

THE MESSENGER

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February 2003

War or Peace? —a New Churchman's Search

Carl Yenetchi

A man may build himself a throne of bayonets, but he cannot sit on it.
(William Ralph Inge)

Our Church has never had a clear policy on the morality of participating in a war. Among our members we have had, and have today, pacifists, soldiers, hawks, and doves. Therefore our response to various wars has been mostly individual rather than collective. I am aware of only one resolution passed by Convention in support of any war, and that was a 1917 resolution passed in support of the United States' entry into World War I. We also have a standing resolution passed on August 3, 1969, which reads:

Resolved: That the Secretary of Convention maintain a register of young men and women within the fellowship of the Swedenborgian Church who are recognized by the Selective Service System as conscientious objectors to war, and that the President of Convention appoint a minister to serve as spiritual counselor and advisor to these young men and women and to others who may apply to the Selective Service System for recognition as Conscientious Objectors; the purpose being that the Church might in this way show its sympathy with those whose conscience dictates such a step and may be of some assistance to them as they struggle with all of the implications and legal problems which such classification brings.

This resolution—passed at the height of the Viet Nam conflict and the Anti-War movement that sprang from that conflict—is perhaps as close

as we have ever come to enunciating any pacifist strain in our collective will.

Emanuel Swedenborg wrote relatively little on the subject of war. But, what he wrote on the subject—as with most of his writings—is intriguing.

He told us that war is contrary to Christian charity:

The worshiper of himself and of nature confirms himself against the Divine Providence when he reflects that wars are permitted and in them the slaughter of so many men, and the plundering of their wealth. It is not from the Divine Providence that wars occur, because they involve murders, plunderings, violence, cruelties and other terrible evils which are diametrically opposed to Christian charity. (*Divine Providence* 251)

**Therefore, perhaps the
response to war
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to punish itself by war.
If we know the truth
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He told us that war, as with every other evil thing, is a result of human free will:

... That wars are permitted, the slaughter of so many men, and the

plundering of so many cities, nations, and families; and so on. Can anyone deduce such things from any other source than the possession of freedom of choice by every man? The permission of evil known throughout the world has no other origin. (*True Christian Religion* 479)

He told us that war in defense of others is not sin:

The good man is prudent and zealous only in defense, and rarely does he exercise his prudence and zeal in attacking others. It is the same with spirits of hell and angels of heaven; the spirits of hell attack while the angels of heaven defend themselves. Hence is deduced this conclusion, that it is allowable for anyone to defend his country and his fellow-citizens against invading enemies, even by means of wicked generals, but that it is not allowable to make oneself an enemy without cause. When the cause is to seek glory alone it is in itself diabolical, for it springs from the love of self. (*Divine Providence* 252)

Swedenborg presented to us a very thin line of permissibility for participation in war. He also leaves the decision to participate to the individual and makes no grand statement for or against participation. Each must search his or her own conscience to decide if participation is right or wrong.

Swedenborg thinned the line even further when he wrote:

Charity in the Common Soldier: If he looks to the Lord and shuns evils as sins, and sincerely, justly, and faithfully does his duty, he also becomes charity; for as to this there is no distinction of persons. He is averse to unjust depredation; he abominates the wrongful effusion of blood. In battle it is another thing. There he is not averse to it; for he does not think of it, but of the enemy as an enemy, who desires

(Continued on page 19)

IN THIS ISSUE:

New York Church Rededication • Review: *Healing as a Sacred Path*
• Convention 2003, "Faith of our Mothers" • Uses, 2003 • Teen Adventure Camp

Divine Irony

Ken Turley

February, as a month in relation to the rest of the year, always seems to me like that moment after completing an inhale but not yet having started the exhale. There is a sense of drawing inward, the suspension of movement, and yet a moment in time that is filled with potential and purpose for what is about to come. February is such a cold and quiet month. I suppose the one exception being Valentine's Day.

Here in the depth of winter, the coldest of months has a day devoted to the heart and all things warm and loving. Divine irony, if you ask me. The month of suspended animation, the time when much of the natural world is asleep under a blanket of snow, the moment of inhaled breath—and of all times, that is the time given to celebrate the opening of the heart. It is as if God offers us a bit of foreshadowing, a glimpse of the love offering to come, just when we are likely to need it the most. For what are the life and teachings of Jesus, what is the message of his death and resurrection, if not that the heart is the center and the essence of life? What do we learn from the Lord if not that, even when things seem at their worst, the power of love can renew life?

So here we are at the middle of winter, so much cold and snow all around. But each of us has that heart of love within, a source of warmth and light to draw on and so renew ourselves and others, no matter how dark it may seem outside. February is our chance to be a source of warmth and light in the middle of the cold and dark of winter. Flame on!

The Rev. Ken Turley is pastor of the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine.

Reprinted from the *Fryeburg Monthly Bulletin*, February 2002.



Robert McCluskey

The following statement was released by *Keep America Safe: Win Without War*, a new coalition formed in Washington, D.C., on December 11, 2002, and supported by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. (For a complete listing of peace activities, log on to www.nccusa.org)

"We are patriotic Americans who share the belief that Saddam Hussein cannot be allowed to possess weapons of mass destruction. We support the rigorous UN weapons inspections to assure Iraq's effective disarmament.

We believe that a preemptive military invasion of Iraq will harm American national interest. Unprovoked war will increase human suffering, arouse animosity toward our country, increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks, damage the economy and undermine our moral standing in the world. It will make us less, not more, secure.

We reject the doctrine—a reversal of long-held American tradition—that our country, alone, has the right to launch first-strike attacks. America is not that kind of country.

We can achieve the valid U.S. and UN objective of disarming Saddam Hussein through legal diplomatic means. There is no need for war. Let us instead devote our resources to improving the security and well-being of people here at home and around the world."

This statement is one of many that have been voiced by the religious community over the last several months. One can think of countless voices for peace, including Boenhoffer, Gandhi, King, and others who did not have the luxury of hindsight in declaring their

opposition to war and violence. Like many are doing today, they took a risk in speaking out against the status quo, the nationalist fervor of their time, the easy path of demonizing others while neglecting the work of repentance. In the midst of crisis, advocates for peace are easily dismissed as naive, simplistic, and unrealistic. And of course all of that changes once the time of crisis has past, once the injustice which fueled war has been revealed, once the possibility of peace has emerged. Only then are they commended, extolled, and set up as national or spiritual examples, heroes and saints. With the crisis still upon us, now is the time for such examples to inspire and challenge us to continue to work and pray for peace; not in the future, when it might be easier—that is, unnecessary—but right now, when people and policies are at risk.

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

Reprinted from the New York church newsletter, January 2003.



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War or Peace?

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(Continued from cover)

his blood. When he hears the sound of the drum calling him to desist from the slaughter, his fury ceases. He looks upon his captives after victory as neighbors, according to the quality of their good. Before the battle he raises his mind to the Lord, and commits his life into His hand; and after he has done this, he lets his mind down from its elevation into the body and becomes brave; the thought of the Lord—which he is then unconscious of remaining still in his mind, above his bravery. And then if he dies, he dies in the Lord; if he lives, he lives in the Lord. (*Doctrine of Charity* 166)

Swedenborg is telling us that it is possible for a person to participate in a war while maintaining Christian charity, and therefore to be in a state of salvation. But still he is silent on the question of whether this is the best course of action for the person.

The spiritual state maintaining Christian charity that Swedenborg describes for the person participating in battle has some rather troubling elements in it. That the soldier is to become unconscious of the Lord—even though the Lord is to remain in the mind—while committing “evils which are diametrically opposed to Christian charity” (*Divine Providence* 251) as long as “When he hears the sound of the drum calling him to desist from the slaughter, his fury ceases” and “He looks upon his captives after victory as neighbors, according to the quality of their good,” (*Doctrine of Charity* 166) seems to indicate that war constitutes a circumstance in which we are encouraged to suspend our standards of morality. Furthermore, can it be right that a person is to become unconscious of the Lord?

