

2023
Journal
of the
Swedenborgian
Church

No. 201

THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH UNITED STATES AND CANADA

INCORPORATED 1861

THE GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE NEW
JERUSALEM IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ANNUAL SESSION

“THE PRACTICE OF OPTIMISM”

JULY 1 – JULY 4, 2023

BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY,
BRIDGEWATER, MA

ANNUAL THEME

THE YEAR OF REGENERATION

SEPTEMBER 1, 2022 – SEPTEMBER 1, 2023

RECORDING SECRETARY

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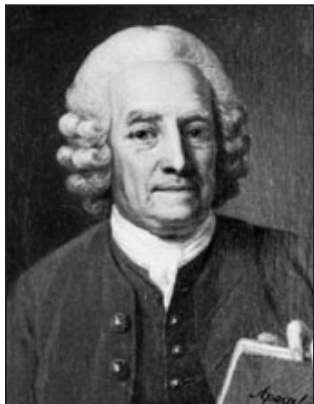
CENTRAL OFFICE

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THE FAITH AND AIMS OF OUR CHURCH

The Swedenborgian Church believes that a new epoch is opening in the spiritual life of mankind. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as he promised to do, has come again, not indeed in a physical reappearance, but in spirit and truth; not in a single event only, but in a progressive manifestation of his presence among people.

Our Church regards as tokens of his coming the burst of scientific de-



velopment, the rise of the spirit of inquiry, the progress toward political and intellectual freedoms, and the deepening sense of a national and international responsibility which have characterized the last few centuries. These are more remote signs, however, of epochal religious change. More directly denoting a movement of the spirit of God on the human spirit are the stirrings in world faiths, the revisions of thought and outlook in them, the searching after standards and spiritual power adequate to the needs and problems of the times, and

this notably in the Christian faith. The Lord is everywhere at work, moving to the reestablishment of his kingdom, and specifically to the renewing of Christianity with the power and understanding to serve and speed his kingdom.

In any coming of the Lord, he brings about many things which people are slow to see. Our unseen, spiritual environment is made over as well as our visible world. A greater awareness of the good that there has been, a fuller justice and truer peace offer themselves for us to realize. Today, in a world that has contracted into a neighborhood, the responsibility to the neighbor makes its demands on all people of good will. Evils that have been long established begin to look as though they could be conquered. We believe that the Lord in his second coming has "reordered the heavens and subjugated the hells" as he did at his first coming.

This coming of the Son of man, "as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west," making the salvation of all people possible, is the direct and sole work of the Lord—a redemption of the world by the Redeemer of persons.

Our Church is also convinced that the Lord has given his followers word of all this, and done so by means of a servant from among them. We

believe that Emanuel Swedenborg thus served the Lord. A person's destiny beyond the earthly life needed to be placed in fuller light; the Scriptures needed to be reestablished as the Word of God; and the Christian message was in need of renewed and contemporary expression. To supply these needs Swedenborg devoted half a lifetime, and an insight born of a regenerating experience. He was enabled "by the Lord's mercy" to inform the Christian hope of immortality with knowledge of the world of the spirit; in Old and New Testament he set forth a meaning which speaks timelessly of the spiritual life and can nourish it now; and he freed Christian teaching from many crippling errors and formulated it anew from the Word of God.

In the theological works of Swedenborg the message of Christianity is restated to inspire the spiritual life of all anew. Its truths present themselves as truths of life here and hereafter. They invite inquiry and ask understanding. They open the door to spiritual renewal and urge upon everyone the personal responsibility to participate in this renewal. The Lord has taken initiative in his coming. We have our response to make. In that response three essentials are urged: that we acknowledge God in the Lord, and that he alone can bring about our redemption and regeneration; that we acknowledge the holiness of the Word and the inspiration which the Word gives us to seek and promote his kingdom; and that we live the life of charity, the exercising in all our relationships, large and small, the neighborliness enjoined by his commandments.

The Swedenborgian Church believes, then, that under Providence the world has received, through the instrumentality of a man, a revelation which confronts it with the universally valid truth of the spiritual life of all human beings. It believes that the Lord Jesus Christ, availing himself of human agency to give us this explicit guidance, has done a sweeping if hidden work of redemption, and created a new heaven and a new earth about us. He is ushering in the epoch, if we will, which he foresaw and which he promised at his first coming. In John's vision on Patmos, the Risen Christ once more promised the dawn of this epoch in the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem, to earth. To signalize our conviction that the Lord is fulfilling his promise, we originally organized under the name the Church of the New Jerusalem. The spirit and the humanity which longs to be united to the Lord alike cry, "Come." We lift our voice and pray, "Come. Even so, come Lord Jesus."

THE OFFICERS OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President

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Piedmont, CA 94610

Phone: (415) 378-5944
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Kurt Fekete, Vice President

38 Great Falls Road
Gorham, ME 04028

Phone: (802) 345-0169
E-mail: vp@swedenborg.org

Karen Conger, Recording Secretary

314 Apollo Circle
Bishop, CA 93514-7051

Phone: (760) 275-2910
E-mail: secretary@swedenborg.org

Jennifer Lindsay, Treasurer

601 Carolina Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

Phone: (415) 706-6155
E-mail: treasurer@swedenborg.org

GENERAL COUNCIL

The General Council consists of the Officers of the Swedenborgian Church and the elected members listed below. (Constitution, Article II, Section 2.) The chair of the Council of Ministers is also an ex officio member with vote on the General Council (Constitution, Article II, Section 3).

Numbers in parentheses are the terms currently being served for the positions so indicated, persons are limited to two consecutive three-year terms. Those fulfilling unexpired terms are indicated by ().*

Term Expires 2024

Barbara Halle (2)
(219) 363-0528
halle310@comcast.net

Term Expires 2025

Rev. Sage Cole (1)
(617) 435-5262
revsagecole@gmail.com

Term Expires 2026

Rev. René Machiniak (1)
(248) 229-5668
revrene@aol.com

Rev. Thom Muller (1)
(267) 363-0528
tmuller@ses.psr.edu

Pastor Paul Deming (1)
(314) 803-6519
paul.deming@icloud.com

Kelly Kennedy (1)
(780) 298-3684
kellykennedy40@gmail.com

Herbert Ziegler (1)
(617) 388-0252
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Dr. Emily Tergliafera (1)
(413) 464-2123
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Tom Murphy (1)
(415) 515-9348
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Rev. Rich Tafel, Chair, Council of Ministers

Apt 404 1939 12th St NW
Washington, DC 20009

Phone: (202) 365-7764
E-mail: comchair@swedenborg.org

STANDING COMMITTEES

(Constitution, Article II, Section 4 and Bylaws, Article X.) The President of the Swedenborgian Church serves ex officio without vote on all Standing Committees.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION:

Chair:	Rev. Kevin Baxter	2025	(1)
	Tara Conkling	2024	(1)
	Rev. Dr. Dave Brown	2026	(1)

ex officio (without vote): Beki Greenwood, Editor, *The Messenger*
Rev. Thom Muller, Editor, *Our Daily Bread*
Rev. Cory Coberforward, Minister, *Spiritual Sunshine*
Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Dean, CSS
Brittany Price, Central Office, SCNA
Rudy Caseres, Digital Communications Manager, SCNA

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION AND RESOURCES FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY:

Chair:	Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Representative of Center for Swedenborgian Studies, appointed by the CSS Board of Trustees		
	Rev. Shada Sullivan	2024	(1)
	Rev. Julie Conaron	2025	(2)
	Rev. Junchol Lee	2025	(1)

ex officio (without vote): Kurt Fekete, Youth Director, SCNA

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

<i>Chair:</i>	Jennifer Lindsay, Treasurer, SCNA		
	Kurt Fekete	2024	(1)
	Tom Neuenfeldt	2024	(1)
	Rev. Rachel Madjerac	2025	(1)
	Rev. Lisa Solwold	2025	(2)
	Bill Coffman	2026	(2)
	Stan Conger	2026	(2)

ex officio (without vote): Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR NOMINATIONS:

Convention Bylaws, Article X, Sec. 4. “...There shall be a Standing Committee for Nominations of five members to serve for five years each; one member to be elected each year, but not from any Association from which his or her predecessor or any other member of the Committee is a member. The unexpired term of any member may be filled from the same Association. A member moving to another Association shall continue to serve and shall be regarded as coming from his or her former Association; but no retiring member shall be eligible for immediate reelection. Whenever possible, the Standing Committee for Nominations shall propose slates representative of the Swedenborgian Church’s overall constituency.

It shall be the duty of this Standing Committee to present, at each session of the Swedenborgian Church, nominees for the Swedenborgian Church officers (where applicable), vacancies in the elective members of the General Council and all other Boards and Committees, unless otherwise appointed. Each year the member whose term is next to expire shall act as Chair of the Committee.

<i>Chair:</i>	Dr. Rebecca Esterson	PCA	2024
	B.J. Neuenfeldt	MI Assoc.	2025
	Pastor Paul Deming	IL Assoc.	2026
	Nancy Little	ME Assoc.	2027
	Pastor Robbin Ferriman	OH Assoc.	2028

COMMITTEES

CENTRAL OFFICE REVIEW COMMITTEE:

Standing Resolution 11, June 29, 1983: "...it is the responsibility of the Vice President, together with a committee he may appoint, to conduct an annual review of the Central Office, covering staff, employees, organization, etc."

Chair: Kurt Fekete, Vice President, SCNA
Stan Conger

COMMITTEE ON AMENDMENTS:

Chair: Rev. Kevin Baxter
Stan Conger

COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY:

The General Council, at the request of the Council of Ministers, voted to form the Committee of Inquiry at its June 26, 1996 meeting. It was voted "that the Committee of Inquiry be under the auspices of General Council and that the committee consist of five (5) members to be appointed by the President of Convention in consultation with the Chair of the Council of Ministers of the Swedenborgian Church."

Chair: Stan Conger
Barbara Cullen
Pastor Karen Feil
Rev. Paul Martin
Rev. Nancy Piorkowski

ex officio (without vote): Rev. Rich Tafel, Chair, Council of Ministers

COMMITTEE ON LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTS:

“Resolved, That a Committee of three on Library and Documents, one of which shall be the President of the Theological School, shall be appointed by the President of the Convention to see to the collecting, depositing and cataloging of books, manuscripts and other documents which may have been donated to or otherwise procured by the Convention; the Chairman of this Committee shall report to the Convention annually.” (1911 Journal, Minute 90)

The archives of the Swedenborgian Church are held in two places: histories of societies, organizations, committees and persons at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS), and other miscellaneous SCNA materials at a facility in southwest Ohio managed by the Urbana, OH church.

<i>Chair:</i>	Sue Ditmire Pastor Robbin Ferriman Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Dean, Center for Swedenborgian Studies
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<i>ex officio (without vote):</i>	Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA Brittany Price, Central Office, SCNA
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INVESTMENT COMMITTEE:

“The General Council, at its first meeting following each annual session of the Swedenborgian Church, shall appoint an Investment Committee of not less than three members, one of whom may be the Treasurer of the Convention, which shall be charged with the general oversight and care of the investments and securities of the Swedenborgian Church Common Fund, with full power to purchase and sell and to invest and reinvest as in their judgment and discretion may seem advisable.” (By-laws, Article XVIII)

<i>Chair:</i>	Jennifer Lindsay, Treasurer, SCNA
	Holly Gottschalk 2024
	Drew Siebert 2025
	Rev. Paul Martin 2026
	Pete Toot 2027
	Herb Ziegler 2028

<i>ex officio (without vote):</i>	Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA
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RETIREMENT COMMITTEE:

Its duties are to administer the proceeds of Convention's Permanent Pension Fund (1975 Journal, Fund 37) in accordance with the stated purpose of the Fund.

- Chair:
- Rev. Dan Burchett
John McIntosh
Meredith Conant Piotti

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE:

The Social Justice Committee is an ad hoc committee created by General Council as a forum to address social concerns for the purpose of bringing information to the body of Convention through the Messenger and other vehicles, and to offer resources for ways to be involved.

- Co-Chair
- Rev. Dr. Amanda Riley
- Co-Chair
- Rev. Shada Sullivan
Alex Gayheart
Olivia Hackett
Dru Johnson
Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence
Dr. Page Morahan

**SPIRITUAL SUNSHINE: A SWEDENBORGIAN COMMUNITY
ONLINE CENTRAL COMMITTEE:**

- Chair
- Kurt Fekete, Vice President, SCNA
Dr. Emily Tergliafera (2024)
William Rotella (2025)
Rudy Caseres (2026)
- ex officio (without vote):
- Rev. Cory Coberforward, Minister, *Spiritual
Sunshine*

STRUCTURE REVIEW COMMITTEE:

“Design, adopt and maintain an organizational structure that is directly responsive to Convention’s Purpose and needs, and that includes provisions for its own self-evaluation and growth.” (Standing Resolution 1, Objective 9, July 3, 1986)

<i>Chair:</i>	Rev. Paul Martin
	Rev. Kit Billings
	Alice Henderson
	Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry

SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH YOUTH LEAGUE (SCYL):

<i>Youth Director:</i>	Kurt Fekete
<i>President:</i>	Zsa Zsa Dolley
<i>East Coast Activities Officer:</i>	Ellie Barnaby
<i>Midwest & Fundraising/Finance Officer:</i>	Trent Carson
<i>West Coast & Service Officer:</i>	Lilly Carson
<i><u>Clear Blue Sky</u> Editor:</i>	Nora Barnaby
<i>League Chaplain:</i>	Rev. Renée Machiniak

BOARDS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE WAYFARERS CHAPEL:

The appointive members of the Board shall consist of six persons, two appointments to be made each year by the President of The Swedenborgian Church with the approval of General Council. Three (3) must be appointed from the Pacific Coast Association [indicated by *]. Board members shall be appointed for a term of three years. Those members who have served three consecutive three-year terms, including ex officio members, shall not be eligible for immediate reappointment. Terms end and begin coinciding with the summer convention of the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

Chair	Peter Gottschalk	2026	*(3)
Treasurer	Robert Carr	2026	*(2)
Secretary	Ben Gunter	2024	*(*)
	Katharine Carr	2024	*(1)
	Stan Conger	2025	*(1)
	Rev. H. Tafel	2025	*(1)
ex officio (with vote):	Michael Robbins, Representative of the PCA Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA		
ex officio (without vote):	Rev. Dan Burchett, Executive Director Rev. Dr. David Brown, Chapel Minister		

BOARD OF MEDIATION:

Consists of five members. “Two such members shall be lay persons appointed by the President, and two shall be ministers appointed by the Chair of the Council of Ministers, and their terms of office shall be the same as that of the President of the Swedenborgian Church. The fifth member shall be the Vice President of Convention who shall serve as chair” (Bylaws, Article XVI).

Chair:	Kurt Fekete, Vice President, SCNA
	Matthew Fleming
	Bet Giddings
	Rev. Kit Billings
	Rev. Kathy Speas

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL CHURCH:

“The Board of Trustees of the National Church, now holding the title to and having control of the Church property in Washington, D.C., shall continue to consist of fifteen members who shall be citizens of any part of the United States and of whom a majority shall be chosen from some other place than the city of Washington, D.C., and shall not be selected from any one association, and vacancies in their number shall be filled by the Board with approval of the President and the Secretaries of the Convention, having in mind the restrictions stated above, and five members shall constitute a quorum” (Bylaws, Article XX).

<i>Chair:</i> Karen Conger	CA		
Polly Baxter	MA	Rev. Randall Laakko	DE
Rev. Jenny Caughman	TN	Tom Neuenfeldt	MI
Rev. Betsy Coffman	OH	Dr. Malcolm Peck	VA
Stan Conger	CA	Rev. Ken Turley	ME
Alex Gayheart	IN	Susan Weiss	FL
Barb Halle	IN	Herb Ziegler	MA
Carl Helm	KS	Annabel Park	WV

TRUSTEES OF THE BUILDING FUND:

The Board of Trustees of the Building Fund shall consist of three trustees who shall be appointed by the General Council...to serve each for three years. (Bylaws, Article XIX) The purposes of this Fund were broadened in 1946 “to aid New Church societies in purchasing, remodeling, or erecting places of worship, Sunday School Quarters and Parish Halls in America.” (1946 Journal, Minute 42 and 1947 Journal, Minute 38)

<i>Chair:</i>	Mark Careaga	2024	(1)
	Rev. Dan Burchett	2025	(1)
	Bob Perry	2026	(1)

ex officio (without vote): Jennifer Lindsay, Treasurer, SCNA
Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA

TRUSTEES OF THE TAFEL FUND:

The Tafel Fund, established in 2011 to advance the mission and purpose of the Swedenborgian Church, is a permanent fund restricted to the use of income only. It 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 General Convention of past and present Tafel ministers.

Chair:

Rev. Richard L. Tafel
 Linda Tafel
 Rev. Dr. Gard Perry
 Karen Conger (Appointed)
 Lon Elmer (Appointed)
 Jennifer Lindsay (Appointed)

REPRESENTATIVES**DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES:**

The President of the Swedenborgian Church, with the counsel and advice of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, shall make the various appointments of the delegation to the National Council of Churches, and then they shall be confirmed by the General Council.

Head of Communion:

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA

Delegates:

Rev. Dr. David Fekete
 Rev. Richard L. Tafel
 Alex Gayheart

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

*All ministers of the Swedenborgian Church, twelve constituting a quorum
(Bylaws of the Council of Ministers, Article III)*

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

<i>Chair:</i>	Rev. Rich Tafel	2026	(1)
<i>Secretary:</i>	Rev. Kevin Baxter	2025	(*)
	Rev. Dr. Donna Keane	2026	(1)
	Rev. Gabriella Cahaley	2024	(1)
	Rev. Julie Conaron	2025	(*)

ADVISORY PLACEMENT COMMITTEE:

This is the sole proper channel of communication for churches or groups seeking to employ a minister, and for ministers seeking employment.

<i>Chair:</i>	Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA
	Rev. Rich Tafel, Chair, COM
	Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Dean, CSS

COMMITTEE ON ADMISSION INTO THE MINISTRY:

(Bylaws of the Council of Ministers, Article IV, Section 7)

<i>Chair:</i>	Rev. Junchol Lee	2025	(1)
	<i>Open</i>	2025	(*)
	Rev. Gabriella Cahaley	2026	+(1)
	BJ Neuenfeldt	2024	+(1)
<i>ex officio (with vote)</i>	Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA		

COMMITTEE ON PROGRAM:

(Bylaws of the Council of Ministers, Article IV, Section 5)

Rev. Rich Tafel, Chair, COM
Rev. Kevin Baxter, Secretary, COM
Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Dean, CSS

* Filling an unexpired term

+ Elected by Convention

COMMITTEE ON REVISION OF THE ROLL:

(Bylaws of the Council of Ministers, Article IV, Section 8)

- Karen Conger, Secretary, SCNA
- Rev. Kevin Baxter, Secretary, COM
- Brittany Price, Central Office, SCNA

COMMITTEE ON WORSHIP:

(Bylaws of the Council of Ministers, Article IV, Section 4)

- Chair: Open
- Rev. Roslyn Taylor
- Pastor Paul Deming

ETHICS COMMITTEE:

(Bylaws of the Council of Ministers, Article IV, Section 6)

- Chair: Rev. Catherine Lauber
- Rev. Betsy Coffman
- Rev. Solomon Youngmin Kim

MINISTERS’ TRAVEL FUND:

- Chair: Rev. Rich Tafel, Chair, COM
- Rev. Kevin Baxter, Secretary, COM
- Brittany Price, Central Office, SCNA

MISCONDUCT DETERMINATION BOARD:

(Bylaws of the Council of Ministers, Article IV, Section 9)

- Chair: Rev. Catherine Lauber
- Rev. Kevin Baxter
- Rev. Julie Conaron
- Rev. Dr. Donna Keane
- Rev. Solomon Youngmin Kim

NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

(Bylaws of the Council of Ministers, Article IV, Section 1)

- Chair: Rev. Nancy Piorkowski 2024
- Rev. Dr. David Brown 2025
- Rev. Kit Billings 2026

CHAPLAIN ON YOUTH AND THE MILITARY:

Rev. Andy Stinson

ENDORSER OF MILITARY CHAPLAINS:

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

AUXILIARY AND ASSOCIATED BODIES

The following organizations are legally independent bodies in which the Swedenborgian Church has an interest.

AMERICAN NEW CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION D/B/A SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES (SCCM):

Chair/President:	Rev. Kit Billings
Vice President:	Pastor Kelly Milne
Secretary:	Nancy Little
Treasurer:	Beverly Titus

TRUSTEES OF THE GRAY LEGACY:

Wesley N. Gray Fund - Legacy held by three Trustees appointed by the Probate Court of Middlesex County, MA, on joint recommendation of the Massachusetts New Church Union and the General Convention. The Trustees are instructed to expend the net income for “such church and missionary uses, preferably in Massachusetts first, then in the United States of America, and then in the whole world, as shall seem to them most deserving and most useful towards the growth of the New Jerusalem Church,” and to render “a report of said fund and of the proceedings under it...each year to the said General Convention” for printing in its *Journal*.

Secretary:	Dr. Rebecca Esterson
Treasurer:	Herbert Ziegler
Trustee:	Nancy Little

DEBORAH’S TREE:

Deborah’s Tree is a non-profit ministry that focuses on uplifting the work of female scholars, writers, clergy and artists in the global Swedenborgian faith community. Created by Rev. H. Roslyn Taylor, a minister in the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

Chair:	Rev. Roslyn Taylor
Secretary:	Pastor Robbin Ferriman
Treasurer:	Rev. Julie Conaron

**CENTER FOR SWEDENBORGIAN STUDIES (CSS), FORMERLY
SWEDENBORGIAN HOUSE OF STUDIES:**

(Incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on May 17, 1881, as the New Church Theological School)

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

<i>Chair:</i>	Tom Neuenfeldt
<i>Vice Chair:</i>	Pastor Tassy Farwell
<i>Clerk:</i>	Karen Conger
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Jennifer Lindsay
<i>Ex officio with vote:</i>	Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Dean, CSS
<i>Liaison (without vote):</i>	President, Graduate Theological Union

ELECTED MEMBERS:

<i>Term Expires 2024:</i>	Rev. Dr. Gard Perry*	(1)
	Pastor Tassy Farwell**+	(0)
<i>Term Expires 2025:</i>	Jennifer Lindsay*	(1)
	Rev. Kathy Speas**+	(0)
<i>Term Expires 2026:</i>	Lewis Shaw*	(1)
	Karen Conger**	(1)
<i>Term Expires 2027:</i>	Robert Carr*	(1)
	Tom Neuenfeldt**	(1)

*Trustees elected by Representative Class

**Trustees elected by At-Large Class

+ To complete an unexpired term

**GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, INC.**

d/b/a The Swedenborgian Church of North America

**MINUTES
FROM THE ONE HUNDRED NINETY-NINTH SESSION**

2023 HYBRID CONVENTION
BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY AT BRIDGEWATER, MA

Sunday, July 1, 2023 to Tuesday, July 4, 2023

**Sunday, July 2, 2023 9:15 AM PDT
BUSINESS SESSION I**

1. **Opening** – Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President of the Swedenborgian Church of North America, brought the 199th session of the General Convention to order at approximately 9:30am. Jim led the assembled in an opening prayer.
2. **As stipulated by Article II. Sec. 2 of the Bylaws** were read by Recording Secretary Karen Conger per the Bylaws.
3. **President’s Declaration on Present and Voting** – Jim explained that for the purposes of the annual business meeting of the denomination, “Present and Voting” means present in the room and online during the actual meeting.
4. **Proceedings Relative to Elections** – Jim advised that the Credentials Committee (Brittany Price and Jennifer Lindsay) shepherded this process, handling the administrative details around the registration of delegates. Since 2019 when the denomination first had a virtual convention, and subsequently with a hybrid format, this process no longer involves someone checking individuals in and handing out voting cards.

5. Reports of the Officers –

- a. **President Jim Lawrence:** spoke briefly about his first year as president of the denomination, saying that he continues to “settle into the role” and is enjoying the experience.
- b. **Vice President Kurt Fekete** spoke of the “rare sighting” of a vice president that his presence at the meeting represents, busy at this point as he always is with the young people as Youth Director.
- c. **Recording Secretary Karen Conger** spoke of her pleasure at being nominated again (for the ninth time), having been elected to the office for the first time during our last visit to Bridgewater State University in 2015.
- d. **Treasurer Jennifer Lindsay** advised that during the brief economic downturn of the first quarter of 2023 the denomination lost \$4M on paper; however in the last six months that has been fully recovered. She invited all who would like a copy of the report to request one from the Central Office. Jennifer informed the assembled of the circumstances of the Baldwin Trust which consists of monies set aside from the 1934 will of Mary V. A. Baldwin, a member of the former Newark, OH, society, to benefit “the Swedenborgian college.” This fund had benefited Urbana University during the last several decades in the form of an annual gift; Baldwin’s will indicated that the secondary beneficiary was to be the “Swedenborgian Church,” and when Urbana closed the folks at Franklin University, who then owned the campus, went directly to the General Church (apparently an innocent mistake) instead of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (SCNA). Phillip Zuber, an official of the General Church, first discovered the error and contacted the Central Office. Pastor Robbin Ferriman and Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) librarian Michael Yockey conducted considerable research and the results were sent to the General Church, which conducted their own research, and the determination was made that the SCNA is in fact the beneficiary, to the tune of as much as \$50K in income per year. Our thanks to Robbin and Michael for the work that resulted in this very positive outcome, as well as to Mr. Zuber for alerting the denomination.

6. Report of the Credentials Committee – Karen Conger

Association (Conference)	Churches		Ordained Ministers		Licensed Pastors	Members	Number of Potential Delegates	Number of Actual Delegates
	Active	Inactive	Active	Retired				
Eastern Canada (ECC)	1	0	2	1	0	56	8	2
Illinois Association	5	0	4	1	3	61	8	8
Kansas	2	0	1	0	0	55	8	6
Maine	3	0	1	4	1	110	13	8
Massachusetts New Church Union (MNCU)	4	0	5	1	1	53	7	7
Michigan	1	0	2	1	0	52	7	7
Middle Atlantic	3	0	6	1	0	103	12	10
New York	1	0	1	0	0	20	4	2
Ohio	3	0	2	2	1	45	7	7
Pacific Coast (PCA)*	7	0	18	3	4	224	24	16
Western Canada (WCC)	2	0	1	0	0	59	8	0
At Large	n/a	n/a	1	0	0	3	2	1
Unknown Affiliation	n/a	n/a	11	7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sub-Total	32	0	55	21	10	841	108	74
Association/Conference Total	32	0	n/a	n/a	10	841	108	74
COM	n/a	n/a	55	21	n/a	n/a	76	38
General Council (lay officers and members)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9	9
Total Possible Delegates							193	121

*Did not submit information for 2022, using 2021 information

7. **Reports of the Council of Ministers (COM)** – Secretary of COM Rev. Kevin Baxter rose to present the COM report. 18 ministers were in attendance in person with an additional 15 online; there are currently seven Licensed Pastors (LPs) and four persons studying for various ministries. Rev. Susannah Currie has termed off from the position of Chair of COM, having served four years, with the final year an extension of her three-year term due to the COVID crisis. Rev. Rich Tafel has been elected the new chair of COM. Amongst other business the Council adopted a requirement for 20 hours total, 10 every year, of continuing education every two years for the clergy in order to remain in good standing; this professional requirement is standard practice in many other traditions.

At her own request, Rev. Jennifer Tafel has asked to be removed from the Roll of Ministers and placed on the Roll of Former Ministers, Jenn is now a minister of the United Church of Christ. In addition, the Council remembered the life and ministry of Rev. Carl Yenetchi; though severed from the rolls several years ago, Carl touched the hearts and minds of many. All rose for a moment in remembrance of all the ministers who have passed into the spiritual world in the last year: Rev. Jerry Poole, Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Rev. Skuli Thorallsson, and Rev. Judith Vandergrift.

- a. Motion : The Council of Ministers recommends to the General Convention, that CONSOLINA TAMBURRI McOSKER, after completing Licensed Pastor studies' requirements at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies as deemed adequate by the Council of Ministers, as well as on approval from the Committee on Admission Into The Ministry, and with the Garden Church being an appropriate site in our understanding, be given Licensed Pastor standing, serving at the Garden Church in San Pedro, California. The motion was seconded by Rev. Jane Siebert as a founding member of the Garden Church.
- b. Motion : The Council of Ministers recommends to the General Convention that Gordon Meyer be recertified on the basis of a letter of intent and the unanimous approval of the Council of Ministers of the Swedenborgian Church.
- b. Motion : At his own request, and by recommendation of the Committee on Admission into the Ministry, the Council of Ministers recommends to the General Convention, that Dr. DEVIN PHILLIP ZUBER, after experience and training recognized as equivalent to a

Master of Divinity Degree and a Certificate of Swedenborgian Studies, be ordained into the Ministry of the General Convention, and that the service of ordination be held at this session of convention, his name, after ordination, to be placed on our Roll of Ministers. Dr. Rebecca Esterson rose to second the motion. Introduction and questions for ordinand:

Q. DEVIN, in requesting ordination into the Christian ministry for service in the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America and in Canada, do you, in the presence of this Convention, affirm your love to the Lord, your faith in the Lord’s divine Word and your allegiance to the heavenly doctrines as unfolded in the theological works of Emanuel Swedenborg?

A. *Yes, I affirm this as my love, my faith, and my allegiance.*

Q. To this end, do you faithfully promise to uphold the Constitution of the General Convention and to abide by the Bylaws and practices of its Council of Ministers?

A. *I do promise this, and I ask the prayers of Convention to guide and sustain me in my ministry.*

8. Explanation of the NemoVote process – Jennifer rose to briefly explain the process of voting, directing all to visit swedenborg.nemovote.com in order to vote. All were invited to visit swedenborg.org/contact if they encounter problems and advised that there are folks waiting to help. Jim gave permission for the vote to be opened. The vote was closed at noon.

9. Business Session I recess at approximately 11:00am EDT.

BUSINESS SESSION II**10. Reconvened – approximately 1:35pm.****11. Report of the Standing Committee for Nominations – Chair Bill**

Coffman read the list of nominees for tomorrow's elections as follows:

- Vice President: Kurt Fekete
- Recording Secretary: Karen Conger
- General Council Lay Person: Kelly Kennedy (1st term)
- General Council Lay Person: Tom Murphy (1st term)
- General Council Minister: Rev. Renée Machiniak (1st term)
- Committee on Admission
into the Ministry: Rev. Gabriella Cahaley
- Standing Committee for
Communication & Information: Rev. Dr. David Brown (1st term)
- Standing Committee for
Financial Accountability: Bill Coffman (2nd term)
- Standing Committee for
Financial Accountability: Stan Conger (2nd term)
- Standing Committee for
Nominations: Nancy Little (Unexpired term)
- Standing Committee for
Nominations: Pastor Robbin Ferriman
- CSS Board of Trustees,
representative class: Robert Carr (1st term)

12. Nominations From the Floor – Jim asked for nominations from the Floor (in person and online), en masse. Hearing/receiving none, the nominations were closed.

- 13. Report on Ordinand & Licensed Pastor voting** – Jennifer advised that with 121 eligible voters, the simple majority is 61:
- a. Rev. Gordon Meyer – 72 votes cast, 69 in favor, one opposed, two abstentions; the vote carries.
 - b. Consolina McOskey – 72 cast, 71 in favor, one opposed; the vote carries.
 - c. Dr. Devin Zuber – 72 votes cast, 72 in favor; the vote carries.

14. Reports:

a. The Messenger – Editor Beki Greenwood reported that over the last year 131 articles have been published from 41 different people, and that the Messenger archives on swedenborg.org have been updated to fill in many missing years and issues. Beki reminded our various ministries of the importance of submitting deaths/births and concerns/joys so that important events can be shared throughout North America. She also encouraged others to send to her their photos from convention, as she remains busy with IT duties. “Putting on (another) yet another hat,” she then gave her report as Director of the Fryeburg New Church Camp advising that plans for this year’s camp are well underway and inviting all to attend!

b. Website (swedenborg.org) – Digital Communications Manager Rudy Caseres spoke to emphasize his intension that this convention should be as truly hybrid as possible, enabling folks online to have as close to a live experience as possible, not forgetting all the lessons we’ve learned during the COVID period, and adding that this technology is something we’re going to need to continue to develop into the future.

c. Wayfarers Chapel restoration project – Executive Director Rev. Dan Burchett introduced his power point presentation and advised that the process to achieve National Historic Landmark Preservation Status proceeds and is expected to be completed soon. The years 2021 & 2022 have provided strong income, but additional funds will be required for the necessary restoration of the Chapel, plans for which proceed apace. Phase I of the restoration will involve the stabilization of the site, diverting underground water away from all structures and walkways, while rebuilding/relocating damaged ancillary buildings. Phase II will see the careful restoration of the Chapel; the projected start date is November 2025.

d. Our National Church in Washington, D.C. – Karen Conger directed the attention of attendees to her report as printed in the Advance Reports, and as an update advised that the DC Committee (currently consisting of

Jim Lawrence, Karen Conger, Pastor Paul Deming, Jennifer Lindsay, Tom Murphy, and Herb Ziegler), continue to converse with the Washington, D.C. Society as to future plans for the property and the Society. It is the consensus from all sides that the time for the sale of the property has come and it remains to determine the future of the Society and the disposition of the residue of the expected sale. As yet the property has not been placed on the market.

15. **Rev. Jane Siebert and Rev. Ros Taylor** rose to make a presentation about Gathering Leaves, which will be held in Byrn Athyn, PA. this August. This is a well-attended gathering of women/sisters from all branches of the Swedenborgian Church. This year the theme is Delighting in Our Spiritual Variety. This year a fund has been established for travel expenses; please visit gatheringleaves.net for more information. The 10 August is the deadline for registration.
16. **Rev. Donna Keane** rose to discuss the “small church problem,” and the importance of remembering that small churches have their assets, being able to “turn on a dime” and change, unlike large churches. She would like Convention to consider developing a program to financially assist small churches in paying Licensed Pastors, and asked others to join her on this bandwagon!
17. **Rev. Kevin Baxter** rose to announce the “private Baxter shuttle,” which will leave from the commuter rail parking lot 15 or 20 minutes before meetings; Kevin will be there to ferry folks.
18. **Herb Ziegler** announced that after the process of sorting through his dear deceased wife’s clothing he had lots of beautiful, padded hangers to share.
19. **Craig Carson** was welcomed as the new director of the Almont New Church Assembly and Retreat Center. A “Brick the Yard” fundraiser has commenced enabling folks to buy a brick which will be used to beautifully pave a planned memorial area.
20. **Brittany Price** spoke for a few minutes to remind people to sign the book, please; tomorrow night’s ordination service will be held at the beautiful Bridgewater Church and the bus will be waiting at the parking

lot between 6:15pm and 6:30pm on Monday, July 3; and there are bus sign-ups for the outing at the lovely Elmwood Church on July 4 and advising that the parking lot at the church is small.

21. Business Session II recess – approximately 2:40p EDT

Monday, July 3, 2023 1:30 PM EDT

BUSINESS SESSION III

- 22. Reconvene convention** – at 1:37pm. Kevin made a parliamentary announcement regarding recognition by the Chair, requiring those who wish to speak to come forward or signal the chair for a mic.
- 23. The Vote for candidates** as presented by the Standing Committee for Nominations was opened at 1:37pm.
- 24. Additional Reports** – before hearing further reports Jim asked those in the Zoom room to please let us know about their experiences with this technology so that we continue to improve the experience.
 - a. OurDailyBread (ODB)**—Rev. Thom Muller reported that ODB continues to serve as an outlet for Convention-specific Swedenborgian content with the explicitly two-fold mission of serving members of the Swedenborgian Church of North America as well as the public by providing sermons, meditations, articles, reflection, and original content in written and a/v format. Spiritualquesters.org has seen an increase of 40 views over last year. Thom solicited input, encouraging folks to come and speak with him.
 - b. Swedenborgian Community Online (Spiritual Sunshine)** – Rev. Cory Coberforward joined the meeting virtually from Ontario, Canada, and spoke of the pleasure he receives in reading messages from all over the world. Cory extended his thanks to the Central Committee for all their excellent support, and wondered out loud if “we are more conscious of our minds that we have so little control over, or the peace that exists eternally within us?”
 - c. Social Justice Committee (SJC)** – Chair Rev. Shada Sullivan reviewed the process around the SJC from last year and welcomed Dru Johnson onto

the committee which meets monthly on the second Tuesday. Along with Jim Lawrence they have started work on engagement with the National Council of Churches' Social Justice Committee. Rev. Renee Machiniak suggested the possibility of inviting one of our youths onto the committee, they having a lot on their hearts. The SJC expects to be able to present a Climate Justice statement for consideration at next year's convention.

d. Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism (SAAR) – Current Chair (they have a triannual rotating chair) Rev. Shada Sullivan continues to publish the newsletter on a tri-weekly schedule. They recently offered a lecture by Rev. Randy Woodley and are always pleased to welcome new members. SAAR is an independent committee, but affiliated, and Shada commented that the Rainbow Committee may be seen as branching off from SJC and SAAR.

e. Swedenborg Foundation – President Robert Carr and VP of Development Tim Bilger rose to present; Robert spoke of the mission of the Foundation to foster an affirmative, informed, and increasingly broad engagement with the theological thought of Emanuel Swedenborg. The current thrust of efforts may be seen to be divided into “two buckets:” publishing and online (Off the Left Eye). They are currently conducting an assessment of their website presence(s) and may end up with just one website. They are pleased to report that their greatest growth in watchers is in the 24–30 age range. A new Community Membership has been introduced, at \$10 a month or \$99 per year, accessible through a portal which is live, now. This new membership is different from the core membership which includes voting rights. Significant discussion ensued.

25. Business Session III Recessed – 2:45pm EDT

Tuesday July 4, 2023 11:00 AM EDT

BUSINESS SESSION IV

26. Reconvene convention – at 11:05am

27. Several announcements preceded. With special thanks to Merilee Phinney! Thanks to Brittany for her very hard work in getting all the items out of Iron Mountain!

28. Announcement election results –

Vice President

(1 yr. term)

Recording Secretary

(1 yr. term)

General Council (Lay Person)

(3 yr term ‘26)

General Council (Lay Person)

(3 yr. term ‘26)

General Council (Minister)

(3 yr. term ‘26)

Standing Committee for

Communication & Information

(3 yr. term ‘26)

Standing Committee for

Financial Accountability

(3 yr. term ‘26)

Standing Committee for

Financial Accountability

(3 yr. term ‘26)

Committee on Admission

into the Ministry

(3 year term ‘26)

Nominating Committee

(to complete an unexp. term ‘27)

Nominating Committee

(5 yr. term ‘28)

CSS BOT Representative Class

(4 yr. term ‘27)

Kurt Fekete

60 votes cast, 60 in favor; the vote carried

Karen Conger

64 votes cast, 64 in favor; the vote carried

Kelly Kennedy

53 votes cast, 52 in favor; the vote carried

Tom Murphy

53 votes cast, 53 in favor; the vote carried

Rev. Renée Machiniak

64 votes cast, 64 in favor; the vote carried

Rev. Dr. David Brown

63 votes cast, 63 in favor; the vote carried

Bill Coffman

54 votes cast, 53 in favor; the vote carried

Stan Conger

54 votes cast, 54 in favor; the vote carried

Rev. Gabriella Cahaley

63 votes cast, 63 in favor; the vote carried

Nancy Little

63 votes cast, 63 in favor; the vote carried

Pastor Robbin Ferriman

62 votes cast, 62 in favor; the vote carried

Robert Shaw

63 votes cast, 63 in favor; the vote carried

29. President Jim Lawrence declared the election valid.

- 30. Recognition and Certificates of Appreciation** – Jim was pleased to present certificates to several people for years of loving service to the Church in many different capacities, as well as to ten ministers for years of service:
- a. Five years: Rev. Cory Coberforward & Rev. Rachel Madjerac
 - b. Ten years: Rev. Betsy Coffman & Rev. Dagmar Bollinger
 - c. Fifteen years: Rev. Catherine Lauber
 - d. Twenty years: Rev. Kim Morrow
 - e. Thirty-five years: Rev. Deborah Winter
 - f. Forty years: Rev. Kei Torita & Rev. Rachel Rivers
 - g. Forty-five years: Rev. Ron Brugler
- 31. The Swedenborgian Church Youth League** held a silent auction during the days of convention and were pleased to announce the winner (there were several very high bids): Rev. Chris Barber, a guest and speaker from the General Church, whom we were so pleased to become acquainted with (and hope to see again!). The prize was a framed vintage t-shirt signed by SSR faculty and students.
- 32. Rev. Kit Billings** shared his prayerful wish that the near future might see a gathering of folks from Convention, the General Church, and the Lord's New Church; these folks might be comprised of clergy or possibly the laity as well.
- 33. The site/dates for convention 2024** have not yet been chosen. Stay tuned to *The Messenger* for coming details!
- 34. Close Business Sessions** – at approximately 11:40am the Bible was closed and the 199th Session of the General Convention was brought to a close.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Conger, Secretary

2024 Convention Site and Dates: In September, 2023 the site for the 2024 Convention was chosen and will be in East Lansing, MI at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center and Michigan State University on June 28–July 2, 2024.

