
THE MESSENGER

Monthly Publication, Swedenborgian Church of North America

June 1995

From September 1994 to April 1995, Agnes Shabalala of Pretoria, South Africa, lived and worked in New York City, through a fellowship program of the Ford Foundation, for the Sesame Street at Children's Television Workshop. During her stay in New York, it was our pleasure at the New York New Church to become acquainted with Agnes, and to explore through her eyes some comparisons between the new church in North America, and the New Church in South Africa.

We felt that *Messenger* readers would appreciate and enjoy learning about being Swedenborgian in South Africa from Agnes's perspective, and so, one Saturday afternoon shortly before her departure, she found some time in her busy schedule to sit and share her thoughts with me about her experiences here in New York, and about her church in Pretoria.

A few members of the New York New Church still recall the late Rev. Obed Mookie's visit with his wife here some time ago. Mr. Mookie was the president of the denomination in South Africa until his death in 1990.

The New Church in South Africa: A Visit with Agnes Shabalala

Mona Connor

"New people are drawn to the church in a way that is difficult to pinpoint."

The denomination there is still in the process of finding its new president. The Rev. Teko is the minister of Agnes' church in the Northern Transvaal section of Pretoria. He ministers, on a rotating basis, to four large churches in Pretoria. Each church has a small staff, and services are conducted by lay leaders when Mr. Teko is preaching elsewhere in Pretoria. Agnes estimates that there are over 100 families in her own congregation, and plenty of children.

She describes our denomination in South Africa as relatively formal and

conservative in style, when compared to the Swedenborgian Church in the U.S. and Canada. South Africa, through all its trouble, has been, and continues to be, a part of the world where almost everyone has a faith, and relies on their church as an essential source of strength in difficult times. Many South Africans favor a strong western-based Christianity, while maintaining cultural traditions. It's less a question of *whether* to belong to a church, and more a matter of *which* one you belong to.

Agnes' grandfather, the Rev. Joseph Mosedi, was a Swedenborgian minister, and she was raised in the Swedenborgian faith. She never considered rebelling against her faith as a teenager, and has enjoyed her church all through her life. It's what she understands, and feels familiar with.

When I asked Agnes what kind of outreach the South African New Church practices, she wasn't quite sure what I meant! After I explained what American churches do and gave her some examples, she indicated that they don't have outreach. She has observed that many of their special services, such as communions, and even funerals seem to attract interest all the time—"New people are drawn to the church in a way that is difficult to pinpoint." I speculated with her that the combination of how important 'church' is in general there combined with the positive energy, size, and an organization of the South African New Church must be a factor, and she agreed it could be.

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South African New Church uniforms have remained the same for many years.

Moving Toward the Light

A Legacy of Peaceful Energy

Many of you have expressed interest in knowing more about the little Southern California mountain town we live in, and several of you have visited us since we moved here two years ago. Summer, with its blessings of flowers and birds (and lizards brought in by the cat, which I duly rescue when possible) seems an appropriate time to describe the quality of life here and share a little bit of history.

The quality of life can be depicted in a few revealing glimpses: a daily trip to town to pick up my mail: I'm sitting in my car reading a letter from my daughter when I hear a birdsong being echoed. I look over to see a man sitting in his car with the windows open, listening to a nearby bird, then whistling a pretty fair imitation. The bird answers, he replies. He is fully absorbed in this conversation; I smile and go back to my letter, not wanting to intrude on the moment by starting the engine.

Local artist and gardener Sally Snipes launched a volunteer daffodil planting project that is in its fourth year. During the month of March visitors and locals alike are greeted by masses of daffodils throughout the town and along the roads leading in and out of town. Her work is featured in the Santa Ysabel Gallery, along with many other talented artists who live here. If someone is having a special gathering and calls her, even on short notice, she delivers a large bucket of cut flowers from her garden. You open your door early in the morning, and there it is.

Just across our road lies one of many metate rocks in the area, where Native American women (the Kumeyaay in this region) once sat for hours under these oaks and ground acorns. There is a peaceful energy hovering there that invites you to sit for awhile on the warm stone and just be.

I am in training to become one of the volunteer docents who lead hikes up our Volcan Mountain Wilderness Preserve and talk about native plants and their food and medicinal uses, the varieties of oaks, birds, the grinding rocks—and the gate that you see in the photo. It is the entryway to the Preserve, designed by well-

known artists James Hubbell and Mirko. The ironwork figures represent the basic elements of fire, earth and wind; the elaborately carved totem animals on the gate begin at the bottom with snakes, frogs, and other lower forms, then progress to mammals and birds. The rock work was accomplished with volunteers donating months of labor.

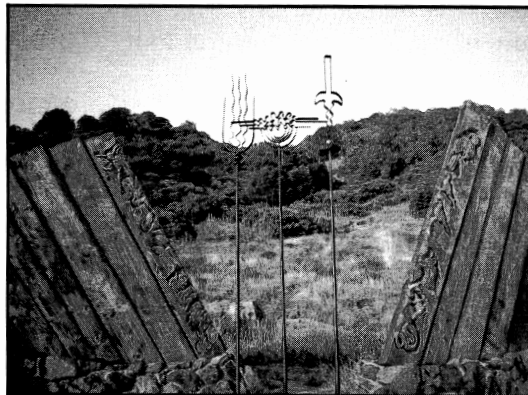
There is much to learn and discover. On a hike with another docent a few days ago I spotted, about 40 feet off the trail, a mountain lion cub playing around a tree stump. I managed to snap a picture, but don't know yet what will emerge on film.

We are 60 miles northeast of San Diego, 4,200 feet elevation; the area is known as the Backcountry and is famous for the quality of its apples and homemade apple pies. In one apple orchard a few miles down the road there is even a replica of Johnny Appleseed.

In 1866, only three settlers and their families were living and farming at the base of Volcan Mountain; there was no town, and no roads.

Following the Civil War, in Dalton, Georgia, Drury Bailey and his two brothers, James and Frank, with their cousins Webb and Mike Julian, had returned to their homes after fighting in the Confederate Army to find

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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.

Is Focus Different?

Dear Editor:

I would like to offer my viewpoint about several *Messenger* dialogues in recent issues:

Robert McCluskey responded in March to Carol Lawson's article of January, and she replied. I don't agree with Carol that a traditional 'denominational' perspective lacks "a very broad focus" or a "respect" and "desire" for diversity."

I am disappointed that Carol's reply indicates her feeling that the mission to "bring Swedenborg into the mainstream" and "to people of diverse persuasions" is somehow unique to the Foundation's efforts, and that there is a dividing line on this basis between those in the church, and those outside

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Agnes Shabalala

(from front cover)

Another interesting difference between our churches is the way in which we focus more on Swedenborg and his life than the South Africans do. Agnes found this intriguing, particularly when we celebrated Swedenborg's birthday at the church. She describes the sermons in Pretoria as very Bible-centered, with a distinctively Swedenborgian focus and framework, yet delivered in a way that Swedenborg's name is *seldom if ever mentioned or referenced*. She expressed an interest in knowing more about Swedenborg's life, and wished her church might commemorate his birthday too; while I, on my part, was given quite a pause for thought about the possible value and impact of using her church's approach in sermons!

Services last quite long in Pretoria on communion Sundays, usually a minimum of three hours, since these services are also when baptisms and confirmations are administered. Only full members may partake of communion. Men sit on one side of the church, and women on the other, while children (from toddlers on up) sit in their own pews facing the congregation, and behind the minister.

