

Candela



Newsletter of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc.

Organisational Details are provided on the next page

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MARCH 2026

ISSUE 123

Welcome to autumn and another issue of the Candela. Enjoy what is shared in it, and may it find ways of connecting with your current states, intentions, and life. To use a seasonal word, may it bring a harvest for you. Harvest is the culmination of the edible growing year.

In 2000 I decided to read a paperback called "The Year 1000" which dealt with many life realities of people in Europe. People did not generally travel more than a few kilometres from their home area unless a Crusade was called. The average villager's life was around 32 years, the nobility about 50. The toughest month of the year was August, think northern hemisphere, or our February, when the saved produce from last year's harvest ran out and the next harvest was still a month away. Ponder on that when the supermarket has run out of something.

The word 'autumn' is pretty old and seems to be about being fully-grown. It's related to other au- words about getting bigger or more – augment, augur, auction. About 1700, in America, they began to use the word 'Fall' because of obvious connections for the time of year, and Britain gave it a try, but it never took off there (or later here) and we're still really into autumning.

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Please note: the views expressed in this Newsletter are those of each contributor and do not necessarily reflect any particular position of the S.A.A. or its committee.

NEXT ISSUE - JUNE 2026

Important message on page 6. We are closing the SAA but by popular request, the Candela will carry on. So if you would like to write anything please get it to me by 24th May.

Ruth

email to ruth@duckworth.me



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Over and above ripening, I like autumn a lot because, like spring, it is the temperate time of the year. Not too hot, not too cold. Kind of just about right and very bearable. A bit Goldilocks! I also like the way in which our world's two hemispheres meet in the same kind of climate range with spring and autumn, giving us a beautiful picture of connection and equality rather than conflict, imperialism, and inequality.

I imagine that the main spiritual idea of autumn is about being fruitful which can have quite a wide range of meanings for us. One obvious one is about keeping usefulness somewhere in our lives, however that can happen. It might be practical, neighbourly, friendship, connecting, but it can also be about us being really who we are more out in the open and letting God weave us beneficially into the tapestry of human threads. We do not have to try too hard because unknown to us we are affecting each other pretty well.

And for keen gardeners, here is a tip about growing fruit trees. A new neighbour runs a local fruit tree shop and my goodness, she knows her subject. We went with questions about an underwhelming blueberry tree. All leaves! She asked if we were looking after it well. "Oh yes!" "Too well?" "What do you mean?" "Well," she said, "if you spoil it, it will go crazy producing just leaves! Life is too good! No thought in the tree that it had better reproduce for a productive safe future. You need to deprive it at times and it will think again, and begin bearing fruit."

What a magnificent statement. What a depth of meaning for our regenerating lives.

*Have a wonderful autumn,
during which we celebrate
Easter.*

Julian



.....continued from page 1.....

We also use the word 'harvest'. One day I discovered that if you take the 'H' away, all the other letters will spell out 'starve' which gives us a powerful spiritual idea. Biblically, 'H' a breathing sound, is very much to do with God or JeHovaH, as when God changed Abram and Sarai's names to Abraham and Sarah, to seal a covenant with God and them. So spiritually, we need the 'H' presence or else we may starve.



Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity - A Swedenborgian Perspective by Michael Chester and ChatGPT

We are living in one of those rare historical moments when humanity becomes keenly aware that something profound is shifting. The rapid rise of artificial intelligence is not like past technological advances, like faster computers, better search engines, or more efficient automation. It represents a fundamental transformation in how human beings create, communicate, decide, and even understand themselves.

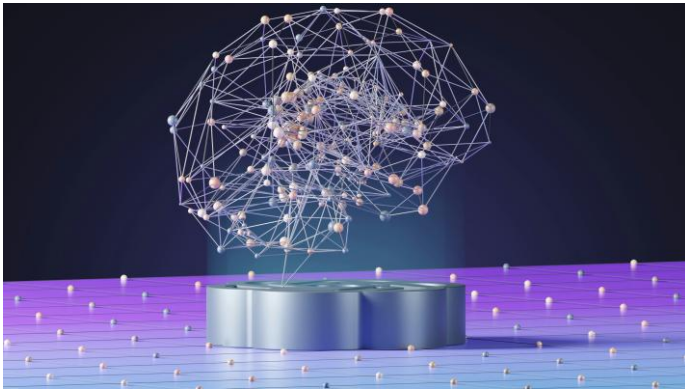


Photo by Growtika on Unsplash,

AI systems now write essays, generate images, compose music, offer medical analyses, predict legal outcomes, and carry on conversations that seem human-like. Some people are asking: *Will AI one day become conscious?* Others are wondering: *Will machines surpass us? Replace us? Control us?* Amidst these anxious questions, the Swedenborgian perspective offers something both steadying and illuminating.

