

THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

April 2004

If the Swedenborgian Church Had a Coach

Rich Tafel

As a strategist, I generally work with organizations that are really trying to make a positive difference in the world, particularly the political world. My role is to coach them around barriers and help to hold them accountable to their stated goals and values. I also work with business executives attempting to improve their companies, and with individuals seeking to make more from their lives. Add to the mix that I'm also an ordained minister in the American Baptist Church and that this summer I'm hoping to officially transfer my ordination to the Swedenborgian denomination. Today, I serve as president of the Church of the Holy City in Washington, DC.

One trend I've observed in my strategy work with organizations is that while the church is often suspicious of the language of business, the business world is embracing traditionally spiritual language. Some of the hottest business books include, *Creating Customer Evangelists*, *Servant Leadership*, and *Jesus CEO*. Corporations call their company's purpose a Mission Statement, and more of them are writing out their company's values as well: "Mission," "values," "evangelists," and "servant leadership." These traditional ecclesiastical words dominate the language of the successful corporation. It is clear that business is learning from the language of spirit, but what can the church learn from business strategy?

Mission and Values for the Swedenborgian Church

Imagine for a minute what would happen if we applied the Swedenborgian Church to a business strategy.

First, we'd check to see if all our members can state the current mission adopted in 1986. In addition to our mission statement, what values does our church articulate?

Growth Strategy: 500 New Members by 2010

With our values and mission clearly understood by everyone in our denomination, what goals are we setting for ourselves? A corporation seeks new customers, and we might say we want new members. How many new members would we like to see by 2010? Working backward from that goal, what growth would be needed each year? For the purposes of this exercise, let's

After articulating our mission and goals, might we look at our current structures, funds and churches, and question if there might be another way of getting our message out? Is there a better way to minister to our members' needs? How do we best use our funds?

say our roughly 2000 member denomination wanted to grow by 25% by 2010; we'd like to see 500 new members. Okay, now working backward, how would we grow an average 100 members each year for the next five years? For 2004, we'd need to add 8 new members each month. To accomplish this we'd need absolutely accurate lists from each

of our churches for a baseline. With an accurate number of our churches and their membership numbers, we might ask each church to set a goal to grow by four new people each year.

Again we can employ some project management tests to our goal by asking, Is our goal realistic, accountable and measurable? Would each church growing by four members in 2004 be realistic? Well, we might need to assign higher numbers to our more successful churches, lower numbers to our mid-size churches, and maybe set the goal for our struggling churches of not losing any members.

How would we apply accountability to our effort? Maybe we could have our president host a monthly conference call with our churches where each of us checks in with our successes, failures, and any suggestions from plans that work.

To make our goal measurable, would we publish a chart in *The Messenger* with baselines and a record of our numbers of growth each month? Might we also be held accountable by publishing these goals on our website?

Stewardship Strategy

Here's just an example of ways we might apply executive coaching to our spiritual goals. We might apply the same strategy to our denomination's stewardship strategy. The Swedenborgian Church has been blessed and cursed with a substantial endowment.

The blessing is that most of our ministries are in some way subsidized by generous ancestors. The curse is that a well endowed denomination can

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Life and Love Prevail

Rev. Renee Machiniak

"In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness. I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which will destroy us, too. I can feel the suffering of millions, and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again."

—Anne Frank

The words of Anne Frank inspire and challenge us still today in our changing and uncertain world. Her faith and vision coming out of the darkness and torture of World War II encourage us to pause and re-examine our own faith and trust in God's higher providence for our lives and the lives of everyone today.

Anne Frank (1929-1945), a German-Jewish girl, wrote an honest and powerful diary while hiding with her family from the Nazis during World War II. Eventually, Anne died in the Nazi concentration camp at Belsen in March of 1945. We continue to learn much from her writings about the triumph of love over hate and death.

We understand by looking into the lessons of the past that, at different times, confusion, misery and death indeed have had their day; hatred, pride and cruelty continue to find a temporary home in the cellars of unchecked appetites and motives, that, if left unattended, grow cold and contrary to Life itself. But history also teaches us that confusion, misery and death are temporary conditions; that Life prevails in the long run and Love is the strongest force in the universe and always will be.

During this Lent and Easter season, we try to reframe our lives, to position them inside a new picture frame, one that moves us to see the power of God, the power of Love itself moving wisely

according to the colors and contours of our experiences and fears, our strengths and gifts, and our God-given purpose.

Communion is a ritual that helps us remember the Lord with us; it helps us remember the power of Love Incarnate. Just a little bread, a little wine—but they are a powerful reminder to those of us who still confuse bread with stones, who think that even free gifts involve some kind of price tag. These symbols remind us that God is present with us, even after we have gone astray and even as we stray. We may push love away, but love doesn't give up; it strives and strives to reach us, to welcome us back, back to ourselves. Easter's message is this; that Love's forgiveness has the final word; suffering and death do not. Love, though quiet and gentle, is infinitely stronger than its opposite.

So, when we take time to quiet our minds, to reexamine our lives and face the darkness—we pray for divine help and tap into a Presence that gives us the faith, vision and hope we need, the very same Presence that touched Anne Frank in her life and circumstance.

O God, at this time, let us not be afraid to open ourselves to you. Let us have courage to sit with you quietly and face what we must, to admit our need, and to then receive the gift of Life freely given. Only when we seek you intentionally, reverently, can we know you and fulfill what we must to bring about your peace and purpose. O God, though we, like generations before us, hear the ever-approaching thunder, help us in these times to indeed look toward the heavens, to see in that light the things we must do to change and yet to see, at the same time, the inherent goodness in the hearts of all. When we change, the world gradually changes. With your angels of highest intent, help us to commune with you and minister to that which brings about HOPE and NEW LIFE.

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

Reprinted from the March/April 2003 Church of the Holy City Newsletter.



A Small World

Two of artist Mona Diane Conner's miniature paintings have been accepted into the World Federation of Miniaturists Exhibition and will be displayed in the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. in June 2004. The international show takes place every four years, and reflects what is happening in the world of miniature. Mona is a former chair of COMSU and member of the New York church. The paintings in the show are, "When Lauren Smiles," a portrait of her niece, and "Crucifix for B-Gay," a painting of a terra cotta crucifix that a family friend brought back from Poland prior to her death from cancer.

A small exhibit of six of Mona's larger paintings and angel photographs was recently on display at the Namaste Gallery in New York Yoga Center. The angel photos included in that exhibit were also published in *God in the Midst of the City*, a J. Appleseed publication. Congratulations, Mona!

—PWL



THE MESSENGER

Publisher: The Communications Support Unit
Published monthly, except July and August, by the Swedenborgian Church of North America (founded 1817, incorporated 1861 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America).

April 2004
Volume 225 No. 4
Whole Number 5289

Typesetting & Layout
Town & Country
Press, Plymouth, IN

Patte LeVan, Editor
Editorial Address:
The Messenger
P.O. Box 985
Julian, CA 92036

TEL: (760) 765-2915

E-MAIL: messenger@julianweb.com

Business & Subscription Address:
Central Office
11 Highland Ave.
Newtonville, MA 02460
E-Mail: manager@swedenborg.org

The opinions of the contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the Communications Support Unit, or represent the position of the church. Subscription free to members of the Swedenborgian Church; non-members, \$12.00 a year; foreign \$15.00 a year; gift subscription from a member, \$5.00 a year; single copies \$1.00.

Deadline for material: Six weeks before the first day of the month of issue.

If the Swedenborgian Church Had a Coach

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lead to undermining healthy growth and personal stewardship. Churches, like small businesses and families, are able to do what they can pay for. When we get something without paying for it, we develop a disconnect with what's realistic for us to do going forward. Might we set a goal of getting each church on a budget based on what they can raise from among themselves, rather than having it subsidized from the denomination? The tough decisions and discussions that would emerge from such a plan might help set the denomination on a healthy growth pattern.

