
THE MESSENGER

Monthly Publication, Swedenborgian Church of North America

March 1996

Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church Rededication Service

Merrilee Phinney

PHOTO CREDIT: THE BROCKTON ENTERPRISE © 1995



***"The temple or church is empty unless the good of life fills it.
It is not the stone walls that make it small or large, but the brave
soul's light shining around and in it."*** —Helen Keller, *Light in my Darkness*.

It is a joy to be reporting on this phase of our recovery from the fire. As *Messenger* readers already know, our sanctuary was severely damaged by a spectacular fire July 12, 1994. Since then, rebuilding efforts consumed a great deal of time, energy and money. Although the necessary work was often overwhelming, and there seems

no end to the soot (we're still finding it), we were able to resume our worship services in the sanctuary this past September.

On November 12, 1994, we joined with community members and friends to rededicate our beautiful worship
(continued on page 35)

IN THIS ISSUE: Endings and Beginnings • Testimony to the Invisible • Apocalypse Now?

Moving Toward the Light

Say It Now

This winter season has brought with it a greater number of deaths than usual, it seems—many persons known and beloved in our church; my own gentle son-in-law, Beau, whom I had been privileged to know only briefly; and Jack Smith, who inadvertently shaped part of our family's destiny.

When we reach a certain age (whatever that is—you choose, it is of course, subjective), things tend to rise out of our past: to haunt; to bring a fresh perspective; to provide opportunity to deal with old events in a more enlightened way; to trigger a chain of memories and waves of nostalgia. To remind us that people we were certain would be around forever are apt to leave suddenly, and those thoughts and feelings we were intending to express to them shouldn't be postponed.

A native of Los Angeles, I was still living there in the late sixties, juggling homemaking and child rearing while working on a particularly difficult and lengthy writing project I'd committed to finish. I had developed the habit of reading only the comics and Jack Smith's column in the *L.A. Times* each morning before I settled in to work. Jack wrote with incisive grace and compassionate wit about great and humble scenes throughout Los Angeles; about his "Renaissance" wife crawling under their house to fix the plumbing; his growing sons with their live bug collections that showed up when least expected; his inscrutable cats, his intractable Airedale dog; his house in Baja, California; struggles and foibles—the usual encounters with the people and things all of us encounter. But he saw them with a benevolent clarity, a bemused fascination, describing them with a subtle poignancy that never erred into sentimentality. He seemed to savor with all his senses the rich texture of those fleeting moments that make up all our days, moments which most of us pass through without recognition. And so he showed us a way to view our own everyday lives with more love and humor—if we allowed ourselves to go there with him.

One morning after reading a particularly touching, funny column, I wrote him a fan letter, the first I had ever written. Although I kept it humorous and light, I felt a bit foolish, like some sort of groupie. He wrote a delightful letter back, and I began writing to him regularly. He replied when he had time, and that was enough. The correspondence gave back a part of my life that I had felt I was losing, or perhaps burying would have been more accurate.

Many of his columns were adapted to publication in book form over the years spanning 1965–1989, eight books in all. *God and Mr. Gomez* was probably the most popular, a best seller that was a running story of his adventures in Baja with the fey and philosophical Gomez, who had (very slowly) built Jack's house in Mexico and who would sweetly appear in answer to Jack's household emergencies—all in good time, or God's time.

Jack wrote about getting away from it all down there in order to contemplate the Meaning of Life. I wondered in later years what he had come up with in respect to this, and whether he continued to refer to God as Random Chance.

I saw him in person only twice, at an autographing and later a magical lunch. In November of 1970 I read that he was going to be at the Wilshire Boulevard Temple autographing his second book, *Smith on Wry*. I got dressed up (in hose and heels, as we used to say), collected my mother and my then-husband, and led a somewhat grand entrance into the temple, bearing a large yellow potted chrysanthemum for his wife and a box of my home-made fudge for him, which I presented with a modest flourish. By that time our whole family had come under his spell. My husband had begun, surely in self-defense, to write vignettes about his own struggles in the film

(continued on page 45)

The Messenger

Publisher: The Communications Support Unit

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

March 1996

Volume 217, No. 3

Whole Number 5208

Typesetting & Layout

Linda Mahler

Town & Country Press
Plymouth, IN

Patte LeVan, Editor

Editorial Address:

The Messenger

P.O. Box 985

Julian, CA 92036

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

Business & Subscription Address:

Central Office

48 Sargent Street

Newton, MA 02158

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

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

Letters

To the Editor: (dated January 5, 1996)

The January *Messenger* arrived this morning and how pleased—no, delighted—I was to read Elaine Lowe's letter on page 15. I am the daughter of "the wonderful Dr. Wilde" she speaks of so fondly, who was pastor of the New York Society for thirty years. Though I had my eighty-eighth birthday two days ago, I remember her mother, Adeline Nunez Baker, vividly and with equal fondness. She was a very beautiful and charming lady.

My husband, Arthur Hull-Ryde, our son Norman and I moved to North Carolina in 1950. There is not a New Church society within 400 miles of us. I should say "me"—my husband died in 1984. But my eldest granddaughter, Carolyn Bower, is a faithful member of the Church of the Open Word in St. Louis, and I am a great admirer of her pastor, the Rev. David Rienstra and his wonderful wife, Carole.

I am happy that the New Church affiliation continues in the family.

Most sincerely,

Kathleen Wilde Hull-Ryde
Gastonia, North Carolina

Rededication

(Continued from front cover)

space. This was a very special event for all involved and a time for our congregation to express our appreciation to a very caring community. Without their support we could not have finished this project so quickly. The day was perfect and everything sparkled, but how do you plan a rededication service? There is no service of rededication in our *Book of Worship*, and no examples to follow. So we celebrated with a service of gratitude and joy, filled with music, prayer and words of thanksgiving.

Members of the Elmwood Brass began the service with jubilant music that set the tone for all that followed. With nearly 200 people in the sanctuary, special words were spoken by our moderator, Lawrence Conant; member David Lemee; Selectman Jeffrey Nagle; and the Rev. Deborah Shipp, speaking for the Bridgewater Council of Churches. A flute duet by Patty Woofenden and Susan Caplan was followed by more expressions of gladness and thanks from Sunday school teacher Kelly Benoit and church treasurer Merrilee Phinney. The Rev. Dr. George Dole concluded the service and summed up the feelings of the entire congregation by saying: "It is our hope that this congregation can be of genuine use to the community that has been so generous." Everyone then joined in a reception and fellowship, with more music from the Elmwood Brass.

The disaster that struck our small society could have been too much for us to handle. The insurance money alone could not have completed the project. The job demanded countless hours of hard, dirty, often discouraging work, and hundreds of hours of loving, persistent dedication from members and friends. It also took many fundraising efforts supported by members of the congregation and the community, along with their encouragement for the rebuilding process. It was an awesome task. Without this combined effort we would not be where we are today.

There are still things that need to be done. This spring, we hope to have



Sights and sounds of rejoicing: Stained glass window crowns the Elmwood Brass Quintet.

the entire grounds landscaped and to erect a new sign on the front lawn. Replacement of the steeple is many years down the road, but we have already begun a fund for the repair of our historic 1865 EG&G Hook organ. Within the scope of our desire to be of use to the community, is a hope to secure a minister to help us meet our long-term goals. Our house of worship is beautiful once again, but without being of use it is just filling a spot on the Bridgewater Common. "The temple or church is empty unless the good of life fills it. It is not the stone walls that make it small or large, but the brave soul's light shining around and in it." (Helen Keller, *Light in My Darkness*, p. 134).

"Autumn sunlight glowed through stained glass windows as the New Jerusalem Church was rededicated Sunday afternoon, exactly 16 months after a roaring fire gutted the 123-year-old building." (Newspaper account). The rededication service was covered by three major TV stations. We wish you could have been there, too, to share in the wonder of it all. It is the hope of our congregation that this day was the beginning of a new era for the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church. □

Merrilee Phinney, lifelong member of the Bridgewater church, treasurer, and Sunday school teacher, lives in Carver, Massachusetts.

