

# THE MESSENGER

Monthly Publication, Swedenborgian Church of North America

May 1996

## *When the Heart of a Spiritual Community is in Trouble*

John Billings


**W**hat does a congregation do when it is in disarray? Not the kind of disarray that comes from a calamity

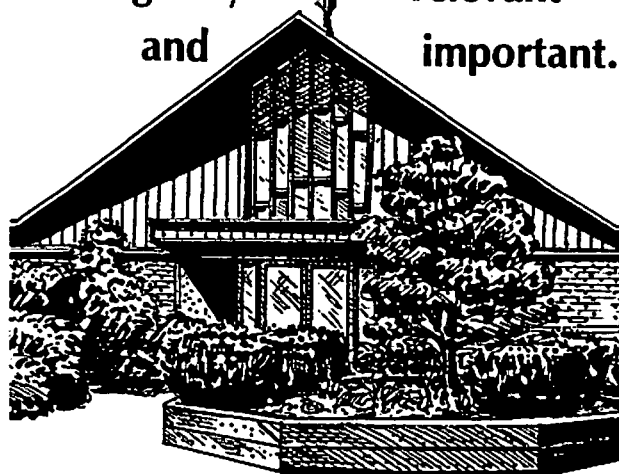
like a tornado or other natural disaster, but a spiritual disaster. The kind of disarray that comes from *within* the congregation itself—the kind that is much more deadly and difficult to deal with. It can be long standing, or it can suddenly appear. What can a congregation do when the spiritual community itself is in real trouble; when it is crippled and staggering under the weight of its own internal difficulties? It is a time, no doubt, when even the angels are particularly distressed.

A Swedenborgian congregation, no matter what size or type it might be, has many ways it can go about trying to fulfill its purposes. I believe its main purpose is to facilitate personal growth and development around the two great commandments of loving the Lord and being able to truly love other human beings. Any program or activity in a congregation that helps us love ourselves and other human beings in real and appropriate ways, or helps us better understand and love the Lord, is a program worth doing.



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urgently  
and  
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relevant  
important.



But, if a congregation is in too much internal difficulty, is being torn apart from within by negative and destructive forces, it will not be able to pursue such programs or activities effectively. Thus, the church's efforts are being short-circuited, if not actually aborted. That should not continue.

But what to do?

**I**n my view, a congregation is, more than anything else, a spiritual community. Nowhere else in the world can you find the spiritual *in* community. You can find the spiritual by itself and you can find community by itself. Some groups are genuine communities, e.g., a business or an educational community. And the spiritual can certainly be experienced by any one individual at any time—in any setting.

But when these two come together, a genuine sense of the spiritual within a real sense of human community, you have a church. And when these two *do* come together in this way, it is the foundation out of which the church lives out its call or vision. If a part of that foundation is missing or cracked, the very life and mission of the church is compromised. This often happens when a minister leaves or enters a church. When it happens we need something powerful to deal with it, because these forces can sometimes be very dark and very strong.  
(Continued on page 67)

Guest Editorial by Erni Martin

## Peace and Reconciliation

When we hear the words "peace and reconciliation," we think immediately of talks in Cairo or Jerusalem or Washington, D.C. Can the Israelis and Palestinians ever live in peace with one another? We think of the Bosnians, Croatsians, and Serbs, and wonder whether the fragile peace can be maintained, and a permanent settlement of differences worked out.

It's always easier to focus on conflict resolution "out there," in some other country or part of the world, than in our own spheres of influence. We may be disturbed by the name-calling in the Republican primaries, but as candidates drop out, they switch their support to the front-runner, suggesting they are ready to forget the attacks on each other.

More difficult to confront are the conflicts in the family, church, and community. How many of you know of men and women who haven't talked to brother, sister, or parent for years? Few may remember just what the original snub or fight was all about, but there has been no effort at resolution. No one is ready to take the first step, whatever that might be.

During the last few years, several families have come to Temenos for reunions of siblings with the added element of a psychotherapist or facilitator to help them deal with serious and long-standing family issues. What a constructive way to create and make use of sacred space!

Church families are often in need of conflict resolution, when the peaceful atmosphere of the church is broken by strong differences of opinion. Differences within one Swedenborgian Church led the two factions to sit on opposite sides of the aisle during Sunday worship, and they would not speak to one another. Some would not speak to the minister, or even shake hands.

One church business meeting ended in a shouting match, with a family withdrawing their membership. Differences within another church resulted in half of the members staying away from the Sunday worship services.

I am sure that most of you could tell similar stories from your own experience. We pride ourselves on the reasonableness of our church faith, yet this does not seem to make us immune from fiery tempers, emotional attacks, and destructive behavior.

What is the answer? How do we resolve conflicts in our family, church, and community, and attain peace, perfect peace? If by peace we mean no differences of opinion, or raised voices, that kind of peace is not likely or desirable. We need differences to contribute to a healthy community. The challenge is to be able to listen to one another with respect, deal with differences openly and honestly, and achieve a win-win resolution.

A somber plea for goodwill and love of the neighbor is not enough to achieve peace and harmony. John Billings has described one way of dealing with conflict: employing a team of community builders to work with his church. Lorraine Sando, in the April *Messenger*, reported on a five-day training program that she attended in Ohio to teach people skills in conflict resolution.

Our denomination has recognized for a long time the reality of church squabbles and dissension. Many years ago a Board of Intervention was set up to deal with "disputes and irregularities" within the church. From my own experience on the board, this approach has not been all that helpful. To fly in three or four people for an evening or weekend to decide who was right and who was wrong seldom resolves bitter and long-standing disputes. The board members may be faithful and committed Swedenborgians, but usually have had no training or expertise in conflict resolution.

## The Messenger

**Publisher:** The Communications Support Unit  
Published monthly, except July and August, by the Swedenborgian Church of North America, founded 1812, incorporated 1861 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America.  
May 1996  
Volume 21, No. 5  
Whole Number 5710  
Printed by: Editor  
Typesetting & Layout: Linda Malt  
Town & Country Press  
Plymouth, IN

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The opinions of the contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor of the Communications Support Unit or represent the position of the church. Subscriptions are to members of the Swedenborgian Church, non-members \$12.00 a year, foreign \$18.00 a year, print subscription from a member \$3.00 a year, single copies \$1.00.

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

As in the case of addictive behavior, it is essential that the individuals or parties involved recognize there is a problem, and be open to asking for help in resolution. It is important that help be sought before the serious shooting begins and positions become firmly entrenched. As members within our church become trained in conflict resolution, we will have resources to turn to. One encouraging sign is that the name of the board has been changed to the Board of Reconciliation, which suggests that they are seeking a win-win solution. In many cases, it may be more helpful to call on consultants who are outside our membership and can be more neutral and objective.

We point to the battles of the Old Testament as symbolic of the spiritual struggles in which we must engage throughout our spiritual journeys. Swedenborg said that internal peace comes through a bringing together (conjunction) of good and truth. This peace is not absence of differences, but a state of mutual respect which comes from commitment to the active struggle of reconciliation.

*The Rev. Ernest Martin is director of Temenos Conference and Retreat Center and minister of the Philadelphia Swedenborgian Church at Temenos near West Chester, Pennsylvania.*

## Community . . . in Trouble

(Continued from front cover)

And if they are entrenched, in some cases for decades, the energy it takes to get things turned around can feel overwhelming. In some cases it probably isn't going to happen at all because of the way forces are aligned. There may already be too many nails in the coffin so that even greater death must first occur! But sometimes real solutions to these kinds of problems can come about if the right kind of power is brought to bear.

**P**ower. It can be a wonderful thing—exciting, moving, thrilling. I've never been physically present as one of the Saturn V rockets blasted off for outer space, but I've been told by someone who *was* there that it's awesome in the truest sense of the word. My friend said you can not only hear the thunder and crackle of those engines straining as they go full bore straight upward, but you can also feel their power and energy on the surface of

**E**veryone who was there would, I'm sure, have a different perspective. I tend to think in psychological and spiritual terms.

We were all contained within the structure and limits that the leaders brought and we paid for—\$2200 worth. Boundaries were set, almost immediately. Boundaries of confidentiality. Boundaries of not speaking without first saying our name out loud to help us feel and own what we were saying. Boundaries of only speaking in the first person—in other words, using "I" statements. Boundaries of not speaking *unless we were first moved to speak*.

