

## News from the SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

### Rebooted Facebook Group Focuses on Lively Discussion

The [Swedenborg Foundation](#) is happy to announce the newly revitalized [“Watching & Reading Swedenborg” Facebook group](#) (formerly the “Swedenborg Online Discussion Team”). Digital Media Producer Curtis Childs began the group in 2014 for volunteer moderators of the [offTheLeftEye YouTube channel](#), but the group has grown exponentially over the last few years and has evolved as a discussion forum for Swedenborg-related topics.

Since we’re always looking for ways to connect people who are interested in Swedenborg’s work, we jumped at the opportunity to enhance the platform to help deepen spiritual bonds between people. For instance, members of the Facebook

*continued on page 2*

#### IN THIS ISSUE

- OTLE Growth Continues
- In Memory and In Honor
- New Book: *Last Judgment / Supplements*
- New Book: *A New Key to the Bible*
- NCE Minute: The Sound of a Cry
- S&L Recap: 5 Reunions in the Afterlife
- Blog: Are Thoughts and Prayers Enough?



#### WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!

There are so many ways in which you can get involved with the [Swedenborg Foundation](#). Whether you’re giving financial gifts, paying for memberships, participating in chat sessions, reading blog posts, joining Facebook groups, attending events, or sharing your personal reflections on our show topics. You are a part of a very special community, and we thank you! For financial gifting options, contact Tim Bilger, Director of Development, at 610-297-2107 or [tbilger@swedenborg.com](mailto:tbilger@swedenborg.com). •

group can use the Get Together tool (located as an option in Write Post mode) to find out if there are others in the group located in their geographic region who would like to meet up to perhaps start a Swedenborg book club, *Swedenborg & Life* watch party, or prayer group. The Poll feature is another fun tool available for members of the group to ask others what their favorite books or episodes of *Swedenborg & Life* might be.



Another feature of the group is Watch Parties, in which a number of members can watch a video together and chat while it's streaming. Although only page admins can host a Watch Party, anyone in the group can participate, and members can always suggest ideas for the videos that will be watched.

“[Watching & Reading Swedenborg](#)” is a closed group, so you can feel secure that while others can search for the group and see who's in it, only members can see posts, and the content is closely monitored to ensure members adhere to our code of conduct.

If you read our books, view our [offTheLeftEye](#) videos, or are just getting acquainted with Swedenborg, we invite you to join this interactive group! It's a great place to engage in thoughtful conversations and learn how others are applying the eternal lessons of spiritual love and wisdom offered by Emanuel Swedenborg to their everyday lives. To join, go to [facebook.com/groups/Watching & Reading Swedenborg/](https://facebook.com/groups/Watching%20&%20Reading%20Swedenborg/).

## OffTheLeftEye Growth Continues

Our [offTheLeftEye](#) (OTLE) YouTube channel, which hosts our weekly webcast *Swedenborg & Life*, celebrated a milestone in August when we hit 65,000 subscribers. Over the past few months we've continued a trend started back in April of unprecedented viewership: for the four months from April to August, we had 20.9 million minutes watched, a 57 percent increase over the same period in 2017.

As part of the ongoing evolution of the OTLE team, in June we hired a new motion graphics designer, Meng Zhang, who is currently doing animations and video graphics for *Swedenborg & Life*.

With a master's degree in entertainment technology from Carnegie Mellon, Meng has worked in visual effects, animation, and UX (user experience) design for a variety of companies and organizations. His experience includes 3D modeling and application design for educational purposes; graphics and animations for commercial use; and visual effects for the film industry, where he worked on films like *Pacific Rim* and *Transformers III*.

You'll be able to see examples of his work every Monday night at 8 p.m. Eastern time at [youtube.com/offthellefteye](https://youtube.com/offthellefteye).

