



The Messenger

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

Time for ME!



By Rev. Jim Fuller

SEVERAL YEARS AGO my friend Victoria Moran introduced me to the idea of taking time for *ME in the morning*. No, it's not about having another cup of coffee while I read the newspaper or a favorite book. Time for *ME* comes before that. The "ME" in *ME in the morning* stands for Meditation and Exercise. We all want to improve our lives and open our minds. But how easy it is to slide

through our day only to realize at bedtime that another day has passed by and we have yet to begin the positive changes we intended! In order to have a different kind of day we need to develop a practice that orients us in a new direction right from the start. Victoria wisely noted that starting her day with some *ME time* set a positive direction for the whole day. And putting *ME first*, saves us from forgetting to meditate or exercise later on.

The meditation part of *ME in the morning* now comes easily for me, but that was not always true. It took several years of "wanting to meditate" and "trying to meditate" before I finally settled into a daily meditation practice. Some mornings I spend more time in meditation while other days my meditation is relatively short. But I now find time for meditation every morning. The same holds true for the evening meditation that I added on a few years later. And I now really look forward to days when I can sit for extended periods of time, a lovely treat.

Developing a daily meditation practice is as much a matter of committing to set aside time each morning as it is about learning techniques. Meditation techniques that

work for you are something you will pick up along the way as you participate in meditation classes and meditation groups. Simply meditating in church typically isn't sufficient. That's why I encourage people to attend our Wednesday evening meditation group. Practice may not make perfect, but practicing with a group really strengthens your practice. And over time your morning meditation practice will reflect this. It can become as much a part of your daily routine as combing your hair or brushing your teeth.

Exercise has been a different story for me. In my family sports and exercise weren't on the family agenda, so taking time to stretch and strengthen my body didn't come automatically. (Only in a Universe with abundant love and humor could I end up married to Kay, a Pilates and Yoga teacher.) I have always been strong and healthy but as I have "matured" I find myself needing to exercise regularly in order to experience a comfortable and flexible body. I also find that trying to sit and meditate in a tight or out of shape body doesn't work very well. Aches or numbness set in fairly quickly and my peaceful time turns into a meditation on discomfort. I have read that yoga exercises were developed in part to prepare the body for extended periods of seated meditation. Perhaps the discomfort I occasionally feel is simply a reminder that I need to take some time for *ME*? Just like when I first started developing my meditation practice I find that if I don't exercise in the morning I am not likely to fit it in later in the day, a

strong case for taking time for *ME in the morning*.

I have added one more E to Victoria's *ME in the morning*. My third E stands for eating. Those who know me are clear that I will never forget to eat. But sometimes I get busy and am tempted to substitute convenience food for a real meal and that can mean fewer fruits and vegetables than I might otherwise choose. Making a conscious effort

***I know that I am
spirit and not a body,
but I take care of my
car don't I? Why not
take care of my other
"vehicle" too?***



The President's Corner

By Heather Diddel

Awestruck!

I AM AWESTRUCK by the energy that emanates from the Unity community when it gathers together. That energy feels warm, welcoming, vibrant. Life-affirming. Like a resounding "Yes!" to life, and an equally resounding "Yes!" from life. I notice this enticing energy on Sundays when people come together in the sanctuary and then flow down to fellowship hall, the library, the garden and other corners of the building. And I notice how it continues through the week, as our people come to classes taught by Rev. Jim and others, coffee houses, other events or gatherings. It's heart opening.

I realized the other day (as I felt waves of this joyful energy quietly washing through me and the rest of the community) that I was seeing a dream unfold. For several years, members of the board have expressed a dream of the church as a virtual beehive of inviting energy, welcoming those who yearn to be welcomed. A quiet hum of well-being, open-hearted connection and energy. Open and inviting. Rich and unfolding.

That dream has grown richer and stronger over time. If you look around at all the "doings" in the church community these days, you will see a remarkable number of classes and activities that are the inspiration of, and are being led by, different members of our community. There are more study groups and classes focused on intriguing, life-affirming teachings than there are days in the week.

As I savor the dream that is blossoming in our church community, I am reminded of both (1) our innate ability to dream our lives, and (2) our responsibility - if we choose - to consciously dream. In our daily lives, for ourselves, for our loved ones, and perhaps even for all of humanity. Does that sound too big? Or is it time for us to real-ize that we transmit the dreams we hold (both consciously and unconsciously) every moment, through our thoughts, words, actions and feelings- and create our reality?

