

THE MESSENGER

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February 2004

The much beloved Rev. Dr. Robert H. Kirven passed into the spiritual world January 9, 2004, after a long struggle with pancreatic cancer. In honor and affection for a life well lived, a number of reminiscences follow.

❧ EULOGY ❧

Rev. Robert Hoover Kirven, Ph.D.

December 29, 1926 – January 9, 2004

By: Diana Elizabeth Kirven Stickney
Margaret Lorraine Kirven Larsen

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the
counsel of the wicked,
Nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And on his law he meditates day and night.
He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
That yields its fruit in its season,
And its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.*
Psalm 1: 1 – 3; RSV



By this psalm will we always remember our father, Bob Kirven. His theological studies, his teaching and his years of service to the church were the focus and substance of his life. Almost all his friends are Swedenborgians. His wife, our mother Marian, shared his love and devotion to the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. She also graduated from the New Church Theological School (later SSR), and served for 20 years as the seminary's librarian. Truly, our father meditated day and night on the Word and was nourished by the Lord's Love and Wisdom. The fruit of his years on the faculty is seen and known in the many seminary graduates and ordained ministers who studied under him. His selfless love was manifested throughout his 48 years of marriage, especially as he cared for Marian with faithful devotion during the last seven years of her life.

Our father applied to enter the New Church Theological School several times before he was finally admitted. Some people were concerned that his life-long struggle with stuttering might hamper his ability to serve. Their hesitation did

not deter my father, who, when finally accepted, excelled in his theological and seminary studies and continued on to complete a doctoral degree and to serve for thirty years on the faculty of that same school. He loved theology, Swedenborg's theology in particular, and the history of ideas—theological ideas, to be exact! As young children at the dinner table, we marveled at such mysterious words as "exegesis," "eschatology," and "Arcana Coelestia." And we always were encouraged to participate in the evening's discussion. Just two days before his death, a former student called to say that he regularly had called our father to discuss a sermon topic or to debate a theological point with him, just for the fun of the discussion.

Known to everyone else as Bob, he was "Dad" to us, a faithful mentor and counselor, always ready and able to listen objectively and advise uncritically. If he had a fault in his guidance, it was only that he ALWAYS could see another point of view. Consequently, he had a very difficult time identifying the guilty party. It was he who first read to us the story of the five blind men and the elephant, the last line of which says, "...all were partly in the right and all were in the wrong."

His ability to listen non-judgmentally allowed him to hear all sides of the argument and to acknowledge the value and strengths of every point of view. We hardly ever heard him criticize or condemn another for his or her



Bob with Rev. Marlene Laughlin, Kansas, 1997.

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Reminiscence

Bob Kirven was one of the first people I met with after being appointed *Messenger* editor in 1989. Bob was a professor at SSR, and I was told that he'd also been a former editor of *The Messenger*. Our meeting took place in Chicago—Bob and Steve Koke were representing the Information Management Support Unit (I had only the haziest understanding of what IMSU was at the time), and wanted to know what they could do for me technologically. I wasn't technologically savvy enough to know, but the meeting was memorable because of the warmth and humor that surrounded Bob like an aura, and drew everyone in. I knew that he was a leading Swedenborgian theologian, scholar, teacher, with a brilliant mind. But my impression of him at that meeting, and all later encounters, was of a warm, funny, honest human being who simply wanted to be supportive. I knew that I could count on him to write, and be there for me when I needed articles, and I called on

him often in the early years. He always came up with something solid and inspirational, especially for the Christmas issues, and got the material to me on time. He understood deadlines, and was a thorough professional in all that he did.

In later years, after his retirement to Arizona, he would show up in full cowboy regalia at conventions and the Swedenborg Foundation meetings, and everything always felt better and lighter when I caught sight of him. At the Florida convention, I hugged him and said, "I'm always so glad to see you." "I'm always glad to see you, too," he replied. He meant it. He exuded love. The last few years when we were serving on the Foundation board, his stomach problems were such that he couldn't eat after two in the afternoon, and couldn't join us for dinner. I missed him. I look at the photographs we took of him at the Florida convention, and realize how much I miss him now.



Carol Lawson said, "This poem fell off a shelf in my office and fluttered to the floor. When I finally picked it up and read it, I realized—this is what the angels are saying to Bob."

Love After Love

*The time will come when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other's welcome
and say, sit here. Eat.*

*You will love again the stranger who was
your self. Give wine. Give bread.
Give back your heart to itself,
to the stranger who has loved you
all your life, whom you have ignored
for another, who knows you by heart*

*Take down the love letters
from the bookshelf, the photographs,
the desperate notes, peel your own image
from the mirror. Sit. Feast on your life.*

"Love After Love" from *Collected Poems 1948-1984* by Derek Walcott. Copyright 1986 by Derek Walcott. Permission granted to reprint by Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, Inc.



—Patte LeVan

In Appreciation



Deborah with daughter Sola.

Dear Friends,

I graduated December 13, 2003, with a Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy. I will be on my way to pursue licensure now. I want to thank everyone

for the love, support and prayers I have received along the way. It surely has been a long haul and I have missed everyone so much! I am so grateful for my education. I work with children and families of significant emotional trauma and I have valued this opportunity for further education in helping those I work with. I am forever grateful to the Council of Ministers for granting monies for this endeavor out of the Continuing Education Fund. At the end of the day, after working with the families, I truly feel the purpose of ministry.

*In Thoughts of Blessing,
Rev. Deborah Winter
DeLand, Florida*

Editor's Note:
Congratulations, Deborah!

THE MESSENGER

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EULOGY

(Continued from cover)

ideas. Such genuine open-mindedness could also at times be a very real handicap, for example, when our father was faced with a choice of two distinctly different but equally good travel routes. Sometimes we had to wait patiently in the car for what seemed like eternity while he evaluated the routes and decided which one to take home that night.

His finely-tuned sensitivity to emotions and good intentions made him a wonderful person to whom we could pour out frustrations and disappointments. He never failed to understand, commiserate, and enlighten. As his daughters, we are extremely grateful to the many friends who have expressed to us (and to him when he was here) what an outstanding man he was—always friendly, ready with a smile, gentle and patient. We have heard these comments from ministers, spouses, relatives, doctors and nurses here in Phoenix, and friends of his who were strangers to us. Thank you, all.

Many people who knew our father were probably unaware of his keen interest in poetry. Until the last year of his life, he continued to read poetry, sometimes new, sometimes old favorites. He knew many poems by heart and could always be depended on to recite any particular one in his repertoire. Some of his best-loved were "The Deacon's Masterpiece," "The Raven," and "The Song of Hiawatha."¹ He passed on a love of fine literature

to both of us and we remain literature snobs and word mavens to this day because of his influence. Now we

challenge each other to cut-throat games of Scrabble, four games in one evening last week while we kept vigil with our father.

If you knew Bob, you knew his sense of humor. His mind must have worked like the hot node on a battery: barely touch it with a live wire and sparks would fly in all directions. Some of the sparks gave you the answer you were looking for and others produced ancillary thoughts that frequently had us laughing until we cried. Even in the weeks before he passed away, when his days were moderated by steady doses of pain-killers, chemotherapy, and debilitating attacks of hiccups, his sense of humor hovered close to the surface and broke through many times.

When Marian was still alive but could no longer stay alone, she lived with Margaret for a few weeks because Bob needed some free time to work on a book. Mom was well past the ability to form words by then, but she never lost her grip on current time. Each day she would bring her calendar to Margaret so that she could point out what day it was. One day, as Margaret told her how many days until she would see Bob again, tears came to her eyes and she clasped her arms around herself in short hugs, showing in poignant silence how much she missed him. Already we miss Bob, too. In the weeks ahead, as we attend to the bittersweet task of sorting through his books and papers, many of you who read this will be refreshed in our minds as we look at photos, articles, old issues of *The Messenger* and other memorabilia. Thank you, one and all, for your part in the life of this fine individual.

