

THE MESSENGER

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September 1997

The Lord Reigns; Let the Earth Rejoice!

Convention Sermon, 173rd Convention of the Swedenborgian Church,
July 1997, Hutchinson, Kansas

Robert Kirven

Joel 2:1-3; 2:15-19; Revelation 21:1

It is a moving experience for me to stand before you in Kansas as convention preacher, just two days shy of the thirty-fifth anniversary of my ordination in Kansas, along with Galen Unruh and Richard Tafel, Jr.. Such symmetry is so delightful at this point in my life, that I need the help of your prayers to shift my attention—and yours—away from my pride and reminiscences, focusing instead on the spiritual growth and mission of our communion in the New Church. Please pray with me.

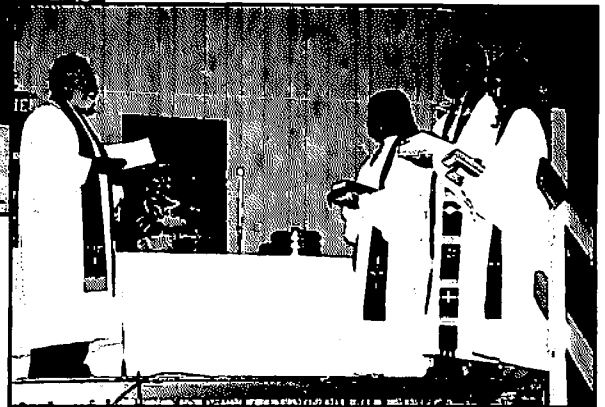
Lord, we have come from the corners of our continent to its center here in Kansas; grant that our journey may bring us also from the daily details of our church and work and home, to the center of our life and purpose as we worship you. Help each of us hear, through our liturgy and sermon and fellowship this morning, your words of guidance, encouragement, and hope for our lives and for the life of the church that we seek to build in your name. Amen.

"Let the earth rejoice!" is a great theme for our convention. It calls us forward to greater efforts, greater deeds, greater satisfaction and joy. In the context of Psalm 97, *The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice!*, it recalls the reason for rejoicing: the Lord does reign over the earth and our individual lives. That is reason enough for us, and for the whole earth, to rejoice and be glad. As the Lord promised in Isaiah 65 (17-18): *for, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth . . . Be glad and rejoice forever in*

Each time one of us surrenders again, admitting the Lord to govern another aspect of our daily living, we join the earth which naturally rejoices in his reign, increasing the cause for rejoicing.



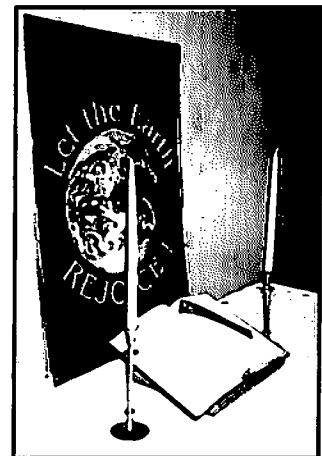
Above: Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven
Right: Ordination—Rev. Edwin Capon and ordinands Min-Heui Cheon, Jonathan Mitchell, Nadine Cotton.



that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

It is important to remember that what we join the earth in rejoicing over is the Lord's presence and action in our lives. If we forget that, we begin to feel that our response to the Lord's loving providence is what gives the earth cause to rejoice. The earth will be glad if we ride our bikes instead of driving our cars, and plant trees instead of using paper towels!

That is precisely the distortion of reality that led Adam and Eve to



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Convention Commentary

I wasn't exactly blown away by the idea of Kansas in July. But then I have a hard time with leavetaking in general, especially those last 24 hours. I insult my neighbor's intelligence by going over the cat care and garden routine with her for the tenth time, compose last minute codicils to my will, and make one more frantic attempt to clean off at least the top of my desk. As I pack, I picture my loved ones poking through my effects, lamenting more the piles of paper I left behind than my sudden and tragic departure from the planet.

I arrived at the Wichita airport after an exceptionally uneventful flight and was greeted in the baggage claim by a tall smiling lad holding a Swedenborgian Convention sign, who turned out to be Mary Siebert's son Andrew. He was looking also for the Revs. Donna Keane, Robert McCluskey and Richard Tafel. We retrieved Tafel and McCluskey, but Keane had disappeared in Dallas, destined not to resurface for another 12 hours. She had not only missed her connection, but forgotten her ruby slippers. Ah, another convention was underway.

A wonderful breeze tempered the heat. It was after 6 p.m. when we left the airport for Hutchinson Community College. The late afternoon sun bathed the fields of wheat stubble in a heavenly pink-gold light, and Andrew, a delightful host and conversationalist, directed our attention to the longest grain elevator in the world, stretching out along the horizon on our left. A feeling of peace and tranquility and all things being safe in God's hands settled over me. That energy, usually fleeting, seemed to remain more or less intact throughout a week in which our church dealt with some very deep and difficult issues.



The three-day pre-convention workshop, presented by our Education Support Unit and facilitated by



Lazy Eights, a part of Brain Gym. (L-R) Pat Tukos, Barb Halle, Connie Unger, Patty Thompson, Susan Poole, integrate their right and left brains during pre-convention workshop.

Lorraine Sando of Seattle and Carol Fusco of Portland, Maine, delivered superbly on its promise to make connections with body, mind and spirit through art, music, meditation, writing, song, Therapeutic Touch, Brain Gym and group sharing. It was consistently fun, energizing, non-threatening and enlightening.

The workshop was generously offered free to all ministers' spouses, with some built-in separate time for the spouses to meet and renew our connections, catch up on the year, and welcome new spouses. This year we welcomed Mary Beth Billings, Kit Billings' new wife, and Carl Blenkin, Jonathan Mitchell's partner, both of whom also participated in the workshop and greatly enhanced the group energy. It was such a pleasure to have Muriel Bennett again in our midst.

Laurie Turley of Fryeburg, Maine, led us in Yoga stretches. Carolyn Buchanan and Sue Frid from Kitchener introduced us to Therapeutic Touch, a non-invasive therapy utilizing the body's own electromagnetic energy field. Developed by Dr. Dolores Krieger, it is now being taught in 80 universities and hospitals in the US and Canada along with 40 countries around the world. We were able to practice some beginning techniques with each other that enabled us to feel more balanced,

centered and peaceful.

Brain Gym, presented by Pat Tukos of LaPorte, Indiana, consists of simple exercises that integrate right and left brain activity and enhance mental clarity. Art, writing, song, and clay

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Photos in this issue by
Marian Mull and Patte LeVan.

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The Lord Reigns; Let the Earth Rejoice!

(Continued from front cover)

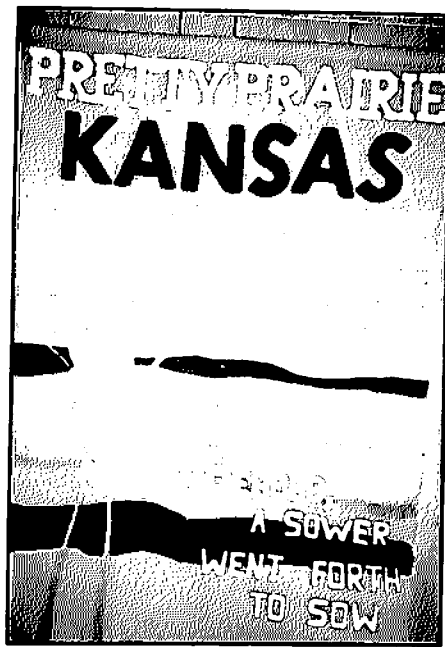
transplant their own favorite tree into the center of the garden where God had placed the Tree of Life. That is the process by which we have messed up our individual lives and the health of our living planet. We may ride bikes and plant trees when we accept the Lord in our lives, but it is the Lord's arrival in our living, rather than our response to it, that is the cause for rejoicing.

Accepting the Lord's rule over our thoughts and feelings and actions isn't always what we think we want to do. The Old Testament Prophets spoke of it as "the day of the Lord," and prophesied truly when they said that more often it appears as something to avoid. Joel called the Day of the Lord *a day of darkness and of gloom, a day of clouds and of thick darkness!*" Amos' imagery describes the Day of the Lord as when you run away from a lion, and meet a bear; or flee into your house, where a snake bites you! (5:19) The truth is: whatever we're enjoying when the Lord is *not* ruling is an enjoyment we'll have to give up to accept the Lord's reign—and that scares us.

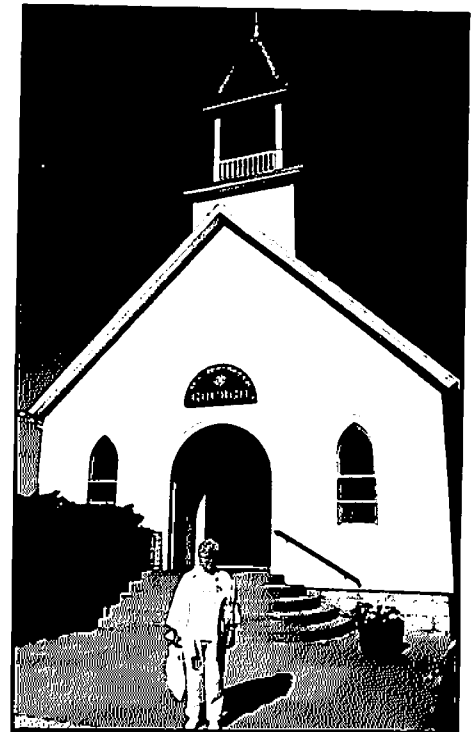
That's the bad news: there is something in us that makes us avoid and reject the Lord's rule over our lives. Whatever our profession on Sunday morning, God's way looks dark and frightening in the actual moment of decision, and we turn back to more familiar paths. The earth doesn't rejoice over that.

But there's good news. The good news is that the Lord—always ready to rule, guide, and support us—also helps us overcome our fears and reluctance, helps us welcome him into our hearts and our lives. The Lord never forces us, never makes us submit to his reign whether we want to or not. But if we really want to live more fully and joyfully, the Lord opens our eyes to see our need for him, guides and assists us through the changes we have to make in ourselves to be able to accept him, and transform us into new creations. When that happens, our ears

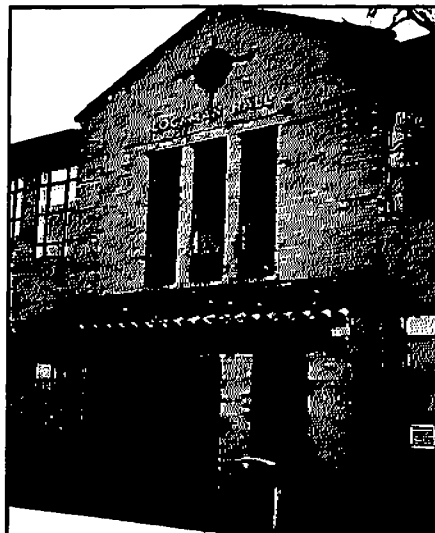
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Right: Muriel Bennett at Pretty Prairie Church.



