

News from the SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

OTLE Has New Studio, New Look



On March 19, the crew of our [offTheLeftEye](#) YouTube channel (OTLE) unveiled a new, [expanded studio](#) along with a new format for the weekly webcast [Swedenborg and Life](#).

The studio expansion was made possible in part by a generous donor and fan of the show whose substantial contribution arrived last fall just as new space opened up adjacent to the current OTLE studio and offices in the campus of Bryn Athyn College. The donation allowed us to upgrade to next-level video technology—including new cameras, lights, audio equipment, and digital animation software and hardware—

continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

- Given In Memory
- Jane Williams-Hogan Passes
- New Books:
 - *Other Planets*
 - *The Shorter Works of 1758*
- NCE Minute: Swedenborg on Conscience
- S&L Recap: The Inner and Outer Self
- Blog: Showing Up



ANNUAL MEETING TO FEATURE LIVE S&L BROADCAST

Attendees at our 2018 annual meeting will have a special treat: they will become the live studio audience for a broadcast of our weekly webcast [Swedenborg and Life](#). Come to the broadcast starting at 7:30, or arrive a bit earlier for our 6:30 business meeting and find out what we've been up to all year. There will be a dessert reception afterward. All events will be held at [Glencairn Museum](#), 1001 Cathedral Road, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 on April 27, 2018. •

while also creating a new, expanded physical set that includes an anchor desk, backdrop, green-screen wall, and other studio enhancements.

The new format for *Swedenborg and Life* takes advantage of the new technology and builds on past experiments in real-time audience interaction, resulting in a different look and feel that will still be familiar to existing fans.

Swedenborg and Life: New and Improved

Swedenborg and Life, broadcast every Monday night at 8 p.m. Eastern time, gives a Swedenborgian take on topics from the afterlife and spiritual growth to God and the Bible. Coinciding with the unveiling of the new studio, we launched a new, paired-episode format with a show titled [“Do Ghosts Exist?”](#)

The first episode in the pair has all the features that fans of the show have come to expect: Curtis Childs and co-host Jonathan Rose tackle a topic through a combination of passages from Swedenborg, animated sequences, live-action skits, and guest interviews. The upgraded equipment gives these shows a whole new look and allows the hosts to interact more with their environment, incorporating the use of cutting-edge virtual reality technology.

The second episode in the pair is on the same topic as the first but is broadcast live, allowing viewers to interact with the hosts and share their stories and experiences. In addition to audience polls and the hosts’ ability to answer live-chat questions during the broadcast, these shows incorporate



stories from viewers relevant to the topic. They also give the hosts a chance to discuss aspects of the topic that weren't covered in the first episode.

A Special Donor

The studio expansion was made possible in part by a gift from Peter Dowden, who made the donation on behalf of himself and his sister Gloria Dowden-Cooney.

Peter grew up as part of a Swedenborgian community in New England, and while he later moved away from involvement in the church, he never lost his love for Swedenborg's writings. He spent most of his working life in the region of Montreal, Canada, where he worked as a stone mason and had an active volunteer life.

Peter's deepest desire is for peace on earth. Now eighty-nine, he had been searching for a way to leave a lasting impression on the world when he discovered the Swedenborg Foundation and the [offTheLeftEye](#) channel. He knew right away that this was the way he could continue to help the world for a long time to come.

In honor of Peter's tremendous gift, we have named our new space The Peter Dowden & Gloria Dowden-Cooney Studio.

Curtis Childs Speaks at Austin NDE Symposium

Curtis Childs, producer and host of our [offTheLeftEye](#) YouTube channel, gave a dual presentation on practical spirituality at the [Wisdom of the Near Death Symposium in Austin, Texas](#), on March 23-25, 2018.



The three-day event featured keynotes and workshops from prominent near-death experiencers, researchers, and authors such as Mary C. Neal, MD; Jeffrey Long, MD; Howard Storm; and many more.

