

# THE MESSENGER

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May 1999

## New Paradigm Needed for SSR

Lee Woofenden

When I was a student at the Swedenborg School of Religion in the mid-90s, one of the main topics of conversation among the students was the program and atmosphere at the school. Of course, in any institutional setting there are issues of personalities—and we certainly discussed those. But as great as the effect of particular personalities can be, we stand to gain far more by addressing the *systemic* realities in which the personalities operate.

The students recognized that many people were working very hard to provide us with a seminary education, and we appreciated their efforts. But few of us felt that the system was working well for us. Some felt that we were not getting an adequate background in the Bible and the church's teachings. Others felt a need for more work on the pastoral end of ministry. Still others wanted more development in administration and public speaking. Most felt that a lot of our time in school was spent doing things that were not addressing our greatest needs in preparing for ministry. Nearly all felt the need for major, systemic change.

The teachings of our church give us a clear direction for that change. If we review our church's history in the light of those teachings, we can gain some insight on how we arrived where we are now, and where to go from here.

For over two hundred years, Swedenborgians have proudly carried the banner of the Holy City, New Jerusalem, with its motto, "I am making all things new!" Yet change tends to happen slowly. Historically, when we gave institutional flesh to the new ideas in Emanuel Swedenborg's writings, we usually adopted already existing forms, merely adjusting them to eliminate blatant inconsistencies with our theology. Our traditional First Order of Service, for example, is similar to traditional forms of worship in many mainline Protestant churches, since it comes from the

same Anglican and Methodist roots.

It is no surprise, then, that when we were ready to formalize the training of our ministers, we looked to the older denominations for models of theological education. And because of our church's historical intellectualism, the founders of the current Swedenborgian seminaries adopted the *academic* model of ministerial training. We set up mini-seminaries very much like their larger, mainline cousins and proceeded to train our ministers through classroom training, lectures, exams, and final papers, complete with a lettered grading system. Later, as Field Education programs grew in the mainline seminaries, we adopted this practice as well—which will, I believe, give us the seeds for our next wave of growth and development in training our ministers.

For many years we have run our seminary along traditional, academic lines. And our denomination has had the same success as the mainline churches: a disastrous decline earlier in this century, and more gradual decline ever since, with only very recent indications that our long decline may have finally halted.

Our church is a shadow of its former self. I believe this is a direct result of our reluctance to adopt the new paradigm that is contained in the teachings of our church. The great social changes that have been happening in our world are a result of that new paradigm—of the Heavenly City descending upon the earth.

Traditionally, we have explained our small size and limited success by referring to the great red dragon of Revelation chapter 12. Taking our cue from Swedenborg's explanation of that chapter, we have identified our church and its new teachings with the woman clothed with the sun, and her newborn child. In explaining our lack of numerical success, we have pointed our finger at the great red dragon of the established "faith alone" Christianity, which fought against the fledgling Swedenborgian church, driving us into a desert of smallness and insignificance.

There may be some truth to this interpretation. But it has a serious problem: it projects the entire reason for our church's small size onto those "other folks" *outside* our own group—conveniently excusing us from any responsibility. We're okay; they're not okay.

However, it was the woman herself who fled into the desert. Yes, she was chased there by the dragon. But as in individual

Our church's teachings indicate that the future of humanity lies, not in a realm where reasoning and intellect are primary, but in a realm of love and human interconnection *informed* by the understanding.

(Continued on page 73)

### In This Issue:

❖ Thoughts on Swedenborg & Homelessness  
❖ Biographies of Nominees

❖ Preview of Mini-courses  
❖ Bringing Church and Society Together—NCC Report

# May Musings

During the month of May, we traditionally celebrate Mothers Day, we breathe in the ecstasy of spring in all its glory, we honor those who fought and died in various wars, and, if we're Swedenborgian, we prepare for another June convention.

I can hardly think of Mothers Day anymore without regarding a certain letter my son framed and is now hanging in my bathroom. A few years ago my son, Kerrigan, who is now in his forties, unearthed this letter from a box his grandmother had left him when she died. It was a letter of instruction that I had written to my son's babysitter when he was two and I was twenty-two. I wrote the letter before departing for the hospital to give birth to his first sister. The person who was going to stay with Kerry, Mrs. Kisicki, was a mature woman who had raised several children of her own. However, so concerned was I that his routine be exactly as it would be if I were there, I felt nothing should be left to chance. The letter of instruction to Mrs. Kisicki goes thusly:

Upon his awakening in morning, strip him, put him on potty, run his bath water a little warmer than elbow temperature, add a sprinkling of Robinson's bath salts and bathe him immediately. After bath, apply baby lotion or powder, clean out his nose and ears with cotton buds as necessary, and give him Vi Penta drops filled up to .06. The bottle is in the medicine cabinet. Dress him in diaper, rubber pants, shirt, socks, shoes, outer shirt, and trousers. Then give him breakfast which consists of: Small glass orange juice, filled two-thirds full. Half a cup cereal. Alternate rice krispies with shredded wheat, cold milk. Give him his curved spoon to goof around with or he won't eat. One soft-boiled egg, cooked 3 & 1/2 minutes. Cocoa in yellow plastic cup with the picture of smiling man.

Put him out in yard to play if warm enough; lock outer den door and open window part so he can hear you. Make sure gate is closed and locked and don't

lose track of either of his stuffed elephants. If you give him the run of the house, lock both bathroom doors, inner back porch door, and master bedroom door; close closets, and watch him. Do not allow him to ride his tricycle anywhere but the den or the back yard. Morning nap at 10:30. Remove his socks, shoes, give water, wash his hands.

The letter went on for two pages, *ad nauseam*, outlining my son's every waking moment. I was convinced that our lives as a family depended on everything going exactly as I laid it out, without deviation.

I look at that letter now as a lesson in letting go of things in general. May God bless all the mothers who feel that they need to control everything in their own family's lives, even in their absence—and God bless all the mothers who have learned, or are learning, to let go. Each stage of our growth is precious. I'm touched that my mother-in-law saved this letter to Mrs. Kisicki as a valuable piece of memorabilia—and a source of much laughter—to pass on to future generations.



As we head toward another convention, the theological education dialog continues. And I receive the news that yet another of our churches is in the grip of serious conflict. In the decade that I have been editor of *The Messenger*, I hope that I have conveyed at least one editorial policy: that *The Messenger* encourages everyone who has anything to say on any subject to speak out and regard *The Messenger* as an open forum where everyone who presents a reasonable viewpoint can be heard. My stance is neutral. If I have a bias as an editor, it is toward encouraging community building, and toward encouraging the practice of calling in conflict resolution professionals as a matter of course when church conflicts are brewing. Our Church can't afford to remain provincial in its attitude on any front. We can't afford to assume we can and should control and resolve every situation by ourselves.



I was having a discussion with a friend recently about computer games. He mentioned all the war games that are available. You can get computer games in which you can go back into any of our wars and take certain battles and fight them out, with different outcomes. But wouldn't it be more exciting, I asked, to have Peace Games on the computer? To devise games in which war or any kind of physical or emotional attack, violence, character assassination, is **not** an option. A game in which a serious conflict is laid out, and we have to solve it with community building and conflict resolution skills, diplomacy, compassion, and consensus, to negotiate a win-win solution. It seems to me that would be much more challenging.

## Happy Mothers Day, and Happy Spring.

Patte LeVan



### DON'T FORGET

Convention '99,  
June 23–27 at Pepperdine in  
Malibu, California.

### THE MESSENGER

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What helps can Swedenborgian theology provide for responding to such realities as homelessness? The realities of homelessness can be related to other realities and the overall conditions of communities. Homelessness is not isolated. It is much affected by lack of options for many who are victims of domestic violence, have not had access to effective job training, or are parents without adequate child care support. Ideas from Swedenborgian theology can be related to efforts which seek to be responsive to people who are now homeless while also seeking to foster transformations to provide alternatives to homelessness and related conditions such as poverty, abuse victimization, lack of job training, lack of health care, and lack of assistance with child care. Central in applying Swedenborgian ideas to these conditions is a balance between individual responsibility and interdependence.

Swedenborg compares a good community to a healthy human body. Each he views as a whole to which parts contribute and which supports and nurtures parts (*Divine Love and Wisdom*, no. 367). Parts of a healthy body are interdependent with one another, and each part contributes. In a healthy community, individuals contribute and also receive, being interdependent with others and dependent on the community as a whole.

Individuals as parts, for Swedenborg, are responsible for seeking and finding ways of contributing or participating in uses. Yet individuals are interdependent and are parts of communities. There are many realities beyond individuals' influences which shape what they can bring to participation in uses. What individuals can contribute is greatly enhanced by the presence of healthy communities. With each good community, there is a general good. The general good supports individual uses, and individual uses contribute to the general good (*Doctrine of Charity*, nos. 127, 131, 133).

