

THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

November 2001

New York Reflections on Saturday Afternoon, September 22, 2001

Pamela Selensky

Everywhere one looks there are reminders of the tragedy—faces of the missing still look out at you from building walls—a beautiful smiling woman in her wedding dress, a young man with his baby, a young woman in her cap and gown, and a dignified gray-haired man with his arm around his wife—all of them so happy. The firehouses that you pass have candles and photos in front of them as well as signs written by school children saying, “We love you,” alongside pictures they have drawn of the two burning towers.

I am sitting writing this on the second Saturday after the World Trade Center disaster. Like so many of us New Yorkers and others around the country I am trying my best to deal with feelings of profound sadness, anger, fear, and grief. At the same time I go about my usual Saturday routines in an attempt to get things in my life back to “normal.”

I left my building earlier this morning and saw some of my neighbors’ children once again sitting outside of my Greenwich Village apartment building collecting money for the families of seven local firemen who are still missing. I put some money in a large glass bowl on the table and take an enameled stud pin. It is an apple with the words “I love New York” written on it.

As I headed to the Greenmarket at Union Square, which I do nearly every Saturday morning, I marveled at how, once again, as has happened for most of the days following September 11th, the beauty of the late summer weather contrasts with and belies the ugliness of what has been committed here in my city. Every time I momentarily forget what has happened and what is now going on only a few miles from my home at “ground zero,” I am reminded by the acrid smell that blows north to my section of Manhattan from the rescue site.

When I reached Union Square I bought a bunch of beautiful orange dahlias, some juicy red apples and small yellow pears, the first signs of fall. Before I left I walked once again into the adjacent park as I have done a number of times in recent days.

Union Square Park has become a focal point for many New Yorkers and others to come and bear witness to their grief and to proclaim their desire that peace prevail over violence. Flowers everywhere, hanging on the metal fences, forming a

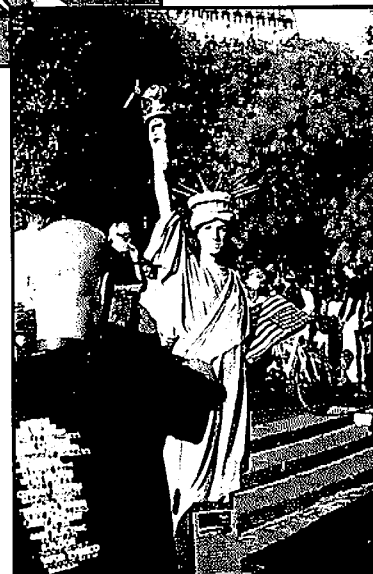


Photos of Union Square Park in this issue were taken by Pamela Selensky and Mona Conner.

carpet on the ground next to rows and rows of candles. A sign that reads, “Free Hugs,” and I see a Prayer Station manned by people who pray with those seeking to be comforted. One woman is crying as she looks at the pictures of those missing, and another woman next to her slips her arm around her shoulder. A small group of children are sitting on the grass with an Asian man and they are folding paper cranes; and another man is playing “Amazing Grace” on a panflute nearby. It has the feel of a 1960s happening.

It is peaceful here and an oasis of calm and community for people whose hearts are broken, for people grieving over a loss that seems too hard to bear and too vast to comprehend. But the spirit and power of community that is represented by the sights, sounds, and activities in Union Square Park has the power to heal.

Whether being drawn to the comfort of a candlelight vigil at dusk in Washington Square Park on Wednesday, September 12th after wandering aimlessly down streets closed off to traffic earlier in the day, or going to a local church on Friday, the National Day of Prayer, to be part of the prayer and support of a community of faith, the power of community has brought and will continue to bring healing and peace to me and many others throughout this city and this country.



“Living” Statue of Liberty, who previously frequented Grand Central Station as a living art statue, now raising funds in Union Square Park.

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In this Issue:

- How Swedenborgians Responded
- Commentary on Inner Meaning of the Tragedy
- Why Going Within Is Safe—VanDusen

In Search of the Blessing

In the more orderly world prior to September 11, our November *Messenger* would have carried a traditional Thanksgiving message. But now, with thousands of grieving families facing yet another onslaught of sadness as the holidays approach, we need to look with more awareness for reasons to feel thankful and to feel God's loving hand upon us.

With the Rev. Wilma Wake's assistance, we asked the pastors of our churches to share with us how they responded in the aftermath of the tragedy. Nearly all replied that special prayer vigils were held; their churches were opened to all in the community for continuing prayer. Some of their responses are printed here. The Rev. Lee Woofenden, pastor of the Bridgewater church in Massachusetts and editor of *Our Daily Bread*, scrapped his regular October issue and collected four sermons from the Revs. Robert McCluskey, George Dole, John Billings, and Andy Stinson to put out a special ODB issue. Lee's sermon is on his website: <http://www.leewoof.org/leewoof/2001/9-16-01.htm> The Rev. Rachel Rivers, pastor of the San Francisco church, was at first reluctant to have her sermon published here, because it was a message designed for the first line of healing, five days after the shock. But it is, in the opinion of this editor, a message for all time. (These special sermons and other material will also be published in a forthcoming J. Appleseed booklet, "God in the Midst of the City.")

This *Messenger* is something of a commemorative issue, an historic document of the responses following the tragedy, pointing to some directions for healing. What now? Where do we go? And what can we be truly thankful for in this world that changed overnight?

When crises plunge us into a wake-up to our shared humanity, we realize anew that we are in a continuing process together, on many levels—of struggling,

grieving, surviving, healing, recovering, growing, moving on, in the spiritual evolution that is our common task. In our excruciating pain, we become profoundly grateful for each other. We're in a state of collective grace when we reach out from this place, but the trick is to make it last.

David Spangler's "Commentary on the Inner Meaning of the Tragedy" (p. 146) was first sent to a number of people via e-mail, several of whom sent it to me with the comment that it was such a comforting, inspiring message that they wanted to pass it on. This feedback and my own inner response to it prompted me to publish it here. Before I even got to Spangler's main message, I was comforted by the idea of a "collective Soul of America": the noble ideals that formed this country, even though we've fallen appallingly short of them many times—the courage of individuals who risked and lost their lives involving themselves in the anti-slavery and civil rights movements; who fought in wars, large and small, foreign and domestic, popular and unpopular; who stood up against the status quo, with no other thought than to free the victims of oppression and give them an equal chance at "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Spangler writes, "...all who died gave the gift of energy released by their dying. And in the opening of the portal so powerfully by the deaths of so many, this gift of life from death, even though initiated by the hatred of a few, became a channel for an outpouring of the love that is at the heart of America. It is, I know, a painful gift, but it is a gift nonetheless. It is for you who remain to take that gift and reshape your world with it..."

Columnist Anna Quindlen writes, in the commemorative issue of *Newsweek*, "Children learn in social-studies class and in the news of the lynching of blacks, the denial of rights to women, the murders of gay men. It is difficult

to know how to convince them that this amounts to "crown thy good with brotherhood," that amid all the failures is something spectacularly successful. Perhaps they understand it at this moment, when enormous tragedy, as it so often does, demands a time of reflection on enormous blessings."

The Rev. Eric Allison writes, "This is the greatest opportunity the world has ever had to confront evil in an entirely new way. If we are to grow from this experience, not just as Americans but as people who share this earth, it may be that an entirely new response is required. If we are to spiritually evolve as a species we must move beyond 'an eye for an eye'."

May we move into a state of Thanksgiving for the opportunities this Gift has opened for us, and may God help us to remain in that state in the difficult days to come.

Patte LeVan



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New York Reflections *(Continued from cover)*

The idea of getting back to "normal" seems most real in the presence of others who care. It also seems most real in the presence of children. We warmed with pleasure at the joy of 4-year-old Avery as he blew out birthday candles on his cake at church last week and laughed with 2-year-old Otto as he played with a bright yellow balloon because this joy is also part of our life now and is to be welcomed and celebrated.

How do I end these reflections? Maybe with words that I see written on a piece of paper lying amid the hardened wax of burned-out candles in the park:

"My heart is forever burdened by this memory, my soul forever lifted by hope."

Pamela Selensky is president of the New York New Church. She has lived in New York all her life.



Candles spill out of Union Square Park onto a nearby construction site.



Children Speak

The messages below, written by children on the artist's roll of paper in Union Square Park were copied by Mona Conner and e-mailed to the *Messenger*. (The artist's roll of paper was the same one Mona spoke of in the October *Messenger*, on which she wrote a memorial to Alicia Titus. The roll has disappeared, but is expected to surface in some kind of exhibit later.)

"I hope all who died are enjoying heaven."
(I watched the child who wrote this; I think she was about 8 or 9 years old).

"I feel sad." (The word "sad" drops down.)

"This has been a big hit for my generation since we had never experienced a war or anything. I tried to help by donating blood but I couldn't because I wasn't old enough, nor weight enough. I feel really sad about this. God bless you all.

Sincerely, Marie Rody, age 12 & 1/2"

"I hope no more buildings fall down, or I would feel down."

"Life will never be the same"
(with picture of crying face)

"God Bless America. Let's be united. Learn how to love one another. Childrens are the future. We live in a hatriest world. Why can't we all get along? War is not the answer. Let's Pray every day." Marisia, B'kyn, NY

"I love the world! I love you!" Edward Liu

"Always you will be with us. Peace and love, Shalom"

(written inside a drawn heart): "us + them"

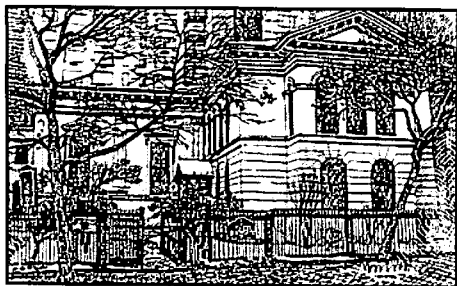
"I sorry. I love to mucha.
San Salvador, Central America"

(inside a drawn heart): "these are the towers we need now"—with outline of two towers labeled "strength" and "love."

"Sweet Dreams and fine machines and pieces on the ground—our sorrow is felt around the world."



