

CREATING HARMONY:

Art as Spiritual Practice

202ND ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

Mini Course Line-Up for Convention 2026

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

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

There are two formats for Mini Courses

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

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

We look forward to seeing everyone both in person and online this year!



*The Swedenborgian
Church of
North America*

Saturday, June 27 at 1:30 PM ET

Practice Contemplative Creativity Bronwen Mayer Henry

This course will be in-person on campus. This Mini Course will require pre-registration when you register for Convention to ensure there are enough materials.

This Mini Course invites you to practice contemplative creativity in a simple, accessible way—no art experience required. Together, we'll explore creative play with shapes and color as a gentle practice for meeting life's struggles with greater compassion and kindness. You'll be encouraged to set aside pressure to perform or produce and instead use creativity to slow your thoughts, soften fear and self-criticism, and reconnect with moments of ease and joy. Artist and meditation teacher Bronwen Mayer Henry will guide participants in a contemplative, process-based approach to creativity as meditation and stress relief. All levels welcome, including beginners.

Bronwen Mayer Henry is a self-taught contemporary painter specializing in nature-inspired large-scale canvases with acrylic paints. It was an unexpected path through Thyroid Cancer that led Bronwen



to commit time to painting. Her art is an expression of prayer, meditation, hope, and joy. She shares the inspiration of breaking through creative barriers by designing and leading retreats and workshops, and in her book, "Radioactive Painting," published by Shanti Arts LLC.

Creative Contemplative Prayer: A hands-on, guided experience—No artistic ability required!

Rev. Jenny Caughman

This course will be in-person on campus. Due to limited seats (16), this Mini Course will require pre-registration when you register for Convention.

This workshop will combine two spirit-rich experiences—both of which are open to people of all levels. First, we will decorate a candle holder. Participants will then be led in a guided contemplative prayer experience, and finally, will finish decorating their candle holder with insights coming from the prayer experience. Jenny firmly believes that God speaks to us in a myriad of ways and we can deepen our personal relationship with God by opening ourselves up to God, and inviting God into our inner world through both the creative process and contemplative prayer.

Contemplative prayer is a form of prayer where we choose to turn toward God with a listening stance, inviting God into our hearts and minds and being open to what God might say or

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present to us. We will use *Lectio Divina* (Latin for Divine Reading), which is a way of engaging with scripture, not striving to cognitively understand it (which, while very valuable, is not what we will be doing in this experience) but instead inviting God to speak to us through scripture. In this way, we are open to moving from an intellectual understanding of God to a felt relationship with God. In Swedenborgian terms, from externals to internals, or from using our understanding to engaging our will. Contemplative prayer is a way “of being willingly present for God and trusting God’s presence for us” (Tilden Edwards). In a similar way, the creative process moves past understanding as we open ourselves up to another form of truth as we explore different forms of knowing and expressing ourselves.

So come, listen, play, pray, and learn about yourself and God!



The Rev. Jenny Martin Caughman has had diverse professional experiences, from working as a music therapist with terminally ill cancer patients to being in the unique position of a

Swedenborgian minister serving a United Methodist Church for fourteen years. Recently retired from congregational ministry, she is currently training in Spiritual Direction and seeks to integrate the creative and contemplative processes into helping people deepen their knowledge, love, and experience of God.

Living Liturgies for the New Church: Our Work in Progress Heather Garland

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

What if liturgy were something we created rather than something we only inherited? This interactive workshop

explores the purpose and power of liturgical forms and invites participants to collaborate in shaping new prayers, rituals, and worship language rooted in Swedenborgian theology and responsive to the spiritual hungers of our time. Through discussion, reflection, and small-group creative collaboration, workshopers will help craft fresh expressions of worship and leave with tools for cultivating locally grown liturgical practices in their own communities, and a network for sharing those resources with the church at-large.

