

THE MESSENGER

Monthly Publication, Swedenborgian Church of North America

March 1998

Mary Kay Klein

As a teenager, I often babysat for a family in our neighborhood. After the four children were safely asleep, I enjoyed searching the family bookshelves for new books to read. One of the books I discovered was *The Seven Storey Mountain* by Thomas Merton. This story of his early years and conversion to belief in God profoundly influenced my life. His search for God, his mysticism, and his sense of the connection between the spiritual life and social transformation have become powerful themes in my life.

Probably the best known twentieth century mystic, Thomas Merton began life in Europe in 1915. After his parents died, he led a wild life as a university student, getting a woman pregnant and generally having a good time. He also searched for God, as the following passage suggests:

I was in my room. It was night. The light was on. Suddenly it seemed to me that Father, who had now been dead more than a year, was there with me. The sense of his presence was as vivid and as real and as startling as if he had touched my arm or spoken to me. The whole thing passed in a flash, but in that flash, instantly, I was overwhelmed with a sudden and profound insight into the misery and corruption of my own soul, and I was pierced deeply with a light that made me realize something of the condition I was in, and I was filled with horror at what I saw, and my whole being rose up in revolt against what was within me, and my soul desired escape and liberation and freedom from all this with an intensity and an urgency unlike anything I had ever known before. And now I think for the first time in my life I really began to pray—praying not with lips and with my intellect and my imagination, but praying out of the very roots of my life and of my being, and

Swedenborg Meets Thomas Merton

praying to the God I had never known.¹

At his guardian's insistence, he came to the United States. After completing his degree at Columbia and pursuing a brief teaching career, he entered the Trappist monastery of Gethsemane in Kentucky. His book *The Sign of Jonas* chronicles his early life in the monastery and his ordination. He felt as though his ordination is what he was born for—it was what justified his existence. *The Sign of Jonas* concludes with the "Firewatch" section in which is found the following passage:

The voice of God is heard in Paradise:

"What was vile has become precious. What is now precious was never vile. I have always known the vile as precious: for what is vile I know not at all."

"What was cruel has become merciful. What is now merciful was never cruel. I have always overshadowed Jonas with My mercy, and cruelty I know not at all. Have you had sight of Me, Jonas My child? Mercy within mercy within mercy. I have forgiven the universe without end, because I have never known sin."

*Like Swedenborg,
Merton sought to find
his true self in God.*

"What was poor has become infinite. What was infinite was never poor. I have always known poverty as infinite: riches I love not at all. Prisons within prisons within prisons. Do not lay up for yourselves ecstasies upon earth, where time and space corrupt, where the minutes break in and steal. No more lay hold on time, Jonas, My son, lest the rivers bear you away.

"What was fragile has become powerful. I loved what was most frail. I looked upon what was nothing. I touched what was without substance, and within what was not, I am."²

Under obedience, Thomas Merton wrote a number of books on the contemplative life and spiritual themes. He often focuses on the contrast between the false and true selves. His entire life seemed to be a search for the true self, the one who exists with God. He describes some of these themes in the following passage from *The New Seeds of Contemplation*:

My false and private self is the one who wants to exit outside the reach of God's will and God's love—outside of reality and outside of life. And such a self cannot help but be an illusion.

We are not very good at recognizing illusions, least of all the ones we cherish about ourselves—the ones we are born with and which feed the roots of sin. For most of the people in the world, there is no greater subjective reality than this false self of theirs, which cannot exist. A life devoted to the cult of this shadow is what is called a life of sin.

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SOME PASTORAL THOUGHTS ON LENT:

A TIME OF INTROSPECTION AND REPENTANCE

Are you thinking about spring? I am! But we are not there yet. It only feels like it on some of these warm, sunny days.

We are not to Easter yet either. We are in the middle of Lent, the forty days before Easter traditionally observed as a time of penance. Lent has not been as strong a tradition in the Swedenborgian church as in some other churches—probably because it is a traditional rather than a biblical observance. Swedenborg says a lot about such biblical events as the Lord's birth, life, crucifixion, and resurrection. But he says little or nothing about the traditional observances that have grown up around these events.

When Swedenborgians observe Lent, we transform it from a time of penance to a time of introspection and repentance. Penance has a sense of paying for the sins we commit. Introspection and repentance have a different focus. Rather than paying for our sins, Swedenborg teaches that we need to clearly identify them in ourselves, admit to them, and then ask the Lord for help in overcoming them.

When we do this kind of repentance, we are preparing ourselves for the joy of the Lord's resurrection by clearing away the obstacles within ourselves. Only when we put aside our thoughtless and self-centered habits can we accept the glory of the risen Lord Jesus into our lives. This is the time to act on those New Year's resolutions we have forgotten about!

*Rev. Lee Woofenden
Bridgewater, Mass.*

(Reprint, March 1997 Bridgewater church newsletter)

The forty days before Easter marks the period for self-examination that needs to precede the joyous event of Easter. The forty days of Lent (which begins March 1st) are reminiscent of the forty years the Israelites were in the wilderness, the forty days the Lord was in the desert after his baptism, and perhaps the midlife crisis that occurs for some at around forty.

During Lent we are invited to detach from our passions enough to make a review; we are to take stock of the progress we are making through the continuing issues in our lives. We do so privately and in the company of the Lord. Having looked within without harsh judgment, we celebrate our victories, and ask for forgiveness where we have fallen short. And we ask for help to begin anew. This is repentance.

Though actual repentance is never easy, in the long view it is much easier than neglecting it. Such a review is a useful strategy for avoiding problems that have worn out their welcome with others, and needless pain in ourselves. I ask, "What is my part in this difficulty with another person?" Then, I ask for forgiveness, and for help to amend my behavior.

You can do the same. Be sure to take responsibility for your part, regardless of what the other person's share of the problem is. (Perhaps there will be an opportunity for you to talk about that later). Good can result, which is part of the joy of Easter.

*Rev. Gardiner Perry
Conway, New Hampshire*

(Reprint, March 1995, Fryeburg church newsletter)



***When we quit thinking primarily about ourselves
and our own self-preservation,
we undergo a truly heroic transformation of consciousness.***

—Joseph Campbell

IMPORTANT CHURCH CALENDAR DATES

- 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

THE MESSENGER

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

March 1998
Volume 219 No. 3
Whole Number 5228

Typesetting & Layout
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Plymouth, IN

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

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

WEAVING A VILLAGE INTO COMMUNITY

Editor's Note: While at the Wayfarers Chapel on church business last fall, I got to chatting with Kay Fox, one of the Chapel's wedding directors. She is a delightful presence there, with her Australian accent and her radiant good humor. I learned that Kay had come here from Queensland in 1977 with her husband Don, a systems analyst and former dean of a Christian college.

