



Dr. Rebecca Esterson Named Next Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies

BY JANE SIEBERT

The Board of Trustees of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, (CSS) the Corporation of the New Church Theological School, is delighted and honored to announce the selection of our new dean, Dr. Rebecca Esterson, starting July 1, 2022.

Rev. Dr. James Lawrence is retiring after twenty-one years as dean and will become the new President of the Swedenborgian Church of North America at this year's annual convention in June.

Dr. Rebecca Esterson is supremely equipped to lead our church's seminary with her outstanding teaching and scholarship skills combined with her life-long love of the church. Her now-renown abilities in leading journeys of discovery ensure a promising future for our beloved community as we all continue



the quest for understanding and contributing Swedenborgian wisdom in the challenges of fulfillment as a culture and as individuals.
—Dean Jim Lawrence

There will be a celebration and reception honoring both Jim and Rebecca at this year's CSS Corporation meeting during convention.

Rebecca was raised Swedenborgian in the town of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, and joined the Swedenborgian Church of North America while in graduate school at Harvard Divinity School in Massachusetts. She was an active member of the Cambridge Society of the New Jerusalem for seventeen years. While there, Rebecca held several lay leadership positions, including serving on the worship committee for periods when they were without a minister, and time as both vice president and president. She served on the founding board of the Garden Church in San Pedro, California, and has been a member of the Hillside Community Church in El Cerrito,

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Convention Keynote to be Delivered by Dr. Rebecca Esterson *Images of Infinity in the Cosmic Garden*

Saturday, June 25 at 7:30 PM PT

This event is planned to be live-streamed for remote viewers

Our tradition teaches that we can know something about the infinite nature of God by observing the natural world around us. Here we will consider two ways that the created world is infinite. First, we see images of infinity in the myriad forms that bodies of living things exhibit. If the human face alone exhibits this quality, how much more so do the ecosystems that fill our universe. Secondly, we can see an image of infinity in the way a seed contains within it the power of self-propagation to eternity (*Divine Providence* §56). Reflecting on these images of infinity in space and in time can inspire our thinking about the nature of God and our participation in the unfolding of Providence, as individuals and collectively. This address will consider ways that these images might be usefully applied to urgent ethical concerns of our time, such as inequality and divisiveness, and to anxieties about the future of our church. 🌐

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Editor's Corner



Keeping the Distance at Bay

March is typically the month when many of us start working on summer plans. For the first time in two years, it feels like we can really start doing that. We're getting closer and closer to the *business as usual* feeling that we have been waiting for. Convention and summer camps are working on their in-person plans—getting excited about gathering again. We have learned so much over the past couple years about how important it is to feel togetherness—no matter the distance—and we will strive to keep those lessons at the forefront and keep those who are farther away feeling close.

The annual convention being held in Long Beach, California, this year, has a hybrid convention team working on the virtual components of the

event. There are still so many uncertainties, even though it feels like we have come through the other side, that it has been prioritized to offer what we can for virtual participants. With fuel and travel costs currently on the rise, there are sure to be several people who wish to be there but have financial concerns or still hesitant due to the pandemic. Plans for live streaming the keynote and worship services, interactive business meetings, and a variety of ways to participate in mini courses will make even the most distant participants feel part of the event. There is nothing like being together at convention, but now we can include more Swedenborgians than ever and feel like we are all one. Registration for both in-person and virtual convention will be open in mid-April. (See p. 24 on how to donate to help offset costs on convention.)

Not only is convention back on track, but summer camps are as well. Almont will be celebrating forty years of Survivors this summer (see p. 28) with plans to be back in-person after missing two summers. So many of us who have grown up going to a Swedenborgian camp every summer live all year for that time with our spiritual family. They will be hosting a celebration worthy of two years of being apart.

The Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) has just opened registration for the 2022 session in August. Last year, time and effort was spent researching how to make their hybrid vision come to life. People from all over North America were able to join in and watch the lectures, participate in discussion group, and there were lectures delivered by remote presenters, too. They will continue to have virtual lectures and other religious programming for anyone and hope to continue last year's trend of many new in-person campers, and members and friends

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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.

Letters to the Editor

Response to January/February Editorial

Firstly, let me express my profound thanks to all who work/contribute to this newsletter. I would like to respond to a couple of issues in your latest editorial in *the Messenger*.

You spoke about Putin's troops surrounding Ukraine. What the media neglects to mention is that there are 300,000 U.S. troops in Europe. U.S. has advisors in Ukraine and has

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Letter from the President

The Year of Providence: 2021–2022



Dear Friends,

Many say, “Reading Swedenborg is hard,” I agree, and I am wondering if we are making it harder than it needs to be.

Think about the verse, “*And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.*” John 8:32. In the Swedenborgian Church of North America, we hold Swedenborg’s writings as divinely inspired truth. So, reading Swedenborg should set us free rather than bind us to one way of thinking. It is important to have those that have studied and written and who made it their life work to lead us as clergy and learned scholars. And at the same time, this guidance should leave us free to ponder the words in our own minds rather than limited to one way of understanding. They write to help us think deeply, not to tell us what to think.

Many of our churches have added a time of discussion after the service or message. This allows participants to participate, to think what this means in their lives, to bring the truths into their lives and breathe life into what they have heard. “Truth that is not truth in act or deed has no life in it. Every truth is sown in the inner self and takes root in the outer one. Consequently, unless the truth that is sown takes root in the outer self, which it does by being put into practice, it becomes like a tree placed not

in the ground but on top of it, which in the radiating heat of the sun immediately wilts” (Emanuel Swedenborg *Apocalypse Revealed* §17).

