



The Messenger

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



By Rev. Jim Fuller

Puppy (or Kitten) Love

DID YOU EVER bring home a cute puppy or kitten that you just adored only to have it wreck havoc on your house and belongings? How could such a cute and loving little ball of fur do so much damage? Most people find ways to redirect their pet's impulses to chew, run, climb,

dig and poop into acceptable directions, and so the pet-owner relationship thrives. But some avert their attention and pretend that their homes aren't in shambles. They tell others that the destruction around them is simply a natural part of having a pet. Others decide to pass the untrained pet along to someone else saying, "Perhaps this pet stuff isn't for me." Meanwhile the puppy or kitten is for the most part oblivious to our worries and continues to wag or purr and play. What else could we expect?

Our relationship with our personality or human ego is often similar to our relationship with our pets. While we can't go to the "personality shop" and pick out a cute little personality to take home and raise we all do end up with one living in our home. Perhaps we saw someone with a personality we admired and did our best to "breed" one just like theirs? Perhaps we felt a need for safety and decided to get in touch with our inner "pit bull"? It may seem that our friends or family dumped an unwanted personality on our doorstep and now we are stuck feeding and caring for it. Or maybe we are still trying out different breeds looking for a personality that will finally make us happy? Silly as this may seem it is how many of us experience our relationship with our personality or ego, with our "self." And unlike pets we can't just say, "Perhaps this personality stuff isn't for me."

When we adopt a pet we realize that the puppy or kitten won't be with us forever. This is a time-limited relationship. We also know that the pet must be trained and guided if our relationship with it is to be successful. And most importantly, we understand that our pet is not us and we are not our pet. (Confusion in this area will produce problems for both the pet and the owner.) So, how is your rela-

tionship with your personality-self, with your human ego? Do you love and appreciate it for what it allows you to experience? Do you understand that this is a limited term relationship? Are you allowing Spirit, a higher part of yourself, to guide and train the puppy or have you declared that the puppy is in charge? And if the puppy is in charge, what will you do when the puppy is no more?

One of the most important relationships we encounter is the relationship between our True or Eternal Self and the many small personality-selves that we buy or breed along our way. The nature of this inner relationship impacts our outer relationships with others. It also impacts our ability to experience our primary relationship, our relationship with the Creator Presence, with God. We only need to look around to notice that we all have the ability to create a personality and to recreate it when we so choose. Through these various personalities we have the opportunity to experience time-limited relationships with pets and with people. What a wonderful although sometimes challenging experience!

So how is your relationship with your personality-self or ego-self today? Have you learned to love this furry little self for what it is? Have you learned to appreciate the furry little selves of the others around you, and trained your little self not to snap at them? Have you realized that your personality-self, your pet-self, isn't who you truly are? Do you remember this about the others around you?

If you are seeking something more lasting and meaningful than "puppy love" it will be important for you to learn to differentiate between the personality-self and the inner True Self both in yourself and in others. And while we may learn to appreciate as well as domesticate our furry little personality-selves; it is of utmost importance that we also learn to connect with the Real Self, with our Spirit. It is that relationship which assures our lasting happiness and joy.

May we all learn to love and appreciate our both our personality-self and our True Self. And may we not become confused in

Unity Church Cares

THANK YOU to everyone that has signed up to volunteer for our new *UnityChurchCares* ministry. Many of you have stepped in to help, and your generosity of spirit is so appreciated! Fliers are located in the Bradford Street lobby, explaining the purpose and mission of this new ministry. If you feel called to volunteer in some way, there is a yellow folder with a sign up sheet for your contact information. We will add you to the growing list, and call if and when the need arises. As our list of helpers expands, so will our capacity to help others in need.

Have you noticed our new, pink mailbox mounted on the wall? This is for our "heartfelt" request cards that may be filled out and placed in confidence in our mailbox. A committee member will check the mailbox regularly, and help link volunteers to those in need of a card, a phone call, or a visit. Email requests may be entered into our account at unitychurchcares@yahoo.com. We now have a phone request line as well; listen for the voice mail option to press 14 to leave a confidential request.

Any questions or concerns regarding *UnityChurchCares* may be directed to Diane T. at 280-4311.

If anyone is informed of a reason to send a card or make a call for support or congratulations, remember *Unity Church Cares*.

