



An Evolving Proposal for Good Practices in the Swedenborgian Church

A “Good Practices” working group was commissioned by President Jane Siebert for the purpose of helping to facilitate growing competencies in how we conduct our ministries and shape responsible practices throughout our denomination. The group began last year by sending out a denomination-wide questionnaire that led to a first phase of draft documents, which were presented in a mini-course at the 2018 Annual Convention.

From there, new edits were shaped, with the evolving documents proceeding to General Council and then the Council of Ministers for further engagement and suggestions. Now, with this issue of *the Messenger* the current state of three documents are being shared with the church as fully as we can to elicit any further suggestions. The hoped for outcome will be proposing adoption of these documents of guidelines and covenants as endorsed by the denomination at the next annual convention, this summer in Indiana. The three documents are: 1) A Congregational

Covenant; 2) Good Practices Guidelines for Ministries of the Swedenborgian Church of North America; and 3) A Covenant between Constituent Bodies and the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

We want everyone to have a seat at the table and for all of the church to have a chance for giving input. Many *Messenger* readers have already provided input, but further additions and suggestions are welcomed, and for those who are seeing these for the first time, we’d like to hear any suggestions for improvement.

You can send your comments to any of these three members of the working group:

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—*The Good Practices Work Group: Barb Halle, Tom Neuenfeldt, Rich Tafel, Page Morahan, Jim Lawrence*

An Example of A Congregational Covenant

In our work and conversations as members of [*blank space for congregation name*], we realize that conflict, disagreements, and misunderstandings can easily occur. We therefore affirm our collective conscious commitment to healthy practices of communication and process in the life of our ministry. To guide us in our congregational life and ministry, we pledge this Covenant together to faithfully follow these guidelines for embodying a thoughtful and loving community.

Let us honor variety, work in respectful

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Good Practices Guidelines For Ministries of the Swedenborgian Church of North America

Congregational Relations

- Develop a Congregational Covenant for healthy communication practices in the congregation’s life, and ensure the Covenant is visible and frequently referenced.
- Keep the congregation informed about what the ministry governing board or council is doing, such as regularly emailing minutes to the membership and friends.
- Offer open board meetings for

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A Covenantal Spirituality for the Swedenborgian Church of North America A Covenant between Constituent Bodies and the Denomination:

The Swedenborgian Church of North America commits to

- Provide ministry resources for spiritual growth and formation, outreach, and membership.
- Provide information about potential grant opportunities.
- Provide support and guidance, when asked, regarding internal conflict difficulties.

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The Editor's Desk



Creation

A core belief of most, if not all, religious traditions is that a god, gods, or divine force, however it is defined, created the universe and everything in it. This core belief requires an explanation; thus, each religious tradition has its own creation story.

Humans evolved into an animal with a brain that enables them to contemplate their existence. If they have the ability to solve complex problems, contemplate the past and the future, consider their place in the world and relationships with other people, and plan and review their actions, then their thoughts must at some point in their maturation come to contemplate how they got here and why. Since humans are part of the created world, they do not have a collective memory of creation, and thus a story of the creation emerges in their consciousness.

A creation story explains the mystery of where we came from. It is a story, not history, because no human was available to observe and record it. Scientific explorations of creation look for physical evidence of creation and uses that evidence to formulate physical-evidence-based theories. Religions have eschewed physical evidence in favor of creation stories not based on physical evidence.

Problems arise from these creation stories when scientific theories based on observable phenomena began to establish a world view that seemed to challenge long held religious beliefs, religious authorities began to challenge, and even persecute their promoters. In the twenty-first century, most religions have found a way to live with the scientific consensus, although uncomfortably in many cases.

Many religions simply put their religious beliefs and the observable world in silos, putting aside any conflicting claims. Others incorporate scientific theories into their stories. Some fundamentalist Christians refuse to accept the reality of evolution, instead asserting creationism, a pseudo-scientific alternative evolutionary theory based on misinterpreted evidence that aligns nicely with their belief that history started with Adam and Eve, about 6000 years ago.

As Swedenborgians, we gain tremendous insight into the inner meaning of

the Bible. Swedenborg was a brilliant scientist who understood the geological record. He writes that the creation story in Genesis is a myth whose purpose is to reveal the lifelong human process of spiritual development, leading us to explore our spiritual growth.

In this issue of *the Messenger*, we have several articles (and an invitation to buy a book) that delve into the creation. Kurt Fekete recounts the SPLATz retreat, where the children explored and embraced this inner meaning, and Rev. Junchol Lee explores the first three days of creation.

—Herb Ziegler

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Church Calendar

- **June 29–July 3:** 2019 Annual Swedenborgian Convention, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN
- **August 28–31, 2020:** Gathering Leaves, Purley Chase, GB

the Messenger

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Message from the Vice- President



The Year of the Lord: 2018–19 —*The Primacy of Spirit*

Rev. Jane Siebert is recovering from surgery and was unable to attend the installation of Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts as minister of the Church of the Good Shepard, in Kitchener, Ontario. Vice-President Tom Neuenfeldt attended in her stead, and addressed the congregation during the service with the following.

So Jesus called them all together and said, “You know that the rulers of the heathen have power over them, and the leaders have complete authority. This, however, is not the way it shall be among you. If one of you wants to be great, you must be the servant of the rest, and if one of you wants to be first, you must be the slave of the others—like the Son of Man, who did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life to redeem many people (Matthew 20:25-28).”

It is truly an honor and a privilege for BJ and me to participate in the installation of Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts, and to help this congregation welcome Cory and Alyssa into your faith family.

I chose the Matthew scripture reading because I believe that during the final stages of his life on earth, our Lord was explaining to his disciples that being a leader should also entail being a servant. He was preparing them and all of us for carrying out his ministry.

