

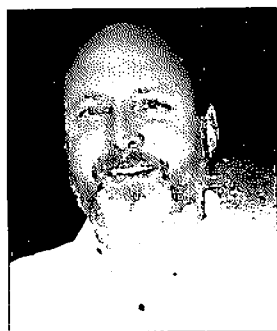
THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

May 2001

Jim Lawrence New Acting Dean of Swedenborgian House of Studies

Jane Siebert




The Swedenborg School of Religion is proud to announce the appointment of the Rev. Dr. James Franklin Lawrence as the Acting Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies. Rev. Lawrence will begin June 1st at his new office on the Pacific School of Religion campus.

Jim brings the skills and perspective necessary to provide the hands-on guidance that building this new model for Swedenborgian theological education will require. An Oklahoma native, Jim found his way to the Swedenborg School of Religion after receiving a B.A. in Economics from the University of Texas and attending Brite Divinity School. He graduated from SSR and was ordained in 1984. He served our parishes in St. Louis and Fryeburg and for the last eleven years was co-pastor at the Church of the New Jerusalem in San Francisco. During that time he received a D. Min from the Graduate Theological Foundation.

Jim Lawrence has served our denomination in many capacities. He has been professionally involved as a publisher and editor for seventeen years, editing the denominational magazine, *The Messenger*, for six years, serving as managing director of our denomination's press, J. Appleseed & Co., for eleven years and serving as a publications specialist on the boards of other publishing groups. He currently serves on the boards of directors of the Swedenborg Foundation, Wayfarers Chapel, and the Maybeck Foundation, and is president of the Pacific Coast Association.

Jim and his wife, Joanne, live in Piedmont, California with Joanne's two children. He is working on a doctorate in the new field of Christian Spirituality at the Graduate Theological Union.

Please join the Board of Trustees of the Swedenborg School of Religion in congratulating and welcoming Jim to this critical leadership position at the Swedenborgian House of Studies.

Jane Siebert is president of the SSR Board of Trustees. 

Jim's Farewell to the San Francisco Congregation

Dear Beloved Congregation,

It is my bittersweet task to inform you that I have accepted a call to become the Acting Dean of the new Swedenborgian House of Studies at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, effective June 1st. My last official Sunday as your pastor will be June 3rd.

Responding affirmatively to this call did not come easily. I vacillated for a few months, primarily due to the immensely positive experience of serving on the pastoral staff of the San Francisco church. Yet, I have felt a true calling to give everything I can to theological education and to the scholarly needs of our precious spiritual tradition and heritage. As many know, I worked very hard to bring the seminary to Berkeley, but it comes at a time when our scholarly ranks have thinned dangerously. I feel I am most needed now in this new capacity. In addition to the duties that go with being Dean of an institution, I will be teaching courses immediately and also commencing studies as a Ph.D. candidate in a fairly new field called Christian Spirituality.

I wish to thank the congregation for a level of support and fellowship that has exceeded my wildest hopes, and I also wish to acknowledge the deeply integral nature of my work with Rachel. This past decade has been one for the record books, if I can say so, and it would be impossible for me to convey in words the extent of the blessings I have received in working with everyone for the purposes of ministry.

Joanne and I will not be far away—just across the pond. I expect to be sending over outstanding interns from time to time, and perhaps haunting the place myself occasionally.

There are nearly three months for a little "farewelling." For now, let me say: it has been a privilege serving God with you.

Affectionately,
Jim



In This Issue:

❖ Meet the Nominees ❖ General Council Meeting ❖ MINSU Report ❖ Mini Courses

May 2001

More Thoughts on Community Building

Last month, in my editorial about the latest school shooting, I wondered about preventive programs in schools that would work toward developing a sense of empathic community in young people so that taunting, bullying, the victimizing of kids who are perceived as "different", would be replaced by acceptance, compassion, and conscious skill-building to recognize and handle emotions and conflicts in more productive ways.

Something told me to look up a book called *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, by Daniel Goleman. It was a title I'd heard about when it was first published about five years ago. I had made a mental note to read it, but had never gotten around to it. I ordered it from the library. It turned out to provide all I had hoped to find and more. Goleman, former senior editor at *Psychology Today*, thoroughly explores the roots of emotional intelligence, and the how and why of emotions, citing solid scientific brain studies. "As Goleman demonstrates," says the bookjacket summary, "the personal costs of deficits in emotional intelligence can range from problems in marriage and parenting to poor physical health...lack of emotional intelligence can sabotage the intellect and ruin careers...Perhaps the greatest toll is on children, for whom risks include depression, eating disorders and unwanted pregnancy, aggressiveness and violent crime."

And, yes, there are schools with programs to educate young people in emotional awareness. At the Nueva Learning Center, a private school in San Francisco, the subject in Self Science is feelings—your own and those that erupt in relationships...and how to deal with them in a productive way. "The topic, by its very nature, demands that teachers and students focus on the emotional fabric of a child's life—a focus that is determinedly ignored in almost every other classroom in

America. The strategy here includes using the tensions and traumas of children's lives as the topic of the day. Teachers speak to real issues—hurt over being left out, envy, disagreements that could escalate into a schoolyard battle."

Goleman says that Self Science is a pioneer of an idea that is spreading to schools coast to coast; with varying names for the classes such as "social development," "life skills," "social and emotional learning." They're working in the inner city schools as well; one example cited is the Augusta Lewis Troup Middle School in New Haven. Evaluations of these programs (comparing behavior before and after, or with students not in such a program) found students better able to:

- Recognize and name their own emotions
- Understand the causes of feelings
- Recognize the difference between feelings and actions
- Handle stress
- Handle anger appropriately, without fighting
- Take another person's perspective
- Show empathy and sensitivity to others' feelings
- Listen to others
- Analyze and understand relationships

There were far more examples; space doesn't permit citing them here, but a recurring finding was that emotional literacy programs improve children's academic achievement. In schools where students were routinely suspended for fighting, there has been a steady drop in suspensions in schools where emotional literacy classes have been phased in over the years. Many emotional literacy programs include special classes for parents.

Goleman says that some of the most effective programs in emotional literacy were developed as a response to violence. One of the fastest growing is the conflict-resolution program, Resolving Conflict Creatively, which is in several hundred New York City public schools and schools across the country. "The optimal design of emotional literacy programs," Goleman states, "is to begin early, be age-appropriate, run throughout the school years, and intertwine efforts at school, at home, and in the community."

Thus a campus culture *can* become a "caring community," a place where students feel respected, cared about, and bonded to classmates, teachers, and the school itself.



PeaceWorks! is an organization founded by Diane Kelner and Tracey Heck, who trained with the Foundation for Community Encouragement, the Seattle-based organization that teaches Community Building methods developed by FCE and M. Scott Peck, author of *The Road Less Traveled* and *A Different Drum*. Kelner and Heck's program, called "Peace Begins With You!" is structured to meet each individual child's needs—through the various activities, the students strengthen their ability to imagine, observe, make decisions, assume responsibility, communicate, and solve problems. Says Tracey Heck, "I was inspired to create a program for children in which they would feel accepted, understood, and valued. "Peace Begins With You!" creates an emotionally safe environment in which Spirit can work"

For further information on PeaceWorks!, please contact their website: Peaceworks.richnet.net, or email: Peaceworks2@aol.com

Patte LeVan



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Patte LeVan, *Editor*

Editorial Address:

The Messenger
P.O. Box 985
Julian, CA 92036

TEL: (760) 765-2915
FAX: (760) 765-0218

E-MAIL: messenger@jinet.com

Business & Subscription Address:

Central Office
11 Highland Ave.
Newtonville, MA 02460

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Editor's Note: *Ian Prattis' article was sent to me by Carol Lawson to evaluate for the next Chrysalis Reader three days after I wrote the editorial for the April Messenger, "Who Was Listening?" about the latest school shooting. Dr. Prattis had obviously written the article before the current rash of school murders. Coincidence? More likely synchronicity.*

TAKING THE FIFTH *—High School Murders and Mindfulness Training*

Ian Prattis

The Fifth I refer to is not the amendment found in the American Constitution. It is the Fifth Mindfulness Training of Thich Nhat Hanh (*For a Future To be Possible*, 1998), which is part of an ethical design to conserve and protect wholeness in our society and environment.

