

THE MESSENGER

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All Shall Be Well: Julian of Norwich and Swedenborg

Andrew Stinson

Julian of Norwich was a reclusive mystic of the late 14th and early 15th centuries. She lived in a small cell off the church of St. Julian in Conisford at Norwich, England. As an anchoress, she lived alone with only a servant to attend to her needs. Her cell contained a slightly open window through which she offered advice to the townspeople! Beyond that, little else is known of her; even her real name has been lost to posterity. The name "Julian" comes from her church.

Her visions of the spiritual world, of God, and of the workings of the Lord in the universe, have electrified spiritual seekers throughout the centuries. What is particularly striking about Julian was her intense desire to know and be in the company of the Divine regardless of personal cost. Reminiscent of Swedenborg's early visions, she intensely desired and cultivated her initial "showing" of the Divine on May 13th, 1337, while she was in a serious illness. This cultivating and longing to know was pivotal in her mystical experience.

In the strict Trinitarian Augustinian Christianity of the medieval period, she encountered the Lord's truths with remarkable passion and clarity. Her work, *Showings*, records 86 of her encounters with "spiritual sight" (pg. 130) and with God. The world that was opened to her was so congruent with the descriptions and revelations of Swedenborg that one article cannot be adequate. While clearly influenced by the theology of her time, her experiences, observations, and understanding resonate with the truth. These common truths

powerfully inform us as we live our lives attempting to attune to what God would have us know. In this examination, we might gain a glimpse of what is ultimate about the universe and our lives in it as we relate to the Divine.

Christ as Incarnation

Julian's vision of the Christ, while centered on the suffering of the cross, offers a radical understanding of the incarnation. Though steeped in a culture of atonement, what emerges from her visions is a quite different picture. Julian's visions began when she wished to know Christ's sufferings; not an uncommon request for the penitent theology of the medieval period. As she sought to know Christ's passion, she became so ill that it was not expected that she would live. In what she believed would be her dying meditations, she was enraptured by a cross that was brought to her by her priest. Her vision was that of the dying Jesus on the cross. With it she had what can only be interpreted as a moment of empathy for the dying figure. Her wish to know the suffering of the cross came true. She wrote that she was, "...Filled full of pain and compassion...then I saw that every kind of compassion which one has for one's fellow Christians in love is Christ in us." (pg. 144) She goes on, "...our Lord showed me...the joy and delight he had in that passion, because of Love," (pg. 168) and finally, "(He reveals) the aspect of his passion and his cross, ...and shows to us the demeanor of truth and pity, mightily defending us against all our enemies." (pg. 319)

This is not a Christ of atonement.

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Though she refers to atonement, as any good nun of her time and place would have, the images and language are of pure compassion, "mightily defending" humanity out of that compassion. This is similar to Swedenborg's revelations of Jesus' incarnation. They both hold up a Jesus that loves enough to defend all humanity. Even with a hell to tempt him and all of heaven to incarnate within him, Jesus was never anything less than pure compassion and understanding. On the cosmic scale, Julian's vision of the Christ is another version of Swedenborg's definition of Love: feeling the joy of another as one's own.

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A Search for the Perfect Dog, and the Homeward Journey

Some weeks ago one of my Julian friends, Dorsa O'Dell, the widow of Scott O'Dell, author of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, introduced me to a newly published author and his wife who had recently moved to Julian.

The writer, Gary Shiebler, had his first book published this year by Broadway Books, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. His book, *A Search for the Perfect Dog*, is slender, only 121 pages. The book jacket says Shiebler was an award-winning singer and songwriter, and a model before embarking on a

writing career. During a life-crisis transition, he took a job as an animal shelter educator at the Helen Woodward Animal Center in southern California, where he helped find homes for dogs left there and also taught children how to care for their adopted pets.

His book is a celebration of the dogs that have touched his life, beginning with Rusty, the perfect dog of his youth against which all others were measured. It's a parallel journey of his emotional and spiritual growth, as he faces the challenges that each dog brings, and learns the life lessons of humanity, compassion, trust, relationship, unconditional love and death.

He tells us about the dog named Squeeze, and about dying alone.

In the summer of 1992, we asked her to make one more move. And it was a difficult one—New York to California. Seven days together in a Ryder rental truck. Two dogs, two cats, one five-year-old child, and two adults in search of a new life. It has taken me a long time to forgive myself for maybe asking one move too many.

One Sunday morning in early October, I walked to the kitchen. I put

one and a half scoops of dry food in her dish. The newly shampooed carpets beneath my feet were finally dry. I felt bad that she had to sleep in the garage that night.

I dampened her food with warm water and then opened the door to the garage.

Sometimes, I can still see her lying there. Too still. Too quiet. I have to focus on something else. Reach for Linda's hand. Look for a sliver of moonlight.

Friends are very kind. They assure me that she died peacefully in her sleep.

She wasn't supposed to die so soon. We expected her to live to be very old. Our daughter would be a teenager. We would be living in the country again, where it was quiet and peaceful and there would be many trails.

And when it was time for her to go, I would be there. Dear God, I would be there.

He tells of a bird that landed on his windshield one day, a Northern Flicker, relative of the woodpecker family.

I quickly pulled over and untangled his wings from the wiper. I cradled the bird in my hands. He was stunned and remained very still in my grasp. His breathing was labored, and his magnificently long tongue dangled hopelessly from his mouth. I felt honored to be holding such a wild creature. I walked to a grassy area under a tree and sat with him. I admired his brilliant radiant red crown, his speckled breast, his saberlike beak. We sat together for five minutes or so. Suddenly, his body shook. He turned his head to the side, closed his eyes, and was gone.

"I set him down under a yellow forsythia, said a little prayer, and got back into my car. I kept replaying the scene in my head. Could I have swerved to avoid him? Could I have hit the brakes sooner? Why did the bird have

to fly right in front of my car? What could I have done differently? A friend told me that sometimes, no matter what we do, we can't change a thing. "I hope I die in someone's arms," she said.

I was reading Gary's book when Rianne Boell sent me "Memories of a Spirit Passing." Reading her description of the way she and Elizabeth and Ted were with Horand as he made his transition into the spiritual world, I thought, yes, that is the way to go, to die in someone's arms as they're singing, and rubbing our feet, and anointing us with oil, and holding communion, and helping us along on the next leg of our journey. Going for it, going without fear, in the company of those we have loved who are seeing us through this second birthing.

Wishing all of us a Happy New Year, and the wish that we cherish and use each moment here as if it may be our last on this plane. All shall, indeed, be well.

Patte LeVan



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Memories of a Spirit Passing

Rianne Boell

I wanted to see him right away when Elizabeth told me he was ill. I wanted to go over to the house, but when I called Vati (as the kids in the Gutfeldt family call him), Horand asked that I wait a little bit because he was feeling too ill and uncomfortable to have a visit. I called them daily on the phone for five days. It was during this time that Horand's body was changing rapidly; refusing to hold food, sweating and hurting. Then he felt peace come and Elizabeth, his wife of 42 years, called us to come visit.

There, in an upper bedroom with big windows and trees just outside, he lay resting. I had never experienced someone dying and, as I approached, I felt somewhat hesitant. I sat on the edge of the bed. My seven-year-old daughter had made a card for *Opah*, as she called him, and shyly gave her card to me to give to him. She stood at the side of the bed and didn't seem to want to come closer. I wanted to show the card to him and read it together, but he couldn't sit up, so I crawled up on the bed to lie down beside him. Because of my years of relationship with Horand as a foster daughter, I had already experienced times where we lay down in the van camping, or where we lay side by side as he taught me his meditation techniques, so to crawl up on the bed and lie down beside him was natural. I kissed him on the cheek and he turned and blessed me, as was his beautiful way. The fragrance of flowers came from his breath, which startled me because I think I was anticipating "the smell of death" that everyone's heard about. I looked near the bed on the nightstand and around the room but there were no flowers, and I realized that it was just the sweetness of heaven's presence upon him.

