



Creating Harmony: Art as Spiritual Practice

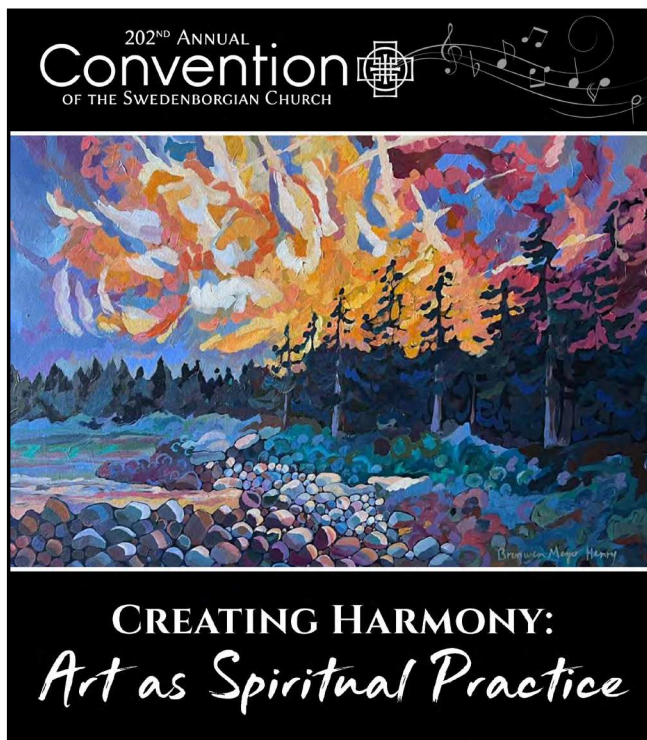
202nd Convention at the Babson Executive Conference Center
in Wellesley, Massachusetts

Friday, June 26 – Tuesday, June 30, 2026

In-person registration is open until May 15,

Virtual registration is open until June 15 on swedenborg.org

Members and friends of the Swedenborgian Church, we are happily planning to gather again in a lovely conference hotel setting that is also associated with a college: the Babson Executive Conference Center, adjacent to Babson College in suburban Boston. Again, this year we will provide robust virtual support for all business sessions and worship services, as well as many of the educational events (Mini Courses). We warmly welcome people to join us in-person or online. This year, our convention for in-person attendees will offer participant-friendly accommodation, with all activities (lodging, meals, business sessions, and event services) in the hotel and conference building. Our theme is “Creating Harmony: Art as Spiritual




Logo inspired by a painting by Bronwen Mayer Henry, “Wild Edges.” 2023, Acrylic on Canvas. The sunset at Acadia National Park, Maine.

Practice” as we return to the top of the cycle of seven themes with the Year of the Lord.

Keynote Address

Creating Harmony: Art as Spiritual Practice By Bronwen Mayer Henry

Bronwen will explore how creativity can be an accessible, everyday path to healing, finding inner steadiness, and meaningful engagement with the world. She was featured in the March Messenger (ti.nyurl.com/mvnpz7kd).

The Convention Preacher this year will be Rev. Catherine Lauber (whose sermon is featured on [page 45](#)), and our host is the Church on the Hill in Boston. There will be twelve stimulating Mini Courses that are a highlight of our gathering every summer. The business sessions will allow us to continue steering our special-purpose church that heralds a Holy City awaiting us all. 

2026 Nominations for Elected Positions

Read candidate statements from those nominated for the 2026/2027 elected positions.

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Accommodations —Explained!

Find out what’s new this year for those staying with us at the Babson Executive Conference Center.

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Youth Programming

Information on Convention programming for our teens (13–18) and our youth (0–12) attending Convention this year.

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Editor's Corner



Ocarina of Time

As a parent, there are things from our own childhoods that we are desperate to share with our kids, because being able to share what we loved in our youth with them brings joy. For my mother it was certain books: *Heidi*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and the *Bobby Twins* come to mind. These aren't necessarily books of great fiction, but books that were deeply important to her as a child, that I desperately wanted to love as much as she did. But, as is so often the case, I did not.

These tokens of nostalgia usually don't translate to the next generation. It is a different time, there are different cultural norms, and the next group of kids may simply like different things than their parents.

However, I continue to try to offer these little bits of my childhood to my children, to see if they would bring even a tenth of the amount of joy that these things gave to me. “Do you like fantasy, perhaps you would like David Eddings? No, what about Robert Jordan? You like campy Sci-fi, let's watch *Star Trek Next-Gen*, or perhaps *Quantum Leap*?” I would offer things that I loved to share with them, but they almost never seem to speak the same way to the next generation. Yet, every once in a while, the inter-generational connection is made.

“Mom, how am I supposed to get through the water temple?” I was shocked! Somehow my daughter made a connection to the game *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* that was similar to my own! We talked, bonded, and slogged our way through the dungeon. She was fully immersed despite the games blocky graphics and awkward interface.

the Messenger

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

Church Calendar

- **April 1, 2026:** Association Membership information is due to Central Office
- **April 3–April 5, 2026:** Central Office of the Swedenborgian Church is closed for the Easter holiday
- **April 15, 2026:** Registration for 202nd Convention opens!
- **May 15, 2026:** In-Person Registration for 202nd Convention Closes.
- **May 15, 2026:** 2026 Advance Reports due to Central Office.
- **May 22–25, 2026:** Memorial Day Youth Retreat.
- **May 25, 2026:** Central Office Closed for Memorial Day.
- **June 15, 2026:** Virtual Registration for 202nd Convention Closes.

The truth is, connecting with people is a two-way street, and I have to remind myself that when my kids want me to watch *Avatar: the Last Airbender* or read *Warriors*, they are reaching out to me to make those same connections. The joy that I get from having them love what I love is the same joy they feel when I love what they love. We won't always love the same thing as each other, everyone is unique! But, everyone wins when we take a moment to experience what makes our loved-ones happy, and every once in a while a connection is forged across generations and brings with it, joy.