Today, we call this Servant Leadership. Servant-leaders put their followers first; they empower them and help them develop to their full personal capacities. I consider Jesus to be the greatest servant-leader of all time. Perhaps more leaders should adopt the popular phrase, and wear the little plastic bracelet that says, “What would Jesus Do?”

As a congregation, you have called Cory to be your new minister—your leader. Ministers are a special type of leader. A minister is also a servant—a servant-leader. They are servant-leaders for the Lord and servant-leaders of their congregations.

Servant-leaders place the good of their followers over their self interest and emphasize the development of those around them.

The outcome is that followers become leaders in their own right. They are empowered and create a community of cooperation and good will. Isn't that what we all envision for our congregations, our schools, our communities, and our families?

Being a servant-leader is really more of a calling than it is an ambition. These leaders are more

concerned about community gain than self gain; they nurture their followers, are attentive to their concerns, and empathize with them.

A Vision for Church Governance

This style of leadership has an impact on the least privileged of the community. It does not provide benefit only to those who can give benefit back to the leader in return. As Jesus said, “When you give to the least of these, you give to me.”

Our denomination and our churches, including

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Blessing of the prayer shawl: (L to R) Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts, Rev. Dave Rogalsky and Alyssa Cover, Rev. Cory's partner

A Vision Is Emerging in Cambridge

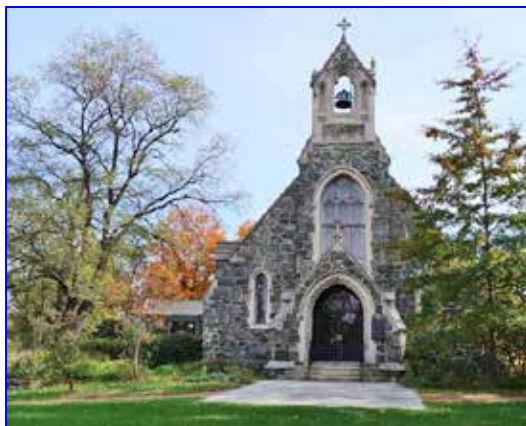
BY SAGE COLE

At Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2018 was an incredible year of discernment and work for all of us. Enlisting the support of Rev. Anna Woofenden, who came to work with us as ministry consultant for outreach and new initiatives, we intentionally entered a year of sitting with the question, “What will the next season of ministry be at Swedenborg Chapel?”

When we started asking this question, all of us truly did not know what the answer would be. Some of us even wondered if there would be a next season. With a small endowment and an even smaller membership, thoughts of the future often felt tinged with fear and uncertainty. While we are blessed with an incredibly beautiful historic chapel in the heart of Harvard Square, these challenges often make it difficult at times to feel a sense of abundance and possibility.

Each month, Rev. Anna invited us to share with each other our hopes and our fears. She invited us to write them on small strips of papers, hopes on one side, fears on the other, and then, after sharing them, rip them up and place them in a basket to be composted in the garden. Rev. Anna invited us to consider that the Lord as Divine Composter would work with all of this to bring about the next season, the new thing. That it wouldn't be up to us, to “figure it all out” but to do the work of preparing the soil.

And that work we did—lots of hard conversations, lots of truth telling—some uncomfortable moments. And slowly, but not quite as slowly as we all feared, things began to change. The soil softened and new life began to emerge.



Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge

Today, as 2019 begins we are in a very different place. We have started to recognize the abundance that exists around us in the gift of being stewards of our beautiful chapel. We have let go of many of our fears. We have started to feel hope. And after all our hard work of preparing the soil, the Lord has provided a vision. The seed is now planted for our next season of ministry in the world, and we are so very excited to nurture it and help to bring it into being.

Central to these next steps is looking anew at how we house the library of the Massachusetts New Church Union and fulfill its mission: “To maintain in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts a religious library and reading room, and to promote the knowledge of the doctrines of the New Jerusalem as revealed in the Word, and taught in the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.” The vision that has come to be is a way to create a vital space to share the doctrines of the church and their potential for transforming lives.

The Helen Keller Memorial Library and Center for Spiritual Life

These truths have been to my faculties what light, color, and music are to the eye and ear. They have opened the gate of the Garden of

Heaven for me and showed me fair flowering paths I love to walk. What precious herbs of healing grow there! What sweet smells of celestial flowers greet me! What thresholds of quiet I pass over, leaving behind me all the harsh, loud utilities of earth-life. . . . In giving me the golden key to the hidden treasures of the Bible, Swedenborg's books have lifted my wistful longing for a fuller sense-life unto a vivid consciousness of the complete being within me. Each day comes to me with both hands full of possibilities, and in its brief course all the verities and realities of my existence, the bliss of growth, the glory of action, the spirit of beauty.

—Helen Keller, *Light in my Darkness*

Proposal: To create a dedicated space in the annex of the Swedenborg Chapel at 50 Quincy St. in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for a library of Swedenborgian research material, along with educational exhibits about the life and spirituality of Helen Keller. This comfortable welcoming space will serve the needs of researchers of Swedenborg and Helen Keller but, more importantly, the needs of those seeking to connect with their own spiritual life in a place dedicated to quiet contemplation and spiritual study. The library will seek to lift up Helen Keller as an example of lived Swedenborgian spirituality, emphasizing the joy and meaning she drew from awaking to the reality of the spiritual world and her call to a life of usefulness and justice-seeking.

Swedenborg Chapel is located directly across from Harvard Yard. It is sandwiched between William James Hall and the Graduate School of Design, the current incarnation of the

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Emerging Vision in Cambridge

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Harvard School of Architecture, founded by Herbert Langford Warren, a member of the first Society of the New Jerusalem in Cambridge and the designer of our beloved Chapel. This busy corner where Quincy and Kirkland Streets meets is also across the street from Sanders Theater, where the Radcliffe College graduating class of 1904, of which Helen Keller was a member, held their commencement ceremonies only three years after the Chapel was completed.

