
THE MESSENGER

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December 1995

Cambridge Swedenborgians Open Historic Dialogue with His Holiness, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama

Eugene Taylor

Fulfilling their promise to help lead Swedenborgians into new directions in theological education for the twenty-first century, members of the Cambridge Swedenborg Society met with the Dalai Lama September 10, 1995 at the Charles Hotel in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange gifts and to initiate a dialogue between Swedenborgians and Tibetan Buddhists as part of a larger and more long-term project

to educate Swedenborgians about world religions outside the sphere of Christianity. For the past two years the Cambridge Society has hosted the Tibetan Association of Boston and the Tibetan Community Assistance Project as part of its outreach and social action ministries.

The Dalai Lama is spiritual leader to six million Tibetan Buddhists and a revered figure throughout New Age spiritual communities in America. He also received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

The Tibetans were driven out of their own country nearly 40 years ago by the Chinese Communists and have been living in exile ever since. The U.S. Immigration Act of 1991 allowed 1000 Tibetans to enter the U.S. as stateless, and also permitted them to apply for American citizenship. These Tibetans settled in 21 cluster sites around the U.S. The Boston cluster site has some 65 Tibetans, and will soon grow to almost 250 when additional family members begin arriving next year. The American friends of the Tibetans who have banded together into the Tibetan Community Assistance project (TCAP) have some 50 members.

As a gesture of appreciation for help which the Cambridge



Foreground, left to right: F. Robert Tafel and Lars Wiberg holding hands with the Dalai Lama. Background: Rinchen Dbarlo (center), the Dalai Lama's representative to the U.S., and Eugene Taylor (right).

Photo courtesy of Lilian Kemp.

Swedenborgians have extended to Tibetans and to TCAP on numerous occasions, the Tibetan Association of Boston introduced the Cambridge delegation to the Dalai Lama on his recent visit to Massachusetts and offered the Swedenborgians a book on Tibet inscribed by the Dalai Lama. In return, the Cambridge delegation presented the Dalai Lama with materials on Swedenborg, including Larsen's *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision*, Swe-

denborg's *Journal of Dreams*, Taylor's pamphlet *Life of the Spirit: Talks on Psychology and Religion in the Swedenborg Chapel*, and a copy of Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Wisdom*. (The books were provided courtesy of the Swedenborg Foundation).

The delegation was composed of Ethel Rice, of the Cambridge Ladies Auxiliary; Raphael Guiu, Cambridge treasurer; Bob and Polly Erikson, Finance and Library Committees; F. Robert Tafel, the Society's minister; Lars Erik Wiberg, president of the Church Council; and Eugene Taylor, faculty sponsor of the Harvard-Radcliffe Swedenborg Chaplaincy.

It was hoped that through this initial contact the Dalai Lama would write a short preface to the Swedenborg Foundation's forthcoming book on D.T. Suzuki, foremost interpreter of Zen to the west and founder of the Swedenborg Society of Japan. It was also hoped that a dialogue between Swedenborgians and Buddhists would begin on mutual respect for each other's traditions as a result of this visit.

Dr. Eugene Taylor is director of the Cambridge Institute of Psychology and Religion and is the faculty sponsor of the Harvard-Radcliffe Swedenborg Chaplaincy.

Moving Toward the Light

If you are one of the many who are working with the Insights from *The Celestine Prophecy*, or are a devotee of Jung, you may have become aware of the synchronicities happening in your life. Even if you aren't especially Jungian or acquainted with the Insights, you may have noticed more synchronicity coming about: You wish for something that will guide, inspire, feed your spirit, enhance your life, bring joy. And then—if you're paying attention—the means, the opportunity to act and move in that direction, appears in your path. Coincidence? Hm-m.

I recently attended a writers conference at the Swedenborg Foundation held October 27–29. The workshop was focused on sharpening the ability of participants to communicate Swedenborgian concepts in fresh and contemporary ways to non-sectarian readers. I was delighted to be included and to be able to free up time to go, but I was even more excited when I arrived, opened my packet of materials, and found the book *The Artist's Way: A Course in Discovering and Recovering Your Creative Self*, by Julia Cameron. It was a gift to each of the participants, and we were told we would be working with it.

It was also the fourth time in four months that this book had been put in front of me. The first glimpse of it was a description in a mail-order catalogue. Might be interesting, I thought, but I didn't get around to sending for it. The second time was at convention in San Francisco, one of the books in the Stonehouse Book Store display. I perused it, thought about buying it, but didn't. The third time, an introductory offer from a new book club, offering free books on joining. *The Artist's Way* was featured in the many choices. I'm finally getting the message—I think I'm supposed to have this book. I send for it and begin reading it immediately. On page 2, the author says, "As you work with the tools in this book, as you undertake the weekly tasks, many changes will be set in motion. Chief among these changes will be the triggering of *synchronicity*: we change and the universe furthers and expands that change. I have an irreverent shorthand for this that I keep taped to my writing desk: 'Leap, and the net will appear.'"

The basic principle of this book is that creativity is the natural—and spiritual—direction of our lives, because we are each a unique part of a creative universe. This book leads us through a twelve-week program to recover our creativity, which has often been blocked by limiting beliefs, fear, and many other inhibiting forces. The primary tool we are encouraged to begin using immediately is *writing three pages every morning*. They're called the Morning Pages. They are not meant to be art, or *writing* as such; simply what the author calls stream-of-consciousness "brain drain," because, she says, in order to retrieve our creativity, we first have to find it. The morning pages serve as an emptying-out process; whatever babble is going through our heads, put it on paper and keep the hand moving for three pages. She says, "all that angry, whiny, petty stuff that you write down in the morning stands between you and your creativity." Morning pages also serve the splendid purpose of getting us past our censor, our critic, our editor, our inner saboteur. (It is interesting to note that one of the key components in spiritual and psychological healing is the emptying process; Scott Peck, among others, speaks of this need to allow ourselves to experience emptiness before we can make room for something new to come in).

Another basic tool the author advocates is the artist's date. You take you artist self on a date, a fresh adventure of some kind, each week, by yourself, to keep the creative well filled.

So there I was at the Swedenborg Foundation, (the artist's date!) staring at this book, the back of my neck tingling with the *coincidence* of it all. The gift, the positive sign, the support, all in place, waiting only for the renewal of commitment to the best that is in us.

If you are in the habit of giving yourself a Christmas present each year—and I hope you are—I would recommend that you invest in a copy of *The Artist's Way*. It definitely falls into the category of gifts that keep on giving.

—Patte LeVan

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Opinion

In this section of *The Messenger* we are pleased to present the varied views of our readers. Letters published here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editor, the Communications Support Unit or the General Council of the Swedenborgian Church. Published letters may be edited for brevity and clarity.

When you see an opinion with which you agree or disagree, please send your own views to the Editor so that *The Messenger* can be a forum for individual viewpoints. We welcome letters on all pertinent topics.

Meditations from St. Thomas

Dear Swedenborgian Friends:

In response to many questions about meditation and Divine Sophia which were presented to me at the [San Francisco] convention in July: My recommendation is to contact a blessed colleague, the Rev. Tara Lang, in Los Gatos, California. We have worked with her for the past 12 years in exploring the benefits of meditation.

