

THE MESSENGER

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May 2000

Grandmama and Thoughts on Mothers Day



My maternal grandmother died before I was born, and my paternal grandmother died a few years ago. I met Liz's grandmother four years ago when she was 86.

At that time she was living on her own in Deerfield Beach, Florida. Liz, my housemate, would often make the four-hour drive to bring her here where she could visit her family and friends for a long weekend. It didn't take long for me to feel natural calling her "Grandmama," as she was very kind and gracious to me and my daughter, Sola. She is "Grandmama" spoken with a Scottish brogue or "grandma-the-great" as her great-grandchildren call her. She is the life of any party and still harmlessly flirts with any gentleman, should the opportunity arise.

She came over from Scotland in 1930 at the urging of her fiancé, who had already emigrated to the U.S. He sent her money for her passage to America. She spent the money on chocolates and fun things, like getting her hair done. Again he sent her money for her passage. Once again, she spent the money on chocolates and other fun things. He sent her the passage money once more with a note saying that it was the last time he would send money. That time she chose to sail to America, where they were married. He passed away several years ago. It is easy for me to say that Grandmama has lived an interesting and colorful life.

Over the past two years, Grandma's

health has deteriorated. A neighbor called us, worried that Grandma could not get out of her apartment. Liz phoned and discovered that her grandmother couldn't figure out how to unlock her door and that "the children wouldn't stop crying." Grandma is fiercely independent. Liz went to Deerfield Beach with the intention of tricking her grandmother, or as Grandma later said, "I was kidnapped." Grandma had not been eating, had lost weight and was disoriented. On the trip home to Liz's mother's, Grandma was waving at her feet as if to say hello to them. Grandma's apartment of 25 years was sold and Grandma moved in with Adele, Liz's mother. Transition in life became significant for both Grandma and her daughter.

Last Thanksgiving, Grandma fell and broke her hip. She was in the hospital and rehab facility for a month. It was hard seeing her there, along with the further deterioration that had taken place. Liz was often mistaken for a "he," or an "uncle." Adele, her daughter became "My Mommy." The hospital was an hour away. Liz and Adele made countless trips there, often to find her sitting without her teeth or shivering because no one bothered to put her sweater on. In the end it became clear that it was either us or a nursing home. No one in the family wanted to see Grandma in a nursing home.

I recall stories of the child becoming the mother. As this Mother's Day approaches, it feels helpful to express some of my thoughts about the incredible experience this has become. Moving Grandma into our home was a conscious decision. It felt like the right thing to do.

TO ALL WHO PLAN TO ATTEND CONVENTION 2000 IN URBANA OHIO:

There were some significant misprints in the registration form that appeared in the April *Messenger*.

- Additional passengers in Burgundy Taxi vans are 50 cents, not \$50.
- The room rate for a single in a suite is \$63, not \$47.
- Dorm rooms are \$30, not \$40 and adults are permitted to be there as well as children.

We are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused. Corrected Registration Form is on page 72.

There is a sense of family values, and I found myself grateful that together we could pull it off. Yet, the first month felt like an eternity of frustrations and difficulties. Grandma needs constant care. The first month, as she was still recovering from her fall, she was not to get out of her wheel chair without assistance. But Grandma got up whenever she wanted to. Even if she agreed on the need not to, she couldn't remember that she was not supposed to get up. Night after night Liz slept outside her Grandmother's door so that when she awoke Liz would be there to assist her. She often refuses to eat and weighs only 103. She easily lashes out as we try to help her. If she could, she would sleep the day away. We listen to the doctor

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Census and Sensibility

In case you hadn't noticed, we get counted every ten years by the government. Some people feel reassured to know that somebody, if only a bureaucrat, is vitally interested in the fact that they exist and—if they've had the random luck to receive the infamous Long Form—in every detail of their lives. I can tell you that people who feel this way are in a distinct minority.

I state this from experience because in March I took a job as a temporary census worker. Of course we census workers are *all* temporary; it only *seems* as if it will never end. We bear the job title of Update Enumerators. I remind myself daily that it pays well and there are aspects of it that are fun and interesting. At this writing the census is still going on, and those of us chosen to canvass the nearby desert are still trudging through sand, wind, and undulating scarlet fronds of thorny ocotillo to ring doorbells and ask the questions on the forms in personal interviews. We also must take note of any newly built living quarters not indicated on our field maps and map spot them, then note them in our address listing book with matching sticky labels. It took four straight days of training for us to learn how to do all this.

This desert area is one of the few in our county that is being personally canvassed rather than allowing the respondents to mail in their completed forms, partly because of the numerous vacation homes in the area, which necessitates our filling out double forms called WHUHES (Whole Household Usual Home Elsewhere). WHUHES are not nearly as difficult to do as to explain to the people involved why they have to be accounted for in this way. I was standing in the dusty driveway of one house preparing to fill out a Notice of Visit card when a man roared up in his pickup and asked what I wanted. It was nearly dusk, and an almost gale force wind was kicking up as I explained with

increasing volume who I was and what I needed to do. He sat comfortably in his pickup answering questions through the open window while I stood there trying to keep pages from two different forms from blowing off my clipboard and mark x's in squares that I could no longer see.

"Bet you meet a lot of interesting people in this job," he concluded in parting. "Yeah," I said.

One man who got the long form invited me to come in and sit down. Then he delivered a diatribe against government waste—Census 2000 being a prime example, in his opinion, of wasted billions. He refused to answer any questions beyond verification of his name and address.

A woman balked at the query regarding the amount of her mortgage payment. "That's none of Clinton's business," she snapped. "Well, ma'am," I replied, in a fair imitation of Columbo, "this information is for demographic purposes, and you know Mr. Clinton has enough problems—I could be wrong, but I don't think you need to worry about his taking a personal interest in your mortgage payment." I hadn't responded with the party line of census defense, but it seemed to mollify her somewhat.

Some people were annoyed by the query as to what race they identified with. Several people who were obvious Caucasians appeared the most impatient with the question. "These aren't races, they're nationalities," one woman pointed out as she viewed the list. "And anyway," her husband added, "what difference does it make? We're all Americans."

Many respondents freely expressed negative opinions about the invasiveness of the long form, but actual rudeness was rare, and most of the people I encountered were gracious and considerate, offering me cold drinks and a comfortable place to sit, even lauding me for working at what they felt was a tough job.

When I took on this job, I knew I would encounter a whole range of attitudes. I girded myself, I thought, for most anything. But then, suddenly, I'm sitting in their homes and hearing their

stories between the lines, and it's an unexpected gift. I'm reminded again of how courageous and gallant and frightened and fragile and strong we all are. We need to be reminded of that often in order to love, and the rest is relatively unimportant.

A recently widowed, still grieving woman in her late seventies works her way slowly through the long-form question I'm reading to her, distressed that she can't recall things like the amount of her annual homeowners insurance and her electric bill, and she offers to try to locate the figures. "Don't worry," I tell her. "Just make a guess, it'll be ok." She's so frail she appears almost transparent in the late afternoon light. I thank her, tell her I'm sorry to put her through this ordeal. "Oh, that's all right," she says. "I enjoyed the company."

A couple living only on Social Security, their savings nearly exhausted by medical expenses, point out to me with joyful excitement the arrival of a pair of roadrunners that come to feed every evening in their beautifully kept garden.

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Grandmama and Thoughts on Mothers Day

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and Liz's older brother and wife who are nurses and try to follow their instructions. It is a daily inventive process of how to relate to Grandma lovingly and with dignity when she refuses to eat and the scale is dropping. The one thing no one is to mess with is Grandmama's purse...it is sacred and must weigh ten pounds. It is with her always. On occasion we have taken her purse away until she eats. It works and the scale then rises, but we are left always searching for the right way to work the days out with Grandma.

As time has gone by we have found resources: A good doctor who doesn't say to us "she's just old, you should put her in a nursing home," a doctor who has given her medication to stimulate her appetite...who really looks at Grandma and finds ways to help her. We've found a wonderful woman who works with the elderly and runs a weekday lunch and activities program which Grandma attends. Most of all, there is the constant support from Adele and the rest of the family who continually tell us we are doing great.

