



Consecration and Installation of Three New Licensed Pastors

BY JANE SIEBERT

One of the joys of being president is to visit churches. Twenty months of pandemic restrictions have curtailed my visits. I was delighted in late September to make the ten-hour drive to Urbana, Ohio, to offer the consecration and installation of Robbin Ferriman as licensed pastor in the Urbana New Church. I had the additional joy to stay with Bev and John Titus to share stories and renew a dear friendship.

Robbin and her community put a lot of work and preparation into the beautiful ceremony and worship service. Family and friends flew in from Florida and drove in from around her hometown of St. Louis. Rev. Betsy Coffman proudly assisted Robbin in offering communion and spoke of their joint ministry to the Urbana



Top Left: Rev. Betsy Coffman, Rev. Jane Siebert, and Pastor Robbin Ferriman in Urbana, Ohio.

Right: Pastor Kelly Milne and Rev. Jane Siebert in Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Lower: Members of the Agapao Church in Santa Ana, California, with Jennifer Lindsay, Rev. Jane Siebert, and Pastor Jae Chung (centered in front).

for the consecration and installation of Kelly Milne. We three had been in the Investment Committee meetings on Saturday. The Bridgewater Society had the sanctuary prepped and ready for visitors,

and over eighty attended the service, including members of the Elmwood New Church with Rev. Dr. Donna Keane. Kelly is a proud member of the Order of the Eastern Star, an appendant Masonic organization, and friends supporting her in ministry came from around the state. It was a joyous occasion.

Rev. Susannah Currie, retiring minister and mentor for Kelly's licensed pastor journey, spoke about their work together and Kelly's natural inclination to ministry. Susannah shared the names of saints that had served the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church on this All-Saints Day. The names included Kelly's grandfather who had served many years as Sunday school superintendent. Kelly officiated her first communion for the congregation. Her family and friends had prepared a luncheon and the fellowship hall was filled with conversation and camaraderie.

Finally, it was a unique experience offering the consecration for Jae

Society and how their gifts of ministry complement one another.

After the service, we all gathered for lunch and shared memories of Robbin's adventure into the Swedenborgian Church. She glowed as she spoke of how much the church means to her and how it has helped her through difficult times.

Next, on Halloween Sunday, Herb Ziegler drove Jennifer Lindsay and me to Bridgewater, Massachusetts,

Save the Date!

2022 Annual Convention

The Tree of Life: Into the Garden

Long Beach, California
June 25–28, 2022

More information to come in the next issue of *the Messenger*.

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the Messenger

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Editor's Corner



Lovely Virtual Advent

I'm not sure what it is about the advent candles. I have always been drawn to them. I remember thinking

as a kid, "Why are the Christmas candles purple and pink?" However, I remember loving that they were my favorite colors. Funny thing—I haven't thought about them in years.

I don't remember the last time I made it to an advent service. (Hear me out.) For years and years, I prioritized going to the Christmas Eve service. It is one of my absolute favorites. But I will be truly honest: the last one I went to, my son was about three months old, miserable the entire time, and an entire bottle of baby formula exploded in my purse. It was a bit much to deal with the night before Christmas. Since then, my kids are in bed by 7:30 (more recent years, 8:30) and it's just too late to go to a Christmas eve service and be ready to deal with the chaos (happy chaos, but chaos nonetheless) that Christmas morning brings. We regularly are not able to make it to in person church services on Sunday. There are too many obligations with youth sports, children's social events, catching up on the week's chores—that really make it difficult to carve out a morning of weekend time. But, as we all know, God doesn't take attendance—it is living a life of good that truly counts.

But I do *like* going to church, whether I get to walk through the door or not. I am truly grateful for the virtual services that are now available to us. They work for me. There is real value to the efforts being made supporting virtual and hybrid church services.

I recently attended the Fryeburg New Church via Zoom and was welcomed there. Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen works her whole service to accommodate both in-person attendees and virtual attendees. (This specific week there were seventeen in person, and seventeen on Zoom) With help from the SCCI Technology grant, the Gray Fund, and the A/V consultant, the Fryeburg Church has been able to update their equipment to integrate their audio clearly and add a room camera; and Rev. Alison uses a laptop near her to keep the remote participants feeling like part of the service. She made a point to announce to all who were physically there who had joined on Zoom, and any who wanted to see each other came up during "Coffee Hour" to say hello to the virtual participants. (Remote participants {and pets!} were not only those from Maine who couldn't make it to church physically, but members from Massachusetts, New York, Tennessee, and Michigan.) But I have to say, one of my favorite things from this service was to see how many on Zoom had their own advent candles and took part in lighting them in their own homes. One family had their candles on their table as they were enjoying breakfast while listening and being part of the service and it made me think—this is something that we could do, why don't we?

Rev. Alison's sermon was about letting in the light and embracing it. What better way to bring in the light than encouraging virtual members to light their own candles and share them with each other. Next year, I think I will add my own set of purple and pink advent candles to the community light.

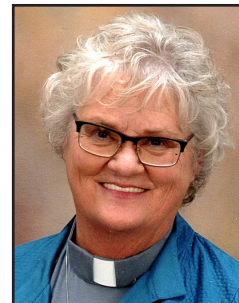
—Beki Greenwood

Messenger@Swedenborg.org

If you would like to take part in the Fryeburg New Church services, send an email to fryeburgnewchurch@gmail.com to get their Zoom login information and sign up for their newsletter.