My stay by his side was brief. I could tell he was deep into the meditative state he had taught me. I realized he was using deep meditation and spirit-out-of-body techniques to remain peaceful and free himself from pain. It was inspiring and wonderful.

Four days later I moved home to Gutfeldt's again, as I have lived with them before and now wanted to be

tuned in and available to help. The days were very peaceful and Horand's needs were few. He did not take food any longer, only sips of water and some juice. He conversed clearly and competently as he moved in and out of his deeply meditative state. He slept only in half hour naps and lay quietly, moving onto his back and side occasionally. We were having a heat spell so the windows were open and a couple of fans were gently humming. I hung a white sheet on the outside of the window to block the sun from the room. Elizabeth and Ted Gutfeldt and I enjoyed the warm quiet and read aloud from the Bible for short periods. (Psalm 118 was especially inspiring). At times, the three of us spelled each other at his side, but mostly we stayed together enjoying each other's company.

I used small drops of pure rose oil in a bowl of water to freshen Horand. We laid a moistened cloth on his head and learned from the daily visiting hospice nurse to also place the cool cloth on the back of his neck. One afternoon in the height of the heat, I took a small handful of the rose water to cool Horand's feet—carefully, because I didn't want to shock him. I trickled the water first on the tops of his toes. Then I brought more water down the inside of his arch and then placed the palms of my hands at the bottoms of his feet. I could feel the quiet stillness of his energy. He spoke only in a whisper to say with a big smile, "WOW, that feels terrific!" We giggled together feeling joy at his comfort.

It was later in the afternoon that day, when Elizabeth and Ted needed to go out, that it occurred to me to cool Horand's feet again. The house was very still and the outside world seemed to come to a halt and be at

complete rest. As I stood at the end of the bed, I trickled the rose water over Horand's feet. This time, though, I felt so moved by the atmosphere of love and affection that I just stood there with my hands outstretched toward him on the bed. With all the intention my heart could muster I prayed for peace and blessing to travel through my hands and arms upon him. I stood there a few moments with my arms outstretched, not touching him. My stance wavered and I felt the sensation of falling or going inward. In that moment, Horand, who lay in deep meditation, and who had not been touched by my hands, rose up and exclaimed, "I felt that!" I said it was just me, blessing his journey. He then snuggled into his pillow and got cozy again, continuing on in his meditations and waiting in the spirit.

In his meditative state, Horand often stirred into consciousness with something to say about what he was experiencing inwardly. This occurred

while the hospice nurse was visiting. Half sitting up with his hands holding onto her arms for support, Horand spoke in a clear whisper saying, "There is an angel present with me to help ensure to bring the Heart along."

When I first came to Horand's side I was drawn to assist Elizabeth to make ready his passing.

My cherished memories of Horand's last days on earth are inextricably woven with who I am and what I was feeling at the time: I am a child of the sixties who was in high school on the West Coast with the love generation. I am one sixteenth Cherokee Native American. I have been a Swedenborgian for 28 years. I am Zen-minded, led by intuition; and am a musician and singer. I worship the Divine Per-

In his meditative state, Horand often stirred into consciousness with something to say about what he was experiencing inwardly.

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Memories of a Spirit Passing

(Continued from page 3)

sonal Spirit, Male/Female. I believe in simple, meaningful ritual. How we help the dying and what this means to each of us is different, as unique as a fingerprint. What is it to be in tune? How to trust to be led to sing or to read a specific scripture to someone on the threshold of another world's dimension? My way is to speak first from love, then trust, then courage. To reach out, to be willing to give, without knowing if you are "right" or "led," this is a real challenge. I share with you what I felt led to do, which was to give of myself to Horand, unobtrusively. Sitting at his bedside, I drew upon a combination of many rituals of different faiths that I have held high in my heart. I sang gospel songs very quietly. Songs I knew and loved and ones that I knew he especially loved. *Amazing Grace* and *Swing Low Sweet Chariot* revealed new meaning as I sang them to someone who was really going home. Sometimes Horand would sing with me, sometimes he would lie still, his hair a white halo of peacefulness on the pillow.

One morning, while drifting into waking, I envisioned Ted, the oldest son, at Horand's head anointing him with oil. I spoke to Ted privately about this, and he was all for bringing this vision to life. I went then to Elizabeth, who spoke to Horand about it, Horand wanted to do it very much. At sundown, I brought my "sacred things" into the room. First I lit a bundle of sage and cleared the four corners of the room's ceiling, "smudging" the entire room and then swirling the smoke around each person, including Horand. Then candles were lit to the four directions, white candles for truth and red ones for love, creating a shift out of the ordinary into the Presence of Spirit. We added rose oil to blessing water and, while slowly reciting with Horand the 23rd Psalm, we began the anointing. Beginning with the feet, then the hands, then a touch of oil on his forehead and, lastly the crown of his head. There was a glow of light in the room far brighter than what four lighted candles could pro-

vide and we all exclaimed at the phenomenon of our opening to another dimension of light. This ritual lasted no more than fifteen minutes so as not to tax Horand's attention. He then settled back again and we sat in family bondedness for another hour or so without much talking. We sang very quietly to each other and together, occasionally bringing in a Christmas carol.

The next morning, as I was reflecting on the ritual of the anointing, it occurred to me that a communion was called for. I felt grateful for this insight and called Elizabeth right away to tell her. It had occurred to her also, but she appropriately wanted to ask Horand's permission. At first, he thought we were proposing that he conduct a communion service and told us he wasn't up to it. He was usually the one who led our family communions, so his response was understandable. When Elizabeth assured him that we were planning to lead it ourselves, his reaction was very positive.

Close to midnight, we again gathered our "sacred things" in the upper bedroom. We created a purified sacred circle with smoke and prayers and, amidst the glowing of the four candles, sat closely on the bed around him. John, my special friend, joined us and quietly accompanied our singing on his guitar. Horand joined us as we said The Lord's Prayer. All of us then sang *Amazing Grace* with an inward focus that brought new depth and meaning to the old familiar words. We then said the words that are spoken over the physical things that become changed as we take them in; to be fed and to drink and never thirst or hunger again is truly mystical.

In this atmosphere of reverence and worship, we ate and drank our last meal with Horand that night. Ted and I did not know it at the time, but just three hours after our communion, in the predawn light, as Elizabeth held him in her arms singing "Let go and let the Spirit flow," Horand stepped across. Elizabeth held him and continued to sing, quietly, songs of peace and trust. After awhile, she came and woke me. I let my daughter continue to sleep downstairs, and Elizabeth and

I quietly woke Ted. The three of us hugged and gently cried before entering the room. Horand was lying on his side facing the doorway with his hands curled under his white-bearded chin. I kissed his cheek and saw the slightest suggestion of his familiar smile. He was just as approachable as ever and yet now "he" was no longer in his body. The time had come for him to grow and leave it. We whispered to him, "God Speed." We smudged the room and lit the candles. I brought in my shaker rattle and eagle's feather, shaking the rattle in a rhythm all around the room; the intention being to clear and center the spirit world around him. Using a small Hopi pot, I lit frankincense rock and with the feather swirled the smoke the length of his body. Then at the last, I brought the smoke up to the crown of his head and swirled it up in a spiral, as I chanted a two-thousand-year-old Cherokee song for blessing harvest and dedicating sacred spaces.

Together we spontaneously began singing one of Horand's favorite songs, substituting *you* for *we*.

"You will enter his gates with Thanksgiving in your heart.
You will enter his courts with praise.
You will say this is the day that the Lord has made.
You will rejoice for he has made you glad."

We washed his entire body with rose water and continued to speak quietly to him, telling him of our love and agreement with his moving on.

There was a glow of peace and presence of a higher spirit around him, such as I have never before experienced. Horand truly trusted his Lord as he birthed into the spiritual world on that September morning.* It was a privilege to be there and I am changed now because of it.

Rianne Boell is the foster-daughter of the late Rev. Horand Gutfeldt. She is a member of the El Cerrito Hillside Community Church in California.