Today, this bustling corner continues to be regularly walked by students of all kinds, as it was in the early 1900s. Many stop to view the Chapel's architecture, to appreciate our wildflower garden, to come in for a brief moment of prayer, or to stop in and inquire about Swedenborg. These busy students find a brief respite from the bustle of school work for a moment on our sacred grounds. It is here that we wish to create a space dedicated to the spiritual life of Helen Keller.

A Perfect Location in the Heart of Harvard Square

This library will include a full collection of Swedenborg's works, collateral materials in the tradition of Swedenborgian discourse, and historical texts contemporary to Helen Keller's time. We will have Braille copies of Swedenborg's works, like what she would likely have read with John Hitz, who introduced her to the tradition. We will have a dedicated computer that will introduce visitors to all of the ways to research and explore Swedenborg's writings online. We will also have biographies and other written materials focusing on Helen Keller's life and spirituality.

In addition to providing research materials, the library will display educational exhibits about Helen Keller's

life and spirituality. We will work with Helen Keller scholars to develop a foundational exhibit and then work to regularly create new exhibits and presentations over the years, focusing on Keller but also others influenced and shaped by Swedenborg's vision.

In her spiritual autobiography, *My Religion*, republished as *Light in my Darkness*, Keller writes "Each day comes to me with both hands full of possibilities, and in its brief course all the verities and realities of my existence, the bliss of growth, the glory of action, the spirit of beauty." We will carry this forward as a developing mission statement for our library, to encourage those who visit to embrace life in this way, as full and rich with possibilities for growth, action and beauty. Through our educational displays, promotional materials, and presentations we will seek to emphasize these dimensions of the spiritual life that are so vital to the Swedenborgian tradition, spiritual growth, putting love into action, and embracing beauty.

The library will be regularly open to the public, staffed with a person knowledgeable about the Swedenborgian tradition and Helen Keller. We will have a reference collection as well as books for sale. We will regularly hold presentations and lectures on Swedenborgian spirituality, Helen Keller, and other figures influenced and inspired by Swedenborgian thought. We will also hold spiritual growth groups and organize groups inspired to social action by Helen Keller's example. Swedenborg Chapel will also be a place open for mediation and quiet, inside as well as in a labyrinth on our grounds, which will be completed in spring 2019. This will allow our visitors many ways to find stillness and quiet and ways of connecting with their spirit.

We feel at this time in history the way forward in sharing the inspiration and power of the vision of Emanuel Swedenborg is lifting up how that

vision has inspired the lives of real people, and we see Helen Keller as a wonderful example of such a life. Through her story, people will be inspired to explore how Swedenborg's vision could impact their own.

It is reported in her biography that while Helen Keller enjoyed her time at college, she thought that students' schedules were too hectic and didn't allow time to sit and think. She wrote, "We should take our education as we would take a walk in the country, leisurely, our minds hospitably open to impressions of every sort."¹ We envision that this Library and Center for Spiritual Life will be such a place to sit and think. Comfortable, inviting, full of the texts of Emanuel Swedenborg that so profoundly opened Helen Keller's spiritual vision, this would be a place to study these works and find some quiet and rest to focus on the spiritual dimension of living.

It is not yet clear all that this Center will do and be. A lot will depend on who shows up and how the Lord continues to unfold this vision. But we feel confident that if we stay faithful, Helen's legacy will surely inspire us to do good things, not only to share the wisdom of our tradition but to live it out in useful service.

We hope very much that many others will wish to be a part of all that is unfolding as well. We are blessed to house the Central Office of the Swedenborgian Church in our space and hope that much of what may unfold at the Chapel will be able to positively impact the visibility and activity of the denomination as a whole. Please join us on this journey. Offer us your prayers, your enthusiasm, your wisdom. Follow us on Facebook! As this year unfolds there will be more practical ways to get involved. Be a part of

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¹ Helen Keller and James Berger *The Story of My Life: The Restored Edition*. p. 83. Modern Library Classics.

2018 SCYL Winter Retreat: Swedenborg, Then and Now

BY KURT FEKETE

Seventeen exuberant teenagers gathered at Almont Retreat Center in December to discuss the relevancy of Emanuel Swedenborg's writings and how they match up to today's science, religion, and cultural beliefs. This topic was selected by the teens in October and it was wildly embraced by both the presenters and the teens. We had an all-star lineup of presenters this retreat. Our session titles looked more like a course load for a Master of Theology student rather than a teen retreat, and everyone was eager to get started on this fascinating topic.

After the obligatory rules, introduction, and icebreaker session, Rev. Dagmar Bollinger kicked off our topic with a lecture on Swedenborg and the new physics. She explained that although we experience the world as static and stationary, it is incredibly dynamic. "The universe is constantly and continuously being created by God. Everything is vibrating. Nothing is firm." Rev. Dagmar went on to say we can sometimes reach this vibrational state, known as the astral plane, through transcendental meditation or an accidental near death experience. Our mind is amazingly powerful. Waves and particles actually change their properties upon observation through mental force. God is present in all of the wonders of cutting edge science. Everything material is spiritual first.

I presented the next session titled Swedenborg



The 2018 SCYL Winter Retreat group

Nailed It! I covered angels, correspondence, and the Last Judgement—three areas of Swedenborgian theology that I thought were relevant and moving towards broader acceptance in the contemporary world. I noted similarities between modern beliefs and popular culture with the writings of Swedenborg. For instance, concerning

angels, we compared J. K. Rowling's vision of the afterlife in her Harry Potter series with Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*. Swedenborg wrote in *Heaven and Hell* §461, "When we enter the spiritual world, or our life after death, we are in a body as we were in this world. There seems to be no difference, since we do not feel or see any differ-

ence." In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, Professor Dumbledore proclaims to Harry, "To the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure." Like Swedenborg, J. K. Rowling depicts individuals in the afterlife as appearing the same as on earth, with the same memories, thoughts, and feelings. I did a similar comparison with correspondence, relating it to Native American tradition and



The teen boys haul wood for the closing worship ceremony fire.

