



Envisioning the Future as the Swedenborgian Church

200th Convention at the Kellogg Conference Center in East Lansing, Michigan

Friday, June 28 – Tuesday, July 2, 2024

Registration will be open from April 15 – May 15 on swedenborg.org


Friends, and colleagues of the Swedenborgian Church, we are eagerly preparing for a historic 200th annual convention at Michigan State University that will be robustly available in hybrid format again. Our theme at our 200th anniversary mark is “Swedenborg: Envisioning the Future,” and we are finalizing our keynote speaker arrangements to emphasize the trends in our world around spirituality that unite with the uniquely forward-looking vision of the Swedenborgian movement. Stay tuned for unfolding details!

We are planning both a wonderful in-person setting at the deluxe conference center while also supporting virtual participation. We are excited to be upgrading from our long tradition of being in college dormitories to the attractive



setting of the superb [Kellogg Conference Center](#) adjacent to the university. This choice setting provides inviting meeting spaces and comfortable lodging accommodations, and our

convention will utilize a mix of both Hotel and University facilities. At the same time, we are continuing to upgrade our expert technology support so people can also attend our business meetings and popular Mini Courses from the virtual comforts of home. Last year, this inclusive approach to our annual convention led to our biggest participation numbers in quite some time, and we are committed to making the in-person experience rich and the virtual experience easy. In addition to the program of activities, educational events, business sessions, and worship and ordination services, the Michi-

gan Association is hosting an outing aboard the riverboat Michigan Princess, and our convention will conclude with a fun banquet Monday evening with special presentations. 

What's Inside:

Wayfarers Chapel • Nominations for Elected Positions •
Convention Accommodations • Proposed Bylaw Amendments •
SCYL Memorial Day Retreat • Proposed Standing Resolutions •
Creation Care Webinar • Interview with Rev. Ken Turley • And More!

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Editor's Corner



How Do We Grow?

Last summer at one of our family camps, I attended a discussion group about where the church is going. I have to say, I had never attended a discussion group before. They are typically at a time where my camp responsibilities made it difficult to attend. But this one was added on at a different time, and it was a topic I care deeply about. It was a good discussion that could have kept going. But by the end I left being made to feel guilty by someone that my priorities weren't straight since we didn't attend Sunday worship due to our many other family responsibilities, primarily youth sports. This was from someone I just met, who thought it was best to tell me that family worship on Sundays should be at the top of my priorities. Me. I live and breathe for the Swedenborgian Church and my faith

in my daily life. I pride myself in teaching my kids that you follow through with your commitments. I have to say, I was offended.

Sunday services do not work for most young, active families. And you know what? That's ok! You know what we have done? We dial-in and listen to a service for as long as we can in our car. Catholic families in our town have four different times over the weekend that they can go one mile down the street and participate in worship. And you know what? That's great for them! It does not work for Swedenborgian families. Our closest location to worship in-person is thirty minutes away. (That is probably close for most of us.) We would have to dedicate our full Sunday morning to church. Apparently, some view that as my priorities aren't straight.

Is that the case? Truly in our church that focuses on small heavenly communities? God doesn't take attendance, I know in my heart this is true. We live our lives everyday by the golden rule. Our family looks forward all year to the extended periods of time (camps, retreats, conventions) that we spend with our spiritual communities—it keeps us going. So why do I inherently feel guilty that we don't attend Sunday services?

Ultimately, the mentality needs to change. We need to continue to find multiple options for worship, community, and use for all walks of life, wherever we are. Our Swedenborgian denomination is so special, so unique... and we need to embrace and show that. The standard format is not conducive to growth. So how do we grow? We keep looking for the pockets of what make us special, the atypical church, and embrace them. I have two, brilliant, loving kids who adore their spiritual families. But we cannot as a family commit to the societal norm of church. I implore our spiritual communities to keep looking towards the future. What

the Messenger

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

is next? How do we lead the way of worship in younger people and families that works in their insanely busy lives? We have an abundance of outside the box thinkers, we can do it—and not only succeed but thrive.

I am very much looking forward to this year's Annual Convention Swedenborg: Envisioning the Future, the topic feels very timely (See the cover for details). Also see p. 21 for a new virtual education offering from Rev. Dr. Devin Zuber, and p. 28 for a new way of being community with Rev. Sage Cole.

—Beki Greenwood
Messenger@swedenborg.org

Message from the President

Envisioning a Way Forward for Wayfarers Chapel

The Year of Spiritual Uses: 2023–24

Most have heard about the dramatic closure of Wayfarers Chapel due to massive landslides and structural damage to the famous “glass church.” Despite geologic stability for three quarters of a century, two years of atmospheric rain waves compounded by water flow and drainage complications associated with local utilities have created land shifts on a scale hitherto unknown. Television and newspaper coverage of the story has been national, which attests to the cultural significance of the first transparent glass church in the world enjoyed and experienced by millions. The damage to date includes ten glass panes and innumerable cracks on the surrounding

sidewalks, foundations, and grounds, including the visitors center.

Ironically, Wayfarers Chapel was officially granted National Historic Landmark status this past December, literally days before the seismic shifts became alarming. The

Chapel is considered the crowning achievement in Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr.’s career. Known as Lloyd, he was the son of Frank Lloyd Wright, Sr., and his own son, Eric Lloyd Wright, also was involved in ongoing landscape design as well as the Visitor’s Center built in the Nineties.

Owned by the Swedenborgian Church of North America, Wayfarers is governed by a national board of directors and operated by a superb staff. Together we are vigorously engaging the unfolding story and formulating the next phase of the Chapel’s life. There’s a one hundred percent chance the extraordinary story of Wayfarers Chapel will continue. We ask that you join us in prayerful hope as we strive to preserve one of our national spiritual treasures.