The first of Curtis's two presentations was "[How to Make Every Experience Spiritual](#)," an hour-long exploration of how we can bridge the gap between sublime spiritual experiences of love and light—such as one might have in a near-death experience—and the often irritating, distracting world of dirty dishes and traffic jams. How do we navigate the distance between heaven and earth? The theme continued in his second presentation, an afternoon workshop titled "[Three Practical Tools for Constant Spirituality](#)," which featured three distinct techniques for strengthening the connection between the spiritual and the everyday.

Curtis also helped out the conference organizers by doing a series of promotional interviews with other conference participants, such as John Burke, lead pastor of the Gateway Church in Austin and author of the bestselling book *Imagine Heaven*; Jody Long of the Near-Death Experience Research Foundation; and well-known near-death experiencer Howard Storm, author of *My Descent into Death*. You can view any of these interviews on the conference's Facebook page at facebook.com/NearDeathWisdom.

Support OTLE for a 5:1 Match

Fans of our [offTheLeftEye](#) YouTube channel and our weekly webcast [Swedenborg and Life](#) can support us on an ongoing basis through a website called Patreon, where you can donate and become a member of a wonderful community of like-minded individuals. As a donor, your financial support is combined with that of others to assist us in bringing you the highest quality programming as we strive to apply Swedenborg's message in an increasingly complex world.

Our patrons are passionate about the importance of our work, so much so that we recently received a very generous gift from a family foundation (which also helped to fund the studio expansion) that allows us to match every dollar gifted five times over! That means that until we reach our 2018 goal, every new patron or increased pledge will see their dollars matched 5:1.

To find out more about support through Patreon or to sign up, visit www.patreon.com/offthelefteye.

Given in Memory and in Honor

Over the past months, we have received donations either in memory of or in honor of particular individuals. The individuals in whose name the donation was given are listed below, in alphabetical order. Please note that the names are listed exactly as they were given to us and may be a shortened or alternative version of the person's legal name. •

Roxana Abrishami	Kathleen H. Poovey
Philip M. Alden	Bonnie Pryor
David Bowman	Rev. Erwin Reddekop
Mariah Carey	Chester Robertson
Curtis Childs	Donald L. Rose
Roscoe L. Coffin	Frank S. Rose
David Crow	Jonathan S. Rose & Kristin King
Dorothy Randall Cutler	Evelyn Rosenberg
Grant Doering	Lydia Cutler Schrader
Bruce E. Elder	John R. Seekamp
Goldie	Milagros Seminario
Saully Guanda	Alice B. Skinner
Eduard Kazanchyan	Carey Neal Smith
Eren Emre Kilic	Henry Smith
Ralph Frederick King	Roger & Barbara Smith
Carol S. Lawson	Emanuel Swedenborg
Katrina May	Lawrence A. Teater
Pat Frazier McCredie	Frank W. Very
Aaron James McDonald	Arvid E. Westerdahl
Fred Odhner	Nadia Williams
John C. Perry	

Former Board Member Jane Williams-Hogan Passes



Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan

[Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan](#) passed away in February following a brave struggle with cancer. The professor of religion and sociology at Bryn Athyn College was seventy-five years old.

Dr. Williams-Hogan served for twelve years on the board of the Swedenborg Foundation (2005-2017); she was a long-time board associate before her formal board service began and was serving as an associate once again at the time of her passing. Her Foundation colleagues fondly recall her “rare blend of insight and integrity” and “deep, inexhaustible passion for Swedenborg’s life and works” as she helped to guide the Foundation’s scholarly publishing program and associated participation in international conferences and events.

Over a prolific career that spanned some forty-three years, Dr. Williams-Hogan made indelible contributions to the academic study of Emanuel Swedenborg. She leaves a substantial legacy in the fields of Western esotericism and new religious movements, where Dr. Williams-Hogan’s pioneering scholarship on Swedenborg’s place in modern religious and cultural thought remains foundational.

In spite of her cancer diagnosis in 2016, Dr. Williams-Hogan was still able to co-organize the [Swedenborg and the Arts International Conference](#), which brought over forty academics to Bryn Athyn College for five days of rich conversation in June 2017. She truly was, as Ralph Waldo Emerson once said of Swedenborg, a “colossal soul” who impacted the lives and ways of thinking of people around the globe. •

We are indebted to Dr. Devin Zuber for authoring this tribute to Jane Williams-Hogan, reproduced here in condensed form.

