



The Messenger

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Did Jesus Own A Yoga Mat?

IN THE FORWARD to Phillip Goldberg's book "American Veda", author and teacher Houston Smith comments on the connection between Jesus' reply to the question "Which commandment is first of all?" and the four branches of Yoga (*bhakti*, *raja*, *jnana*, and *karma*). In Mark 12:29-30 Jesus as answers the question by replying, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart (*bhakti*), and with all your soul (*raja*), and with all your mind (*jnana*), and with all your strength (*karma*)." According to Yogic/Vedic teachings each of these paths to God is suited to a particular temperament or type of individual: *bhakti* for the emotional/devotional, *raja* for the contemplative/meditative, *jnana* for the intellectual/reasoning, and *karma* for the physical/industrious. Jesus appears to be encouraging us to work with all four pathways.

Trying to make a connection between Jesus' teachings and Yogic/Vedic traditions would seem like a big stretch to most Christians. We typically assume that the Jesus' teachings were built on his Hebrew traditions alone, isolated from Vedic or other influences. But what if we are actually encountering here is an interweaving of two traditions? Judea was located on a major trade route and people of many cultures traveled through that land at the time of Jesus. Still sound a bit far-fetched? Read on.

Jesus' reply to the scribe's question, "Which commandment if first of all?" is based on the words of the second telling of the commandments in Deuteronomy (6:4-8) "Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." This text is central to Judaism and is known as the *shema*. It goes on the say recite these words to your children, talk about them at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Notice that the verse in Deuteronomy contains only three elements: heart, soul and strength. However in Mark, our earliest gospel, Jesus expands the original to include four words: heart,

soul, *mind* and strength. Jesus would have known the original wording as would Mark, so this is more than a misprint. When Luke retells the story he retains all four words, only Matthew edits Mark shortening it to the traditional three.

Throughout the gospels Jesus was constantly reinterpreting and expanding traditional teachings. In his reply to the question about which commandment is first he also expands it by attaching a verse from Leviticus (19:18), "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself." He revises the Commandments with comments like, "you have heard it said that you shall not commit adultery, but I say to you that whoever looks at a woman with lust..." (Matthew 5:27-8) Here he adds the element of mind or thought to a teaching that originally only addressed actions. Clearly Jesus was comfortable incorporating new interpretations and even new ideas into his understanding of Judaism. Could he have encountered the teaching of the four pathways to God and decided to incorporate them into his message?

My point here is not to say that Jesus was teaching or advocating Vedic ideas. And I am not one of the people that believes Jesus spent time in India (or Egypt) during the "missing years"; the part of his life that is not accounted for in the gospels. And I don't think that he owned a yoga mat. I do find it quite believable that during his life he encountered ideas from other religious traditions. And I believe that he would feel quite comfortable incorporating those "new ideas", which were of course actually quite ancient, into his spiritual teaching. The willingness to notice, examine and incorporate new or divergent ideas is, in my eyes, the mark of a mature teacher or student.

Jesus' teaching to learn to love God with heart (*bhakti*), soul (*raja*), mind (*jnana*), and

Continued on page 6



By Rev. Jim Fuller



PRESIDENT’S CORNER

By John Frederick



In times of turmoil, I notice how quickly I lose equilibrium and balance, mentally and emotionally. Spiritually, I am not even present in Spirit. No peace of mind. No ease of breath. No awareness of God’s Presence in me or around me or in anyone else. I immediately spin (more or less, depending on the situation at hand) into worry, fear, scheming, tensing, etc. Fight or flight seem the only two choices, with

do nothing and fret the third option while I weigh the other two.

Yet, like a keel beneath a boat, the Spiritual teachings and awareness’ that have developed over time bring me back to something close to right-side-up. Sometimes quickly; sometimes slowly. The awareness that my breath is not actually breathing. That my shoulders are tense around my ears. That my thoughts are spinning in unproductive circles and exhausting and fruitless ways.

I remember the snatches of a denial and an affirmation: *In God I Trust. The thought of lack has no power over me. I am a Child of God. I Am enough. God’s Good is here for me now. I cannot inherit sickness. I Am ONE with God and all Life. God is in my midst and helps me overcome any seeming limitations. Divine Mind has all in Divine Order.*

I can consciously slow and deepen my breathing. I can turn my attention from my head to my heart. I can turn from without and go within. I can manifest a smile, even if I don’t feel like smiling, which seems to change my mood, break up some of the clouds.

