



# unity

December 2014—January 2015  
Vol 31, Issue 1

Unity Church in Albany • 21 King Avenue • Albany NY 12206 • 518-453-3603 • [www.unityalbany.org](http://www.unityalbany.org)

## Jesus' Brothers & Sisters



At Christmas we recall the birth of Jesus. We see nativity scenes; recreations of the stables be-

hind the traveler's shelter where he was born. We imagine his parents looking lovingly on him as he rests in his manger bed with shepherds and angels nearby. The stories of the birth of Jesus found in Matthew and Luke are wonderful reminders of the simple beginnings of the man who would one day experience his Divine or Christ nature and then go on to help us re-frame our understanding of both God and ourselves. And while we may realize that the stories of Jesus' birth are more symbol or allegory than history, most of us still find them both comforting and inspiring.

But what about the other children of Joseph and Mary? In Matthew 13:55-56 we read that when Jesus returned to Nazareth and tried to teach there, people asked, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers

James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us?" We tend to forget that Jesus did not grow up as an only child. Here we have four brothers named; James, Joseph, Simon and Judas, along with a reference to "all of his sisters". This was no small family!

From other historical sources, we know that after his resurrection, his brother James, known as James the Just, became a leader in the early Christian movement. In the Gospel of Thomas, an original collection of Jesus teaching dating to the same time period as our other gospels, we read of Jesus' followers saying, "We know that you are going to leave us. Who will be our leader?" To this question Jesus replies, "No matter where you are, you are to go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being." Clearly Jesus viewed his brother James as more than just a sibling. Thomas' assertion that Jesus had designated his brother James (not John) to carry on his work may explain why Thomas is por-

trayed as both dense and doubting in the Gospel of John. Some scholars have also raised the question of whether Thomas, which in Aramaic is a nickname meaning the twin, was yet another of Jesus' brothers.

So Jesus has brothers and sisters, and at least one of his brothers is actively engaged with him in his spiritual work. How might we imagine their births? Did Joseph and Mary smile warmly and lovingly on them? Did the radiance or spirit of God shine in their eyes too? Did angels watch over them and guide them as they grew into men and women? I believe the answer to each of these questions is yes, of course. Did each of them come to understand and experience their Divine or Christ nature fully like their brother Jesus? James might have, and perhaps some of the others, at least to a degree. By now, they may all be fully awake.

Like us, each of Jesus' brothers and sisters was a Divine creation with an inner Christ nature. At one point in his travels, Jesus

### *Mission Statement*

*The mission of Unity Church in Albany is to awaken to and embrace the Christ in all persons through prayer and service.*

(cont'd on pg. 3)

## President's Corner



What would you do?

By Dottie Frament

"What would I do, if I knew that I could not fail?  
If I believed, would the wind always fill up my sail?  
How far would I go? What could I achieve, trusting  
the hero in me?"

**If I were brave**, I'd walk the razor's edge, where fools  
and dreamers dare to tread.

I'd never lose faith, even when losing my way.

What step would I take today, if I were brave?

What would I do today, if I were brave?"

What would I do today, if I were brave?

What if we're all meant to do what we secretly dream?

What would you ask, if you knew you could have  
anything?

Like the mighty oak sleeps, in the heart of a seed,  
are there miracles in you and me?

**If I were brave**, I'd walk the razor's edge, where fools  
and dreamers dare to tread.

I'd never lose faith, even when losing my way.

What step would I take today, if I were brave?

What would I do today, if I were brave?

What would I do today, if I were brave?

If I refuse to listen to the voice of fear, would the  
voice of courage whisper in my ear?

**If I were brave**, I'd walk the razor's edge, where fools  
and dreamers dare to tread.

I'd never lose faith, even when losing my way.

What step would I take today, if I were brave?

