." If, instead, we started grappling with the questions of our lives, we would contact others who are asking the big ones: who are we, where are we going, what shall we do with our lives, how can we make our relationships work, what meaning is there in my daily work? Swedenborg found his answers in searching beyond the conventional wisdom of his day. His quest could be a model for our own. "Creativity," writes Nachmanovitch, "exists in the searching even more than in the finding." Such a shift would also affect the way we teach. "Education must teach, reach and vibrate

the whole person rather than merely transmit knowledge.

Faithfulness to the creative process entails a surrender, we are warned. We must give up a lot of control, give up our expectations. The reality is that when we improvise we move into the unknown. Not knowing is hard for us in this age of information, but—and—in the not knowing there is mystery and there is life. A creative life is risky business, yet the reality is that we risk our lives every time we step out of our doors or into our cars.

Beyond the personal, there is a source of creative energy recognized in every spiritual tradition. The common theme, Nachmanovitch points out, is that "the person is a vessel or conduit through which a transpersonal force flows. That force can be

enhanced through practice and discipline of various sorts; it can become blocked or bottled up through neglect, poor practice, or fear; it can be used for good or evil; it flows through us, yet we do not own it, it appears as a principal factor in the arts, in healing, in religion." Our task is to engage in the practice or discipline, get our ego, or little self, out of the way, and let the magic juice flow. Why discipline: Because "everything in nature arises from the power of

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LEFT: Remedios Varo, *Musica Solar*, 1960.

## Free Play

(Continued from page 71)

free play sloshing against the power of limits. Our creator used the simple materials at hand, "water, fire, moonlight, mud", or was it before those a simple dot of energy which resulted in the big bang.

"These creative processes are a paradigm for how our creative processes work at those especially beautiful moments when the work flows and work is play and the process and the product are one." As we learn to listen to the flow of transpersonal energy, the creative and the receptive resonate, "matching and answering each other."

Yet we need limits for our play, rules for our games, time limits or spatial boundaries. When we recognize the limits, they form the container for our play. Our children's all-time favorite of toys were the simple blocks my brother made by cutting and sanding pieces of pine board. We learn to see possibilities in the ordinary. Stradivari found a pile of waterlogged oars on the docks in Venice, and from these made some of his most beautiful violins. Mistakes can become pearls, requiring ingenious solutions which create new patterns.

When we engage in the creative process, we soon find obstacles looming in our path. We find ourselves in vicious circles of addiction, have to's that Nachmanovitch calls do-loops, with no logical way out of endless repetition. We become addicted to our present comfortable ways; needing to stay in our present job, though we are bored and not growing; needing a church service always the same; doing things for others that they could and should do for themselves; waking up with coffee, winding down with alcohol, spending evenings mesmerized by repetitious television shows. Or, on the other hand, we get into don't-loops—procrastination, putting off our changes until tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. Both of these vicious circles have their roots in fear. Mostly we fear failure, sometimes we fear success. Our fears are fed by ghosts, judges, parents, teachers, critics. Nachmanovitch en-

courages us to gather all those fears and simply drop them like a big suitcase, collect every negative statement we make to ourselves and burn them up.

Such an act requires courage. For it is ego that fears failure, fears to be criticized or laughed at, as we were when we were little children, unable to protect ourselves. To create, you, and your ego, must disappear. The blocks or obstacles keep us from surrendering and allowing our artistry to take over, without hopes, without expectation, letting inspiration flow. Sometimes we have to take a break or a Sabbath from our work, let it ripen as we rest, and the new solution will burst forth. Many a scientific problem has been solved overnight in sleep and dreams. "The only antidote to destruction is creation," writes Nachmanovitch. When we get to an impasse, "What can pull us out is the fresh perception fostered by a creative attitude, as well as the openness to the free play of possibilities."

Too often we give our power away to professionals. We need them for their skill, for their knowledge, for their experience. But the real healing is done by us. "Beyond the drive to create is yet a deeper level of commitment, a state of union with a whole that is beyond us." And from this union, we act courageously out of love.

*Free Play* offers us each a challenge for our personal lives and for our churches. "We can cling to that which is passing, or has already passed, or we can remain accessible to—even surrender to—the creative process, without insisting that we know in advance the ultimate outcome for us, our institutions, or our planet. To accept this challenge is to cherish freedom, to enhance life, and to find meaning."

