Founded in New York City in 1849 as the American Swedenborg Printing and Publishing Society, we have been dedicated from the start to making Emanuel Swedenborg’s thought as widely available as possible. Originally, that meant distributing his books for the lowest cost possible, but in 1928 (the same year our name changed to the Swedenborg Foundation), our mission expanded to include publishing books about his ideas. Since our founding, we have sold or given away millions of books, pamphlets, and other informational materials. In entering the digital age, we have embraced new forms of communication, but our goals remain the same: to reach out, to inspire, and to inform.

The mission of the Swedenborg Foundation is to foster an affirmative, informed, and increasingly broad engagement with the spiritual experiences and theological message disclosed by Emanuel Swedenborg.

CONTENTS

A Message from the President 2
Advancing the Mission in 2017 3
    Online Engagement: Paving the Way for New Growth 3
Core Content: New Century Edition 7
Lifting Up Voices 10
Finances 11
    Programs and Funding 11
    Income 13
    Membership and Donations 15
    Investments 16
Life Members of the Swedenborg Foundation 17
Contributors for the Year 2017 18
Officers, Board of Directors, and Staff 28
A Message from the President

On a personal note, the most satisfying aspect of serving as president is to once again preface the annual report by stating what has been commonplace in recent years: in 2017 the Foundation continued its historical trend of reaching new heights in terms of engaging more people—worldwide—with the works of Emanuel Swedenborg than ever before. This upward trajectory of engagement that started a few years ago has continued unabated, and there are no indications that it will slow down.

This phenomenal growth, and overall health of the Foundation, is due largely to two groups: our staff and our members/donors.

With regard to the staff, Executive Director Morgan Beard has done an outstanding job not only in recruiting extraordinarily talented individuals, but also by molding them into a close-knit, collaborative, congenial team. Morgan’s leadership, and staff involvement, are key elements to the Foundation’s success.

While the leadership and staff support and adhere closely to our overarching mission, all are also concurrently acutely aware that creative outreach activities are themselves dependent upon fiscal considerations. Those fiscal considerations were given a big boost this year by two significant gifts, and a portion of each was put to immediate use in upgrading and expanding online activities. That initiative, in turn, led to an expansion of the donor base while concurrently maintaining the support the Foundation has relied on through the years from members, individual donors, and family foundations.

In summary, as the following report attests, 2017 was another banner year in terms of outreach, membership growth, and contributions, one that all of us associated with the Foundation take pride in. My conclusion is that the Foundation would not be where it is without the day-to-day involvement and implementation of the board’s mission provided by our leadership team, and without the generous support of our members and donors.

Thank you!

Richard B. Hatheway / President
Swedenborg Foundation
Advancing the Mission in 2017

Our mission has always revolved around spreading Emanuel Swedenborg’s teachings to the broadest possible audience. It started in 1849, when our charge was to publish his writings in English and distribute them for the lowest cost possible. Today, the tools we use have expanded: we still publish translations of Swedenborg’s works, but in addition to printing books we also post those translations online, allowing anyone to access them, anywhere in the world, completely free of charge.

But with new media come new ways to communicate. Our mandate to promote engagement with Swedenborg’s thought has led us to lift up the voices of many thinkers who have insights into how these works can be used by people today, through many different channels. When it comes to engagement, our most successful venture to date has been the offTheLeftEye YouTube channel, featuring our weekly webcast Swedenborg & Life. From humble beginnings, the channel grew to more than 57,000 subscribers by the end of 2017, with a total of 32.6 million minutes watched throughout the course of the year and 2.8 million individual video views.

However, translations continue to be the core of what we do, and without the ready availability of high-level English translations of Swedenborg’s works—without the access to translators and editors who can discuss the deeper nuances of Swedenborg’s thought—the quality of our online content would suffer greatly. Therefore, strategically our progress depends on advancing both of these programs at once.

