
THE MESSENGER

Monthly Publication, Swedenborgian Church of North America

October 1995

Paddling the Spiritual Waters

Eric Allison

We have the expression "getting away from it all." I'm not sure exactly what the "it" is, but whatever "it" is, I was away from "it" last summer when my wife Cathy Gregory and I repeated our annual ritual of a canoe trip. Traveling by canoe for a week or so through the north woods has always been magical for me. Seeing an elf scurrying through the ancient forest would not surprise me, for the land itself exudes mystery and enchantment.

Perhaps the reason I enjoy traveling so much is that every change of scene can provide fertile ground for learning and relearning fundamental spiritual lessons. Life is indeed like a journey.

Our eleven-day paddle was above the 50th parallel in a new wilderness area called Wabakimi. About two hundred miles north of Thunder Bay it is literally at the end of one of the most northern roads in Ontario.

After being flown to an outfitter's isolated cabin, we began our adventure in what was a new world for most of us. I had been on the Canadian Shield before but not this far north. The Canadian Shield is a solid mass of granite which stretches for over two thousand miles. It is as if the many lakes and rivers left by the glacier were poured from a pit-

cher of pure water that filled every groove and crevice. One digs into the forest floor only a few inches or a few feet at most before hitting solid rock. The lakes we would enjoy during our two hundred miles of paddling would be only a few of the over one hundred fifty thousand in

was built upon this spot? If so, how long had they been there? A thousand years, or two, or even more?

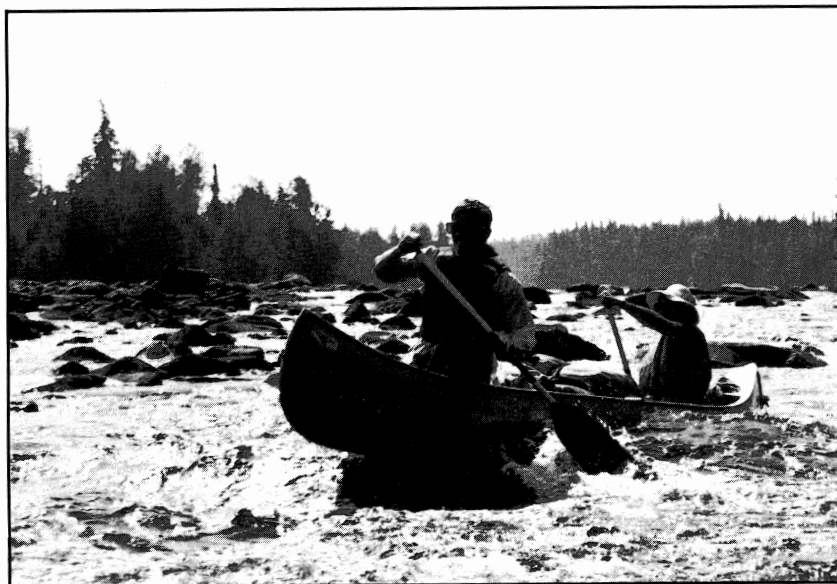
Eight of the ten people on our trip were over forty years old and almost everyone had white-water experience. An ambitious schedule required some long days of paddling

which, like life, at times took us upstream against the wind. The portages were occasionally over half a mile long and I learned again that it really isn't all that much fun to carry a canoe on my shoulders for a few hundred meters let alone a half mile. Most of our time was spent fulfilling the duties required to keep us on the move. Setting up camp, cooking, eating, cleaning up, and paddling all day long was the daily routine. The sleep to rest sore and tired muscles

came easily. It brought home to me how much time our ancestors spent doing the tasks required to stay alive. There wasn't much time for spiritual endeavors or reflection.

I found myself thinking of the Hindu belief that a person is born wealthy so that he or she has more time for enlightened spiritual pursuits while the less enlightened are occupied as their servants. While I was chopping wood and carrying water I thought of this, and the phrase "no

(continued on page 119)



Turbulence is exciting if you know how to handle it.

Ontario alone. The forest floor was a lush carpet of varying shades of soft green and gray mosses. I felt I was seeing the earth as it was created, not as we have made it. No soil was tilled, no trees were cut, no minerals were mined. The nearby native Cree tribe lived in the same region in which they have lived for at least two thousand years. I wondered aloud one evening, while standing on a rocky point in the midst of our campsite, how long it had been a campsite? Were any of the rocks in the circle there when the first fire

Moving Toward the Light

Week Without Violence

A recent article in the *Parade* magazine section of the Sunday newspaper announced the YWCA's launching of a national Week Without Violence campaign, joined by schools, churches and other groups. The campaign is in response to the epidemic of violence that has become the regular media fare offered to all of us, and is, for many more than we might suspect, an experience closer to home than newspaper headlines or TV. The statistics are so oft-repeated as to benumb us: Yearly, over 2.7 million cases of suspected child abuse; 2.5 million women victims of violent crime; 40 out of every 1000 men over age 12 victims of violent crime (85% of those crimes committed by men); 12% of all violent crime now committed on school property.

The designated Week Without Violence is October 15-21. The YWCA's goal is to inspire alternatives to violence, and for every American to live one week without inflicting, observing, or experiencing violence. There is an advisory council, and there are major sponsors such as Time Warner, Ben & Jerry's, Coca-Cola, to mention only a few. NBC and CBS networks are running 30-second PSAs with Hilary Clinton.

The first day, Sunday, October 15, is a day of remembrance—mourning loved ones, friends, co-workers and neighbors lost to violence. (In 1993 alone, 24,526 people were murdered in the U.S.). Day two is devoted to activities to better protect our children. Day three suggests ways to make our schools safe. Day four, confronting violence against women. Day five, facing violence among men. Day six, eliminating racism and hate crime. Day seven, replacing violence with sports and fitness. Specific activities are suggested for each day, which space doesn't permit detailing here. You may write or call YWCA U.S.A., 726 Broadway, Dept. WWV, New York, N.Y. 10003-9595. Phone 212-691-6262. The special team working on the campaign will FAX or send you material.

This is a laudable effort on their part; surely violence is an aspect of our lives that must be targeted for concentrated awareness and right action, or we will indeed perish from the earth. Think what stunning transformations could be effected if everyone who heard about this moratorium took it to heart. What a tall order, isn't it, to live one week without *inflicting*, *observing*, or *experiencing* violence? Violence is on so many levels and in so many areas of our lives. It penetrates our culture so deeply that the more we contemplate it, the more difficult it becomes to imagine what one week without any violence at all would be like, even for those of us who like to think of ourselves as reasonably non-violent!

In addition to the actions suggested for participating in this campaign, we would also watch no news, unless the networks decided to run only inspirational or encouraging news. We would not hear or repeat gossip, and we would avert our eyes when we walked past the scandal magazines at the checkout stand that are screaming the latest on who did what to whom. And what about violence to the planet? What would it be like if we stopped polluting for a week?

And the violence we do to ourselves (and our loved ones) when we continue the thoughts and acts that constitute workaholicism? When we try to control others? When we put substances in our bodies that we know are toxic? A week without overtime, alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine. Think of that.

And what about the very seeds of violence, our violent thoughts? The process of violence begins with angry thoughts, often flamed by the idea that we are victims in some way, and that the violence we commit is justified. Ironically, where our violent thoughts are concerned, we do need to *observe* them while we're *experiencing* them in order to make a conscious choice whether or not to inflict them—on ourselves, and on others who pick up our energy, whether or not it's overtly expressed.