Marketing the Swedenborgian Church

With church growth and renewed stewardship as two goals, what other strategies in the business community could help us to achieve our goals? How about looking to what the business world calls "branding" and "marketing" our message?

Branding is the business word for using a symbol to send a message about some larger concept. Swedenborg predates the use of branding by using what he calls correspondences in Scripture, where an image speaks to a larger truth. Marketing is what Johnny Appleseed did when he walked throughout the United States frontier with pamphlets on Swedenborg. Our church could examine the words we use to define ourselves. The Swedenborgian name creates a discussion about who Emanuel Swedenborg was. Is that the discussion we want to create? Did we choose that denominational name or accept that name from others? Thinking outside the box for a minute, is there a word that we do not now use that better defines our theology and church? What name would better represent our denomination to the public?

To get to that answer we might refer to Seth Goden's marketing book *Purple Cow*. Goden's thesis is that a successful business does not go into the market to imitate its competition.

Successful businesses stress what makes them unique—a purple cow in the field of black and white cows. What makes the Swedenborgian Church absolutely unique in the world of churches? How about the fact that we actually have a clear view of the afterlife? Or how about the fact that we don't believe in the traditional view of the Second Coming? Maybe it is our ecumenical belief that all religion is good. What is our most different belief? Now how do we find a way to describe ourselves that demonstrates that our Church is unique?

"Customers" of the Swedenborgian Church

For this we might refer to the book *Creating Customer Evangelists*. This book, which studies the most successful companies of today, concludes that marketing of the past is dead. People don't read print ads and don't trust media ads. Today, the consumer believes what their circle of friends tells them is true. When you have someone go on and on about how great Krispy Kreme donuts are, you are experiencing customer evangelism. The internet is full of customer evangelists praising or condemning products. In every city in the nation there's a group of people that the book calls "influentials" who command audiences through their opinions of what products are good or bad. Could our denomination seek out those influentials to tell them about our beliefs? Is each of our members comfortable sharing why he or she is a member of our church? If not, and my guess is not, then what can we do to help build confidence and the ability of our members to articulate with friends outside the church what they believe and why? Can we encourage a strategy to bring a friend to worship? Maybe set a date each month or quarter when all of our churches focus on evangelists for our faith. Could we put talking points on our website? Might we host monthly calls with evangelist leaders from each church?

There's still more we can learn from the business world's literature. In Jim Collin's book, *Better to Best* he studies

which companies have succeeded most. In one chapter he focuses on a concept he calls finding your hedgehog. The exercise asks companies, in our case our church, to ask three questions: 1. What is our passion? 2. What is our unique specialty? 3. Who would pay for this? In our case we might say our passion is that we are excited about a unique spiritual insight that we've been blessed to hear. Our specialty is that we alone among people of faith have clear insights into heaven and hell and how this understanding impacts the meaning of life here on earth.

Finally, the toughest question for any church or business: Who is willing to make getting this message out something they will write a check for? Who has the funds to get this message out? Who, that wants our churches to get the word out, has the funds?

Another great exercise businesses go through is revisioning the company name, brand, image, and products to stay current with the current client base. Successful companies are aggressive about polling, surveying, and seeking criticism from their clients. Maybe our church could ask each member to offer his or her suggestions for improvement of our website. Or we could do annual surveys of our current membership to find out what needs we as a church have, or can improve through our services and outreach.

Other exercises helpful to planning the future of a company are putting everything on the table. After articulating our mission and goals, might we look at our current structures, funds and churches and question if there might be another way of getting our message out? Is there a better way to minister to our members' needs? How do we best use our funds? Then we allow a period of questions and brainstorming without negative comments, such as, "We've done this before," or "We can't do that." It would allow us to revision our denomination's ministry.

Swedenborg the Executive Coach

As we can see, the principles that are guiding our leading businesses might equally apply to our own de-

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My Experience at the Making Disciples Seminar

Kit Billings

It's a pleasure to report on the *Making Disciples: General Church Evangelization Seminar 2003*, which I attended with one of my church parishioners, Paul Deming, over the weekend of October 25th in Boulder, Colorado. The Ministries Support Unit (MINSU) and our congregation funded our trip in hopes that this conference would inspire new growth in our congregation. Toward the end of 2004 I believe we will be able to report on whether or not this is the case.

The natural setting itself in Boulder was beautiful. The grand and inspiring Rocky Mountains cradled us, reminding me of the ultimate majesty of life our future angelhood will hold, and each morning was sunny and beautiful. Toward the end each person in our group from Convention kept saying, "Wow, I can't believe it, but this weekend just keeps on getting better and better!" There was a spiritual snowball effect which I have experienced before from the Lord at various retreats, workshops, and conferences.

The conference was led by many good people, a combination of local Boulder New Church staff and Bryn Athyn Office of Evangelization staff, including their bishop, their bishop elect, and the dean of their seminary. There were keynote speakers, classes on many interesting topics, spiritual worship services and devotions (which included Holy Communion—one of the most beautiful experiences of my life), meaningful mealtimes together, and a few hours at one point to get out and stretch our legs.

I was impressed by the level of organization and the spirit of welcoming evident in all who hosted us. Eleven people from General Convention were there. General Church people came from as far away as Kenya and Sweden. It was awesome to hear from the lives and ministries going on every day around us, which until then I never knew about. This experience reconfirmed that my spiritual home is within Convention, due to several key differences about our churches, yet I am now much more intimately aware of so many gifted cousins I have in our sister Church, too. I appreciate the depth with which some of these folks can think and reason quite compassionately from within New Church doctrine. I had a discussion, for example, with one of their priests on the

subject of homosexuality that was warmly illuminating. As with so many of us in Convention, it is a thrill for me to dialogue lovingly with Christians who have expanded their thinking with the theology brought to earth by means of Swedenborg, and even more importantly, to visit and worship with other folks who worship a God who has no trace of anger and wrathfulness and helps us grow and develop every day. My own appreciation for the strengths and growth areas of both denominations has grown a great deal.

The seminar dealt with issues of sound leadership, the history of the General Church in its challenge of growth and what they have learned along the way, New Testament leadership exemplified by the Lord, why we should market the church, how to organize our relationship with the media, deepening our appreciation for "moments that matter," the deep spiritual effects of great teamwork within congregations as a preparation for heaven, breaking through to the next level of church growth, making use of our greatest strength as the New Church (our pluralistic vision of religious life on

earth), practicing servant leadership, and much more. Evangelization is a long-haul choice. We can encounter real barriers to it, some of our own making. As a congregation, identify your unique barriers, and commit to eliminating them gradually, one by one.

We looked at our attitudes around church growth and examined every area of our relationship to the church. We examined how we felt inside about our church and the whole reaching out and evangeliza-

tion journey. We looked at whether each thing we do and plan for is really for growth or not. A huge issue can be that with serious growth will likely come evolution and change. As a baby grows, it experiences many changes. Life is full of change, and there are some things each of us may identify that we really do not want to change. Also, of course, the deepest and most important aspects of our church shouldn't change, such as who and what God is, His work and presence in our lives, the abiding and eternal doctrines of our church that make it what it is, etc.

Are we opening ourselves vulnerably and faithfully to the Lord's will, or mostly to just what we want? Our own needs are important, and so is an openness to what God may want, which may or may not be different from all that I'd like for my church and denomination. The good news here is that, as Swedenborg wrote, if God wanted to make certain that an individual would wind up in hell, he'd simply give that person everything they want when they want it. Choosing to give and take opens us up to the spirit of giving and sacrifice, which is part of what real loving is about.