*Reviewed by Perry S. Martin*

*Perry S. Martin, Ph.D., is a psychotherapist, potter, writer, and program director at Temenos Conference and Retreat Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania.*

## American New Church Sunday School Association

*Report of the nominating committee:*

President — Rev. Gertrude Tremblay

Vice-President — Rev. Eric Hoffman

Secretary — Lorrie Lipski

Treasurer — Adrienne Frank

*Committee Chairpersons:*

Outreach — Rev. Eric Allison

Teaching Aid — Joyce Fekete

Teacher Training — Betty Hill

Publications — Rev. Jim Lawrence

*Nominating Committee:*

Martha Richardson '94

Margaret Kraus '95

OPEN '96

*Maria Korsten, Chairperson '93*

*Phone (403) 476-5007*

## Notice of Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the American New Church Sunday School Association will be held at Gordon College, Wenham, Massachusetts, Saturday, June 26, 1993 at 10:15 a.m. The room number/name will be posted in the convention reception area not later than June 23.

*Lorrie Lipski  
Secretary, SSA*

## Attention Philately Buffs!

For many years, the Swedenborgian Church has had a fund-raising project to benefit Missions. Members and friends of the church have collected U.S. commemorative and foreign stamps from mail they received and have sent them to the Central Office or directly to Phillip Alden, Sr. Proceeds from sale of these stamps were used to support Missions at home and abroad. After many years of devoted service, Mr. Alden is stepping down as stamp chair. Is there a *Messenger* subscriber and philately buff who would like to take over this project? Please call the Central Office for more information (617-969-4240).



## Archival Gold

# Our Swedenborgian Heritage

*(Seventh in a Series)*

Louise Woofenden

### *The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition—The Women Speak*

The World's Columbian Exposition, held (a year late) in Chicago in 1893 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America, was a world's fair devoted to arts, architecture and trade. George Westinghouse displayed for the first time the alternating current generator, the basis of modern electric power in the U.S. Louis Sullivan's Transportation Building was one of the very earliest examples of modern architecture. Henry Ford is said to have gotten the idea for his automobile at this fair. It was a seedbed for ideas of the New Age.

The director of works and a prime mover of the exposition was a Swedenborgian, the noted architect Daniel Hudson Burnham. He praised the practical wisdom of the men who raised huge sums of money for the building of the "White City," in that they "freed the arms of the allied arts which until now had been bound since Columbus' day."

Freedom, the sign of the New Age, was also evident in an undertaking which was part of the Exposition, the World's Religious Congresses. The idea for the Congresses was conceived in the mind of another ardent Swedenborgian, C.C. Bonney, directly out of his conviction that the New Church would finally prove the reconciliation and crown of all the religions of the world.

The preliminary statement for the Religious Congresses may be the first document in history signed by a Jewish Rabbi, a Catholic Archbishop, Protestant clergy, both orthodox and liberal, and Quaker—and a New Churchman! The paper also stated as a goal the participation of Brahmans, Buddhists, Confucianists, Parsees and Mohammedans, and these were in fact represented.

There was a Parliament of Relig-

ions, made up of representatives of all faiths in attendance, and to provide each denomination with its own forum, Bonney arranged that each should also have its own congress, at which papers were presented by clergy and lay people. In itself the congresses of Religion exhibited the spirit of the New Age. A distinctive part of the New Church Congress was another evidence: nine papers presented by women on the subject of woman's place in the world. They speak for themselves as early signs of the women's movement and Aquarian thinking. Here are excerpts from four of these papers.

\* \* \*

There never has been, there never can be, any matter of more importance before the world than The Woman Question; and it is of this grave nature for the reason that the problem of right living is inextricably involved with it. If the Divine intended us for certain ends, and planned us for these, and we fail to cooperate with Him, what but perverted lives can result? Nor is the subject one that concerns woman more than man. So close are the interests of the two sexes that what one thinks concerning any affair and what one does in regard to any matter becomes directly productive of either good or harm in the life of the other. . . . What do we find concerning the respective genius of men and women in Swedenborg? First, we are told that man is a form of the understanding, and woman a form of the will. That is, man loves primarily those things which relate to knowledge and science. To him, in his natural state, the most important thing is the accumulation and storing up of facts in his mind. He considers it his privilege to investigate everything intellectually. He does not want to do anything unless he first understands the reason why.