Casual attire is not considered appropriate for church, and until recently women used to have to cover their heads. An elaborate system of uniforms is worn for special occasions, (with the exception of weddings, when street clothing is worn). Four different groups each wear their own costumes. The men, "Sons of New Church," wear navy jackets, shirts, ties, pants, and special badges. The "Women's League" wear white blouses, black skirts, black and navy jackets, special hats, and pins. Young women, the "Junior League" wear blouses with special collars, black skirts, special hats, and pins. Children are called "Swedenborg Stars" and they dress like the adults, but wear different pins. New Church Day is one of the special occasions when uniforms are donned.

In Africa, Agnes works for the

Human Sciences Research Council, specializing in early childhood development research. The fellowship program she participated in at Children's Television Workshop in the U.S. was designed to build improved relations between South Africans and Americans. Her favorite work with Sesame St. research dealt with issues of 'attention' and 'comprehension for children, and she has designed a study to try to help American children and South African children understand each other better. She had the unique opportunity to study this subject from both vantage points.

As a result of our discussions about her interest in children, and the many languages she speaks (*seven* of the official *eleven* languages of South Africa), a new set of the Dole Notes is being donated by our church, in the hope that they will be useful in Pretoria's Sunday schools.

Agnes told me that she feels "changed" and enriched as a result of her experiences here and that, more than anything, she has been impressed with the sense of commitment she found in the U.S., in her co-workers and elsewhere. This approach of greater commitment, along with a spirit of cooperative effort, are attitudes she intends to take back with her. "No matter how small the job, every person's (use) is important here."

As of this writing, Agnes has already returned home to South Africa. We thank her for the interesting window she has opened for us upon her New Church life in a part of the world where the Swedenborgian faith continues to stand very strong. Best wishes, Agnes.

Mona Conner is a member of the New York Swedenborgian Church.

Please take a few moments, when you see this, to send heartfelt love and prayers and God's healing peace to all those whose lives have been devastated by the Oklahoma City bombing tragedy.

Book Review

A History of the New Church in Southern Africa 1909-1991 and a Tribute to the Late Reverend Obed S.D. Mooki

(200 pages)

by Jean Evans

There is awe, fascination and excitement that European New Church people have felt, and continue to feel, about the growth of the New Church amongst Africans in South Africa.

Our most senior surviving ministers were school-age boys when the Rev. David Mooki, then an ordained minister of the African Catholic Church, stumbled across a copy of Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion* in a second-hand bookshop in Krugersdorp, now a modern suburb of prosperous Johannesburg. And they were teenagers when in 1917, the General Conference "adopted" what was called "The New Church Native Mission in South Africa."

At the time of David Mooki's untimely death in 1927, when he was only 51, the Mission had grown to an estimated 3,300 adult and 670 junior members. Twenty-three years later, in 1951, when the Rev. Brian Kingslake attended his first Conference as chief superintendent, that membership had grown to 4,138 adult and 1,094 junior members. In 1962 when he relinquished the post and the Rev. John Booth succeeded him, there were 25,000 members, 114 ministers, 39 churches and 15 manses. Subsequently many members of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion, which had amalgamated with the New Church Mission in 1960-61 left. Even so, at the 1993 Conference of the New Church of Southern Africa, chaired by the Rev. J.S.N. Kula, president, a total membership of 20,158 was reported, associated with 378 groups.

Sometimes I think we, in Britain, America, Australia, and elsewhere, have needed South Africa as a "success" story. It has compensated for our difficulties, falling membership, apparent failure to make headway, and consequent uncertainty for the future of the New Church among our people. At least it is growing

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Book Review

(from page 83)

elsewhere and we take comfort in the sagacious statements about the Africans, and the potential for the growth of the New Church among them, found in Swedenborg's theological writings.

But what has thrilled us from a distance hasn't been accomplished without sweat and tears. You need to read *A History of the New Church in South Africa* to know of the shanties people worshipped in and the grinding poverty they lived with, to at least begin to get a sense of the humiliations and frustrations black people encountered in their own country and under a system so economically and politically stacked against them. And you need to read the book for what it tells you of the heartache of successive superintendents trying to do so much and meet so many needs, out of the pittance of the funds available to them.

"In house" as the book is, it will, I believe, also delight many people and be read widely, not only because of the interest there has been over the years in the growth and development of the now officially styled, 'New Church of Southern Africa,' but also because of the people mentioned and things recorded about them. This is very much a people's book about people.

It is also an important book for the

history it records, and we are greatly indebted to the author, Jean Evans, a South African and convert to the New Church through her high school friendship with Jenny Sutton, for gathering this together for us. But it is also important as a source of facts. One of the things about South Africa is that stories easily become legends, and half-truths are insisted upon as being facts. For instance, with regard to Obed Mooki's involvement with the African National Congress and his association with Nelson Mandela. We now know how things stood and have it clarified. Obed's stature is in no way diminished by what Mrs. Evans writes, but it is infilled in the right way.

In the draft stages there was an uneasiness voiced about the "selectiveness" of the book in the retelling of the history of the New Church of Southern Africa. There is selectiveness, though I wonder how it could have been otherwise. The history referred to has been so colorful and the personalities so many and varied. It's been incredible. There are countless unsung people who have loyally worked away in their corner of that vast country, flying the flag for the New Church, but about whom we read nothing. Without them there would have been no history of the New Church there. But this is a his-

tory avowedly written in the light of the leadership given over the years, most especially Obed's, and I cannot see that it could have come out otherwise.

As the title of it in part spells out, the book is a tribute to Obed, one of the great personalities of the organized New Church in our times. Born in 1919, he was ordained by the Rev. Edwin Fieldhouse in 1940, when he was 21 years old. He thereafter gave colossal service firstly within the church, as the right hand man of the various white chief superintendents and, secondly, in impressive ways in his community and on behalf of his people's welfare. In 1967 he himself became chief superintendent and, in 1970, when the church became independent of the General Conference, its first president. What we also remember about him was his incredible way with people, his commitment to the spread of the Heavenly Doctrines and his vision of how things could be, which excited us all.

On its own, Obed's love of the Doctrines, excellently captured in the book, makes it worth reading. If ever your spirits are down or nagging, depressing doubts come to you about the church and its future, read pages 77 to 79 to lift your spirits and for the tonic they are.

—Reviewed by Ian A. Arnold

(Ian, who is the principal of the New Church College, assisted Brian Kingslake in South Africa for a short time before becoming a student himself in the 1960s. Only a small number of books were printed initially, but a reprint is planned by the New Church College, 25 Radcliffe New Rd., Radcliffe, Manchester, M26 1LE (tel. 061-766-2521) to which inquiries should be addressed.

Reprinted in abridged form from *Lifeline*, April 1995.

