

2024
Journal
of the
Swedenborgian
Church

No. 202

THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH UNITED STATES AND CANADA

INCORPORATED 1861

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

ANNUAL SESSION

“SWEDENBORG: ENVISIONING THE FUTURE”

JUNE 28 – JULY 1, 2024

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY & THE KELLOGG HOTEL
AND CONFERENCE CENTER,
EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN

ANNUAL THEME

THE YEAR OF SPIRITUAL USES

SEPTEMBER 1, 2023 – SEPTEMBER 1, 2024

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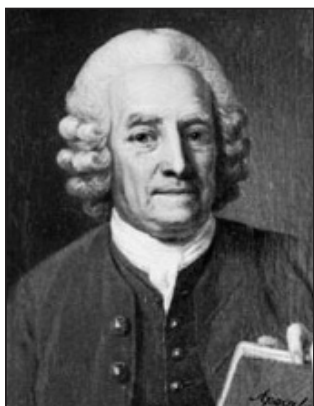
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THE FAITH AND AIMS OF OUR CHURCH

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE OFFICERS OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President

4 Cavanagh Court
Piedmont, CA 94610

Phone: (415) 378-5944
E-mail: president@swedenborg.org

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38 Great Falls Road
Gorham, ME 04028

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

Karen Conger, Recording Secretary

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

Jennifer Lindsay, Treasurer

601 Carolina Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

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

GENERAL COUNCIL

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

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

Term Expires 2025

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

Term Expires 2026

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

Term Expires 2027

Rev. Thom Muller (2)
(267) 363-0528
tmuller@ses.psr.edu

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

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

Kei Pang (1)
(605) 515-1915
keipang88@gmail.com

Dr. Emily Tergliafera (1)
(413) 464-2123
drtscna@gmail.com

Tom Murphy (1)
(415) 515-9348
tom@tommurphy.com

Herbert Ziegler (2)
(617) 388-0252
hziegler@icloud.com

Rev. Rich Tafel, Chair, Council of Ministers

Apt 404 1939 12th St NW
Washington, DC 20009

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

STANDING COMMITTEES

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

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNICATION
AND INFORMATION:

Chair:	Rev. Kevin Baxter	2025	(1)
	Rev. Dr. Dave Brown	2026	(1)
	Tara Conkling	2027	(2)
ex officio (without vote):	Beki Greenwood, Editor, <i>The Messenger</i>		
	Rev. Thom Muller, Editor, <i>Our Daily Bread</i>		
	Rev. Cory Coberforward, Minister, <i>Spiritual Sunshine</i>		
	Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Dean, CSS		
	Jackie Shihadeh, Central Office, SCNA		
	Rudy Caseres, Digital Communications Manager, SCNA		

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION AND RESOURCES FOR
SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY:

Chair:	Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Representative of Center for Swedenborgian Studies, appointed by the CSS Board of Trustees		
	Rev. Julie Conaron	2025	(2)
	Rev. Junchol Lee	2025	(1)
	Rev. Shada Sullivan	2027	(2)
ex officio (without vote):	Kurt Fekete, Youth Director, SCNA		

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

<i>Chair:</i>	Jennifer Lindsay, Treasurer, SCNA		
	Rev. Rachel Madjerac	2025	(1)
	Rev. Lisa Solwold	2025	(2)
	Bill Coffman	2026	(2)
	Stan Conger	2026	(2)
	Kurt Fekete	2027	(2)
	Tom Neuenfeldt	2027	(2)

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

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR NOMINATIONS:

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

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

<i>Chair:</i>	B.J. Neuenfeldt	MI Assoc.	2025
	Pastor Paul Deming	IL Assoc.	2026
	Nancy Little	ME Assoc.	2027
	Pastor Robbin Ferriman	OH Assoc.	2028
	Pastor Kelly Milne	MNCU	2029

COMMITTEES

CENTRAL OFFICE REVIEW COMMITTEE:

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

Chair: Kurt Fekete, Vice President, SCNA
 Stan Conger

COMMITTEE ON AMENDMENTS:

Chair: Rev. Kevin Baxter
 Stan Conger
 Beki Greenwood

COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY:

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

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

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

COMMITTEE ON LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTS:

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

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

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

Established by vote of the General Council in 2024, “There shall be a Committee on Ministry Development whose central focus shall be facilitating ministries within the Swedenborgian Church. The Committee 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 visioning and ministry efforts throughout the church.”

<i>Chair:</i>	Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA Dr. Rebecca Esterson Rev. Catherine Lauber Rev. Rich Tafel
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INVESTMENT COMMITTEE:

“The General Council, at its first meeting following each annual session of the Swedenborgian Church, shall appoint an Investment Committee of five members for terms 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. The Investment Committee is 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.” (Bylaws, Article XVIII)

Chair:	Jennifer Lindsay, Treasurer, SCNA
	Drew Siebert 2025
	Rev. Paul Martin 2026
	Pete Toot 2027
	Herb Ziegler 2028
	Holly Gottschalk 2029

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

RETIREMENT COMMITTEE:

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

Chair:	Rev. Dan Burchett
	John McIntosh
	Meredith Conant Piotti

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE:

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

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

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

<i>Chair</i>	Kurt Fekete, Vice President, SCNA
	William Rotella (2025)
	Rudy Caseres (2026)
	Dr. Emily Tergliafera (2027)

ex officio (without vote): Rev. Cory Coberforward, Minister, *Spiritual
Sunshine*

STRUCTURE REVIEW COMMITTEE:

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

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

SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH YOUTH LEAGUE (SCYL):

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

BOARDS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE WAYFARERS CHAPEL:

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

Chair	Peter Gottschalk	2026	*(3)
Treasurer	Robert Carr	2026	*(2)
Secretary	Ben Gunter	2027	*(1)
	Stan Conger	2025	*(1)
	Rev. H. Tafel	2025	*(1)
	Katharine Carr	2027	*(2)
ex officio (with vote):	Michael Robbins, Representative of the PCA		
	Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA		
ex officio (without vote):	Rev. Dan Burchett, Executive Director		
	Rev. Dr. David Brown, Chapel Minister		

BOARD OF MEDIATION:

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

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

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL CHURCH:

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

On November 21st, 2024, escrow closed on the sale of what was the National Church, and the Board of Trustees disbanded. The Washington D.C. Society continues as a constituent body within the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

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

TRUSTEES OF THE BUILDING FUND:

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

<i>Chair:</i>	Mark Careaga	2027	(2)
	Rev. Dan Burchett	2025	(1)
	Bob Perry	2026	(1)

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

TRUSTEES OF THE TAFEL FUND:

The Tafel Fund, established in 2011 to advance the mission and purpose of the Swedenborgian Church, is a permanent fund restricted to the use of income only. It is administered by a Board of Trustees: three appointed by General Council and those who are seated by virtue of having donated a minimum of \$25,000. The fund was established to honor the service to the General Convention of past and present Tafel ministers.

- Chair:*
- Rev. Richard L. Tafel

Linda Tafel

Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry

Karen Conger (Appointed)

Lon Elmer (Appointed)

Jennifer Lindsay (Appointed)

REPRESENTATIVES

DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES:

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

- Head of Communion:*
- Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA
- Delegates:*
- Rev. Dr. David Fekete

Rev. Richard L. Tafel

Alex Gayheart

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

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

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

<i>Chair:</i>	Rev. Rich Tafel	2026	(1)
<i>Secretary:</i>	Rev. Kevin Baxter	2025	(*)
	Rev. Julie Conaron	2025	(*)
	Rev. Dr. Donna Keane	2026	(1)
	Rev. Gabriella Cahaley	2027	(2)

ADVISORY PLACEMENT COMMITTEE:

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

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

COMMITTEE ON ADMISSION INTO THE MINISTRY:

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

<i>Chair:</i>	Rev. Junchol Lee	2025	(1)
	Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell	2025	(*)
	Rev. Gabriella Cahaley	2026	+(1)
	B.J. Neuenfeldt	2027	+(2)
<i>ex officio (with vote)</i>	Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President, SCNA		

COMMITTEE ON PROGRAM:

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

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

* Filling an unexpired term

+ Elected by Convention

COMMITTEE ON REVISION OF THE ROLL:

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

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

COMMITTEE ON WORSHIP:

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

Chair: Rev. Roslyn Taylor
Pastor Paul Deming

ETHICS COMMITTEE:

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

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

MINISTERS’ TRAVEL FUND:

Chair: Rev. Rich Tafel, Chair, COM
Rev. Kevin Baxter, Secretary, COM
Jackie Shihadeh, Central Office, SCNA

MISCONDUCT DETERMINATION BOARD:

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

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

NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

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

Chair:	Rev. Dr. David Brown	2025
	Rev. Kit Billings	2026
	Rev. Rachel Madjerac	2027

CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE:

Chair:

Rev. James Barry
Rev. Gabriella Cahaley
Rev. Nancy Piorkowski
Rev. Jane Siebert
Rev. Lisa Solwold
Rev. Kathy Speas

ENDORSER OF MILITARY CHAPLAINS:

ex-officio

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

SWEDENBORGIAN CHAPLAIN TO THE HARVARD CHAPLAINS:

Rev. Sage Cole

ROLL OF MINISTERS

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Ordination
Allison, Eric J. N.	Retired	12806 Bothell-Everett Highway Apt 207 Everett, WA 98208 ericallison1949@gmail.com	(425) 830-5616	July 3, 1977
Amato, Colin D.	Rainbow Church of the New Jerusalem, Virtual	836 Southampton Road PMB Box 131 Suite B Benicia, CA 94510 onaroleplay@yahoo.com	(707) 655-6975	June 27, 2022
Barry, James H.	Hospital Chaplain	330 Wellesley Road Philadelphia, PA 19119 jameshbarry@gmail.com	(215) 237-4682	May, 2009 Inducted June 30, 2024
Baxter, Kevin K.	Secretary for Council of Ministers, Senior Pastor, Boston Society of the New Jerusalem (Independent), Boston, MA	130 Bowdoin Street #309 Boston, MA 02108 kevin@baxtonia.com	(508) 857-6244	July 12, 2004
Billings, John K.	Retired	1119 Woodlawn Avenue Royal Oak, MI 48073-5624 carpentrycrafts1@gmail.com	(513) 379-9771	June 25, 1972

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Ordination
Billings, Kit B.	Minister, New Church (LaPorte, IN)	405 Harrison Street LaPorte, IN 46350 revkit123@gmail.com	Cell: (219) 380-4682 Office: (219) 362-1959	July 9, 1995
Bollinger, Dagmar W.	Retired	606 Boardwalk Lane Dexter MI 48130 bollind@gmail.com	(734) 604-2444	June 29, 2013
Brown, Dr. David	Wayfarers Chapel (Rancho Palos Verdes, CA), Garden Church (San Pedro, CA)	22416 Anza Avenue Torrance, CA 90505-2224 davidb@wayfarerschapel.org	Cell: (310) 418-6533 Work: (310) 377-1650	June 30, 2006
Brugler, Ronald Paul	Retired	2238 N. Cypress Bend Drive Apt 901 Pompano Beach, FL 33069	(216) 401-0571	July 2, 1978
Burchett, Dan	Executive Director, Wayfarers Chapel (Rancho Palos Verdes, CA)	106 N. Western Avenue Unit 306 San Pedro, CA 90732 danb@wayfarerschapel.org	(310) 991-9696	September 1980 Inducted July 1, 2019
Buteux, Sarah Lynn	Inactive, Working as UCC Clergy	998 East Pleasant Street Amherst, MA 01002-1532 revsarab@mac.com	(413) 549-8444	June 29, 2001
Cahaley, Gabriella	Part-time Pastoral Counselor at Skyland Trail, Spiritual Direction: circlecommunity.net and gabriellacahaley.net	2547 Verner Road Lawrenceville, GA 30043 gcahaley@msn.com	(678) 836-5829	July 1, 2011
Caughman, Jenny Martin	Minister of Spiritual Care, First United Methodist Church (Oak Ridge, TN)	125B Montana Avenue Oak Ridge, TN 37830-8200 jjcaughman@comcast.net	Home: (865) 482-9319 Cell: (865) 256-1026	July 7, 2012

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Ordination
Coberforward, Cory	Spiritual Sunshine	corycoberforward@gmail.com	(573) 673-4073	July 3, 2018
Coffman, Elizabeth V. (Betsy)	Minister, Urbana New Church Society (Urbana, OH)	3156 Adell Drive Urbana, OH 43078-8732 bcoffman45@gmail.com	Home: (937) 653-5054 Cell: (937) 631-0899	June 29, 2013
Cole, Sage Serene		31 Manion Road Hyde Park, MA 02136 revsagecole@gmail.com	(617) 435-5262	July 11, 2005
Conaron, Julie	Retired	702 Grant Avenue Willow Grove, PA 19090-2619 julieconaron@hotmail.com	(215) 947-8917	June 29, 2015
Cotton, Nadine	Retired	6274 Carsten Road Medina, OH 44256 revnadine@gmail.com	(440) 954-2742	July 13, 1997
Currie, Susannah L.	Retired	100 Silver Street Riverside, RI 02915-2939 revscurrie@gmail.com	(207) 256-7529	June 26, 1999
Duvivier, Patrick	France	Ipialla 06540 Saorge, France	+33-06-13-51-32-58	July 2, 1982
Fekete, Dr. David	Retired	9116 106 Avenue, #306 Edmonton, AB T5H 0M19 Canada revdrfekete@gmail.com	Home: (780) 995-6063 Office: (780) 475-1620	June 30, 2006

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Ordination
Friedrich, Carla	Retired	1514 Patterson Avenue Charleston, SC 29412 revcarlafriedrich@gmail.com	(480) 707-7893	July 11, 2005
Heger, Pavel	Czech Missionary	New Church Mission 765 - 51 Zasová 193 Czech Republic pavelhsw@post.cz	+420-651-634993	July 9, 1994
Hoffman, Eric	Retired	771 21st Street Red Wing, MN 55066 ericmadscience@gmail.com	(612) 212-6844	June 28, 1992
Holland, Elizabeth Blair		70 Center St Fort Covington NY 12937 elizabethveva@gmail.com	(707) 813-1908	July 4, 2014
Keane, Dr. Donna Dee	Minister, Elmwood New Church (Elmwood, MA)	10 Captain Carlson Way W. Bridgewater, MA 02379-1845 donnaakeane@verizon.net	(781) 799-8097	July 4, 1986
Kim, Solomon Youngmin	Minister, Korean New Church (New York, NY)	309 Lafayette Avenue #13A Brooklyn, NY 11238-6901 koreannewchurch@yahoo.com	Home: (718) 398-3989 Cell: (718) 316-8296	July 1, 2000
Kuniyeda, Kim'ichi	Retired	30-5 Iwasaki-cho Hodogaya-ku Yokohama 240 Japan	+81-45-331-4089	July 9, 1995
Laakko, Randall Edward	Retired	1025 Dettling Road Wilmington, DE 19805-1028	(302) 994-4804	June 27, 1965

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Ordination
Lane-Olsen, Alison		20 Warren Street Fryeburg, ME 04037-1115 revlaneolsen@yahoo.com	(620) 960-6748	July 12, 2004
Laubert, Catherine	Minister, Fryeburg New Church (Fryeburg, ME)	<i>US Mailing Address:</i> 22 Elm Street Fryeburg, ME 04037 <i>Canada Mailing Address:</i> 121 Hilltop Drive Ayr, ON N0B 1E0 Canada fryeburgnewchurchpastor@gmail.com	(207) 256-6333 (<i>USA</i>) (519) 900-1204 (<i>Canada</i>)	July 5, 2008
Lawrence, Dr. James (Jim) Franklin	President, Swedenborgian Church of North America	4 Cavanagh Court Piedmont, CA 94610 president@swedenborg.org	(415) 378-5944	July 1, 1984
Lee, Junchol	Minister, San Francisco Swedenborgian Church (San Francisco, CA)	2034 - 20th Avenue San Francisco, CA 94116 junchollee@gmail.com	Cell: (415) 533-5714 Office: (415) 346-6466	July 1, 2000
Lemole, Emily Jane A.	Retired	404 Tomlinson Road Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-4818 rev.ej28@gmail.com	(215) 947-2882	July 7, 2012
Linen, Cameron	Licensed Pastoral Counselor (Portland, ME)	108 Vaughn Street Portland, ME 04102-3508 camlinen@gmail.com W: www.cameronlinen.com	(207) 776-2627	June 26, 2009

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Ordination
Machiniak, Renée	Minister, Church of the Holy City (Royal Oak, MI)	1119 Woodlawn Avenue Royal Oak, MI 48073-5624 revneee@aol.com	Home: (248) 629-4273 Cell: (248) 229-5668	July 9, 1995
Madjerac, Rachel		4815 Utah Street San Diego, CA 92116 rmadjerac@gmail.com	207-899-7407	July 3, 2018
Maine, John Edward	Retired	76 Troy Street Kitchener, ON N2H 1M1 Canada jemaine@rogers.com	(519) 742-2478	June 29, 2001
Mania, Christian	Retired	Lindenstrasse 19 D-78224 Singen, Germany Romaian@web.de		July 2, 1982
Martin, Paul	Mosswood Hollow Retreat Center	20215 - 320th Avenue NE Duvall, WA 98019-9707 paulw@gmail.com	Center: (425) 844-9050 Home: (425) 788-6916	July 2, 1982
McCluskey, Robert	Wayfarers Chapel (Rancho Palos Verdes, CA)	900 W. 14th Street #10 San Pedro, CA 90731-3938 jgb1995@gmail.com	(213) 245-9213	July 1, 1984
Mitchell, Dr. Jonathan	PCA	1114 Opal Street Apt B Redondo Beach CA 90277 jonathanrbca@gmail.com	(310) 435-4907	July 13, 1997

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Ordination
Moore, Alison L.	Minister, Church of the Good Shepherd (Toronto, ON Canada)	57 Queen Street N. Unit 712 Kitchener, ON N2H 6T7 Canada revalisonm@gmail.com	(519) 500-7782	June 26, 2009
Morrow, Kimberly C.	Environmental Ministry	649 E. Hillcrest Lane Lincoln, NE 68520 kmorrow2530@gmail.com	(402) 405-9425	July 8, 2003
Moss, Doug	Retired	539 Loma Vista Terrace Pacifica, CA 94044-2422 rev.doug.moss@gmail.com	(650) 355-3203	July 11, 2005
Muller, Thomas	Minister, Swedenborgian Society of the East Bay (El Cerrito, CA)/Editor, <i>Our Daily Bread</i>	1420 Navellier Street El Cerrito, CA 94530 tmuller@ses.psr.edu	(267) 351-0172	July 1, 2016
Noack, Thomas	Retired	Apollostrasse 2 CH-8032 Zürich Switzerland info@swedenborg.ch	Office: +41-44-3835944 Home: +41-44-3835107	Oct. 30, 1994 added to Roll June 26, 2001
Paradise-Lewallen, Dr. Sky	Retired	1055 Adams Circle #1003 Boulder, CO 80303 mountainskywoman@aol.com	(720) 314-8621	June 29, 2007
Perry, Dr. F. Gardiner	Pastoral Counselor	P.O. Box 1816 Conway, NH 03818-1816 gardperry029@gmail.com	(603) 662-9552	July 1, 1979

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Ordination
Piorkowski, Nancy A	Hospital Chaplain	216 Seventh Avenue Wilmington, DE 19805-4762 nancypiorkowski@comecast.net	(302) 373-3786	July 1, 2019
Pults, Stephen J.	Retired	7838 - 131st Avenue NE Kirkland, WA 98033-8238 stephennow@earthlink.net	(425) 827-6113	July 5, 1987
Rivers, Dr. Rachel	Ministry of Pastoral Counseling, Teaching, Rites and Sacraments, and Spiritual Direction	P.O. Box 926 Inverness, CA 94937 r.rachel.rivers@gmail.com	Home: (415) 669-7801 Office: (415) 669-9896	July 3, 1983
Roberts, Dr. W. Hunter	Transformative Arts Liminal Coaching/Ministry Without Walls (Budapest, Hungary)	La Rambla 25 2/2 Barcelona ES 08002 Spain hunter@trans-arts.com	Home: (415) 459-3000 Cell: +34 665 457 884 (Please phone during morning hours in North American time zones)	June 30, 2006
Sanchez, Steven		5823 Alameda Avenue, Apartment F Richmond, CA 94804-4845 influx23@gmail.com	(510) 685-0046	July 1, 2011
Sandahl, Lana	Hospital and Palliative Care Chaplain	559 Vermont Street San Francisco, CA 94107-2404 lanasandahl@gmail.com	Cell: (415) 516-3587 Office: (415) 431-4100	June 30, 2006
Schnarr, Arthur W. (Terry)	Retired	12 Margaret Avenue Kitchener, ON N2H 4H2 Canada awsenc@aol.com	(519) 749-5401	Ordained June 6, 1981 Inducted July 1, 2016

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Ordination
Siebert, Jane	Retired	2620 Bridgewater Drive Lawrence, KS 66046 janesiebert@gmail.com	(620) 727-2371	July 12, 2004
Sloan, Donna	Retired	5627 London Drive Austintown, OH 44515-4151 rvdnash77@aol.com		July 5, 1987
Solwold, Lisa J.	Hospital Chaplain	11394 Newtonian Blvd. Jacksonville, FL 32256 lisa.solwold@bmcjax.com	(765) 491-6505	July 1, 2016
Speas, Katherine	Retired	1609 Ninth Street Anacortes, WA 98221 kathyspeas@comcast.net	(415) 308-9802	July 12, 2004
Stinson, Andrew D.	Senior Minister, First Congregational Church of Fall River Church (Fall River, MA)	P.O. Box 41 Portsmouth, RI 02871 stinsonad@gmail.com	Cell: (508) 654-9798 Office: (508) 672-5862	June 26, 1999
Sullivan, Shada	Pastor, Church of the Holy City (Wilmington, DE)	2424 Walton Road Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006 revshada@gmail.com	(215) 840-1757	July 10, 2017
Tafel, Harvey Alan	Retired	25837 Oak Street #110 Lomita, CA 90717-3125	(310) 539-0125	June 25, 1967
Tafel, Richard L.	Chair of the Council of Ministers/Pastor, Church of the Holy City (Washington, D.C.)	1939 12th Street NW Apt. #404 Washington, DC 20009 revtafel@holycitydc.org comchair@swedenboorg.org	(202) 365-7764	Jan. 22, 1988 Inducted July 12, 2004

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Ordination
Taylor, H. Roslyn	Minister, Home Church (Bryn Athyn, PA) and Deborah's Tree	621 Dale Road PO Box 620 Bryn Athyn, PA, 19009 hroslyntaylor@gmail.com	(267) 679-6596	July 1, 2019
Tortia, Kei	Retired	1-1-1-606 Onuma-cho Kodaira-shi Tokyo 187-0001 Japan	+81-42-344-6375	July 3, 1983
Turley, Kenneth Owen	Retired	PO Box 594 Bridgeton, ME 04009 ken.turley10@gmail.com	(603) 986-3609	June 29, 1985
Turley, Susan Gwen	Retired	7321 85th Lane SE Olympia, WA 98513 susansturley1978@yahoo.com	(415) 244-3324	June 29, 1980
Wake, Dr. Wilma	Retired	37 Branch Road Kennebunk, ME 04043	Home: (207) 985-8776 Cell: (207) 329-9730	July 1, 1990
Wheaton, Gladys	Retired	1770 Massachusetts Avenue, #151 Cambridge, MA 02140	Voicemail: (781) 416-4738	June 29, 1980
Winter, Deborah	Retired	6871 Ames Road Apt 1006 Parma, OH 44129 soulw53@gmail.com	(440) 241-8476	July 3, 1988

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Ordination
Woofenden, Lee	Annotation Editor, New Century Edition, Swedenborg Foundation	<i>US Mailing Address:</i> 30 North Gould Street Suite 9205 Sheridan, WY 82801 leewoof@leewoof.net	US Cell: (307) 381-0281	June 30, 1996
Vidil, Jean	Lausanne, Switzerland	c/o Nouvelle Eglise et Centre Swedenborg Rue Caroline 21 CH-1003, Lausanne, Switzerland	Home: +81-02-123-7877	Oct. 25, 1987
Zuber, Dr. Devin Phillip	Center for Swedenborgian Studies (Berkeley, CA)	354 Panoramic Way Berkeley, CA 94704 devinzuber@gmail.com	(510) 993-8549	July 3, 2023

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ROLL OF LICENSED PASTORS

HOME FIELD

Active (consecrated by and serving within the context of the Swedenborgian Church)

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Consecration
Callander, Linda	New Church of the Southwest Desert (Silver City, NM)	911 N Grant Street #1	Cell: (575) 639-0994	June 30, 2016
		Silver City, NM 88061 mslinda815@hotmail.com		
Chung, Jae Hyon	Agapao Church (Santa Ana, CA)	288 Finch Street Lake Forest, CA 92630 newchurchca@gmail.com	Cell: (949) 422-9166	June 26, 2021
Deming, Paul	Church of the Open Word (St. Louis, MO)	8987 St. Louis Ave. St. Louis, MO 63114 paul.deming@icloud.com	Cell: (314) 803-6519	June 30, 2016
Farwell, Tassy	Hillside Community Church (El Cerrito, CA)	115 Diamond Court Hercules, CA 94547 hillsideswedenborgian@gmail.com	Home: (510) 245-0219 Cell: (510) 815-8709	July 1, 2019
Feil, Karen	Chicago Society of the New Jerusalem and the Swedenborg Library (Chicago, IL)	77 W. Washington Street, Suite 1700 Chicago, IL 60602 info@swedlib.org	Office: (312) 346-7003	July 9, 2017
Ferriman, Robbin	Urbana Society of the New Church (Urbana, OH)	412 W. Light Street Urbana, OH 43078 Robbincats@gmail.com	(937) 508-1601	June 26, 2021

Name	Presently Serving	Mailing/Email Address	Telephone	Consecration
Kardash, Lorraine	Portland New Church (Portland, ME)	409 Main Street Gorham, ME 04038 lorrykardash@yahoo.com	Cell: (207) 650-4391	July 2, 2019
Meyer, Gordon	Virginia Street Church (St. Paul, MN)	4848 York Avenue, S Minneapolis, MN 55410 gordon@bijnagte.com	Cell: (612) 270-9980	July 3, 2018
Milne, Kelly	Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church (Bridgewater, MA)	147 West Street East Bridgewater, MA 02333 pastorkellyj317@gmail.com	(774) 444-0627	June 26, 2021
McOsker, Consolina	The Garden Church (San Pedro, CA)	515 Albro Street San Pedro, CA 90732	(424) 558-6919	July 3, 2023

AUXILIARY AND ASSOCIATED BODIES

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

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

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

TRUSTEES OF THE GRAY LEGACY:

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

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

DEBORAH’S TREE:

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

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

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

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

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

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

ELECTED MEMBERS:

<i>Term Expires 2025:</i>	Jennifer Lindsay*	(1)
	Rev. Kathy Speas**+	(0)
<i>Term Expires 2026:</i>	Lewis Shaw*	(1)
	Karen Conger**	(1)
<i>Term Expires 2027:</i>	Robert Carr*	(1)
	Tom Neuenfeldt**	(1)
<i>Term Expires 2028:</i>	Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry*	(2)
	Pastor Tassy Farwell**	(1)

*Trustees elected by Representative Class

**Trustees elected by At-Large Class

+ To complete an unexpired term

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

d/b/a The Swedenborgian Church of North America

**MINUTES
FROM THE TWO HUNDREDTH SESSION**

2024 HYBRID CONVENTION
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY AT EAST LANSING, MI

Friday June 28 to Sunday, June 30, 2024

**Saturday, June 29, 2024
BUSINESS SESSION I
9:00 AM EDT**

- 1. Opening** – Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President of the Swedenborgian Church of North America, brought the session to order at 9:21am EDT.
- 2. As stipulated by Article II. Sec. 2 of the Bylaws** Article IV. Sec.1 of the Constitution and Article II Sec. 2 of the Bylaws were read by Recording Secretary Karen Conger.
- 3. President’s Declaration on Present and Voting** – Jim gave a few instructions about addressing the chair, a mic being necessary not only so that those present in the room can hear but so those attending virtually can hear. Robert’s Rules of Order indicates that the phrase “present and voting” is meant to be understood in the literal sense as those presently in the room, not just present at convention.
- 4. Proceedings Relative to Elections** – Jim advised that he would be taking nominations from the floor for all offices at once, as opposed to office by office.

5. Reports of the Officers –

a. President Jim Lawrence: invited everyone to refer to his report in the Advance Reports and remarked on his delight at once again being at a convention of the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

b. Vice President Kurt Fekete offered all a special opportunity to answer questions about the youth or the Swedenborgian Committee Online; he remarked on his excitement over what Rev. Cory Cober forward is experiencing, having moved his family from Canada to Missouri and asking prayer and support for Cory at this time. Kurt expressed his appreciation for all the support he receives from the Executive Committee and from the membership of the Church.

c. Recording Secretary Karen Conger referred everyone to her report in the Advance Reports and expressed her pleasure at once again being at convention and enjoying the heavenly fellowship.

d. Treasurer Jennifer Lindsay remarked that the financial review is underway and will be available in July. Our expenses for all we do as a denomination run about \$850K per year; this past year saw a surplus of \$265K. The unrestricted portion of that is driven mostly by income from the Baldwin Trust, while the restricted portion is driven partly by Augmentation grants that were not distributed due to clergy leaving their position or not ultimately being hired. The Common Fund corpus is currently at \$27M+, an increase of 8.5%. Now that the denomination is receiving an annual amount from the Baldwin Trust (about \$55K per year), a new program was approved last spring by the GC which will be administered by the Building Fund and will utilize that annual amount for grants (not loans) that will be made available to ministries with property for which the denomination holds the deed. A communication from the Trustees of the Building Fund will be forthcoming.

6. Report of the Credentials Committee – Karen Conger

Association (Conference)	Churches		Ordained Ministers	Members	Number of Potential Delegates	Number of Actual Delegates
	Active	Inactive				
Eastern Canada (ECC)	1	0	2	64	8	5
Illinois Association	5	0	2	58	8	6
Kansas	2	0	2	56	8	3
Maine	3	0	5	90	11	4
Massachusetts New Church Union (MNCU)	3	1	6	53	7	4
Michigan	1	0	3	56	8	8
Middle Atlantic	3	0	7	88	11	6
New York	1	1	1	17	4	0
Ohio	3	0	6	38	6	6
Pacific Coast (PCA)	6	0	21	195	22	17
Western Canada (WCC)*	2	0	1	59	8	1
At Large	n/a	n/a	1	3	2	0
Unknown Affiliation	n/a	n/a	19	n/a	n/a	n/a
Church Membership Sub-Total	30	2	n/a	777	103	60
COM	n/a	n/a	76	n/a	76	32
General Council (lay officers and members)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9	9
Total Possible Delegates					188	101

*Did not submit information for 2023, using 2022 information

7. **Reports of the Council of Ministers (COM)** – Secretary of COM Rev. Kevin Baxter rose to deliver his report to the floor announcing the passing of two of the denomination’s ordained ministers during the previous year..

Motion: After 18 years in the ordained ministry, the Rev. Freeman Schrock entered into the fullness of the spiritual world on October 19th, 023. The Council of Ministers recommends to the Swedenborgian Church that their name be removed from the Roll of Ministers and added to the Roll of Former Ministers. Rev. Kit Billings rose to speak with affection and respect of his friend, Freeman, and seconded the motion, which subsequently passed.

Motion: After 14 years in the ordained ministry, the Rev. Dr. Sharon Connelly entered into the fullness of the spiritual world on the first of June 2024. The Council of Ministers recommends to the Swedenborgian Church that their name be removed from the Roll of Ministers and added to the Roll of Former Ministers. Pete Toot rose to speak with affection and respect of his friend, Rev. Sherrie Connelly, and seconded the motion, which subsequently passed. A moment of silence in their memory was observed.

In addition, the following motion was received:

Motion: At his own request and upon certification for induction by the Committee on Admission to the Ministry, the Council of Ministers recommends to the General Convention that Jay Barry having been ordained in the General Church of the New Jerusalem and after preparation recognized as adequate, accepting the doctrines of the New Church and expressing allegiance to the Constitution of the General Convention, be inducted into our ministry and that this service of induction be held at this session of the General Convention, his name after induction to be placed on our Roll of Ministers. Rev. Renee Machiniak rose to second the motion. Introduction and questions for inductee:

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

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

Q. To this end, do you faithfully promise to uphold the

Constitution of the General Convention and to abide by the Bylaws and practices of its Council of Ministers?

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

8. **General Council Report to the Floor** – Karen Conger advised that since the 2023 convention in Bridgewater, MA, the General Council has met virtually or in a hybrid format a total of six times. During the virtual Spring 2024 General Council meeting the items of business undertaken included the continuing process of the New York New Church Legacy Fund, developments at Wayfarers Chapel, and at the National Church, where arrangements continue to be made to ready the property and confirm its legal status so that it may be placed on the market. In her report treasurer Jennifer Lindsay advised the General Council that the Common Fund earned 13% in 2023. Additionally, updates on the annual convention to now being held in Lansing, MI, at Michigan State University, have been received regularly from the Central Office, staffed by our wonderful personnel, accountant Gina Peracchi and Operations Manager Brittany Price.

A few of the many other items of business undertaken by the General Council during the past year have included various appointments of personnel to committees, the purchase of a MinistrySafe account in order to add another layer of safety for our precious children and youth; and a review of how well the new(ish) standing committees are working, which resulted in a pending amendment to the Bylaws creating a new Standing Committee for Ministry Development, which will be voted on during convention meeting this summer.

9. **Explanation of the NemoVote process** – and invitation to vote for Inductee – Jennifer briefly gave a few instructions, reminding folks that most of us already have an account, having voted this way in the past. Everyone should have a swedenborg.org email address and a passcode that was automatically generated or changed. The Help Desk is available at swedenborg.org. At 10:10am, the vote was opened for the induction of Rev. James (Jay) Barry. That vote was to close at noon EDT.

10. Dr. Rebecca Esterson, chair of the Standing Committee for Education and Resources for Spiritual Community, spoke briefly about the upcoming mini courses. She reported that Rev. Robert Hagan was, sadly, unable to visit us from Ghana so his mini course has been deferred until next year. Rebecca stepped in at the last minute to offer a collage course in its place complete with copies of National Geographic to use for materials. A course entitled, “Why Worry, We Were Told This Would Happen”, was presented by Rev. Roz Taylor, (offering an opportunity to embrace the changes that result), replacing Lynn Chittick’s course (she had an accident but was reported to be okay). Rev. Sage Cole was unable to be present, but her course was set to proceed virtually.

11. Business Session I recess – 10:21 EDT

BUSINESS SESSION II
2:45pm EDT

12. Reconvened – 2:59pm EDT

13. Report of the Standing Committee for Nominations – Chair Dr. Rebecca Esterson delivered her report and advised that a position on the Nom Com is open this year, inviting those who are qualified to step up. Licensed Pastor Kelly Milne subsequently accepted nomination and was added to the ballot:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| • President: | Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence |
| • Vice President: | Kurt Fekete |
| • Recording Secretary: | Karen Conger |
| • General Council Lay Person: | Herb Ziegler |
| • General Council Lay Person: | Kei Pang |
| • General Council Minister: | Rev. Thomas Muller |
| • Committee on Admission
into the Ministry | BJ Neuenfeldt |
| • Standing Committee for
Communication & Information: | Tara Conkling |
| • Standing Committee for
Education & Resources: | Rev. Shada Sullivan |
| • Standing Committee for
Financial Accountability: | Tom Neuenfeldt |

-
- Standing Committee for Financial Accountability: Kurt Fekete
 - Standing Committee for Nominations: Pastor Kelly Milne
 - CSS Board of Trustees, representative class: Rev. Dr. Gard Perry
14. **Nominations From the Floor** – Jim asked for nominations from the floor; hearing none the nominations were declared closed.
15. **Report on Inductee Voting** – Regarding the vote on the inductee, Jennifer was pleased to report that of 67 votes cast, 66 were in favor, with one abstention. Cheers all around!
16. **Standing Resolution #1: Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery & Statement of Support for Indigenous Peoples in Pursuit of Restitution & Reparations; Swedenborgians Acting Against Racism (SAAR) has proposed and the General Council has accepted the proposal** - *The Swedenborgian Church of North America (SCNA) publicly repudiates the so-called “Doctrine of Discovery” starting in the 15th century that was employed by European Christians to colonize and subjugate the lands and indigenous peoples they “discovered” outside of Europe and 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.”*

Andrew Dodd rose to offer a few remarks, reminding us that we are all on native land. The standing resolution was Moved & Seconded (Andrew/ Peter Gottschalk). Esther Fyk rose to speak of the Truth and Restoration Committee of Canada. Rebecca requested that the proposed standing resolution be read, and Jennifer did so. The vote was to open at the end of the present session.

