

# The Messenger

September 1993

## 169th Convention, 1993



## WHO ARE WE AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?

*Donna Keane*

Who Are We? It's a marvelous question.

I listen to many people in my counseling office asking this very question—Who Am I? The answers they find reflect the many different ways they see themselves—as children of God, as parents, siblings, friends, lovers. However, these are roles they play and relationships they have with other people. They are, indeed, more than these roles and relationships, but it is far easier to define themselves by roles.

Maybe we can learn from them. We as a community are asking ourselves *Who Are We?* We are a body—an entity—that has a distinct personality and sense of itself—but that personality can be different things to different people.

For example: We are the *recipients* of all the gifts and skills of those members of our church community who have gone before us. We are the *inheritors* of the dreams and visions of our ancestors in this community. We are the *maintainers* of the legacy of our forefathers and mothers who provided so much time and energy to this church.

*(continued on p. 103)*



## Contents

- 99** What Is Our Scriptural Basis?  
Convention Sermon 1993  
*Richard Baxter*
- 101** President's Address  
*Edwin Capon*
- 103** Who Are We—And Where Are We Going?  
*Donna Keane*
- 105** SSR Convocation Address  
*Jerome Poole*
- 106** From a Delegate  
*Carol Fusco*
- 107** General Council Report  
*Gloria Toot*
- 110** Council of Ministers Report  
*Robert Kirven*

## Departments

- 98** Moving Toward the Light  
*Editorial, Patte LeVan*
- 108** Opinion
- 115** Passages

## Important Church Calendar Dates

### September, 1993

- 17-20: EdSU: LaPorte, Indiana  
17-18: Temenos Board of Managers: West Chester, Pennsylvania  
24-25: GOSU: Midland, Michigan  
27-29: Council of Ministers Exec. Comm.: SSR  
30-Oct. 3: Committee on Admission to the Ministry: SSR

### October 1993

- 1-3: SSR Board: Newton, Mass.  
8-10: PCA: San Francisco  
15-17: FPSRU: Washington, DC

### November, 1993

- 4-7: PMSU: Kitchener, Ont.  
13-15: Retirement Committee: Newton, Mass.  
General Council/Cabinet: Boston area

### January 13-16, 1994

### February, 14-15, 1994

### April 15-17, 1994

- SSR workshop for ministers  
PMSU/GOSU: Almont, Michigan

Our Cover: From left, clockwise: Renee Morris, banner procession; Convocation at Gordon Chapel, Anne Perry conducting "Grounding in Nature" mini-course. Photos by Kinichi Kuniyeda, Tracy Morris, Patte LeVan. Thanks to Kinichi and Tracy, the Massachusetts Association Convention Planning Committee, and Central Office staff for their coordination and hard work.

## The Messenger

**Publisher:** The Communications Support Unit

Published monthly, except July and August, by the Swedenborgian Church of North America (founded 1817, incorporated 1861 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America).

**September 1993**

**Volume 214, No. 7**

**Whole Number 5183**

**Patte LeVan, Editor**

**Linda Mahler,**

*Town and Country Press,  
Layout and typesetting*

### Editorial Address:

The Messenger

P.O. Box 985

Julian, CA 92036

(619) 765-2915, Phone & FAX

### Business &

### Subscription Address:

Central Office

48 Sargent Street

Newton, MA 02158

The opinions of the contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or the Communications Support Unit, or represent the position of the church. Subscription free to members of the Swedenborgian Church; non-members, \$12.00 a year; foreign \$15.00 a year; gift subscription from a member, \$5.00 a year; single copies \$1.00.

**Deadline for material:** Six weeks before the first day of the month of issue.

## Moving Toward the Light

### Who Are We . . . and Where Are We Going?

As I write in this space after a two-month hiatus, the experience of convention is once again behind us, but the theme lingers on with its many layers of meaning. It seems to be a question we could ask ourselves—perhaps *need* to ask ourselves daily—and listen closely to the different responses that come up. For me these past months it has had a very personal and urgent meaning as I became more strongly aware that I must return to my native state of California. I joked about the seven years I spent in Indiana being a biblical number of completion. The experiences there had been rich and varied, the friendships precious, the growth and understanding invaluable, but the call to home was unmistakable.

In 1980, a friend who knew I needed a few days rest suggested I visit her where she was house-sitting, and we would roam the backcountry of San Diego County. Her brother, she said, had settled in the little historical town of Julian, 4,200 feet up in the mountains. She described an old-fashioned marble soda fountain, a gold mine that was still operating, a place that was known for its wonderful apples and apple pie. I fell in love with the area, later came back and bought a small house there. I spent several weeks getting it in shape to rent, and for the next 13 years, other people lived in it while I fantasized about returning one day, living here in my house, where I could be in the country and still drive to Los Angeles to see my children.

As is often the case in this marvelous Earthean adventure, making the decision to embark on a huge life change is much more difficult than doing it. Once I made the commitment to begin the journey, the universe moved in to support it in many countless ways. Our friends showed up, en masse, in groups of two and three, one at a time, helping pack, helping load, fixing cars, cleaning, providing food, organizing a farewell party and fundraiser, blessing us with their presence and love in every way within their means. My husband was willing to go to a place he'd never seen and work with a house he knew would be difficult to manage in his condition. The effort involved was horrendous; we put in 16-hour days for months. There were all the usual large and small disasters and glitches along the way, but the move was accomplished, and our purpose here will evolve—for, in case you haven't noticed, we are never in a place for the reasons we think we are!

Who are we and where are we going is answered out of listening for our truth and becoming willing, as Donna Keane describes the process, to change, to move out with faith, understanding that chaos is a natural part of the Journey Home . . . and that Home is the Journey.

On a more pragmatic note, I have not moved the production end of *The Messenger* to California, only the editorial office. The typesetting, printing and mailing will continue with Town & Country Press out of Plymouth, Indiana. Please continue to send submissions and correspondence to me at my new address. (See masthead, p. 98, and Change of Address, p. 111.)

# What Is Our Scriptural Basis?

Convention Sermon 1993

Richard Baxter



I have spent a lot of time in the hospital. I was there so long that I changed roommates often, and as was always the case, sooner or later it would come out that I was a minister, and a religious discussion would ensue.

One roommate had a rare form of terminal cancer and a very talkative wife.

I overheard that they were members of the United Pentecostal Church. Immediately upon arrival at the hospital, they made contact with their local church and their side of the room was soon flooded with members bringing food and with visits from the minister. (The irony was that the patient couldn't stand the sight of food and didn't want to talk to anyone.) Meanwhile, I was just recovering from my own very severe treatments. I did not feel in any mood to take on the Pentecostals.

But, one day a nurse "blew my cover" by calling me "Rev." The talkative wife immediately followed up, and I explained as briefly as I could that I was the pastor of a church in Washington, near the White House, hoping that would satisfy her. She responded by saying that *Her Church*, the Pentecostal Church, was founded upon the scripture verse from Matthew that says: *Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.* "What scripture verse is your church founded upon?" she asked.

The Swedenborgian Church has such an individualistic approach to

religion that I don't think it ever occurred to me to hold up one particular scripture verse as representing the whole church! Well, being the quick-witted, resourceful person that I am, I coughed several times, had a pain or two, and wished that I smoked a pipe so I could conveniently put it in my mouth and gain some time to think. I finally replied that our church was founded upon the scripture from the book of Revelation that says, "I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven." How did I do? Is that what you would have replied? She stated that she had often studied the Book of Revelation but couldn't make much sense of it. It had so many mysteries and prophecies. She asked me if I thought a certain prophesy applied to a present international situation.

I said, "Well, try this outline and see if it helps. Try to think about Revelation as prophesy about yourself, of inner dynamics within yourself. And not about the Nazis, the Russians, the Middle East, the Chinese! It's not about somebody out there, but about what is going on inside you."