The Swedenborgian Church Statistics

as of December 31, 1994

| Associations | Churches | | Ordained Ministers | | Authorized Lay Leaders | Members | | | Number of Delegates |
|---|-----------|----------|--------------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|---------------------|
| | Active | Inactive | Active | Inactive/Retired | | Active | Inactive | Total | |
| Canada | 1 | 0 | 2 | - | 1 | 179 | 47 | 226 | 24 |
| Connecticut | - | 1 | - | - | - | 8 | 9 | 17 | 3 |
| Illinois | 6 | - | 3 | - | - | 125 | 59 | 184 | 20 |
| Kansas | 2 | - | 1 | - | 2 | 93 | 18 | 111 | 13 |
| Maine | 2 | - | 2 | - | - | 289 | 6 | 295 | 31 |
| Massachusetts | 7 | - | 9 | 2 | 0 | 214 | 64 | 278 | 29 |
| Michigan | 1 | - | - | - | - | 59 | 11 | 70 | 9 |
| Middle Atlantic | 3 | - | 3 | - | - | 116 | 47 | 163 | 18 |
| New York | 1 | 0 | 1 | - | - | 22 | 33 | 55 | 7 |
| Ohio | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 83 | 5 | 88 | 10 |
| Pacific Coast | 6 | - | 10 | 0 | 2 | 300 | 11 | 311 | 33 |
| Southeast | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 42 | 4 | 46 | 6 |
| Western Canada | 9 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 141 | 10 | 151 | 17 |
| Guyana | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 25 | 15 | 40 | 6 |
| Church of the Little Grain (did not report) | | | | | | | | | |
| TOTALS | 43 | 5 | 37 | 3 | 12 | 1696 | 339 | 2035 | 226 |



MITE BOX 1995

will support the
ministry of the
Rev. Pavel Heger
in Czechoslovakia

Giving Comes Naturally on the Prairie

Eric Allison

Even "pop theology" rightly espouses the idea that the primary purpose for which we are given life is to help make this world a better place. Whatever physical or emotional joys we may have pale in comparison to the fulfillment experienced by genuine spiritual giving. That is giving, helping, and caring for others just because we feel inwardly that it is the right thing to do. Swedenborgians look upon these acts of charity as helping God to put in place the very building blocks of the Holy City. Our small denomination does make a difference. Each of us makes a difference. Sometimes the actions of a few people create a grand impact. We must remember that even a kind word can have an effect upon the whole world. Swedenborg tells us that the effect of "every action is felt to eternity." With this thought in mind I continue to be impressed by how much is done by our congregations to help make this world a better place.

Giving, caring, sharing and simple hard work seem to be as much a part of the prairie landscape as the wheat.

Pretty Prairie

In Pretty Prairie, Kansas, a large crowd gathered on February 12 to honor Eric Zacharias for forty-five years of ministry. Well done, good and faithful servant. He said that he was so impressed by the good spirit of the membership which had always been very supportive of the church and his ministry. Any repairs that have been needed church members have given time, talent, and money to get the job done. They have never borrowed from the denomination's building fund and never asked the Augmentation Fund for help.

Eric recently reported that during his long and fulfilling ministry the people never failed to rally to needs that arose, whether they be in the

church, the community, or the world. The Mooki College in South Africa and other overseas church projects have received assistance from Pretty Prairie. During the big flood of the Mississippi River in 1993, the congregation collected money especially for flood relief in St. Louis. A member of our San Diego Church needed financial help for expensive surgery so they collected a generous sum to help defray expenses. Three times every year a large collection is given to the Reno County Food Bank. For many years our congregation has joined with other local churches in providing food for those who donate blood when the blood-mobile comes to town. When it comes time for the annual sausage and pancake supper which serves over six hundred people, our church joins three other congregations in providing the spread. The proceeds go to help local families in need, a nearby nursing home and other community projects. They even help the senior class each year at the Pretty Prairie senior prom by funding some of the activities for this gala event. The church hosted a meeting of the Swedenborg School of Religion board and contributed to its Endowment Fund drive. Speaking of funding, our New Church people have joined others in creating a Community Scholarship Fund which offers financial assistance to three or four college-bound students each year.

Pretty Prairie is becoming a bedroom community for people working in Wichita who want to get away from the troubles of the big city. As the town continues this slow but steady growth, our church will play a greater role in ministering to the community it has served so faithfully. Pretty Prairie has a very active and enthusiastic adult Sunday school which members take turns leading. The number of adults and children attending Sunday school averages

twenty-five.

The churches in the heartland are about people finding a way to serve. As needs arise, they respond. Not long ago, a blizzard had blocked the roads so people had to come out on tractors to attend a funeral. Virginia McGovern made sure that the food for the meal following the service found its way to the church refrigerator even if it had to come by tractor. The people on the prairie will find a way to do what needs to be done.



Pawnee Rock

I have visited Pawnee Rock on only two occasions and what struck me each time about our church there was how clean and well-cared-for the attractive brick building looked. Its sparkling condition is certainly some indication of how devoted the people are to their church. In the church you will notice a box where non-perishable goods are collected regularly for the food bank in Great Bend. As long-standing members of the Pawnee Rock Ministerial Alliance, our congregation has been actively involved in all community activities, and this covers a lot of ground. Since 1935, local churches have presented the annual Sunrise Easter Pageant at the Pawnee Rock State Park. It must be an awesome experience to look out over the prairie when the sun rises on Easter morning. Our congregation also joins in the planning and leadership of the community services for World Day of Prayer, Good Friday, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Vespers. Several members are active in the community chorus which always sings at these events.

Our congregation also does its

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Giving on the Prairie

(Continued from page 85)

share of the important and regular duty of delivering lunches to seniors five days a week.

The huge annual yard sale in Great Bend is quite a fund raising event. Apparently, it is lots of fun as well as a source of income.

Our New Church folks try to minister to the unchurched. The Sunday school led by Vivian Bright, Anita Wilson, and Lacey Stimatz gathers in children from the community to teach them the Bible stories even though their parents don't attend any church. Between Sunday school and church the children sing songs each week to those gathering for the service. What a great idea! Word has it that Howard Bowman and Gerald Hadley do a great job with the adult Sunday school class. Two women even drive one hundred miles one way just to come to the class and attend church. The public is invited to the special Christmas Eve service which always draws a crowd. The Rev. Galen Unruh is still conducting funerals for the unchurched in Pawnee Rock. The community has greatly appreciated this service he has provided for many years.

Currently they are working on making the church accessible for the handicapped.

News Bites

Urbana, Ohio church has monthly get-togethers for anyone in the church who wants to share a meal and brainstorm. No votes are taken. Ideas and dreams from these sessions end up on the agenda of monthly board meetings. May 7 is the first organ concert in a series. Our Urbana church is one of the few churches in all of North America to have two Tracker organs. Money is being raised to repair one of the organs. When that happens, they will be able to offer a real treat, a Tracker organ duet.

Portland, Maine: Ken Turley reported that during its first year of operation, the Road Kill Program he started brought 2,500 pounds of venison to the food banks.

St. Paul, Minnesota: The Virginia St. church is taking in two new members this year. They have had fifteen new people join the church in the last five years, and almost all of them have remained active.

LaPorte, Indiana started out 1995 with a successful four-part series, "Stress Management in the 90s." In February another series, "Religion and Spirituality," did not attract as many people despite the attractive flier and ads. But, the ten people present were faithful in their attendance. The 13-week program, "Unlocking Your Spiritual Potential" is being well-attended.

Royal Oak, Michigan has had book and display tables at several of the Body, Mind, Spirit festivals. The result is a slow but steady flow of visitors to the Sunday morning service. Ed Van Balen has been putting ads in *phenomeNews* which has also been bringing visitors to the church. They plan to have a table again at the next Body, Mind, Spirit Festival on May 13.

Montgomery, Ohio: The Kemper Road church has had a successful Tuesday evening series. The public has come out to hear talks on such topics as Men's Spirituality, Human Sexuality, Swedenborg's interpretations of Dreams and Angels, Easter Issues, and Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled*.

Cleveland, Ohio: The church is averaging two weddings per month. Not bad for a church that started a wedding ministry in September without a minister. The weddings have brought some new people into the church.