The link between men, angels and spirits brought about by the affections of love is so close that if it were broken and angels and spirits were thus cut off, men would immediately fall unconscious; and if the link were not repaired and reestablished, they would die. (*True Christian Religion* 607)

If this were true, then the soldier in battle would be unconscious of the Lord, and not thinking of “Divine things.” Thereby the soldier would lose communication with the angels of heaven, and thus would break the link between angels, spirits, and man. The soldier would die not from physical wounds but by wounds of the spirit. However, in any case, the state of the soldier in battle is somehow different from the state of a soul under ordinary circumstances. We can easily see that the person is under compulsion and that this lack of freedom freezes the soul as to regeneration or degeneration. So the salvation of the soldier clearly is possible. Indeed, Swedenborg writes:

Wars that have as an end the defense of the country and the church, are not contrary to charity. The end in view declares whether it is charity or not. (*True Christian Religion* 407)

The presence of charity means that the intent of the soul is good. Still, it leaves open the question, “Is the action right?” If we do the best we know, then we are within charity even though what we do may still be wrong, hurtful, and destructive. This does not answer, however, the question, “Is it the highest good to participate in a war?” This question is at the center of our collective response to the call to arms.

Let's explore further. St. Paul wrote:

... if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:20-21)

Here we begin to see that war is perhaps not the best response to war. We are called to “overcome evil with good.” If, as Swedenborg wrote, war is the result of the improper use of human freedom, and that all good comes from the Lord, then perhaps our best response to war is prayer, and good works.

Swedenborg gave us further insight when he reported that one of the things he saw in the spiritual world was the manner in which warfare between Heaven and Hell was carried out.

The good man is prudent and zealous only in defense, and rarely does he exercise his prudence and zeal in attacking others. It is the same with spirits of hell and angels of heaven; the spirits of hell attack while the angels of heaven defend themselves. Hence is deduced this conclusion, that it is allowable for anyone to defend his country and his fellow-citizens against invading enemies, even by means of wicked generals, but that it is not allowable to make oneself an enemy without cause. (*Divine Providence* 252)

I wonder at his conclusion. My wonder is in the fact that spiritual warfare is carried out in a manner so different from earthly warfare.

Spiritual combats are chiefly carried on by means of truths of faith. Truth is the first thing of combat. The men of the spiritual Church are tempted with regard to the truths of faith, wherefore they combat by truths. The men of the celestial Church are tempted with regard to the goods of love, wherefore they combat by goods. (*The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrines* 198)

As painful as spiritual combats are, they form the road to regeneration and salvation. Earthly combats, however, “involve murders, plunderings, violence, cruelties and other terrible evils which are diametrically opposed to Christian charity.” (DP 251)

Let's review. Swedenborg said wars contain, “terrible evils which are diametrically opposed to Christian charity.” (*Divine Providence* 251). And yet a soldier can enter this arena and maintain a state of Christian Charity if during battle he becomes unconscious to the presence of the Lord in his mind. (*Doctrine of Charity* 166).

Many Swedenborgians and readers of Swedenborg have, however, been pacifists and have made strong statements against war.

Aldous Huxley wrote: “People love to talk about a war to end war; they do not love to talk about a peace to end war.”

Andrew Carnegie, around 1900, said “To kill a man will be considered disgusting [in the twentieth century] as we in this day consider it disgusting to eat one.”

(Continued on page 20)

Summary of Michigan Association Annual Meeting, October 2002

President, Barb Boxwell called the meeting to order in the Almont chapel at 9:45 a.m. October 5, 2002. The Rev. Renee Billings-Machiniak offered an opening prayer.

REPORTS:

1. Rev. Renee regarding the life of the Royal Oak Church of the Holy City, tri-county ministry, and continuing education.

2. Barb Tourangeau, Almont Retreat Center, and, with Rev. Renee, the Almont New Church Assembly condition and use, and also on the 2002 Almont Summer School.

3. Chris Laitner: the 2002 annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church

4. Barb Tourangeau, Rev. Renee, and Matthew Fleming on the twentieth anniversary celebration of the Survivors.

OLD BUSINESS:

The Association voted to add a member-at-large clause to the Constitution. This will provide a place of membership for confirmed Swedenborgians who are not members of the Royal Oak church (membership there provides automatic membership in the Michigan Asso-

ciation) but who wish to be active Swedenborgians in Michigan. A letter with specific information and a method for feedback will be sent out to all members before the end of the year.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Members created a mission statement for the Michigan Association:

Our mission is to understand and encourage the expression of the Lord's Holy Spirit as we study the Holy Bible as revealed through the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg. We work on this mission by supporting: worship, community, education, fiscal responsibility, and growth & outreach.

2. Members elected to send contributions to five areas of the work of Convention: Millennium Fund for youth; the Education Support Unit; Central Office; *The Messenger*; and the J. Appleseed Press

3. Voted to contribute \$1000 for use by Kurt Fekete, denominational Youth Director, for use with midwest youth.

4. Heard from Kris Lange re: possible Swedenborgian group in Lansing.

5. Received information from Sage

Currie, student at the Swedenborgian House of Studies about her possible combined field education and clinical pastoral education experience located in Michigan.

6. Voted to donate \$2,000 to the Alicia Titus Memorial Peace Fund.

7. Adopted the 2003 budget

8. Discussed the possibility of Regional association meetings in the future.

9. Elections

President: Barb Boxwell

Vice president: Betsy Lau

Secretary: Chris Laitner

Treasurer: Barb Tourangeau

Trustee: Maynard Zimmerman (2003)

Joy Zimmer (2004)

Matthew Fleming (2005)

After the meeting, members continued in a spiritual growth workshop under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake, in afternoon and evening sessions. Many members stayed the night at Almont to participate in the Sunday chapel service.

—Chris Laitner, secretary Michigan Assoc.



War or Peace?

—a New Churchman's Search

(Continued from page 19)

Helen Keller wrote: "Strike against war, for without you no battles can be fought!"

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "The real and lasting victories are those of peace, and not of war."

We are left now with the same question. Is it the highest good to participate in a war? We have individual answers such as those of Keller, Carnegie, Emerson, and Huxley, but no universal answer. Let's look onward.

Swedenborg did offer us one other insight into the origins of war in our natural world. He wrote:

All wars, although they may be civil in character, represent in heaven states of the Church and are correspondences. Such were all the wars described in the Word, and such also are all wars at this day. The wars described in the Word are those which the Children of Israel waged with vari-

ous nations. Moreover, when the Children of Israel, who represented the Church, departed from their precepts and statutes and fell into the evils which were represented by those nations . . . then they were punished by that nation. For example, when they profaned the holy things of the Church by foul idolatries they were punished by the Assyrians and the Chaldeans, because Assyria and Chaldea signify the profanation of what is holy. (*Divine Providence* 251)

Perhaps the causes of the wars of our times are correspondential as they were in the time of the Old Testament wars. As we have seen, Swedenborg wrote, "... all wars, although they may be civil in character, represent in heaven states of the Church and are correspondences. Such were all the wars described in the Word, and such also are all wars at this day." Therefore, perhaps our wars are a punishment for some collective societal evil; just as with the wars described in the Word. Perhaps, too, the people

or nations that make war on us have correspondences with the evil of which we are guilty.

Therefore, perhaps the response to war which will help us to live in peace is to discern and repent of the evil that is seeking to punish itself by war. If we know the truth about ourselves, are we less apt to be at war?

Swedenborg wrote: "a 'sword' signifies truth fighting and destroying falsity." (*Arcana Coelestia* 7456) Is this to be our weapon? Truth! Yes; we are to go to war, not with literal weapons, but with truth. Jesus said:

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. (Luke 6:27)

Put away the sword of Peter and take the sword of Christ. Let us destroy falsity with truth and thereby find peace.

The Rev. Carl Yenetchi is pastor of the LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana.



One Hundred Forty-three Years of History And Spirit

"O Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout the ages. From everlasting to everlasting, you are God."

Psalm 90, vs.1-2

Robert McCluskey

On the morning of February 6, 1859, with the nation on the verge of war, the New York New Church celebrated its first worship service at its new home in Murray Hill, drawing over 400 people to its simple but graceful sanctuary. During that service, a snowstorm descended on the city, continuing all day, which prevented many from attending an evening lecture by George Bush, professor of Hebrew at New York University. Seven score and three years later, on November 17, 2002, with the nation once again on the verge of war, the New York New Church hosted an evening Service of Rededication in the middle of a severe Nor'easter, which prevented many friends from attending. Still, over 85 souls gathered on 35th St. to celebrate the restoration of our sanctuary and a renewal of the church's mission. The service was a blend of readings from scripture and prayers, music and hymns, reflections on the past, present and future, and an occasion for joy on the part of all present.

