



## Death and Beyond

WITH DR. DEVIN ZUBER

*Tuesdays, from 4:00 – 5:30 PM, Pacific Time  
March 23<sup>rd</sup> – May 4<sup>th</sup>*

The Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) in Berkeley, California, is pleased to continue its learning initiative, Virtual Education Offerings for the Planet, an online outreach aimed at bringing scholarly and educational resources about Swedenborg and Swedenborgian theology to our broader, global, and increasingly interconnected communities.

The staggering number of people who have died from COVID-19 has brought questions of (im)mortality back onto our national consciousness, perhaps in ways not seen since other moments of great cultural crisis (world wars, the influenza pandemic of 1918). National life expectancy rates have dropped for the first time in decades; so many of us are likely to either have lost someone personally to COVID-19 or know people who have. With this as our very real and still-present backdrop, this seven-part seminar is a slow, sustained engagement with Swedenborg's so-called classic about death, dying, and the spaces thereafter: *Heaven and Hell* (first published in 1758 and, consistently since the nineteenth century, Swedenborg's best-seller). We will explore both this book's rich literary, theological, and artistic contexts—how it relates to other speculations and accounts of death and afterlife—and its profound influence on later imaginings about the great beyond. The class

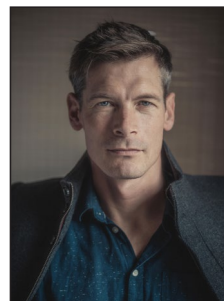


will be enlivened by guest speakers, both scholars and spiritual care practitioners (chaplains), who deal with death and the dying on a daily basis. Starting on Tuesday, March 23, this class will meet every week, from 4:00–5:30 PM, PST, through Tuesday, May 4. This class is free, but space is limited for participation.

**Please register in advance with the  
Center for Swedenborgian Studies  
office assistant Alex Sicular:**  
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Dr. Devin Zuber (pictured right) is the George F. Dole Professor of Swedenborgian Studies at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) in

Berkeley, California, where he also serves at the Graduate Theological Union as chair for the Department of Historical and Cultural Studies. He has published widely on art, literature, and Swedenborg's influence on the nineteenth century. His most recent book, *A Language of Things: Emanuel Swedenborg and the American Environmental Imagination* (University of Virginia Press), was awarded the Borsch-Rast Prize in Religious Studies for 2020. Before moving to California, Devin taught at universities in Germany, and has held fellowships or visiting professorships at the British Library, Stockholm University's Department for Aesthetics and Culture, and the Rachel Carson Center for the Environment (LMU Munich). He also serves the Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco as a ministerial assistant and is an ordinand for ministry with the Swedenborgian Church of North America (General Convention). He lives in Berkeley with his partner, Suzanne, and their two daughters (Sophia and Catherine), and loves to go surfing on the California coast when he's not teaching, reading or writing.



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## the Messenger

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The opinions and views expressed are those of the authors, not of *the Messenger*, the Standing Committee for Communication and Information, or the Swedenborgian Church.

## Editor's Corner



### Arranging Things in Their Place

Before being reduced to order, it is very common for everything to fall

into confusion or seeming chaos. This allows things that cling together poorly to separate, and when they have separated, the Lord arranges them in their place (*Secrets of Heaven* §842.3).

For a long time, this has been one of my favorite pieces of Swedenborg to frequently return to, even when it comes to the simpler things, like cleaning the house or just a room. I always prefer to dump everything into a pile in the middle of the room and sort everything out—reorganize the keep pile and purge the things that no longer fit in. Though in this situation, it's chaos I made for myself.

There is certainly a greater chaos we have been going through over the past year. (Can you believe we have been dealing with COVID-19 for a full year now?) I have felt the confusion, the chaos, and what seems like endless disorder in nearly every corner of our lives. There is still so much uncertainty. However, I also can see the glimmer of hope at the end of this lengthy tunnel.

Many of us have started to get the vaccine as it gets rolled out in each of our states (see p. 25 for images from around the continent of our fellow Swedenborgians getting their

vaccines). Though there is much frustration as to each state's system of prioritization. But I witnessed what felt like the best attempt to begin to put order to the pandemic chaos. We went to a mass vaccination site, and it felt very organized, with no waiting, and the maximum efficiency possible.

Waiting is certainly a challenge at this point—patience is wearing thin. Everyone is doing what they can to help get through this journey, plan normal events to the best of their ability, and keep spirits up and positive.

Let us find the patience to get to the end of the confusion, and let the Lord arrange everything back in its place.

—Beki Greenwood

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## Letters to the Editor

### Latest Messenger a Page-turner

I had other things on my mind when I opened the latest digital *Messenger* file, but found it such a page-turner that everything else took second place. It adds up to an inspiring overview of the quality of thought and concern that is gathered into our little organization, and would be a wonderful item to hand anyone who asks, *What is your church all about?* I (naturally) found myself wanting to add a few reinforcements.

To Rich Tafel's article, I would add the observation that it is folly to think we can fight terrorism by killing terrorists. We just strengthen their spirits by creating martyrs to inspire them. No, concentrate on protecting the innocent, and watch the bad guys destroy themselves. Hell is inherently self-destructive. In the battle between reality and illusions, reality wins, time after time.

One thing that came to mind reading Jenny Caughman's article was that

*Continues on page 30*



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## Letter from the President

*The Year of the Spiritual World: 2020–21*

Dear Friends,

My thanks go out to Beki Greenwood as she celebrates a year as editor of *the Messenger*. She took the baton from Herb Ziegler, and without missing a beat continues his legacy as editor. I am proud of our thoughtful, insightful, diverse denominational newsletter that is read around the globe. Recently I heard from friends in Australia commenting that they look forward to their electronic copy of *the Messenger*. When we put words out to the universe, we never know who God sends them to.

Beki mentioned it feels like a year at warp speed. I paused. Warp speed? Yes, in some ways the year has flown by, and in others it feels like the longest year of our lives.

Sometimes I want to crawl in a hole and live the rest of this pandemic out... just me and God. Then I remember the admonishment from Swedenborg that we have to live in the world and to participate in the world around us to form a spiritual world within (*HH* §528).