You Have Something To Give

DID YOU EVER WONDER what you could do to get involved in your church community? Did you ever think that your skills might be utilized in some meaningful way? Did you ever have the desire to "give back" to the community? Did you ever feel "at home" at Unity but wonder how to fit in?

Our 'small' church operates in a 'big' way with many activities, classes, and events. All of these are successful because of the love, energy, and devotion of our minister, board of trustees, and many wonderful volunteers. Service opportunities are available in several ways within many ministries:

Whatever gift(s) you have, the gift you give will be the gift you receive. When being of service, you are giving, forgiving. Many blessings come your way via our small church community and it is difficult to know how to help, how to give back, how to know what's available and what to do. Because it is natural to want to give back what you receive, there are many opportunities that you can pick and choose from, opportunities that may match your skills and desires. See the list of volunteer opportunities on the bulletin boards and/or contact Bonnie Kriss or Pamela Coles are for further information.

"Only what you have not given can be lacking in any situation." *A Course In Miracles, Text 368*

Bonnie: 373-2135, tedandbonkriss@hotmail.com

Pam: 764-3783, pjcoles61@live.com

During the cold winter months, the need continues at the Food Pantry

Infant Care:

- Diapers
- Baby wipes
- _____
- _____

Bathroom Items:

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

Kitchen:

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

Laundry:

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

Other:

- _____
- _____

Please remember that the Food Pantry needs go on around the calendar. Especially needed are diapers, baby products, paper products, bathroom and toiletry items, laundry soap, and household cleaners. Your donation is always appreciated.



"The People" - Amanda Bickford, Trena Jones, and Ellie Owens - blessed us with their voices Sunday, Dec. 5, and also at the Christmas Party on Dec. 4. Thank you, gals!

Spotlight on Service

By John Daubney

Jack Allison

You may see him starting a wave or dancing in the back of the sanctuary when a particularly touching piece of music is being played, cheerily greeting, hugging, and passing out Sunday's bulletins to those entering church, taking up the offering, issuing an emphatic 'Amen' when Sunday's message hits the mark or maybe even providing a little Rodney Dangerfield line to bring a smile to your face on a day when life seems to weigh so heavy. That's Jack Allison; and his service is an expression of the Christ presence within and his desire to pass his joy and



love on to those he comes in contact with. His humor also brings to mind the picture of the laughing Christ that hangs on the wall in the foyer which is a great reminder of how healing and nurturing a good belly laugh can be. Thank you Jack!

"I first attended Unity Church in NYC at Lincoln Center. I later moved to Albany in 1987 and attended Unity of Albany when it was located on Madison Avenue. My first Tai Chi teacher, Don Ahn, taught me about the importance of service and as I continued on the spiritual path it kept coming up for me as a "to-do" thing. Service, to me, feels good. It helps me to focus on something outside of myself. It also taught me that we're all connected—like the course in Miracles says—you can't find yourself by yourself. Yeah, it takes a village and then some.

"My service commitments are to things I like and to people I like. I also do service any time, any where, if I see a need or when intuition says to. I benefit by feeling good, knowing I'm sending positive ripples out, and being a planetary citizen. It feels good to do what I know is right. Even if no one is watching—God is."

Holiday Happenings at Unity



Unity Christmas Party had swing and bling!



Judy Avitabile played for the New Year's Eve chorus



Calendar

Town Meeting

Sunday, January 30th, 12:45-1:45 PM

Town meetings are informal gatherings to share information and discuss the activities of our church. Reverend Jim and members of the board will share short reports on recent and planned events and business. And there will be time for questions and suggestions. Town meetings are open to everyone, members and non-members alike.



Small Business Fair

Sunday, February 6, 10:00 AM – 1:30 PM

(Snow Date February 13th)

WHAT FUN WAS HAD at this past January's Small Business Fair! In addition, it was a successful event!

If you have a small business or enterprise that you would like to share with our church community, an opportunity will be available after services on Sunday, February 6th. This is a wonderful way to support and be supported by friends at Unity Church in Albany!

If you are interested in participating, contact Bonnie Kriss at 373-2135 or tedandbonkriss@hotmail.com.