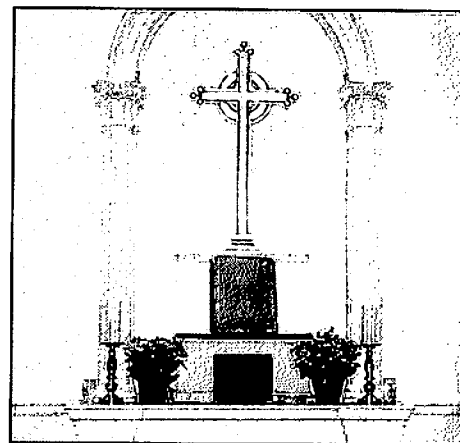
Church president Pamela Selensky provided a snapshot of the church's origins on 35th St., including its humble beginnings in 1805, its steady growth and search for a permanent home in New York. In 1854, a founding member of the church (and first president of the Swedenborg Foundation), James Chesterman, offered the church a parcel of land he owned on 35th St., provided they build a house of worship there. Being so far removed from the general population of the city, the members declined the offer at first. In 1858, however, the offer was accepted, and the church was completed the next year. Pamela then offered this brief but intriguing account of the opening

service on February 6, 1859, culled from church records:

The services commenced at half-past ten o'clock A.M., but before that hour the house was filled in every part, and chairs brought into the aisles were also filled. Many were still unable to obtain seats, and several were left standing in the vestibule. It is estimated that between four and five hundred persons were present. The house will seat comfortably over three hundred . . . Of the New House of Worship itself we can speak in terms of satisfaction. Its location is in one of the most desirable quarters of the City. Its design and execution appear to us in every respect admirable . . . All its interior arrangements are convenient, as well as simple, chaste, and appropriate . . . At the conclusion of the Dedictory Services of the morning, notice was given that Rev. George Bush [an ancestor of the President] would deliver a discourse in the new edifice at half-past seven of the same evening. Had the weather proved propitious, the house would doubtless have been again filled to overflowing; but a driving snowstorm had commenced before the morning service was concluded, and at the hour for the evening meeting the streets were literally blocked with snow, while the storm continued without abatement. A very respectable audience, however, assembled in spite of the weather.

Our Vice-president, Will Linden, then reviewed some "familiar faces" at 35th St.

We know the usual suspects: individuals who were strongly influenced in their own thinking by Swedenborg's vision of a fundamentally new Christianity. William Blake, Goethe, Emerson, Johnny Appleseed, Jorge Luis Borges, William Butler Yeats, and so many more, including distinguished preachers such as Henry Ward Beecher, Phillips Brooks, and Edward Everett Hale, a Unitarian minister who noted near the end of the 19th century: "Swedenborgianism has done the liberating work of the last century. The wave Swedenborg started lasts to this day. The statements of his religious works have revolutionized theology." These individuals represent more than just famous people who happened to be readers of Swedenborg. Rather, Swedenborg's distinctive theology played a central and recurring influence in their thought and work. Through their efforts, Swedenborg's new teachings on creation, morality and spiri-



Newly refurbished altar, New York Church sanctuary.

tual life led to bold innovations in the realm of art and architecture, philosophy and psychology, social justice and interfaith initiatives, as well as challenges to traditional theology that continue to be heard today.

This church, this sanctuary, was the spiritual home to a number of such individuals who found in Swedenborgian theology revolutionary insights into the nature of human experience, and incorporated those insights into their own work. Among them were Samuel Woodworth, Henry James, Sr., George Inness, John Bigelow, Julian K. Smythe, and Helen Keller.

It is our hope that as we renew the life of the New York New Church, these individuals may serve as examples to us: examples of new ideas applied to life, of a faith strong and clear enough to bring new light to old problems, of a charitable spirit which works in all things for wholeness and health, integrity and justice. It is our legacy, which is at once a source of pride for all of us and a challenge to each of us.

The Rev. Young Min Kim, pastor of the Church of the Little Grain in Brooklyn, led the congregation in a responsive prayer, and the Rev. Ron Brugler, president of Convention, offered a benediction taken from the 1912 book of worship. Also present was friend of the church Jean Seward Uppman, granddaughter of the late Rev. Samuel Swayze Steward, pastor of the 35th St. New Church 1879-1897. A special moment occurred when a

(Continued on page 22)

One Hundred Forty-three Years of History And Spirit

(Continued from page 21)

commemorative plaque was presented by Carol Rasic, descendant of James Chesterman, and Virginia Branston, friend of Adrienne Frank. Anna Martinian read the plaque to the congregation:

Dedicated in loving memory to Adrienne Frank (1913-1999), whose generous bequest made possible the restoration of this sanctuary, and to James Chesterman, whose original gift of land in 1858 made possible the building of this church on East 35th St.

Presented on the occasion of the rededication of the New Church sanctuary on

Sunday, November 17, 2002.

Rev. McCluskey offered some views on the theme of "Spirit and History," how the commandment of love and spiritual maturity play themselves out in the actual circumstances of human life. The distinctive features of the New Church were laid out in their basic form, with an emphasis on the "both/and" nature of our theology: historically rooted and imaginatively innovative; honoring tradition and creativity, science and spirituality, mystical experience and social justice; Christ-centered and ecumenically oriented.

Spiritual growth does not take place in a vacuum or retreat from the world, but only in the context of our actual lives, in the choices we make and the values we affirm by our words and actions. History and spirit form a seamless web that is our lives together, and the church's function is to help people unite and harmonize both realms. To make our inner and outer lives reflect each other, so that our words and actions reflect our highest motives and deepest convictions. No one can do this alone: we need God and we need each other, and this is how faith communities are born, why churches and temples and mosques are built, and it is the only way they can be maintained. The light of truth and the warmth of

love roll through reality, revealing themselves in sparks and flames that light up the cultural and moral landscape in which we live, giving rise to actions and words, institutions and movements that embody and promote the Word of God for God's people. In this church, this community, this country, this world: history continues to unfold, and the spirit continues to move over the dark waters of our time.

Breaking down the walls of superstition and differences; challenging long held but rarely examined dogmas; acknowledging our limits and ignorance, calling us to embrace new understandings of tradition and experience; to ask the difficult questions without insisting on simple answers; to open ourselves fearlessly to paradox, ambiguity and contingency. To embrace the call of mystical experience and social justice, and see more in common between them than differences: the renewal of the self and the renewal of the world.

Like so many other houses of worship, we no longer enjoy the status and access afforded to religious institutions in days gone by. Still, we can be proud that we, along with so many other people of faith, continue to stand and strive for a higher good. God continues to move in and through the course of human history: and we become the church only as we remain open to this movement; responsive to its duties and obligations, and receptive of its life and joy.

Tonight we want simply to remind ourselves of the treasure contained in this church. That for a church so small, our influence has been as great as is our responsibility to the future. We rededicate this sanctuary not in the hope of recapturing some

former glory, but to prepare ourselves to receive the new glory that God longs to share with all people. Our hope is that we might continue to be a part of that gradual descent of spiritual life, the New Jerusalem, into the hearts, minds and affairs of people. To let our light shine, to seek unity with God and to be of spiritual use and service to our neighbors. To remember the new commandment given to us, that we are to love one another as God loves us; to remember the promise, that God really *does* love us; and to see with new eyes the heavenly possibilities of authentic human life that lies before us at all times.

(Continued on page 23)



The Rev. Robert McCluskey, pastor of the New York New Church, with the Rev. Ron Brugler, president of the denomination.



From left: Virginia Branston, Robert McCluskey, Anna Rich Martinian, and Jean Steward Uppman, granddaughter of the late Samuel Swayze Steward, pastor of the New York New Church 1879-1897.

Kemper Road Teen Adventure Camp and Worship Service

Editor's Note: We apologize to Kurt and our adventurous teens for not including this article in an earlier issue, due to lack of space.

