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# THE MESSENGER

Monthly Publication, Swedenborgian Church of North America

June 1997

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## Swedenborg as a Mystic from an Easterner's Point of View

Jun-Chol Lee

I had a cultural difficulty when I heard that Swedenborg is a mystic. "Mystic" in Korea means the one who experiences spirits, and in fact most of them are shamans. They are regarded as abnormal people, so I was instructed to not have any contact with them by my parents and teachers. The reason that people avoid mystics in Korea is because Koreans traditionally have a belief that there are supernatural beings who have power over human beings. And another reasonable guess is that they probably do not want to hear their private matters made public, since Koreans believe that mystics can inquire about their inner secrets from spirits.

So I was afraid to see Swedenborg as a mystic, because I prefer to think of him as a very intellectual being and at the same time a person whose mind was very open and developed to see God. I respect Swedenborg as much as I respect Confucius, Buddha, Lao-tz and Zhuang-tz because of his strong passion toward learning and his lifelong effort of searching for the real truth which finally led him to meet God, the source of all truth and the truth itself as Swedenborg defines it in his theological works. For my new understanding of the term "mystic," I thank George Dole's article, "What is Mysticism?," which was the first one of this series.\* His article gave me a more positive approach to the term "mystic," and further it became obvious to me that we all have a possibility, to some degree, of being mystics. George defined "mystic" as "one for whom [spiritual] experience is both recurrent and meaningful." It is clear from Swedenborg that we are created to have such experience. He says at the beginning of *Arcana Coelestia*, "Man was so created by the Lord as to be able while living in the body to speak with spirits and angels . . . (no. 69)." But unfortunately our ancestors lost this ability by choosing pleasures of senses rather than delights of being spiritual. In the East, there has been a kind of ambivalence about such experiences. Educated people regard mystical experiences as primitive or illusory things; at the same time they worship spirits of their ancestors and believe in the spirit's influent power over them. Many among uneducated people believe in

mystical experiences as receiving of the divine order, so they regard shamans as messengers of God.

It is not easy to say whether or not any of the founders of the three major religions of the East had the same experiences in the process of their enlightenment as Swedenborg did. Consequently it is impossible to compare them with Swedenborg concerning mystical experiences. But as Dr. Dole says, "[Swedenborg] would welcome the company of the Zen master who told the young seeker for enlightenment to go home and wash the dishes."

Usefulness can be regarded as Swedenborg's main emphasis concerning one's life. Throughout some thirty volumes of his theological writings, it is not hard to find a number of passages in which he insists the life of charity or the

life of use is the most important goal of one's life. Then what is use? According to Swedenborg, "when love by means of wisdom is put to use, it actually exists, because it is realized in action (*True Christian Religion* 387.3)." Use is something that is actualized out of love or motivation through wisdom or way. It is works of good through truth. And it is the life of li of Confucius, the life in the way of Tao of Lao-tz, and the life of the enlightened one of Buddha.

I prefer to compare Swedenborg with Confucius, because of his strong zeal to learn and his emphasis on the actualization of what has been learned. As far as I know, Confucius is the obvious one among the founders of the Eastern religions who really insists that knowing, doing and being charitable are not separated things, but one within the conduct of a person. According to Confucius, we are all born into this world in accordance with the will of heaven, so everyone's life must be focused on following the way of heaven which is being completeness.

It is curious that Confucius did not give any name to a supernatural being as God Almighty, while Swedenborg refers to the Lord as the only God. I am sure that Confucius knew many names of gods which he had learned from the Chinese religious tradition. But they were not

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(Continued on page 93)

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### IN THIS ISSUE:

- The Best Church Around ■ Doctrine on the Half Shell ■ Parish News from All Over
  - Convention '97 Schedule and Events ■ New J. Appleseed Publications
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# Reflections on Heaven's Gate

Guest Editorial by Eric Zacharias

In late March, this nation—and I am sure folks far beyond our borders—were stunned on learning that 39 people had committed "mass suicide" in California. These were not among our disadvantaged, our uneducated. They were members of a cult called Heaven's Gate. Many questions puzzle the mind.

Members and former members of the cult have been interviewed by the press and TV media. I listened closely to the lengthy segment devoted to this tragedy on 20/20 the evening of March 30, and tried to understand what I heard in the light of our New Church teachings.

The two people interviewed were asked a number of penetrating questions related to their belief system. They explained that they believe man to be a spiritual being—the body is a shell only, a "container," housing the spirit. By rigid obedience to prescribed demands set by their leader, a transformation takes place to a level of higher consciousness—not unlike that of a caterpillar emerging as a beautiful chrysalis on the shedding of its cocoon.

I was left with the impression that this cult turns to Jesus' own experience for confirmation of its beliefs—for Jesus, at the time of his death on the cross, was, as to his body, material, and he rose on Easter morning in a state of higher consciousness—but still with a material body, they believe. Jesus, during the 40 days of ministry (post-Easter) dined with his disciples, requested of Thomas that he "thrust his hand" into his side. *John 20:27*.

It is not clear to me how the comet Hale-Bopp fits into the scheme of things for the cult, or the space ships riding on the tail of the comet. However, it occurs to me that this is not so different from the prophet Elijah's experience. "... as they still went on, and talked ... beyond, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire ..." *II Kings 2:11*. Off to heaven he went.

It seems to me that it is worthy of

our reflection, too, that these former cult members interviewed are insisting that this was not a mass suicide. These 39 cult members, it is reported, after some years of preparation, moved *joyfully* to this higher level of consciousness. Life in the material body is but a school for ... the next stage of a more perfect life.

I have been thinking—can we not see a thread running through the belief system of this cult that looks familiar to us? The New Church also insists that we are spiritual beings housed within a material body. Swedenborg also writes that our transformation experience, upon our death, may be likened to that of the emerging chrysalis. *Arcana Coelestia* 2758. We also, in our appreciation of our human nature, give recognition to our "lower" and "higher" self—a natural and a spiritual nature.

Can we say, then, that while there are similarities in the Heaven's Gate cult's basic beliefs and our own beliefs—that our response to these basic teachings is *very different*. We believe that our day-to-day involvement in the world is of primary importance and significance.

Indeed, it is as we move through the "stages" of our spiritual growth that even the least of what we do is "infused" with a power emanating from our Creator—and, thus, is sacred. The "higher consciousness" so much sought after by members of the Heaven's Gate cult is available to us here and now.

It does seem to me that because God is who He is—and we are who we are—there is a natural affinity that draws us to each other. We seek one another out. This is what life is all about. God loves us all—and in His infinite mercy He understands far better than we, the path we choose in order to reach that blessed state of Oneness with Him.

*The Rev. Eric Zacharias is minister of the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas.*

*Reprinted from The Plains Banner, April, 1997.*

## What We Are Bound To

It is well  
That we should recall  
With what we are united.

We are in union with  
All we love.  
All we regard—  
Honors our pledge.  
Our hopes and aspirations  
Unite us to our Eternal.

Our loves define  
What is coming in our world.  
Our persistent hopes—  
What is being constructed.

These are not minor things.  
But the very links  
Of becoming.  
And a beginning  
We are in—  
And enjoy not.

—Wilson Van Dusen  
2/22/97

## THE MESSENGER

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

June 1997  
Volume 218 No. 6  
Whole Number 5221

Typesetting & Layout  
Town & Country Press,  
Plymouth, IN

Patte LeVan, *Editor*  
**Editorial Address:**  
The Messenger  
P.O. Box 985  
Julian, CA 92036

TEL: (760) 765-2915  
FAX: (760) 765-0218

**Business & Subscription Address:**  
Central Office  
48 Sargent Street  
Newton, MA 02158

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

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

# The Best Church Around

Several weeks ago *Messenger* Editor Patte LeVan phoned and asked me to write an article for the June *Messenger*. It was a fairly specific request. She wanted an overview written—with newcomers to our church and annual convention in mind—that would explain how we function within our denominational structure. It was to include everything from General Council to the Council of Ministers and the five Support Units, to whatever affiliated bodies I felt were important to include. Then she asked that I tie this all in with how the denomination serves our local churches. Talk about a simple assignment!

