

# 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

February 2017

- ❖ Inspiration
- ❖ Information
- ❖ Illumination

## Inside this issue:

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## The Month of Love

By Richard and Mary-Alice Jafolla

February-St. Valentine's Day-the "Month of Love." Some interesting questions come to mind. For instance, why are people attracted to each other? What primal urge leads us to seek the acceptance and the love of another human being? Whatever it is, it seems to be a built-in longing common to all life. We once saw a film showing an experiment done with heart cells. It was an unforgettable portrayal of the mystery of attraction.

Individual living heart cells were placed in a solution that kept them alive and beating. Each solitary cell was pulsating at its own internally established rhythm while drifting slowly about its environment. In this random movement, there were abundant opportunities for each heart cell to bump into another. Curiously enough, when they did touch, they immediately joined together. And then the strangest thing happened: *each changed its rhythm and began beating as one!* Each heart cell surrendered its own unique rhythm and joined with its partner to pulsate in a new agreed-upon cadence. Other heart cells experienced the same phenomenon-they chanced to join another and began beating as one. Then two of the joined cells with their shared rhythms touched another pair with a different rhythm, and the four of them began beating as one. On and on it went, four joining with one or two or another quartet, then those

eight picking up a stray one or joining with another group. Each time the heart cells joined together, they relinquished their individual rhythms and began beating as one. Finally, all of the heart cells were joined together and beating in unison " a symphony of life performed on the cellular level, composed and conducted by a life-force so pervasive that its music is danced to by all of creation.



Watching this intricate little square dance of the heart cells ("join with your partner, round you go ... ") made us think that there is really no "you" and "me," no "them" and "us." In Truth, whether heart cells, individual humans on planet Earth, or massive galaxies wheeling through space, we are all part of a living Force that pulsates Its life through our entire universe.

February is traditionally the month of love. So February might be the perfect opportunity to be more authentic-which is to be more loving. We can tune in to and listen to that still small voice within. Like a monotonous metronome, it beats out one rhythm, one tune, one cadence, one message. The message is not "one-two-three-four, one-two-three-four, one--two-three-four ..." Rather, the rhythm that all of creation from mountains, to dandelions, to microbes, to humans, to planets-has in its core is "One, One, One, One ... "

This month the two of us are committed to making all of our world our valentine. Why not join us? Remember the story of the tiny heart cells. Each surrendered its own plan for a higher plan. Each tuned in to the music of the universe for its cue. We can too.



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Cindy Gibbs

WINGS NEWSLETTER  
Faye Schmelig, Editor  
Email:  
fayeschmelig@Gmail.com

OFFICE HOURS  
Mon. – Thu. 9am – 3pm  
Church phone: 314-845-8540  
Minister's home: 314-520-3440  
Fax: 314-845-0022

www.firstunitychurchstlouis.org/  
Silent Unity: 1-800-669-7729

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### First Unity Membership

For Unity membership, there are no requirements other than a desire to know God, to unfold spiritually, and to understand, love, and align with Spirit's Laws of Being. If you are feeling led in becoming a member of First Unity, just complete the "I Desire to Become a Member" form by the guest book in the vestibule.

### Stay Connected

We will soon be implementing a texting program to keep you up to date on the activities and events of First Unity Church. If you are interested in being added to our text list, please call or email the office.

### Pancake Brunch

We will be having a pancake brunch on February 12 following service. Bring someone you love to join us!



**Third Thursday Quilters** Join us on Feb. 5 for a display of the finished quilts created by the quilters. For more information, contact Jane Vondruska (636 226-4562) or Sandy Etheridge (314 309-8136).

**The Ladies' Night Out Group** will meet Monday, February 20, at 5:30 p.m. at 026 Bar & Grill at 515 Gravois Rd. For more information call Mary Tumminello Home: 314-843-1807 Cell: 314-814-4530.