- 17. Standing Resolution #2: Standing Resolution on Climate Justice; The Social Justice Committee (SJC) has proposed, and the General Council has accepted the proposal** - *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 (DLW no. 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 & education centering Environmental Justice, divestment and socially-responsible investment, local advocacy & support of environmentally just green efforts. Denomination: Encourage divestment and socially-responsible investment, join/support/promote lobbying efforts of grassroots 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.

*Final version of the last paragraph above:

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. **For individuals: to be conscientious consumers taking the time to research the impacts of the greener alternatives they are considering. **For congregations**: to offer creation care worship and education centering environmental justice, socially responsible investments, and the local advocacy and support of environmentally just green efforts. **For the denomination as a whole**: to explore socially responsible investments, and to join/support/promote lobbying efforts of grass roots movements which center environmental justice and aim*

to build support across bipartisan lines for climate justice legislation. The standing resolution was Moved and Seconded (Rev. Shada Sullivan/ Rev. Dr. Devin Zuber). Shada remarked that this is a resolution on Climate Justice, not Climate Change, and stated that “no matter where you land” on whether or not climate change exists or whether or not it is anthropomorphic, it is mostly those who are not driving climate change who are being affected by it. Rev. Kevin Baxter rose to ask about the denomination’s investments and how this standing resolution might affect those. Jennifer advised that a sub committee was formed from the Investment Committee to investigate Environmental, Social, & Governance (ESG) considerations. In January of ’24 the decision was made to invest in two ESGs. The IC is currently considering a model that includes three to ten% of our investments to be focused on those types of firms. Holly Gottschalk, also on the IC, rose to state that just because an investment is an ESG doesn’t mean it will lose money. Considerable discussion ensued, with several people rising to speak to the motion. Parliamentarian Stan Conger rose to remind folks that a standing resolution does not require action, unlike the Bylaws, Constitution, and Articles of Incorporation, which do. Shada accepted a friendly amendment to add the word “Encourage” to the first sentence after “Denomination.” After additional discussion it was determined to move on in the agenda while members of the Social Justice Committee rephrased one portion of the proposed standing resolution.

- 18. Bylaws: Proposed Amendment #1: Add Standing Committee for Ministry Development** - The General Council endorses the proposal of the Structure Review Committee (p. 9 in 2023 Journal) consisting of Rev. Dr. Gard Perry, Rev. Paul Martin, Rev. Kit Billings, and Alice Henderson, to amend Article 10 of 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. of 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.

The motion was Moved and Seconded (Herb Ziegler/Gloria Toot). Subsequently several amendments to the motion were discussed. However, after considerable additional discussion it was determined that a way forward could not be found and Jim remarked that it seemed best to consider other options. Herb moved to table the motion and Rev. Dr. Donna Keane seconded; there being no objection from the floor, the chair accepted the motion to Table. The meeting moved on to the next item on the agenda.

- 19. Bylaws: Proposed Amendment #2: 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 at 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. The Investment Committee 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 judgement and discretion may seem advisable.

After some discussion and rewording the motion above was Moved and Seconded (Jennifer Lindsay/Rev. Jane Siebert).

20. Reports:

a. The Messenger—Editor Beki Greenwood began by asking for more articles as this past year has seen a significant decline in submissions. It's been suggested that we invest in fewer large print copies. Valuable discussion has ensued regarding the future of the Messenger and Beki hopes that this dialogue will continue.

b. Website (swedenborg.org) – Digital Communications Manager Rudy Caseres shared that he's really glad to be doing the job, and he hopes that everyone will let him know what they need along the lines of digital and IT assistance.

c. Wayfarers Chapel restoration project – Chair of the Board of Trustees Peter Gottschalk brought everyone further up to date with the status at the Chapel, offering a bit of history around all the rain the region has received over the last couple of years. The new visitor center was red tagged by the City of Rancho Palos Verdes (CRPV). The last of the large bent redwood arches came down this week and some of the redwood trees had to be removed. The artifacts of the Chapel are being stored at the CRPV city yards. At this point the hope is that we will be able to begin reassembly in about four years. Board member Robert Carr working on a plan culminating in 21 points; there are approximately 12 different possible spots with an ocean view, something required by the National Park Service if we're to be able to keep our National Historical Landmark status. The BOD has explored six of the sites, and they're all good possibilities. The former Chapel site is massive and still moving, which makes the likelihood of our being able to reuse it most unlikely. During the month of May of this year there was approximately 9.5" of movement per week, and it's still picking up speed but not as much as formerly. We have security from 4pm to 7am, and our building and grounds folks are taking over during the day.

21. **Jennifer opened the vote** for all at 5:47pm and advised she would close the vote at 10:30pm.

22. **Business Session II recess –**

Monday, June 30
BUSINESS SESSION III
9:00 AM EDT

23. **Reconvene convention – 9:33am EDT**

24. **Report on the Result of Standing Resolutions Vote** – Jennifer reported that both Standing Resolutions had passed, as well as the Amendment concerning the Investment Committee (see 19. Above).

25. **Opened the vote for officers and committees** at approximately 9:35am; closed at Noon. The results of the vote taken regarding Jay Barry’s status were repeated because lots of folks were out, including Jay. Lot’s of applause!

26. **Yesterday’s tabled item**, a proposed amendment to the Bylaws which would have added a Standing Committee for Ministry Development, was reintroduced to the floor. Herb Ziegler withdrew his former motion to add the new standing committee, removing it from consideration. The Second, Gloria Toot, agreed. Jim announced that he would consider other options that would bring to fruition a committee for ministry development, possibly with an ad hoc status.

27. **Additional Reports:**

d. Our Daily Bread (ODB) – Rev. Thom Muller rose to report invite materials for ODB, prayers, poetry, interviews, and spoke of ODB as a way for the flavor of Swedenborgianism to have a public face. Formerly ODB was mostly a way for clergy to share sermons, and that’s still important, but other things are, too. There is a new searchable archive PDF format for download and printing of materials, including info from

many years ago. Thom and others are exploring a new name for ODB; there's no formal committee, but it's hoped that by next year there will be a new name. There were 20,000+ visits in the last year; 500-1000 views per item; our most read article this last year was How the Grinch Saved Christmas! Rev. Kit Billings rose to thank Thom for all his work, and the way in which this ministry is being carried out

28. **Jennifer added another note** about the voting, stating this particular vote is slightly different because of write-ins. That option is available, and when used it's necessary to advise at writeinvote@swedenborg.org.

29. **Continued Additional Reports:**

e. Spiritual Sunshine – Rev. Cory Coberforward joined the meeting virtually and advised that videos and content have been adjusted during this time of transition as he and his family move from Canada to Missouri. All were invited to reengage with Spiritual Sunshine and stay tuned for big happenings. He referenced Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake as having been in the vanguard of this ministry and commented that he believes the youth are becoming more open to spirituality. There were a several interesting questions from the assembled. Cory commented that there were 17K views last month, which is an increase.

f. Social Justice Committee (SJC) – Chair Rev. Shada Sullivan invoked Rev. Dr. Amanda Riley and her good work in San Pedro, CA, with the Garden Church; Shada shared that the Garden Church has invited the Swedenborgian Church Youth League to come up with a logo for the SJC.

g. Swedenborg Library and Bookroom, Chicago: – Dell Rose spoke about the forthcoming work in celebrating the mind and spirit, curiosities of both types encouraged, along with prayer and intellectual analyses. “Beyond the Church, Beyond the University”. Several questions were asked resulting in lots of fun. All were warmly invited to involve ourselves either online or, “If you’re ever in the neighborhood . . .”

h. Helen Keller Center – Alex Gayheart noted that during Dylan Hendrick’s keynote speech they felt drawn to his futuristic statement about the future being a place where Swedenborgianism will be readily available and the connection between that and the Helen Keller Center. Rev. Sage Cole is inviting all to a path of love, truthfulness and usefulness. Though recent events have closed the door to what she had hoped for,

she remains hopeful that it will open to something even more wonderful. Jim commented on this idea as an opportunity for collaborative energy.

i. The National Church in Washington, D. C. – Karen Conger announced that the property is expected to go on the market by July 8, 2024, and those plans proceed apace. There continues to be excellent cooperation between the General Council, the Trustees of the National Church, and the Society. Rev. Rich Tafel announced that they welcomed nine new members at Easter and celebrated three baptisms, and that the average age of the members is about 30; it is a very energetic group. As an aside, and in his position as Chair of COM, Rich invited the lay members of the Church to contribute any feedback they may have for the ministers.

j. Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism (SAAR) – Jim is meeting with them monthly, helping to shape the discourse and working on the messaging on the website. He noted that there are often strong feelings around the denomination that we should make efforts to be more inclusive. SAAR has been working more on justice issues and the history of racism, with Sue Ditmire’s very important research on the black history of the General Convention. SAAR sponsored the land acknowledgement statement that was adopted at this convention. They are looking toward work on Asian racism in this country, noting the civil rights attorney Wayne Mortimer Collins a firebrand around Japanese evacuation and internment issues during WWII; he was raised in an orphanage started/run by a Swedenborgian! Jim recommended viewing the documentary on Collins entitled *One Fighting Irishman*.

k. Swedenborg Foundation – President Robert Carr commented that the Foundation has stewardship of over 170 years of print information and about 13 years of video. He noted that there has been some turnover in past years but for the last few years the membership has been largely stable. Robert lauded the good teamwork on the Board with their focus on the mission of making the writings increasingly available and said that the Foundation could be seen to be at the cusp of a third wave, after print and video (Off the Left Eye), that being the use of generative AI to provide a new way to make the writings more accessible. Robert leans toward the idea that there may be a “correction” though the current technology (possibly not going to be as many bots as currently expected?). Chris Dunn has fed an “off the shelf” AI engine all of the writings and experimentation is now ongoing and looking promising. This will not replace the first two waves but compliment them. We don’t know the

details of what this is going to mean for the Foundation, but time will tell. Robert opened the discussion to questions and Dell Rose and Rebecca Esterson rose to express deep concerns regarding the idea of what amounts to approximately 800,000 pages of very dense, nuanced materials being “turned over to a bot.” Robert agreed with their sentiments and shared their concerns, maintaining that there is no sense of a rush to accomplish this, and that there need to be “guard rails” around sensitive topics. Robert invited opportunities to work with Dell and Rebecca and others offline. Kei Pang rose to point out the differences between accessibility of materials versus familiarity with them. Robert spoke of the use of the video aspect of the Foundation’s work along those lines.

- 30. Jennifer reminded that** the vote would close at noon with only about half of the delegates having voted so far.

31. Business Session III Recessed – 11:35am EDT

BUSINESS SESSION IV
2:45 PM EDT

32. Reconvene convention – at 3:00 pm

33. Announcement election results –

President (3 yr. term)	Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence 56 votes cast, 55 in favor; the vote carried
Vice President (1 yr. term)	Kurt Fekete 54 votes cast, 54 in favor; the vote carried
Recording Secretary (1 yr. term)	Karen Conger 55 votes cast, 55 in favor; the vote carried
General Council (Lay Person) (3 yr term ‘27)	Herb Ziegler 55 votes cast, 49 in favor; the vote carried
General Council (Lay Person) (3 yr. term ‘27)	Kei Pang 55 votes cast, 45 in favor; the vote carried
General Council (Minister) (3 yr. term ‘27)	Rev. Thom Muller 56 votes cast, 56 in favor; the vote carried
Standing Committee for Communication & Information (3 yr. term ‘27)	Tara Conkling 56 votes cast, 55 in favor; the vote carried
Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (3 yr. term ‘27)	Kurt Fekete 56 votes cast, 48 in favor; the vote carried
Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (3 yr. term ‘27)	Tom Neuenfeldt 56 votes cast, 50 in favor; the vote carried
Standing Committee for Education and Resources (3 yr. term ‘27)	Rev. Shada Sullivan 55 votes cast, 55 in favor; the vote carried
Committee on Admission into the Ministry (3 year term ‘27)	BJ Neuenfeldt 56 votes cast, 54 in favor; the vote carried
Nominating Committee (5 yr. term ‘29)	Pastor Kelly Milne 56 votes cast, 53 in favor; the vote carried
CSS BOT Representative Class (4 yr. term ‘27)	Rev. Dr. Gard Perry 56 votes cast, 56 in favor; the vote carried

34. The site/dates for convention 2025 It is hoped that the Retreat and Conference Center at Zephyr Cove, South Lake Tahoe, CA, will be the site of Convention 2025. More information will become available

35. The Business Sessions of the 200th session of the General Convention were adjourned at 3:10pm ET.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Conger, Secretary

CONVENTION PREACHERS SINCE 1959

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

1997	Robert H. Kirven	Hutchinson, KS
1998	James F. Lawrence	Leesburg, FL
1999	J. Theodore Klein	Malibu, CA
2000	Paul Martin	Urbana, OH
2001	Renée Billings Machiniak	St. Paul, MN
2002	Paul Zacharias	Gorham, ME
2003	Ken Turley	Geneva, NY
2004	Wilma Wake	Kitchener, Ontario, Canada
2005	Marlene Laughlin	Berkeley, CA
2006	John Billings	Urbana, OH
2007	Eric Hoffman	Holland, MI
2008	Sarah Buteux	Bridgewater, MA
2009	Junchol Lee	Seattle, WA
2010	John Maine	St. Paul, MN
2011	Jonathan Mitchell	Cincinnati, OH
2012	Andrew Stinson	Bridgewater, MA
2013	Jane Siebert	Urbana, OH
2014	Alison Lane-Olsen	St. Louis, MO
2015	David Fekete	Bridgewater, MA
2016	Solomon Youngmin Kim	Urbana, OH
2017	Susannah Currie	West Chester, PA
2018	Kit Billings	San Jose, CA
2019	Kathy Speas	Valparaiso, IN
2020	Paul Deming	Virtual
2021	Sage Cole	Virtual
2022	Anna Woofenden	Long Beach, CA
2023	Richard Tafel	Bridgewater, MA
2024	Elizabeth Coffman	East Lansing, MI

MEMORIAL

REV. DR. SHARON CONNELLY (JUNE 1, 2024)

We are sad to announce the passing of the Rev. Dr. Sharon (Sherrie) Connelly. On the first of June, Rev. Dr. Connelly passed peacefully into the Spiritual World. She was ordained in 2010 and pursued her ministry “Spirit in Transitions” in many ways, including serving for the Cincinnati Church for two years to assist them in their future organizational development. After retiring, she continued to perform 8 to 10 services a year for Cincinnati. A helping and pastoral presence, she was loved. Her parting was sudden and she will be missed. Inquisitive and intelligent, she was a lifelong learner and dedicated servant of God. Her thirst for knowledge and spirit is being filled by the divine in the spiritual world. Well done good and faithful servant.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kevin Baxter

KATHLEEN EASTON-GILHOOLY (SEPTEMBER 21, 2024)

With affection and fond remembrance, we report that Rev. Kathleen Easton-Gilhooly entered the fullness of the spiritual world after a period of illness. Originally from Scotland, Kathleen moved to the United States in young adulthood and became active in Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware in the early 1980s. Participating in the ministry led by Rev. Randall Laakko, she became inspired to train for the ministry herself. After completing the full course of study at the Swedenborg School of Religion, she was ordained into the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church of North America in 1989 and began a ministry of congregational leadership at the Virginia Street Church (Swedenborgian) in St. Paul, Minnesota. She returned to the UK in 1992 to pursue a bi-vocational life of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in numerous international contexts while continuing to offer her services in spiritual care and guest preaching as opportunities presented themselves. Her latter fifteen years in retirement were spent in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence

REV. FREEMAN A. SCHROCK (1953–2023)

Our friend and colleague the Rev. Freeman A Schlock passed fully into the spiritual world on Oct. 19th at 3:34am at the age of 82. Freeman has gone on ahead of us into our Lord's heavenly Kingdom, and there one day we shall see him again. Freeman was born on August 3, 1941 in Noble County, Indiana to Amos and Elizabeth (Miller) Schrock. In their one-room schoolhouse, Freeman and his siblings were only able to have up to an 8th grade education. As a young adult Freeman attained a G.E.D. high school certificate, which led him eventually into college. He had a BA and Masters in Clinical Social Work and a BA and Masters in Theology and he always valued education highly. He enjoyed using it wisely in the jobs he held. He was employed as a Social Worker in Elkhart County, Indiana for many years. After that, Freeman served as a Minister in the LaPorte New Church for eight years (2004-2012). He was ordained in the American Catholic church in 2000 and inducted into the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church on July 1, 2006.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kit Billings

REPORTS OF OFFICERS, BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND ASSOCIATED BODIES

PRESIDENT

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

Pastoral Ministry Comings and Goings and Significant Shifts.

In terms of comings and goings, the Fryeburg New Church opening successfully resulted in Rev. Catherine Lauber relocating from Ontario, Canada to Fryeburg this past year and beginning a new pastorate in that wonderful historic ministry in Western Maine. We have three current openings described in my Advisory Placement Committee report that describes the searches at Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Church of the Open Word in Edmonton, and the New Church of the Southwest Desert in Silver City, New Mexico, all of which are ongoing as of this writing. Two significant shifts involve the advanced progress of the New York New Church in Manhattan refocusing from an on-the-ground traditional ministry to an outreach program supporting other creative projects. The church building was sold with the assets invested to support the new organization called in its bylaws as the New York New Church Legacy Fund. The other significant shift is with our national church, the Church of the Holy City in Washington, D.C., whose trustees, Society members, and our General Council have agreed is ripe for a relocation effort that will shift from a traditional church model to one that focuses more on programming in addition to its worship gatherings.

Wayfarers Chapel: Disassembly and a Future Reconstruction.

With the now national story of the landslides and the city of Rancho Palos Verdes red tagging (forbidding contact with the public) our beloved and historic Wayfarers Chapel, the board of directors has met weekly nearly all year to handle the large task list of going forward. This has included assessing and finally choosing a collection of firms to handle the disassembly of the crucial pieces of the original architecture for storage being offered for free on protected property owned by the city of Rancho Palos Verdes, and as of this writing the disassembly is well underway. The work has also included selecting a short term project manager for overseeing public relations, fundraising, and community building for the next leg of the journey, which will be reconstruction of the Chapel.

Continuing to Expand and Improve Virtual Methods of Holding Church Community.

A significant effort is underway to increase our skills and support for virtual and online presence of the denomination and of local ministries. Last year we hired a half-time Digital Communications Manager, Rudy Caseres, who has been improving our operations as a denomination and also supporting local ministries. We continue to support two online ministries (Spiritual Sunshine and the Rainbow Church of the New Jerusalem) and to facilitate local groups combining together for worship via the virtual capacities of a hybrid set up. Our outreach to attend convention virtually has continued to grow participation from many others in our annual convention, and we hope to see more outreach this summer in Lansing, Michigan.

In addition to leading the General Council for its meetings (the executive committee meets monthly), I have attended many meetings on Zoom of various committees, and I also attended the Fryeburg New Church Assembly last August as the 2023 Rev. Everett K. Bray Visiting Lecturer, and this upcoming summer I will be attending the Almont New Church Assembly as a lecturer and participant.

Lastly, I would like to highlight the exceptional staff with which we are blessed, which feature Brittany Price, our Operations Manager, and Gina Peracchi, our Accounting Manager in addition to the aforementioned Rudy Caseres, and I would like to thank the hard working and tireless executive committee: Jennifer Lindsay as treasurer, Karen Conger as recording secretary, and Kurt Fekete as vice-president. I'm blessed with an outstanding team.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, President

VICE PRESIDENT

This is my third full reporting year in the position of Vice President. I continue to be of service to our church community, and while I am still learning, I am doing my best to contribute and be of use. Most of our church business is conducted in hybrid, meaning I have the option to attend either in-person or virtually. Aside from our annual Convention General Council meetings, I have elected to attend our business meetings primarily virtually on Zoom. Central Office manager, Brittany Price, and accounting manager, Gina Peracchi, continue to do exceptional jobs running the duties of Central Office from their homes.

Here are the Vice President highlights of year 2023-2024:

- Chair of the Board of Mediation committee. Did not meet during this reporting period.
- Participated in monthly Swedenborgian Community Online (aka, Spiritual Sunshine) committee calls and continue as Chair of that committee. Other Spiritual Sunshine committee members are currently Rev. Cory Coberforward, Emily Tergliafera, Rudy Caseres, and William Rotella. Under the leadership and direction of Cory, Spiritual Sunshine has an engaging and ever-evolving website. Cory is producing great content, including weekly worship services and monthly mediations. Spiritual Sunshine is using social media to reach out to denomination members and new spiritual seekers around the world.
- Attended monthly Executive Committee (ExCom) meetings, responded to emails and text messages, and addressed ExCom issues throughout the year to conduct the ongoing business of the General Council. It is a joy to work with President, Rev. Jim Lawrence, Secretary, Karen Conger, and Treasurer, Jennifer Lindsay. They are doing inspiring work for the denomination, and I am blessed to serve with them all.
- Attended all six General Council meetings (July 2023 pre- and post-Convention, Nov. and Dec. 2023, Mar and Apr. 2024) and presented VP reports along with other assigned duties.
- A member of Swedenborgians Active Against Racism (SAAR) but have not regularly participated in monthly calls due to schedule conflicts and conflicting priorities.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Fekete, Vice President

SECRETARY

Per the duties outlined in the Journal I have taken minutes at all meetings of the General Council and Executive Committee. I have sent correspondence to organizations and individuals on behalf of the General Council as directed, as well as working closely with the president to create and manage the agenda for the above meetings. We are in the process of planning for this year's hybrid convention meetings at Michigan State University, which will include voting both for virtual attendees and those attending in person. In order to determine accurate delegate numbers, statistics are currently being collected and compiled from ministries, as-

sociations, and conferences throughout the denomination in North America. Later this year I will be assisting Operations Manager Brittany Price in compiling and editing the 2024 Journal.

In addition, I have continued to be active on the Board of Directors of the New York New Church (NYNC), their numbers having fallen below the required membership as outlined in their bylaws. Under the excellent leadership of Rev. Rich Tafel, who was hired by the denomination in 2020 to facilitate all of the above, the NYNC property has been sold to the government of Serbia who plan to use it for their United Nations Mission. The name of the new organization is The New York New Church Legacy Fund and we expect to begin funding within the next twelve months.

I am also the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the National Church at 1611 16th St. NW, in Washington, D.C. The D.C. Church Committee continues to do a very good job of stewardship of the property. It is hoped that the property will be placed on the market sometime in the next few months after the many necessary details around a deed that was formed nearly 150 years ago have been seen to under the leadership of Rev. Rich Tafel.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Conger, Recording Secretary

TREASURER

The Office of Treasurer is busy throughout the year with a variety of Zoom and in-person meetings, written reports, administrative duties, and strategic planning sessions. Gina Peracchi, Accounting Manager, and I work closely on a weekly basis to manage the checking and saving accounts, bookkeeping, payables, and other financial reporting. We also interact directly with the independent financial auditors who perform the annual financial review. Gina recently celebrated her 20th anniversary as a valued employee of SCNA. We are blessed to have her on our Central Office team.

We experienced a bittersweet surprise from the Covid-19 period. Our beloved Urbana University permanently closed at the end of the 2020 Spring Semester during the height of the pandemic. We have many alumni among our friends and family members. We also hold fond memories of past Conventions held on the campus. Unexpectedly, I was informed during Summer 2023 that a trust exists with Urbana University as its primary beneficiary and SCNA as its secondary beneficiary. With the closure of Urbana University, these funds from the Mary V.A. Baldwin Trust will now be received annually by SCNA for the foreseeable future to support our ongoing ministries and programs. SCNA received the first payment from this trust in late 2023.

Financial Results

The independent financial auditors will complete their professional review of the 2023 financial statements during July 2024. I will provide a verbal update at the Convention Session.

The Common Fund experienced a positive 13.2% return during 2023. Consequently, SCNA incurred a capital gain of \$2.0M on our combined restricted and unrestricted funds during 2023. This gain has continued into the first half of 2024 as the markets have provided additional positive returns. Overall, the SCNA continues to be on firm financial footing.

Virtual Voting

General Council is in support of maintaining the ability to vote virtually to enable as many delegates as possible to participate in the annual elections. Thus, the Office of Treasurer continues to manage the virtual voting process by interacting with the vendor NemoVote, creating the virtual ballots, and assisting delegates with accessing the Nemovote platform for voting purposes at the 2024 Convention.

Other

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

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

grateful. I look forward to seeing everyone again in person and virtually at the 2024 Convention Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Lindsay, Treasurer

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

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

For the Years Ending December 31, 2023 and December 31, 2022

	<u>31-Dec-23</u>	<u>31-Dec-22</u>
ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 568,491	\$ 441,880
Investments	25,195,985	22,995,152
Agency Funds	852,676	785,406
Accounts Receivable	2,463	25
Advance Receivable	-	50,000
Notes receivable	562,945	584,312
Prepaid Expenses	9,434	20,270
Property and Equipment	604,330	569,710
Other Assets	1,000	1,000
Investment in Wayfarers' Chapel	<u>975,429</u>	<u>975,429</u>
Total Assets	<u><u>\$ 28,772,753</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 26,423,184</u></u>

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Accounts Payable	\$ 52,348	\$ 52,422
Agency Funds	852,676	785,406
Annuity Obligation	-	20,863
Total Liabilities	905,024	858,691
Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	6,274,534	5,759,312
Net Assets With Donor Restrictions	21,593,195	19,805,181
Total Net Assets	27,867,729	25,564,493
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 28,772,753	\$ 26,423,184

GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
For the Year Ending December 31, 2023

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Without Donor Restrictions</u>	<u>With Donor Restrictions</u>
REVENUE AND SUPPORT			
Investment Income (Loss)	\$ 2,650,684	\$ 356,737	\$ 2,293,947
Program Income	245,204	241,427	3,777
Appeals and Donations	132,146	130,073	2,073
Interest Income on Loans	26,225	-	26,225
Convention Revenue	120,868	120,868	-
Miscellaneous Income	22,395	1,625	20,770
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	-	558,778	(558,778)
Total Revenue and Support	<u>3,197,522</u>	<u>1,409,508</u>	<u>1,788,014</u>

EXPENSES			
Program Services	572,604	572,604	-
Supporting Services			
Management and General	250,950	250,950	-
Fundraising	-	-	-
Total Supporting Services	250,950	250,950	-
Convention Expense,	70,732	70,732	-
Total Expenses	894,286	894,286	-
Change in Net Assets	2,303,236	515,222	1,788,014
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	25,564,493	5,759,312	19,805,181
Net Assets, End of Year	\$ 27,867,729	\$ 6,274,534	\$ 21,593,195

GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

For the Year Ending December 31, 2023

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Program Services</u>	<u>Management and General</u>
PERSONNEL AND RELATED:			
Salaries	\$ 279,625	\$ 149,256	\$ 130,369
Employee benefits	34,808	10,976	23,832
Payroll taxes	<u>17,605</u>	<u>11,158</u>	<u>6,447</u>
Total personnel and related	<u><u>332,038</u></u>	<u><u>171,390</u></u>	<u><u>160,648</u></u>
OCCUPANCY:			
Rent	6,000	-	6,000
Telephone and Internet	<u>2,309</u>	<u>681</u>	<u>1,628</u>
Total Occupancy	<u><u>8,309</u></u>	<u><u>681</u></u>	<u><u>7,628</u></u>

OTHER:

Grant Expense	253,773	253,773	-
Meetings and Travel	74,914	69,039	5,875
Insurance	45,401	32,755	12,646
Office	41,674	25,073	16,601
Retreats and Scholarships	14,715	14,715	-
Professional Fees	25,474	-	25,474
Miscellaneous	8,296	4,544	3,752
Depreciation and Amortization	24,460	634	23,826
Bad Debt Recovery	(5,500)	-	(5,500)
Total Other	483,207	400,533	82,674
Total expenses	\$ 823,554	\$ 572,604	\$ 250,950

THE AUGMENTATION FUND
REPORT OF 2023 ACTIVITY

Fund Balance 12/31/2022

Temporarily Restricted Investments	\$ 6,588,206	
Permanently Restricted	<u>703,856</u>	
Total Funds		\$ 7,292,062

ACTIVITY DURING 2023

Investment Income	287,833	<u>287,833</u>
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Expenses

Administrative and meeting costs	78,027	
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Grants:

Edmonton, AB	6,250	
El Cerrito, CA	12,000	
Garden Church	11,520	
General Convention - CAM	8,401	
General Convention - President	20,000	
Kitchener, ON	3,000	
Korean New Church	10,000	
St. Paul	450	
Spiritual Sunshine	29,200	
Washington, DC	30,000	
Wilmington	<u>18,000</u>	
Total Grants	<u>148,821</u>	

Total Expenses		<u>226,848</u>
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Operating Surplus (Deficit)		\$ 60,985
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Other

Unrealized capital gain/loss on investments		<u>624,570</u>
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Change in fund balance		<u>685,556</u>
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Fund Balance 12/31/2023

Temporarily Restricted Investments	\$ 7,273,762	
Permanently Restricted Investments	703,856	
Total Funds		<u><u>\$ 7,977,617</u></u>

THE MISSIONS FUND
REPORT OF 2023 ACTIVITY

Balance as of 12/31/2022

Temporarily Restricted Funds	\$ 2,157,469	
Permanently Restricted Funds	<u>447,387</u>	
Total Funds		\$ 2,604,856

ACTIVITY DURING 2023

Investment Income	102,819	
Donations	<u> </u>	
Total Income	102,819	

Expenses

Administrative and Meeting Expenses	28,104	
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Grants:

Deborah's Tree	1,000	
Garden Church	27,000	
Korean New Church	2,500	
The Rainbow Church	12,000	
Southwest Desert	15,000	
Washington, DC	10,000	
Total Grants	<u>67,500</u>	

Total Expenses	95,604	
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Operating Surplus (Deficit)	<u>\$ 7,215</u>	
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Fund Additions	140	
Unrealized gains (losses) from investments	223,108	

Change in fund balance	<u>230,463</u>	
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Fund Balance as of December 31, 2023

Temporarily Restricted Funds	\$ 2,387,793	
Permanently Restricted Funds	<u>447,527</u>	
Total Funds		\$ 2,835,319

THE IUNGERICH FUND
REPORT OF 2023 ACTIVITY

Balance as of 12/31/2022

Temporarily Restricted Funds	\$ 1,130,813	
Permanently Restricted Funds	<u>-</u>	
Total Funds		\$ 1,130,813

ACTIVITY DURING 2023

Investment Income	44,636	
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Expenses:

Administrative Expenses	12,118	
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Grants:

Edmonton, AB	2,000	
Swedenborg Foundation	15,000	
San Francisco, CA	7,000	
Spiritual Sunshine	1,200	

Total Grants	<u>25,200</u>	
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Total Expenses	37,318	
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Operating Surplus (Deficit)	<u>\$ 7,318</u>	
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Unrealized gains (losses) from investments	\$ 96,855	
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Change in fund balance		<u>\$ 104,172</u>
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Fund Balance as of 12/31/23

Temporarily Restricted Funds	\$ 1,234,985	
Permanently Restricted Funds	-	

Total Funds		<u><u>\$ 1,234,985</u></u>
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TRUSTEES OF THE TAFEL FUND

REPORT OF 2023 ACTIVITY

Balance as of 12/31/2022

Temporarily Restricted Funds	\$ 72,755	
Permanently Restricted Funds	<u>138,221</u>	
Total Funds		\$ 210,976

ACTIVITY DURING 2023

Investment Income	8,328	
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Expenses:

Administrative and Meeting Expenses	2,206	
Grants		
Almont New Church Assembly	1,348	
The Garden Church	3,000	
Gathering Leaves	431	
Washington, DC	<u>5,000</u>	
Total Grants	<u>9,779</u>	
Total Expenses		<u>11,985</u>

Operating Surplus (Deficit)		<u>\$ (3,657)</u>
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Fund Additions	300	
Unrealized Gains (Losses) from Investments	<u>18,070</u>	
Change in fund balance		<u>14,713</u>

Fund Balance as of December 31, 2023:

Temporarily Restricted Funds	\$ 87,168	
Permanently Restricted Funds	<u>138,521</u>	
Total Funds		<u><u>\$ 225,688</u></u>

THE BUILDING FUND
REPORT OF 2023 ACTIVITY

Outstanding Loan Balances as of
12/31/2023

Churches and Societies:		
Almont New Church Assembly	\$ 23,427	
Fryeburg New Church Assembly	70,027	
General Convention - National Church Tower	220,152	
St. Louis, MO	3,049	
Silver City, NM	114,941	
Washington, DC	314,384	
		<u>\$ 745,980</u>
Ministers:		
Rev. Wilma Wake	23,308	
Rev. Lee Woofenden	16,081	
		<u>\$ 39,389</u>
Total Outstanding Loan Balances	785,369	
Allowance for Bad Debt	(2,274)	
Outstanding Loan Balances-Net of Bad Debt		<u><u>\$ 783,095</u></u>

GENERAL COUNCIL

Since the 2023 convention in Bridgewater, MA, the General Council has met virtually or in a hybrid format a total of six times. During the virtual Spring 2024 General Council meeting the items of business undertaken included the continuing process of the New York New Church Legacy Fund, developments at Wayfarers Chapel, and at the National Church, where arrangements continue to be made to ready the property and confirm its legal status so that it may be placed on the market. In her report treasurer Jennifer Lindsay advised the General Council that the Common Fund earned 13% in 2023. Additionally, updates on the upcoming annual convention to be held in Lansing, MI, at Michigan State University have been received regularly from the Central Office.

A few of the many other items of business undertaken by the General Council during the past year have included various appointments of personnel to committees, the purchase of a MinistrySafe account in order to add another layer of safety for our precious children and youth, and a review of how well the new(ish) standing committees are working, which resulted in a pending amendment to the Bylaws creating a new Standing Committee for Ministry Development, which will be voted on during convention meeting this summer.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Conger, Recording Secretary

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

On the evening of June 27th through the afternoon of June 28th, 26 ministers, eight leaders of our churches consisting of licensed pastors and ordained ministers from other traditions gathered in person and online at Michigan State University in Lansing, Michigan.

The Council thanked the convention planning committee, staff, and volunteers who made it possible for us to meet and do the business of the council.

The chair put forward an agenda and presence that highlighted the professionalism of our clergy and a desire to serve and support them. Issues are arising about the systems through which the council functions. The Executive Committee will be spending some time revising the function of the council.

After dispensing much of the standard business of minutes and receiving reports, the council focused on some notable business.

The Council created a Chaplaincy Committee to advise the denominational endorsing officer for the certification of chaplains, as well as supporting our chaplains through professional and educational development.

The Council asked the Executive Committee of our Council to present to the General Council a request to develop new models that increase support for our ministries by 1) Exploring new modes of financial support for historic church buildings in need of support; 2) Creating new funding mechanisms for ministries outside the traditional parish model; 3) Exploring new funding levels for ministers.

The Council spoke about a critical failure of the denominational process of misconduct for Ministers and Licensed Pastors. The council is presenting its proposal to the General Council for a stop-gap process for the denomination's Board of Inquiry and the Council of Ministers Misconduct Determination Board. While this is a proposed temporary repair, it is essential that the General Council and the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers work to develop an up-to-date misconduct policy that will carry us into a more professional future.

The council asked the Executive Committee to review the Licensed Pastor process to ensure clarity of roles and training exist.

The Council received the Vision of Ministry by Tirah Keal

Elections were held and the Rev. Kevin Baxter was elected as Secretary of the Council, the Rev. Gabriella Cahalley was elected to the COM Executive Committee, the Rev. Dr Jonathan Mitchell was elected to a one-year unexpired term on the Committee on Admission into the Ministry, the Rev. Rachel Madjurac was elected to the Council Nominating Committee, and the Rev. Catherine Lauber was elected as the 2026 Convention Preacher.

The Council gathered on Friday afternoon for an educational program on Grief led by the Rev. Dr. Donna Keane, Rev. July Conoran, Rev. Gabriella Cahalley, and Rev. Ros Taylor. The program explored person and organizational issues. The council then broke into discussion groups to talk about the importance of giving voice to grief for the process of our spiritual growth.

And finally, the following motions are being brought before the convention for its deliberation and action.

Motion: After 18 years in the ordained ministry, the Rev. Freeman Schrock entered the fullness of the spiritual world on October 19th, 2023. The Council of Ministers recommends to the Swedenborgian Church that their name be removed from the Roll of Ministers and added to the Roll of Former Ministers.

Motion: After 14 years in the ordained ministry, the Rev. Dr. Sharon Connelly entered into the fullness of the spiritual world on the first of June 2024. The Council of Ministers recommends to the Swedenborgian Church that their name be removed from the Roll of Ministers and added to the Roll of Former Ministers.