Is a week without violence impossible? Well, maybe, but we have to begin somewhere!

—Patte LeVan

The Messenger

Publisher: The Communications Support Unit

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

October 1995

Volume 216, No. 8

Whole Number 5203

Typesetting & Layout

Linda Mahler

Town & Country Press

Plymouth, IN

Patte LeVan, Editor

Editorial Address:

The Messenger

P.O. Box 985

Julian, CA 92036

(619) 765-2915, Phone FAX (619) 765-0218

Business & Subscription Address:

Central Office

48 Sargent Street

Newton, MA 02158

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

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

Candidates Sought for President of the New Church College, Manchester, England

The Council of this College is considering suitable applicants for the post of Principal to replace the Rev. Jan A. Arnold, who will shortly be returning to Australia.

Any person who wishes to be considered for this appointment, or who may know of some other suitable candidate, please inform the College Council as soon as possible.

The College Council has listed the following qualities as being either essential or desirable in a future Principal:

- Well grounded in New Church teachings
- Capable of communicating in Higher Education circles
- Dedicated and hard working
- Good interpersonal skills
- Capable of using initiative
- A person of vision
- A person willing to relocate to the Manchester area
- Good leadership qualities
- Spiritually aware
- Good administrative ability
- Perceptive and sensitive towards others

Anybody who allows their name to go forward for consideration will be expected to subsequently submit their curriculum vitae, together with a written statement of their interpretation of the role of College Principal. After this they could be interviewed, when they would have the opportunity to explain their vision.

Replies should be addressed to the College President, Mr. W.B.R. Taylor, 27 Sunderland Road, Cleadon Village, Sunderland, SR6 7UW, England.



Paddling the Spiritual Waters
(from front page)

one is too enlightened to chop wood or carry water." With these two thoughts pulling me in opposing directions, I discovered a middle view. I thought how all of us by world economic standards are rich even if we don't have servants. We have more free time than any preceding generation but we are all *busy*. We are "*busy busy busy*." I suspect that much of what we are *busy* doing are things which we really do not need to do but choose to do. We are *busy* because we would not know what to do if we were not *busy*. Too much of what we choose to be *busy* with does not do anything to feed our soul or the soul of anyone else. So, we could have almost as much time as a Brahman but we are still occupying ourselves with too much trivia and not enough genuine spiritual endeavor. It reminds me of when I was a student and had a paper due or an exam coming up. Before I got around to starting the academic job at hand I would clean my room, run errands, make phone calls, write postcards or do anything but what I was supposed to be doing. It was a frantic effort to avoid the inevitable. I'm convinced that too much of what we do are meaningless tasks that we don't need to do. We just think we need to do them but we do not have the time to pray or reflect upon the spiritual challenges before us. It is nothing more than a subtle seduction of our soul.

When bedding down for the first night or two in the forest, I must confess that I usually worry about bears

*The improvement of
our own soul takes
place because we
allow the stream of
providence to pull us
in the direction we
need to go.*

or even some fiendish imaginary animal coming to eat me. The silence can be eerie. Isn't it typical that we are afraid of a new place simply because it is new. Making a change in lifestyle is also like this. There is nothing to be afraid of and yet we are afraid. We wonder if we can adjust. We crave the familiar. But, if we push ourselves into something positive even though unfamiliar we soon adjust. After a day or two in the woods it seems like home. I noticed on this 20th trip to the wilderness that I finally felt at home on the first night.

In the wild, the correspondences of nature and events seemed more easily discernible. For example, a dangerous white-water experience clearly demonstrated that formidable obstacles should never be taken lightly, whether spiritual or physical. In this case, the obstacles were rocks and water. My partner and I were in level-three white water. Unable to paddle our canoe into the current we wanted, we were thrust into an untried route through the rapids. We were in danger. We could have been

killed. With little time to decide, we paddled into an eddy and reassessed. We felt confident enough to go for it. Sometimes in life we have to know the right strokes or learn them and sometimes there isn't much time nor room for error. We may even have to ask for help. We can't just go with the flow.

In this case, my partner and I combined skill and luck. As the current pulled us downstream, we were frantically drawing left or right to avoid boulders. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief when we were safely deposited into the still waters at the bottom of the rapids. Water represents truth. Here I suspect water represented a rather fluid wisdom that is cold and unforgivingly honest in its presentation. What the water expected of us was to pay close attention to our every move and pull ourselves away from the obvious and immediate dangers.

The few minutes' journey seemed like an eternity. We received lots of praise from the others for our quick thinking, but felt undeserving of the congratulations. After my heartbeat slowed and I regained some composure, I realized how much this was akin to my own spiritual life. Danger is around but the path is usually clear. With experience, the danger becomes more evident and easier to avoid. Even though we may be afraid, simple solutions are often all that are needed to get us through turbulence. When we finally arrive at still waters, we don't feel as though we can take any credit for our

(Continued on page 120)

Paddling the Spiritual Waters

(from page 119)

progress. We feel thankful that God has led us. The improvement of our own soul takes place because we allow the stream of providence to pull us in the direction we need to go.

In a wilderness area the local animals are hiding. The shy caribou can hear a human voice ten miles away. One irritating behavior of the humans on this trip was the almost constant chattering about things not related to the trip: i.e., movies, books, work, etc. We always paused in awe when a bald eagle flew over or some other creature was spotted, but everyone seemed to find it difficult to be quiet for even the first hour of paddling each morning. I'm not sure why there is such a need to talk when the beauty around us seems to demand silence. It reminded me of going out to dinner with people who talked only about other restaurants the whole time they were eating, unconscious of the very food in their mouths. It's like going on vacation and then spending hours talking about other vacations. Is it so difficult to stop and savor what is around us at the moment? Apparently it is. One of the highlights for me was the few mornings when the water was completely still and looked like a huge mirror stretching for miles. On these occasions only the gentle sound of the paddle swishing through the water could be heard. Swedenborg tells us that the Lord is around us in everything all the time. The very grains of sand preach heavenly truths. But this still

small voice is one we rarely hear because we are too busy jabbering. I read an article in the February *Sierra Magazine* in which a man describes his experience of climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro while wearing his walkman. I asked myself why he didn't just save himself the money and watch a program about Kilimanjaro on TV.

Personal appearances and the standard of cleanliness on a canoe trip quickly change. After several long days of paddling and working together, people begin to value each other not because of how they look or what they say, but because of what they do. When you are tired and don't feel like pitching in to help cook or clean or carry a canoe the extra half mile, at least one layer of personal facade is peeled away. "All the kind words and all the good wishes never replaces help with the dishes."

Bathing requires swimming in cold water. On a cold rainy day, bathing is a rather unattractive prospect. But one can only stand so much of the natural odors before being driven into the cold water for purification. Environmentally conscious bathing requires going into the water and then coming out to lather up with soap. To rinse off, a willing assistant gleefully pours more cold water from a container over the bather. This should be done at least thirty-five feet from the water so that no soap enters the water.

I found getting clean—so much work and somewhat unpleasant—to be reminiscent of spiritual cleansing

or repentance. The scent of our souls can be malodorous. We know a good cleaning is required, but we would rather put it off as long as possible because of the unpleasantness. We know we will feel better when we confess a sin, ask for forgiveness from someone we have injured, or forgive someone who has injured us. But sometimes it's hard to even get our spiritual feet wet, let alone take a bath in the cold but refreshing water.