¹ "The Deacon's Masterpiece" by O. W. Holmes
"The Raven" by E. A. Poe
"The Song of Hiawatha" by H. W. Longfellow

A memorial service conducted by George Dole is scheduled for January 22 at 2 p.m. in the Auditorium of Glencroft Retirement Community, 8611 North 67th Avenue, Glendale AZ 85302, tel: 623-939-9475



Bob at Florida Convention, 1998.

Reminiscence

"The neighbor is the good in others," (*Heavenly Secrets* 2417:6), and Bob was one who constantly looked for the best in others. In those decades when Convention's "doctrinalists" and "personalists" were openly at odds with each other, he served as interpreter of each to the other, disappointing those on both sides who wanted him to share in their disapproval. He was simply unwilling to retreat from his fair-mindedness into the weakness of partisanship.

This same fair-mindedness informed his scholarship as well. The philosopher C. S. Pierce drew a sharp distinction between real reasoning, in which our reasoning leads to our conclusions, and "sham reasoning," in which our conclusions control our reasoning. The severe discipline of doctoral research and writing fit Bob's love of real reasoning like a glove, much to the benefit of SSR and the church. Day after day and year after year he kept discovering new things; and it was a blessing to have an office across the hall from his and to be the first to hear of so many of them. Like all of his other colleagues and his students, I could probably say that some of my best ideas were Bob's.

Then there is the person known to his family and friends—sometimes struggling, sometimes lonely, always sensitive, never giving up, and winning through eventually to that gentleness and fundamental integrity for which he will long be remembered. Those who let him into their hearts have absorbed some measure of those qualities; and this is perhaps the subtlest and most abiding of his many legacies.

Rev. Dr. George F. Dole
Bath, Maine

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Reminiscence

(Continued from page 15)

Bob Kirven was the first Swedenborgian on whom I ever laid eyes. In the fall of 1980 I was a first-year seminarian at Brite Divinity School trying to deal with my fascination with Swedenborgian theology and whether to “jump ship.” I had had some correspondence and phone calls with a few Swedenborgians, but had never met anyone in person. And Bob agreed to stop in Dallas-Ft. Worth for a several-hour layover on his way back to Newton from Wayfarers Chapel meetings. He proved fascinating! I had never met anyone like him. Sort of a big bear of a guy with an exceedingly gentle, playful, and, if I can say it this way, a spiritual demeanor, Bob almost seemed like someone from another culture than my own.

That afternoon left an indelible impression on me, and by the next fall I was a full-time residential student at the Swedenborg School of Religion, where Bob was beginning his second year as president. For the next three years I got to know him as a professor, mentor, confidante and friend. Bob was a terrific “pastor” of the school. Many students regularly sought his counsel on all manner of issues in their lives. He was also a very popular classroom teacher, especially fine in both history and theology (his Ph.D. from Brandeis University was in the history of ideas). He had very broad interests and taught in a holistic way, seeing connections everywhere. His keen artistic sensibilities were a special treat: he could discourse at length on poetry, music, and architecture. Before entering the academic profession, he chaired, as a layperson, the building project of the exquisite little jewel of the Church of the Open Word in St. Louis. He was also an expert calligrapher and photography buff. His students prized Bob for his largeness of spirit, his gentleness and humor, his sincerity and genuineness, as well as for his theological creativity and clarity. We all grieved deeply with him as he

lost Marian, his beloved wife, through her untimely physical decline and death right after they retired. The way he chronicled that journey in his loving and pastoral tribute, *A Book About Dying*, exemplifies all the qualities that made Bob the extraordinary person he was. We will all miss him dearly.

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence
Dean, SHS
Berkeley, California

Among the most precious memories of my life in the Swedenborgian Church has been my association with Bob Kirven. In my three-day visit with Bob in December, we reminisced about our friendship of some 45 years. We recalled our three-hour dialogue with leaders of the National Council of Churches in the early 1960s that led to their inviting our church to apply for membership in the National Council.

We looked back on the visits of Bob and Marian with Perry and me at our summer home in Bridgton, Maine. In my mind's eye I see Bob driving their large motor home up the curving driveway to a level space in the field, and getting it leveled and firmly settled. Bob recalled buying brightly-colored swimming trunks in Reny's department store so that he could take one swim out to the raft in Day Lily Cove.

Bob was not a great summer sportsman, but he enjoyed puttering around our lakefront cottages, repairing the hand pump and installing window shutters. Bob was a philosopher and theologian, yet his father told me that Bob could repair anything so long as there were printed instructions.

Bob and I shared some of our memories of our beloved friend, John King, who was totally blind, and who served as a minister in our church in the 1950s and 1960s until his death from cancer. John taught at the New-Church Theological School when Bob was a student, and when Bob graduated he became a member of the faculty. The three of us talked often about the Swedenborgian view of life after death, or as

Bob preferred to say, “continuing life.” Bob and I were especially close to one another between 1968 and 1975 when I established the Central Office of the church at the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, and I served as president of Convention. Bob was on the faculty of SSR and also edited the *New-Church Messenger*.

Bob was president of SSR when my daughter Rachel and son Paul were at the theological school in Newton. Perry and I were living 3,000 miles away at that time, on the shores of the other ocean, and felt that Bob was like a father-in-residence for our son and daughter. Bob was a particular God-send for Rachel as she encountered serious health problems.

I recall our visiting with Bob and Marian at their home on the ocean in Hull, Massachusetts, and Bob speaking of how much he enjoyed life there and the daily commute across Boston Harbor and the round trip to the seminary in Newton.

Whenever Bob and I got together, we would inevitably discuss thorny issues of Swedenborgian theology. In my visit with Bob in February of 2002, I asked him how he explained the obviously unchristian behavior of certain devout Swedenborgians (who shall remain unnamed). Bob replied that there was a “disconnect” between their faith and their life. Relating this conversation to our friend George Dole, I asked how we could repair this “disconnect.” George said, “try harder.” Bob agreed.

Bob liked gadgets and was fascinated by the computer. Not so long ago he drove from Arizona to Florida for a church convention and proudly showed me a computer program that would guide him very precisely in his projected drive to New England.

Bob and I shared a strong interest in mysticism, and I recall our co-teaching a class at Andover-Newton Theological School on “Swedenborg the Mystic.” I was able to be with Bob in West Chester, Pennsylvania, the evening he got the news of the death of his wife, Marian, in Arizona, and we ministered

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THE RETURN OF THE KING

Part 3 of The Lord of the Rings

New Line Cinema, produced by Peter Jackson and Barrie M. Osborne. Directed by Peter Jackson, written by Frances Walsh.

Review by Stephen Koke

Tolkien's Theme

"There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made. And he spoke to them, propounding to them themes of music; and they sang before him, and he was glad. . . ."

"And it came to pass that Ilúvatar called together all the Ainur and declared to them a mighty theme, unfolding to them things greater and more wonderful than he had yet revealed; and the glory of its beginning and the splendor of its end amazed the Ainur, so that they bowed before Ilúvatar and were silent. . . ."

Long before *The Lord of the Rings* as written, J. R. R. Tolkien formed a grand cosmology, eventually published after his death as *The Silmarillion*, which begins with the words quoted above. In it the world, Middle Earth, was created out of music. Eru is of course God. The Ainur are primal powers, male and female, who issued forth from him, intelligent and creative, timeless. Out of this eventually came the various peoples of the world, beginning with the Elves, "the Firstborn," tall, strong, beautiful people frequently in possession of magical powers, who would live forever unless killed, and others, wizards, dwarves, and even living trees, who populate so many magical traditions and fiction. Humanity came later.

The Ring trilogy concerns the struggle to find some accommodation between these primal powers and ourselves: either try to use these powers for oneself—undoubtedly to rule others—or for the betterment of everyone, or simply do without them and take a path that is more distinctly

our own. *The Lord of the Rings* chronicles the last battles to decide that issue. Complicating matters is Sauron, "the Dark Lord," who sprang from Melkor, one of the Ainur. Tolkien continues:

"But as the theme progressed, it came into the heart of Melkor to interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with the theme of Ilúvatar; for he sought therein to increase the power and glory of the part assigned to himself. To Melkor . . . had been given the greatest gifts of power and knowledge, and he had a share in all the gifts of his brethren. . . ."


