

# THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

October 2000

## Angels in Action at Walker Center SSR and Cambridge Reach Agreement

Lorraine Sando

On Saturday August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the lengthy, steamy historical conflict between SSR and the Cambridge Chapel was resolved. There will be more details reported later when details are worked out with representative boards.

I was privileged to facilitate the meetings. I knew in my soul ahead of time that things would work out, and I brought that confidence to the meetings. That confidence came from divine providence, let me assure you. So an ordinary miracle happened (miracles are ordinary) at Walker Center for Global Mission in Newton, Massachusetts. "The Center is a conference/retreat center for mission work, justice, peace, and spiritual renewal. Walker is a place of hospitality enabling all who sojourn here to explore and develop their gifts for mission. It is intergenerational, multicultural, and diverse in its ecumenicity and lifestyle."\*

We explored and accomplished our mission. The center offered its peaceful, hopeful ambience as a perfect contextual container for the actions that were taken. The meals were gourmet and artfully served. The beautiful grounds filled out the picture. I began my facilitation of the meeting by proclaiming the importance of our meeting and appreciation for all who came.

There were 15 members of the Cambridge Society led by Lars Wiberg, the Rev. F. Bob Tafel, and Ray Guir; the Council of Ministers was represented by the Rev. Paul Martin; General Council and the Church were represented by our president, the Rev. Ron Brugler; the Massachusetts New Church Union was represented by Larry Conant; the Boston church was represented by Bobby Buchanan; the Swedenborg School of Religion was represented by the Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers, John Titus, and Jane Siebert. Cambridge truly demonstrated their commitment to their church by their attendance in large numbers.

Paul Martin began the meeting with the affirmation that all of General Convention and SSR support saving the Cambridge Chapel. He gave his own three goals for the meeting:

1. Support SSR in their mission to train ministers for our churches.
2. Find a way for the Cambridge Society to continue to worship in the Chapel.
3. Keep the Chapel within Convention.

He followed this with a prayer. I played the song "Surely the Presence of Love is in this Place," and the meeting began. The morning was spent building the container for the afternoon action. Several were impatient at not going immediately into the conflict. Most of us do not know the importance of creating a safe container where all points of view are respected, and where each person is seen, heard, and respected as a unique manifestation of God regardless of differing points of view. By noon people had been heard, and most of the issues were out on the table.

Then Rachel Rivers came to me after lunch and said, "Here's a possible plan." I listened and concurred that it was a great plan. I knew that it was God in action manifesting through Rachel.

Six people of power and influence were asked to move to the center of the room and sit in a circle. These would be the only voices heard for the next hour. The rest of the group sat on the outside of the circle and were asked to refrain from speaking and to *pray continuously*. Our meetings were scheduled until 5:00 p.m. The meetings began at 1:45 p.m. By 3:00, agreement had been reached. Participants were asked to stand and softly place their hands on the shoulders of the people in the center while a recording of Andrea Bocelli and Celine Dion singing "The Prayer" was played. There were few dry eyes. Participants departed in joy, apprehension, amazement and gratitude. That's what happened. I have never experienced such a concrete manifestation of the power of prayer. And then to have it happen in about an hour's time! John Titus writes so eloquently in his piece, "The Light," which tells the story that most of us can't see:

**The answer is that God  
is abundantly there  
for us.  
The more  
we're able  
to believe  
this,  
the more  
powerfully  
we affect  
ourselves,  
others, and  
the world.**

(Continued on page 133)

### In This Issue:

❖ The Convention Theme Presentations ❖ Film Review of *Dogma*  
❖ Book Review of *Lost Legacy* ❖ General Council Report ❖ David Lomax's Talk

October 2000

In this issue we continue Convention's theme, "Building the City of God," with presentations that were left over from the September issue. As editor, I've now attended 12 conventions. I've felt, each year, that it was important to present as complete a picture of convention events as possible through all the written presentations I could glean, in addition to some personal observations—mine and others. And let the spirit of the theme carry through much of the year, if possible.

Carol Lawson, a former chair of COMSU said once, "It's good if members and readers who couldn't attend our convention are able to read the convention issue of *The Messenger* and feel as if they were there." A laudable goal, but so much of what goes on is the "you have to have been there" variety. We've experienced the energy created when people get together face to face that results in a sum greater than its parts. A between-the-lines subtle level of spiritual growth for the organization is attained and often just drops quietly into place when we're not looking. It's good to remember that there are always two levels of activity going on—what appears to be happening, and what is really transpiring because of the unseen angels rowing in the galley. There were some years when it seemed as if a lot of heated argument was going on, with little spiritual progress being made, but I believe the need for more wise and loving communications was slowly growing out of our collective pain, and we were building for what happened this year even when it seemed the pain was all there was.

George Dole states, in "Behind the Blueprint," that "if we are serious about becoming a city of God, we need to look at the way or ways we handle conflict." Dorothea Harvey and David Lomax speak of the importance of telling our own stories and really hearing each other's stories, and Erni Martin reminds us of our vision of a healthy Swedenborgian Church in which everyone engages in open, direct, and caring communication in all of our church relations. And Paul Zacharias, in "Can We Dream," talked of more honesty and trust in all our church affairs and

relationships. It would seem that "the Sages'" messages to Convention were inspired out of deep concern for the SSR/Cambridge conflict that had gone on for years. Then, before our eyes, the healing began to take place, culminating in their coming to an agreement at the August meeting which Lorraine Sando and John Titus write about in "Angels in Action." So for those of you who weren't at Urbana this summer, our October issue celebrates a second coming together, and John Titus' description of catching the angels at their work is as good as being there...well, almost.

And now, on a lighter note, I give the remainder of the space over to Jim Erickson for his mini-guest editorial exploring an ingeniously simple new idea for church growth...hmm. Eric Allison, take note...

—Patte LeVan

## Help Solve the Swedenborgian Identity Crisis

Jim Erickson

What our church needs is an identity. We sometimes call ourselves The New Church, or The Church of the New Jerusalem, and at other times our preferred referent is The Swedenborgian Church, or some other name that refers to a street, city, or some other title. Swedenborgians have a history of not knowing how to identify their churches, or even their denomination. Part of the problem is related to the association of Swedenborg's name with our churches.

As far as the name affiliation goes, it is frustrating to constantly have to respond to inquiries explaining that we do not translate Swedish letters found in somebody's grandma's attic. It is embarrassing when someone shows up for a Sunday service with friends from Stockholm to give them a taste of a sermon that is "just like back home." It is downright irritating when someone telephones to ask if he can schedule an appointment for a Swedish massage. These are incidents that have actually happened at the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church.

Why shouldn't our church name be confusing? Even every spelling check system of every computer around rejects the word "Swedenborgian." However, there is no spelling check problem with "Protestant" or "Catholic." Protestants and Catholics don't have to suffer an identity problem.

You can help solve this problem. Call or write the manufacturers of these bigoted machines. Demand that they put "Swedenborgian" in the spelling check component of their limited devices. That way, those who misspell the word "Sweden" (there are likely thousands) will get the list of alternative spellings that includes "Swedenborgian." Many of them will be curious. They will click on their electronic network system and look for "Swedenborgian."

Then we have them. We know a percentage will become fascinated with this wonderful approach to religion and start attending or supporting a Swedenborgian church. This will snowball, and the cumulative effect is likely to be that we gain hordes of new Swedenborgians. Soon "Swedenborgian" will be a household word. This will end the identity crisis.

(Continued on page 124)

### THE MESSENGER

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

September 2000  
Volume 221 No. 8  
Whole Number 5253

Typesetting & Layout  
Town & Country  
Press, Plymouth, IN

Patte LeVan, Editor

#### Editorial Address:

The Messenger TEL: (760) 765-2915  
P.O. Box 985 FAX: (760) 765-0218  
Julian, CA 92036 E-MAIL: Messenger@Jinet.com

#### Business & Subscription Address:

Central Office  
11 Highland Ave.  
Newtonville, MA 02460

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

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

# Staying in Touch with our Stories

David Lomax

*Editor's Note: At the recent Urbana Convention, vice-president Chris Laitner, acting for president Ron Brugler in his absence, introduced the Rev. David Lomax, Convention's guest from the British Conference: "David was ordained in 1994 and works from a base known as 'Greenhill' in New Barnet, Herfordshire, which is north of London. He is exploring, in a practical way, the meaning and boundaries of 'church,' and extending his ministry into an appreciation of the holistic needs of seekers and worshippers. He has an affinity with young people, and special skills in communicating with them. David has a great interest in literature, the arts, and holistic healing, with a particular interest in seeking to establish the influence of Swedenborgian concepts on them." (At this writing, his nomination for president of the General Conference of the New Church 2001-2004 has been confirmed.) Following is the talk he presented at the Urbana Convention:*

The first thing I'd like to do is to bring official greetings from the General Conference of the New Church, or, as you know us, "the British Conference." We have not had a large amount of contact in recent years, but it was a pleasure to meet Ron Brugler, your president, and Wilma Wake when they attended a seminar at New Church College (our equivalent of SSR) a few months ago, and I'm glad that this has led to my being able to be here this week. I say that not just on the level of our organizations, but on a personal level, and much of what I am about to say is very much my personal observations and thoughts.