One night as the wind raged and the rain furiously pelted our tent, I thought how a little bit of truth—like the tent's thin nylon walls—can effectively protect us from spiritual harm. We were warm, dry and cozy. For us the storm was impotent. We were as assured of our comfort as a righteous one is of holy truths. When we know that something is wrong or right, there is no onslaught of persuasion powerful enough to change our convictions. The storm will pass.

The expression "to put a damper on things" I have always interpreted as meaning to rightly or wrongly subdue enthusiasm. On a canoe trip, having dry clothes is essential. In order to do this, all clothing is kept in three layers of sealed plastic bags. Extracting the clothes can at times be tedious. But it is a standard that must be maintained. I compare this necessary precaution with living by necessary spiritual values. Once we compromise a basic spiritual value, such as honesty or compassion, we place our spiritual health in peril. (Continued on page 121)



Paddling the Spiritual Waters

(Continued from page 120)

On some things there can be no cheating, even if at times it is tedious to maintain the standard.

After wearing wet shoes from morning to night for several days, it was fascinating to see how luxurious the simple pleasure of putting on dry socks and dry shoes felt at the end of the day. We live very comfortable lives, perhaps too comfortable. Any wilderness trip includes some "hardships"; we cannot have every physical comfort we desire, and we are required to do things we would rather not do. Obviously, many things which I would rather not do are good for me. I find the Catholic concept of giving up something for Lent a useful spiritual tool, because it is good for us to at least occasionally not have something we really want. Depriving ourselves of things we usually have can develop strength of character. If we always walk on level ground without any inclines to overcome, our muscles for climbing hills will atrophy. It is a simple lesson, but one I have to learn over and over again. If I don't push myself to say or do something I'd rather not, even though I know I ought, then my regeneration is stalled. Are we spiritually growing if we only do what we want to do and are never denied anything?



Everyone needs a map to stay on the path.

However, the main reason I go on canoe trips is not the deprivation. I go primarily for the beauty of the landscapes, the clean air and water, the excitement of the white water, to be away from civilization, and to feel closer to the Creator. There is something wonderful about being able to dip my face into the lake and drink clean water free of harmful bacteria, chlorine, fluoride, or any unnatural chemicals. It thrills me to reel in a northern pike two feet long and cook it moments later over an open fire.

There is nothing quite like a sunset on a lake unmarred by speed boat or vapor trail, or a moonlight canoe ride on calm water when the only sound is the haunting call of the loon. Freedom from the usual urban distractions provides quietness for the soul which breeds inner thought. Jesus went to the wilderness before and during His ministry. There he found the purposeful direction he needed.

Every human experience offers food for the soul. But nature is not a spiritual proving ground. It has not been created for our amusement or growth. Its beauty is to be honored, not conquered. One of the main reasons camping is "getting away from it all" is that it shows us how simple life can be. As civilization continues to expand and wilderness continues to diminish, both the earth and the human spirit are becoming less of what they were meant to be. If this is true, it may be an unconscious desire for a simpler life in harmony with nature which drives millions of us into the woods each year to find ourselves and our Creator.



In search of a shower.

The Rev. Eric Allison is PMSU's church growth consultant. "Paddling the Spiritual Waters" is another in a series of reflective articles he has written during his many and varied travels. Eric lives in Kitchener, Ontario.

Doing Justice with Mercy: Responses from Wilma Wake

Emanuel
Swedenborg
clearly put
justice and
mercy
together just
as he put
external and
internal
together.



Wilma Wake

At the Swedenborg School of Religion, I have the delightful job of teaching “practical theology.” The question sometimes gets asked: “If Wilma is the only faculty member teaching practical theology, what kind of theology is everyone else teaching?” Actually, *all* of our Swedenborgian theology is practical—designed to be *lived out* by real people in a real world.

I want to explore further some of Robert’s comments on justice—and how to make it practical in our church community.

Robert spoke of social justice as that part of “doing justice” which includes our “responsible involvement with the larger neighbor.” Robert says that doing justice in reference to the larger neighbor means “each one of us must become intentional about the impact we have on social structures, policies, and justice issues.” And that “the church as a whole must do the same.” But how do we begin to do that in the confusing and complex world we live in today, with the wide range of political, economic, and social viewpoints amongst us?

First, I think we must become clear that a commitment to justice is a central tenet not only of Christianity, but of our Swedenborgian faith. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote about this in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* in which he said: “The great stumbling block is the moderate Christian who prefers a negative peace, which is the absence of tension, to a positive peace, which is the presence of justice . . . in the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say, ‘Those are social issues with which the gospels have no real concern.’¹ In today’s world of rapid change and demanding complexities, we cannot afford inaction. To do nothing is to take the side of the forces working for injustice.

We can see this commitment to social justice as a central tenet of our Judeo-Christian tradition even more clearly in looking at Biblical texts. There are many viewpoints about justice in the Old Testament—I am going to look at places that are very supportive of it.

Dr. John R. Donahue, S.J., Associate Professor of New Testament at Vanderbilt University says, “In general terms, the biblical idea of justice can be described as *fidelity to the demands of a relationship*.”² He says that “throughout the Old Testament Yahweh is

proclaimed as just. . . . The justice of Yahweh is not deduced from reflection on his nature, but is intrinsic to the covenant relationship. . . .

Breaking of the covenant or turning away from Yahweh is a failure of justice.”³ Yahweh’s commitment to the oppressed includes particular concerns for “the widow, the orphan, the poor and sojourner.”

So in the Old Testament, justice can be seen as part of our larger covenant relationship with the Lord and is an imperative upon us to care for the oppressed as the Lord cares for them. The New Testament continues this theme as Jesus says, “Seek first his Kingdom and his justice,” (Mt. 6:33) and Jesus criticizes the scribes for neglecting “justice and mercy and faith” (Mt. 23:23). A major focus of Paul is the “justice of God and the justice given to the world in faith.”⁴

Emanuel Swedenborg clearly put justice and mercy together just as he put external and internal together. He wrote in the *Arcana* (#9120): “The Conscience of what is good is the Conscience of the internal man; and the Conscience of what is just is the Conscience of the external man. The Conscience of what is good consists in acting according to the receipts of faith from internal affection; while the Conscience of what is just consists in acting according to civil and moral laws from external affection.” We cannot be living in regeneration if we live solely on the basis of an internal faith. We must externalize our faith by active living in charity to our neighbors. As Dr. Vredenburg, Bishop of the Federation of St. Thomas Churches, says, “Swedenborg’s understanding of the active life provides an important corrective to the internal focus of much of mysticism.”

We are fortunate, as Swedenborgians, that we have a doctrine so clear in its adherence to the wholeness of inner and outer. Our theology is not muddy; it is not dualistic. We are fortunate to have a theology that is so relevant to the world nearly 300 years after being written. Yet we struggle, as individuals and as a church, to fully live our theology.