Consider a family where there are three young children, one parent is disabled, and one parent is struggling to find work. The person struggling to find

## Swedenborg and Homelessness

work is vulnerable in many ways, for example, as homeless, having a disabled partner, and having three children who need child care. Such vulnerabilities affect what choices are open to such a person. We can consider how much is such a person's responsibility, how much is others' responsibility, and what roles are best for various levels of government and for private agencies. We can also consider what roles churches can have in such situations.

The parent trying to find work may have very limited job skills. Offering job training could be vital in providing paths out of homelessness for the family and ways the parent can contribute. Assistance with child care could go further than what the parent with a disability is able to do. Agencies of government, church communities, and other private

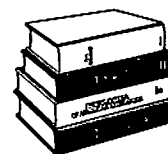
agencies cooperate in providing these and other needed supports.

A person dependent on support and not seeking to contribute when able would go against uses and the general good, but so also would failing to provide needed support in addressing vulnerabilities and many conditions which drive people into homelessness and other deprivations. Consider the situation of a single mother of a young child, homeless and on welfare. The emphasis on individual responsibility would encourage her efforts and initiatives. The recognition of interdependence and vulnerability would go with efforts to make available to her supports such as job training, assistance in finding affordable housing, help in finding health care, and assistance with child care. The joining of supports with encouraging initiative could support the well-being of this family and of the parent as contributing in uses.

Swedenborg clearly points to individual responsibility in indicating people

(Continued on page 75)

### The SSR Library Serves the Church at Large



In addition to serving the student population and faculty at SSR with reference books, an Internet computer and a wide range of general information, the SSR Library is available to church members for browsing, research, and self-education.

The SSR Library houses 32,000 books. Church members are welcome to avail themselves of the library's resources. There are books by Swedenborg—all his writings, plus concordances, histories of the early church, and books on prayer and poetry. Some of the collection contains books about sexual abuse, clergy abuse and women's issues. There are also books on spirituality, Jesus, evil, holistic medicine, and socialism. The library contains information about many religious subjects, from Zen to paganism.

The SSR Library also contains the archives collection. Located in a locked vault on the first floor, the archives are open to any church member by appointment with the president or the librarian. The archives contain photographs, letters, realia and sermons by prominent church members.

The library has, in addition, excellent periodicals, both scholarly journals and magazines, which are available for personal or professional research.

We extend an open invitation to church members to visit our library. Call ahead—peruse our extensive collection. The only consequence we promise is expanded understanding.

Johanna S. Hedbor, Librarian



# Bringing Church and Society Together

Report on the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

*Robert McCluskey*

The Executive Board and General Assembly of the NCCCUSA held its annual sessions in Chicago, Illinois, November 9–13, 1998. Representing the Swedenborgian Church were the Rev. Drs. Dorothea Harvey and Jonathan Mitchell, the Rev. Robert McCluskey, and Mary Ann Fischer. The Swedenborgian delegation was invited to lead the Assembly in a morning worship service. Jonathan Mitchell delivered the sermon, based on Ezekiel 34:17–31.

The Council welcomed into its fellowship its 35th member communion, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. Like the Mar Thoma Church which was welcomed into membership last year, the Malankara Church also traces its roots to the apostle Thomas, who came to the Malabar Coast of India in 52 A.D.

## THE CHURCHES AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOL

The Assembly heard a first reading of a proposed policy statement, **"The Churches and the Public Schools at the Close of the Twentieth Century."** The statement is being circulated for discussion and feedback prior to final action by the Council in November 1999.

Noting that "public consciousness (about public education) has been dominated by religious and political groups whose view on public schools is largely negative," the statement calls on the NCC's more than 230,000 constituent congregations to renew "our traditional support for the strengthening and reform of the public schools. Our concern for children and for the creation of a truly caring community impels us to this action."

The statement acknowledges that "the public schools are the primary route for most children—especially the children of poverty—into full participation in our economic, political, and community life" and declares, "We affirm once again that public money should be used only for public schools, and declare our belief that the First Amendment to the Constitution, along with the Equal Access Act, provides an adequate and sufficient guarantee of the religious liberty of students and their parents. Consequently, we oppose any efforts to alter the First Amendment's prohibition against laws respecting the establishment of religion."

"We are concerned," the statement adds, "that, should the public further weaken its support for the public schools, we would all suffer a devastating loss in the quality of public, economic, and spiritual life throughout our society. Tragically, those who would suffer most from this abandonment would, once again, be children."

Recognizing that "public education has been under attack for over two decades by persons representing religious, cultural and economic views which offer little or no support for public schooling," the statement calls for addressing "the issues of race and class which threaten both public education and democracy in America." It calls attention to, and demands action to reduce, the serious inequities in public school funding.

The statement calls upon churches to champion and support public education and lists ways in which that can be done.

The statement was bolstered later in the meeting by a moving presentation by Dr. David Hornbeck, Philadelphia superintendent of schools, who described both the failings and the potential of the public education system in Philadelphia. He shared with the Assembly his efforts to successfully challenge the funding patterns in Philadelphia, and he suggested that similar efforts need to take place throughout the country.

## INTERFAITH RELATIONS AND THE CHURCHES

Another proposed policy statement titled **"Interfaith Relations and the Churches"** received an enthusiastic response from the Assembly, with several delegations indicating that they would begin to use the document immediately, even though formal action on the policy statement is not scheduled until November. The policy received unanimous preliminary approval when it was presented for a "first reading" to the General Assembly in Chicago last November. It supports the ongoing work of the Council toward more harmonious interfaith relations and invites Christians to reflect theologically on this matter at a time when increasingly they live side by side with Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Native American traditionalists and adherents of other faiths. In its final form, the policy statement will be the centerpiece for a "starter kit" primarily for Christian congregations who want to promote faithful relations with people of other religious traditions. Available early in 2000, the kits will include commentary and a study guide to the statement; a bibliography of print, video, and human resources on interfaith relations; tips for dialog, and more. For more information, contact NCC Interfaith Commission, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 870, NYC 10023, or call 212-870-2156/2560.

## ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

The Executive Board and General Assembly both wrestled with the pressing issue of **economic sanctions**, currently employed against 75 countries around the world. Members acknowledged the need to find a healthy balance between "bomb or doing nothing." In their present form, "Sanctions are flawed instruments, misapplied, poorly enforced and monitored," and usually have severe humanitarian impact but little or no political impact. The need for "targeted sanctions" was seen as more useful: this would involve more intentional use of specific sanctions to address the specifics of each situation, a strengthening of humanitarian relief and monitoring, the lifting of general civilian trade sanctions, and a greater emphasis on the arms embargo. The situation in Iraq received special attention, where economic sanctions have killed more than 200,000 of Iraq's preschoolers. The Assembly drafted a letter to President Clinton on Friday, objecting to the use of military

*(Continued on page 74)*

## New Paradigm Needed for SSR

(Continued from cover)

psychology, groups of people can also internalize the ideas projected onto them by their societal parents and teachers. I believe that we as a church internalized the faith-alone perspective that was the hallmark of Protestantism at the time of our church's birth. And we became an intellectualized desert of smallness and dryness.

Our church's teachings indicate that the future of humanity lies, not in a realm where reasoning and intellect are primary, but in a realm of love and human interconnection *informed* by the understanding. We humans have traveled from the innocent, heart-centered days of our "primitive" Golden Age ancestors to the spiritual intellectualism of the great Silver Age; we have struggled through the guttural, pragmatic millennia before Christ, when might made right; and we finally began moving upward again in the new spiritual light given to us by our Lord in the First Coming.

Now, in the time of the Second Coming, humanity is moving back toward heart-centered religion—to a "celestial" or heavenly religion, in Swedenborgian terms. But unlike the ancient heart-centered religion, we are gaining the innocence that comes from *wisdom*. The new Christianity is to be a religion that comes from the heart, is informed by our learning and life experience, and leads to practical acts of kindness toward others.

This story of our spiritual journey over the ages helps us to understand where our current forms of seminary education came from. It also gives us the direction to go if we wish to become truly a part of the new Christian era that is dawning on the earth.

In the academic model, the primary training happens in classrooms, where ideas are taught in isolation from the human realities that our ministers will be immersed in after they are ordained. It is an intellectual exercise involving study, research, writing, discussion, and other head-centered modes of learning. *This is the old paradigm!* As long as we train our ministers in this way, we will continue to

founder as a church, because we will continue to pour the new wine of a wonderful spiritual enlightenment into the old bottles of intellectualized forms of training and ministry that belong to a previous era.

