

THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

May 2004

Heart/Vision

A New Series for Children and Teens

Eric Allison

Our growth as a congregation had stopped. I finally admitted to myself that our church wouldn't grow unless it had a good program for children, and I knew that the New Age population in the region wanted something refreshing. But what? What we were doing was not working. We had tried the Dole Notes, a modified version of the Dole Notes, The Whole People of God, and created our own programs. I think all of them worked to some degree, but it was obvious that none of those teaching really had a passion. Teaching and attendance were never consistent. One week we would have fifteen kids and the next week we had three. It was also discouraging for teachers to prepare and then have no one show up.

It finally settled into a holding operation with Amanda Peterson, a high school student, doing the whole Sunday school with adults helping out from time to time. This didn't work when eleven-year-olds had to be in the same class with four-year-olds.

Then I met with Dr. Richard Desselte, and he started talking with me about spiritual intelligence for children: to have kids doing things that they wanted to do rather than lining them up in rows and telling them what we thought they should know. I remembered a quote from Swedenborg:

When children first begin to learn, the more spiritual something is, the more they desire it.

So why not give them spiritual things that they love—a program

where they actually experience God?

The Seattle area has the highest unchurched population of any city in the U.S. This is just California with rain. Every way-out New Age thing you can think of is here. And many people expect a church to be open and honoring of all religions. Since our church has always talked about how we honor other faiths, I figured it was time we did that in a way that honored our children. Also, it seemed important to honor a part of our own faith that we shy away from—our mysticism.

People were very excited about this concept of building upon how children already experience God. Swedenborg makes it clear that children are spiritually sensitive in a way that adults are not. We even had twenty adults sign up to teach it. Why was everyone suddenly

Why not give them
spiritual things that
they love—a program
where they actually
experience God?

so excited about this? People were excited because this program honored other religions not just by talking about other beliefs but by creating a format which encouraged kids to strengthen the connection to God they already have rather than only learning stories about God.

During our first meeting, fourteen adults were present. Two kids were off in the corner amusing themselves quietly. Someone objected to the use of the term "fairies" in our pamphlet. So I walked over and gently led one of the

children over to the adult group. Unrehearsed, I asked her if she saw fairies. Innocently, she said, "I haven't seen ones like those in the books. All I see are the lights running up and down the stairway and running around the room. That's the only fairies I've seen."

Here was a child having a spiritual experience. Should we tell her that it was just her imagination and to go read a book about spirits instead? I don't think so. The idea of this program is not to encourage children to believe in fairies but to affirm their own innocent experience of the spiritual realm. Perhaps we may join them in "entering into the kingdom of heaven." Wouldn't that be a great children's program?

Dr. Desselte and his partner Janet Killcullen came up with a program for seven weeks that they would teach, and we would pay them for their professional leadership. Our Pacific Coast Association offered us a \$1200 seed grant to that end. After reading through the material the church board generally agreed that the program was too shamanistic. So Kathy Frank and I went through the program and took the weirdest stuff out and put Swedenborg and the Bible in it. Richard and Janet bowed out as our paid leaders and we decided to pay individual professionals for each week who have expertise in one area such as music, shamanism, chanting, overtone chanting, prayer, art, drumming, dancing, making despacho, healing, story telling, communion, and baptism. We also plan to include rituals that the children are called to create on their own. At this writing we are almost finished honing the program and plan to start it on May 16.

So what do we actually do? Here is

(Continued on page 63)

IN THIS ISSUE:

Swedenborg's Vision • Whale Rider Review • Meet the 2004 Nominees

The Kindness of Strangers

One particular Mother's Day stands out clearly in my memory. I was ten years old, an only child. My mother was seriously considering a proposal of marriage from Alfred, the brother of Ada, a close friend. "My brother," Ada warned my mother, "is very neurotic, and you know, he's never been married." Alfred seemed to want to ingratiate himself and be pleasant, but it was obvious he was humorless and, most of the time, morose about something. Somebody had always done him wrong, and he had a sad little story about it. The world was out to get him, and, as time went on, my mother and I found we were both hoping the world would succeed in its mission. But I'm ahead of my story.

My mother was recovering from surgery. Haunted by the possibility of frail health and not being able to continue working to support us, she paced slowly through the house muttering to herself. Several times I caught her sitting on the edge of the bed with her face in her hands, and I knew better than to disturb her with questions. I sensed that she didn't particularly want to marry Alfred, but she needed the security. It was probably the preoccupation with all of this that made me forget Mother's Day until the Sunday itself when I woke up early and realized what day it was. I'd completely forgotten to get her a gift. In previous years everybody had made some gruesome ceramic thing at school for their mothers, wrapped in colored tissue paper to await the triumphant presentation. But I had outgrown that and had a fleeting thought some weeks before that I would have to think of something to buy. Then I'd forgotten. All I had left of my allowance was ten cents.

My mother was still asleep when I quietly left our house and ran up the street clutching my dime. I took the shortcut path along the edge of the Columbia Studio back lot, past the walnut trees and the big house with the fancy garden and wrought iron fence

that my girlfriends and I had spied on during the recent war, convincing ourselves that the place was full of Nazi spies. It held no intrigue as I sped past it, intent on getting up to Riverside Drive where I could buy some kind of present and get back to the house before my mother woke up.

I was heading for the drugstore, wondering what kind of cheap thing I could get that wouldn't look cheap, when I saw that a little nursery on the corner was open. Potted plants of all sizes were lined up on wooden tables. I examined them carefully, but there didn't seem to be any prices marked on them. A geranium wouldn't do, we had those in the back yard. No ivy either, we had that on the trellis by the front porch. Then I spotted a lovely little plant with colored leaves—pink, russet, green, yellow, a little white. It was perfect. A woman came over and asked if she could help me. "What is that?" I asked.

"It's coleus," she smiled. "Isn't it pretty?"

"It's beautiful. How much is it?" The Burbank sun was already warm, and I was sweaty and breathless from the run. I was praying that I had enough money.