* (The Rev. Horand Gutfeldt entered the spiritual world September 26, 1997. See *Passages*, November 1997 *Messenger*). ❖

Going For It! Thirty-six Views on the Good Life

Edited by Carol S. Lawson

Janet Ashton Vernon

At a transitional time in my life, once again making significant life changes, I found *Going For It! Thirty-six Views on the Good Life* confirming and supportive. In this fourth volume of the Chrysalis Reader, "a journal of spiritual discovery," we are offered stories, essays and poetry that provide us with the opportunity to gain new perspectives, validate those we hold, while challenging and delighting us.

Going For It!, as the Chrysalis Readers before it, creates an ecumenical landscape for Swedenborg's work to be expressed, and Robert Kirven's introductions to each of the four parts clearly state the Swedenborgian connections.

The editor's preface speaks of how living the Good Life, a life of meaning, "is still the faraway silver gleam most of us reach for." Four clusters of conditions, the phases we encounter when striving for "lives meaningfully spent" are outlined. These, taken from Saul Ader's memoir, "Only One Life," define the four parts of the volume: Waiting For An Opening; The Voyage Out, Alone; What You Do With What you Get; and Nothing Wasted.

In the first introduction Robert Kirven describes life patterns as four stages most of us can relate to: frustration, change, growth, and transformation. However, as most of us have discovered, and the writings of this volume confirm, the purposeful use of these stages for the creation of meaningful lives takes courage, acts of will, patience and determination. That is what the stories, essays, and poems in this book are all about. Each one is special and well-deserving of our attention. They will linger with you and make use of you.

I was drawn early on to "Blue Moon" and "This Color Is My Skin." The courage, patience and risk-taking

that Patricia Schuetz' excellent story described in "Blue Moon" certainly addresses the frustration and waiting encountered with a choice to Go For It! A lonely, challenging, going-out-alone is found in Abigail Calkins' "This Color Is My Skin." Both stories offer insights about issues seldom brought to our attention.

In "Good for All or Good for None," Tom Williams asks us if we have the courage to see that there is an opening, and opportunity, right now, to take action and preserve the planet.

The quality and diversity of the writings in *Going For It!* hold interest for all generations and transport the reader to many locations and situations in the United States and throughout the world: China, Mexico,

Cameroon, Scotland and Britain.

The many poems are in keeping with the theme. Linda Pastan's "April," tells of young cherry trees Going For It! in the spring. Jean Kiser's poem, "Things Change," reflects her ability to see aging-related changes as an opportunity.

Katherine Stannard's, "Nothing Wasted" is a special kind of life review as she relates how and why her "...life events have composted into a rich unique soil from which new growth will always occur."

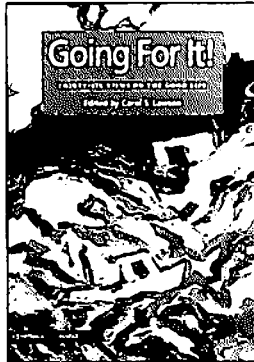
I am sure I will be drawn back to read again many of the inspiring stories in this book. They are expressions of what it takes to move forward, to move inward, to ultimately take the responsibility for self-change and create a life of meaning. Raymond Wong's "Precious Jade," will be among the first revisited, as well as, "A Real Life," by Ihla Nation.

In the center of this book is an invitation to the reader from the editors, to let them know how you read it: All at once? One story at a time? At bedtime? And if, or how, some of the stories appeal to you. Perhaps we could also let the editors know if and how these Chrysalis Readers and their con-

tents have a useful impact on our lives and others.

David Eller's, "Tending the Garden" touched something deep within me that reaches back to my Brethren family ties in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. My great-grandfather's great grandfather and his family came across the Atlantic from Germany in 1733, and my great great-grandfather was a Brethren minister who, with his family, moved westward from Virginia over a century later. I feel impelled to learn more about this part of my family, many of whom made journeys to share the spiritual message. They were people courageously seeking new shores and new frontiers, showing us the way to seek the good life, a life of meaning.

Janet Ashton Vernon is a semi-retired mental health therapist, writer, and reader of Swedenborg living in Orient Washington. Her work first appeared in *The Messenger* in November, 1997. ❖



Aboriginal Benediction

*Always look in before you look out;
Try a whisper before you shout.*

*Learn from the elders,
teach the young,*

*Hear the message,
no matter what tongue.*

*Offer your hand,
don't stamp your feet;*

Present a smile to people you meet.

*Hear the wind, feel the rain,
Touch the trees, it soothes the pain.*

*Watch nature, our beautiful guide;
Feel the spirit that's by our side.*

*The spirit by our side
is the spirit within,*

*The pureness, the oneness,
the barrier from sin.*

*A different name, a different face,
A different language, a different place.*

*There seems a great difference,
but we're all the same;*

*We breathe the same air,
we feel the same pain.*

*Always look in, before you look out;
Try a prayer, before you shout.*

— Richard Wally

All Shall Be Well: Julian of Norwich and Swedenborg

(Continued from Cover)

Providence Abounds

Julian writes:

"...I saw God in a point, that is, in my understanding, and by this vision I saw that he is present in all things. I contemplated it carefully, knowing and perceiving through it that he does everything which is done...however small it may be, and that nothing is done by chance, but it is by the endless providence of God's wisdom." (pg. 137)

This view of God's Providence and interaction with the world is remarkably similar to Swedenborg's. Curiously, like Swedenborg, she sees all things coming from God and knows that she is seeing through her understanding. It is critical to note the universality of God's involvement in every atom of our being and to recognize that the possibility of seeing this in our lives exists through our own understanding.

For the Forgiveness of Sin

As is the case with so many mystics, Julian's visions serve only to strengthen her faith in the love of God. She writes of how God revealed to her the necessity of sin being critical to the operation of the universe. Yet departing from the theology of her day, she says, "Every sinful soul must be healed... (in heaven), one's wounds are seen by God not as wounds but as honors." (pg. 155) It is only when one is conquered by sin, when one comes to choose evil, that shame is at all attached to sin. Julian sees, as Swedenborg suggests, that we must transgress, must move away from what is good in order that we might know the pain of its absence and the joy of its return. Where Julian offers "wounds as honors," Swedenborg proposes that we are done great service by our sins if only we repent from them; we must know what is not good in order to know that which is good. (*Divine Providence*, par. 24)

Both Julian and Swedenborg insist that sins should be shunned and evil discovered and repented. Also core to both are that there is no shame connected with sin, no enduring desire on God's part that we should suffer or be

pained for anything we might or might not do. We are already forgiven for anything we might have done. Julian offers this, "No more than is his love for us withheld because of our sin does he want us to withhold our love for ourselves and for our fellow Christians; we hate sin utterly, and love souls endlessly as God loves them." (pg 156)

All Shall Be Well

Swedenborg's vision of the spiritual world is undeniably optimistic. The fact that there is a Holy City descending implies that things are getting better. The world, our lives—even the entire universe—are engaged in becoming more and more heavenly. It is not that we will not have setbacks, but there is a loving, beautiful God who is taking an active role in creation of the heavenly city here on the earth.

If there is one point which assures us that Julian saw the same spiritual world (though perhaps from a different angle) as Swedenborg, it is the overwhelming optimism which permeates her writing, and for which she is best known. Her vision "that all shall be well" rings throughout her writing to remind us constantly that it, truly is, all right. Her words: "And so our good Lord answered to all the questions and doubts which I could raise, saying comfortingly... I will make all things well, I shall make all things well, I may make all things well, and I can make all things well; and you will see that yourself, that all things will be well." (pg. 151)

Though the Augustinian doctrine through which she saw the Divine was different from Swedenborg's, Julian of Norwich's spirit, heart, desire—and most of all, vision—of the ultimate reality resonates with and embodies in it the very best that Swedenborg has to offer. These themes—the compassion of the incarnation, the expanded idea of sin, Divine Providence, and the majesty of the Holy City—need to become central to our lives as people of God. The commonality of visions of Swedenborg and Julian can truly inform us in the very core of what God would have us know about our universe, our God, and ourselves.