That bears repeating: Not speaking unless we were first *moved* to speak: Wow! Immediately that puts all of us more inside ourselves. More genuinely personal. More spiritual. We can no longer dodge or hide behind agendas, politics, automatic talking, whatever. Now the whole world of inner feeling and thought suddenly becomes almost urgently relevant and important.

"hung in there." I now truly love this person much more. From this encounter I also saw more fully and clearly how difficult it is for me to remain soft and straight when relations get difficult.

As more trust was built, we were asked to draw a picture of a mask that would portray all the many different masks we think we wear in everyday life. It was tough, but the leaders did it too, which probably helped all of us to participate in more real ways. But throughout the entire workshop, the emphasis was always the same: take the risk to relate in more real, more open and more authentic ways. For me, the bottom line here is my voluntary willingness to go through whatever pain there might be from being open and honest and vulnerable. And sometimes it *does* hurt. It did hurt, at times, for almost everyone. But it's a hurt worth paying in order to reach more authentic, loving connection. That's probably the basis of all spiritual power: a willingness to

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your skin! He said it makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck. This kind of power has a marvel and majesty about it; it made him cry.

That's physical power. Raw physical power corresponds to spiritual power, which is why it can so profoundly move and affect us. But what *is* spiritual power? The Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church has recently had a taste of it in the community building workshop that concluded November 12th, 1995. It was an experience we won't soon forget. It reached deep inside many of us in very positive ways. In my perception, it altered our entire congregation forever for the better. Clearly, that's some kind of power from somewhere. What was the source of that power?

From our leaders we got *straight* talk from gentle hearts that were couched in the gentle tones of their voices. Such talk can be very sobering. Such straight talk also means a great deal of emotional honesty—a real leveling between people. It's a little like the kind of straight talk that can occur when persons are on their death bed. I'll not soon forget Jerry Hampton temporarily taking off his leadership hat and just joining us as himself. Tears rolling down his face as he shared a new level of understanding of how important his family is to him—a coming home to his own deeper priorities. Or the moments of difficult conflict and anguish between another member and myself that eventually resolved so beautifully because we both

be hurt for love's sake. In my sense of Swedenborg, this is what he means by truth from love.

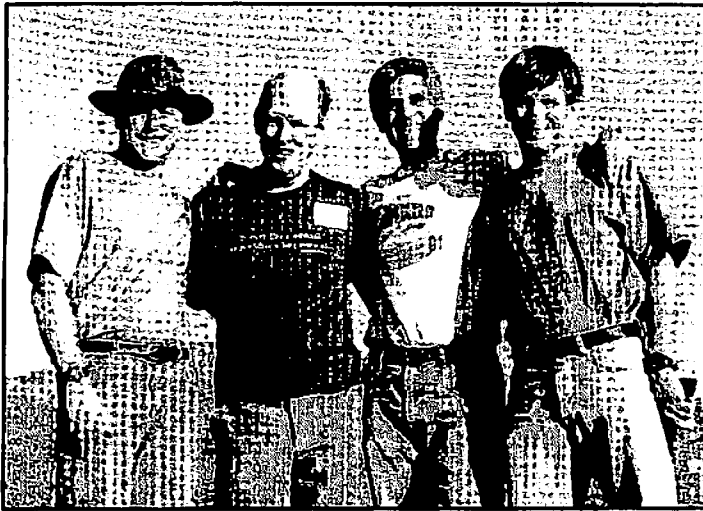
Our leaders led the way; took some hits but kept coming back. We followed suit in our talking and sharing. Truth from love. This is also what entered the world 2000 years ago and split history in two. Real power. It's what God is all about too. In fact, that Spirit was very much present at times—they called it real, not pseudo, community.

To conclude, there are two things I want to say. If, in your group or congregation, those dark clouds begin to gather or have gathered, don't run. It's actually a wonderful opportunity. But you have to respond in a way that meets the

(Continued on next page)

# Unity in Diversity—a Possible Dream

Eric Allison



L to R: Grant Schnarr, David Friend, Ray Silverman, Eric Allison.

## The Adventure

I tore myself away from the snow and ice of Ontario to head for Arizona. From February 7 through 11, I had the privilege of attending the first annual General Church Evangelization Seminar at the Sunrise Chapel in Tucson, Arizona. Having never been to Bryn Athyn, this was my first experience on this scale with the General Church. I was a bit nervous. Everyone did their best to welcome me, and I was included in many hug exchanges.

## The Setting

The Sunrise Chapel was a perfect setting. Under the leadership of Frank and Louise Rose and with the hard work of many others, a dynamic and growing congregation has been brought forth. The white chapel has a calming effect. In the center of the chancel stands a beautiful uncarved granite boulder, five and a half feet tall. This is the altar, and the Word rests upon it. Behind the altar is

a semi-circular floor-to-ceiling plate glass window. Every Sunday morning, at eleven a.m., the sun shines upon the Word. Outside the window, behind the altar, a large saguaro cactus reminds the worshiper that this chapel is a desert refuge. Birds flit in and out of their nests within the cactus. You look left through a window stretching the length of the sanctuary to see the jagged ridges of the Catalina Mountains cast against a bright blue sky. Looking to your right at the windowless "sun side" you gaze reflectively upon the large reliefs of Mount Sinai and the Mount of Olives. This was the setting for "Tucson '96 A New Vision for Growth." It truly is "a rose that has bloomed in the desert."

## Uplifting

This was an enriching experience for me not only because of what I learned, but because of the many friends I made, and because of the melting away of numerous misconceptions I had about the General Church. I met friendly people who share the same essential faith and want to work together despite our acknowledged differences.

## Things are Happening

My counterpart, Grant Schnarr (director of evangelization) said "There is an evolution going on within the General Church." There are also many changes taking place within the British Conference, the Australian New Church, General Convention and the Lord's New Church. Maybe we're somewhere between evolution and revolution. I hope the openness, excitement and enthusiasm that I saw will spread to all parts of our church. It was empowering for me to be with people who openly shared their faith and love for the Lord.

There were very encouraging words from British Con-

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## Community . . . In Trouble

*(Continued from page 67)*

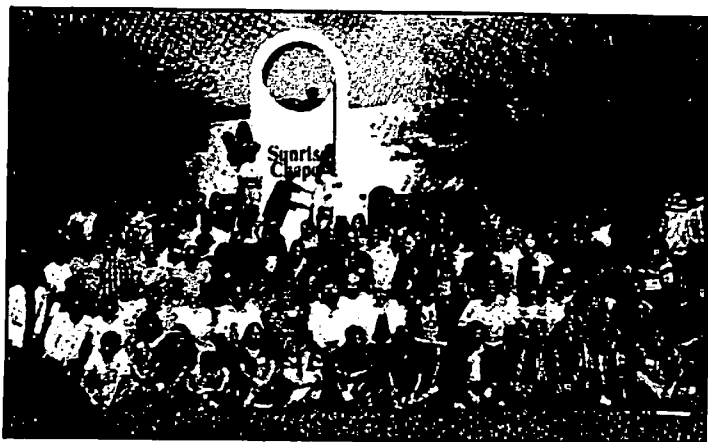
challenge effectively. I suggest you seriously consider the community-building route. It can be tough, but it works and what you will have gained is definitely worth the pain.

**I**n our case here at Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church, what we gained is more trust, more openness. There is less tension in the air, less defensiveness in general. People are more relaxed with one another. Communication is more free-flowing and easy, no matter what the subject is. The church board is now better able to really work, to get more specific, more concrete things accom-

plished whether it is attention to the physical building or more programs conceived and set in motion. Fighting, when it's nasty and vicious, takes a lot of energy. And it doesn't have to be out in the open either. It can be covert and subtle, but just as destructive. In my perception, we aren't doing that any more. If we fight, we fight much more gracefully. I've also noticed that it has affected my preaching. My body will now let me down into deeper, more spiritual/ vulnerable subjects and issues and I experience more courage in trying to present them. It's always difficult to be vulnerable and to take risks, but now it's happening more

often. There's more true life present. Now we can spend time encountering our more real, inner demons because we all feel safer with each other. Before, we were more preoccupied with demons outside ourselves, with all the bickering and fighting. For me, that is spiritual progress and worth whatever pain I needed to go through to gain it. If you want a further understanding of what I am talking about, I would suggest you read Scott Peck's book on community building. It's called *The Different Drum*.

*The Rev. John Billings is the minister at the Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio.*



Seminar participants, Sunrise Chapel

ference representative David Friend about the Swedenborg Movement. Most of us have noticed during the last few years that more and more people recognize the name when we say "Swedenborg." Friend has been involved with efforts of the Swedenborg Movement at New Age festivals where they meet many enthusiastic readers of Swedenborg. The concept is to expand the readership of Swedenborg through New Age events, and contact those who are already readers of Swedenborg. Will this spawn an entirely new form of the church? These groups springing up are certainly a manifestation of the New Church.

