
THE MESSENGER

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March 1999

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION DIALOG: What are the Basic Questions?

Alice Skinner

We are approaching a crossroads when the Swedenborg School of Religion faces decisions about its future. The board and faculty are working on plans to sell the campus in Newton, Massachusetts, where SSR has been located for the past 33 years, in order to invest more in education and less in real estate. Concurrently, the president and board leadership have been challenged. We all need to understand the issues and share in selecting a course of action which best serves the needs of the church.

As I see it, there are two basic issues. One is financial and the other is educational. Let us first consider the financial issue:

SSR, along with the other Convention organizations that participate in the Common Fund, finds it necessary to reduce costs and increase income. In order to add sufficient funds to its endowment to continue to operate, SSR is selling its properties in Newton and Cambridge, Massachusetts. This decision is considered sound by SSR trustees because it converts major real estate assets into income which can be used for theological education, our primary purpose. At the same time we deeply regret that it means an end to the support SSR has provided for the Cambridge Society for over 90 years. Their understandable disappointment and search for redress may have led to their blaming the SSR president for SSR's financial pressures. Others have taken up this cry (in my opinion prematurely) and called for Dr. Klein's resignation. Elsewhere in this issue of

The Messenger you will find an authoritative report on SSR finances which demonstrates two important facts: [1] The president of SSR has a fine record of keeping annual expenses within a tight budget approved by the trustees. [2] The decision to sell property was forced by a reduction in income from the Common Fund and the consequent need to increase SSR investments in order to generate sufficient operating income.

As to the educational issues, they are strikingly similar to those faced by other seminaries at a time when traditional curricula are questioned, student populations include more older students, and churches want ministers with practical skills. Parallel questions asked by other theological schools and denominations led the Association of Theological Schools [ATS] to issue a report entitled *The Good Theological School*, which clarifies the purposes of theological training in terms of learning personal habits of engagement in theological reflection:

"The curriculum of a good theological school should be understood not as an accumulation of courses and other sorts of academic experiences but as an overall process of critical reflection and integration . . . The goal of a theological curriculum is not just the accumulation of knowledge or the development of ministerial skills: it is a way of understanding, a formed perspective, or, as it has often been described in ATS circles, an acquired *habitus* or capacity for doing theological reflection." [Donald Senior and Timothy Weber. "What is the Character of Curriculum, Formation,

and Cultivation of Ministerial Leadership in the Good Theological School?" *Theological Education*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1994), p.22.]

How can future Convention ministers best be prepared to continue and improve on our tradition of practicing and communicating theological reflection rich in Swedenborgian insights?

The educational issues . . . are strikingly similar to those faced by other seminaries at a time when traditional curricula are questioned, student populations include more older students, and churches want ministers with practical skills.

What needs to be taught in our own school and what could be learned elsewhere? How important is it to learn theology from a Swedenborgian perspective? Would our students be adequately prepared if they took courses in Bible in other schools? What do they need to know about New Church history? These are some of the questions under consideration as we revise our denominational approach to educating ministers.

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Special Issue: SSR

Living in Community

It may be one of those "coincidences" that John Billings submitted his article about community-building in time for this issue, which is mostly devoted to theological education dialog, information about SSR, and opinions regarding our current SSR/church crisis. But we've likely all heard that there is no such thing as coincidence, so perhaps it wasn't.

Late last May and June, I spent a month in a work/study program at Harbin Hot Springs, a New Age spiritual growth center and community of approximately 150 residents living and working together on 1,160 wooded acres about two hours north of San Francisco. Harbin has been operating successfully in its present form since 1975, with three major activities: A residential center and village, a conference facility with four large meeting buildings, and a retreat center for visitors to enjoy the hot springs and the skilled bodywork available. One of the reasons I chose to go there, aside from seeking a restorative, healthful working vacation in an inspirational setting, was

to observe how people in this kind of community setting deal with the interpersonal and group conflicts that inevitably arise.

Harbin is governed by circles, which, since they share governing, could be called interdependent. Harbin circles are groups that sit in a circle, where each participant has equal say, and decisions are made by consensus—meaning that issues are discussed until no participant objects to the decision. Circles promote the power both of the group and of its individual members. Interpersonal conflicts develop as they do anywhere else, but there are mechanisms and one or two skilled psychotherapist/mediators in place to assist each person in putting community-building conflict resolution principles to work; honest self-examination, clarification of attitudes and motives, and self-responsibility, are uppermost. Also basic to the process is an underlying commitment to living together harmoniously. There is no magic formula or (as I had secretly hoped) a highly advanced written manual for effective communication,

but it all seems to work pretty well most of the time.

A most interesting experience. Perry Martin's ideas (below) on what is the most important basis for ministerial training fits with what I've been saying, so I will let her thoughts complete the editorial comments. And many thanks to Alice Skinner for suggesting this special issue to explore the topic of theological education and for soliciting the articles.

Patte LeVan



Coming Next Month:

The theological education dialog will continue in the April *Messenger*, with articles from Karen Feil, former SSR board member, Dorothea Harvey, part-time SSR professor, Johanna Hedbor, SSR librarian, and others, plus MINSU member Alan Thomsen writing on his personal journey with the PCA project in Puget Sound.



KNOW THYSELF

Perry S. Martin

My wish for the education of our ministers is that they be trained to understand themselves and others. This training could be accomplished through attending Gestalt or other therapy groups and, ideally, through individual therapy. Personal growth, which Swedenborg refers to as regeneration, is of course a lifelong process. If our ministers are to be effective leaders of their church members in Swedenborg's three R's, repentance, reformation and regeneration, they need as much understanding of their own emotional and family patterns as we can give them in their formative professional years. Such a basis would

hopefully encourage them to continue their therapy after graduation. An understanding of group dynamics would also help them understand what happens when church groups gather to make decisions about their church life. When we grow in understanding and accepting ourselves, we experience the reality of God's acceptance. We are then able to express love of God and the neighbor and are free to perform our individual uses in the world.

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Let the People Speak

Jane Siebert

When asked to write an article about what parishioners want in their minister, my first idea was to simply ask our laity. I sent out a general survey to lay people whose e-mail addresses were listed in the *Journal*. I was astonished and gratified at the response. *Two thirds responded.* Those of you who have worked with surveys know how phenomenal a 67% response rate is. Let there be any doubt, Swedenborgians are willing to share their opinions, and we care deeply about the preservation of our denomination. There is a common discernment that a healthy, serving, productive Swedenborg School of Religion is essential to our future.

This article is only one facet of what will come out of the responses that were sent to me. I have compiled the answers in an easy to read anonymous format by removing names and personal comments made directly to me. Copies were given to each SSR trustee and SSR professor. If you would like a complete copy, just send your e-mail address to jsiebert@our-business.com.

There is a wealth of information. Responses came from our youth, our new members, our established parishioners. **Thank you all!** This made my job easier, but it also made it harder as I tried to adequately represent all of your views. Please be gentle with my humble attempt to put this all together. Your comments brought me joy, hope and pride in being a Swedenborgian.

QUESTION 1: What are the attributes of a successful minister?

I combined the various attributes and they filled three pages. I was reminded of Dorothea Harvey's commencement address a few years ago, "Educating People to do a Job That is Humanly Impossible to Do." As I read the list, I thought, how could anyone live up to this? But these are ideals rather than standards. They are goals to strive toward, not principles upon which someone is judged. I have grouped them, and yet they cannot be

separated, because they are a continuum. They are listed in order of frequency mentioned:

- **Love of people** is the most important, compassionate, warm, friendly, outgoing, available, good listener, understanding, caring, sincere, concern for others above themselves, thoughtful.
- **Love of God is the basis of service**, desire to serve a parish, dedicated, open minded, understands the demands of their chosen career, vision, passion, commitment, dedication to living a useful life, embraces the ministry.
- **Ability to help individuals with their spiritual journeys**, willingness to grow and improve and continue to learn, gentle leadership, charisma, skilled in providing pastoral care, trustworthy, likes children, relates to teens.
- **Excited about our religion and its truth**, desire to share the Word of God, knowledgeable about the writings, able to relate theology to practical experiences of everyday life, teach, explain the complex stuff on our level, energetic, attracts people to the church, able to design relevant programs, desires to grow the church, firm foundation and belief in New Church doctrine.
- **Strong communication skills**, articulate, creative, good public speaker, holds our interest while preaching, able to conduct weddings, baptisms and funerals with grace, present ideas in a clear and understandable way.
- **Serve as an example of what a God-centered life should be**, self-awareness, nonconfrontational, cooperative, non-judgmental, self assured, dependable, enthusiastic, treats parishioners as peers and coworkers in God's ministry, flexible, tolerant, honest, genuine, humble, leads the life of the Good Samaritan.
- **Other attributes**, intelligent, confident, well read, organized, creative at problem solving, small and large group management, marketing skills, neat in appearance, mature.

To balance this utopian character analysis, I should have asked our ministers to list the attributes of their ideal parishioner and we could see how we measure up.

QUESTION 2: Rate each aspect of ministerial training as to the importance. (1 to 5) 5 = very important, 3 = moderately important, 1 = not important, etc.

