



Emanuel Snowenborg

BY KURT FEKETE

A couple of times each winter season here in Maine, if you're lucky, you get that perfect modeling snow. Not too wet, not too powdery, but that just right snow that packs easily but isn't overly soggy. On those days, once the driveway and porches are cleared off, Zsa Zsa and I set off to work on creating an original snow sculpture. Over the past ten years or so we've made some fantastic creatures—an enormous rabbit, Zsa Zsa's cat, Daisy (the snowball tail was a real challenge), a true to scale great white shark consuming Zsa Zsa, the Little Mermaid, a huge platypus, a kangaroo with joey (to raise awareness and support Australian wildlife in crisis during the wildfires of late 2019 and early 2020), and even a massive turkey after an early season snowfall on Thanksgiving Day! But, up until now, we've never attempted to sculpt a bust of a human being. Zsa Zsa is a sophomore in high school and really enjoys art, and recently told me how much she wanted to sculpt a human head, albeit, out of clay. Our first big snowfall of the year was perfect for sculpting, but as it was smack in the middle of high school midterms, Zsa Zsa didn't have the time to build anything too large. So, with a bit of coaxing and a promise of hot cocoa with extra marshmallows, I



convinced her to do a smaller snow sculpture that we could complete in under an hour. Since we spent a November weekend with a marble bust of Swedenborg at the Boston church of the New Jerusalem and as we recently returned from the SCYL winter retreat, making a Swedenborg bust was the natural choice. We've spent much time working together as a team and time was short, so we constructed quickly and efficiently. As usual, I did

the heavy lifting, by bringing in the snow, building the base, and rolling the ball to form the head. Once the structure was roughed out, Zsa Zsa immediately started in on carving the facial features while I frantically worked around her rolling cylinders and attaching them to the sides of the head to form those famous wig curls. We laughed as the "wig powder" came down naturally from the sky as light

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Save the Date for Convention 2023 • Fryeburg New Church Seeks Minister •

What's Inside: New Church Visionaries Lecture Series • SCYL Winter Retreat and 2023 Officers
• Ministry in Parish and Beyond • Engaged Swedenborgianism • And More!

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the Messenger

© The Swedenborgian Church of North America
Published monthly except two combined issues by the Standing Committee for Communication and Information of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (founded 1817, incorporated 1861 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America), Rev. Jane Siebert, president.

January/February 2023

Volume 247, No. 1 Whole Number 5479

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Printing: FenwayGroup, Boston, MA

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50 Quincy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

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Subscriptions: free online subscription at <https://swedenborg.org/subscribe/>. Printed and mailed to US address, \$25/year; to Canada address, \$30/year; to all other addresses, \$40/year; single copies, \$3.00, libraries & prisoners, free. Send check made out to "Swedenborgian Church" with "Messenger" on the memo line. Other requests, write or call Central Office.

Submissions are accepted at any time. Submissions must be received by the third Monday of the month to be considered for the next issue.

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

Letters to the Editor

Check out Swedenborg.org

Have you checked out [Swedenborg.org](https://swedenborg.org), the home website of our denomination? If you haven't lately you might want to look again. When someone asks, "What is your church?" I am proud to direct them to our website.

Recently, I was speaking with the members of the Pretty Prairie and Pawnee Rock Swedenborgian churches in Kansas. I opened our website and once again was so thankful for the vision and insight this site offers and the continued work of the website committee to keep it fresh and meaningful.

It contains all one needs to lead a confirmation class, starting with thoughts on "some general tenets of Swedenborgian spirituality." These are not presented as definitive statements on doctrine, rather Swedenborg's views in simple language to spark discussion.

Example: "The Nature of God: God is loving and is never angry, judging, or punishing. Swedenborg shared in his theological writings a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings. In his view, God is Love and Wisdom itself, quite literally incapable of judgement, punishment, or anger. It is our call to be vessels of this love and to share it, whatever form it may take. The emphasis is not on accepting particular doctrines but rather on leading a life of love. The oneness of God is emphasized; Divine Love is represented by the Father and Mother imagery of the Bible, and Jesus is the incarnation of Divine Wisdom. Divine Love and Divine Wisdom come together in Divine Action, represented by the Holy Spirit."

The site currently offers Swedenborg's views on The Inner Meaning of the Bible, Regeneration, Divine Providence, The Spiritual World, Heaven and Angels, What About Hell, Salvation and The Second Coming.

Emanuel Snowenborg

Continued from page 1

snowfall continued while we worked. In just about forty-five minutes we completed the whole project. It came together easily and honestly the most difficult part was capturing a picture that showed Zsa Zsa's wonderful work on the facial details (she even insisted on adding wrinkle creases to the forehead and around the eyes and mouth after I thought we were finished). Zsa Zsa is nearly sixteen now and our times snow sculpting together are drawing to a close. Soon she will be going off to college and I'll be left behind with just the memories of all our fun times working and playing together in the snow. But until then, if the weather cooperates, if the temperature hits that ideal sweet spot, if the snow falls at just the right



Zsa Zsa and the kangaroo with joey they built in 2019.

In another introductory section, The Swedenborg Foundation is highlighted with a short video by Jonathan Rose explaining the man Swedenborg and the value of several individual books he wrote. And offering free downloads of the books with a click.

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Message from the President

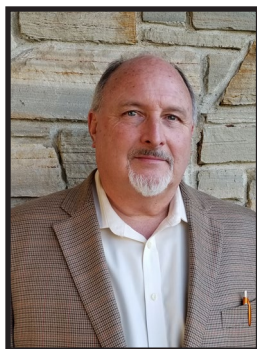
Swedenborg, a Scientific Spiritual Visionary for Our Times

The Year of Regeneration: 2022–23

A flourishing religion in the West is scientism: the belief that all ultimate answers for meaningful information about life lies in scientific research of physical phenomena. Merriam-Webster defines scientism as “An exaggerated trust in the efficacy of the methods of natural science applied to all areas of investigation (as in philosophy, the social sciences, and the humanities).” I come across believers in this view every single day, and all sociological studies of trends in belief and thought in Europe, the United States, and Canada support the actuality of this growing trend. At the same time, nevertheless, many vigorous more-than-physical philosophies continue to engage large numbers as well, and Swedenborg provides tremendous potency for this seeming divide because few bring more expertise for coherence.

The final book penned by Rev. Dr. George Dole, *The Universe and I: Where Science & Spirituality Meet*, explores this gap. He notes the need for an interface between science and spirituality is driven by two frustrations: the inability of science to explain the emergence of life and the mind, and the inability of living minds to find ultimate values in science. Swedenborg is suited for this interface to a rare degree since only very few figures make the list of such distinguished contributions to both science and spirituality as to be deemed by scholars as historically significant.