There was a vast outpouring of Swedenborgian response to the disasters of September 11th in the U.S. Below are some of the ways that our churches and centers have been involved in the healing process. (The Rev. Eric Allison's article begins on the back page.) We hope to include more Swedenborgian post - September 11th activities in future issues, so send us whatever you have to add to this account:



New York September 19, 2001

Dear Friends,

I write to you, members and friends of the New Church in New York City, in the aftermath of the most significant event in American history, and the greatest tragedy most of us have ever known. And of course it happened in our city. Our hearts are broken over the suffering and loss of life. We are unsure about what the future will be like. And some of us are concerned about the deeper implications, not only of the attack, but of our response: the principles we will choose to defend, and the methods we will use.

The Swedenborgian Church especially feels the loss of Alicia Titus, 28-year-old daughter of John and Bev Titus of Michigan, who was a flight attendant on United flight 175. I've known Alicia since she was seven, watched her grow up in the church and the Youth League, attend conventions, become active in the San Francisco church, and then move to Boston. John also serves with me on the Board of Trustees of the Swedenborgian House of Studies. The grief for Alicia has extended across the country and was deeply expressed at a memorial service in Urbana, Ohio, on September 17, held at a Lutheran Church that holds 350

people. It was standing room only, and the line was out the door. And this is one story out of many thousands.

Words continue to fail us, to help us understand, to feel safe, to bring closure. And so I write to remind you of the Word that can sustain and guide us, enlighten and console us, through all things. I write to remind you of the inner sense of this Word, now open to us, which teaches us about who we really are, what we are really called to do, and what this world is really all about. I write to remind you that the church has much to offer, and that there has been no better time to be mindful of its teachings:

- comforting teachings about the afterlife, and the Lord's providence and foresight
- strengthening teachings about the power of the Lord and his angels to help us.
- challenging teachings about how we, beings created for love, are to respond to evil
- insightful teachings about the relationship between our spiritual and political lives
- humbling teachings about the role of prayer in surrendering ourselves to God in all things.

We have been profoundly shaken. The loss has been great. Healing will take time.

Please know that here at the New Church, we are here for each other. I am available by phone or appointment and would be happy to speak with you about any issue you presently face. I also encourage you to reach out to the friends you have made here at the church. I hope that now, more than ever, we can be a spiritual community, united in our love to the Lord, and steadfast in our commitment to being spiritually useful to others.

May the Lord's grace and peace be with you all,

Rev. Robert McClusky,
New York New Church

(Posted outside the church)
SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

As a result of the senseless destruction and death visited upon our city and

country, thousands of people now struggle to make sense out of the sudden loss of their loved ones. Our nation is called to think and act in new ways in the world. Each of us has been made keenly aware of the sensitive and complex issues with which we live.

At this time of national tragedy and grief, THE NEW CHURCH extends its deepest prayers and highest thoughts to the victims and their families and friends, to the residents of New York, the citizens of America, and to people of good will throughout the world.

We pray that those responsible will be held accountable, and that the potential for future attacks will be eliminated; hopefully through dialogue rather than war. We also pray that in responding to these horrific acts, we will not lose our grasp on the very principles we seek to defend. We urge all to act with restraint and compassion, to link our legitimate feelings of outrage and justice with our stated commitment to peace and reconciliation. Finally, we pray that our all too human tendency to seek revenge or demonize others might be tempered by our faith in the One who has called us into being and into the whole human community.

Wayfarers Chapel

"To memorialize those who lost their lives on September 11, we have started a fund to purchase and plant a tree on the grounds. The public has responded beautifully to this idea. The words below are in the Chapel and in the Visitors Center."

Rev. Harvey Tafel

Dear Wayfarers,

The tragic events of Tuesday, September 11, leave us in a state of shock and sadness. We find ourselves longing for God's comfort and guidance. We open our minds and hearts in prayers for all those whose lives have been lost and shattered. We seek God's wisdom in



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order to gain a deeper understanding of the hatred that would cause people to act in such an evil fashion and ways that this hatred might be overcome. Truly, we pray that God be our refuge and strength, and be present with us in this time of trouble. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you are with me." Psalm 23.

As a living symbol to the victims of September 11 we are dedicating a memorial tree that will be planted in a significant location on the Chapel grounds. Those who wish may make a donation to this memorial.

The Chapel is open daily from morning to evening for prayer and reflection.

Thank you,
The Chapel Ministers

Church of the Holy City Washington, D.C.

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell
September 25, 2001

The world has truly changed since our previous update on September 9. As a congregation we are called, as all people of faith everywhere are called, to a renewed commitment to ministry.

On the day of the attacks, I opened our sanctuary doors, even as people sent home from government offices and downtown businesses streamed northward on the 16th Street sidewalks. Throughout the week we opened our doors, and a number of people stopped in to light candles, to pray, and to share a word with me.

In one particularly poignant conversation, a man who had stopped in on Monday to view the architecture and stained glass windows, returned on Friday to tell me that he is a Bosnian Muslim who had lived in an Italian refugee camp, and last year had become a U.S. citizen. He wanted me to know that he was "sorry" for what had happened. All I could think was, this man has lived through so much recent history, I am sorry to see it continue here.

On Friday at noon, we held a prayer

service. Despite the impromptu nature of this event, and lack of time to get the word out, about 40 people gathered. Most were members and staff of our next door neighbor, the Green Door, a not-for-profit that helps prepare the mentally ill for employment. Others came from the congregation and off the street. As those of you who were there also said, I'm glad we did this.

Last Wednesday, we held our rescheduled all-church meeting. As we discussed programming and outreach, our thoughts turned again and again to the aftermath of the September 11 attacks...we decided to implement a weekly prayer service for peace, one open to the community and intended to continue long after the initial responses to the attacks were over.

It is ironic that it should take such a tragedy to focus our efforts. However, if any good is to come out of recent events, one piece will be that people of faith recommitted themselves to serving the spiritual needs of their communities.

Fall Focus for the Sunday Forum:

Over the summer, I gathered together materials on Swedenborg's teachings about love, joy and service—intending to use them for a workshop on inner joy, and also as materials for sermons. I plan to proceed with this. Even in the most trying times, joy remains part of our message. As the Psalm says, "Restore in me the joy of your salvation."

Updates

Wednesday Peace Prayer Vigil:

Every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. starting on Sept. 26, I hope to have interfaith involvement as the weeks unfold, starting with the groups who use our church. We envision this as an ongoing prayer time, since lasting peace will only come from the hard, persistent work of cross-cultural understanding. Our prayers for peace will continue long after the current crisis is over. For a fuller description of the intention of our prayers, visit our website at www.ForMinistry.com/20009COTH.C.

Music with the Angels:

Harlie Sponaugle and Barbara Wilkinson offered a concert entitled "American Songs of Love and Farewell" on Sunday September 30 at 4 p.m. We donated the proceeds to the relief efforts. In addition, Harlie auctioned two tickets to Cal Ripken's last game in Camden Yards on October 6.

Blessings
Jonathan

San Francisco

Rev. Sue Turley

I conducted an Interfaith Service of Prayer and Remembrance at the California Pacific Medical Center, where I work. We had Tibetan bells, sacred readings and celebrants from various faiths, and a ritual that invited people to release their burdens by placing a rock in a bowl of water and sending their prayers of hope and healing by placing a rose petal in a Buddhist gong. We had a prayer wall and corner where worshipers could receive a healing blessing or prayer. We also held prayer and meditation open for the public in the hospital chapel and held a candle vigil service.

Sue Turley,
Coordinator of the Spiritual Care
Department at CPMC
San Francisco, California

Fryeburg New Church, Maine

Rev. Ken Turley

Here in Fryeburg we had an Ecumenical prayer service at our church Tuesday evening and at the First Congregational Church on Wednesday, September 12, and an open service was held at the Catholic church on Thursday night. Each was attended by 40 to 60 people. On Friday, I kept the church open for personal prayer and meditation from 7am to 7pm and held a special prayer service at noon attended by about 70 people. My main theme has been to identify and accept the wide range of emotions and thoughts that we

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will all have in response to the attacks. But recognize that the true test for each of us is how we translate our inner experience into outward action. Will we be contributors to what is violent and hateful or will we contribute to what is loving and wise?

I also talked in terms of responding to the terrorists. I suggested that if we consider humanity to be the body we recall Jesus saying, 'If your right eye offends you, pluck it out, if your right hand sins, cut it off. Better to lose part than have the whole thrown into the fires of destruction.' The point being that it would be better to pluck out and cut off the terrorists as something evil to be removed, than allow them to throw the entirety of humanity into a war of unrestrained hate and destruction. All of my services have allowed people the opportunity to share thoughts, feelings, questions and comments, which they have been eager to do. "

Messages From Overseas *(to President Ron Brugler)*

On September 12th, Ron received emails from Gordon Kuphal and David Lomax... Gordon is the Secretary of the British Conference. Many of you met David Lomax at the Urbana Convention in 2000.

Dear Ron,

... I was shocked by the appalling events in New York and Washington yesterday. I'm sure I speak for the members of the New Church generally here in expressing our sympathy with the American people and especially with our New Church friends in America... We pray for all those who have been killed or injured, or who have lost friends or relatives, and for the doctors, nurses and rescue workers trying to help.

In love and friendship,
Gordon Kuphal

Dear Ron,

I've no way of knowing how many people from the church as a whole

may have been affected directly by the attacks in New York or Washington... however, I'm sure that you and everyone else will have been affected in other ways, so I wanted to say that I'm thinking of you. We were due to meet at Greenhill yesterday evening and so we met and prayed about all sorts of aspects of what has happened. I'm sure that will be continuing in the next few days... know that I'll be thinking about you.

Best wishes,
David

(Note: The Rev. Ron Brugler's message to our church at large was published in the October issue.)

Swedenborgian Church at Temenos West Chester, Pennsylvania *Rev. Susannah Currie*

On September 12, I attended the regularly scheduled Religious Council of Greater West Chester monthly meeting. After much discussion around the table, it was decided that 'because' of our different theological positions about the proper response to those responsible for the terrorist attacks, we could not agree on a format or content for any kind of interfaith service. Although a prayer was distributed and a statement was sent to the paper in support of those suffering, no event was planned. I was not impressed with the 'response to the call for ministry' that I felt was needed.

