

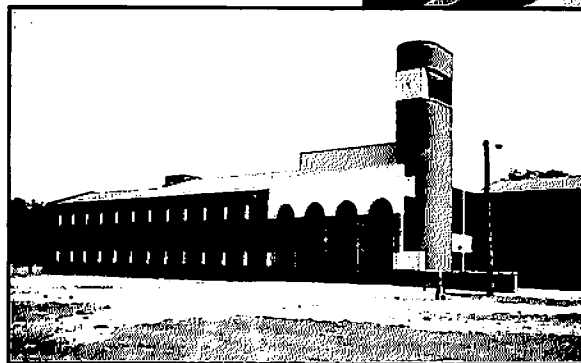
THE MESSENGER

Monthly Publication, Swedenborgian Church of North America

September 1996

To define
"love" is to
distinguish it
from what it
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in life more
urgent is to
live by that
definition.

George Dole



The Nature of Evil Reexamined

*Swedenborg School of Religion
Graduation Address
June 27, 1996, Urbana, Ohio*

I had an address nicely printed out when I arrived, but a conversation with Paul Zacharias Sunday evening prompted some thoughts that seemed more germane to the church in its present situation.

At SSR, an imperfect faculty is dedicated to preparing imperfect students for service in an imperfect church. Probably because of our traditional focus on individual regeneration, a good deal of attention is paid to the student's process, and perhaps too little to the church's process. For surely, just as the faculty must recognize and respect where a student is, so a graduate must recognize and respect where the church is. In each case, we may wish that things were different. In each case, the task is

one of facilitating learning and change. In each case, the enterprise is subverted by resentment of the facts or by ignorance of their background.

What I should like to do, then is to propose a way of looking at the story of our church which may suggest fresh responses to our present situation. At this point, I am not sure what the implications might be for theological education, but (thank goodness) I don't have a class tomorrow morning.

Reflecting on the early growth of our church, I would highlight four factors which differentiate that era from the

(Continued on page 103)

S P E C I A L C O N V E N T I O N I S S U E

A Mystery Summer

In the April *Messenger* I reported an update on the Random Acts of Kindness movement. ("Random Acts of Kindness Institutionalized," p. 62), with a promise to report more in May. That followup is still pending, but I'm picking up the trail again here on a more informal level. It seems to fit well with our convention theme, "Serve the Lord with Gladness." The emphasis on spontaneity and joy in the personal anecdotes of the theme-storytellers this year parallels the spirit of the "Random Acts of Kindness" movement—that is, the discovery of creativity in the moment, in everyday living. There is so much opportunity presented to us to transform adversity or just the ordinary and mundane into a celebration of life, but we have to be attuned and aware.

A letter from my friend Marcia in Indiana came my way just before I left for convention. "We've a favor to ask," she began. "A very young friend of ours from church has had some bad luck this year. Joey fell out of a tree (about 15 feet) and broke his leg above the knee. He was put in traction but wriggled and jiggled so much the doctors decided to do surgery. They placed pins in his leg and a metal contraption around it to keep the leg straight. After weeks in the contraption, it was removed and Joey was free again.

"But it wasn't for long. Joey fell and broke his leg again, and this time he has had to be put into a body cast. It promises to be a long, hot summer for eight-year-old Joey. I'm writing this letter to ask if you'll send something to him . . . whatever you can find—maybe a postcard from your town—a brochure for some place in your area—a note or a letter from you, a picture your kids drew, a napkin from somewhere. I'm sure you can think of something unique to share with Joey. The big favor is, please don't tell Joey how you got his name and address!

Maybe it will give Joey something to think about and become a big mystery—he's going to get a map in the mail so he can put pins in the places where mail comes from. If you'd like to send this letter along to someone else—that would be great. It will be fun to see just how many MYSTERY letters Joey receives.

My prayer is that this little boy will find out how many loving and caring people there are in this tired old world as his leg heals. Thanks for being a part of the JOEY MYSTERY SUMMER!"

What fun it was to stop my busy-ness, FAX this letter to several people immediately, and then send Joey a postcard from Julian, telling him about a mountain lion that appeared in our yard. (If any *Messenger* readers want to respond, Marcia granted permission to reprint her letter. Just don't spill the beans! Joey's address is: Joey Pask, 3955 300 East, LaPorte, IN 46350.

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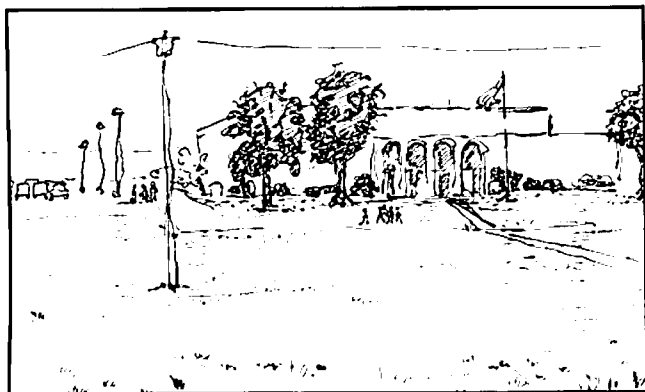
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Powwow preceding Blue Jacket Outdoor Drama

One of the highlights of convention each year is that the local convention organizers plan a Saturday night outing at some regional attraction. This year we all took a long ride on three chartered buses to Xenia, Ohio, to attend the outdoor drama, *Blue Jacket*, the true story of a white man adopted by the Indians, who became War Chief of the Shawnee Indian Nation 200 years ago. The pageant was performed by 50 professional actors using 18 horses and over 1,000 costume pieces,



The Commons, Urbana University —Sketch by Manon Washburn

on a three-acre stage on the very ground where some of the story's action historically occurred. This stunning production was preceded by a catered outdoor dinner in a screened enclosure that effectively kept us from being the mosquitoes' catered meal.

We were told that we could meet the actors afterward, have them sign our programs, take pictures, browse the gift shop, etc. When the play was over, I did some of these things, plus purchasing a book about *Blue Jacket*. When I stepped out of the gift shop, there was no sign of the buses that were to return us to Urbana University. It took me a few moments to digest the sobering fact that they had left without me, and I was standing there at 11:30 on a balmy summer night, in the midst of a rapidly disappearing crowd of strangers, 60 miles from where I

(Continued on page 106)



Pre-Convention Workshop, Creating Inner Sacred Spaces



Youth League gathers following Tiki Torch Parade.

CONVENTION 1996

Nature of Evil

(from front cover)

present. They were so interactive that it seems inappropriate to put them in a linear sequence, but I can't figure out a way to pronounce them all as they occurred, that is, simultaneously.

One was an infectious national mood of optimism. Progress was everywhere evident, and felt irreversible. The ship of state was sailing into a radiant future, and the New Church was standing on its prow. Within that church, there was a vivid sense of discovery, of newness. There was an experience of liberation from an oppressive theology. When the claim was made that the writings were a revelation, this may have been more a description of personal experience than an assertion of dogma. Then there was the presence within the church of persons of eminence—of Cutlers and Scammons and Vanderlips and Carters and Shellenbergs and Harrons and Bigelows, for example. This meant that there was capable and confident leadership, financial resources, and a tacit belief that this was a significant church. AND there was the demonization of the Old Church.

This last factor may have more importance than we have given it. In *The True Believer*, Eric Hoffer observed that a mass movement can get along quite nicely without a god, but that it cannot survive without a

devil. In a sense, the defining moment in our institutional history came at the Great East Cheap in London when the gentle ecumenism of John Clowes was drowned out by quotations from *True Christian Religion* that insisted on the incompatibility of the new theology with the old. The toxic spiritual effects of the old theology were seen as necessitating a clean break, an entirely separate organization, an "us" that was against "them"—and it worked.

In all four respects, there have been radical changes. The optimism of the nineteenth century which now looks so naive has been displaced by a pessimism which may actually be no less naive. The sense of discovery was gradually overlaid, it seems, by a sense of trusteeship. There were decades when I wondered whether we were the church of the Second Coming or the church of the second edition. The captains and the kings have departed, taking with them not only their financial support and their leadership, but also a substantial portion of our morale. And when the split with the General Church occurred, we lost the most strongly separatist voices.

In none of these cases are we talking about loss alone. Each can be seen as an evidence of, or opportunity for, spiritual progress. If, in fact, each of these changes has proved debilitating to the institutional church, as I believe is the case, we must suspect that it is because we have not

responded to them appropriately.

How can we respond? We cannot change the prevailing mood of our culture, for instance, but we can challenge its naivete. We might set out to recruit the wealthy and prominent, but I suspect our consciences would trouble us if we did. I believe a sense of discovery has been gaining steam recently, especially since the publication of Wilson Van Dusen's *The Natural Depth in Man*. But I think we have been reluctant—perhaps understandably—to "name the enemy," and that it is time for a serious look at the nature of evil.

The church has an erratic record in its dealings with issues of evil and judgment. One major strand of traditional Christian theology attributed judgment to a wrathful Father and forgiveness to a merciful Son. We could make a good case for simply inverting the image, with the infinite Divine being utterly loving and the incarnate Lord coming to bring not peace but a sword, to set the members of the household against each other, to separate the wheat from the tares and the sheep from the goats. This is, after all, "the Word" made flesh, the true light that blesses the good *and* un-masks the evil.