Letter from the President

The Year of Providence: 2021–22



Dear Friends,

Your spiritual journey is not measured by how many answers you have accumulated, but by how many questions you have confronted. We are not gods who must know everything, gatekeepers to truth—we are seekers who look for the truth where it may be most difficult to find. Our wisdom is not in what we know, but in what we wonder. The light beyond the hill calls us to leave the shadows, even if the shadows were our pride and our possessions (*Ladder to the Light: An Indigenous Elder's Meditations on Hope and Courage* by Steven Charleston).

In this Christmas season of hope, courage, light, and mystery, may you pause to ponder these words.

We like solid answers. It is comforting to think we have something completely figured out in a world of uncertainty. And fortunately, we do find answers to hold onto. Yet I am reminded not to hold too tightly to these finite answers when we are being taught, guided, and held up to the Light by the Infinite.

So often I hear a Swedenborgian minister, pastor, teacher say: “This is how I understand it.” I love this. It keeps the door open. The deep mystery remains for the listener to take in the words offered, to ponder them in their heart, to add them to their own understanding, and to remain in wonder.

God is shrouded in mystery. The incarnation within the Christmas story is beyond blind acceptance. How can we comprehend God taking on our human form with the purpose of reaching us in a way an ethereal God cannot? Advent must be felt in our heart, graced with unparalleled promise in our mind, and born within us for us to revel, rejoice, and delight in this season. It pulls us out of the commercialism that tries to spoil Christmas and into the light of a child's face.

As Elder Steven Charleston says above, “Our wisdom is not in what we know, but in what we wonder.”

May you experience a “wonder filled” Christmas!

With joy, love, peace, and light,
—Rev. Jane Siebert

The Little Church That Could

BY CARLA FRIEDRICH

The New Church of the Southwest Desert (NCSWD) often refers to itself as “the little church that could.” NCSWD has faced many challenges over the years, perhaps not so different than other churches that: began without a minister, had dwindling congregations through attrition, single-digit plate offerings for weeks on end, untimely deaths, inadequate buildings or no building at all, and, for us, a disappointing seven-year search for a more appropriate building, and now, COVID-19.

NCSWD has approached everything with courage, hope, and a roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-busy kind of attitude. Throughout all of these challenges, our parishioners and friends have shown loyalty, commitment, vision, and dedication. We could not have made it without our strong volunteer base.

For example, two gentlemen showed up for a full year as we finally made the move into our new, historic, downtown location. They swept, mopped, moved, painted, and decorated. One had had a stroke, the other had a dislocated shoulder from a fall at home, but we all pressed on. There are others who volunteer to fix things, clean, arrange, and bake, though we can always use more volunteers. We were also recently gifted with a brand-new espresso machine from an individual donor.

We are now settled in and can offer a full complement of activities including small groups, classes, game night, dances, and art. We often fall short of what we hope to do, but from a high

“All of life is the religion, and the life of religion is to do that which is good” (Emanuel Swedenborg, *Doctrine of Life* §1).



The exterior sign and entry to the Oasis Coffee & Tea House on North Bullard Street in historic downtown Silver City, New Mexico, which doubles as fellowship hall on Sundays. The church entry is in the rear on the City Plaza side.

vantage point, we hope the Lord is pleased. There is that little church that could... and tried.

On some Sundays, we have had to move thirty chairs and tables from one side of the building to the other, so that repairs and remodeling work could be done while groups and activities could continue (worship, AA, fellowship, creative recovery group for recovering our creativity as artists, Bible and book study class, rummage sales, coffee served, etc.).

Our next effort will be to open our stage with full music equipment for acoustic nights, dance parties, and karaoke, and bring back our Cosmic Saturdays studying the cosmos in all its glory and Mystical Mondays exploring

new thought teachings. We hold an Annual Healing Arts Fair: but not during the pandemic, yet we are still a connection for healers and those seeking alternative healing modalities such as herbs, light, frequency, natural and organic foods, and positive thought.

When I came to Silver City, New Mexico, I wasn't sure I wanted to stay past the initial time of an interim minister, but the NCSWD, the Oasis, and the Silver City community are amazing, eclectic, amenable, adventurous, and adaptable.

Since many of you have not traveled to Silver City, and may never get this way—though you are always welcome—I thought I would describe for you the flavor or tenor of the ministry on any typical day.

We are in New Mexico, which is a depressed area, and Silver City is even more so

because of its isolation. It's considered a “frontier town” due to its isolation. Silver City boasts natural surroundings, historic buildings, and approximately thirty-seven art galleries.

Our mission is to help bring about or demonstrate the Second Coming Holy City New Jerusalem descending through praising and love to the Lord in worship, sharing Swedenborg's teachings, and a life of service.

Our messages must meet the needs of a spiritually diverse congregation: Southern Baptist, Buddhist, agnostic, atheist, Swedenborgian, mystical Christian, Native American Elders, Baha'i, evangelical, Catholic, and more faith stances. Not an easy task.

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Church That Could

Continued from page 140

We continue to offer the “new Christianity” and have regular visitors in attendance at church services. Some stay and some move on.

