

THE MESSENGER

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November 2003

Swedenborgianism and Social Justice

Kathy Speas

How can “social justice” be such a loaded phrase when no Swedenborgians would count themselves committed to “social injustice?” Still, “social justice” has had a contentious history in our denomination. The reasons for this are partly theological and partly due to the thorny difficulty of translating theology into ethics. There is little in Swedenborgian theology that does *not* somehow relate to these questions. If we are going to quote Swedenborg in justification of our position on a particular social issue, what are we going to say?

Those who are born with a disposition to mercy, but do not make their natural acts of mercy spiritual . . . believe that charity consists in giving to everyone who is poor and helping everyone who is needy, without previously enquiring as to whether the poor or needy person is good or wicked . . . the people who do kindnesses are to blame too for the harm done to the good. Doing kindness to an evil-doer is like giving bread to a devil, which he turns into poison. (*True Christian Religion* 428)

The spirituality of charitable acts consists in their being done from a love of justice combined with judgment. (*True Christian Religion* 459[14])

The Lord is the neighbor in the highest sense . . . But all the distinctions of the neighbor can never be known . . . neither does the Lord require any more of the man of the church than to live according to what he knows. (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 86)

How do we decide whether we are giving “bread to a devil” or feeding “the least of my brethren”? Swedenborg affirms our inability to de-

termine the moral fitness of recipients of our compassion. Thank God for good old “judge not that ye be not judged” scripture, which prevents us from having to query each and every person coming to our homeless shelter dinner before allowing them to sit down to a plate of lasagne!

However we interpret or apply doctrines of charity, Swedenborg guides us to not separate ourselves from the society around us in favor of our own spiritual development. Indeed, one of the most important tenets of our theology is the idea of community and how the material world is a “seminary of heaven,” where “. . . no angel or spirit can possibly have any life unless

“The effort to link power with compassion tends to bring concern for spiritual growth and social action together, where they belong . . .”

—George Dole,
Sorting Things Out

he lives . . . in a harmonious relationship of many people. A community is . . . the harmonious relationship of many, for one person’s life in no sense exists in isolation from the life of others . . . the same applies to the human race. (*Arcana Coelestia* 687)

How has this theology been actualized by our denomination in American

history? “Check out the Civil War era,” I was advised by Swedenborgians, “Swedenborgians were great abolitionists.” One of our Convention ministers claims to have the very copy of *True Christian Religion* read by a slaveholder who immediately freed his slaves upon finishing that book. However, upon reading some half a dozen tracts and books from the 1850s and 1860s, it was apparent that Swedenborgian theology has been used both to speak out for human freedom and to justify isolationism and a comfortable status quo.

One early New Church author, Richard deCharms, in evaluating the condition of slavery in light of *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine*, rationalized that slaves were better off in the US than in Africa, and that it was Christian kindness to care for one’s property. DeCharms decries slavery as motivated from “cupidity, not from benevolence,” but goes on to say that God permits slavery to exist “for the exercising and strengthening of noble virtues in those among whom [slavery] unfortunately prevails,” and asserts that slavery saved Africans from cannibalism and provided for the moral and intellectual improvement of Africans. Slavery, in this view, is “correspondent of [Africans] mortal and moral degradation . . . an outbirth of their interior evils, and as a reaction on them for correction or restraint, a sort of penitentiary punishment of defects of their character. He even goes so far as to attribute a correspondential relationship between the degeneration of the Africans’ celestial state and their having “wool instead of hair.”

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Mystical Movie Messages

Several weeks ago a friend in the L.A. Area called me and said, "you remember the movies, *What Dreams May Come* and *Somewhere in Time*?"

"Of course," I said. "I loved those films, and *What Dreams May Come* was discussed rather extensively in *The Messenger* back in 1998 when it came out."

"Well, I was just listening to a fascinating interview with Stephen Simon on public radio. Simon produced both films, and he has a new movie coming out called *Indigo*. He's giving a lecture at the Agape Center in Culver City on September 14, and he's written a book called *The Force is With You: Mystical Movie Messages That Inspire Our Lives*."

"Let's go," I said. It's no small undertaking for us to drive over 150 miles to hear a lecture, but I had no doubt that I was supposed to find out more about this; the various reasons would unfold in time.

The Agape Center holds 2000 people and it was nearly filled soon after our arrival.

Stephen Simon came on and began speaking about his 25 years as a producer who turned out 30-some mainstream films; about his growing vision to make more spiritual movies; the struggle to get *What Dreams May Come* made (it took 20 years); the making of his new low-budget film, *Indigo*, set for release in 2004; commentaries on the spiritual messages in several 2002 films (*About Schmidt* and *The Hours* were among them); and his recent departure from Hollywood.

His commentary on his Hollywood career was filled with the typical funny, poignant, frustrating and horrifying stories of trying to get films made that meant something, and living with compromises. He regrets nothing of that quarter-century experience, but two years ago he knew it was time to leave. He and his family moved to Ashland, Oregon, and in

2003 he founded the corporation, **Moving Messages: The Institute for Spiritual Entertainment (ISE)**.

"Movies," Simon states, "are the most electrifying communications medium ever devised and the natural conduit of inspiring ourselves to look into the eternal issues of *who we are* and *why we are here*."

The ISE is "dedicated to the development of intellectual properties that are focused upon the rediscovery of inner wisdom and divine power. Through myths, archetypes, and storytelling, it explores the magic, mystery, and paradoxes of the human experience...the purpose of the ISE is to provide a venue for the development of artistic and creative works that inspire and ennoble the human spirit. Since the evolution of mankind, it has been the role of the arts to realize in physical expression ideals about what mankind could or should be. The arts provide a venue for mankind's highest spiritual striving."

A large number of dedicated and talented people are involved with the Institute, and, judging from the intense enthusiasm of the audience on September 14, the movement is gathering momentum.

Indigo is Simon's first movie as a director, and it was made on a \$500,000 budget. The film is about a psychically gifted child who heals a family that has been deeply shattered. (It is rather widely believed in mystic circles that *Indigo* children—sometimes referred to as Star children—are being born throughout the world in the last 20 or so years with the specific mission to impart the love and wisdom that will heal the planet.) Neale Donald Walsch, actor and author of the best-selling *Conversations with God*, plays the part of the grandfather.

Simon's book, *The Force is With You*, discusses a number of films made in the last 30-some years that, for him, have spiritual significance.

ISE provides workshops for aspiring

screenwriters, and there is also a club one can join, The Spiritual Cinema Circle—for \$29 a month you can receive three movies on DVD personally chosen to give you the best movies with heart and soul, films that you wouldn't likely see anywhere else. There are several websites you can check out for more information: To register for the Spiritual Cinema Circle, go to www.SpiritualCinemaCircle.com

For more information about Stephen Simon and ISE, go to mysticalmovies.com or movingmessagesmedia.com For information on the production of *Indigo*, go to IndigotheMovie.com

Patte LeVan

As always, we invite *Messenger* readers to discuss or send reviews, and commentary on movies that you feel have imparted a spiritual message. Next month, watch for our review of *Secondhand Lions*.



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Swedenborgianism and Social Justice

(Continued from Cover)

Thus, deCharm's conclusion is that the purpose of slavery (since everything has a purpose in divine providence) is to regenerate the celestial church in Africa. William Holcombe, M.D., in addressing the Members and Friends of the Church of the New Jerusalem in New York, suggests that "differences in interior life or constitution of different races of men give rise to a necessity for widely different means for their regeneration." He justifies slavery as "withholding Africans from the evils from which they are unable to abstain," and feels that the slaves should not be emancipated before they are regenerated by whites, who are the only race able to receive the Church. What might we be saying today that will look so unenlightened to people 200 years from now?

