
THE MESSENGER

Monthly Publication, Swedenborgian Church of North America

April 1997

Touching Spirit: A Journey of Healing and Personal Resurrection Elizabeth K. Stratton, M.S. © 1996, Simon & Schuster

Anatomy of the Spirit: The Seven Stages of Power and Healing Caroline Myss, Ph.D. © 1996, Harmony Books, Crown Publishers

Reviews by Mona Conner

One weekend last Fall, Pamela Selensky and I, both members of the New York Swedenborgian Church, treated ourselves to two very special lectures in Manhattan about healing and spirituality. The first was *Touching Spirit*, by Elizabeth Stratton, at the New York Open Center. The second, by Carolyn Myss, was the premiere lecture on her new book, *Anatomy of the Spirit*, at the Ethical Cultural Society.

Last summer Pamela had already given me an advance copy of a book she was reading, *Anatomy of the Spirit*, out of our mutual interest in the subject of healing as it relates to spirit. By October, we had each also purchased Elizabeth Stratton's book, *Touching Spirit*. Having read all, or portions of both books by 'lecture weekend,' we anticipated quite a watershed experience, and these two wonderful spiritual teachers did not disappoint us.

Stratton and Myss (pronounced 'mace'), are fascinating in the ways that they both contrast and connect with one another philosophically, and experientially. The simultaneous publication of their books says a great deal about the current boost of enthusiasm for the field of energy medicine. There is an increasing willingness to unite the medical and spiritual realms in ways that validate spirit as the essential home within which our physical bodies abide. These two books also underscore the fact that women are now bringing a new level of sensitivity, discipline, and respectability to this burgeoning field.

Elizabeth Stratton's work as a miraculous and compassionate healer, pastoral counselor, and teacher, spans two decades, and she has been a key figure in bringing the laying-on-of-hands back into churches. She speaks annually during Lent at Marble Collegiate Church in NYC, and leads laying-on-of-hands services along with the ministers. She has spoken at Harvard Divinity School, and recently taught 650 members of the clergy how to do laying-on-of-hands at an annual convention of the Catholic Health Association.

In *Touching Spirit* she describes the laying-on-of-hands as "a simple way to touch the living presence of God within each person (which) does not depend on

(Continued on page 52)

Prayer From Anatomy of the Spirit

God be in my head and in my understanding
God be in my eyes and in my looking
God be in my mouth and in my speaking
God be in my tongue and in my tasting
God be in my lips and in my greeting

God be in my nose and in my smelling/inhaling
God be in my ears and in my hearing
God be in my neck and in my humbling
God be in my shoulders and in my bearing
God be in my back and in my standing

God be in my arms and in my reaching/receiving
God be in my hands and in my working
God be in my legs and in my walking
God be in my feet and in my grounding
God be in my joints and in my relating

God be in my guts and in my feeling
God be in my bowels and in my forgiving
God be in my loins and in my striving
God be in my lungs and in my breathing
God be in my heart and in my loving

God be in my skin and in my touching
God be in my flesh and in my paining/pining
God be in my blood and in my living
God be in my bones and in my dying
God be at my end and at my reviving



Photo © Mona Conner 1996

"In physical touch, the Divine gets taken out of the realm of disembodied Spirit, and becomes manifest. Spirit touches us, we touch Spirit. *Touching Spirit*." (p. 230, *Touching Spirit*)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Mysticism Series #6
- A New New Church
- Field Education Workshop
- Nomination Committee Report

Choices

I was immersed in the usual routine of meeting yet another deadline and feeling tired, flat, and uninspired when I suddenly decided to stop everything and take myself on an Artist's Date. You may recall my editorial about *The Artist's Way*, written last year. Cameron states that one of the ways to cultivate and nurture your inner artist, in addition to writing the three "morning pages" each day, is to take yourself out on an Artist's Date once a week—by yourself. "As artists," Cameron says, "we must learn to be *self-nourishing*. We must become alert enough to consciously replenish our creative resources as we draw on them—to restock the trout pond, so to speak. I call this process *filling the well*."

So I dropped what I was doing and headed off by myself to see the film, *Rosewood*. I've felt a need to see the film since I first read about it. It was wonderfully freeing to drive along for an hour on a sunny Tuesday afternoon, then enter the darkened theater like some lone conspirator. Fewer than a dozen people were scattered throughout. I wondered briefly why they had chosen this movie over the seven others offered. Whatever their reasons for being there, I felt a sort of kinship with them.

Rosewood is based on the true story of a black community in Rosewood, Florida, that was massacred in 1922. The trouble begins when a young married white woman is severely beaten by a white man she's been seeing, and in order not to be found out by her husband, she claims a black man broke in and abused her. This coincides with a rumor that a black man has escaped from a chain gang and is in the vicinity. At the same time, a black stranger, who turns out to be a decorated World War I veteran, (played by Ving Rhames) has ridden into town planning to get his horse shod and move on. Impressed by the family of a black music teacher who extends their hospitality to him, he is persuaded to see *Rosewood* as a place

where a black person can settle down, own property, and live respectably.

There is, of course, a core of white males who are itching to lynch, and the white woman's claim is all it takes to set them off. The sheriff doesn't really believe her, but he fails to stand up to her lie, and in fact proves to be ineffectual at every turn. As the fear and violent incidents mount, we see a man who knows what is right but doesn't have the guts to get behind it. The white store owner (played by Jon Voight in what I consider one of the finest performances of his career) is trying to keep peace, be fair, and play it safe. It can't be done.

It is the classic struggle of the soul, with each involved adult called upon many times throughout the escalating horror to make choices for what is humane and moral, or to go along with prevailing attitudes. Even the attitude of the white "liberals" of that day was, live and let live, but in any ultimate confrontation, it wasn't worth risking your community status and possessions to save a black person's skin—and certainly not your family or your life.

I came away with a renewed sense of how infectious is the courage and truth that we bring to any given moment of our lives—if it is expressed with passion and conviction, it is more infectious than fear, because most of us in our souls long for truth. Near the end of the film, the adolescent son of one of the chief instigators of the lynchings walks out on his father, courageously turning his back on all that his father stands for, knowing in his heart that it is wrong. Voight's character finally musters the courage to act heroically, but it is his wife's courage that shames him into facing the fact that he can't continue half measures, or playing it safe; he must risk everything and go the distance.

At the end of the film, we are told that in 1993, the Florida House of Representatives voted that reparations be paid to the descendants of the survivors of the massacre. The decision was based on the testimonies of the descendants, including the sworn testimony of one white survi-

vor. The official town records had stated that six blacks and two white persons died; the actual count was between 40 and 150 killed, most of them African-Americans. The film was made with the cooperation and input of these descendants.

As I sat alone in tears in the empty theater, watching the credits roll, I discovered my younger daughter's name listed as the assistant music editor on the film. She had been working a terrible schedule on two films prior to Christmas, and had little time to discuss what she was doing. She may have mentioned titles, but I never made the connection. Ironically, she called me right after I got home. I told her she could certainly be proud of being a part of such a fine film. "I know it was good," she said, "but I never got to see the whole thing, I was stuck in a hopeless traffic jam the night of the preview and never made it to the theater, so I've only seen bits and pieces of it."

I suggested she might choose to take herself on an Artist's Date. ❖

Patte LeVan

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Eckhart, Swedenborg and Heavenly Joy

Jonathan Mitchell

(This is the sixth in the series Swedenborg Meets the Mystics presented by faculty and students at the Swedenborg School of Religion).

Heavenly joy. The communion of saints. The one idea contains the other—if, as Swedenborg taught, God's purpose in creation is a heaven from the human race. For heaven is grounded upon that love from which one feels the joy of another as joy in oneself.¹ Thus the sharing of joy is at the heart of our spiritual paths; it is among the lessons we are here to learn.