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Andy Stinson is in his third year of study at the Swedenborg School of Religion. By way of further biographical material the following musing is reprinted from the San Francisco church's October newsletter. Andy recently completed an internship there.

The Importance of Breathing

I was asked to share a bit of my own journey into ministry with all of you. So much of my path and preparation for ministry has been up to God and so little up to me, rather than describe the things I have done and the decisions I have made, I would like to share with you the forces that have conspired to bring me where I am now.

In being born in Maine I have been given a wide streak of independence, vital to defining oneself as a minister.

In being born a Stinson, I learned something of love, something of hate, something of resiliency and something of commitment.

In going into the army at 17 I learned courage and fear, and both must be present to accomplish anything hard, or loving.

In going to college, I was opened to the wondrous options that knowledge can bring us, and without the intestinal fortitude to put them into action they are not really options at all.

In graduating I was given something of pride; in the year of unemployment following I was given something of humility.

In the years of working as a commercial underwater diver I learned something of quantum physics, instant karma, and living well; of the importance of continuing to breathe, and that every action has lifelong importance.

In this last lesson was the core of my call, that the universe, just like the tide, has an order, an ebb and a flow, and if we ever want to get anywhere, we had dam sure better go with it.

—Andrew Stinson ❖

The Melody Lingers On

Gloria Toot

In March of 1995, Pete and I had a rare opportunity to work and live in Nagoya, Japan. Originally scheduled to stay for eleven months while Pete worked for General Electric, we ended up staying for almost two years. While we missed our family and friends, we were honored to make new friends—many of whom became “family” to us.

When we arrived we were nervous and excited. An American couple from Texas who were also there for GE met us at the airport. Strangers in a strange land depend on friends for more than you can imagine. The couple immediately “adopted” us, showed us the area attractions as well as shopping places, banks, etc. Pete and I lived in an apartment just a few miles from them. We had chosen the apartment building because there were no gaijin (foreigners) living there—we had decided to jump into the culture with both feet. Luckily we had a very friendly and helpful neighbor who spoke excellent English. At this point Pete and I could say *Sayonara*. When we left, our language skills were only a little better.

There were so many new sights and impressions that it is impossible to describe. I would like to just recall some things in a free flow as the thoughts come back to me now.

People, people people! Many on bicycles, some wearing masks to keep from spreading their colds. They seemed to make their own private space around them as a way to survive the crowded streets.

Bicycles, bicycles, bicycles! You could tell where a subway station was located just by the hundreds of bikes parked all around the sidewalk. Some stations even had bicycle parking lots.

Subways (something we do not have here in Cincinnati), that were safe, convenient, punctual and sometimes very crowded. Yes, there really are people to push you into the car when you think another person could not possibly fit.

There were flowers everywhere and at every season. What a beautiful way they had of celebrating the beauty of nature.

There were of course the cherry blossom festivals, also the azalea festival, wisteria (fuji) festivals, iris festivals, leaf viewing festivals, and many many others. Flower shops on about every corner, people carrying flowers home in special carrying cases, flowers planted everywhere along the streets. I still marvel at how flowers seemed such a major but everyday part of their lives. One of the favorite activities that I became involved in was Ikibana flower arranging. Pete was especially good at critiquing my work! We both truly enjoyed having flowers in our home all the time.

The Japanese people had some very clever “gadgets” like an electronic eye to turn the escalator on, so it would run only when someone used it. And remote control of every-

thing in the apartment—including heater and air conditioner units. I had a great laugh when we first arrived and our realtor was showing me how to work everything in the apartment. The washing machine had buttons for five different water levels, six different wash speeds, several spin cycles and speed choices, automatic program buttons for delicate, heavy, etc. There

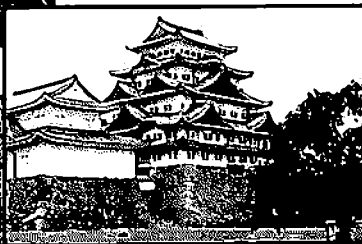
were more buttons than I would ever use. She put little sticky labels in English on everything. I said, “I think I understand it all, but where do you choose hot or cold water?” Her response was, “Oh, you just turn these handles

at the water hoses.”

One of the first challenging things I did was a trip to the grocery. There were grocery stores in the basements of almost all department stores, as well as neighborhood markets. While many items were recognizable—a loaf of bread is a loaf of bread—some things I was not sure whether animal, vegetable or mineral! And while bread may be bread, what looks like hamburger buns may turn out to be filled with bean paste (an acquired taste).

January 1 is a big holiday—New Years Day. There are too many traditions associated with it to list, but my favorite was ringing the bells at midnight at the Buddhist temple. It

(Continued on page 8)



Top: Pete and the young ladies of Horai-cho.

Above: Nagoya Castle.

Left: Pete learning to make mouchi (pounded rice) the old fashioned way.

Below: Pete and Gloria after tea with a gentleman in Takayama.

The Melody Lingers On

(Continued from page 7)

felt like a much more special way to celebrate the coming new year than our usual party. At least every month, there was a holiday. Boys' day, Girls' day, Golden Week, Obon (when spirits of deceased relatives visited their homesteads), and many other wonderful traditional celebrations. On Boys' day—now more popularly called Children's day, most homes flew Carp banners for each child in the family to signify their hope for their children to be strong and persevere. At obon, whole villages danced traditional dances.

One of the highlights of our stay was when we were fortunate to be invited to go with a group to a small rural village for a weekend of foreign exchange. The entire village of over 200, from the 100+-year-old matriarch to the smallest baby, turned out to meet the sixteen of us. Most of the villagers could not speak English (our common language) and most of the foreigners could not speak Japanese. Luckily we had a fun interpreter along. They put on a show for us of all their traditional arts, helped us learn to cook some of their traditional foods, taught us their Obon dance, played games and really treated us as royalty. When we finally had to part the next day, every one of us and our hosts were embracing and weeping in joy for the friendship we had experienced. There is nothing quite like hugging so many people who cannot even converse with you, but with whom you have felt a great kinship.

There were many other small but blessed experiences we had: The trip to a farm for persimmon picking and dinner. The party in the mountains where our Japanese friends were playing and singing bluegrass music. The time a stranger invited us and another American couple into his home for tea and a tour of his gardens. The time I, along with a Japanese and an American friend helped an old man who had collapsed on the sidewalk, too weak to finish his walk. We gave him a ride in my car and were invited in by his wife for tea. He was a retired supreme court justice and she was a noted photographer. Then there was the man in McDonald's who made many Origami items for us while he sat next to our table. The school girls who spoke to us about world peace while we were sightseeing in Kyoto. The many people who helped us find our way when we seemed lost. The policeman who decided it was too difficult to communicate with me so he didn't give me a speeding ticket! The people at the hair salon who loved to practice their English—especially my hairdresser whose favorite expression was "trust me." The little school boy



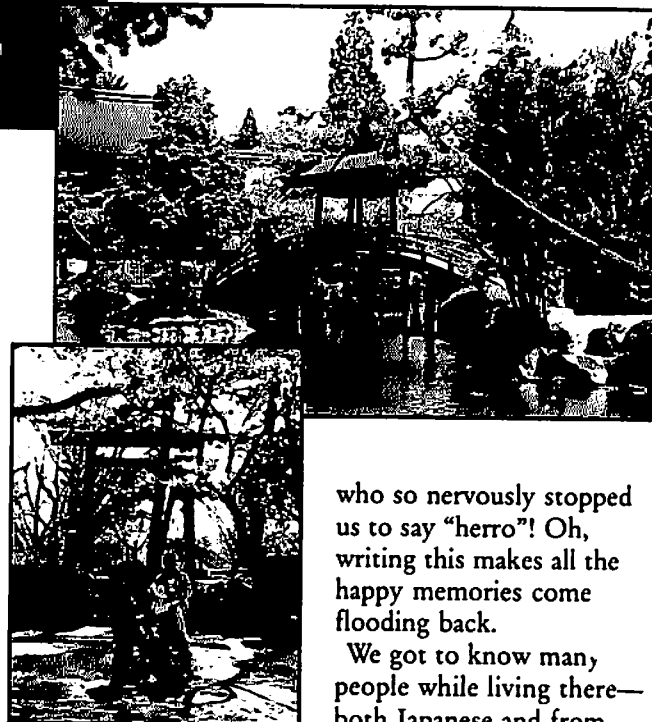
Top: Gloria and the elderly ladies of Horai-cho.

