



Fall General Council Meeting Report

BY KAREN CONGER

The General Council (GC) of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (SCNA) met in a hybrid format Friday and Saturday, November 3 and 4, 2023, at Mercy Center in St. Louis, Missouri. The business undertaken included hearing reports from the officers and others, such as the chairs of the Council of Ministers, the Committee on Admission to the Ministry, the Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS), the Chair of the Board of Trustees of CSS, and the editor of *Our Daily Bread*.

Under unfinished business, Rev. Rich Tafel reported on the progress of the New York Legacy Fund, explaining that, at the present time, the church property having been sold to the government of Serbia, there are two boards. The “old” NYNC board will stay active until all legal matters pertaining to what was the NYNC have been finalized, and a new board, which held a retreat at Temenos in September, which agreed to focus on a mission that might involve fund expenditures of \$1M a year in three grants over ten years (this is tentative).

In addition, President Rev. Jim Lawrence reported on the formation of an At-Large Membership

Review Committee whose recommendations included the recognition of all our camps (Almont, Fryeburg, and Paulhaven) as constituent bodies, should they so choose, and the encouragement of all of the associations and conferences in the SCNA to consider the recognition of an at-large membership category. Currently only the Pa-



General Council members met hybrid style: Herb Ziegler, Rev. Renée Machiniak, Jennifer Lindsay, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, and Pastor Paul Deming in-person; joined by Rev. Rich Tafel, Barb Halle, Kurt Fekete, and Karen Conger online.

cific Coast Association has such a category; it appears to be working very well for them. It was subsequently moved, seconded, and carried to adopt both recommendations.

The Church of the Open Word in St. Louis reported that they have established The Woodlands Conservancy Project, which comprises of roughly

two acres of woodlands surrounding the structure. The Society wishes to investigate the possibility of adopting this to raise money for supplemental support for the church. This would result in a “land reservation” which cannot be developed, though it would not prevent the property from being sold.

An amendment to Bylaws Article XVIII will be brought to the floor of convention in 2024 to clarify and simplify the term structure of the Investment Committee, to wit:

“An Investment Committee of five members shall be appointed by the General Council for a term of five years and each member may be reappointed without term limits. The Treasurer of the Convention shall serve as Chair of the Investment Committee *ex-officio* with voting rights.”

An article will appear in the next *Messenger* presenting the amendment in time for a vote

to be taken on the floor.

Several liaison reports were presented and listened to with interest. This program continues to be important in order to maintain good communication between the GC and our various ministries.

Regarding the National Church,

Continues on page 5

What's Inside:

Let's Meet Up—Online • A Message on Hope • Faith Acronyms • Clear Blue Sky • SCYL Officer Elections • Power of Spiritual Uses • And More!

Contents

Fall General Council Report	1
Editor's Corner	2
Letters to the Editor	2
Message from the President.....	3
Message on Hope.....	5
Year of Spiritual Uses.....	6
Faith Acronyms.....	7
Clear Blue Sky	8
SCYL Officer Elections.....	9
Passages.....	10
What's Happening.....	11
2024 Convention Theme	12

Editor's Corner

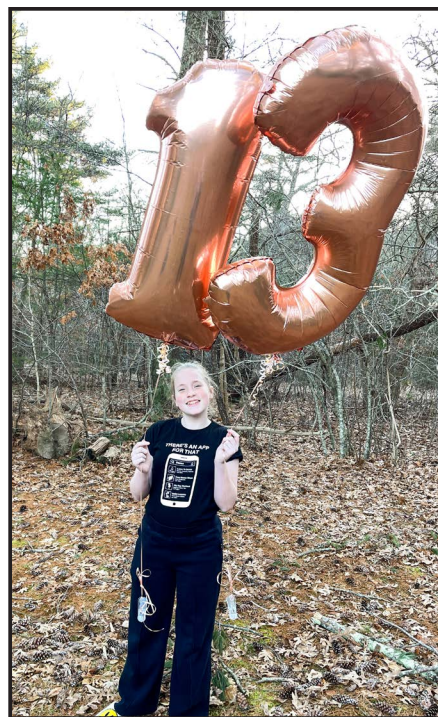


Lucky Number Thirteen

Thirteen years ago this past February, I became mom. Miss Serena couldn't

wait to get here, so she came eight weeks early at an itty-bitty four pounds and six ounces. With my medical conditions, this was not a surprise. She stayed in the NICU for three and a half weeks and she was ready to come home. Now here we are... we officially have a thirteen-year-old. You would never know how tiny she was. We are blessed with a smart, caring, talented kid who loves her church community.

I brought her to Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) when she was just four months old for our annual Work Weekend. There is something magical about our multi-generation



Serena is officially a teenager!

camp that is hard to put into exact words. She was surrounded by people who instantly loved and cared for her, and she loves them all back.