Read then what Meister Eckhart, the fourteenth century "preacher, spiritual master, and leader of souls" has to say about the sharing of joy:

If you love the angels' happiness as much as your own, and if you love our Lady's happiness equally as your own, then you enjoy the same happiness, quite as properly as she does; it is your own as it is her own. Therefore it is said in the book of wisdom: "He has made him equal to the saints." (Sirach² 45:2)³

That equality, that shared happiness is what makes a "communion" of saints into a heaven, as Eckhart details:

Within the body all parts of the body are so united that the eye belongs to the foot, and the foot to the eye. If the foot could speak, it would say that the eye in the hand is *more* the foot's than if it were in the foot, and the eye would make the same comment. In the same way, I believe that all the grace in Mary belongs more, and in a more characteristic way, to an angel and is more in this angel—than if that grace were in the angel or in the saints. For everything that Mary has, a saint has also, and it is more the saint's, and the grace of Mary pleases the saint more than if it were within himself or herself. . . .

And so I say that whatever one person has there, another has too. And the first person has it not as something coming from the other or as something within the other but as rather something within himself or herself. This takes place in such a fashion that the grace within the

first person is also completely within the other, exactly as if it were one's own grace. This is also the way the spirit is within the Spirit.⁴

To be sure, this is not entirely something that Swedenborg might have said. As a medieval Catholic, Eckhart reveres Mary, and takes her as a model for our own spirituality. This was not possible, at least to the same degree, within Swedenborg's Lutheran background. Yet the description of heavenly joy is the same. For instance, in the *Arcana Coelestia* 2057 we read:

While emphasizing the spiritual centrality of joy, Eckhart and Swedenborg are both sensitive as well to all that is sorrowful or painful in human experience.

Mutual love in heaven consists of the fact that they love the neighbor more than themselves . . . and hence it is that the happiness of all are communicated to each one, and those of each one to all. Consequently the heavenly form is such that every one is a center of communications and consequently of happiness, from all; and this in accordance with all the differences of mutual love. And because those who are in that love perceive the highest happiness in being able to communicate to others that which flows into them—from the heart—the communication becomes perpetual and eternal. Thus as the Lord's kingdom increases, so the happiness of each angel increases.

Was Eckhart, in holding up his image of the "communion of saints," merely offering a "beatific vision" in which one is "wholly lost in wonder at the beauty of the Divine"?⁵ Well, it is

hard to say. But his metaphorical use of the parts of the body gives us an opening to read him in the light of Swedenborg's doctrine of uses. The sharing of grace and joy in heaven is grounded in mutual service of the same sort that eye and foot perform for each other.

While emphasizing the spiritual centrality of joy, Eckhart and Swedenborg are both sensitive as well to all that is sorrowful or painful in human experience. They are particularly sensitive to that suffering which so often seems a part of the spiritual path itself, the pain of renouncing worldliness and selfish love, the pain of letting go and trusting God. Swedenborg in the opening chapters of the *Arcana Coelestia* describes joy and tranquility as the last stage of regeneration. But he also acknowledges that seldom are even the early stages of the process reached "without temptation, misfortune, or sorrow." In fact Swedenborg tends to characterize the spiritual journey in warrior terms—as combat, as an inner war between conflicting impulses.

Eckhart uses a very different metaphor:

So long as you have sorrow in your heart for anything, even for sin, your child will not be born. Do you have sorrow in your heart? Then you are not yet a "mother", you are rather still in the act of bearing a child and close to the time of birth. But it is completely born when a person feels no sorrow in his or her heart.⁶

Such an image acknowledges the reality of pain but sees it as a prelude to a greater joy. Matthew Fox speculates that Eckhart learned this imagery of becoming a mother, and giving birth from the religious communities of women whom he served as preacher and spiritual director.⁷

It was a turning point in my own spiritual journey several years ago when I picked up a copy of *Breakthrough*, a collection of Eckhart's sermons with commentary by Matthew Fox. My heart soared with a joy

(Continued on page 61)

(Continued from Cover)

complicated theology, (or) doctrine, . . . It is the reality of love in action. It is the feminine component of religion."² She speaks of a grass roots revolution in both churches and hospitals (yes, she has also spoken to hospital administrators in several parts of the country, explaining how "spiritual healing integrates into the medical model"³).

Carolyn Myss is a medical intuitive with a theological degree. In *Anatomy of the Spirit* she correlates three significant 'sevens' to seven parts of our physical body. The *seven chakras* of eastern traditions correspond to *seven parts of the Jewish Kabbalah*, or "Tree of Life" (four of the ten branches becoming corresponding 'left-and-right' or 'yin-and-yang' pairs, creating a corresponding seven), and also to *seven sacraments* found in Christianity: Baptism, Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, Confession, Ordination, and Extreme Unction. By meditating on the symbolic meaning of these three levels in seven areas of our body, we can learn to intuit areas of dis-ease, even before an illness develops. She calls this ability "symbolic sight."

Regardless of the specific differences of the three religious traditions she draws upon, Swedenborgians may find themselves a bit bedazzled by such beautiful and enthusiastic application of the concept of correspondence. My heart beat faster during her lecture as she pointed out to the large audience the endless spiritual correspondence inherent in certain key numbers: the Seven Days of Creation are encoded in our bodies too. Twelve represents the twelve signs of the zodiac, the twelve disciples, the twelve tribes of Israel, and so on.

Stratton, Myss, and Swedenborg share in common a conviction which is still not as popular as it must be for true regeneration to take place: that spiritual growth at the personal level can be a gut-wrenching experience—that it requires us to call upon levels of humility, courage, and discipline we did not know we would receive spiritual assistance with, when we become willing to face the inner demons head on. Swedenborg's

'temptation combats' become what Elizabeth Stratton refers to as her "Burning roots"—her 'Dark Eye.'

During her gritty, ground-zero dialogue with the audience at the Ethical Cultural society, Carolyn asked us, "Would you like to know what your angel's relationship to you is really like?" She speculates that up until the point when we ask God for help—when we become really sincere about wanting to grow spiritually,—our angel has been "watching CNN." Now our angel, having been officially petitioned by us, springs into action, notepad and pen in hand. (Carolyn is now your angel talking with you):

"Okay, you've just outgrown your chosen career. Would you like to quit your job voluntarily, or shall I arrange it for you?"

(and, still taking notes.):

"Oh, and I almost forgot, for some time now, your marriage has been over. Do you plan to get a divorce, or do you want me to make that happen?"

In an article for *Common Boundary* called "Plugging In," Carolyn Myss describes herself as 'laughing while on

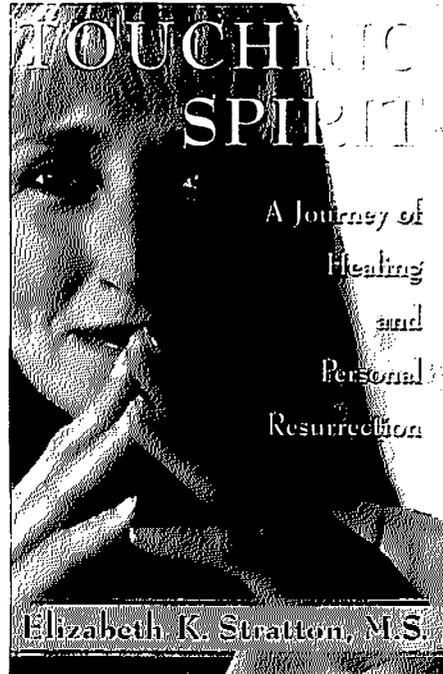
her knees.' If her sense of humor is a bit irreverent, she never allows it to get in the way of her humility.⁴ Her humor is a coping mechanism, a way of objectifying the fearsome experience spiritual healing can be.

Another common thread among Stratton, Myss, and Swedenborg: their encounters with spiritual growth seemed to have been thrust upon them in ways that threw them completely off their chosen path, and asked them to walk with blind faith in another direction. ("Would you like to change your career, or shall I arrange it for you?")