Kurt Fekete

In mid-August 2002, I had the opportunity to lead a youth adventure camp with volunteers from Ohio, Missy Sommer, Emily Butler and Mike Butler. The six participating teens experienced a high energy, frenzied and action packed long-weekend adventure. The ten of us met at the Kemper Road Swedenborgian church on a Friday morning where we proceeded to the Joy Outdoor Education Center. Here we joined the Camp Joy staff leaders and were safely led through a series of fun and thought-provoking group initiatives where we had to negotiate both physical and mental challenges to succeed as a team. We followed the group initiatives with apple tree planting. The trees we planted were saplings taken from an original Johnny Appleseed tree. Friday evening we watched the video "Johnny Appleseed and the Frontier Within," then shared songs, discussion and S'mores around a campfire.

On Saturday morning we faced a great challenge and true adventure on the High Ropes course. We put on our harnesses, partnered up and traversed a number of suspended cable lines, wooden poles and swings high above the ground. After successfully com-

pleting the High Ropes, we rewarded ourselves with a lazy and refreshing afternoon paddle and swim down the Little Miami River. Saturday night was spent having a pizza slumber party back at the Kemper Road church.

Throughout the busy weekend adventure we interspersed sessions to break up physical activities. Our group volunteered to do the worship service on Sunday at the Kemper Road church and the teens needed to prepare! In our first session we discussed the meaning of the word "worship." We brainstormed as a group and came up with as many words as we could that relate to worship. From these words, the teens selected the elements of worship that they wanted to include in their worship service and started to piece together the order and choose the content of the service itself. The teens decided that the sermon would be a group effort with each person writing a piece about a particular weekend adventure. The last session, on Saturday night, the teens wrote about their selected experience and the group selected Scripture and Swedenborg readings related to each activity. I would like to share with you the portion of the Worship Service that the teens wrote and presented to the Kemper Road congregation on August 18th. Meredith Curry provided an introduction to the weekend events (not included here) and then the other teens shared their brief readings and a prayer.

One Hundred Forty-three Years of History And Spirit

(Continued from page 22)

Besides those who participated in the service, special thanks also go to Craig Ketter, our musical director and pianist, and his wife Valerie Gonzalez, our soloist; Pamela Selensky and Therese Pineda for holding an open house and reception hours before the service; Sue Hirschl and Rev. Sook Hyun Yoon for their help with child care.

The church also offers its sincere thanks to the following for their gener-

ous support of the building project: Dr. Gerald and Emily Lemole, George and Lynn Bischof McClure, Dr. Mehmet and Lisa Oz, Charles and William Witzell, and the Women's Alliance of the Swedenborgian Church in North America.

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

Editor's Note: See "Short Takes" p. 25.



Kemper Road Camp teens with staff members: (left to right) Missy Sommer, Emilie and Mike Butler and Kurt Fekete gathered outside in the Kemper Road wedding chapel.

Group Initiatives - by Brendan Dzeba

Bible Reading: Psalm 37:3-9

- ³ *Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.*
- ⁴ *Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.*
- ⁵ *Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this:*
- ⁶ *He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.*
- ⁷ *Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.*
- ⁸ *Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret-it leads only to evil.*
- ⁹ *For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.*

Hello, my name is Brendan Dzeba and I am a member of the Cleveland Swedenborgian Church. My section of the presentation is the Group Initiatives that we did Friday at Camp Joy. Every challenge took a great deal of teamwork and cooperation. They all had challenges and hidden meanings that revealed the people within us.

(Continued on page 24)

(Continued from page 23)

From holding each other up, moving boards to get across a bubbling tar pit, guiding each other through a spider web (a weave of vertical string with geometric sections) without waking the spider, swinging across quicksand to get water or trying to lower a "helium" stick while accusing other people of raising the stick. Not only did we challenge ourselves, but we also got to know each other well.

Planting Apple Trees - by Jordan Smith

Bible Reading: Psalm 92:12-15

- ¹² *The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;*
- ¹³ *planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God.*
- ¹⁴ *They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green,*
- ¹⁵ *proclaiming, "The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."*

This weekend at Camp Joy we planted apple trees. The ones we planted were descendants of the last standing tree in Ohio to be planted by Johnny Appleseed. Johnny Appleseed, whose real name was John Chapman, was a Swedenborgian. He believed that Divinity could be found in nature and strived to find unity with all things. Working together to plant apple trees I believe we found a little of that unity. Apple trees, and apples in particular, have a lot of religious and folk significance. An apple is often used to represent the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. There also is an element of folklore, which says that sharing an apple with the one that you love cements the affection. A popular verse is, "If you love me, feed my people." Hopefully, one day our trees will do that.

Campfire - by Brittany Fleming

Bible Reading: Exodus 3:1-6

- ¹ *Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.*



Kemper Road Camp Teens: (left to right) Jordan Smith, Kasey Godden, Meredith Curry, Brittany Fleming, Brendan Dzeba, Shannon Fisher.

- ² *There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.*
- ³ *So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."*
- ⁴ *When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."*
- ⁵ *"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."*
- ⁶ *Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.*

When we first arrived at the fire pit, we had a visitor! A huge spider had made an incredible web from one tree to another about a yard and a half away from each other. The spider was still there, but obviously the web took a long time to make and it was probably tedious work. Swedenborg says that insects correspond to thoughts. Things that crawl on the ground correspond to natural thoughts. Spiders also correspond to the hard workers and the people that do the not-so-fun

jobs that, basically, the rest of us don't want to do. This ties in with our campfire because Mike and Emily actually made the fire while the rest of us hung back and out in a nearby building. Once the fire was built, we automatically went for the S'mores, roasting/burning our marshmallows. We also had things like pretzels and pop, which we ripped out later. We sang songs like the ever-so-popular "Moose Song"! Or the never ending "Song Game" in which you take the last word in the song and start another song with that word, and so on. Swedenborg says that any kind of light, be it light from a light bulb or light from a campfire, corresponds to love. There was a lot of love at this campfire and it helped us bond and grow together as friends. I found a reading that spoke to me about our campfire experience. When sitting by the fire-side and contemplating the dancing flames, loving God, I am entranced by the sudden changes, the dynamic movement and the intoxicating light. Teach me how to listen to the voice at the heart of the flame and learn the language of light: "Come, let us walk in Yahweh's light" (*Earth Songs: Praying With Nature*, Wayne Simsic, Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1992).

High Ropes - by Kasey Godden

Bible Reading: Psalm 23

- ¹ *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.*
- ² *He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,*
- ³ *he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

(Continued on page 25)



White knuckled high adventure!!!

(Continued from page 24)

- ‘ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,¹¹ I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- ‘ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
- ‘ Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

The High Ropes is a difficult obstacle course that involves strength, balance and determination. But on top of all that, it was 30 feet in the air! That complicates things a bit. We each made a goal for ourselves, whether it was getting halfway up the ladder or completing the course blindfolded backwards. All of us felt comfortable going out of our comfort zone

SHORT TAKES

The New York New Church was featured in the *New York Times* Real Estate Section on December 22, 2002, in an article entitled “For NYC Churches, Births and Rebirths.” The article, by David Dunlap, focused on the restoration of the sanctuary, and included a beautiful photo of the church. The church extended its thanks to Alex Gorlin, the architect, for having photos taken, alerting the *Times* and getting the New York church included. Here is an excerpt:

Nothing about the exterior prepares a visitor for this luminous room, an almost perfectly preserved antebellum meeting house that is at once chaste in its modest neoclassical detailing and yet generous in its size and proportion. One might easily imagine Abraham Lincoln paying a call here in his 1860 visit to the city...Mr. Gorlin is celebrating the fact that the ceiling could be saved at all; examining drawings of the shallow and inexpertly designed truss, the architect said, “We don’t know how it stayed up at all.” There followed the briefest of pauses before the minister looked up and said, “We do.”