If we are willing to take responsibility for creating (or co-creating with Spirit) our reality, why not dream BIG? Why not lift the lid off our thoughts and consciously dream the biggest, juiciest dream we can tap into? For ourselves and all of humanity? Now. How about a dream for a world of peace, where all children are held in loving arms, fed good food and given clean water to drink? A world where all beings are members of Team Earth, playing full out, to nurture all forms of life. A world of social justice, spiritual connection, loving relationships, and environmental sustainability?

Does an inner voice whisper, "That's ridiculous! That's impossible. You can't do that! What will the neighbors say? Get a grip...?"

I have heard that voice and its dream-shrinking message. And in response, I claim what I know is true: Our history is full of "impossible" dreams becoming real. What was impossible yesterday is an everyday reality today. Look at planes, electricity, space shuttles, the end of slavery, the renaissance, the freedom fighters around the world who have changed entire societies, former "enemies" making peace, frozen dinners, electric cars, and countless other examples.

The voice that declares the "impossibility" of a dream needs to be put aside, gently but firmly. Just as it has been by many dreamers before us.

How many people told Martin Luther King, Benjamin Franklin, or Abraham Lincoln that their dreams were "impossible"? Or told the Wright brothers that they were crazy to dream of flying? Or told others that we could never land a human on the moon? Or that women would never get the right to vote? Or that slavery would never end or the Iron Curtain would never fall? Or that people's dreams of freedom around the world would never take root and grow?

All of these "impossible" dreams became reality. And literally countless other "impossible" dreams, large and small, have come true.

What "impossible" dreams live inside of us? When we go to a place of stillness, and open to the guidance that is always within, what dreams yearn to be dreamed and made real?

If we were each asked, at the end of this life, "Did you live the dream you came here to live? Was that all you wanted?" What would our answer be? What would we want our answer to be? What would Spirit tell us if we asked these questions now, and opened our hearts to receive guidance?

Listen to Sunday Services

You can now download MP3's of Sunday messages from our church website.

Just go to www.unitychurchinalbany.org and click on "listen". New talks are added every few weeks.



Time for ME! cont.

keep my diet in balance is one way I have found to honor and appreciate my body. I know that I am spirit and not a body, but I take care of my car don't I? Why not take care of my other "vehicle" too? Clearly I am not a perfectionist when it comes to caring for my body, but spiritually speaking I believe that each loving thought and act that I direct toward my body bless me in ways that go beyond simple eating or exercising.

My version of *ME in the morning* is still a work in progress. The meditation part now comes quite naturally. The exercise part is still developing, although my body now reminds me to stretch more, sometimes twice a day. I do more extensive exercise about four times a week. I also walk several times each week, although not always in the morning. For me walking outdoors is more than just exercise; it's an opportunity to connect with the Aliveness I sense all around me. After several years of living "up North" Kay and I now walk regularly winter and summer.

And that brings me back to my reason for writing about taking time for *ME in the morning* as summer approaches. Summer is a busy time, a time when we may let important things like meditation and exercise slip by. And yet summer is also a great time to start your *ME in the morning* routine. The sun is shining brightly, the birds are singing and it's no longer cold inside the house. Perhaps that's just the little extra support you need to help get up a few minutes earlier and spend some time meditating and exercising? And once you get your *ME in the morning* routine established it will be easier to carry it forward into the darker and cooler months of winter. Thank you Victoria for a clever way to remember to take time for *ME in the morning* all year long.

May we all remember that by finding and expressing our own wholeness, we become able to see and support the wholeness in our friends and our world.



Victoria Moran is the author of ten books; a motivational speaker specializing in inspiration, wellness and personal growth; a certified life coach specializing in spiritual-life coaching; a certified Holistic Health Counselor; a native or Kansas City, Missouri; and an adopted New Yorker.

Victoria, her husband William and Bobby the cat live in Harlem. She can be found on the web at VictoriaMoran.com. Victoria returns to Albany on Sunday August 14th for a 10:00 worship service and 12:00 workshop.

Five-Step Prayer Process

Prayer is connecting with God. In prayer, you create a sacred space in which you commune with God. Use the following Five-Step Prayer Process to deepen your connection with God, to heighten your awareness of God within you. Experience the power of prayer.

Relax

Set aside time each day for prayer. Begin your quiet time by relaxing your body and opening your mind to an awareness of God. Breathe deeply, knowing that you are in the presence of God and the presence of God is within you. Let go of your concerns and know that all is well.