Woman, on the other hand, being

a form of the will, or voluntary principle, is representative of the affections, and values the exercise of them above everything else. If her heart is not satisfied, her brain wearies. Love takes precedence, and this prompts her to act without her knowing why, or caring very much to know the reason why she should do some specific thing. Yet, in separating the two, man and woman, for the purpose of analysis, we have divided those whose very nature is indissoluble; for we may see that, in fact, something of love, the feminine principle, must enter into everything a man does, and even into his thoughts, because he cannot do anything, or think of anything unless prompted by the will; and something of the understanding, the masculine principle, must be in every woman, or she would not know how to carry out her will. The essential difference between the two sexes is that in man the understanding leads, but in the woman this takes second place. But there is no room for an arrogant assumption of superiority on the part of either man or woman; for, as Mrs. Browning says, "thought can never do the work of love." Neither, we may add, can love be a substitute for thought, or either, by itself, bring anything to fruition. . . . That sex is of the soul, that it is not interchangeable or eradicable, we may perceive at any time that we are willing to arrange our lives on the basis of this truth.

—Miss Mary L. Barton

\* \* \*

*Conjugal Love, which is the seminary of human society, and from which is formed the Lord's Kingdom in the heavens, is the most important of all uses. All pleasures are according to the excellence of their uses.*

—Swedenborg, Arcana Coelestia 997

We are here taught that Conjugal Love, or the state of true marriage, is  
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the foundation of the life of the highest use, because its end is the perfecting of the heavens by angels who to become such must first be born upon some earth in the great universe. From this we may plainly see that the state of wife and mother is the noblest condition of human life attainable by woman, and when society shall be regenerated by the living truths of the new age, the aim of all education will be to fit her for this highest prerogative of her being. From this central use flow all other uses. But you will say we have not yet reached this millennium, and what shall become of us while the times are out of joint? We cannot all be wives and mothers. Granted. But we can all be spiritual wives and mothers, that is, forms of affection in some one of the innumerable uses, as members of the Lord's great family. We are to be helpmeets to the other sex. . . . An intelligent study of the Writings will teach us that in every use to be performed there must be found the conjunction of two essential principles. May not these be represented by the two sexes—one part to be fitly performed by men, and the other suited to the genius of women? And will not the use be more perfectly accomplished when men and women work together side by side in the fear of the Lord and for his sake? By making a practical application of this principle, it seems to me there will be no lack of avenues for legitimate work for women. Medicine, the law, fine arts, mechanics as applied to industry, all offer opportunities for the exercise of the especial form of woman's mind, and if she be true to the God-given instinct of her being, she will not walk in the path of the man, but side by side they will be true helpmeets, the one to the other.

—Mrs. J. R. Hibbard

\* \* \*

Now we have entered upon a new age. Now the proclamation has gone and is going forth, "Behold, I make all things new." Nowhere else has this message come with such awakening and thrilling power as into the heart of woman; and nowhere does it meet such response as with the

Annas, who have waited and worshipped in the courts of the temple night and day waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. In all the world, especially the Christian world, women have been waking up, shaking off, little by little, the thralldom of ignorance and superstition, looking about for new fields of activity, where their awakened faculties could come into fuller play, showing great eagerness for knowledge, scientific, rational and spiritual, and with the acquisition, earnestness and tact in adapting it to the uses of life, and making it serve for practical good. . . . On the different planes of life, woman's work will be different and varied, as is illustrated by the comparison of barbarous people.

◆  
*On the different planes  
of life, woman's work  
will be different and varied.*  
◆

Women's field of activity is graded according to the degree of civilization attained. There is every reason to expect an increase in the "diversity of gifts" with both men and women as the influence of the new age increases. If there were prophetesses in the Jewish Church, and in the early Christian Church, and if the history of the New Church follows in successive order, when the Pentecost comes again—not in the exact form of the first, but not the less really because on a more interior plane—is it not to be expected that the accompanying gifts shall rest equally between men and women, when it is directly asserted (Joel 2:28,29) that in the last days, when the spirit is poured out upon all flesh the daughters of the earth shall prophesy? When this inspiration comes, who shall fix the rules as to how and when and where the message should be spoken? Why may not woman be left free to follow the instincts within her in finding her right place and work in religious and in other fields? Is not the law of God written upon her heart, teaching her through her own interpretation of His revelations, by her perceptions and by her inclinations and adaptations, what she

ought and can best do?

—Mrs. T.F. Houts

\* \* \*

The question for the New Church to consider, therefore, is whether the new movement is in the direction of completer womanhood; whether the new avenues open up for women the most perfect use. The purpose of the Creator is unchanged; "helpmeet for man" is still the highest destiny for woman; what are the ends and aims of the manhood of the present generation which our women are seeking to share? Is the trend of present-day thought toward the Lord and His Kingdom? Women aspire to the pulpit; do men there testify to the reality, nearness and eternity of either? Women will be scientific, and present-day science is full of unconcealed antagonism to religion. Medicine is a favored field of use for men; but the horrors of vivisection and the increasing list of operations where final cure is impossible are spreading evil. Politicians are striving for power and place; women seek seats on the forum—will they become deterrent forces, or will they go with the tide? To be rich is the main end of the majority; will women be witnesses of the delight that lives in simpler pleasures, healthier aims and purer ends? Are women in these departments attaining a higher calling?