In spite of the frustrations, things are leveling out. Grandma swears she sees children playing in a field. She won't let the Toyota man on TV see her unless her hair is fixed up and she waves and laughs at the Rooms To Go commercials and "Want To Be A Millionaire"...you can only imagine. She can be so sharp and lucid, sitting at the breakfast table early in the morning as we scurry around with Sola on school days. Grandma looks across the table, knows Sola is Sola and often tells her what a good and smart girl she is. She goes to all of Sola's tennis lessons and watches, transfixed. Then, as we walk off the tennis court we ask, "Grandmama, where would you like to go for dinner?" and she responds, "Yes, I think the toilet paper is in the bathroom."

May 10th, Grandmama will turn 90 years old. Over and over I sense something so significant and spiritual is happening as we care for this 90-year-old woman. There's a lesson here. She

has lived 90 years! I want to remember that I am not just living with a woman with "senile dementia"...but with a woman who has a whole long span of stories, experiences, and a wisdom that may not easily be seen. I can only perceive glimpses of her. How sad it would be to see only a 90-year-old woman who says in regard to her daughter "My Mommy is coming to see me today," or who sees children in a field. I've come to love these "children" and I wonder, *what is it when she sees these children?* I will never know...but I have a feeling of awe as I wonder. I see a spirituality that is alive and well. Perhaps these "children" are connected to her...perhaps they once lived in a field in Scotland. Perhaps they are her adult children, or reflections of herself. Whatever they are, they are real to Grandmama. I am sorry I once said, "Grandma, there are no children." Now I am much happier saying, "Tell me about the children..."

At work, during a staff meeting, we all went around telling "what we are most proud of." I said that my greatest joy and pride was in mothering Sola. I love watching her grow. She is nine years old now, and her interests and uniqueness have truly bloomed. I loved watching her hit that first tennis ball over the net and the instructor saying "sweet." I am so proud of her. Now we all strive to mother and nurture Grandma. One day as Grandma was sitting in her room, Sola and I took a box full of old photographs from Grandma's life and plastered them all over her room. All the while Grandma smiled and was pleased. I am glad that Sola has this experience in her life. One day Sola said to me, "taking care of Grandmama is a good thing." Sola asked what I thought we should get Grandma for her 90th birthday. We both agreed that maybe a box of chocolates and some fun things might be a good gift.

A few years ago, my best friend's mother turned 60. She decided that she wanted to have a "Crone" party. She wanted the gift of the party to be presented to her while passing around a talking stick where we would all speak something to her of her "Cronehood." The first time I had heard the word *crone* was while reading



Grandmama with Deborah's friend John, the man she likes to flirt with most. John takes Grandma out twice a week—he is her "gentleman friend." They go line dancing together.

the story of Vasalisa in the book, *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, by Clarissa Pinkola Estes. In her book, Estes describes that to look into the face of a Crone is to "see eyes of blood, the perfect newborn child and the wings of angels all at once." The story of Vasalisa is an old Russian tale that I love. For the past few weeks, while caring for Grandma, the story of Vasalisa keeps coming to me. Maybe it is because in the tale the Crone, Baba Yaga, is seemingly just a frightening creature to be avoided at all costs. Instead, "if we are lucky, the Yaga will leave her big broad footprints in the carpet at our bedside. She will come to peer at those who do not know her. If we are late to our initiation, she wonders why we do not come to visit her, and comes to visit us in our night dreams instead." The Crone wants us to "be strong...and to be able to stand it...to be able to learn, to be able to stand what we know...to stand and live."

Somehow, I think the tale of Vasalisa is at the heart of what I've been feeling the past few months. The story opens with a small child, Vasalisa, who with her father stands by her dying mother's bedside. Her mother calls to her and gives her a doll that is dressed like her. Her mother says, "Here are my last words, Beloved. Should you lose your way or be in need of help, ask this doll what to do. You will be assisted. Keep the doll with you always. Feed her when she's hungry." Vasalisa's mother tells her this is her blessing to her and, once said, Vasalisa's mother draws her last breath.

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Grandmama and Thoughts on Mothers Day

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After a time of mourning the father remarries a widow with two daughters, who when alone with Vasalisa are cruel to her. They hate Vasalisa for her goodness and her beauty. Vasalisa remains helpful and does not complain. Finally, the stepmother and stepsisters conspire against Vasalisa. They make the fire go out in their hut and tell Vasalisa that she must make her way to the fearsome Baba Yaga to bring fire home to them. Vasalisa agrees and prepares for her journey.

The journey is frightening, the woods dark, and Vasalisa reaches down to her pocket and touches her doll and upon the touch says, "Ah, yes I feel much better." Every time Vasalisa doesn't know which way to go she touches the doll. The doll seems to jump up and down when Vasalisa makes a wrong turn. As she walks she feeds the doll some of her bread.

Vasalisa sees strange things along the way. She sees a man in white on a white horse and it becomes daylight. She sees a man in red on a red horse and the sun rises. She then sees a man in black on a black horse who rides into the Yaga's house, and it becomes night. There is a fence around Baba Yaga's house with skulls that glow with an eerie light.

Baba Yaga is a "fearsome creature" who travels through the sky in a flying cauldron. She carries with her a broom made of "long dead person's hair." Her long chin curves up, and her long nose curves down, until they meet. She has a white goatee and warts on her skin made "from a trade in toads." Her brown stained fingernails are "thick and ridged like roofs." Her house, which sits on top of huge chicken legs, walks about by itself and sometimes twirls like an ecstatic dancer. The Yaga swoops down and shouts to Vasalisa, "What do you want?"

Frightened, Vasalisa says, "Grandmother, I come for fire. My house is cold...my people will die...I need fire." The Yaga confronts Vasalisa asking why she should give her fire. To this Vasalisa replies "because I ask." To this the Yaga says, "You're lucky. That is the right

answer." Baba Yaga tells Vasalisa that she won't get fire for nothing and that she is to complete certain tasks first. The Yaga tells her that if she does not complete these tasks she will die.

Baba Yaga tells her to "wash my clothes, sweep the yard and the house, prepare my food, and separate the mildewed corn from the good corn and see that everything is in order." Baba Yaga then flies off in her cauldron.

Overwhelmed, Vasalisa consults the doll, fearful that she will not be able to complete the tasks. The doll reassures her that she can and that she should eat a little and go to sleep. The next morning Vasalisa finds that the doll has done all the work except the meal, which Vasalisa tends to. Upon Baba Yaga's return, she can find no fault with Vasalisa and tells her she will live another night. The Yaga gives her the tasks

The Crone wants us to "be strong...and to be able to stand it...to be able to learn, to be able to stand what we know...to stand and live."

again, but this time includes a huge mound of dirt in the yard. She tells Vasalisa that there are millions of poppy seeds in the dirt and that Vasalisa is to separate the seed from the dirt. The Yaga snores off to sleep as Vasalisa nearly faints with the insecurity that she will never be able to accomplish the task. After an attempt to sort the seed from the dirt the doll assures her that all will be well and to go to bed and get some sleep. Again the doll takes care of the task completely. The Yaga returns and says, "Well! Lucky for you that you were able to do these things."

Vasalisa says, "May I ask you some questions, Grandmother?"

"Ask," orders the Yaga, "but remember, too much knowledge can make a person too old too soon." Vasalisa asks about the white man on the white horse.

"Aha" the Yaga says, "that first is my Day."

She then asks about the red man on the red horse.

"Ah, that is my Rising Sun."

Vasalisa then asks of the black man on the black horse.

"Ah yes, that is the third and he is my Night. Come, come child. Wouldn't you like to ask more questions?" wheedles the Yaga.

As Vasalisa is about to speak the doll jumps up and down, and so Vasalisa says, "No, Grandmother. As you yourself said, too much knowledge can make one too old too soon." With that the Yaga is satisfied. Baba Yaga gives Vasalisa one of her fiery skulls and sends her on her way.

Again the doll helps Vasalisa find her way home. The eerie light of the skull frightens her to the point that she wants to throw it away. The skull speaks to her and helps her to calm down.