She also thought it was important that I write this article in light of my being the nominee for Convention president—our members would find it helpful to know that a candidate for our highest office has a grasp of how things work in the church. It would give them my perspective, she noted, and then added words that have come to weigh very heavily on my mind. She said, "Make it personal. That's what people see as one of your strengths."

I must be honest and share that this has been one difficult assignment, because I find it very hard to separate feelings from facts, people from circumstances, real committee functioning from the uses they are called to perform. In preparing this I've re-read much of the work done by the Ad Hoc Committee that led to our new denominational structure and I've studied our constitution to remind myself of the way things are supposed to be. Then these past few weeks it seems that many things have happened that challenge the goals and objectives we so joyously proclaim to be our reason for being. And so as I write this, I still wrestle with wondering if I should speak the truth as I perceive it, or color-coat it so that new people to our church will not see too many of the problems. What has emerged is a mixture of both.

On one level I truly believe that our denomination begins and ends with the local churches, centers and camps. In eighteen years of ministry I've become fairly familiar with thirty of our some forty-five affiliated ministries. Perhaps you wonder why I use the word "some" in that last sentence. I use it because never have I heard agreement on which groups are active and inactive, and we haggle over which ones are or are not part of the denomination. As if that's not bad enough, we debate the difference between a church and a center and a ministry as though in the long run those definitions really make a difference.

It doesn't make much of a difference from my perspective, however. I try to focus on three things. The first is a group's sense of love as God has helped them to attain. The second is their appreciation for our Swedenborgian teachings. And the third is the use, or purpose that they are

trying to fulfill. I deeply value the variety of ways that these are manifested on the local level. From Almont to Edmonton, from Kitchener to Deland, from Boston to Wayfarer's Chapel, each of our ministries has a uniqueness I cherish. I rejoice that none of our groups is the same. I'm glad that no two ministries are identical. Each is, for me, one of those gems in the Lord's crown that Swedenborg referred to. And I know that the denomination tries very hard to serve each and every one.

The denomination is to me that level of the church where we pool our talents and resources in those areas where we want to work together. We claim five such areas, which we title "Support Units." These are Communications, Education, Financial and Physical Resources, Ministries, and Information Management. Don't expect them to be called by these names, however. They

are COMSU, EDSU, FPRSU, MINSU, and IMSU, a reflection of our love for acronyms (a love that may appear to be a requirement for church membership)! These support units consist of three elected members (except for MINSU, which has six), and others who participate on an ex-officio basis or because they work in related areas.

These support units are the backbone of the denomination. I like to think that each of them helps us respond to the following basic questions: How do we best share our Swedenborgian thought with the world? How do we best learn? How do we make the best use of our money and other assets?

How do we best serve our members and communities? And how do we best share data with each other? That's a lot of "bests" but to me that concept is essential. Doing, and being our best is a goal we seek. The problem that arises most often is that we don't agree on what the "best" is. You see, somewhere along the way we've misplaced the stone tablet that gave us the definition.

In an effort to maintain some degree of agreement in this, each support unit sends a member to a yearly meeting of what is called the Cabinet. At this meeting, which is chaired by the president of the denomination, the support units are to discuss and establish priorities for the coming year and ways that these might be achieved. They also establish a budget that reflects these. When the process works well, it is a wonderful thing for our church, for we are united. When it is bypassed or breaks down, problems arise quicker than Fleischmann's Fast-Acting Yeast.

The priorities and budget that the Cabinet has prepared are then referred to General Council. This body, consisting of the four primary officers—president, vice-president, recording secretary and treasurer—along with nine other members elected by the convention delegates, gives

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(Continued on page 84)

# The Best Church Around

(Continued from page 83)

these another going over, and yes, they make changes in them. This is because they also take into consideration other important aspects of our organization that lie beyond the direct work of the support units, such as the operations of our Central Office, legal issues that arise from time to time, and matters of concern to the Council of Ministers and other affiliated groups. In this way, it is the General Council who ultimately oversees the operation of the entire church. And believe me, each and every member of that council takes his or her responsibility seriously.

Another group that takes its responsibility seriously and works hard for the church is the clergy, which forms the Council of Ministers. We are an incredibly talented and resourceful group of men and women who share a desire to make working for the Lord and this church an integral part of our lives. I hope that sentence brings a smile to your face because that's what ministry is supposed to do. And smile we do in our meetings, but we also cry, and argue and debate various issues until all have had their say and then some. Yet all of this is a reflection of a basic love we hold in common—a desire to share our Swedenborgian teachings with those we encounter in our jobs, because these truths help people in their spiritual journeys and lives.

Because of the fact that we each work for the church in some way, the Council of Ministers has a hand in pretty much every aspect of our denomination's life. We are represented on General Council and each Support Unit. We also have several primary committees to facilitate our work, among which are the Committee on Admission to the Ministry, Committee on Worship, Ministerial Placement Committee, Ethics Committee and others. (It strikes me as odd that none of our COM committees use the word "support").

Our charge when we are ordained is to teach and lead. Thus, we set aside time in our meetings for presentations that deepen our knowledge and skills so that we can do these things. We discuss issues of relevance to our local

churches and ministries. We deal with problems and concerns that we are encountering in our professional and personal lives. We seek to maintain the ministry through contact with students at our seminary and by acting upon their visions and plans of ministry. We develop new forms of worship for use in our centers. And we even worship, which is perhaps the most important aspect of our being together.

But please remember that few of our decisions are final. We make recommendations to the Support Units and General Council. We refer other matters to the floor of convention. In almost every aspect of our work, we seek cooperation with the laity.

Regarding our convention sessions, each church or center is a part of a regional association that is allotted a certain number of delegates who are permitted to vote at our annual meetings, the convention. We vote on many things—the budget, the officers, ordinations, recommendations from the COM, and other issues. But as a newcomer, don't get too excited about voting, because many other things happen there too. We hear reports, enjoy mini-courses, and simply get to know each other once again before we part our ways for another year.

I don't know if any of this will give new members a clearer perspective on what this denomination is all about and how it works. But I do hope that one thing comes through. We sure try to get things done, and God helps us in the process. Perhaps this makes us a bit like Avis. We're the little church that tries harder.

And as I've already indicated, there are many messes to be cleaned up, such as procedures that are vague, criteria unspoken or ill-defined, and decisions that are made in vacuums. As an organization, we have much to do if that "best" I spoke of earlier is to become a reality. I hope that it happens soon, because too often, we hurt those we love and care about the most in spite of our good intentions.

*The Rev. Ron Brugler is pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario. ❖*

## Committee Member Needed

The Retirement Committee is a standing committee of General Council. It administers and acts as trustees of the ministers' pension plans. Membership is for a 3 year term. A lay member of one of the churches is sought. A legal background or a background in pension or employee benefits planning would be helpful. If you are interested or you know someone who is qualified and might be willing, please contact the Committee Chair, Rev. F. Robert Tafel, 48 Sargent Street, Newton, MA 02158.

## Opportunity Of A Lifetime

Swedenborgian Church Youth League Director  
Salary \$2500-\$4000

Salary level depends on experience and job duties. Job description includes organizing retreats, maintaining a mailing list, keeping in contact with regional officers, etc. Interested? Inquire in writing to B.J. Neuenfeldt at 206 West Center, Ithaca, MI 48847

## Convention 1998 in Florida

General Council has decided by letter vote to hold Convention 1998 at the United Methodist Church Camp and Conference Center in Leesburg, Florida, the site of SSR's Field Education Supervisors Training Course last January (see *The Messenger*, April, 1997). The dates of convention are June 24 through 28, 1998.

Paul Zacharias

# Heaven

The recent Time magazine cover story, "Where Is Heaven," turned out to be a most fascinating article. For example, a major religious survey taken among active church members—from across the left-right theological spectrum—reveals that: 67% of the people surveyed believe that heaven is a place "up there"; 43% said we'll be playing harps; 36% look forward to wearing halos; and 85% feel that life in heaven is totally different from life on earth. The article begins by saying that in current theological circles there really isn't too much interest in heaven. There is a great deal of interest in angels and in miracles and Jesus/God, but oddly enough, there is little discussion on the nature of heaven. Well, maybe it's not so odd: in the article many prominent Protestant and Catholic scholars are quoted, and their responses indicate that they really know very little about heaven, which could explain their reluctance to talk about it.