I said that the Book of Revelation can be divided into three parts. The first part is the message to the seven churches. Each of the churches was in some kind of physical or spiritual trouble, but, if each persisted, they would be given a reward that was particularly relevant to them. (A branch from the Tree of Life, the bright and morning star, the hidden manna, the crown of life . . . all symbols for Christ elsewhere in the Bible). They would each receive Christ in a form that was particularly appropriate for them—considering the path and the struggle that the seven churches were going through.

The middle part of the book, the part about the beast and the dragon, the plagues, and the trumpets,

represents our spiritual battles.

The third part, about the Holy City, describes the goal. It is a transformation of the original Garden of Eden. The Tree of Life is still in the center but instead of the simplicity—instead of the innocence of ignorance of the Garden of Eden—you now have the complexity of a city, which implies a complex web of relationships. It implies the developing sophistication of being aware of "the world" but not "conformed to this world"—the innocence of wisdom.

In this spiritual journey, you have all the experiences of life—all the ups and downs of everything that happened in the Old Testament and New Testament, leading up to the reward and goal of Christ—and the innocence of wisdom that comes with dwelling in His presence.

She certainly had never heard any explanation like this before, and it clearly gave her something to think about. Just then the nurses and doctors came in to look at her husband and me, and we never did have an opportunity to discuss what I had said. So I am not sure what kind of impression it made on her, but I think the impression was a positive one.

The exchange also gave me something to think about. As I lay back and reflected on the conversation and the difference between our two scripture verses, it occurred to me that hers was an action statement—and her church was very busy being active!!

The scripture verse describing the  
(continued on page 100)

## Video Tape Available

A video tape of the Sunday service at the 1993 convention, including the sermon by the Reverend Richard M. Baxter, is available from the Central Office for \$15.00. Please send your request to 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158.

## Convention Sermon

(from page 99)

descent of the Holy City is a vision statement. There is a difference of feeling between the two. The scriptural basis that says "go teach others" implies "the known," suggesting that you have a list of what you are going to teach them. The scriptural basis of a "descending holy city" implies "mystery." It is introspective. We are paying attention to getting in touch with our own inner world which we see pictured in the Biblical vision.

The difficulty with a vision is that you must describe it pretty completely before it makes much sense to others and then you must interpret the symbolism of the vision and make it relevant to contemporary life. Maybe that is why we feel so inadequate when we try to answer a question as to what our church is all about. Where do you start?

You could start at the beginning with the creation story. We see the creation story as a parable showing the potential, the growth that human beings are capable of, from the first ray of light that is the dawn of consciousness until the sixth day when we have developed into mature men and women.

But our scriptural basis is wider than the creation story even though that seems to be the one we teach over and over again. The creation story shows the pattern of our potential. Our actual story is much longer and more circuitous than that. As our scriptural basis, we see within the books of the Bible that have an inner sense, two parallel stories: the historical account of people, places, and events of the literal story—and within that account a deeper spiritual level that is a reflection of our individual journeys.

Therefore, the scriptural basis of our spiritual journey begins with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in a simplistic relationship with God. It proceeds through infancy and childhood illustrated by the children of Abraham. There is a necessary period of desert wandering on our own before we can claim the Promised Land. There is struggle before we can assume the Kingship of

adulthood. Our so-called "mid-life crises" can be compared with the division of that kingdom, with the "ways of the world" pulling us one way and the biblical prophets pulling us another—calling us to our former ideals. The New Testament shows us a deeper maturity based on the inner meaning of Jesus' parables. The Book of Revelation ties together many of the biblical themes into a vision of spiritual maturity in the Holy City.

But I say to you today that even with this all-encompassing vision, our scriptural basis would be spotty and incomplete unless we made as our scriptural basis all the books of the Old Testament: Ruth, Esther, Job, Ezra, Nehemiah, etc. which have so much to tell us about brave human beings caught in desperate circumstances.

---

## We are the people of the Book.

---

A scriptural basis should also include the Apocrypha—those books that cover that 400-year period between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Washington church received a Tiffany stained-glass window from the Brooklyn church. No one knew anything about the window. We found from the Tiffany Studio catalog that it was of the Archangel Raphael. Raphael is *only* mentioned in the Bible in the apocryphal book of Tobit. In thirty years of association with this church I doubt if I have ever heard reference to the Apocrypha. I thought: this window must be some kind of mistake! But I looked up Raphael in Swedenborg and there he was! (I have always found Swedenborg to be wider than the church). In *Apocalypse Revealed* (AR 548) Swedenborg said that the archangels such as Raphael represent ministries in heaven. Raphael had three ministries in the Book of Tobit: (1) guiding wayfarers, (2) healing the sick, (3) and arranging propitious marriages.

Do these sound like good subjects for a New Church window?

But our scriptural basis has to be even wider than that. It has to include a proper recognition of the letters of the Early Church. Again, Swedenborg makes many references to them, but the church usually has not. In the 1850s, Rev. Bayley, a New Church minister, gave a series of lectures at Brighton, England. The questions and discussion from the floor centered around the Letters of the Early Church. Dr. Bayley gives a brilliant defense of the Swedenborgian theology based on the Letters and their proper translation. His answers have been an inspiration to me. I have xeroxed the whole book and have it right on my desk all the time. I commend them to you.

You can see by now that I am uncomfortable singling out one verse as being our scriptural basis. My reflection in the hospital has convinced me that our scriptural basis has to be the whole Bible.

We must have the full scope, the BIG picture: our potential described in the creation story and then our spiritual journey from the Garden of Eden to the Holy City. This prepares us for all kinds of ministries both here and in Heaven. Our task as a church is anything that involves spiritual growth—churches, groups, retreats and retreat centers, personal counseling, wedding ministries. The danger is that the vision becomes just an umbrella under which a collection of individualists pursue their own thing. We need to ask how the vision connects to the task of community if each of us is on our own individual pilgrimage. We need to ask how the vision connects with our individual gifts to enable us to support and implement the vision. The vision can empower us. The vision should empower us. The vision must empower us.

This convention session we have asked ourselves: Who are we? Where are we going? I know the answer.

**WE ARE THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK** and we are on a journey from the Garden of Eden to the Holy City. I'll see you there!

*The Rev. Richard Baxter is pastor of the Washington, D.C. Swedenborgian Church.*

# President's Address

Gordon College, Wenham, Mass., June 24, 1993

[Abridged Text]

*Edwin Capon*

I know what Convention—not the annual meeting but the total body—was like 44 years ago. I have witnessed the changes that have taken place in the past 44 years. I will not be here to see what our denomination will be like 44 years hence, but I would like to believe and certainly hope that it will be flourishing from a rebirth which may already be underway. The next 10 years are likely to be critical, so let's take a look at some of the areas that may need attention, if we are to grow.

How to provide pastoral leadership for our churches is a problem in two respects. There is a shortage of ordained ministers. And in a number of cases there are insufficient funds to provide an adequate salary for an ordained minister.

If the money were available for salaries, we could find employment for eight more ordained ministers. We don't have them. Five ministers presently serving churches are likely to retire in the next five years. We may ordain eight new ministers for service in this country in the next five years, but this will still leave us short. But could we pay eight more adequately, if we had them?

Many of our denomination's churches do not have the resources to pay an adequate salary. The Augmentation Fund, originally established to augment the salaries of ministers in growing churches, has been dipping deeply into its surplus. Our Pastoral Ministry Support Unit is encouraging and helping guide the growth of such churches, but even our growing churches may be too small for some time to become self-supporting. A number of years ago I read that a church needs at least 500 members to be financially viable.