The situation may be the same....for now. But my attitude has changed (a little). My outlook has changed (a little). My perspective has widened. My Spiritual eyes are not closed now and I see that there is wisdom in stepping back. I can ask for help. I can do something small and productive. I can focus less on the “problem” and more on the solution.

Thank you, God, for your balancing and stabilizing presence in my Life.

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THE TAO, THE I CHING AND UNITY

Facilitated by John Frederick

The Tao, or The Way, is a spiritual philosophy that traces its origins back nearly 4,800 years. The Tao Te Ching is the most commonly associated text in “Taoism”. It was written some 2,500 years ago. Tao has many interpretations. It is the source of everything, the essence behind God. It is the flow of the Universe. It is unnamable and unknowable.

The Tao does nothing, yet through it all things are done. It is work without effort, leading by following. Returning is it’s movement; yielding is it’s way. The Tao cannot be grasped, but it can be used. It is empty, yet produces all things. Taoism can teach us how to walk through this world with minimal effort, and yet accomplish many things.

The I Ching, or the Book of Transformation, uses the chance throwing of sticks or coins to create a series of distinct scenarios, which point to where things are moving....in the Universe and in your own personal journey. Knowing what accords with the times and seasons we are better able to plan our actions, to wait for things to ripen, to retreat or to move ahead. The I Ching speaks of the infinite and the intimate with equal power and a certainty that is remarkable.

These two systems of understanding the world are perhaps some of the oldest and most universal. They inform everything from Buddhism and Hinduism to the teachings of Emerson, Thoreau and the Transcendentalists which have a direct lineage to the Fillmores and the teachings of Unity.

3 2-hour classes will be held on Sunday, September 30th, October 14th and October 28th, each starting at 12:30, after the 11:00 Unity service. Cost is \$20 for each class or \$50 in advance for all 3 classes. Suggested readings will be The Tao Te Ching, translation by Stephen Mitchell and The Tao of Pooh by Benjamin Hoff.

Treasurer and Prosperity Ministry Report in a Nutshell



By Heather Diddell

As Treasurer, it is my pleasure to affirm that Unity Church in Albany is prosperous and blossoming.

Last year, the Board was inspired to re-vision the Finance Ministry as the Prosperity Ministry. Through Unity teachings, we are remembering that prosperity comes in many forms, on many levels. Finances are one of those forms. Our vision for income to the Church this year is \$220,000. And lo! And behold, the income the Church has received in the first 6 months of 2012 is \$104,000 - -which means that we are well on our way to our vision of \$220,000 income for the year. We are grateful for the prosperity that

How I Met Ram Dass For the First Time—Twice

By Patricia Hunt-Perry

I am standing on a raised platform behind a lectern, looking out at dozens and dozens of students packed into this cavernous lecture hall at Syracuse University. It is the 1970's and the course is titled Ideology and Culture.

Despite the elevated position in which I find myself, I am uneasy. After having overcome mountainous economic and social obstacles to be the first person in my family to go to college (some had not graduated from high school), I am now only a dissertation away from my Ph.D. Yet somewhere, somewhere in my being, is a powerful sense of discomfort about it all—a vague feeling that there is, somewhere beyond this classroom, more important things to learn about the way the world works. Things that don't come from academic studies and treatises.

After class I notice a student walking down the long aisle from the back of the room, both hands outstretched in front of him, a square purple book in his upturned palms. He seems to be walking in slow motion, carefully placing one foot in front of the other.

As he nears the podium, I step out from behind the lectern and he lifts up both palms, the book floating up to my level as he says, "You need to read this, Professor." When I take it, he adds, "But only read the introductory white pages. You are not ready for the rest of the book yet, the brown pages."

He was right. Even the white pages of Ram Dass' book, *Be Here Now* shook my world. Now suddenly there was "a crack in everything" as poet Leonard Cohen says, and that is how the light gets in.

Here was a book written by Harvard professor, well ex-Harvard professor but HARVARD nonetheless, who had been to the academic mountaintop and who realized that academia didn't have all the answers or even most of the relevant questions. Here was a man who saw that no one really knows, but that so few admit they don't.

Yes!!! I had seen that! Reading this book felt like coming home after climbing a mountain made of quicksand.

