



## SPLATz Find *Freedom* in Boston

BY KURT FEKETE

The first thing the girls did was stake out their territory, flip the tables, and build their forts! Thus began the November SPLATz+ (Super-Powered Lovable Almost Teens) retreat at the Boston Church on the Hill (Boston Society of the New Jerusalem). Seven youth, aged ten to fifteen, gathered for the weekend to discuss and experience the topic of freedom. On Friday night, once the mattresses were inflated (we stayed on the floor of the church fellowship hall) and forts were complete, the youth played card games and drew silly pictures while waiting for everyone to arrive. Some youth traveled from as far away as New Jersey and even Philadelphia! Once we were all settled in, the girls in their forts and the boys behind the curtain on the stage, we went over rules and the schedule. We closed the evening with a short ice-breaker where the youth named which animal in the world they thought was the most free.

Our three freedom topics of discussion were national, personal, and spiritual freedom. On Saturday morning, we discussed national freedom.



**Above:** SPLATz in front of the Massachusetts State House: Serena, Caroline, Athena, Zsa Zsa, Nate, and Ben.  
**Right:** Craft time making Freedom Flags.

We talked about liberty, our country, and reviewed the first paragraph of the Declaration of Independence and the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights. Next, we discussed personal freedom. Each youth made a list of five things they are free to do, five things they are not free to do (like driving a car, because of age), and five things that they are free to do but feel are too dangerous. (Such as walk around certain

areas at nighttime or picking mushrooms in the forest and eating them). They shared their favorites with the group, and we talked about laws and how they protect us but limit our freedom.

In the afternoon session, each youth wrote on the easel one thing that they would like to be free to do, today, right now in their life. Not surprisingly, some kids wanted unlimited use of their cell phone. One child wanted to stay up all night, every night, all the time! Next, the tweens and teens created miniature cloth personal freedom flags. They varied in representation,

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### What's Inside:

The Swedenborgian Revolution • The Common Good • Interview with  
Rev. Dr. Brown • CSS and General Council Fall Meeting Reports •  
The Life of Chauncey Giles • Plus More

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## Editor's Corner



### Priorities

I am sure all of us have noticed that as we get older our priorities shift. Mine certainly have. My family, primarily my kids, take utmost priority over everything I do. Don't take this wrong, I love it. I absolutely love watching my kids, and their friends, in all their extracurricular activities. Whether it is a sport, a performing art, or a church activity—I will be there, with bells on, to support them. There have been so many events for my kids in the past month that have reminded me how important it is to support the youth programs that keep them together.

For several years, I have been talking with Kurt Fekete, SCYL Youth Director, about initiating a SPLATz youth retreat on the east coast. But, just like so many other things, the

## Letters to the Editor

### Thank You SPLATz

My daughter Caroline attended the SPLATz youth retreat held at the New Jerusalem Church in Beacon Hill over Veterans Day weekend. The group, led by Kurt Fekete, focused on the theme "Freedom." The group explored the many aspects and perspectives of what Freedom means to them and were lucky enough to have some great weather to walk part of Boston's Freedom Trail, along with lots of games, discussions, and team-building exercises.

My daughter came home from this retreat walking taller and more confident, with a new sense of belonging. She met some great new friends and is very excited about the upcoming youth

pandemic got in the way. COVID-19 really put a damper on gathering youth together, especially the younger ones who had more restrictions on vaccinations. Keeping the momentum for kids attending programs has not been easy. As camp director of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) we have for years been trying to figure out ways to keep our younger generation involved. Several years ago the FNCA initiated our Senior Flames program for young adults aged eighteen to twenty-two. For decades there was an issue keeping the *twenty-something* age range coming to camp through their college years. We created this group so that they could continue to come to camp, as a young adult, but at the same price as the teens, in exchange they take on a leadership role in the group. It gave them a use, and a *best of both worlds* position as they transition to adulthood. They have the freedom to choose if they want to participate as a Senior Flame or as an adult. It is a program that works.

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retreats (including Almont Winter Retreat). This was a great opportunity for her, especially being her first retreat!

Kurt is a fantastic youth group leader, giving the kids a great weekend of "Freedom" from their parents and responsibilities. They were able to be themselves, to grow and develop as a young teen along with their peers. We are so thankful for Kurt and Beki Greenwood for making this weekend possible.

Sincerest Thanks,  
—Lori Phinney  
Carver, Massachusetts

## the Messenger

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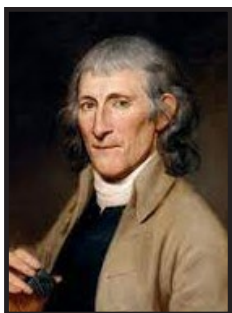
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The opinions and views expressed are those of the authors, not of *the Messenger*, the Standing Committee for Communication and Information, or the Swedenborgian Church.



## Message from the President A Time for Revolution

*The Year of Regeneration: 2022–23*



Francis Bailey has an important message for the Swedenborgian Church of North America today: be passionate for the spiritual heritage we have inherited and be revolutionary in how we imagine the church. The Founding Fathers once turned to this

young printer in Philadelphia who was impressively publishing the radical *Freeman's Journal*, and they hired him to publish the Articles of Confederation (the first American Constitution in 1777). But soon Bailey discovered another revolutionary cause of a different but equally critical kind: Swedenborg's writings. They had landed both in his city's harbor in 1784 and in his heart and soul. This was a spiritual revolution! The golden way was the deed, not the creed, and that such ethical love laid the groundwork for the true path to the freest land imaginable in God's heaven of higher uses.