Online Engagement: Paving the Way for New Growth

Our focus on YouTube for 2017 was on testing new content and new growth strategies. Over the three years since we launched Swedenborg & Life we’ve built a core audience that follows the show on a weekly basis, many of whom had never heard of Swedenborg before encountering the show. Our challenge as we grow is to continue increasing our exposure to new audiences while still maintaining what our existing audience loves about the show.
A standard format for *Swedenborg & Life* is to pick a Swedenborg-related topic—from the afterlife to the Bible to the power of the human mind—and explore it through a series of animated sequences, skits, physical demonstrations, guest interviews, and, of course, insights from Swedenborg. During the summer of 2017, Dr. Jonathan Rose, the series editor of the *New Century Edition*—already a frequent guest on the show—formally joined the crew as a co-host, working with Curtis to give additional perspective on the topic at hand.

In the second half of the year, while maintaining production of our standard format shows, we also began testing various types of interactive shows, especially community chats, where *Swedenborg & Life* host Curtis Childs and guests went live on YouTube to answer questions and respond to comments that were typed into the chat box by viewers as the video streamed. The ability to chat with other viewers is something that our core audience really enjoys, and they’re always full of questions, whether it’s via a live chat or in the comments section beneath a video.

This focus on improving quality led to an increase in two key metrics. One was watch time, or the total amount of time that people spend watching our videos, which rose 4 percent to 32.6 million minutes throughout the course of 2017. The other was average view duration, which is the average amount of time each person spent watching one of our videos, which rose 29 percent in 2017 to 11 minutes and 20 seconds per video. Of course, this is an average of all views; some people might watch only briefly, while many others watch most or all of an episode to the end.
The metrics of minutes watched and average view duration are important because the more time people spend watching videos on a particular channel, the more YouTube recommends that channel to others.

OffTheLeftEye remains the source of some of our most amazing viewer feedback. In this report we’re sharing just a few of the more than 23,000 comments we received on the channel last year, many of them from people who have found life-changing comfort and support in Swedenborg’s teachings.

We have been humbled by the way that these results have translated into financial support. Toward the end of the year we received two major donations, together totaling more than half a million dollars, that led to some transformative changes in early 2018, including an expanded offTheLeftEye studio space and a revamped show format. We look forward to having more exciting things to say on that front in next year’s report!

**Facebook**

While offTheLeftEye is the core of our online activity, we have also had tremendous success with our Heaven and Hell Facebook page, which provides an alternative way of introducing people to Swedenborg’s thought. The page features quotes from Swedenborg (paired with images for greater impact) and related thinkers as well as posts pointing back to specific videos on the [offTheLeftEye channel](https://www.youtube.com/c/OffTheLeftEye). This year the number of people following the Heaven and Hell Facebook page rose to just under 450,000, and because of extra promotion our weekly reach was able to go as high as 1.65 million individuals.

“I am going on 68 and finally have found the truth and inner peace I searched for. I doubted myself a lot but never stopped believing or giving. Thank you for all you do to help us grow and understand better.”

—YouTube viewer

“WOW WOW wow wow! Why don’t they teach this in churches? I totally need this. I recently lost my mother, and grandmother and sister. My question was always, why aren’t they trying to let me know they love me? Your channel helps me get a deeper understanding in life, and for that . . . I am ever so grateful. Thank you, thank you, thank you.”

—YouTube viewer
offTheLeftEye YouTube Channel
KEY STATS IN 2017

- **Total minutes watched**: 32,643,302
- **Total video views**: 2,879,032
- **Total comments received**: 23,318
- **Subscribers at year-end**: 57,392

**Gender split**
- **Male**: 46%
- **Female**: 54%

**Biggest age demographics**
- **45–54**: 24%
- **55–64**: 25%

**Geographic distribution**
- **55 countries**
- **61% USA, 9% UK, 5% Canada**
**Swedenborg.com**

Our website, Swedenborg.com, remains an important tool for the general public to discover Swedenborg and do more research about his thought and his life. In 2017 we had more than 235,000 visitors to the site, a 31 percent increase over 2016.

Most of our website traffic comes from one of two sources: search engine results and Google advertising. The Google advertising is funded by a Google AdWords grant that allows us $10,000 per month in in-kind advertising; we use this to point people toward different aspects of our site, from offTheLeftEye to [free e-book downloads](#) to [blog posts](#) that highlight different aspects of Swedenborg’s thought.