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Are we opening ourselves vulnerably and faithfully to the Lord's will, or mostly to just what we want? Our own needs are important, and so is an openness to what God may want, which may or may not be different from all that I'd like for my church and denomination. The good news here is that, as Swedenborg wrote, if God wanted to make certain that an individual would wind up in hell, he'd simply give that person everything they want when they want it.

My Experience at the Making Disciples Seminar

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Church growth depends greatly, also, on a choice to be a servant leader, one committed to leading by means of serving and giving. We know we've shown great leadership if others discover empowerment and hardly realize they are being led. I believe that church growth is most deeply dependent upon everyone in a congregation (both lay and ordained) being powerfully and warmly open to the Lord. Thus, regular prayer and meditation are truly vital. There is a deep and profound commitment issue, which another workshop dealt with, my commitment to serve Jesus Christ, my Lord, my Savior. Some things are out of our control, but we can create a commitment to serving the Lord, even if no church growth occurs.

Embracing evangelization is first about committing to be a certain kind of disciple. We can each choose to be a disciple. As John Odhner wrote, as servants "we commit to prayer, reading, giving, service, repentance, praise, and mutual support."

In addition, I discovered a whole new love and appreciation for my sisters and brothers in the General Church who renewed my joy in our teachings as something vital and important to share with our world. It's deeply inspiring for me to be with Christians who are exuberant about the Lord's Second Coming and who celebrate it with joy and energy. I discovered many new friendships with people who deeply love and enjoy Swedenborg's writings, who actually light up when they are discussed. I was blessed each morning (and a couple of times late at night) to enjoy mealtimes with a great little group of Convention members, deepening our friendships, which have inspired us all since the conference ended. And lastly, five of us had one of those special visits with a married couple and their son who are good friends of Paul Deming. They hiked us into the Rockies and fed us a meal with discussion and sharing that was so utterly real!

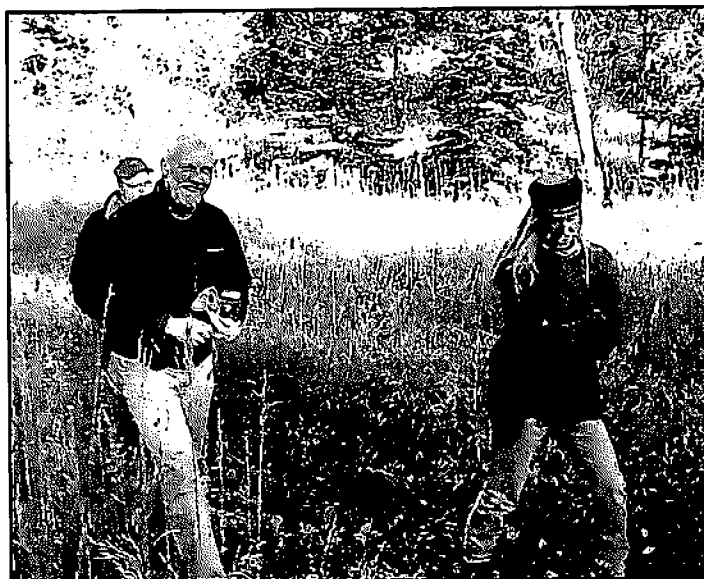
Our church has much to share and offer. I pray that every church or growth center in Convention and in the General

Church may either attend, or get the information at, this Making Disciples seminar, and then use it to whatever extent we can. I praise God for every one of you, and for the opportunity to serve him as a true and loving disciple, helping the Lord to grow heaven on earth.

The Rev. Kit Billings is pastor of the Church of the Open Word in St. Louis.



Susan Baile leading workshop. "Moments that Matter."



Paul Deming and Elisa Muller hiking.



Boulder Church Sunday School singing in the last worship service of the conference

Buy a Tote Bag and Support the Portland Church!

Perhaps you remember the canvas tote bag which was given away at Convention 2002 in Gorham, Maine, filled with Maine-made goodies. It was a sturdy tote embroidered with the Swedenborgian logo in three colors on one side.

Now you can order your very own tote bag and at the same time support the Portland Church. The bag measures 19.5"x14.5"x5". Its generous handles are colored canvas, as is the bottom of the bag; choose from red, navy blue, royal blue or black. The canvas is natural color. Cost is \$26.00 each; postage and handling charge is \$4.00. Payment is by check or money order made out to the Swedenborgian Church.

Order from: Mimo Allen, 1106 Highland Avenue, South Portland, Maine 04106.



Lost In Translation

Dear Editor,

In her article, "Restorative Justice and Community" (*Messenger*, Jan. 2004), Jackie Lageson offers the following quote from Swedenborg, citing paragraph 154 of the *Doctrine of Charity*: "The human being is born to become charity and can become charity only by constantly doing the good of use to the neighbor from affection and pleasure. . . . We can do charity constantly if we make charity consist in good deeds only."

I appreciate her concern with gender neutral language, but her re-translation errs in two important ways. Using the "old" standard edition of the writings, we find this: "Man is born that he may become charity; and he cannot become charity unless he perpetually does the good of use to the neighbor, from affection and its delight." (n. 154) Then follows paragraph 155: "He who places charity in good deeds alone *cannot* do this perpetually." (emphasis mine)

If the Swedenborgian Church Had a Coach (Continued from page 47)

nomination. The irony is that Swedenborg's theology anticipates the buzz words used today in business. The focus by executive coaches on the importance of Mission and Purpose is, in New Church language, the importance of Uses. The focus on empowerment and taking control of our lives is a modern way of talking about free will and the importance of motivations. The "Purple Cow" concept is not unlike Swedenborg sharing with his contemporaries his challenges to the theological views of his day. Read these sections of Swedenborg again and discover that he did little to fit in and insisted he was seeing something completely new and, so far, misunderstood. Though he never created a church, Swedenborg relied on "customer evangelists" in England and Germany to get his message out, which led to the formation of a society long after his death. Finally, Swedenborg the scientist wasn't afraid of integrating the best information and science of his day with an understanding of God's creation—

TO THE EDITOR

The first error is in taking the word "this" in 155 to refer to charity, instead of "good use." Important here is that Swedenborg is sharply distinguishing between uses on the one hand and deeds, or works, on the other; two categories that are usually treated as equal or interchangeable.

The second and more significant error is in using the word "can" instead of "cannot;" i.e., according to Swedenborg, equating charity with good "deeds" actually *prevents* us from "becoming" charity.

An exploration of the differences between uses and deeds (or "works") would make an excellent discussion topic for New Church groups. I believe it would help to clarify the church's ambivalent stance toward social support and justice issues, and also

neither should we be afraid.

Rich Tafel is an Executive Coach and president of the Washington, D.C. Swedenborgian Church. You can contact him at: www.RLTStrategies.com.

Editor's Note: When asked whether he was able to put these ideas to work in his church, Rich replied, "*I drafted a business plan about five years ago for our church. We've implemented the first phase, which was saving the building and making it profitable. Now we are in the phase of growth and we've just drafted a brochure employing the purple cow concepts of what makes us different.*"

We've also begun keeping attendance records and setting goals there. We lost our minister in January a year ago which makes the challenge even greater. This year we budgeted and planned our future free of augmentation expectations. So, we've really begun employing these ideas."

highlight its unique role in distinction from other social service entities. Of course, any such discussion would need to account for the pervasive role of the proprium in our understanding and practice of charity, including the possibility of restorative justice. In fact, Swedenborg's discussion of "uses" begins with a reference to self-love and the proprium (*Charity*, 158).

*Rev. Robert McCluskey
Brighton, Mass.*



Loginov Fund Appeal

Open Letter

Dear Swedenborgian Friends,

Back in September 2000 we made an appeal to help a Swedenborgian family in the Ukraine. Sergey Loginov is a Swedenborgian preacher in Kherson, Ukraine, who has a study group and is involved in translating Swedenborg's writings from English to Russian. He has very little prospect of finding a job. His wife, Marianna, is sick with cancer and asthma. He also has a daughter, Oxana, age 13.