I'd like to say how much I have enjoyed the last few days and how inspiring I have found them. I am grateful that I have been invited here and allowed to attend these meetings, including the sessions of the Council of Ministers. I have been very conscious of a warm welcome and have felt very much part of the proceedings, even as a visitor. I have been reflecting on this, and I hope you'll take this in the right way if I say that one of the things which

I have found most moving has been to hear about your struggles and the problems with which you are wrestling.

I can relate to this type of situation fairly easily as our church in the UK is facing up to various difficulties also. Church attendance is very much a minority activity in Britain these days, and it is clear that unless we are able to

**In stories we can often face up to things which are very difficult or even feel dangerous, struggles or conflicts, or maybe just situations which bring up strong emotions for us...telling these stories keeps us in touch with what is within us and also with each other.**

adapt to changing times the church will become increasingly marginalized. Many of the issues which we are looking at are ones which I know are familiar to those of you in Convention, and I'd like to share some of these with you.

We are aware that we need to focus very much on our young people and their needs in today's world. We believe that the teachings and sphere of the church have much to offer them, but we also have to be sensitive to how the environment in which many young people grow up differs from that which we could once count on. In recent years, we have been thinking a great deal about ministry and how to provide training for people to become involved

in ministry, including those who do not enter the ordained ministry. As many of you will know from the article in *The Messenger* reporting Ron and Wilma's visit, we have moved to a model in which most of the training for ministry takes place locally rather than involving relocation for residential training at our College. This has also had the advantage that a wider range of people have begun to take all sorts of College courses and to use these ideas in their churches. These changes have also affected the courses themselves, and change is an ongoing theme for all those involved in College work. Some courses look at worship, which is another area in which the church as a whole is challenged by a need to consider our tradition and to see how new elements can be introduced which are in harmony with that tradition.

I have heard a lot this week about people seeing needs in their communities and doing what they can to address those needs. That always strikes me as very encouraging when we have the confidence and courage both to look outwards and to believe that we can affect what is happening in the world at large. We in Conference are also very much aware of how important this aspect of church life is. We are very sensitive to the way in which our churches have a role to play in providing a "spiritual home" to people, where they can come and be supported in a process of discovery and affirmed in what they already know about spirituality. At the same time we need to find new forms in which we can take our message out to people.

These are a few thoughts I have had which I thought it worth sharing with you. I know that there is a great deal going on in the churches of Convention (and indeed beyond them) of this nature too. I have been impressed this week in what I've heard about the church making a difference in people's lives. While remembering that it is always the Lord working in us and through us that enables this to happen, it is heart-warming indeed when we feel that this is happening. It is perhaps easier sometimes to be aware of this sense of making a difference by coming in as an outsider as I have done this week. One of the things which

*(Continued on page 124)*

## Staying in Touch with our Stories

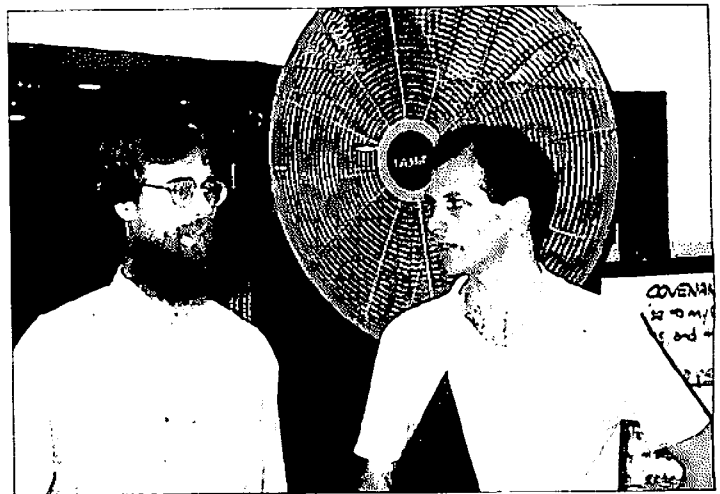
(Continued from page 123)

happens when meeting people for the first time is that they often tell you their story in some way. When you meet them at a church conference they often also tell the story of the church as they see it. I've been privileged to hear these stories on many occasions this week, and this has led to a few thoughts on this subject of telling and listening to stories.

A few weeks ago I was shown an article in which someone was claiming that CEOs of business organizations ought really to be CSOs - Chief *Storytelling* Officers rather than Chief Executive Officers. Their argument seemed primarily to be that such stories are very important for people's motivation. Every organization has a story, but so has every individual in that organization. Each individual adds something, like a tale that grows in the telling. It seems to me very important that we in the church continue to listen to each other's stories, and I'd encourage you all to do that. Part of the story may be the collective history of the church, and I know that there are individual churches in Convention which have been looking at their own history. There may also be aspects of the story which focus on the life history of individuals. These can be woven together within the context of the background story of the whole of the organization.

I think that this idea of telling a story has several important aspects to it. In stories we can often face up to things which are very difficult or even feel dangerous, struggles or conflicts, or maybe just situations which bring up strong emotions for us. I think that we often feel like that in times of change, so that this may be especially needed right now. Telling these stories keeps us in touch with what is within us and also with each other. Again, one of the things that happens when things are in flux or uncertain is that individuals lose touch with each other and attitudes often harden. Stories can remind us that everyone has a part of the picture which is valid and that it is important that this is shared. This can be a way of moving towards the truth—it's worth remembering how often Jesus used stories for this purpose.

Another thing about stories which is true of Jesus too is that they depend very much on images, and I would like to share with you now an image which is very much part of my personal story. Quite a few years ago, I was struggling to come to terms with what I saw as my ministry, and I wasn't actually sure whether I was going to be ordained as a minister or not. I then began to have a very clear picture in my mind of a skylight, a space in the roof letting through the light. In our convention sessions this week we have actually spent much of our time in a space which has relatively little light. I know that it would not make sense for a basketball court to have windows in the roof, but I invite you to imagine for a few moments what it would have been like to have light coming down from above us. I knew that this picture of a skylight as it was given to me was a picture of the Lord's light and warmth shining down on us. For me there is also a great deal of importance in the idea of the space created on the floor by the light coming into a building through a skylight. It creates a space where people can come



(l-r) David Lomax (r) chatting with Lee Woofenden during convention.

together and where things can happen, and there may also be a sense of drawing something from the relative darkness at the edges into the middle or even also moving from dark to light and back again, which seems very much like the story of our lives.

I have given this image from my own experience, but I'm very much aware that you will have your own. I'm also conscious that many of the Convention churches have a central image built into their name. Images can be like central pillars around which a story revolves, and they can give our stories a sense of permanence and continuity. However, our stories will change over time, also. I hope and pray that you will use your stories in your groups and churches, with all the different levels that they have of the collective and the individual, to continue to build the church and to help it to grow and to be an influence for good in the world. On that note, I'd like to finish with a quotation which comes from Margaret Meade, the anthropologist: "Never forget that a small group of dedicated people can change the world—and indeed it is the only thing which ever has."




### Guest Editorial

#### Help Solve the Swedenborgian Identity Crisis

(Continued from page 122)

Make your feelings and ideas about this movement known. Write in with your comments supporting, or giving suggested alternatives to, this idea. You can also e-mail your comments to: [st.paulswedch@juno.com](mailto:st.paulswedch@juno.com).

Reprinted from the July/August Correspondences, the bimonthly publication of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. Jim Erickson is a member of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church, on General Council, and a member of the Information Management Support Unit (IMSU). 