Motion: At his own request, and upon certification for induction by the Committee on Admission to the Ministry, the Council of Ministers recommends to the General Convention that Jay Barry, having been ordained in the General Church of the New Jerusalem, and after preparation recognized as adequate, accepting the doctrines of the New Church and expressing allegiance to the Constitution of the General Convention, be inducted into our ministry, and that this service of induction be held at this session of the General Convention, his name, after induction, to be placed on our Roll of Ministers.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin Baxter, Secretary of the Council of Ministers

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

The Standing Committee on Communication and Information met periodically throughout the year. We work with *the Messenger*, the Director of Digital Communication, and Central Office. To coordinate our efforts, Spiritual Seekers (Our Daily Bread) and Spiritual Sunshine are invited to the meeting. Bringing together all the denominational internet folks is invaluable.

The SCCI discussed the future of *the Messenger* format. Beki Greenwood proposed a shift from a paper copy to a digital format for their publication. There would need to be a paper copy for archival purposes.

Working with Rudy Caseres, we looked at the denomination's YouTube Channel and the other social media platforms, and discussed possibilities beyond convention to drive traffic to the site. What are the emerging issues we should be examining? We also have been discussing the difficulties working with such vastly independent churches and associations. The lack of local expertise and programming makes it difficult to use grassroots efforts for programming. In addition, how do we create a unified denominational presence in such diversity? Would it be possible to use times when people are gathered to generate content that can be edited and used throughout the year?

Talking with ODB, we explored issues surrounding needs for web unified technical, web coding skills. But this also raises the question whether or not multiple hosting sites are effective and efficient.

We also discussed looking at ways to help put denominational resources like music and other things onto the website. We have a variety of resources that have been compiled over the years and exist in a paper format. Questions about copyright and access to the files would need to be explored. The first step is to at least create places where we can link to other people who have put valuable resources online.

The goal before is to distill some of the topics and ideas down into achievable goals for the next convention.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kevin Baxter, Chair

THE MESSENGER

The Messenger is an official publication of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (typically ten issues, including combined January/February and July/August issues), and had a good year of supporting and serving its readers. *The Messenger* publishes information that the Church wishes to communicate to the membership, such as church membership statistics, reports from meetings of the General Council and the Board of Trustees of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, nomination information, news about ministries of the church, updates from committees, and information about the upcoming Annual Convention. In addition to news articles and announcements, *the Messenger* published articles on theology; Swedenborg and Swedenborgian related issues; articles by and about churches, church members, clergy, and other ministries; and personal reflections from members and clergy. We print 149 physical copies and email out almost 1500 copies each issue.

Personally, I had a difficult Fall with medical issues which led to *the Messenger* being delayed for about three months. The understanding and compassion I have received has been overwhelming, and truly appreciated. This led to some good conversations about the future of *the Messenger* and what direction it should be going—perhaps more frequent online, fewer larger print issues—among some options discussed. I hope we keep this discussion going as we keep up with evolving to suit the future needs. There has been a significant decline in regular submissions this year.

We updated *the Messenger* archives last year on swedenborg.org and filled many missing years and issues. However, we have now discovered that this has taken up too much space on the website. The Digital Content Manager is working on a resolution for this since we know having access to back issues is important

to many. Individual articles are posted regularly to swedenborg.org and tagged as Messenger articles.

The Messenger would not be possible without the volunteer editorial support from a variety of people: Rudy Caseres, Jennifer Darcy, Jason Greenwood, Robert Leith, Rev. Rachel Madjerac, Brittany Price, Dr. Emily Tergliafera, Trevor Woofenden, with special thanks to the Editorial Advisory Committee—Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, and Herb Ziegler.

Respectfully submitted,

Beki Greenwood, Editor

OUR DAILY BREAD

Our Daily Bread continues to provide a variety of sermons, articles, and original content, maintaining an online presence of the “Convention-flavor” of Swedenborgianism to people associated with the denomination as well as interested new-comers.

Since the Fall of last year, we have had around 20,000 visits to our “Featured Programming” page, continuing a steady trend of viewership. Our most-visited piece this past year has been “How the Grinch Saved Christmas” by editor Rev. Thom Muller, with 1594 views, followed by “New-Church Visionaries: Johnny Appleseed”, a video interview conducted by Eleanor Schnarr as part of the Cambridge Swedenborg Chapel’s series of talks, with Rev. Jim Lawrence sharing about the Swedenborgian history of John Chapman, at 1149 views. The average piece, be it a sermon, blog, or A/V content, receives between 500 and 1000 views. We currently have 860 followers on our Facebook page, who receive notifications of each new posting on their personal Facebook “wall”.

Currently, in addition to our regular programming, we are working on creating an “archive” page on the website, which will contain a database of older digitized PDF issues of ODB from the “in-print” days.

We continue to gather input from people in the denomination about a future renaming/rebranding of our ministry to carry a more unique and noticeable, possibly Swedenborg-explicit name. We hope to use this year’s Annual Convention as an opportunity to engage in dialogue with people about ideas regarding this.

Overall, we are happy with how this year has gone, and looking forward to continuing to find proactive ways to serve our denomination and the world at

large, and appreciate the support, creative input, and submission of materials from the organization and individuals within it.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Thom Muller, Managing Editor

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION AND RESOURCES FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

Standing Committee for Education and Resources (SCER) met over Zoom and worked by email this year to help plan the programming for Convention 2024. Members gave input into the theme of Convention, “Envisioning the Future,” and on the choice of Convention speaker Dylan Hendricks. As a committee we focused the majority of our energy on developing 12 mini courses for Convention on a range of themes. Half of the mini courses will be in-person and half will be hybrid, meeting the needs of both those attending in-person and those attending online. After the success of last year’s pilot project, we are able to offer modest financial support to some presenters for the cost of attending Convention again this year. The purpose of this funding is to support a diversity of voices and offerings at our annual meetings. We will be able to support the travel and registration costs for two mini course presenters. Those wishing to offer a mini course at Convention should contact the SCER chair in January or February of the new year.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Chair

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

In September 2023, the SCFA met in a hybrid manner with four of the members in person at the Mercy Conference and Retreat Center in St. Louis, MO (Mercy Center) while the other members participated virtually via Zoom.

During the September meeting the SCFA reviewed, discussed, and modified the initial draft 2024 General Convention budget and recommended that it be forwarded to General Council for approval; appointed itself to also serve as the Augmentation Fund Committee; and made granting decisions for applications related to the Augmentation Fund, Missions Fund (including New Directions grants), and Iungerich Fund.

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

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

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

The ministries and projects supported through the SCFA grant decisions for calendar year 2024 are:

Augmentation Fund

- Edmonton
- Cambridge
- Fryeburg Church
- Garden Church (San Pedro)
- General Convention – Committee on Admission to the Ministry
- Hillside (El Cerrito)
- Kitchener
- St. Paul (automatic per donor requirement)
- Southwest Desert (Silver City)
- Spiritual Sunshine (On-Line)
- Washington, DC
- Wilmington

Missions Fund (Including New Directions Grants)

- Eleanor Schnarr
- Rev. Ken Turley
- Almont
- Deborah's Tree (On-Line)
- Garden Church (San Pedro)

- Rainbow Church (On-Line)
- Southwest Desert (Silver City)
- Washington, DC
- Wilmington

Iungerich Fund

- Eleanor Schnarr
- Czech Republic
- Spiritual Sunshine (On-Line)
- Swedenborg Foundation
- Wilmington

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

Due to the retirement of Rev. Carla Friedrich at the end of 2022, the 2024 Augmentation Fund grant to Southwest Desert has been approved contingent on the hiring of an ordained Swedenborgian minister.

With the launch of the newly designed SCNA website, the grant submission process has migrated to a web-based on-line application as of the 2023 grant submission cycle.

The SCFA found the Mercy Center to be a beautiful and hospitable facility that is also geographically convenient for those traveling from across the continent. It also provides an opportunity for the committee members to visit the St. Louis church. Thus, the SCFA plans to meet there again in person during September 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Lindsay, Chair

CENTRAL OFFICE REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Central Office Review Committee is chaired by the Vice President of the Swedenborgian Church. Both the Operations Manager and Accounting Manager continued to work out of their respective home offices throughout the entire reporting period. Central Office rents record storage space in the basement cage of the Swedenborgian Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Central Office also

maintains a Post Office box in Cambridge. The Accounting Manager visits these two physical locations as needed to collect mail and conduct any on-site business. This has worked well, and it is anticipated that Central Office personnel will continue to work out of their home offices.

Personnel: Brittany Price continues as Operations Manager. Brittany works from her home, 30 hours per week. Brittany has been an exceptional Operations Manager. Over the last year, she has organized, scheduled, and attended numerous Zoom committee meetings, fielded myriad questions, managed a hybrid in-person/virtual Convention, and ran the business of Central Office smoothly and capably. She has spent much of her time this past year maintaining and updating the denomination website. Brittany also spends considerable time planning, organizing, and executing annual Convention. She also continues to be an active member on the Standing Committee for Communication and Information and attends Executive Committee and General Council meetings as needed. Brittany is accommodating, flexible with her hours, friendly, and efficient. We are blessed to have her working with us.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Fekete, Vice President

COMMITTEE ON AMENDMENTS

The committee on amendments was not activated by the General Council this calendar year. The committee stands ready to be consulted about any constitutional or bylaw change. .

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kevin Baxter, Chair

COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

The Committee of Inquiry did not meet. No issues were referred to the committee this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Stan Conger, Chair

COMMITTEE ON LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTS

A year ago, right before the 2023 Annual Convention, the Library and Documents Committee was able, with the help of General Council, to recover the archival material that had been stored in an Iron Mountain Facility since the Theological School moved to Berkeley.

Unfortunately, when it was packed into boxes, caution was not taken to maintain the sorted and documented contents. It is boxes labeled with partial contents. The re-sorting and documentation has been started, but it will take a long time to get it done. The good news is we have access to it. Most of the likely important document boxes were sent to Berkley and those of unknown importance were sent to Ohio. Both places have begun slowly going through the material, making a list of its contents.

The members of this committee took on this project because it needed to be done, even though we did not have a clear mandate to do it. Recently, while doing research on another topic, I came upon this resolution, which we now know gives us the mandate to Champion for the Archives.

90. The resolutions recommended by the General Council, regarding Archives of the Church were adopted as follows:

I, II, III: List specific items that are to be sent to the archives from year to year – to collecting and preserving Records, Manuscripts and other documents of historical value to the Church, the Convention adopts as its depository of such archives pursuant to the consent of the Board of Directors of the Theological School of Convention, the fire proof library room of the said School in Cambridge. Mass.

IV: That a Committee of three on “Library and Documents,” one of which Committee shall be the President of the Theological School, shall be appointed by the President of Convention to see to the collecting, depositing, and cataloging of books, manuscripts and other documents which may be donate to or otherwise procured by the Convention, the Chairman, of this Committee shall report to the Convention Annually. (Journal of the General Convention, 1911, p. 13-14)

We see this as a two level process:

1. To help individual societies and Associations to not only collect their existing records, but to try to locate the records of societies that are no longer active. Robbin Ferriman and Sue Ditmire volunteer to help any group or member who would like our assistance in how to go about, taking care of what you have and locating other sources.
2. To encourage General Council and the Theological School to come up with a plan to not only store, sort, and categorize what exists, but to consider possible better storage as mentioned in the resolution that used to exist as the fire-proof room.

Great progress has been made at CSS with the purchase of a professional scanner to digitize and make documents available online at some point.

As stated earlier, this will not be a quick fix, but we are aware and working on it.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Ditmire, Chair

COMMITTEE MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

Established by vote of the General Council in 2024, “There shall be a Committee on Ministry Development whose central focus shall be facilitating ministries within the Swedenborgian Church. The Committee 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 visioning and ministry efforts throughout the church. As part of its scope, the Committee on Ministry shall help as desired in assessing ministry grant proposals and offer advice and counsel to the Standing Committee for Financial Accountability for decisions on grant applications. The Committee on Ministry Development shall consist of three to five 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 two ministers with five or more years of professional leadership in a denominational ministry, as well as Licensed Pastors and laypersons.”

Serving in 2025: Rev. Rich Tafel, Rev. Catharine Lauber, Dr. Rebecca Esteron, and Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Chair

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

At the end of both October 2023 and April 2024, the Investment Committee convened for its regularly scheduled semi-annual meetings. In addition, the Investment Committee held a special meeting in January 2024 to specifically discuss the possibility of adding ESG (Environment, Social, and Governance) investments to the portfolio. All three of these meetings were held via Zoom. Our current investment advisor from Marquette Associates, Lauren Cellucci, joined the meetings to provide updates regarding the overall economic market, reports on the performance of the Common Fund portfolio, and recommendations on potential changes to investments in the Common Fund portfolio. The Investment Committee decided to add two ESG investments to the portfolio starting in January 2024.

There are over 30 participants in the Common Fund that represent many of our churches, camps, and associations – as well as the General Convention and our theological school, the Center for Swedenborgian Studies. This past year, The New York New Church Legacy Fund joined as a new participant.

The Common Fund earned a positive return of 13.2% for the calendar year 2023. This was a nice recovery from the negative returns experienced for the previous calendar year. During 2024, the equity markets have continued to perform well. The Common Fund earned a positive return of 5.7% during Q1 2024.

As of March 31, 2024, the Common Fund generated the following annualized returns (payout rate plus unit value increase):

- 15.1% over 1 year
- 5.8% over 3 years
- 8.2% over 7 years
- 7.5% over 10 years

The Investment Committee aims for the Common Fund to earn at least a 6% targeted annual rate of return on average, which is provided to Participants in the form of the payout plus the increase in the value of the underlying units owned by the Participants. Due to the strategy of the Investment Committee to not provide Participants the entire rate of return in the form of the payout during bull market years, the Common Fund has proven able to withstand dips in the market while continuing to provide a reliable quarterly payout to all Participants.

During its October 2023 meeting, the Investment Committee voted to increase the 2024 quarterly payout rate by 2.2% from \$0.335 per unit to \$0.3425 per unit.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Lindsay, Chair

RETIREMENT COMMITTEE

The retirement program through MMBB (Ministers and Mission Benefit Board) is the retirement tool being used by most of our Swedenborgian ministers. MMBB is an organization serving all faiths in the area of retirement and disability services.

Individual ministers and the churches they serve collaborate to provide needed retirement benefits. The ability to continue using this income as housing allowance, as it is received in retirement, is a helpful tax savings when pre-tax ministerial funds are received in retirement.

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

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

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

As the Board of RETCO, we continue to consider how best to serve our “wandering ministers” who are not employed by a local congregation as a church minister. We are pursuing options on how best to offer these ministers a retirement benefit with a matching component to assist with their retirement income.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dan Burchett Chair

Committee Members: John McIntosh and Meredith Conant Piotti

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

From May 2023-May 2024 the Social Justice Committee has:

- Spent time reflecting on the mission of the committee and how it can fulfill its charter.
- Asked Rev. Dr. Devin Zuber to assist in authoring a Standing Resolution on Climate Justice, which will be offered for vote at Convention 2024.
- Administered a logo competition with the SCYL and selected a logo that will be used for SJC communications for the next year.
- Supported our Messenger liaison in submitting regular Messenger articles.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Amanda Riley, Co-Chair

Rev. Shada Sullivan, Co-Chair

SWEDENBORGIANS IN ACTION AGAINST RACISM

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

The SAAR newsletter continues to be published on a tri-weekly schedule. The SAAR leadership team offered support and counsel to Sue Ditmire, as she has worked on her book *Missional and Marginalized: Black Ministers Ordained in General Convention*. We anticipate continuing to assist the process through editing and publication.

SAAR organized and supported the submission of a Standing Resolution on the *Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery and Statement of Support for Indigenous Peoples in Pursuit of Restitution and Reparations*, which will be offered for vote at Convention 2024.

For Convention 2024, SAAR will offer two mini-courses:

1) *Institutional Repentance*: a survey of the process of repentance outlined by the Jewish philosopher Maimonides, how it compares to Swedenborg's writings

on the same topic, and what both might suggest for how an institution might repent and offer reparation for past race-related harms.

2) *Bound Together on Indigenous Land: Steps to Liberation and Regeneration*: Presenting considerations and a starting outline for any organization or community to begin to pursue a course toward Indigenous land acknowledgement, covering purposes, intentions, commitment, engagement with local indigenous communities, statement drafting, public announcement and visibility, alliance, support, and activism.

Jim Lawrence began as chair in the spring of 2023, and has continued in the role. We welcome new members! Please feel free to reach out to a member of our working group: Sue Ditmire, Andrew Dodd, Rebecca Esterson, Kurt Fekete, Alex Gayheart, Jim Lawrence, Robert McCluskey, Page Morahan, Shada Sullivan, and Shalonda Ingram.

Respectfully submitted,

The Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism Leadership Team

SPIRITUAL SUNSHINE: A SWEDENBORGIAN COMMUNITY ONLINE

Spiritual Sunshine continues its mission of connecting people across the world to our denominationally shared message, pointing to God's peace, love, and wisdom at the centre of all being. This means connecting on many fronts, from YouTube to TikTok, from emails to on our website (SwedenborgianCommunity.org).

Over this last year, we've seen continued growth on many fronts, and more importantly, we feel as though we continue to settle into the peace of the Spirit's workings and God's grand providence in all things and every detail. We believe that Spiritual Sunshine shines from the core of each of us, and we (like many communities) centre on the life we find empowered by our shared teachings and traditions, our shared loves and connections, as well as our differences. In fact, we view the organization Spiritual Sunshine as a possible light to empower people across the world to feel more enabled to connect in a variety of community spaces (whether Swedenborgian or not), from local ones to online, knowing that the Lord's light is what shines within their every moment and leads them into a deeper awareness of the blessings of the light of life. We share this message through periodic podcasts and videos, from short to long content.

Your support is most welcome, starting with your support of your own being: settling further in your identification with your light of consciousness and not the

particulars of any changing expression that you perceive. Know that the peace, love, and wisdom of God is YOUR life itself. Thanks.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Cory Coberforward, Minister

STRUCTURE REVIEW COMMITTEE

No report submitted.

YOUTH DIRECTOR

My twenty-second year as your Youth Director has been adventurous and spirited! I continue to work primarily with youth ages 10 – 18, however, I also organize the children's program at Convention and assist with the young adult, 18 – 30 year-old, Transitions group. Transitions are growing, and I plan on doing more work with this group in the coming years. Our preteen program is called SPLATz (Super Powered Lovable Almost Teens). Our teen program is the SCYL (Swedenborgian Church Youth League). Growth of the SCYL programs has been slow, but steady, since Covid restrictions have lifted. SPLATz has not recovered yet, but I see a bright future ahead with some of the younger children on the horizon. We are excited to be face-to-face again and are working to rebuild and restructure our retreats to support the growing needs of the youth today.

Here are the Youth Director highlights for 2023-2024:

- May 2023 Memorial Day SCYL Almont Retreat – Theme: Building, Daily Building.
- Convention 2023 – Bridgewater State University, E. Bridgewater, MA. SCYL Worship theme: The Support of Loving Community (featuring a flying angel!).
- July 2023 Almont Summer Camp – 7th – 9th grade class. Camp theme: The Journey of the Ark.
- August 2023 Fryeburg Summer Camp – Briefly visited youth.
- October 2023 SCYL Cedar Hill Retreat – Theme: Sun, Moon, and Stars.
- December 2023 Almont Winter SCYL Retreat – Theme: Why Am I a Swedenborgian?

I'm extremely grateful to all of you who generously give time and money to our denominational youth program. Without your support, there would be no youth events. Our youth truly benefit from this spiritual and nurturing experience

in their lives. I look forward to the coming year with enthusiasm, new plans for enrichment, and continued spirited splendor!

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Fekete, Youth Director

YOUTH LEAGUE

Through the past year, our SCYL group has come together numerous times to learn more about the Swedenborgian religion and to have fun. We began our year together at Almont for our Memorial Day retreat, with our theme of “Building. Daily Building.” After learning about the different verses of the song and learning the history of it, we enjoyed our annual activity of go-kart racing and mini-golfing. Having been away from our friends for so long, we were overjoyed to see them at the 2023 Convention at Bridgewater State University in E. Bridgewater, MA. The theme of the SCYL closing worship service was “The Support of Loving Community,” where we shared our fears and how community has helped us overcome them, sang together, and finally watched our flying angel carry our fears away. Finally, some of us got to watch our first ordination before heading back to our homes around the world.

Continuing the fun, we met up again in July at Almont Summer Camp to learn about

“The Journeying of the Ark”. Although I did not attend Fryeburg Summer Camp in August, I did hear that the SCYL members who attended had an amazing time. After a very long two months and the start of the school year, some of us attended the Cedar Hill Retreat. I was also unable to attend, but would have loved to have been there to hear about the “Sun, Moon, and Stars”. To finish off the year, we joined together again at the Almont Winter SCYL retreat. We enjoyed bowling and participation in our first Swedenborgian Game Night, as well as attending sessions where we listened to congregation members discuss the theme of “Why Am I a Swedenborgian?” It was a long and joyful year, filled with love and friendship. Even though I will be aging out of SCYL soon, I am still so excited to see the amazing things that this group will do.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellie Barnaby, President, SCYL

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE WAYFARERS CHAPEL

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

This past year brought radical change on a scale and of a type that none of us saw coming. Since May of last year, Wayfarers Chapel has gone from celebrating a banner financial year, with plans for a top-to-bottom Chapel restoration, to mourning the loss of the Lloyd Wright-designed marvel and home for worship and countless cherished memories for nearly 75 years.

In May of last year, following one of the wettest winters on record, Wayfarers hired a project manager, general contractor, electrical, structural, and soils engineers, who, with an architect and other consultants, worked to simultaneously advance five projects as a first step toward a total restoration of the historic Chapel structure, which time and salt air had compromised.

Plans included replacing a 60-year-old single office trailer with a new three-office cottage, replacing a large 450-amp main electric panel, tearing down an old office condemned years ago due to land movement, installing a 1,000-foot-long French drain to control groundwater, and building a new enclosure for the garbage dumpster. These efforts proceeded apace when on August 20, a 5.1 quake coincided with Tropical Storm Hilary, which shed seven inches of rain within two days. Shortly thereafter, staff began to notice cracks forming in new places.

When the Board met in early October, the doors in the administrative office no longer opened or closed properly, some sidewalks were heaved up in the air, and there were 12-inch high waves in the parking lot asphalt. Most concerning was that two very large glass panels in the Chapel had shattered – one during the night and another right after a prayer service. Thankfully, no one was injured. The City of Rancho Palos Verdes declared a State of Emergency due to unprecedented land movement in a one-square-mile region, of which Wayfarers Chapel sits on the southwest edge. To minimize risk, the Board chose to close the Chapel to visitors but remain open for previously scheduled weddings and Sunday worship.

Ironically, in late December after a seven-year effort, Wayfarers Chapel was designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

In January, scaffolding was erected and clear security film was applied to all of the glass wall panels. Survey data indicated that the landslide had accelerated to a rate of several inches per week. In February, our offices were red-tagged by city

officials, and to spare it from a similar fate, the Board made the difficult decision to close the Chapel to all but remaining staff and work crews. The final wedding in the Chapel was held on February 18, 2024.

In March and April, plans were made to disassemble the structure in order to save it for reconstruction in situ after the landslide abates, or if necessary, in a nearby location TBD.

In May, the Chapel, brides' room, loggia, and colonnade will be deconstructed and stored off site. The stone berms, which contain the redwood trees, the pulpit, chancel, and bell tower will remain. Our hearts are broken and our spirits brought low by this unexpected tragedy. We have momentarily lost a building but our faith remains, and our hopes to rebuild a fully restored Wayfarers Chapel within the next four years shine as brightly as our trust in a merciful and loving God.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Gottschalk, Chair

BOARD OF MEDIATION

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

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Fekete, Chair

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL CHURCH

It seems to me to be appropriate to once again begin this report with a little bit of pertinent history. In 1889, General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America commissioned a committee to build a house of worship in Washington D.C., to raise funds for that purpose, and to act as the trustees of the property in the name of Convention. The Trustees of the National Church operate as agents of the General Convention, which holds title through the Trustees as their agent. The Board of Trustees is a body of fifteen people, per the 1895 Deed.

The property at 1611 16th St. NW has not yet been placed on the market, but plans proceed apace to bring that to fruition. The deed of 1895 being so old, there are many ducks which still need to be gotten into their respective rows before this can take place. Amongst other things, since the original trustees of the National Church are all long deceased, the title company overseeing some of these details suggested that all of the current fifteen trustees should be re-confirmed in their

positions through a vote by the General Council of Convention. That has taken place, and we continue to move forward.

The Washington, D.C. Society continues to be a very active group of folks under the leadership of Rev. Rich Tafel, with many exciting ideas. Stay tuned for more to come!

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Conger, Chair

TRUSTEES OF THE BUILDING FUND

Convention's Building Fund Committee, composed of the Trustees of the Building Fund and with ex officio representation by Convention's President and Treasurer, reviews loan requests from churches and camps for building repairs, improvements, and purchases. The Committee conducts its business via email and meets by conference call as needed to deliberate and finalize decisions. The Committee's business during the past year included the extension of a loan to the Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco, to provide bridge funding in connection with a real estate transaction.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Careaga, Chair

TRUSTEES OF THE TAFEL FUND

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

During the past year, three grants were made: (1) William Keith and the "Subjective Mystery" of the California Landscape, a public symposium by four scholars and authors held at the San Francisco Church in partnership with St. Mary's College of Moraga, CA., (2) Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, DE., in order to provide proper, safe storage for their records and salary for staff to interview older members for the sake of historical records, (3) from President Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence on behalf of the SCNA requesting funding support for denominational relations with the Lord's New Church in the underwriting of modest cost support to enable Rev. Solomon Keal to attend our convention in the summer of 2024 with the goal of forwarding denominational relations.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Conger, Trustee

DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

This past year has been a year of transition. Rev. Rich Tafel served for part of the year as our representative to the National Council of Churches Governing Board, but after eight years of service in this role put in his request for resignation. However, during the year he continued with a core role in the revision of bylaws that were passed by the NCC. We thank him for his valuable and influential service as the face of the Swedenborgian Church of North America at the NCC. Also, during this year longtime NCC delegate Rev. David Fekete participated in the Christian Unity meeting held in Nashville, Tennessee during October.

A significant evolution this year for how we participate in the NCC came in the form of officially engaging our Social Justice Committee under the leadership of Alex Gayheart for assessing requests for our church's participation in the numerous social statements issued by the National Council of Churches during the year. This is the most publicly visible role of the National Council of Churches in society, which issues from the Joint Action and Advocacy Convening Table. The NCC has a long history of working on behalf of the marginalized and of being a prophetic voice for justice and peace, and these public announcements are carefully cultivated to address important current issues.

When a particular pronouncement passes out of committee to be submitted to member communions for consideration in joining the pronouncement or statement, each communion makes their own decision. Not all statements are signed by all communions, and for those that do they are listed. It is helpful that we have such a committed Social Justice Committee meeting monthly and in active email conversations that include co-chairs Rev. Shada Sullivan and Rev. Dr. Amanda Riley, along with members Alex Gayheart, Dr. Page Morahan, Dru Johnson, Olivia Hackett, and myself. As a team we make decisions on which public statements to sign, and this is an important part of our own public voice and visibility.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Acting Denominational Representative to the NCC
Governing Board*

AUXILIARY AND RELATED BODIES

SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

The annual meeting of the Swedenborgian Church Childrens' Ministry (SCCM) was held on June 30, 2024 at Michigan State University. A hybrid meeting allowed attendees to participate in the meeting via Zoom, as well as in-person.

Rev. Kit Billings called the meeting to order at 12:21 p.m. Rev. Kit opened the meeting with a welcome and opening prayer. Articles I and III from the SCCM Constitution were read by Rev. Kit. A motion was made to accept the agenda as presented by Rev. Kit.

Current officers: Rev. Kit Billings, President; Pastor Kelly Milne, Vice President; Bev Titus, Treasurer; Nancy Little, Secretary.

The minutes of the 2023 annual meeting were read and accepted. M/S/V

President Rev. Kit gave his president's report and stated that he continues to have neurological issues due to a concussion and has not been able to devote the time that he would like to the work of the SCCM. Pastor Kelly agreed to step up as President.

Bev Titus gave the treasurer's report, stating that the balance is currently \$11,124.39. The report was accepted. M/S/V

Current Business:

Bev Titus reported that she has been in contact with Sarah Valley, a mindfulness coach who specializes in mindfulness for children and teens, about offering a 4-week mindfulness training (\$120 per person). Bev asked people to use a sign-up sheet to express interest in the training. A 1-hour mindfulness meditation training will be offered to teens attending the SCYL retreat in fall/winter. Bev will be in contact with Kurt Fekete to make arrangements. SCCM will sponsor a mini-course on mindfulness meditation facilitated by Sarah Valley at the 2025 annual convention.

SCCM continues to work on short religious education videos using the PowToons platform. A list of Top 5 was compiled. In addition, Rev. Kit was able to obtain Joyce Fekete's Top 10 with the help of Kurt Fekete. Feedback from teens about the videos and ideas for new videos will be sought with the cooperation of Kurt Fekete, SCYL Leader. Pastor Kelly showed a sample video about Noah and his family, which she produced using PowToons. SCCM is in the process of purchasing a professional level of PowToons. Pastor Kelly asked people to send their

feedback and ideas about the videos to a new email address: scmswedenborg@gmail.com

Elections were held and the secretary was asked to cast one ballot for the slate:

President: Pastor Kelly Milne

Vice-President: Rev. Kit Billings

Treasurer: Bev Titus

Secretary: Nancy Little

The meeting adjourned at 12:51.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Little, Secretary

TRUSTEES OF THE GRAY LEGACY

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

- Requests for proposals for the next calendar year will be made through *the Messenger*, and submissions will be due by August 15. Selections will be made by the trustees by October 1.
- Requests can be for the calendar year only or up to three years, renewable annually.
- Grantees will be required to provide a report.
- If funds remain to be granted for the following calendar year after awards are made, the Gray Fund will consider requests for funding of \$3,000 or less on a rolling basis.

The following is a list of grants for the year 2023-2024. These grants were made under the Trustees’ interpretation of the will of Wesley N. Gray to fulfill programs and forms of ministry in Massachusetts, the United States, and the world.

Grants 2023-2024

- Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener.....\$704.85
- Royal Oak Church of the Holy City.....\$500
- San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.....\$3,000

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca K. Esterson, Secretary

DEBORAH'S TREE

In 2023-2024, Deborah's Tree continued to reach out to our global community by adding weekly content to our website (deborahstree.org) and social media, and held one hybrid and one virtual event. Our mission is to promote the work of female Swedenborgian authors, scholars, clergy, and artists. We appreciate Liz Kufs, our hard-working IT consultant and tech person, who maintains our website and manages the audio-visual technology for our hybrid activities.

The Spiritual Inspiration program consists of a weekly Excerpted Inspiration on Wednesdays, and a weekly Spiritual Reflection on Fridays. Excerpted Inspirations (deborahstree.org/blog) were submitted by Linda Simonetti Odhner and illustrated by Liz Kufs and Linda Odhner, sometimes using photography by Page Morahan. The short excerpts were mostly by female authors and always contained a spiritual message of some kind. Spiritual Reflections (deborahstree.org/watch-1) are (mostly) short videos in the 5-minute range, and were created by five women on a weekly rotation: three Ministers (Renee Machiniak, Julie Conaron, and Roslyn Taylor,) one Licensed Pastor (Kelly Milne) and one seminarian (Eleanor Schnarr). Both Excerpted Inspirations and Spiritual Reflections were posted on our website, and on our Facebook page. Our Facebook reach and visits are increasing, with similar global geographic locations to last year. Our website sessions are 15% fewer than last year, with 17% fewer unique visitors. We stopped posting on Twitter/X, where our numbers were stable, due to ethical concerns.

The Women's Companion to 'Conjugal Love' blog (deborahstree.org/blog.) was started in 2022 but has taken a hiatus since March 2023. We will be reviving this popular blog soon.

Events for Deborah's Tree in 2023-2024 consisted of one virtual retreat in the fall and one hybrid event in the spring. In addition, the Deborah's Tree community is always invited to the monthly hybrid Saturday Brunches held by the Home Church in Bryn Athyn, where mostly female speakers address a wide variety of spiritual topics. In the autumn of 2023, the virtual retreat focused on "Mystery and Spirituality." Our spring event in 2024 was about "The Journey to Finding Yourself." We learned we have a larger audience when hybrid. Both women and men attended our spring event, which is the intended audience for both our online and hybrid offerings. The speakers at the Saturday Brunches covered topics that included little-known influences in Swedenborg's life, traditional vs. alternative church, strategies for shrinking congregations, and misogyny and patriarchy. One

video from a Saturday Brunch is available on deborahstree.org/events, with more to come as we onboard our new IT assistant, Joan Lee.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Roslyn Taylor, President

CENTER FOR SWEDENBORGIAN STUDIES (CSS)

2023-24 HIGHLIGHTS

LEARNING COMMUNITY

The highlight of our year has been working with an exciting cohort of new students to CSS and building community with returning students and staff members. Our three Nunc Licet Fellows are busy in their respective MDiv programs. Students in our certificate journey are enrolled in five different accredited seminaries in the United States, and are joined by students from Canada, Ghana and Taiwan.

JANUARY INTENSIVE:

We hosted four students for our January Intensive, which was on Spiritual Care and the Transformation of Consciousness. The sessions were run by a teaching team made up of Rev. Dr. Gardner Perry, Rev. Jay Barry, and Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers (with Devin and Rebecca in a supporting role). It was a meaningful four days together, ending with a visit to the beautiful Tamales Bay. The emphasis on spiritual care, chaplaincy, and CPE met the needs of the students and contributed to a new emphasis in this direction that has been in the works for the last couple of years.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

On April 10, we hosted a guest lecture by Thomas Goetselius from Stockholm University on “Epistemology of the Night: Emanuel Swedenborg and the Problem of the Soul.” The event was co-sponsored with UC Berkeley’s department of Scandinavian studies. It was a wonderful evening of networking and learning, well attended both online and in person. Dr. Zuber offered a four-part, public, online series on “Creation Care,” exploring how Genesis and other sacred creation stories can inform contemporary environmental ethics.

LIBRARY:

A group effort between CSS board members, faculty, students, and staff is moving us forward both in managing the massive amount of archive materials

that has recently come our way and in planning to move forward building a digital archive. This summer, we will begin working with a consultant, Amy Epperhart, who lives in San Pedro and is currently a Young Adult Librarian at the Los Angeles Public Library. Formerly, she was the junior archivist at the Los Angeles Maritime, where she digitized and cataloged the photographic collections. She is meeting with staff to get to know the project goals and the cataloging system of our library. In June, she will come to Berkeley and help us get started. This archival project is supported by grants from the Boston Church and the Iungerich Fund.

CURRENT SWEDENBORGIAN STUDENTS

In addition to online learners and GTU students who interface with the work of CSS through courses and advising, there are 7 Swedenborgian ministry students and 11 Licensed Pastors in our learning community. We are in conversation with four prospective students.

Ordination Track (CAM Approved):

Lynn Chittick Thompson, Doctor of Ministry student at the Pacific School of Religion

Blake Gibbins, Iliff School of Theology

Michael Goos, Nunc Licet Fellow, Pacific School of Religions, MDiv

Tirah Keal, Nunc Licet Fellow, United Lutheran Seminary, MDiv

Roxanne Sperry, MDiv completed, completing a Certificate in Swedenborgian Ministry Studies

Ordination Track (Not Yet CAM Approved)

Ben Gunter, Nunc Licet Fellow, San Francisco Theological Seminary, MDiv

Others earning Certificate in Swedenborgian Ministry Studies

Robert Hagan, Pastor in Ghana (is seeking affiliation with the SCNA)

Licensed Pastor Continuing Education: Connie McOsker (Garden Church);

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

2023-24 COURSES

Fall Semester

- Swedenborg Seminar (Devin Zuber and Rebecca Esterson)
- Kenosis: The Art and Theologies of Self-Emptying (Devin Zuber and Deidre Green)
- Interdisciplinary Seminar (Rebecca Esterson and Sam Shonkoff)

- Ezekiel: The Promise of Return (Rebecca Esterson, for LP and minister continuing education)

January Term

- Spiritual Care and the Transformation of Consciousness (Gard Perry with CSS Faculty)

Spring Semester

- Theologies of Death Across Traditions (Rebecca Esterson and Kamal Abu-Shamsieh)
- Transcendental Countercultures & Religion (Devin Zuber)
- God of the Old Testament: The History of an Idea (Rebecca Esterson)

Faculty and Staff

Library: **Michael Goos** (they/them) has been hired at 9-10 hours a week to work in the library as a student worker. Their primary projects include replying to questions from outside researchers, making arrangements for visiting researchers, sorting and cataloging the recently acquired archive material, and continuing to catalog the biographical archive material already in our collection. They are also involved in the planning for our digital archive and will begin scanning for that project when the time comes.