From things heard and seen, Swedenborg gives us a wealth of information about heaven. He says that in heaven:

- There is no time and space as we know it, but there is the very real and definite perception of time and space. Those dimensions are more authentic there than here, because they are marked by the progression and changes of our inner spiritual states.
- We are fully conscious, with our complete personality and character, all of which is contained within our own recognizable spiritual body. We are still very much ourselves.
- There are still mysteries to be understood, problems to be solved, questions to be answered. The learning is in the questing. "Seek and you will find."

• We essentially go our own way, and do our own thing, all based upon the total sum of our life experience on Planet Earth. Every individual in heaven does what he or she really wants to do, and what they enjoy doing.

- Everyone serves some type of useful purpose; an activity or task which benefits the other community members, and which also provides personal satisfaction and enrichment.
- Every person creates his or her own environment. The outer world is an extension of our inner world.
- Loved ones—husbands and wives, parents and children, siblings, close friends—eventually are reunited in the spiritual world, and these relationships continue and are strengthened, or they are gradually dissolved, based upon the true quality of the mutual affection and trust involved.

• What is really REAL within each person eventually comes to the surface, which means that there is nothing to hide, no place to hide, and no reason to want to hide!

- Everyone speaks a common language, which Swedenborg apparently picked up rather quickly, all of which is based on a kind of audible thought transference. So it should make for some very interesting conversation! Open, honest and stimulating.

For more complete information read, *Heaven and its Wonders and Hell* again, and try to read it as if for the first time. If all this heavenly information is true . . . and if we really believe it . . . it's going to make us very careful, isn't it! And grateful. ❖

## Try a Camp Adventure or Retreat Experience this Summer

For those members or friends who are new to the Swedenborgian Church in the past year or so, you may not be aware that we have five beautiful family camps and retreat centers located in Michigan; Massachusetts; Maine; Pennsylvania; and Alberta, Canada.

For information on schedules and activities, write or phone:

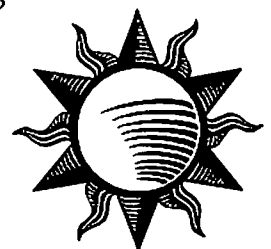
**Almont New Church Retreat and Conference Center**  
1513 Cameron Road  
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Contact: Betty Jean Neuenfeldt  
(515) 875-3127

**Blairhaven Conference and Retreat Center**  
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South Duxbury, MA 02331  
Contact: Donna & Phil Berry, Directors  
(617) 934-7131

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Fryeburg, ME 04037  
Contact: Fryeburg New Church  
(207) 935-3413

**Paulhaven**  
C/O The Church of the Holy City  
9119-128 A Avenue  
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(403) 948-3667

**Temenos at Broat Run Retreat & Conference Center**  
685 Broad Run Road  
West Chester, PA 19382  
Contact: Rev. Ernest O. Martin, Director  
(610) 696-8145



## Our Swedenborgian Heritage

*Twenty-eighth in a series*

### The Canadian Northwest, as reported by T. Mower Martin

Mr. Martin, the Toronto artist we featured in the last article, was also a missionary for the New Church. He had applied to be ordained as a missionary minister of General Convention but for some reason, probably internal politics, he did not get his wish.

The August, 1910, *Messenger* carried this letter (abridged).

It may interest the readers of the *Messenger* to hear something of their fellow New Churchmen in the northern provinces of Canada.

The most northerly settlement is at Rosthern, almost in latitude fifty-three, but a fine agricultural section where wheat, barley, oats, and flax, produce large crops, but this season being exceptionally dry, not more than half a crop is expected.

The number of receivers as given me by Gerard Ens, M.P.P. for this district (Rosthern and Bergen) counting children old enough for confirmation, is sixty. There are also many younger children, as large families are the rule. These people are much in earnest in their adherence and understanding, and they are people of weight and influence in their communities. They are on the best terms with their neighbors, as evidenced by the fact that the Presbyterians lent me their church for a course of three lectures on the origin, progress and destiny of the human mind; that the Anglican, Evangelical, and Mennonite ministers gave notice of the lectures from their pulpits and attended themselves. At the close of the first lecture the Anglican minister made a speech from the platform stating that he himself was reading and profiting from Swedenborg's books.

After staying a week and holding a Sunday service in the society's church building, I left for Chaplin, where the Rev. Peter Hiebert lives. I lectured twice in the schoolhouse, held a service in Mr. Hiebert's

house, and then he drove me to Herbert, where some prosperous New Church people reside. We stayed with Mr. Jacob Zacharias, who owns the largest flour mill in this section, and I delivered two lectures. Passing thence to Waldeck, I lectured in the house of Rev. Klaas Peters and went on to Didsbury, Alberta, where I lectured in the school house to a number of New Church people and others, some of whom had driven long distances.

The majority of these people are German by descent, though many of them were born in Russia, and although so widely scattered some time back combined themselves into an association, but their books of record and draft of constitution were destroyed by fire. There seems a desire to join the Canada Association, and I suggested they send delegates to the coming annual meeting at Berlin (now Kitchener), Ontario. The young people among them do not seem to be losing their interest in the church, but seem eager to learn, and are reading and studying for themselves from the writings.

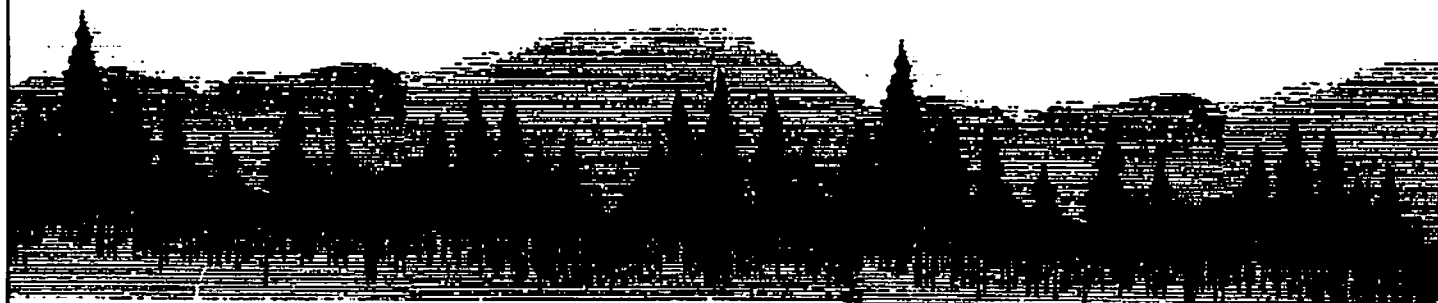
[On this missionary tour] I called on over twenty ministers of various Protestant denominations, and six of them have the books, while at least six more said they would send for them. Interest in the doctrines is spreading among both clergy and laity.

I have also established two depots for the sale of the smaller books of the writings, one at Regina, the capital of Saskatchewan, and one at Calgary, in Alberta.

I am now on my way to Victoria, B.C., where some hundreds of Methodist ministers are now assembling. I hope to meet some of these that I know [and incidentally do some missionary work among them?].

*Next time: Mr. Martin tours British Columbia*

*Louise Woofenden is a writer and retired archivist of the Swedenborg School of Religion. She resides in Sharon, Mass.*



# Further Thoughts in Response to Gay Marriage Commentary

James Lawrence

The spirited level of dialog generated by my original *Messenger* article last November,\* in which I shared a little bit of my personal journey as to how I became supportive of performing ceremonies blessing the love commitment between two members of the same sex, indicates that our denomination is pretty much lock-and-step with the rest of religious America. Most major communions within the Christian, Jewish, and even Buddhist realms have been experiencing heated debate not only over the question of gay marriage, but also over ordination of openly gay ordinands. Our discussion in the pages of *The Messenger* is more than timely since delegates will be voting this summer for the first time on the ordination of an openly gay candidate for ministry in the General Convention.

I wish, not to respond to all of the points made by each of the contributors, but simply to offer some follow-up thoughts that I feel moved to contribute, now that the issue seems to have had a lengthy (though far from comprehensive) hearing. Twelve letters were published over the course of five issues of *The Messenger*, with eight basically in support of the San Francisco congregation's decision to conduct gay marriage ceremonies and four fundamentally opposed. Of the four opposed, only Duane Beougher of St. Louis provided actual reasoned and dispassionate points, and for that I thank him.