Left: A young boy tries his English on Gloria.

Below: Gardens at Enhoji Temple (one of our favorites)

Bottom left: Burning incense at a Buddhist temple.

Bottom right: Tori gate among the cherry blossoms. (Tori gates are at entrances to Shinto shrines).



who so nervously stopped us to say "herro"! Oh, writing this makes all the happy memories come flooding back.

We got to know many people while living there—both Japanese and from other countries. We shared

values, ideas, support and lots of fun. We had an experience that will never be equaled. During my farewell speech to the Cross Cultural Exchange Association, a women's group consisting of 35 Japanese women and 35 foreign women (I was president during the second year) I related a dream I had. I dreamed that a person from GE was coming to our house to take everything important away, everything that was Japanese. I was warned he was coming so I hid, in a very secret place, a little music box. I knew the things around me would not be Japanese anymore, but the music—the deep life-changing experiences I had had in Japan—would forever be in my heart.

Gloria and Pete Toot are members of the Cincinnati (Kemper Road) Swedenborgian Church. Gloria serves as secretary for the denomination. ❖

MINSU MEETING REPORT FALL 1997

The Ministries Support Unit (MINSU) held its fall 1997 meeting in Bridgton, Maine, on the weekend of October 11-12. According to church bylaws, MINSU's "central focus shall be on facilitating ministries within the Swedenborgian Church and facilitating activities that increase the number of individuals and groups consciously committed to the realization of the Swedenborgian Church's purpose." Present for this meeting were Betsy Coffman, the Rev. Paul Martin, Linda Tafel, Alan Thomsen, and the Rev. Ken Turley, who served as our host.

Our first item of business was the election of a new chair, as the Rev. Carl Yenetchi resigned from MINSU due to new employment and its attendant responsibilities. By unanimous consent, Linda Tafel was elected chair and Alan Thomsen assistant for the year to come.

We wish to note that Linda Tafel conscientiously raised the concern that she should perhaps not serve as chair due to the fact that her husband's ministry in Southwest Florida is funded through MINSU. However, MINSU has a strictly enforced policy of its members removing themselves from the meeting when there is a conflict of interest. Currently, both Paul Martin and Linda Tafel willingly and consistently remove themselves from any discussion and vote concerning their respective ministries. Therefore, the members of MINSU felt that there is no conflict of interest in Linda serving as Chair. Moreover, she offers much needed continuity in this position. Having three years' experience and an excellent grasp of the issues with which we must deal. Serving as chair requires much time and dedication and we are grateful for Linda's willingness to serve and capably guide us during this time of transition.

The fall meeting is largely devoted to reviewing requests received from ministries across North America and Guyana. These requests summarize the programs, activities, and financial situations of local ministries, many of whom request denominational assistance. Based upon their reports, we

discuss the requests and make recommendations for funding. Some ministries are eligible for Augmentation Fund assistance which is restricted to supplementation of ministers' salaries and is managed by the Augmentation Fund Committee. Others are recommended in our budget to the Cabinet for assistance through Missions Funds and for ultimate approval by General Council.

MINSU is, however, very much concerned with all ministries, even those which are financially self-supporting. Indeed, each member of MINSU acts as liaison to a number of ministries in an attempt to facilitate communication, be aware of trends and important events, and to provide any guidance and support we can. Please feel welcome to contact your liaison if we may be of any help to you! Consult the list of liaisons below.

We are pleased to note that many of our ministries have attained self-sufficiency or are making progress toward that goal. We thank all of you for your good-faith efforts to grow in all ways and to thus "share the wealth." Because of your many successes, we are able to fund new churches and projects and to help some parishes afford a minister after having had vacant pulpits for varying lengths of time. This year feels like something of a watershed: a New Church in southwest Florida, a full-time minister at the Network Center* for Spiritual Growth in New Hampshire, a minister again employed in our Washington D.C. National Church, new full-time ministers in Edmonton and in Georgetown, Guyana, and continuing support to many others across the continent. At the same time, we are acutely aware that yet other deserving groups are without ministers, especially due to the dearth of active clergy available to serve. If you have ideas, concerns, or needs, we would like to hear from you!

Two fairly new proposals were discussed at our meeting which may offer hope and help in the not-too-distant future. The first, a Phoenix Team, is to help existing parishes, which may be at risk to rekindle themselves, by assisting them in the

visioning and planning processes—and beyond into action. The Phoenix Team has already been at work in a couple of places. The second, a Transition Team, would help ministries cope with and resolve such issues as loss, separation, grief, and conflict when they are changing leadership or direction. Ideally, we would have at our disposal, as do larger denominations, well-trained staff and interim clergy to help church groups through ties of change.

At our spring 1998 meeting, we hope to meet with the Swedenborg School of Religion at their request to discuss these and other issues of mutual concern. We will also address how we can more effectively and caringly communicate our concerns, joys, vision, and decisions with the church as a whole. Working together, we are optimistic that we can take great strides forward and enjoy making progress as we experience the Lord's vivifying presence among and around us.

LIST OF LIAISONS

MINSU liaisons were established and the need reaffirmed to call and introduce ourselves to church presidents or other leaders and ministers, lay leaders, and then call minister and president before each meeting. Assignments are as follows:

Linda Tafel—Kitchener, Urbana, Gulfport, Kelowna, Bridgewater, Boston, Guyana, Vancouver, Fryeburg.

Betsy Coffman—NetWork Center, Royal Oak (Detroit), Cleveland, Palos Verdes, Elmwood, Kemper Road, Portland, San Francisco.

Alan Thomsen—StoneHouse, Ft. Meyers, Edmonton, Cambridge, Los Angeles, Temenos, Living Waters, East Bay.

Rev. Paul Martin—Wilmington, Pretty Prairie, Pawnee Rock, Des Plaines, San Diego, St. Louis, St. Paul, Deland.

Rev. Ken Turley—Puget Sound, New York, Little Grain, Bayside, Washington DC; Chicago, LaPorte, Western Canada.

—Alan Thomsen, Co-chair MINSU ❖

New Students at SSR



Swedenborg School of Religion, Newton, Massachusetts

This article is to introduce you to some of the newer students at the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, Massachusetts, and to tell you something of the journeys that have brought them here.

John Maine came to Swedenborgianism via the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, in 1992. He and his wife Catherine were looking for a spiritual home for themselves and their son Joshua, then three years old. John comments, "We had grown apart from the denominations into which we had been baptized (Anglican for me, Catholic for my wife), but we immediately felt right at home at the Church of the Good Shepherd. Our church is blessed with many wonderful, warm and caring people who make it a great place to be and a wonderful family to be part of. We soon became more involved, with Catherine leading various courses and workshops, while I have served on the board as a Sunday school teacher and as a member of the men's group."

John works in community social services, helping to provide various kinds of employment and training services, primarily to disadvantaged youth, a career he has pursued for the past sixteen years. Currently he works as a project manager for Lutherwood, a broad-based human services agency sponsored by the Lutheran Church. He notes, "My role involves the development and delivery of new, Internet-based vocational resources for youth in our community." John has a masters degree in education,

specializing in counseling and adult education programming, from the University of Toronto.

John notes, "I have long had an abiding interest in theology and in questions of human meaning and purpose." John is enrolled as a part-time student in a Masters in Theological Studies program at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary in order to get a better grounding in biblical studies. The program allows him to use correspondence courses taken through SSR as electives. John comments, "I received the generous support of the dean at the seminary here, of Mary Kay Klein and the faculty at SSR, and of many friends in our church." He is presently taking "Introduction to Swedenborgian Concepts" with the Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, and says, "I am very grateful for his support and for all the learning that I am doing. I am hopeful, too, that this learning will enable me to give back to our church in new ways."

