



The Messenger

Unity Church in Albany • 21 King Avenue • Albany NY 12206 • 518-453-3603

Christmas as the Birth of Innocence

By Rev. Jim Fuller



IF YOU PAY ATTENTION to your thought processes you will notice that you are constantly evaluating, comparing and cataloging everything you see, hear and think. Notice how you assign meanings to these various thoughts and experiences. Some seem important, others less so. Some seem helpful, others harmful. Each new idea or experience is also compared against all those you have previously evaluated. Unfortunately many of the past evaluations were probably inaccurate or incorrect. Some of the ideas or situations that you once judged as good weren't really all that good or productive. Other experiences that you judged against and avoided were actually missed opportunities. If you are willing to be honest with yourself you will quickly realize that your ability to correctly assess and evaluate situations, experiences and even thoughts is very limited.

It is easy to see how your present ability to make accurate and clear evaluations is still influenced by all those meanings you assigned in the past. Perhaps you once felt intimidated by a teacher who placed high demands on you so you labeled him as unloving or unkind. As you continued through school you used this teacher to evaluate others by; those who seemed like him, those who were (in your experience) kinder, and those who seemed even less loving. As you do this with different people and various situations you build up a huge catalog of comparisons in your mind.

How many were inaccurate? How many were simply wrong? As we continue to make more and more judgments, each influenced by previous errors we move deeper and deeper in to confusion. We also use these inaccurate and incorrect judgments to evaluate ourselves. If you do something that reminds you of the teacher you believed to be unloving, then you must be unloving too. If you don't respond like the people you have evaluated as generous or good, then perhaps you are not.

As we paint ourselves into a corner after corner with our judgments we may feel stuck and hopeless. Is it any wonder that so many people today struggle with depression and anxiety? Before we start judging ourselves for being stuck, let's find a way out of the whole evaluation, comparison and judgment mess. In *A Course In Miracles* Jesus reminds us that we actually only experience two emotions, love and fear. Everything that we experience or think is some form of either love or fear. If you are willing to quiet your mind, even for a few moments, you can usually sense which emotion is present in you now. Since your quiet mind is not thinking, only feeling or sensing, all the meanings and judgment from your past

Learning to notice if you are feeling love or some form of fear is a simple yet effective way out of the corner you may seem stuck in.

Blessing of Our Animal Companions

WITH THE SUN SHINING and the air crisp on a beautiful early fall day, a procession of people and their beloved pets made their way to Unity Church for the annual Blessing of Our Animal Companions.



Roger Mock led the gathered flock in song while John Frederick and Sa'mone welcomed the animals (and their human companions) and led them in prayer. All of the pets were blessed, each in turn, and after another song, the group enjoyed some refreshments.

Everyone noted how many wonderful gifts animals bring to our lives: examples of unconditional love, companionship, willingness to listen without comment or judgment, warmth, opportunities for interactions with others, opportunities for walking and playing, health and healing physically, emotionally and spiritually. The list of gifts that our animal friends give is endless.

Special thanks to Rev. Jim for helping to set up and give support and guidance to make the day complete. We look forward to next year's celebration of our animal friends and to their constant presence for many years to come.



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

Birth of Innocence —

Continued from Page 1

are less likely to color your awareness of what is actually happening. Learning to notice if you are feeling love or some form of fear is a simple yet effective way out of the corner you may seem stuck in. Sometimes fear may try to disguise itself as love, but if clinging, neediness or manipulation is present the underlying fear is quickly exposed. Love on the other hand is always accompanied by feelings of connection, contentment, and wellness. Love (another name for God) has no need to separate or control; it is generous and freeing.

As we celebrate Christmas, the birth of Christ Consciousness into our minds and lives, let us take time to notice what we are feeling in our hearts. Human thinking may have led us down many dark alleys of fear in the past, but we certainly don't have to remain there. There is a deep Christ Wisdom within each of us that knows what is true and loving. This Christ Wisdom was Jesus' connection with the Mind that he called Abba (Papa); it is our connection to that God Mind as well. As an extension of God Mind, the Christ Wisdom does not speak to us through judgment, logic or comparison. It speaks simply and directly through insight and feelings. If you listen carefully this Christmas, it will speak to you of the innocence that is the truth of your being; innocence that has never been spoiled or marred by anything you