They have three children and two grandchildren. Kay had previously taught English in Long Beach as a second language to adults from Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos. I also learned that she and her husband and a number of others had just returned from their fourth trip in ten years to Museekee, a small village in Thailand. What, I inquired, were they doing there? It seems Kay and Don have been involved as youth group leaders in mission work most of their lives. The trips to Thailand began in 1985, when they were part of an interdenominational missions team that consisted of students drawn out of a Christian university in Hawaii. In 1985 they went over to build a bathroom for a school in a village that wouldn't have been able to enlarge their school otherwise... and one thing led to another...

Kay Fox

Four trips in ten years and we see the work blossom...

In 1987, we found a young woman from Mizoran, in the far northwest of Thailand working among the Burmese refugees, the Karen people. Her financial support was little, but she was keeping five young girls from being sold into the flesh trade in Bangkok and she longed to be more of a help in this village.

We seemed wealthy in the extreme, by comparison, and decided with our entire family's approval, to mail her \$1,000. The need for the girls to help with their support had been discussed with her and we agreed that some treadle sewing machines would begin this effectively.

Weaving had formerly been part of the Karen women's vocation, but that work had been replaced by helping in the rice fields and vegetable gardens to increase their subsistence farming and to provide surplus for themselves and for other families' needs.

With the seed money to get things going, dollars were available to purchase raw materials, and familiar old weaving sticks were rediscovered and brought into use once more. Dyeing recipes were written out, tree bark and other natural dye materials were gathered, and a tradition that had nearly been lost was revived. Weaving patterns were shared and classes were started up, and the word spread—classes were attended by girls and women, many walking for hours to reclaim or learn for the first time this Karen heritage.

More girls could be added as another house was made available. Sewing machines were pumping away after school making back packs with locally woven cloth. My handbag from Sears was left behind at the end of our second trip, to be used as another pattern.

A vest came hot from the sewing machine and our daughter



Kay Fox (center) with Chimonee and her daughter Tatu. Chimonee is coordinator of the weaving program.

quickly shared "the black back and waist belt-buckle look." This cloth needed store-bought dye, and a whole new avenue opened.

For our second trip, we had also gathered about 100 pairs of spectacles and laid them out in our friend's home. We watched as folks passed through her house, trying on pair after pair until triumphantly beaming their approval: they could see well again. Walking around the village afterwards was a delight as we were often greeted with

gestures telling us of spectacles now owned.

Another breakthrough—another avenue opened: the women met together and exchanged embroidery patterns. Many of the older women were able to do close needle work now as they watched over the children too young to work in the fields.

In the years following our second trip, folks around us at home asked how they could be a part of this work.

Our young friend who had begun all this had since married a local man and had a baby. Her time at home was used setting up accounts, etc., and we were able to effect a support system for individual girls. Our "support families" could write, and she could translate the girls' return letters and yet another wonderful new avenue opened.

The third trip was much fun as we delivered gifts from 'support' families; some went to girls who lived at the center and some were hand-delivered to homes, and we met families and took pictures for U.S. 'parents.'

We took tools and found our friend's husband had purchased a tool box and we were able to fill it. More spectacles and used clothing and our duffle bags were filled. Dried peaches for missionaries were made available to us to deliver. It was wonderful being back there.



Kay (center, standing) with women and visitors in craft center.

(Continued on page 38)

Unity, Identity, and the Churches

Robert McCluskey

The General Assembly of the National Council of Churches in the USA met in Washington, D.C., November 11–14, 1997, at the Hotel Washington, one block from the White House. This annual meeting brings together delegates from the Council's 34-member communions to review the work of the past year to explore critical issues facing the churches, and to deliberate on the work of the council in the year ahead. The other three Swedenborgian NCC delegates are the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey, the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell, and Steve Koke. As usual, while the meetings were informative and exciting, this report can offer only a glimpse into the complex and important work of the Council, the preeminent ecumenical organization in the USA.

As often happens at retreats, workshops, and conventions, a theme emerged early on that seemed to resurface in almost everything we did. That theme was the tension that exists within the ecumenical movement between unity and identity: between who we are and who God calls us to become; between our individual traditions and doctrines on the one hand, and the ecumenical calling of full unity in God on the other hand. In ways that many did not expect, discussions led delegates to confront the real challenge of the ecumenical call to be one in Christ.

The Interfaith Relations Committee is developing a policy statement on interfaith relations for 1999. As part of their efforts to generate input from Council members, the Committee invited Dr. Diana Eck of Harvard University to present on religious pluralism in America. She noted that our diversity is so great that "ecumenism" (Christian unity) will no longer help us address the bigger issues that face us, such as global economics and the environment. She challenged the churches to "let go of God." God is not *ours*, as Christians; rather, *we* are God's. How essential, she asked, is Christ for salvation? How can we own our own viewpoints and traditions and fully accept genuine differences? Her presentation was followed by discussion among delegates of different communions.

The National Ministries Unit offered several policy statements for study. *No Barriers for Deaf People in Churches* was adopted after its second reading. (Each policy statement is read at two consecutive General Assembly meetings before it is voted on, so that member communions might offer comments and changes during the year.) *Disabilities, the Body of Christ, and the Wholeness of Society* had its first reading, as did the policy statement on *The Churches and Public Schools at the Close of the 20th Century*. This last item generated a good deal of discussion, principally around the issue of public funding for private schools, and the related issue of a voucher system to enable parents to use tax dollars to subsidize the private education of their children. Debate focused on the need to acknowledge the disparity between public and private education, the fact that the voucher system primarily benefits only those who are eco-

nomically advantaged, and the larger issue of the separation of church and state. The NCC has repeatedly stood in support of this last principle, and opposes the voucher system for that reason.

Church World Service and Witness presented a resolution, later adopted, on *The 50th Anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, calling on the Council and its members to strengthen their commitment to advancing human rights. Also adopted was a *Resolution Renewing the Call for a Complete Ban on Anti-Personnel Land Mines*. Ms. Judy Williams, Coordinator for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and co-winner of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize (with ICBL), spoke on behalf of the resolution. Afterward, delegations were asked to sign a letter to President Clinton asking for US compliance with the Ontario agreement.

For the last several years, the Ecclesiology Task Force, chaired by Dr. Michael Kinnamon, has been exploring the effects of the churches' involvement with ecumenism, how has each affected the other? His final report raised up three critical issues for the Council to address. **Deepening our Commitment** to ecumenism and each other: our focus needs to be on what we *are* together more than what we *do* together. We must also **Expand the Table**: to seek partnerships outside of our membership, looking for new forums in which we can carry the conversation to higher levels of effectiveness. Finally, we must **Reclaim the Vision**: what does it mean to be a church, and one church among many? Again, the issue of identity and unity came to the fore. The Swedenborgian delegation commends these questions to our churches and its leadership, so that our ecumenical involvement might bear greater fruit for ourselves and for others.

