

THE MESSENGER

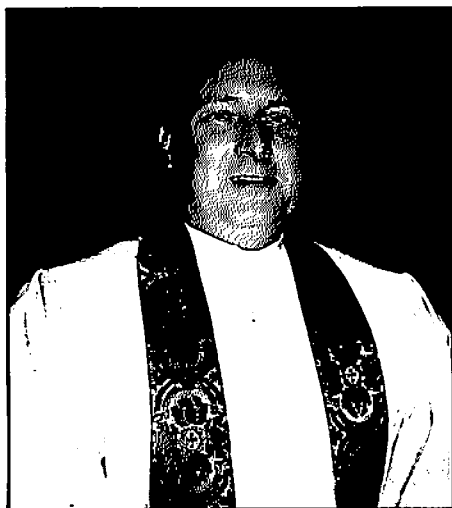
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September 1998

The Promise of the Rainbow

Convention Sermon
James Lawrence

"And God said, This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come; My rainbow I have set in the cloud, a sign of the covenant between myself and the earth." —Genesis 9:12-13



IN THE SWEDENBORGIAN perspective, the real protagonist of the Bible is the reader. Via the inner sense, the Bible interacts with our soul's personal journey—a neat living literary device which only God could author and whose progress or lack thereof only God can evaluate. As the Bible slowly spins forth its circuitous epic from *Genesis* to *Revelation*, the reader is ushered into a personalized version of some kind of spiritual thriller—a

hold-your-breath, what-unforeseen-complication-will-next-occur plot line that hinges on a great promise of bliss to the reader, and the consequent gripping drama of whether this promise can in fact be realized.

This promise, as Genesis 9 puts it in the Noahtic myth, is not only to be fruitful, to multiply, and to replenish the earth—by which we understand we are to grow into the fullness for which we have been created,—we are also to understand that the life within us cannot be uncreated or wiped out. We now exist and have already been given the amazing privilege of life, and we must play it out. All our freedom exists within the story and does not include opting out of the starring role.

So off we all go, chasing the rainbow—seeking what has been promised to us that God's paint brushes splash across the spent storm clouds. We might note in the most tertiary fashion that in the upcoming costume changes, this rainbow covenant morphs into etched stone tablets at Sinai, into bread and wine at the Last Supper, into a shining and Holy City in John's vision, as well as many other manifestations in the phosphorous glow of the Bible's inner sense.

Whether the journey will at last bring forth realization of the promise or unbridled absorption into the hells, this tale is first and foremost a drama about our personal lives. But there are broader applications of the covenant. Covenants can be between God and larger aspects of the human commu-

nity, such as epochs and churches.

With this opportunity to address our denominational gathering, I would like to consider the promise of the rainbow and our journey with the covenant as we strive to herald the New Church as an external church—a legally incorporated ecclesiastical organization. To do this, I would like to offer a view of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem as to its past tense, its present tense, and its possible future.

GENERAL CONVENTION IN THE PAST TENSE

An exalted weight draped heavily upon the shoulders of the first Swedenborgians. They perceived their task to be nothing less than Christianity's utter reformation. They fully expected to convince the dominant culture that through the work of a seer and prophet, the Second Coming had been accomplished and had redefined most of the established doctrines in Christendom. Though exciting in its own way, what an enormous responsibility by which to do justice! You can see the sweat dripping from the brows of those early laborers in the New-Church vineyard: publishing, publishing, lecturing, lecturing. More than one religious historian has noted that Swedenborgians published far more *per capita* than any other sect.

The promise they understood was that a New Age was dawning through their reception of the new understanding, that a New Church was coming into being, and they were to be the initial apostles. Only time was needed for the transformation of the world's mindset just as the first Christian

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1998 CONVENTION ISSUE ~ LEESBURG, FLORIDA

Healthy Communication

Isn't it interesting to observe that when we take real notice of an idea whose time has come, it seems to leap into our awareness repeatedly; as we continue to think about it, talk about it, work with it, we see it spreading everywhere: Harmonious communication. In Jim Lawrence's

sermon, he says, "I sense our reaching for a future church that will prize above all else integrity of communication and integrity of effort, honesty in our dealings, forbearance with one another, and a greater willingness and courage to utilize our communal church life as primary grist for the regeneration mill." The Communications Support Unit has voted to stand as an official advocate for healthy and harmonious communications throughout the church; the Swedenborgian Church

Youth League is seeking to improve their communications with EDSU, ministers, and the church at large; several of our church bodies have, over the past few years, availed themselves of professional mediators to show them the way to better communication and community building skills, including, most recently, the Wayfarers Chapel. The strong desire to change old ways that no longer work is a most encouraging sign of growth!

I recently paid my once-a-month visit to Lori, the woman who cuts my hair. In catching up on what had gone on in our lives for the past few weeks, she mentioned the recent death of her father-in-law. She stated that when the family gathered the day before the service, they agreed to take the opportunity of their being together to participate in a healing session. This consisted of each person naming the ways in which he or she had hurt another family member or had been hurt, and instead of blaming or griping, each person took responsibility for having inflicted hurt or for believing

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Letter from the Editor:

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

Donations and subscriptions for 1998 and 1999 thus far total over \$3,000, with nearly \$450 into the endowment fund. *The Messenger* Endowment Fund now has a current worth of \$110,000. As we build up *The Messenger's* endowment, our church's publication can eventually become financially independent.

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

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

Blessings, Patte LeVan



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

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

Your Name _____

Your Address _____

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

THE MESSENGER

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The Promise of the Rainbow

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church finally swept over half the world by the fourth century.

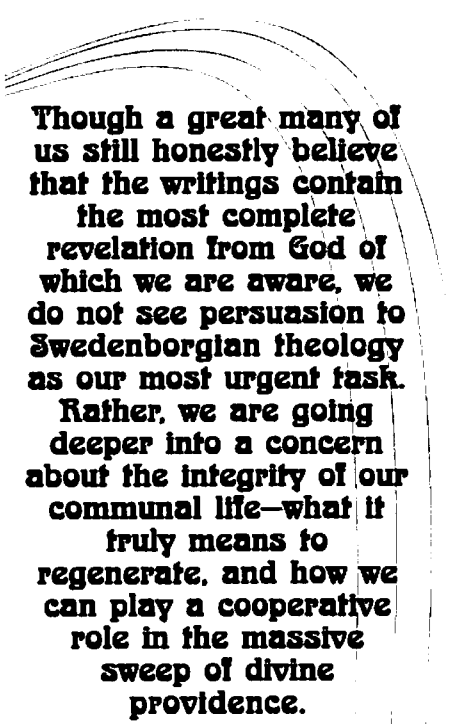
The Rev. Eric Allison regaled convention attendees with a *Star Trek* fantasy in which Spock, from the twenty-sixth century, time-travels to our very own 174th convention of Swedenborgian Churches in Florida in the year 1998. Surveying the small group set amidst a lake teeming with alligators and with nearby fires raging, Spock discovers that the Swedenborgians are meeting to consider their religious vision and to grasp "the promise of the rainbow." Spock then wryly observes how peculiar it is that this tiny group would in time grow to become the most widely spread religion, not only of its own Planet Earth, but of the entire galaxy! (Eric's fantasy elicited cheering and stomping from convention audience.)

And now I will boldly go into far-flung futuring and predict that Swedenborgianism will never become the dominant ecclesiastical organization in the natural world — and it is interesting to ponder why it took a church that so well understands the power of internals so long to get away from looking to externals for spiritual validation. Well into this century and well even into the lives and careers of many still around, the victory of religious argument, if you will, has been believed to be the needed destiny of the ecclesial New Church. (It astonishes me that so many in other Swedenborgian organizations still believe that the ecclesiastical New Church will yet conquer — an expectation that seems as futile and misguided as the expectation that Jesus will return again physically, a fallacy ironically corrected by the very revelations that are being treated to a similar torturing from an inability to shift one's perception onto the spiritual plane).

As a way to segue to a view of our church in the present tense, I would like to share a personal experience and tell you about my very first Swedenborgian worship experience. It was towards the end of my first year at a mainline seminary in Texas. I decided

to indulge my two-year old curiosity about the Swedenborgian Church, because my love affair with the writings did not abate but only got stronger the more deeply I delved into theology and training for the ministry. I was joined on my trip to Boston by one of my two best friends at my former school, a Methodist who was considering a transfer to Boston University's School of Theology.

We got into Boston on a very wintry Saturday night in March. Tom said he'd like to go along with me to church the



Though a great many of us still honestly believe that the writings contain the most complete revelation from God of which we are aware, we do not see persuasion to Swedenborgian theology as our most urgent task. Rather, we are going deeper into a concern about the integrity of our communal life—what it truly means to regenerate, and how we can play a cooperative role in the massive sweep of divine providence.

next morning. I had looked up the Cambridge church's address and service time. Now, Tom was doing his student internship at First Methodist in Fort Worth, which had thousands of members and a TV ministry popular throughout the state. And both of us, in fact, were accustomed to large, successful churches. But he alone of all my friends and professors had any real understanding of what was considered my career-ending obsessive interest in an obscure, dead-end religious movement.

Now, anything north of the Mason-Dixon line was exotic to us in those days, and we were used to flat Prairie cities with streets laid out on easy grids. Just finding the church in our rented car the next morning was a

maddening ordeal. Round and round we went: darting the wrong way up one-way streets, finding ourselves back in the same lost place for the third time and not knowing how we got there, and becoming generally dizzy in an Alice in Wonderland craziness. Finally, we pulled over to study the map, and while we were shaking our heads, I looked up and saw that our car was parked right in front of yet another old-looking church — but this one's sign read, "Church of the New Jerusalem."

For those of you who don't know, the lush ivy covering the New England granite that is resplendent for three seasons of the year slumps into such dormancy in winter as to resemble deathly fingers clutching at the walls. The glass enclosure at the entrance installed during the sixties reflected, from our angle, an utter black opaqueness. And though it was time for the service to begin, not one soul was in sight. As if in a movie, Tom stared at it for a long moment and then turned his head slowly to me with a nervous laugh and said, "Are you sure this is it?"