For this revolution he again turned to his presses and began issuing the first Swedenborgian literature in America—pamphlets, broadsides, and even books that

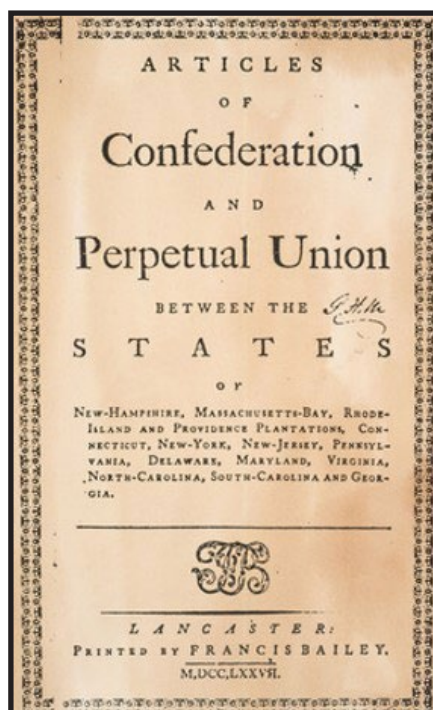
included *True Christian Religion* (in American English, of course), which Benjamin Franklin and two other signers of the Declaration of Independence purchased by subscription. Yet he was not done being revolutionary as he instigated the first American “Swedenborg Reading Circle” in North America. Soon replicated in many places, these cells evolved into bodies that became the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

Let us heed Bailey's revolutionary ways yet again

today. Though we grapple with a very different time and world, his wisdom quite effectively translates into our context. He got the word out via the latest technology, and he designed an effective way to grow group work on the ground. A quarter-millennium later, we are working toward another revolution in how our church communicates and how it gathers. The denomination has been helping fund technology for our churches and summer camps to have the equipment to reach audiences beyond old geographic boundaries. And the denomination just this fall has approved funding to help a new-start virtual program explore innovative ways of gathering entirely online to learn and live a spirituality you can never outgrow. The times call for Revolution.

—Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

Please see our [Annual Appeal](#) on [swedenborg.org](http://swedenborg.org) for how to donate.



## SPLATz Freedom

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from the humorous, “free to go to 7-Eleven and get a slushie” flag, to the more serious, “until animals and humans live together in peace, I will never be free” flag. All of them came out beautifully.

We were blessed with absolutely gorgeous weather on Saturday afternoon with lots of sun and temperatures in the seventies! It was very hard to believe this was Boston in November. So, off we went to traverse the Freedom Trail. We saw lots of historical sites, like old State Houses, Paul Revere’s grave, the Old North Church, and the site of the Boston Massacre. We also visited Faneuil Hall and Christmas in Boston! It was such a beautiful day to just frolic outdoors and stroll around Boston Common.

Saturday evening after dinner, we talked about our spiritual freedom. We talked about how our church, the Swedenborgian Church, is a church of freedom where you choose your own heaven or hell. We learned that heaven and hell are not actually places, but states of mind.

During our time in Boston, we did a bunch of fun things and had amazing adventures. On Friday, November 11, we had our first night at SPLATz. We had an amazing dinner and played sardines before having our session. Our SPLATz theme was freedom. We stayed up till 10:30 playing games before going to bed for the night. On Saturday we had an amazing breakfast and had our first session of the day. After our morning session, we were playing games until lunchtime when we had tacos. Then we had our lunch session which was our art session. We all made freedom flags with a bunch of different coloring supplies. We took a couple hour break and took a walk around the Freedom Trail. We went to some shops and went to see where Paul Revere was buried. Also, we went to the Shake Shack (we begged the adults). Even though it was way too early, we also went to a Christmas shop. When we got back to the church where we stayed every night, we had a lovely dinner. Then we had our last session talking about how we get to choose if we go to heaven or hell. We played a game along with that with a cube with three angels and three devils on it. Right before our session, we went on top of the building where we could see all the beautiful lights in the city, including the Old North Church that was fully lit up. On our last day, we went to church and shared about our freedom flags and how we think our flag represents freedom. We all had such an amazing time and I hope we can do it again soon. *Serena – Age 11*

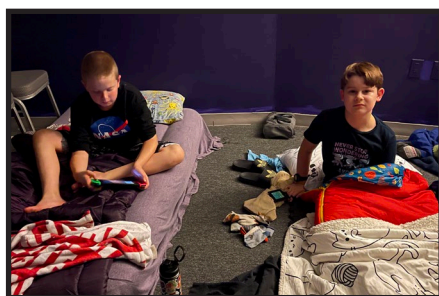
Our daily choices in our earthly life right here and now ultimately determine where and how we live in the next life. We have awesome responsibility and freedom. God wants us to be as happy as we can be and allows us to make our own decisions, whether good

or evil. Although, Swedenborg writes in *Divine Providence* that we are not truly free in hell because, “Two kinds of freedom that are opposite to each other cannot both be true freedoms. Further, we cannot deny that being led by what is good is freedom and being led by what is evil is slavery.” After session, Rev. Kevin Baxter came in

and took us up to the eighteenth floor rooftop to observe a fantastic nighttime view of the Boston skyline. Once back downstairs, we finished the evening with a couple of rounds of “Heads Up” and “Catch-

phrase” games. The girls merged their forts together into one big fort so that they could be together and “whisper” after hours (I did have to finally shush them), while the two boys, Nate and Ben, remained in residence on the stage area behind the curtain.

Sunday morning, we awoke early to the sound of chefs in the kitchen. They



Above: Nate and Ben setup their “room” on the fellowship stage area.

Right: The girls hang out in Fort Zsa Zsa.

Lower: Kurt leads session.

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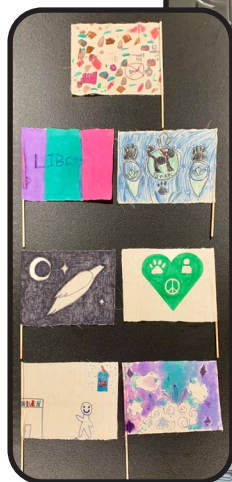
## SPLATz Freedom

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arrived early to cook turkeys along with an entire traditional Thanksgiving meal! We quickly got dressed, organized and cleaned up the hall and lounge areas, and ate breakfast. Then, we attended the lovely worship service on freedom led by Rev. Kevin which included listening to a magnificent professional choir. The SPLATz youth, led by Maudie, explained to the congregation how they spent their retreat weekend and then showed off their freedom flags. They also shared three quotes, two from the Bible and one from a famous leader that knows a little something about freedom and captivity. From 1 Corinthians 10:23–24, “We are free to do anything we want to do. Yes, but some things do not make people better. It is better if we do not do such things. A person must not think only of himself. But he should think of the other person as well.” From 1 Peter 2:15–17, “This is what God wants. Live as free men. But do not use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. Live as servants of God. Show respect for all people. Love the brothers and sisters of God’s family. Respect God.” Lastly, we heard the words of Nelson Mandela, “For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

After worship we enjoyed the big turkey dinner in the fellowship hall, then packed up, hauled our stuff to the underground garage, and departed. A huge thank you to Beki Greenwood who helped plan and organize this retreat, purchased groceries, did all the

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**Above:** Ten Swedenborgians in a tiny elevator! Athena, Beki, Zsa Zsa, Serena, Nate, Caroline, Kurt, Rev. Kevin, Maudie, and Ben (just outside the frame next to Maudie) are going up to see the evening Boston skyline. **Top Left:** Nate finds his use running the industrial dishwasher! **Left:** Freedom Flags designed by the SPLATz and presented at the Boston Church Sunday service. **Lower Left:** Serena, Athena, Zsa Zsa, and Caroline with the democratic donkey.