Why is this? Robert talked about the complexities of many social issues and the difficulty of finding a common position as a church or agreeing upon a common project within a local community. There are many times when our individual jobs

(Continued on page 124)

to Robert McCluskey* and Skuli Thorhallsson

Thank you, Robert! I agree, in essence, with everything you have said. You show how being split off (justice from mercy, truth from love) is the source of confusion and injustice, and how this is reflected in the individual, in society and in the church. Then you show the way out of this fragmentedness through a spiritual perspective—the standard of love, which, when we receive it and live it on a daily basis, creates a balance between outwardness and inwardness. (Speaking of balance, the Chinese equivalent to the Hebrew word Shalom—peace, harmony, wholeness, welcome—is *he ping*. There are three symbols that make up this word. The first pertains to grain, the second to mouth or mouths and the third means balance or equal distribution. The message is that there will never be peace in our world until everyone is fed).

I agree with what you say about proprium. This Latin word used so much by Swedenborg (Pott's Concordance devotes 12 pages to it) has the same root as *property*: to make one's own, to appropriate everything (both good and evil) to ourselves. This is the dark side of it. When we try to exclude the divine from it we are free to create an inhuman existence. And yet Swedenborg also says that the Lord God alone has proprium (we are living as it were on borrowed proprium). The Lord God's proprium is Life and from it our proprium is vivified, made alive! (*Arcana Coelestia* 149). We are, as it were, asleep when we suppose that we live from ourselves. The journey to awakening begins when we recognize that our life is not our own, that every good we have comes from the Lord. Every unkind, uncaring, violent tendency comes from a spiritual dimension (commonly known as hell) of indifference to love and caring and compassion. Once we realize the true source of our life, we are free to live "as if" it is our own, but recognizing all the while, with gratitude, what a wonderful gift it truly is!

I like how you point out that charity is defined as acting with prudence to the end that good may result. (This is great as long as I don't get confused and use this as an excuse to not help someone because they are different from myself.) When justice and mercy come together we have charity—love in action. So we could say that charity is a state of mind before it becomes an action. It is being sensitive to the

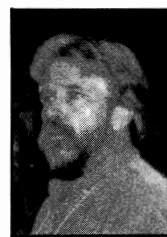
good in others and in ourselves, and to the evil as well. It is what Rollo May meant in *Power and Innocence* when he said, "The good we seek is an increased sensitivity, a sharpened awareness, a heightened consciousness of both good and evil." I feel this is well illustrated by Swedenborg's account of his meeting with some Chinese in the spiritual world. (The passage below was pointed out to me by a friend when I was sharing my difficulty identifying myself as a Christian when so much of Christianity seems to be so condemnatory. My friend recommended that I look up *Chinese* in Pott's Concordance). Swedenborg was perhaps sitting in his garden in Sweden, sipping coffee and eating sweet rolls, and probably doing some deep breathing exercises. He goes into an altered state, connects with the inner spiritual dimension and hears an angelic choir in the distance. He learns that they are Chinese because of some representations he sees:

... a kind of woolly goat, a cake of millet, and an ebony spoon, and also the idea of a floating city. They desired to come nearer to me, and when they applied themselves, they said they wanted to be alone with me, that they might open their thoughts. But they were told that they were not alone, and that there were others who were indignant at their wanting to be alone, when they were guests. Having perceived their indignation, they fell to thinking whether they had trespassed against the neighbor, and whether they had claimed anything for themselves which belonged to others. I was given to perceive their agitation; it was that of an acknowledgment that perhaps they had injured others, also of shame on that account, and of other good affections at the same time; hence it was known that they were possessed of charity. Presently I spoke with them, and at last about the Lord. When I called Him Christ, a certain repugnance was perceived in them; but the reason was disclosed, that they had brought it from the world, from their having known Christians to live worse than they did themselves, and in no charity. But when I simply mention the Lord, they were inwardly moved. (AC 2596)

This is a beautiful example of a vivified proprium doing justice with mercy. This is what worshipping the Lord is all about. Doing justice with mercy is worship. And this permeates every aspect of our lives. This is illustrated by the Africans who Swedenborg said are, in this world and in heaven, more receptive of goods and truths, are more interior and think more inwardly spiritually than the rest (AC 2604). This is supported by Louisah Teish's¹ writing about spiritual traditions from Africa:

African spirituality says that getting up in the morning is worship, cooking your meals is worship, washing your body is worship, working in your garden is worship, sweeping your floor is worship, making love is an act of worship. Worship is every act done with integrity and love and the understanding that it is connected to the overall scheme of Nature. The tradition teaches
(Continued on page 124)

When
justice and
mercy come
together, we
have
charity—
love in
action.



Skuli Thorhallsson

Response from Wilma Wake

(Continued from page 122)

or individual involvement in the community are important forms of justice, *and it's important to own and claim the significance of our individual contributions.* But beyond that, we also need to address the basic problems within our system that lead to the injustices. And changing the underlying inequities within our society is not something any one of us is likely to achieve alone. By working together, in mutual commitment to justice, we can have that level of impact on our world. Think of such concerns as child abuse, homelessness, hunger, violence, and racism. We need to work to change the forces that allow these evils to exist among us. In many of these areas, we could work together on local, denominational, ecumenical, and interfaith levels. As Robert said: "if we were to act as one church, our impact would be that must greater." We would also reap the benefit of increasing our dialog with other Christians and other religious groups as well as living out our theology in a visible way in the world that would bring us greater recognition and probably draw many to us. Our new Social Concerns Education Committee can help us begin sharing and learning together on the local and denominational levels about important issues of our day.

Justice is presented very much as a relationship in the Old and New Testaments as well as within Swedenborg—our relational commitment with the Lord and with each other. In living out that relationship in mutual respect, we will have differences. Our differences are our strength. Let's not be afraid of them! Let's not avoid the difficult issues of the day, let's debate them openly and honestly with each other, and out of those debates we can find the projects, the issues, the beliefs to which we can commit ourselves as a community.

To debate and make decisions about issues and to then take them firmly and loudly into the world is not going to shake our stability. In-

stead, it will likely lead us to greater recognition and growth. As Robert said, "our lack of involvement with social issues may be the reason, not the result of our size."

Perhaps, fellow Swedenborgians, we need more confidence in ourselves. We have a theology that is uniquely and practically suited to the issues of the latter 20th century. We can be leaders to move the world beyond dualisms and into realms of regeneration, charity, love and wisdom. We can be the leaders of tomorrow in bringing justice and mercy into our world. Let us claim our calling and march into the 21st century with a loud Swedenborgian voice.

The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is professor of Practical Theology at the Swedenborg School of Religion and is director of the Network Center for Spiritual Growth in Concord, New Hampshire.

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, quoted in Dieter T. Hessel, *Social Ministry*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1982, p. 17.

² Donahue, *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Response from Skuli Thorballsson

(Continued from page 123)

the real dynamics of power and to trust that your own head, your own . . . (body), your own crown chakra is connected to the big holy picture of God and Nature. (p.104)

I offer these examples, because I feel that they show what doing justice with mercy would look and feel like. Perhaps we cannot fully experience it because of our split vision. But I know that it has to do with being in touch with your body and your spirit at the same time. We lost that ability! We then created an externalized world where *things* can be more important than people and authoritarianism can be the water we swim in. But because the Lord God is fully present in all times and in all places, everything that is ever possible is possible at this moment. If willing, we have today an unprecedented opportunity to recreate our world, to recreate our spirit, to recreate our church, in the Light of a

new vision with an ancient thread. To do justice with mercy, to walk humbly with our God—the Lord is looking to express the divine self ever more fully in your life, in my life, in the life of the church and the world. The way there is so beautifully expressed in that wonderful Native American prayer:

O' Great Spirit

Whose voice I hear in the winds,
And whose breath gives life to all the world,
hear me! I am small and weak, I need your strength and wisdom.

Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.

Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice.

Make me wise so that I may understand the things you have taught my people.

Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my greatest enemy—myself.

Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes.

So when life fades, as the fading sunset,
my spirit may come to you without shame.

To act justly with mercy, to walk humbly with our God is to leave the path of fear and walk the path with heart, where heaven begins.

The Rev. Skuli Thorballsson is minister to the Swedenborg House Chapel and Growth Center in DeLand, Florida.

¹ *Journey Notes*, Richard Solley and Roseann Lloyd, New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1989.

*See September, 1995 *Messenger* for the Rev. Robert McCluskey's speech.

Soulfire

Soulfire

Burning, steady

*Red, orange and yellow coals,
that glow down deep.*

Deep in that inmost place

That I had forgotten.

Now I remember.

Remembrance is in the knowing.

Somedays are just about

adding a calmer color

to the browns and greys

and hardening darknesses

that seem to take hold.

There is a covering that has melted away,

leaving an opening that

longs for sensitivity and

gentle-heartedness and love.

I've come to know the longing

for my human to meet and

wed my soul.

I've leaned too long on places

of little knowing, weakening strength

and hunger fed by tears.

I've been far away in some

dry wilderness.

It is not my home.

Home is my soul,

and my human,

and where the fire

reaches my eyes

*and causes sight to clarity and the recognition
of me.*

*That dry wilderness
almost like an old lover*

has brought me to a

mountain and has

released me at her pathway.

A great mountain

where snow is found

as well as crocus

and deep flowing waters.

And animals that

no longer need the fear

that hovers, entraps and consumes.

The mountain has travelers—

*Kindred-souls traveling their own human
way—*

*Walking, sometimes crawling, sometimes
running*

and even can be seen flying

Homeward.

Homeward, toward

soulfulness and humaness

and lovefulness.

The light of heaven

shines all over the mountain

golden and warm

and she grows and reaches up

toward the healing light.

The love and light caresses

and soulfire crackles

through flames that are

protected and free.

Deborah Winter

1/21/94

ATTENTION ALL MINISTERS

The Fryeburg Church of the New Jerusalem in Fryeburg, Maine, is actively searching for a minister for their church. For more information, please contact Deborah Dolley, 1-207-935-2887, or the church office, 1-207-935-3413.

Bridgewater's First Service

On September 10, 1995, the Rev. Edwin Capon preached in the Bridgewater church's newly rebuilt sanctuary, celebrating the first service held there since the fire in July 1995 that partially destroyed the church. Services prior to September 10 were held in the Sunday school rooms. President Capon reported that the Bridgewater church was his first parish 47 years ago.

On the Way Up, Not Out

Eric Allison

Adolph Leibert's article in the May *Messenger* was sobering. He told it like it is. Our denomination has been steadily declining for the last ninety years. Yes, we have gone from 105 societies to 38. I agree with every word of his insightful article. I would add that we have indeed started doing many of the things he suggested we do and I think we have started to grow. Our churches are changing. In the twenty-three years I have been associated with our denomination, congregations seem to be more vital, more open to change and more committed to growth now than at any other time in my experience. Certainly, we have a long, long way to go but I believe that our decline has stopped. In spiritual terms, we may have reached vastation. Now, we are on the way up, not out.

Until recently, most of our churches have imitated the format of what Swedenborg called the Old Church. Most are moving away from a traditional type of worship and program, but this is not a solution that works for every church. Some of our most traditional ministries are growing. What works in Pretty Prairie, Kansas, may not work in Portland, Maine. We cannot think of our denomination as needing to go in one direction. We need to continue to evaluate, affirm and experiment. What appears to be happening is that most of our congregations have come to the realization that they must do things differently or at least improve what they do or perish. Most congregations have genuinely taken stock of who they are, what they have that is unique and they are trying to tap into a segment of the community where they can meet a need. It seems that people have simply said, "If it's sink or swim, we are going to swim." It is like the process of spiritual regeneration. Changes and adjustments and evaluations must be

made continually to get somewhere and we are no longer just treading water.

Listed below are statistics which I gathered in June of this year. Twenty-eight churches were surveyed. I excluded all groups which did not meet weekly for worship. The Church of the Little Grain was not included simply because I was not able to contact anyone from the church before the deadline of the survey. These are encouraging statistics which demonstrate that our churches are changing, improving, and growing.

Goals

- 1990**—fewer than ten churches had a written plan for the year. Fifteen churches had goals, but not necessarily written down.
- 1995**—twenty churches had written goals. This certainly shows that congregations are much more intentional in what they do.

Worship

- 1990**—nine churches used the first order of worship on most Sundays. Only one congregation created a new service each week in a written folder.
- 1995**—only two churches use the first order of service on most Sundays and twelve create a different service each week which is printed in a service folder.

Lay Leadership

Many lay people and clergy are keen to try new things and look at ways to enhance the worship experience.

- 1990**—only two churches had a committee or individual lay people who regularly helped the minister plan the worship service or gave the minister feedback about the service.
- 1995**—we see that fifteen churches have lay people who help

with the planning and creation of the service at least once each month. Two churches give the minister regular feedback on the worship service. This is evident in the use of new music. A church management axiom I have often quoted is "*the more people who are involved in the planning and leadership of the service the more likely it is to be successful.*" We can see this principle helping our churches.

- 1990**—fifteen churches involved lay people "regularly."
- 1995**—at least twenty churches had lay people regularly involved in the leadership of the service.

Music

The change in music is difficult to determine because I didn't ask enough questions about it in 1990. However, there is definitely a trend toward using more contemporary music in the service.

- 1990**—nine churches frequently used contemporary music.
- 1995**—fifteen frequently use contemporary music. Ten churches are using instruments other than organ as their primary source of musical accompaniment and two "always" use guitar, one usually uses guitar and three regularly use guitar during the worship service.

Adult Sunday School

- 1990**—total attendance for twenty-eight churches was one hundred twenty-four.
- 1995**—showed a decrease by two with a total of one hundred twenty-two.

Teens

- 1990**—Fifty-one teens were actively involved in the life of the local church.
- 1995**—48 teens actively involved in the life of the local church.

- 1990—only thirteen churches said they had “any teens at all.”
- 1995—only twelve churches said that they “have teens.”
- 1995—five churches have teen groups which meet regularly. This is not encouraging news but it doesn’t really show a decline when you figure the work being done for the teens on the national level with annual retreats, *Clear Blue Sky*, etc. There are over three hundred teens on the mailing list. Churches would do well to ask Eric Hoffman what the magical formula is. The LaPorte church has fifteen teens meeting twice each month.

Adult Attendance at Worship

It is encouraging to see that twenty-one churches now keep written attendance records while the 1990 survey showed only sixteen churches kept written records. Our adult attendance has not declined in five years; it has increased. How much it has increased is debatable.

- 1990—when I asked for the average attendance at worship, the total for 28 churches was 730 (26 per congregation) in church on the average Sunday.
- 1995—the average adult attendance of 28 churches was 745 (27 per congregation). Not a huge increase here, but at least no decrease. The increase may be much higher.