That led to self-absorption and eventually to an extreme lust for power. It was eventually focused in the creation of the Ring of Power. Frodo Baggins, a hobbit, one of a very simple but courageous and earthy people in Middle Earth, was chosen to carry it to the volcano where it was forged. He must never wear it, for its powers are enormously addictive, corrupting and diminishing the mind and soul with an inflated desire for dominance, beginning with the gift of invisibility when slipping it on. To wear it would immediately reveal its location to the Dark Lord who created it, invested much of his own power in it, but eventually lost it in a previous war and will stop at nothing to get it back. Right under the eye of the Dark Lord, Frodo must throw it into the volcano and destroy it.

The story of that journey, constantly tracked and attacked by covert and even supernatural forces, is the subject of the Ring trilogy. It is dramatically beautiful and absorbing, filled with intrigue, obviously a myth of spiritual growth and courage. In Frodo it follows much of Swedenborg's analysis of the inner struggles of Jesus, even though Tolkien was apparently unaware of Swedenborg's theology. Peter Jackson, producer and director of the three long films ("The Return of the King" is 3 1/2 hours long) gives us a spectacular look at the story, with the amazing powers of modern special effects.

There are some signs of too much attachment to Hollywood formulas.

Battles occupy too much time at the expense of a clear view of the deeper issues involved; dialogues are sometimes hard to understand as hurried actors mumble incoherently while preparing for war. The delicate mythology and the history of the distant past that led to the current situation is left unclear in favor of action, action, and more action, and that probably explains why one of the major characters in the story, the Lady Galadriel, gets so little time onscreen. She is the most sensitive and insightful representative of the Elves in Middle Earth, one of Tolkien's earliest creations, a major character in *The Silmarillion*, and in *The Lord of the Rings*. She gives balance to an overwhelmingly masculine story; Tolkien did some of his best writing for her. Cate Blanchett is given much too little to do.

It's not clear yet whether Jackson and Walsh have greatly increased general interest in reading Tolkien. Tolkien has always had a large following, but these films may only put more vivid images in their heads.

What is interesting, though, is the broadly spiritual trend in big, expensive films these days—we have *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Harry Potter* films, and the new editions of *Star Wars*. Where is all this going? Maybe to more spiritually significant films as a general production value. Longtime producer and former president of two film companies, Stephen Simon, is now promoting his own line of spiritually significant films, (see November 2003 *Messenger*) playing on extraordinary themes like Jackson, as well as incorporating more ordinary characters and more lifelike dramas. To find out more about his sense of vision, see www.movingmessagesmedia.com. 

O you who love clear edges more than anything...watch the edges that blur.

—Adrienne Rich

reprinted from "Sunbeams," *The Sun*, September 2003

Tolkien's Angel

The vision that comforted the author of *The Lord of the Rings*
Reprinted with permission from *Angels On Earth*

Edward Hoffman

I was at my desk wrestling with the problem of finding something original to say in an upcoming TV interview. I had written a book called *Visions of Innocence* about spiritual childhood experiences, and the producers of the show wanted me to talk about parenting and spirituality. But I couldn't think of anything fresh and stimulating. As I stared out at an uninspiring world of brown grass and bare trees, my 12-year old son, Jeremy, burst in asking, "Dad, what's a hobbit?"

I looked at him and felt a smile of unexpected delight spread across my face. I hadn't thought about the little people called hobbits in many years.

"My English teacher gave us a list of books. We're supposed to pick one to read over winter break. Ever hear of *The Hobbit*?"

I thought back to when I was a teenager in the late sixties and had first discovered J.R.R. Tolkien and his wondrous fantasy tales of a place called Middle-Earth, which ostensibly resembled Old England, but was populated by people and strange, talking creatures who had incredible adventures. *The Hobbit*, as well as Tolkien's celebrated trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, remained firmly impressed on my imagination, and I was delighted to know that my son was about to discover the same pleasures.

Jeremy looked at me expectantly. I pushed aside my notes and turned to him. "Hobbits," I explained, "are furry-footed beings who make their homes underground. They like to smoke pipes and are extraordinarily brave."

He raised his eyebrows. "So, you've read it, huh? Great! Then may I come to you for help if I get stuck, especially when I have to write the essay assignment?"

For a second I considered my looming deadlines. How would I find time to reread Tolkien? But Jeremy was counting on me, and lately I had spent an awful lot of time buried in my work. "All right," I said, giving his shoulder squeeze. "Sounds like fun."

Before he left he slid his teacher's detailed study guide on my desk. "Here, take a look at this." His teacher had provided a dauntingly comprehensive series of questions, including one that caught my eye: How did the author's life influence the book you have just read?

That question stayed with me over the next few weeks as I reread *The Hobbit* and familiarized myself with some biographi-

cal material. Tolkien was indeed a genius at inventing complex, magical worlds where exotic creatures battled for goodness over evil. But more compelling was his life—inspirational, instructive and, in one important way, surprising.

Born in 1892, Englishmen J.R.R. (Ronald) Tolkien was the older of the two brothers who lost their father in childhood. Their mother, Mabel, strove hard to raise them according to the ideals of their Christian faith. Living near Birmingham, the Tolkiens were so poor they were forced to board with relatives and owned practically nothing. But his mother was rich in faith and love; however, before Tolkien was a teenager, she was gone as well.

With the help of a kindly and astute priest who recognized his unique gifts, Tolkien was given a place to live and enough money to finish school. Since childhood, his imagination had been ignited by Old Norse, Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, and German sagas and mythology.

In Tolkien's vision,
every human soul appeared
connected directly to God
through a divine light,
and for each soul there
existed a specific guardian
angel: "...not a thing
interposed between God and
each creature, but God's
very attention itself,
personalized...I received
comfort...I have with me
now a definite awareness of
you poised and shining
in the Light."

Life gleamed with promise for Tolkien until the horror of World War I in 1914. Soon after marrying Edith Bratt, he fought the nightmare of the Battle of the Somme, in France, where British infantrymen came storming out of their trenches directly into German machine-gun fire. At the end of the first day of battle, 20,000 Allied troops lay dead or dying on the field. Tolkien developed trench fever, a serious illness common to frontline soldiers trapped in filthy, lice-infested trenches, and he was shipped home to a hospital in Birmingham, where he eventually recovered. But the Great War left its scar. "By the time I was twenty-one," he was to write, "all but one of my friends were dead."

He and Edith devoted themselves to raising the kind of family they, both orphans, had never known. Four children—John, Michael, Christopher, and Priscilla—were born between 1917 and 1929 while Tolkien was a professor of medieval English at Oxford.

Most significantly, Tolkien was able to give his children the gifts of his prodigious imagination by inventing fantasy tales for their entertainment. When John had trouble falling asleep, Tolkien sat on the corner of his bed and conjured up tales about Carrots, a red-haired boy who climbed into a cuckoo clock and had fantastic escapades. At other times, Tolkien created stories about a villain named Bill Stickers—the name was taken from a street sign that read Bill Stickers Will Be Prosecuted—who battled a comic do-gooder named Major Road Ahead.

One day Tolkien was at his desk in his study when suddenly a strange phrase popped into his head: *In a hole in the ground lived a hobbit*. Scribbled into the blank page of a text booklet, that simple sentence became the basis for *The*

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WHY ONLY GENESIS, EXODUS, AND REVELATION IN VERSE-BY-VERSE EXPLANATION?

Stephen Koke

This is an old question. Swedenborg often wrote that he was commissioned to “reveal,” (or “declare,”) the inner sense of the Word. Yet he published only *Heavenly Secrets* (*Arcana Coelestia*), explaining Genesis and Exodus, and *Revelation Unveiled* (*Apocalypse Revealed*), explaining the book of Revelation, as thorough attempts to do that. Many shorter, less detailed explanations covering much of the rest of the Word appear here and there in his published works. Why not more complete coverage?