This is the ranking from the survey:

1. Swedenborg's Writing 4.68
2. Bible Background 4.32
3. Public Relations 4.22
4. Speaking Skills 4.19
5. Preaching Techniques 4.11
6. Outreach Techniques 4.08
7. Writing Skills 3.51
8. Comparative Theology 3.01

Additional comments add value to this question:

- **The importance** of the study of Swedenborg's writings is to be able to apply the teachings to life.
- **Bible background** is not to be able to quote verses of scripture, but rather to have a strong basis and overall understanding upon which to build.
- **Public relations** encompasses the ability to relate to the public, both within the established church and the broader community. Interpersonal skills sustain, nurture and build the church.
- **Speaking skills** are different from preaching techniques in that speaking is getting ideas across with effective communication, while preaching is the development and formulation of these ideas into words.
- **Outreach** is important because you have only one chance to make a good first impression. It is always important to have a welcoming face at the door and good followup for first-timers. Outreach is reaching out to the community.
- **Good writing skills** are needed for communication throughout a very small and scattered denomination. We rely on periodicals to pull together and cancel

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Let the People Speak

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out the effect of the great distances to other churches in the denomination.

- **Comparative theology** enables a minister to have a broad-based understanding of other cultures and different ways of relating to God.

QUESTION 3: What percent of time in ministerial studies should be devoted to experiential training, i.e. field work?

There was a general consensus that the time currently given to field work at SSR was not enough, although many weren't sure how much time is actually devoted to field work. (Read Wilma Wake's article (p. 46) and her article in the June 1998 *Messenger* for the answer to that).

The responses ranged from 10% to 75% with the average of 36.6% of time that should be devoted to experiential training. Many felt that the program should be adapted to the skills and needs of the student. Following Swedenborg's teachings, the training should be through "use." It was noted that the value of field work should be enhanced with debriefing and opportunities to apply one's learning. Summing it up, a good comment was "the importance of field work is invaluable because the profession itself is an ongoing experiential one."

The remaining questions concerning why we lose ministers, how to reduce the loss, and how to attract more candidates to the ministry will be dealt with in another article.

The last question was to solicit other comments from parishioners.

I have learned that we all appreciate being asked to present our views and we should do more of this in the future.

There is a concern about the precarious foundation of SSR. Many gave suggestions for changes in the future:

- **Use the lay-minister training program** as the basis of a kind of "Associates Program" for ministerial study. The program might not require a

person to actually be present at SSR, could be accomplished in two years' time. The program would have the same fundamental Bible and Swedenborg classes, and successful completion would allow a person to move into a full ordination program later, if wanted.

- **We should stop teaching the subjects that can be gained by outside education** in an advanced degree from a well-qualified institution and aim our resources toward the areas we can do best and cannot be done well by others. Teach doctrinal, New Church history and other subjects specific to Swedenborg.

- **Install a professor or two at strategically located seminaries** where students could take a concentration in Swedenborgian studies along with a regular divinity program. This would make Swedenborgian teaching more widely available geographically, and a larger number of divinity students would be exposed to Swedenborgian theology.

- **Create better correspondence school materials.** Develop Internet courses at various levels. Market these generic courses to attract other students. Use new technology to reach out and meet the needs of prospective students who cannot come to Boston.

- **Send students to churches without ministers during their fourth year.** This would serve the needs of the church and give great experience to the student. A community of parishioners could provide the support network and feedback sessions.

- **I have always felt that we have missed the boat by not allowing students to get their seminary training in their local communities and doing a 'finishing' at SSR.**

Finally, the comment that sums up what many purveyed: "Perhaps we need a completely new format for education or a melding of the old and the new. In any case, a change seems called for. I pray that we are up to the challenge."

Jane Siebert is secretary of the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas, and a member and assistant treasurer of the SSR Board of Trustees. ❖

THE COVENANT CURRICULUM: *Whence and Whither*

GF Dole

In 1973, Malcolm Knowles of Boston University published a book entitled *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*. His main point was that it was a serious mistake to handle adult education in the same way as the education of children, with the teacher in complete control, providing the stimulus for learning. This set the adult in a reactive rather than a proactive mode. If adults were given a significant voice in the design of their learning program, they would feel a greater responsibility for it and would be more consistently motivated.

It was Cal Turley who introduced this model to the faculty, and it seemed to make very good sense. We had recognized on a number of occasions that it was hard for adults to adjust to being full-time students, and this promised to respond to that difficulty. We designed a convenanting procedure that involved four basic steps: first, to identify the student's professional goals; second, to inventory the skills necessary for those goals, third, to inventory the skills which the student already had, and fourth, to design a course of study to "fill in the gaps."

It turned out to be easier said than done. The most obvious problem was that, especially for students who were new to the church, their professional goals were vague—worthwhile and sincere, to be sure, but vague. The first semester, even the first year, was spent floundering. We found ourselves doing a lot of explaining about ministry, and before long there was a "Forms of Ministry"

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Is SSR Meeting Our Ministerial Needs?

Ron Brugler

In the January 1999 *Messenger*, Alice Skinner invited dialog concerning theological education as we move into the twenty-first century. She urged that an issue be devoted to matters such as the kinds of ministries our churches need to succeed, how our Swedenborgian theology can best be taught and communicated, the practical ministerial skills that ministers require, how courses may be taught in the future, the benefits and drawbacks of a Swedenborgian seminary, and the kinds of organizational relationships that should exist between SSR and the denomination. She also noted that the Swedenborg School of Religion “has been challenged about the education it offers, about its finances and leadership,” which is a reference to the motion unanimously passed by General Council at its November meeting calling for a change in the leadership of SSR.

As president of our denomination, I would like to address an additional question that many of our members are asking. It is an important question since in several ways its answer lies at the core of the current crisis faced by the church and SSR. The question is, “Is the Swedenborg School of Religion meeting our denomination’s ministerial needs?”

While thinking about this question, two different answers have emerged in my mind that reflect the root of the current debate. The first response stems from awareness gained by serving on SSR’s board of trustees. This enables one to appreciate how the question can be answered with a resounding “Yes!” Recent SSR graduates are well trained and serve our churches and centers in productive and positive ways. In the past several years numerous changes have been made in the SSR ordination program that have improved this training—changes that include such areas as church administration, practical ministerial skills and expanded field education opportunities. The SSR faculty, administration, and board of trustees have worked hard to develop the present ordination program and are currently engaged in further evaluation so that additional improvements can be made to ensure our offering a high quality program for years to come.

But as also noted above, a different response reflects a real concern that permeates our denomination. It stems more from quantity rather than quality. As simply as I can state it, the response centers around the realization that in terms of the number of ministers our church needs to function in a vibrant and growing fashion, SSR is not graduating enough candidates for ordination. A look at the facts causes me great concern for the future of our denomination.

As we begin 1999, our denomination currently has eight churches and centers that are seeking ministers. These include: Cleveland, Pawnee Rock, Pretty Prairie, LaPorte, Elmwood, El Cerrito, Temenos and Portland. Of these eight churches and centers, three have been waiting five or more years for a minister.

Next let me add to this figure those groups within our denomination who, although not actively seeking a minister, might be

open to sponsoring a ministry either in the form of reestablishing a church or offering a different form of ministry. These include: Chicago, Kelowna/Western Canada, Yarmouth Port, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Urbana University, and Newtonville. These represent seven potential locations for ministries within our denomination that would help our church grow!

Similarly, as we look ahead over the next ten years, it is quite probable that up to eight of our clergy who are currently employed within the denomination will retire. This figure does not include retirements from the SSR faculty or those ministers who may choose to leave the active ministry.

These figures indicate that over the next ten years we could employ up to 23 new ministers, a number that increases to approximately 35 ministers if one plans for attrition, planting new churches or sponsoring alternative and new forms of ministry. Knowing this, we must waste no time in making major changes so that we offer a form of ministerial training that attracts the people we need.

Can our current ordination program meet this challenge? In response I’ll borrow a phrase from the world of financial investment. We know that past return is no guarantee of future performance, but it does give us a sense of where one might be headed.

Consider the following. Between 1988 and 1998, SSR graduated 15 people from the ordination program. Of these 15 individuals, two are serving overseas, three have left the active ministry, one serves on the SSR faculty, another works in a counseling ministry, and one is unable to serve due to medical problems. This leaves seven men and women who are serving churches and ministries directly related to our churches and centers. Without meaning to imply that SSR is responsible for what a graduate does after completing the program of study, and acknowledging that we have a responsibility to serve the world-wide Swedenborgian Church, this figure still holds relevance for the current discussion. I say this because we must realize that our form of preparing ministers has produced, on average, less than one active minister per year for the past ten years for service to our members in North America. Our churches and centers are asking, Can our ministerial needs ever be met?

We can begin to answer this by looking at the current students enrolled in the ordination program. The good news is that this year two individuals will complete the program and be ordained into our ministry, and that three of the remaining students are committed to serving our Korean congregations. This leaves two students, only one of whom has expressed a clear desire to serve an established congregation. Over the next three years SSR will not even meet the average of the past ten years.