Vasalisa's stepmother and sisters presume Vasalisa long since dead and "bones dragged away by animals and good riddance." Vasalisa enters the house "triumphant that she had survived her dangerous journey and brought fire back to her home. But the skull watched the stepsisters' and the stepmother's every move and burnt into them, and by morning it had burnt the wicked trio to cinders."

The tale of Vasalisa evokes images connected to our unconscious. Moreover, it evokes images of the collective unconscious where the experience becomes universal in its archetypal reality. The story suggests that we are all images of Vasalisa, the Crone, and even the wicked stepsisters and stepmother. We are also images of the "too good mother" portrayed by Vasalisa's mother who dies bearing a gift to her only child.

The images the tale stirs up are countless and a whole other writing in itself. In regard to what thoughts have been recently present for me while caring for Grandma, whose last days will be under our care, I am reminded of the wisdom that can lie sometimes hidden due to the stresses of life's transitions. There is surely wisdom of a child as we so often can hear said, "out of the mouths of babes." The wisdom is there in the morning of life. With Grandmama I see the wisdom of a very old woman. Now is the evening of life when the wisdom is sensitive as the light dims and it is easy to stumble and

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MEET THE NOMINEES FOR 2000

PRESIDENT 3-year term

Ron Brugler
Canada Association

I have agreed to seek a second term as president of our denomination, but I also must share that I did so only after considerable prayer, thought, and discussion with many people. I hope that this brief statement will help you to understand and support my decision.

On one hand, my presidency has come at a time in our church's history when difficult transitions and unsettling situations seem to be the norm. From our seminary, to the Committee on Admission to the Ministry, to several of our local congregations, there has been turmoil and uncertainty. Leadership has been difficult to provide. Relationships have been strained. Mistakes have been made. In addition, this position takes me away from my family and church—a lot! These aspects of the presidency have weighed heavily upon my mind and heart, just as they would do to anyone.

But on the other hand, I believe that I have served the church well in this position, having done my best to fulfill the many responsibilities that the presidency entails. I have worked with the General Council, Cabinet, and Support Units to clarify our goals and objectives and appropriate our funds in the best way possible to achieve these. I have visited with many of our churches and centres, learning of their hopes, accomplishments, and concerns. I have provided a sense of pastoral support and presence on numerous occasions. I have worked to restore our outreach to the global New Church. And, working closely with our Central Office, I have overseen the business operations of the denomination in effective ways.

I now realize that through all of these experiences, God has taught me many invaluable lessons that can be put to good use in a second term. And having made this decision, I am looking forward to the opportunity.

VICE-PRESIDENT 1-year term

Chris Laitner
Michigan Association

It has been my honor and pleasure to serve two one-year terms as Vice-

President of Convention. It has also been a busy, eye-opening experience! I have had the opportunity to travel as a Church representative to churches, associations, and committee meetings. These opportunities have reinforced my belief that we are a vital, positive, and growing Church! We have so much to offer, and we have marvelously dedicated people throughout our organization who, through their care and creativity, are ever moving us forward.

I am finishing my thirty-first year of teaching. Currently teaching full time in the Gladwin High School English Department. I am in my seventh year of chairing that department. During this past winter I had the opportunity to serve as an online guest lecturer for a college class to present Swedenborg's connection to Emerson's Transcendentalism. This was a marvelous opportunity to both discover the power of distance/online collegiate education and also to interact with students who were discovering, through their readings (I had the privilege of writing an essay to add to their syllabus) and their search of the Internet, Swedenborg, and the Church for the first time.

In all of this, though, my work with the Swedenborgian Church remains of paramount importance to me. I live a considerable distance from a parish, so my work with Michigan Association, the General Council, and the vice-presidency of Convention is the vital link I have in my life to the Church. I am both proud and humbled by the office that has been conferred on me, and I would like very much to continue to serve the Swedenborgian Church in all of its aspects as the Vice-president.

RECORDING SECRETARY 1-year term

Gloria Toot
Ohio Association

I have been a member of Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church for almost 30 years, having served in various capacities for the local church and the Ohio Association. I have been the Recording Secretary for General Council for about five or six years and would like to continue to serve the denomination in this capacity.

TREASURER 1-year term

Polly Baxter
Mid-Atlantic Association

I have been deeply involved in the finances and accounting for the denomination for the last eleven years. I served as assistant to the Treasurer for five years, and the last three years as Treasurer. In 1992, I received the President's Award to the Layperson 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 2 lay, 1 minister, for 3-year terms

Jim Erickson
Illinois Association

I have been a member of the Virginia Street Church of the St. Paul Society for ten years. Since first becoming part of the congregation I have been active in committee and ministry work as well as serving as a representative and president of the board of trustees of the church. I have taught Sunday school, worked as the coordinator for the wedding ministry, and am proud of frequently being asked to conduct Sunday worship services in the absence of the minister.

I currently serve on the General Council and enjoy it very much.

Note: *Jim Erickson is also nominated to fill a position on IMSU.*

Margaret Kraus
Kansas Association

I am a member of the Pretty Prairie church where I serve as Sunday school teacher and on the finance committee. I

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am on the Hutchinson Reno County Cultural Commission, the District Natural Resources Board, and Chair of the Pretty Prairie Civic Theater Board. As an incumbent on General Council I have served one term. It takes that time to learn the business of convention. I believe I can now be an informed and effective member of the Council. I would appreciate your support.

Lee Woofenden
Massachusetts Association

General Council is the nerve center of our church, so it is a great honor to be asked to serve on it. I was reluctant at first to step into such a responsible position only four years after being ordained to serve as a minister in our church, yet I will be working with an experienced and dedicated group of people as we collectively seek the good of our denomination. I was born into the Swedenborgian Church nearly forty years ago, and have spent many years serving it in various capacities: president of the Youth League; organizer and staff at dozens of youth retreats throughout the U.S. and Canada; teacher and lecturer at four of our camps: Fryeburg, Almont, Paulhaven, and Blairhaven; Swedenborg translator; author of many articles about our church and its beliefs; overseer of Convention's growing Internet presence through six years of service on the Information Management Support Unit; and most recently as pastor of our congregation in Bridgewater Massachusetts since 1996, and since 1997 as editor of the Swedenborgian Church's monthly devotional magazine, *Our Daily Bread*.

My growing conviction through all of this service is that now, more than ever, our church has a vital message to offer the world. While supporting the many good things we are already doing, your vote for me to take a seat on General Council is a vote to continue moving our church forward toward a broader engagement with our communities and with the world around us. I believe the time is ripe for a new emphasis on outreach to the millions of people who are a part of the great spiritual revival now taking place in our society.

We do not need to remain a tiny church known only to a select few. The teachings of our church contain the most comprehensive and satisfying answers available to the great questions of our day—and the

most powerful motivation for us to continue asking new questions as we move forward on our spiritual journeys, both individually and as a body. We are limited only by our will and our creativity in carrying forward the mission that the Lord has given us.

Our challenge is not only to do a better job of reaching out with the wonderful message that has meant so much to each one of us, but also to provide spiritual homes for seekers by drawing them into communities of faith with others who share their quest. This is my vision both for our existing church centers and for the many new churches we will plant and develop as the New Jerusalem descends ever more powerfully out of heaven from God into our world.

My vision for our church is an expanding one! I look forward to working closely with the many people on General Council and throughout Convention who share this growing vision for the Swedenborgian Church.

COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT UNIT 3-year term

Stephen Koke
Pacific Coast Association

I am completing ten years of work on two of our support units, IMSU and COMSU. Five of those years have been as chair: two years with IMSU, three with COMSU. I published a book, *Hidden Millennium*, through the Swedenborg Foundation, and a pamphlet on the same subject through J. Appleseed & Co., both of which have sold well in the US, Europe, and Australia. My wish is that we find ways to exchange our best thoughts and inspirations, open doors to the horizons that we have been told about, and, with all the advances modern communication has made, make the immense distances between our churches disappear.

