



# The Manual

November 2023

Fall Members Meeting  
Information

p. 3

Mission Committee  
Update

p. 6

Church Discovery  
Group

p. 8

# About Our Church

## Pastors

Rev. Kevin Baxter    Rev. Colin Leitch

## Church Officers

President	Stephen Dyson ('24)
Vice President	Janet Forbes ('24)
Secretary/Clerk	Patricia Blakeney ('25)
Treasurer	Thomas Peebles ('23)
Governors	Diane Beverly ('24)
	Carlton Doctor ('25)
	Debbie Hammer ('25)
	LiKam Lie ('24)
	Jerry O'Sullivan ('25)

## Staff

Bookkeeper	Don Vashaw
Church Administrator	Alex Ferraro
Director of Finance	Sue McQuarrie
Director of Music	Andrew Mattfeld
Receptionist	Mary Guarino

## Who We Aspire to Be

The Boston Society of the New Jerusalem is a progressive Christian presence in the City of Boston, a reflection of the Swedenborgian theology of service and mission through our commitment to education, social justice, and human rights.

We seek to make a difference in the lives of strangers and seekers through our compassion and acceptance by inviting all who share our common values to be members of our community.

We attempt to be a “rock” of stability and support in an uncertain world — a tranquil and peaceful “home away from home” for all people, where a person is missed when absent, and where one can find comfort, healing, and normalcy when things are not going well.

We worship the Lord Jesus Christ according to His Holy Word and the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. In following those teachings, this Church shall maintain free and open worship of the Divine and shall honor the good in all religions that seek to foster a positive regard for all humanity, recognizing unity and diversity.

## Board of Governors Update

At its October meeting, the Board of Governors approved an updated employee handbook and formalized the hiring of choir members as employees of the church. The Board then voted to amend the church bylaws to allow voting members who are in the choir to serve on the Governance/Bylaws Committee. The Board next approved two motions from the Mission Committee: a grant of \$15,000 to the Hawaii Community Foundation and up to \$650 to ABCD's Thanksgiving food event. The Board next approved the 2024 budget submitted by the Finance Committee. The budget and bylaw

changes will be voted on by the membership at the fall members meeting.

The Board voted to adopt as official policy that the church be an alcohol-, drug- and smoke-free zone. In executive session, the Board approved a plan for allowing the finance director to assume the bookkeeper's duties while the bookkeeper is absent.

As always, full minutes of all Board of Governors meetings are available in the office.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alex Ferraro

## Fall Members Meeting

The fall member's meeting will be held on **Sunday, November 19 at 12:45 p.m.** (following worship). The membership will review and vote on bylaw amendments and the 2024 budget, and hold an election to fill open leadership positions.

## ❖ ❖ ❖ Kevin's Corner ❖ ❖ ❖



The Governance/Bylaw committee's survey last year revealed a need to examine not only the committees of the church, but also how the various committees are functioning. The committee has asked our parliamentarian to work with the board and committees to help us fulfill their various functions better.

When addressing the Governors, she used the Massachusetts Attorney General's non-profit guidebook. The book mentions the duty of care, duty of loyalty, and duty to mission.

Basically, duty of care means that a person must reasonably act as another person would act. How do we, as a church, know if we are reasonably acting? One way is to ask other reasonable people about what we are doing, but that would be very laborious. Another easy way is to look at best practices within non-profits and churches. Even if it is not a best practice, the general behavior of other churches is a key indicator. I often hear that we "have the money" and are different than other churches. The fact of the matter is that many of our neighbors have larger budgets than we do. This is one of the oddities of being in one of the oldest cities in the United States. How do Old South, Trinity, Arlington Street, Church of the Advent use their fiscal resources? If we are the only one doing something, we might not be doing what other reasonable people would do.

Duty of loyalty means that we should be making decisions in the best interests of the organization, not our own desires. This also means that members of the Board make a commitment to show up to meetings prepared. Under Stephen's presidency, each board member has received an agenda and packet before each meeting. Not only does this help the meeting go quicker, but it also gives much needed information to the board. Governors also have an obligation to ask questions so that they are informed about what is happening. Ultimately, all the conflicts of interests a

person might have with the organization need to be disclosed.

