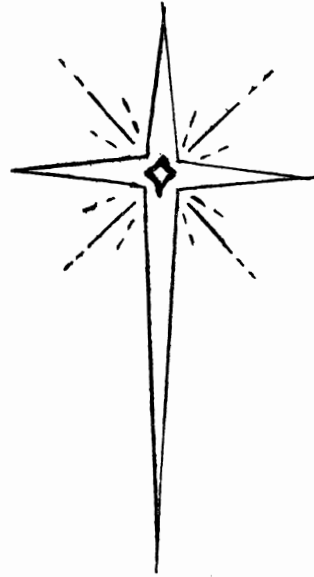


The Messenger

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH
DECEMBER 1976

And lo, *as*
the Star, *as*
which they saw
in the East, *as*
went before them
till it came *as*
and stood *as*
over where the
young Child
was. *as*

MATTHEW II. 9



EDITORIAL

The Season of Hope

Webster defines hope as, "Desire with expectation of obtaining what is desired; trust, reliance, ground or source of happy expectation." I like that definition, especially the last part, "source of happy expectation."

Do we look forward to Christmas 1976 with this kind of happy expectation? As we look at our life and envision our future, what exactly are we hoping for? A white Christmas, a full mailbox, a few moments of peace and quiet with nobody asking for anything, health for our families, a new pair of slippers, some happy times with friends and family that will become the golden memories of tomorrow! These are the slender, modest threads of our hoping on the "natural" level of life. Without these threads life would be dreary indeed. The Hebrew word for hope has the root meaning of "to twist" or "to twine", and is related to the word *kiven* which means a spiderweb. So much of our hoping has this spiderweb quality to it — this quality of incredible strength and spectacular beauty spinning out of our ordinary, insignificant daily affairs. We live in and by a network of hopes each one lending strength to the others, and all of them somehow supporting us, leading us into the future.

So much of our behavior — what we say and how we live — is shaped by our hopes and aspirations. In a very real sense we live as we hope. The prophecies we make for ourselves are eventually fulfilled. Check this out in your own experience. When your hopes are realistic and valid they eventually come true.

What then is the nature of our Christmas hope? Like love, it is impossible to adequately define or describe hope. Words and thoughts always limit spiritual realities. But we can try to picture hope.

It has something to do with birth — the unexpected birth of new attitudes, new ways of looking at the world, new found strength to face the complexities of life.

It has something to do with peace — the kind of peace that floods our soul with feelings of equanimity and goodwill despite hard onslaughts from the outside world.

And mystery is a part of hope — prophecies, magi, stars, angels, shepherds, heavenly music. Ours is a practical, rational age. We want to understand everything, which leaves little room for mystery . . . and hope.

Ultimately, hope has everything to do with God. The Source of our being, the Giver of Life, holds our destiny in His hands. This being the case, we can hope, with confidence, that all is well for time and eternity.

May the peace and joy of Christmas be yours.

P.Z.

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Rose Sanders)

THE MESSENGER

December 1976

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Paul B. Zacharias, Editor

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The Starting Line

Eric Zacharias

ON CABBAGES AND A KING

Words heaped upon words, this election year. Bureaucratic machinery of ever enlarging dimensions casting lengthening shadows over freedoms slowly being choked by thorns of spreading legalisms. "I just don't know!" Into these few words, often heard today, are packed a variety of feelings — those of frustration, of longing hope, of an almost over-whelming complexity of life.

We now prepare to celebrate the Incarnation, the birth of our Lord into this world. Wherein lies the blessing of this event?

The prophet Isaiah's words leap out to us in a bold declaration: "of the increase of his government. . . there shall be no end. . . The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Is our society, then, to bear the weight of an increasingly burdensome divine government? Will the world community be forcibly pressed into the divine mold? ". . . of the increase of his government there shall be no end."

Yes, indeed, there is a divine government that threads its way through all human affairs, that seeks to lead all response to the source of creation. "The Divine Providence is the Government of the Lord's Divine Love and Wisdom." Every life is touched — guiding, healing, stirring, moving — and each of us is permitted to act as of ourself and to discover for ourself that the more we become our own the more we truly become the Lord's — not held in bondage by a restrictive government but bonded to Him in loving partnership. This must surely be the highest, noblest function of government. "He who lives in good and believes that the Lord rules the universe . . . can be endowed with heavenly freedom and peace . . . Whereas he who believes that he rules himself is continually disquieted." A.C. 2892

May, then, the increase of his government and peace be the blessing of this Christmas Season for His church and for all the world.

This fall and early winter have been busy. Representing Convention, I have attended and participated in the annual meetings of the Pacific Coast Association in Los Angeles, the Ohio Association in Pittsburgh, the meetings of the Board of Education, the Planning and Development Committee, and the Kansas Association Retreat. I consecrated Mr. Henry Korsten into the office of Lay Minister in accordance with the request of the Edmonton Society and the vote of Convention in Philadelphia this past July.

I pause here for a moment. It was a privilege for me to arrive in Edmonton early afternoon of October 22nd and, at once, find a place at the table at which were present Mr. and Mrs. John Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. David Sonmor, Mr. and Mrs. Lee Sonmor, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Tremblay, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Korsten, Dr. Robert Kirven and Dr. William Woofenden. The training course for the Lay Ministry, under the supervision of the Swedenborg School of Religion, is intense and deals in some depth with those areas important to ministry. To see and to share for some hours in the work that is being accomplished in Edmonton was an inspirational experience.

On Sunday morning, October 24th, before a large company of members and friends, Henry Korsten was consecrated into the Lay Ministry. We wish him well and so may the Lord lead him into a fully satisfying service.

I also had opportunity during this Western Canada visit to spend a day with the Rev. Henry Reddekopp in Saskatoon, Sask. Here Mrs. Wiebe opened her home to us for an evening gathering. I wish to express my appreciation to all the people in both Edmonton and in Saskatoon for their warm and gracious hospitality.

We move on. Our Board of Education is planning and sponsoring some innovative, creative church programs. The leadership within the Board, joined by others with specific kinds of skills, has conducted conferences for retirees and has ventured also into the area of conferences for women. This is an effort on the part of the Church to address itself to the concerns of today's world. Within the Church, we are beginning to build a base of resources and skills that makes it possible for us to respond in a more helpful way to those uses that serve the Church within us.

A filmstrip portraying the message of the Wayfarers' Chapel through photography, music and narration is nearing completion and will be available for distribution throughout Convention very soon. This project, professionally done under the supervision of the Chapel ministers, Ernest Martin and Harvey Tafel, will surely serve us as an exciting resource.

I had opportunity to read the script for the above mentioned filmstrip and was struck by the following quote, "The Chapel is a memorial to Emanuel Swedenborg, whom Emerson classed with Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe as the 'unfading petals five which compose the world's perfect flower'."

Mrs. Zacharias joins me in wishing for each of you all the blessings of this Holy Season.

CHRISTMAS READINGS



He came once in the flesh that He might come forever in the spirit. He was born once in the city of David, that he might be born in every man who will receive Him. If he has been born in us, even though He can find no room in us but a manger, and no swaddling clothes but the few and tender spiritual truths we have learned in childhood, we can have our Christmas. We can join our voices with the angels in singing, "Glory to God in the highest!" We can welcome Him to such homes as we have in our hearts. They are poor homes, it is true, and scantily supplied with the heavenly furniture of holy affections. But He will come wherever there is a place to lay His Divine Head.

Chauncey Giles

In fact, we are living in a world which would not know what to make of the love of God if seen in the flesh. We say to ourselves, "If Christ were to come to earth today, would we not also fail to recognize Him? Or might we not be like that army 'officer' who admitted that if he were the military governor of Palestine today and Christ were to come again, he would have to execute him again?"