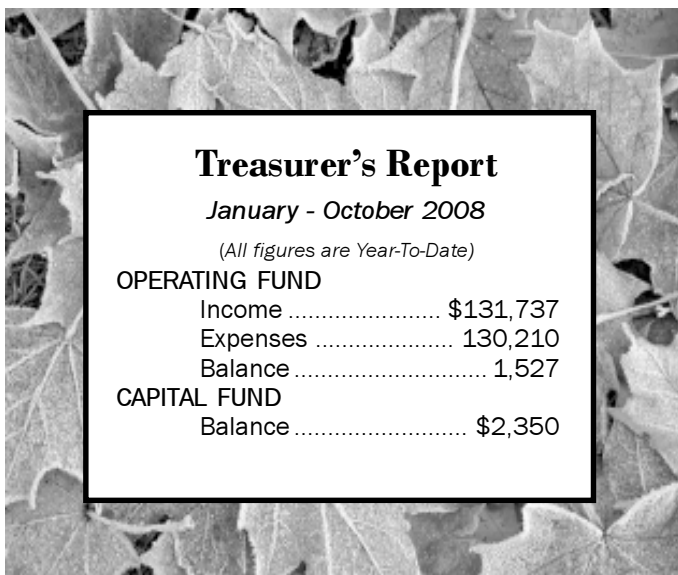


have done or imagined. It will remind you that this same innocence lives in every person around you, and it will show this to you this you if let it.

All that is asked of you is the willingness release your desire to judge yourself and others. If you will leave all judgment to God you will be pleased with the outcome, for in the Mind of God your innocence has never been questioned or forgotten. Within each one of us is all the innocence, perfection and potential that we imagine when we see images of the infant Jesus lying in his manger bed. No judgments, fears or doubts can linger long in a mind that welcomes the innocent Consciousness of the Christ at Christmas. And where there is no fear; love, peace, safety and certainty must be present. We are not asked to undo our past thinking and judgments. We are simply asked to constantly redirect our attention toward love and innocence, both in ourselves and in those around us. The fact that we can do this is one of the great miracles of Christmas,

because it demonstrates to us that the Christ Mind is still present in us. Does this require some concentration and practice? Yes it does. And yet, what greater gift could you receive at Christmas than to have your own innocence proclaimed by the Christ Mind in you?

“May you experience yourself as the innocent child of God that you are, and may you share that vision of innocence with all those who still suffer in judgment.”



Treasurer's Report

January - October 2008

(All figures are Year-To-Date)

OPERATING FUND

Income	\$131,737
Expenses	130,210
Balance	1,527

CAPITAL FUND

Balance	\$2,350
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Christmas gift suggestions:

To your enemy, forgiveness.

To an opponent, tolerance.

To a friend, your heart.

To a customer, service.

To all, charity.

To every child, a good example.

To yourself, respect.”

— Oren Arnold



Christmas Party

Saturday, December 13th at 7:00 PM

Join your Unity friends for an evening of fellowship, songs and fun. Light refreshments will be provided.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

December 24th at 5:30 – 6:30 PM

Rekindle the Christ light in your heart this Christmas. Join Reverend Jim and our Unity musicians as we celebrate the birth of Christ Consciousness in our lives. We have scheduled our service early to allow you to spend the evening with family or friends. Join us as we listen to the Christmas story, share prayers, sing hymns, and light our Christmas candles together.

Christmas Day Luncheon

December 25th from 1:00 – 5:00 PM

Reverend Jim and Kay invite you to join them for a pot luck lunch and time of fellowship on Christmas Day. Come early and enjoy lunch or just drop by to say hello. We will sing carols, share stories and perhaps even enjoy a short film. As always you are welcome to bring friends or family. Christmas is a wonderful time to gather and celebrate, won't you join us?

Unity Newsletter

Articles for the February/March edition of the newsletter can be submitted to Denise Klein at katzr3@nycap.rr.com by Sunday, January 18th.

Your news articles, spiritual thoughts, poetry, photos, humor or suggestions are always welcomed.

New Years' Eve Burning Bowl Service

December 31st at 5:30 – 6:30 PM

Clear out the closets of your mind and make room for the life you desire. Open your heart and your imagination to the blessings that God is offering you now. This is our traditional ritual of releasing to the burning bowl those things that we choose to let go of and writing our letter to God stating our vision for the coming year. Join us as we sing, pray and move into a New Year filled with wonderful possibility for all.