Some events of note were the installation of Bishop Craig Anderson (Episcopal) as President of the NCC for the next two years, held at the rather spectacular National Cathedral. Outgoing President Bishop Melvin Talbert (UMC) was honored for his two years of exceptionally effective service on behalf of the Council...On Friday morning, Vice-President Al Gore addressed the Assembly. Besides being a "pretty funny guy" in person, his remarks indicated a genuine understanding and appreciation of the work of the Council. He noted that the Council is known for its unity inspired by diversity and for promoting interfaith relationships. He raised up civil rights and the environment as two examples where the NCC has shown effective leadership. "How meaningful it is," he said, "to survey the work you do to aid the social and spiritual well being of people." ...Finally, delegates were invited to tour the Holocaust Museum, a truly moving experience to which words cannot do justice. I encourage you to do what you can to make the trip yourself, i.e., the next time you're even near Washington, D.C., go!

The Faith and Order Movement, the most representative theological forum in the USA, celebrated its 70th Anniversary; we note that the contributions over the years of the Rev. Drs. Horand Gutfeldt and Robert Kirven have always

General Convention Appeal Report as of January 28, 1998



Have you sent in your contribution to our denomination's annual appeal? One hundred forty-one people have thus far. Their gifts are welcome and are greatly appreciated, no matter what the amount. It is

never too late to send yours. You may be interested in some information about the gifts we have already received, about the donors and about the preferred uses.

Appeals mailed: 2,000
Date mailed: 11/5/97
Responses to date: 141 (7.05%)

New donors (never given before)	34	(24.1%)
Lapsed donors (given before but not last year)	30	(21.3%)
Donors who increased gift from last year	24	(17.0%)
Donors who decreased gift from last year	14	(9.9%)
Donors who gave the same amount as last year	37	(26.2%)
Anonymous donors	2	(1.4%)
Allocations*		
General Funds**	101	(71.6%)
Growth in Existing Churches	20	(14.2%)
Youth Work	15	(10.6%)
Outreach	8	(5.7%)
New Ministries	4	(2.8%)

* Exceeds 100% because some donors checked more than one category

** Includes donations where no category was checked

Requests for information about making General Convention a beneficiary in the donor's will: 1

Unity, Identity, and the Churches *(Continued from page 36)*

been warmly received. The Rev. Andrew Young was elected to serve as President elect of the NCC. His term will be 2000-2001. Young is a UCC minister, businessman, human rights activist, author and former public servant; ironically, he also staffed the NCC Youth Department in the early 50s. We also heard a report on plans for the 50th Anniversary of the NCC, to be held in Cleveland in the year 2000.

For the last five years, the Counseling Committee has been pursuing its goal facilitating dialogue among member communions on the issue of homosexuality and the church. However, efforts to assemble an inclusive body of participants which reflected the diversity of thinking within the council proved unsuccessful. Regrettably, the officers received a letter of resignation from its chairman (the Rev. John Thomas, UCC) prior to our meetings, indicating his belief that the churches were not yet ready to engage each other on this issue. At his recommendation the Committee has not been renewed. As one who was privileged to serve on this committee, I commend the work of its other members, and share their hope that opportunities for dialogue and understanding

will present themselves in the future, and that we will be quick to seize them.

The assembly was also updated on the Council's efforts to address the current interest in the issue of religious persecution abroad. In contrast to more dramatic responses coming from the religious right, the NCC recommends that our focus be on the unique particulars of each country and religious groups involved in any dispute. It urges a variety of responses, and the judicious use of sanctions only after it is determined that they might benefit those in need. And it extends the call to include the persecution of non-Christian groups as well.

The work of the Council, which represents over 54 million Christians in the USA, includes much more than can come before the assembly in just three days. Ongoing efforts like the Religious Liberty Committee, Racial Justice and Eco-Justice working groups, task forces on Campaign Finance Reform and Health Care Reform, dialogue on doctrine, worship and scripture interpretation, and the Burned Churches Project, are just a few of the many areas in which the Council is engaged throughout the year. As *Messenger* readers know, the Rev. Ted Klein and Bill

Shakalis of the Social Concerns Education Committee are providing leadership for the Eco-Justice Congregational Covenanting Program introduced at last year's Swedenborgian Church Convention by the Rev. Richard Killmer, assistant vice-president of the National Ministries Unit.

Religious pluralism: separation of church and state; the effect of ecumenism on the churches; religious persecution and tolerance of differences; human sexuality and the church; the tension between unity and identity. These are just a few of the issues that the Council deals with to which the Swedenborgian Church can make significant contributions. By making such contributions, I believe that we can benefit as well. In the coming year, I ask for your prayers and support, so that we might respond to these opportunities for ministry in a larger forum.

If you'd like to track the work of the Council on the internet, try www.accusa.org, or World Faith News at www.wfn.org.

The Rev. Robert McCluskey is pastor of the New York Swedenborgian Church.



WEAVING A VILLAGE INTO COMMUNITY

(Continued from page 35)

We have recently returned from our fourth trip. A tremendous joy to us to not only take some of the U.S. "parents" with us, but also some of the pre-med students and a faculty member from the University of Southern California. These folks were supportive of the program, and also helped by presenting themselves in their lab coats. Many of the villagers had never seen a doctor or a nurse and were introduced to them as they were seen traveling around. Two swing sets were erected by some support "fathers" and villagers.

The days are busy with hauling water uphill from the stream, school work, sewing, working in the rice fields, preparing food and washing clothes and cleaning house. And before sleep finishes the day, just a few minutes spent as a child on a swing.

As a result of our latest trip many woven goods were purchased, more girls will be supported and folks are discussing the next visit with us.

Editor's PS.: A beautiful red and green woven shawl hangs over my china closet, a gift to us from Kay. I placed it there before Christmas. The season is over, but I don't want to put it away. It seems to re-



Young girl performs weaving demonstration for visitors.



Village women singing in village church choir.

flect the light from both windows, and is a constant reminder of what love and will can accomplish.

For those who may wish to write or send a contribution, please contact: Kay and Don Fox, c/o Wayfarers Chapel, 5755 Palos Verdes Dr. S., Palos Verdes, CA 90275 ❖

Blue Sky for Mite Box 1998

The executive board of the Alliance of Swedenborgian Women decided to help the Swedenborgian Youth League to publish their newsletter, *Clear Blue Sky*, by presenting the Mite Box Collection for 1998 to them. The *Clear Blue Sky* is a wonderful publication produced by and for the youth of our church. Like so many other projects in our denomination, it has had its funding cut. The youth of our church are our future and it is so important to support their projects. When the announcement to designate the 1998 Mite Box to the *Clear Blue Sky* was made at convention it received rousing approval and over \$500 was collected from the floor.

So let's all dig deep and send in our little mites for this deserving project. Checks need to be in by the 30th of May and can be sent to:

Margaret Krause
229 South Park Avenue
Box 264
Pretty Prairie, KS 67570



Swedenborg Meets Thomas Merton (Continued from cover)

...The secret of my identity is hidden in the love and mercy of God.

But whatever is in God is really identical with Him, for His infinite simplicity admits no division and no distinction. Therefore I cannot hope to find myself anywhere except in Him.