We bravely went in and found the service just starting. Perhaps fifteen or twenty people were present. The interior was old-world, the congregation seemed a tad feeble, and the minister was a bit wispy. To help along the many hard-of-hearing elderly, the standard practice was to hand out with the worship program the printed sermon. I cannot recall the precise text Will Rice preached on that day, but it was from the book of *Numbers* and had to do with the correspondences of tabernacle worship. It was the first New Church sermon I had ever encountered, and as I read the very words he was intoning in his distinctive sing-song cadence, the profundity of the thoughts made my heartbeat speed up. Insights burned; thoughts sparked; something knowing registered as deeply in my soul as anything I had ever experienced. I understood. Real jasper was flashing from the altar in the nearly abandoned, old and forlorn-seeming church.

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Trusting the Promise

Ron Brugler

June 24, 1998

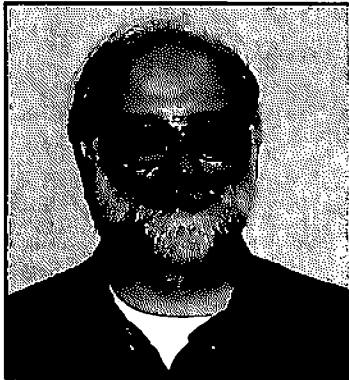
Good Evening everyone, and welcome to our 1998 Convention sessions! Edwin Capon just mentioned that he felt that he did not need to introduce me to you since you all knew me well enough to elect me as your next president. I was a little taken aback by those words since some of what I have to say here tonight might inspire you to want to change your minds! But I am willing to take this risk, so I want to begin by sharing with you that a very strange thought went through my mind today when it was announced that this is the 174th time that these sessions have been held. Imagine that—174 conventions! One hundred and seventy-four years that we Swedenborgians have gone to all this work. To me that says one of two things. Either we really like doing this, or we are very slow learners!

I also want to share with you that it seems 174 years that I have been working on this speech. For weeks now I've spent some time each day trying to draw various thoughts together, only to realize that they made little or no sense. I even reached the point where I would awaken in the middle of the night with what I thought was a flash of brilliance, only to discover that a transport truck had just made the turn onto Ottawa Street outside our bedroom window. It seems that the harder I've worked on this, the more nervous and anxious I have become.

This reality has seemed strange to me for several reasons. I'm completing my fourth year as chair of the Council of Ministers, and have never felt overwhelmed by having to

speak before that prestigious and august body. I even made the conscious decision to run for president of this denomination, and I felt comfortable and confident doing so—not nervous at all. But last January when I was asked by the planning committee to offer this theme address, I felt humbled and inadequate. I questioned if I was up to the task. I wondered what I might be able to share that would help begin our convention on a productive and positive note—all feelings that persisted up until a few days ago.

Then after what seemed like an eternity of failed beginnings. I admitted to myself that I needed guidance from a source far greater and wiser than myself and used a tool that I've developed over the years that has always helped me in



Ron Brugler

such times of confusion and worry. I turned to a technique similar to the one used by Swedenborg in his own spiritual quest—a meditation practice where I sit quietly in my office and focus my complete attention on a picture that has hung on my office walls in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Almont, Urbana and now in Kitchener—a true masterpiece of North American art. As I gaze at it, it becomes a guiding light amid the storm that surrounds me. Of what picture do I speak? I have it right here. It is a photograph of Wally and the Beaver, two people who have been my friends for years!

These two people have never let me down, never! And in fact, whenever I surrender myself to them in such a way, whenever I ask them for guidance, I am able to fully trust that the right answer will come, as I ask the question that has endured throughout the years. Yes, I sit alone in my office and literally say, "Golly Gee, Wally, what are we going to do?"

This time the experience reminded me of a strength that God has given me that I can draw upon here tonight. It is that deep down, I am simply a theme kind of guy. I love them. I thrive on them. There have even been times when I make some up just to enjoy the experience! Throughout my ministry I've been able to use themes effectively in camps, retreats, association meetings, preconvention and conferences. In a variety of ways, I have used themes to help groups examine and explore some very important issues and concerns. And this is exactly what I saw as the potential within our theme this year when it emerged during our Cabinet meetings last August at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly.

This theme emerged during a discussion on a report of the Structure Review Committee, where it became clear to us that many of our members have an increasing sense of alienation from our denomination's decision-making bodies—which is leading to a deepening sense of mistrust. For example, we learned that many of our members believe that the Ministries Support Unit makes arbitrary funding decisions; few of us know how the Communications Support Unit decides what to publish; and many of us believe that the Education Support

Unit does little in the areas of youth and children's ministry.

At first reading, we were defensive, noting that these perceptions were not true, and we acknowledged that we are doing our best to serve our

church in positive ways. But eventually we had to admit that these feelings are real, and that for the good of our denomination and our local centers, we needed to take several intentional steps toward making our working together an act of "Trusting the Promise."

Still, there is more, because those of us at the Cabinet meeting came to realize that the promise we need to trust exists on at least two basic and important levels. One is the level of the promises that our Support Units make to our centers and membership through the ways that we use our resources, budgets, and the goals that we set. The second

We need to learn how to trust the promise, not the problem.

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level is grounded in our various centers and ministries and churches through the many ways that you aspire to serve the Lord's New Church. Trusting the Promise, in this way, is a matter of asking ourselves if the goals and priorities of our Support Units will help our ministries move toward what they want to become. Or put another way, we want to become a healthy, functional family, kind of like the Cleavers!

Anyway, as I sat there in my office seeking guidance from the Beaver as to how to develop this theme, an answer came to me. I recalled a recent event when I did something that makes being a minister wonderfully worthwhile. During our worship service at the Church of the Good Shepherd, I confirmed 10 young people into the Swedenborgian Church!

This event was meaningful for several reasons. First, my own son and daughter, Toby and Jessie, were in that class. And it was special because I've now been in Kitchener eight years, and have watched most of those kids grow and mature. But what made it especially meaningful was that even though those kids grew up in this church, *they still wanted to join!* They looked forward to becoming official "Swedenborgians." That fact should tell us something about our theme!

You see, each of those youth trust the promise that our church will help them grow in their relationship with God.

Each of those kids want our church to be a part of their life. They trust the promise, to be sure. But why? But why? Because for them, the promise has been kept!

This, my friends, presents each of us with a similar question. Do we trust the promise? Do we? Do we really?

This past January the convention planning committee met here in Leesburg and during that meeting I was asked to share a few words about the Cabinet's intent for the theme. No sooner had I mentioned the words, "Trusting the Promise," than someone jokingly said, "Wouldn't a more appropriate theme be 'Trusting the Problem?'"

We had a good laugh at this. Too good. Why? Because those words are too true. We are experts at trusting the problems within this church. Which tells me that ours is not only a good, but needed theme for us. We need to learn how to trust the promise, and not the problem.

But what promise has God made to us that might help us grow in our ability to do this? The answer will vary with each one of us here, to be sure, for God has made many promises to us through the scriptures and our teachings. And I am very appreciative that so many of you took the opportunity to respond to this question that was part of our convention registration form.

As I pondered my own response to this question, and then later as I read many of your responses, it became clear to me that there is indeed one of God's promises that always offers me, and many of you, strength and guidance during life's difficult times. It is the promise that our Lord made to the disciples near the time of his ascension, when in Matthew we read, "And remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." My friends, as we gather here this evening, I want us to realize that perhaps there is no other promise of God that holds more relevance and meaning for us. I say this for two reasons.

First, within this statement lies the assurance that God is with us always, without fail. Our teachings make clear that these words speak to us of so much more than God's ongoing presence within our minds and hearts. They also assure us that there will always be something here on this planet. Do you know what that is? It is the church, for the church exists to maintain the Divine presence among us. And through that church, God will seek to be made known to us in a multitude of ways. And this is true whether we are speaking of the church universal, or the church specific, or the church external or the church internal.

My heart overflows with joy and happiness whenever I realize that this promise even speaks to our own denomination. We are part of the way God is fulfilling this promise wherever we are! That's an incredible and wonderful truth!

And secondly, when it is said that "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Our teachings make clear to me that our church has the potential to grow and change continually as the ages come and go. I hope that all of us realize what an incredible ability this is!

But it also assures me that the greatest problem we have to overcome is our own reluctance to make use of this gift as love and truth demand it.

We are going to overcome this reluctance! That's a promise we can trust!

Our first step in this direction will come in our business session when we will do something new. We will listen to long range plans from each of our support units. These plans represent the ideas and goals that they want to pursue.

After these presentations, we will break into groups for discussions that will help the support units learn if what they plan to do is what you, as representatives of our various ministries, want and need for them to do. The Cabinet will then use this information to make changes during our meeting in September.

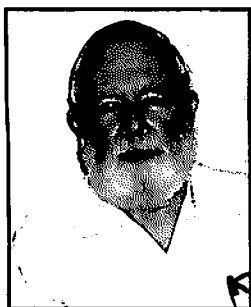
The Cabinet hopes that we will think of this as a step we



Installation of the Rev. Ronald Brugler as denominational president. Left, the Rev. Edwin Capon, past president.

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS



The by-laws of General Convention require that the president each year address "the Swedenborgian Church, set-

ting forth the state of the Church, and shall ensure that the activities of the Cabinet are reported to the Swedenborgian Church." I think it would make sense to fulfill the latter requirement first.

For several years now the Cabinet has met in August at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly immediately following the regular sessions of the Assembly. We begin our meetings with full verbal reports from the support units and from the Council of Ministers. Later in the meetings we review the budget requests from the support units and the Council of Ministers and the Central Office. When we find that requested expenditures exceed anticipated income, we work very hard to make cuts and bring the budget into balance. This year as in other years we were able to make some cuts, but we felt that we would do too much harm if we had to actually balance the budget. Also, we were aware that we do not always spend every penny we budget.

Cabinet does not confine itself to matters coming from the support units and the Council of Ministers. This year we spent some time dealing with a concern that had come to us from several sources, namely, the desirability of having a youth worker full-time. I think all favored the idea, but most felt we were not ready to proceed yet, particularly since EDSU is already working in this area and has a part-time person. The Cabinet also

chose a theme for Convention to bring to General Council for final approval. We further had a preliminary report from the Structure Review Committee.