We confirmed five new individuals into the New Church last year, and two more this year. Pastor Linda and Rev. Carla offer spiritual messages on a variety of topics using the Bible, Swedenborgian excerpts, and modern writers.

On any given day, if necessary, we shop for the Oasis (creamers, flour for baking, cups, waters, juice) and open by 10:00 AM. Our clientele is mostly tourists but also some locals who love the concept of a welcoming, friendly, inclusive place to gather. Both the church and the Oasis have a reputation for being inclusive of all, ecumenical, interfaith, as well as a place of useful service and charity.

Throughout the day, we have a few locals who will drop in for coffee, or a couple of tourists, or a family, will stop in for coffee and perhaps directions and recommendations for travel and sightseeing. Often you can hear a sigh as a person enters, and they will remark about the way the space feels: “a very peaceful and good” vibe.

Frequently, an un-housed person will come in to rest from the weariness of being “moved along” on the street. In these cases we will offer a juice, coffee, or a bagel, a kind conversation, an outlet to charge their phone (their only connection to estranged family, loved ones, community services, or a doctor appointment). If you were there, you would hear and see the anger subside as their heart and soul becomes at ease again. It is in those times that one nods to oneself and thinks, “Ah, that is why I am here today.”

Additionally, we may have a box of veggies, or snacks, protein bars, water, or other supplies to hold a person over



Peaceful New Church of the Southwest Desert sanctuary with our ironwood altar, the open Word, two doves, prayer candles, and “Jesus of the Southwest Desert” by church member, Dug Sitowski, who recently transitioned to the spiritual world.

until being paid, or other resources come in. While there are several public bathrooms down the way, sometimes a shopper who has been turned away at another establishment comes in to use the restroom. We often help people fill out and turn in paperwork for food stamps, HUD housing, and college applications. These things are not our job, but in the long run help to make less work for us.

We have a comfortable place that is cool in summer/warm in winter with international flags circling the wall at ceiling height, and a wall-sized thoughtful photographic display fundraiser for children and families stuck at the border. We have colorful, historic famous Swedenborgian characters, by Swedenborgian artist Eleanor Schnarr, framed and gracing the walls.

We are also affirmed in our mission when someone just thinks they are coming in for coffee or creative expression, but leaves with a sense of friendship; gets a key piece of information critical to their well-being and future; or finds new hope, courage, belonging, or acceptance because someone saw

them and heard their story or listened to their concern without judgement.

Occasionally, someone will stop in to ask for a “go-fer” ride after the Oasis closes, when the pastor helps out or we may call another person in to help. We offer rides to the grocery store, doctor appointments, and housing agencies or run water, food, and other supplies to an un-housed person camping in the woods. This goes on regularly.

The Oasis has become a place of outreach, accessibility, connection, and community. Through this open door, people find this is a church that cares and is active in living faith. They may or may not ask about the church, but if they do, we show them. They are pleased to see that our image of Christ is as a Native American.

I heard someone say recently, “This is the only church I’ve ever seen that deserves to be called a church.” We’re sure it’s not the only one, but we do try to be real and faithful to scripture and Swedenborg’s writings.

Rev. Carla also stays in touch with far-flung Swedenborgians who do not have a nearby church and who visit

Continues on page 150

Report of the General Council Fall 2021 Meeting

BY KAREN CONGER, *Recording Secretary*

The General Council met for its fall session via Zoom on Friday, November 5 and Saturday, November 6. We had hoped to be able to meet in person but given the effects of the continuing pandemic, that plan was reluctantly scrapped.

Reports were received from the officers and all the standing committees. In addition, the Council was updated on the progress of the website redesign, which is in process under the guidance of the project facilitator, Ben Phinney, along with members of the Website Committee: Holly Bauer (Standing Committee for Communication and Information), Beki Greenwood (*Messenger*), Brittany Price (Central Office), Rev. Shada Sullivan (Council of Ministers), Rev.

Thom Muller (*Our Daily Bread*), and Rev. Cory Coberforward (Online).

The Convention 2022 Planning Committee has begun their meetings: Amanda Riley, Jonathan Mitchell, Dave Brown, Robert McCluskey, Dan Burchett, Jae Chung, Jane Siebert, Susannah Currie, Kurt Fekete, Brittany Price, Ros Taylor, Jim Lawrence, Jennifer Lindsay, and Karen Conger. The host churches are The Garden Church in San Pedro, California, Wayfarers Chapel in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, and Agapao Church in Orange County, California. The plans are for ministers to meet June 23–24, with convention officially opening the

evening of June 25 and continuing through the evening of June 28. The current plan is that portions of convention will be available online. Stay tuned for details as they become available.

The 2020 audit was presented to the General Council, and everything is in order for our financial records thanks to the work of Gina Peracchi and Jennifer

and these effects will continue to reverberate for an unknown period as 2021 closes and 2022 begins. Because of lowered expenses, due to having no in person meetings, the denomination, with donations from various people and ministries, has been able to extend financial aid to our ministries, to individuals in the Church, and to our three camps. Thanks be to God.

Kit Billings chair of the Committee on Admission to the Ministry, joined the General Council for an extended review and discussion on the Licensed Pastor Program. President Jane Siebert was directed to appoint an ad hoc committee to move forward on considerations from the General Council and other issues, including the Council of Ministers' constituency.

