



## Mini Course Line Up for Convention 2022

*Join us on Sunday for a Mini Course presented to the whole convention, and then afterwards there will be three time slots that have four courses running concurrently—two in-person only, one in-person and live streamed, and one fully virtual on Zoom.*

**M**ini Courses are small group offerings for attendees (both virtual and in-person) to learn about a topic that is presented by someone from the Swedenborgian Church of North America or an invited guest. We are excited to be able to offer a variety of formats this year for our hybrid convention. Once registration for Convention has closed, you will be contacted about which Mini Course you might like to attend.

### There are three formats for Mini Courses

- In-person for on campus attendees only
- Streamed live (not pre-recorded) from campus. Virtual attendees are able to view this Mini Course, but will not be able to interact with those in the room
- Fully virtual on Zoom (on campus attendees will need to log in to Zoom on their own device to participate in this course)

Three of the four time slots have four courses running concurrently—two in-person, one live streamed, and one fully virtual. Virtual attendees will be able to choose between the

live streamed and fully virtual sessions, while the in-person attendees can attend any of the courses being offered. Finally, we will be offering a Mini Course called Translating at Babel: Church Leadership in the Public Square by Rev. Rich Tafel that will be live streamed in its own time slot on Sunday morning for all to attend together.

### Sunday, June 26 at 10:15 AM PT (One Course for all attendees)

#### Translating at Babel: Church Leadership in the Public Square Rev. Rich Tafel

*This course will be in-person on campus and live streamed.*



This Mini Course will make the case that the most important way Christians can become peacemakers is to become “translators.” We live in a culture

now that talks past and over each other. We’ve learned to demonize those

who disagree with us. We’ve sorted ourselves into bubbles of people who think like us. We use the same words with different meanings. Everyone is talking, but who is listening? This high level of polarization has reached the point where we see people with different political views not as simply wrong but evil and a threat to our life. With the anxiety in the midst of pandemics, wars, and uncertainty, many political leaders exploit our fears. This course will show that Swedenborgian leaders can play a critical role in leading as translators across cultural boundaries. Swedenborg’s insights into the meaning of the Tower of Babel offer us a different take on that famous story and new insights into our Babel culture today. Our tradition’s evolutionary spirituality offers us a map to understand what’s going on and where things are headed, based on our theology of an inclusive and loving God who never uses fear and shame to guide us. The course will give case study examples of what we can do as individuals, churches, and as parts of larger communities seeking to be peacemakers in these times of great division.

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**Registration for in-person Convention closes on Friday, May 13**

**Registration for virtual Convention closes on Monday, June 13**

**Register here: [convention.swedenborg.org](https://convention.swedenborg.org)**

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## Editor's Corner



### Love is Love

Much of this issue of *the Messenger* is dedicated to the proposed standing resolution Welcome and Support of All People in the

LGBTQ+ Community (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus\*) being brought to the floor of convention this year in Long Beach. (You can find the full wording of this proposal on p. 64.) I have always been proud of our church's stance on ordaining women and those who are in the LGBTQ+ community. I would like to share two stories of mine, one more recent than the other, of when I have felt most proud of our stance on LGBTQ+ issues.

When I was in high school, I had a solid group of friends—many of us had been friends since preschool. We hung out regularly, and one of our friends had an amazing basement to hang out in, and we spent many weekend nights there. Many of them came

from Christian upbringings, but at the time, I wasn't fully aware of differences in beliefs, so it didn't matter much to me. It goes without saying, and I'm sure many of you will find it shocking, that my brother and I were the only Swedenborgians in our high school.

One of these nights in the late 90s, my junior year, I clearly remember sitting around the table in my friend's kitchen, and we were talking about relationships. I don't recall how, but same-sex relationships came up. One of my guy friends got very worked up and said, "I don't care what anyone says, God created a man and a woman to fit together, everything else is wrong!" I was so caught off guard I didn't know how to respond. This was someone who I considered a close friend, and I had no idea they felt this way. What about my family members who were gay or lesbian? I have never felt nor been taught that they are "wrong" in the eyes of God. There were a few others around the table that agreed with him. I did not get angry, but said that I, and my church, don't feel that way, got up, and went to play bumper pool in the basement with some others.

After this gathering, I realized that I didn't feel as close to these particular friends as I once assumed I was. While I had no ill will towards them, I knew our views on spirituality and love simply didn't align—I eventually distanced myself from this group over time. At the time, I didn't have enough knowledge of other religions or the intellectual tools to defend my perspective to these different views, and we drifted apart naturally. Some I have remained in contact with over social media and their views have evolved over time. This was one of the first times that I realized how special our church is, and that I was proud to be a part of it.

Fast forward twenty-something years to last summer, 2021. Rev. Jane had sent out a letter at the beginning

## the Messenger

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Submissions must be received by the third Monday of the month to be considered for the next issue.

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of June—Pride Month—encouraging the ministries to simply hang a Pride Flag in their church as a way to show welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community. As part of the leadership team of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, a couple of us brought this idea back to the Board of Directors. The Board then decided to bring a motion to the membership at their annual meeting to hang the Pride flag on our flagpole under the American Flag. We went into this meeting knowing there would be some people who wouldn't be thrilled with the idea. One of the things the

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## Letter from the President

*The Year of Providence: 2021–22*



Dear Friends,

I am honored to bring before you this proposed standing resolution to be presented at our Annual Convention 2022 for your vote. It was written by the Social Justice Committee at the suggestion of the LGBTQ+ Focus Group. Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell wrote the first draft, and it received several renditions and modifications from both committees. It truly represents the voice of the committee members.

The resolution to be LGBTQ+ Embracing is on behalf of our denomination. Each of our churches and camps will have the opportunity to decide if they want to become LGBTQ+ Embracing ministries. Plans are underway to provide education for those ministries that request more information on how to be welcoming, inclusive, and pastoral for people in the LGBTQ+ community.

This is an important step for our denomination to reach out in love and acceptance in a time of prejudice, discrimination, and condemnation by

some religious institutions. We have always stood by our Christian inclusivity and now we have another chance to show it. We have Standing Resolution 3 on inclusion (1960, 1989, 2015), Standing Resolution 14 on discrimination (2019), and the COM Statement on Same Sex Marriage (2004). May this Standing Resolution in support of the LGBTQ+ community (2022) link hands with the others to strengthen our resolve and further our actions.

