

Wings



FIRST UNITY CHURCH – Serving the spiritual needs of the St. Louis community for over ninety years.

The Newsletter of
First Unity Church
Of Saint Louis

May 2014

- ❖ *Inspiration*
- ❖ *Information*
- ❖ *Illumination*

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Jesus: the Man/the
Christ
By Randolph
Schmelig

The Silence

By Richard and Mary Alice Jafolla

There is only one way to experience "the silence" and that is to be silent, physically and emotionally silent. One of the best ways to accomplish this is through the process called meditation.

Small Investments Bring Big Benefits

Sitting quietly, with the body relaxed and the mind stilled, brings many physical and emotional benefits. It reduces tension and stress, lightens anxiety, lowers blood pressure, increases energy levels, improves sleep patterns, helps to decrease harmful body chemicals and increase beneficial ones. It does all this and much more.

Yet these physical, mental, and emotional benefits cannot begin to compare with the greatest benefit, the one we actually enter the silence for, and that is the experience of knowing God and of activating our own divine qualities.

Since the within of us is so vast, it seems obvious that we should direct our attention to inner core, dipping into the eternal wellspring of life which we find there. During these times of stillness, we want to let go of all reservations, all preconceived ideas, all personal willfulness, and then surrender completely to Spirit.

Meditation is not prayer. Put simply, prayer is talking to God whereas meditation is allowing God to talk to you. You do this by getting quiet and intentionally directing your attention to your inner self, to the secret place of the Most High. ...

You begin by relaxing your body and then turning your mind inward to the stillness, resting in the beautiful sense of your oneness with God.

Regularity and consistency apply to location as well as time. Always try to meditate in the same place. If you can set aside a special room in your home to do your spiritual reading and meditation, this would be ideal. Just walking into the room would prepare you for the silence.

However, few of us have that luxury, and so the next best thing is to have a special chair in

a special corner of a room to be used for your meditation times and spiritual work. This is perfectly acceptable and serves quite well, as long as you can surround yourself with quiet when you are in your chair.

Maybe you have a favorite outdoor spot, one which has a minimum of distractions and is easy to get to. You will find the right place for your quiet times. The main thing to keep in mind is that it should be as free from activity and noise as possible. ...

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WINGS NEWSLETTER
Faye Schmelig, Editor
Email: fayeschmelig@att.net

OFFICE HOURS
Mon. – Wed., 9am – 3pm
Church phone: 314-845-8540
Minister's home: 314-892-3017
Fax: 314-845-0022

www.firstunitychurchstlouis.org/
Email:
randyschmelig@att.net

Silent Unity: 1-800-669-7729

New Board Members

At our annual meeting on April 27th we elected Roy Vaisvil for a second term, and new members Sandra Etheridge, and Linda Harr, to our church board. Tom Bullock and Carol Ellerman stepped down after two consecutive terms of wonderful service. We give thanks for all our out-going board members have done for our church and welcome the contributions our new members will make for our future.



New Members

On Sunday, April 27, we welcomed five new members to our congregation: Eileen Cook, Carolyn Finke, Bob Leonard, Betty Ponzar, and Ralph Ponzar, Jr. We are growing!

Lessons in Truth Class

Join us to embark on a spirited adventure to explore the Universal Truths of Unity with Dr. E. H. Emile Cady's classic, *Lessons in Truth*. Whether you are a longtime Truth student or new to Unity, you are invited to join this journey of self-discovery and spiritual understanding. This interactive 10-week book study, facilitated by Jan Mourning LUT, will meet Sundays from 9:15-10:15 a.m. in the adult classroom, beginning May 4. A detailed class schedule will be available on May 4. The class will be offered for credit. Books are available in the bookstore. For the first class, please read the Introduction and Chapter 2, "Statement of Being."