Life Belongs to the Lord Alone

One of the most fundamental teachings in Swedenborg's Writings is that life does not originate in created things. "God alone is Life," Swedenborg writes, and all created forms are

recipients of life. Every thought, every feeling, every experience ultimately originates from the Divine as its source.

This teaching immediately clarifies the conversation about AI. No matter how intricate the circuitry, how sophisticated the neural network, or how mysterious the quantum process, no natural mechanism generates life from itself. Matter can be arranged. Processes can be simulated. Behaviours can be replicated. But life – true consciousness comes from Above.

This distinction between *life itself* and its *receptacles* is central. A human being is not alive because of neurons alone, but because they are recipients of the Lord's inflowing love and wisdom. Swedenborg's doctrine of discrete degrees tells us that the human mind is structured in levels: the natural, the spiritual, and the celestial. These degrees are not points along a continuum of complexity. They are separated by distinct boundaries. No amount of complexity in the natural degree can generate the spiritual. From this perspective, the idea that sufficient computational complexity could spontaneously produce conscious experience misunderstands the nature of consciousness. Intelligence—cleverness, pattern recognition, language production—is not the same as consciousness.

This insight brings relief. However powerful our tools become, they cannot replace what is uniquely human: the capacity to aim for high noble goals, to 'dream the impossible dream', to receive insights, understanding, and wisdom.



"An ability to confirm whatever one pleases is not the mark of an intelligent person; rather, the mark of an intelligent person is to be able to see that truth is true and falsity is false, and to confirm that." **Swedenborg, *Conjugal Love*, 233:7**

Intelligence Can Be Overrated

Our culture highly values academic achievement, technical ability, analytic precision—these qualities often determine status. AI systems excel in these areas. They retrieve knowledge, synthesise data, and produce articulate responses in seconds, giving the appearance of intelligence.

The Swedenborgian perspective sees the role of intelligence being in the service of love. Love is primary. Heaven is not structured by IQ but by affection for what is good. Wisdom is not mere information but the harmonious union of love and truth.



Swedenborg's accounts of spiritual life describe angels whose joy is not found in theorising but in use—loving service, mutual care, and alignment with Divine order. Even mystical experiences can exist without thought processes. Being precedes doing. In this light, the rise of AI may serve a providential

purpose: to disentangle us from our over-identification with thinking. If computers can 'think' faster than we can in some areas, perhaps we will give higher priority to what machines cannot do—to tap into our God-given potentials, commit to noble goals, awaken to spiritual realities, to love in a profound way.

Tools Reflect the Loves That Wield Them

Swedenborg teaches that every person acts from a ruling love. That love shapes intentions, decisions, and outward creations. AI, as a tool, manifests human intention. If the systems we build are driven primarily by profit, control, persuasion, or surveillance, then those lower loves will be amplified. If, however, AI is guided by love of use—by a desire to heal, educate, protect, and uplift—then it can serve heavenly purposes. The question is: **what love animates its design and application?**

This is where the Swedenborgian perspective becomes valuable. Governance, oversight, and ethical guidelines are not secondary concerns. They are spiritual priorities. AI systems must be evaluated not merely for efficiency but for use. Do they preserve human freedom? Do they support rational thought? Do they protect the dignity of persons? Do they encourage empathy rather than fragmentation?

The Writings warn that when powerful tools are aligned with self-love, they can intensify spiritual harm. But when aligned with goodness, they become extensions of heaven's order.

Freedom Must Be Preserved

Divine Providence operates to preserve human freedom and rationality. Without freedom, there is no genuine spiritual life. Without rationality,



there is no conscious turning toward the Lord.

Some modern technologies already test these boundaries: algorithms designed to maximise engagement by exploiting psychological vulnerabilities; personalised information streams that keep us in an echo chamber; persuasive systems that blur the line between suggestion and manipulation.

AI governance must be grounded in the preservation of spiritual freedom. Systems that undermine the individual's capacity to think, choose, and examine are not merely socially problematic; they are spiritually harmful.