CONVENTION PREACHERS SINCE 1959

1959	Ernest O. Martin	Asilomar Conference Grounds, CA
1960	Owen Turley	Lake Forest, IL
1961	Calvin Turley	Washington, DC
1962	Richard Tafel	Pawnee Rock, KS
1963	Paul Zacharias	Miami Beach, FL
1964	Rollo Billings	Philadelphia, PA
1965	Brian Kingslake	Brockton-Bridgewater-Elmwood, MA
1966	Galen Unruh	Urbana, OH
1967	Eric Zacharias	Kitchener, Ontario, Canada
1968	George F. Dole	Windsor, Ontario, Canada
1969	Randall Laakko	Claremont, CA
1971	Erwin Reddekopp	Urbana, OH
1972	Ernest L. Frederick	Boston, MA
1973	Robert H. Kirven	Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
1974	Andre Diaconoff	Urbana, OH
1975	George McCurdy	Urbana, OH
1976	Richard H. Tafel, Jr.	Philadelphia, PA
1977	Dorothea Harvey	San Francisco, CA
1978	Ernest O. Martin	Kitchener, Ontario, Canada
1979	Friedemann Horn	Urbana, OH
1980	Edwin G. Capon	Wellesley, MA
1981	Eric Allison	Urbana, OH
1982	Andre Diaconoff	Irvine, CA
1983	F. Robert Tafel	Wilmington, OH
1984	Ronald P. Brugler	Center Harbor, NH
1985	F. Gardiner Perry III	Windsor, Ontario, Canada
1986	Gladys Wheaton	Boone, NC
1987	Jaikoo E. Lee	Tacoma, WA
1988	David L. Rienstra	Newton, MA
1989	David P. Johnson	Urbana, OH
1990	Jerome A. Poole	Olds, Alberta, Canada
1991	Robert E. McCluskey	Kitchener, Ontario, Canada
1992	Stephen J. Pults	St. Louis, MO
1993	Richard M. Baxter	Wenham, MA
1994	George F. Dole	Arlington, VA
1995	Carl Yenetchi	San Francisco, CA
1996	Horand K. Gutfeldt	Urbana, OH

1997	Robert H. Kirven	Hutchinson, KS
1998	James F. Lawrence	Leesburg, FL
1999	J. Theodore Klein	Malibu, CA
2000	Paul Martin	Urbana, OH
2001	Renée Billings Machiniak	St. Paul, MN
2002	Paul Zacharias	Gorham, ME
2003	Ken Turley	Geneva, NY
2004	Wilma Wake	Kitchener, Ontario, Canada
2005	Marlene Laughlin	Berkeley, CA
2006	John Billings	Urbana, OH
2007	Eric Hoffman	Holland, MI
2008	Sarah Buteux	Bridgewater, MA
2009	Junchol Lee	Seattle, WA
2010	John Maine	St. Paul, MN
2011	Jonathan Mitchell	Cincinnati, OH
2012	Andrew Stinson	Bridgewater, MA
2013	Jane Siebert	Urbana, OH
2014	Alison Lane-Olsen	St. Louis, MO
2015	David Fekete	Bridgewater, MA
2016	Solomon Youngmin Kim	Urbana, OH
2017	Susannah Currie	West Chester, PA
2018	Kit Billings	San Jose, CA
2019	Kathy Speas	Valparaiso, IN
2020	Paul Deming	Virtual
2021	Sage Cole	Virtual
2022	Anna Woofenden	Long Beach, CA
2023	Richard Tafel	Bridgewater, MA

MEMORIAL

REV. RICHARD H. TAFEL, JR. (1935–2022)

Rev. Dick Tafel, Jr. served in ministry for fifty-five years. Ordained in 1962, his first pastorate in Cincinnati thrived for twenty-eight years. Arriving fresh from seminary to shepherd the historic “Tiffany windows” church in the Avondale section of town northeast of downtown, Dick arrived not only to a church experiencing a slow decline, but also one whose building was being taken by eminent domain for a freeway. Dick, however, saw the dramatic hurdle as an opportunity for a radical evolution in approach to ministry. His seminary training involved new ways of being a community church with an emphasis on small groups and on integrating psychological into spiritual formation. The result was a modern style multipurpose building on spacious acreage that included an outdoor sanctuary in addition to the indoor option in the northern suburb of Montgomery.

For the ministry newly named as Kemper Road Center for Religious Development, Dick oversaw the construction as well as the design of innovative programming. From 1969 through 1972 a team ministry experiment was conducted with Dick’s cousin Rev. F. Bob Tafel that included a teen coffee house program where area teens could gather on Friday evenings. In 1979 Dick spearheaded a new Swedenborgian camp program on Rocky Fork Lake that was named “Beside the Point,” where in addition to adult retreats inner-city youth and church youth spent a week or two together each summer.

Per the church board’s request that he be involved in community service outside the church, Dick joined the Montgomery Community Fire Department as a volunteer, serving twenty-three years and rising to the rank of Assistant Chief. He also was certified as an EMT and volunteered on the Blue Ash-Montgomery Life Squad. Dick also served in numerous denominational roles, including Chair of the Council of Ministers and President.

In 1990 when he took office as President, he and his wife, Linda, relocated from Cincinnati to Fort Myers Beach, Florida. In 1995 he started the New Church of Southwest Florida, enlisting a community network of local businesses supporting an outreach ministry including an after-school program for latchkey kids, a community thrift shop, and a food pantry. A federal grant was obtained to provide staffing for the after-school project. He retired from active ministry in 2006 yet remained active as a consulting minister for many years.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

REV. CARL E. YENETCHI (1953–2023)

Carl Yenetchi graduated from the Swedenborg School of Religion and was ordained in 1980. He first served the Elmwood (MA) New Church and also was Chaplain of the Massasoit School in nearby Braintree. His next ministry was with the Urbana, OH, Church of the New Jerusalem and also as a chaplain on the campus of Urbana University. On the pastoral staff for several years at Wayfarers Chapel in Palos Verdes, CA, Carl initiated a new legal structure, The Swedenborgian Church of Palos Verdes, for active church goers since Wayfarers as a mission run and governed by the denomination has no formal congregation. He began his final Swedenborgian pastorate in 2001 at the LaPorte New Church in Indiana. Having become interested in other forms of Christian faith, Carl moved with his wife, Betty, to Florida and became officially inactive in the denomination and severed his ties in 2016, while yet retaining many friends and relationships throughout the church.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

REPORTS OF OFFICERS, BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND ASSOCIATED BODIES

PRESIDENT

Many activities, challenges, and visions are happening in our larger church family. Some of the work more towards the foreground of my joys and labors include:

Our History and Documents Materials. After twenty-three years of storing 500 boxes of denominational files in a hard to access facility in Boston, the Library and Documents Committee oversaw a two-year process of downsizing, updating, and relocating all remaining materials. After a downsizing based on materials being out of date, approximately half of the remaining materials were sent to the seminary library space in Berkeley, and the other half went to a southwest Ohio facility near Urbana. We have personnel in both locations to provide better oversight and hands-on access compared to what was possible in Boston. In Ohio we have dedicated research historians in Pastor Robbin Ferriman and Sue Ditmire, and in Berkeley we have the CSS faculty and staff. This brings a tremendous relief and new hope for ensuring our history materials will be in easy reach by capable hands, and this large overhaul and move also delivers a significant long-term savings in cost.

Renovations at Wayfarers Chapel. Much work has been happening at Wayfarers Chapel supporting plans for a significant restoration project to address foundation issues as well as cleaning. New pews built according to the original design by Lloyd Wright have been installed this past year. The Chapel is in the late stages of National Landmarking at this writing—a high bar to attain compared to local or state landmarking. The Chapel continues to rise as a prominent subject in architecture articles in the media and online sites. The office building called Wayfarers West a half-mile up the highway that has been owned by Convention for a quarter-century but less needed now was sold to help finance the restoration project, and staff operations have been consolidated on the main campus. Plans are also underway to replace modular office space at Wayfarers with an attractive small building in keeping with the rest of the grounds.

Virtual Methods of Holding Church Community. A significant effort is underway to increase our skills and support for virtual and online presence of the denomination and of local ministries. Over the past few years, the General Council has supported grants to local churches and camps for upgrading their technological support level for live-streaming and hybrid support of services and programs,

and in a significant step into the future we designed and staffed a new half-time position in the denomination for a Digital Communications Manager, which commenced on March 15 with Rudy Caseres, who has been working steadily with the website and preparing to support a robust virtual attendance option for our summer convention.

Changeovers in Ministry Operations. Openings have occurred for ministerial leadership in our Fryeburg, Maine and Edmonton church ministries, and these two as of this writing are engaged with a search process. An older opening at the New Church of the Southwest Desert is now being met by rising up a Licensed Pastor student, Xander Toth, who has begun training under the purview CAM and CSS. The church on Murray Hill in New York City finally completed their shut-down as a congregational ministry, have sold their building, and reconstituted as a shared trusteeship that will support projects and programs. A fledgling Rainbow Church of the New Jerusalem project with online gatherings on Sunday afternoons has commenced this year. All our ministries, ministers, licensed pastors, camps, congregations, and social justice groups have continued working hard to meet the challenges of sharing Swedenborgian spirituality with one another and our world.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President

VICE PRESIDENT

This is my second full reporting year in the position of vice president. I've been busy in service to our church community, and it has been an engaging and enlightening experience. The easing of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions has allowed most of our church business to be conducted in hybrid, meaning options to attend either in-person or virtually. Aside from our annual Convention General Council meetings, I have elected to attend our business meetings virtually on Zoom. Fortunately, nearly all our church worship services and camps have returned to in-person, while some have continued to offer a virtual option as well. Central Office manager, Brittany Price, and accounting manager, Gina Peracchi, continue to do an exceptional job running the duties of Central Office from their homes.

Here are the Vice President highlights of year 2022–2023:

- Chair of the Board of Mediation committee. Did not meet during this reporting period.

- Participated in monthly Swedenborgian Community Online (aka, Spiritual Sunshine) committee calls and took over as Chair when William Rottella's term expired. Additional Spiritual Sunshine committee members are currently Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts, Rev. Thom Muller, and Dr. Emily Tergliafera. Under the leadership and direction of Cory, Spiritual Sunshine has an engaging and ever-evolving website. Cory is producing great content, including weekly worship services and monthly mediations. Spiritual Sunshine is using social media to reach out to denomination members and new spiritual seekers around the world.
- Attended monthly Executive Committee (ExCom) meetings, responded to emails and text messages, and addressed ExCom issues throughout the year to conduct the ongoing business of the General Council. It's been a joy to work with President, Rev. Jim Lawrence, Secretary, Karen Conger, and Treasurer, Jennifer Lindsay. They are doing inspiring work for the denomination, and I am blessed to serve with them all.
- Attended all six General Council meetings (July 2022 pre- and post-Convention, Nov. and Dec. 2022, and Feb. and Mar. 2023) and presented VP reports along with other assigned duties.
- Working with Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism (SAAR) attending bi-weekly calls and assisting with events. Chaired the SAAR meetings Jan.–Apr. 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Fekete, Vice President

SECRETARY

Per the duties outlined in the Journal I have taken minutes at all meetings of the General Council and Executive Committee. I have sent correspondence to organizations and individuals on behalf of the General Council as directed, as well as working closely with the president to create and manage the agenda for the above meetings. We are in the process of planning for this year's hybrid convention meetings at Bridgewater State University, which will include voting both for virtual attendees and those attending in person. In order to determine accurate delegate numbers, statistics are currently being collected and compiled from ministries, associations, and conferences throughout the denomination in North America. Later this year I will be assisting Operations Manager Brittany Price in compiling and editing the 2023 Journal.

In addition, I have continued to be active on the Board of Directors of the New York New Church (NYNC), their numbers having fallen below the required membership as outlined in their bylaws. Under the excellent leadership of Rev. Rich Tafel, who was hired by the denomination in 2020 to facilitate all of the above, the NYNC property has been sold to the government of Serbia who plan to use it for their United Nations Mission. The NYNC has been dissolved, though the Board of Trustees continues to function until such time as a trusteeship can be set up to oversee the disbursal of funds.

I am also the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the National Church at 1611 16th St. NW, in Washington, D.C. The D.C. Church Committee continues to do a very good job of stewardship of the property. With funds granted by the denomination's Trustees of the Building Fund the Society was able to complete some much needed repairs to the Tower and the roof. The D.C. Society and the denomination are currently conferencing to consider the sale of the property.

The move to a virtual Central Office at the beginning of the COVID lockdowns continues to work very well, and Brittany Price is a top caliber Operations Manager who's a pleasure to work with. Gina Peracchi is another blessing to the denomination, and represents another reason for me to be thankful for the team at the Central Office. The Executive Committee, made up of President Jim Lawrence, Vice President Kurt Fekete, and Treasurer Jennifer Lindsay, are wonderful friends and colleagues; they serve the denomination admirably.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Conger, Recording Secretary

TREASURER

Fortunately, the year 2022 reintroduced the ability to start interacting and meeting in-person again after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. SCNA had the good fortune of saving funds on travel expenses related to retreats, Convention, General Council meetings, and various committee meetings during 2020 and 2021 the COVID-related travel restrictions. However, there is something special and reaffirming about coming together in-person to build community across our ministries and committees.

The Office of Treasurer was busy throughout the year with a variety of Zoom and in-person meetings, written reports, administrative duties, and strategic planning sessions. Gina Peracchi, Accounting Manager, and I work closely on a weekly basis to manage the checking and saving accounts, bookkeeping, payables, and

other financial reporting. We also interact directly with the independent financial auditors who perform the annual financial review.

One of the more unusual projects that I participated in this past year was working with the New York New Church Society to prepare for and facilitate the sale of its historic church building in the Murray Hill neighborhood of Manhattan. The Republic of Serbia purchased the building to create a consulate in the vicinity of the United Nations complex. It is bittersweet to no longer have this grand church building as part of our on-going ministries, yet to also know that it will be used for significant events on behalf of Serbia for many years to come.

Financial Results

The independent financial auditors completed their professional review of the 2022 financial statements during August 2023. During 2022, SCNA had an operating surplus of \$120K. Due to the negative 11.7% return on the Common Fund during 2022, SCNA incurred a capital loss of \$3.9M. Fortunately, this loss has been partially mitigated by the positive returns in the markets during the first half of 2023. Overall, the SCNA continues to be on firm financial footing to support our ministries and programs.

Document Storage

For over 20 years, a significant amount of historic and financial documentation has been stored at a storage company facility near Central Office in Cambridge, MA. This documentation was difficult to access given its control by a third-party vendor. Members of The Committee on Library and Documents, namely Nancy Little, Sue Ditmire, and Robbin Ferriman, along with Brittany Price worked diligently over the past year to cull unnecessary items and arrange for the remaining documents to be moved to a combination of the CSS Library and an easily accessible storage facility in Springfield, OH near Urbana. This change in our document storage locations enables our historical documents to be made available for research efforts and creates significant monthly cost savings for the foreseeable future.

Virtual Voting

SCNA experienced a higher number of voting delegates at the 2022 Convention given that delegates could vote while attending either in person or virtually. General Council is in support of maintaining the ability to vote virtually to enable as many delegates as possible to participate in the annual elections. Thus, the Office of Treasurer continued managing the virtual voting process by interacting with

the vendor NemoVote, creating the virtual ballots, and assisting delegates with accessing the NemoVote platform for voting purposes at the 2023 Convention.

Other

Besides chairing the SCFA and Investment Committee (see separate SCFA and Investment Committee reports), I also serve as a member of the Building Fund Committee and a trustee for the Tafel Fund.

It is a privilege to serve General Convention as Treasurer and an honor to be entrusted with this responsibility. The regular Zoom meetings and email communications provide a strong connection with our community during those months between Convention Sessions and other in person meetings. For this I am grateful.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Lindsay, Treasurer

GENERAL COUNCIL

The General Council met virtually or in a hybrid format a total of five times, as well as during the hybrid convention in Long Beach, CA, in June of 2022.

During the virtual Spring 2023 General Council meeting the items of business undertaken included the continuing sale process of the New York New Church, developments at Wayfarers Chapel and the National Church, the new website (swedenborg.org), and updates on the upcoming annual convention to be held in Bridgewater, MA.

Amongst the many items of business undertaken by the General Council during the past year have included various appointments of personnel to committees, the hire of a Digital Communications Manager, and the removal of documents/materials from Iron Mountain for redistribution to Urbana, OH. and Berkeley, CA.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Conger, Recording Secretary

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

On June 29th and 30th, 18 Ministers gathered in person and 15 Ministers online (for a total 32) as the Council of Ministers of the Swedenborgian Church. We welcomed 7 Licensed Pastors and 4 people studying for various ministries. The Rev. Susannah Currie chaired the council and Rev. Baxter served as secretary pro temp. The two-day meeting allowed time for the needed business of the council, ministry sharing, and educational growth.

Our educational program centered around the mission and purpose of the church in interesting and unique ways. Through elevator speeches and the creation of taglines. The various virtual attendees gathered in zoom rooms and the ministers broke out into small groups to focus in on what the essential qualities and attributes of the church are to them. Meaningful and spirited discussions occurred, peppered with humor and fun.

As is normal practice, our elections are held right before convention. We would like to acknowledge the dedication of the Rev. Susannah Currie, who has served for the past four years due to the extended COVID year. She has brought new approaches to ministry support and has given her gifts faithfully and prayerfully. We thank you for your service. As her term ended, she announced that at her request, Susannah Currie would like her COM standing shifted from active to retired. And we can all say, well done, good and faithful servant.

The newly elected officers of the Council of Ministers are as follows. The Chairperson is Rev. Rich Tafel, Secretary, Rev. Kevin K. Baxter, At-large members of the Executive Committee are Rev. Dr. Donna Keane and Rev. Julie Conoran for a three-year and two-year term respectively, The Rev. Kit Billing will serve on the Nomination Committee, and Rev. Kevin Baxter was elected convention preacher in 2025. With the election of Rev. Tafel to chair, he resigned his seat on CAM, which we hope will be filled by Rev. Rachel Madjerac if she accepts the results of the election.

Taking care of some administrative business, the council also adopted a requirement for 20 hours of continuing education every 2 years for the clergy to remain in good standing. This professional requirement is standard practice in many other traditions. Also, we approved Job descriptions for the Chair of the Council, Secretary of the Council, and the Chair of CAM. We also heard from the treasurer of convention about budget process and socially aware investing.

The Committee on Admission into the Ministry as of the start of this meeting has advisees seeking ordination: Dr. Devin Zuber, Eleanor Schnarr, Lynn Thompson, and Roxanne Sperry. In addition, the Rev. Jay Barry is considering induction into our ordained ministry. We know of additional people who will be applying for ordination as well. Two candidates for the Licensed Pastor program were also admitted to the LP track—Connie McOsker from the Garden Church and Xander Toth of Silver City. Of significant note, CAM has received communications from individuals in Africa seeking admission to our ministry through various ways. CAM has asked for guidance and the council has tasked the Executive Committee of the Council to work with CAM on this issue. CAM also asked for additional guidance from the council on issues of induction into ministry.

A letter was also received focusing on the need to support pastoral ministries, especially those served by Licensed Pastors. The query was raised if Convention could find funding to assist the Licensed Pastors who are not sufficiently paid. This letter was received into the packet, but not acted upon.

We were pleased to receive visions of ministry from Eleanor Schnarr, Roxanne Sperry, and Lynn S. Chittick Thompson. Also, we received a plan of Ministry from Dr. Devin Zuber, which we approved.

The Virginia Street Church and Gordon Meyer sought approval to continue Pastor Meyer's license to pastor the church, which we approved.

The Ad Hoc Committee recommendation for Licensed Pastors on the Council of Ministers reported back with the following change, which was accepted. In recognition of the significant difference in training and formation that distinguishes the educational paths between Ordained Ministers and Licensed Pastors, be it

resolved the bylaws of the Council of Ministers be amended to indicate the following rights and restrictions: that Licensed Pastors may attend Peer Supervision and COM meetings without invitation; may participate in executive sessions with invitation of COM members; may not vote on business matters; may not serve on the Executive Committee, the Nominating Committee, or the Committee on Admissions to the Ministry; and may receive room and board for convention paid for from COM's budget. While some additional work remains to properly codify the change, we welcome our colleges in pastoral ministry to increased participation in the activities of the council.

Motion: at her own request, Rev. Jennifer Tafel has asked to be removed from the roll of ministers and placed on the roll of former ministers.

The Council took a moment to remember the life and ministry of Rev. Carl Yenetchi. While he was severed from our rolls in 2016, Rev. Carl Yenetchi touched the hearts and minds of many and was fondly remembered. His ministry continued after his departure from our roll as he served his call for 36 years. He entered the fullness of the spiritual world on March 2, 2023.

Motion: After 34 years in the ordained ministry, Rev. Skuli Thorallson entered into the fullness of the spiritual world on July 30, 2022. The Council of Ministers recommends to the Swedenborgian Church that their name be removed from the Roll of Ministers and added to the Roll of Former Ministers.

Motion: After 14 years in the ordained ministry, Rev. Judith Vandergrift entered into the fullness of the spiritual world in late July, 2022. The Council of Ministers recommends to the Swedenborgian Church that their name be removed from the Roll of Ministers and added to the Roll of Former Ministers.

Motion: After 57 years or so in the ordained ministry, Rev. Jerry Poole entered into the fullness of the spiritual world on September 24, 2022. The Council of Ministers recommends to the Swedenborgian Church that their name be removed from the Roll of Ministers and added to the Roll of Former Ministers.

Motion: After 60 years in the ordained ministry, Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr. entered into the fullness of the spiritual world on October 13, 2022. The Council of Ministers recommends to the Swedenborgian Church that their name be removed from the Roll of Ministers and added to the Roll of Former Ministers.

Motion: The Council of Ministers recommends to the General Convention, that Connie McOsker, after completing Licensed Pastor studies requirements at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies as deemed adequate by the Council of Ministers, as well as on approval from the Committee on Admission Into The Ministry, and with the Garden Church being an appropriate site in our understanding, be given Licensed Pastor standing, serving at Garden Church in San Pedro, California.

Motion: The Council of Ministers recommends to the General Convention, that Gordon Meyer, be recertified as basis of a letter of intent and the unanimous approval of the Council of Ministers of the Swedenborgian Church.

Motion: At his request and by recommendation of the Committee on Admission to the Ministry, the Council of Ministers recommends to the General Convention that Dr. Devin Zuber, after experience and training recognized as equivalent to a Master of Divinity Degree and a certificate of Swedenborgian Studies, be ordained into the ministry of the General Convention and that this service of ordination be held at this session of the General Convention, his name after ordination to be placed on our Roll of Ministers.

Respectfully Submitted :

Rev. Kevin Baxter, Secretary of the Council of Ministers

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

For this past year the SCCI has continued to work on sharing new content and expanding our outreach efforts, including building on the initial success of the revised Swedenborg.org website and our other online platforms. We also welcomed multiple new members to the committee, including Kevin Baxter and Rebecca Esterson, and Holly Bauer continued to serve as the website facilitator through Fall of 2022, in addition to her regular duties as an SCCI member (Thanks, Holly!).

In Spring of 2023, SCCI assisted with the hiring of a new Digital Communications Manager, Rudy Caseres. In addition to participating on the SCCI, Rudy is responsible for managing the website and social media content/online presence of the denomination, and he will also be an integral part of the online/virtual convention team, helping to manage events for both in-person and virtual attendees for convention. We hope that the revised website, as well as our other online plat-

forms (including Facebook and YouTube) are up-to-date and continue to be useful for both current members and the general public, and we look forward to finding new ways to grow our digital media presence and outreach in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,

Tara Conkling, Chair

THE MESSENGER

The Messenger is an official publication of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (ten issues, including combined January/February and July/August issues), had a successful year of supporting and serving its readers. *The Messenger* publishes information that the Church wishes to communicate to the membership, such as church membership statistics, reports from meetings of the General Council and the Board of Trustees of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, nomination information, news about ministries of the church, updates from committees, and information about the upcoming Annual Convention. In addition to news articles and announcements, *the Messenger* published articles on theology; Swedenborg and Swedenborgian related issues; articles by and about churches, church members, clergy, and other ministries; and personal reflections from members and clergy. We print 142 physical copies and email out almost 1600 copies each issue.

Over the past year (May 2022–April 2023), *the Messenger* published 131 articles from 41 individual writers. We had submissions from 25 female writers, 14 male writers, and 2 non-binary writers—ages ranging between 11 and 90. 17 of those writers were clergy from around our denomination and 5 were youth writers between the ages of 11–17. There were also 14 Passages printed in this time frame. I’d like to encourage our churches to remember to send in births, baptisms, confirmations, and marriages as well as passings so that we may not only share in our community sorrows, but also celebrate our joys. People are reading, and responding to *the Messenger*, which keeps us relevant and an important communication tool for our worldwide readership.

We updated *the Messenger* archives on Swedenborg.org and filled many missing years and issues. Individual articles are posted regularly to Swedenborg.org and tagged as Messenger articles. Now that we have a Digital Content Manager, we are looking at other creative ways to use *the Messenger* content in the future.

The Messenger would not be possible without the volunteer editorial support from a variety of people: Rudy Caseres, Jennifer Darcy, Jason Greenwood, Robert Leith, Rev. Rachel Madjerac, Brittany Price, Dr. Emily Woofenden, Trevor

Woofenden, with special thanks to the Editorial Advisory Committee—Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, and Herb Ziegler.

Respectfully submitted,

Beki Greenwood, Editor

OUR DAILY BREAD

This past year has been a positive experience for *Our Daily Bread* at *spiritualquesters.org*. We continue to serve as an outlet for Convention-specific Swedenborgian content, with the explicitly two-fold mission of serving members of the Swedenborgian Church of North America, as well as the public by providing sermons, meditations, articles, reflections, and original content in written and a/v format. uing to proactively lean into the new opportunities of the information age.

We are continuing to expand the ways in which we can be a relevant public voice for Swedenborgianism with a Convention-flavor. With the success of Swedenborgian virtual outreach in the past years, including through the Swedenborg Foundation’s “Off the Left Eye,” ODB serves as an outlet for the kind of Swedenborgian thought that Convention is especially known for, namely an inclusive, critical, theologically liberal, diverse and creative engagement with Swedenborg and our tradition, as well as an emphasis on ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue.

Since we began recording the number of visits via a new WordPress plugin in the Summer of 2020, we have had just over 61,300 visits to our Featured Programming page. The average piece/article/sermon receives between 200 and 300 views.

The piece with the largest number of views since our report at Convention, Rev. Thom’s report about his “Swedenborg pilgrimage” to Sweden, had 610 views.

A total of 826 people are subscribed to our Facebook page and thus receive ODB post on their Facebook wall daily. This is an increase of around 40 followers since last convention. We are especially pleased that our most recent addition to our platform, the “Who is Swedenborg?” page, has reached around 2,600 views so far.

A highlight in the past 6 months was an interview with renowned scholar and teacher Bishop Stephan Hoeller, a household name in the study of Gnosticism, Depth Psychology and the Western Esoteric Tradition, entitled “The Future of Esoteric Christianity”. It has so far received 187 views. More recently, Rev. Thom interviewed Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, president of the SCNA about his vision and the church in general. So far, it has had 76 views.

Our older pieces (1+ year) have received, on average, 600–700 views. This indicates that readers continue to actively engage our pieces far beyond the period in which they are published and advertised, and continue to browse all of our published content.

There are several adjustments in our overall approach which we are currently developing and establishing. One major shift is our use of our “platform maintenance” budget to hire an on-the-spot tech consultant, Lukas Thao, a Swedenborgian and IT worker, who has generously agreed to work with us on a radically reduced rate.

This is part of finding a more permanent and dynamic solution to making sure there is consistency and competence on the level of IT. Without such an arrangement, time and resources are unavoidably spent somewhat inefficiently, with Rev. Thom having to invest significant portions of his time on IT and platform maintenance. Together with the additional support provided by our new denomination-wide Digital Communications Manager, we believe this will make our work more efficient, and more immersed into the possibilities offered by new technologies.

Another change, which is in its early stages, is exploring the re-naming of ODB. While the term has become known in the intra-Convention scene, it makes public outreach quite difficult. The current name is extremely common among other Christian-themed journals, newsletters, and blogs, and makes it difficult for people to search and remember. In terms of branding, especially in trying to reach a more diverse audience, the name seems less than ideal. We were recently reminded by our Digital Communications Manager that it is imperative to have unique, descriptive wording and branding in the online world. We are currently in the process of brain-storming with different folks, and are looking forward to engaging General Council and the Council of Ministers in conversation about this.

Another project coming up is the hosting of pre-online digitalized copies of *Our Daily Bread* from the archives, allowing visitors to easily access older, print-based copies on our website.

We continue to stress collaboration with other public Swedenborgian outlets, such as *the Messenger* and *Spiritual Sunshine*, in addition to SCCI and the website committee, which have enabled a very steady exchange of ideas and projects between these different organs of our denomination.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Thom Muller, Managing Editor

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION AND RESOURCES FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

SCER met over Zoom and worked by email this year. Members gave input into the theme of the 2023 Convention, “The Practice of Optimism,” inspired by Helen Keller’s integration of a life of active engagement in the affairs of the world with what she called the “religion of optimism.” As a committee we focused the majority of our energy on developing a powerful set of 12 Mini Courses for Convention on a range of themes. Some courses will be in-person, some virtual, and some hybrid, meeting the needs of both those attending in person and those attending online. Keller’s emphasis on a life lived for the sake of justice in society is reflected in our Mini Course line-up, which brings a diversity of perspectives and an emphasis on social justice. Given this emphasis, and with President Lawrence’s support, we initiated a pilot project that provides modest financial support to presenters for the cost of attending Convention. We hope to develop this for future Conventions, with an aim of supporting a diversity of voices and offerings at our annual meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Chair

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

In September 2022, the SCFA met in a hybrid manner with three of the members in person at the Mercy Conference and Retreat Center in St. Louis, MO (Mercy Center) while the other members participated virtually via Zoom. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was the first meeting with an in-person component since 2019.

We had the good fortune at the Mercy Center facility of being introduced to a meeting Owl (from Owl Labs Technology) which enhances the camera and speaker capabilities for participants meeting in-person to interface effectively with those participating on Zoom. Subsequently, the SCFA made a recommendation to ExCom to purchase a meeting Owl for use by General Council to enhance its ability to meet more effectively in a hybrid format. ExCom authorized the purchase of a meeting Owl and it was utilized by General Council at its November 2022 hybrid meeting.

During the September meeting the SCFA reviewed, discussed, and modified the initial draft 2023 General Convention budget and recommended that it be for-

warded to General Council for approval; appointed itself to also serve as the Augmentation Fund Committee; and made granting decisions for applications related to the Augmentation Fund, Missions Fund (including New Directions grants), and Iungerich Fund.

The SCFA continued to utilize the following five priorities in its grant decision making and assessment that were confirmed during the November 2018 General Council meeting.

- Focus on the promotion of a General Convention based Swedenborgian perspective to the broader world and community.
- Impact on people and the potential for growth in the number of people served. Ability to attract people to participate in the ministry or project.
- Expressed commitment to the ministry or project, including buy-in from the local Swedenborgian religious leaders and donations of time and money from the local community.
- Effort toward becoming sustainable and self-funded with other sources of financial support.
- Accountability to the General Convention denomination including a willingness to accept and incorporate constructive feedback.

The Augmentation Fund Committee continues its expectation that any minister whose compensation is supported by an Augmentation Fund grant will attend both COM meetings and Convention during the year of the grant.

The ministries and projects supported through the SCFA grant decisions for calendar year 2023 are:

Augmentation Fund

- Edmonton
- Garden Church (San Pedro)
- General Convention – Committee on Admission to the Ministry
- General Convention – Office of the President
- Hillside (El Cerrito)
- Kitchener
- Korean New Church (New York City)
- St. Paul (automatic per donor requirement)
- Southwest Desert (Silver City)
- Spiritual Sunshine (Online)
- Washington, DC
- Wilmington

Missions Fund (Including New Directions Grants)

- Deborah's Tree (Online)
- Garden Church (San Pedro)
- Korean New Church (New York City)
- Rainbow Church (Online)
- Southwest Desert (Silver City)
- Washington, DC

Iungerich Fund

- Edmonton
- San Francisco
- Southwest Desert (Silver City)
- Spiritual Sunshine (Online)
- Swedenborg Foundation

Each Missions and Iungerich grant recipient is expected to submit both a mid-year and year-end report on the use of the grant and how it supported the ministry or project. The SCFA requested that certain grant recipients submit an article for publication in *the Messenger* to provide broader awareness of these ministries and projects.

Due to the retirement of Rev. Carla Friedrich at the end of 2022, the 2023 Augmentation Fund grant to Southwest Desert has been paused until another ordained minister is called. Also, a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the New York Church building has been designated to provide on-going support to the Korean New Church. Thus, both the 2023 Augmentation Fund grant and the 2023 Missions Fund grant to the Korean New Church will cease once the receipt of those funds has been finalized.

With the launch of the newly designed SCNA website, the committee discussed with Brittany Price the possibility of migrating the grant submission process to a web-based online application. Ideally, this transition will be completed in time for the next grant submission cycle in Summer 2023.

The SCFA found the Mercy Center to be a beautiful and hospitable facility that is also geographically convenient for those traveling. Thus, the SCFA plans to meet there again in person during September 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Lindsay, Chair

CENTRAL OFFICE REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Central Office Review Committee is chaired by the Vice President of the Swedenborgian Church. Central Office still has its physical presence in the basement of the Swedenborgian Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Daily duties of both the Operations Manager and Accounting Manager continue to be accomplished remotely throughout the entire reporting period, with the Accounting Manager visiting the physical location twice a week to conduct any necessary on-site business. This has worked well, and it is anticipated that Central Office personnel will continue to work remotely.

Records Storage: All records are being removed from Iron Mountain storage. The materials will go half to the Urbana, OH area, and the other half to CSS. This will net the denomination a large cost savings in the long term and allow us much easier access to our records. We continue to maintain our more active records in the Cambridge Church basement storage cage which we lease for \$500 per month.

Personnel: Brittany Price continues as Operations Manager. Brittany works from her home 30 hours per week. Brittany has been an extraordinary Operations Manager. Over the last year, she has organized, scheduled, and attended myriad Zoom committee meetings, fielded numerous questions, managed a hybrid in-person/virtual Convention, and ran everything in Central Office smoothly and capably. She has spent much of her time this past year working on the denomination website, record retention procedures, and organizing Convention. She was an active member on the Digital Communications Manager hiring team. Brittany is accommodating, flexible with her hours, friendly, and efficient. We are blessed to have her working with us.

Accounting Manager, Gina Peracchi, continues her outstanding work. Gina conducts the business of both the Operations Manager and Accounting Manager whenever there are vacancies in the Operations Manager position. Gina is wonderful to work with and is extremely reliable and consistent. She works closely with the Treasurer on financial accounting, administers payroll efficiently, handles the distribution of payment and reimbursement quickly and accurately, and oversees projects skillfully. Gina is a real asset to the denomination, and I greatly enjoy working with her.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Fekete, Vice President

COMMITTEE ON AMENDMENTS

As a Committee of the General Council, we are called into service when amendments are submitted to General Council and referred to us. We have had no amendments referred to us for action this year. We have been informally asked about a bylaw interpretation; which was answered by Stan Conger as parliamentarian and his answer was affirmed by Rev. Kevin Baxter.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kevin Baxter and Stan Conger

COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

The Committee of Inquiry did not meet between the end of Convention in 2022 and Convention 2023. There were no cases submitted during that time.

Respectfully submitted,

Stan Conger, Chair

COMMITTEE ON LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTS

We have been regularly meeting and the main topic of conversation at these meetings was about retrieving the archival material that was in storage at Iron Mountain and how it was basically inaccessible for research.

It was decided that the primary boxes would go to the New Church Theological School (CSS) in Berkley and the secondary boxes would go to a climate-controlled storage unit in Springfield, Ohio, where Sue Ditmire, Pastor Robbin Ferriman, and Mary Ann Fischer have volunteered to sort and catalog the contents, with the long-term goal of finding a more permanent location.

At the Fall General Council Meeting funding was approved to have the boxes removed. So far 133 boxes were removed and sent to New Church Theological School in Berkley. We are still in the process of trying to get an estimate on removing the rest of the boxes (approx. 130) to Springfield. It seems to take a couple months to get Iron Mountain to commit to an estimate and requires a lot of calling and writing. We hope to have all the boxes removed and delivered by June 1.

The New Church Theological School received a grant from the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem for an archival quality state-of-the-art scanner. The scanner is now on site, and they are learning to use it. Due to limited staffing scanning will be slow at first.

Committee Member, Pastor Robbin Ferriman will be presenting a mini course “The Basics of Church Archives,” at this year’s General Convention.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Ditmire, Chair

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

At the end of both October 2022 and April 2023, the Investment Committee convened for its regularly scheduled semi-annual meetings. Both meetings were held via Zoom. Our current investment advisor from Marquette Associates, Lauren Cellucci, joined both meetings to provide updates regarding the overall economic market, reports on the performance of the Common Fund portfolio, and recommendations on potential changes to investments in the Common Fund portfolio. The Investment Committee added the Global Infrastructure asset class to the portfolio starting in 2023.

There are over 30 participants in the Common Fund that represent many of our churches, camps, and associations – as well as the General Convention and our theological school, the Center for Swedenborgian Studies. This past year The Gray Fund joined as a new participant. The New York Society is in the process of establishing a new legacy trusteeship that will manage the proceeds from the recent sale of its church building. Once this legacy endowment trusteeship is legally established, it will also be a participant in the Common Fund.

The Common Fund earned a negative return of 11.7% for the calendar year 2022. The overall equity markets also experienced negative returns in 2022 due to the lingering inflation from supply chain disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic and the oil and gas supply shocks from the war in Ukraine. Fortunately, the equity markets recovered a bit in early 2023 and the Common Fund earned a positive return of 4.0% during Q1 2023.

The Investment Committee aims for the Common Fund to earn at least a 6% targeted annual rate of return on average which is provided to Participants in the form of the payout plus the increase in the value of the underlying units owned by the Participants. Due to the strategy of the Investment Committee to not provide Participants the entire rate of return in the form of the payout during bull market years, the Common Fund has proven able to withstand the turmoil of the markets during the COVID-19 pandemic and the more recent market volatility due to the war in Ukraine.

As of March 31, 2023, the Common Fund generated the following annualized returns (payout rate plus unit price increase):

- -4.6% over 1 year
- 11.5% over 3 years
- 7.6% over 7 years
- 7.5% over 10 years

During its October 2022 meeting, the Investment Committee voted to increase the 2023 quarterly payout rate by 2.3% from \$0.3275 per unit to \$0.335 per unit.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Lindsay, Chair

RETIREMENT COMMITTEE

In recent years, RETCO moved away from providing grants to individual retirees and implemented a retirement program through MMBB (Ministers and Mission Benefit Board), an organization serving all faiths in the area of retirement and disability services to our ministers. This retirement system is maintained by individual ministers and the churches they serve. Another benefit to this program is the ability to continue using this income as housing allowance as it is received in retirement (a helpful tax savings when pre-tax ministerial funds are received in retirement).

The majority of our ministers are participating in the MMBB retirement program and we are currently assisting two remaining individuals with grants.

As a reminder, MMBB “Benefits for Life” includes a 403(b)-retirement account, disability insurance, and term life insurance. Health insurance is not included, however, it does offer the opportunity to join a group plan under Cigna health insurance.

The denomination’s Central Office and the Retirement Committee interface with MMBB to ensure a continuity of care for ministers and other employees in the benefits arena. “Benefits for Life” requires churches who employ ministers to pay 10% of their minister’s salary to MMBB. Fortunately, the Swedenborgian denomination reimburses 3% of that amount back to churches, leaving local churches with the responsibility for the remaining 7%. Churches are required to pay the entire 10% to MMBB each month and the denomination will send them a reimbursement of 3%.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dan Burchett, Chair

Committee Members: John McIntosh and Meredith Conant Piotti

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

From June 2022–May 2023 the Social Justice Committee has:

- Offered a standing resolution which was approved at the 2022 Convention titled “Standing Resolution on Welcome and Support of the LGBTQ+ Community” in conjunction with the Rainbow Group.
- Organized a Mini Course titled Climate Care: How Can Swedenborgian Theology, Our Denomination, and YOU Support Climate Justice? at the 2022 Convention
- Accepted with thanks the resignation of Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell as Co-Chair of the SJC and elected Rev. Shada Sullivan as new Co-Chair of SJC to serve with Rev. Dr. Amanda Adams Riley.
- Added new member Dru Johnson
- Spent time learning the history of the committee and identified the following guiding principles for our collective work in the next year.
- Gathered a group interested in climate justice via Zoom.
- Supported Dru in the publishing of regular *Messenger* articles.

The SJC continues to meet monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. We welcome new members! Please contact either co-chair to get involved with interest.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Amanda Riley and Rev. Shada Sullivan, Co-Chairs

SWEDENBORGIAN ACTION AGAINST RACISM

Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism (SAAR) was formed in response to the increase in awareness and action around racial justice during the summer of 2020, and out of a desire to be able to learn and act together in community within the Swedenborgian tradition. An ecumenical leadership team of clergy and lay people from around the country formed in order to create educational and formational programming to offer to the denomination (and beyond).

Newsletter: The SAAR newsletter continues to be published, and moved to a triweekly schedule in 2023.

Camp programming: At Almont 2022, for Sunday evening chapel, SAAR organized a well attended service featuring justice readings from the Bible interspersed with musical interludes. At Fryeburg 2022, SAAR orchestrated a drum circle and “protest song” sing-along.

Fall Programs 2022: In partnership with the Friends Committee on National Legislation, SAAR offered a Zoom workshop entitled Friends in Unlikely Places: Engaging with Those Who Don't Agree with You.

Winter/Spring Programs 2023: In February 2023, SAAR was very pleased to offer a lecture by the Rev. Dr. Randy Woodley, entitled Learning From Our Past, Healing Our Future: Dismantling Colonial Dominance in Western Christianity. In March, SAAR offered a follow-up discussion group for anyone wishing to continue to engage with the material from the lecture.

For Convention 2023, SAAR offered three Mini Courses:

1. a follow-up to the lecture with Dr. Woodley with a mini-course entitled Learning From Our Past, Healing Our Future: A Swedenborgian Perspective on Dismantling Colonial Dominance in Western Christianity, which aimed to apply the insights from the lecture to our specific Swedenborgian context.
2. a primer on indigenous land acknowledgments entitled Regeneration: Acknowledging Truth, Honoring Landscapes, which aims to explore how land and our relationships to it operate in our daily lives.
3. a presentation entitled The History of Black Ministers in Convention, representing the continued research that SAAR leadership team members are making into Convention history. This research was also explored in multiple in-person and online presentations at local churches and gatherings during the past year.

Leadership: The SAAR leadership team implemented a rotating chair system, with each chair serving four months in the position.

We welcome new members! Please feel free to reach out to a member of our working group: Sue Ditmire, Andrew Dodd, Rebecca Esterson, Kurt Fekete, Esther Fyk, Alex Gayheart, Elise Genzlinger, Shalonda Ingram, Jim Lawrence, Robert McCluskey, Page Morahan, Jane Siebert, Shada Sullivan, Rich Tafel, and Dru Johnson.

Respectfully submitted,

The Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism Leadership Team

SPIRITUAL SUNSHINE: A SWEDENBORGIAN COMMUNITY ONLINE

Spiritual Sunshine continues its mission of connecting people across the world to our denominationally shared message pointing to God's peace, love, and wisdom at the centre of all being. This means connecting on many fronts, from Ins-

tagram to YouTube, emails to website (SwedenborgianCommunity.org). Over this last year we've seen continued growth on many fronts, and more importantly, we feel as though we continue to settle into the peace of the Spirit's workings and God's grand providence in all things and every detail. What a blast! What's truly awesome is folks' willingness to tune in and connect in their own way, which often feels like the name of the game for our connected world these days. We believe that Spiritual Sunshine shines from the core of each of us, and as a Swedenborgian community online, we (like many communities) centre on the life we find empowered by our shared teachings and traditions, our shared loves and connections. In fact, we view the organizational Spiritual Sunshine as a possible light to empower people across the world to feel more enabled to connect in a variety of community spaces (whether Swedenborgian or not), from local ones to online, knowing that the Lord's light is what shines within their every moment and leads them into a deeper awareness of the blessings of the light of life. We share this message through weekly podcasts, videos, and written sermons.