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SCYL Winter Retreat

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Transcendentalism. I ended my session discussing how the New Jerusalem and Second Coming are here and now. From Swedenborg's *Last Judgment* §73 we read,

The prophecies in the Word are not about kingdoms on earth or nations here, so they are not about wars between them. They are not about famines, plagues, or earthquakes on earth either, but about events that correspond to all these in the spiritual world.

[F]rom now on the people in the church will have greater freedom of thought concerning matters of faith and concerning spiritual things that have to do with heaven because their spiritual freedom has been restored.

Rev. Jennifer Tafel spoke about her ministry as a religious advisor for Q-Cross at Michigan State University. Rev. Jenn explained what she does as a



Rev. Renée takes a short break

Swedenborgian member of an interdenominational, ecumenical coalition serving the needs of the LGBTQ community. She identified God's distinguishable oneness of love and wisdom as noticeable and prevalent in her interfaith clergy association. Jenn offered, "Building relationships and forming community



Molly gets comfortable at her first SCYL winter retreat

is fundamental to growth and understanding." The teens were very interested in her work and asked many faith-

equality-, and gender-based questions. She closed her session by having us write down a message that we might hear that separates us from our neigh-



"Wait. What did you say?"

bors or the Divine. All of our paper messages were attached to a Yule Log that was ceremonially burned as a part of the closing worship service.

Rev. Renée Billings-Machiniak's session was on atheism. Rev. Renée had us consider how the rise in atheism

may be partly the result of the descent of the Holy City and the freedom people have been given to be deeply spiritual without necessarily being religious. Renée asserted, "The strongest faith is a questioning

faith. As soon as we think we know it all, we do not. Figuring out what matters to you is your faith journey. When you figure that out, you must then give it back."

Our last session was led by Rev. Catherine Lauber. She spoke about the regeneration process and the most recent developments in neurology. Catherine explained that people who practice prayer and meditation have increased brain grey matter, temporal lobe activity, and frontal lobe activity. "Gratitude improves the brain and these are long-term effects," Catherine concluded.

Two teens, Joey Kalinowski and Liv

Hackett, participated in the Exodus to Independence ceremony for our eighteen-year-old teens, who are exiting the SCYL and moving into adulthood. They joined the rest of the teens, received their pillowcase of affirmation gift, and entered into the moving closing worship service, led by Jenn and Catherine, with the traditional Yule Log burning followed by communion. We celebrated the end of the retreat with a pizza-party bowling outing. Everyone had a wonderful time at this retreat and learned so much. We can't wait to see each other at the next retreat gathering in the spring.

SCYL Teens Reflect

After attending the 2018 winter retreat, my knowledge of religion, science, and Swedenborg grew. But my friendships grew even more. I always enjoy learning the lessons, but my reasons to keep going to retreats is the people. It doesn't matter if we are just sitting in a room doing our own thing, playing a game, or walking around the pond; the memories made is what makes me happy, especially at this year's winter retreat. My favorite memory was playing a very intense game of Signs.

—Lauren Doppke, SCYL president



Molly gets comfortable at her first SCYL Winter Retreat

I loved the latest winter retreat. It was one of the more emotional retreats I have been to, as it was my best friend's last retreat. At the end of the winter retreat we have an Exodus ceremony for those leaving. Part of that is a pillowcase that every-

one has had the chance to write messages on, which then is given to the person leaving. I was the one that gave him his pillowcase, and it was a very

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2019 SCYL Officer Elections

BY KURT FEKETE

The 2019 Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) election of officers and chaplain took place at the Almont Winter Retreat this past December. The results are

- President: Lauren Doppke
- East Coast and service officer: Jack Cadden
- Midwest and public relations Officer: Josh Moore
- Canada and fundraising and finance officer: Gillian Harnadek
- West Coast and activities officer: Nathan Hamilton
- Editor, *Clear Blue Sky* (CBS) and communication officer:

Liv Hackett

- League chaplain: Rev. Renée Billings-Machiniak

We had nearly a complete turnover in our SCYL leadership for 2019, with only one returning officer. We thank retiring officers Scout, Freya, Joey, Ava, and Peyton for their service last year.

Lauren Doppke was elected president for 2019. Lauren previously served as *Clear Blue Sky* editor and is very active in retreats, camps, and annual conventions. We welcome her wise guidance and insight.

Jack Cadden begins his first term as East Coast officer. Jack started out attending Fryeburg Assembly and since has moved to attending nearly every retreat as well as Almont Summer Camp. He is excited about serving as an officer for SCYL.

Josh Moore was elected Midwest officer. Josh grew up attending Almont Summer Camp and began attending teen retreats as soon as he was old



2019 SCYL officers (L to R): (top) Lauren; (middle) Liv, Gillian; (bottom) Josh, Nathan, Jack

enough. We welcome Josh's work effort and determination to the team.

Gillian Harnadek, our one returning officer, was elected to represent Canada. Gillian enjoys dance and is very outgoing and friendly. She lives in the States but her father is Canadian, so she looks forward to connecting with her friends in the North.

Nathan Hamilton, our West Coast officer, also grew up attending Almont Summer Camp. Nathan loves technology and has been the tech expert for SCYL worship services at annual conventions for the last several years.

Liv Hackett was elected editor of *Clear Blue Sky*. Previously, Liv served as our West Coast officer. She loves softball, attending retreats, and Almont Summer Camp. Liv, a strong leader with intelligent thoughts and opinions, will be a great spokesperson for the SCYL.