In the Swedenborgian world, there is an *a priori* matter to be considered: are the writings of Swedenborg the last word for Swedenborgians on this issue? I will own up to the truth that I do not regard Swedenborg as infallible on all matters, because there are ways in which he seems clearly limited by the horizons of human knowledge and suppositions of his day. For instance, I do not enjoy defending *Earths in the Universe*, with its declaration that there is intelligent human life on many of the planets of our solar system. I am well aware of

the creative (and to me, far-fetched) theories put forth by Swedenborgians to explain away its obvious problems, as early in this century this work became increasingly scandalous as astronomy advanced.

I also find it interesting that with all his vast wanderings in the spiritual world, and even with his encounters with those who in the world lived in Tartary (the Mongolian region), Swedenborg never seems to have run across a Buddhist or a Hindu in heaven. I suspect that is because knowledge of the religious beliefs of the Far East had not penetrated Europe. He mentions Mohammed many times, because he is familiar with him, but the Buddha is never mentioned, because those texts had not been translated into European languages. Swedenborg discovers in the spiritual worlds only members of religious traditions with whom he is already familiar in this world. He manages to find spiritual beings from other planets, but he never mentions the most numerous spiritual adherents on earth at the time. It seems obvious that his perception was limited in some ways by what he already knew from his natural life, which also explains why he linked beings that he perceived were not from our world to other worlds in our solar system, because the solar system was perhaps his most highly developed academic specialty at one time (he was once offered the Chair of Astronomy at the University of Upsala).

I believe Swedenborg had the most capable human mind in the annals of human experience into which the Lord was able to shine the most profound and comprehensive wisdom ever given through one soul. But that still does not make him infallible. So let me put it right out there: I do not look to the writings as the ultimate determinant for my theological position on the nature of homosexuality. Outwardly gay people were as nonexistent as Hindus in Swedenborg's Stockholm. There is simply not enough careful consideration with the subject in Swedenborg for me to be comfortable with limiting my theological position

to what I find in his writings, and I even feel it is irresponsible to do so. I made a key admission in my original article, which I would like to repeat: "... it is true that many years ago I became emotionally committed to supporting gay people in the face of what I felt was blatant discrimination. This bias has inspired me to find a higher theological basis that would help me understand my passionate feeling that somehow gay love 'works' in the subtler byways of divine order."

I am well aware that the few lines which can be culled from the Bible and from Swedenborg indicate, in their most obvious literal sense, that homosexual expression is disorderly and even immoral. I simply am unconvinced by that meager testimony in the face of personal and modern social experience with what I consider to be in many ways a very beautiful part of the human community. So I am quite consciously seeking a new theological framework for explaining my "bias," and my highest hope is that I can be part of a discussion that will help us all progress toward a deeper understanding. If it turns out that I have been fundamentally wrong about some things, then I feel that my honesty in the striving will have served our modern need to understand each other better in this the New Age.

I feel a moral obligation as a modern Swedenborgian theologian to wrestle with this matter in a world in which *eros* between two people of the same sex has become common, but not obviously destructive or unhealthy, any more than unhealthy destructiveness often characterizes heterosexuality. "By their fruits you shall know them." My experience of the gay community is that our world has received from this unusual but potent variant expression an immensely creative and positive contribution, which makes for a stronger, more productive *maximus homo*. Homosexual attraction, in which a certain type of conjugality of the masculine and feminine has united within the

(Continued on page 95)

## Name Change Boosts Popularity

The Rev. Skuli Thorhallsson reports that the Swedenborg House Chapel and Growth Center in DeLand, Florida has been changed to Chrysalis Retreat Center & Garden Chapel. They are noticing that this change to a more inviting name has made a big difference. Inspired by the Noetic Sciences Conference in Boca Raton and the Alternative Therapies Conference in Orlando, they have made arrangements with the Daytona Beach Community College Institute for Health Services to present educational programs that give continuing education units to professionals. Their first program is, *Promoting Spiritual Wellness in the Helping Professions*, which will address the importance of promoting spiritual wellness in all clinical settings and will demonstrate simple, specific spiritual treatments to integrate spiritual wellness into traditional practice. The second, *Yoga, Meditation and Angelwork as Coping Strategies* is an experiential workshop designed to familiarize helping-professionals with some effective and time-honored complementary strategies to assist clients to cope more successfully with stress.

Skuli was invited to speak at the local chapter of Noetic Sciences in Ormond Beach, which brought several visitors to their Sunday service. Four people recently joined the church. In addition to Sunday service, the chapel continues to conduct a variety of spiritual growth and support groups. Chrysalis Retreat Center is a beautiful setting for small groups and retreats, and an increasing number of people are hearing about it. Skuli says, "We invite other groups and presenters to use our space. Everyone who comes here comments on what a great place it is and what a positive experience they had and they tell their friends. This is the best advertising in the world. We are very excited about our future programs." ❖

*Kneeling: Rev. Renee Billings, Lisa Reddekopp, Jo Zimmerman. Standing: Ruth Brandau, Mary Crenshaw, Jo Locke, Libby Reddekopp, Grace Mikelos & Barbara Penabaker.*

The Royal Oak Swedenborgian Church Women's Alliance celebrated Easter this year with church



members and friends by combining Mite Box Sunday with a formal coffee hour tea social. Sixty-one people attended on Sunday, March 30th. Everyone enjoyed the treats donated for the occasion, as well as the background music of Glen Miller and Charlie Barnet. Swedenborgians from around the state of Michigan joined the Royal Oak congregation for a day of worship, tradition and celebration.

## Billings Guest on AM Radio Program

The Rev. Renee Billings, pastor of the Royal Oak Swedenborgian Church (Detroit) is a member of the Royal Oak Pastors' Association and served on the steering committee for the city's first annual Peace Conference in October. The Pastor's Association also initiated Rose Sunday, (March 9, the fourth Sunday of Lent) a flower exchange among the community's churches to build up the sense of their common ministry and to convey a warm sense of caring and support from one congregation to another. The Salvation Army Church was paired with the Royal Oak Church. A representative from the Salvation Army Church attended and

placed a rose on the altar during the service, and the Royal Oak Church sent a representative to the Salvation Army Church.

Renee has appeared on three occasions as a guest on the AM radio program, "Your Health Alternatives," and was invited to host the program as well. Regular church ads in the monthly holistic publications, *PhenomeNews* and *Touchstone Journals* have proven to be excellent sources of outreach and exposure to the people in the area, as well as the church's participation for the last several years in the twice-yearly New Age Body-Mind-Spirit Festival held in Rochester, Michigan. ❖

## Wedding Ministry Flourishes

The Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, pastored by the Rev. Randy Laakko, has increased its membership to 54. Their wedding ministry continues to flourish, with twenty-two weddings in 1996. The church continues its community outreach with an ongoing commitment to buy and prepare meals for the homeless, active participation in the local Adopt-a-Family program at Christmas, and making their facilities available to various community groups. Proceeds from their second annual plant sale raised sufficient funds to plant a lovely garden at the church. ❖

## LaPorte New Church "Hub" of Candlelight Historical Tour

The LaPorte New Church (LaPorte, Indiana), built in 1859, was chosen as a tour site and the hub of the Candlelight Historical Tour held in December by the *People Engaged in Preservation*. The church offered refreshments and horse-drawn sleigh rides to historical homes in the community. An estimated 800 people were welcomed through their doors! Among the church's other special programs were a five-week angel series in the spring and several musical concerts. With the combined efforts

(Continued on page 89)



## LaPorte New Church "Hub" of Candlelight Historical Tour

(Continued from page 88)

of the congregation and the Historical Preservation Committee, the exterior of the church was repainted and new walls and flooring installed in the basement Sunday school room and kitchen, plus a new office for the minister. They have received many compliments from the LaPorte community on the church's warmer, more inviting look. ❖

## Bayside First Annual Meeting

The first formal annual meeting of the Bayside (NY) Swedenborgian Church, which just joined the denomination last year, was held April 13, 1997. They elected Je-Hyung Bae as president, Youn-Wol Son as secretary, and Sang-Hun Chon as treasurer. Min-heui Cheon is minister there, and is also a student at SSR. Teenage Bible Study meetings were begun in September 1996, in addition to Adult Bible Study and Young Adult Bible study groups. ❖

