



A Tradition of Service

BY DR. REBECCA ESTERSON

This past summer, the Department of Defense (DOD), under the direction of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, dropped 180 faith groups from its official list of religious codes for service members. The list, which was reduced from 211 religions to just 31, is used for collecting information on the religious affiliation of service members to assist military chaplains in planning and providing religious support. The new list excludes minority religious groups, and critics have charged that the move is part of efforts by the Trump administration to limit religious diversity in support of Christian Nationalism.

Swedenborgians have much to object to...both in solidarity with other religious minorities who have been erased, but also because of our presence and contribution to American military history.

From a Swedenborgian perspective, the history of this DOD list is a fascinating one. Like other religious minorities, we were dropped in this latest 2026 revision. In the first year of the Trump administration, however, we were added to the list, or at least we were included in a new way. In 2017, the Department expanded its list of “Faith and Belief Codes for Reporting Personnel Data of Service Members” from just over 100 to 211, including the addition of “General Conference of the Swedenborgian Church,” which was tracked with the code B7. We were not totally absent up to this point, however, and prior to the 2017 expansion, the list included “Churches of the New Jerusalem” identified by the code XJ. Both categories, General Conference of the Swedenborgian Church and Churches of the New Jerusalem, appeared from 2017–2026, and both are now absent from the new list of codes. This does not mean that service members cannot self-identify as Swedenborgian, or that Swedenborgians can’t be military



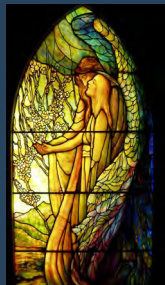
Rev. Arthur O. Brickman

chaplains, only that there isn’t a recognized code for service members who identify this way for the purpose of gathering data and planning chaplaincy services. At least this is my best understanding of the situation.

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Ministry of Chaplaincy

Acknowledging the work of chaplains in honor of October being Chaplain Appreciation Month.



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Accompanying the Dying and Their Loved Ones

Dr. Rebecca Esterson shares her experience of doing Clinical Pastoral Education during her partial leave of absence from the Center for Swedenborgian Studies this last spring.

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Art as Spiritual Practice



Sharing art, music, and poetry by members from the denomination in our new ongoing column, “Art as Spiritual Practice.”

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Church
Calendar

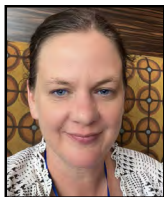
- **October 9–12, 2026:** SCYL Fall Retreat.
- **October 27, 2026:** Investment Committee Meeting.
- **November 13–14, 2026:** annual hybrid General Council meeting.
- **November 26–27, 2026:** Central Office closed in observance of Thanksgiving.

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Editor's Corner

Making Space for
Chaplaincy

I lived in New Orleans in 2005, and was there when Hurricane Katrina hit. Those of us who went through that experience fell into two groups: those who evacuated and those who stayed behind. Thankfully, I evacuated, but the city I returned to was completely devastated for many years afterwards. That was the one and only time that I turned to chaplaincy services, and I am grateful for the help it gave me, putting me on a path of healing and service.

Last year, I learned that October was Chaplain Appreciation month. It seems to me that it's always the undervalued and underpaid professions that get a month. Teachers, nurses, farmers, social workers. The old, more cynical me would say that these helpers and doers are given appreciation months so that society can continue to feel okay with undervaluing them. That while they may not get paid according to their contributions to society, they should be happy to get a month of appreciation.

However, now that I am a smidge older and a tad less cynical, I can see the real value in taking time and making space to shine a spotlight on what these various professions do. So when I learned that October is recognized as Chaplain Appreciation Month, I was grateful for the opportunity to share with you all about chaplaincy: historic, current, and future endeavors.

There seem to me to be a large number of Swedenborgian Church of North America ministers who find their employment and calling in hospital chaplaincy (although admittedly, I do not know what the normal number would be for this profession). It's a pastoral

the Messenger

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use that I can really relate to, and I was grateful to have access to so many years ago. When someone tells me that they are a chaplain, it is apparent to me that they are a person who is looking to add more good into the world than there was before they were in it.

I look forward to making space every October for their stories, scholarship, and history.

—Brittany Price
editor@swedenborg.org

*Message from the President***Teen Ministry: From Innocence of Childhood to Responsibility of Adulthood***The Year of the Lord: 2026–27*

One of the strongest programs in our church these days is the teen youth work of the Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL), led by our Youth Director Kurt Fekete, who has also been the vice president of the denomination for many years. This is the national group that spans coast to coast, and they gather for retreats and trips that have become, by their own testimony, deeply formative for their lives, and of course for their spiritual life. There is an annual gathering on Memorial Day weekend at the Almont New Church Assembly in rural Michigan, which also typically features a mid-winter retreat as well. And routinely they meet in places such as the Cedar Hill Retreat Center in Duxbury, Massachusetts, and even in Europe when they joined teen groups from the UK, Germany, and the Czech Republic for an International Summer Camp that met at the rural Swedenborgian Purley Chase Retreat Centre in England (see “[International Summer Camp 2025: Fun, Faith, and Friendship](#)” by Kurt Fekete in *The Messenger*).

This past summer, the youth league led a special service for the whole convention that involved tremendous creativity, but one feature that stood out for me was the testimonies of several youth about the centrality of SCYL in their lives and how they knew very few peers who had something like this group and formation place in their lives. A distinctive feature of our denomination, in fact, is our annual

summer intergenerational camps. All denominations have summer camps and retreats, but the vast majority are for specific age groups: they are either youth retreats, adult retreats, or multigenerational retreats, but not intergenerational in programming. Our current three (Fryeburg, Almont, and Paulhaven) have been going for more than a century and two of them represent a profound space of intergenerational activity that offers a special place for exploring the big questions of meaning together through the weekly themes.

The youth retreats are always centered around spiritual formation in creative, fun, and serious ways. We have special Swedenborgian insights about the spiritual issues of development in these years that have been shaped through the curriculum of the multi-year, six-volume *Bible Study Notes* by Anita Dole, along with many other resources. These provide an understanding of spiritual formation issues appropriate to the various ages from young childhood to adulthood. They are all Bible-based, but they emphasize personal engagement and creative conversation.

I want to give some voice and vision to the long and deep structural programming that the church maintains to ensure that our teen youth, whose relatively small numbers are flung across far-apart spaces, have regular ways of gathering in special places to develop relationships, have tremendous fun together, and especially spend time on the truly important questions of life together with such skilled and responsible leadership as our Youth Director, Kurt Fekete, and his helpers provide.

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

Chaplain Appreciation Month

Tradition of Service

Continued from cover

The recent move to restrict codes for military faith groups to only the world's major religious traditions has received a fair amount of backlash, most publicly from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who objected to being listed outside the subcategory of Christian religions (the military has removed the category altogether in response, and now lists different Christian traditions alongside non-Christian ones without subcategories). Swedenborgians have much to object to with this recent development, both in solidarity with other religious minorities who have been erased, but also because of our presence and contribution to American military history.

This history often begins during the Revolutionary War with reference to Reverend Jacob Duché, an Anglican minister who was invited by Samuel Adams to open the first Continental Congress in prayer on September 7, 1774, in the presence of George Washington. Duché's role as religious advisor to George Washington and the Congress would be a troubled one, as his later stance against the war resulted in his exile to London, where he would eventually become one of the earliest followers of Emanuel Swedenborg, before returning to live the remainder of his days as a Swedenborgian in Pennsylvania.

Among our tradition's greatest military chaplains is Rev. Arthur O. Brickman, founding minister of First German New Jerusalem church in Baltimore, where he served from 1854–1861. Brickman had been Lutheran prior to 1853, when he encountered the teachings of the New Church. The following year he was tried for heresy and excommunicated by the Lutheran

synod, on charges of having embraced the doctrines of Swedenborg.