Ongoing events: “You Can Heal Your Life,”

Weekly Classes

Eleven-week series runs through December 17

This class will focus on healing through affirmative prayer and changing our inner patterns of thought using ideas from her bestselling book.

We encourage you to read the book (at least the introduction and first chapter) before attending the class. Books (including audio books), affirmation cards and other materials are available in our bookstore.

A Course In Miracles Study Groups

Sunday, 7:00 PM: at Unity Church

Mondays, 7:00 PM: in Delmar, call 439-1775 for details.

Unity Book Club

**Reading for January-February 2009:
“The Third Jesus” by Deepak Chopra**

**Book Discussion with Reverend Jim:
Sunday, February 22 at 12:45 PM**

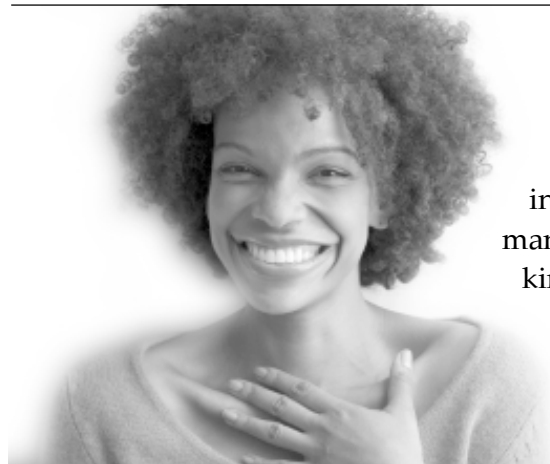
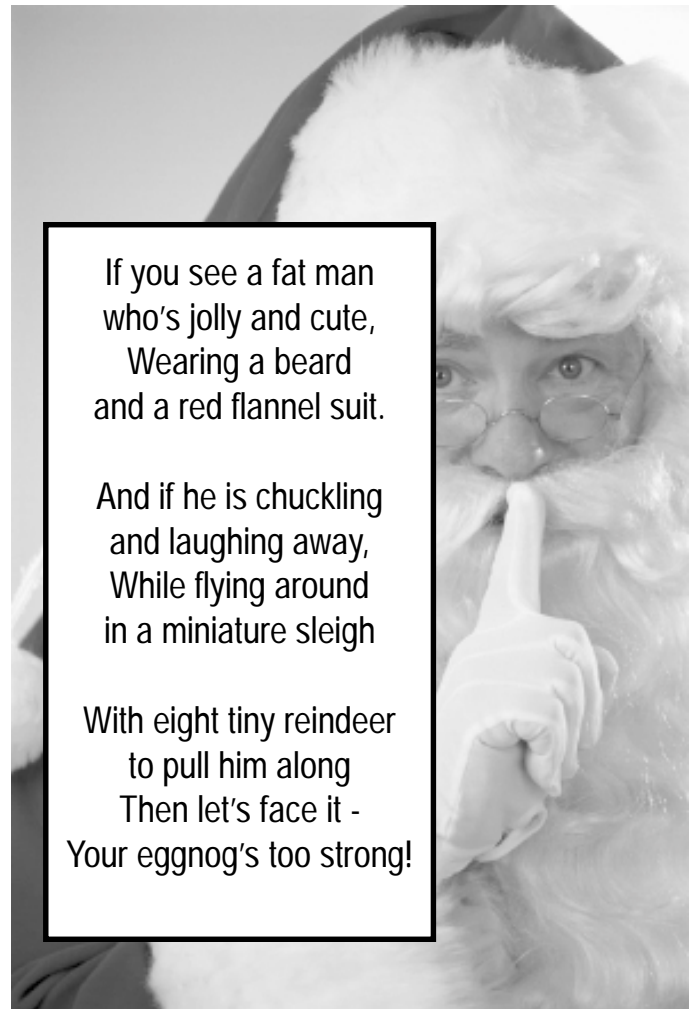
(The Book Club is on break during December.)