Swedenborg’s writings, and the corollaries written about what Swedenborg said, should be read with our minds open to receive the living message within the words to us, just like we read the Bible and Mary Oliver’s poems. Our beloved George Dole told us the Bible is about us. We question, what is the Di-

vine spirit saying to me through these words? What truth stirs my heart and helps me to love more? How can I put what I understand to work in my life to live a better life? Are there parts I don’t understand?

This relates to what I am writing here. Each reader reads and understands through their own lens. Some may resonate with my words, and some may want to discuss further or even completely disagree. And even what one thinks personally about me may influence their reception. Our response is colored by what else is going on in our lives, or how we felt when we woke up this morning.

So, is there ultimate Truth? Can we distill it and hang on to it and say, “Yes, I’ve got it? I understand?” I believe there is ultimate Truth, capital “T”. However, this Truth is infinite and living and we are finite

The ultimate Truth I hold to is God is Love, and even that is understood by each of us in our own way.

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Cleaning Out Central Office

BY HERB ZIEGLER

Over a long weekend in February, a crew of Swedenborgians assumed the task of sorting through files and various collected items that convention had stored in the basement of Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The collection of papers and other items has been piling up for many years and only occasionally accessed for a variety of reasons. It was time to do a thorough review and reduce the mass of unnecessary paper. Led by convention president Jane Siebert and president-elect and dean of CSS, Jim Lawrence, with the help of convention treasurer, Jennifer Lindsay, account manager Gina Peracchi, convention vice president, Kurt Fekete, chair of the Library and Documents Committee, Nancy Little and her church history enthusiast husband Trevor, and myself—the team went to work.

Jennifer and Gina dug into the financial records. With a keen understanding of the legal requirements for financial record keeping, for three days they went through records and produced many bags of shredded documents for disposal.

In addition to his skills and knowledge as an academic, Jim is a treasure trove of knowledge of both Swedenborgianism and the history of the Swedenborgian Church of North America, as well as familiarity with many of the people involved in governance leadership and participation in the church in the past and the present. Therefore, he became the go-to person for checking on whether documents reviewed by the rest of us should be



Above: Central Office clean out team trapped in the Cambridge Cage: (Left to right) Gina Peracchi, Herb Ziegler, Nancy Little, Jennifer Lindsay, Trevor, and Jim Lawrence

Below: Framed piece of wallpaper was found with the following inscription on the back: "This piece of wallpaper came from the house in Stockholm in which Emanuel Swedenborg was born in 1688."

Right: Note on the back of the wallpaper.

kept or discarded and, if kept, what their disposition should be. So, we began sorting through numerous boxes that have been in storage and retrieved from a remote storage facility, looking at each document.

Much of it had no historical value and was of no use to future researchers, and we disposed of it. And what we kept we reorganized into better labeled folders and placed them in file drawers and file boxes, labeled appropriately.

On top of files, there was quite a bit of office equipment and supplies to be dealt with. Central Office and its employees are now remote. This saves on rent and allows staff to be based

anywhere—not just in the Boston area. For some reason, we had an excessive amount of office supplies. These items, along with the office furniture and fixtures, are being distributed to people who need them.

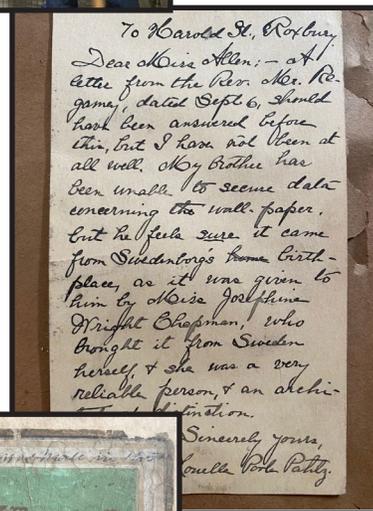
The last type of things we came across were items of historical, sentimental, or personal value for Swedenborgians. These were collected and set aside for an auction to be held

at the annual convention in June in California. Jane had boxed prizes, small stones that she had hand painted for the person who found the most surprising

thing and the person who found the oldest thing. Yours truly came across a small, framed image that looked like an old print of some sort. Turning it over, there was documentation that it was a

piece of wallpaper from Swedenborg's home in Stockholm. It stated that the wallpaper had been produced in 1654. I won the prize for the oldest item! It will be among the variety of items on auction at the annual convention in June. ☸

Herb Ziegler resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and serves on the General Council. He is the former editor of *the Messenger*.



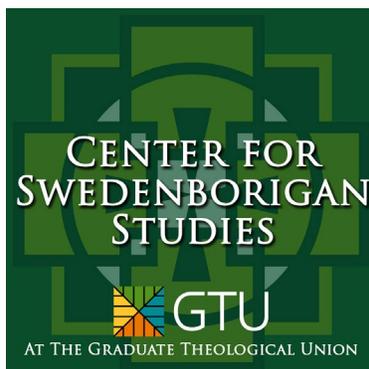
New Dean of CSS

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California, since she arrived in the Bay Area in 2015. Rebecca serves currently on the Hillside church board, the denomination nominating committee, and Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism. She is the Dorothea Harvey Professor of Swedenborgian Studies and Associate Professor of Sacred Texts and Traditions at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, California.

Many of you know Rebecca from a variety of educational programming where Swedenborgians gather, including lecturing at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, offering mini courses at Convention, and programs of the West Coast Association and the Bay Area's annual Memorial weekend Swedenborgian retreat.