Recollections of the Fateful Day

Church Moderator Larry Conant began the rededication by reviewing the day last year which changed the lives of all the members of the church. "When the East Bridgewater firefighters came over, they thought it was the whole town of Bridgewater that was on fire . . . the flames towered above Central Square. . . and then it started. People came up to us, people we didn't know, offering us time and talent and help. There was never a chance it wouldn't be rebuilt." More than 300 groups and individuals assisted the church in its struggle to rebuild.

David Lemee, one of the first church members on the scene at the fire, reported that after the fire he had reviewed the church's history, often consulting records which church members had rescued from the burning building. Lemee said the church cost \$10,000 to build in 1871, and parishioners then rented their pews, which paid for the cost of the church.

After last year's blaze, the cost to rebuild the church was set at \$630,000, including \$58,000 to repair the 1865 EG&G Hook organ, and \$140,000 for a new aluminum steeple.

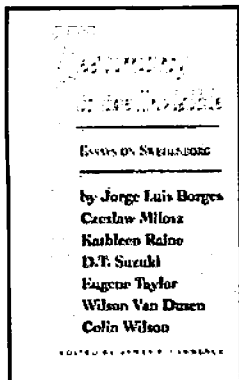
Speaking for the youth of the church, Kelly Benoit, 17, said the church's teenagers talked about the tragedy, then pitched in to help. They cleaned, swept and sold pieces of slate from the collapsed roof to raise money for the rebuilding.

Sitting in a corner of the reception after the rededication service was Miriam Houghton, 92, the church's oldest member. The day after the fire last year, Houghton had commented that her grandfather established the church, and she was married there in 1930. At that time, she said, "This will bring us together as nothing has done in the past."

Excerpted from November 13, 1995 Brockton Enterprise newspaper account by Judy Bernstein.

Book Review

Testimony to the Invisible: *Essays on Swedenborg*



By Jorge Luis Borges, Czeslaw Milosz,
Kathleen Raine, D. T. Suzuki,
Eugene Taylor, Wilson VanDusen,
Colin Wilson

Edited by James F. Lawrence,
published by Chrysalis Books,
an imprint of the Swedenborg Foundation, Inc.,
West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1995; 190 pages.

Reviewed by Steve Koke

We have always needed to give Swedenborg's name more cultural significance. The usual response to any mention of him is simply, "Who's that?" That one fact, that he has seemed a stranger, does not leave people without an opinion of him. It actually invites unattractive projections on him. If there is not some resentment against what looks like another upstart movement on the fringes of Christendom (aren't they all weird?), the most likely reaction to his name, or to the word "Swedenborgian" on the signs outside our churches is going to be, "Sounds Swedish, therefore ethnic. Not for me."

It would be better to put out a church name that is descriptive of a central value we have and leave Swedenborg's name out of it. But the best solution is to give high priority to making Swedenborg's name known and respected in our culture like those of a number of other theologians considered to be cultural resources. The best modern example of this is Paul Tillich.

One way to do this is to give books like *Testimony to the Invisible* a lot of circulation. This is a collec-

tion of essays by prestigious contemporary writers whose opinions do count for something. If Borges, Milosz, Raine, etc., are known to like Swedenborg, then he begins to look more like a cultural discovery. Furthermore, most of these writers refer to other cultural figures who had the same respect for Swedenborg—especially William Blake. Blake persistently haunts these discussions, looking like a major source of the world's awareness of Swedenborg.

Editor James F. Lawrence introduces the authors and their work in a very informative eleven pages.

Jorge Luis Borges wrote "Testimony to the Invisible," the lead essay, as an introduction to Sig Synnestvedt's *The Essential Swedenborg*. It is a sparkling general introduction, and it shows that a great writer can come up with a poetic twist or two on the facts. Borges states that on the night of his commission Swedenborg was shadowed through the streets of London by the Lord in the guise of a mysterious man. Later in his essay, Borges writes that in the celestial state a man and woman who have loved one another will form a single angel—a romantic image, and Swedenborg does come close to the concept, but in this form it is woefully underexplained. Borges makes a striking observation, though, that is a highlight of the book: "To the requirement of righteousness [for the regenerating human being], Swedenborg adds another, never before mentioned by any theologian: intelligence" (p. 13).

It is good to learn more about D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966), the Buddhist scholar who introduced Zen Buddhism to the West and then brought Swedenborg's work to the East—a rich exchange. He took his philosophy degree at Tokyo University and then lived for many years in the United States, where, around the turn of the century, he began to read Swedenborg. He translated several of Swedenborg's books from English into Japanese. Kei Torita's short essay concentrates on Suzuki's *Swedenborugu*, a combination biography and theological overview of Swedenborg. This may be one of

the best treatments of Swedenborg as a man who was profoundly Christian but who also discovered important aspects of Eastern thought and practice. Torita says, "In some places, Suzuki seems to think of Swedenborg as a Buddhist scholar or a perfect Japanese gentleman" (p. 174).

Eugene Taylor ("Emerson") provides a wealth of information about a man whose *name* is very widely known, but *about* whom little is actually known, Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson objected to some of Swedenborg's ideas, but he was one of the great exponents of a generally Swedenborgian approach to philosophical questions. Taylor shows us a man very much on the move, mingling catalytically with Henry James, Sr., Thomas Carlyle, James John Garth Wilkinson, and others. But we are left with questions about the ideas to which Emerson was so passionately dedicated and which must explain all of this activity: What in particular did Sampson Reed mean in his essay "Oration on Genius" that started Emerson's intellectual career? The summary on pages 145-6 is fragmented and aphoristic. And what is "descriptive theism," a subject that Emerson criticized in Swedenborg?

Czeslaw Milosz ("Dostoevsky and Swedenborg") shows how Dostoevsky consciously made thorough use of Swedenborg's symbolism. Even individual characters, such as Svidrigailov in his *Crime and Punishment*, reflect Swedenborgian concepts in vivid and unmistakable forms.

We feel, in Svidrigailov, still another dimension, as though he had just arrived from and were returning to the beyond, in spite of his palpable presence and his presumed biography. Everything about him—the way he visits Raskolnikov for the first time, his physical features, his gestures, his speech, and his dreams—qualify as Swedenborgian correspondences; viewed from that angle, he is, though alive, a melancholy inhabitant of hell. (p. 28)

Kathleen Raine ("The Human

Face of God'') writes both poetically and analytically about Swedenborg's idea that God has a human face. This became a central theme in William Blake's work, and Blake became a central theme for her. She writes with wonderful feeling:

There is not one image or face of God but an infinity of images, an infinity of faces. The implications are overwhelming, for it follows that every human face in the world is, insofar as it is open to the divine influx, one of the myriad faces of God. (p. 76)

And why should artist and poet William Blake be so important to the history of Swedenborgian thought? Milosz suggests that "an acquaintance with Blake must awaken interest in Swedenborg, not only because Blake was influenced by him but also because Swedenborg can best be understood when approached using Blake's own criteria" (p. 24).

As if in answer to Milosz, Raine quotes Blake on some of those criteria: "Knowledge is not by deduction, but Immediate by Perception or Sense at once." Later, she says, "I suggest that the power of Swedenborg's revelation and of Blake's prophetic writings lies in the reality of what they describe, a growing inner awareness on which we cannot go back" (p. 60). Intellectual proof is therefore not what Swedenborg offers. This becomes a repetitive theme. Borges agrees: "Like Emerson and Walt Whitman, [Swedenborg] believed that arguments persuade no one and that stating a truth is sufficient for its acceptance by those who hear it."

Wilson Van Dusen ("A Mystic Looks at Swedenborg") then champions the oftentimes controversial idea that Swedenborg was a mystic. Swedenborgians have wanted to keep Swedenborg free of demeaning connections with any type of vague, irrational thinking. But Van Dusen shows that there are two dictionary definitions of "mystical"—the "layperson's" meaning, which runs toward the obscure and mysterious, and the "scholarly" meaning, which emphasizes a spiritual reality and in-

cludes direct communion with the divine. The layperson's meaning, he says, is now out of style.

Most of the essayists do think of Swedenborg as a mystic. Borges points out that this does not impede Swedenborg's clarity of mind—a good example of the use of Van Dusen's scholarly definition.

