

THE MESSENGER

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March 2002

Breaking New Ground at the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound

Eric Allison

It's hard to believe that just two years ago the services here had only five people in attendance. But a variety of blessings have conspired for our growth. We accepted nineteen wonderful new people into the church in 2001, had two services on Christmas Eve, an average of 54 in our congregation during December, and our annual giving has increased by over 30%. Because our community continues to grow in spirit and offers something people can find nowhere else, more are considering this to be their spiritual home.

The main reason I came to the Seattle area was that I was convinced that, besides the Wayfarers Chapel, this was our best shot for growing a small group into one which is self-supporting. We really are breaking new ground here. We are doing everything we can to create a new model of a congregation. Not bound by traditions, we are trying to respond to the spiritual needs of those who have had either a bad experience or a boring experience in church.

After ten years of teaching people how to make churches grow, being back in the soup (part time) during these last two years has taught me many things I couldn't have learned unless I had lived them. I've learned that some of the things I taught don't work well in all situations, but there are several basic principles of growth we don't really embrace as a denomination. Oddly enough I believe that the most essential ingredient is simply to work with and for the Lord. As of January 1, 2002, I'm the full-time minister and I'm looking forward to this year being filled with many more blessings.

It is simple and well known, but it really is true that the success of the church is a mirror of the leader/minister's spiritual life. If my own relationship with the Creator isn't growing, I can't expect to lead others in growth. All the techniques in the world don't mean squat if our hearts are not passionately seeking to heal and help as a service to God.

It is rare to not have new visitors on Sunday mornings. Where do they come from? One of the main reasons we are growing is that we are located in the Stonehouse Bookstore and Growth Center. It is a marvelous place. We rent office space from the Stonehouse Bookstore for me and for our



Sunday School

part-time administrator, Gigi Sosnoski. We rent the largest classroom for Sunday worship and grab what space we can for the Sunday School. Most people who come to the church have learned about us because they were browsing at the store and (providentially) stumbled into the Swedenborg section! While they were still scratching their heads, I emerged from my office (which looks out into the bookstore) to ask if I could help. Sometimes I have long talks with three or more people in one day.

Even though the percentage of people who may come back is low, the sheer volume of inquiries is sometimes more than I can handle. One day there's a gentlemen who walks in who had read "The Green Thirty" and made his living translating Byzantine Aramaic for Oxford University. He had several books with him which were over seven hundred years old. The next day there's a lady who works with heads of state on psychic consultations but was unaware of Swedenborg. So many searchers and so many talented people looking for a community that accepts seekers.

Everyone doesn't just walk in the door. We use every local free advertising option available in every newspaper, Web page, and community calendar, in at least forty locations on a regular basis. Each week we send out our announcements to all forty locations. We advertise in alternative publications. We advertise quarterly in major daily newspapers our presentations on angels and life after death. We attend and participate in as many public events as possible. Thanks to the Gray Fund, we have a seven-minute video about the church which

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March 2002

Finding Freedom in Lent

Renee Billings-Machiniak

"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the evil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was famished. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' Jesus replied, 'It is written, One does not live on bread alone...Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

The season of Lent is a very rich time for us. Very early in our history our Jewish ancestors, from their struggle with slavery in Egypt, came to believe an eternal truth: that all people must be free, that there is no true freedom unless all people are free. From their long struggle they discovered the highest spiritual truth we can know. Freedom itself, the highest divine law, protected over all others, is the basic state we need which serves as a foundation for everything in life to which we may aspire.

Freedom is primary both on the physical level and the spiritual level for us to be happy and to actualize our potential. During Lent we spend more time than usual asking God to free our inner spiritual "chains" that leave us heavy and vulnerable to inner and outer voices of temptation and self-

destruction. We look for something to give up, we reflect and pray on the love the Lord demonstrated to us, and we may even fast to cleanse our body and exercise our will. We do what we each need to do to open ourselves to Spirit, to Life, as we approach the season of Easter. Perhaps it is time for you to free yourself of a particular "chain," or make a positive change in your life?

This year, for the first time, I chose to fast for four days as Lent began. The temptation to give up and to give in was immense. Colleagues laughed at me, tough schedules wore me down, my head pounded, skepticism loomed. This is a small portion of struggle compared to Jesus' temptation in the wilderness for forty days while standing firm against the lures of hunger, power, greed, and false promise. Carrying his love for the entire human race in his heart, he defeated the tests of selfishness. His ministry then began with power and great mercy as he reentered society cleansed in mind, body, and spirit.

During my four-day fast, the temptation struggles captured only part of me. A remarkable thing took place. Colors became more vivid. Smells were stronger and the air more fresh. I had clearer thinking. I was light on my feet. My longings turned more to the Lord because I could not turn to food to comfort me. I was

inwardly free. I am reminded of the wisdom from the prophet Isaiah (58:6-8): "Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me—it is the Lord who speaks—to break unjust fetters and undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke, to share your bread with the hungry, and shelter the homeless poor, to clothe the person you see to be naked and not turn from your kin? Then will your light shine like the dawn and your wound will be quickly healed over."

We are "the oppressed" and we are "the hungry" when we are bound by our temptations. And we are "the free" when we let go of that which chains our spirit, when we are tested and come through with faith and strength. We then find the Lord in the center of our life. We are renewed and opened to the power and presence of God.

The Rev. Renee Billings-Machiniak is pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of the Holy City in Royal Oak, Michigan.

Reprinted from the church's March 2001 newsletter, *News and Views*.



Alternatives for Simple Living

Started in 1973 as a protest against the commercialism of Christmas, Alternatives for Simple Living has thrived producing books, videos, and workshops that encourage people to examine and challenge the consumer society. Its aim is to promote living justly and celebrating responsibly, by offering resources featuring creative ideas that truly reflect your values and don't cost the earth.

"A Time to Reassess," a new 40-day guide for Lent, and other resources for Lent and Easter 2002, are now available

from Alternatives for Simple Living. The guide contains daily thoughts from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday (March 31) or for some other 40-day period. The guide can be used by individuals, families, and other small groups.

For a free catalog, which includes a complete free sample of the Lenten guide, and for a copy of "10 tips for a Simpler, More meaningful Easter," call (800) 821-6153. Email: alternatives@simpleliving.org Web site: www.simpleliving.org



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Breaking New Ground at the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound *(Continued from cover)*

we hand out to visitors of the store and members of the congregation to loan to friends. The most common source of visitors is people just walking in and asking what "this Swedish thing is about."

When this happens, I spend as much time with them as they want. If they are interested, I show them our seven-minute video. Most are seeking to be part of a spiritual community, but the word "church" is often a term which brings back bad memories for them. That's why we borrowed the name "Celestial Circle" from the Rev. Wilma Wake (who founded the Network Center in New Hampshire) to describe our Sunday morning experience. Many think of themselves as somewhat Christian, others as very Christian, but most don't like any label. Some have told me that they have a hard time even saying aloud "I'm going to church this morning."

So the people we are attracting are those who don't like church and don't want to join anything. What they are sure of is that they want to be with others who are seeking God on their own terms. They want to play a part in creating a spiritual community which reflects their own beliefs and style of worship.

So far, what are we doing that is working? The worship service is working, and it is the mainstay of the congregation. Years ago preparation for the Sunday service meant for me selecting a Scripture reading, picking the hymns, and writing my sermon. Now I create an opening for each service which involves readings by six different people. I select a reader for the Scripture.

We have a different person do the "welcome" each week. We often have someone other than the minister offer a message to the children. The words used for the offering invitation go along with the theme of the service and are done each week by someone other than myself. Other parts of the service also have lay leadership. My main function is to help others lead. The people have had a hand in planning and leading each service. They give me input on changes and themes. It is a lot more work, but it makes a big difference.