We are called to emulate a Lord who glorified his humanity by unmasking and overcoming the hells. It may have been genuine wisdom and not just eighteenth-century moralism

(continued on next page)

Nature of Evil

(Continued from page 103)

that prompted Swedenborg, in defining the life of charity, to assign a primary role to "shunning evils as sins."

We need to be thoughtful, though, about what we label as "evil," what we demonize. One fact that shines through the Gospels is that outward righteousness may be more demonic than outward sin—witness the Pharisee and the tax collector on the steps of the temple.

We are on somewhat safer ground when we demonize "racism" or "promiscuity" or "homophobia," but we are entering a shadowy ground between behaviors and attitudes. Underlying the observable patterns of behavior may be all manner of fears and angers, old wounds and ego trips. One director of New York City's programs for the homeless resigned because of her conviction, from experience, that "homelessness" was not a workable category. It could be a manifestation of chemical dependency, mental illness or disability, post-traumatic stress, evasion of responsibility, or any combination of these and other factors, and in many if not most instances, "providing shelter" was not the answer.

The Gospels call us to look beneath the surface. John the Baptist heralded the Christ by saying, "Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree." Now, that is, evil would be unmasked at its source, would be named for what it is. The ultimate unmasking comes in the closing chapters of Revelation, where all the demonic figures of the cosmic battles resolve into two. One is named Babylon, the scarlet woman, and the other is that old serpent named Satan—and incidentally, in the Greek courtroom the "satan" was the accuser, the prosecuting attorney, while the counsel for the defense was the "paraclete," the "comforter" promised in the Gospel of John.

Swedenborg identifies Babylon as "the love of dominion from the love of self," and the serpent as "faith alone"—not exactly phrases you hear on the nightly news. Let me suggest

for the first "the need to be in control" and for the second "the practice of believing our own rationalizations." Let me propose that however righteous the manifest cause, this Babylon and this serpent can make it an instrument of tyranny.

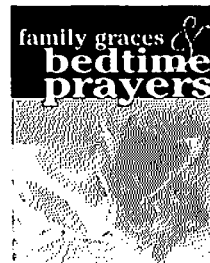
We do recognize this from time to time. In the optimistic early stages of *perestroika*, one Russian regretfully sounded a cautionary note. "It seems as though every time we change the system, the bad guys are first in line." Or there is a cartoon by a namesake of mine showing two men in biblical garb, one looking quite depressed. "It's not working out the way we planned. We're having a rash of ploughshare murders."

All this may not sound much like the Gospel, the "good news" of the kingdom of heaven, and I would offer a closing image. It rests in the fact that different people can mean very different things by the word, "love." To define "love" is to distinguish it from what it is not, and the only task in life more urgent is to live by that definition. In his discourse at the Last Supper, we find Jesus giving us a commandment to love one another, and then providing us with a definition of love—"as I have loved you." Whether we like it or not, this must entail fighting against what he fought against.

Demonizing "the Old Church" worked for a while, but its dark side is too obvious now for it to be a defensible strategy. I am suggesting that its demise has left a vacuum which we might fill by giving honest and thoughtful attention to the boundary, that the effort to define what is essentially "non-love" would help us to redefine our church and to find the unique service it can render to the world in which it finds itself.

The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole is professor of Bible, Language and Theology at the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, Mass. In addition to translations of Swedenborg's works, his publications include A Thoughtful Soul: Reflections from Swedenborg, A Scientist Explores Spirit: A Compact Biography of Emanuel Swedenborg (with Robert Kirven) and With Absolute Respect: The Swedenborgian Theology of Charles Carroll Bonney, and the most recent Swedenborg Foundation publication, The Last Judgment in Retrospect, to be released in October.

Family Graces & Bedtime Prayers



Messenger readers may recall a request that appeared many months ago inviting contributions of family graces and bedtime prayers to be sent for a collection that was in process. The 32-page book, compiled by Susannah Lorraine Currie and published by J. Appleseed & Co., is now available. Artists Mona Conner and Carolyn Judson contributed illustrations, Ken Turley arranged the music for those prayers and graces that may be sung, and over a dozen other persons contributed material and support for the project. The result is a very attractive and useful publication.

"This collection of old and new graces and prayers is offered as an aid to home worship," states the Introduction. "The experience of sharing mealtime graces and bedtime prayers can be one of joyful worship and prayerful gratitude. Gathering with family and friends at meals, and in the quiet moments before sleep, we can create, with our words and our reverence, an atmosphere of trust and love—a natural setting in which to reach closer to God. Remember, God is always listening. *Speak up!*"

Family Graces & Bedtime Prayers is being offered to churches for \$3.00 each for 10 or more copies, \$5.00 apiece for smaller orders, plus postage and handling. To order, contact J. Appleseed & Co., 3200 Washington Street, San Francisco, CA 94115. Phone (415) 346-6466.

The Heart and Hands of Ministry— Completing Swedenborg's Universal Triangle

June 27, 1996, Urbana College, Urbana, Ohio

Lee Woofenden

It has been a long road, but I have finally reached the beginning of it.

In God's mind, I am sure my road toward ministry started before I was born. But in my mind, it started over twenty-five years ago, when I was eight or nine years old. It was in the beautiful sanctuary of our St. Louis church that my early stirrings toward ministry were nourished. I remember sitting in the pews there, seeing the minister in the chancel—who just happened to be my father—and knowing that one day I would be a minister, too.

By the time I was a teenager, I saw myself as a regular member of the Future Swedenborgian Ministers of America Club. (Truly an elite group!) I threw myself into Sunday school and Youth League activities and began reading the Bible and Swedenborg daily. Every chance I got, I added to my knowledge of our church's teachings—all as a way of preparing myself for my future ministry. I even listened to my Dad's sermons!

By this time, I had my path toward ministry all mapped out. But the Lord had a different path in mind. After getting a two-year degree, I realized that I was not ready for ministry. I had been to a lot of schools and done a lot of studying, but I hadn't seen much of life. I decided not to continue in school. Instead, I traveled for a while, and then settled down in Washington state for the next ten years.

As I was going through the decade after I finished my two-year degree, I didn't think I was preparing for ministry. But I was. I was attending one of the finest schools in the world—the school of life. During that time, I also married my best friend and began getting an even better education in how to live and how to love.

What I have been gaining in the years since my first run at ministry is the other two legs of Swedenborg's universal triangle. I had already gotten a solid knowledge of the Bible and the teachings of our church. What I still needed was a warmth and caring in my heart for those I would serve, and



Patty & Lee Woofenden

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allow us.***

practical experience in meeting not only the challenges of ministry, but the challenges of life. I hope and pray that I will be able to serve people with my head, my heart, and my hands fully engaged, and with the spirit of God filling my ministry.

I have now accepted a call to serve two of our churches: Bridgewater and Yarmouth Port, Mass. Following our Lord's example, my plan as pastor of these churches is to preach and teach the good news to be found especially in the Bible and in Swedenborg, and to help heal the spiritual wounds of

the people through pastoral care.

I also want to reach out beyond our own membership and help make the Bridgewater and Yarmouth Port churches active and essential parts of their communities. I firmly believe that if we reach out to people and offer them our service and support, they will reach back to us. The mutual relationship that then develops will gradually break down the boundaries of the church community and make our churches into centers of spiritual power and spiritual healing rather than boundaries that define who is in and who is out.

I have not traveled this road to ministry alone. There are many people I would like to thank—people who gave me crucial help along the way.

I would like to thank Jim Lawrence for giving me that little extra nudge I needed when I was (again) contemplating ministry. I would also like to thank the good people at Fairhaven College in Bellingham, Washington where I completed my degree in Communicating Spiritual Ideas. Fairhaven enabled me to begin my theological education—including field education—before I reached theological school. And I would like to thank the faculty and staff at Swedenborg School of Religion for shepherding me through the last three years of my theological education.

I had many field education supervisors that I would like to thank: Paul Martin at the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound, where I did much of my field work while attending Fairhaven College. Oliver T. Lee and Sam Lowe at Interfaith Health Care Ministries in Providence, Rhode Island, where I did my Clinical Pastoral Education—and where my heart was opened so much through my work with hospital patients. F. Robert Tafel in Cambridge, Mass., Ron Brugler in Kitchener, Ontario, and Ken Turley in Portland, Maine—and their congregations—who opened their churches to me and taught me so much about the practical aspects of ministry. Also Scott

(Continued on page 106)

Lee Woofenden's Address

(from page 105)

Sweezy and Robert Currence at Emerge in Cambridge, a counseling center for men who abuse women. My experience doing counseling and administrative work twenty hours a week at Emerge during my final year at SSR was a crash course in the realities of human interaction and regeneration.

Several groups within the church gave financial support to me and my family so that I would make it through school. For this, I would like to thank the Pacific Coast Association, the Los Angeles Society, the Chicago Society, the Boston church, and also SSR and the Augmentation Fund Committee.

Finally, there are three special people I would like to thank. Two of them are my Dad and Mom, Bill and Louise Woofenden. Mom and Dad, thanks for everything you have done for me, and for all of us kids. You gave us a solid foundation in the teachings of our church—teachings that mean so much to you. Yet you also gave us the respect and the freedom to follow our own paths. Your support of me through the years has meant a tremendous amount to me.