For a significant theologian, Swedenborg’s prowess in science is second to none. His contributions to astronomy, mineralogy, physical anatomy, and neuroanatomy all have been assessed as major by many historians of science. Historian of Swedish science



Paivi Maria Pihlaja selects Swedenborg for a short list of Swedish figures on an official chain of pathfinders whose ideas proved to be of lasting value in the unveiling of scientific ideas. The Swedish Nobel laureate Svante Arrhenius has detailed Swedenborg’s importance in the history of astronomy, and Princeton historian of cognitive science, Charles Gross, has persuasively presented Swedenborg as a potent figure in

brain localization theory. Harvard’s Herbert Benson notes that Swedenborg was the first to deduce that the brain undulates in concert not with the heart (the then prevailing assumption) but with the lungs. This insight led to the neuroscience of the positive effects from deep or even still breathing, which yields the powerful psycho-physiological benefits of meditation. Overall, Swedenborg produced approximately 150 small and large works in at least a dozen science disciplines, and the sheer quantity and breadth of his decades in natural science analysis itself is of historical note.

Yes, his contributions to religion and spirituality are no less impressive. In addition to inspiring a church movement operating in many countries, Swedenborg adorns cultural studies in numerous fields: Western literature, art history, intellectual history in Christianity, Western esoteric studies, and near-death studies. Such leading historians of religion as Catherine Albanese, Sydney Ahlstrom, Eric Leigh Schmidt, and Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke all have underscored Swedenborg’s visible role shaping religion in the modern period. Esteemed scholars of spiritual practice and biography such as Huston Smith, Sam Kean, Colin Wilson, Wilson Van

Continues on page 6



SATURDAY, JULY 1ST – WEDNESDAY, JULY 5TH 2023

In her 1903 book *Optimism*, Helen Keller detailed her conviction that true optimism (not to be mistaken with “the false optimism of the prosperous”) compels the faithful to a life of active engagement in the affairs of the world. Pessimism, in her view, kills the instinct to struggle against poverty, ignorance, and crime. Optimism is the “faith that leads to achievement” compelling us to a time when “no man shall live at his ease while another suffers.” Inspired by Helen Keller’s life and faith, the theme of this year’s annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church of North America will be “The Practice of Optimism.”

Meet the Churches of the Massachusetts New Church Union Waiting to Welcome You to Bridgewater!

The Elmwood New Church

The Elmwood New Church, (a.k.a. the New Jerusalem Society of East Bridgewater) was established in 1831, at its present location in Elmwood, a section of East Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Since then, the society worshipped in the original church building and the community hall until 2015, when deterioration of the building occurred after many years of deferred maintenance, and it was decided that the building was compromised, the original church had to be torn down, and a new church built on the same lot.

Since 2015, we have met in our new, beautiful, light filled, airy space devoted to the Lord with a group of dedicated parishioners who continue the

message of Swedenborg into the community. We have local community groups who meet in the church space grateful for such a beautiful space to use. We have had funerals, weddings, and had a lively zoom attendance during the COVID-19 shut down, in addition to having Parking Lot Church during the Spring, Summer, and Fall months. Since the summer of 2019 we have had a continuing presence on Sunday mornings on the local television channel carrying our Sunday service.

In other words, we are an ongoing, lively congregation, attracting three new members last year and two more people who are interested in joining this year. With the grace of God and the spirit of worship alive in our church, we anticipate a new year full of promise for renewal and strength as we journey together on the road to spiritual enlightenment.

Cambridge Swedenborg Chapel

Designed by Herbert Langford Warren (1857–1917), who was a founding member of the society and a celebrated architecture professor at Harvard, the “pocket Gothic” chapel built for the theological school campus adjacent to Harvard Yard was completed in 1901 and has remained a widely known jewel of Cambridge churches. A congregation was established in the beginning to co-exist with the theological school before the school finally moved to the west coast in 2001.

The congregational life over the decades has been rich with creative and talented ministers and laypeople. Study groups, public lectures, music



Continues on page 13

Fryeburg New Church Seeks Minister

Established in 1787 as the Church of New Jerusalem

The Fryeburg New Church seeks a full-time ordained, Swedenborgian minister to join our community. Fryeburg is nestled in western Maine, with mountains on its doorstep, small rural New England charm, the comforts of neighboring resort towns and the ocean an hour away. The Fryeburg New Church offers an interwoven spirituality blend of traditional Swedenborgian roots with a modernized, enlightened atmosphere. We encourage candidates who share our desire to be of service to our community, providing fellowship and spiritual growth, to apply.



The Fryeburg New Church

The Fryeburg New Church is a welcoming, devoted, service-oriented congregation strongly engaged in the community. Our church is a blend of hybrid and virtual members who have a deep generational family connection to the Swedenborgian church and those who now call our church home. We are looking for a minister who can communicate the doctrines to those with a range of Swedenborgian familiarity. In addition, we have a beautiful, talented, inspiring music program with an enthusiastic vision of connecting our church with the community.

As Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen ends her ten-year ministry and we find ourselves post-pandemic, we are at a crossroads of where we are heading as a church. We look forward to finding our next spiritual leader for our church with the wisdom and leadership skills to guide us with care and love into our future.

Fryeburg, Maine

Fryeburg is nestled in the Mt. Washington Valley and offers a wealth of outstanding outdoor activities, including hiking, skiing, and biking.

We also have a rich cultural environment with arts, music, and food. In addition, the ocean is an hour away and three hours from Boston. Fryeburg is home to the Fryeburg Fair, where we undertake our largest fundraiser of the year, operating a food booth, and the Fryeburg New Church Assembly is just a mile away. We seek a minister that can be involved in both. We encourage our ministers to be part of the community, to use it to relax and explore their joys for fulfillment.

Outline of Minister Job Description:

- Officiate at and guide weekly scheduled worship services (hybrid and virtual), coordinating with the Worship Committee and the Choir Director.
- Provide pastoral visits to the church community at home, in care facilities, and in hospitals
- Officiate at weddings, baptisms, confirmations, and resurrection services
- Bring Swedenborgian theory to current life situations, provide enrichment programs (study groups, book clubs, private counseling sessions)

- Oversee religious and educational classes
- Work with peers within the Swedenborgian denomination, the Maine Council of Churches, and with local spiritual leaders to build ecumenical connections
- Have an active role in the day-to-day administration of church business, working with the church secretary Maintain regular office hours
- Participate in church fundraising and outreach programs Attend community programs that request religious direction

Minister Job Benefits:

- Salary compensation per experience
- Housing (FNC Parsonage)
- Utilities & plowing
- Phone & travel allowance
- Health Insurance stipend
- Full job description and benefits package is available upon request.