What would I do today, **if I were brave?**

### What would you do today if you were brave?

These lyrics from Jana Stanfield's song, "If I were brave", set me to thinking. If I knew that I could not fail, why would there be any hesitation in moving forward? It's that unexamined fear that I most certainly can "fail", however, that slows down the momentum. Today, I realize that in those moments of stalled momentum, I am forgetting about Grace. Grace is the gift that is always there for me if I only awaken to it. The writer Anne Lamott says, "I do not at all understand the mystery of grace, only that it meets us where we are, but it does not leave us where it found us." (*Grace (Eventually): Thoughts on Faith.*)

So if we find that we don't feel brave enough to follow through on a dream or an insight, perhaps we might want to consider calling upon and receiving the source energy of Grace, the freely given gift that is always present in the soul.

My friends and I were having this conversation about what we could do if we were brave. We instantly generated a long list of ways in which we could make heroic shifts, if we trusted that, in the big scheme of things, we could not fail. We found that there are lots of things that we hesitate to initiate even though they may seem more mundane than mountain-moving.

For starters, we came up with: If I were brave today, I would:

- Make the phone call I've been too timid to initiate
- Allow my child to wear what he or she wants to wear
- Allow my child to feel good about his/her choice, even if I think they might face ridicule or might not achieve the successful outcome I want for them
- Forgive or ask forgiveness for what I once thought was unforgivable
- Leave the job I hate
- Let go of sentimental possessions that I no longer need to remind me of the love or friendship of the person who gave them to me
- Be willing to look at my shadow side, with whatever support I may need
- Set aside a time and place to allow myself to grieve losses
- Say no to something good because it's not what I really want to do

As you can imagine, the list is endless. What would you do if you knew that you could not fail? Why not take a moment to write down what comes up when you ask this question.

Let us consider this thought: Grace (aka "Courage") is available today to trust the hero in ourselves. Because we are brave, today we might see the miracles in you and me.

*Namaste*

## Jesus' Brothers & Sisters

(cont'd.)

uses the arrival of his mother and brothers and sisters at the house where he was teaching to point toward this when he asks, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" He then comments, "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:48-49). Those who have found their God connection understand that, at the level of Spirit, they are all brothers and sisters and even mothers to one another and to Jesus.

And that brings us to your Divine birth. You may not have been born in a stable at Christmas but you do have a place in the holy family that includes Joseph and Mary and Jesus and James the Just and the many other sons and daughters of "Our Father" God. So how might we imagine your holy birth? I'm not just talking about your physical birth but your birth into the awareness of your Divine or Christ nature. Might angels be gently watching over you, shepherding your mind as it awakens to its Divine nature? Might the Christ within all those around you smile warmly as moment by moment you are born into Christ awareness? And might the birth of your Christ nature inspire and awaken the memory of the Christ within other members of your family; your brothers or sisters or mothers?



This Christmas, I invite us all to celebrate not just the birth of Jesus, but the birthing of the Christ in ourselves, our friends, our neighbors. We are all Jesus' brothers and sisters. Let us acknowledge ourselves as members of this very holy family, the family of Jesus, the family of God. Let us treat

one another not only with gentleness, kindness and love, but also with reverence and respect for the Christ that lives within. Perhaps this year we too will get to witness the birth of the Christ in some of those around us... or even in ourselves.

***May the light of Christ, the true light of the Christmas season, shine in your mind and in your eyes that you might behold the birth of Christ in the holy ones that surround you.***

***Amen***



## Congratulations Jane Bloom, LUT!



In November, Jane Bloom completed her coursework and examinations and became a Licensed Unity Teacher. A Licensed Unity Teacher (LUT) is similar to a lay minister in other denominations with one notable exception, it generally requires considerably more time and training. Jane is now fully licensed and approved by Unity to teach all Unity classes and coursework. Additionally, Jane has chosen the area of Youth Education as a specialty area. That means she has also been trained and certified to develop and lead Unity youth programs.

