
THE MESSENGER

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April 1994

Morning, Sunday, Springtime, and Resurrection

Robert H. Kirven

Our lives are crowded with symbols. "Stop" signs have the same eight-sided shape the world over, so drivers obey the shape whether they can read the word, or not. Companies that spent a generation or more establishing a good reputation for their name, change it to initials so they can advertise it in a recognizable symbol. Our signature is a symbol of ourselves that represents us with such authority that someone with a convincing copy of it can take all our money. Indeed, even the personally handwritten signature is in turn symbolized by some computer code on a piece of plastic, so that a machine thousands of miles from home will not only give me money from my bank account back home, but also greet me by name!

Religion always has made much of symbols. They may have been originated for religious purposes. The Cross stands for the Lord, who died on it, and for the Church built in His Name. And we celebrate Easter in the morning, on the first day of the week, in the spring of the year, with brightly colored symbols of fertility and birth. Four symbols for one celebration! We have used them for so long, it is worth stopping for a moment to look at them and some of their meanings.

Morning

Experienced every day, morning is a symbol that is familiar apart from Easter, apart from religion, remind-

ing us of newness, freshness, hope, unlimited possibilities. Dawn, the beginning of morning, morning's "morning" as it were, sharpens morning's symbolic focus on light in contrast to darkness, starting over in contrast to failure, hope in contrast to despair. The cliché, "it is darkest just before dawn," points to morning as a turning point, a change for the better. And on a morning, on the first day of the week, in the spring of the year, we tell the story of the women going "early in the morning, before the sun was up"—the dawn of that day, and the dawn of a new stage in human history.

Roman mythology had a goddess of the dawn, called Aurora; and an early Swedenborgian in England took the name for the title of a religious periodical. That was the time when English Swedenborgians thought of starting the calendar anew, marking years not since the life of the Lord, but from the date of His Second Coming. In our days of a dwindling number of Swedenborgian churches, with shortages of members, ministers, and money, it is hard to regain their sense of a new day dawning. It is somewhat like waking after a short and restless night, feeling grumpy and out-of-sorts, and hearing someone singing, *Oh, What a Beautiful Morning*, too loudly and not quite on key: the hope and glory of morning may not be what we want to hear, just at the moment!

But all of us can remember a morning when we awoke with joy,

the day was filled with hope, and our spirits rose with the sun. Mornings like that, morning at its best, is the symbol for Easter, as well as for the church. The fresh start, the second chance, the new day dawning, can recall for us the day that dawned over the entrance to the empty tomb.

Sunday

One of the more notable among closet Swedenborgians, the late Rev. Phillips Brooks, of Boston, is said to have designed a preacher's calendar that long was published under his name (perhaps it still is). The main thing that made it a preacher's calendar was its eccentric arrangement: Monday was the first day of the week, Sunday the last, on the theory that a preacher's week works up to a Sunday climax.

How odd that so devoted a Christian would move Sunday from its place as first day of the week—a place it holds from the biblical

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Guest Editorial by Eric Hoffman

I have a confession to make. Easter hasn't been one of my favorite holidays.

I suppose this is due to a number of factors, not the least of which is how I have seen Easter celebrated. The day after Valentine's Day, without fail, the stores begin to devote aisles to rabbits, ducks, chickens and grass—all of which reveal that the plastic industry has been hard at work. There are stacks of boxes containing at least a dozen different "kits" designed to turn an egg blue or red or green with little sparkly things. Granted, this is all pretty fun stuff when you're a kid, but as I've grown older the commerciality of our holidays, including Easter, is bothering me more and more. The secular world of Easter egg decals and mass-produced Easter bunny balloons seems to prefer making a quick buck over upholding the intended sacredness of the holiday.

It took me a long time to finally comprehend what Easter is all about. As a child, the sermons were never quite clear on the subject, and the story of the resurrection of Christ rested just at the edge of credibility. And of course, as a teenager at the height of my ability to sleep, there was no way on God's green earth you were going to get me to attend a sunrise worship service.

One of the breakthroughs in the continuing process of my enlightenment was to learn that Easter as we know it has had a long and complex history, incorporating elements of many cultures. It began as a fusion of the religious acknowledgment of the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion and subsequent resurrection and a pre-Christian celebration of the coming of spring (the word "Easter", in fact, comes from the Norse word for the spring season, "Eostur"). Now spring is something I can identify with! The deepest sense of joy overwhelms me when the slush is gone and the mercury finally hits fifty. Sometimes all I can do is sing a lot and smile like a fool; "work" becomes all but impossible. Spring is an exciting time, and is much easier to relate to, for me at least, than some set of abstract theological doctrines.

But in a very real sense, feeling the joy of spring is the key to understanding Easter. There was a winter of sorts before Christ came into the world—a spiritual winter in which the warmth of God's love was not received in the hearts of the people. All of existence was overlain by a cold and bitter negativity that could not be ignored. Jesus' early life was spent learning to see through the negativity, and his ministry was to help others perceive that underneath it all was the rich, green presence of heaven waiting to bloom. His final acts were like the first consecutively warm days in which the snow gives in and melts away and the world finally commits to the new growth of Spring.

I look into the faces of our children and wonder—are they making the connection? Do the young people of our community, through all the grumblings about having to get dressed up, know that beneath all the plastic and food coloring is a wonderful sense of joy just aching to be realized? I for one, having been shown the inherent beauty of this holiday, will do my best to share the joy Easter can bring so that it does not come and go unappreciated again.

The Rev. Eric Hoffman is minister to the LaPorte New Church (Swedenborgian) in LaPorte, Indiana.

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Linda Mahler

Town & Country Press

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Patte LeVan, Editor

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

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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.

Focus on the Wheat

Dear Editor:

The past several *Messengers* have included many responses to Len Harding's two-part letter in the Opinion section during fall '93. Among the responses, Robert McCluskey wrote in the January '94 issue about his concern that "so much 'chaff' found its way into *The Messenger*," and his further concern that because *The Messenger* is the "window" for people outside our denomination that "our image (may be) greatly and unnecessarily tarnished by giving credence to such uninformed material."

The "Opinion" column is always prefaced with the following caveat: "Letters published here to do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editor, the Communications Support Unit or the General Council of the

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Morning . . . Resurrection (from cover)

tradition of the women finding the empty tomb on the first day of the week! Most of us don't care that much *where* Sundays are placed on the calendar page, except that we're so accustomed to the traditional arrangement that anything else looks weird; but the beginning of the week is like the beginning of the day, only rarer. It's the start of a new time, a fresh start, another chance. If we don't associate Mondays with anything so wonderful and uplifting, it probably is because we earn our money doing something we don't like doing. But we shouldn't let "blue Mondays" on a dull job spoil our appreciation of Sunday as a bright beginning of a new week. The prayers, the fellowship, the singing, the sermon—the whole collection of experiences we call church—are meant among other things to give us a running start on a new week of spiritual growth, of expanding help to those we love, a new start on a heaven-bound life. That is what Sunday is supposed to remind us of, especially the Sunday on which we celebrate Easter.