Visitors to the site downloaded 38,763 free digital books, of which the largest number were from the New Century Edition (46%); 19% were copies of our older [Redesigned Standard Edition](#) translations; and another 35% were copies of other popular titles, including *Our Life after Death* (excerpted from the “World of Spirits” section of *Heaven and Hell*), *Regeneration* (a compilation of Swedenborg’s writings on the topic), and *Afterlife* (excerpts from *Heaven and Hell*).

**Core Content: New Century Edition**

The [New Century Edition](#) of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg (NCE) is the most ambitious team translation of Swedenborg’s works ever undertaken. Each Deluxe hardcover volume includes extensive annotation and references, and every volume published is carefully edited for internal consistency.

Throughout 2017, the NCE team continued to work on the translations and the accompanying scholarly materials in the NCE series. As the year came to an end, several volumes were moving rapidly toward publication in early 2018, and two volumes were actually in the proofing stage.

**Milestones in Translation, Scholarship, and Editing**

The main focus of the editorial team in 2017 was the Deluxe volume *The Shorter Works of 1758*. This collection includes four titles—*New Jerusalem, Last Judgment, White Horse*, and *Other Planets* (traditionally referred to as *Earths in the Universe*).
Some features of this volume are:

- **A fascinating introduction by Richard Smoley.** A scholar with nine popular religion and spirituality books to his credit, Smoley lucidly sets these four works by Swedenborg in their context in the history of thought. To give just two examples, the introduction shows how Last Judgment is Swedenborg’s response to centuries of speculation about the “end time,” and how Other Planets, which argues that Christian salvation applies throughout the universe, makes Swedenborg’s voice heard in the boisterous Enlightenment debate about the existence and meaning of life on other planets.

- **Clear and accurate translations of these four essential works.** Even material that has often been omitted from these volumes—the cross-references to Secrets of Heaven—at last takes on its true form in English as a trenchant summary of Swedenborg’s thought and teachings.

- **More than one hundred pages of annotations** contributed by fourteen scholars. These reconnect readers to Swedenborg’s wide-ranging knowledge of the books, trends of thought, and customs of his day, as well as mapping the myriad links between the works of 1758 and his other writings.

- **An essay by the editors** detailing new research about the order in which Swedenborg’s works of 1758 were composed and how and why that sequence differs from the order in which Swedenborg himself commonly presented them.

- **A brief essay detailing the history of earlier editions and translations** of the four titles—and explaining why the reader should be aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

- **Four indexes** that provide abundant means for serious readers to explore the text. Their ninety pages include tables of Scripture references as well as the most thorough translation index and the most complete table of parallels to other works by Swedenborg ever published.

Two related NCE volumes also moved to the starting gate in 2017 for publication in early 2018: both the Portable (translation-only) version of Other Planets, and the Portable Last Judgment. The latter title will be printed accompanied by its sequel, Supplements, which is in itself a dual work made up of Supplement on the Last Judgment and Supplement on the Spiritual World.
During 2017 Lisa Hyatt Cooper translated almost half of the final volume of the fifteen-volume Secrets of Heaven series, even while she continued reviewing previous volumes with her two consultants. Once this last volume in the first phase of the New Century Edition series has been translated, the NCE team’s efforts will be directed toward editing the still-unpublished translations and compiling and/or editing the scholarly material that accompanies them—the prefaces, introductions, annotations, and indexes.

This remaining task is already well begun. During 2017 every other yet-to-be-published work received at least some—and in the case of several volumes, considerable—editorial attention. These were The Shorter Works of 1763 (that is, the Four Doctrines and Supplements); Marriage Love (now being edited); Revelation Unveiled volumes 1 and 2 (now fully indexed); and Secrets of Heaven volumes 3 to 15 (undergoing annotation).

Updated Publications

During 2017, stocks of several titles ran low, and reprinting them gave us a chance to make some minor corrections. The Portable edition of Divine Providence was the first of these reprints, receiving the first “upgrade” since it was printed in 2010. True Christianity volume 1, in both Portable and e-book forms, was also re-released with minor updates.