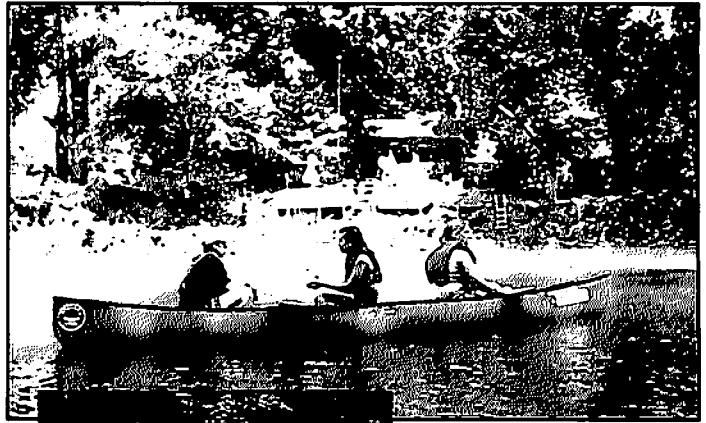
and taking a risk to accomplish these goals. While we were way up high almost all I could hear were people supporting their partners by telling them that they were doing a good job. But also you can tell that people were supporting themselves inside. This helped people overcome their fears. Personally, when I am scared I talk to God, which makes me feel like I can do anything I put my mind to. Also, there was a lot of trust throughout the situation. From trusting your partner or yourself, to trusting God who inside can keep you safe from many problems emotionally. From Swedenborg’s *Heavenly Secrets* #3451 we learn, “For when with such there is confidence or trust in the Lord, which they call faith itself, they are then in good as to the life.” And from #3868, we hear, “Few know that faith is trust and confidence, and still fewer know that trust or confidence is from charity, and is not possible with anyone who has not lived the life of charity.”

Canoeing - by Shannon Fischer

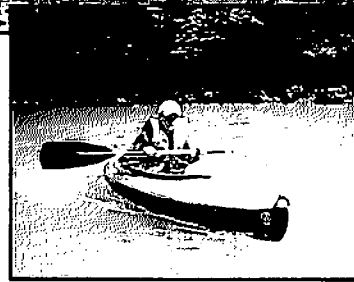
Bible Reading: John 4:13-15

- ¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,
- ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”
- ¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

This weekend the youth went canoeing. It was really fun, from falling out of the canoe, switching canoes, going kayaking, to tipping over. We had a wonderful time. There also were other meanings to canoeing. The canoe trip was a good experience for all



Above: Brendan, Kasey and Jordan enjoying conversation and a lazy float down the Little Miami River.



Left: Brendan ready for white water!

of us because we learned how to work as a team. The people in our canoe were like a wolf pack, working to complete a trip, because wolves always stick together for better or worse. Some people were uncomfortable with water and some were comfortable around water. Those who were uncomfortable had to take a risk and trust in themselves and trust that others were telling them the right thing. If you fall out of the canoe God can’t catch you, but can help you mentally stand back up on your feet. Throughout all of the struggles it was a good accomplishment. When we were stuck on the rocks we were afraid to get out because there were snakes! I overcame my fears and pulled through and got out of the rocks.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for being here with us. We would like to thank you—for the campfire that kept us warm and made us marshmallows, the water that carried us downstream and that we swam in, and the friendship bonds we made. This has been a growing, memorable experience that will stay with us forever. Amen.

Kurt Fekete is our denomination’s Youth Director. He lives in Gorham, Maine.



In heaven all who perform uses from affection for use, because of the communion in which they live, are wiser and happier than others; and with them performing uses is acting sincerely, uprightly, justly, and faithfully in the work proper to the calling of each. This they call charity...

—Emanuel Swedenborg
Divine Love and Wisdom, 431

"Uses are the concrete acts that correspond to charity and good."

Wilson Van Dusen

Through the review of the annual Common Assessment Forms and communications from churches to their liaisons, the Ministries Support Unit has the privilege of becoming aware of our centers' and congregations' many and varied acts of true charity. MINSU would like to share with the denomination how our churches are working to better serve the Lord with no thought of financial gain for themselves. Well done, good and faithful servants.

—Barbara Halle, MINSU Chair

Southwest Florida

This church's clothing thrift shop provided clothing to local low income families and helps provide income for the church to use in the following community programs.

The Kids VIP After-School Program offers care, supervision, and homework assistance for elementary and middle school children. The VIP School Incentive Program is a weekly, as needed, program offered to involve students in community projects and helps them to earn a little pocket change. The VIP Teens and Justice Program provides support for teenagers who are awaiting adjudication in the juvenile justice system, working as a rehabilitation program to involve teens, their families, and the court systems. The VIP Intervention Program is offered for families with acute stress or dysfunction.

The Rev. Dick Tafel and other congregants provide bread for the homeless, down-and-outs, and those on the cusp. Currently the program serves about 100 people.

(Continued on page 27)

CONVENTION 2003, "FAITH OF OUR MOTHERS" *Hobart William Smith College, Geneva, New York*

Mark your calendars for the annual convention next summer to be held on the campus of Hobart William Smith College on Seneca Lake in Geneva, New York. This historic and picturesque campus is in the heart of New York State's Finger Lake District, renowned as a summer resort area for over a century.

Convention will begin Saturday, July 5 and will end Wednesday, July 9. Because this convention is not hosted by a church or association, the denomination will act as host and the members of General Council as the convention committee. Housing is in very comfortable attached townhouses, each with four single rooms, kitchen, sitting area, and two full baths. For those who have trouble walking, we hope to have golf carts available. There is ample parking at the residences and near the meeting and dining areas for those who would like to use their cars to go from one area to another.

Those who travel by air may fly to either Rochester or to Syracuse. Each airport is about an hour from the campus. You may coordinate travel with others from your area to share a rental car for convenience. Geneva is within driving distance of Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Kitchener and other areas in the East and the Midwest.

Convention's theme is "Faith of our Mothers," to honor the important roles that women fulfill within our denomination and the 100th anniversary of the Alliance of New Church Women. A special Alliance luncheon on July 7 will help to mark this occasion.

Special treats and events are planned to please everyone! Watch your *Messenger* each month for more announcements.

—MB

Editor's Note: Kim Hinrichs, Program Director and student at the Swedenborgian House of Studies in Berkeley, California, submitted the following, stating: *This is something I did this past semester while working on George Dole's online class, "A Spiritual Sense of the Bible." I made a line-by-line chart of Swedenborg's interpretation of Exodus 20:8-11. This is found in Secrets of Heaven 8884-8895. I then "transliterated" it into more flowing English, and came up with the "The Seventh Day." The author is really Swedenborg, and I am the translator. I've included the Exodus passage below from which it derives.*

The Seventh Day

The union of goodness and truth in heaven is abiding and cannot be broken.

There is strife which precedes this bond, but ultimately goodness is established, and from it union with truth follows.

Heaven is found everywhere, deep in our souls as much as in our worldly existence.

All of these parts of ourselves, inner and outer, are at every moment growing toward goodness.

It is here where we find the peace and goodness of love.

It is here where we find the heavenly union from God, which can never be broken.

Exodus 20:8-11 (Swedenborg's version)

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Six days shalt thou labor, do all thy work.

The seventh day is the Sabbath to Jehovah thy God;

Thou shalt not do any work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and thy beast, and thy sojourner who is in thy gates.

For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested in the seventh day; wherefore Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

 —Kim Hinrichs



(Continued from page 26)

The church raised \$2500 in partnership with local businesses to send seven youth to Almont Summer Camp. Rev. Tafel also serves as chaplain for the Fort Myers Beach Fire Department.

LITTLE GRAIN

The Church of the Little Grain, under the leadership of the Rev. Solomon Young Min Kim, continues to serve the people of Brooklyn in a number of ways including a program of regular visits to youth incarcerated in the New York penal system, raising funds for Korean orphans, the serving of an Easter meal and a Thanksgiving Day meal to upwards of 70 homeless people, some of whom are suffering with H.I.V.; and regular visits bringing entertainment to the Brookdale Hospital Nursing Home. In addition the church continues efforts to promote traditional Korean arts as a way of community building in the Brooklyn area and beyond. The church has participated in the Korean Moon Festival Parade, the Korean Traditional Arts Festival, the Liberty Pole Celebration Parade, and many other events.

The Rev. Solomon Young Min Kim writes: "Thank God! We had another gracious Thanksgiving Day this year. Fifteen church members (ten adults and five kids) drove one hour to the South end of Staten Island, the new location of Project Hospitality where we met 25 people who were suffering from AIDS. We had the Thanksgiving Day feast there together. We brought enough scarves, socks and gloves for each person to wear, and foods and drinks as well to serve to them. I believe we receive great joy when we do such works. Whenever we plan to do these charitable works, we always receive donations.

When we plan these events, we make phone calls or send letters to people asking if they will join us after we explain what we are going to do. Usually, I visit the people and ask for help. Because of this, we have many people who are willing to donate their time for these works.