And last but not least, we've introduced a new logo for OTLE, which you may have noticed on the YouTube channel as well as on our recently rebranded [offTheLeftEye](https://www.facebook.com/heavenandhellswedenborg) Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/heavenandhellswedenborg](https://www.facebook.com/heavenandhellswedenborg)). That logo is also now available in our [RedBubble](#) store, where you can express yourself by choosing your favorite variation to see it displayed on T-shirts, tote bags, travel mugs, and much more. Not only will you get an ethically sourced product shipped right to your door, but 15 percent of the proceeds from your sale will go toward helping us continue to offer our free weekly webcast and related spiritual resources. You can find our store at [www.redbubble.com/people/swedenborgfound](https://www.redbubble.com/people/swedenborgfound).



*Meng Zhang, offTheLeftEye's new motion graphics designer.*

## In Memory and In Honor

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

Nancy J. Alden	Dorothea Harvey	Irene Racicot
Ruth & Bernard Amsterdam	Effie Hatzipapafotiou	Donald L. Rose
Anthony Lyle Bates	Kevin D. Heacox	Evelyn Rosenberg
Jean F. Bestor	Kevin W. Hickok	Gunther Schiel
Melba Blazek	James Noah Hinson	Supranee Schleider
Harry Bohannon	Evelyn Johnson	Winyss Acton Shepard
Stan & Karen Conger	James F. Jungé	Roger & Barbara Smith
Thomas R. Cooper	Edward Kazanchyan	Elmer Unruh
Stephanie J. Crampton	Bettina Kuypers-Supol	Henry & Mary Unruh
David Crow	Marie Laackman	Jimmy Verive
Mary Elliott	Nicolas Leslie	Joseph Verive
James Francis	Steven Marsh	Niem Verive
Steven Gainsford	Ilse & Noel Mattei	Marion & Tom Wallace
Robert W. Gauzens	Katrina May	Arvid Emanuel
Muriel Rose Genzlinger	Richard Douglas	Westerdahl
Theresa Grenville	McClain	Soni Werner
Saully Guanda	Mary McCormick	Naomi Joy Wilcher
	Fred Odhner	Jane Williams-Hogan

### THANK YOU, PATREON SUPPORTERS!

We are thrilled to announce that through the generosity of the Asplundh Foundation and new and existing donors, we have reached and exceeded our matching gift challenge goal on our page at the crowdfunding site Patreon.com! The [offTheLeftEye YouTube channel](#) continues its work impacting the lives of thousands of viewers, and your financial support is crucial to that success. •

 **BECOME A PATRON**

## New Book Release: *Last Judgment / Supplements*

One of the most unique facets of Swedenborg's theology is his assertion that the Last Judgment isn't a future event, but one that has already happened.

In his short work [Last Judgment](#), Swedenborg explains that a world-ending event like the apocalypse is impossible, because the human race needs to continue living so there can always be new angels in heaven. Rather, the Last Judgment takes place in the spiritual world, as a type of cleansing process that happens when there is so much evil that it is threatening the stability of the spiritual world. More than that, the Last Judgment is not a one-time event, but a cyclical occurrence. The subject of [Last Judgment](#) is the one that Swedenborg himself witnessed in 1757, where he writes in detail about the events he saw and their significance.

Also included in this volume are two short supplements originally published separately from the short work. The first, "Supplement on the Last Judgment," provides some expanded information about the background and events of the 1757 judgment. The second, "Supplement on the Spiritual World," talks about the fate of different groups from his day in the spiritual world.

Translated by George F. Dole, with New Century Edition Series Editor Jonathan S. Rose as a secondary translator, [Last Judgment](#) also appears in the New Century Edition Deluxe hardcover [The Shorter Works of 1758](#), a volume that includes an introduction from Richard Smoley and extensive annotations that put the text in its historical context. The two supplements will appear in the forthcoming Deluxe volume [The Shorter Works of 1763](#).

You can buy [Last Judgment / Supplements](#) or any of our current releases in our online bookstore at [www.swedenborg.com](http://www.swedenborg.com). •

### [LAST JUDGMENT / SUPPLEMENTS](#)

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

Translated by George F. Dole and Jonathan S. Rose

978-0-87785-416-6 / pb / 136 pages / \$6.99

978-0-87785-681-8 / e-bk / \$1.00



## New Book Release: *A New Key to the Bible*

In this inspirational introduction to the correspondences of the Bible, author Bruce Henderson shows how each of us can find a path to a loving God through even the most difficult parts of sacred scripture.