Online videos from the art conference

You can find a link to videos, presentations, and much more from the Swedenborg and the Arts Conference at: swedenborg.com/video.

New Release: *Other Planets*

The New Century Edition translation of one of Swedenborg's most challenging pieces, [*Other Planets*](#), will be released as a standalone paperback in mid-April.

This short work takes the form of an extended description of Swedenborg's experiences in the afterlife—specifically, visiting the spirits that originated on other planets. He gives accounts of meeting spirits from the planets in our solar system that were known at the time (Mercury through Jupiter, and also Earth's moon), as well as some extrasolar planets. The work has often posed difficulty for people who read it literally, given that advances in astronomy have shown that there is no intelligent life on many of the bodies he names, and has been the subject of a great deal of speculation. For an overview of the theories about this work, see the Deluxe volume [*The Shorter Works of 1758*](#)—also appearing in April—where the introduction by Richard Smoley contains a special section on that very topic.

Regardless of how the reader understands Swedenborg's experiences, the work presents a fascinating spiritual message: that all humans, whether we encounter them today here on Earth or tomorrow in the far reaches of the universe, have their share in a spiritual life. The beings Swedenborg encounters offer a variety of different perspectives on how to live spiritually, often highlighting ways in which we here on Earth get it wrong. Along the way, Swedenborg offers some of the most concise explanations of key theological principles to be found anywhere in his works.

This work has also been published under the title *Earths in the Universe* and *The Worlds in Space*; the Swedenborg Foundation also offers a translation by John Chadwick titled *Life on Other Planets*.

[*Other Planets*](#) will be officially released in mid-April but is now available for pre-order through Swedenborg.com or by calling 800-621-2736. •



[OTHER PLANETS](#)

Emanuel Swedenborg

Translated by George F. Dole

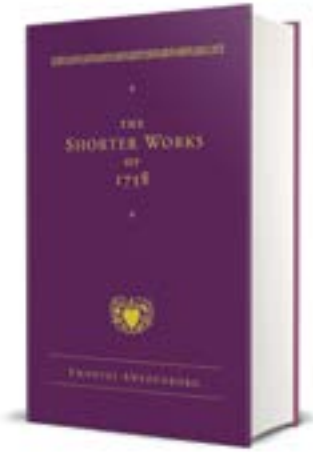
and Jonathan S. Rose

978-0-87785-417-3

pb / 118 pages / \$6.99

978-0-87785-682-5 / e-bk / \$1

New Release: *The Shorter Works of 1758*



[THE SHORTER WORKS OF 1758](#)

Emanuel Swedenborg

Translated by George F. Dole
and Jonathan S. Rose

978-0-87785-482-1

hc / 752 pages / \$29.95

978-0-87785-700-6

e-bk / \$2.99

The highly anticipated next Deluxe hardcover volume in the New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg will be available for sale in mid-April. [The Shorter Works of 1758](#), translated by George F. Dole and Jonathan S. Rose, contains four of Swedenborg's short works:

- ***New Jerusalem***: In this work, Swedenborg outlines his theology in twenty-three brief chapters.
- ***Last Judgment***: This work on the “end times” asserts that the Last Judgment foretold in the Bible was actually an upheaval in the spiritual world that has already occurred and that Swedenborg himself witnessed.
- ***White Horse***: This brief work is primarily an exposition on the inner meaning of the white horse mentioned in chapter 19 of the book of Revelation.
- ***Other Planets***: Swedenborg describes life on other planets in our solar system and elsewhere in the universe.

In addition to the works themselves, the Deluxe edition contains an introduction by author and scholar Richard Smoley that places each of the works in the context of the history of thought; a note on editions and translations by editors Jonathan S. Rose and Stuart Shotwell that explores the complex history of translation of these short works; and an editors' preface that discusses the order in which the works were published and what might have motivated Swedenborg to write on these particular themes.