Our retreat’s theme was “freedom.” We had four total sessions learning about this topic. The first one was short, and only really covered the rules of the retreat, but Kurt did ask us what animal to us symbolized freedom. Our second one focused on political freedom, like what we can do with and without restrictions like laws. For example, I can’t get a paid job at a store because I’m not old enough. We also talked about what we can do but it’s too dangerous, like sleeping on a cliff we have the freedom to do but it’s too dangerous without the right equipment. For our third session, we talked about individual freedom, and what freedom meant to us. We showed this by creating flags on what freedom meant to us. My flag represented how I would like the freedom to walk to different places, and I drew myself walking to a 7-Eleven to get a slushie. Our fourth and final session we talked about Heaven and Hell, and how we have the freedom to choose where we want to go in our lifetime. God wants us to be happy, so wherever we choose to go, we will be happy. God gives us this freedom. During the retreat, we walked part of the Freedom Trail in Boston. We learned about historic events and places in our historic city and how they led up to us having all the freedom we have today in this country. I really enjoyed this retreat, and I met many friends during it. *Caroline – Age 13*

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Caroline, Zsa Zsa, and Serena take selfies with the night skyline.

I went to the retreat at the Church on The Hill in Boston. One thing all of us kids loved to do was play a game called sardines where we would turn out all the lights and one person would hide from the rest of us. We would then all try to look for the person and whoever found them first would win. I hid under a box one round, and no one could find me! We all played this game over and over while waiting for sessions to start. I am sure everyone found the sessions very informative, and I loved the spiritual take on freedom. While on the Freedom Trail we stopped by the Shake Shack and begged the adults to let us get a drink. They let us stop and I got a delicious chocolate malt shake. Caroline wanted to go into a Christmas store, but Serena and I stayed out because it wasn't even Thanksgiving yet! While waiting for Caroline, we saw a giant realistic dinosaur that wiggled its arm every so often. It was scary. Overall, this trip was so much fun, and I think I have made some lifelong friends along the way. *Zsa Zsa Dolley – Age 15*

cooking, and supervised the group. Without Beki, none of this wonderful experience could have or would have happened. Also, thank you to Rev. Kevin Baxter and the Boston church for their hospitality and the use of their building. New friendships were formed, existing friendships were strengthened, and special memories from this weekend of freedom were

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made that will remain for a very long time. ☺

**Languages of Love**

*SCYL Teen Retreat at Almont  
Retreat Center*

The Swedenborgian Church Youth League is pleased to be gathering in person again for the annual 2022 Winter retreat! The retreat will run from 3:00 PM Tuesday, December 27 to 10:00 AM Friday, December 30 at Almont New Church Assembly and Retreat Center located at 1513 Cameron Road, Berlin Township, Michigan. All youth ages 13 – 18 are invited. Cost is \$75 (scholarships are available). You must be vaccinated and have received a booster for Covid-19 within the last six months in order to attend. Our retreat theme is “The Five Languages of Love.” We will explore the five languages of love within a Swedenborgian theological context and how it is useful in our lives and our relationships. We will also have our special Exodus to

**Editor's Corner***Continued from page 134*

This year, we tried another needed new program—Senior Sparks. (Sparks are children that attend the FNCA ages twelve and under.) Post pandemic it seems that the tween and young teen group needed more support and options. The oldest teen was fifteen, and we had a vibrant group of older Sparks. We put together a similar program that they were able to choose to participate in (with parent permission). When space and age differences allow, they can stay in the dorms, but they help in the kitchen one meal a day; they can still participate in all the programs for

the younger children, but also are invited to participate in some of the teen programs. The kids had the best time and started forming the strong bonds that we see with the older teens. When Kurt came to FNCA this past August, we discussed the success of this program and started working towards finding a way to get a SPLATz+ retreat for ages ten to fifteen going this fall. We came across many roadblocks... but were able to pull it off. And I am so glad we did.

It is so important to continue our efforts and put love and support into our youth programs. I wouldn't be who I am today without attending Blairhaven Kids Camp, SCYL Retreats, and the summers at Fryeburg New Church Assembly—I look forward to seeing how the next generation grows as they find their place within the Swedenborgian Church.

—Beki Greenwood

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

Independence ceremony for our teens exiting the SCYL. Register at [swedenborg.org](https://swedenborg.org) or contact Youth Director, Kurt Fekete, [kfekete@hotmail.com](mailto:kfekete@hotmail.com) or 802-345-0169. ☺



# We Can No Longer Afford to Ignore the Common Good

BY JENNY M. CAUGHMAN

There are not many things most people agree on these days, but describing our current political and cultural climate as divisive is perhaps one of them. And perhaps another is that very few people think we are in a good place, that our current system or attitudes are working well. For many, young and old alike, there is a prevailing pessimism, if not downright fear, when we consider the future of our country, of the world. I also believe that most would agree that something has got to give, that a change needs to be made. And while it is tempting to point out all the faults of the *other* and pontificate on how they need to change, this attitude or behavior is rarely very productive. An attitude which I believe too many of us have abandoned, and which I see as both a symptom and a cause of our current predicament, is a commitment to the common good.



benefit from such service.

The common good is based on the Golden Rule—in both of its forms: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; Don't do to others that which you would not want done to you. The beauty of the Golden Rule is that it is shared by many people, as well as most faith traditions.