As this pandemic separates us from loved ones, it can feel like it is separating us from the Lord. As it zaps our energy and wakes us up tired every morning, it seems like good intentions for spiritual growth are swallowed by responsibilities. People are grumpy and irritable—so am I. The trials and difficulties can overwhelm us in the midst of COVID-19 anxiety and uncertainty.

And then, over and over again, I learn the pandemic does not isolate me from the love of God. My responsibility is to stay open, to look and to listen.

During a recent snowstorm, I randomly picked up a book, *Prayers to Sophia, Holy Wisdom*, by Joyce Rupp. And our God of Mercy and Understanding spoke to me through her words. To me this is Goddipity. From “Solitude” on p. 84,

Companion of my solitude,  
sometimes I think that half of me  
is well lodged in another world.  
On rainy days, in times of solitude,  
my spirit pulls and tugs,  
crying for home in that other space.  
All the things here  
that give my life rhyme and reason  
fade from view.  
I am left with the longing  
to put down my sword  
of busyness  
and dwell in the land  
of simple contemplation.

*“Wisdom cries out in the street; ...at the busiest corner she cries out.”*

Proverbs 1:20–21

Look and long for *Sophia, Holy Wisdom*,  
everywhere and in every encounter and everything.  
The Divine Presence will not let you down or leave you alone,

—Rev. Jane Siebert





# The Life of Chauncey Giles

## Chapters Five and Six

SUMMARIZED BY LOIS DOLE

*Somewhere I found a small pamphlet by Chauncey Giles titled “The Blessedness of Death,” and I found it so comforting. When rearranging a bookcase, I came across his biography, written by his daughter Carrie Giles Carter; I thought I would look into it. I found it so fascinating: it’s mostly letters written to and from him that tell how important finding New Church teachings were to him, but also capture the feelings of the times about church beginnings in this country. This is the next installment of my summary.<sup>1</sup>*

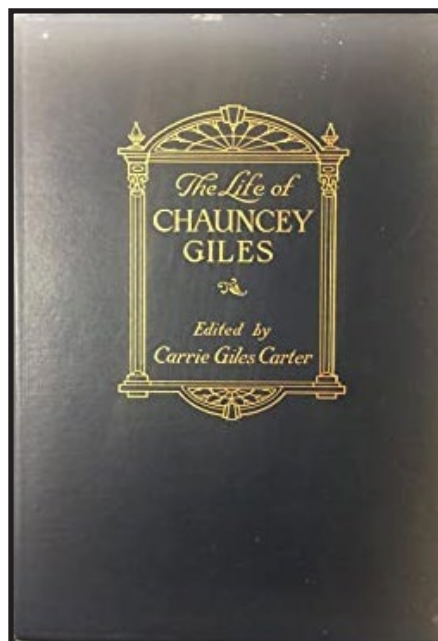
### Chapter Five: Pomeroy, Ohio

In late April, Chauncey wrote that his old trouble of sadness came over him during a church service, but he chased it away with gratitude to his heavenly Father, for Eunice, and the dear little ones. He was also glad that the three cherubs in heaven would escape all life’s trials and sorrows.

He was pleased with the people he had met in Pomeroy and thought that Eunice would be comfortable, and that Rowena would enjoy teaching the girls in the school. His separation from his family prompted him to write many pages to Eunice saying that he could not express his great love for her and that he would have to allow his actions to tell her. He told her he was trusting in the goodness of the Heavenly Father as to the future.

The house they were promised was on a bank of land overlooking the town and the river. A slide happened there, worrying Chauncey. However, he moved some furniture in before leaving for Yellow Springs to collect his family.

Eunice was recovering nicely. In



mid-June they moved into the house and had eight boys as boarders. Life in Pomeroy was more agreeable than any previous situation: the school was successful, they had friends, and the family was happy.

Cholera was prevalent there, and Eunice came down with it, until Chauncey, who “was always open to new truths,” gave her a homeopathic remedy. She got well, which prompted Dr. Lakey to give the remedy to a patient of his.

Chauncey’s daughter writes that he was constantly trying to improve his methods of teaching. To add to his scholarly offerings, he worked with a teacher of French and learned so quickly that it astonished his professor.

As his interest in the New Church deepened, he was asked to read others’ sermons to small groups, until he decided to write one himself. It was well received, and despite some misgivings about his ability, he continued to write. It soon became clear to him that he

would have to choose between teaching and preaching.

In August of 1850, he attended conferences in Boston and Cleveland about teaching methods. At the latter, he was unimpressed with what he heard about female education, feeling that, had he the courage, he could do a better job.

Throughout 1851 Chauncey pondered whether to accept the position of professor of languages at a New Church school that was to open in Urbana, Ohio. If he went there, he hoped he would have a house without boarders. He felt that he could now comfortably meet new people “as an opportunity of increasing my sphere of heavenly influence.”

Still in Pomeroy, for his own enjoyment he was learning German, in order to be “roaming at will in a field so rich in thought.”

At this time Chauncey was becoming known in New Church circles. He was invited to Chicago by Mr. Scammon, a wealthy man who promised him an annual salary of a thousand dollars to open a New Church school in that rapidly developing city. While there he met Mr. Hibbard, an itinerant New Church preacher who had met Abraham Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois. He said that Mr. Lincoln was influenced by the writings of Swedenborg that had been given to him by a friend in the years 1842 and 1843.

Chauncey was now preaching regularly both in Pomeroy and in small societies in other towns. As a result, New Church leaders requested his ordination, which happened in Cincinnati in 1842, and in the following year he was given the right to baptize, perform

<sup>1</sup> See prior installments in the November 2020 issue and July/August 2020 issue.

## Life of Chauncey Giles

*Continued from page 20*

marriages, and give communion, but not to ordain.

His daughter writes,

*Never* were the beautiful New Church doctrines mere abstractions to him. They were imparted to the recipients not for their admiration only, but as comfort to their sorrows and aid in the difficulties of daily life.

In October of 1853, eleven years after his ordination, he was called to become the pastor of the Cincinnati society.

### Chapter Six: The New Church in the Middle West

In 1841, the newly married Chauncey and Eunice had come to a recently settled part of the country. Traveling was difficult at best. The early settlers needed a strong independence to survive in those harsh conditions, which imbued their thinking with “narrow but strong convictions.”

