Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

Volume 244 • Digital Special • Holiday 2020

arm Christmas wishes to everyone. During this unique holiday season, we wanted everyone to have the opportunity to provide season's greetings, updates, and well-wishes to one another. Enjoy this digital special with messages and images from your fellow ministries around North America with several links to upcoming Christmas services. Merry Christmas to all!

—Beki Greenwood Editor, the Messenger

Portland New Church

Portland, Maine

Greetings of Comfort and Joy from the Warmth of Our Inner Light. From the community of the Portland New Church, Portland, Maine.

—Dan, Susan, Nanci, Anne, Linda, Karen, Loretta, Bob, Lawrence, Page, Lucas, Wilma, Minister Emeritus & Lorraine, Licensed Pastor



Looking for a little Christmas Cheer on this most unusual Christmas Day?

All are invited to come together virtually to seek light, joy, and community on Christmas afternoon

Finding Some Christmas Joy

LED BY REV. JANE SIEBERT Friday, December 25th

4:00 PM Eastern Time • 3:00 PM Central Time • 2:00 PM Mountain Time • 1:00 PM Pacific Time

Hope you are all doing well this holiday season. I have decided to offer a Christmas Day service for the many that are spending this holiday alone or couples and families separated from the rest of their family. I have asked a variety of people to offer music and other uplifting stories. Others will be joining me to offer an hour of casual Christmas celebration.

Karen Conger – with song,
Terrie Crenshaw – with prayer,
Rev. Kathy Speas – with thoughts & responsive chant,
Rev. Gabriella Cahaley – with scripture,
Rev. Ken & Laurie Turley – with carols

I very much look forward to having something special to do on Christmas and pull this all together for you.

Zoom Link

Meeting ID: 882 0927 8023 Passcode: 496429



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Merry Christmas from Church of the Holy City, Washington, D.C.

We wish all of our sisters and brothers in the church a very happy and healthy Christmas. We have not met as a church community in person since last March. However, the pandemic forced us into action and now our services are open to visitors around the world. We've had attendees as far as London, England join us.

Our services are Sunday at 5:00 PM EST and we love when members around the country join.

We treasure our church family, and although distances keep us apart, we somehow feel closer to everyone this year. If you'd ever like to join our service, please just contact us at revtafel@holycitydc.org. We'll add you to our newsletter list where we publish sermons each week.

We are convinced that out of this time of chaos and hardship something wonderful is being birthed into the world in the form of a new church. We hope this Christmas reminds us all that out of the chaos a child was born in a manger that transformed the spiritual trajectory of humanity.

Merry Christmas from Washington D.C.,
—Rev. Rich Tafel

Christmas Eve Service

Thursday, December 24th at
5:00 PM EST, 4:00 PM CST, 3:00 PM MST, 2:00 PM PST
Church of Holy City, Washington D.C.
Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols (Zoom).
Contact revtafel@holycitydc.org if you'd like to do one of the readings!

Zoom Link

Swedenborgian Community Church at Hillside

El Cerrito, California

At Hillside Swedenborgian, we have been celebrating Advent virtually as we gather online for our services, meditations, and various small groups. We have also purchased a fire pit that allows us to have small socially distanced gatherings of no more than five people at a time, outside on the lawn, to touch base and share.

While struggling with the effects of COVID-19 on our operations, we have been able to keep our spiritual community strong and to support each other as we celebrate this season of contemplation, anticipation, and hope, and have been working with our partners to be of use to our fellow beings in this difficult time.

We wish all of our Swedenborgian siblings in Convention all the best, Merry Christmas, and a year full of health, joy, and connection."

—Rev. Thom Muller





Follow the Messenger on Facebook!

facebook.

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LaPorte New Church

LaPorte, Indiana



Christmas Greetings and Blessings from LaPorte!

From our Church Family to Yours,

Our wishes are for you personally, and for all our neighbors: for a more hopeful, peaceful, and joyful future filled with a fuller awareness of God's everlasting love and wisdom in each of our lives.

God, we pray, let it be so. Amen.