# Building the City of God

Editor's Note: As noted in the September *Messenger*, the Rev. Drs. Dorothea Harvey and George Dole and the Revs. Ernest Martin and Paul Zacharias were introduced at convention as "sages of the church," who presented their viewpoints on this year's convention theme, "Building a City of God." Due to lack of space, their presentations were scheduled for the October *Messenger*, except for Paul Zacharias' talk, which was contained in the article, "Can We Dream?" which appeared in the March 2000 *Messenger*.

## Building the City of God

Dorothea Harvey

When I think of the theme of this convention, the first thing that comes into my mind is Psalm 127:

*Unless the LORD builds the house,  
Those who build it labor in vain.  
Unless the LORD watches over the city,  
the watchman stays awake in vain.  
It is in vain that you rise up early  
And go late to rest,  
eating the bread of anxious toil;  
for he gives to his beloved sleep.*

As I think of a city of God, I think of God's presence in our coming together. I have trouble with our being asked to "build" the city. The psalm seems more a call to a kind of alertness zone of our awareness of God's purpose, of God's action, which I take to be completely real.

The other biblical passage I think of is the description in Psalm 107:

*Some wandered in desert wastes,  
finding no way to a city to dwell in;  
hungry and thirsty,  
their soul fainted within them  
Then they cried to the LORD in their  
trouble,  
and he delivered them from their  
distress;  
he led them by a straight way,  
till they reached a city to dwell in.  
Let them thank the LORD for his  
steadfast love,  
for his wonderful works to the sons  
of men!  
For he satisfies him who is thirsty,  
and the hungry he fills with good  
things.* (Ps 107: 4-9)

I think we all know the experience of wandering in those desert wastes, and finally being led to that city to dwell in, a city where we can live in safety, a peace-

ful city in which we feel supported in our awareness of God's love with us. The experience is a true one. Again I am not sure about the verb "building" in reference to the city. I have a feeling it is more our being called to notice the result of God's leading us to find that city of living in safety, to know God's presence with us.

Last fall in one of the meetings of the Executive Committee of representatives of the churches in the Massachusetts Association, I found myself asking, "What is alive in your church?" I was not asking what new program had been tried, and what the results had been, but what actually is that living center for each of us, where *we* find the life of the church?

And then this spring we had a workshop meeting for people from all the different churches, in which we talked about our experience. We had a facilitator. We broke into small groups, and we talked with each other about one of two questions, either: "What brought you into the church?" or, if you were born in it, "What kept you in the church?" Then we reported to the large group. We heard common themes expressed: A church that is open, accepting other religions, positive, accepting the validity of science and religion, not based on a sense of guilt and the avoiding of punishment, practical, concerned with the living of religion, not just thinking about it.

It was a good meeting. I think in that meeting we were doing some building. We were not trying to make it happen, but we couldn't help noticing that it was

happening. We were talking to each other and listening to each other, valuing each other and the life we experienced as the church, in our speaking and our hearing.

Then this spring I preached once in the Bridgewater church. Lee Woofenden had listened to one of the speakers we had at SSR, and believed what the speaker said, that a minister needs to take a sabbatical break after three years in a church, to be open to new perspectives. He did it. He took a three-month sabbatical. He asked some of us to come in, but mainly he asked people in


the church to lead the services, to preach, and to deal with the theme: Why I am a Swedenborgian. He said afterwards that he was a little uncertain how it would work out. But when he came back there were more people in the church

*We were talking to  
each other and  
listening to each other,  
valuing each other and the  
life we experienced as the  
church, in our speaking  
and our hearing.*

than before. There was an excitement about being a member of that church. They had spoken to each other, and they had listened.

In our Church we have a man who knew the height and depth of heaven and hell, who walked with those who knew the source of life itself, and who lived his life in this world knowing it was the presence of Reality itself. He knew heaven and hell, and lived patiently and conscientiously in his own political setting, working out policy for the mining industry, dealing with issues of currency, working to make human life in this world productive and positive.

I think of the potential of two thousand human beings aware of the actual presence of God and of the wonder and goodness of being alive in this world. I think of the power in that. I think that has something to do with a city of God on earth.

*The Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey is a part-time professor at the Swedenborg School of Religion and the pastor of the Massachusetts Association.* 

# Building the City of God

## Behind the Blueprint

George Dole

I want to start off with a quotation from *Arcana Coelestia* that I suspect and hope will be a bit startling. It comes from §6917, and reads as follows:

We need to realize that items of information are neither true nor false in and of themselves. Rather, they become true for people who are in quest of truth and false for people who are in quest of falsity. It is their application and use that makes this happen. Our information is like money for us, like wealth. When we are caught up in evil, money and wealth are destructive because they are applied to evil uses. When we are engaged in good, though, money and wealth are useful because they are being applied to good uses.

Let me next suggest that a plan for the city of God is an assemblage of items of information. It is something like a set of policies and procedures, a design of patterns of relationship or lines of accountability; and both history and doctrine advise us that any such plan will turn out to be “true” or “false” depending on how it is applied. Doctrine tells us this by its insistence that truth apart from love is truth adulterated and falsified. History tells us this through countless stories of sincere and even brilliant efforts to found utopian communities that have failed because of “the human factor.”

This does not exempt us from the need to work on policies and procedures, patterns of relationship and lines of responsibility. It simply puts such efforts in context, pressing us to keep our expectations within the bounds of realism. If we think we are smart enough to design a system that will outsmart our own impulses to outsmart it, we are deluding ourselves.

Given the need to give some form to our notions of the city of God, then, it would seem obvious that we turn to our theology, and specifically to those descriptions of the spiritual world that may tell us how community is supposed to work, to descriptions of heaven. This is not as helpful as we might expect,

though. It turns out that the form of government in heaven is tyranny, since the Lord’s will rules absolutely; that it is anarchy, since everyone is left in complete freedom; that it is communism, since everything is shared; that it is aristocracy, since the best people are given the responsibility of governance; that it is democracy, since the will of the community determines its form and functions—and, incidentally, that there is no perceptible difference between church and state.

The reason for this is quite simple. Forms of government are distinguished from each other by the way they handle disagreement, conflict of wills. Where there is total unanimity, then, there is no way to tell them apart. The rather unwelcome corollary of this is that if we are serious about becoming more and more a city of God, we need to look at the way or ways we handle conflict.

Before dealing with that directly, though, I want to take a brief detour. It is arguable that both General Convention and the General Church have made and are making honest efforts to be guided by our theology—to quote the Epistle to the Hebrews (8:5), “See that you make everything according to the pattern shown to you on the mount.”

The General Church has tried to be a utopian community, to be a kind of heaven on earth, by setting high behavioral standards and by isolating itself from what is obviously a very imperfect world. Convention has tried instead to model itself after the world of spirits, where behavioral controls are relaxed so that what lies beneath the surface may be brought to light. There are clear risks to both approaches; and we would be

well advised to spend our time recognizing the risks involved in our approach, looking at the risks of the General Church’s approach primarily when we consider moving in the direction of greater centralization or isolation.

With that as background, then, let us turn to the matter of handling conflict. I would begin by quoting what for me is one of the hardest sayings in our theology, the closing sentences of *Arcana Coelestia* §107:

Wherever there is no charity, love of self is present and specifically a hatred for everyone who is not on our side. The result of this is that we do not see anything in our neighbor except what is wrong, and if we do see anything good, we either discount it completely or put a negative interpretation on it. It is totally different when we are focused on behaving thoughtfully. . . . [Then] we scarcely see what is wrong in other people, but are alert to everything that is good and true in them, putting a

positive interpretation on anything evil and false. All angels are like this; and they get it from the Lord, who bends everything evil toward the good.

My instinctive reaction to this is that it is totally impractical, that it is the perfect recipe for making doormats. The standard re-

**If we peeled away the most hellish behavior, we would eventually come to the legitimate need that was energizing it. We would come, that is, to the basis of genuine conflict resolution and genuine community.**

sponse to conflict is to make as strong a case for ourselves as we can, and find every possible flaw in the other. One writer described the abortion debate as “. . . a political battle so passionate and divisive that warriors on both sides feel that all is fair, that no weapon is out of bounds, and that any admission of weakness could give the enemy an opportunity for total conquest.” The

(Continued on page 127)

# Building the City of God

## Behind the Blueprint

(Continued from page 126)

writer refers to this as a “new ‘ethics of advocacy,’ modeled after the combative behavior of lawyers in a courtroom, in which the quality of facts takes a back seat to the deftness of their manipulation” (*New York Times* article). My only disagreement with this picture is the characterization of this ethics of advocacy as “new.” I think it’s old as hell.