Fortunately, the academic model is not the only one available. There is another model of learning that is both new and ancient—a model that involves not just the head, but the heart and hands as well. One name for it is the "action/reflection" model.

An example of the action/reflection model is Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). In CPE, seminary students (including those at SSR) are placed in hospitals, prisons, or other institutions where they provide chaplaincy services while receiving supervision and training from the CPE program staff. Students commonly spend three days a week doing chaplaincy work, and two days a week with their supervisors and other students reflecting on the work they are doing and receiving training in various aspects of pastoral care.

During the two days of reflection and training, many theological and psychological concepts are presented to the students. But these concepts are never simply theoretical. The learning is always related to real, ongoing ministerial work that the students are engaged in. Because of this, the ideas are not simply committed to memory where they are easily forgotten—as so often happens in the academic model—but committed to *life*, where they become a part of the person's character as a minister and as a person.

Of course, pastoral care is only one aspect of ministry—and I am not suggesting that we turn our seminary into a CPE program. But if we are going to give our new ministers preparation that is appropriate to the work of ministry, we need to listen to our church's teachings when they tell us that nothing is real unless it involves a union of love and understanding, resulting in action.

The academic model of education is a faith-alone model: it is based on an intellectual approach to learning. The action/reflection model encompasses not only the mind, but also the heart

and hands. I never cried in the classes at SSR—the instruction never engaged my heart. But I did cry when I was with my fellow students and supervisors in CPE. There, learning was taking place on all levels, and it hit my heart just as strongly as it hit my head.

We need to find ways to engage the heart and hands with the entire spectrum of ministerial training, from theology to administration to pastoral care. These are not theoretical concepts to be taught in a classroom, but *spiritual realities* that we live and breathe each day. As long as we teach them in an academic way, we will continue to miss their vital connection with the throbbing heart of human life—and as a church, we will continue to languish in the desert to which we have fled. But if we bring the heart and hands fully into our ministerial training *along with* the head, we will be moving toward the vision of the Heavenly City that our teachings hold out for us.

What would the new Swedenborg School of Religion look like? That is something we need to discuss and determine as a denomination. My purpose at the moment is primarily to suggest a direction, not to provide a blueprint. But I would like to add a couple of my initial thoughts to the drawing of the blueprint.

First, we need to drop the standardized curriculum model. In its place, we could bring in a system in which our Ministerial Standards (which were published in the March 1999 *Messenger*) are the benchmark. New students would be assessed as to their areas of strength and weakness in meeting those standards, and a program would be developed with each student to focus on areas where he or she needs the most work. Unlike our earlier "covenant" system, we would not only take the *student's* plans for ministry into account, but also the *denomination's* needs and requirements for ministry. The advantage over the current system is that we would not waste student and faculty time on classes that the students don't need, but would focus our energy where it will do the greatest good for the students' future ministries.

(Continued on page 75)

## Mother's Day

As an adult I would understand that parents provide the first archetypes of the Divine for a child. How much does a belief in a demanding, punishing God come from a child's experience of demanding, punishing parents? For lay leader *Beth Fitzgerald*, her first concept of God was similar to what author/psychiatrist Scott Peck calls the "benevolent Irish Cop in the Sky." God was seen as a loving, authoritarian father. What would our image be if God were mother?

*Nancy Adair*

In the beginning  
Nothing that is  
was—not yet.  
In the beginning  
Everything that is  
was merely becoming  
For everything was  
gestating.  
In the close and holy  
darkness of  
Her Great Womb  
For in the beginning  
She was  
She-Our Source,  
She-Primordial Oneness,  
She-Wholeness  
She-Our Virgin Mother,  
Pregnant with Possibility,  
Pregnant with limitless,  
eternal Possibility.

*Beth Fitzgerald*

Reprinted from the  
Portland, Maine  
Swedenborgian Church  
Newsletter.



## Bringing Church and Society Together

(Continued from page 72)

force in Iraq, and pointing out severe effects of sanctions on civilians, especially women and children.

### CANCEL DEBT

The Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution endorsing the **Jubilee 2000 Initiative to Cancel the Debt** of the poorest countries by the year 2000. This resolution recognizes the burden which indebtedness places on the poor and the environment in these countries, and calls upon the U.S. to act with the international community to cancel this debt. It also specifically calls upon the U.S. to act promptly to cancel the debt owed to it by Honduras and Nicaragua, to help speed that region's recovery from Hurricane Mitch.

### VIOLENCE AGAINST GAYS DECRIED

Only a few weeks after the brutal murder of Matthew Shepard, the national ecumenical officer of the United Federation of Metropolitan Community Churches brought greetings to the NCCC, decrying violence against gay and lesbian people and calling for a time of reconciliation and renewal. "As people of faith, we must get Matthew Shepard and all the potential Matthew Shepards off the fence," said the Rev. Dr. Gwynne M. Guibord. Dr. Guibord is ecumenical officer for the U.S. for the UFMCCC, an international church that is open to all and that has a primary outreach to gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered persons.

The Council is preparing for a spectacular celebration of its 50th "Jubilee" Anniversary in November 1999, in Cleveland, Ohio, the site of the NCCC's founding. This looks to be a widely publicized event: the heads of each member communion will be invited to attend, as well as major media sources. A new orchestral piece has been specially commissioned for this event, and will have its debut during the meetings. A variety of banquets and banners, processions and programs will all focus national attention on the work and promise of the NCCC, the premier ecumenical movement in the U.S.A. At those events, the Rev. Andrew Young will be installed as Council's president. Young addressed the Assembly in November, reporting on his experience as part of a NCCC delegation to China.

## SONGS FOR UNITY IN CHRIST

New Songs for Unity in Christ is a project to encourage each Council member communion to commission a vocal or instrumental work marking this anniversary occasion. These collected songs will be printed and used throughout the celebration, and will also be available for nationwide congregational use. The Swedenborgian Church is included in this project, and the Revs. Ken Turley and John Billings (chair of Committee on Worship) have already been alerted. Your ideas and contribution are very much welcomed as well, and will help us make the best of this opportunity to join with others in fashioning new ways to praise and thank the Lord. For more information about submitting music for the songbook, you may also contact the project coordinator: John Gingrich, New Songs Coordinator, Gingrich Arts Management, PO Box 1515, NY, NY 10023, 212-799-5080, e-mail: [gingarts@erols.com](mailto:gingarts@erols.com)

### 50TH ANNIVERSARY WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Other noteworthy events included: At a moving service of worship and remembrance, celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the **World Council of Churches**, Dr. Emilo Castro, first president of the WCC, spoke of its past accomplishments, the changing nature of ecumenism, and the challenges ahead. The service was held at the **First Methodist Church of Evanston, Illinois**, site of the first meeting of the WCC in 1948 . . . Dr. David Daniels of the Church of God in Christ presented a talk on "Pentecostalism Today." Dr. Daniels spoke of the need to dispel stereotypes and offered a greater sense of the racial, ethnic, and political diversity with the Pentecostal movement. Afterwards, delegates sat "ecumenically" for "table talk" discussions across denominational lines about how we can better understand and relate to these and other Christian movements currently outside the NCCC . . . The **Faith and Order Commission** issued a timely and cogent response to the recent Papal encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint* "On Commitment to Ecumenism" . . . The Assembly received a report from the **Pappas Consulting Group**, which has been engaged for the last year with the ongoing transformation of the Council's structure. Significant changes in leadership and accountability were approved, with a special emphasis on greater fiscal responsibility and effectiveness.

*The Rev. Robert McCluskey is pastor of the New York Swedenborgian Church and delegate to the NCCC.*



## New Paradigm Needed for SSR

(Continued from page 73)

Second, we could move much more strongly in the direction of parish-based education. In the Boston area alone, there are six Swedenborgian parishes, some of which are in great need of ministerial services. There are many more parishes in other parts of the United States and Canada. These are all locales where field work that would be of real benefit to our churches could be combined with teaching and supervision in the many aspects of theology, church history, administration, and pastoral care.

For example, instead of confining our teaching to classrooms, we could offer courses in the Bible, the teachings of our church, and other subjects right in our churches and spiritual growth centers. These classes would be open not only to our seminary students, but to church members and the general public.

This would provide an automatic link between theology and life. Seminary students have a professional interest in learning the intricacies of theology. But for most other people, Swedenborg's pithy statement that "all religion relates to life" holds true. In a parish setting, the discussion and learning will be much more closely related to real life situations that people are facing. These are the same people that the seminary students will be serving once they begin their ordained ministries.

There are many other ways that our seminary could become an exciting, broad-based center for the training of head, heart, and hands for ministry. I look forward to hearing *your* ideas as our denomination renews its vision for the Swedenborg School of Religion.

