



## Envisioning the Future as the Swedenborgian Church

201<sup>st</sup> Convention at the University Place Hotel in Portland, Oregon

Friday, June 27 – Tuesday, July 1, 2025

In-person registration is open until May 15,

Virtual registration is open until June 15 on [swedenborg.org](https://swedenborg.org)

Members and friends of the Swedenborgian Church, we are happily planning to gather again in a lovely conference hotel setting that is also associated with a college: University Place Hotel and Conference Center adjacent to the lovely Portland State University campus in downtown Portland right by the Willamette River. Again, this year we will provide robust virtual support for all business sessions and worship services, as well as many of the educational events (Mini Courses). We warmly welcome people to join us in-person or online.

This year our convention for in-person attendees will offer the easiest accommodations we've had in decades since all activities (lodging, meals, business sessions, and event services) will be in the hotel building.

Our theme is "Spiritual Innovation for a Changing World" as we move into the Year of the New Jerusalem in our cycle of annual themes.



### Keynote Address

*Spiritual Innovation for a Changing World: The New Church Vision*  
By Rev. Rich Tafel.

Rich Tafel is a Swedenborgian pastor, bridge-builder, and thought leader dedicated to healing divides in our

society through spiritual insight and practical action.

As pastor of Church of the Holy City in Washington, DC, and a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, Rev. Tafel has spent his life bringing people together across political, religious, and cultural lines. He developed the Cultural Translator training to help leaders navigate conflict and build coalitions rooted in deeper understanding.

In both his ministry and public life, Rich integrates faith with service, having worked in government, education, and global health. He also is the co-founder of initiatives that connect social impact investing with real-world change.

Rev. Tafel continues to teach, speak, and lead at the intersection of spirituality, public leadership, and civic renewal—living out a Swedenborgian call to serve the common good through love and wisdom in action. He also is the chair of the Council of Ministers.

### What's Inside:

Nominations for Elected Positions • Convention Accommodations • Proposed CSS Bylaw Amendments • SCYL Memorial Day Retreat • Mini Course Line-up • Almont Summer School 2025 • Fryeburg New Church Assembly 2025 • Convention Outings • And More!

## Contents

Convention 2025 .....	17
Editor's Corner .....	18
Church Calendar .....	18
Message from the President.....	19
SCNA Nominations .....	20
Convention Outings .....	22
CSS Bylaw Amendment.....	23
Convention Accommodations.....	24
Almont Summer School.....	25
Fryeburg New Church Assembly .....	25
Mini Course Line-up .....	26
Convention Worship Services .....	29
Upcoming Retreats .....	30
Convention Youth Programs .....	30
What's Happening .....	31
Convention 2025 Appeal.....	32

**Do you write poetry?**  
Send it along to:  
[Messenger@Swedenborg.org](mailto:Messenger@Swedenborg.org).

## Church Calendar

- **May 23–May 26, 2025:** [SCYL Spring Retreat](#), Almont, Michigan
- **June 26–27, 2025:** [Council of Ministers Meeting](#), Portland, Oregon
- **June 27–July 1, 2025:** [Annual Convention](#), Portland, Oregon
- **July 12–20, 2025:** [Almont Summer School](#), Allenton, Michigan
- **July 26–August 2, 2025:** [SCYL International Camp](#), Atherstone, England
- **July 26–August 10, 2025:** [Fryeburg New Church Assembly](#), Fryeburg, Maine
- **September 25–28, 2025:** [Gathering Leaves](#), Temenos, Pennsylvania
- **October 10–13, 2025:** [SCYL Fall Retreat](#), Duxbury, Massachusetts

## Editor's Corner



### Thank You and See You Soon

Even though I plan to continue to write for *the Messenger* when I can, this is my last official editorial. It's almost always the last thing I've done for each issue, and that holds true now as well. I am struggling with what to say, as it still feels surreal to be letting go of *the Messenger* Editor role. I have truly loved being involved in the denomination in this way for the past five years. I have learned so much and built strong relationships with so many of you that this will affect my life forever.

When I first met Herb Ziegler, I was pregnant with my son and had my fifteen-month-old daughter in a stroller at Convention in Bridgewater in 2012. I told Herb then when he was done being *the Messenger* Editor that I wanted to do it. He told me that's great, but I plan on doing it until I'm dead. I am grateful that didn't turn out to be the case, on both fronts. Herb has been one of my biggest supporters. Any time I came across anything odd, or difficult to navigate in this position, he would talk me through it with a very level head until we came across a solution on how to handle whatever issue it was. Herb is one of my dearest friends and most favorite people to have a porch sit with at Fryeburg New Church Assembly. I am thankful for his ongoing love and support.

Brittany and I used to joke with each other that between us we knew every Swedenborgian (General Church or Convention) in North America and their dietary needs—I think we were pretty close to truth on that. I am so thankful for the time I had working

## the Messenger

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Submissions are accepted at any time.

Submissions must be received by the 15<sup>th</sup> 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.

with Brittany and getting to know her through being co-workers. There are times in one's life when you come across special people—instant connections that will last a lifetime. So, thank you to Rev. Jane Siebert for hiring us both in the same window of time so that I was able to find one of my spiritual sisters in the world.

I knew Rev. Kevin Baxter for several years prior to working for the denomination. However, since 2020, his support and understanding of life through sarcasm and nerdy topics has got me through some of the most difficult things I've every come across. I

*Continues on page 23*



*Message from the President*

## A Tribute to the Departing Messenger Editor

*The Year of the Word: 2024–25*

For the past five years, Beki Greenwood has wowed our world with beautiful issues of *the Messenger*, and while we wish her well in her departure, we are surely sad to see her go. Her first issue was the February/March issue in 2020, which we will remember was at the very cusp of the outbreak of the COVID shutdown. During this phase of anxiety with lockdowns and shortage of gatherings, Beki stepped in with beautiful graphic design skills to nourish our imagination during that year and longer. She also helped strategize a streamlining of a publication system that prioritized online delivery with all its colorful attributes while minimizing the expensive black-and-white print versions via the US and Canadian mails. Looking through her issues over the past half-decade provides a vivid picture of the life of the Swedenborgian Church of North America. Her work continued an important function in our Church's history, given that *the Messenger* has been our official organ of denominational communication since 1855.