On Thursday afternoon, when the President called for a day of prayer on Friday, I received a call from Mary Guspan, a participant in our ongoing Interfaith Worship gatherings. She urged that of course we should meet, and within 30 hours we did, with 25 worshipers gathered from email announcements, referrals from the Unitarian Church, and a sign by the road. Our prayer service included quiet piano music, a few words of greeting, a time for prayer (we each held a candle and came up to light it from a central candle, God's wisdom and love as we see it and feel it in light and warmth), singing the round "We Are All One"

and departing in silence after each of us circled the central candle and received the prayers of each other.

No theology was explicitly shared, we were simply being in prayer together, raising our questions and fears to God. It was very moving...even the children were attuned to the moment. It 'was' when it was 'needed.'

Following this Interfaith Prayer Service, our regularly scheduled Interfaith Worship was held on Sunday, September 23rd. We had an attendance of 35, some of whom heard about us through a listing in the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* Interfaith Calendar. It was the only listing that started with the word "interfaith." The Muslim women we have now worshipped with for over a year told me how important it was to them to feel that they were welcomed and ENCOURAGED to share their faith with the group. We sat in a circle, shared readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Gospels and the Quran*, spoke on the topic "God's presence as a guide for our lives," prayed, listened to some musical selections and ended holding hands in a "Circle of Peace and Prayer," each offering our prayers and affirming them in unison with "Hear our prayer." Many stayed to talk afterwards and were grateful to have a place to worship God in unity.

We continue our interfaith worshipping every other month and expect that the group will continue to grow.

The time is now to come together and show the world that it is true, as Swedenborg wrote, that "diversity is an INTENTIONAL part of God's creation."

Blessings,
Susannah

* *Koran*

Cincinnati, Kemper Road Center Church *Rev. John Billings*

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

Below is something I'm trying at this dark time in our national life—something that you may at least want
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to consider for yourself in your area. It began with our largest newspaper calling me and asking me about Alicia Titus. As time went on, and I spoke more and more with these TV and newspaper people, it occurred to me to add...the part about why the Lord allows such terrible, evil atrocities in our world. At least one of the TV stations has asked for my sermon entitled: "War and Tragedy and a God of Love."

Note: this sermon is included in the special October issue of *Our Daily Bread*.

(Abridged text of email John sent to Shannon Keller of Channel 9 News):

"... **A**s I stated to you on the phone, as part of our ongoing healing as a nation and as individuals, I will be glad to email you our church's response to the question of why these kinds of horrendous, murderous acts are allowed by God. Rev. Billy Graham said he does not know. That leaves many people feeling like there is no reason...There is a reason that is knowable and makes very good sense, and some people may need to know that to facilitate or complete their healing. It could possibly be helpful if you might simply state on your newscast that there is a church out there that DOES have an answer to this question at this very dark, bleak time in our national life..."

In a later update to us, John said, in summary, "Channel 9 news in fact showed up with their big TV truck, and they taped our entire service because of the subject being dealt with: War, tragedy and a God of Love! It was quite an experience...Clearly our people are united now around what has happened, and clearly the terrorists have made a blundering mistake... by stirring us to the point of becoming so united. They would have been far more clever to take little bites out of us one at a time rather than one huge gouge that has brought us so deeply together. The people in the line to visit the Tituses and at Alicia's service were *in* community like any sense of community I've ever seen in a

community- building workshop. It was quite beautiful...."

**Church of the Holy City,
Edmonton**

Rev. John Maine

On the afternoon of Sept. 11th, I sent emails to the pastors of our churches in both New York and Washington DC, assuring them of our love, support, and prayers and offering any help we could.

On Thursday, September 13th, my wife Catherine organized a Sacred Circle Dance for Peace event at the church. People shared their feelings about the tragedy, danced for peace in the world and donated money for the American Red Cross.

On Sunday, September 16th, there was to have been an installation service conducted by Ron Brugler, installing me as the new minister. However, at my request, Ron canceled that visit (he was needed more in his role as president), and I conducted a special service remembering the victims of this violence and reflecting on the spiritual implications of terrorism*. We donated all our collection plus any other donations that Sunday to the American Red Cross—a total of \$600, which I think is pretty good for a small congregation in a "rebuilding" phase.

**A copy of John's sermon will be reprinted in the Western Canada Conference fall newsletter.*

**Church of the
Good Shepherd
Kitchener, Ontario**

Lay Leader Steve Thomas

Steve reports that Kitchener had a special service on September 16. It included time for quiet, a prayer circle, and for lighting candles for peace. His sermon was on "Peace and Reconciliation," looking at issues of responding with compassion vs revenge. On October 21st they are having a speaker from an Islamic Center.

San Diego

Lay Leader Eldon Smith

Their service on the 16th was dedicated to those who lost their lives, and honored all those who are still giving so generously of their time and talent to the rescue and recovery mission.

It was voted to give the morning's collection, matched by the church treasury and the money voted by the Women's Alliance, to a disaster fund. The total came to \$225 and was sent to the American Red Cross Disaster Fund.



**Goodbye to Alicia
(Lish), Friend and
"Sister"**

Jenn Tafel

Lish was my sister. I have many "sisters" and Lish is one of the special ones because we met at Almont. We were five, and in the Little Girls Dorm. I didn't have any experience with camp... and having Lish (and Missy) there helped tremendously...We would all make sure the dorm was clean for the daily inspections and hope above all hope to get a flag (which meant we passed!).

When we made it to the age of nine we got to go into the Middle Girls Dorm. This was a *big* change...there were BUNK BEDS! Good thing I had "sisters" like Lish and Missy. This was the key to survival in the dorms...The Middle Girls dorm held new things like...hair spray...*high* hair...lots of it (remember...it was the 80s). I have special memories of us ditching the annual middle weekend baseball game so that we could play poker in the dorm. We managed to hoard lots of junk food and only a *few* people were invited. This was cool stuff. We finally got this dorm routine down to a science and then we turned 13....

Initiation into the Almont Survivors

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The San Francisco Swedenborgian Church September 16, 2001 Worship Service

Do Not Be Overcome by Evil, But Overcome Evil with Good

Rachel Rivers

When we find ourselves in dangerous situations, we become afraid. And then that fear tends to manifest into a whole spectrum of emotions, from anger to depression. Once the immediate danger is over, it is important for us to pay attention to what feelings have arisen inside of us. If we are not to become prisoners to those emotions of anger and depression, we must be able to name what is coming up for us, to give words to those emotions. Rage; hopelessness, what else? Terror; sadness, what else are you feeling today?

Congregation answered: Numbness; powerless; helpless; confusion; determination; despair; distress; dread; resolve.

Once we are in touch with what those feelings are, the next step is to remember that love is stronger than any of them. These feelings come from a very primitive place inside of us, a very human and primal place. They are young and vulnerable parts of us. And it is important that we take all of those feelings and, just as if they were a child and we were holding them in our arms, let ourselves express those feelings, but within the comfort of a love that is far greater than any of them.

Another way to come to terms with what is happening and how it is affecting us is to breathe in all those states you just said and to let them flow through us. This is a Buddhist exercise: to actually breathe in those fearful, angry, hopeless, depressed states and to breathe out peace. This helps us know that love is the greater reality.

Another way is to actually picture, in this little sanctuary, all of those heavy emotions that we mentioned. And at the same time imagine this little church being cradled in the arms of God. Can you picture that? Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

There is an extraordinary danger facing us, not only as a nation through actual physical attacks and fears of future attacks, but in how we respond to this evil.

While the depression and the anger and all the feelings in between are natural and healthy responses to what has occurred, there is a danger in staying stuck in any of those feelings, and that is why it is important to let them flow through. If we stay stuck in them and let them control us, then we're in danger of being overcome by evil. Evil can kill us. It is real and it is dangerous, not only to the body, but to the spirit. The way that it kills the spirit is either through depression, through hopelessness, through despair, or through anger. The danger of operating out of anger is that we may become the very evil and hatred that we condemn, and we multiply it. Instead of stamping it out, we increase it, and we increase its power.

Those are the two greatest dangers not only this week but really every day in the smallest of ways. Now we're facing it in the biggest of ways. It is hard because there is actually truth in both of those places of being. It is true that there is evil in the world. There is lot of evil. And it is true that we need to find a way to be safe as a country and as a human race. So do you see the dilemma? And do you see the danger of falling on either side into hopelessness and despair or into hatred and evil? What is the way out?

Our church believes that we as a human race are evolving, that humanity is evolving. And one of the primary ways that we evolve as individuals and as a people is through recognizing evil for what it is and through finding an effective, loving response to it. In our Gospel reading this morning Jesus tells us the first step in how to do this: Love your enemies.

Love your enemies? Now how the heck do you love your enemy? First let's talk about what it doesn't mean. Loving your enemy does not mean that you love the evil that was done; it does not mean condoning evil; it does not mean doing nothing and letting it happen again. Loving your enemy means remembering that we are all part of one humanity.

From a Swedenborgian perspective, evil

is very, very real, and yet it is not a primary source. Evil is what we call a *perversion of good*. All life, all love, the essence of everything, is good. And we human beings are able to mess up that goodness; we are able to turn things upside down and make things very bad and very evil. We human beings are given freedom to turn good into bad. Now lots of people ask, Why didn't God stop this from happening? Wouldn't a loving God stop this from happening? Think about that all the way through. If God stopped our evil actions, what would we be? The purpose of life is to learn how to love. The only way to learn how to love is to have choices, some good choices and some bad choices. And folks, those choices are real, and God doesn't stop us from doing really bad things. God loves us enough to not stop us, to not take away our humanity.

So again, the challenge before us is to respond to this extraordinary crisis by actually taking an evolutionary step forward in our development as humans by not letting our spirits be killed by this attack, by not letting ourselves become consumed by the anger and hatred which was projected at us, and by finding a way, an action that is motivated by love.

I'll tell you one way, how I do it. I don't know the people who did these terrible things. But I know that they were once little babies, innocent little babies; and I'm able to love every little baby. That is one way I can bring that love. And I know that God doesn't give up on any of us; no matter how bad an act we commit, God never gives up on any of us. There is always inside of everyone at least a spark of goodness; and we can love that goodness in somebody even when we can't see it. We can believe and trust that it is there. And that is what "love your enemy" means. It means love the good that is within them, even if that is a goodness you cannot see.