Angels are not doormats. There is a full chapter in *Heaven and Hell* on their power, and it should be taken seriously. This power is utterly inexplicable if angels are living in some dream world, caught up in illusions that everything and everyone is really very sweet after all. Power comes with truth, with realism.

The realism of *Arcana Coelestia* § 1079, with putting the best possible interpretation on others, is that it is the only way we can see the world through their eyes. As long as the opponent of abortion can see the other only as murderer, as long as the advocate of choice can see the other only as self-righteous oppressor, they are living in different worlds, talking different languages. All the rhetorical skill in the world will be futile—powerless. It will feel strong, but that strength will itself be an illusion, and as it proves itself time after time after time to be ineffective, the efforts to exert it will intensify.

Let me come at the problem from another angle, starting with the assertion that there is something profoundly legitimate behind everything anyone tries to accomplish. This, I think, is the absolutely necessary corollary of the fact that each of us is sustained in being by the constant inflow of the Lord’s love and wisdom. That love-and-wisdom may get terribly distorted by the time they reach the level of outward behavior, but in the depths of our souls, it is heavenly. This means that if we peeled away the distortions of even the most hellish behavior, we would eventually come to the legitimate need that was energizing it. We would come, that is, to the basis of genuine conflict resolution and genuine community.

This is not to say that if we adopt this as our policy, we will always succeed. We may not be very good at doing it, partly from lack of practice, partly from lack of trust. However, I strongly suspect that if we do not adopt this policy, we will always fail, at least where it counts most. We may win some battles, but we will cease being the church.

This brings me to the last thing I would like to say, namely that we are faced with an urgent need to let go of anxiety about our survival. My wife worked for years in a geriatric facility and can cite chapter and verse about the folly of trying to maintain life after the meaning of life has been lost. Our task is not to preserve the organization, it is to make the organization worth preserving. When I read Swedenborg’s descriptions of the new church in *The Apocalypse Revealed*, I am struck with their beauty. If we were that new church, we would be bursting at the

seams. The marriage of perceptiveness and love would be irresistible. Newcomers would discover that they were both understood and treasured, with no sense at all that they were seen as fodder for the membership roll.

This, in a way, brings us back to the digression about the difference between Convention and the General Church, because the only way to be lovingly perceptive is to be open to the perceptions of others. Paul said it right: “Then shall I know, even as I am known” (I Corinthians 13:12). The holy city, with its gates wide open on every side, is not an image of the collective church only. It is an image of the individual church as well.

*The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole is an author, a part-time professor at the Swedenborg School of Religion and the pastor of the Swedenborgian Church in Bath, Maine.*



---

## Love in Action Revisited

*Erni Martin*

I’m a little uncomfortable being labeled a Sage. Does it mean more than a golden-ager or church elder? One dictionary defines “Sage” as one who is distinguished for wisdom, wise through reflection and experience. That sounds better. I like to think that I have learned something during my lifetime in the church, 48 years in the ministry, pastor of three churches, president of Convention, associate minister of the Wayfarers Chapel, founder of the central office, and developer of Temenos. There is always more to learn, however, and my son Paul has given me an opportunity to work with him in the leadership of the Stonehouse Bookstore and Growth Center in Kirkland, Washington. Wisdom may yet come!

I want to reflect on my experience in the church and share some thoughts about the future. An accomplishment that I would like to point to is the adoption in 1986 of a new Statement of Purpose for our church, along with nine Objectives, and a host of Strategies. I’m sure that all of you have this ten-page Statement on your bedside table, next to the family Bible.

The Statement of Purpose begins: “The General Convention exists to help people be open to the Lord’s presence and leading especially by fostering personal and ordained ministries which facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, and which have in common a working for the Lord in bringing in the New Age—the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem.”

This is a wonderful summary of the convention theme - “Building the City of God.” The city is built or descends through the process of regeneration,

(Continued on page 128)



# Building the City of God

## Love In Action Revisited

(Continued from page 127)

facilitating spiritual well-being. The sixty-four dollar question, or perhaps I should say today, the million dollar question, is how do we facilitate spiritual well-being, and as a church how well are we doing in our spiritual growth? How can we help one another to become more regenerate, to grow into angelhood?

We take great pride in the teachings of our church, as resources to be used in facilitating spiritual well-being. I view our doctrines as providing a perspective in our ministries and in our lives. I don't think we are always clear just how this perspective advances our spirituality. In my own struggle with this question, I experienced a significant breakthrough a month or so ago.

I am a great admirer of William James, one of America's greatest philosophers and psychologists, and son of Henry James the Elder, prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century Swedenborgian. James taught at Harvard and Radcliffe, and on one occasion he had been sick and missed several classes. To express their concern, students from Radcliffe sent him an azalea plant and their best wishes for a speedy recovery.

In a note of thanks, Professor James wrote: "I am deeply touched by your remembrance. It is the first time anyone ever treated me so kindly, so you may well believe that the impression on the heart of this lonely sufferer will be even more durable than the impression on your mind of all the teaching of Philosophy 2-A."

He continued:

"I now perceive one immense

omission in my psychology. The deepest principle of human nature is the craving to be appreciated, and I left it out altogether from my books, because I have never had it gratified till now."

James had a eureka experience. It dawned on him, in a compelling way, of the universal need to be loved and

appreciated, and he confessed that his need to be appreciated had never been gratified until now, when it was expressed through the azalea and note.

In our church we are fond of saying that God is love, and that love is the ultimate reality. But how well do we express this love in our human relationships?

The wife of a Vermont farmer asked her husband of fifty years whether he still loved her. "Of course I love you," he responded. "Didn't I tell you on our wedding day?"

Most of us do pretty well in expressing love and appreciation at birthdays and anniversaries, on Mother's Day and Father's Day, and at Christmas, sending Hallmark greeting cards to show how much we care. In between these holidays, how well do we express our caring? I'm convinced that our need for love and appreciation is much greater than our need to be reprimanded and punished, to have people point out our failures and shortcomings.

I have often puzzled how such a brilliant student of human nature as William James could have suffered frequently from depression.

*I see the mission of our church as helping one another learn how to love, care, and appreciate, not through a set of gimmicks or techniques, but through expression of genuine feelings.*

Swedenborgians often wonder how informed church members could be depressed, contemplate suicide, or sue for divorce. After all, we have all the answers! James had the answers, in his books, and in his head, but he hadn't listened to his heart. My plea, as we plan for ministry in the future, is to heed the



The four sages: (l-r) Paul Zacharias, George Dole, Erni Martin, Dorothea Harvey.

needs and promptings of our hearts.

I see the mission of our church as helping one another learn how to love, care, and appreciate, not through a set of gimmicks or techniques, but through expression of genuine feelings. We can't do this if we're tied up in knots of depression and defensiveness, feeling inferior and inadequate, all too ready to judge and condemn.

I pointed to the inspired statement of purpose that we adopted as a church. More recently the Council of Ministers approved a statement of a healthy Swedenborgian Church in which they asked everyone to engage in open, direct, and caring communication in all of our church relations.

I am deeply saddened by examples on many sides of charges and counter-charges, unresolved conflict, intemperate language, firings and resignations.

What have we done with the love that pours into our beings from God, and enlivens us?

When my good friend, Andre Diaconoff, celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination, I asked him this

question: Over those fifty years in ministry, how did you deal with conflict? Taking pen in hand, I waited anxiously to record his secret. Andre's answer was: "I didn't." It's much easier to deny conflict and differences, to walk away from them, rather than deal

(Continued on page 133)



# Dogma

(Lion's Gate 1999) Starring: Linda Fiorentino, Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Alan Rickman, Chris Rock, Jason Mewes, Kevin Smith, George Carlin, Salma Hayek, Jason Lee, Bud Cort, Alanis Morissette. Director: Kevin Smith. | Writer: Kevin Smith

*Reviewed by Tim Boxell*

Dog.ma A system of principles or tenets as of a church.

Dog.doo A bad place for your car keys. (explanation below)

Good? Bad? Offensive? Thought-provoking? Controversial? After getting heat from the Catholic League and being bounced around a bit by Disney and Miramax, the companies that financed and owned it, *Dogma* got "Thumbs up" from Roger Ebert, raves from Janet Maslin at the *New York Times* and was identified by *Entertainment Weekly* as "one of the ten best films of 1999." *Dogma*? This *Dogma*?