Your support is most welcome, starting with your support of your own being, of course! The peace, love, and wisdom of God is not far and it's even closer than our imagination itself. We have but to ask ourselves, what shines light on my experience, on my thoughts, feelings, and every moment? It is but each of us, "the light of the world" as Jesus Christ called us, what you might also call "Spiritual Sunshine" and, as the Lord endearingly coined, "children of God."

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Cory Coberforward, Minister

STRUCTURE REVIEW COMMITTEE

No activity to report.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lisa Solwold, Chair

YOUTH DIRECTOR

My twenty-first year as your Youth Director has been active and exciting! I continue to work primarily with youth ages 10–18, however, I also organize the children's program at Convention and assist with the young adult, 18–30 year-old, Transitions group. I look forward to doing more work with this growing group in the coming years. Our preteen program is called SPLATz (Super Powered Lovable Almost Teens). Our teen program is the SCYL (Swedenborgian Church

Youth League). The easing of the COVID pandemic restrictions has allowed me to begin hosting in-person retreats and attending summer camps once again. This is wonderful news! It has, however, been a challenge to gather youth back together after several years of living in the virtual world. Still, we are excited to be face-to-face again and are working to rebuild and restructure our retreats to support the needs of the youth today.

Here are the Youth Director highlights for 2022–2023:

- May 2022 Memorial Day SCYL Almont Retreat – Theme: *Apples and Oranges: The Quest for Common Ground*.
- Convention 2022 – Long Beach, CA. SCYL Worship theme: *Lost in the Wood, Looking for the Garden*.
- July 2022 Almont Summer Camp – 7th–9th grade class. Camp theme: *Music*
- August 2022 Fryeburg Summer Camp – Briefly visited youth and attended SAAR drumming circle.
- October 2022 SCYL Cedar Hill Retreat – Theme: *The Nature of Correspondence*.
- November 2022 SplatZ Boston Retreat – Theme: *Freedom*.
- December 2022 Almont Winter SCYL Retreat – Theme: *The Five Love Languages*.

I’m extremely grateful to all of you who generously give time and money to our denomination youth program. Without your support there would be no youth events. Our youth truly benefit from this spiritual and nurturing experience in their lives. I look forward to the coming year with new excitement and new plans for enrichment and spirited adventure!

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Fekete, Youth Director

YOUTH LEAGUE

Over this past year, the SCYL had many fun adventures together. We started off on Memorial Day weekend with the Apples and Oranges: The Quest for Common Ground retreat at Almont. We made posters of what we are passionate about and found community with each other during sessions and activities. All of us really enjoyed go-karting and mini-golfing and by the end, we couldn’t wait to see each other again at the 2022 Convention at Cal State University, Long Beach. The theme of the convention focused on nature and gardens, so we went to the “Feed and Be Fed” garden where we picked and ate fruit from trees, and the Gar-

den Church where we helped make goodie bags for the homeless. The Japanese Garden was one of the teens' favorite places where we saw big koi fish. The trip to Wayfarers Chapel to see Colin Amato's ordination was a beautiful experience with a glass chapel and redwood trees in the sunset.

Some of us teens met up later at Fryeburg and Almont Summer Camps. As usual, I had a blast at both camps, attending the Fryeburg Flames service and becoming an Almont Survivor. I was unable to attend the fall Duxbury retreat but the teens loved visiting the Plimoth Patuxet villages and museum. The Splat+ retreat at the Boston Church on the Hill included some of our younger members where we went on the Freedom Trail. Finally, the SCYL wrapped up 2022 with the Winter retreat on the five love languages at Almont where we learned the deeper meanings of the love languages. We also went bowling. This year educated me incredibly on Swedenborgianism and brought me new friendships. It is safe to say that all of us thoroughly enjoyed our time together and can't wait to see what the future brings next year for the SCYL.

Respectfully submitted,

Zsa Zsa Dolley, President, SCYL

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE WAYFARERS CHAPEL

“Pause for a moment, Wayfarer, on Life's Journey. Let the beauty of holiness restore your soul. May the harmony of sky, water, leaf and rock nourish the creation and growth of your inner being as you fare through this life and on into the life beyond.”

Wayfarers Chapel remains a popular destination internationally, drawing many thousands to the iconic structure that is the National Monument to Emanuel Swedenborg. Wayfarers Board of Directors continues the ministry of the Chapel with virtual and in person meetings.

Wayfarers total revenue for 2022 was \$2,607,115 which includes \$1,974,282 in wedding income. Our Net Current Assets as of February 2023 is \$2,872,288.

Wayfarers Center West (Wayfarers Administration Office since mid-1980s) was listed in January 2023 and sold for \$1,875,000 in 33 days. These funds were wired to Wayfarers M & T investment account in April (Net Current Assets shown above do not reflect proceeds from the sale of WCW.).

The planning of Phase I of restoration is ongoing and the work is expected to begin in 2023 with the major restoration of the Chapel to follow as we continue to raise awareness and funds to complete the work.

It was great to have the Ordination Service held at Wayfarers Chapel in the summer of 2022 with Rev. Colin Amato. The Ministry of Wayfarers Chapel continues to see an increase in weekly attendance as people slowly return to in-person worship services and prayer services. In the fall of 2022, several people went through the introduction to Emanuel Swedenborg seven week course intensive and this spring we welcomed three new Members-At-Large of the Pacific Coast Association through their connection to Wayfarers Chapel. There has been renewed interest in exploring the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg and there is already a waiting list for the next course offering slated for the fall of 2023. There are several new faces that have found their way to Wayfarers Chapel after sampling other local churches and so our informal congregation has been enjoying several new people that now call this their spiritual home. We do hope to hear official affirmation soon on Wayfarers Chapel being designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dan Burchett, Executive Director

BOARD OF MEDIATION

The Board of Mediation is chaired by the Vice President of Convention. The Board of Mediation did not meet during the past year.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Fekete, Chair

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL CHURCH

In 1889, General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America commissioned a committee to build a house of worship in Washington D.C., to raise funds for that purpose, and to act as the trustees of the property in the name of Convention. The Trustees of the National Church operate as agents of the General Convention which holds title through the Trustees as their agent. The Board of Trustees is a body of fifteen people, per the 1895 Deed.

Over the last year and half or so a number of repairs have been made to the structure of the church building and attached parish house area, including stabilization of the Tower, extensive repairs to the interior balcony and staircase, and roof repairs to the parish house. These repairs were not “restoration” so much as stabilization, and necessary to the safety of attendees of the church and surrounding neighbors.

After considerable prayerful discussion and consideration, it has been determined that due to the continuing deterioration of the buildings on the property at 1611 16th St. N.W., the most reasonable way forward is to sell the property. The Washington, D.C. Society very much wish to continue as a society, and at this time the denomination and the society are in discussions with the view to determining how best to make that work.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Conger, Chair

TRUSTEES OF THE BUILDING FUND

Convention's Building Fund Committee considers loan requests from churches and camps for building repairs, improvements, and purchases. The Building Fund Committee meets by conference call as needed, typically a few times during the year. In addition, the committee may conduct business via email, providing necessary information to its members on various items of business. The Committee's business during the past year included a leadership transition; bringing on two new members, Rev. Dan Burchett and Bob Perry; and extension of a new loan to The Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, DE.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Careaga, Chair

TRUSTEES OF THE TAFEL FUND

The Tafel fund was established by Rev. Dick and Linda Tafel to help ministries with unusual financial needs. It is a permanent fund restricted to using only its income. Funds are distributed on a reimbursement basis.

During the past year three grants were made: (1) the Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, DE, to assist in making their building ADA accessible. (2) the Garden Church, San Pedro, CA, to acquire upgraded sound equipment to enhance their outdoor ministry. (3) Gathering Leaves for their scholarship fund for lower income women.

The Board of Trustees meets three times a year to consider requests made before January 15th, May 15th, or September 15th.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Richard Tafel, Chair

DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

I began my 8th year as our representative to the National Council of Church Governing Board. Here are some highlights of the NCC's work this past year. This past year a new executive director, Bishop McKenzie, took over after many years of leadership under Jim Winkler.

I joined the NCC Governing Board and staff at a special retreat on racism May 4–5, 2022, in Montgomery, AL. In addition to a facilitated retreat the group trough he Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace. The Legacy Museum was one of the most impactful museums I've ever been to, and I highly recommend it.

The NCC hosted their annual Christian Unity Gather virtually October 9–11, 2022, on the theme The Challenge of Change. I was asked to give the closing prayer for one of the days.

Bylaws

I chair the bylaws committee for the NCC and spent much of this past year revising and updating the bylaws for board approval.

Friendship Press

The NCC launched a new translation of the Bible called the New Revised Standard Version Updated (NRSVue).

75th Anniversary

NCC will launch a two-year celebration to celebrate their founding May 15–16, 2023, at National City Christian Church and I will attend both the service and the two days of meetings.

Voting Rights

NCC campaign for the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and Bishop McKenzie testified before Congress.

Pastoral Presence

NCC continued to speak out against gun violence and the leaders of NCC visited grieving families in Uvalde and Buffalo.

Social Justice

The NCC partnered with Poor People's campaign and joined a Town Hall meeting at Harvard's Kennedy School on the topic of reparations.

Prayer

NCC convened prayer and advocacy to help push for the release of Brittney Griner. They hosted 40 Days of Pray and Polls leading up to the midterms.

World Council of Churches

NCC played a prominent role at the World Council of Churches meeting in Germany.

Inter-Faith

The NCC organized Christian dialogues with Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus.

The investment of time and energy in the NCC continues to pay dividends for our church as we work in collaboration with a sisters and brothers of many faiths.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Richard Tafel, Denominational Representative to the NCC Governing Board

AUXILIARY AND RELATED BODIES

SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

The Swedenborgian Church Children's Ministry (SCCM) had three major goals this past year, which were: 1) Pay for two or more leaders in the SCCM to have the basic meditation training offered by Sarah Woods-Vallely who teaches Mindfulness Training for Children; 2) Discern several of our theology's main teachings (or Bible stories) to use with an online cartoon making program and put together one example to share with SCCM members at the 2023 convention in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. The overarching goal is to produce at least ten helpful cartoons for Sunday School teachers and parents to use in their own church or family religious education; and 3) Work with Central Office in producing a basic SCCM webpage within the Swedenborgian Church's website to be a resource center for New Church children's education.

Our bank account balance decreased by approximately \$500, due to the volatility of the stock market, which gives us an account balance of \$10,410.67 (see Jennifer Lindsey's report handout at our SCCM Annual Meeting during Convention 2023). When the cost of the Mindfulness Training is taken into account, our current balance on July 1, 2023 will be approximately \$9,930.67.

Our achievements this past year were the following:

1. Titus-Treasurer) in a basic, four-session training online by Sarah Woods-Valleley. Each session was one hour long and cost \$120/hour with both of us attending. Both Bev and Kit have copies of Sarah's primer Mindfulness Meditation Training book. Kit and Bev discussed what steps are next to make use of this training.

2. In cooperation with Pastor Karen Feil (Director of the Swedenborg Library in Chicago), we reviewed four inexpensive and viable online cartoon making options, and we chose PowToons. With input from seven people throughout the church, we narrowed down options for a core New Church belief or teaching (or a Bible story) to use as an example of motion animation to teach children Swedenborgian Christian beliefs. Creating simple cartoons to convey religious-spiritual ideas is in harmony with modern culture. We are working on having a PowToons example to share at our Annual Meeting during Convention 2023. The list we compiled went as follows:

- a) God is Love (revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ)

- b) God's truth can grow in us, see "Parable of the Sower" (*Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23*)

- c) Love the Lord—by learning about the life of Jesus and living His Commandments

- d) Put others before yourself (see "Parable of the Good Samaritan," *Luke 10:25-37*)

- e) Be honest and truthful

3. With good intentions for this past year, we regret not making progress on developing a new Swedenborgian Church Children's Ministry webpage on www.Swedenborg.org, but we are looking forward to working on this goal this Summer and Fall of 2023.

If you or someone you know feels inspired to consider working cooperatively with our Executive Committee this coming year to make further progress on our goals, please connect with Rev. Kit Billings at your convenience at RevKit123@gmail.com

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kit Billings

TRUSTEES OF THE GRAY LEGACY

Any Convention-recognized organization can request financial aid from the Gray Fund. Copies of the request should be mailed to the Gray Fund secretary and accompanied by a detailed description of the proposed programs for which the requested funds will be utilized including a budget. We request this background information because proper stewardship of a will trust such as the Gray legacy should not be used by organizations as a "reserve fund" to be tapped in order to protect current assets.

- Submissions will be due by August 15. Selections will be made by the trustees by October 1.
- Requests can be for the calendar year only or up to three years, renewable annually.
- Grantees will be required to provide a report.
- If funds remain to be granted for the following calendar year after awards are made, the Gray Fund will consider requests for funding of \$3000 or less on a rolling basis.

The following is a list of grants for the year 2022–2023. These grants were made under the Trustees’ interpretation of the will of Wesley N. Gray to fulfill programs and forms of ministry in Massachusetts, the United States, and the world.

Grants 2022–23

• Church of the Holy City, Wilmington	\$6,000
• Annual Convention Meeting	\$3,500
• Bath Church	\$3,000
• Garden Church	\$2,000
• Gathering Leaves	\$5,000

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Secretary

DEBORAH’S TREE

In 2022–2023, Deborah’s Tree continued to reach out to our global community by adding weekly content to our website (deborahstree.org) and social media, and held two hybrid events.

The Spiritual Inspiration program consists of a weekly Excerpted Inspiration on Tuesdays, and a weekly Spiritual Reflection on Thursdays. Excerpted Inspirations (deborahstree.org/blog) were submitted by Linda Simonetti Odhner and illustrated by Liz Kufs, sometimes using photography by Page Morahan. The short excerpts were mostly by female authors and always contained a spiritual message of some kind. Spiritual Reflections (deborahstree.org/watch-1) are short videos in the 5-minute range, and were created by four women on a weekly rotation: two Ministers, one Licensed Pastor, and one seminarian. Both Excerpted Inspirations and Spiritual Reflections were posted on our website, our Facebook page and on Twitter/X. We have seen growth in traffic to all three sites, both in numbers and in geographic location.

In the fall of 2022 a new blog was introduced, The Women’s Companion to ‘Conjugal Love’ (deborahstree.org/blog.) In 2018, women from around the world

collaborated together to write about women's responses to Swedenborg's book *Conjugal Love*. Four female editors started taking turns writing a summary and highlights of the contributions of the writers to "The Women's Companion to *Conjugal Love*."

Events for Deborah's Tree in 2022–2023 consisted of our biannual hybrid events, held at the Lord's New Church in Bryn Athyn, PA who have partnered with us for hybrid events, and the monthly hybrid Saturday Brunches held by the Home Church in Bryn Athyn to which the Deborah's Tree community is always invited. In the autumn of 2022, we held a well-attended event on the theme of Responding to 'Conjugal Love' in the 21st Century. In the spring of 2023, our event was about Feminine Spiritualities, with a smaller but very engaged attendance. Both women and men attended our events, which is the intended audience for both our online and hybrid offerings. The speakers at the Saturday Brunches covered a wide range of topics, including LGBTQIA issues, the plastic crisis and Black history in the Swedenborgian/New Church in America. Videos from both our hybrid events and the Saturday Brunches are available on deborahstree.org/events.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Roslyn Taylor, President

CENTER FOR SWEDENBORGIAN STUDIES (CSS)

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

- **BACK TO BUSINESS AS USUAL:** Our faculty-staff team has returned to an in-person work environment following the COVID years. We are all in the office more, enjoying hallway conversations and impromptu meetings. We held a faculty-staff retreat at the San Francisco Swedenborgian church on August 26, which provided needed time for goal setting and team building. We also gathered on September 16 in the archives for a day of sorting and organizing. It has been really enjoyable to be working together in these ways.
- **CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM:** In October we hosted an advisory committee of 3 Swedenborgian Chaplains to help us think through how we might better serve those who journey with us on their way to a career in chaplaincy. We met over the course of two days, to study the issue, brainstorm, meet with the GTU's director of the Interreligious Chaplaincy Program, Kamal Abu-Shamsia and meditate on what a chaplaincy informed by Swedenborgian theology looks like. The meeting was thoughtful and

productive. Since then one of the chaplains taught a Pastoral Care course for us, another has produced a document on Swedenborgian principles in chaplaincy, which appears on our website.

- **GRANT FOR SCANNER:** We received a grant from the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem for \$16,789. We have used this to purchase an archival-quality scanner. This was just installed last week, in addition to a new computer for Michael in the library. We will use the rest of the grant money to begin converting VHS recordings of CSS lectures and Convention events into a digital format. There is a lot to do in the library archives, more than our current staff can handle.
- **FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM:** We rolled out our new Nunc Licet fellowship program for students on the ordination track. We can see already that this has generated the hoped for response, and there are three prospective and one current student who have expressed serious interest. One of them has applied already for the fellowship. The program has ensured a pipeline of promising students.
- **ISRAEL/PALESTINE:** After four years of planning and multiple postponements due to the pandemic, our group of 16 intrepid travelers finally made it to Israel and Palestine over spring break. We spent 10 days with the guides, drivers, lecturers, and hosts arranged by Mejdi Tours, making this an educational and spiritual experience on many levels. It was a powerful experience and a successful project in terms of CSS's educational and community goals.

CURRENT SWEDENBORGIAN STUDENTS

In addition to the 100+ online learners who are now accessing our virtual offerings each year, and the 50+ GTU students who interface with the work of CSS through courses and advising, there are 16 Swedenborgian ministry students in our learning community (not counting the new LP student who has not yet begun coursework with us – see below under prospective students)

Ordination Track:

- Devin Zuber, working with CAM on final requirements
- Jay Barry, Induction path, now enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at PSR
- Eleanor Schnarr, MA student at the GTU and working on a Certificate in Swedenborgian Ministry Studies in addition to other requirements
- Lynn Chittick, Doctor of Ministry student at PSR who is completing a Certificate in Swedenborgian Ministry Studies

- Roxanne Sperry, has already done an MDiv and is completing a Certificate in Swedenborgian Ministry Studies

Licensed Pastor Track:

- Connie McOsker, Licensed Pastor candidate with the Garden Church, San Pedro, CA, beginning her second module

Licensed Pastor Continuing Education:

- Helen Barler (Puget Sound)
- Paul Deming (St. Louis)
- Karen Feil (Chicago)
- Linda Browning Callander (Silver City)
- Lorraine Kardash (Portland)
- Tassy Farwell (Hillside)
- Robbin Ferriman (Urbana, OH)
- Kelly Milne (Bridgewater, MA)
- Jae Hyon Chung (Korean New Church, Irvine, CA)
- Gordon Meyer (St. Paul, MN)

COURSES Spring and Fall 2023

Note: CAM, COM, and CSS meet annually in May to determine the educational needs of ordination-track, LP, and continuing education students. Classes for next year will be added to the list after that meeting.

For-Credit Courses

- Historical and Cultural Studies of Religion Doctoral Seminar (Devin Zuber and Kirsi Sterna, Spring)
- Theologies of Death Across Traditions (Rebecca Esterson and Kamal Abu-Shamsieh, Spring)
- Swedenborg Seminar (Devin Zuber and Rebecca Esterson, Fall)
- Seminar on Interdisciplinarity, GTU Doctoral Seminar (Rebecca Esterson and Sam Shonkoff)

Non-Credit Courses

- Swedenborgian Biblical Exegesis (For LP and Ordination-track students, Rebecca Esterson, Spring)
- Seeing Rainbows: Queer Swedenborgians and Queering Swedenborg (Virtual Educational Offering for the Planet, Devin Zuber, Spring)
- Pastoral Education (For LP and Ordination-track students, Kathy Speas, Spring)

LIBRARY

We have now held two all-staff and faculty purge days in the archives, sorting materials and organizing. There is much more to do! In addition to inheriting the papers of Robert Kirven and George Dole, we recently received 133 boxes of archival material from the denomination, which had been in storage in Boston. All of these recent acquisitions will require a lot of work sorting and cataloging.

We have purchased an archival scanner with the grant from the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem. This gives us the ability to easily digitize items from our collection. The natural next step in preserving and making accessible our archives is to build a digital archive.

Both the projects of sorting recent acquisitions and building a digital archive will require further grants and more staffing. As an initial first step, I propose hiring a student worker who can do some work organizing boxes, researching platforms, and scanning.

We have begun a “From the Archives” blog on our website, featuring a new artifact each month, utilizing relevant themes such as Black History Month and the Israel/Palestine trip to determine what to feature.

CSS WEBSITE

Recent developments to our website include the “From the Archives” blog, a fuller section on student journeys, and updates for course offerings and events. Paola is taking on more of the work of content upkeep and this has made the flow a bit easier.

STAFF

Administrative Assistant: Paola Pruett-Vergara continues to be the hub of our wheel of activities. She will be with us next year, which is the last year of her Masters program at the Dominican School of Theology. As a summer project she will begin building a database for tracking student journeys.

Financial Manager: Alan Thomsen continues to manage our financial transactions and business with a steady hand on 7.5 hours per week.

Librarian: Michael Yockey continues to be a valuable asset organizing and managing our library. He works six hours per week. We could use more of his time, and he may be able to offer it.

FACULTY REPORTS:**Rebecca Esterson**Dean's Outreach and Denominational Activity:

I continue to offer Sunday messages once or twice a year at both the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church and Hillside. I will participate in and give a workshop at the upcoming Memorial day retreat for west coast Swedenborgians.

The church and denominational committees I serve on are as follows:

- Board member, Hillside Community Church
- Trustee and secretary, Gray Fund
- Secretary, officers of the Pacific Coast Association
- Chair, Standing Committee for Education & Resources for Spiritual Community (SCER)
- Standing Committee for Communication and Information (SCCI)
- Search committee for Digital Communications Manager
- Program Committee for the Council of Ministers
- Nominating Committee for the SCNA
- Library and Archives Committee

Current Scholarship Activity:

- My book on allegory is being copy edited and should be in print by the fall.
- I have been working with a team of 4 on a college-level textbook anthology on *Death, Dying, and After Death*, to be published by Cognella this summer.
- I have been asked to co-author a book on Helen Keller's Swedenborgian faith with Megan Leverage for the Eerdman's series on Religious Biographies.
- I will be giving a paper titled "Helen Keller on Optimism, Activism, and her Swedenborgian Faith" at an interfaith GTU conference on "Joy: Community, Inclusion, and Social Justice"

GTU and SBL Service

At the GTU I am in my last year serving as the chair of the Department of Sacred Texts and Their Interpretation. I am on the faculty advisory committee for GTUx, a new digital learning platform (2 year term), and served on the PhD admissions committee in January.

I continue to be co-chair of the program unit on The Use, Impact, and Influence of the Bible at the Society of Biblical Literature.

Devin Zuber

Teaching:

In the spring semester I am co-teaching the required PhD methodology seminar on historical and cultural studies of religion with Dr. Kirsi Stjerna, a Luther scholar and feminist theologian @ PLTS. We've had a great class with some phenomenal guest speakers zooming in, like John Thatamanil at Union. I am also doing an online "freebie" CSS webinar "offering for the planet" on the topic of "Seeing Rainbows: Queer Swedenborgians and Queering Swedenborg." It meets for six sessions this spring. Over 50 people have registered to attend.

Publications: An invited lecture I gave last summer for documenta 15 (international art exhibition) in Kassel, Germany, was just published as "Unmapping the World, Feeling the Planetary" in *Zukunftsdialogue: ein Jahr im Gespräch mit Wissenschaft, Kunst und Gesellschaft* (University of Kassel Press, 2023), 38–44.

Talks, Lectures, Conferences: I gave an invited lecture at a conference on Human Rights and Romanticism at Sam Houston State University of Texas, Huntsville. The talk was entitled "William Blake's Black Lives Matter: Translating Swedenborg's Universal Theologies into Romantic Rights." At UC Berkeley's Center for Interdisciplinary Critical Inquiry (CICI), I organized and moderated a discussion with Dr. Laura Zander on April 12th on "Migrancy and Narratability: Precarious Subjects on the Move Between Law and Literature," with a response from GTU colleague Dr. Munir Jiwa. Between April 13–15 I was busy with a conference I co-organized with GTU and UC Berkeley colleagues on "Forms of Psychedelic Life: the Intersections of Aesthetics, Ethics, Religion, & Altered States"—the conference was the culmination of a three-year working group I have been part of at the Townsend Center for the Humanities: <https://bcsr.berkeley.edu/events/forms-of-psychedelic-life-an-interdisciplinary-conference-exploring-the-intersections-of-aesthetics-ethics-religion-and-altered-states/>

My own talk (with Martina Bengert) was called "Surrender as Style: the emptying Selves of Teresa of Avila and Emanuel Swedenborg." Highlights of the conference included spending time with Lama Tsultrim Allione, who was Allen Ginsberg's meditation teacher for many years, and quite close to Ram Das in India, and was full of rich stories (she also led us in a "feed your demon" tantric meditation). I also got to know Maria Mangini, who was part of the Timothy Leary circle at Millbrook, and, it was a delight to discover, later friends with Wilson van Dusen in her California years. CSS sponsored a "Wilson Van Dusen" closing reception, where Lama Tsultrim and others attended.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Dean

FINANCIALS

At the time of publication of The 2023 Journal the reviewed 2022 year-end financials for CSS were not yet available. We anticipate that the reviewed financials will be available sometime in December 2023. Please reach out to the Treasurer or Accounting Manager of General Convention with any questions or requests for additional information.

CHURCH STATISTICS

THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH STATISTICS — AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2022

<u>Association</u>	<u>Churches</u>		<u>Ordained Ministers</u>		<u>Licensed Pastors</u>	<u>Active Members</u>	<u>Number of Delegates</u>
	<u>Active</u>	<u>Inactive</u>	<u>Active</u>	<u>Retired</u>			
Eastern Canada Conference	1	0	2	1	0	56	8
Illinois Association	5	0	4	1	3	61	8
Kansas Association	2	0	1	0	0	55	8
Maine Association	3	0	1	4	1	110	13
Massachusetts New Church Union	4	0	5	1	1	53	7
Michigan Association	1	0	2	1	0	52	7
Middle Atlantic Association	3	0	6	1	0	103	12
New York Association	1	1	1	0	0	20	4
Ohio Association	3	0	2	2	1	45	7
Pacific Coast Association*	7	0	18	3	4	224	24
Western Canada Conference	2	0	1	0	0	59	8
At Large	n/a	n/a	1	0	0	3	2
Unknown	n/a	n/a	11	7	n/a	n/a	n/a
Totals	32	1	55	21	10	841	108

*Did not submit information for 2022, using 2021 information instead

REPORTS OF ASSOCIATIONS AND CHURCHES

EASTERN CANADA CONFERENCE

Annual Report May 2022 – May 2023

Constituted as The Association of the New Jerusalem Church in Canada

Our mandate is to maintain and encourage the establishment of congregations and other groups within Eastern Canada that adhere to the Holy Scripture and to the doctrines of Emanuel Swedenborg, to promote the theology of the church, and encourage outreach to members at large. There is one congregation/group in the Eastern Canada Conference : The Church of the Good Shepherd (a charter member) which is located in Kitchener Ontario.

In 2022 we were able to support our spiritual community in a number of ways. We continue to support the Church of the Good Shepherd's foray into Social Media and the internet. We offer financial assistance to our members for travel costs to attend General Convention and retreats.

In 2023, we are continuing with these and other worthy projects.

Respectfully submitted,

David Ingard, Secretary

CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Kitchener, Ontario

In June 2022 we finished the church year with a picnic on the lawn.

As we moved into the summer months we saw the seasonal decline in attendance. Summer services were offered outside on the lawns (weather permitting)

September 2022 we held our Rally Sunday BBQ welcoming back our members to the new church year. We resumed indoor services.

Once we resumed our normal Sunday Worship mid-week groups followed and once more we are an active faith community. We were once again open to after worship events like potlucks and lunches.

Our online presence has steadily grown. Some of our online members have donated to us as well, using our e-transfer email give@shepherdway.ca.

We formed a Forward Team led by Kate Harvey to look at re-engaging with our base, with our community, and with our neighborhood. A Welcome Home Sunday was held in October and a Welcome Neighbor Sunday was held in the

spring. Both encouraged members to attend and bring friends. We welcomed some familiar faces and met some new ones.

We were able to resume generating revenue from CITS parking again, which is most welcome. From that we also instituted a parking pass system for our evening renters.

As of June 2022 the local branch of the Pentecostal church: Jesus is Lord moved to a new location. We welcomed the return group of the Mahima Prasan-sha Nepali Church, who began renting our space as of December 2022. They have rented it on occasion for gatherings too large for a member's home.

We had a fundraiser Paint Night, it was well attended and enjoyed by all.

Our Message Team created a welcome package and a new brochure to share with people entering our building for the first time.

We attended the Tri City Pride event in Victoria Park. We provided information and treats that led to many great meetings and conversations.

A Pastoral Committee was formed to support Rev. Cory Coberforward and continues to meet regularly. We instituted a zero garbage policy for the Church and our renters. It has been adopted fairly well. Our Church was rented for Mel Brown concert and by Laurier University to present their musical talents. We had a hybrid Zoom and in-person Annual General Meeting again this year.

We had 4 Weddings, 1 Baptism, 3 deaths.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Smith, Secretary

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION

From May 1, 2022 to May 1, 2023, the Illinois Association continued to meet its operational goals of providing support and encouragement to member churches including LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, IN Virginia Street Church in St. Paul, MN, the Chicago Society c/o the Swedenborg Library office in Chicago, the Church of the Open Word in St. Louis, MO, and the Lenox Township Church of Norway, IA. LaPorte New Church, Virginia Street Church and Church of the Open Word received financial support as well. Hosted by Board member, Pastor Karen Feil, panel discussions were provided online featuring guest speakers such as Rev. Robert McCluskey, Rev. Dave Fekete, Rev. Eric Hoffman, Rev. Kit Billings, Pastor Karen Feil, and others. These online programs were offered to members and non-members alike.

In April, 2023, the LaPorte church hosted the annual Peer Supervision gathering and was presided over by Rev. Kit Billings. The Executive Committee con-

tinues to meet virtually and is planning to provide support for the Virginia Street Church as it celebrates 150 years of providing Swedenborgian ministry to their community.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Paul Deming, Secretary

**CHICAGO SOCIETY OF THE NEW JERUSALEM/THE
SWEDENBORG LIBRARY AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH CENTER**

Chicago, Illinois

The Library was open 94 afternoons during 2022, and we had visitors on 70 of those days. Chicago's central "Loop" business district where we are located continued to experience lower than usual pedestrian traffic, due to the COVID-19 pandemic remote-work policies. Far fewer retired people are traveling to the Loop, in part due to personal safety concerns, and after dark, few people are walking about the central business district. As a result, our programming focused on Zoom-delivered programs in 2022 and into 2023.

In February 2022, Rev. Robert McCluskey presented a program on "Correspondences" over a four-week period; in July he repeated his Convention Mini Course on "Doing Good"; and in October we hosted via Zoom a 7-week program on "Revelation" with Rev. David Fekete, Rev. Catherine Lauber, and Rev. Robert McCluskey leading the discussion on the Book of Revelation.

A few regulars continued to visit the Library for coffee and spiritual conversation weekly during Library hours. Work continued on processing the 19C books and materials that have been in storage. Interest in in-person programming is starting to resume, so we plan to host more daytime programs at the Library in 2023.

On a denominational level, Director and Licensed Pastor Karen Feil participated in COM and Convention meetings via Zoom in 2022, as well as the Licensed Pastor support group and mentor calls with Rev. Robert McCluskey.

In 2023, we are gearing up for the World Parliament of Religions which will once again be in Chicago (August 14–19); the Library will participate with a booth and is bringing Irish scholar Dell Rose and CSS faculty member Devin Zuber in to present a program on "Many Roads to the Kingdom of Heaven: Swedenborgianism's Cultural Legacy" during the conference. We are also planning for Zoom educational programs to be hosted by the Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Feil, Secretary/Treasurer, Chicago Society/Swedenborg Library

LAPORTE NEW CHURCH***LaPorte, Indiana***

In the year 2022 with the easing of COVID-19, LaPorte New Church continued to be cautiously more involved in community events and with one another, both socially with coffee hours and with church projects and programs. The executive committee meets monthly to help ensure that its congregation's needs and desires are being met.

With the addition of one new member, Sunday worship attendance averages 13 adults in person and 4 Zoom participants, most from out of state. We do our best to encourage in-person attendance, however both our Sunday School (lack of young ones) and the wedding ministry have been discontinued for now. We have, however, increased the number of rummage sales to help with expenses.

Rev. Billings participates in our community's new interfaith group, Faith and Community United (F&CU) which favors progressive thinking and outreach efforts, a good fit for LPNC. Proceeds from a fundraising community hymn-sing last fall went toward purchasing trees for a local park as an effort to help our ecosystem. A focus of F&CU this year is on the homeless which continue to pervade our town; our small church with its downtown location at times feels overwhelmed with newcomers who are needy. Our human resources are so limited, and so we are grateful for this group's focus.

Three in-person and online small groups met: a book group, grief support, and a Lenten series on the Ten Commandments. We hope to more offer in-person outreach programs. The newsletter will resume in a modified format after a hiatus, and the LPNC website has been quite informative.

Our church family has been having friendly conversations about becoming an overt LGBTQ+ Embracing ministry. We will be proceeding with a formal congregational vote as the year moves forward.

As our ministry evolves, so do we as we do our best to serve our congregation well, maintain our buildings, and let our faith shine out into the community.

Respectfully submitted,

LPNC Executive Board

LENOX TOWNSHIP CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM*Norway, Iowa**No report submitted.***VIRGINIA STREET SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH***St. Paul, Minnesota*

Just like so many churches across the world, the good people of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic lock down facing a multitude of challenges. A church with a small and aging congregation, mandatory closure coupled with fear of covid exposure, fragmented our small congregation into two opposing camps divided into whether or not to reopen when mandated closings were rescinded. With the Church closed, the new worship team led by Rev. Eric Hoffman and Dr. Jeremy Rose, co-pastors, continued to rely on Zoom meetings that they had been developed during the prior pandemic year. Beautiful as the services on Zoom were, many members of the congregation did not attend online and had begun to drift away entirely. Feelings ran high. It was a challenge reflected in congregations worldwide. Many felt their right to worship God in the sanctuary should not be restricted when social distancing could be observed. Others felt that their efforts to produce online services were unappreciated and that in person meetings were dangerous. Eventually live services did resume, but each progressive wave of Covid variant made some members of the congregation fearful of meeting in person, and were frustrated that others did not share their fears. With God's help fears were stilled, animosities overcome, and nearly everyone returned in person by the summer's end, with Zoom remaining a hybrid enhancement for remote or at home participation. But beneath the surface of calm, we needed spiritual healing.

By the summer, the congregation joined forces to clean up the grounds and neglected areas of the church following its long closure. Grounds were cleaned, old storage areas sorted out, refuse and recycling helped to enhance the feelings of making a fresh start. As fall came to St. Paul, we resumed participation as a location for the Saint Paul Art Crawl hosting 15 artists and 10 musicians for the 3 day art and music festival. An estimated 400–500 people attended the event. It was a pivotal moment in our congregational regeneration.

As a result of some soul searching at our October Retreat, the week before the October Art Crawl, we began to look at our church in new ways. The old methods of trying to grow the congregation were clearly not working. We were still divided by fear. Fear of contagion, fear of change, fear of the unknown. We were challenged to rethink our purpose and vision as a congregation. Again, through the grace of God we began to see new possibilities to be useful, to be viable. Then, we slowly stopped worrying about ourselves, and considered what we have to offer to others during this terrible time of illness and loss. What unique characteristics of our Christian faith viewed through a Swedenborgian lens might we offer solace to those in need? What did we have to give and how could we give it? How could we be of use, and who needed us? And how do we define a congregation? Is it those 20 people who sit through a Sunday Service, or does it include holiday visitors? What about visitors, attendees at a wedding, drop-ins, tenants in the building? What about the plumber who stayed for coffee after repairing the geriatric boiler? Are they not also a part of our church family? What if we were these people's only church experience for the year? Would they be your flock as much as the Christmas attendee? What if you offered loving acceptance without thought of return to all who entered your doors for any reason?

Though prayer the answers came in unexpected ways. Through Art Crawl, and by our Lord, we met an artist, Tom Watkins, who produced a collaborative sculpture with the survivors of human trafficking and prostitution, at a survivor led non-profit agency near us, Breaking Free. We featured this work in our sanctuary and gave Tom a place in a sacred environment to talk about helping women survive the horrors of human trafficking and the trap of drugs, abuse, and prostitution. We have since formed an alliance with the group, working together with former prostitutes, to share their graduation ceremonies, Christmas parties and special events in our beautiful and sacred space—a physical symbol of God's forgiveness and healing of broken souls. Many other churches in the area donate much appreciated money and food, but deny the group access to their physical church. There was no spiritual home for those broken by abuse of prostitution and human trafficking. We found that our gift of loving acceptance into God's home, recognition of the divine in all of us, in a small way helps to heal decades of abuse and self-denigration. These brave women in return have given us a trust and love far surpassing our efforts, and regard Virginia Street Church as a spiritual home, a safe non-judgmental haven-without ever having been to a service. It appeared that we indeed had a new flock to care for.

We were further inspired by the pain of loss occasioned by the pandemic to open the church every Thursday from 10am until 8pm for personal meditation and

prayers. We offer Swedenborg's Divine Providence as a free book. The unearthly serenity of our historic little church is now open to the community for candlelit meditation. To pray in that candle lit sanctuary, with snow falling outside on a dark frigid Minnesota February afternoon, seems to bring a sheltering peace much needed during these difficult times. It seems that loving and providing a safe place for prayer has become another use, and another flock to care for.

When we posted a photo of our Open Thursday Meditation/Prayer it miraculously went out to over 50,000 people worldwide sharing our faith and Swedenborgian theology. We felt blessed.

We expanded our concept of other ministries/other flocks to embrace the artists and musicians of our Art Crawl events and to include hosting Garrison Keillor in a book reading here in the church he had done book reading in years ago. Even though some of the public criticized our hosting, our friendship, with a man so bruised by the press and public opinion over sexual harassment allegations, it offered us, again, a chance to live our beliefs, and offer forgiveness and second chances to those who ask.

At the Spring Art Crawl in February we had an opportunity to share our inclusion and love with welcoming all to our event and offering food and wine throughout the week end. Attendance had jumped to an estimated 800–900 people with many from our immediate neighborhood. We were blessed with excellent artists and musicians in genres of art including oils, acrylics, pottery, pen and ink, portraiture, abstract, landscape, jewelry; music included ancient classical Hindu temple dance, folk rock, jazz, contemporary guitar, flute, accordion (people literally danced in the aisles) and Eastern European club music, and classical keyboard. Again, we now see our visitors and our musicians and artists as a part of our ministry, another part of our flock, who we welcome home. So many people visiting have no spiritual home of their own, so we offer love without condition and welcome home without thought of material return.

With meditation and prayer in the Sanctuary, the Parish House opened Thursday for classes, meetings, pastoral work, coffee, and friendship. Classes in the Parish House have grown to now have 12 people attending Swedenborg 101 taught by Pastor Gordon Meyer. Open Thursdays have become a visible sign of life returning to the church, coming in for coffee and discussion, dreaming, planning, and feeding the hungry, offering love to the lonely. When we stopped doing events for our own ends, and in seeing where we might in some small way be a comfort, a use to others, we have been richly rewarded in love returned in kind.

In February, we modified our experiment with the co-pastor program, when our former Pastor Gordon Meyer returned from retirement and teamed up with

Melissa Chaple (former board president who had a dream of also becoming a licensed pastor). We continue to enjoy sermons by Dr. Jeremy Rose on a monthly basis, and by Rev. Eric Hoffman on special occasions. We are blessed with Rev. Hoffman's Bible Studies every Sunday, in-person and on Zoom.

We are sad to announce the passing of our dear friend Kathryn Needle, whose entire life was lived in the light of our Lord in a family devoted to the theology of Emanuel Swedenborg for generations. She is sadly missed.

After 149 years our little church, in short found our own path to regeneration through loving usefulness and a care for the other flocks that came to us for shelter in this post pandemic storm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Melissa Hirst Chaple

CHURCH OF THE OPEN WORD

St. Louis, Missouri

The Church of the Open Word / Garden Chapel in St. Louis, has continued to offer worship services every Sunday morning both in-person and on-line via Zoom. Our services start at 11am and usually finish by noon followed by a coffee-hour and time to fellowship. It is not unusual to find wedding prospects arriving at 12:30 to tour the chapel and meet with Suzy Deming, our Wedding Coordinator. Like other churches we've struggled with lower in-person attendance since the pandemic and welcomed slight increases in online attendance. We've averaged ten to fifteen weddings per year and expect to see increases in the future. Extra activities and uses for our chapel include guitar lessons on Wednesdays and karate classes on certain Mondays. In October we resumed our annual Beatle Festival and welcomed a good crowd to hear some of St. Louis's best musicians paying tribute to the Fab Four. We will host our next Beatle Festival on October 8th 2023. A special performance honoring the music of Frank Sinatra is also planned.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Docent Group met here last Fall to honor one of our beloved board members, Dave Baumgartner, who passed away in May of 2022. A non-profit group (Dignity Period) has used our facility for special meetings on several occasions this year. Our woods beautification project continued as our generous parishioners, the Pangs, cleared brush and made the grounds more welcoming for wildlife. In addition, they planted native plants and installed a beautiful garden in the front of the church. Our landscaping improvements included the installation of French drains and rain drainage on the church property to alleviate

water concerns in the back of the church. We are continuing to improve curb appeal to make our church as welcoming as possible.

We often feature guest musicians, and this year welcomed a visit and concert by Peter Mayer, lead guitarist for the Jimmy Buffet band who we consider a friend of our church.

We continue to participate and maintain our membership in the Illinois Association, which supplies a portion of our annual budget and funding for our Licensed Pastor, Paul Deming.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie O'Reilly, President, and Pastor Paul Deming

KANSAS ASSOCIATION

The Kansas Association met in Pawnee Rock, KS on Sunday, May 7, 2023. The morning worship service along with communion was led by Rev. Jane Siebert. Her message was titled "Going Down into Egypt" and she shared moments of her recent trip to Egypt. Afterwards, dinner along with much good visiting was enjoyed.

The President of the Association, Carl Helm, opened the meeting at 1:30pm. The Minutes of the 2022 annual meeting and treasurer's report were read and approved.