Furthermore, Van Dusen continues, the great mystics were mostly rational writers. "Seen in the whole of the world's mystical literature, Swedenborg's spiritual writings are perhaps near average for clarity or rationality" (p. 129). Van Dusen includes some basic instructions in how to develop a personal mystical sense, using everyday experiences.

... the "unconscious"
is not inside us—
we may be inside it,
like fishes in
the sea ...

Colin Wilson ("The Reality of the Visionary World") tells us that Swedenborg "admits that he is an intellectual who prefers to be understood rather than believed" (p. 100). That is a profound point.

How true were Swedenborg's experiences? Was he suffering from delusions? His contemporaries, Wilson says, were in no position to answer that question. Wilson traces the growth of society's awareness of a non-material reality up through Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, who discovered the unconscious mind. Freud would have dismissed Swedenborg's experiences as "some form of illness or compensation mechanism," but Jung found evidence that the "unconscious" is not inside us—we may be inside *it*, like fishes in the sea. There are things in the mind that have an independent existence, just like the things we see around us in the material world. Later on, other psychological studies would come up with more evidence of a complete

world "inside."

But Wilson seems wrapped up in this quest for another reality beyond the limitations of an old scientific materialism, and he seems not to see much of Swedenborg's religion: Swedenborg's interest in the Bible, he theorizes, was due to his religious upbringing. His father was a bishop, and therefore "if he had been brought up on the works of Shakespeare or Dante, no doubt his ideas would have expressed themselves in the form of gigantic commentaries on Shakespeare's tragedies or the *Divine Comedy*" (pp. 99, 100).

Ironically, it is Swedenborg's religion that is the real cause of belief in his experiences. The light of heaven, which is naturally received by a person living the life of love for others, needs only to find conscious articulation in the right religious instruction, say from the literal Word, to eventually overcome doubt and unveil the spiritual point of view. One of Swedenborg's more startling insights is that it is *goodness*, not more data, that recognizes spiritual truth. That is what allows Blake to be right about knowledge and perception. But Wilson looks for philosophic information and longterm scientific change. In the end, one can get from this only other interesting theories that may not change lives, only our intellectual culture.

Nevertheless, everything helps. He concludes, "One thing seems clear: there are mental states in which we can glimpse vistas of knowledge that remain concealed from us in 'everyday consciousness.' Our great mistake lies in supposing that the kind of knowledge we acquire slowly over a lifetime is real, ultimate knowledge" (p. 99).

Wilson ends his essay with an observation that might as well sum up the book: "No one can doubt that it was the mystic ... who ventured furthest into the depths of this alien world that lies inside us." (p.103).

Steve Koke is copy editor for Blue Dolphin Publishing, in Grass Valley, California. He is a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.

Endings and Beginnings

Robert McCluskey

The General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA held its annual meeting in Oakland, California, November 12–15, 1995. Representing the Swedenborgian Church this year were the Revs. Edwin Capon, Dorothea Harvey, Robert McCluskey, Susan Turley-Moore (new to the delegation), and Ms. Nancy Hawley. These meetings marked the end of a quadrennium, and so included a number of reports and events summarizing the work of the last four years. The board gave final approval to the council's new structure, to begin this year. All of the work of the council is now done under the guidance of three units: the General Secretariat, the National Ministries Unit, and Church World Service and Witness. Beginning next year, the General Board becomes the General Assembly, with a greater emphasis on communal worship and facilitating inter-communion dialogue, and less of a focus on business and legislative matters.

UN 50th Anniversary

The council celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations, reviewed the central role played by the churches in its creation, and recommitted itself to its original vision of a world without war. The council also celebrated 75 years of service to the poor and marginalized accomplished through the National Farm Workers Ministry. In conjunction with this observance, the board noted with sadness the death of Sister Pat Drydyk, who for years served as the head of the "Wrath of Grapes" boycott, which was initiated to seek safe working conditions and collective bargaining rights for workers in California. The Swedenborgian Church endorsed the boycott in 1987, which enjoins church bodies to refrain from buying California table grapes. The boycott is still in effect.

Human Rights

The board adopted the Policy Statement on Human Rights, which had been greatly revised after its first and second readings. This statement expands the council's views on human rights from its previous statement of 1963 (reaffirmed in 1979). It affirms the interconnectedness of the variety of human rights, such as civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights; it links the biblical themes of freedom, justice and peace to social justice issues and the Christian call to compassionate service; it raises up the prophetic role of the church, and the need for a sense of genuine stewardship to replace old forms of dominion and oppression of other people and the earth; and it stresses the need for religious freedom as a basis for all other freedoms.

Media Education

Also adopted after its second reading was the Policy Statement on the Churches' Role in Media Education and Communication Advocacy. This statement addresses the critical role of communication in human development, coupled with the pervasive and powerful effect of media; it warned of the concentration of power in the hands of fewer and fewer people, and the consequent degeneration of programming that results. And it calls Christians to be educated about the media, how it works and how they are involved, and to become actively involved by advocating for change in media policies and practices.

Forum on Human Sexuality

As readers know, the 1992 General Board meetings experienced a great deal of dissension over the relationship of the United Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches to the NCCC, and over the issue of homosexuality in the church. As a result of that meeting, a Counseling Committee was appointed to address

the larger issue of how council members can deal with issues which divide them. At this year's meetings, the committee held a forum on human sexuality that consisted of three parts. The first part was a worship service of reconciliation and tolerance. This was followed by a panel presentation of three parents of gay or lesbian children, who shared their struggles in reconciling their church's teachings and their love for their children. And finally, about 30 minutes was given to "ecumenical conversation," in which delegates sat with members of other communions and simply shared their responses to the service and presentation. Intentionally missing from this forum was any deliberation or action in a legislative mode. Its purpose was to provide a safe space in which deeply held personal convictions could be shared without judgment or criticism, and most of those involved were impressed in a positive way by the experience.

Response to Budget Debates

One item of business that was not on the agenda was a response to the budget debates just then taking place in Washington. A letter to President Clinton was drafted at the beginning of the meetings by the heads of communions, and presented to the board. The usual flurry of on-the-spot editorializing began, but was lessened by the urgency of the issue. The board approved the letter, which called on the President to remain faithful to those in society who would be most hurt by the drastic measures coming from Congress: children, the elderly, and the poor. Bishop Edmund Browning, head of the Episcopal Church in America, moved that, instead of simply sending the letter to the White House, the issue was critical enough that it should be "placed on his desk" by a delegation of officers of the Council. Later the next day, we received word

that the President would receive such a delegation that weekend. It was rather exciting to see the General Secretary and others hurriedly making their way from California to Washington as meetings ended on Saturday.

Ban on Anti-Personnel Landmines

Also approved at the meetings were: a Resolution to Endorse the Call for a Complete Ban on Anti-Personnel Landmines; a revision of the NCCC Policy on the Churches and the Public Schools, affirming the need for a delicate balance in issues of religion in public schools, grounded in a clear understanding of the first amendment; and a report from the Ecclesiology Task Force Study, which is examining the changing nature of churches, and how they relate to one another.

Nancy Hawley's Contributions Recognized

Delegates are appointed on a quadrennium basis, and so a number of those present (about a third) were also celebrating their last time together. Among those leaving we raise up the name of Nancy Hawley, who, except for a brief hiatus a couple of years ago, has served faithfully as a delegate from the Swedenborgian Church since 1984. Active in the youth delegation (ages 18-35), Nancy became a familiar face to NCCC regulars, young and old alike, and helped to articulate the ideas and concerns of younger board members to the officers and leaders of the Council. Nancy's contributions to the deliberations of the delegation were both lively and critical, and added immensely to our discussions. Lay representation on our delegation is extremely important, but it requires a certain amount of sacrifice: there is no compensation for this work, and all meetings take place during the week, requiring delegates to take several days off a year on their own time to attend. (Until 1990, the board met twice a year.) That Nancy served so well for so long indicates a level of commitment on behalf of the church that merits our admiration and our thanks.

As always, detailed information about any of these items, or answers to your questions, can be yours by writing the chair of the delegation, Rev. Robert McCluskey, 112 East 35th Street, New York, NY 10016. □

World Patchwork Quilt

Youth Outreach

The Sunday School Association Outreach Committee is on the move to assist better connection between kids at the local level and the whole church internationally. In order for this vision to be realized, it needs the support of caring adults who will take just a little of their time to help make it happen. What is this vision? It involves three activities and promises possible new friendships, increased awareness of the larger church, and more incentive for camp, retreat, and convention involvement.