When she was eight, I brought her to Convention for the first time, and she loved it! She loved the children's program, and looked up to all the SCYL teens, they even let her sit with them at lunch! Since then, she has been counting down the minutes until she



Above: Serena at FNCA in 2011 meeting one of her cousins. Right: Twinning with Nora at Convention 2023.



turned thirteen. This past Convention she was in the twelve-and-a-half-year-old pocket, which can be really hard. Fortunately, Kurt (Youth Director) had the great idea to let her have the best of both worlds—children's program during the day and hang out

Continues on page 6

the Messenger

© The Swedenborgian Church of North America

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

January/February/March

Volume 248, No. 1 Whole Number 5486

Editor, design, and production: Rebekah Greenwood

Copy editing and proofing: Rudy Caseres, Robert Leith, Brittany Price, & Trevor

Standing Committee for Communication and Information: Rev. Kevin Baxter, Rev. Dr. David Brown, & Tara Conkling

Editorial Advisory Committee: Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, & Herb Ziegler

Printing: FenwayGroup, Boston, MA

Editorial Email: messenger@swedenborg.org

Editorial, Business, and Subscription Address: *The Messenger*, Central Office
50 Quincy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Tel: 617.969.4240

Central Office Email: manager@swedenborg.org

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

Submissions are accepted at any time. Submissions must be received by the 15th of the month to be considered for the next issue.

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

Letters to the Editor

Heartfelt Thanks

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for this excellent newsletter. Gordon Meyer's sermon on consciousness and love was compelling, articulate, and very timely. I might add that our problem in the Northern Hemisphere does stem from greed and, if we look even more deeply, from a culture of "lack." We fear that we won't have enough and then take way more than we need. After reading Braiding Sweetgrass in our book club, we discussed

Continues on page 9

*Message from the President***Let's Meet Up—Online!***The Year of Spiritual Uses: 2023–24*

Dear Beloved Swedenborgian Community,

Many people are discovering the delights of worshipping and fellowshiping with Swedenborgian groups even when they live hundreds or thousands of miles away. Many of our Churches have virtual worshiping options through highly personal and interactive platforms like Zoom or through excellent seats in the pews on Facebook Live and YouTube. If you do not live close to a Swedenborgian ministry on the ground, that no longer means isolation from real-time connections and relationship building. I encourage people to explore ways to have real Swedenborgian ministry experiences and real Swedenborgian community from the comfort of your home. Check out [all these options!](#)

Sunday Worship

10:00 AM ET | 9:00 AM CT | 7:00 AM PT

[Fryeburg New Church](#)

The Fryeburg New Church is located just on the border of New Hampshire in Fryeburg, Maine. They also offer an online Sound Bath Meditation every second, third, fourth, and fifth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM ET. Visit them Sunday on [Zoom](#).

[Temenos](#)

Temenos is located in Westchester, Pennsylvania. They stream their Sunday services on [Facebook](#).

10:30 AM ET | 9:30 AM CT | 7:30 AM PT

[Bath: Church of the New Jerusalem](#)

The Bath Church of the New Jerusalem is located in coastal Bath, Maine. They stream their Sunday services on [YouTube](#).

[Bridgewater: New Jerusalem Church](#)

The Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church is

located in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. They stream their Sunday services on [Facebook](#).

[Kitchener: Church of the Good Shepherd](#)

The Kitchener Church of the Good Shepherd is located in Kitchener, Ontario and streams their Sunday services on [Facebook](#).

[Portland New Church](#)

The Portland New Church is located just minutes away from downtown Portland, Maine. They stream their services on Zoom the third Sunday of the month. This virtual offering is an Interfaith Service led by students of The Chaplaincy Institute of Maine. All are welcome. [Email them](#) to request the Zoom link.

[Wilmington: Church of the Holy City](#)

The Wilmington Church of the Holy City is located in Wilmington, Delaware. They stream Sunday services on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

11:00 AM ET | 10:00 AM CT | 8:00 AM PT

[Cambridge: Swedenborg Chapel](#)

The Cambridge Swedenborgian Chapel is located just outside the Harvard campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They run several streamed services throughout the week. The Sunday service is streamed on [Facebook](#).

[Cincinnati: New Church of Montgomery](#)

The Cincinnati New Church of Montgomery is located in Glendale, Ohio. They meet on the first, third, and fifth Sundays of the month and offer services through Zoom. [Email them](#) to request Zoom information.

Continues on page 4

Message from the President

Continued from page 3

LaPorte New Church

The LaPorte New Church is located in LaPorte, Indiana. They stream their Sunday service on Zoom. Fill out [this form](#) for the Zoom link.

Royal Oak: Church of the Holy City

The Royal Oak Church of the Holy City is located in Royal Oak, Michigan. You can join their Sunday service via [Zoom](#) and their monthly Wednesday Meditation at 7:00 PM ET via [Zoom](#). Email revneee@aol.com for more information.

St. Paul: Virginia Street Church

The Virginia Street Church is located in St. Paul, Minnesota. They stream their services to [Zoom](#). They also offer a fully virtual Tuesday evening Arcana group from 7:00–8:00 PM ET via [Zoom](#). Email gordonmeyer@blues-tratum.com for more information.