FIFTH MINDFULNESS TRAINING

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant, or to ingest foods or other items that contain toxins, such as certain TV programs, magazines, books, films, and conversations. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society, and future generations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger, and confusion in myself and in society by practicing a diet for myself and society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society.

We must also exercise care and responsibility over what we allow into the minds and bodies of our children, to prevent murders from happening in our schools. Furthermore, this care and responsibility is to prevent young people turning their consumption of violence in

on themselves. So we say NO to our children consuming violence through movies, video games, and hate concerts, and at the same time we say NO to ourselves at engaging in violent and toxic interactions with them. We must take steps to fill the ethical void, give our children the benefits of our full presence and learn to listen deeply to them so that positive steps are taken to eliminate murders in our schools.

The shock waves from the 1999 high school shootings in Littleton, Colorado and Taber, Alberta swept across North America and touched every community.

The recent incidents of high school murders are not a teenage problem; they are a societal problem of systemic violence penetrating to the consciousness of young people through their sensory doorways. Thus a societal solution is necessary, one that deals with anger, frustration, and hatred; one that provides an alternative to the internal environment of violence and transforms it.

As those shock waves have receded, the greatest danger is that the public may distance itself from taking responsibility for the toxic environments all of us have allowed to be created. On the anniversary of the shootings at Columbine High School many students across America refused to go to school for fear of a repeat shooting spree. Their fear is that "IT" could happen in their school.

Personally, the specter of children shooting children in high schools shocked me very deeply. After several days of silence and meditation I wrote a short essay titled "Yes, It Can Happen Here" that looked deeply into the causes of the shootings. I felt it was necessary to provide protective measures for our children and to make them aware of the Fifth Mindfulness

Training as a refuge from the violence that was in and around them.

I wrote about the ready availability of guns and drugs. When this combines with lack of time spent with young people by parents, teachers, and community leaders, then the consumption of violence by our children through the media, video games, and the Internet can lead to the deadly carnage of high school shoot-outs. Many of our children have become exiles. They experience "not love," "not connected." Nobody hears their voice, and we have largely forgotten how to listen to them. Many children have found a third parent in cyberspace where violence, hatred, and killing are readily available without any sense of consequence or responsibility. In the absence of clear ethical guidelines from parents and society, young people are creating their own identity from the very worst that cyberspace and Hollywood have to offer. This is the reality where they satisfy their search for identity. In the absence of a stable identity, there is a drive to achieve instant fame through acts of notoriety, following the scripts of cyberspace and movie violence.

Children who have received core values through parents, teachers, and community leaders have an internal strength to resist this seduction. But children who have fallen through the ethical cracks, and who are without support and guidance, can live out their sense of exile through the cruel fantasies available in cyberspace. In the process they become desensitized to the consequences of violent acts.

Dear parent, how many of your children are alone in their rooms with their computers, engaging in this dangerous creation of an exiled identity? Do you know that you may be allowing them to become part of a growing subculture of violence in our schools and society?

Most young people, their parents, and society as a whole, are unaware of the need to guard their sensory doorways or eliminate their engagement with violence. The recent incidents of high school murders are not a teenage problem, they are a societal problem of

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TAKING THE FIFTH

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systemic violence penetrating to the consciousness of young people through their sensory doorways. Thus a societal solution is necessary, one that deals with anger, frustration, and hatred; one that provides an alternative to the internal environment of violence and transforms it. The Fifth Mindfulness Training, among others, can help mend this ethical void. There are mentally disturbed young people because there are so many mentally disturbed adults as role models. Neither group knows how to protect themselves from ingesting the toxins and violence that pour through their senses.

After the political and media platitudes subside following the high school murders, not much will change in terms of institutional structures or constraints on the production of violence through the media, video games, and television. Therefore it is necessary to provide young people with the skills to take care of the energies of hatred and violence produced by parental neglect and societal approval of violence. The change I suggested in the essay—"Yes, It Can Happen Here"—is Mindfulness Practice. Parents and teachers everywhere are desperate for a change of direction and know they are in the middle of an enormous crisis. The Chinese letter for crisis has two characters to it—the first is danger, the second is opportunity. We need to recognize the danger of anger and hatred and seize the opportunity of Mindfulness Practice to deal with it. In the space created by meditation, the toxic and violent consumption of everyday life has no doorways to pass through. It is not a total solution, but it is a start.

In the essay are two meditations that young people could do in order to take care of their anger, frustration, and distress: walking meditation and a meditation with internal tones. I invited meditation teachers to take their skills into schools and community centers and provide the methods that can make an impact on the anger and hatred that

affect our children. I invited young people to bring such teachers into their midst to see what they could teach. I reminded everyone that we are either part of the problem or part of the solution. It is our actions, from a space of clarity, that can provide solutions. Our indifference to the dangerous environment we have created means that we perpetuate the problem. I asked everyone to choose wisely and immediately.

I made the point that as we calm and take care of our distress in meditation, our body and mind have the capacity to heal us and release the cause of the distress when we do walking meditation. In walking meditation we literally walk ourselves out of crisis by taking care of the distress and releasing the energy of it into the ground. We find the clarity to know what to do, or say, in situations of crisis. I used this to good effect with a teenage son deeply in trouble with drugs. The hell I entered exposed me to a world I did not know, and I struggled to find the best response at the time. I drew on the silence of meditation to keep myself steady and was able to stay free of judgment and discrimination by creating a space of deep silence within myself through walking meditation. From that space there was clarity about how to proceed. If I had not been taught what to do about anger and distress, I could have set in motion a chain reaction of anger and suffering.

The essay on high school murders and Mindfulness Practice was sent far and wide, thanks to Internet technology and to good people everywhere who passed it on through their own networks. It was used to good effect in many communities, particularly Colorado. In my own community, Ottawa, one response came from the teachers of St Clare's elementary school in Orleans, a town close to Ottawa. They were alarmed after Columbine and invited me to give an evening workshop to their school about violence in schools and Mindfulness Practice. In the fall of 1999 many teachers did a retreat with me on "Leadership and Mindfulness Practice for Schools," which was a prelude to introducing mindfulness practice into their school.

All this was accompanied by a realization that we can be part of the solution, when we know how to touch the love, compassion, strength, and courage that have been there all the time. It simply takes Mindfulness Practice to uncover these qualities and make them available to schools and other communities.

The Fifth Mindfulness Training is about the way we consume, and it guides us to adopt new patterns of consumption so that our society becomes mindful. We consume much more than edible food, though what we mostly eat is not good for the state of our health or mind! The same applies to the rest of our consumption. Our

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Cambridge Society Purchases the Chapel at Cambridge

It is official. The papers have been signed by the Swedenborg School of Religion and the Cambridge Society for the sale of the Chapel to the Society. The Swedenborg Chapel at Cambridge, Massachusetts is owned by SSR and worshiped in by the Cambridge Society. The new agreement will allow Cambridge to purchase the Chapel over the next two years.

Historic occasion. 100 years ago the Chapel was built for the New Church Theological School adjacent to the building which housed the School. It was completed in May, 1901. In 1965, The Theological School, renamed The Swedenborg School of Religion, sold all of its Cambridge property, except the Chapel, to Harvard University and moved to 48 Sargent Street, Newton.

The tie that binds. The Swedenborg School of Religion Board of Trustees and Faculty are worshipping with the Cambridge Society at the Cambridge Chapel, April 29. The Board's regular spring meeting is April 27-28, in Boston.

—Jane Siebert
President, SSR




Some Guidelines for Community Building

One of the most important elements of community is authentic, effective communication. The following communication skills are essential:

- Use "I" statements
- Speak personally and specifically rather than generally and abstractly.
- Listen to your inner voice. Become aware of when you are moved to speak and when you are not moved to speak.
- Listen carefully and with respect to what another person is telling you. Do not formulate your response while someone is speaking but wait until the other has completely finished.
- Be aware of your own barriers, such as prejudices, expectations, ideologies, judgments, or a need to control, which are obstacles to community.
- Be willing to share your own woundedness. This is one way you invite others to be vulnerable with you.
- Sharing brokenness as well as heroism is an essential part of maintaining community. Both the darkness and light can be expressed.
- Understand the value of silence in communication. Be comfortable with silence, your own and others'.