At that time, a number of people answered the appeal very generously (Thank you!), and the Ohio Association got involved. Sergey has proposed to continue to conduct a ministry in Kherson (also spelled "Herson") in return for the help we send. We are now set up to accept donations through the Ohio Association of Swedenborgian Churches, into the Sergey Loginov Fund, so that donors in the U.S. can get tax deductions for their donations.

A web site has been set up to accept donations by credit card via PayPal Inc. as follows: <http://home.att.net/~oa.swedenborg.ch>

Edmund Swiger, Secretary of the Ohio Association, is administering the site.

Also, donations can be made by sending checks payable to The Ohio Association of Swedenborgian Churches, noting on your check that it



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CONVENTION 2004 REGISTRATION

St. Jerome's University, Waterloo, Ontario

"A Voice in the Wilderness"

Saturday, July 10 - Wednesday, July 14, 2004

This year's convention sessions are being hosted by the Canada Association and the Church of the Good Shepherd on the campus of St. Jerome's University in Waterloo, Ontario, with some of us being housed at Renison College, which is directly next door to St. Jerome's. Both facilities feature dorm-style housing. The rooms at St. Jerome's have two twin beds, refrigerators, sinks and built-in fans, and each floor has two large washrooms. Rooms at Renison are air-conditioned, with two rooms sharing a washroom. These rooms cost more, and for those who have their way paid to convention by the denomination, you will have to pay the difference in cost. The dining room, auditorium, and classrooms at St. Jerome's are all air-conditioned. Ontario summer weather can be like that of any mid-western state.

For those driving to K-W, maps will

be provided to you once your registration form has been received. For those of you who choose to fly, we suggest that you arrive at Pearson Airport in Toronto. Transportation to the campus is available at Airways Transit, located at the Out of Town Ground Transportation wicket in each of the three terminals. This transportation can be pre-arranged by logging onto our website, or you may choose to just wait for the next available van. The cost for ground transportation is your responsibility.

Information regarding child care, and the children and teen programs, will be available in upcoming *Messengers*.

The Sunday morning worship service, and Monday evening ordination service, will be held at the Church of the Good Shepherd. On Tuesday evening we will enjoy a special Oktoberfest Celebration at the

Concordia Club in Kitchener. This family oriented event will feature German food and entertainment. Bus transportation will be provided for these events.

Our friends from south of the border are also reminded that upon entering and leaving Canada, you will need to present a government issued photo ID and proof of American Citizenship. A U.S. issued passport will suffice for both purposes, or you may use a driver's license and birth certificate. (It is a good idea to carry photo copies of these documents in case of loss). We would also urge that you check with your health insurance provider to determine if you need to purchase short-term "out of country" medical coverage.

Additional information about this year's convention can be obtained by logging onto:
www.churchofthegoodshepherd.ca.

(Detach here)

Names: _____

Names and ages of children accompanying you: _____

Street address: _____

City and Province/State: _____ Postal Code/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Arrival _____ Departure _____ Email _____

Home Church (for your name tag) _____

	U.S. DOLLARS	CANADIAN DOLLARS			
ADULT REGISTRATION	\$95.00	\$120.00	X ADULTS	=	\$
TEEN REGISTRATION (13-17)	\$85.00	\$95.00	X TEENS	=	\$
CHILD 5-12 REGISTRATION	\$75.00	\$90.00	X CHILDREN	=	\$
REGISTRATION FAMILY MAXIMUM	\$275.00	\$350.00		=	\$
LATE FEE IF MAILED AFTER JUNE 1	\$75.00	\$100.00		=	\$
PRE-CONVENTION WORKSHOPS (see description in this <i>Messenger</i>)					
PER DAY	@ \$10.00	\$13.50	X adults _____	=	\$

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The program includes:

- Oktoberfest/Waterloo County specialty foods with "family style" table service
- A local comedian who will help us laugh at ourselves (clean family entertainment)
- Uncle Hans from the local Oktoberfest to lead us in the "Chicken Dance"
- A dance group to illustrate ethnic dances and help us get up on our feet
- Dancing music by a local trio
- Transportation to and from the Concordia Club



Come to "Oktoberfest in July"

A CONVENTION 2004 FEATURE EVENT

A "Family Event" for all ages (children under 4 attend free).

Come to Kitchener for Convention 2004, July 10–July 14

For registration information and more, visit our website:

<http://www.churchofthegoodshepherd.ca/convention.shtml>



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Please indicate your selection of workshops and mini courses using the list and codes in the accompanying article.

Preconvention workshop	P001 <input type="checkbox"/>	P002 <input type="checkbox"/>			
Mini Course selections (circle one) Monday	A001; A002; A003; A004; A005; A006; A007; A008; A009				
Mini Course selections (circle one) Tuesday	B001; B002; B003; B004; B005; B006; B007; B008; B009				
ROOM & BOARD (Please take one option)	U.S. DOLLARS	CANADIAN DOLLARS		# OF NIGHTS	
DORM ROOM SINGLE	@ \$52.00	@ \$66.00	X PERSONS		= \$
DORM ROOM DOUBLE	@ \$48.00	@ \$61.00	X PERSONS		= \$
RENISON SINGLE	@ \$60.00	@ \$ 76.00	X PERSONS		= \$
RENISON DOUBLE	@ \$56.00	@ \$71.00	X PERSONS		= \$

All bills must be paid in full by June 15. No registration refunds after June 1. Bills may be paid by VISA and MasterCard. Provide number and four-digit expiration date.

VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Number: _____ Expiration: _____

Make check payable to: The Swedenborgian Church

U.S. Attendees: Please send form with checks to: Central Office, The Swedenborgian Church, 11 Highland Avenue, Newtonville, MA 02460

Canadian Attendees: Please send form with cheques to: Church of the Good Shepherd, Convention Registration, 116 Queen St. North, Kitchener, Ontario N2A 1Z2

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

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Central Office at 617-969-4240.

Pre-Convention Workshops

P001 Therapeutic Touch (Level 1)
 Presenter: *Sue Frid*
 Offered: Friday, July 9, 2004

Therapeutic Touch is a contemporary interpretation of several ancient healing practices—a consciously directed process of energy exchange during which the practitioner uses the hands as a focus for facilitating healing.

Research and experience have shown Therapeutic Touch's effectiveness in:

- eliciting a 'relaxation response' and reducing anxiety
- changing a client's perception of pain
- facilitating the body's natural restorative process

Therapeutic Touch is a technique

that anyone can learn for personal or professional use.

This is a full day course (9 am to 5 pm), limited to a maximum of 20 participants. It will involve lecture/discussion, sharing and experiential presentations.

We would appreciate a donation (suggested amount \$10) for the opportunity to take part in this course. A basket will be inside the door of the lecture hall.

P002 Swedenborgian Evangelism
 Presenter: *Rev. John Maine*,
 Church of the Holy City,
 Edmonton, AB
 Offered: Saturday, July 10,
 2004 from 9 am until 12 noon

This workshop is based on the belief that our denomination is now reaching a critical juncture in its history. A century of general membership decline,

church closings, and the emergence of serious financial woes bring our future into question. It is therefore imperative for us to explore new visions and new ways of being the Lord's New Church. This workshop will propose one possible approach to revitalizing and growing the church, based on John's experience at the Edmonton church and his encounter with the "new evangelism" of our sister denomination, the General Church.

This course is a lecture/discussion and will take place during the morning (9 am until 12 noon). It is open to 50 participants.

We would appreciate a donation (suggested amount \$10) for the opportunity to take part in this course. A basket will be inside the door of the lecture hall.



