

SWEDENBORG: ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

200TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

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 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.