In Baltimore, Brickman was involved in pro-Union activities and eventually left his congregation to serve as a chaplain in the Union army under Ulysses S. Grant. He was elected chaplain to the First Maryland Regiment of Cavalry but served without formal appointment until he petitioned Abraham Lincoln directly in an 1861 letter.

We have been a nation of many religions, large and small, since the beginning. Swedenborgians have always been in the mix, and will continue to be, whether or not we make the list.

The Messenger published several letters sent by Brickman from the front lines in 1864 and 1865¹, while he was stationed with the infantry in Virginia near Petersburg and Danville. His letters describe his position, not removed from the front lines, but in trenches and under fire alongside the service members he ministered to. He writes “under a shower of balls from the rebel sharpshooters in front” and reports that the “loss in dead and wounded in my regiment is fearful; we have been literally cut to pieces.”

Brickman's letters lament his disconnection from Swedenborgian life. He has not been able to attend Convention or to receive and read *the Messenger*, “I long very much after spiritual food and bodily rest. I hoped to visit the Convention this year, and see once more my old friends, but this pleasure I had to forego on account of my

position in the army.” He nevertheless is strengthened in spirit when meeting other New Church service members from Massachusetts and Baltimore “who are full receivers of the heavenly doctrines.” He receives a volume of *Heaven and Hell* in the mail, which brings him comfort, but asks for copies of New Church tracts that he can pass out, noting the wide circulation of other religious tracts “Jewish, Roman Catholic, Unitarian, or Universalist papers.”

Brickman's letters describe his activities as a military chaplain. He writes of visiting the sick and preaching, all while under fire, and complains about chaplains who avoid the more dangerous locations for their ministry. He keeps worship every night in a chapel tent, even though the structure is heavily damaged by Minié balls and the sound of fire is constant.

In one of his last letters, he summarizes his teachings as inclusive of “the doctrine of the Lord, the internal sense of the Scriptures, and the doctrine of life. My demonstration of the soul and the future world seems especially to please all who hear me.”

I teach the New Church truths fearlessly, openly, and boldly, but never attack any sectarian doctrines. My preaching is positive; I show what is true, and use the common sciences, and above all the letter of the Word, to demonstrate and illustrate the truths of the New Christian Church. My audience is usually large, and will interspersed with officers of high and subordinate ranks. The interest in my sermons and lectures, all of which I deliver without any manuscript before me, has constantly increased, and not a day is passing by but somebody calls upon me, asking for information about the New Church and her doctrines.

¹ A full transcription of Brickman's letters is available at swedenborg.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Brickman-Letters.pdf

Chaplain Appreciation Month

The Ministry of Chaplaincy

COMPILED BY REV. JAY BARRY

During their annual meeting in 2024, the Council of Ministers created a chaplaincy committee whose purpose was “to advise the denominational endorsing officer for the certification of chaplains, as well as supporting our chaplains through professional and educational development.” Rev. Jay Barry is the chair of this committee. In honor of October being National Chaplain Appreciation Month, I reached out to him and asked if he would be willing to submit a piece on chaplaincy to the Messenger. The following has been compiled by him and contributed to by five chaplains in the Swedenborgian faith tradition.

Understanding Chaplaincy

By Rev. Jay Barry

To better understand chaplaincy, let’s look through a Swedenborgian lens for a moment.

Think of how the sun shines upon the earth in the same way the Lord shines upon all creation. The warmth and light emanating from the sun symbolize love and truth emanating from the Divine. This is the source of all wonder, life, and beauty, shaped in countless forms. Creation is a manifestation of love and usefulness, and every human being among us is included.

And yet, the world below the sun is ever-changing. The atmosphere of human life can be calm and reassuring, but it is also stormy and sometimes terrifying.

We respond in different ways when life is frightening. Some run, some hide, and others dissociate.

Chaplains, however, are trained to walk into the storm of human

suffering, to support those who are injured and comfort those who are dying.

Chaplaincy is a practice that began in the military as we supported soldiers in the storms of war. Now, it extends to hospitals, schools, organizations, and communities. The training to become a chaplain is structured via the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (acpe.edu). The Center for Swedenborgian Studies requires that each of our divinity students must take one program of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) to be ordained, which helps them learn to support the vulnerable and witness the importance of spirituality in human existence.

Chaplains see human suffering firsthand and learn about compassion—light from the Divine—shining through the storm and comforting the injured and those who are helping them.

Emotional Awareness

By Rev. Kathy Speas

People do not mirror themselves in running water, they mirror themselves in still water. Only what is still can still the stillness of another being. — Taoist wisdom

So simple, yet not easy, to still our minds. An effective chaplain presence is a still, calm, centered, solid, grounded presence. Being fully present is hard.

Emotional Awareness in Chaplaincy begins in CPE, with supervisors and peers challenging us as to what might be going through our consciousness landscapes when we are interacting with patients and families.



"Underhill Memorial,"

Tiffany Glass & Decorating Company c. 1880.

We confront fears. We encounter unresolved wounds and old family dynamics. We face our judgmental shadows. We become aware of how our own needs in dealing with conflict, anger, and strong emotions color how we respond to those issues in others. Chaplains never overcome it all; we just learn to be aware and try to avoid reacting from our wounded places.

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Chaplain Appreciation Month

What Is A Chaplain?

Chaplains are licensed or ordained members of clergy who provide spiritual and emotional care in an organization other than a church. They support people from various backgrounds, belief systems, faiths and those who identify with no faith.

WHERE CHAPLAINS SERVE:

Chaplains generally serve in secular institutions such as:

- Hospitals
- Hospices
- Law Enforcement Departments
- Fire Departments
- Schools/Universities
- Prisons
- Military locations
- Corporations

BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION:

Chaplains need a minimum of a bachelor's degree. A master's degree is required by many institutions, often with a preference of Master of Divinity, Pastoral Care, or other seminary studies. Most chaplain positions require Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), a program providing experience and supervised training in pastoral care within a clinical setting. Prospective chaplains should be prepared for in-depth interviews and background checks, and possibly psychological interviews.

ENDORSEMENT:

Chaplains need an endorsement from a recognized religious organization or denomination.

Ministry of Chaplaincy

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I remember an African American woman who was so furious that the staff turned to the chaplain for help. Furious at the hospital, raging at the doctors, lashing out at the nurses, enraged at her family, boiling angry at everyone around her. I tried my best to calm her down, to no avail. I came to realize I was reacting to my own discomfort with anger, my own old messages that anger was to be avoided at all costs (especially in women). I needed to hold space for her rage at being discriminated against all her life by a biased health care system, her anger at a body that was in pain, her fury at being abandoned by loved ones. I needed to *validate her experience*, not try to redirect her because I was uncomfortable with anger.

Chaplaincy serves up many dimensions of suffering that arouse our own emotions. Sympathy is feeling the pain of another. Empathy is being present to the pain of another without entering into it. Some wise sage advised to stare into the suffering of the other, so that when they are ready to face it, they are not alone.



*"Lida Mitchell Fenton Window,"
Tiffany Glass & Decorating Company c. 1900.*

I Have Learned to Deeply Appreciate

By Rev. Robin Childs

It is a touching reality that we walk toward those who are dying, declining, who are in anticipatory grief or have reached grief, those who are in shock from trauma, as well as those who are angry with the reality they're stuck in the middle of with nowhere to escape to, and sometimes those who are really angry with God.

I find it humbling to be with people who are facing trauma by leaning on family, leaning on God through prayer, and, to a degree, leaning on us.

What I find truly amazing, beyond the beautiful role we fill of being with the hardest of feelings and situations, is the amazing attitude of so many of the people we get to accompany. The myriad acts of kindness and support family members give each other as their loved one declines. I am also blown away by the positive spiritual outlook people develop in the worst of situations.

There was a woman in the later stages of multiple sclerosis, losing the ability to physically do anything. I felt at a loss for words. Falling back on my intuition and training, I simply asked her, "How do you do this? You seem so peaceful."