Library: **Michael Yockey** (he/him) is currently working remotely due to his move to Paradise, CA. His move coincided well with Michael Goos' employment, who can be the "boots on the ground" while Michael Yockey manages the collection from afar. In addition to guiding Michael Goos, he is working on overdue acquisitions and other collection management projects.

Administrative Assistant: **Paola Pruett-Vergara** (she/her) has been the hub of our wheel of activities. She is assisting in nearly every aspect of CSS operations on some level and has been especially helpful with recent transitions in the library staffing. She is in the last year of her Masters program at the Dominican School of Theology and has been accepted to a PhD program at Villanova. We are thrilled for this next opportunity for her. It also means that we need to begin a search for a new Administrative Assistant this summer.

Financial Manager: **Alan Thomsen** (he/him) has been invaluable in responding to the announcement out of the GTU about the closing of their business office. He has been proactive in getting urgent information from various parties, making connections with key people related to the transition, and thinking strategically about next steps for CSS. Alan has also been especially helpful in thinking about the Nunc Licet program in its first year, and what adjustments should be made going forward.

Professor: **Devin Zuber** (he/him) presented at Cambridge University's Centre for Platonism ("Climbing Towards the Spiritual Sun: Adam Mickiewicz and Emanuel Swedenborg"), Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco ("Jess's Esoteric Poetics of Place"), the William Keith symposium at the San Francisco Swedenborgian church ("A Thing of Vibration: Swedenborgian Synesthesia in William Keith's Late Landscapes"), the University of California's conference on Global Legacies of Anti-Nuclear Activism: Intersectional Approaches ("Dreaming of Bombs and Roses: Antinuclear Aesthetics in California's Spiritual Countercultures"), and the Leibnitz Institute for European History ("Dark Green Abstractions: Painting Nature Spirituality in Hilma af Klint's Art"). Two of his chapter contributions for Marina Abramovic: the Spirit in Any Condition does not Burn (Royal Academy of Arts, London) were published in September. His chapter, "Spiritual Laws: Religion and Rainbows" will be published in the new Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson. He continues to be a liaison with the Swedenborg Society in London. He is serving as assistant pastor at the San Francisco Swedenborgian church and is on the board of the Swedenborg Foundation.

Dean: **Rebecca Esterson** (she/her) presented at various Swedenborgian and non-Swedenborgian organization, including the West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat ("Tree of Life: Nature Symbolism in Scripture"), Gathering Leaves ("The Poison of Internalized Misogyny"), the Bryn Athyn College's Institute for Swedenborg Studies ("Swedenborg, the Old Testament, and the Age of Enlightenment"), and the Institute for Theology and Disability ("Embodied Knowing in Helen Keller's The World I Live In." She continues to offer Sunday messages once or twice a year at both the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church and Hillside Community Church in El Cerrito. Her book Jewish Allegory in Eighteenth-Century Christian Imagination was published by the Society of Biblical Literature Press in October. She is co-editor of a volume Death, Dying, and After Death, published by Cognella this summer, for use in college and graduate-level classrooms. She is co-authoring a religious biography of Helen Keller for Eerdman's Publishing. She also had a short article published on thetorah.com on the topic of midrashic interpretations of the biblical figure Sarai. Dr. Esterson served her third and last year as chair of the Sacred Texts department at the GTU and continues to be co-chair of the program unit on The Use, Impact, and Influence of the Bible at the Society of Biblical Literature.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Rebecca Esterson, Dean

Tom Neuenfeldt, Chair

FINANCIALS

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

CHURCH STATISTICS

THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH STATISTICS — AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2023

<u>Association</u>	<u>Churches</u>		<u>Ordained Ministers</u>	<u>Active Members</u>	<u>Number of Delegates</u>
	<u>Active</u>	<u>Inactive</u>	<u>Active</u>		
Eastern Canada Conference	1	0	2	64	8
Illinois Association	5	0	2	58	8
Kansas Association	2	0	2	56	8
Maine Association	3	0	5	90	11
Massachusetts New Church Union	3	1	6	53	7
Michigan Association	1	0	3	56	8
Middle Atlantic Association	3	0	7	88	11
New York Association	1	1	1	17	4
Ohio Association	3	0	6	38	6
Pacific Coast Association	6	0	21	195	22
Western Canada Conference*	2	0	1	59	8
At Large	n/a	n/a	1	3	2
Unknown	n/a	n/a	19	n/a	n/a
Totals	30	2	76	777	103

*Did not submit information for 2023, using 2022 information instead

REPORTS OF ASSOCIATIONS AND CHURCHES

EASTERN CANADA CONFERENCE

Annual Report May 2023 – May 2024

Constituted as The Association of the New Jerusalem Church in Canada.

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

In 2023, we were able to support our spiritual community in a number of ways. We continue to support the Church of the Good Shepherd's social media presence, sponsoring the purchase of equipment for streaming worship services on Facebook. We offer financial assistance to our members for travel costs to attend general convention and retreats.

In 2024, we are continuing with these and other worthy projects.

Respectfully submitted,

David Ingard, Secretary

CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Kitchener, Ontario

The theme of church year 2023-24 has been growing the Church. In 2023, we developed a new introductory brochure, purchased a sunshade and went into the community to introduce ourselves as a spiritual community for everyone.

We attended the Tri-City Pride event in Victoria Park. We provided information with our new brochures and treats that led to many great meetings and conversations. As we traditionally do, we finished the church year with a picnic on the lawn.

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

September 2023 we held our Rally Sunday BBQ, welcoming back our members to the new church year. We resumed indoor services. We added to our exterior banner collection with a banner for our fence that matches the one purchased

for the stand at Tri-Pride identifying ourselves. The new banner states “Come as you Are!”

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

Our online presence continues. Some of our online members continue to donate to us as well, using our e-transfer email give@shepherdway.ca. We have worked hard to add to our equipment for streaming.

A Welcome Home Sunday was held in the fall and a Welcome Neighbor Sunday was held in the spring. Both encouraged members to attend and bring friends. We welcomed some familiar faces and met some new ones.

In late November our dear friend Frances McIntosh passed into the spiritual life.

We continue to hold our Christmas Vendor market and bake sale the first week of Advent. It is progressively better attended each year. Our Advent activities were much as other years with a Christmas Potluck Party and Peace Pageant. We held our annual Candle Light Christmas Carol service in person for the first time since COVID-19 shutdowns preempted them in 2020. It was a lovely surprise to have several of the people we met at Tri-Pride join us.

A new search committee was struck with the news that Rev. Cory would not be renewing his contract. He and Alyssa would be staying until after Jessa was born and then returning to the USA. The committee put together a package and put out a call for a new minister.

January started with a low-key celebration for Swedenborg’s birthday because that same week we lost one of the remaining members of our founding families, John Emil Schenider.

A committee was also created to plan for Sunday Services once Rev. Cory was done.

A 65” TV was purchased for Sunday Services streaming of services from Royal Oak, Michigan and Fryeburg, Maine.

Our annual General Meeting was held in person and on Zoom on Feb. 25, 2024. We had quorum with 4 members joining via Zoom.

Easter service was led by Rev. Allison Moore.

Community Sunday Services continue with guest speakers and member led services.

We are gearing up for the Tri-Pride Festival again and will participate in the local neighborhood festival.

Revenue from CITS parking continues as a very important revenue stream.

The Nepalese Pentecostal Church continues to rent our space.

Hope Spring Cancer Support Centre is renting a space for children affected by cancer. Out Shepherd Stage concert venue is used by Wilfrid Laurier University New Music Society (NUMUS) also has resumed recitals in our space along with various music teachers and members of the former Kitchener Waterloo Symphony which disbanded and filed for bankruptcy in September 2024.

We held 1 Wedding, 1 Baptism, 2 Deaths.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Smith, Secretary

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION

The Illinois Association continued to meet its operational goals of providing support and encouragement to member churches, including LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, IN; Virginia Street Church in St. Paul, MN; the Chicago Society c/o the Swedenborg Library office in Chicago, IL; the Church of the Open Word / Garden Chapel in St. Louis, MO; and the Lenox Township Church of Norway, IA. LaPorte New Church, Virginia Street Church, and Church of the Open Word each receive generous financial support from the Association for ongoing operational costs. In addition, the Association considers applications for financial assistance from the youth of member churches for continuing education as well as to attend summer camps and convention.

The Executive Committee made a smooth transition as Kit Billings retired from the position of Association President and welcomed Karen Feil as our new President. Kit will continue to serve as Vice President. Meetings were held on an as needed basis by Zoom and focused mainly on investments, applications for funding, and discussions of pertinent bylaw changes. The Association also made a generous contribution to the 150th Anniversary celebration of the Virginia Street Church. Kit Billings attended the event and represented the Association. April Illinois Association statistics were compiled and submitted to the Central Office to determine delegates for Convention.

President Karen Feil was instrumental in coordinating and hosting the 2024 Parliament of World Religions in Chicago, Illinois and represented both the Illinois Association and the Chicago Society (for more information, see the Chicago Society report). She also continued to provide interesting panel discussions

with Rev. David Fekete, Rev. Robert McCluskey, and several other guest speakers which were announced and made available via Zoom to all member churches.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Paul Deming, Secretary

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

Chicago, Illinois

The Library was open and hosted by Karen Feil, Licensed Pastor, for 97 afternoons during 2023, and we had visitors on 74 of those days.

Scheduled programming offered in person in the Library included weekly viewing “The Chosen” series 1-3; weekly video recordings with discussion of the “New Jerusalem” Study Group hosted by Rev. Sage Cole; a special viewing of “Heaven and Hell & Other Places;” and weekly video classes on “The Gnostics.”

In May 2023, we hosted a Zoom program on “R. W. Emerson” delivered by Rev. Robert McCluskey, which drew an audience of 14, including members of the Illinois Association.

On a denominational level, director and Licensed Pastor Karen Feil participated in COM and Convention meetings via Zoom in 2023, as well as the Licensed Pastor support group and mentor calls with Rev. Robert McCluskey. She also attended via Zoom the CSS class on “Ezekiel” presided by Dr. Rebecca Esterson. Pastor Feil also eulogized former member Melinda Jester during her memorial service in North Vernon, Indiana on April 15, 2023.

In 2023, the Swedenborg Library participated with a booth and a lecture at the World Parliament of Religion the week of August 14-18. Karen Feil, Tom Lane, and Dell Rose handled booth duty. Scholar Dell Rose presented a talk on “Many Roads to the Kingdom of Heaven: Swedenborgianism’s Cultural Legacy” during the conference, to approximately 20 attendees. We distributed approximately two dozen books to interested parties during the week-long conference. Attendees were attracted to the historical photos our booth displayed of the original 1893 World Parliament. A general critique of the World Parliaments – that too many competing programs are offered at one time – applied again in 2023.

In May 2024, we are looking forward to Dell Rose relocating from Amsterdam to Chicago. He will consult with the Library on programming for both the Library and the Illinois Association and assist with outreach, as he works on his PhD dissertation.

In the Des Plaines Society, Dr. Bud Phillips was involved with the Niles Township town hall public events. The township is the owner of the former Ballard Road Good Shepherd Church, founded by Rev. Rollo Billings in the 1960s, with members of the former Kenwood (Hyde Park) church. It has a similar design to Wayfarer's Chapel, although not all glass, due to the climate. The building received National Historic Landmark Status on April 11; during the celebratory meeting, Bud manned a table with information about the Swedenborgian Church. The building has meeting rooms that the township rents at a very reasonable rate, for future suburban events that we might like to hold there.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Feil, Secretary/Treasurer, Swedenborg Library

LAPORTE NEW CHURCH

LaPorte, Indiana

This church year was finally back to nearly normal, with comfortable in-person gatherings and events, with the COVID-19 pandemic having eased. We continue to offer hybrid worship services, with 4-6 attending virtually and 10-12 in the pews. Rev. Kit has worked diligently to make the services easy to follow and meaningful for all. We enjoy a mixture of contemporary and traditional worship services on designated Sundays, followed by a coffee hour, always a warm, social time with friends. Quarterly newsletters are published. The laportenewchurch.org website is continually being updated and improved, in large part by Rev. Kit and a devoted friend of the church.

Although we have newcomers, we gained no new members. There is a growing interest by some of our younger people, so a teen/young adult confirmation class will be offered this summer. Sadly for us, two dear church member friends passed into the spiritual world -- our former pastor, Rev. Freeman A. Schrock in October and Sandra McDaniel in March, with Rev. Kit officiating both.

Our two 160+-year old buildings require continual oversight and maintenance. We installed gutter guards on parts of both buildings and covered the window wells at the church. A large, unhealthy tree limb will soon be removed by the City, at its expense since it's on the tree-lawn, as it is hanging over the chancel and its River of Life window, causing major damage were it to fall. We are opening our beautiful garden to the public again for a peaceful place to pause, now that we have done our best to discourage its use for undesirable actions.

The State highway in front of the church will begin major re-construction this fall, lasting almost two years as part of a utilities upgrade and beautification project. An appeal by the church to the DOT was granted to modify their plan, since originally they had decreased our church-front parking from two spaces to one. The church will be affected for several weeks when our section of the highway is closed, but the church will do its best to remain open.

A few highlights

- The congregation voted to join many other Swedenborgian churches in becoming LBGTQ+ Embracing.
- Siblings Rev. Kit and Rev. Machiniak exchanged pulpits one May Sunday.
- We celebrated our musician, Mary Hedge, for her 25 years of dedicated service to our ministry.
- As he does bi-annually, Rev. Kit offered a Swedenborgian church service at the annual Johnny Appleseed Festival in Fort Wayne, 100 miles away.
- Mid-week, Rev. Kit emails his sermon topic to the congregation with the invitation to reply with their personal insight ahead of Sunday, knowing that he may incorporate it into his message. He also chooses monthly sermon themes, which allows us to delve deeper and wider.
- We now use a different camera angle for virtual friends so that Rev. Kit can stand closer to the congregation. The congregation, in-person and virtual, greatly appreciates this change.
- A full Christmas Eve meal was shared and enjoyed together after worship.

This year's community events and programs

- We held five rummage sales at Manna House, which proves to be multi-beneficial: to our community (very reasonably-priced quality items), our church (exposure to our church community and proceeds almost covered the ever-increasing insurance premium) and the environment (re-using/re-purposing).
- The church hosted and Rev. Kit facilitated the Midwest Peer Minister Supervision Retreat.
- We offer an adult Grief Support group bi-weekly, open to anyone, anytime.
- We had a 5-week Journey program in the fall: Realizing Spiritual Freedom.
- Rev. Kit is a valuable member of LaPorte's open-minded and diverse ecumenical group, Faith & Community United, whose purpose is to make our community a stronger, more desirable place to live through collaboration, compassion, and creativity.

We know we are blessed to have and to offer this open-minded, compassionate ministry to our conservative community. We look forward with hope and welcoming hearts to all who wish to join us in the spirit of love and wisdom that God inspires.

Respectfully submitted,
LPNC Executive Board

LENOX TOWNSHIP CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Norway, Iowa

No report submitted.

VIRGINIA STREET SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

St. Paul, Minnesota

Weekly Sunday services continued with Pastor Gordon Meyer providing three-fourths of the services, and Rev. Eric Hoffman, Jeremy Rose and other lay leaders providing the rest. Filling the void left by Sylvia, our musicians Liz Zeno, Jeremy Rose, and friends filled in to supply music for all events. The choir once again began to sing regularly and to prepare for special 150th anniversary events.

Services this year were greatly enhanced by our ability to broadcast services and events via Zoom. Thanks to the work of Erik Lange, Benjamin Robinson, and others, we now have the capability of having multiple cameras so that the viewers can see the whole congregation and can hear the music played in the back of the church. Several members and friends attend events regularly via Zoom, and have become an important part of our congregation despite living far away. Benjamin Robinson continues to post copies of sermons on our web, as well as occasional videos or special events.

Rev. Eric Hoffman provides a weekly Sunday morning Bible study with a mix of online and in-person participants. It is well attended and highly valued by those involved. The Tuesday evening Arcana study group, led by Pastor Gordon, is meeting entirely online, and the group has grown with regular attendees from Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Arizona as well as from our local congregation. Pastor Gordon has been leading a Thursday class that started out as a “Swedenborg 101” class, but has continued studying other books with foundational teachings of our faith.

In celebration of our 150th anniversary, we held a series of events. The first was part of our annual celebration of Swedenborg's birthday (this year was his 335th). Lunch was provided and Sylvia shared memories of 70 years of involvement in the church as organist. Erik Lange researched information about prominent people who were involved with the Virginia Street Church in the early days of the congregation, and shared that information at one of the services.

In July, we hosted an Open house for people to tour the church with refreshments and live music provided. Jean Schroepfer provided historical information to attendees about the building, and Pastor Gordon provided information on Swedenborgian beliefs. Attendance was good and many were neighborhood individuals who had wondered about the church as well as those interested in the historical aspects of the church.

The biggest events for the celebration were held the weekend of Rally Sunday in September. The Friday night event included speeches by Kate Solomonson, a local architecture professor with a special passion for Cass Gilbert, the architect that designed the Virginia Street Church, and Robert Ferguson, another local architect who also happened to get married in the Virginia Street Church, and Pastor Meyer talking about the history of the congregation. We learned about the history of the building in the context of architectural trends at the time, the correspondences used in the design of the church, and the major characters involved in making the church a reality, and why the building holds such an enduring appeal. The event was well attended by architecture students, people interested in Cass Gilbert, as well as folks interested in Swedenborg (35-40 attendees).

The Saturday event included a catered dinner, special music, and a keynote speech by Jonathan Rose from the Swedenborg Foundation talking about the tides of spiritualism and Swedenborgian thought through time. (The fascinating talk was reprised by the Swedenborg Foundation and is available on their website.) There were forty-four at the dinner and more who came just to hear the speech. On Sunday, we held an extra special worship service (attended by thirty people) with lots of music, and Rev. Kit Billings, Rev. Eric Hoffman, and Pastor Gordon Meyer co-leading and sharing their reflections on their time leading the Virginia Street Church. After lunch, the Illinois Association held their biannual meeting. It was wonderful to have the church filled with people all weekend and there was a wonderful sense of celebration and connection.

The last event of the 150th year was our Christmas pageant. It was advertised as the 100th performance of the pageant and part of the 150th year. With Sylvia unable to play the organ and her family members unable to attend this year, we lost most of the cast and those that knew the most about the performance.

Jeremy Rose stepped in to become the stage manager, and the whole congregation rallied to recruit family and friends to fill the roles. The Christmas Pageant went on without a hitch. Highlights included Rev. Hoffman giving a short talk about the correspondences involved with the Christmas story and its relevance to our own spiritual journey, an especially beautiful Heavenly Host and a vocalist who sang the chants. The pageant was well attended by folks from the surrounding community.

The 150th led us to advertise ourselves to the community with two banners hanging on the Selby Street entrance advertising our 150 years, email notices to organizations, and event notices on Facebook, Nextdoor and Alignable to invite people to join us. We also contacted past members and friends of VSC to issue a special invitation to attend. Several of those friends did attend one or more events and it was wonderful to reconnect with them.

In other events, the church again hosted the St. Paul Art Crawl in April and October which brought several hundred people each time into the church over the three-day periods. In addition to art from congregation members and friends, music was provided by several groups including musicians from the congregation. Marin Zeno has started a non-gendered spirituality circle which meets once a month. We also hosted events for Breaking Free, a local group that support survivors of sex trafficking to build new lives through safe housing, services, and survivor advocacy. Local AA and A-Al-Anon groups continue to meet weekly at the church. The building was also used for several weddings, memorial services, community meetings and other events.

Sadly, we lost Melissa Chaple in January. Melissa was studying to become a Licensed Pastor and was half of our pastoral team when she entered the spiritual world. She was a major help with organizing church activities as well as leading services. We are sorely missing her energy and many contributions. We also had a major setback when our organist of over 70 years, Sylvia Lange, suffered a major health crisis and has been unable to play for services or even attend church since June. Her son, Erik Lange, has been tied up with caring for her and unable to participate in the many things he has typically done for the church.

On the positive side, we have four new members, Kelly Lund, Eric Hoffman, Robert Arsenal and Michelle Grosz and there are about a half dozen people who have been attending services or classes regularly that are not yet members. Two are musicians that have been recruited to help with music for Sunday services. Several others started attending after our public events related to the 150th anniversary and Art Crawl (described above). Some came to us through contacts with the Swedenborg Foundation programming. Overall, church attendance has

increased over the year as members and friends return to in-person events after COVID and past attendees reengaged with us as a result of the 150th anniversary events.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Zeno, President

Carla Abler-Erickson, Secretary

CHURCH OF THE OPEN WORD

St. Louis, Missouri

The Church of the Open Word / Garden Chapel offered Sunday morning services hosted online by Pastor Paul Deming, and provided in-person services for all of 2023 and 2024. An occasional guest minister provided messages online or in-person, including Reverend Kathy Speas (virtually) and Reverend Dr. Jim Lawrence.

Approximately 10 wedding services were provided during this time by Pastor Paul and Suzy Deming, Wedding Coordinator. Suzy also serves as Church Secretary and Building Event Coordinator. Music for Sunday morning services was provided by Joan McNair O'Neal (keyboardist and board member), and Pastor Paul on guitar and vocals with an occasional guest performer (John McCain on violin, and Peter Mayer on guitar). Our sound board and video camera were run by volunteers, or set up in advance by Pastor Paul. The board continued to meet on the second Sunday of each month. Our online attendance has grown, with visitors and members as far away as Switzerland and France, as well as Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Illinois in the United States.

In March, the church was visited by Pastor Paul's friend and fellow musician, Peter Mayer, who for 34 years toured with the Jimmy Buffet Band as lead guitarist. Peter shared briefly about his Lutheran upbringing and shared original music. That Sunday evening, Peter provided a concert of his songs to a small crowd of fans, and donated a portion of his CD sales to the church. Peter has offered to come back and visit us again, and is planning another concert with Pastor Paul for the Fall of 2024. The church has managed to stay financially solvent through the generous contributions of the Illinois Association, board members, and congregational giving. Numerous volunteers were also recognized for ongoing services behind the scenes (providing refreshments for coffee hour, watering plants, providing maintenance services and minor repairs etc.) In November (2023), the General Council held its Fall meeting in St. Louis and those who attended in-

person visited our Sunday morning service and Reverend Dr. Jim Lawrence provided the sermon.

Other church functions included weekly guitar lessons provided by Pastor Paul, and occasional karate lessons featuring different teachers. A local non-profit group (Dignity Period) has used our facility several times during the year, making small donations each time.

The church has also retained the services of Katina Truman, who is currently updating our website and Facebook page for both the church and our wedding services.

In the Spring, of 2024, the congregation and board entertained a proposal by long-time supporters and members to begin a land-conservation project with a portion of the church property defined as “the woods.” The conservation project, which is still being developed and will be submitted to the General Council for consideration and approval, will make available to the public a preserved wooded area to be maintained by a local non-profit organization, which will be free of commercial or residential development, free of dumping, free of encroachment by invasive plant species and routinely managed by volunteers and paid staff. Educational classes on nature preservation and other ecological topics would be provided by the same non-profit agency, and open to the general public. In addition to gaining widespread community support, if the project is approved, a private foundation is willing to donate as much as \$200,000 to be established as an endowment to provide ongoing support for the Church of the Open Word / Garden Chapel. While the property and woods remain under the ownership of General Convention, the woods will be permanently restricted from development should the property ever change hands.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie O'Reilly, President

Pastor Paul Deming

KANSAS ASSOCIATION

The Kansas Association met in Pretty Prairie, KS, on Sunday, April 28, 2024. The morning worship service was led by Rev. Jane Siebert. Her message was titled “What’s Happening, God?” Afterwards, dinner along with much good visiting was enjoyed.

The President of the Association, Carl Helm, opened the meeting at 1:30 p.m. The Minutes of the 2023 annual meeting along with a partial treasurer’s report were read and approved.

Reports for the past year from both Pawnee Rock and Pretty Prairie were given. Both Societies have remained active in both their church life and within their respective communities. Sunday school and morning worship services have continued, except for several bad weather times. In August both churches met at Toni Stimatze's home for lunch and a joint Sunday service led by Pastor Billie Blair, with the message entitled "When Did We Stop Skipping?" In October members met for the 49th time at Camp Mennoscah for a weekend under the leadership of Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen. December brought about the Christmas decorating of our churches and focusing on the Advent Season. Members of both churches gathered at Connie and Carl's home for another wonderful party of great food and a gift exchange. Lovely and memorable Christmas Eve services were celebrated in both churches. The Pawnee Rock church is in the leadership position in their community for the Easter sunrise service "The Way of the Cross." They thank all those who help and participate to make this event possible. Rev. Jane led the Pretty Prairie church service Easter morning followed by a dinner. It has been a busy year – good times when coming together. Though we are a small group, there is much love and commitment.

Though we won't be holding Camp Mennoscah this fall, several dates in the late summer and a time in the fall were discussed for a joint coming together by our two churches.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Veneta Lane, Secretary

CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Pawnee Rock, Kansas

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

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

On Sunday, March 31, 2024, we will participate in the sunrise service, "The Way of the Cross," in the community Easter service. Our church is in the leadership position for this service and without our church, the service would not happen. Thanks to all that helped and participated in the program. Roy and Trica Prescott are coordinators.

Last year's Kansas association meeting was held May 1, 2023, in Pretty Prairie, KS. Rev. Jane Siebert led the service and Carl Helm led the meeting. Elections were held and results were: President Carl Helm, Vice President Howard Bowman, Secretary Veneta Lane, Treasure Linda Kraus and Trustees Joan McDonald, Connie Helm, Megan Alexander.

In August, members of both Kansas Churches met at Toni Stimatze's home for a Service led by Rev. Billie, "When Did We Stop Skipping," and enjoyed a great lunch.

We held the annual Church Camp at Mennoscah in October with Rev. Alison from Maine leading the study sessions and the Sunday service with a wonderful meal to end the weekend.

On December 3, 2023, we enjoyed soup and desserts while we decorated our Church for Christmas. We had lot of helping hands.

Connie hosted the Christmas luncheon December 12 at our home for both Kansas Churches members and past members. We had good food, a fun gift exchange game and a great time.

On December 17, during our Sunday School time, we sacked 60 sacks of candy, nuts and fruit to be handed out at the Christmas Eve Program.

On December 24, at 5:00 PM we had a beautiful Christmas Eve Program. It was directed by Tricia Prescott and Anita Wilson. We had about 100 viewing the program. It was nice to have a large crowd. We rewarded people that participated in the program with a \$5 gift card. We also passed out candy sacks and fruit.

I want to thank all the members of the Church. Being a small Church, I think we all seem to come together and everyone helps where needed. I'd like to thank, Tricia Prescott, Roy Prescott, and Connie Helm for partnering to do the services, and Vivian Bright plays the organ when Karen is gone. Karen Hadley, for her beautiful organ music. Howard Bowman, for leading Sunday School and being the Treasurer. I also would like to thank Howard, Tricia, and Anita, for all the work we do mowing, trimming, and trash removal on the Rock. The State of Kansas pays our church for taking care of the Rock. Thanks goes to Toni Stimatze and her grandsons for taking care of the churchyard. Thanks to Anita Wilson for keeping the inside of the church looking beautiful, and for taking care of the flower bed outside. Thanks also to Anita for being the Secretary of the Board. Thanks to

Tricia Prescott and Anita Wilson for directing the Christmas Eve program. Also, I want to thank Roy Prescott and Megan Alexander for being the readers and all others on stage and those that sacked candy and fruit. It was a beautiful program with about 100 people in our church. I want to thank Jennie Wilson, for filling in as organist for the Christmas program. I would also like to thank my wife, Connie, who helps with a lot of extra things that need doing for the church. I appreciate her doing the newsletter.

The church donated cash donations to Barton County food bank, 20 student Christmas gifts from the giving tree (at Larned), money to Circles program, and a Larned after-prom party. During our business meeting in January we reviewed the use of the Giving Forward Foundation for recent gifts to be placed in an endowed fund and updating of our dissolution clause to meet what we are doing. We are also giving scholarships in the name of the Unhruh family. Some of the other gifts are given in the Name of the Frank and Luelma Hejney family.

This completes the 135th year of our church. I sincerely hope God will bless this church with many more years to come.

Respectfully submitted,
Carl Helm, President

NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH

Pretty Prairie, Kansas

Pastor Billie Blair continued to provide our Sunday service messages for at least two Sundays each month, with Reverend Jane available to provide services for our small congregation on occasional Sundays, including our Easter & Christmas services this church year. Thanks, as always, to both of our pastors as well as to our pianists, Veneta Lane and Debbie Siebert, providing the music for our Sunday services. Sunday School lessons continued to be shared throughout the year by member volunteers.

A synopsis of church happenings this church year –

At the beginning of the year, several members enjoyed sharing a special weekend with fellow Christians studying spiritual readings from Mark Nepo's "Seven Thousand Ways To Listen - Staying Close to What is Sacred," as well as taking relaxing nature walks along the Ninnescah river during Rev. Jane's Women's Retreat at Camp Mennosciah.

In the spring...

Our president, Joyce, found a free website-building site to put together info for and about our Church to hold us over until we are able to establish a link to the main website for the Swedenborg Organization.

Mike and Jean replaced the old, well-worn church sign frame with new wood and glass so we now have a fresh-looking, welcoming church sign again. *We had to laugh when Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen said (when asked about where the church sign letters were) “You mean you haven’t changed the sign message since I left Pretty Prairie 10 years ago?!”

We studied Richard Rohr’s *Wondrous Encounters* during Lent, celebrated Palm Sunday with Pastor Billie, hosted the Methodist Church on Maundy Thursday with a service shared by Rev. Jane and Rev. Angela Devore, and celebrated Easter Sunday led by Rev. Jane, followed by a luncheon, once again sharing conversation & food with family and friends.

Also, at this time we also began looking at revising the church constitution & dissolution clause.

In addition, Rev Jane shared enlightening stories and memories with photos from her recent trips to Egypt and to Jerusalem. In light of the war still happening now, in 2024, between Palestine and Israel, looking back at March 2023, Rev Jane reflected upon her thoughts via email while in Jerusalem– “this trip has touched me deeply. Last night we settled in for a time of sharing how we have been affected and how this trip has continued to expand our understanding of God. There is much division here between the Israelis and the Palestinians. And now we see demonstrations within the Israelis about the power grab of Netanyahu to control the courts. In the midst of millennia of struggle, revolutions and oppression, Jesus was born and continues to be.”

Rev Jane also shared thoughts of her Story Corps interview, “One Small Step Conversations,” regarding conversations between people with widely different world and political views.

<https://storycorps.org/discover/onesmallstep/conversations/>

Sue Harris offered our church members an experiential session on Sotai, Japanese physical therapy which can be compared to gentle yoga. From Sue, we always learn ways to gently take care of our bodies and minds, with her skills as a nurse - acupuncturist - and healer in general.

In the summer... We wished Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen well (on zoom) in her new life’s journey as she presented her last service at the Fryeburg Church, ME, as she is taking a break from church ministry to pursue opportunities in other directions, as a Reiki and Intuitive Chakra Practitioner. We wish her well in her life’s new journey!

Members attended services and mini-courses (via online) presented at the Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts -- this year's theme, The Practice of Optimism.

In addition, discussions regarding making edits and updates to our church's original constitution and dissolution clause began in earnest in the summer and continued throughout the year. The ebb and flow of the revisions took many directions, with questions and concerns being revisited and reworded numerous times before the final conclusion.

In the fall... We returned to having church services after traditionally having only Sunday School throughout the summer, and we started with the Fall Association meeting (Pretty Prairie and Pawnee Rock) in September at Toni and Rick Stimatze's house in St. John, with Pastor Billie leading the Sunday Service, followed, of course, by a potluck dinner.

In October, the two Kansas churches ventured to Camp Mennohah and enjoyed having Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen (accompanied by daughter Elin) as our guest minister. Rev. Alison led the Saturday Bible lesson about "sound", connecting sound to nature and to the Bible, and the group discussion was insightful. We enjoyed relaxing walks along the Ninnescah River, origami, and even some kayaking on the Ninnescah River. Linda led an excellent Sunday school lesson on how Genesis represents our spiritual development, followed by Rev. Alison's sermon on how some trees allow each other "space", reflecting how that is healthy for us as well to allow "space for ourselves and our spiritual journey."

And in the winter... we were pleased to again continue our support of a Christmas "family" -- this year choosing 6 children from a single family from the Pretty Prairie Angel tree at the Citizen's State Bank.

Rev. Jane led our Christmas Eve service this year as we spent time looking back at the wonderful memories we have shared on this Holy Night, honoring Jean Graber and the cherished plays that she wrote each year to involve all the children and young in heart in lessons through stories. We shared laughs as we remembered the times the pews vibrated with giggles, sang favorite Christmas hymns and had our traditional lighting of the Advent Wreath and Silent Night candles. Special music was shared by Debbie Siebert's piano students and with a dulcimer piece, "Christmastime". Thanks to Carly Sanchez for providing Zoom and to Joyce for recording and photos as well to all others for helping make this beautiful Christmas celebration happen.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Conkling, Secretary

MAINE ASSOCIATION

The Maine Association of the New Jerusalem Church consists of the Fryeburg New Church, the Portland New Church, and The Bath New Church.

Meetings continue yearly; the last one was held in Portland, Oct. 22, 2023. As we alternate the meeting place each year, this year's meeting will be held at The Fryeburg New Church on Nov. 3, 2024. Rev. Catherine Lauber has been serving as the minister of the Fryeburg Church since last September.

Pastor Lorraine Kardash continues to serve the Portland New Church and Rev. Ruben Bell serves at the Bath New Church.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pastor Lorraine Kardash, President and Secretary

BATH NEW CHURCH

Bath, Maine

The Bath Church of the New Jerusalem seeks a minister who would like to relocate to the picturesque coast of Maine.

The historical City of Bath is located on the pristine Kennebec River, 30 miles north of Portland, Maine. The beautiful four-mile sands of Popham Beach are but a few miles east of Bath on the Atlantic Ocean. Bath is proud of its long history of shipbuilding. "Bath Built Is Best Built," is the slogan of Bath Iron Works, builder of hundreds of destroyers that have protected America since 1884, and Maine's largest private employer, providing a livelihood for more than 5,000 men and women. BIW was founded by a Swedenborgian, Thomas W. Hyde.

The Bath New Church building has been in continuous use by Swedenborgians since it was built in 1843. With the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg as our guide, we offer spiritual seekers a unique perspective to better understand the Bible and to better live useful lives.

The ideal candidate will officiate and guide weekly scheduled worship services; provide pastoral visits to the church community; officiate at weddings, baptisms, and resurrection services; and oversee religious and educational programs.

Compensation is negotiable depending on experience and the particular skills and interests the candidate has to offer.

Please forward your cover letter, resume, a brief statement of your approach to growing the church, and a sample sermon no later than December 1, 2024 to:

Bath Church of the New Jerusalem

Pastoral Search Committee

PO Box 1139

Bath, Maine 04530

or email to:

Gretchen Goodine (Bath Society Secretary), mgoodine@msn.com.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gretchen Goodine, Secretary

FRYEBURG NEW CHURCH

Fryeburg, Maine

After ten years, Rev. Alison Lane-Olsen stepped down as the minister for Fryeburg New Church in June 2023. Rev. Catherine Lauber joined us in September 2023, and our Sunday worship service continues to be offered in hybrid, inviting all in the sanctuary and on Zoom to be part of the congregation. Rev. Catherine also offers bi-weekly mediation, open to all.

We hosted an ecumenical Thanksgiving service, and Rev. Catherine delivered the Christmas Eve message at the Fryeburg Congregational Church. For Easter, we invited all to walk through our traditional Easter Alfombra.

As with many churches, fundraising keeps the doors open and exposes the outside world to our church. We had a successful 2023 Fryeburg Fair, our largest fundraiser, spanning over nine days, and recording over 1,000 hours of volunteer time. Our annual craft fair was in August, and we participated in the Dole 3 Miler race, sponsored by the Fryeburg New Church Assembly.

We make our space to available community groups, music teachers, and coaches, as well as regular Saturday Tai Chi practice, and we host musical concerts throughout the year in our sanctuary. We hosted a summer camp in July.

One choir practices in our sanctuary on a weekly basis. A local community group recently offered a puzzle tournament. One family who has taken part in some activities recently began attending worship services. Even though our goal in offering our space for use is not to specifically grow our church service attendance, there may be more who find our church family because of these activities.

The Fryeburg New Church continues to grow while holding fast to its strong heritage. Our focus remains on serving the community. As the community's needs

change along with our church's transition of spiritual leadership, we acknowledge that unity is what we desire and can offer.