She accepts my firm belief that St. Emanuel Swedenborg was the most accomplished and inspired meditator of all time. His immensely enlightening writings flow from a deeply reflective life, and Rev. Tara is able to demonstrate that unique spirituality very well. Swedenborg's fidelity to the Word of God is expressed very well by my fellow teacher in the College of Seminarians. Let's hear from those interested in the truly contemplative life.

Write: The Rev. Tara Lang, D.D.
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Archbishop Mar Joseph Vredenburg
Catholicos
Santa Cruz, California

It was snowing in Peking (Beijing) in late December. Christmas was just around the corner. I was a lonely eight-year-old staring out through the window of my bedroom at the snow-covered backyard of a grand old mansion where my father, stepmother, and half-sisters lived. It was their home, but not mine. I had come to China only a year ago; father had sent for me. I was born in Honolulu, Hawaii; my mother died shortly after giving birth to me. Heartbroken, my father, a graduate of the University of Columbia, went back to China, leaving me in the care of my aunt. Until he sent for me, my aunt and I lived in Madison, Wisconsin, where she taught piano in a private school. There were few Chinese in the Midwest in those days. Being a college graduate from the U.S., father was doing quite well in China. He was the manager of a large factory. He spent little time with me. Why did he send for me, I often wondered. As I stood there against the window gazing at the bare branches of the trees under the grayish cloudy sky, voices of my father and stepmother echoed in my ears—

"Learn to speak and write Chinese! Don't forget your roots!"

"I don't want you to play with Mei Lan! Behave like a *shao-yeh*!"

Yes, they called me *shao-yeh*, the young master, son of the head of a well-to-do household. Mei Lan was the daughter of my half-sisters' nanny. She was one or two years younger than I. In China, a nanny was considered a lowly servant. But I liked Mei Lan; we were innocent children. At first, she was shy, and so was I. As time went on, something drew us together. In spite of the language barrier, I felt at ease with her. We played each other's secret little games, and we laughed when we could not communicate in spoken words. Soon our separate worlds became one; class, nationality, social background became obscure. We were ourselves, a little boy and a little girl who enjoyed each other's company and were brought together across the ocean by an invisible messenger.

All that came to a sudden end. Unable to stop me from playing with Mei Lan, my stepmother fired the nanny, just to show her authority. She said my half-sisters no longer needed a nanny. Father bent to her wish. The grand old mansion, supposed to be my home, suddenly became empty. I missed Mei Lan! As I now stood by the window alone in my bedroom, I thought of her. The snow kept on falling; the pine trees in the yard were coated in white. Soon it would be Christmas. I wanted to bring a present to Mei Lan. But I had no idea where she was.

I asked our chauffeur if he knew nanny's address. He looked at me and asked why. I did not tell him what I had in mind, fearing that he might tell my stepmother. "I want to send her a Christmas card," I said. After pausing a moment, he wrote down nanny's address on a piece of paper and handed it to me. Although I had lived in

Peking for over a year now, I had no idea where that place was. I lived a sheltered life; my area of activities was restricted to school, church, and family circles. But I was determined to carry out my secret mission.

Three days before Christmas, I went to a store on my way back from school. There were so many things on display for the holiday season. "What would she like?"

I asked myself, wandering from one counter to another.

I stopped at the toy department. She liked dolls.

After glancing over all the dolls on the shelves, I pointed to a beautiful girl doll which looked like an angel and asked the clerk how much. "Two dollars," he said. I emptied my pocket and counted the coins. There

was only one dollar and eighty-five cents, all the money I had saved from my allowance. I must have looked miserable and depressed, because the clerk smiled at me and told me I could have it for fifteen cents less. Oh, how grateful and excited I was!

Locking myself in my bedroom, I made a card for Mei Lan and wrote "Merry Christmas" in Chinese, which was quite a job for me. Now, I had to think of a way to get to nanny's place. The address was No. 16 Lung Yen Hutung, Alley of the Dragon Eye.

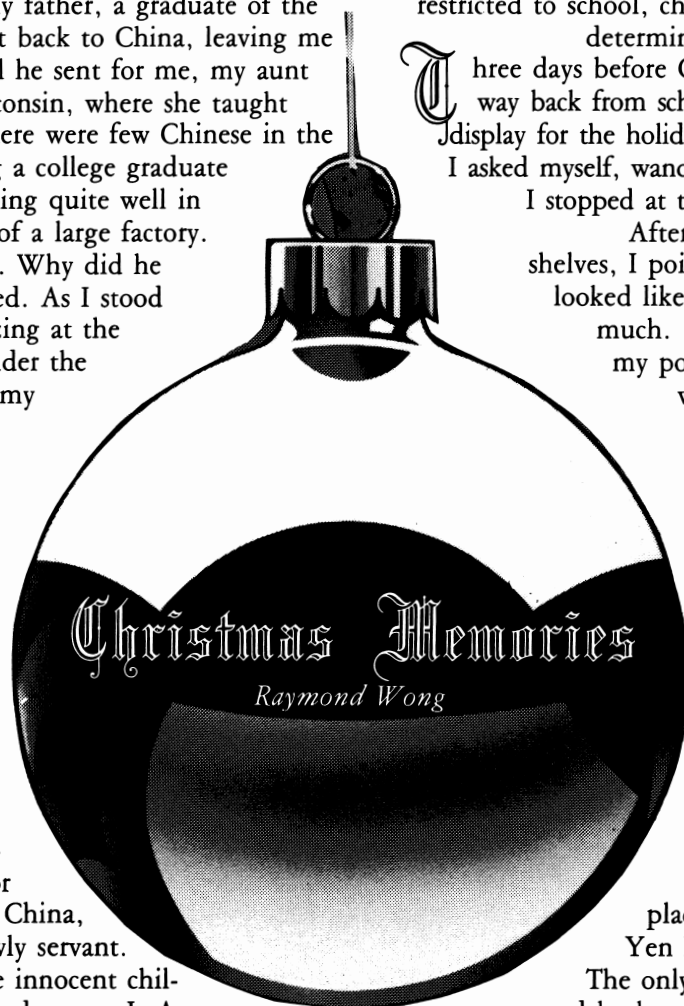
The only way I could think of to get there and back was to hire a rickshaw; but I had no more money. Having no other choice, I went to Margaret, my half-sister, and asked her to lend me a dollar, hoping it would be enough to pay for the rickshaw. I told her to keep it a secret and promised to pay her back from my future allowance. She gave me the money without asking any questions. Other than Mei Lan, Margaret was the closest one to me in the family.

Two days passed; it was the day before Christmas. The snow stopped; the sky was sunny and blue. The entire family was invited to a dinner party at a friend's home.

I told my stepmother I was not feeling well, so they left without me. As soon as they were gone, I sneaked out of the house with the doll in a gift wrap and got on one of the rickshaws waiting for hire at the corner of the street. This was the first time I had been completely on my own since I came to China; I was a little scared.