Ultimately the only way that I can be myself is to become identified with Him in Whom is hidden the reason and fulfillment of my existence.¹

After a number of years in the monastery, Thomas Merton came to the realization that he was not isolated and away from humanity in his life with God. In the following passage from *The Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Merton describes his moment of insight.

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I

loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers.⁴

In the 1960s, Merton became active in political issues including racism and war. He wrote a number of antiwar articles. He also reached out to the East, seeking to learn from its mysticism. On a trip which involved meetings with religious representatives in the East, he was killed in a freak accident in Bangkok in 1968.

Like Swedenborg, Merton sought to find his true self in God. As time went on, his spiritual life deepened and became more universal in scope. He recognized the good in all mystics and members of various faith traditions. Swedenborg and Merton both accepted the reality of evil, and both realized that human choice plays a role in shap-

ing the universe. I can well imagine that Swedenborg and Merton would have much to discuss, including their divergent views on monasticism.

¹ *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948), p. 111.

² *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953), quoted in *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master*, edited by Lawrence S. Cunningham (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), p. 144.

³ *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1962), pp. 34-36.

⁴ *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), quoted in *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master*, p. 144.

Dr. Mary Kay Klein is president of the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, Mass. ❖

OPINION

Inclusive Language a Necessity

To the Editor:

I write in reply to Steve Koke's letter in the December 1997 *Messenger*. He expressed concern that the Swedenborg Foundation's new Library Edition not be dated or compromised by the use of inclusive language, given that alternatives have not been well established. I welcome the chance to express further my views on the subject.

In any given paragraph Swedenborg's published theological works address one of three groups of people:

- 1) human being regardless of gender
- 2) females
- 3) males

To judge by Swedenborg's statistical preference for the generic term *homo* (28,307 occurrences) over the female *uxor*, *femina* and *mulier* (3316) and the male *vir* (2770), group one is discussed 82% of the time, group two 10%, and group three 8%.

The third person singular pronouns in English are broken into masculine, feminine, and neuter. There is no differently-spelled third person singular *common* pronoun to refer to masculine and/or feminine. For the modern English translator of Swedenborg, then, the problem to which both Mr. Koke and I address ourselves is how to convey Swedenborg's three groups with only two sets of pronouns (*he, him, his, she, her, her*).

As Mr. Koke says, *he, him*, and *his* have been traditionally used as generic or inclusive singular pronouns. Nevertheless there is a problem here. Whether they were ever taken as truly generic or not, there has been an erosion, and they now scan as exclusively masculine to many readers. Using the statistics above, this creates a gross misimpression that Swedenborg exclusively addresses males not 8% but 90% of the time. It is this distorted impression that impels me to seek inclusive language when Swedenborg discussed group one.

I don't think all readers of Swedenborg in English, male and female, have

TO THE EDITOR

always felt or understood that women were included under *he*. I don't think they have always successfully overcome the linguistic impression that men are addressed 90% of the time. And I don't see how readers of any time period in English could tell every passage that addresses group one from those that address group three, since they have identical masculine singular pronouns.

I open the standard edition's *Divine Providence* at random and immediately find a useful example: "To reason about divine things whether they are so or not comes from the reasoner's not seeing them from the Lord, but wanting to see them from himself" (paragraph 219.3). When the text says *himself*, by what clues would the reader determine whether Swedenborg is saying this of a male reasoner or of a reasoner whether male or female? The surrounding language gives no clue.

This is a problem; but there is a solution, and one that involves no departure from standard English: the *plural*. As a general rule I would like to see the new Library Edition use the plural for Swedenborg's group one, and of course the feminine for group two and the masculine for group three.

Let me attempt to clarify my point. English has six sets of personal pronouns:

- 1st person singular: I, me, my
- 2nd person singular: you, you, your
- 3rd person singular: he/she/it, him/her/it, his/her/its

- 1st person plural: we, us, our
- 2nd person plural: you, you, your
- 3rd person plural: they, them, their

Despite the fact that these pronouns are the most heavily inflected area in the English language, only one of the six, the third person singular, specifies gender. The other five sets of pronouns are inclusive.

In fact, the third person singular is the *only* set of English personal pronouns *incapable* of generic expression, while none of the other five are capable of expressing gender specificity! So it is ironic that we have asked the third person singular to carry the burden of inclusion when it is the least fitted for inclusion and the only one designed and able to be gender specific.

Practically speaking, then, when Swedenborg addresses group one, the inclusive set of English pronouns that I consider closest to the Latin's third person singular is the third person plural: *people, they, them, their*, with plural verbs. The first person plural is my next choice, one that works well and is at times even preferable: *people, we, us, our*. Although some may fear a loss of accuracy in rendering Swedenborg's singular as an English plural, I seldom experience a loss in rendering a generalizing singular as a generalizing plural. There is instead a significant gain in accurate and unambiguous communication of the original.

Since reading Mr. Koke's letter I have searched in vain for discussion of his homonym theory, that *he, him*, and *his* are actually two sets of easily distinguishable yet identical pronouns, one of which is generic and inclusive, the other exclusively masculine. Nor have I found recent support for using the masculine singular pronoun to refer to either gender. Every dictionary and grammar I have consulted says things like "usage problem," "sexist language," and so forth. Although the estimates of when this became no longer acceptable English range from forty to over a hundred years ago, I could find no source that remains at peace with *he* and *him* as generic pronouns.

In addition, I have personally come to believe that *he, him*, and *his* were never truly or fully inclusive. The language we have inherited was formed at a time when society was less than inclusive, when women were excluded from university, from most professions, from most of the privileges men enjoyed; how inclusive could its forms of language have been?

Therefore I see the movement

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OPINION

(Continued from page 39)

against the use of *he, him* and *his* as generic pronouns as a good thing. Perhaps the movement in the English language away from a masculine-dominated pronominal system parallels the Lord's moving Christianity away from an overemphasis on faith and truth alone towards a greater balance.

However our language forms may have come about, confidence in the masculine singular pronoun as a true generic form has eroded. Whether those forms communicated accurately in the past or not, they are currently failing to communicate to many readers. With a simple, traditional, time-honored alternative like the plural, the Library Edition can convey a much more accurate identification of the three groups to which Swedenborg addressed himself.

Jonathan S. Rose
Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania ❖

Plea for Combined Efforts in Translations

Dear Editor:

Whilst a member of the Swedenborg Foundation and involved on a fulltime basis in distributing Swedenborg's works throughout Australia, thus conversant with the plan for the Library Edition of the theological writings, I was overjoyed to read the succinct article about this in your recently arrived October 1997 issue. Rev. Jonathan Rose's clarity in presenting the reasons behind the proposal and particularly the three features—faithfulness of style, gender-inclusive language and true English—which are sorely needed in a combined way in translations, demand the commendation and support of all interested in reading and promoting the theological writings. No doubt the Swedenborg Foundation will eventually appeal for tangible support which will be welcomed.