—Brittany Price
messenger@swedenborg.org

Message from the President

A Holy Pilgrimage to Boston

The Year of the New Jerusalem: 2025–26



It is good to routinely make a pilgrimage to sacred beginnings, and a case can be made that our shrine city is Boston. That is where the Swedenborgian movement originally congealed in a fulsome way in America, and it still boasts more Swedenborgian churches in the greater Boston area than any other city.

James Glen gave the first public lectures on Swedenborg in 1784 in this country on a short swing that included Boston. Two converts were netted, which quickly grew into a reading circle that included some prominent citizens. They gave a set of Swedenborg's works to young Samuel Worcester, son of a prominent, if controversial, Congregational minister and also a student at Harvard. Hearing that the reading circle also gave a set of the *Arcana Coelestia* to Harvard College, Worcester, and his younger brother, Thomas, went looking for them. Not finding them on the library shelves, they searched until they located the volumes in a dusty room that the university called a "Museum" but which the Worcester brothers said was more a broom closet—though it did also contain a stuffed alligator.

Thomas Worcester was also a Harvard student and a good friend of fellow student Ralph Waldo Emerson. Thomas gathered a reading circle of Latin-reading Harvard students—a group that included three

future Swedenborgian ministers, a Swedenborgian layman who became a banker and state senator, one who became a druggist and a leading Swedenborgian thinker and writer, and another who became a lawyer and dean of Harvard Law School. That's a productive haul for a trial reading group! With this nucleus, the Boston Society of the New Church was founded in 1818, and the congregation named Thomas Worcester as its leader.

Over time, there would be as many as ten Swedenborgian churches in the greater Boston metropolis. Worcester himself was a force far beyond Boston. He became the most prominent denominational leader as the Swedenborgian movement began to grow, having become legally founded in 1817 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem. Worcester was an intense and creative force, as he became the on-point advocate for Convention's congregational polity. He was resisting the centralized episcopal movement advocated by the Academy Movement anchored in Philadelphia, which ultimately broke away in 1890. Worcester's style became synonymous with the "Boston Position," and he holds the distinction of having served the most years total as president of Convention: a whopping thirty-six years across three incumbencies (1832, 1839–49, and 1851–74).

Importantly for Boston, Worcester drove the beginnings of our seminary in 1866, the New Church Theological School, which had numerous locations

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Nominations for Elected Positions in the Swedenborgian Church

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

Kurt Fekete
Vice President
(one-year term)



I am honored to accept the nomination for the position of Vice President. Raised in a Swedenborgian family, I attended Sunday School at the Detroit church (later Royal Oak) and treasure my memories of Almont summer camp and youth retreats. Inspired by Swedenborg’s writings and a love of science, I studied Chemical Engineering at Wayne State University and worked in that field into my forties.

In the 1990s, I helped launch the Transitions young adult group, served on the Almont New Church Assembly board, and volunteered as a youth leader throughout my adult life. That passion led me to become youth director for the Swedenborgian Church in 2001. Now in my twenty-fifth year, I still enjoy working with young people while serving as vice president.

Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
President	3	***
Vice President	1	Kurt Fekete*
Recording Secretary	1	Beki Greenwood
Treasurer	3	***
General Council: layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Helen Barler Tom Murphy*
General Council: minister	3	Renée Machiniak*
Standing Committee for Communication & Information	3	Dave Brown*
Standing Committee for Education & Resources for Spiritual Community	3	Junchol Lee
Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (2 to be elected)	3	Kei Pang Andrea LoPinto
Committee on Admission Into the Ministry	3	Gabriella Cahaley*
Board of Trustees of CSS, representative class	4	Lisa Solwold
Nominating Committee (unexpired term)	4**	Jae Chung
Nominating Committee	5	OPEN

* Incumbent
 ** Years remaining in unexpired term
 *** No candidate to be elected this year

I strive to serve the church faithfully alongside president Jim Lawrence, the Executive Committee, and General Council. If re-elected, I will continue to bring a youthful perspective while honoring our Swedenborgian heritage.

I live in Maine with my wife, Shelley—whom I met at a youth retreat—and my adult daughters, Ava and Zsa Zsa.

Beki Greenwood
Recording Secretary
(one-year term)

I am honored and humbled to accept the nomination of Recording Secretary of the Swedenborgian Church of North America. I have been involved with the Swedenborgian Church for as long as I can remember. I became

a confirmed member of the Bridgewater Church at the age of eighteen, but I have always felt that I am a member of the denomination at large.



I grew up attending Blairhaven Summer Camp, attended youth retreats, and have been actively attending Fryeburg New Church Assembly for forty-five years—and have been a board member for the past twenty years. Most recently, my family and I have started attending Almont Summer School as well, and have felt right

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2026 Nominations

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at home among that community. I feel very blessed to have been an active member of so many groups among our denomination. It is with the connections that I have made with these foundations that I feel will make me a good fit to continue to serve our denomination at the greater level.

I have served a term on the General Council, as well as *ex officio* on the Standing Committee for Communication and Information and the Convention Planning Committee. With these foundations and my most recent experience as *the Messenger* editor, I feel ready to step into the role of recording secretary, being able to use my knowledge of the Church and community connections to continue to support the denomination in a new capacity.

My husband Jason and I live in Massachusetts near Cape Cod with our two children, Serena and Nate, and our two cats. I look forward to being in your service.

**Pastor Helen Barler
General Council–Layperson
(three-year term)**



I am honored to be nominated to serve on the General Council.