★ The first project is the making of a World Patchwork Quilt. Each church who will provide the materials for the children to decorate one 8" x 8" square with their church signature on it, will send the square to Anna Maria Billings by April 1st. She and Sharon Billings will arrange and sew them together on backing for the quilt. It will be displayed at the annual convention in Urbana, Ohio for everyone to enjoy. The quilt will then rotate

among all participating churches for one month display times with a list indicating where to send it next.

★ Our Pen Pal Program requires initial information-gathering to be logged into a catalogue of names, addresses, ages, and genders of kids who would like to participate. Send this data by May 1st to: Sharon Billings, 5602 Betty Lane, Milford, Ohio 45150.

★ Send or bring along to convention any examples of special projects your church school kids have done in the past year and would enjoy sharing at the Sunday School Association's display table. (Banners, crafts, writings, photos, etc.) These may help spark creativity and interest in others looking for good ideas. It's fun to see the things our youth do!

Hoping as many of you as possible will get involved and support these activities as a part of your spiritual modeling to our young people.

Sharon Billings
S.S.A. Chairperson

Fryeburg Assembly Themes Set

The Executive Committee of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly met January 27, 1996, under the leadership of its new president, Ellen (Woofenden) Morin to lay plans for its 1996 season. The two weeks of Assembly sessions begin on Saturday, August third and close on Sunday, August eighteenth. The themes will be "Prayer and Ritual" for the first week, and "The Prophets" for the second. *Messenger* readers who would like their names added to the Assembly's mailing list may write to the Registrar, Sarah Dole Robertson, P.O. Box 308, Canaan, VT 05903. □

Important Church Calendar Dates

March 7-10	SSR Board Retreat	April 25	COMSU - Temenos
March 17-19	CAM - Newton	April 28-30	East Coast Peer Supervision - Blairhaven
March 22-24	GOSU/PMSU, EdSU - Almont, Michigan	May 20-21	Retirement Committee - Newton, MA
April 20	Investment Committee - Temenos	June 26-30	Convention 1996 - Urbana, Ohio
April 21	Augmentation Fund Committee - Temenos		



Come Early.
Stay Late!

WHO? You and Your Family

WHAT? Convention '96

WHEN? June 26–June 30

WHERE? Urbana University—Urbana, Ohio

WHY? Fun, Fellowship, and Inspiration

HOW? Send Registration Form in Now!

Saturday night is "Blue Jacket" night

No, we are not all wearing blue jackets. In fact, men don't even have to wear a tie. We are going to the outdoor dinner theatre drama, "Blue Jacket." This is the true story of a white man adopted by the Indians who became war chief of the Shawnee Indian Nation. This pageant is performed on the very ground where some of the story's action historically occurred over 200 years ago.

Receptions

Wednesday — President's Reception hosted by Rev. Edwin Capon

Thursday — SSR Graduation and Reception

Friday — Urbana University Reception hosted by Dr. Francis Hazzard, followed by dance hosted by Youth League

Urbana University
Tours of campus available. Most buildings named after Swedenborgians. Examples are the Harvey Chapel and the Swedenborg Memorial Library. The new math/science building will be finished! This is the first new building on campus in 25 years. This building will be utilized for some of our mini-courses and other events.

Urbana Swedenborgian Church
This church is the home of not one, but two Tracker organs. It is the only place in the country with two Trackers.

Children's Program
Will consist of organized programs for youth and will include field trips and/or on campus activities. Babysitting will also be provided for children not old enough to par-

ticipate in programs. This will allow for participation by parents in activities and meetings.

Youth League

Will schedule and coordinate their own Youth Convention Program. Enough said! Fun will be had by all.

What's Near the Convention Site?

Cincinnati— 1½ hours

Columbus— ½ hour

Dayton— 45 minutes

Banners and Displays

Banners no larger than 2' x 4'. Tables will be available for church and other appropriate displays. Sale of items must benefit church or church-related organizations.

**MORE SPECIFICS NEXT MONTH
INCLUDING LOCAL ACTIVITIES!**

Pre-Convention Workshop

Creating Inner Sacred Spaces

Dates: Begins June 23, 1996 at 7:00 p.m. and concludes Wednesday, June 26 at noon

Cost: \$75.00 per person.

This workshop, presented by EDSU, 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." (Convention theme)

Program and Leaders:

Facilitator: Lorraine Sando, from the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound. She will use art, meditation, prayer and healing therapies to build community and sacred spaces.

Jean Treasch from San Diego church will teach self-help Jin Shin Jyutsu, a healing art similar to acupuncture.

Manon Washburn from the Los Angeles Society will teach us watercolor painting.

Nancy Peterson, LaPorte, Indiana, will lead us in Brain Gym.

Sue Frid, Kitchener, Ontario, will teach us Therapeutic Touch.

Nancy McBride, Vernon, B.C., Canada, will show us pottery.

There also may be others contributing.

Let us know NOW if you are planning to attend by writing or calling Lorraine Sando, 1518 SW 130th Street, Seattle, WA 98146. Telephone: (206) 242-7354.

Brochures will be available in churches in March.

Advance Convention '96 Registration

Urbana University
Urbana, Ohio
June 26 - 30, 1996
"SERVE THE LORD WITH GLADNESS"

<p>Please complete in full - one application per family</p>	<p>Last Name _____ First Name _____ Last Name _____ First Name _____ Address _____ City, State, Province _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Accompanied by _____ Children: 1. Name _____ Age _____ 2. Name _____ Age _____ 3. Name _____ Age _____</p>
<p><i>SCYL Members between the ages of 13 and 18 please complete.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> My parents will attend convention. They are _____ <input type="checkbox"/> My guardian at Convention (if no parent is present) will be _____</p>
<p>Arrivals and departures <i>Shuttle service is available to/from Columbus International Airport and Urbana University. There will be a moderate charge for this service.</i></p>	<p>I/We will arrive on the Urbana University campus on: Date: _____ Time: _____ My/Our first meal on campus will be: Date _____ Breakfast <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch <input type="checkbox"/> Dinner <input type="checkbox"/> My/Our last meal on campus will be: Date _____ Breakfast <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch <input type="checkbox"/> Dinner <input type="checkbox"/> (Last meal served will be breakfast on June 30)</p>
<p>Special Needs</p>	<p>I am not able to climb stairs or walk very far. _____ I have these medical requirements _____ _____ I am <input type="checkbox"/> diabetic <input type="checkbox"/> a heart patient Other health problem _____ Other physical/dietary/special needs: _____ _____</p>
<p>Children: <i>The children's program will begin on Wednesday evening, June 26 and end at lunch on Saturday so that children can accompany their parents on outings. There will be an optional children's program on Saturday night for those children not attending the performance of "Blue Jacket" with their parents.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> My child/children will be participating in the Children's Program for ages 4 to 12 beginning on: _____ Names: _____ Ages: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> I will need child care for age 3 and under beginning: _____ Names: _____ Ages: _____ Special needs: _____ Have your children attended pre-school? _____</p>

Rates for 1996 Convention Room & Board

Please note that there are two types of accommodations on campus.

There are also various hotel and/or bed and breakfasts available locally. Information and telephone numbers will be available on request.

Board (3 meals a day, refreshments, etc.)	\$20 per person per day.
Board for children 5 and under	FREE
Dorm Room (Single bed, no A/C)	\$10 per person per day
Suite Room* (Single or double)	\$30 per day

*Suites contain 3 double bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and an unfurnished common room. Suites are airconditioned and are suitable for families, congenial couples, etc. Children under 12 may sleep on the floor (sleeping bags or mattresses) in parents' room at NO CHARGE. Children older than 5 years will still be charged for board and registration fee. But, our goal is to make this an affordable family experience.

All prices are in US dollars.

Some financial assistance is available for teens and children. Please ask for more information if you would like to apply.

Accommodations

All accommodations are on a first come, first served basis. Early registration before April 30 should ensure your first choice. All room & board charges must be paid in advance and received in the Central Office before 6/17/96.