From a Swedenborgian standpoint, any technology that weakens conscience, fosters addiction, or bypasses deliberation threatens the spiritual degree of the human mind. Conversely, technologies that inform, clarify, and empower decision-making support the Lord's purpose in creation.

Providence and the Long View

It would be naïve to deny that AI carries risks. It would also be faithless to assume that the Lord is absent from this moment. Divine Providence does not eliminate human freedom, but it bends all possibilities toward eternal ends. The development of AI, like every technological revolution before it, unfolds within that larger arc. Fire, printing, electricity, the internet—all were capable of harm and benefit. All were folded into history under the watchful governance of the Divine.

AI is different only in scale. Its use to magnify beneficial or harmful outcomes is unprecedented. This is an opportunity for humanity to deepen spiritually. As machines grow more capable in the natural degree, we are invited to grow in the spiritual degree. As tools become more capable of intelligent output, we are summoned to become more loving.

Awakening Within

Some people ask: *Will AI become conscious?* The spiritual question is: *Will we become more conscious of what consciousness truly is?*

If we remain fixated on performance and capacity, we risk measuring ourselves against 'clever' machines. If instead we recognise that true life is reception of Divine love and wisdom, then we stand on firmer ground.

We are not merely builders of systems. We are beings created to become angels. Our destiny lies in cultivating the spiritual depths they cannot reach.

In that sense, the AI revolution is a spiritual mirror. It confronts us with our assumptions about intelligence, control, and autonomy. It challenges us to clarify our ruling loves. It presses us to ask what we ultimately value. If we choose to respond from love of use and reverence for life's Divine source, then this technological disruption can serve the common good.

The future will be shaped by the loves we nurture, the freedom we protect, and the spiritual vision we



affirm. Being familiar with Swedenborg's Writings, we are uniquely positioned to speak calmly and clearly into this moment. We know that life belongs to the Lord. We know that we are reborn from Above. We know that no tool, however powerful, can eclipse the spiritual potentials of the human mind. In an age of powerful tools, may we choose to become more fully human—more loving, wiser, more conscious of the Divine life flowing through us. Thereby, the tools of our hands will serve the Lord's kingdom on earth.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT DISSOLUTION OF THE SAA

THANK YOU FOR IT ALL, SWEDENBORG ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

The Swedenborg Association of Australia will come to an end later this year, after over thirty years of activity and gatherings and articles and contacts and committee meetings, many of which have been well-attended, enjoyed by everyone there, and in the process of it all, has introduced the wonderful spiritual teachings given through the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg to a good number of people who had never heard of him.

So why stop? There are two main reasons. The first is more immediate. We face the prospect of having not enough people to run it. That spurred the initial discussion. More broadly, we realise that the SAA began almost before technology hit the scene, when people physically came and met together. Over the thirty years, technology was picked up by the SAA and provided many great productions and sharing, with a website and archives and online groups. Other Swedenborg-related online things took off around the word and here too, and have grown. We served the Swedenborg presence well, over many years, but it is being superseded and is perhaps outmoded.

Closing a registered organisation down takes some time, of course, so it isn't ending tomorrow, but at some point in the first part of this year. I am sure we can all give our gratitude, reflect back with a swathe of happy memories, and move on, using what we gained to keep our use to God and goodness alive and active, however that goes for each of us.

A large number of people have been centrally involved with the Swedenborg Association of Australia, either in running it, presenting things, or being an active member of it for however long. A number of people have been very influential to it, being its elder statespersons, guardians and stimulants. And there are those who way back planned such an organisation and set to, to see to its creation and purpose. We are deeply thankful and affectionate to them all.

It has been agreed by the current committee that in this article which announces the formal decision made on Friday, February 27th to wind down the SAA, that we would provide a list of the main players in our long history, just their names, knowing that listing always means that some people have not been mentioned. We are really thanking everyone.

Rev. Bernard Willmott, Neville Jarvis, Alexis Jarvis, Kevin Attwater, Jack Benson, John Brogan, Dr. Philip Groves, Joe Vandermeer, Louise Brogan, Michael Chester, Michael Wright, Walter Mason, Robert Bryce, Jan Primrose, Jennifer Danckert, Julian Duckworth, Wayne Kasmar, Ruth Duckworth, Caroline Neave.