The very fact that we raise this as a hypothetical question shows how attenuated Christianity has become. We say, "If Christ were among us today . . ." He is among us today. He is living power in the world. We treat him as the world has always treated Him; but He is born in us today, nevertheless. We say to ourselves that it cannot possibly happen, but it has happened. And it does happen.

David Roberts

"Christmas is a festival which brings us together in small groups, a family group if we are lucky. We are not just nameless people in a crowd. We meet as friends who are glad to be together and who care about each others happiness. Nowadays this is a precious experience. So much of the time we feel that our lives are dominated by great impersonal forces beyond our control, the scale of things and organizations seem to get bigger and more inhuman. Then Christmas comes and once again we are reminded that people matter and it is our relationship with one another that is important. Jesus showed that what people are and what they do does matter, and does make all the difference."

H. M. The Queen

THE MORNING STAR

The following Christmas thoughts were written long ago by Gwynne and David Mack, but seem fully appropriate today when we are deeply praying for health and wholeness among human beings, and peace throughout our world:

"Peace on earth . . . good will . . ." How inseparable they are! We have no peace without good will; where there is good will, there is peace. The world is working desperately now for peace; but where is the good will? What is good will? Isn't it simply the *willing* of good? Not wishing, but willing! To will is to set in motion the wish.

There can't be good will among men while there is suspicion, intolerance, greed; nor can there be peace. Let us remember that man is not an isolated phenomenon, nor a static one. The earliest Americans were Indians, the next were immigrants. The "Democratic" party began as "Republican." The original Christians were Jews; the first Protestants were Catholic. Negroes did not choose to live in the United States; they were brought.

So we came from somewhere else; but we are all searching for the same thing: a peaceful way of life. We all belong to one human race which must use one earth. There are two ways of doing this: by dominating as much of the earth as possible, each for himself; or by insuring free use of earth's opportunities to every living man. To do the latter is to have good will. It is humanity's one hope for peace on earth. It is what Christmas is trying to teach us.

At year's end, and beginning of the new, these few days of Christmas shine upon us like the morning star, lighting the way between past and future. And in this radiance we give more gladly, receive more appreciatively, respond more to the loveliness of music and color and light.

The meaning of Christmas is not understood by everyone, but it is felt in the heart of the whole world. The festivity and joys are shared by those of many faiths and by those of no faith at all. That this is so, tells us the reason for this special time.

It is a time for reminding the human race where it came from, where it should be going and how it is to get there. It is a time for remembering the knowledge renewed in mankind with that first Christmas — the knowledge that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein . . . We are His people."

We are all His people, each one in every far corner of the earth — tall or short, ignorant or wise, light-skinned or dark, Christian or pagan, those who dwell in jungles or cities or tenements or mansions — all human beings belong to God.

And so Christmas comes again and again, gently stirring in our depths the remembrance of this belonging, the sense of oneness with all the others who belong.

May each new year bring our world closer to the understanding which alone can turn this momentary radiance into permanent warmth and light.

Then the love which we feel at Christmas will be more than a morning star twinkling briefly on those we know. It will be the full and widening brightness of the day, enfolding all the earth and every person who dwells therein.



This prayer was broadcast across Outer Space by humans circling the moon for the first time, in Apollo 8 on Christmas Eve 1968:

"Give us, O God, the vision which can see thy love in the world in spite of human failure. Give us the faith, the trust, the goodness, in spite of our ignorance and weakness. Give us the knowledge that we may continue to pray with understanding hearts, and show us what each of us can do to set forth the coming of the day of universal peace. — Amen"



THE MANGER MOUSE

He opened a window in the straw
And poked out his nose, two ears and a paw,
And all of midnight filled the skies,
Except where two dots were his eyes.

He saw the glory around the manger
And knew that something so much stranger
Than he had ever seen before
Had come in at the stable door.

The Light spread out to darker places,
And fired the garnets in the faces
Of goats and sheep . . . and all the cows
Wore amber jewels at their brows.

He stared at eyes that watched from under
Horns and fleece, and gazed with wonder;
Unaware the Light had thrown
Starry diamonds into his own.

Ralph W. Seager

CHRISTMAS EVE

"We hurried on, our heads bent against the wind, to the cluster of lights ahead that was 149th Street and Westchester Avenue, and those lights seemed to me the brightest lights I had ever seen. Tugging at my father's coat, I started down the line of pushcarts . . . I would merely pause before a pushcart to say, with as much control as I could muster, 'Look at that chemistry set!' or 'There's a stamp album!' or, 'Look at the printing press!' Each time my father would pause and ask the pushcart man the price. Then without a word we would move on to the next pushcart. Once or twice he would pick up a toy of some kind and look at it and then at me, as if to suggest this might be something I might like, but I was ten years old and a good deal beyond just a toy; my heart was set on a chemistry set or a printing press. There they were on every pushcart we stopped at, but the price was always the same and soon I looked up and saw we were nearing the end of the line. Only two or three more pushcarts remained. My father looked up, too, and I heard him jingle some coins in his pocket. In a flash I knew it all. He'd gotten together about seventy-five cents to buy me a Christmas present, and he hadn't dared say so in case there was nothing to be had for so small a sum. As I looked up at him I saw a look of despair and disappointment in his eyes that brought me closer to him than I had ever been in my life. I wanted to throw my arms around him and say, 'It doesn't matter . . . I understand and . . . This is better than a chemistry set or a printing press . . . I love you.' But instead we stood shivering beside each other for a moment — then turned away from the last two pushcarts and started silently home . . . I didn't even take his hand on the way home nor did he take mine. We were not on that basis. Nor did I ever tell him how close to him I felt that night — that for a little while the concrete wall between father and son crumbled away and I knew that we were two lonely people struggling to reach each other."

Robert Raines.

Christmas is
Love!

I REMEMBER CHRISTMAS!

Christmas is a special time for loving and giving — and for storing good “remains” in little children. It is the Lord who builds such remains, of course, but parents can do much to help.

My first clearly remembered Christmas came four months before my fifth birthday, at one of Grandpa's small farms in northern Vermont. It was cold and blustery outside, with snow falling in chunks, it seemed to me; but at the breakfast table, John, three and a half, and I, warm and cozy, listened attentively as Papa read the Christmas story from Luke: we were expecting a new baby in our own family before long! Then after breakfast, the “parlor” doors were opened, and we were so amazed at something not there when we went to bed that we did not think of presents — perhaps because neither recalled previous Christmases. It was a fragrant tree, festooned with popcorn and candy chains, and glistening with shiny ornaments — and each of us had a present. John a gay sled big enough for two, and I a beautiful jointed doll, clad in one of my own baby dresses.

That doll was my pride and joy for years. I bathed and dressed it, combed its hair, “fed” it and put it to bed — in general treating it as I had watched Mama care for my siblings. And I named her Dottie, for little sister Dorothy, one year and a half, who had gone to heaven the previous summer.

About two years later, I remember waking one winter night only an hour or so after going to bed. The house was quiet and dark except for the kitchen lantern, visible through the doorway near my bed, and suddenly I knew that I had not given Dottie her supper. I realized that she was not a real baby, but thought: “If I can forget to feed Dottie now, when I am grown up, I might have a real baby I would forget, and that would be awful.” Though reluctant to leave the warm bed, I made myself crawl out, and running barefoot across the cold dining - room floor to the kitchen, sought Grandma's cookie jar. It was out of reach, but I snatched a cracker someone had left on the table, and hurried, shivering, back to bed and Dottie, and proceeded to feed her. She always wanted me to share her meals, but she had the first of every bite!

Since those long ago days I have often recalled this first remembered instance of a dawning conscience; and today when I see the clutter of toys some children have, I realize what a privilege it was to own one prized possession. It must be confusing to a young mind to be faced with so many choices, and difficult to develop a sense of order, of loyalty, and responsibility. The “remains” of a clutter are not good ones!