## Public Lecture by author Brooks Hansen

Among the special programs offered during the year at the New York Swedenborgian Church was a public lecture by Brooks Hansen, author of *The Chess Garden*, in commemoration of Swedenborg's birthday. (*The Chess Garden* was reviewed in the February 1996 *Messenger* by the Rev. Robert McCluskey, pastor of the New York church). The church continues to participate in the H.O.N.E.Y. local food program, the Interfaith Thanksgiving Eve Service, sponsored by the East Midtown Clergy Association, and AIDS Interfaith New York. This year, a Public Relations Committee was formed to enhance communication between the church and the community. ❖

## Greeting Visitors to our Church

The Rev. Eric Allison, church growth consultant, visited the San Diego church and conducted a workshop February 8, with the discussion

centering on how first-time visitors should be greeted and what should be said to encourage them to return and become a part of the church family. The topic was chosen for the workshop because the San Diego church had 57 first-time visitors from August 1996 to January 1997, who have not returned for a second visit, even though many seemed to enjoy the service and stayed for social hour. This problem, of course, is not unique to the San Diego church, so we reprint here a summary of the workshop discussion as it appeared in their church's March 1997 newsletter:

### WHAT DO YOU SAY AFTER YOU SAY "HELLO?"

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Ask questions (small talk).
3. Offer them a cup of coffee and refreshments.
4. Thank them for coming to our church.
5. Tell them you hope they feel enough love in this church to return.
6. Ask them what brought them here today.
7. Ask how they learned about the church.
8. If someone appears sad or unhappy, ask if they are okay and share that it is okay to cry here because we are an emotional group.
9. Express the hope that they feel comfortable with our group.

### WHAT NOT TO SAY

1. If they ask about our church teachings, and have not heard of the church before, keep your answers simple.
2. If they are familiar with the church, keep your explanations in tune with their question. Great detail is not generally needed.
3. *Under no circumstances should they be overwhelmed with church doctrine.*

### SHARING WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO US AS ATTENDEES AND WHY WE COME

1. Share what you like about the church.
2. Share that you like the church because it helps you to be free and makes you think.
3. Everyone is created for heaven.
4. It helps me to be aware of my negative thinking and transforms it into positive thinking.

5. It is good to associate with other people who believe in God and worship Him in like manner.
6. We believe in heaven as something to work toward.
7. Being useful is a way to serve God.
8. I come here because I feel spiritually at home. ❖

## Send Us Your News!

As editor, I receive most of our churches' newsletters. But it is really helpful when you send items—and photos—especially earmarked for inclusion in *The Messenger*.

Following are some examples of the kinds of news items we're happy to publish, as space permits:

- Your church's participation in ecumenical and outreach activities, programs, presentations.
- New or unusual church programs.
- Unusual or experimental worship services.
- News about members such as special honors, jobs or community service, relocation, 50th wedding anniversary. Special anniversaries of churches, or church organizations.
- Mission statements from various churches.
- Contributions from our young people at Urbana.
- Special youth activities and contributions from SCYL.
- Acknowledgment and mention of our churches, members, events or of Swedenborg in a local paper. (it's helpful if you send the paper's writeup of your local event or activity, complete with date and name of newspaper).
- Retreats and workshops, and significant comments or responses from those who attended.
- Bequests.
- Guest preachers, and presence and/or participation of some noted person in your church.

(Continued on page 93)

# EdSU Meeting Report

The Education Support Unit met at the LaPorte New Church Swedenborgian April 13-14. Attending were President Edwin Capon, Pat Tukos (chair), Lorraine Sando, B.J. Neuenfeldt, Esther Nicastro-Capon (SSR representative), Rev. Eric Hoffman (SSA representative), Rev. Eric Allison (church growth consultant), and Barb Halle (EdSU secretary).

EdSU is charged with "Determining the educational needs of the denomination, developing programs to meet those needs, supervising activities such as pre-post convention conferences, programs directed toward the Swedenborgian youth, programs directed toward Sunday schools, Leadership Training for potential and present church or camp personnel and other special programs such as retreats and seminars. EdSU is also expected to maintain close liaison with the Swedenborg School of Religion to ensure that the education efforts of both are coordinated."

## Summary of Reports and Projects:

**PRE-CONVENTION:** Lorraine gave us an update on the pre-convention workshop, "Growing, Sharing, Rejoicing." (see schedule p. 92) Lorraine is composing guidelines on "How to Organize a Pre- or Post-Convention Program" to add to the EdSU Handbook.\*

**MINI-COURSES:** Pat gave the mini-course report. At this point there still appears to be a total of 14 mini-courses, 7 for each time slot. Pat will finish gathering the audio visual needs, prepare the evaluations, and see that there are sign-up sheets and door signs.

**CHILDREN'S PROGRAM:** Pat presented the revised "Guidelines for Convention's Children's Program." Many months before convention EdSU provides the local planning committee with these instructions and many make themselves available to answer questions and advise. At the start of convention the director will be given a report form and evaluations for the children and parents to fill out.

**SSR:** Esther reported that SSR fundraising surpassed their goal, that there are presently 25 students attending SSR (full and part time), and that the '97 graduates are Jonathan Mitchell and Nadine Cotton. She also reported on the recent SSR-sponsored Field Supervisor's Workshop and the development of a Long-Range Planning Committee.

**SSA:** The Rev. Eric Hoffman reported his decision to abandon sending copies of the Sunday School Teacher Training video (from his '96 mini-course) out to Sunday schools. The quality of the video did not make it a useful teaching tool.

We again discussed the *Whole People of God* materials currently being used by many of our Sunday schools. We agree that this material is helpful for busy working people who want to teach but have limited time; nevertheless, we are concerned that the children are not receiving the Swedenborgian insights as taught in the *Dole Notes*. Providing a Swedenborgian supplement to the *Whole People of God* appears to be an almost insurmountable task, as new materials are received each year (and old ones are not to be reused). We are hoping that, prior to starting each new unit (usually every six weeks), Sunday school superintendents will call meetings and have their ministers provide the teachers with a Swedenborgian perspective for each lesson.

EdSU also encouraged SSA to again publish *Five Smooth Stones*.

**EVALUATIONS:** (EdSU supplies SCYL and Transitions with evaluation forms for both participants and staff prior to each retreat) Barb passed out summaries of the evaluations returned to EdSU following the last two Transitions retreats and the Winter SCYL retreat.

**TRANSITIONS:** Pat presented information received from Kurt Fekete, Transitions Coordinator. Two Transitions (young adult) retreats were held at Almont in the last six months. Travel assistance guidelines have been established and the mailing

list updated. Those interested in receiving the Transitions newsletter (or information about Transitions) can write to Kurt at 6156 Farmbrook, Detroit, MI, 48224.

**SOCIAL CONCERNS EDUCATION COMMITTEE:** Pat shared information received from the Rev. Ted Klein, SCEC co-chair. SCEC has recently sent National Council of Churches materials to all churches, has helped in the search for a speaker for convention '97, and will again offer a mini-course at convention.

**SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH YOUTH LEAGUE:** Pat stated that she had received the disc with the mailing list and logos from the Rev. Steve Pults, who resigned as Youth League director March 27. B.J. Neuenfeldt will update the Youth Director job description, handle the advertising for this position, and accept applications. Until the new director is hired, B.J. will oversee the printing of the League publication *Clear Blue Sky*.

The Rev. Eric Hoffman will continue as SCYL chaplain and be responsible for the Midwest Memorial Day Retreat.

Pat will be in touch with the SCYL officers, help with their convention travel plans and coordinate their convention responsibilities and needs.

Appreciation was expressed for Steve's wonderful rapport with the teens and his devotion to them. He will be missed.

**BUDGET/GOALS/FIVE-YEAR PLAN:** We worked on our '98 and '99 budgets, which B.J. will finalize before the August Cabinet meeting. We set goals for the next five years.