*The Rev. Lee Woofenden is pastor of the Bridgewater Swedenborgian Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts.*



## FREE POSTERS

The Central Office has copies of the Swedenborgian Wayside Pulpit Series poster to give away! the series of 17" x 22" posters has almost twenty quotes by Swedenborg and another thirty one-lines, both challenging and witty, suitable for display at your place of worship. The shipping cost to receive these free posters is \$10.00. Place your order by sending a check to the Central office, or stop by and pick them up at no cost whatsoever!



## Swedenborg and Homelessness

(Continued from page 71)

are to do what they can to provide for themselves and their families in being in a position to contribute in uses (*Arcana Coelestia* no. 6934, *The Heavenly City*, no. 97). Yet Swedenborg also suggests an interdependence which recognizes limits to what individuals can do for themselves. He presents a general good as present in good communities.

The general good consists of the following things: that in any community or country (1) there be the divine among them; (2) there be justice among them; (3) there be morality among them; (4) there be industry, knowledge, and integrity among them; (5) there be necessities of life; (6) there be necessities for employment; (7) there be necessities for self defence; (8) there be a sufficiency of wealth, affording the above three necessities (*Doctrine of Charity*, no. 130).

Any of these elements not being pervasively present is beyond an individual's responsibility and ability to

provide. We can take the idea of general good as pointing to responsibilities of a society as a whole, communities and agencies within it, and individuals with sufficient influence to contribute to the general good being furthered. Providing housing for all, and providing jobs for all who can work, could be taken as extensions of this account of the general good.

Vitally important for responding to homelessness and other conditions is acting from compassion and understanding. Part of charity or love of the neighbor, according to Swedenborg, is being compassionate to sufferings of others as towards self (*Arcana Coelestia*, no. 351). Having this compassion involves listening and hearing, understanding what people are going through, being sensitive to realities of their lives, and being able to respond from that

understanding and sensitivity.

Cooperative and compassionate efforts to make housing and jobs available could draw from a variety of groups (church groups being part), agencies, levels of government, and concerned individuals. Similar efforts could take place with job training, health care, child care assistance, and other needed supports. Such efforts can work to support individual responsibility while recognizing realities of interdependence.

***Central in applying Swedenborgian ideas to these conditions is a balance between individual responsibility and interdependence.***

*The Rev. Dr. Theodore Klein is professor of theology and philosophy at the Swedenborg School of Religion. He is the author of The Power of Service, published by J. Appleseed in 1998.*





# Mark of the Beast . . . or Mark of the Blessed?

## Can Tattoos Be a Medium for Spiritual Ideas?

A. J. Geddes (with Mona Connor)

When we see someone wearing a tattoo, what impression first springs to our mind about that person? A rugged individualist, a Hell's Angel, or a person expressing an aspect of their spirituality? These days, with the renewed popularity of tattoos provided by Generation X, and Next, we might even think, "trendy."

Since ancient times, and even until the present day, people have used some sort of outward sign to tell the world who they are, what they are, what they believe. The English word *tattoo* is derived from the Tahitian word *tatu*, meaning *mark*. In some South Pacific cultures, tattoos are still used as part of their religious practices.

Tattooing has been traced back as far as ancient Egypt, and with the exception of Judaism and Islam which have strict prohibitions against tattoos, practically every culture, worldwide, has used a permanent mark to denote tribal and/or religious beliefs.

In the case of the Israelites the practice was proscribed:

Leviticus 19:28 "You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead, or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord."

Using the most basic form of tattooing, they cut their skin with a knife and rubbed the cremated ashes of family members into the cuts. Many times this resulted in death or a lost limb due to infection. Moreover, it was too similar in practice to some of the pagan customs of the area. Tattooing is outlawed in Islam for similar reasons, in accordance with its prohibition of graven images.

As was mentioned in a discussion about my own tattoos in an earlier *Messenger* article (October 1998), early Christians often wore a small cross or fish tattoo on their hands as a mark of recognition. But the first Christian emperor, Constantine, outlawed the practice, and tattooing languished in

Europe until the time of the Crusades.

At that time, the Crusaders encountered the Coptic Rite Christians of the Middle East, who to this day use elaborate tattooed images of the cross as an optional part of their religious practice. After this, the Crusaders often returned to their native lands tattooed with the Maltese Cross or a palm frond to identify themselves as veterans of the Holy Wars.

Mehendi, or henna tattoos, have always been an integral part of Hindu ceremonies. These are usually temporary. However, as a rapid transit conductor, I have noticed that some of my passengers, newly arrived from India, have small permanent tattoos written in Sanskrit to express some aspect of their religious beliefs.

We've established that tattoos have expressed spiritual values. But what do they mean for us today? In any given tattoo studio, marks of the beast and marks of the blessed occupy probably 40 percent of the available designs and vie equally for patrons' attention and interest. Images of Christ, crosses, angels, and other religious symbols share catalog space with images of Satan, demons, and even the ever popular comic book character, "Hot Stuff, the Lil' Devil"!

Generation X has moved the tattoo parlor from the red light district and the waterfront to one-stop shopping extravaganzas where one can buy clothing, shoes, CD's, and be pierced and tattooed, all in the same shopping trip. Many of the younger generation carry highly visible tattoos. And often, these are Chinese or Japanese ideograms representing God, love, peace, heaven, and other positive ideas.

My own tattoo artist, Mr. Leape, became so bored and cynical about being asked to do so many Asian symbols that one day he decided to bring a bit of humor to the situation. Selecting what he thought were the most visually attractive characters on a Chinese menu, he had them tattooed on his neck! Non-Chinese readers may be impressed, but Chinese readers laugh out loud when they read "Beef and broccoli"!

Since the time that the first human

accidentally discovered that ashes in an open cut would leave a permanent mark, humans have been tempted to wear their identity on their skin. But the permanence of tattoos also reflects commitment. Short of expensive laser treatment, tattoos last for a lifetime. In ancient times, committing oneself to the wrong mark could even mean one's death! And while the maturing crowd could accuse the young of caving into a superficial fashion trend, where once sacred imagery may risk being trivialized, ask young people what their tattoos mean to them. You may be surprised to learn how much thought and research went into the selection of their tattoos.

As for myself, as I said in a previous article, many reasons influenced my own choices about my tattoos. There is my Scottish heritage. Believe me, the Scottish were into body markings—big time! Since the 70s, I've had a small unobtrusive tattoo, but I was envious of the younger generation's boldness with the art.

After my wife's death over a year ago, my thinking began to focus more on acceptance of God's will, conscience, and divine intervention. These were things that had already brought me to the New Church in New York, and now were helping me through the worst time of my life. For better or worse, my own tattoos are an expression of these feelings. Especially one—a tribute to my wife's spirit, and her belief that none of us was put on this earth to be miserable.

Some people, especially those I have met at the New Church, have the true spirit of tolerance and acceptance that reflects Swedenborgian beliefs. True spirituality does come from within, and seeing past what is printed on the skin to know the person underneath is what really matters. But in America, maybe it pays to advertise.

What do you think?

*Al Geddes is a member of the New York New Church and wears the Swedenborgian cross among his new tattoos.*

*Mona Conner is a member of the New York New Church and our Communications Support Unit.* ❖



**The Swedenborgian Church's Nominating Committee has selected the following nominees as candidates for national offices in 1999.**

**VICE PRESIDENT**

1-year term

**Chris Laitner**

*Michigan, Michigan Association*

Over the past decade, I have had the honor of serving for two terms on the former Growth and Outreach Support Unit, participating for five of those six years as chair. Following that, I was elected to serve on General Council where I completed one term and was elected to a second term. Last summer, 1998, I was elected to the position of vice-president of convention.

I have endeavored to serve in this position as well as possible, assisting President Ron Brugler whenever and wherever necessary. It has been a wonderful year: I have been privileged to be part of the annual meeting of the Western Canada Conference, a meeting of the Ministries Support Unit, and a further "working meeting" with the Edmonton Church. I have also, as an executive member of Convention, been part of General Council's deliberations, and, through General Council's mandate to serve as the Board of Trustees of the National Church, been chosen to serve as the chair of that board. It has been an exciting year!

Currently, I am in my thirtieth year of teaching. I work for the Gladwin Community Schools in Gladwin, Michigan, where I teach sophomore English and upper level American Literature. I am still involved in the choral music program in the school, no longer as director, but as public and festival accompanist. I am in my sixth year as the English Department Chairman and am involved as a director in my district's curriculum council. I also serve on a multi-district, state-supported panel of educators who are writing assessment packages for the State Communication Arts Objectives. I direct two handbell choirs, one adult and one teen group, for a local Methodist church.