We welcome Rev. Renée

Billings-Machiniak as elected league chaplain. Renée has served in this capacity in the past and is dedicated to the well-being of the young people in our Swedenborgian Church. Renée loves working with the teens whenever she can and always opens her heart to them. She is excited about serving them as chaplain in the coming year.

Please join me in congratulating all of our 2019 SCYL officers and our new league chaplain. We have an engaged and active team of great teens leading the League this year. They really care for our church and for their teen community. I welcome their service to the SCYL and pray that their efforts help the League to grow in communal love. I'm grateful to work with them in 2019 and I hope that you get a chance to meet them and get to know them better. ☪

SCYL Winter Retreat

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emotional and memorable experience for me. It was the last time we would both be at a teen retreat together, as teens at least.

—Nathan Hamilton,
SCYL West officer

This retreat was incredibly bitter-sweet for me. As I approached the night of my Exodus Ceremony, it really struck me how important these retreats have been in my life. It seemed fitting that my last one would have a session that focused on angels—I've met so many at Almont. Some highlights of this retreat for me were the moments that came between the

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Op Ed

Mark Zuckerberg Sets an Example for Entrepreneurs, but Is It a Good One?

BY RICHARD TAFEL

Is it time for faith communities to reclaim the role of moral teachers in American business? Let's look at what Mark Zuckerberg had to say during his recent Senate testimony.

I think the mistake we made is viewing our responsibility as just building tools, rather than viewing our whole responsibility as making sure those tools were used for good.

Mark's comment is raising an important question in American business: Who today teaches us what's 'good'?

Having done some work with tech companies, my view is that Zuckerberg is the product of a generation that believes human problems are mechanical

SCYL Winter Retreat

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sessions: playing the Sign Game, taking walks around the lake, and just sitting together being present and grateful for each other. But my favorite moment has always been our closing ceremony, and this year's was no exception. The burning of the Yule Log was particularly poignant; while it's therapeutic on its own, it becomes something much more amazing when done with my friends in the SCYL. So, while I'm sad that it was my last teen retreat, I'm far more grateful for all the memories these retreats have given me.

—*Liv Hackett,*

SCYL Clear Blue Sky Editor

Kurt Fekete is the youth director of the Swedenborgian Church.

problems—change the algorithm and you can bring the world together for world peace. That is an entirely novel conception of how to create positive change in the world, and not one widely shared.

Without a common understanding of what is good, accepted American business practices today are simply transactional and simply focused on what is profitable. One smart, young entrepreneur recently made a profound observation to me about the rising generation.

We learned about what's good in business from the Facebook movie. Basically, it taught us that the morality of leaders matters less than the ability to win. Stealing intellectual property might cause some problems in the short run, but if you can pull it off, you can earn millions and become a celebrity.

Over the past fifteen years, I've provided strategic coaching to over 200 social entrepreneurs. Their innovative business ventures seek to make the world a better place through both social impact and financial return. While there are plenty of places to teach them their business model, there are almost no places in American culture that teach them how to develop their moral leadership.

The collapse of religious affiliation and condescending views toward spirituality among the rising tech generation means spiritual leaders have forfeited their role teaching of the good.

The rising generation is marked by a sincere desire to make a profound social impact. And, at the same time, they continue to score higher on

the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and are more depressed and anxious than previous generations. The most successful social venture leaders I've worked with have found their moral compass usually through three primary paths: family, faith, and their own personal search. Most have tried and failed at something—have worked through a “long dark night of the soul.” They have built up a powerful, non-transactional social network and exhibit the traits of humility, curiosity and integrity.

In addition to my work with social ventures, I pastor the Swedenborgian church in downtown Washington DC. This past year, we hosted a series of dinners and a gathering of “spiritual entrepreneurs” from around the country. Their vision is to marry together the process of building a social venture business model, including a business plan and fundraising, with a developing inner, spiritual life through prayer, service, and purposeful work. All houses of worship should consider this as part of their mission.

The global challenges facing the rising generation are daunting. To change the world, we all need to work to become better people and create sound business models as we humbly move forward to become tools for good. ☪

Rev. Rich Tafel is managing director at Raffa Social Capital Advisors, pastor of Church of the Holy City, and cofounder of The American Project, at Pepperdine School of Public Policy.



SPLATz Study the Seven Days of Creation

BY KURT FEKETE

Nine lively Super-Powered Lovable Almost Teens (SPLATz) from four states (Maine, Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana) herded into Manna House at La Porte New Church (LaPorte, Indiana) on a frigidly snowy January weekend to learn about the seven days of creation story.

After everyone arrived, we started with an icebreaker where we paired up and discussed the personal creation we are each most proud of making. Next, we read the complete creation story found in Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 2:2.

We learned how the seven days of creation is a story of positive personal growth called regeneration. The creation days align with our stages of development from infancy to old age. We cycle through the days of creation when we actively battle a temptation,

challenge, or trial. Our life becomes brighter with more capacity for love and wisdom as we complete each day and move toward the light; hence, each day ends with, “Evening passed, and morning came.” As I reviewed the days

numerous guiding principles respectfully.

- On the Fifth day, we *perceive* when the fish, which represent our affections for worldly knowledge, and the birds, which represent our affections for spiritual knowledge, come alive in the “seas and skies” of our mind, giving us true and useful knowledge of what is right and wrong.
- On the Sixth day, we *serve*, as land animals become active affections in our heart and we



Splat group on the slopes

of creation with the young people, we discovered together that,

- On the First day, we *desire* as we first see the light and realize there is a higher meaning to life and recognize that we can change.
- On the Second day, we *organize* the waters above and below by separating our worldly concerns from heavenly, divine thoughts.
- On the Third day, we *plan* and *act* as dry land appears and many kinds of vegetation spring forth. Our individual character forms from our myriad ideas, thoughts, and experiences as our internal potential and external acts begin to fall into harmony.
- On the Fourth day, we *devote* as the sun, moon, and stars strengthen our love to the Lord, increase our faith in our spiritual path, and illuminate our

choose to act in goodness and charity from both faith and love.