Some Principles of Community

- Community is inclusive. Individual differences are celebrated. Soft individualism, rather than rugged, can flourish.
- Community is realistic and multi-dimensional. Each member is free to experience his or her own facet of reality.
- Community facilitates healing once its members stop trying to heal or fix one another.
- Community is reflective, contemplative, and introspective.
- A community's members can fight gracefully.
- A community is a group of leaders who share equal responsibility for, and commitment to, maintaining its spirit.
- A community is a highly effective work group.
- A community is the ideal consensual decision-making body.
- In a community a wide range of gifts and talents is celebrated. 

WE MADE IT!

Genuine Community is Reached at Kemper Road Church's Community Building Workshop

John Billings

In the end, we were all in the internal—and it was very beautiful. The profound comfort with long, soft, moments of silence together. The quiet wakefulness and peaceful stillness that can be such a central part of any truly sacred experience. For me, it's like the Lord enters the room at some point and then people begin to descend and surrender to their much deeper, more vulnerable feelings and thoughts. They get more noticeably sensitive, and there's an air of real expectancy that at any moment good and beautiful things will suddenly appear. To one degree or another, people shared, in very soft ways, what they dared to move closer and closer to inside themselves—inside where, to embrace themselves, might mean they get rocked or shaken by their deeper being waiting for their embrace. It is very clear that the most profound issue, in life and in the community-building workshops, is whether we can move to a much deeper, more beautifully intimate connection to our deeper selves, and then surrender to what's there. We did just that over the weekend of March 2nd and 3rd, and I will be forever grateful to have been a part of that "temple together." It is so sacred and so deeply moving.

But the road to this beautiful place was not easy. Real community always comes hard, or at least that's been my experience so far. It is work. At the beginning our facilitators told us we might have to reach inside in order to "hang in there," that this process can require that because it is difficult and stressful at times—but is infinitely worthwhile.

And there has been such a wonderful fallout in the rest of the church; "and the odor of the ointment filled the room." In my perception, people are now more gentle with each other—much more desiring to deeply receive each other in more soft and feeling ways. In the service that followed the next Sunday, I was still so affected that I wanted to do the service on celebrating and praising


the Lord, because I was very clear that the Lord was behind all this. Many individuals certainly played their parts, but right from the beginning, I felt this inspiring, guiding hand all along the way. The only problem was that I could not do the service without crying, very deeply at times, throughout the entire time as I struggled to share my perceptions of the Lord in my life and in the bringing about of our wonderful workshop. I spoke and shared about the Lord, in this very feeling manner, for 30 minutes. It was holy. And the next week was a continuation of the same. So now a new standard has been set in our worship in which I feel we will have to rely on the Lord to lead us. So be it. He will. But we will be less controlled and controlling, and more truly in charge.

Another positive outcome is that several members of the church have joined our ongoing community-building group that meets for four hours once a month. In my view, in this work, we are literally practicing for heaven.

Community-building is a spiritual discipline and practice, definitely a part of the second coming. When the people in a workshop enter into genuine community, it is very similar to Swedenborg's description of how people are and relate to each other in heaven. The newly arrived spirit who broke down and cried because he'd never heard love speaking before. The softness in people's very being and the incredible depth from which they relate. The joy and happiness. The laughter—for hours we'd move in and out of hearty laughter. The profound moral and spiritual order that is everywhere evident. And, of course, the most important of all: the embrace of love as the supreme value to be worshiped. Is it any wonder the Lord enters the room?

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

For further information:

The workshop leaders were Harolyn Boulware, a therapist from Maryland, and the Rev. Dr. Kurt Keljo, a chaplain at Ohio State University in Columbus. The Foundation for Community Encouragement, the organization begun by Scott Peck that trains leaders to facilitate community building workshops is located in Seattle. The FCE's toll free number is (888) 784-9001, their email address is: Inquire@fce-community.org 

MEET THE NOMINEES FOR 2001

VICE-PRESIDENT

1-year term

Chris Laitner

Michigan Association

It has been my happy privilege to serve as vice-president of the Swedenborgian Church for the past three years. During that time, I have visited Association meetings; served as a facilitator for congregations; as chair of the Board of Trustees of the National Church in Washington, D.C.; as chair of the Central Office Review Committee that evaluates the work, needs, and job descriptions of the Church's Central Office and its employees; overseen the sending of Convention's young adults to Camp 2000, a worldwide event held in England during July, 2000; and, because of unusual and unforeseen circumstances, chaired a General Council meeting and presided over three days of our annual convention last year.

Over time, my service connection with the Swedenborgian Church has included holding the offices of secretary, vice-president, and president of the Michigan Association, and also holding various executive positions, including president, of the Almont New Church Assembly board. I also served as chair of the Growth and Outreach Support Unit for five years. This support unit became part of what is now Convention's Ministries Support Unit. I have been fortunate to serve on various other boards and committees as well.

I enjoy working with and for the Church. I cannot state emphatically enough how much care, love, commitment, and joy I feel from members of this Church. It's an amazing thing! I work as a music director for a "mainstream" church in my home city of Midland, Michigan. This position has provided me with an opportunity to realize and appreciate the beauty of our Swedenborgian theology and the wonderful nature of our congregants and involved friends. We are blessed with marvelous ministries and have so many wonderful possibilities!

I would be honored to serve another term as vice-president of the Swedenborgian Church.

RECORDING SECRETARY

1-year term

Gloria Toot

Ohio Association

I have been a member of Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church for 30 years

and have served on Kemper Road's board of directors many times, as well as being active in the Ohio Association. I have been privileged to serve as Secretary on General Council for about five years and would like to serve another term in this position. I think that clear communication is one of the most important aspects of working towards a common goal. I also feel I get along well with people and that I still have some energy for this job.

TREASURER

1-year term

Lawrence Conant

Massachusetts Association

I am running for my second term as treasurer of the denomination. I am currently treasurer of the Bridgewater Society of the New Jerusalem, treasurer of the Temenos Retreat and Conference Center and president of the Massachusetts New Church Union. All of these positions have provided me with a strong background in non-profit accounting including the FASB 117 (Financial Accounting Standards Board) regulations for funds held in trust. In 1999 I worked with Polly Baxter and Martha Bauer to install the MIP accounting software in the Central Office, replacing the 10-year-old DOS software then in use. This installation involved revisiting many accounting issues like the chart of accounts used to keep track of our denomination's expenditures and receipts.

Since becoming treasurer, I have worked with the Central Office to institute quarterly closings instead of the old annual system. This quarterly system allows us to have a more orderly presentation for the annual audit. Additionally, it allows our denomination to pay out the funds held in trust in a more timely manner.

I would like to thank Polly Baxter for the excellent work she did in establishing the complex spreadsheets used in the closing. I would also like to thank Martha Bauer for the extensive accounting work she does on a day in day out basis. Finally, I would like to ask for your support so that I may have a second term as treasurer.

GENERAL COUNCIL

2 lay, 1 minister for 3-year terms

Duane Beougher

Illinois Association

For my local church over the last 22 years, I have served in a number of capacities, including nine years as president,

and the past three years as treasurer.

For the denomination, I currently serve on the Committee of Inquiry, and am completing my first 3-year term on General Council. I was previously on the Nominating Committee for 5 years.

In between, I find some time to own and operate a small general contracting business, concentrating mostly on interior remodeling projects. My only desire in seeking a second term on General Council is to promote an honest and thorough evaluation of the spiritual and monetary needs of the church, and to help find the most responsive and responsible means to address those needs.

Dexter J. Pasternak

Mid-Atlantic Association

(Nomination for General Council one-year unexpired term following resignation of Nancy Freestone)

Dexter Pasternak is a member of the Church of The Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware and its Board of Trustees. He is also assistant treasurer of the church, an active member of the Development Committee and has initiated a number of major improvements to the 145-year-old church building—including design and reconstruction of a new kitchen.

Dexter has an engineering degree from Virginia Tech and an MBA from the University of Delaware. He served two years as an officer in the United States Army, worked for the Western Electric Company in New York City and New Haven, Connecticut for two years, and then 31 years for the DuPont Co., primarily in Wilmington, before retiring in 1995, after which he was self-employed through July 2000. Dexter's education and work history coupled with involvement in professional associations and government agencies provide him with a broad perspective of the business world. His personal assets include a unique blend of analytical skills, sound business judgment, a touch of creativity and the ability to communicate effectively. Dexter would welcome the opportunity to serve the denomination on General Council.