"Those small pots are all 25 cents."

"Do you have any smaller coleus?" I asked her. "All I have is a dime."

"Well," she said. "I really don't have any smaller ones...is this a gift for your mother?"

"Yes," I said. My mind was scrambling to figure how I could come up with another 15 cents, but I knew it was impossible.

She held the coleus out to me. "You can have it for ten cents," she said. "I just know your mother will love it."

I put my dime in her hand, dizzy with relief. "Thank you so much."

"Thank you," she said. "Tell your mother, indirect sunlight and don't let it dry out. I know you can remember that."

My mother did love it. She'd never seen one before either, and was obviously impressed with my good taste. "Indirect sunlight," I told her, "and don't let it dry out."

She took good care of it, and the

coleus thrived. Her marriage to Alfred didn't. But my mother grew stronger, and many months later, when I finally told her about the woman who gave me the coleus for ten cents, I think she was as touched by that act of kindness from a stranger as she was by the gift.

Patte LeVan



Business Manager Wanted

*If you are looking for
A PART-TIME CHURCH-
RELATED JOB . . .*

*Your church's
outreach publishing program*

J. APPLESEED & CO.

*is looking for
a new business manager*

For particulars e-mail resume to
The Communications Support
Unit at chrysalis@hovac.com and
we will get in touch with you.

THE MESSENGER

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

May 2004
Volume 225 No. 5
Whole Number 5290

Typesetting & Layout
Town & Country
Press, Plymouth, IN

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

TEL: (760) 765-2915

E-MAIL: messenger@julianweb.com

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

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

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

Heart/Vision (Continued from Cover)

part of what would happen during the first week:

1. Children and adults will all come together in a circle in the main classroom and introduce themselves as equals. Each person will say his or her name and make a gesture to go along with the name. Everyone will imitate the gesture and repeat the name.
2. If someone has a birthday we will sing them the Swedenborgian Birthday song.
3. Leader will provide an overview of what 'Sacred Space' is.
4. We will commence creating sacred space.
5. We will learn to sing a song from an aboriginal tradition.

There will be an altar with a Bible on it. The children will light two candles. One candle is for Divine Love and the other for Divine Wisdom. These are the essential qualities of the Divine. They will open the Bible and perhaps several other books to start with their own tradition. They also create their own safety bundle altar and mesa. This is done to start their own tradition and show that the mesa and their safety bundle altar are related to the altar of the church.

We do a four directions ceremony in which everyone participates. From the Swedenborgian view each of the four directions represents a spiritual quality similar to the native ritual of the four directions. The Heart/Vision ritual for creating sacred space joins the aboriginal tradition of "Calling in the Directions" with many other religions which honor God's creation. Various elements of several traditions merge to create something entirely new that connects all participants to the many ways people around the world honor God as they know God. Each of the directions represents a season of the year, a season of the soul, an element of nature, an element of God.

Swedenborg tells us that angels are attracted to any ritual that has a purely spiritual intent. Angels are drawn toward songs and music. The children

will learn to offer a variety of playful, reverent and engaging songs and chants from many traditions. Children love rattles and drums. They will use these in worshipful yet celebratory ceremonies which we hope will please the angels. We won't be following the Native North American tradition of passing around a pipe filled with sweet smelling tobacco to fill the teepees with a pleasant odor as an offering to the power animals and beings of the light. Instead, the class will be provided with a basket of offerings, age appropriate, from which to choose an offering to give to each of the directions, and we will merge the ceremony with elements of our own tradition from Genesis and the writings of Swedenborg. Examples would be flower petals, leaves, rice, beans, small candies and shells, a small New Testament and book from our tradition.

Below are the words of our most recent edition of our three fold handout. If you would like to have a copy of the entire seven week edition, I can send you a big attachment. Just write to me at heavenonearth@swedenborgianchurch.org.

HEART/VISION: a new series for children and teens

As our everyday world becomes increasingly fast paced, our spiritual selves are diminished. In such an atmosphere, how will our children ever become aware of their intimate connection to the Divine? Heart Vision—Discovering the Divine in Everyday Life—was created to support the spiritual awakening and growth of our children.

By deepening our children's inherent awareness of, and connection with the Creator and creation, our program reduces the distractions of our materialistic culture and focuses more attention on the inner life.

In this eclectic program, teachers and students explore the spiritual realm from many perspectives.

Our focus is on the experience of God that children are having. We expose children to religions from around the world, including Swedenborgian Christianity. The children learn by doing. They are performing rituals; doing craft projects; going out into nature;

and studying the ways of indigenous peoples.

As in Native American and early Christian gatherings, our classes begin with a circle ceremony and the setting of sacred space. Students learn by experience what sacred space is and why we have it, and how it can help us in our daily lives.

Students quickly learn that the spiritual realm is real. They learn about our relationship with nature, and that everything is alive, has a soul, and is connected to God. Through this, we help them realize that everything is interdependent, and that the plan of Divine Providence always works for the good.

Children at an early age naturally interact with angels and other beings of light. Our program is designed to nurture this divine relationship while deepening each student's awareness of her or his own spiritual gifts.

By learning to follow their personal intuition and allowing these powers to assist them in connecting to the Divine, students learn to make each moment of each day a sacred moment.

Given the teachings, each student creates an individual mythology based on her or his personal experience of the Divine.

The Classes

The students feel at home in groups that match their age and maturity level. We honor the specific needs of each student by providing a variety of learning materials and approaches.

We begin with the sacred circle, followed by a brief sharing time and a short introduction by the teacher. Then, things really cut loose and the students step into an exciting spiritual lesson. Having fun as well as learning is virtually guaranteed.

It is our conviction that Swedenborg's vision of the Holy City is happening now. That is, the presence of God is increasing in the world and drawing people of every faith away from doctrine and toward charity. As each student explores and expresses her or his own unique spiritual gifts,

(Continued on page 69)

Swedenborg's Vision

Editor's Note: This piece arrived in mail along with the following explanatory note from Perry Martin: *Going through some old papers, I came across this. It was written in the heyday of the Board of Education, mainly by {Rev. Dr.} Dorothea Harvey, with some ideas from {the late} Carolyn Blackmer. It seems as relevant today as then—both for the church and for the nation.*

We agree—so here it is.