Heather Garland is the Music Coordinator at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. Her ministry seeks to awaken the experience of inner sense through the arts of worship. She



is currently engaged in research toward the creation of a Swedenborgian Hymnal for the General Convention, and is a student on the Licensed Pastor track through the Center for Swedenborgian Studies in Berkeley, California.

Bringing Out the Best: Creativity and Dementia

Tryn Rose Seley

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

Tryn Rose’s Mindful Art sessions are designed to enhance the lives of those with dementia through music, storytelling, and artistic expression.

The presentation will include a slide-show of a session, anecdotes regarding the positive impact on participants, and a hands-on experience of Mindful Art elements, including live music and creative time.

Attendees will participate in both 1:1 and large group sharing. They will leave with a mini art project and an expanded understanding of how to use creative methods for people with

dementia, as well as for themselves.

Tryn Rose has spent thirty years working with young children and elders with special needs. She looks for the person beyond the layers of Alzheimer’s or other forms of dementia, and finds the spark that’s waiting to emerge. She is a professional musician, photographer, expressive arts teacher, music leader, and meditation provider for various church communities, and has written a book and contributed to other books for caregivers of those living with dementia. Her books can be found on her website, caregiverheart.com, and wherever books are sold.



Sunday, June 28 at 1:30 PM ET

Harmony at Play: Everybody Wins as Spiritual Practice

Trevor “The Games Man”

This course will be in-person on campus.

A play-shop by TREVOR “The Games Man” featuring interactive, non-strenuous, everybody-wins, social games for adults and teens designed to create unity, team-building, and friendship. There will be ice breakers, large group games, small groups, one-on-one, brain teasers, creative problem solving, oh, and some silly stuff, too! All ability levels, no special skills required, just arrive with a playful spirit... and comfortable shoes.

TREVOR “The Games Man” is a certified New Games Leader, Cooperative Play Specialist, Professional Stilt walker, multiple award-winning full-time entertainer, and fifth or sixth generation Swedenborgian.



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Through Anna's Eyes: Using Correspondences to Read the World

Rev. Christopher Barber

This course will be in-person on campus.

When she died in 1877, Philadelphia Newchurchwoman Anna Keyser Baker (b. 1821) left behind, in the form of a three-year diary, an inspiring record of how she saw the world through a Swedenborgian lens. Miss Baker interpreted nature and art with a correspondential frame of mind and applied her faith to all aspects of her life. Join Rev. Chris Barber for an introduction to Miss Baker, her life and times, and the sights and sounds that inspired her. Additionally, you will be shown a few simple resources, techniques, and exercises to help you interpret your world as she did. This session will include history, theology, art, and spiritual practice, leaving participants better knowing this obscure yet moving figure from New Church history and how you, too, can read your world.



Rev. Barber is an ordained priest of the General Church of the New Jerusalem and a teacher of religion at the Academy of the New Church in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. He writes, teaches, and

lectures on New Church history, theology, and social issues. He serves as the President of the Swedenborg Foundation and holds degrees from Bryn Athyn College and Widener University. Barber is publishing an annotated and appended edition of the Diary of Anna Keyser Baker with Brookline Books in Summer 2026.

The Hidden Churches of the East: Swedenborg's Japanese Readers and the search for World Renewal in 'Thibet'

Dell Rose

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

Like Utopia, wherever the mystic "Far East" might be, it always seems to be somewhere far away. This was certainly the case in Meiji Japan, where Japanese religious thinkers, like their Western esoteric brethren, were also looking for the spiritual secrets of Asia. Onisaburo Deguchi 出口 王仁 三郎 (1871–1948), one of the two leading lights of the Oomoto faith (大本), believed this so strongly that he personally led an expedition to connect with spiritually enlightened civilization on the Mongolian steppe. This quixotic quest gets even more bizarre when we consider that his inspiration in seeing Mongolia as the last bastion of spirituality, a "church" from the ancient world, came not from any Japanese movement, but rather from the writings of Swedish visionary and esotericist Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). Swedenborg taught that in the ancient church, a golden age period, people had an innate understanding of spirituality and understood from nature the truth of the spiritual world. There were still pockets of this living tradition around the world, notably in Africa and in a geographically mysterious "Thibet." Onisaburo accepted these claims as factual and wanted to learn the secret nature of the world from those who still knew it, hence his expedition. However, Swedenborg's teachings also colored how he would see his own Japan and the spiritual legacy that existed hidden in traditional arts. I argue that Western conceptions of the spiritual "Far East" were also complementary to nativist arguments flourishing in the Meiji era, and that many like Onisaburo were happy to use Western connotations for their

own cultural self-assessment.