A month before Ft. Sumter, in an address in Portland, Maine, Swedenborgian minister William Hayden left the matter of slavery to God, saying, "times are in the hands of the Lord, we, in our infinite prudence, are not the best judges as to how or when changes should come involving the organic structure of a great community, and the dearest interests of many millions of men." Hayden apologizes for digressing from the "otherwise uniform course of avoiding the discussion of such topics in the pulpit." Just after Ft. Sumter, Thomas Worcester (founder of our seminary) decried slavery as evil, citing scriptural references to man's dominion over everything except other men, and calling for the North to keep the South from seceding. Upon the death of Lincoln, E. S. Benade preached to the First New Jerusalem Society of Pittsburgh, celebrating that "human slavery is abolished forever. . . Crime and curse have been burnt up in the fire of their own building, and out of their ashes there shall arrive a new life, that of the Freedman, to add to the nation's prosperity and glory," and praising the late President as fighting a righteous battle against "the right of man to wring his

bread from the sweat of other men's faces."

Swedenborgians expressed a more egalitarian application of Swedenborgian doctrine following the Civil War. Around the turn of the century, John Worcester wrote of our duties to feed the spiritually and materially hungry (which he called "the industrious poor") and believed that "the most intelligent of men can be instructed by everyone they meet as to some states of life which they did not know before." A New Church publication on charity professed that, "rich and poor, high and low are our neighbor . . . look kindly on all classes of men in their varying states of life."

Swedenborgian doctrine was called upon again at the outset of World War I when the war was justified by some as the kind of war of self-defense of which Swedenborg himself might approve. Julian K. Smythe, describing World War I as a threat to our spirituality, cites Swedenborg's affirmations that evils are permitted (*Divine Providence* 251), that it is noble to die for one's country (*True Christian Religion* 414), and that our country is the neighbor we are exhorted by scripture to love (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 93). There are numerous commentaries in Swedenborgian publications of these years about the war, suggesting that it was not just a few souls who chose to speak out against social injustice. There were several publications from the World War II era related to Swedenborg's ambivalence about war, most notably a New Church tract calling for Swedenborgians to join the war efforts, and justifying killing by rationalizing that "death of the body merely changes the scene of life from this world to the Spiritual world."

Helen Keller gave an address at the Church of the Holy City in Washington DC in 1928, responding to the complaint that Swedenborgians (and Christians in general) were not "leading any movement for world betterment," asking, "What are they doing to promote peace and good will among men?" Ms. Keller delivered an eloquent call to action:

If the people are to find spiritual joy in the Church, the Church must establish a practical Christianity upon earth. . . . We have a precious treasure in the New Church, and we must be careful not to value the vessel more than the treasure. . . . The withdrawing attitude of the New Church keeps people from knowing what a glorious message it has for those who are lost in the fogs of materialism. . . . I want to see the New Church put on its beautiful garments and shake itself from the dust of aloofness.

John Bigelow, another New Church author in the late 1920s, observes that the biggest differences between the "haves" and "have-nots" are found in Christian nations, which evidenced considerable technological and material progress, but little spiritual progress in the years after the Great World War. However, Bigelow displays some of the same tendency to use Swedenborgian theology in service of the status quo when he claims that some people are better regenerated by poverty, which keeps them from temptations they are unable to resist. "The Golden Rule is more easily taught and more readily observed in adversity than in prosperity," and "people's environment is precisely adapted to their needs," he advises. Bigelow associates qualities of spirit and character with poverty and wealth, showing him to be of a social location where "untruthfulness, idleness, imprudence, self-indulgence, ignorance, intemperance, impatience, and selfishness" were projected onto the impoverished (not indicted Enron and WorldCom executives) and where "usefulness to humanity" was correlated with wealth (not with being a teacher or firefighter who can barely make ends meet).

Around the time of World War II, Swedenborgians began to focus more on the general issue of the church and social justice, perhaps in response to increasing news about conditions around the world. The world had a general tendency to "get smaller" as people served abroad and returned to an increasingly mobile and changing society. Edward J. Pulsford said that "the New Church cannot be satisfied

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to regard social reform as an end in itself, or to advocate or work for it as such . . . [A] social system that achieved the reformer's dreams—freedom from want, freedom from disease, from fear or war, etc., and yet left men loving and living for themselves and for the world, rather than for the Lord and their neighbor, enjoying a paradise of self-gratification, would be a sorry failure." The role of the New Church, he says, is "to cultivate a certain quality in the life of the people, in order that [reform's] beneficent aims can be achieved, and not to be involved in social reforms."

Currently, the denomination does not have social justice as part of its "brand image," as do groups like the Quakers, Mennonites, or Amish. The September 2000 issue of *Our Daily Bread* included several different explanations of our approach. Quoted is a 1967 sermon by Clayton Priestnal which calls us back to a purely spiritual focus. Adolph Liebert agrees with this but stresses the importance of living our faith so that society's ills can be healed. Robert McCluskey exhorts us to fight racism by identifying how each of us participates in its perpetration. Ted Klein suggests things that individuals and congregations can do in "addressing injustices, responding compassionately to pains and to needs, and seeking to aid people in coming to freedom."

The theme of Convention in 1995 was "Doing Justice with Mercy: Where Heaven Begins." In Robert McCluskey's keynote sermon in *The Messenger* (September 1995), he observes that recent collective denominational social action initiatives have failed, "largely due to the prevailing belief that the Church should leave such efforts to the individual and should not presume to speak for all its members."

The thorny question is, "How to act?"

I suggest that there are three dimensions that must be considered in arriving at a position on social justice:


1. **God's Intent:** What role does the Divine play, and what is my role in manifesting the Divine? How can justice and judgment be tempered with mercy and forgiveness? How can compassion be tempered with accountability and empowerment (not enabling)?

2. **Personal Intent:** How do my social location and my worldview guide my positions? How does the situation speak to my individual gifts? How do I separate my own self-interest (such as assuaging guilt) from the common good?

3. **Community Context:** What long- and short-term community needs are being addressed? What longer-range effects are my actions (or restraint from action) likely to have? What is the "Common Good" in question? The call to action is this: Be deliberate in arriving at your position, but arrive at one. You may feel called to link our Church to social action initiatives in your community. You may feel called to focus your spiritual education on developing the compassionate spirit in your parishioners or students. You may alternate positions, depending on the context. George Dole, in his book *Sorting Things Out*, perhaps articulates it best:

The effort to link power with compassion tends to bring concern for spiritual growth and social action together, where they belong. If spiritual growth is conceived of as a strictly private matter, as involving only an inner relationship to God, then it does lead to disengagement from the world around us. If social action is conceived of as strictly the redesign of societal machinery, then it becomes oblivious to the hearts from which both justice and injustice arise. (p. 191)

Let us not forget the tenets of our theology that allow for as many different reactions to a situation as there are individuals. Let us not condemn those who choose a different course of action. And let us choose our own paths wisely, and with love.

Kathy Speas is a third-year student at the Swedenborgian House of Studies and a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. She's married to Todd Board. Kathy grew up in Baltimore and went to college in Montreal, lived in Denver and North Carolina before moving to California in 1995, and has a background in social work and marketing research. Her article is a condensation of a paper she wrote for a class at SHS. She will provide footnotes and sources for the article on request. Kspeas@aol.com 

Restorative Justice: A Paradigm

Jackie Lageson

Daniel Van Ness, a writer and implementor of the Restorative Justice paradigm, proposes that if crime is more than lawbreaking, then justice requires that we should work to heal victims, communities and offenders who have been injured by crime; victims, communities, and offenders should have opportunities for active involvement as early and as fully as possible; and we must rethink the relative roles and responsibilities of the government and the community. *Government is responsible for preserving a just order, and the community for establishing a just peace.*

Within the current retributive paradigm, the questions currently asked are:

1. Who done it?
2. What laws were broken?
3. How will we punish the offender?

Within the Restorative Justice paradigm, Howard Zehr, author of *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, asks these questions:

1. What is the harm?
2. What needs to be done to repair the harm?
3. Who is responsible for this repair?

Restorative Justice brings victims and offenders into contact, so that victims can get answers to their questions, tell the offender what the real impact of their offending was and receive an apology. Restorative Justice gives offenders the chance to make amends for

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Swedenborgian Book of the Bi-month Club Begins

Wilma Wake

A number of people are taking advantage of our new book club. A group in the LaPorte New Church (Indiana) has been meeting since the summer in conversation with us, but also choosing some different books for their discussion. They are adding great new ideas for our next series of books for discussion.