Joining the Swedenborgian Church of North America in 2005 as a member of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound, I set out on the journey of becoming the first Licensed Pastor of the denomination, consecrated in 2018 and serving Puget Sound in person until I

moved back to Texas in 2024 (I continue to serve remotely). I have served on the board of the Pacific Coast Association of the New Jerusalem for a total of twelve years, including four years as Vice President.

My educational background includes a BA and an MA in anthropology with a minor in art history, focusing on archaeology, iconography, and comparative religion. I have a certificate in Education for Ministry from the Seminary of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, and a Certificate of Swedenborgian Studies.

My secular work experience includes about seventeen years in publications and graphic arts (large and small newspapers, print shops and in-house advertising) and twenty-two years in the offices of the Operating Room department of Harborview Medical Center in Seattle.

I currently live in Seguin, Texas, with my husband, Paul Flesher, and our two cats, Dubh and Honey. The cats and I are avid birders—they watch out the windows, and I listen, watch, and photograph in nature, locally, and wherever I go.

I feel that my life experiences and education have prepared me uniquely to be of use as a member of General Council, and I am looking forward to the opportunity to serve.

**Tom Murphy
General Council–Layperson
(three-year term)**

Growing up as a Catholic in Northern California, Tom Murphy didn't know about Emanuel Swedenborg until much later in life. Tom attended Jesuit High School (Bellarmine College Prep) and University (Santa Clara University) on the West Coast, where he was introduced to a broad spectrum of traditions (Buddhism, Yoga, Druidry).

It wasn't until 2012 that he discovered the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church while planning his wedding.

That was such a positive experience that Tom and his wife became members of the church. After a few years attending services and then helping plan the Annual West Coast Swedenborgian Retreat, Tom was elected to the San Francisco Church Council in 2015, where he has served terms as president, vice president, and secretary.



Time on the Council taught Tom the fiscal challenges of keeping a local church solvent, the constant energy required to keep members engaged, and the delicate art of keeping things relevant to potential members.

In addition to his service with the San Francisco Church, Tom spent six years on the Board of the San Francisco Chapter of The Recording Academy, where he served as secretary and Advocacy Committee chair. During that time, he led a number of local and national initiatives to create new income opportunities for musicians. Locally, he helped create a Limited Live Performance Permit for the City of San Francisco, which opened new venues and new sources of income for artists. Nationally, Tom traveled to Washington DC twice to lobby on behalf of artists for the passage of the Music Modernization Act. These efforts taught Tom the balance of bringing people together for larger social change, the political incentives to move projects forward, and the patience needed for true long-term growth.

Since 2021, Tom has served as a

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2026 Nominations

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member of the Convention's General Council and would be honored to continue in service.

Rev. Renée Machiniak **General Council—Minister** **(three-year term)**

Rev. Renée has served the Royal Oak Church of the Holy City in Michigan since 1995. She was the Director of the Almont Summer School for nine years, and lectures yearly for the camp sessions. She very much values her volunteer service as our denomination's youth chaplain, and has served the Royal Oak community as a volunteer police chaplain since 2004 and an oncology and hospice chaplain since 2015. She continues to serve as a director on the board of the Royal Oak Lions Club, and helps to raise awareness and funds for *Leader Dogs for the Blind* in honor of Helen Keller and her sister-in-law, Karen Billings, who suffered partial blindness due to a massive brain aneurysm. She is happily married to her husband of twenty-five years, Joseph Machiniak, and enjoys playing the guitar and spending quality time with her retired parents, Rev. John and Sharon Billings, who reside with Joe and Renée.



Rev. Dr. David Brown **Standing Committee for** **Communication & Information** **(three-year term)**

It is an honor to accept the nomination, and many thanks for this. In serving the wayfarer, extending our reach online through new directions in ministry, and meeting people where they are at as part of the ministry team at the Garden Church, I can tell you that God is doing something new in the world and in our church. The descent of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, is accelerating, with new people being called into spiritual formation and leadership. I believe that our church is on the precipice of great things breaking through in the coming years, and I would love to help you in your discernment. Is God calling you to serve? If so, please let me know and in what capacity. Thank you for your consideration.



Rev. Junchol Lee **Standing Committee for Education** **& Resources for Spiritual** **Community** **(three-year term)**

Rev. Junchol Lee, ordained in 2000, has served Swedenborgian parishes ever since and is currently serving the Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco as its Senior Pastor. He is serving on the



Committee on Admission to the Ministry as its chair and the Pacific Coast Association as its president. He served previously on the Standing Committee of Education and Resources for one term, and is now willing to serve more.

Kei Pang **Standing Committee for Financial** **Accountability** **(three-year term)**

It would be an honor to serve on the Standing Committee for Financial Accountability (SCFA) for the Swedenborgian Church. I discovered the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg through the Church of the Open Word (Garden Chapel Sanctuary) in St. Louis eight years ago, and his theology has profoundly deepened my understanding of Christianity and strengthened my faith.

Prior to retiring in 2022, I spent my career with an international industrial conglomerate where maintaining financial discipline and safeguarding the long-term financial health of the organization were key aspects of my responsibilities. My professional experience required careful evaluation of financial risks, strategic planning, and responsible stewardship of resources—skills that I hope may be of service to the church.

In this next phase of my life, I feel called to contribute my experience and perspective to organizations whose missions align with my values. In addition to my involvement with the Swedenborgian community, I work with several environmental initiatives

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Convention
Registration Opens
April 15!

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2026 Nominations

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and help manage a small foundation, the Nature Partners Foundation, whose mission is to preserve biodiversity and promote the well-being of all life on Earth.

Serving on the SCFA would be a meaningful way for me to support the long-term vitality of the Swedenborgian Church and help ensure that its resources are managed with wisdom, care, and integrity.

**Rev. Lisa Solwold
CSS Board of Trustees –
Representative Class
(four-year term)**



It’s a privilege to be considered as a nominee for the Center for Swedenborgian Studies board.