EDUCATION SUPPORT UNIT 3-year term

Bill Baxter
Michigan Association

I am a lifetime member of the Swedenborgian church, seeking my second term on EdSU. I have been involved with the SCYL, and Transitions. I live in the New York area and attend Almont summer school. I'm a member at large of the Michigan association.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SUPPORT UNIT 3-year term

Robert Hinrichs
Pacific Coast Association

I am the CTO (Chief Technology Officer) of one of San Francisco's leading Internet technology companies. We specialize in setting corporations up for business on the Internet. Among other things, I put together websites, including the one that advertises the San Francisco Church (www.sfswebdenborgian.org). I've been an active member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church for four years.

Note: Robert Hinrichs' article, "Updated Convention Website to Spur Church Growth," will appear in the June Messenger.

MINISTRIES SUPPORT UNIT 3-year terms

Paul Zacharias
Canada Association

Our Nominating Committee has asked me to serve on MINSU, and I would be honored to do so. During my 35 years of active service in Convention's ministry, I have pastored our churches in Elmwood, MA; Portland, OR; and for 25 years at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ont. Over a period of more than 40 years I have served on virtually every board and committee in Convention, including several terms on General Council, Chair of the Council of Ministers, editor of the Messenger, Boards of Missions and Publications, CAM, and PMSU. So I feel I have a fairly good grasp of how Convention functions, its history, and what it means to its members.

I have been retired for some years now, but on occasion still conduct worship services, weddings, funerals, etc. here in Kitchener; and in recent years have also visited Kelowna, Cleveland, and elsewhere for worship services. Though retired, I am still keenly interested in all aspects of Convention's life. My two recent articles in the Messenger express both my deep affection and my ongoing concern for our Church. I would like to work with MINSU to help our denomination to work forward.

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Mark Allen

Maine Association

I am a Store Planner for Hannaford Bros Co. (Northeast supermarket chain operator.) I became a member of the Portland Swedenborgian Church in April, 1994 and have served over the past six years as Secretary, Building & Property Coordinator, co-chairing the church's facade remodelling and improvements since 1998. I was also our Newsletter Editor, Vice President, and in 1998 President, of the Church. Currently I am enjoying a sabbatical from church council activities while remaining publisher of the church newsletter.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

2 to be nominated, 1 to be elected

Martha Richardson

Maine Association

I am a delegate of the Maine Association and a member and Sunday School teacher of the Fryeburg New Church. I am an active member of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly and a past president of the American New Church Sunday School Association. I served on EDSU, was chairperson for four years. Since my first Convention in 1972, I have been interested in our policies and programs. My current concerns are for the welfare and needs of our children and youth, for the growth of our parishes and centers, the education of our ministers, and the direction and outreach of our Church. I feel that by being elected to the Nominating Committee I can best serve my Church.

Steve Thomas

Canada Association

I am a Lay Leader with the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, where I have been a member for 10 years. I served as a member of our Board of Directors for 7 years, including 2 years as President of the Board. I have conducted numerous worship services over the past 5 years, as well as being very active in our wedding ministry. I became Lay Leader in 1995.

I feel that with my experience I am qualified to run for the position on the Nominating Committee. I would make every effort to seek qualified people to serve on the various support units. I believe that we have a vast array of talented people within our denomination who

would add to our vitality and growth. I would appreciate the opportunity to serve the Lord and the Church in this way.

SSR BOARD

1 minister, 1 lay for 3-year terms

Robert McCluskey

New York Association

I have been a member of the Swedenborgian Church since 1978, and was ordained in 1984. My first parish was in Portland, Maine. Since 1988, I have served as pastor of the New Church in New York City. I have also served Convention as a member of the Swedenborgian delegation to the National Council of Churches (1984 to the present, chair of the delegation since 1996); as a representative to the Executive Board of the NCC since 1991; as a member of General Council for one term (1991 to 1994); and as chaplain to the Youth League (1984 to 1986). I am currently finishing a term on the Nominating Committee. In 1998 I received an M.A. in philosophy from the New School of Social Research in New York City. I have long been interested in the important role our seminary plays in shaping our denominational life and would appreciate this opportunity to bring my parish experience to bear on the ongoing transformation of theological education.

Robert Leas

Illinois Association

Qualifications: BA. from Indiana University; M.Div. cum laude from McCormick Theological Seminary; Certified Supervisor, Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (with extensive committee work, serving on Executive Board, chairing History Committee, member of Accreditation Committee and Standards Committee); extensive work with Committee on Preparation for Ministry, Presbyterian Church U.S.A.; Board Certified Chaplain, Association of Professional Chaplains; Adjunct Faculty, Michigan State University College of Human Medicine; Instructor in Religion, Franklin College, Franklin, Indiana.

Although I am a Presbyterian clergy person, I have been interested in the Swedenborgian Church for the past 10 years. My wife, Marjory Hill Leas, a lifelong Swedenborgian, has encouraged my interest by enabling me to participate in the life of the church through the

Almont New Church Assembly, Convention meetings, and attending worship at the LaPorte Church.

For the past thirty years, I have been a pastoral care educator through the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, serving hospitals in Park Ridge, Illinois, South Bend, Indiana, Saginaw, Michigan, and currently Fort Wayne, Indiana. My work involves teaching practical theology to seminary graduate students and clergy. Prior to becoming a CPE Supervisor, I served as a parish minister to congregations in Iowa, Indiana, and Michigan.

My particular interest in SSR was stimulated by a visit to the school in Newton, where I became aware of the fact that I could contribute to the shaping vision of the school as it goes through its present transition. With my teaching experience in the field of graduate theological education, I am familiar with the pluralistic religious environment in theological education today and feel I have something to offer in the area of curriculum development and theological reflection. I would consider it a challenge to serve as a member of the Board of SSR.

SSR BOARD (CONT.)

1 lay to fill an unexpired term

Sue Burns

Illinois Association

I have served on the Augmentation Fund Committee, and the Millennium Fund Committee; as Chair of the Building Fund; Secretary, Treasurer, and President of the Church of The Open Word, and on the Illinois Association Executive Committee. I am currently president of the board.

Professional Background: Currently business analyst—perform statistical analysis, market penetration, segmentation, financial. Site, market strategies and planning; c-commerce marketing strategies; direct mail and database marketing strategies; competitive and organizational analysis. Serving on the SSR board during this time of transition provides an opportunity to help our Church achieve its vision.

(Continued on page 73)



CONVENTION 2000 REGISTRATION

176th Convention

of the
Swedenborgian Church

at
Urbana University

June 28 to July 2, 2000

The 176th Convention of the Swedenborgian Church will be hosted jointly by the Ohio Association and by Urbana University to celebrate Urbana University's Sesquicentennial.

TRANSPORTATION: We recommend that those who are flying to Convention plan to arrive at the Dayton airport rather than the Columbus airport. Columbus is under construction, and Dayton is closer. There are vans available from Burgundy Taxi Service, Springfield, Ohio (937) 323-3283. The cost is \$52 for a whole van which can carry four to six passengers for the one-way trip to Urbana University's Grimes Center. Each additional passenger is 50¢. There may be additional fees for meeting a flight that does not arrive on time. For those who wish to share vans, we will try to find folks arriving at the same time.

Please make sure you provide us with your arrival information so we can do the match-making.

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.

ACCOMMODATIONS: There are a limited number of rooms available in air-conditioned suites. A suite consists of three double bedrooms, two bath-rooms and a common area. Dorm rooms are double, non-air-conditioned; the bathrooms are down the hall. If children wish to sleep in the same room (dorm or suite) as their parents, and if they bring their sleeping bags (no linens provided), they may pay for meals only (\$15 per day).

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

Names: _____

Names and ages of children accompanying you: _____

Street Address: _____ City / State _____ Zip: _____

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

Adult registration	@ \$ 60.00	x adults _____	= \$ _____
Teen registration (13-17)	@ \$ 35.00	x teens _____	= \$ _____
Child 3-12 registration	@ \$ 20.00	x children _____	= \$ _____
Registration family maximum	@ \$150.00		= \$ _____
Late fee if mailed after May 15	@ \$ 20.00	x adults _____	= \$ _____
Suite: room & board double	@ \$ 43.00	x persons _____	x nights = \$ _____ = \$ _____
Suite: room & board single	@ \$ 63.00	x persons _____	x nights = \$ _____ = \$ _____
Dorm: room & board single & double	@ \$ 30.00	x persons _____	x nights = \$ _____ = \$ _____
Women's Alliance Luncheon	@ \$ 8.00	x persons _____	= \$ _____

☞ 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. Bills may be paid by VISA and MasterCard. Provide number and four digit expiration date.