2004 Convention Minicourse Schedule

Monday July 12, 10:30 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

A001 Hearing the Cry for Service:
 "Anyone Who Has Faith in Me
 Will Do As I Have Been Doing"
 (John 14:11)

Presenter: *Rev. Nadine Cotton-Durgin*

Meeting the needs of the people is the way of the ministry of The New Church of Southwest Florida. Being present in the community and talking with the people to find out their many needs has led to providing the programs that are needed. Our ministry is very, very blessed with the Lord's help. As we strive to meet the needs of the people, the Lord has provided us with the avenues, the means and the people to do His work. Find out about our programs and what is working for us. This work for the Lord is not an easy path or a quick fix, but the rewards for the heart are enormous.

Format: lecture/discussion

A002 Starting Church Archives
 Presenter: *Betty Schneider*

Betty will share her personal experience with organizing the archives at Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada including: where to begin, establishing policies, and defining purpose, developing criteria for storage space, obtaining help and advice, creating storage materials and systems, continuing the collection of resources, and initiating archive access and use

procedures for the congregation.

Format: lecture (session limited to 20 participants)

A003 Meeting of the Heart and Mind, Part I

Presenters: *Eli Dale and Mark Allen*

Participants will learn and practice a meeting method called "Group Process/Consensus" as an alternative to Roberts' Rules (or whatever method your church uses to direct meetings). Group Process leads members into deep relational thinking guided by the church's mission statement. The desired outcome is a win/win solution for each agenda item that the group considers. The Process stays in process until all eligible members of the group agree that the best course of action has been discovered. Group Process is both orderly and humane. **This is a two part workshop; please commit to attending both sessions.**

Eli Dale is Portland's meeting facilitator and Mark Allen is Portland's president.

Format: lecture/discussion (session limited to 20 participants)

A004 Enliven Your Spiritual Center
 Presenter: *Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake*

This minicourse will consider the concept of "spirituality" in the Swedenborgian tradition, and then look at a range of approaches to energizing the living of spirituality in our centers. It will include: retreats,

ongoing groups, spiritual friendship, spirituality in business meetings and community outreach. A brief overview of the topic will be presented, followed by sharing ideas and projects. There will then be opportunity to experience a meditation, followed by spiritual sharing as spiritual companions. A variety of materials will be made available, including the following books. Any of these could be read in advance:

Frank Rose and Bob Maginel: *The Joy of Spiritual Growth: Real Encounters*

John Ackerman, *Listening to God: Spiritual Formation in Congregations*

Thomas P. Williamsen: *Attending Parishioners' Spiritual Growth*

Format: lecture/discussion/experiential

A005 Community-Focused Ministries and Balanced Budgets
 Presenters: *Barbara Halle and Rev. Dick Tafel*

Stop letting the tail wag the dog. Your church program should determine the budget, not the other way around. Fresh approaches to meeting spiritual needs and balancing budgets.

Format: lecture/discussion/experiential

A006 Signs of the Times
 Presenters: *Rev. Dr. George Dole and Rev. Sarah Buteux*

(Continued on page 54)

2004 Convention Minicourse Schedule

(Continued from page 53)

Some people are convinced that the world is going to hell in a handcart and are sitting on the edge of their seats waiting for the Rapture. What do Swedenborgians think? Our theology tells us that a new age has dawned—can we see signs of it in the confusion and conflicts of our present times? There is one statement that the immense changes in the spiritual world at the last judgment would not make much noticeable difference on our level, but that was almost two hundred and fifty years ago. Is it working? Is the world becoming a better place? Come, listen, and share: perhaps together we'll discover something.

Format: lecture/discussion

A007 Breathing Life Into Our Sunday Schools

Presenter: *Rev. Eric Hoffman*

Are your children listless or hard to manage? Would you like to see a light in their eyes when it's time for class? Are your teachers running out of ideas? We intend to fill you with new ideas and reinvigorate your creativity! We can make our Sunday Schools burst forth with new life each and every Sunday! We will look at ways to make a positive impression on differently gifted classmates of all ages and to use all the resources of our community for the purpose of communicating our Swedenborgian spirit.

Format: lecture/discussion

A008 Wedding Celebrations

Presenters: *John Cullen and Kirk Miller*

The Men's Group of the Church of the Good Shepherd held a very successful Wedding Celebration on Valentine's Weekend in 2002. Over thirty-five couples renewed their wedding vows in an event that attracted much outside publicity and many non-members of our church. We surveyed attendees to determine what else we should do for our wedding ministry and plan on repeating this program in 2005.

Format: lecture/discussion (session limited to 40 participants)

A009 An Introduction to Hyperspace, Part I

Presenters: *Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers and Dr. Wilson Van Dusen*

We will show the simple structure of "space", and then generate one-dimensional through four-dimensional space to demonstrate how these structures apply to the

spaces we know. Next, we will generate spaces five through seven. Since these spaces turn out to be levels of mind, it is quite possible we will be looking at the lowest levels of the simplest structures of all existence. We will then answer questions and discuss this startling finding.

Format: lecture/discussion

Tuesday July 13, 2:30 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.

B001 Developing a Church Website

Presenters: *David Ingard and Val Brugler*

From idea to design to implementation, the website committee of the Church of the Good Shepherd will share with you the process of starting up a church website. After attending this mini-course you'll have more confidence to talk to Internet Service Providers. No preparation for this mini-course is needed. You should be familiar with the basic functions of a personal computer before signing up.

Format: lecture/discussion

B002 Spiritual Craftwork for Youth

Presenter: *Kurt Fekete*

Traditional methods of engaging young people in religious thought rely heavily on reading and lecture formats. Yet adolescents typically respond emotionally, creatively and unconventionally; they are attracted to creative expressions of life. Working with tactile artistic media can be an extremely effective and rewarding way to strengthen a young person's connection with God. How? By employing craftwork to convey spiritual concepts, foster discussions and promote self-examination. In this mini-course I will share several simple, theme-based projects that can easily be done with junior and senior high school youth. This is a hands-on workshop where no previous artistic experience is required. Share your faith with teens through art!

Format: lecture/discussion/experiential (session limited to 20 participants)

B003 Meeting of the Heart and Mind, Part II

Presenters: *Eli Dale and Mark Allen*

See description for A003.

Format: Practice (mock meeting); session limited to 20 participants

B004 Exploring the Roots of Your Center

Presenter: *Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake*

In this minicourse, there will be 2-3 presentations from Centers who have been exploring their history. Then some approaches to utilizing history exploration in community building and visioning. There will be a discussion of the history series being published by J. Appleseed, and encouragement of Centers to write their history for this series. This minicourse is different from the one that will specifically look at issues involved in preserving and utilizing one's archives, but they will be presented as two parts of the subject.

Format: lecture/discussion

B005 Grant Writing, Grant Finding

Presenter: *Chris Laitner and guests*

This course will cover some fundamentals of locating granting sources and will also provide participants with background for preparing grant requests. The presenter(s) will share source and writing materials and will also cover some of the major responsibilities of grant recipients.

Format: lecture/discussion

B006 Serving the Church Through Lay and Ordained Ministry

Presenter: *Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence*

We are all called to serve God in our own unique way. Join this discussion to find out about ways in which you might serve your church or denomination by developing your own gifts. The Swedenborgian House of Studies has a wealth of information to share on how you might further your education in Swedenborgian theology, spirituality and ministry for lay and ordained positions.

Format: lecture/discussion

B007 Outreach Communications

Presenters: *Carol Lawson, Nancy Apple, Susan Poole*

How can we interest "one-time" newcomers at weddings, baptisms, memorials, etc. to attend another one of our services? How can we interest the many people who are seeking life's meaning in finding out about Swedenborgian spirituality?