\*The EdSU Handbook, now complete, outlines the responsibilities of the chairperson, secretary, members, and the SCYL director. It includes a brief history of some of EdSU's present and past programs, the Guidelines for Convention's Children's Program, and "Organizing the Mini-courses" page. A Retreat Planning Guidebook is also in the works. ❖

—Pat Tukos, chair

## Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit

The Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU), commonly called "Fippersue," oversees the wise use and development of the denomination's resources and provides advice and counsel regarding financial and property matters for any denominational body. It makes recommendations to General Council which makes the actual decisions on funds and properties. It provides consultants for the Church's collective bodies. There are three elected members as well as the treasurer of the denomination, ex officio. The treasurer is specified as chair of the support unit by the bylaws.

FPRSU works closely with the Common Fund Investment Committee which is responsible for making the investment policy decisions for the Common Fund. The Common Fund can be described as the denomination's privately held mutual fund. Any General Convention body can invest in the Common Fund.

FPRSU also appoints the members of the Augmentation Fund Committee. The Augmentation Fund was established early this century "to assist weak societies" in employing minis-

ters. It also provides some funding for candidates for the ministry for their education and makes grants to ministers for continuing education. The Philadelphia Library Fund is administered by FPRSU. The fund makes grants for the establishment of Swedenborgian libraries, specifically book purchases and limited advertising, and distribution of free literature.

Each year, budget requests are received from the General Council, the Council of Ministers and all support units. These are used to prepare the preliminary budget that is presented to the Cabinet. FPRSU is instructed to clearly indicate any adjustments that seem to be needed. The Cabinet reviews the budget, negotiates and makes adjustments to the budget before referring it to General Council for adoption.

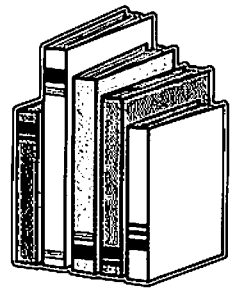
FPRSU is also responsible for seeking new sources of material support for the denomination. ❖

—Polly Baxter

*Polly Baxter is a member of FPRSU, chair of the Augmentation Fund Committee, and assistant to the treasurer.*

## Applications Wanted

In 1993 the New Church Book Association of Philadelphia turned over its assets to the denomination, to be made available for three purposes:



- Establishing or maintaining libraries of bookrooms in/by local Swedenborgian churches or other constituent bodies, said libraries to house books or other material written by, relating to, or having a marked interest in the theology of Emanuel Swedenborg.
- Providing Swedenborgian literature for free distribution.
- Funding limited advertising programs by said church libraries or bookrooms. Distribution of available monies for the current church year is being decided by FPRSU. Applications should be sent to:

**Philadelphia Library Fund,  
48 Sargent Street,  
Newton, MA 02158**

## THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH ~ STATISTICS AS OF DEC. 31, 1996

ASSOCIATIONS	CHURCHES		ORDAINED MINISTERS			AUTHORIZED LAY LEADERS	MEMBERS			# OF DELEGATES
	ACTIVE	INACTIVE	ACTIVE	INACTIVE	RETIRED		ACTIVE	INACTIVE	TOTAL	
Canada	1	0	2	0	1	1	158	43	199	17
Connecticut	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	7	18	3
Illinois	6	0	3	1	0	0	143	28	171	16
Kansas	2	0	0	0	2	0	109	0	109	12
Maine	2	0	2	1	0	0	116	174	290	13
Massachusetts	5	2	11	0	3	1	216	34	250	23
Michigan	1	0	1	0	0	0	71	13	84	9
Middle Atlantic	3	0	3	0	0	0	124	39	163	14
New York	1	0	1	0	0	0	25	34	59	4
Ohio	3	2	1	0	0	1	67	22	89	8
Pacific Coast	6	0	9	3	2	1	317	0	317	33
Southeast	2	1	3	0	0	0	55	13	68	7
Western Canada	5	3	2	1	4	0	115	40	155	13
<b>SOCIETIES</b>										
Georgetown, Guyana	1	0	0	0	1	0	54	14	68	7
Bayside, NY							20	2	22	4
Church of the Little Grain							19	15	34	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1618</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>2096</b>	<b>186</b>

# PRE-CONVENTION CONFERENCE & CONVENTION SCHEDULE



## "Let The Earth Rejoice"



### Growing, Sharing, Rejoicing

*The Pre-convention Conference begins Sunday July 6 at 7:30pm and ends at noon on Wednesday July 9.*

#### SUNDAY JULY 6

##### Preparing The Ground

7:30 pm *Prayer of Beginning ~ Building Community ~ Hopes and Wishes for Growing ~ Singing ~ Lorraine Sando, Carol Fusco & EdSU Members.*

#### MONDAY JULY 7

##### Planting The Seeds

9:00 am *Brain Gym ~ Pat Tukos; Announcements ~ Lorraine Sando*  
9:15 am *Qigong ~ Susan Harris*  
10:15 - Noon *Therapeutic Touch ~ Sue Frid & Carolyn Buchanan*

##### Germinating

1:00 - 1:45 pm *Solo Time / Journaling*  
1:50 - 3:40 pm *Sacred Writing and Art ~ Lorraine Sando*  
4:00 - 5:00 pm *Special Interest Groups*

##### Sprouting

7:00 pm *Community ~ Sharing our Growing ~ Lorraine Sando*  
7:45 - 8:45 pm *Sacred Theatre ~ Carol Fusco*  
9:00 - 9:30 pm *Song ~ Prayer ~ Rejoicing*

#### TUESDAY JULY 8

##### Budding

9:00 - 9:20 am *Brain Gym and Qigong ~ Pat Tukos & Susan Harris*  
9:20 - 10:45 am *Therapeutic Touch ~ Sue Frid & Carolyn Buchanan*  
11:00 - Noon *Guided Imagery & Creating with art materials ~ Lorraine Sando*

##### Blooming

1:00 - 1:45 pm *Solo Time / Journaling*  
1:45 pm *Song*  
1:50 - 3:45 pm *Massage ~ Carol Fusco*  
4:00 - 5:00 pm *Special Interest Groups*

##### Bearing Fruit

7:00 pm *Community ~ Sharing our Growing ~ Lorraine Sando*  
7:45 - 8:45 pm *Sacred Theatre ~ Carol Fusco*  
9:00 - 9:30 pm *Song ~ Prayer ~ Rejoicing*

#### WEDNESDAY JULY 9

##### Harvest And Thanksgiving

9:00 - 9:20 am *Brain Gym and Qigong ~ Pat Tukos & Susan Harris*  
9:20 - 10:10 am *Closing the Special Interests Groups*  
10:30 - Noon *Bringing Home the Harvest ~ Lorraine Sando ~ Closing Ritual*

### Convention '97

*Convention '97 begins at 2:00 pm on Wednesday July 9 and ends Sunday July 13*

#### WEDNESDAY JULY 9

10:00 am General Council  
2:00 pm Opening of Convention  
3:00 pm Sunday School Association  
3:00 pm General Council  
7:30 pm Worship Service ~ Banner Procession ~ President's Address ~ Business Session ~ Welcome Address: HCC President, Dr. Ed Burger  
9:30 pm Presidents Reception ~ Centering Down

#### THURSDAY JULY 10

7:00 am Service of Remembrance  
8:00 - 9:00 am Choir Rehearsal  
9:00 - 11:00 am Theme Presentation  
11:15 am Report of the Nominating Committee  
Nomination from the Floor  
11:30 am Women's Alliance Luncheon  
*Prairie Dunes Country Club*  
1:15 - 2:45 pm Business Session  
3:00 - 5:00 pm Mini-courses  
6:30 pm Rehearsal: SSR Graduation  
7:30 pm SSR Graduation  
8:45 pm SSR Reception

#### FRIDAY JULY 11

7:00 am Chapel Service  
8:00 - 9:00 am Choir Rehearsal  
9:00 - 10:15 am Business Session  
10:30 am Election of Officers  
1:15 pm Business Session  
3:00 - 5:00 Mini-courses  
7:30 - 8:30 pm Business Session  
8:45 pm Kansas Association's evening of entertainment with Bill Mallory as Johnny Appleseed  
10:00 pm Kansas Association Reception ~ Dance  
Instruction at same time as reception

#### SATURDAY JULY 12

7:00 am SCYL Chapel Service  
8:00 - 9:00 am Choir Rehearsal  
9:00 - 11:00 am Corporation of SSR  
11:30 am Buses leave for Pawnee Rock for a tour of the church and a reception  
11:00 - 4:15 pm General Council: Lunch provided  
1:00 pm Space Museum and Space Center  
4:30 pm Bus departure from Student Union parking lot to Pretty Prairie for a buffalo feed and rodeo (or movies in the old theatre) and a dance

#### SUNDAY JULY 13

10:00 am Church Service and Ordination

## Our Daily Bread Available

Ever since 1949, the Swedenborgian Church has been publishing a monthly magazine of readings, sermons, and devotions. That magazine is *Our Daily Bread*. Each month the magazine brings to its readers sermons from a wide variety of clergy and lay people within our church, as well as classic sermons from preachers in the church's past. Every issue has a theme. There is a sermon for each Sunday, accompanied by a Bible reading, a reading from Swedenborg, and a prayer, all centered on some aspect of the month's theme. Then, for each day of the week, there are brief Bible and Swedenborg readings and a short devotional prayer. The magazine is designed to be used for personal reading and devotion, for home worship, and for use by lay preachers serving churches

who are without pastors.