First, there may be a problem with the word *reveal*. Suppose a friend asks you to reveal the plot of *Gone With the Wind*. You’ve read the book; this should be easy. But later, sitting down to write, it quickly becomes clear that “reveal” is a vague word; how much is required in order to *reveal* something? Anything could be enough, from a few lines to just handing over the book; after all, a short summary is the plot, as is the entire book.

Second, the only departure from an inherent vagueness in Swedenborg’s statement was offered by his London printer, John Lewis. In 1750, still early in Swedenborg’s theological career, Lewis wrote in an ad for the second volume of *Heavenly Secrets* in English translation that “This work is intended to be such an exposition of the whole Bible as was never attempted in any language before.” Lewis has attracted quite a following, for he should have inside information. That alone may have settled the idea that complete, detailed coverage of the Word was at least intended. But Lewis’ ad was actually weak, showing some hesitation and no evidence that he actually had such a statement from Swedenborg. Among other things, we have needed to take a close look at Lewis.

In the volume he was advertising there is a list of the books of the Word of the Old Testament, with some books of the conventional canon conspicuously missing (n. 2606). Lewis

would have known that his use of the word “Bible” was inaccurate if he had read what was going through his shop and its distinction between the Bible and the Word. If Swedenborg had seen the ad before it went out, he would have protested, “John, please don’t commit me to the Bible. I’m not interested in the Bible, only in the Word, which is a part of the Bible. If you publish that, we are going to lose credibility when I start to skip books of the Bible, and especially when, should I go into the New Testament as you say, I omit the very treasured Acts and the Epistles.” Swedenborg therefore never saw the ad before it was printed and never passed on it. He had not been in England for over a year before the ad was written.

It is very significant that Lewis doesn’t provide attribution to his author for the claim. The claim simply hangs out in the wind with no support, making it indistinguishable from mere sales hype. Every good businessman knows that in order to publish a strong, convincing ad, you attribute your dramatic claims for your product to an authoritative source; in this case, the author. Swedenborg was publishing anonymously, but absence from the title page was a thin protection and should eventually be reversed, especially if the author was, like Swedenborg, a famous person. To provide attribution gives reassurance that if the author should become known, the ad would undoubtedly be vindicated. Swedenborg *was* widely known not too long afterwards to be the author of those strange books. Lewis would certainly have attributed his claim to “the author” if he had such a statement from him. The omission therefore becomes evidence that he did not have such a statement.

In fact, if we believe that Swedenborg told Lewis that he would cover all of the Word in *Heavenly Secrets*, we also have to believe that he failed to tell his readers about it despite the importance to buyers of knowing just what to ex-

pect, especially of a large work.

Swedenborg then, we would have to admit, let the fact leak out through Lewis in an ad of limited circulation and still failed to inform his own readers about it. A very implausible scenario.

Lewis was highly motivated to be dramatic, if possible, for although Swedenborg was paying the printing costs, Lewis would have wanted more income from sales. The work was failing miserably; the first volume sold only four copies in two months. Lewis had to do something; contemplating a period each year in which his facilities would be wasted with little or nothing to show for it would not have been comfortable. He had to walk a thin line between his business interests and his commitments to his absent author, could only say that his author “intended” to go through the “Bible.”

Now *intended* is a soft, pliable word, often based on subjective impressions, and considering the absence of an attribution to his author, Lewis does not put a lot of solid ground under his feet. If challenged he could only say, “Well, it looked to *me* like that’s what he wanted to do, and we had to advertise the English translation. After all, I didn’t quote him.”

Besides the need for a dramatic improvement in sales, what might have led Lewis to make his large claim for the work? One possibility is that Swedenborg originally let it drop that his mission was to reveal the inner sense of the Word, a general statement that Lewis, working alone, could seize upon two years later. Another is that Swedenborg undoubtedly came in carrying the manuscript for the first volume, or some portion of it, for talking purposes, and the title page, right on top, read:

Heavenly Secrets of the Word of the Lord Revealed

Here those in Genesis

This is a very open-ended title-subtitle combination. It indicates no
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WHY ONLY GENESIS, EXODUS, AND REVELATION IN VERSE-BY-VERSE EXPLANATION?

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end to coverage, which is not the same as a promise of complete coverage. One might provisionally take such a title to indicate complete coverage, and that might even be correct. But such title-subtitle combinations are also often used to indicate in the title the broad field in which the author is working, while the subtitle indicates what is actually being covered. Consequently, one may not know which way to interpret the title page until the finished work is on display in the bookstore. Facing his need to write an ad, Lewis could have decided that complete coverage was *probably* what was intended. He also might sell copies, and he could leave a way out of possible trouble with Swedenborg by not attributing the claim to his absent author. If challenged, he would of course declare himself entirely responsible.

Third, we apparently never posed a question that could have taken us much closer to the heart of the matter: Could Swedenborg have *finished* complete verse-by-verse coverage of the Word? The answer is a very definite no. He moved through scripture in all of his exegetical works much too slowly. His average progress per year was only 11 pages of scripture, plus a fraction, as measured by my Bible. The extremes, as far as can be determined, are close to this median. The average required was some 35 pages per year.

It doesn't matter which Bible you use to figure this out, for regardless of how much text is on each page, you will still be measuring the same amount of scripture. It would have taken him 77 years to finish, or until 1825. When he died in 1772, he would have been only somewhere in the First Book of Samuel.

When might he have realized this? Sometime well within the first two years with *Heavenly Secrets*, before Lewis' ad. If he had told Lewis he planned complete coverage, he would have sent Lewis a correcting note before the ad mandated for the English volume went out.

Furthermore, Swedenborg shows no interest in pushing *Heavenly Secrets* into the New Testament. He opens the work with "From the mere letter of the Word of the Old Testament no one would ever discern that this part of the Word contains deep secrets of heaven." He then remains exclusively focused on Old Testament subjects in what looks like a statement of his agenda. It merely lacks a formal statement that this *is* his agenda, and it occurs precisely when we would expect his agenda to be laid out.

The term "New Testament" is not even mentioned until n. 1690, a long way down the road. If he were thinking of complete coverage of the Word we should find both Testaments on his mind at the start.

Swedenborg makes many promises to take the work into scripture that may lie even a few pages ahead. He words those promises tentatively, relying on the Divine mercy, or what the Lord determines is good, which wouldn't have been known in advance. His persistent dependence on the Lord's guidance, or undeserved "mercy," is a litany unrivaled in later works. It tells us that *Heavenly Secrets*

John Lewis, Swedenborg's London printer, wrote in an ad for the second volume of Heavenly Secrets in English translation that "This work is intended to be such an exposition of the whole Bible as was never attempted in any language before." Lewis has attracted quite a following, for he should have inside information. That alone may have settled the idea that complete, detailed coverage of the Word was at least intended. But Lewis' ad was actually weak, showing some hesitation and no evidence that he actually had such a statement from Swedenborg. Among other things, we have needed to take a close look at Lewis.

had no clear plan, was to be written until stopped. Thus, there really was nothing to tell Lewis. Those promises that would have taken *Heavenly Secrets* beyond Exodus would be of the greatest interest to us, showing changes in what Swedenborg was contemplating, but we apparently have never catalogued them.

In a computer search of his constant use of the word "mercy" when looking ahead in *Heavenly Secrets*, I found no promises to take the work into the New Testament. The most ambitious one is interesting. It skirts very close to the New Testament in n. 1212, in the first quarto volume, promising the Prophets, which end the Old Testament. He was very optimistic about how far he *could* go when he started. But as he got more deeply into the project, the range of these promises declined drastically in the second volume, the second year's work, and never recovered afterwards. The five short books of the New Testament Word just beyond the Prophets are just a sliver compared to the huge bulk of the Old Testament Word. If Lewis' claim were correct, it's hard to imagine Swedenborg anticipating coverage of the Old Testament in n. 1212 without mentioning coverage of the very short New Testament Word as well.

Swedenborg's mission in *Heavenly Secrets* was evidently always limited; basically he had to restore the often neglected Old Testament to dignity and usefulness, for it was "but little cared for," (n. 2) and level the playing field so that the Church would honor the entire Word, not merely the New Testament.