Dr. Esterson has created a good following at CSS and GTU. Her classes draw Swedenborgian students and a wide variety of graduate students on various theological career paths. Classes like "Death, Grief and Im/mortality," "Genesis: A Journey Inward," and "Incarnational Theology" offer an interface with a Swedenborgian theological context and other Christian and non-Christian traditions. Each class has experiential objectives and application to a life of uses.



Acknowledgement of her teaching has resulted in many awards and elite recognitions including the Teaching In Excellence Award from the GTU (2020); Early Career Faculty Workshop Fellow from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion (2019) and Fellowship Grant Recipient (2019–2020); the Helen G. Allen Humanities Award and the Angela J. and James J. Rallis Memorial Award from Center for the Humanities at Boston University (2015); and the Outstanding Teaching Fellow Award from the College of Arts and Sciences at Boston University (2014).

Esterson's publishing history includes articles through the Swedenborg Foundation, scholarly Journals, and her forthcoming book, published by the Society of Biblical Literature Press, on biblical interpretation in the eighteenth century, titled *Imagining Jewish Allegory*. 📖

Virtual Education Offerings for the Planet

Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Wisdom* in Conversation

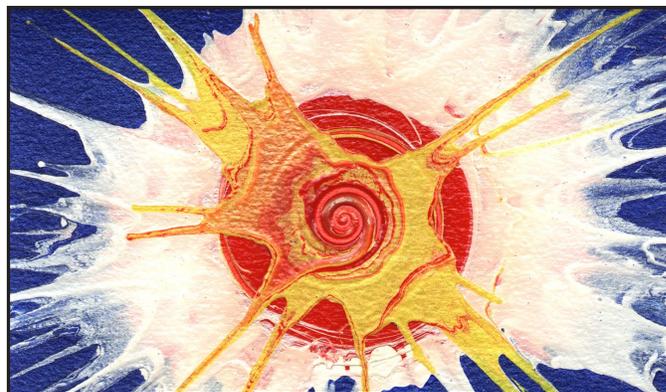
With Dr. Rebecca Esterson

Tuesdays, March 29 – April 19 from 4:00 – 5:30 PM ET

This four-part online course with Dr. Esterson will invite participants to a close reading of Swedenborg's work, *Divine Love and Wisdom*. In tracing the contours of a Swedenborgian incarnational theology, we will consider what it means to engage an embodied God and how divinity manifests in the natural world and the human body. That embodied action and participation in the thriving of God's creation is the ultimate incarnation, the end goal of all religious learning and practice, will be considered in conversation with contemporary

discourses, such as disability theology, womanist theology, and ecotheology. This program is part of the "Virtual Education Offerings for the Planet" series being run by the faculty of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies.

This is a free, online learning initiative. All sessions will be on Zoom. 📺



Please register in advance by emailing the instructor at resterson@gtu.edu.

Reflections: We Did It!

Looking Back on FNCA 2021

BY TREVOR

A very huge *thanks* to everyone who pitched in to make the in-person 2021 session of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) so wonderful. We couldn't have done this without your help and support. We are especially grateful to the following:

1. The CALM Team (Camp Administration Leadership Management) who stepped up in May to act as camp director when we suddenly found ourselves without one. Beki Greenwood, Emily Woofenden, Trevor, Rev. Susannah Currie, Miriam Lexie, and Carol LeBaron pulled off the amazing feat of making the 2021 session work smoothly and professionally without a visible hitch.

2. The COOK Crew (Caretakers Of Our Kitchen): Jason Greenwood, Chris Tergliafera, and Alex Dyer who jumped in at the very last minute when the cooks quit *the day before camp started*. These three pulled off a seamless miracle in preparing our meals and running the kitchen and dining hall efficiently, effectively, and on time. They are the 2021 FNCA superheroes!

3. The Tech Team: Beki Greenwood, Kristina Madjerac, Bob Perry, Ben Phinney, and Chris Tergliafera. They researched, ordered, and installed our entire new A/V system and then ran technology for all our hybrid events. Special thanks to Convention's SCCI (Standing Committee for Communication and Information) Technology Grant and the Gray Fund for funding our upgrades.

4. Dave Richardson, Colgate Searle, Dan Dyer, and the entire Buildings & Grounds Committee for their work building the new bell tower, the new granite Ruby bench, helping to create

our new art cabin, taking the dock in and out, and numerous on-the-spot repairs before, during, and after camp.

5. The Centennial Celebration Committee



tee chaired by Nancy Little, with assistance from her husband Trevor, for their careful planning of a variety of programs throughout the entire session celebrating the FNCA's first 100 years!

6. Plus the many, many camper volunteers who continually filled in the gaps cheerfully and selflessly throughout the entire session.

The Opening Weekend Program was *Reconnecting with Camp*, led by Rev. Susannah Currie, Tina Wood, Leone Dyer, Carol LeBaron, and Rev. E. Kent Rogers. Campers enjoyed: Reconnecting with the Land; Empty Box Meditation; Reconnecting with Each



Above: The new granite bench overlooking the Saco River in memory of Ruby Blackman being enjoyed by Ruby's mother, Amy (Perry) Cooke, and her uncle, Bob Perry.

Left: The COOK Crew from left to right: Alex Dyer, Chris Tergliafera, and Jason Greenwood.

Below: New Bell Tower (rotten branch it replaced at the lower left).



Other; and the Gifts of Solitude, Silence, and Stillness.

