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# THE MESSENGER

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## ***After the Ecstasy, the Laundry***

Ernest Martin

I like to think of myself as a practical mystic, a person who is motivated by the highest ideals, and yet has his feet squarely on the ground. After graduating from high school, I spent 1 ½ years at a college of business administration, preparing for life “in the real world.” The tragic death of my six-year-old brother, during my first year of college, forced me to take a hard look at my life’s goals and priorities. After three years in the Army during World War II, I transferred to a college of liberal arts and majored in philosophy. From there I went to our theological school and prepared for ministry in the Swedenborgian Church. I decided to focus my energies on ministry rather than the business world, and yet I don’t see the two disciplines as contradictory. Swedenborg said the spiritual life is developed through an active life in the world.

I feel that my training in business administration has helped me in my ministry, enabling me to work constructively with people in varying walks of life. My administrative training and background helped me in my service as president of our denomination for seven years; helped me to make the Wayfarers Chapel self-supporting during my nine years there; and helped me in establishing the Temenos Conference and Retreat Center, a project that I worked at for 15 years. It is essential that we have high ideals, but they must be expressed in our daily lives through practical discipline and know-how. The realms of the sacred and the secular must be integrated, for together they make one life.

Reflecting on this theme of religion and life, my attention was drawn this summer to the book, *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry*, by the Buddhist monk Jack Kornfield. Kornfield writes: “We all know that after the honeymoon comes the marriage, after the election comes the hard task of

governance. In spiritual life it is the same: After the ecstasy comes the laundry.”

He adds, “Most spiritual accounts end with illumination or enlightenment. But what if we ask what happens after that? What happens when the Zen master returns home to spouse and children? What happens when the Christian mystic goes shopping? What is life like after the ecstasy? How do we live our understanding with a full heart?”

Pir Vilayat Khan, the 75-year-old head of the Sufi Order in the West, confides his own belief – “Of so many great teachers I’ve met in India and Asia, if you were to bring them to America, get them a house, two cars, a spouse, three kids, a job, insurance, and taxes...they would all have a hard time.”

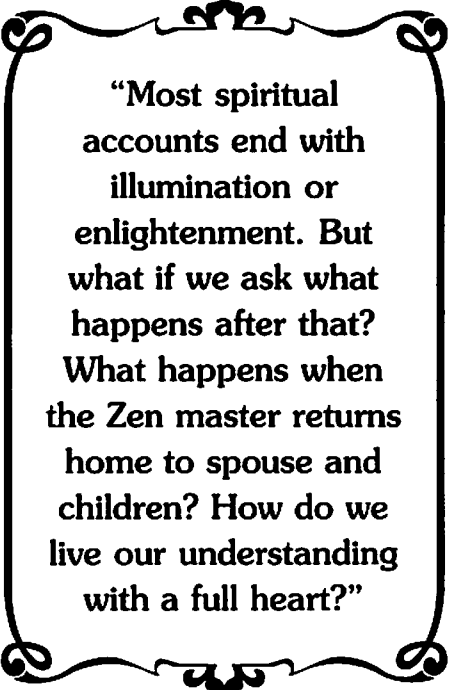
Zen teacher, poet, and father Gary Snyder writes: “All of us are apprenticed with the same teacher—reality...It is as hard to get the children herded into the car pool and down the road to the bus as it is to chant sutras in the Buddha-hall on a cold morning. One is not better than the other, each can be quite boring; and they both have the virtuous quality of

repetition. Repetition and its good results make the very activities of our life into the path.”

One of the greatest challenges to the development of the spiritual life is in our human relationships – marriage and the family, our workplace, our church, and other social relationships. During my ministry of 50 years, I have conducted over 3,000 weddings, and in many cases one or both partners had been married before. In our wedding conferences, I would often ask: “What did you learn from your first marriage? Why do you think your second marriage will be more successful than your first?”

Most couples respond that they feel more mature now, and perhaps more realistic in their expectations of one another. This is doubtless true, and yet statistics show that the probability of second marriages ending in divorce is greater than those of first marriages.

Many second marriages involve children from previous marriages, and joint custody, adding to the stresses of the new family. One new groom came to me confessing that he could not feel the same love for his stepchild that he did for



**“Most spiritual accounts end with illumination or enlightenment. But what if we ask what happens after that? What happens when the Zen master returns home to spouse and children? How do we live our understanding with a full heart?”**

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January 2004

# The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

It had already seemed as if we were not merely moving into the new year, we were careening into 2004; daily life felt like those car chases in the movies, things were being slammed into and demolished on the side of the road and there was no time to stop and take notice. Too much going on, too much to think about, let alone dealing with all of it.

Then I'm gathering with fellow choir members on December 14 in the United Methodist church here in Julian, and somebody says that it's on the morning news--Saddam Hussein has been found and captured. Christmas is coming. Messiah practice. Performance on the 21st. Our choir director hands out the music for the sestet piece we're performing on Christmas Eve. I'm still thinking about our fellow choir member whose son died last week in a fire when their guest cottage burned down. They survived the big fires here, then this tragedy happened out of nowhere. He's already lost his wife and his other son to cancer in the last five years. The memorial is announced for next Thursday. He's here in his usual place in the tenor section, singing with us, carrying on and making the best of it.

During the church service, there are announcements of joys and concerns. A man stands up and says, "I guess you all know they caught Saddam Hussein." He raises a jubilant fist. "Now we can hang him!" There is silence in the congregation. Our choir director rolls her eyes and shakes her head. The minister makes no comment, and moves on to the next item on the service bulletin.

We're singing an energetic Israeli anthem, "The Promised Messiah Will Come." My attention wanders from the sermon to the nature of evil. There was apparent disapproval of the man's remark, but wasn't he voicing the sentiments that many of us had harbored at times over these past months? Hussein is the quintessential bad guy, the embodiment of all that is corrupt and wicked in mankind, and some have undoubtedly been persuaded that his capture and ultimate execution would be the solution to the problems in Iraq. In myths and legends, when the dragon is slain and heroes are proclaimed, isn't peace restored to the kingdom?