The Dragon Eye Alley was in a slum area in the northern section of the city. Nanny's home was in a dilapidated

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Christmas Memories

(continued from page 151)

housing project behind a crumbling brick wall fronting on a narrow unpaved dirt road. My heart was beating fast when I knocked on the door of No. 16. Nanny opened the door. With her eyes open wide, she stepped backward. "Shao yeh!" she cried. I did not know what to say at that moment except "How are you?" "Mei Lan! Shao yeh is here!" she shouted. Running, Mei Lan came out of the house. For a moment, we stood still, all at a loss for words. Then I handed Mei Lan the gift. "Merry Christmas," I said in Chinese. She looked at me, tears coming out of her eyes. I bit my lip to hold back my tears. In another moment, I was back to the waiting rickshaw. I had to hurry home before the others came back from the party. That was the last time I saw Mei Lan. I returned to the United States the following year when war broke out between China and Japan.

* * *

"I think we're lost," said the colonel. I was driving him in a jeep from a remote French military outpost back to Saigon in Indochina, better known as Vietnam. I was now 21, serving in the American military advisory group and was assigned to the colonel as his assistant. At that time the United States was not yet officially involved in that savage war between the French and the North Vietnamese. It was the day before Christmas; but here there was no sign of the coming of Christ. The road was winding and bumpy; rice paddies lay in ruins; deserted and shattered straw huts scattered here and there; not a living soul was in sight. We realized we must have made a wrong turn somewhere. The day was getting dark; we were worried. After driving aimlessly for another half hour or so, we came to a river bank which neither the colonel nor I remembered having seen before. We had no idea where we were. Cautiously we followed the narrow dirt road alongside the winding river. Then, after making a

turn at the far end, suddenly we saw glimmers of light at a distance. What was it? Guerrillas?

Holding our breath, we approached the lights. They came from an old building standing on a higher ground behind a cluster of trees. It looked like a church or some kind of retreat. When we reached the pathway leading to the front gate of the building, we shut off the engine, turned off the headlights, and sat quietly in the dark. While we were pondering what to do next, we heard children's laughter from inside the house. Instantly our fear disappeared. We got off the jeep and knocked on the door. A tall, elderly gentleman with a long white beard opened the door. "Yes?" he asked. We told him we were on our way to Saigon and were lost. Looking us over and seeing us in American uniforms, he smiled and invited us to come in. He introduced himself, speaking with a strong French accent. He was the minister of this little church which, too, had been badly damaged by the war. There were twenty some children, both boys and girls, sitting in a circle on the floor. They were all orphans, innocent victims of the war. The church was taking care of them. A small Christmas tree stood in the corner, lit with candlelights. As we sat there watching, the minister raised his hands to the children and they started singing *Silent Night* in Vietnamese. How beautiful! How touching! "Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas," we greeted one another. "Peace on earth," I added.

But there would be no peace on this tortured land for years to come. I left Vietnam shortly thereafter. Each time I read about that war, the devastation, the sufferings of the people, I recalled that unforgettable moment on Christmas Eve.

* * *

Time went on, another year, another Christmas. I was about to be discharged from the service. Before going back to the States, I decided to spend a few days in Hong Kong. I might not have another chance to visit this part of

the world for a long time. After arrival in that glamorous, busy metropolis of the British crown colony, I checked into a nice hotel on Queen Street. What a difference between here and the miseries and ruins of the war-torn Vietnam! Skyscrapers, crowded streets, sounds of tooting horns of endless automobiles, department stores jammed with holiday shoppers. On Christmas Eve, a friend of mine who worked for the American Embassy took me to a local bar frequented by GIs. We stayed there till almost midnight, nursing our drinks, watching the girls, and listening to the loud music. After we had finished our last drink, we paid our bills and edged our way out through the crowd—American GIs, British sailors, and local civilians. Just as we stepped out of the bar, we were surrounded by a group of children, all sticking their hands out for "cumshaw"—gifts—usually candies, chewing gum, cigarettes, or a few coins. My friend ignored them; but I distributed all the loose change I had. Just then, a grown-up man towering over all the little kids also reached out his hand toward me. I looked at him and said, "You're too old for this; you should be working." "Friend! Friend! I just want to shake hands with you and wish you a Merry Christmas," he yelled back. "Merry Christmas to you, too," I said and shook hands with him. When I got back to the hotel, my wrist watch was gone. Oh, well, 'twas Christmas; hope my "friend" liked the present, it was a steal!

* * *

It was a lovely autumn day in San Francisco, clear sky, gentle breeze, and the ringing of wedding bells. The year was 1958; I was getting married to a beautiful young lady. Our first and only child, a baby boy, was not born until nine years later on August 26, 1967. He was four months old on Christmas day that year. As usual, we decorated our Christmas tree and spread out the goodies. But there was something special on this Christmas: God had given us a precious gift. Life was never the same again—changing

diapers, bathing him, taking turns at night feeding him, and watching him grow. It was hard work, but we enjoyed every moment of it. His smile, his cry, his cute little dimples, his curious shiny eyes, they all became part of our lives. Holding the baby in her arms on his first Christmas Eve, my wife and I sat by the tree watching the twinkling lights and listening to the beautiful Christmas carol—

O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.



Olive and Ray Wong with their son, Christmas 1967.

Our son is now twenty-eight years old.

* * *

Seasons change, the world changes, life goes on. Balmy days, stormy nights, shiny paths, turbulent waters, they bring us joy and test our courage. Be it the height of hope or the depth of despair, keep your dreams alive, have faith in God. He will never forsake us. His love is eternal.

Merry Christmas
Peace on Earth
Good Will to All

Raymond Wong is secretary of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. Ray's heartwarming stories have appeared in several past issues of The Messenger; readers may best remember him for his unforgettable three-part "Journey East," which appeared in the January, February and March 1993 Messengers.

Eugene Taylor Writings Available in New J. Appleseed & Co. Publication

Jim Lawrence

To honor and celebrate the important achievement of Harvard-Radcliffe Swedenborg Chaplaincy, J. Appleseed & Co. has released a handsome commemorative edition of six talks given by a central force in our presence at Harvard University, Dr. Eugene Taylor, formerly a lecturer at both the Harvard Divinity and the Harvard Medical Schools. He is currently the director of the Cambridge Institute of Psychology and Religion.

Though not officially a member of the denomination, Eugene Taylor has long been a spiritual soulmate of the Swedenborgian Church, and few have done more for public outreach of Swedenborgian thought over the past fifteen years. Dr. Taylor has a longstanding relationship with the Cambridge Society and has delivered an impressive number of lectures and talks on many subjects over this period of time in our historic church adjacent to the Harvard campus. Dr. Taylor has also addressed audiences at numerous other Swedenborgian venues around the country on many special occasions. Six of the most significant of these have been produced in an attractive booklet, *The Life of the Spirit*.

The compilation presents a splendid array of style, ranging from two Epiphany sermons given at the Cambridge church to major addresses on such provocative themes as evil, spiritual education, and idealism. The 38-page elegantly designed booklet gives church members a brief but substantial piece of literature that is not only an excellent piece to give inquirers, but is a stimulating read for seasoned Swedenborgians as well. The Communications Support Unit (COMSU) is offering *The Life of the Spirit* to readers of *The Messenger* for \$5 (postpaid): J. Appleseed & Co., 3200 Washington St., San Francisco, CA 94115.