Attendance records in 1995 are more accurate, and when I asked for a combined attendance of adult and children in church the total came to 924 (33 per congregation). This is interesting because in many cases it was obvious that when I asked for the *adult attendance*, I was given a figure that combined both adult and children. I had to press the point to get just the adult attendance, so I can assume that many churches in 1990 probably gave me a combined figure when I asked for the adult attendance on Sunday mornings. If that is true, and we add the average attendance of the Church of the Little Grain and Celestial Circle of

Concord, New Hampshire, our total would be 960. My calculations would then put our growth during the last five years at 31 percent. This may be a bit too optimistic but any way you slice it our denomination has definitely increased its Sunday attendance.

Sunday School for Children

Although my figures don’t exactly match those reported to the Sunday School Association, my figures are the ones I was given.

- 1990—total attendance for twenty-eight churches was 164.
- 1995—total attendance for twenty-eight churches was 231. That’s 41% increase. Something good is happening!

Advertising and Outreach

The figures in this category are not exact but indicate a considerable increase. More churches are advertising and improving the quality of the ads they use and the quality and quantity of programs. I have copies of hundreds of ads created by local churches during the last five years.

- 1990—records show \$42,033 spent on advertising and outreach.
- 1995—records list \$112,250 spent on advertising and outreach.

Visitor Follow-up

- 1990—four churches had some form of visitor follow-up.
- 1995—twenty churches had “some form” of visitor follow-up. This is probably the most deceptive of all the improvements made on the local level. We have yet to have even one church zealously follow-up on visitors the way I would like them to for an entire church year.

Stewardship

- 1990—the survey listed nine congregations as having a pledge system and only four as having an annual stewardship Sunday.
- 1995—Now fourteen churches have a pledge system and eight have a stewardship Sunday.

Giving in many of our churches has gone up considerably. It is en-

couraging to see this change. This still could be greatly improved. If all of our members gave at least five percent of their income to the local church, the denomination would have to do far less funding. In some cases, no denominational funding would be needed. There are those who give enough and those who don’t have much to give, but many could give more.

Management or Growth Training

- 1990—Only five churches reported having even one person in the congregation who had ever had any training in the area of church growth or management.
- 1995—Seventeen churches reported having one or more people who had received training in the area of church growth or management outside of our denomination. When we add to this the number of churches visited by PMSU’s board trainers we see a significant step forward in training our leadership.

The Church Board

- 1990—Eleven churches reported having monthly board meetings.
- 1995—Twenty-five churches report having monthly board meetings. This represents an important change in attitude. You might say that we are getting down to business.

We are not out of the woods, but we are on a trail out. It is not within the scope of this article to theorize about why we have some good news. Nor will I list what more needs to be done. To all those who have worked so hard during the last five years, accept this as a pat on the back for a job well done.

The Rev. Eric Allison is the church growth consultant working with the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU).

Did Adam Sin for All the Planets?

A Question

The planets all, are they inhabited
By creatures like ourselves?
Did Adam sin for all the planets? Say,
Did Eve the apple eat for yon bright sun?
Did Jesus die to save so many worlds?
Or are the planets filled with angels bright,
Mantled in glory and in robes of light?

by Daniel Hudson Howard, 1825, age 11

Louise Woofenden

Deep musings for an eleven year old—a serious, introspective boy full of questions, hungering for answers. Born in Mansfield, Massachusetts, in 1814, he learned to read early though he did not go to school until he was eight. Then a benevolent woman paid for five years of school for Daniel, first (probably a year) with a private teacher, then at the prestigious Boston Latin School. After two weeks at Boston Latin, however, the boy had to withdraw because of illness, but we are told that he then spent three years at the Mount Pleasant Classical Institution in Amherst, Mass., where he learned Greek, Latin, French and some Spanish. How he managed to pay for schooling beyond that point we aren't told, but he later added German and Hebrew to his foreign languages. At nineteen he left school and worked in various printing houses until 1839 when his eyesight became too poor for this work. Later he was employed by the *Old Colony Reporter* in North Bridgewater and the *North Bridgewater Gazette*.

Howard's introduction to the New Church was an interesting case of providence. While he was working for the printing house of George W. Light in Boston, his employer took a man's library as security for a bad debt. Among these books some of Swedenborg's writings caught Daniel's eye. Though he had formerly been prejudiced against Swedenborg, he looked into the impounded volumes. He became interested enough to study them deeply, eventually becoming a firm believer (and presumably finding the answers to the questions in the poem of his childhood). In 1845, having already been a contributor to the two Bridgewater papers, he began writing for the *New Jerusalem Magazine*, the *New Church Children's Magazine* and the *New Jerusalem Messenger*. A collection of his poems was published in Brockton in 1879.

Never married, he lived with his parents, and after they died he kept house with his sister.

During the latter part of his life he was an invalid, which may account for the tenor of the following article and poem:

One Use of Suffering

Pity, mercy and compassion are heavenly virtues, and constitute some of the chief excellencies of human character. They are ascribed to the Lord in their fullness, in the Word, where we are exhorted to become like our heavenly Father, in the possession of these qualities. But mankind are too apt, from their evil nature, to be hard-hearted and unmerciful towards their fellows, and especially, perhaps, to those who stand in the greatest need of sympathy and compassion: the weak, the helpless and the afflicted. The bold and strong do not know how to sympathize with those who are not so, because they have never experienced the misfortunes of weakness and infirmity. Therefore I take it that one great and important use of the various forms of suffering which are experienced in this world is to make the sufferers compassionate toward others who are in affliction; that is, at least, to give them an opportunity of learning to become so. And a little good acquired during this present life becomes greatly increased in the other life, as the Lord taught in the parable of a grain of mustard seed which grew and became, as it were, a great tree.

—*Messenger*, November 6, 1881

The Bible

What book so like a universe as this

Whence each who hungers his supply receives;
How various so e'er their wants, none miss

Their needful medicine in its healing leaves.

—*Messenger*, June 9, 1849

Louise Woofenden is a writer and former archivist for the Swedenborg School of Religion.

Open Door, Open Hearts . . . Really?

Laurie Turley

Imagine this: You've just arrived for the first time at this cool new church you've been hearing about. You're a bit nervous, a bit excited, and certainly a little unsure of what the morning will bring. You enter the door and someone hands you a book of songs and a bulletin, says a few nice words—you feel welcomed. Then, you find a seat and sit down. From then on, you notice that people arrive and sit together, some with their arms around each other, some laughing and talking about their week, their children, their jobs, their lives. Someone comes and sits near you . . . near you, but not beside you, leaving at least one seat between you and them. You sit through the service, finding your way through the song book and at the end, people gather and get coffee, some smiling at you, but most engaged in conversation with people they already know. You kind of liked the service, but you feel too shy to make the initial contact to introduce yourself, and no one steps forward to reach out to you. You leave . . . Will you come back next week?



We like to think of ourselves as a warm and friendly bunch of folks here at the Swedenborgian Church, and indeed, for the most part, we are. But how often does a new person come through our doors to be met with the above scenario? Unfortunately, according to a recent poll, more often than we think. It's great to see our friends and catch up on community life, regather after the

week apart, or work out important church "business" that needs attending to. How can we better attend to the business of reaching out to one another, especially to those who don't know their way around? The church council and worship committee have been actively trying to ensure the availability of "greeters" in the back of the room to welcome everyone who enters the door, newcomers and familiar faces as well. But the job doesn't stop with them. If you see someone new sitting alone, perhaps you could opt for sitting next to them instead of your favorite pals, maybe sharing a song book instead of taking one yourself at the back door, or . . . what? What could you do? Think back. When you first walked through the door, did you feel welcomed? If so, how? What would you do differently if given the chance? The chance is here; a new person walks through the door nearly every week. Think about it.