Lecture themes were "The Sayings of Jesus" and "On Love to the Neighbor." Lecturer staff was the Revs. Susannah Currie, Sage Cole, George McCurdy, Gard Perry, Roslyn Taylor, Paul Martin, as well as Dr. Ian

Thompson and this year's Rev. Everett K. Bray Visiting Lecturer: Rev. E. Kent Rogers. All lectures were streamed live and included both in-person and virtual lecturers, thanks to our experience with virtual camp last year.

The Afternoon Book Club enjoyed Rev. Dr. George F. Dole's 2016 book: *A Thoughtful Soul: Reflections*

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Reflections of FNCA 2021

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on Swedenborg, under the leadership of Rev. Susannah Currie and Rev. E. Kent Rogers, with most sessions held outdoors on the lawn.

The biggest excitement was probably transforming the former boys' bunkhouse into our new art cabin: The Treehouse. Led by a full-time art director, campers young and old were thrilled with daily art activities in a wide variety of artistic styles and creations... and lots of great art!

Special presentations included: a virtual tour of Wood's Cider Mill, social justice sing-along hosted by SAAR, cup crankies craft, comedy improv, a facilitated science and religion discussion, The Subtle Body in Swedenborg and Siddha Yoga, England Canal Boat Tour travelog, a slide show of Alia Woofenden's research on Anita Dole, and the FNCA's 100th anniversary birthday cake on the Assembly's actual 100th birthday: Saturday, August 7, 2021.

Plus, old favorites: Sparks Games, Flames Games, the Banana Hunt, Tie Dye Day, Purple Day, The Lalla Scrabble Tournament, adult soirées in Frank Hall, and the annual FNCA Sales Table Auction held virtually.

We did morning chapel and all our singing graces before meals standing in a big circle outside on the front lawn Almont style. We sang many old favorites and some energetic new ones that got us rockin' it before meals.

At the Annual Meeting, Beki Greenwood was elected Camp Director; Miriam Lexie, Rev. E. Kent Rogers, and Trevor were elected to the Board of



Above: The FNCA Board of Directors from left to right: David Richardson, Dan Dyer, Rev. E. Kent Rogers, Beki Greenwood, Trevor, Emily Woofenden, Colgate Searle, Jr., Tina Wood, Miriam Lexie, Jesse White, Kristina Madjerac, and Bob Perry.
Left: The Progress Pride Flag now flies on Chalmers Lodge, the teen rec hall, which makes it visible from the main road and the front porch of the Main Building.
Below: "Everybody's George (Dole)" at the FNCA in 1932



Directors; and after a spirited discussion, the Assembly voted to fly the Progress Pride flag visible from the road to publicly show that we are a welcoming organization to all.

The new officers are Dan Dyer, president; Colgate Searle, vice president; Emily Woofenden, secretary; Bob Perry, treasurer; Jesse White, assistant treasurer; Kristina Madjerac, clerk.

We were honored by the Dole family's choice to hold the memorial service for the FNCA's own Rev. Dr. George F. Dole (July 8, 1931 – June 29, 2021) at the Assembly. We planned the final Saturday of camp as a full day of all-things-G.F.D.: the Dole 3 Miler Road Race, showing a 2018 Science and Spirituality interview with Rev. Dr. Dole, the memorial service itself, an outdoor dinner reception based on George's

favorite camp meal (franks and beans), and a G.F.D. Song & Story Swap.

George's service was held under a huge tent on the front lawn with the congregation looking out over the river at that spectacular mountain vista. It opened with a quartet consisting of his two daughters, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter delighting the audience with an appropriate song about rivers. Featured speakers included the president of Convention, the dean of the theological school, relatives, friends, and colleagues.

Overall, campers young and old, new and returning, were absolutely delighted, thrilled, enthusiastic, and just plain feeling good about being back at the good old FNCA once again! It's our little slice of heaven on earth. 🌈

Trevor is the chair of the FNCA Outreach Committee and a life-long attendee at the FNCA.

Registration for FNCA 2022, July 30 – August 14, is open.
www.fryeburg.org/register
 Contact the registrar, Miriam Lexie, with any questions:
registrar@fryeburg.org



SATURDAY, JUNE 25TH – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29TH 2022

Dear Friends,

We are gearing up for Convention 2022 at California State University at Long Beach June 25 – 29. We need your help to underwrite the expenses. As you are all aware costs continue to increase. Our goals are **to keep registration fees as low as possible, subsidize costs for children and youth, and cover the additional costs for a hybrid convention so members and friends can attend in person and/or virtually.**

After two years of virtual conventions, we have witnessed the value of live-streaming worship services, business meetings, and mini courses. We have hired extra technical assistance to produce the best virtual convention possible. We also feel deeply the need for as many as possible to come together and share the fun, learning, and spiritual gifts that our annual convention offers. We will be taking necessary health precautions, based on the university's requirements and how things are improving by mid-spring.

Registration for convention will open in early spring. Please visit swedenborg.org for updates as they become available.

When giving, please tell us how you would like your gift to be used:

- To keep the cost of attending convention as low as possible for all.
- Scholarships for children and youth and underwriting other expenses to enable them to attend.
- To help pay for the additional cost of making convention available online for those that cannot attend in-person.

There will be posters at convention 2022 recognizing your gifts.