At that time the still young denomination decided that it was time to have a regular organ coming regularly to homes and churches, and the name they chose was *The New Jerusalem Messenger*. The

name has evolved some over the many decades to *New Church Messenger* for nearly a century and was shortened simply to *The Messenger* in the late Sixties that was clarified a tagline in smaller print: "Official Organ of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches," which itself evolved in the mid-Nineties to tag *The Messenger* the "Official Organ of the Swedenborgian Church of North America."

It is our official organ of communication, and if you line up the full run of *Messengers* from beginning to the current moment (and I have done this in our library), Beki's *Messengers* jump out with their vivid colorful and artistic designs. You can spot them from thirty yards away.

With great gratitude and appreciation, we salute and celebrate Beki Greenwood's contribution and gift to our current life and our history. We are delighted to report as well that we have an interim editor to step in immediately in Brittany Price, who was recently our Central Office manager, who possesses excellent editorial and graphic design skills. We will be running an open search for the permanent editor's position, but for now we pause to be thankful for the talent and production of Beki Greenwood.

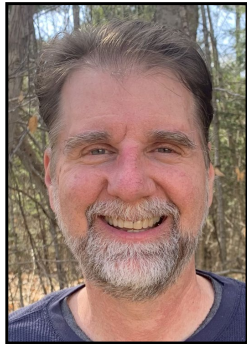
—Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence  
[president@swedenborg.org](mailto:president@swedenborg.org)

## 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*.

### **Kurt Fekete** **Vice President** **(one-year term)**

I am incredibly honored to accept the nomination to the position of Vice President. Raised in a Swedenborgian family, I attended Sunday School at the Detroit church (later Royal Oak) and loved my years at Almont summer camp and youth retreats. Fascinated by Swedenborg's work



and science, I studied chemical engineering at Wayne State University and worked in that field into my forties. I helped launch the Transitions young adult group in the 1990s, served on the Almont New Church Assembly board, and volunteered as a youth leader throughout my adult life. This passion led me to become the Youth Director for the Swedenborgian Church in 2001. Now in my twenty-fourth year, I still love working with young people while also serving as vice president. I strive for excellence in my work with President Jim Lawrence, the Executive Committee, and General Council.

Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
President	3	***
Vice President	1	Kurt Fekete*
Recording Secretary	1	Karen Conger*
Treasurer (Elect)	3	Jennifer Lindsay
General Council: layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Emily Tergliafera* Paul Deming*
General Council: minister	3	Sage Cole*
Standing Committee for Communication & Information	3	Kevin Baxter*
Standing Committee for Education & Resources for Spiritual Community	3	OPEN OPEN
Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (2 to be elected)	3	Rachel Madjerac* Jane Siebert
Board of Trustees of CSS, representative class	4	Jennifer Lindsay*
Nominating Committee	5	Terrie Crenshaw

\* Incumbent

\*\* Years remaining in unexpired term

\*\*\* No candidate to be elected this year

If re-elected, I'll continue bringing a youthful perspective while honoring our Swedenborgian heritage. I live in Maine with my wife Shelley, whom I met at a youth retreat, and my adult daughters, Ava and Zsa Zsa.

### **Jennifer Lindsay** **Treasurer Elect** **(three-year term begins 2026) &** **CSS Board Representative Class** **(four-year term)**



Jennifer Lindsay is honored to be renominated as a candidate for Treasurer on behalf of General Convention. Jennifer has served as Treasurer since being initially elected in 2017. She is also pleased to be

renominated to serve as a member of the Representative Class for the Board of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies. Jennifer has served on the Board and as the Treasurer for CSS for over fifteen years.

Jennifer came to know and embrace Swedenborg's teachings through the San Francisco Church where she has been an active member for over twenty-five years. She served the church council as treasurer for seven years and is currently completing her sixth year as president. She currently serves as treasurer for the Pacific Coast Association and previously served as a Board Member of Wayfarers Chapel.

Besides her volunteer efforts on behalf of the Swedenborgian Church, Jennifer also volunteers on the Board of the San Francisco Playhouse. She previously served on the Board of the MFA program at the American Conservatory Theater for over a decade

*Continues on page 21*

**Nominations 2025**

*Continued from page 20*

and supported Texas A&M University by serving on the Development Council for the College of Liberal Arts, the Chancellors' Century Council, and the Board of the Association of Former Students. She also currently serves on the Board of the Swedenborg Foundation.

Professionally, Jennifer completed a twenty-plus year career as a Principal with KPMG in its Silicon Valley office where she led the Forensic Practice and served as the Partner-in-Charge of Corporate Responsibility for the office. Her focus was providing investigative services and compliance risk assessments for a variety of clients in the technology and energy industries. She graduated from Texas A&M University with both a B.S. in Economics and Aerospace Engineering. She received her M.A. in Economics from Stanford University.

Jennifer is an avid world traveler who most likely has another global escapade on her mind.

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



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 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 (PCA). I have served on the former Ministries Support Unit for several years, 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.

**Emily Teragliafera  
General Council-Layperson  
(three-year term)**

I am honored to be nominated to serve the General Council. I am a lifelong Swedenborgian that grew up attending the Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) in Fryeburg, Maine,



and I am a member of the Fryeburg New Church. I currently serve on the Board of Directors for the FNCA, which I have done for many years and find the work to be quite fulfilling. I am also the FNCA Summer Camp Session Director. I am happy to have the opportunity to expand my service and experience to the greater Swedenborgian denomination.

I live in the rural mountains of upstate New York with my husband, Chris, and our three pets—High King Aslaan and Prince Caspian the Maine Coon Cats and Lexi the Puggle. I completed my Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Methodology with a focus on Special Education in May of 2022. After realizing that academia wasn't for me, I went back to teaching elementary school and now teach a special class of kids with severe social and emotional

learning needs at a public school here in New York.