May I just say, though, that in my view there are already a number of more recent editions that substantially

fit the criteria which Rev. Rose emandates, including those published by The Swedenborg Society, London by Latin scholars Rev. John Elliott and Dr. John Chadwick who are mentioned by Rev. Rose. In particular, the translations of *Arcana Caelestia*, *True Christian Religion*, *The Last Judgment*, *Earths in the Universe*, *The New Jerusalem* and *Conjugal Love* could surely be readily incorporated into a Library edition saving enormously in time and costs. I am aware that it has been suggested in the past that Americans do not take to British translations and the British do not take to American translations. In Australia, we certainly cope with both admirably and as the world gets smaller, these differences surely pale into insignificance compared to the very tiny world-wide Swedenborg movement trying to produce so many, many translations of the same works. It seems to me that a truly combined effort between the major Swedenborg English-speaking publishing houses is an essential ingredient to true success of this project. I urge everyone involved to examine the possibilities and to endeavor to work on a plan that can achieve just that. If we do not start properly combining resources in the publishing area and release more funds for promotion of the works, plus the tremendous benefit of cost-effectiveness of larger production runs, then our efforts will remain tempered through lack of financial and manpower resources. I defy anyone to adequately explain to a newer reader of Swedenborg's theological writing why we can offer him or her four different editions of *Conjugal Love*!

Stephen Levine's proposal for an illustrated calendar (Perpetual?) is also to be commended and I am sure that the organization I represent would be very interested in seeing it come to fruition. It would have to be a truly international presentation (not just North American) and relate to the wider nature of Swedenborg's theological writings rather than related to the Swedenborgian Church. There are many "out there" who would be interested in having such a calendar even though they have no desire or

need to be part of any denomination which they find "off-putting."

With every good wish,

Neville Jarvis
Secretary/Manager

The Swedenborg Lending Library and
Enquiry Center
Australian Main Office
North Ryde, New South Wales ❖

Praise for Chrysalis Books

Dear Ms. LeVan:

Your December *Messenger* has just arrived on my doorstep and a quick glance has taken my attention to a number of items on which I would like to comment.

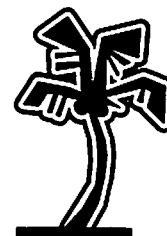
Firstly may I express my thanks to those who have written reviews of *A Psychology of Spiritual Healing*, *Tunnel to Eternity* and *A Book about Dying*. Having read all three books now, I'm delighted to see others encouraged to read them as well. In our work in Great Britain, the Outreach Team of the General Conference has found considerable use for the publications of Chrysalis Books and these three books will all find space in our work with newcomers to the teachings of Swedenborg. The generally lucid, but thought-provoking and challenging way in which the texts cover their subject matters is most helpful to those of us whose skills are less in the written word than in face-to-face contact with folk new to our teachings. These books are practical guidebooks for those interested in the topics and, apart from those references in *A Book about Dying* which refer to specifically American practices, will be welcomed by those in this country working for the expansion of the knowledge of the work of Swedenborg.

I refer next to the letter from Steve Koke and echo his doubts over the perceived necessity to 'invent' inclusive language for translations of Swedenborg's writings—or any other text for that matter. He refers to the almost universal use in English of the masculine *he, him* and *his* as being also

(Continued on page 43)



CONVENTION 1998 REGISTRATION



Life Enrichment Center ~ Leesburg, Florida ~ June 24 to June 28

"TRUSTING THE PROMISE"

Convention 1998 will be held at the Florida Methodist Conference Life Enrichment Center in Leesburg, Florida. Although we expect June in Florida to be hot and muggy, the retreat center is fully air-conditioned. The rooms are motel-style, most with twin beds and some with king-sized beds, each with its own full bathroom. Half of the rooms have first-floor access; the rest are up one flight of stairs. The meeting areas are modern, comfortable and all air-conditioned on a flat site where all buildings are close together. We will be right on the beautiful lake full of waterfowl (and alligators) in an attractive and restful setting. We have tried to keep the cost down to make this an affordable trip for everyone.

Transportation: The best access from the Orlando International Airport is by car. Since the convention is not hosted by a local church or association, there are no volunteers to do airport pickups. However, there will be some van pickups at peak arrival times. We suggest arriving with friends and sharing rental cars. For creative transportation options call the Central Office (617-969-4240) and ask

for the airport transportation information packet.

Children's programming: We will provide separate care for children ages 0 to 4 and a more structured program for children from 5 to 12 during scheduled activities from Wednesday evening through Saturday morning. Parents of each child will be asked to volunteer two hours each day helping with the children.

Saturday evening: Get ready to perform in a Swedenborgian Talent Show followed by a dance for all ages with a locally famous sister-brother team of DJ/entertainers.

Saturday outing: Plans are in the making for a trip to Deland to the Chrysalis Retreat Center and Garden Chapel. Or go to nearby Claremont for a Blessing of the Harvest at the Lake Ridge Winery. Many other possibilities are available for folks with cars!

RV hookups: If you have (or rent) your own recreational vehicle, there are lots of spaces available. Great for families! Call for rates.

See YOU At The Convention



(Detach here)

Names: _____

Names and ages of children accompanying you: _____

Street Address: _____ City / State _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Arrival: _____ Departure: _____ # of Nights: _____ E-Mail: _____

Adult registration	@ \$ 65.00	x adults	_____	= \$	_____
Teen registration (13-17)	@ \$ 50.00	x teens	_____	= \$	_____
Child 3-12 registration	@ \$ 35.00	x children	_____	= \$	_____
Registration family maximum	@ \$180.00			= \$	_____
Adult/teen room & board single	@ \$ 47.00	x adult	_____	x nights	_____ = \$ _____
Adult/teen room & board double	@ \$ 38.00	x adult	_____	x nights	_____ = \$ _____
Child room & board double	@ \$ 36.00	x children	_____	x nights	_____ = \$ _____
Child board only	@ \$ 16.00	x children	_____	x nights	_____ = \$ _____
Late fee if mailed after May 15	@ \$ 20.00	x adults	_____		= \$ _____

☒ All charges are in US dollars. All bills must be paid in full at least two weeks before convention. No registration refund after June 1.

Total = \$ _____

Special needs: (dietary, handicapped access, roommate requests, etc.) _____

The theme of convention is "Trusting the Promise." Please write one sentence explaining which of God's many promises means the most to you and why. Your answer will be posted in the common area (with your name) unless you request anonymity.