The New York Association Women's Alliance helps us constantly. Twenty members from the Brass Band Team of Korean Entertainers Association, Inc. are our good partners especially when we visit the residents of the Brookdale University Hospital Nursing Home. They, as well as the Grace Praise Team consisting of a piano trio with a soprano and baritone singer, students

from Manhattan Music School, entertain the people.

One young owner of a fruit store willingly donates his fresh fruits every time. Another young grocery store owner donates boxes of drinks.

I thank God for allowing us be able to carry out these works for the past five years.

FRYEBURG, MAINE

The Fryeburg New Church

congregation and the Rev. Ken Turley have collected clothes and shoes that people no longer use, and sorted and bagged them. They then delivered them to a nearby Indian reservation where the Native Americans sell the items in a rummage sale to raise money for their Children's Daycare program.



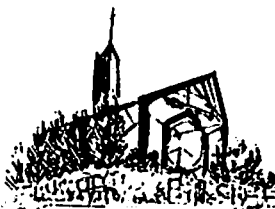
WAYFARERS CHAPEL

Feeling truly blessed by the abundance of life, the Wayfarers Chapel invited all their visitors to consider a little different way of celebrating Christmas by making a gift to the Harbor Interfaith Shelter in the nearby city of San Pedro. Over the years the Harbor Interfaith Shelter has helped hundreds of people, many who were homeless and needy, to turn their lives around to live productively and responsibly.

The Rev. Harvey Tafel pointed out a Christmas Carol long used in the Swedenborgian Church called "O How Shall I Keep My Christmas?" The last verse is:

*"O how shall I keep my Christmas?
as they keep it in heaven above;
O keep it with peace and thanksgiving,
and kindest deeds of love;
And share with the poor and the needy
the joys which the Lord gives thee;
And thy heart shall keep with the angels,
the Lord's Nativity."*

So Wayfarers invited visitors to make a monetary gift to the Harbor Interfaith Shelter and in return they would put their names on an ornament ribbon and hang the ornament on the Christmas tree. This way



they helped those in need with a special Christmas gift and at the same time helped the

Chapel decorate its Christmas tree. This unusual Christmas gift raised \$500 for Harbor Interfaith Shelter.

PUGET SOUND

The Swedenborg Church of Puget Sound has a program called Recycle Imagination in which church members bring in books they have read and are willing to discard, which are then given to a local bookstore for free distribution. They have an ongoing funding program for the local women's shelter. Some of the congregation is involved in cleaning up a nearby section of I-90 highway.

Most of the programs and workshops they offer are free for people who cannot afford to pay. The Rev. Eric Allison has also recently attended a wonderful workshop on church leadership—"the best such workshop I have EVER attended." He will be sharing his new ideas and wisdom with us soon.

LAPORTE, INDIANA

The LaPorte New Church has been holding Wednesday evening meditation and prayer services. They are completing their second year of offering a free soup kitchen, known as *Loaves and Fishes*, twice per month, averaging twenty-five people each time. In addition, each person attending takes home a 'care bag' filled with one or two easy-to-make meals at home. The Church sponsors weekly CODA meetings and meetings of *1st Place*, a Christian weight loss group. The Society also has created a "New Church Samaritans" program which shares the talents and skills of church members in helping members and friends of the church community in need.

On the third Thursday of each month the Rev. Carl Yenetchi offers a "Thursdays with Manny" program to better acquaint people with the life and teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg. Rev. Yenetchi began a cyber-ministry in September with daily "Thoughts from Swedenborg" sent to both isolated and non-isolated members and friends. In addition, he emails his entire weekly worship service, including song sheets and sound, to all on his Swedenborgian mailing list. A recent "Homecoming and Remembrance Service" saw the return of four non-active members to the active role.

LaPorte New Church has just acquired and refurbished the ten-room building formerly owned by the Red Cross, next door

(Continued on page 28)



(Continued from page 27)

to the church, and is in the process of creating its three-fold purpose: a parsonage, a pastor's office, and a bookroom offering Swedenborgian and other spiritual literature and dialogue. They also envision its becoming an after-school free tutoring center and providing additional space for further outreach programs.

CAMBRIDGE

The Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge has a diverse program of social outreach. Their Social



Action Committee continues to collect food and used children's books for distribution. "Music at Noon" offers free concerts throughout the summer months, showcasing the talents of local musicians and offering a welcome respite at midday for the Cambridge community. On the first and third Wednesdays of each month they open their doors to all who would come and share about their mystical experiences. This group provides a safe and supportive environment for people of all faiths to come together and make sense of how the Lord is working in their lives. Many of these individuals also attend the church's Spiritual Art Shows. These gatherings draw over a hundred people, and allow artists, musicians, authors, and people with many and varied talents to perform and showcase their God-given talents in a spiritually-centered environment. Various free lectures are offered to the public, including lectures on Swedenborg and related topics through the annual "Wilfred Gould Rice Lecture on Religion and Psychology," lectures offered by the Jungian institute of Boston, and other educational offerings in such areas as architecture and spirituality. The chapel hosts "non-violent communication" training workshops and is working on developing a mediation center for the surrounding community with the intention of training the youth in their local school system to function as peer mediators, as well as working with couples, families, and institutions that need mediation.

The congregation and the Rev. Sarah Buteux are also working on developing an after-school program for teenagers. Practice space is offered to the Orianna Consort, a classically trained chorale who reciprocates by performing bi-annual fund-

raising concerts for the chapel. Three twelve-step groups meet weekly in their parish wing.

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church is part of a network of churches throughout St. Paul that provides shelter to the homeless. Each church opens its doors to the homeless for overnight shelter. In St. Paul's case, they housed 15 to 18 people (mostly women and children) each night for a month (some of the larger churches were able to take in more). Beds and bedding were brought in for the month. They provided volunteers (three per night) to help with children's homework, play games, provide treats and prepare a light breakfast to start them out for another day of school or day shelter. Volunteers benefit by this experience because it is such a wonderful way to demonstrate our denomination's philosophy of "uses." They learn a great deal from their "clients.")

The church also partners with a neighborhood association that puts on parties for Halloween and Christmas for all the neighborhood children. Having a number of low-income families in their area, this is often all the attention the children get.

They collect food for their local food pantry shelves, participate in the "Back to School" drive by donating school supplies, the "Kitchen Kits" drive by providing supplies to help the homeless set up their new homes, and the Christmas "Toys for Tots" drive through the St. Paul Council of Churches.

Being a small church, they have found that partnering with other local churches has helped them to be more effective in their outreach efforts.

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

The After-School Club is a new program developed by the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton in partnership with the principal, teachers, and Parent Council of Mee-Yah-Noh Public School (located across the street from the church). The Rev. John Maine spends his lunch hours as a volunteer schoolyard supervisor there and learned that the school has "early dismissal" at 2:30 p.m. every Thursday which concerned some parents due to childcare and/or financial situations. Moreover, their concern was heightened by the fact that the neighborhood is beginning to see the



emergence of urban issues like drugs, street crime and gangs.

In response, Rev. Maine, with the school's Parent Council, worked out the idea for the After-School Club. Interested parents can register their children for a nominal fee of \$12.00 for the fall term for every Thursday after-school care. Parent and church volunteers lead them in an hour of crafts and games and offer a snack of juice and cookies. It was agreed from the start that this program would NOT be the exclusive responsibility of the church, but rather a partnership where all would take an equal share in making it work for the children. It is understood by all that this is a community-based, not a "religious," program, and every effort is made to welcome children of all faiths and backgrounds.

Having begun the first Thursday of October, it has been a solid success with 14 children enrolled, most of whom are six to eight years old. They and the volunteers have had a great time (their Halloween party was a blast!). At present they are working on having a modest "Christmas concert," with the children putting on the church's choir gowns and singing some seasonal songs for their parents and friends.

This program is helping open up their church to its surrounding community. They have gotten wonderfully positive feedback from teachers, parents and kids. People who've never before set foot inside the church are now at least having a look. They're talking with Rev. Maine and making new friends; as a church, members are now discovering their congregation "outside the walls." The Church of the Holy City is venturing into the city, and the possibilities for service, growth and change are very exciting!

ROYAL OAK

Rev. Renee Billings-Machiniak and the parishioners contribute both clothing and volunteer hours at the local community shelter. Their Sunday School also meets with the local 4-H chapter to provide a full program to give the children exposure to both natural and spiritual matters.