Laughter Yoga with Jodi

Simple Stretching, Breathing and Guided Meditation! Join in for a Positive Spiritual Experience! Thursdays 4:00 - 5:00 PM in Fellowship Hall



May 13: Long Walk to Freedom by Nelson Mandela. We will meet at Mary Tumminello's house, 5111 Kennerly Pines Ct., at 11:30. Bring a sack lunch to enjoy during the movie and discussion. Mary's number is 314-843-1807.
June 10: Breaking Out of Bedlam by Leslie Larson
July 8: The Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingslover
August 12: Modoc: The True Story of the Greatest Elephant that Ever Lived by Ralph Helfer



This month the **Ladies' Night Out Group** will meet Monday, March 17th at 5:30 at Red Lobster, 5733 S. Lindbergh Blvd. For more information call Mary Tumminello – Home: 314-843-1807 Cell: 314-814-4530.

Here are the dates for the **First Unity Prayer Chaplain Meetings**. We meet at 7:00 p.m. May 12, June 9, July 14, August 11, September 8, October 13



Ukulele Concert and Spaghetti Dinner

Join us on Thursday, May 29th, for dinner and a concert. We will begin serving dinner at 5:30 and the music will start at 7:00. Admission will be \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. Please call the office to let us know if you are coming and how many guests you are bringing so we know how much food to prepare.



Feed My People is

associated with a national group called Ample Harvest which encourages people to donate any excess produce their garden grows to a local food pantry. They are always thrilled to have fresh fruit and vegetables to give out to their clients and would be glad to receive any extra produce from your home garden.



www.feed-my-people.org

May Affirmations



Inner Peace: In this moment, there is only God, only peace.

Guidance: I am guided forward, one step at a time.

Healing: My healing is quickened through faith.

Prosperity: God is my source. I claim abundant good.

World Peace: I hold a vision for peace in the world.





Mother and Child

"I love you,"
said a great mother.
"I love you for what you
are,

knowing so well what you are.
And I love you more yet, child,
deeper yet than ever, child,
for what you are going to be,
knowing so well you are going far,
knowing your great works are ahead,
ahead and beyond,
yonder and far over yet."

-Carl Sandburg

God is Nigh

The simple but
powerful bugle melody
"Taps" has been a
standard component of
U.S. military funerals
since 1891. It's also played during
each of the 2,500 military wreath
ceremonies conducted every year at
the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier,
including those held on Memorial
Day.



Many legends exist about the
origin of "Taps" — both its melody
and its lyrics. The words below, by
Horace Lorenzo Trim, make an
appropriate bedtime prayer.

Day is done, gone the sun
From the lakes, from the hills, from
the sky
All is well, safely rest
God is nigh.

Fading light dims the sight
And a star gems the sky, gleaming
bright
From afar, drawing near
Falls the night.

Thanks and praise for our days
'Neath the sun, 'neath the stars, 'neath
the sky
As we go, this we know
God is nigh.

Holy Homophones

Do you remember learning
homophones in school? We enjoy
hearing our grade-schooler make the
connections. Every once in a while, he

hears one — say, *chilly* — and
announces, "Hey! That's a
homophone of the kind of chili we
eat!"

Stuck at home one Sunday
morning, I listened to a local worship
service on the radio. When the pastor
prayed, "O Lord God, reign ..." my
brain — apparently due to the same
son's horse-riding lessons —
perceived "rein." In the fraction of a
second before the pastor's next word,
I assumed he'd say "us in"; instead,
he said "in us."

Ah, I realized, his phrase was
"reign in us," not "rein us in." But
sometimes God has to do both: In
order to reign in us fully as King of
our lives, God must rein in our
tendency to wander away from him.
Only then can we sense the peace that
comes from Christ alone *raining*
down on us! (Aren't homophones
fun?!)

-Heidi Mann

Do "eustress" enough?

Stress generally isn't viewed as
positive, but psychologists speak of
both *distress* and *eustress*. Eustress is
a level of discomfort not so high as to
make us give up but high enough to
urge us forward.