Springtime

Springtime is a more happy symbol than morning (when sometimes we would rather sleep) or Sunday (ditto?). New shoots and buds, the brightly blossoming perennials, the unmistakable bright green of new foliage, warmer days after the winter everyone loves to hate—spring has a joy for every eye, a delight for every heart (even snow-loving skiers have spring skiing!) Also, human symbolism from before the beginning of history has linked spring, spring flowers, spring lambs, everything that starts new in spring, with hope and new life and immortality.

Spring's connection with Easter has historic, as well as symbolic support. By contrast, we celebrate Christmas in December, but we have no certain knowledge of the year or

time of year when Jesus was born. But the Passion Story's involvement with the Jewish holy day of Passover gives us clear certainty that the Lord's Resurrection was in the springtime, when "all awakening nature unite in telling of eternal life" (according to a prayer from the 1950 *Book of Worship*).

Springtime signals not only newness, freshness, growth and hope; springtime is especially the symbol of rebirth. Morning carries some of that sense, in that waking after sleep, the body that was weary the



night before now refreshed and invigorated for a new day. But trees, and ground, and bushes, look so dead at the end of winter, that buds and shoots and tiny leaves have an indelible print of the miraculous.

My good friend, Galen Unruh, told what has remained for me the ultimate springtime parable. Once, during a dry spring when he was farming fulltime, he was wondering gloomily about what kind of crop he'd get that year, if he got one at

all. Lying full-length on the ground to look at it and feel it, he scratched at the earth with his finger, and *Hey!*, suddenly, right under his eye, a tiny green shoot of wheat flipped upright out of the dirt! It was awesome to him. It was like the feeling a farmer gets when he witnesses birth, but increased by the suddenness, the surprise. It was life springing from the dry, dead-looking ground.

That story is the kind of thing that shepherds and farmers, closer to nature than city folks seem to be, think of in connection with spring. And that is spring's symbol for Easter and the Resurrection.

Resurrection

All the symbols we have for new days, fresh starts, new weeks, springtime's new life, individually or altogether, still are only inadequate, partial, symbols for the Lord's Resurrection. Awakening from death and rising from the tomb was miraculous. But rising from life as a human being into life as the Risen Lord, goes beyond all the words we have to express wonder and awe. Being unique in all of history, it was incomparable; but beside its astonishing glory as an event, it was a change in our lives. Dawn morning, the new day; Sunday, the new week; Springtime, buds, and dew-fresh blossoms from cold dead soil; all these gain their deepest emotional impact from their association with Easter.

Easter, after all, is the supreme new beginning, the start of lives for which God has conquered sin and death, bringing us salvation. Easter is the fresh start *par excellence*, a chance to start over free to choose the good and the true, free of bondage to all that would make us less than we can be. Easter is the climactic victory in the saving story that was written by God in human history.

Easter is the morning, first day, and springtime of our lives.

The Rev. Dr. Robert H. Kirven is the Council of Ministers chair and a past president and retired professor from the Swedenborgian School of Religion. He is living in Glendale, Arizona.

Our Churches Serving the Community

Eric Allison

This is the third in a series of articles describing the social action or service our churches offer. It has been most encouraging to discover that all of our churches are doing something to help their communities and/or to reach out across the seas to those in need. I confess that I have been surprised. Some of our congregations are very small with a majority of the members being people who have given of themselves for years and have now reached the point in their lives that it is time for them to receive. But, they keep on giving in very tangible ways.

During my information-gathering conversations I have learned about many of the activities which may not really be considered as social action. Sometimes it has been difficult to draw the line between self service and community service. Some programs are an effort to reach out to the community or provide a service to non-church members, so I have listed them here even though they may not be strictly social action. Many people have expressed their thanks for these articles and have enjoyed reading about what other churches are doing. So, while this is a departure from my original intention for this series, it seems to be appreciated. Thank you for your comments.

The Elmwood Swedenborgian Church (Massachusetts) has been known for decades for its high quality "bean suppers." Five or six times each year the church hosts a bean



ELMWOOD CHURCH

supper. This has become more of an event for seniors. For little cost people can gather to enjoy each others' company over a tasty and healthy meal. In a time when there are not many places older people can gather, this is a wonderful service to the community. The church makes a little profit from these occasions, but mostly the meal is served because it is an essential ingredient in what makes Elmwood a "community." The village of Elmwood just wouldn't be the same without the bean suppers.

Three times each year the congregation gathers food for the local Food Bank.

Twice yearly the rummage sale offers high quality items for ridiculously low prices. It's the church's way of giving useful items to those in need while still allowing the people to have the satisfaction of giving something back to the church.

The fellowship hall is often used as a community center for: Cub Scouts, music groups, anniversaries, birthdays, social events, the Harvest Supper, the Christmas Fair and a host of other events.

The Virginia St. Church of St. Paul, Minnesota has been a very active member of the local Council of Churches for many years. It is not exaggerating to say that our church in St. Paul has been known as one of the most active churches in community concerns. Rev. Andre Diaconoff was instrumental in starting

the New Beginnings Center which continues its work today by supplying food, clothing and housewares to the poor. The Virginia Street Church still contributes to the New Beginnings Center with an ongoing collection of food at the church.



ST. PAUL CHURCH

Even though the congregation is small, they are active members of **Congregations Concerned for Children**, **Church Women United** (and the various activities it supports), and the **Y.W.C.A.** program for **Transitional Housing for Battered Women**. Regular assistance of food, clothing, and household goods are also given to **The Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church FREE STORE**.

Last year a nearby church burned to the ground. Members of the Virginia St. congregation helped them build a new church. Church member Bowman Brackin is very active in a **Covenant House** project which helps street children of Guatemala. Bowman even traveled to Guatemala to see the conditions of the children and help with his own hands. The church donates the use of their copy machine for the many copies made explaining this worthwhile project.

The church building is used weekly by a **smokeless AA group**. Each year the Christmas Pageant attracts many people from the community who come for the spiritual uplift which this presentation offers.

The **Women's Alliance** supplies the **Department of Indian Works** with money and food and clothing each year.



LAPORTE CHURCH

The LaPorte New Church has offered the community ten tape presentations **On Creating Love** by John Bradshaw. As many as forty people were in attendance for these dynamic sessions which offer sound

advice on creating love. The cost to the public was a free will offering.

At Thanksgiving a collection of groceries was taken so boxes of food could be given to two families. At Christmas five families were helped with gifts and groceries. A total of \$1,500 was given for these five families.

The Rev. Eric Hoffman takes part in the community Lenten services. He is on call as a chaplain once each month at the hospital and offers a worship service about once a month to the boys at the Crowley Juvenile Service.