In the recent "feel-good, revenge, redemption, and how to steal a car" movie, *Gone In Sixty Seconds*, a dog swallows a set of keys critical to the success of our loveable thieves. After feeding the hound a big meal and an overdose of Exlax, two young criminals-in-training are sent to walk the dog knowing that at some point those keys will be leaving the dog. It is their task to retrieve the keys.

Watching *Dogma* is like that. There are a couple of shiny bits of worthy thought and value at the heart of the story, but getting to it is about as pleasant as retrieving those keys...

Loki (Matt Damon), and Bartelby, the Angel of Death (Ben Affleck), cast out of heaven for questioning God's word, have found a loophole that can get them back through the pearly gates. Alas, the process involves proving God wrong, and, as you might guess, will bring about the end of existence as we know it.

Who will take up arms to prevent this disaster? What champion of virtue will have the power to go up against the Angel of Death himself? Schwarzenegger? No, you're thinking of *End of Days*, a different cheery end-of-existence tale with a bigger special

effects budget and even lower aspirations.

Our collective fate is in the hands of Bethany (Linda Fiorentino), a dysfunctional Catholic who works in an abortion clinic and is also the last known descendant of Christ (who was black), the 13th Apostle, Rufus (Chris Rock), currently dead, who was left out of Scripture because he was black, and unlikely allies Jay (Jason Mewes) and Silent Bob (Kevin Smith) who together must stop the Angels.

Loki and Bartelby's efforts to reach a Catholic Church in New Jersey are being abetted by a demon who would prefer that everything cease to exist rather than return to the fiery pit.

Now a brilliant director might be able to make this work. Fellini. Bunuel. Altman. Mike Nichols on a good day with a script by Elaine May. But what we have here is Kevin Smith. And Ebert and Maslin and *Entertainment Weekly* so starved for a film even pretending to be about something that they get all excited and start saying things they'll regret when a really decent film shows up.

Kevin dives willingly into a sewer he's visited before. This time (like those dog-walkin' crooks) he's up to his eyeballs (and so are we) in dreck to wrestle with the dogmatic problems of his faith. He takes issue with what he sees as the Catholic Church's shabby efforts to reinvent itself in hopes of filling empty seats. And in his Angels' fierce existence-imperiling effort to regain Heaven he has contrived a thorny loophole. He wants us and his young audience to listen to him, to take his soul-searching travails seriously.

Director Smith has always had an ear for clever, often funny, dialogue and ideas. Romance was at the heart of his last two films, *Mall Rats* and *Chasing Amy*, but the environment is always obscenity-laden and rich with images you wish you hadn't been exposed to. Is the only way to catch and hold a jaded youth audience to beguile them with extreme words and images and hope that the ideas you want to communicate are the things they take home from the show? That's what Smith seems to believe, and I think he's wrong.

Oliver Stone, apparently hoping for an ancient Greek cathartic experience, tried to make a point about the news media's


culpability in glamorizing violent crime and criminals in his film *Natural Born Killers*. He made the attempt by making an incredibly violent film that appealed for all the wrong reasons to the very bloodthirsty audience he claimed were nurtured by sensationalist news media. His heart was in the right place, but his method missed its mark by miles.

Smith aspires to spiritual discourse but chooses to use a lewd, vulgar, blasphemous, violent, and juvenile approach that extinguishes whatever candle he holds up to the issues in a foul spray of words and images. Agreeing to review Smith's film resulted in my thinking a lot about what he wanted to do, but very little about what he did. What lingers from the film are not the issues of Catholic dogma that trouble Smith, but the unimaginative and offensive words and images he chose to make his attempt.

Ed Harris starred in a film last year—*The Third Miracle*—that got a lot less attention than *Dogma*. It was about a priest who'd lost his faith and then was given the task of participating in the evaluation of a woman being considered for sainthood. Watching the process of a man who isn't really sure he even believes in God come to accept the possibility that a woman has lived and functioned as a true Saint manifesting the healing powers of a living God, is a lot more successful and entertaining and appropriate to its content.

If you've got two bucks to rent a movie tonight and you're looking for something to think about, the smart money's on *The Third Miracle*. Forget *Dogma*.

*Tim Boxell, a new writer for The Messenger, is a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. He wrote the following bio information: "Tim Boxell is a filmmaker living in the San Francisco Bay Area. He's done a whole bunch of short and long films for television and the big screen, some of which you may even have seen. Religious issues? He had a big problem with God frying that guy who, while trying to keep it from falling, touched the Arc of the Covenant. He is glad that Swedenborg had a good and satisfying explanation..."*

Editor's Note: Mr. Boxell's credits are too numerous to list here. Among the feature films he worked on were *The Right Stuff* and *The Black Stallion Returns*. 

Carol Smith, a teacher and daughter of Eldon and Annella Smith (San Diego Swedenborgian Church) writes about a meaningful Convention experience in their church newsletter:

*Since I work with children, one of the highlights of Convention was watching the play of Johnny Appleseed put on by our young people...at Urbana University near the Johnny Appleseed Museum which we toured afterwards.*

*The play started with Johnny saying goodbye to his family. Later on, he met the*



*Sketch of Johnny Appleseed by Michael Major*

*Indians...as well as the early settlers, and showed them how to plant the appleseeds. On his travels among the settlers he distributed pages from books by Swedenborg. Heaven and Hell was one of his favorites. If the settlers could not read, Johnny read to them. He*

*would leave the pages on one trip and then pick up those pages and leave others on his next trip.*

*There are some apple trees on the university campus that were started from some of the seeds and trees that Johnny planted.*

*On Friday...Bill Jones led an interesting mini-course about Johnny Appleseed, showing us maps listing the places where Johnny had planted appleseeds, where some of the orchards are still producing, and all the areas that Johnny covered in his travels.*



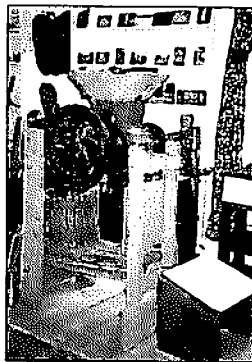
Inside the small Johnny Appleseed Museum, housed in the old Bailey Hall, one's attention is immediately drawn to a lifesize drawing of Johnny Appleseed (above) resting on an easel that belonged to the late Alice Archer Sewall James, a noteworthy artist and daughter of the late Rev. Frank Sewell. She was married to John James, III, and they lived in Urbana. The drawing is by well-known area artist/sculptor Michael Major, and is the preliminary sketch for

## "Comfort Me With Apples..."

*Song of Songs, 2:5*

a statue of Johnny Appleseed that will be placed by the museum near the apple trees on campus. Alice B. Skinner, past president of the Swedenborg Foundation, was named after Alice Archer Sewall James, and is in the process of writing a book about her.

The apple cider press (R) belonged to Col. John James, who founded Urbana University.



*Apple Cider Press*

Johnny Appleseed planted apple trees for the James family, and the press was used to press apples from those trees for years.

Here in the Julian area, which is also apple country in southern California, a wooden statue of Johnny Appleseed stands near the roadside at Calico Ranch. Since the owners are away in Europe for an extended vacation, the origins of the statue remain a mystery, but perhaps I will have more information next month!

### Update on Johnny Appleseed Heritage Center

The Johnny Appleseed Heritage Center & Outdoor Historical Drama, scheduled to open in June 2002, will provide an educational, cultural and recreational experience in a natural environment for visitors to learn about Appleseed's life. Guests will also be reminded of practical traditional values such as hope, faith and courage. The experience will reinforce the importance of life, the need to take responsibility for one's actions, and the impact people have on one another.

Located two miles south of Mifflin, Ohio, on State Route 603, the 45-acre Appleseed Center will also offer an interactive museum focusing on John

Chapman's life, the history of the region and the apple industry. In addition, the J.M. Smucker Auditorium and Library will be available, along with a learning center for children's programs on philanthropy, conservation, and the environment.

There will also be apple-menu pioneer meals, a gift shop, living history and reenactments, an orchard, garden, nature trail, festival, and an annual hero scholarship award.