Back at home, we turn on the TV news and see repeated images of this former tyrant who's been hiding for months in an eight by ten spider hole. He's exhausted,

shamed, submitting to having his mouth swabbed out. He looks like any down-and-out homeless person you might stumble across in a big-city doorway. A newscaster opines that it might have been better if he'd been found dead, because now, of course, there's the problem of what, exactly, to do with him and how to go about it.

But alive, he presents a more complex picture; we're seeing the power of evil unmasked and reduced to a tired old man. His reign of terror and brutality was born and nurtured out of fear and violence, and was allowed to continue because of a consensual belief in violence as a solution. There's celebration in Baghdad with guns being shot in the air. And he still has supporters who are filling the streets as well. Will the violence in Iraq be curtailed now? Not likely.

Competing with Saddam on the news is a new morning-after contraceptive pill that is up for FDA approval for over-the-counter. And Christmas retail sales are not measuring up to merchants' hopes for the holiday season. We're not buying enough stuff.

And a new weapon has been developed that can shoot around corners.

A lot to ponder and pray about in the New Year. Wishing you a blessed and peace filled 2004.

—Patte LeVan



TO THE  
EDITOR

Letter from  
Pavel Heger

## Dear Friends in the General Convention,

We would like to thank all of you who supported us spiritually or materially during these past months. We very much appreciate your help, your prayers, your concern, your love and your financial support.

It is hard to believe how difficult this experience is—to lose the house by fire. (Our house was not just home for us, it was also a school for our five kids, our missionary center, our workplace). Losing the house by fire means rethinking and rebuilding the whole life. And there are still five kids with many needs to take care of. We have to provide for them, be strong, loving, supporting, and lead them

through, while we adults have needed something similar for ourselves.

We and our experience got into newspapers and TV several times. We really appreciate this opportunity since people need the experience that even tragedy does not need to steal belief and trust in God. Many people even heard about the New Church. We still stay in a very small mobile home (8x20 feet). There is not enough money for building a new house though there is some money. Until that time we hope to stay in a partly repaired building that is not supposed to be used for permanent living any more. We however will be able to use this building in future for farming purposes.

Recently we started to heat there with a stove. We still do not have finished the roof (we cannot get anybody to finish it) and there are no finished floors. We still hope to be able to move there by Christmas.

I am sure you can imagine how important for us are both your prayers and your dollars. Thank you very much!

*Rev. Pavel Heger with wife Alice and kids Anna, David, Zuzana, Adam and Pavla*

Note: Donations for Pavel may be sent to the Central Office, designated as such.



## THE MESSENGER

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## "After the Ecstasy, the Laundry" *(Continued from cover)*

his own offspring. He wanted so much for this marriage to succeed, and wondered whether there was something wrong with him. The demands of family life call on our hearts and test our strength like almost nothing else.

The pressures on the principal participants in a wedding, baptism, and even a memorial service are tremendous. In a church setting, we make a commitment before God and our closest family and friends, and wonder whether we can live up to this commitment. What if we fail? What will people say? Will our friends still love us? Following the ecstatic moments of a high celebration, comes the laundry, the dirty dishes, the mortgage payments, and the car pool.

Most young people today feel pressured to go on to college, and a prestige college at that, and then to graduate school. From the time of a child's birth, parents wonder how they can save thousands of dollars, or hundreds of thousands, to meet expenses of tuition and room and board. Graduation is a peak experience, but what if I can't find a job? Will parents feel that I have failed them? How can I ever repay my student loans?

The rite of ordination is a high point in the life of a minister as he/she stands before God and receives this ministerial grace: "May you receive from God wisdom and enlightenment to foster the corporate unity of our church to increase our cooperation with all bodies within the fellowship of his kingdom, and to deepen our consecration to his redemptive purpose for all humanity."

At the same time that the new ministers are filled with awe and reverence, they are fearful that they may not prove worthy of the trust. When the service is over, the pictures are taken, and the reception paraphernalia put away, what will happen when I get to my new pastorate? How will I be able to lead my people by truth to the good of life; that in the paths of love, wisdom, and well doing, they may

know the peace of the Lord our God? And how will I meet expectations to "grow the church" and achieve a balanced budget?

Our church tells us that the goal of life is to grow into angelhood. But what if I don't always feel like an angel, or wonder what being an angel should feel like? The minister reads from the Sermon on the Mount - "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." I am doing my best, but how can I ever achieve perfection?

We read of a staggering number of people, young and old, who succumb to the pressures of life and take their own lives. It is one thing to read of people who are terminally ill, who make a decision not to permit unusual methods to sustain life, but it is more difficult to fathom the action of teenagers who make a compact over the internet to join other teenagers in suicide. Suicide is becoming more prevalent in Japan where the determination to succeed is so great, and many people are thrown out of work and feel worthless.

The church—every church—has both the responsibility and the privilege to serve as a support group for its members and community. The church is not to add to a person's guilt or sense of failure in life, but to lift us up as children of God, to assure us of the Lord's eternal presence and love. Each of us can turn to the Holy Scriptures for the promise of Divine support. "I am come," said the Lord, "that you might have life, and have it more abundantly." The abundant life, or life to the full, comes as we respond to the love that flows into us continually from God. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

The Church can set before us the ideals of spiritual life, and at the same time support us each day as we do the laundry, pay the taxes, and take out the trash. A teacher told how as a young Catholic, she was inspired by the saints. She had always wanted to do things like work with Mother Teresa in India, but most of her life had not been so glamorous. After college she became a teacher in an elementary school. And then her mother had a stroke, and the teacher had to drop out of school and

help care for her mother—bathe her, care for her bedsores, pay the bills, and run the house. At times she was anxious to complete her family responsibilities and get back to her spiritual life. Then one morning it dawned on her. She was doing the work of Mother Teresa, and she was doing it in her own home.

From his own life experiences, Buddhist Jack Kornfield tells us that we don't have to leave our job, home, or family to grow spiritually or find a monastic community. We have the opportunity to learn about community all the time. There are others all around us who can highlight our prejudices, our fears, our attachments, and show us the way to an open heart.