“You’re Not Going Crazy, You’re Just Waking Up”

Sunday, February 20th -1:00pm-4:00pm

In this workshop Dr. Michael Mirdad will explain why the challenges in your life (and in your heart) may make you feel as though you’re “going crazy.” He will share the Five Stages of the Soul Transformation Process and the chal-

lenges that lead you to the “Light at the end of the tunnel,” wherein you gain a new perspective of your life, yourself, and your purpose. This process assists you in rising to new levels of spiritual mastery and becoming an active participant in Re-building a New Life, a life that is described in A Course in Miracles as, “A future . . . without a trace of sorrow, and with joy that constantly increases.” (Love offering \$35)

An Evening of Miracles with Dr. Mirdad

Monday, February 21st ~ 7:00pm-9:00pm

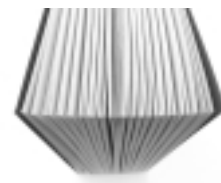
This evening lecture is for ALL students of spirituality and healing. It is especially informative for students of A Course In Miracles. Learn how to experience miracles, replace fear with love, heal relationships, practice forgiveness and receive healing and guidance. (Love Offering \$20)

Dr. Michael Mirdad is a Spiritual Teacher, Healer, and Author. He is the author of: *The Seven Initiations of the Spiritual Path*, *You’re Not Going Crazy...You’re Just Waking Up!*. He has been featured as a keynote speaker at national and international Expos and Conferences and also appeared on radio and television. *Michael Mirdad speaks from the heart and heals with his very presence and words. Michael’s entertaining anecdotes combine perfectly with his wealth of knowledge and passion for teaching. But what I love most about him is his commitment to teaching Christ Consciousness.* — Dr. Doreen Virtue Author, *Angel Cards*

Unity Book Club Luncheon

Sunday, February 27th at 12

Join Debra Burger, Rev. Jim and others at Professor Java’s Coffee Sanctuary on Wolf Road as we discuss Tara Brach’s book, “Radical Acceptance.”





Unity Church Annual Meeting

Sunday, March 6 at 12:20 PM

This year's Unity Church Annual Meeting will include brief reports from Reverend Jim and board members. It will also include the election of trustees to serve on the church board. Only church members may serve on the board or vote for trustees. The meeting itself is open to members and non-members alike.

Winter Class with Rev Jim Fuller

“Discover the Power Within You” (8 weeks)

Wednesdays at 7:15 starting March 16th

Discover the Power Within You is based on Eric Butterworth's classic book. It is a spiritual and Biblical exploration of our true and timeless nature. This is a Unity “Spiritual Education and Enrichment” class designed to help you deepen your understanding of core Unity teachings and integrate them into your daily life. SEE classes are appropriate for new and experienced Unity students. They are also prerequisites for advanced Unity training including the Licensed Unity Teacher and ministerial programs.

“Living A Course In Miracles” with Dr Jon Mundy

Sunday, March 27th at 1:15 PM

Dr. Jon Mundy was introduced to *A Course in Miracles* by its scribe Dr. Helen Schucman in 1975. He's been an active student/teacher ever since. A University Lecturer in Philosophy and Religion, and a Unitarian Minister, this is his 6th book based on the teachings of the Course.

Recital with Judy Avitabile

April 3rd at 1:00 PM

Piano and voice to raise the spirit. Free and open to the public.



Sing Along With Mitch Judy

Saturday, April 9th at 7:30 PM

Judy will lead an old fashioned sing-a-long with: spirituals, oldies, camp songs, show tunes, rounds and more. Refreshments will be provided. Love offerings to cover church expenses will be appreciated.

Create Your Best Life: Vision Boarding

April 10, 2011, at 1:00-3:00 pm

Vision Boarding is an effective tool for picturing your heart's desires and manifesting them in your life. What is it you want to create in your life right now? Whatever it is, Vision Boarding can help you receive it more quickly and easily. Ginger Tomaselli will also briefly cover tools that facilitate the creative process, like visualizing and affirming yourself having your desires, letting go of whatever is holding you back, expressing faith and gratitude in advance, and acting “As If!” Posterboard, markers, and several types of magazines to cut pictures from will be provided – bring your own pictures as well!

“Active Dreaming”

Thursday, April 28th 7:00 - 9:00 PM

A lecture with Robert Moss. Learn to live as an active dreamer 24/7. This means reading signs from the world around you, *choosing* where you will put your energy and attention, stepping beyond self-limiting beliefs and constantly testing the bounds of possibility. It involves finding and living your bigger life story, and helping others to get out of their boxes and live from the heart.

