

News from the SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

Changes to Foundation Events and Programming Due to COVID-19

As this newsletter was being put together, many parts of the world, including the region of the United States where our offices are located, were in a state of social distancing, with nonessential businesses shut down, travel restricted, and people either urged or required by law to stay at home. It's a frightening time as people deal with worry for their loved ones and anxiety about the economic consequences of the shutdown. We pray that as you read this, you are safe and healthy.

As a result of the spread of the virus and the limits on gatherings, we've made some changes to upcoming events:

- The OffTheLeftEye Experience, a weekend gathering originally scheduled for June 5–8, has been cancelled. We plan on rescheduling the event once we have a better idea of how

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IN HONOR OF THOSE WHO INSPIRE

Who's your personal hero? If you want to let someone you care about know how much they mean to you, consider a gift to the Swedenborg Foundation in their honor! You can make donations online at swedenborg.com/donate or by calling 610-430-3222, ext. 109.

the virus will affect people's ability to travel and gather over the long term. In the meantime, registration fees have been refunded; if you registered and have not yet received your refund, please let us know.

- Our annual meeting, previously scheduled for May 2, has been postponed. At the time of publishing this newsletter, we didn't have a new date for the meeting, but we will mail a notification of the new date to all life and annual members as soon as one has been established.

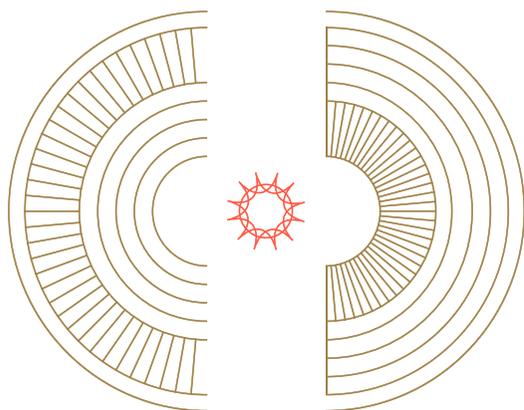
In mid-March, our book distributor was forced to shut down operations; while they have since reopened, there may be delays in filling backorders while they catch up. As always, we have a large number of books available in our online bookstore for free, including all of Swedenborg's writings in both the New Century Edition and the older Redesignated Standard Edition translations.

The team at our offTheLeftEye YouTube channel has a number of episodes of our hit webcast *Swedenborg & Life* produced and ready to release on schedule over the coming weeks (see the story on the next page). For the live episodes that would normally come in between, the production team and writers are working from home to bring you new

content. "Ideas to Help You Manage Your Fear and Anxiety during the COVID-

19 Pandemic" was the first of these live episodes. Check it out at youtube.com/offthelefteye, and read the episode recap in this newsletter (page 8).

For those who are looking for more ideas on uplifting things to read, our marketing team has put together a list of free downloads, videos, and other resources that you can access on our home page, swedenborg.com. •



Stay safe while
keeping the connection.
We are still here for you.

#swedenborgfound

OffTheLeftEye Hits All-Time High

Viewership on our offTheLeftEye YouTube channel hit an all-time high in the first three months of 2020, reaching more than 1 million individual viewers!

“Unique viewers” is a statistic that YouTube recently began offering; it tracks how many different devices were used to watch our videos over a given period of time, which roughly translates to the number of individuals watching our videos. For comparison, in the last quarter of 2019, we had about 530,000 unique viewers, so our viewership doubled from one quarter to the next!

The reason for the increase was a new advertising technique that allows us to take advantage of the way that YouTube’s search algorithms work. We advertise videos based on popular keywords, and we adjust the language that we’re using based on what gets the best results. We’re looking forward to continuing to spread the word far and wide!

NEW SEASON OF SWEDENBORG & LIFE IS NOW ONLINE

After a very well-received series on the afterlife, *Swedenborg & Life* is switching gears over the spring and summer for a season of shows on divine providence: how God’s love and the design of the universe guides us in both big and small ways.

Here’s a schedule of episodes for the season. Each show debuts on the date listed below at 8 p.m. Eastern time, but you can watch previously aired episodes anytime at youtube.com/offthelefteye. •



From “God Used a Specific Design to Create Heaven.”

- March 30: “[God Used a Specific Design to Create Heaven](#)”
- April 20: “[The Pattern of God Has Been Built into the Universe](#)”
- May 11: “Our Bodies Connect to God’s Design of the Universe”
- June 1: “Two Steps to Awaken to God’s Design”
- June 22: “Awakening to God’s Design Changes Your Spirit”



In Memory and In Honor

Often our supporters give donations either in memory of (for those who have passed) or in honor of (for those still living) particular individuals. In this section, we list all the people who have inspired gifts in the first few months of 2020. 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. Names are listed in alphabetical order by last name where a last name is given. •

Annica

Curtis Childs

My Dad

Deborah

Justina B. Del Rosario

James A. Dowell, Jr.