*A New Key to the Bible: Unlock Its Inner Meaning and Open the Door to Your Spirit* opens with the Creation story, showing how it's truly the story of our own spiritual creation. From there, Henderson leads us through some favorite stories of the Old Testament: Adam and Eve, Noah and the Flood, Abraham and Sarah, Jacob's Ladder, and the journey of Moses and his people out of Egypt in search of their true home. In the transition to the New Testament, we see the transformation to a new type of relationship with the Divine, not only for us as individuals but for the entire human race. The book closes with one of the most mysterious books of the Bible, and also one of the most important for Swedenborg's vision of the church to come: the book of Revelation.

Perfect for people who want a short, accessible introduction to Swedenborg's view of the Bible or who have struggled with some of its more challenging passages, *A New Key to the Bible* will give you a new way to think about sacred scripture. Now available in print and e-book, you can order it through our bookstore at [www.swedenborg.com](http://www.swedenborg.com) or from booksellers everywhere. •



**A NEW KEY TO THE BIBLE:**  
**Unlock Its Inner Meaning and**  
**Open the Door to Your Spirit**

**BRUCE HENDERSON**

978-0-87785-308-4

pb / 160 pages / \$13.95

978-0-87785-702-4 / e-bk / \$6.99

The following is an excerpt from chapter 5 of [A New Key to the Bible](#) by Bruce Henderson:

While in Midian, as the story goes, an angel of the Lord appears to Moses on Mount Horeb, in a bush that was burning but not consumed by the fire. God called to Moses from the midst of the bush and told him to take off his sandals, “for the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). God went on to say that he had seen the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt and had come to deliver them into a new land “flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8). He was calling on Moses to lead them, but Moses wasn't ready for this. Moses didn't feel prepared to lead anyone. “Who am I,” he asked, “that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” But God assured him, “I will be with you” (Exodus 3:11, 12).

The spiritual meaning for us, Swedenborg says, is that taking off our shoes is a way of raising our focus from earthly distractions so that we can really hear God's voice. It's like turning off the TV, getting away from e-mail and Facebook, and escaping all the demands on our attention so that we can sit quietly and contemplate a garden or a sunset—so we can just listen. That is how we “draw near” to God, he says. It is something we cannot do physically but can do with our spirit.

Swedenborg teaches that we all are living spiritual as well as earthly lives in this world, although we are not conscious of it. And because our spiritual lives are what will continue eternally, making our natural lives just a blink of an eye by comparison, we should be feeding our spirits as regularly and purposefully as we do our natural bodies.

We can feel alive and energized in this life, he says, while also being spiritually asleep—and therefore stuck—without even realizing it. He likens this to the story in the Gospels about the disciples who were sleeping while Jesus was praying in Gethsemane, the night before the soldiers came to arrest him. When Jesus finds the disciples asleep after having asked them to remain awake with him, he chastises Peter: “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?” Then he says to them, and says to us: “Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:40–41). Even after this warning, however, he left them twice more to pray and each time again found them asleep. Does he also find us asleep when we should be “staying awake and praying”?

When we are spiritually unaware amid all that is going on around us, Swedenborg warns, we should be listening for God's voice. Just as God called Moses and the children of Israel out of Egypt, he calls us to leave whatever we are slaves to and follow him. •

# NCE Minute: The Sound of a Cry

By Lisa Hyatt Cooper

And Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted and said to Moses, "The sound of war in the camp!" And [Moses] said, "It is not the sound of the cry 'Victory!' and not the sound of the cry 'Defeat!'; it is the sound of a wretched cry that I hear." ([Secrets of Heaven](#) text of Exodus 32:17-18)

Those of us privileged to be translators for the [New Century Edition](#) of Emanuel Swedenborg's theological works are blessed with the opportunity to read and study the text word by word. In so doing, we have moments of discovery in which its rich spiritual knowledge resonates with common experience in remarkable ways. Swedenborg's exposition of the story of the golden calf in Exodus provides one such moment.