There are several ways to give:

- You can donate online with a credit card by clicking the PayPal button (no PayPal account necessary) at <https://swedenborg.org/donate/> Please indicate in the “notes” section how you would like your gift to be used.
- You can use the QR code at the bottom of this letter to link directly to the PayPal account. Please indicate in the “notes” section how you would like your gift to be used.
- You can use Zelle to transfer money directly from your account to the Swedenborgian Church of North America. Please indicate in the “notes” section how you would like your gift to be

used. The Zelle contact email is: accounting@swedenborg.org

- You can donate with a check made out to “Swedenborgian Church of North America” with “Convention 2022” in the memo. Please include a note with the check indicating how you would like your gift to be used. You can mail your check to:

**Central Office
Swedenborgian Church
50 Quincy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138**

Please email Operations Manager Brittany Price at manager@swedenborg.org with any questions.

Thank you in advance for your donation and prayers for a very special convention. 🙏

—Rev. Jane Siebert,
President, Swedenborgian Church of North America

—Rev. Susannah Currie,
Chair, Council of Ministers

Open the camera on your phone and scan this QR code to easily donate via PayPal.



Letter from the President

Continued from page 19

and limited in this natural plane. We have a perception of truth, and we must remember it is *our current* perception. We need to stay open to continued influx by the Holy Spirit to refine our understanding by holding it up to the light of the Divine. And that light, insight, influx is alive and continuous, so how can truth be static and defined and limited?

The ultimate Truth I hold to is *God is Love*, and even that is understood by each of us in our own way. What do we mean by “God” and what do we mean by “love,” and even what is “is”?

When we pick up one of the books of Swedenborg, I feel we should read with freedom. We shouldn’t be restrained by a fear of “getting it wrong.” There are parts that will immediately resonate as truth for each of us and there will be parts that make us scratch our heads in wonderment of what does this mean. I think reading with freedom means to be open to what the words say to us and how they help us to live a life of goodness and service, and to pass over the words that do not come through to us with clarity, leave them for another day. If we concentrate on what we do not understand today, we can miss the jewels within the words as the Divine breathes life into them and opens our minds to receive.

Spring cannot come soon enough.

With care and thankfulness for each of you,

—Rev. Jane Siebert

Thoughts on Truth

A subject keeps popping up before me in a variety of venues, including the morning’s, *Sojourner’s Verse of the Day*:

Swedenborg had quite a bit to say about truth. Others have offered interesting quotes that are worth pondering:

If you tell the truth, you won’t have to remember anything.

—Mark Twain

The truth will set you free. But not until it is finished with you.

—David Foster Wallace

The truth is still the truth even if no one believes it. A lie is still a lie, even if everyone believes it.

—Unknown

They are just angry because the truth you speak contradicts the lie they live.

—Unknown

A lie doesn’t become truth, wrong doesn’t become right, and evil doesn’t become good, just because it’s accepted by a majority.

—Booker T. Washington

The truth carries a weight that no one can counterfeit.

—Manku Allahabadi

The thread of truth is our life line, the connection of our soul to our physical body.

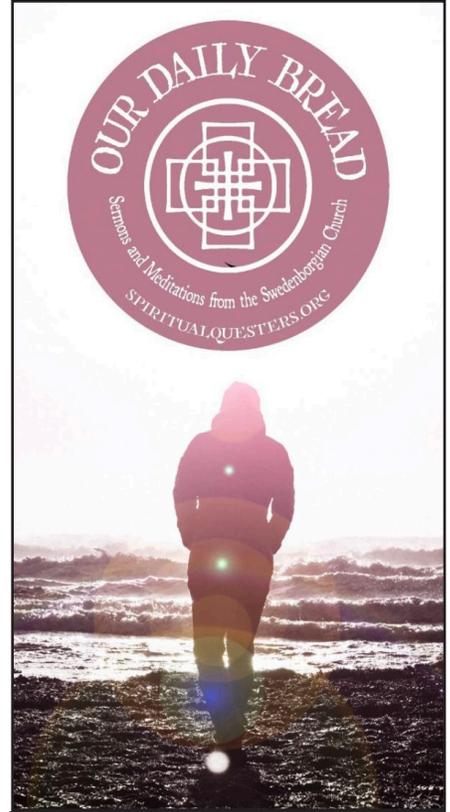
—Rumi

It is said that ignorance is bliss. Ignorance is this: a vine that sneaks up a tree, killing not by poison, but by blocking out its light.

—Amanda Gorman

A half-truth is still a lie.

—Unknown



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“Heaven is granted only to people who know the way to it and who travel that way...Angels recognize there is knowledge of the way from a walking in it and a walking of the way from a knowledge of it.”

—Emanuel Swedenborg, *Divine Providence* §60

What Does Swedenborg's Civic Engagement Say About Our Times?

BY JIM LAWRENCE

Since Swedenborg plays an exceptionally influential role in our tradition, it is worth asking how he approached the matter of action in the social arena as part of his faith commitments. Though he did not address specific social issues in his theological works (explicit social justice theology as we know it today arises in the century *after* Swedenborg) and though there were compelling social problems in his world, not the least being an active slave trade, Swedenborg did nevertheless live a life of remarkable commitment to civic engagement, and his theology contains both foundation and vision for a social justice arc to help us today.

Due to his father's own foremost role at the highest levels of the church and society, Swedenborg's family became ennobled when he was thirty-one, and as the oldest surviving male child, Emanuel began serving in the Swedish Parliament at that early age. His contributions to government rose to a level of considerable significance, especially in the areas of economics and advocacy of a more democratic voice in government. He helped solve a national economic crisis in the early 1760s through his design and advocacy of a strict monetary policy regarding currencies. He also lived through decades of political unrest at the highest levels on the strength of an authoritarian monarchy versus an expanding democratic structure of the ruling government, and Swedenborg was noted as one of the most effective voices for an expanded democratic rule, which he based on the importance of freedom reigning more truly throughout the populace.