Above: Convention Choir, Sylvia Nelson, director.



Above: Lockman Hall, Hutchinson College. Right: Jenn Tafel, Urbana University student, addresses issue on floor of convention. Far right: Ordinand Min-Hewi Cheon.

The Lord Reigns; Let the Earth Rejoice!

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are opened so that we can hear the earth rejoicing around us.

One reason we find it hard to accept the Lord's reign in our lives, is that we don't know what it means. We take it as a platitude, one of those phrases common in the Bible and in boring sermons that—with eighty-four cents—will get you a cup of coffee at the corner quick-mart. In the daily stress and pleasures of personal living, and in our corporate efforts to sustain and strengthen our church, we feel we are too busy with things that *matter* to worry about whether the Lord reigns in our lives. How would we know if God reigns in us or does not? What difference does it make?

I could have answered such questions quickly if a student had asked me when I was teaching theology, speaking of the "inner consent and favoring" the Lord provides. But I've learned a little more about the subject, and want to share some of that with you.

I learned God's power, and the joy of accepting it, a dozen years ago when he enabled me to win a struggle with alcohol, but I wasn't through learning. A near-fatal gastric catastrophe last Christmas diminished my ability to eat and sleep. When the doctor told me last month that I had recovered as much as I am likely to, I felt depressed, and pessimistic about my future. But then, like a prototypical modern man who reads the directions only when all else fails, I asked the Lord to help me.

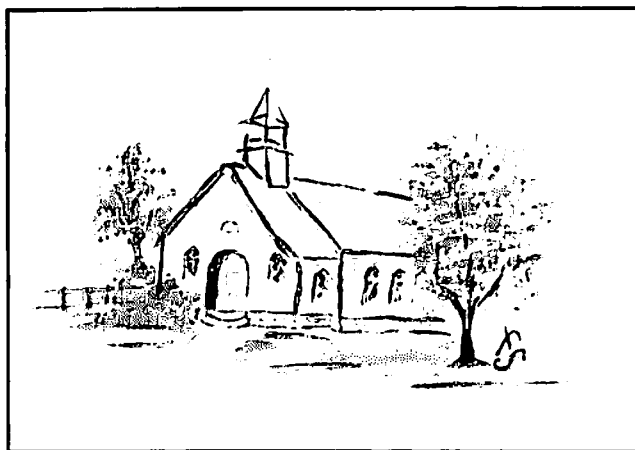
I had prayed before during all this; but stubbornly resisting what wisdom I had garnered in my life, I had prayed for recovery, for restoration of my former state—forgetting that I had been unknowingly on the brink of collapse when I'd been in that state. In other words, I prayed for what I *wanted*, or thought I wanted. Our Lord's instruction, if you'll recall, was to pray that God's will be done; not that we get what we want. Yielding to

desperation, at last I simply asked the Lord to help me, in God's own way—to take charge of my life.

What I received in answer to my prayer for help is a realization of both the limitations and the possibilities defining my physical life, and a new ability to accept both. Together, the realization and acceptance have changed my attitude in remarkable and unexpected ways. For one example, I feel more excited about writing my next



Margaret Kraus, Florence Steward (Pretty Prairie's "Grandma Moses," who at 95 still paints exquisite greeting cards), and Virginia McGovern. (Far right, back: Eugene Carlson of Norway, Iowa).



Water color of Pretty Prairie church by Florence Steward

book than I did last December. Also, I feel better and enjoy life more. This is because I am looking from a new perspective, and that perspective is God's answer to my prayer.

I had a hard time, writing those last three paragraphs of personal reminiscence. It took several days to realize what I wanted to say. The great difficulty I experienced shows me that I am still having trouble looking at all my life from my new perspective. But the fact that my keyboard struggle led

me to see the situation in this way shows me that the perspective is a valuable one, the answer to my prayer. In fact, when I finished that last sentence, I got up and opened my drapes so I could see the palm tree and other shrubbery outside my window. Before I recognized the connection to what I was writing, I thought—as I often do—how happy the green leaves in the sunshine look to me, as long as I'm not out in the three-digit heat along with them! Without recognizing the connection to the sermon on my computer screen, I had joined the earth, the natural world, in rejoicing over God's reign in my life! It was an amazing moment. With one pull of the drapery cord, I opened my physical, spiritual, and mental view of my life and of the sermon I am illustrating with it. Among other consequences, the experience shortened the sermon, by providing the bridge I had been looking for between my illustration and my point.

That point is both personal and cosmic: each time one of us surrenders again, admitting the Lord to govern another aspect of our daily living, we join the earth which naturally rejoices in his reign, increasing the cause for rejoicing. As I apply it to our theme and our church, it is a call to each of us to set aside personal ambitions and hopes for the church, and seek instead to commit ourselves

afresh to the Lord's reign.

I don't know what that means for any one of us. I don't know whether the Swedenborgian Church as we know it will prosper if we all commit ourselves even more fully to the Lord's leading and rule—or whether it will prosper or fail if we do not. But I know there is satisfaction and joy to be found in serving the Lord, and his purposes will be accomplished sooner

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The Earth is the Lord's and the Fullness Thereof

(Abridged text)

Richard Killmer

The Bible has a great deal to say about God's creation, the human task of stewardship, the harm the creation has experienced by human hands and its redemption by God through Jesus the Christ. There are several ongoing Biblical themes about creation:

CREATION IS GOOD

Throughout the Psalms and the rest of scriptures, the wonders of God's creation are praised and great thanksgivings are offered. Built into the creation is shalom (peace). God's intentions are that shalom mark relations between God and humankind, between humans and humans and between humans and creation. We do not own creation. Creation is God's. Therefore when we build interstates on wetlands, we are abusing a world that does not belong to us, but to God. Living on the earth is more like borrowing our neighbor's lawnmower than it is buying one.

The earth is the Lord's for all generations, including the next one. In the Yahwist story of creation, God creates plants, animals, man and woman from the dirt. They all have a common source. Humans are made from this soil, they return to it at death, and they cultivate it during their lives. In their basic nature, therefore, humans are associated with the earth rather than with the deity, with creation rather than with the creator. In this regard humans share the lot of all of life, since animal and plants are both fashioned by God out of arable soil.

In the Priestly account of the creation story, human beings are not created from dirt with plants and animals, but are created in God's image. This image probably means that human beings are God's representatives or stewards in creation. It is a special function and responsibility which is not shared with other animals or plant life. The Priestly account helps us to see the innate goodness in nature and the potential power wielded by humanity. It helps us to understand the awesome responsibility that humanity holds in its choices of using the land for good or for ill.

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S . . .

The steward takes care of someone's property. Since the earth is God's and not ours, we are responsible to God for protecting creation.

God mourns the brokenness . . . Creation suffers because people do not treat each other or creation well. And this occurs because people are not faithful to God . . . Creation in its broken state longs for healing. It is like being in labor waiting for the child to be born. All of creation waits for God's transformation and God's redemption.



Above: Richard Killmer (R) with panel responders Donna Keane and Ted Klein.

Some examples of the brokenness in creation are:

- Soil erosion • Water pollution
- Climate change • Urban sprawl • Consumption

SOIL EROSION

Soil erosion has reached epidemic proportions in many parts of the world. As the topsoil gets thinner, its productivity declines. During the 1980s in the U.S., loss of soil occurred on over one third of the croplands. Guatemala has lost 40%; Turkey, 54%, and one fourth of India's total land area suffers from erosion.

It takes at least 100 years for nature to create 2.5 centimeters of new soil.

WATER

Water for drinking and crops is often in the wrong place at the wrong time or contaminated from agricultural and industrial activities. In California, most of the rain is in the north and most of the people are in the south. Therefore there is a complex network of pumps and aqueducts to take water from north to south. Based on the rate at which water tables have dropped, serious water shortages are projected throughout the western states at the turn of the century.

On the other coast, the water available to the 3.5 million people of Long Island, New York, is becoming contaminated by industrial waste and leaks from landfills and septic tanks.

Clean drinking water is becoming a prized commodity and in many parts of the world the water that is available is not safe for drinking.

GARBAGE

It is estimated that Americans produce 230 million tons of garbage per year—5.1 pounds per person a day. That is more than China and twice as much as France or Germany. Thousands of landfills have been closed. Since nobody wants one nearby, the landfills are often placed where poor people live or in communities of color.

Millions of tons of garbage are trucked to faraway sites.

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Edwin Capon

Has the Church a Future?

I am pleased to note that both our active membership and our total membership have gone up, the active membership by 82 and the total membership by 90. That felt good to me, but it is not enough to prevent me from asking the question *Has the Church a Future?*

Actually, that is the title of a book mailed to all our ministers prior to our convention some years ago. Some of its contents seem to me to be of continuing relevance. Five of our convention churches I have preached in which are now closed, and some I have visited in the last few years are largely attended by people past 60. I also know of mainline churches that have closed or are attended mostly by older people. We cannot avoid the question *Has the church a future?*

It is often said that we are living in the post-Christian era. Probably most of us know more people who do not attend church on Sunday morning than do. Seminars, conferences, athletic contests, all kinds of activities are now scheduled for the traditional hour of Sunday worship. It may well appear, therefore, that churches, our own as well as others, are on the way out. I believe it is important for those who are committed to the church to look at the prospects for its future even though it may seem not to be positive thinking.

The author of the book that raised this question, Douglas John Hall, is a professor of Christian Theology at McGill University in Montreal. He does not ask the question to reject a negative answer out-of-hand. He does not ask the question to reject the question itself, as he thinks many self-deluding Christians do. He asks it to encourage us, almost to shock us into accepting that the church of the future may be quite different from the church we know. He asks it so that we may be contributors to that future church, not obstacles in its path.