12:00 PM ET | 11:00 AM CT | 9:00 AM PT

St Louis: Church of the Open Word

The St. Louis Church of the Open Word is located in St. Louis, Missouri. They stream their Sunday services on Zoom. [Email them](#) to request the Zoom link.

2:00 PM ET | 1:00 AM CT | 11:00 AM PT

Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco

The Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco is located in San Francisco, California. They stream their Sunday services on [Facebook](#).

The Rainbow Church of The New Jerusalem

The purpose of The Rainbow Church of The New Jerusalem is to

create a safe virtual/in-person safe space for LGBTQ+ spiritual seekers and allies to come together in worship, reflection, and discussion grounded in the theology of Emanuel Swedenborg as understood by The Swedenborgian Church of North America. Follow them on [Facebook](#) for updates and access to programming.

Rainbow Gatherings: First and Third Sundays of each month.

Reading/Discussion Group: Second and Fourth Sundays of each month at 5:00 PM ET/4:00 PM CT/2:00 PM ET.

5:00 PM ET | 4:00 PM ET | 2:00 PM ET

Washington, DC: Church of the Holy City

The Washington, DC, Church of the Holy City is located in our country's capital and is literally a mile walk away from the White House. Visit them Sunday on [Zoom](#).

Other Services Throughout the Week

Thursdays at 7:00 PM ET | 6:00 PM ET | 4:00 PM ET

Be Love, Be Honest, Be Useful

This fully virtual group discusses how we might move forward in building a new church that welcomes and supports diversity, creativity and change. This is the first official offering of the Helen Keller Center for Spiritual Life, an initiative to build space in the world that honors our distinguishable oneness, the unique expressions we each are of the one life that we share. [Request Zoom link here](#). If you have any questions about the group email beinglovetogether@gmail.com.

At Unspecified Times Agapao Church

The Agapao Church is a small Korean language church based out of Santa Ana, California. They offer worship content through their [YouTube Channel](#).

Calgary: New Church Society

The Calgary New Church Society is located in Alberta, Canada and has virtual offerings through a private Zoom session. Email lipskis@oldsnet.ca or sharonwilliams@shaw.ca for more information.

Chicago: Swedenborg Library

The Swedenborg Library is located in Chicago, Illinois. The Swedenborg Library is located in Chicago, Illinois. Some lectures and discussion programs are presented with Zoom access. [Email them](#) to request the Zoom link.

Elmwood New Church

The Elmwood Church is located in Elmwood, Massachusetts and is just minutes away from their sister church in Bridgewater. Weekly sermons are recorded separately and can be watched [here](#).

Hillside Community Church

The Hillside Community Church is located in El Cerrito, California. They upload sermons to their [Soundcloud](#) account.

Swedenborgian Spiritual Community of Puget Sound

While the Swedenborgian Spiritual Community of Puget Sound doesn't have a regular physical location, they are an active community of spiritual seekers primarily located in the Greater Seattle region of Puget Sound in Washington state. Their services are offered through Zoom. Email hbarler@hush-mail.com for more information.

Swedenborgian Community Online

The Swedenborgian Community Online, or Spiritual Sunshine as it is also known, is an online Swedenborgian ministry. They have regular spiritual services and offerings at various times throughout the week on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#). 📺

A Message on Hope for the New Year

BY SUSAN TURLEY

This year, my realization for the importance of hope was re-kindled. This is especially important when slipping into the depths of despair. The world can press heavy even on the broadest of shoulders. It can take tremendous effort to believe in new possibilities. 2023 has been a year filled with sorrow and tragedy around the globe. Particularly in these circumstances, the answer to the question “How do we keep hope alive?” carries profound significance.

I decided to begin this quest to find ways to keep hope alive by examining my lack of hope. I connected my sense of

I was drifting farther out to sea on a small rubber raft with no hope, no direction but plenty of indifference.

hopelessness with a lack of faith leading to self-neglect. You see, on October 14, 2006, when my son died, my faith died, too. Living without faith is gut-wrenching as well as illuminating. I learned that trying to find meaning in the externals is shallow. Not being able to access wisdom from a Higher Power is lonely and scary. I was drifting farther out to sea on a small rubber raft with no hope, no direction but plenty of indifference. There was a significant part of me that just stopped caring about almost everything. I could care about others but not so much about me. I came to realize this lack of self-regard was really nothing new and I was sick of it. I decided it was time to root out this self-neglect once and for all. So, I got to work.

I began by asking questions such as, “When do I put myself first? How do I know when it is right to say no? What will it take to feel okay when setting healthy boundaries?” I have struggled with these questions all my life while observing others who don’t think twice

about fulfilling their priorities. It was high time that I learn to do this, too.