Kornfield shares the story of a military officer who was studying meditation in a class for stress reduction and stopped at a supermarket on a busy evening. The lines were long, and the woman carrying a child in front of him had just one item to buy, but she wouldn't get into the express line. The officer, whose habit was impatience, began to feel annoyed with her. It became worse when she got to the checkout stand and she and the clerk started cooing over the baby. The woman even handed the child to the clerk. After all! The officer began to tense up, his anger building at the thought of how selfish and inconsiderate she was. But because he had just come from his class in stress reduction, he noticed what he was doing to himself and began to breathe more softly and relax. He even noticed that it was a cute baby. By the time he got to the clerk he had let go enough to say, "That was a cute boy." The clerk replied, "Oh, thank you, that was my baby. You see, my husband was in the air force but he died last year in a plane crash. Now my mother takes care of my boy, and she brings him here to the store once a day so I can see him."

We judge each other so quickly, yet know so little about what another carries in his or her heart. To truly awaken to grace and sacred presence, we must offer to all the same respect we would give to a great teacher. The sloppy, angry, inconvenient, hurried,

*(Continued on page 11)*

# Restorative Justice and Community

Jackie B. Lageson

Understanding community and its role and responsibilities within the restorative justice philosophy requires an understanding of what community means, and determining if we understand the notion of community as a verb or a noun. As a faith community, specifically a Swedenborgian faith community, I propose that the notion of community is a verb.

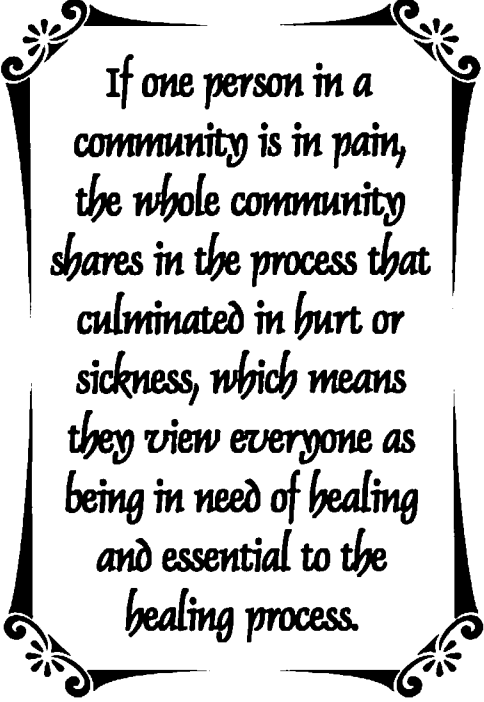
In The Oxford Universal Dictionary "community" is defined as "The quality of appertaining [to belong as parts to the whole, or as members to a family or class, to be related, akin to—to belong, or be suited, proper, or appropriate] to all in common; common ownership, liability, etc." DeTocqueville's features of early community states citizens have the power to decide what is a problem, have the power to decide how to solve the problems; and are key participants in implementing solutions. The First Nations people of Hollow Water on Lake Winnipeg hold that:

"If one person in a community is in pain, the whole community shares in the process that culminated in hurt or sickness, which means they view everyone as being in need of healing and essential to the healing process...to put it differently, when one person acts out of balance, this is a symptom of imbalance in the whole system. Since everyone is part of the same system, everyone has been affected by whatever is causing the pain. As a result, everyone must be involved in the healing process, and everyone will be blessed by the healing." [*Mystic Heart of Justice*, by Breton and Lehman, pg. 49]

In the Ojibway belief, those individuals that the criminal justice system labels offenders "the elders see as people in such pain that they pass their pain on to others through crime." [Breton and Lehman] With this understanding the First Nations people evoke a process of healing for all individuals affected by the incident; the victim, the community, and the offender. In contrast the American criminal justice

system, by design, redefines the individual as an offender, a noncitizen, marginalizes them, dehumanizes and demonizes them, and severs all contact with the community of which they are members. They become known only as criminals, convicts, ex-convicts, felons, and/or ex-offenders. The victims also become marginalized, revictimized by the systemic process, and isolated from their communities. The community members are spectators at best; they are not included or consulted in the process.

Whereas the First Nation people invoke healing for all the individuals in pain: victim, community, and offender, the current philosophy in criminal justice is to treat those individuals in pain as lepers and untouchables, which instills a



If one person in a community is in pain, the whole community shares in the process that culminated in hurt or sickness, which means they view everyone as being in need of healing and essential to the healing process.

sense of fear and isolation. The restorative philosophy is an effort to find common ground between victim, community, and offender. Searching to find what harm was done, identify how to repair the harm and who will do the repair, and locate community resources that can be used to assist the repair. This process provides a sense of safety and hope.

Dee Bell, of Florida Atlantic University Restorative Justice Center, proposes a concept of communities of hope versus communities of fear. Communities of fear operate within a cycle of fear: When a crime or harm happens the response is fear, fear leads to isolation, isolation leads

to generalized distrust, distrust leads to a weakened community fabric, a weakened community fabric leads to more crime which leads to more fear...and so the cycle of fear continues.

The restorative process, searching to find what harm was done, identifying how to repair the harm and who will do the repair, and locating community resources that can be used to assist the repair, create communities of hope, perpetuating a cycle of hope: When a crime happens the response is a process which builds community, building community leads to more community connections, more connections lead to a sense of hope, a sense of hope leads to a stronger community fabric, a stronger community fabric leads to crime prevention, preventing crime leads to more processes which build community...and so the cycle of hope continues.

The roles for community within the restorative philosophy are:

- Policy development by the victim, community, and offender
- Supporting and staying in a relationship with victims
- Determining the terms of accountability
- Implementing the terms of accountability
- Staying in a relationship with offenders who are in custody
- Providing resources.

Within the roles for community the faith community holds basic philosophical underpinnings for the restorative philosophy. Howard Zehr, author of *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, addresses biblical justice and love saying,

"We tend to assume that love and mercy are different from, or opposite to, justice. A judge pronounces a sentence. Then as an act of mercy, she may mitigate the penalty. Biblical justice, however, grows out of love. Such justice is in fact an act of love which seeks to make things right. Love and justice are not opposites, nor are they in conflict. Instead, love provides for a justice which seeks first to make things right."