In this story, Moses climbs Mount Sinai, accompanied by his attendant, Joshua, to meet with Jehovah. Jehovah gives Moses the Ten Commandments, carved onto two stone tablets, and tells Moses to go back down to the people of Israel (who are camped at the foot of the mountain) because their worship has become corrupt. At this point Moses has been absent from the people for forty days and forty nights, and during that interval the people have been wondering what has become of him. So they ask Moses's brother Aaron to make them an idol to take Moses's place as their leader, and Aaron obliges. From gold contributed by the people, Aaron makes an image of a calf, which the people worship and celebrate with feasting and dancing. The sound of their revelry, reaching the ears of Joshua and Moses as they descend the mountain, is what prompts the exchange above (as translated into Latin from the Hebrew Bible by Swedenborg and translated in turn from his Latin into English).

One striking thing about this passage is Swedenborg's phrase "the sound of a wretched cry." A search of other Bible translations suggests that Swedenborg's rendering of the phrase is unique. In the original Hebrew, the word here translated "wretched" has homonyms with unrelated meanings. One of those homonyms refers to singing, and that is the sense that most translators adopt in interpreting the phrase. The idea would then be that Moses simply understands the sound he hears to be the Israelites' raucous celebration of the golden calf. But Swedenborg appears to trace the critical

word to a verb meaning "to be bowed down," "to be afflicted." Moses's people certainly *believe* they are happy, but what Moses hears, in Swedenborg's interpretation, is the cry of misery.

We often find this sort of disjunction between an appearance of ease and a reality of misery in Swedenborg's descriptions of human experience. For example, in *Divine Providence* §220:10, Swedenborg talks about those who have wealth and material resources in this world but don't value them for the good they can do for others. In the next world, where earthly illusions fall away, they find that instead of material resources, they have misery. Similarly, in *Secrets of Heaven* §9960:7 "wretched" and "miserable" appear among a constellation of grim adjectives that describe a condition in which one is "without any truth grafted onto one's life and therefore without goodness."

In the passage from Exodus 32, however, there is an additional nuance. To the people in the distant camp, their worship of the false god seems pure happiness. But because their worship is, at its root, an assault upon truth and goodness, Joshua, on his higher spiritual plane, hears it as a literal war tearing the camp apart. Moses, still more spiritually perceptive, hears in that sound the sheer misery that on a spiritual level the people are experiencing at that very moment.

It is these nuances that resonate with observations of the world around us. It seems, particularly in the political sphere, that the more people assault the truth and the more they work against goodness, the more they rejoice in their spurious success. And Joshua's insight is true, too: the way such people live is a kind of warfare. From a spiritual viewpoint, one can see the terrible cost of viewing all interactions with the world in win-lose terms, as they do. For them, even the most common neighborly interchange becomes a pitched battle to maintain power. And even as victors they have to struggle constantly to stay on top and must treat everyone around them as a potential threat.

From a still-higher spiritual viewpoint, life under those circumstances is wretched, even if it brings rejoicing over apparent victory. If we listen with the perception of a Moses, we can hear the anguish hidden in that celebration.

The lesson to take away is not about others, however. It is to listen to the sound raised by our own work in the world. Is it the sound of honest singing in worship of what is true and good, or is it the cry of inward wretchedness? •

# Swedenborg and Life Recap: 5 Reunions in the Afterlife

By Josh Cole, Swedenborg.com Contributor

The following is a recap of a recent episode of our weekly webcast [Swedenborg & Life](#). To watch this episode (or any other!), go to [youtube.com/offthellefteye](#). You can also read recaps of other recent episodes at [www.swedenborg.com/](#).



Imagine this scene:

A family—mother, father, and two sons. The first son dies young, and the second son grows up to be, well, a bit of a jerk. Arrogant, difficult to get along with. He grows estranged from his parents.

When he dies and goes to the afterlife, he meets them again, but it's the same fighting and accusations at first. Then, because heaven isn't as linear as earth, the second son appears to them as a child, and he's able to fully express the hurt and jealousy he felt in life because he wanted all of his parents' love, and they couldn't give it. Then his brother, who had been in heaven this whole time, comes to him and tells him how much he loves him. The second son breaks down and cries for the first time, saying he couldn't help it, that love itself was speaking to him.