Respectfully submitted,
Leone Dyer, Chair

FRYEBURG NEW CHURCH ASSEMBLY

Fryeburg, Maine

The Fryeburg New Church Assembly (www.fryeburg.org) held its annual summer session this year from July 27 – August 11. Our themes were, “The Blessings and Challenges of Community, in the Bible and Now,” week one, and “Swedenborg’s Analysis of the Human Psyche,” week two. We were thrilled to welcome Rev. Paul Martin as our Everett K. Bray Visiting Lecturer. We continued to offer our religious programming virtually with hybrid interaction with those who were at camp for another year, which included a very well attended virtual lecture by Rev. Robert McCluskey. We had a vibrant group of Flames (teens, ages 13–17) first week and a combined group of Flames and Senior Sparks (tweens, ages 11–12) second week that continue to enjoy the bond of being at the FNCA together, and growing up with a special shared camp experience.

The Buildings and Grounds Committee once again spent countless hours on the facility updates. After our water pump failed three days before camp session in 2023, we had a new double water pump system installed with a campus-wide water filter. Not only does it have a failure prevention system, but the FNCA also now has safe drinking water across the entire campus! A special thanks to the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem for their generous donation to not only cover these updates, but also included funds for the electricity upgrade that is needed to support the new system. We had Ross Woofenden rebuild the front deck with an ADA-compliant ramp and two beautiful new doors to the lecture hall. Additionally, we successfully hosted a wedding for 80 guests at the end of June. Many hours of volunteer work go into making the FNCA property usable for both in-session and off-session, we are deeply thankful to all who give their time for our continued success.

The Eleventh Annual Dole Three Miler Road Race (www.dole3miler.com) was well attended, with both in-person and virtual racers. George Dole’s 14-year-old granddaughter came in 7th place! This event continues to be one of our biggest fundraisers, and we are very much looking forward to the twelfth Dole Three Miller next year on Saturday, August 9, 2025.

The FNCA had a few changes on the Board of Directors during the 2024 session. Dan Dyer was re-elected to another 5-year term on the board, Emily Tergli-afiera was elected Camp Director by the membership, and Beki Greenwood was elected Secretary by the Board of Directors. The Board also appointed Kristina Madjerac as Assistant Camp Director. The membership also passed a motion to request being recognized as a constituent body of the Maine Association.

We are looking forward to the 2025 session of the FNCA—July 26 through August 10—and will continue to offer hybrid options for anyone, anywhere, to be able to join us.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebekah Greenwood, FNCA Secretary

PORTLAND NEW CHURCH

Portland, Maine

The Portland New Church in Portland, Maine, continues to grow as the center of a diversified community, which shares their own unique love and wisdom with the greater Portland community. The President of our council, Anne Gresinger, has taken over this year as the building use coordinator, as well as administrator of our website at www.theportlandnewchurch.com, which is well visited and indicative of the activity and mission of the church.

The small, but loyal, core church membership remains the same, however, we have two new council members, one who is our handyman, and the other, an ordained interfaith minister who is active in the interfaith community. We continue to hold a 2nd Sunday worship service, a monthly spiritual book study service, and a creative arts service, led by LP Lorraine Kardash, and are in the process of adding a monthly visiting minister service.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pastor Lorraine Kardash

MASSACHUSETTS NEW CHURCH UNION

The Massachusetts New Church Union continues to support its churches and mission. After several years of diligence, we have decided to sell the Newtonville Church of the Open Word. It had a distinctive and distinguished life. Designed by

Ralph Adams Cram, it is an historic property that is going to be preserved by the new owners. The church has struggled for the last 20 years, and the cost to continue to maintain the property had become too injurious to the Union.

Pastor Kelly Milne is leading the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church, and has an active Sunday school. Rev Dr. Donna Keane, the pastor at the Elmwood church, has brought in some new members and continues to record a service for the local cable channel. As pastor of Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Rev. Sage Cole continues to move forward with the Helen Keller Center and is engaging the Harvard campus and online users with fundamental questions of honesty, love, and usefulness.

We are looking forward to the possibilities that are before us as we continue to work together for the future of the church in Massachusetts

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kevin Baxter, Secretary

NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH

Bridgewater, Massachusetts

The Bridgewater Church meets weekly in the sanctuary, all worship led by Pastor Kelly Milne. We continue to offer our services on Facebook Live, with an average of 40 plus views each week. Daniel Pappas, a talented musician, is our pianist. His music is a joy to listen to and adds much to each service. Pastor Kelly teaches Sunday School with 4-6 children (ages 5-13) before the church service, including them in the first half of the morning worship, and ending their stay with a Children's Talk.

It was a pleasure to participate in the 2023 Convention and to host the ordination ceremony. Our building is special to us, and we were happy to have so many enjoy the space and the service. In October, we joined Elmwood, Cambridge and The Boston church for the annual Massachusetts New Church Union outing. Forty-five members and friends enjoyed a cruise along the Cape Cod Canal and then dinner together at a fine restaurant. On Thanksgiving Sunday, we joined with the Elmwood Church for a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. This year, our third year dining together, was enjoyed at the Bridgewater church. Pastor Kelly participated in the Bridgewater Ecumenical Thanksgiving service and the Easter Sunrise Service. She and Rev. Donna Keane, have initiated a monthly "Pastor's Corner" cable show. This has been well received and they continue to work together on this and other events/programs.

Our rental agreement with Pilgrim Area Collaborative (PAC) continues. This year it is a small group of 4 cognitively challenged students and 3 teachers. They are respectful of the property and we appreciate them. Sprint (now T-Mobile) ended their lease with us for telecommunications on February 1, 2024, We are grateful for our 25 year partnership and for their initial replacement of our steeple.

Accepting challenges as they come, we look forward to Convention 2024 and to the year ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Merrilee Phinney, Treasurer

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

Cambridge, Massachusetts

For the 2023-2024 church year, we at Swedenborg Chapel have taken some new steps to explore and expand what it means to be the New Church. We undertook a yearlong study of Emanuel Swedenborg's *New Jerusalem*, in both our weekly worship services and in a weekly virtual book study held on Facebook Live.

In connection with our ongoing efforts to establish a Helen Keller Center at Swedenborg Chapel, we launched a Thursday night virtual offering in the Fall of 2023 called "Be Love, Be Honest, Be Useful." These weekly gatherings emerged with the idea of the Helen Keller Center being grounded in the values of love, wisdom and usefulness, embodying Swedenborg's insight that worship is life. This also led to Rev. Sage's publication of a new virtual newsletter, <https://worshipislife.substack.com>, to explore these themes through writing and an interview podcast.

Rev. Sage has expanded her role as the Swedenborgian Chaplain at Harvard University by offering spiritual direction to Harvard students. The Harvard Chaplains have also agreed to be partners in a series of in-person events in support of the Helen Keller Center, organized around the themes of Love, Wisdom and Usefulness, which we plan to host in 2025. In all these new initiatives, Rev. Sage has been supported by our part-time Digital Media Coordinator, Alex Gayheart, whom we were able to hire at the beginning of 2024 thanks to a generous Augmentation Grant from Convention.

Our wildflower gardens, planted now for the third consecutive year by our president PJ Buehler, have garnered much attention and affection from the Cam-

bridge community, including a re-wilding initiative at Harvard. The wildflowers continue to be our greatest local outreach, and a living embodiment of worship as all of life.

We just concluded our sixth season of monthly Taizé prayer services with our talented cantor and musicians Stephanie Hollenberg and Luke Concannon. Sadly, Stephanie is graduating from Harvard Divinity School, and she and Luke are relocating to Vermont. Nonetheless, we plan to continue this ministry with a model of increased partnership with other Christian communities in the area. We thank the Massachusetts New Church Union for their continued financial support of this ministry.

Our wedding ministry continues to be vibrant, and other income streams from long-term renters, concerts and other events, and ongoing support from the Massachusetts New Church Union, keep us sustained financially. We are a small but committed congregation, and we pray that the Lord continues to help us navigate the uncertainties of growth and change and to walk faithfully into the life of the New Church.

Respectfully submitted,

The Officers of the Cambridge Society

ELMWOOD NEW CHURCH

Elmwood, Massachusetts

No report submitted.

CHURCH OF THE OPEN WORD

Newtonville, Massachusetts

No report submitted.

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION

Meeting was called to order at 10:17am by President Barb Barber.

Opening prayer and devotion, “Our Spiritual Inheritance” was offered by Rev. Renée.

- Discussion was held on our own “Spiritual Inheritance”

12 Members in attendance were: President Barb Barber, Rev. Renée Machin-
iak, Vice President Marjory Leas, Secretary Ian Barber, Treasurer B.J. Neuen-
feldt, Barb Boxwell, Lori Patana, Barb Torangeau, Mary Lou Jarrett, Jeanine
Keller, Sharon Billings, Dorie Litchfield

1 Guest in attendance: Glen Litchfield

Report of the Secretary

- Ian handed out copies from the Michigan Association Annual Meeting from 2022
 1. Mary Lou’s last name corrected from Jennett to Jarrett. Amended
 2. Rev. Jim Lawrence elected President of the ‘Ministry’ to ‘Convention’ Amended
 3. Jane S corrected to Jane Siebert. Amended
- Rev. Renée moved to approved as amended, Barb Boxwell seconded. Report on File as amended.

Report of the Treasurer

- B.J. handed out copies of the ‘Financial Report: Oct. 1, 2022 - Sept. 30, 2032’.
 1. Acct.value updated from ‘\$622,8574.97’ to ‘\$622,857.49’
- Ian moved to approve report as corrected, Barb Boxwell seconded. Report is on File.

Almont Retreat Center Facilities Report - Lori Patana

- ‘So Faiths The Light’ filming has completed. The director has started attending Film Festivals.
- Tom Neuenfeldt came down late October to help train on winterizing the camp grounds.
- Special Touch arrived Mid-March to begin renovations.
 1. New flooring throughout the campgrounds.
 2. New doors throughout the campgrounds.
 3. Driveway was graded with limestone.
 4. Compressor on the well had been replaced.
- “Brick The Yard” bricks are still available.

- Weddings, Baby Showers, Graduations, Disc Golf throughout the summer.
- Chapel is being painted before our 150th Anniversary in 2025.
- Blessing Box is still available for the community.
- Betsy Aldrich submitted a letter thanking Michigan Association for the generous donation for renovations.

Ministerial Reports - Rev. Renée

- Rev. Renée provided a copy of her report.
 1. Board of Trustees purchased a Brick for the “Brick The Yard” campaign.
- Report is on File.

Old Business

- Convention 2023
 1. B.J. provided an update. “Mostly work, No play”
- New Ministries Report
 1. Rev. Devin Zuber was ordained.
 2. Rev. Connie McOsker was confirmed.
- Satellite Gatherings
 1. Rev. Renée asked May Lou if she’d be willing to host, and Mary Lou said yes.
 - Hopes for a Spring gathering.
- Women’s Retreat
 1. We had a good group in attendance.
- Other
 1. No other old business.

New Business

- Convention 2024
 1. Michigan is hosting in Lansing on June 28 - July 2, (roughly).
 - Kellogg Center.
 2. Craig asked if Almont would be willing to help with Convention.
 - Barb Barber and Chris Laitner discussed some ideas prior to Annual Meetings
 3. B.J. is willing to help serve as a contact person to Convention on behalf of Michigan Association.
 4. Some discussion was held for brainstorm some ideas for outings.
 - Potentially have an event for Teens and Young Adults.
 - Mini-Course on Swedenborg in Lansing.
- Presentation of 2023-24 Budget

1. B.J. presented the Proposed Budget for 2023-2024.

- Discussion was held for 'Convention help 2024 (in Mich)' line item.

- Amended from \$10,000 to \$15,000 unanimously supported.

- Peaceful Tomorrows line item for \$100 was added to the Budget.

- Almont Retreat Center from \$4,000 to \$8,000.

2. Rev. Renée moved to approve the Budget as amended, Marjory seconded.

- Passed unanimously.

- Women's Retreat (Date TBD)

1. April 26-28.

- Michigan Association Meeting 2024

1. October 5, 2023 at 11:00am.

- Nomination for One (1) Trustee

1. Ian nominated Mary Lou. Mary Lou accepted.

- Election of Officers for 2024 Year

1. President - Barbara Barber

2. Vice President - Marjory Leas

3. Secretary - Ian Barber

4. Treasurer - B.J. Neuenfeldt

5. Trustee - Sharon Billings

6. Trustee - Tom Neuenfeldt

7. Trustee - Mary Lou Jarrett

- B.J. moved to cast a unanimous ballot for the proposed slate of officers, seconded by Marjory. Passed unanimously.

- Other thoughts/ideas/insights to share

1. Once we find out more on Convention, we might need to hold a conference call.

Executive Committee Meeting 2024

- Date TBD

Ian moved to adjourn, seconded by Dorie. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 12:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ian Barber, Secretary

ALMONT NEW CHURCH ASSEMBLY AND RETREAT CENTER*Allenton, Michigan*

The annual Almont Summer School was held July 20th–28th, 2024, with the theme of “The Book of Revelation: Dragons, Beasts, and Horsemen!” Many new and returning staff members helped make camp possible for the 139 registered attendees, which represents a return to the pre-pandemic camp experience! We were blessed to have extended and diversified our lecture staff this year to include ministers from east to west coasts, and from differing philosophical and religious backgrounds, hearing from a theology student, Tirah Keal, to well-versed Swedenborgian ministers: Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Rev. Renee Machiniak, Rev. Kit Billings, Rev. Sage Cole, and Rev. Kevin Baxter, in addition to Dr. Elliott Bazzano, a professor of Islamic studies.

The theme of this year’s session is central to our faith, and the lecturers helped those who were able to attend explore what it means for the New Jerusalem to descend into our lives. Our many thanks to our Spiritual Program Coordinator, Rev. Jane Siebert, for assembling this amazing group of dynamic speakers to take on this enormous, spiritual task. Our youth campers also enjoyed engaging in conversation and projects that tied in with this year’s theme. The teaching staff did an excellent job of making Dragons, Beasts and Horsemen a fun yet relatable topic to dive into. We are thankful for their hard work, organization, and dedication to our smallest and tallest campers.

A highlight of the week is always our time-honored, sacred tradition of the Survivor Service, where new teen campers experience induction into a unique group of spiritual friendship through an evening chapel service surrounded by friends and loved ones; a service that spans generations. The preparation involved in guiding the teens through the week on this journey, and working up to the Survivor Service is immense. We are so thankful to Tammara Mounce for having taken on this role and creating space for our teen campers for many years. Your love and dedication to this program and the teens has been incredible. In that same vein of gratitude, we are equally excited to welcome Tony Kalinowski, who will be taking over the role of the Survivor Program Coordinator. We are eager to see what directions he can grow and guide the program.

The Annual Meeting of the Almont New Church Assembly held during the Summer School session saw the induction of two new members as well as the election of Oliver Hamilton to the Executive Committee as our newest trustee. The Assembly also voted to request Constituent Body status within Convention

and have sent a letter to the Michigan Association for consideration. While the close of camp session is always bittersweet, and as we prepare to part ways, we are reminded that we are called to live as community members of the New Jerusalem no matter where we live, work, or play.

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

Respectfully submitted,

ANCA Executive Board

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CITY

Royal Oak, Michigan

The Royal Oak Church of the Holy City continues to offer hybrid worship services throughout the year, meeting in-person at the Women's Club and in our backyard garden, as well as online Zoom. We are grateful to have some of our isolated members join us on Zoom regularly. Our average attendance through the last year has been 22 people and, since September 15, 2023, we have confirmed one new member; an individual confirmation class was offered.

During the autumn and winter months, we offered monthly online Wednesday Meditations and a monthly community outreach program at the Women's Club "Awakening Wonder." We are grateful for our Sunday morning musicians, violinist Jenni Burke and guitarist Tom Allen, as well as pianist Karen Billings. We welcomed back Joel Palmer as a regular musician once a month beginning October 2023. Weekly Church Updates were sent out to members and friends to keep everyone connected.

Our church collected donations to support service dogs for veterans and participated in our city's "Clean Veterans Graves" at Oakview Cemetery in May and September. We volunteered at the Starr Presbyterian Homeless Shelter Warming Center, serving breakfasts and baking Shepherd's Pies for their lunches. Rev. Renee continued to serve in our city as a volunteer oncology chaplain and volunteer police chaplain. She joined the Royal Oak Lion's Club and became a Director on their board in June 2023. Rev. Renee participated in ongoing educational programming offered by Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism (SAAR) "Learning from the Past and Healing the Future." The Royal Oak Church gratefully

received a \$500.00 Grey Fund grant to assist hosting guest speaker, holocaust survivor, Irene Miller, on September 13, 2023. Our church bought and gave away a box of Irene's book, Into No Man's Land, and donated remaining funds from the event to Peaceful Tomorrows in loving memory of Alicia Titus and family.

Rev. Renee served as Youth Chaplain at the December 2023 Almont Teen Winter Retreat and the 2024 Memorial Day Teen Retreat. She participated in Flowerfest and led our 2024 annual Almont Women's Retreat. She participated in the Midwest Peer Supervision in LaPorte in April 2024. In May 2024, Renee co-organized and co-led the first online Gathering Leaves Midwest Conference with Charlotte Gyllenhaal.

Renee lectured at the 2024 Almont Summer School sessions, participated in C.O.M. meetings, was elected to serve on General Council and participated in the Convention, in June 2024 in E. Lansing, MI, offering a mini-course on church history in Michigan. We are most grateful for our Michigan Association members who worked hard with the Convention Planning Committee to prepare and offer a most successful 2024 Convention session! Rev. Renee continues to mentor monthly Licensed Pastors, Robbin Ferriman and Tassy Farwell, as well as participate in quarterly mentor supervision and Swedenborgian Chaplain Support Groups. She offered worship with The New Church of Montgomery in Cincinnati on Sunday, August 25, 2024, for their Homecoming celebration.

SEPTEMBER 15, 2023 – SEPTEMBER 15, 2024 STATISTICS:

0 BAPTISMS

2 FUNERALS/MEMORIALS: Dorothy Earls (10/4/23), Joyce Fekete (7/20/2024)

1 NEW MEMBER: Beth Sowles (10/8/2023)

UPCOMING EVENTS: MI Assoc. Mtg (10/5/24); Music Fundraiser (10/13/24); Satellite Mtg. (9/20/24)

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Renee Machiniak, Minister

Barb Barber, Treasurer

MIDDLE ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION

No meetings were held.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Rich Tafel, President

Rev. Shada Sullivan, Secretary

Robin Tafel, Treasurer

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CITY

Wilmington, Delaware

The year 2023, at the Church of the Holy City, has been a year of restoration and renovation, led by Reverend Shada Sullivan, with help from the congregation. The following is a list of projects:

- Empowerment Grant approved, allowing installations of mini-splits for heat and air conditioning in the Parish Hall and lower level. This system eliminates the use of the boiler and need for oil.
- Extensive work has been completed on the Tower, including cleaning out pigeon debris and rebuilding the infrastructure. This work began in 2023.
- Heaters have been installed in the bathrooms.
- The pollinator garden is doing well. Done Right Plumbers was able to run a water line from men's room to a new spigot outside, so we have access to water for the garden.
- The basement and Sunday School room have been cleaned out and cleaned up. Thanks to Mary Alice and Ed and Susan and Joe DeSantis!!!
- The Board has been discussing installing cameras outside to monitor activity in the outside stairwells and the property in general. No decision has been made yet.
- Reverend Shada and Jean have continued meeting with Shalonda, our events coordinator, every Monday at 10:00 via Zoom.
- Green For the Greater Good continues to meet on Saturday morning at 10:00 in the parish hall.
- The Copeland String Quartet continues their concerts on Sunday afternoons on a scheduled basis.

My thanks to the trustees for their continued dedication to the work of this church!!Also to the members of the congregation for their involvement in all of the activities throughout the year. And to Reverend Shada Sullivan for her tireless

work on researching grant money AND filing the paperwork, all the while nurturing this congregation and attending to our spiritual needs.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Dougherty, President

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CITY

Washington, District of Columbia

The past year has been busy one, as we contemplate the sale of the church structure and look forward to acquiring a new home in Washington, DC, and advancing a new ministry to serve the local community and the wider world.

As we prepare for exciting change, we continue to serve a growing congregation, which, through the electronic magic of Zoom, comprises worshippers from Nova Scotia to Hawaii. More than 30 members attended the Easter service, virtually and in person, with our current membership standing at 36. Increasingly, young people attend services at the church. Rev. Tafel often takes these members to dinner after the service, where animated discussion of the sermon topic continues. Approximately 50 different people have attended services or served as guest speakers in the past year; 100 have done so between 2022 and the present. In recent months, we have added nine new members, and several baptisms have been performed. Contributions to the church have increased in parallel with the expansion of the membership. We continue to derive helpful revenue from rental of church space.

Several church-sponsored programs should be noted. On Sunday, December 10, a brilliant young Korean-American pianist, Junghoon Park, presented an exciting offering of 19th and 20th century selections, featuring works of Sergei Rachmaninoff, whose 150th birth year was celebrated in 2023. In a second “Music with the Angels” program on Saturday, March 16, the church’s own Ross Capon organized and led a performance of orchestral selections by the Accord Symphony Orchestra based in Rockville, MD. In addition to music of Johann Strauss Jr. and Franz Josef Haydn, the program included exciting music of American composers Aaron Copland and Louis Moreau Gottschalk. This was followed by the Washington, DC-based Accord Wind Ensemble under conductor Julien Benichou, performing works by Richard Strauss and Mozart. The Swedenborg Reading Group continues to flourish, with eight members meeting on Zoom each Monday evening from across seven time zones. While book selections include

studies by contemporary philosophers and neuroscientists, Swedenborgian perspectives and insights are featured significantly in the discussions.

After much careful preparation, we are nearly at the point of putting the church property on the market. While we have had to revise downward somewhat the estimated amount of the sale, it will assuredly provide sufficient funds to acquire the property needed to carry forward the mission of the church. While the sale may not be consummated for some time, we are already deeply engaged in discussion of our vision for the future. Central to that vision is the idea of a “home” that will embody a sense of community and security. That home will be designed to lend itself to many different uses, including development of spiritual entrepreneurship and the offering of musical performances. Inclusion of a kitchen will enlarge the range of possible activities. Our central concern in all that we will be doing in our new home is to help bridge social and political divides, and promote healing for individuals and groups that experience isolation, alienation, and exclusion. We believe that the church has a real opportunity to exercise a positive impact on society by creating this kind of a home.

All of this will be possible because of the generosity and unstinting support of the national leadership of Convention. We are deeply grateful for critically needed loans to help undertake major renovation work to prepare the church for sale and to provide needed support as we await the sale. Especially we are grateful that we have been able to proceed with the support and encouragement of the national leadership at every step in the process of moving to a sale and preparing for a new home.

Respectfully submitted,

Malcolm Peck, Vice-President

TEMENOS

West Chester, Pennsylvania

Temenos Community continues its work with the sacred land we hold near and dear to each of our hearts. Our hope is to protect this land in perpetuity under the guidance of a local land trust and the SCNA.

Our various missions at Temenos have been strong. Some of our programs and offerings include:

- Sunday morning services, Rev. Yung Me Suh Morris
- Song of the Trees (part of the Wild Church Network), Patrick Cody
- Community garden, DhamiBoo

- Grief Group, Cynthia Sperberg
- Yoga and other wellness groups and programs
- Self-publishing
- Tree identification programs
- Poetry in Motion
- Musical programs
- Piano lessons, Megan Balee
- Sacred drumming
- Trail clean up days

We are planning several events for our local community over the coming months. One of our members, Megan Balee, is successfully expanding our community footprint on social media.

As a community, we are whole, and we are together as one and striving our way into the future. We remain vigilant and optimistic as we look to God to hold Temenos in the Light and show us how best to serve his Will.

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Maurer, President

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION

No report submitted.

KOREAN NEW CHURCH

New York, New York

We held worship services every Sunday either via Zoom or had gathering in the rented space. However, we felt more than ever the significance of having a church space where we could run worship services and church programs whenever needed.

The worship service with a young man who was a Sunday School student and is now a mature adult working out of state was a time of joy and satisfaction.

In addition, I was invited to the 97th birthday party of old member who was unable to attend church physically due to his old age, and the meeting with his family was also a time of blessing and grace.

On Sundays in May, when the weather is nice, we plan to have an outdoor worship service, and on the third weekend of June we are planning a three-day, two-night retreat.

We continue to find a space to worship and for the church outreach ministry, and to find a new pastor to serve the church in the future.

We are grateful for thy light and guidance, and we pray that the will of the Holy Lord will be done through us.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Youngmin Kim

NEW YORK NEW CHURCH

New York, New York

Under the leadership of Rev. Rich Tafel, along with members of the New York New Church and representatives from Convention, the New York New Church Legacy Fund was established in January, 2024. The Legacy Fund is made up of proceeds from the recent sale of the New York New Church. The purpose of the Fund is to “support Swedenborgian societies, associations, start-up and existing ministries, theological schools, camps, retreats, conferences, meetings that are sponsored and/or recognized by the Denomination, and other activities aligned with promoting the interest of the Congregation Mission (Approved Entities).”

First priority will be given to plans to start a Swedenborgian Society in New York City; second priority will be given to other approved entities located within the New York Metropolitan Area; third priority will be given to approved entities located in North America outside of New York State.

The mission of the New York New Church Legacy Fund will preserve the values held by this historic ministry inspired by the Swedenborgian insight that to love the neighbor is to love God. We accomplish this by supporting innovative works that provide useful impact toward greater inclusion, social justice, and leadership for resilient communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert McCluskey, Chair of Board of Trustees

OHIO ASSOCIATION

The Ohio Association met for its annual weekend meeting from September 29th-Oct 1st, 2023, at the Glendale New Church, Cincinnati area.

On Friday, Sept. 29th, Rev. Betsy Coffman led a celebration of life service for the Rev. Richard (Dick) Tafel, Jr., with many family members and friends present to remember and honor his life as a family man and minister, who contributed so much to his lifetime career in the Swedenborgian Church.

A total of 21 attended the scheduled activities, which included a business meeting and spiritually themed program on Saturday, with a Riverboat cruise that evening. On Sunday Rev. Betsy Coffman and Robbin Ferriman, LP, led the service and Communion.

Lunch and socializing concluded the weekend, with warm “good-byes”.

The following officers were elected at the business session:

President: Gloria Toot

Vice President: Sue Ditmire

Treasurer: Frank Doyle

Recording Secretary: Robbin Ferriman

Corresponding Secretary: Anna Clem

Nominating Committee: Pat Sommer

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Betsy Coffman

NEW CHURCH OF MONTGOMERY

Cincinnati, Ohio

The New Church of Montgomery congregation meets online for Zoom worship services on the 2nd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of each month, with approximately 20 participants. When we are in-person, we meet at the Glendale New Church. We maintain a social media presence on WordPress, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, where we regularly add sermons, musical selections, or Swedenborgian quotes.

A dozen visiting, resident or lay-ministers have conducted our worship services, and the congregation appreciates the variety of approaches and messages. We also visit other Swedenborgian Zoom Services via “Virtual Field Trip”. Fellowship precedes our PowerPoint worship service, and participants may assist in readings during that worship. After sermons, there is discussion, which supports reflection/community.

NCoM’s variety of events include our annual Homecoming Picnic, and Charity Art Show. Some members attend the Festival of Faiths convention, or gather for our Ohio Association Meeting. At this year’s meeting, participants enjoyed a

lively discussion on “The Joy of Regeneration,” and afterwards embarked on an Ohio Riverboat dinner cruise. The Annual Harvest Feast is popular, as is our lovely Easter breakfast/Zoom/In-person worship service. Members may also convene quarterly to volunteer at Matthew 25 Ministries and package items for disaster relief. Some members participate in the occasional garden party to maintain the Glendale New Church garden which NCoM expanded and developed (a lovely mix of perennials and annuals is visible from the main thoroughfare).

In lieu of a formal collection, members donate to local organizations. NCoM has supported a Parents of Special Needs Students advocacy group, low-income students attending prom, as well as contributing towards memorial services. This year, NCoM gathered with the families of church members and friends to celebrate their lives and transition to the spiritual world, including those of longtime minister, Rev. Dick Tafel, friend, Dick Sommer, and member, Larry Vaughn.

Finally, work has begun to hire an administrator who will take over the responsibilities of Gloria and Pete Toot who will be retiring from the wonderful services they do for the church – please inquire via email if you are interested in applying for this position!

Respectfully submitted,
Gloria Toot, Treasurer

CLEVELAND SWEDENBORG CHAPEL

Cleveland, Ohio

We meet as a Bible study group. We either meet at Panera or in a park in nicer weather.

Barb joined us about a year ago and is enjoying our faith teachings.

Respectfully submitted,
Janie Dzeba, Secretary

URBANA SOCIETY OF THE NEW CHURCH

Urbana, Ohio

Worship & Related Activities:

Worship Services are held weekly, with an ongoing Zoom option. Except for special services, we hold a reading and discussion during the service rather than a sermon. We just completed *How to Think Like an Angel*, published by

the Swedenborg Foundation. We have just begun *Immortal Diamond*, by Richard Rohr. Our discussion will compare and contrast the readings with Swedenborgian thought. We hold special services for World Day of Peace, Epiphany, Palm Sunday, Easter, Earth Day, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas Eve. Services are led by Rev. Betsy Coffman and Robbin Ferriman, L.P., who function as a team ministry.

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

Denominational Activities/Programs:

Convention 2023— Seven members attended Convention in Bridgewater, MA, while, others several others attended virtual events. One teen attended the youth program.

Ohio Association 2023: In October, we met at the Glendale New Church in the Cincinnati, Oh area for our annual weekend. Rev. Betsy Coffman led a Celebration of Life service for the late Richard Tafel, Jr., who had served as minister in Cincinnati for many years. Our spiritual program focused on Saturday This was jointly led

Community Outreach & Connections:

Our Wedding outreach ministry has declined significantly since the Pandemic. Efforts continue to reach out to those who wish for a “church wedding” but do not have a “home church”. Robbin Ferriman, LP and Cindi Haimerl, who is a state-licensed wedding officiant, oversee this program. Three 12-step meetings our held in our church weekly.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Betsy Coffman

PACIFIC COAST ASSOCIATION

The PCA held its 2023 annual meeting virtually on October 21, 2023. The PCA Officers decided to hold the PCA annual meeting in person every other year to be more fiscally economical and to reduce the level of effort on the membership

for meeting planning. This decision also enables the PCA to continue supporting its ministries and providing travel assistance to its ministers and Licensed Pastors who wish to attend future COM meetings and Conventions. The 2024 PCA annual meeting will be held in person during October in San Pedro near The Garden Church.

Due to good stewardship and reduced expenses during the pandemic, the PCA was able to provide grants to our ministries to support various projects and initiatives this past year. Grants totaling \$4,000 were awarded during the Board Meeting in April 2024.

The PCA assisted one of our ministers and one of our Licensed Pastors to travel to the 2024 COM meeting and SCNA Convention in East Lansing, MI. The PCA continues to support the virtual aspects of the conventions by contributing \$2,000 to both the 2023 Convention in Bridgewater, MA and the 2024 Convention in East Lansing, MI.

Peer Support for the ministers in the PCA was held at St. Columba's Episcopal Retreat Center in Inverness, CA in April 26-28, 2024. Rev, Rachel Rivers offered a wonderful interactive workshop on sharing our challenges and rewards in our ministries. There were 7 participants: 4 ministers (Rev. Rachel River, Rev. Jonathan Mitchell, Rev, Kathy Speas, and Rev. Junchol Lee) and 3 Licensed Pastors, (Pastor Tassy Farwell, Pastor Consolin McOsker, and Pastor Jae Hyon Chung). Having this event bi-annually was helpful financially, because we were able to fully support ministers traveling from a distance. One regret was that ministers from the Wayfarers' Chapel were not able to attend due to the tremendous challenge that they were heavily involved in.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Junchol Lee, President, Pacific Coast Association

AGAPAO CHURCH

Orange County, California

No report submitted.

THE GARDEN CHURCH

San Pedro, California

We marked 1 year with Rev. David C. Brown as one of our Pastors, and we celebrated Connie's consecration in September of 2023. This year we have seen our church community grow with the addition of 6 new members and one baptism. We also said goodbye to one of our beloved founding members and former board chair Annette Ciketic who passed from this life to more life on March 1, 2024, surrounded by her family.

In August of last year, we celebrated our children who were growing in faith with the gift of a Bible. Having become strong readers, Leia and Leila were given bibles from our church. It is a blessing to see these little ones grow in faith and love of the Lord. In September, we had a tremendous celebration as Connie became the Licensed Pastor of The Garden Church. This winter has been particularly wet and sent us indoors for worship on several occasions. We have been blessed by good neighbors who continue to share their indoor space with us. One of our new neighbors, Sunken City books, run by PCA member, Wayfarers chapel person, and seminary student Ben Gunter, has become the new meeting place for our Theological Thursday education group run by Rev. Dave.

The closure of Wayfarers Chapel in February has had an impact on The Garden Church, both because of the devastating sense of loss for our larger community, and because of several wonderful people who are active in both communities. Each Sunday, we pray for those who call the chapel home, for the future of the structure, and the worshiping community that is currently displaced. We did also receive word from Rev. Dan Burchett, Executive Director of Wayfarers, that they will (understandably) not be able to complete their financial commitment supporting the Garden Church this year. The members of the Wayfarers community remain committed to providing food for our Sunday meals, and we are grateful for their generous spirit.

As the winter rains subsided and regular sunshine has returned to the garden, we were blessed to celebrate spring time with a mostly outdoor (Palm Sunday and Easter had to be indoors due to weather) Holy Week. Even though we had to move Easter worship and our egg hunt for children indoors, we were blessed with a baptism and more than 70 in attendance for Easter! Earth month brought us even more celebrations with a large, Feed and be Fed Earth Day Fair and an Interfaith Earth Day Sunday worship arranged in conjunction with the San Pedro

Faith Consortium. Our last year in the garden has been one filled with tender moments, miracles, and blessings. We are eager to see what our Lord has in store this coming year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Dr. Amanda Riley, Lead Pastor

SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH OF SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco, California

Our worship services continue to occur both in-person and live-streaming on a weekly basis with a steadily-increasing average in-person attendance of 40. We continue to offer Sunday school, which is growing with more young families attending, as well as a weekly Swedenborgian reading group and Bible study. We are blessed to have Rev. Dr. Devin Zuber, who was ordained in 2023, as our assistant minister.

We held many of our annual events, including the 86th Celebration of Marriage service in March, and the Animal Blessing service in September. In June, we held a ceremony for our Land Acknowledgement Plaque installation, which was enhanced by members of the local native community. In October, we presented a very well-received symposium, “The Subjective Mystery of the California Landscape,” about the life and work of William Keith, the prolific California landscape artist whose paintings are featured in our historic church. We also hosted a series of diverse concerts - both free and ticketed - over the past year.

We sold the residential property adjacent to our church in December, and have reinvested the proceeds in the Common Fund. This financial infusion represents a major turning point for our church, as it will allow council and staff to redirect attention to supporting congregational needs and outreach.

We are blessed to have made wonderful progress over the past year toward our congregational priorities: providing meaningful worship services and classes, strengthening and maintaining a caring and supportive community, and guaranteeing financial security. We are grateful for the enthusiasm and hard work of our staff and congregational volunteers for making all this possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Léa Park, Secretary

HILLSIDE, AN URBAN SANCTUARY
SWEDENBORGIAN SOCIETY OF THE EAST BAY

El Cerrito, California

Hillside has been doing well as we continue our mission of providing Swedenborgian programming to our existing community as well as the public.

We continue to meet on Sundays for a contemplative service, followed by social hour, and hold a total of four weekday small groups, led by Rev. Muller, including our Swedenborg reading group, "Observing Spirit" group, dream group, and our newest "Cloud of Unknowing" reading/meditation group, which consists of readings from this classic of Christian mysticism followed by periods of silent meditation. We have found this to be a very healthy and well-received balance point to our other, often very intellectual and "heady" small groups.

Our average Sunday service attendance has been between 15 and 20 people. Most of our Sunday services are led by Rev. Thom Muller, with Licenced Pastor Tassy Farwell, Rev. Alex Rush, Rev. Jim Lawrence and Rebecca Esterson preaching on a regular basis as well.

Currently, we are working on our next series of "Spiral Lectures", talks on alternative spirituality, which have drawn both members and newcomers in the past several years since we have organized them. As in the past, an Outreach Grant from the Pacific Coast Association has made this programming possible.