Les Shepherd, minister of the New Church in Brisbane, described growth and very hopeful signs of change in Australia.\* He was particularly excited about successes with young people.

Ray Silverman of The Lord's New Church is starting a New Church Corps. "It's like the Peace Corps, but grounded in New Church ideals," he said. He went on to say that "the purpose of this organization is to get college-age young people placed in a setting where they can learn compassion. This is based upon Swedenborg's statement that *'the perfection of man is the love of use,'* or service to others. The New Church Corps is open to young people from any of the branches of the church. When this idea takes root in the organized New Church, the dream will come alive."

Inspiring worship, heavenly music, open-hearted sharing of faith and detailed descriptions about how to achieve tangible results combined to create an upbeat and—at times—electric atmosphere. The conversations were not all about how everything was going "just great" in the local church. There are General Church congregations struggling just like some of ours. However, what was so encouraging was that "doom and gloom" about a declining church was treated like an unwelcome evil spirit with no power there.

### Mountain Top Experience

David Friend, Grant Schnarr, Ray Silverman and I walked together to the top of a ridge to share and pray and ask God's blessing upon our ministries. It was a powerful time. I shall treasure it in my memory.

(Continued on page 70)

## All in the Family . . .

### General Convention

The formation of what is now known as the General Convention of the Church of the New Jerusalem—"Convention"—took place in Philadelphia in 1817. Representatives of seventeen "societies" or churches elected the officers. General Convention has a congregational form of government. We view the writings of Swedenborg as divine revelation which are an aid for explaining the internal meaning of the Word. Swedenborg's writings are not seen as equal to the Bible. (Our current in-house literature usually refers to "Convention" as the Swedenborgian Church to alleviate confusion when speaking of our annual convention).

—Eric Allison

### General Church of the New Jerusalem

The General Church movement started in 1876, when a group of men left the Convention and started a school based on the teachings of Swedenborg, called Academy of the New Church. As the Academy grew, they decided to begin a church called "the General Church of the New Jerusalem." The General Church strongly emphasizes religious education based on Swedenborg's teachings as a key factor in the growth and health of the church, as well as evangelization. The General Church has congregations in many parts of the world, but mostly in the United States and Canada.

—Grant Schnarr

### The Lord's New Church

In the 1930s, a few General Church ministers began to emphasize the idea that Swedenborg's theological writings, like the Old and New Testaments, had a spiritual sense. They felt that Swedenborg's literal statements, especially his comments about the various nations and the inhabitants of other planets, should be read as revelations—apart from the limitations of time, space, and person. In this view, Swedenborg's objective information veils deeper secrets about the process of human regeneration and the Lord's love for the universal human race.

This "new view" created a considerable stir. Some saw it as a gigantic stride forward in the doctrinal progress of the church. Others saw it as a dangerous heresy that would leave the church without a firm foundation in the letter of Swedenborg's writings.

Eventually, the viewpoint of those who opposed the "new view" prevailed, and the ministers who were advocating the new view were asked to resign. This led to the formation of a new body of the church, based on the belief that the teachings concerning the interpretation of sacred scripture must be fully applied to the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. The new body of the church, founded in 1937, was named The Lord's New Church, which is Nova Hierosolyma (New Jerusalem).

Today, 60 years after the split, there is the beginning of a movement towards reconciliation. People in all branches of the New Church feel drawn to something in Swedenborg's writings which transcends denominational and doctrinal differences. Beneath the veils of church histories and complexities of theological doctrine, there is a spirit of inward peace and mutual love bidding us to rise above self, above the world and experience that higher reality where all are of sacred value in the eyes of an infinitely loving and wise God.

—Ray Silverman

## Unity in Diversity (Continued from page 69)

PHOTO COURTESY OF C. REYNOLDS.



Altar at the Sunrise Chapel

### Now What?

When the conference was over, through the veil of fatigue I felt renewed and hopeful about the future of all forms of the Swedenborgian Church. I also felt strongly that we have the opportunity to enter into a new era of cooperation with the General Church and The Lord's New Church. Bishop Peter Buss impressed me as a person of honesty and integrity who would welcome greater cooperation. Ray Silverman is as open as one can be to joining forces so our outreach efforts compliment each other. The "buzz" going around in the waning hours of Tucson '96 was that an evangelization conference with all branches of the church would be the next step. Isn't it time we gather as one group to learn from each other, worship together, share our struggles and triumphs and make plans for a future where the spirit of the Lord flourishes within us as one New Church? Yes, there are real differences among all the groups. So what—there are real differences between my wife Cathy and me, but we love being together and working together. When we concentrate on our differences we will not be able to build anything heavenly together. At good workshops a kind of magical elixir develops, in that a sense of community quickly arises from the common focus. This happened in Tucson. Since then I have been reminded of the Psalmist's expression, "How good it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity."

## The Program

Moving Your Small Church Towards Growth *Erik Buss*

Answering Questions About the Church *Grant Schnarr, David Roth, Roxanne Junge*

Making Contact *Reuben Bell*

Selling the Church in Today's World *Les Shepherd*

Music in the Church *Chris Simons, Terry Schnarr*

Little Things Mean a Lot *Louise Rose*

How to Plant a Church *Grant Schnarr, David Roth, Erik Buss*

The Interact

*Scott Allen, Victor Odhner*

The Pleasure and Pain of Being Involved in Church Growth

*Frank Rose*

Contemporary Services

*Theresa McQueen, Cathy Schnarr, Terry Schnarr, Chris Simons*

You are an Egg *Lori Odhner*

Getting the Word Out

*Tracy Wright*

Cold Feet and Sweaty Palms

*David Rot*

Implementing Healthy Change

*Eric Carswell*

Networking in the Community

*Phil and Terry Schnarr*

Strategies for Overcoming Resistance to Growth *Eric Allison*

A Force to be Reckoned With

*Academy College Students*

Youth Ministry *David Lindrooth*

In addition to these one-hour workshops were six presentations offered during plenary sessions:

A New Vision for Growth

*Grant Schnarr*

A New Vision for Growth:

Ministers' Wives and the New Paradigm

*Cathy Schnarr*

Panel of Lay Speakers

*Kay Hauck, Billie Baty, Jim deMaine, Candace Frazee*

Report of Church Planters

*John Gin, David C. Roth, Erik J. Buss*

Why Bother? *Michael D. Gladish*

What Makes It All Worthwhile

*Frank and Louise Rose*

*The Rev. Eric Allison is our church growth consultant on the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU). He lives in Kitchener, Ontario.*

*\*In Australia, there are Swedenborgian churches in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Ballarat, Perth, and Sydney.*

## Temenos Update

At the February meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, it was brought to my attention that many of you do not know what is happening in regard to Temenos. This is an update and I hope that further word of progress will be available in June at Convention '96 in Urbana.

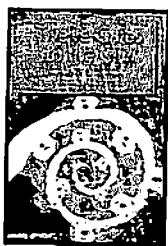
Because of the affirmative vote at convention in San Francisco last June, many of us expected to hear that Temenos had broken ground for the dormitory building it was believed was so badly needed. Unfortunately, there has been a delay.

The cause of the delay is that, even though local environmental agencies had approved the new septic system, a state or federal agency for environmental protection raised questions. Some time last fall Temenos submitted lengthy documentation defending what had been done, but only recently was there a response through a meeting at Temenos with three members of this environmental agency. Director Erni Martin tells me that he came away from that meeting with a very positive feeling, though Temenos was told a couple of rather minor things needed to be done before final approval. Engineer's plans for this must now be drawn up and then approved. Erni hopes that both these things can be done by the middle of April and that construction on the dormitory building can begin in May.

Because no one knew what was going to happen with regard to the septic system and hence the new dormitory, no agreement has yet been signed with the Philadelphia church at this writing. I am in the process of scheduling a meeting of the Executive Committee of General Council at Temenos, probably in April, so that an agreement can be discussed with Philadelphia and—hopefully—signed. In essentials it would, of course, be the agreement voted by General Convention in San Francisco. I have met with representatives of the Philadelphia church and I believe they are still anxious to go ahead.

*Edwin C. Capon  
President*





**Chrysalis Reader: 2 (1996)**  
*Twelve Gates to the City:*  
*Spiritual Views on the Journey*  
*from Thirty Authors*  
 Lawson, Carol S., ed.  
 The Swedenborg Foundation.