You can find the full resolution on [page 64](#). Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence has also put together a forty-year history of Sexuality and Gender in the Swedenborgian Church of North America that may be found on [page 52](#).

There will be a live streamed Mini Course at convention to explore the topic of gender and sexuality through the prism of Swedenborgian spirituality ([see p. 54](#)) led by Colin Amato and Rev. Rich Tafel, and they will answer *any* questions you might have.

—Rev. Jane Siebert

# A Forty-Year Journey Engaging Human Sexuality and Gender Questions in the Swedenborgian Church of North America

BY JIM LAWRENCE

**A**t the upcoming annual convention, a proposed Standing Resolution of **welcome and support of all people in the LGBTQ+ community** will be brought to the floor. Our Church has striven to understand and address the emerging and changing world of sexuality and gender identities that has profoundly characterized our times. I would like to lift up the theological and spiritual reflection that has occurred, in official and published ways, over the past several decades.

## 1979: Council of Ministers Statement on “The Conjugal Principle and Human Sexuality”

In the late 1970s, an openly gay ordinand—a fourth-generation Swedenborgian named Paul Giunta, raised in and an active member of the Cambridge Church—was admitted to the Swedenborg School of Religion but with no promise that ordination would be available, since the specific question had never been faced. To inform the journey, the Council of Ministers shaped a year-long study of relevant theological, biblical, and spiritual questions raised by evolving public journeys with sexual orientation. That ad hoc study committee was chaired by the professor of pastoral care and counseling, Rev. Dr. Calvin E. Turley, who was joined by Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey, Rev. Dr. George Dole, Rev. Randy Laakko, and Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr. Their report to the Council of Ministers in 1978 was reworked by Rev. Cal Turley into a further position paper, “The Conjugal Principle and Human Sexuality” the following year

that was widely shared in the church. As circumstances unfolded, Paul Giunta lost his life in a violent attack days before the convention in 1980 when he was to come up for an ordination vote. Though that vote and ultimate conversation was thwarted at that time, an important exploration of meaning and purpose for the changes occurring in public awareness around human sexuality had begun with careful thought.

Rev. Cal Turley’s widely read position paper emphasizes the limitations of regarding sexuality as only for the purpose of procreation and argues instead “the central emphasis must be on nurturing human souls,” which can take a variety of healthy and spiritually nourishing forms. The eleven-page, single-spaced paper concludes with these words:

The conjugal principle of dynamic, creative interrelatedness and relationship is not limited to any one, single definition or expression of commitment between persons. It is not limited in its expression to any one specifically defined means of genital relating; nor is it limited to any one specific purpose of procreation. Rather, the Divine Conjugal is a symbol of the very essence of life, the unitive process which can and does manifest itself in a multitude of varieties which we can only dimly perceive and before which we stand in humble awe.

## 1986: Resolution on Whom We Ordain

It is important to remember that 1975 was the year the first woman became ordained in any branch of Swedenborgianism in the world, and

though there was no vote in 1980 on a popular, skillful, and openly gay candidate, the Council of Ministers continued to encourage discussions on the right foundations for ordination. Increasingly, broad agreement developed for the position that the qualities for ordination are internal qualities and are not affected positively or negatively on external sociological factors. In a resolution, whose primary author was Rev. Dr. George Dole, a foundational statement was endorsed at the 1986 convention. Here’s the pivotal language:

Periodically during its history, Convention has faced issues of suitability for ministry. It has dealt with questions of social class, race, divorce, and gender, as it currently faces the issues of sexual orientation and may in future years face questions presently unseen. Its decisions have in each case affirmed a consistent principle, which the Council of Ministers expresses as follows:

“In light of the inclusiveness of the vision of the Holy City, New Jerusalem, from which our theological perspective is drawn, the Council of Ministers believes that the central consideration in evaluating requests for ordination is the quality of the ministry that it believes the individual is capable of providing.”

In other words, in the Swedenborgian Church of North America, we assess inner qualities of training and readiness for excellent service as the relevant considerations—the Church does not regard external and social aspects of personal definition to be relevant considerations.

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## Forty-Year Journey

*Continued from page 52*

### 1997: First Vote on an Openly Gay Candidate for Ordination

In 1993, a lifelong member of Convention who grew up in the Elmwood Church, Jonathan Mitchell, was accepted into the ministry program at the Swedenborg School of Religion. The support for those identifying homosexual seemed strong by then in the Church, and no significant resistance appeared. That probably explains why no formal denominational statements were shaped. The editor of *Studia Swedenborgiana*, Rev. Dr. Bill Woofenden, commissioned two ministers to publish articles looking at theological dimensions of gender and sexuality, which led to “The Role of Gender in Marriage: A Swedenborgian View” by Rev. Carl E. Yenetchi and “The Spiritual Origin of Sexuality and Gender,” by Rev. John K. Billings. The editor of *the Messenger*, Patte LeVan, commissioned what became a two-part article by me, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, “Risking on the Side of Compassion” and “Further Thoughts on the Gay Marriage Commentary” spurred by the vigorous response to the first article. The ordination vote on Jonathan Mitchell passed overwhelmingly in both the Council of Ministers and on the floor of convention, and there have been several subsequent ordinations of openly gay candidates since.

### 2004: Denominational Statement on Same-Sex Marriage

With the rise of social and political discourse and action in the arena of legalizing same-sex marriages, in 2003 the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, asked the Council of Ministers for guidance on whether to support same-sex marriage ceremonies in their church. In response, the Council of Ministers appointed Rev. Paul Zacharias, Rev. Dr.

Jonathan Mitchell, Rev. Kit Billings, and Rev. Kim Hinrichs (as chair) to serve as a task force to study relevant issues and questions and come back the following year with a report and possible recommendation(s). This process led to a formal “Denominational Statement on Same-Sex Marriage,” adopted at the 2004 annual convention. This statement was fundamentally supportive spiritually and politically of legalizing same-sex marriages and of celebrating same-sex marriages in Swedenborgian churches. However, it also affirmed the congregational polity of the denomination and affirmed the right of all congregations to make their own final decisions on whether to hold same-sex marriage ceremonies in their own churches.