The duty to mission was the final of the three duties. This is because to some degree it contains the duties of loyalty and care within it. The church stands on the shoulders of generations of faithful members who have given us the gifts we enjoy today. Since 1818, the group has been dedicated to the Christian theological teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg that have centered around useful service and the ten commandments. Since our incorporation in 1824, we have had a stated purpose to offer a free and open Swedenborgian worship service to the city of Boston. Our bylaws direct us to be a progressive Christian presence and to embody Swedenborg's teachings of service. These two things are followed by a comment about faithful stewardship, which is not only in our bylaws, but in state law as well.

When we ask the question, "what should our church be?" how much do we think of what we want instead of what church was organized for and created to be? When we plan activities and hold our meetings, how much do we even entertain the church's primary purpose and stated mission? What is our duty the church's mission and purpose as members?

This past month, I wrote a document for the Music Committee that asked these questions. What is the mission and purpose of our music program. After the committee has had time to wrestle with it, I hope this document will be published in the Manual in January or February. I will be asking the other Boards and committees to do this level of engagement with the mission and purpose of the church. My hope is that we will shift the dialogue of the church from a seemingly secular conversation to one that is based on the faith and life of the church itself.

These same questions exist in our own lives. What is our mission and purpose? How does what we do reflect our faith verses our worldly loves? This is a question we all struggle with, even ministers.

## “Under Construction” Workshop

On Saturday, October 28, we held an engaging and informative workshop for members of the church’s committees. Church parliamentarian Kendra O’Toole led a presentation and discussion on the responsibilities and expectations of all committee members at the church. This workshop was an opportunity for all members to learn not only about committee member protocol, but the general responsibilities of each individual committee and how important it is for these committees to work together with each other.

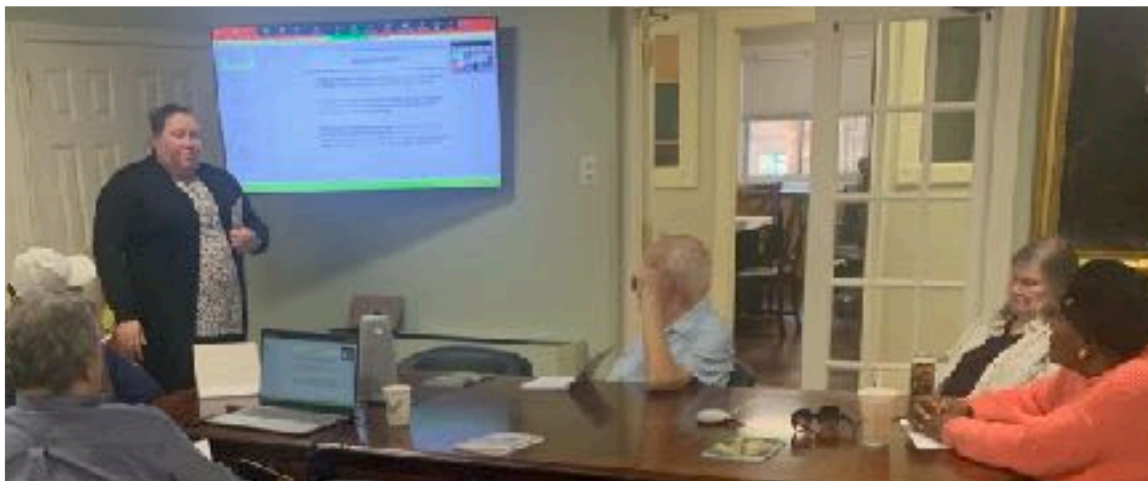
Kendra’s presentation compared a functioning committee to a finely tuned car, with many parts working together and simultaneously to help it run smoothly. Keys

to success include reviewing the bylaws often, planning the committee’s annual financial goal throughout the year, and keeping minutes. During discussion, committee members had the opportunity to share stories and suggestions drawn from their experiences.

Polly Baxter graciously prepared and served lunch following the workshop.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Hadley



## Mission Committee Update

The Mission Committee is trying to make a difference in these trying times. This month, we sent a check of \$15,000 to Hawaii Community Foundation for their Maui Strong Fund to help rebuild Lahaina due to the massive wildfire.

Next, we sent a check to iHelp for \$10,000 to build a school in the Wayuu community which is situated in the remote Guajira Peninsula region in the northern part of Columbia and northwest Venezuela. At present, two single-classroom structures are planned, each measuring 5x6 meters. Currently, this community is home to around 100 school-aged children. Funds will also help supply desks and educational materials and create a designated space to store medical supplies for healthcare outreach. I will try to give updates as a retired school teacher.