In the early 1950s, a week-long conference, held every summer on the Isles of Shoals off the New Hampshire coast, featured the theme "The Coming Great Church." On July 28, 1953, the Rev. William F. Wunsch addressed this interfaith conference on "The Coming Great Church as Seen by Swedenborg." It seems to have been generally assumed then that the adjective "great" would be an appropriate description for the church of the future. But Dr. Hall asserts in his answer to his own question that "it cannot be doubted that the general trend is toward minority status for Christians in the world." (He does not mention the growing number of Muslims and adherents to Indian religions in the United States.) He further states that "There are few groups of Christians on the scene today who can still pretend to great success (Has he

overlooked the fundamentalists, or are they less in evidence in Canada?). Christendom (which is what the West has claimed and with some success attempted to be since the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine)—"Christendom as Western Christianity has imagined it and tried to create it for some 16 centuries has come to an end. The Church as a "mighty army" is no more, and no manner of Christian revivalism can put Humpty Dumpty together again." Then he goes on to say that

"The end of Christendom might be the beginning of the Church."

When the Emperor Constantine made the Christian religion the official religion of the Roman Empire, it may have seemed that

"the kingdoms of this world had become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ," to quote the Book of Revelation. And it was true to some extent. But the kingdoms of this world have had a diluting effect upon the church ever since. The state and the secular culture have not supported the Christian Church throughout the centuries without expecting and often receiving the support of the church in return, whether it be in the form of the blessing of armies, the endorsing of economic systems, or approving the programs and policies of governments. A notable example from our own history is the support of slavery by the clergy, the churches and the lay people of the South.

The return to minority status upon the part of the church may just be the church's opportunity to return to greater loyalty in both word and deed. In trying for numbers the church may too often have settled for lukewarm numbers. Last week Bernie Ward suggested on his radio show that if Christianity were made illegal most Christians would only get a ticket.

In seeking to build and maintain impressive churches the church may have made compromises to gain financial support. In seeking protection, if not support, from the state, they may have closed their eyes to some of what the state is doing. By accepting minority status not only as inevitable but possibly also as God's intention for it, the church may be better able to concentrate on its real task. As St. Paul has said, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

To quote Hall again, before St. Paul "all the metaphors Jesus employed suggest a minority. He said his followers would be like a bit of yeast in a loaf of bread. He compared them to a candle in the night . . . He said they would be like salt—a pinch of salt in an otherwise insipid

By accepting minority status not only as inevitable but possibly also as God's intention for it, the church may be better able to concentrate on its real task.

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Looking to the Future

*Swedenborg School of Religion
Commencement Address, July 10,
1997, Hutchinson, Kansas*

David Eller

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself. Lord God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight and these my brothers and sisters . . . Amen."

Madame president, trustees, faculty, students, family and friends, graduates . . . it is indeed an honor and privilege for me to address you on this momentous occasion. A commencement ceremony is a sacred occasion, marking one of the defining moments of who we are as a church, a school, and who we are as faculty, students, and graduates.

The ability to reflect theologically, regardless of our career choice, may be the most important thing you have learned at SSR. I have been both a teacher and a preacher, as well as an editor and publisher—and in all of these sought to understand and reflect the spirit and will of God. In another month I will conclude my executive responsibilities with the Swedenborg Foundation and return to academic life. I want to take this opportunity to thank the General Convention, SSR, and indeed the entire Swedenborgian community for making me feel so welcome these past five years, for your kindness, your understanding, and your spiritual insight. These have been precious, growing years. I will miss you.

Allow me to turn now to three challenges for tonight's graduates that I offer to help you shape your ministry as you look to the future in the New Church.

My grandfather was a farmer preacher in the hills of southern Virginia around the turn of the last century. He was a kind man, hard worker and prosperous orchardman,

but rigorous in his faith. He wore the plain dress, broad-brimmed black hat, and beard of our Brethren ancestors, and he conducted many revival services, often lasting a week or more in isolated communities. A story is told that at one such revival a man attended who was well known in that community. But he had an unsavory reputation. He drank too much, gambled, and couldn't seem to hold a job—all of which kept his wife and children in poverty.

Somehow he showed up at Grandpa's revival meeting. He came back for each service, and his wife and friends began to pray for his conversion. Sure enough, at the end of the week he asked for baptism. After the close of the Sunday service, Grandpa led the congregation and the candidates for baptism up the hill onto a neighboring farm where a stock watering tank had been prepared as a baptistry. Kneeling before Grandpa in the tank, the man confessed his sins, accepted Jesus into his heart, and promised to support the church. Grandfather then immersed him in the Dunker manner—three times, forward, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. After the final immersion, it is customary to lay hands on the candidate while yet in the water, and offer a prayer asking for the gift of the Holy spirit. But before Grandpa could begin the prayer, the man leaped up and jumped out of the watering tank, shouting.

"It is finally over; it is finished" But Granddad quickly repositioned the man humbly back on his knees with the admonition, "No brother, no. It is just *beginning*. Your life with the Lord begins today."

In one sense tonight, you graduates can shout, "it is finally over, it is finished." You have worked hard, you have studied with purpose, you have accomplished much. Your formal training for ministry is completed. This

commencement honors that work and study and dedication. But in the larger meaning, in a spiritual sense, you are just beginning. And so I would urge you, as with that brother in the Virginia hills, to humble yourself with the Lord as you embark on a full life of ministry and service.

■ ■ ■

Another challenge from my faith pilgrimage concerns my father, also a Brethren preacher. Although born in Virginia, he served as a pastor in Idaho and California as well as Virginia. In 1965 he was in Sacramento, California, when a phone call came from the Northern California Council of Churches asking if he would go to Selma, Alabama, for a few weeks to help register African-American voters. As a white southerner who never lost his distinctive accent, they thought he

would be an asset to a delegation from that part of the state. Those of you over 50, think back for a few moments to the tension of those hot summers in the mid-1960s and the Civil Rights movement. Our society was seriously divided on several key social, political, and economic questions. The nonviolent action in Selma leading to the successful registration of black voters later came to be seen as one of the turning points in the Civil Rights struggle.

Almost everyone was against Dad going—from members of his church to many of his colleagues in the Brethren ministry. "Why do you want to get involved," they said. Even if they agreed with the goals of the voter registration, it was "someone else's problem," they said. But Dad decided he could be helpful and decided to go anyway. When he arrived, tensions were already at a fever pitch. The

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Paul's summary of love is not simply that it is the greatest spiritual gift. The punch line is that we should make love our goal, our purpose, our aim.

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Looking to the Future

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police had used dogs, and firehoses, and mass arrests to deter the marchers who sought to make their way to the courthouse. On his second day there, Dad was in a line of marchers when he found himself face to face with a local white man. This angry man gave him crude gestures, cursed him with every obscene name, quoted the Bible to him, and ended their encounter by spitting repeatedly on him.

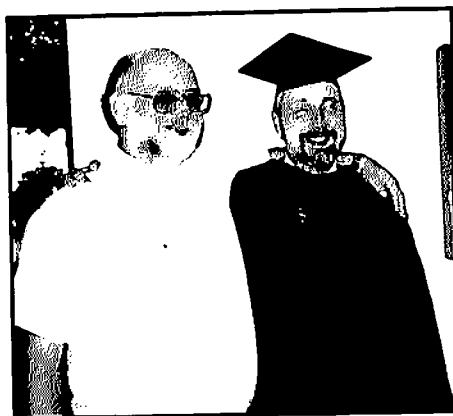
Dad had been a conscientious objector during World War II, so he was used to a certain amount of public ridicule for his faith. But this response was new, a kind of hatred he had never experienced. Something deep inside him cracked, and he left the line of marchers, feeling defeated. Back in his quarters, Dad began to question his purpose in going to Selma, and he began to pray. And as he prayed, a chapter of Scripture repeatedly came to him, the 13th chapter of the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Often known as the "love chapter," it begins "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." If we are familiar with this passage, we normally stop reading at the end of the chapter: "And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love."

In Dad's mind, however, he continued to the first verse of 14th chapter, which begins, "Make love your aim." And he paused. Of course, make love your aim. In the days long ago when Paul's letters existed only in scrolls or in bound manuscripts called a codex, the text was not divided into chapters and verses like our modern Bibles. Paul's summary of love is not simply that it is the greatest spiritual gift. The punch line is that we should make love our goal, our purpose, our aim. We are to follow the way of love.

That spiritual reminder gave Dad the strength he needed to face his own racism, and to confront the power of hatred with the even greater power of love. The Greeks had different words



Hutchinson Brass Quintet.



Jonathan with president-elect and COM chair Ron Brugler.



Nadine Cotton and daughter Kelly. "Does this mean I have to call her Reverend?"

for different kinds of love. *Agapos*, the word used in Paul's letter to the Corinthians and at several other places in the New Testament, is a special kind of love. We might think of it best as God's redeeming love. This love is not so much a feeling as it is an action. It is not so much a sentiment, as it is a lifestyle, an approach toward serving others. *Agape* love does not ignore feeling, but it is the kind of love that compels us to go beyond our feelings. It is a form of love that obligates us to treat with concern and respect even those with whom we disagree, even our enemies. This kind of love, Paul says, never runs out. This kind of love is costly because it requires some personal investment, sacrifice, and risk, and the willingness to be vulnerable. And it is also rare.

Graduates, you are entering into ministry in a world that is still divided

by racism, and war, sexism, and into a world that is separated into rich and poor, between the haves and have nots, between the industrial capitalism of the West and the grinding poverty of the third world. Into this world I believe God's will for us is clear: make love our aim. Dave Eller, you make love your aim. Nadine Cotton, you make love your aim. Jonathan Mitchell, you make love your aim. Faculty and trustees, you make love your aim. Swedenborgian Church, you make love your aim.

■ ■ ■

I want to conclude this evening with a reminder from the commencement address that was given when I graduated from theological school in 1971. The

(Continued on page 105)

The Graduates Speak

Jonathan Mitchell

This moment has been a long time coming! When I first wrote these words last week, I had in mind primarily my own personal journey. But in light of this afternoon's events, I have to say that they have a broader application as well. I attended my first convention in 1987, after having officially become a Swedenborgian a few months earlier. And it was during Steve Pults' graduation and ordination that I started to imagine myself standing in that place, embarking on that journey.

Later, one afternoon at the Fryeburg Assembly, Jim Lawrence sat down next to me on the porch and wondered aloud if I might not have a call

(Continued on page 106)



Jonathan with parents Mary and Roy Mitchell.

Looking to the Future

(Continued from page 104)

Vietnam War was still raging and many of us were draft resisters. We believed we had God's message "all war is sin," and all of society needed to hear it whether they wanted to or not. We were ready to go out and save the world.

To that optimistic, even militant, group of graduates the school's administration invited a faculty member to give the commencement address. He was a well-loved theology professor who marched with us in peace demonstrations and wrote for left-leaning periodicals and journals. He was politically active, someone who took part in the anti-war rallies at the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention, and who refused to pay all of his income taxes as a war protest. And he taught fascinating courses on topics like "the history of nonviolence" and the "theology of radical discipleship." We were sure this professor would use the commencement address as an anti-war cry, and we were delighted with the prospect that our parents and friends who attended the ceremony would finally be set straight on the proper role of the church in the world.