☐ I/We would like a suite. I/We would like to share a suite with _____

☐ I would like a dorm room. I would like a room near _____

I/We would like information on: ☐ Hotels ☐ Bed & Breakfasts

Registration

All prices are in US dollars.

Children under 12	\$20.00
Teen League (SCYL participant 13-18)	\$35.00
Other Teens and Adults	\$60.00
Family maximum (Parents and children)	\$150.00

Late fee if received after 5/1/96 \$10.00

Registration is per person and covers some special costs and events. No registration refunds after June 1. Please mail this form with your check, made out to The Swedenborgian Church to:

Central Office
The Swedenborgian Church
48 Sargent Street
Newton, MA 02158

Early Arrivals and Delayed Departures

Urbana University will allow a limited number of convention attendees to come early and/or stay after convention if arrangements are made in advance. Please let us know if you wish to take advantage of this opportunity.

Financial Assistance

For children and young people, please contact the Central Office
48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158

Apocalypse Now?

James Lawrence

God willing, most of us will not only experience that once-in-a-lifetime thrill of welcoming a new century, we will witness an event ten times rarer: the dawn of a new millennium. That also means we are about to experience the inevitable sensationalistic wave that such mega-markers excite. Nostradamus and Edgar Cayce are but two credible psychics with large followings who predicted worldly cataclysms to accompany the end of this millennium.

Contemporary seers have been predicting everything from world apocalypse to a new Golden Age to the very end of human culture as we presently know it. Strands of Christian evangelicalism see a fulfillment of biblical prophecies coming to pass at this momentous cusp, citing it as a likely time for the Last Judgment—which won't be pretty for those outside the fold.

In these pressing times, a thoughtful perspective is needed. Ignoring the subject altogether might be acceptable for non-Christians, but since the New Testament clangs the "final judgment" and "end times" gong quite loudly, the serious Christian will want to make some kind of sense of this matter.

We're in luck! An appealing alternate view hit the presses in 1758, when Swedenborg consolidated relevant material scattered throughout his recently completed 10-year *Arcana Celestia* opus and released a small work entitled *The Last Judgment*. Declaring the seismic events referred to by Jesus in the New Testament as metaphors for an inner, spiritual revolution of human consciousness, Swedenborg consistently avers that the famed "end times" prophecies are not predictive of earthly historical events but are instead descriptive of spiritual upheavals. All "ages" receive a "last judgment" in this sense: they undergo a pivotal collective spiritual shift when finally the entire mentality begins to come undone (i.e., is "judged") and a new spiritual mentality (not necessarily a superior one) takes root in its place.

Swedenborg, famed for his division of human history into five great spiritual epochs, portrays each as characterized by a fundamental spirituality. Christ's incarnation was especially significant, ushering in a new spiritual consciousness that kept the human enterprise from sliding into a hell of no return. But that era (the fourth) also didn't last. That once-new spiritual infusion became established over the many centuries, then ossified and became corrupt—and its last judgment finally occurred, a spiritual re-ordering enabling our modern era to be born.

Swedenborg claimed to witness this "judgment" in the spiritual world during the earth year 1757 (the year just before publishing *The Last Judgment*), and with its con-

clusion, a powerful new spiritual environment of far-reaching potential came into existence, which he called The New Church. It was, in fact, Swedenborg's ultimate calling to begin articulating the new understanding of this fifth and New Age.

Swedenborg's explanations of the last judgment foretold in the New Testament, the apocalypse, the "end of time" and their relation to worldly events is unique among the wide range of teachings that exist in Christian and quasi-Christian quarters. As the new millennium approaches, urgent messages will fill the airwaves and the print media from those who would have us look here and look there for the signs of a coming judgment. But, as always with the New Jerusalem, we need only to look within.

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

Temenos Program Calendar Winter-Spring 1996

Healing Circle	Susan Herrick in Concert
Second Sundays	April 13
March 10, April 14,	
May 12, June 9	Sacred Space Retreat
	April 14-15
Valuing our Differences	Ritual for Healing Grief
February 23-24	April 21
Reiki Level II Training	Writing from Within the Self
February 24-25	April 26-28
Nicaragua Revisited	Healing Power of Breath
February 25	April 27-28
Women's Group	May Festival
February 28, March 6, 13, 20, 27,	May 5
April 3, 10, 24, May 1, 8, 15	Inner Bonding
The Everyday Shaman	May 10
March 2	Reiki Level I Training
Love and Power	May 18-19
March 10	Managing Anger
Meditation for Everyone	May 31
March 17	Transforming the Family
Alternative and Conventional	May 31-June 1
Medicine	Creative Process as
March 24	Spiritual Pathway
Celestine Insights II	June 8
March 30	Testimony to the Invisible
In Search of Harmony	June 9
April 13	

For further information or a full brochure, call 610 / 696-8145 or write to: Rev. Ernest Martin, Director, Temenos Retreat and Conference Center, 685 Broad Run Rd., West Chester, PA 19382.

Thank You!

The Swedenborgian Church thanks the following individuals who made contributions in 1995 (as of January 17, 1996)

Mr. & Mrs. Robert E. Abbot
 Evelyn Aiken
 Philip Alden, Sr.
 Philip M. Alden, Jr.
 Mark & Wendy Anderson
 Julia V. Anget
 Dorothy Armstrong
 Stewart Ayton
 Brian Bagnall & family
 Juliet Barton
 Joseph R. Baume
 Polly, Bill & Kevin Baxter
 Bertha Berran
 Mr. & Mrs. Bestor
 Joy A. Bidwell
 Rev. Kit B. Billings
 Gay Beth Bingham
 Christine Blackmer
 Mary Blair
 Janet Blake
 Helen Bohlander
 Edward R. Bosley, Jr.
 Donald Bowman
 Barbara Boxwell
 Dr. John L. Boyer
 Mrs. John D. Boyle
 Thomas Bramel
 Ruth C. Brandau
 Pamela Brown
 Goodwin Brown
 Anna Buck
 Susan Burns
 Devlin & Mary Cadilac
 Margaret Bray Calby
 Lee Ann Campbell
 Mary Carey
 Eugene Carlson
 Isabel Carpenter
 George Chapin
 Rev. En Bo Chung
 Dorothy Churchill
 Bill & Betsy Coffman
 Lurabel Colburn
 Clifton Colby
 Anne Conkle
 Conn. Assoc. of the New Church
 Josephine Covern
 Mary E. Crenshaw
 Jean Cressy
 Deane & Susannah Currie
 Susan J. Dangberg
 Dorothy Davies
 Ron Davies
 Sylvie Desouches
 Mr. & Mrs. Philip Diaconoff
 Rev. Dr. George Dole
 John & Aili Driscoll
 Mrs. Milton C. Early
 Capt. August A. Ebel
 Mr. & Mrs. Herman Eckert
 Betty J. Eldridge
 David & Barbara Eller
 Lon Elmer
 Elmwood New Church
 Dela Erickson

Dorothy Farnham
 Karen Feil
 Grace M. Fisher
 Joy Fleming
 Doris Francis
 Adrienne Frank
 Hazel E. Frederick
 Doris Friesen
 Benjamin Frost
 William & Sally Frost
 Leslie & Mardelle Gaboury
 Penelope H. Garver
 John Gaul
 Richard & Audrey Goff
 Penelope Pietras Goldstein
 Mr. & Mrs. Kenton Graber
 Roy Graber
 Elisa Greiff
 Gwynne Griswold
 Rafael M.J. Guin
 Daisy M. Halle
 Barbara Halle
 Elfa Holloway
 Daniel A. Hanley
 Duane Harley
 Mary Hatfield
 Richard B. Hatheway
 Thelma E. Hawkins
 Dr. Francis Hazard
 Mr. & Mrs. Albert J. Heer
 Elizabeth Higgins
 Clera E. Hill
 H. Jeannette Hille
 Lorraine Holmberg
 Lillian How
 Kathleen Hull-Ryde
 Donna Humes
 Betty B. Imhoff
 Helen S. Jackson
 Maxine Jennings
 Margery A. Jester
 Pierce & Nancy Johnson
 Marjorie Johnston
 Elsa Jones
 Donald & Catherine Jones
 Mrs. Alvin L. Kearns
 Lt. Col. John W. Keller
 Vivian Kelley
 Bertha Kimmig
 The Church of the Good Shepherd,
 Kitchener, Ontario
 Drs. Ted & Mary Kay Klein
 Esther P. Knierim
 Sam & Anna Knight
 Henrietta Knutson
 Adrienne B. Kopa
 Janice Krapf
 Mr. & Mrs. Kraus
 Rhonda S. Kuster
 Christine Laitner
 Rev. Dr. James Lawrence
 Howard A. Lawrence
 Donald & Joan Lechner
 Rev. Chungson M. Lee
 Frances LeLand