So, in this season of my life called retirement, it became possible to prioritize myself. I have found space to pursue my interests. This newfound freedom is wonderful and challenging. Wonderful because I find joy in my pursuits. Challenging because I can feel void of purpose and meaning. During the times I am engaged in creativity I am content. During the empty times I am faced with fear and longing.

As I started to attend to my priorities, I began to sense a bit of hope that the existence of God may be possible. This

glimmer of hope gave me a rush of oxygen propelling me to take the next step out of the darkness into the light. I am not out of the woods, yet. But I see the light through the trees and the path forward because I am paying attention to my priorities. There was a day many years ago, I was standing on top of a hill overlooking the ocean. A feeling of peace and oneness came over me. I melded into the universe, and all became clear. I hang on to that moment as an anchor, a gift from God, a sacred moment that reminds me there is always hope, the promise of a better tomorrow, another opportunity for growth and rebirth. I hope this coming year will be filled with more happiness than sadness. Yet, life is not meant to be easy. So, let us embrace challenges with courage and blessings with gratitude. Let us hope for a glorious and triumphant 2024 all around the globe, filled with joy, laughter, peace, and most of all full of love. ☸

Rev. Susan Turley was in the first class of SSR women to be ordained into the SCNA in 1980.

GC Report

Continued from page 1

Rich and Jennifer brought the Council up to speed on the negotiations between the DC Society and the denomination. There is a draft document in process which eventually will go to legal counsel for advice. The property will be sold, all debts satisfied, and a 50/50 split of the balance will be realized, with criteria placed upon the DC Society with regard to membership numbers and the presence of a Swedenborgian ordained minister. An oversight committee will be formed made up of four people from the denomination and four from the Society, who will see to the management of the grant process. There remain a number of issues to be discussed and agreed upon.

Amongst other valuable discussions held was one around how well Convention is working as an organization. The SCNA is congregational in polity, horizontally based with a democratic function with offices that have terms, etc. At one time it was a departmental structure, which subsequently moved to the Support Unit structure in an effort to get more of the rank and file involved in the actual processes of the denomination. Dream Weavers arose and the Structure Review Committee came from that, its purpose being to keep its collective finger on the pulse of how things were actually working. Subsequently the Support Units were sort of collapsed and consolidated in an effort to make the working parts less complex. The former MINSU might be said to have not translated well into the new format, and the Structure Review Committee has been asked to take a look at this.

The GC will meet in a virtual format for its Spring 2024 meeting on Saturday, March 9 at 11:00 AM ET. ☸

The Year of Spiritual Uses

The Power of Uses in Spiritual Entrepreneurship

BY SHERI SMITH

In the evolving world of work, there's a compelling idea that stands out – the concept of usefulness. This notion suggests that every person has a unique purpose, a special role connected to the divine creator within us all. According to Emanuel Swedenborg, everything in the world is a result of divine love and wisdom, making each creation a reflection of these spiritual aspects. This idea goes beyond our earthly life, as Swedenborg believed we continue our unique roles in the heavenly realms after we transition. Wilson Van Dusen explored this idea further in his landmark 1981 essay *Uses: A Way of Personal and Spiritual Growth*.

The idea of uses also finds resonance in the wisdom of Jewish sages, who suggest that even a small act of kindness to an insignificant person on Earth can be a soul's reason to descending to the earthly realms. It challenges the notion that our purpose must be grand or noteworthy. Instead, finding our usefulness aligns with the belief that God has a meaningful plan for each person, no matter how seemingly ordinary their actions.

Many of us have a sense that we're meant to do fulfilling work, work that aligns with our natural talents and passions. This is why I was drawn to Swedenborg's writings and the Church of the Holy City in Washington D.C. They validate this belief. Swedenborg also describes how angels find great joy in their ongoing work in heaven, which becomes ever more perfectly suited to their abilities. Heaven is a place where everyone has a role that brings them inner happiness:

In heaven everyone comes into his own occupation.... He comes into the employment or occupation corresponding to his use in much the same conditions of life as when he was in the world.... Yet there is this difference, that he then comes into an interior delight, because into spiritual life...and therefore more receptive of heavenly blessedness. (*Heaven and Hell* §394)

In Swedenborg's vision, heaven operates as a harmonious community where everyone works together for the greater good. In contrast, those in hell work for their own selfish gain, creating a discordant environment.

In Swedenborg's vision, heaven operates as a harmonious community where everyone works together for the greater good.

What we do on Earth has a connection to our spiritual life. The communities we engage with here reflect the ones we connect with in the spiritual realm. This highlights the importance of finding meaningful work on Earth and collaborating with others in our communities.

This concept lies at the heart of my mission and the founding of the Indigo Education Company. I believe that Spiritual Entrepreneurship is the future of work. By helping people discover work that aligns with their higher purpose and aims to spread love, we can make a positive impact on both the physical and spiritual realms.

In our denomination, this year's theme centers around "spiritual uses."