When you haven't seen someone you love for a long time, reunion is just wonderful. But in the afterlife, people can not only share their happiness, but heal old wounds and experience profound love. As eighteenth-century philosopher and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg traveled in the spiritual world, he saw a great deal of these afterlife reunions.

As soon as we arrive in the other life, we are all recognized by our friends and relatives and by people we have known in one way or another. Further, we talk with each other and continue to see each other in keeping with our friendship in the world. I have heard many people who had just come from the world overjoyed to see their friends again, and their friends overjoyed that they had arrived. ([Heaven and Hell](#) §494)

On the other side, we might even have heartfelt reunions with people we haven't met yet—people who share so much in common with us that we might as well be old friends. They're just one of several types of people we'll connect—or reconnect—with in heaven.

[First, let's look at how we'll encounter our ancestors.](#) Love pulls these families together—it's a force as strong and predictable as gravity, and it applies not only to beloved family you knew in this life, but ancestors you never knew you had from hundreds of years ago.



Swedenborg describes meeting his mothers—his biological mother and his stepmother—in the afterlife, where they told him about their lives in heaven and even gave him some new insights into his father's character ([Spiritual Experiences](#) §4182).

You'll also reunite with friends in the other world. Swedenborg witnessed some old friends meeting up to discuss ideas that interested them. Even though they lived in different parts of heaven, they still connected and had plenty to talk about.

For thousands of years, people have discussed [whether married people reconnect in the afterlife](#). Latin consultant Chara Daum and show writer Chelsea Odhner join to discuss Swedenborg's experience with this.

It often happens that married partners meet and welcome each other joyfully. They stay together as well, but for a longer or shorter time depending on how happily they had lived together in the world. Ultimately, unless they had been united by real marriage love (which is a union of minds from heavenly love), they separate after having been together for a while. ([Heaven and Hell](#) §494)

So Swedenborg learned that good, healthy, loving relationships will continue into the afterlife, while others will end amicably, with the husband and wife being given the opportunity to find their true soulmates.

Swedenborg actually witnessed a whole love story in the spiritual world—between an empress and a count, no less! Even though they didn't



recognize each other from their earthly lives, when they met in heaven, the Lord kept causing them to meet, as if by chance, until they recognized their inner compatibility and decided to marry.

However, not all heavenly reunions are positive ones. Swedenborg tells us that if you spend a lot of time thinking about somebody, you'll find them in the other life—even if you don't like them. So what are these negative reunions like?

This I know, that acquaintances, whether associates or friends or those they worship, find each other in the other life; so let people beware of hatred, revenge, envy, lies, adoration, and the like, for these things in the other life sometimes miserably annoy them. (*Spiritual Experiences* §2909)

It's way easier just to let go of those old grudges and find peace with people in this life. If that sounds easier to say than to do, check out our episode on "Rediscovering Forgiveness," which features an amazing Auschwitz survivor who managed to get beyond her horrifying experiences.

After all, as Jonathan says, "love is not just an abstraction."

Love is the force that holds all things in connection. (*True Christianity* §37) •

## VIEWER COMMENTS

"I lost my wife last year, of 20 years. We have two children 14 & 24. She would be 46 & was way too young to pass. She was a great person, she was an ER nurse for the last 10 years. I've lost my younger sister & both parents, but nothing comes close to the pain I have felt losing my soulmate. Just the thought that she is in heaven & waiting for me is what gets me through these days. That & our two beautiful daughters. Been watching your videos over the last year, & I feel she has turned me onto them. Keep up the great work guys." —John

