
THE MESSENGER

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May 1994

Is Our Church Going Broke? Or Are Our Resources Ample for Our Needs?

After last year's annual convention, during which the church was again confronted with fearful forecasts of a dwindling financial capacity to fund ministries, even in the near future, it was evident that a broad range of opinion (and confusion) regarding our financial strength reigned among members of the church. COMSU decided to stage a panel discussion for the benefit of *Messenger* readers by asking four responsible and knowledgeable church leaders to put forth their view of our current financial position, and then to have a second round in the same issue of *The Messenger* in which each has the opportunity to respond to views advanced by the others. Many individuals could have made excellent contributions to this panel discussion, but we settled on these four, whom we believed would deliver a variety of perspective, both on our current financial picture and on the church's future.

—Jim Lawrence

• FOUR CHURCH LEADERS SPEAK OUT •

Polly Baxter is assistant to the treasurer for the denomination and works in upper level management for the Federal Home Mortgage Association. She currently sits on the Investment Committee for the denomination and is completing a term on the Board of Trustees for the Swedenborg School of Religion.



Paul Martin was ordained in 1982 and has spent his entire ministry in the Puget Sound area in one of the most enduring and successful of our church's outreach ministries receiving significant national funding. Taking over the remnant of the Project Link ministry, Mr. Martin established the Stonehouse Book Room and Spiritual Growth Center, which has grown in every year of its existence.

Since the last convention, people have frequently asked me if I think the denomination is going broke. Going broke is not a very precise term and is hard to apply to the situation in which the Swedenborgian Church finds itself today. To me, going broke means that there is no income and there are no assets. If that is the definition, we are not going broke. But we do not have enough money available to do everything that we want to do.

We have a relatively large asset base but it is not all equally accessible. A little less than one-third of the denomination's assets were given with the provision that only the income from the gift could be used. Those funds will always exist because, by law, we cannot use them. An almost equal amount of our assets are invested in real estate. In other words, we have a lot of money that cannot be used and a lot of money that is tied up

(Continued on page 68)

I was very upset, disappointed, and angry during and after last year's convention session. What bothered me was not the decisions that were made, but just the fact that we spent the whole week focused on finances while ignoring the critical condition of our church. A previous treasurer remarked one time that our church would run out of members before it ran out of money. I felt like our precious time together could have been better utilized looking at why the Lord's New Church is passing us by

and what we could do about it. I think of the Lord's New Church as consisting of the growing number of people committed to their own and the larger community's spiritual growth. Although my primary interest is in the programs we could be sponsoring in order for our church to have an ongoing interaction with these people, I understand that financial considerations

(Continued on page 68)

IN THIS ISSUE

Summit at Temenos 75

Nominees Selected 76

Convention Highlights 74

If We Build It . . .

This month, the Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence acted as guest editor in planning and implementing the panel discussion on church finances, an idea that we first talked about last October. The idea grew out of a concern about the ongoing confusion in the minds of many members regarding the financial state and health of our denomination. We decided to present it in the May *Messenger* so that the relevant issues that emerged would be more sharply in focus just prior to convention and would, since the discussion is written in laypersons' language, ensure better-educated delegates. It is hoped that, as Jim stated in his memo to the panelists, "despite inevitable disputes on some aspects of our denomination's finances, consensus and clarity on *some* issues will emerge . . . We feel that some issues in stewardship are philosophical and are not matters of right and wrong. We also know that there are differing philosophical perspectives regarding how the church might best proceed from her current position (*whatever that is!*), and that there isn't only one useful direction. We hope that this panel discussion will be a place where some philosophical differences can be aired, so that people can do their own reflecting and move toward a wiser perspective."

I, for one, feel that I have gained a better grasp of terms, issues, and the whole picture, especially due to the panelists being asked to comment on each others' presentations on the second round. It is good to have this as reference and a jumping off place. But being of a philosophical bent, as I was reading through the discussion my mind kept recalling the book by Marsha Sinetar, *Do What You Love, the Money Will Follow*, published in 1987. It was a bestselling guide, life-changing for a number of people. It explored the psychological aspects of what many of us have come to realize is a spiritual principle—that is, *when we make a wholehearted commitment to working, creating, serving in an area that claims our highest passion and love*, the way opens up, the means are shown to us, the material goodies follow; the universe, it is said, cooperates. Many have seen this come to pass in their own and others' lives, and in the lives of organizations.

And it is well known among marriage counselors, therapists and others working with clients besieged by money problems that our relationship with money—how we handle it, regard it, our attitude about it—is merely symptomatic of underlying attitudes toward self, others, life; attitudes that we are often unaware of, attitudes that we learned in our families of origin, in our culture, that we carry with us into every aspect of living—including, of course, our church family.

"Do what you love, the money will follow" seems another way of saying, "If you build it, He will come," doesn't it? Many years ago Myrtle Fillmore, co-founder of Unity, was asked, during a particularly difficult period, to pray that the money would hold out. "No," she replied, "let us pray that our faith holds out."

We may, individually and collectively, want to take a good look at any money problem we have and regard it as we might regard any other pain—as a symptom, a signal, a message that something needs to be changed on the causal level. *Do we believe, can we believe, that if we build it, He will come?*

Patte LeVan

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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.

Simplicity Lauded

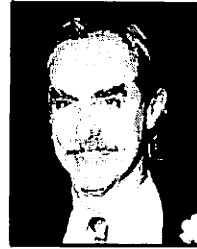
Dear Patte:

I've enjoyed your editorials, especially the one in the March issue. And your account of helping build the house is a treasure.¹ One thing that impressed me was the simplicity of the project, exemplified even in the fact of the outhouse(!). The usual method of our organizations so often is geared to our own standard of living. We dam up rivers for power, thereby destroying forests and even towns. Then we bring in electricity and running water, making the people consumers of resources. We send them white flour, sugar and cow's milk which they substitute for their native goods—stone-ground corn meal, etc. Then we have to send in dentists and doctors to take

(Continued on page 79)

FOUR CHURCH LEADERS SPEAK OUT: Is Our Church Going Broke?

John Perry has been the denomination's treasurer since 1986 and is retired from a career as a research engineer. He has been active over the years on the boards of Urbana University, the Swedenborg School of Religion, and the Swedenborg Foundation, and he currently chairs the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit for the denomination.



Jerry Poole, an ordained minister since 1965, has been an investment counselor for the past twenty years. He has chaired the denomination's fundraising efforts for the past several years and recently served two terms as the chair of the Board of Trustees for the Swedenborg School of Religion.

Is the Swedenborgian Church running out of money?

The answer to that question is *no*. But that is not the question that should be asked. Let me try and explain. The church has a great deal of cash invested both in the stock market and in loans and mortgages (with local churches and Urbana University). Our cash income comes mostly from these investments each year. Let's talk about what these investments are. Also let's put everything on the same level playing field by talking about all of the investments at market value. Market value is the cash that we would expect to receive if we were to sell our investments today. This is a fair way to look at our investments because the interest we are now getting is based on market value. This means that the value of our investments is about \$13,000,000 in round numbers (\$11,000,000 in the stock market, and \$2,000,000 in loans and mortgages). The total stock market return that we have been getting recently has been about 11% (that includes interest and fund growth). Remember that fund growth is the increase in value of the invested money due to increased value of the stock that we own. The loan and mortgage income has been about 6% and as these are fixed contracts, there is no growth. Where does this leave us? It means that our total interest income comes to about \$1,330,000 in cash. We get an additional small amount of income that equals approximately \$60,000 from other sources such as annual appeal, gifts, publication subscriptions, etc.