On a personal note, Dexter was born and raised in New England. He and Aida have been married for 36 years and have two grown sons. His varied interests include golf, gardening, photography, working with wood and model trains.

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Rev. Harvey A. Tafel
Pacific Coast Association

Our Church is experiencing a dynamic time of growth and development. I am seeking a second term on General Council because I want to continue to be an integral part of this process. I have gained a wide variety of skills and expertise from over thirty years as an ordained minister at the Wayfarers Chapel. As Chapel Administrator for the last three years, I have been instrumental in a number of projects such as the construction of the new Visitors Center. In addition I am a member of the Board of Directors of the Lomita Railroad Museum and interface with numerous local and state organizations such as the California Association of Museums. I believe these resources can be of great use to the Church.

Chuck Winter
Ohio Association

I am a member of the Swedenborg Chapel of Cleveland where I have served on council for six years, five of them as president. I am also on the Executive Council of the Ohio Association as vice-president. I have been very active in our wedding ministry at the Chapel. During 2000 I was officiator at 65 weddings. As I have done for the last six years, I continued taking my turn in leading Sunday worship services, until the Rev. Jun-chol Lee arrived in September 2000. Since I am now a retired high school teacher I am able to devote more time to the Cleveland Chapel and to General Council. I would very much like to continue serving on General Council, it has been an exciting and thought-provoking first term and an honor to be a part of this dedicated team. I would appreciate your support.

COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT UNIT (COMSU)

3-year term

Susan Flagg Poole
Mid-Atlantic Association

An educator, writer, and development editor, Susan Flagg Poole lives in Wilmington, Delaware and Friendship, Maine. She has served on boards and support units for the West Community Center, Contact Crisis Hotline, Delaware

Nature Education, and Literary Volunteers of America. For the past four years Susan was the acquisition editor at the Swedenborg Foundation and served on the board of directors of the Temenos Conference and Retreat Center near West Chester, Pennsylvania. Currently she is working on several exciting book projects and writing articles for numerous periodicals and journals. She has completed three years on COMSU. Music and women's studies are her particular interests, and enjoying time with her teenagers is her highest priority.

EDUCATION SUPPORT UNIT (EDSU)

3-year term

Susan Hemmerich
Canada Association

I have been an active member of the Church of the good Shepherd, in Kitchener, Ontario, for nearly 40 years. During that time, I have served on the board of directors and participated in many facets of church life. However, my work in education, particularly with the education of children, has been the area closest to my heart, both within and outside the formal church setting.

My work with children began as an older sister with three younger sisters, and progressed to being a babysitter, playground supervisor, elementary school teacher, mother, Sunday school teacher, and superintendent for many years. At the present time, I am retired from formal teaching responsibilities, and am able to focus my energies on my 11 grandchildren.

I feel that our focus on education is the blueprint for the future of the Swedenborgian Church. Children, and adults as well, are learning constantly, making it necessary for us to be aware of the messages we intend for them to receive, and how these messages might best be delivered.

If elected as a member of the Education Support Unit, I would be honored and would do my best to serve to the best of my ability.

FINANCIAL & PHYSICAL RESOURCES SUPPORT UNIT (FPRSU)

3-year term

Jennifer Lindsey
Pacific Coast Association

As a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church for the past three years, I have provided my talents and energy on the Finance and Invest-

ment Committee, the Annual Congregational Retreat Committee, and the Welcoming Ministry. As a member of the Finance and Investment Committee, I am involved in developing and implementing a capital campaign to raise funds for building upgrades and preservation. As a member of the Annual Congregational Retreat Committee, I assisted in planning and attended two retreats. I also had the wonderful experience of participating as one of six group leaders for the adult spiritual growth break-out sessions. As a member of the Welcoming Ministry, I experience the special human interaction of personally greeting members, guests, and visitors as they arrive for Sunday worship. Further, I recently joined the General Convention's Augmentation Fund Committee where I have gained a taste of the responsibilities and mission of FPRSU. As such, I hope to put my financial acumen to the service of General Convention as a participant on FPRSU.

MINISTRIES SUPPORT UNIT (MINSU)

3-year term

Karen Nielsen Conger
Pacific Coast Association

My husband Stan and I live in the Eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains of California, both of us having recently retired. Our 24-year-old son, Dan, and 21-year-old daughter, Lauren, will graduate from the California State University system in 2001.

I grew up in the Washington, D.C. church, and have been a member of both the Urbana church and the Los Angeles Church. I am currently a member-at-large of the Pacific Coast Association (PCA). I served from 1991 to 1997 as the Secretary of the PCA, and have served on the Nominating Committee of the denomination. I am currently finishing the unexpired term of a member of Ministerial Support Unit who found it necessary to resign. Serving the Lord through the Swedenborgian Church has become more and more important to me, and I would love to continue that service through involvement with MINSU.

Carl Blenkin
Mid-Atlantic Association

When one is asked to write a biography about himself it is very hard to condense forty-nine years worth of living into two paragraphs. As a

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relative newcomer to The Swedenborgian Church, I feel very committed to its future growth potential and spiritual development of the local parish and societies.

As a member of the Washington Society we are currently exploring and finding new innovative and creative ways of building up our membership and to bring in interesting and spiritually motivating programs. I currently serve on the board of The Church of The Holy City as corresponding secretary. In recent years I have attended the annual church conventions where I have made lasting and spiritually meaningful relationships. I have felt accepted, supported, and most of all love and have a real need to convey that to the world that we live in. Throughout my life I have been involved in various church denominations at different levels of ministry. I have a theological education obtained at Drew Theological School and had pastored a small United Methodist Church for four years. At the moment I work as a Social Service Coordinator at an independent senior building in Arlington Virginia, you will also find me to be a supportive ministerial spouse and very proud of it. What I bring to MINSU is a wide variety of experience and expertise. I feel I would serve MINSU with great hope, dedication and commitment towards building our future Church together. I look forward to this challenge.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SUPPORT UNIT (IMSU) 3-year term

Robert Hinrichs
Pacific Coast Association

Robert's experience in technology consulting spans six years, during which he has worked as a developer and consultant in business technology for ISL Consulting in San Francisco (<http://www.islco.com>), where he has fulfilled managerial, advisory, and hands-on capacities. His current title is Chief Technology Officer. His primary job is to maintain an up-to-date understanding of the potential benefits that application of technologies can provide for a venture, and to create successful implementations that not only solve needs, but can literally transform and extend the venture into new realms.

Robert serves on IMSU, and feels that the Web offers some very significant opportunities to enhance the presence and message of the Swedenborgian Church.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE 2 to be nominated, 1 to be elected

Mary Crenshaw
Michigan Association

I became a member of the church 35 years ago. I have served on General Council, as a member of the Ad Hoc Group of the 80s, on the SSR Board (am currently member Emeritus) former president of the Michigan Association, and three years as president of the National Alliance.

I am currently on the Amendment Committee, Board Training Committee, 5 C's Committee, Board of Inquiry for clergy abuse, member of Women's Alliance. I recently moved from Detroit, Michigan to Redwood City, California.

Laurie Turley
Maine Association

I was not raised in the Swedenborgian Church, but I sometimes feel like I was. We seldom went to church as children, because my mother never found a church that taught what she believed—that God doesn't send people to hell, that everyone is made for heaven, and it is our own choices, freely made here on earth, that determine our spiritual well-being or lack thereof. I grew up believing these things. When in my late twenties, after searching through many world religions to find one that resonated with my beliefs, I met Ken Turley, then a seminary student, who shared with me the theology of his faith. I felt like I had come home. Becoming a minister's wife wasn't exactly what I had in mind for my destiny, but I am convinced that it was entirely in God's plan for me. True to God's eternal wisdom, marrying Ken Turley was the best decision I ever made.

I have been employed for the past nine years as a music teacher, first in private schools, and then in the public schools. I have taught on the elementary, junior high and high school levels, and am currently teaching elementary school music full time in Conway, New Hampshire, just over the border from Fryeburg, Maine. For the majority of my 16 years as a member of the Swedenborgian Church, I have focused most of my attention on the youth and the music of the church, feeling

that my strengths are best offered there. I have served as the youth choir director at three churches and as the music director at two. I was the music director at two national conventions and am currently serving the Fryeburg New Church as the adult and youth choir director, as well as the youth group leader. Most recently, I served on the nominating committee of the national church's Sunday School Association, and am currently serving as secretary of SSA. I have attended all but two of the national conventions that have been held since I joined the church 16 years ago, and have served as a delegate at all that I attended. During all this time, I believe I have formed friendly, honest relationships with a wide range of the members and clergy of our church.