With a deep humility and a strong sense of the responsibility of the position, I would like to continue as the vice-president. I have enjoyed this year very much, and would like the opportunity to continue working at this level with the church as it (albeit with some pains) grows into the new millennium, bringing forward its exciting, important, and timely theology.

**RECORDING SECRETARY**

1-year term

**Gloria Toot**

*Ohio, Ohio Association*

I am a longtime member of the Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church in Cincinnati. I have served at various times, on their board of directors and as program committee chair, youth/Sunday school coordinator, and other positions. In addition the church employed me as office manager/administrative assistant for about twelve years. I was elected recording secretary of the denomination in 1991 and served through March 1995 when I moved to Japan for two years. I was reelected recording secretary at the 1997 convention and again in 1998. I would like to continue to serve the church in this capacity.

**TREASURER**

1-year term

**Polly Baxter**

*Maryland, Mid-Atlantic Association*

I have been deeply involved in the finances and accounting for the denomination for the last ten years. I served as assistant to the treasurer for five years, and the last two years as treasurer. In 1992, I received the President's Award to the Lay Person of the Year for the work performed in redesigning the chart of accounts and bringing the church bookkeeping into line with the most recent generally accepted accounting practices. I am currently on the Investment Committee, the Augmentation Fund Committee, and serve as chair of the Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit. My professional background is in accounting, computer application design, strategic planning and general management practices. I view my work with the finances of the church as my personal ministry and would like to continue to serve in the capacity of treasurer.

**GENERAL COUNCIL**

3-year term—(1 minister, 2 laypersons)

**Lawrence D. Conant**

*Massachusetts, Massachusetts Association*

I currently serve many positions in our church organization: moderator, Bridgewater, Massachusetts Society, chair of the board, Blairhaven Retreat &

Conference Center; president, Massachusetts New Church Union; member, Investment Committee for General Convention; trustee, Church of the Holy City, Washington, D.C.; member, General Council.

I was first elected to General Council in 1995 to fill the remaining term of Larry Young. The General Council meetings since that election have made me realize the breadth of issues that come before the Council. My broad experience in the above-named organizations have provided the background necessary to take an active part in the discussions which have occurred at the General Council meetings. I would greatly appreciate being reelected to serve an additional three-year term on General Council.

**Nancy Freestone**

*California, Pacific Coast Association*

San Francisco being a very busy parish, I've had a chance to do quite a lot during my 24 years of membership.

I've served several three-year terms on our church council and have twice been president for that group. I've been a member of the Worship Committee, Wedding Ministry Committee, Hospitality Committee, Buildings and Grounds Committee and others (some of which are no longer active). San Francisco has hosted two conventions, and I was active in the planning of those occasions as well as a few Pacific Coast Association weekends. I've attended annual conventions as often as my work schedule would permit.

I'm concerned that we need new faces and new energy to propel us into the future. I'm a fiscal (yet compassionate) conservative with the belief that one should "listen first" before trying to lead. My career as a buyer for a major equipment manufacturer has encouraged me to become a skilled negotiator, a diplomat, and a policy maker. I believe these qualities, along with my passionate love for my Church and its people, will make me effective as a member of General Council.

More recently, I am serving on the board of directors for the Pacific Coast Association and am the newest president of the Pacific Coast Association Alliance. I'm excited about serving my local and regional

*(Continued on page 78)*

(Continued from page 77)

church groups, and, with your support, am eager to expand to national service at this time. Your faith in my abilities warms my heart. Thank you.

**Rev. Jerry Poole**  
*Delaware, Mid-Atlantic Association*

Over the past decade, the Nominating Committee has asked me to run for General Council several times, but I declined because of involvement as an SSR trustee. I am not running for reelection as an SSR trustee. I am running for General Council because I would like us to expand our looking outward as a Church—to serve needs in the world and to offer what we have. I do not want the Church to be a maintenance organization. During my time on the SSR Board, the school became more visible and more effective in its program, and more credible in the church and theological communities. Financial support and interest increased. I would like to do my part to help a similar kind of thing happen in Convention, that is, be a contributor to the development of other new approaches for our church to be an alive, effective force in this world.

My experience includes service on the SSR Boards of Managers, Directors, and Trustees; the Board of Intervention; Leadership Education Institute (L.E.I.); and various camp staffs. At one time or another, I have visited almost every Swedenborgian Church and center in North America. I have led many worship services at the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, and served as chair and member of its trustees. Currently I serve on the Council of Ministers' Executive Committee, and as consultant to the Swedenborgian Church Investment Committee. I have significant expertise in finance and business.

### COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT UNIT (COMSU) 3-year term

**Mona Diane Conner**  
*New York, New York Association*

As people often say regarding the possibility of reelection to a second term, I feel I am in the midst of several efforts on COMSU's behalf, and I hope to

see these through to completion if reelected. I am involved in working to improve the design look of *The Messenger* with Patte LeVan, the editor, and the designer at Town & Country. As the only current COMSU member-at-large who is not also involved with the Swedenborg Foundation as a board member, editor, or writer, I can provide the group with a more objective ear, regarding the needs of our denomination to publish Swedenborgian material from its own perspective, tailored to the appropriate audience. As the Swedenborg Foundation and J. Appleseed each evolve, the growth of these publishers demands that finer distinctions be made between the publishing efforts of each. It is one of our goals to bring increased clarity to J. Appleseed's role in the next several years.

I am also developing a handbook for the denomination that will be written specifically for new and prospective members of our faith, putting forth basic Swedenborgian theology in a format that is accessible and welcoming to newcomers, whether young adults from Swedenborgian families, or those who come to us from other spiritual traditions.

We have a group of people now serving on COMSU who are bringing together a variety of important skills, and a cooperative spirit to our efforts. Each of us has had to park our proprium at the door along the way in order to work in concert, and we've shown a willingness to do so for the betterment of the denomination. This is what "church" is about. I would be pleased to continue serving with this dedicated team for another term.

### EDUCATION SUPPORT UNIT (EDSU)

**Joy Fleming**  
*Michigan, Michigan Association*

I was born into the Swedenborgian Church in Detroit, which is now the Royal Oak Swedenborgian Church. I have taught Sunday school there and at Almont Summer School. I am presently on the Almont Retreat Center board and have attended camp most of my life. I feel that children, teens, and young adults are the future of our churches and am excited about what is being offered to them by our denomination as compared to what was available to me as I was growing up. I would enjoy serving on EDSU and participating in our exciting future.

### FINANCIAL AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES SUPPORT UNIT (FPRSU)

**Frances McIntosh**  
*Ontario, Canada Association*

I would like to serve a second term on FPRSU because I feel strongly that a firm financial base has an essential role to play in the Swedenborgian Church. I was born into a family that had strong roots in the Kitchener Society, and I have served that church in many capacities, as a Sunday school teacher and superintendent of the Sunday school, as church president, and as organizer and supporter in many activities. Recently I served eight years as treasurer, and I think I understand at least the basics of church economics. My term on General Council also has given me an insight into the many activities of General Convention committees, and a background knowledge of their goals and operations. The financial affairs of Convention are sufficiently complicated that, having spent an initiation period, I feel I can make a significant contribution in a second term.

### INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SUPPORT UNIT (IMSU)

3-year term

**Philip Bae**  
*New York*

Personal Information:

Place of birth: South Korea (country),  
Jun-Ra-Nam-Do (state), Kwang-Ju (city).  
Birth date: 12/23/1974  
Date of Entrance to USA: 9/1988  
Status: Permanent Resident - currently a student at SSR  
Favorite Food: Grilled Kim-Chi  
Favorite Sports: Skiing  
Favorite Musician: Andrea Bocelli

Education:

- Graduated from I.S. 125, New York
- Graduated from Bayside High School, New York
- Bachelor of Arts in Computer Science at City University of New York, Queens College.
- Currently taking Harvard University Information Technology Courses.

Work Experience:

- 9/1994-9/1995: Quiny Computers, Inc.
- Lecturer/Private Tutor in DOS/Windows/MSOffice and etc.

(Continued on page 79)

(Continued from page 78)

- Lead Technician in Computer Troubleshooting and Network Maintenance.
- 1/1996-7/1996: 3C Labs, Inc.
- Lead 3D Programmer in Building Game Engine.
- 2/1998-9/1998: Game Express, Inc.
- Internet Operation Director.
- Web Application Server Programmer as E-Commerce Solution Provider.
- System Administrator in Windows NT v4.0 Network Environment.

## Misc. Work Experience:

- Worked as a Freelance consultant, providing solutions for small businesses.
- Maintained an Internet Server built from ground up.
- Published various books with in-house Desktop publishing equipments.