Cabinet met again in December both before and with the General Council. This was in part because one support unit had not had some needed information, but also because it was felt this would be of help to General Council. At this meeting a recommendation to General Council was voted that "General Council... establish a means to review the Pastoral Ministries Consultant position and evaluate its priority." Referred to General Council were new timelines for developing and approving the budget.

What can I say that will convey something of the state of the denomination?

When I became president in 1992 pulpits were empty in five churches that would have warranted a minister.

Today the number is six according to my reckoning. During that period three of the ministers active in 1992 died, one retired, and three are no longer employed within the denomination. During my presidency I have ordained nine new ministers, seven of

whom are serving churches in the United States or Canada. Two were from overseas.

As I look at our church today, I think we—or at least some of our churches—have turned the corner. We are learning new ways, and trying new things.

In 1992 the *Journal* listed 48 ministers as active in the home field, the 1997 *Journal* lists 50. Of the 48, 15 were not employed within Convention. Of the 50 the number not em-

ployed is 17. Comparing the two lists I think I can safely say the average age of our ministers is lower today than it was six years ago.

Our membership has decreased slightly between 1992 and 1997 from 2073 to 2029, but five associations show an increase: Illinois, Maine, Ohio, Pacific Coast, and Southeast. By far the biggest increase was in the Pacific Coast Association. Unfortunately about a quarter of our members are inactive, but I'm sure we have a number of active nonmembers.

Over the years I have visited 51 Convention churches and organized groups. Twelve of these are no longer in existence or—in the case of two—have left the denomination. On the other hand six of these were not in existence when I was ordained 49 years ago. Most that were active 49 years ago have fewer members, but that holds true for churches belonging to the National Council of Churches. Which reminds me of a quotation from the book, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land*, by Martin Marty. "The more uncooperative a group was, the more likely it would be successful." I cannot think that is justification for General Convention to withdraw into itself. As I look at our church today, I think we—or at least some of our churches—have turned the corner. We are learning new ways and trying new things. I was happy with our denomination as it was 35 years ago,



Edwin and Esther Capon



Edwin and Esther Capon with Friedemann Horn.

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How Do I Know if I'm Success?

Ernest Martin

I think of myself as a practical mystic, a visionary with his feet on the ground. I'm going to put on my practical cap this evening, and talk about success in ministry. I'll take off this mortarboard cap, for it serves no useful purpose, and trade it in for the cap the construction crew gave me at Temenos.



One of the principal themes of American life is SUCCESS, and bookstores are lined with shelves on "how to become successful." Years ago, as I began my ministry, I was intrigued with a book titled: "How to become a bishop without being religious." I dutifully followed some of the author's advice, such as: "Don't meddle with the Ladies' Aid." But I ignored his warning against driving sporty cars. When I drove into the parking lot at the Washington church with my new aquamarine Buick convertible, a layman said: "It must be nice to be a minister, and drive a car like this." I replied that I would be glad to get him an application form for SSR, so that he too might enjoy the grand benefits of ministry. He never mentioned the matter again, and I never became a bishop. President, yes, but never a bishop!

Boys of my father's era were brought up on the Horatio Alger series of books, in which the hero, Frank Merriwell, overcame all obstacles to rise above his humble beginnings to become a success. A book I found in my father's library was entitled: *Strive and Succeed* Another was, *Bound to Rise*.

From the day we enter kindergarten or preschool, we are pressured to succeed—to get top grades, edit the school paper, be on the varsity athletic teams, become a class officer—then gain entry into one of the elite colleges and graduate schools, become a

member of one of the noble professions (like medicine and law), make a "good living," i.e. earn lots of money and enjoy all the benefits that wealth can bring.

I grew up during the Great Depression, and sensed the anxiety of my parents in trying to keep up mortgage payments and have food on the table each day. I felt the need for security, and sought my fortune in business administration, majoring in accounting. Through a personal crisis that many of you are aware of, I felt called to ministry. My whole scale of values was turned upside down by the death of my little brother, and I adopted a new definition of success.

When my mother told a neighbor of my decision to leave accounting and prepare for the ministry, the neighbor responded: "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. He had such promise." In the ten minutes or so allotted to me this evening, I want to focus your attention on the meaning of success in ministry. I speak in particular to the graduates sitting before us. The rest of you are welcome to listen in, for a part of the Protestant tradition is the priesthood of all believers, i.e. each of us is a minister, ordained or unordained.

If any of you has been thinking of the ministry as a substitute for the lottery in gaining instant wealth, let me disabuse you of the notion. I'm not aware that any one of you has been granted a million dollar bonus for signing a contract with your church. There is a greater likelihood of your flying to the moon than achieving wealth as a minister.

If we have to rule out wealth as a valid measure of success, how about fame and fortune? At a retreat some years ago, our ministers were asked to write out their obituaries, as they

would fantasize them. I recommended that they be put on file, so that when the time came we would have a collection of objective memorials for *The Messenger*. One minister was proud to predict that he would be remembered as the author of a multi-volume systematic theology. Alas, the New York Times list of best-sellers has yet to include a book by a Swedenborgian minister! If it's fame and notoriety you're after, I suggest you become involved in some sort of scandal, a form of Swedenborg-gate, and help the world forget President Bill Clinton.

How can we measure success in ministry? I have always been active in ministerial associations in communities where I served. I found that as ministers sat around the table at lunchtime on Monday, they would invariably ask each other: "What kind of turnout did you have at your worship service yesterday?" The obvious implication was that the larger the congregation, the more successful you were. They would have also liked to ask, "What is your salary?" but that wouldn't have been polite.

We can't ignore the numbers game. The very survival of our denomination depends on attracting and keeping new members, and it is assumed that the minister will be primarily responsible for this growth. Success all too often seems to be measured in dollars and cents. Ministers of churches receiving aid from the Augmentation Fund or other church funds are under constant pressure to become financially independent. For the last 12 years I have been involved in the development of the ministry of the Temenos Retreat Center. Whether my ministry as director is considered successful or not, will be determined by many to be when and if the Center becomes finan-

I am convinced that we must pay more attention to our hearts, listening to the still small voice within, and honoring our intuition.

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How Do I Know if I'm Successful?

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cially self supporting. That's the bottom line. I'd like to see more emphasis on the top line, programming to advance the spiritual life.

For a more positive clue to the meaning of success in ministry, let's turn to the statement of purpose of our church, set forth in the constitution. We declare:

The Swedenborgian Church exists to help people be open to the Lord's presence and leading, especially by fostering personal and ordained ministries which facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, and which have in common a working for the Lord in bringing in the New Age, the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem.

The ministers and laity of the church overwhelmingly adopted this statement of purpose, which clearly distinguishes the church from a publishing body. We are committed to helping one another in our spiritual growth and regeneration, making particular use of the resources of our church. Our goal in life is to grow into angelhood, and in that growth process we look to the church and its ministry for direction and support.

I could end my talk right now and say that we are successful in ministry to the extent that we facilitate the spiritual well being of the people around us, including the members of our churches. But you might very well ask, "How do I know if I have helped people grow spiritually?" You could look for feedback. For example, if a parishioner says to me, after a service, "That was a wonderful sermon, Mr. Martin; it should be printed in *The Messenger* or *Our Daily Bread*," does that mean I have arrived? that I have nurtured the spiritual growth of the congregation? that I am successful in ministry? I wish it were that simple!

I am concerned that 16 of our ordained ministers are presently unemployed by a church body. The mortality rate is high. Some have been fired, others have resigned, or financial support has been withdrawn. Has success eluded these ministers? Several have dropped out because they couldn't get along with

their congregations, or vice versa. We spent a block of time at our Council of Ministers' session discussing the book, "Clergy Killers," dealing with the increasing conflict between clergy and laity. I am convinced that success in ministry is dependent on effective human relations between clergy and laity, including boards and committees and the congregation in general.

The Swedenborgian Church has put major emphasis on its doctrine, and expression by spoken and written word. It has been said with pride that our church is a "thinking man's religion." Across the top of the Urbana University library is the nunc licet statement: "Now it is permitted to enter with understanding into the mysteries of faith." Swedenborg spoke of the primary importance of love, but we seem to find it easier to grapple with ideas than to uncover and share our feelings.

Success in building up a viable organization is most likely to happen if the minister is an extrovert. But the truth of the matter is that our church primarily attracts introverts, those who love to think about the doctrines, and are often not so comfortable in reaching out into the community, and working with strangers!

As I approach the 50th year of my ministry, I am beginning to catch some glimpse of what ministry is all about. I wish that I could convey that insight to the graduates sitting before us, but it is something that each one of us must hammer out on the anvil of our own lives. In closing, I can share some personal observations. I am convinced that we must pay more attention to our hearts, listening to the small voice within, and honoring our intuition. This truth was most dramatically conveyed to me at a wedding that I celebrated at the Wayfarers Chapel some years ago.

At the close of the service, as I stepped down from the altar, the father of the groom walked up to me, shook my hand, and looking into my eyes said: "You really care about them, don't you?"

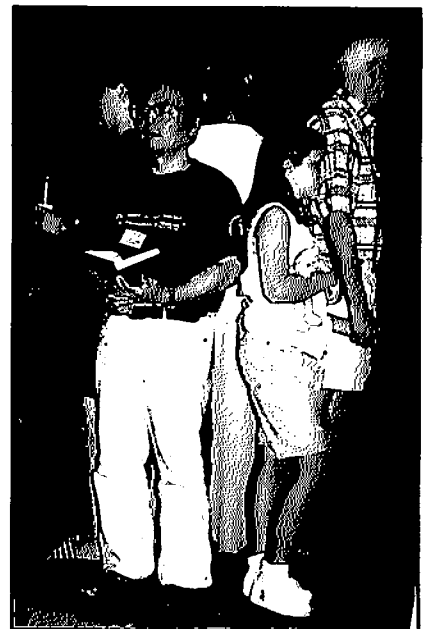
The tears came. This was a Eureka experience. Caring is what ministry is all about. We are successful to the extent that we care about people, and ex-

press that care effectively in everything we do—tone of voice, the words we utter, the warmth of our embrace, the eye contact, the depth of our listening.