In the Christmas message of the celebrated newscaster, Harry Reasoner, four years ago, among other things he said:

“If Christmas is the anniversary of the appearance of the Lord of the Universe in the form of a helpless baby, it's quite a day . . . People are afraid of God and His very bright light; but everyone has seen babies, and almost everyone likes them — so if God wanted to be loved as well as feared, He moved correctly . . . also if He wanted to be intimately a part of man . . . For the experience of birth and familyhood is our most intimate and precious experience . . . It is the story of the great innocence of God, God in the power of man; and it is such a dramatic shot toward the heart that if it is not true, for the Christian nothing is true . . . It is all right that so many Christians are touched only once a year by this incomparable story, because some final, quiet Christmas morning, the touch will take.”

Such a statement means *good* remains. (AC 561)

Alice Sechrist

BIBLE STUDY NOTES

by

Anita S. Dole

A beautiful and special Christmas gift — Anita Dole's first of six volumes entitled, “Bible Study Notes”, in attractive gold lettering, handsomely bound in red cloth, 429 pages, priced at \$6.75 plus 75 cents for postage and handling. Approximately two weeks for delivery. Order yours now from:

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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Board of Managers, S.S.R.	Dec. 3 — 4
Rededication of Cambridge Chapel	Dec. 5
Board of Missions, Newton	Dec. 6 — 7
General Council, Urbana	Jan. 20 — 22
Dept. of Publications, Phila.	Feb. 17 — 19
Florida Conference, DeLand	Feb. 19 — 23
C.O.M. Executive Committee, Newton	March 2 — 3
Planning and Development, Newton	March 20 — 22
General Convention, San Francisco	June 29 — July 3

THE LEGEND OF THE LAY MINISTERS' LABORATORY or the Edmonton Educational Epic

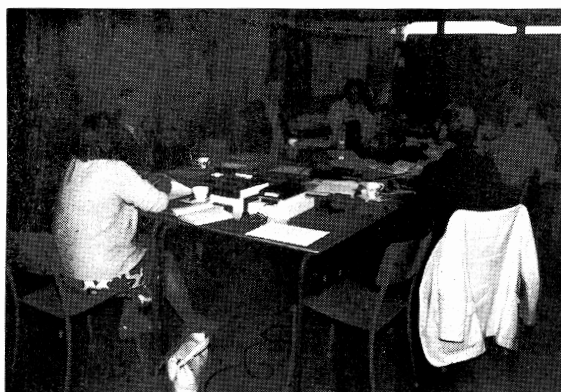
William R. Woofenden

On October 21, 1976, Dr. Robert H. Kirven and Dr. William R. Woofenden left Logan Airport, Boston, en route to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada to conduct the fifth of a series of semi - annual Lay Ministers' Training Sessions, sponsored by the Western Canada Conference and Convention's Augmentation Fund, and staffed by faculty members of the Swedenborg School of Religion. It was a good session, all agreed, the next to last in what has evolved into a three - year program: one which Western Canada Conference sincerely hopes can become a prototype for future such programs, not only in their area but wherever needed throughout Convention.

The study program began at 9:00 o'clock Friday morning in the parish hall of the Edmonton church, and did not adjourn until well after 9:00 o'clock that night. Saturday the intensive program continued at the same pace and again went well into the evening hours. Convention President Eric Zacharias had meanwhile joined the group, for it was also planned that he should consecrate Henry Korsten into the office of Lay Minister on Sunday morning. It was a beautiful service in a well filled church, followed by a congregational luncheon honoring Hank. As soon as the meal was cleared away, back to work went the participants in the Lay Ministers' Training Session. It was early evening before the last word was said, the last cassette recorder unplugged, and then the luxury of a relaxed evening of good fellowship. Monday the SSR team again boarded a jet, arriving in Logan about 8:30 p.m. It took a day or two to stop vibrating.

How did all this get started? It goes back about five years. In February 1972 President Edwin Capon of SSR responded to a letter from Edmonton and in March went there and began planning ways to meet the needs of lay leaders for training in the skills of ministry. In June, 1972 SSR sent Rev. Drs. Calvin E. Turley and Robert H. Kirven to spend three days with the Lay Council of the Edmonton Church. This session was broadly exploratory, and while clarifying some aspects it also pointed up the need for extensive planning before commitments could be made. Meanwhile, Convention had accepted the invitation of the Western Canada Conference to hold its 1973 sessions in Edmonton, so a new priority took over temporarily.

It was late in 1973 before new steps were taken, in the form of a proposed seven - year program of study — largely the work of Mrs. Paul (Gertrude) Tremblay. It was her belief that "we should recognize that spiritual qualities tend to develop as one grows older, and that some of our best ministerial material will come from those who did not discover this interest in time to take advantage of . . . residence at SSR." Thus the proposed program would not be competitive with SSR's program, but would serve to augment it and help alleviate ministerial shortages in areas where fulltime ministries could not be supported. By June of 1974 a consensus had been reached and a compromise worked out, namely, a telescoping of the original plan into a trial three - year program. The hope then envisioned was that SSR supply teams for intensive sessions twice a year,



(l. to r.) Gertrude Tremblay, John Jeffrey, Paul Tremblay, Muriel Bennett, John Bennett, George Dole, John Sawchuk, Dave Sonmor

and that one or two other three - day meetings also be held but that they be staffed by local talent (University of Alberta faculty, counselling service personnel, etc.).

Meanwhile a severe blow had been dealt to the program planning by the untimely death of Vincent Almond, long a leader in the life of the church in Western Canada. It was thus with mixed emotions — a poignant regret that Vince would not see this dream come true, along with a quiet joy that the way now seemed opened for the dream to become a reality — that definite plans were made for the First Regional Training Session to be conducted by SSR at Edmonton in October 1974.

It was Dr. Cal Turley and Dr. George Dole who boarded the jet that time. Responding to the three - year plan, the areas dealt with included (1) conduct of worship services, (2) preparation of sermons, (3) planning and leading funeral services, (4) basic principles of pastoral care, and (5) doctrinal study. As a means of facilitating review both for participants and staff, all sessions were tape recorded. Followup in the weeks afterward were also handled by cassette tapes. The signed - up participants (those taking it "for credit" we might say) were Paul and Gertrude Tremblay, John Jeffrey, Lee Sonmor, Hank Korsten, John Bennett, and Dave Sonmor. But also present for all or part of the sessions were Alma Sonmor, Maria Korsten and Muriel Bennett. Later sessions also included Shirley Sonmor, John and Ann Sawchuk. Geographical spread, Edmonton and Slave Lake, Alberta, and North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

Space will not permit more than an outline of the next four weekend sessions. In May 1975 George Dole was joined by Bill Woofenden and they dealt with material prepared by the trainees on the *Four Doctrines*, the use of the writings of Swedenborg in preparing sermons, the writing of funeral addresses, the authority of the Writings, review of pastoral care and parish work, referrals, group leadership and

management, together with an evaluation of the first year and advance planning for the second year.

In October of 1975 Edwin Capon planned to join Bill Woofenden for the third session. The unfortunate illness of Edwin's wife, however, forced him to stay home, and, failing to find a teammate on short notice, Bill headed for Edmonton alone. In that solo performance he dealt with an outline of *Divine Love and Wisdom*, evaluation of sermon presentations by trainees, a session on premarital and marital counseling, followed by a session on the work *Conjugal Love*, walking - through or role playing the sacraments and rites, including baptism, confirmation and wedding procedures, and a further treatment of group leadership skills. In the advance planning for the next time, strong emphasis was placed on the need for help in religious education techniques.