The Catch

This sounds pretty good. You might think it should give us about \$1,400,000 in round numbers to run our programs for the year. But here is the catch! That money does *not all* belong to us! Only about 20% or about \$280,000 is unrestricted in its use so that we can spend it as we wish. All the rest is restricted in its use. About 4% of the income must be paid to other churches, associations, and the Swedenborg School of Religion as we are trustees of funds that were given to us to manage. Another 17% is for very special use and all the income must *by law* be used for those purposes. These include pension funds for our ministers, special education funds, funds for helping repair our churches and help ministers buy homes, etc. The remainder of our income must also

The current financial condition of our denomination can be seen as either bright or gloomy, depending on how one views the church's resources.

If we see our current endowment as seeds planted or gifts given by those who lived before, and ourselves being both the beneficiaries and stewards, as well as having the living responsibility to replenish and augment the fund, the picture is bright. In this case we have sufficient funds to maintain useful "old programs" and initiate "new creative ones", as long as we do our part to add new money and charitable energy to that already given. The \$11,000,000 endowment is a super base upon which to build.

If we are consumed by the belief that the church's once adequate endowment can no longer do the job, that is, we must "cut out and cut down" in order to operate within the boundaries defined by the available assets, and view the funds as all we have or will ever have, the picture is gloomy. It will only be a matter of time before inflation and the increasing costs of running the church exhaust the \$11,000,000 endowment.

Do We Have a Vision?

The big questions before all of us are: "Does the Swedenborgian Church want to operate within the constraints of its old money, being limited in programming and activities to the level of income produced by assets given by previous generations?"; or, "Does the Swedenborgian Church have a vision, that in order to be realized requires us to set goals and methods of financing these goals, methods that go beyond coming back to the church to see what's available?"

The size and income of our church's endowment are recorded and readily available; the numbers are annually compiled or audited and illustrated according to general accounting principles. This is not the problem. The problem is, for too long denominational projects have been conceived and often started without any thought as to how they might be financially supported other than from denominational coffers. Do we believe in our ideas enough to invest current dollars from our own pockets? Should any project, going forward, be considered that does not have a reasonable plan of self support, at least partial? Can our church survive without entrepreneurship,

(Continued on page 69)

(Continued on page 69)

Polly Baxter: *(Continued from front cover)*
in property.

Let's take a look at the situation in a different way, still remembering what has been said above. Everything can be broken into restricted and unrestricted assets. If an asset is restricted, it can be used only for certain purposes, such as missions, publications, or assistance to churches for ministers' salaries. Unrestricted funds can be used for any purpose. The unrestricted assets include the real estate that we hold. This real estate does not produce any income. This means that the money that is available for general purposes is severely limited.

Our income is derived primarily from our investments in the Common Fund which have a total yield of about 11%, an amount which varies from year to year. This yield includes growth in the value of the investments and interest and dividends from the investments. All participants in the Common Fund receive 5.5% of the current market value at the end of each quarter as cash. In our low interest rate economy, this can be considered a good return.

Our Funds Have Restrictions

It has been suggested that we increase the amount of money that is available to us to spend by taking the entire yield of the Common Fund as income. Unfortunately, this would not solve our money crisis because all of the invested funds would have an 11% yield and most of the increased income would go for restricted purposes, not general purposes. General purpose (unrestricted) funds make up only about one-sixth of our Common Fund investment. If we said that we wanted our total yield to be converted to cash, we would have no growth to provide protection against inflation and our total yield would probably drop because our investment managers would have to look more toward income-producing investments rather than those that provide growth. Income producing investments tend to have lower yield than our more balanced portfolio does.

If you have read this far into this dry material, I commend your patience. By this time, I would be asking, "So what can we do?" To me, the obvious answer is that we need to have more income producing assets. This can be accomplished by individuals donating funds to the denomination. Very little money has been donated specifically for programs for our young people and for educational purposes in general. Very little, if any money has been donated to just reach out to people in need. And, as has been mentioned repeatedly, there is little money that has been donated for the general purposes of the church. It would be beneficial if all of us were financially generous to the church during our lives and in our wills.

Why A Problem Now?

Along with the question of whether or not we are going broke, the question is raised about why there is a problem
(Continued on page 70)

Paul Martin: *(Continued from front cover)*

are often used as the rationale for not going forward with these programs, so we must first address our church's financial condition.

We must begin by recognizing that there are a number of interrelated issues and until we address them all we will not be ready to even talk about the budget. Last year at convention we panicked and jumped to a decision to limit the budget without any real understanding of our financial position, without any discussion of our financial goals, and totally ignoring our overall goals and priorities. We must begin with the end, or purpose, and proceed from there.

Goals and Priorities

What are our overall goals and priorities? Most of our budget is spent on administration and supporting our traditional parish churches— basically on maintaining the status quo. It would appear that our goals are to trim our expenses by cutting the new projects, the outreach ministries, the programs that work with the youth and people who are not members of our church. It also appears that short term savings is a higher priority than quality. We give projects just enough money to stay afloat, but not enough to do things well enough to flourish. Perhaps it is because we think of ourselves as small and unworthy, which, of course, is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Our policies lead to failure and also lead to the creative committed ministers and laity in our churches who want to work with youth, or work for church growth, or out of social concern reach out and minister to people who are not already members of our churches, feeling very frustrated at the lack of support within the denomination.

To turn our church around we need to turn our priorities around. We certainly do not need to abandon traditional Sunday services, but they cannot be the primary focus of our personal and financial resources. We must put as our top priority programs that reach out to the wider community, attracting and involving new people. We also need to commit ourselves to excellence in all of our services and programs. All the publicity in the world will not help if when people arrive, they find poor quality. If we do these things, our church will grow, but I do not believe in church growth just for church growth's sake. If we offer a special program or a free meal for the public, and then try to convince those that come of our version of the Truth or try to coerce them into joining our church, we are insincere, manipulative, and counter-productive. We need to believe in community service, facilitating people's spiritual growth (regeneration), ministering to people, for its own sake or for the Lord's sake. If this were truly our intention, I believe the church would grow easily and naturally for we would be fulfilling a true use.

What are our short and long term financial goals? In the long term, is our goal to break even, increase our assets to keep up with inflation, or increase assets by 10 or
(Continued on page 70)

FOUR CHURCH LEADERS SPEAK OUT: Is Our Church Going Broke?

John Perry: *(Continued from page 67)*

be used for the purposes for which it was given to the church. This includes missions (both home and foreign), augmenting ministers' salaries, assisting students working for ordination in our church, youth programs, and publication efforts of the church (such as *Our Daily Bread*, *The Messenger*, *J. Appleseed & Co.* It is important to remember that *all income that cannot be spent for its restricted use must be returned to the same restricted fund that gave us that income!*

What we have said points us to the question that we should have asked in the first place. Not, *are we running out of money*, but *do we have the money to support all the programs that we want to support?* The answer to that question is that we do not. We have tried to leave in our invested funds each year an amount of income equal to the value of inflation (about 3% this past year). This is so that our income next year will buy the same amount of programs when the national inflation causes our money to be 3% less in value. The Common Fund (the denomination's investment fund) has been issuing income at the rate of 5.5%. Over the past few years, we have been spending more money than we have been receiving. To pay our bills we have had to take money from the investments at a rate just about equal to all that has been left of the total return on our funds. Great, you might say. We broke even. Well, no, we didn't, and here is why not. Most of the bills we had to pay were for the general uses of the denomination and must be from our general *unrestricted funds*. The funds that we can dig into the capital are only about 10% of the total or a bit over \$600,000. *This is the bad news.* If we keep having deficits that average \$100,000 each year, in about six years there won't be any place we can get money to pay the deficit bills!