Forthcoming works from J. Appleseed & Co. include both short introductory pieces and in-depth book-length treatments to meet a variety of published literature needs as expressed by church leaders in a recent survey. Titles you can look forward to in the near future include two pamphlets that have been produced in response to a reading needs survey conducted by COMSU sent to all ministers and church presidents; one, by popular physicist-theologian Dr. John Hitchcock, presents the universal outlook of our faith; the other, a new work by Eugene Taylor, presents a Swedenborgian view of spiritual healing. A major work that has been in progress for some time is *An Overview to Swedenborg's Theology*, a substantial book by former Swedenborg School of Religion professor, Dr. Robert Kirven.

In addition, J. Appleseed has also overseen the re-design of the most popular pamphlet in recent times, *The Story of Swedenborg and the Swedenborgian Church*, originally by Vicky Dixon of Urbana College in 1976. It has now gone through numerous editions, and by the time you read this, a terrific looking new edition will be available from the Central Office (at no cost to member churches and centers). Other projects in some form of incubation are: a book of graces; a book of prayers by a Swedenborgian minister; and a pamphlet on a Swedenborgian view of the coming millennium.

We at COMSU are always vitally interested in hearing from church members what your reading needs are. We invite you to communicate to us by writing our chairperson, the Rev. Ernest Martin, 692 Spruce Dr., West Chester, PA 19382. □

There Is Only Light

James Lawrence

In a "Peanuts" comic strip, Lucy speaks to her brother Linus who listens with thumb in mouth and security blanket tucked against his ear. She says, "I'm going to tell you something I've never told anyone before. Do you see that hill over there? Someday I'm going over that hill and find the answer to my dreams. Someday I'm going over that hill and find happiness and fulfillment. I think, for me, all the answers to life lie over the grassy slopes of that hill."

Linus removes his thumb from his mouth, points toward the hill and responds, "Perhaps there's another little kid on the other side of that hill who is looking this way and thinks that all the answers to life lie on *this* side of the hill."

Impressed, Lucy studies Linus for a bit, then turns toward the hill and shouts: "**FORGET IT, KID!**"

Each Advent season, we stand facing such a hill, over which and beyond which we expect to receive Life. And actually, we have much more to go on than Lucy and Linus in our hopes that life in much greater abundance lies beyond the metaphorical hill. We have the momentous sign of a light, a great light. Isaiah in ancient days gave us the first advance report: "Those who walk in darkness have seen a great light." Later on, the Wise Men's hopes rested on the great light in the night sky, and they faithfully followed its path. The shepherds, while in the dead of night, suddenly stood bathed in a shining glory that overwhelmed them. And they knew the Savior was at hand. Lights surround the Christmas event.

As far as I'm concerned, the pagans came up with a terrific idea when they began a ritualization of

brightening up the long winter nights. The older I get, the more I am affected by the length of days. I just don't like it to be still dark at 7 o'clock in the morning and then dark again by 4:45 in the afternoon! I thrill to those summer days, when the sun rises before me by a good hour and lets me linger in its light until late in the evening.

I share this reaction of mine because I know it was shared by the ancients, and I know it is shared by most people I know. Something deep down inside us compels us to hang lights in our winter rituals: to make fires, not just for physical warmth, but for psychological comfort, to set candles all about, to string up colored lights.

I would like to share three thoughts about light shining in the darkness, three thoughts about the Light of Life that came to enlighten everyone, three thoughts about **LIGHT** for your Advent preparation.

There is Only Light

There is only light. All there is is light. This is not merely a religious proposition. This is the common understanding in physics at this point in scientific history. There is not a counter-substance called darkness. True darkness is the absence of light. Most of what we call darkness is actually very poor or weak light. It is light becoming very dim. A true absence of light is almost impossible to simulate, even in specially constructed chambers, and a real absence of light is death itself.

So there is only light. We know this to be true. But our knowing this has not had the kind of impact on our consciousness that it deserves. If we as a whole lived even one day with any sort of profound spiritual

interpretation of this truth, our world would never be the same. The spiritual quality of life here would be changed for good for the good.

All this is made of light. Light doesn't just shine on us, on objects of this material world, illuminating them; not only do we see everything and each other through the medium of light, but all the forms themselves that we see, and we ourselves, are forms of light. For what are these but light modified: broken down, refracted, stepped-down frequencies of energy over and against other frequencies of energy. Though it is complex, mathematical, and subtle, in reality it is all light itself. This is the presumption of modern physics.

But the significance of this stunning fact doesn't end there at all. The real significance for us is that this continuum of light continues right on into our interior reality, into our souls, which are, after all, in a seamless unity with physical reality. This emanating, adapting, communicating, creating energy carried throughout the creation by light permeates our inward, subjective lives as well. And what is this personal subjective aspect of light? Our consciousness—that which observes, feels, sees, knows that it exists and is alive, is also light itself. The energy of our core personality, the center of our spiritual selves is also light, though a spiritualized form of light. Light is radiant force and light is consciousness.

Light is God's Truth

Emanating Forth to Give Life

In the theological works of Swedenborg, there are at least 550 references to light, always pertaining to some aspect of the Lord's wisdom or truth. Heat and light are usually found together. The sun is the most

*Not only do we see everything and each other
through the medium of light, but all the forms themselves
that we see, and we ourselves, are forms of light.*

common metaphor in the writings for the Lord. Like God, the sun of our world is constantly sending forth warmth and light, causing everything to live and grow and be beautiful. The heat corresponds to His love; the light corresponds to His truth. Light is said to correspond to truth because it is by light that we see, it is by light that things are made clear—and that is the nature of truth; it is truth itself. The first words God says in the Bible are: “Let there be light.” (Genesis 1:3)

When we think of life in our world, we know that trees and plants and flowers need warmth to grow and flourish, but they also need light. Even if kept in ideal temperatures, without light they would grow pale and sickly and bear no fruit at all. So it is with our spirits. Without truth, we would make a terrible mess of everything. Nothing would work right, no good ends could be accomplished. Even with the best of intentions, even with hearts of gold, without truth we would be just as incapable of bearing fruit as sickly plants. Trees and plants, when deprived of light, are not only pale and sickly—they grow ugly and misshapen, losing proportion and beauty. So also with our spirits. It is truth which gives to our souls healthy and beautiful form. Beauty could not even be apprehended, even if it did exist, if it did not exist through light.

Swedenborg wrote a great deal about the quality of light in the various regions of heaven and how the quality of light corresponds with the beauty and attractiveness of the inhabitants there. In heaven, angels are stunningly beautiful. All of them!

They are beautiful because they love the truth. It is the truth that provides them with their form and gracefulness. Fallen spirits have hideous faces, Swedenborg writes with a sobering sadness. They have

cultivated a love for darkness rather than for light, and have become like those deformed plants. The weight and gravity of Advent is that the choice of what we want to do with the Light is up to us. A free gift. An open moment.

The Lord is constantly extending His light of truth to us. He gives it to us in a special form in the Word, where it is written: “The entrance of thy words give light.” Among numerous instances that could be quoted, Jesus said, “Everyone who does evil hates the light, and they do not come toward the light, lest their works be seen and reproved. But those who act in truth come into the light.” Advent is a time to consider again what we are about, and to re-dedicate our lives to the good.