The appointed day came, a hot Sunday June afternoon, and the chapel was packed. But instead of issuing marching orders for the nonviolent revolution we knew was at hand, the speaker cautioned us to be realistic about the changes in the world and the church that we could honestly expect to make. He gently reminded us of the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy penned by Thomas Aquinas some seven hundred years ago: to teach the unlearned, to counsel the doubtful, to reprove the sinner, to forgive the offender, to hear with the oppressive and troublesome, and to pray for us all. The professor also suggested we commit to memory Aquinas's Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, which are these: to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to visit the sick and the prisoners, to ransom captives, and to bury the dead.

At the time I did not find these recommendations as to what idealistic theological graduates might do with their lives particularly inspiring. I wanted to march on Washington and bring down the government to stop the war. Yet as I have changed careers,

taken on the responsibilities of family life, completed a doctoral program, taught undergraduates, learned about management skills and computers and electronic typesetting . . . my theological perspective has matured and these insights of St. Thomas have stayed with me. Graduates, I trust they will also mean something to you.

And so Nadine and Jonathan, my third point this evening is simply this. Do not take the entire world on your shoulders. You do not have the money, the power, or the influence. But you *are beginning* your ministry and have a fresh enthusiasm about it. Moreover, you have *agape love*, and kindness, and mercy, and generosity—skills and spiritual gifts to be of use, to be of service, to God and for your neighbor's good. May God richly bless you.

The Rev. Dr. David B. Eller is the former executive director of the Swedenborg Foundation. He is now director of the Young Center for the study of Anabaptist and Pietist Groups and professor of History and Religious Studies at Elizabethtown College in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. (see p. 120) ♦

The Graduates Speak

(Continued from page 105)

to ministry. (Others had wondered that, myself included). On that afternoon I asked Jim if the denomination was ready to call a gay minister. And I recall Jim's advice: he told me to take it slow, to let people get to know me as a person first, and maybe there would be a church who would call me.

I entered SSR fully expecting the program in its entirety to be long, arduous, and demanding. I expected that I would be challenged to grow, that I would be required to move beyond my self-imposed limitations. The experience more than met those expectations. To be a full-time student, living at the school, is a whole lifestyle unto itself. And while at times they have been stressful and exhausting, these last four years have been the busiest, the most exciting, the most growth-filled, and the happiest years of my life so far. For me, the growth of these years has been personal as much as professional. But SSR was the context for both, and I am profoundly grateful to SSR for the opportunity to enter into what I know is my use.

The summer before I entered SSR, I read in *The Messenger* Paul Giunta's "Plan of Ministry." Had he lived, Paul might well have been the first openly gay man to be ordained as a Swedenborgian minister. I've returned to that plan many times—for me it has always been an inexpressibly poignant document. My dream has been dreamed before, by someone I will never have the pleasure of meeting in this life. In his plan, Paul proposed an outreach ministry to the gay community. You get the impression, though, that that was a second choice. His ultimate goal was to be a parish minister. He wrote—and this is in 1981—"I am fully aware that at

It was with a profound appreciation of the trust that has been placed in me that I accepted a call to the Washington D.C. Society, a church that by its action has shown it trusts me to be who I am without disguises and be a pastor for everyone.

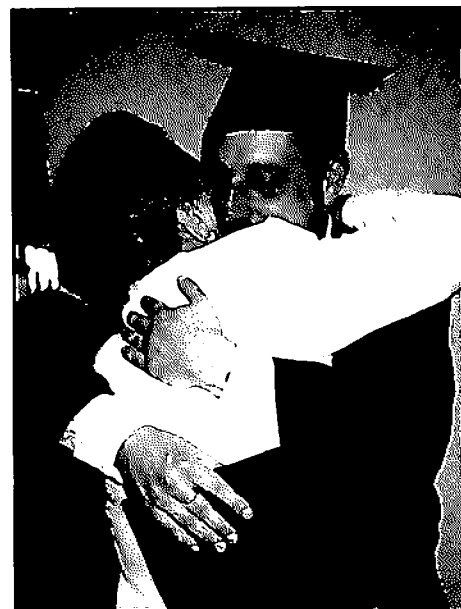


Grads Mitchell and Cotton thoroughly hugged by Bill Baxter.

present there is probably not one parish in the church that would accept me as a pastor and therefore I seek a ministry of the streets . . ." He went on to express a hope that maybe within ten years' time a parish would be ready to call him.

Of course, we'll never know. But the world has been changing in the meanwhile. We do know that in 1997 four groups within the denomination invited me to candidate, four were ready to at least consider calling an out gay minister. Therefore, it was with a profound appreciation of the trust that has been placed in me that I accepted a call to the Washington D.C. Society, a church that by its action has shown it trusts me to be who I am without disguises and be a pastor for everyone.

I want to thank everyone who helped me along this journey: my family, Wilma Wake, Mary Kay and the SSR faculty, fellow students, the Committee on Admission into the Ministry, the Council of Ministers, field education supervisors and many friends from those fielded sites. I especially want to thank the SSR community as a whole, who not only supported me all the way, but also welcomed my



Hug and congrats from Virginia Branston, New York.

partner Carl and made him a full member of the community. And to Carl himself for hanging in there with me through the many demands placed on my time and energies by SSR and the candidating process.

Over the last few hours, many of you have asked me if it was hard to sit through the discussion of my ordination. And yes, it was nerve-racking. However, from a long-range point of view I think it was a good thing. I want you to believe me that I am glad we had that discussion. I thank everyone who spoke, whether for or against. I think it was a necessary discussion. I believe that when we look back at the action we took today, it will be with pride—and rightly so.

In my original draft of this talk I included a quote from Swedenborg. In *Arcana Coelestia*, par. 3986, he says, "The good qualities of people, both within the church and without, are thoroughly diverse, so diverse that the good of one person is not exactly like that of any other." And goes on to say, "Things good and true in the Spiritual World—although diverse—still make a 'one' from the Divine through love and charity." Today, I believe that our denomination as a spiritual community has taken a further step towards that Divine "oneness." Let the earth rejoice! ❖

The Graduates Speak

Nadine Cotton

WOW! I can't believe I have finally made it. I am still amazed that my life has led me to ministry. Ministry is probably the last thing that I expected to do with my life. My first reaction to feeling "called" was, WHY??? But now that I am here I am glad that I came. What I have learned in my life is how important it is to let God do the leading. I would have never have led myself here, yet, I am very happy today.

As a child I went looking for happiness, the love and acceptance that I was not getting at home. I went looking in all the wrong places. I dreamed of being a star and gave that up with the many other loses in my life. I eventually figured that the reason I was not happy, the reason I could not find the love that I wanted and needed was because there was something wrong with my head. I went into counseling and discovered that what was wrong with my head, was that the connection between my heart and my head had been severed. I needed to find a way to reconnect and rebuild this connection. In this work with my counselor, I was eventually led to working out my anger with God and starting a spiritual program. During the Christmas season of that year, I went to a meeting that Santa Claus attended. We each got to tell Santa one wish, and I wished for happiness. Well, since that Christmas, my happiness has somehow managed to climb to incredible new levels each and every year. God has led me and keeps leading me up the ladder of happiness.

I have heard that some wells are fed by tiny little capillary-like streams that fill up the well as long as water is drawn out from the well. If the well is no longer used, if water is not drawn out, the little streams clog and cannot flow freely to

the well. The connection between the water and the well is severed. The well dries up! This is the way it has felt inside of me. When I lived without God in my life, that inner well of love and truth seemed to clog and dry up. When I let God back into the center of my life and let God do the leading, this well again started flowing. I now feel an incredible amount of love within my well that fills me higher and higher as I draw from this love and give to those around me. Swedenborgian theology has become the rope for the bucket that allows me to draw from this well. I am so excited by the possibilities I now have in front of me of sharing this well of love with others as a Swedenborgian minister. I like helping others to find their well of goodness, love, understanding and guidance that is already within them and waiting to be tapped.

I am excited that the ministry I have been led to will make use of a lot of

my creative talents. I have a graphic artist background and I have found that as a creative person, I get bored easily. But I have

found that people are not BORING! The work that I have done in ministry with people and my studies of Swe-

denborgian theology is never boring. I find that I sometimes want a little *less* excitement and interest, but I am not bored on this path. I am sure that I will continually be learning new and exciting things in the ministry that I envision at the Network Center in New Hampshire. I feel very fortunate

to be in on the ground floor of helping the Network Center become an active entity in the Swedenborgian Church.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped on the way to making this dream happen. Thank you to SSR faculty, staff and board; my family—especially my daughter Kelly, for all of her patience and support; my friend, Patt McClain, who helped me find my connection with God; my fellow students who have walked the path with me at SSR; the Billings' family

who first heard about and supported me in this crazy notion of ministry; the ministers who supervised me in my field education experiences; and thanks to all the ministers and friends who have supported me along the way. I would also like to thank SSR and the Augmentation Fund Committee for their support and I would especially like to thank the Chicago Society for their support. There are many others in and out of General Convention that have made an impact upon me and helped me with my ministry. Thank you to *everyone* who has believed in me and helped me along the way to finding the true happiness of God's love within me! ❖



Old grad (95) Renee Billings in heart-to-heart with new grad Nadine Cotton.

When I let God back into the center of my life and let God do the leading, this well again started flowing.

Inner Situation Dictates Appearance in Spiritual World

To the Editor,

In fairness to everyone who has been following the *Messenger* discussion of gay unions, it should be pointed out that Swedenborg seems not to comment on gays at all. I have not been able to find any reference to them. Nor do they seem (so far as I can determine) to appear in scripture. The scripture passages which seem to refer to them are of course usually taken literally; but the next question, especially among Swedenborgians, is whether the real meaning in these passages would lie in their inner sense instead,

For example, Leviticus 18:22 says:

"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination."

If we take this literally, then it is strange that only males are prohibited from having a same-sex relationship; homosexuality is also found among woman. Leviticus 20:13 adds, "they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them." That would be ridiculous unless the passage is taken symbolically.

Swedenborg writes about these abominations at great length in *Apocalypse Explained* 141, including that last quote:

From the presence of spirits who have confirmed falsities in themselves, and have applied truths from the sense of the letter of the Word to confirm them, there exhales an abominable sphere of whoredom. Such spheres correspond to all the prohibited degrees (of which, see Leviticus XX. 11-21) with a difference according to the application of truths to falsities and the conjunction of falsities with evils.