*Reviewed by Forster Freeman*

A gate is for entering. Entering what? The question is at the profound center of the reason for our being. Each of us intuitively what it might be, chooses what he or she wants it to be. The divine plan contains a yearning for every one of us to be magnetically attracted along one of the myriad paths that lead to our slipping finally through a gate and finding ourselves There. The There that is described for us in the code language of the Word is the gleaming Holy City, or the realized divine-human life.

"It has a great high wall with twelve gates. . . . Its gates will never be shut. . . ." (Revelation 21:12, 25), according to the apocalyptic passage most central for the New Church. What more essential, life-giving theme could be addressed by any writer or reader? This volume embraces the reflections of thirty authors that provide intimations of "the way that leads to life," bound together here in never-shut availability to whoever will read.

There are some spiritual guides who speak of "privileged places" along the journey. Seekers have long discovered that the process of regeneration can be facilitated through "places" such as the Word in the Bible and other literature, sacrament, prayer and meditation, dreams and visions, nature, marriage and family, aging, providential "coincidences," arts, spiritual direction, retreat, experiences of *agapè*,

fear and suffering, revealed theology, near-death experiences. . . I have heard a runner describe an overwhelming glimpse of transcendence along her course, and a man tell of sensing heaven when a mathematical problem mysteriously yielded into resolution. The Lord will track us down and lure us to closeness by every means conceivable, and more beyond the conceivable.

The writers of this current Chrysalis Reader touch on most of the areas just listed. Some of their poetry and articles are winsome, some carefully rational, exercising numinous memory or wondering at a sacred mystery, moved by a medieval saint, exploring a proposition of natural science, reverently listening, gratefully marinating in holy love. Some describe gate-epiphanies brilliantly, some obliquely. Here is a mother strongly restoring her panicked children, a teacher sweetly redeeming a failed and hopeless pupil. We are presented with a kaleidoscope of images and metaphors designed to kindle our spirits with the flame of the eternal image.

Together, they suggest to us that the supposedly-normal human ways of knowing and communicating which are familiar to us are actually delusions of a prevalent trance state. Stated by Wilson Van Dusen, "As we become locked in our own worlds and feel we need not consider the rest of life, we too are in danger of being taken over by our own limitations." It could be said we become locked out of our real selves/the holy city/the pearl of great price/the pearl gate. The knowing and communicating that are potential and ever held open before us are vastly above our fondest suspicions and hopes. In his essay, "Transcending Destruction," Walter R. Christie reminds us of Emerson's seeing "I am part and particle of God."

Intermixed among the authors are several whose writings are familiar to *Messenger* readers and others who introduce yeasty treasures from Emanuel Swedenborg. Tony Mitton, in the first third of his piece, offers a fresh and lucid explication of above-below correspondences in the Revela-

tion. It is unfortunately marred by lapses into male-exclusive pronouns. "Man is now returning to the unity of the spirit with his creator. In his return, the key role is played by the Christ, a concept present in all religions."

Series editor Carol S. Lawson states the focus: "This book has been written for, and by, today's hero with a thousand faces, people who are experiencing what it means to find and follow a 'golden thread.'" Alice B. Skinner is present, providing her usual expansive selection of art and poetry, inviting us to look in them for gates. Mary Kay McKeon Klein brings us with admirable succinctness to the distilled luminous poetry and prose of the twelfth century visionary, Hildegard of Bingen. John L. Hitchcock observes, "We also have abundant connection with the 'other side,' but the contact is usually unconscious."

Stephen and Robin Larsen predictably provide an essay wonderfully insightful about the subtle shifts in the mind of our culture. They include Rupert Sheldrake's recently-articulated paradigm of "morphogenetic resonance." They highlight six watershed themes in the writings, and claim "that both the work and the life of Emanuel Swedenborg contain key symbolic or paradigmatic elements in a major shift in the spiritual climate of Western civilization. . . . he embodied the *Anthropos*, the quintessential human of our time. . . ."

Those most benefiting from this collection will be persons with sufficient freedom of spirit to keep asking what is real, while heedless of conventionally-assumed boundaries. Who knows? Perhaps, for some, even reading this Chrysalis Reader will nudge one of "ye ancient doors" to yield.

*Forster Freeman is a minister with standing in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ, who attended the Swedenborg School of Religion and now has a ministry of spiritual direction in Berkeley, California.*

*(See back page for ordering details and other Foundation offerings.)*

# Mini-Course Descriptions

Convention 1996      Urbana, Ohio      June 26-30

Convention activities will include the following two-hour mini-courses, to be offered at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, June 27 and 28:

## Nuts and Bolts and Glue!

*Rev. Eric Allison*

Each year I discover numerous aspects of our churches which are working well. This workshop will include brief presentations from a variety of people around the church who are doing exciting things. If you have something brief you would like to share, let me know in advance and I'll put you into the workshop if time allows. Topics will be announced at convention.

## Angels

*Rev. Dr. Robert H. Kirven*

This mini-course explores angels' actions that affect our lives. Relying on Swedenborg's reporting, and on peoples' experiences—including angel stories from the lives of the participants—discussion will cover such topics as angels' reality and nature; visions, voices and intuitions; angelic roles in the answering of prayers; and living on earth in the presence of angels.

## Basic Spiritual Principles for Living

*Rev. Paul Zacharias*

As Paul celebrates a "big" birthday, he finds himself reflecting on the key New Church ideas that have sustained and nurtured him. This mini-course will be a discussion of 12 to 15 of the most precious, most helpful New Church principles.

## How to Read the Treasurer's Report

*Polly Baxter*

Some comments from the past two years' evaluations of this workshop: "Clear, easy to understand explanation of the denomination's financial statements," "Should be required for all church officers," "All ministers and treasurers of churches receiving augmentation should attend this mini-course."

## Introduction to Swedenborg

*Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey*

A basic statement of Swedenborg's thought and its implications for our ability to Serve the Lord With Gladness.

## Welcome to SSR!

*Dr. Mary Kay Klein, Faculty and Students*

Overview of SSR programs and an opportunity to meet students, faculty and administration to discover more about SSR.

## The Millennium

*Rev. Paul Martin and Rev. Dr. George Dole*

The Millennium is a concept that is already showing up as the topic of best-selling books, seminars and workshops, talk shows, sermons and religious publications. This interest will continue to increase to a frenzy over the next four years until it is daily conversation in churches, homes, offices, factories, street corners and pubs. What does your church teach about the coming millennium? How do you understand it and make use of it for your personal growth?

This mini-course will include discussion on: how other religions,

cultures, and the "New Age" view the millennium, as well as how the 20th century was looked upon a hundred years ago; Swedenborg's teachings regarding the Last Judgment, New Church, etc.; the current state of the world, including political and religious trends; and how we can understand the millennium and use it as an image and tool for personal growth and transformation.

## Sunday School Teacher Empowerment

*Rev. Eric Hoffman*

This will be a time in which you'll be glad you said "yes" to being a teacher! We will be building a Sunday school lesson from the ground up, bringing to the fore all of our creative skills (yes, you have them too!) and working with each other to find new ways of communicating our unique message to the next generation.

## Famous (and Infamous) People Influenced by Swedenborg

*Louise Woofenden*

We seem to brag about the well-known people who read Swedenborg, maybe assuming that we are something special because of that. For a long time, anybody who was anybody read him, and with varying results. You will hear about some *very* interesting people, including scientists, writers and artists from the 18th century to the present.

## Living Life in Charity

*Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake*

An overview of Swedenborg's comments on "Charity" and comparison of his views with other theologians and philosophers on this issue. A discussion of how we can better apply these ideas in our own lives—and affirming the ways in which we already are living in charity.

## Connections Between Reiki Healing and Swedenborgian Theology

*Mona Conner, Level II Reiki Healer, assisted by Pamela Selensky*

What does an ancient Tibetan method of hands-on healing have in common with the Christian focus of Swedenborgian theology, and what are the implications of this healing method, known in its revived form as Reiki for us in the modern world today? The answers are surprising. Join us as we discuss the uses and universal qualities of Reiki healing and how it returns the wisdom of the Ancient Church to us in the 20th century.

The spiritual qualities of Reiki healing will be discussed, and what it may teach us about Divine Providence, prayer, and developing the intuitive side of our spiritual nature. Participants of this class will have the opportunity to sample a brief Reiki treatment.