There is another thing we must do... We need to feel our suffering and not be overcome by it. We need to let in the enormity of what has happened, and we need to find the resolve inside of ourselves that we will spend the rest of our lives seeking a way to create peace.

There is one more thing that we must do, and perhaps it is the hardest one to say

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right now. In order to stamp out evil, we need to see inside ourselves, as individuals and as a nation, in what ways we contribute to evil. You know the saying, we need to see the plank in our eye as well as the splinter in the other's eye. There is no justification for what occurred, absolutely none, that's not what I'm talking about. But for healing to happen, for peace to happen, between any groups of people, we need to each recognize our part, whether big or small. Do you know what I mean by that? This is the trickiest one of all, and I don't want you going out of here confused about that. If you are, come find me and we'll talk it through some more.

Congregation answered: You mean beginning to understand our enemy?

Yes, beginning to understand our enemy. It doesn't make them right in any way, but peace can't happen without beginning to understand how the things we say or do or how we act or don't act contributes to pain and suffering in this world. And then we must find a way to begin to turn that around.

I can't end on that note. I'm going to end on *this* note. How many of you have cried tears this week for somebody whom you've never met? How many of you are acting a little more warmly and kindly to strangers? How many of you are driving more considerately? How many of you are finding yourselves saying "I love you" to people who you have never said "I love you" to before? These are all signs of our hearts growing. And our hearts need to

continue to grow. We need to keep letting that happen, okay? So as well as loving those people who we have a really hard time loving, let's increase our loving of those who it's not so tough to love too.

Would you reach out to someone next to you, and let's say a closing prayer.

Dear God, help us not to be consumed by hatred and revenge, but help us to act wisely in the face of this crisis, and help us not to fall into hopelessness but help us to be buoyed up by the spirit of your love. Lord, through your love and your wisdom all things are possible. Help our love for one another to grow and deepen all the days of our lives. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers is the pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.



Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound

(Continued from back)

The Creator of the universe knows that most people are good and has such confidence in us that we have been given the freedom and responsibility to make this world just what we want it to be. We can choose to be honest and fair and just and tolerant and to embrace our differences or we can choose otherwise.

The world that will emerge from this tragedy is a world that we will shape. It will represent the quality of our own souls. Out of the greatest evil can come an even greater good. The mystic Emanuel Swedenborg wrote, "There is a limit on what evil can do, it is a universal law that no evil is allowed to happen unless there is some good that can come from it." But there is no limit upon how much good we can do. We have heard dozens of stories of heroism and kindness. Most of us grew up thinking of New York as a big unfriendly city. Now people are spontaneously stopping on the streets to pray together, embrace each other, lend a hand and share their sorrows and fears.

We face a greater uncertainty than we ever have had because we live in a world which can produce violence and explosions many times beyond what

we have already seen, and yet we are called upon to rise to a higher level of humanity because someone else has chosen to violate humanity.

This is the greatest opportunity the world has ever had to confront evil in an entirely new way. If we are to grow from this experience, not just as Americans but as people who share this earth, it may be that an entirely new response is required. If we are to spiritually evolve as a species we must move beyond an eye for an eye. The Code of Hammurabi (an eye for eye) represented a step forward because it reduced vengeance on large numbers of innocent people to just tit for tat. In the twenty-first century our response must take us to a higher level of maturity, and we already see signs that we are moving in that direction. After Pearl Harbor was bombed, we rounded up Japanese Americans. We took their property and put them in camps. Today we are moving to protect those who wear the Turban and the Shador and seeking to learn more from the Muslim faith because we know that it abhors terrorism. We have grown and we are asked to grow more.

My first response was, "Nuke em." When I calmed down it was abundantly clear to me that too much is at stake to allow our emotions to rule. The majority of Afghanistan's people are already

victims of oppression and live in abject poverty. The evil of terrorism cannot be overcome by bombing innocent people. We must overcome it in another way. First we must ask, What have we done that makes so many others see us as the bad guy? Our effect on the world has not always been good. We are in a relationship with the rest of the world. Nothing excuses the terrorism, but a relationship cannot grow unless both parties take responsibility for their own actions. We are not as innocent as we would like to believe.

What shall we do? I read an email that was titled, "Bomb them with Hope." The gist of the message was that it would show the world a new model by airlifting huge quantities of food to the hungry refugees. Drop TVs and VCRs (illegal in Afghanistan). Cover the country with useful gifts and information from the rest of the world. Empower the majority with food and information and just as the Berlin Wall came down so would the Taliban. If the "Evil Empire" can become our ally so can Afghanistan. All the armies of the world cannot stop an idea whose time has come.

So we are asked today to honor those people who are the victims of evil in its

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most raw, repugnant form. Can we make a difference? Swedenborg wrote "the consequences of every action are felt to eternity." The reality is that we have no choice but to make a difference. The question is simply—what kind of difference will we make? Shall we rise up in righteous wrath and smite the perpetrators with all the power our forces have to offer? Or shall we look within ourselves and plan for a peace that passes all understanding? I'm not suggesting that the terrorists should not be brought to justice. They should be. But how shall we take up this torch that has been forced upon us? Shall we have the courage to accept the challenge that when an evil rises to the surface, and we see it for what it is, that it is only then that we can overcome it? And we overcome it not by imitating it but by transcending it, outsmarting it and demonstrating a better way to live.

We are to honor the innocent with our walk today. To honor means to act out one's beliefs with honesty and integrity. Whatever action you choose or choose to support, may it be a step forward for all of humanity, and may we all love mercy and justice and walk humbly with our God.

Let us pray:

Dear God, Creator of all that is. We know that you offer a comfort and strength beyond what this world has to offer, and we call upon you to be with the families of all those who were killed on Tuesday. We ask that they feel the love of an entire nation around them. We pray that they would know that we feel the ache in their hearts and that our hearts ache also. And we ask that out of the ashes of these angry acts, love would blossom in the hearts of the terrorists as well as the hearts of the grieving, and that together all the people of this world will join in creating a heaven on earth. Amen.

The Rev. Eric Allison is pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound in Kirkland, Washington.



Goodbye to Alicia (Lish), Friend and "Sister"

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awaited us the summer we were 13...No one knew what would happen. We had only the previous year's memories and *hoped* we wouldn't have to do that kind of horrible stuff. But we did. And more. The summer we got initiated, a bunch of us had strep throat...we 13-year-old girls had to dress like boys and vice versa....and we had to speak in a deep voice. Not fun with strep throat. But we did it. We had to show the clique of older teen girls that we weren't going to "wimp out." Lish was dressed as Johnny Appleseed, which meant that she walked around all day with a pot on her head!...The Teen Girls Dorm was awesome compared to the previous dorms...We didn't know how special it would be to get into the Survivors and have our own bathroom attached to the bedroom...as opposed to walking down a long, cold linoleum hallway...Another cool thing

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Commentary on the Inner Meaning of the Tragedy

David Spangler

Over the past few days since the tragic destruction of the WTC, several folks have asked me to comment on the inner side of this event or wondered if I had any particular insights into what has been happening on the inner realms. The truth is that for all of Tuesday and Wednesday I was simply too caught up in the enormity of the tragedy to be able to tune in properly. I needed to process my own feelings. When I did try to journey inwardly into the situation, I encountered such a powerful maelstrom or cloud of psychic energy around it that all I could do was to enter it and hold a peaceful, loving center. Just as survivors of the WTC collapse have spoken of being enveloped in dust so thick and black that they couldn't even see their hands in front of their faces, so it was for me entering this cloud of emotion, thought, and energy. All I could experience within it was sorrow, grief, fear, and anger, and all I could do was simply be a point of holding and peace within it. I had little ability to see into the higher domains where some deeper information or insight might be available.

Late Wednesday afternoon, however, I was contacted by a being with whom I have had prior contacts and who appears to me to be one of many beings whose function is to nourish the ongoing evolution and well-being of this nation. I suppose I think of this being as an agent of the Soul of America. Through this contact, a series of images and insights began to unfold for me, but it has taken me two days to get a good handle on the information, and chances are I will still be processing it for days to come. As the effect of this contact has deepened for me, it has also made it possible for me to journey into the situation and observe for myself some of the energies and forces at work.

Because of this I have two levels of information. One comes from an inner plane being and the second comes from my own observations while working on the inner planes. I want to differentiate clearly between these two. Both draw on different capabilities. In the first case, the trustworthiness of the information depends on my skills as a mediator and translator of another being's perceptions; in the second case, the trustworthiness depends on my abilities as an observer and is affected by my interpretation of what I have seen and my thoughts about its meaning. I have reasonably good trust in myself and in my skills in both instances, but you need to evaluate the information for yourselves, so you need to know what information is coming from what source.

As most of you know, information received using intuitive skills from the inner worlds or from inner beings is not to be given any greater authority or weight than you would give to any other information, particularly when it comes from an ordinary, human source. It is still one person's (or one being's) perspective, and you must receive it and evaluate it using the integrity and independence of your own thinking

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Commentary on the Inner Meaning of the Tragedy

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and feeling and the guideline of your own soul and spirit.

I will share what I received from my inner contact. In a later message I will share my own observations and thoughts. What this being said and showed me could be translated in this way:

“**W**hat has taken place is an act of sacrifice and a gift given by the Soul of America to the world at large. To understand this, you must know two things. The first is that whenever a death occurs, for whatever reason, whether peacefully or in violence, an energy of spirit is released. An incarnational portal is opened, just as it is at birth. This energy is neutral, or perhaps I should say, unformed. It is a gift that flows between the worlds. What is shaped from this gift is up to those who receive it, as well as the one whose death has released it. Think of this energy the way your biologists and doctors think of a stem cell: it is capable of being shaped and particularized in many ways. When a death occurs peacefully or as an act of courage and sacrifice, or when the one dying does so in a loving or blessingful way, then this energy is given a spin in a certain direction and can be a source of blessing for others. It lends itself to being shaped in positive ways. If the death is violent and hateful, a different spin is given, and this energy can more readily be shaped in hateful ways. However, this is not a rule, and even hateful and violent deaths can generate an energy that will ultimately be shaped in loving, healing, or transformative ways.