The Light is a Person (and personal)

In *Arcana 4180*⁵, Swedenborg writes: “As concerns the origin itself of light, it was from eternity from the Lord alone; for the Divine good itself and the Divine truth, from which is the light, is the Lord. The Divine Human which was from eternity was that very light; and as this light could no longer affect the human race, the Lord willed to put on the Human itself through birth; for thus He could illuminate again [the spiritual lives of people.]”

There are many passages in the Word which will help us to understand how personal divine light is and can so seem to us: “The Lord God is a sun and a shield. . . . The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light. . . . And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. . . . In Him was

life, and the life was the light of all people.”

Perhaps you have had episodes with light like the time as a teenager when I was lying on the beach with my eyes closed and my face turned toward a brilliant noon sun. As I felt the goodness of the warmth and light, I could feel my interiors opening up, relaxing, expanding out toward that goodness. As this bliss continued for some time, I began to feel truly one with that light, and then I felt as strongly as I have ever felt it under other circumstances the presence of God: Someone loving me. Beyond all doubt for me in that episode, there was intelligence and love in that light, but it was so vastly transcending that I couldn't stay with it for long as soon as I identified how personally alive it was.

Such an encounter with a brilliant unearthly loving Light is the single most common denominator that people encounter in near-death experiences. They do not often see specific forms that represent God, but rather they find themselves directly in the presence of a Light that they know instinctively and without a slightest doubt to be God—a Light that is thrilling for them, a Light whose energy holds them in a love beyond anything they have known or can describe later.

The divine light that shines in Advent hearkening us to a coming glory is the light of the Person of God, a light that can become more personally healing and loving than we can now stand. But as always, this Light will respect our freedom to come at our own pace, to prepare for it or not to prepare for it, to seek it or not to seek it. The choice is always ours.

The Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence is co-minister at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church and manager of J. Appleseed & Co., a small-press publisher of books and pamphlets promoting contemporary expressions of Swedenborgian spirituality.

Reprinted sermon enclosure from the San Francisco Church's December 1992 newsletter.

Stewardship is Assuming Responsibility

Paul Martin

There are several aspects to stewardship. Stewardship certainly involves taking financial responsibility for our church centers. Many of our centers require financial assistance from the denomination and/or are running an annual deficit which will soon deplete their resources. One solution is for us all to give more to our church centers. The Rev. Eric Allison wrote a good article in the November 1995 *Messenger* on this aspect of stewardship. For some of our centers, those with close to balanced budgets, this alone may be the answer.

Most of our church centers, however, require a more drastic solution—a total reassessment of what it means to be a “church.” Our model for “church” is still an independent society owning its own large church building and employing its own full-time professional minister. This is our model, yet increasingly fewer of our centers actually fit this description. Some say we do not have enough ordained ministers to go around, but in fact, a majority of our clergy are not employed full-time by societies and almost all of our societies without ministers cannot afford to hire one. Sixty-five of our churches have disbanded since 1900, leaving about 45 currently listed in the *Journal*. Of these, only about 15—one-third—employ full-time ministers. Of those 15, only about four are financially self-sufficient and one of these does not own a building. We have perhaps only three church societies in North America that own their own building, employ a full-time minister, and are financially self-sufficient! Two of the three are not any larger or more active than most of our societies, just wealthier.

Most of our centers are trying to measure up to this old model we cling to of “church” even though it

fits very few of us and virtually guarantees failure for the rest of us. Until we radically change our idea of what it is to be a “Swedenborgian church” I fear we will continue to see our centers letting their ministers go, selling their buildings, and disbanding. Possibly the most critical aspect of stewardship is often overlooked—what we do with what we have. The Rev. Ernest Martin wrote an article in *The Messenger* in 1984 entitled “Time for Decision,” which estimated that there were a total of 2500 Swedenborgians controlling about 30 million dollars in total church assets (buildings, property and funds of local societies, associations, and the denomination). He was prompting us all to consider how we might best utilize these resources. Current estimates are that we now have about 1500 Swedenborgians with 75 million dollars in total assets, half as many members and more than twice as much money as a decade ago. Clearly, though we can all give more, money is neither the primary source of our problem nor the primary solution. Deeper change is necessary.

Possibly the most critical aspect of stewardship is often overlooked—what we do with what we have.

In his article, Martin quotes Marguerite Block, from her book *The New Church in the New World*, “The real trouble seems to be that the New Church as an organization is now old, and like the other old

churches, has an established body of traditions and dogmas with which it is loath to part. Whereas it was once ahead of orthodoxy in its scientific attitude and breadth of view, it is now exactly in the same place, and using exactly the same defense mechanisms to hold its firmly entrenched position. A large number in the New Church still seem, in spite of all that Swedenborg said, to believe in ‘salvation by faith,’ and to feel that doctrinal ‘soundness’ is the *sine qua non* of true religion.” And this was written about our church in 1932!

I believe the answer begins with taking responsibility for our decisions. We need to ask ourselves if we are being good stewards. If we inherited 75 million dollars today, is this what we would do with it? Would we buy the property and build the churches we now own? If we own a million dollar building or are putting a great deal of money into maintaining our building, and we don’t have the funds to hire a minister or to run programs, are we being good stewards? If we have precious doctrines of regeneration but are not facilitating people’s spiritual growth, are we good stewards of those doctrines?

It is apparent by now that what our churches are offering, at least in the current form, is not attracting hordes of people and/or money. That does not mean that the current form is inherently wrong, merely that not many people today are interested. If we admit that what we are doing is not working, then we are left with two possibilities: we lack the vision or the will, that is, we don’t know how to change or we don’t want to change. If the problem is that we don’t want to change, that is a legitimate choice but we will have to assume financial responsibility for that decision. This is not an opinion or an arbitrary judgment

by some church committee; it is simply fact. The denomination does not have the funds to grant current requests and the trend is that more of our churches will be requesting more money. Societies which choose not to change will have to give up the "church ideal" and look at other options, essentially downsizing to live within their means. This could be done by employing only a part-time minister, joining forces with another church, an association hiring a minister to serve two or more societies, selling property or a building to raise funds, etc. Each of our societies and associations will have to look at their own situation and decide what they want to do. There is no one right decision.

If the problem is a lack of vision—we want to change but don't know what to do—we should be getting together to brainstorm ideas, on local, association, and national levels. A substantial portion of our time together should be devoted to such considerations. We would have to stop kidding ourselves that tinkering with the worship service or springing for a newspaper ad is going to reverse our decline. We like to think that the New Church is a slight variation on the Christian Church as we know it. The New Church will be not only more different than we imagine, but more different than we can imagine. We need to start visioning what can be. We would have to be open to the possibility of radical change. It could mean selling all our buildings and starting over. It could mean abandoning the word "church" and calling ourselves spiritual growth centers. It could mean consolidating our resources to sponsor a few large high quality centers, or not having any high profile or expensive centers but emphasizing many small inexpensive local programs. It could mean focusing on church growth, or not worrying at all about soliciting new members but just serving the needs of people in our communities. I don't know what the outcome would be, but it would be painful and exciting. We would have to let go of some things while embracing others.

Everyone's ideas would need to be considered and a bold course of action decided upon.