All of the information I have shared thus far deeply disturbs General Council and several members of the SSR board of trustees. We are not challenging the quality of SSR’s program. Our concern is that the form of a four-year resident

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An Open Concept

Before any discussion about the Swedenborg School of Religion, I must begin by first acknowledging the dedication of the faculty and staff at SSR. Their work and devotion to the church and the education of the students is beyond question. They have worked very hard, and my proposal does not in any way intend to challenge the quality of their teaching or expertise. My concern is the structure of the system relative to the needs of the church and the changing society itself, and its affordability.

• WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF MONEY

SSR has been running at a deficit for the past eight years, a deficit so large that only dramatic changes in the budget can save us from financial ruin. I just can't believe that it is so necessary to spend over three hundred thousand dollars annually to supply our denomination with an average of one person per year in active ministry. Unless there is a huge influx of students next year we will get into deficit spending to operate our school for as few as two students in the ordination track. I am embarrassed to admit that as a board member I didn't see voting against the deficit budget as an option. Now I do. The projected deficit for 1999 is \$219,000. Our deficit is more than the entire budget of the New Church College in England. The New Church College was also deficit-spending until two years ago. Now, it has a balanced budget, thirty students (mostly part-time) operate their entire program at an annual cost of only \$140,000, and the students are scoring higher on exams than ever before. My congratulations to principal John Presland and company. I was surprised and delighted to learn from Mr. Presland that someone a short walk from my home, Liz Heinrichs, is taking courses at the New Church College in England. Wonders never cease.

• IT'S BROKE AND WE NEED TO FIX IT

As SSR and the Church approach the next millennium we would be wise to look at where we were at the end of the

last century. In the last century the New Church had four hundred seventy-nine societies and groups and over a hundred ministers. In 1954 we had dropped to seventy-seven societies. Now, our journal lists forty-four churches or groups and only twenty-nine active ministers. Currently, virtually no courses on church growth are taught at the school, and the faculty has little parish experience. If we don't start training ministers to make churches grow—we are toast!

• A THEOLOGICAL CONCERN

Bringing SSR to the level of degree-granting status is a huge accomplishment, and I would like very much for that status to be maintained. However, if the cost of keeping degree-granting status means that we live beyond our financial means and follow a model of education which is largely Old Church, then the cost is too high. While there are certainly valuable aspects of the Old Church, what we imitate are primarily the methods of training which other declining denominations use despite their ineffectiveness. The methods used for training people to build new congregations and build up failing churches have not been made part of our training. If we are to be the New Church we need to focus on adapting to what is new, not what is old. Let's think of this time ahead as a period when we boldly experiment to find out what works for us in a New Church context.

• AN OPEN CONCEPT

Jesus taught under a tree, on a hillside, by the lake, in someone's home, or in the temple. When he enlisted the disciples into full-time ministry their station in life was of no consequence. Their most important credential was the desire to serve God. The Lord's school was not accredited. No degrees were

required or promised. He was well versed in the scriptures, and it is likely that he was formally trained and earned the title of "rabbi" for academic as well as spiritual qualities. He was not just a man of the spirit. He chose to teach the disciples by on-the-job training because it obviously had a level of effectiveness which was not possible at the local rabbinical school. Granted, we live in a world far different from the world of Jesus, but the spiritual needs and talents of people today are not much different from human needs two thousand years ago. I favor having SSR becoming an "Open School," which might mean becoming a school without walls. Why? Because it is an experiment we can financially afford, it is the model the Lord used, and because it is more in keeping with the spirit of the New Church.

How does this work? Like the New Church College in England, faculty would not be full-time. Some faculty or instructors may even be volunteer. If the SSR building were sold, an administrator and secretary could work out of a small rented office. They would work closely with a hands-on board of directors.

• CLASSES

Because most classes have only a few students, they could take place anywhere that is mutually convenient, and much could be done via e-mail, fax, and snail mail. We have one student who is currently doing the bulk of his preparation for ministry via e-mail. Without the expense of a full-time faculty and full-time president, we could provide the best theological education in the world for as little as half the cost and save our dwindling endowment.

Of even greater importance is the quality and flexibility of an open program. Currently many of our students get degrees from other institutions. The open concept would focus on individually crafting each student's program so that courses from other schools, combined with tutorials from our faculty, would give a student the very best training. Students would be encouraged to take courses at the

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An Open Concept

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finest schools with people who have renowned expertise. Students could be trained by people who have started churches that have become self-supporting. It could help us attract top-notch people. Without a full-time faculty we would even have enough money to subsidize some students who contracted to serve our denomination for a mutually agreed-upon number of years after graduation as a way of repaying the expense of their training.

• ADMISSION

The person would apply for candidacy for ministry. A joint committee of CAM and faculty would interview each prospective candidate. Evidence of the applicant's education and prior experience would be required. A qualifying exam would be administered *prior* to setting up the person's courses of preparation for ministry rather than *after* one year of courses.

• LENGTH OF PROGRAM

There would be no set duration for a ministerial candidate's program. The length of each student's training would depend upon his or her background and level of skills to effectively carry out the kind of ministry the candidate is called to serve. For example, a candidate with a demonstrably strong Swedenborgian theological foundation would no longer be required to take courses that are redundant for her or him.

• PRACTICAL, NOT ACADEMIC

Much like medical training, the focus would be practical. Study terms (periods when courses are taken) would generally be four to six months long for full-time students. Courses in a study term would be designed to prepare a candidate for a work term (a three month period working in a parish). For example, entry level candidates would take courses in basic Swedenborgian doctrine, the Bible, preaching, worship leadership, small group leadership and the small group system, pastoral care, program planning, and prayer and healing during these

study terms. They would also be engaged in onsite training at a growing church. After a four-to-six-month study term the candidate would work full-time for three months in a parish under a minister who is certified as a supervisor.

This manner of preparation for ministry would continue until the candidate had completed his or her program and had passed a comprehensive exam.

• REQUIREMENTS FOR ORDINATION

Candidates would have

- a thorough knowledge of the Bible and of Swedenborg's teachings.
- excellent preaching skills.
- a thorough understanding of the principles of church growth, the

small-group system, and advertising.

- ability to read music and use of a wide variety of resources for creating dynamic worship services.
- worked well during work terms to empower lay people.
- a commitment to the lay-centered model of ministry and church administration.
- attended worship services in many different churches.
- passed a comprehensive examination.
- people skills, basic counseling techniques, a strong desire to serve.

The Rev. Eric Allison is ministries and church growth consultant. He lives in Kitchener, Ontario.



THE COVENANT CURRICULUM: *Whence and Whither*

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course in which first year students visited a wide variety of ministries in the Boston area with a view to identifying those forms that appealed to them most and seeing first hand what skills were necessary to perform them effectively.

The effectiveness of this course led gradually to the realization that the same need for foundational information was necessary in other areas as well; and when we sat down to look seriously for what a student needed to know in order to set realistic professional goals for ministry within our denomination, we found that we had a two years' worth of courses. For a while, then, we had a curriculum in which the first two years were spent in required courses (with exemptions possible for qualified students), with the course of study for the final two years determined by a covenanting process.

Three factors led to the abandonment of this system for the present one of simply offering increasing room for electives in the last two years. One was the small size of the faculty. It was simply not possible to have as many curricula as we had students. The second was the fact that students did have needs in common. It was quite possible to design classes that might not be exactly what any individual student was looking for but which centered in shared areas of interest. The third was the growing realization of the central importance of a learning *community*. It is important that students do a significant part of their learning together, exchanging ideas, challenging each other, supporting each other.

In retrospect, one further problem with the covenanting curriculum stands out for me. It provided no avenue of input concerning the needs and wishes of the church. It asked "What do *you* want to do?" It did not really ask, "What needs to be done?" The church needed and wanted parish ministers, and we were not conveying that need effectively. In fact, of course, parish ministry was where most of the opportunities were, so that goal was always kept in view; but only gradually did it return to the centrality which it now holds.

The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole is an author, translator, and professor of Bible, language and theology at the Swedenborg School of Religion. ❖

SSR Serving the Church

Theodore Klein

SSR's mission involves preparation for Swedenborgian ministries, being a center for spiritual growth and Swedenborgian scholarship, and making resources available to the church and the community. Each aspect of this mission involves ways of serving the church. Education of students for ministry occupies most of the day-to-day-work at SSR, but members of the SSR community also work with the church in many other ways.

In recent years, SSR has made workshops with expert facilitators available to various groups within the church. A grant from the Lilly Endowment enabled SSR to offer to ministers and some lay people two workshops with leaders from the Alban Institute. One, led by the Rev. Fred Shilling in 1993, was on the church and the future of ministry. The other, led by the Rev. Dr. Roy Oswald in 1994, was on church growth. The same grant also provided for a workshop on theological education in 1993 for the General Council, Cabinet, and SSR Board of Trustees led by Dr. Fredrice Harris Thompsett, Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School. SSR arranged for a further workshop with Roy Oswald, this one on spirituality and church growth, in 1996. Members of Swedenborgian Churches in New England were invited to join the SSR community for this workshop. In 1997 and 1998, workshops were held to train ministers in field education supervision. Andover Newton faculty members, the Rev. Dr. George Sinclair and the Rev. Dr. Julieanne Hallman, led these workshops, with Wilma Wake and Mary Kay Klein providing administrative coordination.