The Heritage Center will employ about 72 people, attract 65,000 guests a year, operate on a \$650,000 annual budget, and contribute over \$12 million to the economic development of the region. Under a volunteer board of trustees, the Center currently operates with two staff members, Bill Jones as president/general manager/executive producer, and a full-time executive secretary. The center is being built through the generosity of numerous individuals, families, corporations, and foundations. For more information, contact:

**Johnny Appleseed Heritage Center, Inc.**  
124 North Main Street  
Mansfield, Ohio 44902  
(419) 525-1300 or (800) 642-0388  
fax: (419) 524-7722  
email: [appleseed@jahci.org](mailto:appleseed@jahci.org)  
web: [www.appleseedoutdoordrama.org](http://www.appleseedoutdoordrama.org)



*Johnny Appleseed painting by Richard Haynes, Ohio artist*



*Johnny Appleseed, Calico Ranch, Julian, California*



—PL

## ASK SWEDENBORG

Dear Mr. Swedenborg...

What is the difference between a spirit and an angel?

Answer: Swedenborg's theology has much to say about spirits and angels. Every human being on earth and in the realms of spirit may be called a "spirit" generally speaking. This is because the human mind is spiritual in nature; our mind is spirit. While on earth, the mind is connected to the brain and body. The human mind is composed of affections with their accompanying thoughts. This is what we are in essence, and these together within us make up our "spirit." Thus, everyone is a spirit. The big question is, what quality of spirit are you, and what stage of development are you in?

Angels are human spirits that are highly developed—or as Swedenborg

put it, fully regenerated. They are not a separate order of creation. Angel people have grown into loving, faithful and wise spirits; their minds are in varying degrees of receptivity to the Lord's divine light of goodness and truth. The depth of receptivity draws them to a corresponding depth or level of heaven. Swedenborg outlines seven stages of spiritual development that everyone must go through before true angelhood is achieved, symbolized in the seven days of creation in Genesis.

God gives us the ability to move through all of these stages while on earth, which is a wonderful and difficult challenge. Thus, Paul's view that angels may be among us is well substantiated in Swedenborgian thought.

Swedenborg distinguishes spirits and angels in terms of life in the spiritual world. Angels are the citizens of heaven

because they love being in a heavenly state of heart/mind. He often referred to spirits as those who dwell in the "world of spirits" (where all go immediately after death while final growth happens to an angel or hellish spirit). He used the term "spirit," also, to refer to those people residing in some level of hell too, as well as for the angels of various levels or depths of heaven.

*Reprinted from Correspondences, the July/August Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church newsletter, St. Paul, Minnesota, the Rev. Kit Billings, pastor. If you have a theological question that you would like answered, please send your questions to the church at 170 Virginia Street, St. Paul, MN 55102 or by e-mail to: st.paulswedch@uno.com*



*General Council members (l-r) Duane Beougher, Jim Erickson, Jonathan Mitchell.*

General Council met before and after Convention sessions at Urbana University, June 28 and July 1, 2000.

At their meetings, various reports, including those of the president, the vice-president, Council of Ministers, and Wayfarers Chapel were received. The treasurer, Polly Baxter, announced her intention to not run for reelection due to personal reasons. She was thanked for her devotion and hard work with a standing ovation.

General Council (GC) voted to request the Compensation and Career Concerns for Church and Clergy Committee (otherwise known as the 5-C

## General Council Report

Committee) to meet and revise the salary schedule for ministers and to report to GC at their October meeting. They also voted to endorse the resolution made by the Council of Ministers to facilitate the resolution of the Cambridge Chapel situation. It was voted to accept the Blakebell New Church Home Funds, the income of which will be distributed according to certain stipulations of the Ladies Benevolent Association of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos. GC voted to grant a request from the Rev. Pavel Heger (Czech Ministry) to help fund a new computer.

Structure and budgeting process was discussed at length. Polly Baxter and Duane Beougher will work on the ideas and suggestions generated and bring them to the October GC meeting for further recommendations. The Youth Minister

position was discussed and a charge given to the Rev. Ken Turley to be involved with MINSU and EDSU as they work out the details.

Various committee appointments were made, including Merle Lundberg and Jeanette Hille to the Wayfarers' Chapel Board, Susan Wood to the Retirement Committee, and Jim Erickson to Library and Documents Committee. The invitation from Washington DC to host the 2003 Convention was accepted. The next General Council meeting is scheduled for October 19-21 at Temenos.

*Gloria Toot, secretary*



*(l-r) Martha Bauer, Central Office manager, General Council members Chuck Winter, Margaret Kraus, vice-president Chris Laitner, former treasurer Polly Baxter.*

# Fall Transitions Retreat

The theme for the fall Transitions retreat is "Distinguishable Oneness." The Rev. Susannah Currie, pastor of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos, will facilitate the retreat the weekend of October 26-29, 2000, at the Temenos Retreat Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Rev. Currie describes her ideas for the theme as follows: "Love is reality and wisdom is presence; love actually does not occur except within wisdom, nor wisdom except from love. So when love is within wisdom, then it becomes present." DLW 14

Rev. Currie continues with "When one thing does not occur without another thing and not apart from it they are 'one' but 'distinguishably one.' Just as the heat and light of a flame cannot exist separately, so it is with the love and wisdom of God. And as we are made in God's image and likeness—our will and understanding are distinguishably one."

At the Transitions retreat we will discuss this theological concept and how we experience it in our lives in such ways as career choices and life meaning; relationship to others and relationship to God; relocation and redefinition of self endings; death and resurrection renewal.

Jenn Tafel, President  
Transitions



## Temenos Retreat Center FALL 2000 Programs for Personal and Spiritual Growth

### YOGA CLASSES

Mondays 6:45 - 8:15 p.m.  
Thursdays 9:30 - 11 a.m.

### SEPTEMBER

- 10 Heaven and Wildflowers 1:30 - 3 p.m.
- 12 Spiritual Growth Group begins 7:30 - 8:45 p.m.
- 13 Meditation 7:15 - 9 p.m.
- 14 Mapping Your Spiritual Journey begins 7:30 - 8:45 p.m.
- 17 Chamber Music Concert 4 - 5:30 p.m.
- 27 Reiki Practitioner Support 6:30 - 9 p.m.

### OCTOBER

- 1 Mystic Ways of the Sufi 2 - 4 p.m.
- 7 Trusting your Intuition 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
- 10 Mindfulness Meditation series begins
- 11 Meditation 7:15 - 9 p.m.
- 14 Elevated Excursion 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- 14-15 Reiki: Level I Training 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- 14-15 Soul's Journey, Fire's Breath
- 22 Chamber Music Concert 4 - 5:30 p.m.
- 25 Reiki Practitioner Support 6:30 - 9 p.m.
- 28 House as Mirror of Self 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- 29 Freeing the Self from Family Grief 1:30 - 5 p.m.
- 29 Interfaith Worship 2 p.m.

### NOVEMBER

- 4 Therapeutic Touch 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- 5 Roots of Mystical Christianity 2 - 4 p.m.
- 8 Meditation 7:15 - 9 p.m.
- 10-12 Proprioceptive Writing @
- 11 Spirit-informed Partnership 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- 12 Partnership as Spiritual Practice 1:30 - 3 p.m.
- 18 Trails Day 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- 18 Navigating the Mid-life Passage 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- 22 Reiki Practitioner Support 6:30 - 9 p.m.

### DECEMBER

- 2 Introduction to the Enneagram 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- 3 The Heart, The Mystic Center 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
- 9 Spiritual Warfare 8:30 a.m. - 12 noon
- 10 Chamber Music Concert 4 - 5:30 p.m.
- 13 Meditation 7:15-9 p.m.
- 31 Millennium Celebration 8 p.m.

For more information, please contact:

Temenos Retreat Center  
1564 Telegraph Road  
West Chester, PA 19382  
Phone: 610-696-8145  
FAX: 610-696-7335  
E-mail: [programs@temenosretreat.org](mailto:programs@temenosretreat.org)  
Website: [www.temenosretreat.org](http://www.temenosretreat.org)



### Letter from the Editor:

The Communications Support Unit and *The Messenger* want to thank all those who responded to the September 1999 *Messenger* Fund Appeal. The appeal brought in a total of \$2,695, with \$825 added to *The Messenger's* Endowment Fund.

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

—Patte LeVan

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

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

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to *The Messenger* and mail it in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope included in this issue, to: Swedenborgian Church, Central Office, 11 Highland Avenue, Newtonville, MA 02460.

## TO THE EDITOR

### Acronym Inaccurate

Dear Editor:

The meaning for DEADSU is not "Drop Everything and Dance," as reported in the pre-convention *Messenger*. We do not advocate dropping anything. What we advocate is taking responsibility for being actively involved in the life of the church.