Her answer was so touching. She said, "I have learned to deeply appreciate every friendship, every ability I still have, every breath I still get to take, every moment with family." It reminded me how often these people we seem to be there to serve are serving us instead.

A toast to those of us called and trained to step toward pain and grief. However, my real love for this job is for the people who, by their courage and selflessness, remind me how precious

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life is. Of how these people in pain have so much to give us once we arrive at their bedside.

The Role of Prayer in Chaplaincy

By Rev. Lisa Solwold

Prayer isn't magic, it's alchemy. Prayer changes us, and how we engage with the world around us. Prayer gives voice to our deepest desires and has an impact well beyond our understanding. Within the act of prayer is the yearning to be witnessed, to feel whole, and to feel the presence of the Sacred. — Unknown

When people picture a hospital chaplain, they often imagine someone moving from room to room, praying with each patient. The reality is much more nuanced. Prayer is one tool among many in a chaplain's practice. It's not automatic and never assumed. It emerges when it fits and is set aside when it doesn't.

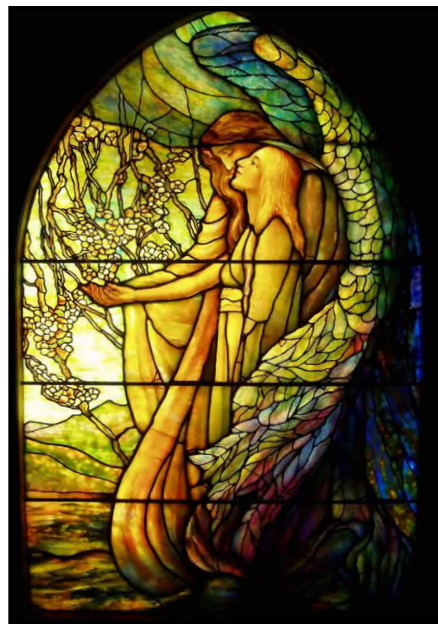
Chaplaincy is built around meeting people where they are, spiritually and emotionally. Patients and families come from a variety of backgrounds: devout, secular, spiritual-but-not-religious, actively questioning, or even grieving a faith they once held.

A visit involves deep listening, hearing beyond the words. Noting both what's being said and what's not, as well as what carries a particular charge or anguish. It may also involve helping a patient or family process a diagnosis or simply sitting in silence, being a calm presence in a hard moment.

Most chaplains are trained to ask rather than assume before adding the ingredient of prayer. In doing so, it can be a vital source of comfort, especially

in moments of fear, uncertainty, or loss. It can be a powerful way to close a visit.

It is through conversation that a chaplain gains insight into where a person is struggling and provides clues to crafting a personal prayer. Additionally, asking the patient or family member: "What do you most need from God today?" invites them to give voice to the focus of their need. The prayer becomes a collaboration between chaplain, patient, and/or family.



"Guiding Angel,"

Tiffany Glass & Decorating Company c. 1890.

The Art of Compassionate Listening

By Rev. Kit Billings

What are some of the ways you feel loved by another person without that person ever saying the words, "I love you"?

It happens when someone chooses to listen to us with genuine care and compassion.

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What Does A Chaplain Do?

Chaplains provide compassionate support and non-judgmental pastoral care.

Several support areas include:

- Process trauma and spiritual first-aid during disasters
- Bereavement support
- Help people cope by providing a calming presence in crisis situations
- Conduct specific assessments to discern spiritual, physical, and emotional needs
- Make referrals for additional care resources and specialized help
- Hospital chaplains support patients, families, and staff
- Hospital chaplains collaborate with interdisciplinary medical staff
- Provide hope and encouragement to people in distress
- Provide active listening, through trust and non-judgment.
- Officiate end-of-life rituals in accordance with faith needs of those they're serving.
- Administer sacraments of baptism and with the proper credentials, officiate weddings and funerals.

Chaplains encounter many types of spiritual and emotional needs in the course of their work. From general worry to extraordinary crisis. A calming presence is always a valuable ingredient.

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As a professional chaplain who has worked in healthcare and spiritual care for many years, I have experienced countless ways people answer this question. Yet one response seems remarkably universal: we human beings have a fundamental need to feel heard, seen, respected, and understood through carefully attentive listening.

One of the sweetest gifts we can give another human being is to listen consciously and compassionately while believing in and valuing that person's inherent dignity and potential for wholeness.

James Miller and Susan Cutchall, in their book, *The Art of Being a Healing Presence: A Guide for Those in Caring Relationships* (2001), emphasize an important truth about caregiving: the caregiver's task is not necessarily to fix, rescue, cure, advise, persuade, or even make another person feel better. Rather, healing caregivers seek to create a relationship and environment in which the other person can encounter his or her own inner resources, meaning, dignity, wisdom, and capacity for healing.

Healing listeners listen with more than their ears. We listen with our eyes, facial expressions, posture, and presence. We communicate, often without words, that the person before us matters. Healing listening also requires silence...sometimes the most compassionate thing we can do is simply remain attentively present, willing to be led by the heart and mind of the person before us.

Silence can create sacred space. It also involves active listening—reflecting back what we hear, asking gentle questions, clarifying rather than assuming, and paying attention not only to the words being spoken but also to what may be underneath those words. For me, however, healing listening is ultimately grounded in trust: the



"Ecclesiastical Angels,"
Tiffany Glass & Decorating Company c. 1890.

conviction that God is already present and at work in the life of the person sitting before me. My role is to become sufficiently present so that I can participate in that sacred process rather than getting in its way.

A chaplain may not be able to remove someone's pain, but we can help make it possible for that person to carry their own pain without carrying it alone. And we may not be able to give another person meaning, but we can listen carefully enough that the person begins to discover meaning emerging from within. This is why compassionate listening is much more than a communication skill. It is an act of patient reverence. I am saying, in effect: Your story matters. *You matter because you are you.*

Ultimately, compassionate listening invites us into a different way of being with one another. That may be one of the most sacred gifts we can offer.

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As Brickman's reputation as a chaplain grew, he was elected to the position of president of the Association of Chaplains of the Ninth Army Corps, which communicated with the Secretary of War on chaplaincy matters. He would later be awarded a gold medal for his service, and was a beloved and popular preacher and lecturer, in English and in German, in the years after the war.

A fuller history of Swedenborgian military chaplains is yet to be written. Such a history would feature more recent representatives, such as Rev. Andy Stinson, who served in the Iraq War. Swedenborgian military chaplaincy is an important part of U. S. history. In our better moments, our nation is one that celebrates religious diversity and the contribution of minority religious traditions. We have been a nation of many religions, large and small, since the beginning. Swedenborgians have always been in the mix, and will continue to be, whether or not we make the list. ☩

Dr. Rebecca K. Esterson is the dean of CSS and the Dorothea Harvey Professor of Swedenborgian Studies. She teaches in the Department of Sacred Texts and Their Interpretation at the GTU in Berkeley, California and is a member of the Swedenborg Society of the East Bay.



We discover that sometimes the most healing thing we can give another person is not our wisdom, our advice, or our solution—but simply our loving and faithful presence. Truly, to listen deeply is to say, without ever speaking the words: "I am here. I see you. Your story matters. You matter. And for this moment, you do not have to walk through this alone." ☩

Chaplain Appreciation Month

Accompanying the Dying and Their Loved Ones: My CPE Experience

BY DR. REBECCA ESTERSON

In the spring of 2026, with the support of the CSS Board of Trustees, I took a partial leave of absence to enroll in a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). There were two reasons I decided to do CPE. The first relates to professional development as the Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies. CPE is an important part of our ordination candidates' learning journey, and I saw the value in experiencing it for myself to better support our students. I am also increasingly involved in teaching students who are preparing for careers in chaplaincy, and it was becoming evident that this work would benefit from having chaplaincy training myself. The second reason was the long-standing calling I have to end-of-life care. This calling has informed my membership in the Threshold Choir, among other activities that have had me regularly at the bedside of people at the end of life in recent years. When an opportunity arose to do CPE clinical hours in a hospice in San Francisco, it seemed like providence had opened a door to an important next stage of my own journey.