Position Paper adopted by the Board of Education of

THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

AUGUST 1977

Swedenborg foresaw a new age in which the Lord's presence would enable human beings to live in free, people-centered societies on this earth. The goal of the Swedenborgian Church in this new age is to help persons to become aware of the presence of the Divine in their growth process as they learn to experience their own integrity and meaning as unique individuals, and their potential to become angels who return the Divine love consciously and freely.

This goal is essentially educational. It is based on the assumption that each person is created with a never-ending potential for growth, self-actualization, and discovery of meaning in life, and that the experience of this growth gives insight permitting participation in the growth process of others. Human beings are not mechanically functioning pieces of matter, passively responding to conditioning and behavioral control. They are active beings, capable of self direction. Within basic human limitations, they have the freedom and responsibility to make choices for their own lives, which affect the lives of others.

Choice, however, has little meaning without an understanding of alternatives and implications. Education can provide an atmosphere in which possibilities are revealed and clarified, and in which informed, intelligent choices can be made, so that individuals can discover for themselves their own conceptions of what is of value. Such a non-parochial atmo-

sphere contains a respect for variety and difference. Learners are offered the opportunity to experience the effects of their choices in interactions with others in a climate of trust rather than blame. Learning takes place when choices are viewed as actions with consequences rather than unchangeable decisions leading to success or failure, and when the individual can risk trying out new behaviors and discover that the world may not operate as he or she has always assumed.

This education of whole persons as feeling, caring individuals, learning through experiencing intellectual and spiritual growth, de-emphasizes the mere memorization of facts and information. Truth is not taught by the simple telling; learning is through struggle, engagement, and an involvement that links knowledge to feelings to create a sense of meaning. The goal becomes the development of persons who do not passively reflect the values and ideas of their culture but

who actively seek to understand and transform that culture. This process involves freeing minds from prejudice and arbitrarily imposed authority, allowing them to think for themselves and make their choices freely and rationally.

For Swedenborg, knowledge of facts or of sense data is necessary material for learning. Facts must be provided. But learning comes in relating these facts to love, in committing them, as he says, to life rather than to memory. The ability to connect sense data with feelings is dependent partly on sensory awareness. Education of the whole person includes re-educating and sharpening sensory perceptions and expanding bodily awareness and potentialities. The process of connecting what we see and hear with our intuition, imagination, and feeling reactions may still be largely unconscious for the learner or for the teacher. But the degree to which learning takes place will depend on the depth of feelings and the

openness to new ideas tapped in the educational process.

This depth of feelings, and this openness, go far beyond the individual. Swedenborg speaks of Divine love constantly flowing into each person, coming to us through many and varied means: through spirits and angels, through reading the Bible, through worship experiences, through love between friends and family, through wonder at the beauty of nature, through becoming aware of truths through looking within and feeling something from beyond flowing into ourselves. Swedenborgians understand one of the major goals of education as helping people to get in touch with this transpersonal aspect of life in a continuing process of renewal. As Swedenborg says, the basic "cause of

Education can provide an atmosphere in which possibilities are revealed and clarified, and in which informed, intelligent choices can be made, so that individuals can discover for themselves their own conceptions of what is of value.

man's ignorance is man's belief that he lives from himself, and that he has no connection with the first Being of life. . . . Yet if that connection were broken a man would instantly fall dead." (*Heaven and Hell* 302)

Swedenborg emphasizes that this Divine love desires diversity. No person is encouraged to imitate another, nor to imitate a given standard model, in order to make connection with the source of life. Rather each seeks to use and to integrate his or her unique talents to experience and to respond most fully to the particular and distinct act of love present in an individual life. This response means action as well as understanding. It meets the needs of others, and uses talents effectively for good in society.

As persons experience this unique growth process through their inter-

(Continued on page 71)

CONVENTION 2004 REGISTRATION

St. Jerome's University, Waterloo, Ontario

"A Voice in the Wilderness"

Saturday, July 10 - Wednesday, July 14, 2004

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

For those driving to K-W, maps will be provided once your registration form has been received. If you're flying, we suggest that you arrive at Pearson Airport in Toronto. Transportation to the campus is available at Airways Transit, located at the Out of Town Ground Transportation

wicket in each of the three terminals. This transportation can be pre-arranged by logging onto our website, or you may choose to just wait for the next available van. The cost for ground transportation is your responsibility.

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

The Sunday morning worship service, and Monday evening ordination service, will be held at the Church of the Good Shepherd. On Tuesday evening we will enjoy a family oriented Oktoberfest Celebration at the Concordia Club in Kitchener, featuring German food and entertainment. Bus transportation will be provided for these events.

Our U.S. friends, upon entering and leaving Canada, will need to present a government issued photo ID and proof of U.S. citizenship. A U.S. issued passport will suffice, or you may use a driver's license and birth certificate. (It is a good idea to carry photocopies of these documents in case of loss). We urge that



you check with your health insurance provider to determine if you need to purchase short-term "out of country" medical coverage.

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

(Detach here)

Names: _____

Names and ages of children accompanying you: _____

Street address: _____

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

Phone: _____ Arrival _____ Departure _____ Email _____

Home Church (for your name tag) _____

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

(Continued on page 66)

Pre-Convention Workshops

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

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

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

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

Therapeutic Touch is a technique that anyone can learn for personal or professional use.

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

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

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

This workshop is based on the belief that our denomination is now reaching a critical juncture in its history. A century of general membership decline, church closings, and the emergence of serious financial woes bring our future into question. It is therefore imperative for us to explore new visions and new ways of being the Lord's New Church. This workshop will propose one possible approach to revitalizing and growing the church, based on John's experience at the Edmonton church and his encounter with the "new evangelism" of our sister denomination, the General Church.