Since the master plan called for a staggering of team members, it was agreed that Bill and Edwin would plan to go in April of 1976. But personal commitments again made it difficult for Edwin to go, and consultation by telephone with Edmonton led to the decision to invite Louise Woofenden to join her husband in leading this session which would put major stress on educational functions. Louise led the following: Philosophy and goals of New - Church education, stages in child growth (two units), child education in heaven, teaching major doctrines to children and young people. Bill's offerings were: The historical position and structure of Convention, outline study of the *Arcana Coelestia* (two units), sermon critiques, pastoral care of our young people (leagues, retreats, camps), some problems in Swedenborg's terminology, more role - playing of sacraments and rites, and review of a New - Church textbook in homiletics.

As you may have guessed, it was again considered prudent for the sake of continuity that Bill go one more time; and that's where our saga began. We have only to note that Bob and Bill dealt (alternately) with: Areas of competency for lay ministers, preparing and leading confirmation classes, values of church history, a bird's - eye view of Swedenborg's writings, an overview of church dispensations (two sessions), outline chart of *True Christian Religion*, the treatment of regeneration in AC and TCR, parish management and administration, plus a team critique of sermon presentations.

For the next and final session in this three - year cycle, the trainees have requested a basic Bible study unit (with emphasis on the literal text), more sermon critiques, further pointers on discussion group leadership, public relations for churches, and a study of Swedenborg's *Divine Providence*. They would also like to fit in somewhere some help in writing prayers, copies of recommended books for both individual libraries and church libraries, along with bibliographies on the competency areas. The next session has been set for April 1977. In the meanwhile, the Western Canada participants will be reviewing the entire program to date and preparing recommendations for rearranging and restructuring future curricula.

It is hard for this observer to be objective about this program, having been involved in it to the extent that he has; but it is my subjective judgment - heartfelt, if you will - that it is one of the best, most forward - looking programs going on in our church today.

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING, NEWTON, MASS.

September 24 - 26, 1976

The Board of Education was pleased to have representatives or reports from six of our Church Camps: Fryeburg, Almont, Blairhaven, Split Mountain, Paulhaven and Kansas.

We were convinced of the value of these camp programs for the life of our Church, and wished to hear from each one about the kind of program, leadership, purpose, age group and geographical area served, and dates, places and staff.

We appreciate the reports given by Louise Woofenden on Fryeburg, Lois McCurdy on Blairhaven, Tom Zehner on Almont, Eric Zacharias on Kansas, and reports sent in by Karen Conger on Split Mountain, and Jean Gilchrist on Paulhaven. We were delighted to learn the strengths and values of these camps for families, for young people, and for children, and we will be reporting in more detail on each of these in future issues, in good time for signing up for the summer of 1977.

The Board was also glad to respond to the request of the Washington Church for help in teacher training for the Sunday School. We have three people well qualified with special training and experience in this area, and we will be glad to arrange for help for specific societies or associations, either through our own resources or with the cooperation of the Sunday School Association.

We invite inquiries on camps, conferences, teacher training, retreats, workshops for women or men, training for lay leadership, or WEYS, and look forward to a good year ahead for education for all age groups in the Church.

Dorothea Harvey, Chairman.

JUST RECEIVED

Dear Rev. Eric Zacharias:

On behalf of the 200 delegates who gathered at Convention this week, we send you, and through all New Church people in the U.S.A. and Canada, our affectionate greetings. We remember 1974, when we visited with you, and the warm welcome you gave us in all our journeyings. And now we are aware that you still continue to show great interest in us, and your members still contribute toward our College Fund. The Priestnals have informed us that we can expect another \$5000 toward this project. Please convey our sincerest thanks to ALL our friends in America and Canada. May the Lord bless you all, and may His Church in your Country grow from strength to strength.

Eulalia Mooki, President
N.C. Women's League S.A.

Dear Mr. Editor:

Pleading guilty to having been responsible for the able, unforgiveable and altogether reprehensible error in setting up the "whole" numbers of the *Messenger's* May 19, 1951, issue, and without seeking to offer an alibi, nevertheless I suggest it might have been even more instructive had your November editorial, instead of asserting, in effect, "Marshall was asleep at the switch," had succinctly stated something like, "If only Marshall had been asleep he could not have made the switch in numbers."

Leslie Marshall, St. Petersburg, Florida

YOUR THIRD CAREER — USEFUL RETIREMENT

by Thomas B. Zehner

First Career — Early life, education, courtship and marriage.

Second Career — Raising a family, earning a living, building a nest - egg.

And now a Third Career — A continuation of your interests and activities. The chance to develop those interests to the fullest. You now have the time. A whole set of new circumstances offering you fresh opportunities to lead a more satisfying and useful life than ever before. You now have the wisdom and experience to take advantage of those opportunities. Above all, your third career means freedom to do what you want to do when you want to do it. You can experiment — new places, new clothes, new food, new ideas, new ways to work and play. You can build a new lifestyle for yourself, combining the best of the old with the best of the new.

Our retirement has been so satisfying that we would like to share it with everyone. As we eat our breakfast in the cold months we watch the birds eat their food, just outside the dining room window. Dozens of them come and go, and we even think they try to thank us. Song sparrows especially treat us with a beautiful song and the cardinals look through the window with each visit. We don't have a schedule to keep and so if the show is good we can prolong our breakfast. Also, during breakfast the television offers many good programs that are informative and educational. During warm weather the garden is waiting for spading and planting, and after the crops mature we prepare and freeze them for the winter. Following the visit with the birds and garden its time for the mailman, who usually brings something concerning the Pittsburgh church, Ohio Association, Board of Education, or Sunday School Association, and the latest magazines that we now have time to read. From the mailman's visit until lunch time I can do the work I have always enjoyed doing for the church, but before never had time to complete.

Trips for fun and church come up often. The only thing we have to consider is boarding our little dog, Liebchen, or deciding if the weather is suitable for travel. Our fun trips, usually with the American Association of Retired Persons chapter, have given us the opportunity to make many new friends and renew old friendships from high school and Parent - Teacher Association days. All of this doesn't just happen by itself. It requires preparation just as our earlier careers

did. Preparation for retirement, involving family and friends, can be interesting and exciting.

As we get into retirement or preparation for it we should be thinking about — what changes we'll want to make . . . how challenges can create opportunities . . . adding more years to life . . . and new life to those years . . . scaling peaks of knowledge . . . facing and preparing for death.

We will want to think about how retirement will affect our health . . . the value of medical check - ups . . . the best forms of exercise . . . prevention of major medical problems . . . how to anticipate potential accident causing problems . . . suggested safety precautions . . . proper nutrition in the later years. Investigate: where other people retire . . . is there an ideal climate . . . what about the cost of living in different parts of our country . . . how to stay put happily in your present home . . . your housing choices . . . how to get housing you need, want, and can afford.

Your legal obligations in everyday transactions and special situations of retirement . . . when you may need a lawyer and how to choose one . . . special legal considerations of contracts . . . buying, selling and renting real estate . . . how a Will shows you care and saves you money . . . estate planning. What is "leisure"? . . . factors that mold our concepts of leisure . . . what we want from the time we spend . . . activities of self - expression . . . fun and games . . . participation, recognition, adventure, learning, physical fitness, income.

Where will the money come from . . . how much will we have . . . how adequate will it be . . . where could you get more . . . budgeting your money . . . practical tips on cutting expenses for housing, food, medical care, clothing, transportation, taxes, personal and miscellaneous items.

In future articles we hope to discuss:

CHALLENGES OF RETIREMENT
HEALTH AND SAFETY
HOUSING AND LOCATION
LEGAL AFFAIRS
ATTITUDES AND ROLE ADJUSTMENTS
MEANINGFUL USE OF TIME
SOURCES AND AMOUNTS OF INCOME
FINANCIAL PLANNING
FAMILY RECORDS.

(Tom Zehner, retired, is a member of the Pittsburgh New Church, formerly an Insurance Counselor for the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, and a member of Convention's Board of Education).