Perhaps we need to make more use of lay leaders trained by SSR. Might our financial resources be less strained if in a few situations an or-

dained minister and one or more lay leaders served two or more churches as a team? I have in mind primarily lay leaders with full-time jobs in other fields but so dedicated to the cause of our church that they are willing to give much of their free time to its service.

A second area needing attention in my opinion is a determination as to what our priorities should be and specifically a determination as to whether parish ministries are our top priority or whether specialized ministries should be. It seems that we spend money more readily for non-traditional ministries than we do for local churches. I sometimes get the feeling that some of us have given up on the parish ministry. Or perhaps some feel that parish churches are not really the appropriate form for the New Church in this new age.

Yet we are a denomination made up of Associations which in turn are made up of parish churches. Personally I find it hard to believe that the individual in the pew has given up on the parish church. If this is so, we need to be recruiting and training for ordination primarily men and women committed to the parish ministry, though in some cases we may expect it to be combined with other forms of ministry such as counseling. But in order to set priorities we need to know how the people really stand on this issue.

A third area I would like to see us addressing is the relationship of The Swedenborgian Church to Swedenborg. It seems to me that few of us now see our role as that of custodians of the new doctrine; as Brian Kingslake suggested a few years back, the Swedenborg Foundation in this country and the Swedenborg Society in Britain are quite capable not only of preserving the writings but also of publicizing and dis-

tributing them. But I believe many of us still believe we have a responsibility to make them known. In fact, our teachings mean so much to some of us that we forget to be tactful in expressing them to others.

As I look at the latest statement of purpose embodied in Article 1, Section 2 of our Constitution, I can see the possibility of different interpretations of that purpose, depending upon where one puts the emphasis. How do we relate facilitating the spiritual well-being of people with working for the Lord in bringing in the New Age, the descent of the Holy City New Jerusalem? Is it part of our purpose to share the light in which we walk? If so, how do we communicate that light as we find it in Swedenborg? There are many ways of facilitating the well-being of people, but how many make use of the particular talent the Lord has entrusted to us?

The final issue I wish to place before you is the steady drain on our financial resources our recent budgeting has brought and will bring about. That there is such a drain is certain, though I find it very difficult to get at exact figures. A document dated January 25, 1993, entitled Budgets 1993 & 1994 shows a deficit of \$86,873 for 1991 and budgeted deficits for 1992, 1993, and 1994 of \$90,946, \$123,592, and \$175,038 respectively. The actual figure of 1992 was \$193,370.06—as near as I can figure out. This would mean a total expenditure over income during a four year period of \$582,946, more than half a million dollars. Inevitably a substantial reduction in income would result.

In 1992 the book value of the funds held by the Augmentation Fund went down by \$143,238. In 1993 it is estimated that our overall income will be down by \$90,000.

*(Continued on page 102)*



## President's Address

(from page 101)

The following year may see a drop of another \$50,000.

The mere fact that we are dipping deep into our income-producing funds is bad enough. What makes it much worse, I understand, is that we have to make up much of our deficits from unrestricted funds, which means that increasingly we will have income largely from restricted funds with limited purposes. Correspondingly our freedom to fund those things we consider important or even essential will become limited.

Two years ago General Council decided to go to zero budgeting in 1993; they felt unable to do so because of the desirability of projects old and new. But they hope to do so in 1994. Last fall the Augmentation Fund decided it should go to zero budgeting in 1993, but acknowledged the denomination's needs by granting one half of what the treasurer hoped would be available to balance the budget. It is still the intention of the Augmentation Fund to go to zero budgeting in 1994.

It is not my belief that a deficit budget should be avoided at all costs. But I am convinced that such a budget should be the exception

rather than the rule. And I believe we hold a fiscal responsibility to those whose gifts and bequests constitute the bulk of our assets as well as to our church's future financial needs.

According to our Constitution, General Council is responsible for all financial functions of the Swedenborgian Church. It is a heavy responsibility. As a member of General Council, I for one would like to know how the membership feels about fiscal policy. Should we go to zero budgeting? Should we continue to spend as we have been spending? Or should we adopt a policy somewhere in between?

When our new Constitution and By-laws were adopted in 1986, Dr. George Dole stated that the purpose of these new instruments was to decentralize "power" and assist the president in his complex duties. The purpose of my words and of the opportunity for discussion that is to follow\* is to further these two ends. I certainly want to know what members are feeling and thinking about the four concerns I have raised. And I believe that Cabinet and General Council, our primary decision-making committees, would like to know also. Let me recapitulate:

1. How should we respond to the shortage of ordained ministers and the limited financial resources of many churches?
2. What are our priorities? Should we provide more, or less, guidance and help to our local churches?
3. What is the role of Swedenborg's writings in our ministry?
4. Shall we continue large deficits? Shall we go to zero budgeting? Shall we cut out or cut back some programs? Or do we go for broke?

*The Rev. Edwin Capon, in addition to his duties as president, is minister to the Virginia Street Church (Swedenborgian) in St. Paul, Minnesota.*

\*[Editor's Note] Following his address, President Capon asked that we gather in small discussion groups according to Associations to focus on the four concerns raised. Ideas and suggestions emerging from these discussions are to be printed and given to General Council, subsequently to be published in a future issue of *The Messenger*. Readers/members who did not attend convention are also invited and encouraged to send opinions and suggestions care of the editor. Please keep comments as brief and succinct as possible, typed and double-spaced.

Due to lack of space, Mr. Capon's introductory material was deleted. Readers wishing to see full text may write to: Rev. Edwin Capon, Virginia St. Church, 170 Virginia St., St. Paul, MN 55102.

## Group Discussions

### TOP LEFT PHOTO —

*Illinois Association, from left: Karen Laakko Feil, Rev. Eric Hoffman, Rev. Edwin and Esther Capon, Carole and Rev. David Rienstra.*

### TOP RIGHT PHOTO —

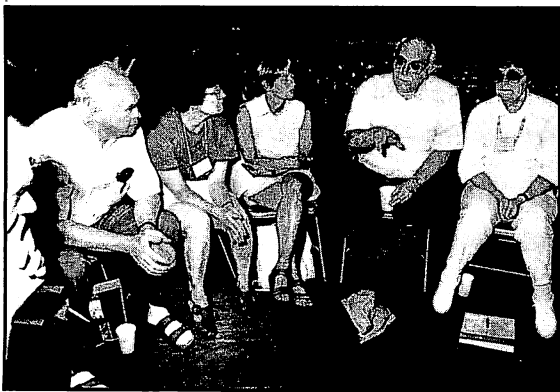
*Middle Atlantic Association, from left: Jeff Watt, Hampton and Elora Schoch, Millie and Rev. Randy Laakko, Carol Lawson, Rev. Debra Winter.*

### BOTTOM LEFT PHOTO —

*Canada Association and Western Canada Conference, from left: Rev. Paul Zacharias, Rev. David and Shirley Sommor, Nancy McBride, Rev. Henry Korsten, Pat Zacharias.*

### BOTTOM RIGHT PHOTO —

*Pacific Coast Association, from left: The Revs. David Johnson, Susan Turley-Moore, Jim Lawrence, Harvey Tafel; Betsy Young, Rianne Boell, Mareta Tafel.*



## Who Are We . . . ?

(continued from cover)

In addition: we are the people who have been drawn to this church as *newcomers*—readers of Swedenborg, members of growth groups, attendees of spiritual retreats who have been awakened and called by the fellowship and the love of those fellow journeyers we have met. We are *believers* and *seekers* in a variety of places in our journeys—some of us stuck, some of us confused, some of us convinced of the rightness of our beliefs to the point that our minds and hearts are closed to any view but our own.