<https://www.wayfarerschapel.org/>

—Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence



Nominations for Elected Positions in the Swedenborgian Church

The Nominating Committee nominates at least one candidate for each open elected position. Elective offices and nominees to date are listed on the chart shown on the right. If you are interested in being nominated for any position, contact the Nominating Committee through Central Office. The following candidate statements have been received by *the Messenger*.

Rev. Jim Lawrence, D.Min., Ph.D. President (three-year term)

I'm only two years into my first term as president, but since we have an *elect* year I need to decide already whether to keep going if re-elected. I'd be honored to keep going as your president. When I wrote my first profile for the Messenger in 2021 for the "president elect" year, I mostly reflected on the many ways I had worked in the Swedenborgian movement since crossing over from a mainline denomination and how much I still believed in this church. The compelling need I'm seeing is to facilitate creative paths forward for often struggling existing ministries and to reimagine paths for new ministries.



Despite the beauty of our spirituality, the paradigm of church has been in a long cultural decline that is now trending downward even more dramatically with the younger generations. In addition to keeping all of our current moving parts humming, most

Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
President	3	Jim Lawrence*
Vice President	1	Kurt Fekete*
Recording Secretary	1	Karen Conger*
Treasurer	3	***
General Council: layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Herb Ziegler* Kei Pang
General Council: minister	3	Thom Muller*
Standing Committee for Communication & Information	3	Tara Conkling*
Standing Committee for Education & Resources for Spiritual Community	3	Shada Sullivan*
Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (2 to be elected)	3	Tom Neuenfeldt* Kurt Fekete*
Committee on Admission to the Ministry: layperson	3	BJ Neuenfeldt*
Board of Trustees of CSS, representative class	4	Gard Perry*
Nominating Committee	5	OPEN

* Incumbent

** Years remaining in unexpired term

*** No candidate to be elected this year

of my creative effort goes toward sustaining our current trained leadership and attracting the next wave of prospective leaders. Two specific foci involve emphasizing the powerful new tools of virtual outreach to those living far away from a church but who prefer Swedenborgian spirituality if they can get it. They can get it now if we serve it to them! Virtual tools can also collapse distances between our own disparate ministry settings such that groups can worship together in real time in new ways, do more together, and grow community. Additionally, we need to reimagine the power of our denominational resources for how they can better sustain livelihoods of those willing to give their professional time and effort to the Swedenborgian movement. Who will go for us? We need to make leadership sustainable.

New starts and re-starts hold genuine potential for the Swedenborgian

Church of North America, and there's nothing I would rather do than work with everyone in our movement to keep imagining the New Jerusalem.

Kurt Fekete Vice President (one-year term) & Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (three-year term)



I am pleased and honored to accept the nominations to the positions of vice president as well as the Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (SCFA). I was raised

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in a Swedenborgian family and have been involved with the Swedenborgian Church my entire life. I attended Sunday school at the Detroit church that later moved to Royal Oak when I was a teenager. I attended Almont summer camp every year. I loved going to Almont, and when I became a teenager, I also loved attending youth retreats. I was fascinated by Swedenborg, and as an adolescent I enjoyed talking about theology with my mother, Joyce. Like Swedenborg, I was also fascinated by science and engineering. I graduated from Wayne State University with a BS in Chemical Engineering and worked as a bench chemist, department director, and quality engineer into my forties. I was a member of the original team that launched the young adult group known as Transitions and led the group through the 1990s and early 2000s. I was also a board member of the Almont New Church Assembly and served as president for a partial term. I continued working as a church youth leader volunteer at camps and retreats until I discovered that youth work was my true passion and calling. In 2001, I left my career in chemical engineering to become the Youth Director for the Swedenborgian Church. Now in my twenty-third year serving the youth of the church, I still love working with teens, tweens, and young adults at retreats and summer camps. I have also greatly enjoyed my work as denomination vice president and as a member of the SCFA. I think that I make important contributions to our denomination, and I wish to continue to serve in these two capacities. I strive for excellence and steady reliability as your elected representative to the Executive Committee and SCFA. If elected to serve in these two positions in the coming year, I hope to continue to provide a youthful perspective

to the organization while honoring the heritage and foundational principles of our beloved faith community. I live in Maine with my fabulous wife, Shelley, whom I met at a youth retreat, and my two wonderful daughters, Ava and Zsa Zsa.

Karen Conger **Recording Secretary** **(one-year term)**



first elected in 2015. I am a lifelong, third generation Swedenborgian who was raised in the Church of the Holy City in Washington, D.C. I have been a member of both the Urbana and Los Angeles Societies and am currently a Member-At-Large of the Pacific Coast Association. I served on the former Ministries Support Unit, the Nominating Committee more than once, and I was the Secretary of the PCA for several years, as well as holding elected positions on the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Society and the Wayfarers Chapel Board of Directors. I continue to very much enjoy working as secretary and hope to continue in the position. Thank you for your consideration.

Kei Pang **General Council—** **Layperson** **(three-year term)**

In reflecting on my journey,



Greetings! It's once again an honor to accept nomination for the office of Recording Secretary of the General Convention, a position to which I was

I find that my spiritual and professional paths have intertwined in unexpected yet enriching ways, guiding me toward a deeper understanding of myself and my place in the world.

My upbringing, spanning across different cultures and continents, has instilled in me a sense of openness and curiosity toward diverse perspectives and beliefs. While my early exposure to Christianity through Lutheran traditions laid a foundation for my spiritual exploration, it was not until encountering Swedenborgian theology at the Garden Chapel in St. Louis that I found resonance and congruence with my beliefs. For the past seven years, I have been actively engaged in the Swedenborgian community, contributing to the spiritual and practical aspects of our congregation. Serving on the board and investment committee has not only allowed me to offer my skills and insights but has also deepened my connection to the church community.