Unfortunately, I have not seen much interest in even discussing such things in my 13 years of ministry. The statistics appear grim, so we avoid the subject. We say we want to grow, but we are not willing to even contemplate change. New ideas and projects are condemned as being not "Swedenborgian," meaning different from what we are used to, or as too expensive, while the tens of millions of dollars tied up in traditional churches goes unquestioned. I have noticed that a great deal of anger is generated whenever the reality of our situation is brought up. We are accused of being pessimistic and negative. Yet I am extremely optimistic about the potential future of our church! Paradoxically, I believe the

grim reality of our situation will be our salvation, for apparently we will not change until we are forced to. When we are ready to change, we have great potential. We have talented personnel, abundant financial resources, and an enlightened and enlightening theology.

Stewardship is a matter of taking responsibility for our church. If we like it the way it is, let's make it work by supporting it with our time, talents and money. If we have a vision of how we would like it to be, let's make it so by attending meetings, speaking up, writing letters, and then earmarking our donations to the specific projects we do support.

The Rev. Paul Martin is director of the Stonehouse Bookstore and Growth Center and chair of the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit. The foregoing is the second in a series of three articles being written on stewardship.

1995 Fryeburg Lecture Tapes Available

Readers of *The Messenger* are invited to order the set of audio taped lectures from the 1995 Fryeburg New Church Assembly summer session. Our themes this year were *Exodus* and *The Question of Evil*. A full order is for both weeks at \$24.00; the minimum order is for one week at \$12.00. Shipping and postage are included. Canadian currency will be accepted at par. Send your order with payment to: The Fryeburg New Church, 4 Oxford Street, Fryeburg, ME 04037.

Exodus

The Passover; Its Christian Significance
Rev. Dr. William Woofenden

After Sinai
Rev. Dr. George Dole

The Exodus and the Search for the Beloved
Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake

The Exodus: A Biblical Perspective
Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey

We Are Called by God
Rev. Dr. William Woofenden

The Plagues
Rev. Dr. George Dole

The Passover
Rev. Dr. George Dole

Being Called Out of Egypt
Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein

The Tabernacle
Rev. Dr. William Woofenden

The Question of Evil

Evil 101
Dr. Stephen Larsen

The Unpardonable Sin, I
Rev. John Elliott

Evil 102
Dr. Stephen Larsen

Dealing with Evil
Rev. Dr. William Woofenden

Peace at the Last
Judy Elliott

That Old Serpent
Rev. Dr. George Dole

Who, What, Why, Where, and When is Evil?
Lee Woofenden

The Unpardonable Sin, II
Rev. John Elliott

Thank You!

The Messenger and the Communications Support Unit wish to express our appreciation to all of you who have responded so generously to our fund appeal in the September and October *Messengers*. Total subscriptions and donations through November 5 are over \$2500, with over \$1200 added to the Messenger Endowment Fund. Our heartfelt thanks to the following:

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Marjory Wood Crawford Chesterton, Indiana	Helen Jackson Brockton, Massachusetts	John & Anne Perry Brunswick, Maine	Dorothy DeB Young S. Easton, Massachusetts
Forest & Margaret Dristy Oswego, New York	Cynthia James Bridgewater, Massachusetts	Nancy Perry Jackson, New Hampshire	<i>We also appreciate your warm written comments about The Messenger—to quote a few:</i>
August & Mary Ebel Annapolis, Maryland	Leon James Kailua, Hawaii	Velma Bates Ramirez Mayaguez, Puerto Rico	
Lori Edwards Kitchener, Ontario	Mr. & Mrs. Conner Jester Greenwood, Indiana	Joy Risser Apple Valley, California	
Lon Elmer Seattle, Washington	Florence Kearns San Jose, California	Ruth Robertson Victoria, British Columbia	<i>From Massachusetts—“I enjoy the articles in The Messenger so very much and look forward with much enthusiasm to each issue.”</i>
Hilda Epp Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	Margaret Kraus Pretty Prairie, Kansas	Mareta Saul Costa Mesa, California	<i>From California—“We enjoy The Messenger immensely. . . .”</i>
Dorothy Farnham DeLand, Florida	Marion Lorentzen Seattle, Washington	Margaret Schaefer Waterloo, Ontario	<i>From Indiana—“ . . . enjoyed September issue especially.”</i>
Adrienne Frank Westport, Connecticut	Ernest Martin West Chester, Pennsylvania	Margaret Schneider Cincinnati, Ohio	

How can you do \$50 worth of good with \$25? Be an early bird in SSR's 1995 fund drive.

Thanks to a new matching grant, if your pledge is among the first \$20,000 in pledges to the Swedenborg School of Religion, your gift will be matched in full.

The annual gifts that SSR receives are essential to the operating funds of this very busy place. Among the denomination's ministers now in active service, more than half were ordained within the past 15 years. At present, we have nine students preparing, either full-time or part-time, for ordination.

We cannot overemphasize our conviction that no gift is too small. The growing support of the church strengthens our awareness of our responsibility to provide a capable and devoted ministry—a recognition that we are in this venture together, and for the long haul.

We hope you're among those who make their gift count double, by pledging early. And thanks for your support in helping SSR convert a \$20,000 matching grant into \$40,000 of good for our churches' future.

SSR Current Funds:

(Both interest and principal can be used as needed.)

- **Blackmer Fund/Current:** This fund is used for computers and other equipment needed in the library.
- **Building & Grounds Fund:** For maintaining the property.
- **Student Aid and the Rev. J.P. Perry Funds:** Current funds to assist ordination-track students.
- **Library Development Fund:** A fund for equipment used to preserve valuable library materials deteriorating due to acid paper. Gifts in kind, such as equipment, are welcome.
- **Calvin E. Turley Fund:** A fund in memory of the Rev. Calvin E. Turley, for teaching field education.

SSR Endowment Funds:

(Only interest can be used as needed.)

- **Blackmer Fund/Endowment:** Same as above, adding to this fund's endowment value.
- **Correspondence Course Fund:** An endowment fund to support the teaching of SSR's correspondence courses.
- **Diaconoff/Tobisch/Young Funds:** Three endowment funds with a common purpose—to encourage practical ministry and spiritual growth. These funds are in honor of the Revs. Andre Diaconoff, Othmar Tobisch, and Robert L. Young.
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- **Endowment Fund:** This fund supports SSR's Preparation for Practical Ministry programs, Faculty Development, the Library, Archives, and continuing education services.
- **Timothy Otis Paine Fund:** An endowment fund in honor of the Rev. Timothy Otis Paine, for the general purposes of SSR.
- **Helen Keller Fund:** A student aid fund.
- **Leonore Dresser Poole Fund:** A fund in honor of Leonore Dresser Poole, for development of worship programs, the study of the arts for use in ministry, and for general purposes of SSR.
- **Richard H. Tafel, Sr., Fund:** Established in memory of the Rev. Richard H. Tafel, this fund is used to encourage the study of worship and theology, and to support teaching in these areas.
- **William F. Wunsch Memorial Library Fund:** A fund, in memory of the Rev. William F. Wunsch, for enhancement of SSR's library as a facility for scholarly research.

To discuss establishment of a new fund, contact Dr. Mary Kay Klein, president, SSR, 617-244-0504.