Forster Freeman

Richard Hill

Raymond McAbee

Jeanne McCarthy

Mr. Binkers

Fred Odhner and Nancy Cook Kloc

Reina

Betty Jean Reynolds

Judy Warren



FORMER BOARD PRESIDENT MARLYN F. SMITH PASSES

We are saddened to report that Marlyn Smith passed into the spiritual world on Thursday, April 2, 2020, at the age of 91.

A lawyer with the firm of High Swartz, Marlyn joined the Swedenborg Foundation's board in 1993 and quickly distinguished himself as a stalwart proponent of the organization. He served as the association's secretary from 2000 to 2008, and then as the board president from 2008 to 2012. Although he

retired from the board in 2012, he continued to serve as an active associate board member up until the time of his passing.

The board and staff of the Swedenborg Foundation send their deepest condolences to Marlyn's family and loved ones on his passing, with profound gratitude for his years of devotion and service. •

New Season of *Transcendiots* Launches

Transcendiots is back for season two! This webcast series, hosted by Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts, features people from all walks of life sharing their perspectives on spirituality and on all the ways that we can bring our faith into our lives.

The second season launched in February with Cory interviewing Kent Rogers, author of *Seven Days of Spiritual Evolution: The Genesis of Personal Transformation*. In an intense and broad-ranging conversation, the two of them



talk about how evolution and quantum physics relate to spirituality, about the tools that we can use to disconnect from our ego, about the fundamental nature of God, and about the nature of evil.

In the second episode of the new season, Cory interviewed Dave Rogalsky, a Mennonite pastor who specializes in working with congregations in transition. In that capacity, he was briefly the pastor of a Swedenborgian church in Kitchener, Ontario. Dave tells Cory about his encounter with Swedenborgianism, and they discuss the importance of spiritual practice and the beauty that can be found in the diversity of spiritual traditions.

You can view this episode—or any other in the series—by going to youtube.com/swedenborgfoundation and clicking on the *Transcendiots* Webcast playlist. •



NCE Minute: A Community in Spirit

By Shannah Conroy

For this installment, Shannah Conroy, an intern with the New Century Edition (NCE), was asked to give her impression of working with the NCE editorial team.

At first I saw a major obstacle to describing the work of the team that translates, edits, and prints the New Century Edition. I undertook this writing assignment in mid-March 2020, while large areas of the nation and the world were in lockdown. Workers everywhere, not just members of the NCE team, had just been separated for what felt like forever (even if it was promised to last only a couple of weeks). How, I thought, could I report on how the NCE works as a group when we had more or less been disbanded to hide out in isolation?

But then I realized that the really important features of our teamwork are still in place to be described. Even though our physical gathering in a single place has been put on pause for a time, thanks to technology our work community is still intact; and because of the flourishing of our work community, our spiritual community continues to thrive. This is very much in line with what Swedenborg reports about how the universe operates. “The angels of any given heaven are not all together in one place,” he says, “but . . . angels engaged in similar activities form a single community” (*Heaven and Hell* §41). Throughout his works, he repeatedly says that angels are united in a spiritual community by what they love and by the useful functions they serve (*Heaven and Hell* §§64:2; 387, 391; *Divine Love and Wisdom* §§141, 143, 368, 431; *True Christianity* §447; and many other passages).

And that’s true not just of the angels. Through the same means, each of us is connected to a spiritual community “even while we are living in our bodies” (*Heaven and Hell* §438; see also §510). As Swedenborg says:

Heaven is differentiated into communities, and so is hell. Every spirit is a member of some community, is sustained by an inflow from it, and therefore acts in harmony with it. This is why we are united with heaven or hell just as we are united with spirits. We are actually united to some community there, the community we belong to in respect to our affection or our love; for all heaven’s communities are differentiated according to their affections for what is good and true. (*Heaven and Hell* §294)

So, even if I can't be in the same place as Chara Daum, Jonathan Rose, Lisa Hyatt Cooper, the folks at [offTheLeftEye](#), and all the others I work with, our spirits continue on together, united by our common love of creating a modern, accessible translation of Swedenborg's works and making it useful to as many seekers as possible.