"The reunion [at the beginning of the episode] made me cry." —Mary

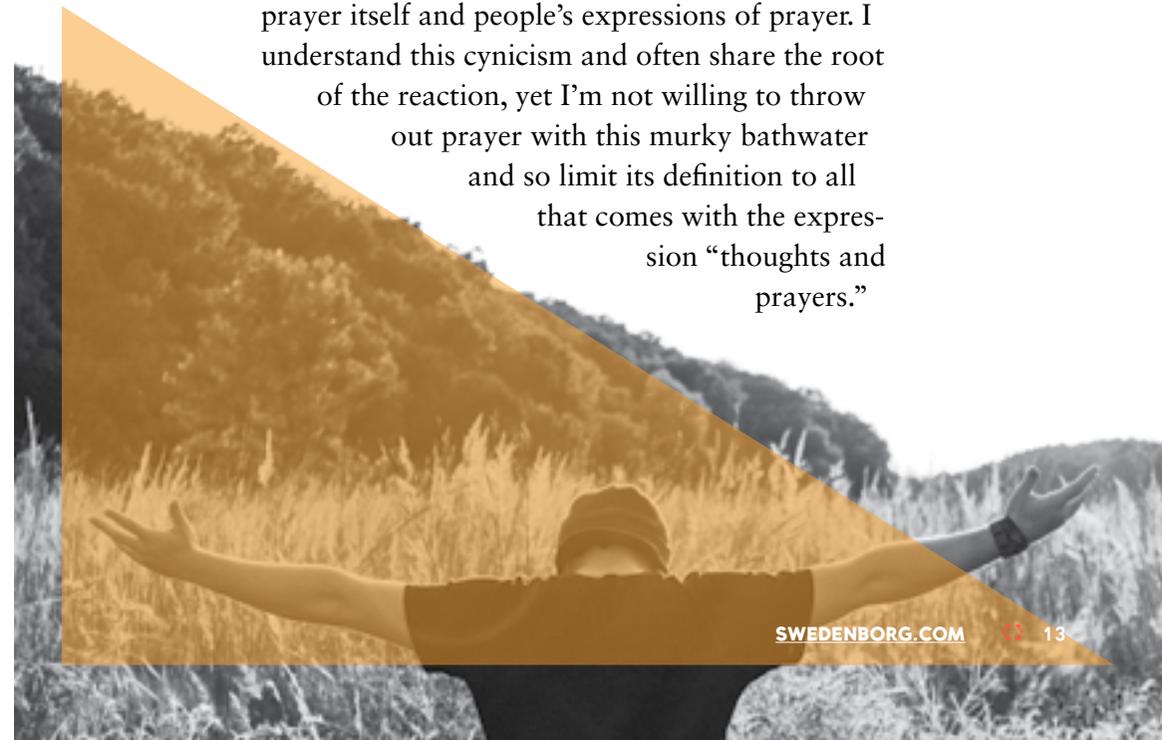
## Are Thoughts and Prayers Enough?

By Anna Woofenden

I know that I am not alone in eye-rolling in outrage when something terrible happens and politicians and celebrities respond with proclamations of their "thoughts and prayers." It's not that I have anything against people thinking of and praying for whatever hard thing is happening in the world. It's just that it seems that the subtext under these phrases is often "and we're not going to do a darn thing about it."

Offering "thoughts and prayers" seems to have become the thing to say when you want to express some kind of acknowledgment of what has happened, but you don't want anyone to expect that you're going to make a shift in policy or invest in creating a world where tangible action for change is taken as a response to tragedy. Along with this response, it seems there is, understandably, a growing cynicism toward both prayer itself and people's expressions of prayer. I understand this cynicism and often share the root

of the reaction, yet I'm not willing to throw out prayer with this murky bathwater and so limit its definition to all that comes with the expression "thoughts and prayers."



According to Emanuel Swedenborg, “prayer, regarded in itself, is speech with God” (*Secrets of Heaven* §2535). Prayer, in itself, is a conversation with our Creator, a dynamic back and forth—speaking and listening, giving and receiving. And then, may I add, prayer leads us to take action. It’s often said that prayer doesn’t change God, it changes us; I believe Swedenborgian theology would agree. It gets back to who we think God is and how God operates.

When I was a hospital chaplain, I spent a fair amount of time praying with people, and most of the time it was in intense situations—life and death for the individuals or their families. I would usually start by asking, “What do you want us to pray for?” and the conversations would unfold. And most often, people would have a pretty specific ask. “Pray that my mom’s cancer will go away.” “Pray that I will not die from this tumor.” “Pray that my baby’s lung will heal.” All of these prayers made perfect sense. Of course these were the things to pray for. Of course this was what they desperately and fervently wanted, and it was what I wanted for them. But how to pray?