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Send contributions to: The Swedenborg School of Religion, 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158

New Titles from the Swedenborg Foundation

Recently released:

Charity: The Practice of Neighborliness by Emanuel Swedenborg, trans. William Wunsch (paper, 96 pages, \$6.95).

This trade-size edition features a new introduction by William R. Woofenden and Swedenborg's original paragraph numbers.

Gold From Aspirin: Spiritual Views on Chaos and Order from Thirty Authors, ed. Carol S. Lawson (paper, 192 pages, \$12.95).

The first volume in the *Chrysalis Reader* series, this richly illustrated book continues the fine tradition of the Foundation's journal *Chrysalis*. This collection includes essays by Gregory Baker, George Dole, Wilson Van Dusen, John Hitchcock, Zalman Schacter, Penny Pagliaro, and Wickham Skinner. (Reviewed in June 1995 *Messenger*).

Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam, by Henry Corbin, trans. Leonard Fox (paper, 168 pages, \$9.95).

This monograph contains two essays by Corbin: "Mundus Imaginalis, or Imaginary and the Imaginal," and "Comparative Spiritual Hermeneutics." In each essay Corbin explores connections between Swedenborg's works and the Islamic esoteric tradition.

Titles available this month:

A Thoughtful Soul: Reflections from Swedenborg, comp. and trans. George F. Dole (paper, 184 pages, \$11.95).

This revision of *A View from Within* includes new prefatory material, new selections, and two indices.

Testimony to the Invisible: Essays on Swedenborg, ed. James F. Lawrence (paper, 200 pages, \$11.95).

This important book features significant essays, many from *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision*, that explore Swedenborg's influence as a mystic and original thinker. Authors include Jorge Luis Borges, Czeslaw Milosz, Wilson Van Dusen, Kathleen Raine, D.T. Suzuki, and Colin Wilson.

Holiday special sale, prices good through February 1996:

Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision, ed. Robin Larsen (576 pages, over 400 color and b/w illustrations). \$10.00 paperback, \$15.00 hardback.

Swedenborg's Journal of Dreams, 1743-1744, Commentary by Wilson Van Dusen. (paper, 196 pages). \$5.00.

Johnny's Trail, by Anne E. Crompton. Children's book about Johnny Appleseed. (hardcover, 112 pages). \$2.00.

The Holy Center, A Biblical Path to the Presence Within, by Dorothea Harvey. (paper, 128 pages). \$2.00.

Poems from Swedenborg, by Leon C. LeVan. (paper, 167 pages). \$3.00.

Emanuel Swedenborg: Scientist and Mystic, by Signe Toksvig. (hardback, 389 pages). \$2.00.

Swedenborg: Life and Teaching, by George Trobridge, Revised by Richard H. Tafel and Richard H. Tafel, Jr. (hardback, 176 pages). \$10.00.

Three monographs for \$15.00:

Sampson Reed: Primary Source Material for Emerson Studies, Compiled by George F. Dole (60 pages).

Swedenborg and Kant: Emanuel Swedenborg's Mystical View of Mankind and the Dual Nature of Humankind in Immanuel Kant, by Gottlieb Florschütz, translated by George F. Dole. (32 pages).

With Absolute Respect: The Swedenborgian Theology of Charles Carroll Bonney by George F. Dole. (48 pages).

Specials on large-print books:

Heaven and Hell, by Emanuel Swedenborg, translated by George F. Dole. (hardback, 850 pages). \$5.00.

My Religion, by Helen Keller. (hardback, 202 pages). \$3.00.

— To order, call the Swedenborg Foundation at 1-800-355-3222 —

New Church Women's Symposium a Success

Three hundred sixty-one women attended the second New Church Women's Symposium held March 31–April 2, 1995, in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. More than one third of the women were from other states and from Canada and England.

The symposium opened with the keynote address, "Women as Warriors of the Heart: Embracing Change, Conflict, and Each Other," presented by Suzanne Bernhardt, Dean of Women at the Academy College. Thirty-three workshops were given, with topics that included women's influence in the business world, the healing art of dance, the church as our mother, women in the priesthood, grandmothering, sexuality, and prayer in relationships. The two panel discussions offered were, "Finding a Balance: Female Influence in the Church" and "Stages of Life and Turning Points."

Tapes of the Women's Symposium (panel discussions and many of the workshops) are available from the General Church Sound Recording Library, Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009; phone (215) 947-1889. Call or write for a description of the 23 titles. You can purchase (\$3 each) or borrow. Hours are Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m. to 12 noon, or leave a message.

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Louise Woofenden

Keeping Christmas

In the 1920s, *The Messenger* was a weekly, and its editor was the Rev. E. M. Lawrence Gould, son of a Canadian New Church minister. In a time when the usual Christmas message was very lengthy and doctrinal, Mr. Gould's editorials were brief and original. These two paragraphs, both of which deal with words in which we describe the meaning of Christmas, were the lead articles for the December 23, 1925, *Messenger*.

* * *

We commonly speak of "keeping" or "observing" Christmas. Whatever the meaning we in fact attach to them, the words are unfortunately chosen. Both look backward. It is true that the basis of Christmas is a past event; had not the Lord actually come among men to redeem them, no man could then or since have escaped reversion to a worse state than that of the beast. But while we may properly say that our Lord was our redeemer, we cannot say in the same sense that he *was* our savior. The only salvation that counts is what takes place now. The highest angel and the soul just beginning to be reborn depend alike on his constant help and presence. What he did for us once avails us nothing except as he does it now and hereafter. Moreover the Lord could and did redeem us without any effort of ours; he can save us only with our full cooperation. He was born for the first time apart from us, although of our flesh and blood;

he can be born a second time only with and in us. And though the first coming alone made the second possible, it is nonetheless the second which is our chief and immediate concern.

"Keeping" Christmas is therefore of value only as it inspires us to *make* Christmas, to find in sweet memories and hallowed associations a new impetus toward bringing the spirit of the Christ once more to earth in our daily lives.

* * *

The essence of Christmas is rightly seen by the world to consist in giving, but how little is giving itself understood! For instance, we recognize when we stop to think of it that we are not giving when we expect a return. To say we "exchange gifts" with another is really a contradiction in terms. But more than that, money and what it buys can never be gifts in any case. We can give only what is ours, and material things are not ours; they are the Lord's and are held in trusteeship for him. When therefore we dispense these where they will be useful we are faithful stewards; when we "give" them otherwise we are unfaithful—that is all. The only things that we really own are our love and the thoughtful kindness to which love alone can lead. By using whatever outward things are available as means of conveying these, we may become truly givers, and the spirit of Christmas may find lodgment in us. But how much of our Christmas giving really meets this test?

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A LIGHTER MOMENT

I asked my children's class at church this question, "What gifts did the wise men give to baby Jesus?"

To which a little boy matter-of-factly answered, "Gold, Frankenstein and myrrh."

—Sherry Fisk
Northwood, Missouri





This Christmas, Give a Gift for the Spirit!



Are you wondering what to give your children, grandchildren, or children of a friend or neighbor? Instead of giving them something that brings ten minutes of entertainment before being discarded, why not give something that will remain in their spirit for eternity.