In Massachusetts, a group at the Bridgewater church has now signed up, and is starting with the first book, the new Chrysalis Reader, *Eternal Wellness*. They will move on in two months to the New Century Edition translation of *Divine Providence*.

Several other scattered Swedenborgians have expressed interest in the book club. We're looking into develop-

ing an internet group for those of you who don't have a group nearby.

It's never too late to join—you can start at any time, and begin a group in your area or join the internet discussion.

Discussion questions for the first two books are being mailed to the participants, but later questions will be in *The Messenger*.

Don't miss this incredible opportunity to be "in the know" about our newest Swedenborgian publications and to be part of book discussions that will take place throughout the denomination!

If interested, contact Spiritual Ministries Consultant, Wilma Wake
Home phone: 207 985-8776
Email: wilwake@adelphia.net
or Wakewil@aol.com



New Spirituality Programs

MINSU is offering a number of new programs to our centers through the Spiritual Ministries Consultant. They include:

- **Training in spirituality leadership.** We are integrating our programs with the new Lay Leader Certificates from SHS. Let us know if you would like to pursue a lay leader certificate in spirituality leadership.
- **Roots: Exploring Your Church History.** We are assisting churches who wish to probe into their history, and create a timeline of events and patterns. We'll then help you to preserve your materials in archives as well as prepare a manuscript for J. Appleseed about your history. J. Appleseed is publishing a series of summary publications of the history of our churches, and your church can be a part of it.
- **Interim Ministries:** If you are struggling with having lost a minister, we can help you explore programs and

opportunities for interim ministries, involving trained interim ministers, as well as developing your own internal leadership with the help of MINSU resources.

In addition, our ongoing programs continue:

- **Spirituality Weekends.** A weekend program for your parish on the living of Swedenborgian spirituality and taking it into the community and spiritual companionship to each other, either within your center or to offer to the public.

If interested, sign up soon. The available workshop time for the Spiritual Ministries Consultant in the coming year is going fast. Contact:

Wilma Wake, SMC
207 985-8776
wilwake@adelphia.com or
wakewil@aol.com



SMC Position Completes First Year

The Spiritual Ministries Consultant position has completed its first year. During the first 12 months of this position, the SMC:

1. Developed materials to study "Old Testament People" with New Church College in England.
2. Developed a Youth peace packet for church groups.
3. Developed a parish program for spiritual companioning groups
4. Developed a program to mentor and train leaders for spiritual companioning groups
5. Developed a workshop for parishes seeking an interim minister
6. Helped develop a lay leadership program for the denomination
7. Developed a certificate program for lay leadership certificate in spirituality
8. Developed a Swedenborgian Book of the Bi-month Club

Visited These Places:

1. Michigan Association
2. Cambridge Church
3. Elmwood Church
4. New York Church
5. Blairhaven Youth Retreat
6. Fryeburg Memorial Day Youth Retreat
7. Convention for mini-course
8. Shalem Institute residency for facilitating group spiritual direction
9. Ministers' retreat with David Spangler
10. SHS for lay leadership meeting
11. LaPorte with MINSU
12. Wayfarers Chapel with MINSU

Received this Response ...

1. Appreciation from youth for presence at their retreats
2. Enthusiasm from adults for deepening spirituality programs
3. Gratitude from New York for help in seeking an interim minister

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Short Takes

San Francisco

The Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers, pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, is hosting a fall discussion group of the Rev. Dr. George Dole's New Century Edition translation of Swedenborg's *Divine Love & Wisdom*.

The spiritual classics, *Divine Love and Wisdom* and *Divine Providence*, are now in the new and eminently readable translation, describing in vivid detail the universal spiritual laws that shape the world and our lives and provide unique and often surprising answers to age-old questions about the nature of God, the universe, and the inner self. Introductions by Dr. Gregory Johnson and annotations by Dole, Johnson, and other scholars of Swedenborg, supported by several complete indexes, provide readers with wide paths of access to these remarkable works.

On October 8, Dr. Gregory Johnson presented at the San Francisco church an evening of conversation about Swedenborg's enlightened understanding of the nature of God and what difference this understanding can make in our lives. Dr. Johnson is the Associate Professor of Swedenborgian Studies at the Swedenborgian House of Studies at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley.

Seminarlans Internship Completed

Swedenborgian House of Studies students Kathy Speas and Alison Baxter concluded their year-long internship at the San Francisco church in May. Alison's internship focused on leading the Sunday School program and providing adult Bible study classes every Sunday. Kathy's focus was on outreach and social concerns as well as offering classes on the exploration of prayer. In addition, Kathy and Alison officiated at weddings, baptisms and memorials with care, concern and presence. SHS student Carla Friedrich is interning for the 2003/04 academic year, which began in September.

Chrysalis Reader Event

On November 6, several authors featured in the recently-published Chrysalis Reader, *Eternal Wellness*, will read from their works at SHS, at the Pacific School of Religion campus in Berkeley. West Coast authors presenting include Wilson Van Dusen, Carol Lem, Mike Taylor, W.E. Reinka, Steven Moss, and Linda Lancionne Moyer. The Reader event, hosted by the Swedenborg Foundation, takes place at 7:00 with a reception following. Foundation Director Deborah Forman, in the absence of Alice Skinner, art editor of the Chrysalis Reader, will discuss the art of art selection for *Eternal Wellness*.



BLESSING IN A BAG

What Is a "Blessing In a Bag?"

Each bag contains: a Blessing, a Swedenborgian quote, one Swedenborgian Cross magnet, and an item significant for the blessing, such as a heart, a star, a penny, a shell, a crystal or a stone.

The Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound has created six different colored 3" X 4" sacred bags. Each color corresponds to a different Blessing:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Red = Love | Lavender = Joy |
| Gold = Prosperity | Ivory = Gratitude |
| White = Wisdom | Silver = Good Luck |

Purchase Price: \$5.00 per bag, plus \$10.00, shipping and handling, for fewer than 12, \$3.50 per bag, plus \$15.00, shipping and handling, for orders of 12-24; \$20.00, shipping and handling, for orders of 25-49; \$25.00, shipping and handling, for orders of 50-74; \$30.00, shipping and handling, for orders of 75-99. We will pay shipping and handling for all pre-paid orders for 100 bags, (\$350) or more.

All pre-paid orders received by November 20th, 2003, will be shipped first class by the end of November 2003, to ensure ample time for holiday season sales.

Name _____
would like to order (#) of EACH or

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| _____ # Love | _____ # Joy |
| _____ # Prosperity | _____ # Gratitude |
| _____ # Wisdom | _____ # Good Luck |

bags for a total order of _____ (#) of bags.

Enclosed is our check or money order in the amount of \$ _____ (including s&h above) made payable to:
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Mail to: Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound
21030 54th Avenue West
Lynnwood, WA 98036
Attn.: Kim Roff

Please ship to: _____

Print Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Marketing materials and receipts will be included with each order.

Thank you and Blessings from The Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound.



Editor's Note: The following is a continuation of the *Faith of our Mothers* Convention theme, chronicling some history of New Church Women in New England.

Faith of Our Mothers

Denyse Daurat

Massachusetts is the home of the founding Church of the New Jerusalem in North America, in Boston. It was from this beginning that General Convention was ultimately born and organized as societies. The Boston Society benefitted from the efforts of early New Church women. In 1817, the first meetings of the Society were held at the home of Margaret Hiller Prescott. In 1845, the Boston Church was built at 132 Bowdoin Street on the site of the home of Thomazine Minot and her second husband, John Wilkins.

Eleanor Peebles of the Boston Society, strongly supported by Alix Williams, worked tirelessly to keep the Society within Convention and was recognized by Convention for her efforts. Mrs. Peebles was also extremely knowledgeable about homeopathy.