The common good is grounded in two basic concepts—goodness and truth. It is embodied in honesty and kindness and basic civility. Commitment to the common good requires a basic attitude of respect for others—even when we do not agree with each other. A commitment to the common good means that none of us has the right to take advantage of or intentionally harm others in the pursuit of what we want. In committing to the common good we will need to counteract the self-righteous selfishness that is all-too-common in our culture today. We must bravely ask ourselves if the path we are pursuing is self-serving or will it truly lead to greater well-being for most people? It requires that we each broaden our narrow, comfortable focus and make room for views other than our own.

When my husband and I married we were on opposite sides of the political fence. Because I loved and respected him, I listened to him, and I came to realize that we actually shared many of the same over-all goals, yet we had very different ideas as to the best way to reach those goals. I believe that most Americans do want what is good for this country, though we may define what that looks like and how to achieve it quite differently. If we are to work for this common good, we must first understand what the common good is,

which means we must understand not only what we each want, but also what others want. If we are truly invested in the common good, we must know what that is, moving beyond our parochial definition. This will necessitate an openness not particularly common these days. It will require we listen to those whose beliefs are different from our own, and not just write them off as stupid, misguided or bad. To listen to another does not require that we adopt their view, but it does entail an attitude of curiosity; the goal needs to be to understand the others' viewpoint and not to convert them to our own perspective. In a respectful conversation we do not insult and denigrate the other; we listen, and then, in our turn, politely share our own perspective.

Earlier I said that the common good is grounded in two basic concepts—goodness and truth. I believe both goodness and truth are grounded in kindness. I am a fan of the popular phrase: In a world where you can be anything, be kind. I believe commitment to kindness can take us a long, long way. And I also believe that kindness and truth are compatible. Being truthful may at times require we say something that may not be popular, that someone else may not want to hear. The challenge is, can we speak the truth kindly and respectfully, without the arrogance, condescension and insulting attitudes that are all too common these days. Can we advocate for our perspective without insulting and demeaning the person who holds another? Can we treat them as we want to be treated even when we're mad? Even when the other may not be treating us respectfully? Even when we think they

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# An Interview with Rev. Dr. David Brown

BY JIM LAWRENCE WITH DAVID BROWN

## Introduction

Rev. Dr. David Brown, Lead Chapel Minister at Wayfarers Chapel, successfully defended his doctoral dissertation at Pacific School of Religion last April with his defense committee of me, Dr. Rebecca Esterson, and Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell. His dissertation, entitled “Kairos and Attention Epistemology: Socioeconomics, Neuroscience, and Spirituality,” engages an interdisciplinary exploration of a new spiritual practice he hopes to continue shaping for general teaching and use in ministry. For readers of *the Messenger*, I held the following conversation with Rev. Dr. Brown to share the fruit of his doctoral study and work.

—Jim Lawrence



## JL: Your dissertation centers on a concept you call Attention Epistemology. Can you describe this concept in a few sentences?

DB: Attention Epistemology is a concept designed to ground our lived experience within the larger framework of the regeneration/glorification process whereby we increasingly live consciously, informed by our spiritual dimension. The spiritual dimension is always available to us, but for so many it remains merely an abstract or even an absent concept. Attention Epistemology actualizes experiences of our incarnate nature and generates a more generously awake moment. It draws upon knowledge of spiritual force and relies on a consciousness shift to being in the presence of the divine. This is sometimes referred to as Relational Consciousness, and Martin Buber sums this up quite nicely with his quote, “When two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges

between them.” Attention Epistemology complements all other spiritual practices that might already be working for you. In order to enter meaningfully into a daily spiritual practice, we need a basic orientation as to where we are at, and where we can potentially go deeper in our spiritual life.

## JL: You discuss the important difference between Chronos and Kairos, two Greek philosophy words for time. Chronos is chronological time, but what is Kairos and why is it central to your spirituality?

DB: Chronos is linear time, and Kairos is opportune time. The Lord unites all realms and possibilities of the multiverse, both in this physical dimension and the spiritual. Given that this is happening and operating at this very moment, there is a sacred gift in becoming spiritually present to this moment where we exist outside of the dimension of chronological time. We become present to the gift of Kairos, the sacred time

where we feel intimately connected to the presence of divinity. Jean-Pierre de Caussade in the eighteenth century called this “The Sacrament of the Present Moment.”

At the beginning of 2022, I began to sit in contemplative prayer for one hour each day. It is fascinating how much our surrounding ambient sounds can either contribute or detract from this experience. The sounds of birds and water have been known to be soothing since the beginning of time. With certain sound frequencies, this Chronos time in contemplative prayer or meditation can be enhanced to become Kairos time with effects extending outside of strict Chronos with continuations into the future after the Chronos of meditation has ceased, as also supported in current research in cymatics (the study of visible effects of sound and vibration).

Sound is connected both to Swedenborg’s work, *On Tremulations*, and to the work of theoretical physics operating in eleven dimensions. Healing sound vibrations such as attunement to 528Mhz is the healing technology of now.

## JL: You focus on the continuum between the physical body and what Swedenborg calls the subtle body or the substantial body that exists after physical death. How does your doctoral work speak to us regarding who we are with respect to our bodies?

DB: One answer to this is to “Die before you die” and realize there is ultimately no death. I believe Swedenborg underwent a consciousness transformation such as this as he was able to travel mystically and be led by the

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## Interview with Dr. Brown

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Lord through dimensions of heaven and hell. What I am suggesting here is not that same voyage through the afterlife but an intensification of our attention to that subtle body already available to us. This is really the crux of Attention Epistemology: as we expand our awareness to include the subtle body contained within our physical body, we activate this awareness. A simple way of testing this out is to close our eyes and hold out our hand in any direction. Without physically looking at your hand, can you sense the presence of your physical hand? This substantial body that awaits us after death is already contained within us as our soul, and it is connected to all that is wise and intelligent if we choose to follow it. We simply need to give it some loving attention. With some committed practice we will feel this dimension to our lived reality in this physical realm. This becomes the binding force that anchors us in this physical realm and connects us more powerfully to the spiritual truths of the next.