Beyond my spiritual journey, my professional life has been equally fulfilling and diverse. With an engineering degree from the University of London and an MBA from the University of Michigan, I embarked on a career with Emerson Electric in St. Louis, where I spent decades contributing to the company's growth and success. Alongside my corporate endeavors, I pursued further academic pursuits, earning a Doctoral degree in Business Administration from the University of Missouri. My involvement with the University Chancellor's Advisory council has further underscored my commitment to education and academic excellence.

Upon retiring from the business world in 2022, I embraced a new chapter of exploration and service. Immersing myself in the study of natural sciences and climate change, I have sought to deepen my understanding

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Nominations

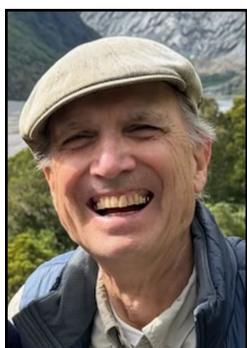
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of the interconnectedness of all life on our planet. Engaging in volunteer work, particularly in ecological restorations, has allowed me to translate my knowledge and passion into meaningful action, contributing to the preservation and restoration of our environment for future generations.

As I stand at the threshold of this new phase of life, I am filled with gratitude for the experiences that have shaped me and the opportunities that lie ahead. It is with humility and dedication that I offer myself to serve the Swedenborgian Church of North America, drawing upon my diverse background, skills, and passions to contribute to our collective journey of spiritual growth and ecological stewardship. With faith as my compass and service as my guiding principle, I look forward to the journey ahead, trusting in the wisdom and grace that illuminate our path.

Herb Ziegler

General Council–Layperson
(three-year term)



I would appreciate your support for a second term on General Council. I offer experience, wisdom, an analytical mind, and deep care

for the sound management and administration of the General Convention's resources for the present and the future. I served earlier terms on General Council and several terms on the CSS board (SHS at the time). I have a good knowledge of the workings, history, and challenges of the Church, and I claim some wisdom from being

on this earthly plane for a long time. In my past service I have contributed useful insights, ideas, and time toward moving us forward. I believe my contributions have been well received and I would like to continue my service for one more term.

Rev. Thom Muller

General Council–Minister
(three-year term)

Rev. Thom Muller is pastor at the Swedenborgian Society of the East Bay



at Hillside, an Urban Sanctuary, in El Cerrito, California, as well as senior editor of *Our Daily Bread*. His passions include the intersection of

spirituality and psychology, interfaith theology, and the Western esoteric tradition. Rev. Muller was ordained into the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church of North America in 2016, upon receiving his theological education at Bryn Athyn College and the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.

Tara Conkling

Standing Committee for Communication & Information
(three-year term)

Thank you for this opportunity to be nominated for a second term serving the Standing Committee of Communication and Information (SCCI). Originally from Pretty Prairie, Kansas, I grew up going to



the New Jerusalem Church there, and even though we often didn't attend regularly, our presence in the congregation was always welcomed with smiles and open arms. Many of our closest friends and neighbors have been Swedenborgians, and I have always considered our church members to be part of my extended family.

I live in Davis, California—close enough to enjoy occasional visits to the Hillside Swedenborgian Church when distance (and traffic) allows. And over the years I have lived many places for school and work (Kansas, California, Utah, Texas, Florida, Mississippi, and even Australia) in my career as a Wildlife Biologist, but I have only been close enough to congregations a few times to be able to attend a Swedenborgian church in-person. However, the communication methods we all discovered during the COVID-19 pandemic (such as Zoom) have also allowed me to attend many local events such church services and guild meetings with friends and family in Kansas, as well as participate in SCCI meetings with members spread across the country.

Although nothing is quite like the experience of in-person worship and fellowship, these past few years have shown me the benefits that these (along with our traditional) communication methods have in maintaining that sense of connection with others (regardless of the distance). For example, adapting the Annual Convention to include both in-person and online attendance has allowed many members (myself included) the opportunity to participate in convention these past few years, and helped us all overcome the challenges of travel or daily lives that may have limited people from attending in the past.

I've enjoyed my time over the past three years on the SCCI helping with efforts to expand the Denomination's digital footprint through content for

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both current members and the general public on our online platforms (such as the revised website, Facebook, and YouTube) and annual convention, as well as our efforts to provide support to local congregations with their social media content and digital outreach. An important part of this outreach is making the content easy to use (and easily accessible) to everyone, regardless of their computer skills and experience. As such, I look forward to the opportunity to continue these efforts with the SCCI to help all of those in our Swedenborgian community (and those outside it seeking to learn more) continue to build our connections with each other.

Tom Neuenfeldt Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (three-year term)

I am running for a second term on the Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (SCFA). This has been a very productive committee under the leadership of our chair, Jennifer Lindsay. One of the major functions of the committee is to review grant requests from our ministries and to distribute available funds as appropriate. In addition to SCFA, I am the chair of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies Board of Trustees, a member of the Royal Oak Church and Almont New Church Assembly. BJ and I live in East Tawas, Michigan and chase our grandchildren around the state in their many activities. We enjoy our local music groups and spoil our dog, Bear.



BJ (Betty Jean) Neuenfeldt Committee on Admission to the Ministry-Layperson (three-year term)

My name is BJ Neuenfeldt (alias for Betty Jean which you may call me if you knew me before college) and I grew up in Detroit, Michigan, and currently live on the shore of Lake Huron in East Tawas, Michigan. After graduating from Central Michigan University with a teaching degree, I spent over twenty years as an elementary school teacher and special education teacher. I married Tom in 1972 and we have three daughters and nine grandchildren. I am retired now but active in Almont New Church Assembly (education) and the Swedenborgian Church of North America serving now on the Nominating Committee and the Committee on Admission to the Ministry. I have previously served on the education and financial committees. I've finished one term of three years and am willing to keep going for three more to keep continuity for the ordinands.