Total = \$ _____

☞ Make checks payable to: THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

send Form with checks to: Central Office, The Swedenborgian Church, 11 Highland Avenue, Newtonville, MA 02460

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

(Continued from page 71)

COMMITTEE ON ADMISSION TO THE MINISTRY

1 lay, 1 minister for 1-year terms

Pat Tukos

Illinois Association

I am a longtime member of the LaPorte New Church, Indiana, now serving as president of our society. I am also actively involved with the Wedding Ministry, the Growth Committee, and the Women's Alliance. On the national level, I've served on CAM for the past three years, and previous to this on EDSU for six years. I've attended several Cabinet and General Council meetings and the last eight annual convention sessions.

I would very much like to continue serving as the denomination's lay member on CAM. It has been an honor to be a part of this dedicated team.

Marlene Laughlin

Pacific Coast Association

This marks the third year that I have both been ministering at Wayfarers Chapel and a member of CAM for the second period of time. The new interests that are being expressed by the denomination, school, and students in the ministry of the Internet are also being recognized as very valuable to Wayfarers. Yet, ministers must first learn theology and dealing with people for the true value of our message to be communicated to the world. The opportunity to be involved in this transition period will of course demand experience and vision. I believe that my experience in many different types of ministry, membership on CAM, and work with diverse groups of people will add quality to CAM and our future ministry. My vision is that the special gifts that are brought by each student be honored, enhanced, and fully utilized by the denomination as we grow in the new millennium.



From the Church Bulletin Bloopers Collection:

The pastor will preach his farewell message, after which the choir will sing, "Break Forth Into Joy."

2000 Mini-courses

How to Read the Treasurer's Report

Leader: Polly Baxter

Description: Do you look at those numbers and your eyes swim? Here's a chance to find out what they really mean! The Common Fund, what it is and how it works will also be discussed.

Youth Leaders Discussion

Leader: Eric Allison

Description: An informal discussion and review of last fall's Youth Leader's Conference with video highlights and fun activities. Take home some great ideas! A brainstorming session for ideas about the next conference will also take place.

Sunday School Starter Kit: Learning to Look, Looking to See...in Nature ~ Two-part Session

Leader: Ruth Tafel

Description: In order to develop the art of seeing, this workshop will focus on a time honored method for enhancing observation of nature, make connections with good children's literature, honor the philosophy of Joseph Campbell, and make connections with the teachings of Swedenborg. You will be first the student, then the teacher, and will ultimately leave with a starter kit containing 5 one-hour lesson plans that can be used for either Sunday School or camp and will also include: complete samples of student materials, including workpages for you to copy. If weather permits, we will meet outside—wear comfortable clothing. This is a two part session, participants should attend both sessions.

Simplicity Discussion

Several people have expressed interest in a Simplicity circle discussion. A room and sign up will be provided, and the discussion will be open and informal.

Community Building and You

Leader: John Billings and the Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church

May be a two part session. Details still in the works.

Wings and Roots: Emanuel Swedenborg and the New Age Dialog

Leader: Wilma Wake

Description: A presentation and discussion of some of the concepts presented in Wake's book, exploring the relationship between Swedenborgian ideas and New Age spirituality.


Meeting of the Mind and Heart: An Exercise in Group Process Meeting Style.

Leader: Eli Dale

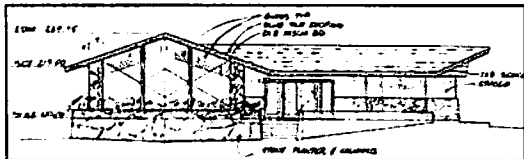
Description: Convinced that they don't use Robert's Rules in heaven, Eli Dale will offer an alternate meeting method. Used in the Portland church for 10 years, Group Process/Consensus aims at discovering the best decisions a group can make by synthesizing the will and understanding of all group participants (including the unseen) in keeping with your church's Mission Statement. The result is action that is fully understood and supported by all decision makers—there are never any losers. Experiential, plus lots of info to take back to your home church. (Limit 20).

Video Outreach

Leader: Kit Billings

Description: Come and learn about a new approach to outreach in ministry in our Church! You will be led through a presentation/discussion about professionally made videos of worship services to be used in "getting the word out" about your church and what makes the New Church unique. This is another way to make the tech-age work for the church. Learn about the ABC's of video production in worship to be aired on free public access cable stations. A finished product will be shown in part. 

Building the Vision: The New Visitors Center



Last fall the Wayfarers Chapel appealed for help in building a new Visitors Center. Many members and friends of the Swedenborgian

Church have generously contributed, and we want to keep you informed of developments. It is through your help that we are making our vision a reality.

The original Visitors Center was constructed in 1958. Because of extensive damage caused by the Abalone Cove landslide, the building had to be closed in the early 1980s and finally removed in 1995. The loss of the Visitors Center severely curtailed our educational and visitor programs. The new Visitors Center, designed by Eric Lloyd Wright, will be built in the northwest corner of the Chapel property at the head of the main driveway. As you read this article construction will already have begun.

What makes this project so exciting to the many people involved is the purpose it will serve for the tens of thousands of visitors to the Chapel every year. In so many ways the building is only an *envelope* that holds within it the heart or *use* it serves.

The Visitors Center will house much-needed visitor facilities such as new restrooms, provide shelter in inclement weather, a place to explore when the Chapel is closed for a private service or wedding, or a place to gather after church on Sundays for a cup of coffee.

As important as these services are, there is an even more important function that the new building will serve. It will tell the *Story* of Wayfarers Chapel. To achieve this end, Think Jacobson and Roth, a premier design company for museums and interpretive centers, has been hired to help develop and produce displays that will be attractive and convey our *Story* in dynamic and effective ways.

A committee consisting of the three Chapel ministers, Flo Swiger representing the Board, and Manon Washburn of the Los Angeles Church, has been appointed to work with Lori Jacobson and Carla Roth. The committee is hard at work beginning to give shape to our *Story* under *Think's* expert leadership. Our *Story* is multifaceted. Topics include the concept of Wayfarers Chapel and its architecture, the services and ministry offered by the Chapel, and Emanuel Swedenborg and The Swedenborgian Church.

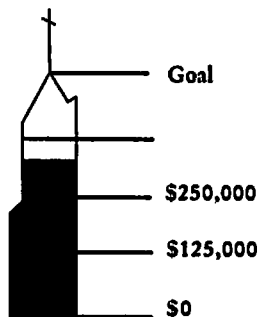
We are truly excited about the possibilities! And we are looking forward to completing our *Story* displays so they can greet the public when the new Visitors Center is opened later this year.

Your help is still needed for us to reach our goal. For more information on how you can help, please contact me by phone or e-mail.

Thank you for your generous support. We look forward to keeping you abreast of developments in future issues of *The Messenger*.

Rev. Harvel Tafel
Chapel Administrator/Minister
310-377-1650
Harveyt@wayfarerschapel.org

5755 Palos Verdes Drive South
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275



Ministries Support Unit Report

The February 24-27, 2000 MINSU meeting was hosted by Linda and Dick Tafel in Fort Myers Beach, Florida. A report was given by President Ron Brugler with updates on local church ministries, General Council, and a special request from Cabinet to all support units. Liaisons reported on their church/ministries addressing special issue requests from several congregations. Budget adjustments were made for 2000, and a preliminary budget was set for 2001. MINSU responded to Cabinet's request, reevaluating long-term goals, revisioning, and refining operational procedures. The charge is to determine how this support unit can better serve all Swedenborgian churches/ministries, improve the distribution of support and maintain continuity within the support group unit when its members change. To help in this process a MINSU handbook will be completed by the time the Urbana Convention takes place, with job descriptions, MINSU member expectations, and support unit procedures.

A motion was made to adopt a sister church program with the hope of improving communications and exchange between Convention churches and congregations abroad. MINSU will appoint a person to create, coordinate, and oversee the program. Letters with information about the sister church program will be sent to congregations around the world inviting them to participate.