TRUSTING THE PROMISE

The Rainbow Spiritual Journey

*Come connect, learn and
participate in this exciting
spiritual community of Swedenborgians*

PRE-CONVENTION 1998 ~ LEESBURG, FLORIDA
SUNDAY JUNE 21, 7:30 PM TO JUNE 24, 12:00 PM

Presenters:

Facilitator: Lorraine Sando (Washington): Art, Writing, Meditation, Healing Touch
Co-Facilitator: Laura Lawson Tucker (Vermont): Dance, Creative Process, Sacred Ritual
Joan McGavin (Ontario): Healthy Aging
EdSJ staff: B.J. Neuenfeldt (Michigan) and Margie Shelley (Indiana): Song, Music, Humor and more

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

REGISTRATION

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

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

ROOM & BOARD: (*Please check one*)

☐ Single Occupancy \$47.00 ☐ Double Occupancy-2 people in a room \$38.00 per day per person

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

(Please see CONVENTION REGISTRATION for more details)

SPECIAL NEEDS: (Please Specify) _____

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

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



CHILD CARE AVAILABLE

Make checks payable to: THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

**Send Form with
Checks to:**

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

TO THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 40)

all-inclusive and, much as those apparently politically correct point out the apparent shortcomings of such a form of address, it is, nevertheless, the way the English language is constructed. Surely we shall not have too many people wishing to alter 'mankind' into 'personkind'? There are usually alternative ways of expressing ideas in a genderless way for those who wish to make a point of such linguistic problems, but in translations into English from Swedenborg, I would prefer to see what Swedenborg wrote in good basic English.

Finally, I note that William Bloom will be addressing the third workshop in the series at the Stonehouse Bookroom and Growth Center in the middle of February. This gentleman, with whom the Swedenborg Movement has already had some contact in this country, is an interesting speaker and one whom the Swedenborg society is hoping will address a follow-up meeting after the London Festival for Mind Body Spirit in June this year. It is good to see that speakers of this calibre are drawn to speak at gatherings organized by our church and bring to our contacts a breath of New-Age thinking which may enhance our understanding of the breadth of God's creation of all people.

I fear that this letter has rambled on at length, but it may provide you with evidence of at least one contact in this country appreciative of much of the work being done by the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

With best wishes,

David R. A. Friend,
Outreach Administrator
The Swedenborg Movement
Middlesex, England



Yes to Inclusive Language

To the Editor:

I appreciate Mr. Koke's insights regarding the challenges of inclusive language (December 1997 *Messenger*), and I'm likewise looking forward to the new Library Edition of Swedenborg. I disagree, however, with his assertion that we should stick to the old rule of using masculine pronouns to refer to mixed company. The quest to find a genderless pronoun is important for our culture as we seek to attain a deeper sensitivity to gender inclusiveness.

My understanding is that there is a significant percentage of our community which does not feel recognized when we adhere to the "old rule." That's really all the justification we need to enable a change, in my opinion. Language is merely a tool, and when the tool is no longer adequate, it's time to find a new tool. I feel we get into a lot of trouble when we elevate the "rules" of grammar to the status of unyielding law, even going so far as to consider transgressions against the rule as a "linguistic crime." Language needs to be flexible if it's going to be of practical use to our changing and growing society, and we need to feel empowered to make the changes in language that need to be made.

I agree that the use of *he* or *she* / *she* or *he* is awkward, at least in written form, but it's a good first step. It acknowledges that we've heard and are doing our best to respond to those who have felt excluded. Another option at our disposal, and one which flows quite nicely when spoken, is to use *them*, *they* and *their* as a singular pronoun, such as, "to each their own." Doubtless, this may be uncomfortable to read at first (I can hear the shocked gasps already), but it can become more comfortable with time and use. I can imagine some of the conventions we consider good and proper English today would have incensed a philologist of two hundred years ago. It seems to me that if *he* can be used to

refer to the feminine, then to use *they* to refer to the singular doesn't seem at all unreasonable.

I am *very* supportive of the use of inclusive language in the Library Edition. I don't believe it will "date" the Edition any more than consistent spelling "dated" a manuscript of the sixteenth century. To my mind, the endeavor toward inclusive language is by no means controversial since it is an effort to put our love for each other into action. We need to do what is right regardless of what Webster says. The decision to incorporate inclusive language into a new edition is something I happily leave to the editors, yet I do encourage them to follow their heart in this matter. After all, it wouldn't be the first time Swedenborgians broke from tradition to do what was good and right.

Rev. Eric Hoffman
LaPorte, Indiana



Instruments of God

*A small wooden flute,
an empty, hollow reed,
rests in her hand.*

*it awaits the breath
of one who creates song
through its open form.*

*my often-empty life
rests in the hand of God;
like the hollow flute,
it yearns for the melody
which only breath can give.*

*the small wooden flute and I,
we need the one who breathes,
we await the one who makes
melody.*

*and the one whose touch creates,
awaits our empty, ordinary forms,
so that the song-starved world
may be fed with golden melodies.*

—Joyce Rupp

Royal Oak, Michigan, Swedenborgian
Church Newsletter, 1995

Cabinet / General Council Meetings

The Cabinet met on December 4, 1997 in Redondo Beach, California, preceding the joint meeting with General Council on December 5. On December 6, General Council met at Wayfarers West, a separate office building a half mile north of the Chapel.

At the Cabinet meeting all the Support Units gave reports, and the 1998 proposed budget was deliberated. After a long day of meeting, the budget work was complete and referred to General Council.

Among the things discussed at their joint meeting were the following items: the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU) is planning to implement financial/stewardship training or consulting for local churches. The Augmentation Fund Committee will make its funding decisions with less input from Ministerial Support unit (MINSU). Communication between Support Units and General Council was found lacking and the decision was made to have all minutes distributed to all members of each body. An ad hoc committee was formed to study the problems of budgetary timelines and made recommendations that were referred to General Council. Pursuing the idea of joint ownership of the archives between the Swedenborgain Church and the Swedenborg School of Religion was voted. Cabinet and General Council discussed the budget in detail, looking at priorities and reasons for funding figures.

There was a discussion about the recent changes at Wayfarers Chapel, including steps being taken to ease tensions and to improve communication. Cabinet and General Council then visited Wayfarers Chapel and toured its grounds. This was the first visit for many of the members. General Council voted to accept the appointment of Merle Lundberg to the Wayfarers Board.

General Council discussed many items, including the suggestion that new ordinands be encouraged to go to an existing parish ministry on interim basis, where they gain experience while

further developing their dreams, including seeking funding for these goals.

They received and placed on file several reports, including Martha Bauer's job evaluation. Full-time youth ministry was discussed but no action taken. The Pacific Coast Association's invitation for 1999's annual convention was accepted. The vote to amend the Constitution to allow one vote for each person failed to pass. It was voted to keep the annual convention on an annual basis and to not form a study committee regarding this issue. It was voted to recommend to General Convention that the name of the Board of Intervention be changed to the Board of Mediation. The Council met with Wayfarers senior staff and heard their reports. A fundraising idea that will be announced at Convention '98 in Leesburg was approved. Ted Klein was appointed to the Board of Inquiry. The 1998 proposed budget was adopted and a one-year trial budgetary time line was adopted. The time line is as follows:

1. All requests for inclusion in the following year's budget (i.e. Support units, other Convention bodies, and local centers) will be due to the treasurer by the end of our convention sessions. Priority discussions will take place at convention with the delegates.

2. Then in the following order:
—by mid-September the FPRSU & MINSU will meet.
—by late September the Cabinet will meet.
—by late October General Council will take action on the budget.