The SSR community provides leadership for many church programs and activities. SSR faculty members regularly lead mini-courses at the yearly convention. In recent years, Wilma Wake and I have each been part of panel presentations at conventions, George Dole was Convention preacher in 1994, and I am scheduled to be Convention preacher in 1999. SSR members have often participated in programs for associations, the most recent example being George Dole and Bill Woofenden, who participated in a 1998 program on the millennium for the Pacific Coast Association. SSR members regularly make presentations as part of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly program.

Through various positions and work on committees, SSR members make important contributions to the church. Mary Kay Klein is on the Investment Committee and the Placement Committee. George Dole is on

the Council of Ministries Ethics Committee, and he is also vice-president of the Swedenborg Foundation. Dorothea Harvey serves on the Council of Ministers Ethics Committee, is a member of the denomination's delegation to the National Council of Churches, and is general pastor of the Massachusetts Association. Wilma Wake chairs the Committee on Inquiry and is the SSR representative on the Education Support Unit. I am Secretary of the Council of Ministers and a member of the Council of Ministers Executive Committee, and SSR student Bill Shakalis and I are co-chairs of the Social Concerns Education Committee.

Those of us who are SSR faculty members and ministers are actively involved in conducting guest worship services in church centers. Among the centers where one or more of us has recently done services are Elmwood, Portland, Newtonville, Urbana, Cleveland, Boston, New York, Bath, and the Spiritual Network Center.

Through a variety of publications, SSR members are serving the church. In recent years, the SSR community has compiled yearly prayer books to which students, faculty members, administrators, and board members have contributed. Various members of the SSR community contributed articles to the series on mysticism which ran in *The Messenger* for over two years. Members of the SSR community have contributed sermons to *Our Daily Bread*. George Dole completed the translation, *The Last Judgment in Retrospect*, and also completed a translation of Friedemann Horn's thesis on Schelling and Swedenborg. His new translation of *Heaven and Hell* will be the first volume in the Swedenborg Foundation's "New Century Edition" series, formerly referred to as the Library Edition. Bill Woofenden edits *Studia Swedenborgiana* and recently completed a redesigning of the Standard Edition of Swedenborg's theological works. My book, *The Power of Service*, was published in 1998 by J. Appleseed & Co. Dorothea Harvey is writing a new book, *Knowing Spirit* for the Swedenborg Foundation. Wilma Wake is working on two manuscripts: *Crystals, Crosses, and Chakras: A Modern Mystical Journey* for the Swedenborg Foundation, and *Wings and Roots: Swedenborg and New Aegers in Dialog* for J. Appleseed & Co.

Considering these highlights can be a reminder of kinds of service that need to continue and a challenge to develop further ways of making a difference for the church in the future. ❖

Developing Alternative Ways of Teaching Regular SSR Courses

Theodore Klein

SSR is making efforts to expand available ways of taking courses for people who cannot attend SSR. One alternative tried with lay leader students is offering courses in an intensive series of workshops over a week. Courses such as Worship, Pastoral Care, Church Administration, and Religious Education have been offered in this way. The approach provides special opportunities for group cohesion and “hands on” learning. For example, in the summer of 1997, Wilma Wake taught Church Administration, and I taught Religious Education to three lay leader students over five days in Urbana. This experience was wonderful! Travel costs involved are sometimes a challenge. Also, theology, church history, and Bible, for example, do not lend themselves well to this approach.

SSR offers correspondence courses in church history, Bible, and theology, but they are presently not equivalent to any regular SSR course in these areas. A college degree is not required for these courses. Some recent experiments have presented regular SSR courses through a combination of correspondence work and computer technology. For example, in the 1997-98 school year, I taught the year-long Introduc-

tion to Swedenborgian Concepts course to John Maine in Kitchener. The course combined regular mail, faxes, and e-mail—the e-mail bringing an interactive dimension. I was very happy with how the e-mail discussions were able to simulate what interaction in person would do in a classroom. Further developments in this direction could move into use of computer “chats” involving a teacher and more than one student. Cautions about these approaches are the amount of faculty time needed to carry them out and current lack of equipment.

Other valuable ways of presenting courses may emerge as SSR explores possibilities and the needs of possible students are considered. There is also the option of taking courses elsewhere in the Boston area while attending SSR, as many of our students have been doing. We would like to hear from prospective students interested in exploring non-traditional alternatives as well as students interested in a regular full course of study.

The Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein is professor of Theology and Philosophy at the Swedenborg School of Religion and author of The Power of Service, a J. Appleseed publication.



Modes of Learning

Mary Kay Klein

When one thinks about how SSR students learn, the first image that usually comes to mind is teachers and students in one of our classrooms, communicating through such usual modes as lecture, discussion, student presentations, audio-visual resources. However, what is less obvious is the multitude of other ways in which our students learn.

Students share in leading our morning chapels, which provide a wonderful quiet moment at the beginning of the day for participation in communal prayer.

Students are required to take a course comparing Swedenborg with other Western mystics, and to work privately with a spiritual director who can help them focus on their personal relationship with God.

For ordination track students, there is generally a field education experience each semester, in a local church or center or in a community program. During the summers, ordination students do clinical pastoral education in a hospital or other setting, or a Swedenborgian Center experience. They also work at church camps and attend the annual church convention.

Most Wednesdays, we have a forum program in which a speaker or leader presents a two-hour program to the entire community of faculty and students. These programs often introduce new ideas and energy into the community. Sometimes we attend the Wednesday morning Boston Clergy Breakfasts at the Boston Church of the New Jerusalem on Beacon Hill.

Living in community has its own opportunities for learning, especially for students living in the Sargent Street building. Everyday moments such as sharing the school car, studying and talking with one another, and eating together, provide opportunities to develop relational skills.

The SSR Library offers one of the few special Swedenborgian collections in the world. In addition to books, the Library houses extensive archives, non-print materials, and computers through which students can interact with the internet and contact other local libraries.

Having the Central Office of the church in SSR's building provides an opportunity for students to meet ministers and other visitors who come for meetings, and to observe the workings of the Church.

The Committee on Admission into the Ministry visits twice each year. Students have their own CAM advisors, who can also be a source of learning, support, and guidance.

The city of Boston and surrounding areas contain many seminaries and schools which students can visit and attend. The cultural resources of the city of Boston are among the finest in the world.

Other options are being explored for future seminarians. SSR already uses correspondence courses and week-long workshops. As demand increases, we are working toward offering courses utilizing computer technology.

SSR offers a huge array of learning possibilities of all kinds: it is up to each student to take advantage of these opportunities in ways which make the most sense for that student.

Dr. Mary Kay Klein is president of the Swedenborg School of Religion. ❖

MINISTERIAL STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

In fulfilling its charge “to oversee the maintenance of high standards for the Church’s ministry,” the Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM) shall base its recommendations for ordination or induction into our ministry on a candidate’s competency and continuing growth in the areas described below. The candidate shall have completed the course of study at SSR or its equivalent.

PASTORAL QUALITIES

“The ordained ministry exists to facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, helping them to be open to the Lord’s leading and enabling them to live useful lives.” Constitution, XII Preamble.

With this as our highest standard, we will evaluate candidates on their ability and willingness to:

- lead, teach, work with, and relate to all of God’s people.
- positively integrate spiritual and daily life within a faith community through the effective use of a variety of interpersonal skills.
- walk with others throughout their life’s journey.
- sustain in every aspect of their ministry an awareness of how they will seek to bring God’s presence into the lives of their community and the people they serve, having a vision of what God wants for themselves, our church, and the larger community.
- show emotional stability by their ability to tolerate stress, their awareness of their limits, and their willingness to seek appropriate help in difficult life situations.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Spiritual growth is brought about by the nurturing of self and others through a growing prayer life, a sense of the sacred, a sense of humor, and a life of charity in a vital relationship to God. All of these reflect a trust and delight in God’s surprises. Spiritual growth as a

Swedenborgian minister is a lifelong learning process. It is an openness and awareness of life as a journey. This journey entails risk-taking as well as being grounded in our theology and its connection to life.

MINISTERIAL SKILLS

Ministers of the Swedenborgian Church need:

- the ability to conduct worship services which bring peace, joy, comfort, relevance, challenge, reverence for life to the congregation in their spiritual journey.
- continued growth in the knowledge and understanding of the Bible and Swedenborg’s teachings.
- an ability to clearly express and articulate thoughts and ideas, along with well-developed listening skills.
- a professional attitude and skills to lead and participate in a group process, which leads to the fulfillment of the church’s vision and brings strength and peace in the midst of conflict.

ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS

Ministers of the Swedenborgian Church need:

- to be strong, sensitive leaders who have developed competent administrative skills.
- an understanding that careful organization serves to create an environment of trust, strength, stability, and efficiency in maintaining God’s community.
- to be able to work within the denomination, local churches and the larger community.
- to be able to identify and include in church planning responses to social needs of those less fortunate within your local community.
- to develop personal skills of independence and the ability to ask for and accept help as needed.

MORAL AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

A minister is a representative of our national denomination. As leaders of the church community:

- Ministers need to demonstrate a sense

of inner strength, which is reflected in being trustworthy, integrated, and authentic.

- Minister’s words would be consistent with their being and their actions.
- Ministers should demonstrate accountability and show respect for secular laws and community standards.
- Ministers should make it a goal to serve as an example of what God-centered life should be.

INTRODUCTION TO QUESTIONNAIRE:

Ten years ago, SSR surveyed members of the Council of Ministers about their experiences with ministerial education. We were particularly interested in what had been helpful to the minister in their work, and what had not. On the basis of the answers, a number of changes were made in the SSR curriculum. We made a commitment to send out another questionnaire ten years later.

The SSR faculty designed this questionnaire, using as a basis information from the ministerial standards developed by the Committee on Admission into the Ministry (CAM). We are currently reevaluating the curriculum, and your input will be extremely valuable. Feel free to add additional sheets with further comments on any issue. We would appreciate your completing the questionnaire and returning it as soon as possible to SSR Survey, 48 Sargent Street, Newton, MA 02458. Deadline for return is April 13.

Feel free to send your numbered comments on a separate sheet of paper. Thank you very much for your help!!

QUESTIONNAIRE

SSR would appreciate your input on the following questions. As we are in the process of revamping our curriculum, the information you provide will be of great help to us. The first two questions are designed to help us understand how you would diagnose the situation(s) that our graduates are entering. “Strengths” and “weaknesses” refer to internal matters: material and spiritual resources at your disposal on the one hand and material and spiritual problems on the other. “Obstacles” and “opportunities” refer to the environment(s) in which we find ourselves. What is happening in that world that makes our task more difficult? What is happening that offers support or opens doors for us?

(Continued on page 43)

QUESTIONNAIRE

(Continued from page 42)

1. What would you identify as your own church's or center's principal . . .

- a) strengths? _____
- b) weaknesses? _____
- c) obstacles? _____
- d) opportunities? _____

2. What would you identify as the Swedenborgian Church's principal . . .

- a) strengths? _____
- b) weaknesses? _____
- c) obstacles? _____
- d) opportunities? _____

3. In light of the above, how important is emphasis on the following areas in the education of ministers? (Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important.) This list is derived from CAM's list of skills essential to ministry.

- ___ conduct of worship: _____
- ___ knowledge of Swedenborgian approach to Bible: _____
- ___ knowledge of Swedenborg's teachings: _____
- ___ ability to express and articulate thoughts and ideas, along with good listening skills: _____
- ___ group process skills: _____
- ___ competence in administration: _____
- ___ understanding the importance and creative power of careful organization: _____
- ___ knowledge and understanding of the denomination: _____
- ___ responsiveness to social needs: _____
- ___ personal skills of both independence and the ability to ask for and accept help as needed: _____

4. From your experience, how well has SSR prepared future ministers in each of the same areas? (Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the best prepared . . .)

- ___ conduct of worship: _____
- ___ knowledge of Swedenborgian approach to Bible: _____
- ___ knowledge of Swedenborg's teachings: _____
- ___ ability to express and articulate thoughts and ideas, along with good listening skills: _____
- ___ group process skills: _____
- ___ competence in administration: _____
- ___ understanding the importance and creative power of careful organization: _____
- ___ knowledge and understanding of the denomination: _____
- ___ responsiveness to social needs: _____
- ___ personal skills of both independence and the ability to ask for and accept help as needed: _____

5. Wherever SSR is located, it will be difficult for some students to come for any protracted period of time. We are working on possible solutions to this dilemma. Is this a serious problem for you personally? Is this a serious problem for someone you know? (If yes, please provide name and contact information.) _____

6. Additional Comments: _____

Signature (optional) _____

Church or Center _____



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The Swedenborgian church of Portland has a large collection of rare and antique New Church literature and would like to find a home for it. We are offering any or all of these books free of charge to readers of *The Messenger*. We ask only for reimbursement for postage and handling.

For a detailed catalog send \$1 (to cover postage) to:

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The list is also published on our website:
<http://www.gwi.net/~angels/booklist>



Our apologies for this issue being late. Town & Country Press has encountered some problems while upgrading our system to prepare for Y2k. Most of the problems have been resolved. Your patience is greatly appreciated.

The Financial Picture

Richard Stansbury

Many Church members have expressed an interest to me over the past few years in learning more about the financial situation at the Swedenborg School of Religion. I suspect that many more have the same interest, though unstated to me directly. This article will attempt to provide some easy to digest information about the school's finances; past, present and future.

Perhaps an historical perspective will assist in understanding how we arrived at our current position.

In fiscal year 1984, about the last year the budget produced a surplus, staffing at the school was as follows: four full-time faculty (one of whom acted as president), half-time chaplain, half-time librarian, part-time archivist, full-time maintenance director, full-time secretary and half-time accounting services performed by the Central Office in exchange for office space at Sargent Street, which is the equivalent of eight full time employees. Student enrollment was nine. The total budget for operating the school was \$302,800. We enjoyed a \$26,000 surplus. The market value of the school's assets in the Common Fund was \$3,028,000. While I don't have any reliable data, it appears that the market value of our real estate holdings was considered to be negligible. Income distribution from the Common Fund was \$270,000. (At this time, the Common Fund's income distribution philosophy appears to have been "pay out all that is earned." The payout percentage from the Common Fund was 8.9%. Revenue from the Common Fund accounted for 82% of the total revenues, while 18% of the revenue was derived from other sources. Compensation and benefits consumed 61% of revenues, while everything else* consumed 39%. With the market value of our real estate considered to be small, we viewed our assets to be almost totally revenue producing.

Let's move forward to fiscal year 1998. The staffing at the school was as follows: full time president teaching part-time, 3 full-time faculty, 1 part-time faculty, part-time librarian/archivist, half-time maintenance director, full-time secretary/administrative assistant and part-time bookkeeper with monthly review by a retired accountant, which is the equivalent of 6.5 full-time employees. Student enrollment was 20. The total budget for operating the school was \$516,000. We suffered a \$155,000 deficit. The market value of the school's assets in the Common Fund was \$4,900,000. The market value of our real estate holdings was \$5,200,000. Income distribution from the Common Fund was \$235,000. (Currently, the Common Fund's income distribution philosophy is to pay out approximately \$.30 per share per quarter.) The payout percentage from the Common Fund was 4.8%. Revenue from the Common Fund accounted for 46% of the total revenues, while 54% of the revenue was derived from other sources. Compensation and benefits consumed 54% of revenues, while everything else consumed 46%. Approximately 50% of our assets were revenue-producing, while the other 50% (largely real estate) were revenue consuming.

A table may make the comparison more meaningful.

	1984	1998
Number of students	9	20
Number of full time equivalent employees	8	6.5

Common Fund—market value	\$3,028,000	\$4,900,000
Common Fund—revenue	270,000	235,000
Other revenue	59,000	126,000
Total revenue	329,200	361,000
Total expenses	302,800	516,000
Surplus (deficit)	26,400	(155,000)
Percentage of revenue devoted to compensation and benefits	61%	54%

So, how did we go from a small surplus to a deficit? There are several significant events that contributed to this, as well as the many small events we have all experienced in our own financial lives.

As mentioned above, the Common Fund, up until about 1987, appears to have distributed all income received by the fund to the participants. In 1984 this was 8.9% of assets. In 1985 and 1986, the distribution was 7.7% and 7.1% of assets, respectively. In 1987, the Common Fund modified its distribution philosophy to be more consistent with other non-profit entities: distributing not more than 5.0% to 5.5% of assets. More than any other single event, this set the school on the path of budget deficits. The reduction in revenue from the Common Fund between 1986 and 1987 was almost \$80,000, even at a time when the fund assets grew by \$600,000. With the primary mission of preparing men and women for Swedenborgian ministry, the board could not simply cut the budget by 30% in order to keep it in balance. As trustees, we have a responsibility to the mission of SSR, as well as a fiduciary responsibility.

While this started the deficit trend for the school, it was not the only contributing factor. Other factors that contributed to expense escalation include: changes in accounting requirements imposed by the Financial Accounting Standards Board which increased the need for sophistication in both the systems and staff required for accounting services, faculty level and quality requirements for maintaining degree-granting status which set a floor for staffing and consequently for compensation and benefit expense levels, and, of course, ordinary inflation which has affected nearly every line item in the school's budget.

However, the board launched initiatives in the late '80s to address the budget deficits. The board established a major fundraising campaign that continues to this day. Over the past 10 years, the school has raised over \$1,200,000 through various fundraising activities. Our annual fundraising appeal has raised in excess of \$635,000, some of which has been added to our endowment, some of which has been used for current expenses. We raised \$565,000 in gift annuities, which provide a

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The Financial Picture

(Continued from page 44)

lifetime income to the donor, but no current income to the school, with the remainder of the annuity reverting to the school at their passing. We have raised an indeterminate amount in the form of bequests in the wills of church members still with us. It is impossible to estimate what the value of such bequests will be.