This promotes the cycle of hope for our communities. *Spiritual Roots of Restorative Justice*, edited by Michael Hadley, states,

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# MINSU Report

As the budget crisis that has enveloped our church for the last year and more deepens, discussion during the Ministries Support Unit (MINSU) meetings increasingly turns upon ways in which we can empower our churches to reach out to a broken and hungry world. Together with the rest of the Church, the brothers and sisters of MINSU seek to work to discover where and how we can put charity/compassion into action, and encourage others to do the same. The Spiritual Ministries Consultant (SMC) position which was implemented in the fall of 2002 is an avenue for this potential to become reality, but, sadly, due to a budget crisis, the position of spiritual Ministries Consultant for the 2004 budget year will be unfunded. The Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake will continue to serve the denomination as the SMC, but mostly as a freelance agent, contracting independently with churches and centers in North America. In addition, she will remain associated with the Ministries Support Unit of the church. It's hoped that in 2005 it will be possible to again employ her on a halftime basis to continue her work as the SMC.

Under the auspices of the denomination, MINSU continues to fund the Rev. Junchol Lee's Cyber Ministry; also a theological student and a minister (Jenn Tafel and the Rev. Eric Allison, respectively) were sent to the Burning Man in northern Nevada this August; and five churches sent a total of ten lay/clergy to the General Church Conference on Evangelism in Boulder, Colorado in October of 2003.

Current research indicates that "thriving" churches routinely reach out in hands-on ministry using people who find personal fulfillment in so doing (*Growing Spiritual Redwoods*, William M. Easum & Thoms G. Bandy). The Doctrine of Uses uniquely qualifies us to join the ranks of those DOING their faith, whatever that happens to be!

In light of the above it was decided by the members of the Unit that our Spring session (03/04) will focus on fine tuning our mission; possibly developing a Vision Statement to accompany our already existing Mission Statement. MINSU meets only twice a year, and we never ever feel we have enough time to accomplish all that needs attending to. As a ministry grows and changes a natural outcome of that can be the evolving of the original mission. We are hopeful that if we can more clearly define what our ministry is, as MINSU, we will be better able to fulfill the "excellence, unity, and growth in the Swedenborgian Church" which our Long Range Plan promotes.

Besides receiving requests for funding and remaining in meaningful contact with our various churches/ministries, goals for the coming year might include the following:

- Develop a Vision Statement for MINSU reflective of the current needs of the world and the Lord's church on earth.
- Develop goals consistent with that Vision Statement and with the Doctrine of Uses.
- Further refine the Common Assessment Form (CAF) to reflect the above.

- Under the leadership of the SMC, and utilizing her research, fund programs/materials that empower our churches toward self growth and ultimately decrease their/our dependance on denominational funding.

Objectives to reach the above goals might include:

- Brainstorming among the members of MINSU, via e-mail, on ideas/concepts/desires for the proposed Vision Statement.
- Brainstorming among the members of MINSU, via e-mail, on ideas to further refine the CAF.
- Discussion on various programs/materials research by Wilma Wake.
- Implementation of same.

This is an exciting and challenging time in the life of the Church. MINSU looks forward to working with the rest of our friends in the other ministries of the Swedenborgian Church as we look to the future with hope and "an attitude of gratitude!"

Karen Nielsen Conger, Chair  
MINSU



## Restorative Justice and Community

(Continued from page 4)

"Buddhist justice grows out of a compassion for everyone involved when someone hurts another. Howard Zehr's biblical understanding, and the Buddhist one, see justice growing out of mercy; but the myth about the social contract implies that the state's justice grows out of fear. If fear is indeed the opposite of love, we are faced with two contradictory paradigms about the origins and role of justice."

The issue becomes, Which kind of community do we want to live in, one in a cycle of fear or one in a cycle of hope? The gospel gives an outline of how to implement a process that invokes a cycle of hope, a cycle of love. In the first half of Matthew 18 Jesus 'instructs us to enter into a dialogue of resolution in efforts to come to common ground and consensus. Jesus further instructs how to treat the transgressor if there is no resolution. He says, "and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer." Let it be noted that Jesus did not treat Gentiles and tax-gatherers as marginalized lepers or untouchables. In the last half of Matthew 18 Jesus instructs us to forgive and how to forgive, and further states that how we forgive so shall we be forgiven. This scripture is a recipe for building a community of hope and love.

Invoking the notion of community as a verb, in a Swedenborgian understanding of uses, building and supporting communities of hope and communities of love, we can create processes that fulfill our responsibilities to act as the church, as community members, to strengthen our community fabric.

"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..." *Charity: The Practice of Neighborliness*, paragraph 154

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# Funding for SMC Position Discontinued

*Wilma Wake*

Unfortunately, due to the need to severely cut the budget for 2004, the General Council has eliminated all funding for the Spiritual Ministries Consultant position for 2004.

What will this mean? I will do my best to be available to churches who would like workshops, but churches will have to pay all of my travel expenses as well as an honorarium. I will need to find another half-time job—I work half-time for the Portland church—and will probably look for a social work position. The number of hours I can devote to the denominational church will be limited, but I will do as much as I can, as I am committed to finding ways that we can share our spirituality with the world.

Those who have started the book club can continue to order their books at a discount from the Foundation, but there will not be discussion questions provided after the end of 2003.

For those interested in the lay leader spirituality certificate, I'll be providing a training program in Portland. Anyone is welcome to come for visits. I'll do my best to provide materials for people in other parts of US/Canada.

It has been a privilege for me to serve as SMC for this year! I am excited by this position and the potential it holds. I hope that in time it can again be funded, whether it is held by me again or by someone else.

For 2004, I'll continue to hold the title "SMC" but without any salary or benefits attached to it. I'll be as available as I can for consultations, providing resources, etc., and will make visits as I can and as requested.

## **The Following Programs Will Be Impacted in the Following Way:**

**Swedenborgian Book of the Bimonth Club**

We have 13 people in two discussion groups in two churches. They can con-

tinue to order the series of books from the Foundation at the discount through 2004, although will need to provide their own discussion questions.

## **Lay Leadership Certificate in Spirituality**

I will be developing a training program in Portland for people interested in the certificate, and can help others locate local resources for training.

## **Spirituality Workshops**

I'll make some time available for parish visits, but parishes will probably need to pay all my travel expenses plus an honorarium.

At this time of budget cuts, our need for deep spiritual wisdom is stronger than ever! Cutting the SMC position does not mean cutting out spirituality in our lives! Please, let's continue our prayers and our connections to each other.