Rev. Theodore & Patricia LeVan
 Mr. & Mrs. Adolph Liebert
 Ann Livingston
 Wilfred Locke
 Robert Locke
 Marion Lorentzen
 A. Elaine Lowe
 Mr. & Mrs. Merle F. Lundberg
 Carl Lundberg
 Jean Lutz
 Louise Worthington Lynn
 Mr. & Mrs. Maier
 Albert Maletsky
 Joseph E. Martin
 Rev. Ernest O. Martin
 Alice Mason
 Mass. New Church Union
 Mr. & Mrs. McClure
 Charles McCormick
 Jay & Crystal McElhenney
 Virginia McGovern
 Alice Memmott
 Susan Mesick
 Grace K. Mikelos
 Mrs. Gordon W. Miller
 Mary Mitchell
 James Moran
 John Mucka
 Mr. & Mrs. Keith Mull
 Lorna Murphy
 Dr. & Mrs. G.W. Nash
 Rachel J. Nicol
 Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Nielsen
 James O'Donnell
 Mr. & Mrs. O'Reilly
 Sylvia Odey
 Diane Olsen
 Lawrence & Edith Pangato
 Dexter & Aida Pasternak
 Alfred Pate
 Alice M. Pedersen
 Barbara Penabaker
 John & Anne Perry
 Nancy C. Perry
 Rev. F. Gardiner Perry
 Mabel Peterman
 Nancy Piotrowski
 George C. Prosser
 Rev. Stephen J. Pults
 Velma Bates Ramirez
 Howard and Connie Recher
 Leon Rhodes
 Mr. & Mrs. Dennison Rice
 Lincoln & Sarah Dole Robertson
 Emily Romney
 Lorraine Sando
 Mr. & Mrs. Saul
 Margaret D. Schneider
 Hampton & Elora Schoch
 William Schrader
 Hester Schwarting
 Gladys C. Schwendker
 In memory of Katherine Swiger
 Donna Sekhon
 Doyle Adam Seward

Lynn M. Higgins
 Katherine Shaw
 Velma Shepherd
 Lavina Siebert
 Cecil & Mary Siebert
 Jane, Ray, and Casana Siebert
 Helen Sions
 Wickham & Alice Skinner
 Helen T. Smailier
 Carol Sanchez
 Eldon & Annella Smith
 Jean Spitzer
 Laurie Steese
 Florence K. Steward
 Richard F.D. Stibolt
 Meredith Swanson
 Mary Alice Swartz
 Swedenborgian Church of
 Greater Cleveland
 Fryeburg Alliance
 Edmund & June Swiger
 Robert W. Tafel, Jr.
 The New York Association
 Marilyn Thomas
 Valerie E. Thompson
 Alan R. Thomsen
 Margit Tobisch
 Lola Todd
 Elizabeth Trautmann
 Major & Joyce Travers
 Jean Treash
 Geraldine Trombly
 Alrena Tucker
 Jeannette Tucker
 Pat Tukas
 Marilyn Turley
 Laurie Turley
 Rev. Susan Turley-Moore
 Louise Turnidge
 Connie Unger
 Dan Unruh
 Naomi Unruh
 Alvena Unruh
 John B. Van Meer
 Vivian Vanderberg
 Frances Vodola
 Arthur Vos, Jr.
 Mr. & Mrs. Wagner
 J.C. & Gloryann Webb
 Evelyn Weed
 R. Craig Weigel
 Priscilla Weld
 Ann Graber Westermann
 Mr. & Mrs. Louis Wheaton
 Mrs. T. North Whitehead
 Charles & Verda Winter
 Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Wong
 Vivian Wood
 Linda Wood
 Susan Wood
 Dr. Carolyn Wright
 Rev. Carl & Betty Yenetchi
 Dorothy deB. Young

Thank You

The Messenger and the Communications Support Unit thank the following individuals for subscriptions and donations to the *Messenger* Endowment Fund from November 5, 1995 through January 30, 1996. Thanks as well for the notes of greeting, appreciation, and encouragement:

Rev. Eric J.N. Allison
Kitchener, Ontario

Giorgio E. Ferrari
Venice, Italy

Richard A. Foster
Konigsfeld-Weller, Germany

Doris Frost Francis
Corpus Christi, Texas

Rev. Forster Freeman
Swannanoa, North Carolina

Lucretia W. Green
Scottsbluff, Nebraska

Daisy M. Halle
LaPorte, Indiana

David J. Keating
Coopersburg, Pennsylvania

Rev. C. Henry and Maria Korsten
Edmonton, Alberta

Rev. Randall and Mildred Laakko
Wilmington, Delaware

Paul and Karen Melnychuk
Hermosa Beach, California

Grace K. Mikelos
Harrison Township, Michigan

Thomas H. Neilson
New Westminster, B.C.

New York New Church

Jimmy Parham
Asheville, North Carolina

Rev. F. Gardiner Perry
Conway, New Hampshire

Allene Pickering
Tonasket, Washington

Sara Sawatzky
Grand Centre, Alberta

Pamela Selensky
New York, New York

Elizabeth R. Shesler
Thomaston, Maine

Mary Kay Siebert
Pretty Prairie, Kansas

Florence K. Steward
Hutchinson, Kansas

Elizabeth M. Trautman
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Patricia G. Tuko
LaPorte, Indiana

Velma E. Shepherd
Ft. Collins, Colorado

Beulah L. Unruh
Pawnee Rock, Kansas

Louis Wheaton
Bonita Springs, Florida

From Venice, Italy, Giorgio Ferrari writes: . . . "Thanking you, *Messenger*, editor P. LeVan, and all contributors [for] your voice of news and faith, for your blessed work. Wishing . . . every Lord's Aid towards a New Year of your propitious accomplishments."

Attention All Ministers

The B.C. New Church Society in Kelowna, B.C., Canada, is actively searching for a minister for our small (15 adults and 12 children) but enthusiastic and growing group. We are open minded and willing to discuss the possibilities with you. For more information, please contact Dave McBride, at 1-604-545-9581.

Moving Toward the Light

(Continued from page 34)

industry, dating from the days when he was a child actor in a B-movie series. Miraculously, his column got syndicated. Several months later I took over the writing of an old, nearly defunct syndicated political gag column, *Potomac Fever*, which was originally started by Fletcher Knebel. It was all small stuff compared with Jack, of course; his column was ultimately distributed to over 600 newspapers. But he had changed the course of our lives. I had gone back to college, and shared Jack with my psychology teacher, a nun who was head of the psychology department at Loyola Marymount. She, too, had become a fan, but her duties at the college prevented her joining our convergence on the temple. She asked me to bring her back an autographed copy of his book, which I did.

The weather was gloomy, and there weren't many people in the temple on that November day. Jack was delighted to see us, and we were able to chat for a short time uninterrupted. He had misplaced his keys that morning and was worried about being locked out of his house, since his

wife was away. He was sharing the dais with authors Will and Ariel Durant, and Dr. Irving Bengelsdorf, a science writer on the subject of overpopulation and pollution who was quite pessimistic about the situation. In between other book signings and conversations, Jack drew me a map to their house in Baja, and said we were welcome anytime. I never went, but I cherished the gesture and kept the map for years with my best jewelry.

A few days later I was rewarded with several lines in a funny column about his lost keys. It seemed we had indeed brightened his day; he mentioned that he took the chrysanthemums home for his wife to plant. "Maybe they'll remind me to be optimistic when I'm pessimistic," he wrote. I wonder if they're still growing in his garden. Do chrysanthemums last for 25 years?