I am honored to accept this nomination, and I look forward to further serving the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

**Pastor Paul Deming  
General Council-Layperson  
(three-year term)**

Paul is currently pastoring the Garden Chapel Sanctuary in St. Louis, Missouri where he was installed in 2016 after completing the certification required for the Licensed Pastor Program. He is retired from teaching elementary school music and is currently pursuing his master's in theological studies as part of his ordination journey. In his spare time Paul writes music, gives guitar lessons, and practices Karate. Paul is married and has two grown sons with families of their own.



**Rev. Sage Cole  
General Council-Minister  
(three-year term)**



Rev. Sage Cole is the founder and lead minister of the Helen Keller Spiritual Life Collaborative. She produces the Be Love Podcast and the weekly newsletter [WorshipIsLife.Substack.com](http://WorshipIsLife.Substack.com). She lives in Boston, Massachusetts, with her husband and two sons.

*Continues on page 22*

## Nominations 2025

Continued from page 21

### Rev. Kevin Baxter Standing Committee for Communication & Information (three-year term)

Rev. Kevin Baxter is the Pastor of the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem, also known as Church on the Hill. He is running for his second term on



the SCCI, this is his second go around on the SCCI since its inception. Previous to that, he served on IMSU for several terms. Light web

programming, publishing, and audio/visual skills prepare him for the unique skill set needed to examine what it means for the denomination to communicate. As he is fifty, he is beginning to wonder what things like TikTok might be. As he moves toward cultural irrelevance, he continues to try and make a difference.

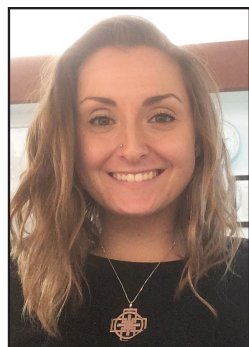
### Rev. Jane Siebert Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (three-year term)

I'm ready to serve again because I love our church. Three years ago, I finished serving two terms as President of the SCNA. I have watched from a distance as Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence picked up the reins and didn't miss a beat. I am excited with the new initiatives and many changes that have



occurred, and I hope to do my part. All of our committees are filled with volunteers that give of their time and abilities in a variety of ways. I would like to serve on the SCFA whose "central focus is on the wise use and development of the resources as are directly under the Swedenborgain Church's control" (Bylaws Article X). I will do my best and I will listen to our members.

### Rev. Rachel Madjerac Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (three-year term)



Rev. Rachel Madjerac lives and works in San Diego, California. She has been serving as a member of the SCFA since 2020.

### Terrie Crenshaw Nominating Committee (five-year term)

Terrie Crenshaw is a member of the Hillside Church in El Cerrito, California. She grew up attending the Church of the Holy City in Michigan, going to Almont Summer School and traveling with the Youth League to many churches within driving distance. She is a founding member of the Manifold Angels Facebook group, and co-author of the anti-discrimination resolution confirmed by the 2018 Convention. She also follows in the footsteps of her mother, Mary Crenshaw, as a trustee of the CSS board.



## Convention Outings: Three Destinations to Choose From!

This year, you'll have the opportunity to choose from three unique outings—each offering a different glimpse into the charm and character of Portland, Oregon. Whether you're a lover of nature, history, or literature, there's something for everyone:

### International Rose Test Garden

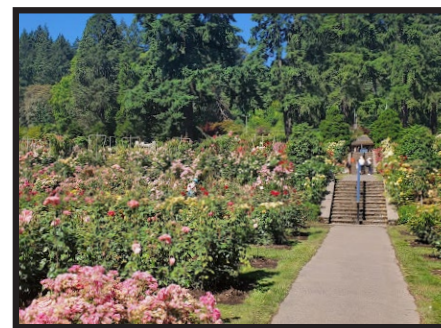
Stroll through a stunning display of over 10,000 rose bushes in bloom at one of Portland's most iconic attractions. Located in Washington Park, this garden offers a peaceful retreat with breathtaking views of Mt. Hood and downtown Portland. [www.portland.gov/parks/washington-park-international-rose-test-garden](http://www.portland.gov/parks/washington-park-international-rose-test-garden)

### Pittock Mansion

Step into Portland's past with a guided visit to the historic [Pittock Mansion](#). Built in 1914, this beautifully preserved estate sits high above the city and offers a fascinating look at the life and legacy of one of Portland's founding families.

### Powell's City of Books

Get lost in the stacks at the world's largest independent bookstore. Spanning an entire city block, [Powell's](#) is a haven for book lovers and a true Portland institution. Take your time browsing thousands of titles and don't forget to stop by the Rare Book Room. 📖



## Notice of a Meeting of the New Church Theological School (Center for Swedenborgian Studies) to Amend the Bylaws by adding a Dissolution Clause.

The Center for Swedenborgian Studies will convene its annual Corporation meeting at the Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church of North America in Portland, Oregon. The Convention is scheduled for June 27 to July 1, 2025, and the CSS Corporation meeting is scheduled for Sunday, June 29.

### Proposed Dissolution Clause for the Center for Swedenborgian Studies

*Current Article X will become Article XI*

*Current Article XI will become Article XII*

#### **NEW Article X. Dissolution**

Any action to dissolve the Corporation of the New Church Theological School (dba The Center for Swedenborgian Studies) must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board of Trustees before being referred to the eligible Voting Members of the Corporation. There shall be a meeting of the Corporation called to specifically consider such action, for which meeting legal notice has been issued to all Members eligible to vote in accordance with the provisions of these bylaws. At said meeting, if 2/3 of all of those physically present and eligible to vote agree to dissolve the Corporation of the New

Church Theological School, then all of its property, real and personal, after paying all just claims upon it, shall be conveyed to and vested in the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America or its legal successor. The Board of Trustees of the School shall perform all actions necessary to this end.