If I had been asked to be on the nominating committee for our church 10 years ago, I don't think I would have been as prepared for the job as I am today. A member of this committee needs to be able to view many situations and people with objectivity and reason, and to be able to make decisions based on what would best serve the whole. I feel that the recent years have taught me much about making wise and careful decisions. I would be honored to serve the national church in this capacity, and would do my very utmost to serve the church with integrity.

SSR BOARD

Sue Burns
Illinois Association

I have served on the Augmentation Fund Committee; the Millennium Fund Committee; as chair of the Building Fund; secretary, treasurer, and president of the Church of the Open Word (St. Louis); and on the Illinois Association Executive Committee. I am currently president of that board.

Professional background: Currently business analyst—perform statistical analysis, market penetration, segmentation, financial. Site, market strategies and planning; e-commerce marketing strategies, direct mail and database marketing strategies, competitive and organizational analysis. I have served on the SSR board for one year. Serving on the SSR board during this time of transition provides an opportunity to help our church achieve its vision.

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COMMITTEE ON ADMISSION TO THE MINISTRY (CAM)

1 lay, 1 minister for 1-year terms

Pat Tukos

Illinois Association

Here I am again, asking for your vote. After serving on CAM for the past four years, I would be honored if you would allow me to continue as the denomination's lay member on this committee. I would like to think that my past CAM experiences will make me an asset to this committee as we enter into this time of many changes, working with new students in the new environment of the S.H.S. I am a longtime member of the LaPorte New Church (Indiana), presently serving as president of our society and wedding coordinator. I am active in the Women's Alliance and serve on a couple of other committees. I taught Sunday school and served as superintendent for decades, hauling loads of kids to Almont.

My six years on EDSU gave me the opportunity to attend several Cabinet and General Council meetings. I have attended the last nine annual convention sessions. This variety of local and national activities has given me a fairly clear picture of the workings of Convention, the camps, and the local church and has made me aware of the many demands that our theological students will face upon ordination.

I would very much like to continue serving on CAM as we work hand in hand with the theological school doing all we can to prepare new ministers for the challenges that lie ahead for them.

Rev. Marlene Laughlin

Pacific Coast Association

This marks the fourth year that I have both been ministering at Wayfarers Chapel and a member of CAM for the second period of time. 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.

Editor's Note: Nominees whose biographical statements are not included here did not submit them.



Spring General Council Meeting

General Council met March 17 thru 19, 2001, at the National Church in Washington DC. The first day and evening were spent in a workshop led by Lorraine Sando, designed to help Council members explore ways to be more effective in meeting their goals. The goals were to continue growing our church, to develop ways to help members and associations to establish goals and new directions, to establish clearer lines of communication for helping them to accomplish those goals and review priorities and move toward a new set of goals for the future. Quite a few ideas surfaced and everyone will likely hear about some of them as the work progresses.

The officer's reports were read, as well as reports from SSR Trustees, and the Wayfarers Chapel.

Two committees are continuing their work on exploring options for a youth support unit and for outreach/networking type of support unit which will possibly include social concerns, adult education and National Council of Churches oversight.

The request from SSR Trustees for help moving the library to the Pacific School of Religion campus was referred to the Philadelphia Library Fund. General Council will consider the issue again in June if expenses have not been covered.

After considerable discussion, General Council voted against a by-law change from Wayfarers' Trustees, who wanted to change their term limits from two to three consecutive terms.

In response to an offer to purchase the Printz farm by Urbana University, it was voted to make a counter offer at the most recently appraised price. If accepted, the purchase price would be added to their existing loan, extending the payoff date about six years. They hope to be able to use the property for dorms in the future.

The Massachusetts Association reported on a new goal to have six active, growing churches year-round in the area. They hope to accomplish this vision with growth & outreach grants. The new Massachusetts Mission board will oversee this work. Yarmouth Port and Newtonville will be given mission status and the plan is to plant a new congregation in these places. General Council was very pleased to hear these ideas and there was consensus to write a letter of support.

The proposed new ministerial salary scale was discussed in depth. General Council will recommend the pay scale to the floor of Convention this summer.

The Convention dates will be a little different in 2002. Convention will be hosted by the Maine Association and will begin with the pre-convention workshop starting Wednesday, June 25. Council of Ministers will begin meeting Thursday, June 26. Convention will open Saturday, June 28 and close Wednesday, July 3. This addresses several problems, such as ministers being away from their church for two Sundays in a row and either meeting so early that some children are still in school or so late that it would be over Independence Day.

The main reason for meeting at the National Church was to convene as the Trustees of the church and be able to meet with their board and members. Saturday afternoon and evening were taken up in this manner. We attended a delightful reception at Rich Tafel's home near the church and were thus able to get better acquainted with members of the church. General Council also made the effort to attend the worship service on Sunday morning, led by the Rev. Jonathan Mitchell.

Gloria Toot, secretary



MINISTRIES SUPPORT UNIT ANNUAL REPORT

Since the last annual report, the Ministries Support Unit (MINSU) met informally during the 2000 Urbana Convention sessions to respond to requests for Augmentation grants by churches hiring ministers in the fall. Our two formal meetings were held in September 2000, at the Washington DC Church of the Holy City, and in March 2001 in Deland, Florida, at the home of MINSU secretary the Rev. Deborah Winter.

During Convention in Urbana, Ohio, MINSU sponsored a table where information about our church liaisons and activities were available. The church's Pastoral Ministries Consultant, the Rev. Eric Allison, held a "used book sale" of materials he has utilized over the years in working with churches on growth and outreach. The Rev. Paul Zacharias became MINSU's newest elected member, filling the vacancy left by our former chair, Linda Tafel, who had completed two terms.

At the September meeting, our main focus was the review and consideration of requests from various ministries for denominational assistance, this being a major responsibility of MINSU. Liaisons assignments for each ministry were updated and follow-up letters written to inform each ministry of their liaison for the coming year. The Rev. Donna Keane was appointed as MINSU's representative to the Ministerial Placement Committee. Other areas MINSU addressed included:

- The need to improve the level of salaries for ministers
- Finding ways to connect churches that have been successful in certain areas with other churches that could use some knowledge and assistance (e.g. wedding ministries, growth and outreach programs)
- Approval for the Pastoral Ministries Consultant (the Rev. Eric Allison) to become half-time minister for the Puget Sound church and half-time employee of MINSU confirmed

MINSU met with the members of the D.C. church and their minister, the Rev. Jonathan Mitchell, to hear about their concerns, dreams, and hopes for the future of their ministry. The members hosted a wonderful evening meal for MINSU.

Barb Halle was MINSU's representative to the fall, 2000, Cabinet meeting and reported on MINSU's activities and concerns. Issues related specifically to MINSU included plans for revisions to the Common Assessment Form which ministries fill out when requesting denominational funding. Cabinet also supported the development of MINSU's "Sister Church Project."

At MINSU's March, 2001 meeting, the support unit finalized Common Assessment Form revisions that were developed in a collaborative meeting with the Augmentation Fund Committee. They also spent considerable time responding to AFC's request to develop criteria that could be used to determine one-half, three-quarters, and full-time status for ministers when they are being hired by churches/centers.

MINSU appointed Rev. Paul Zacharias to initiate the first steps in our plan to develop the "Sister Church Project," with Paul contacting Convention and foreign ministries in order to begin the process of connecting them (Convention churches could "adopt" a foreign "sister church" and provide various types of support and/or resources. MINSU's hope is to improve communications and exchange between Convention churches and congregations abroad).

MINSU members were each given a handbook which has been in the process of development for some time. The purpose is to define the responsibilities and operation of MINSU as a support unit, as well as member and chairperson responsibilities. Records of liaison contacts, worksheets, and other information helpful to MINSU

members, are included as well. Hopefully this will help to maintain continuity and focus within the support unit even when members change.