Spiritual evils are meant, and of course anyone can commit spiritual evils, whether he is "straight" or not, and then be seen doing these things in the spiritual world, whether or not he actually did them physically in the natural world. Swedenborg continues:

Who cannot see that by "whoredoms" here are not meant whoredoms in the usual natural sense? For the church in which all the truths of the Word have been falsified is treated of; this is what is meant by "whoredoms;" for "whoredoms" in the spiritual sense, or spiritual whoredoms, are no other.

There is a critical difference between these people and those who in the natural

TO THE EDITOR

world do things that look similar on the outside but inside are expressing love because this is the only way they can do it. How *they* should appear in the spiritual world is going to be quite different. The spiritual world and the inner sense of the Word depict motives, the inner situation, not necessarily physical acts.

Steve Koke

Rough and Ready, California ❖

Millennium Muddle Widespread

To the Editor:

I had to wonder if William O'Sullivan got the end of the century right in the reprint of his announcement ("Religion in 99") in the *May Messenger*, page 69.

Maybe he did. In any case, many, many people, newspapers (including our own *Sacramento Bee*), and even Internet websites are getting it wrong. The beginning of the new century and millennium is January 1, 2001, not 2000. The year 2000 is the last year of this century, despite the higher first digit. When you count on your fingers you start with 1 and continue until you reach 10, not 9. If you then go on to count your toes, starting

from 11, you end with 20, not 19. The last in any sequence of ten always looks a bit like the start of the next 10, because of the added or higher first digit, whether it is fingers or centuries. But it is the 10th and last of the group, not the first of the next group of ten.

Steve Koke

Rough and Ready, California ❖

Editor Chastised, but Forgiven

To the Editor:

I have just received the *May Messenger* in which I am referred to as "a Louise Lynn of Winter Park, Florida." For the record, I am a lifelong member of the New Church. I was baptized in the Baltimore church where my parents, Elinor and Edward Worthington, were married. My grandmother, Ella Browning Linhardt, was a member of that church (the first Swedenborgian society in this country). I attended Sunday school there. My father's work took us to the Midwest, and I attended church and was confirmed in the Chicago area at Humboldt Park, and I attended the St. Louis church. For about thirty years I was a member of the Connecticut Association of the New Church—first as secretary and later president.

This may be the pot calling the kettle black (figure of speech), but I thought your response was a tad flip. However, I forgive you!

Louise W. Lynn

(Mrs. Martin F. Lynn)

Winter Park, Florida ❖



Min-Hwei Cheon, Jonathan Mitchell, Patte LeVan, and Jonathan's partner Carl Blenkin.

The Lord Reigns; Let the Earth Rejoice!

(Continued from page 100)

if we surrender to his reign than if we wait for someone else to do it.

I cannot think of any harder charge to give you, nor a more rewarding effort for you to make, than to give back to the Lord the control over life that you've worked all your life to gain. We try so hard to find the right path for our lives and the right course for our church, that it is hard to quit chasing our own dreams, and let God actually reign in our lives. We've all paid lip service to cute little slogans like "Let go, and let God," but we keep on trying to do *our* best for what *we* think is right. As I read my Bible, and Swedenborg, and my life experience so far, that works to some extent if we're lucky—but never well enough. That's why our lives and our church are not in better shape than they are.

It's such a simple thing, but incomparably complex, to surrender control and let the Lord reign. It's such a little thing, but infinitely far-reaching, to commit ourselves to God's way instead of our own. But if we do it, and let the Lord actually rule our lives, we and all the earth will have great cause for rejoicing.

Let the earth rejoice!

The Rev. Dr. Robert H. Kirven, a former president and professor at the Swedenborg School of Religion, is now retired and living in Glendale, Arizona. He is the author of several books; the latest is A Book About Dying: Preparing for Eternal Life, published by the Swedenborg Foundation. ❖

Convention Structure Review

The General Council established the Structure Review Committee to evaluate the current working structure of our denomination. The committee, comprised of Phyllis Bosley, Ron Brugler, George Dole, Chris Laitner, Perry Martin and Pat Zacharias has been gathering information from ministers, Central Office, past and current officers of General Convention and the Support Units, and from SSR. A preliminary report of the information gathered was presented to the Council of Ministers and to General Council at the 1997 convention in Hutchinson, Kansas. Delegates to the convention had the opportunity to view the preliminary report and to fill out a form so that their input could be added to the data. Several did, but many did not find time to do so. The information covers areas which work well, and also those areas that are in need of revision, etc.

In order to fully evaluate the structure of General Convention, the committee needs more input from the laity. Anyone who wishes to comment on programs, practices, ministries, assistance, etc., of our denomination in any way may address comments to the Structure Review Committee chair, Chris Laitner, at 10 Hannah Ct., Midland, MI 48642. (E-mail: kiplingcat@juno.com) Main areas that have been identified from responses to the committee's questions include: the perception of General Convention as an organization; the Support Units; the budgeting and evaluation processes; communication; and use of outside resource people and/or General Convention's Dream Weavers. Comments on these and any other areas are welcomed through October 20, 1997.

Chris Laitner, Chair

How's It Going ?

One of the provisions of the organizational structure General Convention adopted in 1986 was that there would be periodic evaluations. Is it working as intended, or not? What needs to be changed? We need as much feedback as we can get. Please fill out one of these forms for each denominational body that you or your group has had dealings with during the past three years. If you have had no dealings with any denominational body, please submit one form with a check mark in the first box. You may sign the form or not, as you wish.

1. I have had no dealings with any General Convention body during the past 3 years. ☐
2. I have had dealings with _____ (Support Unit, Officer, etc.)
3. The issue dealt with was _____
4. I found the proceedings (Place a check in one box on each line)

<input type="checkbox"/> Discouraging	<input type="checkbox"/> So-so	<input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging
<input type="checkbox"/> Confusing	<input type="checkbox"/> So-so	<input type="checkbox"/> Enlightening
<input type="checkbox"/> Unproductive	<input type="checkbox"/> So-so	<input type="checkbox"/> Productive

CONVENTION FUN!



Pretty Prairie Rodeo



Above: Kevin Baxter, Urbana University, being supportive of Megan Helm, Kansas, at ice cream social.

Right: Bill Mallory as Johnny Appleseed.



GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT

(1997, Pre (July 9) and Post (July 12))

General Council met at the 1997 convention in Hutchinson, Kansas.

Action taken included:

- Restoration of funding to the Stonehouse Bookroom in Redmond, Washington
- 1997 funding for a new minister at the Network Center for Spirituality in Concord, New Hampshire
- Approval of a property transfer at the church in Guyana
- A decision to join the Alban Institute with institutional membership

General Council spent much time deliberating over the ministry at Wayfarers Chapel.

Chris Laitner presented the preliminary report of the Committee for Structure Review. (See General Convention Structure Review, p. 109).

A discussion of a change to the Bylaws to allow "one delegate, one vote" at annual convention was tabled until December.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 5-7, 1997 at the Wayfarers Chapel in Palos Verdes, California.

Martha Bauer, Central Office Manager

Swedenborgian Church Election Results

President Rev. Ron Brugler (beginning 7/98)

Vice President Phyllis Bosley

Secretary Gloria Toot

Treasurer Polly Baxter

**General Council Margaret Kraus
Christine Laitner, Rev. Skuli Thorhallsson**

Communications Support Unit Steve Koke, Susan Poole
Education Support Unit Bill Baxter
Financial & Physical Resources Support Unit Barbara Boxwell, Fran McIntosh

Ministries Support Unit..... Linda Tafel, Alan Thomsen
Information Support Unit Rev. Lee Woofenden
Nominating Committee Mildred Laakko
Committee on Admission to the Ministry.. Pat Tukos, Rev.
Deborah Winter

Board of Trustees, SSR Marilyn Turley, Eric Allison

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS REPORT

The Council of Ministers met from July 6 through July 9, with 34 Council members and eight guests participating. We welcomed the Rev. Kei Torita from Japan to our sessions. We began with a general sharing of personal and professional concerns, dealing with a variety of issues.

There was a panel presentation and group discussion on "Our Swedenborgian Identity—What Is It and What Difference Does It Make?"

In a discussion of Swedenborg School of Religion/Council of Ministers issues, led by Dick Hatheway and Esther Capon, many issues of mutual interest were explored.

Reports were presented and discussed from the Building Fund Committee, the General Convention Structure Evaluation Committee, and several other COM committees.

The Council of Ministers budget for 1998 was revised and approved.

The question of "What is adequate preparation for the ministry?" was discussed at length. A committee will be appointed to explore this issue.

Worship services opened and closed all of our daily sessions, and the worship experiences were especially effective this year.

The COM Executive Committee for the coming year is: Ron Brugler, chair; Ted Klein, secretary; Renee Billings; John Billings; and Bob Kirven. Our CAM member is Skuli Thorhallsson, and our convention preacher for 1999 is Sue Turley. (Jim Lawrence is convention preacher for 1998).

It was voted to support Nadine Cotton, Jonathan Mitchell, and Min-Heui Cheon's ordinations, acknowledging their respective calls to the Network Center for Spiritual Growth in Concord, New Hampshire; the Washington, DC, Church of the Holy City; and the Edmonton, Alberta, Church of the Holy City.

At the request of the Guyana Society, on recommendation of CAM, and on the basis of preparation recognized by COM to be adequate, and on his expression of allegiance to the constitution and bylaws of the Swedenborgian Church, the Council recommended the induction into our ministry of the Rev. Compton English for service in Guyana.

Paul Zacharias, outgoing secretary

Theodore Klein, incoming secretary ❖



*Rev. Kei
Torita,
Tokyo,
with
Marian
and
Keith
Mull,
Kansas*

Network Center Joins Maine Association

Wilma Wake

I was pleased that on my last day as minister with the Network Center (July 27, 1997), the Center was voted into membership as a society of the Maine Association by an overwhelming majority of Maine Association delegates! Karyn Hannigan represented the Network Center Board at this special Association meeting and expressed the Network's desire to work in fellowship with other Swedenborgian groups. The Association voted first to amend its constitution to allow societies of adjoining states to apply for membership. It then voted to accept the request of the New Hampshire charitable corporation: The Network Center for Spirituality, Inc., to be accepted as a society of the Association and thereby to become a body of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

Denomination membership is the culmination of a long process for the Network Center. During the past several years the board has been exploring the theology of Emanuel Swedenborg, getting to know the Maine Association, and learning about General Convention. Board treasurer Michael Ivanoff attended his first convention this year and was enthusiastic about the many new friends he made and the wonderful time he had. He talked with Edwin Capon about his interest in doing an oral history of the earlier New Hampshire Swedenborgian groups in Manchester and Contoocook.