The church has a thriving young peoples' group which meets twice each month. This group of ten to eighteen teens is open to the community, providing a place where Christian values can be understood as a viable way to make it through this turbulent time of life.

Each month the church makes a contribution to the Salvation Army. Our church in LaPorte has been an active member of Church Women United and its numerous functions in the community for many years.



SAN DIEGO CHURCH

Our **San Diego** congregation recycles cans for its discretionary fund. Members bring their cans to the church and the money raised from this is used to help those who come to the church asking for financial help.

Each year a Thanksgiving potluck is held at the church for people who don't have a place to spend Thanksgiving.

Many groups use the church as a meeting place. The Circle of Light religious group, the Wednesday Forum worship service, and The Spiritual Life has a weekly worship service and study program.

Because of a grant from the PCA, the Swedenborg Book Room library is open every Saturday.

The church is an active member in Ecumenical Society. Eldon and Annella were invited to Saint John's Episcopal Church to conduct a work-

shop on Swedenborg.

The congregation makes an annual contribution to the American Red Cross and Salvation Army. The sanctuary is open Monday through Friday for prayer and meditation. The library is also open, and Eldon and Annella are available for those who want to talk. During a three month period they recorded eighty visitors.

The **Women's Alliance** meets monthly at the church. Though not involved as a group in any community service projects, every member helps at least one local volunteer organization. The gathering is a time for them to socialize and do in-house service.

Each April the congregation hosts a weekend program for isolated Swedenborgians in Southern California.



EL CERRITO CHURCH

Our congregation in **El Cerrito** is committed to the belief that the church facility is a sacred space that should only be used by groups that are devoted to some type of inner spiritual work. They don't rent the building for birthday parties, receptions, business meetings, etc. The facility is used every day of the week. As a public service, rent for the building use is kept on a donation basis only. This generates income for the church and makes the premises affordable for spiritually centered groups.

An example of this is the **Peter Pan Co-operative Nursery** which operates its program at the church five days each week from 9:00-12:00 a.m. The co-op hosts thirty children from Asian, South American, Latino, South African, German, white and Afro-American families of every socioeconomic level. The parents are required to meet weekly for ongoing training in effective parenting. This is a place where miracles happen. Children and parents learn how to love and live together.

The **Contra Costa Chorale** meets twice each week to practice their heavenly music. They perform only re-

ligious music and donate money to the church from concert proceeds. The singers also do maintenance tasks around the church in partial payment of rent. **Women and the Change** meets weekly. They follow a 12-Step program for women going through menopause. This support group is a place for heart-to-heart sharing. **Body Tales** also gathers weekly for movement and self-exploration through music. **Sacred Circles Dancers** convenes weekly, sessions open to all who want to experience the healing spirit discovered in dance.

The congregation has an ongoing food distribution project which gives a package of canned food and a can opener to those who come to the church for assistance. This is a very active program. Baby formula and canned milk are also available. Every Sunday a soup and sandwich lunch is offered. Many homeless people come for this free meal and fellowship. Always present is a table offering spiritual food by way of free Swedenborgian books. Books are also distributed to local prisons.

The Rev. Horand Gutfeldt has been a regular participant in the Ecumenical Association's hospital visitation program.



WAYFARERS CHAPEL

We all know that thousands of people have come to the **Wayfarers Chapel** to be married in one of the world's most beautiful chapels. This service, and the many baptisms and memorial services, is not the only benefit the public receives from the chapel. Premarital and marital enrichment workshops are regularly presented as part of the Chapel program.

The Chapel staff has volunteered regularly to help at a nearby soup kitchen. Their most active social action project is a very creative response to the homeless problem. They give away wrap-around thermal blankets. So far the Chapel has provided one hundred of these hooded "space blankets" to

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Oneness Out of Diversity

In a short time we will be celebrating the victory of the empty tomb. The bonds of death are broken. Christ has risen as he said. Until the moment of dawn, however, we are given opportunity to reflect upon those events that led to the cross.

On reading those accounts of the final days before Judas' betrayal of the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, there is one theme that reverberates powerfully throughout these pages of Scripture. Jesus, after his stress-filled ministry, has found peace within himself and his longing now is to reach out to his disciples in a way that brings them into oneness with God.

In John 17:11, we read, "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given me, that they may be one as We are." The disciples were a diverse group of men. There was Peter, the fisherman, who surely must have spent many long, starlit nights quietly trolling the vastness of the Sea of Galilee. There was Matthew, a tax collector, an urban dweller accustomed to the noise and bustle of the city.

Oneness out of diversity. That was the challenge. Jesus, all during the course of his ministry, appreciated and responded to the uniqueness of those he met. It was not conformity that he championed. He knew that our individual nature, our individual interests and talents can so easily separate us from each other. He made it his mission to show that our differences, if honored, promote the richness of life. He held before his listeners the possibility of unity without conformity.

This is the ideal of the marriage bond. "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one." (Gen. 2:24). In essence, the more each of us becomes what the Lord intends for us to be, the more we have to offer to the beauty and strength of the relationship. Harmony, then, is the reward of shared goals made possible through personal fulfillment. There is present a heightened sense of oneness from the partnership of the diversity of our being.

This partnership must serve as the internal structure of all interpersonal relationships and for our international relationships, too. There is much being written today about our global society, about world government. From one perspective we have already moved into the framework of this Oneness. The world community already maintains a World Court, a World Bank, the United Nations, World Health Organization. If we can hold to the ideal

of Oneness through our diversity of cultural heritage, there is little to fear from this. We are all part of the human family, and events within this family inevitably bring us face to face with each other.

At this juncture of our human story, this may well be the most significant message of hope, that Easter holds for us. To be sure, it is idealistic. If we do not have our ideals—what else is there?

The Rev. Eric Zacharias, minister to the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas. Reprinted from The Plains Banner, April 1992.

In the Valley

"Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low . . . Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together." (Isaiah 40:3-5)

Sometimes a person can be discouraged about progress through life's difficulties, problems and challenges. In the Bible this condition is described as being down in the valley. The most poignant and well-known example is found in Psalm 23—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death . . ." There are characters in the Bible, too, who are down and out—the man beat

up by thieves on the road down to Jericho, and the prodigal son, to name two.

In each case there is a dramatic turn of

events that teaches us that the Lord is present in our distress to provide comfort, and help. The Psalmist fears no evil, because the Lord's "rod and staff comfort him." The man beaten up is cared for by one who demonstrates the Lord's love; and the prodigal son is uncharacteristically welcomed back by his father, who also pictures the Lord's love for us.

At this time of year, you may feel down and out, even beaten by life's difficulties. I am aware of more than a few people who have expressed this feeling. Our valleys can be turned into light and joy, however, if we can find humility instead of defeat, receptiveness to love, rather than bitterness, in our valleys.