The Application Process

Please submit:

- A résumé and a cover letter
- Three letters of reference from:
 - a ministerial colleague
 - a person in the community familiar with your work
 - a character reference
- A video of a sermon
- An example of writing for a newsletter or article
- A statement of your vision for the growth of the Swedenborgian church and the role of the local parish

Please email your application by
April 1, 2023 to:

TrusteeFNC@gmail.com

Search Committee:
Leone Dyer, Chair; Greg Huang-
Dale and Susan Logan

The Year of Regeneration

"Salvation the Goal, Regeneration the Process"Edited excerpt from *Inner Light: Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual Dimension*

BY BRIAN KINGSLAKE, EDITED BY JIM LAWRENCE

Repentance means a true conversion, and conversions may be sudden or gradual. It may take a few seconds, perhaps during a sermon, or as a result of some great shock or disaster; or it may take many years of slow change, here a little, there a little—first in one area, then in another. Some people have to be converted over and over again; for others, once is sufficient. But, converted we must be, if we are to stop desiring evil and begin desiring good.

Since the old will is inevitably corrupt it must be destroyed, and a new will must be allowed to grow in its place. This process is called *rebirth*, or, in the Latin language, *regeneration*. We destroy the old corrupt will by resisting its promptings, saying "no!" to it, or as Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" (Matthew 16:23) In Swedenborg's terms, we must "shun evils as sins against God." That is to say, we must flee from evils because yielding to them would be acting in opposition to the purpose of God. It is useless, from the point of view of our

regeneration, to shun evils merely because they are bad for our health, or because they might get us into trouble, or lower people's opinion of us—for then the motivation would be selfish. We should flee evils because they separate us from God. Gradually, then, the old will shrivels up, and the God removes it from us and replaces it with a new will from God's own Self, which can only desire the things of heaven. We are *born again* as his children, growing up in his image and likeness.

We cannot regenerate ourselves. All we can do is to say no to our egotistic cravings: we have the power of veto.

This rebirth usually takes a very long time, perhaps a whole lifetime. Conversion, as we have seen, may be instantaneous. A person might be able to say, quite truly, "I was converted on such and such an occasion, or at such and such a time," but we cannot give a date for our regeneration. We cannot

even say how far we have gotten with it. Only God knows. Rebirth is God's work only. We cannot regenerate ourselves. All we can do is to say *no* to our egotistic cravings: we have the power of veto. Then, as the new will begins to grow in us, we can say *yes* to its unselfish promptings. We thus open ourselves to God, and then God's life floods into us, and we become new creatures. ☒



Rev. Brian Kingslake (1907–1995) served churches in the north of England and South Africa and as Principal of Mooki Memorial College, a Swedenborgian college in Soweto, Africa. His last pastorate ministry was a ministry for eleven

years at Convention's national cathedral, Church of the Holy City in Washington, DC. Author of numerous works, including popular children's books, this edited excerpt is from *Inner Light: Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual Dimension* (J. Applesseed & Co., 1991), which is now available fully online at <https://swedenborgdigitallibrary.org/ilight/inner13.htm>

Letters to the Editor*Continued from page 2*

One part I want to direct you to is a favorite that centers on today's life questions, like: Why is there so much political turmoil and what can I do about it? Why are we experiencing this pandemic? What happens after we die? These are written by several of our ministers and are not offered as definitive answers. The site explains: These answers are written by ministers of our

church and are written in the hope that they can guide you or give you peace through understanding. They are not meant to represent the beliefs of our church as a whole."

In our new year, check out our ever-new website Swedenborg.org. And remember the goal is to move people to think rather than to tell people what to think.

Blessings and Care to you all,
—Rev. Jane Siebert
Wichita, Kansas

Message from the President*Continued from page 3*

Dusen, Stephen Larsen, and Eugene Taylor place Swedenborg among history's most accomplished explorers of the inner life.

For a skillful response to mere scientism, I recommend taking a look at George Dole's last book. You can find it on the [Swedenborg Foundation bookstore website](https://SwedenborgFoundation.org) or on [Amazon](https://Amazon.com).

—Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

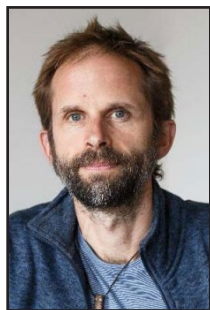
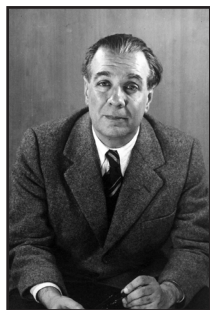
Virtual Education Opportunities

Lecture Series: New Church Visionaries

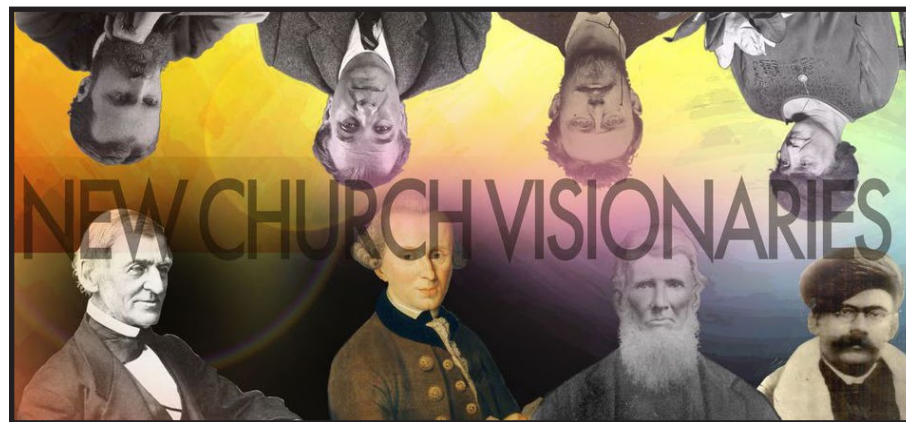
Join us on a seven-part journey to learn about some of the greatest visionary minds of the New Church lineage. The influence of Swedenborgian ideas and spirituality has been one of enormous diversity and dynamism. This free online lecture series is offered by the Helen Keller Spiritual Life Center, an initiative of the Cambridge Society of the New Jerusalem at Swedenborg Chapel, with generous financial support from the Massachusetts New Church Union.