In 1801, John Chapman, later known as Johnny Appleseed, came to the Midwest and for forty years planted apple orchards and also left portions of Swedenborg’s writings with the early settlers. So, by the time the Giles’ arrived, there were many small enclaves of settlers who were somewhat familiar with the doctrines.

The author states,

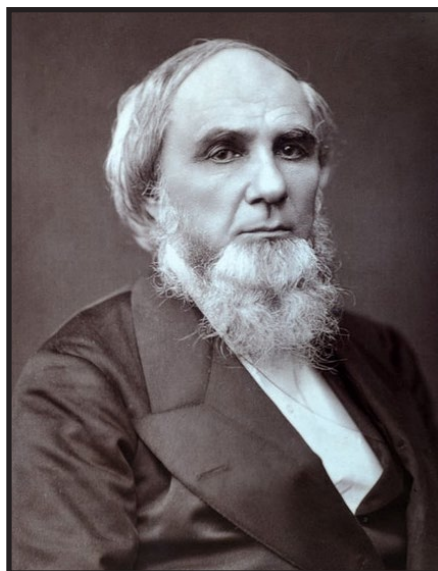
The early New Churchmen of the West were active, intelligent men, diligent readers of Swedenborg and inspired with an ardent zeal to communicate the truths that they loved to others.

In 1817 a Mr. Carll said of his extensive missionary work in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Ohio,

After an absence of thirty-nine days I have travelled eight hundred miles, baptized thirty-seven souls,

administered the sacrament twice, proclaimed the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem twenty times to not fewer than two thousand persons, many of whom had never heard them before.

In 1837, seven people in Detroit made application for an organization under Mr. Edwin Burnham.



Rev. Chauncey Giles (1813–1893)

Rev. G. M. Field from England was the next pastor. In 1852, while working as a missionary for the Illinois Association of the New Church, his lectures often took place in Methodist churches. He mentioned giving one hundred twenty-four lectures in the course of eight months, for which he charged admission.

Travel was perilous: Field mentioned nearly drowning while fording a rain-swollen river, being drenched with rain, and being frozen with a bitter northwest wind over a lonely prairie. He said,

I have experienced the mercy and protection of the Lord in all my sojourning and but with slight exception have had good health and good courage to pursue my way.

Not surprisingly, some of his

lectures were vehemently opposed by resident clergy. A lecture that explored the subject of the Creation was the topic of a debate that lasted six evenings. In small Goshen, Ohio, from three to five hundred people attended a discussion that lasted two days, when a Presbyterian minister put forth arguments that Swedenborg was insane and a blasphemer because of his treatment of the Creation. The next Sunday the congregation at the Methodist church listened attentively for three hours to Mr. Field’s lecture on the subject.

One of people who influenced Chauncey was Rev. David Powell, Jr. of Ohio, who at age twelve had resolved to devote his life to New Church ministry. He supported himself at first by opening a school in Steubenville and preached every evening and twice on Sunday. He was also instrumental in the establishment of Urbana University and in editing the *New Jerusalem Messenger*.

In 1852, he advised Chauncey about writing sermons:

Take for a text a passage Swedenborg has fully explained. Put that explanation in your own language in the form of a sermon. If you even give long extracts, it will do no harm.

Another person was a Mr. Stuart, who greatly influenced Chauncey Giles when he was in Hamilton, beginning his reading in Swedenborg’s writings. Stuart became a teacher at Urbana College.

### History of General Convention

Founded in 1817, the General Convention met almost annually. Since its members came from many sects of the “old church,” it follows that there was much discussion on procedure, especially on the ecclesiastical forms to be practiced. A very few felt that ordination was unnecessary, and at the other

*Continues on page 24*

# Proposed Amendments for Annual Convention

***Note:** We are an Illinois corporation, and we are currently permitted to hold electronic meetings and electronic voting under Illinois statute, absent a specific prohibition against such meetings. These proposed amendments are intended to establish procedures in our constitution and bylaws for future virtual meetings. The 2021 Convention can proceed virtually, with electronic voting, operating under existing Illinois corporate law. Portions underlined in red are changes to existing sections. New sections are preceded by “add new section” and are underlined in red.*

## Constitution: Proposed Amendment:

### Article VI

#### Meetings of the Swedenborgian Church

##### *Add new Section 4*

Section 4. Virtual conventions and annual or special meetings of the Swedenborgian Church may be held when authorized by the General Council and may include electronic voting. The General Council may authorize hybrid, virtual, and in-person meetings to allow greater participation, which may include electronic voting or a combination of in-person and electronic voting. All such meetings and voting must comply with all other existing constitution and bylaw sections.

## Bylaws: Proposed Amendments:

### Article XI

#### Electronic Meeting Guidelines

##### *Amended Section 1, add*

Virtual conventions and annual or special meetings of the Swedenborgian Church; General Council, Cabinet, and other boards and committees of the Swedenborgian Church may use telephone conferencing and electronic communication to conduct business when not in regular session, or when

face to face meeting is impractical. Such communication must follow procedures adopted by the denomination to ensure that an orderly deliberative process is honored.

##### *Add new Section 7*

Section 7. Virtual conventions and annual or special meetings of the Swedenborgian Church shall follow the policies listed below, along with any additional procedures adopted by the General Council whether temporary or via a standing resolution.


General Council may call a virtual convention with electronic voting whenever an in-person convention is deemed by it to be impractical, too costly, or at any time when a virtual convention is desirable. It shall establish a Committee on Virtual Conventions to organize any such meeting. The committee must ensure that the meeting structure complies with all then existing articles of the constitution and bylaws.

A suitable outside vendor shall be chosen to handle electronic voting. At a minimum, any such vendor shall be capable of reviewing our constitution and bylaws concerning elections and shall provide evidence that they did abide by the applicable constitution and bylaw sections. The General Council or the Executive Committee of General Council shall select the vendor.

Only delegates eligible to vote shall be provided access to the voting system and shall be limited to one vote for each eligible position or issue being considered. All members and friends shall be afforded the opportunity to participate in the meeting. A quorum for such a meeting shall be the same as described in Article VI of the constitution.