Dorothy de.B. Young of the Boston Society was for a long time Secretary of Convention and the secretary of the Boston Society for 30 years.

Marjorie Nichols Gale, the daughter of Malcolm Nichols, mayor of Boston in the 1920s, was born into the Church. She treasured the Swedenborgian books her father left her and loved the Church and its teachings. She was the chief of the operating room nurses at New England Baptist Hospital. Mrs. Gale taught Sunday school in the Boston Society and was a member of many committees and also secretary of the Society, a member of the Ladies Auxiliary and the Alliance. Marjorie's great sense of humor, quick mind, and affectionate nature endeared her to many friends.

Prior to being the first woman ordained in General Convention, the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey had served in the military. As a college professor she taught students as well as prison inmates. She was for many years a professor at SSR and is now the general pastor of the Mass. Association.

Gertrude Isabelle Weems was married to the Rev. Samuel Weems, the first African American to be ordained by Convention. He became the pastor and founder of the North Cambridge Swedenborgian Church. Mrs. Weems worked by his side, and being a trained teacher, she taught Sunday school, piano, sewing, nutrition, elocution, and drama. She also played the piano for the services. Her mission was to be of use in the neighborhood and to help new migrants from the South overcome their disadvantages and be successful in their new location. She managed to do all this and more while raising eight children. She passed on her love of the teachings to her granddaughter, the Rev. Gladys Wheaton, who was the first female African American minister. Ordained in 1980, she served the Cambridge Church as associate pastor to the Rev. Wilford Rice. Since returning to Cambridge in 1998 as a retiree after serving several other parishes, the Rev. Wheaton has sought to help people with their

prayer life and encourage deeper group prayer. She is a member of the Cambridge Church and pastor of the Newtonville Church.

Louise Dole Woofenden, wife of the Rev. Dr. Bill Woofenden, has devoted her life to family and church. She was a member of the Sunday School Association and very active in planning for it. She illustrated activity books to go with her mother Anita Dole's *Dole Study Notes*, and she is also an accomplished artist and book illustrator. Louise was a leading light of the Church. She is still active in helping her husband with his computer skills. She was the archivist of the Swedenborg School of Religion. Marian Kirven, wife of the Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven, was active in the church and was the librarian at SSR and mentor to the women students.

Mary Lathbury of the Bridgewater church wrote the hymn "Break Thou the Bread of Life" and many other hymns.

Mary Elizabeth Cook Wisdom was an outstanding member of the Cambridge church. Her mother, Elizabeth Hammond Cook, was a devoted charter member of the Cambridge Society. Mrs. Wisdom was treasurer of the Ladies Aid for many years and an officer of the Massachusetts Alliance of New Church Women. She was a member of the King's Daughters, a society of New Church women. She loved the church and rarely missed a service. As a volunteer, she read several times a week to the Rev. Everett Bray after he lost his sight. Her courage and high ideals and common sense strengthened her when she became a young widow with a daughter.

Elizabeth Ann Wisdom, Mary's daughter, has followed in her mother's footsteps. She and Harriet Whitehead, who was a lifelong member of the Church, were the most visible members of the Society in the community as they volunteered in countless ways. Harriet taught Sunday School and contributed her musical talents. She was fiercely dedicated to preserving Cambridge Chapel as a Swedenborgian place of worship, right up to her death at the age of 92.

Ethel Vennison Rice, wife of the Rev. Wilford Rice, was Secretary of Convention and of the Cambridge Society for many years. She wrote a definitive history of the New Church Women's Alliance. Her cheery nature and optimistic view helped many parishioners and friends in good and bad times. Her deep devotion to the Church and its teachings was a beacon of light for many.

Marjorie Tuzik is a member of "The Flames" at the Fryeburg Assembly and was present at the very first meeting 75 years ago. She became a member of the church in 1927 and finally joined the Cambridge Society in 1990 when she took charge and brought order at every level. She stated that the House of the Lord should at the very least look as cared for as your own. Marjorie lived in New Hampshire at the time but still made the 75-mile journey frequently. Her upbeat personality and cheerfulness, especially in the face of adversity, are admirable traits.

Betty Guiu taught Sunday school for many years and is a devoted member of the church, very active in the Mass. Association of New Church Women, the Women's Alliance and the Ladies' Aid.

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Editor's Note: The Rev. Kim Hinrichs, ordained this past summer at our convention in Geneva, New York, was the first to be graduated from the new Swedenborgian House of Studies. The Rev. Gladys Wheaton and Philip Bae were the last students to receive an M.A. degree from the "old" SSR in Newton, Mass. Unfortunately we didn't have space in the September 2001 *Messenger*. Several succeeding *Messengers* were filled with post-9/11 responses, and so the graduates' remarks never got published. Their speeches were given June 28, 2001, at St. Thomas University, at our convention in St. Paul, Minnesota. To grant them a long-overdue honor, the Rev. Gladys Wheaton's speech is printed below, with Philip Bae's to follow in our December issue.

In Praise and Thanksgiving

Gladys Wheaton

Board of trustees, faculty, fellow students, members of Convention, family, and friends, both here and in the spiritual world, and guests—

Praise the Lord! I have finally completed what, for me, is a kind of summary of my life's work to date. This project, in a sense, really began with my ordination in 1980 when my plan of ministry was to introduce to churches something that was called Christian Community Counseling, based on Re-evaluation Co-counseling by Harvey Jackins.

Since that time I encountered another psychological discipline called Focusing, developed by Eugene Gendlin, and subsequently discovered Non-violent Communication developed by Marshall Rosenberg. These became incorporated into my spiritual practice along with practices developed from study of the Bible, Swedenborg's writings, other religions and religious philosophies.

This brought me to the current focus of my personal spiritual practice which is learning to love myself as the Lord loves me. This is based on the three biblical commandments which tell us to love God, love our neighbor

and to love one another as the Lord Jesus Christ loves us. It was my desire to share this learning with others and invite reciprocal learning that led to this project and thus to this degree.

When I got ready to prepare this talk, I prayed. I asked the Lord to help me say whatever would be useful, and I began to write. As I got down to the bottom of the page, I realized that I had forgotten the very thing that this degree is all about for me—"Loving Oneself as the Lord Loves One."

I had forgotten to ask the Lord to help me love myself as S/He loves me. When I did, this is what came forth:

Thank You, Lord, for making me, me! Thank You that the pattern of my existence has been present in You from eternity. Thank You, that You foresaw my use in this world and the next, as well as the struggles I would encounter in becoming conscious of You and myself, as well as the rest of the world around me.

Thank You that You have prepared a path that maintains my freedom to choose between the narrowly binding self-only road and the all-encompassing self-plus-others road.

Thank You that there are such things as an angelic proprium, an angel-self, an image-and-likeness-of-You self that has been there all along; a God-given self that wants to become all that s/he can be; that wants to weave the elements of this outer creation into a personal form that rejoices in all the other personal forms around her or him; that sees You and receives You in all those others, and as a result, a lovely surprising result, learns more about oneself and You and the others and delights in the learning.

Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, for Your Revelation of Yourself in the works of Your Servant, Emanuel Swedenborg. Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, for the reception of that Revelation in my spiritual ancestors in this Church.

Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, for those in this Church and at SSR who have allowed my reception of You, and my way of expressing that, to be useful to them.

And thank You also for those for whom my way of receiving You makes no sense whatsoever, and all others in between, especially those who are willing to share what is meaningful to them in spite of the differences.

Praise You and Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, for making me, me!

Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, for making each of us who we are!

And thank You, Lord, for You!
AMEN

Thank you all.

The Rev. Gladys A. Wheaton is pastor of the Swedenborgian Church in Newtonville, Mass.



Proprioceptive Writing Workshop

My Experience

Rebecca Eliot

At the end of June, just before Convention 2003, I was thrilled to receive the scholarship from Convention's Communications Support Unit to attend my first Proprioceptive Writing workshop, which took place in Portland, Maine. It is a writing method I've been curious about for years. I quickly discovered Spirit was showing me a way to go deeper with my "inner writings" and stretch my honesty muscle—which can always help in all my creative endeavors. My class was the start of a new format which included one day of meeting with others and three "writes" sessions, followed by three more sessions online with one of the instructors.