Concentrate

As you close your eyes and release any thought of the world around you, begin to think about God ... about God's presence in your life. Focus your mind on a single thought or idea or scripture that resonates with you. Repeat this idea over and over, either silently or aloud until it becomes your only thought.

Meditate

Allow this focused state of mind to move you into a deeper awareness of God. "Be still ... and know that I am God." Be still as you connect with this divine presence within you.

Realize

From the depth of your being, know that you are one with God. This knowing, this realization as you experience God's holy presence is "silent soul communion." In this receptive state of mind and heart, listen for the inspiration of God, the answers to your prayers.

Give Thanks

Let gratitude be your heart's joyous response to this experience of communion with God and with God's infinite goodness. Give thanks for blessings to come, ready to receive your good.

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Sing Along With Judy

Saturday, June 4th

7:30-8:30 PM

Gather around the piano and sing along with Judy and your Unity friends. We will sing oldies, show tunes, camp songs, pop songs, spirituals and more. The sing along is free and open to everyone.

Renew / Relax / Reflect

Saturday, June 11th 2:00 – 4:00 PM

Join Nancy McClearn for an afternoon of giving and receiving Reflexology – massaging of hands and feet. It's simple, gentle and leaves your whole body feeling great! Anyone can learn, everyone can participate. Much of the work will be done on the floor so please bring a towel/blanket/mat and a pillow. Cost: \$25/ person or \$45/ couple. Call Nancy at 441-7912 to register.

Forgiveness: Freedom from Self-deception

June 19, 12:15-2:15 pm, \$25 cost

A Course in Miracles says that "Forgiveness is my only function." It also says, "I am the light of the world. That is my only function."

So for Heaven's sake, what is my only function?

How can forgiveness allow me to be the light of the world?

And what's all this have to do with happiness?

Join Drs. Bill and Mary Yoder for a practical and experiential exploration of forgiveness, truth, light and happiness.

Dr. William Yoder has a doctorate in philosophy, ten years of university teaching experience and an



immersion in both Western and Eastern philosophy. He is the author of two books: *Lighted Clearings for the Soul*, and *The Happy Mind*. (www.TheHappyMindBook.com)

The Happy Mind explores the foundational causes of unhappiness, and offers seven simple principles that can allow us to experience deep and lasting happiness. This book can also serve as a powerful tool for understanding the teachings of *A Course in Miracles*. It has been endorsed by many well-known teachers of the *Course*, including Marianne Williamson, Hugh Prather, Jerry Jampolsky, John Mundy, Carol Howe and Beverly Hutchinson-McNeff.

Dr. Yoder also has a doctorate in chiropractic, and he and his wife Dr. Mary Yoder have practiced at their holistic health center in upstate New York for the past twenty-five years. In addition, they conduct workshops and speak on the topics of happiness, health and healing, and human potential throughout the United States.

Songwriting Circle

**Begins on Sunday, June 19,
from 11 AM to 1 PM**

Facilitated by Mark Shepherd and Debra Burger

Join us to share original songs with and be inspired to develop your inner songwriter. We will be meeting on the third Sunday of every month.

All are welcome! Whether you already write songs or you are simply curious about how to do it, join us for the first meeting and begin a new musical adventure!

“How to Overcome Procrastination NOW” with Coach Cary Bayer

Sunday, June 26th noon-3:30 PM

In this valuable class, *How to Overcome Procrastination NOW* and *Affirmations to End Procrastination*, author Cary Bayer offers procrastinators *curative* tools to immediately overcome habits of delaying actions that cause untold suffering, loss of money, and lack of success. It includes interactive one-on-one processes that help procrastinators isolate the causes of their behavior. The class provides men-



tal, emotional, and behavioral techniques that empower a dynamic life filled with achievement and peace. Methods include a behavior modification process based on an enticing weekly reward, appealing to the inner child, that offers win/win scenarios for procrastinators and everyone else whose lives they touch. Most of all, this fun procrastination game dramatically transforms how one feels about the activities that one procrastinates-morphing what had been stress and anxiety into pure pleasure. Moreover, the class presents the Procrastination Aerobics, a 15-minute *preventive* program that builds self-esteem and makes it very difficult for procrastination to take root again. Your investment: \$25

Phil “Shiva” Jones

Sunday, July 3rd

10:00 Sunday lesson “Accessing the Point of Love and Self Empowerment and

12:00-2:00 PM Workshop “Discovering the Sacredness of Breath & Sound”

Phil will teach four basic steps during the workshop:

- Accessing a state of inner tranquility and connecting to the Divine within, including simple breathing exercises for enhanced meditation. (An important aspect of the instrument.)
- Demystifying the technique of Circular Breathing, where you’ll learn how to continuously make a sound through the instrument while breathing at the same time.
- Bridging the subtle and physical realms via the expansion of Harmonics.
- Creating nature, animal, percussive, and toning sounds through the Projection of the Voice.