Reports for the past year from both Pawnee Rock and Pretty Prairie were given. Both societies have remained active in both their church life and within their communities. Sunday school and morning worship services have continued except for several bad weather times. During the 2022 summer, both societies met to review the Association Bylaws. In October the annual Camp Mennoscah was attended with Pastor Billie Blair leading the study sessions. Connie and Carl Helm of Pawnee Rock once again opened their home to a very enjoyable Christmas party in December attended by members of both churches which soon was followed by lovely Christmas celebrations in both churches. Pawnee Rock was in charge of a sunrise service Easter morning for anyone in their community. Rev. Jane led the Easter service at the Pretty Prairie Church. It has been a busy year – good times when coming together. We appreciate the help of each and every one whenever it is needed and though we are a small group, there is much love and commitment.

The date for this year's Camp Mennoscah is the weekend of October 7 and 8. A committee will look into a possible guest leader for the study session and Sunday worship service.

It was voted to continue sending monetary aid to the ongoing war in Ukraine. We also voted to send a donation to the victims of the train disaster in Ohio and to the fund helping people from the recent Mississippi tornado.

Elections were held for the slate of officers as well as two trustees. There was no further business to discuss and the meeting came to an end.

Respectfully submitted,
Veneta Lane, Secretary

CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Pawnee Rock, Kansas

In the last year we held church services and/or Sunday school almost every Sunday, with the exception of a couple bad weather days. For June, July, and August and the first Sunday in September we only had Sunday school and all others were both. In Sunday school we are still studying a book called Swedenborg Sampler and in November and December studied the Christmas story in the Dole Notes.

On January 8, 2022 a funeral was held for one of our longtime members Keith Mull. His funeral was held at the Presbyterian Church in Larned. Reverend Jane Siebert led the funeral service. A lunch was served at the church for family and friends.

On February 6 we held the annual meeting for our Church. Our Church service was led by Vivian Bright, following the service we enjoyed a potluck dinner, After which we had the business meeting and election of officers.

On April 17 at sunrise our church took part in the community Easter service. Our church is in a leadership position for this service and without our church the service would not happen. Thank all those that helped and participated in the program. Roy and Tricia Prescott were coordinators.

Last year's Kansas Association meeting was held May 1, 2022 in Pretty Prairie, KS Rev. Jane Siebert led the service and Carl Helm led the meeting. Elections were held and results were: President Carl Helm, Vice President Howard Bowman, Secretary Veneta Lane, Treasure Linda Kraus and Trustees Joan McDonald, Connie Helm, Megan Alexander.

On August 21, members of both Kansas churches met at Toni Stimatz's home for a service led by Rev. Jane and review of the Kansas Association. Bylaws as mandated from the Kansas Association meeting and a great Lunch was enjoyed by all.

We held the annual Church Camp at Mennoscah on October 8 & 9 with Rev. Billie Blair leading the study sessions and the Sunday service with a wonderful meal to end the weekend.

On October 23, Rev. Jane, baptized the twin boys of Tyson and McKenzie Calloway. The boys names are Hunter and Hudson Calloway. The service was followed fine pot luck meal.

On November 27, 2022 we enjoyed soup and desserts while we decorated our Church for Christmas. We had lot of helping hands.

Connie hosted the Christmas luncheon December 15 at our home for both Kansas churches' members and past members. We had good food, a fun gift exchange game, and a great time.

On December 18, during our Sunday school time we sacked 60 sacks of candy, nuts and fruit to be handed out at the Christmas Eve Program. On December 24, at 5:30pm we had a beautiful Christmas Eve Program. It was directed by Tricia Prescott and Anita Wilson. We had about 100 viewing the program. It was nice to have a large crowd. We rewarded people that participated in the program with a \$5 gift card.

I want to thank all the members of the Church. Being a small church I think we all seem to come together and everyone helps where needed. I'd like to thank Vivian Bright, Tricia Prescott, Roy Prescott, and Connie Helm for partnering to do the services and Vivian plays the organ when Karen is gone, and also for being my vice president. Karen Hadley for her beautiful organ music. Howard Bowman for leading Sunday school and being the treasurer. I also would like to thank Howard, Tricia, Anita for all the work we do mowing, trimming, and trash removal on the Rock. The State of Kansas pays our church for taking care of the Rock. Thanks goes to Toni Stimatze and her grandsons for taking care of the churchyard. Thanks to Anita Wilson for keeping the inside of the church looking beautiful, and for taking care of the flower bed outside. Thanks also to Anita for being the secretary of the Board. Thanks to Tricia Prescott and Anita Wilson for directing the Christmas Eve program. Also want to thank Roy Prescott and Megan Alexander for being the readers and all others on stage and those that sacked candy and fruit. It was a beautiful program with about 100 people in our church. I want to thank Jennie Wilson for filling in as organist for the Christmas program. I would also like to thank my wife Connie who helps with a lot of extra things that need doing for the church. I appreciate her doing the newsletter.

The church donated money to Barton County food bank, 20 student Christmas gifts from the giving tree, money to Circles program, and a Larned after-prom party. During our business meeting in January we reviewed the use of the Giving

Forward Foundation for recent gifts to be placed in an endowed fund and updating of our dissolution clause to meet what we are doing.

This completes the 134th year of our church. I sincerely hope God will bless this church with many more years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl Helm, President

NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH

Pretty Prairie, Kansas

May 2022–2023, Pastor Billie Blair continued to provide our Sunday services two Sundays each month. Rev. Jane also led our congregation on occasional Sundays again this year. Thanks to both of our pastors as well as to our pianists, Veneta Lane & Debbie Siebert.

Our informal weekly Guild gathering via Zoom, kept us in touch with each other as well as discussing and planning church events & needs. In addition, quarterly meetings guided our work projects.

Yearly events that were held this year included –

In May we welcomed Pawnee Rock to join us in Pretty Prairie for worship, lunch and the annual KS Association Meeting. In May & June church members collected socks (to send to the Garden Church as part of a Convention project) & rocks native to our area of the country for the 2022 Swedenborgian Annual Congregation. Church members enjoyed the services and presentations provided during the 2022 Swedenborgian, Annual Convention, “The Tree of Life into the Garden,” this year an in-person AND virtual convention, June 25–29 in Long Beach, CA.

This was Rev. Jane’s last convention as President of the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

We want to give a “shout-out” and thank Rev. Jane for serving in this position as President for the last 6 years (2 terms) in her challenging position, yet full of exciting traveling opportunities to many churches in a variety of countries. Indeed a job “over-and-above” well done!

In August we traveled to St. John (to Toni Stimatze’s) to meet with Pawnee Rock for our Fall Association meeting, this meeting taking the place of our usual September meeting at Sterling Lake. Rev. Jane shared the church service, we worked on reviewing/updating the association bylaws and, of course, enjoyed a delicious luncheon & fellowship. In October, after a 2-year hiatus, a few of us en-

joyed getting back together at our annual Camp Mennoscah retreat. Pastor Billie led the Saturday lesson (about different ways to pray) as well as the Sunday service, and Rev. Jane shared the Sunday school lesson on the tenets of Swedenborg. We enjoyed walks along the river, sharing fellowship and dulcimer lessons, and, as always, a wealth of food at meals. We hope more church members will be able to attend again next year.

After Thanksgiving, we gathered for our “Hanging of the Greens”, decorating the church for Christmas, and another scrumptious lunch get-together. December brought Connie Helm’s annual Christmas Luncheon, and soon after, we looked forward to our member-prepared Christmas Eve service.

In December, we also were excited to continue our support of a Christmas “family” – this year, however, choosing children from different Pretty Prairie families via the city’s Christmas Tree Angels. Our member-planned Christmas Eve service was held at the church at 3pm, an early Christmas eve, due to single-digit-weather concerns. What with people being gone to other places for Christmas as well as illnesses, we had a smaller group for Christmas Eve than normal. We did not have a minister to lead us this year but our guild “Christmas committee” planned a simple and meaningful service – sharing the Christmas story, singing carols, enjoying a dulcimer duet accompanied by Veneta, and our traditional Silent Night lighting of the candles.

Our 2023 NJC Annual Meeting was held in February. On Maundy Thursday, our church held a joint service this year at the Pretty Prairie New Jerusalem Church with Pastor Angela from the Methodist Church presenting the service along with Rev. Jane. On Easter Sunday, Reverend Jane led our Easter service, sharing thoughts from her recent journey in Israel & Palestine, followed by – of course – a delicious luncheon in the Church basement!

Community involvement this year included providing funds to the Food Pantry as well as providing supplies for food baskets delivered during the Thanksgiving & Christmas seasons. Donations were given to the Hutchinson Cottonwood fire victims, to Ukraine, to Project Prom, and to memorial & health care funds. We also completed “NJ church community” projects this year – installation of a new water heater by Ray Siebert, clean out projects in the church basement & the sanctuary cabinet & caring for Rev Eric’s memory roses.

Throughout the year Sunday school continued our studies of other religions as guided by the book *Holy Envy, Finding God in the Faith of Others* by Barbara Brown-Taylor. Throughout the summer, we read and discussed the book, *Ladder to the Light* by Steven Charleston, Choctaw Elder and Episcopal priest, who shared thoughts and stories of spiritual wisdom, paths of hope, courage, and

love. We also viewed two memorable videos of the New Jerusalem Church's Sunday service and 100-year-celebration from 2006, seeing faces of and reminiscing about folks no longer with us as well as seeing other more youthful faces from the past. Advent lessons & then Lenten studies from the Bible & from Richard Rohr's book, *Wondrous Encounters* rounded out our year.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Conkling, Secretary

MAINE ASSOCIATION

The Maine Association met on 10/23/22. The annual division of shares was voted. Member churches reported on their previous year. It was discussed to have a weekend Maine Association retreat at the Fryeburg Assembly as has been held in the past. Due to lack of time, Rev. Dr. Gard Perry was asked to record his presentation on How the New Church came to Maine. It was decided to drop the idea of merging with the Massachusetts Union.

Elections results were:

- President: Lorraine Kardash
- Vice President: Martha Richardson
- Secretary: Susannah Currie
- Treasurer: Dan Dyer

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Susannah Currie, Secretary.

BATH NEW CHURCH

Bath, Maine

For a small congregation, the Bath Church has been busy during the past year.

- We successfully repainted the exterior of the building; removed a massive Norway spruce tree, which had been struck by lightning and threatened to fall on the building; refinished the floors of the church entry and kitchen; and refreshed the church restroom with a new tile floor.
- We continue to have regular weekly services, with a traditional hiatus in July and August.
- Pastor Reuben Bell preached a theme-related Advent series, leading up to Christmas. We hosted a Christmas Eve service with 20 people in at-

tendance. Sophia, our technician, provided live-streaming of the service and photography.

- Pastor Bell provides weekly sermon introductions posted on Facebook. We've have many positive responses to these, some from people we don't know.
- We continue to live-stream the weekly service onto both YouTube and Vimeo platforms. As with our Facebook page, we continue to receive positive comments from all over the United States and Canada.
- Our focus now is on continued website development with a launch this summer. Our site will provide both scholarly content and links to other New Church sites.
- We are advertizing weekly in the local paper, the Times-Record, with a picture of the church and a "teaser" phrase or sentence based on the teachings of Swedenborg.
- There was a resurrection service in November for life-long Bath New Church member Sam Trott, with over 100 people filling our historic sanctuary. They left with a clear New Church image of the nature of the life to come and their place in it.
- Pastor Bell continues to offer in-person visitation to people in need, with regular telephone contact as well.

We pray and work for an increase in BCNJ attendance and interest. Fallout from the compulsory Covid-19 lock down took its toll, but Internet attendance is growing, with the number of visits on that platform surpassing our in-person attendance each week.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Lawson, President and Rev. Dr. Reuben Bell, Pastor

FRYEBURG NEW CHURCH

Fryeburg, Maine

The Fryeburg New Church sallied forth in 2022 envisioning our "new church" in the wake of the era of shuttered doors and online worship. This year was a time of holding space for each other and imagining new ways to worship and uses for our church building as a community gathering center.

We were able to return to our special services such as Children's Sunday and Music Sunday in June of 2022. We also celebrated fall holidays with our ecumenical friends in Fryeburg on Thanksgiving and Christmas. The Fryeburg Fair Booth,

our largest fundraiser of the year, revised for covid safety has become a slimmer more efficient system and raised as much or more money for our annual budget than pre-covid sales!

The church building went through updates this year as our elevator required repair; a new phone, internet and security system were installed; and the purchase of IT worship equipment (camera, TV, laptop and software) has brought our pew congregants and zoom congregants closer through sight and sound. Alison and Lee have managed our transition to an ongoing hybrid service has been nearly seamless and worshippers in all spaces have felt inspired and healed by the worship experience.

Expanded use of our church building - tai chi sessions, music lessons, performances, meditation gatherings, cooking lessons and community board games night - strengthen partnerships with other community organizations bringing new people and new life into our fold even as we celebrate the transition of elders to the realm of angels hovering around us.

Alison Lane-Olsen announced her retirement from church leadership in the fall. We are hopeful that with patience, persistence and prayer we would find a candidate who would feel called to lead our small rural community church. Noting the tight housing market in our community we are grateful that the parsonage gifted to the church over 100 years ago was still part of the package we could offer to a new minister moving to the Saco River valley in western Maine..

Respectfully submitted,

FNC Board of Directors

FRYEBURG NEW CHURCH ASSEMBLY

Fryeburg, Maine

No report submitted.

PORTLAND NEW CHURCH

Portland, Maine

The community of people who enjoy and utilize the Portland New Church (PNC) building is thriving to the point that there is now not room for all who would like to do so. We're having a gathering to thank and celebrate the PNC community with a Fall Festival on the fall equinox, September 23. We have a

new updated website and Facebook page, and continue to offer two community worship services a month. A heat pump was installed, providing very comfortable heat and cooling.

Sadly, a much loved, long time member, Dan Wood, passed away in November of 2022.

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Lorraine Kardash

MASSACHUSETTS NEW CHURCH UNION

Like many, as we emerge from the pandemic, we are faced with challenges and the re-evaluation of our priorities and goals. We are blessed with vibrant ministries led by Rev. Sage Cole, Rev Dr. Donna Keane, and Licensed Pastor Kelly Milne. In addition to them, the Union funded an internship experience with Eleanor Schnarr at Swedenborg Chapel, Cambridge. We seek to support students in their training for ministry and believe Massachusetts to be a prime location for transformative learning.

We continue to sponsor the Columbus/Indigenous People's Day Retreat. Rev. Kevin Baxter, Rev. Sage Cole, and Eleanor Schnarr lead sessions. We also had the privilege of the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem partnering with Kurt Fekete to have a SPLATz Retreat for our pre-teens, which could not have been done without assistance from Beki Greenwood. We also hosted the East Coast Peer Supervision weekend for clergy and licensed pastors.

Our societies are working on questions of community relevance and service. Cambridge continues to explore the Helen Keller Center, Elmwood looks to use its facilities to facilitate local town nonprofits and community organizations, and Bridgewater continues to grow its online presence through streaming services and online postings.

We have struggled with a congregation in transition, which led us to explore the sale of the Newtonville Church of the Open Word. The cost of maintaining the building with a congregation that is too small to support the facility proved infeasible. The Union made the decision to list the church. It is a historic structure with a historic organ, but both have fallen greatly into disrepair. The church is filled with history and at one point was one of the flagship congregations. It is with a heavy heart that we move forward; yet, we trust in providence to help us liquidate the asset for the use of our church in this world.

We are looking forward to hosting convention this year and hope to see a great turnout!

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kevin Baxter, Secretary

NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH

Bridgewater, Massachusetts

The Bridgewater Church meets weekly in the sanctuary, all worship led by Pastor Kelly Milne. We continue to offer our services on Facebook live, with an average of 40 plus views each week. Daniel Pappas, a talented musician, is our pianist. His music is a joy to listen to and adds much to each service. Pastor Kelly teaches Sunday School with 4–8 children (ages 4–12) before the church service, ending with them being part of the morning worship and staying thru the Children's Talk.

On Thanksgiving Sunday we joined with the Elmwood Church for a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. It has been our hope for many years to share more time together, this being our second November dinner, and plans are already being made to do it again. Pastor Kelly and Rev. Keane continue to work together planning this and other events. Although our congregations are different, and in different towns, we are only three miles apart and hope to help each other with growth and encouragement.

Our rental agreement with Pilgrim Area Collaborative (PAC) continues, but due to lack of numbers, there was little use of our building for the 2022–2023 school year. They expect to use the building more this coming year. Sprint (now T-Mobile) will end their lease with us for telecommunications via our steeple in June. We are grateful for the steeple and their use of it for twenty-four years.

We have a new discussion group meeting monthly in our office room: Connect-the-Dots/Health and Wellness. This time encourages us to share ideas for joyful living. Our office space has been rearranged, new floor mats added, and 'linen' color shades have replaced the WW2 black-out shades in both the office and parlor rooms. Getting ready for guests, we look forward to welcoming the 2023 Convention to Bridgewater and into our space this year. It will be a special experience for all.

Respectfully submitted,

Merrilee Phinney, Treasurer

**CAMBRIDGE SOCIETY OF THE NEW JERUSALEM D/B/A
SWEDENBORG CHAPEL**

Cambridge, Massachusetts

As our Society returned to in-person church life in early 2022, Rev. Sage Cole declared a New Church Jubilee Year, with the intent of dwelling a little longer in the uncertainty brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and to reflect on the call of the New Church, as manifest in Swedenborg's writings, in the life of Helen Keller, and in our own individual and communal experiences of change and transformation. Rev. Sage felt – and continues to believe – that a new paradigm for understanding the New Church is necessary for long-term sustainability and growth of our Society.

During the early months of the Jubilee, Rev. Sage connected with artist and CSS student Eleanor Schnarr, who became an important collaborator for envisioning the deeper call of the New Church. Over the summer of 2022, Eleanor helped Rev. Sage develop a New Church Jubilee Facebook group (which currently has over 200 members) and began planning what would become the New Church Visionaries Lecture Series that was launched in March 2023. With generous support from the Massachusetts New Church Union, we invited Eleanor to undertake a 9-month ministry internship at the Chapel as part of her path toward ordination, starting in the fall of 2022. Eleanor brought a syncretic theological outlook, reflected in thoughtful sermons that combined her deep knowledge of Swedenborg with the spiritual tradition of Saiva Siddhanta.

During the middle third of Eleanor's internship, Rev. Sage took a three-month sabbatical, during which time she reflected more deeply on the call of the New Church and produced a series of letters entitled, *Dear Martha: Letters to My Church*. The first of these letters was published in the March 2023 issue of *the Messenger*, and they initiated a series of challenging conversations within our Society about where we are now and what the future might hold. These conversations centered on what the call of the New Church requires, including a deep love that wants us all to be as we are, even if we are vastly different from one another.

As our president often says, "the chapel abides." We just finished our fifth season of monthly candlelight Taizé services, which consistently draw 15–20 people from the Cambridge community. The chapel continues to be a popular venue in Cambridge, and during the past year, we hosted ten weddings, one memorial service, one baptism, and six concerts, the last of which was a Harvard-sponsored jazz concert that packed the house. On January 19, our dear friend, Lars-Erik

Wiberg, passed into the fullness of the spiritual world. Lars led a long, rich, and useful life and faithfully served as our president for many years. As Lars was fond of saying, “life is a permanent condition.”

Respectfully submitted,

Officers of the Cambridge Society

ELMWOOD NEW CHURCH

Elmwood, Massachusetts

The Elmwood New Church has been busy over the last year with Sunday services, community committees meeting in our sanctuary once a month and a small local church which uses our sanctuary on Sunday afternoons.

We have presented joint services in Advent and Christmas Eve and the two churches get along well together when we meet. They are a lively and active group and their pastor is a blessing to work with.

Our congregation stays active and involved, with officers attending church meetings and taking responsibility for some maintenance issues for the church building. Our sexton had to resign due to conflicts with her schedule, so we now have a new sexton, a sixteen year old grandson of one of our faithful parishioners who is doing a great job, and has even washed all the windows!

Our pianist has been a mainstay for many years and his wife has now joined us as our soloist. They make a fantastic duo with years of professional playing and performing that is evident in their selections each Sunday.

We anticipate another active and busy coming year with many exciting happenings especially as we help to host the General Convention this year.

We continue to spread the good news of the Lord’s redemption as seen through the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

“Where the heart is, there is the worship” AC 10411:E

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Donna Keane, Minister

CHURCH OF THE OPEN WORD

Newtonville, Massachusetts

No report submitted.

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION

Meeting was called to order at 9:08 am by President Barb Barber.

Opening prayer and devotion, “Keep Working” was offered by Rev. Renée.

12 Members in attendance were: President Barb Barber, Rev. Renée Machin-
iak, Vice President Marjie Leas, Secretary Ian Barber, Treasurer B.J. Neuenfeldt,
Chris Laitner, Barb Boxwell, Lori Patana, Barb Torangeau, Mary Lou Jennett,
Jeanine Keller, Rhett Billings.

Report of the Secretary

- Minutes from the October 2, 2021 Meeting were handed out and read in silence.
- One Amendment was “Soul” to “Soule” in the Ministries Report.
- Spelling corrections for names: Dorie Litchfield, David Fekete.
- Motion to approve as amended by Chris, seconded by Rev. Renée. Passed unanimously.

Report of the Treasurer

B.J. presented the Financial Report and the Proposed 2022-2023 Budget. Report is on file.

- No Youth Retreats or regional meetings, so there was no spending in those budgeted items.

Almont Retreat Center Facilities Report

Lori presented the report

- New furniture in the Living Room with help from Rhett Billings.
- New lighting fixtures, installed by Jill Baxter and Betsy Lau Aldrich.
- There were 4 trees removed on the grounds for safety issues.
- Women’s Retreat had members helped de-winterize the dorms in the Spring.
- Return of Summer School.
- We are looking to do renovations for the Recreation Hall, \$60,000 is the estimated cost for those renovations.
- Blessings Box is still a success within the community.
- There will be filming done for a movie on the campground, in the chapel, and upstairs of the main house.
- 2025 our Chapel will be 150 years old, during that year’s Homecoming we will look into participating in the Homecoming Day Parade.
- Internet/Wi-Fi was added to the campgrounds.

Ministerial Reports

Rev. Dagmar Bollinger

- Highlights of the report read by Chris Laitner, report is on file.
- Lori suggested looking into Cottage Law to help with logistics for Soule Food for Dagmar.
- Potential involvement with Michigan Association and Dagmar to work together with the Youth Group.

Rev. Renée Machiniak

- Presented by Rev. Renée, report is on file.

Old Business

Convention 2022

- B.J. provided some highlights. Played keyboard for one of the new ordinations.
- Rev. Renée provided some highlights. Shared that there was a proposal of being inclusive and welcoming and passed unanimously.
- Royal Oak Church of the Holy City was grateful for the grants provided by Convention that were used to invest in Audio/Video set up for Hybrid Services.
- Others discussed their own personal highlights.
- Convention 2023 will be in Bridgewater, MA.

New Ministries Report

- Rev. Renée provided the new Pastors in the denomination, Rev. Jim Lawrence was elected President of the Denomination
- Satellite Gatherings
We are not giving up on it, just an issue with time and energy.
Potential Port Huron host?

Other

- Kevin Baxter resigned as Director of Almont. Craig Carson is now the Director.
- Jane Siebert will be the Spiritual Programmer/Religious Coordinator.

New Business

Women's Retreat 2023

- April 28-30 at the Almont New Church and Retreat Center

Presentation of the 2022-2023 Budget

- B.J. presented the Proposed Budget.
- Discussion on raising the Almont Retreat Center line item budget. Barb Boxwell made a motion to grant \$60,000 for the Recreation Hall renovation, Marjie seconded. Passed unanimously. Will be it's own line item as "Rec Hall Grant." Lori provided insight on what needs to be renovated.

- Motion to approve the budget by Ian, seconded by Barb Torangeau, passed unanimously.

Michigan Association 2023 Annual Meeting October 7, 2023

- Nomination for One (1) Trustee
- Ian nominated Tom Neuenfeldt for the open Trustee position. Ian motioned to cast a unanimous ballot, seconded by Lori. Passed unanimously.

Slate of Officers for 2023 Year

- President Barb Barber
- Vice President Marjie Leas
- Secretary Ian Barber
- Treasurer B.J. Neuenfeldt
- Trustee Chris Laitner
- Trustee Sharon Billings
- Trustee Tom Neuenfeldt

Motion to approve the slate as presented by Marjie, seconded by Barb Boxwell. Passed unanimously.

Other thoughts/items/insight to share

- President Barb shared her gratitude to all the members.

Executive Committee Meeting 2023

President Barb discussed wanting to hold a meeting during the year to further discuss things throughout the year.

Motion to adjourn by Ian, seconded by Marjie. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 10:53 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Ian Barber, Secretary

ALMONT NEW CHURCH ASSEMBLY AND RETREAT CENTER

The annual Almont Summer School was held July 22nd-30th, 2023 centering around the theme of “The Journey of the Ark of the Covenant.” It was the first year having Craig Carson as the Director and Rev. Jane Siebert as the Spiritual Program Coordinator as well as our new Registrar, Heidi Barnaby, and Health Services Manager, Catherine Carson. Additionally, B.J. Neuenfeldt was selected as the new Curriculum Developer, helping to support our outstanding slate of teachers. Many new and returning staff members helped to make camp possible for the 109 registered campers, which while lower in number than pre-pandemic years, witnessed the transition of a large group of teens into young-adulthood, leading to lower dorm numbers but full adult housing. There were many new pro-

cedures implemented to improve the registration, personnel records, and medication management practices in an effort to improve our ability to meet state of Michigan regulations.

Rev. Jane helped to lead our slate of lecturers, which included Rev. Renée Machiniak, Rev. Kit Billings, Rev. Kevin Baxter, Rev. Sage Cole, and Rev. Leah Goodwin along with ordination candidate Lynn Chittick Thompson from the Center for Swedenborgian Studies. Throughout the week we followed the Ark via scholarly, spiritual, and literal senses. The teenage classes made a life-sized Ark for their two-part evening Chapel services and a Biblical procession occurred from the flag pole to the Chapel!

As part of a full schedule of activities and events, four new teens were initiated into the Survivors, the Almont Women's Alliance met and held their annual birthday party fundraiser, an auction was held to raise money for the Survivors, two campers were confirmed into the Swedenborgian Church of North America, and 13 new members joined the Assembly. The Assembly also voted to keep Betsy Aldrich as Treasurer and Tammara Mounce as Secretary, while electing Victoria Mounce as a Trustee.

In addition to the Summer School, our beautiful facilities continued to be updated, maintained and utilized for numerous events throughout the year including retreats, weddings, family reunions, and canning classes. We have been blessed with incredible support from our Assembly Members, the Michigan Association, the Ohio Association, and the Church on the Hill Boston. Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,

ANCA Executive Board

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CITY

Royal Oak, Michigan

Our church continues to offer hybrid worship services, meeting in-person and online Zoom. We are grateful to have some of our isolated members join us on Zoom regularly, as well as friends from California and Canada! Our average attendance throughout the year is 20 people.

During the 2022 fall and winter months, we offered homemade soup lunches on the first Sunday of each month. We are grateful for our Sunday morning musicians, violinist Jenni Burke & guitarist Tom Allen, as well as pianist Karen Billings. A special Christmas Eve Zoom service was offered last year and this year we offered a Christmas Day service instead. Our Women's Alliance enjoyed our

Christmas luncheon at The Master's Restaurant, and we lifted the spirits of Nursing Home seniors with Christmas Caroling in December. We participated in the preparation and assisted in providing lunch for the homeless shelter at Starr Presbyterian Church. Weekly Church Updates were sent out throughout the year to members and friends to keep everyone connected and Wednesday Meditations on Zoom were offered during the church year. Our Women's and Men's Spirituality Groups met in-person during the summer. We began offering new monthly outreach groups in-person at the Women's Club beginning December 14, 2022. We invested in advertising in the Royal Oak Review and the Clawson Paper.

Our church raised \$450.00 in donations for our ongoing project to support Veterans' Service Dogs and participated in our city's "Clean Veterans Graves" at Oakview Cemetery on May 7th, 2022. Our minister continued to serve in our city as a volunteer oncology chaplain at Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital and volunteer police chaplain for the city. On October 7th, she represented our church at Royal Oak's "Faith and Blue" event to help improve understanding and peace between law enforcement and faith communities. Our congregation participated in the Salvation Army clothing, diaper and toy holiday charity.

Rev. Machiniak participated in ongoing educational programming offered by Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism (SAAR) and the Friends Committee on National Legislation. She led worship for our sister church in Cincinnati, The New Church of Montgomery, on Sunday, August 7th, 2022. Rev. Renee served as youth chaplain at the Almont Memorial Day Teen Retreat May 27-30, 2022; the theme this year was "Apples and Oranges," focusing on healing divisions.

Church members participated in Flower Fest on June 4th and Rev. Renee led our annual spring Almont Women's Retreat with Licensed Pastor Robbin Ferriman April 22-24. She participated in Zoom in the Midwest Peer Supervision May 2-4th. From July 23-31st and lectured at our Almont Summer School on "Music of the Psalms." Camp's theme this year was "Music in the Bible." She participated in COM meetings and Convention, June 23-28 through Zoom, as she needed to stay home to care for her husband, Joe, after spinal surgery. She continues to mentor Licensed Pastors, Robbin Ferriman and Tassy Farwell, on a monthly basis, as well as participates in quarterly mentor supervision and Swedenborgian Chaplain Support Groups.

The Royal Oak Church of the Holy City is a very active and close congregation, filled with spirit!

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Renée Machiniak, Minister

MIDDLE ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION

The Mid-Atlantic Association met on Zoom in January 2022 in order to welcome Rev. Yung Me Morris to her position as Interim Pastor at Temenos.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Rich Tafel, President, Rev. Shada Sullivan, Secretary, Robin Tafel, Treasurer

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CITY

Wilmington, Delaware

Greetings to all! Life appears to be back to normal. We have had services in the sanctuary straight through the winter without closure due to Covid. The Copeland String Quartet is continuing their concert series with us and we have joined the Sacred Grounds Cohort in order to expand our pollinator garden.

Nancy Piorkowski, Treasurer, has been working with John Kalmer and Rev. Susannah Currie to install and use QuickBooks for the church finances. The program is simplifying the bookkeeping for Nancy. The program went live on January 1, 2023.

Bill Baldwin has continued to coordinate our participation in the Emanuel Dining Room South, providing a noon meal on the third Thursday of each month. Other members assist when they can. Bill also works with the Food Closet at St. Stephen's church.

We received an inquiry from the Green for the Greater Good about holding their weekly meetings in the Parish Hall. It's been a wonderful opportunity to welcome engaged community residents into our spaces.

Reverend Shada and I have continued our Monday Zoom meetings with Shalonda, Events Coordinator, and Peerspace to promote use of our building for community events.

The Restoration Fund and project plans are moving forward. We continue to investigate opportunities for historic preservation grants. We have received the Empowerment Grant for HVAC improvements, the work will start soon!!

The Christmas Eve service was an in-person service, using our regular format of lessons and carols. Rev. Shada confirmed the date for the Blue Christmas service, December 20, 2022.

Other activities: the forming of a Stewardship Committee to work on the Annual Appeal to promote awareness of the church's basic financial needs; an art show by parishioner Nathan Smith.

We look forward with anticipation to the coming months of this year as we work on the restoration and opening our doors to the community.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Dougherty, President

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CITY

Washington, District of Columbia

After an exciting and collaborative 2022-2023 year, the Church of the Holy City Washington, DC (CHC DC) remains deeply committed to providing worship, building community, spiritual dialogue, and supporting spiritual entrepreneurs. The board, diverse in age, gender, ethnicity, and perspective, meets monthly to envision the church's role in re-imagining the future of the church. The Swedenborgian denomination is uniquely poised to address progressive ideals, rich relevant content, and inclusive faith statements.

Compelling and inclusive external collaborations included a Community Speaker Series featuring guest speakers from around the world in social impact spaces and the Muslim community. Rev. Tafel also expanded the 2022 convention's Building Bridges Across Worldviews course by offering pilot classes to those interested in healing the divide. We are now seeing the fruits of the church's first spiritual entrepreneur program launched in 2022. Members initiated efforts in spiritual entrepreneurship training, DC youth participation in work readiness, and cutting-edge housing solutions.

The church building also achieved several important milestones. The external church tower repairs were completed with the support of the denomination and a DC grant, ensuring the building is safe and aesthetically pleasing. Jimmy Cox became the full-time building manager after 30 years of church service and retiring from his career. Building rental rates were raised, and the rental business continues to thrive.

One of many church-hosted events, the funeral of Congressman Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), was attended by over 400 people, including Ambassador Cindy McCain who read greetings from Bono. This event provided exposure to the church and the inclusive Swedenborgian theology of life after death, which brought great comfort to many.

The CHC DC board is looking forward to the coming year, continuing the partnership with the Swedenborgian community, and growing a new model for churches and civic engagement.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Rich Tafel, Minister

TEMENOS

West Chester, Pennsylvania

To reflect back over the past year brings about a pattern of continuous change. Difficult at times but overall, so much has been accomplished.

We started the year with Rev. Cairn Neely until the completion of their commitment. From mid-August until mid-September, we had guest ministers come in on Sundays to give service. Some of our community even provided some Sunday services which was quite fun! Later in September, Rev. Yung Me Suh Morris began as our interim pastor and will continue indefinitely. Yung Me brings a wealth of enthusiasm to Temenos. We are beyond thrilled to have her with us.

Retreat House bookings are strong. Ian Campbell, General Manager, and Hope Merkert, Office Manager, work diligently to keep everything running smoothly.

Council VP, Nina Tafel organized a group to make blankets for the Ronald McDonald House.

Council member, Patrick Cody has been offering a monthly outdoor service called "Song of the Trees," an outreach of the Wild Church International Network.

Council member, Cynthia Sperberg created a grief group, called Living Leaves, who meet once a month after church.

Rev. Yung Me has organized and mentors a Self Publishing group for anyone interested in publishing a book. Group meets monthly.

Long time member, Tom Devereux, holds a Swedenborgian book reading group who meet just about every Sunday morning before service.

The Community Garden, led by Dhama Boo and volunteers, donated over 1,000 lbs. of food to a local food cupboard in the Fall of 2022. Efforts have begun for the new harvesting season under Dhama's continued supervision.

Other community offerings include sound healings, yoga, drumming, piano instruction. We are always looking for new opportunities and welcome everyone's ideas.

Working with some groups at West Chester University who are doing trail cleanup, GIS surveys and planning an archaeological dig this summer on the grounds.

As a Community, we are whole and we are together as one and striving our way into the future. We remain vigilant and optimistic as we look to God to hold Temenos in the Light and show us how best to serve his Will. “We are standing on holy ground and we know that there are angels all around.” (Verse from the song, “On Holy Ground.”)

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Maurer, President.

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION

After the Board of Directors of New York New Church, one of the two churches in the New York Association, decided to sell the building due to a decline in membership, we helped with basic repairs and urgent finances before selling the building.

In 2020 and 2021, we did not have a meeting due to covid pandemic.

Rev. Youngmin Kim attended the 2022 convention in Long Beach, CA.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Youngmin Kim, President

KOREAN NEW CHURCH

New York, New York

It is very sad that the New York New Church building where we worshiped was sold. The memories of worshiping at the temple, praying, studying the Bible, eating, drinking coffee, and laughing together are now gone.

Until the first Sunday of December last year, Sunday worship was held in the temple for one week and in a hybrid way for the other week using Zoom.

At first, the buyer wanted to close the sale of the building before Christmas last year, so we had to temporarily move the chairs, tables, Bibles, hymn books, and other supplies for worship and church programs to the storage room. The program also had to be stopped. However, the actual sale took place only after three months, and during that period, all we could do was wait for the sale and hold Sunday worship services every Sunday using video chat.

Nevertheless, the church members prayed for the future of the church and continued worship every week.

Pastor Rich Tafel and all executive members who lead the New York Church Executive Committee, which was formed to sell the New York Church building, made a generous and important decision for our church.

Therefore, we can have hope again.

We will be looking for a new venue for worship and outreach programs, and continue our journey to the Lord starting in July.

Another encouraging thing is that alumni who have a will for ministry and loyal alumni who will oversee the program will be participating in the Convention this year for the first time. I hope that the guidance and grace of the Lord will be with them.

We praise the Lord who gives us every new day!

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Youngmin Kim

NEW YORK NEW CHURCH

New York, New York

The New York New Church (NYNC) having legally dissolved in 2021 and the property having been sold in 2023, is now an inactive society. The Board of Directors (BOD) will continue to function until the legal suit with the owner of the adjacent brownstone over water rights is settled. A firm of attorneys is overseeing this lawsuit.

The proceeds of the sale of the property having been invested in a separate account in the Common Fund, and a trusteeship having been envisioned to oversee funding requests, the BOD will meet in September of 2023 to begin the process of forming the NYNC Legacy Fund Trusteeship to oversee the distribution of the net assets. If after twenty-five years no new Swedenborgian church is formed in New York City the remaining funds will become the property of the denomination.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Conger, Member, Board of Directors of the New York New Church

OHIO ASSOCIATION

No report submitted.

NEW CHURCH OF MONTGOMERY

Cincinnati, Ohio

The New Church of Montgomery congregation meets for Sunday worship services online the 2nd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of each month with usually 20 or so participating. We have occasional hybrid services for special occasions, such as our Harvest Feast celebration and Easter, but there are many technical difficulties and many of our local members enjoy the convenience of Zoom. We all need in person connection, so we plan and support fellowship with potluck dinners, Friday evening “Coffee and Conversation”, and other get-togethers to make up for not having in-person services very often.

As for our members on Florida’s east and west coast, it was only logical that the “Swedenborgian Road Angels” came into existence. Their mission is to provide in-person support and fellowship for each other, as well as other isolated Swedenborgians in Florida. Several times in the past year, east coast members Rev. Ron and Val Brugler and Susan Wood, have traveled to the west coast to visit with Rev. Dick and Linda Tafel, gathering at Joyce Fekete’s assisted living facility. A small service was held with Rev. Ron providing communion. The last trip was to make a final visit to Rev. Dick as well as to provide support to Linda Tafel during Dick’s final days as she was also dealing with Hurricane Ian damage. The next trip is planned for May.

We continue to participate in outreach projects, including volunteering quarterly at Matthew 25 Ministries (an international disaster relief organization based here in Cincinnati.) We participated in Christmas adopt-a-family with Bethany House Family Shelter and supported projects at several local schools. Our Swedenborg Study Group continues to meet online, currently studying “Mindful Communication Challenge.” Plans are underway to put on charity Art Show in the fall.

Worship leaders from around the US and Canada continue to lead our services, providing rich and varied input. We fill in the calendar with an occasional lay-led service. Since last May, we’ve enjoyed sermons from Rev. Kevin Baxter, Rev. Dagmar Bollinger, Rev. Ron Brugler, Rev. Cory Coberforward, Rev. Julie Con-

aron, Rev. Dr. Sherrie Connelly, Rev. Dr. David Fekete, Pastor Robbin Ferriman, Rev. Catherine Lauber, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, and Rev. Renée Machiniak..

Respectfully submitted,

Gloria Toot

CLEVELAND SWEDENBORG CHAPEL

Cleveland, Ohio

We are still meeting as a Bible study group and have no changes to make. .

Respectfully submitted,

Janie Dzeba, Secretary

URBANA SOCIETY OF THE NEW CHURCH

Urbana, Ohio

Worship & Related Activities:

Worship Services are held weekly with an ongoing Zoom option. Except for special services, we hold a reading & discussion during the service instead of a sermon. We just completed *Spiritual Growth*, a book put out by the Swedenborg Foundation. We are about to begin *How to Think Like an Angel*, also by the Swedenborg Foundation. We hold special services for World Day of Peace, Epiphany, Palm Sunday, Easter, Earth Day, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas Eve. Services are led by Rev. Betsy Coffman and Pastor Robbin Ferriman, who function as a team ministry.

Meditation Group: One of our members, Sherry Rutledge, leads a weekly meditation and study group on Zoom, which is open to non-members as well as members.

Denominational Activities/Programs:

Convention 2022: Seven members attended Convention in Long Beach while others attended virtually. Of those, one was a teen who attended the youth program. In 2023, we also expect 6 adults and 1 teen to attend the Convention in-person at Bridgewater State.

Ohio Association 2022: In October, we held a joint Ohio-Michigan Association weekend at Almont, MI, with our Saturday program theme of “The Spirituality of Inclusion.” This was jointly led by Rev. Renee Machiniak, Rev. Betsy Coffman, and L.P. Robbin Ferriman. Sunday’s service included a Christian Native

American Communion. We were thrilled to have Rev. Eric Allison join us and help lead us in native drumming.

Community Outreach & Connections:

The Wedding outreach ministry is rebuilding after the Pandemic and now scheduling and conducting weddings. We have added a new wedding officiant, church member Cindi Haimerl. She is also working on enhancing our website. Pastor Robbin Ferriman is our long-standing officiant as well.

Three 12-step meetings and a weekly outside group conducting spirituality workshops, meet in our church.

Donations were made to our local “**Caring Kitchen**” community shelter, the county **Community Christmas** program, the school “**Backpack Friday**” program and the **Johnny Appleseed Foundation/Museum**.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Betsy Coffman, Minister

PACIFIC COAST ASSOCIATION

The PCA held its annual meeting in San Francisco on October 7-8, 2022. This was the first in-person since the pandemic. The meeting was a hybrid one offering Zoom link for PCA members who preferred the virtual meeting.

The theme of the annual meeting was “On Indigenous Land: Finding a Path to Regeneration.” On Friday, 10/7, evening, Gregg Castro, Program Director of the Ramaytush Ohlone people, provided the keynote presentation on the meaning of being indigenous. And on Saturday, Dr. Devin Zuber provided a talk on the linkages between Swedenborg and the Sami people of northern Scandinavia.

Due to good stewardship and reduced expenses during the pandemic, the PCA was able to provide grants to our ministries to support various projects and initiatives this past year. Grants totaling \$5,500 were awarded during the Annual Meeting in October 2022. Another set of grants totaling \$5,000 were awarded in Spring 2023. The PCA was also able to assist two of our ministers and one of our licensed pastors to travel to the COM meeting and Convention in Long Beach, CA. In recognition that the 2022 Convention was the first hybrid Convention in SCNA history, the PCA contributed \$2,000 in support of the virtual aspects of the 2022 Convention.

Peer Support for the ministers in PCA was held virtually in 2023 on April 22. The topic of discussion was “What does it mean to be a minister, personally to

me?” The plan moving forward is to have Peer Support one year virtually, and the following year in-person.