My nameless student was right, though. I wasn't ready for the rest of the book, the brown pages where Ram Dass shares deeper spiritual teachings from his journeys in India and with his guru, Neem Karolie Baba. Nevertheless, I peered into those brown pages and got lost as the student predicted, except for one story about the chicken:

A master gave two students each a chicken and told them to go kill their chicken where no one sees. They went away and when they returned one student had a dead chicken. The other student had a live chicken and reported, "the chicken sees."

Despite all my training in societal and academic prescriptions to follow directions as they were given (i.e., kill the chicken), I identified with the second student and her angle of perception. And I, too, became determined to see.

So that spring, still determined to see, I made what some considered a rather questionable career decision. Much to the consternation of my caring Ph.D. committee members, who had invested a lot of time and effort in me over the years, I accepted a job at a small, new interdisciplinary college in New Jersey that offered a non-traditional approach to education.

At Ramapo College, in addition to full-time teaching, they gave me the task of running a weekly lecture series that featured different off-campus speakers. Another crack to let in the light.

Despite being told that Ram Dass had so many invitations that he had to turn most down, I wrote and invited him to come to speak

to my students. And a few weeks later, while sitting in my office, I picked up the phone and there was Ram Dass himself agreeing to participate in the series. (I still sometimes wonder if he accepted this invitation because the college name had Ram, the name of god, in it.)

The appointed day came and soon after he arrived at

Ramapo, I handed him crystal clear water in a twinkling glass jar, explaining earnestly that New Jersey water wasn't very good and that this was from the pristine well on my New York State farm. "It's probably more pure than I am," he said, winning me over immediately. I loved the humor, but especially the lack of pretension behind it. No academic pretension and no spiritual pretension either! Unlike many spiritual teachers Ram Dass was totally accessible, not only revealing his own life challenges and difficulties but using them as a tool to help others wake up.

That late April evening, sitting on top of a hill overlooking a 200 year old purple cooper beach tree framed with yellow forsythia, hundreds of admiring people and a few scandalized traditional academics, sat in rapt attention as Ram Dass led meditation and talked of his spiritual journey. Clock time faded with the brilliant sunset lighting the gathering in glows of reds, purples and yellows.

As darkness and a chill eventually descended upon the scene, a large group of us went inside and Ram Dass continued for some hours while my young son, James, poured tea for him.

Later I asked Ram Dass if I could study with him. Sitting in lotus position he took a deep breath, closed his eyes and then there was silence.

Whoops, I thought, no luck. As I had come to learn, silence in academia does not suggest success.

Then those clear piercing eyes looked into me.

"I'm only interested in working with people who want to go to God," he said. Pause and breath. More silence. "And most academics have a hard time with that one!"

"Well, Ram Dass," I said, "I cannot do what you do, go off to India or live in a cave. I have two young children that I love dearly, whose dad just died. I have a group of students that I adore and that are ready to engage beyond the parameters of traditional academia. And ..." ahhhh, the final winning point, words tumbling out like a bag of spilt marbles clanking on a cement floor, "I am only earning twelve thousand dollars a year and I need this job."

Ram Dass paused again waiting for me to catch up with myself after my breathless explanation of what I couldn't do and why. And when the world was silent again, he said, "You don't need to go to a cave in India, Patricia. The hot fire, maybe the hottest fire, is right here in this culture, in this country. It is the perfect place for practice. If you can do it here you can do it anywhere."

He smiled. I smiled. And that is how I joined Ram Dass' group that met one day a month on Riverside Drive.

In the many years that followed that invitation, I have been very blessed to be able to spend time with and receive teachings from, some of the outstanding spiritual teachers of the late 20th and early 21 centuries, who I honor, love and revere. But Ram Dass always and forever inhabits a special love-pocket in my heart, and it is he who is still available for one-on-one conversations.

From the early days Ram Dass has used perspectives from this culture to draw me (and tens of thousands of others) to explore inner space as well as the nameless beyond. It was he who brought the light that first started me on my spiritual path this lifetime. I deeply love him. I honor him dearly. I always will.



August to September . . .



The Next Newsletter —

Articles for the October/November edition of the newsletter can be submitted to Denise Klein at katzr3@nycap.rr.com by Sunday, September 23rd. Your news articles, spiritual thoughts, poetry, photos, humor or suggestions are always welcomed.