**February 14:** A Husband's Secret by Liane Moriarty

**March 14:** Our Souls at Night by Kent Haruf  
**April 11:** The Girls by Lori Lansen

**May 9:** Love Anthony by Lisa Genova

**June 13:** Have A Little Faith: A True Story by Mitch Albom

**eScrip News** – Remember to use your eScrip card at Schnuck's. Go to [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com), or look for the link on the First Unity website to earn money for First Unity as you shop. Thank you!



### Youth Education

We welcome extra hands and hugs. If you could help just one Sunday a month, it would make a huge difference.

### Feed My People



In addition to food, the following items are always welcome: warm blankets or heaters for those who have no way to keep warm,-- personal care items such as toilet paper, shampoo, soap, etc., -- items for the elderly such as Ensure and Depends, -- baby items such as diapers and wet wipes.

[www.feed-my-people.org](http://www.feed-my-people.org)

Stop by Our **Lending Library** and check out an inspirational title from among a wide selection of books written by some of Unity's greatest authors.



If you miss a Sunday lesson, you can listen to it from our website:  
[www.firstunitychurchstlouis.org](http://www.firstunitychurchstlouis.org)



### January Affirmations

**Inner Peace:** My heart is a sanctuary of love and peace.

**Guidance:** I listen for the guidance of Spirit, and I am gently guided to my good.

**Healing:** I am radiantly and vitally alive.

**Prosperity:** Attuned to divine ideas, I am abundantly prospered.

**World Peace:** I express divine love and understanding to all.

### Prayer for Presidents' Day

Lord of heaven and earth, we offer you our deepest appreciation for this blessed land. Stir up a sense of stewardship in every citizen so we all may care for our nation and each inhabitant of it.

We pray especially for our leaders. Prompt everyone in a position of authority, from local to national leaders, to strive for righteousness, justice and the welfare of all citizens.

Finally, we pray that we may be ever mindful of the psalmist's teaching that "Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord ..." (Psalm 33:12, NRSV). May that promise become real "from sea to shining sea." Amen



## Take Care

In Jimmy Fallon's first monologue as host of NBC's *The Tonight Show*, he expressed thanks to all past hosts. On an occasion when he might have said, "And now this stage is mine!" or "I'm delighted to be counted among such greats," instead he stated with deep humility, "I just want to do the best I can and take care of this show for a while."

*Take care of.* That's language not of ownership but of stewardship. That's the language of Genesis 2:15 (NIV) — "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and *take care of it.*"

What have we been called to "take care of for a little while"? The earth, surely. Perhaps a congregation, a business, a neighbor in need, a volunteer or an employee. A child, who may need less care — or different forms of it — as time goes on. We don't own these people and things. God invites us to be stewards of them, to care for them, to use wisely and value these precious gifts ... and someday, to pass them on to others.

## Have a Heart

Valentines of every size and description adorn store windows and other places of business this time of year. The holiday has become a time for love to be enthroned as a virtue, with the heart symbolizing the romance of our lives.

But the heart symbolizes not only love, but life itself! Without a heart, our bodies cannot survive.

Consider God's words to Samuel: "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7, NRSV).

The heart — that inner countenance — shows what we really are. Samuel was to seek one of the sons of Jesse to be the new king. David, even though he was the weakest physical specimen, was the

one selected. His heart was great.

Love looks deeper than outward appearances, and we can thank God for that. Don't be swayed by mere valentines — have a heart!

## Two Wolves

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, "My son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all.

"One wolf is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego.

"The other wolf is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute, and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

## Anyway

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered; Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish ulterior motives;

Be kind anyway.

If you are honest, people may cheat you;

Be honest anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, people may be jealous of you;

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God;

It was never between you and them anyway.

—"The Paradoxical Commandments," Kent M.

## "Quotable Quotes"

Love is taking a few steps backward, maybe even more ... to give way to the happiness of the person you love.

—A.A. Milne

We cannot pray in love and live in hate and still think we are worshiping God.