My CPE experience required 300 clinical hours, which I fulfilled working at Sutter Hospice. This involved doing two kinds of work: I worked half of the time as a bereavement counselor and the other half providing direct patient spiritual care to people at Coming Home Hospice in the city's Castro District. Coming Home is a special place. Originally built to be a convent, housing the city's Sisters of Mercy, the nuns themselves turned the 15-bed residence into a hospice so they could care for

the dying during the AIDS crisis. The Sisters eventually sold the building to Sutter Health, who have maintained it as a stand-alone residence for hospice patients ever since. One feels this history keenly when one enters the building, and I often felt the presence of the nuns, the patients, and the countless loved ones who have visited and tended to the needs of the dying in that space over the years. It is indeed a sacred place.

It is impossible to briefly summarize the experiences I had or all the things I learned during this time. Instead of a comprehensive overview, I've pulled some entries from my journal. The following are things I learned or heard from patients, clients, teachers, and colleagues over the course of the experience:

- There is something in common between the inability to communicate with words at the end of life and at the beginning of life.
- A chaplain comes into a hospice setting moving at a different pace than all the other people working there. It can feel like there is a lot of empty time, like there should be more to "do." But moving at a slower, more mindful pace is a benefit to everyone there, as other professionals are often busy and rushed. Taking time to sit and meditate before or after visiting patients can help move into a fuller intentionality around this different pace.



*Coming Home Hospice
in the Castro district of San Francisco California.*

- Family systems are like a mobile: carefully balanced. When someone dies, the whole system goes wonky. A lot of the work of grief is addressing the resulting imbalance, adapting to life in a new system, and finding a new balance.
- A client's husband comes to her in the form of birds, mostly hummingbirds.
- Watching a loved one die is like watching the train leave the station. There's nothing you can do to stop it, and you are left alone on the platform.
- Helpful phrases in grief work: "The presence of absence," "grief brain," "grief eyes," "secondary loss," "dosing grief."
- The three rules of widowhood: my love, my grief, my rules.

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Accompanying the Dying

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- Some people are Death Doulas (who “do”). Others are Death Be-las, who bring presence rather than doing.

- Be careful with touch at the very end. It can have the effect of bringing people back into their bodies, delaying or interrupting their death.

- Humming is especially helpful when you are with a patient who is restless.

- Client does not want to be the conveyor of messages from her dead mother.

- A hundred years ago, patients at the end of life were given a mixture of drugs (Brompton cocktail) that included cocaine, for pain relief but also to make them more alert and social so that they could share what they were seeing and hearing. Today we give them morphine, which makes people sleepy or unconscious. We are having fewer conversations with dying people today.

- A helpful ritual for those who work with the dying: write the name of one who recently died on a dissolvable piece of paper. Light a candle and thank them for letting you into their life, and drop the name into water.

- Anger can be a vehicle for a grieving person to be able to tell their story.

- Visiting the hospital places (hallways, nurses’ stations, waiting rooms, even the bathrooms) where the client’s husband received treatment is exposure therapy. Moving slowly in places where everything was rushed and urgent, she

can revisit a time that was traumatic but also precious, as everyone there was working to try and save his life.

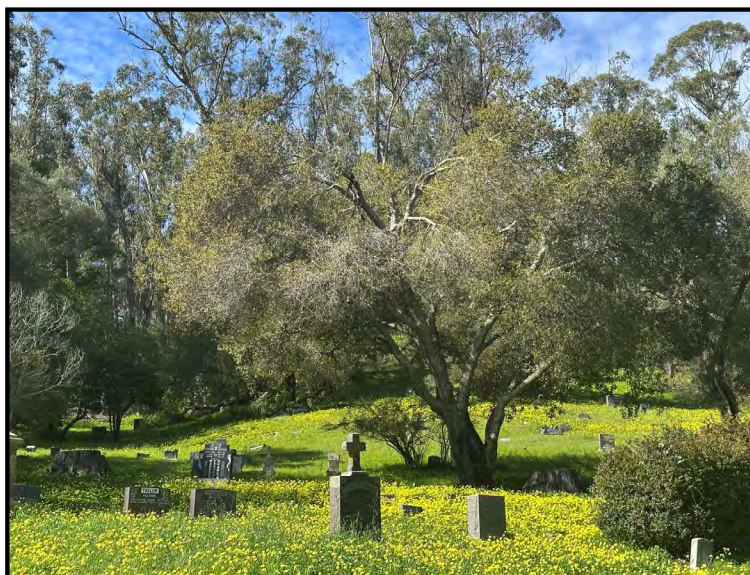
Why CPE is Important for Our Ministers

Completing a unit of CPE is currently a requirement for those seeking ordination in the Swedenborgian Church of North America, as it is in many other denominations. Having done a unit myself, I am even more convinced of

time and the education and reflection time, are essential for ministry training. Taken together, these experiences offer critical lessons on professional boundaries, ethics, and the many complex interpersonal challenges that inevitably come with ministry. These are skills that benefit not just our ministers and their parishioners, but the health of our church as a whole. One example of where CPE education informed my own thinking about church gov-

ernance comes from the concept of “dual relationships.” Sometimes in professional or pastoral settings, there can be a need for two people to work together who have two or more different kinds of relationships between them. This might be the case, for instance, if a parishioner who is a church board member is also a relative or close friend. These dual relationships are often unavoidable, especially in smaller organizations such as ours. But it is still important to recognize them, name the complications they create, and work openly with the larger community to avoid conflicts of interest or other boundary issues. CPE is a place where students not only learn about such dynamics but practice dealing with them professionally and in a context that offers support and honest feedback.

If you encounter ordination candidates who are doing CPE or recently completed a unit of CPE, consider asking them about their experience and what they have learned from it. It is truly an enriching experience, and I’m grateful to have had it. 📱



A place of reflection. Mt. Tamalpais Cemetery in San Rafael, California.

the importance of this experience for those entering the ministry. There are two components of every CPE unit. As mentioned, I was required to complete 300 hours of clinical work, which is intended to develop pastoral and professional skills in spiritual care through direct experience. In addition, I was required to complete 100 hours of education, which involved working with specially trained teachers and a cohort of other CPE students who would come together one day a week to reflect on the clinical work, examine our own inner processes, and offer feedback. Both of these areas, the clinical

Justice is the New Jerusalem

The Power of Service Through Theology

BY REV. DR. JIM LAWRENCE

One of the most focused Swedenborgian books on the public theology possibilities for faith in the public square was penned by Swedenborgian professor Rev. Dr. Ted Klein as *The Power of Service: A Swedenborgian Approach to the Social Issues in the Twenty-First Century* (San Francisco: J. Appleseed & Co., 1998). Rev. Dr. Klein had earned a Ph.D. in Moral Philosophy at Boston University and had been instrumental in developing the Social Concerns Committee in our denomination. That committee today sails under the banner of the Social Justice Committee, which produces these regular “Justice is the New Jerusalem” contributions in our monthly denominational organ. Along the way in his career, he taught philosophy at Urbana University for many years before lending his skills in the classroom to the Swedenborg School of Religion, and he enjoyed many years as an adjunct professor at the University of Massachusetts (Boston campus). He also served on the ministry staff at the Church on the Hill in Boston for fifteen years and took great interest in serving the social needs of the homeless and needy around the church.