## Misc. Skills:

- Very capable in DOS/Windows v3.1/Windows 95/98/NT Operating Systems.
- Skillful in C/C++/Pascal/ColdFusion.
- Ability to develop Direct X enabled applications.
- Expert in Internet Technologies including HTML/HTTP/FTP/SMTP/POP3/SSL/TCP/IP/etc.

## MINISTRIES SUPPORT UNIT (MINSU)

**Barbara Halle**  
*Indiana, Illinois Association*

Having become a member of the Swedenborgian Church in 1991, I still feel like a relative newcomer considering there are so many lifers in this denomination. My daughters actually started teaching me about the religion about 16 years ago when they began attending Sunday school. Since I joined the church, over the years I have found that, thankfully, I have begun to understand the importance of charity and usefulness in this life. And it's made for a bit less spare time on my part: in the eight years that I've been involved with LaPorte New Church, my roles have included Sunday school superintendent (5 years) and teacher, president and treasurer (3 years each), and secretary of EDSU (4 years). I am currently serving a one-year unexpired term on MINSU, and again as local church treasurer. I've sponsored children at Almont New Church Assembly for five years and taught several summer school sessions. For all the time and energy I've given my church, I can't imagine it being

spent in any more worthwhile manner. This church has given balance to my life. I have a heartfelt commitment to it and a strong desire to help it thrive, not just survive. It is an honor to be re-nominated to serve on MINSU.

**Rev. Dr. Donna Keane**  
*Massachusetts, Massachusetts Association*

I graduated from SSR and was ordained in 1986. I hold an M. Div. (1986) and D. Min. (1988) from Andover Newton Theological School.

After serving as minister at the Newtonville church for one year. I worked with the Massachusetts Association at the Swedenborg Library in Boston for two years where I also had a pastoral counseling practice.

In 1990, I accepted the position of minister at the Elmwood New Church, in Elmwood, Massachusetts where I served until 1997.

I have held positions within General Convention on the Committee on Admission to the Ministry, served as chair of the Council of Ministers for one year, sat on the executive committee of the Council, and as chair of COM sat on General Council for one year.

I have been in private practice as a pastoral counselor for the last 13 years and am a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

As a minister and counselor who has approached both traditional and non-traditional types of ministry, I bring a fresh approach to the issues confronting ministry as we go into the next millennium.

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE (elect 1 for 5-year term)

**Linda Kraus**  
*Kansas, Kansas Association*

I have been a member of the Pretty Prairie New Church for 33 years. During that time I have served, and am still serving, in a rotation as Sunday school pianist, Sunday school teacher, church organist, and with my husband Vernon, take a turn presenting the Sunday worship service. I am president of our Women's Service Guild and on the Board of Trustees for the Kansas Association. I try to serve the Lord in whatever way I can and would enjoy the opportunity to be a member of the Nominating Committee.

**Stella Podmore**  
*Alberta, Western Canada Association*

I have been involved in various positions in the Edmonton church, church board, Sunday school, Women's Alliance, newsletter, Altar Committee and Girl Guides through the years.

I've been to convention several times in the last few years and have assisted with registration. I'm friendly, outgoing, conscientious, and interested in this position and will do my very best.

## COMMITTEE ON ADMISSION TO THE MINISTRY (CAM) (elect 2 for 1-year terms)

**Rev. Marlene Laughlin**  
*California, Pacific Coast Association*

I am presently serving on CAM, and have previously served on CAM and the Board of Trustees of the Swedenborg School of Religion. Prior to ordination I was a biology instructor at Ball State University and had marketing and sales experience in numerous scientific, real estate, and financial institutions.

My ministry training has included graduation from SSR, M. Div. at Andover Newton, ABD in pastoral psychology at Andover-Newton, advanced CPE (national chaplaincy and field supervisor status). My ministry experience includes serving six years as minister at the New Jerusalem Church of Bridgewater, Massachusetts; four years as chaplain counselor at Bournewood Mental Hospital, Brookline, Massachusetts; I am presently serving as a chapel minister at Wayfarers Chapel, Rancho Palos Verdes, California.

I am dedicated to serving convention through listening and responding to the needs of the church for well-prepared ministers, and supporting ministry candidates re their academic and experiential preparation for ministry.

**Pat Tukos**  
*Indiana, Illinois Association*

I am a longtime member of the LaPorte New Church, now serving as president of our society. I am also actively involved with the wedding ministry and the Women's Alliance.

On the national level, I've served on CAM for the past two years and previous

(Continued on page 80)

(Continued from page 79)

to this, on EDSU for six years. I've attended several Cabinet and General Council meetings and the last seven annual convention sessions.

I would very much like to continue serving as the denomination's lay member on CAM.

## SWEDENBORG SCHOOL OF RELIGION (SSR) BOARD

(elect 2 for 3-year terms)

**John Titus**

*Ohio, Ohio Association*

I am currently serving on the SSR Board and finishing my first term. As with any new challenge, it takes time to fully comprehend the complexities that are involved in truly serving the needs of students, faculty, and administration relative to the needs of the church. I conscientiously undertake this monumental task.

I do offer a unique perspective and try to utilize my experience, my skills, and my heartfelt caring, which are necessary in making decisions that are going to impact people's lives. I am a person who is continuously regenerating, as is our theology school and our church. I have a plethora of experiences from life, work, and in the church that lend themselves to serving on the SSR Board.

A brief summary of some of these experiences include the following:

- Thirteen years as an administrator/student advocate in higher education.
- Nine years working in mental health facilities in a counseling capacity with troubled youth.
- A Bachelor's degree in Social Services from Urbana University.
- A Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling from Wright State University.
- Professionally licensed as a LPCC (Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor).
- Experience serving on a number of boards, e.g. Montessori school, credit union, advisory boards, General Council, etc.
- Extensive committee work and professional affiliations.
- A genuine sense of caring and a joie de vivre.

I've been married for 26 years to my best friend, Bev, and have been blessed with four wonderful children, who have

helped me tremendously in prioritizing my life. I have a passion for adventure in the great outdoors and love to run, bike, hike, and play in the woods. People, travel, music, reading, and constant learning are my interests. Daily, I am discovering how I can better manifest my "use" to serve my community. Serving on the SSR Board is an important way for me to be of use.

**Diana Kirven Stickney**

*Phoenix, Arizona*

Education:

- Master of Divinity, Weston Jesuit School of Theology, May, 1978 Bachelor of Arts
- German Literature cum laude, Drew University, May, 1973.

Employment:

- Coordinator, Master of Arts in Theology degree program, University of San Francisco off-campus location at Kino Institute in Phoenix, Arizona, September 1989 to present.
- Adjunct Faculty in Theology and Spirituality, Kino Institute, 1985-1990.
- Coordinator of Religious Education, Our Lady of the Valley Parish, 1981-1982;
- St. Jerome Parish, September-December, 1980;
- Holy Family Parish. 1978-1980.

Related Activities:

- School Board member, St. Jerome School, 1986-1990; 1995-present.

Personal: Married 20 years with four children. Hobbies: bicycling, hiking, traveling, reading.

I believe that I would bring to the SSR Board of Trustees a valuable combination of experience, professional expertise and personal interest. I am a daughter of the Rev. Dr. and Marian Kirven and was raised in the Swedenborgian Church. Although I am now a member of the Roman Catholic Church, my Swedenborgian upbringing still forms the foundation of my Christian faith.

Since childhood I wanted to study theology and began my studies in 1974 at the Swedenborg School of Religion. A desire to expand my horizons led me to the Catholic school, but my commitment to theological education has never wavered. In 1978 I moved to Phoenix where my husband was already employed in Youth Ministry for the Catholic Diocese of Phoenix. I was employed in various ministerial and educational positions in the church before I was hired in 1989 for my present position.

The University of San Francisco is a Catholic Jesuit university which conducts a fully accredited off-site graduate program in theology at Kino Institute in Phoenix. As program coordinator I am responsible for public relations and marketing, student recruitment and admissions, registration, enrollment, and completion of degree requirements for about forty students. I serve as their unofficial, but on-site student advisor and financial aid advisor and host their commencement ceremony. I provide support services for the faculty, who travel here from San Francisco to teach their courses. I collaborate closely with Kino Institute, our host institution, to maintain a mutually beneficial environment for theological education and ministerial preparation.

I anticipate with excitement the opportunity to share my interests and experience with the other trustees of the Swedenborg School of Religion. I would consider it an honor and a privilege to serve the school in this capacity. ❖

## Preview of '99 Convention Mini-courses

As of this writing (more to be revealed in the June *Messenger*) the following mini-course lineup is:

**Visioning the Future of SSR**

*Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake & SSR Faculty*

Presentation of faculty thoughts on the future of Swedenborgian theological education followed by participant input. Exploration of models for a flexible curriculum.