The annual payout of invested funds is to be conveyed to the General Convention of the New Jerusalem and may be used to fund programs that met the Mission of the New Church Theological School during its existence:

- To prepare qualified individuals for ministry in the Swedenborgian Church and world
- To serve as a center on the leading edge of Swedenborgian scholarship
- To share its resources of scholarship, leadership, and people with the wider church and community. ☸



### Annual Meeting of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School

The Annual Meeting of the Corporation of the New Church Theological School (d.b.a. the Center for Swedenborgian Studies of the Graduate Theological Union) will be held during the annual convention of the Swedenborgian Church of North America, Sunday, June 29, 2025 at 3:15 PM PT, in the University Place Hotel Ballroom, Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. ☸

### Editor's Corner

*Continued from page 18*

am beyond thankful for his friendship and an ear at times when I've needed it.

There are so many others, and I am grateful to all of you. A special thank you to Robert Leith, who has been a copy editor for *the Messenger* for many years. This was also his last issue. I thank you all and I will see you soon!

—Beki Greenwood



*I made this "Sweden-Borg" to go with one of the puzzle answers in one of my first issues as editor. It one of my personal favorite Photoshop creations. I wanted to take his chance to run it one more time.*

# Convention 2025 Accommodations – Explained!

BY JACKIE SHIHADDEH, OPERATIONS MANAGER

There are a few important updates to accommodations this year as we prepare for the 201<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

## What's New in 2025?

- Everyone, including teens, will stay in the hotel this year—no dorms at all.
- Teens (ages 13–18) only need to pay the registration fee of \$110. If a teen stays in a double room in the hotel with other Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) teens, their room and board will be fully covered thanks to generous donations. Parents are not required to stay with them—they'll be housed together as part of the supervised SCYL program.

This is a big shift from past years, when SCYL participants stayed in dormitories—this year, they'll enjoy the comfort of hotel accommodations alongside the rest of our community.

## Hotel Details

We've blocked out a limited number of rooms at the University Place Hotel and Conference Center in Portland, Oregon, for the discounted rate of \$110 per night plus taxes and fees—\$25 less

### -Standard Double Room:

-\$110 (SCNA Room Block)

### -Meal Package

-4 Days: \$325

-5 Days: \$415

### -Registration Fee

-Adult/Teen: \$110

-Commuter: \$55

-Virtual Attendee: \$50

-Child 12 and Under: \$0

than last year's rate.

Each room (double or king) includes a mini fridge and access to hotel amenities like the pool and fitness center.

**Important:** You must book your room by calling the hotel directly at 503-221-0140 and mentioning you are with the Swedenborgian Church of North America. There is no online booking platform. More information: [www.uplacehotel.com](http://www.uplacehotel.com)

## Youth & Family Accommodations

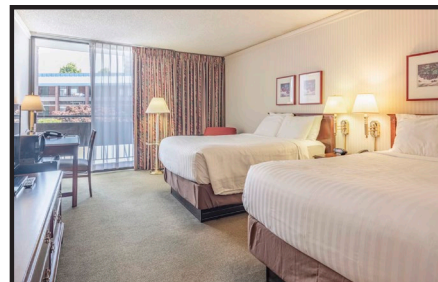
- Teens (13–18) staying in a double room with the SCYL group only need to pay the registration fee (room and board are free).
- Youth (0–12) staying with parents will have all meals fully covered and no registration fee.
- Families only pay per room, not per person—making this a great value for families.
- Children under 13 must stay in the same room as a parent or legal guardian.

## Meals

This year, meals are fully catered by the hotel—a big upgrade from previous years, when meals were provided through dormitory cafeterias. The Meal Package includes:

- Hot breakfast each morning (except July 1, which includes continental breakfast provided by the hotel)
- Hot lunch
- Catered dinner
- Snacks and reception desserts and hors d'oeuvres

The cost for Lay Attendees is \$325 for the full meal package. You'll enjoy varied, high-quality meals in a relaxed setting—all conveniently located on-site. A catered banquet dinner with a



DJ will also be held the evening of June 30 to celebrate the end of Convention.

If you have dietary restrictions, please contact [manager@swedenborg.org](mailto:manager@swedenborg.org) to ensure your needs are met.

## Wellness & Recreation

Hotel guests receive exclusive access to Portland State University's Campus Recreation Center, just six blocks—or two MAX stops—from the hotel.

### A \$15 day pass includes:

- Two-court gymnasium
- Indoor track (1/11 mile)
- Gym for floor hockey & indoor soccer
- Large cardio & weight room
- Group fitness studios
- Aquatic complex (lap pool & whirlpool spa)
- Bouldering wall
- Daily fitness classes
- Locker rooms

## Registration Reminders

- In-person registration deadline: May 15 at 5:00 PM ET
- Room & board must be paid in full by May 15
- Virtual registration deadline: June 15 at 11:59 PM ET

### Register & Learn more:

[swedenborg.org](http://swedenborg.org)

### Questions? I'm here to help!

[manager@swedenborg.org](mailto:manager@swedenborg.org)

857-217-3309

(M–F 10:00 AM–2:00 PM ET) ☎



## Summer Camps

### Almont Summer School 2025

Saturday, July 12 – Sunday, July 20

We are excited to share the topic for the Almont Summer School's 2025 Session, "Correspondences: A Magic Key to the Bible and Our Natural World." This year's theme honors the memory of one of our camp's "precious jewels," Mrs. Joyce Fekete, and her work in helping to bring the understanding of Swedenborgian Correspondences to life. An example for consideration is a small bird darting through your sight. You may hardly notice it, but Jesus reminds us that even the tiny sparrow is important (Matthew 10:29). This little bird corresponds to a spiritual thought that may flit through your mind. Through these earthly natural things, God is continually attempting to communicate with us. Pay attention. Take time to notice the world around you. What is the spiritual thought you might have missed if you did not pay attention? Swedenborg's Correspondences can open our eyes, hearts, and minds to experience the Spirit of Holiness in a personal way. Correspondence is alive, like the world around us.