—Miss Carrie E. Rowe

\* \* \*

Why then do we so often act as though we have interests that may be divided without a mutual loss? It is because we are yet in bondage to the spirit of selfishness. When we care more that a thing shall be done well, and the whole world gain by it, we shall let its merit tell its own story, and neither man nor woman will care to boast of having exclusive jurisdiction in any field. And when the love of use shall have dominion, regenerated souls will have the "spirit gauge" that will determine any question like that relating to the proper sphere of woman.

—Miss Mary L. Barton

*Louise Woofenden is an archivist in the Library of the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, Massachusetts.*

# Between Yesterday And Tomorrow

*Message, 50th Reunion Memorial Service  
Morse High School, Bath, Maine — Class of 1942*

*Gertrude Dole Tremblay*

*"For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. [Psalm 90:4]"*

As our 50th reunion nears its close, and we look back in memory to our graduation in 1942, these words from Psalm 90 take on a special meaning for us. Somehow the years between then and now have telescoped, and even 1942 begins to seem like only yesterday. In a few more hours, this reunion will also become part of yesterday; in fact, most of the weekend has already done so.

Now that we in our turn have arrived at the normal time of retirement from the work force, it is increasingly brought home to us, by the passing of those who are dear to us, that our generation is moving toward its full transition from life in this world, to the life further on. Last night, sitting together at the alumni banquet, we took our place among the many classes more recently graduated than ours, and the few classes still represented from those who graduated before we did.

It was 50 years ago that we sat at the center table as the newest members of the Bath High School Alumni Association. At that time my parents were sitting with the 40-year reunion class, and I well remember Dad's comments before and after the banquet, about how many of his Class of 1902 would be present, and how many were actually there or had passed on. Last night we could once again see ourselves in the context of the history of Morse High School, as well as in the context of our own class history.

A memorial service at this stage of

our lives brings home to us in a special way how very short a time fifty years actually is in the context of eternity. Truly a thousand years is like yesterday once it has passed into history. Even as recently as 25 or 30 years ago, 1942 seemed a very long time ago; but now it is beginning to seem more like yesterday. What is more remarkable still, the same thing is happening to our sense of the future: even the year 2012, when a few of us might still be around to celebrate a 70th reunion, seems no farther away than tomorrow.

Science would suggest that our memory is suffering from overload, or that our brain cells are failing to perform their proper function, so that we are losing quantities of data from our memory banks. Perhaps, to some extent, this is happening; but I like to think of it as the result of a spiritual and mental housecleaning similar to what most of us are doing (or hoping to find time to do) about our worldly goods. We have many memories that we are quite content to part with and pass on to others, or just turf out.

Other memories, however, we still treasure, and find increasing pleasure in keeping by us. We might think of these memories as spiritual photo albums which we look through, sometimes by ourselves, and sometimes (as on this weekend) with friends who share our memories and have brought along their own albums to share with us. Some of our most treasured albums are those of our high school years.

My husband and I spend a lot of time attracting and feeding birds, and providing nesting sites. We particularly love the barnswallows that nest on a ledge under the eaves of

our garage. The newly hatched babies are deep down in the nest, their tiny beaks barely visible above the rim of the nest, their voices only a faint peeping. As they mature, they begin looking out over the nest and making much more noise as they demand to be fed. Finally, they begin to stand up in the nest, flapping their wings and displaying their nearly mature plumage. Then the day comes when they leave the nest, one by one. For the first day they return often to the nest; then for another day or two they return only at night; then they are off into the world.

Our school years were much like that. In the early grades, we saw very little of the world around us, and our demands, though vocal, didn't carry much weight. By the time we reached high school, however, we were getting our adult feathers. We were standing up in the educational nest and flapping our wings, making plans for going out into the world. Graduation was takeoff day: one by one we received the diploma we had been working for. Yet, though we were officially out of the structured system, for a few days we stayed close to the nest: the class picnic, the alumni banquet and dance, the baccalaureate service, and then back to the old school for our yearbooks and goodbyes. At last, in the words of our class motto, it was "ON TO THE HEIGHTS AHEAD!"