This time line will be implemented in 1998 for preparing the 1999 budget.

—Gloria Toot, Recording Secretary ❖



CALL FOR NOMINEES

The Nominating Committee is seeking qualified candidates for the offices listed below. If you have any questions or suggestions, please notify your minister or a member of the nominating committee immediately. Thank you for your prayerful involvement in this important process!

Vice-president	
Recording Secretary	
Treasurer	
General Council	4
Communications	
Support Unit (COMSU)	1
Education Support Unit (EdSU)	1
Financial & Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU)	1
Ministries Support Unit (MINSU)	3
Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)	1
Nominating Committee	1
Swedenborg School of Religion Board of Trustees	4
Committee on Admission into the Ministry (CAM)	
.....	1 lay person
.....	1 minister

—Karen Nielsen Conger, Chair
7203 Alverstone Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90045
(310) 670-4685

Nominating Committee:
Karen Nielsen Conger, California
Sharon Billings, Ohio
Rev. Robert McCluskey, New York
Barbara Penabaker, Michigan
Mildred Laakko, Delaware



Elmwood Needs Minister

The Elmwood New Church wishes to inform interested ministers that we are at this time without a minister and have been filling the pulpit with guest ministers. We would very much like to have a minister for Sunday services who would also be able to participate in the Council of Ministers in our town and help with our spiritual and outreach programs.

At present, this would be a part-time position. If anyone is interested in more details, our address is:

Elmwood New Church
20 West Street
Elmwood, MA 02337
Phone: (508) 378-2981

—Mary Mitchell
Church Council Secretary

Angels Discussion Group

The Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church is hosting two small-group discussions on angels. One began February 1, meeting every other Sunday at 1:30 p.m. for six sessions; the second began February 4, meeting every Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. for six weeks. Both groups are meeting in the parlor of the church. A discussion leader starts each session with a suggested topic and a brief reading. The remainder of the time is spent in informal discussion directed by the interests and experiences of the group.

A Wedding Story at Wilmington Church

An interfaith wedding that took place at the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, was professionally videotaped for showing on a cable program called, *A Wedding Story*. It has aired several times this past fall and winter locally, and is being shown periodically throughout the country on various cable and learning channels.

Beacon Hill Coffeehouse

The Boston church's Beacon Hill Coffeehouse is in its second successful year. Open one Saturday night each month, it boasts live entertainment, catered food, and coffee "As You Like It." On February 7, Irish folk singer Robbie O'Connell, a Boston Music Award winner, was featured. The coffeehouse, often attracting a crowd of 50 or more, was started by Jamie Peebles and his wife Elaine, who work hard to keep it happening.

Massachusetts Association Celebration

As part of the Swedenborg birthday weekend celebration, the Massachusetts Association of Swedenborgian Churches held a service of celebration February 8, at 1:30 p.m. in the Boston church, with guest speaker Eugene Taylor presenting "Our Cup Runneth Over," a topic that explored some future prospects for Swedenborgian ideas. On February 6, the Janus Opera Productions staged "Only a Miracle," with Juliet Cunningham directing.



Fryeburg Elevator Dedication

On Sunday, March 1, 1998, the Fryeburg New Church, Fryeburg, Maine, is holding a dedication ceremony for their newly completed elevator, with a potluck luncheon following the service. All are invited.

Blairhaven Spring Vacation Youth Retreat

There will be a retreat for East Coast teenagers at Blairhaven Retreat Center in South Duxbury, Mass., during April vacation. The dates are Wednesday noon (lunch), April 22, through Saturday lunch, April 25. The topic is "World Religions: Twelve Gates to the City." The cost is \$35. In addition to our Swedenborgian staff, we will have special guests of various faiths to share their beliefs and practices with us.

For further information, or if you know any teens who would like to attend, contact:

Rev. Lee Woofenden
88 Pearl Street
Middleboro, MA 02346
(508) 697-3068 (office)

San Francisco Church's Hour of Peace into Sixth Year

Beginning on the second Tuesday of October, 1992, Linda Baker has



provided an hour of piano music (without any words) every second Tuesday evening for over five years, for those who wish to simply come and sit together in the sanctuary. With rare exceptions, this music has been provided live on the piano by Linda herself. Originally conceived as a gentle, stress-free hour for AIDS sufferers and caregivers to AIDS victims, *Hour of Peace* quickly gained a wide appreciation, with a steady average attendance of about 20 persons.

The San Francisco church was featured in the November issue of the *Nob Hill Gazette* by a writer presenting four architectural jewels of the city. Along with Mission Dolores, the Palace of Fine Arts, and the Maritime Museum, it was lauded as a must-see gem.



Hot Flash from Worden in Iceland

Yes! Ethelwyn (Muff) Worden the globe-trotting, chimerical former Central Office director, has been discovered partially thawed but otherwise alive and well in Iceland. We hope to have a full report on her adventures there one day soon, but meanwhile, we have availed ourselves of her communique passed on to us by Bill Woofenden. Muff writes, "Things going well, almost back to normal after an indecently long Christmas holiday . . . here in balmy warmish Iceland. We continue to have above-freezing temps most of the time, occasional immense winds, and a lot of rain, drizzle or occasionally sleet. Locals, used to skiing from early October through April, are not pleased, though they do see some benefit in not having constantly to shovel their way out of houses and cars.

"My housemate discovered the following on the internet chat line for Romanticists, and I thought you might be interested in it, and might pass the word along to potential writers on Blake."

So here it is:

A Call for Papers

Twenty-First Century Blake: The Wordsworth-Coleridge Association invites papers for a session on William Blake at the MLA Convention in San Francisco, December 27-30, 1998. Papers should explore new directions in Blake studies, particularly the convergence of Blake and hypertextual media, the development of computer-based approaches to Blake's poetry, new methods in textual editing, and the relevance of Blake's work to the approaching millennium. Send 15-minute papers or detailed abstracts by March 1 to: James McKusick, Department of English, University of Maryland Baltimore County, Baltimore, MD 21250.

Muff's note ends with a quote from Charles Lamb: "It is good to love the unknown." Right. Just because it's there. ❖

Friday, March 6

World Day of Prayer

"WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?"

Sponsored by
Church Women United

Why would anyone pause to pray on Friday, March 6 – World Day of Prayer? – to join millions of women and men around the globe from 120 countries and islands in the largest grassroots, ecumenical, international worship service. This year's 1998 annual World Day of Prayer was written by Christian women from Madagascar on the theme "Who Is My Neighbor?"

Madagascar is the third largest island in the world, situated in the Indian Ocean on the Southeast of Africa. It has a tropical climate and is known for its precious stones, spices such as vanilla and cloves and a unique wildlife. Its population is a mixture of Asians and Africans in a number of tribes, speaking a common language. Over the years Christianity has become the dominant religion, but its acceptance was not difficult for the Malagasy people for their culture already encompassed a belief in God as holy, a creator and provider. The concept of "Fihavanana" is also an important element of the Malagasy tradition. Fihavanana is the bond between people, a unity, a sharing of sorrow and happiness. The writers' question for the World Day of Prayer, "Who Is My Neighbor?" Is easily answered by them and demonstrated in their proverbs and sayings, such as, "Whichever hand is cut, the whole body feels the pain:" "However little food we have, we'll share it;" "It is better to lose money than friendship." Solidarity and honesty are also virtues valued by the Malagasy people. They have much to teach us.