If someone has a pop song with a spiritual essence which fits the theme of the service, we sing along with the CD. If someone has a workable idea for a style or theme of worship, we do it. It is important for people to know that they are going to get something new every week and that their opinion matters.

Here I must give special thanks to Lisa Cole for leading the music. Lisa not only performs and writes songs to go along with the service theme, but has arranged for regular

performers to be a part of the service. We have had everything from violin and harp to didgeridoo and kitchen pot lids providing the worshipful music.

What is a service like? It's not always the same. Some times we open with a time of reflection. People are met at the door by a whispering greeter who gives them the service folder and a card which has some readings and questions to reflect upon before the service starts. While new visitors sign our guest book, people are asked to be quiet while reflective music plays. Other Sundays have lively music playing, and the room is buzzing with chatter before we start singing some rousing songs. Rarely do we sing traditional hymns.

The singing is followed by a general "welcome" by someone who has been attending services for awhile. He or she says in less than one minute his or her name, "welcome," and what keeps them coming back. They also introduce our Prayer Bowl. *This large bowl full of unlit candles is called our Prayer Bowl. If at any time during the service you feel moved to put someone or some concern or thanksgiving*

in the light of God, please feel free to come forward. You don't need to say what its about to light a candle or two or three. That's between you and God. Then the welcomer invites people to get up and move around and greet people with handshakes or hugs. The lovely sound of a Tibetan prayer bowl is rung to get people back to their seats.

After everyone is seated, two people stand at the altar to light the candles and open the Bible while others in their seats read aloud their assigned readings. We adapted this from our church in Portland, Maine. Each week the opening quotations follow a theme. The opening below follows the theme of Divine Providence.

(Spoken from the altar): *We open the Bible, one of the many sacred writings in the world, as a Symbol that God's Word is open and available to us all. Jesus said, "God knows when even a sparrow falls to the ground. Even the hairs on your head are counted. So don't be afraid! You are worth much more than many sparrows."*

(Spoken while lighting the center candle): *We light the flame to remind us that the light of Divine wisdom and the warmth of Divine love are ever present. In Sikhism it is taught, "God's light is concealed in every action, but we know it was God when we look back upon the path that has led us to peace."*

(Read as four outside candles are lit): *We honor the good and truth found in all spiritual traditions. In Islam it is written, "From the cradle to the grave, always seek knowledge that you may carry out the plan of Allah."*

We honor and support the variety of individual paths which together make our one spiritual community. The Buddha said, "Neither eating, nor fasting, nor penance, nor sacrifice, nor observance of the seasons, purify a mortal who has not conquered her doubt and found joy."

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The people we are attracting are those who don't like church and don't want to join anything. What they are sure of is that they want to be with others who are seeking God on their own terms. They want to play a part in creating a spiritual community which reflects their own beliefs and style of worship.

Breaking New Ground at the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound

We honor an enlightened Christianity found in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, who wrote, "It is a law of Divine Providence that we should not be compelled by outward means to believe and love things but that we should bring ourselves to believe and love and sometimes compel ourselves."

We honor and provide an open and safe place for all who seek a greater understanding and a life of deepening spirituality. From Judaism we hear the words of the Psalmist saying, "O lord, Your eyes beheld my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them." Psalm 139

This part of the service concludes with the congregation usually reading an affirmation of faith. Below is the one used during Easter.

"There is one source of Love and Wisdom who shows us the many paths that lead to heaven, the all loving Creator, the Christ, the Compassionate One, the Light of the World. This Divine Light became flesh and dwelt among us and shines into every human heart. This Sacred Spirit takes us from darkness to light, from death to life, that the beauty of life may blossom within us and around us as we help the Lord to create a heaven on earth by giving of ourselves."

The children come forward for a few words of wisdom before going to their classes. I give this talk about half of the time and always end it with a prayer. If I don't give the talk, I come forward at the close to lead the prayer. Our children's Christmas play went so well we are writing a new one to be performed in church on a quarterly basis.

Our next part of the service is called "Spiritual Centering." The leadership of this changes, and it takes many forms. Sometimes it is a meditation with soft music playing in the background. Usually it involves people standing up and doing an easy yet powerful Yoga or Tai Chi exercise. The idea is to help people open their own sacred space to God by leaving the stresses of the world outside.

Now that people are spiritually focused, we have a reading from the Word. Sometimes this is acted out. The sermon is interactive. People feel free to interrupt me, but usually raise their hands. I ask questions and people respond with insights or other questions which definitely enrich the service. The person taking the offering often informs the congregation of specific financial needs. We usually sing a dedication song.

The one we use most often is done to an old Irish tune:

*Love shall be our token
Love be yours and love be mine
Love to God and love to all
Love so freely, love Divine.*

We close the service with a prayer circle. While holding hands, names of loved ones are spoken aloud. We close by saying together, "Lord surround them with your light." Our closing song takes many forms. Sometimes it is an African song, sometimes "go now in peace."

*Go now in peace, go now together
Be sure once again my love has no end and you are its beginning
Go now in peace, go now together
Create a space and cradle a place where we all can come together
Go now alone not lonely, Go now alive not just living
Go as yourself and rely on my help, Till yourself is yourself for the giving
Go now in peace, go now together.
Be sure once again my love had no end and you are its beginning
Go now in peace.*

Most often we sing the familiar:

*May the Lord, loving God, bless and keep you forever.
Give you courage in every endeavor.
Lift up your eyes and seek her face and his grace forever.
May the Lord, loving God bless and keep you forever.
(to the tune of Edelweiss)*

Taking a page from our San Francisco church which has "a coffee hour to end all coffee hours" we offer the aroma of Starbucks Coffee and a table laden with treats which beckons people to stay.

Having made several attempts at consistent visitors follow-up, we now have one in place which seems to be working. At the end of the year, we will be able to track how well it is working. Each visitor is asked to sign in the guest book their name, address, phone number, and email address. That day they receive a follow-up phone call from Stacey, one of our newest and most enthusiastic members. Their name is placed on the weekly email list, and they receive a personal email message along with the weekly announcements. They also receive a beautiful card in the mail with a hand-written message. After the third visit to the church, they get a phone call from me.

While the Sunday morning Celestial Circle is our main program, we also have a women's group, men's group, teen's group, Sunday school for children and adults, and four "dinner-for-eight groups" that meet monthly. Quarterly we clean up our section of Route I-90 which is marked by a sign announcing that the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound cares for that two-mile section.

One of the most frequently mentioned needs of urban people is to find relief from stress. Paul Martin and I created a Wednesday evening program designed to meet this need. We called it the Circle of Light and enlisted practitioners from the Stonehouse to lead people in a wide variety of practices which calm the body, mind, and spirit. There is a \$5.00 charge for the evening. We have also had a variety of special events including caroling in the neighborhood, an animal blessing booth at "Bark in the Park," annual camp out, Johnny Appleseed fund raiser and planting of a cutting from the last known tree planted by Johnny Appleseed, weekly "Soup and Swedenborg" luncheons, planting flowers

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WE WOULD BE BUILDING . . .

A Report from the New Church in New York City

Robert McCluskey

The New Church in New York City built its present house of worship on East 35th St. in 1859, consisting of a large sanctuary or "temple." Seven years later, an extension was added on to provide a lobby, a library and community room. Finally, in 1928, the church purchased a brownstone adjacent to the church and converted it into the Parish House and parsonage.