**JL: You make use of one of Swedenborg's earliest science papers, *On Tremulations*, which examines the concept of vibrations as a basic dimension of physics, and in this context, you speak about multiverse theory, such as Michio Kaku's eleven-dimensional vibrations string theory. Can you say why eleven dimensions are needed for the range of vibrations, and can you relate multiverse cosmology to Swedenborg's metaphysics?**


DB: Theoretical physics has concluded that all the laws of physics exist within the eleven dimensions according to

science. This includes laws of physics that do not even apply to our world. The leading theory is that no more than eleven dimensions can exist because conditions become unstable, particles naturally beyond this and collapse back down into ten or eleven dimensions. Jesus was the consummate nondual thinker, always binding together, seeing the wholeness of life. Was Jesus born into this world on the ninth spiritual dimension described in string theory and then spiritually progressed into the eleventh dimension from the cross to the empty tomb? This is just a playful question, but I think Swedenborgian Christology must consider physics. Swedenborg's *On Tremulations* displays some visionary understanding of quantum physics (and let's remember that in his 1734 *Principia* Swedenborg anticipated Einstein's atomic theory by two hundred years). The mystery of these eleven dimensions in theoretical physics comes to life when we look more deeply into the mystery of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus's death, resurrection, and appearance to his disciples starts to make sense to scientific sensibility through the operation of eleven dimensions of theoretical physics.

Swedenborg's own definition of what tremulation is as a motion remains elusive and mysterious to this day. The various descriptive definitions for this word given at the beginning of his work on this topic only add to the larger theoretical concepts beyond the human physical body. Here is a description of what tremulation is and a description of some of the properties of its nature:

Tremulation is the most subtle form of motion that exists in nature, and it possesses wonderful and distinctive properties, differing from all other motions. Although what is tremulatory presents itself each moment before us, playing round about each of the senses, yet is our mechanism and our reason still so little

cultivated, that we have no proper knowledge of tremulation and its most subtle nature, as to wherein it consists, and wherein it differs from other motions...a motion as takes place at the center alone.

This is an explanation of a subtle form of motion made centuries before a language was established to describe theoretical physics, and yet it still begins to make some sense for our modern-day sensibilities. It is described in detail as the most subtle of all the known forms of motion that can exist in nature. Science is currently still exploring various subatomic forms of motion that can be observed. Swedenborg goes into very specific details of the discrete degrees of the heavenly realms and how there are higher and lower levels depending on the interior spiritual qualities of how a human lived here on earth. It is not too much of a leap to explore how this is all operating presently in our own lived experience and specifically to how our physical world corresponds to the spiritual world. 

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is the Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Pacific School of Religion and President of the Swedenborgian Church of North America.



## Joining Together with Thankful Hearts

BY MERRILEE PHINNEY

Situated only three miles apart, the Elmwood New Church and the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church are in different towns. Different towns usually mean different schools, different libraries, different sports and activity centers, and associating with lots of different people. However, for many years it has been the wish of these two societies, in different towns, to become friends with the members of each, helping encourage fellowship while boosting congregational energy.

The Elmwood New Church has a long tradition of sharing a Thanksgiving feast on Thanksgiving Sunday. In 2021, the Bridgewater Society was invited to join Elmwood in their tradition and together shared a bountiful meal. As it happened, the *New* Elmwood New Church was being rented that afternoon, so we joined together in the large meeting room of the Bridgewater New Church. The event was enjoyed by all who attended, and it was agreed we would like to share the feast again—and so we did!

On this past Thanksgiving Sunday, November 20, members of the Bridgewater Society and the Elmwood Society gathered in the beautiful Elmwood Church—forty people in all—to give thanks and celebrate community. And this year, members of the Faith Family Life Church, who rent the Elmwood Church Sunday afternoons, were invited to join in morning worship and to also share in the Thanksgiving dinner. It was a very nice time for all.

We have often been asked how it is that two churches so close in miles do not combine and share much together. That question has been asked for years



*Members from different churches enjoy a feast together at the Elmwood New Church.*

and years. Although there were often personalities that got in the way, as well as family ties and familiarity, in many ways it has been the result of town borders, in place for hundreds of years. (There were other Swedenborgian churches in neighboring Massachusetts towns also: Brockton and Mansfield). Everyone knew, and gathered, with people from their own town, in their own church, with their own community, and most often their own families and neighbors.

But things are different now and we hope that joining together in this annual Thanksgiving feast will help bring us together more often, building new friendships and creating a more unified community with mutual goals. We shared a very special time together this Sunday and are already preparing to do it again next year. ☸

Merrilee Phinney is the facilities manager and treasurer of the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church and an active member of the FNCA.

### Common Good

*Continued from page 139*

do not deserve it? Can we hold on to our commitment to the Golden Rule? For when we lash out in anger and frustration, when we demonize, insult, and degrade the other, we all lose. Such behavior makes the world a little bit uglier and unpleasant, and we move not toward, but away from the Common Good.

One more plea as to why I believe this city, state, country and world would benefit from a greater commitment to the common good is because I firmly believe that we can no longer afford to be alienated from one another. We must acknowledge that to some degree just as what happens to my spouse and children impacts me, for better and for worse we are all one human family, and we are not immune to each other. We may not like it, but if nothing else the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that we are all in this together—an outbreak halfway around the world will eventually make it to our sacred shores. If we want to protect ourselves, we must come to understand and consider the condition and experience of others and include it in our equation. Even the strongest fortress can eventually be breached. This is why I believe we can no longer ignore the Common Good.

And here's one last thing—the good news about committing to the common good is that in helping one we help ourselves. By addressing the infection in my hand, my whole body is made healthier. And as so many have learned, it is better to give than to receive. May we make room for others in our hearts and in our minds, and may we meet one another, hand to hand as, together, we pursue the Common Good. ☸

Rev. Jenny Caughman is a Convention minister serving a United Methodist Church in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.