In each of their lives, there was a point of no turning back. Stratton's ability to sense other people's pain surfaced dramatically one day as she sat listening to a lecture, and experienced pain so severe it sent her out of the lecture room and flat on her back, trembling, into an altered state she could not comprehend. She decided to surrender to whatever was happening to her. Later she found out that her symptoms of pain mirrored exactly the lecturer's recent experience of a fractured rib.

Soon after this her hands became warm in the presence of illness, and she discovered she had healing abilities. She acquired a degree in comparative religion, quit her job in a New York City museum, and began a full-time practice in spiritual healing.

Fifteen years ago Carolyn Myss describes herself as a newspaper reporter who decided to get a master's degree in theology and start a New Age book-publishing company,



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(Continued on page 53)

(Continued from page 52)

with several partners, called Stillpoint. Personally, she had an aversion to New Age matters, chain-smoked, and drank too much coffee. Yet on the business level she was immersed in books about alternative healing methods. (She was cooperating a little; but it looked as though her angel were going to have to arrange some of this!)

Spontaneously, over a period of several months, her perceptual abilities expanded, and she found she could intuit illness in others in a way that was startlingly accurate. When word got out that she had this ability, people began making appointments at Stillpoint to see her. Still feeling ambivalent and somewhat detached about her new skill, her day-of-no-turning-back nonetheless arrived. She found herself confronted by a woman with terminal cancer who asked her "Why is this happening to me?"

Myss describes that something Divine overtook her and responded *through her*, deeply, kindly, thoroughly to the woman, despite the fact that at that moment she had just lost all patience with what seemed completely beyond her Stillpoint, self-fashioned job description. She walked trembling into the open field around Stillpoint after this experience, and "agreed to cooperate with this intuitive ability, no matter the outcome."⁵ She speculates, "I suspect that I became extremely intuitive as a consequence of my curiosity about spiritual matters, combined with a deep frustration I felt when my life didn't unfold according to (my) plan."⁶

As a medical intuitive she has worked with a 93% accuracy rate—10% better than conventional medicine, although she relies on her partner, Norman Shealey, M.D., to offer follow-up testing and actual medical advice.

There is another belief which Swedenborg, Stratton, and Myss share: the ultimate responsibility for healing ourselves, for regeneration, is in our own hands, (and the Lord's) more than most of us understand. Swedenborg emphasizes our free will in the matter of regeneration; Myss puts forth the principle that we alone can help ourselves heal; Stratton agrees that healing is not about empowering someone else to do the work for us.

Both women have shifted their original focus from using their intuitive skills with healing, to studying their own process in order to teach it to others. Both of them feel that

we all possess the ability to intuit our own illnesses and to heal ourselves with our own mind, heart, and hands. The abilities that spontaneously developed in Stratton and Myss are the same abilities we can all learn to develop within ourselves. Are we willing to try?

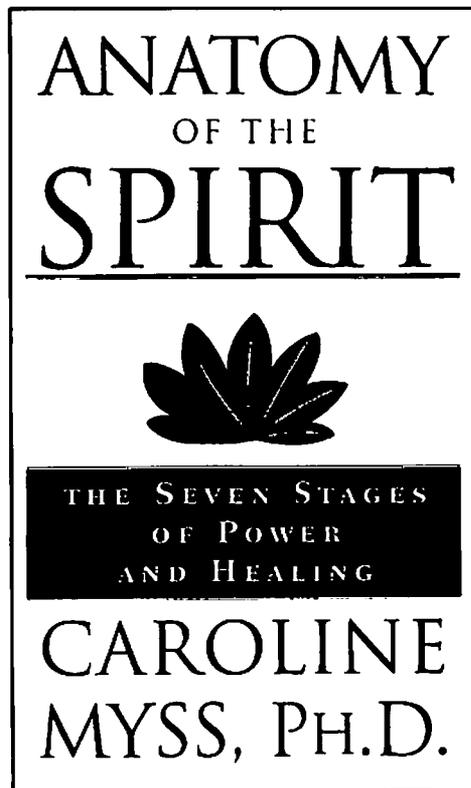
Stratton founded a three-year "Touching Spirit" (T) training program in spiritual healing and the laying-on-of-hands. Myss had become completely exhausted from doing hundreds of medical readings at conferences and workshops, when it occurred to her that she could serve others better by teaching them how to do it for themselves. Now she no longer diagnoses, but teaches and writes on the subject full time.

During the 'Touching Spirit' lecture, all eighty-or-so of us experienced laying-on-of-hands healing, with Elizabeth Stratton guiding us in a meditation, and with the help of four of her trained assistants. For me, the experience was transformative, and surprisingly deep. At the book-signing afterward, I asked her if she teaches a particular method like Reiki, especially since her spiritual influences include Tibetan Buddhism, where Reiki originates. She knows of Reiki, but has not explored it, and has taught more from her intuition and the direct experience of working with healing energy.

To meet her, and to listen to her lecture, is to float upon the sound of her voice and experience a great feeling of inner peace. I took no notes except in my heart.

An afternoon with Carolyn Myss lecturing was more like an especially good class with your favorite college professor. I belly-laughed, and took lots of notes, and appreciated the depth of her perception about spiritual matters. Like Swedenborg, she perceives Jesus Christ as a role model who was showing us the Way through his death and resurrection about 'what lies ahead of us; not what has been done *for* us.'⁷ She pointed out that we have one foot in the present age and one foot in the age about to come. The Aquarian Age is one of holographic thought. We feel this approaching, she points out, by wanting all our communications to be instantaneous; simultaneous—and for healing to be that way too!

Their books reflect their personalities and their gifts to us. If there is any shortcoming in *Touching Spirit*, it has to do with the way words are inadequate to describe the levels of spiritual joy which Stratton explores and experiences. Misunderstood, she may sound trivial, perhaps even a little self-indulgent. You might "have to be there." More concrete, however, is an appendix of healing meditations, which she has created for readers to try at the end of her book. Included are her instructions for how to do the laying-on-of-hands.



(Continued on page 57)

Religion as Discovery

Horand Gutfeldt

A new book by Wilson Van Dusen *Returning to the Source*¹ leads to entirely new ways of understanding religion and its experience. This is a courageous guide to achieve and identify mystical states of a Divine Presence, emphasizing many phases that are unknown or ignored or even denounced in our present culture.

A great many ways can lead to God, and this is symbolized by the heavenly Jerusalem with twelve gates, three in every one of the four directions. Many of the old paths have become abused or barred in countless different ways, so for anyone seeking new dimensions of consciousness, surprising and fascinating new avenues are outlined here. A unique feature is that everything is not only explained in theory, but from most immediate personal experience. The descriptions are in everyday language, and yet containing profound and far-reaching implications, creating in the reader a desire to experiment and search in similar directions on his own.

However, a considerable load of ballast will have to be left behind. Many traditional images of what God is like, what religion itself is supposed to be, most previous concepts of church and worship—may need to be thrown overboard. It takes a certain amount of boldness to follow the path that the author indicates. I personally would emphasize more the doing, the following and applying the Sermon on the Mount within our limitations as the main way to build our house upon a solid foundation.

An understanding of religion that focuses upon a complex of duties, of obligations and rules, or any claim "This is the only right way" would point in the opposite direction of the way that is opened up in the pages of this volume. Van Dusen gently opens a door and says: Try these new ways yourself, and you will see and feel what is right for your own individual way to God. This has in many places the ring of celestial states that are dominated by love, usefulness, and unconditional acceptance.

Anyone who will seek in the directions indicated, will find avenues of surprises—and the discovery that there are a number of others who in the past have taken some of these channels and have come to unexpected and never-dreamt-of experiences in themselves and in others.