### 2022: Proposal for a Standing Resolution of Welcome and Support of All People in the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus) Community

In the nearly two decades since the statement on same-sex marriage, the issues of gender identity and sexuality have continued to grow in significance in cultural discourse around not only social justice issues but also in spirituality studies. The awareness level in our contemporary moment is much higher than two decades ago, and many people exploring spiritual programs and movements often look explicitly for information on where a particular denomination stands. This is especially true of the younger generations. For this reason, the need for a formal public relations statement has grown for many in the Swedenborgian Church of North America, and we will have a chance to discuss the resolution that has been shaped not only by the Social Justice Committee but with the help of several others, including me. I am in support of this proposed resolution both because of its message and of its

usefulness for describing a broadly held commitment throughout our denomination and communicating such to those asking the question. ☸

## Spirit in Action: Civic Engagement and Religious Life

*Session Five:  
Swedenborgians in the Field*  
**Monday, May 23,**  
**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 final installment: *Swedenborgians in the Field*

A panel discussion led by Rev. Rich Tafel, on the topic of what Swedenborgian faith-based advocacy might look like in the field. Featuring Swedenborgians already engaged with civic issues: Annabel Park, Shalonda Ingram and Page Morahan. ☸

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

Or contact Rev. Shada Sullivan at [revshada@gmail.com](mailto:revshada@gmail.com)

Rev. Robert McCluskey will present an [in-person Mini Course](#) at the annual convention that will offer a summary of the content of this series, highlight key findings, and provide ample time for discussion and questions on this topic of growing import for our church.

Registration for in-person attendees closes on Friday, May 13.

## Mini Course Line Up

*Continued from the cover*

Rev. Rich Tafel is deeply involved in the intersection of faith and the public square. He has been pastor of Church of the Holy City in Washington, D.C. for the past six years. He has represented the Swedenborgian denomination for a decade at the National Council of Churches. In addition to his church work, Rich is the Director of Marcum Social Capital Advisors working with social venture companies. He is involved in public policy work as the co-director of the American Project at Pepperdine School of Public Policy

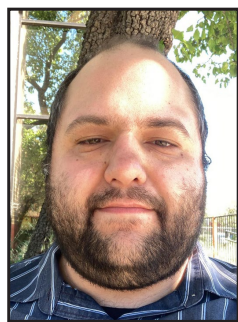
### Monday, June 27 at 9:30 AM PT (Four Options)

#### Gender, Sexuality, and Swedenborg

**Colin Amato and Rev. Rich Tafel**

*This course will be in-person on campus and live streamed.*

How can we view current issues of gender and sexuality through the prism of Swedenborgian spirituality? This Mini Course will offer short, panelists' presentations as conversation starters. The bulk of the session will allow for Q&A from participants with our panel. Facilitated input from audience members is welcome from all perspectives. No questions are off-limits. Come join as we work through this topic together.



Colin Amato is an ordinand in the Swedenborgian Church of North America and a psychotherapist at the Rainbow Community Center of Contra Costa County in California. He holds a

certificate in Swedenborgian Studies, a master's in Theological Studies from the Pacific School of Religion, and an M.A. in psychology from San Francisco State with certification in California as a Marriage and Family Therapist.

#### Climate Care: How Can Swedenborgian Theology, Our Denomination, and YOU Support Climate Justice?

**Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell & Rev. Dr. Amanda Adams Riley**

*This course will be fully on Zoom and available to everyone anywhere.*

Join the Social Justice Committee (SJC) of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (SCNA) for a discussion around what we can all do to support climate justice. We will consider how our Swedenborgian theology encourages us to understand our relationship and responsibility to the earth. We will take a look at what other denominations are doing regarding both institutional statements and direct action. We will share ideas with each other for effective strategies in supporting climate justice individually.



Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell is co-pastor at The Garden Church in San Pedro, California. He has served ministries in Washington, D.C., Wayfarers Chapel, and San Diego,

California. In his spare time, he enjoys hiking and the study of natural history.

Rev. Dr. Amanda Riley is co-pastor at The Garden Church and has served numerous Presbyterian churches. She fell in love with the vision, work, and mission of the Garden Church and became involved in 2016.



#### Where is God Leading Us: Youth Wisdom for Our Times

**Rev. Renée Machiniak**

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

As we face many ongoing challenges in today's world, including fear and isolation from the global pandemic, violence in its many forms, environmental and war time concerns, what is it that our youth need from the church

and what ideas for change do our youth envision for the church's future? Youth League chaplain, Rev. Renée Machiniak, will facilitate the presentations and discussion, as well as offer reflection on Swedenborg's theology of innocence, Divine Providence and the prophetic sense.



Rev. Renée has been serving the Royal Oak, Michigan, Church of the Holy City since 1995, serves as youth chaplain for our denomination and volunteers as police chaplain and hospital chaplain for the city of Royal Oak.

#### Music and Video in Worship and Small Groups

**Rev. Ken Turley and Rev. Roslyn Taylor**

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

This will be an open and exploratory presentation, discussion, and sharing of ways to use video and music to enhance worship, meditation and discussion in a variety of ways, including in person and on-line settings. It will offer a few approaches and ideas and welcome the sharing and offering of experiences and resources of all who attend. It is a new world, and if we are to be relevant participants, we too must expand our repertoire and ways of reaching out. This is one opportunity to further the exploration.

Rev. Ken Turley, son of Rev. Cal and Marilyn Turley, was raised in the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church. He performed and taught music in San Francisco and Seattle for many years getting a B.A. in Music along the way. Intending to serve music in the church, he was ordained in



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## Mini Course Line Up

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1985 and served parishes in Elmwood, Massachusetts, as well as Portland and Fryeburg, Maine. During his thirty years of active ministry, he earned his master's degree and served on a number of committees and support units, including Committee on Worship, Committee on Admission to the Ministry, and General Council, and completed two terms as president of Convention. Now retired, he continues to compose classical music, write songs, and play original songs and covers in the folk-jazz genre with his wife, Laurie.

### Tuesday, June 28 at 9:30 AM PT (Four Options)

#### Church Strategies to Reach People: Lessons Learned from the Art of Reaching Course Told from Four Perspectives

**Rev. Rich Tafel, Rev. Shada Sullivan, Pastor Robbin Ferriman, and Pastor Paul Deming**

*This course will be in-person on campus and live streamed.*

Last summer, an article by a Canadian evangelical pastor predicted that the church would never be the same after the pandemic. The insights from this piece were circulated to all clergy. A group of ministers wanted to know what more can we learn from the successful practices of other faith paths. Our denomination agreed to cover the cost for ministers willing to take the course, but also to provide a bi-weekly Swedenborgian translation of those growth efforts. Four pastors agreed to take the class and create their own working group. In this course, four congregational leaders will share their takeaways from the course and offer

ideas for how we can grow in these turbulent times.