## Center for Swedenborgian Studies Fall Meeting Report

BY KAREN CONGER

The Board of Trustees of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) met in hybrid session for their annual fall meeting at Mercy Center in Burlingame, California, on September 30 and October 1, 2022. Chaired by Tom Neuenfeldt, and attended by Dr. Rebecca Esterson, the new Dean of CSS, the two-day meeting focused on a number of matters. There are currently four Ordination Track students: Eleanor Schnarr, Roxanne Sperry, Lynn Thompson, and Dr. Devin Zuber. In addition, Rev. Jay Barry is a prospective inductee from the General Church, making a total of five ordinands. Connie McOsker is on the Licensed Pastor Path, and there is another possible candidate who has not yet submitted their paperwork. Discussions were conducted around some very interesting and innovative ideas for providing scholarships, and it was

determined to form a committee to delve into this more deeply. The board organized into the following committees, who all reported and deep discussion ensued: the Interrelations Committee, made up of Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Tom Neuenfeldt, Dr. Lewis Shaw, and Dr. Devin Zuber; the Board Education and Development Committee, made up of Karen Conger and Jennifer Lindsay; the Faculty and Staff Committee, made up of Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Robert Carr, Rev. Dr. Gard Perry, and Rev. Kathy Speas, with Jennifer Lindsay and Tom Neuenfeldt consulting; the Student Relations Committee, with two sub-committees: Student Scholarship, made up of Robert Carr and Karen Conger, with Jennifer Lindsay consulting; and Student Recruitment, made up of Pastor Tassy Farwell and Tom Neuenfeldt. 📖

## General Council Fall Meeting Report

BY KAREN CONGER

The General Council (GC) of the Swedenborgian Church of North America met for their first ever hybrid fall board meeting at Mercy Center in Burlingame, California, on November 4 and 5, 2022. Several members were able to be together in-person, while several others were thankful to be able to join virtually in a gathering of friends and colleagues. The officers and others delivered short verbal reports, and amongst the business to be discussed was the proposed 2023 budget of the Church. Treasurer

Jennifer Lindsay reported that although the denomination's investments in the Common Fund have lost approximately one million dollars on paper during this economic downturn, overall we are in good shape financially, with capability to continue with our programs. Other items for discussion included the prospective part-time hire of a Digital Content Manager to oversee the website as well as other functions, the official re-appointment of Rev. Thom Muller as the Editor of *Our Daily Bread*, discussion on ways to

## Print Messenger Subscription Changes

If you subscribe to *the Messenger* (print edition) we are making a change to the subscription model. Now everyone will have their subscription renewed on the same day every year, starting August 1, 2023. There will be renewal reminders printed in *the Messenger* as well as a mass email reminder. We hope that this will make it easier to remember to subscribe! This also means that the "First" edition of 2023 will be the Convention edition.

If you are set to renew before 8/1/2023, you will be invoiced for the prorated amount of \$2 per issue, with the option of adding \$25 to carry you over to 2024.

If you sign-up for a new *Messenger* subscription between April 1 and October 31, you will be charged the annual rate of \$25 with a renewal date of August 1 the next year. If you subscribe between December 1 and April 30, then you will be charged \$15 with a renewal date of August 1 with the option to add \$25 to carry you over to the next year.

Thank you for working with us as we transition to this subscription model. 📖

Information, prices, and ways to pay/subscribe can be found here:

<https://swedenborg.org/news-announcements/newsletter-the-messenger/>

simplify and streamline the process for becoming a Member-At-Large of the denomination, and information about our 2023 Convention which will be held from July 1 to July 5, with the Council of Ministers meeting from June 28 to June 30 at Bridgewater State University in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. 📖

# The Life of Chauncey Giles

## Chapter Twelve: New York Pastorate 1875–1877

SUMMARIZED BY LOIS DOLE

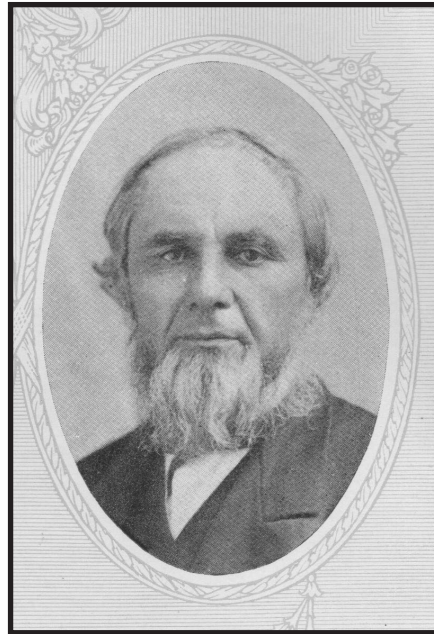
*Somewhere I found a small pamphlet by Chauncey Giles titled “The Blessedness of Death,” and I found it so comforting. When rearranging a bookcase, I came across his biography, written by his daughter Carrie Giles Carter; I thought I would look into it. I found it so fascinating: it’s mostly letters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

Chauncey was elected president of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in 1875, succeeding Rev. Thomas Worcester. He held the position until his death in 1893. His major endeavors both in parish work and in leadership roles were to promote practical uses of the doctrines and their dissemination in missionary work. He was impatient with formalities, feeling them an obstruction to getting the job done and eventually left them to his vice-president.

Concerning the New York society, he felt that it had entered “an era of good feeling” and that it would now prosper.

In April 1875, the society voted to give Chauncey a few months’ vacation in Europe. But first, on May fifteenth, he dedicated the New Church in Washington, DC. That day there was an overflow of visitors.

He sailed to Liverpool on June sixteenth and was much heartened of his reception by New Church members



who “...not only took me by the hand but by the heart.” He wondered at the English proclivity for walking “...men, women, and children.” He described a company of boys “...with their long sticks and bags, rushing along as though they were walking on a wager.” He added that he would go for a walk when he finished the letter.

He had a letter from Rev. Potts in Glasgow saying how happy he was to tell his congregation that Rev. Giles would be preaching next Sunday and offering to help him arrange some trips in the area. In another letter he mentions the almost constant rain.

Chauncey writes home about his visit to Edinburgh, with its ancient houses eight and nine stories high, and beautiful Keswick, where he got lost trying to take a walk around a lake. He describes an “Inevitable” tea at a church in London, where Mr. Prestand presided, and Mr. Tafel introduced him. He said this about his reception by his European hosts: “I never

had such attention paid to me in my life, and I never expect to, or hope to, again.”

He writes about the Tafel’s kindness to him, and of Mrs. Tafel’s care of the household “and is just such a wife as Mr. Tafel, who is devoted to his books, needs.”

London, he writes, has many magnificent buildings, but the houses “...are not so elegant as ours.”

In Holland he describes his visit to the palace, where he was guided through the rooms by the Queen. She showed him China that was two hundred years old, and another set given by the Emperor of China that was three hundred and fifty years old. Chauncey was impressed. They went from one opulent room to another, then the Queen held out her palm open and horizontal. He decided that this was a signal and gave her a silver coin, for which she expressed thanks.