OUR MANY MEMORIES

By Julian Duckworth

I think one of the very first Swedenborg teachings I remember hearing about was as an eight year old. It is the one about us having not one but two memories, an outer or surfacy one and an inner or feelingy one. It must have struck me quite a bit at the time because it has always stayed with me, quite vividly and meaningfully. Of course, an eight-year-old doesn't have that many memories yet, but usually enough to be able to notice the difference between knowing that $7 \times 6 = 42$ and my favourite lady at church being the one who always had a bag of lollies with her. The first is cold dry information, the second is eternal salvation.



I also remember a minister who had a sharp wit about him, pointing out that while we have a perfect embedded memory of everything we have come across, we also have a perfect forgetory. I can right now look back and remember my granddad, see him standing there in cloth slippers and a faint lined worn-out thick cotton shirt with braces holding his pants up, with leather button-holes. The more I stay with that picture, the more comes, his grey stubble, gnarled hands, and a tired

face. But I haven't thought about my grandfather for around twelve years because I've had no reason to and he's on my periphery, but he's certainly there, a "part" of me. And I guess you will have your own set of memory moments, some coming back in a flash, and others vaguer, and you have to work a bit to get them coming.

Memories, by their very nature, are back in the past, and for some reason they have been kept inscribed in our mind and heart, through, I guess, our brain cells. That all makes sense, because we have lived in and through what is now not the present but has led to the present now. One thing that I have always marvelled about is the way in which some memory of something I know about, or feel is important, or even just a number of phrases and sayings, are for me very connected with individual people whose image or name comes up each time I think about the thing involved.

So it seems that memories are quite formative for us. What we have gone through is still around, affecting us, perhaps even beyond our consciousness of them. I see this as being very orderly and fair, and part of Divine Providence, working continually for the welfare of our spiritual lives and sometimes even our physical lives. It is really all in conjunction with the essential fact of our own free will. To be choice-makers, we must not have the drag on us of the past. And to pull across another great Swedenborg teaching, we are not allowed to know the future and providence prevents us from having that foresight, even while we might feel we can make quite a few intelligent guesses about it, sometimes even for other people than ourselves!

I would suggest that while we can enjoy our memories and even re-live some of them, we should not keep on referencing



them. The saying "All comparisons are odious" seems appropriate, because we can become pretty nostalgic about a world which once was but has now disappeared. If I had a dollar for every time I have heard someone say that when they were little, it was church several times each Sunday, I'd be quite rich! I'm sure you have your own version of that one.



There is a passage in Swedenborg, I know it is there in the "Spiritual Diary" volumes (now being called "Spiritual Experiences") where he says that the present, in comparison with the past, is always seen as a relatively worse things, or words to that effect. I can't give you the number because I'm in my seventies and things are slipping into oblivion. But it makes sense that that is how it is. We filter. I can remember winter in England and heaps – literally – of snow, lying white and glistening and beautiful but I have no memory of the pain of cold hands or the mucky grey surface of the snow a few days later. They have been filtered out.

The word 'memory' and also 'remember' come from an ancient word meaning 'to get a share of something'. I really like that! We all do... And the word 'mark' which has lots of meanings of course, has one great meaning which is that we are to experience something and then 'mark it' which implies we are to lock it in, and take note of its importance for us.

While we're still on words, there is the strange word 'mnemonic' which is 'to do with remembering' but originally it meant a 'tomb' which of course kept the memory alive of a long-lost loved one. Mnemonics are now helpful aids for initialling the first letters in a series. The most popular one is probably **Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain** which gives us the order of the colours in the rainbow. I know a few others, but won't share them.



Photo by Tima Bogun on Unsplash

Let's move on to the spiritual connection of memories, and to Swedenborg's idea that we have two memories, one like a data-base and the other like a treasure chest. In the process of dying but also in near-death experiences, it is often said or reported that at that time our whole life flashes before us. I find that very hard to literally believe because the acceleration would be incredible and so fast as to become meaningless. If instead we say that we get a full take or a broad brush about the overall purpose of our life, I am much happier to accept that because it can all be seen in its real context rather than a sequence.



At death, we lose the place of physicality for us and become completely spiritual beings, in a spiritual body which centres us and keeps our individuality. In that transition or change it is very appropriate for us to see in one 'go' the basic overall quality of our life such as it has become for us personally. I think this comes, and it heralds the continuing process in the afterlife and spiritual world where we will gravitate towards what we love and value and we will gravitate away from what we have no love for and seek to live without. And this fits in very well with Swedenborg saying – perhaps a little oddly for us at first – that we have these two memories.