Rev. Shada Sullivan serves as minister at Church of the Holy City in Wilmington,



Delaware; **Rev. Rich Tafel** serves as minister at Church of the Holy City in Washington, D.C.; Pastor Robbin Ferriman serves at the Urbana



Society of the New Church in Urbana, Ohio; and Pastor Paul Deming serves at Church of the Open Word in St. Louis, Missouri.



Dell J. Rose is an American Ph.D. student at the University of Amsterdam. Holding a bachelor's degree with majors in English, History, and Religion and a master's degree in Folklore, he is also a fellow of the Swedenborg Society in London. His doctoral project deals with the early reception of Swedenborg's ideas amongst nineteenth-century reforming societies and in nineteenth-century political discourse. Further academic interests include Christian theosophy (especially Caspar Schwenckfeld, whom Swedenborg mentions, and Jakob Böhme, to whom Swedenborg was often compared by his contemporaries), Willem Bilderdijk studies, Sabbateanism, and the work of Franz von Baader.

#### A New Church Year of Jubilee

**Rev. Sage Cole**

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

On March 3, 2022, the communi-



ty at Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, declared a New Church Jubilee Year, with the intention of taking a full year not to jump back

to what once felt like normalcy, but instead intentionally to stay in the uncertainty generated by the pandemic and consider how we are being called to change and grow to become more of the New Church that Swedenborg declared. We declared this year on March 3rd, as that was the day in 1887 when Helen Keller met her teacher Annie Sullivan and the day she would always celebrate as her "Spiritual Birthday." Helen Keller has been Swedenborg Chapel's resident Swedenborgian saint since 2018 when we first declared our dream to build a center in her honor on our site. In this Mini Course, Rev. Sage will share stories from this New Church Jubilee Year, possibilities that have emerged, and insights from Helen Keller's writings and life.

#### The Great Day of the Lord: Swedenborgian Millenarianism after 1757

**Dell J. Rose**

*This course will be fully on Zoom and available to everyone anywhere.*

In 1757, Swedenborg had a vision of the last judgment, and his New Age was far from the brimstone and blood of the Christian Millenarianism. However, this vision as well as



Swedenborg's ambiguity toward apocalypticism did not stop his earliest followers from engaging in millenarian discourse and speculation about the end of all things and "the coming of the Lord." The beginning of the nineteenth century was a period of marked millenarian expectation, and though it was perhaps not Swedenborg's intention, there were several prominent apocalyptic thinkers deeply influenced by Swedenborg's thought. This workshop will provide an introduction to the world of nineteenth century millenarianism in its British context and highlight the role that Swedenborg's teachings played in popular imaginings of "the end." This course is introductory and assumes no prior exposure to the material, and it is especially recommended for those interested in Swedenborgian cultural history.

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## Mini Course Line Up

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I've been blessed throughout my life by the Church. Since my entry at age thirteen into the loving embrace of the SCYL, the Church has held me and called me into ministry where I have been serving for the last seventeen years. I have been blessed to serve in a diverse array of settings, the first Pastor of [www.swedenborgiancommunity.org](http://www.swedenborgiancommunity.org), associate pastor of the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, as a hospice chaplain in Southern Maine, Pastor of the Fryeburg New Church, Family minister of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Anchorage, Alaska, and now as Pastor of the Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Since coming to Cambridge in 2015, I have had the blessing of walking through a community truly at an ending point, then stepping into a new beginning as our community has grown in love and openness and come to embrace the vision of expanding our ministry with the development of a center in our space dedicated to the faith and life of Helen Keller. I live in Hyde Park, Massachusetts, with my husband Ted and two boys, Theo and Zach, ages 7 and 5.

### Black Church History in Convention (and more)

**Sue Ditmire**

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

This Mini Course will share something of the emerging story on Convention's own "Black Church" history as it emerges with several key figures and valued neighborhood churches in Boston, Manhattan, and other places. Additionally, we will dive into how to be a church historian and offer tips and insights for discovering the history of your church or association or perhaps another story line that interests you.



Sue (Weiss) Ditmire first joined a Swedenborgian church at Kemper Road Center (Cincinnati) in 1973 and served as the secretary for the denominational Board of Education for three years in

the 1980s. She moved to southern New Jersey in 1983 and joined the Wilmington, Delaware, congregation. She holds a degree in accounting and ran Ditmire Motorworks with her husband for many years until turning it over to her children. Now retired, she dedicates her time to historic research and is currently working on Convention history from numerous angles and is available to assist people and congregations with history questions.

### Tuesday, June 28: 1:15 PM PT (Four Options)

#### Feminine Swedenborgian Spirituality

**Rev. Roslyn Taylor**

*This course will be in-person on campus and live streamed.*

This Mini Course offers an overview of female spirituality, with a look at the relevant Swedenborgian teachings. Participants will explore together how the themes of female Swedenborgian spirituality are emerging in the activities of the Deborah's Tree ministry.

Rev. Roslyn Taylor is a minister with the Swedenborgian Church of North America, living in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. She facilitates the Home Church in Bryn Athyn, recently founded the Deborah's Tree ministry, and has provided music for worship services in several different contexts.



#### Three Essentials of Church Governance: What Pastors and Leaders Need to Know

**Rev. Kevin Baxter**

*This course will be fully on Zoom and available to everyone anywhere.*

Church governance is often overlooked when things are going along well. It is only when a church faces conflict or crisis that the documents are pulled out and all too often are found wanting. Reviewing them

for key elements when things are going well is a gift to the church if crisis befalls it. This course will look at best practices of key areas of church governance documents, parliamentary procedures, and liability issues. Based on work by Richard Hammer of Church Law and Tax, Kevin Baxter will highlight some crucial areas that are important for ministers, pastors, and church leaders to be aware of.

Rev. Kevin Baxter is the senior pastor of Church on the Hill, Boston, Massachusetts—an independent Swedenborgian Church. He has also served as Chair of the Council of Ministers, co-editor of *Our Daily Bread*, pastor at Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, and as an administrator and instructor at Urbana University.