Winemakers know that the best
wine comes from stressed grapevines,
planted in rocky soil and given only
enough water to prompt the roots to
stretch downward to find more
moisture. People, too, grow strong
when pushed to work hard, not when
handed everything we want or need.
Good parents know this, as does our
good and gracious God.

When we're struggling and
stressed, God hasn't abandoned us,
but he may be practicing the
vinedresser's tough love to help us
grow. Perhaps the Spirit allowed the
Bible to be difficult in places so we'd
work to learn what it means. Perhaps
God lets questions challenge our faith
so we'll stretch to find answers.
Maybe God will transform what
seems distressing into *eustress* —
making us the very best we can be.

"Quotable Quotes"

Meditation is not just blissing out
under a mango tree. It completely
changes your brain.

-Matthieu Ricard

The mind can go in a thousand
directions, but on this beautiful path, I
walk in peace. With each step, the
wind blows. With each step, a flower
blooms.

-Thích Nhất Hạnh

If you want to conquer the anxiety of
life, live in the moment, live in the
breath."

-Amit Ray

To understand the immeasurable, the
mind must be extraordinarily quiet,
still.

-Jiddu Krishnamurti

Within each of us is a light, awake,
encoded in the fibers of our existence.
Divine ecstasy is the totality of this
marvelous creation experienced in the
hearts of humanity.

-Tony Samara

Restore your attention or bring it to a
new level by dramatically slowing
down whatever you're doing.

-Sharon Salzberg

Mindfulness isn't difficult, we just
need to remember to do it.

-Sharon Salzberg

Be here now. Be someplace else later.
Is that so complicated?

-David Bader

You get peace of mind not by thinking
about it or imagining it, but by
quietening and relaxing the restless
mind."

-Remez Sasson

Even when in the midst of
disturbance, the stillness of the
mind can offer sanctuary.

-Stephen Richards

JESUS THE MAN THE CHRIST

By Randolph Schmelig

Chapter V

Born of the Spirit

The Kingdom of God, the subject of most of Jesus' teaching ministry, is the goal of the spiritual life. It holds the promise of all good, the promise of oneness, the promise of bliss. It is of such tremendous value, of such greatness, that once we glimpse its grandeur, we eagerly forsake all else for the pursuit of this ideal, an ideal that can be realized here and now. The coming of the kingdom in our life is truly cause for great rejoicing.

We already have some inkling as to the qualities of the kingdom. We know that it can be found within each of us, at the very center of our being. We know that the coming of the kingdom in our life means total fulfillment for us: "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33).

We have discovered the "whats" and the "wheres" of the kingdom; now we must discover the "how." And here as so often before, we need to turn to the words of Jesus: the man/the Christ, to find the answer to our questions to learn how to enter the kingdom and to manifest it here and now.

Probably the most vivid and meaningful description of the process or method-the "how" of entering the kingdom-lies in a conversation between Jesus and a man named Nicodemus. In this dialogue, Jesus answers the very question we are asking now.

"Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these

signs that you do, unless God is with him' " (John 3:1,2).

These initial verses of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus help set the scene for our journey back into time and they tell us a good deal about Nicodemus.

We are told that Nicodemus was a Pharisee. The initial response of many people to this information is to group Nicodemus with the so-called villains of the New Testament-the outsiders, the "misunderstanders" of Jesus. But prejudice of this kind is an obstacle to the sincere seeker of Truth. If we are looking for a true and personal understanding of the meaning of Jesus Christ, we must follow His commandment to "judge not by appearances," for the pursuit of His Truth is a search for inner meanings rather than for outer appearances.

A current definition of the word *Pharisee* would probably include such phrases as "one who considered himself more righteous than other men," or "a sect of the Jews concerned with the strict observation of outward forms and ceremonies of their religion without grasping the spirit of the religion," or "a hypocrite." These may be convenient definitions of the term in the context of modern Christianity, but they do not suffice for those who are seeking the deeper answer to our questions about Jesus' great kingdom teaching, for His message was one of love, of forgiveness, of understanding that surpasses all outer forms and labels.