Updates on all Convention's churches and centers were given by liaisons, and focused time spent on those in which significant changes are taking place or in which new development is expected. Many exciting activities and possibilities are in process throughout Convention, and MINSU continues in its attempts to be proactive in supporting the needs of our churches and centers.

Betsy Coffman, chair

MINSU MEMBER INFORMATION

Karen Nielsen Conger
314 Apollo Circle
Bishop CA 93514
Home: 760-872-3392
Work: 310-458-8448 (until 4/3/01)
E-Mail: nunclct@aol.com

Barbara Halle (chair as of July 2001)
3365 W. Small Rd.
LaPorte, IN 46350
Home: 219-326-1707
Work: 219-324-2770
Fax: 219-324-0074
E-Mail: halle@csinet.net

Betsy Coffman (present chair)
3156 Adell Dr.
Urbana, OH 43078
Home: 937-653-5054
Fax: 937-652-2172
E-Mail: bccoff@main-net.com

Rev. Deborah Winter (secretary)
4169 Grand Ave.
DeLand, FL 32720
Home: 904-985-2139
Work: 904-740-0425
E-Mail: soulw53@aol.com

Rev. Eric Allison (Pastoral Ministries Consultant)
12602 N.E. 85th St.
Kirkland, WA 98033
Home: 425-889-4716
E-Mail: theborg@stonehouse.org

Rev. Donna Keane
19 Webster St.
Needham, MA 02494-2425
Home: 781-444-5381
Fax: 781-453-0076
E-Mail: donnaeane@aol.com

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The New Century Edition
Leader: Rev. Dr. George Dole

I plan to talk about the purpose and principles of the edition by "introducing" the translators and talking about the special gifts each one brings to the project. I will be using examples both from the published *Heaven and Hell* and from *Divine Love and Wisdom*, the next to be published, which I am working on at present. By way of preparation, I'd suggest that people read the articles by Stuart Shotwell and me in the March *Messenger*.

The National Council of Churches:
Challenge and Opportunity
Leader: Robert McCluskey

The Rev. Robert McCluskey will explore the roots and fruits of the National Council of Churches. After a brief review of its history and present structure, we will look at where the NCC is today, its priorities, goals, and challenges. We will examine in more detail the Council's new initiatives to address Poverty Issues and to Expand the Ecumenical Table. Finally we will review how Convention presently relates to the NCC. A 20-minute video will be shown at the beginning, and there will be time for questions and discussions.

MINISTRIES SUPPORT UNIT ANNUAL REPORT

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Rev. Ron Brugler (President of
Convention)
116 Queen ST. N.
Kitchener, ON N2H 2H7
Home: 519-748-5322
Office: 519-743-3845
Fax: 519-743-3375
E-Mail: goodshep@golden.net

Mark Allen
1106 Highland Ave.
Portland, ME 04106
Home: 207-741-2010
E-Mail: markallen@hannaford.com

Rev. Paul Zacharias
28C Ahrens St. W.
Kitchener, ON N2H4B7
Home: 519-744-6785
E-Mail: brugler@golden.net



2001 Mini-courses

Marriage Love: Living the Promise
Leaders: Rev. Renee Billings-Machiniak
and Joe Machiniak Rev. Paul and
Pat Zacharias

Join us as we share insights from real life couples in the light of Swedenborg's vision of marriage love. Rev. Paul and Pat Zacharias share the wisdom of the many years that they have had as husband and wife and newlyweds Rev. Renee and Joe Machiniak share the optimism and courage it takes to make and to keep a lifelong commitment today.

Winnie the Pooh
Leaders: Rev. Susannah Currie and
Jenn Tafel

The Sunday School Association announces the creation of their first support unit, POOHSU (the Winnie the Pooh Support Unit). POOHSU will hold it's first 'reading' at Convention 2001 and invites all fans of A.A. Milne, and any and all stuffed animals from the Hundred Acre Wood, to join together to hear the tales, wag the tails and discuss the de-tails of the correspondences of the qualities of Milne's characters and our 'characters.' We'll hear readings from Milne, Swedenborg, and the Tao Te Ching. Fun for all ages!

p.s. to the SSA officers—if you have any issues about this 'presidential' decision to spin off a support unit unilaterally—let me know. I'm only a Piglet sort of tyrant, timid-like but decisive at times.
Susannah

1) An Introduction to the Swedenborgian House of Studies
Leaders: Rev. Jim Lawrence and
Kim Hinrichs

Join the Acting Dean and other staff and board members to find out what is in store as we transition from SSR to SHS. See photos of our new offices and library on the Pacific School of Religion campus in Berkeley, learn about the programs and courses we will be offering, and what we envision for the future. Led by Rev. Jim Lawrence, Kim Hinrichs, and board members TBD.

2) Ministry as a Calling and a Career
Leaders: Rev. Jim Lawrence and
Kim Hinrichs

Come be a part of a discussion of what it means to be called into God's service in a lay or ordained capacity. Issues such as discernment, vocation, service, balance, and ministry as a profession will be discussed. Led by Rev. Jim Lawrence and Kim Hinrichs.

Sacred Cow Website and How to Use It
Leader: Committee On Worship (COW)

1.) Sacred Cow Website and how to use it. The Committee On Worship is planning on creating a website to provide worship materials that will be "down-loadable." We hope to have responsive readings, meditations, children's talks, anecdotes as well as complete services and a listing of links to other resources. This course will describe the project and explain how to use it to the best advantage for your specific situation.

2.) A New Songbook for Convention
Leader: Committee on Worship

The Committee On Worship is putting together the first installment of a new songbook complete with a CD of the songs with singing and accompaniment only. This course will introduce the music and different ways to use it to enhance your specific worship style. COW will be putting out a number of new songs each year to add to the songbook and soliciting favorite songs from around Convention to add to the collection.

Sacred Circle Dancing
Leader: Catharine Maine

Come with an open heart as we create sacred space through movement and circle dance from all over the world, danced in the Findhorn tradition. The emphasis is on enjoyment and relaxation. Beginners are welcome, and no previous dance experience is needed. Wear clothing and shoes for your comfort. Come join the dance!

The Church in the Community
Leaders: Rev. Dick and Linda Tafel

Our experience as a new congregation in identifying and trying to fill needs and reach out in the community.

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2001 Mini-courses

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Alternative Forms of Worship

Leader: Rev. Eric Allison

The Sunday morning worship service is still the first contact most new people have with a church. In Puget Sound we have experimented with a variety of alternative styles of worship. It has been exciting. Our Sunday attendance has doubled in a year. This workshop will give participants lots of material and examples of different worship styles to take back to your church.

Your National Memorial to Emanuel Swedenborg

Leader: Rev. Marlene Laughlin

The new Visitors Center of Wayfarers Chapel provides an opportunity to disseminate the theology of Swedenborg to thousands of wayfarers on the journey of life each year. We will tour this new facility via video and photographs as we view the steps of construction and the Center's dedication on May 20th, 2001.

We at Wayfarers have been working over the past few years to provide vision and goals that will help us fulfill the promise of this wonderful ministry. In this workshop we will explore together what has been done and what you would like to see provided in this "window to the world" for our church.



BOOK REVIEW

Sermon from the Compost Pile

By Edward F. Sylvia

Sermon from the Compost Pile: Seven Steps Toward Creating an Inner Garden, is a warm and charming little book by Edward Sylvia, who retired from a lucrative career with big-city ad agencies and realized he needed to develop his inner world. Then he discovered that, in fact, he was developing his inner world through his gardening. He says, "The planning, physical work, and the peace of being alone in the garden all helped me to regain some balance from the stress and artificiality of the modern world. More importantly, I began to learn new things about myself, as I prepared the soil, planted the seeds, watched over the growing plants, and reaped the rewards of my labors. I somehow started to sense that the closeness I felt with my garden transcended even the physical closeness of my nose burying itself inside the petals of a Star Gazer lily. The relationship with my garden was slowly turning into a kind of "peculiar recognition." It strangely reminded me of myself. It was as though I was experiencing what was inside me, outside myself. When I looked out into my

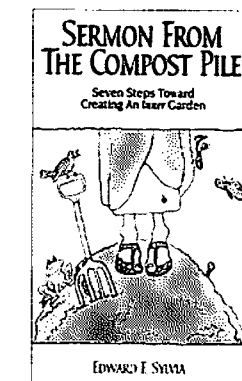
garden, I was actually looking into my spirit. A world that was so hidden from me seemed now to reveal itself in unending detail!"