Mysticism is defined as "...immediate experience of oneness with Ultimate Reality" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*², which also adds "Both those who have known mystical experience and those who have studied it are agreed that the mystical vision is ineffable." Yet, a direction of search and certain approaches can be described, and we can follow the recommendations given by Van Dusen without excruciating problems or

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exercise. It used to be thought that mystic states of ecstasy could only be reached if one renounces the world and all its pleasures, withdrawing into seclusion and devoting oneself to this quest with absolute dedication. Now, in an age of expanding consciousness, new possibilities open increasingly to everyone, yet it takes a little guidance and willingness to follow. Van Dusen points to a great many steps that everyone can take to gain immediate experience of worlds within worlds of internal experience and wonder, as it has been indicated by Swedenborg and a number of other mystics.

When we try to explain, to define, to grasp with our intellect alone, we will always fall short. To approach the Most High with our feelings, with our

affection or with a searching tender love first can lead us ahead much faster. No one can bring another to this experience; everyone has to discover it anew for himself or herself. We can and should be open to hear from those who have gone ahead in a related direction, but ultimately we have to be open to be led in our personal way, according to our unique background and experience. This opens up perhaps a new and different attitude towards Swedenborg and his revelations. This heritage can be understood as roadsigns to follow, as a call to apply all recommendations as guides to our own individual growth and understanding, to unique insights and adventures. Finding out what is true and right becomes exciting in discovering new horizons of expanding meaning for our entire existence. Here are ways to recognize the truth in all religions, the dimensions of application and love, an understanding that will explode the limitations of our own culture and our own senses.

This does not come cheap and without responsibilities. A certain readiness is needed to let go of the ego and its concerns and fears, and yet this is shown to be easy as shedding fetters that were only limiting experience. Periods of temptation and dryness cannot be avoided. There are also certain caveats, a number of shoals and blind alleys to avoid in charting the course. Not experience alone, no new dimensions of consciousness can ever fulfill the real needs of our soul by themselves. As exciting, delightful and almost unfathomable as many of these adventures may be: Unless there is a readiness to follow through, to do something about it, to be guided in the direction of unique usefulness, much of this will only lead to profound emptiness, depression and disillusionment. This is made clear in many ways, and it appears as a risk to take—but in reality it is the promise to even greater uplift and infinitely wider ranges of possibilities.

I felt greatly enriched by much of what I read, and am on my way to explore a lot further.

Coming from a culture that mainly

(Continued on page 57)

TO THE EDITOR

OPINION

Dear Editor,

I would like to comment on [some of] the letters that I've read regarding the Rev. Dr. James Lawrence's article, "Risking on the Side of Compassion."

As a young adult in the church I often question my religion: Am I getting fulfilled? Are there people with the same views as me? After reading these letters, I began the questioning all over again.

Almost everyone in our church hopes for growth and outreach, but when that actually happens people get frightened. I feel our church is scared of change. We get comfortable in our ruts and it's hard to get out of them. I think that's why when our ministers take a stand for something so many people put up a fight. We are trying to grow and prosper as a church, yet we shut our doors to so many people because they are different. Why?

Where is the love, compassion, and understanding that we pride ourselves on? It's so easy for people to talk about it in the pulpit or to listen to while sitting in a pew. What about practicing it?

Jesus said, "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." (John 13:34). This is such a simple statement but how many of us actually practice it? I wonder.

Jesus stated in Matthew 7:12, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matthew 7:1-5).

That's why I'm confused about my religion as a young adult in the

Swedenborgian Church. I question my religion more and more lately. I used to just accept my religion. I can't do that now reading about how many people instantly judge one another and don't even bother to find out about the person. I ask how can we grow in the next century if all we do is condemn each other for who and what we are. If God created us in her or his image and vision, then why is it so hard for us God-like creatures to love and accept one another?

So I repeat Rev. Lawrence's plea: Let's take risks on the side of compassion.

Jenn Tafel
Urbana University
Urbana, Ohio



To the Editor:

Concerning, the Rev. Dr. James Lawrence's article "Risking on the Side of Compassion" November 1996 *Messenger*:

Although not formally a New Churchman, I am a reader of Swedenborg and the Bible. In response to your reader's request to find pro-gay passages in the Bible, I suggest re-reading the story of Jonathan and David. There have been many Scripture scholars who view their relationship as a homosexual love affair, e.g. the Rev. Tom Horner: *Jonathan Loved David*, [Cf. I Sam. 18:1-4, 20:30-31, 41-42; 2 Sam, 1:26]. Although Saul considered his son Jonathan the "son of a perverse rebellious woman" (the reading "you pervert" is possible) because of "choosing" David to his own "confusion", God favored this "covenant."

God spends much of the Old Testament changing his mind, "repenting" of his harsh judgments. He is the author of science and nature and Scripture, but can make exceptions to his own rules. Yahweh is the king-emperor of the universe; the Bible—marred by centuries of human corruption—is but yet a "thing," a tool, not the Deity itself. One would have thought that the work of Philo, Origen, Luther, and Swedenborg, in resisting a slavishly literal reading of Scripture would have had more impact on *Messenger* readers.

My own monogamous gay "marriage" of 13 years is based upon "love of person" not "love of pelvis." Has a genetic "variation" so widespread in the animal kingdom really damned such lovers of God-in-Christ as Jerome, Augustine, Michaelangelo, Leonardo, Erasmus, Alexander Hamilton, Dag Hammarskjold, and Tom Dooley to hell? Saint Paul was simply—wrong. I can say it; Swedenborg often did. Thank you for the ongoing discussion of this topic.

Hunter J. Jones
Montclair, New Jersey



Swedenborg's Active Mysticism

Dear Editor,

The wonderful article by the Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein in the January *Messenger* brings to mind a method I use for spiritual living. If a person begins each day with prayer to the Lord and reading in His holy word, then He gives that person whatever is needed for his or her life and sends His angels to be with that person. In this way we can always be attempting to express the Divine in our actions.

I have been retired for six years and now have more time to focus on living creatively. For example, spending time with grandchildren and other loved ones, writing letters, reading, doing arts and crafts, and enjoying natural surroundings. The time I spend with others I believe to be of richer quality than when I was employed.

But of course, one does not have to be retired to practice this "spiritual" living; I call it "dwelling in the house of the Lord." Once it is begun, I believe a person will soon realize a strong desire to establish it because of the wonderful feeling of peace it brings and they will always find the time to start their day by going to the source of all life.

I am sure this is not anything new, but simply my own version of something similar to practical mysticism.

Paul R. Hammond
Springville, California



The Training of Field Education Supervisors

Carl Yenetchi



Field Education Supervision Workshop, Leesburg, Florida, January 27-31, 1997, jointly sponsored by SSR and the Council of Ministers. BACK ROW: Erni Martin, Sue Turley-Moore, Ken Turley, Paul Zacharias, Randy Laakko, Eric Allison, F. Bob Tafel, Mary Kay Klein, Dick Tafel, Kit Billings, Carl Yenetchi, Eric Hoffman, Julieanne Hallman (Leader), George Sinclair (Leader). FRONT ROW: John Billings, Skuli Thorhallsson, Wilma Wake, Jim Lawrence, Ron Brugler, Reneé Billings

The NFL's New England *Patriots*, when they were still the AFL's Boston *Patriots*, played their home games in Fenway Park during the 1963 and 1964 seasons. This was the greatest mistake in the franchise's history, because they were there and then tainted by the curse of Babe Ruth which has haunted the *Red Sox* and every other team that has ever called Fenway Park home since the Red Sox traded the Sultan of Swat to the *Yankees*.