It's a chance for us to reflect on how God sees us, emphasizing that the way we live, the things we cherish, and the actions we take have significance, not just in this life, but in the next one too. What we do here on Earth resonates in the spiritual realm, and what happens there has an impact on our lives here. The concept of spiritual uses guides us toward a future of work filled with purpose, spirituality, and deep connections. 🙏

Sheri Smith, M.A. serves as Board Secretary for the Church of the Holy City in Washington, D.C. She is an alumna of American and Georgetown Universities. In her recent book, *"Spiritual Entrepreneurship: Raw Reflections of a Female CEO,"* Sheri explores how her discovery of Swedenborg inspired her to approach business with a focus on expanding love. In 2013, she founded the [Indigo Education Company](#) driven by a mission to empower the divine spark in all individuals.

Editor's Corner

Continued from page 2

with the teens at night. What a success. She formed such strong friendships during this time, that they are sure to last a lifetime.

When the countdown to thirteen on her phone got to zero, she got messages from her SCYL friends welcoming her and Kurt posted a welcome to her on the SCYL Facebook page, you would have thought she won the lottery.

I would not be who I am today without camps and retreats. I am so thrilled that she (and her brother) also love these experiences and cannot wait to attend them all. What a joy to watch them love and thrive in our church community this way.

—Beki Greenwood

Faith Acronyms

BY SUE FABIAN

I recall a story about a man who had only one line to remember in a play. Upon hearing the boom of the cannon, he was to say, “Hark, I hear the roar of cannons yonder!” When the cannon boomed, he turned in fright and heart-thumpingly blurted, “What the hell was that?!”

When the cannon blasts of stress hit our hearts, we react in much the same way. How can we remember our lines in the heat of the moment?

I’ve found acronyms to be a powerful faith tool. Imagine trying to remember twenty-four areas of law much less federal and state distinctions in them to pass an exam that becomes your ticket to pay off your mushrooming student loans (laden with interest) and also provide the economic means to live. That’s what I was faced with when taking the bar exam. Acronyms were my passport under extreme stress.

Life is the bar exam for all of us. Swendenborg says that planet Earth is the hardest planet of all upon which to live. I have no problem believing that. Can acronyms play a role in helping us on our difficult journeys?

In the heat of the moment, keeping it simple is the imperative golden key. In fact, there’s a well-known acronym for that! Keep It Simple Sweetie. Acronyms are a tool in Twelve-Step Programs because of their effectiveness. So, I want to pass along some that have come to me that have been of help.

ACCEPT

Allowing Creation Conception (time to) Express Potential & Truth

I’m reminded to step aside and allow my higher power (Creation) time to work, to express, to allow a potential to manifest that I might not have seen so that I can more clearly see the truth.

PATIENCE

Practicing Acceptance, (divine) Timing, Inhaling, Exhaling, No! to impulsivity, Contemplative meditation, and Embracing the moment.

Oh, how hard it is to have patience. Here I’m reminded to breathe, to consider, to give the divine its own time, and to embrace rather than force the moment in my own haste.

PRAY

Proportioning Rest And Yearning
Petitioning, Receiving, Accepting,
Yeast

I couldn’t decide which one I liked better, so I let both be. I like the idea of balancing my yearning with resting in the situation. Certainly, prayer can aid this. I also like the more basic version where I make a petition, then receive a reply by way of feeling or an image or idea (sometimes I get a blank), accepting what feels right in what I’ve been given, then putting the reply in motion by yeasting it in my life through contemplative action.

FAITH

Fostering Acquiescence In The Highest (or Holy)

Faith, for me is a combination of accepting, patience and praying. This puts it all together. Then it’s for me to remember that my Higher Power, the Universe, Creation, the one who created the cosmos, the oceans, the mountains, all creatures great and small, and breathed life into me and continues to do so with each heartbeat knows far more than I ever could hope to dream. I often forget this, feeling that I know what’s best for my life. In a sense I do, for I am responsible to create, to help,

and to manage the life that I’ve been given. Yet there is one that is greater; my maker. S/He knows what makes me tick, my strengths, my weaknesses, my passions, my hopes, my dreams, my dreads... Who best to turn to! I need to constantly remind myself of this.

Which leads me to my last (for now) acronym:

TRUST

Total Release Unto Supreme Teacher

I’m not great at trusting but I get better at it. Learning to trust something I can’t see or touch or experience with any of my five senses is really hard for me. I figure this goes beyond my five senses into a sixth sense, a spiritual muscle that I’m given to develop. So, incrementally, I practice trusting that which I cannot see. And how I do that is another story.

Whether you borrow one from this list or create one of your own, I encourage you to put the tool of acronyms in your backpack to aid you in your journey, for life indeed is a trip!



Sue Fabian is an Elder Law attorney, Geriatric Care Manager and Licensed Professional Counselor north of Detroit. She is a board and congregational member of the Church of the Holy

City Swedenborg church in her hometown of Royal Oak MI. She is a leader in a community action group, has taught at a university and loves to pass on her love of learning.