—Rev. Kit Billings

Christmas Eve "Eve" Service

Wednesday, December 23rd at 8:00 PM EST, 7:00 PM CST, 6:00 PM MST, 5:00 PM PST LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana Contact revkit123@gmail.com for the Zoom link and login information.

Lenox Township Church of the New Jerusalem

Norway, Iowa

Merry Christmas and well-wishes from the Lenox Township Church of the New Jerusalem near Norway, Iowa. Our traditional gathering was canceled this year due to COVID-19, but it's been a year of new beginnings for our church building. We have been updating, repairing, and restrengthening our 140-year-old church building to last for many years to come.

Just as a walk with God, a new roof and siding, as he shields us. Balancing of the foundation, only a solid foundation may bring us closer to God. New windows, to see him in greater light. We know in the next coming year we will be able to gather normally and worship God for all of these blessings.

We hope with the challenges that we have all faced this year you have a joyous, healthy, and peaceful Christmas.

—Jordan Uthoff, President



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Swedenborg Chapel

Cambridge, Massachusetts



What a year we have all been through friends. We held our last regular inperson worship service on Sunday, March 8. It was a beautiful Sunday, many visitors, lots of kids, a great coffee hour with Betty's egg salad. And a few days later everything changed.

We immediately moved online. Our elders picked up Zoom and YouTube and we even managed to hold a virtual annual meeting.

Through the summer we let things slow down, but then as fall approached and the clarity that an end was not quickly in sight, we stepped up our ways to connect, worship, pray, and support one another through what looks to be a long winter.

On Sunday mornings at 11:00 AM EST, there is Virtual Worship on YouTube, Tuesday evenings we hold a short Taizé service over Zoom at 7:30 PM EST, and then Monday through Friday we have a very short Morning Prayer Service on Zoom at 8:00 AM EST, co-led by Rev. Sage and Rev. Shada Sullivan from the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware.

There are no more physical boundaries in this new virtual world! It's been a great joy to pray in the morning with people from Maine to Kansas and to have members who moved out to California back with us on Sundays for virtual worship.

Although we miss worship in our chapel, egg salad at coffee hour, and good hugs, we have been amazed at how close we can still feel to one another in spirit—aided by technology.

We all agree that if the pause button had to be pushed, we were glad it happened at a time when our community was strong and connected, with our vision for the future Helen Keller Spiritual Life Center cast into the world. We all agree Helen Keller definitely would be out in support of Black Lives Matter and is likely doing a great deal from her spot in the spiritual world! While Rev. Sage's time has been limited by her two sons home all the time with virtual school, God still seems to be working on the project and we have great faith in its course.

We are so grateful to be a part of the larger family of the Swedenborgian Church and are praying for you and with you.

Merry Christmas, friends!

—Rev. Sage Cole and the members and friends of Swedenborg Chapel

Children's Advent Worship

Wednesdays in December

YouTube Link

Christmas Eve Service

Thursday, December 24th at 4:30 PM EST, 3:30 PM CST, 2:30 PM MST, 1:30 PM PST Cambridge Swedenborg Chapel Candlelight Service

Request Zoom Link

Email revsagecole@gmail.com if you would like to receive the Zoom links for the weekday Morning Prayer Service or the Tuesday Taizé



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Fryeburg New Church

Fryeburg, Maine

Greetings from Fryeburg!

This past year was certainly not the one we had planned a year ago. Our goals, our outreach projects, our plans for our church and community were all rerouted, as with everyone else. We had no Easter breakfast, no blessing of the bicycles, no baptisms, no pie-making, and no Fryeburg Fair! And yet, as we look back over 2020, we are reminded of what makes the Fryeburg New Church the loving, inviting small, community we are. The church, our church, is not a building, it is the people. So, while our doors have remained closed since March, we still connect weekly through worship,

meditation time, choir sing-along and book clubs. We have invited new members



Members of the Fryeburg New Church hung wreaths on the close by Fryeburg New Church Assembly



through our virtual gatherings, we have celebrated births, said goodbye to fellow members and loved ones. Our goals and desires for 2020 were sent out into the Universe and we received all, plus more, over this past year. We hope that this Christmas and this year of pause to what has always been, has allowed you and your church to appreciate what is most important to a church community, Love.