For two years he steadily worked on the crowning achievement of his career that intertwined his twin passions of Swedenborgian theology and social justice service. In *The Power of Service*, Ted begins the book with a substantial description of Swedenborg’s career in the House of Nobles for forty years. He underscores that Swedenborg continued his focus on public service after his dramatic spiritual call from God to his new endeavor of the books that are

now part of world spirituality, and that Swedenborg never stopped focusing on the social needs of his country. He brought his evolving spiritual values to bear on his perspectives concerning the social good.



Rev. Dr. Ted Klein

church not only addresses the spiritual needs of the life of faith within the walls of its sanctuaries but also speaks in the public square, offering a spiritual view on the social issues we face as a society. Chapters of *The Power of Service* explore philosophically social concepts of “Community, Pluralism, and Power” in how we go about the challenges of social justice; and economic concepts of “Disparities, Justice, and Compassion” in how we go about the justice work of disparities, fairness, and the general good. Other chapters investigate various moral and social issues, and throughout the book consistently draw from Swedenborg’s theology.

One such quote capturing the essence of living out spiritual values in our larger life as a society is:

There is a single doctrine when all people have mutual love or compassion. Mutual love and compassion make them one, even though they are different, since a one is made up of different components. All such people, no matter how many (even to hundreds of thousands), if they

are involved in compassion or mutual love, have a single goal, namely, the common good, the Lord’s kingdom, and the Lord himself. Differences in doctrine and worship are then like the differences between the senses and organs in a person, which contribute to the perfection of the whole. Then the Lord flows in and works through compassion uniquely for everyone’s individuality and arranges the entire group in a pattern—on earth, therefore, as in heaven; and then the Lord’s will, as the Lord himself teaches, is done on earth as it is in heaven.

—*Arcana Coelestia* §1285

Much more than a century ago, a book called *New Church Worthies* celebrated Swedenborgian laborers in the vineyard, and the term “New Church Worthies” caught on for a long time as a term to recognize and appreciate the contributions of those who have gone before. In this offering of bringing our Swedenborgian voice of faith to the public square, I salute the New Church worthy Ted Klein for his invaluable scholarship in the work of bringing our Swedenborgian voice of faith to the public square on social issues. 📖

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is the president of the Swedenborgian Church of North America. He was the dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies for twenty-one years prior to being elected president of the denomination in 2022.

Submission Deadline Reminder

Time-sensitive articles submitted to *the Messenger* must be received by the **14th of each month** to be considered for print in the following issue.

Helen Keller Spiritual Life Collaborative

Kindling Our Light: How Helen Keller Inspires Us Today

BY TRYN ROSE SELEY

Walking into the Lord's New Church in mid-May in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, we were immersed in burgeoning spring-time flowers, gentle breezes, and birdsong. The camaraderie was apparent with warm welcomes for new and old friends gathering from as far away as Boston, Phoenix, and Pittsburgh. The synergy and value of showing up together from all branches of the New Church in the form of a vibrant, thriving tree was felt, and all leaders and participants brought their God-given light to share with each other at this weekend event.

Sponsored by Deborah's Tree¹ and presented by the Helen Keller Spiritual Life Collaborative (HKSLC)², this

¹ Deborah's Tree (www.deborahstree.org), founded by Rev. Roslyn Taylor. From their website: "We value equity, respect, cooperation, supportiveness, justice, sensitivity, and intuition as values important to women. As participants in the Swedenborgian movement, we value freedom, inclusiveness, individual responsibility for our human growth processes, and bringing loving intentions and wise actions together in useful service."

Rev. Roslyn Taylor is the interim pastor at Temenos in West Chester, Pennsylvania, among the many roles she holds as the founder of the Gathering Leaves retreats and the sponsor of this retreat. (hroslyntaylor@gmail.com)

² After twenty years of serving in traditional roles as a parish minister and hospice chaplain, Rev. Sage Cole is the visionary who founded the Helen Keller Spiritual Life Collaborative (www.helenkellercollaborative.org) in January 2025, as a virtual and retreat ministry aimed at nurturing new forms of New Church life inspired by the embodied faith of Helen Keller. Rev. Cole lives with her husband Ted and two sons Theo and Zachary in Hyde Park, Massachusetts. (revsagecole@gmail.com)



A copy of one of Eleanor Schnarr's "Vision" series of Helen Keller, digital collage, 2019, hung up at the event.

special retreat weekend on the campus of the Lord's New Church was all about light: the light we carry, the light we kindle in each other, and the light we shine into the world to illuminate the path for God to travel among us and through us. "Kindling Our Light" is an image of supporting each other along the path of life.

Helen Keller noticed something about sin: it is something one often wants to hide from in shame, keeping it in darkness. She proposed a different response: to rejoice that we noticed the sin, to shine a light on it, to observe our mistakes, and be free to make those mistakes so we can notice, reach for growth and understanding, and make a change with God's help. No one can address a problem unless it is brought into the light. In Rev. Sage Cole's words:

We are here to face challenges; there's no way around it. We can embrace it. Change is beautiful, essential to cultivating acceptance and even eagerness to learn and change if it leads to happy, healthy living, welcoming each other into deeper relationships. Regeneration, after all, is a set of steps our Swedenborgian Christian faith shares to assist in our spiritual development—consisting of three steps: repentance, reformation, and regeneration; and if we need to repent and reform ourselves, that's changing, and the process is designed that way.

Helen saw the sin of the world regarding human rights: for women, minorities, and those with disabilities, and spent her life advocating for policy changes and equality for all. In her physical darkness, her spiritual eyes were opened by reading Emanuel Swedenborg's teachings, and she became a world traveler and advocate at the governmental level.

On Friday evening, Rev. Sage led a lecture and slide show for a well-attended hall called "Becoming the Holy City Inside and Out." She shared about the early influences on Helen's life, including pastor Phillips Brooks, Helen's first minister and the one who wrote the beloved song, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," whose primary message was about love. She also shared details about pastor John Hitz, Helen's second pastoral influence, and a friend of Alexander Graham Bell.

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Helen Keller Spiritual Life Collaborative

Kindling Our Light

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Saturday was, as described in Rev. Sage's invitation:

...a day to reflect, share, and kindle our light in the darkness, through a threefold journey that I call Be Love, Be Honest, Be Useful. I trust that by the end of the day you will feel encouraged, refreshed, and more and more in love with the light that you are and the light you experience in others! Blind and deaf, Helen Keller inspired the world with her ability to reach out, create, and flourish in a way that most believed impossible.

Rev. Sage has a way of speaking with a calm energy, full of empowerment and confidence in us as she shares how Helen lived a thoughtful spiritual life on earth, and how much she did with it, especially her willingness to embrace growth and change.

Rev. Sage reminded us that "The Holy City" is now; it's alive in each of

us, new right now; the New Church is instantly new, so we gather to kindle each other's light." Through the HKSLC organization, Sage is dedicated to the commitment to the emergence of a new church, meaning the church within each of us as we care about and cultivate an evolving path toward God, and an outward church in which to express these approaches for a thoughtful and inspiring spiritual life.

In the introduction time, Rev. Kent Rogers, one of the ministers from the Lord's New Church, sang a stirring original song with his sister Amanda Rogers and friend Tryn Rose Seley called "The Roll Call of Love." Each minister on site had written original music, which was celebrated and performed across the weekend. Rev. Sage



(left to right) Rev. Kent Rogers, Rev. Alan Cowley, Tryn Seley, Rev. Solomon Keal, and others play music together.

encouraged us to work toward "transparency now to create a new church now, experiencing heaven here today, with both the ugly and the beautiful revealed and transformed."

The "Be Love" session:

We answered the question, "What is something (person, place, story, image, special object, poem, song, activity, practice, etc.) that helps you feel the presence of love?"

Participants sang songs, played the flute, thanked mentors in the room and in the spiritual world, spoke of remembrances, and of family members living with dementia who may not remember the details of a visit, but will remember the warmth and presence of family.