Back in 1989, while having the church exterior repaired and painted, the church suffered serious water damage, with the sanctuary being hit especially hard. As we investigated the damage, we discovered other problems of a structural nature, which led to our decision to close down the sanctuary for reasons of both aesthetics and safety. The complexity and cost of repairs initiated several years of discussion, meetings, visions and proposals, designs and estimates, involving architects, lawyers, and contractors along with the Board and membership of the church.

In April of 2001, we began a long awaited and much needed renovation of our sanctuary, focusing our attention first on the roof and ceiling.

Here's what we did:

- installed a new roof (from the deck up)
- repaired the underlying truss system, using epoxy, metal bracing, and several new beams
- repaired the ceiling
- had the entire sanctuary painted (our thanks to Mona Conner and Anna Rich Martinian for the stately but striking color scheme)
- restored a skylight over the chancel that had been covered over since the 40s ("let the sun shine in")
- renovated the garden, and replaced the canopy over the entrance to the church with clear glass

The work was completed in October 2001, but a good deal still remains to be done: namely, windows and carpets and pews (oh my!). As those of you with responsibilities for church buildings know, replacing the carpet means taking up all the pews and putting them back again. (Our sanctuary holds 350 people, and has about 80 pews.)

Our windows are another story. (Yes, they're that tall! But seriously.) They are an intricate design of leaded bubble glass and are damaged in a number of places. Because of expense and maintenance, we had first decided to replace our existing windows with a simpler design replicating the original 1859 model. (One of the original windows of 1859 still remains in the sanctuary, having been covered from the back when the lobby was added in

1866.) However, this plan has been complicated since the New Church was designated as a landmark by the New York City Landmark Preservation Committee in late January. Although we opposed this designation, it seems the church has little power over this type of government regulation. (As you might imagine, the issue of landmarking and religious freedom is the subject of another article.)

Remaining repairs will be expensive, but nothing like the cost of structural repairs, which ran a little over \$500,000. The growth of our endowment, managed through Convention's Common Fund, was strong through the 90s and enabled us to move ahead with the project. We consider it providential that we removed most of the funds needed before the market took a dive in 2000. Still, projections indicated that we did not have much wiggle room in terms of budget, and in this sense the project represents a genuine act of faith on the part of the members. Apparently, though, providence was not done with us. Adrienne Frank, longtime member of the New York New Church and indefatigable supporter of our denomination, passed away in August 1999. Her estate was settled in the spring of 2001, shortly after we began our building project. Adrienne left the New York Church an extremely generous bequest which helped us to cover the remaining costs and return a good portion of our investment to our endowment fund. Our gratitude to Adrienne is absolute.

We had originally intended to reopen the sanctuary this spring, but a number of variables remain which simply cannot be nailed down until we get to them. We will be sure to keep you informed as we near the finish line. We are planning to dedicate the new sanctuary to two individuals: James Chesterman, who originally donated the property to the Society in 1858, and Adrienne Frank, whose generosity will ensure that the New Church will continue to be a presence in New York City.

The Rev. Robert McCluskey is pastor of the New York New Church.



THE NEW CHURCH CENTRE GROWTH TRIAL

a General Conference

of the New Church Initiative

Applications are invited for the position of

TRIAL LEADER

A challenging opportunity has arisen in the U.K. for an Ordained Minister to lead a three year Trial which is part of the General Conference's Renewal Programme. The Trial will be centred around an existing U.K. centre.

Accommodation appropriate to the

Leader's personal circumstances will be provided in the immediate vicinity. An Assistant Trial Leader will be recruited. The Trial's objective is to reach out in new and innovative ways to identify an environment in which a New Church Centre can grow in today's world.

For further details, including a Job Description, and Terms of Employment, contact the Project Leader, Michael Clubb by Email: mikeclubb@aol.com or write to 55 Heronswood Drive, Spondon, Derby, DE21 7AX

Closing date for applications is the end of March, 2002.

BRIDGEWATER, MASS.

The Bridgewater Swedenborgian Church has been hosting a four-part series of Wednesday evening workshops on *Life, Death and the Afterlife*. On February 6, 2002, *Near-Death Experiences* was led by Cynthia Gadow and Mark Giordani, two people "who have gotten a glimpse of the other side—and come back to tell about it."

On February 20, Lynne Stewart, a volunteer coordinator at a Boston hospice, and the Rev. Kristy Marston, a bereavement counselor at a hospice in Stoughton, spoke on the topic, *Facing Death with Integrity*.

The Rev. Any Stinson, pastor of the Elmwood New Church, and the Rev. Lee Woofenden, pastor of the Bridgewater New Church, are speaking on *Heaven and Hell* March 6.

Angels in Action is the topic on March 20, with Sandy Alemian-Goldberg, author of *Congratulations...It's an Angel* and founder of the Seeds of Hope Foundation, and Richard Cook, artist

Parish News FROM ALL OVER

and author of *Angel of Light*, speaking on spiritual growth after losing their young children. The requested donation is \$5 at the door, students and seniors \$3. For more information call (508) 946-1767 or email leewoof@mediaone.net

On February 10, the Bridgewater church hosted the annual Massachusetts Association's Swedenborg Birthday luncheon with entertainment by Trevor [Woofenden] the Games Man, who led non-competitive games for all ages.


BOSTON

The Boston Church of the New Jerusalem hosted a Super Bowl Sunday February 3, 2002, kicking off at 10:00 a.m. with Michelle Giargiari and the Rev. Steve Ellis, pastor of the

Boston church, speaking on *Swedenborg and Astrology*. At 11:00, a concert of sacred music, *The Song of Moses*, was presented by the Boston church choir, directed by Juliet Cunningham. A Super Bowl luncheon followed the service.

LAPORTE, INDIANA

A Swedenborgian Youth League Reunion was hosted by the LaPorte Swedenborgian Church the weekend of January 18-20, 2002, at Barb Halle's home. The impetus for organizing the gathering was the Outreach/Missions committee's realization that there are several young adult Swedenborgians currently in that area who grew up in the LaPorte church. Their dream was to connect these people with the larger "old" youth league from across the country. Throughout the weekend, there were 25 adults and four children participating with some coming from the east and west coasts and thirteen spending the night. Thought-provoking and lively discussions were led by the former SCYL youth minister, the Rev. Steve Pults; the new SCYL youth minister, Kurt Fekete; the Rev. Dave Gibbs, LaPorte Presbyterian youth minister, and the Rev. Carl Yenetchi, pastor of the LaPorte church. The weekend was greatly enjoyed by all who attended.

Midweek candlelight meditation services are being offered by the LaPorte church every Wednesday evening at 6:30 p.m., providing a peace-filled half-hour, Holy Communion lovingly offered, nothing demanded of anyone except to sit back, soak up the peace and beautiful live music, and soothe your harried soul. 

Correction

In the February *Messenger*, Lee Woofenden's article, "Find Swedenborg Books via the Worldwide Web," p. 30, an incorrect web address was printed for J. Appleseed & Co. The correct address is: www.jappleseed.org The email address is: jappleseedbooks@aol.com

Transitions Retreat Coming Up

WHEN? April 12-14, 2002.

WHERE? Almont New Church Assembly and Retreat Center.

WHO? Rev. Renee Billings-Machiniak will be the facilitator.

PEOPLE

ATTENDING: Young adults in our church...18+.

HOW? Um, fly into Detroit Metro airport, and let one of us know when to collect you! Train into Lapeer, Michigan, and let us know when to collect you. Get driving directions from one of us... like Betsy Lau or Shell Huffman.

COST? It's usually around \$50...and maybe a little spending money.