RAINBOW COLORS IN THE WORD

is a book for juniors. Children who like to know 'Why?' will enjoy this introduction to color. Colors are part of their natural world. Colors are found in their Bibles. Colors relate to their feelings. Here is a basic correspondence of colors with pictures and puzzles and a thoroughly readable text. Adults will find it entertaining and informative.

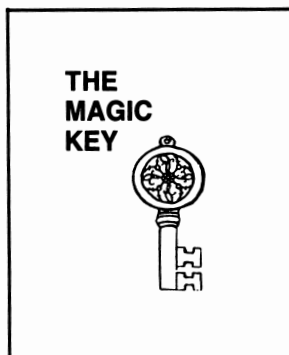
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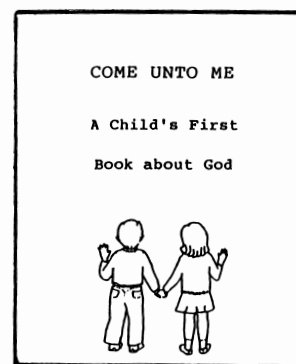
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COME UNTO ME

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Book about God

COME UNTO ME is a book for little children, those who like sharing a book with mother or grandpa. It introduces, one page at a time, simple Swedenborgian philosophy about God, Heaven, the Lord's prayer, work and love. A little book to read to your little boy or girl, or use as a classroom supplement. There are twelve topics, each with a picture to color.

It is written by Joyce Fekete (your Aunt Joyce of *Five Smooth Stones*). Introduced at Convention 1991, it is in its second printing.

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FIVE SMOOTH STONES is a bi-monthly paper for children, ages five to eleven. Stories, Bible lessons, puzzles, handwork, pictures to color and letters to share with Aunt Joyce.

This is a children's paper that will enrich family time. It will bring Swedenborgian teachings into your home if you are isolated members. Teachers will find it useful in their classes.

Single subscriptions are \$4.50 per year
Special rates for Sunday Schools.

Yarmouthport Church Seeks Minister

A sense of history, tradition and faith unfold in viewing the Yarmouthport church, which celebrates the 125th anniversary of its dedication this month.

The white wooden Gothic Church was dedicated December 27, 1870, by the Yarmouth Society which has been gathered since 1843. The church can accommodate up to 300 worshippers. An oak and chestnut vaulted ceiling and delicately frescoed walls frame the chancel's fine black walnut pulpit, communion table and baptismal font. The church also boasts a Clarke Tracker organ. A spacious basement room and smaller rooms complete the church's interior.

The inviting two-story, four-bedroom antique parsonage beckons a minister to serve the congregation on a full or part-time basis. Since the retirement of its most recent minister, the Rev. Clayton Priestnal, the congregation has lured ministers for its summer services in exchange for a Cape Cod vacation at its parsonage. Although the endeavor has been successful, the ideal would be to have a resident minister with roots in the community.

Tradition more than innovation appeals to the congregation, who view the Swedenborgian faith as a spiritual boon to the twentieth century society and culture. Ocean air, Cape Cod charm and Yankee hospitality complete the package. Cape travelers on Old Kings Highway, Route 6A, are made to feel welcome at our summer Sunday services, which are followed by a light repast in the parsonage. A minister, new members and guests constitute our own vision of a Pilgrim's progress in future years of service and renewal.

Enquiries for the Yarmouth Society ministry should be addressed to Walter Chapin, 11 Studley Road, South Yarmouth, MA 02664, or made by phone to (508) 398-3323.

Passages

Birth

Mounce—Zachary Ryan Mounce, second son of Robert and Connie Mounce, was born September 24, 1995, in Haysville, Kansas. Robert was confirmed in the LaPorte, Indiana Swedenborgian Church and occasionally attends the Pawnee Rock church in Kansas.

Confirmation

Stankus—Christine Stankus was welcomed into the membership of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church October 1, 1995.

Marriages

Gallagher and Lange—Fawn Gallagher and Kristofer Lange were united in marriage September 9, 1995, at the Almont New Church Retreat and Conference Center in Allenton, Michigan, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating. Kris is the son of Sylvia Lange of St. Paul, Minnesota. Both are long-time participants in the Almont programs.

Lange and Kemp—Sara Lange of St. Paul and Adrian Kemp of New York City were united in marriage August 26, 1995, at the Virginia Street (Swedenborgian) Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Revs. Kit Billings and Trevor Hausske officiating. Sara is the daughter of Sylvia Lange, both members of the Virginia Street church.

Tukos and Sbrocco—Rachael Tukos and Greg Sbrocco were united in marriage August 26, 1995, at the LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating. Rachael is the daughter of Richard and Pat Tukos.

Deaths

Avery—Nathan Avery, 21, entered the spiritual world September 8, 1995, due to an automobile accident. A memorial service was conducted September 11, 1995, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating. Nathan's parents were Renee Avery Murray of LaPorte, and George and Eva Avery, members of the LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana.

Schrader—Lydia Cutler Schrader, 90, longtime member of the Virginia Street (Swedenborgian) Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, entered the spiritual world September 4, 1995. A resurrection service was conducted September 15, the Rev. Kit Billings officiating. Lydia was lovingly remembered for her work in the church, as a research librarian and as director of the local Planned Parenthood Association. After complications arose from Alzheimer's disease, she spent her later years in California and Arkansas. She is survived by her four children—Bill, Ernst, Jr., Marna, and Emilie.

Important Church Calendar Dates

December 2-3

General Council/Cabinet/National Church Trustees—Washington, D.C.

January 12-14

FPRSU/AFC—Ft. Myers Beach, Florida

February 16-20

Com ExCom—Newton

March 17-19

CAM—Newton

March 22-24

GOSU/PMSU/EdSU—Almont, Michigan

June 26-30

Convention 1996—Urbana, Ohio

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.

SSR Board Elects New Chair

At the SSR fall board meeting, Dick Hatheway was elected chair of the board, and Tom Peebles and Bob Reber were named to the newly reformulated Cambridge Church Liaison Committee. Barb Penabaker and Eric Allison are alternates, in case Tom or Bob has a schedule conflict and cannot attend a meeting.



(From left): Bob Reber, Eric Allison, Tom Peebles, Alice Skinner, Karen Feil, Barb Penabaker, Dick Hatheway, Horand Gutfeldt, Erni Martin. Missing from photo: Edwin Capon, Esther-Nicastro Capon, Jerry Poole, Dick Stansbury).

Photo taken by Mary Kay Klein.

Creating Inner Sacred Spaces

The theme of Convention 1996 is "*Serve the Lord with Gladness.*" The Education Support Unit (EdSU) is planning a 1996 pre-convention workshop titled, "*Creating Inner Sacred Spaces.*" This workshop will offer creativity, small group sharing, meditation, prayer, and approaches for healing body, mind and spirit. It will also include ways of using the learnings in one's personal and church life. Through exploring and expanding ourselves, we awaken to "*Serve the Lord with Gladness.*"

The workshop will begin Sunday evening, June 22, 1996 and will (tentatively) conclude just before lunch on Wednesday, June 25th. The cost of the workshop will be \$75 per person. Reserve this time on your calendar now. Brochures and registration will be available in March 1996. For further information, call or write Lorraine Sando, 1518 SW 130th Street, Seattle, WA 98146. Telephone: (206) 242-7354.

**The Swedenborgian Church
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