The board has also evaluated the 50% of its assets that are revenue-consuming to determine ways to make them revenue-producing. These assets are the real estate on Sargent Street and the real estate on Quincy Street. While the Sargent Street property generates a minimal amount of revenue from renting space to the church, to date we have been unable to convert either to revenue-producing status.

The board discusses our financial situation at every board meeting. Over time we have reviewed each and every expense line item to determine its importance to the overall enterprise. We have routinely cut expenses as much as we believe prudent while maintaining our focus on meeting our mission. As with any enterprise, the school maintains reserves, which in our case is our endowment. During times of abundance we add to our reserves so that we may draw on them during difficult times. That is where we are now, drawing on our reserves to maintain our mission while we seek solutions to our financial dilemma. We continue to evaluate all alternatives that are presented to us or that we can think of. We are confident that a solution will be crafted and implemented so that the school can continue to meet its mission for all future generations of Swedenborgians.

* "Everything else" includes all of the non-compensation and benefit expenses of the enterprise such as utilities, physical plant and equipment maintenance, office supplies and equipment, insurance, library and archive expense, student aid, board expenses, auditing and consulting, and fundraising, publicity, and recruiting.

Richard Stansbury is SSR Board treasurer. He is a member of the Puget Sound Swedenborgian Church in Redmond, Washington and is on the Finance Committee of the Swedenborg Foundation. ❖

Richard Hatheway

While there have been suggestions from some quarters that the manner in which

Swedenborgian ministers are educated needs to be changed, to do so without first thoroughly examining the present and desired states would be irresponsible. Significant changes have taken place during this past decade due to the impact the technological revolution has had on our lives. Our means of communication, the way we conduct business, how we retrieve information, and, yes, higher education including SSR, have all been affected. The curriculum in place today at SSR is not the one that was in place ten years ago, since school-generated curricular reform has been an ongoing process. However, in response to those who feel more drastic changes are in order, perhaps the process should be opened up so that the whole church can participate in the discussion.

Theological education as we approach the twenty-first century is undergoing scrutiny on a world-wide basis. IN TRUST, a magazine for leaders in theological education, has had a number of articles over the past three years discussing this very issue. The Swedenborgian Church is not the only church looking at its relationships with its theological school.

However, as we engage in this scrutiny of SSR, we must focus on educational issues and follow a logical process. The first step would be to determine the fundamental skills and attitudes all ministers ordained in the Swedenborgian Church must possess. We have to reach consensus on our basic expectations ("outcomes" is the word in vogue at the moment) for our ministers prior to making judgments as to the manner of their education. In order to achieve that goal, I suggest convening a broadly based task force representing all constituencies within the church. The charge to this group would be to ascertain what it is we expect of our ministers prior to ordination. Once that has been agreed upon, then, and only

Consensus on Expectations Called For

then, can we enter into the debate as to the most effective forms theological education should take.

During this debate we must not lose sight of the fact that available evidence suggests ministers are getting a quality education at SSR. Granted our SSR graduate may not have mastered all the skills required for a successful ministry, but what school, theological or otherwise, can substantiate that claim? SSR is justifiably proud that eight of this decade's graduates are currently engaged in full-time parish ministries (out of 18 such ministries in the denomination). Many of the skills required for this type of ministry are not available through various modes of distance learning, but must be acquired in a residential setting. Learning is an active process which requires student to student and student to faculty dialog and interaction. It is also a lifelong process, and skills learned by interacting with mentors/scholars/faculty on a residential campus cannot be minimized. Maintaining the quality of the educational experience by having at least some of it take place in a traditional campus setting is of paramount importance.

That continued quality can be assured as long as 1) admission standards are in place for entering students, and 2) the institution has an ongoing internal review process in place, and is also anxious to have external agencies periodically involved in the process.

In summary, any review of the current state of theological education in the Swedenborgian Church must start with reaching consensus on what we as a church feel are the essentials of that education. Once we have arrived at that point we will be able to design a curriculum flexible enough to use the most recent technologies available, but confined enough to assure the quality of the program.

Richard B. Hatheway is chair of the Swedenborg School of Religion Board of Trustees. ❖

It Takes a Whole Convention: Field Education at SSR

Wilma Wake

Throughout its history, the New Church Theological School, later the Swedenborg School of Religion has provided a rigorous and intensive academic program for students. In more recent years, field education has become an increasingly important component of the curriculum. There are a number of reasons for this. One is that our Swedenborgian theology emphasizes uses and charity. This is one of my favorite statements of Swedenborg on the subject:

... the life of charity is to wish well and to do well to the neighbor, to act from what is just and fair, and from what is good and true, in every work, in like manner in everything we do; in a word, the life of charity consists in performing uses [Arcana #8253].

Swedenborg sends us into the world to be actively of use. All of us, laity and clergy, are called to be of service in the world. It seems crucial that we emphasize the experience of this call in the preparation of future ministers.

We are increasingly recognizing that the preparing of ministers involves the participation of the whole people of God. This preparation cannot be done by seminary faculty alone; it involves the Council of Ministers, the laity of the church, and our Swedenborgian centers.

The importance of field education is being increasingly recognized by all denominations. Field education directors have formed the Association of Theological Field Education to work together on improving the field work experience. Many seminaries are now helping students develop skills of theological reflection in their work. I value this because it emphasizes that what is important is not just ministry skills, but how one understands and reflects upon those skills.

What is theological reflection? There are many definitions, but I particularly like the idea of its focus on the presence of God. When I do theological reflection on my ministry, I ask: Where is God in this event? How was God guiding me at that time? What have I learned about myself and my relationship with God from this encounter? How can I better serve the Lord in my work?

We have been offering training to our field supervisors on how to do theological reflection themselves and how to help our students do it more effectively. We are now offering theological reflection training to lay members of the teaching parish committees so that lay members can also work with the students. (See June 1998 *Messenger*, "Field Education at SSR," for thorough description of a student's experience in four years of field education).

The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is associate professor of practical Theology and director of field education at SSR. ❖

Is SSR Meeting Our Ministerial Needs?

(Continued from page 37)

ordination program is not producing enough ministers.

SSR has assets of well over six million dollars, and its annual operating budget approaches \$350,000. We are using these resources to train, on average, less than one minister per year. In other words, the crisis is one of "Use." Our educational resources should benefit our denomination by producing more ministers, and we must develop a new form of ministerial training that fulfills this need. It is time for radical change.

There is significant merit in our denomination asking that the SSR board of trustees develop a new structure for SSR that has a primary focus on "Distance Education" so that we can expand our student body to include those individuals who cannot move to SSR. Such a program would allow our students to attend seminaries across North America, obtaining an accredited Masters of Divinity or other degree approved by CAM. It would allow us to use our educational resources for scholarships, and to augment these programs with Swedenborgian courses taught on location or via the internet and mail and by offering intensive workshops at various locations and times throughout the year. Local Swedenborgian clergy could be trained to serve as advisors, and several of our churches could be invited to become teaching parishes. It might even be possible for this form of program to serve the world-wide Swedenborgian Church, with both faculty and students in England, South Africa, Korea or elsewhere. SSR's use would be expanded, and we would greatly improve our ability to attract the ministers that our denomination requires.

Some fifteen years ago I served on the SSR board of trustees when a new vision emerged for our seminary that also stemmed from concern about SSR's ability to meet our ministerial needs. We dreamed of offering our own degree though a program that would attract many new students to SSR. In no way do I regret that we had the courage and determination to pursue this dream, and it became a reality. But unfortunately, the reality has not fulfilled one essential part of that dream. It is not helping us to ordain enough ministers.

There are numerous reasons for this. But one primary cause is that the world has changed in so many ways. Second careers have emerged as a norm. Computers have ushered in new possibilities for education and communication. Spirituality is approached by both new and traditional avenues. Financial resources must be used in more prudent ways.

But amid this transformation, our church is still called to share our teachings and minister to God's people. In order to do this, a new form of ministerial preparation must be developed, and it must be done quickly. To do anything less is unacceptable for a church that has such a wonderful message to proclaim to the world.

The Rev. Ronald Brugler is president of the Swedenborgian Church (General Convention) and part-time parish minister in Kitchener, Ontario.

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CONVENTION 1999 REGISTRATION

Pepperdine University ~ Malibu, California

"IN GOD'S HANDS"

Convention 1999 will be hosted by the Pacific Coast Association and held at Pepperdine University, near Malibu, a lovely college campus in southern California on the Pacific Coast.

TRANSPORTATION: The Los Angeles airport is about one hour from Pepperdine. For airport transportation options call the Central Office (617-969-4240) and ask for the airport transportation information packet. We will be glad to match up folks arriving at the same time to share rental cars.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING: We will provide separate care for children ages 0 to 4 and a more structured program for

children from 5 to 12 during scheduled activities from Wednesday evening through Saturday morning.