Rev. Shada Sullivan Standing Committee for Education & Resources for Spiritual Community (three-year term)



Rev. Shada Sullivan is the Pastor at The Church of the Holy City in Wilmington Delaware. She is co-chair of the Social Justice

Committee, and a member of the Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism (SAAR) leadership team.

Rev. Dr. Gard Perry CSS Board of Trustees – Representative Class (four-year term)

Rev. Dr. F. Gardiner (Gard) Perry was ordained into the Ministry of the Swedenborgian Church in 1979. He served as pastor in Royal Oak, Michigan, in the 1980s, and in Fryeburg, Maine, in the 1990s. Gard earned his Doctor of Ministry degree (1990) at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit, Michigan, after which he attained Certified Pastoral Counselor by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. In the 2000s he worked in his home area (Conway, New Hampshire) as Spiritual Care Counselor in End of Life Care until his retirement in 2020. In his career, Gard has served on numerous boards and committees, and has been a long-time lecturer at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) Summer Session. Having served a first term on the CSS Board, Gard has closely followed our faculty's leading-edge scholarship and support for student journeys. Available to serve a second term, Gard will attend meetings in-person, continue as a member of the Faculty and Staff Relations Committee, and engage with the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) Board governance process. He writes, "It is my honor to stand in nomination to represent the Swedenborgian Church of North America as a Member of the CSS Board of Trustees Representative Class. Thank you!" 🙏



Convention 2024 Accommodations – Explained!

BY BRITTANY PRICE, *Operations Manager*

There are several new things happening this year as we prepare for the 200th Convention, and I wanted to take this opportunity to explain one of the biggest changes we have, which is the accommodations. Please note, that the following information is for regular Convention attendees, and may not apply for Ministers, Licensed Pastors, and General Council.

This year we have a limited number of rooms blocked out in the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center (<https://kelloggcenter.com/>) for the price of \$135/night plus taxes and fees for a standard room (King, Queen, or Double). This is where the majority (if not all) of COM members, GC, and LPs will be staying. This is also conveniently the location of where much of our programming will be held. Everyone will need to register first, regardless where you are staying. After you register you will receive the discount code to make your reservation at the hotel. You will be responsible for booking the room and for making arrangements with anyone you wish to share a room with. While everyone needs to register, only one person needs to book a room. The cost of the room is



The Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center on the Michigan State University Campus

the same if there are one or two people in it, and there is a minimal fee for having a third or fourth person in the room. If you stay in the hotel you will be responsible for paying for your own meals at the cafeteria, at a cost of \$9 for breakfast, \$13 for lunch, and \$13 for dinner (plus tax).

To put things in perspective, splitting a double hotel room and paying for your food out of pocket should cost you approximately the same amount as it cost for a double dorm room

the opportunity, like previous years, to choose a double or single dorm room, with food cost included. These dorms are very basic and consist of rooms on a hallway with a shared bathroom. The cost for these rooms reflects how basic they are, with four night room and board packages priced at \$235 for a double room and \$345 for a single room. A/C window units will be placed in the rooms for your comfort.

Finally, we are very pleased to announce that teens aged 13–18 can stay in a double in the dorm at no cost! Thanks to the generosity of our Churches, Associations, and previous Convention attendees and their donations, we are able to offer free room and board in the dorm for any teen who wishes to stay with our SCYL only group.

The denomination will also be covering the full cost of meals for any youth (ages 0–18) who are staying in the hotel with their parents.

Do not wait to register. We have a limited number of rooms blocked out at the hotel and they may run out. 📞

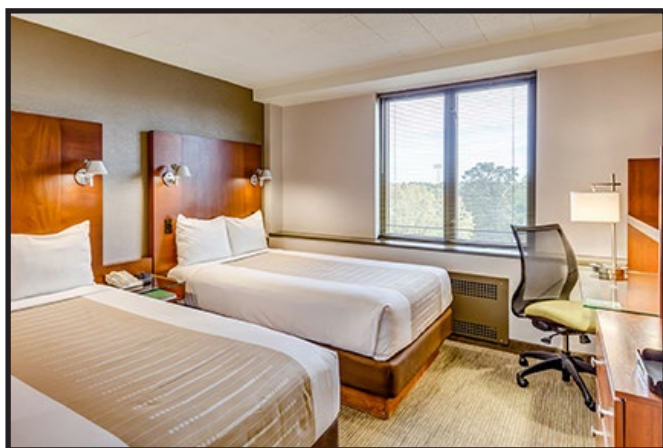


Image of a double room inside the Kellogg Hotel,

at Bridgewater State University in 2023. You are welcome to skip a meal or have up to four people in a room, which means it may cost less for some of our attendees than last year, while enjoying the comfort of a hotel.

In addition to this, you will have

Virtual Education

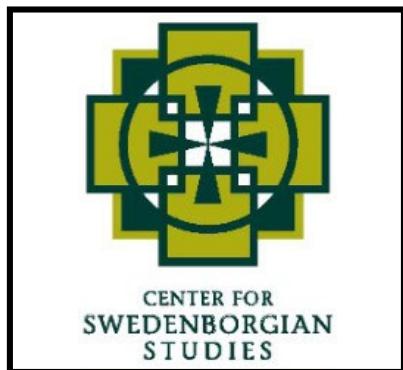
Creation Care Four-Part Webinar for the Month of May


Tuesday May: 7, 14, 21, and 28

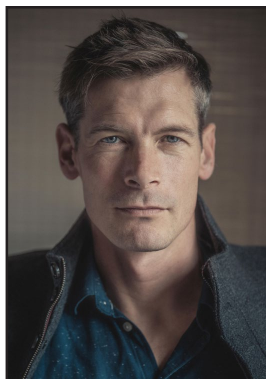
5:00–6:30 PM PT / 8:00–9:30 PM ET.