Due and timely notice and publication of such notice shall be the same as the then current constitution and bylaw sections state.

The Committee on Credentials, in consultation with the Recording Secretary, shall submit a list of eligible voters to the General Council committee organizing the meeting, by a date established by the President of Convention. The General Council’s Committee on Virtual Conventions shall consult with the election vendor to establish election access protocols, in consultation with the credentials committee.

Hybrid meetings are those meetings allowing any combination of in-person participation and voting, and electronic participation and voting. Hybrid meetings will be treated in the same way as any virtual meeting with electronic voting. Any delegate voting virtually must be able to both participate in the meeting concurrent with other meeting attendees and vote at the same time voting opens for all other delegates. 

## Annual Convention 2021 – Virtual

### *Navigating the Rapids in the Stream of Providence*

**Friday, June 25<sup>th</sup> – Sunday, June 27<sup>th</sup>**

*Registration will open May 15<sup>th</sup>*

As we navigate the uncertainty of the next year, one thing is certain: we will be having a virtual convention. Unlike last year, it will feature a more interactive mini-course structure, worship services from our convention hosts at the Bridgewater and Elmwood churches, and regular business meetings with voting—all online! We will also find time for games and socializing. We hope to see you all in June!



## Proposed Standing Resolution for Annual Convention: Good Practices for Social Media Understanding for Leaders in the Swedenborgian Church of North America

**T**he importance of the appropriate use of social media cannot be overstated. It is a primary means of communication today. How we and our institutions represent ourselves on social media form the cornerstone of our relationships with one another as well as those not familiar with our denomination. Therefore, a Social Media Committee was formed in August 2020 to help our church leaders navigate the complicated world of social media use. Many dedicated volunteers contributed to this endeavor and worked carefully and thoughtfully to create this document. It has gone through a number of changes, and this version represents the best of our collective efforts. General Council has approved the following document, and we introduce this standing resolution for consideration by the delegates at the 2021 Annual Convention.

### A Reminder to Pause Before Hitting Send, and Then Ask Yourself “How Am I Loving God and the Neighbor in this Post?”

In today’s world of pervasive social media use, all of our church leaders have become the outward face of the Swedenborgian Church. An essential question our leaders might now mindfully be thinking of asking themselves is: *How am I loving God and the neighbor in what I post?*

As church leaders—ordained clergy, licensed pastors, lay leaders, committee and board members—both local and national, we have to be especially discerning as we speak for the local church and for the greater church. Like it or not, we carry additional authority and responsibility. We need to be consciously, and conscientiously, aware

that our words and sentiments online can project a positive or negative influence, elicit a calming or angering effect, promote spiritual enlightenment or unrest.

As lay and clergy leaders in the Swedenborgian Church of North America, we affirm our tradition’s embrace of varied opinions as well as the importance of personal choice and freedom in all matters (*Secrets of Heaven* §2876). We value a diverse community that is bound together by shared love of the Lord and service to the neighbor. As Swedenborgian Church leaders, we also carry a responsibility in all we do and say—this can be especially challenging because of the blur between personal and professional communications. It is hoped that these “Good Practices for Social Media Understanding for Leaders in the Swedenborgian Church of North America” can help lessen that challenge, with thoughts on how to maintain a neighborly and respectable social media presence with God’s love and wisdom at the forefront.

It is a given that social media can be used as a powerful, positive tool for communication or a precarious emotional outlet that can lead to risky, contrary, and potentially harmful commentary. It is our responsibility to use our discernment. Let’s consider asking ourselves the questions below before posting:

- *What kind of conversation am I starting or encouraging?*
- *Why am I posting? Am I feeling tired, angry, or scared? Am I feeling provoked?*
- *If there is conflict—how is my contribution going to de-escalate the situation?*

- *If I’ve already contributed to this conversation today—would it better to wait twenty-four hours before adding anything further?*
- *Would I choose to say these things face-to-face?*
- *Would this conversation be better handled privately?*
- *Will I be embarrassed or cause embarrassment if this post appears somewhere else?*
- *Are my comments towards people and/or the church following the sentiment expressed here?*
- *What can I do to make this conversation more inclusive, just, and equitable?*

In addition to attending to the wisdom of the above list, **special attention needs to be focused on how adults interact responsibly with our often-vulnerable youth online.** Added to the all-important moral, ethical, and spiritual reasons is the liability risk. Following are further good practices that will help us maintain healthy and safe relationships all around:

- All public content, communication, and information shared should be professional and youth appropriate.
- Unless other arrangements have been made with parents, leaders should not send requests outside of family to add youth to their network on a social media website (“friend requests”).
- Adults may accept friend requests from youth, however, we should carefully discern the level of contact we should maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
- If friend requests from youth are

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## From the Social Justice Committee

## Selections from *Divine Providence* §220

BY SHADA SULLIVAN

When we consider the ways the Bible tells us to care for our neighbor, the internal sense blesses us with the opportunity to manifest this care in multi-layered ways. We come to understand that such passages do not only point us toward physical need, but spiritual need as well.

However, this understanding can sometimes lead us to value acts of charity with spiritual outcomes more than acts of charity with physical or social outcomes. Yet, we also know that the spiritual and the natural cannot be so neatly compartmentalized. An exploration of *Divine Providence* §220 makes a persuasive case for why natural acts of charity are important.

The main thrust of the section is that we leave behind what is physical and time-bound when we leave this world. But not before the Lord unites what is physical to what is spiritual, and what is time-bound to what is eternal within us through acts of service. This process of uniting earth and spirit gives shape and quality to our heavenly character, and when we do finally leave temporal things behind, the way we have engaged with them leaves an imprint on our soul.

Here are some selections from *Divine Providence* §220:

The union of temporal and eternal matters in us is the Lord's divine providence.

[4] (b) Through his divine providence, the Lord unites himself to



what is physical through what is spiritual and to what is time-bound through what is eternal, doing so according to acts of service....

[5] The time-bound things that are proper to us in this physical world are, broadly speaking, matters of eminence and wealth, and more specifically, the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, and shelter. These too we shed and leave behind at death, putting on and receiving things that are similar in their outward guise and appearance but not in their inward guise and in their essence. *They all get their inward guise and essence from acts of service in temporal matters in this world.* These acts of service are good actions, the good effects of our caring. [emphasis mine]

The time-bound things in the above passage sound very much like issues of social justice.