Cambridge, Mass: The Harvard-Radcliffe Swedenborg Chaplaincy Spring Lecture Series offers highbrow topics to match the interest of the neighborhood. "William James on Consciousness and Freud's Reply" and other intellectually challenging topics have been well attended.

Bridgewater, Mass: The church is still under construction at this writing and they still welcome contributions. The Valentine's Day dance fundraiser was such a great success they plan to make it an annual event.

San Francisco: For some time, Lin-

da Baker, a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, has been holding musical evenings of meditation and music, twice a month. With candles lit and the fire burning, Linda plays the piano for one hour. There are no announcements and no verbal language of any kind for the entire hour, or during the succeeding period of quietude after the music ends. People pray, meditate, weep; there is no direction. Jim Lawrence reported that the evenings are very successful, that he personally attends them all and is spiritually nourished; the turnout is consistently good.

Temenos: Erni Martin spoke to a standing-room-only crowd at Temenos on Swedenborg's birthday, January 29. The subject was: "Life, Death, and the Survival of Consciousness." The turnout of 60 or more people was triggered by a lead article in the Wilmington, Delaware daily paper on January 26.

Puget Sound: The Rev. Dave Johnson writes to *The Messenger*: "As the Rev. Steve Pults concludes his first year as pastor, a Sunday school has been established, followed by a youth league which meets once a month. James Gordon is taking the league on overnight hikes along the seashore. They all take along plastic bags which they fill with litter and carry out the next day.

Since January, a women's support group meeting alternate weeks has been established, with eight in attendance at its last meeting. Under the leadership of one of our newest members, a men's group is being formed.

Having provided a membership class following the church service, to which all wishing to learn more about the church are invited, Steve, on behalf of the church, has received eight new members since January of this year.

Once a month the congregation and friends join for a pot luck supper and an evening of fellowship, one including Irish dancing. For those who wish continuing instruction in the teachings of the church, Steve provides an evening class on alternate weeks."

You Don't Hear Me!

David Johnson

For many years our church people have cherished their Swedenborgian way of Christian faith. Many have hurt deeply as they have seen their churches dwindle in numbers and eventually cease to exist. The familiar experience of worship as they knew it and some know it today is and was an integral part of their life. As a leaguer in Philadelphia 65 years ago, I recall our thoughts, our dreams, our hopes and our plans for the growth of our church. Sometimes something worked and all too often it didn't, and we sometimes lost what we had gained. But our caring, our determination and our devotion were nonetheless strong and valid.

Today there are those of us who still dream that our church may return to what it once was with grand liturgical services and familiar activities. It is hard to understand why new people aren't rushing to join what is the most reasonable understanding of the Christian faith that man has ever known.

There are others of us who are as deeply devoted but have come to believe that we must present that same message in different formats that will fit with the growth and development of knowledge and insights of our times. So some of us have ventured in our churches, in our camps, in our Sunday schools and with our children and young people to find new and effective ways. Some churches have been growing. Almost youth gatherings have expanded in numbers and effectiveness. We had large gatherings of children at our conventions until funds were not available last year. The Sunday School Association strives to enlarge and make its work more effective. This is hard work with little recognition and praise.

We have also worked to expand our outreach and find new and effective ways with projects such as the

Wayfarers Chapel, Temenos, and Stone House. But something different takes place organizationally. Each of these, if not at the start, have either been organized with a denomination-established board of managers or required to have denominational representatives on their boards. Though they may be moving toward more self-sufficiency, they have required various large sums of money to be established.

These latter areas of church work consequently have a different kind of tie with the national organization with consequent national exposure. With the Wayfarers Chapel and Temenos, board members are either elected or are appointed by the denomination president and are responsible to the General Council. The president sits on their boards, the treasurer must see their financial statements and the General Council must approve their budgets. With the Stone House, it now must have denominational representatives on its board, one of whom is vice president. Like it or not, this gives these organizations national attention, recognition and presence that other church organizations do not have. Added to this are the promotional statements that indicate *they* are the future of the church.

What I am hearing in the protest

of many individuals is the cry, "Listen! Hear us! Our work and our projects that we treasure are valid, too!" They see the areas of church work that need financial and national support. However, they see funds tied up in other projects and are saying, "You don't hear us saying we have genuine and valid convictions too. We do not hear you verbally, emotionally, rationally assuring us you are also willing to underwrite our convictions. If you do feel that way, the message isn't getting across!"

We as "General Convention" will need to listen patiently and undefensively to those who are feeling *disfranchised*. We must recognize the depth and genuineness of their hopes and dreams and plans. We are one church under one Lord, each member striving to find through his or her most devoted convictions those ways to further the way of life we cherish. To belittle or minimize or fail to listen to any genuine and sincere conviction or way of "being the church" is to deny the very foundation of our faith. In smallest form, each individual IS the church.

The Rev. David Johnson is a member and pastor emeritus of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound, and a pastoral counselor fellow of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

President Edwin Capon's Activities, 1995

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| January 20, 21 | Temenos at West Chester |
| February 11 | Investment Committee in Newton |
| February 17, 18 | Urbana Board of Trustees in Urbana |
| February 19 | Preached in Detroit |
| February 26 | Preached in Washington, D.C. |
| March 23-25 | PMSU at West Chester |
| March 26-28 | Council of Ministers Executive Committee |
| April 2-4 | CAM in Newton |
| April 12-16 | Two services in St. Paul |
| April 23 | Retirement Committee in Newton |
| April 25, 26 | General Council Executive Committee in San Francisco |
| April 27-29 | Wayfarers Chapel Board in Palos Verdes |
| May 5, 6 | SSR Board at West Chester |
| May 7 | Massachusetts Association meeting |
| May 13 | Connecticut Association meeting |
| June 2, 3 | Urbana Board in Urbana |
| June 4 | Preach in Cleveland |

We Thank You

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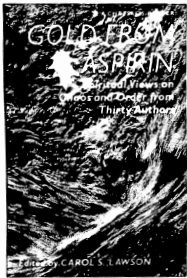
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Gold From Aspirin

Each time we work through a chaos, we gain a step on our spiritual paths



Steve Koke

Lawson, Carol S., ed. *Gold from Aspirin: Spiritual Views on Chaos and Order from Thirty Authors*.
Chrysalis Reader:1 (1995).

The Swedenborg Foundation.
Call 800/855-3222 to order.

This is a brave book. The central question about chaos is, Why should things go bad just when we seem to have our lives and work in order? The question ranges in form from irritation at some inconvenience to the ultimate crisis: if God seems to be nowhere, how do we avoid depression—and possibly suicide?

That central question is like a mountain to be climbed, and this book engages us in fascinating attempts to scale it. Some attempts get part way to the top but delight in pieces of the puzzle. Others seem to catch sight of the peak only a few yards away or to actually stand there with the climb basically accounted for. There are some who find the details of the climb or the terrain absorbing in themselves and in the process do not bring us quite to the peak, while others depict the view from the top—without telling us how to get there. Some dwell on the drama of the climb (as someone once said, "I don't have any answers, but I certainly admire the problem").

However, everyone helps—starting with Frank Leonard's intimate account of what it is like to weather a fierce winter blizzard in Maine. Leonard avoids the deeper, more soul

shaking inner crisis, painting only a picture of chaos in the natural realm. But it seems right to start a healing process with something as basic as this. The disruptive elements are there, along with a fundamental sense that chaos tests the purity of His work. It is a good frontispiece, a common model of what may also appear within at any time. Naturally, the next task is to move this model oward the soul itself where things become much more dangerous.