Jorge Luis Borges with Dr. William Rowlandson

February 17 at 3:00 PM ET



The first lecture of the series will be delivered by Dr. William Rowlandson, who will be discussing famed Argentine writer, essayist, and poet Jorge Luis Borges, whose interest in mysticism and mystical texts was deeply influenced by Swedenborg. Dr. Rowlandson is a Senior Lecturer in Hispanic Studies at the School of European Culture and Languages, University of Kent. He has written books and articles on Latin American cultural and political history, Cuban history, Cuban literature and film, Borges, Swedenborg, mysticism, psychedelics, the Imaginal, and the Daimonic. Among his numerous publications



are *Imaginal Landscapes: Reflections on the Mystical visions of Jorge Luis Borges and Emanuel Swedenborg* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 2015) and *Borges, Swedenborg and Mysticism* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013). In the latter book, Dr. Rowlandson argues that Swedenborg constitutes a far richer presence in Borges' work than scholarship has previously acknowledged, and he assesses the presence of Swedenborg in Borges' aesthetics, ethics, and poetics.

Helen Keller with Rev. Sage Cole

March 3, at 7:00 PM ET



The second lecture will be delivered by Rev. Sage Cole, who will be discussing Helen Keller, the world-famous deaf blind author, disability rights advocate, political activist, and lecturer. Born in West Tusculum, Alabama, in 1880, Helen lost both her sight and her hearing at the age of nineteen months following an illness. At the age of

seven, she met her first teacher, Anne Sullivan, who would become Helen's lifelong companion. Through Anne's patient tutelage, Helen gained access to language, both reading and writing. She went on to receive her formal education, eventually earning a Bachelor of Arts degree from Radcliffe College at Harvard University. While Helen's career in activism and advocacy on the world stage is well known, the grounding influence of Swedenborg on her life, her work, and her thought is often overlooked. Rev. Sage Cole is the Pastor and Director of Swedenborg Chapel, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she also serves as the Swedenborgian Chaplain at Harvard University. She was ordained into the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church of North America in 2005 after receiving a Master of Divinity from the Pacific School of Religion and the Swedenborgian House of Studies in Berkeley, California. In 2018, Rev. Sage had a vision to form a new center to advance the spiritual legacy of Helen Keller, as a way for the church to expand its ministry to meet the spiritual needs of a new generation.

Please visit the Swedenborg Chapel Facebook page for information on how to attend these lectures via Zoom: <https://www.facebook.com/CSNJsc/>



Swedenborgian Church Youth League

clear blue sky

1981
october

*CBS logo from 1981

2023 SCYL Winter Retreat

BY NORA BARNABY, *Clear Blue Sky* Editor

The theme for our teens' Winter Retreat was the Five Love Languages. During each of our sessions we learned about how everyone feels and shows love in different ways, and that in order to make someone feel loved you may have to do something different than what you normally would do. We also had a craft time after one of the sessions where we were told to make a replica of a gift that made us feel loved and meant a lot to us using a variety of supplies.

We spent a lot of time, when we were not in session or sleeping, playing games such as Apples to Apples, Exploding Kittens, and Werewolf. The new year needed a new advisory board so we held elections for officer positions as well. Our new president is Zsa Zsa Dolley and we are excited to see what this year brings.

At the end of all our teen retreats we always go on an outing. This time we decided to go to the Hideaway Lanes bowling alley. We had a lot of fun and ate a lot of pizza. I am very excited for the rest of this year and to see what we will accomplish. Happy New Year! 🍕



The 2022 Winter Retreat teens and staff!
From left to right: Molly (with Josh on her phone), Julien, Zsa Zsa, Kurt, Renée, Kit, Nora, Caroline, Bill, Athena, Craig, Lilly, Trent, Roberto, Wyatt, Ivy, Becky, and Ellie.



Above: Athena in the middle playing the sign game (Caroline, Julien, Zsa Zsa on left, Ivy, Wyatt, Trent on right).
Left: League Chaplain, Rev. Renée Machiniak, describes the importance of quality time to the teens.
Far left: Closing worship service with League Chaplain Rev. Renée Machiniak and Rev. Kit Billings.



The SCYL 2023 Officer Elections

BY KURT FEKETE

The 2023 Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) Officer and Chaplain elections took place at the winter retreat this past December. I thank outgoing Officers Molly Moore, Oliver Hamilton, Wyatt Steinhiser, and Julien Billings for their service in 2022.

Zsa Zsa Dolley, 2022 *Clear Blue Sky* (CBS) editor was elected President for 2023. Rev. Renée Billings-Machiniak returns as elected 2023 League Chaplain. Renée has served as our League Chaplain for quite a few years. Renée attends retreats whenever she can and does an outstanding job presenting lectures, leading discussions, and caring for all our youth.

Please join me in congratulating and welcoming our new officers and Renée. This is a wonderful group of teens with great leadership skills and I'm very excited to work with them in 2023.

Zsa Zsa Dolley President

Hi I'm Zsa Zsa Dolley, your new president of the SCYL. I am in the tenth grade and live in Maine. I love to draw, and when I go to retreats, I often sketch on the long flights to get there and during sessions. During my time so far in the SCYL, I have made so many friends and learned so much. I can't wait to make even more memories in 2023 working with the other officers and hanging out with all my SCYL friends at retreats, camps, and Convention.



some include National Honor Society, Student Council, and band. When I am not at school or at Almont, I enjoy listening to music, singing, and doing art. As the oldest of five children, I manage to keep quite busy. I have been attending Almont since I was a baby, but this is my first year being an officer for the SCYL. I am very glad that I have the opportunity to be part of such an amazing group of people.

Trent Carson Midwest and Fundraising Officer

I am from Westerville, Ohio and this is my second year on the SCYL Executive Board. I participate in tennis as well as in my school's marching band. I am also a part of the Mock Trial team and theatre. I attend the Church of the Holy City in Royal Oak, Michigan, and am invested in the SCYL. I am glad to continue aiding the league in 2023.



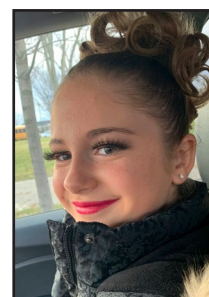
Nora Barnaby Clear Blue Sky Editor

I live in Alma, Michigan, and when I am not at Almont camp or school, I enjoy playing volleyball, reading, and acting. I am also involved in student council and our school newspaper. I love all animals but my favorites are hedgehogs. This is my first year being an officer on our executive board, and I can't wait to see what this year has in store for us.