Jane began this process by taking many hours of prerequisite classes in order to apply to the program. These are the same prerequisite classes required for applying to the Unity seminary. She then spent three years taking LUT classes on line and in person at Unity Village. This November, she traveled to Unity Village for her final written and oral examinations and, of course, passed with flying colors. We congratulate Jane on her commitment to serving Unity as a Licensed Unity Teacher. We look forward to her continued work with our youth program and to the possibility of additional Unity classes being offered at our church.



## We Are The Ones



By Roger Mock

The idea of Divini'y showing up in the flesh in this material world is one that finds resonance in many traditions. Jews long for the promised **Messiah**; for Christians the Messiah is **Jesus** of Nazareth, who has already come and ascended to heaven but will reappear (perhaps in a new guise) at his Second Coming. Muslims also expect the second advent of Jesus, who will come as a Muslim **Imam**. Buddhist sutras prophesy the coming of the **Maitreya Buddha**; Hindu scriptures prophesy the future descent of an avatar named **Kalki**; Zoroastrian scriptures prophesy the coming of the **Saoshyant**; and some Confucian texts speak of a future **True Man** who will finally bring peace to the world by perfectly instituting the Way of Confucius. \*

These days, if you are tuned in to some new age sources, you keep hearing about something big coming soon to a planet near you (that would be here) called Ascension, or "moving into fourth density." It's the idea that the whole earth and all of us with it (some who perhaps dislike their neighbors say "most of us") are going to transform into a kind of heaven on earth. This has been interpreted as ful-

filling the second coming of Christ – we all become fully "Christed" beings. Others hope that benevolent extraterrestrials will show up and save the day.

Clearly the dream of the advent of a better day is deeply embedded in the human psyche. It typically shows up in the belief that someone out there will come here and lead us out of this mess, hopefully soon. That longing in turn stems from the feeling that I think we all share about the human experience that something is missing or out-of-whack. We feel incomplete and look for another person or experience to complete us. An old gospel song laments, "I can't feel at home in this world anymore," expressing a longing for deliverance from this "veil of tears" to the heavenly home.

In Unity, we believe that the wholeness we seek is already present and can be found right here and now. We affirm that our "Christed" nature is true right now. We do not need to look outside of ourselves for deliverance because the presence of the Divine is already there within. As St. Paul put it, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). We are Divinity showing up in the flesh. As poet June Jordan put it, "We are the ones who we've been waiting for."

\* Info from *World Scripture: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts*,  
International Religious Foundation



### Weekly Prayer & Meditation

Jerry Patel and friends continue to offer Sunday morning meditations each week. The regular practice of meditation builds peace and calmness within and helps us strengthen our awareness of our connection with the Divine. Group meditation makes the process easier and helps us move more deeply into the meditation experience. Sunday meditation is held in the large upstairs classroom. Please arrive before 10:15 AM as the doors will close to hold the silence for this sacred gathering.

### Prosperity Team Meeting

Please feel free to join the Prosperity Team on **December 14** for a visioning session in the sanctuary from approximately 12:20-12:50pm. If you have any questions, please contact Rob Geyer at 439-4564.

## Talking With God Workshop

One great desire in our heart is to be intimately connected with the Divine, to have a direct and meaningful conversation and to share our thoughts, questions and feeling and then to hear what God has to say back to us. I invite you to attend a workshop, Talking With God, which will be spread out over four consecutive weeks, beginning in January 14, 2015 @ 7:00p. For more information please see Rob Geyer.



## Unity Church Cares

As a church community, there are times in our lives when we may need help. **UnityChurchCares** is a volunteer ministry to offer such service in times of need. Utilize your church commUNITY for caring and support in the following ways:

Examples of congregant needs:

- ◆ Do you need a ride to church or an appointment?
- ◆ Are you having surgery and need a call for support?
- ◆ Are you having a short term occasional setback?
- ◆ Are you unable to prepare a meal due to temporary circumstances?
- ◆ Wish to share joys and/or accomplishments?