So, why only three books of the Word in verse-by-verse explanation?

Some fundamental concepts in the Word had to be explained in detail. Genesis and Exodus depict the religious journey, a fundamental psychology of religion in its innocent beginnings, its later crises and achievements, foundation works that would be extremely useful to the religious world anywhere. Beyond Exodus the Old Testament concentrates on issues that are more specifically Judaic. Revelation qualified for detailed exposition because it is the only book of the Word

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Tolkien's Angel

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Hobbit, which the author steadily developed by reading it to his captivated children. Together they discussed the themes, characters, and plot until the book was published in 1937.

When Nazi aggression plunged England into war again, Christopher Tolkien was called up into the Royal Air Force. The frailest of the four children—a heart condition had caused him to be an invalid for several years in his early teens—Christopher had always been close to his father. The two spent many exciting hours together planning *The Lord of the Rings*. Now they deepened their relationship through frequent correspondence. In their letters they shared their most private emotions and their mutual belief in heaven and guardian angels. Though proud of his son's bravery as a combat pilot, Tolkien was profoundly troubled by his safety and he prayed continually. It was prayer that led him to have a fateful vision in November 1944.


One afternoon Tolkien was on his knees praying in an Oxford church, consumed with anxiety over Christopher's well-being. What happened next was not a hallucination or fantasy. As he later wrote to Christopher, the experience was real and exquisitely intense. In Tolkien's vision, every human soul appeared connected directly to God through a divine light, and for each soul there existed a specific guardian angel: "... not a thing interposed between God and each creature, but God's very attention itself, personalized. ... I received comfort. ...

I have with me now a definite awareness of you poised and shining in the Light."

Christopher survived the war and returned home safely, and Tolkien never forgot the comfort brought to him by angels that November day. *The Lord of the Rings* was published in the mid-1950s and, like *The Hobbit*, it became a worldwide bestseller. In comfortable retirement Tolkien was famous and wealthy beyond his wildest dreams, yet he and Edith continued to live modestly until their deaths in the early 1970s.

By the time winter break was over, my own son, Jeremy, had devoured *The Hobbit* and written a good essay, and we had many a spirited hour discussing the book. I had rediscovered the magic of Middle-Earth and its author, whose life and vision made such an impression on me. I had an unexpected reward as well. For my TV interview I discussed how the force of imagination can help parents forge a powerful link with their children. After all, that is exactly what Tolkien did.

But it was a real story that affected me most, the surprising account of Tolkien in church that gloomy November day. For in reading about it, I was able to feel the same sense of relief and comfort at the definite awareness of my son "poised and shining in the Light." I was reminded again that God's love is indeed personalized, and for each and every one of us there is an angel to prove it.

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WHY ONLY GENESIS, EXODUS, AND REVELATION IN VERSE-BY-VERSE EXPLANATION?

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which deals with the New Church and the issues that made it necessary. It is virtually our charter.

An important consideration is that the entire inner sense, even in these three books of the Word, cannot be communicated anyway, since much of it is "ineffable," beyond ordinary dictionary language, the only language Swedenborg could publish in. Indeed, its most adequate language is just the language of symbolism, the existing imagery; scripture works best in that form, if only we can get used to reading it differently.

Furthermore, to demonstrate that one can hold to a highly specific method of interpretation, making it work so consistently and spectacularly through long stretches of scripture with its many component documents, amounts to a stunning case for his theology and its view of a continuous inner sense.

Elsewhere, Swedenborg seems to have faced the many possible ways to *reveal*, feeling free to choose between them, depending on the levels at which we needed illumination and the problems for which we needed detailed or only summary answers. Here, we face another consideration: That word, *reveal*, was part of his spiritual commission, and it would be better to at least take it spiritually. *To reveal* is in this primal sense to inspire higher *realizations*, not merely to spell everything out in dictionary language for the verbal intellect, an impossibility.

With the impressive start he gives us, we should eventually find ourselves in more regenerate states consciously accessing the spiritual sense that the heavens, he tells us, deposit deep within us when we read the Word with reverence and devotion. It should grow constantly, waiting for that breakthrough in consciousness.

Stephen Koke is a Swedenborgian member at large in the Pacific Coast Association; author of *The Hidden Millennium: the Doomsday Fallacy* (Swedenborg Foundation); contractual editor for J. Appleseed; and recent member of the Communications Support Unit. 

IMPORTANT CHURCH DATES

February 12-15, 2004—MINSU
Ft Myers, FL

March 26-29, 2004—SHS Board
Berkeley, CA

July 7-14—General Convention
Kitchener, Ontario Canada

August 26-29, 2004—MINSU
St. Louis, MO

Nov 4-7, 2004—General Council
Wayfarers Chapel

Social Justice Revisited

Dear Editor:

In reading Kathy Speas' "Swedenborgianism and Social Justice" (November 2003 *Messenger*), I was struck by the irony that the article was actually about (individual) "Swedenborgians" and social justice, not "Swedenborgianism." The Swedenborgian Church, as far as I can tell, has little policy base or track record in the field. I know of only three significant statements from the church on the topic. A standing resolution in 1969 supporting a woman's right to choose, and another in 1982, recognizing the church's responsibility to "voice its conviction on ethical and moral issues that arrive from time to time in our nation and in our world." The third is, I believe, more significant and worthy of closer study. The Act of Incorporation, approved in 1861, and still in effect as far as I know, describes the purpose of Convention in six points, two of which are relevant here.

#2) The specific and primary charitable purpose is to aid the poor and unfortunate by collection and disbursements of funds, food, clothing and shelter.

#5) No substantive part of the activities of this Convention shall consist of the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, nor shall this Convention participate in, or intervene in (including publishing or distribution of statements), any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office or perform any act that will disqualify the Convention for tax exempt status conferred by local, state or federal government which has jurisdiction over Convention.

I think most readers can see that the implications of these statements cannot be addressed in this brief forum; nonetheless, I believe the following points deserve note:

Concerning the first point (#2) I find it odd that the church would refer to those on the margins of life as "unfortunate," considering Swedenborg's assertion that chance

TO THE EDITOR

and accident are but "idle terms" (DP 70). To recognize that problems have causes is a first step in finding a solution.

Further, what is advocated here is not so much social justice as "personal mercy" extended on an individual basis to those in material need. Two points seem important here. First, our doctrine teaches that the material realm is the realm of effect and the spiritual realm is the realm of cause. Thus, our efforts on behalf of others are only truly effective and lasting if they address the *causes* of poverty, etc., and not just the external symptoms. (The familiar observation about giving a fish vs. teaching one how to fish seems to be most frequently employed when people want to hold onto their own fish! Meanwhile, we never seem to get around to the more socially transformative work of "teaching how to fish.") At any rate, I know of no denominational efforts to accomplish the goals set forth.

Secondly, our doctrine is equally clear about who the neighbor to be helped is: it is the "larger" neighbor. As our confirmation vows indicate, the larger the neighbor, the greater our responsibility to it: state trumps family, country trumps state, and world trumps country. So while our doctrine calls us to address underlying causes on behalf of the larger community (social justice), we have opted instead to focus on addressing external conditions on an individual (read: piecemeal) fashion (very much like "charity" in the old church sense of the term). For these reasons, I appreciated the passages from Swedenborg which reminded us of who the "neighbor" is and how we are to honor our interdependence with one another. Justice requires the spiritual acknowledgment that we are all one, regardless of outward differences. The status quo requires only that we continue to accept differences of wealth, status and reputation as both

real and relevant. (Here we want to remember, as the article suggests, how closely aligned our church was with the status-quo and moneyed classes in the late 19th century, and for some time after that.)

Concerning #5, I find it curious that the word propaganda is extended to include "efforts to influence legislation." Most of us hear the word "propaganda" and immediately think of things like false information, coerced belief, and the exclusion of different opinions. But these are connotations, born largely of a cold-war mentality unknown to the authors. Propaganda is nothing more than that which is propagated: to transmit, spread, disseminate, multiply, increase, etc. Something we have been striving to do with our doctrines all along, and something all politically active citizens in a democracy are encouraged to do as well.