As Rev. Kevin Baxter and Dr. Mary Kay Klein wrote in the September newsletter, "We have a strong commitment to social justice and human rights. We believe that everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities. These are some of the issues about which have been expressed by members: climate justice, economic inequality and poverty, racial equality, women's rights, refugee crisis and immigration, help for disaster relief, LGBTQ

rights, hunger, homelessness, ageism, health care, support for veterans, voting rights, and gun violence."

Looking ahead, a group of us will be visiting the Boston Foundation on November 8 to discuss future funding strategies. On November 9, church president Stephen Dyson and I will distribute 25 Star Market gift cards to people at the Blackstone Apartments for Thanksgiving.

This is your last call for 2023 matching grants. Forms need to be submitted to the office by December 1, 2023. This year, the church will double match your charitable donation. Forms are available in the office. Remember to include the organization's charitable ID number. Folks have sent checks to help with Canadian fire relief, the Trevor Project, Old West Church garden project, and St Jude Children's Hospital. What is your favorite charity?

As always, we'll see you at our committee meetings on the first Sunday of each month after church lunch at 12:45. That's November 5 and December 3.

Respectfully submitted,  
Likam Lie

## From the Organ Bench



Our first month back, dear reader, were eventful and fruitful. We've expanded our choir, invited special artists to perform, and

provided meaningful and uplifting service music as we approach the holidays.

Our fall choir concert will be on November 19, with an exciting and eclectic program of choral works. Our choir retreats have been productive as we learn the music the concert. This particular performance in our series will feature Benjamin Britten's "Hymn to Saint Cecilia." This monumental choral work is significant for a few reasons. The first is its historical context, composed while Benjamin Britten and his partner were fleeing the oppression of Nazi Germany at sea during World War II. The work was confiscated when they reached New York because the U.S. State Department thought that the music was Nazi code. The second reason is that the work is semi-autobiographical, with a poem by W.H. Auden. The poem was composed for Britten and represents his transition from young man to established musician while

juxtaposing the childlike nature of someone who understands their mortality.

We are greatly looking forward to presenting to you all a semi-staged production of "Amahl and the Night Visitors," a short opera retelling the story of the Magi through the eyes of a little boy who saw a star. Menotti's setting is a dynamic and fun filled score with highlighted singers from our choir, as well as full company singing the choruses within the work. This presentation will take place on December 3.

And, of course, we will have our usual Caroling on the Common on December 9 (a Saturday this year due to some prior obligations by members of the choir), and our annual Messiah sing on December 17.

We look forward to welcoming back the RenMen, whose concert date and time will be announced shortly. Looking forward to a music filled, productive, and uplifting year.

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrew David Mattfeld

## Church discovery group begins November 5

What is a church discovery group? This group is for anyone who wants to learn more about our church, whether they're a longtime member, a prospective new member, or not interested in membership at all.

The group will be on a trip of discovery! All the sessions will explore the nature of God and the Holy Bible through different perspectives. One will talk about Swedenborg, whose particular view of the Bible and God is transformative for our lives. Another will discuss how the early founders broke from their traditional churches out of a need to have a Swedenborgian Church in Boston. Then we will look at the way God, Scripture, and our faith motivate our current actions. Finally, we'll explore how our vision of God, Scripture, and faith leads us into the future.

The group will meet on the **first Sunday of each month at 10 a.m.**, beginning November 5.

**Session 1, November 5:** The Foundation and History of Church on the Hill

**Session 2, December 3:** Who is Swedenborg and Why Should Anyone Care?

**Session 3, January 7:** Mission, Purpose, and our Organization Now

**Session 4, February 4:** How Can Church Help Us Live Lives of Faith?

If you are interested in joining us, let Rev. Baxter know so you can be included on the contact list!



## More Tears, Continuing Fears by Janet Forbes

I have been so fortunate to have traveled to many countries and made some wonderful friends along the way. With each trip, my Christmas card list has grown; over the years, I've kept in touch with many.

You may recall that I recently shared the almost certain death of a long time penpal that I met in Ukraine more than 50 years ago. Her son has let me know that he believes he is one of the few survivors in his family, although he has no proof of how or where eight members of his family died.

Recently, as the news broke of the violence in Israel, my heart sank. I have so many friends there.