We have had a number of new congregants and new members this past year, all local people who were drawn to our community through their interest in esoteric Christianity and mysticism, as well as our open-minded, pluralistic style of spiritual community building. It has been particularly encouraging to see an increase in age-diversity among our congregants, with several "Millennials" becoming active participants. Our philosophy has been to provide programming that is both explicitly and heavily Swedenborgian, and at the same time radically inclusive and dialogical. The "market" for theologically liberal spirituality is very large in the San Francisco Bay Area, and we seek to be an alternative to the often heavily politicized and decidedly exoteric approaches present in the area. There is a great need for this kind of approach, and we look forward to continuing to find creative ways to cultivate it.

Our intentional use of our name, "Hillside, an Urban Sanctuary - Swedenborgian Society of the East Bay" is indicative of our approach and our commitment.

We are happy to continue to host a large array of spiritual, musical, and other non-profit groups and events at Hillside, and pleased with an increase of explicitly

spiritual groups using our space. We continue to rent the downstairs of our building to a German-language after-school program, which has been a reliable source of income for us.

Overall, this has been a very positive year for us, and there is a feeling of vibrancy and depth in the work of our spiritual community.

Respectfully submitted,
Reverend Thom Muller

WAYFARERS CHAPEL

Rancho Palos Verdes, California

(Please see page 88 for annual report)

NEW CHURCH OF THE SOUTHWEST DESERT

Silver City, New Mexico

Following Rev. Carla Friedrich's retirement in January 2023, "the Little Church that Could" has struggled through another challenging year:

Formerly active member Xander Toth suspended his Licensed Pastor formation and ordination track in Swedenborgian Studies indefinitely, and his inspirational presence at church was further disrupted when his father died and he needed to care for his mother, who has serious health problems.

A Swedenborgian minister who was passionately interested in moving to Silver City to become our pastor regretfully cancelled those plans due to severe health problems.

Assistant Pastor Linda Callandar's significant other passed due to a stroke and heart condition. Several months later, Linda was badly injured in a car accident (she was not at fault). She is slowly and painfully recovering.

Throughout the travail, NCSWD has continued holding Sunday services. The Board recently voted to provide messages via the Swedenborg Foundation's "Off the Left Eye"; weekly services are also posted on Facebook. We recently made the church completely wheelchair accessible. Liturgy consists of music, lighting candles, prayer requests, readings, OTLE video, discussion, fellowship and food.

Chandra Visser, church musician and board member, has been "holding the fort on the ground" so to speak, seeing to bank deposits, mail, outreach, plus she continues to host Open Mic at Oasis on Sunday afternoon, which is well-attended.

NCSWD's other community outreach has continued: Members who can't otherwise reach healthcare facilities are given rides (GO-FER Program), and gloves were provided outside the church this past winter for people who were suffering from weather exposure.

We have a charming building in Silver City's Historic District which has doubled in value through hard work and donations for upgrades. The Coffee and Tea House potential awaits someone with vision and know-how to fully utilize the opportunity for supplemental revenue. For now, Oasis is a one-off events venue, and a place for staging a faith-based presence at the twelve plus festivals a year held on Main Street: for example, we supported the recent Festival in the Ditch with electricity. One of the musicians has been giving guitar lessons at Oasis.

"The Little Church that Could" will continue to be a place of worship until we attract an ordained minister to 300+ days of sunny blue skies in New Mexico who will help us reinvigorate the rhizome of people still interested in New Church theology.

Respectfully submitted,

Patte LeVan, Vice-President

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

Seattle, Washington

The Swedenborgian Spiritual Community of Puget Sound continues to offer a unique brand of mystical Christianity to the "Spiritual but not Religious" people of western Washington, as well as to Christians seeking a deeper, and more inclusive, spiritual understanding of sacred scripture.

While our local spiritual community is small, our services usually include the participation of Swedenborgians in other areas of the country who find our virtual events, which always include lively discussion, to be convenient and relevant. Retired ministers Rev. Eric Allison and Rev. Paul Martin continue to be part of our church family.

In addition to our Autumn Angels and Ancestors program, we have a virtual Christmas Eve service with solo performances by Steve Mason and Teagan Robbins. We were overjoyed to have our first post-pandemic in-person services on Easter 2024! It was well-attended at Mosswood Hollow with fantastic weather and music by Steve Mason [<https://youtu.be/MvuI3hTKcdk>]. The congregation and friends also gave their thanks to Pastor Helen Barler, who recently moved to

Texas. The board has discussed many different directions for the future, although none are firm enough for elaboration as of this writing.

The Swedenborgian Spiritual Community of Puget Sound is grateful for Helen's leadership and enriching sermons, and will continue to enjoy her insights as a virtual guest speaker. We explore novel opportunities for growth, and launched a new website in March 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Robbins, President

WESTERN CANADA CONFERENCE

No report submitted.

CALGARY NEW CHURCH SOCIETY

Calgary, Alberta

Greeting from the Calgary New Church Society, situated in southern Alberta, Canada. We are a small society and since Covid, meet for a church service once a month, mostly via Zoom. Our average attendance is 7 – 8. Sermons come from a variety of sources. Music can be through YouTube, or played and led by our amazing guitarist and vocalist, Lorrie Lipski.

Our Christmas service was a combined in-person and Zoom presentation. Instead of a sermon, we all offered favorite Christmas memories and stories. This was followed by a pot luck of holiday goodies. June will be a hybrid service again, again followed by a pot luck after the service.

One of our long time members, in fact, an original member of the Society, passed into the spiritual world in this past year. We did, however, have two people join our society as satellite members.

We wish you a fruitful Convention this year. Peace and Joy to all.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Williams, President

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CITY

Edmonton, Alberta

No report submitted.

VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES

THE RAINBOW CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

The Rainbow Church has gone through some amazing changes since the last annual report. Beginning in May 2023, Rev. Colin entered the fall and winter seasons with an expansion of hybrid programming which included both local services/gathering in addition to continuing virtual Sunday worship and discussion groups. Beginning in 2024, Alex Gayheart was hired on as Administrative Assistant. Alex has already helped the Rainbow Church immensely by increasing social media presence both on Facebook and Instagram. Alex has also designed a website for the Rainbow Church, which we hope will help to increase attention and reach for our programming. Rev. Colin has begun broadcasting services online via Facebook which has shown a marked increase in virtual participation. It was decided in May 2024 that our discussion group would conclude reading Conjugal Love, although queering that text will continue in the context of articles, and has decided to focus on the study of Heaven and Hell.

The Rainbow Church has begun partnering with local LGBTQ+ organizations and interfaith groups to increase programming and awareness of the needs of LGBTQ+ spiritual seekers and share the theology of Swedenborg. Rev. Colin also hopes to mark Pride Month as the beginning of a spiritual support group that will be hybrid (both in-person and online) in the hopes of creating a safe space for queer people to come together and share their authentic selves without judgement. The Rainbow Church is continually appreciating the ongoing support we receive from our sibling congregations in Convention, opportunities to guest preach both in-person and online, and the overall support from The Council of Ministers.

Respectfully submitted,

Reverend Colin Amato

SPIRITUAL SUNSHINE

(Please see page 85 for annual report)

ACT OF INCORPORATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Approved January 29, 1861

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

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

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

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

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

Article I.

Name, Purpose and Membership

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Article II.

Officers, Councils and Administrative Functions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 5. *Left blank for future use.*

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

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

Article III.

Duties and Powers

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

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

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

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

Section 4. *Left blank for future use.*

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

and Strategies as listed in the Standing Resolutions.

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

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

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

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

Article IV.

Representation and Voting

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

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

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

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

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

Article V. The Ministry

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Article VII.**Amendments**

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

Revised June 28, 1996.

Adopted as Amended June 27, 2021.

BYLAWS OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

Article I.

Religious Observances of the Annual Meeting

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

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

Article II.

Enrollment of the Swedenborgian Church

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

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

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

Article III.

Order of Business

Reports and Communications shall be presented in the following order:

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

10. Unfinished Business
11. New Business

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

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

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

Article IV.

Annual Meeting Planning and Operation

Section 1. Planning for Sessions of the Swedenborgian Church.

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

Section 2. Local Arrangements.

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

Section 3. The Swedenborgian Church Business.

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

Article V.**Parliamentary Procedures**

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

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

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

Article VI.**Duties of the President**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Article VIII.

The General Council

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

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

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

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

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

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

Article IX.

Article X.

Standing Committees

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

Section 1. The Standing Committee For Financial Accountability.

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

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

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

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

Section 3. The Standing Committee For Communications and Information.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Article XI.

Electronic Meeting Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Article XII.**The Council of Ministers**

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

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

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

Article XIII.**The Ordained Ministry**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 2. The Ordaining Minister.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 3. The Authorized Candidate for the Ministry.

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

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

Section 4. Special Circumstances.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 1. Lay Leader.

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

- (2) On satisfactory completion of the first year of this program, duly certified by the School, the individual must request of the Ordaining Minister and be granted status as a Probationary Lay Leader, this request to be supported by the recommendation of the Council of Ministers. With this status, the candidate is authorized to lead in worship, teach the doctrines of the Church, and officiate at resurrection services. The expected duration of this status shall be two years. The Committee on Admission Into the Ministry or other committee recommended by the Council of Ministers will be responsible for monitoring the progress of Probationary Lay Leaders. The Ordaining Minister may rescind the status of Probationary Lay Leader if the candidate fails to keep pace with the educational requirements, if the congregation or appropriate supervisory body requests such rescission, or for other due and weighty cause. If for good and sufficient reasons the person is unable to complete the prescribed training within the normal period, the Ordaining Minister may extend the authorization for one year. Extensions of more than one year will require review by the Council of Ministers.
- (3) Consecration as a Lay Leader, administered by the Ordaining Minister, shall take place when the following conditions have been met.

 - a) The Swedenborgian House of Studies shall certify to the Council of Ministers that the educational program has been satisfactorily completed.
 - b) The congregation of the candidate shall reaffirm to the Council of Ministers its desire for such consecration.
 - c) The Council of Ministers shall recommend the consecration to the Swedenborgian Church.
 - d) Said Church shall authorize the consecration. The consecration itself shall take place in a public service held in the congregation or area to be served.
 - (c) Henceforth, the title “Lay Leader” shall be reserved for individuals so consecrated.
 - (d) Following consecration, the Lay Leader may administer all the rites and sacraments to the congregation or in the area served. This authorization shall include the right to perform marriages where the laws of the state or province permit. Lay leaders are expected to comply with the guidelines for ministerial conduct.

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

Section 2. Worship Leader.

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

Section 3. Special Circumstances.

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

Section 4. The Roll of Lay Leaders.

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

Section 5. Licensed Pastors

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

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

Article XV.

Theological School

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

Article XVI.

Board of Mediation

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

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

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

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

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

Article XVII.

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

Article XVIII.

Common Fund Investment Committee

The General Council, at its first meeting following each annual session of the Swedenborgian Church, shall appoint an Investment Committee of five members for terms 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. The Investment Committee is charged with the general oversight and care of the investments and securities of the Swedenborgian Church Common fund, with full power to purchase and sell and to invest and reinvest as in their judgment and discretion may seem advisable. Any members constituting a majority of said Committee may exercise all of the authority and powers hereby granted to or conferred upon said Committee. This Committee is authorized to make investments and reinvestments in such bonds, notes, debentures, corporate stocks and other securities and such real estate, real estate mortgages, interests in real estate mortgages, and other property as the Committee, in the exercise of reasonable intelligence and caution, shall deem best. This Committee shall work in close cooperation with the Standing Committee for Financial Accountability.

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

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

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

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

Article XX.**The National Church**

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

Revised June 30, 2007.

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

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

Article XXII.**Indemnification**

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

Article XXIII.**Amendments**

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

Dated May 3, 1985

Typed July 2, 1985

Revised July 10, 1985

Delegate Version

Revised October 31, 1985

Revised December 7, 1985

Revised General Council, February 1, 1986

Revised May 27, 1986

Revised June 26, 1992

Revised July 8, 1994

Revised July 7, 1995

Revised June 28, 1996

Revised June 26, 1998

Revised July 9, 2005

Revised July 1, 2006

Revised June 28, 2013

Revised June 28, 2013

Adopted as amended July 1, 2017

Adopted as amended July 3, 2018

Adopted as amended July 3, 2019

Adopted as amended June 27, 2021

Adopted as amended June 30, 2024

STANDING RESOLUTIONS

1.

(Adopted by the General Convention July 3, 1986)

THE PURPOSE OF CONVENTION

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

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

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

OBJECTIVES

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

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

Objective 1

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

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

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

Strategies

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

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

Objective 2

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

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

Strategies

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

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

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

Objective 3

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

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

Strategies

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

Objective 4

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

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

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

Strategies

- A. In cooperative effort with associations, societies, and other constituent bodies, develop programs intended to achieve growth.
- B. Develop centralized efforts that both encourage a desire for growth among Convention's constituents and strengthen our self-image.
- C. Develop centralized efforts that create interest among non-Swedenborgians and thus stimulate growth.
- D. Create programs that offer assistance and incentive to ministers and constituent bodies so that they develop the skills and programs necessary to increase growth.
- E. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 5

Religious Cooperation – Continue our commitment to the cause of religious unity.

With the Lord working through all religions to provide the means for the life that leads to heaven, we are again called to a relationship of critical supportiveness. The committee is not recommending any notable increase in our national involvement, but the strategies are intended to relate that involvement more clearly to our purpose and to our other objectives.

Strategies

- A. Continue our involvement in the National Council of Churches and make significant contributions to the policies and programs of the Council.
- B. Improve upon the reporting of our Council representatives to Convention and make resources and services of the Council available to our churches.
- C. Support our ministers' and laity's regional and local involvement in councils of churches and in interfaith activities.
- D. Foster among our church membership an attitude of appreciation and open-

mindedness toward the religions of the world.

- E. Provide for the ongoing evaluation of our participation in ecumenical activities, with a view toward focusing that participation in areas most closely related to our central purpose.
- F. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 6

The New Age – Clarify and intensify our participation in and contribution to the Lord's New Age.

There are strong indications in the world around us that the whole climate of thought is beginning to change. Specifically, the materialistic, mechanistic, “either-or” mentality so hostile to our message is under attack from within the scientific community itself, and there is a widespread resurgence of interest in spirituality. Again, the committee recommends a policy of critical supportiveness, with a strong sense that there are major opportunities in this area for both internal and external growth. The phrase “critical awareness” is intended to convey our belief that not everything new is necessarily in accord with our purpose, and that we have a great deal to learn about how the Lord is working for the new church in the world around us.

Strategies

- A. Foster an awareness of the freshness of our theology and its implications for our activities.
- B. Foster critical awareness of the congenial trends that occur in thought and activity outside Convention.
- C. Make ourselves and our theology known and available to persons involved in such thought and activity.
- D. Encourage and support involvement in New Age activities.
- E. Encourage the participation of “New Age” persons in Convention events and programming.
- F. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 7

Use Our Resources – In accordance with our Doctrine of Use and in cooperation with Convention's constituent bodies, improve the management and use of the physical-financial resources available for the fulfillment of our

Purpose.

We are per capita a startlingly wealthy church, and yet we seem to have trouble finding the money to do what needs to be done. Given growth in the clarity of our sense of purpose, we need to be candid with ourselves about our use of resources, and foster a motion from less effective to more effective uses. The committee recognizes and values the distribution of responsibility inherent in our present situation of local autonomy, and insists that this motion cannot be healthy unless it is voluntary; but it also insists that the principle of local autonomy must not be used to evade accountability to the principle of use.

Strategies

- A. In cooperation with Convention's constituent bodies, create and maintain an inventory of these physical and financial resources.
- B. Create and implement a system to improve the management of Convention's resources. This system should include provisions for: resources evaluation, cost/benefit financial planning, accounting, and other necessary items.
- C. Create and implement a system to aid Convention's constituent bodies in the management of their resources, and provide guidelines, standards, education, and other assistance.
- D. Create and implement a system to aid Convention's financial resources. This program will take advantage of the breadth of our current support base and will seek new sources of income.
- E. Keep Convention's constituent bodies aware of the programs and persons involved in the efforts to accomplish this objective.
- F. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 8

Communication – *Design and implement effective means of communication: means which will ensure an open and timely flow of information and will promote Convention's Purpose.*

The technology is available for the body of Convention to have a "central nervous system" that will overcome many of the liabilities of our wide geographical distribution, and both within and outside the church there is the expertise to design a system that will suit our particular needs. This objective relates closely to the "networking" strategy under Objective 1, as providing the means by which information resources may be made available when and where they are needed, and kindred individuals and groups kept in touch with each other.

Strategies

- A. Provide means for the on-going evaluation of Convention's communication activities. Make sure that they are consistent with Convention's central Purpose.
- B. Establish and maintain a central information exchange to collect, store, correlate and disseminate information both within and beyond Convention. This central exchange will:
 - Incorporate a relational structure rather than a hierarchical one.
 - Take advantage of advancing technology. For example, computers, video, communications satellites, etc.
 - Be the hub of a "distributed information system" (see Strategy C)
 - Administer this "distributed information system."
- C. Design and implement a "distributed information system." This system will provide for the open, direct and timely flow of information among the various constituent groups and individuals of Convention.
- D. Design and implement means to coordinate Convention's various publications and productions. This way we will strive for greater effectiveness and economy.
- E. Establish and maintain means to ensure that our communications to the world at large are coordinated and considered, and foster an appreciation of Convention's purpose and objective.
- F. Recognize and promote clear and precise communication.
- G. Design and implement a means of evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Objective 9

Organized Structure – *Design, adopt, and maintain an organizational structure that is directly responsive to Convention's Purpose and needs, and that includes provisions for its own self-evaluation and growth.*

Toward a Theology of Polity

The writings of our Church do not describe for us a particular form of church organization. Swedenborg insists that there must be order in the church; but since the possibility of a separate "Swedenborgian" ecclesiastical organization was not significant enough to mention, he was content to leave us with a few observations about church government based on eighteenth century European models.

Heavenly government is also a less useful model than we might expect. Since

heaven is characterized by essential unanimity, its “political system” can be described as democracy, aristocracy, oligarchy, anarchy, dictatorship, communism, socialism, or what you will.

Our own polity has evolved pragmatically. It began from the desire of separate societies to get together on some regular basis, and has grown and changed in response to changing circumstances. It is largely a traditional pattern: though if one sees democracy as a result of the Second Coming, this would then be a major “New Age” feature.

Essentially though, our own polity rests on Newtonian, Euclidian mechanical models. That is, it seeks to promote order and effectiveness by such devices as marking off areas of responsibility—drawing a single territorial map, as it were—and by a system of checks and balances.

This leads to such anomalies as having the Board of Education responsible for Leaguers’ travel to convention, the Board of Missions’ virtual exclusion from the field of missionary publication, and cumbersome procedures for the guidance and support of any venture that does not fit some existing category. It also means that it is quite possible for an individual to have been a lifelong member of one of our societies without being able to identify one thing that Convention has done for the welfare of that society.

In order to distribute responsibility as widely as possible under this system, we need our policy that a single individual not serve on more than two Convention boards or committees at once. This means, however, that it is rare for members of one board to have an appreciation of the problems and labors of another; and General Council depends for its information largely on minutes which are not designed for such communication.

Essentially, the Ad Hoc Committee sees a pressing need that we reconceptualize our organizational presuppositions on a more profound and more realistic model, looking at patterns of relationship that are actually productive. We see three basic essentials in this—clear and direct lines of mutual communication and accountability, the ready gathering of compatible interests, skills and resources for particular tasks, and a constructive accountability to our common theological convictions.

The model that we have in mind may be unfamiliar in terms of physical models, but it is immediately recognizable in terms of personal experience. It involves seeing the identity of an individual or group as essentially determined not by fixed boundaries or “externals,” but by a particular center; and by the relationships of that center to other centers. Boundaries or circumferences may then expand or contract as we generalize or specialize; and the overlaps, rather than be-

ing problems to be eliminated, are the utterly necessary fields of mutual support, enlightenment and cooperation.

In this model, the primary function of the centralized administration would be to administer decentralization. This central body should be granted such power, and only such power, as it needs to accomplish this task, and should be held accountable by Convention to policies and priorities determined by Convention.

Strategies

- A. Design an organizational structure that is directly responsive to Convention's Purpose and needs, and includes provision for its own self evaluation.
- B. Create an ongoing process which ensures that the organization exercises self evaluation, is open to change, and encourages growth.
 - 1. Generate criteria for self evaluation and prepare a plan for adapting to change and growth.
 - 2. Generate feedback and data annually and encourage continual feedback.
 - 3. Assess and review the organization annually.
 - 4. Revise and adapt the plan each year and revise the structure as necessary.

2.

(Adopted by the General Council, July 18, 1949)

Resolved: With regard to properties of local societies in which Convention has a contingent interest through conveyances providing that, in certain circumstances, the title would come to Convention, it is the policy of Convention not to make contributions toward the cost of maintenance of such properties, such maintenance being the sole responsibility of the Society in whose hands the title to the property is vested.

3.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 1960, Min. #58)

(Amended by General Convention, July 1, 1989, Min. #61)

(Amended by General Convention, June 30, 2015, Min. #20)

A Standing Resolution to Swedenborgians Everywhere:

Resolved: The General Convention/Swedenborgian Church assembled at Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts for Convention June 30, 2015 reaffirms its belief that the Church Universal includes those of diverse origins.

In its ever-growing desire to serve all of God's children, the General Convention (aka The Swedenborgian Church), urges Swedenborgians everywhere to acknowledge that the Church Universal is inclusive and to act in this spirit. Let no Society of the Church exclude any from membership on such considerations as ethnic origin, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, condition of health, handicap, or economic status; but seeking those who accept our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as Redeemer of the world and who accept the essentials of faith of the Church, welcome all with joy and affection into the full and free community of the Church.

4.

(Adopted by General Convention, August 3, 1969)

Resolved: That the Secretary of Convention maintain a register of young men and women within the fellowship of the Swedenborgian Church who are recognized by the Selective Service System as conscientious objectors to war, and that the President of Convention appoint a minister to serve as spiritual counselor and advisor to these young men and women and to others who may apply to the Selective Service System for recognition as Conscientious Objectors; the purpose being that the Church might in this way show its sympathy with those whose conscience dictates such a step and may be of some assistance to them as they struggle with all of the implications and legal problems which such classification brings.

5.

(Adopted by General Convention, August 3, 1969)

Resolved: That the General Convention support the legalization of abortion in cases where it is responsibly applied for the physical and emotional welfare of those involved. Be it also resolved that such therapeutic abortion shall be considered primarily a matter of concern between the patient, attending physician, and personal counselor.

6.

(Adopted by General Convention, July 2, 1976)

Resolved: That General Council be given a standing order to recommend to the Convention the names of such persons who in its opinion should qualify for emeritus status, for a vote by Convention.

7.

(Adopted by General Council, January 22, 1977)

Resolved: It is recognized that the establishment of the requirements for membership is the responsibility of the individual society or other body, and that various types of membership are utilized by different bodies. However, for the purpose of determining delegate strength for the voting at Convention sessions only adult active members defined as follows shall be counted: An adult active member of a society is one who is eighteen years of age or older and who has been accepted by the Society through Confirmation or other appropriate service of introduction, or by transfer from another Society, and who within the year has shown active interest in his/her membership. This is demonstrated by joining in the programs of worship and work or by contributing toward its needs physically and financially. It shall be the joint responsibility of members and Societies involved to ensure that the member is not counted in more than one Society's count for delegate strength.

8.

(Adopted by General Convention on recommendation of its Council of Ministers, July 1, 1978)

SWEDENBORG'S REVELATION**Perspectives of the General Convention**

The Lord's Second Coming promised in the Gospels is described in *True Christian Religion* §779 as a process of spiritual reawakening, beginning with a cosmic event in which Swedenborg was called to play a key role. Through spiritual experiences while reading the Holy Word, he received truth from the Lord into his understanding. From this enlightenment he worked out and published teachings for a new church to serve the new age of the Lord's Second Coming. The truth of these teachings revealed by the Lord to Swedenborg is presented to us with the authority of the Holy Word from which they are drawn, and by which they are confirmed. This new revelation teaches us three essential things to believe and do. The first of these is to worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as the one God in whom is the divine Trinity. The second is to hold to the conviction that the Word of God is holy, not only in its plain sense, but also because of the deeper meanings lying within it. The third is to commit ourselves to a life embodying love to the Lord and the neighbor. In living these three essentials, each of us must search with discernment for critical meaning in Swedenborg's theological writings. Any written form of revelation can be misunderstood if it is insisted that

a single interpretation is final and prescriptive. However, we are convinced that if love to the Lord and the neighbor permeate our perceptions, our church will be unified despite any number of particular differences of opinion as to interpretation and application of doctrine. In former times, when Christian doctrine was hammered out by theologians or determined by church councils, unity depended on obedience to creed, with reason subservient to faith. But in this new age, the spiritual freedom of the individual has been restored. Now it is permitted to enter with understanding into the mysteries of faith.

9.

(Adopted by General Convention, July 2, 1982)

Resolved: It is recognized that it is the responsibility of the church to voice its conviction on ethical and moral issues that arise from time to time in our nation and in our world. Where the issue is one of long-term relevance, and where opportunity has been afforded to societies and associations for prior discussion, a member of Convention may submit to the President, in time for announcement on the first day of a Convention session, a written proposal for a Standing Resolution. The President shall at that time accept motions to refer or to place on the agenda with time for discussion.

Should the issue be one of immediate urgency only a member of Convention may submit to the President, in time for announcement on the first full day of a Convention session, a written proposal that a particular resolution be adopted as “the sense of this meeting.” The President shall at that time accept motions to refer or to place on the agenda with time for discussion. Should such resolution come to a vote, the vote shall be counted and the tally included with any use of the resolution.

10.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 30, 1983)

(Amended by General Convention, July 3, 2019)

[This Standing Resolution is no longer an operating policy of the General Convention.].

General Convention no longer provides ministers personal loans through the Building Fund. Outstanding loans that remain in good standing will continue as agreed until fully repaid. Ministers with outstanding loans from the building fund, who cease to remain on the Active Roll of the Council of Ministers, may have their loan called in and due and payable within ninety days.”

11.

(Adopted by the General Council, June 29, 1983)

Resolved: That it is the responsibility of the Vice President, together with a committee he may appoint, to conduct an annual review of the Central Office, covering staff, employees, organization, etc.

12.

(Adopted by General Council, January 30, 1983)

(Addendum, May 12, 1988)

(Addendum amended and adopted by the General Council on June 25, 2022)

Resolved: “Whereas: The American New Church Tract and Publication Society has indicated its desire to turn over its assets to the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the U.S.A. to continue the purposes for which the Tract Society was established, and

Whereas: these purposes are included within the broad purposes of General Convention; now therefore, be it

Resolved: that General Convention agrees to accept the funds of the Tract Society, and if when offered, to be held for the purposes given and specifically that the income of those funds be used first: for the publication and distribution of *Our Daily Bread* and second: for other publications efforts; and further be it

Resolved: that the Treasurer of General Convention be directed to assist the Tract Society in the orderly transfer of these funds.”

Addendum: Selection and appointment of the Editor of *Our Daily Bread* shall be made annually by the General Council at their Fall meeting. The Editor shall serve, at will, for a period of one year with reappointment, or appointment of a new editor, taking place each year on the anniversary date of appointment.

Should the position of Editor become vacant for any reason between General Council meetings, then the President of Convention may appoint a new Editor in the absence of a special meeting of the General Council. The Editor filling the unexpired term shall then serve until the Fall appointment schedule.

The General Council will serve as the Publisher, having the authority to settle any issues that may arise concerning editorial decisions, but otherwise leaving daily operating decisions to the discretion of the Editor. The publication of *Our Daily Bread* shall not be terminated without a vote of the General Council.

13.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 28, 1989)

That the AIDS Ministry Committee appointed by the Cabinet continue to carry out its task which shall include support of Swedenborgian Ministries to HIV persons, their families and friends; facilitation of ecumenical involvement in these ministries; and the provision of educational materials.

14.

(Adopted by General Convention, July 1, 2019)

**Statement of the Swedenborgian Church of North America on
Discrimination**

As Swedenborgians we affirm the core truths of our faith that honor the diversity of both heaven and earth, and recognize that loving people who are different from us is integral to the practice of a religious life.

We also acknowledge that broad generalizations of races, nations, genders, sexual orientations, physical abilities, and religions can be found in our sacred texts when interpreted literally and that these texts have been used on occasion to promote opinions that run counter to these core truths.

We hereby affirm our responsibility to interpret our texts in the light of love and inclusion, in heaven's light, and categorically reject interpretations of the Bible or of Swedenborg's writings that promote a discriminatory viewpoint. Where any translation or interpretation appears to invite the reader to engage in exclusionary or hateful thinking, promote stereotypes, or justify discrimination against anyone for any reason, regardless of the source, we stand against this. If any member, clergy, employee, or other affiliated person indicates by word, deed, works, writings, affiliations, or any other means, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim bigotry, gender bias, heterosexism, ableism, or any other expression of prejudice, they do not reflect nor represent the practical doctrine of the Swedenborgian Church.

We encourage one another to advocate for those who face discrimination and to address these expressions of bias in our personal interactions and in the larger society. We also acknowledge that forms of discrimination come in many subtle shades, and that we have a responsibility to regularly investigate our actions and beliefs, both individually and collectively to align them with these truths, so that we can be greater vessels for Divine Love in the world.

15.

(Adopted by General Convention, July 1, 2019)

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES***For Ministries of the Swedenborgian Church of North America*****Congregational Relations**

- Develop a Congregational Covenant for healthy communication practices in the congregation's life, and ensure the Covenant is visible and frequently referenced.
- Keep the congregation informed about what the ministry governing board or council is doing, such as regularly distributing Minutes to the membership and friends on email.
- Offer open Board meetings for transparency and cohesiveness.
- Conduct periodic congregational surveys assessing experiences in the ministry, since such surveys facilitate a sense of congregational teamwork and enable a transparency and inclusion that often harvests information and viewpoints otherwise held back.
- Use a facilitator sooner rather than later when congregational dynamics seem to be stuck.
- Maintain a standing pastoral relations committee to provide a communication sounding board.

Administration

- Maintain clear job descriptions for all paid staff positions, including the ordained and consecrated leadership, and perform annual reviews.
- Develop explicit guidelines on compensating members for work in the ministry.
- Create and annually update a Conflict of Interest Policy for the primary governing board.
- Avoid having more than one family member at the same time on the primary governing board.
- Review Bylaws regularly to ensure they fit the ministry purposes and keep them visible.
- Ensure the Bylaws have a properly worded dissolution clause that protects assets from improper takeover and provides guidelines for how assets will be distributed (e.g., to the denomination, the Association, the theological

school, a designated Convention ministry, or combination of these).

Denominational Relations

- Follow the denomination's Advisory Placement Committee's guidelines when conducting position searches.
- Send delegates annually to the Association and denominational gatherings and submit an annual ministry report for the denomination's Journal.*
- Keep the denomination's Central Office supplied with a copy of the ministry's current Constitution and Bylaws.

**Note: Receipt of timely annual ministry reports is required in order to be eligible for Augmentation Fund grants.*

A COVENANTAL SPIRITUALITY FOR THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

A Covenant between Constituent Bodies and the Denomination

The Swedenborgian Church of North America promises to:

- Provide ministry resources for growth, outreach, and weekly programming.
- Provide information about potential grant opportunities
- Provide support and guidance when asked regarding internal conflict difficulties
- Support ministries without current ordained or consecrated leadership with 1) a registry of ministers and pastors willing to travel to churches, 2) a list of ministers seeking a pastorate position, and 3) the Advisory Placement Committee's guidelines
- Keep information about the denomination in front of the consciousness of local ministries to encourage relationship to and community with the larger spiritual community of Convention.

Constituent Ministries of the Swedenborgian Church of North America promise to:

- Participate annually if at all possible in the Association and the summer denominational convention meetings.
- Submit an annual ministry report for the denomination's Journal.
- Follow the denomination's Advisory Placement Committee's guidelines when conducting position searches.

- Keep the denomination's Central Office supplied with a copy of the ministry's current Bylaws, executive committee members, and any changes in pastorate positions and compensation as regards the pension fund.
- Keep the Association and the denomination in front of the consciousness of local members to encourage relationship to and community with the larger spiritual community of Convention.

16.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 27, 2022)

Welcome and Support of All People in the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus¹) Community

The Swedenborgian Church of North America (SCNA) publicly declares itself to be LGBTQ+ Embracing. The SCNA encourages all its constituent bodies to become LGBTQ+ Embracing.

As an LGBTQ+ Embracing organization, the SCNA recognizes that the LGBTQ+ community, in particular those of color, continue to experience prejudice, discrimination, and condemnation at the hands of many religious institutions. The SCNA will clearly and publicly make known their welcome of all LGBTQ+ people, will advocate in the public sphere for their rights, and will educate themselves on the care and pastoring of people in the LGBTQ+ community. We welcome LGBTQ+ seekers and support their identities and loving relationships. All rites and sacraments of the SCNA are available to LGBTQ+ people including, baptism, confirmation, communion, marriage, consecration as a licensed pastor, ordination, and services of remembrance and resurrection.

The SCNA understands the message of love and inclusion taught to us through the Bible and insights of Emanuel Swedenborg to affirm diversity in all its exciting complexity, offering equal value and worth to all people with a variety of God given gender identities, gender expressions, sexual orientations, and loving relationships. The SCNA will seek to interpret the Bible and the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg in ways that honor the equal value and worth of all sexual orientations, genders, gender identities, and gender expressions. We will support everyone who is engaged in the regenerative journey—individual or partnered. We affirm any partnered relationships that are entered into freely, are grounded in mutual fidelity and respect, and have as their end the well-being and spiritual growth of each partner. We acknowledge that living in truly loving and wise ways

¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus—including: intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, non-binary, gender non-conforming, aromantic, and asexual

is possible for finite and fallible human beings only with the Lord's leading.

As our understanding of this continues to unfold, the SCNA is dedicated to educating itself and others. The SCNA respects the judgment of those who make decisions for its constituent bodies and lends its support to them as they discern whether to become LGBTQ+ Embracing and will offer resources and guidance to facilitate the process.

17.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 30, 2024)

Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery & Statement of Support for Indigenous Peoples in Pursuit of Restitution & Reparations; Swedenborgians Acting Against Racism (SAAR) has proposed and the General Council has accepted the proposal

The Swedenborgian Church of North America (SCNA) publicly repudiates the so-called “Doctrine of Discovery” starting in the 15th century that was employed by European Christians to colonize and subjugate the lands and indigenous peoples they “discovered” outside of Europe and 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.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 30, 2024)

Standing Resolution on Climate Justice

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 (DLW no. §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:

For individuals: to be conscientious consumers taking the time to research

the impacts of the greener alternatives they are considering. For congregations: to offer creation care worship and education centering environmental justice, socially-responsible investments, and the local advocacy and support of environmentally just, green efforts. For the denomination as a whole: to explore socially-responsible investments, join/support/promote lobbying efforts of grassroots movements which center environmental justice and aim to build support across bipartisan lines for climate justice legislation.

STANDING RECOMMENDATIONS

To Associations, etc.

Each Association, or other collective body of the Church, is requested to report annually a list of its ministers.

Associations are recommended to make such specific rules, under the general rules for the regulation of the ministry, as they may consider necessary or desirable.

Associations are requested to furnish the Secretaries with copies of all their printed *Journals* of past years, and also copies of their future proceedings, from time to time, as they may be published. (*Journal* of 1900, Minute 163.)

In the apportionment of delegates to the Convention, the Association shall try to secure a proportionate representation of the societies constituting them, and to that end shall consult the wishes of the various societies. (*Journal*, 1937, Minute 50.)

To Isolated Societies

To establish Sabbath school and to give it watchful care in which the truths of the Church shall be distinctly taught.

To adopt as rules of discipline, or laws of charity, what is taught by the Lord in Matt. v.23, 24, and xviii. 15–17.

To establish free libraries of the theological works of Swedenborg for loan to all who are interested.

To Ministers

To keep a record of names, ages, residences, etc. of all persons baptized by them.

To the Standing Committee of the American New Church Sunday School Association

To report annually to the Convention such statistics and such action by the Association as may be of general interest.

As to Collections of Convention

Collections at the Sunday morning service of the Convention to be for the general use of Convention. (*Journal* of 1993, Minute 6.)

Procedures of Appointments to the National Council of Churches

The President of Convention, with the counsel and advice of the Executive

Committee of the Council of Ministers, shall make the various appointments to the National Council of Churches, and that these then be confirmed by the General Council.

The Nominating Committee

It is recommended to the Nominating Committee, that when preparing a slate of nominees to fill the elective offices of The General Convention, the slate be of such order that if elected, a nominee shall not serve on more than two Boards or Committees or a Board and a Committee simultaneously. “No individual who has accepted nomination for an office shall accept nomination for another office if election to one would invalidate election to the other.” It is further recommended that this order be kept by the Chair when accepting nominations from the floor of Convention.