—A.W. Tozer

There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.

—John Holmes

Patience with others is love, patience with self is hope, patience with God is faith.

—Adel Bestavros

A heart set on love will do no wrong.

—Confucius

I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour if we will only tune in."

—George Washington Carver



A joy that is shared is a joy made double.

—John Ray

Love has nothing to do with what you are expecting to get, it's what you are expected to give — which is everything.

—Vittorio Alfieri

He who has a thousand friends has not a friend to spare; and he who has one enemy will meet him everywhere.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Our economy, peace and lives depend upon a healthy sustainable environment. If we are out of sync with creation, we are out of sync with the Creator.

—Doug Bland

# The Ebb and Flow of Spiritual Growth

By J. Douglas Bottorff

"I just don't understand it. There are times when I feel so close to God that it's easy to keep my attitudes right. But other times God seems like nothing more than a distant concept, and nothing I do helps bring me closer to Him. What am I doing wrong?"

This question, coming from the bewildered person sitting before me, was one that I must have asked a thousand times during the early years of my own spiritual quest. In more recent years, however, I have had the opportunity as a minister and spiritual counselor to observe and better understand the ebb and flow of spiritual development. Although those of us who experience it may feel we are isolated cases and our spiritual pride makes us hesitant to discuss it with others, it is a universal phenomenon accompanying the growth of almost everyone. If this is true, then it needs to be approached in the light of understanding, lest we fall prey to the fear—as I have heard expressed from time to time—that we may be unworthy of God's love or that our waning may cause permanent soul damage.

I would describe the ebb and flow of spiritual growth like this: There are times when you feel close to God, when you really understand what it means to be one with God. You can easily sense a spiritual depth in the people and conditions in your life and your attitude toward your own spiritual development, and the development of your life in general is very optimistic. You feel confident and fearless, for you know God is your ever-present companion. This is the "flow" period, the time when you know you are in God and God is in you and everything is in divine order.

Then there is the "ebb" side. During this phase you may feel that God's presence has been withdrawn from your life altogether. You don't feel enthusiastic about practicing spiritual principles. You don't feel like reading any Truth books, even though you think you should. And even if you do read them, they seem to offer little or no help. You think and feel negative, and it just seems easier to forget the whole spiritual approach to life, or at least put it on hold for a time. You may feel so insecure that the slightest hint of negation in your affairs sends you into a negative emotional reaction in which you feel forsaken and alone.

Each side of the cycle varies in duration. They may last for several days or weeks or even longer.

Through simple observation we can see there is an ebb and flow everywhere in the natural world. We see it in the ocean tides, the seasons, the phases of the moon, the growth of plants and animals, and in our own minds and bodies. We do not consider any of these cyclic changes to be either negative or positive; rather, we see them as natural rhythmic expressions of an orderly universe. But we interpret the ebb and flow of our spiritual development in a different way. We tend to see the flow as the positive result of our study, prayer, meditation, and right thinking, while we feel the ebb is brought about by our disinterest and negativity. We believe when we do the right things we are rewarded by being placed in the flow, and when we do the wrong things we are punished by being placed in the ebb. As ironic as it may sound, however, study, prayer, meditation, and right thinking do not influence the ebb and flow of our spiritual development. They only influence the way we

experience it.

You can prove this to yourself by remembering that your spiritual awakening began long before you were conscious of it. It was happening before you knew what metaphysics, meditation and prayer, and the power of positive thinking were. Your search for Truth is a *response* to the dawning of God's presence in your consciousness. This dawning probably began to manifest itself as a sense of dissatisfaction that caused you to question some of the ideas that seemed important to you at one time but were not giving the satisfaction they once did. Without really knowing it, you began to outgrow your old ideas. Your dissatisfaction caused you to start searching for something that addressed this ambiguous awakening, and your search has led you into the study of metaphysics, the practice of meditation and prayer as you now understand them, and the art of monitoring your thought processes. As many other people have expressed, you probably found yourself leaning toward the ideas we teach in Unity long before you were formally exposed to them. Your spiritual awakening is a conscious response to a call initiated by God; God is not responding to a call initiated by you.