SECOND FLORIDA CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 19 – 23, 1977 (Including Travel Time)

SWEDENBORG HOUSE, DeLAND, FLORIDA

This is a Decision Making Conference geared to anyone over fifty who is planning toward the retirement years and those who are already retired. The focus will be on the opportunities available for a third career, for changes in Life Style with new freedoms to choose a mixture of leisure and use, of caring and sharing with others as opposed to loneliness.

We will use as resources the Swedenborgian religious heritage, planning and management skills (be sure to see a forthcoming article in the *Messenger* by Tom Zehner), the wisdom and experience of our combined ages, and our professional staff. Additional topics for consideration will be: Death As A Part Of Life, Time, and Usefulness to the Church.

The Conference is sponsored by the Adult Work Committee of the Board of Education. The director is Calvin Turley with Tom Zehner as Resource person. It is anticipated that one or two theological students will participate as at the previous conference.

COSTS: Registration Fee \$20.00 single; \$30.00 couple.

Room and Meals: At Swedenborg House
\$14.00 per day, double.

\$16.00 per day, single

At Motel — with meals at Swedenborg House
\$16.00 double, per day

\$19.00 per day, single.

If interested, please cut off and send in the application form below.

APPLICATION: PLEASE RETURN WITH

REGISTRATION FEE TO: Swedenborg House, Rev. Ernest Frederick
Rte. 2, Box 239, DeLand, Fla. 32720

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____ NUMBER IN PARTY _____

WE/I plan to arrive on _____ at _____ We/I will travel by _____
(date) (time)

_____ and will arrive at _____. We/I
(car, plane)
will, will not, need to be met and provided with local transportation to Swedenborg House.

Please indicate housing preference: Swedenborg House
Motel

Make all checks out to: Swedenborg House

If flying, please fly to Daytona Beach Airport

If you would like to stay at Swedenborg House for a few days following the Conference, please write to Mr. Frederick.

HOW TO LISTEN TO A SERMON

Dr. George Sweazey

Millions of people assemble every Sunday to hear sermons on how to make themselves and the whole human race more Christian. Not much else brings so many people together except spectator sports — and the sermon event is decidedly not a spectator sport.

In this game, the players are in the stands. The hearers' skills are more important than the preacher's.

Football fans do not have to be athletes. But they need to know the rules of the game. Churchgoers need to know what the task of preaching is and what their part can be.

1. GET READY FOR SERMONS IN ADVANCE. How much you get from a sermon depends on how much you already know about Christianity and the Bible. Religious illiteracy forces preaching to stay elementary. Those who can understand the day's events theologically can have a lively share in the preaching.

An eager hope of getting something good is a second pre-condition. Not much is likely to happen to the person who is merely sitting in church out of habit. Real worship is hard work. It is the sort of work that leaves us refreshed, but if we think of other things during the hymns and prayers, we will not be ready for the sermon.

2. HELP THE PREACHER PREPARE. A preacher needs to talk with people about their needs and what is on their minds; this is the background from which good preaching comes. There are definite ways of bringing members into the sermon preparation. They may be asked to submit questions they would like dealt with. At one church a group comes each Wednesday to work together on the subject and text of the next Sunday's sermon. It incorporates their discussion.

A preacher needs his people's prayers. A statement by the Church of England says, "No one has earned the right to criticize the sermon who has not first prayed for the preacher." A sermon is an occasion for something to happen. Whether it happens or not depends very literally on the praying of the congregation.

3. TAKE PART DURING THE SERMON. Kirkegaard said many people go to church as they would to the theatre, expecting to hear a performance and judge it. But in reality, he said, in church the hearer is on stage; the preacher is the prompter in the wings; and the audience judging the players is Almighty God.

The preacher prompts you with the lines, but the performance takes place between you and God.

One of the tricks of good sermon listening is to have some questions in mind. You may ask: What need is this sermon trying to meet? What solution does it offer? What action does it ask for? Or you might be more personal: What does this sermon say to me? What difference will it make in my life? Some churches put cards in the pews with questions like these and spaces to be filled in. Others list questions in the Sunday calendar.

The only time Christians should think of themselves first is in listening to sermons. It is good to hope that others may benefit, but to say, "He told them off today," may show too much nimbleness in ducking. People can get calloused from all the sermons they let bounce off them to hit someone else.

4. GOOD LISTENING MAKES GOOD PREACHING. Every minister who preaches often away from home is struck by the effect of different congregations. Some make him feel as if he is slogging through mud up to his waist. In others everyone seems to lean towards him, looking pleased and expectant. A wave of interest picks him up and carries him along.

Every responsive face is like a tonic. Alertness and sympathy in the pews lift the sermon higher and higher. Listeners get back what they give.

5. CHURCH MEMBERS SUPPLY HEARERS FOR THE WORD. They make the preaching effective by bringing themselves. Each person who comes improves the setting; each one who misses impairs it. Preachers prepare sermons, not "for whom it may concern," but with definite people in mind. If they cannot know who will be present, preaching becomes impersonal. Members have to decide whether the weekly assembly for worship is important. The Scottish beadle explained, "If it's wet they'll no' come out, and if it's dry they'll no' come in."

Second, church members supply hearers by bringing them. Their enthusiastic comments to their friends are the best of all church advertising. In one church, the average attendance almost doubled when the members decided to tell at every chance how much they were getting from the services.

6. HEARERS HAVE A TASK AFTER THE SERMON. They can help the preacher by their comments. He needs to know whether he is meeting their needs. Neither praise nor criticism should be given carelessly. The minister may be misled. He cannot hope always to please people but he does need to know whether they were interested and helped.

(con't. on page 242)



HOW MANY CONVENTION FACES CAN YOU IDENTIFY?

There are fifty different Convention members pictured on the opposite page.

HOW MANY OF THEM CAN YOU IDENTIFY?

We will send \$20.00 to the first reader sending us all fifty names.

Inasmuch as this is "mission impossible", we will send \$10.00 to the MESSENGER reader who correctly identifies the *most* faces in the composite picture. In the extremely remote event that you do know all fifty people, the \$20.00 prize will be yours.

Ministers and their wives labor under a three point handicap.

In the event of a tie, the earliest entry wins.

This contest ends Jan. 31, 1977

Send your list of Convention faces to:

Messenger Editor,
Box 2642, Stn. B.,
Kitchener, Ont. N2H 6N2
Canada.

THE ALMONT ASSEMBLY CHAPEL

All chapels, truly dedicated and used as centers of worship, offer many riches to those who enter and participate freely in the outward form.

Children, restless and inattentive as they may be, experience golden moments to treasure in their memory. Through a chance phrase, or fragment of music, they have a transient awareness of the spiritual life.

Young people in their teens and early adulthood find a focus for their questioning and searching for the truth which will aid them in their individual formulation of faith.

Mature adults enjoy a deepening of their devotion and the opportunity to pass on to others their own sincere beliefs. This continues with the feelings of those blessed with a long life who experience a resurgence and renewal of all the Truths they have acquired through life on earth.

Our chapel at Almont is no different in these aspects, but it has its own individuality. There are the surface memories of the hot dusty summer days, the well, and stalls in the yard for the horses of long ago, and the farm sounds in the distance.

But along with these are the memories of the twice daily gatherings for worship, the sound of the organ being played at other times, arranging flowers for the Sunday service, the young people conducting chapel with such sincerity.

The Almont Assembly holds many memories of meeting together, of joy and pleasure, of growth and understanding, but the Chapel is the center of Almont where one can most easily feel one's nearness to GOD.

Joylyn Ives Mercouris

(The author of this sensitive tribute to Almont Summer School grew up in the Detroit Society, attended Almont for many summers, then studied at Urbana College, where, in the early 1950's, we engaged in some incredibly fierce table tennis matches. It is delightful to hear from Joylyn again. Ed.)

NATIONAL NEW CHURCH – CHURCH OF THE HOLY CITY WASHINGTON, D. C.