To the Convention

To submit (to the President or Treasurer), in advance of the business session of Convention, any request for appropriation of funds.

To Leaders (adopted June 28, 2021)

*A Reminder to Pause Before Hitting ‘Send’, And Then Ask Yourself...
“How Am I Loving God and the Neighbor in this Post?”*

Good Practices for Social Media Use Understanding

In today’s world of pervasive social media use, all of our church leaders have become the outward face of the Swedenborgian Church. An essential question our leaders might now mindfully be thinking of asking themselves is: How am I loving God and the neighbor in what I post?

As church leaders—ordained clergy, licensed pastors, lay leaders, committee, and board members—both local and national, we have to be especially discerning as we speak for the local church and for the greater church. Like it or not, we carry additional authority and responsibility. We need to be consciously, and conscientiously, aware that our words and sentiments online can project a positive or negative influence, elicit a calming or angering effect, promote spiritual enlightenment or unrest.

As lay and clergy leaders in the Swedenborgian Church of North America, we affirm our tradition’s embrace of varied opinions as well as the importance of personal choice and freedom in all matters (*Secrets of Heaven* §2876). We value a diverse community that is bound together by shared love of the Lord and service to the neighbor. As Swedenborgian Church leaders, we also carry a responsibil-

ity in all we do and say—this can be especially challenging because of the blur between personal and professional communications. It is hoped that these “Good Practices for Social Media Use” can help lessen that challenge with thoughts on how to maintain a neighborly and respectable social media presence with God’s love and wisdom at the forefront.

It is a given that social media can be used as a powerful, positive tool for communication or a precarious emotional outlet that can lead to risky, contrary, and potentially harmful commentary. It is our responsibility to use our discernment. *Let’s consider asking ourselves the questions below before posting:*

- What kind of conversation am I starting or encouraging?
- Why am I posting? Am I feeling tired, angry, or scared? Am I feeling provoked?
- If there is conflict—how is my contribution going to de-escalate the situation?
- If I’ve already contributed to this conversation today—would it better to wait 24 hours before adding anything further?
- Would I choose to say these things face-to-face?
- Would this conversation be better handled privately?
- Will I be embarrassed or cause embarrassment if this post appears somewhere else?
- Are my comments towards people and/or the church following the sentiment expressed here?
- What can I do to make this conversation more inclusive, just, and equitable?

In addition to attending to the wisdom of the above list, special attention needs to be focused on how adults interact responsibly with our often-vulnerable youth online. Added to the all important moral, ethical, and spiritual reasons is the liability risk. *Following are further good practices that will help us maintain healthy and safe relationships all around:*

- All public content, communication, and information shared should be professional and youth appropriate.
- Unless other arrangements have been made with parents, leaders should not send requests outside of family to add youth to their network on a social media website (“friend requests”).
- Adults may accept friend requests from youth, however, we should carefully discern the level of contact we should maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
- If friend requests from youth are declined, we should explain to the youth

why this was done so as to maintain healthy face-to-face relationships.

- Written messages and transmitted images can often be ambiguous, confusing, and taken out of context. Always follow professional standards and do not share any questionable content with youth.
- Pictures or videos of minors may only be shared with the permission of the minor and their parent or legal guardian.
- Ask yourself: does my communication reflect good and wise practices for working with children and youth? Would you say this to a child or youth if you were face-to-face with them?

And finally, some nuts and bolts for all adults and youth:

Privacy, Confidentiality, Authorization

- Respecting Privacy: I will respect my own privacy as well as that of my co-workers/friends and of any organization by not providing or sharing any personal or confidential information, including addresses or locations, without permission from that person or organization. I will ask myself: Is this my news to tell? Do I have permission to share this information?
- I will remember that, unless duly authorized, I will not speak on behalf of the Swedenborgian Church—or even my own local congregation. I will be professional and maintain the integrity of my office as a church leader through social media.
- I will be aware that giving my opinion, especially on hotly debated topics, can be construed as making a statement on behalf of the church.
- For my protection and the protection of the Swedenborgian Church, I note that I am prohibited from using internal or external social media channels to discuss confidential items, legal matters, litigation, or organizational financial performance. Confidential information includes anything labeled as such or information not available to the public.
- I will cite resources and not violate copyright and fair use laws nor plagiarize another's work. If required, I will obtain permission if I wish to use material created by someone else.

Approaching social media with clarity of mind and sincerity of heart contributes to useful experiences that promote healthy interactions, meaningful conversations, and love of the neighbor.

For, as we are reminded,

“Everyone can see that charity is doing no evil to the neighbor; for charity is love towards our neighbor, and a person who loves anyone wants to avoid doing evil to them. There is a conjunction of souls between them.” (Doctrine of Charity §14)

SEVEN YEAR CYCLE OF ANNUAL THEMES

It is part of the Lord's Providence that in every challenge there is an opportunity and the bigger the challenge, the bigger the opportunity. That's a good thing for us, not least because, as a church, we are facing a very big challenge indeed. The Standing Committee for Education and Resources for Spiritual Community (SCER) every year undertakes a useful way to meet that challenge, one that can offer us a considerable opportunity to grow and move forward as bearers of a new message of hope for the world.

A regular cycle of thematically-unified, denomination-wide programming, built around the key beliefs of our faith, will go far in restoring our church's confidence and capacity to play its proper part in the building of the New Jerusalem. As Swedenborgians we are blessed in many ways but especially with a love of learning. This is our strength and our opportunity. Let's learn and grow into a new future.

The Seven-Year Cycle of Annual Themes

1. THE YEAR OF THE LORD (2019–2020)

the primacy of Spirit:

- the one Lord, Love and Wisdom, Creator and Life
- the unifying truth, hope and power, known by many names
- revealed for us in Jesus, as friend, mentor, model

2. THE YEAR OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD (2020–2021)

the nature of Life:

- the diverse, multi-dimensional, and eternal nature of life
- the reality of the spiritual world; heaven, hell, and world of spirits
- our journey with angels and demons, from this life to the next

3. THE YEAR OF PROVIDENCE (2021–2022)

the assurance of Purpose:

- the universe makes sense and we have a special, angelic purpose
- the laws of Providence are Love and Wisdom at work for us
- our call to “choose life” and become who we (really) are

4. THE YEAR OF REGENERATION (2022–2023)

the way of Change:

- spiritual life as intentional, committed, relational
- the journey of transformation and the second birth
- the work of repenting, reforming, and regenerating

5. THE YEAR OF SPIRITUAL USES (2023–2024)

the call to be a Blessing:

- true faith as the life of charity, what we actually do, not just think or say
- discerning our gifts through love in action (charity)
- becoming our true use for the building of the New Jerusalem

6. THE YEAR OF THE WORD (2024–2025)

the power of holy Scriptures:

- correspondences and the Lord's presence in the Word
- the story of our lives in the Word
- the sacred character of all holy texts

7. THE YEAR OF THE NEW JERUSALEM (2025–2026)

the emergence of a New World:

- the Second Coming in the Spirit now
- the new world and new consciousness emerging now
- building the future: the unity of the human family in justice and peace

BYLAWS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

PREAMBLE

The Council of Ministers (COM) is established by Article II of the Constitution of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America which reads in part as follows: “The officers of the Convention shall be...a Council of Ministers, consisting of all ministers belonging to the Convention, of whom twelve shall constitute a quorum...”

In order that it may in more orderly fashion exercise the powers and perform the duties committed to it by Article III, Section 3, and Article V, Section 1, of the said Constitution, and Article XII of the Bylaws of the said General Convention, the Council of Ministers, establishes these Bylaws as a guide to its procedure.

Article I.
Categories of Membership

Section 1.	Internal Categories of Clerical Standing with COM shall be:
Active:	defined as any ordained minister that: 1. is employed as a minister by a constituent body of Convention, or 2. is involved in a ministry recognized as valid by COM, or 3. is present at COM annual or regional meetings.
Inactive:	defined as any ordained minister who does not meet the above requirements, but who has submitted an annual accounting of ministerial activity to the COM Secretary in accordance with denominational Bylaws, Article XII, Section 3.
Not in Good Standing:	a member who has not met the professional standards of ministry in the Swedenborgian Church.
Lapsed:	defined as any minister that has not met any of the above requirements and has been not in good standing for a period of three years.
Retired:	defined as any minister that has drawn on his or her retirement benefits and who has requested to be considered as retired on the Council’s Roll. Only those members that have retired in good standing shall be eligible for supplemental retirement benefits.

Severed:	defined as any minister who has been removed from the Roll of Ministers by request or as a result of disciplinary action.
Deceased:	defined as any minister who has died.

Section 2. *Definitions of Clerical Standing*

“**Good Standing**” is defined as a member of the Council that: participates in continuing education on a biennial basis for the purpose of building and maintaining professional competence, in accordance with COM Standing Resolutions, paragraph 2, and participates in supervision on an ongoing basis for the purpose of maintaining a personal system of emotional support, in recognition of “Guidelines for Ministerial Work in the General Convention,” Section III, preamble, *and* is not under disciplinary action by the Council of Ministers.

“**Not in Good Standing**” is defined as a member of the Council that has not met the above requirements.

Amended June 2008, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Section 3. *Credentials*

All members of the Council who are not retired are requested to communicate with the COM Secretary *before the end of May* regarding their continuing education and supervision activities during the time since the last COM annual meeting. Those who do so shall be recorded as in good standing. The names of those who have not done so will be shared with the Executive Committee, who shall respond as follows.

Procedure for Changes in Clerical Standing

A member of the Council’s Executive Committee shall contact any member of the Council whose standing is in jeopardy at least thirty days before the Council convenes for its Annual Meeting. The Executive Committee shall take into account such member’s specific situation and shall suggest reasonable rectifying measures before any change in standing is considered. If the member in question is unwilling to comply with such measures, he or she will be considered temporarily “not in good standing” until such measures are taken. The Executive Committee shall continue to support and encourage an individual who is not in good standing throughout a restorative period.

A member who is not in good standing and who is in disagreement with such a standing may make an appeal to the Council as a whole, whose majority vote shall determine the standing of the member in question. The name of a member

who is not in good standing for a period of three years shall be presented before COM. They shall decide by vote whether or not to designate such member in the Roll of Ministers as “Lapsed.” A person whose membership has lapsed and who wishes to become active again may make a written appeal to the Council’s Executive Committee.

Amended July 8, 2005, Berkeley, California

Amended June 2008, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Article II.

Sessions and Meetings

Section 1. Sessions of the Council of Ministers shall be held in connection with every session of the General Convention, at such times as may be assigned to it by the Business Committee of the Convention.

Section 2. Special meetings of the Council may be held at any time at the call of the Executive Committee or by letter vote initiated by petition of at least seven members. Public notice shall be given of the time and place of the proposed meeting.

Section 3. Meetings of the Council of Ministers shall be of three types: public meetings, open to anyone who may be interested; business meetings, at which the business of the Council shall be transacted, attendance at business meetings being limited to members of the Council, the President of Convention if said person is not ordained, the Dean and full-time faculty of the Swedenborgian House of Studies, if said persons are not ordained authorized candidates, theological students, and others who may be admitted by vote of the Council; and executive session, for which all persons who are not members of the Council shall withdraw at the request of the Chair. Any guest may be invited to remain for executive sessions at the request of a Council member, together with a three-quarters vote of the Council.

Amended July 9, 2004, Waterloo, Ontario.

Article III.
Officers

Section 1. The officers of the Council of Ministers shall be a Chair, a Secretary, and three at-large members of the Executive Committee.

Section 2. At its 1993 sessions, the Council of Ministers shall elect a chair for a two-year term, and a secretary for a three-year term. In subsequent years, when the offices become vacant, the chair and secretary shall each be elected for a three-year term. Officers who have served two consecutive full terms shall not be eligible for immediate re-election.

Amended June 27, 1992.

Section 3. The Chair of the Council shall preside at all meetings, and shall, unless in any case it be otherwise ordered by the Council, appoint all members of committees, except the Executive Committee and the Program Committee. The Chair shall designate the chairmen of such committees as he may appoint.

The Secretary of the Council shall perform the usual duties of a secretary, and in addition shall present to the Convention a report of all meetings of the Council, including the titles of all papers presented, a summary of the important business transacted, and a statement of all matters referred by the Council of Ministers to the Convention and of all recommendations made to said Convention.

The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chair, the Secretary, and three members to be elected initially by the Council for terms of one, two, and three years, and thereafter one member to be elected annually by the Council for a term of three years. Executive Committee members who have served two consecutive full terms shall not be eligible for immediate re-election. It shall be the duty of the Committee to fill vacancies and to consider and act on matters connected with the business of the Council in the interim of its sessions. It shall have no power, however, to make decisions in the name of the Council with reference to any matter within the province of the Council's Standing Committees.

Amended June 2008, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Section 4. In the interim between the sessions of the Council of Ministers matters requiring the immediate decision by the Council may be acted upon

by vote recorded by the Secretary through a letter, email, or conference call, to be determined by the Executive Committee. For such votes to be valid, at least twenty ministers must cast ballots. If by letter, ballots must be received within 30 days from the date of issuance. If by email, ballots must be received within 7 days from date of issuance. If by conference call, the ballots shall be recorded orally at the time of the call. Every reasonable effort will be made to contact every active member of the Council.

Amended July 9, 2004, Waterloo, Ontario.

Article IV. Committees

Section 1. There shall be a Nominating Committee of three persons which shall present to the Council at each annual meeting a full slate of nominees including two nominees for Convention Preacher. At the meeting at which this Bylaw is adopted, one member shall be elected for a three-year term, one for a two-year term, and one for a one-year term, with the member whose term is next to expire to serve as chair.

Section 2. The Standing Committees of the Council shall be the Committee on Worship, the Committee on Program, the Committee on Ministerial Ethics, the Committee on Admission into the Ministry, the Committee on Revision of the Roll, the Misconduct Determination Board, and the Advisory Placement Committee.

In addition, the Chair of the Council upon the decease of any member thereof shall appoint a committee to prepare a memorial to be offered for presentation before the Convention. The Council may from time to time order the appointment of such special committees as it may deem necessary.

Amended June 2012, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Section 3. Members of Standing Committees shall serve until their successors are appointed.

Section 4. The Committee on Worship shall consider and report on all matters connected with the worship of the Church, as well as proposed changes in or additions to its liturgical books.

The Committee will explore and develop new forms, style and materials of worship and liturgy to meet the expanding needs of Convention Worship Leaders.

The Committee, or an appointed individual by the Committee, will oversee and coordinate, in conjunction with the host group and/or the Convention Planning Committee, the worship and music expenses of our annual convention.

Amended June 2009, Seattle, Washington

Section 5. The Committee on Program shall consist of the Chair of the Council of Ministers, the Secretary of the Council, and the Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies. Its duties shall be to prepare the program for each session of the Council.

Amended June 2008, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Section 6. The Committee on Ministerial Ethics shall consist of the council appointed by the Chair for their depth of pastoral experience and background in the study of ethics. This committee shall:

1. periodically present issues for reflection and discussion for meetings of the Council and shall consist of three members of the council.
2. be available for consultation and advice in cases of need, and
3. propose such revisions in the Guidelines for Ministerial work in the General Convention of Swedenborgian churches as it may deem useful.

Section 7. The Committee on Admission into the Ministry (CAM) shall consist of a chair, who will be a member of this council who has served at least one complete term (3 years) on the Committee on Admission to Ministry and shall be elected by the Council for a three-year term; two at-large members who are ministers with at least five years ministerial service within the denomination, one to be elected by the Council of Ministers and one to be elected by Convention; one lay person to be elected by Convention; and the President of Convention. The three elected members are to be elected for three-year terms, one to be elected each year. At-large members who have served two consecutive full terms shall not be eligible for immediate re-election. The chair may not serve more

than two consecutive terms as chair and is not eligible to serve as an at-large member following a term as chair. Members of the regular faculty of the theological school shall not be eligible for election, and should either the President of Convention or Chair of the Council of Ministers be a member of that faculty, said officer shall designate a member of the Council of Ministers as replacement, subject to the approval of the Council.

The primary duty of this committee shall be to oversee the maintenance of high standards for Convention's ministry. To this end, it shall interview all candidates for ordination or induction into our ministry, and make its recommendations to the Council of Ministers. It shall also annually grant or deny the status of candidates for ordination to all Swedenborgian affiliated theological school students or applicants who request it, confer regularly with such students, and report its decisions to each student concerned, to the faculty of the School and to the Augmentation Fund Committee.

It shall also confer with the candidate before ordination, to the end that the candidate may be mindful to the task ahead, and approach the Rite of Ordination truly prepared for consecration to the Lord's service.

Amended July 9, 2004, Waterloo, Ontario

Amended June 25, 2015, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Section 8. The Committee on Revision of the Roll shall consist of three members; to it shall be referred without further action by the Council all matters of record involving changes in the Roll of Ministers of the General Convention, for report and recommendation to the Council.

It shall also be the duty of this Committee to keep a Roll of Former Ministers of Convention, to which the names of those who have ceased to be minister thereof, through death, resignation, or removal, shall be transferred in accordance with the rules of Convention.

Section 9. The Misconduct Determination Board shall consist of five members, three of which will be from the Executive Committee and two from the Ethics Committee. It shall be the duty of this Board to review charges and evidence given it from the Board of Inquiry and determine:

- i) if misconduct occurred, and
- ii) what actions should be taken.

The Misconduct Determination Board is to follow the policies laid out in the misconduct procedures adopted by the Council of Ministers and General Council.

Added June 2012, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Section 10. The Advisory Placement Committee shall consist of three members; the Chair of the Council of Ministers, the Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies, and the President of Convention who serves as Chair. It shall be the duty of this committee to provide resources and advise ministers who are seeking employment within the denomination and also societies that are seeking to call ministers.

Added June 2012, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Section 11. The Chaplaincy Committee shall consist of five members of the council, appointed by the Executive Committee, who are charged with the following tasks. Advising our denominational Endorser, who has the sole authority to accept or not accept an applicant who desires to be endorsed by the Swedenborgian Church. Advising the Committee on Admission into the Ministry regarding candidates on the ordination track. At the request of CAM and/or a candidate for ordination, the committee will provide mentorship for candidates for ordination in matters such as selecting a CPE program to fulfill their requirement for ordination. Providing a “system of support” for CPE students, and endorsed chaplains, such as the accessibility of avenues of communication for our chaplains, written guidelines which must be maintained for endorsement, presentations and papers on Swedenborgian theology and chaplaincy, and a periodic online support group.

Added June 2024, East Lansing, Michigan.

Article V. Business

Section 1. The business of the Council shall be considered in the executive meetings in the following order:

1. Call to order
2. Address of the Chairman
3. Adoption of report of the Program Committee
4. Appointment of special committees for the session
5. Communications
6. Report of the Executive Committee

7. Reports of Standing Committees
8. Reports of Special Committees
9. Old Business
10. New Business
11. Election
12. Adjournment

The Standing Committees shall report in the order in which they are named in Article III, Section 1. If a report is not ready, it shall be passed over until all other committees have had an opportunity to report, unless the Council set a specific time for hearing of a report. No debate shall be allowed on any of the above reports until all of them have been presented, but a motion to refer or adopt a recommendation where there is no desire to debate shall be in order.

Section 2. The parliamentary procedure of the Council of Ministers shall be governed, in all cases not specifically covered by the Constitution and Bylaws of Convention or by these Bylaws, by Roberts Rules of Order. The Secretary of the Council shall keep a copy of these Rules available for ready reference.

Section 3. All requests for appropriations in connection with the work of any of the committees of the Council, as being beyond the power and authority of the Council of Ministers, shall, if the Council of Ministers approves, be presented to the General Convention.

Article VI.

Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended or suspended by a three-fourths vote of those present at any regular meeting. They may be suspended at special meetings by a three-fourths vote of those present at such meetings.

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS STANDING RESOLUTIONS

Whereas ministry as a professional endeavor requires continuous development and personal growth, and, whereas education is a lifelong process not ending with ordination; therefore, be it resolved that the Council of Ministers of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches affirms that planned continuing education is not an elective but is a necessary process to build professional competence.

1. Ordained clergy are subject to requirements for mentorship in their first two years of ministry, and annual peer supervision and attendance at Convention's annual meeting throughout their ministry. The secretary of COM will oversee their "good standing" based on annual reporting.
2. The continuing education (CE) is overseen and approved by EXCOM and the following criteria must be met regarding the continuing education unit being chosen:
 1. Areas of study—ministry, spirituality, small group leadership, working with boards, pastoral care, church growth (pick at least 2)
 2. To be earned at Peer Sup, CSS classes, Convention COM Education, Camp Sessions, or training by a legitimate organization that has a relevant knowledge base. Leading a session does NOT count as Continuing Ed.
 3. Requirement is 20 hours of continuing education every two years
 4. 1 credit per hour = 1 in-person professionally-led instruction
3. Retired ministers are not subject to these professional development requirements.

(Preamble, amended at General Convention, 2023)

Periodically during its history, Convention has faced issues of suitability for ministry. It has dealt with questions of social class, race, divorce, and gender, as it currently faces the issues of sexual orientation and may in future years face questions presently unseen. Its decisions have in each case affirmed a consistent principle, which the Council of Ministers expresses as follows:

(Adopted at General Convention, July 3, 1986)

"In light of the inclusiveness of the vision of the Holy City, New Jerusalem, from which our theological perspective is drawn, the Council of Ministers believes that the central consideration in evaluating requests for ordination is the quality of the ministry that it believes the individual is capable of providing.

"It is the responsibility of the Council of Ministers, using the good office of

its Committee on Admission to the Ministry, to evaluate the readiness and suitability of individual candidates in accord with the general principles outlined in Article V, Section 2 of the Constitution, and in the Preamble to Article XIII of the Bylaws of the General Convention.

“Article V, Section 2 reads: ‘Through its Board of Managers of the New Church Theological School, commonly known as the Swedenborg School of Religion, the General Convention shall within the limits of available resources, provide for the thorough professional training of individuals seeking ordination, such training to focus on the spiritual growth of its participants by development in understanding of our theology, sensitivity in human relations, appreciation of other traditions, and in the technical skills required for effective ministry.’

“The Preamble of Article XIII reads: ‘Jesus said to his disciples, you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.’ (John 15:16)

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

GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERIAL CONDUCT IN THE GENERAL CONVENTION OF SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCHES

The Constitution of the General Convention (Article III, Section 3) assigns to the Council of Ministers “responsibility for the pastoral support of all ministries and for providing them with clear ethical standards.” It adds, “It shall exercise such disciplinary functions over the ordained clergy as it may in its collective wisdom adopt, subject to the provision of the Constitution and Bylaws.”

Given the importance of our purpose—to facilitate the spiritual well-being of people—and the variety of ministries devoted to this end, the task is both urgent and difficult. Our theology points to clear principles of spiritual well-being which do not change. It recognizes also that there are outward behavioral expectations which we ignore at our peril, but which do change with the passage of time, and which vary from region to region.

Accordingly, we have tried in the following revision to distinguish these two aspects of ministerial ethics, in an effort to be uncompromising in devotion to the Lord’s service and responsibly flexible in the means used for that service.

Theological Basis

For the Swedenborgian, spiritual well-being is a state of oneness of heart, mind, and life. The most adequate ministry will therefore lead by affection, precept, and example. Our theology also insists that human life is a process, that we do not achieve perfection, but can move toward it to eternity. As ministers, we need both self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others. Since charity is “acting with prudence to the end that good may result” (*The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* §100), we are called in all circumstances, without exception, to consider not just what has happened, but what we can do for actual betterment. When we fail to hear or to heed this call, as we all do at times, then the call simply comes again, asking us to recognize our failure, and not to dwell on it but to consider what we can do about it.

In this effort, we cannot stand alone. Our very being is constituted in part by the affection and understanding we receive from each other, and our common involvement in ordained ministry gives special weight to our treatment of each other. Genuine affection, clear understanding, and unflinching fidelity within this fellowship work strongly for our purpose, and their lack brings a profound distress.

Under the Lord’s providence, something could emerge from this distress

which would recommend itself to everyone. There are times, however, when we fail to discover that ideal solution, and must resort to the discipline authorized by the Constitution. This may be freely accepted by all parties; but even when it is not, the imposition of discipline may be the best course of action available. We must then accept our imperfections and focus our efforts on minimizing the harm. It is at such times that the distinction between fundamental principle and local, human tradition is most critical, and when the spirit of the discipline is as important as the discipline itself.

As concerns ministry in particular, doctrine, history, and experience point up the perils of reliance on the authority of the clergy. It is particularly tempting to try to solve difficult problems by clerical pronouncement, ignoring the fact that to the extent that any course of action is taken under compulsion, it is not conducive to spiritual growth. At the heart of the following guidelines is the conviction that our choices as ministers need to be informed by the central purpose of our church, to facilitate the spiritual well-being of those who rely on us.

I. Personal and Interpersonal Conduct

We are unanimous in our acceptance of the law of love, but not necessarily in our understanding of it. Our understanding of the word “love” is demonstrated primarily by our behavior, which is at least as instructive as our words. We communicate by the way we act that the good life is difficult or easy, joyous or bitter, flexible or rigid; and no amount of talking effaces these messages. It is vital that we recognize that we ourselves are in process, being open about our failings and about our ideals alike.

1. Persons live only as they receive life itself from God. We have made public acknowledgment of that life by seeking and accepting the laying on of hands of ordination. We have a special responsibility to open ourselves to our own emotional, intellectual, and spiritual depths, to the wisdom and power of the Bible, to the theology of our church, and to the Lord in meditation and prayer. To work toward our goals, we need also to keep abreast of current developments in the religious and secular worlds around us, with a special responsibility for attention to currents of thought and feeling within Convention.
2. However differently understood and accepted, the Divine is equally present in all People, regardless of such outward attributes as race, class, sexual orientation, creed, gender, physical capabilities/limitations or age. Prejudice or discrimination of any kind is a denial of this central tenet of our theology.
3. As we are drawn to become more intimately connected to persons in our communities, it can be that a pastor finds a real friendship developing. Choosing

friends from among those one serves and leads has inherent complications. There is a difference between being friendly and being a close friend who shares confidences. It is better to find friends among colleagues and through organizations that promote your values and interests. However, if you develop a close friendship with a congregant, the following steps must be taken.

- Discuss the difficulties of being both spiritual leader and friend.
- Avoid discussing the business of the congregation with him or her.
- Avoid spending time together at congregational events.

4. Pastors who are single must often decide whether to date someone in their congregation. It is, after all, a place to meet someone with similar values and commitments. To date a congregant, however, introduces myriad complications and opportunities for misunderstandings. If you find yourself attracted to a member of your congregation, you must take the following steps.

- Inform him/her that you cannot be his/her spiritual leader and have a romantic involvement. Therefore, if the person wants to pursue a dating relationship, he/she should find someone else to serve as spiritual leader.
- Tell your governing body and supervisor about the relationship.

5. Human sexuality is a gift from the Lord, providing an avenue to the deepest and most abiding of human relationships. It is also an avenue to our deepest vulnerabilities, and its misuse can have tragic personal consequences, and can lead to severe legal consequences. We are called to fidelity in all our relationships, and particularly to the utmost respect for the sexual integrity of all persons. Sexual contact or sexualized behavior between a faith leader and a congregant, client, student, or employee with whom the faith leader has a pastoral or professional relationship is an abuse of power and constitutes sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct is defined as sexual contact (not limited to intercourse) that violates the trust developed by the congregant, student, client, or employee in the context of the pastoral or professional relationship.

6. The community in which we live is our neighbor, and our constructive participation in its affairs is an essential element in religious life. As ministers urging others to live by the Lord's commandments, we make a special commitment to live consistently ourselves. It is important that we be unquestionably fair in our financial dealings and reliable in keeping commitments made. This includes such matters as preparation for and attendance at meetings, clear and adequate reports, and prompt attention to correspondence. We should neither ask nor expect special favors or immunities because of our ministerial status. Where discounts, privileges, or special fees are offered, they may be accepted with appreciation, and with the acknowledgment that we are to give as freely as we receive, though not

necessarily in kind. Under no circumstances should special favors or immunities be offered or accepted in exchange for any “gift.”

7. In keeping with our sense of the holiness of all life, we are aware that excessive drinking and other forms of substance abuse, obscene stories and expressions, and raucous behavior diminish our effectiveness, as do the other extremes of prudery and self-righteousness. Both extremes betray a narrow egocentricity that renders us insensitive to the feelings and needs of those around us.

8. Personal appearance is one of the ways in which we communicate with each other, and excessive concern with and willful disregard for appearance are equally damaging. Our dress and grooming should reflect our interest in and concern for the human situations in which we engage and should be in general accord with local traditions.

9. Clergy use of social media for personal and professional use contribute to the public face of our denomination, and therefore constitutes clergy conduct. Decisions about what to post must conform to the ethical standards set forth in these Guidelines. Decisions on how and who to email need careful attention, with thought given to include all who should be included, and not communicating electronically in ways we would not consider communicating in-person or on the phone.

10. There are no quantitative measurements of spiritual well-being, and therefore no simple standards of evaluation of ministerial effectiveness. It is necessary that we be fully honest with ourselves and our employers, neither inventing unnecessary tasks nor avoiding necessary ones, fulfilling the terms of our employment in the spirit as well as in the letter. It is permissible to take other remunerative work with the knowledge and consent of the employer; but again, there is need of honest evaluation of the effect this has on our ministry.

11. The personal nature of ministry can allow it to intrude on the minister’s personal and family life. It is vital that the family not feel engulfed by the church and that the minister have time that is genuinely free for family involvement. Regular days off and complete vacations are necessities, and should be openly negotiated with the employing body.

12. As human service professionals, we are accountable for a self assessment of our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. When mental health issues, stress due to family discord, and any other factors interfere with our daily lives and ability to minister to others, we have the responsibility to address our concern with peers, and when warranted, to contract for appropriate professional support. We also have the responsibility to be aware of signs of depression, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, etc. that may arise in congregants, fam-

ily members or colleagues, and to assist them to access appropriate assistance.

II. The Relationship to the Group Served

The relationship of employee to employer can be ambivalent in the ministry. We are enjoined to lead our “employers” by truth to the good of life, a good which is genuine only if it is freely chosen. There are times when it seems that the welfare of the institution is at odds with the welfare of one or another of its members, or of its minister, and the available alternatives seem equally painful. Devotion to our central purpose is essential at all times, and never more than in times of difficulty.

1. Professionals in all the helping professions receive confidences, and are both legally and ethically bound to respect them. Ministers especially tend to be trusted, and a constant sensitivity to that trust is vital. Confidences, whether explicitly labeled or not, are not to be shared, even with colleagues and spouses. However, if individuals give us reason to believe that they are intending harm to themselves or others, we are obliged to weigh carefully the resources we have to prevent such harm, and to act according to our most prudent and compassionate judgment. We are responsible as well to know and to abide by the laws that apply in the particular regions of our ministries. We are to be guided at all times by a pastoral concern for those who trust us.

2. We recognize the trust placed in the therapeutic relationship, its unique power, and the inherent danger of exploitation in any dual role relationship. The role of Pastor and Congregant develops a “dual” aspect when there are additional roles played by either party; i.e., committee chair/member, officer/employee, counselor/counselee, etc. These relationships need careful ethical attention. It is unethical to enter a counseling relationship with anyone with whom we have sexual, family, business, or friendship relationships.

3. Different ministers respond to different aspects of our theology. We should not make our own special interests into idols, but should try to present the full depth and breadth of our teachings and to foster an appreciation of colleagues whose special interests differ from our own.

4. We do not exist in a vacuum, but are sustained in our mental and emotional growth by our communications with each other. Our open acknowledgment of our inter-dependence upon each other is of critical importance to the health of our church.

5. Our belief in the Divine of the Lord entails rather than precludes the presence of that same Divine in all religions of the world. We are true to this principle only as we seek the best in and for all faiths; and we are false to it whenever we try

to exalt our own religion by demeaning others. Our task is not to try somehow to make our own understanding universal, but to discover the universality to which it points.

6. Ministers are responsible to whole congregations or groups, and have a responsibility to nurture a fabric of healthy relationships. Ministers employed by hospitals, hospice organizations, schools, non-profits, etc. have a call to see these organizations as sacred community, and have the responsibility to support the relationships within these communities in the same manner as described for church communities. In all our communities, the fabric of healthy relationships is damaged by any form of favoritism toward individuals or subgroups, and by involvement in political games. Such issues require particular attention when critical decisions must be made, as when a group is relocating, or a minister is leaving.

7. The health of a society depends not only on its internal relationships, but on its relationships with the community and world in which it finds itself. Every effort should be made to nurture the conviction that the church is not a self-righteous enclave in a world of sin, but a participant in the process of community, nation, and world, called by virtue of its gifts to special service.

8. The minister's relationship to an employing body has personal, professional, and moral dimensions. A formal contract can be helpful in making unspoken assumptions explicit. No agreement, however informal, is to be terminated without adequate notice, except by mutual consent. We should be freely accessible to the employing body for discussion of continuation or termination of service, and should, unless explicitly invited to remain, absent ourselves from further discussion and from the actual voting procedure.

9. The minister's self-evaluation is essential to growth in service. An annual report to the employing body, with an open review of it by that body, is an excellent means of improving the effectiveness of the minister and the group, and of discovering hidden expectations.

10. A group grows far more by making decisions than by having decisions made for it. Ministerial leadership encourages general involvement in the understanding and formulation of policy and in the choice of particular courses of action.

11. Our spouses, while under no professional obligations, may come into positions of significant influence. It is incumbent upon us to do our best to communicate to them both the substance and the importance of these guidelines, and to nurture an appropriate sense of accountability to them.

III. Relationship to Other Ministers

Ministry as a profession is sufficiently different from most others in that we

look particularly to each other for understanding and support. We are not only professionals, but professionals dedicated to a common service to God in a calling that points beyond our human strength. For this we need relationships with our fellow ministers of comradeship, frankness, mutual respect, cooperation, mutual help, and recognition of a spiritual imperative over and above any professional standards. We need to hold ourselves ready to offer affection, understanding, and assistance, defending our colleagues against misunderstanding or injustice, and being with them in loving concern in times of need or distress.

When support and understanding are forthcoming, this is especially meaningful, and when they fail, the sense of lack is especially severe. Our geographic isolation intensifies the significance of every communication, both for better and for worse.

1. Our ministries are tending increasingly to take different forms, and there is a risk that this may provide occasions for dispute. Given the principle that a form is the more perfect as its constituents are distinctly different, and yet united (*Divine Providence* §4), we are called to see these differences as complementary rather than competitive, and to enrich our own limited understandings by insights that come from endeavors outwardly unlike our own.

2. As professionals, we are responsible for normal professional standards. This means a respect for the integrity of the professional work of fellow ministers, doing nothing directly or indirectly to interfere with that work (e.g., performing ministerial services in another parish without its minister's permission). This is in no way to be construed as a license for possessiveness or defensiveness, and calls us to support any efforts that further our central purpose (e.g., welcoming the participation of another minister in any such service, or the performance of tasks complementary to our own). Because we identify so closely with each other, we may well overreact when opinions or policies diverge. In cases of serious professional or personal misconduct, we should in virtually all instances refer the concern to the responsible officials. In most instances of disagreement, however, the most sympathetic interpretation is also the most constructive. Unsympathetic criticism of another minister, particularly one's predecessor or successor, is contrary to the central principles of a life of charity.

3. The relationship between a minister and an employing body is a sensitive one. It is unethical to make overtures to a church or employing body whose minister has not expressed the intent to resign or retire; and if overtures are received from such a body, the well-being of the incumbent minister should be of primary concern.

4. A pastorate, particularly a long one, builds strong bonds of affection which

can place an incoming minister at a serious disadvantage. Resignation or retirement should be handled with special sensitivity in this regard. Every effort should be made to enable the church to make its own free choice, to create a favorable climate for the successor, and to leave the field free by avoiding anything that might be interpreted as interference with the successor's work. It should be made clear to the church before departure that, however painful it may be, a decisive break in the relationship is necessary. If an invitation is received to perform ministerial services for a former parish, the present minister's permission must be sought and the participation of that minister encouraged.

5. An affirmative attitude needs to be expressed in visible forms. A departing minister should demonstrate his or her acceptance of the successor by some form of public welcome and by cordial introductions to as many of the members as possible. Personal notes and any materials of a confidential nature should be destroyed; but the successor should have free and immediate access to all official records; including membership and address lists, minutes, financial records, and legal and constitutional materials. Every effort should be made not to perpetuate divisions by prejudicing the successor against any individual or group within the church.

6. The best use of our limited ministerial resources requires constant attention. A minister contemplating a change should seek the best information possible concerning current areas of need, using the Ministerial Placement Committee as the most appropriate resource.