The only requirement I am aware of is that we let our mountains of pride, arrogance, and self-sureness go. Then, as Isaiah has promised, and as the Lord promises in Luke's Gospel, "every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low." And, we shall see the glory of the Lord, that is a light of hope and love and joy in our valley, that comes from the Lord. It is the light of eternal life for which we wait this Easter.

The Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry, minister to the Fryeburg Swedenborgian Church in Fryeburg, Maine. Reprinted from the April 1993 Bulletin.

Easter Thoughts

SPRING AT TEMENOS

Nineteen programs are offered at Temenos this Spring as a service of the Swedenborgian Church in facilitating the spiritual well-being of people. The format of the programs includes Saturday workshops, weekend retreats, and Sunday afternoon seminars. Some of the programs are ongoing or continue for six or eight sessions. Programs include:

Psyche As Hologram
Led by George Dole
Sunday, March 20

Women's Group
Led by Perry Martin
Wednesday evenings

Marriage Enrichment Weekend
Led by Howard and Betsy Friend
of the Temenos staff on March 4-5

Jubilee Time: Agenda for a Now and Future World
Lecture by Maria Harris on April 8
at St. Maximilian Kolbe
Roman Catholic Church

Sacred Space Retreat: For Clergy and Professionals Working with People
Led by Howard and Betsy Friend
on April 10-11

What Does Grief Have To Do With It? A Day for Men.
Led by Lon Elmer on
Saturday, May 21

Proprioceptive Writing Workshops
Two workshops led by Mary Bok
April 11-12 and April 15-17

Living the Single Life
Led by Jacquelyn Zoe de Bray
Saturday, May 14

Creative Arts Group
Led by Perry Martin one Friday each
month from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

**Yearning for God:
A Contemplative Prayer Group**
Led by Betsy Friend
on Thursday evenings



Temenos-at-Broad-Run

Healing Power of Breath
Weekend workshop led by
Laurie Weaver

Coming Alive: Personal Power and Emotional Awakening
Led by Andy Seubert

Dance of the Spirit: Seven Steps in Women's Spirituality
Workshop for women
led by Maria Harris on April 9

Resources for Parenting
Betsy Friend, facilitator
Three Thursday evenings in April

Reconstructing Your Family
Workshop with Lorraine Sando
April 22-23

**Wellness Course for Busy Men:
Walking the 7-Fold Path**
8 short weekends from May through
November led by Rick Voss and
Gerry Evans

**May Festival:
Dances of Universal Peace**
Led by Jeanne Ayesha Lauenborg on
the bank of Broad Run on May Day

In addition to the programs listed at left, a number of churches and educational groups in the greater Philadelphia area have rented Temenos facilities for their own programs. Groups coming to Temenos this Spring include:

Trinity Episcopal Church
of West Chester

American Baptist Church
(Board of International Ministries)

School of the Spirit (Quaker program)
Napier Associates

Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship
from Newark, Delaware

Lakota Sioux Native American Group

Web of Light—
ecumenical church group

Unitarian Church of
Wilmington, Delaware

Ardmore Presbyterian Church

Women's Group led by Pat McBee

The Philadelphia Society (the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos), meets for worship each Sunday at the Farm House chapel and holds educational programs and social activities at the Farm House and at Sky Meadow, the pastor's home. The number of weddings in the chapel, the herb garden, and along Broad Run is increasing.

For more information, please contact: Rev. Ernest Martin, Director, Temenos at Broad Run Retreat and Conference Center, 685 Broad Run Road, West Chester, PA 19383. Phone (215) 431-3883.

GOOD NEWS!

In my March editorial, I promised to begin a Good News column in *The Messenger*: stories of people making a difference in everyday life and strengthening all of us spiritually by their example. As I kept my eye out for these things, I noticed (of course!) that simply looking for these items, focusing on that search, helped me feel more positive.



Following the Los Angeles earthquake, Lucky Market, a west coast supermarket chain, was one of the first into the disaster areas with truckloads of food and necessities for folks who had lost their homes. They weren't selling their goods; they were giving them away.



In New York, an organization was formed to help people get off welfare, and now the state is paying them to do just that. If they aren't successful, they don't get paid, but they *are* successful because they are thorough in providing not only job training, but teaching people how to do a resume, conduct a successful interview, dress, overcome other obstacles, and generally helping them build their pride and self-confidence. The organization also has staff persons out in the field convincing potential employers to take the former welfare recipient into the work force, and they follow up to see how the person is doing. This operation has already saved the state millions of dollars, not to mention the lives that have been put back together.



In San Diego, a man began a movement to get guns off the street. He offered toys and goods in trade for guns, asking people to voluntarily turn them in. His idea was scoffed at by many officials; he was told it wouldn't work, he would be lucky if one person turned in a gun. While folks argued over the merits of his idea, he continued to use his own money to put it into effect. He refused to be discouraged, stating that if only one gun was turned over that might have been instrumental in killing somebody, the plan was a success. Surprisingly, hundreds of guns were turned in, the idea spread, and the plan is being adopted in many cities throughout the U.S.



On our flight to San Francisco to attend the Pacific Coast Association meeting last October, two Southwest Airlines flight attendants began outrageously funny improvisations on the standard spiel that flight attendants are required to make. Soon we were all breaking up; the young women's timing as each played off the other's remarks was on a level with professional comedians. Our spirits soared, and the flight ended with a big round of applause from all the passengers. I've been on many plane trips, but that one lives in my memory as a joyous and all-too-short journey, simply because two women risked breaking out of a textbook role and set us all free.



More next month. And I'm waiting to hear from YOU.

Patte LeVan

SSR Close to First Million

The Swedenborg School of Religion is very grateful to the individuals, churches, and association who contributed a total of \$30,312.19 in gifts and pledges to help us match the Chicago church's \$25,000 challenge grant. The Chicago church has generously agreed to match the entire \$30,312.19, for a total of \$60,624.38.

Each donor was able to choose among various current and endowment funds, some of which have restricted purposes, such as student aid, library equipment and preservation, trees and shrubs, and the teaching of worship and theology. SSR now has raised a total of \$932,622 toward its long range goal of \$3,000,000.

We are in need of further contributions to help us reach our goal. For more information on the available funds, and on deferred gifts which benefit both the donor and SSR, please contact the school at 48 Sargent Street, Newton, MA 02158.

We thank everyone who participated, and send a special thank you to the Chicago church for their support.

Mary Kay Klein

Offering from the San Francisco church:

Any isolated Swedenborgian anywhere in the United States may receive a copy of the weekly Swedenborgian sermon and monthly newsletter of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church simply by writing: Weekly Sermon Service, Swedenborgian Church, 3200 Washington St., San Francisco, CA 94115.

Churches Serving Communities (Continued from page 53)

homeless people in San Pedro.

The Chapel also helps fund Operation Fish. This Ecumenical Food Pantry distributes food to homeless shelters in the South Bay area.

Six hundred dollars each year is budgeted for and used by the ministers' discretionary fund.