The Swedenborgian Church has recently selected a new editor for *Our Daily Bread*: the Rev. Lee Woofenden, pastor of our church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Lee is continuing the magazine in the fine tradition set for it by its previous editors, the Revs. Richard Tafel Sr. and Jr., while adding to that tradition improvements from his own editing and translating experience. Readers can enjoy the same variety of contemporary and traditional sermons that the magazine has offered in the past, while benefiting from fresh translations of Swedenborg made especially for the weekly and daily readings.

The topical nature of the magazine has been strengthened, so that each issue can serve as an introduction to

some aspect of our church's teachings and life. This will improve the usefulness of the magazine for introducing newcomers to our church. The month's topic is now printed on the front cover, helping to give each issue more personality.

*Our Daily Bread* is a ministry supported by the Swedenborgian Church and by individual subscribers. The price is kept well below our costs of production so that all who wish to subscribe will be able to do so. If you would like to subscribe to *Our Daily Bread* for yourself, a family member, or a friend, please send your check for \$10 US or \$13 Canadian for each one-year subscription to:

Our Daily Bread  
PO Box 396  
Bridgewater, MA 02324-0396

### Swedenborg as a Mystic from an Easterner's Point of View

(Continued from cover)

correct names to him, or perhaps he simply felt no need to give a name to God which could be misunderstood.

I hear a voice from inside that tells me, "You need more work on this!" I, as a Korean Swedenborgian, now realize that I need to do some more comparative studies between Swedenborg and the great religious founders of the East to introduce Swedenborg and the New Church. If, as I hope, I find a more acceptable way to share Swedenborg with Koreans, there will be many among them who would like to regard Swedenborg as a great philosopher, theologian and spiritual leader and Swedenborg's theology as an acceptable and modern form of theology.

\* November, 1996 *Messenger*.

*Jun-Chol Lee is a first-year student at the Swedenborg School of Religion. He is from Korea, and studied Eastern philosophy there in his undergraduate work at Han-Guk University of Foreign Languages. He also studied at the Academy of the New Church College in Bryn Athyn. ❖*

### A Call for Sermons!

Are you an ordained or lay worship leader within the Swedenborgian Church? Or do you have a stash of sermons that you are no longer using, written by ministers in our church? If so, the Rev. Lee Woofenden, editor of *Our Daily Bread*, wants to hear from you! Specifically, he requests that you send him current and older sermons for possible use in *Our Daily Bread*. It is quite a challenge to find enough sermons on many of the topics that would be interesting to the magazine's readership. The greater the pool of sermons the editor has to draw from, the better each issue will be. Please be sure *Our Daily Bread* is on your church's sermon mailing list. Also, please send your current and past sermons—and keep them coming! Thank you.

Our Daily Bread  
PO box 396  
Bridgewater, MA 02324-0396 ❖

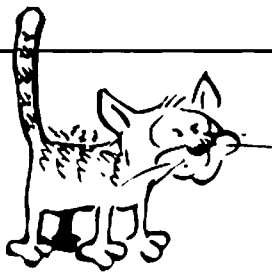
### Send Us Your News!

(Continued from page 89)

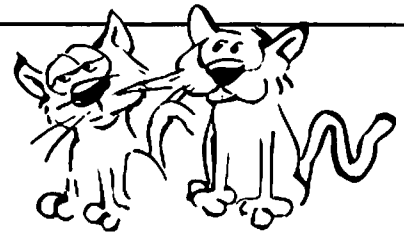
- New church officers; building changes and improvements.
- Special activities or events at Association meetings.

Please make sure *The Messenger* is on your church's newsletter mailing list. If you don't do a newsletter, it would be helpful, when you're calling on volunteers for various tasks in your church, to ask someone to be in charge of getting your church's news to *The Messenger* as soon as possible after it's happened. Even if the item is going to be printed in your newsletter, and I'm on your mailing list, I would appreciate receiving the news as soon as possible after the event, so that it can be included in whatever *Messenger* issue is upcoming.

And ministers, if you're too busy to send items for *Passages*, please put someone else in charge of this task so that these notices appear as quickly as possible after the event. ❖



## Of War and Peace and Cat Tales



Patte LeVan

During the course of phone conversations on other *Messenger* business, several readers have inquired about the two 11-year-old Ginger tabbies I had mentioned adopting in the February *Messenger*. At the end of my story ("Peace and Joy Alive and, Well, Relative"), I spoke of being optimistic that the three male cats—Burt, Ernie, and Julian, the cat I have had for five years—would work out their relationships, that their basic need for fellowship would ultimately win out over their territorial imperative.

I was wrong about that. But there are spiritual lessons we can learn from animals as we observe their interactions—the parallel to our human behavior is uncanny. For the first few days after Burt and Ernie arrived, each of the cats found a preferred hiding place where they holed up and emerged only to take care of vital necessities, hissing warily if one passed too close to the other enroute to their feeding and litter box areas. Burt and Ernie didn't hiss at each other, of course; they are brothers who were raised together. Julian was not pleased that his home was invaded by these two, but he seemed willing to make the best of it as long as they stayed out of his immediate space. Julian is courteous, quiet, affectionate if he trusts you, and exceptionally neat and clean, but quite set in his ways. If there were a cat-casting of *The Odd Couple*, Julian would play the Tony Randall part.

Burt is a 14-pound lovable, gentle giant who seemed to sense what it was going to take to get along well in this new home. He gave Julian all the space he needed, calmly ignored it when Julian hissed at him, and went about peaceful and unafraid, but minding his own business. Ernie is sweet, but higher strung than Burt. He has large green eyes and one cauliflower ear (an

old battle scar) which tends to lend an unbalanced, Van Gogh intensity to his expression. As Ernie became more secure in his new surroundings, he began to react to Julian's warning hisses by pushing further into Julian's territory. He was getting in Julian's face, and Julian was reacting by hissing and growling more menacingly. Ernie then seemed to take this as a challenge, and stepped up his aggression as he apparently decided he had to fight it out with Julian for the position of head cat. These war preparations usually took place at night. The hiss-rowr-snarl-thump wasn't exactly music to sleep by, but when things really heated up, Ernie and Julian took short cuts across my body as they chased each other over the bed.

During a conversation with SSR Professor Dr. Wilma Wake, a fellow cat person, I explained my dilemma. She has four cats who coexist in reasonable tranquility.

"There was one I had who was very combative," she told me, "and the vet prescribed some kind of injection that brought out the more feminine side and quieted down the aggressiveness."

"What's the name of it?" I asked. "If that were released for human consumption, we might achieve world peace before the millennium."

"I can't remember what it was," Wilma said, "but it did work. Have you considered having a talk with the kitties?"

"Yes, but I've committed the classic parental sins—I asked Ernie why he couldn't be more like his brother, and I told Julian he was bringing more trouble on himself with his incessant hissing and growling."

"You do need to be more subtle. There are deep issues buried in their kittenhood that need to be explored. I'd be happy to make an onsite visit," she offered, "but my fees are exorbitant because I'm the only expert in this field." She suggested I talk to my vet.

The vet said she wasn't prescribing

the hormone anymore because cats often became diabetic as a side effect. "This is such an avoidable tragedy," I said. "All they have to do is change their attitude."