PAYMENT: All bills must be paid at least two weeks in advance.

LINEN CHARGE: Linen is an additional one-time charge of \$10.00 per person. Linen is optional and anyone wanting to bring his/her own sleeping bag, towels, etc. should feel free to do so. A linen set will consist of the following: two sheets, a blanket, two bath towels, two hand towels, one wash cloth, a hotel-sized bar of soap, and a plastic cup.

----- (Detach here) -----

Names: _____

Names and ages of children accompanying you: _____

Street Address: _____ City / State _____ Zip: _____

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

Adult registration*	@ \$ 65.00	x adults	_____	= \$	_____
Teen registration (13-17)	@ \$ 50.00	x teens	_____	= \$	_____
Child 3-12 registration	@ \$ 35.00	x children	_____	= \$	_____
Registration family maximum	@ \$180.00			= \$	_____

* Add \$4.00 if you are attending Women's Alliance luncheon.

Adult/teen room & board single	@ \$ 55.00	x adult	_____	x nights	_____	= \$	_____
Adult/teen room & board double	@ \$ 47.00	x adult	_____	x nights	_____	= \$	_____
Child room & board double	@ \$ 40.00	x children	_____	x nights	_____	= \$	_____
Child board only	@ \$ 10.00	x person	_____	x nights	_____	= \$	_____
Late fee if mailed after May 15	@ \$ 20.00	x adults	_____			= \$	_____

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

Total = \$ _____

All charges are in US dollars. All bills must be paid in full at least two weeks before convention. No registration refunds after June 1. (You may opt to pay by VISA or MasterCard).

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

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Place yourself in God's hands by making your convention experience deeper, close, and more fun by attending the pre-convention conference

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**PRE-CONVENTION 1999
PEPPERDINE COLLEGE ~ MALIBU, CALIFORNIA
SUNDAY JUNE 20, 7:30 PM TO JUNE 23, 12:00 PM**

We are excited to have special guest presenter Cecile Andrews join us in leading our Pre-Convention Conference.

- Learn from Cecile ~ ways of simplifying and enriching your life through the avenue of Volunteer Simplicity and
- Study Circles ~ Discover ways of meeting your deepest yearning for spiritual community and connection
- Learn Skills for creating this in your everyday life and making room for the divine.
- Cecile is author of *The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life*.

Conference Coordinator: Manon Washburn (California)

PRESENTERS WITH POSSIBLE TOPICS:

FACILITATOR: Lorraine Sando, Art, Writing, Meditation, Conscious Living and Dying, Community Building (Washington)

Co-Facilitator: Cindy Gutfeldt, Relating Our Teachings to Life Ritual, Healing Energy Work (California)

EdSU Staff: B.J. Neuenfeldt (Michigan) and Marjie Shelley (Indiana) Song, Music, Humor and more!

☞ *This workshop will include ministers, spouses and will take place at the same time as the Council of Ministers meeting.*

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

REGISTRATION

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

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

ROOM & BOARD: (*Please check one*)

Single Occupancy \$55.00 Double Occupancy-2 people in a room \$47.00 per day per person

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

(Please see CONVENTION REGISTRATION for more details)

SPECIAL NEEDS: (Please Specify) _____

**All Workshop fees to be paid in full by
June 1, 1999**

CHILD CARE AVAILABLE

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Send Form with
Checks to:

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

Community Building and You

John Billings

The purpose of this article is to try and determine if there is any significant interest in Swedenborgian congregations who are interested in creating a greater and deeper sense of genuine community within their church; and, if so, then to consider doing that through the process known as “community-building.” Clearly, the first and most important question is: Do you sincerely and genuinely want a greater sense of community in your congregation? Want it to the point of being willing to work for it, learn about it, even sacrifice, that it might come and be a permanent part of your congregation? If the answer is “yes,” then you will probably want to continue reading this article.

But let's back up a minute. What is real community and what is community-building as a process? M. Scott Peck, M.D., is the Christian psychiatrist who has written quite extensively about genuine community, as opposed to pseudo-community, in his book *The Different Drum*. He, along with ten other committed people, established, in 1984, the FCE, the Foundation for Community Encouragement, a non-profit, educational foundation. If you're like many others, FCE's founding vision will speak to you. It reads as follows:

“There is a yearning in the heart for peace. Because of the wounds—the rejections—we have received in past relationships, we are frightened by the risks. In our fear, we discount the dream of authentic community as merely visionary. But there are rules by which people can come back together, by which the old wounds can be healed. It is the mission of The Foundation for Community Encouragement to teach these rules—to make hope real again—to make the vision actually manifest in a world which has almost forgotten the glory of what it means to be human.”

FCE encouraged people in a fragmented world to discover new and better ways of being together. Living,

learning and teaching the principles of community, FCE serves as a catalyst for individuals and organizations to:

- Communicate with authenticity
- Deal with difficult issues
- Welcome and affirm diversity
- Bridge differences with integrity
- Relate with compassion and respect

This approach encourages tolerance of ambiguity, the experience of discovery and the tension between holding on and letting go. But, perhaps, even more than this, community building is about gaining a much deeper, *felt* connection with others. Have you ever felt lonely in a crowd, even if it's in your own church?

Community-building deals very effectively with this problem. Indeed, as Scott Peck has said, “The most common emotional response to the spirit of community is joy. It is like falling in love . . . *en masse*.”

There are other results of community-building that are particularly important for churches. One is that people in community *do* have differences and conflicts from time to time, but they deal with them differently. Instead of responding destructively, they “fight gracefully.” How often have conflicts and hurt feelings in a church stopped it dead in its tracks, stopped important projects and ministry of many different kinds? Or left tension and negative feelings in the air that could choke a horse? I have seen this happen more often than I care to. At such times, the real issues never get talked about, let

alone resolved. It's kind of like hell wins at those times. Community-building works against these forces by fostering better ones, forces like compassion, listening, acceptance, deeper understanding and caring. This is an environment that can heal and liberate people to experience their real selves. During the community-building process, roles, posturing, and facades are lessened, if not dropped entirely, and, in an atmosphere of love and acceptance, people seek to know each other and themselves as they actually are. This is not always easy, but it is always worthwhile. Those versed in our church's teachings may begin to see that genuine community is about what

Swedenborg calls charity—charity that can be experienced and felt on this side of life rather than having to wait until we cross over where it will be a fundamental part of everyday life because we are in heaven.

Back to the original question. Is there anyone out there who would like to bring more community to their congregation? If so, there is now a possibility to bring the FCE kind of community-building process to your congregation at an affordable cost by sponsoring a community-building workshop at your church. If you want more information, please contact

John Billings by phone or by mail.
Phone: 513-248-0636.
Mail: 5602 Betty Lane
Milford, Ohio 45150.

The Rev. John Billings is pastor of the Cincinnati Swedenborgian Church.



New Jerusalem Church Hosts Islam Workshop

Lee Woofenden

Thirty people gathered at the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church (Swedenborgian) on Wednesday evening, January 27, for a lively and informative workshop on Islam presented by Imam Taalib Mahdee. Mr. Mahdee began with a traditional Arabic Muslim greeting.

Ha'salaam walecem. meaning "Peace be upon you," and taught the audience the response, *Wa'alecem ha'salaam,* meaning "An upon you peace." Mahdee then went on to explain in an engaging fashion the five "Pillars of Islam:"

1. Faith: There is one God, and Mohammed is his prophet.
2. Prayer: Muslims must pray five times daily.
3. Charity: Muslims must give to the poor, and also live in charity toward others.
4. The Fast: Muslims must observe the yearly fast of Ramadan.
5. The Pilgrimage: Muslims who are able must make a pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in their lifetime.

Summing up his remarks, Mahdee said, "Islam may look very different for Christianity, but really, we believe in the same basic things. We are more alike than we are different."

After Mahdee was finished with his presentation of Islamic beliefs and practices, his wife Linda, who is a nurse, gave a woman's perspective. "In Islam," she said, "women are seen as individuals in their own right. The money we earn is our own, and we must follow our religious obligations for ourselves." She went on to say that one of her goals is to raise their two daughters, who were also present, to be both faithful Muslims and good American citizens.

In response to questions about how Islamic people and cultures appear in

our news, Mr Mahdee took the opportunity to clear up some misunderstandings. "The religion of Islam tells us to practice charity toward all people, whether they are Muslim or not," he said. "We have issues with Muslims who practice violence, such as the World Trade Center bombers. These individuals are not practicing Islam; they give our religion a bad name." In fact, Mahdee pointed out, the name "Islam," which means "obedience," comes from a word meaning "peace." A lively discussion continued over refreshments.

Taalib Mahdee is resident Imam (religious leader) at the Masjid Al-Quran in Boston, and Muslim Chaplain at the Massachusetts Correctional Institute, Bridgewater. This workshop was the first of six in a World Religions Series hosted by the New Jerusalem Church every other Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., from January 27 through April 7. The next workshop, on Christianity, will be held February 10, 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. The presenters will be Francine Bell, Director of Religious Education and Pastoral Associate at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Parish in Bridgewater, and the Rev. Paul Nickerson, Pastor of Central Square Congregational Church in Bridgewater, as well as Church Growth Consultant for the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ.