In the worship service, the Biblical references used are closely tied to their traditional beliefs, Romans 12 speaks about being in one body with Christ and being joined to each other as different parts of one body, while the parable given by Jesus in Luke 10 refers to loving your neighbor as yourself. Those attending the service will be invited to participate in an anointing service, declaring to another person, "I am your neighbor." People may take part in small groups, sharing their ideas about being a good neighbor in the midst of singing Malagasy Hymns.

A portion of the World Day of Prayer offerings will be given in grants to projects in Madagascar.

Additional resource materials and background information on the 1998 World Day of Prayer may be obtained by contacting Church Women United at 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 500, New York, NY 10115. Phone (800) CWU-5551, press 2.



Virginia Dispute Signals New Trend?

Jim Lawrence

For a number of years I have followed with interest court cases regarding church-and-state issues. Various government entities have expanded efforts to limit unwanted activity by religious groups, usually through the means of zoning, historic preservation and other local ordinances. Many times cases have gone to court, and the results have been mixed, but with religion getting its wings trimmed more often than not. The U.S. Supreme Court, in fact, struck down in June a new federal law called the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which had made it more difficult for government to interfere with religious practice and expression. But there are signs that the public overall favors a firm church-state

separation, and challenges to the new circumstances have begun in earnest. In Richmond, Virginia they had passed an ordinance restricting how much church groups could feed the poor. In a stunning uproar, the City Council had to back down as the supporters of the churches vastly outnumbered those who don't like such activity going on in their neighborhood. Amazingly, the City Council had gone on record in a previous meeting stating, "feeding the homeless is not the primary activity of churches."

The Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is co-pastor at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.

Reprinted from the December 1997 San Francisco church newsletter. ❖

P A S S A G E S

CONFIRMATIONS

Keley, O'Connor—Jon and Barbara Keley, and Sharon O'Connor were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church and welcomed into membership December 14, 1997, at the Swedenborgian Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, the Rev. Randall Laakko officiating.

DEATHS

Baker—Wade A. Baker, age 29, formerly of Fryeburg, Maine, entered the spiritual world in San Francisco January 6, 1998. A resurrection service was conducted at the Fryeburg New Church January 13, 1998, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.

Hull-Ryde—Kathleen Truelove Wilde Hull-Ryde, 89, daughter of the late Rev. M. Arthur Wilde, a former minister of the Swedenborgian Church in New York City, entered the spiritual world October 3, 1997. Born in London, she came to the US in 1924 after her father was called to the New York church. A lifelong Swedenbor-

gian known for her keen intellect, wit and charm, she and her husband, Arthur-Hull-Ryde, moved to Gastonia, North Carolina in 1950. A funeral service was held at St. Mark's Episcopal Church October 6. She is survived by her son, the Rev. Norman Arthur Hull-Ryde of Gastonia; three granddaughters, Carolyn Hull-Ryde Bower of St. Louis, Missouri; Debby Hull-Ryde Tanner of Birmingham, Alabama; Emily Hull-Ryde Webster of Chapel Hill, North Carolina; and seven great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Hull-Ryde, a consistently generous contributor to our annual appeal, has also left to General Convention a \$5000 bequest, for which we are most grateful. She left an equal bequest to the New York church.

Wethey—Rona V. Wethey, lifelong member of the Cambridge Society, entered the spiritual world December 28, 1997. Interment was private. A memorial service is planned for April 19, 1998, following the worship service.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF LOVE AND WISDOM

Early Childhood Development Seminar

VIDEO AND AUDIO TAPES

Audio tapes are available from the General Church Sound Recording Library and video tapes are available from the Office of Education.

AUDIO TAPES

Available from the General Church Sound Recording Library
(215) 914-4980

- Tape 1: \$2 Reuben Bell
- Tape 2: \$2 Peter Buss Jr. and Panel
- Tape 3: \$2 Joanne Freer
- Tape 4: \$2 Sonia Werner

VIDEO TAPES

Available from the Office of Education (215) 914-4949

Tape 1: \$10 Reuben Bell: "Neurophysiology of the Preschool Child and Joanne Freer: "Educational Beginnings"

Tape 2: \$10 Sonia Werner: "Nurturing Moral Development" and Peter Buss Jr. and panel: "Learning Styles of Girls and Boys"

Tape 3: \$10 The Waldorf Marionette Show and "The Future of New Church Early Childhood Programs"

* * *

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL CATHY SCHNARR
(215) 914-4957**

* * *

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.

FROM THE SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

Schelling and Swedenborg: Mysticism and German Idealism

Friedemann Horn
Translated by George Dole

"At last, this book—a combination of superb scholarship, lucid writing, and stimulating discourse—is made accessible to an English readership. It has remained an unmatched and frequently cited reference work on both Swedenborg and Schelling."

Antoine Faivre
Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes

In this groundbreaking study, Friedemann Horn documents Friedrich Schelling's intense personal engagement with Emanuel Swedenborg's theological works, an engagement fueled to a considerable extent by the untimely deaths of two women whom Schelling loved. In Swedenborg's vision of the spiritual realm, Schelling found an invaluable resource that supplied an underpinning for his own romantic idealism. Horn details the linguistic similarities in the writings of the two philosophers and shows how, particularly in *Clara* and the *Stuttgart Lectures*, Schelling employs the ideas of the "seer of the North."

FRIEDEMANN HORN received his Ph.D. in Religious Science from Marburg University, where he studied under Ernst Benz, and has also studied languages, comparative religions, and Protestant theology. For the past forty years, he has been editor of the bi-monthly journal *Offene Tore*; has translated many Latin, English, Italian, and French works into German; and has written articles for scientific publications. He is editor-in-chief of Swedenborg Verlag in Zurich, Switzerland.

GEORGE E. DOLE is professor of Bible, language and theology at the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, Massachusetts. He has translated many of Swedenborg's works into English and is currently working on a translation of *Heaven and Hell*.

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From 23 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates

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In order to reduce the suffering of children these laureates are addressing an appeal to all heads of state of all member countries of the General Assembly of the United Nations, for the UN General Assembly to declare:

- That the first decade of the new millennium, the years 2000–2010, be declared the "Decade for a Culture of Nonviolence."
- That the year 2000 be declared the "Year of Education for Nonviolence."
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Together, we can build a new culture of nonviolence for humankind which will give hope to all humanity and in particular, to the children of the world.

With deepest respect,

The Nobel Peace Prize Laureates

Reprinted from Friends of Peace Pilgrim Newsletter, Fall/Winter 1997.

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