Stop Deficit Spending

What does this all mean, and what can we do about it? The very first thing we should do is get our house in order and stop deficit spending! Your General Council has already taken the first step by passing a balanced budget for this year (fiscal year 1994). We must continue in this direction in the future. But how can we do the things that we feel are important? We obviously can't do everything everyone would like. We must set priorities, putting the things we feel are the most important first. We must then fund programs from the high priorities down to the low priorities, stopping when the money runs out. Programs that cannot be funded this year must be postponed to future years. This tells us the importance of having a plan that shows programs for several years in the future. Having such a plan would allow for adjusting our plans and priorities to use the available money and fund the programs the denomination considers to be most important.

(Continued on page 71)

Jerry Poole *(Continued from page 67)*

without the creators and implementors of ideas and programs taking on financial risk? I believe not, whether our church has \$11,000,000 in income producing assets or \$25,000,000.

How did we get in this position of being dependent on the "Mother Church" for the meeting of our financial needs? Probably many well meaning forefathers down through the years paid all the bills and basically told "us all" what we could do and couldn't do. And, the system worked as long as either the forefathers had the ability to cover the budget, or the cost of sustaining the life of the church did not exceed available income. Members of our denomination got used to being taken care of without having to put forth treasure as well as time and talent. We all know, however, the allowance program doesn't work when our children develop their own ideas and begin leading their own lives away from home. We in the church, like our growing children, need to begin viewing our national church's assets as a source of initial and now-and-then help, not as an open line of continuous financial support.

Accountability Structure, Better Communications Needed

For whatever reasons, the Swedenborgian Church organization has failed to establish and publish policies which govern the use and allocation of funds. Too many decisions are left to subjective judgment of committees that are regularly changing in membership; politics, or the power of a few, have made decisions which have affected many. If policies and procedures were in place regarding the use and application for use of our church's funds, greater objectivity would be brought to bear in financial decision making. The good news is, it's not too late to put some useful accountability structure in place, and doing so, although difficult, could be very enlightening and beneficial to the entire church. We'll need to define what is important for the life and growth of our church and to what extent projects can be supported. Limits of allowable denominational involvement will be clearly laid out. Projects requiring small amounts of support and a definite short-term need with a clear end date for support, might be handled differently than a larger project that would require a significant number of dollars for an extended period. Certainly, in the second case, decisions should not be deferred to a small number of people; the first case might allow this, as long as procedures agreed upon by the larger church were followed.

We could all benefit from our Central Office finding the best way of communicating a clear and easily understood picture of our church's finances, and doing so. It may even make sense to obtain the assistance of a consultant who does this kind of thing on a regular basis. Policies and procedures will help. The greatest help,

(Continued on page 71)

Polly Baxter: (Continued from page 68)

now when there did not seem to be such a problem in the past. This situation is of fairly recent origin because we have recently undertaken a very large denominational project, the development of Temenos. This has taken a large amount of unrestricted money that generated income previously and converted it into real estate. There also have been operating losses at Temenos which had to be funded by the denomination. In all, this has resulted in an annual loss of about \$110,000 in cash income and a proportional loss of growth in value each year. In setting our priorities, we must recognize that if Temenos is a project that we want to fund, we must be willing to give up other things that we want to do. We cannot have everything.

An effort is underway to determine what our denominational priorities are. A survey has been prepared and sent to everyone on *The Messenger* mailing list, and I would encourage everyone to honestly respond and let the General Council know what your priorities are. If you do not do so, the General Council will continue to be in the position of trying to make guesses about where the membership prefers to use our limited resources. □

Mother's Day

You wrote no lofty poems
that critics counted art
But with a nobler vision
You lived them in your heart.

You carried no shapeless marble
To some high-souled design
But with a finer sculpture
You shaped this life of mine.

You built no great cathedrals
That centuries applaud
But with a grace exquisite
Your life cathedraled God.

Irene D'buez

Reprinted from Conference, May 1993

Paul Martin: (Continued from page 68)

20% annually? In the short term do we really want to require a balanced budget each year, regardless of our overall goals and priorities? Sometimes enabling a project to become self-sufficient, or even income-producing, in the long run, requires a short-term investment. Are we willing to be flexible in the short term in order to make the church grow and be stable in the long run? I believe we should have a long-range goal of increasing our assets, but until we have a healthy growing organization, we should not let our financial goals preempt our overall goals. We cannot afford to say we cannot afford growth and outreach programs.

What is our current financial position? The figures indicate that our total assets are growing. The 1993 Convention Journal listed total assets of \$11,403,605, but this was based on the Book Value of the Common Fund (what it was worth many years ago). The Market Value of the Common Fund (what it is worth today) was almost five million dollars higher and so a more accurate figure of our assets would be \$16,335,962. Looking back several years at the 1985 Journal, we find total assets (Market Value) of \$11,491,881, indicating an increase of almost 5 million dollars in the past 8 years. It may seem surprising that our assets are growing so fast while we run "deficit budgets", but this is because our budget is based on annual income from the Common Fund of 5.5% every year, regardless of how well the Fund actually does. In fact, the total return (income and growth) is close to double that. This fact, along with most of the figures printed being based on the Book Value rather than the Market Value, tend to make us overlook the substantial increase in the Fund's value. It may be that the "unrestricted funds" are not growing (it has been impossible to tell from the financial reports because of the Book Value always being used instead of the Market Value). On the other hand, some of our restricted funds are growing rapidly and we need to find a way to utilize these funds. Also, we do have quite large assets for such a small church. With the denomination's 15 million dollars and local churches' probably 30 million dollars in assets, and only about 1500 members, money should not be our biggest concern. How can best utilize our wealth should be our biggest concern.

We Have Theology, Resources — Do We Have the Will?

In planning new and exciting programs for the future of our church, we should not feel confined by the limits of what was contributed by our ancestors. If we agreed on some common goals and priorities for our church, we would find the means to fund them even if it meant cutting other parts of the budget, spending some of our savings, or raising new funds. We have the theology to address the spiritual needs of people in this day and age. We also have the financial resources to sponsor programs to facilitate people's spiritual growth. All we lack is the will and the imagination.

FOUR CHURCH LEADERS SPEAK OUT: Is Our Church Going Broke?

John Perry: (Continued from page 69)

This is why it is so important that members of the denomination tell the Cabinet and General Council members what programs are important to be accomplished.

To summarize, we can again ask the original question. Is the church running out of money? The answer is no, there will always be money. However, we may well be running out of money to do the programs we as a church feel are most important. To assure that this does not happen, we *must* be sure to continue to balance our budgets and update our list of program priorities. □

Power of Religion

A new treatment may help provide relief for people who are unhappy, anxious, or mildly depressed: attending religious services. So says a review of all the scientific studies on religion in two main psychiatry journals over a 12-year period.

Researchers from the U.S. Department of Human Services and Bowman Gray medical school analyzed all scientific articles that studied religious involvement and its effects on mental health in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* and the *Archives of General Psychiatry* between 1978 and 1989. The researchers divided religious involvement into five categories: ceremony participation, meaning and purpose, social support, participation in prayer, and active relationship with God.

Of the 37 published findings which analyzed effects of religious commitment on mental health, 31 had beneficial effects (84 percent), five had harmful effects (14 percent), and one had no effect (three percent). Of those religious characteristics which clearly involved active participation, 24 of 26 studies (92 percent) showed beneficial effects on mental health.