William Shakalis began attending the Church of the New Jerusalem in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in November 1995 and joined the church in January 1996. Raised in the Roman Catholic Church, he became unaffiliated with any church for a number of years, returning to church membership via Unitarian-Universalism in 1992.

Raised in Stoneham, Massachusetts, Bill moved to Cambridge in 1975. About his family he comments, "I am second-generation Lithuanian-American. Both my parents were born and

raised in Cambridge, of Lithuanian emigré parents, all four emigrating to Cambridge from Lithuania prior to World War I."

Bill is currently employed as a computer programmer.

Bill is very active in the Cambridge church serving as chair of their Social Action Committee. He was very involved with activities around the recent visit of the Chinese president to Harvard University. The Cambridge Church Association has a history of supporting the Tibetan Association of Boston struggle with China for national and religious rights, and they hosted a candlelight prayer vigil, complete with banners and a portrait of the Dalai Lama (during President Jiang Zemin's recent visit.)

Bill says of SSR, "I find that SSR offers a modern seminary education combining Swedenborgian traditions, and allows development of personal ministries."

"I strongly feel that our society is spiritually and culturally over-materialistic and lacks religious/spiritual values upon which to base our personal and social life.

"My search for a loving and sustaining God and a new religious spirituality includes a vision of strong application of social action in the social arena as well as integration of the personal spiritual. Swedenborgianism supports the holistic integration of mind, body and spirit in connection with Christian theology that does not deny the findings of human reason.

"I seek a deeper spiritual relationship with God; seek a tradition that speaks to this; long for skills, religious and academic knowledge that will be of use to our Church and society; and the development of a new life that will help others develop their spiritual paths."

Philip K. Bae was introduced to New Church doctrines by his parents. He became a member of the Bayside, New York Swedenborgian Church in 1991. He has been a youth group leader, worked on publishing Bible

(Continued on page 15)

LETTERS

World Council of Churches

Open letter to all organizations of the New Church from Friedemann Horn, Zurich, 1997.

Dear friends of the New Church all over the world,

As an ordaining minister of the Swiss New Church and chairman of the Council of New Church Ministers on the European Continent, I have been commissioned to draft a letter to all the members of the New Church and their respective New Church organizations:

We believe that the revelation of *True Christian Religion* as offered by the Lord through his servant, Emanuel Swedenborg, is intended not just for the benefit of a few but for all of humankind. The extent to which the truths expressed in this revelation flow into the hearts and minds of humanity manifests the second coming of our Lord and the Age of the New Church. We believe that the ecumenical movement, flawed as it may be, is a precursor of the age of the New Church, since it is in harmony with one of the key principles of *True Christian Religion*: love leads, doctrine follows. Emanuel Swedenborg, whose visionary theology we espouse, stated repeatedly that despite all the differences in their teachings, the various Christian churches could become one if only they could agree to the preeminence of love of God and charity over doctrine (e.g. *Arcana Coelestia* 1799, 1834). Interestingly, one of the founding fathers of the ecumenical movement, the Swedish archbishop Nathan Soderblom, looked positively at his compatriot Emanuel Swedenborg. Few Christian churches are as ecumenical in principle as are the denominations of the New Church. This is one reason why our membership in the ecumenical movement is desirable; but there is another, perhaps more important one to us: We would lose the stigma of being a cult, and as such inherently dangerous. We have suffered enough from this prejudice!

There have been several attempts by New Church organizations to join the World Council of Churches. Until

TO THE EDITOR

now, all efforts failed simply because of numbers. The minimum requirement for membership is 25,000 parishioners. In October 1996 Jean Vidil (minister in Lausanne, Switzerland) and I spoke directly with representatives of the World Council and found that there is no exception to this requirement, even if we were ready to sign their basic confession of faith:

"The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

We can wholeheartedly agree with this statement on the basis of our teachings, more so than many other churches. We were assured that there is only one possibility: to group together all the various New Church Organizations on the planet, establishing an Alliance of Independent New Church Organizations (AINCO) and thus unified, apply for membership. Nobody knows the exact number of parishioners of all New Church organizations. Estimates vary from thirty thousand to fifty thousand. In any case, this number would be sufficient to join the World Council of Churches.

Consolidating our efforts in an ecumenical Alliance of Independent New Church Organizations, accepting and respecting our varying interpretations of Swedenborg's visionary theology, we would gain common objective: The possibility to actively participate in the formation of a new Christian era as members of the World Council of Churches.

Let me add the following thoughts: Emanuel Swedenborg did not personally found a church, whether it be called "New Church" or "Church of the New Jerusalem" or similar. He believed that the truths, revealed to

him by the Lord, which he published in many volumes, would eventually conquer the minds and hearts of all Christianity by sheer power of truth. On the other hand he stressed "that each use must have its organ." Each idea needs living minds and bodies, arms and legs by which it can be manifested. Let us regard the various New Church organizations as organs of a larger body that serves the Lord in establishing and unfolding the era of his New Church on earth.

Contrary to a belief held by some of us, Swedenborg did not see the necessity for a complete break with the traditional church as a prerequisite for the second coming of the Lord and of the age of the New Church. Swedenborg was not a soothsayer, but he made his prediction following the events of 1757 (J 73-74):

The various denominations will continue to exist and will continue to teach their doctrines as before. The divine influx from the new heaven, however, would increase and thus people would be free to question the doctrines of their respective churches. He foresaw that the center of the church would shift from the traditional Christian realm to new "heavenly" ones. This seems to be exactly the situation we see today. Keeping this in mind, it would be a mistake to look at the World Council of Churches as merely an Old Church-organization with which we have no business to associate. On the contrary, here is a hopeful sign for us, that the era of the New Church is dawning. The New Church of Switzerland, which I have served as minister since 1950, implemented in its statutes years ago, that its work is to be done in an "ecumenical spirit." We feel that we are a very small but vital part of the body of Christ.

With these thoughts in mind, I call on the friends of the New Church all over the world to join in a common goal. Let us establish an Alliance of Independent New Church organizations (AINCO) and thus connected, join the "World Council of Churches."

To repeat: The aim of this Alliance is not the creation of a strictly structured,

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Feeling Safe with God

Renee Billings

Now that all of the planning, shopping, visiting and celebrating of the holidays is over and the new year is beginning, we can perhaps be still a while and reflect on what it all meant to us and how we might continue to live and grow in the presence of the Lord's new life within us and around us.

During the months and seasons following the Lord's advent, the "infant" dimensions or expressions of our spirituality grow (in subtle and sometimes obvious ways) as the baby Jesus did grow into adulthood. The coming months can be a fruitful time for us to explore how the Lord is manifesting in our lives in new ways, for now in January we enter into the spiritual season of Epiphany.

Epiphany celebrated in the West centers on the theme of the magi and points to the universal nature of the Lord's first coming. However, Epiphany originally began as the Easter celebration of the incarnation of the Word and the eventual baptism of Christ—and now for us today in our New Year's exploration of the developing divinity within, we can begin to search for the pockets of darkness and emptiness that have, in fact, been touched by the Human aspect of the Divine presence and trust.

Swedenborg wrote that the cleansing and purifying qualities of water signify the cleansing and purification that result in our spiritual growth process when truths of faith are added to our understanding (*Arcana Coelestia*, paragraph 10238[2]). The truths of faith that we acquire, however, are of little use to us if we believe that an outward, surface knowledge of them is sufficient to regenerate us, i.e. to develop our spirituality, our relationship with the Divine Human.

The Divine energy that created the Word brought to the world through the incarnation the ability to understand the truths of faith *internally*. If we allow the spiritual understanding

that we gain from Scripture, our inner vision, our doctrine and other teachings, our families, our faith community and others in our lives to *affect* us on an internal level, then the Lord's life has space in us not only to be born in an infinite variety of forms according to the need of the moment, but also the Lord's life has the needed room to grow and strengthen and serve.

It takes a wholehearted commitment on our part to "let go and let God;" to let ourselves *feel* our faith as much as we endeavor to think about it. As the prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (29:13).