Sales and Free Downloads

In 2017, the Swedenborg Foundation sold 1,981 printed NCE volumes, a 7 percent increase over 2016. We also sold 73 audio-books, which represents a slight drop from the previous year, but does not include subscriptions from Amazon’s Audible audiobook service. Audible is extremely popular among audiobook users, and we expect that it will represent an increasing percentage of our audiobook sales. Our sales of NCE e-books were up from last year’s 2,467 units to 2,578 units this year, with Heaven and Hell—always our number-one seller—continuing to expand its lead over our other volumes.
Combined, these sales of units in all categories increased just slightly over the total of sales during 2016—in 2016 the total number of NCE titles sold was 4,490, and during 2017 it was 4,632.

Those paid sales numbers, however, were as usual far exceeded by the free downloads of NCE volumes from our site. These free downloads came to 17,327, 21 percent under 2016’s total of 21,963. The decrease for the most part represents a Google ad that went viral in 2016, causing a spike in book downloads, and then fell off, which is a natural cycle for online advertising. Even with the decrease, NCE downloads represent the largest single category of book downloads on our site; we continue to get strong traffic from people around the world looking for these volumes. The 2017 downloads brought to 239,009 the total free downloads of NCE volumes since project inception.

**Lifting Up Voices**

In addition to our two core programs, we continue to promote other perspectives on Swedenborgian spirituality, both in scholarship and in the world of everyday life. We played an active role in the organization and financial support of the Swedenborg and the Arts International Conference, held at Bryn Athyn College, which attracted scholars from around the world and introduced some groundbreaking new thought on Swedenborg’s influence across a wide range of arts.

Although our publication of popular and scholarly books other than translations of Swedenborg’s writings has been greatly reduced in recent years, we are constantly delighted to find people who have new insights into Swedenborg’s work, and we seek to bring those voices forward not just in our online content, but in printed form as well. In 2017 we made great strides toward bringing some long-standing projects to fruition, which we look forward to introducing to the public in 2018. •
**Finances**

We ended the 2017 fiscal year in great shape once again. We had a banner year for donations, especially in light of two significant gifts toward the end of the year that totaled more than half a million dollars, but we also received some wonderful support from individuals that went a long way in helping us continue our work. Our investment value was up significantly, following trends in the market, and our expenses came in at or below target.

**Programs and Funding**

Our total expenses for 2017 were approximately $1.71 million, a slight (5 percent) overall increase that reflects growth in spending in online programming. Following is a breakdown of both expenses and funding sources for our major programs. For a more detailed breakdown of our expenses by program, please see the statement of functional expenses on page 15.

**Online Programming**

Online media production—which covers our YouTube programming, our social media outreach including the Heaven and Hell Facebook page, and our website—was our single largest program in 2017. Total expenses for the year were $682,449, but this includes an in-kind advertising donation from Google of $118,767. Once that is factored out, actual expenses were $563,682, a 16 percent increase over 2016. The spending increases were directed specifically toward the offTheLeftEye YouTube channel, providing for additional personnel and equipment purchases.

OffTheLeftEye’s spectacular growth over the last few years would not have been possible without donations from individuals and organizations. Excluding the Google grant, approximately $224,000 of the 2017 expenses were funded by donors, with the rest coming from the Foundation’s operating budget.

As discussed in more detail below, in 2017 we were blessed to receive two major gifts, together totaling more than half a million dollars, for offTheLeftEye. A significant portion of those gifts was applied to the 2018 budget, in part to support an expansion of the offTheLeftEye studio and in part for increased motion graphics
support and comment moderation. The remainder of those funds is being held in reserve to be applied to future opportunities.

**New Century Edition**

Our second-largest program in 2017 was the [New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg](#). Expenses for the NCE in 2017 were $361,496, down 10 percent from 2016.

In 2015, the board set aside a sum of $2 million from our pool of invested funds to sustain the first phase of the NCE—translation and publication of Swedenborg’s published theological works—through completion. Beginning in 2016, that fund has served as the primary source of operating funds for the NCE. However, donations received from individuals and family foundations help to sustain the project and reduce the amount that is deducted from that fund. In 2017, there were a total of $95,387 in donations for the NCE. These donations help to extend the life of the fund, and we are particularly grateful to those who continue to give generously to help make this project a reality. As of the end of 2017, the remaining balance in the fund was $1,475,314.