Jerry Poole: (Continued from page 69)

however, must come from you and me. If we really want to learn about the finances of our church, we'll have to do the usual stuff of learning: ask questions, participate in open dialogue regarding the various uses of our church's funds, attend seminars or other open sessions that Central Office might offer, elect people to our governing boards who are open and desirous of our knowing what's going on. We'll have to establish goals, including financial goals, for the development of ministers, special ministries, children's programs, outreach materials, etc., and then support or pay for them with our own money, current dollars. We must begin paying our own way and not riding on "donated dollars of the deceased."

We have some more big questions to ask. How many of our dollars should be tied up in property? Do we own the most useful property? Should some exchanges or changes take place, i.e., "a property sold here where little is going on, for a property over there where a great deal is happening"? The relationship between, and value of, people, property and programs must be examined and determined on a regular basis.

Making sure the assets of the church are properly invested to maximize income and growth within acceptable parameters of risk is very important. If the church is to live out its social concern via its investments, then you and I must keep ourselves socially aware in order to keep our church on its toes. For too long, people in the Swedenborgian Church have avoided talking about or dealing with money. We need to seriously start now, doing both. Our spirits and the spiritual life of our church are depending on our doing so. □

The least benefits involved "meaning and purpose." But even so, religion was beneficial in more studies than it was harmful. Researchers postulate that "meaning and purpose" may be of less benefit because many people rate religion highly but feel guilty because of their lack of participation.

The most consistent benefits showed up in the categories of "ceremony" and relationship with God," followed by "social support," and "prayer."

The National Institute for Healthcare Research
Contributed by Trevor Woofenden

RESPONSES TO PANELISTS' VIEWS

Polly Baxter's Response:

It was gratifying to sense so much agreement among the opinions expressed here relating to the necessity of setting priorities. Regardless of the amount of funding that is available, it will be difficult to use the denomination's assets well if we are not clear on our long-term goals and objectives. I agree with Paul Martin that if we have common goals and priorities for our church, the funding for them will be accomplished more easily.

We do need to be cognizant, though, that our assets are not the same as what is available to fund our programs. We do have control over \$11 million invested funds. (That information can be found on page 56 of the *Journal of the Swedenborgian Church*. As John Perry points out, it is not all for our uses and what is cannot all be used to fund our programs. Only the income can be used from much of it and, in some cases, only for specific things.

In most denominations with which I am familiar, money flows into the central coffers at a steady rate. There are "per capita" taxes that each congregation must pay to the denomination. There are "special collections" taken for specific purposes, like support for mission projects. Because of the generosity of those who have gone before us, we have not had to emphasize support of the denomination by the local churches. Our programs might mean more to us if we had to start "paying our own way and not riding on 'donated dollars of the deceased'," as Jerry Poole so aptly states.

Checking our "ruling loves"

A friend of mine once said that if we wanted to determine our ruling loves, we could just look at our checkbooks. If all of our discretionary funds were used to buy luxuries for ourselves, love of self or of the world would seem fairly obvious. If our funds went for more altruistic purposes, love of the neighbor or the Lord would seem more likely. This can be carried to our support of the denomination. Is it our expectation that it will take care of us or do we think that we have some responsibility towards it? If the programs of the church truly reflect our priorities, we will find ways to fund them. If we are committed to them, we might even pay our own way. □

*"Whatever lies before me is
not blocking my next step;
it is my next step."*

—Maureen Brady

Paul Martin's Response:

I have several reactions and responses to the other articles. To begin with, it should be fairly simple to agree on our denomination's total assets, but readers may still be confused by the different figures used in the different articles. Jerry mentioned an \$11,000,000 endowment but was apparently referring only to the Common Fund investments. John wrote that the value of our investments is about \$13,000,000, referring to the \$2,000,000 in loans and mortgages in addition to the Common Fund. I used the figure \$16,000,000, which included as well our \$3,000,000 in real estate. So it looks to me as if we are all in basic agreement if we include all our assets.

I enjoyed reading John, Jerry and Polly's articles and agree with them on our need to set priorities for our church and to raise new funds if there are new projects we want to carry out. I did, however, find parts of Polly's article inflammatory and misleading. She referred to our situation as a "money crisis." Our assets are increasing by an average of \$500,000 per year and General Council has just passed a balanced budget for 1994 which includes being able to continue funding outreach projects like Temenos, The Stonehouse, the Concord (New Hampshire) Area Spiritual Growth Network, and Living Waters (HIV/AIDS Ministry). She states that "it has been suggested" that we spend the entire yield of the Common Fund. I would not suggest that, but we *could* choose to spend one or two extra percent and still keep up with inflation *if* we really wanted to fund a particular project. She blames our "money crisis" on Temenos, states that our real estate holdings are about one-third of our assets, and concludes that as a consequence we must give up the other things we want to do.

In fact, our total real estate holdings make up less than 20% of our assets. Personally, I believe our two largest real estate holdings, Temenos and the Wayfarer's Chapel, embody our denomination's greatest potential for outreach. Real estate may not produce income but that does not mean it is not a good investment. The Stonehouse, for instance, is now spending \$50,000 per year on rent (all self-generated), and if it continues to grow, it may get to the point where buying a building will actually save it money. Some local societies, on the other hand, have 50 to 90 percent of their assets in real estate and may find that selling their building and renting worship space will enable them to become financially self-sufficient. I agree with Jerry's point that "the relationship between, and value of, people, property and programs must be examined and determined on a regular basis." We cannot generalize about whether owning real estate is good or bad, but must examine each case on an individual basis.

What is worthwhile?

Many people are saying that we cannot afford to fund the few outreach projects that we are now involved in, or that because we are funding them there is no money to
(Continued on page 74)

RESPONSES TO PANELISTS' VIEWS

John Perry's Response:

Although the panelists have all approached the issue of the church convention's financial health from a somewhat different perspective, the most important issues that are before the church appear as a common theme in the discussions that have been set forth. I believe that there remains among the general membership, a hazy understanding of the present financial condition of the denomination. This requires continued education of this subject, and we must all put more effort toward this end.

There remain more important issues that we must face to ready the church for growth into the next century. The common themes which have come forth are the importance of focusing on our goals and priorities for the future and the raising of new funds to allow the church to meet those goals. It is critical that we approach this problem in the proper sequence. We must first review our mission to confirm that it still satisfies our overall direction as a church. We must reaffirm or modify our goals and then set them forth accordingly. This effort is ongoing and under constant review by the General Council. Now, we as a church must set priorities and programs that will allow us to attain our goals. In my opinion, this has not adequately been accomplished in recent years. We must, as a church, sit down and determine which programs are important and which are not. When we overlay our priorities on the funding process we are now using, we will be supporting the programs that the church as a whole will back.

Funding what we truly want

This will go a long way into setting our house in order. Now we will find ourselves ready to go and raise new funds. Having set our goals and priorities for programs, it will give a picture of our direction to those wishing to contribute financially to the future of our church. It is much easier to raise money for projects that have a strong center of support. We must remember that we cannot develop support until we all come to a consensus on the goals and priorities.

The General Council has commissioned a project to go to the grass roots of the church to try to determine what the members feel are the goals and priorities. I would encourage *everyone* to get involved in this process. Without a broad base of involvement we will not have valid answers to what may well be the most important questions that face our church today. □

*People—like trees—need storms
to reveal their strength.*

—Janey Ebersoll

Jerry Poole's Response:

The Swedenborgian Church needs to get back to the basics of good communication. Through the use of graphs and accompanying explanations, the financial picture of our church can be created. This picture can then be developed and published in *The Messenger*, as well as displayed at the annual convention. Common language and simple examples exist that will enable most people to understand and become conversant with the material.