It was Super Bowl Sunday [January 26, 1997] and I was traveling with the Revs. Ron Brugler, Paul Zacharias and John Billings from the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers. We were meeting at Swedenborg House in Deland, Florida, then on to Swedenborg School of Religion's Field Education Supervisors Training course which was to be held at a Methodist retreat center in Leesburg, Florida. On the way we stopped and enjoyed a meal of barbecued ribs done in the southern fashion and then arrived to hear Mary Kay Klein's joyful announcement that the *Pats* had just scored a touchdown. Secure in the unbreakable trust that Babe Ruth would not let this trend continue, we

moved our baggage into our rooms and went to find a quiet place where we could enjoy an evening of Pinochle. I guess Ron and I had spent more warm summer days at Fenway Park than John and Paul had because we lost every game.

While the Pinochle game and the Super Bowl were working their way to inevitable conclusion, the rest of the supervisors arrived: Ken Turley, Renee Billings, Kit Billings, Eric Hoffman, Jim Lawrence, F. Bob Tafel, Randy Laakko, Sue Turley-Moore, Skuli Thorhallsson, Dick Tafel, Erni Martin, Eric Allison, and Wilma Wake. That was the end of any games for the rest of the week. George Sinclair and Julieanne Hallman from the Andover-Newton Theological School were to keep us busy for the next five days from 8:00 a.m. till 10:00 p.m. instructing us on how to supervise an SSR student in Field Education.

First they helped us to define what supervision is and why it is important in theological education. We were made aware of the intricate nuances of the supervisor's role. Then George and Julieanne divided us into groups and we worked on defining the role in

terms of theology, counseling and professionalism. We read student reports and supervisors' comments and looked for the strengths and weaknesses in them. We did role playing and sought our own strengths and weakness, and tried to help each other to define our understanding of the role and how we could help our church train its future ministers. We wrote our own reports on work that we were doing in our various ministries and took turns supervising each other so we could experience the roles and give each other feedback.

Swedenborgian ministers are often isolated from one another and have at best little understanding of each others' ministries. Besides training us to supervise students this was an excellent chance for us to get to know one another better and to learn of the variety of skills and forms of ministry that each of us has.

Despite the long hours and hard work we had fun learning together. Because we brought real situations from our ministries for supervision, we got tangible help from a colleague. We learned some skills that we can use in our peer supervision groups, and with parish staff, in addition to students. We also had some time for just plain fun and many of us took canoes onto the gorgeous lake that bordered the retreat center. We wanted to take advantage of the warm weather and blue lake for swimming, but the retreat personnel convinced us that we didn't want to tangle with the alligators.

I came away from this experience with a greater understanding of supervision and its role in building our Church's ministry but also with a greater appreciation that our clergy is a Gideon's army and that we are doing a powerful work in the building of our Lord's Kingdom here on earth. The curse of Babe Ruth may be upon my beloved *Red Sox* and the *Patriots* but my beloved Church has only the blessings of Jesus upon it.

The Rev. Carl Yenetchi is a minister at the Wayfarers Chapel and is chair of the new Ministries Support Unit. ❖

Book Review: *Returning to the Source*

(Continued from page 54)

regarded religion as a system of obligations, of commands and duties, I am happy to find here a new and very promising road to find one's own relationship to the Ultimate Reality. Whatever we name this, we may sense in thousands of ways the mystery that is greater than any human idea or image. Still, in approaching Swedenborg, I myself have been most impressed by first trying to study and apply the "Doctrine of Life," exploring repentance and the shades of values implied in the deeper recesses of the Divine Precepts. The two stages of regeneration are (1) being led by truth (obligation or duty) and (2) being led (cultivated) by love. This second, most important phase seems to be rarely understood and practiced.³ I have encountered very few who have been able to witness anything like it from their own experience. Here, finally, we have a competent voice before us, which matches a motto that has been the guiding mystical light of the Western monastic movement, the ideal for monks and nuns for centuries. Three main steps were outlined: Purification, illumination and union.⁴ Conjunction with God is the great goal held before us by Swedenborg,⁵ and it is full of ecstasy, transcending all boundaries of finiteness.

I feel much helped by this book and only wish I could have obtained it in earlier years to give more clarity for my searching and struggling. For an age and a culture that searches for expansion of consciousness,⁶ for our own access to higher regions of our minds and of the Universe—if we are willing to give up some security—

increasing and expanding glimpses of Cosmic Consciousness are available. Many other new publications are pointing in a similar direction.

¹ *Returning to the Source*: The way to the Experience of God. Real People Press.

² *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Chicago London. etc. 1968 edition, Vol. 15. p. 1129.

³ Swedenborg *True Christian Religion* the main systematic work, #571.

⁴ The most influential mystic for the medieval monastic movement became known under the assumed name of Dionysius Areopagita. *Pseudo-Dionysius*, the Complete Works, Paulist Press, New York 1987.

⁵ *True Christian Religion* #89e "In proportion as man approaches God, which he must do entirely by himself, God approaches man, and conjoins Himself with him in the midst of him."

⁶ An interesting overview in a modern perspective is given by Ken Wilber et al. *Transformations of Consciousness* New Science Library, Shambhala, Boston, London 1986.

The Rev. Dr. Horand Gutfeldt a retired Swedenborgian minister living in Berkeley, California. He is Pastor Emeritus of the Hillside Community Church in El Cerrito, California. ❖

(Editor's Note: Van Dusen's *Returning to the Source* was reviewed by Eli Dale in the *March Messenger*, but since we also received the pleasant surprise of this unsolicited review by the Rev. Dr. Horand Gutfeldt, I decided to publish it as well, in the interest of presenting readers with two different perspectives on the same work).

Touching Spirit & Anatomy of the Spirit

(Continued from page 53)

Anatomy of the Spirit contains much wisdom, but not the humor Myss shares with live audiences. I think it's because she cares so very much about imparting the material, and this comes across clearly in both her book and her lecture.

Carolyn Myss asked our audience, "do you know why we are here?"

"We are here," she said, "to learn to manage spirit in physical form."

And, from what I can personally tell so far, nothing can be more complex and bewildering than this. This might even be the very definition of healing.

Mona Conner is an artist and an active member of the New York Swedenborgian Church and a member of the Communications Support Unit.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Celia Coates, M.S.W., "Plugging In", *Common Boundary*, Sept./Oct. 1996 issue, p. 24, (courtesy of Patte LeVan)
2. Elizabeth Stratton, *Touching Spirit*, p. 230, Simon & Schuster, © 1996
3. *Ibid.*, p. 234
4. Celia Coates, "Plugging In", *Common Boundary*, p. 31
5. Caroline Myss, "Anatomy of the Spirit", *Intuition*, Sept./Oct. 1996 issue, p. 32-33, (courtesy of Patte LeVan)
6. *Ibid.*, p. 33
7. Celia Coates, "Plugging In", *Common Boundary*, p. 27

Audio and videotapes are available from both authors. Write to Mona Conner for information:

*1 Montgomery Pl. Apt. 8
Brooklyn, NY 11215*

OR, see list in the back of the books.

IMPORTANT CHURCH CALENDAR DATES

April 1-3	CAM	SSR, Newton, MA	May 14-15	COMSU	San Francisco
April 3-6	FPRSU/MINSU	Newton, MA	June 6-7	Urbana Board of Trustees	Urbana, OH
April 10-14	SSR Board of Trustees	Chicago/LaPorte	July 6-9	Pre-Convention Workshop	Hutchinson, KS
April 13-14	EDSU	LaPorte, IN	July 6-9	Council of Ministers	Hutchinson, KS
April 13-14	Retirement Committee	Newton	July 9-13	1997 Convention	Hutchinson, KS
April 26	Investment Committee	Temenos			
April 27-28	East Coast Peer Supervision	Blairhaven, Duxbury, MA			

A New New Church

Eric Allison

Since the article in *The Messenger* last fall, some of you have heard bits and pieces of how The New Church of Southwest Florida is progressing. So far we have every reason to be optimistic about this new church growing into a full fledged self-supporting congregation. It has been an exciting and sometimes scary ride—exciting because of the interest, enthusiasm, and accountability of the new people; scary because everything is new: new people, new geographical area, new trends, etc.