Treasurer Jennifer Lindsay presented the draft of a conflict of interest statement. After lengthy and valuable discussion, the Conflict of Interest Statement was so adopted. Going forward this document will be signed by all General Council members annually at the post-convention meeting; also, by all employees, members of the Investment Committee, the Committee on the Building Fund, and the Standing Committee for Financial Accountability. This document will be shared with all ministries and associations for their consideration to adopt.

The General Council will meet again in the Spring of 2022. ☪



Members of General Council and ExCom meeting over Zoom (beginning at the top left): Rev. Jane Siebert, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Kurt Fekete, Jennifer Lindsay, Karen Conger, Rev. Susannah Currie, Brittany Price, Rev. Betsy Coffman, Beki Greenwood, Rev. Jenny Caughman, Barb Halle, Herb Ziegler, Rev. Thom Muller, Stan Conger, Susan Hulcher, and Tom Murphy.

Lindsay. 2021 financials are coming in strong due to the PPP loan (which was duly forgiven) and lack of committee travel. The Common Fund investments increased by 9.6% this year and the payout rate was increased by the Investment Committee for 2022. This will help all our church and association investors in 2022. The proposed budget for next year was passed with a surplus.

The General Council members each have three to four ministries that they stay in touch with during the year, and these reports were delivered at the meeting. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our churches and camps,

Transcription Fun

It's sometimes helpful, to read the closed caption text while on Zoom calls. If the audio is garbled or otherwise difficult to hear, sometimes reading the words can aid you in deciphering what was said. It can also be funny. On our recent November General Council Zoom, it was particularly amusing to see all the different closed caption spellings of the spoken word "Swedenborgian." Here is a list of them that Kurt compiled during our meeting. (By the way, "Swedenborgian" was not one of them!)

Sweet and Georgian
Sweden origin
Sweden Georgian
Sweetened Borden
Sweden boarding
Sweden gorgeous
Twin Borden
Sweetened beverages
Sweden organism
Sweden margins
Swing boarding
Swim origin
Suite of origin
Sweden Gourgeon
Screen margin
Sweet and Gourgeon
Sweet and 4G



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.

Temenos Church Council Appoints Interim Pastor

Temenos Church Council has announced the appointment of Rev. Cairn Neely, known as The Outdoor Chaplain, as Interim Pastor for the Temenos community, effective as of Monday, November 15, 2021. Temenos is committed to honoring all paths and sits on fifty-seven wooded acres along the Broad Run Watershed in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Spiritual-based Sunday services are held at 10:00 AM in the historic Farmhouse located at 685 Broad Run Road, West Chester, Pennsylvania, and are also live streamed on their Facebook page (www.facebook.com/TemenosCommunity). All are welcome to attend.




Rev. Neely is passionate about nature and community and includes daily doses of time and prayer outdoors as part of a spiritual wellness routine. Involved in chaplaincy for more than ten years, Rev. Neely received a M. Div. with Chaplaincy Specialization from Lancaster Theological Seminary and earned a UNESCO Environmental Sustainability diploma through immersion studies with the shamans and people of the Ecuadorian rainforest. Clinical experience in trauma, grief, and bereavement work is a hallmark of Rev. Neely's professional focus.

Rev. Neely holds certifications in Pastoral Care and Crisis Intervention and their professional engagement includes racial, environmental, and social justice issues both locally and with the International Council of Community Churches, Churches United in Christ (CUIC), and consulting work for Interfaith Philadelphia.

After leading services as a guest

minister for quite some time, Rev. Neely has grown to appreciate Swedenborgian spirituality and thought, and given Rev. Neely's experience, wisdom, and fresh perspective, the Temenos Church Council is excited to begin a new chapter in ministry building on the longstanding church traditions of welcoming all paths, incorporating universal spiritual principles and prioritizing a reverence for nature. The church community looks forward to a growing relationship within and beyond the community.

Temenos Church was incorporated as the First New Jerusalem Society of Philadelphia and operates Temenos Retreat Center as an outreach to the community. The Retreat Center can be reserved for lodging events, retreats, workshops, meetings, weddings, and classes. In this serene environment, the beauty of nature allows individuals and groups to nourish body, mind, and spirit. 

Annual Appeal of the Swedenborgian Church

With only seven months left in my presidency, I am writing with thankfulness for your past gifts to the Swedenborgian Church of North America, and to ask for consideration of a gift for our future. As I think about the joy of giving, I share these words:

We give.

We give because we can.

We give because we care.

We give because we appreciate our Church.

We give, looking back at what our Church has given us.

We give, looking forward to the future of our Church.

We give, looking inward as the Divine fills our hearts and leads us to give.