Format: sharing

B008 A Taste of Belly Dancing

Presenters: *Debbie Gehl and Alana Miller*

Join in an introduction to Oriental dancing, also known as belly dancing. You will

(Continued on page 55)

2004 Nominating Committee Report

Vice-President Jim Erickson
Recording Secretary Gloria Toot
Treasurer Larry Conant
General Council

Barb Cullen

Rev. Renee Billings Machiniak

Sharon Reddekopp Williams

COMSU Carla Friedrich

(Communications Support Unit)

EDSU Nancy Freestone

(Education Support Unit)

FPRSU Jennifer Lindsay

(Financial & Physical Resources Support Unit)

IMSU Bob Hinrichs

(Information Management Support Unit)

MINSU

(Ministries Support Unit) Karen Conger

Carl Blenkin

Nominating Committee

Michelle Huffman

Chuck Winter

Committee on Admission to the

Ministry (CAM) Rev. Sue Turley

Board of Trustees,

Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS)

Rev. Andy Stinson

Rev. Young Min Kim



2004 Convention Minicourse Schedule

(Continued from page 54)

learn about the background of this intriguing art, see an example of a dance and learn some of the basic movements. Please wear comfortable, casual clothing (preferably not a skirt), a top that can be raised slightly so you can see your ribs, and bring a scarf or something to tie around your hips. You may want to bring a bottle of water.

Format: lecture/discussion/sharing (session limited to 15 participants; unsuitable for those with back problems)

B009 An Introduction to Hyperspace,
Part II

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers

We will discuss together further implications of Van Dusen's theories and their relationship to the greater design of existence and Swedenborg's theology."

Format: lecture/discussion



Grand Opening of Manna House in LaPorte

Judy Freeman

LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana, celebrated Emanuel Swedenborg's birthday with the grand opening of its Manna House Book Room and Spiritual Resource & Program Center on January 31 and February 1, 2004. The weather was very cold. However, that didn't affect the warm and satisfied feeling inside.

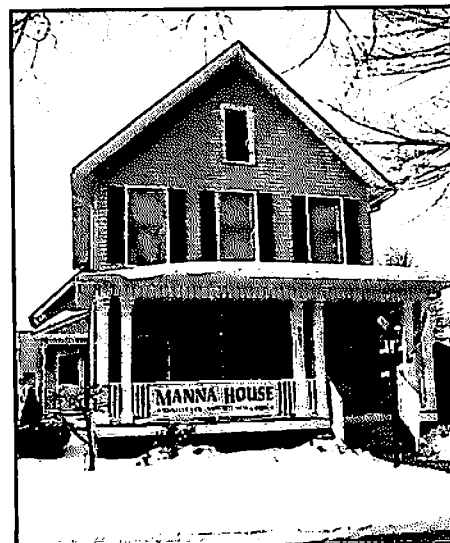
The dream began years ago with the knowledge that this piece of property was the last house left on our block in which we may be able to expand our ministry. We let the American Red Cross who owned the property know of our interest and asked for first right of refusal should they ever decide to move. This project officially began in early September, 2002, with the purchase of this house located behind our church as the American Red Cross merged with another chapter within our county. Our major impetus for this purchase was our desire to open our community's awareness of what our faith has to offer. We thought a book room might seem more comfortable for a visitor than going in cold to an unfamiliar church for the first time on a Sunday morning, and the possibilities for its use would be almost boundless.

Our goal was to make the large front room a public book room/program center area and to finish the rest of the house to be a parsonage and the minister's office. This house was built in the late 1800s, and not much updating had been done, which turned out to be a blessing as well as a hindrance. The woodwork, staircase, and interior integrity had maintained its original beauty and warmth, but the wiring and plumbing were a challenge. In addition to making those necessary updates, we added a complete full bathroom, revamped plumbing and wiring, tuck-pointed basement brick, repaired plaster, painted and wallpapered, added some new carpet, flooring and light fixtures, built a kitchen island, and installed new handrails on the front porch. All this was done with very little of the work hired out. We still need to rebuild a porch—possibly with a handicap entrance, repaint the kitchen, work in the basement and second floor, add insulation, and do some more wallpapering.

Many hands have been busy and many hours spent finishing projects that needed to be completed the last few weeks before the opening. During the two months prior to the opening, we inventoried the books and pamphlets, stained and varnished the bookcases, finished and hung seven solid-wood doors, and finished decorating the book room. After this frenzy, the result became a welcoming and warm atmosphere, with peaceful music and steaming, spiced apple cider for the open house while pamphlets and Manna House bookmarks were given to visitors, along with loaves of homemade applebread. There were some people who braved the cold and ice. They had some interesting and challenging questions for our hosts and hostesses. Several people showed real interest in the church, and one visitor is now attending regularly.

At present we are open to the public just eight hours each week which are voluntarily staffed by our church family, but our hope is to be open more hours when we again employ a minister. During the open house, we held a drawing for two free copies of *The Purpose-Driven Life* by Rick Warren, our current book club

(Continued on page 56)



Grand Opening of Manna House in LaPorte

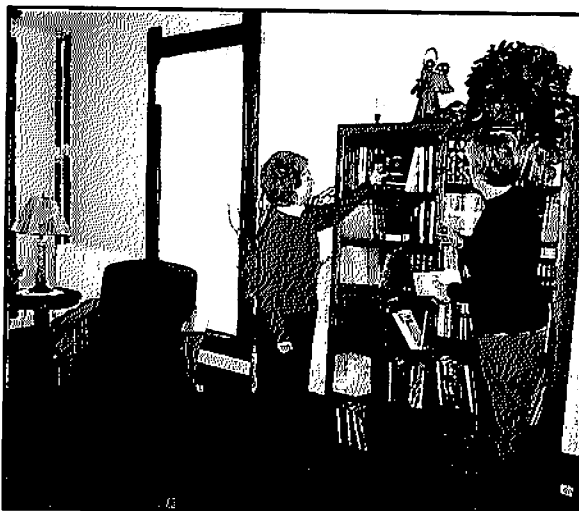
(Continued from page 55)

reading which, appropriately, is taking place during the forty days of Lent. We have about twelve people interested and meeting. In 2003, we read, met, and talked about *The Lovely Bones*, *The Aqueduct Papers*, and *The Red Tent*.

Our dream is to develop more evening programs to acquaint people with who we are and to help the community become more aware of what Manna House has to offer. A local minister, Rev. Rebecca Armstrong, has some interesting programming ideas for us.

Our church family held a Fat Tuesday potluck dinner at Manna House since our church basement was full of treasures for our annual rummage sale. This dinner was followed by a candle-lit Ash Wednesday service in the church sanctuary offered by one of our beloved guest ministers, Rev. Freeman Schrock.

The Manna House Book Room had been in the planning and development phase for well over a year. It is truly amazing to see what a small group of people can accomplish with hard work, devotion, a committed vision, and a good sense of humor. LaPorte New Church has many people to thank for this accomplishment of ours. We received a generous grant from General Convention that played a huge role in remodeling. Illinois Association granted funds as well, also used for remodeling. A grant from the Philadelphia Library Fund has helped with the purchase of the bookcases, books, and pamphlets. We've also been given books from the former Swedenborg Library on Newbury St. in Boston. We send a special thanks to Rev. Lee Woofenden, Pete and Gloria Toot, and Martha Bauer for their ingenious ways of getting these books to northwest Indiana at minimal cost. Lee, your book choices and packing skills were excellent! We sincerely thank each of these people and groups for their contributions and assistance in helping make our Manna House dream happen.




Gail Homes and Pat Tukos at bookcase.



A church board meeting with Judy Freeman, Pat Tukos, Rev. Rebecca Armstrong (guest minister), Nezero Mrozinski, and Heidi Potucek (her back to the camera).

At this point in time, I am sitting in the book room, looking around in amazement at how everything just fits so perfectly. There is such a peaceful feeling here, and visitors have shared that they felt the same. The love put into this project is truly reflected back. My heart tells me that this is surely something created through God's love.