The "Be Honest" session:

It was not about candor, but about looking at and asking for support from God to remove the blocks to growth so we may become servants of God here and now. Four collaborators gave their time, talents and kindness in the "Be Honest" segment. Rev. Alan Cowley (amcowley@gmail.com), associate



Rev. Sage Cole leads the group at the Lord's New Church through a series of reflections intended to kindle the light in the darkness with a threefold journey called "Be Love, Be Honest, Be Useful."

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Helen Keller Spiritual Life Collaborative

Kindling Our Light

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pastor at New Church Live and Labyrinth Designer at Golden-Thread Labyrinths, led a group on three separate types of labyrinth walks to invite an honest path with several helpful exercises that led us to peaceful states. "Labyrinth turns in the path are re-directions, not wrong turns."

Katie Hammond (katiehsky@gmail.com), therapist and meditation expert, led a quiet, re-centering experience. She leads regular monthly online and in-person retreats.

Rev. Kent Rogers (krogers@thelordsnewchurch.org), Lord's New Church minister, led a spiritual walk for which he created quotes on the natural grounds at this church's campus.

Rachel Sagerman (hot4humanity@gmail.com), spiritual leader, led a meditative art-creating experience. Rachel provides regular online group experiences and in-person one-on-one

sessions.

The "Be Useful" session:

As our day came to a close, we spoke of the ways our lives are strengthened by our time together, and ways we can bring the light we're given out into the world. Usefulness comes naturally, like a flower blooming, a mother hen with her growing chicks who turn and have their own broods: the fruit of our spiritual labor shows in each of our lives.

Sunday morning's worship service included retreat members and regular congregants from our hosts at the Lord's New Church, with a blessed message of welcoming us to our current spiritual lives, sharing Helen's modeling of embracing spiritual growth. There was a flourishing music team led by Tryn Rose Seley and our blessed minister staff, Rev. Solomon Keal on piano and Rev. Alan Cowley on guitar and vocals, and faithful musicians Liam Taylor and Amanda Rogers. Playing "Give Me Love" by George Harrison together was a highlight to close out the service!

Helen's whole life changed from darkness to light by reading Emanuel Swedenborg's writings. Any of us can access the light that helps each of us become our unique self, find our purpose, be open to changing, learning, expanding our knowledge, and be open to its evolution in our lives.

Thank you, Rev. Sage Cole, founder of the Helen Keller Spiritual Life Collaborative, for bringing this enriching experience that gathered us together to



The event began on Friday night with a lecture from Rev. Sage Cole called "Becoming the Holy City Inside and Out."

share truth for balm.

Thank you to Roslyn Taylor, founder of Deborah's Tree, for sponsoring and hosting this soon-to-be annual event. We will be gathering again on Saturday, March 6, 2027 at the Lord's New Church for the next Be Love retreat. Please join us! Information will be posted on the HKSLC website: helenkellercollaborative.org.

Thank you to the Lord's New Church manager, Leonard Rose, and head pastor Rev. Tom Rose; to Stan and Liz Rose; to Rev. Solomon Keal, who agreed to welcome this event and who played the piano on many vibrant occasions; to Lisa Kufs on technology, who also created the resplendent "kindling our light" backdrop; to the food providers; and to those who attended and brought their light to share and to keep the inspiration going. 🙏

Tryn Rose Seley (trynrose@gmail.com) is a musician for spiritual gatherings and for those with Alzheimer's who loves to write. For more information please visit caregiverheart.com.



Lisa Kufs created these beautiful table centerpieces to go along with this special event.

Helen Keller Spiritual Life Collaborative

Creating What Comes Next

BY REV. SAGE COLE

June 2026 marked the end of a seven-month journey through the Days of Creation with The Helen Keller Spiritual Life Collaborative (HKSLC at helenkellercollaborative.org). A fabulous mix of humans joined together to reflect on the process of regeneration through varied modalities: biblical study, art, writing, internal family systems, dreamwork, and Swedenborg's descriptions of the process of awakening from death. A big thank you to our collaborative cohort leaders: the Rev. Sue Turley, Rev. Judith Lethin, Chelsea Rose Odhner, the Rev. Dr. Ted Cole, and Rev. Sarah Walker. Also, to our doctrinal contributors, Rev. Catherine Lauber, Rev. Lee Woofenden, and Rev. Kent Rogers, and so many more who took part to share their insights and experience from four different continents! Thank you, too, to the New Church Kisii Kenya for going on the creation journey during our monthly [Global New Church Prayer Circle](#), and the [Wayfarers New Earth Community](#) for inviting me into their circle each month to share the creation journey. You can view the Seven Days of Creation and Regeneration liturgies and monthly recaps of the gatherings and workshops on the HKSLC YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/@helenkellercollaborative).

In the midst of our creation journey, our Second Annual Celebration of Helen Keller's Spiritual Birthday was held on March 3, 2026. We gathered two large circles of Swedenborgian devotees, pastors, leaders, and teachers to share together the particular treasure of the New Church that we each carry. It was so beautiful to hear all the diverse jewels and to feel the depth of love present within each one. This sharing formed the basis for our summer series [Notes from the New Heaven](#), and the monthly Be Honest Faith Conversations to be held September through June 2027, covering nine faith topics: The New Jerusalem; God as Love, Wisdom and Use; Spiritual Freedom; Divine Providence; Heaven and Hell; Regeneration; The Word; Jesus and the Divine Humanity; and The Church.

We are excited to settle into our new fall rhythm:

Monday Morning: [Be Love Devotion](#)—7:30–7:42 AM ET. We will be using a simple traditional Swedenborgian liturgy for reflection and prayer.

Tuesday: [Be Honest Conversations](#) and [Be Love Podcast](#) episodes, live-streamed and pre-recorded conversations about love, faith, justice, and community.

Wednesday: Meditations by Rev. Sage released weekly on the Worship is Life Substack (worshipislife.substack.com).

Friday: [Be Useful Open Office Hours](#)—pop in to co-create and collaborate with us!

We are also looking forward to the following in-person retreats/events in the works:

October 9, 2026, Swedenborg House FL, The Villages, Florida; November 7–8, 2026, Jackson, Michigan; March 6, 2027, Lord's New Church, Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania; early spring, 2027, Wilmington, Delaware (dates TBA); April 9–11, 2027, Almont New Church Assembly, Allenton, Michigan; and April 16–19, Cedar Hill Retreat Center, Duxbury, Massachusetts.

And perhaps most excitingly (although it's not a competition), our Felt with the Heart Helen Keller traveling exhibit is getting underway!

If you participated in the 2025 HKSLC Annual Celebration of Helen Keller's Spiritual Birthday, you may recall an exciting idea bubbling to the surface. Collaborators and participants alike expressed enthusiastic support for the development of a small traveling exhibit of artifacts that enliven Helen's life of faith and justice.

We are thrilled to announce that an enthusiastic team of talented and dedicated collaborators met in September to begin identifying exhibit objects and elements, locations, and potential partner institutions, with a plan to launch the tour in the fall of 2027 at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies' Helen Keller Conference celebrating 100 years since the publication of her book, *My Religion*.