No group of men in all of human history ever set out to be hypocrites or villains. These are labels placed on people by others-generalizations made by outsiders. These judgments do not contain the understanding of the genuine motives behind the original formation of the group, nor do they account for the positive aspects of the philosophy that once drew people to become a part of it. When we scrutinize the word *Pharisee* through the magnifying glass of objectivity expanded by selfless love, our

understanding can come through as pure and complete.

The Pharisees were members of a Jewish sect that was very popular at Jesus' time. They distinguished themselves by their strict observation of the rites, ceremonies, and traditions of their faith, and by strict adherence to the laws of Moses. It was their belief that scripture was to be taken literally, and that the precise observation of their religion was the key to the salvation of the Jewish people and of Israel as a nation. In the context of modern Christianity, we would probably call these people fundamentalists. Seen in this light, the Pharisees were simply men, very much like us-men seeking spiritual understanding and illumination, men who wanted the Lord to smile upon them and draw them to His bosom. The teachings of Jesus are not so different in essence from the philosophy of strict adherence to scripture that was practiced by the Pharisees. It was Jesus who said, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17).

We may say that tradition is not necessarily synonymous with Truth, and that the Pharisees were mistaken in their reliance on the old ways. But we must be very cautious about judging the beliefs of others. If we judge Nicodemus to be a hypocrite because he was a Pharisee, we too are accepting a tradition as Truth. We are basing our assumption on what others have said or taught, and not on objective investigation and sincere seeking on our part. The very fact that Nicodemus went to Jesus and questioned Him is an indication that he was, as we would hope to be, a seeker of Truth who was sincere in his beliefs.

We can perceive that Nicodemus seems to have been an earnest Truth student, and we know something of his philosophical background. In the first part of the Gospel narrative, we also learn something about Nicodemus' station. He was

apparently a man of authority, a leader-in the language of the Bible, he was "a ruler of the Jews." He was a man of high social status, a respected member of his community.

The second line of the narrative is curious: "This man came to Jesus by night." This seems to indicate that Nicodemus came to Jesus in secret, that for some reason he sought to elude the public eye on his visit. The first impression is probably correct; Nicodemus seems to have been very secretive about his visit. Perhaps the reason for this feeling is that there is something in human nature-some inner tendency many of us experience-that makes us consider secrecy as automatically suspect. Yet the content of his conversation with Jesus does not indicate that Nicodemus had any trickery or devious motive in his mind.

The reason Nicodemus came to Jesus "by night" is probably a simple one. Perhaps we should try to put ourself in his place for a moment-to ask ourself, "Why would I be secretive about visiting Jesus if I were Nicodemus?" One possible reason for the secrecy lay in Nicodemus' high station in the community. This conversation apparently took place early in Jesus' teaching ministry. If we had had similar status and responsibility in the community-if we were looked upon as leader, teacher-we also might have been afraid that a visit with this new Teacher would be seen by some as an endorsement of Him, or as a sign of inadequacy or uncertainty on our part. From the context of the conversation, it seems clear that Nicodemus *was* uncertain, that he did not quite know what to think about this man Jesus. So an explanation of the secrecy appears to be simply that Nicodemus did not wish to be identified with Jesus at this point. If we could exchange places with Nicodemus, perhaps we would not look too harshly upon him.

A second possible reason for a nocturnal visit is more subtle, but perhaps even easier to identify with. Are we not sometimes embarrassed to

let others know of our deepest longings and inmost questions about religion? It is difficult to explain why we have this tendency, but there is no denying its existence. We do tend to conceal our thoughts about spiritual matters; we tend to keep such thoughts as unspoken secrets. This human trait may also have motivated Nicodemus to come to Jesus "by night."