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

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

P003 Swedenborg's *Conjugal Love* in Today's World
 Presenter: *Dr. Gregory R. Johnson, SHS*
 Offered: Friday, July 9, 1pm

The aim of this lecture is to critically examine the central teachings of Swedenborg's *Conjugal Love*. We will then discuss the book's relevance to today's world, as well as the very concept of "relevance" and the standards by which we should judge it.
 Format: lecture/discussion



2004 SHS Corporation Meeting and Graduation Ceremony July 11th, 7:30 p.m.

The 2004 Corporation Meeting of the New Church Theological School, doing business as the Swedenborgian House of Studies, will be held on Sunday, July 11th, at 7:30 p.m. Convention is at University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. Following the meeting, we will celebrate our first graduation ceremony for SHS students. Afterward, the board and staff will host a reception.

We hope you will join us!

Dr. Robert Reber, Chair; John Titus, Vice Chair; Rev. Bob Leas, Clerk; Garfield Byrd, Treasurer; Rev. Rachel Rivers, Assistant Clerk; Mindy Jester, Assistant Treasurer; Rev. James Lawrence, Dean; Rev. Ronald Brugler, Bill Coffman, Herb Ziegler, Rev. Jonathan Mitchell, Rev. Andy Stinson, Alan Thomsen, Maryann Thorhallsson



(Detach here - Registration continued from page 51)

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

Preconvention workshop	P001 <input type="checkbox"/> Poo2 <input type="checkbox"/>					
Mini Course selections (circle one) Monday	A001; A002; A003; A004; A005; A006; A007; A008; A009					
Mini Course selections (circle one) Tuesday	B001; B002; B003; B004; B005; B006; B007; B008; B009					
ROOM & BOARD (Please take one option)	U.S. DOLLARS	CANADIAN DOLLARS		# OF NIGHTS		
DORM ROOM SINGLE	@ \$52.00	@ \$66.00	X PERSONS		=	\$
DORM ROOM DOUBLE	@ \$48.00	@ \$61.00	X PERSONS		=	\$
RENISON SINGLE	@ \$60.00	@ \$ 76.00	X PERSONS		=	\$
RENISON DOUBLE	@ \$56.00	@ \$71.00	X PERSONS		=	\$

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

VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Number: _____ Expiration: _____

Make check payable to: **The Swedenborgian Church**

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

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

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

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

MEET THE NOMINEES FOR 2004

Vice-President 1-year-term

James E. Erickson

Illinois Association

I am honored to be nominated for the position of vice-president of General Convention. The task of preparing information for this biography provided me with a wonderful opportunity to review my experiences and skills appropriate to this important office. What was affirmed during my review is the reason why I was drawn to this position: that is the satisfaction over the years in being able to serve in leadership roles. This is particularly true when any skills I can muster are of use to the New Church. Below are selected credentials for others to judge their worthiness. I include those experiences and skills I feel are most relevant to the station.

Training and Experience:

University of Minnesota—Program in English, Speech Communications and Theater, specializing in interpersonal and institutional communication systems
Graduate School, University of Minnesota—Psychological Foundations and Cognitive Studies Programs on brain function related to intelligence and learning. This resulted in selection to a Federal panel of experts to determine how to apply learning theories to improve student achievement in science.

Work History:

Secondary teacher in English/ Speech/ Debate/Writing Director of Private School affiliated with University of Minnesota

Founding partner in Isis Productions, a documentary film company

Founding partner in Holographic Concepts, holograms for art and industry

Anthropology Specialist for the Science Museum of Minnesota

Historian in publications and programs for Ramsey County Historical Society

Offices Held: Education delegate to State Legislature of Minnesota for Education Issues

Social Service Delegate to U. S. Housing & Urban Development for Cedar -Riverside

Community Development Center, Minneapolis

President, Cedar- Riverside Health Clinic in Minneapolis.

Current President, Oral History Association of Minnesota

Church Involvement:

Past president Board of Trustees Virginia Street Church (VSSC)

Current trustee on VSSC Board of Trustees

Teacher for Sunday school and adult "Introduction to Swedenborg" class

Occasional preparation and presentation of worship services

Committees:

Current Chair Stewardship Growth Outreach and Historic

Preservation Committees

Currently serve on Newsletter, Worship, and Finance Committees.

Head of project to set up a separate corporation to establish a nonprofit corporation and for a capital fund campaign.

Currently Serving on General Council of General Convention

President of American New Church Sunday School Association

Interim Teacher of "Introduction to Swedenborg" classes

Secretary

Gloria Toot

Ohio Association

I have been a member of Kemper Road Swedenborgian Church in Cincinnati for over 30 years and have served On Kemper Road's board of directors many times, as well as being active in the Ohio Association. I have been privileged to serve as secretary on General Council for eight years and would like to serve another term in this position. I think that clear communication is one of the most important aspects of working towards a common goal. I also feel I get along well with people and that I still have some energy for this job.

Treasurer 1-year term

Lawrence Conant

Massachusetts Association

I am seeking my fifth year as our denomination's treasurer. Over the last four years I have continued a program of simplifying our bookkeeping and budget presentation. The Support Unit structure combined with many restricted funds results in a very complex accounting system. In addition, I have helped many of our churches and centers make financial decisions.

I am a lifelong member of the Bridgewater, Massachusetts church. I currently serve as treasurer of the Temenos Retreat and Conference Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Over my long history with the Swedenborgian denomination, I have served on many committees at the Association and national levels. I believe this experience uniquely qualifies me to serve another year as your treasurer.

General Council 3-year-term

Renee Billings Machiniak

Michigan Association

It is my pleasure to serve Convention in whatever capacity is most useful for the larger good. I am currently serving in the ninth year of my first pastorate at The Church of the Holy City in Royal Oak, Michigan, and work part-time as the executive director of the Almont Summer School. I have served our local community's Pastor's Association as president for the past three years and stay involved in our city's homeless and battered families shelters with volunteers in many churches. My undergraduate degree is in Social Work and I earned a Master's Degree from the Swedenborg School of Religion on "The Spirituality of Listening." I very much enjoy my ministry in Michigan and keep busy balancing my call to serve God in the church and in my growing family. I am married and have two beautiful step-daughters. Currently, my husband, Joe, and I are seeking to adopt and raise a child of our own. I am aware of many issues facing our churches and our families today—and I am happy to contribute what I can to building our future faithfully and honestly.