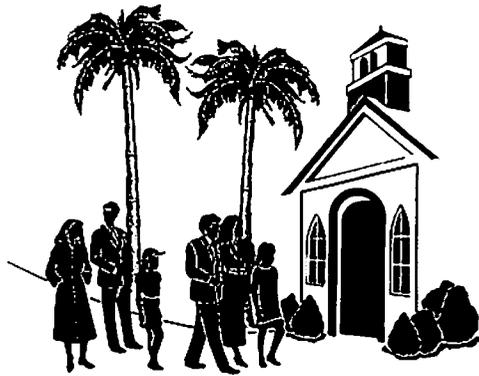
Since Dick and Linda Tafel moved to Fort Myers Beach seven years ago, people at different times encouraged Dick to start a new church there. This interest culminated in an overview proposal being presented to MINSU (Ministries Support Unit) at last summer's convention meetings. Through face to face meetings, many phone calls, information exchanges via the fax machine, and a personal extended on-site visit by myself, a proposal emerged which was presented in November to MINSU and General Council (the denomination's executive arm). That proposal with its plan of action was approved.

Funds were approved for an automatic dialing machine, a program for making personal phone contacts to 30,000 people in the fall, a two-thirds salary through August, and a full salary beginning in September, coinciding with the beginning of "The Phone is For You" program. As part of the proposal, no funds were requested by the Southwest Florida group for program implementation, facilities rent, publicity and outreach, printing and duplicating, office equipment, mailing, worship materials, signage, office space, fund raising, nor the usual 1001 expenses necessary for a church to function and grow. The new church that "was not as yet" would raise these funds somehow!

There was terrific free local publicity in the weeks leading up to the opening service on January 5, coupled with some paid ads. There was also an attractive letter-sized flyer-insert

enclosed in a local weekly newspaper with a circulation of 13,500, announcing both the first church service and an angel workshop on January 7.

The first ever public Swedenborgian church service in southwest Florida attracted 48 adults and 8 children. Some of these were "one-time" attendees: friends, visiting Swedenborgians, and others who came to support Dick



in this first service. The rest were looking for a church. As of this writing, there have been eight Sunday services with attendance ranging in the twenties to thirties, and several children in the Sunday school. Joyce Fekete, a member of our Detroit church, has agreed to lead the religious education program. She and Dick work closely together so as to follow the same Bible lesson each week, Joyce for the children and Dick for the adults. The adult class also serves as a confirmation class which consistently has had attendance in the double digits.

The January 7th lecture/workshop on angels was conducted by myself, with 36 adults in attendance. A follow-up angel group was formed for a five-week period led by Dick and Sandy Schofield. Attendance has ranged from seven to thirteen. Plans are in the works to have a local expert on "angels and their presence" lead a workshop sometime in March.

The New Church of Southwest Florida meets in the chapel of the Fort Myers Beach Funeral Home, located

on the main route to the beach from the greater Fort Myers area. It has ample parking, is handicapped-accessible, and has several rooms for classes. The church may also use these facilities several evenings a month. However, confirmation of such scheduled events can only be given several days in advance, due to the nature of the business. Only one worship service thus far had to be moved to another location due to a Sunday funeral. While the rare Sunday space cancellation and the short notice approval for week-night use are drawbacks, the location, space and facility costs more than make up for any inconvenience. (Dick negotiated the use of the facilities for free).

To date, a lot of time and effort has been expended to assimilate the new people into a church congregation. Visitor follow-up is being pursued efficiently: a phone call is made that Sunday afternoon and a note or letter sent on Thursday. These are done by two different lay people. Dick follows up the next week. People who come more than once are invited to join one of the four working groups: fellowship and worship, publicity and outreach, program and structure, and stewardship and finance, in this way we hope to involve people in the life of the church and, at the same time, teach them about the various aspects and workings of the church. More than 30 Swedenborgians from around the country have visited this church in the past eight weeks. This has had a tremendous impact on the new people here. They really sense being a part of a larger religious organization.

With a limited budget, how will the church continue to attract new people? A new church-planting requires using the latest methods and technologies. A "Percept Study," a demographic analysis, was done to identify by neighborhoods important information for planning a publicity and outreach campaign: age, density, church affiliations, stewardship habits, etc. To efficiently reach large numbers of people quickly, the denomination purchased a "System 707," an automatic dialing machine, for use first by

(Continued on page 61)

GROWING ~ SHARING ~ REJOICING

Join the earth in rejoicing as we come together to extend and discover our spiritual roots

we will make connections with body, mind and spirit through art, music, meditation, writing, song, Qigong, Therapeutic Touch, Brain Gym and group sharing.

PRE-CONVENTION 1997 ~ HUTCHINSON KANSAS SUNDAY JULY 6 TO WEDNESDAY JULY 9

Presenters:

Facilitator: Lorraine Sando, ART, WRITING, MEDITATION (Seattle, Washington)

Asst. Facilitator: Carol Anne Fusco SONG, DRAMA, MESSAGE (Portland, Maine)

Sue Frid and Carolyn Buchanan: THERAPEUTIC TOUCH (Kitchener, Ontario)

Pat Tukos: BRAIN GYM (LaPorte, Indiana) ~ Susan Harris: QIGONG (Boston, Massachusetts)



For more information contact: Lorraine Sando (206) 242-7354

REGISTRATION

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY, STATE, PROVINCE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE _____

REGISTRATION: \$75.00 Per Person (by May 1) \$85.00 Per Person (after May 1)

BOARD: (3 meals a day) \$15.00 per person per day

ACCOMMODATIONS: (Please check one)

Single Occupancy \$15.00 per day Double Occupancy-2 people in a room \$7.50 per day per person

ARRIVAL: I/we will be arriving by car _____, airplane (list dates, airline, and flight times)

(Please see CONVENTION REGISTRATION for more details)

SPECIAL NEEDS: (Please Specify) _____

Please Note: This Workshop Will Be Taking Place at the Same Time as the Council of Ministers Meeting and Ministers' Spouses Meeting

All Workshop fees to be paid in full by
June 1, 1997



CHILD CARE AVAILABLE

Make checks payable to: **THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH**

Send Form with
Checks to:

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

ADVANCE CONVENTION '97 REGISTRATION

Hutchinson Community College ~Hutchinson, Kansas ~July 9 - 13 1997



"Let The Earth Rejoice"

Please complete in full - one application per family

Last Name _____ First Name _____ / Last Name _____ First Name _____

Address _____ City / State / Province _____ Zip _____ Phone () _____

Accompanied by Children:

1. Name _____ Age _____ 2. Name _____ Age _____ 3. Name _____ Age _____

Arrivals and Departures

Shuttle service will be available by convention host from Mid-Continent Airport. There will be a fee of \$10 per person, round trip, for this service. (Last meal served will be a box lunch at noon 7/13.)

I/We will arrive on the Hutchinson Community College campus: Date _____

First meal will be: Date _____ Breakfast Lunch Dinner / Last meal will be: Date _____ Breakfast Lunch Dinner

The children's program will begin on Wednesday evening, July 9 and end as lunch on Saturday so that children can accompany their parents on outings.

My child/children will be participating in the Children's Program for ages 5 to 12 beginning on _____
Names _____ Ages _____

I will need child care for age 4 and under beginning: _____
Names _____ Ages _____
Special needs _____ Have children attended pre-school? _____

Rates for 1997 Convention Room & Board

There are various motels available locally. Information and telephone numbers will be available on request.

All room and board charges must be paid in advance and received in the Central Office before 6/17/97.