In August, he was transfixed by the play of colors on the peaks of the Alps in Switzerland at sunset and how sunrise the next morning reversed its glory. “The transformation was magical beyond description.”

In September, he visited the church in Milan which houses the original of Leonardo da Vinci’s Last Supper, saying that Christ’s face “...is full of majesty, sweetness, and sorrow.”

In Rome, he visited St. Peter’s and the Vatican. In the galleries that held some of the world’s masterpieces he remarked that some of the subject matter was so dark that he could not understand how artists could deal with it. On the other hand, he was tired of seeing Madonnas, babies, Marys and Josephs “...and saints of all descriptions”

*Continues on page 145*

<sup>1</sup> See prior installments in the September 2022 issue, June 2022 issue, January/February 2022 issue, October 2021 issue, May 2021 issue, March 2021 issue, November 2020 issue and July/August 2020 issue.



## Chauncey Giles

Continued from page 144

and that it would be a relief to see a well-painted sinner.

In October 1875, Chauncey is home in New York, feeling that he had "...enlarged the horizons of my thoughts and affections" and that as he returned to his writings he would "...think of the pleasant hours and kind faces and warm hearts in England...." He said that he was deeply thankful for the opportunity to make the visit and that he would try to profit from it as much as possible.

In December of that year, Chauncey wrote reflecting on the year, saying that he felt he hadn't wasted much time and hoped he had performed some use. He said that if he had it to do over, he would work more with people and put less emphasis on preaching. He felt that his preparation for the ministry consisted of some knowledge of the doctrines but no training for his work. He writes, "What an absurdity! — to set a man over a society and put the special care of souls into his hands when he has no preparation for it."

He felt that the society at that time was "...spiritually in a very prosperous state."

In April 1876, he describes how he spent a Sunday: first writing a "discourse," Then traveling to Brooklyn, preaching for Mr. Ager, having lunch and delivering a prayer there, back to church to deliver a "discourse" in the afternoon, performing a service at a cemetery, going "as fast as I could" to Bergen [NJ?] and lecturing, reaching home about eleven o'clock.

On his sixty-fourth birthday, May tenth, 1876, Chauncey reflects on his life: "I can see how I have been checked, my way absolutely blocked, at times, how I have been guided, restrained and helped....What dreadful mistakes I have made, and yet out of them it seems as though I could

perceive that the Lord had led me to some of my greatest blessings."

The family moved from 35th Street to apartments at 52nd Street and Broadway and in October 1876 to an apartment on 24th Street.

That month Chauncey wrote to Mr. L.H. Tafel of his admiration of his learning and dedication the New Church, adding that he had recommended the publication of his book.

A friend wrote to him asking whether he should read Swedenborg every day. He answered: "As a general rule I think it is useful to read some every day, if you do not read too much." He continued that it wasn't so important to know a lot as to "...love to be useful."

In January of 1877, Chauncey gave a course of four lectures in church with an audience larger than anyone expected, and for the next three Sundays the church was "well filled."

After one of the lectures two men from the Masonic Temple proposed that Chauncey give the lectures in the great Masonic Temple on the corner of 23rd Street and Sixth Avenue. Although the biography doesn't mention that this happened, Chauncey said that, "Nothing in the New Church has ever made such a stir in New York as these lectures."

Beginning that month and continuing for fifteen years, Chauncey wrote encouraging letters to two women in Paris who were striving to keep a small society of the New Church going there. Carrie says that her son brought the letters home to her on his return from WW I.

During this period of his life, Chauncey's workload was taking its toll. In addition to his pastorate requiring frequent lecturing outside the city, he was president of Convention and editor of *the Messenger*. He was so seriously overworked that he became ill the fall of 1877. He realized that he could not sustain the pace he had been

keeping and when a call came for the pastorate in Philadelphia, he considered it seriously.

In December 1877, Mr. T.S. Arthur, chairman of the Philadelphia society search committee, wrote to Chauncey of the society's need for him to cure its "disorganized, crippled, and disheartened state." For a long time, Mr. Arthur continued, he did not want to ask Chauncey to leave his beloved New York, but Chauncey's illness indicated to him that he needed a change. The Philadelphia "Tract and Publication Society" would enable him to put New Church books into circulation. Over one hundred members of the society hoped he would come.

Eunice writes to Carrie [Giles] on Chauncey's last Sunday in New York that, having been in the city for over fourteen years, they would leave it and many dear friends behind with deep regret. ☸



## Passages

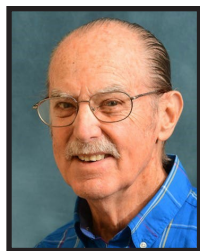
### Baptisms

On November 10, 2022, at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers baptized **Matilda and Samuel Miyasaki**, infant twins of Richard and Annamarie Torpey Miyasaki, and grandchildren of Linda Baker and the late Howard Torpey.



### Deaths

**Rev. Jerome (Jerry) Alden Poole, 83,**



passed away while sleeping peacefully at his home in Wilmington, Delaware, on September 24, 2022. Born in Wilmington in 1939, he grew up in the Wilmington

church in a multigenerational New Church family. Jerry graduated from the Friends School in Wilmington before attending West Point Academy in New York, followed by Colby College in Waterville, Maine, where he received his undergraduate degree. He experienced a call to ministry and graduated from the New Church Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and as part of the inter-seminary program, Jerry received the Master of Divinity degree from Andover Newton Theological School, Newton, Massachusetts.

The internship year of his theological training occurred in 1964–1965

at the Swedenborgian Church of the Good Shepherd in Bellevue, Washington, where three ministers worked collaboratively as a team ministry in Project Link. Jerry was ordained July 2, 1965, at the Convention Sunday service at the Brockton, Massachusetts church. He was called to serve in a team ministry, serving both the Wilmington, Delaware, Church of the Holy City and the Church of the New Jerusalem in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At that time, Richard H. Tafel, Sr., pastor of the Philadelphia church, was the president of Convention and needed assistance with pastoral responsibilities. Jerry's classmate Rev. Randall Laakko was part of the team as the two served both Philadelphia and Wilmington. During the team ministry, many innovative programs and worship services were created. Yokefellow prayer therapy groups and other programs of personal and spiritual development occurred during that time. It was also during that time that Jerry was one of the chaplains for the Youth League and served on the staff of the Leadership Education Institute (LEI), a convention program for teens who were potential future church leaders. He loved working with teens, who brought out his fun-loving spirit. The life of the church was exciting and challenging.