In order to get out of the corner we've painted ourselves into by nearly exhausting our unrestricted funds, we need to go back over what caused the predicament. Tradition, politics and a lack of policy are the clearest culprits. Tradition is the easiest to understand. The "Old Folks" left dedicated funds to the running of their church and some unrestricted funds for the continuing operation of the denomination. They did not see it as their responsibility to pay for "our church of today." So, through the years, some unrestricted funds have been consumed maintaining the historical organizational Swedenborgian Church.

Then there is the political factor. A few ideas of a few politically strong groups have consumed a considerable portion of the unrestricted funds. This happens in any organization: the strong and the focused usually get the resources for their projects. Sometimes these projects yield significant benefits to the church; sometimes they do not.

Lastly, lack of policy and a broadly accepted system of accountability poses our greatest challenge. It seems we haven't had a consistent method of measuring the future value of a program and have not stayed close enough to those we've implemented. With a governance system that changes personnel so often, it may be difficult to get a system in place and effectively use it. Somehow we must. Members of the church need to be assured that funds are being expended for those programs that have been scrutinized within specific guidelines and accepted as beneficial to the life of our church. They need to see that politics do not control the use of unrestricted funds, but rather definite criteria do.

We can make this an exciting time

How do we get out of this corner? The Swedenborgian Church members, after developing our understanding and acceptance of the current situation and establishing criteria for the future use of unrestricted funds, begin giving and investing in their church with their dollars. If we begin a period of raising our own funds to support our mutually decided upon programs, we'll experience some real excitement. The truth is, we do not all have to agree on everything in order to support diverse activities and efforts in our church. We do, however, have to understand and develop an appreciation of one another's efforts. If each of

(Continued on page 74)

RESPONSES TO PANELISTS' VIEWS

Jerry Poole's Response: *(Continued from page 73)*

us is personally financially invested, we'll care about and want to know about all of our programs. Let's accept and use well the gifts from the past, and going forward begin paying our way! □

Writing Contest Deadline May 25!

Don't forget to send your children's story entry for the Sunday School Association contest to Eric Allison by *May 25*: 12-180 Highland Crescent, Kitchener, Ontario N2M 5K5. First prize \$250, second prize \$150, third prize \$100. See the March 1994 *Messenger* for full details.

Paul Martin's Response: *(Continued from page 72)*

fund all the other things we want to do. I do not believe we must give up other projects if we believe they are worthwhile. Besides, what *are* all these other programs we cannot afford to fund because of our current priorities? I believe we need more, not fewer, new and creative ideas for outreach programs, and then we should work together to find a way to fund them. I find it very strange that we all agree we want our church to grow but we don't want to do anything different. We say outreach is a priority, but our outreach projects, especially if they are successful, are attacked. As people's inner spiritual selves evolve, the outer religious forms must also evolve. If our church is to survive to be even a small part of the Lord's New Church, we need to embrace change, not resist it. Our church is in crisis, but it is not a financial one. □

Highlights of Convention '94 Marymount University, Arlington, Virginia

July 3-6	Starts 8 P.M.	Council of Ministers Ministers' Spouses
Wednesday, July 6	10:30-4:30 7:30 P.M.	General Council pre-convention session Opening of Convention
Thursday, July 7	9:00-3:00 3:00-4:30 7:30 P.M.	Business Sessions Mini-Courses SSR Graduation
Friday, July 8	9:00-4:30 11:30-1:30 6:30-8:00	Business Sessions & Elections Women's Alliance Luncheon Mini-Courses
Saturday, July 9	9:00 A.M. 10:00 A.M. 11:30 A.M. Afternoon 1:30-3:00 P.M. 1:30 P.M. 9:00 P.M.	SSR Corporation Meeting Sunday School Association Meeting Children's Program Tours & Excursions Mini-Courses Post-Convention General Council Convention Dance
Sunday, July 10	T/B/A	Convention Sunday Service, Ordination and Communion, Church of the Holy City, Washington, DC

Don't Forget to Register for Convention '94 in D.C.!

Your tear-out two-page registration form is in your April 1994 *Messenger*. If you have misplaced your April *Messenger* and need a registration form, please contact Central Office at: 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158. Phone 617-969-4240.

Swedenborgian Summit Addresses Concerns and Hopes about Temenos

Bob Stoddard

For the first time ever Swedenborgians representing 13 segments of their church community spent a weekend together dealing openly with their grandest hopes and gravest concerns regarding the development of Temenos, the Swedenborgian Church's 55-acre conference and retreat center in West Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Attending this unprecedented gathering held at Temenos on March 11-13, were 17 church members and three concerned friends from across the United States and Canada. As several participants stated, the summit was a unique event in that they were able to discuss this project face to face across lines that often segregate them as members of various groups, organizations, institutions and constituencies.

Leaders of the weekend event were Bob Stoddard, Senior Associate of MacIntyre Associates, the firm hired to test the feasibility of a fund raising campaign for Temenos, and Bob Reber, Dean of Auburn Theological Seminary and a longtime friend of the church. Participants reviewed the history and present operation of Temenos, dealt head-on with the issues of stewardship and economic feasibility, and shared their concerns and dreams for the future.

George Dole of the Swedenborg School of Religion served as recorder and will prepare summaries of the summit for the General Council and Temenos Board.

The summit did not produce all the answers, but it did identify five priority areas of concern which must



be addressed prior to and as a part of any campaign for Temenos. The first and, in the minds of those present, foremost concern was the short-term and long-term finances of Temenos. How can Temenos further increase its present income potential? Is the construction of a retreat house with accommodations for 16 people overnight and the operation of a center with an overnight capacity for 30 people economically viable?

To begin answering these questions, a marketing survey of the conference facility needs of local corporations is being conducted by Temenos marketing representative, Betsy Friend. An economic feasibility study by an outside expert will be completed this spring, and MacIntyre Associates will manage the solicitation of leadership gift commitments and thereby test the viability of a fund-raising campaign. The results of these three efforts will largely deter-

mine whether or not a campaign should be launched.

The second area needing more definition is program. What will the programs be? How will they nurture both the various constituencies within the church and reach out to non-Swedenborgians who are seeking the unique gifts which the Swedenborgian Church has to offer?

Third is the area of public relations. There needs to be improved communication between Temenos and the rest of the church. This communication needs to be two-way: The Temenos Board and staff need to share their joys, concerns and questions openly, and listen to the suggestions and counsel of others.

Fourth is personnel, i.e. what additional staff will Temenos need in the future if it expands? And what should be the criteria in selecting that staff?

The fifth and final area to be looked at more closely is that of the usage policy of Temenos. Who else beyond the church should be able to use Temenos and for what purposes? A policy which continues to be in harmony with both the church objectives and strategies and the mission of Temenos needs to be further developed.

Members of the church-at-large can expect to hear more on each of these matters soon. The Temenos Board of Managers, Program and Marketing Task Force and staff will generate data, develop policies and initiate new efforts to communicate this information to members and solicit feedback.



Swedenborgian Summit Participants

Council of Ministers: Robert McClusky
General Council: Edwin Capon
GOSU: Robert Smith
Mid-Atlantic Association: Polly Baxter
Mid-West and SSR: Margaret Kraus

PMSU: Ron Brugler
Philadelphia church: John Smailer
Swedenborg Foundation: David Eller and Alice Skinner
SSR: George Dole

Temenos Board of Managers: Randy Laakko, Gus Ebel and Susan Poole
Temenos Director: Erni Martin
Women's Alliance: Pamela Selensky and Sharon Slough

West Coast: Phyllis Bosley
At large: Duane Beougher
Summit Leaders: Bob Stoddard and Bob Reber
Summit Recorder: George Dole

NOMINEES SELECTED

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

President (3-year term)

Rev. Edwin G. Capon
Minnesota

I offer as my qualifications for a second term as president, two years of experience at it, service as pastor of churches in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Michigan, California, and Minnesota, two terms on General Council, two terms as member of the Augmentation Fund, eleven years as chairman of the Council of Ministers and twenty years as president of SSR. Further, I am giving up my half-time service to the St. Paul church and moving to Massachusetts. Though not the purpose of the move, it will make it possible for me to give more time to the office of president and respond to more requests that I visit churches and association meetings.