I helped to start the Network Center in 1988 as a Swedenborg School of Religion student doing a field education project. The Rev. Dr. Bob Kirven supervised my work with

several Concord-area spiritual seekers in starting a spiritual growth center. In 1990, I was ordained on a plan of ministry to help develop the Network Center of Concord, New Hampshire. In my graduation address, I spoke about the work of the Network

Center, and we received our first donation that evening from Dick and Polly Baxter, who wanted to show their support! Dick Baxter offered a lot of advice and encouragement in our early years. The Growth and



Wilma Wake and Michael Ivanoff.



Nadine Cotton discusses plans for Network Center with Center Treasurer, Michael Ivanoff, attending convention for the first time.

Outreach Support Unit (GOSU), under Chris Laitner's leadership, provided incredible help—both financial and emotional—to our fledgling center. The former Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU) offered its support by sending Eric Allison to help us organize our programs and Eli Dale to train the board members. The Los Angeles Society has provided a grant for the past several years that has allowed the group to rent a large, sunny space on Maine Street in Concord.

I had to announce my resignation to the Network Center some months

ago, since my full-time work at S.S.R. precluded my giving the Network Center the kind of ministry it needed and deserved now that it is growing so rapidly. The group underwent a process of interviewing candidates, and has called the Rev. Nadine Cotton to full-time ministry.

Nadine was ordained at our Kansas convention this year, and begins her full-time ministry with the Network Center September 1. The group has submitted a five-year plan to the Ministries Support Unit (MINSU) that involves becoming self-sufficient in five years.

The Network Center board has wonderful and exciting ideas for the future of the Center. They plan to expand their 500-person mailing list and to offer a wide array of programming that includes groups, courses, workshops, musical events, and fund-raising activities in addition to Sunday worship. One innovative idea involves utilizing the large, sunny space of the Center for a brown-bag lunch to encourage people to come by on their lunch hour for music, meditation, and conversation with the minister. They have received a great deal of help from the Rev. Eric Allison in developing their five-year

plan and look forward to working closely with him in the years ahead.

Thanks to GOSU and PMSU (now MINSU), the L.A. Society, the Maine Association, and the help and support of many of you, our denomination now has a new center with a vibrant, creative ministry there about to begin under Nadine Cotton's direction!

Network programs for September include: Dowsing with Don Taylor, Restorative Yoga with Jan Tueber, Counsel of Men, Women's Vibrational Healing Circle. ❖

RETREATS BOOST SPIRITUALITY

Youth League Report

Alison Lane of Hutchinson, Kansas, introduced herself as League president this year and welcomed everyone to Convention 1997. The other officers are:

West Coast—Andy Yenetchi, East Coast—Myrrh Woofenden,
Central States—Amy Halle, Canada—Toby Brugler
Clear Blue Sky editors—Heidi Neuenfeldt and Katie Shelley

Alison explained that officers are responsible for reporting local league activities and retreats in their region to the president, and keeping an updated list of youth in their area. She encouraged everyone to contact any of the officers with questions, concerns, or to help get local youth in touch with the national league. *Clear Blue Sky* is a league publication sent out several times a year.

She reported that the League has held several retreats this year: Winter Retreat in Almont, Michigan, with the theme of World Religions; a new retreat was started over President's Day weekend in California with the help of Andy Yenetchi and the Rev. Eric Allison; another began in April at Blairhaven, with the help of the Rev. Lee Woofenden—the topic was Heaven and Hell. The annual Memorial Day retreat was held on both the West and East Coasts; the theme was conflict. On the East Coast, the retreat took place at Urbana University.

"We would like to thank Urbana University and John Titus for all their help and hospitality. In a few weeks, the leaguers will be attending Almont Summer School, and Fryeburg. In the fall, we have Camp Mennoscah in Kansas, and the annual LaPorte church lock-in in late fall. We all enjoy the retreats immensely, and we feel that they truly help us to grow spiritually. Participation in the league is important to ensure continuing participation in the church. Former leaguers are now actively involved as delegates and staff of convention, camps and retreats, as well as local church boards. There are always new faces, and people who are very interested in learning about Swedenborg and his teachings."

Alison went on to recognize the Rev. Eric Hoffman as SCYL chaplain, with words of appreciation for his spiritual leadership. She also recognized the Rev. Carl Yenetchi for his years of service as chaplain, and presented him with the title of Chaplain Emeritus. Steve Pults, who recently resigned for personal reasons, was recognized for his decade of service as youth minister. She stated, "His vision and leadership made the league the outstanding organization it is today . . . the foundation which Steve helped lay supports the league in our time of need. We are striving to become more responsible for the operation of the Youth League. With the loss of Steve, comes a new beginning. With Steve's departure, the league is forced to redefine itself, and part of that process is a search for a new director."

Yesterday, while attending the Women's Alliance luncheon, I learned that next year's mite box will be donated to the publication of CBS. We thank all of our supporters for your generous contribution."

Alison Lane



Youth League members who presented Saturday morning chapel service, (L to R): Eli Titus, Ohio; Toby Brugler, Ontario; Andrew Siebert, Kansas; Natalie Wagner, Kansas; Amy Halle, Indiana; Nicole Wagner, Kansas; Aaron Frazee, Ohio; Ryan Smith, Mass.; Alison Lane, Kansas; Myrrh Woofenden, Mass.; Rachel Poole, Delaware.

Storm's Gift

Can you feel the storm? The one a couple days ago.
And maybe one right now, Can you feel the fury of the wind
As it thunders in your ears The "gentle" raindrops
Trying with all their might To press you to the ground.
The angry clouds roll faster And drop their heavy hailstones
Just like bullets from the sky. Now the hailstones turn to rain
And the thunder clouds, blow on by You begin to see
Just a tiny bit of light Beyond the clouds' horizon.
Then come the birds, the little birds
The bringers of trust and harmony.
The trampled grass struggles to stand up tall
As the grasses should.
Everyone lets out a sigh of relief,
That now, the storm is over
You can actually smell
The cleanness of the world.
The fallen hail stones melt, into drops of water
Which immediately seep, gratefully deep into the earth
And most people think
Gosh I wish we hadn't had, That very awful storm
But that's not what the flowers say
The trees or even weeds.
They are all thankful
For the wind and the rain, and even the hail
But mostly the storm itself.
Some think the storm is bad, Full of hate and anger
But listen to the little birds, The trees and all the flowers.
This storm has given us a gift
That nothing else can give
It cleaned the earth, the air, the sky
It's wetted everything around
And if you listen close enough
You'll hear the earth rejoicing.

Myrrh Woofenden
Kansas Convention 1997
(poem presented at worship service)

Alliance of New Church Women

New Officers for 1997-1998

President Mary Crenshaw
 First Vice President Brenda Hollweger
 Second Vice President Val Brugler
 Secretary Sue Burns
 Treasurer Margaret Kraus
 Mite Box Chair Barb Penabaker
 Publication Chair Lee Dyer
 Religious Chair Ellen Shaw
 Round Robin Chair ... Merilee Phinney

Nominating Committee

Chair Carla Abler (1998)
 Susan Poole (1999)
 Jeanette Hille (2000)
 Nan Paget (2001)
 Martha Richardson (2002)



Left: Lee Dyer, St. Louis, outgoing Alliance president. Right: Mary Crenshaw, Detroit, incoming Alliance president.



Below: Dave Rienstra accepts the 1997 Mite Box collection from Mite Box Chair Barb Penabaker for the Carole Rienstra memorial gazebo built in the garden of the St. Louis Church of the Open Word. The contribution amounted to \$1700, the largest ever collected. At right is Nan Paget, San Francisco, far right Kate Griffin, who gave a dramatic presentation of aviator and native Kansan Amelia Earhart's early life.



American New Church Sunday School Association Executive Board, 1997-98

Rev. Kit Billings, President St. Paul, Minnesota
 Rev. Lee Woofenden, Vice President Middleboro, Massachusetts
 Lorrie Lipski, Secretary Olds, AB Canada
 Patricia Brewer, Treasurer Norfolk, Massachusetts
 Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell,
 Chair, Outreach Committee Newton, Massachusetts
 Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence,
 Chair, Publications Committee San Francisco, California
 Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake,
 Chair, Teacher Training Committee Newton, Massachusetts
 Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein,
 Chair, Teaching Aids Committee West Roxbury, Maine

Nominating Committee

Marie Morey, Chair East Bridgewater, Massachusetts
 Susannah Currie (1999) Scarborough, Maine
 Laurie Turley (2000) Fryeburg, Maine

Inquiry Committee

General Convention has put into place a number of procedures to be followed in the event of a complaint being filed against an ordained minister or authorized lay leader for violations of the ministerial code of ethics that call into question the person's fitness for ministry.

A committee of the Council of Ministers worked for several years with Attorney Donald Clark in putting the procedures in place. Mr. Clark is renowned for his work with other denominations on issues related to complaints of ministerial misconduct.

Complaints begin with a letter or phone call to the chair of the Inquiry Committee, Wilma Wake, or one of its other members: Sue Turley, David Johnson, Duane Beougher, and Mary Crenshaw. The committee is under the auspices of the General Council. If the complaint is deemed appropriate under the purview of the committee, Inquiry launches an investigation. Mr. Clark provides any needed legal advice on conducting a fair inquiry. All of the evidence that is gathered is passed to another committee, the Misconduct Determination Board, which is under the Council of Ministers.

The Determination Board examines the evidence and makes a decision as to the validity of the complaint. If it finds the minister or lay leader not currently fit for ministry, it can make a determination as to whether the person's ministry credentials should be withdrawn or suspended. The Board can set conditions for reinstatement, such as receiving counseling or additional training. If the procedures have not been followed, an appeal can be made to the entire Council of Ministers.

At this year's convention, members of Inquiry, Determination, and other interested people received some training from Mr. Clark on carrying out procedures that are fair both to the person bringing the complaint as well as to the accused. Some members of both committees are continuing to receive training from specialists in this arena.

Wilma Wake, Chair
 Inquiry Committee ♦

Awards for Service

Ron Brugler presented plaques to Eric Zacharias for 46 years of faithful service, Paul Zacharias for 41 years, Horand Gutfeldt for 41 years, and to Galen Unruh for 35 years. Ron also presented a certificate to Dick Tafel, retired as editor of *Our Daily Bread*.