As for the magical lunch, he spoke about learning to survive a bad column when you're on deadline every day. He strongly encouraged me to continue writing, and he was altogether open and humble about regrets he had over his lifetime. Not about lost opportunities or riches, but things he said that might have hurt people

that he cared about. He listened, and trusted, and was present and real.

My life changed drastically over the next two decades; a lot of growth and learning was happening. More than once I thought about writing to him again, to catch him up on things. Those letters to him had always had the effect of putting my own experiences in perspective and restoring the light touch if I was taking myself too seriously. But life crowded in, and I lost touch with Jack and the *L.A. Times*. When I returned to Julian instead of Los Angeles, after many years' absence from California, the *Times* wasn't available here, either. Sometime in November 1995, a friend told me that Jack's health had been deteriorating over the past ten years; he'd had several heart attacks and was in a wheelchair, and was describing in his columns what all that was like. I thought about writing to him or even calling, but it had been so many years I didn't think he would remember me. I had called the *Times* before I left for Indiana in the mid-eighties—he was in the hospital, and I wanted to know that he was all right. Of course, I was told, he'll be OK—Jack always comes back. He had, I was

(Continued on page 47)

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.

Response to Stewardship Series

I feel compelled to respond to the series of articles that have appeared in recent *Messengers* on the topic of stewardship. I want to thank Eric Allison, Paul Martin and Polly Baxter for their good stewardship in writing these articles. The time and talents this took on their parts has not gone unappreciated. I have also found these to be insightful pieces that I hope will continue to challenge our doing and thinking in the months and years to come.

However, I must also share that I tend to disagree with several statements made by Paul Martin in the December *Messenger* that concern the ongoing work of our denomination. In particular, near the end of his article he clearly implies that we are not interested in discussing vision and change, nor are we willing to support new ideas and projects.

When I read this . . . I was surprised that the chair of the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit would make such comments. Have we not tried to help re-birth our churches in Portland, (Maine), Cleveland, and Puget Sound according to new visions? Is not PMSU trying to do the same by helping all of our churches explore new forms and avenues of ministry and service? Have we not instituted board and stewardship training and helped churches in developing clear mission statements and long-range plans? Have we not cut or greatly reduced funding to churches that are unwilling to reach out and grow in new ways so that more support is available to those that are?

Likewise, beyond the work of PMSU, has not Stonehouse received thousands of dollars of financial support from a denomination that supposedly "condemns" new ideas and projects? Didn't we spend over a million dollars to begin Temenos? Are we not helping to launch new projects such as Living Waters, the Network Center and J. Appleseed & Co.?

In my seventeen years of ministry within our church I have seen great interest in discussing and implementing change. I have witnessed the work of the Ad Hoc Committee and its predecessor committees on goals and priorities. I have taken part in numerous Council of Ministers' discussions that dealt with similar issues. I have been a part of three different associations—Ohio, Michigan and Canada—where much work in these areas has been accomplished. I have been a part of the board of managers of our seminary that gave birth to a new direction and vision for SSR. I have witnessed numerous changes within both local and denominational ministries.

This is not to say that all of this has been successful. For this reason, I wholeheartedly agree with Paul that we must continue to assume responsibility and demand accountability from our various centers. Accomplishing this has, and will continue to mean that many dif-

icult decisions be made. But from my perspective, for him to imply that as a denomination we are unwilling to do so, and are not even interested in exploring new forms and change, simply is not true.

Lastly, I must address one other point. The article clearly implies that as a denomination "we" are in control of over \$75 million dollars worth of assets. I am not sure who "we" is. Have we adopted an episcopal form of church policy? This must have taken place at the 1993 Convention—I missed that one.

Ron Brugler
Kitchener, Ontario

Response to Response

I have several reactions to Ron Brugler's response to my recent article in *The Messenger*. He objected to my sense that the church is not interested in discussing vision and change. I agree with Ron that some individuals on some support units, committees, or in some local churches are discussing new visions for our church, but I am not very encouraged by the results of these discussions. I, too, was on the committee on goals and priorities and was excited by our discussion and the recommendations we made, but this was over ten years ago and most of those recommendations were never implemented and soon forgotten. I was also, more recently, part of a committee within the Council of Ministers that wrote a Vision for a Healthy Swedenborgian Church, which was heartily endorsed by the Council of Ministers, Cabinet and General Council. I believe the document implied radical change, but fear that its ideas will soon be forgotten. I have been a part of PMSU for over three years and have seen the excitement and dedication of its members as we wrestled with how to help our church centers grow and change. We have celebrated the success of a few churches as they grew or became financially self-sufficient, feeling their joy as our own. But we also mourn with other churches.

When church leaders gather to appraise our situation, the need for change is evident, and change is occurring, though it does not come easily. Sometimes I, too, get excited by the birth of The Stonehouse, Living Waters, the NET*WORK and Temenos, as well as some of the programs being sponsored by our local churches. Other times, however, I get impatient for more rapid and far-reaching change. I get discouraged at how few new projects there are and at how slow and painful their growth has been because of the limited support and angry opposition they have generated.

I believe it would not be too difficult to develop, within five years, regional centers across North America that would be world famous for attracting spiritual teachers and participants. And we do have the resources to accomplish this! When I wrote that "we" control over \$75 million dollars of assets, I used "we" to mean the denomination and its member associations and societies. I realize full well that the denomination has funded a few new projects and does not have the resources to do much more. In the future, associations and local societies will have to fund, or become, the new projects, just as the Philadelphia Church society is adopting the Temenos project. We would easily be perceived as the leading church in the spiritual growth movement. People are looking for spiritual growth

centers, and there is a vacuum in leadership because regeneration is not the theological focus in other denominations, as it is in ours. It is hard to see the church I love dying when I believe renewal would be so easy.

Paul Martin
Redmond, Washington

Stewardship: Form Follows Use

Dear Editor,

Once again *The Messenger* (December 1995) prints an article that calls for reality checking and a willingness to look for and accept changes to heal a declining church. ("Stewardship is Assuming Responsibility" by Paul Martin.) It clearly defined this state of the church; however it made the same recommendations that have been made for the past thirty years.

The answer lies, I believe, in looking to and accepting the theology of Swedenborg as noted on the back page of *The Messenger*. "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." " . . . the sincerest form of worship is a useful life."

We continue to look inward when we need to look outward and ask how can we live a useful life as individuals and as an organized church? Let us leave for a moment, our declining church and ask, prayerfully, what outward useful path should we be following? What good can we accomplish when there is so much pain in the world today? When we can walk together on this path our organization will reflect the quality of action of our beliefs and a small portion of the New Jerusalem will shine through. First comes use and then comes form.

We have studied, written, reviewed, and talked about our teachings for all these years, now is the time to add to this and put into action our beliefs.

Marilyn Turley
Olympia, Washington

Letter

Gutfeldt Honored by St. Thomas Christians

Archbishop Mar Joseph Vredenburg of Santa Cruz, California, writes that, on December 2, 1995, their Federation of St. Thomas Christians conferred upon the Rev. Dr. Horand Gutfeldt an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. (Dr. Gutfeldt is the retired minister emeritus and vice president of the El Cerrito Hillside Community Church (Swedenborgian) in El Cerrito, California).

Dr. Vredenburg further commented in his letter, "Dr. Gutfeldt [is] a great spiritual hero to many St. Thomas Christians. His Ph.D dissertation, *Johann Friedrich Oberlin*, presented to the University of Vienna, exemplifies the core theology of St. Emanuel Swedenborg. Dr. Gutfeldt has been a loyal and true friend and inspiration to the St. Thomas Christians. He has been an intellectual catalyst in the revival of interest in Swedenborg's writings in our churches. He has perfected the spiritual art of meditation so dear to the hearts of Eastern Christians . . . We will designate Dr. Gutfeldt an honorary professor of practical theology in our College of Seminarians at the annual July third Synod. Many of our people have been edified and blessed by his ministry."

Memorial

Duane Carl Lundberg

(Philisie)

August 25, 1923 - January 7, 1996

Carl first became acquainted with the Swedenborgian Church when his mother and dad joined the Riverside, California church in 1937. He attended Split Mountain Camp where he received the nickname "philisie" for philatelist. He later became camp director for two years. During his life he served as president of the American New Church League, president of the Los Angeles church, treasurer of the Pacific Coast Association, and member of the Friends of the Wayfarers Chapel. He met his wife, Betty Pobanz, through the New York Society when he was working in New York.