An actor can do all these things, very persuasively. In ministry this expression must come from heart, soul, and body, from a genuine love and caring. This love cannot be conveyed through a diploma at graduation or by the laying on of hands at ordination. It comes only as we mature spiritually, as we learn to care about ourselves and achieve a sense of self worth, and then are able to reach out to others with genuine love. It can't come if we are overly concerned with the impression we are making, whether people will like the sermon, or our counsel. As we are able to acknowledge from our inmost being that we are children of God, and that God cares for us, we will become more authentic, and able to reach out to family and friends, and to members of our church, with a sense of divine support and inspiration, freeing us to care with all our body, mind, soul, and strength.

Praise be to God. Amen and Amen. ❖

The Rev. Ernest Martin is director of the Temenos Conference and Retreat Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania.



Worship Service led by Kinichi Kuniyeda.

The Promise of the Rainbow

(Continued from page 103)

When the postlude concluded and silence descended upon the sanctuary, for the second time that morning Tom turned slowly toward me, saying this time, "I see why you are here."

GENERAL CONVENTION IN THE PRESENT TENSE

So I followed the rainbow into a denomination that by worldly appearances had its best day a century ago and was even then of negligible account. The church I have known since 1982 has continued to fret about its minuscule membership base, and many of us rather too anxiously scan the cultural horizon to see whether we make any difference at all.

But something very central about how we relate to the promise and what is expected of us in our obligation to it has shifted somewhere along the way. The vast majority of the leaders in Convention know that the ecclesiastical Swedenborgian church is not the center of the unfolding New Church. Rather, we now largely strive to sensitize ourselves to how the broad New Age is unfolding in the larger occurrences of humankind. Though most of us still honestly believe that the writings contain the most complete revelation from God of which we are aware, we do not see persuasion to Swedenborgian theology as our most urgent task. Rather, we are going deeper into a concern about the integrity of our communal life—what it truly means to regenerate, and how we can play a cooperative role in the massive sweep of divine providence.

Most of us still believe that we have a purpose in remaining an ecclesiastical body—a special purpose that pertains to understanding and communicating the heavenly doctrines, that this nexus of human understanding of the revealed inner sense is crucial somehow to the divine operation. But a shift that began in a broad way perhaps 25 years ago seems now largely completed: that we do not need to be validated by suc-

cessfully convincing the world-mind about a certain understanding of traditional Christian doctrines. The center of our church now rests in a vision that combines creative intensity with our special theology, with a humble and open spirit to God's work elsewhere in the human family.

GENERAL CONVENTION IN THE FUTURE

So with our liberation from a glamorous but exhausting and unattainable view of our obligation to the promise, what kind of church are we now free to be? I see a very rich, authentic, and wise church. But we have a long way to go and grow, spiritually speaking. Though we have had the treasure of the heavenly doctrines, by my lights we have nevertheless lived out a pretty conventional collective spiritual life as a denomination. We have much to humble us.

Yet I sense a growing plea among us to raise our sights for the quality of our spiritual life within the church. I sense our reaching for a future church that will prize above all else integrity of communication and integrity of effort, honesty in our dealings, forbearance with one another, and a greater willingness and courage to utilize our communal church life as primary grist for the regeneration mill. In short, we seem to be groping toward becoming a church whose integrity of effort will derive as equally from our communal spiritual life as from our effectiveness in understanding and communicating the heavenly doctrines.

So off we are going, yet still chasing the rainbow. We might note that a rainbow is an optical phenomenon experienced by an observer whose back is to the sun and who is looking toward a receding storm cloud. A refraction of sunlight from the curtain of falling rain across the receding storm makes the bow.

It is a breathtaking symbol of the regeneration that is possible following difficult times. Swedenborg's commentary on the rainbow goes primarily to the teaching that in regeneration we develop colors, so to speak, by the quality of our spiritual intelligence. And so, too, do churches emanate a rainbow with cer-

tain colors and in certain intensities of those colors.

So actually, we will always have a rainbow; the only issue is whether it will be beautiful. God's rainbow, the one that he establishes as his promise, is beautiful beyond words, and the one that Noah and his people saw stands as God's promise to us. It is the same promise extended to the Most Ancient Church to Abraham and Sarai, to the Christian followers, as well as to Robert Hindmarsh and the earliest New Churchmen and now to us: grow, be fruitful, multiply.

The Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence is co-pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church and director of J. Appleseed & Co., publisher.



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

(Continued from page 106)

but I am glad to see a younger generation of ministers seeking to meet the spiritual needs of a younger generation. They are of the church's future as I am not.

I began my ministry as student minister in Bridgewater in the Winter of 1948, fifty years ago. I packed my things and moved to the third floor of the Methodist parsonage in Bridgewater just three or four doors from the Swedenborgian Church. Except for eight months at the beginning of this decade I have had a job within the denomination for the last 50 years. I cannot imagine having chosen a different path. I cannot imagine why so few people find the writings of Swedenborg the fullest answer to the questions of life that humankind has. I expect to begin a true retirement next week, but I will still welcome whatever opportunities come my way to speak of the New Evangel.



THEME PRESENTATION ~ TRUSTING THE PROMISE

(Continued from page 105)

are taking toward strengthening our ability to trust the promise—the promise that our Support Units are making to us, and the promise that we are making to them. Our love for this church demands that we learn from each other.

Making use of this opportunity can only serve us well.

Earlier I shared with you about the recent confirmation service held at the Church of the Good Shepherd. What I haven't yet mentioned is that when I informed our board that 10 youth were going to be confirmed, they wanted to follow the religious service with a reception.

They talked about ordering a cake, and I gladly volunteered to order it for them. After all, I love cake! And so, I went to a nearby bakery to order one, having no idea what a complicated task I had gotten myself into. First the clerk wanted to know how many people it needed to serve, and then she wanted to know if I was wanting a sheet cake or a layer cake. She even asked what kind of icing I wanted on it, including the icing's color. Suddenly, I didn't have a clue what I was doing!

I must have looked rather perplexed by the whole thing, because that clerk looked me up and down, smiled and then took control. "What's the cake for?" she asked and smiled awaiting my response. I told her that it was for a confirmation class reception, and you could almost see the wheels turning in her mind. "I'll tell you what," she said. "I'll make you a cake that will look like an open Bible." "Wow! That's great!" I thought. But then she said something that brought a smile to my face, because she said, "And I'll put flowers on it for you!"

Sometimes our knowledge of correspondences is a curse. When you tell a Swedenborgian that there are going to be flowers on a Bible, we don't think of a few roses stuck up in one of the corners. We picture a garden, a vast array of zinnias, marigolds, pansies, lilies, you name it, and they would all be growing tall and beautiful . . . a heavenly garden befitting of God's Word!

I left that store with the knowledge that my cake would be ready on Saturday afternoon, and I was actually singing to myself the song we coincidentally sang here this evening, "Praise for them springing fresh from the word!"

When I picked that cake up, it looked like a Bible all right, but it definitely did not meet my expectations. On the left hand page was written the word "Welcome." I figured that at least a confirmation class was a form of welcoming, so that was all right. But on the right hand page, there were no flowers at all. What was in their place? Well, from top to bottom, from edge to edge, lay a giant cross. And to top it all off, that cross was blue!

"Well, at least it's not red!" I thought to myself. I still have enough American in me to know that red or blue, that cross meant that a disaster needed to be responded to. And I did not want those kids to think that joining the Swedenborgian Church was a reason to take out an insurance policy! I wanted them to trust the promise, not the problem!

I want the same for each and every one of us here, both throughout the week, and throughout the years to come! My hope is that we'll trust the many promises that God has made to us, and to this wonderful church. I also hope that we'll trust the promises we make to each other. Why? Because for us, those promises have been kept—they have been made real.

And knowing this, trusting in this, filling our hearts with joy at the response that is to come, only one question remains to be asked. "Golly Gee, Convention. What are we going to do?"

The Rev. Ronald Brugler is the new president of the Swedenborgian church and pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd (Swedenborgian) in Kitchener, Ontario. ❖



Ron and Val Brugler



Mini-courses: Reiki treatment in process: (L-R) Pat Sommer, Gladys Wheaton on table, Pamela Selinsky, co-leader; Anna Brown, Mona Conner, leader; Pete Toot on table, Sandy Schofield.



Kevin Baxter and Phyllis Bosley

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Hope, Need and Blessing

Adam Seward

The ministry exists because of hope, need and blessing. We reach toward an ideal called the New Jerusalem, but we live in human denominations. We do not believe that we are the exclusive embodiment of the Holy City, yet we strive toward its realization. This is hope—the first reason for the ministry.

This hope causes us to need, and need is the second reason for the ministry. This need has two manifestations. The first, the internal drive, is general. It can be seen in the life of the Greek orator Demosthenes. Demosthenes went to the sea and put pebbles in his mouth to practice his speechmaking. This story shows an overwhelming motivation for a specific path. That is what it feels like when we say that we feel “called” to ministry. The second manifestation of need, the external call, is specific. We become ministers because the church has called us. The church has called us because of a need. That need is to be reminded of the hope that lives within us all. The church asks its ministers to be as competent as those in other professions. It asks its ministers to have a sense of God’s presence and a penetrating insight. This was spoken of by William Ellery Channing when he said that “There is no such thing as naked truth, at least as far as moral subjects are concerned.”

Living as a minister means living in the tension between the internal drive and the external

call. We cannot always say, as Alcuin did, “Vox populi, vox Dei”—“The voice of the people is the voice of God.” We have to discover the meeting of both voices, and we cannot always discern that meeting place. This ambiguity leads us to the third reason for ministry.

In addition to hope and need, the third reason for ministry is blessing. Blessing is a specific act of caring for one another. I have needed the blessings of those who have trained me, before I begin my Swedenborgian ministry. You may see those blessings on the altar after the ordination service. Anawim center sent a medicine wheel, Newtonville sent a Bible. Bridgewater sent an altar cloth, and Wilmington sent a pulpit cloth. The Swedenborg School

*Living as a minister
means living
in the tension
between
the internal drive
and the
external call.*



Adam and Lynn Seward

of Religion sent an altar cross, and Temenos sent a special blessing. Pretty Prairie and the Kansas Association sent a universal calendar and a banner. All of them have sent me their blessings. They have taught me about hope and need, but most importantly, they have taught me how to care more deeply. With their blessings, I am now prepared to begin the ministry in Pretty Prairie, Kansas. ❖



Charge to the Ordinand

Dorothea Harvey



Adam, when you introduced yourself here at convention, you said you had found a church where you can be a Cherokee-Choctaw and a Christian. I am thankful that I belong to a church in which this is true. I am thankful for Swedenborg's understanding that the church of the Lord is universal, that there is one God, Creator of all humankind, that the Divine Love and Wisdom are in every living creature, that Love is the sustaining power in all, that God's joy is that every living creature enjoy and live its own true nature.