[The Shorter Works of 1758](#) will be released on April 15 but can be pre-ordered at any time through [Swedenborg.com](#) or by calling 800-621-2736. •

NCE Minute: Swedenborg on Conscience

Through our work on the Swedenborg Foundation's [New Century Edition](#), we have the privilege of hearing Swedenborg's insights on human life continue to sound in our thoughts as we view the discords and difficulties of modern society. Here his take on the matter of conscience is contrasted with the views of our own times.

In [True Christianity](#) §§665–666, Swedenborg describes a conference on the topic of conscience among some of the learned in the spiritual world. Readers of other such accounts by Swedenborg are not likely to be surprised at how the conference progresses: the “experts” either express bafflement or trot out theories dismissing conscience as a kind of physical ailment, and finally angels have to step in to set them straight.

The theories offered by these conferees are in some ways similar to the nonspiritual explanations of conscience common today. Conscience is now generally understood as a psychological phenomenon, a sense of right and wrong that arises from one's upbringing and education. Among the cynical, a conscience may even be seen as something morbid or restrictive, a leftover from unresolved childhood conflicts.

While Swedenborg does often connect conscience with one's religious education (see, for example, *Secrets of Heaven* §283 1:1–2), he insists that it is more than a mere relic of past learning: “When we know religious truth, grasp it in our own way, form an intent to act on it, and do act on it, we develop a conscience” ([Secrets of Heaven](#) §9113). Thus conscience does not arise spontaneously from just knowing truth, but evolves from repeatedly acting in accordance with it.

Furthermore, Swedenborg counterintuitively suggests that conscience, rather than being restrictive, actually *sets us free*:



The nature of a spiritual person's freedom is indicated by the fact that the Lord governs such people through conscience. Those whose conscience governs them, or who act in accord with their conscience, act freely. Nothing repels them more than violating their conscience. Acting against conscience is hell to them; obeying conscience is heaven. From this anyone can see that the latter is freeing. ([Secrets of Heaven](#) §918)

This analysis is consonant with Swedenborg's general view that acting in accordance with divine order ultimately leads to a sense of freedom and well-being. It assumes that living by God's rules is *not* incompatible with being free, an assumption that may not compute for Americans, ready as we often are to equate any governance from above with a loss of our freedom as individuals.

Conscience works in a very simple way, according to Swedenborg. It prompts us from within to avoid the pain that comes with acting against divine love:

Conscience is a new will and a new intellect received from the Lord. It is the Lord's presence in us, which is more immediate the more we

CONSCIENCE TRANSCENDS RELIGIOUS LABELS

Swedenborg is careful to emphasize that conscience is not the unique possession of Christians:

The Lord has mercy on the whole human race. He wants to save everyone in the entire world and to draw all people to himself. The Lord's mercy is infinite; it does not allow itself to be restricted to the few within the church, but reaches out to everyone on the face of the earth. When people are born outside the church and as a result into ignorance about the faith, it is not their fault; besides which, failure to believe in the Lord because of a lack of knowledge about him never condemns anyone. . . . So non-Christians who have lived a moral life marked by charity for one another and by innocence are reborn in the other life. . . . The Lord also gives them the gift of a conscience for what is right and good, according to their religious tradition, and into this conscience he instills innocence and neighborly love. ([Secrets of Heaven](#) §1032:2-3)



respond to goodness or truth. If the Lord's presence is stronger than our response to goodness or truth, we come into a state of conflict. The reason for the conflict is that the evil and falsity in us, which are moderated by the goodness and truth in us, cannot stand a more immediate presence [of the Lord]—as circumstances in the other world can demonstrate. Evil spirits there can never approach any community of heaven without going into distress and agony. ([Secrets of Heaven](#) §4299:2)

Our conscience, then, becomes distressed when we do or see something that opposes divine order. Our whole life then calls out for action, and through action our conscience grows, becomes strengthened, and remakes us as better people. As the angels of [True Christianity](#) explain to the stumbling experts, “Following our conscience is acting on the basis of our true spiritual life; going against our conscience is acting against our true spiritual life.” In fact, we build our spiritual life by acting on our conscience. •

For more on this topic, see the summary by Swedenborg in [New Jerusalem](#) §§130–139, forthcoming in the Deluxe volume [The Shorter Works of 1758](#).