Special Speaker: Jackie Hawkins



Sunday, August 5th at 10 AM

"Your Consciousness"

Sunday, August 26th

"Embracing Your Whole Self"

Jackie is a resident of Schenectady, long-time member of Unity in Albany, and a former trustee and board president. She is currently enrolled in Unity's Ministry and Religious Studies program at Unity Village, MO. Jackie looks forward to completing her studies and being ordained as a Unity minister in June of 2013. (Sounds like a great occasion for a "field trip.") She has graciously agreed to help coordinate activities during the second part of Rev Jim's sabbatical. She will also be leading Wednesday evening meditations and helping with Sunday services. Welcome back Jackie!

New Thought Satsang and Kirtan Concert with Elaine Silver



**Saturday, August 11th
at 7 PM - (\$18)**

We will touch upon New Thought Principles though Elaine's divine music, which with your participation will raise the vibratory rate in the room, thus creating a context for more Peace, Love and Joy!

"Faerie" Elaine Silver is a full time musician and recording artist as well as a Certified Passion Test Facilitator and New Thought Practitioner. She completed all studies in the Science of Mind through Religious Science International (Centers for Spiritual Living). She is a Priestess in the Temple of Isis, as well as an ordained minister through the Universal Life Church. It is her joy to facilitate workshops, concerts, Sunday morning platform presentations and private sessions. Visit: www.elainesilver.com to hear samples of her music.

There will be a Sound/Slide AV Team training for current and interested new volunteers on Saturday, August 25 at 10 am.

Join Elaine @ Sunday Worship August 12th at 10:00 AM

Her theme will be: "There Is Only Love"

"Going Veg Like Myrtle & Chuck" Workshop with Victoria Moran on Sunday, August 19th at 12:15 PM (\$25)

A look at Unity's tradition of vegetarianism (Charles & Myrtle Fillmore were dedicated vegetarians) and how a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle can enhance your physical and spiritual life.

About Victoria's latest book: Main Street Vegan

What do pigs, the planet, many Hollywood celebrities and your waistline all have in common? They want you to go vegan - whether right this minute, or at your own pace. Maybe you're intrigued about the vegan life but worry that it's expensive. Or you've tried it but gave up because it seemed too hard. Or you just plain worry about seeming like a cow-hugging weirdo (you can, of course, hug cows without being weird). Every new vegan has concerns like these, and we can help you address each one of them.

We wrote *Main Street Vegan* to provide information and support to anyone, anywhere who wants to move veganward. We're Victoria Moran - an Oprah-featured author of eleven books (accounting for the good fortune of the media mentions, right), a certified holistic health counselor (HHC, AADP), and a vegan of nearly three decades - and daughter Adair Moran, a lifelong vegan who's grown up to be an actor, playwright, wildlife rehabilitator, and stunt performer (in case you thought vegans were wimpy: Not).

Victoria and Adair can also be heard online at www.Unity.FM

"Still Here: Embracing Aging Changing & Dying"



(Film & Discussion)

with Rev Jim and Patricia Hunt Perry

Saturday, September 15th at 7 PM

Still Here is a documentary on spiritual teacher Ram Dass. More than thirty years ago, an entire generation sought a new way of life, looking for fulfillment and meaning in a way no one had before. Leaving his teaching job at Harvard, Ram Dass embodied the role of spiritual seeker, showing others how to find peace within themselves in one of the greatest spiri-

tual classics of the twentieth century, the two-million-copy bestseller *Be Here Now*. As many of that generation enter the autumn of their years, the big questions of peace and of purpose have returned demanding answers. And once again, Ram Dass blazes a new trail, inviting all to join him on the next stage of the journey.

Join Patricia and Rev Jim for a special film viewing and discussion. Free and open to all.

Town Meeting

**Sunday September 16th
at 12:45**

Town Meetings are your chance to talk with Rev Jim and members of the church board, to learn about the upcoming plans for the church, and to ask questions or offer suggestions. Everyone who attends Unity is welcome to participate in the meeting, not just members. The meeting will take place in our downstairs fellowship hall, so plan to grab a cup of coffee and stick around.

Please note: New Date & Time for Uni-Tea

Sept. 30th at 10:20 AM

UniTea: a program to enhance the InTeagration of mind body and spirit. You will experience SereniTea. FlexibiliTea and SimpliciTea while developing CommuniTea. The programs' author, Dr. Pamela Gerali has a background in nursing, healing and holistic teachings. Anyone interested in helping to coordinate this please contact Nancy Wells (783-8528).