One of the first tasks I have in dealing with a patient is to take a history. Our patient today is the church. The presenting problem—the problem which brings people into my office—is usually stated by them in vague, confused terms. “I’m unhappy.” “I just don’t know what’s the matter with me, but I can’t stop crying, spending money, laughing, staying in bed, sleeping, eating . . .” Or, “I can’t cry, laugh, spend money, sleep, eat . . .” Whatever the problem, it usually is a wonderful conscious symbol of the underlying emotional and spiritual state of the patient.

The first step is to listen to the patient. I believe Edwin [Capon] is creatively forcing us with these discussions to identify the problems we are facing as a community, and to listen to them.

The second step in our history taking is to find out if this symptom, this presenting problem, has happened before—when, how many times, to what specific instances is this a normal response of the patient. If there is a pattern, then we can assume that this is a normal way for the patient to react to stress, it is an orderly response for the patient in trying to cope and adapt to his/her reality. But the patient is usually beginning to see that this historical way of trying to cope and adapt is no longer working or helpful. In fact, it may be causing great upset and distress.

If this presenting issue or symptom is brand new in the patient’s life, then we must treat it as not a normative response by the patient in coping with reality; but rather a “shock”

response to a tremendous happening which has jarred the patient into an unconscious symptom or behavior, thought or feeling.

I believe our present financial crisis is in the second category—a situation we’ve not met before and for which we are unprepared.

We are, I believe, in a long state of transition. I am reminded of George Dole’s class on the Bible and how each state of the Israelite Church is represented by a covenant with God. What a nice idea, I said, but what about the tough times of transition, when we do not perceive the Word of God and are still struggling to get to the next level of covenant. These times do indeed feel long and difficult.

We are a group, then, a community with a history, a past, and also a present. The past may seem rosy and wonderful and the present difficult and confusing. But we have no real choice to go back, just as the Israelites were led out of Egypt to wander in the desert for 40 years. We are told they “murmured,” which is often translated as “grumbled.” I believe we call that “complaining!” However you translate it, the Israelites were unhappy. They looked backward to see the goodness of their slavery state—“There we sat and ate all we wanted out of pots of meat; here in this desert we will starve to death!” But the Lord told Moses to gather the Israelites together and tell them about the manna He would provide. Enough for each person according to his or her need.

In my experience—we complain and grumble and murmur when we feel afraid of not getting our needs met, when we fear someone else may have more than we do, or when we are simply so habituated to negative thinking that we are unconscious of our doing it.

I believe we are, then, in a state of transition, and in for a lot of grumbling and complaining as we move through our corporate desert and find our way to our next incarnation as a people of God.

Where Are We Going? Another marvelous question!

We are going into the 21st century, whether we like it or not. We may go kicking and screaming and dragging

our heels, but we cannot remain where we are.

People in my counseling office experience something called “resistance” to change. For change is difficult—it calls us to “become” rather than “to be.” Change means taking risks, not just financial or physical, but emotional and spiritual as well. Change is tough if we seek for guarantees of our security and our comfort. We cannot respond to changes positively and expect not to experience discomfort. So we resist change and try every other way—*around, over, under* rather than *through*. We must confront the need for change and—*change*. It is the only way.

But change to what? What form shall our community of children of God take? How shall we relate to one another as responsible stewards of the past and eager participants in the future?

Change comes in many forms. We may need to *change our image of ourselves*—from a “small town meeting” to a more professional body of effective managers and experts in finance, physical resources, and revenues. We may need to become more sophisticated in the use of outside consultants to help us out of our state of transition into a new state of stable and effective covenant with each other and with God.

Another change I see is a *change in how we do our business*. We may need to change from the organizational structure the ad hoc committee created to a different, more streamlined way of being. It may be a luxury to have all of these committees to govern so few people. If we are responsive to the diminishing numbers of our members, we may need to be leaner at the top and give fewer people more responsibility, while creating avenues of appeal for their decisions so that the few cannot misuse their power without being held accountable to an appeals process.

We may need to *change the goals and objectives of the church*. There are two modes of thought—one states that we need to have programs to bring in new people, but the source of the funding for these programs is the base of people already in the

(continued on page 104)

## Foremothers Honored at Alliance Luncheon

Dr. Alice Skinner honored the pioneer workers in our church June 25, 1993, at the National Alliance luncheon. After the talk, titled "Her Story," Dr. Skinner asked everyone present to remember and note down the names of women we felt had made valuable contributions to our church life. (Those of you who could not attend, please send *your* lists to me. We want to keep the list active: who are, or were, some of your role models?)

The proposed budget was approved, with the emphasis on youth in our disbursements for 1993-1994. Our financial help will go toward expenses for convention baby sitters, children's program, and Youth League. We will continue our contributions to *The Messenger* and Kei Torita. Our Mite Box collection will go to the HIV Ministry in San Francisco under the direction of the Rev. Susan Turley-Moore.

*Phyllis Bosley, President, 3931 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94118.*

Editor's Note: The text of Dr. Skinner's presentation will appear in the October *Messenger*.

### National Alliance Slate of Officers, 1993-1994

Phyllis Bosley, President (*California*)

Leone Dyer, First Vice-President (*Missouri*)

Mary Crenshaw, Second Vice-President (*Michigan*)

Nan Paget, Secretary (*California*)

Nancy Perry, Treasurer (*New Hampshire*)

Pamela Selensky, Mite Box Chair (*New York*)

Brenda Hollweger, Religious Chair (*Missouri*)

Martha King, Round Robin Chair (*Florida*)

Dorothy Webster, Nominating Committee (*Maine*)

## Who Are We ...?

(from page 103)

church, and new people will be attracted and wish to participate in these programs.

I believe we need to change the goals and objectives of the church to add a third mode of thought. We need to create fiscally responsive programs to return a portion of their earnings/income to the denomination. We can no longer afford the luxury of the national denomination funding new programs in "old wineskins" without any expectation of a return on investment.

Now, I am not advocating that we stop any programs which have spiritual content and value just because they are not cost effective. But I am suggesting that the luxury the church enjoyed in 1980 according to Polly's charts yesterday is a part of our state of slavery in the past. They were the "good years" when "we all sat at the pot of meat and ate our fill." We are no longer there. So any programming and funding we do will have to be based on whether or not there is enough for each person according to his/her need.

If there is not enough for everyone, then truly tough decisions are ahead of us and we must be courageous in our choices.

Finally, I believe we must move into the 21st century with our hearts full of hope. For the spirit of this church is great. The willingness to change is there, in spite of resistance. We are a people of courage. People who ask the questions "Who are we and where are we going?" are people who already exist in a state of confusion and openness to exploring new answers to these questions.

I am firmly convinced that our confusion and openness are our best assets, and that our willingness to change will be our salvation. For we will *survive* and *grow* if we are attentive to our journey, if we are able to work through our resistance to the core of our corporate personality, and if we are willing to change to meet the new demands of our next covenant as the children of God.

*The Rev. Dr. Donna Keane is a pastoral psychotherapist, chair of the Council of Ministers, and minister to the Elmwood, Mass. Swedenborgian Church.*

Editor's Note: The Rev. Dr. Donna Keane was one of three theme speakers chosen to address the question, "Who Are We—and Where Are We Going?" The others were the Rev. Dr. George Dole and the Rev. David Rienstra. Space doesn't permit publication of all three pieces in one issue, but the Dole and Rienstra presentations, along with other thoughtful responses to the theme question, will be published in subsequent *Messengers*.



*Louise Woofenden, Elizabeth Johnson, Kinichi Kuniyeda, David Johnson. Louise was honored for her years of service as archivist (she is retiring); the Rev. David Johnson for his 50 years of service in the ministry, and Kinichi received the Richard H. Tafel, Sr. Award for Excellence in Theology. David and Elizabeth Johnson endowed the award, which was presented for the first time last year to Pavel Heger.*



# SSR: Who Are We? Where Are We Going?

Convocation Address, June 24, 1993, Gordon College, Wenham, Mass.