DEADSU means "Do Everything and Dance."

Sincerely,

Lon Elmer, DEADSU co-chair  
Seattle, Washington



### Love In Action Revisited

(Continued from page 128)

with them directly, especially when we're taught and expected to be nice to everyone.

I am encouraged that one of our church leaders, Lorraine Sando, has gotten training in conflict resolution, and that she has made herself available to local churches that are open to her services.

In closing, my plea is to dust off our ten-page Statement of Purpose as a Church, and the Council of Ministers' Statement of a Healthy Swedenborgian Church, and begin to put these principles into practice. We are united in our love of the doctrines; we are divided in our application of these doctrines.

Richard Tafel, Sr., often spoke of Swedenborgianism as "a thinking man's religion." This may be true, although we had better edit the gender reference. The philosopher Descartes said: "I think; therefore I am." In his *Messenger* article in May, Lee Woofenden pleaded for an integration of mind, body, and spirit. Swedenborgians like to argue as to which is most important, love or wisdom. Rather than arguing, I suggest we apply our energies to the integration that Lee speaks of, uniting thoughts, feelings, and actions in the service of the Lord and our Church. And since I'm name-dropping, I can ask that we put into practice the theme of Bill Woofenden's doctoral thesis and book, "Love in Action."

As a recognized Sage, I also ask that during our convention sessions you make a conscious effort to tell at least one person how much you care about them, and appreciate them. And since the convention is just beginning, perhaps you can reach out to two or three people this week.

Thank you. I love you.



### Angels in Action at Walker Center

(Continued from cover)

#### The Light

*I sat in prayerful silence as an observer, outside the circle of hope, the power group chosen to resolve the conflict that had lingered on way too long and divided Swedenborgians needlessly—the possession and ownership of the Cambridge Chapel.*

*As the group proceeded in a process designed to bring resolution, I saw a white light penetrating through a dilating lens in the middle of the dome that graced the otherwise dark cathedral where the group of five men and one woman sat in anticipation. The lens contracted and dilated in accordance with the receptivity of the individuals or the group as a whole. As the issues were put forth and discussed, the Light would shine brighter and the lens would open more fully. At the point of accord the Light would fully encase the circle and shine on each of the participants. Angels appeared out of the Light and flowed, dance-like around the circle in a counterclockwise direction while a group of angels danced in a clockwise direction on the inner circle. A golden trumpeter heralded the heavens. The participants moved closer to resolution, the Light shone brighter, and the angels danced faster and faster until it all emptied into white. Afterwards I was left with a feeling of awe and wonderment as goose bumps gave way to tingling sensations throughout my body.*

*This was truly God's work in process. Let there be peace and love in the Light and may the healing begin.*

—John Titus

The answer is that God is abundantly there for us. The more we are able to believe this, the more powerfully we affect ourselves, others, and the world. I shared an article on abundance from the book *The Planetary Commission* by John Randolph Price. (Quartus Books, The Quartus Foundation for Spiritual Research, Inc.). There are a few people in the group who plan to do the 40-day exercise prescribed in Chapter 13 of the book. I have been practicing it for the last three weeks. I believe that if all churches were to use the principles consistently, we would have abundance, our cups running over.

With deepest gratitude to God and all of the dedicated, motivated, open and honest participants. Bless our Church and let us watch for and expect abundance in membership, prosperity, love, and wisdom. May we be open, joyously and expectantly, to the changes that are needed in ourselves and our churches. Remember that we do not need to let go of anything. As we add what is needed now, what is not needed will fall away in its own time and we can thank anything that falls away for its usefulness. The breath of God is moving among us, calling us to a new, deeper, and higher place in our spirituality. Let us breathe our God and truly embody our divinity in thought, feeling, and action.

*Lorraine Sando is a psychotherapist with special training in conflict resolution. She lives in Seattle, Washington and is a member of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound and secretary on the Wayfarers Chapel Board of Managers.*

\* Walker Center's Mission Statement.



## *A Legacy Recovered*

(Continued from back)

medical practitioner who eventually was awarded a Doctor of Medicine degree from the Female Medical College of Philadelphia, she was a champion of women's suffrage and the anti-slavery movement. She earned a wide reputation for refusing to pay her taxes without representation. She dedicated her life to the health profession, and at the same time continued to promote freedom for all people, regardless of their sex, color, or class. She valued the life of the spirit and mind and was guided by strong spiritual principles.

Anna Cora Mowatt Richie (1819-1870), an actress famous in nineteenth-century America, is virtually unknown today, although her comic play, *Fashion*, was revived in New York in 1924 and 1959 and is still performed in college and local theaters. Richie was a dramatic performer famous for her poetry readings and spiritual beliefs. Although she suffered from tuberculosis, she lived a dramatic public life until she died at 50 in England.

Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909), well-known to historians and literary scholars, was influenced by the Swedenborgian pastor Theophilus Parsons, a Harvard law professor. Poole describes the Swedenborgian influence and the important mentor role that Parsons assumed in Jewett's life, and highlights some of Jewett's literary characters that exemplify tenets of the Swedenborgian beliefs.

Part Two, "In Her Own Words," describes the lives of women who have largely remained unknown to women's history scholars, yet their public lives were unusual for their times. Lydia Fuller Dickenson (1828-1904), educator and essayist, was active in the women's movement and the Fourierist social movement, and she advanced the cause for personal, social and political freedom in many of her essays and articles.

Ednah Silver (1838-1928) was an educator, writer, and the daughter of the Rev. Abiel Silver, a Swedenborgian minister. She addressed the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, and presented a paper to the congress (women were in-

vited to speak at this event).

Mary Artemesia Lathbury (1841-1913) was a lyricist and poet laureate of Chautauqua, New York. When she was twelve she was told in a vision to write from her heart. This vision was to guide her throughout her life as she developed into a serious artist and writer who received training at the School of Design in Worcester, Massachusetts and later taught at the New York Chautauqua Institution. There she developed her talents as a musician and lyricist and wrote many hymns which are still sung today.

Selma Ware Paine (1847-1917) was a published writer and musician from Bangor, Maine who addressed the World Parliament of Religions with an essay entitled "The Womanly Nature," which emphasized the importance of a woman's following her own path, regardless of the strictures of society. This idea was nurtured by her faith in Swedenborgian principles, which stressed the concept of usefulness and the theory of the masculine and taught feminine nature; that a man or woman must follow one's own path in life or risk the consequences of going against one's own nature.

Ellen Spencer Mussey (1850-1936) was an attorney and social reformer from Geneva, Ohio, who was well known in Washington, DC political circles as well as a delegate to represent the Swedenborgian Church. Her speech illustrated Swedenborg's concept of uses, emphasizing the importance of women's active participation in social causes. An appendix following Part Two of the book lists 22 women who were Swedenborgian or were influenced by Swedenborg and includes a brief statement of their accomplishments. This list reads as a veritable Who's Who of nineteenth-century women, thereby highlighting the importance of faith in the lives of these women. The bibliography list includes titles of biographies of all the women mentioned in the book, and provides resources for the interested reader.

Because of its blatant Swedenborgian promotion, this book may not appeal to all readers; however, including it in a syllabus for introductory women's studies courses would answer the need for an anthology of brief biographical

sketches of nineteenth-century women. At the same time, it would serve to remind historians and their students of the importance of spiritual life for nineteenth-century American women. The women described here were in fact of strong Swedenborgian faith, and this teaching and its importance in the history of women should not go unnoticed. *Lost Legacy* serves as a needed corrective to the highly secular nineteenth-century women's history that is widely circulated today, and it may even remind us to nurture our own frail spiritual capacities, even as we expand our intellects and physical strength.

Copyright (c) 2000 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list.

Author/editor Susan Flagg Poole is the acquisitions editor for the Swedenborg Foundation and a member of the Communications Support Unit. She lives in Wilmington, Delaware. To order *Lost Legacy*, please call the Swedenborg Foundation, 1-800-355-3222.



## Heaven and Hell Here and Now

Those who attempt to live a good life begin to experience heaven here. Those who live a poor life, below their capacities, begin to experience hell here. Most lives are a mix of heaven and hell, but the individual can be guided by these experiences. What leads you to heavenly states? This is best for you. In the preponderance of heaven or hell you get a glimpse of your potential destiny. We used to think of heaven and hell as remote, beyond this life. Look and see; they are already known and being experienced. Even the full nature of heaven can be known here. How considerate of the Lord to provide this inner and unforgettable guidance.