“Think of this energy as a kind of inheritance. It is a gift from the dead, a gift from the dying. It is a gift to life, even, you may say, a gift of life that can add to and bless the lives of those who remain physically embodied. Not all inheritances are spent wisely or well, not all gifts are used with grace and blessing, but the gift is there nonetheless. The giving of this gift is an act of soul and is automatic. It is really an act inherent in the boundary between your world and ours, a result of crossing that boundary. To release this energy and to give this gift is not a conscious decision on the part of the one who has crossed the portal, but someone who dies in a mindful and loving way will greatly add to this gift and turn it from an unconscious energy into a consciously positive one. Also, if love is present in the last moments of physical life, even if the death is violent or as a result of hateful acts, this gift can emerge untainted by the hate that may have caused the killing.

“Many of those who died in this event did so with thoughts of love and courage. We can see this, and the importance of this cannot be underestimated. They have left a powerful gift of energy. That is one matter. As you know, there is a reservoir of fear and pain, suffering and anger, hatred and separation, in your world. Why this is so is not of concern at this

Healing Gift, Borand,
9/11/01.

(We are told this is a drawing by a child. It has been passed around to many people on email, but we have been unable to uncover any further information about it.)

moment; suffice it to say that it is ancient in origin, and that all peoples contribute to it and have therefore a responsibility towards it. All people suffer from it, whatever nation they belong to. It is a human problem, not a national or tribal one.

“**I**n this event, the soul of America has acted in a sacrificial way to take on a portion of this energy and hopefully transmute it. It has been doing this for some time, and in this event some of that sacrificial activity has manifested itself into the physical. There are energies of hatred and violence circling your world, so to speak, looking to land, and all nations, including your own, are contributing to this simply because people contribute to it in millions of small and mindless ways. That this particular energy landed in your nation in this way was partly a matter of consequences returning for certain patterns and actions you have set into motion. You cannot avoid paying a price for your own acts of violence in the world.

“But in spite of what many may say about America’s responsibility, this action was not primarily one of retribution or of paying a price. It was an act of sacrifice, a deliberate taking on of a portion of the world’s hatred and suffering

because the soul of America has the capacity to receive this hatred and transmute it. This is not a test of whether or not you can do so; you have already done so. An energy of violence needed to be grounded and was going to land somewhere. The soul of this country took it on, knowing it could absorb this blow. An energy of love and courage has been released into the world. There will be changes and there will be blessings.

“This has happened whatever the immediate response of your people and your government may be. If your response is one that recycles the hatred in acts of revenge, this does not mean you have failed a test, only that you have not yet achieved a place of inner confidence and courage in which you can trust in a spirit of love and healing. But you will reach that place eventually.

Many of those who died in this event did so with thoughts of love and courage. We can see this, and the importance of this cannot be underestimated. They have left a powerful gift of energy.



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Commentary on the Inner Meaning of the Tragedy

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You must understand this. The Soul of America is far more than its government or any one group of people. Even if your government or members of your citizenry react with hatred and seek simple revenge, this does not mean that everyone reacts that way, nor does it mean that a deepening of spirit has not taken place. For those whose desire to love, to forgive, to be peacemakers has been quickened by this event, let them extend this inclusionary, embracing spirit to their fellows, even to those who, in their own anger and pain, now seek revenge.

"The gift of this sacrifice can be received in many ways by people. For those who can receive it in a way that takes them into the deepest places of love and the celebration of the common spirit of humanity, and whose hearts can be opened to forgive, let them be grateful, but they should not condemn those who will receive this gift in different ways.

"If your heart is broken and opened to love, this is a grace for you to embody, not a club for you to hold over your brother's or sister's heart. The energy behind this event needed to be received by humanity, much as the energy in a storm needs to be discharged by lightning. It could have been much worse; its effects were greatly mitigated, in no small measure by the fact that it was taken on by this country.

It is also true that even worse acts of violence have been and are being contemplated. It is the hope of the Soul of America and of all of us who serve that great Being and serve this country from the realms of spirit, that by taking on this event and the release of the energy behind it, as well as the release of the transformative power of the sacrificial act, you will greatly lessen or dissolve the potential of these worse acts.

"Has America lost its protection from spirit? No. You are greatly protected. Bolts have formed that have never struck you and were diverted. This protection will not cease. But you

are all in a stormy world. The charges of hatred and fear are strong in all countries, and these attract and form the bolts of violence that strike your world. If a bolt gets through, it is unfortunate, but you must think of all the bolts that did not.

"I have spoken of this as a sacrificial act made by the Soul of America. Did those who were killed have any choice in the matter? What we see is that many of those who perished had indeed made an agreement at a soul level to participate in this sacrificial act, to make it their portal for entry into our world; others did not but were drawn into the event for a great many reasons personal to them and their destinies. They could not have avoided it. But many had not chosen this way to die nor were bound to the event by chains of attraction or consequence, and they were not touched, sometimes for miraculous reasons, but mostly because of how the event actually unfolded in time and space.

All who died were immediately embraced by the love that led the Soul of America to offer itself in this way, and their entry into our world was graced and blessed by this spirit. But as I have described, all who died gave the gift of energy released by their dying. And in the opening of the portal so powerfully by the deaths of so many, this gift of life from death, even though initiated by the hatred of a few, became a channel for an outpouring of the love that is at the heart of America. It is, I know, a painful gift, but it is a gift nonetheless. It is for you who remain to take that gift and reshape your world with it. It is a precious thing, and it can remake your world. I bless you."

David Spangler is a philosopher, writer and educator whose work deals with incarnational spirituality: the integration of spiritual awareness within the context of ordinary, everyday life. From 1965 to 1969, he taught classes in human relationships and self-development in the San Francisco Bay area and was a teacher for the San Jose Adult Education program. From 1970 to 1973, he served as a co-director and

spokesperson for the Findhorn Foundation community in northern Scotland, recognized throughout the world for its visionary contribution to the "New Age" transformational process. David designed and taught classes for the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee in future studies, community development, leadership, the "new" science, and emerging new paradigms from 1978 to 1984.

David is a Fellow of the Lindisfarne Association, an international association of scientists, theologians, economists, architects, educators, and artists, all working for the emergence of new patterns of culture, spirituality, and science. In 1990, David began designing and teaching classes online using computer telecommunications. He has also designed and taught a class in theology and the new sciences for Seattle University. Since 1978 he has co-hosted with Dr. Brugh Joy, a yearly New Year's Conference at the Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove, California.

For thirty-seven years, David has written and lectured widely on incarnational spirituality. His books include *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age*; *Emergence: The Rebirth of the Sacred*, and *Reimagination of the World*, co-authored with cultural historian William Irwin Thompson. His most recent books are *Everyday Miracles*, published by Bantam; *A Pilgrim In Aquarius* from Findhorn Press, *The Call, Parent as Mystic, Mystic as Parent*, and *Blessing: the Art and the Practice* from Riverhead Books.

In addition to writing and lecturing, David also teaches workshops and long-term classes, primarily in the Puget Sound area. He enjoys a close association with the Rev. Paul Martin and has been a regularly featured workshop leader at Stonehouse Bookroom (Swedenborgian Spiritual Growth Center) in Kirkland, Washington, for many years. David lives in the Pacific Northwest with his wife Julie, and their four children. For information on his online classes or his calendar of talks, please go to www.davidspangler.com, his new website which should be up and running after October 20th.

Editor's Note: *The second part of David's message, his personal observations, were emailed to me, at my request, during the last week in September. These observations will be published in the December Messenger.*



It came as a considerable surprise to me to learn that some people are teaching that the way to the inner life can be dangerous. The inner is the repository of all that is higher (*Heavenly Doctrine* 36-53). So, this teaching blocks the way to the higher. This teaching surprises me because I have gone the inner way, taught it, known teachers of it, and have studied it in all the great religious traditions of the world. In none of these is there any sign of danger. The Hindu-Buddhist traditions alone have led countless millions over the centuries to explore the inner way. Surely if there were horrendous dangers they would know of it. If I lay bare the real situation of the inner way you will soon see why there is no danger.

The inner way is predicated on certain fundamentals:

- The Lord is ever present, *i.e.*, omnipresent, so when you withdraw into yourself you are in the actual presence of the Lord. This presence in no way depends on your beliefs, approach, assumptions, or your cleverness. It is simply always true. At first the spiritual seeker may not sense the presence of the Lord. This sensing depends on the seeker's inner growth.
- The best approach to the inner way is actually ignorant humility. Presumption when dealing with the Lord is, of course, unwise. It blocks perception. Of course the real seeker is ignorant, ignorant of the best approach, and quite ignorant of what will happen. Ignorance and humility are a good combination, a good place to start.
- How to approach the inner? There is a host of spiritual practices used by millions for centuries. It is quite alright not to know how to approach the inner. This is part of ignorant humility. Try any way that seems to attract you. If it is not the best way for you the Lord within will lead you to a way more suitable for you. You may end up exploring several ways before you settle on what works for you.^{1,2}
- Persistence is part of this seeking. Better fifteen minutes a day, every day, to a long session now and then. After you get into the inner way you may be led to a longer time, or a better setting or time of the day. Fifteen minutes every day says you are a sincere seeker.

So these fundamentals are simple:

- 1 Assume the Lord is always present.
- 2 Be content with ignorant humility.
- 3 Approach in any way that first appeals to you.
- 4 Be persistent, daily.

Why Going Within is Safe

peculiarities. It is a marvelous moment when the seeker begins to realize the Lord is really present and guiding the seeker. Swedenborg's writings use a marvelous term for this situation, reciprocal conjunction. Two seek each other, one of them being all wise and loving.

This is precisely the reason this is *not a dangerous process*. Would you as God put hidden and dangerous traps in the way of our poor seeker? Would you require immense brilliance of even a simple and good person? Of course not. The truth is the Lord designed the seeker and every detail of the process and is more concerned than you that you be led a good way. The signs of the Lord's presence and guidance will at first seem like traces. Note and be thankful for these, and more will be given. The whole process is a very subtle redesigning of the person from the inside out, called in Swedenborg's writings *regeneration*. In this the Lord rises to become an active presence in your life.