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: Mark your calendar! :
: Unity Church Fall Retreat • October 28-29, 2011 :
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How I Got My Piano Playing Back

By Judith Avitabile



In March, 2010, I told Rev. Jim that I used to be a pianist but now I can't play because it hurts. It is now January, 2011, and I play the piano as much as I like, often three hours a day. I perform regularly and I totally love my work.

My journey began – when? In 1995 or so, I started reading *Conversations With God* and I knew that all of

the truths were true. The three main ones are: we are all one, there is enough, and there is nothing you have to do. But in 1989 I had started a 22-year perusal of Louise Hay's *You Can Heal Your Life*.

In December, 1995, the pain started in my right elbow. It spread to both wrists, thumbs, shoulders, to my neck and back as I continued to play the piano for up to eight hours a day. Always I was afraid – afraid of playing a wrong note, afraid that I wasn't good enough. I was judging myself and sure that others were judging me. I was judging them too, of course: my students are better than theirs, my students are worse, I'm a better teacher, I'm worse, etc. My psychological and physical tension were severe but I covered it up pretty well in the 'outside world'. I was known particularly as an excellent accompanist. In September, 2008, my body gave out. My physical feeling was one of total upper body tension, heaviness and exhaustion. It had been coming on for years. I quit my jobs and all my music.

I started therapy the next day. I had long known that my physical healing would come after my emotional healing. I knew that my tension had to do with my early painful relationship with my father., and that all my current relationships were also affected by the one with my Dad. In my first session, I told my new therapist that I needed to heal all of my relationships.

In July, 2009, after off-and-on therapy, I wrote my therapist a letter, "the letter". I wrote to him that I had transferred to him all of the feelings I had for my father (and later my mother, both of whom had died years before). I included the statement that I knew I had to surrender to the feelings that were coming up inside me. I had loved my father overwhelmingly but he had taught me not to love him, taught me that loving someone, in other words, wanting to be with them, was a bother to them and therefore bad. My therapist handled it easily. He praised my

sobbing in sessions – "good work" he called it. I spent a year grieving my childhood there and at home.

In February of 2010, my upper body started to release. By that point, I was massaging it a couple of hours a day, getting the fear out. I tried playing the piano, but even three minutes a day hurt. "I never want to play the piano again!", I shouted to my husband. I thought I was never going to be a musician again. Instead I thought I wanted to be a hypnotherapist or a Unity minister. (I wonder why? J)

Meanwhile, I felt guilty that I needed and loved my therapist so much. "I don't know how to handle this" I thought, but I turned my therapy over to the Holy Spirit. I kept thinking that I needed to quit therapy, but then I would know I had to continue. I knew I just had to tell the truth, tell my truth. I told my husband everything. He knew and understood, and supported me when I went off into my studio and sobbed.

In May my body seemed to get worse. Suddenly one day, I said to myself "I'm going to let God do everything". I felt warm energy flowing through my body for many days. Then I began to know that I could do more. Over the next few months, I carried, cleaned, hiked, biked, swam, drove the car for hours – activities that had hurt my body or that I had stopped doing many years before.

I had been having anxiety for years but it got a lot worse in July. I had been praying for months and doing positive affirmations such as 'I can do anything', 'I deserve', and 'I do what I feel like doing'. Now with the increased anxiety, I began to pray to God to help me feel safe. I felt my heart pounding and I felt overwhelming panic. Anti-anxiety medication was recommended and offered to me a few times and I nearly decided to take it, but I knew that it wasn't what I really needed. I began to know that the worst would be over by the one-year anniversary of the letter. Suddenly on July 22nd, I knew I had to see my therapist. I called his office over and over that day and even waited outside the office, hoping for a cancellation so I could get an appointment with him. It's good that no cancellations came because I didn't even know what I needed to talk about. He called me that evening and did agree to a phone session the next day at 1:30. I thanked him greatly. He did tell me on the phone that he couldn't run a practice that way, being constantly available. I acknowledged that I had been calling a lot lately, but that I only called when I felt that I needed to. I also thought to myself with a smile of gratitude and relief, "You can't run a practice that way? Oh, but you do!" He called me the next day at the precise time he said he would. When I told him how horrible I felt about myself for needing people, especially my Dad when I was

so little, and that it made me feel as if I didn't deserve to live, he said, "Judy, that sounds like shame." I said "It is!" I was sobbing hard. He encouraged me to keep getting it out. The rest came out also in sobs, to my husband, the following week.