Sharon Reddekopp Williams

Western Canada Conference

I would like to serve our denomination by being elected to General Council. I am a lifelong member of Convention, having been a member of the Edmonton, Detroit, Urbana and Calgary churches. During that time I have been on General Council, the Nominating Committee, and Secretary of the Sunday School Association. I have held the positions of president, secretary and Alberta representative for Western Canada Conference, as well as having been president and secretary of the Calgary New Church Society, along with teaching Sunday School. Other positions held on a local level were those of director of Paulhagen Children's Camp, pastor, teacher and cook.

Working with our denomination on various levels has given me a wide angle lens with which to view our church world. My picture shows some editing is required, and I would like to help with that. I believe I can do that by serving you on General Council.

Barbara Cullen

Canada Association

I have served on the Board of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario from 1991 to 1998 and from 2003 to the present. I am also currently on the steering committee for Convention 2004 which we are

(Continued on page 68)

MEET THE NOMINEES FOR 2004

(Continued from page 67)

hosting in Kitchener-Waterloo. In my professional life I worked as a Human Resources Consultant for over 30 years and have a great interest in the human side of organizations. I attended the last three conventions and enjoyed both the spiritual sessions as well as the business sessions and I have acquired an interest in making a contribution to the General Council.

Communications Support Unit (COMSU) Carla Friedrich

Pacific Coast Association

I am currently a seminarian at the Swedenborgian House of Studies, ordination track for June 2005. I grew up in the New Church (General Convention). I've been isolated from a formal church community, sometimes traveling distances of 80-350 miles to attend church (Miami/Deland with Rev Ernest L. Frederick). For most of my life (47 yrs), publications have been my church. "Salvation by publication" rings true for me. The truths revealed in the theological writings of our church and the collateral publications around them were and are the source of my awakening, my salvation, my sustenance, my hope and the complete wellspring of my life. Trying to put them to use in my life has only deepened my faith and belief in the essential goodness and verity of them. I would love to be a part of helping this continue and happen for other people. This is the source of my call to ministry and my desire to serve on COMSU. I would like to see communication and "publications" go in the direction of a full-bodied Internet presence.

Other Qualifications: My undergraduate degree is from Mercer University in Early Childhood Education. I was a teacher (substitute) in the public school system and spent 13 years in the communications business as a letter carrier with the U. S. Postal service, as well as in their Business Marketing Unit (deadlines, mounds of paperwork and computerized data). After growing up in Convention, I have an ecumenical bent to my faith stance, spending many years studying yoga, enjoying my own direct experiences of God (mystical), and living in the South in conversation among fundamentalists, and a family of Methodists. I also spent some time with the Rev. Ray Silverman (now of the Lord's New Church) as my minister for two years, and hosted society meetings in my home for nine years under the guidance of General Church pastor, Mark Perry. Of more recent influence is my time spent here at Pacific School of Religion, and I look forward to bridging gaps and extending my interfaith/

ecumenical relationships (evangelization) while remaining faithful to the particulars of our New Church teachings. Always at the core is growing a deeper love and understanding of the WORD as revealed in writings of the New Church, which I believe is the Second Coming of our Lord in the spiritual sense.

EDSU

Nancy Freestone

Pacific Coast Association

I have been a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church for almost 30 years. I live in San Jose, California with my husband Herman and our two cats, Zelda and Lucy. First, I would like to say that I am deeply honored to have been nominated for a position on the Education Support Unit. This group, and its activities, are near and dear to my heart.

I have served on our local church council a number of times and have also been privileged to serve on General Council. I am just completing a six-year term on the PCA Board of Directors. My church work history has included planning two conventions in the San Francisco area and serving as president of the PCA Alliance. I am most happy and fulfilled when doing "church work" and therefore ask for your support for my future happiness! Regrettably, I may not be able to come to Kitchener this year due to a conflict of vacation scheduling with my employer. However, I am still asking for your vote and I promise to make a meaningful contribution to EDSU if elected. Thank you for your faith and confidence in me. Have a WONDERFUL Convention and I hope I can find some way to be with you.

Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU)

Jennifer Lindsay

Pacific Coast Association

For the past three years, it has been my pleasure to serve General Convention on both FPRSU and the Augmentation Fund Committee (AFC). I have also had the wonderful experience of serving on the Board of Managers for the Wayfarers Chapel. This year I serve as treasurer to Wayfarers Chapel. Serving General Convention and the Swedenborgian Church is a powerful outlet for my spiritual growth. It gives me immeasurable pleasure to interact with Swedenborgians from across the country with the purpose of serving our denomination. I embrace this opportunity to continue to provide financial oversight on behalf of General Convention. Thank you for allowing me to put my talent to use

Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)

Robert Hinrichs

Pacific Coast Association

I have worked at ISL (Insight, Strategy & Logic) Consulting in San Francisco for nine years, where I have been the Chief Technology Officer. The company and I have worked on many high-profile projects for Chevron, Yahoo, Common Sense Media, Wells Fargo, Pacific Bell/SBC, and others. I am a firm believer in the power of online resources to spread knowledge and understanding of the Swedenborgian Church and its ideas and beliefs. I wish to continue serving on IMSU to help guide the project in aspects of design and technology.

Ministries Support Unit (MINSU)

Carl Blenkin

Pacific Coast Association

I have just served a three year term on the Ministries Support Unit (MINSU), which has been a journey of learning, exploration as well as great excitement. We have an extremely wide variety of ministry and serve in North America, this in itself is something to celebrate and cherish. The Ministries Support Unit is currently in the process of exploring and looking at what its purpose and mission really is to the local Swedenborgian Churches and Societies. We are exploring and finding ways of enabling and supporting these different and varied situations, a process which requires a great deal of thought and prayer to which I feel very committed. As our denomination and churches struggle financially I feel it is our mission to help sustain each ministry and seek out resources that can help them continue their mission. This is a task to which I bring experience and expertise. Working with MINSU has been rewarding and enriching and would look forward to another three-year term with this great team.