The realities of family life and dreams, however, presented another call for attention that resulted in a decision to leave the full-time ministry and enter the business fields of insurance and financial investments. Over the ensuing six decades he started many businesses while also managing a successful financial services business. Jerry's love for the church kept his interest and involvement in church life at the denominational level, including the investment pension and pension

committees, the Swedenborg Foundation investment committee, and the board of trustees for the Swedenborg School of Religion with many years as chair.

He never left active work in his local church in Wilmington, serving at a high level as trustee and president and using his gift of music to enrich worship, particularly for Christmas, Maundy Thursday, and Easter services. Jerry led many worship services during the years when Rev. Laakko was president of Convention. He officiated at several weddings and baptisms, served as a Sunday School teacher, introduced the Emanuel Dining Room program to the congregation (which serves noon meals once a month to this day), started the Lobster and Wreath fundraising events that served the church and community for many years, and invited the Copeland String Quartet to provide concerts at the church several times a year.

Jerry's faith drove him to a life of use in the local community, again serving on many boards. When he learned of the critical need for a day care center in west Wilmington, Jerry collaborated with a local contractor, raised necessary funds, and served on the board of West Wilmington Day Care center during the building phase. His wife Susan followed him on the board, focusing on program development and hiring teachers. Jerry was also a founding member and served for many years as board chair for All The Difference, Inc., (ATD) a clinic for people of all ages with developmental and neurodivergent differences. The director of ATD said that he often talked about the West Wilmington Day Care Center when meeting with the heads of charitable foundations because that work had provided important experiences.

*Continues on page 147*



## Passages

Continued from page 146

One ATD board colleague wrote: "I can't think of a kinder or more loving person. I know he would move mountains to help people he loved and cared about."

Jerry is survived by Susan Flagg Poole, his wife of fifty years, who celebrated their marriage vows at Wayfarers Chapel, his children Kimberley Adams, Kendra Poole, Leonore Kempisty, Timothy Poole, Aaron Poole, and Rachel Poole, eleven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his sister, Faith P. Greeley. Jerry is preceded in death by his brother Henry Poole, his parents Stewart and Leonore Poole, and his stepmother Mary S. Poole.

Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter now your higher uses and loves in the spiritual world of heavenly angels. ☸

## What's Happening



[SwedenborgianCommunity.org](https://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.

## A Perfect Gift for the Holiday Season

Looking for something simple and easy that will last the whole year long for someone this Christmas? Consider a gift subscription to *the Messenger*!

Print subscriptions to *the Messenger* are available:

### 1-Year Subscriptions:

USA – \$25 / year

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Subscriptions renew on

August 1 annually.

To subscribe, email:

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

## Friendly Game Corner

*No Cost Family Games for All Ages*

BY TREVOR "THE GAMES MAN"

### Group Counting

A hilarious game over dinner, in the living room, or while waiting anywhere for just about anything.

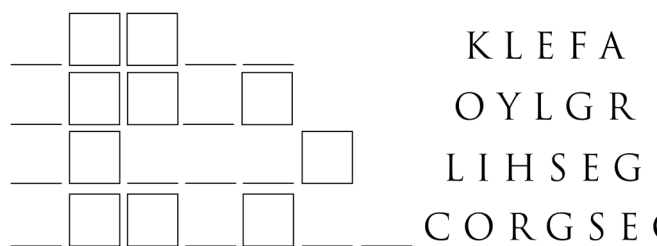
**OBJECT:** To count to ten together.

### RULES:

1. No turns. Anyone may say the next number at any time.
2. Only say one number at a time.
3. If two or more say the next number, you have to start over again at one!

It's completely freestyle. No setting up patterns, deciding ahead of time who will say what number, helping in any way, letting little slips go (see Rule 3), etc.

Simple but definitely not easy. You might be able to do it in a few minutes... if you're lucky! And, because there are no special skills required, all players are completely equal, so kids, teens, and adults enjoy this game together. Have Fun!



*Twin girls born on Christmas Day were aptly named:*

\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

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

### Answers to the September Jumble (no Jumble in October/November):

*Round, Woods, Fetch, Rough*

*Did you know Abraham Lincoln was a great golfer? His personal best total was "Four Score"*

TREVOR "The Games Man" is a certified New Games Leader & Cooperative Play Specialist, Professional Stilt Walker, and full-time entertainer.

### 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.

## Grants and Funding

# Tafel Fund Policies

BY KAREN CONGER

The Tafel Fund was established in 2011 to advance the mission and purpose of the Swedenborgian Church. It is a permanent fund restricted to the use of income only and is administered by a Board of Trustees: three appointed by General Council and those who are seated by virtue of having donated a minimum of \$25,000. The fund was established to honor the service to the Swedenborgian Church of North America of past and present Tafel ministers. One more past Tafel minister was added to the list when former president and long-time minister of the denomination Rev. Dick Tafel recently passed into the spiritual world, to his joy and our loss.

In April of 2022, the Trustees developed a process for the disbursal of the Fund which they wish to share with the ministries of the denomination in the United States and Canada in hopes of encouraging them to apply:

- Grants are to be based on a particular need and not just a lump sum.

- As a point of information grants have been made for as little \$300 and up to as much as \$5,000, while the average grant has been about \$2,000.
- Grant submissions are due three times a year, by January 15, May 15, or September 15, to be considered at the end of the respective month.
- An amount annually available for granting equivalent to 10% of the corpus based on the amount in the Fund at the beginning of the calendar year.
- New ideas favored.

For more information on how to apply for a grant from the Tafel Fund or if you have any questions, please email the committee chair, Rev. Rich Tafel: [richtafel@gmail.com](mailto:richtafel@gmail.com).

### Tafel Fund Committee Members

*Rev. Rich Tafel, Chair*

*Linda Tafel*

*Rev. Dr. Gard Perry*

*Karen Conger (Appointed)*

*Lon Elmer (Appointed)*

*Jennifer Lindsay (Appointed)* 