In this four-part free webinar offered by the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS), we explore how Genesis and other sacred creation stories can inform contemporary environmental ethics. The Swedenborgian tradition has often singularly interpreted Genesis as an elaborate allegory for our own spiritual development, or regeneration. Yet how might Genesis also contain profound wisdom for guiding our broader relationship with the planet, and with other species? Swedenborgian concepts will be situated into dialogue with recent work from different eco-theologians (such as Sallie McFague and Catherine Keller), as we aim to explore what it means to (re)read Genesis in our own era of mass extinctions, or un-creation. Free, but pre-registration is required; please contact the CSS assistant Paola Pruett-Vergara to reserve a place: pruett.vergara@swedenborgianstudies.org

The webinars will take place on four Tuesday evenings in the month of May and will last for approximately an hour and a half.



Instructor: Rev. Dr. Devin Zuber environmental thought. An ordained minister (2023) in the Swedenborgian Church of North America, when he's not reading or gardening, Rev. Zuber enjoys spending time on the California coast with his family (partner Suzanne, their two girls, and a floofy Goldendoodle named Louie). 



Two Proposed Standing Resolutions for Annual Convention

17. Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery and Statement of Support for Indigenous Peoples in Pursuit of Restitution and Reparations

Swedenborgians Acting Against Racism (SAAR) proposes and the General Council has accepted the request to place the following Standing Resolution on the floor consideration in the business session at our 2024 Convention:

The Swedenborgian Church of North America (SCNA) publicly repudiates the so-called “Doctrine of Discovery” starting in the fifteenth century employed by European Christians to colonize and subjugate the lands and indigenous peoples they “discovered” outside of Europe and to force upon them European laws, cultural, practices, languages, and religious dogma. Swedenborg revealed that Divine Providence intends for humans to think, intend, and act in spiritual freedom and not be compelled by outside force. The SCNA encourages all its constituent bodies to recognize, affirm, and support the right of indigenous peoples to celebrate their languages and traditions, pass on their stories, practice their religious rights, and, to whatever extent practicable, to return to their role as stewards over their sacred ancestral lands whereon to reclaim, tend, and protect the resources they once managed and depended upon in the lands they revere.

18. Standing Resolution on Climate Justice

The Social Justice Committee (SJC) proposes, and the General Council has accepted the request to place the following Standing Resolution on the floor for consideration in the business session at our 2024 Convention:

Within the Swedenborgian traditions, our innate connection to nature is deeply valued as a means for communication with the Divine, a way for us to encounter spirituality through the power of correspondences. Swedenborg’s theology has long fertilized a history of environmental justice, from the foundation of the Sierra Club in 1892, in San Francisco, to the motivations behind some of the first movements for animal rights in the United Kingdom. For many involved in these movements and traditions, nature was not something corrupt or sinful, or base matter that we humans had to transcend, or turn into profit; it was intrinsically, instead, an interconnected web, a ladder extending between all created things, whose dynamic relationships should “stun” our minds with wonder (*Divine Love and Wisdom*, §332).

Our churches have also long esteemed the critical insights afforded by modern science; that we are “now permitted” (*nunc licet*) to enter into the secrets of faith with a scientific understanding of the cosmos. It is with gravest concern that we join the faith leaders of other religious traditions in acknowledging the ongoing consequences of anthropogenic climate change, and the present and future harm that our mistreatment of the environment continues to inflict. With

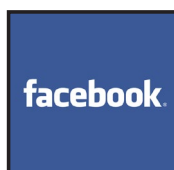
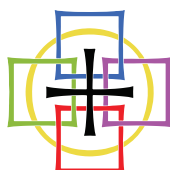
this standing resolution, we affirm the consensus and evidence provided by the scientific community about our quickly warming planet, and believe that we are called upon by our Swedenborgian faith to put our moral concerns into action, to be “of use” to our neighbor, in its broadest sense, to work for the greater good of all living things which refract God’s Divine Love and Wisdom.

The catastrophic consequences of climate change are not equally distributed, and we acknowledge how the brunt of the environmental crisis is most seriously impacting marginalized societies and persons (the poor, the disabled, and various black and brown communities in the global south and elsewhere, indigenous peoples, women, and youth). As Christians, we are called to justice and solidarity with those who are suffering—“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters, you have also done it for me”—and as Swedenborgians we embrace all persons as members of one universal family in which we share.

We affirm that while a call to climate justice will accordingly take many different forms, that the Swedenborgian faith nevertheless shares a grounded orientation towards the presence of the spiritual as intrinsically part of, and entangled with, the goodness of the natural world (“And God saw that it was good”). We believe that the Divine calls for us to be better stewards of this gift of Creation, so that future generations of human and other-than-human life may flourish, continuing to actualize a heaven on earth, an earth as it is in heaven. We mourn the ongoing, unnecessary loss of biodiversity caused by human greed—this sixth great

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The Swedenborgian Church of North America



Standing Resolutions

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extinction the earth is undergoing—and commit to regenerating not only our individual selves, but this collectively shared and most precious planet we all call home.

Heeding a call to have radical hope, we encourage Swedenborgian communities in all their varieties of use to consider taking and encouraging the following actions:

Individuals: Encouragement to be conscientious consumers taking the time to research the impacts of the greener alternatives they are considering.