He was, he realized, discovering the truth of Swedenborg's correspondences. "As above, so below." The author states in a footnote that most of the ideas for his book were inspired by the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, who claimed that "legends, fables, parables and hieroglyphics were sophisticated methods for teaching eternal spiritual truth, rather than historical fact, and that this knowledge has been all but lost to the modern world."

Sermon From the Compost Pile is being distributed by the Swedenborg Foundation.

To order, call (800) 355-3222.

PWL



TAKING THE FIFTH

(Continued from page 68)

senses are bombarded with violence from the media, television and advertising. Along with the consumption that our desires and cravings drive us to—none of this is good for our mental and physical health. Our consciousness absorbs, and is defined by, all that we consume.

Mindfulness is our protector, the Mindfulness Trainings are an ethical guide. By being mindful we can distinguish between that which is good for our organism and spiritual well being and that which depletes it of energy. We can say, "This is not good for me," or "This is not good for my children," and cultivate an alternative consumption that is good. Our mindless consumption and greed fuels a global economic system which threatens the world's resources and pollutes the environment. Indeed, we are manipulated to consume in such a manner by a political/economic system based on greed. As long as we remain willing prisoners to this corporate and media ecology, we are unable to take responsibility for the world we live in and create.

The Fifth Mindfulness Training guides us out of this prison with a clear commitment to consume mindfully and thereby create a different kind of society, one that is responsible to ancestors and future generations. The issue of responsibility is the key to this training. Because we interconnect with and affect everything, we must realize that lack of responsibility—to the environment, our ancestors and future generations—creates a very dangerous situation. If we do not choose to consume mindfully, then it is clear we will destroy our world.

Ian Prattis is a Professor of Anthropology and Religion at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. He is a trained meditation teacher in Vedic, Buddhist and Shamanic traditions. In Ottawa and Montreal he has taught children's meditation courses, as well as adult and advanced meditation courses. His teaching, in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh, focuses on the spiritual issues of the day and he honors all traditions.



Birth and Spirit

Shannon Ray

About seven years ago I had an experience that affirmed—for that time in my life—that accompanying families through the transformations of pregnancy, birth, and new parenting was to be my primary spiritual practice.

While sitting in circle at a women's spiritual gathering, I wondered which of those varied paths whose chants and prayers we used beckoned me the most compellingly. Suddenly, I heard a clear, firm voice tell me, "birth is your path, you don't have to do anything else." A few moments later, almost as an aside, I heard, "Chanting is optional."

In the years that followed, I continued to find truth in the paradoxical focus and surrender of hard labor, the first gurgling breaths of a newly emergent little earthling and the boundless love implicit in all involved in this ageless dance. As a midwife, my practice utilized my heart, body, and soul. I would stay up all night, following a woman to the edge of human endurance, give hours of massage and all the while make clear-headed assessments of the mother and baby's well-being. The absolute concentration involved conferred on me a sense of being fully present and connected to the Higher Power.

At first I thought that my love of legend and fantasy, and my passion for midwifery were separate parts of myself. But I came to see that birth and its participants embodies timeless archetypes. To me, every mother was The Mother, and her babe the Divine Child. These bedrooms/birth rooms could all be Bethlehem, and I was but a servant of this mystery. I was also moved by the deep love of fathers; their respect, awe, and ultimate elation. I would watch the slow touch of a lover as his heart moved his hands. He would hold her, press her back, there was nothing he would not do for his beloved and their precious baby.

Now my path is turning toward being a healing presence to those with illness and injury, and I am pursuing the training that path entails. Spiritually, I am turning inward rather than looking to an outward event, even one as magical as birth, to envelop me in the Divine. But the power, magnificence, compassion, and truth I have partaken in through service to my birthing friends will ever be a part of my soul.

Shannon Ray was a practicing lay midwife in Maui for a number of years before moving to Maine to complete a science degree with the intention of entering a physician assistant program. She has been attending the Portland, Maine, Swedenborgian Church for 16 months and is planning to become a member. Shannon discovered the church through a Sufi group in Portland.

Reprinted with the author's permission from the April 2000 Portland church newsletter, *The Appleseed*.



A Simple Path

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered;
love them anyway.
If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives; do good anyway.
If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies; succeed anyway.
The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow; do good anyway.
Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable; be frank and honest anyway.
What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight; build anyway.
People really need help but attack you if you help them; help them anyway.
Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth; give the world the best you've got anyway.

—Mother Teresa

Happy Mothers Day to the mothers of the world.

Urbana University Given Copyright of Founder's Biography *(Continued from back)*

The Buckeye Titan portrays the social life of early Cincinnati, Lexington, and Urbana as well as the history of the railroad expansion in Ohio, the financial turmoil of the Andrew Jackson presidency, the philosophical issues held by Whigs during the Civil War and recollections of James' acquaintances, including Andrew Jackson, Johnny Appleseed, Henry Clay, Aaron Burr, and Tom Thumb.

Besecker said the university hopes to receive sponsorships and grants to assist in the reprinting of the book. He said the Ohio Historical Society and the Ohio Bicentennial Commission have both expressed interest in helping with this venture.

Urbana University will be the publisher of the book, and the text will be reprinted as is, but a new jacket cover will be put on the book.

"I think it brings distinction to the university," Besecker said of obtaining the copyright. "I think institutions like to look at their beginnings. (James) was the force and dynamic personality that brought (the university) to Urbana."

Besecker said the university already has the copyright for *Johnny Appleseed — Man and Myth* and plans to reprint it as well.

Anyone interested in supporting this project can contact:

Joe D. Besecker
Director of Development
Urbana University
579 College Way
Urbana, OH 43078

(937) 484-1303
email: alumni@urbana.edu
www.urbana.edu



An "Aha!" for Koke's *Debates with Devils* Review

Dear Editor,

I am writing to convey to you my appreciation for Steve Koke's review of *Debates with Devils* in the February *Messenger*. Steve, your words put many of our Swedenborgian teachings on a very personal level that will undoubtedly be of benefit to our readers. I know that they were for me. I'd read the book. I put it aside. I thought, oh well, here's another one for the shelf. But your review made me re-think what was being said. It was an "Aha!" experience. I feel that I now understand so much more about what was being written about. WOW!!

I would love to see COMSU put out a pamphlet on the external/internal explorations and examinations that we benefit from embarking upon in our spiritual journeys. You explained this process and dialogue very well. I hope that you will do this. In such a pamphlet, you could take the extra step of helping people to know what to do if they see internal problems and issues that need to be addressed—that in repentance, we also need to know how to reform. That is not meant as criticism, since it was beyond the purpose of your review. I mention it only as something people might want to learn.

So again, thank you. For me it was a very helpful article, even if it was a book review!

Rev. Ron Brugler
President, Swedenborgian Church
Kitchener, Ontario

The *Missionary Memo* is a quarterly publication of the General Church Office of Evangelization. The purpose of this publication is to inform and encourage members of the New Church in the important work of spreading the teachings of the New Church to others.

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TO THE EDITOR

Ask Swedenborg—Thorny Question Revisited

Dear Editor,

I write in response to the Rev. Kit Billing's article on the issue of gender imagery in scripture (March 2001 *Messenger*, *Ask Swedenborg*). What a lovely and thorny article—I love it!

The question was, why is it more useful to maintain the biblical imagery of Father? To begin with, because of the importance of the literal sense. "Father" is not arbitrarily used, and any substitution would require a retooling of the entire text—something hardly recommended. Remember, Swedenborg very much wants to retain the original imagery of scripture, but imbue it with an entirely new, non-literal meaning, so that when we see the word Father we do not simply and automatically think of a literal father, but rather consider the spiritual qualities that are being described.

I also disagree with Kit's explanation that the retention of "Father" has to do with Swedenborg's view of the spiritual structure of maleness. If God *were* only male, we could apply this model. But if God is both male and female, then God's inmost would be love (to the extent that he is male) and also truth (to the extent that he is female). But this would put us right back where we started. Rather, I believe it has to do with the spiritual structure of the heavenly marriage between God (father) and the church (mother), between God and us. (Besides, Swedenborg's view of the spiritual structure of the genders is not so cut and dried in the first place. Check out AC 4823!) Ultimately, I discern two related (and common) errors: the confusion of realms and the loss of context.