She gave me a five-page manual on the delicate art of introducing new cats into homes with a resident cat. To carry out the instructions of separation, isolation, and periodic reintroduction, I concluded I would need two houses, both large, and would be spending most of my waking hours on this project, with no guarantee of success. By then, Julian was creeping around looking like Harrison Ford in his perpetual state of anxiety, afraid Ernie was going to ambush him, which of course he did. I began housing Burt and Ernie in the guest cottage at night. Ernie escaped late one night while I was trying to get Burt inside. He headed for the drainage pipe, his favorite place to hide outdoors. I spent the next hour crawling around in the ditch with a flashlight trying to retrieve him, so that some coyote wouldn't take him for a midnight snack. The next day I reluctantly called Richard, my son's friend who was the former owner, and explained that things weren't working out with the cats. He was most sympathetic and drove down from L.A. to take them back and try to get them a new home.

I felt terrible about giving up on a commitment, but that night my son called and said a woman who was moving in next door to Richard was overjoyed to discover the cats needed a home, and she wanted to adopt Burt and Ernie. They would be close by so Richard could visit them, and the timing worked out perfectly.

I realized, then, that I wasn't meant to keep them permanently, only the ten weeks it took for this to happen. Timing. Nothing temporal is permanent, and we are operating on God's time schedule—another spiritual lesson we tend to forget most of the time. ❖

## BAPTISM

**Kemp**—Kyle Monay Kemp, infant daughter of Sara and Adrian Kemp, was baptized into the Christian church April 13, 1997, at the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Rev. Kit Billings officiating. Sara is a daughter of Sylvia Lange, longtime member and organist at Virginia Street church.

## CONFIRMATIONS

**Alonso, Buteux, Cruz-Gonzalez, Gonzalez, Shakalis**—Ilia Gonzalez Alonso, Sara Buteux, Zayda Cruz-Gonzalez, Jose E. Gonzalez, and William Shakalis were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church Easter Sunday, March 30, 1997, at the Cambridge Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. F. Robert Tafel officiating.

**Dugan, Sass**—Twyla Dugan and Tammy Sass were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church December 1, 1996, at the LaPorte New Church (Swedenborgian) in LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

**Poznak**—Michelle Poznak was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church March 2, 1997, at the LaPorte New Church, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

**Rennier**—Richard and Debbi Rennier were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church March 9, 1997, at the LaPorte New Church, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

**Robbins**—Michael S. Robbins was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church and welcomed into membership January 26, 1997, at the New York Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Robert McCluskey officiating.

## MARRIAGE

The Rev. Kit B. Billings and the Rev. Mary Beth Sarhatt were united in marriage April 24, 1997, at the Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church in Montgomery, Ohio, the Revs. John Billings and Meg Hess officiating.

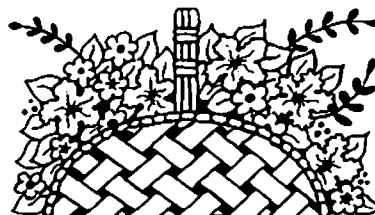
## DEATHS

**Cutler**—Dorothy Winslow Randall Cutler, 98, entered the spiritual world March 14, 1997, in Westminster Village in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Dorothy was baptized at the Boston Swedenborgian Church October 1, 1898, by the Rev. James Reed, and was confirmed and elected into membership April 7, 1918. She was married to Edward Hutchins Cutler at Rockport, Mass., by the Rev. William F. Wunsch. A memorial was conducted at Westminster Village; burial followed in Memorial Park Cemetery. A memorial service is planned at the Boston Church of the New Jerusalem. Our love is extended to William Cutler and Mary Wagner.

**Harvey**—John Harvey, brother of the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey died April 1997, at the age of 81. A small private service was conducted May 24, in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

**Regamey**—Peggy Regamey, 90, longtime member of the Boston Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world April 19, 1997, in Westbrook, Maine. Peggy was the wife of the late Rev. Anthony Regamey, former minister of the Boston church. She is survived by her children, Joyce Bicknell, Patricia Vigue and David Regamey. A memorial service is planned for summer.

**Sigle**—Marcia Sigle, 77, of LaPorte, Indiana, entered the spiritual world March 29, 1997. She was in the process of moving to Colorado to be closer to her family and the mountains, both of which were spiritual inspirations for her. A service of remembrance was conducted at the LaPorte New Church April 11, 1997, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.



## Response to Gay Marriage Commentary Continued

(Continued from page 87)

relationship, may be a variant expression that has always been a possible, but largely suppressed expression within the divine order of the masculine-feminine interplay. But as with many aspects of human development, this possibility has flowered in the spiritually freer environment of the New Age.

In particular, I have developed the theory that a variant of the conjugal principle occurs naturally with many gay people. The basic building block for the conjugal attraction is stated early on in *Congugial Love* (n.32)—namely, that the male soul is inwardly love with an exterior motive expression through wisdom, while the female soul is the reverse, setting up a yin-yang complementarity that is but the human version of an attraction principle holding together everything that exists. I think that this dynamic manifests in many variations of strength with males and females across the spectrum of billions of individuals, and I find it unconvincing that roles never reverse in the variations of the natural order. As human life both biologically and psychologically has become more complex (which I trust is by providential design), I see increasing diversity in possibilities. Since in my real experience the homosexual population clearly enhances life, my hunch is that this fundamental building block of the divine *esse* (the conjugal attraction) can even manifest in combinations (though still rarely—maybe 2-3% of the time) in which the complementarity is happening between two members of the same biological sex. I remain open to further discussion and inquiry, but in my experience with real people, I now believe that gay love, as is also true of heterosexual love, is profaned or made sacred by the integrity of the individuals involved. That is why I am willing to bless gay marriage commitments. It's as simple (and complex) as that. ❖

\* "Risking on the Side of Compassion"

The Rev. Jim Lawrence is co-minister of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.

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.

## New and Forthcoming J. Appleseed & Co. Publications

Jim Lawrence

J. Appleseed & Co., the publisher of books and pamphlets for our denomination, has recently released two newly-designed pamphlets of popular but out-of-print works. Paul Zacharias' *This We Believe* has been slightly shortened, completely redesigned, and returned to its original title: *Swedenborgians See It This Way* (12-page, glossy cover). Also out under a new cover and design is Bob Kirven's *Let's Talk about Death—and Life* (28-page, glossy color cover). Both of these works are available to authorized churches and literature centers free of charge in reasonable quantities (you pay postage).

Several other church publications are in various stages of development and production. One work that we hope to have off the press in time for convention in Kansas is *A Handbook to the Swedenborgian Church*, a smallish booklet that answers key questions about our denomination's beliefs, history, and organizational structure. Modeled after the enduring British Conference's *Better than Gold* (by the Rev. Dennis Duckworth), this will be the sort of piece that can be used for new inquirers, or as a handy reference for church members.

Three books well along the path toward publication are works by two current professors at the Swedenborg School of Religion, and by a professor emeritus. The Rev. Dr. Ted Klein has a work in progress that articulates a special interest which has guided his theological focus for the past twenty years. Essentially, his book will apply Swedenborg's theology to important social issues that face us in the modern world, with an emphasis on uses, a life of active service, and community. The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is nearing completion of a book with the working title, *Beyond the New Age: Spirituality as We Approach the Millennium*, and the Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven will be publishing in book form a version of his longstanding seminary course, *An Overview to Swedenborg's Theology*. ❖

## NCC's Richard Killmer Keynoter at Convention '97

"Healing and Protection of God's Creation" is the topic of the keynote speech to be presented by the Rev. Richard Killmer at the '97 Convention in Hutchinson, Kansas. He will also bring a report from the National Council of Churches. Mr. Killmer is the Associate Director of the National Ministries Unit of the NCC. He also serves the Council as Director of Environmental Justice. He joined the staff of NCC in January 1996, having previously served the national headquarters of the Presbyterian Church (USA) directing the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program for 15 years beginning with the designation of peacemaking as a priority emphasis in 1980.

Killmer worked for the National Council of Churches previously from 1970–1980, directing the Special Ministries/Vietnam Generation, Domestic Hunger and Poverty, and co-directed the Child and Family Justice Project. He has also served as a pastor. Rich has written many articles and resources for publication and was the co-author of two books. He and his wife Peggy live in Princeton, New Jersey, and are the parents of four daughters. ❖

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*The Messenger*  
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