The other person I would like to thank is my wife Patty. You stayed with me through everything, and gave me a crucial reality check all along the way. My ministry and my life will be stronger and more genuine because of your honesty and your presence with me.

As I think about all the people who have made it possible for me to be standing here today, I realize more strongly than ever that we as human beings are not defined by a boundary that distinguishes us from others. Rather, we are defined by a center from which we can expand as far into the minds and hearts of others as our own minds and hearts will allow us. I share a church and a world with each one of you who is here today, and with those who could not be here. You are all a part of who I am, and will be a part of my ministry. I hope I can be a positive part of each of your lives and ministries as well.

I especially realize at this time that the Lord Jesus Christ is the center of all centers, and reaches out to the farthest boundaries of the universe and of our own minds and hearts. I pray that as I go out into ministry, I will be able to keep my eyes and my heart directed toward that center in everything I do.

Thank you.

Moving Toward the Light

(Continued from page 102)

was supposed to be headed. I quickly polled the small knot of people standing near me to see if anybody was headed out to Urbana. They were sympathetic to my plight, but didn't even know where Urbana was. I went up to the concession window just as they were shutting down, explained my situation, and the young man quickly got the manager. I explained it all again to him, and asked him if he could find anybody who was headed out that way. He thought one of the actors lived there, but no, it turned out he wasn't going home that night.

The producer of the show then appeared on the scene, a bright young woman named Jan Abel. "I'll take you back," she said. "But I need directions; I don't remember how to get to the University." I found the Urbana emergency number in my memo book, called, and got directions. We were on our way. During the ride back, I discovered how she'd gotten to be producer of the show, that the local people boarded the horses for free over the winter as a matter of civic pride, that she had no children but did have nieces and nephews. I told her that my son, who does voiceovers, is the voice of Goldar, the winged monster on

Power Rangers, which happened to be a favorite TV show of the nieces and nephews. As a special gesture of gratitude for her going 120 miles out of her way (in addition to giving her gas money) I promised her my son would send the kids autographed pictures of Goldar as soon as I got home. The whole experience was a delightful adventure.

I walked into Grimes Center at 1:00 a.m. "Just wanted to let you know I managed to get back OK," I said to Martha Bauer and Dick and Pat Sommers. They looked blank, then astonished. They had no clue I wasn't on the bus. The next morning I joined Bob Kirven and George Dole at breakfast. I had sat next to George on the bus going to Xenia. "Didn't you miss me?" I asked him, explaining what happened. "I assumed you were on another bus," he responded gallantly. Bob launched into a funny story about the time Corinne Tafel got left behind in the bleachers during a sudden Kansas cloudburst. Nobody realized she was missing until she showed up half drowned, having walked a good distance in the downpour.

I think it's time to compile a book of funny convention stories. Please *Serve the Lord with Gladness* and send your humorous contributions.

—Patte LeVan



LEFT: Margaret Ris, who received a Certificate in Swedenborgian Studies, with Ellen Shaw, SSR student.

BELOW: Ordination—Edwin Capon, Horand Gutfeldt, Lee Woofenden.





The Forgotten Virtue

Convention Sermon — June 30, 1996
Urbana University, Urbana, Ohio

Horand Gutfeldt

Micah VI: 6-8. Matthew XI: 19-30.

There is one virtue that one hardly ever hears mentioned today. Among hundreds of books written by authors in our church, there is not one on this subject. In Bennett's new book on virtues that was for a long time on the best-seller list¹, it is not included. Unless there is at least some of this quality in our heart, there can be no real worship, nor truth or love nor any good in what we do, so our teachings tell us.

What could it be?

It is **Humility**.

But, again we have to understand the right kind of humility—as well as the right kind of pride to distinguish this quality from phony modesty.

For a while I called myself crazy to bring this out in an age that praises self-esteem, self-confidence and the power of the Self. We will have to stress right away that it cannot be servility, submission and "wiping ourselves out." In the beautiful *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis that made a deep impression upon me when I was prisoner of war, it is taught that we have to become a doormat and let others step over us every time. But I learned this only created codependence and reminds me of the story of a wealthy Athenian, who wore a coat full of holes as a sign of modesty. But a friend told him, "I see vanity shining through all the holes of your garment."

There is a good and necessary self-confidence and dignity that enables us to stand and hold up what is right, as we see it. The United States is fortunate to have a great example in Abraham Lincoln, who was a man with a profound humility for himself, and yet radiating great power for what he felt was right and true. There can be a gratitude, a strength of conviction for all that God has shown and given in our lives.

True humility consists in giving all credit to God, that all that is good and true comes from Him and remains HIS property alone, a gift from Him, even though we feel it entirely as our own. This has to be seen not only with the head or reason, but felt with our heart and entire being, as it is described of the angels.

But so much in our daily lives appears opposed to such an attitude. We are used to implying "Look at ME!" Much of our conversation displays our striving to say something more pithy and effective than someone else and "one-upmanship" is the daily fare of many of our exchanges. All gossip implies somehow "I am better" or "at least not as bad as another." When we hold on to "Because I said so," or "Speak softly and carry a big

stick," we fall into the same pit. All fishing for compliments, all comparing ourselves with others where we appear in a better light is related to a desire to set up an idol of the ego, of somehow wanting to be like God, who alone is really good, or Goodness Himself.

Real modesty points to a childlike quality, which is repeatedly called Innocence in our teachings. This is strongly emphasized by our Lord in the first sentence of the Sermon on the Mount, the most important Christian document. It has been translated "Blessed are the Poor in spirit," but a look at the original Greek shows that it would be better to say "Blessed (or graced with heavenly happiness) are the beggars for the spirit." All arrogance is inescapably charged with a horrible fear deep underneath that it might be questioned or refuted. This creates tenseness, and to peacefully serve the Lord with gladness and detachment becomes impossible, and the gladness of worship remains unattainable. In our Bible reading the Lord says "... learn from Me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (or lowly) in heart, and you will find peace for your souls."² This is in a nutshell the sum of what the Lord expects from us, "to walk humbly and to love mercy," as it was said through the Prophet Micah.

There is an episode in the famous book³ by the great Italian poet, Dante Alighieri. Similar to Swedenborg, he describes heaven and hell as was understood in his time. He describes first their visit to the various circles of hell and how he wants to ascend to heaven, accompanied by his beloved Beatrice, and Virgil. Yet they are unable to get higher, hard as they try. Then the angel of humility appears, and with his soft gray wing he wipes the seven marks of pride from their foreheads, and then their steps bring them higher and higher to the realms of the blessed.

Humility is the condition for love. Imagine somebody saying to himself "Oh, how loving I am"—you will perceive immediately that something smells foul. Those who are filled with their own righteousness are always blind to their own arrogance. A special danger appears for members of all churches, but especially for those who are of our church. There are many shades of the "Holier than thou" attitude—"I know things better," "Our family is better than others, for we stand for the real truth." This is the dynamite that destroys the church, and most of the church groups that have dissolved were ruined by this. I have to admit that I myself have often been touched and swept by such feelings, for ministers are exposed to special temptations.

It seems a paradox that humility is hardly ever spread by preaching, and I smile at myself in pondering this, for
(Continued on page 108)

¹ *The Book of Virtues*, William J. Bennett; Simon & Schuster publ. New York, London, etc. 1993

² Matthew 11:28

³ The original title is "La Divina Comedia", perhaps to be translated as "The Divine Plan (or design)"

The Forgotten Virtue

(Continued from page 107)

this seems to wipe out all that I want to convey. We can never spread humility by humiliating others or making them feel guilty. Genuine modesty is communicated by example, and in the family most strongly through the example of the parents or teachers. It is the condition for any work in a team, where the challenge is to contribute and to listen, and to work humbly on a common accomplishment or good, or a use. This falls apart, if we push our own ideas into the foreground.

We cannot force ourselves to be really humble by any willpower or by our own efforts—it turns out to be phony. We can slowly overcome the whispers of pride with the help of God, but with all our efforts, we cannot make ourselves forget what we have done. There is no effort that could make us forget something that we have done. This seems like a literal application of "not letting the left hand know what the right one is doing." But we can pray again and again that God may give us freedom from any pride, from self-righteousness and grace us with genuine lowliness of heart. All of this starts with repentance, with self-examination to see ourselves courageously, what we really are like. All virtues become stale, whenever we want to see ourselves as virtuous, when something in us wants to pat us on our own shoulder—"You are wonderful!" The special virtue of tolerance, which we stress so strongly in our denomination, can be taken as an example, and it is the same with caring or spirituality. Only when these are combined with the highest virtue of all, a sincere giving of all merit to God, can they have any value at all. Only then can we steer toward the right attitude that empowers us to do what is right. This implies that we have an idea of God not being far away, but living and working within ourselves. When we can pray from our deepest heart "Lord, have mercy on me," we are on the right track.

I may not have very much longer to be a guest on this little planet. This then is my charge, my message that I would want to leave with our church. May the Lord lead us all to genuine humility, to that modesty that feels and sees everything good and true coming from and belonging to the Lord, always looking to Him as our guiding star and example.

In concluding, I want to share a Chinese saying that made a deep impression upon me: *Why does the sea receive the flow of all streams and rivers in the world?* The answer is: *Because it keeps below them.* So the wise person will receive wisdom and support from all sides, if he/she stays beneath them and is open to listen and receive.