The PCA Officers have currently decided that it is fiscally prudent to meet in person every other year for its annual meeting, while meeting virtually in the other years. This decision will enable the PCA to continue supporting its ministries and providing travel assistance to its ministers and licensed pastors who wish to attend future COM meetings and Conventions.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Junchol Lee, President, Pacific Coast Association

AGAPAO CHURCH

Orange County, California

Agapao Church has in-person worship every 2 weeks and we add meditation time as well. This year we are focusing more on getting a relationship with God in depth through centering prayer. My YouTube Channel, which is Agapao ComeUnity, has over 900 subscribers and Korean viewers interested in ‘Awaken from Death’ video. It has over 33,000 views in the last 5 months.

Our church members are not growing in-person but YouTube Channel viewers are growing this year.

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, good will toward men” Luke 2:14

Respectfully Submitted,

Pastor Jae Chung, President

THE GARDEN CHURCH

San Pedro, California

The Garden Church continues to grow as an outdoor urban sanctuary which in the last year alone welcomed more than 10,500 people through the gates!

In partnership with Feed and Be Fed and thanks to a dedicated team of who put in 220 hours each month, rescue 500 lbs. of food from the land fill and in the last year have grown 1,290 lbs of food which went back out into our community.

Volunteers include:

- Students from the Port of Los Angeles High School
- Adults with developmentally disabilities

- Students from the Boys and Girls Club
- Community & Church volunteers

Feed and Be Fed continues to maintain a second location at the Vic and Bonnie Christensen Science Center located about 1.5 miles from the church. In addition to producing vegetables for sale at the Farmer's Market it is also the location for the new Garden Lab classes with nearly 150 students from a nearby school.

Since April of 2020 Feed and Be Fed has been the fiscal sponsors of the Harbor Neighborhood Relief Fund which has spawned a new non-profit called Harbor Connects. Harbor Connects has an office a few doors down from the garden and supports the church when we work with members of the unhoused community who need connection to services or support finding housing.

This last year was not free from challenges. The unprecedented rainfall in California lead to a record number of indoor worship services for us, which caused some unexpected expenses. As many of you know, in the first week of the new year, we experienced a burglary of the garden. During the theft we lost all our sound equipment, tools, a generator and a jackhammer which were on site for some construction in progress at the time. The loss and clean up was profound, and even through it all we saw a tremendous outpouring of support for our church and the non-profit. People came by having heard about the incident and handed us dollars apologizing for what had happened. The denomination responded with an outpouring of support through The Gray and Tafel funds and the PCA. These funds will allow us to replace the dilapidated and damaged back fence (through which the thieves entered). Even in difficulty we have seen the Lord's abundant generosity. And all that rain, it means our garden is blooming like never before. We have also been blessed to welcome two new members including a family.

Last summer we thanked and celebrated Rev. Jonathan Mitchell upon his retirement holding a transition worship service in which we welcomed Rev. Dr. David C. Brown into Pastoral leadership alongside Licensed Pastor Candidate Connie McOsker. Each month Rev. Brown provides a chance for deep theological discussion through our Theological Thursdays and preaches monthly. Connie McOsker has completed her coursework and is looking forward to being put before COM and the floor of Convention to become a Licensed Pastor this summer. If all goes as we hope and pray, Connie will be consecrated in the garden later this summer.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Amanda Riley, Pastor

SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH OF SAN FRANCISCO*San Francisco, California*

In 2022, we were pleased to hold many of our annual events in-person with great attendance including the West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat in May, the Animal Blessing Service in September, and an Advent Concert with our new music coordinator Heather Garland followed by three well-attended Christmas Eve services. In October, our church hosted the annual meeting of the Pacific Coast Association with the theme “On Indigenous Land: Finding a Path to Regeneration.” So far in 2023, we began offering member-guided tours of the sanctuary every Sunday for community outreach and enrichment. We also held the 85th annual Celebration of Marriage service in March and in April, our Easter service was nearly overflowing with 104 people in attendance.

Our worship services continue weekly in-person and live-streaming online with an average attendance of 35-40. We continue to offer Sunday school, weekly Swedenborgian reading group and Bible study, biweekly meditation, and a monthly men’s breakfast gathering. We very happily welcomed three new members.

Finally, we were able to complete much-needed maintenance on our physical campus. Very fortunately, we had our Parish House re-roofed and our large garden trees trimmed just before the historic California storms. We also replanted our back garden with native, drought tolerant plants.

Our congregational priorities for the coming year remain the same: providing meaningful worship services and classes, strengthening and maintaining a caring and supportive community, and guaranteeing financial security.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Carlson, Secretary

**HILLSIDE, AN URBAN SANCTUARY
SWEDENBORGIAN SOCIETY OF THE EAST BAY***El Cerrito, California*

Our congregation continues to grow and change. While a number of folks have moved away, new attendees of a range of ages seem to have materialized as if by Divine Providence, the work of our ministers, or very likely both. A typical Sunday will see fifteen to twenty worshippers, many of whom enjoy participating in discussing the sermon topic, which is a regular feature of our order of worship.

Reverend Thom Muller provides the lion's share of sermons, with occasional messages from our Licensed Pastor Tassy Farwell and other guest ministers and speakers. In addition to editing *Our Daily Bread* and serving unhoused people through his work with the San Francisco Night Ministry, Reverend Thom continues to lead four well attended discussion groups throughout the week. In addition to her administrative duties and frequent musical accompaniment during worship, Pastor Tassy Farwell leads the wedding program which regularly sees a small number of weddings each year at our blessed acreage overlooking San Francisco Bay.

The Hillside Board of Trustees has been devoting a good deal of attention to issues regarding the physical plant whose rental generates the bulk of our income. Each winter, Northern California can expect perhaps one or two major precipitation events known as "atmospheric rivers." This year, I believe we had 14. The result was basement flooding and mudslides, pans to catch roof leaks, and a playground under 4" of water. Fixes for these problems have been discussed and remedial action including installation of a French drain at the parsonage and repaving of a portion of the playground is planned for the dry summer months.

In addition to weather related issues, the sanctuary needs a new roof, the building exterior is in need of paint, and a kitchen remodel is easily 20 years overdue. These are all multi-10K dollar projects for which we are presently engaged in lining up bids.

This March Tassy Farwell oversaw the refinishing of most of our hardwood floors which are now very beautiful and with care will last for many years. Toward that end, we are engaged in hiring professional building maintenance people to provide regular cleaning of the Sanctuary as well as our tenant's classrooms downstairs. To date, our maintenance has been provided by Rev. Thom with additional labor volunteered by board member Rev. Alex Rush.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Gottschalk, President

WAYFARERS CHAPEL

Rancho Palos Verdes, California

(Please see page 87 for annual report)

NEW CHURCH OF THE SOUTHWEST DESERT

Silver City, New Mexico

This has been another enormously challenging year for our church community, with Rev. Carla Friedrich's retirement and departure in late July of 2022, due to health issues. Board members, church members, and friends stepped up to the plate (those on-the-ground, and at a distance) with church services, plans, activities, and donations, respectively. Chandra Visser continues to supply inspiring music at services and other church events, and has just recently joined the board.

In early spring this year, Xander Toth was accepted into the Licensed Pastorate Program and began his studies with the Center for Swedenborgian Studies via Zoom.

Two members/delegates, Susan Golightly and Xander Toth, were enthusiastic attendees at Pacific Coast Association in California last fall.

Xander and volunteers continue to do the hard labor of expanding the outdoor eating area.

Outreach and care has continued unabated—a beloved member with a health crisis was helped through a major surgery and successfully relocated, personally attended to throughout the ordeal; is currently happy and thriving. Winter's unusually freezing temperatures prompted a successful coat drive in February, in collaboration with Silver City Swap. Free coats, scarves, gloves, and caps were hung on poles and put out in boxes for people in need, thanks to generous donors and volunteers.

The long-awaited Grand Re-Opening of Oasis began with May 5th, 7pm Flicks on Bricks debuted with *Second Hand Lions* movie. Xander and the two great new baristas prepared the kitchen and the new menu.

Below is an example of the kind of programming that we now offer:

- Sat., May 6: Give Grandly Event at Main Street Plaza.
- Sun. May 7: 10:00am: Breakfast Club, meal, inspiring conversation, prior to service. 11:30am Worship Service with Coach Wendy Spurgeon, Focus Scripture: John 14:1-14 Focus Theme: The Way. 12:30pm: Coffee Hour, tested out the new menu!
- Friday, May 12 Shaking the Tree! The 1st Annual Performing Arts Oasis Fundraiser celebrated the performing arts in Southwest New Mexico, raising funds for Oasis renovations and summer youth programs. 4:00pm to 6:00pm: The Green Show featured local musicians, memorable monologues and scenes, and Oasis Vision for Outdoor Event Space

- Saturday, May 13, Shaking the Tree!: 4:00pm-6:00pm: The Green Show featured Aldo Leopold Musical Theatre's Annie Jr. revue, and Oasis Vision for Summer Youth Programs! Followed by a delicious enchilada dinner, or sampling the lighter, happy healthy hour fare from 6:00 to 7:00pm. 7:00 to 9:00pm: Featured presentation: Poker Queens of Silver City, a new play exploring historical Silver City's Lottie Deno and Poker Alice.
- Sunday, May 14th Mothers Day 10am Breakfast Club. 11:30am: Worship service with Xander Toth. 12:30pm: Mothers Day Brunch, celebrating the mothers in our lives. 2:00pm: Closing Matinee of Poker Queens of Silver City

We are still engaged in a search for a minister—or interim minister—grounded in Swedenborgian theology, with the energy and vision to expand our presence and ministry to all of the wonderful Silver City community.

Respectfully submitted,

Patte LeVan, Acting Vice-President

**SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH OF THE PUGET SOUND D/B/A
SWEDENBORGIAN SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY OF THE PUGET
SOUND**

Seattle, Washington

The Swedenborgian Spiritual Community of Puget Sound continues to offer a unique brand of mystical Christianity to the “Spiritual but not Religious” people of western Washington as well as to Christians seeking a deeper and more inclusive spiritual understanding of sacred scripture. While our local spiritual community is small, our services usually include the participation of Swedenborgians in other areas of the country who find our virtual events, which always include lively discussion, to be convenient and relevant. Retired ministers Rev. Eric Allison and Rev. Paul Martin continue to be part of our church family.

As the pandemic fades in our changed world, we have continued to meet at least monthly for virtual services, including our Angels and Ancestors service in October (for All Saints, Samhain, and Dia de los Muertos) and our traditional Christmas Eve-Eve service on December 23. During March 2023 we gathered virtually on Wednesday evenings to nurture our spiritual growth in the Lenten season, and in April our virtual service on Easter was preceded by a Maundy Thursday service where we celebrated the Holy Supper.

Our members continue to be active in virtual learning opportunities and workshops. Grateful for grant support from the Pacific Coast Association for music and speakers, we are looking forward to begin meeting again in person later in the summer, with plans to increase our virtual presence and our knowledge of Swedenborg and Sacred Scripture.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Barler, Licensed Pastor

WESTERN CANADA CONFERENCE

No report submitted.

CALGARY NEW CHURCH SOCIETY

Calgary, Alberta

Greetings from the Calgary New Church Society!

We have continued our monthly virtual gatherings to check in on each other, visit, and participate in our worship services. We take turns sharing readings from the Bible and Swedenborg, prayers, sermons, and music. We have some wonderful discussions about everything we are learning and sharing. We have regular attendees from all four western provinces for our virtual services.

We are pleased to be hosting the 2023 AGM of the Western Canada Conference in Calgary in May.

At our 2022 AGM the following officers were elected:

President:	Hartmut Lipski
Vice President:	Laurie Slough
Secretary:	Sharon Williams
Treasurer:	Dianne Roesinger
Board Members:	Pat Ravenhill
	Lorrie Lipski
	Susan Hulcher

Respectfully submitted,

Hartmut Lipski, President

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CITY*Edmonton, Alberta*

This church year was more promising than the covid years; our basement was occupied by NA and AA groups on many nights while the sanctuary was active with the African group The Burden Bearers after our service. Pastor Dave had videos recorded of several of his sermons which were posted online receiving hundreds of viewings until the cameraman moved to British Columbia.

We will be working at a casino on June 8th & 9th to qualify for some much needed funds to replace furnaces or shingles, whichever comes first.

The AGM was held May 1st 2023 with the following officers elected:

- President: Randy G Runka
- Secretary: Joyce Dirk
- Treasurer: Barry Reed
- Board Member 1: Guy Spencer
- Board Member 2: Ardith Francis
- Board Member 3: Linda Reed
- Board Member 4: Kelly Kennedy

Pastor Dave submitted his resignation notice to terminate on June 18th 2023. We thank him for his years of service and look forward to the next chapter in the Church of the Holy City Edmonton.

Respectfully submitted,
Randy Runka, President

VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES**THE RAINBOW CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM**

The Rainbow Church launched its virtual ministry officially in February 2023. A Facebook page was created for the ministry to help with advertising and connecting with other LGBTQ+ Christian and spiritual pages and seekers looking for a safe space to explore queer spirituality grounded in the theological teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg. Meetings began to be held virtually over Zoom twice a month with the focus on reading and discussing Swedenborg's text Conjugal Love. Meetings were hosted and facilitated by Rev. Colin Amato with participants taking turns reading passages out loud and engaging in discussion. The group not

only focused on topics related to the text of a given passage but quickly evolved to applying queer theological theory to expanding the meaning and application of the teachings of the theological messages.

Two additional Sundays were added to the monthly offerings and were called “Rainbow Worship” and “Rainbow Gatherings.” These meetings were intended to provide a safe drop-in style space for queer spiritual seekers and allies to come together and engage in free open conversation and facilitated meditation, prayer, listening to inspiring music, hear a sermon, and watch documentaries are topics related to the ministry.

Rev. Amato has officiated one wedding since the launching of The Rainbow Church, in addition he provides consultation for other ministers, offers pastoral counseling, and continued to collaborate with Convention’s Rainbow Group. The Rainbow Church, as of May 2023, is considering in-person offerings/programs to supplement the virtual meetings, as a response from feedback from spiritual seekers who live locally to Rev. Amato who wish to have more non-virtual engagements.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Colin Amato

SPIRITUAL SUNSHINE

(Please see page 84 for annual report)

ACT OF INCORPORATION

An act to incorporate the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America. Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois represented in the General Assembly.

Section 1. That Rev. Thomas Worcester, D.D. of Boston, Massachusetts; Rev. J.R. Hibbard of Chicago, Illinois; Rev. T.B. Hayward of Brookline, Massachusetts; Robert L. Smith, Esq. of Jamaica, Long Island, New York; J. Young Scammon, Esq. of Chicago and I.S. Britton, Esq. of Springfield, Illinois; Hon. Jno. B. Niles of LaPorte, Indiana; Dr. Charles Shepherd of Grand Rapids, Michigan; Rev. Chauncey Giles of Cincinnati, Ohio; David Snyder, Esq. of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; N.F. Cabell, Esq. of Warminster, Virginia; Hon. Jno. H. Wilkins and Sampson Reed of Boston, Massachusetts; Oliver Gerish of Portland and Henry B. Hoskins of Gardiner, Maine; their associates and successors, be, and they are hereby constituted a body Corporate under the name of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America; under which name they shall have perpetual succession, with power to receive, take by gift, purchase, devise or otherwise, property and real estate, real, personal or mixed, for educational or religious purposes, and to hold, lease, and sell or convey the same at pleasure.

Section 2. The business Affairs of said Convention shall be managed and controlled by its Executive Committee, (or General Council) subject to the direction of the Convention, when in session. Said Committee (or Council) shall be chosen or appointed from time to time, in such manner as the Constitution of said Convention may direct, and act in conformity to its votes. Said Committee (or Council) may create such offices, and appoint such Officers as they may see fit, and remove the same at pleasure; and may change its business affairs in such a manner as a majority of said Committee (or Council) may determine, subject to the control of the Convention.

Section 3. Said Convention may sue and be sued, plead and be impleaded, prosecute and defend, in all courts and places, in its corporate name, by Attorney or otherwise. All deeds, conveyances, or leases of the property held by said Convention, for the purpose of leasing or conveying such property, shall be made under the hands of the President and Recording Secretary, and under such seal as said Executive Committee (or General Council) may adopt; but all such deeds must be approved by a majority of said Committee (or Council).

Section 4(a). The purposes for which this Convention exists are: religious, charitable and educational as follows:

1. The specific and primary religious purpose is to aid the teachings of Christianity as taught by Emanuel Swedenborg.
2. The specific and primary charitable purpose is to aid the poor and unfortunate by collection and disbursement of funds, food, clothing and shelter.
3. The specific and primary educational purposes are to distribute funds for scholarships, to help organizations present education programs of general public interest and to disseminate educational material in the public interest.
4. The general purposes and powers are to have and exercise all of the rights and powers conferred on Convention under special charters under the laws of Illinois. However, this Convention shall not, except to an insubstantial degree, engage in activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the primary purposes of this Convention.
5. No substantial part of the activities of this Convention shall consist of the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, nor shall this Convention participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements), any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office or perform any act that will disqualify the Convention for tax exempt status conferred by any local, state or federal government which has jurisdiction over the Convention.
6. This Convention is incorporated and exists not for pecuniary profit and no part of any net earnings shall inure to the benefit of any person, private shareholder or individual.

Section 4(b). The property of this Convention is irrevocably dedicated to religious, charitable and educational purposes and no part of the net income or assets of the organization shall ever inure to the benefit of any director, officer or member thereof or to the benefit of any private persons. On the dissolution or winding up of the Convention, its assets remaining after payment of, or provision for payment of, all debts and liabilities of this Convention, shall be distributed to a nonprofit fund, foundation, or corporation which is organized and operated ex-

clusively for religious or charitable or educational purposes and which has established its tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and/or any future provisions amending, succeeding, supplementing or replacing this section.

If this Convention holds any assets in trust, or the Convention is formed for charitable purposes, such assets shall be disposed in such a manner as may be directed by decree of a court with jurisdiction over such trust, its assets or the Convention, on petition therefrom by the Attorney General or by any person concerned in the liquidation, in a proceeding to which such Attorney General is a party.

Section 4(c). All the property of the Convention held or located in the State of California is irrevocably dedicated to religious or charitable or educational purposes meeting the requirements for exemption provided by Section 214 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, and/or any future provisions that amend, supplement, succeed or replace such section, and upon dissolution or winding up of the Convention such property shall be distributed to a nonprofit fund, foundation, or corporation with religious or charitable or educational purposes meeting the requirements for exemption provided by Section 214 of the Revenue and Taxation Code. In all other respects, property in the State of California shall be subject to Section 4(b) above.

Section 5. Nothing in this Act contained, shall be so constructed as to interfere with the right of said Convention to alter, amend or abolish its Constitution, or to form a new one whenever it shall see fit to do so.

Approved January 29, 1861

The original Act of Incorporation is on file in the Office of the Secretary of the State, Springfield, Illinois; and it has also been recorded on page 1 of Record 48 in that Office.

By vote of a number of members of the New Church from various parts of the United States, assembled in Philadelphia on January 1st, 1817, a call was issued for a convention of the receivers of the doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church to be held in Philadelphia on May 15th of that year, “for the purpose of consulting upon the general concerns of the Church.”

The first meeting of the General Convention occurred as planned on May 15-17, 1817.

The General Convention was incorporated, under the laws of Illinois, on January 29, 1861. Its legal office is at the rooms of the Chicago Society of the New Jerusalem, 77 W. Washington Street, Room 1700, Chicago, IL 60602-2901.

CONSTITUTION
of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem
in the United States of America, Inc.

Article I.

Name, Purpose and Membership

Section 1. This body shall be called the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America, Inc., commonly known as the Swedenborgian Church.

Section 2. The Swedenborgian Church exists to help people be open to the Lord's presence and leading, especially by fostering personal and ordained ministries which facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, and which have in common a working for the Lord in bringing in the New Age, the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem.

The light in which we seek to walk shines from the Lord Jesus Christ in His second coming, available to us through the divine presence in our hearts and minds, and through revelation in the Holy Scripture and in the life and teaching of the Lord's servant, Emanuel Swedenborg.

This section shall hereinafter be referred to as the PURPOSE of the Swedenborgian Church.

Section 3. Constituent bodies of the Swedenborgian Church shall be those collective bodies which subscribe to this Purpose and which unite with the Swedenborgian Church in performing the distinctive uses of a church. All bodies entitled to voting delegates at the time of adoption of this article shall be considered to be constituent bodies. Additional bodies may be admitted to membership on recommendation of General Council and vote of the Swedenborgian Church.

The members of the Swedenborgian Church shall be those persons who are adult active members of a constituent body or who have been accepted as members at large through Rite of Confirmation and by vote of the Swedenborgian Church.

For membership in the Swedenborgian Church, an adult active member is

one who is at least eighteen years of age and who has been accepted by a constituent body through confirmation or by transfer, and who within the calendar year immediately preceding a session of the Swedenborgian Church has shown an active interest in his or her membership by joining in programs of worship and work or by contributing physically or financially.

Article II.

Officers, Councils and Administrative Functions

Section 1. The officers of the Swedenborgian Church shall be a President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer, all elected by ballot. The President and Treasurer shall each be elected for three-year terms, and the Vice President and Recording Secretary shall each be elected for one-year terms. The President and Treasurer shall assume the duties of their offices at the close of the next annual meeting after their election and the other officers shall assume the duties of their offices at the close of the annual meetings at which they are elected.

The election for President and Treasurer shall be held at the annual meetings of the Swedenborgian Church in the year prior to the beginning of each such term. In the absence of such session the term of office of the President shall be extended for one year following the succeeding session in order that the succeeding President may be elected one year prior to taking office. In the event of the death, resignation or incapacity of the incumbent President and/or Treasurer, the successor shall be installed for a full term immediately after the successor's election. A President who served for two successive terms shall not be eligible for election to the next succeeding term. The other officers shall be eligible for re-election without limitation.

The newly elected Treasurer shall be the Treasurer-elect and participate as a non-voting member of Standing Committees and other committees with the current Treasurer, including but not limited to, the Investment Committee and other funding committees. In the absence of such annual meeting of the Swedenborgian Church, the term of office of the Treasurer shall be extended for one year, in order for a new Treasurer to be elected one year prior to the expiration of the outgoing Treasurer's term.

Section 2. There shall be a General Council consisting of the President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer ex-officiis, together with three ministers and six laypersons to be elected by ballot by the Swedenborgian Church,

one minister and two laypersons to be elected annually for terms of three years. Members who have served for two consecutive three year terms shall not be eligible for immediate re-election.

Section 3. There shall be a Council of Ministers consisting of all the ministers of the Swedenborgian Church, of whom twelve shall constitute a quorum. This Council shall select a Chair who shall be an ex-officio member, with vote, of General Council.

Section 4. There shall be Standing Committees as specified in the Bylaws. Standing Committees shall consist of three members, one to be elected annually for a three-year term, or of six members, two to be elected annually for three-year terms, together with such ex-officio members as the Bylaws shall require. Members who have served two consecutive three-year terms shall not be eligible for immediate re-election. Each Standing Committee shall have specific focus as defined in the Bylaws and unless otherwise provided in the Bylaws shall elect a chair.

Section 5. *Left blank for future use.*

Section 6. All elected persons shall hold office for the respective terms for which they are elected, or until their respective successors shall have been elected or qualified, provided, however, that the terms of all such elected persons shall be automatically extended for one year for each year in which because of national emergency or other compelling reason no annual meetings of the Swedenborgian Church are held.

Section 7. The term ‘year’ or ‘years’ as used in the Article shall mean, unless otherwise specified, the periods between elections at succeeding annual sessions of the Swedenborgian Church.

Article III.

Duties and Powers

Section 1. The President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer shall perform the duties implied by the names of their several offices, the duties listed in the Bylaws and such other duties as the Swedenborgian Church may require of them.

Section 2. The General Council shall serve as the Executive Committee of the Swedenborgian Church, shall have superintendence of the business of the Swedenborgian Church, and shall exercise the powers of the Swedenborgian Church in the interim of its sessions. It shall be responsible for all corporate, legal and financial functions of the Swedenborgian Church and shall act as a Court of Appeals as defined in the Bylaws. The President, the Vice President and the Recording Secretary of the Swedenborgian Church shall be ex-officio Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary, respectively, of the General Council. The General Council may fill any vacancy in the General Council or in any office or position regularly elected by the delegates; provided, however, that any such appointment to fill a vacancy shall last only until the next session of the Swedenborgian Church.

The General Council shall annually review all committee and Standing Committee reports and shall recommend to the Church any necessary revisions or clarifications of fundamental principle or priority. It shall receive budget recommendations, revise them as its wisdom shall indicate, and adopt a budget.

Section 3. The Council of Ministers shall have as its central focus the facilitating of ordained ministries serving the Swedenborgian Church's PURPOSE. It shall have primary responsibility in matters pertaining to doctrine and worship of the church and shall have charge of the ministry. This council shall oversee the pastoral, teaching, liturgical and administrative dimensions of the ordained ministry; it shall practice and support disciplined and creative theological research and reflection, and it shall oversee the provision of ordained ministry of the Swedenborgian Church and its collective bodies. It also bears responsibility for the pastoral support of all ministries and for providing them with clear ethical standards. It shall exercise such disciplinary functions over the ordained clergy as it may in its collective wisdom adopt, subject to the provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws.

Section 4. *Left blank for future use.*

Section 5. The primary duties of each Standing Committee shall be to facilitate, initiate and evaluate activities relevant to its focus. Its primary means shall be the provision of supportive supervision for the planning, realization and evaluation of such activities, such supervision to function under criteria approved by the Swedenborgian Church. It shall be responsible for annual review of its efforts with explicit reference to the Swedenborgian Church's Purpose, Objectives

and Strategies as listed in the Standing Resolutions.

Persons or groups desiring denomination support for new or existing activities shall communicate their desire to the President, who shall refer the request to an appropriate Standing Committee. The Standing Committee shall then appoint a supervisor acceptable to the requesting persons or groups to assist in the planning and the evaluation of the activity.

Within the limits of its budget, each Standing Committee shall meet at least semi-annually, either in person or electronically, as provided in the Bylaws. They shall submit written reports, at least annually, to General Council via the Recording Secretary.

Within the limits of its budget, each Standing Committee shall enlist the services of resource persons as supervisors, make decisions concerning the funding of activities in its care and receive and evaluate reports therefrom, submitting to the General Council at least annually a report of its decisions and the activities in its care.

The Chair of each committee shall bear primary responsibility for coordinating these activities with those of other Committees.

Article IV.

Representation and Voting

Section 1. All members of the Swedenborgian Church shall have the right to be present at its meetings and to take part in its deliberations. They may be eligible for election or appointment to any office or position in the Swedenborgian Church as the Constitution and Bylaws shall provide. But the right to vote shall be limited to the members of the Council of Ministers, to the lay officers of the Swedenborgian Church, to members of the General Council during their terms of office and to the delegates of constituent bodies entitled to representation at the annual meetings. No member shall be entitled to more than one vote.

Section 2. Every constituent body of the Swedenborgian Church shall be entitled to two delegates and an additional delegate for every ten members, such delegates to be members of the body which they represent.

Membership is to be determined as of the 31st day of December of the calendar year immediately preceding the date of the Swedenborgian Church annual meetings. For this purpose, only adult active members as defined in Article I, Section 3 shall be counted. It shall be the joint responsibility of the members and the bodies involved to ensure that no member is counted by more than one body for delegate strength.

Section 3. In determining delegate strength and in selecting delegates, only those bodies shall be included which are in good standing with the Swedenborgian Church.

Good standing of constituent bodies shall be forfeited if such body, without express consent of the Council of Ministers, employs a minister on an annual basis who is not on the Roll of Ministers as defined in Article XII, Section 1 of the Bylaws.

Article V. The Ministry

Section 1. The Swedenborgian Church shall at its discretion, on recommendation of the Council of Ministers, and subject to the provisions in Article XII of the Bylaws, authorize the ordination and induction of qualified individuals to serve as its ministers. Such ordination and induction shall confer the privileges and responsibilities of leading in worship, administering the rites and sacraments, teaching, and pastoral care, together with those of full membership in the Council of Ministers.

Section 2. The Swedenborgian Church's interest in education for its ministers shall be exercised through the General Council in its role as the representative class of members of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School. It is the denomination's interest that such education focus on the spiritual growth of its participants by development in understanding of our theology, sensitivity in human relations, appreciation of other traditions and the technical skills required for effective ministry.

Article VI.**Meetings of the Swedenborgian Church**

Section 1. Sessions of the Swedenborgian Church shall be held at least triennially, at such times and places as it may determine. Meetings of the Swedenborgian Church must be called with 90 days' notice published in The Messenger or through a mailing to the members.

Section 2. A quorum to hold a convention shall consist of twenty percent of the number of persons qualified to vote as defined in Article IV, Representation and Voting.

Section 3. A quorum to conduct business at the convention shall be a majority of the registered voters at the convention, as defined in Article IV, Section 1, Representation and Voting.

Section 4. Virtual conventions and annual or special meetings of the Swedenborgian Church may be held when authorized by the General Council and may include electronic voting. The General Council may authorize hybrid, virtual, and in-person meetings to allow greater participation, which may include electronic voting or a combination of in-person and electronic voting. All such meetings and voting must comply with all other existing constitution and bylaw sections.

Article VII.**Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended at any session of the Swedenborgian Church by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting, provided that the proposed amendment shall first have been referred to the General Council, and public notice of the substance thereof shall have been given at least three months before the time of such meeting. Such notice may be dispensed with for any special occasion by a three-fourths vote of those present and voting.

Revised June 28, 1996.

Adopted as Amended June 27, 2021.

BYLAWS OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

Article I.

Religious Observances of the Annual Meeting

Section 1. The annual business meeting of the Swedenborgian Church shall include each day a reading from the Word and prayer.

Section 2. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be administered at an appropriate time during the annual meetings of the Swedenborgian Church.

Article II.

Enrollment of the Swedenborgian Church

Section 1. A Committee on Credentials, to consist of three persons, shall be appointed prior to the opening of each session of the Swedenborgian Church, to examine the credentials of the delegates, and to make up the Roll of the Swedenborgian Church; said Committee to sit during the whole of that session and to add to and correct the Roll, as may be proper.

Section 2. Friends of the Swedenborgian Church, who are in attendance at any session of the Swedenborgian Church, are invited to inscribe their names and residences in a register to be kept for that purpose and to take seats in the meetings. Such registry shall entitle them, without vote, to participate in its deliberations by addressing the Chair for permission to speak from the floor.

Article IV, Section 1 of the Constitution and Article II, Section 2 of the Bylaws shall be read by the Recording Secretary immediately after the opening of the session of the Swedenborgian Church.

Article III.

Order of Business

Reports and Communications shall be presented in the following order:

1. Reports of the Officers of the Swedenborgian Church
2. Report of the General Council
3. Report of the Council of Ministers
4. Reports of the Committees
5. Reports of the Associations
6. Reports of Churches not affiliated with Associations
7. Reports of Trustees
8. Reports of Auxiliary Bodies
9. Special Reports

10. Unfinished Business
11. New Business

When any report called for is not ready, its presentation shall be postponed until all other reports have been presented in their order. This rule shall not apply to the reports of the Council of Ministers or of the General Council, which may be presented as soon as prepared.

No debate shall be allowed on any of the above reports until all of them have been presented; but a motion to refer, or to adopt a recommendation without debate, shall be in order.

The above Order of Business may be suspended at any time by a two-thirds vote.

Article IV.

Annual Meeting Planning and Operation

Section 1. Planning for Sessions of the Swedenborgian Church.

The President shall appoint a committee representing the Swedenborgian Church body for each year's session for the purpose of planning the overall program, including selection of theme, specific programs, allocation of times for these programs and development of the published program.

Section 2. Local Arrangements.

The President may appoint a committee representing the local church or association where the sessions are to be convened for the purpose of planning and coordinating with the Central Office and the host institution such matters as transportation, housing, meals, meeting room requirements, audio-visual equipment, special event requirements, and any other arrangements appropriate for the planned program.

Section 3. The Swedenborgian Church Business.

The Executive Committee of the General Council shall serve as the Committee on Business for each year's session. It shall be the duty of this committee to assign the order under which different subjects shall be presented and the time allotted to each subject, and to prepare and print the program for that session; but such program may be changed at any time by majority vote of the delegates. Any item of new business wished to be placed on the floor for the session must be submitted in writing to the Recording Secretary of the Swedenborgian Church. To ensure an agenda position in the Order of Business, the items must be submitted in advance.

Article V.**Parliamentary Procedures**

Section 1. The provisions of Robert's Rules of Order, so far as they are consistent with the Bylaws, shall govern the proceedings of the sessions. The President shall at the beginning of each session appoint an advisor on parliamentary matters.

Section 2. The yeas and nays shall be taken whenever they are called for by one-fifth of the persons voting.

Section 3. No member shall speak more than five minutes at one time, nor more than twice upon any subject, without affirmative vote of the delegates present.

Article VI.**Duties of the President**

Section 1. The President shall perform the duties required by the Act of Incorporation, the Constitution and these Bylaws. The President shall preside over sessions of the Swedenborgian Church, and shall address the Swedenborgian Church setting forth the state of the Church. In the absence of the President, the Vice-President shall fulfill these duties.

Section 2. All Committees shall be appointed by the President of the Swedenborgian Church, unless otherwise ordered by the Swedenborgian Church, or provided in the Constitution or Bylaws; and vacancies in Committees so appointed shall be filled by the President. Vacancies in Standing Committees shall be filled by the President of the Swedenborgian Church should they occur between annual meetings of the Church, with such appointed members remaining in their positions until elections are held as provided in the Bylaws.

Section 3. The President shall have the privilege of participating, ex-officio without vote, in the meetings of all Standing Committees and committees.

Article VII.**Duties of the Recording Secretary**

Section 1. The Recording Secretary shall perform the duties required by the Act of Incorporation, including the execution of deeds, conveyances or leases, provided by the Act of Incorporation; and any duties that may be prescribed by the Constitution, the Bylaws, the Swedenborgian Church or by the General Council.

Section 2. The Recording Secretary shall be responsible for securing reports from the bodies below named, to be received at least four weeks prior to each annual session of the Swedenborgian Church, or if any such session is not

held in any one year, not later than June 30th of such year. The Recording Secretary shall see that copies of such reports, so prepared, are mailed to each minister and association of the Swedenborgian Church, and to such officers or interested persons as may be deemed desirable at least ten days prior to each session, and distribute them to members at the annual session. Reports received after the deadline may be presented to the Swedenborgian Church orally or in print, in full or in summary.

Such reports are to be requested from: Officers, General Council, Council of Ministers, Support Units, Committees, Associations, Trustees, Auxiliary Bodies and Churches not affiliated with Associations.

Section 3. The Recording Secretary shall be responsible for providing the Committee on Credentials with a list of the number of delegates to which each constituent body is entitled, as defined in Article IV, Section 2 of the Constitution. The necessary information shall be solicited from the constituent bodies in the January preceding the session. Any constituent body failing to comply with this requirement by April 1 shall forfeit the right of its additional delegates (as defined in Article IV, Section 2 of the Constitution) to vote at that session. Should such body submit the necessary information after the deadline, this forfeiture may be waived by a three-fifths vote of the Swedenborgian Church. A numerical table of the maximum delegation shall be published in *The Messenger* not less than one month before each annual session.

Section 4. The Recording Secretary, with such persons as may be appointed by the General Council, shall constitute a Committee on the *Journal*, to procure each year the publication of the *Journal of the Swedenborgian Church*. Said *Journal* shall include the Act of Incorporation, the Constitution and Bylaws, the minutes of the session of the Swedenborgian Church held during the current year; the names of the officers, General Council members, administrative bodies and members of committees of the Swedenborgian Church, current membership statistics, and any other matter that is required by the Constitution or Bylaws to be included; together with any reports presented to the Swedenborgian Church as provided by these Bylaws in such forms as such committee shall deem proper, together with any additional information which the Committee shall deem appropriate. Such Committee shall cause to be printed such number of copies of the *Journal* as it may deem necessary, and arrange for the distribution thereof.

Section 5. The Committee on the *Journal* shall publish in a supplemental or special *Journal* every five years such matters of information of a permanent nature, not required to be published in each *Journal*, as it may deem suitable; and

shall distribute such supplemental or special *Journals* in the same manner as the *Journals*.

Article VIII.

The General Council

Section 1. The General Council shall meet without notice within forty-eight hours after the final adjournment of the Business Session of the Swedenborgian Church. The Council shall also hold two other regular meetings, an interim meeting and a meeting just before the convening of a session of the Swedenborgian Church. Twenty days' notice of these meetings and of any special meetings called by the Chair or by any five members of the Council, shall be given by letter to all members of the Council at their last known address, the time to be computed from the mailing of the letter. The notices of special meetings shall contain brief statements of the purpose of the meetings. At all meetings of the Council seven shall constitute a quorum.

Section 2. There shall be an Executive Committee of the General Council consisting of the President, Vice President and the Secretary of the General Council, and the Treasurer of the Swedenborgian Church, which shall deal with any matters referred to it by the General Council. In routine matters not involving policy decisions, the Executive Committee may act for the General Council between General Council sessions, all such actions to be reported to the next meeting of the General Council.

Section 3. Any action required or permitted to be taken at a regular meeting of the Council may be taken without a meeting if two-thirds of the members of the Council consent to the action in writing and the written consents are filed with the records of the General Council's meetings; provided further that if any member entitled to vote on such action shall so request, the Secretary shall notify all members of the General Council in writing of any objections to the action and allow two weeks from the date of such notice before the count of the vote is finally made.

Section 4. The General Council may, in its discretion, appoint such officers or employees not otherwise provided for, as it may deem necessary or desirable; and it shall define the duties of such officers and employees, and such officers and employees shall hold office at the pleasure of the General Council.

Section 5. The General Council shall serve ex-officio as the representative class of members of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School, and in accord with the provisions of the Bylaws of said Corporation shall represent the denomination's interest.

Section 6. Any member of General Council, of any committee appointed by General Council, or of any Support Unit who fails to attend at least one duly called meeting during a calendar year may be deemed by General Council to have submitted his or her resignation, and shall be so informed by the Secretary. If no good and sufficient reason for said absence is offered, General Council may appoint a qualified individual to serve until the next meeting of Convention.

Article IX.

Article X.

Standing Committees

(Established by Article II, Section 4 of the Constitution)

Section 1. The Standing Committee For Financial Accountability.

There shall be a Standing Committee for Financial Accountability whose central focus shall be on the wise use and development of such resources as are directly under the Swedenborgian Church's control, and the provision of advice and counsel in such matters to the Swedenborgian Church's collective bodies. It shall oversee the management of the Swedenborgian Church's properties and investments, shall seek new sources of material support and shall provide consultants for the Swedenborgian Church's collective bodies toward the best coordinated and wisest use and development of their financial and physical resources. This Standing Committee shall work in close cooperation with the Common Fund Investment Committee. It shall consist of six (6) members, two of whom are to be Swedenborgian ministers or pastors, four of whom are to be lay members of the Swedenborgian Church, plus the Treasurer of the Swedenborgian Church, ex-officio with vote, who shall serve as its Chair.

Based on its assessment of the overall needs of the denomination, the Standing Committee for Financial Accountability shall make recommendations to General Council as to how best to manage its funds and properties. It shall administer all funds, including but not restricted to, the Augmentation Fund, the Mission Fund, and the Iungerich Fund. It shall oversee the distribution of all restricted and unrestricted funds of the denomination and their application process, if any. It shall receive all preliminary budget requests, including but not restricted to, those from General Council, the Council of Ministers and all Standing Committees and committees, and shall prepare therefrom a preliminary budget for submission to the General Council.

Section 2. The Standing Committee For Education and Resources for Spiritual Community.

There shall be a Standing Committee of Education and Resources for Spiritual Community, whose central focus shall be the development and dissemination of resources for worship, small groups, church growth, stewardship, and board development and outreach. It shall be concerned with resources, personnel and programming, and will strive to provide materials for the development of ministries and seek to anticipate and develop programs and resources for local communities' needs for worship, programming and outreach. It shall consist of three (3) members, including at least one minister with five or more years of pastoral experience, plus a representative appointed by the Center for Swedenborgian Studies Board of Trustees.

Section 3. The Standing Committee For Communications and Information.

There shall be a Standing Committee for Communication and Information consisting of three to six members, the number to be determined annually by the President of the Swedenborgian Church based upon the needs of the church at that time. The Standing Committee's central focus shall be on coordinating, initiating and promoting communication both within and across the boundaries of the denomination in all variety of media. It will seek to foster coordination among the Swedenborgian Church's publishing and information and technology activities. This Standing Committee will be alert to the climate of opinion both within and beyond the boundaries of the Swedenborgian Church and will also be alert to developments in communication technology. The official organ of the denomination, *The Messenger*, and the denomination's WEB presence shall be under the supervision of this Standing Committee.

Section 4. The Standing Committee For Nominations (moved from Article XVII to this article).

There shall be a Standing Committee for Nominations of five members to serve for five years each; one member to be elected each year, but not from any Association from which his or her predecessor or any other member of the Committee is a member. The unexpired term of any member may be filled from the same Association. A member moving to another Association shall continue to serve and shall be regarded as coming from his or her former Association; but no retiring member shall be eligible for immediate reelection. Whenever possible,

the Standing Committee for Nominations shall propose slates representative of the Swedenborgian Church's overall constituency.

It shall be the duty of this Standing Committee to present, at each session of the Swedenborgian Church, nominees for the Swedenborgian Church officers (where applicable), vacancies in the elective members of the General Council and all other Boards and Committees, unless otherwise appointed. Each year the member whose term is next to expire shall act as Chair of the Committee.

Section 5. It is recommended that no individual serve on more than two administrative bodies or more than two committees of the Swedenborgian Church, the Standing Committee for Nominations and the Chair being similarly instructed. This does not apply to persons serving ex-officio as provided by the Constitution and Bylaws.

Article XI.

Electronic Meeting Guidelines

Section 1. Virtual conventions and annual or special meetings of the Swedenborgian Church; General Council, Cabinet, and other boards and committees, of the Swedenborgian Church may use telephone conferencing and electronic communication to conduct business when not in regular session, or when face-to-face meeting is impractical. Such communication must follow procedures adopted by the denomination to ensure an orderly deliberative process is honored.

Section 2. It is critical to the deliberative process that all members of a body participate in discussion and votes at the same time (synchronous meetings). Thus, business requiring voting must be done by phone conferencing or "real-time" electronic conferencing (e.g., instant messaging or chat).

Section 3. All deliberations conducted by telephone or electronic means shall be duly recorded and filed with other records of the body. These minutes shall be reviewed and approved at the next meeting of the body.

Section 4. Procedures for using phone conferencing and electronic communications will be the responsibility of a standing committee, appointed by the President. Such committee will present to the General Council proposed procedures for the General Council's approval. This committee shall also be responsible for proposing to General Council from time to time revisions that may be desirable for the efficient and orderly operation of the church's business.