I have a bachelors degree from Harvard and a master's degree from Andover-Newton Theological School and am also a graduate of SSR. It is my desire to be able to give full support both to traditional and contemporary ministries within the limits of the church resources.

Vice-President (1-year term)

Phyllis Bosley
California

I came to the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church in 1957 through their music program and soon became a Sunday school teacher. I served as director of the children's summer camp a few seasons, served on the Parish Church Committee and the San Francisco church board for many years. Currently I am serving (with terms expiring in 1994): Board of Managers of Wayfarers Chapel, Executive Committee of the National Alliance, and General Council. Outside of the church, I have served on two boards of two San Francisco music organizations: The California Bach Society, and the San Francisco Boys Chorus. I find administrative work both challenging and rewarding. My church interests center around growth and outreach; personal interests are my family, music, books, and people. I am married, with children and grandchildren.

My business background: Retired in 1990 from Gregory & Falk Lithographers as production manager and secretary to the corporation; freelance copywriting; junior account executive with Foote, Cone and Belding Advertising Agency.

Secretary (1-year term)

Gloria Toot
Ohio

I have been a member of Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church in Cincinnati for about 25 years, and have worked as their office manager on and off for almost 15 years. I have served several terms on Kemper Road Church's board of directors, including terms as secretary.

I have served as secretary of General Council

for three terms now and have found it to be interesting and rewarding. I hope I have performed the duties of my office satisfactorily and hope to be reelected so I may continue to serve my church in this way.

General Council (3-year term)

Rev. Skuli Thorhallsson
Florida

I am in my sixth year of serving the New Jerusalem Church of the Inner Angel at Swedenborg House Spiritual Growth Center in Deland, Florida. My term on the executive committee of the Council of Ministers ends this July, and this is my last year to serve on the Nominating Committee. I therefore have the time, the willingness and the energy to serve on General Council. That, and my experience of six years in ministry, are my only qualifications. Serving as I have, I continue to grow and learn more about our church. I would value the opportunity to serve further.

Christine Laitner
Michigan

My home is in Midland, Michigan, which puts me about 100 miles north of my "home church" in the Detroit area.

For the past six years I have served on the Growth and Outreach Support Unit overseeing the non-traditional and missionary ministries of the denomination. For all of those six years I have served as chair of the Unit on a yearly basis.

Prior to that time I have served as president of the Michigan Association, president of the Almont New Church Assembly (and Retreat Center), vice-president of both of those organizations, lay member of the Committee on Admission to the Ministry, trustee of SSR, and, twenty years ago, a very young member of General Council.

I am a secondary English and choral music instructor employed by the Gladwin Community Schools. I hold a Masters Degree in music and am a nationally registered music educator. Currently I am serving as a consultant in secondary language arts working on creating interdisciplinary units for schools in the state of Michigan.

I thoroughly enjoy working for this church. I believe that this church has exactly the right things to offer late 20th-century seekers of truth and spirituality. I would certainly welcome the opportunity to serve as a member of General Council and believe that my past six years of GOSU and Cabinet membership have given me a very complete perspective from which to work for the benefit of the church, and I would like the opportunity to be in a position to help this church grow in the world.

Pat Zacharias
Ontario, Canada

I have been actively involved in the Elmwood, Massachusetts, Portland, Oregon, and Kitchener, Ontario churches over the past 38 years and care

deeply about our parish churches.

Having completed my terms on the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit, I feel I can be useful as a member of General Council. My experience serving on Cabinet and my involvement in the budgeting process has been extremely valuable.

As one of the initiators of our effective board management and stewardship training, I have learned how essential these are for a healthy, growing church.

Communications Support Unit (COMSU) (3-year term)

Rev. Ernest O. Martin
Pennsylvania

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

John Hitchcock (1-year unexpired term)
Massachusetts

I have been working in the field of science and spirituality for many years, following by Ph.D. in the phenomenology of science and religion from the Graduate Theological Union and the University of California at Berkeley. I have published two books in this field: *Atoms, Snowflakes & God: The Convergence of Science and Religion* (Quest Books, 1986) and *The Web of the Universe: Jung, the New Physics, and Human Spirituality* (Paulist Press, 1991). The latter is a part of Paulist's series: Jung and Spirituality. A third, *God is a Strange Attractor: Chaos Theory and Spirituality*, is now being considered by Element Books. I am a regular contributor to *Chrysalis*, the journal of the Swedenborg Foundation. After nine years as a member of the Department of Physics at the University of Wisconsin at La Crosse, I have taken early retirement from that institution to devote myself to writing, lecturing, and giving workshops.

For over twenty years, I have been a leader with the Guild for Psychological Studies of San Francisco, specializing in the religious symbols to be found within science, and in mythology. I have taught mythology as well as astronomy at San Francisco State University.

I was born into the Kenwood Parish of the Chicago Society. After my father's death, we moved to Michigan City, Indiana, where we were members of the LaPorte New Church. After World War II, we attended the Almont Assembly. When my mother became Mrs. R.C. Munger, we moved to Michigan. From there, I attended the Fryeburg Assembly. Later, I was in the El Cerrito Parish of the San Francisco Society. After a break of some years, I was invited by the Swedenborg Foundation to lecture at the Swedenborg Tricentennial Symposium on Science and Spirituality, and subsequently was invited to serve on the Foundation's Board of Directors, where I am currently completing my second year.

Education Support Unit (EdSU) (3-year term)

Pat Tukos
Indiana

I am a member of the LaPorte New Church where I have served in such capacities as Sunday school superintendent, teacher and board member. Over the years I have also been involved with Almont Summer School. At this time I am Sunday school treasurer, Women's Alliance vice president, editor of the newsletter, and serve on two committees.

A brief personal history: my husband and I have owned and operated a telecommunications business for the past eight years. We have two grown daughters.

I am presently completing a three-year term on the Education Support Unit, which I have chaired for the past year and a half. I have now been nominated for a second term. EdSU has undergone tremendous change in personnel and programs during the past couple of years and very much needs the continuity gained by a returning member. The EdSU team is working toward better structure and developing clearer vision and goals. If elected I will continue to do my best to improve EdSU's present programs and add new projects as the budget allows.

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

Susan Wood
Florida

I have been a member of the Swedenborgian Church since 1972 and have served on numerous boards and committees, including one term on FPRSU, but would prefer to briefly state my views of this Support Unit in lieu of a biography.

Our church has been forced into fiscal responsibility and has worked diligently to establish workable priorities: the time has come for FPRSU to assist in putting these priorities into action.

With input from other Support Units, FPRSU has established guidelines and specific policies for streamlined funding. Equitable goals have been identified and the level of awareness of our financial workings has increased—to the benefit of all. FPRSU's primary goal is to provide General Council with a sufficient amount of accurate financial information to enable Council to intelligently make the important decisions that will allow our church to thrive, both financially and spiritually.

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

Lon Elmer
Washington

As I study Swedenborg's writings, I am increasingly struck by his ability to combine biblical truths with common sense in a non-self-serving manner. One example of this is the Doctrine of Uses. I refer to it often when I find my own life becoming cluttered with things that really don't reflect my deepest interests and purpose. I also refer to it when I consider our denomination as an organization.