# Church of Southwest Florida —the First Three Months

*Nadine Cotton-Durgin*

I cannot believe that it has been only three months since we unloaded and returned the truck to Ft. Myers U-Haul Labor Day weekend. So much has been happening here, and my days are so filled with activity and usefulness that it feels as if I have compressed a much longer time span into these few months. I am learning and doing an incredible amount with the community here through the many New Church programs started by Rev. Dick Tafel. I have met many people and have taken advantage of numerous community activities to have my presence become known to the community.

My husband Jeff has been so wonderful in adapting to our arriving here and jumping right into working the long hours. He has been extremely

helpful and supportive, and I don't see how I could do this ministry without his loving support. Rev. Dick and Linda Tafel have also donated countless volunteer hours to showing me and helping with this ministry.

Just when I thought I was finished raising kids, I now have lots of children (15-20 daily) to take care of for four hours a day. The Kids' VIP program is in its sixth year of after-school care for the children here. There is no fee for this service, although those who can afford it are strongly encouraged to donate. Many of the children in our program would otherwise be latch-key or on the streets. Most of our children come from single-parent and very low-income homes. The kids are always filled with lots of energy and they have behavior problems, but it is so rewarding and amazing to

watch them blossom under the care and attention of our wonderful volunteers. The one-on-one adult attention that they receive is priceless. The adults help the children with homework, but the most precious learning comes from values and appropriate social interaction that is modeled and taught during our time together.

Whenever I feel inadequate or at a loss, I say a prayer, take a few minutes to meditate and enjoy my beautiful surroundings, and my energy is renewed. It has been amazing to me how the Lord answers my prayers with this program. New, more reliable volunteers have come to my rescue. They tell me they have been following our articles in the local paper and want to help.

I am getting to know the people here on this island. They are a very warm and welcoming bunch. I am already being called "The Bread Lady"

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## Church of Southwest Florida -the First Three Months

(Continued from page 6)

when making the drop-offs to our various locations for those who are hungry. Our daily bread program is well known throughout the community and much appreciated. We have an agreement with the local grocery store to pick up their unwanted bakery items five days a week. I use this drop-off time to meet people and hopefully to become a trusted face.

I am starting to learn the needs of this area and of our church here. We have definitely outgrown our store and church office space. We are having a fundraiser in January for the specific purpose of purchasing or leasing suitable space to house our worship services with our other ministries. I have high hopes that we could have enough space to add a canteen to provide middle-schoolers with a safe hang-out spot and another section for seniors to congregate during the day. There is so much to do!

Just as we started to gear up for the holidays in November, our store manager, Patty, was hospitalized for two weeks undergoing surgery for a burst appendix. I visited her many times in the hospital and later where she is staying to recover. Patty's illness has had the unfortunate effect on our thrift store of shortened and variable



Rev. Nadine Cotton-Durgin and husband Jeff.

# WELCOME TO CONVENTION 2004

*Fran McIntosh*

Welcome to Convention 2004 to be held in Kitchener, Ontario, July 11 to 14. We have been eagerly waiting and planning for your arrival over the past few years. We hope that you will find time to visit our church home, the Church of the Good Shepherd, while you are here. It is a lovely limestone building, and probably the ordination service will be held on site.

This is not our first church home. The congregation was founded about 1833 as a sort of discussion group, meeting in an apple orchard in summer and in a book bindery in winter. A simple frame church was erected and shared with three other congregations, as well as serving as the local school. I often think of this as the ultimate example of efficient usage!

As we are one of the oldest churches in the community, our records are very valuable. Many of the original records of the congregation, dating back to 1842, have been deposited with the public library; however, copies are kept in our very efficient archives, which we hope you will visit when you tour our church.

hours, as well as a piling up of donations. When the bags and boxes started reaching the ceiling, my prayers for help were answered with volunteers to sort through the mess. I was extremely grateful that by Thanksgiving we could again walk through our store.

I am also extremely grateful for the help that I receive from the Lord to muddle my way through getting to know the ins and outs of this ministry here. Without the people who are here helping me in this process, I would be lost and overwhelmed. As it is, I have felt lost and overwhelmed at times, but I keep praying and showing up and thanking God for bringing me to this place of usefulness—with the added benefits of palm trees, ocean, white sand, dolphins...and warmth.

Collecting material for the archives has opened a rich field of history to the congregation. "A Peek into the Past" is a regular feature in the monthly church bulletin. There we remember Rev. Frederick Tuerk, a circuit riding missionary who served forty years as minister of this church and whose grandmother's Bible is one of our treasured archives; Rev. Daniels, whose daughter married here and whose granddaughter still attends; David Johnson, who served twenty years, and whose legacy includes the story of the morning he passed the collection plate, overflowing with bills, to the congregation and asked them to use it to finance an outpouring of talents; Paul Zacharias, who first came to us forty years ago; Eric Allison, who joined him in a team ministry and woke up the congregation one Easter morning with a shout of "Hallelujah!"; Ron Brugler, whom we hope to welcome back after three years leave of absence to serve as Convention's president. During that time Paul Zacharias returned and services were led by Paul, lay leader Steve Thomas, and many guest ministers from Convention.

The sharing of our church home has continued. Recently it was used by a Jewish community, Temple Shalom. Presently a Mennonite Group known as the Church of the Olive Branch uses the facilities for their gatherings. An active wedding ministry opens the church to many people. The church continues to be community oriented, and we are now considered a downtown church, taking part in the social needs of a modern city.

So, take a little extra time in Kitchener-Waterloo, and visit the Church of the Good Shepherd. Be sure to see the beautiful window depicting the descent of the New Jerusalem, a theme the designer had never seen attempted before. Enjoy the peaceful sanctuary and the energy of the congregation, whose worship services end with the printed words "the end of Worship, the beginning of Service."