Wilson Van Dusen  
Author of *Beauty, Wonder and the Mystical Mind* 

## BAPTISMS

**Bullard**—Gracelyn Anne Bullard was baptized into the Christian faith June 11, 2000, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Cambridge, Mass., the Rev. F. Robert Tafel and Rafael M. J. Guiu co-celebrants.

## CONFIRMATIONS

**Foley**—Greg Foley was welcomed into membership of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, with a special confirmation service May 7, 2000.

**Haug**—Fran Haug was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church and welcomed into membership October 3, 1999, at the Church of the Holy City (Swedenborgian) in Wilmington Delaware, the Rev. Randall Laakko officiating.

**Kline**—Rebecca Elizabeth Kline was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church November 7, 1999, at the Cambridge Chapel, using portions from the liturgy of the General Church and the Book of Worship of General Convention. The Rev. Gladys Wheaton officiated. A personal declaration of faith shared with the congregation was part of the ceremony. (See below)

**McGaffigan**—Pat and Ron McGaffigan were welcomed into membership in June—at the June Members' Meeting of the Boston Swedenborgian Church.

## Personal Declaration of Faith

*Rebecca Kline*

I have inherited a truth. It is a truth that I was revealed to the ancestor of my spiritual lineage, the prophet Emanuel Swedenborg, and passed down through generations of his followers. My most recent ancestors in this line of inheritance are also my biological ancestors: to a large extent I received this truth matrilineally from my mother and her sisters, who received it from their mother, who also received it from her mother. The women in my family are strong in their faith. The truth that I have inherited is this: all that is good is from God. It is a simple statement with profound implications. It implies that the things of religion: scripture, prophethood, praxis, are not human imaginings—all of religion that is good is from God. All that is good of Judaism is from God, all that is good of Islam is from God, all that is good of Hinduism is from God. It implies that humans cannot be good, or do any good on their own. All that is good in you is from God, all that is good in me is from God. It implies that God only wills what is good in our society, and all that is good God himself has brought into being. To not recognize these things in the music, the

Templin—Meredith Templin was welcomed into the membership of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos July 30, 2000, with a special baptism remembrance service at the pool. The Rev. Susannah Currie officiated.

**Vose**—Amelia T. Vose recently transferred her membership from the Cambridge church (Mass.) back to the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church when she returned to St. Paul.

## MARRIAGE

**Denson and Drayfahl**—Jill Denson and Joshua Drayfahl were united in marriage August 12, 2000, at the Lenox Township (Norway, Iowa) Church of the New Jerusalem, the Rev. Randy Kittelson officiating. Grandmother of the bride is Delores Denson Rawson, church president.

## Deaths

**McArtor**—Martha Uthoff McArtor, 97, inactive member of the Lenox Township (Norway, Iowa) Church of the New Jerusalem, entered the spiritual world July 13, 2000, at Colonial Manor Nursing Home following a brief illness. The funeral service was conducted by the Rev. Wayne Pfannkuch. Mrs. McArtor is survived by two daughters, Leanna Schulte of Cedar Rapids and Marlys Herr of High Amana, nine grandchildren, 27 great-grandchildren and a great-great-grandson.

loving, the words, the playing, the helping, the working of those around us, is to forget our creator. These things are Revelation, they are divinely inspired and God invites us to participate: "Take, eat, this is my body ... this is my blood of the new covenant..."

The story in Exodus of Moses encountering the bush that burned but was not consumed is an allegory for this truth. Moses came upon the presence of God in an unexpected place—an ordinary desert bush. God spoke to Moses from this ordinary bush: "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."

The place where we stand is holy ground. Swedenborg teaches that the Divine is manifested in our natural world. Revelation, which is the inflowing of God's truth, God's love and God's presence, flows as a constant current, and all that we have to do to make it real in our life is turn and face it. Like Moses, if we discipline ourselves to see and to participate in the divinity that is everywhere, we will hear God calling us by name. We will hear the truth of His revelation. And so I have been called, and so it is that I have come here today to accept my inheritance.

**Peck**—Ruth Peck, 88, longtime member of the Boston Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world May 15, 2000. Ruth was the wife of the late Wilfred C. Peck and the author of *Children's Stories From Around the World*. She is survived by sons Donald and Malcolm. Malcolm Peck of Arlington, Virginia, is a member of the Swedenborgian National Church in Washington, D.C.

**Vette**—Helen W. Vette, 99, inactive member of the Lenox Township (Norway, Iowa) Church of the New Jerusalem, entered the spiritual world July 29, 2000, at the Colonial Manor, Amana, following an extended illness. Services were conducted by the Rev. Steve Whisler. She is survived by a nephew, David Uthoff, nieces Eleanor Uthoff and Dolores Denson Rawson and six other nieces as well as many great-nieces and -nephews. A memorial for the New Jerusalem Church has been established in her memory.



## Correction

The photo caption on page 116 of the September 2000 *Messenger* incorrectly identifies the young woman next to Han Sik Kim as his wife. She is Esther Kim, the Rev. Young Min Kim's wife. We apologize for the error.

## New Website

The Rev. Jonathan Mitchell writes that he's taken a page from the Rev. Lee Woofenden's book and set up a website for our national Church of the Holy City, Washington DC, through ForMinistry.com. You can visit it at <http://www.ForMinistry.com20009COTH.C>. He says this is very much under construction, as he's learning the basics of HTML on the fly, and any comments, suggestions, pointers, etc. would be most welcome. The church also has a new FAX number: (202) 328-7380.





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.

Susan Flagg Poole. *Lost Legacy: Inspiring Women of Nineteenth-Century America*. West Chester, Penn: Chrysalis Books, 1999. 114 pp. Appendix, notes, bibliography. \$14.95 (paper), ISBN 0-87785-386-x.

Reviewed for H-Women by Cynthia Watkins Richardson <cawr@umit.maine.edu>, Department of History, University of Maine.

## *A Legacy Recovered*

It can be difficult in our secular age to keep the spiritual lives of women in the forefront of our minds when teaching women's history. Susan Flagg Poole's *Lost Legacy* provides a needed corrective to secular women's history, and offers tantalizing biographical tidbits that motivate the reader to learn more about the ten fascinating nineteenth-century women whose lives are briefly summarized in this slender volume. Although this book unabashedly promotes the Swedenborgian philosophy, the women's biographies remind us that the lives of women in the nineteenth century were, after all, unabashedly spiritual in dimension.

The women in this anthology are united not only in their Swedenborgian belief, but also in their social or educational background. They were writers, musicians, artists or activists who also taught school, raised children, and participated in local and national reform movements. Their idealistic views and strong beliefs that led them to make "an angelic heaven of the human race" also led them, while being sustained by their faith, to become leaders in their respective causes during an age when being a leader and a woman was a Herculean task (p.xvii). Each brief biography is titled and is accompanied by a quote from Emanuel Swedenborg.

The book is divided into two parts: Part One highlights public figures who became members of

the Swedenborgian Church or were dedicated readers of Swedenborg: Lydia Maria Child, Harriot Hunt, Anna Cora Ogden Mowatt, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Jessie Willcox Smith.

The second part illuminates Swedenborgian concepts through the words of women who are largely unknown today; yet they were known within their communities and organizations in nineteenth-century America (p. xx). Their words were recorded in church journals (an underutilized source for historians) or regional publications, and they all participated in the World Parliament of Religions, which was held in conjunction with the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. The purpose of the Parliament was to hear the religious views of others from different denominations across the country, as well as representatives from Eastern religions. All were invited to present their unique perspectives in a pluralistic atmosphere.

In part One, "On Her Own Path," the author comprehensively mentions most of the voluminous work that Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880) produced in the first biography of the anthology. At the same time, the sustenance of Swedenborgian faith is contextualized as an important element that sustained Child through her sometimes unpopular championing of causes.

The second biography, "Uniting Body, Mind and Spirit," describes the life of Harriot Kezia Hunt (1805-1875), who understood that sickness was not limited to a physical condition (pp. 15, 16). As a



(Continued on page 134)

The Swedenborgian Church  
of North America  
*The Messenger*  
11 Highland Ave.  
Newtonville, MA 02460

Forwarding Address  
Correction Requested

Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Plymouth, IN  
Permit No. 105

\*\*\*\*\*ECRLOT\*\*C-043  
CENTRAL OFFICE  
11 HIGHLAND AVE  
NEWTONVILLE MA 02460-1852