This is an important perspective to maintain, because for some reason, when our spirituality begins to dawn on us, we suddenly feel we are responsible for keeping our evolutionary process going. The intellect attempts to assume a role it has no way of knowing how to perform because it has never before undergone spiritual transformation. It must bow to a higher wisdom and acknowledge that the intuitive nature is a valid channel through which this wisdom is revealed, lest it cause a fear of failure in this most important area of life. After all,

spiritual evolution is a process of becoming intellectually aware of that which you already intuitively know.

If you have carried into your quest for Truth a consciousness of sin and guilt instilled by past religious training, you are likely to complicate matters more by interpreting the ebb as punishment for not having done what God expects you to do. Or you may be like many Truth students who have successfully given up their fear of being punished by an angry and jealous god but have subtly transferred this fear of punishment to the law of cause and effect. They feel this apparent spiritual eclipse is brought on as the just result of their secret negative or limited thinking, and they are simply getting what they metaphysically deserve.

Not understanding the nature of spiritual evolution and how the power and intelligence of God work through you causes both negative and positive reactions to an activity that is really working to lift you into unimaginable heights. God is just as present and active in the ebb side of the cycle as in the flow side, and when you understand this you will not interpret the ebb as the negative result of personal failure and will get on with learning the lessons you need to learn while you are experiencing it. Nothing in this loving universe is seeking to punish you for lack of knowledge of this "promised land" that you are moving into.

Speaking of the Promised Land, the Bible portrays this ebb and flow in detail in the story of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. Though they were headed for the promised land, they still had high and low moments. There were times when they were hungry or thirsty or threatened by some enemy and it seemed the Lord had completely abandoned them.

More than once they murmured against Moses, complaining that, bad as Egypt was, at least they could eat and drink and feel safe there. At other times, their needs were abundantly met and having faith in God was easy and natural. Moses had an understanding of the journey they were making, for he had a revelation of the big picture. Beneath the ebb and flow of surface appearances he could see a greater power working for their good. Though his faith was tried again and again, he kept his vision on God's promise and eventually led his people to its fulfillment.

How might we explain the occurrence of this ebb and flow in our spiritual growth? Are we saying that God's presence is stronger at some times and weaker at others? No. If we accept the idea that God is equally present everywhere at the same time, it would be difficult to explain it as the coming and going of God, the waxing and waning of omnipresent Spirit. We will have to look at it as having to do with the receptivity of the individual undergoing spiritual transformation.

Spiritual growth is the activity of replacing false ideas in the consciousness, or soul, with divine ideas. This is not accomplished in a single movement but in a succession of movements covering a long period of time.

During this time you may revert to your old ideas on a regular basis, and this may strike you as being somewhat hypocritical, adding another reason to interpret the ebb as negative. After all, we've all had a word or two to say about religious hypocrites, haven't we? During your flow periods you can't imagine going back to your old thinking patterns, but you do it anyway because-like it or not-you are still attached to them. If you will simply allow yourself room

to be gradually weaned from these old patterns of thought and behavior instead of expecting it all to happen overnight, you can continue to know God is with you even when you do not feel His presence. God cannot abandon you and you cannot abandon God. Even if you have felt remiss in your spiritual studies, God cannot hold it against you. Is God so weak that your negative or indifferent mental power can hold Him back? If He was strong enough to break into a consciousness as negative as Saul's, is He not also strong enough to break into yours?