A part of this expanded democratic voice included the religious voice

in the public square via his unwavering support for the legitimacy of the House of Clergy in Parliament. Though Swedenborg had resisted his father's wish for him to undertake the life of a clergyperson, Swedenborg was known after 1760 as an author of religious writings, and so his participation in government during the latter phase involved a religious aspect in how his voice was heard. We can infer from all this that he viewed the religious voice as a crucial component in establishing public laws and policies.

If we have eyes to see, social justice foundations are built into Swedenborg's theology. Love in action is central to regeneration, and such love always orients to the degrees of who is the neighbor to be loved. The national social order moves toward the larger scale of our true neighbor and thus very much entails civic engagement. Additionally, Swedenborg's legendary engaged spirituality of usefulness certainly applies toward facilitating goodness in this larger degree of our neighbor, and that means social justice work. Finally, one way to locate love to the larger degrees of neighbor is through his concept of the *maximus homo*—the universal human. This is a profoundly social understanding of how we live deeply connected with everyone. Thus, love in action always must take the whole into consideration.

To conclude, Swedenborg participated at a high level in supporting a religious voice in civic affairs given the context of religion and government in his own times. Therefore, if we wish to consider Swedenborg as an example, we can say he provides encouragement for speaking and acting in the public square at a high level given the context of religion and society in our times. ☸

The Year of Providence

Providential Paths

BY EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

There is a clear image of what is infinite and eternal in the angelic heaven. The angelic heaven is also one of the things we need to know about. Every religious person thinks about it and wants to go there. Heaven, though, is granted only to people who know the path to it and follow that path. We can know the path to heaven to some extent simply by considering what the people who make up heaven are like, realizing that no one can become an angel or get to heaven unless he or she arrives bringing along some angelic quality from the world. Inherent in that angelic quality is a knowing of the path from having walked it and a walking in the path from the knowing of it.

We can know the path to heaven to some extent simply by considering what the people who make up heaven are like...

There really are paths in the spiritual world, paths that lead to each community of heaven and to each community of hell. We all see our own paths, spontaneously, it seems. We see them because the paths there are for the loves of each individual. Love opens the paths and leads us to our kindred spirits. No one sees any paths except those of her or his love. We can see from this that angels are simply heavenly loves, since otherwise they would not have seen the paths that lead to heaven. However, this is better supported by a description of heaven *Divine Providence* §60 (trans. Rev. Dr. George F. Dole). ☸

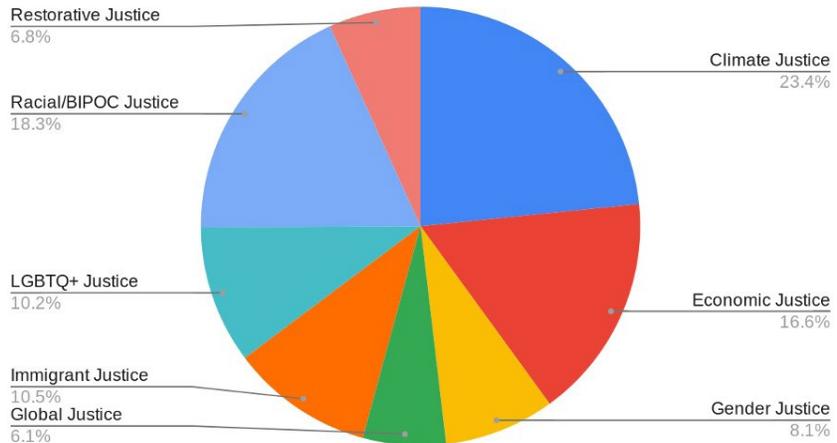
From the Social Justice Committee

The Survey Results are In!

BY AMANDA ADAMS RILEY

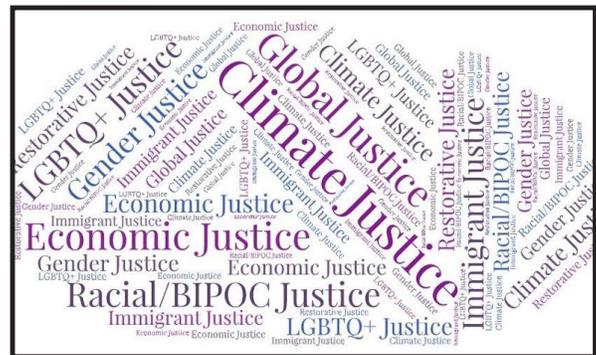
The Social Justice Committee (SJC) received 111 responses from our recent survey. Thank you all for taking time to share your thoughts, interests, and passions with us. We greatly appreciate all the responses and the ability to get a sense of where the Lord is tugging at our hearts and minds in this new year. The largest number of respondents prioritized Climate Justice (69) followed by Racial/BIPOC Justice (54). Nearly 40% of respondents wanted to attend a meeting and learn more. The SJC is committed to organizing a meeting for all who expressed interest in late March. One quarter of respondents expressed interest in joining one of our online Facebook communities committed to this work. A handful of respondents expressed interest in leadership in this work. The Social Justice Committee is thrilled to have this information to guide and shape our work

Social Justice Survey Results



as well as knowing who would like to be more involved including in leadership positions.

With Sincere Gratitude,
The Social Justice Committee



Spirit in Action: Civic Engagement and Religious Life

Session Three: Lobby Training & How to Engage Congress

Monday, March 28, 7:30 – 9:00 PM ET

We all want to help our neighbor and help 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. We will explore this aspect of the Swedenborgian tradition as well as concrete ways to be civically engaged in a five-part series from January through May.