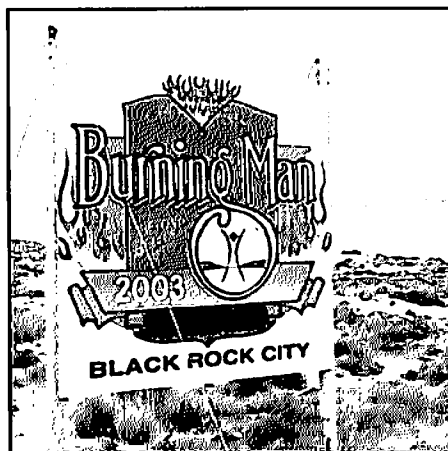
# "Burning Jenn"

Jenn Tafel

*In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him." Matthew 3: 1-3*

The Burning Man experiment is an exercise in the creation and dissolving of temporary community. People from all over the world come for the event and leave changed—for the better (barring no medical emergency). The "gifting" (or commerce-free) society that is Black Rock City allows individuals to freely express themselves. Of course there are rules governing the safety of the citizens, as there is a limit to self-expression if it impedes on someone else's safety and/or comfort level. The only two places where cash is required are at Camp Arctica where one buys ice and at the Center Camp Café—coffee and/or lemonade are necessary now and again! The rest of the city exists without money and one "gifts" items in a relaxed barter environment.

The art theme for this year's event was "Beyond Belief" which revolved around concepts of spirituality. Gary Snyder is quoted from the website, "What is any religion? A little ritual, a little superstition, and some magic. It's not a strictly spiritual affair; it has psychological roles to fulfill. You might



not want it to be a religion based on your own experience but that's like wanting to clean up your dreams."

The art exhibited was awe-inspiring (and awe-inspired I'm sure!) All of it was temporary, and needed to be able to withstand the harsh and extreme environment of the Black Rock Desert in Nevada. The dry lakebed or "playa" where the event takes place each year is home to ranges of temperatures from forty degrees at night up to a possibility of one-hundred twenty degrees during the day. There were sixty to seventy mile-an-hour windstorms that popped up unexpectedly. Dust masks, goggles and sun block were the norm. Yet because judgment from others was lacking, people wore just about anything. Everyone was free to be himself or herself, and the forms of self-expression were uncountable in this society of 30,000+.

"Art cars" were the best way to travel around the city. I got on one, but it sat still—fun but disappointing! Everyone must register their art car with the Dept. of Mutant Vehicles.

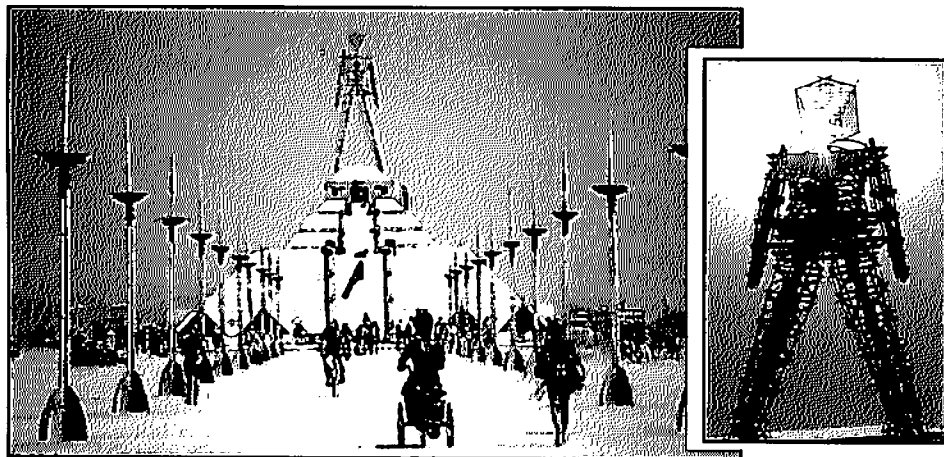
Bikes were the second best way to see the sights—lots to do and so little time! I did not have either an art car or a bike, and so I walked and walked and walked for days. Yet I did have access now and again to a bike, which was awesome, and allowed me to travel to see The Man and The Temple of Honor—two awe-inspiring structures.

The Man is the reason for the event. The history of the event is rather long, and so I invite people to spend no less than ten hours on the website (<http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman>) to try to gain an understanding of the history and the event itself. One must experience the event to gain the whole story, and even that leaves some lacking. The Man's base this year was a temple, in keeping with the theme of "Beyond Belief." People were welcome to climb the outside of the base or visit the various (live) deities and altars inside the temple. The Man burned on Saturday night of the event. During the week, his arms rest at his side and then are raised right before he catches fire.

The Temple of Honor is one of the many temples created by David Best for the Burning Man event. Each year there is a temple for the citizens of Black Rock City to visit (based on the art theme); and this year one was able to leave memorabilia of most any kind honoring those in their lives who have departed or who they felt needed to be honored. This structure was burned on Sunday night. Many art exhibits were burned throughout the week. Artists often choose to burn their pieces of art because everything one brings into the city must be taken out (in one way or another).

The "pack it in" and "pack it out" mantra is part of the Leave No Trace ethic of the society, and the Black Rock Desert is returned to its natural state post-burn. This environmental strategy is an awesome ideal and hopefully people carry it back into their "normal" lives. What we have is impermanent—Burning Man is just one more way to remind one of this ideology. The Earth Guardians help by cleaning up matter out of place (or "M.O.O.P."), reminding people to clean up or by detailing the Leave No

(Continued on page 9)





## "Burning Jenn"

(Continued from page 8)

Trace ethic for people.

I attended Burning Man as a denominational representative from the Swedenborgian Church in order to discover if it is worth the effort to create a spiritual presence at the event. I realized quickly after I arrived that plenty of people create spiritual presences at the event each year. Of course there's the rest of the time on the playa where spirituality happens without effort. "Wonderful happens on a regular basis here," said Rev. Eric Allison, who was my campmate. This led me to ask myself if there's any point at all in trying to create spiritual experiences in people's everyday lives. Why bother? Do we still need religious leaders in today's society? Don't we live in a society where the "Self Help" section of Barnes and Noble fulfils our every need? One can make an argument against the necessity for religion; however, I feel that the situations around the world in current events (among other reasons) lead me to be pro-religion.

While at the event, Rev. Allison and I celebrated communion each evening at dusk. It was one of the most beautiful times of day on the playa, and I was moved on many levels each evening we celebrated this sacrament. There were different people each evening who celebrated communion with us. One of the evenings Jesus walked by and, after protesting, joined in. Did I mention the surreal aspect of the event? One could ask for something and it would manifest from the playa. I created the Temple of Love and Wisdom, and people could leave prayer requests, receive blessings and/or were anointed.