WASHINGTON DC

The Church of the Holy City in Washington, D.C., has been holding a lunch-time Bible study-reading group and evening workshops on topics such as Christian mysticism and angels which were led by the Rev Jonathan Mitchell.

(Continued on page 29)



(Continued from page 28)

BRIDGEWATER

The congregation and the Rev. Lee Woofenden participate in the Thanksgiving Food In-gathering sponsored by the Bridgewater Council of Churches. Parishioners bring donations of non-perishable food items to church on Thanksgiving Sunday, as do other churches in town. These gifts were sorted into baskets and were distributed to the needy for both Thanksgiving and Christmas.

They also regularly have walkers in the BCC's Good Friday Walk for Hunger, which is split in three parts to benefit: Sharing, Inc., which focuses on helping the rural poor; Mainspring House, a women's shelter in Brockton, Mass; and the BCC itself. Last year their walkers raised over \$500 total.

This year their church also hosted the annual Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service sponsored by the BCC. This was the first time they had participation from any of the evangelical churches in town, with musical leadership coming from the South Shore Community Church.



SAN FRANCISCO

The Rev. Rachel Rivers writes: Three years ago, in early winter, a package arrived in the mail for me from the Central Office. Martha Bauer was sending me my knitted wool hat that I had left behind by mistake. I was glad to have it back, and I tossed it into my car. Later that day I was needing to walk some distance and I grabbed my hat and put it on my head. I noticed myself thinking, "My, it sure is nice to have this hat keep me warm on this cold, brisk day." And then I thought, "How hard

to be homeless, especially during the cold months. At least having a warm wool hat would keep some of the chill away."



This line of thought found its way into my next sermon, and soon after that the congregation had put together kits containing knitting needles, warm wool yarn and directions and many of us who had not picked up knitting needles in ages were finding ourselves knitting hats. When our congregation took its turn cooking and feeding at our city's interfaith homeless shelter that winter, we offered the residents dozens of hand-knitted hats of various sizes and colors. The next year we did the same thing, and by that time our reputation had spread. When the people we were feeding would ask us which church we were from, we'd respond "The Swedenborgian Church," and they'd say—"Oh yes, the church that knits us hats!"

SAN DIEGO

They have found in their San Diego church family that letting individuals do their own projects is more satisfactory than trying to do something as a group. This congregation is widely scattered throughout the county and getting together for anything other than actual worship services or Bible and doctrinal study is difficult.

However, in doing their "own thing," their organist who is a professional, volunteers his time for at least two hours or more each week playing at an Alzheimer's Convalescent Home. He says his time spent there depends upon how many requests he gets and how long they want to listen.

Another family spends their Saturdays packaging food that is given out at the Food Bank. Another couple sees that transportation is provided for anyone who needs to go to the doctor's office, or enter a hospital. This is provided for mainly non-members.

Lay Leader Eldon Smith and his wife, Annella, open the sanctuary five days a week for anyone to come in and pray or meditate, and the bookroom/library is also open the same hours.

CLEVELAND

The Swedenborg Chapel offers free counseling for every couple who plans their wedding at their church.

The Rev. Jun Chol Lee offers two series, each with five classes, of Eastern philosophy & Meditation classes, one in



spring and another in fall. For the past two years, they have invited all the children in the neighborhood to their church which they have decorated in a haunted way for Halloween.

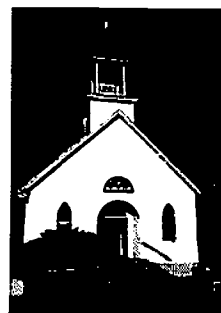
PRETTY PRAIRIE

Their congregation gathers three Sundays a year to clean up a stretch of highway that is designated as the New Jerusalem Church Trash Pick Up Project. Attendance on these days is usually 20 - 40% higher than normal. In the spring and fall they bring sack lunches and go out after church and in the summer they go out early and have a brunch and church service afterwards. The state puts up a sign on the highway that is there year round, essentially advertising their church.

They maintain a mum garden in the shape of a cross at the Lone Star Cemetery. In addition this year they had a "Cemetery Social," providing coffee and cookies for those decorating at the cemetery over Memorial Day weekend. Next year they plan to have a memorial service also.

In other community service, they alternate providing lunch for the local blood drive with other churches in the area. The congregation participates in serving the Ecumenical Pancake Supper, which provides funds to the local scholarship and other service projects. They help fund school supplies for those needing assistance and donate funds to enrich Christmas for underprivileged school children and their families through one of their members who teaches at a low income school.

They also have had several workdays to support the local nursing home, which is having financial difficulties. They go in and clean, repair and paint and also provide baked goods for their bake sales. They participate in local food drives for the Food Bank in the community and prepare a meal and serve at the Soup Kitchen yearly.



Editor's Note:

Many thanks to MINSU chair Barbara Halle for pulling this information together and sending the foregoing article to The Messenger.



Healing as a Sacred Path: A Story of Personal, Medical, and Spiritual Transformation

(Continued from back page)

millennia in the dominant civilized cultures.” [154].

“Awakening the Healer Within” is another significant chapter in this section. He emphasizes that we all bear some responsibility for our illness and our healing. “Only when we are freed up to explore fully the variety of ways that we participate in getting sick will we be able to explore fully the response ability inherent in our inner healer. The former is linked with the latter—our awareness of why and how we get sick can lead our inner healer into the appropriate strategy for getting well. And the contrary is true—the extent that we refuse to consider our participation in getting sick is the extent to which we close off the opportunity for understanding how we can participate in getting well.” [214-215]

He is careful to differentiate this approach from “blame the victim” mentalities often found in our culture. He says accepting responsibility for our own role in our healing and sickness is not blaming the victim.

I’m glad that he has made this differentiation, but I wish that he had spent more time exploring its implications. I think it is all too easy for believers in wholistic healing to feel like failures if they do not become cured from sickness, whether it’s a cold or invasive cancer.

Speaking pastorally, I think it’s important that we be able to help others avoid blaming themselves for not curing their illnesses. I’ve often had to remind people that despite all that they may be doing to foster their wellness, there still are germs around that sometimes are stronger than our body’s capacity to heal. And sometimes coming to terms with a physical illness can be a powerful healing of the soul.

Keck’s chapter “Miracles-in-Progress” talks about transformation. Keck urges us to be open to deep transformational energies, as resisting them can be the primary cause of disease.

I would also add that we should be open to the transformational energies present in disease. Some people have had their deepest spiritual awakenings through their experience of illness, and even in their process of physical death. This, too, is transformational healing, although it may not be the body that is transformed. Ultimately, it is the transformation of our relationship with the Divine that is the goal of healing and, according to Swedenborg, of our spiritual journey. Keck’s book is extremely well written and readable. He brings together his own story with vast amounts of science and spirituality. He has a gift for giving us a great deal of information in an informal, engaging style.

I would like to have seen deeper probing of the issue of transformation. Yet, Keck invites us to come to know a deeper soul-self, and makes clear in his final chapter that this will be different for each of us. It is up to the reader to discover what this means personally.

Only by taking the issues of healing and transformation into our own spiritual journeys can we find their meaning for ourselves.

This is a good book to share and discuss with others, and one that should be widely read in Swedenborgian circles.

The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake is the Spiritual Ministries Consultant under the Ministries Support Unit (MINSU), and is also part-time minister to the Portland, Maine, Swedenborgian Church. She is author of Wings and Roots, published by J. Appleseed & Co., and Crystals, Crosses and Chakras, published by the Swedenborg Foundation.



You’re Invited to a Book Discussion

You are invited to a book discussion group—one that you can start yourself, in your home or church. This is an excellent way to become aware of some of the newest books being published by The Swedenborg Foundation and J. Appleseed, and to use the books to enhance your application of Swedenborgian concepts in your daily life. You can meet weekly or monthly or something in-between. You can have an official leader, or you might want to take turns facilitating the discussion. Share bringing refreshments. Fasten your seatbelts, as this can be a fast track to spiritual insights! Are you ready to begin? Here’s a great book to get you started:

Healing As a Sacred Path: A Story of Personal, Medical, and Spiritual Transformation by L. Robert Keck, Ph.D. The Swedenborg Foundation Chrysalis Books, 2002.