Swedenborgian Church Youth League

clear blue sky

1981
october

SCYL Winter Retreat

BY NORA BARNABY, *SCYL Clear Blue Sky editor*



Teens and Staff at the SCYL Winter Retreat

Our theme for the 2023 SCYL Winter Retreat was “Why are you Swedenborgian?” We enjoyed hearing the adults talk about why they were Swedenborgian as well as the tenets of our religion during sessions. We also held the first ever Swedenborg game night where we had a costume contest on who could make the best Swedenborg, a crossword puzzle about Swedenborg, and a Swedenborg book matching game.

We were all very excited to see our friends after a long break apart, so we spent a lot of time playing games and just being together. Of course, we had to play the classics like Catchphrase and Werewolf, but some teens also enjoyed playing Battleship and Clue.

At the end of the retreat, we had a lovely Exodus ceremony for our one 18-year-old (Ellie) and a closing worship service. Following that was our annual Winter Retreat bowling outing at Hideaway Lanes! Teens drank soda, ate pizza, and bowled the night away.

After all the fun we sadly had to say goodbye to our favorite place and people, but we will be back soon, and we enjoyed our time. 📺



The Social Justice Committee (SJC) is thrilled to share its new logo pictured here as designed by Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) East and Social Justice Officer, Zsa Zsa Dolley (she/her).

The Social Justice Committee reached out to the SCYL towards the end of 2023 for logo ideas to be considered.

Interested teens worked on their ideas for the logo at the SCYL Winter Retreat and the committee chose this one for 2024. The intention is for it to be used in SJC publications, on the SCNA website, and social media. 📺



Above: New Social Justice Logo by Zsa Zsa Dolley.

Left: Rev. Renee Machiniak leads the SCYL teens during one of their group sessions.

2024 SCYL Officer Elections

BY KURT FEKETE

The 2024 Swedenborgian Church Youth League Officers

President

Ellie Barnaby

Clear Blue Sky (CBS) Editor

Nora Barnaby

East Coast, Activities, and Social Justice Officer

Zsa Zsa Dolley

Midwest and Service Officer

Trent Carson

West Coast and Fundraising Officer

Lilly Carson

Canada Officer

Open

League Chaplain

Rev. Renée Machiniak

Below: The 2024 Swedenborgian Church Youth League Officers (left to right): Zsa Zsa Dolley, Nora Barnaby, Ellie Barnaby, Lilly Carson, and Trent Carson

The 2024 Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) Officer and Chaplain elections took place at the winter retreat this past December. All of the officers remain the same, but some positions changed.

Zsa Zsa Dolley, 2023 President, moved over to East coast officer to make room for newly elected Ellie Barnaby who takes the reins as President for 2024. Congratulations Ellie! Rev. Renée Billings-Machiniak returns as elected 2024 League Chaplain. Renée has served as our League Chaplain for many years and this year was able to attend Winter Retreat for the entire time. Renée attends retreats as often as she can and does wonderfully presenting lectures, leading discussions, and caring for all of our youth. The 2024 SCYL Officers are listed on the left.

Please join me in congratulating and welcoming our new Officers and Renée, our Chaplain. These officers did an incredible job leading and fundraising in 2023 and I can't wait to see what they do this year. They are a dedicated and diligent group of teens with amazing talent. I am very excited to work with them in 2024. ☪



Letters to the Editor

Continued from page 2

the Anishinaabeh way. Don't take the first, don't take the last and take only what you need. And these groups lived for (some estimates) 30,000 years very successfully on Turtle Island.

Did they have a comfortable life? Absolutely not! Living in a hide teepee at minus forty degrees is anything but comfortable. They did however recognize that the land was an intrinsic part of them and they a part of the land. As the musical group Emma's Revolution says in their song "Swimming"—"We can worship the ground we walk on, cherishing the beings that we live beside..." This is how God meant us to life when s/he gifted us with this paradise.

As well, I enjoyed Robert McCluskey's take on the myths of gun violence. Living in a country with strict gun laws, I concur with his conclusions. If we respond to fear of the other with love, support, and compassion, we have a positive influence on that fear... indeed, it's the only thing that does. A young Jewish man promoted this idea some 2000 years ago...I think he was on to something. Keep up the great work.

Blessings,
—Esther Fyk

Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada



CENTER FOR
SWEDENBORGIAN
STUDIES

Passages

Deaths

Joyce Aveline Fatland Fekete, 93,



passed into the spiritual world in the first hours of 2024. Daughter of Danish and Norwegian immigrants, Joyce grew up near the Detroit Public Library and