Since my Swedenborgian Church of North America ordination in 2016, I’ve served as a full-time chaplain with Baptist Health System in Jacksonville, Florida. Four years were spent at Wolfson Children’s Hospital covering Pediatric ICU and ED units, and the Pediatric Trauma Team. In the Fall of 2021, I transferred to one of our Baptist Health adult hospitals, serving as lead chaplain. This role covers all units in our hospital and collaborates regularly with palliative and hospice teams to support patients and their families.

I love the work of chaplaincy, especially within the sacred space of the end of life. Whether in the children’s hospital or adult, I’ve aimed to help patients and families find hope and meaning even within the chaos of illness or injury.

The COVID-19 Pandemic was especially challenging for healthcare workers, and much of our chaplaincy has been spent supporting staff as well. For this, I helped create and implement several activities and resources for staff wellbeing, including an eight-week series called “Caring for the Caregivers,” which gathered various practitioners who offered new and unique self-care methods for team members to help balance work-home life.

I pursued additional studies and certifications in grief support and crisis incident management that helped to further support staff through personal loss and grief, as well as anxiety experienced following an unexpected crisis event at work.

I recently switched from full-time chaplaincy to a part-time role, a change that has allowed time with family and self-care. In addition, it provides time to support our Swedenborg denomination through committee service.

Thank you for considering me.

**Pastor Jae Chung
Nominating Committee
(unexpired four-year term)**

My name is Jae Chung. Since 2021, I have served as a Licensed Pastor at the Pacific Coast Association member church, Agapao Church, a home church with a Korean congregation. Additionally, we are sharing the Swedenborgian doctrine with the Korean community through our YouTube channel. I am excited to serve the Swedenborgian Church and look forward to growing together with the community. ☪



Convention Youth Programs

I am thrilled to announce that we have great activities planned for youth at this summer’s annual Convention at the Babson Executive Conference Center! Teens (ages 13–18) participating in the Swedenborgian Church Youth League program will stay in their own rooms (SCYL) at the hotel. Children (ages 0–12) will stay in the hotel with a parent or guardian (see page 44 for more details).

Our teenagers will again be led by youth director Kurt Fekete. The teens will collaborate on a theatrical worship service to present to the congregation, and will also have time for recreation, gathering with friends, and games. Childcare will be provided for youth (5–12) during the morning and afternoon business sessions and Mini Courses. If we have a group of youth in this age range, they will also participate in lessons and creative workshops inspired by our Convention theme, and will share what they have created with the full Convention community.

All youth are encouraged to attend, and subsidies are available to help families manage the cost. While the teen rates are heavily subsidized, if the cost is a hardship for you, please contact SCYL youth director Kurt Fekete for additional financial assistance. We know Convention can be an expensive trip for many families, and we are working hard to help as many children and teens attend as possible.

We are excited to have youth participate in Convention—our spiritual community is not complete without them! For more information, contact Kurt Fekete at kfekete@hotmail.com. We would love to have Convention be part of your summer plans. ☪

Convention 2026 Creating Harmony: Art as Spiritual Practice

Convention 2026 Accommodations – Explained!

BY JACKIE SHIHADDEH, OPERATIONS MANAGER

There are a few important updates to accommodations this year as we prepare for the 202nd Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church of North America. This year's Convention will take place at the Babson Executive Conference Center at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

What's New in 2026?

- This year, due to limited availability, the rooms are all double occupancy rooms, with two queen beds in each room. You can request a roommate on the registration form.
- Each room has two queen beds but can sleep up to four people. Rates for triple and quad occupancy are listed in the FAQ and registration at [swedenborg.org](https://www.swedenborg.org).
- Hotel rooms and meal packages are combined into one price.
- Commuters do not pay a registration fee. The price is \$75 a day for the days they attend, which includes meals and programming.

-Registration Fee

- Adults: \$110
- Teens & Youth (0–18): \$0
- Virtual Attendee: \$25

-Standard Double Room (four nights, meals included):

- Adult: \$680
- Teens (13–18): \$250 (\$500 max for teen sibling groups)
- Youth (0–12): Free

-Day Rate for Commuters (includes registration and meals):

- Adults: \$75/day
- Teens (13–18): \$50/day
- Youth (0–12): \$0

Hotel Details

We've blocked out a limited number of rooms at the Babson Executive Conference Center in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Each double room is nicely appointed with two queen-sized beds. The cost per adult is \$680 for four nights in a double occupancy room. You may indicate on your registration that you would like to be considered for a single (\$955 for four nights) if one becomes available.

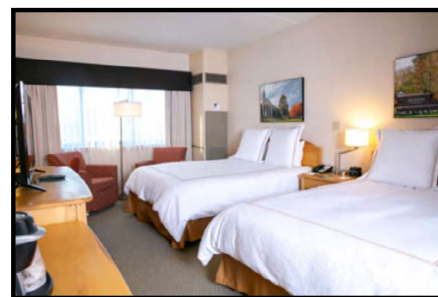
Important: You will book your room by filling out the registration form on [swedenborg.org](https://www.swedenborg.org), rather than calling the conference center hotel directly. You can request an ADA-compliant room on the registration form. More information about the rooms can be found at <https://www.babson.edu>.

Youth & Family Accommodations

- Everyone, including teens, will stay in the hotel this year.
- Teens (ages 13–18) stay in the hotel with other SCYL teens. Parents are not required to stay with them—they'll be housed together as part of the supervised SCYL (Swedenborgian Church Youth League) program.
- Big family? The cost for teen sibling groups is capped at \$500.
- Children under 13 must stay in the same room as a parent or legal guardian.
- Up to four people can stay in one room. Teens may be housed up to four to a room.