May the Lord help every one of us to discover the gladness and blessedness of heaven that comes with the greatest and highest quality of the heart or virtue, that we may be His people, and God Himself be with us and in us, so our hearts will be open for the Spirit and the Glory of God to enlighten and lead us.

The Rev. Dr. Horand Gutfeldt is a retired Swedenborgian minister living in Berkeley, California. He is currently a delegate for the National Council of Churches and has served on the Board of Trustees for the Swedenborg School of Religion.

Convention Scenes



◀ LEFT: Harmonious trio Laurie and Ken Turley, (Maine) and Eric Hoffman (Indiana) on their recorders.



ABOVE: Mona Conner of New York with Mary Kay Pikulic of Canton, Ohio, a first-time convention attendee.

LEFT: Sharing a laugh—David Rienstra and Adrienne Frank.

BELOW: Jonathan, Frank and Nancy Doyle.



ABOVE: Corinne Tafel, Philadelphia, with chauffeur Dick Sommer, Urbana.

ABOVE, RIGHT: Elizabeth Dyer, St. Louis, youngest convention attendee, "does" lunch with Carl Yenetchi, Los Angeles.



Summary of President's Address

The Rev. Edwin Capon gave us an update on the current state of the church and activities of the Cabinet that included some encouraging things happening, as well as things that needed to be done:

- The San Francisco church continues to grow, almost filling its sanctuary every Sunday.
- The Bridgewater church is once again worshipping in its own restored sanctuary following the devastating fire of July 1994. Mr. Capon lauded the inspiring outpouring of love and help Bridgewater has received from the surrounding community.
- The St. Paul, Minnesota and Royal Oak, Michigan churches now have full-time ministers, Kit Billings and Renee Billings Morris, respectively.
- At least six more ministers are needed; however, accomplished and dedicated lay people are doing a great job in many churches, such as Urbana and Cleveland.

Korean Swedenborgians

"Quite new to the denomination are Korean Swedenborgians," Capon observed. "Esther and I had a delightful time visiting the Church of the Little Grain in Brooklyn. About 40 were present for the Sunday worship service, which was largely in Korean. The hymns were written in both Korean and English. We sang the hymns in English while the congregation sang them in Korean. I read a paragraph of my sermon in English, then waited while it was translated into Korean by their minister, the Rev. Young Min Kim."

The president mentioned a second Korean church in Bayside, Long Island, that has sent a young woman student to SSR, Min-Heui Cheon, who was at Urbana for her first convention. (The Bayside church was voted into General Convention during sessions; George Dole's report on his visit there will appear in the October *Messenger*, and Mr. Capon will visit them this fall).

Budget

The president reported that Cabinet has considered the denomination's priorities in regard to budget needs, submitted through support units and other constituent bodies, but in light of recent discussions by the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit regarding our financial condition, he said that Cabinet will need to be less lenient in the matter of monetary requests in order to achieve the main goal of a zero-base budget. The deficit was reduced significantly one year, but is creeping up again, even though the most recent denominational funds appeal was more successful.

Temenos

Mr. Capon noted that there was a long delay in settling the Temenos issue due to governmental failure to approve the new septic system within the expected time frame. This was finally accomplished in late winter, and the president arranged for the executive committee of general Council to meet with representatives of the Philadelphia church. By then, the terms of the agreement voted on in July of 1995 had been made more equitable for Philadelphia, if at any time it became necessary to sell Temenos. It was assumed that the Philadelphia church would vote on that agreement. They instead prepared a new agreement which they felt would meet the same concerns as the original agreement but did not involve a transfer of Temenos to Philadelphia. The president's concern that this would prove unsatisfactory to General Council and General Convention was confirmed by the denomination's attorney. In a conference call involving President Capon, Treasurer John Perry and representatives of the Philadelphia church, several concerns of Philadelphia were voiced. Capon reports, "I presented the Philadelphia agreement to General Council, but with John's approval, I presented General Convention's 1995 agreement also, with several modifications which I believed should satisfy Philadelphia's concerns. Philadelphia representatives at this year's convention agreed."

[At this writing, General Convention and Philadelphia are agreed on the wording of the modified agreement, and it is expected that this will be signed at the time of the Cabinet meeting taking place August 18-21 in Fryeburg, Maine.]

What is a Swedenborgian?

The president lauded the efforts of Pastoral Ministries Consultant Eric Allison. "Some of us are learning and practicing new ways of carrying out the work of our church; others, should. There are new ways that have helped and attracted new people." Capon has,

however, become aware of concerns as to how truly Swedenborgian some of our churches are. "A recent letter to me asks, 'what is a Swedenborgian?' and goes on to express unhappiness that the church the writer attends does not use any form of the faith in the Sunday service or require prospective members to take classes on the teachings of the church. I cannot believe that any of our ministers consider Swedenborg out of date or irrelevant. Is there a temptation to play down Swedenborg in the hope that attracting interesting new people will be easier? I have always favored presenting our teachings in

(Continued on page 110)



President's Address

(Continued from page 109)

language more easily understood by the average person. But what is the point, if we obscure our identity and make little use of the very teachings which brought our church into being? Those teachings are the one God-given 'talent' we have that other churches do not."

Mr. Capon pointed out that the statement of "A Vision of a Healthy Swedenborgian Church," which our ministers have been working on for over two years, contains no mention of Swedenborg or of our teachings—except in the title—yet both appear in the statement of our purpose in the denomination's Constitution. "Perhaps," he says, "it is time to take a fresh look at what it means to be a *Swedenborgian* church, 'seeking to help people to be open to the Lord's presence and leading, especially by fostering personal and ordained ministries which facilitate the spiritual well-being of people."

"I love our Church. There are many things about it that are good . . . and many good people devoted to her . . . Nearly all of us would like to see our church grow, which means we would like to see our individual churches grow. I don't think anyone has come up with a quick fix that will bring this about overnight. But I do believe we are performing an important use and that we may well be the foundation upon which something greater may be built."



Martha Bauer, Central Office Manager



Art of Living Rediscovered

Pat Zacharias

There was once a woman who was a contented person and felt that she was "serving the Lord with gladness" for, as Swedenborg writes "All gladness proceeds from the affection of love." She loved the work she was doing in her church and in her community. She had good friends, a happy family life, a wonderful husband. She loved nature, and on her walks through the woods would often talk to the Lord and thank her Creator for the beautiful world and all that she had been given. She read books, attended various groups and workshops, studied her dreams. She liked gardening, trying new recipes, making things for her home. But that was the extent of her creativity — because she believed she was not talented—she was not really creative. No Way . . . She couldn't draw a landscape, play in the symphony, sing in the philharmonic choir or write a book. These are the people who are really "artists"!

You have probably guessed by now that that woman was me. I say was because my attitudes and conceptions about creativity and "serving the Lord with gladness" have changed.

Last winter at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener I took a 12-week course using as our guide a book called *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron. I learned a

KANSAS NEXT YEAR!!!



different definition of creativity. I learned it means using everything that you are —your intelligence and your experience in a natural and spontaneous expression!

The first requirement of the course was to write three pages every day. Who, me? I can't write! And so I began. It wasn't long until I was looking forward to my writing—I discovered in the process that my writing led me to meditate, that I had unseen helpers who guided my pen, and unknown to me at the time, I was actually writing poetry. And I liked it!

The insights and gifts I was given in this process are too numerous to tell you about at this time, but one thing that has truly made a difference in my life is this thought:

The quality of my life is in proportion to my capacity for delight and my capacity for delight is the gift I received of paying attention. After the course I was led to read again *Original Blessing* by Matthew Fox. As he explains in his book, when we connect with the divine spiritual energy, we become co-creators with God. This is what it means to be made in the image of God.

As Hildegard of Bingen writes "God hugs you
You are encircled by the arms
of the mystery of God."

And I can only add what joy it is to have found a larger, more encompassing image of what it means to "serve the Lord with gladness."

Pat Zacharias is a member of the Swedenborgian church in Kitchener, Ontario, and has served the church in many capacities over the years.

Serve the Lord with Gladness

The Education Support Unit (EDSU) shaped the convention theme presentation this year, headed by family therapist Lorraine Sando of Washington state. EDSU's philosophy is that serving the Lord with gladness involves some of the following basics:

- A. Learn to appreciate and validate our church, ourselves and others. We do a good job of validating our churches and we know we can improve our validation of ourselves and each other.
- B. Learn how to speak directly and respectfully to each other rather than *about* each other regarding our strengths, our wants and needs, our worries and concerns, and our wishes, hopes and dreams. We as churches and individuals have some work to do in this area.
- C. Be able to serve the Lord with gladness in our communities.

The program began with pre-selected individuals, clergy and laypersons, sharing brief personal stories related to the theme. Theme presentations were designed to expand our awareness and communication with ourselves and the Lord in our interactions with others in our personal and church communities, and to use ourselves and our churches to make a difference in our communities. We viewed a demonstration and practiced Temperature Reading, a method of keeping communication open and clear between individuals, in personal, church, school and business relationships. This structure consists of sharing appreciations, puzzles/worries/concerns, problems or complaints with possible solutions, new information, and hopes and wishes, in that order. We broke into groups to practice the process.