You and your group may want to read this book over three sessions, discussing one section of the book each time you meet. Here are some questions that group members can ponder prior to meeting, and that you may want to discuss when you’re together.

PART I. A PERSONAL STORY: TO HELL AND BACK

1. What were your feelings as you read this section? What was your reaction when you finished it? What events in this section moved you?
2. How do you see God at work in this phase of Dr. Keck’s life? How would you compare his journey with Swedenborg’s stages of regeneration: repentance, reformation, and regeneration?
3. Consider this statement on page 63: “Sometimes it is precisely when we think we are in hell, that heaven calls to us. Sometimes it is when our deepest soul-self feels obliterated that God introduces us to an even deeper, even more appropriate soul-self for our future, thus removing our sense of dying and moving us into the promise of becoming.” Has this been true in your own life? Have you had one or more experiences you would consider a “dark night of the soul?” What was its impact on your relationship with God? You may want to

(Continued on page 31)

You're Invited to a Book Discussion

(Continued from page 30)

bring an example or two to your group for discussion.

Part II. The Medical Story: Past and Present

1. Keck gives us three concepts from Christianity that have led to our disbelief in miracles [pp. 82-88]. What do you think of these concepts? How would you compare Swedenborg's Christianity with this traditional theology?
2. Keck gives us five concepts from modern science that trivializes the role of spirituality in healing. [starting on page 92]. What is your reaction to these principles? How have these concepts impacted your own life?
3. What is your reaction to Keck's definition of miracles on page 120. How do you feel about this definition? How does it compare to Swedenborgian concepts of reality?
4. How do you like his discussion of prayer and the five types of prayer he explains on pages 124-5? Do you use any of these methods of prayer? If any of these are new to you, you may want to explore them prior to meeting with your group and share your experiences.

Part III. The Future Story of Miraculous Healing

1. Consider Keck's approach to our interconnections in the first chapter of this section. Look in particular at the question on page 126 from James Hillman: *Where is the "me"?* Where does the "me" begin? Where does the "me" stop? Where does the "other" begin? You may want to take these questions into prayer or meditation, and share your experiences at your group meeting.
2. The second chapter focuses on our relationships. Consider the quotation given near the top of page 174. Are there ways in which this has been true in your life? Can you bring examples to your group for discussion?

PASSAGES

BAPTISM

Penabaker—Maija Elise Penabaker was baptized into the Christian faith November 10, 2002, at the Royal Oak Church of the Holy City in Detroit, the Rev. Renee Billings Machiniak officiating. Maija is Barb Tourangeau's granddaughter. Parents are Scott and Cindy Penabaker.

CONFIRMATIONS

Bernier—Peter and Patricia Bernier were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church November 24, 2002, at the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Mass., the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating.

Tylersmith, Curtin—Romelda ("Romie") Tylersmith and Karen Curtin were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church December 8, 2002, and welcomed into membership at the Cleveland Swedenborg Chapel in Cleveland, Ohio, the Rev. Junchol Lee officiating.

MARRIAGE

Fick and Hamilton—Heather Fick and Chris Hamilton were united in marriage October 5, 2002, at the Almont Retreat Center. Chris and Heather attend Transitions retreats and are friends of the Royal Oak church in Detroit.

DEATHS

Buck—Anna Marion Buck, 93, entered the spiritual world December 7, 2002. She was born March 27, 1909, in Mansfield, Mass.,

the daughter of George M. and Grace A. (Packard) Buck. She lived almost all of her long life at the family home in Easton, Mass., taking care of her parents in their later years. After a forty year career in nursing, she retired in 1972. A lifelong Swedenborgian, she was a member of the former New Church in Mansfield, Mass., and later of the now inactive New Church in Brockton, Mass. She leaves two sisters: Esther L. Buck of Washington state and Virginia R. Parker of Michigan; and a brother Charles I. Buck of Florida. The rest of her twelve brothers and sisters preceded her in death. She also leaves many nieces and nephews. A funeral service was held December 10 at the Copeland Funeral Home in Easton, Mass., the Rev. Lee Woofenden officiating.

Fadden—Philip F. Fadden, age 70, entered the spiritual world October 27, 2002. A memorial service was held October 30, 2002, at the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating.

Lorenz—Wilfred Grenfell Lorenz, 89, a lifelong Swedenborgian who was active in the former Portland, Oregon, Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world December 12, 2002, in Portland. He leaves behind a legacy of goodness, a loving family, and many friends. The Rev. Forster Freeman, a past president of the Swedenborg Foundation, conducted the memorial service December 19, 2002, at the Skyline Memorial Gardens & Funeral Home.

3. The third chapter talks about healing from within. Read with particular care the section on the story of Jonah and the whale [beginning on page 207]. Then read the following in Swedenborg: *Arcana*, 1691, #5 *Apocalypse Explained*, 706b, #6 How do you compare Swedenborg's discussion of this story with Keck's? Where is the meaning of this story for your life?
4. In the fourth chapter, Dr. Keck talks about ways of awakening the inner healer. He returns to a subject he has addressed before in the book: the importance of dreams. You may want to record some dreams prior

to your group discussion and then share them with your group, using Keck's approach to dreams to understand their meaning for you.

5. How do the principles of the last two chapters apply to your life? Do you think its possible for you to transform the soul-self yet still have a physical illness or disability? How would this impact your relationship with God?
6. How can your group support you at living Keck's healing principles more fully in your life?

—Wilma Wake
Spiritual Ministries Consultant

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.

Healing as a Sacred Path: A Story of Personal, Medical, and Spiritual Transformation

The Swedenborg Foundation, 2002.

By L. Robert Keck
Reviewed by Wilma Wake

Robert Keck was a visiting scholar last year at the Swedenborgian House of Studies. He is also a Methodist minister who has a Ph.D. in the Philosophy of Healing. And he is a survivor of polio and a broken back. His latest book, *Healing as a Sacred Path*, integrates the many dimensions of his life experiences into a readable and valuable perspective on healing.

The first part of his book is a personal story of his struggles with healing, especially during his earlier years. He had great hopes of becoming an athlete during his youth, and persevered despite incredible health problems. He finally achieved his dream, and had two good offers for college athletic scholarships. But a mystical experience intervened, and he decided to go to seminary.

Later in life he became ill again, and his doctor told him that he would spend the rest of his life "in pain, on drugs, and confined to a wheelchair." Not willing to accept the verdict of traditional medicine, he explored meditation and learned that his pain could be significantly reduced and he could lead a normal life. He developed a passion for helping others understand healing and he became a vital

minister, scholar, and healer.

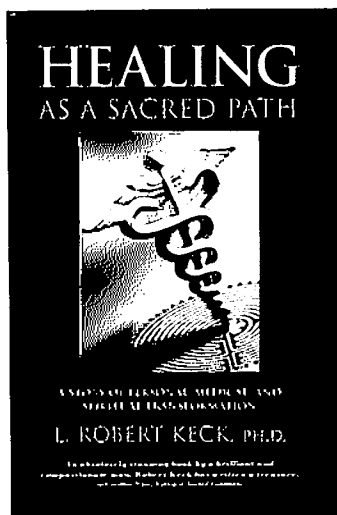
The second part of the book is the account of how constricted paradigms of healing have developed historically, particularly through the Christian tradition. I was pleased that Keck acknowledged Swedenborg's positive role in providing an alternative to this paradigm. I would have preferred for this section to be expanded to give greater focus on Swedenborg's contribution here. But Keck does an admirable job of showing the crucial connection between spiritual and medical healing. He explains the "the story of medical and spiritual evolution, how paradigms can either constrict or liberate an individual's potential for healing, and the new emergent partnership and synergy between medicine and spirituality." [133].

The third section invites us to look at the future of healing. How can we move toward a future that will support healing and wholeness? Keck says the future is "what I believe will become a wonderful, magnanimous, and magnificent story of miraculous healings becoming increasingly available to larger numbers of people and, thus, virtually commonplace." [134].

As an animal lover, I especially enjoyed his first chapter in this section, "An Ecology of the Heart: Nature and Animals." He writes

about our intimate interconnections with nature and animals, and how these relationships can be part of our wholeness. He writes, "I am suggesting that, if we would enlarge our soul-self to include nature and the animal world, we would be opening ourselves up to possibilities for healing that have been denied, overlooked, and trivialized for

(Continued on page 30)



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