But first we encounter articles by scientists, physicists dealing with chaos theory, and experts in business and industry, all filling out the physical picture. Things then get more complex and inward, and some writers even encounter the parapsychological—the invasion of physical space by spiritual entities—a type of chaos that we only dimly understand and may not admit is real. There is chaos in old age, as one writer finds that we need to "own" our advancing years and to stop identifying with ourselves as we were in our forties ("You see, we are bereft of elders in our society"). And so on, in a very rich mix of very personal stories.

Is there a way to tame or to contend with chaos . . . Answers vary unexpectedly, and some even threaten to upset the question. Order may sometimes be its own kind of puzzle. One writer comments, "I warrant that we could start at a perfect depiction of the order of all things and not recognize it (page 149). Our own concepts of an orderly life may make inevitable the accumulation of "social artifice" and a boring sameness. That often brings on a cleansing chaos. Which of the two states is the problem?

Then there is the problem of magic. Magic or enchantment is a kind of chaos, for it upsets normal expectations, but in deeply moving ways. A seven-year-old girl explores her grandparents' farm and finds, in

a secluded courtyard deep behind the house, a beautiful golden carriage hitched to two prancing white horses. She goes on long trips to places she has heard or read about, but she decides not to ask her grandparents about the horses and the golden carriage.

We may need more often to find chaos interesting and take its disturbing aspects less catastrophically. Cultivate the ability to stand aside a little and reserve your panic. When chaos hits hard, the best immediate thing to do may be to stop and wait for a higher order to gently speak to you. Take time.

The essays are grouped into natural, spiritual, and celestial, and in each essay suggestive new ideas and words from Swedenborg fall into place. The book is a good hunting ground.

Steve Koke is a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, an editor for J. Appleseed & Co., and a copy editor for Blue Dolphin Press. He lives in Rough and Ready, California.

Important Church Calendar Dates

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| July 2-9 | 1995 Convention— San Francisco |
| July 2-5 (3 PM) | Council of Ministers— San Francisco State U. |
| July 9-10 | COM ExCom. San Francisco |
| August 19-22 | Cabinet— Fryeburg, Maine |

William Lutz in *Esquire* says that the terms "senior citizen," "sunset years," and "the autumn of our lives" are being replaced by "chronologically gifted." Older people no longer live in old folks' homes: "These days they live in a senior-congregate-living community for the chronologically-gifted."

A Centennial Tribute to San Francisco's Swedenborgian Church

The New Church Comes West

In 1850, the first Swedenborgian clergyman arrived in San Francisco. John Doughty, an energetic attorney devoted to Swedenborg's "heavenly doctrines," rode by horseback from New York. Along the way, he was captured by Plains Indians and narrowly avoided an unpleasant fate by escaping at night and riding a pony bareback to safety. He founded a Swedenborgian congregation in 1852, which built two separate churches on different blocks of O'Farrell Street (neither remaining) over the course of thirty years. That congregation merged with the Lyon Street congregation in 1932.

The present gem at Lyon and Washington begins its story with a remarkable young artist-theologian in Boston named Joseph Worcester, who took a trip west to improve his health in 1865. While on this extended trip, he met John Muir in Yosemite, a friendship that would last for decades; together they shared a rare appreciation of the truths within nature. As young Worcester was the son and brother of Harvard-trained Swedenborgian ministers, a local group of citizens encouraged him to return to Boston for theological education and then come back as their minister. In 1867, Worcester returned, and a second Swedenborgian Church in San Francisco was incorporated. For twenty-five years, they met faithfully in Druid's Hall on Sutter Street. The prominent San Francisco artist, Bruce Porter, a member of the congregation and the son-in-law of William James, contributed the first sketch of exterior design, taken from a small chapel in northern Italy.

Rather than a grand entrance from the street, the sacred precinct offers instead a humble portico that beckons the weary pilgrim in from the dusty streets of life. Turning inward, a walled-in garden is the first indication of the oasis of spiritual refreshment. A person proceeds straight into a full view of a garden that features a small sunken pool and trees from all over the world (Japanese maple, a majestic cedar from Lebanon, an olive tree from Palestine curving over the wall in the back corner, a yew from Ireland, as well as two splendid redwoods, among others).

Worcester wanted to honor the Spanish Mission heritage, and so wrought-iron grillwork is used in arched windows, Spanish knee-tiles grace the roof, and a cross from the Mission San Miguel stands in the high-walled garden. The exterior of the chapel is made from oven-fired bricks. Ever the perfectionist, Worcester did the tuck-pointing himself after failing to get the bricklayers to understand his concept. Within the bell tower is a column of Italian Carrara marble, and underneath the tower is a specially constructed window of Medieval glass taken from Westminster Abbey in London after repairs.

Inside, the church conveys at once a sense of the holy, as well as the nurturing comfort of a simple home. A huge fireplace warms the modest dimensions of the nave which is almost as wide as it is deep. There is no paint or gilt, just the comforting wood tones of nature. The chapel dispenses with the strictness of pews and offers the seeker a sturdy rush-seated chair instead. Arching overhead are structural beams of madrone with the bark left on, conveying the sacred peace of a forest. Four murals by William Keith line the north wall; they depict the four seasons of Northern California and so offer to worshipers the unending cycle of life. The stained glass, by Porter, replicates a garden scene. As the dove drinks sustenance from the water bowl, so is the worshiping congregation to drink spiritual sustenance from the Word of God.

Once the church was completed, along with the parsonage next door at 2121 Lyon St. (not open to the public), the artist William Keith hired Willis Polk to design the house adjacent to the chapel to ensure his desire that a fitting structure bordered the western edge of the grounds. He willed the house to Mr. Worcester personally, who in turn deeded it to the congregation. The church rented out this house until 1947, when, due to growth of the congregation, the house was finally used for parish activities. Today it is known as the Parish House, and is used for receptions, offices and many of the programs of the church for adults and children.

Decades of Growth and Prosperity

The Rev. Joseph Worcester died in 1913 after serving his congregation for 46 years. In addition to his remarkable legacy at the corner of Lyon and Washington, he also left behind a thriving ministry to orphaned boys and to former convicts. As a bachelor who never married, the entire sum of his considerable creative

energy had gone into his ministry. Indeed, he proved difficult to replace. From 1913–1929, the parish struggled through a succession of ministers, characterized chiefly by the brevity of their stay. The congregation had a difficult time accepting any others, so completely devoted were they to Worcester's rare ability and style. However, in 1929 a young and energetic pastor arrived with his equally energetic wife: the Rev. Othmar and Mrs. Margit Tobisch. Finally, another pastorate was to begin that would carry the church beyond the long shadow of Worcester. Only one person was present when Mr. Tobisch's first service began, and by the end of the service a full half dozen had shown up. The Tobisches knew that their work was cut out for them.



For the next 41 years, Tobisch steered the congregational life through the Depression and war years, the prosperous fifties and tumultuous sixties. The first highlight of this long tenure was the merging in 1932 of the three Bay Area Swedenborgian parishes (two in the city and one in Berkeley) into one Society. The O'Farrell St. church sold its wonderful neo-Gothic building and combined its members into the life of the present Lyon St. church, while the Berkeley church had its own building and parish life. Mr. Tobisch served as pastor on both sides of the bay. A second highlight was the extension built onto the Parish House in 1959–60, with what is now called the Garden Room, the largest and most heavily utilized room in the Parish House. Occurring at the height of the modernist period, the room features clean lines and large plate-glass windows looking out onto the main garden. The post-war years were characterized by considerable strengthening and growth, as the ministry of the Tobisches reached full stride. Though already somewhat popular for weddings, within a few years this ministry tripled and suddenly over 200 couples a year were celebrating their vows in the increasingly famous church.