Betsy Young and Adolph (Ad) Liebert, who were not able to attend, were recognized for their years of service as vice presidents, Betsy from 1989-1993 and Ad from 1970-1977. Certificates were placed at the front of the room for all delegates to sign, and sent to Young and Liebert at the close of the session.

Eric Allison presented certificates to Marilyn Turley, retiring from the Committee on Admission to the Ministry, Pat Tukos, retiring as chair of EDSU, to Steve Pults, who has resigned as youth minister, and to Arianne Halle and Kristin Weinzettle, editors of *Clear Blue Sky*. Mona Conner, COMSU member, presented the certificate to Erni Martin, retiring chair of COMSU.

Edwin Capon presented certificates to Pat Zacharias, retiring from General Council, and to John Perry, who has served valiantly as treasurer since 1986.

Eric Allison announced that each of those so honored were entitled to choose one of his clay creations in the display room (which, by the way, were selling briskly, with proceeds to be donated to the New Church of Southwest Florida).



Pat Tukos, Eric Allison.



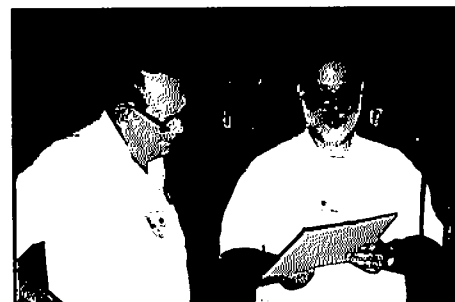
Erni Martin, Mona Conner.



Mary Siebert receives "Sunday School Teacher of the Year" Award from Eric Hoffman at ice cream social.



SSR student Andy Stinson, unofficial award for Great Grin.



Galen Unruh, Ron Brugler.



Left: Song Patrol

Right: Eric Zacharias with Hutchinson Community College President Dr. Ed Berger.



Convention Commentary

(Continued on page 98)

creation with our eyes closed were also a source of joyful renewal. This emphasis on relaxation and stress reduction through body/mind nurture and energy work is a most welcome direction at convention.



The Rev. Richard Killmer's keynote message of healing and protecting the earth brought thoughtful responses from panelists Donna Keane and Ted Klein, and from the convention attendees. Donna, in an often humorous presentation, shared her story of personal growth in environmental awareness, which has evolved from viewing her own consumer-convenience as top priority to understanding that we humans are connected to all of creation—that when we fail to protect the earth and *all* its inhabitants, we destroy ourselves. Responses from the floor echoed a deeply felt awareness of our interconnectedness, and a very real commitment, individual and in congregations, to healing the damage that has been done.



Our denomination became only the third communion of the 33 denominations within the National Council of Churches to ordain an openly gay ordinand. This was not accomplished

without a great deal of discussion on the floor of convention, but open discussion and acceptance of the various feelings and viewpoints was emphatically encouraged, even to the point of one minister requesting that we not applaud anyone's comments. This allowed a process that honored each person's need to be heard without being judged. At the conclusion of the session, there was a standing ovation for the decision, for Jonathan, and, I think, for all of us as a church family who had moved through a painful process with respect and compassion for one another.



Each convention brings us gifts: New friendships, new discoveries in old friendships, new discoveries about ourselves, opportunities to make new choices, people and events and conversations that may alter our lives or simply leave a warm glow. And always a kaleidoscope of images unique to the place and time, that will never be experienced in quite the same way again: The lighted windows of the Pretty Prairie church in the soft summer dark as we were leaving the rodeo. The purple haze of alfalfa, and fields of sunflowers. Kansas volunteers in their sunflower vests, cheerfully solving our problems and keeping everything on track. Being inside the Pawnee Rock church for the

first time and hearing Marian Mull tell us its history. Discovering that there actually is a Pawnee Rock. Bob Kirven outside Lockman Hall wearing his splendid Arizona Dude duds and his puckish smile. Acres of cows. At the buffalo barbecue, Eric Zacharias describing, in answer to Virginia Branstons question, how he dealt with various problems that came up when he was mayor of Pretty Prairie. "Well you see," he said, "we don't have any *law enforcement* here, so when somebody complained about a parking violation or a property dispute, I'd go out and talk to the folks involved, and mostly they wanted to be fair and do the right thing." The look on Connie Unger's face when we invited her into our UNO game and then zapped her with three Draw Fours. Sharing a table at Women's Alliance luncheon with Michelle Huffman, Megan Helm, Alison Lane, Missy Sommers, and Jenn Tafel, fresh and shining in their hats and dresses, looking like lovely young women from a bygone era. Volunteers serenely handing out plastic bags to keep us from getting wet—in a thunderstorm so awesome Charlton Heston could have appeared and ended the world. Kansas in July.

To the 60 or so volunteers in the Kansas Association, thanks for the memories and a great convention. ♦

Patte LeVan

Paula (Kraus) Hilbert and son Adam. (He was never seen without the hat).

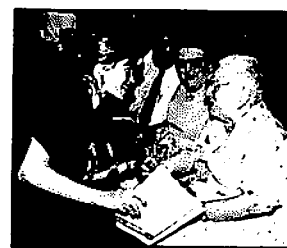


Three generations—Verda Winter, Cleveland; Deborah Winter; Sola Thorhallson, Florida.



Left: Sharon Billings, Cincinnati, and her mother Doris Unruh.

Right: Renee Billings, Detroit, and her grandmother Doris Unruh.



THEY'RE RELATED!



Lovie Unruh, age 89, with her two daughters Eileen Simpson and Sylvia Nelson.

The Earth is the Lord's and the Fullness Thereof

(Continued from page 101)

CLIMATE CHANGE

The earth's climate system is driven by the radiation of heat from the sun which enters the earth's atmosphere mostly in the form of light. The atmosphere is a layer of mixed gases that surrounds and blankets the earth's surface. As the radiation from the sun passes through the atmosphere, the carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that comprise the atmosphere trap much of the heat before it bounces back from earth into space. The density and mix of atmospheric gases determine how much heat reaches the earth and warms it and how much escapes to return to space.

This regulatory action is known as the "greenhouse effect" because the atmosphere works somewhat like a greenhouse, holding close to the earth the necessary heat for the survival of life.

The climate goes through changes. These may take place over hundreds of thousands of years. Slight changes in climate have produced ice ages that have come and gone.

Until recently, climate changes were driven by natural causes but now humans are causing climate change.

Today, people are creating a thicker atmospheric blanket as we add emissions from automobiles, power plants and industries which burn fossil fuel. More of the sun's rays are being trapped. This is warming the earth and causing climate changes.

Consequently, scientists are predicting serious consequences from rapid climate change such as the spread of infectious disease, rise in sea level, changes in weather patterns and contamination of water supplies.

The less developed nations have contributed little to the massive production of greenhouse gases. However, it is those nations which will be most immediately and drastically affected by the water shortage, drought, deforestation, erosion, and desertification that result from rapid climate change.

CONSUMPTION

The United States, with only five percent of the world's population, consumes nearly 30% of the world's bounty and produces 19% of its waste.

Americans use 20% of the world's metals, 24% of the world's energy and 25% of its fossil fuels.

Americans own twice as many cars, drive 2.5 times as far and use 21 times more plastics than we did in 1950.

The average urban American consumes 150 gallons of water, 3.3 pounds of food and 15 pounds of fossil fuels each day and at the same time produces 120 gallons of sewage, 3.4 pounds of garbage and 1.3 pounds of pollutants.

God is redeeming creation and calls us to participate in that redemption and transformation. God continues to

heal, redeem and transform what God has created . . . the new heaven and new earth are currently in the building stage and will be completed in God's time. How does this work get done? God calls the church to be the change agents and the agents of shalom. We join God in God's healing and transformation of all of creation.

The good news is that God gets there first and calls us to join God in the work in progress. Therefore we engage in healing and protecting creation by joining the work which God is already doing. We can do this ministry with confidence and in faithfulness.

Nobody does healing and defending on our behalf. It is a task that every Christian is called to do in their community of faith, in their congregation.

How can congregations really protect and restore God's creation?

HOPEFUL SIGNS

There are hopeful stories of congregations engaged in the tasks of defending and protecting and restoring God's creation:

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH

This congregation in an urban setting 11 years ago created a garden project as a way to be good stewards of the acre-and-a-half of land they owned and to provide food to needy people. The garden is a teaching/learning center as people new to gardening learn the skills of planting, cultivating and harvesting. No pesticides, herbicides or chemical fertilizers are used in this garden.

Weeds are controlled by hoeing and mulching and the soil is enriched by organic fertilizers.

Among the volunteers for the garden are people with physical and emotional disabilities. In addition, ten low-income families work four hours a week and receive hundreds of pounds of food. Ten tons of food are given away to those in need each year.

NEW WAVERLY BAPTIST CHURCH

Bleeding gums, chronic rashes and headaches plagued members of the community in West Dallas, Texas near the New Waverly Baptist Church. When the problems began to include cancer, mental disorders and learning disabilities, the Rev. R.T. Conley, pastor of the church and several other church leaders suspected the nearby lead smelting plant of causing the damage. After testing by the EPA confirmed their suspicions, the church began a campaign to do something about the harm caused by the plant. The Rev. Conley and the people of New Waverly succeeded in having the plant closed down, established a health clinic in the church basement and secured financial settlements for people affected by the toxins.

(Continued on page 117)

The Earth is the Lord's and the Fullness Thereof

(Continued from page 116)

THE AUGUSTANA LUTHERAN CHURCH ENERGY CONSERVATION PROJECT

Members of Augustana Lutheran Church in Hyde Park, Illinois took on a major project to reduce unnecessary energy consumption within their church building. They did an energy audit of their facilities and found that they could save energy on heating, lighting, and water consumption.

They upgraded these areas and reduced their energy consumption by 40%. The reduction in carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere was the equivalent of removing 10 cars from the streets of Chicago.

ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES OF OREGON

Rapid population growth threatens the quality of life that attracts many to Portland, Oregon. Fortunately, there is Metro, the only elected regional government in the nation.,

Six religious leaders testified before Metro in support of a Portland area plan to help reverse sprawl and urban decay which included a proposed expanded rail system designed to provide an alternative to heavy vehicular traffic and to reduce carbon emissions. The leaders' concerns centered on watershed protection, street designs promoting a sense of community, and provision of affordable housing in all areas of the region.

These are all projects which can be done by congregations and other church bodies. They all point to God's healing of creation and celebrate that God gets there first, transforming creation and making all things new.

The Rev. Richard Killmer is the Associate Director of the National Ministries Unit of the National Council of Churches. He also serves the Council as Director of Environmental Justice. (See full biographical sketch on back page of June Messenger). ❖

Right: Convention gang at the Pawnee Rock church.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Has the Church a Future?