Laurie Turley is a musician, teacher, mother, wife of the Rev. Ken Turley, and member of the Swedenborgian Church in Portland, Maine. Reprinted from the January, 1995 Swedenborgian Church Newsletter.

Important Church Calendar Dates

September 30-Oct. 3	EdSu—LaPorte, Indiana
October 1-3	Retirement Committee—Newton, Mass.
November 2-4	Wayfarers Chapel Board
November 3-5	PMSU—Grand Bend, Ontario
November 4	Investment Com.—Wilmington/Philadelphia area
November 11-14	C.A.M.—Newton, Mass.
December 2-3	General Council/Cabinet/National Church Trustees—Washington, D.C.
January 12-14	FPRSU/AFC—Ft. Myers Beach, Florida
March 17-19	CAM—Newton
March 22-24	GOSU/PMSU/EdSU—Almont, Michigan
June 26-30	Convention 1996—Urbana, Ohio

Messenger Indexes Available

Messenger indexes for the five years from 1990-1994 were completed last spring. Lee Woofenden and the Information Support Unit included this task, at the request of the Communications Support Unit, in their project of computer-indexing 150 years of *The Messengers*. The hard copy indexes are being taped or bound into each year's *Messenger* volumes at the Swedenborg School of Religion. Librarian Jean Hilliard is willing to send photostat copies of individual indexes to anyone who wants them for \$1.00 each to cover postage and copying costs. Write to: SSR Library, Attn: Jean Hilliard, 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158.

New Pamphlet Available

Why is this Happening to Me?

by Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein

Why is this Happening to Me?, a new pamphlet by the Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein, seeks to shed light on our ancient and ongoing human struggle to resolve the divine love of God with the messiness of our temporal lives.

How do we find the assurance that we are not alone, that God is present with us even in our darkest hours? Concepts explored in this 13-page booklet include: Creating "heaven spaces" in the midst of pain, healing from the alienation and shame of abuse, working with God to resist oppression, and coming to terms with our freedom and what it means—that God's presence is a cooperative, not controlling one.

In a concluding paragraph, Klein states, "To bring caring and love into reality in our lives, we must be engaged in uncovering, acknowledging and facing our tendencies to grasp, possess and control, and we must cooperate with God in resisting those tendencies. It is through this cooperation that we become more and more aware that God is present with us in our struggle with evil."

Theodore Klein formerly worked as a chaplain and is currently a professor of theology and ethics at the Swedenborg School of Religion. *Why is this Happening to Me?* is a condensed version of a longer work in progress. Published by J. Appleseed & Co., it is available free* for denominational use from the Central Office, 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158.

*Postage charges will be invoiced when order is sent.

Larry Young Honored

The late Lawrence Young, lifelong active and dedicated member of the Boston Swedenborgian Church, was posthumously awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Urbana University during commencement exercises on May 7, 1995. In addition to the many other offices he held serving his local church, the denomination and the community, he was a member of Urbana's Board of Trustees from 1987 until his death December 2, 1994. (See *Passages*, February 1995 *Messenger*.)

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.

To the Editor:

In your April issue, in a review of *The Father, a Life of Henry James, Sr.*, Louise Woofenden says, "A plus for New Church readers is that for the first time James' connection with Swedenborg's doctrines is dealt with in depth."

I would query this statement. Although many books referring to Henry James, Sr., do not explore Swedenborg's influence on

any great extent, I know of two exceptions.

In the classic work, *The James Family* by F.O. Matthiessen (Knopf, New York, 1947), there is a considerable chapter dealing with this aspect, entitled "Henry Senior's Literary Remains."

But the book to which I specially wish to refer is *The Philosophy of Henry James, Sr.* by Frederic Harold Young (College and University Press, New Haven, 1951).

In this there is a 40-page chapter "Swedenborg and James," with numerous other references on the subject throughout the book. In this chapter, the author writes: "The immediate intention is to achieve an adequate understanding of Swedenborg as will throw the whole pattern of James' major concepts into clear perspective," and this he proceeds to do. The book certainly is an important contribution to assessing Henry James Senior's Swedenborgianism.

Gordon Jacobs

West Midlands, England

A Wonderful Gift

Traditionally, the *Messenger* has been given at no cost to all members of the Swedenborgian Church. And it did rank high in priorities in the 1993-94 Survey of *Messenger* readers. It's a pretty wonderful gift, isn't it? Ten free informative, up-to-date church newsletters that offer lay and ministerial views on denominational issues, plus inspirational Swedenborgian insights to help each of us on our spiritual journey.

Would these issues be worth a \$29 subscription? That is the cost to the Church, and certainly there is no plan to charge readers for their ten *Messengers*. But perhaps you would volunteer to defray some of the publication costs by paying for your subscription, as suggested in the *Messenger* Readers Survey.

Did you know that General Convention has a *Messenger* endowment fund, which has a current worth of \$73,500? The interest from these restricted funds can only be used for *The Messenger*, whereby the principal is not spent. In 1994, for instance, \$6,000 was applied from the endowment fund to help pay for the cost of *The Messenger*. As we build up *The Messenger's* endowment, our Church's publication could become financially independent.

We all like choices, so here are three options *The Messenger* can offer its readers: receive the publication free, pay up to \$29 for a subscription, or make a donation to *The Messenger* endowment fund. Whatever you decide, by all means don't stop your subscription! We would much rather you receive *The Messenger* free than for you not to know what is going on in the Church. Your being a part of our readership is very important to us.

Many thanks again to those of you who have made contributions to *The Messenger* in the past; last year we received \$1,865 in donations. Your support and love for your Church's *Messenger* are sincerely appreciated.

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$_____. I want my enclosed contribution to be used for:

- ☐ One-year subscription to *The Messenger*
☐ *The Messenger* endowment fund

Your Name _____

Your Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Please make your check payable to *The Messenger* and mail it in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope included in this issue, to: Swedenborgian Church, Central Office, 48 Sargent Street, Newton, Massachusetts 02158.

Church Remembered with Generosity

Native Kansan Lavina Siebert was born November 21, 1909, in Pawnee Rock, the daughter of August and Helena Unruh Base. A lifetime resident of the Pawnee Rock area and active member of the Swedenborgian Church there, her boundless energy, good cheer and sense of adventure are greatly missed by her many friends. She was active in the choir, the Sunday school and the Alliance, and her lively interest in history prompted her to found the Fort Larned Belles, an historical society that was responsible for complete restoration of an old fort west of Larned which is now a national historic site. She was also a charter member of the Happy Harmony Club, a women's group that studies art and current events and put their knowledge to use in community work. Although she had no children of her own, she greatly enjoyed the company of her nieces and nephews.