Section 5. The procedures approved by General Council under this Article shall be communicated by the Central Office to all members of all boards, and committees of the Swedenborgian Church at least once a year, following the close

of annual convention sessions. They shall also be published in the annual Journal of the Swedenborgian Church.

Section 6. Nothing in this Article is meant to prohibit the use of e-mails, faxes, or other electronic media for communication and information sharing purposes.

Section 7. Virtual conventions and annual or special meetings of the Swedenborgian Church shall follow the policies listed below, along with any additional procedures adopted by the General Council whether temporary or via a standing resolution. General Council may call a virtual convention with electronic voting whenever an in-person convention is deemed by it to be impractical, too costly, or at any time when a virtual convention is desirable. It shall establish a Committee on Virtual Conventions to organize any such meeting. The committee must ensure that the meeting structure complies with all then existing articles of the constitution and bylaws.

A suitable outside vendor shall be chosen to handle electronic voting. The General Council or the Executive Committee of General Council shall select the vendor.

Only delegates eligible to vote shall be provided access to the voting system and shall be limited to one vote for each eligible position or issue being considered. All members and friends shall be afforded the opportunity to participate in the meeting. A quorum for such a meeting shall be the same as described in Article VI of the constitution.

Due and timely notice and publication of such notice shall be the same as the then current constitution and bylaw sections state.

The Committee on Credentials, in consultation with the Recording Secretary, shall submit a list of eligible voters to the General Council committee organizing the meeting, by a date established by the President of Convention. The General Council's Committee on Virtual Conventions shall consult with the election vendor to establish election access protocols, in consultation with the credentials committee.

Hybrid meetings are those meetings allowing any combination of in-person participation and voting, and electronic participation and voting. Hybrid meetings will be treated in the same way as any virtual meeting with electronic voting. Any delegate voting virtually must be able to both participate in the meeting concurrent with other meeting attendees and vote at the same time voting opens for all other delegates.

Article XII.**The Council of Ministers**

Section 1. Application for ordination or other matters relating to the office of the ministry shall first be received and considered by the Council of Ministers. Its report on such matters as require immediate action shall be privileged at any session of the Swedenborgian Church.

Section 2. The Council of Ministers shall revise the denomination's Roll of Ministers annually, and shall report such revision to the Swedenborgian Church for its actions.

Section 3. Every minister ordained or inducted by authority of the Swedenborgian Church, and not serving any church, ministry, or other collective body acting under the rules of the Swedenborgian Church, shall report his or her official acts to the Council of Ministers. If the minister shall have performed no official acts, he or she shall report that fact, and shall signify whether he or she desires to be retained on the denomination's Roll of Ministers.

Article XIII.**The Ordained Ministry**

Preamble: Jesus said unto his disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." (John 15:16)

The ordained ministry exists to facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, helping them to be open to the Lord's leading and enabling them to live useful lives. Resources for the ordained ministry in serving the church include the Holy Word, the doctrines of the church, the rites and sacraments, experiences of worship, and growth-oriented skills insofar as they promote the process of regeneration.

Section 1. A member of the Swedenborgian Church shall be ordained into or inducted into its ministry by recommendation of the Council of Ministers and by affirmative vote of the Swedenborgian Church. The Council of Ministers shall have first received a written vision of ministry from the applicant, and determined that one of the following requirements has been met;

1. He or she shall have earned a Master of Divinity Degree from the Pacific School of Religion, the Certificate in Swedenborgian Theology from Pacific School of Religion, and passing evaluations on all denominational requirements.
2. He or she shall have earned a Master of Divinity Degree or equivalent degree from an accredited institution, the Certificate in Swedenborgian The-

ology from Pacific School of Religion, and passing evaluations on all denominational requirements.

3. After preparation recognized by the Council of Ministers as adequate, and he or she shall have served as an Authorized Candidate for the Ministry for one year.
4. After preparation recognized by the Council of Ministers as adequate, a minister ordained in another communion who accepts the doctrines of the Swedenborgian Church and expresses allegiance to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Swedenborgian Church may be inducted into our ministry.

Those persons applying for ordination or induction shall also have a request for employment from a church or other employing body of the Swedenborgian Church, or shall have a proposal for ministry approved by the Council of Ministers. Upon recommendation by the Council of Ministers, and affirmative vote of the Swedenborgian Church, upon ordination or induction his or her name shall be added to the Roll of Ordained Ministers.

Section 2. The Ordaining Minister.

(a) A Minister who is elected President of the Swedenborgian Church shall be invested with the office of Ordaining Minister during his or her term as President. The Ordaining Minister shall be empowered to ordain duly qualified candidates for the ministry (cf. Section 1), to authorize for one year Candidates for the Ministry (cf. Section 3), to confer upon suitable persons, at the request of the church to be served and in accordance with the provisions of Article XIII (below), the title Lay Leader, and to consecrate as Worship Leaders persons selected by their congregation or group to provide leadership for public worship (cf. Article XIII, Section 2).

b) In the event that a lay person is elected as President of the Swedenborgian Church, then the Chair of the Council of Ministers shall be invested with the office of Ordaining Minister, during his or her term as chair.

(c) When the President is the Swedenborgian Church's Ordaining Minister and is adjudged by the General Council to be incapacitated, the Chair of the Council of Ministers shall be invested with the office of Ordaining Minister until such time as the President is recovered. In the event of resignation of the President, the investiture of the Chair of the Council of Ministers shall be for the duration of his or her term of office, until such times as the Swedenborgian Church shall again have a minister as its President.

(d) In the event that subsequent to the invoking of the provisions of section 2(c), or when the President of the Swedenborgian Church is a lay person, the Chair of the Council of Ministers should resign, or become incapacitated or

die, the Secretary of the Council of Ministers shall be invested with the office of Ordaining Minister, such investiture to terminate upon the recovery of the chair, or in the case of the chair's death or resignation, upon the election of a new chair of the Council of Ministers, or on the election of a minister as President of the Swedenborgian Church.

(e) In the event that it is not possible for the Ordaining Minister to travel to a suitable place for the ordination of candidates for the ministry, he or she may appoint an ordained minister to act as the Ordaining Minister pro tem for a specific ordination.

Section 3. The Authorized Candidate for the Ministry.

(a) A member of the Swedenborgian Church, after preparation recognized by the Council of Ministers as adequate, may upon recommendation of the Council of Ministers, and after affirmative vote of the Swedenborgian Church, be authorized by the Ordaining Minister as an authorized candidate for the ministry and for one (1) year. He or she may lead in worship, teach the doctrine of the Church and officiate at resurrection services. Such persons shall be known as Authorized Candidates for the Ministry. Where authorization does not lead to ordination at the end of one year, the candidacy may be reviewed by the Council of Ministers.

(b) The Ordaining Minister of the Swedenborgian Church may empower an Authorized Candidate for the Ministry or a Swedenborg School of Religion student intern to perform a marriage where the laws of the state or province permit and in specific instances may empower him or her to administer the Sacrament of Baptism and/or the Holy Supper.

Section 4. Special Circumstances.

The Swedenborgian Church by a three-quarters vote may, in individual cases, dispense with limiting requirements, outlined in Article XIII, upon the recommendation of the Council of Ministers showing the need or desirability thereof, such recommendation to be made only on the agreement of at least three-fourths of the members of the Council of Ministers present and voting at the Council Session.

Section 5. The Swedenborgian Church's Roll of Ordained Ministers is the record of all those who have been ordained or inducted into the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church.

Article XIV.**The Ministry of Lay Persons**

Preamble: Every Christian is called to minister. Jesus said that inasmuch as we minister to one another, we minister unto Him. “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” (Matthew 25:35-36)

The Apostle Paul declared that “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To teach is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (I Corinthians 12:4-7)

The church encourages all members to exercise their unique talents and gifts in assimilating the spiritual and well-being of people. Some are called to ordained ministry within the framework of the Swedenborgian Church. Others are called to specific, part-time service in the church and are recognized and consecrated as Lay Leaders and Worship Leaders. Other men and women are called to minister to the world and around them, in their homes, and in their chosen vocations. In addition, some wish to offer their gifts through programs and services in the church. The Swedenborgian Church encourages these ministries and recognizes them as manifestations of the Spirit of God.

Section 1. Lay Leader.

- (a) The Swedenborgian Church commends the efforts of lay people throughout our church who have served in many ways and ministered to the needs of local churches. Out of this experience, the Swedenborgian Church sees the potential for even greater service to the church by trained qualified lay persons to augment the work of its ordained ministry.
- (b) In order to meet ongoing needs of local churches, suitable persons may be consecrated as Lay Leaders to serve particular congregations or to serve within clearly defined geographical areas. For such consecration, the following requirements must be met.
 - (1) The candidate must apply to the Swedenborgian House of Studies for enrollment in its Lay Leadership Education program. This application must be supported by the endorsement of the individual’s congregation or appropriate supervisory body, granted on the basis of leadership ability, knowledge of the Church’s teachings, character, and devotion to the Church. Neither acceptance into the program nor completion of the program guarantees approval by the Council of Ministers.

- (2) On satisfactory completion of the first year of this program, duly certified by the School, the individual must request of the Ordaining Minister and be granted status as a Probationary Lay Leader, this request to be supported by the recommendation of the Council of Ministers. With this status, the candidate is authorized to lead in worship, teach the doctrines of the Church, and officiate at resurrection services. The expected duration of this status shall be two years. The Committee on Admission Into the Ministry or other committee recommended by the Council of Ministers will be responsible for monitoring the progress of Probationary Lay Leaders. The Ordaining Minister may rescind the status of Probationary Lay Leader if the candidate fails to keep pace with the educational requirements, if the congregation or appropriate supervisory body requests such rescission, or for other due and weighty cause. If for good and sufficient reasons the person is unable to complete the prescribed training within the normal period, the Ordaining Minister may extend the authorization for one year. Extensions of more than one year will require review by the Council of Ministers.
- (3) Consecration as a Lay Leader, administered by the Ordaining Minister, shall take place when the following conditions have been met.
- a) The Swedenborgian House of Studies shall certify to the Council of Ministers that the educational program has been satisfactorily completed.
 - b) The congregation of the candidate shall reaffirm to the Council of Ministers its desire for such consecration.
 - c) The Council of Ministers shall recommend the consecration to the Swedenborgian Church.
 - d) Said Church shall authorize the consecration. The consecration itself shall take place in a public service held in the congregation or area to be served.
 - (c) Henceforth, the title “Lay Leader” shall be reserved for individuals so consecrated.
 - (d) Following consecration, the Lay Leader may administer all the rites and sacraments to the congregation or in the area served. This authorization shall include the right to perform marriages where the laws of the state or province permit. Lay leaders are expected to comply with the guidelines for ministerial conduct.

- (e) Lay leaders shall be accountable to the Ordaining Minister of the Swedenborgian Church, who shall be responsible for providing appropriate supervision. If the Lay Leader serves a congregation which employs an ordained minister, said minister shall act as the immediate supervisor and the Lay Leader shall not offer pastoral or liturgical services without the knowledge and consent of this minister. The local congregation or other supervisory body shall have the right to terminate the services of the lay leader. A lay leader may not serve in another congregation or geographical area without a request from the new congregation or other supervisory body, and the approval of the Council of Ministers.
- (f) Administrative details of the above procedure shall be available in writing from the Swedenborgian House of Studies and the Council of Ministers.

Section 2. Worship Leader.

Nothing in this Article shall in any way be interpreted to place restrictions on those lay persons selected by their congregation or group to provide leadership for public worship. Indeed, an appropriate service of consecration for such persons functioning as worship leaders is recommended. Following consecration, such persons shall be known as Worship Leaders.

Section 3. Special Circumstances.

The Swedenborgian Church by three-quarters vote may, in individual cases, dispense with limiting requirements, outlined in Article XIV upon the recommendation of the Council of Ministers showing the need or desirability thereof, such recommendation to be made only on the agreement of at least three-fourths of the members of the Council of Ministers present and voting at the Council session.

Section 4. The Roll of Lay Leaders.

Any person consecrated as a Lay leader shall have his or her name listed on the Roll of Lay Leaders with indication of the church or area which each serves. The names shall appear on the Roll so long as the persons continue actively to serve the church or area for which they were consecrated.

Section 5. Licensed Pastors

Upon application by a member of the Swedenborgian Church and an eligible and recognized body of the Swedenborgian Church of North America, and with preparation recognized by the Council of Ministers as adequate, the candidate upon recommendation of the Council of Ministers, and after affirmative vote of the Swedenborgian Church, may be given license to pastor a society by the Or-

daining Minister for two (2) years. Said license empowers the bearer to provide all sacerdotal duties and to fulfill the pastoral role. Such persons shall be known as “Licensed Pastors.” The license may be renewed by vote of the Council of Ministers upon recommendation of the Committee on Admission to the Ministry. A Licensed Pastor must maintain a mentor relationship with an Ordained Minister of the Swedenborgian Church and follow the Guidelines for Ministerial Conduct. The two year license period will have educational objectives that will prepare the “Licensed Pastor” for Ordination over an extended period of time if the licensee wishes to apply to the Committee on Admission to the Ministry for Authorized Candidacy for Ordination. A licensee may make application to the ordaining minister to become a “Lay-Leader” if they wish to not renew a license.

Article XV.

Theological School

Section 1. The Swedenborgian Church shall by majority vote nominate annually the number of nominees for election by the Board of Trustees of the New Church Theological School, commonly known as the Swedenborgian House of Studies, as provided for, or allowed, by the Bylaws of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School, and shall forward these nominations to the General Council, in its role as the representative class of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School, for consideration for election to the Board of Trustees.

Article XVI.

Board of Mediation

There shall be a Board of Mediation consisting of five members. Two such members shall be lay persons appointed by the President, and two shall be ministers appointed by the Chair of the Council of Ministers, and their terms of office shall be the same as that of the President of the Swedenborgian Church. The fifth member shall be the Vice President of Convention who shall serve as Chair.

Whenever any dispute or irregularity shall arise which affects the fulfillment of the PURPOSE of the Swedenborgian Church or any of its constituent or subsidiary bodies, if the efforts of the ministers or officers immediately concerned have not proved effective, the President or the General Council shall refer the situation to the Board of Mediation; or any member, collective body, or subsidiary body may apply to said Board for relief or determination. The Board shall then use its best endeavors to resolve the matter through the voluntary agreement of

those concerned, or failing to effect such resolution shall render a judgment as to the disposition thereof, after hearing the complaints and considering the facts.

Should the Board be unable to effect a resolution or settlement, it shall render its report or judgment to the General Council, together with such recommendations as it may deem appropriate. The General Council as the Executive Committee of the Swedenborgian Church shall then take such actions and issue such directions as it shall deem suitable. Anyone aggrieved by said report or judgment shall have the right of appeal to the General Council, as a final resort to seek reconsideration by the delegates at the annual session of the Swedenborgian Church.

Any member of the Board of Mediation may decline to participate in the consideration of a specified situation due to conflict of interest. In this case, the President of the General Convention or the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, as may be appropriate, shall appoint a substitute, who shall serve as a full member of the Board during its consideration of that issue only.

Article XVII.

(Moved to Article X and Article XVII blank for future use).

Article XVIII.

Common Fund Investment Committee

The General Council, at its first meeting following each annual session of the Swedenborgian Church, shall appoint an Investment Committee of not less than three members, one of whom may be the Treasurer of General Convention, which shall be charged with the general oversight and care of the investments and securities of the Swedenborgian Church Common fund, with full power to purchase and sell and to invest and reinvest as in their judgment and discretion may seem advisable. Any members constituting a majority of said Committee may exercise all of the authority and powers hereby granted to or conferred upon said Committee. This Committee is authorized to make investments and reinvestments in such bonds, notes, debentures, corporate stocks and other securities and such real estate, real estate mortgages, interests in real estate mortgages, and other property as the Committee, in the exercise of reasonable intelligence and caution, shall deem best. This Committee shall work in close cooperation with the Standing Committee for Financial Accountability.

Article XIX.**Board of Trustees of the Building Fund**

Section 1. The Board of Trustees of the Building Fund shall consist of the Treasurer plus three trustees who shall be appointed by the General Council, to serve three years. One of the trustees, including the Treasurer, shall be a member of the General Council.

Section 2. The Board of Trustees shall review Building Fund loan applications. Loans of up to \$50,000 may be funded by the Board of Trustees of the Building Fund. Loans over \$50,000, but less than \$100,000, shall be reviewed by the Trustees, with a recommendation referred to the Executive Committee of General Council for final approval. Loans in excess of \$100,000 shall be reviewed by the Trustees, with a recommendation referred to the full General Council for final approval.

Section 3. General Council may periodically adjust the dollar amounts based on governance oversight.

Article XX.**The National Church**

The Board of Trustees of the National Church, now holding the title to and having control of the Church property in Washington, D.C., shall continue to consist of fifteen members who shall be citizens of any part of the United States and of whom a majority shall be chosen from some other place than the city of Washington, DC, and shall not be selected from any one association, and vacancies in their number shall be filled by the Board with approval of the President and the Secretaries of the Convention, having in mind the restrictions stated above, and five members shall constitute a quorum.

Revised June 30, 2007.

Article XXI.**Application for Admission as a Constituent Body**

The application of an Association, Church or other body of the Church to be received by this body and represented in the Swedenborgian Church, may be made through the General Council, and upon their recommendation shall come before the annual session. When the session has voted to receive such Association or other body, the President shall announce the names of its delegates, and invite them to come forward. The President shall then inform them of the vote, and all rising, shall give the new delegates the right hand of fellowship, and welcome them to all the privileges enjoyed by other delegates.

Article XXII.**Indemnification**

To the extent now or hereafter permitted by the laws of the State of Illinois, the corporation shall indemnify its officers and directors against all costs and expenses reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with or arising out of any claim, action, suit or proceeding of whatever nature in which he or she may be involved as a party or otherwise or with which he or she may be threatened by reason of his or her having served as an officer or director of the corporation or by reason of any action alleged to have been taken or omitted by him or her as such officer or director, whether or not he or she be such officer or director at the time of incurring such cost or expense, including amounts paid or incurred in connection with reasonable settlements (other than amounts paid to the corporation itself) made with the approval of the General Council and with a view to curtailment of costs of litigation.

Article XXIII.**Amendments**

These Bylaws may be amended at any session of the Swedenborgian Church by a three-fifths vote of those present and voting, provided that the proposed amendment shall have been first referred to the General Council, and public notice of the substance thereof shall have been given at least three months before the time of said meeting. Such notice may be dispensed with for any special occasion by a three-fourths vote of those present and voting.

Dated May 3, 1985

Typed July 2, 1985

Revised July 10, 1985

Delegate Version

Revised October 31, 1985

Revised December 7, 1985

Revised General Council, February 1, 1986

Revised May 27, 1986

Revised June 26, 1992

Revised July 8, 1994

Revised July 7, 1995

Revised June 28, 1996

Revised June 26, 1998

Revised July 9, 2005

Revised July 1, 2006

Revised June 28, 2013

Revised June 28, 2013

Adopted as amended July 1, 2017

Adopted as amended July 3, 2018

Adopted as amended July 3, 2019

Adopted as amended June 27, 2021

STANDING RESOLUTIONS

1.

(Adopted by the General Convention July 3, 1986)

THE PURPOSE OF CONVENTION

The General Convention exists to help people be open to the Lord's presence and leading especially by fostering personal and ordained ministries which facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, and which have in common a working for the Lord in bringing in the New Age – the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem.

The light in which we seek to walk shines from the Lord Jesus Christ in His second coming, available to us through the divine presence in our hearts and minds, and through revelation in the Holy Scriptures and in the work of the Lord's servant Emanuel Swedenborg.

With the purpose of creation being a heaven from the human race, we see the central purpose of the church as the promotion of the process of regeneration. External forms such as buildings, liturgies and organizational structures are valid only insofar as they are useful to this end. It is especially vital for an "organized religion" that its life of piety be constantly grounded in a life of charity. In the case of our Convention, constant accountability to the standards of Scripture and doctrine is the primary warrant for our existence as an organization. In particular, we are offered a vision of a New Age, a New Church radically different from the old, by which we can evaluate our present practices and directions.

OBJECTIVES

1. Facilitate the formation and growth of groups of people who support each other in understanding, loving and living "the life that leads to heaven." We will work to bring together such individuals and groups in a network which amplifies the creative spiritual energy that emerges when we work together.
2. Bring doctrine and life together constructively. We will support this being done in a way that allows them to challenge and enrich each other and that encourages the diverse activities of Convention to express Convention's Purpose consistently.
3. Provide for the discovery, development and evaluation of excellence.
4. Commit ourselves to growth in the number of active members.
5. Continue our commitment to the cause of religious unity.

6. Clarify and intensify our participation in and contribution to the Lord's New Age.
7. In accordance with our Doctrine of Use and in cooperation with Convention's constituent bodies, improve the management and use of the physical/financial resources available for the fulfillment of our Purpose.
8. Design and implement effective means of communication: means which will ensure an open and timely flow of information and will promote Convention's Purpose.
9. Design, adopt and maintain an organizational structure that is directly responsive to Convention's Purpose and needs, and that includes provisions for its own self-evaluation and growth.

Objective 1

***The Formation and Growth of Groups** – Facilitate the formation and growth of groups of people who support each other in understanding, loving and living “the life that leads to heaven.” We will work to bring together such individuals and groups in a network which amplifies creative spiritual energy that emerges when we work together.*

Regeneration, or the life of charity, takes place in connection with other human beings, and is impossible in isolation. The spiritual model we are offered, one of individuals gathered into societies which in turn are gathered into provinces, is inseparable from that individual's relationship with others in his or her immediate society; and the spiritual well-being of the society is inseparable from its relationship with the larger church, and with the world in which it is living.

Healthy relationships are characterized by both love and wisdom, which means that neither uncritical acceptance nor unsympathetic criticism is truly constructive. As even love of self is necessary and good in its proper place, so particular interests, talents and skills contribute to the health of the whole as they are appropriately and appreciatively related to each other.

Strategies

- A. Provide administrative, material and advisory support for the formation and growth of such groups.
- B. Provide training and resources for effective acts of worship, both individual and collective.
- C. Provide for the training of appropriately skilled leaders.
- D. Clarify criteria for membership in Convention in accord with Convention's Purpose and suggest ways for people to become members.

- E. Foster an understanding of networking, particularly as it applies to Convention.
- F. Establish and maintain communication among individuals and groups who share particular interests in common, or who face the same circumstances.
- G. Establish and maintain inventories of the available talents, skills and resources that are necessary for the formation and growth of groups, and provide for the best possible ways of meeting these groups' needs.
- H. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies as they contribute to the formation and growth of groups within the church.

Objective 2

***Doctrine and Life** – Bring doctrine and life together constructively. We will support this being done in a way that allows them to challenge and enrich each other and that encourages the diverse activities of Convention to express Convention's Purpose consistently.*

This objective rests in the principle that doctrine alone, like external worship alone, does not make the church, but a life according to it. It looks toward a rejoicing in the fact that there are some of us who start from the books and some of us who start from involvement with people. For doctrine and life to come together, these need to be experienced as complementary rather than competitive approaches, each acknowledging its own incompleteness and therefore its needs for the other. Like the first objective, it assumes that the church cannot find an inner or spiritual well-being without trying to contribute to the spiritual well-being of the world in which it is living, and it further assumes that this contribution will not be made by conforming to that world but by seeking to understand and live our own distinctiveness.

Strategies

- A. Bring people of different perspectives together for specific purposes such as: worship, team ministries, workshops, camp programs, committees, music and writing projects.
- B. Support thinking that encourages differences of opinion, that acknowledges both the value of a variety of different approaches and the need to continue an on-going process, and that recognizes the beauty of finding inward coherence in a diversity of outward forms.
- C. Develop the ability to use everyday language to express theological ideas.
- D. Develop supportive procedures and resources for program planning and

evaluation. These procedures and resources must insist that theological presuppositions be made clear, that results be honestly evaluated, and that our primary concern be the relation between our central Purpose and the actual results of the program.

- E. Accept and fulfill our responsibility to express a spiritual perspective on contemporary issues in local, national and global affairs.
- F. Provide for the discovery, nurture and integration of diversity in all levels of structure.
- G. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 3

***Excellence** – Provide for the discovery, development and evaluation of excellence.*

The Lord has created each one of us with quite extraordinary potentialities, and the church evades its responsibility if it falls into that common pitfall of volunteer organizations, becoming a haven for mediocrity. For example, we somehow expect people to become effective church treasurers by virtue of election, providing neither resources nor training, and then lament the sad state of local accounting procedures. It is the committee's sense that we are, as a church, already doing many of the "right things," and that we could do them more effectively if we worked toward providing appropriate training for available talent.

Strategies

- A. Develop and maintain an accessible inventory of available talents and skills.
- B. Develop and maintain an accessible inventory of needed talents and skills.
- C. Develop and maintain an accessible inventory of training possibilities.
- D. Facilitate the acquisition of needed talents and training in skills.
- E. Develop means for identifying and improving criteria of excellence.
- F. Update Convention's understanding and appreciation of excellence.
- G. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 4

***Numerical Growth** – Commit ourselves to growth in the number of active members.*

This is the "let's finally face facts" objective. It is not an end in itself, and

must not be achieved to the detriment of other directives, any more than an individual should focus on physical health to the neglect of regeneration. But it also follows that just as physical health for the sake of use cannot be neglected, and must be given specific attention, so we need to give specific attention to numerical growth for the sake of use. Given the intense need for the New Church in the world around us, we cannot avoid our responsibility to find means of outreach that really work, and the clear, objective criterion lies immediately to hand.

Strategies

- A. In cooperative effort with associations, societies and other constituent bodies, develop programs intended to achieve growth.
- B. Develop centralized efforts that both encourage a desire for growth among Convention's constituents and strengthen our self-image.
- C. Develop centralized efforts that create interest among non-Swedenborgians and thus stimulate growth.
- D. Create programs that offer assistance and incentive to ministers and constituent bodies so that they develop the skills and programs necessary to increase growth.
- E. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 5

Religious Cooperation – Continue our commitment to the cause of religious unity.

With the Lord working through all religions to provide the means for the life that leads to heaven, we are again called to a relationship of critical supportiveness. The committee is not recommending any notable increase in our national involvement, but the strategies are intended to relate that involvement more clearly to our purpose and to our other objectives.

Strategies

- A. Continue our involvement in the National Council of Churches and make significant contributions to the policies and programs of the Council.
- B. Improve upon the reporting of our Council representatives to Convention and make resources and services of the Council available to our churches.
- C. Support our ministers' and laity's regional and local involvement in councils of churches and in interfaith activities.
- D. Foster among our church membership an attitude of appreciation and open-

mindedness toward the religions of the world.

- E. Provide for the ongoing evaluation of our participation in ecumenical activities, with a view toward focusing that participation in areas most closely related to our central purpose.
- F. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 6

The New Age – Clarify and intensify our participation in and contribution to the Lord's New Age.

There are strong indications in the world around us that the whole climate of thought is beginning to change. Specifically, the materialistic, mechanistic, “either-or” mentality so hostile to our message is under attack from within the scientific community itself, and there is a widespread resurgence of interest in spirituality. Again, the committee recommends a policy of critical supportiveness, with a strong sense that there are major opportunities in this area for both internal and external growth. The phrase “critical awareness” is intended to convey our belief that not everything new is necessarily in accord with our purpose, and that we have a great deal to learn about how the Lord is working for the new church in the world around us.

Strategies

- A. Foster an awareness of the freshness of our theology and its implications for our activities.
- B. Foster critical awareness of the congenial trends that occur in thought and activity outside Convention.
- C. Make ourselves and our theology known and available to persons involved in such thought and activity.
- D. Encourage and support involvement in New Age activities.
- E. Encourage the participation of “New Age” persons in Convention events and programming.
- F. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 7

Use Our Resources – In accordance with our Doctrine of Use and in cooperation with Convention's constituent bodies, improve the management and use of the physical-financial resources available for the fulfillment of our

Purpose.

We are per capita a startlingly wealthy church, and yet we seem to have trouble finding the money to do what needs to be done. Given growth in the clarity of our sense of purpose, we need to be candid with ourselves about our use of resources, and foster a motion from less effective to more effective uses. The committee recognizes and values the distribution of responsibility inherent in our present situation of local autonomy, and insists that this motion cannot be healthy unless it is voluntary; but it also insists that the principle of local autonomy must not be used to evade accountability to the principle of use.

Strategies

- A. In cooperation with Convention's constituent bodies, create and maintain an inventory of these physical and financial resources.
- B. Create and implement a system to improve the management of Convention's resources. This system should include provisions for: resources evaluation, cost/benefit financial planning, accounting and other necessary items.
- C. Create and implement a system to aid Convention's constituent bodies in the management of their resources, and provide guidelines, standards, education and other assistance.
- D. Create and implement a system to aid Convention's financial resources. This program will take advantage of the breadth of our current support base and will seek new sources of income.
- E. Keep Convention's constituent bodies aware of the programs and persons involved in the efforts to accomplish this objective.
- F. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 8

Communication – *Design and implement effective means of communication: means which will ensure an open and timely flow of information and will promote Convention's Purpose.*

The technology is available for the body of Convention to have a "central nervous system" that will overcome many of the liabilities of our wide geographical distribution, and both within and outside the church there is the expertise to design a system that will suit our particular needs. This objective relates closely to the "networking" strategy under Objective 1, as providing the means by which information resources may be made available when and where they are needed, and kindred individuals and groups kept in touch with each other.

Strategies

- A. Provide means for the on-going evaluation of Convention's communication activities. Make sure that they are consistent with Convention's central Purpose.
- B. Establish and maintain a central information exchange to collect, store, correlate and disseminate information both within and beyond Convention. This central exchange will:
 - Incorporate a relational structure rather than a hierarchical one.
 - Take advantage of advancing technology. For example, computers, video, communications satellites, etc.
 - Be the hub of a "distributed information system" (see Strategy C)
 - Administer this "distributed information system."
- C. Design and implement a "distributed information system." This system will provide for the open, direct and timely flow of information among the various constituent groups and individuals of Convention.
- D. Design and implement means to coordinate Convention's various publications and productions. This way we will strive for greater effectiveness and economy.
- E. Establish and maintain means to ensure that our communications to the world at large are coordinated and considered, and foster an appreciation of Convention's purpose and objective.
- F. Recognize and promote clear and precise communication.
- G. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 9

Organized Structure – *Design, adopt and maintain an organizational structure that is directly responsive to Convention's Purpose and needs, and that includes provisions for its own self-evaluation and growth.*

Toward a Theology of Polity

The writings of our Church do not describe for us a particular form of church organization. Swedenborg insists that there must be order in the church; but since the possibility of a separate "Swedenborgian" ecclesiastical organization was not significant enough to mention, he was content to leave us with a few observations about church government based on eighteenth century European models.

Heavenly government is also a less useful model than we might expect. Since

heaven is characterized by essential unanimity, its “political system” can be described as democracy, aristocracy, oligarchy, anarchy, dictatorship, communism, socialism or what you will.

Our own polity has evolved pragmatically. It began from the desire of separate societies to get together on some regular basis, and has grown and changed in response to changing circumstances. It is largely a traditional pattern: though if one sees democracy as a result of the Second Coming, this would then be a major “New Age” feature.

Essentially though, our own polity rests on Newtonian, Euclidian mechanical models. That is, it seeks to promote order and effectiveness by such devices as marking off areas of responsibility – drawing a single territorial map, as it were – and by a system of checks and balances.

This leads to such anomalies as having the Board of Education responsible for Leaguers’ travel to convention, the Board of Missions’ virtual exclusion from the field of missionary publication, and cumbersome procedures for the guidance and support of any venture that does not fit some existing category. It also means that it is quite possible for an individual to have been a lifelong member of one of our societies without being able to identify one thing that Convention has done for the welfare of that society.

In order to distribute responsibility as widely as possible under this system, we need our policy that a single individual not serve on more than two Convention boards or committees at once. This means, however, that it is rare for members of one board to have an appreciation of the problems and labors of another; and General Council depends for its information largely on minutes which are not designed for such communication.

Essentially, the Ad Hoc Committee sees a pressing need that we reconceptualize our organizational presuppositions on a more profound and more realistic model, looking at patterns of relationship that are actually productive. We see three basic essentials in this – clear and direct lines of mutual communication and accountability, the ready gathering of compatible interests, skills and resources for particular tasks, and a constructive accountability to our common theological convictions.

The model that we have in mind may be unfamiliar in terms of physical models, but it is immediately recognizable in terms of personal experience. It involves seeing the identity of an individual or group as essentially determined not by fixed boundaries or “externals,” but by a particular center; and by the relationships of that center to other centers. Boundaries or circumferences may then expand or contract as we generalize or specialize; and the overlaps, rather than be-

ing problems to be eliminated, are the utterly necessary fields of mutual support, enlightenment and cooperation.

In this model, the primary function of the centralized administration would be to administer decentralization. This central body should be granted such power, and only such power, as it needs to accomplish this task, and should be held accountable by Convention to policies and priorities determined by Convention.

Strategies

- A. Design an organizational structure that is directly responsive to Convention's Purpose and needs, and includes provision for its own self evaluation.
- B. Create an ongoing process which ensures that the organization exercises self evaluation, is open to change, and encourages growth.
 - 1. Generate criteria for self evaluation and prepare a plan for adapting to change and growth.
 - 2. Generate feedback and data annually and encourage continual feedback.
 - 3. Assess and review the organization annually.
 - 4. Revise and adapt the plan each year and revise the structure as necessary.

2.

(Adopted by the General Council, July 18, 1949)

Resolved: With regard to properties of local societies in which Convention has a contingent interest through conveyances providing that, in certain circumstances, the title would come to Convention, it is the policy of Convention not to make contributions toward the cost of maintenance of such properties, such maintenance being the sole responsibility of the Society in whose hands the title to the property is vested.

3.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 1960, Min. #58)

(Amended by General Convention, July 1, 1989, Min. #61)

(Amended by General Convention, June 30, 2015, Min. #20)

A Standing Resolution to Swedenborgians Everywhere:

Resolved: The General Convention/Swedenborgian Church assembled at Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts for Convention June 30, 2015 reaffirms its belief that the Church Universal includes those of diverse origins.

In its ever-growing desire to serve all of God's children, the General Convention (aka The Swedenborgian Church), urges Swedenborgians everywhere to acknowledge that the Church Universal is inclusive and to act in this spirit. Let no Society of the Church exclude any from membership on such considerations as ethnic origin, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, condition of health, handicap or economic status; but seeking those who accept our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as Redeemer of the world and who accept the essentials of faith of the Church, welcome all with joy and affection into the full and free community of the Church.

4.

(Adopted by General Convention, August 3, 1969)

Resolved: That the Secretary of Convention maintain a register of young men and women within the fellowship of the Swedenborgian Church who are recognized by the Selective Service System as conscientious objectors to war, and that the President of Convention appoint a minister to serve as spiritual counselor and advisor to these young men and women and to others who may apply to the Selective Service System for recognition as Conscientious Objectors; the purpose being that the Church might in this way show its sympathy with those whose conscience dictates such a step and may be of some assistance to them as they struggle with all of the implications and legal problems which such classification brings.

5.

(Adopted by General Convention, August 3, 1969)

Resolved: That the General Convention support the legalization of abortion in cases where it is responsibly applied for the physical and emotional welfare of those involved. Be it also resolved that such therapeutic abortion shall be considered primarily a matter of concern between the patient, attending physician and personal counselor.

6.

(Adopted by General Convention, July 2, 1976)

Resolved: That General Council be given a standing order to recommend to the Convention the names of such persons who in its opinion should qualify for emeritus status, for a vote by Convention.

7.

(Adopted by General Council, January 22, 1977)

Resolved: It is recognized that the establishment of the requirements for membership is the responsibility of the individual society or other body, and that various types of membership are utilized by different bodies. However, for the purpose of determining delegate strength for the voting at Convention sessions only adult active members defined as follows shall be counted: An adult active member of a society is one who is eighteen years of age or older and who has been accepted by the Society through Confirmation or other appropriate service of introduction, or by transfer from another Society, and who within the year has shown active interest in his/her membership. This is demonstrated by joining in the programs of worship and work or by contributing toward its needs physically and financially. It shall be the joint responsibility of members and Societies involved to ensure that the member is not counted in more than one Society's count for delegate strength.

8.

(Adopted by General Convention on recommendation of its Council of Ministers, July 1, 1978)

SWEDENBORG'S REVELATION

Perspectives of the General Convention

The Lord's Second Coming promised in the Gospels is described in *True Christian Religion* 779 as a process of spiritual reawakening, beginning with a cosmic event in which Swedenborg was called to play a key role. Through spiritual experiences while reading the Holy Word, he received truth from the Lord into his understanding. From this enlightenment he worked out and published teachings for a new church to serve the new age of the Lord's Second Coming. The truth of these teachings revealed by the Lord to Swedenborg is presented to us with the authority of the Holy Word from which they are drawn, and by which they are confirmed. This new revelation teaches us three essential things to believe and do. The first of these is to worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as the one God in whom is the divine Trinity. The second is to hold to the conviction that the Word of God is holy, not only in its plain sense, but also because of the deeper meanings lying within it. The third is to commit ourselves to a life embodying love to the Lord and the neighbor. In living these three essentials, each of us must search with discernment for critical meaning in Swedenborg's theological writings. Any written form of revelation can be misunderstood if it is insisted that

a single interpretation is final and prescriptive. However, we are convinced that if love to the Lord and the neighbor permeate our perceptions, our church will be unified despite any number of particular differences of opinion as to interpretation and application of doctrine. In former times, when Christian doctrine was hammered out by theologians or determined by church councils, unity depended on obedience to creed, with reason subservient to faith. But in this new age, the spiritual freedom of the individual has been restored. Now it is permitted to enter with understanding into the mysteries of faith.

9.

(Adopted by General Convention, July 2, 1982)

Resolved: It is recognized that it is the responsibility of the church to voice its conviction on ethical and moral issues that arise from time to time in our nation and in our world. Where the issue is one of long-term relevance, and where opportunity has been afforded to societies and associations for prior discussion, a member of Convention may submit to the President, in time for announcement on the first day of a Convention session, a written proposal for a Standing Resolution. The President shall at that time accept motions to refer or to place on the agenda with time for discussion.

Should the issue be one of immediate urgency only a member of Convention may submit to the President, in time for announcement on the first full day of a Convention session, a written proposal that a particular resolution be adopted as “the sense of this meeting.” The President shall at that time accept motions to refer or to place on the agenda with time for discussion. Should such resolution come to a vote, the vote shall be counted and the tally included with any use of the resolution.

10.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 30, 1983)

(Amended by General Convention, July 3, 2019)

[This Standing Resolution is no longer an operating policy of the General Convention.].

General Convention no longer provides ministers personal loans through the Building Fund. Outstanding loans that remain in good standing will continue as agreed until fully repaid. Ministers with outstanding loans from the building fund, who cease to remain on the Active Roll of the Council of Ministers, may have their loan called in and due and payable within ninety days.”

11.

(Adopted by the General Council, June 29, 1983)

Resolved: That it is the responsibility of the Vice President, together with a committee he may appoint, to conduct an annual review of the Central Office, covering staff, employees, organization, etc.

12.

(Adopted by General Council, January 30, 1983)

(Addendum, May 12, 1988)

(Addendum amended and adopted by the General Council on June 25, 2022)

Resolved: “Whereas: The American New Church Tract and Publication Society has indicated its desire to turn over its assets to the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the U.S.A. to continue the purposes for which the Tract Society was established, and

Whereas: these purposes are included within the broad purposes of General Convention; now therefore, be it

Resolved: that General Convention agrees to accept the funds of the Tract Society, and if when offered, to be held for the purposes given and specifically that the income of those funds be used first: for the publication and distribution of Our Daily Bread and second: for other publications efforts; and further be it

Resolved: that the Treasurer of General Convention be directed to assist the Tract Society in the orderly transfer of these funds.”

Addendum: Selection and appointment of the Editor of Our Daily Bread shall be made annually by the General Council at their Fall meeting. The Editor shall serve, at will, for a period of one year with reappointment, or appointment of a new editor, taking place each year on the anniversary date of appointment.

Should the position of Editor become vacant for any reason between General Council meetings, then the President of Convention may appoint a new Editor in the absence of a special meeting of the General Council. The Editor filling the unexpired term shall then serve until the Fall appointment schedule.

The General Council will serve as the Publisher, having the authority to settle any issues that may arise concerning editorial decisions, but otherwise leaving daily operating decisions to the discretion of the Editor. The publication of *Our Daily Bread* shall not be terminated without a vote of the General Council.

13.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 28, 1989)

That the AIDS Ministry Committee appointed by the Cabinet continue to carry out its task which shall include support of Swedenborgian Ministries to HIV persons, their families and friends; facilitation of ecumenical involvement in these ministries; and the provision of educational materials.

14.

(Adopted by General Convention, July 1, 2019)

**Statement of the Swedenborgian Church of North America on
Discrimination**

As Swedenborgians we affirm the core truths of our faith that honor the diversity of both heaven and earth, and recognize that loving people who are different from us is integral to the practice of a religious life.

We also acknowledge that broad generalizations of races, nations, genders, sexual orientations, physical abilities, and religions can be found in our sacred texts when interpreted literally and that these texts have been used on occasion to promote opinions that run counter to these core truths.

We hereby affirm our responsibility to interpret our texts in the light of love and inclusion, in heaven's light, and categorically reject interpretations of the Bible or of Swedenborg's writings that promote a discriminatory viewpoint. Where any translation or interpretation appears to invite the reader to engage in exclusionary or hateful thinking, promote stereotypes, or justify discrimination against anyone for any reason, regardless of the source, we stand against this. If any member, clergy, employee, or other affiliated person indicates by word, deed, works, writings, affiliations, or any other means, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim bigotry, gender bias, heterosexism, ableism, or any other expression of prejudice, they do not reflect nor represent the practical doctrine of the Swedenborgian church.

We encourage one another to advocate for those who face discrimination and to address these expressions of bias in our personal interactions and in the larger society. We also acknowledge that forms of discrimination come in many subtle shades, and that we have a responsibility to regularly investigate our actions and beliefs, both individually and collectively to align them with these truths, so that we can be greater vessels for Divine Love in the world.

15.

(Adopted by General Convention, July 1, 2019)

GOOD PRACTICES GUIDELINES***For Ministries of the Swedenborgian Church of North America*****Congregational Relations**

- Develop a Congregational Covenant for healthy communication practices in the congregation's life, and ensure the Covenant is visible and frequently referenced.
- Keep the congregation informed about what the ministry governing board or council is doing, such as regularly distributing Minutes to the membership and friends on e-mail.
- Offer open Board meetings for transparency and cohesiveness.
- Conduct periodic congregational surveys assessing experiences in the ministry, since such surveys facilitate a sense of congregational teamwork and enable a transparency and inclusion that often harvests information and viewpoints otherwise held back.
- Use a facilitator sooner rather than later when congregational dynamics seem to be stuck.
- Maintain a standing pastoral relations committee to provide a communication sounding board.