(Continued from page 102)

plateful of food. He thought of the little hilltop towns of his country, whose tiny lamp provided some guidance to travelers at night." Jesus' followers were to be as a creative minority in a world needing help.

Speaking of the church in a similar vein, Swedenborg writes in the *Arcana* that "The Church in the Lord's Kingdom is as the heart and lungs in man . . . If the Lord's Church were completely extinguished on the Earth the human race could not exist at all . . . for the Church is like the heart . . . from it the human race, even that which is outside the Church, has life." Such a simile as this certainly suggests a minority status for the church, however creative it may be.

If and as the church moves toward minority status, there will certainly be changes in its outward forms, something which should not be too disturbing to the Swedenborgian who is familiar with Swedenborg's statement that "The Church is not the Church from external things, that is from rituals, but from internal things, for these are the essentials, the former being only the formal things." What these changes will be are hard to predict. Hall looks for churches to take on more the nature of schools of religion with 100 the ideal maximum number in each. Larger gatherings for great festivals of worship would mark the anniversaries of great religious events a few times a year. Harvey Cox of Harvard Divinity expressed a similar idea several years ago. The emphasis in the smaller gatherings would be on serious study of the meaning and application of the Christian faith to everyday life, though it seems clear now that experiential learning will go side by side with study. The church of the future would be in the world but not so much of the world as it has been. It would bring higher values and more eternal principles to bear on life in the world.

Many in the church today may not want the kind of church I have been describing. For many the church may simply be seen as a source of help for living in this world just as it is, accepting its values and practices as inevitable, if not necessarily good. Many more no longer turn to the church at all for help, a trend which may continue.

Dr. Hall believes that the church has a future and I would agree. I regret that many features of the church as we who are older members remember it may be passing away. But Swedenborgians have always been dedicated to the belief that a New Church, a renewed Christian Church, is being instituted by the Lord and that the truths we see in Swedenborg's writings have a major part to play in that process. We above all should not hold onto the externals of an outmoded past, if they hinder commitment to the real essentials of religion, which Swedenborg would call "the good and truth of faith." As members of a tiny denomination it may be easier for us to adjust to minority status for the church than for others to do so. ❖



To Messenger Readers:

If anyone has any information to contribute to a manuscript concerning the women who participated in the Colombian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893, or material on influential Swedenborgian women in the 1890s, the material would be appreciated. Many women contributed to the World Parliament of Religion and the New-Church Congress. Some of the women who wrote essays for the exposition, participated in round-table talks, or had some connection to the themes that surfaced during or after this event, have incomplete biographies. The first names, dates of birth and death or where they are from are missing in some cases, but I am particularly interested in hearing from the descendants of these women. I would like to know what contributions they are making in today's world and how their foremothers have influenced their lives:

Ednah Silver
 Selma Ware Paine
 Mrs. A.N. Waterman
 M.G. Browne
 Mrs. Joseph S. David
 Mary Teegarden
 Mrs. William Bower
 Mrs. John Goddard
 Mrs. Matthew Burton
 Mrs. Charles Mann
 Mrs. Ager
 Mrs. Burnham
 Ellen Andrews
 Marian Foster Washburn
 Mary Peabody
 Clara Burnham
 Lydia Dickenson
 Mrs. E.A. Munger
 Mrs. J.R. Putnam
 Mrs. Matthew Burton
 Mrs. A.E. Scammon
 Mrs. J.M. Hill
 Mrs. C.C. Bonney
 Mrs. E.T. Root
 Mrs. C.H. Cutler
 Mrs. George H. Owen
 Carrie Rowe
 C.C. Gifford
 C.D. Withington
 Alice Thatcher Post
 Janet Orr Conant
 Alice Archer Sewell James
 Ella Mosby

The themes of freedom, truth, and leading a useful, productive life were very important to most of these women who lived at a time when women could not vote, serve on a jury, and could not work in their community in many fields. These Swedenborgian women were active in their unique ways, using their individual talents in promoting freedom, equality, and justice for all people.

Numerous writers, researchers,

editors and thinkers have been involved with this project and other contributors are welcome.

Please send information to:

Susan Poole, 1005 N. Broom St.,
 Wilmington, DE 19806 OR

Susan Poole, Acquisitions Editor,
 Swedenborg Foundation, 320 N.
 Church St., West Chester, PA 19380



Letter from the Editor:

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

Donations and subscriptions for 1996 and 1997 thus far total over \$3,000. *The Messenger* Endowment Fund now has a current worth of nearly \$98,000. As we build up *The Messenger's* endowment, our church's publication can eventually become financially independent.

Traditionally, *The Messenger* has been given at no charge to all members of the Swedenborgian Church—ten free informative newsletters that offer timely lay and ministerial views on our church issues, plus inspirational Swedenborgian insights to help each of us on our spiritual journey.

There is no plan to charge readers for their ten issues, but the cost to the church is approximately \$30 for each yearly subscription. If you feel that *The Messenger* is worth \$30 a year to you, perhaps you would volunteer to defray some of the publication's costs. Your support and love for your church's *Messenger* are sincerely appreciated, and again, many thanks to those of you who made contributions to *The Messenger* in the past.

Blessings, Patte LeVan



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

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

Your Name _____

Your Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

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

CONFIRMATIONS

Foegelle, Gatter, McEntee, O'Mahoney, Paavola, Peterson, Poor, Strell, Ziegler—Herman Foegelle, Brian and Karen Gatter, Tom McEntee, Tim O'Mahoney, Joyce Paavola, Rick Peterson, Nigel Poor, Kathy Strell, and Herb Ziegler were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church June 15, 1997, at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Drs. Jim Lawrence and Rachel Rivers officiating.

MARRIAGES

Benoit and Milne—Kelly Benoit and Michael Milne were united in marriage June 7, 1997, at the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating.

Katz and Rice—Rosemary Katz and Joshua Gould Rice (grandson of Wilfred and Ethel Rice) were united in marriage May 31, 1997, at the Blairhaven Conference and Retreat Center in Duxbury, Massachusetts, the Rev. Dr. George Dole officiating.

Whitaker and Mutrie—Bobbie-Jean Whitaker and Patrick F. Mutrie were united in marriage June 21, 1997, at the Fryeburg New Church, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.

DEATHS

Brown—Edith Brown, aunt of Sue Frid, entered the spiritual world November 16, 1996. A memorial service was conducted November 19, 1996, the Rev. Ron Brugler officiating.

Dutnell—Florence Dutnell, longtime member of the Lakewood Society and the Swedenborg Chapel in Cleveland, entered the spiritual world April 10, 1997, shortly before her 92nd birthday. A funeral service was conducted April 12, 1997, the Rev. William Noyes officiating.

Uthoff—Florence A. Uthoff, 98-year-old member of the Lenox Church of the New Jerusalem in Norway, Iowa, entered the spiritual world May 14,

1997. Services were conducted May 17, 1997, at the church, with burial in the Lenox Cemetery, the Rev. David Young of Hope Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids officiating. Florence (Vette) Uthoff married Henry Uthoff November 10, 1920. They farmed in several Iowa communities before moving to Norway, and Florence worked at the Amana Woolen Mill for 30 years. She is survived by eight children, 36 grandchildren, 77 great-grandchildren, and a sister, Helen Vette.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Lee and Patty Woofenden
88 Pearl St.
Middleboro, MA -02346
508-946-1767 (voice)
508-946-1757 (FAX/data)

IN APPRECIATION

The Rev. Gladys Wheaton wishes to express her thanks for all the cards and messages of love she received following the death of her son Lloyd. She hasn't had time to respond to all, but wants to express her deep appreciation for all the love and prayers.

CORRECTION

The June *Messenger* mistakenly identified the Rev. Min-Heui Cheon, then SSR student, as minister of the Bayside (NY) Swedenborgian Church. She was only a member of Bayside. The president of Bayside New Church society, Mr. Je Hyung Bae, leads their worship service. The editor apologizes for the error and regrets any confusion or inconvenience it may have caused.

It's Not Too Late...

To retrieve your perpetual calendar, whoever you are! The Rev. Eric Zacharias reports that someone who bought one of Pretty Prairie church's perpetual Swedenborgian calendars at convention left it in Lockman Hall. Eric will be glad to send it to its owner if he or she will contact him.

Rev. Eric Zacharias, 105 South Plum Street, Pretty Prairie, KS 67570.
Phone (316) 459-6987

(Now if somebody could just find *The Messenger* editor's sunglasses . . .)



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. ❖

IMPORTANT CHURCH CALENDAR DATES

Aug. 16-20	Cabinet
Oct. 1-3	CAM
Oct. 16-18	SSR Board
Oct. 24-25	Urbana Trustees
Nov. 1	Investment Com.
Nov. 8-9	Retirement Com.
Dec. 5-6	General Council
Jan. 14-16	CoM ExCom
April 1-3	CAM
June 21-28	1998 Convention

Fryeburg, Maine
Newton, Massachusetts
Newton, Massachusetts
Urbana, Ohio
Temenos, West Chester, PA
Newton, Massachusetts
Wayfarers Chapel
Deland, Florida
Newton, Massachusetts
Leesburg, Florida

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.



Dr. David Eller



Foundation Director David Eller Resigns

David Eller, who has served as executive director and publisher of the Swedenborg Foundation since September 1, 1992, has announced his resignation, effective September 1, 1997. He will become director of the Young Center for the Study of Anabaptist and Pietist Groups, and professor of History and Religious Studies at Elizabethtown College in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, starting with the fall 1997 semester. He and his family plan to move to a new home in the Elizabethtown area sometime this August.

Dr. Eller has guided the Foundation's transition to the world of professional publishing and marketing with a keen appreciation for the Swedenborgian tradition. He settled the Foundation into its new home in West Chester, assembled a creative and capable publishing staff; launched Chrysalis Books, our trade imprint; initiated the redesigned Standard Edition reprint project; and in his final months has worked to launch an all-new Library Edition. His friendly spirit, broad perspective, and versatile capabilities will be deeply missed. ❖

Foundation Seeks New Publisher/Executive Director

Swedenborg Foundation, a non-profit educational association and small press seeks a publisher/exec. director to continue development of its trade list of books for spiritual seekers, and to manage association and publishing operations including fund raising and membership development. The preferred candidate will have at least five years experience managing an academic, non-profit or small commercial publishing program plus professional or personal experience working with non-profit boards. We offer an excellent work environment and benefits. Send cover letter and resume with salary history to:

Executive Director Search
Swedenborg Foundation
PO box 549
West Chester, PA 19381

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