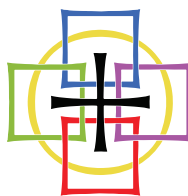
And this passage suggests that such acts of service are both connective and transformative; they are the means by which God unites heaven and earth, and the means by which our eternal essence is formed.

This is a fascinating section! ☩

Rev. Shada Sullivan is member of the Social Justice Committee and the Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism team.

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### Life of Chauncey Giles

Continued from page 21

extreme, some promoted the idea that there should be bishops endowed with a great deal of power and clergy ordained in degrees.

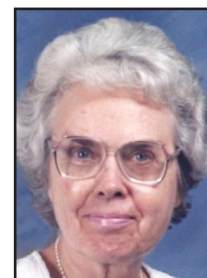
At first, the ministers of the churches in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore were responsible to ordain, but in 1826 that became the responsibility of General Convention. However, the matter continued to be debated for years.

In 1838 an episcopal form of government was established, but it was rejected by the churches at Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, and Maryland.

Those same independent-minded New Churchmen were to be found in the Cincinnati society, a natural outcome for those who disputed "old church" doctrines. Its founder was Reverend Adam Hurdus, a much-revered man, who was ordained in 1818 and lived to be over eighty-three. In 1828, the society produced a constitution which was revised six times over the next twenty years. In 1829, the society's three ministers had separate times for services on the same day.

The next chapters cover Chauncey's pastorate in Cincinnati, begun in late 1853, when he was forty years old. That society had withdrawn from the Ohio Association and General Convention because it did not approve of the Convention Rules of Order. ☩

As a child, Lois and her family attended the Church of the Neighbor (Swedenborgian) in Brooklyn, New York, where she felt it was her job to wait for Mr. Wunsch in the robing room and take his hand to walk to do his greetings at the back of the church. While in nursing school in Manhattan, she babysat for Louise Dole Woofenden. One day Louise said, "You must meet my brother."





# Images from around North America

## #SCNACovidVaccine



Val and Rev. Ron Brugler in Florida

*The best way that we can help end this pandemic is to get vaccinated. Right now vaccines are limited to certain groups, but hopefully, as the year progresses, more and more vaccines will become available to everyone. Show off how you are doing your part to end the COVID-19 pandemic by submitting your vaccination photos to be shared on Facebook and the Messenger! Email [manager@swedenborg.org](mailto:manager@swedenborg.org). Here are a few from February 2021.*



Licensed Pastor-in-Training Kelly Milne in Massachusetts



Rev. Jenny Caughman in Tennessee



Tammara Mounce in Indiana



Rev. Betsy Coffman in Ohio



Messenger Editor, Beki Greenwood and her mom, Merrilee Phinney, in Massachusetts



President, Rev. Jane Siebert in Kansas

# Good News for the New Christian Bible Study Project

BY STEVE DAVID

*Project Manager, [www.NewChristianBibleStudy.org](http://www.NewChristianBibleStudy.org)*

It's been 250 years since 1770. A quarter-millennium. How's the Second Coming coming along?

Of course, it's hard for us to know, since each of us has such a short-term, limited perspective. Thankfully, the Lord knows, and he's in charge, and we just have to do the best we can with what we know and love right now.

One thing that's really fun—an interesting bright spot in New Church activity—is the *New Christian Bible Study* project. I've been involved in it for a decade now, and I have the feeling that it's one of the best things I will get to work on in my lifetime. There are lots of other New Church people involved, too, and I think many of them feel the same way.

## Here's the big idea that's driving this project

- 1) Hundreds of millions of people are *already* reading the Word online, looking for meaning.
- 2) Swedenborg's writings explain the inner meaning.
- 3) As we mesh those two things together, it gets the true ideas of the New Church in front of a big, interested audience.

The great commentators of the nineteenth century, like Clowes, MacLagan, and Smithson, sort of had this idea, but they had no way to reach a wider audience. Now, with the Internet, we do, so it just might work!

## Here's what we have gathered and linked up so far

- The Word in eighty-four translations, in forty-two languages.
- Swedenborg's writings in twenty

languages, with more than 400 originals and translations online, in Latin, English, French, German, Dutch, Swedish, Czech, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Serbian, Zulu, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and more.

- More than 10,000 explanations of words and phrases, verses, stories, spiritual concepts, and chapters.
- User interfaces in seventeen languages.
- Existing (old-fashioned but helpful) New Church commentary on almost the entire Word, in English, plus a stream of new chapter summaries flowing in.
- Over 1,000 linked videos, hundreds of audio sermons, and illustrations.
- A world map with links to more than 400 New Church congregations and organizations.
- Easy and Advanced search functions for the Word, Swedenborg's writings, and explanations, in all the languages.
- Searle's Index, Bogg's Glossary, Parallel Passages, and many more research tools.

## What are we working on now?

*The Writings for Everyone:* We're getting close to having all existing digital translations imported and with their cross-references linked.

We're helping to support active translation pipelines in Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Swedish, Zulu, Malayalam, Filipino, Dutch, English, and other languages.

*The Swedenborg Reader Phone App:* We released the latest version of this in October 2020—check the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store. You can download any/all of the Writings translations and read them on your phone. There's a search capability and sharing, it's pretty neat!

*Interfaces:* We just added Filipino/Tagalog and Zulu interfaces for site users. The goal is to have a comfortable user experiences for people in many languages, with a User interface, the Word, Swedenborg's writings, commentaries, and people to talk to.

*Chapter summaries:* We're crowd-sourcing **concise explanations of every Bible chapter**. This is coming along; we're about 1/3 of the way through it, and people really like it. Some of you may know Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman. He's written chapter summaries for Matthew and Mark (Luke and John are in the works), and we have them all linked in. We just got this note from a site visitor the other day: "The inner meaning of Matthew is truly excellent; I get so much out of it."

I agree with her. I've been reading the Psalms, side by side with Julian Duckworth's commentaries, and I'm getting so much more from them than ever before. It's good.