More generally, this point actually stresses the need to protect our tax exempt status, to rightfully recognize the unique relationship between church and state laid out in the first amendment. However, I would suggest that our understanding of the separation of church and state has evolved significantly since 1861, and that the simplistic notion of the mutual exclusion of these two realms does not serve us well. It is one thing to recognize what our status *prevents* us from doing, and another to acknowledge what it *allows* us to do. Here we are free in a positive, pro-active sense, and responsible to act on what we do believe (if we do believe anything). I would be the first to argue against any political activity by the church that is partisan in nature, but also first to argue against the opinion that all politics is partisan.

Finally, in light of the passages quoted from Swedenborg at the beginning of the article, and Dr. Dole's eloquent linkage mentioned at the end, I was surprised by Ms. Speas' conclusion which affirmed a primarily individual approach to social justice issues. Our theology does grant a greater freedom to individual decision than many other religious traditions. But "let us not forget the tenets of our theology" that

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teach us the illusory nature of such private freedom, our deep interdependence with all others, and our need to be led by the more expansive compassion of the Lord.

The National Council of Churches, especially through its Religious Liberty Committee, offers a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of social justice and church-state issues, inclusive of a broad diversity of viewpoints. Our church could benefit immensely by taking advantage of these resources to further clarify and advance its mission in light of 21st century realities.

Correction: The 1995 Convention sermon was delivered by Carl Yenetchi. My remarks that year were part of a keynote address to Convention, followed by a panel discussion.

Robert McCluskey
Boston

"Preparation for the Spiritual World" Lauded

Dear Editor

How I appreciate all that Wilson VanDusen writes! With his "Preparation for the Spiritual World" in the December 2003 *Messenger* he got my attention again.

Recently rereading his *Returning to the Source, the Way to the Experiences of God*, I was reacquainted with many things in his work that I can understand from my own personal experience. Putting it simply, I appreciate the way he brings/connects Swedenborg to all aspects of life, other religions and expressions of spirituality. As a Christian/Buddhist/Hindu/plus mix, and student of Alice Bailey's writings, I seek harmony, understanding and Oneness within humanity, and all life forms on earth.

I appreciate and recognize others who use their energy toward these goals.

I found that "Preparation for the Spiritual World" addresses issues very similar to my current life perceptions. Moving into my later years, as are the Van Dusens, I am simplifying, appreciating life's gifts, and being selective about my involvements. I seek awareness of the good, caring and purposeful things happening throughout the world.

Having been a volunteer since Brownie Scouts, I find myself still volunteering: with school children through the nature center; wetlands restoration and preservation; hospice; the senior center; and supporting others who are doing things where I am no longer active. Many of us who are retired are very grateful to have the opportunity to be of service as long as we can.

With a background in gerontology, counseling, and hospice, I find aging and preparation for the spiritual world something we need to share among us more often.

Wilson Van Dusen has a way of addressing this and self-awareness that I hope we are all hearing and learning from. Too often there is a denial of our inevitable transition.

Sometimes it comes too quickly/traumatically for a person and/or family. We may never be fully prepared, but some awareness of our relationship with the spiritual world may be helpful.

Hopefully in coming years people of all religions and spiritual understanding will come to perceive in their own ways the Oneness of our connection with the spiritual world and our spiritual destiny.

As I keep moving along I will continue to ponder and assess: Have I done what I came here to do? What more needs to be learned? Completed? How might I be more useful to humanity? And thanks to Wilson Van Dusen, I will continue to learn by reading, from time to time, *Uses, a Way of Personal and Spiritual Growth*.

Janet Vernon
Long Beach, California

Baptism Pamphlet Introduced

The Communications Support Unit recently completed the first of a new series of pamphlets for use in our churches and centers. The Baptism pamphlet, written by the Rev. Kim Hinrichs, program director at the Swedenborgian House of Studies, is about the Swedenborgian Church's understanding of the sacrament of baptism. Future pamphlets, to be completed by the end of 2004, will focus on our understanding of weddings, memorial services, and confirmation celebrations. It is hoped that this series of pamphlets will provide one way for us to introduce the Swedenborgian Church to the many people who visit our sanctuaries for these events.

As these people sit in the church waiting for these ceremonies to begin, they would see the appropriate pamphlet that has been placed in the hymnal rack back of the pews in your church. Guests who read them before the service begins, or take them home, will gain a better understanding, from our perspective, of the event they have

attended.

COMSU's intent is that each church will order enough of these pamphlets to have available for the coming year. The first run is being provided to churches free of charge. To get a rough estimate of the number to be ordered, multiply the number of guests expected to visit your church in the coming year for Baptism ceremonies by the number of ceremonies scheduled.

For future orders, the text of the pamphlet can be ordered from COMSU at a nominal charge. There will be a place in the layout for you to add your church's name, phone, and email address. The file will be emailed to you so that printing can be done at the local level. We request that when you reprint future pamphlets, the wording not be changed.

To order the Baptism pamphlet, please contact:

Margaret Culver, J. Applesced & Co.
(415) 282-1312
Email: mculver@SBCglobal.net



GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT

The fall General Council Meeting took place at Camp Menoscaw, Kansas, on October 23-26, 2003. The usual reports and updates were made, including the officers' reports, Central Office report and Wayfarers Chapel report. The Cabinet-recommended theme for 2004 Convention in Kitchener, "A Voice in the Wilderness," was approved.

The Education Support Unit proposed a constitutional change allowing four elected members and four year terms on EDSU. After lengthy discussion it was decided not to pursue this.

There was considerable time spent discussing future employment of ministers coming out of SHS. The president will appoint a committee, in line with Cabinet's recommendation, to study these issues and will make a preliminary report at the pre-convention meeting.

Lastly, the painful process of arriving at a budget took up the greatest portion of time and energy. With the 2002 deficit being \$217,000 and 2003 looking to be even higher, General Council voted to arrive at a budget with a deficit of less than \$100,000 for 2004. Much serious consideration was given to the Augmentation Fund, and use of restricted and non-restricted funds. After much deliberation, we eliminated funding for the Spiritual Ministries Consultant position and made a 5% across-the-board cut in Convention-paid salaries (except for Central Office which was purposely omitted). The budget was still not acceptable, so General Council agreed to send the budgets back to the respective cost centers with the direction to cut 46% from their budget. After working via e-mail, a conference call was conducted on December 20, with members of Cabinet and General Council, to finalize the budget. Having the Investment Committee's figures for next year at this point in time made our calculations more accurate, and our deficit was now at \$175,000. We heard of a possible large donation to be made, with an emphasis on youth. Disregarding this possibility, it was voted to restore the Youth Director's salary to its original level. The reasoning for this included the fact that youth is the stated number one priority of Convention. The budget, with a deficit of \$191,283, was finalized and voted on by General Council at this meeting.

—Gloria Toot, secretary



SHS SHORT TAKES

Jim Lawrence and Kim Hinrichs

Popular Intersession Course

Adjunct Professor of Spirituality at Pacific School of Religion Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake arrived on campus January 12-16 to teach a week-long Intersession course entitled, "Spiritual Renewal in Parish Life." Advance enrollments were a whopping 18 students wishing to take this course!