Save me a phone call and send me a note telling us what your church does.

The Rev. Eric Allison is the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit's church growth consultant. He lives in Kitchener, Ontario.

Advance Convention '94 Registration

Marymount University
2807 No. Glebe Road
Arlington, Virginia
July 3 - 10, 1994

(Convention Sessions: July 6 - July 10, 1994)
"LIVING AS PEOPLE OF THE BOOK"

<p>Please complete in full - one application per family</p>	<p>Last Name _____ First Name _____</p> <p>Last Name _____ First Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City, State, Province _____ Zip _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Accompanied by _____</p> <p>Children:</p> <p>1. Name _____ Age _____</p> <p>2. Name _____ Age _____</p> <p>3. Name _____ Age _____</p>
<p><i>SCYL Members between the ages of 13 and 18 please complete</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> My parents will attend convention. They are _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> My guardian at Convention (if no parent is present) will be _____</p>
<p>Arrivals and departures</p> <p><i>No airport transportation will be provided. Directions to Marymount by car, taxi and public transportation will be included in the registration packet.</i></p>	<p>I/We will arrive on the campus of Marymount University on:</p> <p>Date: _____ Time: _____</p> <p>My/Our first meal on campus will be: Date _____</p> <p>Breakfast <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch <input type="checkbox"/> Dinner <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>My/Our last meal on campus will be: Date _____</p> <p>Breakfast <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch <input type="checkbox"/> Dinner <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(Last meal served will be box lunch on July 10)</p>
<p>Special Needs</p>	<p>I am not able to climb stairs or walk very far. _____</p> <p>I have these medical requirements _____</p> <p>I am <input type="checkbox"/> diabetic <input type="checkbox"/> a heart patient</p> <p>Other health problem _____</p> <p>Other physical/dietary/special needs: _____</p>
<p>Children</p> <p><i>The children's program will begin on Thursday morning, July 7 and end at lunch on Saturday so that children can accompany their parents on outings. Babysitters will be available for hire earlier in the week.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> My child/children will be participating in the Children's Program for ages 4 to 12 beginning on: _____</p> <p>Names: _____ Ages: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I will need child care for age 3 and under beginning: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Special needs: _____</p> <p>Have your children attended pre-school? _____</p>

Rates for 1994 Convention Room & Board	<p>Adult — Double Occupancy \$45.00 per day per person Adult — Single Occupancy \$55.00 per day Teen — Double Occupancy \$40.00 per day per person Ages 1-19 — Single Occupancy \$50.00 Children 6-12 — Double Occupancy \$40.00 per day per person Children 0-5 yrs. — \$30.00 per day with parent <i>All prices are in US dollars.</i></p> <p><i>Some financial assistance is available for teens and children. Please ask for more information if you wish to apply.</i></p>
Accommodation	<p>____ I Would like a single room.</p> <p>____ I would like a double with _____</p> <p>____ I/We would like a room near _____</p>
Registration Fees	<p>____ Children under 3: NO CHARGE ____ Children 3-12: \$30 US, \$41 CD if mailed before 5/15. After: \$35 US, \$47 CD. ____ Teen League (SCYL) participant (13-18): \$35 US, \$47 CD if mailed before 5/15. After: \$40 US, \$54 CD. ____ Adult and other teens: \$45 US, \$61 CD if mailed before 5/15/94. After that, \$50 US, \$68 CD.</p> <p>Registration is per person and covers some special costs and events. No refunds after June 1. Please mail this form with your check, made out to The Swedenborgian Church to: Central Office The Swedenborgian Church 48 Sargent Street Newton, MA 02158-2399</p>
Delayed Departures	<p><i>Marymount University will allow a limited number of conference attendees to stay on after convention for \$45.00 double p/p and \$55.00 single. Please let us know if you expect to take advantage of this opportunity.</i></p>
Financial Assistance	<p>For children and young people, please contact the Central Office 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158</p>

An Open Letter to Swedenborgians

Wilson Van Dusen

I have studied the writings of Swedenborg and have been associated with churches that stem from his writings for some forty years. Once, after I had spent two active days with the church, I was taken aside by a very sincere church officer. I recall the scene well. We were in a garden, sitting on a stone wall facing each other. He asked me the perennial question that has been asked from the very beginning of the Swedenborgian Church. *How can we increase in numbers?* I could not really answer him. I've seen so many who have tried, for so many decades, that I now believe we've pretty well tried everything. His serious question has bothered me for some months. I'd like to answer it now in a surprising way.

A few have said I am the leading recruiter in this century. Be that as it may, it did not arise because I tried to recruit. In fact, I've bent my whole effort to simply understand the writings and turn them to use. It is sharing my joy of discovery in print that has led to some minor recruiting. My real answer stems from this experience.

To answer I must speak frankly to Swedenborgians. I believe it is just plain wrong to put recruiting in the first place. We don't yet have an adequate church. We don't yet adequately understand the writings. We haven't tried hard enough to perfect ourselves by following the writings. Put simply, we don't expand because we aren't good enough yet. We just have too little to offer.

One of the things that makes this whole situation somewhat appalling to me is that compared to most churches we have some of the most detailed and gifted literature bearing on personal development of almost any church on earth. Offhand I'd say only the Buddhist literature is richer. We are a poor church with *incredible*

riches. I am thinking both of Swedenborg's writings and of our many very gifted collaterals such as the works of Acton, Bogg, Bruce, Fisher, Giles, Keller, Mac Lagan, Odhner, Putts, Tafel, Worcester and Wunsch. These people slaved a lifetime to clarify for us, and at the moment most are out of print or soon will be. We've lost track of more great works than most other churches ever had. When I deal with mature Swedenborgian groups, I ask, how much have you read? It is the rare person who has read two collaterals or even two volumes of Swedenborg. I hardly think we are followers. One person of my acquaintance read all of Swedenborg's theology and felt his life was transformed by so doing. I am not surprised. It has that potential. But so few have tried his theology, it is no wonder it is not generally known.

My basic feeling is that the Swedenborg churches want so badly to grow before they have really investigated the wealth they own. Moreover, they are in the process of losing forever great collaterals they haven't really examined.

I see a key to recruitment in the lives of great Russian Orthodox saints. Most really retired from the world to pursue the interior religious way. It was when they had found the Divine that their wisdom became apparent to others. Often mature saints would be pestered by novices who wanted to study with them. The saints did not recruit and often saw other seekers as interfering with their personal religious life. But good students, finding a real religious leader, would stay anyway and out of this many monasteries were formed. They were not recruiting. They weren't missionaries. They attracted people because of what they could do. St. Seraphim of Sarov healed people with such ease, people were lined up

outside his cell door. Fellow monks were annoyed at the commotion caused by so many people lining up. Did I recruit? No. I merely shared my pleasure in print. Moreover, unlike St. Seraphim, who knelt on a rock for 1000 days (as a spiritual task he vowed to complete), I haven't even had much time to spend on Swedenborg. Fortunately, I enjoy him so much he is easy for me to remember.