During the fifties, the Berkeley parish took advantage of opportunities presented by rapid suburban sprawl. They brought in their own full-time minister and built a new church in El Cerrito. The two parishes remained yoked, however, until 1991, when, after nearly six decades of functioning under one governing structure, the Society voted to split into two separate parishes as a more efficient way to conduct the two ministries separated by many miles and different personnel.

Mr. Tobisch is remembered especially for his leadership role in planning and coordinating the first and only worldwide convention ever held for Swedenborgians from all branches of the church. It was convened in London in 1970. Two weeks after its conclusion, while still in Europe, Mr. Tobisch suddenly passed away, concluding the second 40-plus years pastorate in the life of the congregation.

The Church in the Modern Era

The church was ably guided the entire decade of the seventies under the leadership of the Rev. Erwin Reddekopp, who with his wife, Lisa, helped the busy church maintain a steady course. At his retirement in 1979, the Rev. Edwin Capon and his wife, Esther, arrived. Mr. Capon had served as the president of the Swedenborgian seminary in Boston for over twenty years and brought a scholarly approach to the venerable church. The eighties under his guidance brought another decade of continuing health in a bustling parish. When Mr. Capon retired in 1990, the church had since 1986 utilized the services of associate pastors to meet the challenges of growth. So, in 1990 the congregation chose to continue with two ministers, and the Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers and the Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence were called as co-ministers.

The first years of the nineties have been productive with a growth in the congregation and in the number of programs. A new director of music, Garrett Collins, was brought onto the staff in 1993, completing the staff changeover. His first major accomplishment, in addition to a growth in the choir, has been to lead the campaign for a new state-of-the-art digital pipe organ, installed in time for the centennial year of the church. It is a joyful occurrence that as the church reaches its one-hundredth marker, more people are enjoying its special gifts than ever before.

On March 19, 1995, the congregation celebrated a special worship service commemorating 100 years at 2107 Lyon Street. It is breathtaking to survey the flow of life that has passed through the ministries conducted upon the consecrated ground at the now-famous church. Countless thousands have turned to its quietly evocative beauty and the spiritual vision that called it into being. More than 10,000 spiritual services of one kind or another have been held within its confines, and the word seems to spread ever-wider. Today, we look forward to a full and promising future—to a new century of ministry to all who find themselves drawn in from the busy street of their living to contemplate a universal revelation of God.

Reprinted in abridged form from the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church newsletter, March 1995.

MINI-COURSE ADDITION

WHEN AIDS/HIV DISEASE AFFECTS THE LIVES OF CHILDREN

What can religious educators do when the subject of AIDS enters the classroom?
How do we respond to children's questions about AIDS?
How can we support those who either have AIDS or have friends or family members with AIDS/HIV disease?

In this workshop we will:

- Review basic facts on HIV disease
- Discuss a variety of ways to respond to the subject of AIDS in Sunday school
- Hear about the fears, hopes and challenges facing families affected by HIV

FACILITATOR: Rev. Susan Turley-Moore, Founding Executive Director of Living Waters HIV Ministry; a ministry providing emotional and spiritual support to individuals, families and care-givers whose lives have been affected by AIDS.

Note: The above workshop will be part of the Revs. Eric Hoffman and Ron Brugler's minicourse, "Working with the Whole People of God in the Swedenborgian Church."

Opinion

(Cont. from page 82)

it. Carol states, "The work I do for the Swedenborg Foundation requires a different—a very broad—focus. We want to foster an affirmative, adventurous, and increasingly broad engagement with the theological thought of . . . Swedenborg, especially among persons desiring to apply spiritual principles to life." I couldn't come up with a better description of what we are doing at my church in New York, and I believe all Swedenborgians share this vision. On this subject, I note that Jane Hauserman Siebert has a valuable perspective, in her letter to the editor in April, although I do think regeneration happens, even when we disagree, from "back-and-forth" dialogues in *The Messenger*.

Understanding the Bible

I was also deeply affected by a letter Susanna Lawson, Carol's daughter, wrote in December's issue regarding "the lack of learning about the Bible" she felt she experienced growing up as a Swedenborgian.

Susanna, I was raised Presbyterian, and while I still value the foundation it gave me, it was not until I joined the Swedenborgian church as an adult that I have been getting the answers to my questions about the Bible. Do you know why?

What surprises me about your letter is that you seem to be unaware that twelve volumes of Swedenborg's writing, *Arcana Coelestia*, or *Heavenly Secrets*, interpret the inner meaning of the Bible. I have not found any interpretation of the Bible that even approaches the thoroughness, beauty, and depth contained in these volumes. When you suggest that Swedenborgians are "too proud to use the ideas of other denominations," and that we "feel (we) must create the materials ourselves," there is no need to do either, except perhaps on the level of plain, modern English translations of Swedenborg's writings, which we are continually working on.

It is nearly as upsetting that Jim Lawrence, in his reply to you, also

failed to mention these twelve volumes. Perhaps he was giving you a *quid pro quo* answer about our adult education curricula, but I believe everything we have and use, such as the Dole Notes, derives its information from Swedenborg's interpretation of the Bible's inner level of meaning.

It's great that you are getting something meaningful out of the Cokesbury Press publications and the Methodist Church. But what you have been searching for may also, ironically, have been sitting in your own backyard.

If you feel up to a "serious endeavor" these days—and that is often 50% of it—why don't you check out Volume 1 of *Heavenly Secrets*, and read what Swedenborg says about the creation story in Genesis? For a "basic knowledge of Swedenborg's concepts" try *The Heavenly City, A Spiritual Guidebook*, a new translation by Lee Woofenden that is clear, easily read, and only about 100 pages long. I am wishing you the best in your efforts to study and understand the Bible.

Mona Conner
Brooklyn, New York

Response

To the Editor:

This is a response to Mona Conner's letter in which she differs with my having made a distinction between the program of the Swedenborg Foundation in following its ecumenical mission statement and the program of the Swedenborgian Church in following a similar but entirely Christian mission. The difference is in the purpose of each institution and its intended audience. The two institutions exist for different purposes, and each supplements the other. The Foundation is a publisher and is looking for readers of any faith. Our denomination is a ministry, looking for people who want Christian enlightenment and to be members of a religious community.

According to the General Convention's incorporation statement, it exists for the "specific and primary religious purpose [which] is to aid

the teachings of Christianity as taught by Emanuel Swedenborg." The constitution (Section 2), states that the church exists

"to help people be open to the Lord's presence and leading, especially by fostering personal and ordained ministries which facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, and which have in common a working for the Lord in bringing in the New Age, the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem.

The light in which we seek to walk shines from the Lord Jesus Christ in His second coming, available to us through the divine presence in our hearts and minds, and through revelation in the Holy Scripture and in the life and teaching of the Lord's servant, Emanuel Swedenborg."

The Foundation approaches potential readers with an inclusive message: "In your search for truth you should know about Emanuel Swedenborg. He is an important resource." Foundation readers include scholars, New-Church people, other Christians (many of whom don't want to leave their own churches), and people who are interested in God but outside a church setting. Potential readers may be Muslim, Buddhist, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Hindu, or Protestant, etc., or not connected to any faith. In our Church ministries, however, we express explicitly the views of our denomination as an organization related to prospering the Second Coming.