### The Life of Religion: The Challenge of Doing Good

**Rev. Robert McCluskey**

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

Ours is a tradition that encourages people of faith to be active and conscientious citizens. With this in mind, the Swedenborgian Church offered a five-week series last winter and spring titled "Spirit in Action: Civic Engagement and Religious Life," sponsored by the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism, and the Social Justice Committee of the SCNA. In it, we explored ways we might be engaged with and support civic action, both individually and as a church. We were assisted in our efforts by representatives of the Friends Committee on National Legislation. Topics included Swedenborg's own involvement with civic life, interfaith advocacy, lobby training, raising our voice, and current efforts by

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## Mini Course Line Up

Continued from page 56

Swedenborgians to engage civic life. In this Mini Course, we will offer a summary of the content of this series, highlight key findings, and provide ample time for discussion and questions on this topic of growing import for our church.

Rev. Robert E. McCluskey holds a B.A. and an M.A. in philosophy and is also a graduate of the Swedenborg School of Religion. He was ordained into the Swedenborgian Church of North



America in 1984. He has pastored churches in Portland, Maine, and New York City, and for eighteen years served as representative to the National Council of Churches, with specific attention to the work of social justice and religious freedom. He currently administers rites and sacraments at Wayfarers Chapel. In addition to progressive Christianity, his interests include the electric guitar and all things cinematic.

## Is Heaven A Frequency?

**Rev. David Brown**

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

This Mini Course will take a closer look at Swedenborg's short book *On Tremulation* and explore the implications from his scientific research leading to his spiritual explorations. Is there more to explore in Swedenborg's spiritual practices that can also be applied to our own? This course will also explore some of the spiritual mysteries contained within vibration. 📺

Rev. Dr. David Brown completed his Doctor of Ministry this year, and has been serving the Wayfarers Chapel since 2006 in Rancho Palos Verdes, California.



## More Nominations for Elected Positions in the Swedenborgian Church

The Nominating Committee nominates at least one candidate for each open elected position. Elective offices and nominees to date are listed on the chart shown below. If you are interested in being nominated for any position, contact the Nominating Committee through Central Office. All other candidate statements may be found in the [April issue of the Messenger](#) or on the convention website: [convention.swedenborg.org/election-information/](http://convention.swedenborg.org/election-information/).

### Kelly Schellenberg Kennedy General Council-Layperson (one-year unexpired term)

Hello from Spruce Grove, Alberta, Canada! I am honoured to be nominated to be a Canadian representative for the



General Council. I was introduced to Swedenborg as a young child, attending church in my grandparent's basement in Winnipeg. My grandmother Helen's faith was inspiring! I grew up attending Paulhaven Children's Camp as a camper every summer since I was six, travelling with my grandmother by train, learning all about her life. When I aged out as a camper, I continued on as a counsellor, cook, and eventually director. I made many life-long friends and strengthened my faith. I passed on my love of Paulhaven to my daughter.

I served for several years on the Paulhaven Camp Committee, as a provincial representative for the Western Canada Conference, and am honoured to have served my first year as Western Canada Conference president and have much to learn. I am a member-at-large, soon to be a member of The Church of the Holy City in Edmonton.

*Continues on page 62*

Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
President	3	***
Vice President	1	Kurt Fekete*
Recording Secretary	1	Karen Conger*
Treasurer	3	Jennifer Lindsay*
General Council: layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Paul Deming Emily Woofenden
General Council: layperson (unexpired term)	1**	Kelly Schellenberg Kennedy
General Council: minister	3	Sage Cole
Standing Committee for Communication & Information	3	Kevin Baxter
Standing Committee for Education & Resources for Spiritual Community (2 to be elected)	3	Julie Conaron* Junchol Lee
Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (2 to be elected)	3	Rachel Madjerac* Lisa Solwold*
Board of Trustees of CSS, representative class	4	Lewis Shaw*
Nominating Committee	5	Tammara Mounce

\* Incumbent

\*\* Years remaining in unexpired term

\*\*\* No candidate to be elected this year

# You are Cordially Invited to attend the 2022 Annual Convention Wayfarers Chapel Tour

BY DAN BURCHETT

**W**ayfarers Chapel, the National Memorial to Emanuel Swedenborg, owned and governed by The Swedenborgian Church, will be one of the sites toured by Annual Convention attendees Monday afternoon, June 27, 2022.

The very unique circumstances that brought about the gift of the land, long before the inspired design and building of this treasure, marks the beginning of a very rich and profound history. Wayfarers has welcomed hundreds of thousands of wayfaring so-journers since 1951, making their way to this iconic structure that represents something far greater than its unique beauty. Wayfarers Chapel promotes a spiritual and rational approach to a life of faith, welcoming diversity and inclusion. We are all on a journey

that continues to evolve and the God we embrace and reflect is a God that IS Love and is the very source of Wisdom.

As we arrive on June 27, Monday afternoon, there will be members of our Board of Directors providing tours of the "Tree Chapel," nestled in Redwood Pines overlooking the sprawling front lawn adorned by thirty-foot Stone Pines and breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean. You will pass the Reflection Pool along the walkway to the Chapel that isn't always immediately identified by first time visitors since most of what you see from a distance are the Redwoods and blue-sky glistening between the trees through the large

glass panes of the Chapel. You will be moved experiencing the serenity and peaceful calm inside Wayfarers Chapel as you take time to reflect on the external beauty that harmonizes with its natural surroundings. This promotes an inward examination that fos-

years with more breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean. Among the several additional events held at the Amphitheater site are: local artists, Off The Left Eye gatherings and receptions (*the next is scheduled for July 3, 2022 Sunday afternoon*), and art fairs. As you

pass the meditation garden and hillside stream to the Visitors Center and Giftshop, be sure and pick up a treasure that will often remind you of your wayfaring journey to the iconic Chapel that promotes the healing of humanity through spiritual consciousness, Love for all, and Wisdom that makes our journey worth every moment of inconvenience and challenge.

Following the tour, we will all enjoy a Mexican feast with barbacoa chicken-pastor, enchiladas, mini chicken flautas, rice and beans, assorted toppings

of guacamole, sour cream, pico with chips and salsa, soft drinks, with cupcakes and cookies for the finale.

We will then be moving into the Chapel for the evening Ordination Service that will surely be the crescendo to a day of beauty and soul restoration. If you are unable to attend in person, this service will be live streamed.