Some of the appreciations expressed were: for the Urbana folks for their tremendous work in putting together a smooth-running convention; excellent child care; excitement about Temenos; Urbana University moving forward and achieving; the hug, song, joke and prayer patrol, the youth for their torchlight parade, and the blossoming of a new spirit of sharing and acceptance. Many of us noted that expressing appreciation creates a positive and strengthening climate for the rest of the process.

Some of the concerns expressed centered around youth—support for youth groups, need to have youth on General Council, generation gap—and the usual problems of diminishing funds and dearth of Swedenborgian ministers between St. Louis and San Francisco, Western Canada, and other areas; a need for a chaplain at Urbana University—concern that the students don't know about the Swedenborgian Church; escalating costs of attending convention, with people who would like to be a part of convention being left out.

A second phase the following day expanded to serving the Lord with gladness in the larger community, using stories and examples to inspire and move to action regarding: What's being done in our churches and others; how to initiate and develop appropriate social concern programs at a grass roots level. Following action stories and presentations, we broke up into groups by Associations to develop plans of action to take back home to local

churches. (See *Serving the Lord with Gladness in Communities*).

Storytellers were: Margaret Krause, Kansas; Erni Martin, Pennsylvania; Allison Lane, Kansas; Pat Zacharias, Kitchener, Ontario; Andy Yenetchi, California; Renee Billings Morris, Michigan; Arianne Halle, Indiana; Dave Johnson, Washington.



Lorraine Sando & Renee Billings Morris

Storytellers from Social Concerns were: Robert McCluskey, New York; Deborah Winter, Florida; Wilma Wake, New Hampshire; Carl Yenetchi, California. Pat Zacharias' story appears in this issue, and other stories on the theme will be published in *The Messenger* throughout the year.

Serving the Lord with Gladness in Communities

Discussions that took place in regional Association groups indicated a continuing effort at developing a larger awareness and involvement in social concerns as a regular part of all our church ministries. Talks focused on answering three questions:

1. **Community needs: what are they in our community?**
2. **Contribution/responding to those needs: how can we respond?**
3. **Action plans: what plans can we formulate to meet them?**

As might be expected, churches in more urban areas cited poverty, hunger, housing, welfare crisis, race relations, ethnic blindness, crime, abuse (spouse, child, sexual, emotional drug/alcohol), AIDS, random violence, gang activity, unemployment, illiteracy, elderly, loneliness, day care for children, health care, lack of parenting skills, immigrant issues, environmental pollution. Many of these problems are also very much present in small towns and rural areas, with the added concerns of scarce resources in the more isolated areas.

The discussions revealed varied, deep and committed social action work that many individuals and churches are already doing, some of which has been reported in past *Messengers*: recycling programs, helping families and individuals at holiday times, deer recovery

program, regular food bank collections, highway cleanup, AA meetings in churches, senior citizen lunches, interfaith clergy breakfasts, are only some of the things being done.

Plans for action include more networking with other churches and programs in the community, assessing the needs in the communities, researching what other social action organizations are doing and helping support them or working in cooperation with them (i.e., Habitat for Humanity, Native American centers, etc.), making use

of the *Social Action Workbook*.*

In summary, members and churches are doing a great deal, yet a better coordinated effort through organized and active Social Action Committees in each church would help to facilitate and enlarge upon the activities and energies of members' ongoing work. By doing work in the name of your church's Social Action Committee, you serve the Lord, meet needs and bring the church into the public realm and in contact with many who need to hear our faith and see it in action. Reports of individual churches' social action efforts as they are put in place will be published in future *Messengers*.

Reported by Association group leaders; compiled by Bill Shaklis, Cambridge, Mass., member of the Social Concerns Education Committee; summarized by the editor.

*For further information or assistance, or to order copies of the *Social Action Workbook*, contact: The Social Concerns Education Committee, Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, co-chair, c/o Swedenborg School of Religion, 48 Sargent Street, Newton, MA 02158.



Group discussion: From left, Alice Skinner, (immediate foreground), Edmond Swiger, Betsy & Bill Coffman, Patty Woofenden, Hampton Schoch, Pat Zacharias, Elora Schoch, Martha Richardson, Louise Dole.



Eric Allison, Pastoral Ministers' Church Growth Consultant, Kitchener, and Erni Martin, Temenos director.

Endings & Beginnings

(Editor's Note: The Rev. Kenneth Turley left the Portland, Maine church to begin a new ministry to the Fryeburg church this summer. The following letters to the respective churches were printed in their bulletins. They are, in this editor's opinion, a moving example of the kind of honest, responsible and loving communication that acknowledges what is entailed in moving on with our inevitable life changes, closing one door and opening another. These transitions are seldom without pain and a sense of loss, but loving closure can go a long way toward easing that pain, and new experiences get off to a good start when the new folks know where the minister stands and are invited to communicate to him or her what they want and expect.)

Dear Members & Friends of the Portland Church,

After seven years as minister of your church, I will be leaving to accept the position of minister at our sister church in Fryeburg, Maine. It has been a long, hard and painful decision but I believe, in the context of the larger picture, it is the most wise and loving thing to do.

There are so many things and so many people that I and my family will miss here in Portland. There is a sense of community, not without problems, but truly a level of openness and caring and a quality of life that is rare and valuable among churches. This community has consistently shown in the past an ability to face difficulties and challenges, to openly assess situations, strengths and problems, and then devise and implement solutions that have resulted in ongoing growth and new strength. While we do not always share similar perspectives, there is in common a commitment to the values of caring support and individual spiritual freedom and expression. The Portland community is unique. It is a rare situation and it is what it is because of you, the people who are involved and continue to make it so. It has been exciting and challenging to be instrumental in the development of a community such as this and I am honored to be part of its history. But now I must answer another call and it is time for this community to enter a new era.

The issues that are problem areas in Portland have been consistent and ongoing during my time here. I would identify them as

- 1) inadequate attention and energy to stewardship;
- 2) accessibility to and initiation of pastoral care;
- 3) integration of new people into the life of the church and
- 4) a tendency to avoid personal confrontation around difficult issues until they become serious.

These problems are directly related to my personal and professional strengths and weaknesses. I believe that for me to move on provides the best opportunity for Portland to build on the foundation and strengths that have been developed over the past seven years. To compare Portland to a garden: the ground has been cleared and broken and the boundaries and the basic style of gardening has been established. The earth has been plowed and even some fruitful crops sown and harvested. However, as in any new patch of earth, there are still rocks that have to be dug out and removed, and a lot of weeds still to be pulled. It is a beautiful garden with the potential for producing a flowering and fruitful harvest season after season. But it will, as always, need many hands

to do the work in order to enjoy the benefits.

I know that for many of you there is a sense of loss, with all the feelings of denial, anger and grief that come when experiencing a "death." It is important to acknowledge and accept these feelings for they are real and appropriate. It is also important to find constructive ways to support one another in expressing these feelings as individuals and as a community. It is also important to remember that in our theology of spiritual regeneration, each "death" gives us the opportunity for rebirth and new life. Change and transformation are essential to ongoing life and an integral part of that process is the falling away of what was for a time essential.

This community is unique in that nearly everyone has arrived and become involved while I was pastor. It is a new church with no experience in changing ministers. This is a situation that is unfamiliar and perhaps scary for many of you. But facing unfamiliar situations is something that is "business as usual" for this community. From the beginning we have explored unfamiliar territory and that courageous willingness to move forward has resulted in some wonderful discoveries. There is ahead, more unfamiliar territory to be explored and wonderful discoveries to be made. There are also difficult challenges and losses to be faced. This is not the end, only the end of one chapter in a story that began over one hundred and fifty years ago and will continue on as long as there are people committed to finding and living a wise and loving and free spirituality in a shared community. The Portland church, the Maine Association and the General Convention are all expressions of that desire. It is my hope that at all levels we will continue to explore, face challenges, and grow in our personal and communal spirituality and our depth of caring and enjoyment of one another's company. The future stretches out before us; it is a rich and fertile garden, ripe with possibilities. If we continue to be willing and joyful gardeners, God will bring the flowers and fruit of new life into being. May it be so with God's blessings on us all.

—Rev. Ken Turley

Dear Fryeburg Friends,

First I want to thank you all for the warm and wonderful welcome you have extended to me and my family. We are comfortably settled into the parsonage and almost halfway through unpacking all the boxes! Most of the essentials are accessible and we are making ourselves at home. The kids are making new friends and the faces—if not the names—of the people in the local stores, library, etc. are becoming familiar. Fryeburg is not the friendly sleepy small town I thought it would be. It is rather a friendly, *active* small town. We went to see the fireworks display at the Fairgrounds, the first of a series of concerts in Bradley Park, the kids have been going

(continued on next page)

Endings & Beginnings

(from previous page)

to the Rec Program (excellent!) and swimming lessons and on my morning excursions I've seen my first deer, fresh moose tracks and had a grouse try to lure me away from her nest, which I let her do, of course. In short, while there are many adjustments to be made, we are all very happy to be here.

The parsonage is wonderful for us and full of history. Among the many boxes of books in the attic, I found an old gospel song book from the 1930s. I've already earmarked a couple of songs for the choir to try out this fall!