**Spirituality**

*Dr. Elizabeth Gutfeldt*

**The Church Online: The Internet**

*Philip Bae*

**Mind/Body/Spirit Wellness**

*Marianne & Skuli Thorhallsson*

**Christian Community Counseling and Non-violent Compassionate Communication**

*Rev. Gladys Wheaton*

**The Circle of Simplicity**

*Cecile Andrews*

Other presenters include: The Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven, Renee Billings, Teen/Transitions Panel Discussion—topics to be announced. Presentation on Johnny Appleseed, presenter to be announced. ❖

## NOW, YOU CAN BE A CARD CARRYING SWEDENBORGIAN

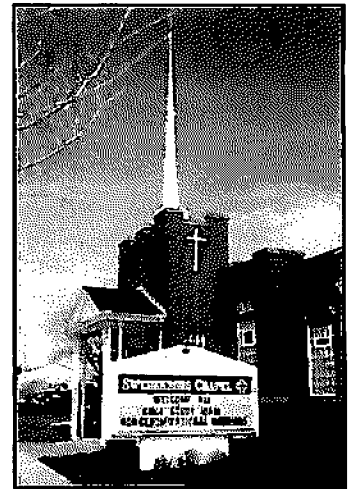
*Eric Allison*

You can have your own (S.I.C.) Swedenborgian Identification Card. No kidding. This tongue-in-cheek fund-raising idea has been approved by General Council to raise money for the Millennium Youth Fund. The MYF has been established to use only the interest of its endowment for youth programs. All of you who give the minimum donation of \$100 can receive your own wallet size ID card. Central Office now accepts Visa, Mastercard, and American Express, and can bill your credit card for \$100 or two \$50 payments. To get your S.I.C. now, simply call Central Office at 617-969-4240.

If you want your photograph on the card, send either a color or black and white photo no larger than one inch square to Eric Allison at 240 Black Walnut Place, Kitchener, Ontario N2P 1T5 and he'll send you your card. If you are attending this year's convention you can have your photo taken and get your card before leaving convention. You will have taken a step toward providing programs for young Swedenborgians throughout the next millennium. ❖

## Cleveland Church's New Steeple Installed

Swedenborg Chapel Spiritual Growth Center in Cleveland celebrated the installation of its new steeple Sunday, March 21, at the morning worship service. The Rev. Ron Brugler, denomination president and a former Chapel pastor, conducted the dedication. With the earlier installation of a colorful new signboard and major Chapel renovations, the revitalization program is now complete. Visitors found a warm welcome at the celebration worship, with a potluck luncheon following the service. ❖



*New steeple and signboard at Swedenborg Chapel, Cleveland, Ohio.*

## The Pacific Coast Retreat

Every one of us has felt sadness, anger, grief, fear, and doubt. And almost all of us have learned to suppress these emotions. We think we are protecting ourselves from anticipated hurt, but instead we are preventing others from touching us where or when we are most vulnerable. We shut ourselves in as we shut others out. In order for us to grow, to develop into the persons we were meant to be, we must allow our hearts to break open. It can be terrifying to open to all the possibilities of our internal and external experiences; to be vulnerable to all that life has to offer, whether it be joy or sadness, pain or pleasure, hurt or healing. A broken heart is an open heart!

To open our hearts is to open ourselves to healing. We allow more and more of our life to be lived with our hearts, not just our bodies or our minds. Like the walnut, becoming open is allowing the possibility of new growth, of freedom, of healing, of developing our genuine human nature. With a broken heart, we are open to love, to healing, to joy and yes, we are vulnerable to hurt and to pain, but these are also a part of being alive! With a broken heart, we are open to Life in all its aspects. Life: the most precious of all gifts—*The Broken Heart*, by Dr. Lloyd J. Thomas

I begin this report by quoting rather voluminously from Dr. Lloyd Thomas because he comes the closest I have ever found to describing a very delicate process which has always eluded me as being veritably indescribable: the process of growth which points us in the direction of becoming the persons we were always meant to be and opens us to all of life. Now that I have his description available to me, I can report that during this year's retreat, from March 5–7 at the Center for Spiritual Development in Orange, California, Perry Martin, an exceptionally gifted and skilled psychotherapist from Temenos (the Swedenborgian retreat center in West Chester, Pennsylvania) guided us gently into those waters in which we could freely decide whether or not we were willing to dive in and 'break open our hearts.' The number of us who 'dove' is a testament to the esteem in which Perry is held and the power

of the faith and love which abounded throughout this two day workshop of 13 people (10 women and 3 men), most of whom knew each other from previous years and other groups.

Friday evening, after we had checked in and allowed our outside world to shrink into the background, we began with a group healing, a literal laying on of hands for a much beloved participant, who has, for the past few years, been opening herself to life so courageously throughout some extremely cruel and painful circumstances, all totally beyond her control. The power and beauty of the love and healing in the room that night was palpable. All felt gifted, all were given to. Miraculously, new growth had begun already.

On Saturday, we were allowed to go still deeper with a lovely guided imagery sending us into becoming tiny caterpillars, followed by moving around the room to look for a safe place for our cocoons (wrapping ourselves up completely in blankets) while beautiful music chanted in the background and various poetry from Rumi, Pesha Gertler and David Whyte were read by Perry. When it was time for us to move out of our cocoons and become butterflies, we were asked to pick out whatever we needed from the many available art supplies which were provided so that we might put into pictures where our 'rebirth' had taken us. Each of us took turns sharing our pictures with the group and gleaned deeper and deeper meanings as others freely associated to what we 'thought' we drew.

I could go on and on, but instead I simply wish to add that the grounds are beautiful, the food delicious, and the pace decidedly peaceful. All the ingredients were there that could possibly be needed in order for healing and growth to take place. Healing happened. Growth occurred. Put me down for next year!

*Dr. Evelyn I. Challis, psychotherapist* ❖

# OPINION

## In God's Hands

Dear Friends:

After reading the articles in the March and April, '99 *Messengers* on the sale of the Swedenborg School of Religion and the Cambridge church, I felt optimistic and hopeful. I reflected, "Change is life, change is good. We now have an opportunity to implement new, exciting innovative methods of preparing our ordinands for the ministry." Lots of ideas flourished in my imagination. Perhaps we could formalize a collaborative relationship with Andover Newton in the education of seminarians. Our professors could teach on their campus, exposing students from other faith communities to Swedenborgian thought. Earning their Masters of Divinity degrees through the BTI system, our future clergy would be better equipped to engage in multi-faith endeavors at the local level. As training centers, our churches could more fully embrace their role in preparing SSR students for the ministry. Perhaps student enrollment might increase, as we respond creatively to the complex needs of working families.

Released from the challenge to provide an M. Div. equivalent curriculum, SSR could focus on what it does best: using the action/reflection model, provide opportunities for professional and personal development by teaching a Swedenborgian curriculum and field placements, both within and outside the Swedenborgian community.

My thoughts continued on this imaginary exploration of possibility throughout the next few days. I still continue to believe in these possibilities. Then, in talking with a friend of these developments, it hit me hard. My thoughts turned to the past. I was married in the Cambridge church. My son was baptized in that church. I thought of Paul Giunta and the beautiful altar cloth he made, the flowers and plants with which he glorified the church. I recalled the fun I had talking to visitors the summer I restored the paintings in the alcove of the sanctuary. I remembered the Christmas Eve candle lighting service my father and I conducted together—one of my childhood dreams that came true. I remembered his memorial service.

Many more memories, faces, events came floating to the surface of my consciousness. I recalled the years I spent at

SSR as a student; building community, matriculating, developing my professional identity. I remembered the times I visited SSR after ordination in my various capacities serving on the denominational level. I flashed back to the innumerable conversations, laughter, tears that were shared among friends and colleagues.

A deep sadness, fear and anxiety came over me. I began to ask, "What if this is the beginning of the end? What if these property losses are just one more nail in the coffin for the Swedenborgian movement? What will happen to the students, the professors, the staff of SSR? Where will be the 'headquarters,' the 'mother-lode' of our denomination?"

I am still grieving these losses as these questions echo through my mind and heart. As I grieve I think of all of you—my fellow Swedenborgians, my extended family. I know you grieve, too. I know some are as anxious and concerned as I.

In these reflections, I hear the call of God to enter into a prayerful state of being, that we may listen and attend to our fears, our hopes and dreams. I hear the call of God to walk carefully upon the path of decision as we face the challenges before us. I hear the call of God to embrace and care for one another as we mourn, as we heal, and as we allow the re-birthing of our hopes, dreams, and visions to inform these decisions.

I do not want to imagine walking through Harvard Square and seeing our beloved Cambridge church as anything but our Swedenborgian Church. It is a sacrilege, in my humble opinion, to do anything but maintain that church as a sacred place of worship for all to enjoy. It will take time, reconciliation, and healing for me to come to terms with this change. But I am powerless over this event and I will learn to accept it.