We look forward with great anticipation to sharing the day with you at Wayfarers Chapel. 📱

Rev. Dan Burchett is the executive director of Wayfarers Chapel.

[Registration](#) for in-person convention attendees closes on Friday, May 13.



© Andrew Pielage

ters healing, spiritual awakening, and a greater realization of our miraculous and mysterious union with the Divine.

To the rear of the Chapel is the Cornerstone placed in 1949 near the loggia and the tower that are visible as you approach the three and a half acre site. Additional areas of interest will be the aromatic rose garden surrounded by the Walk of Honor that celebrates many of the wedding ceremonies held on site, as well as memorials and baptisms with names and dates on the brick walkway. Steps away, as you walk down the colonnade to the Amphitheater, you will see the area that has hosted Easter Sunrise services through the



# Church of the Holy City in Washington, D.C. Begins Tower Restoration

BY RICH TAFEL

**C**hurch of the Holy City in Washington, D.C. is a landmark in our nation's capital located on Sixteenth Street only a ten-minute walk away from the White House. Possibly the most striking part of the church's architecture is that incredible tower with far reaching pinnacles.

The church, built in 1896, was designed by a leading architect in the United States, Langford Warren, the dean of Harvard's School of Architecture. He was joined by another famous Swedenborgian architect, Paul Pelz, who would go on to design the Library of Congress.

Their masterpiece is stunning from the outside, but now over one hundred years old, it has been in need of major renovations. Together with the General Council, the Trustees, and the Building Fund we worked in coordination with the leadership at Church of the Holy City to engage in a four-year program to make the building safe for use.

The biggest challenge for the team seeking to keep the church safe has been tackling the church tower. One hundred years of weather, snow, hurricanes, and one earthquake have left the tower in a vulnerable position.

Minutes from church meetings in the 1980s record concerns that the tower needs to be inspected and repaired. The local church and trustees have been looking for financially responsible ways to tackle the challenge.

History repeated itself when a prominent Cambridge, Massachusetts, architect Mark Careaga—a member of the Cambridge Church—in a meeting with our church President, Jane Siebert, and Treasurer Jennifer

Lindsay, offered to help find the right team to begin work on the tower. Based on this guidance, on March 8, 2022, the tower began much needed repairs. For the first time in church history the building has been seen from above when cranes were used to view the structural decay.

In addition to getting the first real view of the tower from



**Above:** Project leaders from left to right: Mariana Vonder Born from masonry, Tayrn Williams from engineering, and Shalonda Ingram from the Washington, D.C. Church.

**Left:** Work begins on the tower.

**Below:** Shalonda Ingram and Rev. Rich Tafel inside the Church.



above, a masonry team inspected every pinnacle to see if any were in danger of potentially falling off. After two days of work over ten pieces of pinnacle were removed from the tower, each a foot to two feet long. The team working on the project said it was only a matter of time before these would have fallen to the ground. In addition, the team cemented a loose piece that was too large to remove.

The project was conducted with

three female leaders—from the masonry team, the engineering team and our own Shalonda Ingram—on the International Day of Women. Thanks to this proactive work, the church is no longer a potential threat to pedestrians nearby.

As if to acknowledge this important work, a new book was published last week entitled, *Sixteenth Street, Washington's Avenue of Ambition*. This was followed by a Washington Post article that highlighted the [book](#). The book interviews church members Malcolm Peck and Elfa Halloway.

We face daunting challenges in our world and in our churches, but working together we can find ways to move forward together. 🙌





## Convention Worship Services

The following Worship Services are planned to be live streamed for all to enjoy along with our in-person attendees.

### Opening Worship Service

**Saturday, June 25 at 7:30 PM PT**

*Rev. Dan Burchett, Rev. Dr. Dave Brown, Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell, and Rev. Dr. Amanda Riley*

Led by our hosting congregations, our opening worship service will introduce our Convention theme *The Tree of Life: Into the Garden* and center us in the Lord.



Rev. Dan Burchett has been serving Wayfarers Chapel in the capacity of Rites and Sacraments since 2000. In January of 2018, he joined the leadership team and assumed the director

of finance and administration position. On May 1, 2021, Rev. Dan became the executive director of Wayfarers Chapel. His ministry career began in 1980 and has included senior minister and administrative duties. During his ministry, he served as a hospice chaplain for four years. Rev. Dan received his education at Global University, Springfield, Missouri (1981), Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, California (1998) and the Center for Swedenborgian Studies at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California (2019). Rev. Dan was inducted as an ordained Swedenborgian minister in 2019.

Rev. Dr. David Brown is a Chapel Minister and has been serving the Wayfarers Chapel since his ordination in 2006. In 2004, Rev. Brown received the Master of Divinity degree from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. Rev. Brown completed his Doctor of Ministry this year, with a thesis addressing the question of how to apply spirituality to our everyday lives.



Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell is a native of Massachusetts, where he grew up in a restaurant family. Before entering the ministry, he pursued academic interests in philosophy,

comparative religion, and language. He holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and an M.A. in Swedenborgian Studies from the Swedenborg School of Religion. Since ordination, he has served ministries in Washington D.C., Wayfarers Chapel, San Diego, and is now co-pastor of The Garden Church in San Pedro, California.

A native of Washington, D.C., Rev. Dr. Amanda Riley graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary in 2005 and completed a Doctorate in Ministry from McCormick Theological Seminary in 2014. She began her ministry



serving churches in Michigan, then moved to L.A. with her family. She served as parish associate at Brentwood Presbyterian Church, then began a Worshiping Community in Playa Vista, California. Amanda joined the Garden Church board in 2016 and is now a co-pastor there.

### Convention Worship Service

**Sunday, June 26 at 7:00 PM PT**

*Rev. Anna Woofenden—Convention Preacher*

We look forward to gathering in prayer, song, reflection, and the sharing of Holy Communion as we explore the theme of the Tree of Life and the fruits that it can bear in the world.



Rev. Anna Woofenden (she/her/hers) has multi-generational roots in the Swedenborgian Church and was ordained as a Swedenborgian minister in 2014.