I'm currently living in Redondo Beach, California, with my partner of ten years, Jonathan Mitchell, who is one of the ministers at Wayfarers Chapel. My background has been in Social Work, and I have a theological education. I have been involved in the local church and have served on various committees and boards in the past for many years and continue to do so. I feel I can serve MINSU with great hope, dedication and commitment towards building our future church together. I look forward to this challenge.

Karen Conger

Pacific Coast Association

I am a lifelong member of the Swedenborgian Church, having been born into the Washington, D.C., church, and been a member of the Urbana and Los Angeles churches. Currently I am a member-at-large of the Pacific Coast Association. My

(Continued on page 70)

Corporate vs. Personal Swedenborgianism

Dear Editor:

It was good to see Rich Tafel's article "If the Swedenborgian Church Had a Coach" (*The Messenger*, April 2004, front page). There are a lot of constructive suggestions in it, and my only complaint would be that too much of a business model may be built into it when what the Church faces is something of a different and more fuzzy logic—how people are caught up in spiritual issues and need insights which can solve those issues but cannot tell precisely what will do it.

We face several unusual problems:

The inner response a person will have is unpredictable, even if the person is looking for a more satisfactory picture of the afterlife. For example, Swedenborg may or may not seem to be rather Pollyannaish about the afterlife, perhaps *not* really informed. How does one know if he *was* enlightened? Our religious culture has an ingrained suspicion of anyone who makes such big claims about knowing what no one has known before, nevermind that the message is appealing. Only if we are enlightened on reading him, have a deeper, more intuitive response to what Swedenborg is saying, may we overcome that skepticism.

Listening to friends and other influential people can help, but how would anyone know, after hearing our testimonies, that he or she *will* therefore be so enlightened, "sold" on a teaching? Every denomination has people who will fervently proclaim and defend its ideas. An inner light is needed and dawns after sitting down and giving Swedenborg or the Church a fair hearing in the first place, while being open to the Lord. That turns out to be a rare accomplishment, and it often happens under the pressures of a spiritual crisis.

Swedenborg's effect on the individual is not noticeably corporate, inviting to join a church. He pulls the individual deep inside, there to confront his or her own spiritual world, and that often happens only in privacy. Religious belief and Church are not

TO THE EDITOR

strongly linked in his writings. Church attendance is not mandated except to take Communion several times a year. We are left to fight our own inner battles and set up a very personal relationship with the Lord which may not naturally lead into a church community. The Swedenborg Foundation used to publish a list of famous people who were strongly influenced by Swedenborg—great figures in literature, politics, and philosophy. But only one person on that list joined the Swedenborgian Church: Helen Keller. Why was there not a more natural interest in the Church just because of Swedenborg? We have never answered that question.

I tried to interest a very devoted Swedenborgian I met in Berkeley, California, in coming to the church. He had no interest in doing that, even though we became friends. The only other example of an "isolated" Swedenborgian that I knew of felt the same way. I strongly suspect that the deeply introspective impact of Swedenborg had not readily generated any interest in *corporate* Swedenborgianism. The two, personal Swedenborgianism and corporate Swedenborgianism, do seem different in temperament and what they require of the individual. And it seems that corporate Swedenborgianism may not readily be of interest if personal Swedenborgianism has been a very intense interest because of its need to develop within a deep privacy. In a case like that, the church may need to build its own distinctive appeal. It has usually had to fend for itself while other Swedenborgians came and went outside.

Another problem is that signs outside of our churches which proclaim the words "Swedenborgian" or "Swedenborg," typically mean nothing to the passerby because of their lack of name recognition in our culture. They sound vaguely Swedish, as if the church would most likely be an ethnic Swedish

church, certainly "not for me." It is hard to imagine a more efficient way to keep people walking down the street unless the church is widely publicized for other reasons, as has been the case with the Wayfarers Chapel and the San Francisco church, architectural landmarks that have received a lot of public notice. What is needed in most cases is more descriptive wording on the signs out front. "Church of the Holy City," and others, would be more informative, raise a more comfortable curiosity from those who already want community.

Stephen Koke
Julian, California



Heart/Vision (Continued from page 63)

that student helps in building the precious Holy City.

Teachers Poised to Begin

We want this to be an inspired, impacting, well-thought approach to spiritual intelligence. After consulting with education experts, it was determined there would be three age levels with lead teachers: ages 2-6, ages 7-10, ages 11-14. Lead teachers work together to prepare the lessons and then make their specific lessons age-appropriate. Beginning on May 7, we are presenting a 4-week trial Heart Vision Program that will allow our talented and excited teaching group to review the impact of the lessons, songs, and presentors. We will be refining and expanding the trial curriculum (using our "wisdom") to prepare the birth of this heart-created "vision." Our goal is to present a full Heart Vision Program which we will advertise to our local community, satisfying our intent to provide a powerful path for the spiritual intelligence of our precious children.

The Rev. Eric Allison is pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound in Kirkland, Washington.



MEET THE NOMINEES FOR 2004

(Continued from page 68)

husband Stan and I are "isolated" Swedenborgians, living in Bishop, a little town in eastern California. I am retired, and fill my time with gardening, needlepoint, reading, and involvement in our local United Methodist Church.

I have valued my time with MINSU. I joined the Unit in 1999, filling an unexpired term, and was then elected to my first term in 2001. Since the fall of 2003 I have served as chair, and with the invaluable mentoring of the previous chair, am enjoying the challenge. I would love to continue to work with MINSU, particularly now as the denomination is undergoing the transitions required by the financial realities of the 21st century.