Judy Freeman is the vice-president of LaPorte New Church and Illinois Association secretary. 

Loginov Fund Appeal

(Continued from page 50)

is for the Sergey Loginov Fund, and mailing it to this address:

**Frank Doyle,
Treasurer Ohio Association
7325 Drake Road
Cincinnati, OH 45243**

Before we set up the web site, we decided to get independent verification of Sergey Loginov's situation. We contacted Rev. Alexander Vassiliev in Lviv, Ukraine. He is the only ordained Swedenborgian minister in the Ukraine. His ordination is with the Lord's New Church, headquartered in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. Since Rev. Vassiliev could not go to Kherson himself because of other commitments, he sent one of his parishioners, Sergey Gorelkin. He sent a report to us verifying everything, and adding some other problems the Loginov family has that we did not know about.

In order to determine the cost of living in the Ukraine, we did some library research. We determined that the median household income in 1998 was equivalent to \$934. The real economic growth was 6% and the inflation rate was 25.8%. Extrapolated to 2003, when the library research was done and the rate of exchange determined, the median annual household income is \$2942. This amount was corroborated by Sergey when he asked for a minimum \$200 per month. This amount has to be increased when Marianna requires hospitalization, which is often.

In order to improve Sergey's ministry, we will need to get him a computer. The cost of a suitable computer in Ukraine is about \$1000. The cost of installing a land telephone line into Sergey's apartment may be as much as \$250; this estimate was made by Rev. Vassiliev. This equipment must be purchased in the Ukraine because their electric power system is different from ours.

Missionary work that has been done so far includes shipment to the Public Library in Kherson of a complete set

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Loginov Fund Appeal

(Continued from page 56)

of Swedenborg's writings in English, eight computer programs containing all of Swedenborg's writings with different authors compared with sourcing to the Latin, and distribution of Russian language editions of seven of Swedenborg's works, provided by Duncan Smith of Glenview, Illinois.

The Ohio Association of Swedenborgian Churches paid for shipping costs of this project. Sergey had requested one set of writings in English. These are currently enroute to the Ukraine and due to arrive sometime in February. The Ohio Association provided \$1500 for this project in 2003 and was only able to budget \$500 for 2004. We are quickly running out of available funds for ongoing needs of this ministry/humanitarian aid project, and have no money for computer and related equipment.

Sergey is interested in taking courses in Swedenborgian studies over the Internet if we can provide him with the computer, phone line, and funding required.

If you would like to make a monthly pledge or a one-time donation to the Loginov Fund, please go to the Ohio Association website at: <http://home.att.net/oa.swedenborg.ch>

There you can see a photo of Sergey with his wife Marianna and three members of his Swedenborg study group.

Donations can be made online by credit card through PayPal, a secure online payment service. If you have not used PayPal before, there is a simple sign-up to create an account. You can make a monthly pledge for \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100, or \$200. You can also make a one-time donation of any amount you wish to contribute. Or you can send your check to the Ohio Association at the address given above, with a note saying that it is for the Loginov Fund. Monthly pledges are especially appreciated, since this provides regular, ongoing support for Sergey, his family, and his ministry. Thank you!

Blessings,
Edmund Swiger
Rev. Lee Woofenden



PCA-Sponsored Retreat

Mareta Tafel

The Pacific Coast Association has sponsored another retreat led by Dr. Perry Martin, the Swedenborgian psychotherapist who travels all the way from West Chester, Pennsylvania each year to facilitate these retreats. Fifteen searching souls gathered again at the Center for Spiritual Development in Orange, California, over the weekend of February 27-29, 2004. The theme focused on "Being Present" and living fully in the NOW with emphasis on celebrating and letting go of our losses and speaking and listening from our hearts in a community of love.

Again, the weather was spectacular with rain-cleansed clear blue skies and temperatures hovering in the high sixties during the day. We spent some time out-

side meditating in the well tended, quiet flower-laden gardens. Peace prevailed. We also meditated and worked inside in the room we call our own, which is the library at the Center. It has lovely dark wood bookcases, comfortable seating and French doors that lead out to a garden where a fountain gurgles in the background. The above description would be enough to lure anyone to this retreat, but it is Perry's expertise as a group facilitator that is the real attraction.

Divine Providence brought all the participants together for another weekend of loving and learning. We are truly grateful for the opportunity to gather together in a loving community of nurturing friends. We are also truly blessed to have our Manon Washburn-Mc Gee who organizes our retreat each year. Thanks to Manon and Perry and all who came and participated with such energy and openness.



2004 Youth Worker Conference April 22 - 25, 2004

Temenos Retreat and Conference Center
West Chester, PA

Here's your last chance to get in on the Educational Support Unit (EdSU) sponsored Youth Worker Conference. Held this month at beautiful Temenos Retreat and Conference Center, the workshop will be an excellent chance to learn the latest in youth work and gather with other people interested in working with teens. You will come away with renewed excitement to work with children, revitalized from the energetic spirit of enthused youth workers and refreshed from a casual springtime retreat connecting with old and new friends.

Swedenborgian Youth Director Kurt Fekete, and United Church of Christ Massachusetts Conference Associate for Youth and Outdoor Ministries Carl McDonald will facilitate the Conference. Together, Kurt and Carl will lead you through all the training needed to confidently plan youth programs, organize youth events, lead youth activities and supervise youth volunteers. The cost of this Conference is \$75. Financial assistance and scholarships are available.

The Conference begins Thursday, April 22 at 7 pm and concludes Sunday, April 25 at 1 pm. For more information or to register to attend, please contact Kurt Fekete at 207-892-4390, toll free 866-333-7295 or email kfekete@hotmail.com. Don't miss this truly special opportunity. We look forward to seeing you there!



Annual Appeal, National Alliance of Swedenborgian Women

MAIL TO: Margaret Kraus
Box 264
Pretty Prairie, KS 67570

Please return by May 15, 2004

From: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

Membership \$5.00 Mite Box \$_____ General Fund Giving \$_____ Total

Enclosed \$_____

Make check to North American Alliance of Swedenborgian Women (or N. Am. Alliance). Thank you!

This year's Mite Box collection will go to Youth Director Kurt Fekete to fund young people who can't afford to go to camp. So far, only \$300 has been collected. Please consider sending a generous donation to help our youth!

Proposed Bylaws Changes for Alliance Include Name Change Denoting Organization as Inclusive

At last year's annual meeting, the following amendment to the bylaws of the North American Alliance of New Church Women was proposed: Pg. 5, ARTICLE VIII: Dues (current reading) The annual dues shall be a per capita tax of two dollars (\$2.00). Any member who so wishes and whose per capita tax is paid may be a Contributing Member by paying five dollars (\$5.00) annually. All dues and contributions shall be paid to the Alliance Treasurer by March 1st of the current fiscal year.

Proposed change:

The organizational annual dues shall be a per capita tax of those individual members of each organization as of the current fiscal year and payable by the organization to the Alliance Treasurer by March 1st of the current fiscal year. The amount of this tax for the coming fiscal year shall be discussed and voted upon at each annual meeting. Any change in this tax will be communicated to each church or society via the annual newsletter. Individuals who wish to be Contributing Members may forward their contributions at the time of the annual appeal which will be included within the annual newsletter.

Another change was recommended by Jeannette Hille and accepted by the new board on July 8, 2003: Pg. 4, ARTICLE V - EXPENDITURES (current reading): Sec-

tion 2. Travel expenses of the president necessary for attendance at the annual meeting and executive board meetings shall be paid from the treasury.

Proposed change:

Section 2. Upon request, assistance with expenses of the current sitting officers for attendance at the Annual Meeting and Executive Board Meetings shall be paid from the Alliance Treasury. Expenses must be accompanied by substantiating documentation. A budget line item shall be established for this purpose at each annual meeting. The requested funds shall be disbursed by the Treasurer on an equal share basis not to exceed budgeted amount. All requests must reach the Treasurer by April 1st of the current fiscal year, disbursements will be made by April 30th of the current fiscal year.