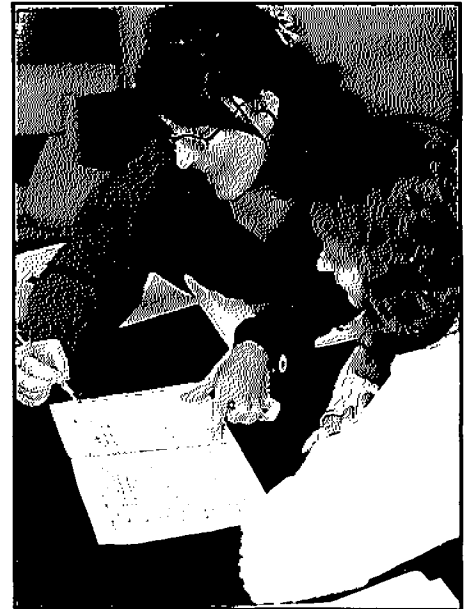
Student Benchmarks

As we look forward to the Spring semester in a few weeks, we are somewhat amazed to report that we have nine residential students and three students (studying at other institutions who are also doing distance education with SHS to complete the Certificate in Swedenborgian Studies as a requirement for application for ordination). This will be the last semester for our first "wave" of soon-to-be-graduates from Berkeley. Kathy Speas, Kevin Baxter, and Alison Lane Baxter are expected to have completed all requirements for ordination at this next convention. Doug Moss, a PSR student who converted to Swedenborgianism during seminary, will graduate from PSR with the SHS certificate this May but has not yet fully completed denominational field education requirements. Sage Currie, Jenn Tafel, Carla Friedrich, Lana Sandahl, and Dave Brown will be continuing students in the program. Jane Siebert, Eli Dale, and Janet Hendrickson are distance students pursuing advanced degrees in ministry in coordination with the Certificate in Swedenborgian Studies. Jane Siebert is also expected to have completed all requirements for ordination at the next convention.

Student Field Ed

Three students during January are doing short-term Swedenborg Center Experiences: Doug Moss with Rev. Eric Allison and the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound; Kathy Speas with the pastoral staff at Wayfarers

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Carla Friedrich and Alison Baxter, SHS ordination track students.

Massachusetts New Church Union Book Room Moves to Cambridge Chapel

Andrew Dole

One of the reasons for the existence of the Massachusetts New-Church Union as stipulated by its charter, is to maintain a bookroom where the public can read about Swedenborg. The closure of the Swedenborg Bookroom and Lending Library at 79 Newbury St. in Boston prompted Eugene Taylor to suggest Swedenborg Chapel as an alternative location for the Union's collection, and the Union's Executive Committee subsequently voted to move its library to Cambridge.

The process of moving the Union's library to the Chapel involves a number of steps, and the process has been underway since August. The first steps involved making space for the collection in the Chapel's parish wing. A number of years ago, the Union's lending library had been moved to the Chapel, together with several sets of metal utility shelves. At the start of the project volunteers from the congregation went through this collection and removed duplicates and extraneous material, packing these books for storage with the remainder of the Union's collection. At approximately the same time, the reference library collection at Newbury Street was divided into two sections, one section to be incorporated into the collection at the Chapel, and the remainder to be placed into storage.

In October, wooden bookshelves from the Newbury Street Bookstore were moved to Cambridge to replace the original utility shelving, and the existing collection was reshelfed. Since that time, books designated for incorporation into the new collection have been moved from Boston to Cambridge. The bulk of the heavy lifting has been done by Chapel member Cliff Siegh, who has devoted many hours to the project.

In addition to moving the books, the Union has been supporting the updating of its library. A database of the Union reference library had been compiled by the staff of the Newbury St. Bookstore; it has been reformatted and updated, and Andrew Dole and Rebeka Simons are in the process of adding the books currently in Cambridge and incorporating the books from Newbury St. into the collection.

We hope to have the entire Cambridge collection cataloged by early 2004.

The next stage of the process, once the Cambridge catalog is complete, will be to organize the books by call numbers so they will be accessible to

browsers, and to publish the catalog database on the Web. Once the information is available online, those in search of hard-to-find books on Swedenborg will be able to find out quickly and easily if a particular book can be found at the Chapel.

The remaining books from the Newbury St. collection which do not end up in Cambridge will be boxed and shipped to an archival storage facility. We plan to continue cataloging these books once the bulk of the work in Cambridge is complete. Eventually, we hope to have detailed information on every book in the Union collection, both those accessible at the Chapel and those in storage.

If you are interested in literature on Swedenborg, including collections of lectures and sermons, biographies of famous Swedenborgians, correspondential biblical commentaries, or expositions of Swedenborgian doctrine (we have quite a few of those!), I encourage you to stop by the Chapel. If you would like to find out if we have a particular book, feel free to contact us.

Swedenborg Chapel
50 Quincy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 864-4552



Decade to Overcome Violence *Service Commemorates Life of Martin Luther King*

Representatives from Christian faith communities around the globe launched a year-long effort to confront and overcome violence in the United States during a stirring worship service commemorating the life and ministry of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Interchurch Center in New York City on January 12. The focus on the US in 2004 is part of the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV).

"We are gathered as peacemakers from various regions of the world to launch this year-long focus in the United States by lifting up the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr, whose work and ministry has inspired peacemakers around the globe," said Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, archpriest, Orthodox Church in America, and moderator, US Conference of the WCC, in opening remarks at the service.

In a multimedia presentation, members of the congregation watched graphic images of violence, destruction, and war on a large screen as DOV coordinator Rev. Hansulrich Gerber presented the goals of the Decade to Overcome Violence, which is to be one of "Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace."

No justice, no peace

"It is a contradiction of life to put peace ahead of justice," said the Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, the pastor of the Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, in intro-

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Decade to Overcome Violence *(Continued from page 25)*

ductory remarks in his sermon. "There will be no international peace until there is international justice," he said, quoting Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion.

Moss, a friend and associate of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., urged members of the congregation never to forget the lessons of history as they pursue both peace and justice. "To forget is exile," he said, "to remember is redemption." Moss warned the congregation to never forget "the moans and groans of countless millions of human beings" who were imprisoned on slave ships and "who were fed to sharks if they died on passage, or served up to slave masters if they survived."

Yet Moss also cited some redemptive historical developments during the past half-century, including the passage of the GI Bill in 1944, that opened educational and career opportunities to millions of disadvantaged veterans. In addition, he said that the establishment of the United Nations and the World Council of Churches were important international milestones on the way to universal peace and justice.

Moss also pointed to national and international liberation movements—beginning with the independence of India in 1947—as redemptive signs. "When India gained independence, the British Empire had a nervous breakdown, and the rest of western colonialism had a heart attack," he said.

All of these significant historic developments, Moss said, were the context in which King found his prophetic vocation.

Following Dr. King's footsteps

“What can we do to follow in Dr. King's footsteps?” Moss asked. "We must be about the business of building a new generation of prophets of justice," he said. "We must be disciples of love, apostles of liberation, teachers of nonviolence, and ambassadors of reconciliation."

Such endeavors, Moss said, "will not come automatically, nor without insti-

tutional and individual risks." And, he added, efforts to make peace would require leaders who "have the courage to lead, to mold consensus, and to act despite the risk of being persecuted."

Quoting Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Moss described King's life and ministry as "a vision, a voice, and a way." He urged his listeners to "share his vision, hearken to his voice, and follow in his way."

"War is obsolete"

Citing the anti-war sentiments of several former generals in the US military, Moss asked: "If generals of the army had that kind of insight, then what is the excuse at the White House, or your house, or my house if the occupants of those homes do not oppose war?"

"We must join with those former generals and declare that 'War is obsolete,'" Moss added. And in a reference to the war in Iraq, Moss chided the Bush administration for its search for weapons of mass destruction there, when there are such weapons in the US.

"Where are the weapons of mass destruction?" Moss asked. "Look around: AIDS is a weapon of mass destruction," he said, "so is hunger, the denial of health care to the poor, illiterate and uneducated minds, tobacco and tobacco-related illnesses, uncared-for children." All these and many other weapons destroy the fabric of the nation, Moss contended.

Efforts to pursue peace must originate "in our commitment to break the bonds of injustice, and to bring justice and peace into our homes, and into our collective house—the White House," Moss concluded. "When we break the bonds of injustice and oppression, then we become God's peacemakers."

DOV Goals

- Addressing holistically the wide varieties of violence, both direct and structural, in homes, communities, and in international arenas and learning from the local and regional analyses of violence and ways to overcome violence.
- Challenging the churches to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of

violence; to relinquish any theological justification of violence; and to affirm anew the spirituality of reconciliation and active nonviolence.

- Creating a new understanding of security in terms of cooperation and community, instead of in terms of domination and competition.
- Learning from the spirituality and resources for peace-building of other faiths to work with communities of other faiths in the pursuit of peace and to challenge the churches to reflect on the misuse of religious and ethnic identities in pluralistic societies.
- Challenging the growing militarization of our world, especially the proliferation of small arms and military weapons.