Regarding the church, I am at this point still just getting my feet settled on the ground. But so far I am very impressed and pleased with the leadership and level of organization and participation of church members. It is gratifying to see such a caring and committed community of people. And I still have so much to learn.

While I will be bringing my own style and perspective to the position of minister, I am also very interested in maintaining a sense of continuity with traditions from the past. To help me do this, I would like to extend an open invitation to each and every person in the church to communicate to me, in one form or another, the things you would like from your minister and your church. What do you look for in the worship services? What best serves your needs in terms of the minister's office hours and general availability? How do you feel about phone calls and home visits? What is important to you in terms of your minister's presence in the community at large? What else is a concern of yours?

Your comments, concerns, suggestions and ideas will help me to better meet the needs of you, the people who make this congregation what it is. Please do not expect me to meet each and every individual suggestion and request. But when put together, they will help me know how better to structure my time and priorities so that within my limits, and with your help and participation, we can meet the greater part.

So in closing I would like to say, I hope to see you around town, or in church and may the Lord bless our new beginning!

—Rev. Ken Turley

Swedenborgian Church Election Results

Vice President
Phyllis Bosley

Recording Secretary
Betty Yenetchi

Treasurer
John Perry

General Council
(Minister) Rev. Susan Turley-Moore
(Lay Person) Sharon Reddekopp
(Lay Person) Larry Conant

Communications Support Unit
Mona Conner

Education Support Unit
Betty Jean Neuenfeldt

Financial & Physical Resources
Support Unit
Polly Baxter

Growth & Outreach Support Unit
Rev. Carl Yenetchi

Committee on Admission to the Ministry
Rev. Deborah Winter

Nominating Committee
Barbara Penabaker

SSR Board of Trustees
Jerome Poole
John Titus

Information Support Unit
Fred Hille

Pastoral Ministries Support Unit
Rev. Ken Turley

Committee on Admission to the Ministry
(Lay Person) Marilyn Turley

GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT

1996, Pre (June 26) and Post (June 29)

Convention Meetings

General Council Agreed:

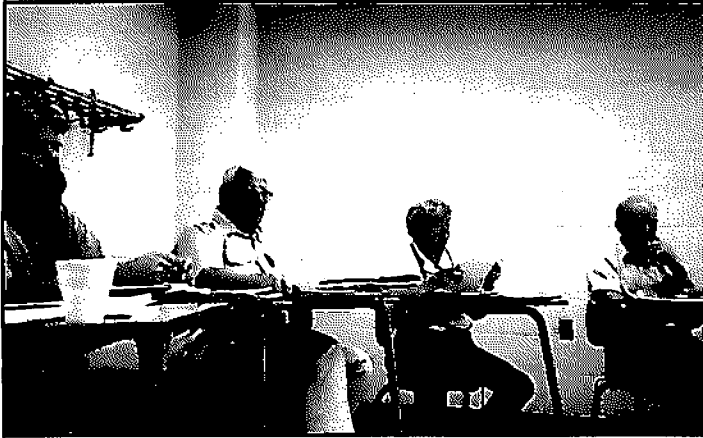
- To recommend to Convention the adoption of the proposed changes to the Constitution, (published in April 1996 *Messenger*).
- To recommend to Convention the adoption of the proposed changes to the bylaws, (published in April 1996 *Messenger*).
- That the Committee of Inquiry (that investigates allegations of clergy misconduct) be under the auspices of General Council and that the committee consist of five (5) members to be appointed by the president of the denomination in consultation with the chair of the Council of Ministers of the Swedenborgian Church. All members shall receive necessary training for carrying out the duties and purposes of this committee. The terms of said members shall be five (5) years rotating annually with a new member appointed each year. The current Council of Ministers' budget line item of \$2,500 for this committee is to be transferred to General Council's operating budget.
- To ratify the Pension Plan resolution: That the action of the incumbent officers of the General Convention in adopting (as of April 25, 1995) amendments to the Defined Benefits Pension Plan and Retirement Plan of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America, as required by the Tax Reform Act of 1986, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1986, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987, the Technical and Miscellaneous Revenue Act of 1988 and the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1989 be, and it hereby is, ratified.
- Unanimously to recommend to Convention to accept the Swedenborgian Church located in Bayside, New York, as a member society.
- That we recognize John Hitchcock, Alice Skinner, Wick Skinner and Sam McBride as members-at-large of the Swedenborgian Church.
- That the president of the denomination once again handle the requests of camps by responding to their specific requests.
- To nominate Bobby Buchanan to the Gray Fund (one abstention).
- To approve the Temenos Agreement as revised and recommended by the Council of Ministers subject to review by our attorney for legal language.
- To create a \$7,000 line item in the GOSU 1996 budget. This line item to be used for an outside professional review of Stonehouse's financial books in accordance with accounting standards and for a professional study of Stonehouse's operation to increase profits.
- To authorize the Executive Committee of the General Council to enter into and execute a lease or sales agreement for the Wayfarers Chapel building and land known as "Wayfarers Center West."

The Ad Hoc Committee on Relations with Foreign Ministries recommends to the General Council that a committee be established (possibly under the auspices of GOSU/PMSU) to maintain contact with foreign ministries and organize fund-raising efforts.

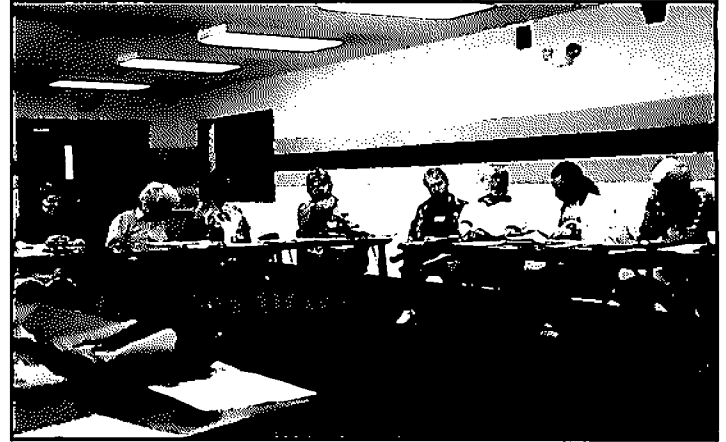
General Council Agreed that General Council will refer this recommendation to Cabinet.

General Council acknowledges with gratitude the transfer of the *Carl Lundberg Charitable Gift Annuity* to the endowment fund. Interest only from this annuity is to be used for the general purposes of the denomination.

—Betty Yenetchi, Secretary



General Council members (l): Skuli Thorhallsson, John Perry, Phyllis Bosley, Larry Conant.



Council of Ministers (l): SSR student Nadine Cotton, Horand Gutfeldt, Paul Martin, Skuli Thorhallsson, Eric Hoffman, Randy Laakko, Robert McCluskey, Paul Zacharias.

Council of Ministers Report

The Council of Ministers met from June 23 to June 25 at Urbana University during our convention session with approximately 40 ministers and 10 guests attending. Our programs included theological discussion on Human Sexuality and God's Created Order led by Dorothea Harvey, John Billings and Carl Yenetchi; a workshop on Strategic Planning for Parish Development by Eric Allison and a workshop on conflict resolution by Gil Rendle from the Alban Institute.

Other items included:

- It was M/S/V to support Lee Woofenden's ordination acknowledging his call to the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church and the Yarmouth Port Society of the New Jerusalem.
- Discussing their Vision of Ministry with SSR students Nadine Cotton and Dr. Jonathan Mitchell.
- Betsy Coffman was granted status as Probationary Lay Leader to serve the Urbana Society of the New Church.
- Approval of the final draft for Procedures for Handling Allegations of Misconduct of Clergy and Lay Leaders.
- Election results:
 - Paul Zacharias, COM Secretary
 - Robert Kirven, COM Executive Committee Member

—Jim Lawrence, Convention

Preacher 1998 (Bob Kirven is convention preacher for 1997.)

- Revision of the Roll of Ministers: It was M/S/V that due to the passing of John Bennett and Phillip Bouvin their names be added to the Roll of Former Ministers; that the "D" be changed to "S" next to Samuel O'Dell Weems' name; and that further information be obtained concerning the financial consequences of placing, by her own request due to health complications, Marlene Laughlin's name to *Retired*.
- Reports were given on the National Council of Churches by Robert McCluskey, the Spiritual Life Committee by Eric Allison; Committee on Worship and Our Daily Bread by John Billings; Mid-Winter institute by Dick Tafel; Temenos and COMSU by Erni Martin; J. Appleseed by Jim Lawrence; Foreign Ministries Committee and Ordination Transfers Procedures by Ron Brugler, and Gladys Wheaton read an inspirational letter from Dr. Joseph Vredenburg of the St. Thomas Church.

*Rev. Susan Turley-Moore,
COM Secretary*

Alliance Elections

The National Alliance of New Church Women elected the following officers for 1996:

President

Lee Dyer, St. Louis

Vice-President

Mary Crenshaw, Detroit

Secretary

Sue Burns, St. Louis

Treasurer

Margaret Krause, Pretty Prairie, Kansas

Mite Box Chair

Barbara Penabaker, Detroit

Publications Chair

Ellen Shaw, Boston

Religious Chair

Ellen Shaw

Round Robin Chair

Merrilee Phinney, Boston

Nominating Committee Chair for 2001

Nan Paget

The Mite Box collection this year is being contributed to the Carole Rienstra Memorial Fund which will be spent for a gazebo in the Chapel Garden at the Church of the Open Word, St. Louis, Missouri.