spent her life teaching. When she was a little girl, her father first introduced her to the Swedenborgian church when he took her and her sisters to the Forest Avenue church in Detroit. From that point forward Joyce was a lifelong devoted Swedenborgian. She spent many years in public school classrooms filled with young children who delighted her, but her legacy is the countless souls she effortlessly educated with a kind word, a simple explanation of her cherished Swedenborgian theology, or her endless patience at the Almont summer camp penny candy stand. After retiring to Naples, Florida, Joyce was very active in the leadership of the Ft. Myers' church and volunteered for decades with afterschool childcare program. She was passionate about collecting dolls and plates, especially Barbie, preferred wearing sparkles, and had a boisterous laugh. Joyce raised five children that filled her life with love and surprises. She was preceded in death by sister Sylvia Gregorius, husband John Fekete, and daughter Sherry Fekete. She is survived by her sister Pearl McCallum, Paul and Debbie Fekete, David Fekete, Joy Fekete Zimmer and Bill Kitsch, Matthew Fleming and Rebecca McLeod, Brittany Fleming, Kurt Fekete and Shelley Dolley, Ava Dolley, and Anastasia Dolley. Joyce and John enjoyed many a night out dancing, and Joyce once wrote, "The first thing I will

do in Heaven is *dance!*" A celebration of life service will be held in the summer of 2024 at Almont New Church Assembly and Retreat Center.

Gwynne Very Blundon Griswold, 95,

passed away peacefully on January 6, 2024 at her home in King George, Virginia, surrounded by her loving family. She is survived by her husband of thirty-eight years, Robert N. Griswold, Sr; his children and her step-children Beth, Amelia, and Nelson; her two daughters, Susie Blundon Baumgarten and Sally Jean Blundon (Debbie Findley), as well as her grandchildren, Katie Marshall (David) and James A. Baumgarten (fiancée, Christine Hill). She is also survived by a host of relatives and many friends who loved and admired her.



Gwynne was born in Westwood, Massachusetts. She was an only child, born to Marjorie Vickers Very who predeceased her on January 25, 1985. She was christened and raised within The Swedenborgian Church of North America, at The Boston Church/Church on the Hill where she attended weekly Sunday services. Upon graduation from high school, she attended Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts, majoring in architectural design. During her college years she spent some of her summer vacations working as a live-in nanny with a family at their vacation home on Cape Cod and also worked as a bookbinder at the Plimpton Press in Norwood, Massachusetts.

She met her first husband, Joseph A. Blundon, at a Harvard square dance that he was calling at Harvard's Memorial Hall, and the two were married after Joe's graduation from Harvard Law School. While her husband was in

the navy, Gwynne worked as a designer in New York, and upon his discharge, the couple moved to Keyser, West Virginia, where they lived, with their daughters, before moving to the DC area. Their initial square dance meeting was indicative of their shared interest in folk music and dance, an interest that led to their involvement with many dance organizations, notably the English Country Dance & Song Society, the Scottish Country Dance Society and the Contra Dance Society. They enjoyed going to Pinewoods Dance Camp in Plymouth, Massachusetts, where the family vacationed for many years.

After moving from Keyser to Kensington, Maryland, in 1966, she became a Head Start teacher, and later, after moving to Potomac, Maryland, a substitute teacher within the Montgomery County Public School System. She was a member of the local Swedenborgian Church, The Church of the Holy City in Washington, DC, where both daughters were christened as infants. She became a Licensed Realtor in the State of Maryland in the mid-1970s. After her divorce from her first husband, she attended George Washington University where she obtained a BS Degree in landscape design in 1983. Soon thereafter, she started her own landscape design business, Gardens by Gwynne (aka Gardens by Design), creating and maintaining gardens for a varied clientele in the larger Washington Metropolitan Area.

Her mother had taught her organic gardening methods at a young age, and she continued to use, experiment with, and develop those techniques in her years of gardening in West Virginia, Maryland and, later, Virginia. In addition, she worked for many years at the National Arboretum in Washington, DC. After moving to King George, Virginia, in 2002, she joined the King George Garden Club where she shared

Continues on page 11

Passages

Continued from page 10

her wealth of knowledge and information with everyone, reciting the precise original Latin name of each plant, shrub and flower, helping design different gardens, and ensuring the proper placement of same depending on the position of sun and shade. She won numerous awards for her many gardening designs and accomplishments. She was also an artist who enjoyed making pottery and painting, like her mother.

She met her second husband, Robert N. Griswold, Sr., in Greenbelt, Maryland, and they were married on November 7, 1987. They enjoyed travelling in Bob's RV, touring much of the United States, as well as spending time at the Lake House in North Carolina. They built a home in King George, Virginia, where they remained until her death. Gwynne continued attending Sunday Services in Washington, DC, until she could no longer drive. She and Bob also frequented the Sunday Services at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in King George, Virginia, where they worshipped together for many years.

We will dearly miss her cheerful, kind, gentle and loving spirit. ☸

Grand Reopening!

**The Johnny Appleseed
Educational Center & Museum**

Come and Celebrate Johnny
Appleseed

Saturday, April 27, 2024

11:00 to 4:00

Ribbon Cutting at Noon
Tours. Food. Games. Fun. Free.
Rain or Shine

518 College Way, Urbana, Ohio

www.johnnyappleseedmuseum.org

What's Happening

SWEDENBORGIANS IN ACTION



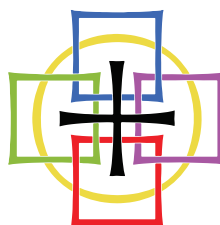
AGAINST RACISM

Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism

SAAR has a biweekly email newsletter that provides education around issues central to antiracism, ideas for actions to take, and inspiration to keep at it long-term. Email Rev. Shada Sullivan, revshada@gmail.com to join the email list.