Join us for the third installment:

Lobby Training & How to Engage Congress

(Led by the Friends Committee on National Legislation)

- Standard lobby training, how to engage your member of Congress
- A short briefing on a bipartisan piece of legislation, as an example

This is a *non-partisan* event series, designed to support civic action generally, without preference to specific issues.

Save the Dates for the Upcoming Installments of this Series:

April 25,
and May 23

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/3athwm9a>

Or contact Rev. Shada Sullivan at revshada@gmail.com



Almont Summer School

LEARNING TO LIVE THE GOLDEN RULE

Almont Survivor Forty Year Anniversary

Did you realize that over 250 campers have been initiated into the Almont Survivors since its inception in 1982? That's a lot of people!

At camp *this* summer, we will initiate a big group— “The Covid Generation,” as it were. We will have the youth who would have initiated in 2020, the youth who would have initiated in 2021, and the youth who will initiate this year, our 40th year, 2022.

Our wish is, on Survivor Friday, July 29, 2022, many of you Legacy Survivors will gather with us on this milestone. To make this anniversary even more exciting, we are planning some special things to honor our Survivor heritage. We are designing a 40th anniversary t-shirt (this time with the correct flag orientation!), that we will debut after a Parade of Survivor Shirts Past. There will be an epic, *all survivor*, water balloon war. Interviews of past and new Survivors will be added to a thumb drive to be included in a time capsule. We're also asking you to bring

A friend will not say never, 'cause the welcome will not end.... A lifetime's not too long to live as friends.



items to add to it, to be opened at the 50th anniversary in 2032. In addition, we need things for an auction: stuff that reminds you of Almont, red and white items, your hand-crafted goods, framed art or photos—any contribution you feel will help us remember that “Friends are Friends Forever.” It would be awesome to have forty items to represent our forty-year legacy.

Our rec hall needs major repairs. We need approximately \$60,000 to make this happen. We would be so grateful if all the 250-plus Survivors would make a \$40 contribution to Almont, in honor of our forty years of love, laughter

and friendship. Just think—if 250 survivors (or their families, friends, supporters) donated just \$40 each, that's \$10,000. Between the teen store for

pop, the dances we've always loved (Four Guys DJ!) and the teen-lounge-now-preschool room, the Survivors really utilize this space. Our retreat center can use this space for rentals, so the repairs will help keep our youth coming back for

future Survivors.

Send your pictures, memories or moments to Tammara Mounce at: tammaramounce@gmail.com

Send your donation to:

**ANCA c/o Betsy Lau Aldrich
120 White Fox Cove,
Round Rock, TX 78664**

Or use the donate button on the [ANCA Facebook page](#).

*Tam – Survivor Advisor and
Your ANCA Survivor filled board,
Craig, Charly, Betsy, Amy, Jack, and
Rose* 🍷

An Invitation to Journey Within: Logopraxis

An Evening with Sarah Walker

Sunday, April 24 at 7:00 PM ET

Logopraxis is a term coined from the Greek words *Logos*, meaning “the Word,” and *praxis*, meaning “to practice.” Simply it means “to practice the Word.”

It is a process orientated approach for engaging with sacred texts in that it is founded on the community’s collective acknowledgement that the Lord continuously reveals Himself through them. These texts form a Divine Revelation or Word. They provide the basis for experiencing the Lord’s presence with us when they are taken into the mind and life through the practice of the truths they offer.

In the New Church organization, we have an acknowledgement that the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg are the texts that have been provided by the Lord to support the regeneration of the human mind. With this as our starting principle we can then surmise that the text is what is given for us to hear what the Lord needs us to hear with regards to divine truth and in how to apply it to our lives. In this way the text can be seen as the meeting place where our outer self, which is reading it, is able to meet with the Lord’s inflowing life in what is of His church within us. So, the text is the



AN INVITATION TO JOURNEY WITHIN IN 2022

Logopraxis



Join us as we explore the text "Heaven and Hell"

Are you at a time when you want something deeper in your spiritual life?

If so, the simple but profoundly effective Logopraxis Approach might be your key.

means by which we can become more conscious of the thoughts and affections that are present for us that are heavenly, i.e., that are of the Lord, and in consequence of that, of those thoughts and affections that are in opposition to what is heavenly, i.e., that are of the hellish proprium.

If we can approach the text with an openness to receiving what it is the Lord has to say to us in this way, then what we observe, what is reflected back, what catches our attention, what we are drawn to... will give us an indication about where our specific work lies in terms of our spiritual regeneration.

We open then to the idea that instead of it being a one-way dialogue of us studying the text—we find that the text is in fact studying us because it is the means by which we may study ourselves.

This year will be starting to work with Swedenborg’s Heaven and Hell. This is a particularly good text to begin using the Logopraxis approach for anyone new to Logopraxis or interested in trying it out.

To learn more, join us for an evening with Sarah Walker on Sunday, April 24 at 7 PM ET. Sarah is a candidate for ordination with the New Church in Australia. Her passion for ministry lies in the Logopraxis approach. It has completely changed her relationship with the works of Swedenborg and has led her into a new life in the Word as the Lord that has transformed, for her, what it means to be in spiritual community with others.