She is the founding pastor of the Garden Church and Feed and Be Fed Farm in San Pedro, California, re-imagining church as an interconnected organism, worshiping, loving, and serving together while transforming a plot of land into a vibrant urban farm and sanctuary. At the end of 2017, Anna transitioned the Garden Church to new leadership and has served as the interim pastor at Zion Lutheran Church of Pittsfield, and the protestant advisor at Amherst College, as well as consulting on outreach and new ministry opportunities,

*Continues on page 61*

## Worship Services

*Continued from page 60*

teaching, writing, speaking, and coaching across the country. She is the author of *This is God's Table: Finding Church Beyond the Walls* and the co-host of the Food and Faith Podcast. She is now an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church and serves as the Rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Northampton, Massachusetts.

### Memorial Worship Service

**Monday, June 27 at 8:45 AM PT**

*Rev. Robert McCluskey*

Join us as we remember and celebrate the lives of those who have passed into the spiritual world. Through prayers, readings from Scripture, and music, we will reflect and remember, grieve and celebrate, pray and share. We will lift up the lives and names of those who have walked with us on the spiritual path, and now wait for us in higher realms. We pray you can be with us.



Rev. Robert McCluskey holds a B.A. and an M.A. in philosophy and is a graduate of the Swedenborg School of Religion. He was ordained into the Swedenborgian Church of North America in 1984, and

served as pastor in Portland, Maine, and New York City. He has served in several positions in the SCNA, including eighteen years as representative to the National Council of Churches. He currently serves as minister of Rites and Sacraments at Wayfarers Chapel in Rancho Palos Verde, California.

### Worship at Wayfarers

**Monday, June 27 at 7:30 PM PT**

*Rev. Jane Siebert, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, and our Ordinand(s)*

Nothing compares to a worship service at the sacred space created by Wayfarers Chapel, except maybe an ordination service combined with worship at the iconic glass chapel overlooking the blue of the ocean at Portuguese

Bay. Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is the ordination speaker. The choir led by Laurie Turley will lift our hearts and spirits as we join together in praise. Prior to the worship service, the Wayfarers Board will give a tour of the Chapel, Visitor's Center, and grounds, and provide an evening meal (see p. 58).

The Following Worship Services will only be available to in-person attendees.

### Worship Service – Children

**Tuesday, June 28 at 9:00 AM PT**

The children of Convention will participate in a youth service "The Secret Life of Seeds" lead by the worship committee, where they will share what they have been doing while at Convention and show some of the crafts and projects they have been working on. Please come to this event and support the children in our community.

### Swedenborgian Church Youth League Service

**Tuesday, June 28 at 7:30 PM PT**



The Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) teenagers from around North America will lead a truly unique, creative, worship experience that the youth will create entirely while at Convention. Typically, the youth-led worship services involve theatrical theological interpretations of the Convention theme with musical offerings and congregation participation. The teens aim to entertain while also providing an opportunity for you to more deeply consider your faith, your choices, and your beliefs. This worship event is not to be missed! 🎭

## Editor's Corner

*Continued from page 50*

FNCA is proud of is welcoming campers from other religious backgrounds—we have several long-time and new members from the General Church and the Lord's New Church. What I didn't expect was the amount of Swedenborgian doctrine that was used to try to prove LGBTQ+ lifestyles invalid. One of our board members who identifies with the LGBTQ+ community got up in front of the whole membership and presented the motion to the group. Most of the members that had any concerns were about hanging the flags (US and Pride Progress) together—many just felt that any flag, apart from a state flag, hung with the US flag was disrespectful to our country. That is not something I personally would have ever thought of and was a reasonable compromise to make. But the use of Swedenborg's words against this, while someone who identifies with this group is standing at the front of the meeting, fighting back tears, was not something I was prepared for. One of our Board members finally reminded the group that while we want and love having members from other churches with us, we are a Convention affiliated organization, and our beliefs align with theirs.

This discussion went on for almost an hour when the motion got amended to not hang the flag with the American flag, but in a location that was visible from the road and from the front porch of our Main Building. We settled on the corner of Chalmers Lodge, our teen rec hall.

These are just two of the many times I have encountered the LGBTQ+ and religion conversation over my life. It is something that I feel very strongly about, and one of the most important things about being a Swedenborgian to me that I am proud of. That pride

*Continues on page 62*



## Passages

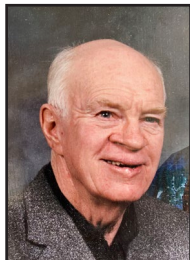
### Deaths

**Rev. David W. L. Sonmor, 84**, died of natural causes at Red Deer Regional Hospital on March 31, 2022. He was born and spent his formative years in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. He enjoyed an idyllic childhood growing up on the Saskatchewan Hospital grounds with his parents, Lee and Alma, and four brothers, Ray, Harold, Eugene, and Gordon in an active, loving family and community.

Educated at the Saskatchewan Hospital, he earned a diploma in Psychiatric Nursing and received a BA in Religious Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. He was a kind and loving person which was reflected in his career helping others. His work included psychiatric nursing, social work, community and economic development, crisis intervention and the ministry. His work as an ordained minister with the Swedenborgian Church was very important to him and he loved sharing his knowledge and spiritual beliefs with those who welcomed it. It was David's belief that after his death, his spirit would immediately enter the spiritual world where he would eternally dwell with like-minded spirits.

He leaves to mourn Shirley, his wife of fifty-eight years, his daughter Elaine, his grandsons Blake and Finn, his son Eric and family, and numerous close relatives and friends.

His body was donated to a medical education and research program in Calgary. A memory service will be held within two years to honor David and other participants of the program. He will be laid to rest in the North Battleford area that he called home.



### More Nominations

*Continued from page 57*

I work in a middle school as an Educational Assistant and teach Foods class. I have a passion for baking and have a side job with a small home baking business. I live in Spruce Grove with my first responder husband, Shaun, and my kids, Maegan, 22, and Logan, 18, and fur baby Skye. 🐾

### Editor's Corner

*Continued from page 61*

swells again today, in 2022, as the proposed resolution is set to hit the floor this June—I am sure many feel the same way.

—Beki Greenwood

[Messenger@Swedenborg.org](mailto:Messenger@Swedenborg.org)



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on Facebook!

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**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](mailto:Messenger@Swedenborg.org).