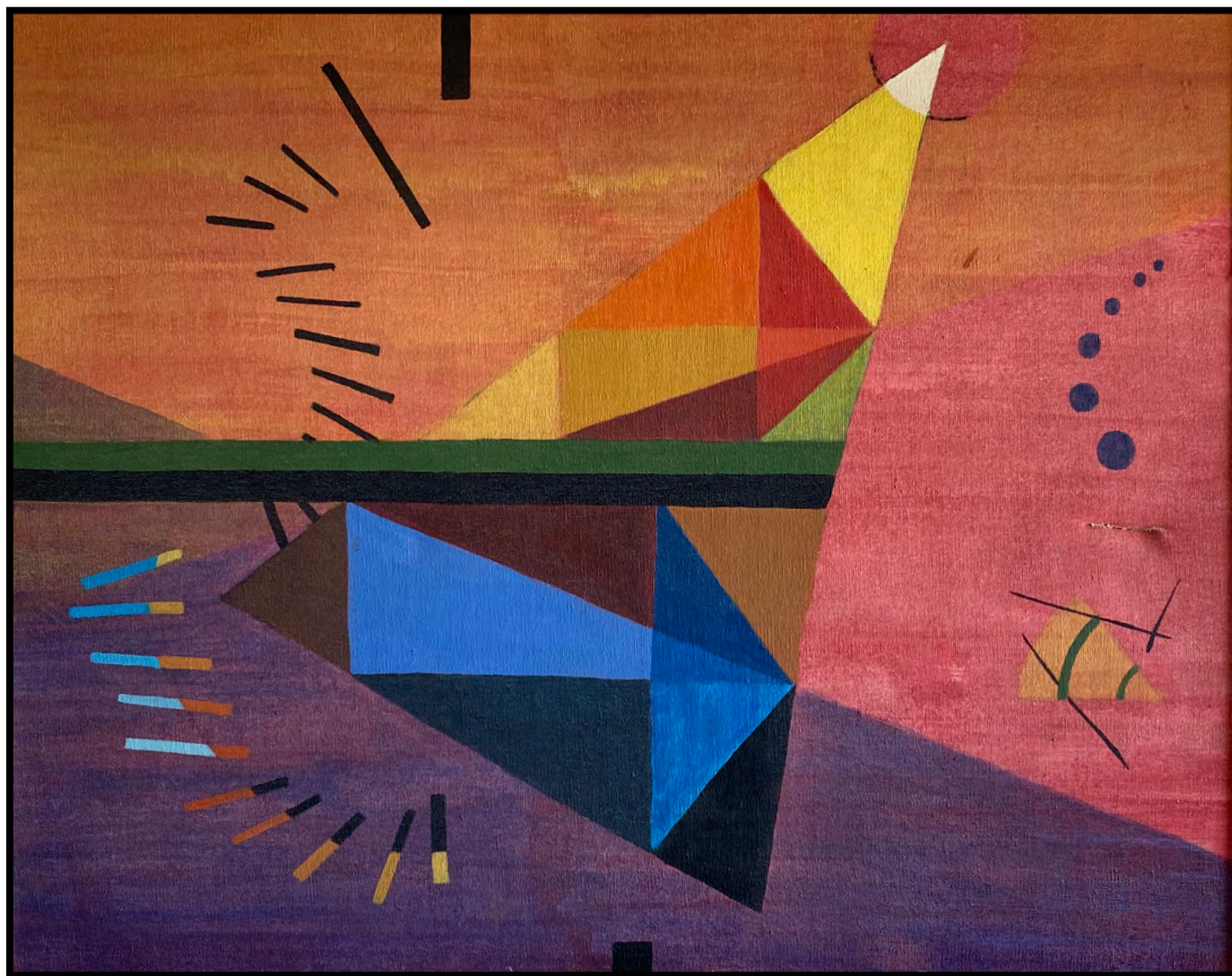
Please contact the HKSLC at info@helenkellercollaborative.org if you have time, financial resources, connections to potential partners, and/or object suggestions you would like to contribute to the effort.

A big thank you to all who are helping to create this new initiative, and if you haven't stepped into the circle yet, know you are very welcome. 🙏

Art as Spiritual Practice

Kandinsky's Triangle

BY REV. ROBERT MCCLUSKEY



"Kandinsky's Triangle," (1978) by Rev. Robert McCluskey, acrylic on canvas. Located in a private collection in San Pedro, California. Contact artist directly for more information.

In the fall of 1978, I was introduced to John Barents, a neighbor and soon-to-be best friend. He was a very talented and prolific abstract painter, and very well read in philosophy. Our interests were many, but standouts would be Plato, Spinoza, Wittgenstein, Gurdjieff, and Nicoll—and our love of Wassily Kandinsky, the father of abstract painting. It was

during this time that I painted this picture.

The primary influence was these words from Kandinsky from *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Part 1, Chapter 2, "The Movement of the Triangle.":

The life of the spirit may be fairly represented in diagram as a large acute-angled triangle divided horizontally into unequal parts with the

narrowest segment uppermost. The lower the segment, the greater it is in breadth, depth and area.

The whole triangle is moving slowly, almost invisibly forwards and upwards. Where the apex is today, the second segment is tomorrow; what can be understood only by the apex and to the rest of the triangle as an incomprehensible

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Art as Spiritual Practice

Jewels of Scripture: New Music For Worship

BY REV. KEN TURLEY

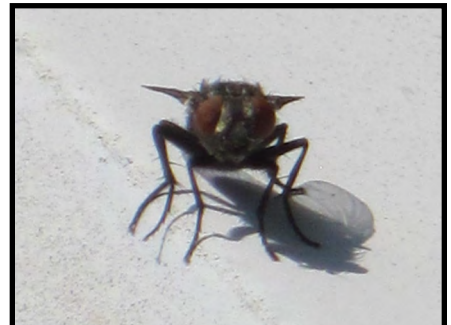
If you are looking for scripturally based anthems for soloists and choir in a variety of contemporary styles, please consider the music of Ken Turley. It can be previewed and purchased at www.jwpepper.com (search "Ken Turley").

Here is a partial list of available pieces:

- Psalm 1—a gospel rock setting for solo or unison choir
- Psalm 19—a moving celebration of the beauty of God's creation for duet or two-part choir
- Psalm 23—a simple setting of this beloved Psalm, for solo voice with optional harmony, perfect for children's choir
- Psalm 36—a rousing affirmation of the power of God's love
- Psalm 37—an energetically joyous celebration for solo or four-part choir
- Psalm 42—a beautiful anthem for solo voice accompanied by piano or classical guitar
- Psalm 92—a moving ballad for solo voice with flute or violin obbligato
- Revelation 7—Benediction for the Countless Millions for solo voice
- Revelation 21—The Holy City, for solo voice with two vocalise harmonies
- Revelation 21—The Twelve Gates, soulful, Gospel Rock for solo and choir
- Luke 17—Heaven Is A State Of Mind
- Matthew 6—Musical settings of The Lord's Prayer

May this music help your worship be sincere, joyful and uplifting! ☦

Rev. Ken Turley was ordained in 1985 and served parishes in Elmwood, Massachusetts, as well as Portland and Fryeburg, Maine. He also served on a number of committees, including Committee on Worship, Committee on Admission to the Ministry, and General Council, and completed two terms as president of Convention. He now lives in Bridgton, Maine, with his wife Laurie and focuses on performing, composing and publishing music. His sacred and secular music can be found at JW Pepper, Bergmann Editions and Ledor Publishing.



THE FLY AND I

Morning sun feeling warm
Leftover night breeze feeling cool
Stretching in shorts and moccasins
Greeting the new day
Joined by a fly
Settling close by
Doing the same.
We stretched together
One limb at a time
Stopping to enjoy the sun
Before stretching again.
We talked, no
I talked, he listened.
Sharing the moment
We welcomed the day.

—Lon Elmer

Kandinsky's Triangle

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gibberish, forms tomorrow the true thought and feeling of the second segment.

These words, and my painting, point to one of my strongest convictions: the rejection of utopian thinking. Things are getting better, and things are staying the same. This world, a world in which souls are formed, will always be a place of order and chaos, change and stasis, growth and decline.

"The poor will always be with you." (Mark 14:7) With so many propiums running around loose, and more born every minute, there will always be differences and conflicts—the ideal context in which to grow spiritually.

Heaven on earth is not the same heaven in heaven. Heaven on earth is the presence of the Divine Love and Wisdom in the midst of ongoing suffering and injustice. The church, you and I, are that presence. In this painting, I hope to impart neither optimism nor pessimism, but realism and hope. Things are getting better, and things

are staying the same. "The whole triangle is moving slowly, almost invisibly forwards and upwards." ☦

Rev. Robert McCluskey holds a BA and MA in philosophy, with a focus on Greek philosophy, modern idealism, existentialism, and hermeneutics. 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.