[Abridged Text]

Jerome Poole

About ten years ago, the Board of Managers of the Swedenborg School of Religion, chaired by Betsy Young, developed a vision and formulated goals to nurture both SSR and our church. Much has been accomplished. In our fund drive, we are approaching 30% of our goal of three million dollars; we anticipate fourteen to seventeen students next year; and have encouraged both parish and alternative ministries. We have developed M.A., lay leader, and certificate programs to compliment our ordination preparation.

Mary Kay Klein met a great deal of resistance from the Board of Regents who had not even considered approving a theology degree for many years. But her efforts were rewarded. In addition to being awarded degree-granting status, we were given a strong message that what we have is valuable, and should be supported, encouraged, and shared beyond our church.

SSR is now at a new stage of its growth process, one in which the questions "who are we?" and "where are we going?" need to be asked again from a new vantage point. In the booklet *Swedenborg on the Nature of Church*\*, George Dole points out, "The purpose of creation is a heaven from the human race. Heaven is the community where every individual is prized, and where every individual prizes the community." Bob Kirven, in the same booklet, reminds us that our lives are lives of engagement in which heavenly love and wisdom directs and mobilizes our motives, so that the church and its members are characterized by actions which help people and communities. Ted Klein emphasizes that in our inner struggles we need to again and again come back to taking responsibility for what is ours, and trusting God to build the church around us and in us with qualities such as trust and safety, welcoming people as they are, belongingness, honoring of dif-

ferences, joy in giving out of love, and genuine sharing and cooperation. Dorothea Harvey notes, "God's Spirit is Loving itself, enjoying and supporting our reality, our willingness to come into being. I believe that we as persons and as a community are a church to the extent that we let that Spirit be present."

We seek to recapture the searching and inquiring spirit of Swedenborg and to create an organism that functions to support the spiritual life and mysticism of the community of the church. Swedenborg's mission was not just to understand spiritual reality, but to help us grasp that the power of God happens in people's lives in ways of which they can be aware, can use, and can share.

There is order in the universe, an order which ultimately depends on God's loving care. Authentic human communities do not function by arbitrary rules, but by order which derives from the life and mutual understanding of the people involved. This implies sacrifice and struggle at times, as we learn to live together in healthier and more productive ways.

We have several key goals:

First, to share Swedenborg's view of the spiritual world. We have already implemented a requirement for ordination of a course in spirituality, including working with a spiritual director. I believe SSR can take a leadership role in the teaching of spirituality; few Protestant seminaries have attempted this and the need is evident. We also can be the place for interreligious dialogue about spirituality. Ten years from now, I hope to see a highly developed program in this area.

Second, we already have the most comprehensive program of field education of any seminary in the Boston area, but we are refining it to require students to work part-time for a year in a community agency or project which directly serves human needs,

and looking at ways to help ordination candidates develop skills which would help them support themselves when a church cannot offer a full-time income.

Third, beginning next fall, it will be possible to complete the M.A. degree by taking night courses. We also hope to bring more international students to us.

Fourth, growth has meant dislocation as well as new energy. Growth also means responsibility. The need for new resources will become even more acute in the future.

SSR is not a spectator of events in the world and in the church; we see ourselves in the middle of things. We are educating students not to look at doctrine and life from a distance, but to be active players, in partnership with the church.

Our drive for community means that we seek to build trust by genuine relating, which is at times painful. Through confronting ourselves, we are striving to become more open to women, minorities, students from other countries, and—in general—all marginalized groups. In partnership with the church, we are seeking to energize and be energized as we move forward.

We also know that our dream is not yet big enough, and that we need to continue to be open to the Lord's leading. We ask your prayers as we attempt to be prophets to ourselves and others, and to hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards of community and partnership.

*The Rev. Jerome Poole is Chair of SSR Board of Trustees.*

\**Swedenborg on the Nature of Church* is an eight-page booklet of the panel presentation by the faculty of SSR to the General Council and Cabinet of the Swedenborgian Church and the Board of Trustees of SSR, given January 23, 1993, sponsored by a grant from the Lilly Endowment. Booklets are available on request, free to members of the school corporation; others please send \$1.00 for postage to: ATTN: President Mary Kay Klein, Swedenborg School of Religion, 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158.

Due to lack of space, the text of the convocation speech has been condensed and abridged. Those wishing to read the entire presentation may write to the Rev. Jerome Poole at the above address.

## CONVENTION '93

## from a delegate:

Carol Fusco

In my awareness that the majority of the members and friends of the Portland Swedenborgian Church were brought up outside the Swedenborgian Church, I have noted a tendency within myself to think of us as being apart from the greater church community. We are the "new kids on the block"; we don't use the "traditional" worship format, we sing rock songs and dance in church; we're weird! If they, whoever "they" are, get to know us, they won't approve of us and might even tell us to go away (i.e. stop funding us, yikes!).

Well, let all stereotypes be blown! I went to convention and found mutual love, acceptance, joy, harmony, fun, laughter, hugs, differing points of view openly expressed, many of the same problems and challenges we're facing in Portland and wonderful, loving people of all ages, sizes and descriptions. This is a wonderful family and our Portland church is a part of this family.

It was illuminating to discover how much we have in common with the other folks within the greater church: of how aware and excited many people are about what we are creating

here at the Portland church. It's like going to a reunion of a family you didn't know you had and discovering that the differences are superficial and the connections of the heart run deep. I gained a greater appreciation of Swedenborg. I developed a deep gratitude for the response to his visions that called this greater church into being and that now provides a field for us to come together and grow a beautiful garden rich in diversity, love and mutual respect.

At some of the meetings I attended, we were asked to break up into Associations to brainstorm on the challenges facing the Swedenborgian Church going into the 21st century. It was joyous to connect with the other members of the Maine Association. We are all "green and growing." We have a lot to share with each other, our denomination, and our world. I would like to see us create more opportunities to schmooze with our cousins in Fryeburg and New Hampshire. I would also like to applaud General Council and our president, the Rev. Edwin Capon, for providing

**The differences are superficial  
and the connections  
of the heart run deep.**

the time and context for our discussions. Having been raised in a religion where I was to keep my mouth shut, look angelic and not talk back, it was refreshing to find myself belonging to a church where my input was sought and valued.

I want to share what happened with the Swedenborgian Church Youth League, which is an organization of teens and young adults. Eli Dale and I were sitting in on the General Council meeting when the SCYL arrived to request a proposal to have two voting delegates at convention. It was inspiring to see the various members of General Council searching through the By-Laws to find the legal means to make this happen so quickly that the SCYL delegates could vote at this convention. When the proposal came before

the business meeting, what appeared to be the entire

SCYL contingent tramped up on stage to stand before us and say, "We want a voice in the decision-making body." The room went nuts. We whooped and applauded and sent waves of love to these young people. We saw the future and it was good.

At the Sunday service, the Rev. Richard Baxter gave one of the most moving, inspiring and well-delivered sermons I have ever witnessed. It brought tears to my eyes because to me the New Jerusalem is the spiritual leap of evolution which humanity must take if we are to redeem ourselves and heal the damage we have done to each other and to this beautiful green earth. The New Jerusalem is a vision of a world of peace and justice, "the valley of love and delight," the New Heaven and the New Earth. I am proud, profoundly grateful, and delighted to be a member of a church whose foundation is to hold and ground and midwife into being a vision of the new paradigm.