You must come to know that God is with you on your spiritual quest even when your heart is not in it. He has called you to come up higher and He knows how to lead you through your darkest times. Do not grumble when you do not feel His presence. Do not assume you have done anything wrong. Do not tell yourself that you should know better than to let yourself fall so far away from God. Be patient with yourself. Know the feeling of God's presence will come again. Stop fighting the natural process of your spiritual evolution. Of course we would love to always feel the Spirit, but we are much better off emotionally if we understand that the transformation we are undergoing is a gradual one and that we do not just slough off in a few moments, days, or weeks an identity that has taken us years to build. Know that God is in charge of the wonderful awakening you are undergoing, and He has no intention of quitting on you now!

## The Narrow Gate

By Anne Wilson

"Enter by the narrow gate .... For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Mt. 7:13, 14).

We had been hiking through a steep mountain pass in Yosemite National Park. The rocky granite cliffs rose on either side. At one point, the pass through which my hiking companions and I were struggling became so narrow that we had to squeeze through it one at a time. Beyond lay a breathtaking vista of the valley, carpeted with thick forests of redwoods and pine.

The narrow way!

The way through which each person must pass alone! It made me think of Jesus' words in a new light. "Few find it," He had said. Could that be because we are so accustomed to doing everything in crowds that we fear the uncharted territories within, through which we must pass alone? Are we so hesitant in trusting the Christ within us that we must always fall back, waiting for group approval?

Ultimately each of us must develop a *personal* relationship with God. No matter what groups or denomination we belong to, we are each called to know ourselves and acknowledge our need of God. God asks us for a unique and personal definition of our faith, and the answer must come from within each of us. It is vital to our own existence and awareness, so that our own unique affirmation of God may become "flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone."

It can be scary to try to find our personal sense of God. There are many dangers along the way. It is easier to accept group definitions and fall back on other people's thinking, especially if we feel that they are more learned than we are, or more skilled. In

the noise and activity of our social groups, we can hide our own insecurities and muffle the voice of little doubts and fears. We can bolster our own opinions by citing those of "everybody else." There is a certain "safety in numbers" maxim that we go by, though a false security is all we achieve by doing so.

Yet we need not diminish the importance of community worship, of belonging to a congregation, and of a preference for a particular denomination. Each of these things is important in our Christian life, too. We are a "people of God" as distinctly and uniquely as we are also individuals. Our society depends upon the strengths of group identities as much as on separate persons.

Yet within the larger body of our churches, our communities, and our relationships, we are still individuals. As individuals, our beliefs and responses will be colored by the experiences, perceptions, and personal characteristics that are uniquely our own. We may agree generally on certain precepts or interpretations, but our inner selves must experience these on a much more personal level. Like Jacob wrestling with his angel, all of us must confront ourselves and know that we are known by God even more than we can ever know ourselves. Like Jacob, we struggle constantly to come to terms with our spirituality, with integrity, and with balance. Thus, our struggle is not always a combat against evil, but also a challenge to that which we consider good, as well.

"*Who do you say that I am?*" (Mt. 16:15). Don't you wonder what Peter's feelings might have been when he was put on the spot by the teacher and master whom he loved?

It was hard for Peter to rely on his own inner conviction. We know that his answer to Jesus

began with a reiteration of what other people had spoken. But Jesus persisted, asking, "*But who do you say that I am?*" Then Peter did it—he passed through the narrow gate and revealed his own inner thinking. Christ blessed him because he had relied on the Spirit within him to supply the answer, not merely mouthed the opinions of others.

This can be exceedingly difficult at times. Though it is easy to oppose those with whom we are in strong disagreement, it is not so easy when we are swayed by friends whom we cherish and admire. Yet there will be times when even our most cherished companions and trusted fellow Christians may not always agree with us; there may be times when an experience may challenge what we have believed or cause us to re-examine some aspect of our thinking—times when the insistent little voice of doubt rises up and screams in our ears!

These are the times when we need to take a deep breath and pass through the narrow gate into the presence of the Lord. We must go to God alone with our worries and fears, trust Him with those things we least want to look at in ourselves, and *know* that God is with us!