Meals

Babson Executive Conference Center offers flexible, sophisticated dining options with a diverse range of



fresh, locally sourced food and beverage choices. The dining hall, Sorenson Commons, is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner and provides a continuously evolving, buffet-style selection of chef-driven dishes designed to please a wide range of palettes. Dietary restrictions can be communicated to the dining room staff, and they will walk you through the buffet to provide meals that meet your needs.

- Hot breakfast
- Hot lunch
- Catered dinner
- Snacks and reception desserts.

Wellness & Recreation

Guests have access to a state-of-the-art, Len Green Recreation and Athletics Complex (LGRAC) on campus (<https://tinyurl.com/5chny3cu>).

Registration Reminders

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

Register & Learn more:

[swedenborg.org](https://www.swedenborg.org)

Questions? I'm here to help!

manager@swedenborg.org

857-217-3309

(M–F 10:00 AM–2:00 PM ET) ☎

Featured Sermon

Blessed Are the People Learning How to Live

A Sermon from February 1, 2026

BY REV. CATHERINE LAUBER

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
—Matthew 5:3

From a Swedenborgian perspective, we enter Scripture most faithfully when we understand that it is speaking about our inner life. The Word is not primarily about managing the world outside us, but about revealing the world within—our thoughts and intentions, our fears and hopes, our resistance and our capacity for change. Beneath the surface, Scripture helps to trace the slow work of regeneration, as Divine Love and Wisdom reshape what we desire and transform how we live.

This is especially true of both the Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments. They each describe what spiritual life looks like as it unfolds within us—what happens when heaven begins to take form in the human heart. The Beatitudes name the inner states where God is already present: in humility, grief, mercy, longing for justice, and the courage to choose peace. The Ten Commandments give those states structure, protecting them and guiding them into daily life.

Together, they show us how we are gradually made whole.

We continue to look to the Word for guidance and inspiration. For wisdom and for comfort. God’s word speaks into moments when people feel pressed, confused, or worn down, and it refuses to pretend that faith is simple when life is not.

That is why the Beatitudes speak as powerfully to us right now as they did

when Jesus first shared them.

These words were not spoken to people who felt secure or certain about the future. They were spoken to people living with fear, economic pressure, moral confusion, and deep divisions about what was true, what was right, and who could be trusted.

Jesus’ words were addressed not to the comfortable, but to those who were tired, grieving, disoriented, and longing for things to be made right.

Into that reality, Jesus did not offer escape. He offered recognition.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

Blessed are those who know that something is wrong and refuse to pretend otherwise.

“Blessed are those who mourn.”

Blessed are those who feel the weight of loss and do not numb themselves to it.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”

Blessed are those who desire divine truth and are willing to live according to it.

These are not sentimental blessings or ideals we must strive to achieve. They are promises spoken to people already living under strain. They say: God is present here, not only when things are resolved, but when they are messy.

So if you feel tired right now, know that you are not failing.

If you feel unsure, you are not faithless.

If you feel the strain of trying to live with integrity in a complicated world, you are exactly where Scripture speaks most clearly.

This is also why the Ten Commandments matter so much right now.

Because when external pressure increases, the inner temptation to cut corners increases. When fear rises, the temptation to fall into judgment of ourselves and others rises. When truth feels costly, the temptation to distort it rises. In a landscape that is muddy, foggy, and spiritually unclear, it’s difficult to know what is the right path. The Commandments do not deny these pressures—they name the spiritual boundaries that keep us human within them.

God is present here, not only when things are resolved, but when they are messy.

You shall not murder is about more than physical violence, it is about refusing to let contempt and resentment live in the heart.

You shall not steal is about more than property, it is about honoring what belongs to another—dignity included.

You shall not bear false witness is about more than lying, it is about being true to yourself and being true to others, and taking responsibility for that.

You shall not covet is about more than desire, it is about freedom from the endless anxiety of comparison and resentment.

And so the Commandments are not so much a checklist for earning God’s approval. They are supports that help

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Featured Sermon

Blessed Are the People*Continued from page 45*

us keep walking forward when the path feels unclear.

In Swedenborgian terms, these commandments describe the order of heaven.

The Ten Commandments describe what life looks like when heaven is taking shape within us. They name the patterns of love that protect our human spirit, deepen freedom, and make real community possible.

They guard the inner states the Beatitudes bless, so that mercy does not collapse under pressure, and peace does not give way to fear.

The Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments belong together because both insist on this truth:

Spiritual life is not about appearing righteous. It is about becoming whole.

The Beatitudes are words of recognition and promise. They speak directly to people who feel worn down by injustice, confused by suffering, and unsure how to live faithfully in a fractured world.

They say:

You are not invisible.

Your grief is not meaningless.

Your longing for goodness is not naïve.

And, your empathy is not a weakness.

And then—quietly, persistently—these blessings invite us forward, into the love of God.

The Ten Commandments do that same work over time. They shape us slowly, sometimes uncomfortably, into people who can actually live the blessings Jesus describes. They train us in the habits of heaven.

Not killing is about learning reverence for life.

Not stealing is about trusting that

there is enough.

Not lying is about honoring reality instead of manipulating it.

Not coveting is about freedom from attachments.

These habits of heaven support our spiritual life as a daily turning towards what gives life. Swedenborg describes this as regeneration: a gradual reshaping of our loves, where Divine Love and Wisdom are given room to work within us.

As heaven is forming within us, and each time you intentionally face your inner fears and choose love....

You are living the Commandments.

You are embodying the Beatitudes.

You are participating in the life of heaven here and now.

As we begin this journey through the Ten Commandments, we do so as people learning how to live more fully God's love.

Blessed are those who are still learning how to live.


Blessed are those who refuse to give up on goodness.

Blessed are those who are willing to be shaped by love, one commandment, one choice, one turning at a time.