There is a third possible explanation of why Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. The words "by night" may have a figurative meaning as well as a strictly literal one. The times in our life when we are most likely to turn to Jesus, the times when our need for understanding is the most desperate, are often times when we feel utterly "in the dark." These are times of great need, times when the meaning of our life seems most uncertain. In these times we turn-perhaps rather shyly and secretly-at first-to the Christ. When we feel lost, when we are seeking "light," we turn to Jesus for answers. Each of us visits Jesus "by night" in this sense. We all come in darkness, drawn irresistibly by His radiance.

And just as Jesus is accessible to us, He was there, waiting when Nicodemus arrived. Jesus answered a question that Nicodemus is not recorded as asking. Nicodemus merely greeted Jesus with a traditional Eastern salutation. He acknowledged Jesus as a great Teacher, divinely inspired. He also recognized and praised Jesus for the many signs and wonders He had performed. Yet the next three words of scripture can make our transition in time complete; can make us truly able to stand beside Nicodemus in this experience. Jesus passed over the salutation, apparently, for the Gospel reads, "Jesus answered him." These three words can serve to draw us into this moment; no matter what we may say or do in the outer, the Christ has a way of getting right to the heart of the matter-to the heart of our inmost questions-to the heart of us.

The unspoken question that Jesus answered is the key to all that follows. In pondering why the question was omitted, we can imagine that Jesus simply perceived the question that dominated the mind of Nicodemus, just as it now stands so strongly in the forefront of our own mind:

"How does one find this kingdom you so often speak about?" This intuitive reaction would certainly not be out of character for Jesus, who understood so readily the deepest feelings of all with whom He came in contact. Perhaps, as with the Samaritan woman at the well and as in several other of the recorded events of Jesus' life, He directly perceived the question without needing to hear it audibly. He read the heart.

Another possibility is that the question may have appeared in the Gospel originally. Perhaps, in the early handwritten days of the Scriptures, the copyist left the question out by mistake, and this mistake may have come down through the years to the Bible in its present form. It is the substance of the implied question that is important to us-that, and making Nicodemus' question our own. We may ask now, as Nicodemus did outwardly or silently:

"Rabbi, I have heard you speak of a kingdom of God. I have heard you speak of it often. What is the kingdom how may I enter the kingdom?" When we can direct our thoughts wholly to this question, we find ourself standing right with Nicodemus in mind and heart. We find ourself in the very presence of the Master, Jesus Christ. Our attention can now shift from places and things, past or present, to that which is eternally important-the Truth.

"Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God' " (John 3:3). What is the meaning of this reply? Is Jesus trying to be cryptic? We normally think of birth as the physical experience of being bodily thrust into this phenomenal world. Is this what Jesus means? Must we somehow be

reincarnated to find and experience the kingdom? Nicodemus seems to be confused by the statement, and asks: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (John 3:4). Jesus, always loving, perceives Nicodemus' confusion and has compassion for him. He restates His message, and patiently explains His answer more carefully.

"Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.' The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit' " (John 3:5-8).

The rebirth about which Jesus speaks is not physical, but spiritual. This process of being "born anew" is a two-fold experience. We must be born of "water" and born of "Spirit" if we are to enter the kingdom. The transcendental quality of this rebirth becomes more apparent if we examine the footnotes that may be found in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible: the words "born anew" may also be translated as "born from above."

The first part of the process is being "born of water." This is almost certainly a reference to the water baptism of John; but we should not jump to the conclusion that this step is taken simply by the physical act of being bodily immersed or sprinkled with water. In our study of Jesus: the man/the Christ, it soon becomes clear that the answers to our questions lie not in outer appearances, but in inner meanings. Baptism without a consciousness of the inner meaning, the spiritual importance of the act, is of no more spiritual significance than taking a cold shower or being caught in the rain.