On the home front, MINSU invites and encourages churches/ministries to keep the communication flowing with your liaison so that we may address any special needs your congregation is experiencing or simply share in your joy! Please contact Bev Titus, MINSU secretary (734) 424-9127, for additional information concerning your liaison. (Current liaison list: Betsy Coffman, Karen Conger, Barb Halle, Linda Tafel, Alan Thomsen and the Rev. Donna Keane).

Bev Titus, secretary MINSU



San Francisco

The Online S.F. Swedenborgian Church Prayer Community has begun. A new venture in church community draws upon the special capabilities of the Internet. The church is now coordinating a weekly prayer community. Prayer concerns, as well as specific prayers, are offered during the week online, allowing people to experience their prayer time on their own time, yet "in community" with the same prayer focus.

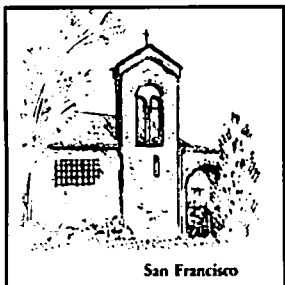
The believers in prayer as a healing force within the modern medical world is growing. In October, the *Archives of Internal Medicine* published evidence that prayer benefits the sick, even when they are completely unaware that people are praying for them. In numerous studies, patients being prayed for consistently did better than those in the "control group." Duke University cardiologist Martin Sullivan has reported that studies have been "airtight" and Duke now has in progress a large prayer study involving several hospitals.

In yet another publication, the *Western Journal of Medicine*, a study in San Francisco conducted on 40 AIDS patients by Elisabeth Targ, assistant professor of psychiatry at UCSF School of Medicine, revealed that prayed-for patients tended to stabilize, while the "control" patients declined. As the popular doctor/author Larry Dossey is now fond of saying, "At what point does it become ethically irresponsible to deny patients prayer?"

If you would like to become a part of the online prayer community, just give the S.F. church your email address (jfl@dnai.com).

The church welcomes Jackie Guenter

as their new office manager and wedding coordinator. She takes the place of much-



PARISH NEWS

From All Over

missed Martha Lusk, who departed this past winter—a tough job, but it sounds as if Jackie is up to it. They're still looking for a new music director to replace Garrett Collins.

A small group within the parish has begun participation in a project coordinated by the San Francisco Interfaith Council to collect children's books for children who otherwise would have no books to call their own. The initial goal is to adopt a day-care center and seek to improve its resources. This new program provides an achievable way to make a big difference to young people during their formative years.

The Rev. Frank and Louise Rose, from the Swedenborgian Church in Tucson, will be the special guest theme facilitators at the S.F. church's third all-church retreat on Memorial Day Weekend, May 26-29, at St. Dorothy's Rest in Sonoma County. "Hope and Healing" is the theme. At this writing nearly 60 people had signed up. Frank Rose is the author, with Bob Maginel, of *The Joy of Spiritual Growth*, which the church is using, along with Peter Rhodes' material, in its weekly Sunday afternoon spiritual growth discussion group that meets after coffee hour. Rose's book is available from the Swedenborg Foundation. To order, call 1-800-355-3222.

The first ever afternoon youth retreat was held at the El Cerrito Swedenborgian Church April 2nd. The afternoon involved outdoor activities and games, concluding with a pizza dinner.

Royal Oak (Detroit) Church of the Holy City

The Angel Trek 2000 is here—April 29-May 7. The purpose of Angel Trek 2000 is to make a gentle pilgrimage to the "City of Angels," through Sequoia National park and up to San Francisco in honor of dedicating ourselves to a transition to peace "once

and for all." The trek begins and ends with travel, prayer, healing, learning, and celebrating the joy of life on earth as we enter the beginning of the third millennium of our faith in God and the message of

God's son, Jesus, to be stewards of the Earth in an atmosphere of peace that passes understanding. Up to 80 participants of the trek will be making a trip to California with our church-year-of-fund-raising activities that will help to secure their passage fees and raise \$50 per person for the Church of the Holy City building fund.

The church held a special potluck luncheon and bottle drive pickup fundraiser on March 2nd to support the Youth Millennium Fund.

Dr. Margaret Dwyer offers a study group introducing attendees to **personal prayer and meditation** on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month.

A Healing Circle is offered Sunday mornings before worship at 9:00 a.m.

Women's Retreat at Almont Retreat Center is taking place May 11-13, the theme is "Life Strategies for Women."

Cleveland

We at the Cleveland Chapel recently had the pleasure of hosting the Rev. David Rienstra who conducted a Sunday Service for us on March 5, 2000. It has been many years since David was last here, and he complimented us on the many improvements we have made both outside and inside the building. As many of the participants in our weddings have remarked, it is a warm and charming place to be married. Chuck and Verda Winter, who were honored as "Volunteers of the Year" at the annual convention in Malibu, are chiefly responsible for the ongoing success of this venture. They totalled 113 weddings in 1999!

Jean Bestor Secretary
Cleveland church

(Continued on page 77)

READING SWEDENBORG OTHERWISE

(Continued from back)

the space after the line that liberates meaning, giving the margin for your soul to resonate. In music, there is that sweet moment just after the note is played, in which, as poet James Merrill describes it, "the silence sings."

A fascinating dimension of Swedenborg's works is its uses of absences. What things are not said? What things cannot be said? Cannot be fully explained? I think this is particularly interesting in relation to affections, to the celestial dimension, and to women. In Swedenborg's theological work there is a lot of talk of "the feminine" but very little speech with women. Were these works composed in a style, from an age, and for an audience that did not know quite how to include women in the conversation? What do we do about this now?

Revelation speaks to us through our passions and experiences, not apart from them. We need to be active participants, active readers, if we want Revelation to enlighten our lives. The Old Testament is full of covenants, mutual agreements about who will do what. In the New Testament, the Lord frequently asks people what they think or believe or want before He heals them. He makes us ask. With Swedenborg's work, too, we are supposed to bring a lot of questions and energy to the text.

[The rest of the talk went on to explore parallels and contrasts between Swedenborg's work and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, asking in particular how the poet used the potentially hubristic scope of his poem to keep turning attention back to God. The talk concluded as follows.]

Milton's choice of poetry rather than prose for this task of describing the loss of Eden suggests his desire to foreground language as both the medium of the fall and the passage back, the 'fortunate fall' which will allow people to reclaim through reason what they lost through love. Milton wants his reader to see that the many layers of meaning compressed in his poetry, and the frequently ambiguous relationships between words and meanings, far from relieving the reader of the responsibility

of interpretation, demand the reader explore her perceptions the more carefully. The reader must return over and over again to the text, not to become involved in a coil of word play (as Eve is hypnotized by the serpent), but to set the individual passages against the poet's broader vision. Just so, individual passages from Swedenborg's writings must be held in a larger context, seen as part of a larger vision, intertextually, organically. One number has meaning in relation to others, in relation to many books, and in relation to our lives.

Jonathan:

In Luke 10:26 a lawyer asks Jesus, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answers with two questions: "What has been written in the law?" and "How do you read?" (or more faithfully to the Greek, "How are you reading?"). The first question points to the text, but the second to the context, meaning primarily what the reader brings to the text. Swedenborg's rules of life seem to apply here—to answer what is written, one would "read the Word of God daily," but to look at how one reads, one would "meditate on the Word of God daily." As Kristin said, Adam and Eve, thought and affection, need to reunite.

To my mind Swedenborg's text is like flour—somewhat white and uniform, and at first glance perhaps even bland. We the readers need to bring a context—we need to supply other ingredients, like water, eggs, dates, nuts, spices, and a great and sustained heat before something will result that we can profitably eat.

Swedenborg places a significant responsibility on the reader. In the last paragraph in *Heaven and Hell* he says that the

reader's experience reflects on the reader alone:

"What I have been saying in this book about heaven, the world of spirits, and hell, will be obscure to people who find no delight in knowing about spiritual truths; but it will be clear to people who do have this delight, especially to people involved in an affection for truth for its own sake—that is, people who love truth because it is true."