Congregations: Encourage creation care worship and education centering environmental justice, divestment and socially responsible investment, local advocacy and support of environmentally just green efforts

Denomination: Divestment and socially responsible investment, join/support/promote lobbying efforts of grass roots movements centering Environmental Justice such as Citizen's Climate Lobby (CCL) and Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) to build support across bipartisan lines for climate justice legislation. 🗳️

Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism

SAAR has an email newsletter that provides education around issues central to antiracism, ideas for actions to take, and inspiration to keep at it long-term. Email 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/

Two Proposed Bylaw Amendments for Annual Convention

Bylaws: Proposed Amendment: Add Standing Committee for Ministry Development

The General Council endorses the proposal of the Structure Review Committee (p. 9 in 2023 Journal) consisting of Paul Martin, Kit Billings, Gard Perry, and Alice Henderson, an amendment to Article 10 in the denomination's bylaws to create a new Section 4 establishing a Standing Committee for Ministry Development.

If adopted, the current Article X, Section 4, Standing Committee for Nominations, will become Section 5 and the current Section 5 will become Section 6.

Article X

Standing Committees *Add new*

Section 4. Standing Committee for Ministry Development

There shall be a Standing Committee for Ministry Development (SCMD) whose central focus shall be facilitating ministries within the Swedenborgian Church. The SCMD shall serve as a sounding board for ministries and programs in the denomination and shall be concerned with resources, counsel, and spiritual support for ministry efforts throughout the Church. To this end, the SCMD shall assess ministry and programming grant proposals and offer advice and counsel to the Standing Committee for Financial Accountability for decisions on grant applications. It shall consist of three to six members, the number to be determined annually by the President of the Swedenborgian Church based on the needs of the Church at that time but shall always include at least three ordained ministers or licensed pastors with five or more years of professional leadership in a denominational ministry.

Bylaws: Proposed Amendment: Common Fund

A study of the history of the Investment Committee language in our annual Journal over the past twenty years reveals vagueness and variance regarding the number of members and whether there are specific terms for those serving on the Investment Committee of the Swedenborgian Church of North America. The current language in Article XVIII in the Bylaws says, "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."

After discussion in the fall meeting of the General Council considering practical issues for best governance, the following amendment for Article XVIII was unanimously voted to be placed on the agenda during our business session at next summer's annual convention at Michigan State University:

Article XVIII

Common Fund Investment Committee *Amended*

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. 🗳️

Interview with Ken Turley on Spiritual Experience through Music

BY JIM LAWRENCE

A few months ago, Rev. Ken Turley agreed to talk with me about the intersection between music and ministry in his career for publication in the Messenger. I have followed his passion for how spiritual experience can be enriched through music ever since we shared an apartment as seminarians in the early Eighties. Not long after this interview took place, Ken suffered a massive hemorrhagic stroke on the right side of his brain. Though his wonderful cognitive and language skills remain, he is struggling to regain use of the left side of his body. His wife and frequent music collaborator, Laurie Turley, is maintaining regular updates where you can follow and support his journey at <https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/kenturleyupdates>

—Jim Lawrence



How old or young were you when you began to realize you had a talent for music and that “doing music” was important for your sense of self and of meaningful expression? Tell us that story of emergence.

In fourth grade, after a demonstration of strings, I was intrigued and the invitation to get out of class once a week for orchestra was too much to pass up, so I began playing violin. A few years later I moved to cello, then to string bass. I never considered whether I had talent, I enjoyed playing, (I did not enjoy practicing), and it included a field trip or two. Still, it was a constant, even if overshadowed by football

and basketball in High School. It was in college, after getting my first D in Zoology, that I decided to switch my educational goals from pre-med and psychiatry to music. It was also at this time that, having applied for and received Conscientious Objector status during the Vietnam War, that I left school for two years of alternate ser-

vice, which turned into five years.

My service involved day staff at a recreation center for physically, mentally, and emotionally challenged adults. And then, Mother Goose, Inc. during what extended into four years as a social service organization, we brought music and the arts, both performing and teaching to kids confined in institutions.

It was during my time in San Francisco working at Mother Goose, Inc., that I grew to understand the purpose and power of music to lift people's spirits and draw them together in a shared sense of unity and harmony. I'm not sure it ever occurred to me to question

whether I had talent, it was what I loved doing.

In 1974 or so, I left Mother Goose, Inc., and drove from San Francisco to Nova Scotia, then to Boston and back across the South to San Francisco and ending up in my hometown of Seattle. I finished my undergraduate work and got a degree in music theory and history, from The Evergreen State College in Washington state. There, I played classical music with a flute player and a mandolin quartet; and also, electric rock-jazz fusion music in a band. There were also many impromptu singing circles in people's living room. As a musician I was completely promiscuous: I would play with anyone, anytime, anywhere. At one point, a girlfriend at the time and her friend liked to play recorder, so I learned alto recorder and we had many an enjoyable evening

paying duets and trios. This led to one of my first efforts in composition, a series of duos and trios for us to play. So, you can see how my musical journey was multi-dimensional and led to my very eclectic tastes in music.

As a preacher's kid, did the music part of church gatherings play any role in your budding love of music as a youth?

Yes, very much so. I have a distinct memory of being in our rather space-age sanctuary in Bellevue and my dad leading worship services with his little Wolensak reel to reel tape recorder,

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Interview with Ken Turley

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and the foot pedal he used to start and stop the music. He was so proud of that! He would play what I must assume was pre-recorded music for anthems and meditations. What I specifically remember was the day he played Odetta singing a spiritual. This was right in the late Fifties when the Civil Rights Movement was at a peak. I don't remember the specific song, but I remember the experience to this day. And of course, that just blew away any boundaries I might have had concerning what can be sacred music and appropriate for worship.

You chose Evergreen State University in Washington for college because it was one of only two colleges you found that allowed guitar to be used as the instrument of choice for music composition majors. Can you share what your vision was at that time and where you were hoping to go?