\* \* \*

We hope you are planning to attend Convention '96 and that your whole family can be a part of the activities! We also hope you will *register early, especially if you are bringing children!* A Super Children's Program can be prepared if we know in advance how many children will be attending for how many days.

— Thanks, *Pat Tukos, Chair, Education Support Unit*

P.S. Urbana College has offered to have a lifeguard on duty and the pool open 8 hours a day!



# Four Angels 'Round My Head

## A Mother's Day Retrospective

Susan Flagg Poole

My mother, Lucile (with one "L," as she would always say) Weatherbee Benson Flagg (1910-1994) experienced a rich and full life. She came from a long line of Swedenborgian ancestors. Then she married my father, Francis H. Flagg (1908-1977), who came from an even longer line of Swedenborgians. They had four children (Sally, David, Loren, and Susan) who were all members of the Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian) in Elmwood, Massachusetts.

I remember Mom describing Sunday afternoon dinners when she was a young girl. On Sunday mornings, Mom, her younger brother Charlie, and her father, Charles, worshipped at the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater. Mom's sisters attended other churches: Ruth, Episcopal; Mary, Congregational; and Esther, Presbyterian. Her mother, Della, attended the Baptist Church.

These were exciting times for Mom. She told her childhood story with great animation, "You can just imagine what Sunday afternoons at the dinner table were like. Discussions were fascinating. We each shared our own experience. We'd take turns talking and listening. It was lots of fun." Mom made those dinner conversations come alive for me. I can just imagine Charles, Della, Ruth, Mary, Esther, Lucile, and Charles, Jr. discussing their thoughts, beliefs, and opinions around their elaborately set dining room table. How this open interaction must have shaped their lives! They learned to respect their differences and value religious freedom. As adults, they held varying beliefs, and remained very close to each other spiritually.

For sixty years, Mom attended the

*She experienced the awe  
and mystery in God's  
creation, and that is the  
greatest gift that she  
gave to me—an  
awareness and appreciation  
of the people and  
the world around me.*

Elmwood New Jerusalem Church. She was a member of the Blairhaven Committee (South Duxbury church camp), secretary of the Massachusetts Association, and president of the Woman's Club, as well as a long-time member of the local Joppa Guild. Being involved with the church locally and nationally all her life, she attended church conventions and was dedicated to the philosophy and theology of the Swedenborgian Church.

Mom was the busiest person I ever knew. In her earlier years, she taught senior English and French. For thirty years, she was postmaster, six days a week, twelve hours a day. She also ran a fully stocked grocery store in the same building as the post office while watching her children. Book-keeping, numbers, and reports were a snap for her.

She had a "listening ear" for many lost people. I have happy memories of her writing poems for people who wanted to express a sentiment to a loved one, but couldn't find the words to do it. She was the pen behind the voice of many people. She had an active inner life,

but didn't reveal the depth of it to many people. She valued her freedom, her life, her mind, and her family, church, and friends.

Mom kept her inner world alive and exciting by being an avid reader. She discussed murder mysteries, the classics, romance, fiction, non-fiction, science fiction, fantasy, philosophy, and theology with anyone who would dialogue with her. Interested in exploring the concepts about life after death, near-death experiences, etc., she subscribed to *The Messenger*, *Chrysalis*, *Five Smooth Stones*, *Our Daily Bread*, and many other church magazines and newsletters from around the country. She was a fast reader and comprehended everything. On the morning of her fatal stroke, she had just finished proofreading a church-related newsletter and was ten pages from completing a romance novel. She never seemed to mind the language, thoughts, and opinions of various authors, absorbing what she wanted. She had incredible mental energy and vitality.

Mom didn't believe something just because someone else believed it. What she believed was based on her own experience and faith. She experienced the awe and mystery in God's creation, and that is the greatest gift that she gave to me—an awareness and appreciation of the people and the world around me. She loved sitting out on our porch in Maine, watching the sunset over the ocean, listening to the waves, seagulls, blue heron, osprey, and loons. She loved the beautiful wildflowers and would get lost in them when left alone, although she would be embarrassed about feeling so deeply about such things.

*(Continued on page 74)*

## Angels 'Round My Head

(Continued from page 73)

She believed in God and that God would take care of her, so she didn't fear taking risks. She had faith in eternity. She flew all around the country to visit her children and grandchildren; flew in small planes up glaciers, went down rivers in rafts, and sailed in foggy weather. Mom loved these experiences and never worried about crashing, drowning, or dropping dead in the middle of nowhere. She was always thinking, wondering, imagining, creating, building new ideas, and loving life. Her theology was important to her because it emphasized free will, love and wisdom, and personal responsibility; she liked to think for herself and live a real life of usefulness based on goodness and truth.

In her eighties, she bought a home in Florida. Here, she came to enjoy her solitude and was totally happy and relaxed. She had made peace with herself, her children, her friends, and her church, and went off to do what she wanted to do. Mom always had friends and family visiting her. Everyone wanted a piece of her time and energy because if you knew her personally, she was lots of fun and was great company.

She constantly read to her grandchildren. They had many close moments with her while she was reading to them, their arms around each other. My children were fortunate to have a grandmother like her.

Music also was a big part of Mom's life. She loved classical, popular, and sacred music. The day before her fatal stroke, she was visiting me at my home in Delaware, and she was feeling great. When I got home, she said, "I had a beautiful day. I played the piano for hours. Memories came to me. I had such fun."

The following day, we had a picnic lunch outside. She was talking about the beautiful architecture on the roof of my house. She was sitting comfortably by the garden's edge. I put an iris in her hand. She smelled the iris and looked so content, talked about it, felt it in her hand, touched it gently, and twirled it around with her fingers. At this point, she suffered a massive stroke, and the delicate purple flower slipped from her fingers to the ground.

In the hospital, she managed to open her eyes one last time as a greeting for each of her children as they arrived from around the country to be at her bedside. She patted our arms and comforted us for four days

as she was dying. She pointed all around the room, trying to communicate. Knowing Mom, she was probably seeing angels and somehow trying to let us know that it was OK to let her go. She wasn't worried and didn't want us to worry. I remember her teaching a prayer to me when I was a child, "There are four corners on my bed; there are four angels round my head; Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; Bless the bed that I lie on." Soon after her death, a close friend of Mom's said that he saw her in the spiritual world and that she was as busy as ever—an angel in action. She lived her life to be useful, to serve others. She celebrated her life and was grateful for her long time on this earth.

I see my mother, Lucile Weatherbee Benson Flagg, in flowers, in the rain, in books and sunsets, and I feel her near me when I sing and play the songs she taught me. She left behind so much that I will keep with me forever—my joy of reading, my love of music, my curiosity, my love of people, good conversation, and a thirst for knowledge. I'm glad that I had the chance to know her for a long time as a daughter and a friend.

*Susan Flagg Poole is an educational psychologist and a member of the Church of the Holy City, the Swedenborgian Church in Wilmington, Delaware.*

## REGISTRATION

### Pre-Convention Workshop — "Creating Inner Sacred Spaces"

June 23, 7:00 P.M. to June 26, 12:00 P.M. — Urbana University, Urbana, Ohio

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE, PROVINCE: \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

All workshop fees to be paid in full by June 1, 1996.

Accommodations: (Please check one)

☐ Dorm room (single bed, no A/C) \$10. per person per day.

☐ Suite room (single or double) \$30. per day.

(Please see Convention Registration for more accommodation details.)

Special Needs: (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Registration: \$75.00 per person  
(by May 1)  
\$85.00 per person  
(after May 1)

Board:  
(3 meals a day, refreshments, etc.)  
\$20. per person per day  
Board for children 5 & under — FREE

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

— CHILD CARE AVAILABLE —

# ***SSR and Cambridge Chapel Struggle to Untie the Knot***

For the past several years, the Board of Trustees of the Swedenborg School of Religion has been talking with the Cambridge Society about our respective futures. We have offered help with long-range planning and fund-raising, and have looked at various possibilities for working out our future relationship.

SSR is no longer in a position where it can financially afford to both maintain the Cambridge property, given the current level of payments by the Cambridge Society, and provide the education needed for ministers and lay leaders to serve the entire Church. We have been working toward helping the Cambridge Society understand that the time has come for us to become independent from one another. The impending separation has caused anguish for both organizations. We have urged several times that a facilitator be brought in to help us resolve issues and feelings surrounding the relationship between SSR and Cambridge, but Cambridge has not yet responded affirmatively.

We would like to put before you some facts regarding the relationship between SSR and the Cambridge Society so that you will have a better understanding of the relationship.