For more information contact:

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The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches, now 342, in more than 122 countries in all continents from virtually all Christian traditions. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member church but works cooperatively with the WCC. The highest governing body is the assembly, which meets approximately every seven years. The WCC was formally inaugurated in 1948 in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Its staff is headed by general secretary Samuel Kobia from the Methodist Church in Kenya.

—Carol Fouke, NCC,



A lot of people are waiting for Martin Luther King, Jr. or Mahatma Gandhi to come back, but they are gone. We are it. It is up to us. It is up to you.

—Marian Wright Edelman

Reprinted from "Sunbeams," *The Sun*, December 2003

SHS SHORT TAKES


(Continued from page 24)

Chapel; and Alison Baxter with Rev. Rita Russell in England. Two students continue with their year-long Field Education requirement at PSR: **Jenn Tafel** with Patricia Keel (a Unity minister) at the El Cerrito church and **Carla Friedrich** with Rev. Rachel Rivers at the San Francisco church.

SHS Professor in India

Dr. Greg Johnson, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and of Swedenborgian Studies, went on a month-long trip to India in January. Greg has a specialty interest in Eastern religions. While he was there, he visited several research libraries. In addition to his courses in Swedenborgian theology and philosophy, Greg also teaches other subjects, including an upcoming course at PSR entitled "Introduction to Hindu Philosophy."

Spring Courses

Two Swedenborgian courses on campus at PSR include: "Swedenborgian Church History, Polity, and Practice" taught by Rev. Dr. **Jim Lawrence**; and "Love, Sex, and Marriage" (a study of Swedenborg's *Conjugal Love*) taught by Dr. Greg Johnson, who will also be teaching a non-Swedenborgian course for PSR called "Flannery O'Connor's Christianity." In addition, the Swedenborgian community will hold its weekly Contexting Seminar under the direction of Rev. **Kim Hinrichs**. 

PAMPHLETS WANTED

Pamphlets are a rather neglected area in Swedenborg's writings. But often a pamphlet covers an area unusually well. A long-time Swedenborg scholar would like any pamphlets. Write the title and author (if any) and price. I will pay cost and shipping.

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PASSAGES

BAPTISMS

McCain, Serrano—the Cleveland Swedenborg Chapel is pleased to welcome two babies into our family. **Jada McCain**, daughter of Larry and Sandi McCain, was born November 20, 2003, and baptized January 3, 2004. **Victor Hugo Serrano**, son of Marianela and Leo Serano, was born October 20, 2003, and baptized January 4, 2004. The Rev. Junchol Lee officiated at both baptisms.

Stroh—Christopher Maxwell Stroh was baptized into the Christian faith November 16, 2003, at the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, the Rev. Randall Laakko officiating. The parents are Darren and Kristina (Laakko) Stroh. Christopher is the grandson of the Rev. Randall and Millie Laakko. Darren is also on the Board of Trustee at the Wilmington church.


Watt—Mathew Albert Watt and Joshua Fenimore Watt were baptized into the Christian faith November 2, 2003 at the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, the Rev. Randall Laakko officiating. The parents are Jeffrey W. Watt and MaryEllen


Watt. Jeff is the president of the Board of Trustees at the Wilmington church.

CONFIRMATION

Engleman, Engleman and Weitendorf—The Cleveland Swedenborg Chapel welcomed three new members November 23, 2003. The Rev. Junchol Lee officiated in the welcoming ceremony for Jackie Engleman, Tim Engleman and Matthew Weitendorf.

DEATH

Kirven—the Rev. Dr. Robert H. Kirven, age 77, entered the spiritual world January 9, 2004, in Glendale, Arizona. Dr. Kirven was a Swedenborgian minister, a past president and professor for 30 years at the Swedenborg School of Religion, former editor of *The Messenger*, and author of *A Book About Dying* and *A Concise Overview of Swedenborg's Theology*. 

A memorial service was conducted January 22, 2004, in the auditorium of Glencroft Retirement Community in Glendale, Arizona, the Rev. Dr. George Dole officiating. 

Reminiscence

(Continued from page 16)

to one another. Bob had just given a talk on *Angels in Action* at the Swedenborg Foundation.

Bob possessed a brilliant mind and gained a doctorate of philosophy in the history of ideas at Brandeis University. His earlier background in writing enabled him to serve the church well in expressing his ideas through books and pamphlets. An early book addressed to teenagers and young adults was *Big Questions off Campus* with the subtitle, *How far can we go without sinning?* One of his most popular courses at the Swedenborg School of Religion was "An Overview of Swedenborg's Theology." I urged him to transcribe his lectures into print so that they could be made available not only to the students but to a larger church public. One of

Bob's last accomplishments was to see the publication of *A Concise Overview of Swedenborg's Theology* in book form. His daughter Diana helped with the final editing, and it came off the press (J. Appleseed) in 2003.

As I took up my pen in my cedar cabin in Duvall, Washington, to share a few memories of my association with Bob, a flood of memories came upon me. I feel most privileged to have been able to reminisce with Bob just a few weeks before he entered upon the continuation of his life. God bless you, Bob!

Rev. Ernest O. Martin
Duvall, Washington



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.

Put these dates on your calendar:

**Sunday July 10
to Wednesday July 14
for Convention 2004**

This July convention will again be held on the grounds of the University of Waterloo, in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. And perhaps you'd better make those dates tentative, because this year you will have *options*!

Pre-convention will have a new twist this year. In response to many requests for more and longer mini-course times, the Educational Support Unit—EDSU—has planned longer workshops and seminars for Friday, July 9 and Saturday, July 10. If the educational opportunities at Convention are important to you, come early and enjoy! A complete list of pre-Convention and regularly scheduled mini-courses will be published in the April issue of *The Messenger*. Watch for it then, but keep your calendar open.

Many times, as Convention ends, Ian and I

wonder why we didn't take advantage of the delightful area we found ourselves in. We're rushing for a plane flight, leaving behind an area it would have been fascinating to explore. So here are a few things you might consider visiting while you are here:

To the east, Niagara Falls is just a two-hour drive from Kitchener-Waterloo. You can view the magnificent American and Canadian Falls, walk through the formal gardens, visit the small restored town of Niagara on the Lake while driving from the East Coast to Convention.

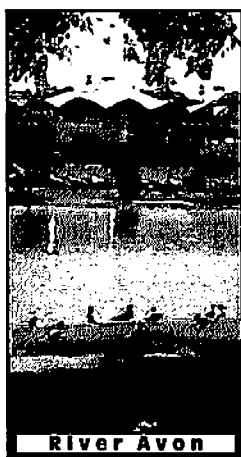
In a westerly direction is the town of Stratford—like the English city, it is on the River Avon, and both offer fabulous theater. Stratford, Ontario, has four theaters offering a wide variety of plays and musicals. The Festival Theatre is the most impressive. It is here that the majestic Shakespearean plays are performed, and where the main musicals are usually presented. You can find schedules and prices on their website at www.stratfordfestival.ca.

And speaking of prices, your dollar goes a lot farther in Canada. When you read a price tag of \$1.00 you have to pay only 75 cents!

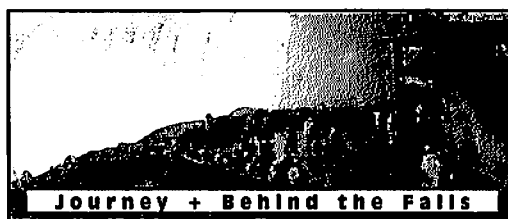
One of our local festivals occurs in October, but as many will remember, it is possible to celebrate it in July, so a celebration of Oktoberfest will be held while you are here, with local food, and yes, jugs of beer. Oktoberfest, however, is traditionally a family affair, and the children and young people will enjoy the traditional dancers and learn to dance the polka. So many things to do and enjoy. Be sure to put them on your calendar!



—Fran McIntosh



River Avon



Journey + Behind the Falls



Horseshoe + Falls

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