Now can you see what a disservice a person does who casts doubt on the inner way? The more they seek every clue to prove they are right the more they serve their own proprium, not the welfare of others. To block one's own way is bad enough, but to use authority to block the way of others is a serious matter. Of course such people are afraid. They have not tried the inner way at all. Are they in danger? Perhaps. Persons who live in such externals may be in danger from their own suggestions. The first time a whole scene was given to them, or they heard the subtle condensed speech of angels, they might flee in terror.

But those in ignorance and humility do not fear coming into the gentle hands of the living God. The Lord is there wisely aiding you from the first moment. There is no limitation as to what can be found this way. Do you want to be just a spectator on the sidelines of the spiritual or enter in yourself? The inner way is wondrous and joyous, opening up the greatest joys of our existence—reason enough to explore it. Yet it has much to do with our eternity.

While exploring the inner way I suddenly came to a world of spiritual poetry, being no poet at all until then.³ Creativity is part of the inner way. It is not only a way to God, but also to your highest use.

It is a marvelous moment when the seeker begins to realize the Lord is really present and guiding the seeker. Swedenborg's writings use a marvelous term for this situation, "reciprocal conjunction." Two seek each other, one of them being all wise and loving.

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Why Going Within is Safe

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What is it like to deal directly with the Lord in the inner world? This is what happens. The Lord is always present so you are dealing with the Lord even when He is not in your thoughts. The Lord is infinitely patient. The Lord took five billion years from the formation of the earth to the birth of man. The Lord works in a comprehensive way, working in every conceivable way simultaneously, and in countless ways we know nothing of. In contrast, we are simple linear creatures. "Please show me a sign I can understand, by next Thursday." The Lord is freedom itself and can in no way be constrained by humans. The Lord works constantly at our ends and even the entire background of our understanding. The Lord is very gentle and loving, knowing depths of feeling we rarely visit.

The overall thrust of this inner development is that we become more like the Lord. As a result we can more easily slip in and out of the experience of the Life of the Lord, seeing perspectives and enjoying feelings and understandings that were not possible before. But this is a slow development taking

many inner changes. In this lifetime we can start on it, but it continues to eternity. It is a blessing and a joy. The inner way is full of direct experience in such contrast to the externals of words and doctrines. It is a life learning so rich and subtle that one can hardly find suitable words. Ask a woman who has raised children what it is like. Her experience is too rich to pack into a few words. It is like that in the inner way.

Be patient. So much needs to be sorted out and rearranged in you. There is no hurry. You have entered upon regeneration. So much that is spiritual suddenly becomes clear and apparent.

Endnotes:

¹ W. Van Dusen, *The Design of Existence*, Chrysalis Books, West Chester, PA., 2001, Chapter 5.

² W. Van Dusen, *Beauty, Wonder, and the Mystical Mind*, Chrysalis Books, West Chester, PA., 1999, Chapter 8.

³ W. Van Dusen, *Moments of Enlightenment*, 2001, Spiritual poetry in an ebook at ebookstand.com, Click on poetry, or from the author.



"Do This in Remembrance of Me"

Roger Buck

The Noble Doctrine of the Great Council of Buddhism, 20th century, states "Never in this world does hatred cease by hatred. Hatred ceases by love, and this according to a law which has existed forever."

Jesus Christ lived in a time of terrible violence and oppression, a time of escalating cycles of retaliation between rival ethnic groups, when the Roman Empire suppressed all dissent by the threat of crucifixion. In order to transform this culture of hatred and retaliation, he preached the gospel of love and forgiveness.

Among those who followed Jesus' example of transforming hatred by the power of love was the Rev. Martin Luther King. Mourning the death of a civil rights marcher, King asked, and I paraphrase, "Must we have a human sacrifice for every step forward?"

Sometimes we must. Sometimes it takes the blood of the innocent to change that which is wrong. Sometimes it takes the death of a great leader like Dr. King to inspire us to strive for liberty and justice for all. Sometimes it takes the death of the Son of God to take away the sins of the world. Hatred ceases by love.

In Rev. King's last speech, he said, "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life.... But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will."

Likewise, Jesus said, "Father, if it is your will, take this cup from me. Yet not my will but yours be done." When they arrested him, he told Simon Peter to "put back your sword." On the cross, he said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

After he had risen from the dead, his first word of greeting, both to the women at the tomb, and to his disciples, was "Peace."

And so Christ, by dying and rising from the dead made visible the horror of violence, of the scapegoating of the innocent. When he asks us, in communion, to "do this in remembrance of me," he asks that we be inspired to follow his teachings and build the New Jerusalem, based not on violence and division, but on peace, love, and forgiveness. Hatred ceases by love.

[Author's Note: This article was composed as a preparation for communion, for Easter 2001. Its message strikes me as timely. I am not implying that the terrible loss of life from the terrorist attack was in any way necessary, or that the victims were human sacrifices. Furthermore, I am not saying that the perpetrators of this crime should not be brought to justice. But I do believe that we must heed the teachings of Jesus Christ, and let our love for all people, and not a desire for revenge, guide our response.]

Roger Buck, along with his wife and two children, has been active in the Portland (Maine) Swedenborgian Church since 1991. He especially enjoys singing in the choir and playing guitar for the congregational singing which begins every service, and looks forward to meeting Swedenborgians from across the country at the 2002 convention in Portland.



Some Thoughts About Hell

Stephen Koke

This article was written before September 11th, but Swedenborg's concept of hell seems even more relevant now.

One chooses heaven or hell, Swedenborg says. But why would anyone choose hell if heaven is better? If we knew that heaven was better, more preferable, we would choose it. But in Swedenborg's concept, the idea that heaven is better is considered nonsense in hell. One's values in hell are not very intellectual, not very aware, just to start with. Intelligence is down in favor of the rise of lower motivations which prevent thoughts from a higher point of view than oneself.

You get there after death by going through the world of spirits where the goal is to get everyone to think as they feel and feel or love as they think. The individual must not be divided inside or neither heaven nor hell will be available. Everyone is then likely to experience whatever they would most love to experience. Everyone is happy in either "place." No one is in pain except by contact with the opposite state of mind. There is, in a way, happiness everywhere in heaven and hell, except that some happiness is perverse and other kinds are much more elevated.

Everyone becomes what he really, down deep, has wanted to be.

In hell, hellish things are what you would love the most or you wouldn't want to be there and therefore really couldn't be there. You couldn't even find a way to get there. A good person finds heaven attractive, and ways to heaven eventually open up in unexpected places in the world of spirits. An evil person really prefers hell, and only those who want to be there ever get in. Ways then open up. But some spirits from hell were allowed to satisfy their curiosity about heaven, looked around and saw heaven as repulsive. The great architecture of an angel's house was seen only as a pile of bricks and straw. There was nothing to envy. There is nothing objectively beautiful in heaven that could be envied by someone from hell. The visitors from

hell felt choked by the energies of love in heaven, couldn't breathe, and finally threw themselves desperately back down head first. There they revived and felt comfortable. In hell, one looks around and sees his friends as regular fellows, good-looking. Only when some light from heaven penetrates does that disappear. But that is temporary, very unpleasant, and there is always a return to normality.

The things that make heaven beautiful and hell ugly are not objective, observable by everybody, because they aren't material, like a beautiful diamond or pile of garbage here that everybody would see the same way. They are values made sensually appealing only to those who have them inside, states of mind. An angel is beautiful because of his or her values, not beautiful to just anybody. Consequently, a person of a hellish state of mind would not be attracted to heaven.

Hell got a horrible reputation from orthodox teaching which made it a place of eternal punishment, not a state of the heart. It is inflicted on you, and the irony of such an idea is that punishment looks forward to reformation; yet no reformation is possible if punishment never ends. Anyone would want out of such an oppressive place and would think in any private moment that there has to be something a lot better than this place. Such pain and ugliness remains as a kind of background coloring to the idea of hell, and it can raise questions about hell's validity, especially if one is stuck with it forever.

Much of this comes from the idea that heaven and hell are *places* you go to after death. Consequently, it would follow that you can stand in the middle of one or the other and freely contemplate some very different set of values deep within yourself and maybe even find a way to the other place. Neither heaven nor hell would in this way be so intimate and commanding as a state of the heart. Swedenborg very early disposes of the idea that in talking about heaven and hell we are talking about places. As states of the heart, they only look like places—something that the Pope caught up with recently (evidently a brilliant guy).

Hell's people know the real logic of hell as a place in the heart. They love it.

They love to fight and make war on the other group or town, only with more intention than people who are addicted to computer war games, or assault weapons, and dream of some juicy military action. The real gangs and warlords on the planet who are in a position to do it for kicks are actually visiting hell already, trying to recreate it around them here, often under the guise of national or religious devotion. After death the competition for dominance in hell is fierce. Rape, destruction, and eventual victory are intoxicating, and you can keep at it for a long, long time. There's nothing unpleasant, punitive, or non-addictive about it.

Nobody dies there. There are no casualties. The "dead" lie stunned for awhile but then revive and gather themselves for the next stimulating encounter. We'll get you the next time around. This is habit-forming. It's an endless round of violence and energy, though it does nothing for anyone but feed fantasies. Also, eternity in either heaven or hell is a state, not just endless time. It is the experience of timelessness. In the spiritual world there is no time, only duration of state, and in the complete enjoyment of one's life time is meaningless; life seems timeless. With total involvement you can let an eternity slip by unnoticed. Hence the eternity of the hells (*Heaven and Hell* n.477-8). It's not a sentence imposed on one, it's a condition of the involved self. The same is true of the eternity of the heavens.

So the big question is, Why would anyone, once in hell and of such a character, ever want to leave? There is no better place in view, hell really looks good. Now and then some spirits from hell get to look at heaven, but that's a crock, and there's no inclination to go find something else. There are no activities in hell that don't have a fierce dedication to them, like a violent or seductive game that one constantly wants to replay. You are totally immersed. You may be tortured by a rival in hell, but your response is just to get back at who did it—double. That's so sweet.

Stephen Koke is an author and a member of the Communications Support Unit.



We Can Mend Broken Hearts

Nancy Adair

One day after church I decided to make a God box with my child, Lucas. Lucas, then three years of age, enjoyed the cutting and pasting of pretty pictures. Suddenly, Lucas turned to me and with a serious expression on his young face said "but Mom, God doesn't live in a box." I said "I know, Lucas." Quite proud of himself, Lucas pointed to the middle of his chest and said "God lives in here. God lives in our hearts."