## ***Who built the chapel?***

The chapel was built for the New Church Theological School on property it owned, adjacent to the building which housed the school. It was completed in 1901 and has always been the property of the school and under its control.

## ***Who paid for constructing the chapel?***

The chapel cost \$25,000; \$5,000 was contributed by the Theological School; \$5,000 was pledged by the Cambridge Society; \$5,000 was raised by solicitation from members of the denomination for a chapel for the theological school; \$10,000 was contributed by an anonymous donor whose identity remains unknown. The chapel was built on land owned by SSR.

## ***When did the Cambridge Society begin to worship on theological school property?***

The society worshiped in the school building prior to the building of the chapel and was invited to use the chapel when it was built "as long as shall seem best for their interests and those of the school." The society continued to use the theological school building as a parish house for Sunday school, church socials, and young people's activities until it was sold to Harvard University in 1964. When the school moved to Newton, it spent \$65,000 to build a parish house attached to the chapel and adopted an agreement by which the Cambridge Society could continue to use the chapel.

## ***What is the relationship between the SSR and the Cambridge Society?***

The school and the society have always been two separate legal entities with separate purposes, budgets, and modes of organization. Occasionally an individual has been active in both organizations (for instance, the president of the school also served as pastor of the Cambridge Society from 1911-1936 and from 1953-1956). The school used the chapel for worship services on a regular basis, and at times theological students have done part of their field education in the Cambridge church, though this is not currently the case.

The school pays the bills for the upkeep (e.g., replacing the furnace and repairing the roof) and operation (e.g., utilities and insurance) of the chapel. In most years, the Cambridge Society has contributed toward the operational expenses. At times SSR has had to borrow money to cover costs incurred, thus adding the costs of interests to SSR's other obligations. SSR has consistently paid major maintenance costs, and is about to pay for a major roof repair to the parish house.

In effect, SSR has financially assisted the Cambridge Society for ninety years, providing it with a low cost place of worship and opportunities to develop Swedenborgian contacts with the Harvard community. SSR does not need the chapel for its educational programs in the foreseeable future, and the cost of essential school programs necessitates that the asset represented by the chapel be translated into income-producing dollars.

## ***What is the current situation?***

A number of alternatives—sale of the property to Cambridge or to others, appropriate rent, etc.—were presented to Cambridge in 1993. Both parties agree that an arrangement which would allow the Cambridge Society to continue to use the chapel is the best alternative. The SSR Board has been told that the chapel could be sold for \$2.5 to \$3 million. Last spring Cambridge offered \$1 million. After considerable discussion of alternatives, and taking into account the added costs associated with finding a different buyer, and the historical relationship between SSR and the Cambridge Society, the board accepted the \$1 million offer as in the best interests of the Cambridge Society and SSR. The acceptance of the offer would ensure that the Cambridge Society could continue to worship in the chapel. Several issues arose during the course of the negotiations. SSR agreed to various conditions requested by the Cambridge Society, but also required, in light of its fiduciary responsibility, that if the chapel is sold within the next 25 years, 80% of the proceeds over \$1 million would go to SSR. In a letter dated August 16, 1995, SSR agreed to negotiate about this 80% requirement if there were a specific arrangement which Cambridge wanted to develop. Unfortunately, Cambridge's financing did not materialize, and the sale is no longer viable.

In the fall of 1995, SSR began a new initiative to try to resolve the situation. We continue to meet with the Cambridge Society to try to find a mutually beneficial solution.

—Approved by the SSR Board of Trustees, March 9, 1996.

# Meet Our Nominees

The Swedenborgian Church's Nominating Committee has selected the following nominees as candidates for national offices in 1996.

## Vice-President 1-year term

**Phyllis Bosley**  
*California, Pacific Coast Association*

I came to the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church in 1957 through their music program and soon became a Sunday school teacher. I served as director of the children's summer camp a few seasons, and served on the Parish Church Committee and the San Francisco church board for many years. Recent service includes Board of Managers of Wayfarers Chapel. Executive Committee of the National Alliance and General Council. I have found these past two years as vice-president challenging and rewarding. My church interests center around growth and outreach.

My business background: Retired in 1990 from Gregory & Falk Lithographers as production manager and secretary to the corporation; freelance copywriting; junior account executive with Foote, Cone and Belding Advertising Agency. My personal interests center around family, music, books.

## Recording Secretary 1-year term

**Betty Yenetchi**  
*California, Pacific Coast Association*

I am a member of the new Swedenborgian Church of Palos Verdes, and have been employed since 1991 as the office manager of the Wayfarers Chapel. Before moving to California, I twice served on the board of the Kemper Road (Cincinnati) church and was employed as a legal secretary and as a legal assistant in a Cincinnati law office.

I have enjoyed this past year as secretary of the denomination and would be honored to be reelected.

## Treasurer 1-year term

**John Perry**  
*Maine, Maine Association*

This past year serving as the denomination's treasurer has again been very gratifying. The budgetary process and year-end calculations for the 1995/96 years have gone well, with the able efforts of assistant to the treasurer Polly Baxter, the Cabinet and the General Council. The compiling of the treasurer's report and integrating it into the book-closing process at the Central Office is now in process. With the new chart of accounts that has been operating well for the last several years and the recalculation of the investments to show them at market value, we approach the long-term goal of making the reporting of fund balances easier for our members to understand.

I am looking forward to continuing the efforts made over these past years by working as the treasurer for another year.

## General Council 3-year term

**Lawrence Conant**  
*Massachusetts, Massachusetts Association*

I currently serve many positions in our church organization: moderator, Bridgewater, Massachusetts Society; chairman of the board, Blairhaven Retreat & Conference Center; president, Massachusetts New Church Union; member, Investment Committee for General Convention; trustee, Church of the Holy City, Washington, D.C.; member, General Council for General Convention.

I was elected to fill the remaining term on General Council left by the death of Larry Young. That election took place at the 1995 convention. The General Council meetings since that election have made me realize the breadth of issues that come before the council. Fortunately, the varied backgrounds of the council members allow the council to effectively address these issues. My background, as described above, has been a positive addition to many of these discussions. I would greatly appreciate being reelected to serve a full three-year term on General Council.

**Rev. Stephen James Pults**  
*Washington, Pacific Coast Association*

I am currently serving as pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound, as youth minister for the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL), and as the director of Almont Summer School. I have been a pastor in our denomination for nine years. I served one-and-a-half terms on the Growth and Outreach Support Unit, resigning after accepting a call to the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

I believe our church has something to offer. I am committed to serving our church to the best of my ability in whatever roles that may take over the years.

Prior to enrolling at the Swedenborg School of Religion, my background included owning and operating a weekly newspaper and publishing business for ten years; thus I offer business and entrepreneurial perspectives. My bias is in investing in the future. I believe in taking risks which offer opportunities for broadening our ministry. I believe in professionalism in our dealings with one another. I believe our pastors should be appropriately compensated for their years of training and commitment to their work. I believe we are first a ministry and must always keep at the forefront our sense of mission to make a difference. I trust in tomorrow and in our being providentially led if we are truly centered in God's calling for us. I am grateful for our history and heritage, but do not see our mission as a historical society. The question for me will always be "What is the best use of our resources, both human and physical, to be present to our time and our world?"

**Sharon Reddekopp**  
*Alberta, Western Canada Conference*

I have completed one term and an unexpired term on General Council. I don't feel like a "junior" any more and believe, if I am elected, the final three years will be my most valuable

contribution to our denomination.

Locally, I am president of our church society (Calgary New Church Society), and president of Western Canada Conference. I was elected to the Nominating Committee 5 years ago and have almost completed the task of "chair" for that committee.

## Communications Support Unit (COMSU) 3-year term

**Mona Conner**  
*New York, New York Association*

I have been a Swedenborgian and a member of the New York New Church for nine years. I grew up in Pennsylvania farm country, and have lived in New York City and Brooklyn for the past 22 years. For most of that time I have worked in the field of communications, for five years at an advertising agency as an illustrator, designer, and assistant art director, and for approximately 13 years as a full-time freelance illustrator in the publishing and advertising arenas.

My educational background includes two art degrees, a B.A. in studio art from Allegheny College, and a B.F.A. in illustration from the School of Visual Arts. I understand the importance and significance of visual communication, and its power when combined with the written word to create something greater than words or pictures alone can convey. As a member of the Communications Support Unit I look forward to the opportunity of bringing my understanding and experience as a working professional in the field of communications to our church's publishing efforts.