Our high school memories are special treasures because they are associated with one of the essential transition periods or "passages" of life. They bridge the gap between the sheltered life of the family and the challenging life of the world. For

*(Continued on page 76)*

## Between Yesterday and Tomorrow (Continued from page 75)

us, the transition was unexpectedly charged with danger, for ours was the first class at Morse to graduate in a blackout. We graduated into a world at war, in a country that had just entered that war. Perhaps we drew closer together in the last few months before graduation, as we talked about what lay just ahead for us.

We hear much talk these days about peer pressure in the high schools. The real pressures, however, do not seem to come from classmates, but from the conflicting values of the community reflected at all levels. In fact, the sense of pressure would appear to come from the need to be part of the peer support group that develops during the transition period. Today we often see TV shots of student groups in high schools after a tragedy, which rather poignantly show the peer support system in action. As we look back to our own high school years, we can relate very closely to their sense of belonging to their class and to their generation, for we have been there, and we remember.

Perhaps, over the past 50 years, we have in our turn learned so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Perhaps we can now see our high school years in the perspective of time, as the passage in time that they in truth are: a time of maturing, a time of developing the personal identity which has remained with us to this day, and which has once again been easily recognized after we recovered from our first sense of surprise and confusion at the physical changes which the outer shells of our classmates have undergone.

For we have recognized in each other spirits which have not aged with our bodies. To each other, we are still the Class of 1942, and our class is once again whole in our memories. Because we now see the intervening 50 years as such a brief fraction of eternity, we can remember those who have passed on as if it were just yesterday that they were among us, and as if it will be only tomorrow before we will be with them once again.

The Biblical King David was a

man of war whose life was often on the line in battle. He knew only too well how short a lifetime can be. When he was told that his infant son would die, he fasted and wept, in the hope that the child would not die; but when he was told that his son was dead, he spoke these words [2 Sam. 12:18]: "But now he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." David knew the truth of the prayer of Moses, that even a thousand years is a very short time. In the 23rd Psalm he recorded his faith that life would go on after death: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

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### We have recognized in each other spirits which have not aged with our bodies.

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By comparison with 50 years, or with the Biblical 70 or 80 years of human life expectancy, "forever" is indeed a very long time. The classmates we are specially remembering today have already passed through the final transition which is drawing closer for the rest of us. From the wisdom we hope we have been learning as we number our own days, we stand now where we can remember those who have passed on without sorrow or grief, for so much time has elapsed since 1942 that it hardly matters just how long ago or how recently each one left this world.

There is a striking parallel between the progress of a class through the school system, and its progress through its years in the Alumni Association. In the continuing history of Morse High School, here we are once again standing up in the institutional "nest," testing our wings, making a fair amount of noise, gradually moving into position among the classes, awaiting the time for our own class to take off into the Archives. And doesn't this give new meaning to our class motto, "ON TO THE HEIGHTS AHEAD"!

Our special memories have been strong enough to bring many of us together this weekend, as they have from time to time in the past. They will be strong enough, if we wish it, to bring us together for reunions beyond the grave, where our decrepit shells cannot follow us (thank goodness!), and where we will have all eternity in which to create new and even better memories.

As we pay our tribute of remembrance to the members of the Class of 1942 who have passed on before us, remembering as well those who could not be with us and whom we may not see again in the world, may we think of them as young in spirit, as we knew them at Morse, and as we know them today. To paraphrase the old French saying, "The more we have changed, the more we are the same."

With a bit of imagination, may we look forward to that "tomorrow" which is fast approaching, when all 110 of us can get together to compare notes and find out what exciting things we have each been doing in our new heavenly homes. Who said that we have reached the heights, and that from here on it will be downhill all the way? That is like sadly seeing the glass as half empty, when we might joyously see it as half full.

Last night the new superintendent of schools shared with us his astonishment at the strength of the Bath High School Alumni Association, saying he had found nothing like it anywhere else in his many years of service in the school system. The kind of enthusiasm and dedication and appreciation of enduring values that sustains such a remarkable institution, is not likely to be cut off in us just because our class is getting ready to move to a new location. We will surely be just as excited at the prospect of getting together once in a while beyond the grave, as we have been in getting together for our Big 5-0. "Tomorrow," when our planning committee has its heavenly computers set up and functioning, who knows what exciting things we will have in store for us?

*The Rev. Gertrude Dole Tremblay is a retired Swedenborgian minister living in Alberta, Canada. She is currently president of the Sunday School Association.*

## 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.*

### Response to "Church Growth"

To the Editor,

In response to Robert McCluskey's letter ('Opinion,' April *Messenger*): Robert raises a number of relevant issues; one we especially need to deal with as a denomination.