How to reach out for needs:

- ◆ Complete request form and insert in pink mailbox, both located in Bradford St. lobby
- ◆ Leave message at church telephone: call 453-3603, ext. 14
- ◆ E-mail requests to email: [unitychurchcares@yahoo.com](mailto:unitychurchcares@yahoo.com)
- ◆ Contact church minister, board member, or committee member

As a volunteer, perhaps you may be willing to be of service in the following ways. Examples of volunteer assistance:

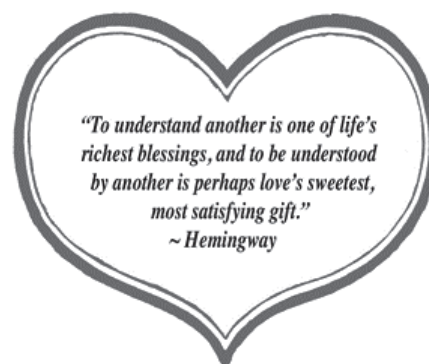
- ◆ Offer a ride to church or appointments
- ◆ Offer support via phone calls, cards, etc.
- ◆ Help with short term assistance... meals, errands, etc.

How to become a volunteer:

- ◆ Leave a note in pink mail box in Bradford St. lobby
- ◆ Send e-mail to [unitychurchcares@yahoo.com](mailto:unitychurchcares@yahoo.com)
- ◆ Phone call to church at 453-3603, ext. 14
- ◆ Contact minister, board member, or committee member

Be a person "on-call" monitoring needs of our commUNITY:

- ◆ Be "on-call" to monitor requests approx. 3-4x/year
- ◆ Check pink mail box for requests
- ◆ Monitor voice mail at church
- ◆ Check email requests
- ◆ Check in with individual's request for specific needs
- ◆ Access list of volunteers to carry out requests/needs
- ◆ Contact church minister, board member, committee member or Bonnie Kriss, 373-2135, [tedandbonkriss@hotmail.com](mailto:tedandbonkriss@hotmail.com)



**UnityChurchCares** is a program to help one another.

Who else to turn to but your church commUNITY?

We are a loving commUNITY who assists in a non-judgmental way,  
with love, and compassion.

"We are your family, we hold you in our hearts, you are the face of God."

## Dates To Note

### Stay Fit / Get Centered at Unity

**Yoga** with Deborah Foss

Mondays at 5:00p  
(785-4131 for info)

**Tai Chi** with Jerry Petell

Mondays at 7:00p  
(441-2418 for info)

**Pilates** with Kay Fuller

Saturdays at 9:00a  
(439-1775 for info)



### Unity Church Christmas Party Saturday, December 6th @ 7:00p

Join your Unity friends for an evening of fellowship, carols and fun. Everyone is invited, so feel free to bring family and friends. Light refreshments will be provided. This is a free event.

### Prosperity Team Meeting Sunday, December 14th, 12:20—12:50p

Please feel free to join the Prosperity Team for a visioning session in the sanctuary. If you have any questions, please contact Rob Geyer at 439-4564.

### Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Wednesday, December 24th, @ 5:30p

Rekindle the Christ light in your heart this Christmas. Join Reverend Jim and our Unity musicians as we sing and celebrate the birth of Christ Consciousness into our world. We have scheduled our service at 5:30 PM so that you can participate and still have the evening free for family and friends. Join us as we listen to the Christmas story, share prayers, songs, and light our Christmas candles together. What a wonderful gift to give the Christ child in you!

### Christmas Day Lunch (pot luck) Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup> 1:00-5:00p

Reverend Jim and Kay invite you to join them for a pot luck lunch and time of fellowship on Christmas Day. We gather to prepare for the meal at 1:00 PM; the meal begins around 2:00 PM. No reservation or sign up needed, just bring a dish to share and come on over. Family, friends and last minute drop-ins are always welcome. Christmas is a wonderful time to gather in friendship and community, won't you join us?