- Finally, on the Seventh day, we find *fulfillment* in “active rest” when we



Craft assistants Bekka and Tony help Ellie and Trent with their posters



Craig and Heidi cook up lunch

experience the deep, inner, peaceful bliss of no longer facing inner temptation, struggle, or trial.

The SPLATz and I presented all of this to the La Porte New Church

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SPLATz Retreat

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congregation at the Sunday morning worship service. They also shared the beautiful artwork that they created for each creation day.

Of course, no SPLATz retreat would be complete without great food, entertaining games, and adventurous recreation. We were treated to the perfect snowfall over Friday night, which allowed us to hit the local slopes for some action-packed sledding. Saturday evening we went old school and played charades. Remember charades?



Zsa Zsa, Ellie, and Trent work on Creation Day 1 and Day 4

Yes, kids today can drop their electronics and still play some old-fashioned games. In fact, they brought it up and started playing on their own!

We all had a fantastic time. Thank

you to longtime Almonters and first time staffers Heidi Barnaby, Craig Carson, and Tony Kalinowski, along with veteran Bekka Lange. We couldn't hold any of these retreats without the help of these amazingly dedicated volunteers. And thank you La Porte New Church for once again providing

Manna House and making us feel warmly welcomed into their community. We can't wait for our next time together in March at Almont New Church Assembly. ☪

Creation and Allegory

BY JUNCHOL LEE

Emmanuel Swedenborg believed that the whole Bible is written allegorically, especially the creation stories in Genesis. He believed that the creation stories have nothing to do with the formation of the physical universe, but everything to do with the formation of the spirit within humanity. The spirit, or inner self of humanity, needs to be formed through a very special process, simply because the spirit is the vessel in which divinity should be contained. What this means is that the spirit must be capable of receiving that which is from the Divine, as well as willing and delighted to become one with the Divine. The second requirement—willingness and delight—is more the reason for the creation story because it requires a human to fully understand the value and meaning of the truth from the Divine in order to willingly receive and be delighted with something that is not from one's self.

The third day of creation with “dry land” and “vegetation” symbolizes the inner process of how the formation of our spirit begins. Dry land is soon called the Earth and signifies the part

This retreat was particularly fun for me. We did The Seven Days of Creation. Now I've heard about the seven days of creation like seven million times. It has always been very simple to me. But in this retreat, Kurt really connected the story to us. It made me realize so much more. My favorite part of the retreat though was definitely the sledding. Once we got back, we even got hot cocoa, and to cool it down someone put snow in it! We also played a bunch of hide and seek games and created pictures of each day of creation. Overall it was so much fun, and I can't wait for the next retreat.

—Zsa Zsa Dolley, eleven-year-old SPLATz retreat participant



Zsa Zsa creates Creation

of our mind where spiritual cultivation would occur. And the vegetation signifies the foundational step into the spiritual cultivation, which happens with many small inner confirmations of the value and power that stem from accepting and acknowledging truths from the higher realm. Just as the vegetation is the most essential, life-providing entity for all land creatures, these small inner confirmations of truths are soon to result in the formation of certainty of truth, and thus living faith, meaning one will be able to live what one perceives as truth from the higher realm.

The most significant part of the

third day in the creation story is that the sower of the vegetation is not humans or the natural process, but the Creator. In other words, the small truths that need to be understood and accepted in our minds must be from the higher realm, and not of our own making. However, in order for this to be possible, our mind must be capable of perceiving the truth from the higher realm (signified by the light on the first day), and distinguish the truth from secular and/or man-made knowledge (signified by the separation of the waters on the second day). ☪

Rev. Junchol Lee is pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church

Congregational Covenant

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relationship, and express gratitude for people's efforts, *for we believe everyone brings a gift from God.*

Let us avoid temptations of gossip and, if and when concerns arise, deal directly with individuals concerned or speak through established congregational channels, *for we believe in taking responsibility for our concerns.*

Let us maintain confidentiality in matters of personnel, *for we believe in respecting boundaries.*

Let us value the ministry of our elected leadership, *for we believe that collectively we will take all reasonable measures toward successful outcomes.*

Let us exhibit courtesy to and respect for others in our community discourse and to understand the difference between intent and impact, *for we strive to assume good intentions.*

Let us refrain from blaming and shaming others, *for we believe in compassionate empathy while understanding that missteps are inevitable and essential for growth.*

Let us practice mindful listening, *for we believe providing a safe place to share opinions and seek enlightenment also enhances our spiritual growth.*

Let us process all significant business of the ministry in an open atmosphere, *for we believe in transparency and that everyone has a voice to be heard.*

Let us support the services of this ministry as faithful stewards of its assets and resources, *for we believe in the ethical responsibility we have for its future.*

Let us practice conscientious prayer for and care with one another, *for prayer brings us all closer to God's compassionate love, wisdom, and healing.* ☩

Good Practices Guidelines

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transparency and cohesiveness.

- Conduct periodic congregational surveys assessing experiences in the ministry, since such surveys can facilitate a sense of congregational teamwork and enable a transparency and inclusion that often harvest information and viewpoints otherwise held back.
- Consider using a Convention communication facilitator sooner rather than later when congregational dynamics seem to be stuck.
- Maintain a standing pastoral relations committee to provide a communication sounding board.