May this journey through the Ten Commandments deepen us in clarity, in truth, and in hope.

May heaven find more room in us.

—Amen.

Rev. Catherine Lauber will be the 2026 Convention Preacher. You can attend her service in-person and online on Saturday, June 27 at 7:30 PM ET. 

Rev. Catherine Lauber is a pastor, spiritual care provider, and former psychotherapist serving the Fryeburg New Church, in Fryeburg Maine. Her work blends Swedenborgian theology with a deep commitment to healing, growth, and compassionate community.

**Convention Worship Services**

The following Worship Services are planned to be livestreamed for all to enjoy along with our in-person attendees. Services will take place in the St. Lawrence Room or the Glavin Family Chapel at Babson College.

Opening Worship Service

Friday, June 26 at 7:30 PM ET

with Rev. Kevin Baxter followed by the Keynote Address with Bronwen Mayer Henry

Convention Worship Service

Saturday, June 27 at 7:30 PM ET

with Rev. Catherine Lauber the 2026 Convention Preacher

Memorial Worship Service

Sunday, June 28 at 8:00 AM ET

with Rev. Renée Machiniak and Rev. Kit Billings

Swedenborgian Church Youth League Service

Monday, June 29 at 8:45 AM ET

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

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Swedenborg.org/news-announcements/newsletter-the-messenger/

From the Denomination

Swedenborg—An “Influencer” to Immanuel Kant

BY REV. SUSANNAH CURRIE

In the October 27, 2025, issue of the *New Yorker* magazine, in Adam Kirsch’s article about the book, “Kant, A Revolution in Thinking,” (Harvard), by Marcus Willaschek, translated by Peter Lewis, the first four paragraphs are devoted to outlining Emanuel Swedenborg’s life and writing. Swedenborg and Kant were contemporaries in the eighteenth century, both scientists and philosophers, and they shared a curiosity about the human body and its relationship to the human mind, or in Swedenborg’s case, the soul.

Kirsch writes that Kant wrote to a friend that he was free of “any trace of a way of thinking inclined to the miraculous.” Yet he ordered Swedenborg’s books and told a friend he was waiting for them with longing. Kant admitted that he was interested in Swedenborg’s powers of clairvoyance, as they had been vouched for by credible witnesses. Upon reading Swedenborg’s claim that spirits could be perceived with the senses, Kant, in contrast, reached his conclusion that there are only two realms: what we know from experience, and what we can imagine and make stories about. Although he rejected contemplating the spiritual realms Swedenborg described, he found in Swedenborg’s writings the inspiration to counter with his own thoughts.

When Kant published his book about Swedenborg, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seeker* (1766), he outlined his impressions of Swedenborg with sarcasm. Kant wrote:

Metaphysics is the science of the boundaries of human reason.” In the age of the Enlightenment, when

scientific advances were everywhere, scientists relied on the experience of finding ‘answers’ to the mysteries of life, and rejected the unseen ‘superstitions’ perceived in the faith of the religions of the day.

Kant’s work kept the scientists and philosophers of his day focused on the experiences of the five senses, with the human as the center of his thought. In contrast, Swedenborg challenged both the science and the religion of his day by opening his readers to the realms of Heaven, Hell, and the World of Spirits. In his book, Willaschek argues that Kant’s claim that to understand anything, it was necessary to understand ourselves. His three “Critiques” shared his ideas about the mind and shaped the development of “psychology, anthropology, and social science.”

These two eighteenth century “influencers,” provide us with two extremes: Kant with his boundary of human reason to the experiences of the senses, and Swedenborg with his openness to realms beyond the five senses. Scientists and religious persons alike were, then as now, given two paths to go in understanding life and themselves. These choices are how we identify ourselves.

It seems that Kant and Swedenborg did agree on a few things worth noting. Both believed that the definition of “good” is what is done with “good will.” Both encouraged the inner journey to both understand ourselves, and to grow in the “doing of good,” and both wrote about the possibility of life on other planets. Kant stressed individual autonomy and Swedenborg explored the meaning of community,

and its reality in all realms: Earth, World of Spirits, Heaven, and Hell. 🌐

Rev. Susannah Currie is a retired minister and chaplain. She is a happy wife of fifty years, mother of three and grandmother of six wonderful humans.



Message from the President

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in the Boston area for decades, including in the Boston Church itself, until finally establishing its beautiful campus adjacent to Harvard Yard in Cambridge, where the original seminary chapel is today a noted architectural gem of Cambridge with its “pocket Gothic” style.

At this year’s convention on outing day, we will be visiting the Boston Church as well as experiencing the surrounding Boston neighborhood, rich with culture and history. Consider a pilgrimage to Boston this summer!

—Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence
president@swedenborg.org

Convention Outing: A Taste of Boston!

On June 29, the Boston Society will present a “Taste of Boston.” We will have an experience of rich cultural heritage and history of the City of Boston. It will be based from the Church on the Hill, the home of the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem. Tours of the church, its downtown neighborhood, and more!

From the Denomination

Programs at the Swedenborg Library in Chicago April–May 2026

The Swedenborg Library in Chicago (swedlib.org) is pleased to announce a series of spring programs exploring one of the most enigmatic and philosophically challenging texts in the Hebrew Bible: the Book of Job. Beginning in April and continuing through May 2026, the Library will host a multi-session online seminar titled “The Book of Job: Between Humor, Heresy, and Revelation,” led by Swedenborg Doctoral Scholar Dell J. Rose. **All sessions will take place on Thursdays at 6:00PM CT via Zoom**, continuing the Library’s commitment to making serious intellectual programming accessible to participants in Chicago and beyond.