I was honored to have my first class be filled with such a spectrum of experience, wisdom, and commitment to this process. I was a baby newcomer, while the others ranged from three to twenty-five years of committed practice to this tool. I was in the best group to just leap with spirit into this new direction. I find the practice is

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TO THE EDITOR

Open letter to Convention:

As president of the Board of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound, I would like to clarify something I heard at Convention regarding our connection with The Stonehouse Bookstore, which is a private enterprise run by Rev. Paul Martin.

The Swedenborgian Church has been in the Puget Sound area since Cal Turley came up from Portland, Oregon in 1959. It grew and flourished, building a cantilevered church in Bellevue in the early 1960s. The church had three ministers supported by our seminary, then the Swedenborg School of Religion, which sent its students here to do internships. Around 1980, for various reasons, the Bellevue church building was sold, and two of the ministers left. Members continued to meet in homes or in Rev. Dave Johnson's counseling office.

Rev. Paul Martin was called to lead the church in Puget Sound in 1984. In 1985 he and his wife, with support from General Convention, established The Stonehouse Bookstore and Growth Center in a little stone house in Redmond, Washington. The church continued to meet in homes and occasionally rented space from Paul in the Stonehouse. When more and more of Paul's time was taken up by the bookstore and his retreat center at Mosswood Hollow, the church called Rev. Steve Pults, who, for three years, rented office and meeting space from Paul in the Leary and Cleveland Stonehouse location. In 1999, the Pacific Coast Association bought a building in Rose Hill for Paul and his bookstore. In January 2000, Rev. Eric Allison was called to regrow the church. The church rented space in the new location called The Stonehouse Bookstore and Spiritual Growth Center, as the church met there for their Sunday

morning services as well as rented office space for Eric. In late 2002, PCA sold the Rose Hill property. The new owners asked the bookstore to relocate, which they did in spring of 2003. The church continued to rent space in the Rose Hill property until we, also, were asked to find a new space.

We had our Exodus Service on June 8th, 2003. Sunday services over the summer were held in various locations, including a Shinto Shrine, on a Washington State ferry and at other diverse locations. While searching for a permanent location, we rented space for Sunday evening services of reflection and meditation, as well as office space for Eric, in the New Stonehouse in the Houghton area. On September 21st, 2003, thanks to a generous offer from the church board of the Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Kirkland, we began having Sunday services at 5:00 p.m. in their sanctuary.

While continuing to search for a permanent location, we are renting office space for Eric in the New Stonehouse in the Houghton area. We are looking for a place to grow our vision of what we would like the church to become to fulfill our Mission Statement of "Creating Heaven on Earth by celebrating Divine Love and Wisdom through Worship, the Arts and Service."

Yes, we do have a business relationship with Rev. Paul Martin and The Stonehouse. However, we are not The Stonehouse. We are the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound with a vision and identity and future of our own.

With thanks for your continued prayers and support through this time of transition,

—Nancy Apple
President of the Board
Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound



Restorative Justice: A Paradigm

(Continued from page 140)

their crime, either to the victim(s) or to the community. But restorative Justice is about more than material reparation—it can repair relationships and trust that have been broken by crime.

Restorative Justice gives rights to victims and challenges offenders, communities and victims to take part in building a better future. By helping citizens resolve conflicts between themselves, Restorative Justice forms a key part in reviving an emphasis on civil renewal, empowering ordinary people to tackle problems at a local level. Restorative Justice recognizes that crime is not just an offense against the state, but a breaking of trust between people. This recognition can transform how we approach crime and justice.

The faith community's role in establishing a just peace is to assist in providing a space for restorative practices to happen, to facilitate the repairing and healing of relationships, and to aid in establishing or reestablishing trust. As a faith community we receive our instructions from the Word as to "how to" establish a Just Peace. In 1 John 4:18 it says, "there is no fear in Love, but perfect Love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfect in Love." As a faith community, our charge is to establish a just peace through the power of love and forgiveness, and to heal and nurture relationships in our personal lives, our small groups, and our national communities.

Jackie Lageson is a member of Cambridge Chapel, our Swedenborgian Church in Cambridge, Mass. She is director of the Chapel's Social Action Ministries and editor of the Cambridge Chapel newsletter.

Reprinted with author's permission from the August 2003 Cambridge Chapel newsletter.



Fryeburg New Church Assembly 2003: Two Weeks in Paradise

Trevor Woofenden

Despite sudden stormy weather, the Fryeburg New Church Assembly family camp had a fabulous session this August with loads of people cheerfully volunteering their time and energy to help run what several campers called "the best summer ever."

Picture three or four generations of Swedenborgians gathering for two weeks of spiritual education, fellowship, recreation, and relaxation in the midst of towering pines on the banks of the cool, clear Saco River—catching up with old friends and making new ones. See the towering peak of Mount Washington from the comfort of an old rocker on the front porch of the Main Building as you look up from your book, crossword puzzle, or conversation. Taste the healthy, nutritious, and tasty meals that our cooks prepare. Hear the big camp bell ringing out its deep tones across the entire camp to announce rising time, breakfast, morning chapel, lectures, lunch, dinner, and special activities. Smell the sweet, cleansing fragrance of the pine forests of Maine envelop you wherever you go. And get in touch with our strong faith and inspiring teachings through adult lectures and discussions, and

children's religious classes. It is a remarkably full experience that has something for everyone and brings people back year after year.

Many of the attendees were returning campers: people who come every year, offering a clear continuity and a steady base of leadership and support. We also had a large number of new people this year, both local people from Fryeburg as well as others from all over New England and beyond. Many were eager to return next year!

Lecture staff this year included the Revs. Bill Woofenden, George Dole, Susannah Currie, Gladys Wheaton, Lee Woofenden, Dorothea Harvey, F. Bob Tafel, and Ken Turley, as well as third-year Swedenborgian House of Studies student Doug Moss and former Swedenborg Foundation director David Eller. Our theme the first week was "Inside Looking Out"—a compelling and informative exploration of how the New Church views other Christian denominations. And our second week's theme was "The Gospels," an overview of the first four books of the New Testament that focused in on several specific aspects as well.

During the middle weekend of camp, we were particularly happy to welcome back a number of people who had not been to FNCA for quite a while. They came to participate in the Flames 75th Anniversary Reunion. Seventy-five years ago, the teens at camp organized themselves into a group they called The Flames. (Over the years the younger children have come to be known as

Sparks, the adults as Bonfires, and the elderly are affectionately referred to as Embers.)

Old Flames received an invitation to come join the gala event, and they returned in droves! Saturday was the high point of the weekend. We followed our regular morning schedule: breakfast, morning chapel, 1st lecture, 2nd lecture, children's classes, lunch. Then after lunch we held the FNCA annual meeting. Our board of directors is now comprised of John Perry (president), Rev. Ken Turley (vice-president), Jesse White (secretary), Nicole O'Brien (treasurer), Bob Perry (assistant treasurer), Debbie Cook (camp director), Colgate Searle, Dave Richardson, Ed Schnurr, and Trevor Woofenden. Our new registrar is Merillee Phinney. The nominating committee is Cecilia Searle, Rev. Gard Perry, and Lois Dole.

After the meeting, Flames memorabilia and photos were on display in the Flames rec hall, Chalmers Lodge. Then we had the dedication of the newest building on campus: the Adrienne Frank Fellowship Hall, which has been affectionately shortened to Adrienne Hall. Afterwards, we had an outdoor barbecue with the tables set up on the front lawn like they used to do every Saturday dinner back in the old days. The tables were all beautifully set with tablecloths and fresh flowers.

The highlight of the evening was a long-standing Flames tradition, Stunt Night! But instead of a series of humorous skits, songs, and the silly jokes everyone has come to expect, each decade of Flames was called in turn to a row of chairs on the stage. And as the microphone was passed from hand to hand the crowd roared with laughter and clapped with delight as each Flame shared a fond memory from his or her time as a Flame.