THEME? TBA

SPECIAL GUEST: Rev. Ron Brugler. This is his first Transitions retreat. Why not make it yours? See you next month! Our full list of contact persons is in the January *Messenger*.

Hugs, Jenn Tafel
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Meet the 2002 SCYL Officers!

by Kurt Fekete

The 2002 Swedenborgian Church Youth League Officers were elected at the Winter Retreat in December at Almont, Michigan. The positions of president, four Regional Officers, *Clear Blue Sky* (CBS) newsletter editor (and appointed assistant editor), and league chaplain were all selected. This year, in addition to representing the various regions of North America and publishing our league newsletter, CBS, five of our officers have the responsibility of leading a particular area of interest and need in the youth league. These five major work classifications are: Activities, Fundraising & Finance, Service, Public Relations, and Communication.

This reorganization provides the youth director and youth coordinator with direct teen representatives to assist in the planning and implementation of our SCYL initiatives. It also matches the SCYL with the organization of our Swedenborgian Adult Group, Transitions, so that our teen officers can be aligned with their corresponding young adult Transitions leaders. The structure promotes a natural mentoring partnership between our teens and adults. It also helps to

strengthen working relationships by building a cross-generational network of volunteers that focus on specific tasks. Below is a list of our 2002 officers and their exciting new tasks. Please join me in congratulating them on their newly elected positions and assisting them in their new responsibilities.

PRESIDENT - DUSTIN WRIGHT

Duties:

Act as liaison to Youth Chaplain, Youth Coordinator, and Youth Director.

Ensure that each officer is serving their representative North American region in activities and decisions.

Oversee all other officers and their respective duties.

Be involved in leadership and forward vision for the SCYL with the Youth Director.

Preside over all SCYL meetings and elections.

Present SCYL annual report to Convention.

EAST COAST AND ACTIVITIES OFFICER - FARREN MAILLIE

Duties:

Organize, encourage, and represent East Coast leaguers in local and national events.

Communicate East Coast happen-

ings at meetings and through written articles including reports to CBS.

Assist in establishing and organizing themes, sessions, recreation, and other activities at SCYL retreats, regional SCYL outings, and annual convention.

CENTRAL STATES AND FUNDRAISING & FINANCE OFFICER - CRAIG CARSON

Duties:

Organize, encourage, and represent Central States leaguers in local and national events.

Communicate Central States happenings at meetings and through written articles including reports to CBS.

Create, and help Youth Director implement, fundraising ideas.

Be aware of the SCYL budget and keep all officers aware of availability of funds.

WEST COAST AND SERVICE OFFICER - GABRIELLE LIPSKI

Duties:

Organize, encourage, and represent West Coast leaguers in local and national events.

Communicate West Coast happenings at meetings and through written

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SCYL group photo.

Meet the 2002 SCYL Officers!

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articles including reports to CBS.

Act as liaison to Social Concerns Education Committee to encourage, nurture, and inspire social action and education.

Coordinate service projects at retreats and Convention.

CANADA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER - GLORIA LIPSKI

Duties:

Organize, encourage, and represent Canada leaguers in local and national events.

Communicate Canada happenings at meetings and through written articles including reports to CBS.

Report about SCYL activities to Messenger and promote SCYL through available and appropriate media.

Responsible for SCYL display at Convention and other promotional events.

EDITOR, *Clear Blue Sky* (CBS) AND COMMUNICATION OFFICER - BENJAMIN CURRIE

Duties:

Responsible for quarterly CBS publication.

Assist with design and construction of SCYL Web Site and other media coordination.

ASSISTANT EDITOR, *Clear Blue Sky* (appointed) - ERIKA PENABAKER

Duties:

Assist with, and contribute to, CBS publications.

LEAGUE CHAPLAIN - REV. JUN-CHOL LEE

Duties:

Write a quarterly Chaplain's column for CBS.

Attend and lead sessions at SCYL retreats as possible.

Attend SCYL meetings.

* All officers maintain communication with the Youth Director and Youth Coordinator.

* All officers attend, if possible, and are actively involved in, SCYL activities at annual convention.

Kurt Fekete is the new Youth Director. He lives in Winball, Vermont. His email address is kfekete@hotmail. He can also be reached at his new toll free number (888) 693-4568.



2002 SCYL Officers: from left, (top) Craig Carson, Ben Currie, Dustin Wright, Gloria Lipski; (bottom) Gabrielle Lipski and Farren Maillie

Winter Retreat 2001: The Outsiders' Version

Gloria Lipski

"Where on earth is Almont?" This is a question I was asked many a time in describing what I was doing over Christmas break. But, when my sister Gabe and I arrived at Winter Retreat in Michigan, the question became, "where on earth is Olds?" Gabe and I were the foreigners, coming all the way from Alberta, Canada. Our first experience at Almont was filled with new friends, existing friends, enlightening lessons, genuine companionship, and oodles of fun!

This year the total number of people who came to Almont approached 40. That's two whole pages of mostly new pen pals! It has been brought to my attention that there was an especially large number of youth this year, resting at about half of the total attendance. I found the rest (aged 20+) to be good role models and friends as well, both youthful spirited and intent on fostering our

potential as we approach young adulthood. They did presentations on the retreat theme, showed us how to make lip balm, crochet, and play new card games. Other activities included icebreakers, eating (haha), going for walks, playing in the snow, keep-away in the rec. room, a euchre tournament, elections, a joint service, and the traditional pizza and dance night.

The theme of the retreat was emotions. We learned what they are, where they come from, how they affect us, how we deal with them, and how we express them. We also had sessions on healthy self-esteem. My personal favorite was Jun-chol's lesson on not only the essence of emotions, but of our religion as well, love, and Swedenborg's understanding of angels and emotion. By far the most touching activity of the retreat involved wearing a sheet of paper hung down our backs by red yarn. We were all encouraged to write positive remarks on each

other's backs, completely anonymous and completely honest. There were many hugs and several tears when we finally read them.

This activity included, the whole retreat was one of the most comfortable, and genuinely loving atmospheres I've ever been in, outside my own home. I know 'the regulars' know better than to take it for granted. There are a lot of stranded New Church youth out there who have no idea what they're missing. I know this because I was one of them. I'm excited and honored to be an *insider* and to be part of all the awesome things SCYL is going to do this year! No 'outsider' is an outsider for long at Almont.

For more information regarding elections or to contact anyone, I'm sure Kurt wouldn't hesitate to point you in the right direction. Contact him at kfekete@hotmail.com.



CONVENTION 2002 REGISTRATION

Living for Peace

Saturday, June 29 to Wednesday, July 3, 2002

University of Southern Maine ~ Gorham, Maine

Hosted by the Maine Association: Portland, Fryeburg, and Concord, New Hampshire

Transportation: The nearest airport is Portland. Transportation from the airport to USM is not provided, but Central Office can match arriving delegates with one another to share a cab. Amtrak now has service to Portland, as well.

Children's programming: We will provide separate care for children ages 0 to 4 and a more structured program for children from 5 to 12 during scheduled activities from Saturday evening through Wednesday morning.

Social Events: There will be a traditional Maine lobster bake on Tuesday night. Special opportunities for outings to Portland and various outdoor activities are planned. The Women's Alliance lunch will be on Monday. Watch your *Messenger* for more plans!

Payment: All registrations and full payment must be received by June 1.

Accommodations: The weather in Maine during Convention may be anywhere from cool to downright warm. Come prepared for both. All dorm rooms are double with bathrooms on each floor. Buildings are handicapped accessible. There are several pleasant motels near the Portland Airport for those who wish more private accommodations.