He asks what my intentions were in writing this letter on why evangelical churches are growing more rapidly than mainline, liberal churches. I had no grand expectations or purposes. I just thought it was an interesting subject: one person's (Sawatsky's) description of the religious climate and atmosphere in North America today. In re-reading the letter I still feel it portrays essentially an accurate picture. Obviously in writing about a large subject in one short article I used some sweeping, general statements which is always dangerous. But I think the essential points are valid. In general (this is based on personal observation and some reading in the field), I find that mainline churches are more apt to be involved in social issues than are evangelical churches. By social issues, I mean things like working with migrant workers, AIDS ministries, overseas relief aid, assisting the poor and homeless, etc. The National Council of Churches, in which Robert is very much involved, carries on an extremely active social program, and as I understand it, the vast majority of N.C.C. members are mainline churches. By and large, evangelical churches have a different agenda. I'm not suggesting this is good or bad; but this is the way it is. There are many exceptions to this observation, but as a general rule I think it is valid. I certainly agree with Robert's comments on the strong political involvement of the conservative/evangelical movement.

Robert is also "concerned that our church has invested so much time and money into church growth programs based on the 'E' model." To a certain extent I share this concern, but the fact remains that most of the information, materials, and training workshops on church growth come out of the evangelical camp. The mainline churches have relatively little to offer in this area, except for the Alban Institute. The Pastoral Ministries Support Unit expects to tap more of the Alban resources in the future. In the past few years PMSU Consultant Eric Allison has been using primarily Fuller materials (a conservative source) which have been modified and adapted for use in Swedenborgian churches. As you read in *The Messenger* several times in 1992, a number of our local churches, in varying degrees, have grown significantly when these methods are properly employed. Whatever the techniques that are used, church growth always requires a great deal of careful planning and hard work on the part of the leadership, both clergy and laity.

Robert contends that the mainline churches tend to sidestep the great, ultimate questions of life. Granted, there are few truly prophetic voices in the Christian worlds today, but in looking back over the 20th century, my sense is that the majority of outstanding theologians and preachers—represented by names like Tillich, Niebuhr, Fosdick, Weatherhead, and many others, all of whom made quite an impact on American life and culture—came primarily out of the mainline, liberal tradition. My experience has been that these people are much more apt to be aware of, and responsive to, the hard, ultimate questions of life. But again, it's not a matter of either-or. You find sincere, dedicated spiritual pioneers and seekers in all walks of life. Thank God for that!

But for me the most intriguing issue raised in Robert's letter is that "we (Swedenborgians) are neither mainline nor evangelical; we are not even some kind of combination of the two. . . we are a *new church*" (lower case). ". . . too often we miss the truly revolutionary, "both/and" nature of the "new" church, and

feel we must pick and choose from contemporary models." These words evoke some enormous questions. If true, who and what are we? What does it mean to be a "new church" in the world today? What exactly is this revolutionary nature of the "new church"? How does all of this impact on our mission in the world? Let's assume for a moment that it is undesirable to borrow or adapt from other traditions/churches; what would a pure "new church" be like as to its ritual, lifestyle and membership? No doubt you will have your own questions to add to this list.

As Joan Rivers might say, "Can we talk!" My impression is that at the parish, association and denominational levels we need to meet and talk about these and related matters. If we don't know who we are, or what we are about, how then can we know where we are going? I have no particular interest in arriving at a pre-packaged destination, but it is nice to know that one is heading in the right direction.

*Paul Zacharias  
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada*

### The Sacking of SACC

The creation of the Social Concerns Education Committee (SCEC) by EdSu, referred to in the January 1993 *Messenger* ("EdSU Creates SCEC") raises problematic issues concerning the use of democratic procedures in the Swedenborgian Church and the proper role of advocacy in our decision-making efforts. The article lifts up the Swedenborgian tradition of respect for individual differences as the reason for replacing the Social Action Concerns Committee (SACC) with SCEC. This new committee will "not take a stand on issues," the article notes. Nor will SCEC provide a means for the church to vote on resolutions—a purpose we have historically held sacred, as documented especially in our Standing Resolutions.

When the denomination endorsed SACC, under the presidency of Rev. Randy Laakko, we revived our democratic procedure for voicing opinions on social issues and promoting programs based on these opinions.

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SACC served to help Swedenborgians live out the Doctrine of Uses within the checks and balances of our Constitution and By-Laws by providing resources for study and discussion of social issues which often led to the presentation and voting of resolutions on the floor of the convention (advocacy). Yet, it remained the responsibility of each individual, parish, and association to implement these resolutions according to their wisdom and circumstances.