Eric and I blessed a man with some holy water as he and his fiancé stopped by our temple inviting people to their wedding. Eric's gifts were

# Parish

## The Swedenborgian Church of San Diego

The San Diego Society of the New Jerusalem (San Diego Swedenborgian Church) celebrated its 120th Anniversary of Incorporation on September 27th, 2003. As you all know, it takes many meetings and lots of working with the "Powers that be" before corporation papers are signed. However, some of the final papers were signed on September 27th, 1883, so that is the date chosen to celebrate.

The celebration was held during the weekend that the Pacific Coast Association had its annual meeting so delegates and friends of the Association could also take part. After a catered dinner and sing-a-long on Saturday evening, those present who had some connection with the church through the years were invited to say a few words about their memories and the impact the church's life had upon them. Present were grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great, great grandchildren of Walter and Carolyn Dibb, who were responsible for the reorganization of the society after some years of no get-togethers, and were pillars of the group as long as

"ancient artifacts" that he created, and which represented sixty-two different cultures. I gave out little tubes of bubbles with quotes from Emanuel Swedenborg on them—the bubbles represented love and the quotes represented wisdom, thus creating a combination of love and wisdom, or the "Distinguishably One" God which is one of the foundations for our theology.

Spirituality is present at Black Rock City. One doesn't have to go that far to find it.

*Jenn Tafel is a second year seminarian at the Swedenborgian House of Studies on the Pacific School of Religion campus in Berkeley, California.*

they were physically able. Also present were grandchildren, great grandchildren and great, great grandchildren of Mr. Frank, who gave generously of his time and talent as well as financial aid to the church through the years. He donated the money to build the assembly hall. Many of the people who used to attend the church in San Diego, but have since moved away, were contacted and their messages were shared. The time capsule that was placed under the cornerstone of the present building in 1926 was opened so the contents could be viewed. The evening ended with the serving of the anniversary cake.

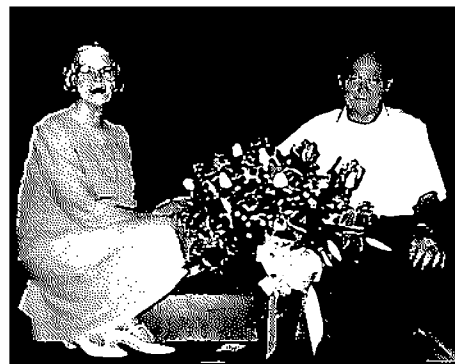
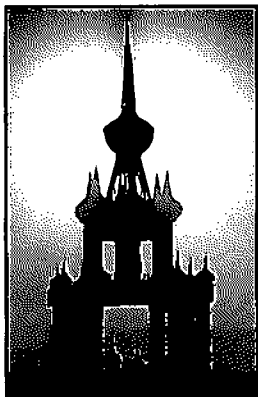
It was a very special event, and a big "Thank you" goes to all those who participated and helped carry out the theme of "Commitment" which we feel is the reason the church has been able to contribute to the community for all these years.

**"Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed."**  
(Proverbs 16:3)

—Annella Smith, Secretary  
San Diego Swedenborgian Church

Following a board meeting on Friday, September 26, at the San Diego Swedenborgian Church, the Pacific Coast Association was delightfully entertained by the TheatreSports ensemble, a theater group that has rented space at the church for a number of years. PCA had its annual business meeting September 27. The Rev. Eric Allison led a prayer and meditation workshop on Saturday prior to the meeting. The dinner and program celebrating the San Diego Church's 120th anniversary took place Saturday evening, with worship in the sanctuary on Sunday morning, the Rev. Harvey Tafel preaching.

—PWL



Eldon and Annella Smith honored at PCA meeting.

## **2004 Youth Worker Conference April 22 - 25, 2004**

**Temenos Retreat and  
Conference Center  
West Chester, Pennsylvania**

### **The Youth In Our Church Need You!**

**D**o you like to work with youth, or do they intimidate you? Would you like to be more comfortable around teens? Are you interested in learning more about youth work? Are you concerned about the safety and liability of working with youth today? Perhaps you are interested in starting a youth group or contributing to one already up and running. Maybe you'd like to be more involved in teen retreats and adventure outings. Here's the youth worker opportunity you've been waiting for. This spring, the Educational Support Unit (EdSU) is sponsoring a Youth Worker Conference. Held at beautiful Temenos Retreat and Conference Center, in West Chester, Pennsylvania, 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. Session topics include: Swedenborgian youth worship, games and youth play, safe practices, registration and medical forms, retreat organization and planning, youth activity staffing and

leadership. Emphasis will be on working with youth ages 10 to 18; however, much of the Conference coursework is also applicable to younger children in Sunday School programs.

The cost of this Conference is \$75. Associations and local churches are being asked to help sponsor participants so that the cost to individuals is as affordable as possible. If you are interested in attending, do not let the Conference or travel costs deter you. Financial assistance and scholarships

are available.

The Conference begins Thursday, April 22 at 7:00 pm and concludes Sunday, April 25 at 1:00 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](mailto:kfekete@hotmail.com). Don't miss this truly special opportunity.

We look forward to seeing you there!



## **Teen Retreat a Success**

*Sarah Buteux*

**W**e hosted the SCYL (Swedenborgian Church Youth League) retreat at the Cambridge Church November 6-9, 2003, and we would do it again in a second. The teens were great! This retreat afforded me the opportunity to closely observe the inner workings of Convention's youth program, and I could not have been more impressed with Kurt Fekete, the director, and with the young people of our church. The best way to describe the overall attitude of the retreat would be to compare it to a family reunion, but unlike most families, this one is actually functional. What struck me right away was the immense amount of affection, trust, and respect these kids have for Kurt, and for each other.