..... (Detach here)

Names: _____

Names and ages of children accompanying you: _____

Street address: _____ city and state: _____ zip: _____

Phone: _____ Arrival _____ Departure _____ No. Of nights: _____ email _____

Home Church (for your name tag) _____

For transportation match-ups, please tell us when you will arrive at the airport and on which flight: _____

Adult registration	@ \$75.00	x adults _____	= \$ _____
Child 3-12 registration	@ \$35.00	x children _____	= \$ _____
Registration family maximum	@ \$175.00		= \$ _____
Late fee if mailed after May 15	@ \$35.00	x adults _____	= \$ _____

Room & Board: double	@ \$55.00	x persons _____	x nights _____	= \$ _____
Room & Board: single	@ \$75.00	x persons _____	x nights _____	= \$ _____

Day Commuters (facilities use and meals) @ \$35.00 _____ x persons _____ x days _____ = _____

Women's Alliance Luncheon @ \$ 8.00 x persons _____ = \$ _____

All charges are in US dollars. All bills must be paid in full by June 1. No registration refunds after June 1. Bills may be paid by VISA and MasterCard. Provide number and four-digit expiration date.

TOTAL \$ _____

Make check payable to The Swedenborgian Church

Send Form with checks to: Central Office, The Swedenborgian Church, 11 Highland Ave., Newtonville, MA 02460

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

Should you have any questions please feel free to contact Central Office at 617-969-4240. Email: manager@swedenborg.org

CONVENTION UPDATES

Kathy Whitmire to be Convention Keynote Speaker

The keynote speaker at Convention 2002 in Maine will be Kathy Whitmire, a Quaker peace activist who will be speaking on the Spirituality of Peace Activism: taking inner peace into outward action and witness. She has published a book, *Plain Living, a Quaker Path to Simplicity*, is currently working on *Practicing Peace*, listening within to how God calls us and comparing the practice of prayer to the practice of peace while looking at Friends history of 350 years.

Lobster Bake at Fryeburg New Church Assembly

The outing day will include meeting at the Fryeburg Assembly for optional rest, relaxation, swimming, horseshoes, volleyball, guided canoe trip and culminating in a catered full meal lobster bake (chicken and steak also available). Visits to Portland, Fryeburg, and Bath churches are options as well.

Temenos Spring Schedule

MARCH

QIGONG

Carolee Parker, M. Ac.
Saturday, March 2, 10:00-4:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 3, 10:00-4:00 p.m.
\$170. Class limited to 10 people.

EXPLORING THE MYSTICAL TRADITIONS OF RELIGION

KABBALAH: THE ANCIENT JEWISH MYSTICAL TRADITION
Rabbi Rayzel Raphael
Sunday, March 3, 2:00-4:00 p.m.
\$15 for the session or \$50 for the Mystical Series.

REIKI: LEVEL II TRAINING

Nancy Mattila
Saturday, March 9, 9:30-4:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 16, 9:30-4:30 p.m. \$170.
Please bring a lunch.

CREATING PASSION AND SEXUAL INTIMACY IN RELATIONSHIP

A WORKSHOP FOR COMMITTED COUPLES
Walt Ciecko, Ph.D.
Saturday, March 9, 6:00 p.m. through
Sunday, March 10, 5:00 p.m.

HONORING OUR NEED FOR CON- NECTION

Anne Baer Clark, R.N., C.R.S. & Perry S. Martin, Ph.D.
Sunday, March 10, 2:00-5:00 p.m.
A singles event for men and women who do not do 'singles events.' \$55.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION AND STRESS REDUCTION

Nancy Mattila
Eight Tuesdays, March 12-April 30,
10:00-12:00 noon or 7:00-9:00 p.m.
\$90 (A materials fee of \$30 will be collected at the first class).

SINGING BOWLS OF TIBET: A SOUND EXPERIENCE

Benjamin Iobst
Sunday, March 17, 1:30-4:30 p.m. \$55.

SOMEONE YOU LOVE HAS CANCER

Lon Elmer
Friday, March 22, 7:00-9:00 p.m. \$15.

MEN & GRIEF: A DAY FOR MEN

Lon Elmer
Saturday, March 23, 9:30-4:30 p.m. \$65.
Please bring a lunch.

SPIRITUALITY FOR THE SPIRITUALLY CHALLENGED

Gerald McOscar, Esquire
Sunday, March 24, 2:00-4:00 p.m. \$35.

APRIL

EMBRACING THE SHADOW

Explore and discover ways to integrate the Jungian 'Shadow'
Neale Bringham, Ph.D.
Saturday, April 6, 9:30-4:30 pm. \$65.
Please bring a lunch.

EXPLORING THE MYSTICAL TRADITIONS OF RELIGION

LOVE, SOUL, AND FREEDOM
DANCING WITH RUMI ON THE MYSTIC PATH
Chris Largent
Sunday, April 7, 2:00-4:00 pm. \$15.

WRITING FROM WITHIN

*THE METCALF-SIMON PRACTICE OF PROPRIO-
CEPTIVE WRITING®*
Mary Bok
Friday, April 12 - Sunday, April 14. \$210
(Includes Saturday Meals)
Overnight accommodation: \$70 for both
nights.

SOUL'S JOURNEY - FIRE'S BREATH HOLOTROPIC BREATHWORK AND EMOTIONAL EXPLORATION AND RELEASE WORK

Laurie Weaver, M.S.
Saturday, April 20, 9:00 -7:00 p.m. and
Sunday, April 21, 9:00-5:00 p.m. \$260.
Saturday overnight add \$40.

GRIEFS OF BIRTHING: HEALING AFTERNOON

Kayta Gajdos, Ph.D.
Sunday, April 21, 3:30-6:00 p.m. \$35.

EMBODYING AND EXPRESSING THE AUTHENTIC VOICE

A WORKSHOP FOR WOMEN
Andrea Clearfield and Jan Garrett
Friday, April 26 - 7:00 p.m. through
Saturday April 27 after dinner. \$175.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SOUL

Tom Legere, Ph.D.
Saturday, April 27, 9:30-4:30 p.m. \$85.
Please bring a lunch.

MAY

SELF-INSIGHT AND THE ENNEAGRAM:
THE SPIRITUAL JUMPSTART LEVEL II WORKSHOP
Sarah Aschenbach, Certified Enneagram
Practitioner
Saturday, May 4, 9:30-4:30 p.m. \$65.
Please bring a lunch.

EXPLORING THE MYSTICAL TRADITIONS OF
RELIGION *SWEDENBORGIANISM*
Rev. Susannah Currie, M. Div.
Sunday, May 5, 2:00-4:00 p.m. \$15.
A more in-depth exploration of
Swedenborgian Theology will follow on
May 15, 27, and June 12, 7:30-9:00 p.m.
(Followup sessions are free!).

TEMENOS OPEN HOUSE

Mother's Day, Sunday, May 12, 2:00-5:00
p.m., with English Tea at 4:00 pm. Free.

QIGONG

Carolee Parker, M. Ac.
Saturday, May 18, 10:00-4:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 19, 10:00-4:00 p.m. \$170.
Class limited to 10 people.

JUNE

INTERFAITH WORSHIP

Led by representatives of the Jewish,
Christian, and Islamic traditions.
Sunday, June 9, 2:00-3:30 p.m. Free.

GETTING THE LOVE YOU WANT:

A WORKSHOP FOR COUPLES
Walt Ciecko, Ph.D.
Friday, June 14, 6:00 p.m. through
Sunday, June 16, 2:30 p.m.

For more information, contact the Rev.
Susannah Currie: revscurrie@yahoo.com
web page: www.temenosretreat.org
or phone (610)696-8145.