Let's Cook Mindfully

Cooking lesson & dinner with Geri Ann Laiacona

**Friday, September 21st at
5:30 PM**

Charles and Myrtle Fillmore were both vegetarians. When they founded Unity School of Christianity, they recommended vegetarianism to students however it was not required. Join Geri Ann Laiacona Friday, September 21st

for casual conversation about vegetarianism as we mindfully prepare a Vegan Dinner and then relax with participants to enjoy the fruits of our labor.

This bountiful meal will include fresh salads, main dishes, side dishes, sauces, and of course dessert made with fresh organic fruits, vegetables, grains, and other healthy delights. The evening will unfold, as Thich Nhat Hanh would say, "Mindfully and joyfully" and with lots of smiles and laughs. We will chop, peel, slice, stir, mix, mince, bake, sauté, simmer, roast, and enjoy good conversation. By the end of the evening you will learn that the art of becoming a Mindful Sous Chef is simply a breath away. Prep time 5:30 to 7 with dinner at 7 PM.

The cost for the evening is \$12 per person. Pre-registration is required. Forms are available at the church of by emailing Geri Ann Laiacona at nutritiongal7@gmail.com.

Charley Thweatt

**Sunday,
September 23rd
at 1:00 PM**

**"I Am The
Wind" Concert**

Music is powerful. Come join in this fun and moving program of music and connection with lots of opportunity to participate and sing along. During some of Charley's songs, we will touch into that sweet inner place of peace. And during others we will shift into full out joy and joining. It's always an in-the-moment event, with Charley listening for which song he is guided to play next. Amazing moments are available in this experience, and in a very brief time you may even feel that sense of inner connection that usually comes only after attending an entire week-end retreat!

Suggested Love Offering \$20.



Charley Thewatt

**Monday, September 24th
7:00-9:00 PM**

**"How to Take Your Power
Back" Workshop**

In Charley's new workshop we'll look at three major spiritual principles by bringing you back to your true power. Is life urging you to get off the bench and back in the game? Do you ever get the feeling that there's more you could be seeing? Are you ready to tap into a greater source of inspiration and trust? In this two hour workshop we will dive into these three areas with music, lecture and experiential exercises. When you have activated these innate aspects in yourself, you will be more in your power and an even greater power for good! *Suggested Love Offering - \$20*

About Charley...

Charley Thweatt brings his gifts of warmth, humor, presence and ease to any gathering. He has been a favorite with Unity groups since the early 80's, when he took a leap of faith from his budding architecture career into touring full time with his spiritual concerts and workshops. Charley has a talent for turning a room full of strangers into connected family, by sharing his original music, his angelic voice and his insightful workshops. He has been a presenter for spiritual organizations and metaphysical conferences for 30 years, throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe, Australia, Fiji and Japan. The biggest influences on Charley's spiritual path have been Unity, *A Course In Miracles* and seven years of touring with Alan Cohen's workshops and retreats. Charley has also been the musical opener for such other luminaries as Wayne Dyer, Marianne Williamson, Deepak Chopra, Ram Dass and Louise Hay. He has appeared on national television and radio with his songs, with such titles as *You're an Angel*, *Take Your Power Back* and *Dancers in the Light*. You'll find his many CDs and more about his transformative work at his website: www.musicangel.com.

Unity's Fall Retreat with John Welshons

October 5-6 (Fri-Sat)

"One Soul, One Love, One Heart: Meditations and Reflections on Inner Peace and Peace in Our World."

Join us for a restful, restorative retreat in the beautiful Dominican Retreat Center in Niskayuna. Our time together will include sitting meditation, walking meditation, and mindful dharma discussions led by Ramananda, John Welshons. Spend a couple of days in meditation and contemplation, quieting, relaxing, and deepening your spiritual connection, both alone, and in community with fellow seekers. This year we will have fully use of the center, including the chapel, throughout our retreat. The cost is \$175 which includes all meals, a private room, and all retreat activities. A \$75 non-refundable deposit is required with your registration form.

We expect this retreat to fill all 44 rooms at the Dominican Center. Please register now!

John Welshons will also be speaking at Unity Church on Sunday, October 7th at 9:00 & 11:00 AM

John Welshons ("Ramananda") is a highly respected contemporary spiritual teacher who lectures and leads meditation courses throughout North America. He has been a practitioner of *vipassana* (mindfulness) meditation and various forms of yoga for more than forty years. He has also traveled and studied extensively in India. He is a gifted counselor and teacher who has worked closely with Ram Dass and Stephen Levine and trained with Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. He is the author of *One Soul, One Love, One Heart: The Sacred Path to Healing All Relationships, Awakening from Grief: Finding the Way Back to Joy* and *When Prayers Aren't Answered*.