### New Year's Eve Burning Bowl Service Wednesday, December 31<sup>st</sup> @ 5:30p

Clear out the closets of your mind and make room for the life your soul desires. Open your imagination and heart to the blessings God is offering you. This is our traditional ritual of releasing to the burning bowl those things that no longer serve us and writing our letter to God claiming our vision of good for the coming year. We will sing, pray and step forward into a New Year filled with wonderful possibilities for all.

### Talk With God Workshop beginning January 14th @ 7:00p

One great desire in our heart is to be intimately connected with the divine, to have a direct and meaningful conversation and to share our thoughts, questions and feeling and then to hear what God has to say back to us. You are invited to attend a workshop, Talking With God, which will be spread out over four consecutive weeks. For more information please see Rob Geyer.

### Myrtle Fillmore and Unity Wednesday classes with Rev Jim beginning January 14<sup>th</sup> @ 7:15p

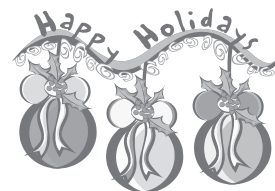
The book "Torch-Bearer to Light the Way" is in my opinion (*Rev Jim*) the finest biography of Myrtle Fillmore written. Through excerpts from her letters and articles it explores her role in the founding of Unity. The book offers a detailed look into her spiritual beliefs and thoughts about healing. The appendices, over 100 pages, include samples of her healing letters and articles on various teachers and sources that shaped her practices and beliefs. There are also sections in the book devoted to Charles Fillmore and the Fillmore family. Additionally, this class will incorporate information on Myrtle, Charles and Unity from other resources.

The book is out of print. A limited number of copies are available in our bookstore. Copies can also be ordered through Amazon.com and other on-line booksellers.

Since this material in this class is quite similar to that covered in our New Member Classes, participation in this class will be accepted in place of the membership class for individuals wanting to join Unity Church.

### Coffee House Saturday, January 31<sup>st</sup> 7:00-9:30p

This is an open mic night with music, poetry, humor and more. Sign in before 6:45p to share your talents, or just come 7:00p and enjoy the show. Admission is only \$5, and includes refreshments.



## Spotlight On Service



### Lois Crommelin

*Many of us who have experienced "coming home" when we started attending Unity are so appreciative that it becomes a natural next-step to want to give back out of gratitude. In Unity, we are encouraged to choose an avenue of service which coincides with what we love to do. That way service becomes easy and a joy to perform. Lois' first choice for service was becoming a member of the garden committee since she loved gardening. Since that time, she has participated in many other service activities using her God-given skills and engaging in activities she enjoys. There are also activities that can be challenging but can offer an opportunity to discover more of what we are capable of being. Lois' willingness to stretch by serving on the church board has brought her many blessings both personally and interpersonally.*

I was raised in a protestant background with my father serving as church deacon, trustee and as a member of the stewardship committee. He was an honest and trustworthy man and an excellent model for service. I attended Sunday school regularly and learned the Bible stories. When I was thirteen, I was baptized on Easter Sunday. Far up above the altar area was a stain glassed window with a large white dove as the centerpiece. As I was being baptized, that white dove flew down to me from that window, lit upon my left shoulder and blessed me. This was my very first spiritual experience and I have never forgotten it.

As I grew thru my teens and young adult hood, I became confused by an image of God that was both loving and vengeful. This effected my entire life. I eventually abandoned everything I was ever taught and went on a quest of my own for several years, avoiding organized religions. But then I investigated the Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist and Pentecostal traditions. Each of these doctrines offered me a few years of advice, but held rules, condemnation, and judgments. I eventually realized My God was way bigger than all of that!! My sister suggested I seek out a Unity Church, as she had found one in San Francisco where she is living, that offered her a way to seek her own spiritual path without rules or judgment.

Imagine that!