Penelope Harms

The Washington National Church has been my church home all my life. During my years there, I have absorbed much of the history and feeling of the people of the congregation and the society they make up.

The Washington society had its beginnings in the mid - 1800's when a group of readers of Swedenborg's works met in each other's homes. Among the members of the group were Ferdinard Fairfax, descendent of Lord Fairfax of Virginia, and William Cranch, a District of Columbia Superior Court judge and Supreme Court reporter.

The first formal society was formed on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1841. That chamber of Congress was often used for other than sessions of the House. There is some speculation that Rev. John Hargrove, pastor of the then newly formed Baltimore society, sparked early interest in Swedenborg through two sermons he delivered before the Congresses of the Jefferson administration in 1802 and 1804.

Swedenborg Temple, the first New Church in Washington, was built by the society on Capitol Hill in the early 1850's. A Swedenborg reading room opened on Pennsylvania Avenue and "New Day" — a small newspaper — was published. During the early days on Capitol Hill, the society was served by the Revs. Rufus Dawes, Jabez Fox, E. D. Daniels, and William Hayden.

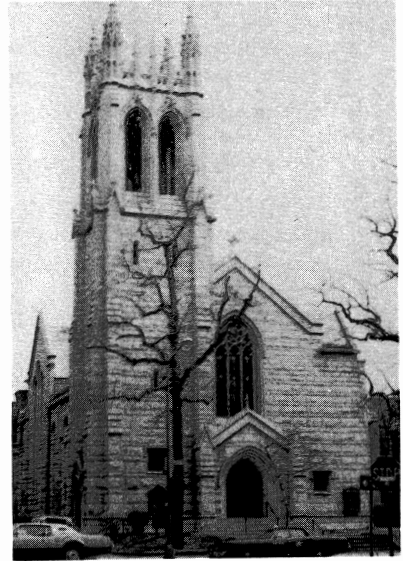
Tragedy struck one Saturday night in 1889 when a furnace overheated, causing a fire that destroyed the church. The rest of Convention came to bat for the Washington society when, at the convention of 1894, a fund was set up to build a new edifice to serve as the national New Church. Contributions came in from thirty - five states, from individuals as well as societies.

H. Langford Warren, Harvard University's first dean of architecture, was hired as designing architect of the new building. Paul Peltz, designer of the library of Congress, was Warren's supervising architect, and second in command.

The cornerstone was laid in ceremony in 1894, with the Rev. Frank Sewall blessing the building and Rev. William L. Worcester of Philadelphia delivering the dedication address. Rev. Sewall had served the Washington society since 1889 and had held services in a rented chapel on Dupont Circle since the fire on Capitol Hill.

Warren and Peltz came up with a beautiful Gothic building of sandy - gray Indiana limestone complete with gargoyle downspouts and a square bell tower. The main building houses a high - ceilinged old English cathedral sanctuary with pews and altar of oak, ceiling beams and trusses of Georgia heart pine. The three - story parish house contains a Sunday School room on the third floor, a parlor and library on the main level, and a dining room and kitchen in the basement.

The chancel is highlighted by seven stained - glass windows symbolizing the seven early churches. Scenes depicted in other windows in the sanctuary include events in Christ's life and the transfiguration.



Noted members of the early society included Judge Job Barnard, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia and John Joy Edson, banker, philanthropist and treasurer of the National Geographic Society.

Many outstanding New Church ministers have served the Washington society, including Frank Sewall, one time president of Urbana College in Ohio; Paul Sperry, spiritual advisor to Swedenborgian Helen Keller; William F. Wunsch, respected scholar and translator of Swedenborg's works; Ernest O. Martin, past president of Convention; Brian Kingslake, former superintendent of the New Church Mission to Johannesburg, South Africa; and, currently, F. Robert Tafel.

Rev. Tafel answered the call to serve the Washington society in February, 1975, re - entering a full - time ministry he had left several years before. Our pulpit had been filled by visiting ministers and laymen for two years since Rev. Kingslake's retirement and return to England in 1973.

"Any career has its frustrating aspects. You have to develop a philosophy toward them." Rev. Tafel returned to his full - time ministry with just such a philosophy after spending some time in the business world.

Eight years after his ordination as a New Church minister, in the early 60's, he became disillusioned with his full - time ministry.

It looked like I'd been hopping from place to place and I didn't want that. I wanted to put down roots and have a real home." Tafel says.

The searching young preacher was looking ahead to see what developments might unfold for him in his career. A part - time ministry combined with a part - time business - world career seemed the most logical solution to his problem.

Ideally, he would develop a career with few negatives paired with a ministry with many positives.

During his first business - world work experience in California — his adopted home since an earlier visit — Rev. Tafel was employed as a water conditioner salesman, a driving school instructor and a relief manager at a restaurant. Although the management position worked out best of the three, he left after a year because he felt it left no time for a part - time ministry.

While employed by the restaurant, Tafel rarely had Sunday off. But on a free Sunday in April 1974, he took his family to Garden Grove Community Church near the Tafel home.

The emphasis of the ministry of Rev. Robert Schuller at the Community Church was on "possibility thinking" — a perspective on life that expands your vision to take in the many possibilities and doors the Lord opens for you.

At a time in his life when he was groping and in need of direction, this new affirmative outlook steered Rev. Tafel back to his active full - time ministry. It changed his attitude not only toward his ministry, but toward life. He re - evaluated his reasons for leaving and considered the frustrating aspects of the ministry, realizing that any career is bound to have them. He learned going out into the business world has its negatives, too. Tafel says he has learned to "eliminate the negatives and accentuate the positives" in his ministry as well as in other areas of his life.

Before his stint in the business world and exposure to "possibility thinking", Rev. Tafel thought of Swedenborg's writings as a body of truth to be looked at, considered, talked about, and related, when possible, to actual experience. He saw the writings as largely having to do with the spiritual world, the internal sense of the Bible, and the necessity of a life of charity that everybody worked out on their own following society's laws. Realizing the cold, intellectual character of his views on Swedenborg, Rev. Tafel says he is now looking to develop perception of any connections of truth as an undergirding for faith.

"The cold, philosophical approach to faith doesn't do much for you when you're unemployed and have a family to care for," Tafel noted.

Rev. Tafel realized a second view of the concept of faith missing from his perception of Swedenborg before he left the ministry. His original view was that faith is intellectual and armed with truth, related to doctrine and internal perception of truth. To this view he added the idea that faith is trust, acceptance and reliance on Divine Providence and thus, promotes possibility thinking. In a recent sermon, Rev. Tafel noted that Emanuel Swedenborg was quite a possibility thinker himself.

"In retrospect, we have 100% vision. As I look back, I would give more consideration to my family. I could have examined my decision more carefully and maybe come up with a different one," Tafel says now. But he feels he gained a broader perspective from working in the business world.

Swedenborg writes in "Heaven and Hell" that affections are particularly well - expressed in tones, i.e., music. Ours must be one of the most affectionate societies in Convention. Music has always played a large role in the life of our church. As far back as Rev. Sewall, the Church of the Holy City has been blessed with talented musicians. Maude Sewall, one of

Rev. Sewall's daughters, was a charter member of the American Guild of Organists. Jim Trabert, organist - choirmaster in the early 70's, began a regular monthly recital series featuring well - known, professional musicians as well as area university students of music.

But the wealth of our musical knowledge and capabilities have not always been limited to organists, choir members and choir directors. Several Washington ministers have shared their musical gifts with us. Rev. Sewall wrote many familiar hymns that are in the Book of Worship. Rev. Kingslake composed several hymns while in Washington, accompanying them on the piano himself when they were used in service.