News from the Denomination

Three Churches Join the Mid-Atlantic Association

BY REV. SHADA SULLIVAN, MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION SECRETARY

In March 2026, at the annual membership meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Association, on behalf of the New York Association, Rev. Youngmin Kim proposed that the Mid-Atlantic and New York Associations should merge. With only one remaining church in the New York Association, clergy and members would benefit from increased collegiality and cooperation with other regional clergy and members. The members of the Mid-Atlantic Association present at the meeting voted unanimously to support the merger.

While discussing the details of the merger, it was decided that the association will retain the name Mid-Atlantic for the immediate moment. A membership meeting will be called at a later date to rename the association to better reflect its new constituencies. On September 12 and 13, the New York Association held its farewell retreat.

With this merger, the Mirral Church (also known as the Korean New Church) has joined with The Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, Temenos Church in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and The Church of the Holy City in Washington, DC as part of the Mid-Atlantic Association.

The New York Society of the New Church has now been dissolved, and the church building has been sold. However, weekly worship services continue online with the hope that someone will carry this ministry forward into the next generation.

In addition to this, two more churches have joined the Mid-Atlantic Association this year: Bloom Haven Spiritual Community Center in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, and Swedenborg House, FL in The Villages, Florida. All these developments are truly exciting for this new eastern coast association, and we look forward to learning how we can all work together to further the mission of the New Church.

The Mirral Church

The Mirral Church, also known as the Korean New Church, was founded in 1981 as a Presbyterian congregation serving Korean immigrants. In 1985, Rev. Jung Sun Lee became pastor after completing studies at the New Church Theological School and Harvard Divinity School and serving in ministry in Korea. A few years later, the church joined the Swedenborgian Church of North America and became

part of the New York Association, a relationship that continues today.

After Rev. Lee retired in 1995, Rev. Youngmin Kim became pastor. Rev. Kim studied for three years at New York Theological School before withdrawing, later graduated from the Swedenborg School of Religion, was ordained, and continued the church's ministry to Korean immigrants and their children. Under his leadership, the church serves people who are socially vulnerable, ill, or isolated, while also offering programs that helped the children of Korean immigrants develop cultural confidence, mutual understanding, and a strong sense of citizenship in a multiracial society.

Swedenborg House, FL

Swedenborg House, FL, now newly relocated in The Villages retirement community, is the latest manifestation of devoted church work in Florida. The original Florida congregation began in Miami and eventually relocated to DeLand as Swedenborg House, later also founding the Chrysalis Retreat Center. In 2020, under the leadership of Rev. Terry Schnarr, a renewed vision emerged, one that honored the church's history while embracing a future centered on whole-person wellness, New Church education through science and nature, day-trip retreats, and ministry to Central Florida retirees and seasonal residents. Following Rev. Terry Schnarr's passing into the spiritual world in March 2025, Rev. Carla Friedrich accepted the call to Chrysalis in May, where they have renamed themselves The Swedenborg House, FL, and are now located in The Villages, Florida. The Villages provides remarkable opportunities for outreach, making it an ideal place to introduce others to Swedenborg's teachings.

Today, the Swedenborg House, FL continues its enduring mission: sharing the inner meaning of Scripture through the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (in person and on Zoom) while encouraging healthy, active, spiritually grounded lives. Outdoor retreats, nature walks, creative activities, and seasonal day trips are paired with offering rites and sacraments, and devotional reflections drawn from Swedenborg's works. Looking ahead, Swedenborg House, FL continues to seek a peaceful property setting where a permanent retreat center and sanctuary can once again flourish.

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News from the Denomination

A New Group for Caregivers

BY AUSTIN CASSIDY

My wife has a serious chronic illness, and it has shaped the last decade of our life together in ways we could never have anticipated. I've now become very used to oxygen tubes running all over my living room and calculating how many tanks to take every time we leave the house together.

Her illness also dramatically complicated our efforts to have children, which turned into a long and expensive road that eventually led us to surrogacy. We have twin boys now, and they were worth every hardship. But I also remember the years before them, and how often someone would ask how we were doing.

It was always difficult to answer that question with anything that felt real or honest.

Caregiving can be some of the most loving work anyone does, but also some of the loneliest. The people doing it often say "fine" when asked how they're holding up, because there just isn't space to give a real answer.

A friend recently compared the role of caregiver to the Kobayashi Maru, the famous no-win scenario from the original Star Trek. An exercise that wasn't designed to be solved, it was designed to measure how a person handles enormous stress while navigating toward the best possible

outcome in a situation that offers no good options. I think a lot of caregivers can relate to that feeling.

With that struggle in mind, I'm really excited to share the news that Bloom Haven is planning to launch a new online support group for caregivers. This is a bit of a unique offering for Bloom Haven, as the vast majority of our small groups will be in-person gatherings. But caregivers face real scheduling challenges, so an online model made the most sense here. It also means anyone in the denomination would be welcome to join us, regardless of geography.

Our view of caregiving is broad and inclusive. Whether you're assisting an aging parent, ailing spouse, a child with additional needs, or anyone else in any caregiving context, this group will be a space to be heard and to find community.

The group will meet monthly, via Zoom, with Tirah Keal acting as our facilitator. If you're interested in learning more, visit the Bloom Haven website at BloomHavenSCC.org and sign up, and we will email you with more details. 📧

Austin Cassidy serves as the Building and Community Manager at Wilmington's Church of the Holy City, and the Treasurer of Bloom Haven. He and his wife Andrea have two boys, George and Patrick.



Three Churches Join Mid-Atlantic Association

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Bloom Haven Spiritual Community Center

Bloom Haven is an emerging spiritual community center rooted in the belief that transformation happens in relationship—with self, others, and the Divine. It embraces a spiritually open and experiential approach that honors wisdom from many traditions, values practice as much as belief, and sees each person's journey as unique and sacred.

While Bloom Haven draws wisdom from multiple spiritual traditions, it remains grounded in the Swedenborgian tradition, emphasizing love, wisdom, and personal transformation.

Tirah Keal, a lifelong Swedenborgian, is the founding pastor of Bloom Haven. She is in her final year of seminary and is a candidate for ordination in the summer of 2027. Initial offerings are focused on small groups, which include Further Reading, a book group; Caregiver Clearing, a support group for caregivers of aging parents or loved ones with long-term illnesses or special needs; and a group called Heart to Art, where the participants share about their lives while making art. 🎨

Rev. Shada Sullivan is the pastor at The Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, and is currently serving as the Chair of the Council of Ministers and secretary of the Mid-Atlantic Association.



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.

Social Justice Committee 2026 Speaker Series

Faith Under Fire: Defending Democracy in an Age of Authoritarian Rule

A free event brought to you from the Social Justice Committee

Date: Wednesday, October 7 at 7:00 PM Eastern Time

Location: Virtually, on Zoom

Registration Link: tinyurl.com/mu5bxpe4

The agenda for this ninety-minute workshop on Voting Rights includes:

- Overview of Faithful Co-Conspirators
- Threats to Voter Access and Election Administration
 - Congressional, Administrative, and State & Local
- Midterm Election Challenges and Threats
 - Threat Assessment, Voter Intimidation, Election Sabotage, etc.
- Opportunities for Voter Access and Election Administration
- Ways to Engage

This workshop will be led by Minister Christian S. Watkins, MDiv (he/him). Christian serves as senior government relations advocate for Criminal Legal Systems, Democracy Reform, and Reparatory Justice at NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, where he works to eliminate racial disparities and advance transformative federal legislation. He is also a certified candidate for ordained ministry in the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, minister of social justice at Asbury United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., and secretary of the Downtown Cluster of Congregations. ☒



Minister Christian S. Watkins