On the sale of his residence, he created a \$50,000 annuity in favor of General Convention, a like amount for the Swedenborg School of Religion and an annuity for the Wayfarers Chapel, which was valued at over \$70,000 on his passing. He created the Betty Pobanz Trust Fund with the Wayfarers Chapel in her memory in the early 80s, with instructions that the contributions to the fund be kept intact and only the earnings used for operations and maintenance of the Chapel.

Eldon Smith, lay minister of the San Diego Church, quoted from Timothy, Chapter 4 in his sympathy card, which I believe Carl would have liked quoted about his life: "The time of departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me."

Contributions to the Betty Pobanz Memorial Fund or flowers on the date of the memorial service may be sent to the *Wayfarers Chapel*, 5755 Palos Verdes Dr. S, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90274.

Goodbye, my brother.

—Merle Lundberg

Passages

Birth

Pruiett—Eric and Katie (Rienstra) Pruiett had a baby boy, named Jonathan Allen Pruiett, January 21, 1996. He weighed 7 lbs. 6 oz. Katie and Eric's address is 2955 Hilleman Ave., St. John, MO 63114.

Deaths

Bischof—Gustave J. Bischof, age 95, lifelong member and a former president of the New York Swedenborgian Church and member of the Swedenborg Foundation, entered the spiritual world December 16, 1995, at his home in Lititz, Pennsylvania. Mr. Bischof, a social action advocate, was a frequent and articulate contributor to *The Messenger* in years past; "Toward a Renewed Church," his article which originally appeared in the February 1981 *Messenger*, was reprinted in the January 1994 issue. A memorial service will be conducted in the spring; at this writing a date has not yet been set.

Colby—Alice M. (Rainey) Colby, age 86, lifelong active member of the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church, entered the spiritual world December 25, 1995. A memorial service was conducted December 31, 1995, at the Bridgewater church, the Rev. Dr. George Dole officiating. Mrs. Colby served the church in many capacities throughout her life and was a dedicated member of the choir.

Kirven—Marian Kirven entered the spiritual world January 19, 1996, in Phoenix, Arizona, "after years of an illness that saw her gradually lose the abilities she had used in the service of her family, her church, and her community. Her patience during those years was poignant. And in extending our sympathy to her husband Bob and her daughters Diana and Margaret, we rest in the assurance that she herself has left her physical limitations behind and has entered a world where her own warmth and candor are very much at home." A resurrection service was conducted in Phoenix February 18, 1996, the Rev. Dr. George Dole officiating.

Lundberg—Duane Carl Lundberg, age 72, longtime dedicated member and a former president of the Los Angeles Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world January 7, 1996, at the Park Imperial Convalescent Center in Lawndale, California, following a long illness. A resurrection service was conducted February 22, 1996, at the Wayfarers Chapel, the Rev. Carl Yenetchi officiating. He is survived by his brother, Merle Lundberg, a board member of the Los Angeles Society. (See Memorial).

Uthoff—Walter Henry Uthoff, age 72, longtime member and current treasurer of the Swedenborgian Church in Norway, Iowa, entered the spiritual world December 6, 1995. A memorial service was conducted December 9, 1995, by the Rev. Burr Bryant at the Norway United Methodist Church. His survivors include his wife, Eleanor, three daughters, three sons, his mother and aunt, seven sisters and one brother, 18 grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. "He was a loving husband, father, grandfather and son, a friend to everyone and will be missed greatly by all who knew him."

Church Family News

The Rev. F. Bob Tafel was released from Deaconess Hospital in early January. He had been scheduled to have an angiogram January 5, but was taken by ambulance to the hospital December 28 after having symptoms suggestive of a heart attack. Fortunately, he reached the hospital in time, before any damage was done to his heart. He had an angiogram a few days later which revealed a 90% blockage in one major coronary artery. An angioplasty was performed on January 2, which seems to have solved the problem. Gretchen Tafel was recuperating from sinus surgery when F. Bob entered the hospital. All this during the blizzard! January was a pretty rough month for them both. F. Bob is home and feeling much better. Cards and letters welcome: 29 Fisher St., Needham, MA 02192. (619) 444-3334.

Moving Toward the Light (Continued from page 45)

certain, transcended mere humanity. He wasn't just part of the *Times*, he *was* the *Times*. A daily column for nearly four decades. Didn't that make him immortal? Wouldn't he always be there, in Section IV?

My son called on January 10, the day after Jack died. He thought I knew, but I didn't. I'd missed Jack's final story. I received all the clippings in a large envelope several days later. The letters from readers, the tributes, the memorials. Bill Boyarsky, a fellow columnist, wrote, "In the last several months, his readers shared his death. No sentimentality or self-pity cluttered his last story. He was covering his own death just as he had covered everything else—with precision and a clear eye."

Years back, Jack had written a column about Will Rogers, which began with Rogers' quote, "You must judge a man's greatness by how much he will be missed." Hundreds of readers wrote to the *Times*, with their memories of Jack and how he touched their lives over the last 35 years. One reader wrote, "I can't stop crying. With the passing of Jack Smith, I have lost one of my last links to the Los Angeles that was. Whether or not he believed in a hereafter, I believe that Jack and Mr. Gomez are somewhere enjoying a tall, cold Cerveza."

Another of his colleagues referred to Jack as a fellow agnostic. The dictionary defines agnostic as "a person who holds that the existence of the ultimate cause, as a god or God, and the essential nature of things, are unknown and unknowable." Well, now he knows. I feel certain he's right up there charming the angels with self-deprecating anecdotes about the days when he referred to God as Random Chance.

—Patte LeVan

1995 Almont SCYL Winter Retreat

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.

Being a first-year college student at Wesleyan in Connecticut, Christmas break was a godsend for me this year. I really needed an escape from the pressures of studying and the loneliness of a new place that after three and a half months still seems foreign to me. I was aching to be with family, friends and the familiarity of the little town in Maine I call home. When my Dad came to pick me up, dressed in his goofy "Mainer" garb, donning his distinguishing smile that extends the length of his face and you swear beyond, I was blissful.

After months of being in a place where no one really knew me and where many people didn't care to, it was so special to go home to a place where I could feel complete acceptance and love. For me, I only get that feeling with my family, with good friends whom I've known most of my life and with the people I see twice a year or so at the Swedenborgian Church Youth League retreats. Walking through the door of Fister lounge at Almont, the same feeling of bliss overtook me as when I saw my Dad's grin.

It seems strange that I could feel so comfortable with people whom I only see once or twice a year, if that. Some of the people at the retreat have grown up in the church and gone to the summer camps since they were little. Others, like me, have come without family or any other connection to the church.

Many don't consider themselves Swedenborgian, many don't come from families who are Swedenborgian or are in any way religious. But no matter what their backgrounds or their reasons for coming to the retreat, once they are there, they are guaranteed to have a special spiritual experience.

This year's winter retreat was no exception. The topic was the Afterlife, and in the lectures co-taught by several ministers and teen leaders, we learned about Swedenborg's visions of *Heaven and Hell* and we shared our own personal visions of heaven and hell. This year's lecturers included the Revs. Steve Pults, Renee Morris, Eric Hoffman and, visiting from the Swedenborg School of Religion, student Nadine Cotton. They shared their thoughts and ideas with teen facilitators who always managed to connect with the teens attending. It was a sacred experience of discussion, playing, renewing friendships, creating new ones, and rejoicing in the splendor of living. At each year's retreat we end with a communion which is always a deep time of sharing.

I'm sure not all youth leaguers will have the same interpretation of how they experienced the retreat, but I'm sure most of them would agree that it was fun. I would bet that most everyone who was there will smile when they think of it and put the experience in a special place in his or her memory, as each retreat is in mine. I can't possibly describe all the happenings of the retreat because they were different for everyone. I have only tried to describe what a special place the winter retreat at Almont is, a home for all where we always belong and where we are always loved.



Andy Yenetchi, President



Amy Halle of LaPorte, Indiana flanked by Casana Siebert and Megan Helm of Great Bend, Kansas.

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

Forwarding Address Correction Requested

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