I see our denomination's mission as: facilitating the study of the Bible through the

guidance of Swedenborg's inspired writings; providing the wherewithal to bring the Bible's truths to daily lives—no matter who we are or what our situation in our individual journeys; and, accepting the loving support of our church's members and friends.

In my daily life, I take time to read, reflect, and put into action. As I see it, the purpose of GOSU is to "put into action." As past deputy director for the Delaware State Division of Drug Abuse Control, past director of the Santa Cruz County Methadone Program, past administrator for the San Francisco Methadone Program, and owner of a publishing company, I know how to "put into action" in a responsive and responsible manner.

So far, in addition to tithing, I have supported our denomination as: committee chair, 1987 national convention; president, Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound (1986-91); board member, Pacific Coast Association (1987-93); board member, Wayfarers' Chapel (1991-93); member GOSU (1989-92). I would like to serve again on GOSU because, to quote the GOSU chairperson for the past six years, I am "good at ascertaining what is useful in non-traditional ministries."

David Rienstra
Missouri

The Rev. David L. Rienstra was ordained in 1978 and served as pastor of the Fryeburg New Church for ten years. The past six years he has been serving as pastor of the Church of the Open Word, Garden Chapel in St. Louis, Missouri.

While in Fryeburg he was president of the Maine Association and is currently president of the Illinois Association. In the past sixteen years he has served the larger church in several positions: member of General Council, CAM, Council of Ministers (chair), Cabinet, Ministerial Placement Committee, and chair of the executive committee of the Council of Ministers. At present he is an active member of General Council.

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

Lee Woofenden
Massachusetts

Lee Woofenden received a BA degree in "Communicating Spiritual Ideas" from Fairhaven College, Bellingham, Washington, in 1993. He is now an ordination track student at Swedenborg School of Religion (SSR). He lives in Sharon, Massachusetts with his wife Patty and daughter Heidi. Lee is in regular contact with Steve Koke, IMSU's outgoing chair, through electronic mail; this would help provide continuity in his work on IMSU.

Lee would bring to IMSU a good background in data communications, having run a computer bulletin board for several years. In connection with the IMSU-supported archivist at the SSR Library, Lee is interested in exploring possibilities for a computerized database of church-related information. This database would be accessible via modem to ministers and lay people throughout North America. It would also be available to the archivist for quick reference in satisfying information requests from people both inside and outside the Swedenborgian Church. Lee will be happy to work with the other members of IMSU

on current projects, as well as looking ahead to IMSU's future role in the church.

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

Linda Tafel
Florida

I first joined the Swedenborgian Church in the 1970s at Kemper Road Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. I have been a member of the board of directors there and served several years as board secretary. I also served a term as president of the Ohio Association. I was an elected member of our denomination's theological school governing board(s) for a total of seven years. I am currently a member-at-large of the Southeast Association.

By profession I am a teacher and information specialist, and have worked in both of these capacities in public school, university, and corporate environments. I have also worked as a computer system designer, a writer, and an editor. I hold a B.A. in American Studies from Miami University (Ohio) and an M.S. in Library and Information Science from the University of Kentucky. I also have training and experience in organizational effectiveness and interpersonal dynamics.

I currently reside in Ft. Myers Beach, Florida, and am reference librarian at the Ft. Myers Beach Public Library. I also am business manager and editorial assistant for the Swedenborgian devotional publication, *Our Daily Bread*.

Over the past several years I have watched as PMSU has gone about its work of supporting and facilitating local ministries and their pastoral leaders. I am very aware of the importance of this task, for I believe the future of our church is dependent upon the effectiveness of its local ministries and their ordained leadership. I believe that the Swedenborgian Church has something important to offer the world, and that there is no more important ingredient in offering it than the work of the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit. I welcome the opportunity and take very seriously the responsibility of helping to further that work.

SSR Board of Trustees (3-year term)

Richard Stansbury
Washington

I am a member of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound, where I have been active since 1984, having found the church through the Stone House Book Room. In 1985, I was elected to the board of trustees of the local church, currently serving my second term as president. I also served as a trustee of the Stone House. I was elected to the Property Committee of the Pacific Coast Association in 1988, and in 1989 was elected to the PCA board of directors and became the treasurer of the Association, an office I still occupy. I was appointed to the Investment Committee of General Convention in 1990, and still serve on this committee. In 1992, I was elected to the SSR board of trustees as a corporation candidate, and soon thereafter became SSR treasurer. I am seeking a second term on the SSR board, this time as a denomination candidate. I am a long-time banker, living in Redmond, Washington with my wife, Peggy, and two sons.

(Nominees continued on page 78)

NOMINEES

(continued from page 77)

Stan Conger
California

I am 47 years of age and a lifelong member of the Swedenborgian Church. I was a member of the Los Angeles church until becoming a member-at-large of the Pacific Coast Association in 1992. While a member of the Los Angeles church, I held the offices of president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. I have also been a member of the Board of Managers of the Wayfarers Chapel and a member of that board's executive committee.

I am currently employed by the Santa Monica Police Department, at the rank of police lieutenant. I graduated from California State University at Los Angeles with a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice. My most recent police department-sponsored training was a three-week course at the Senior Management Institute for Police near Boston, Massachusetts. This course covers management-related topics in both the public and private sector, with course curriculum developed under the auspices of Harvard University.

I look forward to participation on the SSR Board of Trustees, with the aim of contributing to the continuing development of the Swedenborg School of Religion and maintaining their financial stability.

Nominating Committee (5-year term)

Sharon Billings
Ohio

I am a fourth-generation Swedenborgian currently living in Cleveland, Ohio and working on an undergraduate degree in religion at Baldwin Wallace College. My participation in the Swedenborgian Church began in my youth with membership and office-holding in the Pawnee Rock, Kansas church league. More currently, I have served as chairperson and as a member of the Cleveland church board for the past four years as well as having taught Sunday school. I also enjoyed serving for two years as the religious chair of the Women's Alliance at the national level.

As a lifetime member of the Swedenborgian Church and as one who deeply loves this religion's spiritual perspective, I understand the importance of recruiting people to serve in positions of leadership in the church who genuinely wish to assist the Swedenborgian denomination in being vitally alive, relevant, and growing in today's world.

Barbara Penabaker
Michigan

I am a lifelong member of the Swedenborgian Church. I have held various offices in the Royal Oak church, the Michigan Association and the Almont New Church Assembly. I am presently serving as president of the board of trustees of the Royal Oak church, treasurer of the Michigan Association and secretary of the Almont New Church Assembly. I am also the business manager registrar of the Almont summer school. On the national level I have served as vice-president and president of the Alliance of Swedenborgian Women. At present I am serving on the Alliance Nominating Committee.

I feel with my experience that I am qualified to run for the position on the Nominating Committee.

Mini Courses for Convention 1994

Name of Course

Instructor

Some Implications in Swedenborg's Teachings

Paul Zacharias

I believe we have been looking at Swedenborg's writings too literally, thus missing the forest for the trees. In this session we'll be delving beneath the surface and, as a group, looking for deeper, more subtle shadings of meanings in Swedenborg's revelation. One session, limited to 15 people.

Understanding and Improving Relationships

Lorraine Sando

There's more to behavior than what we see and hear. As we understand those unseen levels of coping, feeling, perceptions and expectation, we can honor our authentic selves and can improve our interactions with each other and with the divine.

Living with AIDS: A Positive Response

Roger Young

I plan to show the movie *And the Band Played On* with highlights from the film and intersections of life with AIDS from a personal perspective. I may need two sessions (movie and questions).

Welcome to SSR!

Mary Kay Klein and
SSR Students & Faculty

We will discuss the Swedenborg School of Religion educational programs—ordination, M.A., lay leader certificate. Students will give their perspective on life at SSR. We will also talk about our dreams for the future of SSR and the church. One session.