All of us appreciate Swedenborgian churches that desire diversity, such as the New York church; but most of the diversity available will be Christian and will be to serve people in search of a Christian community. The Foundation's outreach publishing program aims to make Swedenborg relevant both to non-Christians and not-yet Christians in their search for truth. The Foundation's approach in seeking readers and book buyers is thus more general and broad than the church's. Hopefully, the Foundation's publishing activities lay good groundwork for our Church's ministry.

Carol S. Lawson
Dillwyn, Virginia

Moving Toward the Light

(Continued from page 82)

widespread devastation and no work. When the invasion of carpetbaggers completed the ruin, the young men became part of the westward migration, prospecting, laying pipeline, and working in mines. They parted for a while, then reunited again in Nevada. In Yuma, Arizona, there was much excitement about the Pacific Railroad line which was to terminate in San Diego. Hoping to find work there, the men in crisscrossing the territory met one of the three settlers living here, Mr. Horrall, who was on his way to San Diego to sell a wagonload of bacon. His enthusiasm about the area was contagious, and when Drue Bailey made a rest stop here he was so taken with the lush beauty and tranquility of the place that he decided to homestead and the rest, as they say, is history. The Bailey and Julian brothers staked their land, and gold was discovered. They located many rich mines, and Drue, who decided there should be a business center, named the new town after his cousin Mike Julian, because he thought it sounded better than Bailey. Drue Bailey was known throughout his life for his generosity, kindness, and commitment to helping the community, including donations of land and money for churches to be built.

In 1870, the mining camp of Julian had a population of over a thousand people. The population today is only a few hundred over that, but Julian has been discovered, and the average number of cars passing through town daily nearly equals the population count. Of the many mines that once dotted the area, the Eagle and High Peak remain in business, still bringing up a little gold and conducting daily tours. Until fairly recently, most people here didn't bother to lock their doors when they went out; many still do not.

It remains a place that can make your heart quicken on any given day with the joy of being alive.

—Patte LeVan

(More photos on p. 95)

Sweating It Out at Temenos



“How are you doing, Kit?”
“I’m OK,” I reassured
the voice in the dark.

But inside, I was burning up. Someone dolloped another dipper of water on the hot stones located in a small pit at the center of the hut. Beads of sweat were forming little rivulets and dripping from my body now, and it was becoming difficult to breathe. One more dipper, and I’m out of here, I thought. I recalled the leader telling me before entering the sweat lodge that this experience is not designed as a test of endurance but as a time for centering, for self-analysis, for healing. Another voice asked me what I wanted. Why was I here?

Why am I here? I started wondering about Temenos. What exactly had I expected when I came here? Being in my third year at the Swedenborg School of Religion, I had chosen to work at Temenos that spring to fulfill part of my field education requirements. Of course, I knew in advance that this Swedenborgian center would be very different from my field work at the St. Louis church, a traditional parish site. But I wasn’t expecting a sweat lodge! And it was more than this single experience. Participating in workshops, sitting in on the Temenos Executive Board and campaign planning meetings, conducting church services at the Farmhouse Chapel and at the Wilmington church, explaining to visitors what a Swedenborgian is—all of this and more reaffirmed my growing awareness of the holistic reality of Swedenborg’s theology. There is no question that my work at Temenos had proven to be a watershed experience. And at this particular moment, the water was literally pouring off me.

My work at Temenos clarified for me how this Swedenborgian retreat and conference center is very much a part of the “universal church” that I believe in. When I welcomed Swe-

denborgians and non-Swedenborgians to personal growth workshops, I was not only a facilitator, helping and serving the needs of visitors, but was also a resource person who could explain to the curious something about the organization that supported Temenos. I would tell them about the Swedenborgian Church, that Swedenborgians possess a real strength in knowing that there is goodness in all religions. We have a real Christology in our belief that Jesus Christ is an essential part of the cosmological equation. We are unique in that we have a strong, open-minded sensitivity to mysticism and spiritual growth.

An important part of my Temenos experience was my working relationship with Erni and Perry Martin. As director, Erni brings to Temenos a legacy of experience working on a denominational level. As program director, Perry brings to Temenos years of practical experience as a counselor and workshop leader. Another important part of my Temenos experience was working with Howard and Betsy Friend, Temenos staff members who live at the Gatehouse. I remember Howard asking me when I first arrived, “So, Kit, what’s the most important aspect of Swedenborgianism that impacting you now?” How could I not grow under such circumstances?

Someone splashed another dipper of water on the rocks. I moved to the entrance and stepped out into the exhilarating night air. I drank great drafts of the cool air, looked at the vast canopy of starlight, and knew why I was here at Temenos. I was learning at an accelerated pace in this wonderfully new setting that there are many ways to facilitate a person’s spiritual growth. And I knew with great certainty that I was getting in touch with and enjoying the discovery of my entire spiritual self.

Kit Billings

The Dancer — the Vagabond — and Me

There is a schoolyard
up here in the mountains
at what once was a one room school
out back of which there are many oaks
one of which is "my tree."

My tree is a dancer
her limbs are like arms
raised high in the dance
she hears a music
somehow beyond my ears
yet I can feel the exuberance
I can sense a joy in her solidity
and feel her dance of life
even when the wind is still
and her leaves are silent.

She has a mate
strong and somewhat larger than reaches forcefully for the sky
in between there is a child
flamboyantly dishevelled
happily nestled amidst their trunks
happily watched over by them from above.

I was an only child
my mother was a dancer
and like my tree
she appeared to be stuck
with her lot in life
to her place and time
but her essence danced
all about the universe
sprinkling it with her love
like fresh spring rain.

My father was a vagabond
who thought it worthwhile
to settle into a family life
that I might be born
that we might spend time together
the dancer
the vagabond
and me.

It wasn't always easy
it wasn't always fun
for we were all just learning
how to go about loving each other
and there was much that we didn't know
we had come here to teach each other
and much we just couldn't seem to learn
no matter how hard we tried.

There wasn't always money
sometimes even for food
but I never knew

for they always made sure I was cared for
before caring for themselves
and when I got older
it was always clear
that whatever they had
was also mine
they gave me everything
they knew how to give
and when they went on
they left me everything they could.

My parents didn't know how to say "I love you"
they were simple people of few words
I would notice that they did
through their concern for me
when I was home from school pretending to be ill
so I pretended all the more
and saw their joy and great relief
at my sudden afternoon recoveries
I felt love for them
especially when I noticed how much they cared
yet though I was very good with words
I never said "I love you."

Then suddenly they were gone
long before I would have expected it
long after I thought I had stopped caring
and it was over, done.

It took years to notice how much I cared
how much seemed left undone
and through those years my distance grew
and what had been my childhood saddened within me
I forgot the whole of it
remembered just the parts
that hadn't worked for me
and felt dismally alone.

Then I met my tree
and she taught me
that my mother was a dancer
that my father was a vagabond
and that I have always been that little one
flamboyantly dishevelled while happily amidst them
she taught me that all the little ones
are all our children
that all our roots are intertwined
that deaths are not endings
that I am still the child
my father still the vagabond
my mother still the dancer.

So we are together again
the dancer
the vagabond
and me.

—Michael MekaDeva

Michael MekaDeva is a photo-journalist, poet and workshop leader whose works have been published in several newspapers and regional magazines. He is a resident of Julian, California.

Pacific Coast Retreat

The Pacific Coast Association once again held its annual Southern California Retreat March 10-12 at the Center for Spiritual Development in Orange, California, with Dr. Perry Martin from Temenos facilitating.