Prior musical experience is not necessary. Participants will be provided a didgeridoo to play during the workshop. Workshop admission \$20

Phil Jones is an interfaith minister and singer who speaks and performs at churches, spiritual fellowships, universities, yoga studios and wellness centers across the USA.

From 1968-1975 Phil studied with an enlightened Hindu teacher, Swami Ambikananda. He parallels the didgeridoo, a *non-denominational meditation accelerator*, with Eastern Philosophy, New Thought, and Aboriginal Traditions.

As the lead singer and songwriter of the renowned En-



glish band Quintessence (Island Records/RCA), he pioneered the merging of sacred Sanskrit mantras into a modern musical format during the late 1960’s and 1970’s.

Last year Phil was invited to perform at the 40th Glastonbury Festival (England). Phil and Quintessence performed at the very first festival in 1970. Visit him online at: www.philjonesmusic.com.

“Church In The Park” at John Boyd Thatcher Park

Sunday, July 10th

Services - at 9:30 and 11:00 AM

Pot Luck Picnic at Noon (covered dish)

We have a SHADY SHELTER with an AMAZING VIEW!

Look for the Unity Church banner right before you come to the Overlook Parking Area.

Things to bring:

- A covered dish to share. (We provide tableware and beverages.)
- Food to grill (We will a big grill ready for you.)
- Lawn chairs or blankets (There are plenty of picnic tables.)
- A drum if you have one for the 9:30 “Cliffside Service”
- Friends, smiles, suntan lotion, Frisbees, games, walking shoes



Rev. Sonya Milton

Sunday, July 31st 10:00 AM service only

Rev. Sonya Milton last spoke at Unity in Albany in August 2008. Shortly after that she accepted a position as minister at Unity San Francisco. She has also served as senior minister Napa CA and Knoxville, TN. Sonya has extensive training in body therapies and facilitating group process and is a certified Advanced Rolfer and Structural Awareness Teacher. She and her husband Rev.



Hal Milton also operate InsideOut Ministries, an interdenominational ministry dedicated to evoking and celebrating the authentic expression of the divinity inherent in all people.

Spotlight on Service

By John Daubney

Sheila Healy

Some of us may wonder how we can be of service at Unity or even be unaware of where our creativity or particular talent may lie. Often it is an acquaintance or good friend who may see in us what we can not see in ourselves. Such was the case when Debra Burger encouraged Sheila to volunteer for nomination to become a board member. Sheila listened, took the suggestion, and Sheila and we at Unity have been the beneficiaries of her service. Her intellect, creativity, humor, and passion have touched us all. So, pay attention the next time a friend or acquaintance says, "I think you would be great as a _____. They are seeing your spiritual gifts your god-ness.

"IT FEELS AS IF I've been coming to Unity Church for decades but I actually only discovered it several years ago after inviting John Frederick over for dinner one night. Knowing John for years through local politics and state government, he had impressed me with his ability to focus on a goal and accomplish it through diligence, hard work, and persistence, but even more I noticed his personal growth with a deeper understanding of himself and his motivations. Later that night when John told me that he had to leave early to go home so that he could be fresh for church in the morning, I surprised myself by asking John if I could go to church with him. Sitting down in church the next morning and listening to Rev. Jim, it all began to make sense to me.

The Catholic Church was actually an early role model for me but not in all the usual ways. I was raised under the pre-Vatican II regime of the Baltimore catechism and Latin masses where women's value seemed to be limited to motherhood and gay people were condemned to hell. Many of us growing up in the 1960's and going to college in the 1970's began to question our cultural and religious values as momentous social changes were underway. The one issue that the Catholic Church spoke to me unambiguously about – and that I never questioned – was our obligation to take care of the poor and the helpless. The launching of President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" domestic programs gave me a strong sense that this was not only a core moral concern but also a vital public

issue of our time. While undermined by the Viet Nam war, this heroic governmental effort on behalf of the poor, and the understanding of the nexus between racial and economic justice and equality left an indelible mark on many of us coming of age at that time.