Wishing you all a beautiful Christmas.

—Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen

Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco

San Francisco, California

Christmas Eve Service

Thursday, December 24th at 10:00 PM EST, 9:00 PM CST, 8:00 PM MST, 7:00 PM PST Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco Service

> Facebook Link



Have a joyful, safe, and blessed Christmas from your friends at the Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco

Agapao Church

Santa Ana, California

May the Holy Christmas and the Happy New Year be with thanks to the Lord, who has made us see the light of the new life.

—Members of the Agapao Church





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Church of the Holy City

Wilmington, Delaware

Advent Greetings from The Church of the Holy City, Wilmington! Like many of you, our programming has been mostly online this year, and we sure do miss seeing each other in person. But we know that the church is not a building, and we have been working hard on being the church for each other and for our community. This has included starting a YouTube channel, lots of Zoom gatherings, some exciting sustainability initiatives in the works, and an Advent food drive. Plus, there is nothing like a festive front door to spread the Christmas cheer! Sending all of our friends our very best Christmas wishes!

-Rev. Shada Sullivan



Christmas Eve Service

Church of the Holy City,
Wilmington
Thursday, December 24th at
5:00 PM EST, 4:00 PM CST,
3:00 PM MST, 2:00 PM PST

Zoom Link

Wayfarers Chapel

Rancho Palos Verdes, California



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Wayfarers Chapel!

Life at the Chapel has looked radically different this year compared to years' past. In a normal year, we welcome somewhere in the range of 300,000 – 500,000 wayfarers traveling through and visiting the Chapel and grounds. COVID-19 brought with it a closure of our grounds and a severe strain on our Rites and Sacraments. With new protocols and procedures in place, we are grateful to be able to hold small outdoor services for Rites and Sacraments. Over 300 weddings have been postponed and rescheduled into the year 2021. For ceremonies that have stayed on the calendar for this year, couples have celebrated their covenant in marriage on the entrance steps to the Chapel, overlooking the beauty of the Pacific Ocean. With a vaccine on its way, we do see a light at the end of this tunnel, and we hope and pray that the latter half of 2021 will resume some normalcy for the life and ministry of Wayfarers Chapel.

Sending peace and blessings to you all, —Rev. David Brown and the Wayfarers Chapel Staff

Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church

St. Paul, Minnesota

Christmas Eve Christmas Pageant

Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church
Thursday, December 24th
at 6:00 PM EST, 5:00 PM CST, 4:00 PM MST, 3:00 PM PST

Zoom Link

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Urbana Society of the New Church

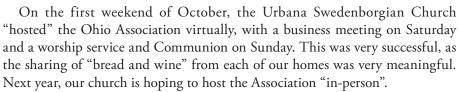
Urbana, Ohio

As with other Swedenborgian Churches, our church in Urbana has had to make adjustments that help us stay together while also staying safe. Since April, we have held weekly services on Zoom, which has had the additional benefit of allowing members from a distance to join us. Several members who had moved away, and some new participants have

attended our weekly services. Occasionally others, particularly from the Ohio Association, have also participated.

In June, many of our members participated in the "Virtual Convention" and very much enjoyed many of the offerings and worship services. For some,

this was their first "attendance" at Convention.



Sadly, we were unable to hold our annual Thanksgiving feast on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. That has always been one of the highlights of our church year. We did offer a special service, with our Licensed Pastor-in-training, Robbin Ferriman, offering a very meaningful message. We also offered Communion with a Native American format.

As we now enter the Advent season, we are missing our church decorating get-together, which was always fun, as we worked together to make our church beautiful for our annual community Christmas Eve Candlelight service. We are focusing on our usual Advent themes each Sunday, and will offer a special virtual Christmas Eve Service this year, adapted to the change in format.

Despite the challenges, we have found ourselves able to stay connected in meaningful ways. We continue to hold monthly board meetings on Zoom. We have made extra donations to community organizations offering support for



those in need and we have continued to make our church available for twelvestep meetings, using safety protocols.

We wish our wonderful Swedenborgian friends a healthy and blessed Advent, Christmas, and New Year.