Board (3 meals a day, refreshments, etc.) \$15.00 per person per day
Board for children 5 and under FREE
Dorm Room (Single occupancy) \$15.00 per day
Dorm Room (Double occupancy) \$7.50 per day per person

All rooms are air conditioned. Children under 12 may sleep on the floor (sleeping bags or mattresses) in parents' room at NO CHARGE. Children older than 5 years will still be charged for board and registration fee.

All prices are in US dollars. Some financial assistance is available for teens and children. Please ask for more information if you would like to apply.

Registration

Children under 12 \$ 20.00
Teen League (SCYL participant 13-18) \$ 30.00
Other Teens and Adults \$ 55.00
Family maximum (Parents and children) \$150.00
Late fee if received after 5/1/97 \$ 15.00

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

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

All prices are in US dollars

Accommodations

I would like to share a room with _____

I/We would like information on: Motels

Special Needs

I am not able to climb stairs or walk very fast. _____

I am diabetic a heart patient

I have these medical requirements _____

Other health problems _____

Other physical/dietary/special need _____

SCYL Members between the ages of 13 and 18 please complete.

My parents will attend convention. They are: _____

My guardian at Convention (if no parent is present) will be: _____

Early Arrivals and Delayed Departures

Facilities are arranged for from 7/5 to 7/13. No rooms are available prior or after these dates.

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

Eckhart, Swedenborg and Heavenly Joy

(Continued from page 51)

of recognition, much like the joy of recognition I had felt a few years earlier when I stumbled upon the New Church. Since then Eckhart has informed my reading of Swedenborg and vice versa. Swedenborg's teaching about man in the Universal Human help flesh out for me what Eckhart says about the communion of saints. And Eckhart's use of birth as an image for the joy and pain of spiritual growth complements for me Swedenborg's battle imagery.

I offer Eckhart and Swedenborg's descriptions of heavenly joy (and the pain of getting there) as just one example of the many convergences between the two. I could just as easily have chosen conjunction, regeneration, proprium, or acting as if of self. It is striking how often mystics of different places and times say startlingly similar things. Yet if we believe in the reality of the spiritual world this need not surprise us. They say similar things because they caught glimpses of the same reality. And by reading them together we get a much more in-depth view of that world of Spirit.

Footnotes:

- 1 See *Divine Love and Wisdom*, n. 47.
- 2 The Bible quotation is from Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus), one of the "apocryphal" wisdom books found in the Catholic but not Protestant canon.
- 3 Matthew Fox, *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation*, Garden City, New York; Doubleday, 1980, p. 236.
- 4 *Ibid*, pp. 326-327.
- 5 See the first article in this series, "What is Mysticism?" by George Dole, *The Messenger*, November 1996.
- 6 *Breakthrough*, p. 329.
- 7 See *Breakthrough*, pp. 35-42.

Jonathan Mitchell is a student in his final year at the Swedenborg School of Religion.

A New New Church

(Continued from page 58)

the Fort Myers Beach church. System 707 is a computerized phone machine which calls telephone numbers programmed into it. It is capable of making up to 500 calls a day. Excluding businesses and unlisted numbers, it calls any area we want. Using the "Percept Study" as a guide, we are systematically calling in the areas around the church. While Linda is at work at the library and Dick visiting people, raising funds, making new contacts, etc., the machine is calling people.

We use Linda's voice and not Dick's because studies have shown that people respond better to a female voice on a taped message than to a male. So far at least three people a day say that they are not involved in a local church and would like to receive something in the mail. It is too early to tell how successful this approach will be, but I think making three positive contacts per day is pretty exciting.

In September, we will embark upon "The Phone is for You" program. This program entails contacting 30,000 people in one month via the telephone. It does not use an automatic dialing machine. It involves individuals making all these 30,000 calls. This plan was designed by telemarketer and committed member of the Friends Church, Norm Whan. It has been used to start more than ten thousand conservative, liberal, or middle-of-the-road congregations. The plan for The New Church of Southwest Florida is to make all 30,000 calls in October. Who will make these calls? Those members brought into the Fort Myers fold between now and October will make most of the calls. Meeting in offices, they will make calls for three hours in the evening, five days each week, for four weeks. Each person can make an average of forty calls per hour. Dividing the work load among fifty people makes it manageable.

It is even better, as well as fun, to have people phoning from our churches and homes all across North America. I already have ten volunteers. A training session will be offered at this year's convention meetings in Kansas for those who would like to participate by making long distance calls to the Fort Myers area. Isn't that expensive? Not really! Remember, a lot of people hang up as soon as you start to talk. But the ones who say, "Yes," to your request to "keep you updated on the progress of the new church we are expanding in November" will make it all worthwhile. The cost for volunteering an evening of your time to start a Swedenborgian Church in another state will probably be less than twenty-five dollars. It could well be one of the most exciting ways you ever spent a church evening or spent twenty-five dollars growing a church.

"The law of large numbers" says that of the 30,000 people contacted, up to 3,000 will say, "Yes," to your request to send them information. Those 3,000 people will receive a follow-up call one week before the opening service. Of the 3,000 phoned, about one thousand will say, "Yes," I'll be there Sunday. On that Sunday about three hundred will actually show up, and at least fifty of them will have asked if they could do anything to help with the opening service. This is not an unrealistic hope. This is the result when that program is followed. It has worked for thousands of others and it can work for us. From these 300 people who attend that November service, a self-supporting congregation can be established within five years. The plan for Fort Myers will be finalized in the coming months, including the date for that very special Sunday.

There is a lot of hope riding on The New Church of Southwest Florida. What is extremely encouraging is meeting an entirely new group of people who have gathered to offer their time, talent and treasure to start a Swedenborgian Church. The people I have personally spoken with are attracted to the church for two reasons: they want to be a part of such an open-minded and inclusive type of Christian religion, and they like the concept of a church that is not "minister-centered" but rather "people oriented." Although only eight weeks old, they have already started a stewardship program of pledging.

(Continued on page 63)

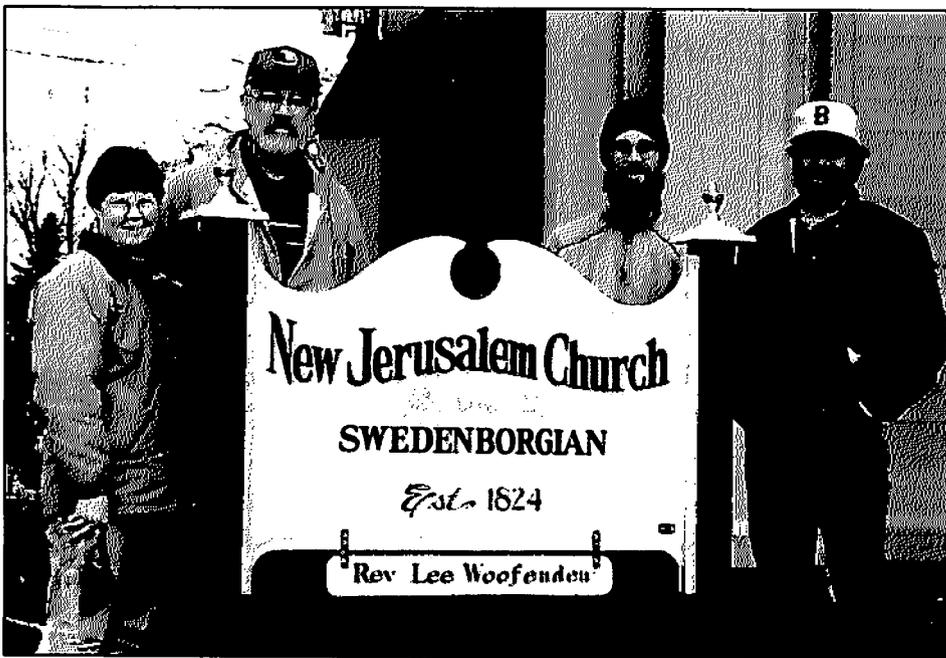
140th Anniversary Celebrated

The ladies of the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church recently celebrated their 140th anniversary of the Sewing Circle during the December meeting of the Massachusetts Alliance of New Church Women at the Elmwood Christmas gathering.