I am saying we should each follow what the writings and the more gifted collaterals say. We should be working to make them "of the life." I look forward to the day when I can actually speak to a Swedenborgian about the experience of "intermediate stages" and "inversions in the sixth day of regeneration." It should not be possible for a mere amateur like me to pull out the method of uses and surprise people with it. It should have been common knowledge for decades.

I do see one danger if suddenly all so-called followers of Swedenborg actually read and follow him. The greatest danger I can see is some may take it all as an intellectual matter to be understood. Religion "of the life" is wholly different. So if someone could glibly speak of Swedenborg's doctrine on the function of intermediate states, I'd then ask, can you give me an actual illustration from your life? I'd be asking, is it more than doctrine? I do not see Swedenborg as a great Rubrik's Cube to be doped out. Rather, as he himself says, it is of the life or it will not survive death. Swedenborg, being a brilliant mind who "categorized the last things," can lead some to believe understanding is the ticket, neglecting love and the heart of the matter.

I can give you a new memorable relation. In Hell I met a whole

(Continued on page 60)

Open Letter

(Continued from page 59)

group of Church people who earnestly entreated me how they could advance out of Hell into Heaven. I showed them they were sitting on and rudely treating the very books that could lead them. I got one to get up off the books and open the top volume, and the words were in flaming gold and all decorated with roses. I was able to assure them they had all the means they could ever ask for if they but used it.

I put our great collaterals alongside the writings themselves because often a scholar has pulled together the essence of what Swedenborg has to say in a way useful for some readers. Swedenborg himself can be a challenging mountain to climb, especially for those not used to such climbing. But our collaterals make all available. That we are in the process of losing great collaterals seems to me a crime. They should be carefully gathered and saved for a generation who might actually read and appreciate them. At least the various societies have preserved Swedenborg and are doing a good job of keeping him in readable editions. Now if we only had readers!

My answer to how to expand our churches is a paradoxical and deeply religious one. We should bend all efforts to turn Swedenborg's writings and the great collaterals to our own personal religious development. I do foresee that so many people searching would find a multitude of different leads in Swedenborg. Our differences would simply delight me. Our faces differ, our loves of our life differ, so why not find different ways? When we've reached the seventh day we can rest and on that day people will find we have things of use to them, too, and they will join us. When we are gifted in the spiritual the church will grow.

I am reminded of a Sikh saint who advocated particular traditional meditative practices. Students would ask about money problems, girlfriend problems—external things—and he would always answer, "Practice," i.e., go to the interior to solve

the exterior. I agree. Practice, practice, practice.

My answer on how to grow in members is as traditional as the Christian tradition itself. Use the fabulous riches we already have. Seek the kingdom of heaven and the rest will be added to us. Practice. Go to

the interior to understand what is wrong in the exterior.

Dr. Wilson Van Dusen is a psychologist, author and lecturer on spirituality from a Swedenborgian perspective. His many published works include The Presence of Other Worlds and extensive commentary to Swedenborg's Journal of Dreams. Dr. Van Dusen lives in Uiah, California.

Report of the Nominating Committee of the Swedenborgian Church

President:	Rev. Edwin G. Capon (Minneapolis)—1-year term
Vice President:	Phyllis Bosley (California)—1-year term
Secretary:	Gloria Toot (Ohio)—1-year term
Treasurer:	John Perry (New Hampshire)—1-year term
General Council:	3-year term
Minister	Rev. Skuli Thorhallsson (Florida)
Lay Persons	Patricia Zacharias (Ontario, Canada) Christine Laitner (Michigan)
Communications Support Unit (COMSU):	Rev. Ernest O. Martin (Pennsylvania)—3-year term John Hitchcock (Massachusetts)—1-year unexpired term
Education Support Unit: (EdSU):	Pat Tukos (Indiana)—3-year term
Financial & Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU):	Susan Wood (Florida)—3-year term
Growth & Outreach Support Unit (GOSU):	Lon Elmer (Washington)—3-year term David Rienstra (Missouri)—2-year unexpired term
Information Management Support Unit (IMSU):	Lee Woofenden (Massachusetts)—3-year term
Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU):	Linda Tafel (Florida)—3-year term
SSR Board of Trustees:	Richard Stansbury (Washington)—3-year term Stan Conger (California)—3-year term
Committee on Admission into the Ministry (CAM):	Rev. Marlene Laughlin (Massachusetts) Marilyn Turley (Washington)
Nominating Committee:	Sharon Billings (Ohio) Barbara Penabaker (Michigan)

Nominating Committee:

Polly Baxter, Chair, *Mid-Atlantic Association*, '94
Rev. Skuli Thorhallsson, *Southeast Association*, '95
Sharon Reddekopp Slough, *Western Canada Association*, '96
Duane Beougher, *Illinois Association*, '97
Karen Nielsen Conger, *Pacific Coast Association*, '98

Editor's Note: Brief biographies and statements of candidates will appear in the May Messenger.

Opinion

(Continued from page 50)

Swedenborgian Church." On this basis alone it cannot be said that *The Messenger* is giving "credence" or non-credence to anything Len Harding or any of us has to say.

But, further, while I have not been happy with everything I see in *The Messenger*, and while I might feel as disappointed as others to see someone lose their temper and "sound off" via this journal of our church, I do appreciate our current editor's ability to listen to everyone and to print it all. I value freedom of the press over intolerance, and my concern over what impression is being conveyed, no matter what, so, I must disagree with Robert here.

It can be observed that a positive consequence of Len's letter has been the dialogue which it has engendered. As frustrated as Len sounds, his letter may be a success on a certain level, simply because it got a rise out of us.

Having said this much, I would like to contribute some further thoughts about words and their impact, and ask readers to think about Len's letter and its consequences on a different level than censorship, or his right to share his views.

On the news recently I heard a true story about a man who considered it his 'use' to collect into one reference book, over a period of many years, all of the curses and evil words that have ever been uttered in every conceivable language, which, I believe, he titled *Maledicta* (Latin for "bad words"). This man persuaded himself and others that his spiritual purpose in studying verbal aggression was actually positive, because it would make people think more carefully about the impact of using bad words. By collecting evil words perhaps he thought one could harness them.

For many years his wife agreed with and supported his project, but apparently the day came when she could no longer stomach being around all the negativity his work entailed. She requested a divorce. Merely spending time with evil had apparently affected

her husband as well, because he proceeded to use everything he knew and had collected about bad words against her in hate letters, and to effect the most terrible, painful divorce ever dreamed of.