Winter Class

“The Third Jesus: The Christ We Cannot Ignore” with Rev Jim, Deepak Chopra and Rev Wendy Craig-Purcell

Wednesdays at 7:15 pm - Jan 14 through Feb 18

WHO IS THE THIRD JESUS and how will we recognize him? How does Christianity fit into contemporary spiritual teachings and practices? The Third Jesus is both thought provoking and insightful. And it articulates many of Unity’s core teachings. Each class will begin with a 30 minute video featuring Dr. Chopra discussing concepts found in his book. The second half of the class will be a discussion facilitated by Reverend Jim. Who is the mysterious Rev. Wendy Craig-Purcell? Join us and find out.



The Ripple Effect

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THE RIPPLE EFFECT created just in smiling at someone? Try this experiment. Smile at people and see how many smiles you receive in return. You’ll be amazed at how far kindness can travel in just a short amount of time. Your inner peace is reaching out to others and the ripples of love and understanding are spreading outward in a never-ending circle.

Now visualize the peace of God encircling the globe. You’re a part of that peace because you’re on a spiritual journey—a pathway that includes peace in your day-to-day living. Just as with any journey, you can pack for the trip. Carry with you an attitude of peace, enfold yourself in God’s love, and always, always have generous amounts of concern and caring ready to share with the world community.

Reprinted with permission from <http://www.unityonline.org/prayer/articles/pathwaysToPeace.html>

Spotlight on Service

By John Daubney



Don Raux

Among the many contributions Don Raux has made to Unity Church is his invention of the "Peace Song Strut. Yes, that smiling man in our closing circle each Sunday, swinging his legs and arms in rhythm to the playing of the Peace song, is none other than

the subject of this month's Spotlight on Service. Don's skills, his enthusiasm for helping and for life, has made him a valuable member of our Board of Trustees and a loving presence, in our congregation through his various avenues of service.

I FIRST ATTENDED Unity Church in Chicago in 1997 while visiting a friend. Sally Taylor was the guest speaker that day. She was fantastic, and by the end of the service I felt like I had found a spiritual home. When I returned home, I found Unity in Albany and I've been here ever since.

People like Sam and Audrey Madison; Bill and Pam Bird, Morgan Barclay, Debra Burger and Dennis Ryan have inspired me over the years and they've been terrific role models for giving service. Through them and through my own involvement in service I've learned that when I contribute of my time and talent I'm rewarded with real joy and self esteem. It is a

wonderful thing to see that I have helped someone in some way.

I began volunteering by being an usher. I decided to do this because the ushers also handed out the bulletins and greeted people as they came in—I really enjoy greeting people. Next I became a Platform Assistant. Debra Burger thought that this would be something that I would be good at and would enjoy. She was right. Later, I took part in the Lay Minister course that Arthur Wells taught and I became a Lay Minister. I did this to increase my involvement and ascertain how I could be of further service to our church.

I then decided to pursue becoming a Licensed Unity Teacher and in 2002 completed the Personal Development Program. In 2004 I became a Prayer Chaplain which has been a very rewarding ministry for me. Each time I pray with someone I receive so much more than I give.

In June, 2005 I got to be "minister" for the day and lead the service when Jim Fuller was out of town. I truly enjoyed doing this and would love the opportunity of serving this way again in the future.

In the fall of 2006 I was appointed to the Board of Trustees to fill a vacancy and in 2007 was elected to a two year term. I am now serving the Board as Treasurer which uses some of the training and skills that God has blessed me with. I truly believe that the only way that I get to keep anything of worth, is by giving it back in some way. I have received so much more, in both spiritual knowledge and in love, than I have ever given. I am very grateful to Unity Church.



Prayer Care Team Update

IF YOU WOULD LIKE our Prayer Care Team to hold you or a friend in prayer please use our new phone or email: 453-3603 extension 13 or unityalbanyprayer@yahoo.com.