In between, some of the groups offered musical entertainment after their peers had finished speaking: with a mop wig and ukulele, the Rev. Dr. George Dole from the 40s Flames recreated his Tiny Tim parody "Tinkering with the Toilets" ("Tiptoe Through the Tulips"); the 70s Flames as a group offered several humorous songs from their era including "The Swilling Hole

(Continued on page 148)



Above: Louise Woofenden, Ellen Woofenden, with group on porch; reunion.

Right: Gard Perry, Mac White; Sheldon Perry; reunion.



Fryeburg New Church Assembly

August 2003 Lecture Tapes Available

Topic 1: The Gospels

The central text of the Christian Church, the Gospels, describe the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They proclaim him the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Messiah, Redeemer, Lord and Savior, one with the Father. They portray him as the Messiah promised in the Hebrew Scriptures, the fulfillment of the covenant between God and humanity. Over the centuries, these four accounts of a solitary life have led to the formation of the church, to culture and community, to debate and controversy, to peace and war, healing and violence.

In the New Church, we are invited to view the Gospels with new eyes and new meaning. Not as a record of past events, miraculous or malicious, but a description of how God moves and works within each person who invites him to dwell with them, pointing the way to genuine justice and peace. The road is difficult and fraught with danger, but the overall message is one of genuine hope and vision for each and all of us. Let's explore this hope and this vision together.

Topic 2: Inside Looking Out

As "a Christian church with a new and compelling message for our

time," the New Church holds a unique place among Christian churches and other religions in our culture. Yet many Swedenborgians are as unclear about traditional Christian doctrine as non-Swedenborgians are about the New Church. What makes us different, distinctive, unique? Answering this question leads us to ask as well, what is it we share in common with other Christian churches, and with other religious perspectives? How can we present the teachings of our church in ways that others find intelligible and meaningful, and how can we best dialogue with those who hold different views about Christianity or religion?

During this week, lectures present an overview of the fundamental concepts that make this church different from other churches. They also seek to explore traditional teachings that are either absent from New Church doctrine, or interpreted in a significantly different way. Some examples that have been suggested are: original sin, immaculate conception, the trinity, faith "alone," and reincarnation. The overall goal is to lessen the gap so often felt between us and our fellow Christians and to encourage us to think more clearly about our own understanding of the New Church in relation to the church universal.

Lecture Schedule

Week One: "Inside Looking Out" Comparing New and Old Church Theology

Mon: 1. Bill Woofenden:
Why Do We Call It The New Church?

2. George Dole:
A Question of Perspective

Tue: 1. Ken Turley:
What We Have in Common with "Them"

2. Dave Eller:
Understanding Protestantism

Thu: 1. George Dole:
What the Bible Says - And How

2. F. Bob Tafel:
The Way We See Things

Fri: 1. Lee Woofenden:
Facing The Tough Questions From
Traditional Christians

2. Bill Woofenden:
The New Church Doctrine of the Trinity

Sat: 1. Dave Eller:
What Pietism Teaches about the Inner Life

2. Gladys Wheaton:
Memorable Experiences of Other Faiths

Week Two: "The Gospels" The Written Word on the Living Word

Mon: 1. George Dole:
The Great Debate

2. Dorothea Harvey:
Providential Discrepancies in the Gospels

Tue: 1. Gladys Wheaton:
The Gospels: Aint'a That Good News!

2. Doug Moss:
Why Four Gospels

Thu: 1. Bill Woofenden:
The Lord's Second Coming (Mt. 24:3)

2. Lee Woofenden:
A Life of Jesus Little Known

Fri: 1. Susannah Currie:
Jesus Christ and the Way

2. Bill Woofenden:
What? Love my enemies? Yes! Love your
enemies! (Mt. 5:43-45, John 13:35)

Sat: 1. Doug Moss:
Who Wrote Them, and When?

2. George Dole:
Be Born in Us Today

Cassette Tapes of the FNCA Lecture series are now available. Cost is \$4.00 per tape (two lectures) or \$20.00 per week. Please add \$4.00 S&H.

Order from and checks made out to:
Fryeburg New Church, 4 Oxford Street,
Fryeburg, ME 04037.



Flames Reunion

Song" ("The Swimming Hole Song") and "Don't Blink the Lights" ("Don't Fence Me In"); and the 90s Flames had us all join in a rousing version of "Sparkle-Sparkle-Little-Flame (you know that one).

All in all, it was a wonderful reunion. Our thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make this such a terrific event. And a great big THANK YOU to all the returning Flames, many of whom have already made plans to come back again next year.

Another thing that made this year different was the rain. Early in the first week the rains began and continued nearly every day. It rained so much that the river rose over nine feet, covering the ramp down to our dock and almost the entire lower railing. At its peak, it was up over the bank and up to the second step up the hill. Although it did go down quite a bit, our beach still hadn't reappeared by the last day of camp.

There was only one sad point in the entire two weeks—it was the final year for Sally and Bill Fernald, our wonderful cooks. Sally has done a fabulous job of feeding the Assembly for 24 years. And Bill has been with her for

most of that time. To honor their retirement we presented them with a framed painting of a scene at camp by FNCA regular Carolyn Judson, plus a substantial financial donation collected on the sly from camp attendees. It was a very teary-eyed version of "We're Sorry You're Going Away" that was sung in a big group hug. In a few months, Bill and Sally will be heading off for two years in Argentina doing missionary work for their church. We will miss both their yummy meals as well as their cheerful presence. And we wish them all the best on their new venture.

When the weather was clear, many people went to nearby Conway Lake or the Fryeburg town beach for afternoon swimming. The Flames had a rollicking good time playing "Flame Games" indoors, as well as two evenings slipping and sliding on the front lawn and hill in the pouring rain. The Sparks were happy with several new and different indoor activities. And everybody old and young did their best to maintain camp spirit at a high level.

With the Bray Cabin bathroom renovation completed on the first day of camp, the Buildings &

Grounds Committee was pleased to report that all the cabins now have hot water and showers. This has been an ongoing project for quite a few years, and we are very grateful to the B&G committee for all their hard work on this and many other projects they have accomplished to improve our facilities and keep everything working, in good shape, and up to code.

And in the spirit of improving camp life at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, we have four requests of you, the members and friends of Convention. If you are willing to help in these or any other ways, please contact FNCA president John Perry at jaypea@suscom-maine.net or (207) 729-9755.

- We need more copies of the red *Hossanna* song book. We have only about twenty or so and could easily use three times that amount. So if you or your church have any (even one) that are not being used, please donate them to the FNCA. They will get lots of use here.

- The last weekend of camp, we announced The Old Dresser Campaign. The boys dorm has a total of one (1) bureau to be shared by all the male Flames, so most of the guys are living out of suitcases, knapsacks, and duffel bags their whole time at camp. If you have an unused dresser in usable condition, preferably the tall kind (so it will fit between the beds), we would love to put it to good use.

- We are always grateful for financial donations of all sizes.

- And especially, we would love to have you come join us. The FNCA is an unforgettable and uplifting experience. As seminary student Doug Moss put it, "When I first arrived, I felt like I was crashing a family reunion, but by the end of the second day you had all made me feel like one of the family. I love it!"

Trevor Woofenden is "The Games Man," presenting and teaching non-competitive games to groups and gatherings all over New England. He is also in charge of The Stamp Program. Trevor lives in Haydenville, Mass.

Faith of Our Mothers

(Continued from page 143)

Louise Glover, a member of the Elmwood Church, is still very active at 96!

Helen Jackson, of the Brockton Church, has only just stepped down from the Mass. Association Standing Committee and is still the treasurer of the Brockton church, where she was a tireless worker for many years.

Dorothy Carter was a member of and generous donor to the Newtonville Church. She was very kind, with a keen sense of humor, and would give regular afternoon teas to foster fellowship among the women in the parish. She loved the Church and she thoughtfully wrote notes to shut-ins and hospitalized persons, often making up verses for them.