In the wonderful best-selling book *Embraced by the Light*, (which is currently causing quite a stir at the New York Swedenborgian Church), Betty J. Eadie writes about what she learned from her extraordinary near-death experience in a manner startlingly like Swedenborg. Among the things she has to say, the following quote about words (page 58) is particularly striking:

"I saw how a person's words actually affect the energy field around him. The very words themselves—the vibrations in the air—attract one type of energy or another. A person's desires have a similar effect. There is power in our thoughts. We create our own surroundings by the thoughts we think. Physically, this may take a period of time, but spiritually it is instantaneous. If we understood the power of our thoughts, we would guard them more closely. If we understood the awesome power of our words, we would prefer silence to almost anything negative."

Negative words really do hurt more than we know. And sometimes our strong feelings about something we are trying to say can turn against us because we express ourselves so negatively that our real point is never heard, or is "cancelled out" by our negative way of speaking about it.

If, on the other hand, we are able to express our concern in a way that is positive and sincere, we have the potential not only to be heard in a more powerful way, but to draw the positive energy of those listening to us toward the area of our concern in a way that produces results instead of more negativity.

But with regard to words, we have a responsibility not only as the speaker, but also as the listener to focus on the wheat, as Paul Zacharias has done with Len's letter. My friend Kate Cusack, who is 14 this year, is as wise as

anyone I've heard on this subject, and I close with the following poem I received from her in her family's Christmas letter:

What do you

by Kate Cusack

The page before the poem
Like a partially filled picture
Is it half empty or
Is it half full
It all depends upon your eyes
Is it good or
Is it bad
What do you see before you
The power of the pen
Strong words of opinion
Beautiful words of praise
Like a bouquet of flowers
Pleasure for you but yet
Pain for them
It all depends upon your ears
Is it praise or
Is it hatred
What do you hear

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Mona Conner
Brooklyn, New York

What Does Maturity Look Like?

Dear Editor,

Every so often in my reading I come across passages that are so thoughtful and/or provocative that I copy them and send them to friends and relatives. One such "jewel" came into view in a recent issue of the Alban Institute magazine *Congregations*, where an interviewer is talking with the writer about the stress that clergy face in the present-day parish. He asks: "Let me challenge you for a minute. What would maturity look like?" (The following answer has clergy in mind, but I believe it speaks to everyone).

"Mature people take responsibility for themselves—the true and the false, the virtuous and the vicious, the freedom and the compliance, the healthy parts and the bleeding parts. Little blaming—immature clergy complain a lot, like kids. Lily Tomlin once said that we created language so that we could complain—a real danger for 'the people of the

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Opinion

(from page 62)

Word." Mature people allow time for things to process . . . don't demand immediate relief for one's own anguish or offer it in the same way to others. Immature people want an event, not a discovery process. Maturity values differences. Immature people split; they think in black/white, either/or fashion. A mature person doesn't collect injustices. You're not on their endangered list forever. Since immaturity flourishes under cover and in the dark, a mature person puts things on the table and is able to receive reflection and feedback from others. A mature cleric won't be rendered helpless or depressed by a 60 to 40 favorable vote. Immature people are emotional absolutists, demanding a 100 to 0 vote in their favor. Mature clergy won't become depressed when others think negatively of them. They don't focus on what others think; they focus on their own thoughts and behaviors. I could go on . . . perhaps this is sufficient to get the main ideas across. All of us are working on these things. No one comes to a point of 'realized eschatology' in human development."

*Paul Zacharias
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada*

From the Inside Out

To the Editor:

Why is this church so small? After reviewing a lot of reasons, I came to the conclusion that these reasons failed because they implied that we were at least getting people through the door. Once we get people inside, they may encounter all kinds of things that would supposedly explain our size—obscure theological terms, lack of a welcome, a flat sermon, maybe even poor coffee and crummy cake.

But these things assume that we are able to interest people enough to make them want to come in, and I suspect that this is half the job. If so, we are not going to do too badly. Churches that are much larger

than ours manage to get people through the door and commit miscellaneous misdemeanors against them afterwards. I imagine the advice we have gotten so far from the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit and Eric Allison over the last several years about church operations has straightened out a lot of kinks. Are we doing much better?

I hope so. But a church that is exceptionally small, like ours, would probably be held down as well by something outside.

Outside our church buildings there is a mysterious word, *Swedenborgian*, or maybe *Emanuel Swedenborg*. It is not familiar, and it has no role in conventional American or Canadian culture. There is considerably more awareness of somewhat obscure names like Paul Tillich or Karl Barth. These will at least come to one's attention in some mainline sermons or in college classes. Paul Tillich, in a lecture series at a church near the University of California campus some years ago, drew large crowds. Coming up the scale a little, John Wesley is a familiar and very accepted figure in our picture of the religious world; so is Martin Luther. These names have achieved cultural significance.

Swedenborg has not. The most likely response one may make to his name is "Who's that?" The most likely response to the signs outside our churches is going to be, "Must be an ethnic church; probably Swedish." Ethnic churches are highly specialized, involve funny old-world customs and rituals, and are generally limited to certain people from the old country. Good for them, and just them. Only the cross on the building may signify something not essentially alien. People who look for churches are also likely to choose ones that seem like home—familiar, reassuring environments for a very insecure time. Not very many are looking to theological innovation.

What it will take to straighten this problem out is unfortunately a lot. Cultural presence is hard to achieve if the original teacher did not achieve it. Swedenborg's essentially

revolutionary message, and his concentration on the few who could receive it in an age of profound skepticism, kept his influence in a small corner of Christendom. Unlike Wesley, who geared his ideas to a church of his own creation, Swedenborg was not interested in founding a church. Robert Hindmarsh was, and he may not have understood the evidence that Swedenborg wanted to reform Christendom from the inside out, not go outside and start over.

Swedenborg's work, left to itself, has done well in infiltrating great minds in quiet and private ways. I retain some suspicion that this is in fact the most natural course for Swedenborgian thought to take—the covert influence and its capacity for quiet internal revolution. By taking an overt course and setting up a separate organization, Hindmarsh may have drawn some unfortunate lines. If Swedenborg is a denominational possession, other churches will exclude him. After all, you don't want the other church's books in *your* church anymore if that's the way it's going to be, and you will also stop discussing Swedenborg. The Swedenborgian effort then may have been forced to work its way into the culture entirely from outside, after having gotten off to a start inside existing institutions. An important setback.

To turn things around, we would want to invest in generally re-educating our culture to Swedenborg's importance, and also in linking ourselves to causes or interests that are already widely accepted and have high visibility. We have already done well in some cases in building churches that have become points of historical or architectural interest, as in San Francisco and The Wayfarer's Chapel. For a more general educational influence, The Swedenborg Foundation is in the most natural position. But it will take some time to create the public awareness we need.

*Steve Koke
Rough 'n Ready, California*

(Continued on page 63)

Are We Following Our Christian Teachings?