Over the years I have enjoyed writing for *The Messenger*, have been a delegate at four conventions, served on my church's board of directors, and am a past and current member of the board of directors of the New York Association. I chair the Nominating Committee at my church, serve on the Worship Committee, and co-chair our newly created Public Relations Committee, which I am very excited about. This committee will work closely with our board of directors and will function much like the Communications Support Unit on the local level.

I initiated, and am working to bring to fruition, a poster for which I created a colorful illustration paired with a quote from Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Wisdom* that can be printed and sold to raise funds for the Living Waters Ministry in San Francisco. This is an ideal time to bring bolder vision and a spirit of daring vitality to our publications, and we can find new ways to connect the theology of our church with the awakening spirituality which surrounds us. I hope to be able to help in this effort through my participation in COMSU.

## Education Support Unit (EDSU) 3-year term

**Nancy McBride**  
*British Columbia, Western Canada Conference*

I am excited about "continuation of learning" at all levels of our church and spiritual growth. I have served on the Educational Support Unit for 3 years and accept the challenge and commit-

ment of serving our church in this capacity for another term.

### **Growth and Outreach Support Unit (GOSU)**

3-year term

**Rev. Carl Yenetchi**

*California, Pacific Coast Association*

I have been serving as the chair since January, 1995.

I am also presently serving as pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of Palos Verdes, a minister of the Wayfarers Chapel, and as a member of the Council of Ministers' Executive Committee. I was the chaplain of the Swedenborgian Church Youth League for seven years and have served the church in many and various ways since my ordination in 1980.

I would be honored to serve a second term.

### **Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)**

3-year term

**Fred Hille**

*Minnesota, Illinois Association*

I am a Senior System Analyst with 3M Information Technology Div. I have 25 years experience in data processing, both in main frame computers and PCs. I have experience as administrator of a local area network serving 250 computers as well as telecommunications; also extensive background in administration and management of data processing including software evaluation and hardware selection. I live in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and am a member of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church. I have served as a member of IMSU and worked with the selection of equipment and software for the SSR Library, and have also assisted in the indexing project of the 140 years of *Messengers*.

### **Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU)**

3-year term

**Rev. Ken Turley**

*Maine, Maine Association*

I was born the first child of four of the Rev. Dr. Calvin and Marilyn Turley on Valentine's Day, 1949. I remember growing up as a minister's son in both Portland, Oregon and Bellevue, Washington where I was active in the New Church Youth League. Around 1969 I parted ways from my family as they moved to Los Angeles and I served four years of alternative service as a conscientious objector in San Francisco.

From 1969 to 1974 I was a member of Mother Goose, Inc., a social service organization in San Francisco. There I served as music director, coordinating volunteer programs, putting together and performing with a band, and participated in performing theater and dance groups.

In the late '70s I relocated to the Seattle area where I played guitar in two productions of *Godspell*. The first was a college production at Seattle Pacific University which reached the semi-finals in a national competition. The second was a semi-professional group which toured extensively in churches throughout the Seattle area.

After completing my undergraduate work in music in 1977, I came east to become a church musician. I decided to study theology at the Swedenborg School of Religion and within the first year had decided to become a minister. I was ordained in 1985. My first position was in Massachusetts, half-time as the director of the newly revived Blairhaven Retreat Center and Sum-

mer Camp and half-time as the minister of the Elmwood New Church.

During this time I served as a member of the Committee on Worship in the Council of Ministers. I also composed an oratorio of contemporary music based on the Book of Revelation which was performed and recorded and currently available on cassette tape.

In recent years I have continued to compose and arrange sacred music. With the help of a liturgical dance group, I directed, composed and performed original music and liturgy for five complete worship services. Recently I have made available an unofficial hymn book of songs for singing in worship.

In 1989 I accepted the call to become the minister of the Swedenborgian Church in Portland, Maine. In the past seven years, the community has reorganized and grown from ten original members to an active congregation of around eighty with two services a week and an ongoing series of small groups, workshops and events.

This spring I have accepted a call to serve as the minister of the New Church in Fryeburg, Maine. I expect to be involved in the Fryeburg Assembly Summer Camp program.

### **Nominating Committee**

5-year term

**Barbara Penabaker**

*Michigan, Michigan Association*

I am a lifelong member of the Swedenborgian Church. I have held various offices in the Royal Oak church, the Michigan Association and the Almont New Church Assembly. I am presently serving as president of the Royal Oak church, treasurer of the Michigan Association, secretary of the Almont New Church and business manager registrar of the Almont Summer School. On the national level, I have served as vice-president and president of the Alliance of Swedenborgian Women. At present I will be serving as the 1996 chair of the Alliance Nominating committee and I am a trustee of the Swedenborg School of Religion.

I feel that with my experience I am qualified to run for the position on the Nomination Committee and I also welcome any opportunity to serve my church.

### **Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM)**

1-year term

**Marilyn Turley**

*Olympia, Washington, Pacific Coast Association*

During the time I have served on CAM I have found the experience of relating to the students a very positive one. The enthusiasm, devotion, and energy of the men and women who are dedicating their lives to serve within our church is a delight, along with the responsibility of being a part of their journey.

**Rev. Deborah Winter**

*Florida, Southeast Association*

I was ordained in 1988. I spent the first five years of my ministry serving Swedenborg House in Deland, Florida. A good part of my focus was in women's issues, including groups for women survivors of childhood sexual abuse. I spent a good amount of time specializing in inner-child work groups.

In 1994 I became a children's therapist for severely emotionally disturbed adolescent girls in a

residential group home. In 1995 I took a full-time counseling position in Deland at the House Next Door, an agency supported by the Presbyterian Church. Shortly after my employment there, my supervisor, coworker and I created a program that Juvenile Justice supported for children under the umbrella of domestic violence. Since then, I have been working with children between the ages of 10-17 and their families. I am blessed with the opportunity to work creatively with these children, including taking them to Mount Yonah to rappel off the mountain. I am becoming increasingly more involved with the Ourward Bound program. I find this resource to my counseling ministry a true gift.

I continue throughout my counseling ministry to do group work at Swedenborg House on a small scale.

I have served one year now on CAM and would consider it an honor to continue to serve CAM.

## **New Church Sunday School Association Meeting**

Let everyone who cherishes the next generation of our church be welcome at the 1996 annual meeting of the American New Church Sunday School Association! Our meeting will be held Wednesday, June 26th at 3:00 p.m. (This is earlier than usual, to avoid conflict with the Swedenborg School of Religion meeting). As part of the agenda, we will be addressing the needs of our Sunday schools and how the ANCSSA can meet and has strived to meet these needs. It is a time of change for our Sunday schools, and you are encouraged to be a part of it! Any potential agenda items should be communicated to the president (Rev. Eric Hoffman, 219-362-1959) or the secretary (Susannah Currie 207-839-6116) before the end of May.

## 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.

### Swedenborg's Intention Debated

Dear Editor:

I enjoy reading *The Messenger*. Thank you for your good work as editor.

There is a question in my mind about the blurb along the edge of the back page that says: "Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him . . ."

It is very hard to establish exactly what a person "intended." I would agree with the statement: "He never intended a denomination to be named after him." But is it true to say that "he never intended a church denomination to be founded"? He foretold "a New Church" in many places. I went to my computer, using the GRANDMAN software, and found that the references to the "New Church" which is the "New Jerusalem" are very numerous and not at all hard to find. *True Christian Religion* ends with a description of the New Jerusalem, meaning "a church about to be established by the Lord." (TCR 782). The *Apocalypse Revealed* has many passages explaining that the "New Jerusalem" is a church "about to be formed" (AR 707), "is to be established" (AR 816), "is being formed" (AR 839), "It is certain that the New Church, which is the New

Jerusalem, will exist, because it is foretold in the Apocalypse (chapters 21, 22)" (AR 547) and so on and on. The *Divine Providence* has many references to the New Church (such as nos. 263, 264, 328:10), and so do most of the books of Swedenborg's writings.

The wording in the blurb could create the false impression that Swedenborg had no thoughts at all about a new church, and that this concept was introduced by his followers. He talked about the New Church, and the New Jerusalem in hundreds of places. There is plenty of room for discussion about just what form this "New Church" is expected to take. No doubt we will be talking about that for a long time. But would we be talking about it at all if Swedenborg hadn't pointed us rather dramatically in that direction?

Frank Rose  
Sunrise Chapel  
Tucson, Arizona

### The Chess Garden

Dear Editor:

I had just finished reading Brooks Hansen's remarkable novel *The Chess Garden* (recommended to me by a New Church friend and colleague) when my attention was drawn to the review by the Rev. Robert McCluskey (February *Messenger*).