Mary Procter of the Newtonville Church was active in the women's groups including the Alliance; she also was treasurer for the Society. She made sure that all her children attended Sunday School where Alice Whittemore was a beloved Sunday school teacher in the early to middle 1900s. The Procter family has been a force in keeping the remnants of the Society together.

Many of these women, in addition to their other accomplishments, were wives and mothers.

Denyse Daurat is a member of the Cambridge church in Cambridge, Mass.



What the Zoo Taught Me

(Continued from back)

Check out the Minister Exhibit!

Like many Zoos, the Washington Park Zoo is a municipal facility and receives the bulk of its funding from the city's operational budget. This means that as a city employee, it was not appropriate for me to function as a minister while I was "on the clock." Nevertheless, there were many situations in which "ministerial" skills were called for.

As the member of the staff who spent perhaps the most time interacting with the public, I often needed to respond to people's questions and concerns about the morality of keeping animals in captivity. I needed to be able to communicate to visitors that captivity, though not the ideal setting for animals, was often safer for them than the wild where many fall victim to habitat destruction and outright hostility from humans. I was in a position to encourage people to see other points of view. Zoos do not exist to put animals on display for human amusement. Zoos exist to educate people about how important and wonderful animals

are, and to do everything possible to prevent these animals' extinction.

In this light, zoo education, done deliberately, is a ministry—no less so than being behind the pulpit every Sunday. If this is true for zoo education, it's not difficult to see how this is also true for other careers as well. I find that the difference between a job and a vocation lies in two things: the degree to which a person's loves are involved in the work, and the larger mission of that work.

Coming to terms with the "A" word

I've had a few jobs in my life. Some of them have been fulfilling, but others I did just to receive a paycheck and put food in my cupboard. Even with jobs I enjoyed, there were sometimes aspects of the work that I detested and put off for as long as I was able.

Administration was one of those aspects. I can't remember a time when I've enjoyed doing all the little detail-oriented things that need to be done, like keeping up-to-date records, balancing budgets and mailing invitations. These are things that left-brained people tend to do efficiently and even

enjoy, but are agonizing for those of us who are so right-brained. I'm surprised we don't lean when we walk! Since I have always preferred to spend my time in creative pursuits that are more personally fulfilling, I have tended to put off or even ignore the more administrative demands that sapped my personal energy.

The turning point in my quest to come to terms with administration

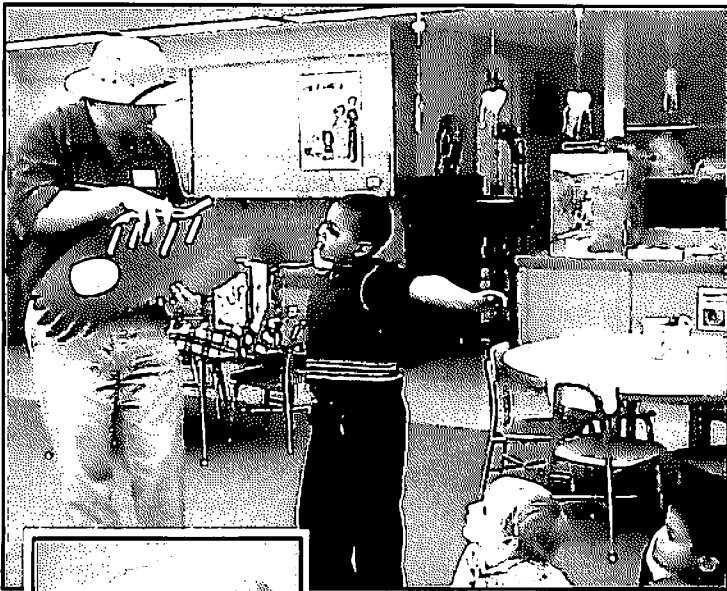
was twofold. First, I needed to understand the mission of the organization in which I was a participant. It wasn't enough to simply know the mission—to be able to recite it. I needed to understand what we were trying to accomplish, to reflect on how important that effort was to me, and to see my work as a valuable part of that effort. I discovered that as long as I believed in the mission, all the annoying little detail tasks weren't so annoying. They were *important*.

Once I began to feel an enthusiasm for administration, I had to figure out how to retrain my brain to avoid procrastinating it. I struggled with this for a couple years before Divine Providence struck again. The city was providing for training in this area from the Franklin-Covey company (Stephen Covey wrote the groundbreaking and extremely popular *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Simon & Schuster, 1989). Several other city employees and I participated in a two-day seminar on building, maintaining and working from a planner. We were exposed to several important ideas that would help us in project management, program management, running an effective meeting, team building, and how to respond in healthy ways when circumstances interfere with the established plan (*accept it, adapt and move on*). It was an incredible experience, and it allowed me to make some major breakthroughs in what I was able to accomplish. I felt empowered! Fortunately I was able to test some of these principles almost immediately.

Working for the Man

Our zoo, as part of the municipal Parks and Recreation Department, is governed by a Parks and Recreation Board of Directors. Although these four men are personable enough, they hail from the world of business and, as a result, tend to hold the zoo up to business standards. This basic belief has been the source of untold frustrations among the zoo staff, who are committed to a mission of care-giving, conservation and education. It was obvious to us that the things the board felt were important,

(Continued on page 150)



Above: Eric teaches that bird wings have the same bones as kindergartener arms.



Left: A Jandaya Conure from Brazil, one of many animals featured in the Zoo's education programs.

What the Zoo Taught Me

(Continued from page 149)

namely, generating profit and being a source of amusement for the general public, simply were not as important as the deeper ideals to which we were committed. As you might expect, there was conflict on almost a daily basis.

Using the skills from the seminar proved invaluable in communicating our position effectively. We were able to establish programs that got their attention. We could report accurately on the impact we were having on the awareness of the public. Our zoo, always a jewel in the city's crown for historical reasons, became a jewel because it was making an impact on people's lives. Although there were some decisions handed down that we simply had to swallow (*accept it, adapt and move on*), the decisions that we found so unenlightened didn't paralyze us. Whatever the attitude of those in governing positions, we still had the power to hold ourselves to a higher standard.

Education on a Shoestring

Of course, this meant that we often had to call upon our powers of creativity in order to get the job done. At one point, the board instigated a plan to cut the zoo's budget by \$200,000 a year in order to make it a source of financial revenue for the city. We all understood that we needed to be good stewards of all our resources, but such a drastic cut demonstrated a lack of understanding of the resources necessary to keep these animals healthy and as happy as possible. Being in a position of having to do much with precious little, we thrived on material donations from the community. For my part, we were able to equip our education programs (zoo camps, teen zookeeper programs and overnight programs, most notably) with effective activities that didn't cost an arm and a leg. We felt confident that, if we had to, we could present a meaningful and memorable outreach program armed with only a stick!

Thank heaven things never got that bad. Still, it was a useful exercise to sit

down and figure out how we could accomplish our mission under a worst case financial scenario. It will always cost money to maintain animals in captivity, and I look forward to the day when it is no longer necessary, but the educational parts of our mission don't require as many material resources.

The essential ingredients for success are creativity, passion and a genuine desire to share the wonders of nature with each and every person we encounter.

Back to the Pulpit

Since I have moved to St. Paul, I have taken the opportunity to reflect on how all of the insights I gained from being a zoo educator are applicable to our work in the church. I feel that I am a better minister for having been there, and not just for the administrative skills I've acquired and am still developing. I feel my spirituality has been strengthened because I have had to figure out how to apply it to life outside the church. This being the position of most of my parishioners, I am better able to relate to the challenge. I am a better listener, because I have had to care for animals who do not use words to express their state (believe it or not, humans are the same way some days!). I am also more in tune with my personal mission, and have learned a little bit more about the talents the Lord has instilled within me to see that mission accomplished.