Few biblical texts have provoked as much reflection—and discomfort—as the Book of Job. The narrative presents a sustained challenge to conventional theological assumptions about divine justice. In contrast to the familiar expectation that righteousness leads to prosperity and wickedness to punishment, Job depicts a world in which an innocent man suffers catastrophic loss without explanation. The presence of such a text within the biblical canon has fascinated scholars and theologians for centuries. Its enduring power lies precisely in the unsettling questions it refuses to resolve too easily.

This spring seminar approaches the Book of Job from several complementary perspectives: its literary structure, its historical origins, and its theological implications. Participants will

engage closely with the Biblical text while also considering how later interpreters—including the eighteenth-century visionary theologian Emanuel Swedenborg—have approached its themes. Particular attention will be given to the book’s remarkable poetic form and its place within the intellectual world of the Persian-period Hebrew scriptures.



*William Blake's "The Lord Answering Job out of the Whirlwind"
Plate 13 from Blake's "Illustrations of the Book of Job"
ca. 1825–1826.*

The program begins on April 16 with an exploration of the textual origins of Job, introducing participants to the historical and literary questions surrounding the composition of the book. This discussion continues on April 23, expanding the analysis of the text’s formation and its relationship to wider ancient Near Eastern traditions.

On April 30, the seminar turns to the distinctive character of the work itself in a session titled “A Strange Book:

Recognizing the Oddity of the Job Text.” Participants will examine the unusual literary structure of the book, which combines prose narrative, poetic dialogue, and philosophical debate.

The May sessions move more deeply into the text. On May 14, the seminar focuses on the prologue of Job (1:1–2:13) and the early exchanges between Job and his companions. The discus-

sion continues on May 21 with an analysis of Eliphaz’s second discourse and Job’s responses, paying particular attention to the rhetorical strategies that shape the dialogue. The May series concludes on May 28 with a discussion of secondary responses to Job and the speeches of Elihu, which introduce a new interpretive voice into the debate prior to the climactic divine speeches later in the book.

Participants are encouraged to obtain Edward L. Greenstein’s “Job: A New Translation” (Yale University Press, 2019), which will serve as the primary text for the seminar and allow readers to engage closely with the poetic subtleties of the Hebrew text in translation (tinyurl.com/39z7ssh9).

In addition to the Job seminar, the Swedenborg Library is also preparing a special lecture by Anna Madison exploring the relationship between Emanuel Swedenborg and the artistic imagination of the Pre-Raphaelites. This forthcoming presentation will examine how Swedenborg’s visionary theology influenced

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From the Denomination

Programs at the Swed. Library

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nineteenth-century aesthetic movements, particularly among artists and writers associated with the Pre-Raphaelite circle. By tracing connections between Swedenborgian ideas and the symbolic language of Victorian art, Madison’s talk will open a fascinating window onto the cultural after lives of Swedenborg’s thought. The lecture is planned for May 2026, with the specific date to be announced shortly.

The Swedenborg Library in Chicago is also beginning preparations for a future retreat program intended to bring together readers, scholars, and spiritually curious participants for several days of shared study, reflection, and conversation. While details are still being developed, members of the community are warmly invited to help shape the program by completing a brief intake survey. Those interested in participating or learning more can fill out the survey here: tinyurl.com/4cdrezdc.

Through these programs, the Swedenborg Library Chicago continues its mission of fostering thoughtful engagement with sacred texts, intellectual history, and the interpretive traditions that continue to animate them. Further information about all upcoming events and registration can be found at swedlib.org. 📧

**Susan Turley
Fine Art**

Dear Friends,
I’m happy to share that my new website is officially up and running. This site has been quietly taking shape over the past several months—paintings shaped by presence, contemplation, and light—and I’m grateful to finally open the doors and welcome you to explore at your leisure.

You’ll find collections organized into series, including Landscapes, Ocean Works, Inner Explorations, and Honoring Women. Each painting reflects my ongoing journey with color, atmosphere, and the quiet thresholds we all cross in our lives.

You can visit here: www.susanturley.com

If a particular painting speaks to you, I would love to hear from you — whether through this email, the contact page on the site, or personally.

As a thank-you for celebrating this launch with me, I’m offering a 10% courtesy reduction to the first five collectors.

Thank you for walking alongside me in this creative season. Knowing you are there makes this work feel less solitary and more shared — for this I am deeply grateful.

I look forward to sharing with you new paintings that are waiting to emerge on canvas. Until then, I hope to hear from you soon.

With gratitude,
—Sue
Susan Turley Fine Art



When you visit susanturley.com you will find photographs of Sue’s work, most of them available for purchase. Some examples of her work, all acrylic on canvas: (top left) “Moon Over the Pines” (bottom left) “Within the Frame,” (bottom middle) “In Her Element,” and (bottom right) “Stillness at Dusk.”



**Do you write poetry?
Do you paint, draw or sculpt?
Do you have a creative story you
want to share?
Send it along to:
messenger@swedenborg.org**

Justice is the New Jerusalem

Tell Me Something Good...

BY REV. DR. AMANDA RILEY ON BEHALF OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

As Christians, we know the power of good news. The Presbyterian Church, where I serve as Parish Associate, has chosen this theme for the season of Lent: “Tell me something good.” We know that good news can change our outlook on life, and, in the case of the Gospel, can change our lives. When it comes to climate change, good news seems few and far between. So, as the Lead Pastor of the Garden Church, I actively seek out good news climate stories, and they are out there. One of the reasons good news is important is that it can serve as an antidote to a consistent diet of bad news. If we only, or mostly, hear bad news, it can overwhelm and leave us feeling frozen, unable to act, or move forward. Worse, it can make us apathetic to issues of faith and a life of useful service, which we hold dear. Enter the power of good news.