These bylaw changes will be voted on by the general membership at our general meeting in 2004.

A proposal to change the Alliance name to "North American Alliance of the Swedenborgian Church," in order to include all genders in our service organization, requires a recommendation from the executive committee to be discussed, then published and approved.

Nan Paget, Publications Chair



BIBLE PUZZLE

This is really a challenge - try and find them all: Thirty books of the Bible—Can you find them?

There are thirty books of the Bible in this paragraph. Can you find them? This is a most remarkable puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket, on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much; he passed it on to some friends. One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his johnboat. Another friend studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend judges the job of solving this puzzle so involving, she brews a cup of tea to help her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot. That's a fact. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. Truthfully, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or scholar to see some of them, at the worst. Research has shown that something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in this paragraph. During a recent fund raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta Phi lemonade booth set a new sales record. The local paper, *The Chronicle*, surveyed over 200 patrons who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As Daniel Humana humbly puts it, "the books are all right here in plain view hidden from sight." Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation that may help is that books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. Also, keep in mind that punctuation and spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete really well against those who claim to know the answers. Remember, there is no need for a mass exodus, there really are 30 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in this paragraph waiting to be found.

Reprinted from *The Plains Banner*, newsletter of the Kansas Association, March 2004. Answers to this puzzle will be in the May *Messenger*. Hint: It helps to have a Bible at hand!



A new full-time position from Summer 2004

THE MANAGER OF THE SWEDENBORG OPEN LEARNING CENTRE, MANCHESTER

(The new working name of
The New Church College in Manchester, England)

Who Are We?

The Swedenborg Open Learning Centre ("SOLCe") is formally to open in June, 2004. This new vision for the work of the New Church College follows upon the successful change over about seven years from residential training for a few to "Open Learning" for many. Though there are no residential students, there are regular schools and tutorials held in the building and we frequently welcome visitors. We are expecting further growth as a result of our well-advanced project of making much of our learning service available through the Internet - see www.swedenborg-openlearning.org.uk. Development of modules, their delivery, and student support will continue to be the responsibility of the Director of the Centre - currently known as The Principal - and his team.

What Are the Manager's Responsibilities?

The holder of this new post will be responsible to the Council for the overall management of the non-academic work of SOLCe. This will involve liaison with the Director and his team, and with students. In addition, the Manager will be responsible for the selection and supervision of support staff, for the building and for the control of the budget. On a day-to-day basis, he or she will report to the Director.

What Skills and Experience Are Needed?

The successful candidate will need to be enthusiastic, resourceful, self-motivated, flexible and able to prioritise. We are looking for someone who either has experience of, or a willingness to develop, appropriate skills in administration, computing and personnel management. Sympathy with the aims and objectives of a Swedenborgian approach to life is desirable.

What Are the Terms and Conditions?

The Manager will be based at SOLCe in Radcliffe, North Manchester, but will be expected to travel occasionally to meetings and events elsewhere in Britain. The working week will be 40 hours, normally during office hours, but there will be the occasional need to work evenings and weekends. The salary offered is between £14,000 and £18,000. This will be negotiated and is dependent on skills and experience. A three-year initial contract is envisaged.

How Do I Find out more about the Position or Apply?

Contact David Haseler, the Secretary of the New Church College, who will be pleased to discuss the position with you. A detailed job description can be obtained from him. Letters of application and *Curriculum Vitae* should be sent to the address below.

44 Michael Court
Bristol Road
Birmingham B5 7TS
0121 440 8070
mdhaseler@tinyworld.co.uk




THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

(Continued from back page)

the King," a story of inner heroism in mythic fiction, swept the Oscars, taking eleven of them. Then, as if waiting in the wings, "The Passion of Jesus the Christ" was released, and it may win a few Oscars next year.


As of this writing it is number one at the box office, having grossed over \$200 million in only twelve days. It is expected to go past \$300 million and may by the time this review is published. Hollywood studios passed it by, and it remained for Newmarket Films, an independent company, to make it.

It is actor and staunch Catholic Mel Gibson's inspiration; he produced it, directed it, and cowrote the script. It is very likely going to be his most successful film. James Caviezel, who portrays Jesus, has appeared in several films, including "The Thin Red Line," (as Pvt. Witt) and "Pay it Forward" (as Jerry).

There is now some speculation that Hollywood has all along ignored a very large audience which responded to this film. I didn't know what to expect when we walked into the theater, a large audience or a small one; often it is small or medium. The theater was filled. 

The Artist

We artists
we speak what we feel
Not to fracture
but to heal
We artists say what ought to be said
We seek the truth
and what must be read
by all those who need a shelter,
a vision, a canvas,
a thread to a higher plane
to a painted space
filled with God's glory
and sacred grace.

—Jeff Holt 

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.

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

Reviewed by Stephen Koke

I was reluctant to see this film at first because it might really get to me. It did. This is raw in the documentary style; a concentrated, single-minded look at the trial, crucifixion and death of Jesus, ending with a brief look at the Resurrection, all without theological comment except for one instance that I can remember. The doctrine that Christ died for our sins, suggestive of the Vicarious Atonement, makes a very brief appearance but hardly affects the film. Brief flashbacks to Jesus' teachings illuminate the story. The emotional intensity of the drama keeps one totally absorbed for two hours and six minutes.

It begins without preliminaries in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus struggles with the inevitability of his death. The Devil, depicted for theatrical purposes as an androgynous figure in a black robe, gently, seductively, questions his inner convictions and mission. What lay ahead was an almost certain condemnation by Jewish and/or Roman authorities to die by crucifixion, still one of the most horrible methods of execution known. Medical scholars have researched it and tell us of sustained, deep shock to the body and nervous system, which in Jesus' case was accelerated beforehand by violent flogging with flesh-cutting instruments, followed by his tortured struggle to carry, physically exhausted, a very heavy cross to Golgotha before he was nailed to it. Typically, death comes only gradually while the victim remains conscious for hours, or even days, in a sea of torment.

Watching it, I was aware that the words we read in the Gospels, and the devotional rhetoric we expend on the subject, cannot match the inti-

macy of the modern film. When you sit in front of the big screen you are *there* and dare not look away.

In his Chicago Sun-Times review on February 24, Roger Ebert wrote, "This is the most violent film I have ever seen;" and, "I was moved by the depth of feeling, by the skill of the actors and technicians, by their desire to see this project through no matter what." He gave it his highest rating, four stars.

Realism is reinforced by having the actors speak Aramaic, the language Jesus and his contemporaries actually used. That was an interesting touch—it is supposedly a dead language, but it was evidently a pretty language that rolls gracefully off the tongue. The simple dialogue is translated in easy to read subtitles. After a few minutes one becomes unaware that there is no English soundtrack.

There have been accusations that the film blames the Jews collectively for the death of Jesus. But that issue requires some sensitivity to two considerations: First, Jesus' careful yet incisive ministry to Jewish faith and practice, elevating them and revealing their neglected inner values, and secondly, the overt evidence that there was indeed corruption in high places, complicated further by the repressive rule of Rome.

Swedenborg treats the Crucifixion as the last temptation in Jesus' intense pursuit of the union of the human with the Divine in himself. It demanded nothing less than the surrender of everything, including his life. We undoubtedly don't really grasp the significance of that journey and its epic burdens unless presented with the experience itself. That it was excruciatingly difficult, impossible for ordinary wills, may be just the kind of theme that needs Hollywood's spectacular abilities to make it vivid.

We are getting a succession of spiritually oriented films. "The Lord of the Rings, the Return of

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The Swedenborgian Church
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