Editorial

SRK Board Discussed Timely Questions

Trust grows from openness. In Conservative Laestadianism it means evaluating the movement's life and activity in the midst of society and the Church. Openness is free and direct discussion even about painful questions, but at the same time it is constructive and secure.

In its discussions on the weekend [Oct. 7-9, 2011], SRK's Board concentrated on timely questions that are currently at the fore. Rising to the focal point were questions concerning the family. The topic this time was specifically the abusive treatment of children. On the basis of presentations by outside experts, the Board examined the areas of family and domestic violence and child sexual abuse, as well as recognizing and confronting these.

Among other factors, there was sorrow felt over this, that in public comments at our movement's mutual gatherings and in position statements, we have seldom been able to find sufficient love and warmth to reach the victim-the person who has been mistreated.

Usually a victim can receive help and support from a trusted professional therapist or in counseling discussions conducted with a believing friend. Significant in the latter-mentioned discussions are being side by side, listening, and preaching the gospel's uplifting grace. We haven't always known how to act in the right way in discussions. Nevertheless, this hasn't meant that we would have knowingly wanted to do wrong.

Openness is also required when we discuss SRK's history. On Saturday, we released the [written] work, *Evankeliumin työ laajenee, Suomen Rauhanyhdistysten Keskusyhdistyksen historia 2 (1945-1961)* [The Gospel Work Broadens: Finland's Central Organization of Associations of Peace-History 2 (1945-1961)]. In discussions about continuing the history [publishing] work, we paused on the examination of life in society, the Church, and Conservative Laestadianism in the 1960s and '70s based on in-depth presentations.

The movement and individual people felt their faith-life to be threatened in the grip of deeply shifting values. Thus, as one form of defensive reaction, the soul care discussions and meetings, which are called caretaking meetings, arose. In their development, it became a distinctive feature after the mid-1970s that spirits of different names, such as *kososlaisuus* [Kososianism], often forced aside actual matters that had names of sin. Doctrinal errors and their resultant abuses occurred.

Based on its discussion, the SRK Board decided to give in this paper a position statement, in which it expresses regret for the errors and abuses that occurred. In those years, God's people experienced their "wilderness journey" but at the same time we also experienced God's blessings in the work of the gospel. That which God cleansed has produced good fruit.

In considering SRK's communication strategy, both internal and external communication were examined. One of the purposes of internal communication is to build trust and security. One of external communication's central objectives is to remove obstacles to furtherance of the gospel.

The proclamation and teaching of God's kingdom's good tidings are the core duty of both domestic and foreign mission work.

In recent times it has brought joy that the sermon of God's Word, both in our homeland and abroad, has been able to guide seeking people from darkness into God's kingdom to experience righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. With His grace, He has strengthened His own in faith and mutual love. "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. 2:19).

SRK Board Meeting, October 7-9, 2011at Siikatörmä - Päivämies #41, 10-12, 2011

SRK Board Discussed History

On Saturday evening, October 8, the Board discussed the events that took place in the 1970s. **Aimo Hautamäki** and **Seppo Lohi** were asked to open the topic with presentations. In his introduction, Hautamäki examined the public treatment of the subject during the last five years. Lohi's presentation was a broad historical overview of the events. His analysis was based on the meeting minutes of the SRK Board of Directors and Executive Committee and other publications. The floor speeches also brought out the background of the societal situation at that time. As a result of the discussion arising from the presentations, the Board decided to release the accompanying position statement, which is based on the presentations heard.

Text: Olli Lohi - Photo: Maria Hyväri

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Position Statement

Continuation of SRK History Work Necessitates Discussion

At the meeting of the SRK Board on October 8, 2011, the second volume of SRK's history of the SRK, *The Gospel Work Broadens***,** by Ari-Pekka Palola, was released. The first volume by the same author, *In the Shelter of Two Shells***,** discussed the phases of the SRK from 1906 to 1946. The volume now released concludes in 1961.

The SRK Board held an initial discussion on the continuation of the history work. Continuation will require examination of the events in the 1970s. The Board was of the opinion that there is reason to learn from the past. One must be able to face the facts openly and honestly even when they are not to our liking. This also applies to the so-

called caretaking meetings, which have background in the broad societal breakdown of values in the 1960s. It was reflected in many ways in our Christianity. Problems arose which needed to be discussed together. Such problems were, for example, our attitude toward television and birth control. Television was a relatively new phenomenon in rural areas and municipal birth control clinics were initiated at the beginning of the 1970s.

Discussions on timely questions on faith and life over a period of time brought about the so-called caretaking meetings. The meetings provided necessary and wanted counsel. The goal was that not only individuals but also the entire group of believers would be protected in one faith, love, doctrine, and spirit. Generally, the discussions remained in this form during the early years of the 1970s.

Regrettably, beginning in the middle of the decade, characteristics foreign to Christianity began to appear, such as doctrinal errors and the abuses they brought about. This was acknowledged already at the Speakers and Congregation Elders' Meeting held at the 1989 Ranua Summer Services.

One doctrinal error of that period was, for example, the so-called spirit doctrine, which demanded that individuals repent of spirits of different names - dry, lenient, or Kososian spirit. Public confession also became manifest at the meetings along with a demand for repentance using specified terminology. In addition, there appeared a wrong concept that the board of the SRK or the RY would form some kind of "government of the House of God."

In addition to these phenomena, the following began to appear: the diminishment of the conscience of the individual, injurious speech, and withholding forgiveness. Humiliation of another person is never right, neither is physical, mental, or spiritual violence.

We regret the errors in doctrine and the abuses that occurred. It is regrettable, and in retrospect incomprehensible, that these errors were able to spread nearly everywhere in the work of our Christianity. Meetings of this type ended at the end of the 1970s, when those who carried the doctrinal errors received the grace of repentance from their errors.

A community is formed of individuals; so also is the community of believers. We believe that the Holy Spirit gathers the congregation of God. When individual Christians err, the fault is not that of the congregation. Therefore, the correction of matters starts with the endeavoring individual's own desire to journey with a good conscience before God and people. Blessed moments were experienced at caretaking meetings when the living gospel was able to break the pressing internal bonds. That, which God cleansed has brought forth good fruit.

There is always reason to hold discussions that care for the soul. The Word of God encourages us to do this, *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual*,

restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (Gal. 6:1).

Today, as before, the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is a spirit of love and forgiveness. It leads one to live according to the Word of God and also with the mind of Christ to support one's travel friends on the way that leads to Heaven.

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