Why call our newsletter *Mary and Martha*? One commonly referred-to story of these two sisters relates how Mary chooses to stay by Jesus and hear him speak rather than help Martha prepare their meal. Jesus explains to Martha that Mary has chosen the better portion by feeding on his words instead of being concerned with more earthly food. While this story expresses an important spiritual truth, it may lend itself to a false sense of separateness between our human and divine aspects. We are of this earth, and we are of the Divine. I remember clearly at my grandmother's funeral experiencing the truth that my flesh had come from her flesh, that I had been created from her in a very earthy, human, mammalian way. I also experienced the reality of her spirit residing with God in that moment as we stood gathered around her body. The paradox of our lives is that we must learn to live in and honor both of these realities.

This came home to me again recently when I heard author Donald Hall speaking on public radio. He spoke about the writing of his late wife, Jane Kenyon. Jane was a writer and poet who died of leukemia at the age of 47. A year previous to Jane's death Donald himself had been struggling with a life-threatening illness. At that time Jane wrote an inspirational poem entitled, *Notes from the Other Side*. "Notes" is filled with a sense of the grace of heaven. A year later, when facing her own death, Jane

Mary & Martha

a Swedenborgian Women's Newsletter

(EDITOR'S NOTE) Ellen Shaw, a student at the Swedenborg School of Religion, has started a Swedenborgian women's newsletter, with the first issue making its debut at our June convention. She was kindling a great deal of interest in the idea last year at the Alliance meeting, and we are happy to see it in print! The first issue is dedicated to Carole Rienstra, who died of cancer early this year. Ellen's introductory editorial is reprinted here so that readers who may wish to receive *Mary & Martha* can get some idea what it is all about.

Readers who wish to subscribe or contribute material to *Mary & Martha* may contact: Ellen Shaw, 12 Heritage Rd., Hanscom AFB, MA 01731. Phone (617) 274-9664. At this time the newsletter is planned as a quarterly. A donation of \$5.00 for the year is greatly appreciated, but not required.

began her last poem, *The Sick Wife*. In contrast to "Notes" this poem speaks of the bittersweet helplessness of human suffering. Donald said that what surprised Jane most at the end was her unrelenting desire to live. How is it that we can experience such different and seemingly opposite realities? How is it that our humanness can hold a kind of truth that the reality of spirit cannot replicate? And how is it that the experience of our divinity can at times be so utterly unshakable, only to disappear and leave us in a darkness we cannot fathom.

We live that interplay of light and dark, human and divine every day. Sometimes the two come together gently, intermingling with an ease that is smooth and sweet. Other times the two clash in ways that seem unresolvable and leave us shaking and uncertain. And we, as humans, must live

these extremes, and all that falls in between, on this journey into our full nature. It is only in living the integrity of each of these realities, each of these aspects of ourselves, that we can truly become what God intended. So Mary and Martha shake hands. See what glorious things you can create together by respecting and learning from one another's reality. As women, let's allow this newsletter to become a place where we can learn about and honor ourselves and one another as we struggle with and celebrate the Mary and Martha in each of us.

—Ellen Shaw



Min Huei Cheon, SSR student; Nan Paget, San Francisco; Sarah Buteux, friend of Andrew Dole, Boston.

ALLIANCE
LUNCHEON



Ellen Shaw (standing). From left: Pat Sommer, Nadine Cotton, Lee Dyer, Margaret Kraus, Virginia Branston, Phyllis Bosley.

The Church of the Little Grain

The first thing which I want to share with you is that Rev. Edwin Capon and his wife Esther visited our church on April 28 and preached for us. We really had a wonderful worship service together. At that time Rev. Chung Sun Lee and his wife Po Young came from Los Angeles to meet Rev. Capon and Esther. I can see their old friendship in God from their conversations.

Our church is located in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. We have worship services every Sunday and Wednesday, and we study Bible and Swedenborgian doctrine



every Sunday morning and Monday evening. So far our congregation consists of 23 adults and 11 children members. We have one full-time minister (Rev. Young Min Kim), one part-time minister (Rev. Sook Hyun Yoon), one elder (Mr. Wan Soo Kim) and five ordained deacons (Mr. Yeon Soo Kim, Kyung Soo Han, Mrs. Ki Soon Kim, Sang Geum Yoon and Mrs. Hee Ja Song).

I (Young Min) serve the church as a pastor and work for the spiritual growth of church members with Rev. Sook Hyun Yoon. She also has a very important mission for the education of our children, because most of our church members are first generation immigrants, but our children were born in the United States. So we could have some diffi-



ABOVE: Edwin and Esther Capon (center) with church members in Parish Hall. BELOW: Parish House (L to R, back row): Rev. Young M. Kim, Won Soo Kim, Po Young Lee, Esther Kim. (Front row) Rev. Sook Hyun Yoon, Esther Capon, Rev. Edwin Capon, Rev. Chung Sun Lee.

culties between parents and children, which are the gaps of two cultures and two languages. Because of this, our church teaches our Korean native language and culture.

Our congregation started in March 1981. A Presbyterian minister (Rev. Yi G. Kim) led a Bible study group every Sunday. A few months later they decided to found a church, then seven members from the congregation registered the

Presbyterian Church under the name of Mirral Church (means The Church of the Little Grain). After three years, when Rev. Kim finished his study at Union Theological Seminary, he resigned his post. His seminary fellow Rev. Jae H. Lee took over his position for about six months, then he resigned and went back to Korea.

During that time, the church was like a flock of sheep without a shepherd. But God brought his servant to his poor people. When Rev. Chung Sun Lee visited our church, nobody wanted to believe that Rev. Lee would accept being our pastor. Our church was very small and poor, and could not pay him enough money. But Rev. Lee proceeded to his new post in March, 1985. He opened a Monday Bible study group (later Mo-Gwang Haak

Hae) in June, 1985 and little by little showed us a new understanding of the Lord and His Word according to the view of Swedenborgian doctrine.

But the majority of members left the church because they thought Rev. Lee had a different and strange perspective from theirs. At last only two families attended. But Rev. Lee continued to lead a worship service every Sunday and teach the Bible and Swedenborg's doctrine. Usually this study group began at 10 p.m. and finished at one or two a.m., because most of the group

members finished their work late and they lived far away (1.5 hours driving) from Rev. Lee's residence.

This Mo-kwang Haak Hae was held until Rev. Lee's retirement in March 1995. Two new ministers emerged out of this study group, and one elder and several faithful deacons were elected for the church.

At last we proclaimed our church to be Jesus Church (the Swedenborgian Church) in December, 1991.

And on April 28, 1996, Rev. Capon, president of the Swedenborgian Church, visited our church and encouraged us.

We really thank the Lord.

We really thank Rev. Chung Sun Lee and his wife Po Young.

We really appreciate the encouragement of Rev. Capon, his wife Esther and all of our Swedenborgian brothers and sisters, especially Mrs. Esther Capon, who came to us like an angel in spite of her illness. We pray for her.

May God bless you and me on the journey of His Love and Wisdom!

Rev. Young Min Kim, Minister,
The Church of the Little Grain



Passages

Baptisms

Brown—Karen Brown was baptized into the Christian faith April 7, 1996, at the Swedenborgian Church in Portland, Maine, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating.

Farwell—Keith Stafford Farwell, son of Kathy and Roy Farwell, was baptized into the Christian faith July 30, 1995, at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Rachel Rivers officiating.

Harper—Louis Kazimieras Harper, son of Carolyn and Sam Harper, was baptized into the Christian faith April 28, 1996, at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Rachel Rivers officiating. [Historical note: Louis' great-great-great-grandfather was the Rev. George Frederick Stearns (New Church Theological School, 1866), and his great-great-grandfather was the Rev. Alfinus Finney Frost (NCTS 1872-3).]

Confirmations

Bailey, Desouches, Donnell, Frostestad, Jepsen, Schulte—Annette Bailey, Sylvie Desouches, Sally Donnell, Ron Frostestad, Lanette Frostestad, Sylvia Jepsen, Cliff Jepsen, and Sharon Schulte were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church October 22, 1995 at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Drs. Jim Lawrence and Rachel Rivers officiating.

Bidwell, Mc Nerney, Wells—Joy Bidwell, Linda Mc Nerney and Victoria Wells were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church April 9, 1995 at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Drs. Rachel Rivers and Jim Lawrence officiating.

Bridgham and Otteson—Lisa M. Bridgham and Malory A.T. Otteson were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church March 3, 1996, in Portland, Maine, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating.

Cotter—Susan Cotter was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church March 31, 1996, at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Drs. Jim Lawrence and Rachel Rivers officiating.

Uhrmann—Rohna (Sandy) Uhrmann was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church March 31, 1996 at the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Marriages

Cressy and McBurnie—Joan M. Cressy and Brian D. McBurnie were united in marriage June 1, 1996, at the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Robert E. Bossdorf officiating.

Sware and Nicols—Myrna Sware and John Nicols were united in marriage April 13, 1996, at the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating. (Myrna is a daughter of Della and Harry Runka of Edmonton and granddaughter of Florence Sampson).