COMSU Meets at Wayfarers, Welcomes new J. Appleseed Editor

The Communications Support Unit met February 1–February 3, 2002 at Wayfarers West, the administrative offices of Wayfarers Chapel, in Palos Verdes, California. We were treated to exceptionally clear weather with a view of Catalina Island from the west-facing windows. The early date of the meeting (we usually meet in May, at Temenos) was agreed upon in order to welcome and orient our new J. Appleseed editor, Ross Fish, of San Francisco; to finalize publication details on *God in the Midst of the City*,

(see back page) and to make decisions on publication priorities for this year. Present were chairperson Mona Conner, New York; members Susan Poole, Delaware; Steve Koke, California; Susanna Lawson, executive secretary, Virginia; J. Appleseed editor Ross Fish and *Messenger* editor Patte LeVan, California; and the Rev. Ron Brugler, Kitchener, Ontario, president of the denomination.

Mary Sabol, public relations director of Wayfarers, with her husband Phil, graciously hosted a delicious dinner for

COMSU at their home Friday night. The Rev. Harvey Tafel, senior Chapel minister, his wife Mareta and daughter Jenn hosted COMSU for another delightful dinner at their home on Saturday night. Chair Mona Conner was honored with a cake and gift to mark



Ross Fish at COMSU meeting, Wayfarers West administrative offices.

her last year on COMSU. The Wayfarers staff provided a catered lunch for both meetings. In all, we were very warmly welcomed and made comfortable.

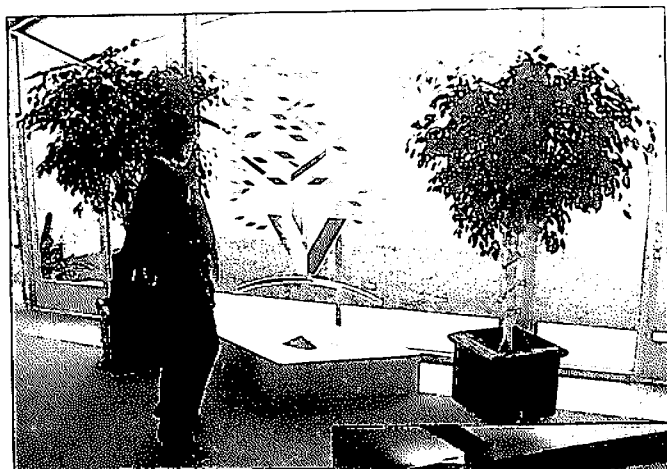
One of the highlights of our meeting was a Friday afternoon guided tour by Harvey of the new Wayfarers Visitors Center. None of us except Ron had been able to attend the May 2001 opening of the Center, and we were amazed at the beauty and spaciousness of the Center, which actually began to do business in July.

Our meeting concluded with a lovely and moving service at Wayfarers Chapel Sunday February 3, conducted by the Rev. Marlene Laughlin, with music by Wendy Ware, music director of Wayfarers, and her husband Geoffrey Ware, trumpeter.

—PWL

(more photos on p. 44)

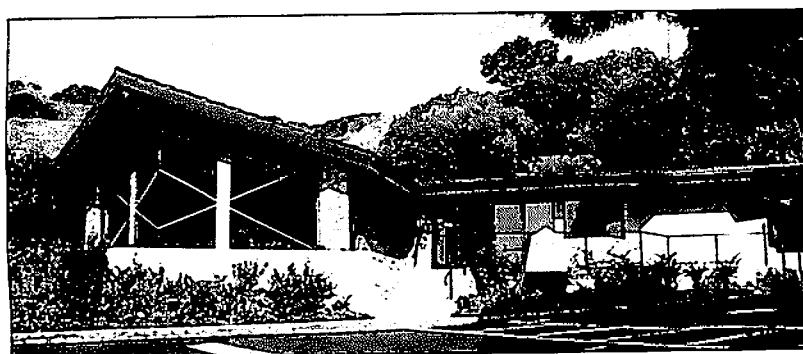
Photos by Steve Koke



Above: Mona Conner views the glass "Tree of Life" honoring donors to the Center.

Right: Visitors Center literature display.

Below: Exterior of Visitors Center.



Harvey Tafel explains exhibit to visitor.

It Was Through Closed Doors that He Appeared...

Eric Zacharias

There can be no doubt that all the awesome power of the spiritual world is pressing down mightily on us earthlings. In the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 10, beginning at verse 5 Jesus provides instructions to the disciples. "Go . . . to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead. . . There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.'"

The reality of the Spiritual. Is this not the accomplishment of the Lord through and by his ministry, his death on the cross and the resurrection on Easter morning? The devastating, controlling power of evil was once and for all time restrained, reigned in. Truth and goodness were and are now the promise and hope of a regenerating world community.

It's not always easy to see beyond the storms, the foreboding clouds, the gray mist that shades from our view that shining Light that is the Lord's presence in our midst.

Who is there among us who has not felt the flow of the divine spirit into our human drama? On reflecting upon this, my mind led me to some thoughts in two areas of change and growth—the drawing power of these options now so readily available to us, the alternatives now making their appeal, and the renewed interest in spirituality.

Alternative medicine, for instance, is today rapidly gaining acceptance, offering us choices not possible even a few years ago. This has encouraged us to assume a greater degree of responsibility for our well-being, to familiarize ourselves with the dynamics of our own anatomy—its needs and the laws governing its healthful functioning.

There can be no doubt that this, in turn, is encouraging many of us to explore the dynamics of life itself. What is there beyond the physical? Whence the energy that drives all

human thought, the awareness of the senses, the striving in the search for truth, goodness?

The pursuit is ongoing and persistent. Small group Bible study. Personal devotional meditation. Prayer. All sorts and forms of activities that feed our souls. Many different paths. All with one goal. To touch. To nurture. To make a connection with that spirit, that inner life-force from which we draw our breath, a sense of wholeness. Alternative roads to a greater sense of Oneness with our Creator.

Thus, moving along in tandem with this search for dynamic spirituality is the process of judgment. Jesus pointed to this: "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." (Matt. 10:26.) Swedenborg, too, writes of this: "All vastations (bringing into the light of day) are affected by the separation of evils from goods, and goods from evils—for all the evil with man has a communication—and this separation is effected in many ways." There is no escaping this—as we come to acknowledge and to experience the spiritual within, we also are drawn more and more into the confrontational face-off between what is now God-within-us and our resistant human nature. The Apostle Paul so clearly writes of this: "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Cor. 15:42)

Indeed, we walk the road that the Lord walked. Our statement of faith reads, in part, ". . . who for our salvation did come into the world and take our nature upon him . . . He endured temptation . . . overcame the hells and (by this) Glorified

His Humanity, uniting it with the Divinity (within himself)."

It was through closed doors that He appeared. It was as a stranger that He appeared to the disciples on their way to the village of Emmaus—that is, as a stranger, until they sat down to eat with Him. It was as a gardener that He appeared to the women who came first to the tomb on Easter morning. This, the eternal reality of the spiritual—now and forever working its way into the confusion, the pain and, yes, those joy-filled moments, too, that are the routine of a struggling humanity.

This is the promise, the hope, of Easter. May our celebration of it lift us all to that higher ground where the reality of the spiritual leads us ever closer to the Lord God from whom we live and move and have our being.

Eric Zacharias is a semi-retired Swedenborgian minister and former editor of The Plains Banner, the news-letter published by the Kansas Association. He lives in Pretty Prairie, Kansas.

Reprinted [abridged] from the April 2000 *The Plains Banner*.



Above: Mona receiving cake at Sabols.