Many years ago, during a vacation to the Middle East, I met a woman whose teenage daughter had recently died after abusing illicit drugs. This mother was determined to encourage the establishment of more treatment sites for the growing drug problem. She lived in Tel Aviv, a huge modern city in Israel. When she learned of my long experience in caring for folks with drug problems, she invited me to return and help promote better education and treatment, particularly directed at teens.

With the encouragement and support of the director of nursing at my hospital, I returned a few months later to begin a year's stay. Without a doubt, this would prove to be the most rewarding experience of my entire nursing career.

The plan was that I would spend three months in four different areas of the country, hosted in each city by a family in their home.

What an unforgettable experience this was. Each family could not have been kinder or more welcoming. I was included in all their everyday activities, including attending their religious services each week. In turn, they accompanied me to church every Sunday.

As soon as I learned of the recent violence, I spent hours trying in vain to reach any of my friends. Sadly, in mid October, I received a call from a daughter of one of my host families. She was only five months old when I stayed in her home and shared her bedroom for three months. She's married now, and I hadn't known she had moved to New England. She gave me the dreadful news that her parents died while attempting to escape when the bombings started in their neighborhood. So far, it has been impossible for her to arrange their burial.

In the meantime, she is planning a memorial service at her temple in their honor and has invited me to speak. This will be an honor.

As with any widely publicized news event, those watching and listening will form opinions. Regardless of your viewpoint, I implore you to continually pray for peace.

There really are no winners in times of such violence. A portion of the prayer of St. Francis seems so appropriate now: "Make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let there be love, and where there is injury, pardon."

Respectively submitted,  
Janet Forbes.



Our Halloween party  
on October 28 was  
spooktacular!



## BostonView Update

At 4:10 p.m. on October 18, the BostonView directors held their normal scheduled meeting with all directors, officers and management personnel present. After the minutes from the previous meeting were approved, management gave its report. The lobby HV/AC system has been installed and the door to Beacon Street has been repaired, as well as the 04 drain stack.

Management assured us that the 12th floor permit closure was close to being resolved. Members of the board are questioning how the error occurred.

The new tenant laundry system, which should fix some of the issues we have been having will be installed at the end of the month. These new readers should resolve the issue of tenants not seeing the status of the laundry machines in the basement on their devices.

Charlesgate informed us that the low-end market valuation of the church's rental space is \$35,000 a month. The directors will report that to the church so that a proper accounting might take place. As it is a paperwork number to address accounting practices, it will

make no tangible difference to the church.

The new fob installation is proceeding slowly — which, given the recent mechanical problems in the building, is probably good. The initial bid is absent the 400 fobs the building needs to purchase.

The board stated its loss of confidence in Embree Elevator as it seems like breakdowns are commonplace. The board asked for a review of the contract and exploration of other companies. Embree is timely, but the breakdowns seem to be a weekly if not daily occurrence.

The directors asked Charlesgate for a proposed 2024 budget for the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kevin Baxter, secretary

## Trying Not to Take Sides by Pastor Colin

From the safety of Beacon Hill, we watch a world in dangerous disarray.

After Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, outsmarting Israeli intelligence, war is underway in Gaza with ominous potential. Robert Card killed 18 people in Lewiston, Maine, using — what else — an assault weapon. Authorities had been warned in writing that Card might do just that. Mossad is joined with their pants down.

Acapulco has been decimated by a Category 5 hurricane. Forty-five people are dead, rampant looting is taking place, none dare cite climate change. Former billionaire Sam Bankman-Fried faces life imprisonment for fraud in the collapse of the cryptocurrency FTX. Investors beware. His parents, both on the faculty of Stanford Law School, are being sued by FTX for self-dealing within the company. The apple and the tree come to mind. Perhaps the parents can retain Alan Dershowitz. The new speaker of the United States House of Representative denies the results of the 2020 presidential election. Here at home, the MBTA is being fixed. Godot may arrive first.

How is humanity doing, we might ask?

Reasonable people, aware of the history and the situation in Gaza, might have applauded the ingenuity and the courage of the Palestinians who make up Hamas. Instead, the assault turned ugly and vicious and criminal. Only 332 of the 1,400 Israelis who were massacred were members of the security forces. Armies attack armies. This was something different.

The atrocities are still being verified and catalogued. Innocents were slaughtered, including babies and elderly people. Revelers at a rave were mowed down, to what purpose? People were decapitated, people were burned. Women were raped.

Hamas took some 200 people hostage. Taking noncombatants hostage is simply kidnapping.