When we give our whole heart to the Loving Creator, the internal truths of faith gradually become clearer to us and more desirable. This is so because the leap of faith that it takes to give our heart (our will) to God will create room for God to clear our "third eye" and reorder our loves so that we actually come to love the truth more than we love self alone and worldly matters.

I believe that it is important for us in our spiritual journeys to strive for a balance in the ways that we go about understanding and expressing our spiritual and natural sides. Swedenborg put forth a theology that *includes and respects* the self as an integral part of our regeneration process whereby a lifetime of relationship with God and personal growth

teaches our self to eventually love to yield to the dictates of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom. As we choose to live our faith more fully, our love for the Creator and for the neighbor guides our self and worldly loves in meaningful and productive ways. Salvation, then is an eternal process of reordering our loves and priorities in ways that affirm the self, rather than deny or put down the self.

With the affirmation and respect of the whole human experience comes the sense that it is ultimately safe with God to explore the internal truths of faith, the gut-level realities of God-with-humankind. When we feel safe enough to ask the Lord to be with us even in the darkest and emptiest places of our lives, then our external-natural self (as compared with our internal-spiritual self) will let go, allow and cooperate with God to reorder and transform our lives.

May this new year and Epiphany season bring you the opportunity to explore your faith journey with a sense that you are safe with God and may you discover, or perhaps rediscover, the wonderful depths and workings of the internal truths of faith available to all people in Scripture, doctrine, human hearts and nature.

The Rev. Renee Billings is pastor of the Royal Oak (Detroit) Swedenborgian Church.

Reprinted from the January 1996 Royal Oak Church newsletter. ❖

EdSu Announces a Pre-Convention Conference

Mark your calendar today and plan to come to Florida. Dates are the evening of Sunday, June 21 to noon on Wednesday June 24, 1998. Join others as we grow and learn and share in a spiritual community. Details later.



For information call

Lorraine Sando
(206) 242-7354.

THOUGHTS TO LAUNCH THE NEW YEAR

The Ministry of Presence

Jim Lawrence

A little over a year ago, one of my favorite 20th century theologians died of a heart attack at age 64. Henri Nouwen, who had taught pastoral theology for over 25 years at Notre Dame, Yale and Harvard, had left full-time seminary teaching for a life of living in community and working with the terminally ill. His most successful book was *The Wounded Healer*, which explored how the painful struggles in the lives of caregivers enabled them to be better healers. In all, Nouwen wrote well over 20 books and it was once quipped that "he never had an unpublished thought."

One of his finest published thoughts is in his 1977 book, *The Living Reminder*. It is about what he called "the ministry of presence"—how just being there physically with people at difficult times is often an effective channel of God's grace beyond what we imagine. I think of how a congregation can grow in its skills of "the ministry of presence" with one another. In illness, hospitalizations, crises, deaths, employment changes, marriage celebrations or family problems, we can bring God's care, concern, and compassion to one another.

A ministry of presence means that we do not have to have all the right words. We can just bring a caring presence—offering a warm hand to squeeze, a gentle hug, a listening heart.

This means, however, that we have a responsibility to let others know when we are undergoing times of special stress. Many times we are better at giving, than at receiving, but this robs everyone—our selves of meaningful support and others of being utilized by God.

I fell to thinking about Henri Nouwen this week, and in the reflecting I became aware of hopes for my own ministry of presence, and for that of our collective presence.

The Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence is co-pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.

Reprinted from the November 1997 San Francisco Church newsletter. ❖

Michigan Association Annual Meeting Report

L-R (Back row):

Ruth Brandau, Daryn Wilson, Chris Laitner, Bob Locke, Lori Patana, Barbara Tourangeau, Steven Legenc, Mary Crenshaw, Michelle Huffman, B.J. Neuenfeldt, Jack Hill, Ray Banaszak. (Front row):

Bill Locke, Maynard Zimmerman,

Rev. Renee Billings, Dean Trombly, Jo Locke, Jo Zimmerman, Libby Reddekopp. This photo was taken in the Almont chapel, which is on the register of Michigan Historic Buildings.



L-R: Michelle Huffman, Jo Zimmerman, Maynard Zimmerman, Rev. Renee Billings, Jack Hill, Chris Laitner, Daryn Wilson.

The annual meeting of the Michigan Association was convened October 4, 1997, at the Almont Retreat Center.

The meeting included a worship service led by the Rev. Renee Billings in the Almont Chapel.

Reports were received from the Royal Oak Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Renee Billings, pastor; the Almont Summer School, Renee Billings and Barbara Tourangeau, business managers, the Almont Retreat Center, Barbara Tourangeau, president; Michelle Huffman for the Transitions; Betsy Lau and Michelle Huffman for the Survivors; and six of the Michigan Association members who attended the July, 1997 convention in Hutchinson, Kansas.

Officers elected for the 1997-98 year were:

President: Mary Crenshaw
Vice-president: Libby Reddekopp
Secretary: Chris Laitner
Treasurer: Barb Tourangeau
Trustee: Lori Patana
(term expires 2000)

The Association discussed member-

ship requirements, and a committee will present a report to the next annual meeting regarding membership possibilities, including specific church membership and Association member-at-large status. Since the Michigan Association has only one active church (Royal Oak, formerly Detroit), guidelines for member-at-large status in the Association and categories of membership in the Royal Oak society need to be established so that outlying isolated members can choose the appropriate membership "niche." (Note: A "gray area" exists regarding membership in the Almont New Church Assembly; Assembly membership does not require membership in the Swedenborgian Church and, therefore, does not connect with Michigan Association in terms of membership).

Following the business meeting, members were encouraged to visit the new gazebo which has been erected overlooking the lake.

Chris Laitner, secretary ❖

Letters to the Editor

(Continued from page 11)

homogenous New Church bureaucracy but rather a heterogeneous union of equal partners for the above-mentioned purpose. As a first step toward this goal, I would like to call on all New Church organizations to initiate a discussion of this issue, and to start the decision-making process within their respective organizations.

The seat of the World Council of Churches is in Geneva, in neutral Switzerland. Once a decision has been reached, the initiators of the effort, Jean Vidil and myself would try to prepare a sketch of the statutes of AINCO, its legal seat etc. and submit it to all of you, so that you would get a chance for such adjustments as you would find necessary. In a second step, Jean and I would try to legally enroll AINCO into the section of religious associations within the register of Swiss Associations in Berne, Switzerland. This should enable us to apply for membership in the World Council of Churches.

May the Lord be with us and give us courage and decisiveness.

With fraternal greetings in Christ our Lord,

Rev. Dr. Friedemann Horn
Zurich, Switzerland



Tunnel to Eternity

Dear Patte LeVan, Editor:

My thanks to *The Messenger* and to reviewer Mindy Jester for her evaluation of my book, *Tunnel to Eternity* in the current enjoyable edition. (December, 1997).

You and she may be interested in a most surprising statement in Swedenborg's *Journal of Dreams* for September 29-30,

I saw a gable of the most beautiful palace that could possibly be seen; glory like the sun upon it. It was said to me that I should be a member that was immortal, which no one had previously been except one who had been dead and lived again. Others said that there were several.

Several near-death experiencers?

Thank you for another good issue.

Leon Rhodes
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania ❖

The Kansas Convention

..... REVISITED

I have just received an evaluation summary of the Kansas Convention based on forms filled out by 102 attendees. Those of you who completed one ought to have a report of them and others who are potential convention goers should find them interesting.

The response that appeared most often was appreciation for the Kansas people, their hospitality, and the thoroughness with which the convention arrangements had been made. Also high on the list of what people liked most were the mini-courses. Some expressed the wish that there were three time slots for them and many expressed regret that the time of some of them had been cut short.

Getting together with old friends and making new friends also ranked high. Probably related to this is the wish stated by some for more free time and a less tight schedule. Nineteen were pleased with the open/Swedenborgian way that the vote on Jonathan Mitchell's ordination discussion was handled.