This is a reminder how your gift helps and where it goes:

- Supporting our mission churches, like the Garden Church, the Korean Church and Church of the Southwest Desert.
- Investing in retreats and camps for our youth. In 2021 we raised an additional \$6000 during our Virtual Convention for each camp: Almont, Fryeburg, and Paulhaven.
- Paying salaries and expenses for our outreach ministries, like the online community Spiritual Sunshine, *the Messenger*, *Our Daily Bread*, and the Swedenborgian Church Youth League.
- Helping churches that have a special one-time need, like boilers breaking down, roof leaks, or cancelled rentals due to the pandemic. In 2020/2021 we distributed an additional \$68,000 in pandemic relief to churches and individuals.
- Supporting new initiatives and ideas to promote ministries, like additional audio/visual equipment and advice from our A/V consultant on how to serve our virtual members and in-person churches. This year fifteen churches asked for help and \$12,000 was given as matching funds for A/V equipment.
- And of course, paying the salaries for Central Office and president. To note: only the president receives a full-time salary. All other employees are part-time, and many have another Swedenborgian ministry they serve.

A friend from another denomination mentioned that we are lean at the top, and that is true. We are still deeply blessed by our many volunteers who are committed to the Swedenborgian Church of North America, our churches, and our camps.

Thank you all for your support, as I did my best to lead our denomination through a difficult and arduous time,

—Rev. Jane Siebert

Thoughts Along the Way

By President Jane Siebert

What is this denomination we call the Swedenborgian Church of North America?

It is a montage of
questing, wondering, and loving individuals;
energetic, searching, and inclusive youth;
open-minded, exploring, and faithful members;
dedicated, hardworking, and passionate elders;
giving, sharing, and helpful volunteers.

They are
striving to create sacred community,
deepen a personal connection with
their understanding of the Divine,
and living a life of use.

We come together
seeking truth, wisdom, and guidance.

We gather to learn
from the gift of Swedenborg's writings.

We care for one another
with compassion, understanding, and fellowship.
We hope to share what we have found
that has made a difference in our lives.

You are the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

*Nobody, not even an angel, can know
all the different ways in which people accept the Lord.*
—Emanuel Swedenborg

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What is New About the New Church?

Sermon Delivered on February 4, 1962 at the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church

BY DORRIT FLOOD

When we are asked by our friends and other young people, just what is *new* about the New Church—how it differs from any other church—it is sometimes difficult to know just what to say. In order to discuss the teachings of our church intelligently we need a good background of knowledge on many different subjects. Exactly what do we believe about God? About life after death? About heaven, and hell? About the Bible?

Today I am going to talk a little about what the New Church teaches about the Bible, which we sometimes refer to as the “Sacred Scriptures,” the “Word of God,” or just the “Word.” I should like to quote a little from a radio address given by Roy. L. Brown on the Power and Prestige of the Bible.

The Bible is so simple that a child can understand it, yet so profound that its deep riches have never fully been comprehended. Anyone who has studied anything of history of the Bible will be overwhelmed with wonderment at the mysterious method of its formation. Here is one book, composed of sixty-six books, written over a period of about one thousand, six hundred years, by about forty different human writers.

These writers include men from all walks of life—poets, priests, kings, even farmers and fishermen, men from all degrees of civilization, some writing from the center of Asia, some from the Arabian Desert, some from the Holy Temple at Jerusalem, some from the palaces of Babylon, some from the rocks of Patmos...many of the writers not even living in the same century.

Yet the Bible has one great theme, one great continuity of thought, one great eternal purpose. How can we

account for such beautiful symmetry, such perfect harmony, such revealed wisdom?

We are still getting the best moral codes of the world from the Bible, upon which all the basic laws of civilization have been founded. This Book is still attracting more attention, in this twentieth century, than any other writings in existence, for it is still the world's best seller. Who but God could, through men unskilled in arts, ...weave such a train of truths?

The Word teaches us about God and His purposes, about our own souls and their development and growth, and about our relationship to Him. God would not have to give us a revelation to tell us things we can find out by our own efforts.

What should we expect from the Word of God? That it would teach us natural science? Natural history? Things which we can find out for ourselves? No. The Word teaches us about God and His purposes, about our own souls and their development and growth, and about our relationship to Him. God would not have to give us a revelation to tell us things we can find out by our own efforts.

When the Lord was on Earth, He taught His followers by means of parables—using natural objects with which they were familiar, to teach spiritual truths. He uses the same method in the Bible. It is written in the natural sense which we can all read—but within the natural or literal meaning is the spiritual truth. We call this inner meaning the spiritual sense or meaning.

Sometimes we say the Bible was written in the language of correspondence. Earthly things correspond to heavenly things. Everything in the natural world corresponds to something in the spiritual world. In the Word, natural objects are used as symbols to express spiritual realities.

For example: water corresponds to truth. Just as water cleanses and refreshes the body, the truth cleanses and refreshes the spirit, or soul. Fire corresponds to love, for love is spiritual warmth and energy. However, if love is turned into self-love it can destroy, just as fire which is out of control can destroy. (This paragraph about correspondences in the Bible is from the book *Better Than Gold* which was published especially for young people of the New Church: page 21.)

To the New Churchman nothing is of greater value than the Word of God. In the strictest sense, the Word comprises the inspired book of the Old and New Testament—that is twenty-nine books of the Old and five of the New.

These books have a consecutive spiritual sense running through them from beginning to end. They are inwardly inspired. The other books of the Bible, which do not have the inward spiritual sense, are of great value for their history and oral teaching. They are to be honored as great religious writings, but they are not of the fabric of God's Word like the rest of the scriptures.