The morning of Wednesday, July 28, 2010, I received a sweet and timely e-mail from a man I used to know well (and who is now a very good friend), which somehow triggered the second round. I e-mailed my therapist to tell him the good news that another big chunk of shame had come up, and then I added joyfully, "I love you". I was no longer ashamed.

A few days later, after feeling that I had healed my relationship with classical music, I had the desire to contact a musical friend about an opera I had just seen. "Wouldn't it be big news if I told him I was back to playing the piano..." I thought. Then for a couple of days, I had a clear desire to volunteer, just volunteer! I signed up to be a teller in church, I bought school supplies for donating and I picked up an old man hitchhiking home from the Farmers' Market. On August 2nd, I wrote in my journal, "I acknowledge my fear, God...(but) I know you have an amazing Miracle planned. Best not to think too much about it." (Eric Butterworth, in *Spiritual Economics*, would call a miracle the "perfectly natural outcome of the divine process".) On Tuesday, August 3rd, I felt as if I wasn't thinking all day. The next morning, I felt unwell, dizzy. However, I had long trusted that physical symptoms were just telling me that something emotional needed to be healed (thanks to Louise Hay). Wednesday morning, August 4, 2010, I had been planning to bring the school supplies over to the church to put in the donation basket. It still felt right to do that even though I was feeling dizzy. I knew that God would not lead me to do something unsafe. On the way home, I suddenly knew that it was time. I dusted off my piano, sat down, and played for twenty minutes. I was fine; my arms and back were fine. My foot started internally itching like crazy, which for a year had meant TELL THE TRUTH to my therapist. I also experienced loose bowels, which to me (through Louise Hay's help), meant that I had been trying to hold back my emotions for a very long time. I HAD to tell the truth about playing the piano, and I couldn't wait the three hours until my scheduled session with my therapist. I dashed off to tell my husband, who was donating platelets, and then my therapist (a ton of anxiety came up in that session), and then everyone else including Jim Fuller. My piano playing was back.

My husband has been with me through all of it – depression, lack of energy, and my not earning any money. Apparently, I am back to being the person he met in 1980 – loving to play piano, ready to have fun, and loving to be with people.

My therapist told me that I was brave to feel all the un-

comfortable feelings. There were times when I was terrified. I trusted, however, that my body would get better. I knew that the feelings were old, as my therapist would remind me, and I trusted that God can only give and not take away. But I was terrified that I would never be able to change my thoughts, never heal my mind, and sometimes I was afraid that I was going insane. My mind, too, however, has been healed. I love myself, I love my life, I think the truth, I speak the truth, and I am at peace. In December, 2010, I had my last counseling session. My therapy came to a natural end. Knowing my therapist as the extremely wise and caring person that he is, I know that he has no regrets about giving me that extra time on July 23rd. He is thrilled for me, amazed, impressed, and I'm sure, impressed with the 'process' – the letting go of negative emotions that can truly heal our entire lives.

And as Michael Mirdad has said in his very helpful book, *You're Not Going Crazy, You're Just Waking Up*, our journey of soul transformation (and the healing of our lives) may begin with what feels like our lives falling apart (Dismantling). Once this happens, there is only a way forward. We must go through facing and releasing the old emotions (Emptiness), and changing our minds about everything (Disorientation). We have to completely trust a Higher Source before we are ready to make changes in our lives (Re-building), and then receive all the good that is available to us (A New Life). In my case, I experienced all the stages, but they did overlap, thankfully. In his conclusion, Mirdad says that after going through all of this, we have, (and he quotes *A Course in Miracles*), "a future...with joy that constantly increases". Thank God!

Note from Rev. Jim & Kay

We wanted to take this opportunity to express our thanks to each of you who contributed to our Christmas gift. We were both deeply touched and delighted. We plan to use our gift to take a short trip to Tucson in late February. (Does running off to somewhere warm in the winter mean we are turning into New Yorkers?) Please know that we really appreciate the love and encouragement we have received from all of you and that this church community feels like family to us.

*Thanks and blessings to all,
Rev. Jim & Kay*



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Finding your 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!*

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Send Your Words Winging

Articles for the April/May edition of the newsletter can be submitted to Denise Klein at katzr3@nycap.rr.com by Sunday, March 20th. Your news articles, spiritual thoughts, poetry, photos, humor or suggestions are always welcomed.