Lilly Carson West and Service Officer

I am from Westerville, Ohio and this is my first year as an SCYL officer. I love dancing, painting, reading, playing tabletop and board games, as well as watching movies. I also participate in school clubs like Dungeons and Dragons. I am excited to be involved in the SCYL as it promotes my desire to be of service. 🙌



Ellie Barnaby East and Activities Officer

I am currently a junior at the high school in Alma, Michigan. At my school, I am involved in a variety of extracurricular activities,



The 2023 SCYL Officers

President

Zsa Zsa Dolley

Clear Blue Sky (CBS) Editor

Nora Barnaby

East Coast and Activities Officer

Ellie Barnaby

Midwest and Fundraising Officer

Trent Carson

West Coast and Service Officer

Lilly Carson

Canada Officer

Open

League Chaplain

Rev. Renée Machiniak

Ministry in Parish and Beyond: When They Call You Pastor Dave in Bars

BY DAVE FEKETE

Who do you work for, when you are a pastor? Jeremiah was commissioned by God to go outside his own people, the Jewish community (Jeremiah 1:5—*gowy-im*). Despite this, in the Book of Jeremiah, he speaks exclusively to Jews. Ezekiel is commissioned to go specifically to the people of Israel (Ezekiel 2:1–10; 3:1–4, 8–11, 27). Isaiah was commissioned to go to the Israelites (Isaiah 6). Hosea was sent to Israel and Judah (1:1, 10–11). Jesus, in His early ministry, apparently believed that His ministry was for Jews (Mark 7:27; John 4:22). Though, later, He opened up to Samaritans, Lebanese, and others outside the borders of Israel. Paul brought Christianity, which was Judaism in his time, all throughout the Mediterranean world to non-Jews. This brought him into conflict with the Jerusalem Christians, who were Jews, then—there were no Christians, yet—and the Jerusalem “Christians” thought one needed to be an observant Jew in order to be a Christian.

I think a lot of ministers, myself included, feel called by God. For me, this means that I serve God wherever God puts me. I asked a keyboard player about this, once. He has played in stadiums with bands like Frank Zappa, Earle Klugh, and Chet Atkins. Now he plays for free at a small Baptist church in Nashville. I told him that when I played music in church, it was personally more meaningful for me than playing in a bar. He wrote back, “I would say I play for God anywhere I am at.” I feel that way about ministry.

However, not everyone feels that way. My first year as Pastor in The Edmonton Church of the Holy City, the church president sat me down in

my office and asked me who I work for. As I started to answer, she said, in no uncertain terms, “You work for the Edmonton New Church Society.” It is true. The Edmonton New Church Society pays my salary—one-third time, now. I recently clarified my relationship to The Denomination—The Swedenborgian Church of North America. Although The Swedenborgian Church of North America ordained me, the President, the Treasurer, and the Chair of the Council of Ministers assured me through several lengthy emails, and phone calls, that I do not work for the Swedenborgian Church of North America. They stated that I work for The Edmonton New Church Society.

Given the variety of perspectives from a variety of viewpoints, the question of who a minister works for can get complex. An assembly line worker for Massey-Ferguson Tractors, as I was, clearly works for Massey-Ferguson Tractors. A psychologist works for the behavioral health sciences agency that hires them, and it is illegal for them to practice psychology outside the agency. A psychologist can, indeed, also set up private practice. But it is also illegal for them to practice psychology outside their office, even in that case. If a psychologist gives psychological advice outside their office of employ, they can be held legally responsible and liable for what they say. But when a musician friend and his son came to my apartment after his wife died, because he knew I’m a pastor, and he had no church and wasn’t a believer, and wasn’t in my parish, but he knew I am a minister and he needed a minister, I answer God’s call in that moment. That is ministry in my definition. And

it is what God called me to.

So, like my keyboard player friend, “I would say I play for God anywhere I am at.” It could be in a bar. That’s right! Often, I keep to myself and write poetry in bars. Sometimes, I write sermons and reduce sermons to outline form in bars. In most of the bars I frequent, they know I’m a pastor, or they find out. Often, they call me Pastor Dave and sometimes they ring up my food orders as Pastor Dave. I never broadcast it, but inevitably, people ask you what you do for a living. That, and when you are in a bar writing or typing on a computer, people will come up and ask you what you are writing. I’m always authentic, and if I’m writing a sermon, I say, “I’m writing a sermon.” One night, a man asked me if he could read the sermon I was writing and I said, Sure. When the bartender saw him sitting in my barstool and me standing behind him, the bartender took it the wrong way and started to ask the guy to give me my place back. But I explained things. In the sermon the man was reading that night, I referred to an earlier sermon of mine called, “Sanitized Christianity.” He asked me if he could read “Sanitized Christianity.” That very evening, I emailed it to him, as I have my sermons saved in files on my computer. He read it on his phone that night and came up to me. He said, “That is the first time I heard Swedenborg mentioned in twenty years.” He grew up under Soviet Russian control in Azerbaijan. The Soviets assigned his high school class Swedenborg’s *Journal of Dreams* in an attempt to show them how wild and wholly religion is, and to dissuade them from religion. We

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Ministry in Parish and Beyond

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talked quite a bit. He works as a Ukrainian translator for a Canadian coyote organization smuggling refugees across dangerous borders. In his case, specifically, Ukraine. The media almost exclusively uses the term “coyote” in reference to drug cartels, human trafficking, and Central America. But it is a technical term for any individual who contracts with a private organization to cross borders illegally. My friend in the bar had to leave shortly after talking with me, as he works on Eastern European time. He gave me permission to mention this story, provided I keep him anonymous, for obvious reasons, as I do here. I added him to my sermon email list, and he now receives my sermons every week. He wants to come to church, but since his workday starts around 1:00 AM, our time, Sunday mornings are challenging for him. One night around 2:00 AM, a bouncer came up to me and handed me a cell phone. He said his friend, the bar owner, was on the other end, and do I do spiritual counseling? His friend needed one. We talked for about an hour that late night, under the watchful eye of the bar security cameras while the owner checked me out and asked other employees there who knew me about my character. I accepted God’s call, and arranged weekly meetings in bars where we could find privacy in a corner, and in city parks and rec centers. These kinds of “coincidences” happen to me all the time in Edmonton. This is ministry.

I email out my Sunday services to a list of 120 recipients. I consider this emailing ministry, also. I “virtually preach” in this way, to more physical bodies than come inside the walls of The Edmonton Church of the Holy City. On one sermon emailing, I wrote that we are now in the twenty-first century and geographical boundaries don’t

mean what they used to. I invited the recipients on my email list to consider me their pastor, if they like. If they had theological questions, or personal concerns, I am open to receiving phone calls and to emailing. Shortly thereafter, I was phoned by a recipient in a distant city who wanted to take me up on my offer. We arranged weekly phone sessions. This is ministry.