Below: Dinner at Sabols (l) Susan Poole, Ross Fish, Phil Sabol, Ron Brugler, Patte LeVan.



Dear Mr. Swedenborg: What does God's Word have to say about divorce in light of New Church doctrine? Is sexual adultery the only just cause for divorce?

Response: Swedenborg was well aware of many deep causes of marital coldness. He understood that marriage love dies sometimes (especially due to physical adultery), and that separations are useful at times. He put forth that marriages within Christianity contain Heaven's essential life and energy, and therefore shouldn't be dissolved except for cases of sexual adultery. He was also aware that adultery of the spirit is just as real as adultery using one's body. Interestingly though, he maintained a very literalistic interpretation of the Lord's words in the Gospels about sexual adultery being the only righteous cause for divorce.

Matthew 5:32 reads: "*But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.*"

Swedenborg wrote that sexual adultery is cause for divorce, and in addition to it are open obscenities in the home and ill-willed desertion that involves illicit sex. Beyond these he believed that marriages should stay together, whether they remain essentially cold or if the couple moves into long-term separation. But still, Swedenborg doggedly maintained that the primary cause for divorce is only sexual unfaithfulness as Christ expressed above. I wonder what he would have said if he'd actually lived through a deeply unhappy marriage?

Swedenborg was aware that many things create inner coldness between partners, such as spiritual separateness (souls not together and minds not connected), rejection of religion by both partners, one partner being atheist and the other religious, partners having two different religions, and "saturation with religious falsity."

Outer coldness may be caused by differences in dispositions and manners (like one partner being committed to simplicity with no perception of what is good and true, great stubbornness, addiction to gambling, physical abuse), a struggle for dominance by both

ASK SWEDENBORG

partners, the husband choosing idleness over usefulness in the world, et cetera.

Swedenborg knew so well that real marital love requires a good, deep, spiritual and religious connection. It is a deeply satisfying bond that is fed by goodness, faith, true friendship, loyalty and devotion, and a concern for our partner's happiness and well-being. In short, the spiritual connection of marriage is fed by love, spiritual truth, faith in, and love for, God.

I have reflected and prayed long and hard on this issue and find that perhaps Swedenborg lacked a certain softness and very deep perception about how New Church theology needs to go deeper here.

When Christ spoke, he did so on two levels of truth at the same time. He talked about the more outward or external levels and also the spiritual levels. The inner layers of truth are brought forth by means of *correspondence* most often in the Word, although here and there it shone through overtly within the literal words. The Lord was well aware that adultery can happen on a bodily level and a spiritual level. "*But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (Mtt. 5:28)

When husbands and wives adulterate the goodness and truth, the love and faith, in their marriages for too long they "kill" the heart and soul of that marriage. Eventually, remaining with that person becomes unbearable and often hurtful.

Swedenborg was well aware that many marriages on earth do not stay together after death, when partners may discover how truly "unwedded" they were in heart, mind, and life. Divorce is alright in life after death. Why wouldn't it be acceptable when either sexual or spiritual adultery is committed on earth?

One answer is that the natural plane is the "footstool" of the spiritual realm, and therefore undergirds and gives heaven expression.

I am the first person to support every marriage being fed, cultivated, supported, and fought for on earth. I believe that *every* effort should be made to make it last. And I've learned by personal experience how horribly painful separation and divorce can be. Even when done respectfully, it still may be terribly agonizing (and yet potentially loaded with growth for those who are open to it). But if it becomes clear that two souls are truly not happy and are unfulfilled in a serious way by staying married, then I support divorce, especially if it can be discussed deeply, respectfully, and openly with the help of a minister or counselor.

What is so vital in marriage is what goes on within and between a couple's hearts and minds, how well they "click" when it comes to issues of feeling, *how* each partner chooses to show his or her love, if their souls are well matched in terms of depth and levels of true intimacy, spirituality, and maturity of thought, and ongoing learning. This is then expressed in speech and action. Adultery, on any level, hurts and kills genuine love, intimacy, and connection.

But sometimes husbands and wives truly do grow apart. Is it just and good for them to remain together in unhappiness for some ten, twenty, or thirty years? Or, perhaps, is it better to respectfully end a marriage in favor of one day possibly meeting someone with whom they can feel and know what true love, joy, and inner peace are like? Is heaven so terribly wounded by such divorces? I don't believe so.

Personally, I love the idea of honoring a once-good marriage with a church-supported ritual where the divorce happens spiritually in the sanctuary, with the husband and wife sharing what was good for a time, and giving thanks for those blessings.

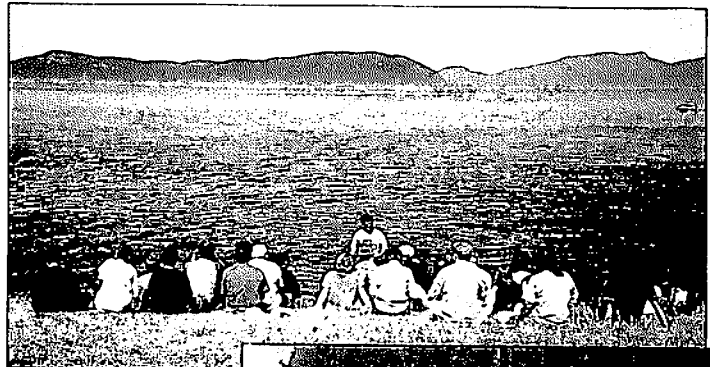
These are both Swedenborg's and my own reflections. I look forward to any responses you may have.

"Ask Swedenborg" is a doctrinal column written by the Rev. Kit Billings, now pastor of the Church of The Open Word in St. Louis, Missouri. It is his best interpretation of New Church theology, arising out of your questions and concerns. Please send questions to him at: info@openwordchurch.org





Highway litter cleanup.



Above: Worship by the sea.

Right: Teen outing by the lake.



Left: Three new members.

Below: Six new members.



Right: Animal blessings



Breaking New Ground at the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound

(Continued from page 36)

as part of our Easter service, etc. It's a long list and getting longer as people come up with more and more things to do together.

Every church has to find what works for it and continually adjust, adapt, and seek to improve. My first few months here were difficult. The service wasn't working. Even when I found out what was wrong, I didn't know what to do. I had to get input from people about what they needed. Worship surveys can help, but they were not very helpful here. I had to ask people one-on-one what was working and what wasn't. If a church isn't growing, the responsibility rests primarily upon the minister. Sometimes it's just not the right match, but I think most of the time it's

because the minister doesn't seek genuine feedback and doesn't work diligently to change and adjust to the needs of the congregation.

I learned that if I didn't put my ego aside and earnestly seek feedback, I was cutting myself off from the information which could make the church what they wanted it to be. It's not my church; I need to respond to what people tell me they need, and if I can't, it's time to pack my bags. People today are not as likely to come to church out of duty and obligation. If they are not getting their needs met, they vote with their feet. Even when we got a format that was working, we had to change after a while because people got bored with it. Just like individual worship, our community worship has to have freshness and flexibility.

The most inspiring part of all this is the people who give so much of themselves to make it happen. They believe in the teachings, the openness, and the importance of having something as unique as the Swedenborgian Church. Whenever I'm feeling overwhelmed, I come back to "whelmed level," when I feel the love of so many who want to share God's love flowing through them. Special thanks to Erni Martin for all the time he volunteers helping in a variety of ways.

Blessing to all as you continue your open-hearted and loving ministries, honoring the Lord and the writings of Swedenborg.