Even within the Christian church, Swedenborg observes, conscience is liable to wide variation. This is because not even the most spiritually knowledgeable of us possesses absolute divine truth:

In human beings, there is no pure form of intuitive truth, or in other words, divine truth. The religious truth we have is only apparent truth. Illusions of the senses attach themselves to it, and distortions urged by our selfish and materialistic cravings attach themselves to the illusions. That is what the truth we have is like. . . . The Lord still binds himself to us in those impurities, however, animating and enlivening them with innocence and charity to form a conscience in us. The truth that forms our conscience varies from person to person, depending on our religious beliefs. . . . Still, the closer we come to possessing genuine religious truth, the better our conscience is. ([Secrets of Heaven](#) §2053:1–2) •



Swedenborg and Life Recap: The Inner and Outer Self

By Josh Cole, Swedenborg.com Contributor

The following is a recap of a recent episode of our weekly webcast **Swedenborg and Life**. From January to mid-March, we went back to basics with a series of shows that explored some key Swedenborgian concepts while getting to know the viewers better by asking about their personal experiences, including an in-depth interview with a viewer each week.

To watch this episode (or any other!), go to youtube.com/offthelefteye. You can also read recaps of other recent episodes at swedenborg.com.

Swedenborg's teaching that we have an inner self that is connected to the divine and an outer self that handles our mundane affairs has profound implications for our spiritual growth. With the help of our viewers, hosts Curtis Childs and Jonathan Rose explore that concept in our latest episode. But first, we start the conversation with a question for the audience to ponder.

ICEBREAKER

If you were to create a motto that encapsulates the “New Church” perspective, what would it be?

For both Curtis and Jonathan, the “New Church” represents not a specific church or organization, but the philosophy that Swedenborg conveys in his writings.

Curtis would encapsulate the Swedenborgian perspective with this motto: “Everything is better than you think it is.” This is true of life, the universe, the Bible, and even our own minds. Another thing he might say is, “God’s got everything handled—you just need to love.”

Jonathan would build on Curtis’s first motto to say, “Everything is better than we can even imagine in the future.” In movies and television, the future seems like a dark place, but Swedenborg shares a brighter vision.

WEEKLY SWEDENBORG KEYWORDS

Our weekly keywords are common words that Swedenborg uses in his own particular way—his definitions hold nuances that you might not expect. In

this episode, Jonathan reveals a piece of trivia about why these keywords are so important to understanding Swedenborg: if you were to create a graph of all the words he uses in his lengthy writings, there are about [sixty words that he uses the most](#)—more than 10,000 times each throughout all of his writings.

This week's keywords are [inner self and outer self](#). You can visualize these in a lot of ways. Here's how Swedenborg describes them:

We are created in such a way that we are in the spiritual world and the earthly world at one and the same time. The spiritual world is where the angels are and the earthly world is where we are. And since that is how we are created, we are given an inner nature and an outer nature—an inner nature that allows us to be in the spiritual world, and an outer nature that allows us to be in the earthly world. Our inner nature is what we refer to as the inner self, and our outer nature is what we refer to as the outer self. ([New Jerusalem](#) §36)

It's important to understand that the outer self is not our physical body, but our earthly mind. This is the part of us that values earthly possessions and ideas above everything else.

The inner self is the part that's in touch with the spiritual world. In good people, the inner self receives light from heaven, but evil people are so focused on this world that they're completely ruled by their outer selves—in effect, they have no inner self.

The more we derive our thoughts and intentions from heaven, the more our inner spiritual self opens and takes shape. This is an opening to heaven all the way to the Lord, and a taking shape in accord with the priorities of heaven. In direct contrast, the more we derive our thoughts and intentions not from heaven but from the world, the more our inner spiritual self closes and our outer self opens. . . .

The inner and outer levels we have been dealing with are the inner and outer levels of our spirit. Our bodies are nothing but a shell in which these inner and outer levels reside. That is, the body does nothing on its own, acting only from the spirit that is within it.