Through lectures and classroom study, we will explore this "magic key" to open the Word to a deeper understanding and draw us closer to God. Joyce wrote the first pamphlet titled



### FNCA 2025

Saturday, July 26 – Sunday, August 10

The Fryeburg New Church Assembly multi-generational family camp will meet this summer from the banks of the beautiful Saco River in Fryeburg, Maine. All who are interested in what the FNCA has to offer are welcome.

There will be a full religious program including chapel services, lectures for the adults, and religion classes for the teens and children. The 1st Week lecture theme is Biblical: "God's Promises in the Bible," focusing on the seven big promises God makes to us. The second Week lecture theme is doctrinal: "Practicing Heaven," offering the opportunity to live like an angel. We are delighted to welcome Rev. Chuck Blair, along with his wife Susan, of New Church Live as this year's Rev. Everett K. Bray Visiting Lecturer.

"Be Love, Be Honest, Be Useful" is

*The Magic Key*, in the early 1970s. A third edition is being edited by her son, Mr. Kurt Fekete, Mrs. Beki Greenwood, Rev. Jane Siebert, and Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, with illustrations by her granddaughter, Miss Zsa Zsa Dolley; and will be reprinted for everyone to get a new copy at camp. The reprint is dedicated to Joyce and her love of Correspondences and of Almont. As we prepare to gather and "Live the Golden Rule" this summer, our sincerest hope is that *The Magic Key* will serve as a guiding light to unlocking the mysteries deep within the Bible and that you will use this key to open many spiritual doors in the everyday. We welcome you to join us.

—The Almont New Church Assembly's Summer School Committee

[AlmontNewChurchAssembly.org](http://AlmontNewChurchAssembly.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/54190325126>



the 2025 Opening Weekend Program, facilitated by Rev. Sage Cole, assisted by Rev. Susanne Currie. Together, we will explore these three primary values/aspects of the Divine. Each session will include time for sharing and reflection and will conclude with a shared ritual experience.

The 2025 Dole 3-Miler road race is on Saturday, August 9 at 8:00 AM ET on the Mountain Division Rail Trail at the Maine Visitors Center or Rte. 302 just over the New Hampshire/Maine state line. This fun event is a fundraiser for the FNCA, the Fryeburg New Church, and the Mountain Division Rail Trail. It is open to runners of all types and includes plenty of walkers for the cause as well.

Other camp activities include a daily arts and crafts program, swimming, hiking, music, games, conversation, porch sitting, a wide variety of evening program events, healthy and delicious meals, and shared community with like-minded people.

FNCA Work Weekend, for anyone who would like to volunteer to help out, will be held as usual over Memorial Day weekend, May 23–26. There is plenty of work that needs to be done and all skill levels are welcome. Many hands make light work.

For more information or to register for the Assembly or Work Weekend, please visit the Assembly's website [fryeburg.org](http://fryeburg.org).

## Mini Course Line-Up for Convention 2025

*Mini Courses will be held in three time slots that have four courses running concurrently—two in-person only and two hybrid for both in-person and virtual attendees.*

**M**ini Courses are small group offerings for attendees to learn about a topic that is presented by someone from the Swedenborgian Church of North America or an invited guest. We are excited to be able to continue to offer a variety of formats this year for our hybrid convention. After you register, you will receive information on how to join them, both in-person and virtually.

### There are two formats for Mini Courses

- In-person for on campus attendees only
- Hybrid style meetings that are also hosted on Zoom so that people can attend and participate both in-person and virtually

These three time slots have four courses running concurrently—two in-person and two hybrid for both in-person attendees and those online. Virtual attendees will be able to choose between the hybrid sessions, while the in-person attendees will be able to attend any of the courses being offered.

### Saturday, June 28 at 1:00 PM PT

#### Created in the Image of God: Imago Dei and D.E.I.

##### Dr. Rebecca Esterson

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

This session will explore resonances between our contemporary discourses about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the ancient notion of Imago Dei. Christian theologians have historically used Genesis 1:27 as a starting point for understanding the nature of divinity in relation to humanity. That “God created humankind in his own image” became known by the Latin shorthand

Imago Dei and used this as a framework for discerning ways that the human form—in body and spirit—reflects God’s form. Our Swedenborgian theology celebrates the diversity of human forms in light of Imago Dei, paving the way for an embrace the fullest possible inclusion in our communities and institutions. “Perfection comes from variety even in heaven” (*Heaven and Hell* §56)



Dr. Rebecca K. Esterson is the Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies and the Dorothea Harvey Professor of Swedenborgian Studies. She teaches in the Department of Sacred Texts

and Their Interpretation at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and is a member of the Swedenborg Society of the East Bay.

#### Spiritual Boundaries in Relationships

##### Rev. Alison Moore

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

Swedenborgian Psychotherapist Mark Carlson has identified inner or Spiritual boundaries, which he calls “Microboundaries.” When we learn and understand where and why these boundaries exist and stop crossing them with others, our relationships, both professional and personal, will improve. There are boundaries related both to our Will and our Understanding, and they matter. Come learn about them and possibly deepen your understanding of what they are, why they matter, and how knowing about them can transform your relationships.

Rev. Alison Longstaff Moore was raised in the General Church but left that denomination to become ordained by the Swedenborgian Church of North America when she was 44. She has served as an assistant at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Canada, and as Pastor in Bath, Maine. Now at 63, she is delighted to be working again in full time ministry as the Pastor at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Canada.



#### All is Within: The Internal Sense of the Writings

##### Rev. Thom Muller

*This course will be hybrid for both in-person and remote attendees.*

In this Mini Course, we will explore the correspondential nature of Swedenborg’s writings, and how an inner reading of his works can profoundly impact our spiritual life and theological outlook.



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. Native of Germany, he 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.