If you have any questions or would like to register to have the Zoom link emailed to you just prior to the event that day, then please contact us at: enquire@logopraxis.online 

Zoom Login Details

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84360690326?pwd=UDISUGlmczVpb09hTVJGNWg1RFBGdz09>

Meeting ID: 843 6069 0326
Passcode: 552658

Letter's to the Editor

Continued from page 18

recently supplied them with killer drones. In 1990, NATO (along with the U.S. general who is the head of NATO), promised Russia/USSR that it would not let any countries east of Germany into NATO. Since that time, fourteen countries east of Germany have joined, some with nuclear missiles and the U.S. has conducted “war games” just inside the Ukraine border. The media describes Russians along the border as aggression and the U.S. troops as defensive.

Peace advocates worldwide have expressed their concerns and have advocated for NATO to back away, for diplomats to continue negotiations. This is also the wish of Ukrainian citizens, according to my daughter who is presently in Lviv, Ukraine.

For a more complete alternate view from mainstream media, Oliver Stone's *Ukraine on Fire* documentary (free on YouTube) contains useful information that changed my perspective about Putin, in particular.

I would also like to address the issue of the Olympics. According to some pundits, China will spend upwards of \$38 billion on the games, not including a driverless bullet train between two cities for more than \$9 billion.

My probes to research how much Canada is spending on the Olympics yielded poor results, if any. While it may be uplifting to national pride to see a Canadian athlete earn a medal, I must question the decision to put millions into these games when there are millions of Canadian nurses struggling to meet the demands of COVID emergencies, when many people have lost their jobs, homeless numbers continue to skyrocket along with child poverty...an endless list.

If the games influenced Canadians to be more active and healthier, I might reconsider. Obesity and its attendant

health problems continue to rise, especially with youth and children.

The way I can decide if the Olympics is an important event to attend, is to ask, “What is the impact on poverty numbers, health, GDP, if Canadian athletes don't attend?” I suggest the impact is minimal, just as when the NHL players went on strike some years ago. The lives of ordinary Canadians were basically untouched.

This is not to ignore the immense efforts of these athletes who, as you rightly comment, spend enormous efforts and funds to qualify. Before we put our dollars into the games, let's make sure that no children live in poverty, that health, education, infrastructure, etc. have enough funds to offer high quality products to all Canadians.

Let's continue to work for peace and justice for *all*.

Blessings and peace,
—Esther Fyk

Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada

Editor's Response

I welcome all response and feedback to anything covered in *the Messenger*. Since I wrote my editorial on the Olympics, the situation in Ukraine obviously escalated. While this was only an example of the world news they were covering (and not the primary issue they were focusing on), it was not intended to come off cavalier or unimportant. We all pray that the situation in Ukraine is resolved swiftly.

—B.G.

New Church Pet Peeve

I have not been near a Swedenborgian church since [my sister] Jenny's graduation, but I read *the Messenger* promptly to keep in touch with what people are thinking and doing.

A pet peeve: We fondly call ourselves the new church. But Swedenborg states that the members of the Lord's New Church are known to the Lord alone. So it seems arrogant to refer to

Theta Alpha International Scholarships

Two annual scholarships are available for high school girls entering ANC High School for the 2022–2023 school year who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. Applications are due April 1, 2022. Email ancdaughters@gmail.com with questions or to apply.

For more info, visit brynathyn.edu/costs-and-financial-aid/scholarships.html. 

Editor's Corner

Continued from page 18

returning after more than a decade away. (See p. 22 on reflections of the 2021 FNCA camp session and how to register for this year.)

I am so proud of everyone making these efforts to keep the Swedenborgian Church moving into the future. From the entire organization, to the weekly church services, to those who only meet once a year—they are all important to our church community. As a smaller denomination, these big efforts keep us all closer together. We feel more close-knit than before, and we can welcome more as the barrier of distance becomes a thing of the past.

—Beki Greenwood

Messenger@Swedenborg.org



*The Swedenborgian
Church of North America*

facebook

ourselves that way. Hopefully as an institution we are moving in that direction. We finally decided to ordain women and LGBTQs. We are learning to serve uses beyond the intellectual. But we have yet to learn humility.

—Perry Martin

*Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and
Bridgton, Maine* 

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.

Garden Church Seeks Co-Pastor

*Re-imagining Church and Loving the Lord – Progressive and Passionate –
Seeking Justice and Growing Community*

Who We Are Looking For

The minister we seek must be a clergy member in good standing in the Swedenborgian Church of North America (SCNA), have an active spiritual life, feel called to innovative ways of being church and be eager to engage in the work of creation care, eco-justice, and food and social justice. We are looking for a collaborative leader who enjoys working as a member of a team, is a self-starter, has good follow-through and is open to anyone who comes through the gates. We are looking for a grounded spiritual leader who can help make complex spiritual ideas applicable to our daily lives. We have the privilege of helping and working with a variety of people and situations, such as those who are unhoused, have active mental illness, and are in emotional distress. We have an ongoing co-operative relationship with a San Pedro inter-faith group of pastors. This group includes several faith traditions including

Judaism, Christianity, and other faiths. At times, pastors from these faiths are invited to participate in worship services at The Garden Church. Our group is composed of a variety of faith traditions worshipping, working, and eating together. Currently our part-time Swedenborgian minister offers Theological Thursdays for those interested in studying the writings of Swedenborg in greater detail.

Following the retirement of our Swedenborgian co-pastor this summer, we plan to transition the remaining co-pastor to lead pastor (remaining part-time) and are currently seeking a minister/co-pastor (also part-

time, up to 50%) to work as a team ministry. You can learn more about us at: www.gardenchurchsp.org and on social media (Facebook and Instagram) @gardenchurchsp

**Interested candidates
should contact
Elizabeth Sala at:
[southbaygarden7@
gmail.com](mailto:southbaygarden7@gmail.com)**

by March 15, 2022. ☰