*Carol Fusco is a member of the Portland, Maine Swedenborgian Church. Reprinted from Portland's July-August newsletter.*



*Swedenborgian Church Youth League*

## Swedenborgian Church Election Results 1993

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

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

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

**GENERAL COUNCIL:** Rev. Randy Laakko (*minister, 3-year term*)—  
Delaware

Sharon Reddekopp Slough (*lay person, 3-year term*)—Alberta, Canada

Lawrence Young, Sr. (*lay person, 3-year term*)—Massachusetts

**COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT UNIT:** Rev. Erni Martin (*1-year unexpired term*)—Pennsylvania  
Ethelwyn Worden (*3-year term*)—Maine

**EDUCATION SUPPORT UNIT:**  
Nancy McBride (*3-year term*)—B.C., Canada

**FINANCIAL and PHYSICAL RESOURCES SUPPORT UNIT:** Polly Baxter (*3-year term*)—Maryland

**GROWTH and OUTREACH SUPPORT UNIT:** Rev. Steve Pults (*3-year term*)—Michigan

**INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SUPPORT UNIT:** Fred Hille (*3-year term*)—Minnesota

**PASTORAL MINISTRIES SUPPORT UNIT:** Rev. Ron Brugler (*3-year term*)—Ontario, Canada

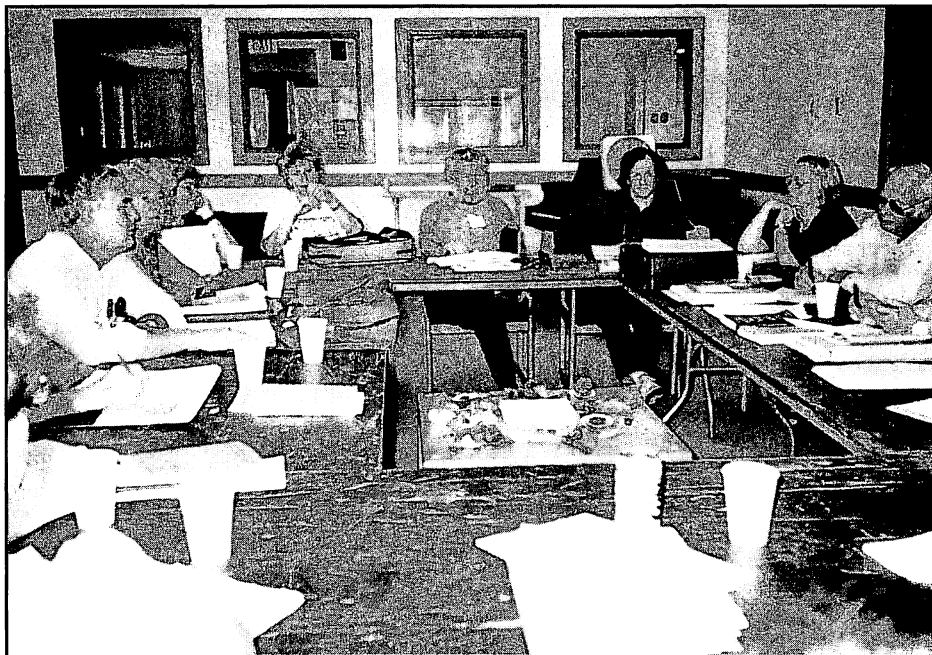
**NOMINATING COMMITTEE:**  
Karen Nielsen Conger (*5-year term*)—California

**COMMITTEE on ADMISSION to the MINISTRY:** Rev. Marlene Laughlin (*minister, 1-year term*)—Massachusetts  
Marilyn Turley (*lay person, 1-year term*)—Washington

**BOARD of TRUSTEES, SWEDENBORG SCHOOL of RELIGION:**  
Karen Laakko Feil (*2-year term*)—Illinois

Rev. Jerome Pool (*3-year term*)—Delaware

Rev. Horand Gutfeldt (*3-year term*)—California



*General Council in session.*

### General Council Report

General Council met just before and after convention sessions in Wenham, Massachusetts at the end of June. Among the items of business were acceptance of the Treasurer's report for audit, and acceptance of the 1993 audits of the church, Temenos and the Wayfarers Chapel. General Council discussed the need for people willing to serve as Urbana University Church Class Trustees. Convention 1994 dates were set for June 29 through July 3 and 1995 Convention dates for June 28 through July 2. General Council, acting upon a request by the Swedenborgian Church Youth League, moved to recommend to the floor of convention that the League be recognized as a constituent body, having two delegate votes. The Research committee was discharged, and a motion rescinding the 1985 motion regarding aid to ministers who are moving, if it is indeed still in effect, was passed. It was moved to accept the various committee appointments made by President Edwin Capon. The Temenos Board's request for approval of a change in their by-

laws to allow for a larger board of directors was approved. General Council also reaffirmed their previous decision to have a zero base budget in 1994. An ad hoc committee to gather priorities from the people at the local level was approved. This committee will report back to General Council so Council will be better able to budget using priorities. There was much discussion about Temenos and the cost overruns at this point. It was felt that we are legally obligated to pay these cost overruns. General Council also directed its executive committee to work out an agreement with the Philadelphia church regarding the Temenos project. It was decided to hold a joint workshop with the Cabinet at the mid-winter General Council meeting, using Lilly Fund Grant leadership. Supervision of the church's involvement with the National Council of Churches is to be located in the General Council rather than the Council of Ministers as it had been previously. Dates set for the mid-winter General Council meeting were January 13 through 16.

—Gloria Toot, Secretary

## 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 agree or 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.

### Deficit Discussion

Dear Editor,

One of the major topics at convention this year was the deficit. We had an interesting discussion, and since not everyone attended convention, I would like to take this opportunity to detail that discussion in *The Messenger*.

Large organizations, like General Convention, do not use a cash system like most home budgets. This is due in part to the fact that many of the investments have fluctuating incomes and having to readjust the budget each time there is a change in income would be very time-consuming. There are various accounting standards that can be utilized to smooth out these fluctuations and an organization can select any combination of these standards for accounting purposes.

In the case of Convention, we had some \$881,000 of revenues in 1992. Of these, approximately \$592,000 came from "investment income." This "investment income" is not a number that represents actual cash received. It is a number calculated using one of these accounting standards and represents 5 1/2 % of the market value of investments made for income purposes. The 5 1/2 % is a number selected to represent the average of the previous five years investment income and is a somewhat arbitrary number. The higher this percentage, the greater the risk that we will not achieve our investment income goal.

The discussion at convention centered on this percentage relative to the deficit. If we exclude the deficit attributable to Temenos, that being an investment decision, the remaining deficit is about \$170,000. This represents about 1.5 % of the

market value of investments used for income. In other words if we had chosen a 7 % multiplier instead of the 5 1/2 %, there would be no deficit. As discussed about, the selection of a higher multiplier represents a higher risk that we will not achieve our investment goal.

A related discussion involves the value of our assets. Again there are a variety of accounting standards that can be used to represent the value of our assets. Convention's assets were last posted to market value in 1984. The difference between that adjustment and the current market value is approximately \$5 million. This represents, in part, increases in income over and above the 5 1/2 % assumption. Although we are looking at a deficit of \$170,000 per year, our assets have increased by an average of over \$500,000 per year. Therefore, we are not eating our seed corn, we are only out of alignment with our assumptions.

The solution is not necessarily to change the assumptions to meet the actual results. If current interest rates remain for an extended period, even the 5 1/2 % assumption may be unrealistically high. We do need to balance our capital appreciation and income. It may be time to take some capital gains in addition to the income.

There was a great deal of discussion at convention on zero-based budgeting to alleviate the deficit. The first step is to re-examine our accounting assumptions and then go forward with the budget allocations.

*Lawrence D. Conant  
W. Bridgewater, MA*

### The Treasurer Speaks

Dear Editor,

After reading Larry Conant's letter to the editor, I have come to the conclusion that I didn't do a very good job explaining the treasurer's report at the convention session and the methods of accounting that are being used. Misunderstandings are very understandable to me, as I spent two years under the able guidance of my predecessor, Gus Ebel, before I felt that I understood our accounting system and how it

worked.