I am active in a twelve-step program that I must keep anonymous at the level of press, radio, film, and internet. I founded a meeting group in it, and regular chair meetings there. For my own serenity, and to carry the message, I attend other meetings that I do not chair. Whether I chair, or whether I carry the message to others, it is ministry. This program is explicitly spiritual. It actively promotes what we would call “re-creation (reformation),” and “regeneration.” The Twelve Steps consist in “turning our will and our life over to the care of God,” a “rigorous personal inventory,” making amends to all persons we have harmed, “through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God,” and members have a “spiritual awakening.” My participation, my leadership, the message I carry, and the support I provide for my fellows is ministry.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has The Fifth Step in its twelve steps. The Fifth Step is to, “Admit to God, to ourselves, and *to another human being* the exact nature of our wrongs” (emphasis mine). In The Fifth Step, members of Alcoholics Anonymous tell another person their Fourth Step. The Fourth Step is “A fearless and thorough moral inventory of themselves.” It is this “fearless and thorough moral inventory of themselves” that members of Alcoholics Anonymous tell out loud to another human being. Needless to say, the human being they tell it to must be trustworthy. And not only trustworthy, but bound to honor confidence. And not only bound to honor

confidence, but to be without any entanglements in legality or in civil or criminal actions. I’ve heard stories of people who went to jail because they told their Fifth Step to an inappropriate listener. So, AA often advises, and often AA members prefer to do their Fifth Step with a member of the clergy. I am on a list in The Edmonton Alcoholics Anonymous Central Office of clergy willing to hear Fifth Steps. So, AA members who want to do their Fifth Step with a member of the clergy can scan the list and look up a clergy person, say, me. Often, total strangers phone me and ask to do their Fifth Step with me. I always accept God’s call when it comes on a phone from a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. We enter Holy Ground together in a Fifth Step. It is Sacred Space. We relive trauma together: rape, incest, addict parents, neglect, abandonment, foster homes, juvenile detention centers, running away from foster homes and juvenile detention centers, and, what burns me the most, is the acquired belief that a child mercilessly abandoned is, themselves, the “problem child.” We both cry in this Sacred Space. And when they depart, I thank God for allowing me into that Sacred Space. That is ministry, too.

Once I was driving in Edmonton and musing about church growth. Out of nowhere, I seized upon the idea that everybody is on their phones, looking at social media. I thought, “Let’s come to them, where they are!” So, my internet ministry began. I began posting my sermons on my personal Facebook page, and on the Edmonton Church of the Holy City Facebook page. I have readers all over the world—Hungary, England, Sand Springs, Oklahoma, Florida, Edmonton. These are Facebook friends, some of whom I’ve never met face-to-face, many are not Swedenborgians, some are atheists, and many are in our Church. And

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they “like” my sermons. It dawned on me further, that the attention span of consumers of social media is usually not long enough to last through a long Facebook post—meaning my sermon. In fact, members of my Church told me so. They said that their friends began to read my sermons, but gave up half-way through. This ongoing revelation led me to realize that we live in a visual society. People watch videos more readily than they read texts. Ergo, let’s make videos. Videos, I found out, cannot be longer than 15 minutes, and that’s a stretch. Through an unbelievable series of “coincidences,” I found a dedicated cinematographer. He filmed me preaching in church, and edited his films, and he is young and artistic, so he knows how to make a good video package for Facebook. He helped me upload the videos, and link it to YouTube. My first video sermon was watched by 210 viewers, at last count. All my sixty-seven years as a Swedenborgian, I have never sat in a Swedenborgian church with 210 people in it, as these 210 people were in attendance in this Swedenborgian virtual service. My video “congregation”—and I do consider them my congregation—extends from Hungary, to England, to Sweden, to Sand Springs, Oklahoma, to Florida, and to Edmon-ton. It consists of Swedenborgians and non-Swedenborgians, alike, atheists and believers. And they “like” my videos. I think I’m a televangelist, now, aren’t I? When God called me, God called me to whoever wanted to hear the still, small, voice of God that I hear and speak. Now, *listen up*, Swedenborgians! I shared my new, brilliant realization about internet video preaching with a Canadian United Minister. *Listen up, Swedenborgians, to what he said:* He said, “Yes, we’ve been doing that for a year, now.” He’s

already been doing it! *For a year!* We’re behind the curve!

We believe in loving God first, and loving the neighbor second. That is the core of Swedenborgian faith.

The plain fact is, we are not going to get bodies back into church buildings. The world doesn’t work that way, now. I attended a virtual Christian Unity Gathering of the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC), USA this year. One of the keynote speakers said that we’ve lost eighty-five percent of Gen Zs, meaning Christian churches have. I don’t think they’re coming back. Not into buildings, anyway. But they are on their phones. *We can come to them. And they are listening!* One Facebook friend outside The Church asked me what Swedenborgians believe. I said that we believe in loving God first, and loving the neighbor second. That is the core of Swedenborgian faith. I figured that if she remained interested, I would tell her later about the celestial of the spiritual entering into the natural, creating the good of the natural, not natural good, which is Jacob in Genesis. I have stood aghast listening to what some of our church theologians say about what we believe. One explanation involved a highly convoluted statement about our essential humanity reflecting the Essential Humanity of God.

Another point that the keynote speaker at the NCCC Christian Unity Gathering made was that we are in uncharted waters, today. The only honest answer to the crisis that the church is in, the only answer anyone can give is, “I don’t know.” We’re in uncharted waters. Here’s the problem. When churches hear someone say, “I don’t know,” they say, “Then let’s find someone who does!” So the search begins for “The Expert” who does know, and

who can fix this problem. There is no expert. Whoever you find is a pretender, a false prophet. Nobody knows. We all must accept that uncomfortable fact.

We can do this. I have faith. I have faith that God did not call me into a vacuum.

Now, about The Swedenborgian Church in particular. The Swedenborgian Church held a prominent place in American society in the nineteenth century. This is not the place for me to detail our prominence, then. We have competent historians in our Church who can. Over the past seven years or so, I have been wracking my brain trying to figure out what happened, and why we are so obscure, today. I wrote up some of my conclusions in an article entitled, “Beyond Swedenborg.” But the article was not accepted for publication in *the Messenger*. I will state two of my conclusions, here:

1) The world changed. Religions across the board are shrinking, losing members, and not gaining new members. This includes Jews, Muslims, and Christians. We need to accept the fact that we are in a new world order, now. But this does not signal our demise. It shouts for us to change and adapt. Insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results. Listen, I’m old, and I see it! We still have young people in our Church. Let’s get their voices and talents into the mix. For I assure you, Gen Zs see a very different world than I do.