Resolutions on world peace, apartheid, AIDS, inclusivity, and other issues were democratic calls to conscience, based on informed opinion, indicating the will of the majority and as such found their way into our *Journal*. These resolutions permit Swedenborgians to engage in inter-faith dialogues and activities, such as the National Council of Churches, with the strength of our denomination's legislative body, rather than just individual opinion. Further, resolutions serve as signposts which future generations of Swedenborgians can point to as they seek wisdom to live out their own faith journeys.

Under the presidency of Rev. Dick Tafel, questions arose concerning the appropriate use of advocacy. Do committees such as SACC have the Constitutional right to present resolutions on the floor of the convention? Does a committee advocating a particular stance infringe on individual freedom or indicate lack of respect for personal wisdom? Is voting on resolutions divisive, risking the loss of members, and denominational unity? An interpretation of Article IV, Section 3 of the By-Laws of the Swedenborgian Church was used to deny SACC the right to bring resolutions to the floor of the convention, even though Section 3 makes no reference to a committee.

In response to the questions raised, SACC contended that adopting resolutions does not prevent recording or respecting individual opinions, nor does it coerce individuals into conformity. Voting on resolutions calls individuals, parishes and associations to study and dialogue in a free exchange of ideas which can enrich our relationships and increase individual wisdom,

mutual tolerance and cooperation. It challenges the church to examine assumptions and provides the opportunity for regeneration. On the other hand, limiting our democratic mechanism for dealing with issues permits fear and insecurity to override the call to social responsibility as individuals and as a church. While not permitting SACC to present resolutions may preserve an appearance of unity, this stifling of debate denies the possibility of realizing unity through democratic decisions that give rise to good works by the denomination.

The idea that voting on resolutions leads to loss of membership is deceptive. Swedenborgians are enthusiastic when voting on global concerns. Enthusiasm attracts members, showing our interest in seeking truth and the relevance of our faith to the world. Resolutions clarify who we are as a religious community and demonstrate a willingness to put our theological principals into humanitarian action. Perhaps our declining membership results, not from the resolutions, but from an unwillingness to tackle the crucial issues of our time.

SACC's request that EdSU provide a democratic process allowing the membership of the Swedenborgian Church to vote on the floor of the convention on the appropriateness of advocacy was denied. Instead, EdSU elected to discontinue funding and sponsoring SACC unless the committee forfeited its advocacy role. Since SACC refused to give up the right to sponsor resolutions, EdSU dissolved SACC and created the SCEC. Independent of democratic process, what right does EdSU—or any one group—have to dictate to the membership of the denomination when it is appropriate to exercise free will, to vote, to advocate, to dissolve or create a committee?

The dissolution of SACC resulted in violating the very principle EdSU seeks to protect—free will and respect for individual wisdom. Respecting the wisdom of the individual and the principle of free will requires not the unilateral act of a few, but the full and equal participation of all. It is illogical to believe that voting is unproductive, that de-

bating resolutions is divisive, that these hallmarks of democratic ideals threaten individual freedom or personal wisdom to such an extent that it is wiser not to vote. In the final analysis, we have sacrificed the potential for unity forged from the consensus of freely shared ideas to a shallow parody of religious community that ensures more people will continue to leave the Swedenborgian Church. If we are to grow and prosper as individuals and as a denomination, we must let the people speak, for it is the voice of the people which ensures respect for free will, not the whim of a committee.

*Susan Turley-Moore*  
*San Francisco, California*

## Fund Drive Re-Directed

The Fund-Raising Steering Committee, which had been responsible for the joint fund drive for the denomination and the Swedenborg School of Religion (SSR), made a presentation to the January General Council/Cabinet meeting and also to the SSR Board of Trustees.

Their recommendations, which were adopted by both groups, were as follows:

1. SSR will continue the drive alone for the next 3 ½ to 4 ½ years. Other groups, such as Temenos, associations, and local churches, will work on their own drives.
2. The denomination and SSR will support one another's efforts in all possible ways.
3. SSR will support and encourage the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit's program of working on stewardship in local churches.

*Rev. Edwin G. Capon, President,  
Swedenborgian Church*

*Dr. Mary Kay Klein, President,  
Swedenborg School of Religion*



# True Reason Triumphs

Carole Rienstra

The right of all Americans to hold office, whatever their religious affiliation, was the subject of a letter written in 1793 from President George Washington to Rev. John Hargrove, minister of the Swedenborgian Church in Baltimore, Maryland. Washington had visited the church while on a tour of the country and wrote Mr. Hargrove that it was "reason to rejoice that in this land the light of true reason has triumphed over the power of bigotry and superstition and every person may here worship God according to the dictates of his heart. In this enlightened age and in this land of equal liberty it is our boast that a man's religious tenets will not forfeit the protection of the laws, nor deprive him of the right of attaining and holding the highest offices that are known in the United States."