### Baptisms

**Jackson Jose Rimeris**, infant son of Marjorie Snyder and Robert Rimeris, was baptized on Saturday, April 2, 2022 by Rev. Roslyn Taylor in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. 🐾



### \*! ? POEM ?! \*

BY THE REV. G A WHEATON (SMILE)

In the midst of the Pandemic  
and a war that makes no sense,  
Someone from the Church  
asked me how I felt.  
I said, "Like a Roller Coaster  
functioning  
Like a Ferris Wheel,  
all of which sat on a platform,  
Like a Merry-go-round (!?),  
while the Algorithm of which  
Was making friends with the  
\*\*mm\ Holograph/mm\*\*.  
"I see", said the Pelican,  
talking with food in his/her mouth,  
HaHaHaHaHa!!!!!!  
"Oh", Someone said, "I see!",  
"This is a Non-sense Poem"  
"You Got It.....AMEN !!!!!" 🐾

**SWEDENBORGIANS  
IN ACTION**



**AGAINST RACISM**

### 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](mailto:revshada@gmail.com) to join the email list.

Previous issues of the SAAR Newsletter can be found on our website: [swedenborg.org/community/diversity-equity-inclusion/swedenborgians-in-action-against-racism/](http://swedenborg.org/community/diversity-equity-inclusion/swedenborgians-in-action-against-racism/)



## What's Happening

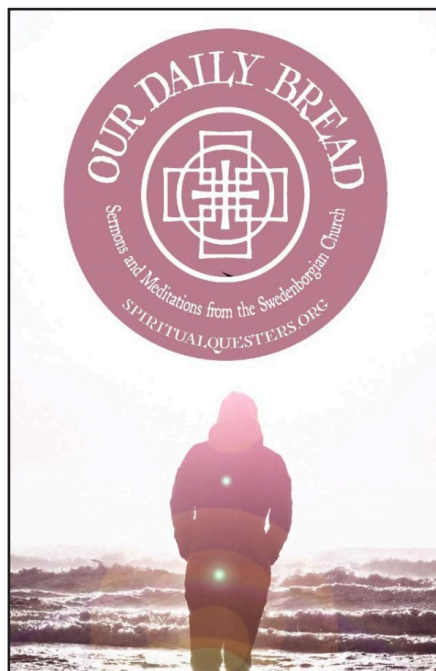
### Save the Date: Gathering Leaves 2023

Gathering Leaves, the international retreat for Swedenborgian/New Church women, will be held at the Lord's New Church in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, August, 24–27, 2023. Please contact Rev. Roslyn Taylor ([hrtaylor@temple.edu](mailto:hrtaylor@temple.edu)) or Rev. Jane Siebert ([janesiebert@gmail.com](mailto:janesiebert@gmail.com)) if you would like to serve on the Steering Committee.



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

*Click the YouTube logo above to subscribe!*



*Our Daily Bread* at [SpiritualQuesters.org](http://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.

### Church Calendar

- **May 27–30, 2022:** SCYL Memorial Day Retreat, Allenton, Michigan
- **June 25–29, 2022:** Annual Convention, Long Beach, California
- **July 23–31, 2022:** Almont Summer School, Allenton, Michigan
- **July 30–August 14, 2022:** Fryeburg New Church Assembly, Fryeburg, Maine

### Get the Messenger by mail

- US Address – \$25/year
- Canada Address – \$30/year
- Other Address – \$40/year

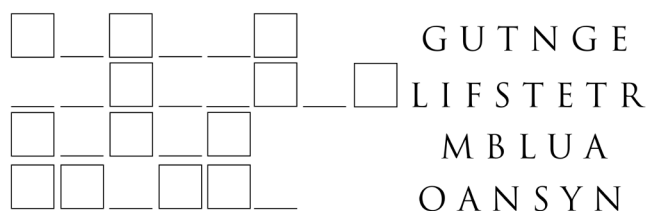
Visit the website for details or to subscribe to the free online version of *the Messenger*:

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newsletter-the-messenger/](http://Swedenborg.org/news-announcements/newsletter-the-messenger/)



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

With broadcasts and written messages most weeks, *Spiritual Sunshine: A Swedenborgian Community Online* is your interfaith-Swedenborgian community—with a presence on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and your favorite podcasting platform. Join us as we seek to empower awareness of and connection to the spiritual sunlight from Divinity within all of us.



What Justin Timberlake's inner voice tells him every April 30<sup>th</sup>:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

### Answers to the April Jumble:

*Spring, Season, Attach, Echidna  
The new hybrid rose bushes were planted directly:  
"Into The Garden"*

## Proposed Standing Resolution for Annual Convention: Welcome and Support of All People in the LGBTQ+ Community (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus\*)

*Delegates will be able to participate in the discussion and vote both in-person and virtually.*

The Swedenborgian Church of North America (SCNA) publicly declares itself to be LGBTQ+ Embracing. The SCNA encourages all its constituent bodies to become LGBTQ+ Embracing.

As an LGBTQ+ Embracing organization, the SCNA recognizes that the LGBTQ+ community, in particular those of color, continue to experience prejudice, discrimination, and condemnation at the hands of many religious institutions. The SCNA will clearly and publicly make known their welcome of all LGBTQ+ people, will advocate in the public sphere for their rights, and will educate themselves on the care and pastoring of people in the LGBTQ+ community. We welcome LGBTQ+ seekers and support their identities and loving relationships. All rites and sacraments of the SCNA are available to LGBTQ+ people including, baptism, confirmation, communion, marriage, consecration as a licensed pastor, ordination, and services of remembrance.

The SCNA understands the message of love and inclusion taught to us through the Bible and insights of Emanuel Swedenborg to affirm diversity in all its exciting complexity, offering equal value and worth to all people with a variety of God given gender identities, gender expressions, sexual orientations, and loving relationships. The SCNA will not interpret the Bible or the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg in ways that deny the equal value and worth of all sexual orientations, genders, gender identities, and gender expressions. We will support everyone who is engaged in the regenerative journey—individual or partnered. We

affirm any partnered relationships that are entered into freely, are grounded in mutual fidelity and respect, and have as their end the well-being and spiritual growth of each partner. We acknowledge that living in truly loving and wise ways is possible for finite and fallible human beings only with the Lord's leading.

As our understanding of this continues to unfold, the SCNA is dedicated to educating itself and others. The SCNA respects the judgment of those who make decisions for its constituent bodies and lends its support to them as they discern whether to become LGBTQ+ Embracing and will offer resources and guidance to facilitate the process.

\*(Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, plus—including, but not limited to—intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, non-binary, gender non-conforming, aromantic, and asexual.)

Please see the [Letter from the President](#) on p. 51 and the [Forty-year History of Gender and Sexuality Questions](#) in the SCNA on p. 52.