2) I conclude that we have become too ingrown, too afraid of the world outside our Swedenborgian world, and consequently, we have lost communication with the voices of the world. Communication is two-way. We need to dialogue with the world outside our Denomination if we want to make an impact in it and if we want to share our treasures with them. We need to do it

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Convention Churches

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programs, and sharing the remarkable sacred space with the community for weddings, memorials, and baptisms have supported a tremendous amount of spiritual community and goodwill. Today the church has been launching the new Helen Keller Spiritual Life Center whose mission is to advance the spiritual legacy of Helen Keller, one of the most celebrated lovers of Swedenborg in American history. The Center will be a place for gatherings, programs, and education about Helen Keller, disability spirituality, Swedenborgian theology, and the causes of justice and peace that Helen supported. Additionally, the church is currently promoting a new program called New Church Jubilee, which seeks to engage the vital roots of living today as a spiritual community.

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in language and in concepts that translate into twenty-first century society.

My ministry in The Edmonton Church of the Holy City and beyond is thrilling, expansive, and successful. I hope that these reflections will inspire Swedenborgians—ordained or not—to spread the Good News that God lives and God lives with us.

Anyone who wishes to be added to my sermon email list may contact me at revdrfekete@gmail.com. I would be happy to add you to my “virtual congregation!” Your friends, too. 📧

Rev. Dr. Dave Fekete is a proud graduate of Urbana University, Harvard University, and the University of Virginia. Having served as the president of the Edmonton Interfaith Center for Education and Action, he has attended and presented in numerous international interfaith conventions. He is on the Academic Senate, D.Min. Program Committee, and is associate faculty at Saint Stephen's College.

Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church



The Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church is a well-established, long-standing society committed to Swedenborgian doctrine. The Bridgewater Society was established in the early nineteenth century and has conducted services in our building for 150 years. The building, a unique wooden structure of Victorian Gothic architecture, lies within the Central Square Historic District and is a prominent landmark on the Town Green. Our central location lends itself to maximum exposure and to participation in town activities. In 1994, our building was ravaged by fire, and accounts of the tragedy were covered by local and national news. As a result, our once-obscure denomination received a great deal of attention. After our decision to rebuild, we received overwhelming support from the Bridgewater community and beyond.

Worship services and Sunday school are held weekly and are beautifully enhanced by live piano music and occasional offerings from our talented choir and guest instrumentalists. We have a wonderful church community who enjoy fellowship activities and potluck luncheons. We have presented well-attended lectures, open to the public, on topics such as Helen Keller, death and dying, angels, and world religions. We participate every year in the ecumenical Thanksgiving and Easter services presented by the Bridgewater Council of Churches. We look forward to hosting Convention once again and welcoming everyone to Bridgewater. 📧

Registration for Convention 2023 will open on April 15. Registration will be online only.

Now Hiring: Digital Communications Manager for Swedenborgian Church of North America

The Swedenborgian Church of North America (SCNA) is looking for a Digital Communications Manager to join our organization. This is a permanent half-time employment position. This employment position will be performed remotely from home with the exception of required in-person travel to the annual Council of Ministers (COM) meetings and Convention in the summer months for eight days (location and specific dates vary). The Digital Communications Manager will manage the website (swedenborg.org) and digital presence of the SCNA. They will assist in the continued development and maintenance of the website including content updates. They will direct and manage the website, oversee future website projects and changes, develop and maintain social media presence, and be an integral part of the team developing the online/virtual component for the annual convention. They will be required to serve as an *ex officio*, non-voting member on the Standing Committee of Communication and Information (SCCI) which meets remotely several times a year. This person will set regular working hours to enable time to communicate and connect with SCNA people located across North America.

The Digital Communications Manager will work with the SCCI and Ex-Com. They will report directly to the president of the denomination. 📧

Please visit <https://swedenborg.org/news-announcements/job-dcm/> for full job description and details.

To apply, please email a résumé and cover letter to manager@swedenborg.org.

Passages

Deaths

Ann “Nan” Paget, 95, died peacefully of old age in her sleep at her home on December 2, 2022. Nan was born Ann Elizabeth Wright in San Francisco in 1927. Her family lived in San Anselmo then and



later moved to various places around California. Her mother, Kay Wright, was a freelance magazine photographer and a World War II volunteer aircraft spotter. Her father, Bill, worked in journalism and PR and was a San Francisco Examiner reporter when Nan was born. Kay and Bill had met at Stanford when they both worked on the Daily Palo Alto, the Stanford Daily's predecessor.

Nan, as she was known all her adult life, graduated from Herbert Hoover High School in Glendale and then Stanford in 1948, with a major called Latin American Regional, studying the Spanish and Portuguese languages. Nan met her first husband, Carl Hepp, while living in San Francisco and working as a reservation agent for Western Airlines. They were married at San Francisco's Swedenborgian Church in 1951. Their two daughters, Caroline Grannan and Marjorie (Mar) Grannan, survive her. Carl died in 1970. Nan reconnected with her college sweetheart, Fredrick Paget, and married him in 1973. Fred, now ninety-nine, also survives her. When Mar told him Nan was gone, he seemed to already know it, and said simply, "Love of my life."

After they married, Nan, who had lived in California all her life, moved to Fred's home in Rockport, Massachusetts, as he was an electrical engineer

for GTE-Sylvania in nearby Salem. Nan embraced being a New Englander. She had gotten a teaching credential at San Francisco State University after her first husband died, Nan worked as a reading specialist in Rockport schools. She and Fred traveled extensively, to the Caribbean, Mexico, Europe, China, and especially Brazil, where Nan practiced her Portuguese and explored the architecture while Fred pursued his passion for rare orchids.

They both retired and returned to Mill Valley in 1986, to the house where Nan and Carl had raised their daughters. Nan loved reading, food, traditional jazz, Gilbert & Sullivan operettas, emergency prep, politics and neighborhood issues, and meeting people from different cultures, and was active in Mill Valley's Tamalpais Park Neighborhood Association. She especially loved Mexican food and knocking back a Modelo Negra at Joe's Taco Lounge or the Cantina in Mill Valley. She had an affinity for murder mysteries, sci-fi and the macabre. Family lore had it that Nan once called out in her sleep, "The Venusian swamp eggs are hatching!" In her last months, a hospice chaplain visited her at home, and Nan wasn't so much interested in praying but enjoyed singing with the chaplain. But the chaplain told Mar, with concern, that Nan wanted to sing "gruesome songs."