*Significations:* This is a fun part of the project—complicated but useful. We want to make it so that every Bible reader can quickly realize that there *is* an internal sense, and what it's like. In English, we've got that working fairly well—see the blue highlighted words in the Bible text on the website.

*Continues on page 31*



## Social Media Resolution

Continued from page 23

declined, we should explain to the youth why this was done so as to maintain healthy face-to-face relationships.

- Written messages and transmitted images can often be ambiguous, confusing, and taken out of context. Always follow professional standards and do not share any questionable content with youth.
- Pictures or videos of minors may only be shared with the permission of the minor and their parent or legal guardian.
- Ask yourself: *does my communication reflect good and wise practices for working with children and youth?* Would you say this to a child or youth if you were face-to-face with them?

And finally, some nuts and bolts for all adults and youth:

### Privacy, Confidentiality, Authorization

- Respecting Privacy: I will respect my own privacy as well as that of my co-workers/friends and of any organization by not providing or sharing any personal

or confidential information, including addresses or locations, without permission from that person or organization. *I will ask myself: Is this my news to tell? Do I have permission to share this information?*

- I will remember that, unless duly authorized, I will not speak on behalf of the Swedenborgian Church—or even my own congregation. I will be professional and maintain the integrity of my office as a church leader through social media.
- I will be aware that giving my opinion, especially on hotly debated topics, can be construed as making a statement on behalf of the church.
- For my protection and the protection of the Swedenborgian Church, I note that I am prohibited from using internal or external social media channels to discuss confidential items, legal matters, litigation, or organizational financial performance. Confidential information includes anything labeled as such or information not available to the public.
- I will cite sources and not violate copyright and fair use laws nor

plagiarize another's work. If required, I will obtain permission if I wish to use material created by someone else.

Approaching social media with clarity of mind and sincerity of heart contributes to useful experiences that promote healthy interactions, meaningful conversations, and love of the neighbor.

For, as we are reminded,

Everyone can see that charity is doing no evil to the neighbor; for charity is love towards our neighbor, and a person who loves anyone wants to avoid doing evil to them. There is a conjunction of souls between them

(*Doctrine of Charity* §14). ☩



Did you know the Swedenborgian Church of North America has a YouTube channel? Virtual content that has been created, including the 2020 Convention and the Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism program, can be found here for viewing at anytime!

**Click the YouTube logo above to subscribe!**

## Pandemic Relief Grants Still Available for Individuals

*A reminder that the Executive Committee of the General Council of the Swedenborgian Church in the U.S. and Canada has authorized a limited number of one-time grants per household for pandemic related relief.*

Donations have been coming in, and we are pleased with the generosity of associations, societies, and individuals. We already have donations from the following: Ohio Association, Illinois Association, Pretty Prairie Church, Urbana Church, Korean Church, seven ministers, and six individuals, to be matched by the denomination up to \$10,000.

Up to \$500 one-time grant per household for pandemic related relief. Grants shall be initiated by church members who are 18 years or older and actively involved with a Swedenborg Church Society, Camp, or Association/Conference. Grants will be available through 2021 Convention or until the available funds are fully expended.

Interested parties should email Rev. Jane ([president@swedenborg.org](mailto:president@swedenborg.org)) directly with their name, the name of the minister/pastor/church leader they worked with, the amount they are requesting, and their address. All requests will be totally confidential. Ministers, pastors, and church leaders are also included if financial help is needed. ☩

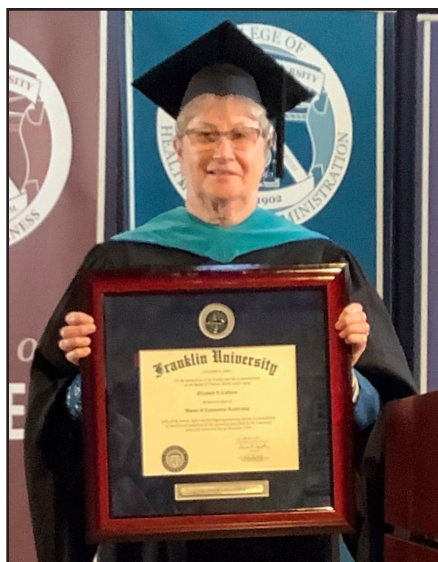


# Rev. Betsy Coffman Recieves Honorary Degree

BY BILL COFFMAN

**O**n January 29, 2021, at Franklin University's 166<sup>th</sup> Commencement, Reverend Elizabeth Coffman was the keynote speaker and the recipient of an honorary Doctor of Community Service degree. Betsy was honored for her many years of outstanding service to her community, profession, and church. The Rev. Betsy Coffman is a clinical social worker at Positive Perspectives Counseling Center in Springfield, Ohio. Her career spans forty-six years as a clinical social worker, in both mental health and substance abuse treatment—advancing to supervisory and administrative levels before entering private practice. Concurrently, she has served for twenty-two years as the pastor of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church. Betsy is the current president of the Johnny Appleseed Foundation, which supports the most extensive collection of artifacts and archival material related to John Chapman.

Betsy received an associates, as well



as a bachelor's degree from Urbana University. She earned her Master of Social Work degree from The Ohio State University and is a licensed independent social worker and a member of the National Association of Social Workers. She studied at the Swedenborgian School of Religion, receiving a Consecrated Lay Leader Certificate, and in

2013, full ordination into the ministry. She is a past vice president of General Convention and serves as a member of General Council. She is the vice president of the Champaign County Ministerial Association.

Betsy served on the Urbana University Board of Trustees for twenty-two years and continued in leadership roles at Urbana after the university was acquired by Franklin. She developed and led the Urbana University chaplaincy program and volunteer chaplaincy team, providing programs and spiritual support for the university community. Betsy was instrumental in founding the Alicia Titus Memorial Peace Fund in 2002, and in organizing its programs and activities on campus and in the surrounding community.

Friends and family much admire Betsy for her accomplishments and the many acts of community and church service. Her honorary degree from Franklin University is more than well deserved! ☸

## Johnny Appleseed Survives COVID-19: Help Save History!

*The search is on for a new home for the collection, the education center, and the museum.*

**A** small band of individuals, some genetic descendants of John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed), continue to preserve and teach Chapman's values. The legendary American, born in Massachusetts, planted apple trees near Urbana, Ohio, around 1802. Johnny Appleseed professed and lived by a set of values that include generosity, humility, stewardship, thrift, entrepreneurship, and caring for one's fellow man—values always needed.