Kurt encouraged the teens to gather their own energies and talents and lead us in a worship service that was beautiful and meaningful. But the real beauty and meaning were in the making of the service, the hours of preparation that the kids put in, and the immense effort expended in encouraging one another. Every single kid had a job to do, and they knew that while they were reading, singing, or simply putting out the candles, all the other kids were right

behind them in spirit. An atmosphere like this does not just happen among people, be they young or old. I believe Kurt and the kids deserve a lot of credit for cultivating such a positive and affirming culture in the SCYL.

I have experienced a number of encouraging signs of our church's growth and impact, but nothing could have prepared me for the spiritual high I felt late Sunday afternoon after the last teen had been picked up. Knowing that these kids are out there eagerly awaiting their Winter get together in Almont, and knowing that the oldest ones have Transitions to look forward to, I am fully confident that we are witnessing a strong and powerful new generation in the making that will grow up with a love for, and commitment to, the Swedenborgian church. I could not be more thankful to General Council and all the people who believed in the importance of funding the position of Youth Director. These retreats are incredibly important, and the Cambridge church was truly blessed by the opportunity to host such a wonderful group of people.

*The Rev. Sarah Buteux is the pastor of the Cambridge Swedenborgian Church in Cambridge, Mass.*



# Hot New Convention Website

Our denomination's website, [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org), has been upgraded to an amazingly large and complete central information center linked to most of our other websites and to collections and Swedenborgian organizations outside of the denomination. Just click on the subjects listed across the top of the opening page to get started.

The site has a welcome page, a "Contact us" facility, information about Swedenborg and the history of the Church, a statement of our beliefs, a list of local congregations with any web addresses they may have; addresses, phone numbers of our churches, camps, and conference centers; some names of current staff, and photographs of our churches as they become available. Participate in discussions and forums, and survey Swedenborg-related material available offline, such as library and archival collections.

You can also find information about our theological school, the Swedenborgian House of Studies, various ministries, and the following major

publishing agencies and publications:

- J. Appleseed & Co., our publisher of books and pamphlets with its list of currently available literature and ordering information.
- The Swedenborg Foundation and other Swedenborgian publishers, here and in foreign countries.
- *Our Daily Bread*, with sermons for each week.
- *Studia Swedenborgiana*, our scholarly journal, currently published by the Swedenborgian House of Studies, which features in-depth articles on Swedenborg and Swedenborgian ideas, as well as occasional samples of new translating work. Here you will find all of the contents of past issues of *Studia Swedenborgiana* going back to its inception in January 1974.
- *Swedenborgian Sunday School Supplements* for the Revised Common Lectionary.
- A very large Online Swedenborgian Library has a continually growing list of materials relating to our Church and its theology. You can read Swedenborg's works and collateral literature online, for The Online Swedenborgian Library accesses the large online resources of some university libraries. In the near future, it will also carry featured articles from *The Messenger*.

Better reserve some time for all this.



## "After the Ecstasy, the Laundry" (Continued from page 3)

difficult Buddhas or Christians around us can teach us steadiness, equanimity, and compassion. We are the grist for one another's mill.

We are fond of quoting Swedenborg that "All of religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." In another place Swedenborg wrote that "It is not so difficult to live the life that leads to heaven as many suppose." Yet each day we are confronted with experiences that test our mettle: the ways we spend our time and money, drive our car, treat the clerk in the store, react to a computer virus, snap back at our spouse or child. This is all part of being human, and it can get pretty complicated.

Our church teaches us that to grow into angelhood we must learn to love wisely. This is a lifelong task, even to eternity, for the highest angels of heaven are not perfect, but growing toward perfection.

Let us not condemn ourselves (or others) for imperfections, or unwise acts, but thank God for the gift of life, and the daily opportunities to grow spiritually through an active life in the world, even as we do the laundry.

*The Rev. Ernest Martin is a retired Swedenborgian minister living in Duwall, Washington, where he assists his son, the Rev. Paul Martin, and his wife, Sandra Grumman, with the new Stonehouse Bookstore and the Mosswood Hollow Retreat Center.*



## PASSAGES

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### Restorative Justice and Community (Continued from page 5)

*Jackie Lageson is a member of Cambridge Chapel, the Swedenborgian Church in Cambridge, Mass. She is director of the Chapel's Social Action ministries. We are pleased to announce that her columns will be published periodically in The Messenger.*

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



# Secondhand Lions

New Line Cinema, directed and written by Tim McCanlies, Rated PG

Review by Stephen Koke

What is the logic by which people believe in what they cannot see? That is part of the unexpected wisdom of this marvelous film about a boy, Walter (Haley Joel Osment, who has grown a bit since he first amazed the industry in *The Sixth Sense*), whose mother, Mae, takes him out into the country and dumps him on two uncles, Garth and Hub (Michael Caine and Robert Duvall), whom he has never known. They are well into their latter years and delight in sitting for hours on the front porch of their large, old, decaying house which is a virtual mirror of themselves. Whenever a traveling salesman drives up and begins his spiel, they raise the shotguns lying across their laps and without a word fire over his head. The salesman gets the idea very quickly and drives off in a cloud of dust. They fish in the same way, blowing the fish out of the water.

Walter has no reason to like his new situation, nor do his uncles appreciate having a nephew suddenly imposed on them. But both sides gradually warm up to each other in a rather chaotic manner. The uncles tell Walter unbelievable stories about their heroic exploits in the Foreign Legion as if they were true Hollywood supermen—for example, about Hub rescuing a beautiful princess named Jasmine from a wicked sheik and hordes of swordsmen. Garth

and Hub are rumored to have millions of dollars stashed away somewhere (hence the salesmen), and they are definitely inclined to start new adventures on impulse, including buying a biplane (even though neither one knows how to fly) and an old circus lion.

Some validation of their tall tales shows up when Hub is rushed by some young toughs in a saloon. "I know how to *fight*," he tells Walter and proceeds to prove it, tossing the hoodlums outside. Afterwards, he lectures them to believe in certain good things just because it is good to believe in them. Whether they are true is not quite the point.

More validation turns up, and it becomes clear that the film is saying something about the course of faith. The idea isn't spelled out explicitly, but the pattern in the plot is revealing—a belief in the incredible but good, heroic, and exemplary things we are told about helps us become better people and is justified for that reason; but in the end its truth gradually appears as if to justify the faith we have fought to maintain. It is a profound point.

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.

*Secondhand Lions* will be out in video and DVD soon.



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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.