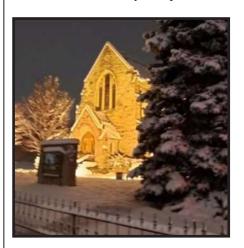
-Rev. Betsy Coffman

Church of the Good Shepherd

Kitchener, Ontario

The Church of the Good Shepherd continues to worship and connect robustly online, with digital meetings, Zoom coffee hours, emailed messages, video book discussions, and online live services. We miss worshipping outside as we did as a church throughout the summer and fall, but as some of your Canadian Swedenborgian neighbors, we'll find joy both cozied up or trudging through the snow. We hope that your Christmas and holiday season is bright, filled with the compassion and peace of the Lord!

—Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts



Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound

Redmond, Washington

Christmas Eve "Eve" Service

Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound Wednesday, December 23rd at 7:40 PM EST, 6:40 PM CST, 5:40 PM MST, 4:40 PM PST

Love's Light Shines Through— A Joyful Christmas Eve Eve Celebration Service

Zoom Link

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New Jerusalem Church

Pretty Prairie, Kansas



What a joy to remember the wonderful traditional Christmas Eve services in the Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem church over the decades. This year we will have to replay the memories and review the pictures, as we will all be snug in our homes. We will have a virtual Christmas Eve service all are welcome.

Our typical Christmas Eve was centered on the children. They would play the piano or their horns, read a poem or sing, and all would participate in a Christmas themed play written by Jean Graber. Around 2005, we created a book of plays and made a copy for all the churches at Convention.

At the end of the evening, the lights went down, and each lit a candle while we sang Silent Night. And then with the jingle of bells and return of light, Santa would appear to hand out presents and candy to all the children and adults.

So, in the spirit of Christmas past, and hope in Christmas to come, the folk at Pretty Prairie wish you all Merry Christmas and to all a good night to 2020.

—Members of the Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem Church

Christmas Eve Service

Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem Church Thursday, December 24th at 8:00 PM EST, 7:00 PM CST, 6:00 PM MST, 5:00 PM PST

Zoom Link



Swedenborgian Community Online Virtual Ministry

Season's greetings and Merry Christmas to you from your Swedenborgian Community Online!

As a denominational ministry, always feel free to connect with us as we continue to offer messages that elevate, enlighten, and reach out to seekers looking for heartfelt inspiration grounded in our open, mystical Christianity - Swedenborgianism. Thank you for your work to sustain and uplift yourself and others during these trying times. Our hearts are with each other as we continue to strive to empower love, spirit,

and life in its diversity. Visit our new site: SwedenborgianCommunity.org.

—Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts



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New Jerusalem Church

Bridgewater, Massachusetts

The Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church began the church year this fall in person, socially distant. It was wonderful to see each other face-to-face; even at six feet apart, the energy filled the sanctuary. We were also able to hold our sermon discussion group following the service. We felt as though there was some small taste of normalcy in a world of chaos. We continued our services through October and were blessed to be together. November brought some changes and we are having services remotely for now. This is not an ideal scenario but knowing that we are able to worship together shows that we are resilient when our faith is tested. Our entire congregation wishes everyone a healthy Merry Christmas and safe New Year.

> —Rev. Susannah Currie & Licensed Pastor-in-training Kelly Milne



Christmas Eve Service

Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church Thursday, December 24th at 7:00 PM EST, 6:00 PM CST, 5:00 PM MST, 4:00 PM PST

> Facebook Link

Church of the Open Word – The Garden Chapel

St. Louis, Missouri

We are doing well at Garden Chapel and using heaps weekly prayers for those affected by COVID-19 in our extended Church family. We are continuing to meet through Zoom on Sunday mornings with visitors from as far away as Indiana and New York.

Some images from past years decorations can indicate how much we love the Christmas season, and the great gift God has given us in Jesus Christ. We will miss our eightvoice choir this year and our annual Eve of Christmas Eve Candlelight service. Mostly, we are missing the weekly greetings and coffee hours that accompanied our services, as well as, the services themselves. The chance to embrace, sing, pray, and break bread together has been a vital part of our community and personal growth. This season the pandemic has created—by necessity—a big slowdown of our usual rush and a chance to contemplate the personal depth of God's love for us. We know that the hope of our healing comes with the kindnesses and caring expressed by those in our churches and families. Thank you to all who remember us at Church of the Open Word / Garden Chapel in your prayers, support, and love.