Several months later Lucas experienced the first major trauma in his life when his daddy was hospitalized. Lucas came to me and said, "Mommy, I think my heart has left me." Shocked, I asked him why he felt that his heart had left him. He said "when I talk to my heart it isn't talking back." After taking a moment to process that my four-year-old has conversations with his heart, I told him that I thought his heart might be broken. I explained that many people have broken hearts and that broken hearts can be mended. He of course asked how a broken heart gets mended. I told Lucas to mend his heart by doing things every day that make his heart happy and to remember all the people who love him. Two days later Lucas told me that his heart was all better.

The following day in a local gift shop I found a glass heart molded from broken glass, called "A Mended Heart." I bought it and gave this mended heart to my son. He cherishes this glass heart and keeps it on our dining room table.

Lucas is now five years old. On his second day of kindergarten the attack on America occurred and the world as we know it changed. I had a vision of making mended hearts from the glass and metal rubble of the twin towers, the sale of the proceeds to create a relief fund for the tens of thousands of people whose hearts have been broken by these tragic events. Even if this vision does not manifest, we can all do what we can to mend our hearts.

Your emotional body resides in the fourth chakra known as the heart chakra. The heart chakra is located in the center of your chest plate where the endocrine gland, the thymus, is located. The heart chakra, being the fourth of seven chakras in the body, blends together the mental and physical energy centers.

By tapping the thymus you can strengthen your emotional resolve. Perhaps you saw the Robin Williams movie about Dr. Patch Adams. He said that it is a scientific fact that laughter boosts the immune system. In the same light, grief depletes the immune system. We are experiencing grief on a greater global scale than ever before. When you tap your heart chakra, actually beat your chest the way Tarzan did and let out sound. The "Ah" sound corresponds to the heart chakra.

Swedenborg said that the angels speak only in vowel sounds. Since each vowel sound correlates to a chakra, it is my belief that the angels are speaking in pure energy. Let us raise our voices and create heaven here on earth.

Nanci Adair is an artist and healer, and member of the Portland, Maine, Swedenborgian Church. She submitted this article to The Messenger especially for this issue.

To Bretton, with Love from Mom

So this is how a young boy grows
Ten little hands, ten little toes
First the crawl, then the walk
First with babble, then with talk

And soon he rides a brand new bike
Kicks a ball or throws a strike
Takes a lap around the track
And tempts the sprinkler on his way back

But each night when he lies to rest
The scars show on his opened chest
He dreams of what he'd like to be
As he sleeps tossing restlessly

And before each new day can begin
He takes his routine medicines
And never gives a second thought
To why the other kids did not

He knows his doctors all by name
And plays with each a different game
Let's see if he's grown another inch
And hope the needle doesn't pinch

And the hospital has just become
"The place he gets his new heart from"
With different nurses every day
Who try to keep the pain away

And each time we walk out the door
We hope for longer than before
To stay at home, to play and rest
To face tranquility, not a test

But even with a war to wage
Different from others of his age
He's filled with love and good inside
And takes his hurdles all in stride

So perhaps his life was meant to be
More of a lesson for you and me
For rarely does he complain or cry
Or contemplate if he will die

But rather, he is quite content
With the life for him that God has sent

— Dede Frost
April 2001



ASK SWEDENBORG

Dear Mr. Swedenborg:

What is evil, and are there truly evil people in life?

Response: In light of recent happenings on earth, I am glad you have asked these questions.

Evil is quite real. It's also true that hell is real and is the source of evil in its many degrees. This is why our Lord God takes hell and evil so seriously and protects us as much as He can from varying degrees of evil, and why He constantly strives to draw the evil spirits in hell toward lesser degrees of evil and falsity. Evil, in short, is twisted, mutated energy and life from God. It is a force of will and its accompanying affections (and therefore delights) that are focused on self, and also, perhaps on worldly power and pleasures. This is why it can feel good to exercise power over someone else or when we find pleasure in putting down someone else's reputation because it seems to advance our own.

Evil is a destructive energy that we inherit from generations past, and that may gradually grow within a person over time; it can eventually close off the conscious mind from the Presence of God deep within. Evil is an opposing kind of force-of-will in relation to goodness. It is *not* "nothing," but rather a twisted form of life from God. Good and evil are polar opposites.

Evil and false forms of thinking come in varying degrees of severity, just as good and truth do. Evil arises as human beings turn away from God and begin to believe that they both author and own their own life-force—that is, when people begin to take credit for their own love and wisdom. Some might call this "egocentric."

In the final analysis, it is evil to not believe in *and know* the Lord (who is known by many names), and it is evil to begin to hate and actively work against God. These statements make great sense when one pauses to get in touch with who God is, and what the Divine's nature is—Love and Truth itself. When a

The "Homeless" Angels of the Seven Churches

Seven Tiffany 'Angel Windows' are currently without a home! They represent the angels of the seven churches in Asia from the book of Revelation. They have been in storage since their removal from the Church of the New Jerusalem in Cincinnati, Ohio, in the 1960s when the church was demolished as part of a highway construction project. They were purchased from the Cincinnati church for the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos in West Chester, Pennsylvania, by generous donations from Swedenborgian Church members and friends from all over North America.

The Swedenborgian Church at Temenos desires to be good stewards of these treasures. We have had the windows examined and have begun fundraising for their restoration. These notecards and bookmarks are our first fundraising effort. Your purchase of these 'angels' and your generous donations will go towards preserving these windows for future generations. This first step of restoration is part of a long range goal of installing the 'Angel Windows' in a new and larger worship space at Temenos.



Please consider making an additional donation with your order. God bless you and may the angels watch over you!

Set of 7 Angel Windows notecards ... \$28
Set of 7 Angel Window bookmarks...\$14
Set of 7 each notecards & bookmarks \$40

Prices include postage. Please send check, money order, or credit card information (card# and expiration date) to: The Swedenborgian Church at Temenos 685 Broad Run Road, West Chester, PA 19382. (610) 696-8145. Please make sure you include your name, address with zip code, phone number, and email address if you have one.



person is devoted to love and truth in life, eventually he or she comes around to discovering the greatest power of love and truth in life—God. Evil stems, too, from a person's devotion to him or her self *alone* as well as worldly pleasure and power over and above the needs, feelings and well-being of others. All evil leads toward callousness.

We also need to not forget the important issue of *consciousness* in relation to evil. As we grow in consciousness about what is good and bad, the degree of good or evil grows as well. Degrees of evil are important. Some people actually enjoy cultivating their methods of gaining dominion over others, in addition to tearing down and destroying other human beings. Fully evil persons are those persons who, over many years, *choose* to confirm themselves in all kinds of evil and falsity. This confirmation and maturation of their evil and falsity, making it their own, makes them

residents of the hells—monstrous individuals. These "well developed" hellish spirits, who may actually reside in your world, are truly evil, and yet it is true that in their inmost being, way down below the conscious level of life, the Lord enters them with their spark of life.



Ask Mr. Swedenborg is a regular doctrinal column featured in the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church newsletter, *Correspondences*. The questions are answered by the Rev. Kit Billings, pastor of the Virginia Street church. This column was written following the September 11 attack, and is published in their October/November issue. If you have a theological question that you would like addressed, please email it to [The Messenger](mailto:stpaulswedch@juno.com) or to Rev. Kit Billings: stpaulswedch@juno.com

Doctrinal commentary from other Swedenborgian ministers and lay persons is welcome.



PCA RETREAT REPORT

Spring in Southern California would just not be complete without a Perry Martin retreat. Again, this year our group was not disappointed. Perry led us through the weekend of March 31 with gentle suggestions and poignant questions. We explored reaching our souls using meditation, music, and art. The following is how one man in our group was touched by the process.

The retreat gives me an opportunity to dwell in a total spiritual surrounding—an opportunity to connect with my inner self, with my fellow retreaters, and to also connect with spirituality that pervades this very special facility, the Center for Spiritual Development in Orange, California. Through poetry, readings, music, art, and movement we are encouraged to take risks in a safe environment of support and love.

I have been attending these yearly workshops for three years. Last year, I was able to reach my feelings of sadness and to deal with my inability to freely

express them through my tears—that I received messages as a young child that tears were unacceptable for males.

This year I was able to confirm for myself my connection to my journey in connecting to myself and to others and experiencing contemplation and appreciation for the many soulful experiences that surrounded me.

Anyone lucky enough to experience this retreat that invites you to be the beautiful person you really are, is truly blessed.

Submitted by Mareta Tafel

Editor's Note: Perry Martin, Ph.D., is a Swedenborgian psychotherapist practicing in West Chester, Pennsylvania. She has been traveling to California for a number of years to facilitate the Pacific Coast Association-sponsored annual spiritual growth retreat held in spring, usually the last weekend in March. Anyone is welcome to attend. For further details, contact Manon Washburn, president of the Los Angeles Society: (310) 831-1815.



Goodbye to Alicia (Lish), Friend and "Sister"

(Continued from page 146)

about being a teen were the various retreats held throughout the year. So I got to see my "sisters" more than once a year! We wrote letters and called one another (especially during rough times or if something really cool happened).

I moved around a lot when I was younger and didn't maintain a core group of friends. I was used to being the new kid and trying to show people that I was okay and good enough to hang out with. This was not the case at Almont. Missy, Lish and I would just pick up our conversations where we left off. Catch each other up on the school year. And then we added another person to our group...Fawn. Now there were four of us. Our sleeping bags next to one another. Getting ready in the bathroom with an inch of water on the floor because the showers leaked so much. Trying out different clothes, hair, makeup and music...I didn't have to go out of my way to be cool. Lish, Fawn and Missy accept me for who I am. Who I will be. Who I was. That's what is so amazing and important about our friendship. I'm 28 and I can say that I've had friends since I was five and we're still friends. Even better ones.

The Transitions retreats Missy, Fawn, Lish and I attended together meant sharing one big room and staying up all hours of the night. By then we were in and out of college and beyond. This is the kind of friendship I cherish. These people know me inside and out and we supported one another in all our life choices.