Dell J. Rose
(Swedenborg
Library Chicago
& HHP Centre-
Universiteit van
Amsterdam)
is on the
ordination
track for the
Swedenborgian
Church of North
America and
is a historian



of religions, working on Swedenborg's global reception. His work engages New Testament studies, Japanese History, radical theology in the Reformation, Italian Fascism, as well as science in the early modern period. At present he is at work on his book, *The Meiji Swedenborg: Western Concepts in Eastern Esotericism*, a project supported by Swedenborg House United Kingdom and the Aries Series in Western Esotericism at Brill.

Church, State, and Social Justice: Religion, Politics, and the First Amendment

Rev. Robert McCluskey

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

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Countless experts over the decades agree that these first sixteen words of the First Amendment constitute a bold, unprecedented experiment in Western culture, the genius of American life, and our greatest gift to the world: the end of theocracy. "It has protected the common good from religious factionalism, and it has ensured the integrity of faith from too close an alliance with the state."

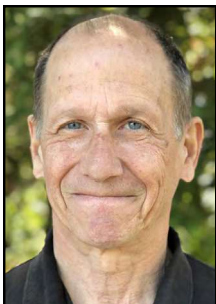
What is the best way for church, state, and society to interact? How might the church, our church, be involved in the pressing social issues of the day, the needs of our neighbor, small and large? Recent events have turned a light on the critical issue of religious freedom, which has been a

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constant source of debate and division from before this country's founding.

In this Mini Course, we will look at the complex history of the religion clause of the First Amendment. We will also look at Swedenborg's teachings on the spiritual, moral, and civil realms of life: each distinct from the other, and each interacting with the others. We will review our church's past efforts to confront societal injustice, as well as the diverse theological views underlying those efforts. We will hear from experienced experts as to how the church should, and should not, engage in social issues. And we will take a closer look at the phrase, coined by Thomas Jefferson, about the "separation of church and state."

For those interested in getting a head start, please check out my review of *Solemn Reverence: The Separation of Church and State in American Life*, by Randall Balmer (*the Messenger*, Summer, 2021).



Rev. Robert McCluskey holds a BA and MA in philosophy, with a focus on Greek philosophy, modern idealism, existentialism, and hermeneutics. He is a graduate of the Swedenborg School of Religion

and was ordained into the Swedenborgian Church of North America in 1984. He has pastored churches in Portland, Maine and New York City, and served on the Social Justice Committee. He also served for eighteen years as representative to the National Council of Churches, with specific attention to the work of social justice and religious freedom. Until recently, he administered rites and sacraments at Wayfarers Chapel near Los Angeles, California.

Monday, June 29 at 10:15 AM ET

"To be his own master, and so to be free." Swedenborg on Temporal and Spiritual Slavery

Dr. Vincent Roy-Di Piazza

This course will be in-person on campus.

Swedenborg discussed slavery extensively across his theology. While his influence on eighteenth-century Swedish abolitionism has long been recognized, paradoxically, few studies have explored Swedenborg's own views on slavery in detail. This Mini Course will delineate the corpus of Swedenborg's writings about temporal and spiritual slavery. We will explore where his views on slavery stood in the context of his time, how they differed from abolitionism, and eventually, how they became part of his wider theology about free will, evangelization, and spiritual emancipation.