My favorite aunt was also a role model. Having joined the Sisters of Notre Dame as a teenager, Sister Patricia was cloistered for 25 years before the church allowed her to return home for a visit. Yet, I have vivid memories of Sister Pat alive with joy in her service to the church as she taught math to youngsters in Roxbury and years later to the children of immigrants in Boston. These sisters filled me with a sense of wonderment and awe at the dedication, love and compassion they brought to their work with the poor and needy.

Until Unity, my service had been primarily directed toward efforts to improve social and economic justice in the form of working on electoral campaigns for candidates who espoused the same values I held or issue-based campaigns in support of LGBT civil rights and health care reform. I am grateful to the many role models and mentors who have helped me along this path.

Joining Unity has given me the opportunity to reexamine what it means to be of service to others often focusing on individuals rather than groups or movements. I have learned that service comes from a place of humility and listening hard so that I can actually hear what others are saying as opposed to simply advancing my personal agenda. I have learned much about myself and about how much more I need to learn to better serve others. I'm learning to quiet myself and my thoughts in order to hear where I need to go and what I need to do next. It's not a decision as much as an awareness. I am grateful to Unity for giving me the opportunity to activate and deepen my spirituality through service to others.

For me, becoming involved in service at Unity was as simple as being asked to serve on the board by another church member. Frankly, at the time I didn't feel like I knew many people at church, wasn't all that familiar with the Unity teachings, and didn't want the responsibility, but Debra Burger encouraged me and I trusted her completely. So, I told myself to go with the flow and jump in. I'm so glad I did because it gave me the opportunity to know more about: Unity teachings, our church, and the members of the church. The surprising gift that never stops giving is the spirit and energy that exchanges among the board members and Rev Jim. I leave these meetings feeling refreshed and revived both spiritually and physically with a deeper sense of what service means to me.



Planning Ahead

Town Meeting

Sunday, August 7th

11:40-12:40

Town Meetings are your opportunity to learn more about what's happening at Unity Church, ask questions of our minister and board, and to offer your suggestions or comments. The purpose of Town Meetings is to promote good communication within our church community and keep in touch with the energy and direction of the group. Town Meetings are open to anyone who attends Unity Church.



Book Club Discussion

Sunday, August 28th at noon

Join Reverend Jim for a lunchtime discussion of *The Spiritual Journey of Charles Fillmore*. This book sheds new light on the life and work of an important spiritual pioneer. In this landmark new biography, author Neal Vahle uses thorough new research, interviews with those who knew Fillmore, and his intimate familiarity with Fillmore's writings to introduce readers to the intriguing co-founder of the Unity movement. It also renders the philosophical and spiritual landscape of Fillmore's era in great detail and provides readers with an excellent overview of the metaphysical movement's evolution

through time. Discussion on the book will take place at Professor Java's Coffee Sanctuary (they have great food too) on Wolf Road in Colonie.

"Circulation Day"

A cash-free yard sale, originally scheduled for June 11 (now rescheduled to September 17th)



Victoria Moran

Sunday, August 14th

10:00 Worship Service and 12:00 Workshop

Faerie Elaine Silver

**"Coffee House" Concert
Saturday, August 20th at
7:30 PM (\$15)**



Unity Coffee House

Saturday, August 27th 7:00 – 10:00 PM

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

Unity Church Fall Retreat

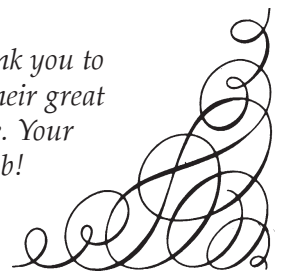
Mark your calendar for this two-day spiritual experience. Our retreat will take place at the Dominican Retreat Center in Niskayuna. Barbara Wisdon is presenter. Your registration of \$175 includes all meals, a private room, and all retreat activities. Space is limited to forty participants. Look for more details in our next newsletter.



Thank you!

I would like to say a very big, huge and heartfelt thank you to Deb, Leslie, Joe, Kathleen, John, Lois, and Gail for their great help during Unity's Second Annual Used Book Sale. Your support and help was very most appreciate. Great job!

Love & Blessings, Geri Ann Laiacona





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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!*

Summertime Musings

Articles for the August/September edition of the newsletter can be submitted to Denise Klein at katzr3@nycap.rr.com by Sunday, July 24. Your news articles, spiritual thoughts, poetry, photos, humor or suggestions are always welcomed.

**Summer Worship
 Schedule Reminder**

**We hold one Sunday Service at
 10:00 AM
 May 29th (Memorial Day)
 through September 4th
 (Labor Day)**

Board of Trustees

- President Heather Diddel ('14) 475-9604
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