I miss Lish. I miss her so much I can't sleep, or I fall asleep and wake up in the night scared. I know that as a Swedenborgian she is on the other side wanting me to get on with my life. That would be an okay burden, but life is far from normal right now. I try to think of Lish as an angel but that makes me so sad because that means that she's really gone. Really gone. Not coming back. I won't get to see her pull into the Almont driveway, or get to run up to her and give her a huge hug. And then I think of her family. I think that my pain is nothing compared to their pain. But this is my reality. This is me going on with my life...with an aching heart.



Alliance of New Church Women

Elected Officers 2001—2002

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1st Vice-president Beverly Titus
Dexter, Michigan
2nd Vice-president Sue Burns
Arnold, Missouri
Recording Secretary Nancy Freestone
San Jose, California
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Pretty Prairie, Kansas
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Rev. Renee Billings-Machiniak
Royal Oak, Michigan
Publication Chair Nan Paget
Mill Valley, California
Round Robin Merrilee Phinney
Carver, Mass.
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Fryeburg, Maine
2003 Pamela Selensky
New York, New York

2004 Sharon Reddekopp-Williams
Airdrie, Alberta
2005 Rosemary Brown-Moore
Cottage Grove, Minnesota
2006 Juliet Cunningham
Dorchester, Mass.

The Alliance voted to give the 2001 Mite Box contributions to the Rev. Pavel Heger, for his outreach ministry in Czechoslovakia. The Mite Box collection total from Convention 2001 participants totaled \$808.66.

The Mite Box collection for 2000 was presented to Transitions representative Betsy Lau.

Transitions is the group of young people who come together as a spiritual community of Swedenborgians to discuss theology, share their journeys and be a spiritual support for each other. The presentation was made during the Alliance luncheon on June 28.



Birth

Richardson—Erin Sue Richardson was born July 23, 2001. Her family includes parents David and Jennifer (McGann) Richardson and sister Elise. David and Martha Richardson, members of the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, are the proud grandparents.

Deaths

Foster—Beryl Foster, 64, wife of the Rev. Theodore T. Foster and member of the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Mass., entered the spiritual world August 31, 2001, at home in Halifax, Mass. She was an artist known for her nature scenes; also an avid gardener and music lover. She was continually giving to those around her, both materially and spiritually. In addition to her husband, she is survived by her children Karen Coffelt, Wanda Mikuchonis, Hope, Kenneth and Dawn Foster; two grandchildren, three brothers, and several nieces and nephews. A memorial service was conducted September 6, 2001, at the Bridgewater church. The officiating ministers were the Rev. Lee Woofenden, pastor of the Bridgewater church, and the Rev. Shawn Garvey of the United Church

of Christ in Lakeville, Mass., where Ted is organist.

Fasnacht—Jean M. Fasnacht, 83, longtime member of the Swedenborg Chapel in Cleveland, entered the spiritual world August 30, 2001, after a long illness. She is survived by her sister, Ann. The memorial service date is, at this writing, yet to be determined.

Winter—Verda Winter, 72, a longtime and much loved member of the Swedenborgian Church in Cleveland, entered the spiritual world September 26, 2001. She is survived by her husband, Chuck; three daughters, the Rev. Deborah Winter, Donna Tresko, and Diane Kvasnicka, seven grandchildren and many Swedenborgian relations. For many years she was the organist at the church until her failing vision forced her to give it up.

Verda and Chuck were honored at Convention 1999 in Malibu, California, for their many years of ministry at the Cleveland Chapel, where they grew a wedding ministry and kept things going during the years when the church had no minister. Verda was the daughter as well as the mother of a Swedenborgian minister.

Her father, the Rev. Isaac Ens, died in 1952. A memorial service was conducted September 29, 2001, at the Cleveland Chapel, the Rev. Jun-chol Lee officiating.

Cards may be sent to:

Chuck Winter
15420 Clifton Blvd.
Lakewood, OH 44107-2410

Rev. Deborah Winter
4169 N. Grand Ave.
Deland, FL 32720



Chuck Winter wishes to thank everyone for the outpouring of love and support the family has received.

Church Family News

Vice-president Chris Laitner fell on a step and broke her right ankle during the MINSU meeting in Kitchener, Ontario, that took place September 7-9. It was a bad break, but she is mending at home and hopes to be walking again by early November. She thanks everyone for their calls and cards. She can be reached at

10 Hannah Ct.,
Midland, MI 48642.
Phone (989) 636-7674



Alicia Nicole Titus 1973-2001

by her father, John Titus
September 17, 2001



We all knew Alicia and loved the person she is. She was always out front with her true self; stalwart, forthright, honest and genuine. Yet, her greatest gifts were about peace, love, joy, and life.

She lived life to the fullest and managed to pack a lot into her short 28 years and three months. She wasn't striving for martyrdom, but as the years unfurl, it will be compelling to place her there. She had so much to give and such a gentle, true spirit.

It's not coincidental or happenstance that Alicia was onboard United flight 175. Her whole existence on this plane, led to her presence, that fateful day, on that plane. She totally opposed violence, acts of terrorism, hate, prejudice, killing or any act against another living thing. Her true nature and human existence were totally opposite of the evil forces that took her life.

My family, friends and I have shared much in the last few days. And one thing that we all agree on, Alicia did not sit passively while this was going on. I can see her trying to talk some sense to the perpetrators, or protecting the little ones from harm, or soothing the hysterical passengers who needed comfort, or trying to organize a resistance movement. Alicia died attempting to do good in the midst of evil.

So, why was Alicia on Flight 175 that morning? After all, she had tried to change her schedule to be home with us on that day, to help us care for her nephew, Logan, whom she loved with all her heart. My longtime friend, Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey, called me up the other day and said, "It was not accidental that Alicia was aboard that flight. She was chosen. She was chosen to make this supreme sacrifice because her soul was strong enough to handle the tragic shock of dying by such a violent and outrageous act of hate and evil. Her soul will not linger in confusion due to this." I believe this with all my heart. I look back at her life, her strength, the depth of her love, her compassion for others, her joie de vivre, her childlike innocence, her playful nature, her sense of peace, her exuberance,

her quest for truth.... And, I find comfort in the fact that she did not die in vain.

Her message will be heard. What she stood for will be proclaimed by many and shared for generations to come. We, all of us who knew and loved her, are the ones who will make this happen. We have been blessed with the gift of Alicia and our calling is to assure that her message is heard throughout the land. *Love and understanding is the only way to overpower hate and misdirection!*

And, while we all would agree that these violent acts of terrorism, so filled with hate, cannot be allowed, let us not seek to destroy innocent people and sink to their level in our attempts to combat this. Let God's wisdom prevail and his love overcome. Let not our hearts be filled with vengeful anger, but love and compassion. For that's what Alicia was all about. And so, I reiterate the words that Jesus prayed while dying on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

May peace surround you and love be in your hearts. This, I believe, is what Alicia would want you to learn from this terrible atrocity. God be with us all.



September 11th: HOW SWEDENBORGIANS RESPONDED

The Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound, Seattle, Washington

Rev. Eric Allison

The first response of the The Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound was to host a twenty-four hour prayer vigil on Wednesday, Sept. 12, with the Stonehouse Bookstore. We began the vigil with a prayer service for world peace which honored the victims of the Tuesday tragedy. Everyone at the service was given a tea candle and a paper plate as they entered the sanctuary that evening. Participants wrote the name or names of people that they wanted to be part of the service's focus. The names and concerns were read as the plates were placed on the altar in the center of the room. I spoke about the death of Alicia Titus. Two other people had also lost friends at the World Trade Center, one was even on the same plane as Alicia.

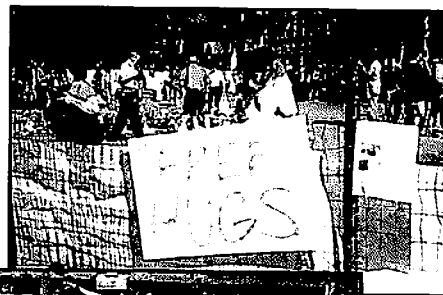
After the service ended, people stayed at the altar to prayerfully read aloud the names of the Titus family and other names, concerns, and prayers for one hour. The candles burned throughout the night while at least one person wore the prayer shawl and kept the vigil going. When relief arrived, a prayer and a blessing was shared, and the shawl was reverently passed to the next person.

On September 14, at the fountain in Seattle Center, people were invited to bring flowers to commemorate those who lost their lives on September 11. There was such a response that this continued all night and all the next day—more than 75,000 people came.

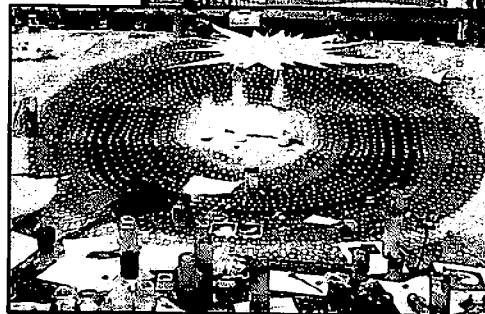
On September 15, before a memorial walk, I was invited to share the stage with Seattle Mayor Paul Schell and put the events of the week into a spiritual context. Below are my words to the crowd at Gas Works Park:

Many of us lost someone on Tuesday, September 11th, but we all lost a certain level of innocence. In some sense we all became New Yorkers when we

Union
Square Park,
New York



Mandala,
Union
Square
Park.



watched the video replay of what we still find hard to grasp. My very good friends, Bev. and John Titus lost their daughter Alicia. She was a flight attendant on the second plane to hit the World Trade Center.

Suddenly ideologies which seemed far away have had a personal impact on all of us. Most of the world grieves with us because everyone is a soul who wants to live and share the joys of life which we have seen ripped away from so many. Today we will have a memorial walk because there is so much that we will never be able to forget. Our hearts are bound together in a new way.

Some may ask, How could God allow such a horrible thing? This was not God's will! God's grief over what happened is much deeper than ours because we are God's children. It is part of the Divine plan that we are all made free. We may be whatever we want to be and do whatever we want to do, good or bad. God does not want bad things to happen. God does not punish! God is beautiful.

(Continued on page 145)

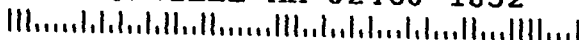
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Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London 15 years after his death. This 1787 organization eventually spawned 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.