I must apologize to Larry and any others I left in confusion over the differences between the budgeting process and the actual cash being received by the denomination. The approximately \$592,000 shown in the treasurer's report does represent actual cash received from investments, of which \$587,653 was received from the Common Fund distribution. The Common Fund distribution is based on 5 1/2 % of the actual market value of the fund and is a percentage selected by the Investment Committee to allow a reasonable amount of cash to the fund that keeps the growth of the fund ahead of inflation.

As Larry correctly pointed out, our funds have increased in value to make the difference between book value, as shown by the treasurers report, and the Common Fund value a bit under \$500,000 per year. This was not a process that occurred equally each year since 1984. Much of the gain came during the same years that inflation was over 10 % per year. The gain in value has indeed offset the destructive effects of high inflation. Also, a number of sizable gifts were added to our funds during this same period.

The developing of an accurate budget for any organization is a difficult process. Determining a figure for future expenses is relatively easy, but income projections are difficult as no one knows how the financial markets will move in the future. The averaging process described by Larry is a method used by our denomination in its budgeting to assist in arriving at a balanced budget, and should not be confused with the Common Fund cash distribution.

The denomination uses a funds-accounting method of keeping our financial books. This is a system used by public non-profit organizations and is somewhat different from the methods used by most businesses. We use this method because of our many funds that have restricted use of the income. Most business organizations can use the income from their investments any way they wish. We, by law, cannot. We must be very careful to use income in accordance with the wishes of the

original giver of the money.

This brings me to the final point that should be made regarding the taking of additional cash from the investments in the Common Fund. All the deficit of approximately \$170,000 except for the Augmentation Fund deficit of approximately \$32,000 *must* be paid from unrestricted-use funds. Removing the Augmentation Fund deficit, the remaining deficit becomes \$138,000. If we took *all* the income and growth available in the Common Fund, which is not the 7% Larry suggests, but is about 10%, we would have an increase of only \$107,000 of unrestricted cash, as we can use only about 20% of the total increase in cash. The remaining 80% *must by law* be returned to the restricted-use funds that they represent in the Common Fund. This would still leave a deficit of \$31,000 that must be taken from the capital value of the unrestricted-use funds. This in turn will reduce the income for unrestricted uses for the following year.

I recognize the difficulty of totally understanding the process by anyone not directly involved in the management of our funds, and I will continue to try to answer questions that arise.

I would like to thank Larry Conant for the time and interest in discussing these issues, as it is a good way to clarify an otherwise confusing situation.

John C. Perry

Treasurer, the Swedenborgian Church

### Social Concerns

To the Editor,

The Reverend Susan Turley-Moore's letter regarding the undemocratic demise of the Social Action Concerns Committee (SACC) in the May *Messenger* prompted me to write. The good reverend's letter reads like a manifesto from the 60s or early 70s: point-by-point indictment of the stand-pat-Menshevik policy that denies the will of the people. While it professes concern with damage to the larger church, its assumptions are as anti-democratic as the action it denounces. To have an argument over whether 10 or so people, as opposed to 151 should commit the entire church to a particular social agenda is silly. There is nothing democratic in

having a small group of people adopt positions on social issues and then giving the rest of us a chance to talk about it *ex post facto*.

We have a national church that is smaller than many local churches. Yet our leadership get to refer to themselves as "national." Our ministers can get together and talk to each other fairly often. They are far less diligent in their attempt to get around to ministering to the local groups that have no minister. The rest of the "leadership" cadre get to flit about the country to meetings with each other. We also have semi-annual meetings at which the cadres gather and talk to each other. All this is apparently quite heady stuff. It would be hard to get such recognition in any other church, or any organization of only 1500 members.

It is important to keep this in mind when considering the disagreements that occur within the "inner circle" of important people. How does one separate the ego factor from theological significance? One cannot. It does not follow that to take no stand on an issue implies that therefore the church supports the opposite side, or does not care. We should all keep this in mind when we are exhorted to take political stands; especially when you consider that our collective opinion represents .00075% of the population of the nation.

What we really have here is a high priestess quarreling with a former exalted high leader over who is more skilled in augury. The issue is not democratic traditions, the issue is who gets to set policy, Dick or Sue?

Neither knows what the rest of us think, their guesses are no better than mine. It is hard to imagine that people join this church because of the social advantages it offers or that the members lack the wherewithal to figure out what is meet and proper to do. And since so few people have even heard of the Swedenborgian church, I cannot imagine that anyone either comes or leaves because of Susan Turley-Moore's ideology.

To be honest, I seldom concern myself about national convention because it seems to be disconnected from the issues we face down here on the farm. Whether or not we should take strong positions on divisive social

issues just doesn't relate to the fact that the roof needs fixing, that the weeds are a problem on the meditation path, that preventive maintenance is something we can only dream about, that there are not enough bodies to get all the work done, or that we cannot afford a minister but we would really like to have one. My understanding is that some of our fellow churches are on the verge of homelessness themselves. Why is not that aspect of homelessness being addressed?

We here at Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church struggle with the issue of how to do best with what little we have all the time. When the national convention gives us "dogma," it only adds a layer of drivel to work through. And I would warn all who preach that while they are probably proud of the fact that they have been able to transcend point of view to reach truth, it is equally as likely that they have trammelled truth in elevating their point of view (this includes me and my point of view). It is noble to address the needs of society, anyone can equate his or her social vision with what the church ought to be doing. Conversely, it is carnal and definitely not-noble to talk about finding enough money to pay the rent and make capital investment for the future when someone is talking about the heart-rending need of such and such. However, society's needs are endless. My concern is that 20 years from now, there will still be an endless supply of needs, but there will be no Swedenborgians to address them.

Do the people in control think that the one who spends the last nickel on the most worthy cause will get to stand closer to God? They act as if being at the helm of a sinking ship is a better job than manning the bilge pumps of one that manages to float. Let us not forget that the very people who led us into this decline are the ones who have appointed themselves as the leadership to "grow the church" and become vital again.

As a frustrated member, I have some suggestions. They are, however, not kind to the current structure. I should like to offer them at a future date.

Leonard Harding, Milford, Ohio

# Council of Ministers Report

Thirty-four ministers were present for all or part of the 1993 Council of Ministers sessions, and by invitation the president of the Swedenborg School of Religion (SSR) and four students attended all except Executive Sessions.

Council members arrived at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts, on Saturday, June 26. An informal gathering was held that evening. On Sunday morning, CoM members and spouses gathered in the Prince Chapel for a worship service led by Donna Keane, with participation by Robert Kirven, John Billings, and Linda Tafel.

Business sessions began Sunday afternoon, with the Address of Council Chair Donna Keane. Communications were received, the agenda provisionally adopted, last year's minutes approved as distributed, and written reports received. In a special report, SSR President Mary Kay Klein described the mid-winter workshop for ministers to be held in February 1994 in Massachusetts sponsored by the Lilly Foundation's grant to SSR. The subject will be church growth, a topic requested by PMSU, and will be led by the Rev. Roy Oswald of the Alban Institute.

## Lay Leadership

The Council held an extended discussion of the procedures by which candidates for Lay Leadership are accepted for the program, prepared for the post, and appointed to provisional and full status. Some years' experience with the program suggested the need for improvement of the process, and various possibilities were discussed at length. Four recommendations by the Lay Leader Committee eventually were moved, seconded, and voted:

1. that candidates complete the SSR application process and one year of the program before applying to the Council of Ministers, and that SSR application material and progress reports be made available (with

the student's permission) for review by the Council of Ministers or any committee designated by the Council, prior to a vote on acceptance as a Probationary Lay Leader.