For over a quarter-century, The Johnny Appleseed Education Center and Museum has taught these values to scholars, children, travelers, and

community groups from its location on the campus of Urbana University, in Urbana, Ohio.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, last summer, Franklin University permanently closed Urbana University. This closure shuttered The Johnny Appleseed Education Center and Museum and sealed-off its collection from the public. The Education Center and Museum housed the world's most significant and complete collection of information about Johnny Appleseed. This extensive research collection was used by historians and scholars. The Education Center trained teachers,

provided educational materials for classrooms, and published books for children.

A small amount of funding for this work has been raised. More is needed. The fundraising is a combined effort of The Johnny Appleseed Foundation and The Johnny Appleseed Society. The Johnny Appleseed Foundation has created a GoFundMe page. <https://au.gofundme.com/f/save-the-johnny-appleseed-museum>

The Foundation's web address is [www.JohnnyAppleseedMuseum.org](http://www.JohnnyAppleseedMuseum.org) where one can learn more and make a donation that will help save history. ☸

# New Music and Worship Resources for Online Ministries

BY KEN TURLEY

It is a new world we live in. Technology is advancing at an exponential rate, and new platforms of Social Media are continually coming into being. The COVID-19 restrictions on social gatherings are pushing more and more of our communal activities on to the Web. And right at the top of the list of things that have been affected are worship and spiritual communities. In responding to this new reality, our church is undertaking an effort to create a catalogue of music and worship materials to be available for general use online.

As one among a number of diverse efforts, I have been given a small grant to add to the music and meditation videos that I have already created and are available online. You may have experienced a couple of them at our past online Annual Convention. Rev. Rachel Madjerac used several as part of the Memorial Worship Service she created and presented. Rev. Susannah Currie has used a few in her local worship services which have been posted online. And in the past, several have been presented on Swedenborgian Community Online.

You can find all the videos here on my YouTube Channel: [Ken Turley YouTube](#). Or to search for these videos, please go on to an Internet browser and go to YouTube and type my name, Ken Turley, into the search bar. There are several of us, but you should recognize me in the circular picture. Click on this picture, and when you get to my website, click on *playlists*. You will find a playlist called "Sacred Music New Directions." You can scroll over the picture and click on "Play All" and it will do just that and continue playing them in sequence until you press stop.



Or you can click on "view full playlist," and you will see all of the videos that have been posted and click on anyone you choose. It will play that video and unless you stop it, will continue to play the other videos in sequence.

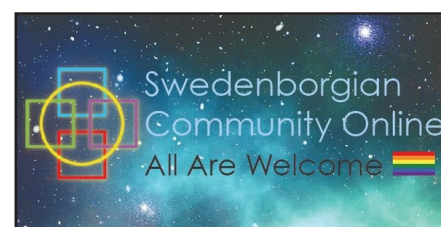
Once you are playing a video, if you go to the bar at the top of the page that says YouTube and click on it, it will then show a long list of characters which you can scroll over and copy. If you then paste that into a document, or email, or even on Facebook, you or anyone else can click on that link and it will take them directly to that video. At that point, how you use the video is up to you. I would ask, if you are able, to give credit in any written listing you may post and also to watch each video all the way through. And please, if you can, leave a "Like" and maybe even a comment. This helps improve the algorithms on YouTube and makes the video more accessible to others and will lengthen its shelf life.

Currently, in another playlist, "Sacred Music," you will find a setting of Psalm 19, sung by Michael Waring, music director at the Wayfarers Chapel, a video from my musical oratorio

"Revelation" (musical settings of text from the book of Revelation) and a series of miscellaneous instrumental compositions, mostly with videos of nature, that work very well as meditation music. The only limit to how these music videos are used is your own imagination. If you have any specific requests, I would love to hear what they are, and we will see what we can do about providing what you need.

Go check out what's currently up on my YouTube channel and see if you can find anything to help enrich your worship experience, be that with your church community or your own personal spiritual practice. It is a new world we are living in, and it is my hope that these offerings of music videos will enrich your worship and lift your spirits closer to the heavenly realm. ☩

Rev. Ken Turley is retired and living in Maine. He devotes his time to composing, playing, recording, performing, and publishing music; gardening; and Skyping with his grandchildren.



[SwedenborgianCommunity.org](https://SwedenborgianCommunity.org)

With broadcasts every Thursday & Sunday, Swedenborgian Community Online is your affirming, interfaith community—with a presence on YouTube, Facebook, and your favorite podcast platform. We seek to uplift God(dess) in all people's diverse ways of living.

## Letters to the Editor

*Continued from page 18*

regeneration is not simply a solo trip. We need companions, and we need to *be* companions. There is need for something like churches. Helen Keller hit the nail on the head when she wrote, “There Is joy in self-forgetfulness.”

To Robert McClusky’s article I would offer the thought that the deep roots of racism lie in our “love of dominion,” our equation of power with privilege rather than with responsibility. Presidential power? Harry Truman said it all in four little words: “The buck stops here.” The power inequality between a mother and a newborn child is immense, and so, *therefore*, is the responsibility.

To Jim Lawrence’s article I’d add the observation that the parish church is about the only organization in which people of all ages are served. One of the main things we are in this world is “from cradle to grave,” and that’s worth remembering from time to time.

In Gladys Wheaton’s article I would underline the importance of recognizing both our need for autonomy and our need for companionship. Marshall Rosenberg’s program relies on the conviction that at the deepest level, we are not in conflict with each other. Of course not. At the deepest level, we’re angels, and there’s no conflict in heaven.

—George Dole  
*Bath, Maine*

## Reactions to Most Recent Messenger

Thank you for sending the recent issue of *the Messenger*. Gladys Wheaton’s essay reflects my values and those of my Swedenborgian family in Canada—Jake and Margaret Friesen (grandparents), Tena (Friesen) Alguire (mom).