Holy City's recital series are only one of the services the church performs in the community. On the recommendation of Rev. Tafel and with the backing of the church committee, the Wedding Chapel was set up. Young couples of all denominations are welcome to be married in our lovely sanctuary. Rev. Tafel counsels each couple beforehand, and performs the ceremony. We also have facilities available for wedding receptions.

Our church building is open for the use of groups within the community. This practice is not only a service, but also an education. We have hosted a group of Shakespearean actors, a citizens' committee, a Yoga group, a Headstart program, and a Montessori school group in temporary need of classroom space. The organ in our sanctuary is available to area organists during the week for practicing. English evangelist Brother Mandus holds healing services in our church when he is in Washington.

Although not a large congregation, we at Holy City are a dynamic, growing group. Enthusiastic new members join our church from time to time, and get caught up in the interesting goings - on. Sunday mornings, the Forum meets before the regular worship service. It was organized by Rev. Kingslake and Dr. R. E. Williams, head of the psychology department at D.C. Teachers College, to discuss Swedenborg's works and their relation to life. Dr. Williams ran across some of the writings in a second hand bookstore and became interested enough to seek out the church. The hour - long sessions attract people from the Washington professional and educational communities by word of mouth.

A group is being formed to study Swedenborg's major works one by one. *True Christian Religion* will be the first subject undertaken in the monthly Wednesday night meetings. The Washington society will host a young people's weekend this month. All interested people are invited to visit us.

In this bicentennial year, Holy City is being considered as a historical landmark by the District of Columbia government. The building remains in its original state, an important requirement for landmarks. Inside, we have been giving our old church a face - lift. The parish house has been brightened up with a "friendly rug." The orangy - goldy red wall - to - wall carpet seems to communicate the society's warmth and love to members and visitors alike. Ever since it was installed, our after - church friendship hours run considerably longer than they used to!

We of the national church in Washington are proud to represent the New Church in the Nation's Capital, and lovingly welcome members of our sister churches in Convention to visit us when you are in the area.

THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION

Richard H. Tafel

Is the sole present purpose of the created universe to provide facilities for man's preparation for heaven? What other usefulness could the good Lord have had in mind?

If you had omitted the words, "sole" and "present", I would find it easier to answer. You raise real obstacles for me. Your question says to me that my life right this minute, and as I have experienced it in the past, has no significance or validity in and of itself: that this world of mine has no worth or significance other than that of providing my inner struggles which will pay off some day in a distant heaven. I cannot buy that. Life is good, and rewarding; the world is beautiful and rewarding. I enjoy being here, and I thank God for his creation. The present moment is all of life that I can know, and that is sufficient. Just by allowing me consciousness and experience, the universe has purpose enough. So I must answer "NO" to your question. It smacks too much of the out-worn concept of the world as a "vale of tears," hostile to the human spirit, its allurements to be resisted so that we may win our souls. No, God looked at his creation, just as he had made it and for what it was, and pronounced it "very good!" The physical universe is the garment of God, the ultimate expression of his outflowing life. Without this to rest upon as a foundation, we are told, there could be no heaven. Isn't the "sole present purpose of the created universe" to make the very existence of a heaven possible?

Another way of responding to your question is to say that the primary purpose of the created universe is to fulfill demands within God. It is the nature of love to give of itself, to give ever more fully, to feel the joy of another one's own joy, and to yearn for a return of that love. In terms of the nature of love and its demands, "the goal of Divine Providence is a heaven of angels indefinitely recruited from the human race," as it has been put. Viewed from this standpoint, "the sole present purpose of the universe" is to support and nourish beings upon whom God can lavish his love and who, if they wish, can return that love. But because that love is divine, it not only demands to be given and responded to and returned, but also all this ever more fully, completely, without measure and without end. Therefore only a heaven of angels indefinitely recruited from the human race can satisfy the demands of Divine Love. This, to me, is "the sole present purpose of the created universe." It does, as you say, "provide facilities for man's preparation for heaven," but that is but one aspect of the larger purpose of creation.

If man's preparation for heaven is the only use that the created universe has, isn't it easier to realize that the trials and tribulations we undergo are specifically provided by Divine Providence? In fact may this not radically change our whole viewpoint on life, if this is sole purpose for the present existence of the universe?

In speaking of "man's preparation for heaven," are you thinking of heaven as a present possibility or as a future destiny? Isn't it a state or condition of heart and mind which we must seek to enter upon and make our own here and now? Can we truly speak of our heaven in Life Further On apart from our heaven of present living?

Our gracious and loving Lord must be pressing that heaven upon us here and now with all of its happiness, blessedness and its sense of satisfaction and peace. His Divine Providence surely must be directed to leading us to welcome heaven's order and joy into our present lives. I simply cannot believe that an All-loving and All-wise God afflicts our bodies for the good of our souls, which you seem to imply ("that the trials and tribulations we undergo are specifically provided by Divine Providence"). He can only will our (present) utter happiness and well-being. It is unthinkable, no matter what high purpose God might have in mind, that he snatches a baby from its mother's arm or brings about the death of a loved one, or that he is in any way the instigator of tragedy, misfortune, ill health or disease.

These things do come upon us, but not from him. They come outwardly, on the one hand, from an immoral society; inwardly, on the other hand, they arise from disorder within us, and from the evils that we do not face and overcome in the Lord's name and power. God did not create darkness and evil; man brought these into being by his wilfulness and misuse of God's good gifts. God, acting through his Divine Providence, seeks in all ways consonant with human freedom to save us from the consequences of our wrong-doing. Where these cannot be prevented without destroying us as free-will beings, he helps us to draw lasting spiritual gains from our tragedies and misfortunes.

I think "what would radically change our whole viewpoint of life" would be a more trusting faith in our All-loving and All-wise God, and a more realistic understanding of the problems posed by his yearning to love and to be loved by the creatures whom he has endowed with free will and with freedom of action.

Send your religious queries directly to:

Rev. Richard H. Tafel
200 Chestnut Avenue
Narberth, Penna. 10972

Letters should be signed, though names will not be used in this column.

WE GET LETTERS

A GOOD OCTOBER ISSUE

Dear Editor:

As a new subscriber to the *Messenger* I would like to comment on two articles in the October issue which I found particularly interesting.

The first, "New Words for a New Age", by Jan Seibert, is certainly aimed in the right direction. In this day and age there are many who hunger for a deeper and more inspiring religion; yet the modern world is woefully deficient in the philosophical and theological tools needed to understand and appreciate the doctrine of the New Church. I feel, as Jan, that we of the Church should provide a more nurturing means by which the neophyte can be slowly brought into a state of understanding by our Lord.

The second article, "Life on Other Planets", by Herman Eckert, was a pleasure to see. My thoughts on this subject exactly parallel his. I feel we need more of this type of edifying spiritual thought by church members.

S.P. Libiszewski
Palmer, Mass.

MORE ON JACOB DUCHE

Dear Paul:

I have a leaflet from the American Bible Society entitled, "Plead My Cause, O Lord." It includes Psalm 35, which Duche read to the first Continental Congress in Philadelphia on September 7, 1774, and also his prayer. The prayer closes with the words, "This we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Saviour." This in itself is an indication that Duche at that time was still an Anglican. This fact is born out in an article in the *New Church Review* for April 1915, and also in Volume 78 No. 2 of the *Helper*.

In 1775 Duche became Rector of Christ Church and St. Peters. In 1777 he included a prayer for the king in his service, and was arrested and imprisoned. He sailed for England that year, and became a popular preacher in Bow Church, Cheapside. Here he met Rev. Hartley and Rev. Clowes, both readers of Swedenborg, who are regarded among early New Church worthies. In 1786 Duche wrote an anonymous preface to Clowes translation of the *Doctrine of Life*. His daughter, Mrs. Hill, said that he had owned Swedenborg's works in Latin previous to 1777, but did not know the contents.

In 1792 Duche with his family returned to Philadelphia. Shortly after this he moved to Boston, where he was friendly with Rev. William Hill, an early New Churchman, and Duche married Hill's daughter.