Bear in mind that after it is released from the body our spirit keeps right on thinking and intending and speaking and acting. Its thinking and intending constitute the inner level of our spirit, while its speaking and acting constitute its outer level. ([*New Jerusalem*](#) §§43, 46)

We can see a parallel in nature: A seed might look like nothing more than a brown husk, but when you shine a light on it, you begin to see new life unfolding. A seed that is kept in a lightless situation won't sprout and grow. In the same way, if we focus only on the material, we put ourselves in a lightless situation and deny ourselves the chance to grow.

We'll see that loud and clear when we dive into Swedenborg's spiritual experiences.

SPIRITUAL WORLD ROAD TRIP

Even in the afterlife, we need to get used to seeing through the [inner-self perspective](#). This week, we take a "road trip" through the afterlife through

the lens of one of Swedenborg's spiritual experiences: the story of the nine wives from [*Spiritual Experiences*](#) §4688.

A spirit who in life hadn't understood the nature of the inner and outer self passed into the afterlife and went

looking for his wife, who had died before him. A group of malicious spirits took on his wife's physical appearance and challenged him to pick his wife out of a group of nine identical-looking women. He tried to guess, but couldn't see past the superficial appearance, and so he chose wrong. Then the outer appearances were removed, and he could see that his wife was now an angel—made stunningly beautiful by her inner goodness—and the others became monstrous. The man and his wife were reunited.

Because of his experience, the husband realized everyone's appearance—their outer self—was just a distraction from the real beauty of heavenly love.

GUEST STORY

As part of his effort to help the audience get to know each other, Curtis takes a moment to [interview a viewer, Ilana Moss](#) from Oregon. She



discovered the program because she teaches about metaphysics online and a friend of hers encouraged her to research Swedenborg. She found [offTheLeftEye on YouTube](#) and started binge-watching the videos. “I had never heard of [Swedenborg] before, and yet everything that he teaches supports and is directly related to what I’ve been teaching for all of these years. So it just blew me away.”

The message of spiritual freedom really resonated with Ilana’s understanding and teaching, as did the idea that we have to work through our ego to connect to higher spiritual levels. Just as they illustrated with Jenga blocks in the episode “[Regeneration: How Radical Love Is Born](#),” she’s found it to be a step-by-step process of replacing self-centeredness with love.



“I have this scientific brain that wants to understand, ‘What’s going on here? How does all this work?’ And Swedenborg’s work has given me another layer to go, ‘Oh, that’s why this works.’”

ICEMELTER

At the beginning, Curtis and Jonathan asked viewers what motto they’d create for the Swedenborgian worldview. Now at the end of the show, we find out what they came up with:

- Bringing Heaven to Earth
- Keep Your Eyes on the Lord and He Will Lead You to All Good
- God Is in His Heaven and All Is Right in the World
- You Are Doing Great—Better Than You Think You Are—and the Best Is Yet to Come
- Love, Heal, Enjoy
- God Is Nicer Than We Think
- Welcome Home
- We All Matter



VIEWER COMMENTS

I love this channel a lot, not only did you guys bring me comfort after losing a friend of mine a couple weeks ago but it's also very intriguing. BTW I don't know why but for some reason every time I see Dr. Rose I feel at peace just by his presence. — IIQueenQII

I have watched with intent so many of your shows that you from SL are like family. No matter what's going on in my life, seeing you gives me an inner calm and a smile. Are you sure you are not angels? — Goat

“Disorder is allowed for the sake of order.” I love this one; it always reminds me of divine providence and divine order. — Lungelo

“Welcome Home” resonates with me. Contact with these teachings was truly a homecoming. All of your team's efforts are so amazingly stimulating and are sources of that constant branching out you described. After the adventure of seeking my spiritual home for many years (first 7 decades of my life) I was so grateful to find my home in the Swedenborgian community. When I first made contact it was as if I had found a specific tonal wavelength and my heart started vibrating in recognition—and my inner mind was lit up as if a light switch had been flipped on. Amazing grace! — Mary