We love and wish you a season of Hope, Peace, Joy, & Love.

—Pastor Paul and Suzy Deming



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Church of the Holy City

Royal Oak, Michigan



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Royal Oak Church of the Holy City Thursday, December 24th at 8:00 PM EST, 7:00 PM CST, 6:00 PM MST, 5:00 PM PST

Email revrenee@aol.com for the Zoom link and Login information

The Royal Oak Church has been reaching out to our members and friends throughout the Michigan Association in new and creative ways to help us stay connected and supported since the pandemic began. We discontinued meeting in person at the Royal Oak Women's Club in mid-March and immediately adjusted our Sunday worship services to the Zoom format, meeting outdoors for worship services as weather permitted and then also offering weekly online Zoom Wednesday Meditations to help build inner peace.

We send out weekly church email and Facebook updates to keep our Michigan Association connected, informed and encouraged. Pastoral phone calls and greeting cards are offered regularly. We delivered *Harvest Blessing Baskets* to local church folks, which included homemade goods, a Swedenborgian book for winter reading, an Inspiration Jar of quotes, a candle and Thanksgiving card reminding them that our thoughts and prayers remain with them throughout the winter months. For Advent, we started a new church program, "Love Always Finds a Way;" we meet in-person in the parking lot of the Women's Club and talk on a conference call line while sitting safely in our vehicles. Homemade soup is handed out and donations are collected for local food banks.

Warm Holiday Blessings to you,

-Rev. Renee Machiniak

Chicago Society of the New Jerusalem – The Swedenborg Library and Spiritual Growth Center

Chicago, Illinois

Merry Christmas from Chicago!

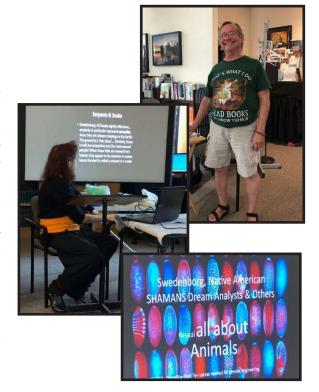
A few thoughts from Swedenborg's *Spiritual Experiences* that resonate with 2020:

SE \$2504: "People like this cause the greatest trouble for those who are laboring for the public weal, whom they despise and consider to be slaves, nor do they begrudge them any joy of life, so that they might carry out their functions with pleasure, but regard them as being far below themselves, as if they were born to servitude, and as if they themselves were born to rule. So they deprive them of all enjoyment, put them in disgrace with their master, who then finally looks on them as vile people and his flatterers as lords whom he greatly esteems. Thus he takes away from his servants all comfort, becoming himself like those flatterers, because he takes them into his circle on account of their flatteries. In short, they create all kinds of trouble for the servants, for the commonwealth, depriving them of all the joy of life, consolation, and hope, destroying the citizens and thereby the state."

SE §2466: "Such is the equilibrium of all in the universal heaven that one is moved by another, thinks from another, as if in a chain; so that not the least thing can [occur from itself]: thus the universe is ruled by the Lord, and, indeed, with no trouble." E. Swedenborg

Let us continue to preach the universal heaven!

-Karen Feil, Licensed Pastor



Above: Library Book Discussion participant and meditation service co-leader Tom Lane, in his "That's What I Do – Read Books" T-Shirt, during the summer reprieve to the city's stay-at-home order.

Below: Victoria Martin teaches Swedenborgian correspondences to an art class.

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Bath New Church

Bath, Maine



Pastor Reuben Bell lighting the Advent candle with our parish children.

We, at the Bath Church of the New Jerusalem, send a photo of Christmas past! It is staggering to look at this photo of these sweet girls and realize how quickly time passes and how quickly things change. In this year of challenge, sadness, and stress, this recollection of Advent helps to remind us that nothing on this earth plane is forever. The arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ brought ultimate hope to the world forever. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a son is given; And the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, The Prince of Peace." Our hope for each of us is a peaceful Christmas filled with health and joy, and a bountiful and productive New Year. And, of course, God Bless Us Every One!