The book had already impressed me deeply and Mr. McCluskey's review will send me back to it with new insights. His account of how the author came to learn about Swedenborg is most interesting. We often wonder what effect (if any) our outreach efforts are having, particularly when they do not seem to result in new people turning up for Sunday worship at our churches. On this occasion the rewards have been rich. Not only is *The Chess Garden* a significant literary work, but the New Church has been given an impressive outreach "tool." I would be happy to recommend this stunning book to any

serious-minded friend or acquaintance searching for something beyond the mere surface of things, but who may nevertheless be put off by conventional religion.

I was fascinated by the references to John Bigelow, previously just a "name" to me, and was inspired to find out more about him. Towards the end of a very long life (he died in 1911 at the age of 94), Bigelow was one of four American men of letters who were among the vice-presidents of the International Swedenborg Congress held in London in 1910. The other three were Henry James (long resident in England but not yet then a British citizen), William Dean Howells and Julian Hawthorne (son of Nathaniel Hawthorne, author of *The Scarlet Letter*). Glancing at David Herbert Donald's new biography of Lincoln in a London bookshop recently, I was surprised to see a brief reference to Bigelow as a "New York sophisticate" who ridiculed Mary Todd Lincoln's pretensions to speak French. However, it appears that the President did not take these remarks amiss as he dispatched Bigelow to Paris to be first American consul and then minister there.

As an Englishman, I was delighted to see that Brooks Hansen has Gustav Uyterhoeven meet and become friends with James John Garth Wilkinson, Swedenborgian (a chairman of this Society) and homeopathic doctor. Wilkinson was a particular friend of Henry James, Senior (Mr. and Mrs. James named their third son Garth Wilkinson after him) and of Emerson, who lavished praise upon the London medical man in his essay "Swedenborg, or the Mystic" in *Representative Men*.

Richard Lines  
Vice-president,  
The Swedenborg Society  
London



## Memorial

### Dr. Marjorie B. Creelman

A Gestalt therapist, known to most of us as "Marrie," she played an important part in the lives of many of us and affected the attitudes and outlook of many in the denomination. John King and I attended a two-week human resources and group dynamics program of which she was one of the leaders at Urbana College in the summer of 1958. Shortly afterward she and her husband George and Dr. Richard Wallen formed Creelman Associates.

The significance of John's and my experience with Marrie and Dick Wallen, another leader in Urbana, led to the conviction they could be of help to our church in finding ways to move forward. We engaged them to work with the officers and heads of boards and committees at what became known as the Fryeburg Conference held in the summer of 1959. They also worked with the Council of Ministers, their spouses, the students at SSR and later in a much wider area of the church.

Though Creelman Associates disbanded, Marrie and/or Dick were called on from time to time by church groups and individuals. I am personally much indebted to her for her help when I was president of our denomination and in my own personal life. She in her warm, perceptive and no-nonsense leadership has affected the lives of many individuals and the church itself. Her presence will be greatly missed.

—Rev. David Johnson  
Bellevue, Washington

## Passages

### Confirmations

Avery—George Avery was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church March 17, 1996, at the LaPorte New Church (Swedenborgian), LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

Kamo, McHugh, Nemeth, Sock, Urquhart—Denise Kamo, Nancy McHugh, Naomi Nemeth, David Sock, and Allyson Urquhart were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church February 4, 1996, at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, the Rev. Ron Brugler officiating.

### Deaths

Creelman—Dr. Marjorie Creelman entered the spiritual world August 28, 1995. (See Memorial).

Hodges—Mary Hodges, longtime member of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world March 5, 1996. Her resurrection service was conducted at the Greenwood Mortuary March 9, lay minister Eldon Smith officiating. At the time of her death, Mary was a member of the church board of trustees, secretary of the Pacific Coast Alliance, and president of the Women's Alliance of San Diego.

Rienstra—Carole Rienstra, 53, wife of the Rev. David Rienstra of the Church of the Open Word Swedenborgian Church in St. Louis, entered the spiritual world March 8, 1996, following a long bout with cancer. A memorial service is planned for June 16, 1996. Carole is survived by her husband, David; three children, David, Jr., Sherilyn, and Kathryn; her mother, Pearl Bayre; and one grandchild, Jonathan Allen Pruiett. Donations may be made to the Garden Chapel, Church of the Open Word, 11688 Chandellay Dr., St. Louis, MO 63146.

Roser—Mark Roser, 89, former trustee of the LaPorte New Church, and beloved friend and spiritual companion to the many seekers who crossed his path, entered the spiritual world March 14, 1996, in Michigan City, Indiana. A memorial service was conducted March 19, 1996, at St. Anne's Church, Father Doyle officiating.

Sigle—Harold Sigle, 78, longtime member of the LaPorte New Church, entered the spiritual world March 10, 1996, in LaPorte, Indiana. Harold donated much time and talent to the church community. A resurrection service of celebration and remembrance was conducted April 10, 1996, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

Swiger—Katharine B. Swiger, 89, lifelong Swedenborgian, longtime member of the Pittsburgh Society and recent member of the Swedenborg House Chapel and Growth Center in Deland, Florida, entered the spiritual world November 15, 1995, at Oldsmar, Florida. A memorial service was conducted at the Florida Sheriff's Youth Ranch November 19, 1995, the Rev. Fred Stone officiating. Mrs. Swiger is survived by two sons, Edmund Swiger of Pittsburgh, Warren Swiger of Safety Harbor, Florida; daughter Florence Swiger, California; one sister, four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Memorial contributions may be made to K.B. Swiger Memorial Fund, Swedenborgian Church of Palos Verdes, Wayfarers Chapel 5755 Palos Verdes Drive S., Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90274.

### Church Family News

We have learned that the Rev. John Bennett was operated on for a brain tumor in early March. Please keep John and Muriel and their family in your thoughts and prayers.

## Memorial

### Carole Rienstra

1942—1996

#### A Celebrated Journey

On March 8, Carole Rienstra ended her fight with cancer. A bittersweet goodbye. A goodbye that is hard to say. A journey that is celebrated with love, joy and completeness.

Carole lived her life with richness; a knowledge of the Word and its meaning was in all that she did and became. Her love of the arts, music, gardening, children, friends and family were all nourished in a true and spiritual nature.

Carole was truly a modern-day Johnny Appleseed. Not being afraid to speak her belief, she spread good cheer with her cancer awareness group. The inevitable was not feared. Never showing doubt of the unknown, Carole knew what awaited her and embraced it.

Seeds grew from Grand Rapids, Michigan,

Newton, Mass., Fryeburg, Maine, St. Louis, Missouri, and points in between. There is a bit of elegance and beauty left at each milestone along Carole's path. Because of her courageous journey, we have been blessed with a visual insight into the spiritual world.

We can hear her laughter and shrieks of joy fill a room. Close your eyes, and if we live the life Carole has shown us we will hear her:

"Rejoice in the Lord always, Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all people. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God; And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Finally, Brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—Meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and

heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you."

—*Philippians 4:4-9.*

Our hearts are now filled with a memory of a gift from God. A gift to us that was fulfilled. Carole watered us with truth, cultivated us with love and watched us all grow and become the beauty God had intended.

—*Lee Dyer*

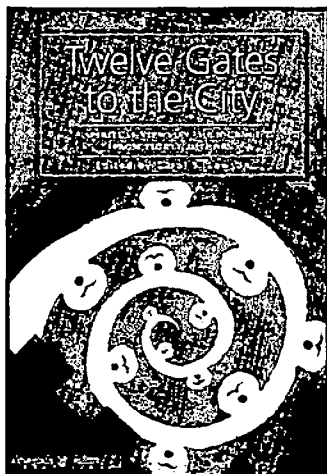
*St. Louis, Missouri*

... Carole left us after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Her courage during her long ordeal touched everyone. She continued to reach out to people with her wonderful all-inclusive smile. Carole loved "all things bright and beautiful." She planted a beautiful garden around her church for all to enjoy. And Carole loved people, always accepting each and everyone and, as she did with her plants, bringing out the best in them. I feel sure a chorus of angels was standing by to bring her to her new home.

—*Corinne Tafel*

*Narberth, Pennsylvania*

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.



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## Important Church Calendar Dates

May 20-21

Retirement Committee  
— Newton, MA

August 18-21

Cabinet — Fryeburg

June 26-30

Convention 1996  
— Urbana, Ohio

August 23-24

PMSU / AFC  
— Fryeburg

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