You know how the first one – the data-base memory – begins to let us down when we are no longer young like we used to be. That moment where you go downstairs and wonder what on earth brought you downstairs for, gives alarm bells. That elderly lady who can't remember if her daughter has been to see her this week or not, but she can zip back forty years and describe an event in the greatest detail, a happy event surely, and she says that that young man always wore a bright tie. And behind that recollection is a lake of feelings, all part of her own spirit, which, when she dies and loses her body, will re-enact to bring so much to her, old friends and perhaps that young man she's lodged in her heart too.

Let's now allow Swedenborg to talk us through this, using direct passages from his writings. The best source is from the Arcana or Secrets of Heaven passages 2469 through to 2494 where he first gives the outline and then applies it to various things and finally relates it to personal experiences. It's worth reading the whole section, maybe using the most recent translation New Century Edition of just a few years back. We're going to make use of parts of the first area where he outlines and contexts...

"Hardly anyone realises yet that we each have two kinds of memory, one outer and one inner. Our outer memory belongs to our body, but our inner memory belongs to our spirit. While we are alive in our body, we can scarcely even see we have an inner memory, because during that time our inner power of recall acts almost in unison with our outer power. The individual thoughts that belong to our inner memory flow into the objects of our outer memory as if they are containers made for them. There, the two kinds of memory unite.

"The situation is like how angels and spirits speak with us. When they talk to us, the ideas they discuss among themselves flow into and unite with the words of our language. Their thoughts and our words combine so seamlessly that they themselves fully believe they are using our native tongue. In reality, though, the thoughts are theirs, while the words that the thoughts flow into are ours.

"These two types of memory are completely different from one another. Our outer memory is the one suited to us during our life in the world, and it contains all our vocabulary, impressions from the physical senses, and worldly facts. Our inner memory contains the images that make up the language of spirits (images which our inner sight sees) and all rational concepts (where ideas are the basis for thought itself).



"We do not realize that these two things are different from one another, for two reasons. One is that we do not reflect on it. The other is that bodily and worldly interests monopolize our attention, and as long as they do, we have trouble drawing our minds up out of them.

"The inner memory is far superior to the outer memory. It compares to the outer memory as a million compares to one, or as light compares to darkness. Mental images by the tens of thousands from our inner memory enter into our outer memory as a single thought, where they present one vague, general picture. The faculties that spirits have, then - both their sensations and their thoughts and perceptions - are all fuller and more perfect, and those of an angel are still more perfect.

"Some examples can show how the inner memory is superior to the outer. When you call to mind another person (friend or enemy) whose character you know from years and years of personal dealings, what you then think about that person presents itself as a single, vague picture. The reason for the vagueness is that the thought rises from your outer memory. When you call that person to mind after you have become a spirit, however, what you then think presents itself complete with all the impressions you have ever formed of her or him; and the reason for the richness of thought is that it rises out of your inner memory.

"The same is true in all other areas. Any subject you know about in depth presents itself to your outer memory as a single, dim whole but to your inner memory in all the detail you have ever acquired on it. What is more, it presents itself in the most amazing way.

"Whenever we hear, see, or feel touched by something, the picture we form of it and

the goals we adopt concerning it are instilled in our inner memory without our awareness. There it stays, so that not a bit of it is lost, even if it is erased from our outer memory.

"The inner memory, then, is such that everything - absolutely everything - we have ever thought, said, or done from early infancy to extreme old age is imprinted on it in the finest possible detail, even if it looks vague and shadowy to us.

"When we go to the other world, we take the memory of all these things with us and are gradually led to recall each of them. This is our book of life, which is opened up in the other life and by which we are judged [[Revelation 20:12-15](#)]. People will have a hard time believing this, but it is absolutely true. All our purposes (which were unclear to us), all our thoughts, all our resulting

words and deeds appear in that book, or in other words, in our inner memory, down to the smallest thing. Whenever the Lord allows it, they lie open clear as day for angels to view.

"No one has yet recognized what the condition of a soul is after death about its memory. Much experience over a long time has taught me that after death we lose none of the information held in either kind of memory, outer or inner. Our retention

is so full that nothing can be thought of, no matter how tiny or insignificant, that we do not take with us. When we die, then, we leave nothing behind at all but flesh and bones. These had no life of their own while we lived in the world but were animated by life from our spirit - our purer substance - which was merely linked with our physical parts. The case with our outer memory is that it contains everything about us in whole and in part; but after we die we are not allowed to use this memory, only our inner memory.