In your ordination you took in your right hand the Word of God, with its statement that God created every human being in God's own image and likeness. You took in your left hand Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion*, with its insight that as God is Love, we are created out of the Divine Love itself, that the essence of love is to enjoy the joy of the other. You made your commitment to be true to God's Word, understood in the light of Love itself, the essence and power of all wisdom.

Our theology is universal. It is also mystical, knowing God's Love as our source of life, knowing a Spiritual world present with us, as a source of wisdom, of guidance, of life. We have adopted at this convention session George Dole's wording of a statement of Principles of Alliance for Swedenborgian organizations. It includes a statement of our universal emphasis, our belief "that the same love and wisdom incarnate in Jesus Christ is present in different forms in all religions, offering the means of salvation to everyone who seeks to live in justice and compassion."

As I have worked with the Lakota tradition, I have found what I believe is a similar emphasis on the universal and the mystical, the presence of spiritual wisdom and power, a world full of the love and the wisdom of the Divine, a world in which we human beings are part of a receiving and a sharing with all living beings.

On the altar tonight is the calendar for today, June 26, with the words from Deuteronomy: "Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God. Listen to the LORD's voice and hold fast to the LORD, for the LORD is your life." On the altar there is also a dream catcher and a medicine wheel. I urge you to be true to all these, to your dream, to the power and wholeness of the medicine wheel, and to the word from Deuteronomy that you choose life.

My charge to you is that you be yourself, that you know your God-given identity as naturally and rightly yours, and know your joy in it and God's joy in you. As you know that joy in your own identity, you will have respect for others, for those with whom you work, to help them find their identity, to rejoice in God's gift of life to them.

Adam, be yourself, your English, Irish, Cherokee, Choctaw self, as you come alive in your ministry. The Lord be with you. Amen.

Dorothea Harvey is a part-time professor at the Swedenborgian School of Religion and general pastor for the Massachusetts association.



"The same love and wisdom incarnate in Jesus Christ is present in different forms in all religions, offering the means of salvation to everyone who seeks to live in justice and compassion."

Convention Scenes

Ordination



General Council



(L-R) Paul Martin, Larry Conant, Sharon Reddekopp, Barbara Boxwell, Perry Martin, Skuli Thorhallsson.

Talent Show



Building A HEAVENLY COMMUNITY

Min-Heui Cheon



Min-Heui Cheon

Good evening! About my graduation address, once I thought that I would say just three words without any addition. Can you guess it? Maybe you guess this sentence, "I am done." But if you have rich vocabulary, you will guess a right word for my asking. I thought only this word, "Thank you, friends." Maybe if now I just say "Thank you, friends," and I sit on my chair, you will be happy because you will be relieved

from one of those long graduation addresses. But I am sorry that I can not. Because I am not sure my ability can express the deep heart with one word and a momentary face expression.

I grew up in the Presbyterian Church. I started studying theology with the simple thought that I wanted to do something for the Lord. After studying theology and ordination program for ten years in another university, seminaries and the Swedenborg School of Religion, after receiving Bachelor of Theology, Master of Divinity, and Master of Sacred Theology, I made up my mind to put my feet in the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church. Because I saw the light in this church. There was enough attraction. Last year, I was ordained to serve our Edmonton church in Canada. At convention, I could see the desire to pursue building a heavenly community. The desire to build a heavenly community was strong enough to invite others to be a part of it. It was contagious. It was bright. It shined. During the first year of my ministry, I thought about the identity of my church a lot. We know that we are human beings who know the way to go and to do but struggle between ideal and reality. While pursuing to build a heavenly community from what we learned, sometimes we fail, sometimes we go backward, but even so, at least we are willing to try it again and again.

After my ordination of last year, the reason that I asked for Graduation was that I wanted to share the feeling which I felt in our churches and our church camps especially about people. It was strong, effective, and warm enough to change people. I really appreciate the sharing of my friends, school and churches. As a person who is on a spiritual journey like all of you, I would like to ask for your prayer to support building up a heavenly community in me, in you, in our school, and in our churches. "Thank you so much, my friends." ❖



I Am Smiling

Ken Turley

I would like to begin by thanking the school and the faculty for staying with me over the long haul; and I would like to thank my wife, Laurie, for everything, for just being there; and I would like to thank my children, from whom I'm learning a whole other level of love; and I would like to thank the musicians whom God has sent my way right when I most needed them.

I've always had a certain admiration for the oriental way of thinking, particularly the Taoist perspective on things. I once heard that they believe that one should divide one's life into thirds: the first third you spend finding yourself and deciding what you want to do; the second third you spend finishing your education and developing your trade; and the final third of your life you spend producing whatever it is you do. Well, I'm right on track, to be about a hundred and twenty years old!

But that's O.K., I have always taken my own path, (not the one less traveled, but the other one, the little one that leads out into the underbrush and then sort of peters out somewhere in the middle of a briar patch), and though it has often taken me longer than other people, to get where I'm going, and though I often emerge all scratched up and dirty with twigs in my hair, it is usually with a smile in my heart if not on my face. And I know I have seen and experienced a lot of things that others don't and, in the end, I have learned what I needed and then some. It has taken over five years to get this Master's Degree, and I have learned what I needed, and then some; with the emphasis on the "then some." And like the caption said under the picture of the bald eagle my dad had hanging on his wall, "I am smiling!"

To me, deep spirituality is among other things, a whole bunch of fun.

It's been hard work, academically and personally to finish this thesis. But it has also been extremely rewarding and I have been both challenged and blessed by God all along the way. I've been challenged and blessed by George Dole, too. Now that I'm actually done with this project, I can get back to seeing him as a friend and colleague and something other than the "Right Hand of God." Now I am a Swedenborgian because I've never believed in a cruel and judgmental God, but after the last five years of submitting this thesis to his evaluation, I'm beginning to have my doubts...

Anyway, Saturday night at the Talent show, we're going to perform a rock musical based on the story of Samson and Delilah which is one part

of my thesis project. I hope you will be there. And to give you a little taste, we're also going to perform one of the songs in a couple of minutes. Now some people may see it as an inappropriate, even disrespectful expression of scripture, but that is not my intention at all. I am simply trying to put what I believe is a sacred message, the most important message in all of life,

into a new form, a contemporary idiom, in a modern musical vocabulary that will be accessible to the current generation, whatever their age may be.

Please understand, I truly love God and the idea of heaven fills me with joy. I love "the neighbor." Well, at least most of them. But it is one of my greatest sorrows to see so many people misunderstanding what spiritual life is all about. To me, deep spirituality is, among other things, a whole bunch of fun. So in the context of a traditionally formal setting, i.e. church, and a graduation ceremony, and wearing this cap and gown, we're going to try to express, in a fun and lively way, what I consider to be a most serious and sacred message. While I know it will not be a perfect performance, and it will most definitely not be everyone's "cup of tea," I do hope that it will be received in the spirit in which it is offered. I guess I would sum up that spirit, and that sacred message, by saying: The older you get, the shorter life feels, so as important as the stuff in your life may seem, remember, you are only one grain of sand on the Miami beach of life. So love God, love your neighbor, be useful wherever and however you can, and try to have a little fun along the way. Let's dance!

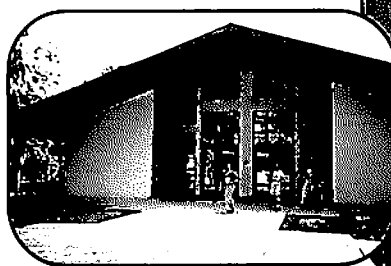
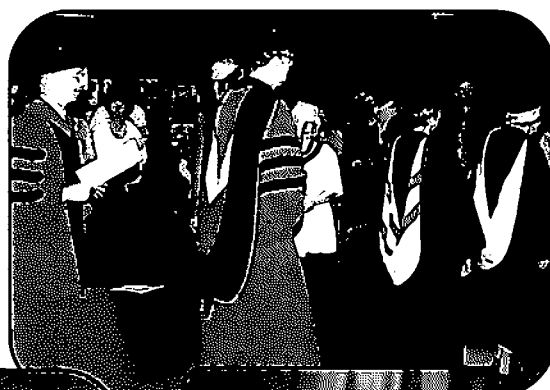
The Rev. Ken Turley is pastor of the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine. ♦

Let's Dance! And so they did!





Above: (L-R) Bob Kirven, Min-Henri Cheon, Betsy Coffman, Adam Seward, Ken Turley, Dorothea Harvey.



Erni Martin in his other hat.

"Long Time Life And Death Dance"

Ken Turley

VERSE 1

Today, we know that it's so bad,
Poverty everywhere,
Crime in the streets, abuse in the home,
The smell of fear, it's hanging' in the air.

CHORUS 1

But every day, the sun comes up
To give us one more chance
To walk our walk, to talk our talk,
To take our place in the Long Time
Life and Death Dance.

VERSE 2

Today we've reached an all time high,
Sales are up, don't talk about the costs,
We're at the edge of complete annihilation,
We'd be fine if only
"They" would take the loss.

CHORUS 2

Still everyday the sun comes up
To give us one more chance,
To spend some cash, to dump some trash,
To leave our mark on the Long Time
Life and Death Dance.

BRIDGE

And its been this way forever,
only the surface seems to change,
Greed and power still plague the world,
but Love and stillness find their place.

VERSE 3 - Instrumental solo

CHORUS 3

And every day the sun comes up
To give us one more chance,
To have some fun, to love someone,
To take a chance

VERSE 4

Today I looked you in the eye,
Saw my soul starin' back at me,
I'm at the edge of romantic annihilation,
I'd be fine if only I knew you loved me.

CHORUS 4

'Cause everyday when the sun comes up
And gives us one more chance,
To kiss the air, to feel the beat,
We take our place in that Long Time
Life and Death Dance.