We must seek the true meaning of John's baptism. We must fully

understand his message: "I baptize you with water for repentance" (Matthew 3:11). Repentance, by John's own testimony, is the reason for and the meaning of baptism. The water used in the outer act is but the symbol of an inner act of repentance, a cleansing, a washing away of old ways of thinking, a change of heart. The tone of John's message is somewhat severe. This is an appropriate attitude for John to take in that his teaching is essentially negative; it is a turning away from something, a denial or elimination of what has preceded it. Thus the first step to entering the kingdom might be called the eternal "no." To obtain our citizenship in the kingdom-in order to be prepared for the eternal "yes" of the Christ consciousness-we must first say "no" to certain ways of thinking and acting.

We must cleanse our mind somehow, but still we do not know which things must be purged from our consciousness. For the solution to this puzzle we turn again to the words of our loving Teacher, Jesus. "That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This cleansing process is not only the elimination of certain thoughts, but really is the complete redirection of our limited mental orientation. Most of us build our patterns of thinking on our perceptions of the phenomenal world. We take as a foundation for our thoughts and feelings the stimuli of outer experiences; our thinking is "born of flesh." There is nothing inherently bad about this orientation, but it is inherently limited, while the teachings of Jesus Christ are unlimited and infinite in their foundation.

-Continued in June



From Page One ...

This article was excerpted from *Adventures on the Quest*. Mary Alice and Richard Jafolla are former directors of Silent Unity, the prayer ministry of Unity, serving people of all faiths with 24/7 prayer support.

The Experience

... In your meditation, find something on which to dwell. That "something" could be internally listening to a sound or a word or paying close attention to your breath. Some people feel comfortable with dwelling on the phrase "I AM," internally saying "I" as they inhale and "AM" as they exhale. The silent phrase is then repeated continuously throughout the meditation time.

One good way to begin a meditation is by concentrating on your breathing. Just focus on your breath and follow it as you gently inhale and exhale. When you feel you are ready to turn your attention inward, take three slow deep breaths, each one deeper than the previous. These three deep breaths will eventually act as a signal, a cue to prepare you for your meditation. ... After exhaling the last deep breath, switch your attention to your special phrase or word and resolutely follow it. ...

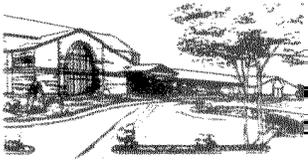
Disregard all passing thoughts. Become indifferent to them. Of course, your mind will introduce, and attempt to entertain, all sorts of thoughts and feelings. Do not fight them. Just allow these thoughts and feelings to pass through. Keep on gently bringing back your attention to the process. Always be aware of the experience you are going through.

Expect Nothing: Don't be at all concerned with how you are doing. The more you are concerned, the less you are in the stillness. Meditation is not the time for concern about the challenges in your life. There is plenty of time later for that.

If your attention wanders, bring it back to the process of meditation. Don't battle with your mind. Don't try to get rid of thoughts. Nonresistance is the key to success. Your tranquil awareness and focus are really all that are needed.

When you are finished with your meditation, return gently to full awareness. Allow yourself to savor the experience. ...





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The light side -- A little holy humor

Punography

- I tried to catch some fog. I mist.
- When chemists die they barium.
- Jokes about German sausage are the wurst.
- A soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.
- I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid. He says he can stop anytime.
- How does Moses make his tea? Hebrews it.
- I stayed up all night to see where the sun went. Then it dawned on me.
- This girl said she recognized me from the vegetarian club, but I'd never met herbivore.
- I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I can't put it down.
- I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.
- They told me I had type A blood, but it was a type-o.
- A dyslexic man walks into a bra.
- PMS jokes aren't funny. Period.
- Why were the Indians here first? They had reservations.
- Class trip to the Coca-Cola factory. I hope there's no pop quiz.
- Energizer Bunny arrested: charged with battery.
- I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.
- What does a clock do when it's hungry? It goes back four seconds.
- I wondered why the baseball was getting bigger. Then it hit me.
- Broken pencils are pointless.
- How do you make holy water? Boil the hell out of it.
- What do you call a dinosaur with an extensive vocabulary? A thesaurus.
- When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.