Deaths

Krahn—Vonda Krahn (nee Ens) entered the spiritual world October 10, 1995, in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. A memorial service was conducted in Saskatoon October 14, 1995, the Rev. David Sonmor officiating.

Prachtler—Elizabeth (Betty) Prachtler, a member for ten years of the Saskatoon, Saskatchewan New Church Society, entered the spiritual world June 16, 1996, due to cancer. A memorial service was conducted June 19, 1996, the Rev. David Sonmor officiating.

Priestnal—Marion Priestnal, wife of the Rev. Clayton Priestnal, entered the spiritual world May 1, 1996, following a three-year illness. A memorial service was conducted July 28, 1996, at the Swedenborgian Church in Yarmouth Port, Mass., the Rev. George McCurdy officiating. Cards and letters may be sent to: The Rev. Clayton Priestnal, Route 6A, Yarmouth Port, MA 02675.

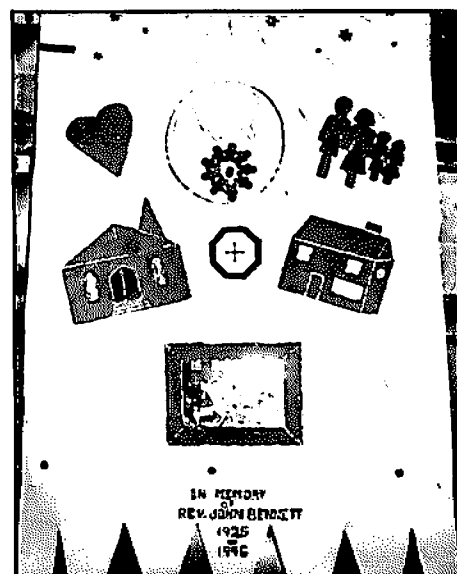
Strauss—Willmer Joel (Bill) Strauss of Dalmeny, Saskatchewan, entered the spiritual world January 4, 1996. A memorial service was conducted January 7, 1996, in Saskatoon, the Rev. David Sonmor officiating.

Wood—Warren E. Wood, long-time friend of the LaPorte New Church (Swedenborgian) in LaPorte, Indiana, entered the spiritual world June 4, 1996. A memorial service was conducted June 7, 1996, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

Correction:

The notice in "Passages" of Mary Hodges' memorial service in the *May Messenger*, refers to Eldon Smith as a lay minister. The correct term is *authorized lay leader*. We appreciate this being brought to our attention.

(Passages continued on page 119)



Pawnee Rock Banner

In Loving Memory Rev. John Bennett

The move that the Rev. John Bennett and Muriel Bennett made from Edmonton, Alberta to Pawnee Rock, Kansas was not only a long move geographically, but also a move into the hearts of Kansas people. Friendships were quickly formed as they participated in community activities. John's message from the pulpit took us into the application of our New Church teachings to the moral and ethical issues of our time. I counted on John for regular contributions to the *Plains Banner*. In the January 1991 issue he wrote, "The 1990s are going to demand great things from the New Church. Here in the U.S.A. we have to play a major part in ensuring not only that we maintain the church but that we do all in our power to stimulate the acceptance of the teachings of the church. We could be entering some of the most challenging years in the history of the church. People are needing and looking for help in order to face up to the unhappy state of the world. They should be aware, through the activities of all who accept the teachings of the church, that help is there and being offered willingly to them by the Lord through His church."

I am confident that we now have John working with us from the 'other side' to help the Lord in the accomplishment of His purpose. John's

(Continued on page 119)

John Bennett Memorial (Continued from page 118)

sense of humor, his open, willing interest in our youth, his steadfast faith in the goodness of the Lord brought to all of us strong bonds of connectedness. His contributions to the life of the church in Kansas will stretch far beyond his stay of five years. All of us are grateful for the time we had with both John and Muriel.

Our prayers of love and support will always accompany Muriel and her family wherever life now leads them.

Rev. Eric Zacharias
Pretty Prairie, Kansas

Muriel Bennett and family would like to thank those who called and sent cards, letters, flowers. They are very much appreciated. It is most comforting to feel the love and support and prayers of so many people.

Many thanks to Rev. Erwin Reddekopp who conducted the memorial service and Rev. Ron Brugler who traveled a long way to represent the clergy. Thanks also to Rev. Eric Allison who kindly visited John while he and Kathy were here on holiday. God bless you all.

—Muriel

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.

Ministerial Standards Only Half the Story

Dear Editor:

Thank you for a wonderfully helpful issue (June, 1996 *Messenger*, p. 91). But with regard to the page on ministerial standards—it separates us. How about a set of standards to qualify us for membership in the congregation? Our ministers aren't going to go to heaven for us, are they?

Ella Baker
Lexington, Virginia

WANTED

Swedenborg scholar wants to acquire either individual copies other than volume one, or a set of Swedenborg's *Spiritual Diary*. Please contact Ben Hitchner, 630 Glen Lake Blvd., Pitman, NJ 08071 or call 609-589-5260.

Passages

(Continued from page 118)

Change of Address:

Muriel Bennett's address has been changed to: 6990 Pleasant Valley Rd., Vernon, BC, Canada, V1B 3R5. She has not moved; the post office has changed the mailing address.

As of July 1, Betsy Young moved from Palos Verdes Estates, California and is living at the home of her middle son, Sewall, and his family in Olympia, Washington. Her new address is: 4618 Village Court, S.E., Olympia, WA 98501

Rev. Edwin Capon, P.O. Box 606, 152 Fisher Street, Millville, MA 01529

Rev. Ken and Laurie Turley, 4 Oxford St., Fryeburg, ME 04031

Important Church Calendar Dates

October 10-13
November 9
November 8-9
November 20-22
November 22-24

EdSU
Investment Committee
Wayfarers Chapel Board of Trustees
C.A.M.
General Council

LaPorte
Temenos
Wayfarers Chapel
Newton, MA
Newton, MA

Letter from the Editor:

The Communications Support Unit and *The Messenger* want to take this opportunity to thank all those who responded to last year's *Messenger* Fund Appeal.



Donations and subscriptions for 1995 and 1996 thus far total over \$7000, including a very generous gift from the Los Angeles Society. Over one third of the sums donated were allocated to the *Messenger* Endowment Fund, which now has a current worth of nearly \$88,000. As we build up *The Messenger's* endowment, our church's publication can eventually become financially independent.

Traditionally, *The Messenger* has been given at no charge to all members of the Swedenborgian Church—quite a gift, isn't it? Ten free informative newsletters that offer timely lay and ministerial views on our church issues, plus inspirational Swedenborgian insights to help each of us on our spiritual journey.

There is no plan to charge readers for their ten issues, but the cost to the church is approximately \$30 for each yearly subscription. If you feel that *The Messenger* is worth \$30 a year to you, perhaps you would volunteer to defray some of the publication's costs, as suggested in *The Messenger* Readers Survey (1993-1994). (You may recall that *The Messenger* ranked high in priorities in that survey!)

Your support and love for your church's *Messenger* are sincerely appreciated, and again, many thanks to those of you who made contributions to *The Messenger* in the past.

Blessings, Patte LeVan

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

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

Your Name _____

Your Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

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

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.

Rebuilding Firebombed Black Churches

A few weeks prior to our convention in Urbana, Ohio, NCC delegate Robert McCluskey sent us information calling our attention to the bombings, arson and acts of vandalism against black churches that have been going on for several years. At least 57 black and interracial churches have been bombed, burned or vandalized during the past six years in more than a dozen states. According to the NCC bulletin, twenty-five of these acts have occurred during the first five months of 1996 alone, and new attacks are being reported weekly.

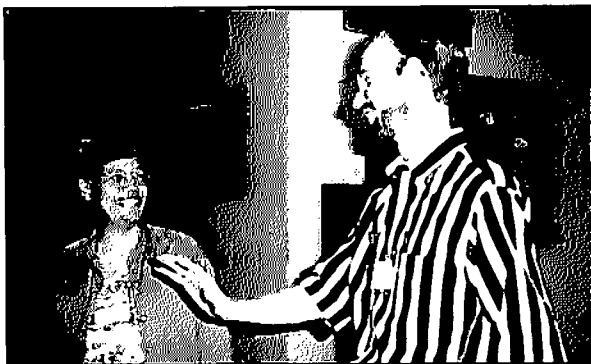
Many of the victimized parishes are black Baptist churches that have been deeply committed to serving congregations and communities in areas of economic development, day care and housing.

The NCC is leading a campaign to end these crimes against churches and to restore the houses of worship that have been destroyed or damaged.

Church World Service has issued a special appeal for \$1 million to support the program of the NCC National Ministries Unit task force on the crimes.

At a healing service conducted at the Urbana church during convention on June 28, it was announced that our plate collection that evening would be donated to Church World Service to aid in the rebuilding of the affected churches. We're pleased to announce that this special collection amounted to \$1,240.

Anyone wishing to aid this cause may send contributions to CWS appeal #76393, Church World Service, P.O. Box 968, Elkhart, IN 46515. (CWS uses 100 percent of all denominational contributions for disaster relief and recovery programs).



Kit Billings chats with Gladys Wheaton following the



Healing service at Urbana church.

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The Messenger
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