VERSE - Instrumental solo out



Above: Jenn Tafel & Jerry Poole



Right: Wilma Wake & Gladys Wheaton



MaryAnn & Skuli Thorballsson

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Here I Am, Lord

Betsy Coffman

When Mary Kay Klein told me that I would have to say something at my graduation, the first thought that popped into my mind to say was, "it was a lot harder than I thought it would be." I had no idea when I began, just how much self-discipline and commitment would be required to keep at it. George Dole summed it up very nicely when I finally sent in another lesson to him after having done nothing for several months. He said, "one thing about correspondence courses is that the lessons just sit there patiently and wait for you to get to them." How true! I want to thank all the SSR faculty who worked with me for their great encouragement and support that helped me keep going.

It's been over six years since I began the process of applying for the program, thinking I'd be finished in three years. However, unlike college or graduate school, life goes on as usual, when one is working on the lay leader training course. And so, along with my full-time professional career, I've continued to serve the church at the local, association and national levels, leading worship and Sunday School and serving on various committees and boards. I've also maintained active membership on the Urbana University Board of Trustees since 1991. My husband, Bill, has said that I generally commit to about 10% more than I can possibly do, although at times, I think he has adjusted that figure upward.

I'm also struck with how many significant life changes have occurred in that time period, including my daughter's marriage, the arrival of three grandchildren, my own remarriage, a major car accident, partnership in a new business and two moves. Life certainly is exciting, isn't it?

And now, this phase is completed and I find it more gratifying than I could have imagined to stand before you and experience the satisfaction of receiving my certificate. I thank you all for being here to support me and



Proud Mom & Dad, Dave & Elizabeth Johnson with daughter Betsy.

share my joy in this moment. So many powerful images come to mind when I contemplate what brought me to this moment, this now.

Among them are my memories of my growing up years in the Kitchener Church of the Good Shepherd where my father, David Johnson was the minister and my mother, Elizabeth, sang in the choir. To me, that church community was my extended family and I felt loved and cherished. I recall loving parishioners who sat with me in church because my dad was in the pulpit and my mother was singing in the choir. And I have strong images of my little self sitting in Sunday School with the other kids, singing songs from the Hosanna. No doubt these early, formative experiences in that church community are beyond my ability to measure and surely influenced my sense of "life as ministry."

Other powerful images relate to my ancestry. Coming from a line of Swedenborgian ministers including Bishop Binet, the Rev. David Powell, who had a church in Steubenville, Ohio (whose autobiography I read as an adolescent), and of course my own father, David Johnson, I think a sense of "ministry" is in my blood. The truth is, I have felt "called" to a life of ministry almost since I can remember. (I'm not sure what this says about free will!) My professional training and career in clinical social work has always felt like a ministry and my Swedenborgian perspective has been invaluable in my work.

As for my service to the church, it is

simply another aspect of my total sense of ministry. It feels as natural a part of me as my walking or breathing. But still, many of you have been a great part of my development and inspiration in this direction. How fortunate I was to be part of the spiritual community as it

developed in the Urbana church during the time that the Gutfeldts, the Kleins, and most especially, my "spiritual mentor," Dorothea Harvey were active there. They were all instrumental in my learning about true spiritual practice and ministering to one another in community.

Today, I consider the Urbana church my spiritual home, where I have been supported and nurtured, where each and every member has shared with me in giving and receiving as we walk our spiritual paths together. Some, with whom I have shared a deep connection, have come and gone. Others are still present and active. To each of them, I want to express my gratitude for their love, encouragement and support. Most especially, I want to thank my husband, Bill, who married me having no idea of the time and energy this commitment would take, yet has supported me unreservedly throughout.

To all of you, I give my pledge to serve the Urbana church in a spirit of mutual trust and respect, aware as I am, that the Lord calls us all to serve in our own way—we are all called to minister, a call expressed so beautifully in the song by Peter Shaw:

Here I am, Lord, is it I Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night
I will go Lord, where you lead me
I will hold your people in my heart.

Betsy Coffman, who has been serving the Urbana Church for several years as a lay leader, is now our graduation consorted lay leader. ❖



*Pillars of the church (otherwise known as the executive committee):
(L-R) Chris Laitner, vice-president; Ron Brugler, president; Polly
Baxter, treasurer; Gloria Toot, secretary.*

Swedenborgian Church Election Results

Vice-President—1-year term	Chris Laitner
Secretary—1-year term	Gloria Toot
Treasurer—1-year term	Polly Baxter
General Council—1-year unexpired term	Rev. Edwin Capon
General Council—Minister, 1-year term	Rev. Harvey Tafel
General Council—Lay person, 1-year terms	Duane Beougher, Chuck Winter
General Council—Lay person, 2-year unexpired term	Jim Ericson
COMSU—3-year term	Susan Poole
EDSU—3-year term	Ruth Tafel
IMSU—3-year term	Steve Ledingham
MINSU—1-year unexpired year term	Barbara Halle
MINSU—3-year term	Betsy Coffman, Manon Washburn
Nominating Committee—5-year term ..	Rev. F. Robert Tafel
Committee on Admission to the Ministry—Lay person, 1-year term	Pat Tukos
Committee on Admission to the Ministry—Minister, 1-year term	Rev. Marlene Laughlin
Board of Trustees, SSR—3-year term	Edward Bohlander, Barbara Tourangeau
Board of Trustees, SSR—2-year unexpired term	Nadine Cotton



(L-R) Jonathan Mitchell, Manon Washburn, Carl Blenkin

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COUNCIL OF MINISTERS REPORT

The Council of Ministers meetings began the afternoon of June 21 and concluded the morning of June 24. Thirty-four Council members and six guests took part in the sessions.

We welcomed to the meeting Council members Friedemann Horn from Switzerland and Kinichi Kuniyeda from Japan.

Our meetings included a theological reflection session on the convention theme, "Trusting the Promise." We reaffirmed the Council of Ministers' vision of a healthy Swedenborgian Church. There was a panel presentation on the book, *Clergy Killers* by Lloyd Rediger.

We approved efforts to go forward with developing ministries to churches and ministers in transition, and we worked on outlining the authorized candidacy path to ordination.

We voted to approve Susannah Currie's Vision of Ministry. We heard reports from the Swedenborg School of Religion, the Swedenborgian Church's Delegation to the National Council of Churches, and a variety of Council of Ministers' committees. We approved a proposed Council budget for 1999. Friedemann Horn reported on the state of the church in Europe. We affirmed exploring the possibility of a world-wide alliance of independent Swedenborgian organizations to seek membership in the World Council of Churches.

The Council of Ministers Executive Committee for the coming year is: Paul Martin, chair; Ted Klein, secretary; Renee Billings; Bob Kirven; Jerry Poole. Our CAM member is Deborah Winter. Our convention preacher for 1999 is Ted Klein and for 2000 is Paul Martin.

Twenty-fifth anniversary certificates were read to the assembled Convention and later presented to Matthew Glowe and Paul Tremblay in recognition of their ordination into the Christian Ministry in the service of the Swedenborgian Church.

We brought to General Convention the recommendation that Betsy Coffman be approved to be consecrated as a lay leader for service to the Urbana church.

The Council of Ministers recommended that Adam Seward, whose ordination has been requested by the Pretty Prairie church, and who has completed a full course of study at the Swedenborg School of Religion, be ordained into our ministry, and that the service of ordination be held at this 174th Session of Convention, his name, after ordination, to be placed on our Roll of Ministers.

Ted Klein, secretary

Support Units Outline Plans— with More to be Revealed

In keeping with the "Trust the Promise" theme of convention, the Support Units have been preparing five-year plans and making efforts to bridge a communication gap with members of General Convention in the understanding of how they function and what their plans are for the future. The following is a brief outline of what was presented. Details of projected support unit plans and how they are working internally, with each other, and with General Convention will be explored in future issues of *The Messenger*.

The Ministries Support Unit (MINSU) members present were Linda Tafel, co-chair (with Alan Thomsen, who was not present), the Rev. Ken Turley and Betsy Coffman made a report using overhead viewgraph projections. Linda Tafel explained the duties of MINSU. Betsy Coffman presented their mission statement: "We seek to serve God by promoting excellence, unity, and growth in the Swedenborgian Church through the development, fostering and support of its varied ministries," and further explained their mission. Ken Turley presented the guidelines for evaluating funding requests and explained that MINSU is a resource for transition in churches. The Rev. Eric Allison, Pastoral Ministries Consultant who is funded by MINSU, presented an explanation and description of his job.

Communications Support Unit (COMSU): Steve Koke, chair, reported on the current activities of J. Appleseed & Co. and *The Messenger*, and stated some ideas in their five-year plan, which will include becoming an official advocate for effective and harmonious communications throughout the church. The other members of COMSU are Mona Conner and Susan Poole, Patte Levan, editor of *The Messenger* and the Rev. Jim Lawrence, manager of J. Appleseed & Co., are employees under COMSU.

Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit: Polly Baxter, treasurer, reported that

FPRSU has changed its thinking from acting as finance committee to its being a support unit. She reported the mission and vision statements and goals of FPRSU. One long-term goal is the accomplishment of a non-deficit budget by 2002. Other goals include tapping into new funding sources through new funds / wills, developing training programs for the local churches and their neighbors, further developing funding criteria, improving communication and funding a new project each year, and developing a new denominational culture of fiscal responsibility.

Education Support Unit: B.J. Neuenfeldt reported for EDSU, speaking about SCYL, Transitions, mini-courses at convention and pre-convention conferences. She commended the SCYL on its fine participation in the life of the church.

Information Support Unit: The Rev. Lee Woofenden reported, explaining joint funding of the archivist and stating that they are working on a computerized index to *The Messenger*. He announced the Web page address: www.swedenborg.org. Organizing a "church talent" database is a future project.

Following these presentations, members gathered into small groups to discuss and ask questions of the Support Unit in which they were most interested. Each Support Unit then reported to Convention the issues that were addressed in their groups and answers to questions posed. These questions and answers will be included in the expanded Support Unit reports in future *Messengers*. ♦



MINSU members (L-R) Ken Turley, Betsy Coffman, Linda Tafel, Paul Martin, and Eric Allison, Pastoral Ministries Consultant.

GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT

General Council met June 24, 1998, in Leesburg Florida for its pre-convention meeting. This was the last meeting as president for the Rev. Edwin Capon and as vice-president for Phyllis Bosley. They were given a standing vote of thanks.

Among the items of business was a vote to terminate the Defined Benefit Pension Plan as recommended by the Retirement Committee. We received the final report of the Structure Review Committee, with thanks. It generated a lot of discussion, including the question of membership and voting rights. General Council accepted the invitation from Urbana University to host the 2000 Convention. A bylaw change allowing for a General Council meeting earlier than midwinter was proposed to recommend to General Convention. The Council reviewed and accepted revised Building Fund guidelines.

There was lengthy discussion regarding the Minister's Relief Funds held by the Massachusetts New Church Union. Larry Conant read a statement explaining the Union's stand on the use of these funds. It was decided to request Council of Ministers to appoint a committee to meet with the Union's standing committee for dialog over this matter.

General Council met on June 28 at its post-convention meeting. New members Duane Beougher, Jim Ericson, and Chuck Winter were welcomed. A committee was formed to study the issue of membership in regard to the Constitution's requirement for Confirmation. Various committee appointments for 1998-99 were accepted and there was a budget revision made to cover repair expenses at the national church in Washington DC.

The Next General Council meeting is scheduled for October 29 through November 1, 1998.

Gloria Toot, Recording Secretary ♦

Alliance of New Church Women

NEW OFFICERS FOR 1998-1999

President Mary Crenshaw
 First Vice-President Jenn Tafel
 Second Vice-President
 Sandra Schofield
 Secretary Sue Burns
 Treasurer Margaret Kraus
 Mite Box Chair... Barbara Penabaker
 Publication Chair..... Lee Dyer
 Religious Chair..... Ellen Shaw
 Round Robin Chair.....
 Merrilee Phinney
 Nominating Committee.....
 Chair—Susan Poole (1999)
 Jeannette Hille (2000);
 Nan Paget (2001)
 Martha Richardson (2002)

The Mite Box contribution for 1998-1999 will be donated to the Sunday School Association in memory of the Rev. Gertrude Tremblay.

Right: Alliance president Mary Crenshaw thanks Chuck Winter for his tremendous help in getting things ready for the luncheon.



Women's Alliance luncheon (L - R) Sandy Schofield, Joyce Fekete, Anna Brown, and ?? (If someone can identify the two ladies on the right, we will remedy our oversight in the upcoming Messenger.)



SCYL Report

This year has been a time of change, growth, and excitement for the SCYL. In our efforts to redefine the way in which the league operates, a tremendous amount of hard work combined with a team effort has been required to take those first steps towards our goal of becoming a stronger, more efficient youth league.

I would like to thank the officers of the SCYL: Myrrh Woofenden, our east coast regional officer; Amy Halle, the central states representative; Andy Scordato, our west coast officer; Toby Brugler, the Canadian regional officer, and our two CBS editors, Katie Shelley and Heidi Neuenfeldt.

In addition, we would all like to thank the members of EDSU, Eric Hoffman, our league chaplain, and Betsy Lau, who is currently serving as youth director, for the time and effort they have put forth to continue the success of the league. We would also like to applaud Lee Woofenden who

has been instrumental in the New England youth program.

Throughout this past year, the youth have participated in various retreats and camps. Many of us were involved in Almont summer school, and later, many participated at Fryeburg in Maine. The LaPorte youth held their annual church lock-in last fall, raising money for the local youth budget. After Christmas, various leaguers gathered for the annual Winter Retreat at Almont, Michigan, exploring the theme of "Food and Spirituality." Memorial Day Retreat was held in New Hampshire this year, focusing on "Heaven and Hell." We thank all the participating ministers for your support.



The League has been evolving from a state of uncertainty to a more stable body. At this time last year, many of us were concerned about the future direction of the League; however, a few events have occurred which have quelled our concerns about leadership.

Since last convention, EDSU, in conjunction with the League, has been searching to find a qualified leader. Betsy Lau, a devoted young adult from our church, was hired this past October to serve as the SCYL director, and is now in charge of organizing retreats and other League business, including the League mailing list, helping teens with travel arrangements, funding, and other administrative details. We all feel fortunate to have Betsy.

This is only the beginning of the changes and goals we would like to see happen. We are beginning to gain an understanding of our responsibilities as the Youth League, in addition to taking the initiative in solving issues that concern us. During the convention, the SCYL officers met with EDSU, Betsy Lau, and Ken Turley to discuss the questions and concerns we felt about the League. The main issue discussed was the League's desire

to improve our communication with not only EDSU, but with the ministers of the church, as well as General Convention as a whole. Another change we would like to see come about is more ministerial involvement and attendance at our youth retreats.

We want to extend our gratitude to all of you who have been working so hard this year towards making the Swedenborgian Church Youth League a promising and spirited organization.

Alison Lane, president ❖

OPINION

Inclusive Language

To the Editor:

It is not surprising that the suggestion to simply ignore the masculine imagery of the word 'he' is coming from a 'him.' It is like a fish who cannot see the water: 'he' is so immersed in 'his' own perspective 'he' cannot see what is distorting 'his' vision.

I would have suggested, in the interest of fairness and equal time, that for the next couple of centuries we try using feminine instead of masculine pronouns to refer to all people. But the writer in question has stated that to consider even reversing the order of pronouns and putting "she" first and "he" second looks like "a mild form of reverse discrimination." I can only assume then, that having 'himself' referred to as a 'her' would be out of the question. Yet this same person is saying women should be referred to as 'he' and not feel discriminated against, they should simply "put on another hat."

As a justification for the use of 'he' as an inclusive pronoun, the writer goes to a dictionary from "all the way back to the sixties." This is supposed to prove that the use of 'he' to refer to all human beings is not sexist. The only problem is that the use of masculine pronouns to refer to all people is a linguistic convention that *dates back centuries*, back to a time when women and children were not even worthy of mention, except as the property of the only people that counted, i.e. men, and free, white, land-holding men at that. This "second rule," the writer's only justification for the continued use of male pronouns, is the very product of a male dominated society and he seeks his support from an academia which for centuries was the *exclusive* domain of males. This social discrimination has only begun to change in the last hundred years and it is only in the last thirty years that women have begun to be seen as equal partners in the social structure. Is it any wonder that the language has not caught up? Don't even talk to me about dictionaries.

As a society we are finally beginning

TO THE EDITOR

to emerge from these social 'dark ages.' As a dominator culture we have been discriminating for so long, and it is so much a part of our attitudinal mindset that we cannot even see it when we look. And to prove to ourselves that we are not bad people (which we are not) we desperately try to justify the rightness of continuing in the traditions of the past rather than repenting and making the effort to change. For years it is we, white America which has been saying, "I'm not racist. There is a reason there are no black quarterbacks in football. They're just not smart enough to play that position. Really, I'm not racist, but they sure can dance." And it is we white males who have been saying, "I'm not sexist, women just aren't intellectual enough to vote; women just can't do a man's job; a woman's place is in the home." But in the last few years we have begun to see this kind of talk for what it is and we have begun to see how deeply these attitudes are rooted in our language. To continue a way of speaking that denies the personhood of women, however subtle it may be done, because the dictionary only mentions the sexist implications in a footnote, is the 'lamest' of rationalizations.

If we persist in the usage and support of such anachronistic language we participate in the support of an attitude and perspective that says women are not worthy of equal status in our language. And our language, how we speak and write, is a direct indication of how we think, for how we think is directly affected by our vocabulary. It is long past time to make the effort to change our vocabulary, our language and our way of thinking. Because, even if you haven't noticed, it is already happening all around us. And we either move forward or we get left behind. This is nothing less than regeneration at work.

One final comment. It is not for me to judge the value or worth of a Library Edition of Swedenborg's writings. But a product aimed at "a very sophisticated

audience committed to mainly standard English," that will readily attract "serious research by scholars," is attempting to reach an extremely narrow and exclusive segment of the population. Perhaps there is value in that, but it will be of little use, certainly no more than any of the older translations that we already have, for most of us who are just average people and who live decidedly outside those hallowed walls of the "ivory tower."

Ken Turley
Fryeburg, Maine ❖

OPINION

Too Many Translations?

Dear Editor,

Whilst a member of the Swedenborg Foundation and involved on a full-time 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 October 1997 *Messenger*. The Rev. Jonathan Rose's clarity in presenting the reasons behind the proposal and particularly emphasizing faithfulness of style, gender-inclusive language and true English—a combination sorely needed in translations—demands 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.

In my view there are already a number of more recent editions that substantially fit the criteria which Rev. Rose mandates, including those published by The Swedenborg Society, London by Latin scholars Rev. John Elliot and Dr. John Chadwick who are mentioned by Rev. Rose. In particular, the translation of *Arcana Caelestia*, *True Christian Religion*, *The Last Judgment*, *Earth's in the Universe*, *The New Jerusalem* [sic] and *Conjugal Love* could surely be readily incorporated into a Library edition saving enormously in time and costs. I am aware

(Continued on page 121)

Heaven and Hell

Memorial Day Retreat Theme

The SCYL Memorial Day Retreat was held at the Northwoods YMCA Camp in Tuftonboro, New Hampshire. The theme was Heaven and Hell, and about 27 people attended. During the sessions, we discovered what it would be like to be in hell, talked about the origin of angels, and Swedenborg's experiences and thoughts on it. We lived without heat or electricity in our dorms, and no one packed enough warm clothing, but we somehow survived. In between our sessions led by the Revs. Renee Billings and Eric Hoffman, and Ellen Shaw-Smith, we played volleyball, basketball, went hiking, had campfires, and the braver souls went swimming in the nearby lake. We ate delicious meals, then cleaned up with the Super Spatulas (the method devised by the YMCA camp director, Jeff), and worried a lot about ties. It was the SCYL's first time visiting this particular retreat center. For some it was a bit TOO rustic, but others enjoyed it and would like to return.

Amy Halle
SCYL central states regional officer



Hello, Central, Give Me Heaven (er, Martha)

To the tune of "Help me, Rhonda"

In an office with a view from on high
at forty-eight Sargent Street

There's a woman hard at work who
you should really take the time to meet

For those of you who do
You'll learn her dedication is not new.