Dr. Vincent Roy-Di Piazza is a historian of early modern science, religion, and political economy based in Finland. Vincent obtained his doctorate from the University of Oxford in 2022, with a dissertation on Swedenborg and the soul-body problem. A Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, his articles on Swedenborg have been featured in academic journals such as *Annals of Science*, *Political Hermetica*, and the *Intellectual History Review*.



The Path of Creative Vision and Practice, Using Mandalas, Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian Art

Pastor Lorraine Kardash

This course will be in-person on campus.

We will explore the light of wisdom in the Buddhist use and meaning of visual art in mandalas and thangka, in Hindu visual art as found in yantras, and in Christian iconography, as well

as the use of sound in mantra, yantra, and word.

There will be participation in singing a Buddhist Mantra together, a Hindu Mantra, and, if there is time, creating a simple mandala using the symbols found in one of the mantras.

Lorraine retired as the licensed pastor of the Portland New Church in September, 2025. She was ordained as an interfaith minister by The Chaplaincy Institute of Maine in



2006. As a student and painter of Christian Orthodox iconography and Tibetan Thangka, she has explored the process of immersing in an art form in a meditative state. Lorraine also studied with the musician Russell Paul, author of the book *The Yoga of Sound*, in the practice of Hindu Sanskrit Mantra, and for many years with Geshe Gendun Gyatso in the study of Tibetan Buddhism.

Table Fellowship and the New Church: "Brown Rice Makes You Very High"

Rev. Lynn Chittick Thompson

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

The teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg and the significance of the plants of the bible hold profound importance for us all. In the art of cooking, how do spiritual correspondences play a role in our day-to-day lives, helping us live in harmony with ourselves and nature? Furthermore, how can we pursue our dreams through the culinary arts, recognizing cooking as a deep connection to God's creation? Swedenborg extensively explored the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. How do these three kingdoms influence our neurobiology and spirituality in the twenty-first century? In this exploration, we will delve into the

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profound wisdom of how God’s creation provides us with the natural art of health and wisdom, ultimately nurturing our souls.

By examining the deep wisdom of food and health through the lens of nature, we can better understand how our dietary choices affect our physical well-being. We will explore the gifts that the earth and God have provided for us to steward and cherish. This course will also address the environmental impacts of our choices and how they contribute to a universal understanding of peace. Additionally, we will discuss practical ways to build fellowship and foster community through seasonal events at your church, and to bridge connections through “Table Talk Health” programs.

Fellowship manifests in many forms. Jesus entrusted us with a healing ministry that can embrace and express through the spirit of food. Building upon Swedenborg’s insights into the three kingdoms, this session invites us to explore how our bodies, minds, and spirits can deepen and flourish as we engage playfully and purposefully in the kitchen.

Rev. Lynn Chittick Thompson, RN, MDiv, ordained in June 2025 by The Swedenborgian Church of North America. Founder of TORCH: The Organization for Realizing



Change in Humanity, focused on peace, health, environment, and technology. She has been a nurse, long-time speaker, author, teacher, and entrepreneur focused on the dream of One Peaceful World. She is currently focused on a DMin with Pacific School of Theology.

Artwork During Spiritual Crisis

Rev. Colin Amato

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

During a period of intense personal change, and on the eve of World War I, Carl Jung began to experience visions that heralded a time of spiritual growth. Jung turned to journaling and writing in an attempt to process these experiences, but ultimately found artwork as the best medium of expression and integration. This minicourse will present images of Jung’s *The Red Book*, along with accompanying text to help demonstrate the significance of artwork as an expression and practice of the spirit. More recent content from the publication of “The Black Books,” Jung’s earliest personal journals, and a connection to Swedenborgian thought will be included.

Rev. Colin was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. Ordained in 2022, he currently serves as pastor of the virtual community, The Rainbow Church, an online LGBTQ+ ministry of the Swedenborgian Church of North America. Rev. Colin, a licensed marriage and family therapist, also serves as the clinical director of Solano Pride Center and maintains a private psychotherapy practice. 🏡