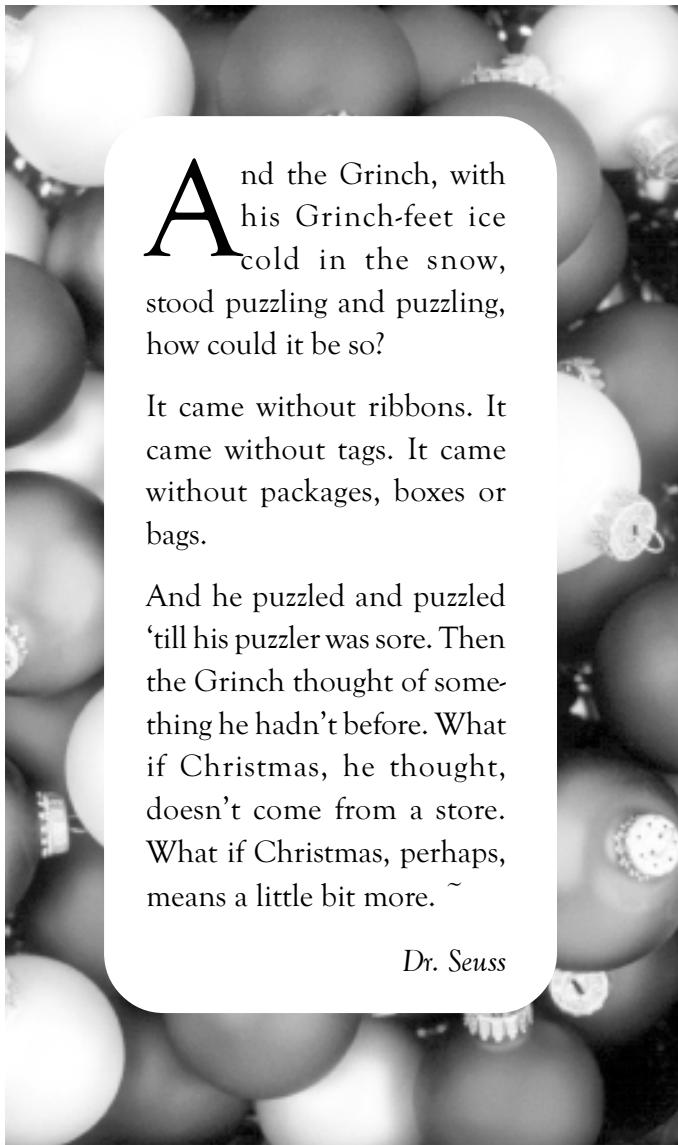
Written prayer requests may be placed in the "Answer Box" in the church lobby. All requests will be prayerfully held for 30 days. All prayer requests are strictly confidential.

“We Care” Revisited

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP support members of your congregation in times of loss or need? The suggestion to create a new congregant support team similar to our former “We Care” team has arisen several times over the past six months.

In response to these requests we will hold two special meetings to discuss how we might create this new team.

Discussion meetings will take place on Sundays January 11th and 18th at 12:30 PM in the sanctuary. Everyone is welcome to attend. For questions regarding this new team or the meetings, please call Reverend Jim at 453-3603.



And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so?

It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags.

And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more. ~

Dr. Seuss

Food Donation Needs

WITH INCREASING PRICES FOR FOOD AND FUEL many families will be turning toward their neighborhood food pantries for assistance.

You can support your neighbors by placing nonperishable goods in the collection basket in our Bradford Street Lobby.

Since food stamps can only be used to purchase food there is always a need for toilet tissue, diapers, feminine hygiene items and cleaning supplies.

Please consider picking up a few extra items to donate on your next trip to the store. And thanks to Sue Herlands (783-0443) for being our new food pantry angel.

**Needed for December & January:
Disposable Diapers, Size 1, 2 & 3**

Food Pantry Reminder List

(clip and carry this list with you when you shop)

These items are especially needed because they are not covered by food stamps.

Infant Care:

- Diapers
- Baby wipes
- _____
- _____

Kitchen:

- Dish soap
- Sponges
- Paper Towels
- Window cleaner
- _____
- _____

Bathroom Items:

- Toilet paper
- Tissues
- Bar Soap
- Razors
- Shaving Cream
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrushes
- Shampoo
- Band-aids
- First aid antiseptics
- Feminine products
- _____

Laundry:

- Detergent
- Fabric Softener
- Bleach
- Dryer Sheets
- _____
- _____

Other:

- _____
- _____



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Web page: www.unitychurchinalbany.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Welcome Home!

FINDING OUR SPIRITUAL HOME — 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!*

Worship Schedule

Services at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.
 Nursery care is available at the 11 a.m. service



Board of Trustees

- President Jacquelyn Hawkins ('09)... 393-1627
- Vice Pres. ... John Frederick ('10) 486-5689
- Secretary Heather Diddel ('11) 475-9604
- Treasurer Don Raux ('09) 877-5928
- Trustee Bonnie Kriss ('10)..... 373-2135
- Trustee Pamela Coles ('11) 729-3207