With affection, and a commitment to advancement and positivity in the year, from all of us in Bath, Maine.

-Members of the Bath New Church

The Garden Church

San Pedro, California



Holidays & Healing

A Virtual Storytelling Evening Sunday, December 20th at 10:00 PM EST, 9:00 PM CST, 8:00 PM MST, 7:00 PM PST

Facebook Link

Christmas Eve Service

Thursday, December 24th at 8:00 PM EST, 7:00 PM CST, 6:00 PM MST, 5:00 PM PST The Garden Church Zoom Service

Send an email to
gardenchurchsp@gmail.com if
you would like to receive the
Zoom link

Swedenborgian Church at Temenos – Sanctuary and Retreat Center

Westchester, Pennsylvania

Merry Christmas Dear Friends!

We have been making our Premiere Christmas Eve Video which will air Christmas Eve at 7:30 on our Facebook page. It has been fun and a challenge to do it ahead and safely. Pictured are the Friendly Beasts and their Owners.

—Christine Campbell, Licensed Pastor

Christmas Eve Service

Swedenborgian Church at Temenos Thursday, December 24th at 7:30 PM EST, 6:30 PM CST, 5:30 PM MST, 4:30 PM PST

> Facebook Link



Top Right: Cynthia and Jake – our Elder Canine Congregant, Above: Courtney with Layla and Lola – the youngsters. Right: Robin and Nina Tafel, our Elders, who light the Christ Candle and give a prayer and a reading. xii the Messenger Holiday 2020

Chronological List of Upcoming Virtual Christmas Services

Ongoing in December

• Wednesdays in December - Children's Advent Worship - Cambridge Swedenborg Chapel --

YouTube Link

Sunday, December 20

Holidays & Healing: Virtual Storytelling Evening – The Garden Church – 10:00 PM EST, 9:00 PM CST, 8:00 PM MST, 7:00 PM PST

Facebook Link

Wednesday, December 23

• Love's Light Shines Through: A Joyful Christmas Celebration – *Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound* – 7:40 PM EST, 6:40 PM CST, 5:40 PM MST, 4:40 PM PST

Zoom Link

• Christmas Eve "Eve" Service – *LaPorte New Church* – 8:00 PM EST, 7:00 PM CST, 6:00 PM MST, 5:00 PM PST Contact revkit123@gmail.com for the Zoom link and login information.

Thursday, December 24

Request Zoom Link

• Christmas Eve Service – *Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, Delaware* – — 5:00 PM EST, 4:00 PM CST, 3:00 PM MST, 2:00 PM PST

Zoom Link

Zoom Link

Zoom Link

• Christmas Eve Service – *Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church* – 7:00 PM EST, 6:00 PM CST, 5:00 PM MST, 4:00 PM PST

Facebook Link

 Christmas Eve Service – Swedenborgian Church at Temenos -7:30 PM EST, 6:30 PM CST, 5:30 PM MST, 4:30 PM PST

Facebook Link

Christmas Eve Service – *The Garden Church* –
 8:00 PM EST, 7:00 PM CST, 6:00 PM MST, 5:00 PM PST –
 Contact gardenchurchsp@gmail.com for the Zoom link and login information.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service – Royal Oak Church of the Holy City –
 8:00 PM EST, 7:00 PM CST, 6:00 PM MST, 5:00 PM PST –
 Contact revrenee@aol.com for the Zoom link and login information.

Zoom Link

Christmas Eve Service – Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem Church –
 8:00 PM EST, 7:00 PM CST, 6:00 PM MST, 5:00 PM PST

Facebook Link

 Christmas Eve Service – Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco -10:00 PM EST, 9:00 PM CST, 8:00 PM MST, 7:00 PM PST

Friday, December 25

• Finding Some Christmas Joy – Virtual Service with Rev. Jane Siebert – 4:00 PM EST, 3:00 PM CST, 2:00 PM MST, 1:00 PM PST

Zoom Link