Introduction to Swedenborg

Dorothea Harvey

An introductory approach to Swedenborg's basic thought and its implications for issues we deal with as we think about our faith and what it means.

Training for Sunday School Teachers

To be announced

How to Read the Treasurer's Report

Polly Baxter

The Book of the People

On the theme of convention, "The People of the Book."

George Dole

Nominating Committee's Report for American New Church Sunday School Association

President:

Rev. Gertrude Dole Trembley
St. Paul, Alberta, Canada

Vice President:

Rev. Eric Hoffman
LaPorte, Indiana

Secretary:

Susanne Lorraine
Portland, Maine

Treasurer:

Patricia Brewer
Norfolk, Massachusetts

Nominating Committee '97:

3-year term

Lorrie PLipski
Olds, Alberta, Canada

Outreach:

Rev. Eric Allison
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

Publications:

Rev. Dr. James Lawrence
San Francisco, California

Teaching Aids:

Joyce Fekete
Naples, Florida

Teacher Training:

Rev. Wilma Wake
West Franklin, New Hampshire

Martha Richardson, Chair

Correction

The April 1994 *Messenger's* report of the Nominating Committee listed the president's term as one year. It should be three years and the Rev. Edwin Capon serves in St. Paul, not Minneapolis. (We meant to say Minnesota!) Our apologies for any confusion this may have caused.

Notice of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the American New Church Sunday School Association will be held in Washington, DC, during the sessions of the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church, tentatively on Saturday, July 9th, 1994. If the date, time, and place do not appear in the convention program, a notice will be posted in the convention reception area.

Lorrie Lipski
Secretary, SSA

Passages

Deaths

Blackmer—Eunice Blackmer, aunt of Alice Blackmer Skinner, entered the spiritual world March 5, 1994, in Tucson. She was the sister of Carolyn Blackmer and the second wife of Franklin Blackmer. Suffering from Alzheimer's Disease for many years, she lived with her daughters. No service was planned at this writing.

Bryant—Mary E. Bryant, 70, of Newton, Massachusetts, entered the spiritual world March 18, 1994. Mary served as Swedenborg School of Religion Registrar for almost sixteen years. Her warmth and supportiveness will be missed by all who knew her. A memorial service was conducted March 24, 1994, at the Cambridge Chapel.

Vette—William Vette, 90, of Amana, Iowa, entered the spiritual world February 3, 1994, after a lingering illness. He was a lifelong member and a former officer of the Lenox Township Swedenborgian Church near Norway, Iowa. Funeral services were conducted at the United Methodist Church in Norway February 7, the Rev. Dr. Paul Benjamin officiating.

Important Church Calendar Dates in 1994

May 19	COMSU, at Temenos
May 20-21	Temenos Board of Managers
May 20-21	Illinois Association
June 3-4	Urbana Board of Trustees
July 6-10	Annual Convention in Washington, DC
August 21-23	Cabinet at Fryeburg NCA
November 6-8	Retirement Committee: Newton
November 20-22	General Council: Newton

President's Meetings in 1994

Jan. 13-16	General Council in Newton
Jan. 23	Preached in Detroit and met with members
Feb. 14-15	Church growth workshop in Massachusetts
Feb. 16	Convention Planning Committee in D.C.
Feb. 18-19	Urbana Board of Trustees
Mar. 3-6	SSR Trustees in Seattle
Mar. 14	Executive Committee, Council of Ministers
Mar. 16-18	Committee on Admission to the Ministry
April 15-16	Pastoral Ministries Support Unit at Almont
April 17	Preach in Detroit
April 28-29	Wayfarers Chapel Board
May 1	Kansas Association
June 3-4	Urbana Board of Trustees

President Capon reports that he and Esther sold their house in Woodbury, Minnesota in five days and will be moving to Uxbridge, Massachusetts in the fall. They will be living in their Maine house during the summer.

Opinion

(Continued from page 66)

care of bad teeth, allergies and so on. Of course, after that comes TV, and you have a generation of children who lose their culture and its values. (Eric Allison's comment about TV in Fiji is an illustration.)² The woman for whom you built the house couldn't have been happier. She is obviously a fine person without all the frills, and she could have 10 children without doing as much damage to the environment as probably one U.S. family with the respectable two children, a summer

home, washer, dryer, electric toothbrush, lawn mower, two cars, power boat, etc. Advances in technology will come to the underprivileged in time, but it could come gradually as the local regimes move from being oppressive. It seems that the places where people are dying of starvation are under the domination of selfish ruling classes. Your article started a whole train of thought. Thanks!

¹ "The Corazon Experience," February 1994 *Messenger*.

² "Adventures in Paradise and Tolerance," February 1994 *Messenger*.

Louise Woofenden
Sharon, Massachusetts

Swedenborgian Church Youth League Convention Program Designed for Fun, Participation, Friendship

Steve Pults



1993 Winter Retreat at Almont Retreat Center, Michigan

Members of the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) ranging in ages from 13 to college age are active participants in our church's annual convention. Their activities range from developing their own chapel, display table, banner and mini course to an outing of their choice the closing Saturday of convention. Unlike the children's programs offered, Leaguers are responsible for developing their own activities with the assistance of Youth Minister Rev. Steve Pults and their elected chaplain.

Last year Leaguers played a big part in helping the office run smoothly during convention and participated in convention business sessions with their two elected delegates. Free time is also an important part of the League's schedule, allowing for discussions and friendships to develop. Rather than being housed in separate quarters, Leaguers room near their parents or sponsors maintaining both their own levels of personal responsibility and those of their parents.

Their Saturday outing is accom-

panied by their youth minister and young adult chaperones. All teens use the "buddy system" in groups of three or more.

It is encouraging to see our teens' parents taking such an active interest in the well being of their children when considering sending them to convention or a League retreat. The SCYL takes the same attitude. Ministry to any group certainly must include providing for participants' safety and care.

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London 15 years after his death. This 1787 organization eventually spawned the present General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

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

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

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THE MESSENGER

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Opinion

It came to SSR's attention very late that PMSU had written a letter to The Messenger concerning the Cambridge church situation. This letter is presented to offer information that we think would be helpful to Messenger readers.

SSR Faces Hard Choices

To the Editor:

I am writing on behalf of the board of trustees of the Swedenborg School of Religion (SSR). Our board has devoted many hours to discussion of a difficult dilemma. SSR is an independent corporation whose primary task is to prepare ministers to serve the needs of the denomination. For over 90 years the Cambridge Society has worshiped in a chapel owned and maintained by SSR and located on valuable property in the midst of Harvard University. We have a growing student body whom we could serve better if the Cambridge property yielded income to add to the almost one million dollars SSR has raised in recent years. The Cambridge Society reimburses SSR for expenses such as utilities and insurance but pays no rent. In effect, SSR is supporting the Cambridge Society with money which should properly be used to educate ministers for the denomination as a whole.

Four alternatives have emerged through our discussions:

- (1) the Cambridge Society might pay rent commensurate with the value of the property;
- (2) the chapel might be sold to the Cambridge Society (we are advised it is worth over \$2,000,000);
- (3) the chapel might be sold to another buyer with a share of the proceeds given to aid the Society to relocate;
- (4) the land might be developed as an income-producing property which would include space for the use of the Cambridge Society.

The trustees of SSR recognize how hard it is to face the loss of a beloved and familiar church structure, and deeply regret our inability to continue to underwrite the Cambridge Society. Our objective is to find a solution which takes their interests into account while permitting SSR to dedicate its resources to its educational mission.

*Alice B. Skinner
St. George, Maine*