Nan was a loyal and active Republican and was a Reagan delegate twice but didn't fit the mold and had the spirit of a bohemian and a liberal in many ways. She belonged to the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church after marrying her first husband there. She returned to it after twelve years in Massachusetts, and sang in the church choir for decades. She was excited when superstar Linda Ronstadt sang with the choir for a while and became a fan. In

her last years, Nan was upright in her recliner, often watching Fox News or watching sports with her caregiver, Nathan Batidravu, until her last few days.

On her last day of life, her daughters sat at her bedside, singing with her the gruesome songs that had distressed the hospice chaplain. Nan especially loved "With Her Head Tucked Underneath Her Arm," the old music hall tune about King Henry VIII's beheaded wife, Anne Boleyn, and luckily Mar knew all the verses. Nan barely had the strength to eat, with her daughters feeding her small bites of the food she had requested, but she sang out with zest. Mar lived with Nan and Fred in their Mill Valley house, and along with caregiver Nathan, provided Nan with loving care. Mar and Caroline had talked beforehand about a "good death" no panic, drama, hysteria, ambulances, ERs or life-prolonging aggressive intervention, and no badgering or cajoling Nan to eat when she stopped wanting food. The family believes she had that good death. The family thanks By the Bay Health for devoted hospice care.

Along with Fred, Marjorie (retired receptionist for Industrial Light & Magic/Lucasfilm in San Francisco) and Caroline (of San Francisco, a San Francisco Chronicle copy editor), Nan is survived by Caroline's husband, Steve Rubenstein, a teacher and retired San Francisco Chronicle reporter; grandchild Will and his partner, Greta; granddaughter Anna Rubenstein of Chicago; great-grandchild Alex; stepson James Paget of Anaheim; and sister-in-law Beth Combs of Redding. Her younger brothers, Bill and Tom Wright, predeceased her. She's also survived by several nieces and nephews. 📷

Virtual Education

Learning From Our Past, Healing our Future: Dismantling Colonial Dominance in Western Christianity


with Rev. Dr. Randy Woodley



Join us for a free event on Zoom on Monday, February 13 at 7:30 PM ET (6:30 PM CT/5:30 PM MT/4:30 PM PT)

Presented by Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism, The Center for Swedenborgian Studies, and Born Brown: All Rights Reserved

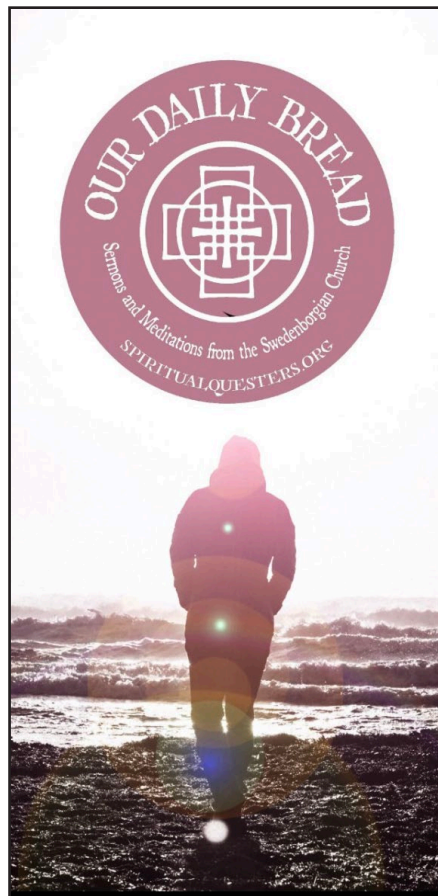
Join us as Rev. Dr. Randy Woodley, farmer, author, activist, scholar, distinguished speaker/teacher and wisdom keeper, using the lens of indigenous spirituality, will speak on how Christianity can be disentangled from the precepts of colonialism and returned to its core message.

You must register at <https://swedenborg.org/diversity-equity-inclusion/woodley/> in order to receive the link. Please feel free to email revshada@gmail.com with any questions. 

What's Happening

Gathering Leaves 2023: Call for Presentations

Gathering Leaves, the international retreat for Swedenborgian and New Church women, will be held at the Lord's New Church in Bryn Athyn, August 24–27, 2023. The theme for 2023 is "Delighting in Spiritual Variety." If you would like to give a presentation or workshop, or organize an activity, please contact Amy Glenn at amydwyer08@gmail.com by February 14, 2023.



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 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/

2023 Annual Convention

The Practice of Optimism

Bridgewater, Massachusetts
July 1–5, 2023

Several events will be livestreamed for anyone to view. Follow our [Facebook page](#) or subscribe to our [YouTube channel](#) to join us!

Answers to the December Jumble:

Flake, Glory, Sleigh, Scrooge

Twin girls born on Christmas Day were aptly named: "Holly & Carol"

Jumble will return next month!

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.

Social Justice Committee

Engaged Swedenborgianism

BY DRU JOHNSON

To be a human being today, a person must be charity embodied (Emanuel Swedenborg, *Charity* §93).

Charity is to be found in the internal person and the sign of it in the external (Emanuel Swedenborg, *Charity* §178).

I had never encountered the phrase "engaged spirituality" until I took my first class at seminary, co-taught by Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence (our now denominational President) and Rev. "Mz. Ann" Jefferson. I can say that for multiple reasons this class changed my life. For one, meeting Dr. Lawrence was a vital step on the road to becoming a Swedenborgian, and another was meeting the marvelous Mz. Ann. Both of them live out their faith in so very inspiring, thoughtful, and empowering ways. A third reason was our textbook, *Engaged Spirituality: Ten Lives of Contemplation and Action* by Janet Parachin. I heartily recommend this slender book with its inspiring short biographies and summaries of practices and thinking from ten giants of being and doing spiritual being and doing.

One of those giants was Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–2022)—whose name means "one action" in Vietnamese—the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, peace practitioner and teacher, nominated by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for the Nobel Peace Prize. He coined the terms "engaged spirituality" and "engaged Buddhism." I would like to propose a new spirituality—one of "engaged Swedenborgianism." As Rev. Dr. Lawrence put it "...Swedenborg's legendary engaged spirituality of usefulness certainly applies toward facilitating goodness in this larger degree of our neighbor, and that means social justice work."

Dru Johnson (they/ them) is a graduate of Pacific School of Religion and The Center for Swedenborgian Studies in Berkeley, California. Dru was especially excited to hear his mentor, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, use the phrase "Engaged Swedenborgianism."