Lavina's first husband of 45 years, Frank Wedel, contracted a rare disease attributed to a polio vaccination that left him handicapped for the last 10 years of his life. She nursed him through those years until his death in 1976. On February 14, 1979, she married Ted Siebert in a Valentine's Day ceremony at Wayfarer's Chapel, performed by the Rev. Galen Unruh in Rancho Palos Verdes, California. When Ted became ill, she took care of him also until his death in 1986. Both husbands were members of the Pawnee Rock church. Her survivors include two step-sons, a sister, two brothers, seven step-grandchildren, four step-great-grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

At Mrs. Siebert's death, it was learned that she had left \$10,000 to the *Messenger* endowment fund, as well as large bequests to the Pawnee Rock church, to Wayfarers Chapel before her death, and to the denomination and the Swedenborg School of Religion in the form of charitable gift annuities.

We are grateful for Lavina Siebert's lifelong joyful support of her church and for so generously including the church's needs in her estate planning.

Passages

Marriage

O'Neill and Wiens—Alinda M. O'Neill and Howard L. Wiens of Summerland, British Columbia, were united in marriage August 5, 1995, at the Summerland Research Station Gardens, the Rev. Erwin Redekopp officiating. Howard is the son of Harold and Thelma Wiens, members of the B.C. Swedenborgian Church.

Deaths

Buck—Sylvia Buck, 55, longtime member of the Los Angeles church when Andre Diaconoff was minister, entered the spiritual world July 16, 1995. Her death was due to ovarian cancer. She had been living in Hawaii for 25 years, and was honored by the Hawaiian Senate for her 13 years of work with underprivileged children as a speech pathologist with the board of education. Sylvia is survived by her father, Carroll Buck, her brother, Tom, and sisters, Betsy, Marcia and Dorothy. Following a celebration of life service, her ashes were scattered over Diamond Head.

Osgood—C. Earl (Bub) Osgood, longtime member and a former treasurer and trustee of the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, entered the spiritual world July 31, 1995, in North Conway, New Hampshire. A resurrection service was conducted August 3, 1995, at the Fryeburg Congregational Church, the Rev. George Davidson officiating.

Siebert—Lavina Esther Siebert, 85, lifelong member of the Pawnee Rock Swedenborgian Church, Kansas, entered the spiritual world May 11, 1995, at Great Bend Manor, Great Bend. A resurrection service was conducted May 15, 1995, at Beckwith Mortuary in Larned, Kansas, the Revs. Galen Unruh and Eric Zacharias officiating. (See *Church Remembered*, at left).

Church Family News

Bob Kirven reports that Marian is improving, and returned home from the extended care facility in late June. We greatly missed Bob's presence at convention, and send our love and prayers to both. Cards and letters welcome.

The Rev. Dr. Robert and Marian Kirven
8650 North 65th Ave. #316
Glendale, AZ 85301

Carole Reinstra's message to *Messenger* readers was featured in the September issue ("Journey with Cancer"), but we didn't include her address following the article. Cards and letters are welcome.

The Rev. David and Carole Rienstra
11689 Chandellay Drive
St. Louis, MO 63146

In Memoriam—

The Rev. Ernest Lewis Frederick* came late to the Swedenborgian Church and its ministry. He was born in Berlin, Germany, the youngest son of Salvation Army missionaries. He spent his pre-school years in India, went to elementary school in Australia and high school in China. In fact, he broke his leg falling off the Great Wall in his teens.

He returned to Canada in his early twenties and married Lily (Dolly) and had one daughter, Vivian. In his mid-thirties he found a book a Swedenborg's writings in a used book store and decided he had finally found what he was looking for. He joined the Toronto church, traveling 70 miles one way to attend services.

In his mid-forties he decided he wanted to do more with his life than run a chain of music teaching studios. He went to college and received his BA degree. He then enrolled about 1957 in the New Church Theological School in Cambridge. While he was there he also completed a four-year course at Harvard Divinity School in three years and received his Master of Divinity degree in June 1954.

The same month he was ordained at the annual convention in New York City at the request of the Brockton Society. He served there for two years when Dolly developed multiple sclerosis. It was recommended that she would be more mobile and more comfortable in a warmer climate.

They moved her to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in February 1955. He spent three weeks each month in Brockton and one week in Florida, until the end of the church year, when he moved permanently to Florida with nothing but a list of isolated members in the Southeast. Shortly thereafter he received the support of the Board of Missions and began work in the Miami area.

By 1963 he had a large enough group to host the convention that year. In 1970 the Miami society purchased the property in DeLand and sold the former Miami church to a Cuban group. His wife Dolly died shortly thereafter. He served in DeLand until 1988 when he and his second wife Hazel retired and moved to Vero Beach.

He was a tireless worker for the church, both as a minister and a caretaker of the property, mowing lawns, repairing roofs, etc. He served the larger church as a member of General Council and as a member of the Board of Managers of the Swedenborg School of Religion.

He will be long remembered by his friends as a humorous, hard-working, and devoted minister of the church. God bless him and keep him, till we all meet again.

Dorothy B. Farnham
DeLand, Florida

*See *Passages, January 1995 Messenger*. The Rev. Ernest Frederick entered the spiritual world November 8, 1994.

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.

Wilma Wake

The Network Center for Spirituality, Inc., is located in Concord, New Hampshire, and is supported largely by funding from the Growth and Outreach Support Unit (GOSU) as a new ministry.

When I was ordained in 1990, my plan of ministry was to help establish a community spiritual growth center in Concord. With the help of many people in the Swedenborgian Church as well as within the Concord community, we have a successful and growing center!

The Los Angeles Society has given us a generous grant this year to help pay for the cost of room rent. We have a beautiful storefront location on the main street of Concord! This past year, the membership elected a board of directors representing many sectors of the community and they are helping to expand our visibility in New Hampshire.

We offer a weekly Sunday morning informal worship service called the "Celestial Circle" and have two or three events for the public each month. During September, Virginia Slayton, the editor of *Convergence*, a well-respected New England wholistic journal, led an open forum on the spiritual changes taking place in the world, and Pursus Laja Ensor, a sound healer and therapist, presented an evening of healing by sound to release old patterns of mind and body.

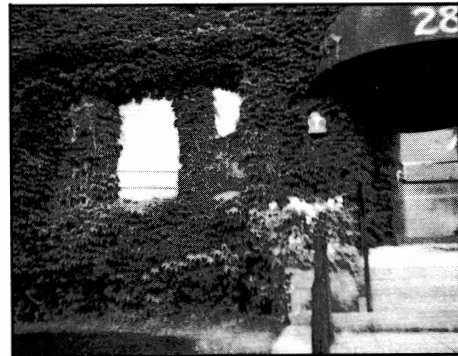
During October, we are featuring a four-session class led by Native Americans, Little Moon and Dancing Deer, presenting in-depth teachings on the four directions and how to integrate the Medicine Way into our daily lives.

Our name is becoming known in the area, and new people are attracted monthly to our events. We now have a mailing list of over 400 names and most programs draw 15-30 attendees.

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

Forwarding Address Correction Requested

The Network Center



◀ Ivy covers the exterior facade of the Network Center.

Interior of Network Center offers peace and tranquility.



The Network Center is drawing interest from many different types of people seeking support on their spiritual journeys. Some of those who contact us are interested in knowing more about Swedenborg and the Swedenborgian Church and we are distributing a great many pamphlets and books.

Thank you, GOSU, L.A. Society, the alliance of New Church Women, and all of the denomination for your support and encouragement!

The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is professor of Practical Theology at the Swedenborg School of Religion.

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