How ironic that the descriptions of the Swedenborgian religion were used to try to persuade citizens in a recent Missouri Senate race that Glen Klippenstein was a questionable candidate! One of the strongest doctrines of the Swedenborgian religion is tolerating all people's views. The opposing political party seemed to have ignored this basic principle of our democracy that a person's religion will not deprive them of the right to hold office. Distribution of the adverse advertisements regarding the Swedenborgian religious affiliation of successful candidate Glen Klippenstein prompted Senator John C. Danforth to write an unprecedented open letter and plea to all Missourians to speak out against religious intolerance. I would like to do just that.

I would like very much to address the way in which our basic principle of religious tolerance was violated. It appears as though Mr. Klippenstein's religion was abused because it was small, unknown, and had a strange-sounding name. Adverse and anonymous literature attempted to raise suspicion about the candidate. There

## Commencements

### Baptism Confirmation

**Dahl**—Codi Dahl was baptized into the Christian faith and confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church February 7, 1993, at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

### Death

**Harnden**—Harmon E. Harnden, 74, entered the spiritual world March 3, 1993, in Bridgton, Maine. A memorial service was conducted March 6, 1993, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

### New Address

Rev. and Mrs. Edwin Capon  
3207 Leyland Circle  
Woodbury, MN 55125  
Telephone: 612-730-8337

(The phone number for the Capons printed in the January 1993 *Messenger* was incorrect, and we apologize for the error.)

was no research done. There were no direct questions to Mr. Klippenstein. Insidious gossip and innuendos were circulated. Subtle hints tantalized the imagination. The doctrines of the church were not discussed, but only the notion that it was "small" and "different."

When, in fact, the press began to research, they found the basic definition of the Swedenborgian religion from the Britannica didn't seem strange at all. They also found that this religion had inspired some great leaders such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Yeats, and some remarkable citizens such as Helen Keller and John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed). Upon further research, it is found that one of the most prevalent teachings of this church is an overall concept of use to one's fellowman.

The lesson to be gleaned from this episode, is not that we shouldn't inquire into a person's religion; indeed, we cannot separate a person from it. Swedenborg, the man, once said, "All religion relates to life and the life of religion is to do good." But we need to inquire and get facts thoughtfully, respectfully, and directly, in the spirit of **true reason**. No candidate, whether Christian, Jewish, Hindu, or Moslem, should refuse to answer questions regarding what they "believe" on relevant issues. If so,

they become what is currently known as "stealth candidates." And would we not want to question the person holding hostages in Texas, if he were to pursue election to public office? Of course, we question and we research. Most important, we reflect and use good judgment when we consider a person for any responsible position. Religion is, after all, what a person thinks and believes. It is extremely important. It is what quite often motivates a person. We as concerned citizens, need to know and ask questions. What we need to be careful about is that we inquire with tolerance. Tolerance is understanding. It is basing one's opinion on facts and truth. It is not using the popularity of a denomination as a measure of its validity. For it is only in the light of "true reason" that "bigotry and superstition" fade and die away.

*Carole Rienstra is a member of the St. Louis Swedenborgian Church (Church of the Open Word) and wife of the Rev. David Rienstra. The above article was printed in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch March 29, 1993.*

## REPORT FROM ZURICH

Friedemann Horn and his wife Hella send greetings from Switzerland. Dr. Horn says that his translation of *Conjugal Love* has made good progress, and he is hurrying to finish it by the end of the year. He adds that, thanks to Johannes, he now has an Apple Power Book 100.

Dr. Horn also reports, "We have just published a new book by a member of ours. The somewhat strange, but attractive title is *The Devil's Wing is Rotten*. It is a well-written report of her life-long struggle with mental problems, and how with the help of the famous Jungian depth-psychologist, Marie-Luise von Franz, she overcame. Though Swedenborg is mentioned only briefly, it

is an example of the rebirthing process, which should interest Jungian psychotherapists, theologians and average readers who are struggling themselves."

The Horns' son Thomas has been studying in Berlin, with diplomas in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. They look forward to his much-awaited spring arrival in Zurich, with his wife Anke, where he will take up his theology studies.

*Dr. Friedemann Horn is our minister in Zurich and is the head, heart and soul of the Swedenborg Verlag, which is the principal publisher of Swedenborg and collateral literature in Germany. Dr. Horn is also a former president of the Swedenborg School of Religion.*

*Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 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 General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.*

*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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