Susan Ziemer, a marriage/family counselor, former nurse and non-Swedenborgian friend of Los Angeles church president Manon Washburn, has been attending the retreats for three years. Susan writes of this year's experience:

"There are about three or four 'must' retreats that I automatically mark into each year's calendar, and one is the PCA retreat in Orange ... where I know I will be able to refuel my soul and my spirit ... When I come to this retreat, I expect to be heard; I expect to take more risks and be more needy than I would allow myself to be at any other time ... when she [Perry] opens wounds, as she will, she must know the proper healing potion for each one of us who asks for that. I suspect she seeks much guidance from her Higher Power before she begins her humbling and exciting work ... It is so wonderful to see a master work ... The grounds are an orchestration of flowers, bushes, trees, archways, delightful patios with swings, blossoms everywhere ... the spirit of thoughtful hospitality greets us in many unsuspected places ..."

There were 12 people attending the retreat this year, (11 women and 1 man), several for the first time. The word is spreading that this is one not to miss! Next year's dates are March 15-17, same place.

Passages

Baptisms

Henschel—Ashley Nicole Henschel, daughter of Mark and Kara (Kiesman) Henschel, was baptized into the Christian faith April 2, 1995, at the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

Kurka, Piermattei—Robert Kurka and Jill Piermattei were baptized into the Christian faith April 9, 1995, at the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound in Washington, the Rev. Steve Pults officiating.

Confirmations

De Boer—Linda and David De Boer were received into membership April 16, 1995, in the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Rev. Edwin G. Capon officiating.

Maroney, O'Brien, Sidell, Ward—Dorothy Maroney, Kate O'Brien, Ron Sidell, and David and Tina Ward were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church and received into membership April 9, 1995, at the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound in Washington, the Rev. Steve Pults officiating.

Schnurr—Wendy Schnurr was welcomed into membership April 21, 1995, at the San Diego Swedenborgian Church, with president and lay leader Eldon Smith officiating.

Marriage

Boell and Wilson—Rianne Boell and Scott Elliot Wilson, members of the El Cerrito Swedenborgian Church, California, were united in marriage April 16, 1995, at the El Cerrito church, the Rev. Dr. Horand Gutfeldt officiating. Rianne is the daughter of the Rev. Dr. Horand and Elizabeth Gutfeldt.

Deaths

Allen—Jacqueline M. Allen, age 67, a resident of Boston and lifelong member of the Fryeburg New Church, entered the spiritual world April 16, 1995, in Bridgton, Maine. A graveside service was conducted April 20, 1995, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

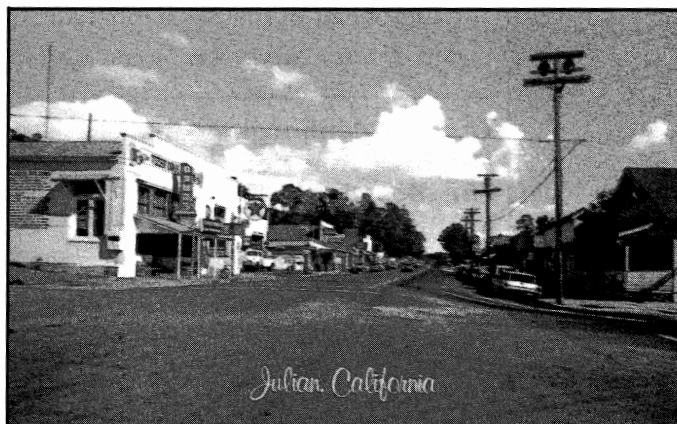
Reddekopp—Norman Issac Reddekopp, age 70, entered the spiritual world April 13, 1995. Norm was the youngest and only remaining sibling of Erwin Reddekopp. He is survived by his wife, Esther.

Church Family News

The Rev. Kathleen Easton-Gilhooly, ministering to the two Swedenborgian churches in Mauritius since September, sends thanks to those who have sent cards and letters; she is slowly catching up on her correspondence. She writes that she has a "strange" Pugeot wagon, and driving on the island is a most nervewracking experience, but on Christmas she was introduced to snorkeling, which she finds to be a much more relaxing sport! She is enjoying being with a variety of people, and tasting the different foods, and feasting on the beauty. "The sense of color here is quite, quite beautiful. The clothes worn by Hindu and Muslim women are lovely ... I'm doing well with the (French) language and my ear is becoming accustomed to hearing it. One of the women in the church is helping me. She speaks excellent English and is very good at translating." Kathleen says a more detailed article, to be written by someone on the church committee, is forthcoming. Good to hear that she is alive and well and as enthusiastic as ever about new experiences.



An exceptional example of Victorian architecture, the Julian Library was built in 1888 as the Witch Creek School, operating as one of the last one-room school houses in the area until 1954. It was moved from Witch Creek to Julian in 1971. The name Witch Creek is from an Indian legend about an Indian who drank from a creek and then fell over dead. The creek was called haguochay, or bewitched water, by the Indians.



Julian as it was 20 years ago. Main Street has changed little in the past 100 years except for additions of shops, building facades and signs approved by the Julian Historical Society.

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.

Egypt Revisited Via Vienna

The Rev. Dr. Horand Gutfeldt reports that he traveled to Vienna for ten days in April, where he had been invited, all expenses paid, to conduct a resurrection service for an old friend in the city where he had been minister of a New Church society for ten years. He welcomed the opportunity to renew old friendships and strengthen the bonds to our church. While there he also contacted the Institute of Egyptology at the university where he had studied for his doctorate.

He writes, "Although scholars there had never heard of [Swedenborg], they discovered several levels of internal meaning in a number of ancient Egyptian writings, especially in the mysterious ancient texts that are inscribed on the insides of the dark chambers in many pyramids, acknowledged to be the oldest religious texts of mankind. It had amazed me that some of their theories, even using the concept of correspondence, came very close to Swedenborg's explanations of internal levels of meaning in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. They also found many convincing traces of a very ancient belief in One High God, or

Monotheism, a fact which is generally ignored or denied by most scholars of antiquity today. It is almost entirely unknown here that most deities of the later-developed Egyptian Pantheon still carry names of qualities or aspects of One nameless Great or Highest God. Certainly, all later testimonies in antiquity speak about many gods, yet there are many proofs that in the beginning there was only one, whose different qualities later became somewhat independent figures. These persuasive indications are consistently ignored because they do not fit into certain prevailing theories of historical development, yet Swedenborg had called attention long ago to this belief of ancient times.

I have now returned with grateful memories of this visit and many notes and books that call for further new presentations of documented items of age-old wisdom from Egypt. Some of this had once impressed the great Greek philosopher Plato who wrote two and a half thousand years ago in the Phaedon dialogue, that in spite of his pride in Greek culture, the vision of Egyptian priests dwarfed all the insights of the Greeks."

Essay Contest Winners Announced

The first Swedenborg Scientific Association Essay Contest has just concluded. The committee of SSA board members and specialist readers have unanimously awarded the graduate prize to Mr. Allen Bedford of Bryn Athyn, with his entry: "A Molecular Marriage: A Metaphorical Look at DNA Structure and its Function in Protein Synthesis"; and the undergraduate prize to Mr. Alan Lewin of Manchester, England, for his entry: "Chaotic Regeneration."

We congratulate the winners, and congratulate and thank all other entrants. We encourage your readers to consider entering the next contest, to be announced later this year.

On behalf of the Swedenborg Scientific Association,

Rev. Erik E. Sandstrom, Chair of Essay Committee

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