Swedenborg was able to perceive the spiritual sense of the Word of God, and to set it down clearly in the writings of the New Church. When our friends ask us what is new about the New Church in respect to our beliefs about the Bible, we can say that the

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Annual Appeal for the Center for Swedenborgian Studies

Thanks to the support of our donors past and present, graduate level Swedenborgian studies has achieved high visibility as a Center of Distinction at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) interacting with thousands of scholars and students of many traditions since arriving in Berkeley in 2001 at one of the world's most prominent theological consortia. We have worked with more than fifty students accomplishing some form of Swedenborgian studies education, which includes licensed pastors as a new level of consecrated leadership.

The two faculty we've recruited and developed over the past decade—Dr. Devin Zuber and Dr. Rebecca Esterson—were recently described as superstars by the president of the GTU during a meeting with the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) Board of Directors. Dr. Esterson was voted by her peers at the GTU with the 2020 Excellence in Teaching Award, and she has delivered her manuscript on Swedenborg's context and role in eighteenth-century biblical interpretation for a book to be published by The Society for Biblical Languages. Dr. Zuber's recently published *A Language of Things: Emanuel Swedenborg*



and the American Environmental Imagination with the University of Virginia Press. This book was awarded the prestigious Borsch-Rast Book Prize. Even after the move to Berkeley, we were able to continue working in online and video conferencing technologies with Rev. Dr. George Dole, a giant in Swedenborgian scholarship who passed into the spiritual world this past summer (www.swedenborgianstudies.org/reflections-on-george-doles-professional-career/).

As you may know, seminaries across the U.S. are facing challenges in attracting students. GTU and PSR (Pacific School of Religion) are no exceptions, and both campuses are making

changes to reduce administrative costs and to offset tuition declines by increasing facility rental income. This will impact CSS since we do not own the spaces we use for offices and our treasured library and archives. Cost increases are coming for our housing on "Holy Hill."

While we are able, we must strive to build our endowment so that CSS is able to continue the good work we've begun in reaching future influencers in the field of religion so that we can support the always budding interest in Swedenborg that our churches and internet ministries are stimulating.

Won't you join me in this mission by making a generous gift to CSS today?

Thank you,
Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence
Dean, Center for Swedenborgian
Studies

It's not too late to contribute to the Rev. Dr. George F. Dole Fund, which is dedicated to faculty support! Just put "George Dole Fund" in the memo line on your check or go to <https://www.swedenborgianstudies.org/reflections-on-george-doles-professional-career/> and designate your gift as a contribution to this special fund. ☒



Dr. Devin Zuber



Dr. Rebecca Esterson



Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

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Teen Storage

BY BJ NEUENFELDT AND IVY LITTLE

What an odd name! Very hard to store your typical teen... so how did this name evolve?

Detroit Storage Evolution

In the early 70s, the Church of the Holy City in Detroit decided to sell their church building. The intent was to purchase a new location with the proceeds of the sale, but markets didn't allow that, and they found a place to rent for the time, but that spot (the Royal Oak Women's Club) seemed to work so well that they stayed, and stayed, and still to this day in 2021 are meeting and worshipping there. But, back in 1971, they needed a place to store the important things they had from the church at Meyers and Curtis—it so happened that Almont, at the same time, was undergoing big changes as well and a gravel pit was dug and with the money, and some fund raising, and financial support, a new dorm complex was built, and two of the oldest dorms were torn down while the other two were relocated, one is the current craft cottage and one was set off to the side with no camp purpose but lots of empty storage space. Detroit asked, and Almont answered that, yes, the paperwork, choral music, and some furniture could be stored in this building, and so for many years it was called "Detroit Storage."

As the youth population began to grow at camp, the class space was limited and someone went in there and thought "this is a good usable space." So the Detroit archives were moved to a little room in the building created for this purpose, and the rest was outfitted with lovely cast-off furniture. This became the teen classroom, and then a place for the Survivors¹ to hang out.

1 "Survivors" are the teen group at Almont Summer School. They are initiated at 13 and age

When the question was asked "where are the teens?" the answer was often "oh, in Detroit Storage!" Eventually it became such a great clubhouse that the name just morphed into Teen Storage.

Recently a group of teens have been working on a makeover of the space with the repurposed furniture from Pfister Lounge. My granddaughter, Ivy Little, will tell a bit about that project.



Teen Storage Update

Teen Storage has needed a deep cleaning for who knows how long! We were able to move all the old sofas and some random junk that had been collecting in there over the past decades and threw it all into a dumpster. Obviously with the help of some other teens. It was hard to get rid of the sofas where we have all been sitting and sharing laughs, good cries at Tam Talks,² inside jokes, writing silly notes on the walls, and so many other special memories. But it was time for them to go, so we all decided on one sofa that we thought still had some life in it,

out at 18.

2 In the evening—or when needed—Tamara Mounce, the adult leader of the Survivors at camp, gathers the teens and they "talk." She is trained in counseling so they feel it is a safe space and call these sessions "Tam Talks."



the *coma couch* (so comfy it pulls you into a coma) as some of you may know it. The rest were replaced with the (slightly used but new to us) sofas from Pfister Lounge. It was definitely a big project, and it is far from finished, but I can't wait for all the new memories to be made there! A big thank you to all those who helped move and were open minded to some changes that needed to happen, even if we weren't ready to let go of what was there before.