In Photo: President Frances (Mrs. Robert) Leland (left), and Vice-President Irva (Mrs. Gordon) Miller are shown poised to cut the anniversary cake. Secretary Grace (Mrs. Herbert) Rainey read a short history of the Sewing Circle.



New Church Sign at Bridgewater Church



Merrilee & Rick Phinney, Reverend Lee Woofenden, Bill Flood

On November 11, 1996, a beautiful sign was erected on the front lawn of the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church. This sign, the first ever free-standing lawn sign for the church, was given in loving memory of Harold Flood, a dedicated and active member of the society, by his children and their spouses: Bill and Sandy flood, Nathan and Marilyn Flood, Judith and Robert Siegfried and Merrilee and Rick Phinney. Bill, Sandy, Merrilee and Rick, along with the Rev. Lee Woofenden, installed the sign while hundreds of townspeople lined the street watching the Veteran's Day Parade. (It was almost comical to have so many people lining the corner where our church stands as we were digging, holding, pouring and leveling—making sure it was the right height and absolutely level). This was a major stage in our 'rebuilding' and we have received many positive comments since. ❖

—Merrilee Phinney

Part-time Ministry Inquiries Invited

The Portland Swedenborgian Church welcomes letters of inquiry from clergy interested in opening a dialog about part-time ministry. We are an active young community in the process of determining exactly what our congregational ministry needs are. We are searching for a way to support our strong volunteer involvement. Some expressed needs include: religious education, occasional worship leading, small-group support, inspiring lay persons in their ministry to each other, facilitating visitor welcoming and integration, and pastoral care/challenge. Please write to the President, Portland Swedenborgian Church, 302 Stevens Avenue, Portland, ME 04103 or call (207) 772-8277.



A New New Church

(Continued from page 61)

DEATH

Loewen—Frank

Loewen, 91, longtime member of the Calgary New Church

Society, entered the spiritual world January 8, 1997. Frank's resurrection service was conducted by his niece, Sharon Reddekopp, lay leader for the Calgary Society.

Wheaton—in addendum to the notice of Lloyd Wheaton, Jr.'s, death on December 3, which appeared in the February 1997 *Messenger*, his mother, the Rev. Gladys Wheaton, wishes it to be known that Lloyd was the brother of Howard Wheaton; both of them members of the Cambridge Church.

Each week, four or more different people are involved with the leadership of the worship service. Having a dynamic worship service is still the most important element of building a congregation. At the very first Sunday worship service, evaluation forms were handed to worshippers as they left the chapel. Most of them filed out the two-page form before they left that day, providing us with useful information which resulted in changing several things in the worship service. This gave a very strong signal that this church is eager to respond to people's worship needs.

Several new programs are underway, as well as plans for a wedding ministry. Advertising has just started, and several major fund-raising events are under consideration.

My conviction is that all our churches and our whole denomination will get a shot of self-confidence if a lot of us pitch in to help get this church up and running full steam. Your encouragement, your prayers, and any time, talent or treasure you can offer will be most appreciated. If you get to southwest Florida, make sure you spend a weekend there and attend our newest church!

The Rev. Eric Allison is the denomination's church growth consultant working directly with the new Ministries Support Unit (MINSU). ❖

The Swedenborgian Church Nominating Committee Report

President: Rev. Ronald Brugler

Vice-President: Phyllis Bosley

Recording Secretary: Betty Yenetchi

Treasurer: Polly Baxter

General Council: (2 lay, 1 minister)

Rev. Skuli Thorhallsson, Christine Laitner

Margaret Kraus

Communications Support Unit (COMSU)

Steve Koke

Education Support Unit (EDSU)

Bill Baxter

Financial and Physical Resources Support

Unit (FPRSU) Barbara Boxwell

Ministries Support Unit (MINSU)

Lon Elmer, Linda Tafel

Information Management Support Unit

(IMSU)

Rev. Lee Woofenden

Nominating Committee (to elect one):

Marge Runka, Mildred Laakko

Committee on Admission to the Ministry

(CAM)

Minister: Rev. Deborah Winter

Lay Person: Elizabeth Gurfeldt

Swedenborg School of Religion Board

(1 lay, 1 minister)

Esther Capon, Rev. Horand Gurfeldt,

Barbara Penabaker

—Duane Beougher, Chair

Nominating Committee

EDSU's Sneak *Preview of the 1997 Convention Mini-courses

TOPIC

LEADER(S)

Sunday School Teacher Training	Rev. Eric Hoffman
Nuts and Bolts - Part II	Rev. Eric Allison
How to be a New Church Person in An 'Old' Church	Rev. Edwin Capon, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, and others
Introduction to Swedenborg	Rev. Eric Zacharias
Homosexuality, Genetics, and the Bible	Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey Rev. Sue Truley-Moore and Rev. Carl Yenetchi
Maintaining Healthy Relationships between People who are Changing	Perry Martin
Introducing Inclusive Thinking	Phyllis Bosley Margaret Kraus, and Laurie Turley
Forgiveness	Rev. Paul Zacharias
Homing to Oneself, Swedenborgian Regeneration	Rev. Deborah Winter
How to Read the Treasurer's New Report	Polly Baxter
The Millennium—Part II	Rev. Dr. George Dole and Rev. Paul Martin
Bible Study—Topic to be announced	Rev. Kit Billings
Social Concerns Education Committee —Topic to be announced	Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, SCEC Chair and others
Spiritual Psychology	Maryann Thorhallsson

*More details next issue!

Never been to Convention? wondering what a mini-course is? These are free two-hour classes/discussions held on Thursday and Friday afternoon at 3:00 p.m. Why don't you consider attending the '97 Convention in Kansas this summer?

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.

Swedenborg Foundation to Hold Annual Meeting in San Francisco, May 18

The annual meeting of the Swedenborg Foundation will take place at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, Sunday, May 18, at 1:30 p.m. This year's meeting will consist of a brief business meeting, a featured speaker, and a reception. The speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose, who teaches at the Academy of the New Church College in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. He will speak on the need and vision for an all-new scholarly edition of Swedenborg's theological works. In addition, members and friends are invited to join the board of directors and staff for dinner at an area restaurant on Sunday evening.

Members of the foundation will receive a formal invitation and ballot proxy in March. Anyone wishing information on membership or the San Francisco meeting should contact the

Foundation offices at (610) 430-3222.

Prior to 1993, when the Foundation moved to West Chester, Pennsylvania, annual meetings were held in New York City. For the past four years they have been held in West Chester. The change in this year's location reflects the Foundation's commitment to serve a national and international constituency. This site will provide an opportunity for West Coast members and friends to meet the board of directors, become more familiar with the foundation's publication programs, and give input into future planning.

Future sites being considered for the annual meeting include Chicago, Boston, and Orlando.

For more informations contact David Eller at (610) 430-3222

Perpetual Calendar Available

A couple of years ago, it was just a dream—a dream stirring in the minds of Jane Siebert of Pretty Prairie and Ellen Shaw now of the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, Mass. We, the members and friends of the Kansas Association, would build us a free-standing, "perpetual" calendar using quotations from both the Bible and the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Soon, this labor of love began to take shape and after many, many hours of checking and re-checking, consultation and decision-making, it was submitted to the printer this past December. The dark blue text appearing on cream-colored, high quality paper has produced an attractive, 6x5 inch calendar suitable for the bedside table or the kitchen windowsill from where it offers "fresh Manna" every morning—just enough to make each day a little brighter.

This "perpetual" calendar is being made available for \$5.00 plus postage. Send your order to:

Eric J. Zacharias, 105 S. Plum St., Pretty Prairie, KS 67570

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