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

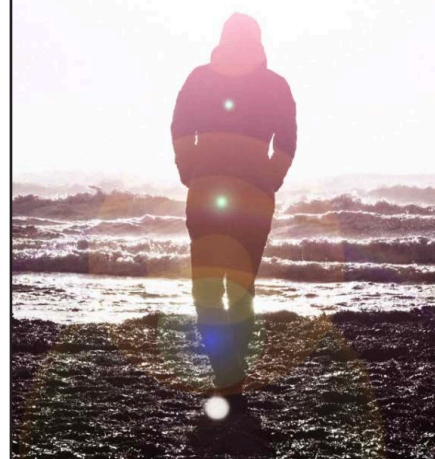
The Swedenborgian Church of North America



facebook



@SWEDENBORGIANCHURCH



Our Daily Bread at SpiritualQuesters.org is your resource for recent sermons, meditations, reflections, lessons, interviews, and original content from within and beyond the Swedenborgian Church of North America.



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

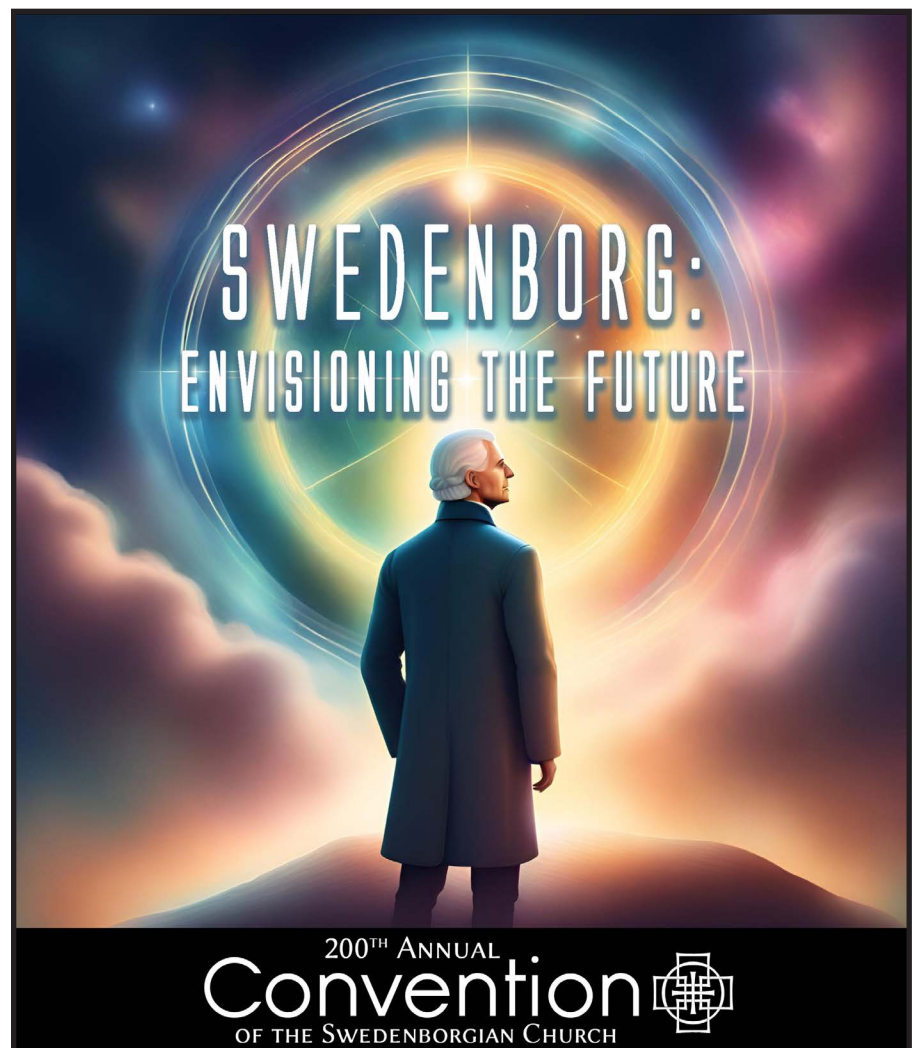
**Click the YouTube logo above
to subscribe!**

About the Swedenborgian Church

Emanuel Swedenborg was born on January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London fifteen years after his death. American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questioning and insights, we as a church exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

In his theological writings, Swedenborg shared a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of scripture as a story of inner life stages as we learn and grow. Swedenborg said, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.



June 28 – July 2, 2024

Located at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center and
Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan
Registration opens April 15 on swedenborg.org!