At this moment in time, then, this is the key report I need to make about the NCE team: we are spirits together, working on a shared goal. Through e-mail, video conference, text message, etc., we are all able to commune in mind and spirit and continue our useful work. I continue sending translated Swedenborg quotations to Karin Childs, who continues her research in Swedenborg's works for upcoming offTheLeftEye programs, and I continue prepping translations for Jonathan's edit, who continues working with Lisa on the new volumes of *Secrets of Heaven*, and so on. We all continue toward our shared goal of conveying Swedenborg's message in ways that people can easily understand—we continue working together, even if from afar.

But our little group working on the NCE is just one example of such spiritual connections. In the same way, the world at large is able to form and maintain communities of like-minded individuals, regardless of the separation of their physical human bodies. Whether you love technology or have reservations about it, you have to admit that it's wonderful to live in an age in which a spiritual community is able to find expression via the physical system that supports the worldwide web. Though interpersonal dynamics over the internet present many new challenges, there is something very beautiful about our natural world evolving in a way that resembles heavenly, affection-based geography so closely.

That is the reason that for now, from this vantage point in the spring of 2020, I'm looking on the bright side—the spiritual side—of our current working arrangement. •



Shannah Conroy graduated from Bryn Athyn College in 2019 with an advanced interdisciplinary degree in math and religion. She started working for the Swedenborg Foundation in July 2019.



Swedenborg & Life Recap: Ideas to Help You Manage Fear and Anxiety during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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/offthelefteye. You can also read recaps of other recent episodes at www.swedenborg.com.



The entire world is going through an incredibly strange and difficult time with the COVID-19 pandemic, and fear and anxiety are everywhere. At the time this special episode was first webcast, the state of Pennsylvania had only

just instituted a shutdown of all nonessential businesses, requiring our writing and production team to retreat to their homes. Not to be deterred, host Curtis Childs hopped on an online conference call with show writers Karin Childs and Chelsea Odhner and community manager Chris Dunn to put together some ideas for how to manage the fear and anxiety that might arise during these troubled times.

The team found themselves learning a lot of new lessons about slowing down and trusting the Lord even amid the fear, and during this show they share some of their favorite mechanisms.



Care for the Morrow

For Karin, a main takeaway is that one of the biggest enemies

is fear, especially fear for the future. What if she runs out of supplies? What if one of her family members gets sick? One of the most useful tools for her has been a complete focus on taking it one day at a time.

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today. (Matthew 6:34)

This speaks to a sense of innocence, that is, a willingness to be present and allow yourself to be led by the Lord. This call to remain present and to reject useless worries about the future helps us both maintain our sanity and be ready to adapt. Your inner attitude can make your life easier or harder.

Anyone who examines the question without looking beyond the literal meaning is apt to believe we must reject all care for the morrow and wait for life's necessities to come from heaven one day at a time.

However, people who look deeper than the letter—those who consider the inner meaning—are capable of seeing what care for the morrow really means. It does not mean taking the trouble to acquire food and clothing or resources for the future, because providing for ourselves and our family is not out of line. No, the people with care for the morrow are those who chafe under their lot, rely on themselves rather than the Divine, and focus solely on worldly and earthly rather than heavenly concerns. Anxiety about the future wholly consumes them, as does the lust to



own everything and dominate everyone, a lust that burns and grows bit by bit until it exceeds all bounds. They grieve if they do not achieve their desires and become frantic when deprived of them. There is no comfort for the loss, because they are then furious with the Divine, reject him, discard all belief in him, and call curses down on themselves. That is what people with care for the morrow are like. The case is totally different with people who rely on the Divine. Although they do have care for the morrow, in another way they do not, because they do not contemplate the future with anxiety, let alone distress. (Secrets of Heaven §8478:2-3)

Planning for tomorrow is a good and healthy thing, but collapsing into fear and anger will only bring you stress.

Other-centered Thinking

Chelsea has found that repositioning all the fear and concern in your mind from self-centered thinking to other-centered thinking can be incredibly powerful. If you're overcome with fear that someone might get you sick, that doesn't do much for anyone. But if you stay home knowing you're helping others stay well, then you can feel like a hero.

If we turn our backs on evils because they are sins, we are daily doing what is good, and are ourselves the useful functions we should be in the body politic. This means that the larger body is being cared for, and so is each member in particular. (*Life / Faith* §114)

When we're doing our part, we're serving our greater purpose in our community. It's a way we can serve the people around us. It's a small thing we can do, and every tiny move is important, even if we're not a healthcare worker or someone who can help in a bigger way. After all, heaven is a kingdom of useful services.