Helpers included: Wyatt, Molly, Oliver, Nathan, Kristofer, Gillian, and a few adult family members who got in on the fun! 📷



BJ (Betty Jean) Neuenfeldt has been affiliated with the Swedenborgian Church her whole life, she currently serves on the Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM).

Ivy Little is a life-long Almonter and an active part of the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL), she currently serves as *Clear Blue Sky* editor.



Virtual Education Offering

Spirit in Action: Civic Engagement and Religious Life

Session One: Swedenborg's Civic Engagement Retrospectively Considered

Monday, January 31, 7:30 – 9:00 PM ET

Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism (SAAR), the Swedenborgian Church of North America's (SCNA) Social Justice Committee, and the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) present a winter/spring learning opportunity.

We all want to help our neighbor and make the world a better place through useful action. But sometimes it is hard to know how to have a meaningful impact. Ours is a tradition that encourages people of faith to be active and conscientious citizens.

In this five-part series we will explore this aspect of the Swedenborgian tradition, as well as ways to be civically engaged. This is a collaborative effort with the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), a non-partisan Quaker organization that provides guidance and training for people wishing to engage with their civic process on a variety of issues from a faith-based perspective.

Session One: Swedenborg's Civic Engagement Retrospectively Considered

*Monday, January 31,
7:30 – 9:00 PM ET*

The series will open the week of Swedenborg's birthday with a lecture on Swedenborg's own civic engagement and Swedenborgian theological considerations. Join us for a lecture with Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence on Swedenborg's own practices of civic engagement during his life, and how the notion of civic engagement relates to Swedenborgian theology. The lecture will be followed by a question and answer period.

Stay tuned for details on our next event, where we will be joined by The Friends Committee on National Legislation for a workshop titled Interfaith Advocacy 101. 📺

Zoom Login Details

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84794320685?pwd=Qm0wcXByNHFmalBSSnlQMWtOTlRmZz09>

Meeting ID: 847 9432 0685
Passcode: Civic2022

Save the Dates for the Upcoming Installments of this Series:

*Spirit in Action:
Civic Engagement and
Religious Life*

January 31,
February 28,
March 28,
April 25,
and May 23.

7:30–9:00 PM ET
(4:30–6:00 PM PT)

All classes are online on
Zoom.



Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism (SAAR) has a biweekly email newsletter that provides education around issues central to antiracism, ideas for actions to take, and inspiration to keep at it long-term. Email Rev. Shada Sullivan, revshada@gmail.com to join the email list.

The Rev. Eric Zacharias Memorial Library

BY JOYCE BARKER

At one time this little room just off the sanctuary of the Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem Church served the function as an office for Reverend Eric Zacharias. He used it as a place to prepare for his sermons, for counseling, and for reading, which was a lifelong enjoyment for him. This room also served as a location for Sunday school with various teachers through the years.

Unfortunately, after Eric's retirement, its function declined into a storage space—a place for an unused organ, plastic flowers, Christmas costumes, books, chairs, and lots of other things that just needed a place to be stored.

With Rev. Eric's passing into the spiritual world this past year, the congregation decided it was time to make the room useful again and all agreed to turn this room into a library space to honor him.

This turned out to be quite an undertaking, with the removal of things that did not belong there and finding homes for the organ and chair. The many, many, books and pamphlets had to be sorted. New bookshelves were obtained, the desk was refinished, and the perfect rug was found.

Fresh paint on the walls gave the space a clean start. Pictures were hung to give a glimpse of Rev. Eric's life as well as the life of the New Jerusalem Church.

And with the addition of the plaque naming the space the Rev. Eric J.

Zacharias Memorial Library, the little room has become a much more important place in the hearts of the congregation.

Just a note—every single person in the congregation helped with this project, which makes it that much more special. ☸



Images of the new space at the Pretty Prairie Church of the New Jerusalem dedicated to the Rev. Eric J. Zacharias, who transitioned to the spiritual world earlier this year.

"The more deeply we look into any object, the more wonderful, perfect, and intricate things we see... This is because the first substance comes from the spiritual sun, which is from the Lord and in which the Lord dwells."

-Emanuel Swedenborg, *Divine Providence* §6

Passages

Deaths



Michael K. Conaron, 37, passed into the spiritual world on November 11, 2021 (Veterans Day) after battling cancer for eighteen months. He is survived by his wife Janine, mother Rev. Julie Conaron, his three brothers and their wives and families. He will be sorely missed but is being reunited with his father and grandparents. ☪

New Licensed Pastors

Continued from page 137

Chung in Southern California in both English and Korean. Jae had translated the consecration and installation service into Korean. I gave a short homily about regeneration, and I noticed when Jae translated, she spoke with such joy and enthusiasm, and her translation was quite a bit longer than my English words, so I'm sure it was more of a sermon than my short homily. Jae has searched for many years for teachings that make sense to her and that she can live out in her life. When she speaks of Swedenborg her whole body lights up. She is invested in bringing the New Church teachings to her Korean community. Not only does she have a small home church, but she has also created a YouTube channel, ([Agapao ComeUnity](#)).

Jae's church also provided a time of respite for me and Jennifer Lindsay on

New About the New Church

Continued from page 145

study of the inner, or spiritual, sense of the Word is the distinctive contribution of the New Church. We can tell them that we believe the Bible contains the Word of God, that God gave us His Word to teach us about Him and about how we can be like Him; that the Bible is written as a parable—using familiar, natural things to teach spiritual and heavenly things.