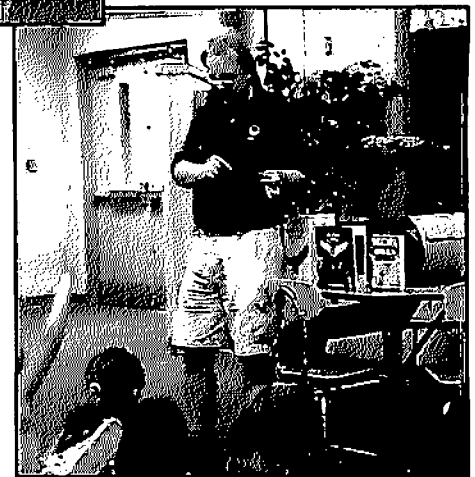
I remember sharing the news at our annual convention in Florida in 1998 that I would be leaving the pulpit for awhile. I received a fair complement of "good lucks" and well wishes. One individual said, "I just have one question for you. Is this decision in keeping with the vows you took at your ordination?" I answered with an unequivocal "Yes." I confess that I didn't really understand at the time



Above: Taking a kindergarten class on a tiger hunt.



Left: Demonstrating to students how snakes move.



Eric teaches elementary school students about the wonders of owls.

how true that answer was. The only thing I really knew was that I felt a calling to be there. Now, I think I know why.

There will always be ministers who feel they need to leave the pulpit, and there will be those who believe the church suffers as a result of their decision to leave. Having had the experience myself, I will choose to keep these ministers in my prayers, knowing the Lord is teaching them what they need to learn in the most appropriate classroom for them. Whatever they do, I will pray that they make it a ministry serving the Lord's New Church.

The Rev. Eric Hoffman is the minister of the Virginia Street Swednorgian Church in St. Paul.



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Nominating Committee is seeking qualified candidates for the offices listed below. If you have any suggestions or questions about the job descriptions, please notify your minister or any member of the Nominating Committee immediately. We encourage you to consider individuals who have talent and abilities in particular areas, but have not yet served within Convention. Thank you for your prayerful involvement in this process!


- Vice-President: elected for one-year term
- Recording Secretary: elected for one-year term
- Treasurer: elected for one-year term
- General Council: three persons elected for three-year terms. One minister and two lay people
- Communications Support Unit (COMSU): one elected for three-year term.
- Education Support Unity (EDSU): one elected for three-year term.
- Information Management Support Unit (IMSU): one elected for three-year term.
- Ministries Support Unit

SMC Position Completes

First Year *(Continued from page 141)*

4. Eagerness from many people who want to start the lay leader certificate program in spirituality
5. Excitement for the Bi-month Book Club

In addition to the new programs mentioned on p. 141, MINSU is also offering **Parish Approaches to Conflict Resolution and Community Building Consultations:** Help in locating materials, workshops, and other resources to address particular issues for your center.


The SMC is already booked for October, November, and December 2003 as well as January, March, April, July, and August of 2004. Act now to book time with the SMC for your center! 

(MINSU): one elected for three-year term.

- Financial & Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU): one elected for three-year term.
- Nominating Committee: two nominations for one elected five-year term.
- Committee on Admissions to the Ministry (CAM): one minister and one lay person, each elected to one-year terms.
- Board of Trustees, Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS): two elected for three-year terms.

The Nominating Committee submits names for vacated unfilled terms on any/all of the above positions. Occasionally a person in a current position may be nominated for another position. In such event, the Nominating Committee should have a "back-up" nominee to account for any such position vacated by election to another support unit, board, or office.

Linda Kraus, Chair
25407 S. Herren Rd.
Pretty Prairie, KS 67570
620-459-6807
lskraus@southwind.net

Nominating Committee:
Linda Kraus, Kansas
Steve Thomas, Ontario, Canada
Mary Crenshaw, Michigan
Laurie Turley, Maine
Jonathan Mitchell, California 

Proprioceptive Writing Workshop *(Continued from page 144)*

very different from regular journaling, as well as the daily practice of "morning pages" advocated by Julia Cameron's *Artist's Way* series. The proprioceptive method digs deeper into the soul, asks more of one in honest introspection, and allows 'Spirit' within to shine through—glistening boldly on the pages before you.


I highly recommend the workshop to everyone. Linda Metcalf and Toby Simon are now offering their fall series that includes weekends and/or sessions online. Information can be found at Linda@Pwriting.org.

Thank you again to Messenger editor Patte Levan and COMSU for support-

PASSAGES

CONFIRMATIONS


Beveridge, Lowell and Paviglianiti—Nancy Beveridge, Pat Lowell and Karen Paviglianiti were confirmed into the life and faith of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos July 27, the Rev. Susannah Currie officiating.

Castillo, Danz, Frostestad, Gottschalk, Jepson, Peterlin, Santimauro, Schuster, Juan Castillo, Katie Teresa Danz, Lena Hagen Frostestad, Kelsey Mae Gottschalk, Samantha Maria Jepsen, Sebastian Bogomir Peterlin, Giovanna Lanella Santimauro, and Rachel Elizabeth Schuster, were confirmed into the life and faith of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church May 4, 2003, the Rev. Rachel Rivers officiating. 

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Jun-chol Lee
new email address is:
junchollee@sbcglobal.net

Nadine Cotton-Durgin
18210 Oak Rd.
Fort Myers, FL 33912
239-489-4364
(no email yet)

Wilma Wake
37 Branch Rd.
Kennebunk, ME 04043 

ing my journey to this wonderful "practice."

Rebecca Eliot is a member of the Portland, Maine, Swedenborgian Church. She will be writing a review of the new Chrysalis Reader, Eternal Wellness, the Importance of Healing, Connecting, Community, and the Inner Journey for the December Messenger.

For those who want to understand more about Proprioceptive writing, Metcalf and Simon have written a book, Writing the Mind Alive, the Proprioceptive Method for Finding your Authentic Voice, published by Ballantine in 2002.



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.

What the Zoo Taught Me

Eric Hoffman

How many have expressed in recent years a lament that ordained ministers are not active in our church's pulpits? I have been actively involved in the church for over twenty years (a small amount of time compared to many), and the number of similar laments that have reached my ears is quite high. Perhaps these comments stem, in many cases, from a feeling that we are dwindling as a church and that the resources we spend in preparing people for the ministry disappears whenever a minister accepts a position outside the church structure. I'm sure there are other reasons for the laments, but I'd like to address this reason in particular. Based on my experiences "outside" the church in recent years, I'd like to present reasons to actually *celebrate* when a minister leaves the pulpit for a time.

In my last days as minister of the LaPorte New Church, I had signed up as a volunteer at the Washington Park Zoo in Michigan City, Indiana. Since my first college degree was in zoology, I was eager to have an opportunity to contribute to an environmental effort. I interacted with visitors as a volunteer and participated in some of the zoo's outreach programs. Then came the day when the Education Curator informed me that she would be leaving. I had already given notice to the LaPorte church board, so I applied for the position. To my delight, I got the job.

I spent over four years as Education Curator of that zoo. I worked with a dedicated and talented staff and with some of the most wonderful animals I've ever been privileged to meet. We instituted several new programs in that short time and I personally gave over four hundred outreach presentations in schools, libraries, churches



An alpaca before shearing. The wool was sent to a local spinner, who demonstrated spinning techniques at the special program at the zoo.

and other gatherings. The Education Department reached over five thousand people a year with our message of care, concern and curiosity—many times more than had walked through the doors of the church in over six years! Although zoos in general tend to attract more people, and especially more families, than churches do, part of me wonders what churches can do to close the gap a little bit aside from housing a Kodiak bear in the chancel and monkeys in the Sunday School classrooms.

Thoughts such as this are only a few of the things that I bring out of that experience. I continue to be in awe of Divine Providence that places people in situations that will teach them what they need to learn in order to grow both emotionally and spiritually. I'd like to share some of the inspirations I've received during those four-and-a-half years that have helped me become not only a better person, but also a better minister.

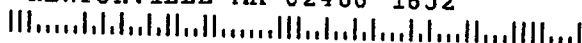
(Continued on page 149)

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