Sharing the Love

In moderating the Swedenborg online community, Chris was struck by how positive and encouraging everyone was and how the atmosphere in the group lifted everyone up. It reminded him of this passage:



It is also common in the other world for one person to communicate pleasure and happiness in a remarkable way by actually passing them on to a number of others, who are as much affected by them as the original person. The

communication takes place without any lessening of the feelings in the person who shares them to begin with. I too was given the opportunity to share my pleasure with others by transferring it to them. You can imagine, then, what kind of happiness exists in people who love their neighbor more than themselves and want nothing more than to spread their happiness to others. Their attitude traces its origin to the Lord, who communicates happiness to angels in the same way. When people

share happiness, they are constantly passing it along in the way just described, but they do so without reflecting on their active role in the process and without making a conscious, deliberate decision to engage in it. (*Secrets of Heaven* §1392)

In this way, the offTheLeftEye community forms their own little micro-cosm of heaven. That’s one of those little things that everyone can do to lift each other up—making a positive comment or supporting someone who’s in a bad place. It doesn’t just help the person receiving the comment; it helps everyone in the community.

We’re in This Together

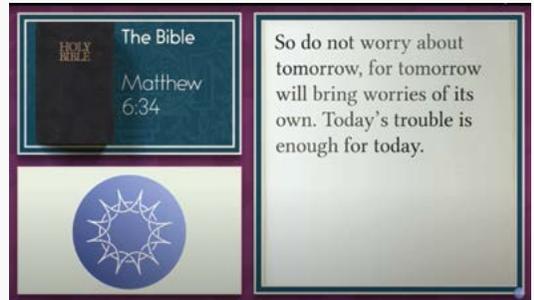
It can be surprising how nice everyone is, despite our challenging circumstances. Karin has noticed how even strangers at the grocery store will make room for each other and lift each other up. Even a simple conversation or reassuring words can really make a difference in someone’s life. We’re all called to be agents of God.

Divine love and wisdom radiate from the Lord as a single whole. . . . No whole occurs apart from a form. . . . Everything we see with our eyes in this world is this kind of whole, and so is everything we do not see with our eyes, either in the depths of nature or in the spiritual world. An individual is this kind of whole, and so is a human community. (*Divine Providence* §4:1–3)

We’re all interconnected in one great big network made entirely out of love. And in that spirit, no matter how long we need to self-isolate to stop the spread of the virus, offTheLeftEye is going to continue making content and putting it out there to help lift people up and bring them together.

To end this episode, the team shared a meditation composed and narrated by Melissa Kloc, one of our online moderators. If you’d like to experience it yourself, find this episode on youtube.com/offthelefteye (searching for “pandemic” will bring it up) and go to minute 33:25.

Thanks so much to every member of our community across the world for keeping us uplifted in difficult times! •



On Our Blog: Let the Coronavirus Adjust Your Spiritual Health

By John Connolly

Where Do We Stand?

As our lives have become upended by the spread of COVID-19, forcing many of us to stay inside our homes in order to avoid physical contact with others, it's hard to avoid thinking about how it puts at risk not only the people we love but also the rest of humanity. We do what we can to keep the awareness of this danger at bay by immersing ourselves in our day-to-day con-



cerns, but its effects manifest in the underlying sense of helplessness that so many of us are feeling. A constant preoccupation with death, whether conscious or not, is a product of the virus's all-encompassing invasion. We may all be in the same proverbial boat, exchanging regretful glances from a distance no smaller than the required six feet, but Emanuel Swedenborg offers us a set of spiritual tools that we can all use to help us through this experience: an acceptance of divine providence, a development of mindfulness, and a relationship with conscience.

Embrace the Divine Embrace

An existential threat engulfs our common reality, making it seemingly impossible for us to find any zone of refuge. But divine providence, whose completeness knows no bounds, promises to make whole what is broken and bend all toward good.

The Lord's divine providence is universal by virtue of its attention to the smallest details [of the material world and to the smallest details of human prudence], specifically through his having created the universe in such a way that an infinite and eternal process of creation by him

could occur in it. . . . The Lord's divine providence works things out so that what is both evil and false promotes balance, evaluation, and purification, which means that it promotes the union of what is good and true in others. (*Divine Providence* §§202, 2)

If we put our trust in the divine design, knowing that even those infinitesimal details of reality are covered, we find that we can breathe and move about more freely without worry or self-doubt. We can act from a position of incomparable conviction, and do so in service to the greater cause. This divine security, both infinite and eternal, relieves us of our attachments to the past, gives us an entry toward grounding ourselves in the present, and provides us with newfound purpose toward a hopeful future.