7. In the search for ministerial employment, if a minister should feel aggrieved, or should feel that the well-being of another is put at risk, by the conduct of another minister, the first step is to raise the issue privately with the individual concerned. If this effort fails, the good offices of the ordaining minister of Convention should be sought. Should this not provide a resolution, the Council of Ministers may be asked to render assistance.

IV. Relationship to Convention and Association

The essence of the church is the Divine presence with us as individuals and collectively. This essence is therefore the Infinite; but it works through forms of human design, for which we must take responsibility. Our highest loyalty in regard to Convention and the Associations is to their essential purpose, and this, to be effective, must be expressed in the most critical and caring participation in the organizations themselves.

1. The larger collective bodies of the church have provided the foundation on which current ministries rely, with significant contributions to the local churches,

to theological education, and to resources for ministry. Ordination therefore involves pledges to uphold the Constitution of Convention and be mindful of its welfare; and these pledges should be remembered and fulfilled at all times. We should stand ready to serve Convention, the Council of Ministers, and our Associations gladly as our particular abilities are needed, with the knowledge that their health contributes to the health of our own local efforts.

2. The wisdom and effectiveness of the collective bodies can be no fuller than we make them. Regular attendance at meetings of Convention and the Council of Ministers, responsive participation in them, and regular and accurate reporting of activities, developments, and statistics are the necessary foundations of a supportive larger church.

3. For the sake of the unity of the larger church, it is vital that its individual members share in its essential values. It is the responsibility of the minister on the local level to admit into membership to all who do so share, and not to admit those who, so far as can be ascertained, do not. The irreducible essentials of our faith—the Divine of the Lord, the holiness of the Word, and the life of charity—should be clearly presented, and a genuine commitment to them expressed.

4. Many of us work in relative isolation from each other, and the Supportive Peer Supervision program has been instituted to compensate in some measure for that isolation. It is left to individual ministers to stress the supervisory or the supportive aspects of the program; and this freedom entails a responsibility to exercise it well. Whether through the program or in some other way, it is our duty to periodically review our fitness for Convention's ministry. Should such a review raise serious doubts, the course of greatest wisdom is to seek the help and counsel of laypersons or clergy with whom there are bonds of affection and respect.

5. Standards for "Good Standing" as a Member of the Council of Ministers, and the requirements for Continuing Education and Professional Supervision, are outlined in Article I of the Bylaws of the Council of Ministers. "Good Standing" membership in the Council gives ministers an external affirmation, in the same manner that upholding these ministerial conduct guidelines gives an internal affirmation, of our appropriate living of our ministerial call from God.

6. Convention and its collective bodies are human institutions, and true loyalty to them includes the duty of thoughtful and constructive criticism. Experience indicates that if such criticism is addressed to the body's will to improve, without a prejudgment as to the best response, the result will be affirmative. The ideal is an unswerving devotion to fundamental principles, with a willing openness to the process of change.

V. Ministerial Misconduct

1. If an issue of ministerial misconduct arises, persons are required to follow the reporting process outlined in “Procedures for Handling Allegations of Misconduct Against Our Ordained Ministers or Our Lay Leaders” from the *Council of Ministers Handbook* (dated July 2012).

Epilogue

For our own sakes, the Lord expects and wants our very best. The preceding guidelines are an effort to define that “best” in the context of our own times and culture, and they are offered in the knowledge that there will be failures and shortcomings. As we try to live up to them, there will be needs for clarification and change, and it is the responsibility of the Council of Ministers to keep us working on the subject of ethics for our ministry. Only to the extent that we are in agreement in principle will the guidelines be felt as supportive of our best rather than as threatening, and it is therefore crucial that any disagreement with them be openly expressed. They are not valid for all time, and will be effective only as they are truly an ongoing part of our collegial process.

**BYLAWS OF THE CORPORATION OF THE NEW CHURCH
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
DBA CENTER FOR SWEDENBORGIAN STUDIES**

Article I.

Name, Purpose and Location

Section 1. The Corporation of the New Church Theological School operates the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, an institution serving the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America and Canada (hereafter referred to as General Convention). The Corporation was incorporated in 1881 as the Corporation of the New Church Theological School under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and is a non-profit, tax exempt institution operating for religious and educational purposes.

Section 2. The address of the principal of the Corporation shall be as follows: Center for Swedenborgian Studies, 50 Quincy St., Cambridge, MA 02138-3013.

Article II.

Members of the Corporation

Section 1. The membership of the Corporation shall consist of two classes:

A. At-large Members

Any person who (i) has been accepted as a member at large of Swedenborgian Church pursuant to the Constitution of the General Convention or (ii) is a member of any Association or Society constituent of the General Convention, who is 18 years of age or older, may become an at-large member of this Corporation by signing these Bylaws and he or she shall cease to be an at-large member hereof upon ceasing to have the qualifications above named, or upon filing with the Clerk a written withdrawal of membership.

B. Representative Members

Each member of the General Council of the Convention shall be a representative member of the Corporation upon election to the General Council and each shall cease to be a representative member of the Corporation upon expiration of his or

her term of office on the General Council or upon his or her resignation therefrom.

Section 2. An adequate and current alphabetical file of the active membership of the Corporation shall be established and maintained in the offices of the Corporation by the Clerk, and shall be available for inspection at all reasonable times to the Trustees and members of the Corporation.

Article III.

Meetings of the Members

Section 1. Place for Meetings. All meetings of the at-large and representative members shall be held at the principal office of the Corporation in Massachusetts unless the Articles of Organization permit the holding of meetings of members outside of Massachusetts and unless a different place is fixed by the Trustees or the Dean and stated in the notice of the meeting.

Section 2. Annual Meeting. The annual meeting of the members shall be held during the annual convention of the Swedenborgian Church. If no annual meeting is held in accordance with the foregoing provisions, a special meeting may be held in lieu thereof, and any action taken at such meeting shall have the same effect as if at taken at the annual meeting.

Section 3. Special Meetings. Special meetings of the members may be requested by the Chair or by the Trustees, and shall be called by the Clerk, or in the case of death, absence, incapacity or refusal of the Clerk, by any other Officer, upon written application of three or more members entitled to vote thereat.

Section 4. Notice of Meetings. A notice of every meeting of the members, stating the place, day and hour thereof and the purpose for which the meeting is called, shall be published by the Clerk in accordance with the provisions of Article V, Section 4 of these Bylaws.

Section 5. Quorum of Members. Ten at-large members and a majority of the representative members as shown on the records of the General Convention shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the members of the Corporation.

Section 6. Adjournments. Any meeting of the members may be adjourned to any other time and to any other place permitted by these Bylaws by the members present at the meeting, although less than a quorum; or by any Officer entitled to preside or to act as Clerk of such meeting if no member is present. It shall not be necessary to notify any member of any adjournment. Any business which could have been transacted at any meeting of the members as originally called may be transacted at any adjournment thereof.

Section 7. Voting. Each member of each class of the Corporation shall be entitled to one vote on all matters before the members, and at-large and representative members shall each vote as a separate class. When a quorum is present, a majority vote shall decide any matter except where a larger vote is required by the law, the Articles of Organization, or these Bylaws.

Any election of Trustees by the members of a class shall be determined by a plurality of the votes cast by members of that class present and entitled to vote at the election.

Article IV. Board of Trustees

Section 1. The business and affairs, including all academic affairs, of the Corporation shall be managed by the Board of Trustees, who shall have and may exercise all the powers of the Corporation except such as required by law or the Corporation's Articles of Organization or Bylaws to be otherwise exercised. Except as so limited, the powers and duties of the Board of Trustees shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. to determine and review periodically the purposes and the mission of the institution.
2. to select the Dean of the institution, and to support the Dean in the exercise of his or her responsibilities.
3. to recommend, review, and approve changes in the educational programs of the institution, consistent with its mission.
4. to establish policies and procedures regarding salary schedules, appointment, and dismissal of each class of employees.
5. to oversee and approve the budget of the institution, and establish policy guidelines for the endowment and for all investments and major fund raising efforts.
6. to authorize the purchase, management and sale of all land, buildings or

major equipment for use by the institution.

7. to authorize the construction of new buildings and major renovations of existing buildings.
8. to authorize the incurring of debts by the institution and securing thereof by mortgage and pledge of real and personal property tangible and intangible.
9. to authorize any changes in tuition and fees within the institution.
10. to authorize officers or agents of the institution to accept gifts or bequests on behalf of the institution.
11. to ensure that adequate due process policies and procedures exist.

Section 2. Election and Tenure. The Board of Trustees shall consist of eight (8) elected members and four (4) ex officio members. At-large members and representative members shall each, voting as a separate class, be entitled to elect four (4) of the members of the Board of Trustees; PROVIDED THAT at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the members of the Board of Trustees elected by the at-large members of the Corporation and at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the members of the Board of Trustees elected by the representative members be members of the Corporation.

Other than as hereinafter provided, Trustees shall be elected for a term of four (4) years. The terms of the elected Trustees shall be staggered, so that the term of one at-large elected Trustee and one representative elected Trustee shall expire each year. When Trustees are elected, their term shall be designated in order to achieve such staggered terms.

No member of the Board of Trustees shall be elected for more than two (2) consecutive full four-year terms unless the members at the annual meeting of the Corporation vote to permit a member of the Board of Trustees to be elected for one (1) additional consecutive four-year term or part thereof, if applicable, where the members agree that extraordinary circumstances warrant such extension of the maximum term; PROVIDED HOWEVER THAT no further extension of the consecutive term of office for such member of the Board of Trustees shall be granted.

Upon the completion of the maximum term of the Board of Trustees, a minimum of a one-year absence is required before eligibility for re-election to membership on the Board of Trustees is restored.

As the terms of the Trustees originally elected by at-large members expire, successors will be elected by at-large members. As the terms of the Trustees originally elected by representative members expire, successors will be elected by representative members.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, any Trustee who fails to attend at least one (1) meeting of the Board of Trustees during any one (1) calendar year of their term (provided that more than one meeting was held in such year) shall be deemed to have submitted his or her resignation as a Trustee, with no further act on his or her part, to the Board of Trustees as of December 31st of such year; PROVIDED THAT the Chair, in his or her reasonable discretion, may waive such resignation requirement (either before or after said December 31st, but prior to the filling of the resulting vacancy) upon the receipt of a written notice from such absentee Trustee providing good and sufficient reasons for his or her absence. In the event that a Trustee shall be deemed to have submitted his or her resignation in accordance with this paragraph, the vacancy thereby created shall be filled in accordance with Section 3 of this Article IV.

The President of the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church and the Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies shall be ex officio members of the Board of Trustees with a vote. If the Clerk and Treasurer elected by the Board are not members of the Board, they shall become ex officio members of the Board without a vote. The President of the Graduate Theological Union and one representative from the CSS student body (see Section 9) shall sit on the Center for Swedenborgian Studies Board of Trustees without a vote. The aforesaid President, Dean and Graduate Theological Union representative ex officio members serve at the pleasure of the Corporation and are not governed by the term restrictions or rotation requirements of these Bylaws.”

Section 3. Vacancies. Any vacancy in the Board of Trustees, however occurring, may be filled by appointment by the Board of Trustees until the next annual meeting provided, however, that a vacancy resulting from the enlargement of the board shall only be filled by election by the members of the Corporation. In the case of a vacancy occurring other than by enlargement of the Board of Trustees such vacancy shall be filled at the next annual or special meeting only by the Class of Members who had elected the prior Trustee.

Section 4. Enlargement of the Board of Trustees. The number of the Board of Trustees may be increased or decreased at any annual or special meeting of the members provided however that the number of members of the Board of Trustees shall always be set at an even number.

Section 5. Trustees' Meetings. The Board of Trustees shall meet at least three times each year. One of these meetings shall be held without notice as soon as practicable after the adjournment of the annual meeting of members.

Section 6. Notice of Trustees' Meetings. Meetings of the Trustees may be called by the Dean, the Chair or any three or more Trustees by a request in writing addressed to the Clerk. Notice of the time and place of all regular meetings of the Trustee shall be given by the Clerk and of any special meeting of the Clerk or the Officer calling the meeting. Notice may be given orally, by telephone, telegraph, e-mail or in writing; and such notice given in time to enable the Trustees to attend, or in any case, notice sent by mail, e-mail, or telegraph to a Trustee's usual or last known place of business or residence or e-mail address, at least ten days before the meeting, shall be sufficient. Any meeting of the Trustees shall be a legal meeting without notice if each Trustee, by a writing filed with the records of the meeting, waives such notice.

The Board of Trustees may permit any or all Trustees to participate in any meeting of the Trustees by, or conduct any meeting through the use of, any means of communication by which all Trustees participating may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting. A Trustee participating in a meeting by this means is considered to be present in person at the meeting.

Every Trustee who attends a meeting without protesting prior thereto or at its commencement the lack of notice to him or her, and every absent Trustee who shall before or after meeting waive notice thereof by a writing filed with the records of the meeting or who shall sign such records, shall be deemed to have been fully notified of the meeting.

Section 7. Quorum of Trustees. At any meeting of the Trustees, a majority of the trustees then in office shall constitute a quorum. Unless otherwise provided by law, the Articles of Organization or these Bylaws, a vote of a majority of those present at any meeting at which there is a quorum shall be sufficient to transact business or to take any action by the Trustees.

Section 8. Action by Unanimous Written Consent. Any action may be taken by the Board of Trustees without a meeting if the action is taken by the unanimous consent of the Trustees. The action must be evidenced by one or more consents describing the action taken, in writing, signed by each Trustee, or delivered to the Corporation by electronic transmission, to the address specified by the Corporation for the purpose, or if no address has been specified, to the principal

office of the Corporation, addressed to the Secretary or other officer or agent having custody of the records of proceedings of the Board of Trustees, and included in the minutes or filed with the corporate records reflecting the action taken. Action taken under this section is effective when the last Trustee signs or delivers the consent, unless the consent specifies a different effective date. A consent signed or delivered under this section has the effect of a meeting vote and may be described as such in any document.

Section 9. Student Representative. At the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees held at the annual meeting of the General Convention of the Swedenborgian Church each year, one student of the Pacific School of Religion enrolled in the Masters of Divinity Program with the Center for Swedenborgian Studies will be asked to serve on the Board of Trustees as a representative of all of the students enrolled with Center for Swedenborgian Studies. Such student representative is to attend all, or at least a portion, of any and all meetings of the Board of Trustees. The Executive Committee will determine in advance of each meeting whether such student representative is to be in attendance for the entire meeting or portion therefore. If attendance of only a portion of the meeting is required, the Executive Committee will also determine the parameters of attendance. Such position is an ex officio representation with no vote. Such student will be expected to make a report to the Board of Trustees at each meeting.”

Article V.

Officers of the Board of Trustees

Section 1. The Officers of the Board of Trustees shall be the Officers of the Corporation and shall consist of a Chair, a Vice Chair, a Clerk, a Treasurer, and other such officers, including one or more Assistant Treasurers and Assistant Clerks, as the Trustees may determine. These Officers shall be elected annually at the meeting of the Trustees following the annual meeting of the members by the Board of Trustees and shall serve until their successors are elected and assume the duties of their respective offices. The Chair and Vice Chair must be Board members but the Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Clerks and Assistant Treasurers, need not be. Officers are eligible for re-election.

All Officers of the Board of Trustees shall serve at the discretion of the Board of Trustees and shall be subject to removal by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Trustees present at a meeting of the Board of Trustees.

A vacancy in any of the offices of the Board of Trustees may be filled at any meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Section 2. Chair. The Chair of the Board of Trustees shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Trustees and at the annual Corporation meeting, serve as Chair of the Executive Committee, and appoint all committees and their Chairs in consultation with the Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies.

The Chair shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by law or by the action of the Board.

Section 3. Vice Chair. The Vice Chair of the Board of the Trustees shall perform such duties as shall be assigned by the Board. In case of death, absence, or inability of the Chair of the Board of Trustees to act, the Vice Chair shall discharge the duties of the Chair until such time as a new Chair is elected by the Board.

Section 4. Clerk. The Clerk shall serve as the Clerk of the Corporation and shall keep the records of the Corporation and the Board of Trustees, and shall give notice of all meetings of the Board of Trustees and of the members.

The Clerk shall be responsible for the maintenance of the file of the membership of the Corporation. He or she shall provide the notice of the Annual Meeting of the Corporation to be published in The Messenger at least 60 days prior to the date of the meeting. If The Messenger is not published at a convenient time, notices of the Annual Meeting shall be sent by first class to each member at least ten days before such Annual Meeting. Notice of special meetings of the Corporation shall be issued in the same manner. It shall be sufficient notice if mailed to the last and usual place of residence of each member in accordance with the records in the membership list. The Assistant Clerks shall have such powers and duties including any and all of the powers and duties of the Clerk as the Board of Trustees may prescribe.

Section 5. The Treasurer shall be responsible for carrying out the mandates of the Board of Trustees in overseeing the financial resources of the Corporation, including cash securities, stocks, bonds and all other property, personal or real, owned by the Corporation. The Treasurer shall assure that all books and accounts are accurately kept, and furthermore, shall present a full and detailed statement properly audited by an independent certified public accountant to the Corporation at its annual meeting and, if requested, at any other meeting of the

Board of Trustees or any meeting of its committees. The Assistant Treasurer shall have such powers and duties including any and all of the powers and duties of the Treasurer as the Board of Trustees may prescribe.

Article VI

Committees of the Board

Section 1. Executive Committee. There shall be an Executive Committee consisting of the Officers of the Board of Trustees. The Dean shall be an ex officio member of the Executive Committee with a vote. The President of the General Convention shall be an ex officio member of the Executive Committee with a vote. The Executive Committee shall have authority to act on behalf of the Board of Trustees on all matters except for the following which shall be reserved for the Board as specified elsewhere in these Bylaws: Dean Selection; Trustee and Board Officer Selection; Charter and Bylaws Amendment; Review of Institutional Mission and Purposes; Incurring Corporate Indebtedness; Expenditure of Funds Not Provided for in the Budget; Approval of the Annual Budget; the Conferral of Degrees; and the Purchase and Sale of Real Estate.

Section 2. Nominating Committee – At-Large Class. On or before March 1 every year the Chair shall appoint a Nominating Committee to select at-large nominees for the Board of Trustees. The Nominating Committee shall be composed of three at-large members of the Corporation at least one of whom shall not be a member of the Board of Trustees. The Nominating Committee shall make its report to the Annual Meeting of the Corporation.

Section 3. Nominating Committee – Representative Class. General Convention shall present nominees to the representative class at the Annual Meeting of the Corporation.

Other Committees. At the discretion of the Board of Trustees, other committees may be formed and discharged as needed.

Article VII.

Officers of the Institution

Section 1. The Dean shall be the chief educational and administrative officer of the institution. He or she shall exercise general responsibility for the overall affairs of the institution and shall bring those matters to the attention of the Board

of Trustees that are appropriate and necessary to keep it fully informed and to enable it to meet its policy-making responsibilities. The Dean shall be an ex officio member of the Board of Trustees and of all committees thereof.

The Dean shall appoint all other administrators, staff members, and temporary faculty members. Regular faculty appointments shall be presented to the Board for prior approval.

Article VIII. Indemnification

Section 1. Each person now or hereafter a Trustee or Officer of the Corporation (and his or her heirs, executors and administrators) shall be entitled, without prejudice to any other rights he or she may have, to be reimbursed by the Corporation for, and indemnified by the Corporation against, all costs and expenses reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with or arising out of any claim, action, suit or proceeding of whatever nature in which he or she may be involved as a party or otherwise or with which he or she may be threatened by reason of his or her having served as a Trustee or Officer of the Corporation, or by reason of any action alleged to have been omitted by him or her as such Trustee or Officer, whether or not he or she be such Trustee or Officer at the time of incurring such cost or expenses, including amounts paid or incurred in connection with reasonable settlements (other than amounts paid to the Corporation itself) made with the approval of the Board of Trustees of the Corporation and with a view to the curtailment of costs of litigation.

No such reimbursement of indemnity shall be paid or made for any expenses incurred or settlement made by such Trustee or Officer in connection with any matter as to which he or she shall be finally adjudicated in any such action, suit, or proceeding not to have acted in good faith and in the reasonable belief that his or her action was in the best interest of the Corporation, nor shall the amount of any such reimbursement or indemnity paid or made to any Trustee or Officer in respect of any matter on which settlement or compromise is effected, including the amount paid by such a Trustee or Officer in such settlement, exceed the expense which might reasonably have been paid or incurred by such Trustee or Officer in conducting such actual or threatened litigation to a final conclusion.

Payment by the Corporation of expenses incurred by such Trustee or Officer in defending any claim, action, suit or proceeding in advance of its final disposition may be made upon receipt of an undertaking by the person indemni-

fied to repay such payment if he or she shall be adjudicated to be not entitled to indemnification under the laws of Massachusetts. The Corporation and its Trustees and Officers shall not be liable to anyone for making any determination as to the existence or absence of liability, or for making or refusing to make any payment hereunder the basis of such determination, or for taking or omitting to take any other action hereunder, in reliance upon the advice of counsel.

Article IX.

Miscellaneous Provisions

Section 1. The Bylaws of the Corporation may be made, amended or repealed at any Annual or Special Meeting of the Members at which a quorum is present by an affirmative two-thirds vote of those at-large and representative class members present and voting, each class voting as a separate class, provided that notice of the substance of the proposed amendment is stated in the notice of such meeting.

Article X.

Miscellaneous Provisions

Section 1. Parliamentary Authority. The parliamentary procedure shall be governed, in all cases not specifically covered by these Bylaws, by Robert's Rules of Order.

Section 2. Fiscal year. Except as from time to time otherwise determined by the Trustees, the fiscal year of the Corporation shall end on June 30th.

Section 3. Seal. The seal of the Corporation shall, subject to alteration by the Trustees, bear its name and the year of its incorporation.

Section 4. Execution of Instruments. All check, deeds, leases, transfers, contracts, bonds, notes and other obligations authorized to be executed by and officer of the Corporation in its behalf shall be signed by the Chair or the Treasurer except as the Trustees may generally or in particular cases otherwise determine.

Section 5. Evidence of Authority. A certificate by the Clerk or a temporary Clerk as to any action taken by the Trustees or any officer or representative of

the Corporation shall as to all persons who rely thereon in good faith be conclusive evidence of such action.

Section 6. Articles of Organization. All references in these Bylaws to the Articles of Organization shall be deemed to refer to the Articles of Organization of the Corporation, as amended and in effect from time to time.

Article XI.
Former Bylaws

Section 1. All former Bylaws will be revoked and repealed immediately prior to the Annual Meeting following the adoption of these Bylaws, provided that General Convention, by appropriate votes, supports the provisions therein.

BYLAWS OF THE WAYFARERS CHAPEL

The Wayfarers Chapel is a national memorial to Emanuel Swedenborg and its services and programs bear witness to the vision of Christianity set forth in the teachings of Swedenborg and in the tradition and practices of the Swedenborgian Church.

Honoring and respecting a variety of approaches to the religious life, the Chapel welcomes all people. The Chapel gardens and grounds are to be maintained beautifully, so that the whole site may be consecrated to the worship and love of God, nurturing the experience of the Divine presence among us.

The uses of the Chapel are many, providing a unique experience for individual wayfarers, couples, groups, and families as a place to meditate and commune with God; a place to nourish the soul and spirit unfettered by the usual man-made structural separations from the natural world that God has created.

The Chapel and grounds provide an inspirational background for the celebration of worship; sacraments and special services to commemorate our Lord's birth, the Last Supper, and resurrection; and the celebration of marriage, baptism, and the transition which is called death.

The educational ministry of the Chapel can be carried out in the Visitors Center including the sale of books, classes and discussion groups, exhibits, lectures and films. Marriage counseling, personal growth enhancement programs and community events are also an integral part of experiencing the Wayfarers Chapel.

In summary the Chapel's uses are: solace and meditation for the wayfarer, celebration of the Christian rites and sacraments, educational programs and exhibits, personal growth programs, and community involvement in an environment as harmonious with God's own natural beauty as the imagination can envision.

BYLAWS

PREAMBLE

The Board of Directors was established by a vote of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the USA, Inc., currently known as and hereinafter referred to as The Swedenborgian Church, at its session in June 1950. The vote at that time read in part as follows: "Resolved – That the use, maintenance, and management of the property at Palos Verdes now known as 'The Wayfarers Chapel: a National Memorial to Emanuel Swedenborg,' be placed in the hands of a Committee consisting of five members, a majority of whom shall be members of this Convention, who shall be appointed by the President with the approval of the General Council, and in addition the President of Convention and the President of

the California Association (now known as the Pacific Coast Association) both ex officio: . . . the initial appointment of said five members to be for terms of one, two, three, four, and five years each; three of said members to be residents within the limits of the Pacific Coast Association.”

At the annual session of The Swedenborgian Church in June 1979, the General Council increased Board membership from five members to seven.

At the annual session of The Swedenborgian Church in June 1983, the General Council reduced the number of appointed members from seven to six.

ARTICLE I

MEMBERSHIP ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1.

In accordance with the action of the General Convention cited above, the appointive members of the Board shall consist of six persons, two appointments to be made each year by the President of The Swedenborgian Church with the approval of General Council. Board members shall be appointed for a term of three years. Terms shall commence and end with the close of the denomination’s annual convention. Those members who have served three consecutive three-year terms, including ex-officio members, shall not be eligible for immediate reappointment.

A member who is chairperson of the Board at the completion of the third year of his/her membership term shall have that membership extended to the close of the next fall meeting of the Board.

A person appointed to fulfill an unexpired term of two years or longer is eligible for reappointment to only two additional consecutive three-year terms. Vacancies on the Board shall be filled by appointment by the President of The Swedenborgian Church with approval of General Council.

Section 2.

Ex officio members of the Board shall include the President of The Swedenborgian Church, the President of the Pacific Coast Association, and the members of the Leadership Team. In the absence of the President of the Swedenborgian Church, the President’s designated representative may represent the President and be accorded full voting privileges. In the absence of the President of the Pacific Coast Association, or when a Leadership Team member is President, a designated representative may be appointed to represent him/her, and be accorded full voting privileges. The Leadership Team members shall serve without vote.

Section 3.

Three or more of the appointive members of the Board must reside within the limits of the Pacific Coast Association. All voting members of the Board must be members of The Swedenborgian Church.

ARTICLE II**OFFICERS****Section 1.**

The officers of the Board of Directors shall be a Chairperson, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Section 2.

The Chairperson of the Board shall preside at all meetings of the Board and its Executive Committee. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Secretary will convene the meeting and preside over the election of a Chairperson, Pro Tempore.

Section 3.

The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and one other Board member (called a Member at Large) plus the Leadership Team serving ex-officio, without vote. The Executive Committee shall have the power to act for the Board in the interim between Board meetings with the limitations set forth in Article IV, Section 2.

Section 4.

The Officers and other members of the Executive Committee shall be elected by the Board at the fall meeting and serve for one year.

ARTICLE III**MEETINGS****Section 1.**

There shall be three regular meetings of the Board, to be held normally in January, May, and September, open to all members of The Swedenborgian Church. The September meeting shall be the annual meeting. Special meetings of the full Board may be called by the Executive Committee or any three members of the Board, two of whom shall not be part of the Leadership Team. With the approval of the Board, any meeting can be held via telephone conference call. Votes taken by letter or the internet shall be confirmed at the next regular meeting of the Board. Minutes of the Board meetings shall be distributed to Board members and

shall be approved at the next meeting of the Board. A quorum shall consist of four voting members.

Section 2.

In the interim between Board meetings, the Executive Committee may meet if necessary. The Chairperson shall schedule an Executive Committee meeting upon request of any two members of the Executive Committee, one of whom may be an employee of the Board, or at the request of three members of the full Board, one of whom shall not be part of the Leadership Team. The Executive Committee minutes shall be distributed to all Board members. Actions of the Executive Committee shall be confirmed at the next meeting of the Board.

Section 3.

Between meetings of the Board, votes may be taken in any written form with the same effect as if taken at a regular meeting of the Board, except that in such written votes a two-thirds vote of the whole Board shall be necessary to decide the matter, and provided further that if any member of the Board requests its Chairperson in writing to delay action on the request under consideration, the Chairperson shall notify in writing all members of the Board of all objections made and reasons therefore, and shall allow two weeks for reversal of votes before the count of the vote is finally made.

Section 4.

The provisions of Robert’s Rules of Order shall be used as a guide for the conducting of business.

Section 5.

Meetings of the Board or Executive Committee may be conducted by conference call, computer conference, or face to face.

ARTICLE IV

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 1.

The Board of Directors shall have superintendence of the services, programs, and activities of the Chapel. It shall employ the Leadership Team and evaluate their performance annually.

Members of the Board shall make themselves available to listen to problems and concerns of the Leadership Team and either individually or as a group, but decisions can only be made by the full Board or the Executive Committee as outlined in Article III.

The Board of Directors shall establish the general policies of the Chapel and

develop long-range plans for improvements.

The Board shall adopt the annual budget, submit copies to the General Council for their information and approval, and require a financial audit on the same schedule as the General Convention's audits, with a financial review in the years audits are not conducted.

The Board shall submit an annual report of The Wayfarers Chapel to the Secretary of The Swedenborgian Church for inclusion in the annual Journal of The Swedenborgian Church.

In carrying out its duties, the Board is responsible to The Swedenborgian Church and its General Council.

Section 2.

The Executive Committee shall act for the Board of Directors in the interim between Board meetings. Between Board meetings it shall have the authority to amend the budget so long as expenditures do not exceed the anticipated income.

The Executive Committee shall carry out the directives of the Board and act on all matters referred to it by the Board. It shall evaluate the effectiveness of the Leadership Team members and make recommendations to the full Board regarding their employment and salaries and other matters germane to Chapel operation.

Section 3.

The Leadership Team shall implement policies of the Board through day-to-day administration of Chapel activities as designated in the Responsibility Matrix. They shall employ, supervise, and evaluate Chapel staff. They shall keep the Board and Executive Committee informed of services, programs, activities, capital improvements, and the financial status of the Chapel.

Section 4.

The Leadership Team, working with the Treasurer, shall annually prepare a preliminary budget for the Board.

In carrying out their duties, the Leadership Team is responsible to the Board of Directors and its Executive Committee.

ARTICLE V

AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended at any meeting of the Board of Directors by a two-thirds vote of the Directors present at the time the vote is taken provided that notice of the proposed amendment shall first have been sent to Board members at least two weeks before the Board meeting. This notice may be dispensed with for any special occasion by a unanimous vote of the Board members present and

voting, provided a quorum exists. Bylaw amendments are also subject to approval by the General Council.

Amendments to these Bylaws are subject to approval of the General Council.

Revised September 21, 2007. Approved by General Council July 2, 2008.

Revised January 8, 2010. Approved by General Council September 5, 2013.

Revised September 21, 2013. Approved by General Council November 1, 2013.

Revised March 11, 2023. Approved by General Council March 11, 2023

BYLAWS OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN COMMUNITY

A fully online, minister-led outreach and connectional ministry of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, Inc.

The mission of this ministry is to create:

- a community where members are known to each other, feel free to share openly their personal journey of faith, and feel nurtured and supported in their walk with the Lord.
- an open and welcoming community for new spiritual seekers, introducing the Swedenborgian faith in an accessible way through powerful testimony and life experience with it.

BYLAWS

PREAMBLE – HISTORY

At its fall meeting in 2004, the General Council of the Swedenborgian Church (General Convention) determined to research the idea of an online ministry that would connect distant Church members and also be an outreach ministry to the world. A Research Committee was appointed for this project. The Research Committee reported regularly and in the summer of 2005, the General Council accepted a proposal to establish an online-only outreach and connectional ministry. The Research Committee was discharged with thanks and a Steering Committee was appointed to organize and create this Internet Ministry, with initial funding from the denomination.

In the fall of 2005, the Steering Committee brought a complete proposal to establish www.swedenborgiancommunity.org along with a request to fund a dedicated part-time minister. The General Council approved both requests and the search for a minister was opened. The General Council approved a part time contract for the first denominational “cyber minister” in the early spring of 2006, supported the design and implementation of a dedicated website for this new ministry and www.swedenborgiancommunity.org was officially launched at the denomination’s annual convention at Urbana University on June 26, 2006.

The Steering Committee continued to serve through June 27, 2008, when it was officially thanked for its diligent, excellent work and discharged. The General Council appointed an oversight committee for www.swedenborgiancommunity.org at its meeting on June 27, 2008. This committee is appointed annually by the General Council and has been named The Central Committee since 2011.

The General Council affirmed www.swedenborgiancommunity.org as a specific, recognized ministry of the denomination at its post-convention meeting

on July 8, 2012, in Bridgewater, MA.

ARTICLE I. CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Number and terms. The Central Committee of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org shall consist of three appointed members. Central Committee members will serve three-year terms, with one consecutive renewal possible. Terms of service will be staggered so that the entire committee membership is not new each year.

Central Committee Member Functions. The types of expertise and experience that the Central Committee will consider in recommending new members for the appointment include: familiarity with the functions of the General Convention, writing, ministry, financial budgeting and reporting, Internet technology, program creation and presentational skills. All Central Committee members will be/become registrants of the ministry, and at least one should be selected from the online community. At least two must be members of a General Convention ministry.

Appointment Process. Upon ratification and implementation of these Bylaws, the Central Committee will recommend Committee appointments to the General Council annually for affirmation by the General Council at its post-convention meeting.

Ex officio members. The minister of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org will serve ex officio without vote on the Central Committee, and is not counted toward a quorum. The Vice-President of the General Convention will serve ex officio with vote on the Central Committee.

Quorum. A quorum is achieved with one less than the number of voting Committee members at the time. If the Committee size should be reconfigured to six or more members, one more than half of the number of voting members will constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE II. OFFICERS

The Central Committee will self-select its internal organizational structure regarding facilitator, financial overseer and secretarial position from within its membership. If the Committee size should be reconfigured to six or more members, the Committee will formally vote to fill offices.

ARTICLE III. MEETINGS AND DECISION-MAKING

Regular and special meetings will be held via telephone conference call or computer-generated voice or video conference. As is possible, the Central Committee will meet in person during the annual convention of the Swedenborgian Church.

Generally, the Central Committee will make decisions through consensus. The Committee will have formal votes on legal matters such as the minister's annual contract recommendation, finalization of the annual budget for www.swedenborgiancommunity.org and on any major changes to the ministry's website.

ARTICLE IV. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE**Section 1. General responsibilities**

The Central Committee shall establish the general policies and have superintendence of the services, programs and activities of this ministry.

Individual members of the Committee shall make themselves available to listen to problems and concerns of the Minister or other employees, but decisions and/or adjudications can only be made by the Central Committee as a whole.

The Central Committee shall submit a report on the work of the online ministry to the General Council at least annually.

The Central Committee will also submit a report for inclusion in the annual Journal of the Swedenborgian Church.

Other reports will be prepared and submitted as necessary.

Section 2. Personnel Responsibilities

The Central Committee, following the denomination's open search process, will select the Minister for www.swedenborgiancommunity.org from the Roll of Ministers of the General Convention and recommend the hiring of that minister to the General Council of the General Convention. The contract will be between the selected Minister and the General Convention.

The Minister is responsible to the Central Committee and the Central Committee will evaluate the Minister annually. The Minister will implement policies of the Central Committee through day-to-day programming and services of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org. The Minister will report regularly to the Committee (frequency to be determined by the Committee and the Minister), and will direct/supervise and evaluate any part time technical/administrative assistant

if one should be in place.

Section 3. Financial responsibilities

The Central Committee, in consultation with the Minister, shall annually prepare a budget for the needs of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org. The Committee shall adopt the annual budget and submit it to the General Council for its approval. The annual budget for this ministry will be part of the complete annual budget of the General Convention, but the budget for www.swedenborgiancommunity.org will be administered by the Central Committee.

All financial transactions for www.swedenborgiancommunity.org will be handled through the General Convention's Central Office. As long as the day-to-day financial transactions are handled through the denomination's Central Office, and the ministry's annual budget is an identified part of the denomination's annual budget, audits and financial reviews of the finances of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org will be part of the overall audit/review process of the denomination as established by the General Council.

ARTICLE V. AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended at any meeting of the Central Committee by a two-thirds vote of the members present at the time the vote is taken, provided that notice of the proposed amendment shall first have been sent to Committee members at least two weeks before the Committee meeting. This notice may be dispensed with for any special occasion by a unanimous vote of the Committee members present and voting, provided a quorum exists.

Amendments to these Bylaws are subject to the approval of the General Council of the Swedenborgian Church in North America.

Approved by the General Council of the General Convention, June 25, 2013

Adopted by Central Committee of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org , July 13, 2013 (Central Committee membership at time of vote: Dr. Page Morahan, Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell, Ms. Christine Laitner; Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake, ex officio w/o vote)

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