One of the outstandingly new and distinguishing features of the New Church was the study of the inner meaning of the Bible, the key correspondences which the Lord gave to the world through the perception of Emanuel Swedenborg. ☪



Dorothea "Dorrit" Flood (11/25/1910 – 10/12/1982) was a lifelong member of the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church and a devoted Swedenborgian who loved words. Her daughter, Merrilee

Phinney, found this sermon in a collection of her written church essays. She was grandmother of *the Messenger* editor, Beki Greenwood.

Laguna Beach. I flew out for the Wayfarers' board meeting in Los Angeles, and afterwards Jae picked me up and offered a lovely hotel on the beach until the weekend special service. Jennifer drove down from San Francisco, and we enjoyed the waves and great seafood meals, including an official Korean barbeque. The highlight was the service at Jae's home, welcomed by her husband, daughter, and Korean members and friends and sharing a meal with them.

We are blessed to welcome these three new licensed pastors and hope to see them all at the annual convention this summer. ☪

Church That Could

Continued from page 141

occasionally. She also hosts a few people in need on occasion: a woman about to give birth, another waiting on housing, a young person kicked out of the house, another getting their medication right, and so on. She lives in a rooftop community of individuals who are parishioners who are inter-dependent on one another for a helping hand. They also enjoy art, music, and meals together. ☪



Rev. Carla Friedrich was born into the New Church (third generation) in 1956. Her home church was in Florida, followed by nine years in the General Church. Rev. Carla was ordained in 2005 in Berkeley,

California, consequently served in San Diego, California and Wilmington, Delaware. She has been serving at the New Church of the Southwest Desert in Silver City, New Mexico, for nearly seven years. She enjoys making art, writing children's stories, being in nature, learning about and supporting sustainable living practices, growing medicinal plants, and most of all spending time with her extended family and friends.

NEW! Follow *the Messenger* on Instagram!



What's Happening

Gathering Leaves 2022 Update

Subsequent to the sad news that the Director of Purley Chase, Rev. Alison Southcombe, passed into the spiritual world on September 30, 2021, plans for Gathering Leaves 2022 at Purley Chase have now been set aside. Alison's passing is a huge loss for Purley Chase and for the General Conference in the UK. Alison had participated in Gathering Leaves 2017 in Ontario, Canada, and was leading the Gathering Leaves Committee. The conversation has begun for finding a location for 2022 in the USA.

Please contact Rev. Roslyn Taylor hroslyntaylor@temple.edu or Rev. Jane Siebert president@swedenborg.org if you would like to serve on the Steering Committee for Gathering Leaves 2022.



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!

Do you write poetry, create puzzles or games, or have pieces of art you would like to share? We'd love to see them! Send it along to Messenger@Swedenborg.org.

A Perfect Gift for the Holiday Season

Looking for something simple and easy the will last the whole year long for someone this Christmas?

Consider a gift subscription to *the Messenger*!

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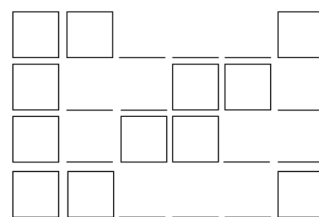
Manager@Swedenborg.org or visit <https://swedenborg.org/news-announcements/newsletter-the-messenger/> for more information.



SwedenborgianCommunity.org

With broadcasts every Thursday & Sunday, *Spiritual Sunshine: A 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.



G I L E H S
R E T Y K U
I G C R H N
N N F T I A

What holiday song would most likely be heard at a renaissance faire?

*Jumble by Jason Greenwood
Answers will be printed in the next issue.*

Answers to the November Jumble:

Latch, Flack, Donkey, Around

The only way I can stop telling Thanksgiving jokes is to do it, "Cold Turkey"

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.

Swedenborgian Church Youth League

Apples and Oranges: The Quest for Common Ground

SCYL Winter Teen Retreat for ages 13 – 19

Almont New Church Assembly in Allenton, Michigan

December 27th – 30th

At our retreats we offer life skills and spiritual sessions based on the principles of the Swedenborgian Church. We strive for a safe, secure, and inclusive environment to discuss and share relevant and meaningful ideas that help with challenges youth face today. We work, play, craft, and learn together as a community. We have fun! This year's theme is Apples and Oranges: The Quest for Common Ground. We all know that we live in a very divisive world. It seems everyone is taking sides and fighting. This retreat will help us discover ways to find common ground and peace amid the division. I'm sure we'll all benefit from the lively discussions and activities.

Everyone attending this retreat must be fully vaccinated for COVID-19. We will take extra care to follow all established CDC guidelines for hosting an overnight event. For everyone's safety, we will be limiting visitors and not leaving the retreat grounds.

The cost is \$75 with a household maximum of \$150. Cash or check payable to ANCA should be brought to the retreat. Assistance is available with the cost.

Bring a sleeping bag (if you are not flying), PJs, towel, personal items, musical instruments, and a friend!

For more information, please call or text youth director, Kurt Fekete, at 802.345.0169 or email kfekete@hotmail.com. See you there! 📱