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## Mini Course Line-up

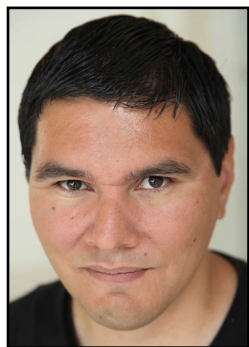
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### Building a Successful Hybrid Ministry

**Rudy Caseres**

*This course will be hybrid for both in-person and remote attendees.*

Hybrid church services are incredibly difficult to implement. Often technology goes wrong and online participants feel like they are getting a back-seat experience. Learn how to get over these hurdles and what audio/visual tech your church should implement to achieve a successful hybrid or fully digital ministry.



Rudy Caseres is the Digital Communications Manager for the Swedenborgian Church of North America. This will be his third Annual Convention serving as audio/visual technical director. He has

recently worked in-person with Wayfarers Chapel's Exploring New Earth digital ministry and upgraded Fryeburg New Church's hybrid services. His goal is to teach member churches what he has learned from these experiences.

**Sunday, June 29 at 1:00 PM PT**

### The Labyrinth as a Spiritual Praxis

**Dr. Dylan Odhner**

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

Course Description: Experience the labyrinth as a tool for spiritual reflection and renewal. This course combines history, symbolism, and hands-on practice, featuring both an open-walk and a guided "Tour of the Holy City New Jerusalem" Audio-Journey. Step onto this ancient path and explore how movement, meditation, and Swedenborgian insights can deepen your spiritual practice.

Dr. Dylan Odhner is a seasoned educator



with extensive experience teaching at the high school, college, and graduate levels. His passion for fostering intellectual curiosity and critical thinking reaches beyond the classroom

to educational travel planning, curriculum development, and the designing of sacred spaces. He is the founder of Golden-Thread Labyrinths, a unique venture specializing in designing, building, and facilitating mission-focused meditation labyrinths, and labyrinth activities.

### What are the Main Differences of the Swedenborgian beliefs from mainline Christianity, and Why?

**Rev. Junchol Lee**

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

In this Mini Course, I will to explore and point out what makes the Swedenborgian belief uniquely different from other religious beliefs, and even other Christian denominations, and thus makes it as an antidote to many poisons from shortcomings of Christianity, and ancient religions in general. One expectation is that after this Mini Course, people may be able to answer the age-old simple question, "How are you different?"



After his ordination in July, 2000, Junchol served on many committees of the General Convention including Executive Committee of Council of Ministers (six

years), Ministry Support Unit (three years), Committee of Admission into Ministry (seven years), the General Council (one year), and served SCYL as the Youth Chaplain for seven terms. Also, Junchol offered Mini Courses at Convention for many years, and delivered

lectures at the Almont Summer Camp. Junchol is deeply interested in the spiritual aspect of education for all Swedenborgians, and finding ways to connect people with the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg. Currently, Junchol is serving the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church as Senior Pastor.

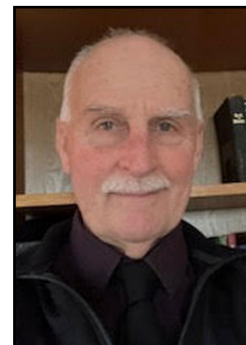
### Glorification: An Overview

**Rev. Dr. Gard Perry**

*This course will be hybrid for both in-person and remote attendees.*

The aim of this Mini Course is to bring Swedenborg's treatment of the glorification within reach of our understanding. There are four (4) topics: 1) Swedenborg's summary of the process; 2) problem statement and solution; 3) a brief biography of the historical Jesus; and 4) Swedenborg's spiritual psychology. Swedenborg's summary is from True Christianity; George Dole identified a problem of interpretation and a solution with his meta translation method; the biography of the historical Jesus builds on current scholarly consensus; and spiritual psychology is framed as "a search for truth with an aim to deepen our love for the Lord and for the neighbor."

Swedenborg's glorification summary will sound familiar, though things get difficult when we turn to his step-by-step process in the Arcana (aka, Secrets of Heaven). Large words like celestial, spiritual, and natural have multiple levels of meaning in various contexts. That prompted George Dole to apply a meta translation method of interpretation - employed here to discover what the glorification sounds like to our 21st Century lived experience. A key finding is that Swedenborg's treatment of the glorification can reach our



*Continues on page 28*

## Mini Course Line-up

*Continued from page 27*

understanding as the capacity for a deeper kind of empathy. Welcome!

Rev. Dr. Gard Perry has engaged the sections of Swedenborg's Latin text that treat the Lord's glorification for more than two decades and offers a summary of his findings in this Mini Course. Gard began his Swedenborgian life as a child at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) and has come full circle to be an FNCA senior lecturer. Gard has served on numerous boards and committees, currently serving on the Board of Trustees of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, the Tafel Fund, and Council of Ministers. Gard's aim is to cultivate a practice of research and development for a 21st Century understanding and application of Swedenborgian ideas.

### Swedenborg, Alchemy, and Activism: Life of an American Philosopher-Soldier

**Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence and Michael Goos**

*This course will be hybrid for both in-person and remote attendees.*

Michael Goos and Jim Lawrence are working on a new book retrieving Ethan Allen Hitchcock's reading of Swedenborg as a hermetic and alchemical philosopher (Swedenborg, *A Hermetic Philosopher*, 1859). Regarded internationally as the most important American contributor to hermetic studies in the 19th century, Hitchcock is also legendary among Native Americans for his torrid campaign against the United States government for its abuse of Native Americans. Abraham Lincoln recruited Major General Hitchcock to serve in his cabinet as a war advisor, and Hitchcock was chosen to stay with Lincoln's body for two days after the assassination. This Mini Course will explore the social justice activism and philosophical interpretation of Swedenborg by an American hero.

Michael Goos is a student at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, an ordinand with General Convention, and a recipient

of the Nunc Licet scholarship who is deeply grateful to be a member of the Swedenborgian community. In addition to pursuing the ministry, Michael aspires to lift-up neglected



Swedenborgian figures from history.

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is President of the Swedenborgian Church of North America and scholar of Swedenborgian history and spirituality.