1. **CONFUSION OF REALMS:** Correspondences are not equations. For example,

to say that a particular illness (blindness) corresponds to a particular spiritual state (lack of faith) does not mean that blind people are faithless. Likewise, to say that the sun corresponds to the male and the earth/moon corresponds to the female does not mean that the sun is masculine, or the earth feminine; much less does it mean that men are "enlightened" and women are "lunatics." Correspondence unites two distinct levels by metaphor and analogy. In this analogy, sun/father/God is the active force, and the earth/mother/church is the passive, recipient vessel. The earth is passive toward and dependent upon the sun's light and heat for growth; the mother is passive toward the father in the biological act of procreation, the church is the dependent recipient of God's activity of regeneration (God alone acts). Having established these parallels, you cannot then simply begin replacing a member of one level with that of another. (That's how you end up with the senseless contest between sun gods and earth goddesses.)

Related point: Swedenborg's theory of correspondences draws not from shifting cultural meanings, but from stable biological dynamics, functions, and relationships. (He was after all a natural scientist, not a political pollster.) It is the physical act of procreation, and the roles of the different players involved, that corresponds to how God insinuates himself into our lives and initiates the movement of spiritual growth and rebirth. See Luke 1:26-38.

2. **LOSS OF CONTEXT:** The full context is God as father in relation to the church as mother (see Isaiah, Hosea, and Johnny D., Rev 21). Again, the lesson is clear from the inner sense of the church as the bride of Christ, the mother of heaven. It is we, human beings, men and women, who stand in a passive/dependent/female role in relation to God, the active/independent/male role. (This is a real problem for most men I know. And is it really coincidental that most of the people in the pews are women? People who have come to know and even accept the passive, suffering side of life that most males try to avoid?) The problem is not just in thinking of God as our spiritual Father, it also involves the difficulty we have in thinking of the church as our spiritual Mother, and of submitting ourselves to both, as their children.

I appreciate Kit's concern that we not neglect the feminine aspects of the

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CHURCH CALENDAR DATES

April 23-24	Mid-West Peer Supervision
April 27-28	SSR Board Meeting Newton, MA
May 5	Investment Committee Meeting Newton, MA
May 16-17	COMSU at Temenos
May 17-20	Wayfarers Chapel Board Meeting & Visitor Center Dedication
June 23-July 1	Convention 2001, St. Thomas University St. Paul, MN
October 25-28	General Council Meeting Blairhaven, MA

TO THE EDITOR

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Divine. However, I believe we can best do this by remembering that these aspects already have their place in scripture, if we know where to look for them. It is the church, Israel, the people of God, those who do the will of the Father. This is who labors, who struggles and suffers, who waits upon the movement of God's spirit, all so that new life, spiritual life, might be "born into the world." To the extent that we are the church, so it is we who are called to assume this maternal attitude toward all of God's children.

*Rev. Robert McCluskey
Pastor, New York
Swedenborgian Church*



Missing Messengers

The Central Office needs a complete set of Messengers for every year. We find that we are missing these copies: December, 1986; May 1989. Please call the Central Office @ (617) 969-4240 if you have copies of these that we could have.

PASSAGES

BIRTHS

Stroh—Erik David Stroh was born October 30, 2000. The parents are Kristina (Laakko) and Darren Stroh. The grandparents are the Rev. Randall, pastor of the Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, Delaware, and his wife Mildred Laakko.

Clarke—Alexander Quinn Clarke was born on December 27, 2000. The parents are Summerann and David Clarke. The Clarks are active friends of the Church of the Holy City, Wilmington Delaware.

BAPTISM

Frost—Bretton Maxwell Frost and Makayla Danielle Frost, children of Stewart and Deneane Frost, were baptized into the Christian faith March 11, 2001, at the Church of the New Jerusalem in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating. Godparents for Bretton are Greg and Kelly Lloyd; Godparents for Makayla are Troy Frost, David and Beth Sturdevant.

CONFIRMATIONS

Barber—Rene Barber, age 12, was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church in Royal Oak, Michigan (Church of the Holy City) on Easter Sunday April 15, 2001. The Rev. Renee Billings-Machiniak officiated.

Dysinger, Liljedahl, Lloyd, Rasnick—Mary Jordan Dysinger, Nels Thomas Liljedahl, Greg Arno Lloyd, and Annice L. Rasnick were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church March 25, 2001, at the Church of the New Jerusalem in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.

MARRIAGE

Kiesman and Collins—Janet E. Kiesman and Brian E. Collins were united in marriage February 14, 2001, at the Church of the New Jerusalem in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.

DEATHS

Poole—Mary S. Poole, wife of the late Stewart E. Poole and stepmother of the Rev. Jerome A. Poole, entered the spiritual world February 19, 2001. A memorial service was conducted March 31 at the Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, Delaware, the Rev. Randall Laakko officiating.

Reinhold—Herman Reinhold entered the spiritual world February 10, 2001. Herman was the husband of Irma Paradiso Reinhold, longtime active member of the Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, Delaware. A memorial service was conducted February 17, the Rev. Randall Laakko officiating.



Mite Box Alert!

Our 2001 Mite Box will go to "Transitions."

Transitions is a non-location-specific church whose mission is "to explore, discuss and learn about our theology and spiritual paths, to foster the development of Leaguers as they move into adulthood, and to support people of all ages in times of change and life transitions."

Please send all monies by May 30th to Alliance
Treasurer Margaret Kraus 229 S.
Park Ave. Box 264
Pretty Prairie, KS 67570.



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.

Editor's Note: Joe Besecker, director of development at Urbana University, sent the following information along with a local newspaper article that provides more history and details. The article is reprinted with permission from *The Urbana Daily Citizen*, December 13, 2000.

Joe writes, "In 1953 Ohioana Library gave its very first grant to Ophia and William Smith to write *The Buckeye Titan*, a biography of Col. John James, the founder of Urbana University. Recently the copyright of *The Buckeye Titan* was acquired by Urbana University and we plan a reprint of it as part of Ohio's Bicentennial in 2003. The estimated cost for the reprint is \$20,000. We invite others to partner with us on this project."

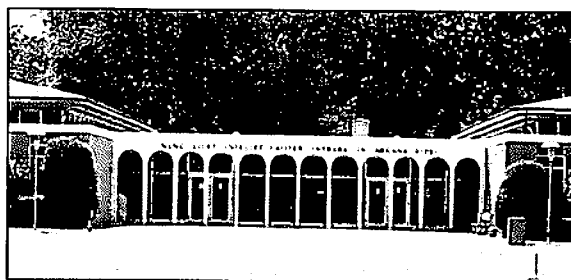
Urbana University Given Copyright of Founder's Biography

Citizen Staff Report

Urbana University has been given the copyright to the biography of John Hough James, one of the founders of the university and the man who donated the land upon which the university is built.

The Buckeye Titan was written by William and Ophia Smith, who were professors at Miami University. The copyright was given as a gift to Urbana University by Joseph W. Smith, son of the Smiths, with the understanding that the university will reprint the book in 2001 in honor of Ohio's bicentennial [in 2003].

"It brings together Urbana University...and Miami University, where the diaries of James are held," said Joe Besecker, director of development at U.U.



Besecker said the diaries of James, which *The Buckeye Titan* is based on, are considered one of the most important collections of historical materials with regard to that time period, 1820-1880.

John James III, the grandson of James, sold the collection of diaries to Miami University, along with other books in his collection.

Besecker said the biography was written through the first grant awarded by the Ohioana Library Association in honor of Ohio's sesquicentennial and was originally published by the Cincinnati Historical and Philosophical Society in 1953. It was based on his diaries as well as contemporary manuscripts and news articles.

James was a lawyer, a banker, railroad builder, scientific farmer and stock breeder, politician, editor, and lecturer from Cincinnati and began writing a diary when he was a senior in college and continued until his death in 1881.

Besecker said James was the valedictorian of the first graduating class of Cincinnati College, now known as the University of Cincinnati. Among his classmates were Frederick A. Kemper and William Henry Harrison, Jr., son of Gen. William Henry Harrison.

After earning his law degree, James and his bride moved to Urbana and stayed for the remainder of their lives. He also served as a colonel in the Ohio militia and became a state senator.

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