

CREATING HARMONY: Art as Spiritual Practice

202ND ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

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

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	Tirah Keal

* Incumbent

** Years remaining in unexpired term

*** No candidate to be elected this year

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.

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

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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 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

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incentives to move projects forward, and the patience needed for true long-term growth.

Since 2021, Tom has served as a 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)



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.

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Andrea LoPinto
Standing Committee for Financial
Accountability
(three-year term)



Andrea and her husband, Robert Carr, were married in the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church in 1986, and she has been an active member of the Church since 1995. Andrea is presently serving on the San Francisco Church Council. She has been an active volunteer at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco for eighteen years, and has been on the Board of the Northern California Society of Botanical Artists for the past five years. She is looking forward to being more active in the denomination.

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 [Continues on next page](#)

Andrea LoPinto is honored to be nominated as a candidate to be a member of the Standing Committee for Financial Accountability.

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 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.

**Gabriella Cahaley
Committee on Admission to the
Ministry – Minister
(three-year term)**



Gabriella Cahaley returned to school after many years of managing aquatic programming, teaching, and coaching swimming. She obtained her undergraduate degree from the University of Arizona and went on to seminary, first at the Pacific School of Religion, then she transferred to Earlham School of Religion, where she earned her MDiv degree. Since her ordination in 2011, Gabriella has pastored in three different

congregations. Gabriella returned to Tucson and began working as a chaplain and bereavement coordinator. After her husband’s death, she returned to Georgia, where she served as bereavement coordinator and chaplain for several hospices. In 2025, after six years at Skyland Trail, a psychiatric residential treatment center, she left her job as a pastoral counselor. Since August 2025, Gabriella has served as a hospice chaplain with Georgia Hospice Care.

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



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.

Tirah Keal
Nominating Committee
(five-year term)



Tirah Echols Keal is a fifth generation Swedenborgian minister's kid. She graduated from Bryn Athyn College with a bachelor's degree in religion. She is on

track to graduate from seminary with her MDiv in May 2027.

Tirah has been married to Solomon Keal since 2001, and is the proud mom of five wonderful humans. Tirah has a passion for building spiritual community and creating welcoming space for all, with a special awareness of LGBTQIA+ people of all ages.. ☪