Administration

- Maintain clear job descriptions for all paid staff positions, including the ordained and consecrated leadership, and perform annual reviews.
- Develop explicit guidelines on compensating members for work in the ministry.
- Create and annually update a conflict of interest policy for the primary governing board.
- Avoid having more than one family member at the same time on the primary governing board.
- Review bylaws regularly to ensure they fit the ministry's purposes, and keep them visible.
- Ensure the bylaws have a properly worded dissolution clause that protects assets from improper takeover and provides guidelines for how assets will be distributed (e.g., to the denomination, the Association, the theological school, a designated Convention ministry, or combination of these).
- Do not have a salaried member other than the minister on the primary governing board. Neither the minister nor their family members shall have a vote concerning the

Denominational Covenant

Continued from page 17

- Support ministries without current ordained or consecrated leadership with 1) a registry of ministers and pastors willing to travel to churches, 2) a list of ministers seeking a pastorate position, and 3) the Advisory Placement Committee's guidelines.
- Keep information about the denomination in front of the consciousness of local ministries to encourage relationship to and community with the larger spiritual community of Convention.

Constituent Ministries of the Swedenborgian Church of North America commits to

- Participate annually, if at all possible, in the Association and the summer denominational convention meetings.
- Submit an annual ministry report for the denomination's Journal.
- Follow the denomination's Advisory Placement Committee's guidelines when conducting position searches.
- Keep the denomination's Central Office supplied with a copy of the ministry's current Bylaws and executive committee members, and inform Central Office of changes in pastorate positions and compensation as regards the pension fund.
- Keep the Association and the denomination in front of the consciousness of local members to encourage relationship to and community with the larger spiritual community of Convention. ☩

minister's compensation package.

Denominational Relations

- Follow the denomination's Advisory Placement Committee's guidelines when conducting position searches.

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Emerging Vision in Cambridge

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what the Lord is doing. We feel most confident that this next season of ministry at Swedenborg Chapel will be very, very good.

Share your ideas!

Rev. Sage will be leading monthly focus groups to gather wisdom from around the Swedenborgian community and beyond regarding what this Helen Keller Memorial Library and Center for Spiritual Life will be and do. Please consider joining one! To sign up, Contact Sage: sage@swedenborgchapel.org. ☩



Rev. Sage Cole is pastor and director of Swedenborg Chapel, 50 Quincy St. Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.
www.swedenborgchapel.org
www.facebook.com/CSNJsc
www.instagram.com/swedenborgchapel/

Good Practices Guidelines

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- Send delegates annually to the Association and denominational gatherings and submit an annual ministry report for the denomination's *Annual Journal*.¹
- Keep the denomination's Central Office supplied with a copy of the ministry's current constitution and bylaws.
- Follow General Council's recommendation that all voting members of local societies be as defined in the By-laws of General Convention. ☩

¹ Note: Receipt of timely annual ministry reports is required in order to be eligible for Augmentation Fund grants.

CSS Intensive at Temenos: A Spiritual Fire in Winter

BY JIM LAWRENCE

The annual January Intensive seminary course of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS), which gathers people in some phase of leadership training in General Convention along with members of the Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM) and, often, area clergy and invited guests, was held this year at beautiful Temenos Spiritual Retreat Center, near Philadelphia, with twenty people engaging a syllabus entitled, "Swedenborgian Spirituality through Practices."

Sessions were led by CSS dean, Rev. Jim Lawrence, Rev. Susannah Currie, Rev. Julie Conaron, Temenos pastor, Christine Campbell, Rev. Shada Sullivan, and *New Church Life* editor, Bruce Henderson. Topics and exercises focused on the essence of Swedenborgian spirituality in practices as it has been shaped in church histories, personal inner work practices, shaping covenants for congregational life, developing spiritual messages for ministry (sermon prep!), ways to shape musical experiences for spiritual community, pastoral care in hospital and hospice situations, and the power of small group work in facilitating spiritual growth.

One half-day was given to a common feature of the winter intensive when each person in licensed pastor training or ordination path training take center stage as we all, in cohort fashion, "workshop" everyone's ministry journey. Though we gathered in a wintry and freezing storm that delayed



L to R: Jim Lawrence, Dru Johnson, Tassy Farwell, Susannah Currie, Julie Conaron, Lorraine Kardash, Paul Deming, Tilah Keal, Nancy Piorkowski, Tom Neuenfeldt, Ros Taylor, Jane Siebert, Christine Campbell, Carolyn Salyer, Page Morahan, Kit Billings, Shada Sullivan, and Jamie Karl (not pictured: Sage Cole and Kathy Speas)

Seven Days of Spiritual Evolution

The newest publication from the Swedenborg Foundation, *Seven Days of Spiritual Evolution: The Genesis of Personal Transformation*, is now available to read on your Kindle or other electronic devices.

From E. Kent Rogers, the author of *12 Miracles of Spiritual Growth*, comes a new book that unravels the process of spiritual rebirth as described in the Creation story in the Book of Genesis. *Seven Days of Spiritual Evolution* examines each "day" in our lives as spiritual people, offering exercises and meditations that can be used to gain new insights. Along the way, Rogers weaves in his experiences as a mental health counselor and how different psychological types and therapeutic techniques can apply to different stages of our mental and spiritual growth. ☩

Seven Days of Spiritual Evolution: The Genesis of Personal Transformation is available in paperback or e-book: <http://tinyurl.com/y6bbq4sb>.

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Save the Dates for the 195th Annual Convention

LaPorte New Church with Illinois Association welcomes you to Northwest Indiana!

Saturday, June 29–Wednesday, July 3, 2019

Valparaiso University

Valparaiso University is hosting us on its beautiful campus. There, we'll enjoy the Resurrection Chapel and labyrinth, a modern residence hall and lounges, a comfortable dining area, and spacious meeting rooms. The town of Valparaiso offers a quaint but lively town square with great restaurants and pubs.

Arrive in time for the Newcomers Reception on Saturday, 3–5 PM, open to all, to meet new friends and connect with old friends.

The opening of the convention on Saturday evening will include the church banner procession (bring your banners!) and keynote speaker Matthew Fox, an American priest, who is well-known as a pioneering theologian, educator, author, activist, mystic reawakening mysticism and protecting Mother Earth, and proponent of creation spirituality. Some recommended Fox books are *Order of the Sacred Earth: An Intergenerational Vision of Love and Action*, *The Lotus and the Rose*, and *Original Blessing*.