### Monday, June 30 at 10:30 AM PT

#### Paul: The Difficult Apostle

**Dell Rose**

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

Paul of Tarsus was one of the most complex and influential thinkers of all time. He was the main influence in spearheading the Jesus-Movement's transition from another Jewish messianic sect to the most successful religion of all time, Christianity. However, the dominance of his thought has also obscured the multiplicity of Christian interpretations, Swedenborg's included. Swedenborg struggled with the legacy of the difficult apostle, his ubiquity, and his qualifications 'to speak for the Lord.' In this seminar we will consider Swedenborg's critiques of Paul by highlighting the personal similarities they shared, and how both struggled to put into a system their own personal experiences of the Lord. To see Paul and Swedenborg as two travellers down the same metaphoric highway, I hope to shift the focus to the rhetorical strategies that each used to convey their teachings and reduce Paul's status as the primary exponent of the Gospel. It is hoped that by presenting this material it will give Swedenborgians the

ability to engage seriously other Protestant movements who center Paul's understanding of the Christ event and to effectively engage with them.

Dell J. Rose is program director at the Swedenborg Library Chicago and is Swedenborg Society (UK) Doctoral candidate at the Centre for the History of Hermetic Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam.

His eclectic intellectual interests focus on the interplay between elite culture and esoteric spiritual currents in several different social and political contexts. At present, he is working on a monograph focusing on Swedenborgianism in Meiji Japan (2026), and his dissertation considers Swedenborgian political movements across the globe. His publications include studies of Southcottianism, British Israelism, the nascent history of the Bahá'í faith, as well as Old Norse and Welsh legal history.

#### Tools for Healing the Pain of Polarization

**Rev. Roslyn Taylor**

*This course will be in-person on campus.*

Most people would agree that we are living in very divisive times, around the world. Many of us are suffering from personal losses due to polarization and the relationship fractures that can result from an "us versus them" mentality, whatever the context. Rooted in Swedenborgian teachings, this Mini Course explores two tools to use as pathways to bridge divides and restoring relationships. Through



*Continues on page 29*

## Mini Course Line-up

*Continued from page 28*

drawing on our Divinely given human potentials, we can begin to heal the pain of our polarization on many levels.

Rev. Roslyn Taylor is a minister with the Swedenborgian Church of North America, living in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. She has been the spiritual leader of the Home Church in Bryn Athyn since 2003. She was the editor of a volume of essays by Swedenborgian authors, published in 2005 as *Healing Words: A Sampler of Wholeness Theology*. More recently, she founded the Deborah's Tree ministry in 2021, which promotes the work of female Swedenborgian scholars, writers, clergy, and artists. Rev. Taylor has been active in the Gathering Leaves retreats for Swedenborgian/New Church women since 2004 and is currently chairing the Steering Committee for Gathering Leaves 2025.

### Honoring Historic Sacred Spaces: Restoration and Evolution

**Rev. Shada Sullivan**

*This course will be hybrid for both in-person and remote attendees*

The Church of the Holy City in Wilmington Delaware is one of the oldest Swedenborgian churches in the United States. It has a fascinating history, and it continues to hold space for a vibrant congregation and evolving uses. Historic buildings need intentional and ongoing care, which takes time and resources. This mini-course will discuss the history of The Church of the Holy City, its current uses, and knowledge gained from its restoration journey, which includes being a recipient of a prestigious National Fund for



Sacred Places challenge grant.

Rev. Shada Sullivan has been the Pastor at The Church of the Holy City in Wilmington Delaware since 2017. She is a

founding member of the leadership team of Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism, and is co-chair of the SCNA Social Justice Committee. Rev. Shada grew up in The New Church in Australia, and has been living in the United States since 1994. She has two daughters, one of whom recently graduated from college.

### Meditation for Children

**Sarah Wood Valley**

*This course will be hybrid for both in-person and remote attendees.*

Sarah is offering a special Mini Course designed for adults who want to teach meditation to children. In this course, you'll explore the brain science behind mindfulness and its many benefits, gain a deeper understanding of how meditation supports children's emotional and social development, and learn how to strengthen your own mindfulness practice. Plus, you'll discover what kids love about meditation—and what challenges they may face—so you can better support them on their journey.



For over twenty years, Sarah Valley has been teaching meditation to children and training teachers, parents, and therapists to do the same. Her training programs have reached people

all over the world, and she has written two books: *Sensational Meditation for Children* and *The Magic Gum Tree*. 📖

**Registration for in-person convention will open from April 15 – May 15.**  
**Virtual attendee registration is open until June 15.**  
 Please visit [swedenborg.org](http://swedenborg.org) for updates as they become available.

## Convention Worship Services

The following Worship Services are planned to be live streamed for all to enjoy along with our in-person attendees.

**Opening Worship Service Friday, June 27 at 7:00 PM PT**

*with Rev. Junchol Lee followed by the Keynote Address with Rev. Rich Tafel*

**Convention Worship Service Saturday, June 28 at 7:00 PM PT**

*with Rev. Kevin Baxter the 2025 Convention Preacher*

**Memorial Worship Service**

**Sunday, June 29 at 8:00 AM PT**

*with Rev. Renée Machiniak and Rev. Kit Billings*

**Ordination Worship Service**

**Sunday, June 29 at 8:00 PM PT**

*with Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Chelsea Odhner, and our Ordinand(s)*

**Children's Program Presentation**

**Monday, June 30 at 9:00 AM PT**

*Presented by the children's program leader and participating children.*

***In-person only.***

**Swedenborgian Church Youth League Service**

**Monday, June 30 at 9:30 AM PT**

*Presented by the SCYL participating teens. **In-person only.***



## Upcoming Retreats

### SCYL and Transitions Memorial Day Retreat

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

**Theme:** *Dreams, Visions, and the Whisperings of Angels*

**Dates:** *Friday, May 23, 7:00 PM – Monday, May 26, 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. This year's theme is Dreams, Visions, and the Whisperings of Angels. Ever feel like there's something more out there? At this retreat we will explore how dreams might be trying to tell you something important, what visions really mean, and how to recognize when angels might be guiding you. Based on Emanuel Swedenborg's spiritual discoveries, we'll help

you develop your own dream and spiritual awareness in a welcoming community where you can share experiences, ask questions, and learn practical ways to understand those mysterious moments that seem more than just coincidence. I'm sure we'll all benefit from the lively discussions, activities, and dream workshops. For more information or to learn about travel options, please call or text Youth Director, Kurt Fekete, at 802-345-0169 or email [kfekete@hotmail.com](mailto:kfekete@hotmail.com). To register, please visit <https://swedenborg.org/events-activities/youthretreats/>.