2. that the Council of Ministers ask the Committee on Admission to the Ministry to take responsibility for designing a way to monitor the progress of lay leader candidates.

3. that SSR report each year to the Council or its representatives on the progress of lay leader candidates.

4. that the Ordaining Minister rescind Probationary Lay Leader status when a candidate has not made satisfactory progress, apprising the candidate of options to reapply or be reconsidered in the future.

In Executive Session Sunday evening, the ministers discussed the slate of the Council, pinpointing needs for development in the Council, and possibilities for improving our meetings.

Monday was devoted to a workshop, led by the Rev. Fred Shilling and the Rev. Celia Hahn, both of the Alban Institute, on the subject of "Sexuality in Ministry." Their leadership was made possible by the Lilly Foundation's grant to SSR. After a day of presentations, and discussion under their leadership, the council divided into smaller groups in the evening for further discussion.

F. Robert Tafel led a discussion of Ministers' Retirement Committee practices and policies, and action required by the Council was taken on the issue of qualification for inclusion in the group life insurance policy that is part of the program.

Robert E. McCluskey, chair of the Church's delegation to the National Council of Churches of Christ, reported on issues that needed highlighting beyond his written report. The Council voted agreement with action of the delegation, in protesting the National Council's decision regarding the United Fellowship of Metropolitan Community

Churches.

Much time and energy was devoted to issues relating to the church's financial crisis, to the CoM's budget reductions in response to the problem, and to President Edwin Capon's address to the Council, which also focused on the budget crunch. More time was devoted on Wednesday to formulating a recommendation to the convention:

The Council of Ministers, recognizing that we are caught in a frightening cycle of invasion of unrestricted capital, decreasing income, and increasing deficits, recommends to the General Council that it direct General Council to prepare and adhere to a strictly balanced budget for the next fiscal year (1994). It further recommends that the Convention direct General Council to be strict in its interpretation and observance of the intent of the conditions attached to the restricted funds.

In this connection, as well as others, the idea of biannual conventions was discussed, with the Council remaining divided: some approve, some disapprove, and many feel that more specific alternatives need to be proposed before the matter can be considered further.

## Future Ordinations

Pavel Heger, of The Czech Republic, and Kinichi Kuniyeda, of Japan, presented "Visions of Ministries" to the Council, which granted provisional approval to both of them. This is the last step before the two candidates present their "Plans of Ministry" to the Committee on Admission to the Ministry for recommendation to the Council next year regarding their ordination.

## Pastoral Ministries Support Unit

PMSU reported through its secretary, Paul Zacharias, that they are formalizing an existing policy which provides that ministers whose churches received AFC aid shall be available for "supply" assignments to churches without ministers, and that they will be providing an evaluation instrument by which ministers

*(Continued on page 111)*



## Council of Ministers Report

(Continued from page 110)

and their church boards may better assess their working relationship. It was emphasized that these evaluations are *not* for reporting back to any national body.

### Policy on General Church

Following up on action taken at the 1992 sessions, and after extended discussion both years, the Council voted:

Recognizing that our Council and our Church have experienced periods of difficult relations with the General Church of the New Jerusalem, as well as periods and areas of harmony and fruitful cooperation:

The Council of Ministers recommends to the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church that officers of the Council and the Church, as well as chairs of official bodies, be allowed to pursue openings toward better relations between the two church bodies as such openings may appear, while exercising due caution and judgment in establishing any contacts or relationships—formal or informal—with the General Church, or any of its officers of bodies. (23 voted in favor, 4 against, with 1 abstention.)

### Ethics Committee Report

A report from the Ethics Committee, mandated by the Council at its 1992 sessions, proposed a set of guidelines for dealing with cases of sexual misconduct by Ordained Clergy or Authorized Lay Leaders, should any arise in the future. The proposal was discussed at length, and finally sent back to the Ethics Committee for clarification in one area, to the Council's Executive Committee for revision in another, and to a committee to be appointed by the Council chair to draft amendments to the Convention Constitution, and/or the by-laws of the Convention and the Council, as may be needed to implement the guidelines once they are adopted.

### Elections

Following nominations from the Nomination Committee, with no additional nominations from the floor, the Council of Ministers elected the following slate of officers for the coming year:

**Chair:** Robert Kirven  
(2-year term)  
**Secretary:** Susan Turley-Moore (3-year term)  
**ExCom Member:** Dorothea Harvey  
(1993-95)

**CAM Member:** Gard Perry  
**Convention Preacher, 1995:** Carl Yenetchi

Robert H. Kirven  
Secretary, 1992-1993

*The Rev. David Sonmor receives award from the Rev. Jerome Poole in recognition of his four years on the SSR Corporation Board of Trustees.*



## Passages

### Deaths

**Goldstein**—Hope Goldstein, unborn daughter of Penny and David Goldstein, entered the spiritual world in early May, 1993. Resurrection service was conducted by the Rev. Rachel Rivers May 6, 1993, at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.

**MacDonald**—Edith MacDonald, lifelong member of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, entered the spiritual world April 23, 1993, on her 93rd birthday.

**Vanderlip**—Frank Arthur Vanderlip, philanthropist, lifelong member and a former chair of the Board of Trustees of the New York Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world April 23, 1993. Resurrection service was conducted April 30, 1993, at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Tarrytown, New York, the Revs. Robert McCluskey and D. Wms. McClurken officiating. A graveside service at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery was conducted by the Rev. Robert McCluskey.

**Thompson**—Violetta (Valladares) Thompson, entered the spiritual world in Conway, New Hampshire, May 16, 1993. Memorial service was conducted at the Swedenborgian Church in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating. Violetta was the daughter of Mary Valladares, who was the cook at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly for many years.

### Change of Address

Patte and Ted LeVan

P.O. Box 985

Julian, CA 92036

619-765-2915 (phone & FAX)

Please address *Messenger* correspondence and submissions to above address.

### Church Family News

The Rev. Eric Allison and Cathy started their journey back from Mauritius to Canada in mid-June, with stops in South Africa, Australia, and other points. They are scheduled to arrive back in Kitchener on August 15.

The Kitchener church donated a special Easter offering of \$937, in addition to other financial support, to the church in Mauritius. The following letter from Lady Yvette Walter was printed in their June newsletter:

Dear Members of the Church of the Good Shepherd,

Your financial gift to the churches in Mauritius is a generous one that has been a great help to us. Had it not been for your generosity, the ministry of Rev. Eric Allison could not have been as effective as it has. Thanks to you we now have an audio tape player for each church which has improved our musical program. We also have new song books, Sunday School material, a supply of books for distribution and an advertising campaign in progress. Soon, we will have a new sign for each church. Because of your thoughtfulness, we are better equipped to continue our ministry in Mauritius.

Again we thank you for your support. We are a world away from you, but share the same sustaining New Church faith.

May God Bless you,

Lady Yvette Walter, Mauritius New Church



*Act III of The Barber of Seville performed June 23 by Janus Opera Company, some of whom are also members of the Boston church choir.*



*Opening session sing-along with (from left): Eli Dale, Ken and Laurie Turley, Nor Dale.*



*Betsy Young (center) receives Honorary M.A. in Swedenborg Studies from SSR's Board of Trustees Chair Jerome Poole and SSR President Mary Kay Klein (R)*



*The Rev. Chungsun and Pob Yung Lee, The Church of the Little Grain (Korean), Brooklyn, New York.*



*Solrun Thorballsson demonstrates sensible approach to convention overload.*

**The Swedenborgian Church  
of North America  
*The Messenger*  
48 Sargent Street  
Newton, MA 02158**

**Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Plymouth, IN  
Permit No. 105**

**Forwarding Address Correction Requested**