God's infinity is instilled into angels by the consideration that they can come into the Lord's presence in a split second, without any intervening space or time, even if they should be at the ends of the universe. A true picture of God's eternity is instilled by way of the idea that the passing of thousands of years seems like no time to them; it is almost as if they had lived for just a moment. And both concepts come by way of the idea that in their present they have both past and future. For this reason, they do not worry about events that are yet to come. They never think about death but only about life. (*Secrets of Heaven* §1382)

We may not be angels, but we can still make efforts to quiet the noise that separates us from the here and now. By doing so, we could more effectively do what the immediate situation requires, not only for ourselves but also for those standing beside us.

Ground Yourself in the Divine Presence

Accepting that humanity is always in the Lord's loving grasp may not be easy to do, especially when things get as bad as they are right now. We have the capacity, though, to overcome this difficulty by mindfully locating ourselves within providence's current—grounding ourselves in the divine present.

As we move through our daily activities, we generally have some amount of outward mindfulness, which we will understand for our purposes here as attention paid to external objects and events. Inward mindfulness, however, is not so readily available. Since this kind of mindfulness relies



upon attention directed toward one's state of being, rather than toward external conditions, its objects of attention are more elusive: our own sensations, thoughts, and feelings. While we might assume that these objects are part of our usual awareness, upon further reflection we should come to see that their presence is really quite fleeting and that we do not always have control over how they affect us. But knowing that these objects are interrelated and that our internal sensory awareness comes from divine goodness should indicate the inherent value in making this inward effort.

All power of perception, which is the internal aspect of sensory awareness, arises out of good, but not out of truth except from good by way of truth. For the Lord's Divine life flows into good and by way of that good into truth, and in this way gives rise to perception. (*Arcana Coelestia* §3528)

By paying less attention to external conditions and instead keeping that attention directed toward the source of the power of perception that lies deeper than our individual state of being, we can stay grounded within providence's ever-present current and in turn become more receptive to a higher understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

We can . . . come into consciousness of [angelic wisdom] through the quiescence of our physical senses, and then through an inflow from above into the spiritual elements of our minds. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* §257)

The more often we practice inward mindfulness, the more we see how it can bring calm to our ordinarily restless mind and have a cleansing influence on our outward engagement with worldly affairs. Such results can lead to the type of selfless and responsible action that we so desperately need at this time.

In our current climate of self-isolation and social distancing, we are seeing these results come to life in our work on refraining from certain habitual behaviors, taking closer notice of how so many little things we do can have a direct effect on our neighbor. And since we are often worried about what might happen next during this coronavirus outbreak, just think how powerful it would be to let those persistent negative feelings serve as reminders to be more present to ourselves so that we might minimize the things we touch, wash our hands more frequently, respect others' personal space, and so on. Our days would consist of one mindful moment after another!

Let What's Right Guide Your Actions

Letting this all-consuming groundedness replace the fear and anxiety that now rules over many of our daily choices results in a sea change not only in our consciousness but also in our conscience. Inward mindfulness inevitably stirs the conscience, or “alertness to what is inside us” (*Secrets of Heaven* §219), in such a way that we awaken from our typically self-enclosed slumber and start to become more keenly empathetic of others.

Divinity cannot focus on anything but Divinity, and it cannot focus on that anywhere except in what it has created. This is evidenced by the fact that none of us can focus on others except on the basis of what is inwardly our own. . . . We unite ourselves to [others] to the extent that they love us the way we love them, or to the extent that their wisdom is like ours. That is how we unite. (*Divine Providence* §53)

We look at ourselves and in turn at others with fresh eyes; and as a result, a richer sort of collective responsibility begins to take shape.

A community, whether small or large, is more of a neighbor than an individual is, the country is still more of a neighbor, the Lord's kingdom still more, and the Lord is the neighbor above all. (*New Jerusalem* §103)

Contemplating our interdependence leads to a remorse not over the past but over how we treat the present, opening us up even more widely to the spiritual nature within us all.

No conscience exists that actually is conscience except one that grows out of charity. Charity—or rather the Lord working through charity—is what creates conscience. What else is conscience but refusing to wrong anyone in any way, that is, doing right by everyone in every way? . . . From this it stands to reason that the spiritual person's conscience is a gift from the Lord, that it is like a new will, and therefore that the person who has been created anew is supplied with a new will and from this a new intellect. (*Secrets of Heaven* §§1076, 918)

During this global health crisis, our conscience demands that we hold ourselves accountable for ourselves. Watching over our own behaviors in order to see that we conduct them appropriately is really the best thing we can do for our neighbor. So, let us now operate from “a new will and from . . . a new intellect,” and together we can create a realm of mutual love. •



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