Furthermore Swedenborg declares that he deliberately wrote in such a way as to engender this effect. He states in his *Ecclesiastical History of the New Church*, sections 3-4, that he crafted his prose in a style designed to shine for believers but to seem dull and worthless to nonbelievers.

Swedenborg says that the Old and New Testaments function similarly. He mentions many ingredients necessary for seeing their inner meaning: the doctrine of genuine truth, a knowledge of correspondences, enlightenment, awareness that there is a higher meaning, a search for truth for its own sake or for some use—all of which need to be supplied by the reader. Swedenborg mentions for example that if we bring with us a sense that God is love, we will not be misled by Old Testament references to an apparently angry God.

This may be why the Lord has given us an ongoing need for new translations. He asks each generation, "What has been written in the law?" and, "How do you read?"



Pictured (L-R) Jun-Chol Lee, George Dole, Philip Bae, Lee Woofenden, Amy Stinson, Louise Woofenden, Mary Kay Klein, Bill Woofenden, Jill Bell, Ruben Bell, Kristin King, and Jonathon Rose.

PARISH NEWS & Community Outreach

(Continued from page 75)

New York

The New York New Church has a new computer and email address: nync@peoplepc.com They were still working out some glitches in early spring, but trust it's all working now.

Plans for repair and restoration of the sanctuary are progressing, with a structural engineers report that came in mid-March.

A spring lecture series "Growing the Soul" began April 25 and will continue every Tuesday evening through May 23rd. More about this in the June *Messenger*.

Boston

The Rev. Ronald Brugler, president of the Swedenborgian Church and pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, was guest speaker April 9 at a luncheon reception at the Boston church, a Lenten celebration with the theme, "The Many Faces of Jesus."

At Large

Marge Calby of Mendocino County, California, an isolated member of the Pacific Coast Association, is very active in environmental issues, saving the trees. She reports that their demonstrations and activities up there also caused Mitsubishi and the Mexican government to cancel plans to install and operate a salt factory which would have destroyed San Ignacio Bay by ruining the spawning grounds for the gray whales. Marge says, "We need to all work together; we're making a difference, focus on the positive."



Alliance of New Church Women

Mary Crenshaw will conclude her last year as president of the national Alliance of New Church Women at this year's convention in Urbana. Mary sends this message to all members:

"This year at Convention 2000 is going to be very special for the Alliance. We have asked for and received approval for time at Convention to celebrate our Alliance history. A very historic and comical skit is being planned for presentation by Phyllis Bosley. She has chosen her cast, and I have not seen so much excitement in a very long time. We are truly moving not only into the new century, but creating innovations in our membership. Young women are among our ranks and this breathes new life into our Alliance.

"Last year's luncheon at Pepperdine University was absolutely top notch. It was well-planned, beautiful, and had a feeling of true sisterhood. Thanks to the planners. It appears that the men are getting curious and inquiring about membership. Now that's news!

"I would again like to express my deep appreciation to everyone for the wonderful support, cooperation, and friendship you have shown me for the past three years. I went into office with many questions. Can I do a creditable job? will I last three years? I am happy to say it has been a joy. Thank you for your support.

"Our meeting in Urbana is fast approaching—start planning. Let's make it an attendance-breaking meeting. Be sure that you are there to make history again. Our chairperson for planning the luncheon is president-elect Jennifer Tafel. She is young, yet mature and dependable; full of energy and ideas. **BE THERE!** Wear your hats, gloves, and clothing of any year for the luncheon."



From Sue Burns, Publications Chair: "The 2000 Mite Box will go to the Millennium Fund, which was created to support programs for the youth of our church. During the year 2000, the Millennium Fund will be used to help send two youths to the British Youth Conference this summer.

What fund-raising efforts are you creating and using to help the Millennium Fund? Let us know. E-mail me at sburns@postnet.com or write a note to Sue Burns, 2969 Highland House Villa Ct., Arnold, MO 63010. We would love to report to everyone our efforts in support of our youth. Let us make the Millennium Fund our number one priority. Support our youth. Give generously to our Mite Box fund-raising efforts.

Yearly Dues:

\$5 per person.

Mite Box:

Any amount you choose to give.

General Donations:

Any amount you choose to give. Money will be used for the church camps' operating expenses and our yearly donation to *The Messenger*.

Please send all monies by May 30th to Alliance Treasurer:

Margaret Kraus
229 S. Park Ave.
Box 264
Pretty Prairie, KS, 67570



Grandmama and Thoughts on Mothers Day

(Continued from page 68)

easy not to see things that are hidden. Yet it is the close of the day that brings on the new day. The sun sets, yet shines in another land, like Grandmama's "delusions," reminding me to never forget the sacred wisdom of a very old soul.

This tale speaks symbolically of what a Crone might urge us to consider. The doll symbolizes our intuition, or more deeply our soul-voice that, when trusted and listened to, assists us and helps us know the Divine that we are connected to throughout the journey. The wicked stepsisters and stepmother who hate Vasalisa's goodness remind me of the places within that live in fear and are threatened by the goodness...threatened by the light. There's a long passage of time and places within that have become familiar, where one circles one's own shadow, unaware of the sunlight beyond the shadow's edge. Stepping into the warm sunlight exposes the shadow and burns away those old familiar places in need of dying. In stepping into the light, questions such as, "What am I hungry for? What do I long for now? What do I wish for now? For what do I yearn?" are ready to surface.

Stepping into the woods, into the dark with the doll in our pocket, we begin to step into the unconscious. I read somewhere that "tears make our pain conscious." I speak of this to the abused teens that I work with. When they are able to release their tears, their thoughts and the feelings behind them begin to surface. Stepping into the woods where it is dark is needed, as it is time to look to an inner light and knowing. We hear our soul-voice speaking, reminding us of our own good judgment, and changes an attitude of, "what will be will be" to "let me see all there is to see."

Vasalisa stands before the fearsome Yaga. As fearsome as she is in this tale, she is just. She teaches Vasalisa that "respect in the face of great power is a crucial lesson." Vasalisa begins her journey initially because she is perceived as "unnecessary." The only real danger is for Vasalisa to perceive herself this

way. In facing the Yaga, Vasalisa faces her strength and chooses to step into it and make it her stand. The seemingly impossible tasks, such as sorting out poppy seed from dirt followed by the soul-voice saying "go to sleep and all will be well" brings in the need for contemplation. There is the need to go to a quiet place, to pray, to get away from the noise so that a clearing can be made in order to

understand what is what. It is in taking this soul-searching time that the doll is fed. What seems impossible through the sorting out, such as separating real love from false love, or nourishing life from spoiled life, feels unattainable without this inward time.

Vasalisa asks Baba Yaga questions of mystery. Symbolically, she is asking,

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CRONE

La Loba: The Old One
La Que' Sabe'
The One Who Knows
the she wolf,
where mind and instinct mingle,
and a woman's deep life
kisses the mundane
and places markers on the path
to the Crone.

In a modern day
where it is too easy
to lose one's own scent and homing,
as in yesterday's way
it is a woman's need
to hear the calling of
that archetypal Wise Old Woman
existing in us all.

Crone,
the god-Mother, the Warrior-Heroine
even at times the Old Hag
or transformed into elegance
through butterfly dance,
ecstatically twirled by her Day,
her Rising Sun
and her Night,
Yet too easily, Crone, through illusion
can appear frightening and foreboding
Like Baba Yaga
flying through the night air
on her cauldron,
Knowing all the while
Vasalisa is making her way
through dark, dark forest,
with no light of her own,
in search of her own longing
and heart's integrity,
Knowing she must face
Baba Yaga
with only a doll
in her pocket
and make it through tasks
veiled by what seems impossible,
Baba Yaga knows-
that the doll jumps and whispers
to the young woman whose instinct is
injured.

The Too-Good-Mother
in her has masked over
the deeply creative.
Underneath the fearsome side of Crone
lies great sympathetic waves of

understanding.
Crone,
lives through many seasons
of Life, Death and Life again.
Like a seed in the ground
that blooms toward the light,
and roots down deep
deep,
into the unconscious earth.
The flower dies
and must wait for its
yet to come again tiding.
So the Crone knows
a woman's journey travels
many seasons,
has many visitations,
and life's shadowing created
her own twice-born
not through her own shadows
but to her return Home
that circles healing after healings.