To the Editor:

It is important to love and have a sense of pride for our church. It is important to identify the basic caring nature of individual Swedenborgians and specific compassionate acts of local churches ("It Ain't So", February 1994 *Messenger*). However, it is also important to review and evaluate the many aspects of our church organization to determine if we are following our Christian teachings, as we understand them through Swedenborgian heritage. In that light I would ask a few questions:

- What percentage of time, money, energy of our denomination is spent in social action concerns?
- How many churches share their space with those in need (shelter, feeding, storage of usable items, etc.?)
- What percentage of local churches' budgets are spent on those in need?
- How many hours are spent at SSR assisting students to understand and respond to social issues?
- How many hours are spent in service to others in our Youth League programs?
- What portion of the Women's Alliance budget is spent on aid to others? How many of their programs assist in understanding ways to respond to social needs?
- How many sermons are developed around charity and give guidance and specific suggestions of ways to respond to local needs?
- What portion of our Sunday school materials speak of the need to respond to the needs of others?

We are a loving and caring people and individual Swedenborgians have made remarkable contributions. However, if we are able to prayerfully review our church activities in a nondefensive manner, it is apparent there are many paths to follow to put our love into action.

Marilyn Turley
Olympia, Washington

Passages

Deaths

Mack—Gwynne Dresser Mack, 86, a lifelong and dedicated Swedenborgian, entered the spiritual world January 21 in Fryeburg, Maine. Both her late husband, David Mack, and father Paul Dresser were Swedenborgian ministers. Mrs. Mack wrote and illustrated many children's books; among those titles produced with a New Church theme was *The Big Adventure*. Gwynne initiated and was director of the New Church Prayer Fellowship in the late '50s, which resulted in her book, *Talking with God*. She is survived by daughters Penelope MacDonald and Gretchen Erff, son Quentin Mack, and seven grandchildren. A memorial service was conducted March 23, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

Reddekopp—The Rev. Henry Reddekopp, 88, entered the spiritual world January 20, 1994. He is survived by his wife Susanna. Of his ministry, the Rev. Robert Kirven writes, "Henry had been a Missionary Minister for more years than my memory covers, and after that was ordained into the full ministry of the church in 1952. Most of his ministry was directed to the far-flung flock on the circuit he rode through western Canada, with special attention to his home base in Saskatoon, and to the congregation in Edmonton, where he lived for about three years. He retired from active ministry in 1978."

Smallwood—Florence Marie Smallwood, 86, a dedicated member of the Chicago Swedenborgian Church for over 50 years, entered the spiritual world January 18, 1994, at Warren Memorial Hospital in Friend, Nebraska. Her late husband, Thornton Smallwood, was the beloved lay minister of the Chicago church for 20 years. Florence is survived by sisters Gladys Heckman and Doris Peters, and numerous nephews and nieces. Services were conducted January 21, 1994, at the United Methodist Church in Friend, the Rev. C. Stanley LaRue officiating.

Changes of Address

Rev. Dr. Robert and Marian Kirven
8650 65th Ave.
Glendale, AZ 85302
(602) 937-8376

Rev. Deborah Winter
729 E. Ohio
Deland, FL 32724
(904) 736-3077

ARE YOU MOVING? (or, if you live in California, moving and shaking?) Whatever, we urge you to send in your changes of address to Central Office as soon as possible.

Church Family News

The Rev. Erwin Reddekopp writes, "Our church group here in the Okanagan Valley continues to meet once a month in a rented hall with about sixteen children for Sunday school. The Rev. John Bennett and his wife, Muriel, have settled in the area now (Vernon), and have become part of our ministerial team. John conducted the Christmas service December 19th and also conducted the services in January and February. We have about 18 adults active in our worship group. We meet for lunch and a social hour after each service. The annual meeting of the British Columbia New Church Society was held March 26, 1994."

Amendment to the Constitution and By-Laws

"To the extent now or hereafter permitted by the laws of the State of Illinois, the corporation shall indemnify its officers and directors against all costs and expenses reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with or arising out of any claim, action, suit or proceeding of whatever nature in which he or she may be involved as a party or otherwise or with which he or she may be threatened by reason of his or her having served as an officer or director of the corporation or by reason of any action alleged to have been taken or omitted by him or her as such officer or director, whether or not he or she be such officer or director at the time of incurring such cost or expense, including amounts paid or incurred in connection with reasonable settlements (other than amounts paid to the corporation itself) made with the approval of the General Council and with a view to curtailment of costs of litigation."

This proposed amendment of the By-laws of the Swedenborgian Church has been approved by the General Council (January, 1993) and by the Committee on Amendments. In accordance with Article VII of the Constitution, it will be presented to the convention session for approval in July, 1994, in Washington, D.C.

Stonehouse Expands

On December 1, 1993 the Stonehouse Bookstore and Spiritual Growth Center (and Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound) moved into a much larger building in a far more visible location. We now have 4000 square feet on the busiest corner in Redmond. We have two classrooms and six offices, most of which are rented to counselors and therapists. The church, which recently employed Rev. Steve Pults as its full-time minister, also has an office and holds all of its classes and services at the Stonehouse. Rev. Paul Martin is now director of the Stonehouse on a full-time basis.

The move was a great financial risk, but was essential if we were ever to really succeed and grow enough to become self-sufficient. We borrowed money to increase inventory and received a generous grant from the Los Angeles Society to renovate our new space.

The move was an instant success. Sales have quadrupled to an average of \$600 per day and we now project annual sales of at least \$250,000. Traffic in the store has increased from 10 people a day to close to 100 people. We have scheduled 25-30 classes per month and people are registering in record numbers.

The success of the Stonehouse demonstrates that we are speaking to a need in our culture today. Swedenborg's vision of a New Church is fast becoming a reality. When the Stonehouse opened eight years ago we offered books that were entirely different from those carried at other stores. Today a glance at the *New York Times* bestseller list generally reveals at least half the books to be spiritual in nature. People are consciously looking for books and classes relating to personal growth. Despite this growing trend, very few organizations are trying to meet this need. Most

churches (non-Swedenborgian, of course) are still stuck in the old format of trying to help people by convincing them of a particular theological belief system. By taking our Swedenborgian beliefs (e.g. religion is life, salvation is the process of our spiritual growth) and putting them to use fulfilling our denomination's purpose (e.g. facilitating the spiritual well-being of people), we have become known as quite unique and are growing rapidly.

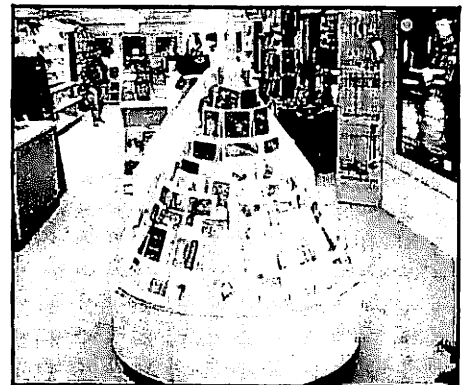


The Rev. Paul Martin browses latest publications in Stonehouse Book Room's new quarters.

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.



Interior of Stonehouse Bookroom

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