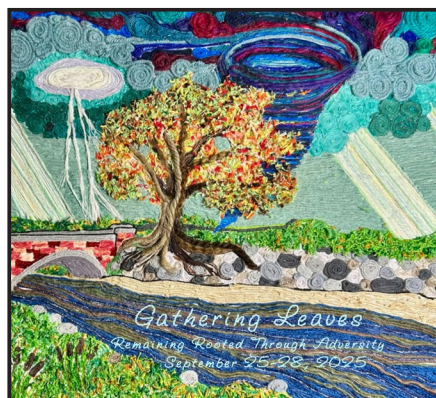
**We have fun! See you there!** 📍

## Gathering Leaves 2025

*September 25–28, 2025*

***"Remaining Rooted Through Adversity"***

Gathering Leaves 2025 is the International retreat for all Swedenborgian and New Church women! It will be an in-person and online event, held September 25–28, 2025, at the Temenos Retreat Center, a Swedenborgian facility and church, in West Chester, Pennsylvania, USA. Consider participating as a workshop presenter, plenary speaker (remotely or in-person), worship leader, music coordinator, musician, or activity leader. Please contact: [Rev. Renée Machiniak](mailto:Rev.ReneeMachiniak) or [Gloria Toot](mailto:Gloria Toot).



[www.GatheringLeaves.net](http://www.GatheringLeaves.net)

## Convention Youth Programs

I am thrilled to announce that we've got two great youth programs lined up for this summer's annual Convention at the University Place Hotel & Conference Center adjacent to Portland State University in Portland, Oregon.

All youth are encouraged to attend, and both our children's program and our teen program have subsidies available to help families manage the cost. We realize that Convention is a very expensive trip for most families and we're working hard to find ways to help as many children attend as possible. Teens (ages 13 – 18) in the SCYL program will be staying in their own rooms in the hotel. Children under the age of 13 will stay in the hotel with a parent or guardian. Travel assistance is available up to fifty percent reimbursement for both children and teens.

The children's program, for youth aged 6 – 12, will follow the Convention theme of "Spiritual Innovation for a Changing World." The youth will experience lessons and crafting workshops exploring this topic with an outstanding leader with great experience teaching and working with children.

Our teens will again be led by youth director, Kurt Fekete. The teens will work hard on a theatrical worship service to be presented to the congregation. Of course, teens will also have lots of time to gather for recreation, play, and outings.

We're so excited to have youth attend Convention as our spiritual community is not complete without them! Contact me, Kurt Fekete: [kfekete@hotmail.com](mailto:kfekete@hotmail.com), 802-345-0169 if you would like more information. We would love to have you and your family include Convention in this year's summer plans! 📍

**What's Happening**





**Spiritual Sunshine**  
A Swedenborgian Community Online

[SwedenborgianCommunity.org](http://SwedenborgianCommunity.org)

With broadcasts and written messages most weeks, *Spiritual Sunshine: A Swedenborgian Community Online* is your interfaith-Swedenborgian community—with a presence on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and your favorite podcasting platform. Join us as we seek to empower awareness of and connection to the spiritual sunlight from Divinity within all of us.



*The Swedenborgian Church of North America*

**Get the Messenger by mail**

- US Address – \$25/year
- Canada Address – \$30/year
- Other Address – \$40/year

Visit the website for details or to subscribe to the free online version of *the Messenger*:  
[Swedenborg.org/news-announcements/newsletter-the-messenger/](http://Swedenborg.org/news-announcements/newsletter-the-messenger/)

*Our Daily Bread* at [SpiritualQuesters.org](http://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.



Convention videos, the Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism program, and virtual content that has been created, can be found here for viewing at anytime!



**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](mailto: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/](http://swedenborg.org/community/diversity-equity-inclusion/swedenborgians-in-action-against-racism/)

Follow SCYL Clear Blue Sky on Instagram:  
[instagram.com/scylclearbluesky/](https://www.instagram.com/scylclearbluesky/)



Instagram

### 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.

## Appeal for the 2025 Annual Convention

*A Message from the Executive Committee*

Dear Members and Organizations  
of the SCNA,

We are reaching out to our wonderful benefactors, both individuals and organizations, to consider a contribution helping us provide this significant annual experience for all of our members and friends. We are thrilled to be hosting our 201st annual convention in another exciting and beautiful setting this summer at University Place Hotel and Conference Center, associated with Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. This lovely setting provides delightful meeting spaces and lodging accommodations, while at the same time we continue with robust technology support so people can also 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 is "Spiritual Innovation for a Changing World." The keynote address by Rev. Rich Tafel is on this theme, and in addition to wonderful Mini Courses and worship experiences for all ages, we will hold important business sessions

and receive hopeful reports of positive developments in many aspects of our denominational life.

Targeted contributions can be denoted for youth activities, hospitality, need-based scholarships, technology for virtual participation, music programs, the mini courses, or simply for general cost support. Modest gifts are richly welcomed, and all gifts will be acknowledged!

To make a donation online visit [www.swedenborg.org/donate](http://www.swedenborg.org/donate) and please remember to indicate what this donation is intended for. If you would like to send a check please make it out to "Swedenborgian Church of North America" and mail it to:

General Convention  
ATTN: Gina Peracchi  
PO Box 380270  
Cambridge, MA 02238-0270, USA