Evergreen was the last of five schools I attended in the ten years it took to get my undergraduate degree. It was in part to be able to major in the guitar, but also because it was one or two or three colleges at the time that would allow you to construct your own major. I built mine with a focus on theory, history and arranging classical music for a variety of instrumental combinations. My Senior Recital involved, besides playing a series of solos and duets on classical guitar, performing a Haydn Sonata for Violin and Piano on electric piano and electric guitar, a Bach Prelude and Fugue with three electric guitars, and a series of pieces in which I played Mandola with a classical mandolin quartet. Upon graduation, I learned an immense amount about music, and absolutely nothing about how to make a living as a musician. It was this predicament, after

playing guitar in a college production of Godspell, and serving as music director for a semi-pro production Godspell that ran for twelve weeks, it finally occurred to me that contemporary music could convey a sacred message, and this led to my decision to pursue becoming a church musician. Long story short: I became a minister who does music.

You have composed pop and folk style melody hymns as well as classical oratorios. What are you doing now, and how would you describe your music style in your performances today?

There are three basic areas of my current musical endeavors.

First is composition. While, recently, I have written a few songs and four orchestral pieces of Christmas Carols, I remain primarily in the classical realm as a composer. While a good number of my pieces are recorded and available for listening and viewing at my page on YouTube (many are accompaniment to nature videos), I am currently putting most of my effort into getting my pieces played and recorded.

Secondly is performing. I have been playing with a community orchestra, sometimes cello sometimes classical guitar. Laurie and I have our singer-songwriter duo of electric piano and guitar where we play Jazz, Blues, Pop, and our original songs. I have also been going out to local open mics and performing solo and/or with a pick-up band pulled together in the moment.

Thirdly is working. I have occasionally served as a substitute musician for a couple of local churches, playing classical guitar and leading hymns. But this category also involves pursuing publication and distribution of sheet music and CDs of my original compositions and songs. Laurie and I currently have a number of things on Spotify (search Ken Turley and Laurie Turley). Also on YouTube, I have a page and,

if you search 24 Hours Laurie Turley, you can find several videos of us playing covers and original songs at a benefit for our local music school.

Having musical parts of worship services is especially challenging for small congregations. What are a couple of tips you'd especially share for how to proceed with music that adds rather than subtracts in worship gatherings of small numbers?

First: while it has always been true, (as proven by my dad in the Fifties), the COVID-19 shutdown has brought to life just how effective recorded music and video can be in small group worship. Not to mention the infinite possibilities and resources that can be found on the internet, specifically YouTube and other music and video platforms.

Secondly, when using live music and musicians in small group worship, consider making it personal, close up and accessible. And if possible, look for opportunities for people to sing along. No pressure, no performance, just the opportunity to join voices in music offered to God. With a small group, sitting together around a haltingly played guitar and a timid voice may be more conducive to worship than people spread all over a sanctuary listening to a distant organ playing old style hymns.

What is your explanation of why music or sound can move the soul so profoundly? Do you have a theory on sound and spirit?

I don't have a theory so much as I have observations over time. I have observed music bringing people into a shared focus of attention and a similar emotional state of being as a result of listening, but even more so, of participating in the generating of sound. This has been everything from singing hymns in church to playing hand

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Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener Seeks New Leadership

BY JIM LAWRENCE



After five years of ministry leadership in Kitchener, Rev. Cory Coberforward is returning to the United States as he and his wife, Alyssa, have been graced with their first child, Jessa, and they wish to be closer to family. That transition opens an opportunity for ministry at one of the premier churches in the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

Approximately forty-five minutes from Toronto, Kitchener is part of a contiguous metropolitan area along with Waterloo that together have over

a half-million residents, but which yet feels like a small, charming city. The church is often remarked upon as the prettiest church in Kitchener and also commands a choice location adjacent to a major performing arts center and is an easy walk to the low-key Kitchener downtown. In addition, the K-W metro area has several colleges, and overall, the sociological environs provide excellent opportunities for ministry outreach.

The Swedenborgian witness and ministry in Kitchener dates all the way back to 1833 when a book binder began a study group for the new Swedenborgian writings that brought forth new transformative perspectives from the sacred scriptures about the power of the presence of God and the destiny of all life. The Swedenborgian community in southern Ontario has enjoyed the talents of many prominent citizens and of great numbers of solid

citizens who strive to love the neighbor in all ways. Along the way the bustling congregation built four different churches as times and circumstances and perhaps providence led.

The current church property has been the home of the congregation since 1922. After the first World War, new social and urban forces led to a decision to “stay downtown” but in a less cramped location, which led to the opening of today’s local jewel. The history of the past century has been remarkable and could fill a book, and there is a sturdy commitment to continue the Swedenborgian movement in the growing area. The search committee has an active call out to the ministers of the Swedenborgian Church of North America, and as this *Messenger* goes to press that search process is at its beginning. 📖

For more information about the Church of the Good Shepherd please contact:

Judy Pidgeon jpidgeon@rogers.com

Grace Sudden gsudden@sentex.net

Appeal for the 2024 Annual Convention

A Message from the Executive Committee

We are excited to be hosting our historic 200th annual convention for the Swedenborgian Church of North America in an attractive setting for our legal and spiritual annual meeting: the Kellogg Conference Center associated with Michigan State University. This lovely setting provides inviting meeting spaces and lodging accommodations, while at the same time we continue with robust technology support so people also can attend our business meetings and our popular Mini

Courses from the virtual comforts of home, so that overall, we are building a terrific design for widespread participation. Our theme at our 200th anniversary mark is “Swedenborg: Envisioning the Future.”

We are reaching out to our wonderful benefactors—both individuals and organizations—to consider a contribution in helping us provide this important annual experience for all of our members and friends. Targeted gifts can be noted as going toward support

for youth activities, hospitality, need-based scholarships, technology for virtual participation, music programs, the mini courses, the Council of Ministers meetings, or general cost support. Modest gifts are richly welcomed, and all gifts will be acknowledged.