From Our Blog: Showing Up

By Anna Woofenden

Someone said to me recently, “‘Showing up’ is a refrain you all use often.” I hadn’t specifically noticed this before. I know that I often preach about the dignity of all human beings, about the power of all kinds of people eating together, and about how we want to be part of cultivating more heaven here on earth. “[Showing up](#)” wasn’t something I had consciously taken as a theme, yet having had it pointed out to me, I realized that “showing up” is at the root of so many fundamental values I hold dear. We need to show up in order to:

- Join together with all kinds of people around God’s table
- Find reconciliation in our relationships and families and between races and classes
- Regenerate, or grow in our spiritual lives
- Be changed by a conversation with someone with whom we wouldn’t normally interact
- Be out in the world meeting new people
- See God in the faces of all those people we meet
- Strengthen our spiritual practice with God
- Love our neighbor

In the Swedenborgian tradition, we talk a lot about the trios and the trines: the trinities that comprise the Divine and the spiritual life. One of the trios that is evoked constantly in Swedenborg’s works is that of love, wisdom, and useful service. At the core of this trio is love, to be sure, but for it to have any life and be experienced actually in the world, love must be paired with wisdom so that it can be put into actions of useful service. It doesn’t end there, though. The trio circles back the other direction, too. As we engage in useful service, we experience love and have new insights of wisdom that shine light on new ways for us to be useful.

Since the Lord is love itself and wisdom itself, the Lord is also usefulness itself, since love has useful functions as its goal and puts them into effect by means of wisdom. Apart from usefulness, love and wisdom have no definition or boundary, no dwelling. This means that we cannot say they exist or are present unless there is a useful function in which they occur. ([Divine Love and Wisdom](#) §230)

The elegant circling of the trio breaks, though, if we don't show up. To encounter and engage with the Divine and to be part of that cycle of love, wisdom, and useful service, we need to show up.

I am not saying that showing up in life happens effortlessly. "Showing up" is a simple enough phrase, and I believe that it conveys a deep truth about our calling both as individuals and in community; but actually doing it, living it, and responding to it are not easy. Showing up requires deep prayer for strength and humility. Showing up:

- Necessitates our commitment and our spiritual practices
- Can mean battling to get out of bed in the morning, to overcome mental and physical challenges
- Entails the emotional work that needs to be done to be present with each other, to look inside ourselves, and to examine the places within ourselves that we would prefer stayed walled off
- Means being humble and willing to rest in God, to trust in God, and to believe in our value and worth as creations of a loving God

During my time as pastor of the Garden Church, showing up every day has presented itself not only as an opportunity but also as a challenge. I remember vividly those early days when I would shake as I drove down to the empty lot that we were transforming into a spiritual gathering place. So much was unknown; anything could happen. I felt vulnerable and curious, even excited and trepidatious about what might happen if we showed up to



this community in such a raw and exposed way. Week after week my hands shook on the steering wheel as I drove down Pacific Avenue, and week after week amazing things happened when we opened the gates. Just the right number of people would show up with food in hand so that there was enough for dinner; a conversation at the gate would turn into an opportunity to pray for a family who had just lost a loved one; two people who come from very different walks of life would come together as they harvest beans; and God would be there.

And in these moments, I was reminded that though showing up is hard, it is also so very simple. It might take determination and courage, but to move outward into basic action can be a simple step to take. As a beautiful passage from the book of Micah reminds us, God delights in how we show up and what we show up to:

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

Showing up doesn't mean that we always know the outcome or are going to be able to accomplish things in exactly the way we had planned. Showing up is that humble walking, that surrender to God, as we are reminded step by step that God is the one who knows the way and is leading and providing. And though we rarely know exactly what God has in store, our experiences often show us that it will be more surprising, and delightful, and uncomfortable, and transformative than anything we could come up with on our own. •

Rev. Anna Woofenden, MDiv, is the founding minister of the Garden Church in San Pedro, California.



SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

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As a nonprofit, independent educational organization, we use donation funds to inform and inspire the world about Swedenborg's spiritually uplifting perspectives on this life and the life hereafter.

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