The Rev. Lee Woofenden, pastor of the New Jerusalem Church, says, "For over two hundred years, Swedenborgians have believed that the religions of the world were given by God to reach out to people of various nations and cultures. Therefore many religions, but they all lead to the same God." Woofenden continues, "We are hosting these workshops both as an outreach into the community and as a way to build understanding and appreciation of the various religious faiths in our world and in this area."

Adding some remarks that weren't in the press release, Woofenden commented, "the spirit in the room was wonderful! The speaker exceeded all my expectations for being lively and engaging as well as informative The thirty attendees (not counting the presenter and his wife and two daugh-

ters) were made up of members of the Bridgewater and Elmwood churches, students and staff from Bridgewater State College, people from several other churches in Bridgewater, and people who simply saw our publicity and came because they were interested We were especially pleased that F. Bob and Gretchen Tafel came down for the workshop, and also George and Lois Dole . . . George will be introducing the speakers at the next workshop, since Patty and I will be away in Arizona at that time"

Future workshops in the series will cover Tibetan Buddhism (February 24), Native American spirituality (March 10), Judaism (March 24), and Hinduism (April 7). Each workshop will be presented by local leaders of that faith. A donation of \$5 is requested at the door (students and seniors \$3) to cover the cost of the workshop. Refreshments will be served. For more information, call the Rev. Lee Woofenden at (508) 946-1767.




**SWEDENBORGIAN
CHURCH MEETING DATES**

1999	
Mar. 7-9	C.O.M. Executive Committee SSR, Newton, Massachusetts
Mar. 10-12	Committee on Admission to the Ministry SSR, Newton, Massachusetts
Apr. 8-10	Retirement Committee Florida
Apr. 17-18	Wayfarers Chapel Board Wayfarers Chapel, California
Apr. 23-24	SSR Board of Trustees Newton, Massachusetts
Apr. 25-27	East Coast Peer Supervision Blairhaven, Duxbury, Massachusetts
May 1	Investment Committee Temenos
June 20-27	Pre-Convention and Convention 1999 Pepperdine College Malibu, California



Baptisms

Carr—Kyle and Adam Carr, infant twin sons of Douglas & Tanya Carr, were baptized into the Christian church December 20, 1998, at the Elmwood new Church in Elmwood, Massachusetts, the Rev. Dr. Donna Keane officiating.

Winsor—Kady Brook Winsor, infant daughter of Craig and Jennifer Winsor, was baptized into the Christian church May 17, 1998, at the Elmwood New Church in Elmwood, Massachusetts, the Rev. Dr. Donna Keane officiating.

Confirmations

Hobbs—Jeffrey A. Hobbs was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church December 6, 1998, at the Church of the Open Word in St. Louis, the Rev. David Rienstra officiating.

Lodato—Joseph J. Lodato was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church December 20, 1998, at the Church of the Open Word in St. Louis, the Rev. David Rienstra officiating.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION DIALOG: What are the Basic Questions?

(Continued from page 33)

Instead of rushing to judgmental decisions about administrators or specific curricula, we need to work carefully through basic questions about what kinds of theological education will lead toward Swedenborgian ministries in a future that may differ in many ways from our past. The design of theological education should start with our visions for the future of the Swedenborgian church, for the ministers being educated now will influence upcoming generations. This is an opportune time for a dialog about the ministries we anticipate and the modes of theological education that will best prepare for them. It is a time to ponder, and then to present ideas so church members can consider what kinds of ministry are important for the future of the church and how our theological school might best prepare potential pastors for these ministries.

Dr. Alice B. Skinner is vice-chair, SSR Board of Trustees, and president of the Swedenborg Foundation. ❖

Deaths

Anderson—The Rev. Arvid L. Anderson, who served as interim minister for 14 years during the '70s & '80s at the Elmwood church, entered the spiritual world December 24, 1998. A memorial service was conducted January 2, 1999, at the Avon Baptist Church in Avon, Massachusetts, the Rev. Steven Gretz officiating.

Churchill—Dorothy G. Churchill, longtime member of Elmwood New Church in Elmwood, Massachusetts, entered the spiritual world August 28, 1998. A service of dedication was conducted at the church in September, with the Rev. Dr. Donna Keane officiating.

Kiesman—Doris E. Kiesman, age 68, member of the Fryeburg New Church, entered the spiritual world January 7, 1999. A resurrection service was conducted January 10, 1999, at the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.

Lareen—Janet E. (Dennison), wife of the late N. Homer Lareen of Marseilles, Illinois, entered the spiritual world January 8, 1999. Mrs. Lareen is survived by a daughter, Dr. Alice Bean, and two sisters, Ethel Rice of Massachusetts and Nancy Hendrix of Nevada, three nieces and two nephews.

Wheeler—Gladys Wheeler, 93, longtime active member of the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, entered the spiritual world January 23, 1999. She served as church treasurer and was active in the Ladies Sewing Circle, Women's Alliance, and church choir. She lived a life of service, humor, and love. Memorial services were conducted January 26, 1999, the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating. Gladys is survived by two sons, Harold and George Wheeler, a stepson Herman F. "Bud" Wheeler, Jr., three grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and several nieces and nephews.



Church Family News

The Rev. Edwin Capon, former president of General Convention, recently underwent quintuple bypass surgery, but is recuperating well. Cards may be sent to him at 1369 Balhan Drive, Concord, CA 94521.

Change of Address

Rev. Eric & Norma Hoffman
416 Oberreich Street
LaPorte, IN 46350
(219) 324-6322

(The above information is in the new Journal, but was never published in The Messenger). ❖

The curtains of winter parted, hanging heavy, gray, from the sky and dragging on the sodden earth. Into the open space curtseyed Spring.

The woods grew fuzzy, garbing in gentle greens and quiet reds. Daffodils leapt bravely toward the brilliant heat of sun, ready for a drama of green and gold.

But in the dark of night crept Trickster Frost, spreading his cold white hands, knocking over the guileless daffodils. The woods stood still, breathless, like a child who hides behind closed eyes, until the joker stole away as quietly as he arrived.

Then the trees, maple, willow, cherry and crab, opened the choral song. The daffodils whispered to their tulip friends and raised their heads to rejoice in dance.

Perry Martin



Elmwood Church Seeks Minister

The Elmwood church, located in the town of East Bridgewater, Massachusetts, continues to seek a minister. The pastorate would require a 30-hour week and would be dependent on funds from the Ministries Support Unit (MINSU). There is excellent train service from Boston, which is 20 miles north. For further information, please call:

Meredith Swanson
(508) 378-2536 or

Louise Woofenden
(781) 784-5041



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 Celebrates Sesquicentennial

You are invited to the kickoff event of the Swedenborg Foundation's sesquicentennial celebration, a gala luncheon on Saturday, April 17, at the Glencaim Museum has provided this gracious venue for the celebration of one hundred-and-fifty years of Swedenborgian book publishing.

Live music will be played before and after a delicious luncheon, and attendees will receive a sample chapter of George Dole's new translation of *Heaven and Hell*, which is the flagship volume of the *New Century Edition Translation of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg*.^{*} The spirited team of NCE translators will offer a lively presentation of their challenging enterprise.

Attendees will also receive a complimentary copy of *Illuminating the World of Spirit: A Sesquicentennial Record of the Swedenborg Foundation*, written by David Eller, former executive director of the Swedenborg Foundation, who will speak and sign copies.

You are invited to take advantage of a special opportunity to tour Bryn Athyn Cathedral and/or the museum on guided tours being offered before and after the luncheon.

Please call Betsy Smailer at the Foundation (800) 355-3222 for information on how to order the \$15.00 luncheon tickets (the cost has been partially underwritten by anonymous "angels") and for help with overnight accommodations in the Bryn Athyn area.



Photo: Jonathan Rose (right) gives update on the *New Century Edition* to Foundation Board. (Left, Alice Skinner, president, and Robert Kirven.



Photo: Swedenborg Foundation Board: From left, back row: Don Rose, Grant Doering, Robert Schoenberger, Robert Kirven, Karen Feil, George Dole, Carol Lawson; middle: Patte LeVan, Dick Stansbury, Alice Skinner, Bill Woofenden; front: Stuart Shotwell, Fos Freeman, Jim Lawrence, John Seekamp.

Founded in 1849 and incorporated in 1850, the Swedenborg Foundation plans a series of celebratory events during its sesquicentennial anniversaries—1999–2000—to pay tribute to 150 years of publishing the theological works of Emanuel Swedenborg as well as books about his life and teachings. The Foundation also celebrates in 1999 its fifth year of trade publishing. The scholarly imprint *Swedenborg Studies* includes works that examine the continually expanding influence of Swedenborg's theology on philosophy, literature, art, religion, and the social sciences. Under the Chrysalis imprint, the Foundation publishes books for spiritual seekers that apply Swedenborgian principles to contemporary life: in particular, Chrysalis Books explore how to live usefully, joyously, and selflessly in this life in order to better prepare for the next. ❖

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