God will put the question, then, to each of us: "*Who do you say that I am?*" If, through our own painstaking challenges and convictions, we have affirmed: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Mt. 16:16), we will have found the narrow gate that leads to life, for the Spirit within us will reveal the truth and truth brings its own inner freedom. Trusting God—knowing He is there for us—will enable us to risk the lonely, narrow passageway. Each time we are willing to be honest with ourselves and with God, we are demonstrating our willingness to enter by the narrow gate into life!

# February 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<i>1</i> A.A. Men's Group, 10 AM  CA 7PM	<i>2</i> Ukulele Practice, 7PM	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i> Choir Practice, 9AM
<i>5</i> Sunday Services, 10:30 AM Youth Ed, 10:30 AM  Quilt Display	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i> A.A. Men's Group, 10 AM  CA 7PM	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i> Choir Practice, 9AM
<i>12</i> Sunday Services, 10:30 AM Youth Ed, 10:30 AM  Pancake Brunch	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i> Book Club, A <b>Husband's Secret</b> , by Liane Moriarty at Bread Co. at 2PM  Valentine's Day	<i>15</i> A.A. Men's Group, 10 AM  CA 7PM	<i>16</i> Third Thursday Quilters, 10 AM  Ukulele Practice, 7PM	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i> Choir Practice, 9AM
<i>19</i> Sunday Services, 10:30 AM Youth Ed, 10:30 AM	<i>20</i> Ladies' Night Out, 026 Bar & Grill, 515 Gravois Rd, 63026 at 5:30 PM  President's Day	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i> A.A. Men's Group, 10 AM  CA 7PM	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>25</i> Choir Practice, 9AM
<i>26</i> Sunday Services, 10:30 AM Youth Ed, 10:30 AM	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>				

# Wings

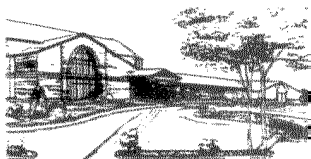
THE FEBRUARY 2017 NEWSLETTER OF  
FIRST UNITY CHURCH OF ST. LOUIS

First Unity Church  
4753 Butler Hill Road  
St. Louis, MO 63128

Phone: (314) 845-8540  
Fax: (314) 845-0022  
Email: [firstunity@firstunitychurchstlouis.org](mailto:firstunity@firstunitychurchstlouis.org)  
[www.firstunitychurchstlouis.org](http://www.firstunitychurchstlouis.org)

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## The light side — A little holy humor

Running late for a meeting, a man circled the block, looking for a place to park. Desperately, he raised his eyes toward heaven and prayed, “Lord, if you’ll find me a parking spot, I promise I’ll start going to church again.”

Just then, a car pulled out of a space right in front of the man. “Never mind,” he said to God. “I found one!”

\*\*\*\*\*

My generation just might have been lucky. I had a “drug” problem when I was young, but I turned out all right anyway.

- I was drug to church.
- I was drug to family reunions.
- I was drug out of bed in the early morning.

- I was drug by the ears when I was disrespectful.
- I was also drug to the woodshed when I disobeyed my parents.

\*\*\*\*\*

There’s an old story about a gravestone with this inscription on it:

As you are now, so once was I.  
As I am now, you are sure to be.

So may I say, as now I lie,  
Prepare yourself to follow me.

Someone came along and wrote these words in chalk beneath the inscription:

To follow you I’m not content  
Until I know the way you went.

\*\*\*\*\*

A woman called a newspaper office to complain that her Sunday

paper hadn’t arrived. Trying to calm her, the man at the office pointed out that the paper hadn’t arrived because it was Saturday.

After a brief silence, the woman said meekly, “Well, that explains why there was no one in church today.”

\*\*\*\*\*

A very embarrassed woman apologized to her pastor because her husband had gotten up and left the sanctuary during the sermon.

“My husband didn’t leave because he disagreed with your sermon,” she said. “Actually, he’s been walking in his sleep since he was a child.”