When I read Rich Tafel’s “Christian Response...” I was taken aback by his statement that “Evil responds only to

punishment.” For me, this is the antithesis of the teachings that I have followed for many years.

On the cross, Jesus did not advocate violence and retribution, but forgiveness because “...they know not what they do.” I propose that the people who invaded the Capitol fall into this category.

Gladys spoke of growing anger and, I would suggest fear, that results in these unacceptable actions. Is our only response punishment? It seems to me, that this is more about our very human hunger for revenge. It is not only that “If we seek revenge, dig two graves” and the dire necessity of living in a state of evil in the plotting of revenge that makes this decision so fraught. It also separates us from God’s love and compassion, which we require in order to make good and wise decisions.

Have people done me dirt, cheated me, treated me poorly, lied about me? Of course. I always want to work hard to forgive, not just for their benefit, but for my own. For many years, I have steadfastly prayed for Donald Trump because I believe that there is a man who knows no peace, ever; that is a special kind of hell. And I can pray for anyone who is in hell.

When I am acting my worst, this is the time when I most need prayers and support. *Not* punishment. I already feel panic, despair, loneliness, horror. Who would want to see that I feel worse?

As a teacher of thirty-seven years, I learned quite early that punishment (writing lines, for example) was a useless waste of time and energy. Open discussion that included concern for the student’s current situation and how I might/would help brought better and lasting results as well as a relationship of trust.

If I’m going to attend church, it is my standard that I will follow the teachings of Jesus to the best of my ability. If I choose otherwise, I will stay home until I can successfully change

my thoughts and attitude. This is my commitment.

I read Jenny Caughman’s essay on “The Role of Truth...” and was dismayed by her stance on animals driven “solely by their physical desires.” There are numerous documented examples of animals risking their lives to save another of the herd.

This seems to be truly altruistic as there may have been other hunting lions nearby.

We are increasingly discovering that we are all one in the sense that we inhabitants of the Earth have more in common with each other, than we have differences. It seems to me that if we have dominion over all the animals, it comes with great responsibility—a responsibility that we have, at best, ignored and at worst, exploited to the detriment of all, including ourselves.

I understand that this may have been a metaphor for our baser desires that we are obligated to overcome. Is there another way to illustrate this without diminishing our animal neighbours?

Let us strive to respect all of God’s creation without assigning more or less worth to any of the creatures who share our Earth.

—Esther Fyk  
*Dauphin, Manitoba*

## Capturing Current Events

The January/February issue of *the Messenger* captured so much of what is happening these days, combining Rev. Rich Tafel’s reporting from D.C. and Rev. Gladys Wheaton’s clear-eyed assessment of the natural/spiritual conditions of this historical moment. And then, the Social Justice Committee mission statement stresses ways forward and bases the document on Biblical and Swedenborgian concepts of diversity and uniqueness. Wow. Thank you!

—Deane Currie  
*Riverside, Rhode Island* ☒



Our Daily Bread at [SpiritualQuesters.org](https://www.SpiritualQuesters.org) is your resource for recent sermons, meditations, reflections, lessons, interviews, and original content from within and beyond the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

## Youth Changing the World

*Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism (SAAR)  
Presents a March Youth Program*

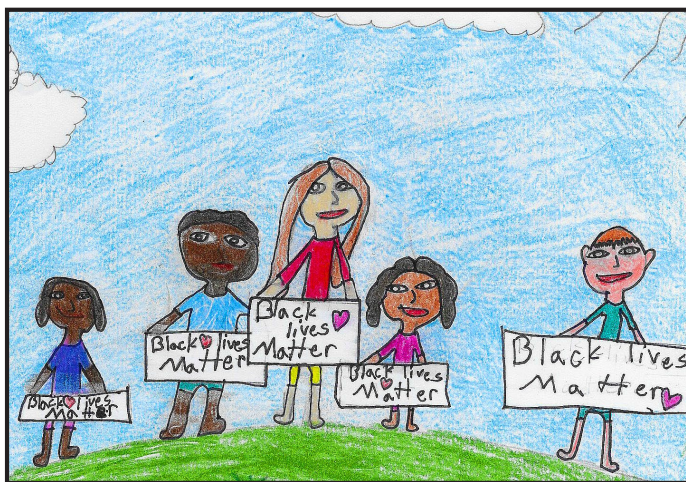
Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism (SAAR) are offering a program for the youth of the Swedenborgian churches. SAAR welcomes all youth, grades K–10, to a three-session learning and discussion series.

They will focus on topics of the language of anti-racism, Black history, and the path to being an active ally and/or participant in the antiracist movement.

The sessions will start on Saturday, March 13, at 2:00 PM EST and continue weekly at the same time with three age-appropriate sessions:

- **March 13:** *Speak Up:* Being Antiracist with Our Words
- **March 20:** *Look Back:* Being Antiracist with Our Knowledge
- **March 27:** *Step Out:* Being Antiracist with Our Actions

The program will be led by Rev. Renee Machiniak, Youth Director Kurt Fekete, Katie Brown, and Ava Dolley with help from Terrie Crenshaw, Elise



*Original Artwork by F. Genzlinger from Pennsylvania*

Genzlinger, and other talented, qualified team members.

Presented via Zoom, we will open the sessions with all ages present and will include an introduction and a short video or two that are appropriate for our youngest attendees. Then we will break off for discussion into two breakout rooms.

One room with a shorter session, approximately thirty minutes, for grades K–5 with two adult leaders. (*At least one parent will be required to be present with this younger group.*)

The other room will have a slightly

longer session, approximately sixty minutes, for grades 6–10 and will also be led by two adult leaders. This room will include more advanced videos and an expanded discussion. If you have any questions about the program content you can contact Kurt Fekete at [kfekete@hotmail.com](mailto:kfekete@hotmail.com).

If possible, please register by **Monday, March 8** using this link: [Zoom Registration Link](#). It will take

you to a registration page where you will answer a few questions and then receive the meeting information. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the Zoom meeting.

**If you have any questions about registering, please email the Central Office Manager at [manager@swedenborg.org](mailto:manager@swedenborg.org) or call 617.969.4240**

**M–F 12:00 PM EST to 4:00 PM EST.**

**We hope you can join us!** 📺