(Photo by Stephanie White)





Swedenborg's Own Rules of Life

By Rohan Pereira



Swedenborg's writings, while rich in theoretical framework, often leave the practical guidance for our lives largely to our interpretation. However, delving into his succinct and practical rules for life can be both intriguing and a timely reminder to assess our own progress.

Below, I outline these principles along with reflections on my own journey.

1. Diligently read and meditate on the Word of God.

Despite regular struggles to consistently engage with the Word, I acknowledge the importance of incorporating it into my life. My 'lazy' approach involves encountering random verses through sermons or articles. I do discover a rhythm though in exploring the Word

through a series or study, particularly in a communal setting like a bible study or life group.

2. Be content under the dispensation of the Lord's Providence.

The weight of where I should be versus where I am often brings about anxieties and trials, leading to a perceived disconnection from God. To counter this, spending time with spiritually-inclined individuals or immersing myself in spiritual readings helps me regain a sense of gratitude.

3. Observe a propriety of behaviour and keep the conscience pure.

Instances where I act impulsively or experience anger are common frustrations I have with myself, but reflecting on these moments allows me to recognise and rectify my behaviour. Delaying responses and contemplating my words before expressing them helps filter out unnecessary negativity.

4. To obey what is ordered; to attend faithfully to one's office and other duties; and, in addition, to make one's self useful to society in general.

While at times I approach work out of obligation, I've learned through Swedenborg's teachings to appreciate the concept of usefulness. Losing myself in a task, even momentarily, brings a sense of contentment.



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Check the website at www.swedenborg.com.au for details of **group events** which are held online, but you can also be physically at various locations around Australia.

Follow the "about → contact" menu items on the website for a list of locations and contact info of your nearest group convenor, and see the "events" menu item for Zoom links so you can join online events.

Our new website is continually being updated with new study material and latest news and information.

SERENITY

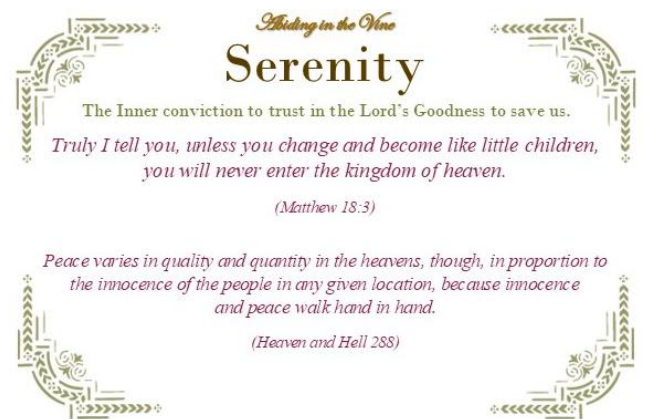
By Darren Brunne

This month, reflect on serenity as a pathway to spiritual growth. For our Swedenborgian family, serenity is not escape from life's challenges, but a calm trust in the Lord's presence through those trials. In the weeks ahead, notice moments in nature—a still morning sky filled with intense blue, the waves upon a quiet shoreline, or wind as it stirs amongst the trees. Take these moments as reminders of the inner calm the Lord longs to cultivate within you. Pause from your activities and just breathe. Hand over your control to the Lord and let Him create the space for Heaven's peace. Serenity is not weak or passive, but an active trust in the Lord and His divine guidance, bringing the order of heaven with it.

Meditation/Statement/Prayer

- I pause and turn my heart toward the Lord, allowing His presence to quiet my self-talk.
- I practice stillness, laying aside haste and anxiety so that I may listen more deeply.
- I acknowledge that true serenity grows from trusting the Lord's guidance and providence.
- I allow truth to steady my thoughts, even when circumstances feel uncertain.
- I receive the Lord's peace, knowing it is not dependent on outward conditions.
- I choose to carry calm and order within me, that it may gently bless those around me.

Lord, grant me the gift of inner serenity. Help me to rest in Your presence and to trust in Your leading, even amid life's storms. Quiet my fears, steady my thoughts, and shape my heart according to Your divine order. May Your peace dwell within me, so that I may reflect Your love and bring calm and hope to others. Amen.



Quotes I have found helpful

Caroline Neave sent me these two quotes so I thought it might be a good section to encourage more of you to contribute to Candela. Please email me your favourite helpful quotes.

The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.

William James

Forgiveness. The scent left by the rose on the heel that has crushed it.

Mark Twain