Nearly a year ago, a group of artists approached members of the Garden Church about a possible art installation. Their inspiration: the story of the brown pelican. The brown



pelican long soared over the shores of Southern California from the Channel Islands to San Pedro. In 1970, the brown pelican was added to the federal endangered species list due to a significant drop in numbers from the use of pesticides. Thanks to human intervention and conservation efforts, in 2009, the brown pelican was removed from the endangered species list. With

this story of hope for God’s creation in mind, a group of artists from “Beyond LA Art” decided to bring the return of the brown pelican to life.

As the artists looked around San Pedro, they discovered our garden and told us that the blue sky above our garden, tucked between two city buildings, was the perfect canvas for their project. And so with support from our Garden Church volunteers, the artists were able to install the brown pelican project. They named the project “Above and Beyond,” calling the story

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(above and left) Two examples of the art installation at the Garden Church in San Pedro, California entitled: “Above and Beyond” by Beyond LA Art. This installation celebrates the California Brown Pelican which is native to Southern California, including San Pedro. Successful conservation efforts meant this bird was taken off the endangered species list in 2009. Contributing artists are Charity Malin, Beanie Kaman, Michael Freitas Wood, Wonsil Kim, Da Aie Park, David Eddington, Peggy Sivert, and Ben Zask.

Justice is the New Jerusalem

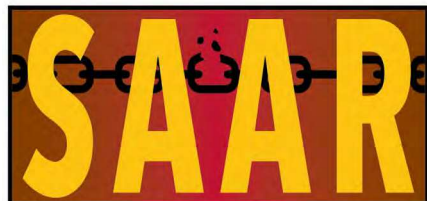
Tell Me Something Good

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of the brown pelican a story of hope.

In honor of Earth Day, I wanted to share this story with you and encourage you to find your own good creation news. As we find and share creation good news, may we be inspired to continue to resist the pull of accepting climate change as a foregone conclusion and instead feel moved to resist. 🌱

Rev. Dr. Amanda Riley has served numerous Presbyterian churches, and is pastor at The Garden Church. She fell in love with the vision, work, and mission of the church, and became involved in 2016.



SWEDENBORGIAN ACTION AGAINST RACISM

Since 2020, the Swedenborgians in Action Against Racism newsletter has provided a way to stay connected with the work of racial justice, through introducing new perspectives and analyses of current events, highlighting useful and concrete actions to take, and encouraging relevant reflection and spiritual practice. Recent issues have included reflections on Rev. Jesse Jackson’s life and work, and a booklist for learning the history of race and policing. Sign up here: <https://tinyurl.com/42pwj4kv> 🌱

2026 Speaker Series with the Social Justice Committee: Queer Ecology

The Social Justice Committee of the Swedenborgian Church of North America is excited to announce the second event in its 2026 Speaker Series on social justice issues:

Queer Ecology: Exploring LGBTQ+ Identities And Environmental Advocacy led by Parker McMullen Bushman on Wednesday May 6, 2026, 7–8:30 PM ET on [Zoom](#).

Parker McMullen Bushman of Eco-inclusive Strategies, will be leading a workshop on Queer Ecology: Exploring LGBTQ+ Identities And Environmental Advocacy. In this workshop, participants will explore the intersection of LGBTQ+ identities and environmental advocacy in the realm of queer ecology. This workshop delves into the ways in which LGBTQ+ individuals engage with nature, ecological spaces, and environmental activism and will give a greater understanding of nature through queerness disrupting the myth of heteronormativity in nature. Participants will gain insights into inclusive approaches to environmental advocacy, promoting acceptance, visibility, and justice for queer communities within ecological discussions.



Parker McMullen Bushman.

Parker is an innovative leader, speaker, and facilitator dedicated to creating transformative experiences that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice across industries and for the environment. As the CEO of Ecoinclusive Strategies, founder of the Summit for Action (www.summitforaction.org), and dynamic social media persona KWEEN WERK (www.instagram.com/kweenwerk), Parker blends over twenty-five years of experience in environmental education, DEI consultation, and organizational development. Recognized by Outside Magazine as one of the “20 Most Influential People in the Outdoor Industry,” Parker leads initiatives that center marginalized voices in conservation, recreation, and beyond.

Register at this link: tinyurl.com/6sv7t4b6 🌱

About the Swedenborgian Church

Emanuel Swedenborg was born on January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London fifteen years after his death. American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questioning and insights, we as a church exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

In his theological writings, Swedenborg shared a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of scripture as a story of inner life stages as we learn and grow. Swedenborg said, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.

SCYL Memorial Day Retreat

SCYL Memorial Day Weekend Retreat

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

Theme: Becoming You: A Retreat on Freedom, Formation,
and Divine Providence

Dates: Friday, May 22, 2026, 7PM–Monday, May 25, 2026, 10AM

Location: Almont New Church Assembly, Allenton, Michigan

Cost: \$75 for SCYL teens and \$50 for Transitions adults,
with a household maximum of \$150

On this Memorial Day weekend, we will host two retreats at one location! Our SCYL teens will gather with the young adult Transitions group. Some activities will be together, such as meals and recreation, and some activities will be separate, like sessions and sleeping arrangements. This year's theme is *Becoming You: A Retreat on Freedom, Formation, and Divine Providence*. We will explore the powerful question: *Who am I becoming?* Through the lens of Emanuel Swedenborg's teachings on Divine Providence, we'll discover how freedom, choices, and everyday experiences shape who we are. Together, we'll learn how Providence quietly works in our lives—guiding, protecting our freedom, and helping form our character and purpose. Through conversation, reflection, and shared activities, we will explore how our unique path, struggles, and decisions are part of a larger story of becoming the person we were created to be. I'm sure we'll all benefit from the lively discussions and activities. For more information or to learn about travel options, please email kfekete@hotmail.com. To register, please visit swedenborg.org.



SCYL teens hanging out on the porch at the 2025 Memorial Day retreat.