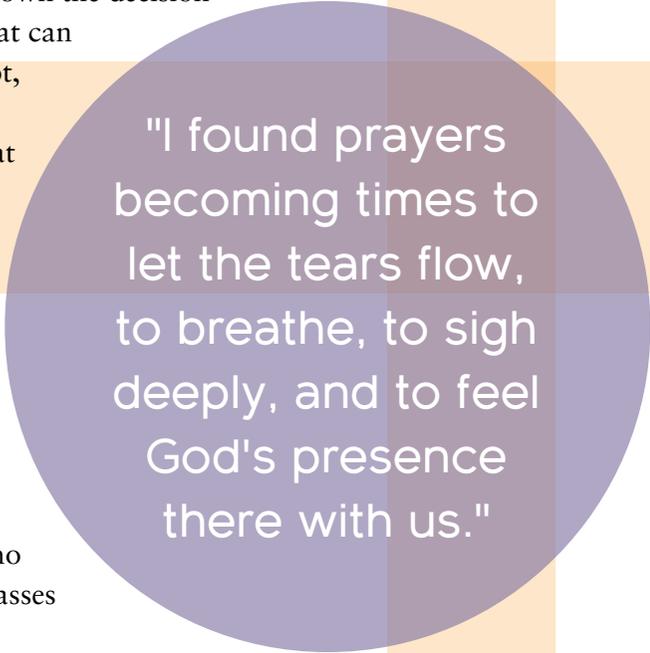
I stood in those hospital rooms, and I would have these moments where the scenario would play out in my head: Yes, I could pray for the loved one to be cured, and it could happen; but it also was just as likely that the patient would die, and then what? Then God doesn’t answer prayers. So was this prayer not just setting people up to sever their relationship with God alongside their experience of heartbreak and loss?

I wrestled with how to pray with hope and with the wholehearted belief in the power of a healing God. At the same time, I prayed with the deep knowledge that God needed to be big enough, close enough, and loving enough—that even if the worst thing happened, that there was space in the prayer, in the theological constructs that we weave with our words of prayer—to still be there and to still be the force of love in the universe and in the lives of the people we love.

And so, I found myself praying for the words to pray; and then I prayed the grief and the worry, the assurance of the presence of love in the room, the sobs and the hopes. I found myself exploring prayers for healing versus prayers for cures, as healing comes in so many forms, including the peace that comes with trusting and loving through even the most impossible situations.

I found prayers becoming times to squeeze the hands of family gathered round the bedside of the patient on the ventilator; they were times to let the tears flow, to breathe, to sigh deeply, and to feel God’s presence there with us. It was about bringing down the decision-making God—the force that can wave a finger to heal or not, immediately changing the course of events—from that high place in the sky to be the God whose presence of love and comfort are immediately felt there in the hospital room, as we walk the halls. Prayer is a conversation and a connection with the God who is with us in our grief and in our joy, the God who holds all of it and encompasses the breadth of our lives.

The people I spent time with in these rooms taught me how to pray. Flowery, lofty prayers don’t go very far in the linoleum-floored hospital room, with the green heartbeat monitor going up and down by the bedside and the IV fluids dripping through the tubes. What happens in these rooms is about as “real life” as you can get; and God was certainly present, teaching us how to pray. Our prayers didn’t just end with some vague hope for some far-off force to do something but to not involve us in the process. Instead, our prayers were woven in with hands on shoulders offering comfort, with tears being cried and Kleenex being given, with donated bone marrow and the deep wisdom and experience of a surgeon’s lifetime of work. These thoughts and prayers have flesh on them, and they change us and move us to acting for good so that we can change for the better the world around us. •



"I found prayers becoming times to let the tears flow, to breathe, to sigh deeply, and to feel God's presence there with us."

*Rev. Anna Woofenden, MDiv, is the founder of the Garden Church in San Pedro, California, and the co-host of the Food and Faith Podcast.*

# SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

320 North Church Street • West Chester, PA 19380

[WWW.SWEDENBORG.COM](http://WWW.SWEDENBORG.COM) • 610-430-3222, ext. 109

*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.*

## CONNECT WITH US