The pre-convention worship received 12 favorable votes, which is a good showing, considering that only a small percentage of the respondents had been at its sessions. There were a number of negative comments about the business sessions, though—surprisingly—ten mentioned them as among the convention activities they liked; one expressing complaint acknowledged that they were necessary. Several regretted that things did not start on time and some said we should start anyway.

By far the largest number of comments came from fewer than five people. Most support of all was for having our conventions on small college campuses, though nine opted for retreat centers and three for conference centers. One suggested we have convention in Jerusalem.

A convention planning meeting is being held in Florida January 17. The evaluation summary will be sent to those attending, in advance of the meeting.

—Rev. Edwin Capon, President ❖

..... President's Activities

July 20 — Preached in Meredith Neck Union Church, New Hampshire

August 17-20 — Cabinet meeting in Fryeburg, Maine

August 24 — Preached in Yarmouthport, Mass.

September 28 — Preached in Elmwood, Mass. and installed the Rev. Lee Woofenden in the Bridgewater, Mass. church.

October 1-3 — Committee on Admission to the Ministry at SSR.

October 12 — Preached in Elmwood

October 17-18 — Trustees of Urbana University in Ohio

October 26 — Participated in rededication of the sanctuary of the Boston Church.

November 1-3 — FPRSU and Augmentation Fund meeting at Temenos, Pennsylvania.

November 7-9 — Wayfarers Chapel Board in Palos Verdes, California.

November 30 — Preached in Elmwood

December 4-6 — Cabinet and General Council in Palos Verdes.

December 14 — Preached in Elmwood

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MARRIAGE

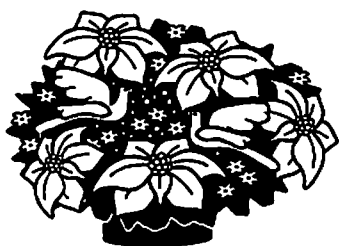
Kahler & Richmann—Phyllis J. Kahler of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Norman L. Richmann of North Liberty, Iowa, were united in marriage October 11, 1997, at the Lenox Church of the New Jerusalem in Norway, Iowa. The Rev. Burr Bryant, Clover Ridge United Methodist Church in Fairfax, Iowa, officiated at the ceremony. A reception, hosted by the bride's parents, Everett and Esther Kahler, followed at the Lenox church.

DEATHS

Giunta—John Giunta, 98, father of the late Paul Giunta and lifelong member of the Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world August 13, 1997. His brother, Henry Giunta, was a Swedenborgian minister. John is survived by his wife, Ida, and by his son Paul's older brother John L. Giunta. Memorial services were held at the Cambridge Swedenborgian Church August 17, 1997, the Rev. F. Robert Tafel officiating.

Guest—Philip Q. Guest, 75, longtime member of the Detroit Swedenborgian Church, later of Royal Oak, entered the spiritual world November 12, 1997. Philip was treasurer of the Detroit church for 16 years. He is survived by his widow, Irma Guest, four children, and six grandchildren. A memorial service was conducted November 16, the Rev. Renee Billings officiating.

Webster—Elaine W. Webster, age 74, entered the spiritual world October 27, 1997. A graveside service was conducted at Pine Grove Cemetery October 30, 1997, in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.



A Season For Nonviolence

A Season for Nonviolence is a 64-day campaign of media, educational and community action events created by people who are choosing nonviolence as a way of life. This will be a commemoration of the 50th and 30th anniversaries of the assassinations of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. from January 30 to April 4, 1998. It will take place at the Agape International Center of Truth in Santa Monica, California and many other major cities in this country and Africa. There are seven co-directors, including Gandhi's grandson, Arun and his wife, Sunanada, and Dr. Michael Bockwith, minister of the Agape church. Advisory sponsors include UNESCO, AFSC, Amnesty International, Free Tibet campaign, Dr. Robert Muller- chancellor of the UN university in Costa Rica, Friends of Peace Pilgrim, and the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy. ♦

IMPORTANT CHURCH CALENDAR DATES

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Jan. 14-16 | Exec. Com. Council of Ministers
Leesburg, FL |
| Jan. 17-18 | SSR Field Education Training
Leesburg, FL |
| Mar. 13-15 | Education Support Unit
Newton, MA |
| Apr. 1-3 | Committee on Admission to the Ministry
SSR |
| Apr. 17-19 | Ministries Support Unit
Newton, MA |
| Apr. 25-26 | Retirement Committee
Newton, MA |
| Apr. 24-26 | SSR Board
SSR |
| Apr. 26-27 | East Coast Peer Supervision Training
Blairhaven, MA |
| May 1-2 | Wayfarers Chapel Board
Wayfarers Chapel |
| May 2 | Investment Committee
Temenos, West Chester, PA |
| June 5-6 | Urbana Trustees |
| June 24-28 | Convention 1998
Leesburg, FL |

New Students at SSR

(Continued from page 10)

Study Notes in Korean, played guitar and the synthesizer for church services, and is the webmaster for his church's website.

Philip was born in Kwang-Ju, South Korea; his Korean name is Kyung - Yeon Bae. He has been living in the United States since 1988.

Philip attended the Academy of the New Church College for a year; he received a degree in computer science from Queens College of City University of New York.

In college Philip was vice-president of the Korean Christian Club and executive director of the Korean Student Association.

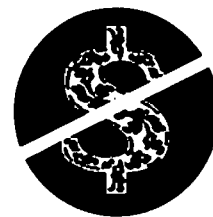
Philip comments, "In my opinion, it takes a lot of hard work to carry on in the New Church ministry, and studying is just a mere start."

About what he hopes to accomplish, Philip says, "By learning New Church doctrines, I would like to start ministry with my life and to my neighbors if possible and be a happy man while on earth."

This article is based on written information and interviews provided by Philip Bae, John Maine, and William Shakalis. It was compiled and edited by Liz Balcom and Mary Kay Klein. ♦

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.

Urbana University Embarks on "Urbana Plan" to Cut Costs For Students and Families



The Urbana University Board of Trustees voted October 19, 1997, to adopt a comprehensive plan to financially assist students entering the university.

The Urbana Plan is a three-part program that eliminates the fee for campus housing at residence halls for qualifying students, enacts a tuition freeze for students attending the university in 1998, and creates a tuition payment plan which allows students to spread their tuition costs over an extended period.

"The Urbana Plan was prompted by the historical commitment to affordability by Urbana University's trustees and its administration," said Francis Hazard, Urbana University president.

A bold element of the Urbana Plan features the elimination of residential room fees for incoming students. Students will be eligible for the room grant on a first-come, first-served basis.

Eligibility for the room grant is based on multiple occupancy for full-time students only and will be renewed annually. Current room charges for students now living in the residential facilities are \$1,900 annually.

The move to offer a free room to students is expected not only to better utilize the residence hall facilities, but also increase student participation in campus events and organizations.

"The university has the ability to serve a freshman class of 300 next fall. Most students will qualify for financial aid, scholarships, grants and loans," Hazard said.

The tuition freeze, which maintains the 1997-1998 tuition rate for students, is a key component of the Urbana Plan. This action is enhanced by

the installation of an extended payment plan which guarantees a four-year, locked-in tuition rate for students who participate in the plan.

"The Urbana Plan will enable incoming students to anticipate the cost of their entire collegiate career and to budget for it in an affordable manner," said James Dillehay, vice-president for Academic Affairs. "The university ranks among the least expensive in total costs of tuition, fees, room and board, among 47 independent institutions in Ohio and this plan will further reduce costs for parents and students."

Founded in 1850, the beautiful tree-covered campus of Urbana University is nestled on the southwest side of Urbana, Ohio. Urbana's location midway between Columbus and Dayton allows for easy access for both commuters and on-campus residential students from populous areas of Ohio. Urbana University enrolls approximately 1,000 students annually and has increased enrollment each of the past seven years.

It is the mission of Urbana University to offer an exemplary liberal arts education in a small college environment. The university strives to emphasize individual attention, excellence in instruction, career-oriented programs, and affirmation of moral and ethical values. The university is noted for its quality education and business programs.

—Lisa Oda Fede
Director of University Relations ❖

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