Crone,
Wild Woman who dares to
speak the truth
and then stand in it.
Who dares over and over,
her own vulnerability,
whose skin has toughened over time,
who also knows what it is like to be the
Skinless Maiden,
who carries the innocence of youth
that has weathered many horrors.
It is the Crone
who knows how to warm
the frozen child
and cease her shivering
through her night stories
of dreams and enchantments
and of doors that suddenly appear
during whispered spoken secrets
and the trust
that warms the child
into her own story and voice.

It is good to honor the Crone.
Her intuition runs deep
and sweeps along
the River beneath the River
of informing waters
that speaks through Soul-Voice
And guides a woman back,
through the dark, dark forest
into her New Day.

...Happy birthday, Grandmama.

Baptisms

Fuller—Erin Nicole Fuller, daughter of Scott and Angee Fuller, was baptized into the Christian church March 26, 2000 at the Swedenborgian Church of the Open Word, St. Louis, Missouri, the Rev. David Rienstra officiating.

Lowe—Samantha Toni Lowe, infant daughter of Laurie and Jeff Lowe, was baptized into the Christian church December 19, 1999, at the Swedenborgian Church of the Open Word, St. Louis, Missouri, the Rev. David Rienstra officiating.

Pruett—Heather Carole Pruett, infant daughter of Katie Rienstra Pruett and Eric Pruett, was baptized into the Christian church February 20, 2000, at the Swedenborgian Church of the Open Word, St. Louis, Missouri, the Rev. David Rienstra (grandfather) officiating.

Marriage

Watt and Menozzi—Jeffrey W. Watt and Mary Ellen Menozzi were united in marriage March 25, 2000, at the Swedenborgian Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, Delaware, the Rev. Randall Laakko officiating.

Deaths

Armstrong—Alice V. Armstrong, age 93, longtime member of the Swedenborgian Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, Delaware, entered the spiritual world March 17, 2000. A graveside service was conducted by an Episcopal priest, who was also a longtime personal friend of Alice. The service was attended by members of the Wilmington church.

Daggett—Maurice H. Daggett, age 88, a former member of the Swedenborgian Church in Fryeburg, Maine, entered the spiritual world in Williston, Florida January 31, 2000. Maurice taught Sunday school at the Fryeburg church for many years when the Revs. Wilfred Rice and Horace Briggs were ministers there. He is survived by his wife, Elsie Smith Daggett of Williston, Florida, two children, a brother, five grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Interment will take place in the spring at



Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in Denmark, Maine.

Hayward—Elizabeth Stearns Hayward, 94, entered the spiritual world at Lakeside Nursing Home in Ithaca, New York, February 7, 2000. She was a longtime member of the Church of the New Jerusalem in Bridgewater, Mass. Elizabeth worked for many years as a librarian, first at Baker Library at Dartmouth College, and afterward at the Howe Library in Hanover, New Hampshire. She was an outstanding pianist as well as a cook and a reader, with a fine sense of humor. She married Oliver Stoddard Hayward in 1934 at the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church. She is survived by her older son, Oliver Stoddard Hayward of Racine, Wisconsin, and her daughter, Susan Elizabeth Knapp, of East Setauket, New York, and five grandchildren. She was also sister to the late Sybil L. Belknap and Miriam H. Houghton. A memorial service is planned for June 17, 2000 at the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Mass., the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating.

Houghton—Miriam Howard (Stearns) Houghton, 96, a lifelong member of the Church of the New Jerusalem in Bridgewater, Mass., entered the spiritual world February 18, 2000. She was the wife of the late Frank Nickerson Houghton and daughter of the late Louis C. and Ada (Benson) Stearns of Bridgewater. She is survived by a daughter, Nancy A. Jackson of Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota; four grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and by a sister, Frances A. Leland of East Bridgewater. She was also sister to the late Sybil L. Belknap and Elizabeth E. Hayward. A memorial service is planned for August 6, 2000, at the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater Mass., the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating.



Address Correction

The Rev. Pavel Heger's address in the April *Messenger* was off by one digit. We apologize for erroneously printing 75652; instead of 75651. The correct address is:

Rev. Mgr. Pavel Heger
75651 Zasova 193
Czech Republic 0602 937 533


Grandmama and Thoughts on Mothers Day

(Continued from page 78)

"What am I, really? What is my work here?" The reply comes through our own ideas, our own lives and the lives of those we touch...that is our work. There is a fire that is created so that its light helps us find our way through the night. Vasalisa thinks she might throw the light away, for with it, all sides are seen from the "disfigured to the divine." Still, she keeps the light and miracles of deep beauty in the world and in humans come to consciousness.

It is the "otherworldliness" where these thoughts take me to Grandmama. Like an autistic child that leaves me wondering, "where is he...really?" I too often wonder, where is Grandmama, really? More than half the time I really don't know. Yet, like the tale of Vasalisa, the images leave me with a deep feeling that where she is, is her own. As Grandmama's external physical self enters its stages of shutting down I sense her deep, deep self guiding her home.

On May 10th, when Grandmama turns 90 years old, I will give her a box of chocolates and some other fun things and read to her my poem, "Crone."

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Census and Sensibility

(Continued from page 66)

Mexican-American families—men who arrived here from Mexico in the fifties with little or no formal education, struggled alone to learn English and work their way into decent jobs, who saved for years before they were able to send for their wives and children: one of these men answers me with sweet, weary patience and quiet dignity; I'm aware that the questions are sounding impertinent in my own ears.

What will the Census Bureau really know, I wonder, when they gather in these millions of completed questionnaires and crunch all those numbers? Will they get the important stuff? Likely not, but we can always hope.

Patte LeVan



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.

READING SWEDENBORG OTHERWISE

Kristin King and Jonathan Rose
*Talk delivered at the Swedenborg School of Religion
 Feb. 29th, 2000*

Dr. Kristin King is assistant professor of English and head of the English major at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. She has recently published related articles in *New Church Life* and *Studia Swedenborgiana* on reading what Swedenborg's writings say they can't say. An article by her entitled, "The Ethereal Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*" was the lead article in the most recent issue of the *Henry James Review*. She received a Ph.D. in English literature from Boston University.

The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose is series editor and a translator for the Swedenborg Foundation's New Century Edition, and chaplain and assistant professor of Greek and Religion at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. He has recently published an article in *The New Philosophy* comparing Swedenborg's Latin styles with those of his contemporaries, and an article in *Covenant Magazine* on the ornaments in Swedenborg's theological first editions. He received a Ph.D. in Latin from Bryn Mawr College. The following is a synopsis of a presentation on reading Swedenborg that they were invited to give at the Swedenborg School of Religion's February colloquium.

Kristin:

There are three strategies or beliefs about reading which I have found useful in broadening my approach to Swedenborg:

First, reading is an action. It should exhaust us, "exhaust our identity," make us be new people we did not think we had inside of us. Each of us carries many selves. The more we bring to a text, the more

we carry away. And most important, we must bring an open heart or the meanings worth having will remain hidden to us, as Swedenborg points out so beautifully at the end of *Heaven and Hell*. The final paragraph states that what has been said throughout the book will be clear only to readers who have an affection for truth, who love it for its own sake.

Second, when writing is powerful, and especially when it is divinely inspired, it exceeds the intention of the human writer, author, or scribe, and certainly exceeds the grasp of the reader. It is not about "getting it all," or tucking it into neat formulas, or packing it for easy consumption. Rather, it is about unpacking ourselves, about knowing we are on holy ground when we feel both very small and very honored to be standing in the shadow of something huge.

Third, meaning is organic and intertextual. By organic I mean it grows and changes. By "intertextual" I mean that things live in relation to other things. If you've read and loved (or hated) one text, it affects the way you perceive another. If we read too exclusively in the Writings, we miss the reciprocal enlightenment that comes from setting one text against another. Margins are fuzzy things, whether between one text and another, or a text and the world, or yourself and the thing you are reading. Life happens at the edges, and meanings are often richest in the gray areas where the reader must go in after meaning. In poetry, for example, it is often

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Pictured (L-R) Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose and Dr. Kristin King.

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