So I found Unity Church in Albany online in 2008 and began attending regularly, soaking it all in. Like others before me, have discovered I was HOME. Unity was a Life Changer for me. I began to read everything I could about the Unity movement, our co-founders, Silent Unity, and began to attend Wednesday classes. I learned a new way to pray and meditate. Everything I was learning was making sense. I was "hungry and I was being fed." I joined the church officially in 2010. My first acts of service were with the garden committee as flowers are my Love. I see God there. Then what followed was the Book store. It's exciting to share my "reads" and those recommended by our Minister. I served on a retreat committee, fall clean-ups, pot lucks, hospitality, circulation day, used book fair, and a Christmas party.

When Jackie Hawkins went off to Unity Village to pursue her calling, I told her that I would be there for her graduation in four years. I then started reading in books and online all I could find about Unity Village. In June of 2013 I was off to the Village which became the biggest spiritual experience of my life. The Village is beautiful and sacred ground. Spirit stunned me and I walked with God during those four days. I experienced a transcended, profound existence. I returned with an entirely different perspective about who I am, my purpose, my relationships with others. I was changed!! In gratitude, I immediately partnered with Silent Unity and became a member of their Circle of Friends, sending in a portion of my tithe each month.

Back in Albany, I was asked if I would consider being on the board. I was delighted and honored to be nominated and then elected. I now serve as the secretary and liaison for Sunday worship. This year I attended the 4T class and learned to truly tithe and have been blessed beyond measure. That was another opening for me to expand my spirit and grow.

Many responsibilities come along with service but I can assure anyone considering service that the joys, satisfactions, and the blessings well outweigh the "work". You will develop many like-minded quality friends; folks who desire to wake up and grow. Laughter, joy, and peace all follow service. Yes, some nights you will feel tired but the satisfaction of serving others will make you smile as you lay your head upon your pillow. Please listen to the call of your own heart. What interests you? Then abandon all "thought" and GO FOR IT! Spirit and others will help and guide you to your true calling.

*"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."*

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.



# Unity Church in Albany

21 King Avenue  
Albany, NY 12206  
Telephone: 518-453-3603  
www.unityalbany.org



## Worship Schedule

**Morning Services**  
at 9:00 AM & 11:00 AM

**Sunday Evening Service**  
at 6:00 PM each week

*Multi-faith service with music, meditation  
and chanting  
(different each Sunday)*



## You Are Welcome Here!

A place to worship, grow spiritually, feel loved and accepted—is no small matter. In our spiritual family, we know there are many paths that lead to God. We believe that Spirit led you here. Our desire is to share Christ's love with genuine heartfelt warmth. We are a gathering of all kinds of people with various backgrounds, life-styles, and life-stories. Growing together we worship, we serve, we laugh, we cry, we learn, and we reach out to our world with life-transforming truth. We aspire to live as Christ and be receptive to Spirit as it calls us to Life. Our name says it all; we are a Unity of believers celebrating and participating in inclusive worship. If you've been praying, searching and hoping for a place to belong, we say again—Welcome Home!



## Sunday Prayer & Meditation

Jerry Petell "and friends"  
will lead the Sunday morning prayer  
and meditation from 10:15 to 10:45  
AM. Please arrive before 10:15 as the  
doors will close at that time.



## Supporting the Food Pantry

The director of the food pantry has let us know that they particularly need:

Laundry detergent  
Cleaning supplies

While you're shopping this week, be mindful of your abundance, and attentive to the generosity of spirit. At other times, you may want to keep this rotation in mind.

### **Week #1—WOMEN'S WEEK!**

Needed are feminine pads, tampons, washes, shampoo, conditioner, tooth brushes & toothpaste, deodorants & soap.

### **Week #2—MEN'S WEEK!**

Needed are shaving cream, razors, deodorants, shampoo & soap, toothbrushes & toothpaste.

### **Week #3—BABY WEEK!**

Disposable diapers, baby wipes, lotions & shampoos.

### **Week #4—HOUSEHOLD WEEK!**

Toilet Paper, laundry soap, paper towels, household cleansers.