For you are Central Martha
Central to the church and our hearts

Chorus: Thank you Martha,
thank-thank you Martha (6x)

.....Thank you Martha, Yea!
For the love in your heart.

She knows the Church's needs and listens long and hard to all our complaints

Graciously compassionate her patience compares with the saints.

We depend on you all the time Oh, and Martha you do look fine!

For you are Central Martha Central to the Church and our hearts

"Everybody!" (Chorus) etc.

(The above was sung to Martha Bauer by Ken Turley and fellow conspirators on convention floor at an opportune moment. All joined enthusiastically in the chorus—and the sentiment!) ♦



OPINION *(Continued from page 120)*

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 worldwide 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 English-speaking Swedenborg publishing houses is an essential ingredient to true success of this project. I urge everyone involved to examine the possibilities and to endeavour 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

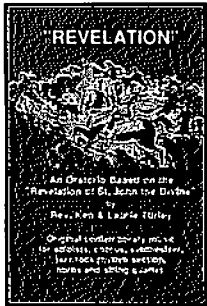
runs, then our efforts will remain tempered through lack of financial and manpower resources. I defy anyone to adequately explain to a newer reader of Swedenborg's theological writings why we can offer him or her four different editions of *Conjugal Love*!

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
Swedenborg Lending Library and Inquiry Centre
New South Wales, Australia. ♦

REVELATION

*an oratorio of contemporary music
based on the
Revelation of St. John the Divine
by
Rev. Ken and Laurie Turley*



What you will hear in the ninety minutes of this two CD package is an imagaic paraphrase of the Book of Revelation. The words of the text, both

spoken and sung, are set to an eclectic blend of gospel, jazz, rock, folk and classical music. There are descriptions of destruction and immense suffering; of compassion and exquisite tenderness; and finally, of the agony of desolation and the joyous peace of reconciliation. All of these passages of scripture are set to appropriately expressive music.

The music stands on its own, and yet the lyrics contain the Lord's final message: the summation of all that precede it in the Word. It can be played in its entirety for listening enjoyment and inspiration or individual tracks can be selected for spiritual meditation and study bringing to life specific passages for use in small groups or

worship.

While it holds closely to the text, this is not intended as a literal translation or as an interpretation of its "true meaning." It is a subjective and very personal musical portrayal. There is, however, meaning on many levels waiting to be discovered as the listener becomes intimately familiar with the intellectual and emotional impact of this last notoriously difficult section of God's Holy Word.

To order please include \$20.00 per set, and \$3.00 shipping cost per order. To receive the complete written lyrics and background information, please add \$5.00 per copy. Make checks payable to Ken Turley and mail to: 8 Elm Street, Fryeburg, ME 04037. ❖

SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH MEETING DATES

1998

- Sep. 25-27 Cabinet
Newton, Mass.
- Oct. 7-9 Committee on
Admission into the
Ministry,
Newton, Massachusetts
- Oct. 16-18 SSR Board
Newton, Massachusetts
- Oct. 24-25 Retirement Committee
Temenos, Pennsylvania
- Oct. 29-Nov. 1
General Council
Temenos, Pennsylvania
- Nov. 7 Investment Committee
Temenos, Pennsylvania
- Nov. 13-14 Wayfarers Chapel Board
Wayfarers Chapel,
California

1999

- Feb. 8-15 Council of Ministers
EdFest
Tucson, Arizona
- Feb. 19-20 Urbana Trustees
Urbana, Ohio
- Apr. 24-25 Wayfarers Chapel Board
Wayfarers Chapel,
California
- June 20-27 Pre-Convention and
Convention 1999
Southern California

American New Church Sunday School Association Executive Board 1998-1999

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San Francisco, CA 94123

Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein, Teaching Aids Chair Phone: (617) 325-1214
273 Perham Street
West Roxbury, MA 02132

Susannah Currie, Nominating Chair Phone: (207) 839-6116
387 Gorham Road
Scarborough, ME 04074

Baptisms

VanRooijen—Kyle Jacob VanRooijen was baptized into the Christian faith June 14, 1998, at the Church of the Holy City Swedenborgian in Edmonton, Alberta, the Rev. Min Heui-Cheon officiating.

Woofenden—Caleb Louis Woofenden, son of the Rev. Lee and Patty Woofenden, was baptized into the Christian faith June 7, 1998, at the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Mass., with his grandfather, the Rev. Dr. William R. Woofenden officiating.

Confirmation

Milton—Rita Milton was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church May 17, 1998, at the LaPorte New Church Swedenborgian, in LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

Brugler, Cullen, Dowsett, Gehl, Leffering, Newell-Kartechner, Wilson—Jessie Brugler, Toby Brugler, Lise Cullen, Tricia Cullen, Jennifer Dowsett, Bogart Gehl, Corrie Leffering, Robert Newell-Kartechner, James Wilson and Lyndsay Wilson were confirmed into the Swedenborgian Church June 7, 1998, at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, the Rev. Ronald Brugler officiating.

Marriage

Chapman and Haskayne—Shirley (Mulroney) Chapman and Murray Robert Haskayne were united in marriage May 30, 1998, in the Devonian Gardens, Calgary, Alberta, the Rev. Erwin D. Reddekopp officiating.

Mounce and Kalinowski—Tammara Mounce and Anthony Kalinowski were united in marriage August 21, 1997, at the LaPorte New Church Swedenborgian, in LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

Area Code Change

The Rev. Kit and Mary Beth Billings' area code has been changed from 612 to 651. Their new numbers are:
Home: (651)-645-5049
Work: (651) 224-4553



Healthy Communications

(Continued from page 102)

something about another family member without having communicated directly with that person to check out the truth, or for reacting in other ways that were damaging to the relationship. And each asked the other member involved, and the family, for forgiveness.

I listened entranced as Lori shared this. I wondered how the miracle was accomplished. I asked her how they had all come to be in this state of willingness and spiritual health—was there a facilitator, or did they do this by themselves. Lori said it was facilitated by her, it was scary and difficult, and she had been working toward this for nearly five years, feeling quite alone with her efforts until very recently. It had started with her own desire to heal and strengthen herself, and had evolved from there.

She said it was the most moving and healing experience of her life.

I left her house knowing I had received a wonderful gift for the day.

I left the Leesburg convention with the feeling that it was one of the most mellow, harmonious experiences I've had since attending convention.

At last May's COMSU meeting, we enjoyed an informal celebration of my tenth year as editor of *The Messenger*. My theme during the past ten years has been healing, and it continues to be. At last, we seem to be moving into a time when healthy communication—in our family, our workplace, our church, our social life—is becoming irresistible, and anything less is appearing unattractive and unthinkable.

I hope there will be more positive experiences of this kind to report in the coming year.

Patte LeVan



SCENES AROUND CONVENTION

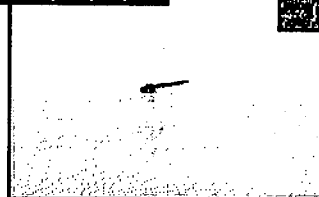


Top: Alligator spotting on the dock. Look carefully . . .



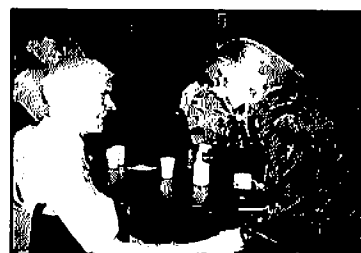
Top: Pat Zacharias prefers to watch from a safer distance.

Right: Yup, there he is, that half-submerged dot in the middle!



Song Patrol: (L-R) Susanna Currie, Nadine Cotton, Kit Billings, Eric Hoffman, Ken Turley.

Below: Eric Hoffman, talent show emcee.



Above: Paul Zacharias and Renee Billings.

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden.

Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London 15 years after his death. This 1787 organization eventually spawned the present General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches. As a result of Swedenborg's own spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church today exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions. Swedenborg shared in his theological writings a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of Scripture as a story of inner-life stages as we learn and grow. Swedenborg would conclude, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.

Swedenborg Foundation Names Deborah Forman New Executive Director



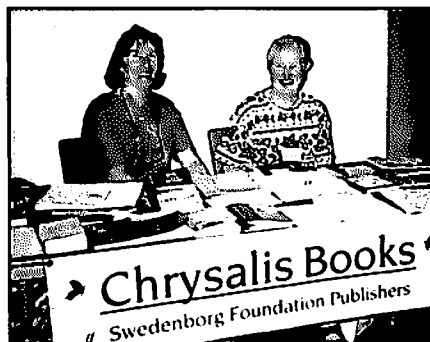
Deborah Forman, sales manager at State University of New York Press in Albany since 1994, has been named executive director/publisher of Swedenborg Foundation Publishers. She holds an M.B.A. in Marketing and

Finance from New York University where she was a Marcus Nadler Fellow, and a B.A. in English from Sarah Lawrence College. She pursued graduate studies in Comparative Religion at Harvard. Forman has extensive experience in marketing, sales management, acquisitions, rights, editing, and writing.

As the Foundation approaches its sesquicentennial celebration next year, Forman believes that "the time is propitious to bring Emanuel Swedenborg's thought to the most dynamic market segment of the publishing business: readers of spiritual books. The works of Swedenborg made a powerful impact on seekers of truth in the past, and the same potential exists now at the brink of the new millennium, when the hunger for spiritual growth is at its apex. Swedenborg was a brilliant Enlightenment statesman and scholar who made discoveries in both the natural and physical sciences. At age fifty-five, he developed remarkable access to the spiritual world and spent twenty-seven years meticulously recording his observations of and communications with the angelic realm, setting forth a theology of timeless and universal appeal."

Forman is pleased to be named director at

"The inauguration of a far-seeing Foundation undertaking: the Library Edition, a new translation of Swedenborg's complete theological works. All twenty-six volumes of the Library Edition will be meticulously annotated and translated in a reader-friendly, contemporary style that will update and enhance the accessibility of Swedenborg's visionary thought." ❖



Susan Poole, Foundation acquisitions and Logos editor with Alice Skinner, Foundation president.



(L-R) John Seekamp, former acting director, Deborah Forman, Alice Skinner at May 1998 Foundation Board Meeting

The Swedenborgian Church of North America
The Messenger
48 Sargent Street
Newton, MA 02158

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Correction Requested

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