**Other Programming**

Although publishing books is no longer our sole strategic focus, we continue to produce books on Swedenborg’s thought for a broad range of audiences. Expenses related to book production were $133,429 in 2017, approximately the same as 2016. We also engage in other activities aimed at promoting Swedenborg’s thought—for example, supporting and attending conferences—which accounts for another $51,113 of our overall expenses. These are funded through a combination of donations, book sales, and general operating funds.
**Supporting Costs**

Our supporting costs fall into two categories: general and administrative, and fundraising. Administrative costs cover staff time spent on organizational business, office expenses and maintenance, professional fees such as investment management, costs associated with leadership meetings, and so on. Our administrative costs for 2017 were $355,067, about the same as 2016.

Fundraising costs cover staff and other expenses related to fundraising; these increased slightly over 2016 with the September hire of our new director of development, Tim Bilger. The total expenses in this category for the year were $131,278.

**Income**

In 2017, as in most years, the lion’s share of our operating funds were drawn from our endowment, the majority of which is invested in mutual funds (see below). For budget purposes, we treat this drawdown—which is limited to 4.5 percent of the endowment value to ensure sustainability—as income. However, the money taken from the NCE dedicated fund is above and beyond that drawdown figure, and so adding those two figures together, our drawdown for the year was $997,364.

Of the $933,864 in donations and memberships received in 2017, $412,362 was applied to expenses in 2017, with the remainder either applied to the 2018 budget or held in reserve for future use. In addition, $170,000 in donations previously received was applied to the 2017 budget, bringing the total of donations applied to operating expenses in 2017 to $582,362. Note that just under $120,000 of that figure represents the in-kind donation from Google.

Other funds applied against this year’s spending were $99,455 in investment income and $40,625 in book sales.
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Membership and Donations

As noted above, in 2017 we received $933,864 in donations and memberships from individuals and organizations. We owe special thanks to two major donors.

The first is Peter Dowden, a Swedenborg enthusiast from Canada who, in looking for ways to make a lasting difference in the world, gave a gift of Cn$400,000 (just a little over US$300,000) for support of offTheLeftEye. We were truly humbled by this gift, made in honor of himself and his late sister, Gloria Dowden-Cooney. The second was the Asplundh Foundation, which has been a valued supporter of our programs for many years, and gave a gift of $215,000 this year. These two gifts, received at the end of 2017, had a transformational impact on offTheLeftEye, as we look forward to reporting in 2018.

In addition to these two gifts, and the Google ad grant of $118,767, we had gifts from individuals and organizations of $278,191, an astounding 61 percent increase over 2016. We had 586 members in 2017, a decrease from 2016, but still a blessing. We thank all of our supporters, regardless of the amount they gave, for their generosity and all that they make possible.
Investments

Our endowment is invested in a combination of mutual funds and real estate investment trusts (REITs). The stock market investments are managed by Vanguard and are invested in a mix of funds that include domestic funds, international funds, and fixed-income instruments like bonds. Our mutual funds started the year with a value of $14.88 million. During the course of the year we had dividends and realized gains from sales of $476,996 and unrealized gains from appreciation in stock value of $2.21 million (a 14.9 percent increase). After factoring in drawdown withdrawals and some cash transfers into the account, our ending account value was $16.79 million.

Our REITs investments, which are managed by the Poole-Locke Group, were valued at $1.53 million at the end of 2017. This represents an unrealized loss in value of $50,771 (-3%), after factoring in a liquidating distribution of $86,700.

Taking into account our investments, cash on hand, property, and other assets, our total net assets as of the end of 2017 were $19.7 million.

Our 2017 financial statements were audited by the firm of Alan Ross & Company PC. You can obtain our auditor’s full report by contacting our business manager, Valerie McLaughlin, by phone at (610) 430-3222, ext. 108; by e-mail at vmclaughlin@swedenborg.com; or by writing to 320 North Church Street, West Chester, PA 19380.
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