I am grateful for the many creative ideas so thoughtfully expressed in the *Messenger* articles. These ideas give us hope, courage, and inspiration. Let me in advance express my gratitude to all those who will be working hard in the reconstruction of our seminary and the caretaking our Cambridge parish. Your efforts will not go unnoticed.

I trust that these efforts will be manifested out of a healthy process in which exploration, planning, implementation, and evaluation will be a part. I trust this will include checks and balances to protect our resources from which to build upon. I trust this will include the voices of many, both lay and professional, both within and without the confines of our Swedenborgian fellowships.

I hope that all our contributions in

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Convention ministries and members please order from the Central Office, 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02458. Non-Convention sponsored ministries: please order from J. Appleseed & Co., 3200 Washington St., San Francisco, CA 94121, at 50¢ each plus postage. ❖

this endeavor, be they ideas and prayers from afar or concrete actions onsite, will add to God's glory and be used according to God's will. I pray for God's blessings upon us all, that we hear and abide to God's call in this sad but promising time of transition and growth.

*Rev. Susan Turley, Executive Director  
Living Waters HIV Ministry* ❖

## TEMENOS Spring/Summer Program

### ONGOING PROGRAMS

**T'AI CHI** ~ Melanie Quinn  
Thursdays, 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**YOGA** ~ Doreen Hardy  
Mondays, 6:40 to 8:10 p.m.  
Thursdays 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.

### APRIL PROGRAMS

**FREEDOM THE CREATIVE SELF**  
Lynn Miller  
Saturday, April 17, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**RITUAL FOR HEALING GRIEFS  
OF BIRTHING**  
Kayta Gajdos  
Sunday, April 18, 3:00 to 5:30 p.m.

**REIKI SUPPORT GROUP**  
Nancy Mattila  
Wednesday, April 21, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

**SOUL'S JOURNEY ~  
FIRE'S BREATH**  
Laurie Weaver  
Saturday, April 24, 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
Sunday, April 25, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**HELPING CLIENTS WITH ISSUES  
OF POWER AND MONEY**  
Lorraine Sando  
Friday, April 30, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

**MY FAMILY, MYSELF: Healing from  
Dysfunctional Family Patterns**  
Lorraine Sando  
Friday, April 30, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.  
Saturday, May 1, 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

### MAY PROGRAMS

**SING IT! ~ Millie Grenough**  
Friday, May 7, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

**BODY VOICE CONNECTION**  
Millie Grenough  
Saturday, May 8, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

### JUNE PROGRAMS

**A DAY OF MINDFULNESS**  
*Water the Seeds of Deep Peace, Joy,  
and the Light Within*  
Nancy Mattila  
Saturday, June 5, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**GETTING THE LOVE YOU WANT:**  
*A Workshop for Couples*  
Walt Ciecko  
Friday, June 18, 6:30 p.m. through  
Sunday, June 20, 2:30 p.m.

**KEEPERS OF THE EARTH:**  
*A Summer Camp*  
Ruth Tafel  
Monday, June 21 through Friday,  
June 25, 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.

**SOUL'S JOURNEY - FIRE'S BREATH**  
Laurie Weaver  
Saturday, July 10, 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
Sunday, July 11, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



## PASSAGES

### Baptisms

**Anderson**—Thomas Glenn Anderson was baptized into the Christian faith February 28, 1999, at the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, the Rev. Lee Woolfenden officiating.

**Kennedy**—Kelly (Schellenberg) Kennedy, camper and staff person at Paulhaven, was baptized into the Christian faith July 26, 1998, at Paulhaven Summer Camp, St. Paul, Alberta, the Rev. Paul Tremblay officiating.

**Mazer**—Tyran Paul Janvier Mazer, son of Charissa Mazer and Kerwin Wright (Janvier) and grandson of Hilda Epp, was baptized into the Christian church July 26, 1998, at the Paulhaven Summer Camp, St. Paul, Alberta, the Rev. Paul Tremblay officiating.

### Confirmations

**Mazer**—Charissa Anita Mazer was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church July 26, 1998, at Paulhaven Summer Camp, St. Paul, Alberta, the Rev. Paul Tremblay officiating. Charissa has been actively involved with camp for years and serves as Sunday school teacher in the Saskatoon Society. She is the daughter of Diane Epp.

**Brown, Cederbom, Dennis, Georges, Harren, Koskela, Lindsey, Marcus, Moore, Rice, Roberts, Russell, Speas—**

Laurilee, Brown, Dr. Gunnar Cederbom, Steve Dennis, Carol Georges, Eva & Bob Harren, Terrie and Jukka Koskela, Jennifer Lindsey, Rodrigo Marcus, Kate & Wesley Moore, Courtney & Ted Rice, Margaret Roberts, Betsy Russell, & Kathy Speas were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church March 14, 1999, the Rev. Drs. James Lawrence and Rachel Rivers officiating.

**Masek**—Linda Masek was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church January 24 at the Swedenborg Chapel in Cleveland, Ohio, the Rev. John Billings officiating.

### Deaths

**Jones**—Elsa Jones, member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world March 6, 1999. A memorial service was conducted in the San Francisco church March 15, the Rev. Rachel Rivers officiating.

### Church Family News

Polly Baxter, our Convention treasurer, underwent heart surgery in February. She has recuperated sufficiently to return to work. Cards and letters are appreciated. Polly's address is 4720 Bel Pre Road, Rockville, Maryland 20853.

## Farewell to Erni With Love & Gratitude



The Rev. Ernest Martin has served as pastor of the Swedenborgian Church and director of Temenos Retreat Center since 1986. His clarity of vision and commitment to the Temenos mission have nourished the development of Temenos as a sacred space. Many lives have been touched, fed, supported and healed through the services of the church and through the workshops, programs and retreats held at Temenos. We wish to say thank you to Rev. Martin, and to bless his entrance into the next phase of his life's journey.

The Messenger and the Communications Support Unit also wish to add our warmest thanks to Erni for all the years we were so graciously hosted at Temenos for our COMSU meetings. Erni went out of his way to look after our comfort, treating each of us like a close family member who had come home for a reunion. He made sure we were fed no matter how late we arrived, often cheerfully going out to pick up late arrivals at the airport. We will miss you, Erni! ❖



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.

## Susannah Carrie Called to Temenos— *Erni Martin Plans June Retirement*

The Swedenborgian Church at Temenos and the Temenos Retreat and Conference Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania, are pleased to announce that Susannah L. Currie has accepted the call to serve as minister/director following the retirement of the Rev. Ernest O. Martin in June. Susannah will be ordained into the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church on June 26, 1999. She has been a part-time seminary student since 1992, receiving her Masters of Divinity degree from the Bangor Theological Seminary in May of 1998. She studied clinical pastoral care at the Maine Medical Center where she continues to serve as an on-call hospital chaplain.

Susannah has served the national church as Secretary of the American New Church Sunday School Association, assistant to the convener of convention in 1998, and onsite coordinator for the Council of Ministers' Retreat in February 1999.

Susannah and her husband Deane have three children, Sage Serene (22), Grace Helene (16), and Benjamin Sanborn (12). The entire family has been active in the Portland church since 1989. They have participated in the Almont winter retreats and



*Grace, Sage and Ben Currie.*

the Fryeburg New Church Assembly where Susannah has lectured the last two years.

Susannah, who comes to ministry with a back-

ground in accounting, will be helped in the retreat ministry by her husband, Deane, whose work experience has been divided between hotel management and adult education. Deane has worked in all areas of the hospitality industry and is currently in a management position at The Black Point Inn, a four-diamond resort. Deane has much enthusiasm for the 'ministry of hospitality' to which he brings varied and useful skills. In his education career, he is especially proud of his role in implementing the adult education program. "Worksmart" at a local manufacturing firm that employs 500 people speaking 56 different languages.



*Susannah and Deane Currie*

Previously known as Susanne Lorraine, Susannah has written book and movie reviews for *The Messenger* and compiled a prayer booklet entitled, *Family Graces and Bedtime Prayers*, which was published by J. Appleseed. Her essay, "A Dance of Discovery," will be included in the Swedenborg Foundation's upcoming book *Rooted in Spirit: A Harvest of Women's Wisdom*.

The Curries are excited about both the mission of the Swedenborgian Church and the outreach ministry of the Temenos Retreat and Conference Center. Susannah has long felt the importance of Swedenborg's writings to her own understanding of a life of "use." Part of her call to ministry is the desire to help others discover how Swedenborgian theology can help them understand their own journey. ❖

(See *Farewell to Erni*, p. 83).

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