To make a donation online, or where to send a check, visit www.swedenborg.org/donate and please remember to indicate what this donation is intended for. 📖

Passages

Births

We joyfully welcome our precious little girl, **Jessa Coberforward**, into the world! Born an Aquarius (like her dad, Cory!) Weighing 6 pounds, 10 ounces, measuring 19 inches long. Mom (Alyssa) and baby are doing wonderfully and are filled with love and gratitude. Jessa's arrival has brought immense joy to our family, and we can't wait to watch her grow and thrive.



Interview with Ken Turley

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drums on a city street corner, and of course concerts and performances of all kinds. There is something about music that seems to touch deeper levels in people. Perhaps it is the tendency to join in the tempo of a rhythm, perhaps it is the vibrational resonance of harmony, perhaps it is the way a melody takes the consciousness and leads it on a bit of a journey. All I know is that whether it be in church on a Sunday morning or in a bar on Saturday night, whether it be a few people around a campfire or a celebratory birthday party, music has a way of lifting people's spirits and creating a sense of shared community. For me personally it has a profound effect on my inner state of being and has been and continues to be an uplifting means of personal expression and, at the same time, a wonderful way to connect and build relationships with other people. And as Swedenborg informs us, as a powerful entity, its ultimate value is defined by the motive

Social Justice Committee

Engaged Swedenborgianism's and Healing from Societal Racism

BY DRU JOHNSON

"They who do not explore the evils of their thought and will, cannot do the work of repentance." —Emanuel Swedenborg The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine §12

The record is there for all to read. It resounds all over the world. It might as well be written in the sky. One wishes that Americans, white Americans, would read, for their own sakes, this record and stop defending themselves against it. Only then will they be enabled to change their lives. The fact that they have not yet been able to do this — to face their history to change their lives — hideously menaces this country. Indeed, it menaces the entire world. —James Baldwin, "The White Man's Guilt," 1965

and intended and actual results with which it is created and absorbed. It is the reason I pay so much attention to lyrics; even in a bar on a Saturday night music can lift spirits and promote positive imagery or it can inflame emotions and promote bad behavior. Like fire, it can serve wonderful and useful purposes, or it can injure and destroy. Fire operates on the material plane, music on the spiritual plane. I am forever grateful for having found and made music a central part of my life, even as I continue to explore and discover music without ever approaching any kind of sense of complete comprehension. It is a gift to be gratefully received and shared, and a mystery to be enjoyed and explored. 🎵

You can find all of Ken Turley's music at: www.turleymusic.com.

Since the June 2020 vicious murder of George Floyd, there are many U.S. polls showing that Baldwin's wish is coming to pass, at long last. In fact, many polls show that the U.S. has clarified its collective mind on its own racism. An April 2023 NBC News poll showed that 59% of people in the U.S. "think America is racist." Does it even need to be said anymore that changing individual minds is important, but not enough? People really seem to be finally recognizing this fact. In the same poll a full 70% agreed that "Our country needs to do more to increase social justice." Since our denomination is overwhelmingly European-American, progressive, and coaxed by Swedenborg to engage in the difficult work of self-examination, I believe we have a sacred opportunity to lead the way among European-Americans towards increasing social justice in the U.S. Self-examination is never easy, but if we actually start practicing what we preach, embarking on our own anti-racism journeys, we are in a collective position to have a positive impact far greater than our small numbers would suggest. Swedenborg's perspective on how humans can go through the inner processes of first repentance, then reformation and finally regeneration is a message that applies not just to individuals, but to institutions and societies as well, and a message our society needs right now to get to where we need to get—a place of reconciliation. If you would like to join in with this vital work, SAAR has resources to help, including an excellent periodic newsletter. Please go to the swedenborg.org website to connect with us. 🎵

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

Worship is Life

Rev. Sage Cole has launched a
new virtual effort:

worshipislife.substack.com

a space to be in deeper
conversation about what it means
to be the New Church inside and
out. Through writing, live
conversations, and more the hope
is to foster personal inquiry and
sharing about how we make
worship all of life, and life an
act of worship.

**Please consider subscribing and
joining the conversation!**

Swedenborgian Church Youth League

SCYL and Transitions Memorial Day Retreat

A SCYL retreat for ages 13 – 18 and a Transitions retreat for ages 19 – 30

Theme: *The Universal Human*

Dates: *Friday, May 24, 7:00 PM – Monday, May 27, 10:00 AM ET*

Location: *Almont New Church Assembly, Allenton, Michigan*

Cost: *\$75 with a household maximum of \$150*

On this Memorial Day weekend, we will host two retreats at one location! Our SCYL teens will gather with the young adult Transitions group. Some activities will be together, such as meals and recreation, some activities will be separate, like sessions and sleeping arrangements. At this retreat we will study the amazing human body. Together we will play games, do crafts, and learn all about the spiritual nature of our body. Did you know that according to Emanuel Swedenborg heaven is in the form of one great divine human being? Just like each part of the body has a specific job to do, each community in heaven works together like a part of the body with a special function also. As an angel, you might be a member of the knee, arm, brain, or tongue community, or even in the stomach, intestines, or bladder (yuck!). Come to this

retreat and while enjoying great food, recreation, and free time with friends you will unlock the mysteries of the human body and learn how all of us play a part in the Universal Human. I'm sure we'll all benefit from the lively discussions and activities. For more information, please call or text Youth Director, Kurt Fekete, at 802-345-0169 or email kfekete@hotmail.com. To register, please visit <https://swedenborg.org/events-activities/youthretreats/>.

At our retreats we offer life skills and spiritual sessions based on the principles of the Swedenborgian Church. We strive for a safe, secure, and inclusive environment to discuss and share relevant and meaningful ideas that help with challenges youth and young adults face today. We work, play, craft, and learn together as a community.

We have fun! See you there! 