Administration

- Maintain clear job descriptions for all paid staff positions, including the ordained and consecrated leadership and perform annual reviews.
- Develop explicit guidelines on compensating members for work in the ministry.
- Create and annually update a Conflict of Interest Policy for the primary governing board.
- Avoid having more than one family member at the same time on the primary governing board.
- Review Bylaws regularly to ensure they fit the ministry purposes and keep them visible.
- Ensure the Bylaws have a properly worded dissolution clause that protects assets from improper takeover and provides guidelines for how assets will be distributed (e.g., to the denomination, the Association, the theological

school, a designated Convention ministry, or combination of these).

Denominational Relations

- Follow the denomination's Advisory Placement Committee's guidelines when conducting position searches.
- Send delegates annually to the Association and denominational gatherings and submit an annual ministry report for the denomination's Journal.*
- Keep the denomination's Central Office supplied with a copy of the ministry's current Constitution and Bylaws.

**Note: Receipt of timely annual ministry reports is required in order to be eligible for Augmentation Fund grants.*

**A COVENANTAL SPIRITUALITY
FOR THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA**

***A Covenant between Constituent Bodies and the
Denomination***

The Swedenborgian Church of North America promises to:

- Provide ministry resources for growth, outreach, and weekly programming.
- Provide information about potential grant opportunities
- Provide support and guidance when asked regarding internal conflict difficulties
- Support ministries without current ordained or consecrated leadership with 1) a registry of ministers and pastors willing to travel to churches, 2) a list of ministers seeking a pastorate position, and 3) the Advisory Placement Committee's guidelines
- Keep information about the denomination in front of the consciousness of local ministries to encourage relationship to and community with the larger spiritual community of Convention.

Constituent Ministries of the Swedenborgian Church of North America promise to:

- Participate annually if at all possible in the Association and the summer denominational convention meetings.
- Submit an annual ministry report for the denomination's Journal.
- Follow the denomination's Advisory Placement Committee's guidelines when conducting position searches.

- Keep the denomination's Central Office supplied with a copy of the ministry's current Bylaws, executive committee members, and any changes in pastorate positions and compensation as regards the pension fund.
- Keep the Association and the denomination in front of the consciousness of local members to encourage relationship to and community with the larger spiritual community of Convention.

16.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 27, 2022)

Welcome and Support of All People in the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus¹) Community

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

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

The SCNA understands the message of love and inclusion taught to us through the Bible and insights of Emanuel Swedenborg to affirm diversity in all its exciting complexity, offering equal value and worth to all people with a variety of God given gender identities, gender expressions, sexual orientations, and loving relationships. The SCNA will seek to interpret the Bible and the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg in ways that honor the equal value and worth of all sexual orientations, genders, gender identities, and gender expressions. We will support everyone who is engaged in the regenerative journey—individual or partnered. We affirm any partnered relationships that are entered into freely, are grounded in mutual fidelity and respect, and have as their end the well-being and spiritual growth of each partner. We acknowledge that living in truly loving and wise ways

¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus—including: intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, non-binary, gender non-conforming, aromantic, and asexual

is possible for finite and fallible human beings only with the Lord's leading.

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

STANDING RECOMMENDATIONS

To Associations, etc.

Each Association, or other collective body of the Church, is requested to report annually a list of its ministers.

Associations are recommended to make such specific rules, under the general rules for the regulation of the ministry, as they may consider necessary or desirable.

Associations are requested to furnish the Secretaries with copies of all their printed *Journals* of past years, and also copies of their future proceedings, from time to time, as they may be published. (*Journal* of 1900, Minute 163.)

In the apportionment of delegates to the Convention, the Association shall try to secure a proportionate representation of the societies constituting them, and to that end shall consult the wishes of the various societies. (*Journal*, 1937, Minute 50.)

To Isolated Societies

To establish Sabbath school and to give it watchful care in which the truths of the Church shall be distinctly taught.

To adopt as rules of discipline, or laws of charity, what is taught by the Lord in Matt. v.23, 24, and xviii. 15-17.

To establish free libraries of the theological works of Swedenborg for loan to all who are interested.

To Ministers

To keep a record of names, ages, residences, etc. of all persons baptized by them.

To the Standing Committee of the American New Church Sunday School Association

To report annually to the Convention such statistics and such action by the Association as may be of general interest.

As to Collections of Convention

Collections at the Sunday morning service of the Convention to be for the general use of Convention. (*Journal* of 1993, Minute 6.)

Procedures of Appointments to the National Council of Churches

The President of Convention, with the counsel and advice of the Executive

Committee of the Council of Ministers, shall make the various appointments to the National Council of Churches, and that these then be confirmed by the General Council.

The Nominating Committee

It is recommended to the Nominating Committee, that when preparing a slate of nominees to fill the elective offices of The General Convention, the slate be of such order that if elected, a nominee shall not serve on more than two Boards or Committees or a Board and a Committee simultaneously. “No individual who has accepted nomination for an office shall accept nomination for another office if election to one would invalidate election to the other.” It is further recommended that this order be kept by the Chair when accepting nominations from the floor of Convention.

To the Convention

To submit (to the President or Treasurer), in advance of the business session of Convention, any request for appropriation of funds.

To Leaders (adopted June 28, 2021)

*A Reminder to Pause Before Hitting ‘Send’, And Then Ask Yourself...
“How Am I Loving God and the Neighbor in this Post?”*

Good Practices for Social Media Use Understanding

In today’s world of pervasive social media use, all of our church leaders have become the outward face of the Swedenborgian Church. An essential question our leaders might now mindfully be thinking of asking themselves is: How am I loving God and the neighbor in what I post?

As church leaders—ordained clergy, licensed pastors, lay leaders, committee, and board members— both local and national, we have to be especially discerning as we speak for the local church and for the greater church. Like it or not, we carry additional authority and responsibility. We need to be consciously, and conscientiously, aware that our words and sentiments online can project a positive or negative influence, elicit a calming or angering effect, promote spiritual enlightenment or unrest.

As lay and clergy leaders in the Swedenborgian Church of North America, we affirm our tradition’s embrace of varied opinions as well as the importance of personal choice and freedom in all matters (Secrets of Heaven §2876). We value a diverse community that is bound together by shared love of the Lord and service to the neighbor. As Swedenborgian Church leaders, we also carry a responsibil-

ity in all we do and say—this can be especially challenging because of the blur between personal and professional communications. It is hoped that these “Good Practices for Social Media Use” can help lessen that challenge with thoughts on how to maintain a neighborly and respectable social media presence with God’s love and wisdom at the forefront.

It is a given that social media can be used as a powerful, positive tool for communication or a precarious emotional outlet that can lead to risky, contrary, and potentially harmful commentary. It is our responsibility to use our discernment. *Let’s consider asking ourselves the questions below before posting:*

- What kind of conversation am I starting or encouraging?
- Why am I posting? Am I feeling tired, angry, or scared? Am I feeling provoked?
- If there is conflict—how is my contribution going to de-escalate the situation?
- If I’ve already contributed to this conversation today—would it better to wait 24 hours before adding anything further?
- Would I choose to say these things face-to-face?
- Would this conversation be better handled privately?
- Will I be embarrassed or cause embarrassment if this post appears somewhere else?
- Are my comments towards people and/or the church following the sentiment expressed here?
- What can I do to make this conversation more inclusive, just, and equitable?

In addition to attending to the wisdom of the above list, special attention needs to be focused on how adults interact responsibly with our often-vulnerable youth online. Added to the all important moral, ethical, and spiritual reasons is the liability risk. *Following are further good practices that will help us maintain healthy and safe relationships all around:*

- All public content, communication, and information shared should be professional and youth appropriate.
- Unless other arrangements have been made with parents, leaders should not send requests outside of family to add youth to their network on a social media website (“friend requests”).
- Adults may accept friend requests from youth, however, we should carefully discern the level of contact we should maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
- If friend requests from youth are declined, we should explain to the youth

why this was done so as to maintain healthy face-to-face relationships.

- Written messages and transmitted images can often be ambiguous, confusing, and taken out of context. Always follow professional standards and do not share any questionable content with youth.
- Pictures or videos of minors may only be shared with the permission of the minor and their parent or legal guardian.
- Ask yourself: does my communication reflect good and wise practices for working with children and youth? Would you say this to a child or youth if you were face-to-face with them?

And finally, some nuts and bolts for all adults and youth:

Privacy, Confidentiality, Authorization

- Respecting Privacy: I will respect my own privacy as well as that of my co-workers/friends and of any organization by not providing or sharing any personal or confidential information, including addresses or locations, without permission from that person or organization. I will ask myself: Is this my news to tell? Do I have permission to share this information?
- I will remember that, unless duly authorized, I will not speak on behalf of the Swedenborgian Church—or even my own local congregation. I will be professional and maintain the integrity of my office as a church leader through social media.
- I will be aware that giving my opinion, especially on hotly debated topics, can be construed as making a statement on behalf of the church.
- For my protection and the protection of the Swedenborgian Church, I note that I am prohibited from using internal or external social media channels to discuss confidential items, legal matters, litigation, or organizational financial performance. Confidential information includes anything labeled as such or information not available to the public.
- I will cite resources and not violate copyright and fair use laws nor plagiarize another's work. If required, I will obtain permission if I wish to use material created by someone else.

Approaching social media with clarity of mind and sincerity of heart contributes to useful experiences that promote healthy interactions, meaningful conversations, and love of the neighbor.

For, as we are reminded,

“Everyone can see that charity is doing no evil to the neighbor; for charity is love towards our neighbor, and a person who loves anyone wants to avoid doing evil to them. There is a conjunction of souls between them.” (Doctrine of Charity no. 14)

SEVEN YEAR CYCLE OF ANNUAL THEMES

It is part of the Lord's Providence that in every challenge there is an opportunity and the bigger the challenge, the bigger the opportunity. That's a good thing for us, not least because, as a church, we are facing a very big challenge indeed. The Standing Committee for Education and Resources for Spiritual Community (SCER) every year undertakes a useful way to meet that challenge, one that can offer us a considerable opportunity to grow and move forward as bearers of a new message of hope for the world.

A regular cycle of thematically-unified, denomination-wide programming, built around the key beliefs of our faith, will go far in restoring our church's confidence and capacity to play its proper part in the building of the New Jerusalem. As Swedenborgians we are blessed in many ways but especially with a love of learning. This is our strength and our opportunity. Let's learn and grow into a new future.

The Seven-Year Cycle of Annual Themes

1. THE YEAR OF THE LORD (2019–2020)

the primacy of Spirit:

- the one Lord, Love & Wisdom, Creator & Life
- the unifying truth, hope and power, known by many names
- revealed for us in Jesus, as friend, mentor, model

2. THE YEAR OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD (2020–2021)

the nature of Life:

- the diverse, multi-dimensional & eternal nature of life
- the reality of the spiritual world; heaven, hell & world of spirits
- our journey with angels & demons, from this life to the next

3. THE YEAR OF PROVIDENCE (2021–2022)

the assurance of Purpose:

- the universe makes sense and we have a special, angelic purpose
- the laws of Providence are Love & Wisdom at work for us
- our call to “choose life” and become who we (really) are

4. THE YEAR OF REGENERATION (2022–2023)

the way of Change:

- spiritual life as intentional, committed, relational
- the journey of transformation & the second birth
- the work of repenting, reforming & regenerating

5. THE YEAR OF SPIRITUAL USES (2023–2024)

the call to be a Blessing:

- true faith as the life of charity, what we actually do, not just think or say
- discerning our gifts through love in action (charity)
- becoming our true use for the building of the New Jerusalem

6. THE YEAR OF THE WORD (2024–2025)

the power of holy Scriptures:

- correspondences & the Lord's presence in the Word
- the story of our lives in the Word
- the sacred character of all holy texts

7. THE YEAR OF THE NEW JERUSALEM (2025–2026)

the emergence of a New World:

- the Second Coming in the Spirit now
- the new world & new consciousness emerging now
- building the future: the unity of the human family in justice and peace

BYLAWS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

PREAMBLE

The Council of Ministers is established by Article II of the Constitution of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America which reads in part as follows: “The officers of the Convention shall be...a Council of Ministers, consisting of all ministers belonging to the Convention, of whom twelve shall constitute a quorum...”

In order that it may in more orderly fashion exercise the powers and perform the duties committed to it by Article III, Section 3, and Article V, Section 1, of the said Constitution, and Article XII of the Bylaws of the said General Convention, the Council of Minister, establishes these Bylaws as a guide to its procedure.

Article I.

Categories of Membership

Section 1. *Internal Categories of Clerical Standing with COM shall be:*

Active: defined as any ordained minister that:

1. is employed as a minister by a constituent body of Convention, or
2. is involved in a ministry recognized as valid by COM, or
3. is present at COM annual or regional meetings.

Inactive: defined as any ordained minister who does not meet the above requirements, but who has submitted an annual accounting of ministerial activity to the COM Secretary in accordance with denominational Bylaws, Article XII, Section 3.

Not in Good Standing: A member who has not met the professional standards of ministry in the Swedenborgian Church.

Lapsed: defined as any minister that has not met any of the above requirements and has been not in good standing for a period of three years.

Retired: defined as any minister that has drawn on his or her retirement benefits and who has requested to be considered as retired on the Council’s Roll. Only those members that have retired in good standing shall be eligible for supplemental retirement benefits.

Severed: defined as any minister who has been removed from the Roll of

Deceased: Ministers by request or as a result of disciplinary action.
defined as any minister who has died.

Section 2. *Definitions of Clerical Standing*

“**Good Standing**” is defined as a member of the Council that: participates in continuing education on a biennial basis for the purpose of building and maintaining professional competence, in accordance with COM Standing Resolutions, paragraph 2, and participates in supervision on an ongoing basis for the purpose of maintaining a personal system of emotional support, in recognition of “Guidelines for Ministerial Work in the General Convention,” Section III, preamble, *and* is not under disciplinary action by the Council of Ministers.

“**Not in Good Standing**” is defined as a member of the Council that has not met the above requirements.

Amended 2008, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Section 3. *Credentials*

All members of the Council who are not retired are requested to communicate with the COM Secretary *before the end of May* regarding their continuing education and supervision activities during the time since the last COM annual meeting. Those who do so shall be recorded as in good standing. The names of those who have not done so will be shared with the Executive Committee, who shall respond as follows.

Procedure for Changes in Clerical Standing

A member of the Council’s Executive Committee shall contact any member of the Council whose standing is in jeopardy at least thirty days before the Council convenes for its Annual Meeting. The Executive Committee shall take into account such member’s specific situation and shall suggest reasonable rectifying measures before any change in standing is considered. If the member in question is unwilling to comply with such measures, he or she will be considered temporarily “not in good standing” until such measures are taken. The Executive Committee shall continue to support and encourage an individual who is not in good standing throughout a restorative period.

A member who is not in good standing and who is in disagreement with such a standing may make an appeal to the Council as a whole, whose majority vote shall determine the standing of the member in question. The name of a member who is not in good standing for a period of three years shall be presented before

COM. They shall decide by vote whether or not to designate such member in the Roll of Ministers as “Lapsed.” A person whose membership has lapsed and who wishes to become active again may make a written appeal to the Council’s Executive Committee.

Amended July 8, 2005, Berkeley, California

Amended June 2008, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Article II.

Sessions and Meetings

Section 1. Sessions of the Council of Ministers shall be held in connection with every session of the General Convention, at such times as may be assigned to it by the Business Committee of the Convention.

Section 2. Special meetings of the Council may be held at any time at the call of the Executive Committee or by letter vote initiated by petition of at least seven members. Public notice shall be given of the time and place of the proposed meeting.

Section 3. “Meetings of the Council of Ministers shall be of three types: public meetings, open to anyone who may be interested; business meetings, at which the business of the Council shall be transacted, attendance at business meetings being limited to members of the Council, the President of Convention if said person is not ordained, the Dean and full-time faculty of the Swedenborgian House of Studies, if said persons are not ordained authorized candidates, theological students, and others who may be admitted by vote of the Council; and executive session, for which all persons who are not members of the Council shall withdraw at the request of the Chair. Any guest may be invited to remain for executive sessions at the request of a Council member, together with a three-quarters vote of the Council.”

Amended July 9, 2004, Waterloo, Ontario.

Article III.
Officers

Section 1. The officers of the Council of Ministers shall be a Chair, a Secretary and three at large members of the Executive Committee.

Section 2. At its 1993 sessions, the Council of Ministers shall elect a chair for a two-year term, and a secretary for a three-year term. In subsequent years, when the offices become vacant, the chair and secretary shall each be elected for a three-year term. Officers who have served two consecutive full terms shall not be eligible for immediate re-election.

Amended June 27, 1992.

Section 3. The Chair of the Council shall preside at all meetings, and shall, unless in any case it be otherwise ordered by the Council, appoint all members of committees, except the Executive Committee and the Program Committee. The Chair shall designate the chairmen of such committees as he may appoint.

The Secretary of the Council shall perform the usual duties of a secretary, and in addition shall present to the Convention a report of all meetings of the Council, including the titles of all papers presented, a summary of the important business transacted and a statement of all matters referred by the Council of Ministers to the Convention and of all recommendations made to said Convention.

The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chair, the Secretary, and three members to be elected initially by the Council for terms of one, two, and three years, and thereafter one member to be elected annually by the Council for a term of three years. Executive Committee members who have served two consecutive full terms shall not be eligible for immediate re-election. It shall be the duty of the Committee to fill vacancies and to consider and act on matters connected with the business of the Council in the interim of its sessions. It shall have no power, however, to make decisions in the name of the Council with reference to any matter within the province of the Council's Standing Committees.

Amended June 2008, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Section 4. In the interim between the sessions of the Council of Ministers matters requiring the immediate decision by the Council may be acted upon by

vote recorded by the Secretary through a letter, e-mail, or conference call, to be determined by the Executive committee. For such votes to be valid, at least twenty ministers must cast ballots. If by letter, ballots must be received within 30 days from the date of issuance. If by e-mail, ballots must be received within 7 days from date of issuance. If by conference call, the ballots shall be recorded orally at the time of the call. Every reasonable effort will be made to contact every active member of the Council.

Amended July 9, 2004, Waterloo, Ontario.

Article IV. Committees

Section 1. There shall be a Nominating Committee of three persons which shall present to the Council at each annual meeting a full slate of nominees including two nominees for Convention Preacher. At the meeting at which this Bylaw is adopted, one member shall be elected for a three-year term, one for a two-year term, and one for a one-year term, with the member whose term is next to expire to serve as chair.

Section 2. The Standing Committees of the Council shall be the Committee on Worship, the Committee on Program, The Committee on Ministerial Ethics, the Committee on Admission into the Ministry, the Committee on Revision of the Roll, the Misconduct Determination Board, and the Advisory Placement Committee.

In addition, the Chair of the Council upon the decease of any member thereof shall appoint a committee to prepare a memorial to be offered for presentation before the Convention. The Council may from time to time order the appointment of such special committees as it may deem necessary.

Amended June 2012, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Section 3. Members of Standing Committees shall serve until their successors are appointed.

Section 4. The Committee on Worship shall consider and report on all matters connected with the worship of the Church, as well as proposed changes in or additions to its liturgical books.

The Committee will explore and develop new forms, style and materials of worship and liturgy to meet the expanding needs of Convention Worship Leaders.

The Committee, or an appointed individual by the Committee, will oversee and coordinate, in conjunction with the host group and/or the Convention Planning Committee, the worship and music expenses of our annual convention.

Amended June 2009, Seattle, Washington

Section 5. The Committee on Program shall consist of the Chair of the Council of Ministers, the Secretary of the Council, and the Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies. Its duties shall be to prepare the program for each session of the Council.

Amended June 2008, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Section 6. The Committee on Ministerial Ethics shall consist of the council appointed by the Chair for their depth of pastoral experience and background in the study of ethics. This committee shall:

1. periodically present issues for reflection and discussion for meetings of the Council and shall consist of three members of the council.
2. be available for consultation and advice in cases of need, and
3. propose such revisions in the Guidelines for Ministerial work in the General Convention of Swedenborgian churches as it may deem useful.

Section 7. The Committee on Admission into the Ministry shall consist of a chair, who will be a member of this council who has served at least one complete term (3 years) on the Committee on Admission to Ministry and shall be elected by the council for a three year term; two at-large members who are ministers with at least five years ministerial service within the denomination, one to be elected by the Council of Ministers and one to be elected by Convention; one lay person to be elected by Convention; and the President of Convention. The three elected members are to be elected for three-year terms, one to be elected each year. At-large members who have served two consecutive full terms shall not be eligible for immediate re-election. The chair may not serve more

than two consecutive terms as chair and is not eligible to serve as an at-large member following a term as chair. Members of the regular faculty of the theological school shall not be eligible for election, and should either the President of Convention or Chair of the Council of Ministers be a member of that faculty, said officer shall designate a member of the Council of Ministers as replacement, subject to the approval of the Council.

The primary duty of this committee shall be to oversee the maintenance of high standards for Convention's ministry. To this end, it shall interview all candidates for ordination or induction into our ministry, and make its recommendations to the Council of Ministers. It shall also annually grant or deny the status of candidates for ordination to all Swedenborgian affiliated theological school students or applicants who request it, confer regularly with such students, and report its decisions to each student concerned, to the faculty of the School and to the Augmentation Fund Committee.

It shall also confer with the candidate before ordination, to the end that the candidate may be mindful to the task ahead, and approach the Rite of Ordination truly prepared for consecration to the Lord's service.

Amended July 9, 2004, Waterloo, Ontario; Amended June 25, 2015, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Section 8. The Committee on Revision of the Roll shall consist of three members; to it shall be referred without further action by the Council all matters of record involving changes in the Roll of Ministers of the General Convention, for report and recommendation to the Council.

It shall also be the duty of this Committee to keep a Roll of Former Ministers of Convention, to which the names of those who have ceased to be minister thereof, through death, resignation, or removal, shall be transferred in accordance with the rules of Convention.

Section 9. The Misconduct Determination Board shall consist of five members, three of which will be from the Executive Committee and two from the Ethics Committee. It shall be the duty of this Board to review charges and evidence given it from the Board of Inquiry and determine:

- i) if misconduct occurred, and
- ii) what actions should be taken.

The Misconduct Determination Board is to follow the policies laid out in the misconduct procedures adopted by the Council of Ministers and General Council.

Added June 2012, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Section 10. The Advisory Placement Committee shall consist of three members; the Chair of the Council of Ministers, the Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies, and the President of Convention who serves as Chair. It shall be the duty of this committee to provide resources and advise ministers who are seeking employment within the denomination and also societies that are seeking to call ministers.

Added June 2012, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Article V. Business

Section 1. The business of the Council shall be considered in the executive meetings in the following order:

1. Call to order
2. Address of the Chairman
3. Adoption of report of the Program Committee
4. Appointment of special committees for the session
5. Communications
6. Report of the Executive Committee
7. Reports of Standing Committees
8. Reports of Special Committees
9. Old Business
10. New Business
11. Election
12. Adjournment

The Standing Committees shall report in the order in which they are named in Article III, Section 1. If a report is not ready, it shall be passed over until all other committees have had an opportunity to report, unless the Council set a specific time for hearing of a report. No debate shall be allowed on any of the above reports until all of them have been presented, but a motion to refer or adopt a recommendation where there is no desire to debate shall be in order.

Section 2. The parliamentary procedure of the Council of Ministers shall be governed, in all cases not specifically covered by the Constitution and Bylaws of Convention or by these Bylaws, by Roberts Rules of Order. The Secretary of

the Council shall keep a copy of these Rules available for ready reference.

Section 3. All requests for appropriations in connection with the work of any of the committees of the Council, as being beyond the power and authority of the Council of Ministers, shall, if the Council of Ministers approves, be presented to the General Convention.

Article VI.

Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended or suspended by a three-fourths vote of those present at any regular meeting. They may be suspended at special meetings by a three-fourths vote of those present at such meetings.

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS STANDING RESOLUTIONS

Whereas ministry as a professional endeavor requires continuous development and personal growth, and, whereas education is a lifelong process not ending with ordination; therefore, be it resolved that the Council of Ministers of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches affirms that planned continuing education is not an elective but is a necessary process to build professional competence.

1. Ordained clergy are subject to requirements for mentorship in their first two years of ministry, and annual peer supervision and attendance at Convention's annual meeting throughout their ministry. The secretary of COM will oversee their "good standing" based on annual reporting.
2. The continuing education (CE) is overseen and approved by EXCOM and the following criteria must be met regarding the continuing education unit being chosen:
 1. Areas of study – ministry, spirituality, small group leadership, working with boards, pastoral care, church growth (pick at least 2)
 2. To be earned at Peer Sup, CSS classes, Convention COM Education, Camp Sessions, or training by a legitimate organization that has a relevant knowledge base. Leading a session does NOT count as Continuing Ed.
 3. Requirement is 20 hours of continuing education every two years
 4. 1 credit per hour = 1 in-person professionally-led instruction
3. Retired ministers are not subject to these professional development requirements.

(Preamble, amended at General Convention, 2023)

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

(Adopted at General Convention, July 3, 1986)

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

"It is the responsibility of the Council of Ministers, using the good office of its Committee on Admission to the Ministry, to evaluate the readiness and suit-

ability of individual candidates in accord with the general principles outlined in Article V, Section 2 of the Constitution, and in the Preamble to Article XIII of the Bylaws of the General Convention.

“Article V, Section 2 reads: ‘Through its Board of Managers of the New Church Theological School, commonly known as the Swedenborg School of Religion, the General Convention shall within the limits of available resources, provide for the thorough professional training of individuals seeking ordination, such training to focus on the spiritual growth of its participants by development in understanding of our theology, sensitivity in human relations, appreciation of other traditions, and in the technical skills required for effective ministry.’

“The Preamble of Article XIII reads: ‘Jesus said to his disciples, you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.’ (John 15:16)

“The ordained ministry exists to facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, helping them to be open to the Lord’s leading and enabling them to lead useful lives. Resources for the ordained ministry in serving the church include the Holy Word, the doctrines of the church, the rites and sacraments, experiences of worship, and growth-oriented skills insofar as they promote the process of regeneration.”

GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERIAL CONDUCT IN THE GENERAL CONVENTION OF SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCHES

The Constitution of the General Convention (Article III, Section 3) assigns to the Council of Ministers “responsibility for the pastoral support of all ministries and for providing them with clear ethical standards.” It adds, “It shall exercise such disciplinary functions over the ordained clergy as it may in its collective wisdom adopt, subject to the provision of the Constitution and Bylaws.”

Given the importance of our purpose—to facilitate the spiritual well-being of people—and the variety of ministries devoted to this end, the task is both urgent and difficult. Our theology points to clear principles of spiritual well-being which do not change. It recognizes also that there are outward behavioral expectations which we ignore at our peril, but which do change with the passage of time, and which vary from region to region.

Accordingly, we have tried in the following revision to distinguish these two aspects of ministerial ethics, in an effort to be uncompromising in devotion to the Lord’s service and responsibly flexible in the means used for that service.

Theological Basis

For the Swedenborgian, spiritual well-being is a state of oneness of heart, mind, and life. The most adequate ministry will therefore lead by affection, precept, and example. Our theology also insists that human life is a process, that we do not achieve perfection, but can move toward it to eternity. As ministers, we need both self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others. Since charity is “acting with prudence to the end that good may result” (*The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 100), we are called in all circumstances, with-out exception, to consider not just what has happened, but what we can do for actual betterment. When we fail to hear or to heed this call, as we all do at times, then the call simply comes again, asking us to recognize our failure, and not to dwell on it but to consider what we can do about it.

In this effort, we cannot stand alone. Our very being is constituted in part by the affection and understanding we receive from each other, and our common involvement in ordained ministry gives special weight to our treatment of each other. Genuine affection, clear understanding, and unflinching fidelity within this fellowship work strongly for our purpose, and their lack brings a profound distress.

Under the Lord’s providence, something could emerge from this distress

which would recommend itself to everyone. There are times, however, when we fail to discover that ideal solution, and must resort to the discipline authorized by the Constitution. This may be freely accepted by all parties; but even when it is not, the imposition of discipline may be the best course of action available. We must then accept our imperfections and focus our efforts on minimizing the harm. It is at such times that the distinction between fundamental principle and local, human tradition is most critical, and when the spirit of the discipline is as important as the discipline itself.

As concerns ministry in particular, doctrine, history, and experience point up the perils of reliance on the authority of the clergy. It is particularly tempting to try to solve difficult problems by clerical pronouncement, ignoring the fact that to the extent that any course of action is taken under compulsion, it is not conducive to spiritual growth. At the heart of the following guidelines is the conviction that our choices as ministers need to be informed by the central purpose of our church, to facilitate the spiritual well-being of those who rely on us.

I. Personal and Interpersonal Conduct

We are unanimous in our acceptance of the law of love, but not necessarily in our understanding of it. Our understanding of the word “love” is demonstrated primarily by our behavior, which is at least as instructive as our words. We communicate by the way we act that the good life is difficult or easy, joyous or bitter, flexible or rigid; and no amount of talking effaces these messages. It is vital that we recognize that we ourselves are in process, being open about our failings and about our ideals alike.

1. Persons live only as they receive life itself from God. We have made public acknowledgment of that life by seeking and accepting the laying on of hands of ordination. We have a special responsibility to open ourselves to our own emotional, intellectual, and spiritual depths, to the wisdom and power of the Bible, to the theology of our church, and to the Lord in meditation and prayer. To work toward our goals, we need also to keep abreast of current developments in the religious and secular worlds around us, with a special responsibility for attention to currents of thought and feeling within Convention.
2. However differently understood and accepted, the Divine is equally present in all People, regardless of such outward attributes as race, class, sexual orientation, creed, gender, physical capabilities/limitations or age. Prejudice or discrimination of any kind is a denial of this central tenet of our theology.
3. As we are drawn to become more intimately connected to persons in our communities, it can be that a pastor finds a real friendship developing. Choosing

friends from among those one serves and leads has inherent complications. There is a difference between being friendly and being a close friend who shares confidences. It is better to find friends among colleagues and through organizations that promote your values and interests. However, if you develop a close friendship with a congregant, the following steps must be taken.

- Discuss the difficulties of being both spiritual leader and friend.
- Avoid discussing the business of the congregation with him or her.
- Avoid spending time together at congregational events.

4. Pastors who are single must often decide whether to date someone in their congregation. It is, after all, a place to meet someone with similar values and commitments. To date a congregant, however, introduces myriad complications and opportunities for misunderstandings. If you find yourself attracted to a member of your congregation, you must take the following steps.

- Inform him/her that you cannot be his/her spiritual leader and have a romantic involvement. Therefore, if the person wants to pursue a dating relationship, he/she should find someone else to serve as spiritual leader.
- Tell your governing body and supervisor about the relationship.

5. Human sexuality is a gift from the Lord, providing an avenue to the deepest and most abiding of human relationships. It is also an avenue to our deepest vulnerabilities, and its misuse can have tragic personal consequences, and can lead to severe legal consequences. We are called to fidelity in all our relationships, and particularly to the utmost respect for the sexual integrity of all persons. Sexual contact or sexualized behavior between a faith leader and a congregant, client, student, or employee with whom the faith leader has a pastoral or professional relationship is an abuse of power and constitutes sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct is defined as sexual contact (not limited to intercourse) that violates the trust developed by the congregant, student, client or employee in the context of the pastoral or professional relationship.

6. The community in which we live is our neighbor, and our constructive participation in its affairs is an essential element in religious life. As ministers urging others to live by the Lord's commandments, we make a special commitment to live consistently ourselves. It is important that we be unquestionably fair in our financial dealings and reliable in keeping commitments made. This includes such matters as preparation for and attendance at meetings, clear and adequate reports, and prompt attention to correspondence. We should neither ask nor expect special favors or immunities because of our ministerial status. Where discounts, privileges, or special fees are offered, they may be accepted with appreciation, and with the acknowledgment that we are to give as freely as we receive, though not

necessarily in kind. Under no circumstances should special favors or immunities be offered or accepted in exchange for any ‘gift.’

7. In keeping with our sense of the holiness of all life, we are aware that excessive drinking and other forms of substance abuse, obscene stories and expressions, and raucous behavior diminish our effectiveness, as do the other extremes of prudery and self-righteousness. Both extremes betray a narrow egocentricity that renders us insensitive to the feelings and needs of those around us.

8. Personal appearance is one of the ways in which we communicate with each other, and excessive concern with and willful disregard for appearance are equally damaging. Our dress and grooming should reflect our interest in and concern for the human situations in which we engage and should be in general accord with local traditions.

9. Clergy use of social media for personal and professional use contribute to the public face of our denomination, and therefore constitutes clergy conduct. Decisions about what to post must conform to the ethical standards set forth in these Guidelines. Decisions on how and who to e-mail need careful attention, with thought given to include all who should be included, and not communicating electronically in ways we would not consider communicating in person or on the phone.

10. There are no quantitative measurements of spiritual well-being, and therefore no simple standards of evaluation of ministerial effectiveness. It is necessary that we be fully honest with ourselves and our employers, neither inventing unnecessary tasks nor avoiding necessary ones, fulfilling the terms of our employment in the spirit as well as in the letter. It is permissible to take other remunerative work with the knowledge and consent of the employer; but again, there is need of honest evaluation of the effect this has on our ministry.

11. The personal nature of ministry can allow it to intrude on the minister’s personal and family life. It is vital that the family not feel engulfed by the church and that the minister have time that is genuinely free for family involvement. Regular days off and complete vacations are necessities, and should be openly negotiated with the employing body.

12. As human service professionals, we are accountable for a self assessment of our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. When mental health issues, stress due to family discord, and any other factors interfere with our daily lives and ability to minister to others, we have the responsibility to address our concern with peers, and when warranted, to contract for appropriate professional support. We also have the responsibility to be aware of signs of depression, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, etc. that may arise in congregants, fam-

ily members or colleagues, and to assist them to access appropriate assistance.

II. The Relationship to the Group Served

The relationship of employee to employer can be ambivalent in the ministry. We are enjoined to lead our “employers” by truth to the good of life, a good which is genuine only if it is freely chosen. There are times when it seems that the welfare of the institution is at odds with the welfare of one or another of its members, or of its minister, and the available alternatives seem equally painful. Devotion to our central purpose is essential at all times, and never more than in times of difficulty.

1. Professionals in all the helping professions receive confidences, and are both legally and ethically bound to respect them. Ministers especially tend to be trusted, and a constant sensitivity to that trust is vital. Confidences, whether explicitly labeled or not, are not to be shared, even with colleagues and spouses. However, if individuals give us reason to believe that they are intending harm to themselves or others, we are obliged to weigh carefully the resources we have to prevent such harm, and to act according to our most prudent and compassionate judgment. We are responsible as well to know and to abide by the laws that apply in the particular regions of our ministries. We are to be guided at all times by a pastoral concern for those who trust us.

2. We recognize the trust placed in the therapeutic relationship, its unique power, and the inherent danger of exploitation in any dual role relationship. The role of Pastor and Congregant develops a ‘dual’ aspect when there are additional roles played by either party; i.e., committee chair/member, officer/employee, counselor/counselee, etc. These relationships need careful ethical attention. It is unethical to enter a counseling relationship with anyone with whom we have sexual, family, business, or friendship relationships.

3. Different ministers respond to different aspects of our theology. We should not make our own special interests into idols, but should try to present the full depth and breadth of our teachings and to foster an appreciation of colleagues whose special interests differ from our own.

4. We do not exist in a vacuum, but are sustained in our mental and emotional growth by our communications with each other. Our open acknowledgment of our inter-dependence upon each other is of critical importance to the health of our church.

5. Our belief in the Divine of the Lord entails rather than precludes the presence of that same Divine in all religions of the world. We are true to this principle only as we seek the best in and for all faiths; and we are false to it whenever we try

to exalt our own religion by demeaning others. Our task is not to try somehow to make our own understanding universal, but to discover the universality to which it points

6. Ministers are responsible to whole congregations or groups, and have a responsibility to nurture a fabric of healthy relationships. Ministers employed by hospitals, hospice organizations, schools, non-profits, etc. have a call to see these organizations as sacred community, and have the responsibility to support the relationships within these communities in the same manner as described for church communities. In all our communities, the fabric of healthy relationships is damaged by any form of favoritism toward individuals or subgroups, and by involvement in political games. Such issues require particular attention when critical decisions must be made, as when a group is relocating, or a minister is leaving.

7. The health of a society depends not only on its internal relationships, but on its relationships with the community and world in which it finds itself. Every effort should be made to nurture the conviction that the church is not a self-righteous enclave in a world of sin, but a participant in the process of community, nation, and world, called by virtue of its gifts to special service.

8. The minister's relationship to an employing body has personal, professional, and moral dimensions. A formal contract can be helpful in making unspoken assumptions explicit. No agreement, however informal, is to be terminated without adequate notice, except by mutual consent. We should be freely accessible to the employing body for discussion of continuation or termination of service, and should, unless explicitly invited to remain, absent ourselves from further discussion and from the actual voting procedure.

9. The minister's self-evaluation is essential to growth in service. An annual report to the employing body, with an open review of it by that body, is an excellent means of improving the effectiveness of the minister and the group, and of discovering hidden expectations.

10. A group grows far more by making decisions than by having decisions made for it. Ministerial leadership encourages general involvement in the understanding and formulation of policy and in the choice of particular courses of action.

11. Our spouses, while under no professional obligations, may come into positions of significant influence. It is incumbent upon us to do our best to communicate to them both the substance and the importance of these guidelines, and to nurture an appropriate sense of accountability to them.

III. Relationship to Other Ministers

Ministry as a profession is sufficiently different from most others in that we

look particularly to each other for understanding and support. We are not only professionals, but professionals dedicated to a common service to God in a calling that points beyond our human strength. For this we need relationships with our fellow ministers of comradeship, frankness, mutual respect, cooperation, mutual help, and recognition of a spiritual imperative over and above any professional standards. We need to hold ourselves ready to offer affection, understanding, and assistance, defending our colleagues against misunderstanding or injustice, and being with them in loving concern in times of need or distress.

When support and understanding are forthcoming, this is especially meaningful, and when they fail, the sense of lack is especially severe. Our geographic isolation intensifies the significance of every communication, both for better and for worse.

1. Our ministries are tending increasingly to take different forms, and there is a risk that this may provide occasions for dispute. Given the principle that a form is the more perfect as its constituents are distinctly different, and yet united (*Divine Providence* 4), we are called to see these differences as complementary rather than competitive, and to enrich our own limited understandings by insights that come from endeavors outwardly unlike our own.

2. As professionals, we are responsible for normal professional standards. This means a respect for the integrity of the professional work of fellow ministers, doing nothing directly or indirectly to interfere with that work (e.g., performing ministerial services in another parish without its minister's permission). This is in no way to be construed as a license for possessiveness or defensiveness, and calls us to support any efforts that further our central purpose (e.g., welcoming the participation of another minister in any such service, or the performance of tasks complementary to our own). Because we identify so closely with each other, we may well overreact when opinions or policies diverge. In cases of serious professional or personal misconduct, we should in virtually all instances refer the concern to the responsible officials. In most instances of disagreement, however, the most sympathetic interpretation is also the most constructive. Unsympathetic criticism of another minister, particularly one's predecessor or successor, is contrary to the central principles of a life of charity.

3. The relationship between a minister and an employing body is a sensitive one. It is unethical to make overtures to a church or employing body whose minister has not expressed the intent to resign or retire; and if overtures are received from such a body, the well-being of the incumbent minister should be of primary concern.

4. A pastorate, particularly a long one, builds strong bonds of affection which

can place an incoming minister at a serious disadvantage. Resignation or retirement should be handled with special sensitivity in this regard. Every effort should be made to enable the church to make its own free choice, to create a favorable climate for the successor, and to leave the field free by avoiding anything that might be interpreted as interference with the successor's work. It should be made clear to the church before departure that, however painful it may be, a decisive break in the relationship is necessary. If an invitation is received to perform ministerial services for a former parish, the present minister's permission must be sought and the participation of that minister encouraged.

5. An affirmative attitude needs to be expressed in visible forms. A departing minister should demonstrate his or her acceptance of the successor by some form of public welcome and by cordial introductions to as many of the members as possible. Personal notes and any materials of a confidential nature should be destroyed; but the successor should have free and immediate access to all official records; including membership and address lists, minutes, financial records, and legal and constitutional materials. Every effort should be made not to perpetuate divisions by prejudicing the successor against any individual or group within the church.

6. The best use of our limited ministerial resources requires constant attention. A minister contemplating a change should seek the best information possible concerning current areas of need, using the Ministerial Placement Committee as the most appropriate resource.

7. In the search for ministerial employment, if a minister should feel aggrieved, or should feel that the well-being of another is put at risk, by the conduct of another minister, the first step is to raise the issue privately with the individual concerned. If this effort fails, the good offices of the ordaining minister of Convention should be sought. Should this not provide a resolution, the Council of Ministers may be asked to render assistance.

IV. Relationship to Convention and Association

The essence of the church is the Divine presence with us as individuals and collectively. This essence is therefore the Infinite; but it works through forms of human design, for which we must take responsibility. Our highest loyalty in regard to Convention and the Associations is to their essential purpose, and this, to be effective, must be expressed in the most critical and caring participation in the organizations themselves.

1. The larger collective bodies of the church have provided the foundation on which current ministries rely, with significant contributions to the local churches,

to theological education, and to resources for ministry. Ordination therefore involves pledges to uphold the Constitution of Convention and be mindful of its welfare; and these pledges should be remembered and fulfilled at all times. We should stand ready to serve Convention, the Council of Ministers, and our Associations gladly as our particular abilities are needed, with the knowledge that their health contributes to the health of our own local efforts.

2. The wisdom and effectiveness of the collective bodies can be no fuller than we make them. Regular attendance at meetings of Convention and the Council of Ministers, responsive participation in them, and regular and accurate reporting of activities, developments, and statistics are the necessary foundations of a supportive larger church.

3. For the sake of the unity of the larger church, it is vital that its individual members share in its essential values. It is the responsibility of the minister on the local level to admit into membership to all who do so share, and not to admit those who, so far as can be ascertained, do not. The irreducible essentials of our faith—the Divine of the Lord, the holiness of the Word, and the life of charity—should be clearly presented, and a genuine commitment to them expressed.

4. Many of us work in relative isolation from each other, and the Supportive Peer Supervision program has been instituted to compensate in some measure for that isolation. It is left to individual ministers to stress the supervisory or the supportive aspects of the program; and this freedom entails a responsibility to exercise it well. Whether through the program or in some other way, it is our duty to periodically review our fitness for Convention's ministry. Should such a review raise serious doubts, the course of greatest wisdom is to seek the help and counsel of laypersons or clergy with whom there are bonds of affection and respect.