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



Baptisms

Immediato—Seth Hendrix Immediato was baptized into the Swedenborgian Church and the Christian faith January 13, 2002. The parents are Carl and Paula (nee Hendrix) Immediato. Carl, Paula, and Seth's older sister, Melayna, are active members of The Swedenborgian Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, Delaware. The Rev. Randall E. Laakko officiated.

Shaw and Kiesman—Desiree L. Shaw and her infant daughter Emily Marie Kiesman were baptized into the Christian faith January 20, 2002, at the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Kenneth Turley officiating.

Serrano—Leo and Nela Serrano were joyously accepted into membership of the Swedenborg Chapel in Cleveland, Ohio, January 20, 2002, the Rev. Jun-chol Lee officiating.

Confirmations

Benjamin, Broderick, Calareso, Hoyer, Jennings, Kennedy, LoGuidice, Woolf—Mary Benjamin, Phillip Broderick, Josephine Calareso, Hope C. Hoyer, Tammy Jennings, Thomas J. Kennedy, Paul LoGuidice, and Anne Woolf were confirmed into the faith and life of the Swedenborgian Church January 27, 2002, at the Boston Church of the New Jerusa-

lem, the Rev. Steven Ellis officiating. These eight persons were also welcomed into full membership by unanimous vote on that date, and Bimola Wal was received into associate membership.

Deaths

Bartlett—Lloyd R. Bartlett, age 71, formerly of Fryeburg, Maine, entered the spiritual world October 30, 2001, in East Hampton, Connecticut. Lloyd joined the Fryeburg New Church in his youth, and resided in Connecticut for all of his adult life. The funeral service was conducted by the Rev. Thomas Kennedy at the East Hampton Congregational Church. Mr. Bartlett is survived by his wife Karen, three sons, five brothers, two sisters, and two grandchildren, plus many nieces and nephews.

Lawrence—Frances O. Lawrence, wife of Howard A. Lawrence, life member of the former Brooklyn Society of the New Church, entered the spiritual world October 23, 2001. Born September 1, 1915, in Norfolk, Virginia, she was raised in East Orange, New Jersey. She graduated from Pratt Institute in NYC and worked as a model. While living in New York City, she married Howard and moved to Brooklyn, New York. There, they raised their daughter, Kathie. At the time of her death she lived in Dahlonega, Georgia. Frances

was a faithful member of the Swedenborgian Church.

Knox—the Rev. Kenneth William Knox entered the spiritual world October 28, 2001. He was born May 15, 1916, in Horwich, Lancashire, England. Mr. Knox served at the Wayfarers Chapel for eleven years as the first full-time ordained minister to serve there. After leaving the Chapel, he served the Los Angeles Society and later was chaplain on the Princess Louise, performing many weddings and baptisms aboard ship. Ken's lifelong search for truth and meaning is found in his book, *Time, Space & Eternity: A Personal Journey to the Beginning and End of Time*. A memorial service was held October 31, 2001 by the Neptune Society in El Cajon, California. Mr. Knox is survived by his wife, Marjorie; three children, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Swanton—Ethel Swanton, age 88, lifelong dedicated member of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world December 21, 2001, in San Diego, California. Ethel, following in her parents' footsteps, was a pillar of the church throughout the 20th century, along with her three brothers, Charlie, Wally, and Harold. Ethel was an active and inspiring presence in all facets of church life. She will be greatly missed. A resurrection service was conducted December 30, 2001, at the San Diego Swedenborgian Church, lay leader Eldon Smith officiating.

Taylor—Mrs Beatrice Taylor, 81, widow of the late Rev. Harold Taylor, entered the spiritual world January 19, 2002. The Rev. Taylor and Bea retired to Victoria, British Columbia, nearly 30 years ago after serving the Vancouver, B.C. Swedenborgian congregation for many years.



Church Family News

Ted Klein sends this update: "It was a shock for a person like me who walks and hikes so much to fall and break a hip. All I could do is accept that it had happened and go on from there. A big thank you to all who have sent cards or e-mail messages and had

me in thoughts and prayers. My recovery is moving along well. I have graduated first from a walker to crutches, then from crutches to a cane, and now can walk mostly without the cane. I am now driving some, getting driven, and walking outside when there are enough ice-free places. It all takes patience. Spring will come!

WRITER'S SCHOLARSHIP OFFERED BY COMSU

The Communications Support Unit is continuing to sponsor a unique, twice-yearly scholarship opportunity for a writer 18 years or older who is interested in writing for the Swedenborgian Church to attend "WRITING FROM WITHIN," a three-day workshop at Temenos Retreat Center. Travel expenses to West Chester, Pennsylvania, will be included. This year the workshop takes place April 12-14, 2002.

If you are interested in writing for our denomination in any capacity—*Messenger* articles, pamphlets, books, sermons, we encourage you to apply for this three-day

weekend intensive to learn the Metcalf-Simon Method of Proprioceptive Writing with expert Mary Bok, in the peaceful setting that Temenos provides.

Simply write to
COMSU,
c/o Patte LeVan, Editor, THE MESSENGER
P.O. Box 985
Julian, CA 92036.

Or send email to Patte LeVan at
Messenger@jinet.com.

See further entry details in the February 2002 *Messenger*.



WANTED!

EdSU is looking for someone to organize and lead a pre-convention program this year. If you know of anyone or are willing to take it on yourself please contact Joy Zimmer, EdSU Chair at matthewmallard@hotmail.com.

God in the Midst of the City

PHONE: 707.938.5885

EMAIL: appleseedbooks@aol.com

CATALOG & ORDERS:

J. Appleseed & Co.

P.O. Box 1065

Glen Ellen, CA 95442

"How fragile we are. How fragile we are." The words of contemporary singer Sting describe the reason for J. Appleseed's new book, *God in the Midst of the City*.

On September 11, our TV news screens shook us to our bones. How could a clear day explode with such pain! We grasped for ways to understand, to heal and to help. We realized how fragile we are.

God in the Midst of the City acknowledges the reality of our wounded spirits. With prayers, meditations and thoughts, this keepsake book leads the reader into a safe space of healing where good can be nurtured.

The book's angel photos are powerful. They give strength to a series of soft candles that spread warm, golden light across each page. The collection of words is interfaith, crossing many lands and cultures and centuries. Personal prayers and poems by Swedenborgians Betsy Coffman, Ted Klein, Bette McDonnell and Rev. William L. Worcester connect with the thoughts of world-famous spiritualists like Mahatma Gandhi, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Rumi. The Lord's Prayer is translated from Aramaic. There is a Pueblo Indian blessing across the page from a Russian Orthodox prayer. There are quotes from the Dalai Lama,

Beinsa Douno, Emanuel Swedenborg, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Dag Hammarskjöld.

Pages 22 and 23 capture the spirit of joy and love shared by Swedenborgian Alicia Titus. Here is the reason we will hold this book to our hearts.

New York Church member Mona Diane Conner conceptualized *God in the Midst of the City*. Her unending energy brought it to publication. Distribution of the book is being spearheaded by a grassroots team of Women's Alliance members and friends called "Seeds of Love." Jenn Tafel is coordinator of the sales force who will have copies available at local churches, firehouses, bookstores, and centers for spiritual healing. There is an extra incentive for the book to sell out: J. Appleseed will donate net proceeds of book sales to New York's Squad #1 Benefit Fund. Donations to the fund will be invested for disbursement to the children of the twelve firemen from Squad #1 who died in the line of duty September 11.

Price of the book is \$10.95 plus \$4.00 shipping, payable by check to J. Appleseed & Co.

Orders and sales ideas should be directed to J. Appleseed's website at www.jappleseed.org or email jappleseedbooks@aol.com.



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.

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