Nominating Committee

Michelle Huffman

Mid-Atlantic Association

I am a native of Saginaw, Michigan, and spent my teen years at Almont New Church Assembly Summer Camp, as well as associated SCYL retreats in the Midwest and Boston areas. I was an active ANCA Board Member for many years, until my move to Georgia in 2002. I have served as the secretary for the Education Support Unit since 1999. I graduated from the University of Michigan with degrees in Biology and Natural Resources, and currently work as an Environmental Project Administrator for the State of Georgia, managing more than 30 water quality grant projects totaling \$8.9 million. I live in Roswell, Georgia, with my fiancée, John Vincent, and will be getting married on the beach in Michigan this coming August.

Chuck Winter

Ohio Association

I am a member of the Swedenborg Chapel of Cleveland where I have served on council for eleven years as president. I have been on the executive council of the Ohio Association as vice-president for seven years and last year was elected president. I have been on General Council for six years and at convention this year my service will be completed. Last year I became a member of the board of trustees at Urbana University. Since I retired five years ago as a high school teacher, I have been able to volunteer more time to the church.

Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM)

Rev. Susan Turley

Pacific Coast Association

I was born and raised in the Swedenborgian Church, daughter of the Rev. Dr. Calvin and Marilyn Turley. I was ordained into the Swedenborgian ministry in 1980 and have served as the parish pastor in Portland, Maine; Los Angeles; in a team ministry at the Wayfarers Chapel; and co-pastor at the Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco. I have served on numerous Convention committees including the executive committee of the Council of Ministers; the Board of Determination; as youth minister; Chair of the Social Action/Education Committee; and I represented Convention on the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches. I am the founding director of Living Waters HIV Ministry, an outreach ministry serving the needs of those affected by HIV/AIDS. I have also provided pastoral care services at women's crisis centers and developed a successful private practice as a pastoral counselor in Newton, Mass. In addition to the Masters of Divinity earned at the Swedenborg School of Religion, I hold a Masters of Education in Counseling from Suffolk University, am a Licensed Certified Social Worker, a graduate of a two-year post-graduate training in Family Systems therapy at the Boston Family Institute and have recently earned my certification as Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor. I am presently in charge of the Clinical Pastoral Education program at the Palo Alto Veterans Administration Health Care Services. I have been serving on CAM since the fall to fill out a vacated term. As a trainer of chaplains, I bring to CAM my professional and personal expertise in professional ministry, education/learning theory and spiritual/personal growth and development.

Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS) Board

3-year term, 2 to be elected

Rev. Andrew D. Stinson

Massachusetts Association

I was born in Maine, attending schools there and graduating from Morse High School in Bath, Maine in 1987. After high school, I joined the Army Reserves and attended the University of Southern Maine. In 1991, I graduated with degrees in Geography and History.

After college, I worked as a commercial diver and fisherman. I eventually left fishing to attend Andover Newton Theological School and the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, Massachusetts, where in 1999, I graduated with an MA in Swedenborgian Studies and a Masters of Divinity degree. I continued to serve in the Army Reserve, being promoted to Captain in the Transportation Corps.

I was ordained in the Swedenborgian Church in 1999, accepting a call to the Elmwood New Church in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts. I also became a Chaplain in the Army Reserve. I have been on the board of the Swedenborgian House of Studies since 2001. In June of 2002, I was called to active duty and am presently serving at Fort Eustis, Virginia. I am single and continue to call Maine my home.

I am active in the alumni chapter of the Delta Chi Fraternity and the Freemasons. I currently serve as the Chaplain to Military Traffic Management Command Operations Center.

Rev. Solomon Youngmin Kim

New York Association

I have a very supportive wife and two children, Keyman, my 18 year old son who is a freshman of Harvard University, and Aileen, my 15 year old daughter who is a sophomore of Hunter College High School.

I have served at one church for 21 years as both a devoted member and as a pastor.

The Mirral Church, of which I am pastor (d/b/s/The Church of Little Grain), is located in a culturally diverse section of Brooklyn. In this capacity, I have worked to build a relationship of understanding and respect between other cultures and the Korean community, such as the African-American, Caribbean-American and Hispanic communities, Italian and Dutch communities, as well as Chinese and Russian communities. I have been a positive force in solving ethnic issues with the Korean businessmen and the Black community by getting the Korean businessmen to employ more residents of the Black community.

My work with the Brookdale University Hospital and Medical Center gives me the opportunity to tend to the sick. I coordinated the group who visits the Brookdale Hospital Shulman Institute nursing home with entertainment and food for the residents. In addition, I helped organize the Census 2000 effort in the Korean communities of Bensonhurst, Bayridge, Flatbush, East Flatbush, Flushing, Queens as well as New Jersey, by setting up testing sites, Questionnaire Assistance Centers and Counted sites.

I have worked very closely with the Brooklyn Borough President office in my capacity as a supervisor with the U.S. Census Bureau.

My activism was also demonstrated in the Korean educational communities of New York City by coordinating an after-school program for Korean students who are having a difficult time academically. This program

(Continued on page 71)

BAPTISM

Batterson—Courtney, Whitney and Shelby Batterson, daughters of Budd and Linda Batterson, were baptized November 11, 2003 at the Virginia Street Sweden-borgian Church in St. Paul, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

DEATHS

Bush—Charlie Bush, age 70, longtime active member of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound, entered the spiritual world March 31, 2004. A memorial service was conducted April 10th with the family in Portland, Oregon, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating, and a second service was held April 17th at the Stonehouse in Kirkland, Washington, the Revs. Eric Allison and Erni Martin officiating. Charlie was a voracious reader of Swedenborg, and is said to have stated, "The Bible is just a love letter written by the Lord, and we shouldn't get all upset

about a little inconsistency." He is survived by two daughters, Lorrie and Lisa, and several grandchildren.