5. Standards for "Good Standing" as a Member of the Council of Ministers, and the requirements for Continuing Education and Professional Supervision, are outlined in Article I of the Bylaws of the Council of Ministers. "Good Standing" membership in the Council gives ministers an external affirmation, in the same manner that upholding these ministerial conduct guidelines gives an internal affirmation, of our appropriate living of our ministerial call from God.

6. Convention and its collective bodies are human institutions, and true loyalty to them includes the duty of thoughtful and constructive criticism. Experience indicates that if such criticism is addressed to the body's will to improve, without a prejudgment as to the best response, the result will be affirmative. The ideal is an unswerving devotion to fundamental principles, with a willing openness to the process of change.

V. Ministerial Misconduct

1. If an issue of ministerial misconduct arises, persons are required to follow the reporting process outlined in “Procedures for Handling Allegations of Misconduct Against Our Ordained Ministers Or Our Lay Leaders” from the *Council of Ministers Handbook* (dated July 2012).

Epilogue

For our own sakes, the Lord expects and wants our very best. The preceding guidelines are an effort to define that “best” in the context of our own times and culture, and they are offered in the knowledge that there will be failures and shortcomings. As we try to live up to them, there will be needs for clarification and change, and it is the responsibility of the Council of Ministers to keep us working on the subject of ethics for our ministry. Only to the extent that we are in agreement in principle will the guidelines be felt as supportive of our best rather than as threatening, and it is therefore crucial that any disagreement with them be openly expressed. They are not valid for all time, and will be effective only as they are truly an ongoing part of our collegial process.

**BYLAWS OF THE CORPORATION OF THE NEW CHURCH
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
DBA CENTER FOR SWEDENBORGIAN STUDIES**

Article I.

Name, Purpose and Location

Section 1. The Corporation of the New Church Theological School operates the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, an institution serving the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America and Canada (hereafter referred to as General Convention). The Corporation was incorporated in 1881 as the Corporation of the New Church Theological School under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and is a non-profit, tax exempt institution operating for religious and educational purposes.

Section 2. The address of the principal of the Corporation shall be as follows: Center for Swedenborgian Studies, 50 Quincy St., Cambridge, MA 02138-3013.

Article II.

Members of the Corporation

Section 1. The membership of the Corporation shall consist of two classes:

A. At-large Members

Any person who (i) has been accepted as a member at large of Swedenborgian Church pursuant to the Constitution of the General Convention or (ii) is a member of any Association or Society constituent of the General Convention, who is 18 years of age or older, may become an at-large member of this Corporation by signing these Bylaws and he or she shall cease to be an at-large member hereof upon ceasing to have the qualifications above named, or upon filing with the Clerk a written withdrawal of membership.

B. Representative Members

Each member of the General Council of the Convention shall be a representative member of the Corporation upon election to the General Council and each shall cease to be a representative member of the Corporation upon expiration of his or

her term of office on the General Council or upon his or her resignation therefrom.

Section 2. An adequate and current alphabetical file of the active membership of the Corporation shall be established and maintained in the offices of the Corporation by the Clerk, and shall be available for inspection at all reasonable times to the Trustees and members of the Corporation.

Article III.

Meetings of the Members

Section 1. Place for Meetings. All meetings of the at-large and representative members shall be held at the principal office of the Corporation in Massachusetts unless the Articles of Organization permit the holding of meetings of members outside of Massachusetts and unless a different place is fixed by the Trustees or the Dean and stated in the notice of the meeting.

Section 2. Annual Meeting. The annual meeting of the members shall be held during the annual convention of the Swedenborgian Church. If no annual meeting is held in accordance with the foregoing provisions, a special meeting may be held in lieu thereof, and any action taken at such meeting shall have the same effect as if taken at the annual meeting.

Section 3. Special Meetings. Special meetings of the members may be requested by the Chair or by the Trustees, and shall be called by the Clerk, or in the case of death, absence, incapacity or refusal of the Clerk, by any other Officer, upon written application of three or more members entitled to vote thereat.

Section 4. Notice of Meetings. A notice of every meeting of the members, stating the place, day and hour thereof and the purpose for which the meeting is called, shall be published by the Clerk in accordance with the provisions of Article V, Section 4 of these Bylaws.

Section 5. Quorum of Members. Ten at-large members and a majority of the representative members as shown on the records of the General Convention shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the members of the Corporation.

Section 6. Adjournments. Any meeting of the members may be adjourned to any other time and to any other place permitted by these Bylaws by the members present at the meeting, although less than a quorum; or by any Officer entitled to preside or to act as Clerk of such meeting if no member is present. It shall not be necessary to notify any member of any adjournment. Any business which could have been transacted at any meeting of the members as originally called may be transacted at any adjournment thereof.

Section 7. Voting. Each member of each class of the Corporation shall be entitled to one vote on all matters before the members, and at-large and representative members shall each vote as a separate class. When a quorum is present, a majority vote shall decide any matter except where a larger vote is required by the law, the Articles of Organization, or these Bylaws.

Any election of Trustees by the members of a class shall be determined by a plurality of the votes cast by members of that class present and entitled to vote at the election.

Article IV. Board of Trustees

Section 1. The business and affairs, including all academic affairs, of the Corporation shall be managed by the Board of Trustees, who shall have and may exercise all the powers of the Corporation except such as required by law or the Corporation's Articles of Organization or Bylaws to be otherwise exercised. Except as so limited, the powers and duties of the Board of Trustees shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. to determine and review periodically the purposes and the mission of the institution.
2. to select the Dean of the institution, and to support the Dean in the exercise of his or her responsibilities.
3. to recommend, review, and approve changes in the educational programs of the institution, consistent with its mission.
4. to establish policies and procedures regarding salary schedules, appointment, and dismissal of each class of employees.
5. to oversee and approve the budget of the institution, and establish policy guidelines for the endowment and for all investments and major fund raising efforts.
6. to authorize the purchase, management and sale of all land, buildings or

major equipment for use by the institution.

7. to authorize the construction of new buildings and major renovations of existing buildings.
8. to authorize the incurring of debts by the institution and securing thereof by mortgage and pledge of real and personal property tangible and intangible.
9. to authorize any changes in tuition and fees within the institution.
10. to authorize officers or agents of the institution to accept gifts or bequests on behalf of the institution.
11. to ensure that adequate due process policies and procedures exist.

Section 2. Election and Tenure. The Board of Trustees shall consist of eight (8) elected members and four (4) ex officio members. At-large members and representative members shall each, voting as a separate class, be entitled to elect four (4) of the members of the Board of Trustees; PROVIDED THAT at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the members of the Board of Trustees elected by the at-large members of the Corporation and at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the members of the Board of Trustees elected by the representative members be members of the Corporation.

Other than as hereinafter provided, Trustees shall be elected for a term of four (4) years. The terms of the elected Trustees shall be staggered, so that the term of one at-large elected Trustee and one representative elected Trustee shall expire each year. When Trustees are elected, their term shall be designated in order to achieve such staggered terms.

No member of the Board of Trustees shall be elected for more than two (2) consecutive full four-year terms unless the members at the annual meeting of the Corporation vote to permit a member of the Board of Trustees to be elected for one (1) additional consecutive four-year term or part thereof, if applicable, where the members agree that extraordinary circumstances warrant such extension of the maximum term; PROVIDED HOWEVER THAT no further extension of the consecutive term of office for such member of the Board of Trustees shall be granted.

Upon the completion of the maximum term of the Board of Trustees, a minimum of a one-year absence is required before eligibility for re-election to membership on the Board of Trustees is restored.

As the terms of the Trustees originally elected by at-large members expire, successors will be elected by at-large members. As the terms of the Trustees originally elected by representative members expire, successors will be elected by representative members.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, any Trustee who fails to attend at least one (1) meeting of the Board of Trustees during any one (1) calendar year of their term (provided that more than one meeting was held in such year) shall be deemed to have submitted his or her resignation as a Trustee, with no further act on his or her part, to the Board of Trustees as of December 31st of such year; PROVIDED THAT the Chair, in his or her reasonable discretion, may waive such resignation requirement (either before or after said December 31st, but prior to the filling of the resulting vacancy) upon the receipt of a written notice from such absentee Trustee providing good and sufficient reasons for his or her absence. In the event that a Trustee shall be deemed to have submitted his or her resignation in accordance with this paragraph, the vacancy thereby created shall be filled in accordance with Section 3 of this Article IV.

The President of the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church and the Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies shall be ex officio members of the Board of Trustees with a vote. If the Clerk and Treasurer elected by the Board are not members of the Board, they shall become ex officio members of the Board without a vote. The President of the Graduate Theological Union and one representative from the CSS student body (see Section 9) shall sit on the Center for Swedenborgian Studies Board of Trustees without a vote. The aforesaid President, Dean and Graduate Theological Union representative ex officio members serve at the pleasure of the Corporation and are not governed by the term restrictions or rotation requirements of these Bylaws.”

Section 3. Vacancies. Any vacancy in the Board of Trustees, however occurring, may be filled by appointment by the Board of Trustees until the next annual meeting provided, however, that a vacancy resulting from the enlargement of the board shall only be filled by election by the members of the Corporation. In the case of a vacancy occurring other than by enlargement of the Board of Trustees such vacancy shall be filled at the next annual or special meeting only by the Class of Members who had elected the prior Trustee.

Section 4. Enlargement of the Board of Trustees. The number of the Board of Trustees may be increased or decreased at any annual or special meeting of the members provided however that the number of members of the Board of Trustees shall always be set at an even number.

Section 5. Trustees' Meetings. The Board of Trustees shall meet at least three times each year. One of these meetings shall be held without notice as soon as practicable after the adjournment of the annual meeting of members.

Section 6. Notice of Trustees' Meetings. Meetings of the Trustees may be called by the Dean, the Chair or any three or more Trustees by a request in writing addressed to the Clerk. Notice of the time and place of all regular meetings of the Trustee shall be given by the Clerk and of any special meeting of the Clerk or the Officer calling the meeting. Notice may be given orally, by telephone, telegraph, e-mail or in writing; and such notice given in time to enable the Trustees to attend, or in any case, notice sent by mail, e-mail, or telegraph to a Trustee's usual or last known place of business or residence or e-mail address, at least ten days before the meeting, shall be sufficient. Any meeting of the Trustees shall be a legal meeting without notice if each Trustee, by a writing filed with the records of the meeting, waives such notice.

The Board of Trustees may permit any or all Trustees to participate in any meeting of the Trustees by, or conduct any meeting through the use of, any means of communication by which all Trustees participating may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting. A Trustee participating in a meeting by this means is considered to be present in person at the meeting.

Every Trustee who attends a meeting without protesting prior thereto or at its commencement the lack of notice to him or her, and every absent Trustee who shall before or after meeting waive notice thereof by a writing filed with the records of the meeting or who shall sign such records, shall be deemed to have been fully notified of the meeting.

Section 7. Quorum of Trustees. At any meeting of the Trustees, a majority of the trustees then in office shall constitute a quorum. Unless otherwise provided by law, the Articles of Organization or these Bylaws, a vote of a majority of those present at any meeting at which there is a quorum shall be sufficient to transact business or to take any action by the Trustees.

Section 8. Action by Unanimous Written Consent. Any action may be taken by the Board of Trustees without a meeting if the action is taken by the unanimous consent of the Trustees. The action must be evidenced by one or more consents describing the action taken, in writing, signed by each Trustee, or delivered to the Corporation by electronic transmission, to the address specified by the Corporation for the purpose, or if no address has been specified, to the principal

office of the Corporation, addressed to the Secretary or other officer or agent having custody of the records of proceedings of the Board of Trustees, and included in the minutes or filed with the corporate records reflecting the action taken. Action taken under this section is effective when the last Trustee signs or delivers the consent, unless the consent specifies a different effective date. A consent signed or delivered under this section has the effect of a meeting vote and may be described as such in any document.

Section 9. Student Representative. At the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees held at the annual meeting of the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church each year, one student of the Pacific School of Religion enrolled in the Masters of Divinity Program with the Center for Swedenborgian Studies will be asked to serve on the Board of Trustees as a representative of all of the students enrolled with Center for Swedenborgian Studies. Such student representative is to attend all, or at least a portion, of any and all meetings of the Board of Trustees. The Executive Committee will determine in advance of each meeting whether such student representative is to be in attendance for the entire meeting or portion therefore. If attendance of only a portion of the meeting is required, the Executive Committee will also determine the parameters of attendance. Such position is an ex officio representation with no vote. Such student will be expected to make a report to the Board of Trustees at each meeting.”

Article V.

Officers of the Board of Trustees

Section 1. The Officers of the Board of Trustees shall be the Officers of the Corporation and shall consist of a Chair, a Vice Chair, a Clerk, a Treasurer, and other such officers, including one or more Assistant Treasurers and Assistant Clerks, as the Trustees may determine. These Officers shall be elected annually at the meeting of the Trustees following the annual meeting of the members by the Board of Trustees and shall serve until their successors are elected and assume the duties of their respective offices. The Chair and Vice Chair must be Board members but the Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Clerks and Assistant Treasurers, need not be. Officers are eligible for re-election.

All Officers of the Board of Trustees shall serve at the discretion of the Board of Trustees and shall be subject to removal by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Trustees present at a meeting of the Board of Trustees.

A vacancy in any of the offices of the Board of Trustees may be filled at any meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Section 2. Chair. The Chair of the Board of Trustees shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Trustees and at the annual Corporation meeting, serve as Chair of the Executive Committee, and appoint all committees and their Chairs in consultation with the Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies.

The Chair shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by law or by the action of the Board.

Section 3. Vice Chair. The Vice Chair of the Board of the Trustees shall perform such duties as shall be assigned by the Board. In case of death, absence, or inability of the Chair of the Board of Trustees to act, the Vice Chair shall discharge the duties of the Chair until such time as a new Chair is elected by the Board.

Section 4. Clerk. The Clerk shall serve as the Clerk of the Corporation and shall keep the records of the Corporation and the Board of Trustees, and shall give notice of all meetings of the Board of Trustees and of the members.

The Clerk shall be responsible for the maintenance of the file of the membership of the Corporation. He or she shall provide the notice of the Annual Meeting of the Corporation to be published in The Messenger at least 60 days prior to the date of the meeting. If The Messenger is not published at a convenient time, notices of the Annual Meeting shall be sent by first class to each member at least ten days before such Annual Meeting. Notice of special meetings of the Corporation shall be issued in the same manner. It shall be sufficient notice if mailed to the last and usual place of residence of each member in accordance with the records in the membership list. The Assistant Clerks shall have such powers and duties including any and all of the powers and duties of the Clerk as the Board of Trustees may prescribe.

Section 5. The Treasurer shall be responsible for carrying out the mandates of the Board of Trustees in overseeing the financial resources of the Corporation, including cash securities, stocks, bonds and all other property, personal or real, owned by the Corporation. The Treasurer shall assure that all books and accounts are accurately kept, and furthermore, shall present a full and detailed statement properly audited by an independent certified public accountant to the Corporation at its annual meeting and, if requested, at any other meeting of the

Board of Trustees or any meeting of its committees. The Assistant Treasurer shall have such powers and duties including any and all of the powers and duties of the Treasurer as the Board of Trustees may prescribe.

Article VI

Committees of the Board

Section 1. Executive Committee. There shall be an Executive Committee consisting of the Officers of the Board of Trustees. The Dean shall be an ex officio member of the Executive Committee with a vote. The President of the General Convention shall be an ex officio member of the Executive Committee with a vote. The Executive Committee shall have authority to act on behalf of the Board of Trustees on all matters except for the following which shall be reserved for the Board as specified elsewhere in these Bylaws: Dean Selection; Trustee and Board Officer Selection; Charter and Bylaws Amendment; Review of Institutional Mission and Purposes; Incurring Corporate Indebtedness; Expenditure of Funds Not Provided for in the Budget; Approval of the Annual Budget; the Conferral of Degrees; and the Purchase and Sale of Real Estate.

Section 2. Nominating Committee – At-Large Class. On or before March 1 every year the Chair shall appoint a Nominating Committee to select at-large nominees for the Board of Trustees. The Nominating Committee shall be composed of three at-large members of the Corporation at least one of whom shall not be a member of the Board of Trustees. The Nominating Committee shall make its report to the Annual Meeting of the Corporation.

Section 3. Nominating Committee – Representative Class. General Convention shall present nominees to the representative class at the Annual Meeting of the Corporation.

Other Committees. At the discretion of the Board of Trustees, other committees may be formed and discharged as needed.

Article VII.

Officers of the Institution

Section 1. The Dean shall be the chief educational and administrative officer of the institution. He or she shall exercise general responsibility for the overall affairs of the institution and shall bring those matters to the attention of the Board

of Trustees that are appropriate and necessary to keep it fully informed and to enable it to meet its policy-making responsibilities. The Dean shall be an ex officio member of the Board of Trustees and of all committees thereof.

The Dean shall appoint all other administrators, staff members, and temporary faculty members. Regular faculty appointments shall be presented to the Board for prior approval.

Article VIII. Indemnification

Section 1. Each person now or hereafter a Trustee or Officer of the Corporation (and his or her heirs, executors and administrators) shall be entitled, without prejudice to any other rights he or she may have, to be reimbursed by the Corporation for, and indemnified by the Corporation against, all costs and expenses reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with or arising out of any claim, action, suit or proceeding of whatever nature in which he or she may be involved as a party or otherwise or with which he or she may be threatened by reason of his or her having served as a Trustee or Officer of the Corporation, or by reason of any action alleged to have been omitted by him or her as such Trustee or Officer, whether or not he or she be such Trustee or Officer at the time of incurring such cost or expenses, including amounts paid or incurred in connection with reasonable settlements (other than amounts paid to the Corporation itself) made with the approval of the Board of Trustees of the Corporation and with a view to the curtailment of costs of litigation.

No such reimbursement of indemnity shall be paid or made for any expenses incurred or settlement made by such Trustee or Officer in connection with any matter as to which he or she shall be finally adjudicated in any such action, suit, or proceeding not to have acted in good faith and in the reasonable belief that his or her action was in the best interest of the Corporation, nor shall the amount of any such reimbursement or indemnity paid or made to any Trustee or Officer in respect of any matter on which settlement or compromise is effected, including the amount paid by such a Trustee or Officer in such settlement, exceed the expense which might reasonably have been paid or incurred by such Trustee or Officer in conducting such actual or threatened litigation to a final conclusion.

Payment by the Corporation of expenses incurred by such Trustee or Officer in defending any claim, action, suit or proceeding in advance of its final disposition may be made upon receipt of an undertaking by the person indemni-

fied to repay such payment if he or she shall be adjudicated to be not entitled to indemnification under the laws of Massachusetts. The Corporation and its Trustees and Officers shall not be liable to anyone for making any determination as to the existence or absence of liability, or for making or refusing to make any payment hereunder the basis of such determination, or for taking or omitting to take any other action hereunder, in reliance upon the advice of counsel.

Article IX.

Miscellaneous Provisions

Section 1. The Bylaws of the Corporation may be made, amended or repealed at any Annual or Special Meeting of the Members at which a quorum is present by an affirmative two-thirds vote of those at-large and representative class members present and voting, each class voting as a separate class, provided that notice of the substance of the proposed amendment is stated in the notice of such meeting.

Article X.

Miscellaneous Provisions

Section 1. Parliamentary Authority. The parliamentary procedure shall be governed, in all cases not specifically covered by these Bylaws, by Robert's Rules of Order.

Section 2. Fiscal year. Except as from time to time otherwise determined by the Trustees, the fiscal year of the Corporation shall end on June 30th.

Section 3. Seal. The seal of the Corporation shall, subject to alteration by the Trustees, bear its name and the year of its incorporation.

Section 4. Execution of Instruments. All check, deeds, leases, transfers, contracts, bonds, notes and other obligations authorized to be executed by and officer of the Corporation in its behalf shall be signed by the Chair or the Treasurer except as the Trustees may generally or in particular cases otherwise determine.

Section 5. Evidence of Authority. A certificate by the Clerk or a temporary Clerk as to any action taken by the Trustees or any officer or representative of

the Corporation shall as to all persons who rely thereon in good faith be conclusive evidence of such action.

Section 6. Articles of Organization. All references in these Bylaws to the Articles of Organization shall be deemed to refer to the Articles of Organization of the Corporation, as amended and in effect from time to time.

Article XI.
Former Bylaws

Section 1. All former Bylaws will be revoked and repealed immediately prior to the Annual Meeting following the adoption of these Bylaws, provided that General Convention, by appropriate votes, supports the provisions therein.

BYLAWS OF THE WAYFARERS CHAPEL

The Wayfarers Chapel is a national memorial to Emanuel Swedenborg and its services and programs bear witness to the vision of Christianity set forth in the teachings of Swedenborg and in the tradition and practices of the Swedenborgian Church.

Honoring and respecting a variety of approaches to the religious life, the Chapel welcomes all people. The Chapel gardens and grounds are to be maintained beautifully, so that the whole site may be consecrated to the worship and love of God, nurturing the experience of the Divine presence among us.

The uses of the Chapel are many, providing a unique experience for individual wayfarers, couples, groups, and families as a place to meditate and commune with God; a place to nourish the soul and spirit unfettered by the usual man-made structural separations from the natural world that God has created.

The Chapel and grounds provide an inspirational background for the celebration of worship; sacraments and special services to commemorate our Lord's birth, the Last Supper, and resurrection; and the celebration of marriage, baptism, and the transition which is called death.

The educational ministry of the Chapel can be carried out in the Visitors Center including the sale of books, classes and discussion groups, exhibits, lectures and films. Marriage counseling, personal growth enhancement programs and community events are also an integral part of experiencing the Wayfarers Chapel.

In summary the Chapel's uses are: solace and meditation for the wayfarer, celebration of the Christian rites and sacraments, educational programs and exhibits, personal growth programs, and community involvement in an environment as harmonious with God's own natural beauty as the imagination can envision.

BYLAWS

PREAMBLE

The Board of Directors was established by a vote of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the USA, Inc., currently known as and hereinafter referred to as The Swedenborgian Church, at its session in June 1950. The vote at that time read in part as follows: "Resolved – That the use, maintenance, and management of the property at Palos Verdes now known as 'The Wayfarers Chapel: a National Memorial to Emanuel Swedenborg,' be placed in the hands of a Committee consisting of five members, a majority of whom shall be members of this Convention, who shall be appointed by the President with the approval of the General Council, and in addition the President of Convention and the President of

the California Association (now known as the Pacific Coast Association) both ex officio: . . . the initial appointment of said five members to be for terms of one, two, three, four, and five years each; three of said members to be residents within the limits of the Pacific Coast Association.”

At the annual session of The Swedenborgian Church in June 1979, the General Council increased Board membership from five members to seven.

At the annual session of The Swedenborgian Church in June 1983, the General Council reduced the number of appointed members from seven to six.

ARTICLE I

MEMBERSHIP ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1.

In accordance with the action of the General Convention cited above, the appointive members of the Board shall consist of six persons, two appointments to be made each year by the President of The Swedenborgian Church with the approval of General Council. Board members shall be appointed for a term of three years. Terms shall commence and end with the close of the denomination’s annual convention. Those members who have served three consecutive three-year terms, including ex-officio members, shall not be eligible for immediate reappointment.

A member who is chairperson of the Board at the completion of the third year of his/her membership term shall have that membership extended to the close of the next fall meeting of the Board.

A person appointed to fulfill an unexpired term of two years or longer is eligible for reappointment to only two additional consecutive three-year terms. Vacancies on the Board shall be filled by appointment by the President of The Swedenborgian Church with approval of General Council.

Section 2.

Ex officio members of the Board shall include the President of The Swedenborgian Church, the President of the Pacific Coast Association, and the members of the Leadership Team. In the absence of the President of the Swedenborgian Church, the President’s designated representative may represent the President and be accorded full voting privileges. In the absence of the President of the Pacific Coast Association, or when a Leadership Team member is President, a designated representative may be appointed to represent him/her, and be accorded full voting privileges. The Leadership Team members shall serve without vote.

Section 3.

Three or more of the appointive members of the Board must reside within the limits of the Pacific Coast Association. All voting members of the Board must be members of The Swedenborgian Church.

ARTICLE II**OFFICERS****Section 1.**

The officers of the Board of Directors shall be a Chairperson, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Section 2.

The Chairperson of the Board shall preside at all meetings of the Board and its Executive Committee. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Secretary will convene the meeting and preside over the election of a Chairperson, Pro Tempore.

Section 3.

The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and one other Board member (called a Member at Large) plus the Leadership Team serving ex-officio, without vote. The Executive Committee shall have the power to act for the Board in the interim between Board meetings with the limitations set forth in Article IV, Section 2.

Section 4.

The Officers and other members of the Executive Committee shall be elected by the Board at the fall meeting and serve for one year.

ARTICLE III**MEETINGS****Section 1.**

There shall be three regular meetings of the Board, to be held normally in January, May, and September, open to all members of The Swedenborgian Church. The September meeting shall be the annual meeting. Special meetings of the full Board may be called by the Executive Committee or any three members of the Board, two of whom shall not be part of the Leadership Team. With the approval of the Board, any meeting can be held via telephone conference call. Votes taken by letter or the internet shall be confirmed at the next regular meeting of the Board. Minutes of the Board meetings shall be distributed to Board members and

shall be approved at the next meeting of the Board. A quorum shall consist of four voting members.

Section 2.

In the interim between Board meetings, the Executive Committee may meet if necessary. The Chairperson shall schedule an Executive Committee meeting upon request of any two members of the Executive Committee, one of whom may be an employee of the Board, or at the request of three members of the full Board, one of whom shall not be part of the Leadership Team. The Executive Committee minutes shall be distributed to all Board members. Actions of the Executive Committee shall be confirmed at the next meeting of the Board.

Section 3.

Between meetings of the Board, votes may be taken in any written form with the same effect as if taken at a regular meeting of the Board, except that in such written votes a two-thirds vote of the whole Board shall be necessary to decide the matter, and provided further that if any member of the Board requests its Chairperson in writing to delay action on the request under consideration, the Chairperson shall notify in writing all members of the Board of all objections made and reasons therefore, and shall allow two weeks for reversal of votes before the count of the vote is finally made.

Section 4.

The provisions of Robert's Rules of Order shall be used as a guide for the conducting of business.

Section 5.

Meetings of the Board or Executive Committee may be conducted by conference call, computer conference, or face to face.

ARTICLE IV

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 1.

The Board of Directors shall have superintendence of the services, programs, and activities of the Chapel. It shall employ the Leadership Team and evaluate their performance annually.

Members of the Board shall make themselves available to listen to problems and concerns of the Leadership Team and either individually or as a group, but decisions can only be made by the full Board or the Executive Committee as outlined in Article III.

The Board of Directors shall establish the general policies of the Chapel and

develop long-range plans for improvements.

The Board shall adopt the annual budget, submit copies to the General Council for their information and approval, and require a financial audit on the same schedule as the General Convention's audits, with a financial review in the years audits are not conducted.

The Board shall submit an annual report of The Wayfarers Chapel to the Secretary of The Swedenborgian Church for inclusion in the annual Journal of The Swedenborgian Church.

In carrying out its duties, the Board is responsible to The Swedenborgian Church and its General Council.

Section 2.

The Executive Committee shall act for the Board of Directors in the interim between Board meetings. Between Board meetings it shall have the authority to amend the budget so long as expenditures do not exceed the anticipated income.

The Executive Committee shall carry out the directives of the Board and act on all matters referred to it by the Board. It shall evaluate the effectiveness of the Leadership Team members and make recommendations to the full Board regarding their employment and salaries and other matters germane to Chapel operation.

Section 3.

The Leadership Team shall implement policies of the Board through day-to-day administration of Chapel activities as designated in the Responsibility Matrix. They shall employ, supervise, and evaluate Chapel staff. They shall keep the Board and Executive Committee informed of services, programs, activities, capital improvements, and the financial status of the Chapel.

Section 4.

The Leadership Team, working with the Treasurer, shall annually prepare a preliminary budget for the Board.

In carrying out their duties, the Leadership Team is responsible to the Board of Directors and its Executive Committee.

ARTICLE V

AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended at any meeting of the Board of Directors by a two-thirds vote of the Directors present at the time the vote is taken provided that notice of the proposed amendment shall first have been sent to Board members at least two weeks before the Board meeting. This notice may be dispensed with for any special occasion by a unanimous vote of the Board members present and

voting, provided a quorum exists. Bylaw amendments are also subject to approval by the General Council.

Amendments to these Bylaws are subject to approval of the General Council.

Revised September 21, 2007. Approved by General Council July 2, 2008.

Revised January 8, 2010. Approved by General Council September 5, 2013.

Revised September 21, 2013. Approved by General Council November 1, 2013.

Revised March 11, 2023. Approved by General Council March 11, 2023

BYLAWS OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN COMMUNITY

A fully online, minister-led outreach and connectional ministry of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, Inc.

The mission of this ministry is to create:

- a community where members are known to each other, feel free to share openly their personal journey of faith, and feel nurtured and supported in their walk with the Lord.
- an open and welcoming community for new spiritual seekers, introducing the Swedenborgian faith in an accessible way through powerful testimony and life experience with it.

BYLAWS

PREAMBLE – HISTORY

At its fall meeting in 2004, the General Council of the Swedenborgian Church (General Convention) determined to research the idea of an online ministry that would connect distant Church members and also be an outreach ministry to the world. A Research Committee was appointed for this project. The Research Committee reported regularly and in the summer of 2005, the General Council accepted a proposal to establish an online-only outreach and connectional ministry. The Research Committee was discharged with thanks and a Steering Committee was appointed to organize and create this Internet Ministry, with initial funding from the denomination.

In the fall of 2005, the Steering Committee brought a complete proposal to establish www.swedenborgiancommunity.org along with a request to fund a dedicated part-time minister. The General Council approved both requests and the search for a minister was opened. The General Council approved a part time contract for the first denominational “cyber minister” in the early spring of 2006, supported the design and implementation of a dedicated website for this new ministry and www.swedenborgiancommunity.org was officially launched at the denomination’s annual convention at Urbana University on June 26, 2006.

The Steering Committee continued to serve through June 27, 2008, when it was officially thanked for its diligent, excellent work and discharged. The General Council appointed an oversight committee for www.swedenborgiancommunity.org at its meeting on June 27, 2008. This committee is appointed annually by the General Council and has been named The Central Committee since 2011.

The General Council affirmed www.swedenborgiancommunity.org as a specific, recognized ministry of the denomination at its post-convention meeting

on July 8, 2012, in Bridgewater, MA.

ARTICLE I. CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Number and terms. The Central Committee of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org shall consist of three appointed members. Central Committee members will serve three-year terms, with one consecutive renewal possible. Terms of service will be staggered so that the entire committee membership is not new each year.

Central Committee Member Functions. The types of expertise and experience that the Central Committee will consider in recommending new members for the appointment include: familiarity with the functions of the General Convention, writing, ministry, financial budgeting and reporting, Internet technology, program creation and presentational skills. All Central Committee members will be/become registrants of the ministry, and at least one should be selected from the online community. At least two must be members of a General Convention ministry.

Appointment Process. Upon ratification and implementation of these Bylaws, the Central Committee will recommend Committee appointments to the General Council annually for affirmation by the General Council at its post-convention meeting.

Ex officio members. The minister of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org will serve ex officio without vote on the Central Committee, and is not counted toward a quorum. The Vice-President of the General Convention will serve ex officio with vote on the Central Committee.

Quorum. A quorum is achieved with one less than the number of voting Committee members at the time. If the Committee size should be reconfigured to six or more members, one more than half of the number of voting members will constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE II. OFFICERS

The Central Committee will self-select its internal organizational structure regarding facilitator, financial overseer and secretarial position from within its membership. If the Committee size should be reconfigured to six or more members, the Committee will formally vote to fill offices.

ARTICLE III. MEETINGS AND DECISION-MAKING

Regular and special meetings will be held via telephone conference call or computer-generated voice or video conference. As is possible, the Central Committee will meet in person during the annual convention of the Swedenborgian Church.

Generally, the Central Committee will make decisions through consensus. The Committee will have formal votes on legal matters such as the minister's annual contract recommendation, finalization of the annual budget for www.swedenborgiancommunity.org and on any major changes to the ministry's website.

ARTICLE IV. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE**Section 1. General responsibilities**

The Central Committee shall establish the general policies and have superintendence of the services, programs and activities of this ministry.

Individual members of the Committee shall make themselves available to listen to problems and concerns of the Minister or other employees, but decisions and/or adjudications can only be made by the Central Committee as a whole.

The Central Committee shall submit a report on the work of the online ministry to the General Council at least annually.

The Central Committee will also submit a report for inclusion in the annual Journal of the Swedenborgian Church.

Other reports will be prepared and submitted as necessary.

Section 2. Personnel Responsibilities

The Central Committee, following the denomination's open search process, will select the Minister for www.swedenborgiancommunity.org from the Roll of Ministers of the General Convention and recommend the hiring of that minister to the General Council of the General Convention. The contract will be between the selected Minister and the General Convention.

The Minister is responsible to the Central Committee and the Central Committee will evaluate the Minister annually. The Minister will implement policies of the Central Committee through day-to-day programming and services of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org. The Minister will report regularly to the Committee (frequency to be determined by the Committee and the Minister), and will direct/supervise and evaluate any part time technical/administrative assistant

if one should be in place.

Section 3. Financial responsibilities

The Central Committee, in consultation with the Minister, shall annually prepare a budget for the needs of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org. The Committee shall adopt the annual budget and submit it to the General Council for its approval. The annual budget for this ministry will be part of the complete annual budget of the General Convention, but the budget for www.swedenborgiancommunity.org will be administered by the Central Committee.

All financial transactions for www.swedenborgiancommunity.org will be handled through the General Convention's Central Office. As long as the day-to-day financial transactions are handled through the denomination's Central Office, and the ministry's annual budget is an identified part of the denomination's annual budget, audits and financial reviews of the finances of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org will be part of the overall audit/review process of the denomination as established by the General Council.

ARTICLE V. AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended at any meeting of the Central Committee by a two-thirds vote of the members present at the time the vote is taken, provided that notice of the proposed amendment shall first have been sent to Committee members at least two weeks before the Committee meeting. This notice may be dispensed with for any special occasion by a unanimous vote of the Committee members present and voting, provided a quorum exists.

Amendments to these Bylaws are subject to the approval of the General Council of the Swedenborgian Church in North America.

Approved by the General Council of the General Convention, June 25, 2013

Adopted by Central Committee of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org , July 13, 2013 (Central Committee membership at time of vote: Dr. Page Morahan, Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell, Ms. Christine Laitner; Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake, ex officio w/o vote)

SWEDENBORGIAN BODIES

The following Swedenborgian organizations are independent of our organization but wish to maintain a close relationship with us. We welcome them in our fellowship.

UNITED STATES:

The General Church of the New Jerusalem

Mailing Address: Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
P: (267) 502-4900
Exec. Bishop: Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss, Jr.
Website: www.newchurch.org

The Lord's New Church Which is Nova Hierosolyma

Address: 1725 Huntingdon Road
Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006
P: (215) 947-2727
Email: info@thelordsnewchurch.org
Website: www.thelordsnewchurch.org

GREAT BRITAIN: The General Conference of the New Church of Great Britain

First Conference 1789; General Conference Deeds enrolled 1822. Incorporated, 1872

Headquarters: Purley Chase Centre, Purley Chase Lane, Mancetter,
Nr Atherstone, Warwickshire CV9 2RQ, England
Spiritual Leader: Rev. J Dunion
jack.dunion@generalconference.org.uk
Chair: Mrs. M. L. Cowie
Web Site: www.generalconference.org.uk

THE CONTINENTAL (EUROPEAN) ASSOCIATION OF THE NEW CHURCH

(Organized in 1965 by the French Federation, the Swiss Bund, the New Church in Germany, the New Church in Vienna, and the New Church in Italy.

Secretary: Rev. Jean Vidil
c/o Nouvelle Eglise et Centre Swedenborg
Rue Caroline 21
CH-1003, Lausanne, Switzerland
P: (0) 21-23-78-77

AUSTRIA: The New Church Society of Vienna

President: Mr. Werner Prochaska
Soesergasse 4, A-1010 Vienna

Secretary: Mrs. Gerda Scholz
Untere Augartenstrasse 1/3
A-1025 Vienna

Services: Intermittently at the home of Mr. W. Prochaska

DENMARK: Den Nye Kirkes Menighed

Vice President: Mr. Oliver Boolsen
Nansensgade 7 1 tv., 1366 Copenhagen V.
Tel: 31 13 52 39

Secretary: Miss Inger Ullrich,
Osterpark 1, 2630 Tastrup
Tel: 43-99 25 59

Treasurer: Mr. Manfred Ullrich
Valbyholm 33, 2, 292 Skellet, 2500 Valby
Tel: 36-45 00 30

Board Member: Mrs. Laura Boolsen
Osterbrogade 228, 1.th. 2100, Copenhagen O
Denmark
Tel: 369-27 04 15

Pastor: Rev. Gudmund Boolsen
Osterbrogade 228, 1.th. 2100 Copenhagen O
Denmark

FRANCE: Association Cultuzelle La Presle

Secretary: Colette Gagnon
Gvaude Rue, 71520 Tramayes

Chrysalis Centre (Workshops and Seminars)

Leader: Rev. Patrick Duvivier
Ipailla 06540 Saorge, France
Phone: 06 13 51 32 58
Email: Francecomechrysalis@msn.com

GERMANY: Neue Kirche in Deutschland

President: Mrs. Barbara Schmidt,
Rosbaumweg 21D-78 Freiburg i Br.

Berlin

President: Mr. Peter Keune
Schmarjestr. 2, D – Berlin – 37
Secretary: Mr. Werner Podlich
Falkenseer Chausse 207, D-1 Berlin 20
Treasurer: Mrs. Gertrude Engling
Services: Fontane Str. 17 A, Berlin 33, Grunewald

Berlin-Grunewald

Lay Leader: Mr. Peter Keune
Nordrhein Westfalen, Heuverstrasse 16, D-463
Bochum
President: Mr. Horst Moelleken
Im neuen Weg 34, D-5480 Remagen
Secretary: Rekha Moelleken
Im neuen Weg 34, D-5480 Remagen
Treasurer: Bernhard Willimzig, Detmold

South West Germany

President: Frau B. Schmidt
Rosbaumweg 20, 79110 Freiburg, Germany
Secretary: Mr. Friedmann Schmidt
Keferstrasse 3, Villigen D-7730
Lay Leader: Mr. Friedmann Schmidt

ITALY: Italian Society of the New Church

Secretary: Signor Fabio Barzelatto
Casella Postale 34, 30035 Mirano (VE), Italy

SWEDEN: Nya Kyrkans Svenska Forsamling

President: Mr. Milan Pokorný
Tallvagen 11, 12163 Johanneshov

Secretary: Mr. Nils-Sture Jansson
Distingsgrand, 37, Hagersten, Stockholm C

Services: Tegnerluden 7, Stockholm
(Occasionally at Gothenburg)

Pastor: Rev. Daniel Fitzpatrick

Lay Leader: Mr. Nils-Sture Jansson

SWITZERLAND: Neue Kirche Der Deutschen Schweiz

Apollostrasse 2, CH-8032 Zurich
www.swedenborg.ch

President: Mr. Heinz Grob Freie Str 22, CH-8280 Krenzlingen
Apollostrasse 2, CH-8032 Zurich

Treasurer: Mr. Philippe Galland, Rue San Pierre 3, case postale
62631002

Pastor: Jean Vidil
Rue Caroline 21, CH-1003, Lausanne
Tel: (0) 21-23 7877

PHILIPPINES: The National Convention of the Swedenborgian Churches (Philippines), Inc.

Incorporated in 1952. Consists of nine congregations totaling approximately 500 members.

General: Rev. Tomas C. Aquino

President: Dr. Simplicio de los Santos

Ministers: Rev. Tomas C. Aquino, Francisco Guzman,
Rev. Amos C. Aquino, Simplicio de los Santos

AUSTRALIA: The New Church in Australia

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A new-start ministry program that exists virtually at:
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MinisterRev. Colin Amato

SPIRITUAL SUNSHINE:
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Committee MemberRudy Casares
Committee Member William Rotella
Committee MemberDr. Emily Tergliafera

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Summer School Director: Craig Carson

A family camp. Modern facilities and a pond for swimming and fishing make this camp outstanding, but the keynote of Almont is Camp Spirit! From the flag raising ceremony and the singing of “Fling to the Breeze Our Glorious Banner!” to the evening vesper service, Almont campers of all ages are alive with projects, classes, games, and skits – helping one another, working and playing together as a big family.

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Secretary	Tammara Mounce
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Trustee	Catherine Carson
Trustee	Rose Favors
Trustee	Victoria Mounce
Retreat Center Manager	Lori Patana

FRYEBURG NEW CHURCH ASSEMBLY

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Religious Programs Coordinator..... Rev. Susannah Currie

Dole 3 Miler Race Director..... Jon Crowe

Camp Director..... Rebekah Greenwood

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Sr., Rev. E. Kent Rogers, Cristina Guiu Wood, Trevor Woofenden

About the Fryeburg New Church Assembly:

The FNCA is a two-week, multi-generational, Swedenborgian family camp typically held the beginning of August, located on 20+ acres of pine forest on the banks of the refreshing waters of the Saco River in Fryeburg, Maine.

The Main Building includes our dinloewening hall, kitchen, lecture hall, adult lounge, children’s lounge, teen girls’ dorm, several second-floor private rooms, and two first floor rooms—each with a private half bath. Other buildings include nineteen family units located in cabins along the ridge overlooking the river, teen boys’ dorm, teen lounge, and laundry room. Tent and RV sites are also available with a bathhouse nearby. The Summer Session program includes something for everyone: chapel, lectures, religion classes and special programming for the children and teens, swimming, canoeing, and evening programs presented by campers. Horseshoes, volleyball, four-square, and ping pong are enjoyed during free time, working up an appetite for delicious meals provided by professional cooks, supplemented by a well-stocked salad bar.

What was originally called “the Promised Land” is now called “Our little slice of Heaven on Earth.”

PAULHAVEN

c/o The Church of the Holy City

9119-128 A Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5E 0J6 Canada

For information, contact Dianne Roessinger (403) 239-4192

Paulhaven children's camp is held at a wooded site on a lovely lake. Accommodations are primitive. The children are housed in cabins, but there is no running water, so this is a true camping experience. Adults do the cooking, but the children share in the chores of housekeeping. The religious program is staffed by members of the Western Canada Conference, which sponsors the camp. Swimming, boating, crafts, sports, hiking and group activities are enjoyed by campers and staff together. Campers come from widely scattered places, and camp is a high point in the lives of youngsters who often get only this opportunity to be with other New Church children.

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