Duche died in 1798.

Alice Van Boven

ANOTHER VIEW OF "EARTH IN THE UNIVERSE"

Dear Editor:

In his letter (The *MESSENGER*, October, 1976), Herman Eckert suggests that life has not been found on other planets because it is in a different physical dimension invisible to us.

This is not a new idea, and although it just may be true, I feel very uneasy about it. It seems vaguely like an escape from the real challenge of the problem, which has to do with the general failure of modern science to find any evidence for Swedenborg's assertion that there is life on every planet. It sounds too easy: If we don't see people there, they must be invisible. One then explains by drawing on scattered clues that there may be some mysterious other dimension. But it always seems suspicious if one has to reach for a whole new cosmology in order to patch up a minor problem. What I tend to see then is a sense of desperation lest Swedenborg not be perfect. The means somewhat outweigh the end.

It is a subtle point, but problems are great teachers. They are not meant to be resolved by answers which merely have a chance of being correct. The challenge they present to us is to design an answer that will command respect and not require too much faith in the improbable. The merely possible far out answer is not good enough for this. Too many maybe's mean that you are in trouble.

Two points stand out when dealing with interpretations of *The Earths in the Universe* that involve other physical dimensions. First, if the inhabitants are in another dimension but the planetary surface is not, there is a problem in explaining how the planetary surface supports its invisible inhabitants. Its food would have to be in the extra dimension. In fact, inhabitants in a dimension invisible to us ultimately require a planet that is in that dimension as well.

Secondly, if the planet is visible but has another surface in an invisible dimension, we get into difficulties with EU. Swedenborg draws our attention to the planets as *we know them*. He never afterwards pulls our attention away from them as objects familiar to astronomers. His point is that they are inhabitable as perceived. We are left with no clues to any other physical universe, he didn't seem to know about them. Nowhere else does he ascribe more than the ordinary plane of existence to the world.

So what are we supposed to do about EU? At least admit that the conflict between Swedenborg and science is real. Swedenborg may have been wrong. The universe as it seems to be to the eye of science is all we are reliably going to have until research and cosmology take a radical new turn. Many of our problems with Swedenborg are exacerbated by refusal

to accept life as it is. Our age may have to suffer with its unanswered questions as any other age does, for the sake of gaining a little backbone. Meanwhile, there is every good reason to advance theories. But I think that the qualities of any age are forged not by the answers it possesses so much as by the character and intelligence of the search it makes for them.

Steve Koke,
Oakland, Cal.

REPRINTS AVAILABLE

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by William F.
Wunsch

A study guide, dealing with a way of life of particular significance to those in quest of religious insights. It is composed of three main sections: the Spiritual Life, The Word, and the Lord — with selected passages from Swedenborg's works. (272 pages, paper, \$4.95 postpaid).

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Due to popular demand, the Swedenborg Press has reprinted this title by William L. Worcester (414 pages, paper, \$3.25 postpaid). The words of the Bible have two meanings — one which speaks to our natural minds and another which addresses our spiritual perceptions. Swedenborg demonstrated how earthly terms drawn from nature symbolize and correspond to spiritual realities. Through Swedenborg's system of correspondences, new light is thrown on the deeper content of the Biblical text.

After a careful study of THE LANGUAGE OF PARABLE, the reader will share the enthusiasm of the late Helen Keller when she stated: "Swedenborg did not make a new Bible. He made the Bible all new."

Copies of these books are available from:

The Swedenborg Press
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New York, N.Y. 10010

FROM CHURCH RECORDS

BAPTISMS

NEUENFELDT — Amy Anna, infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Neuenfeldt, of Midland, Michigan, was baptized at Almont on August 8th, 1976, the Rev. Walter E. Orthwein officiating.

CUTLIP — Amanda Lee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. James Cutlip, was baptized at the Swedenborgian Church of Greater Cleveland on October 24, 1976, the Rev. George F. Dole officiating.

CONFIRMATION

HOLT — Patricia Joan Holt of Eureka, Kansas, was confirmed into the faith of the New Church on October 10, 1976, the Rev. Galen W. Unruh officiating.

DEATH

FISCHER — Miss Agnes H. Fischer, of Manchester, New Hampshire, a life long member of the Manchester Church, died on October 16, 1976, aged 82 years. The resurrection service was held on October 19, the Rev. Edwin G. Capon officiating.

BIRTH

HOWES — A son, Darren Leonard, was born to Mr. & Mrs. Bert Howes of N. Battleford, Sask., on October 3, 1976.

MARRIAGE

MITCHELL — SHEPPARD — George B. Mitchell and Helen R. Sheppard, of West Va., were married at Swedenborg House, DeLand, Florida, on October 26, 1976, the Rev. Ernest Frederick officiating.

(How To Listen To A Sermon — continued from page 235)

Congregations teach their preachers. A minister learns more from the church members than he ever learned in seminary. Devoted, loving, wise congregations make devoted, loving, wise ministers.

The indispensable instruction for sermon hearers is in the parable of the sower. In it Jesus tells the hearers what to do and not to do. It is their responsibility to hear the word and let it grow in them until it bears rich fruit.

Sermons are delivered to the church on Sunday so they can be delivered to the world on Monday. Out there is where the harvest will be reaped.

(Dr. Sweazey is a former moderator of the U.S. United Presbyterian Church. His article is condensed from his latest book, "Preaching The Good News.")

TWELVE WAYS TO CELEBRATE THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

To “celebrate” means to join others in a joyful festivity. We speak of celebrating the festival of Christmas because the celebration has to do with honoring and praising God. It is an event which has a special meaning for us.

Festival comes from the word “feast” which means a meal or anything that gives pleasure because of its abundance or richness. A festival is a time that takes us out of the ordinary and everyday. It says: “Here is something and somebody so good and great that we stop our humdrum lives, break off our daily routines, and celebrate.”

Traditions are customs and beliefs that are handed down by word of mouth or by example from generation to generation without written instructions. In this way colorful customs and basic beliefs become a bridge between old and young, unschooled and schooled, rich and poor. Yet traditions can lose their inner meanings. Then what?

In our time of very rapid change — TV and commercial use of Christmas; people moving to new neighborhoods; men and women of different backgrounds, beliefs, traditions, marrying and raising families — festivals, celebrations, and traditions also outwardly change, but their inner meanings are the same. They can still be great blessings. It is a great time of challenge.

Christmas is forever new wine. New wine needs new bottles. You can make new bottles.

Harold Belgium

<p style="text-align: center;">MAKE</p> <p>New ornaments for your tree or to give away. Use felt, tin, color, sparkle.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SING</p> <p>Joyful, lilting carols. Learn new ones. Sing together holding hands. Listen to records.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">READ</p> <p>The great and famous Christmas texts. Also, read poems and Christmas stories.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">PRAY</p> <p>For those who sent you cards and presents. Use prayers in the Book of Worship or create your own.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">TELL</p> <p>Memories and meanings of Christmases past — sad ones and glad ones. Christmas is both.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DO</p> <p>Something to cheer a lonely old person. Keep doing it.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SEND</p> <p>Letters of gratitude and greeting to gift givers and old friends you have forgotten.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">GO</p> <p>To someone who is near but whom you have neglected. An hour may be a good gift.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">HELP</p> <p>Someone you don't know who is in trouble. Your thanks is that you did it.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">PLAY</p> <p>With your own and other children. Share their excitement about gifts and games.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LAUGH</p> <p>At the sheer goodness of Christmas. Don't get mad or sad. Laugh. To laugh is to forgive.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">REST</p> <p>Because there is peace on earth, peace in your soul, peace with God, peace in your family.</p>

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*The Ongoing Work
of Convention
Depends
Upon Your Response
to the
Appeal*

Merry Christmas  Everyone!