These behaviors set themselves apart from explanations and excuses. Civilization must be the first priority. Do you want to provoke fear and loathing? What do you expect in return?

Israel wants the culprits. They will be difficult to find. Israel's best friends counsel resolve and not revenge.

Can Israel be successful and, at least intentionally, humane? That is such a tall order.

Much good, responsible journalism is available, from varied points of view. Criticism of Hamas and of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been withering. "Read, read, read" might be our mantra. Listen, listen, listen. Events are unfolding.

What do Hamas and the right-wing government in Israel have in common? Both want to destroy any peace process. Can war ever be far behind?

We could point to the United States and to Arab countries as accessories to this awful situation, but to what avail? That's an old story.

Better to look at ourselves and our own hearts. What peace do we find there? What peace in our reactions to October 7 and the resulting war? A tough world asks us tough questions.

What decrease in our own standard of living would we be willing to accept to further peace in the world?

The safety of Beacon Hill may yet prove an illusion.

God bless you.  
Pastor Colin

## November Birthdays

Debbi Hammer  
Lisa Hadley  
Likam Lie  
Catherine Ono  
Kevin Arias  
Charlie Pham

## VISITS, CARDS, AND PRAYERS

Please take a moment to call, send a card, or visit those in our community who are not able to be with us!

**If you would like assistance arranging a visit, contact the pastoral care pastor or office.**

**Bill Davis**

Cambridge Rehab Nursing  
8 Dana St.  
Cambridge, MA 02138

**Andrea Martin**

Webster Park Healthcare  
#200 B1  
56 Webster St.  
Rockland, MA 02370

**Dorothy Ann Klein**

Hebrew Rehab Center  
1200 Centre Street  
Berger, Fl. 1, Rm. 129 South  
Roslindale, MA 02131

**William Wen Li Yen**

South Cove Manor  
288 Washington St.  
Quincy, MA 02169

**William "Martin" Coor**

Tewksbury Hospital  
365 East St.  
Tewksbury, MA 01876

**Irene Legeros**

Neville Center  
640 Concord Ave., 3rd fl.  
Cambridge, MA 02138

# CALENDAR

*Administrative Hours: Monday to Friday, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM*

## November Events

5 <sup>th</sup>	Church Discovery Group	10 a.m.
15 <sup>th</sup>	Community lunch	12 p.m.
	Missions presentation	1 p.m.
	BostonView meeting	4 p.m.
18 <sup>th</sup>	Bowling	2 p.m.
19 <sup>th</sup>	Fall members meeting	12:45 p.m.
	Fall choir concert	3 p.m.
23 <sup>rd</sup>	Thanksgiving dinner	3 p.m.
24 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Thanksgiving holiday (church closed)</i>	

## December Events

3 <sup>rd</sup>	Church Discovery Group	10 a.m.
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Amahl and the Night Visitors	3 p.m.
9 <sup>th</sup>	Caroling on the Common	1 p.m.
16 <sup>th</sup>	Bowling	2 p.m.
17 <sup>th</sup>	Handel's Messiah Sing	3 p.m.
20 <sup>th</sup>	Community lunch	12 p.m.
	Missions presentation	1 p.m.
	BostonView meeting	4 p.m.
25 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Christmas Day (church closed)</i>	

## Weekly Events

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### Worship

11:00 Sundays

### Alcoholics Anonymous

12:00 Weekdays

### Purls on the Hill

10:00 Mondays

### Zoom Prayer Time

11:00 Mondays

### Pastors' Coffee

10:00 Tuesdays

### Board Games

2:00 Tuesdays

### Spirituality Class

12:00 Wednesdays

### Tai Chi

1:30 Thursdays

### Scripture Study

12:00 Fridays

### Regular Committee Meetings

Mission: first Sunday of each month at 12:45 p.m.

Music: second Sunday of each month at 12:45 p.m.



Boston Society of the New Jerusalem  
Church on the Hill (Swedenborgian)

140 Bowdoin Street  
Boston, MA 02108-2799

200 Years of Celebration  
1818-2018



Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880)  
Member of the BSNJ  
Writer, Author, Abolitionist, &  
Civil Rights Advocate

“It is my mission to help in the breaking down of classes, and to make all men feel as if they were brethren of the same family, sharing the same rights the same capabilities, and the same responsibilities. While my hand can hold a pen, I will use it to this end; and while my brain can earn a dollar, I will devote it to this end.” Lydia Maria Child

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