Mini-courses, SCYL (ages 13–18), Children's Program (ages 5–12), and childcare (ages 3–4) are being planned.

And, you are invited to celebrate the 160th anniversary of LaPorte New Church, built in 1859.



Enjoy an afternoon social outing on July 2 in LaPorte at the Church and Manana House, and then it's just a short ride to Stone Lake Park for a catered picnic.

**Make Your
Plans Now!**



Passages

Confirmations

Sylvia Loyd was baptized and confirmed into the life of the Urbana (Ohio) Swedenborgian Church as an at-large member, on Sunday, Dec. 9, 2018, by Rev. Betsy Coffman.

Deaths

Carolyn “Carol” (Peebles) McLain passed fully into the spiritual world on January 9, 2019. Born in 1927 to Professor Waldo C. Peebles and Elinor J. (Cutting) Peebles, she was a lifelong Swedenborgian. She grew up in the Church of the Open Word in Newtonville, Massachusetts, but transferred membership to the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem in the mid 1950s. A graduate of the Chapel Hill School and Boston University, she distinguished herself as an educated woman. While much of her life was dedicated to her family, she was a fervent devotee of homeopathy and the Church. A dedicated reader of *the Messenger* until the day she died, Carol’s heart never left the Swedenborgian Church, even when her congregation separated from General Convention. She is survived by her children, Susan and Andrew McLain.

Mary Agnes Robb Tafel, 87, of Churchville, Pennsylvania, transitioned to heaven on, December 12, 2018,



at Pine Run Nursing Home after a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease. She was surrounded by

her loving family and devoted husband, Louis Tafel.

Mary is the mother of Rev. Richard L. Tafel, pastor of Church of the Holy City in Washington, D.C. She was

Message from the VP

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this one, have been blessed with many such leaders—both clergy and lay members. Bring to your mind those who have led our churches by serving in the past and those who serve now.

How fortunate you are to have Dave Rogalsky, whose service has led you to today, and who will serve with Cory as he begins his new role with you.

As a community we have a responsibility not to become dependent and demanding of our leaders, but to develop servant leadership behaviors of our own.

Love for our neighbor grows as we learn to care, by serving others and not just ourselves. We should not expect anything from our leaders that we are not willing to do for our neighbor.

Our hope is that when followers receive caring and empowerment from ethical leaders, they, in turn, will likely begin treating others the same way.

I like the covenant that Cory, his partner, Christine, and I just signed. Each of us, and those whom we represent, agree on how we will treat and interact with each other. It states,

Ethical standards are set to create and maintain loving, caring, and responsible relationships within the church so that the church will be empowered to effectively participate in Christ’s ministry.

the daughter in-law of Rev. Leonard I. Tafel, past president of the denomination. Rev. Richard Tafel performed her funeral service on December 28.

Mary was the devoted mother to six children: Carol Cotter, James Tafel, Robb Tafel, Rich Tafel, Bill Tafel, and Diane Plack. She was mother-in-law to Pete Cotter, Susan Tafel, Betty Tafel, and Matt Plack. Mary was incredibly proud of her fifteen grandchildren and their spouses and six great-grandchildren. ☪

The congregation covenants to uphold the minister in these ethical commitments with trust, mutual submission, respect, and open conversation, all while speaking the truth in love.

As Swedenborg reminds us “True love consists in desiring to give our own (love) to another and in feeling their delight as our own.”

An example of a congregational covenant that our denomination’s Good Practices Committee is developing states, “Let us practice conscientious prayer for and care with one another, for prayer brings us all closer to God’s compassionate love, wisdom, and healing.”

Swedenborg tells us that prayer can be expressed in many ways. “You continually pray when you are living a life of kindness, although not with your mouth, yet with your heart.”

Caring for and serving each other is from the Lord and for the Lord. May we all use our power and influence to lead with our hearts and make our world a better place with the gifts of service that we give to one another.

May we live the wonderful departure statement that is in your bulletin, “End of Worship—Beginning of Service.”

I wish this congregation the very best as you begin your faith journey with your new minister, Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts.

Cory, I wish you the wisdom of the Divine, the energy of Her spirit, and all of the Love of Her kingdom here on earth and in Heaven.

—Tom Neuenfeldt

CSS Intensive at Temenos

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some participants by a day, the fire in the Temenos fireplace and in our hearts came aglow as we shared the depths and promise of our Swedenborgian spirituality in so many practices. ☪

About the Swedenborgian Church

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 fifteen years after his death. American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questioning and insights, we as a church 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.

In his theological writings, Swedenborg shared 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 said, "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.

7-Week Video-Conference Course with George Dole

Spiritual Meta-Translation

According to Swedenborg (*Secrets of Heaven* §3207:5), we may believe that truth enables us to perceive what is good, but the fact is that it is the good that enables the truth to perceive—which is why in *Life* §1, he tells us that we can't think rightly about the Lord and the neighbor unless we lead a good life. In this spring's seminar, we'll be looking at some of the most basic principles of our theology by first looking at some familiar life situations and then seeing how we can understand—or translate—them in the light of our theology. We'll proceed in the basic sequence of *New Jerusalem's* chapters, necessarily selecting only a few, but keeping them in their remarkable order. There won't be a lot of reading, but you'll be asked to lead as good a life as you can, keep your eyes open both inward and outward during the week, and be prepared to share theological reflections on what you observe.

Weekly session mid-March through early May (Specific dates for the ninety-minute real-time sessions to be determined after class roster is established.)

**Limited to first 7 Student applicants, Cost: \$75
To apply for the course, please email CSS Dean
Jim Lawrence: jlawrence@psr.edu**