Eishen—Mary Eishen, member of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world January 7, 2004. A memorial service was held January 11, 2004, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

Kline—Marcelite Kline, age 80, entered the spiritual world January 12, 2004. Marcelite found the New Church through a job she took at the Cincinnati church in the forties. She was active there, playing the organ, singing, and teaching Sunday School, until she and her husband moved to Los Angeles, where she became active in the Los Angeles Society, later attending the General Church in Glendale. Services were conducted January 25 at the Oakdale Mortuary in Glendora, California, Rev. Jong-Vi Lee officiating.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Andrew Siebert and Amy Sickler became engaged on New Year's Day, in Paris, under the Eiffel Tower. They had spent three weeks in Europe on holiday and visiting Amy's parents. Andrew is the son of Ray and Jane Siebert, of Pretty Prairie, Kansas. Andrew and Amy are back at their classes at Kansas State and are planning to wed after graduation.

MEET THE NOMINEES FOR 2004

(Continued from page 70)

has a successful parental component, which educates new immigrant parents about the way in which the New York City school system operates, as well as the role of the parent and the student in school life. I worked for the School Leadership Teams project of NYC Board of Education for parents, especially immigrant parents.

With these experiences I think that I can help SHS to be known to other ethnic communities.



BIBLE PUZZLE

~ ANSWERS ~

(Don't read this if you didn't do the puzzle in the April Messenger!)

There are thirty books of the Bible in this paragraph. Can you find them? This is a most remarkable puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket, on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much; he passed it on to some friends. One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his *john* boat. Another friend studied it while playing his *banjo*. Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend *judges* the *job* of solving this puzzle so involving, *she brews* a cup of tea to help her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot. That's a *fact*. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in a *jam*, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. Truthfully, from answers we get, we are forced to admit

it usually takes a minister or scholar to see some of them, at the worst. Research has shown that something in our *genes* is responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in this paragraph. During a recent fund raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta Phi lemonade booth set a new sales record. The local paper, *The Chronicle*, surveyed over 200 patrons who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As Daniel Humana humbly puts it, "the books are all right here in plain view hidden from sight." Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation that may help is that books like *Timothy* and *Samuel* may occur without their *numbers*. Also, keep in mind that punctuation and spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete really well against those who claim to know the answers. Remember, there is no need for a mass exodus, there really are 30 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in this paragraph waiting to be found.



Swedenborg's Vision

(Continued from page 64)

change of ideas and feelings with others, they become more capable of individualized learning and self-direction. Whether they are children, young people choosing careers or lifestyles, or adults reflecting on the direction of their inner or outer lives, they learn to deal with the motives and goals that express the meaning of their lives. Their freedom and responsibility for their own education becomes a greater reality. The educational process these individuals experience as growth-producing becomes a model for them to expand and refine in their personal and professional lives. As each life is touched and changed as the connection with the Divine is more conscious and more functional, such education becomes an expanding reality, reaching out to affect unknown lives in generations to come.

Dr. Perry Martin is a Swedenborgian and a psychotherapist living in West Chester, Pennsylvania. The Board of Education pre-dated the current Education Support Unit.



Whale Rider

A film by Newmarket Films, directed by Niki Caro. Written by Caro, based on the novel by Witi Ihimaera. Running time: 105 minutes. Rated PG-13 (for brief language and a momentary drug reference).

Reviewed by Stephen Koke

The greatness of a people rises and falls, and may not rise again unless they recognize their ancient spirit in an unexpected new form.

On the east coast of New Zealand, the ancient Whangara tribe of the Maori people are poor, live in conventional homes, drive cars and trucks, watch television, and have an increasingly fragile connection with their thousand year ancestry. Modern life threatens them with an inner deterioration that reduces the leadership and inspiration of their ancient hero, Paikea the Whale Rider, to little more than a sentimental attachment. Once a proud symbol of the tribe's spirit, an ancient 100 foot war canoe rests in neglect on its cradle near the water.

Two children are born to Paikea's line, a boy and a girl. Tragically, the boy and their mother die in childbirth. That breaks the line, for Paikea's successors have always been male. When she is 12, the girl, also named Paikea, or Pai, is old enough to train for leadership. But Koro, her beloved grandfather and the current leader of the tribe, cannot accept her as his successor. He loves her, but he is devoted to the tribe's heritage and is traditional to a fault. He rounds up the boys and begins to train them in the crafts and fighting skills of a leader, hoping that a worthy male successor will emerge. Pai tries to join them, but he orders her to stay away. She watches discreetly from a distance and absorbs their lessons anyway.

Signs of spiritual leadership and her growing

awareness of hidden forces appear every now and then. In her depths she knows very well who and what she is. She is very sensitive to the cries of whales in the ocean and feels strongly connected with them. Her father wants her to come away to live with him and his new wife, but she is reluctant, pleads to be left behind, but gets in the car. As they drive off, she feels the whales calling to her. "Stop the car!" she says, "I want to go home."

One of the boys challenges her to a match with traditional fighting sticks (called Taiaha), but she quickly disarms him with her stick. She leads chants and takes on challenges that the boys would rather ignore. Koro tests his students by tossing a ceremonial whale's tooth into the ocean, ordering them to dive in and recover it. They come up empty-handed. Later, she decides to dive for it herself, swims far down and finds it.

One morning the tribe discovers that whales have beached themselves. The entire village tries anxiously to help them, but they can only keep the whales wet while wondering what to do. A tractor might do it. It struggles to turn the leader around on the belief that the others would follow him; but the rope breaks, and the tide is rising. The beach is deserted in despair.

It is in a moment of supreme crisis, when easy answers don't work, that a new spirit finally displays its power. The ending is as poetic as the old legend itself.

Paikea is played by Keisha Castle-Hughes, her first role. She was good enough to get a Best Actress nomination at the recent Academy Awards, one of the youngest ever to do so. She is Australian and part Maori. She will appear again in Star Wars III. The deeply meditative musical score by Lisa Gerrard is one of the most beautiful I have heard in recent years. This film is now available on DVD.



The Swedenborgian Church
of North America
The Messenger
11 Highland Ave.
Newtonville, MA 02460

Address Service
Requested

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Plymouth, IN
Permit No. 105

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.