Events Farther Out

Bring A Friend Sunday & Pot Luck Lunch

Sunday, October 21st

Services at 9:00 & 11:00 AM • Pot Luck Lunch at 12:15 PM

Fall Clean Up Day

Saturday, October 27th

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Join us as we dust, wash windows and make our church sparkle.

Unity Coffee House

Saturday, October 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.

Did Jesus Own A Yoga Mat? cont.

strength (*karma*) has been helpful in encouraging me to examine my spiritual paths. I was born into Christian Science, a decidedly mind/jnana (intellectual) tradition. This path however does not always feel particularly easy or natural for me. Later I discovered the soul/raja practice of meditation. This pathway feels more natural and I continue working to further develop it. The practice of strength/karma which includes service, is another path I continue to work on integrating. And within the last twelve years I connected with what I consider to be my primary path, the practice of bhakti/devotion (love).

What motivated Jesus to rephrase the shema? That we can only guess for now. But his message is very clear. We have been given of four pathways to connect with God, with the One. We are encouraged to follow the paths of the heart (*bhakti*), soul (*raja*), mind (*jnana*), and strength (*karma*) as we move Godward. I invite you to notice which pathways to God you have explored and which come most naturally for you. Can you identify a primary pathway? How might you create opportunities to explore other paths?

May all your paths be gentle and your journey filled with wonder and awe. Amen.

Book Club selection for July-August

"Dying To Be Me," by Anita Moorjani

In this truly inspirational memoir, Anita Moorjani relates how, after fighting cancer for almost four years, her body—overwhelmed by the malignant cells spreading throughout her system—began shutting down. As her organs failed, she entered into an extraordinary near-death experience where she realized her inherent worth . . . and the actual cause of her disease. Upon regaining consciousness, Anita found that her condition had improved so rapidly that she was released from the hospital within weeks . . . without a trace of cancer in her body!

As part of a traditional Hindu family residing in Hong Kong, she had been pushed and pulled by cultural and religious customs. After years of struggling to forge her own path while trying to meet everyone else's expectations, she had the realization that she had the power to heal herself . . . and that there are miracles in the Universe that she had never even imagined. In *Dying to Be Me*, Anita reveals what she learned about illness, healing, fear, "being love" and the true magnificence of each and every human being!

Rev Jim will lead a discussion on Dying to Be Me Sunday, September 9th at 12:45.

This book is available in our bookstore and in Kindle format from Amazon.com

Spotlight on Service

By John Daubney

Nancy Wells

Some of us arrive at the doors of Unity with a background and love for service, often inspired by family or other inspirational adults who gave of themselves for what they loved. We look for a way to get involved, knowing the benefits and the inner desire to do so. This is how Nancy Wells arrived at Unity. Once she decided that Unity was a fit for her, she jumped in and we have been all the richer for it.

“Upon my first visit over 5 years ago, my reaction to Unity was: “Where has this Church been hiding all my life?” It was amazing to find a congregation of people that thought amazingly like me. My affection for Unity has continued to grow directly proportionately to the extent that I have been engaged in Unity activities and programs. Like any important relationship, committing time and effort into Unity’s opportunities has paid dividends beyond my wildest dreams.

Through dialog with fellow congregants, I found I was not alone in my dissatisfaction with my Church of Origin. I had drifted away because it was not fulfilling my Spiritual need and I was not in agreement with many of their policies and beliefs. Unity, however, not only embraces Christian principles, but goes one step further by teaching us how to practice them in an inclusive, supportive and peaceful environment.

The many available educational opportunities are compatible with my love of learning. As a retired educator, I have a need to explore new concepts and am always benefiting from Jim Fuller and the many speakers and workshop leaders, as well as the participation of other members. Having attended Unity for a few months, I decided to join a group of 5 others embarking on the year-long *Quest Program*. The objective of the Quest Program is to explore your own concepts of Spirituality and Unity Principles through a group study and discussion process. I learned a lot about myself and enjoyed getting to know my fellow “Questers.” Like all Unity programs I have participated in, the Quest is designed to be a “safe place” to explore your own thoughts. My ideas were never judged or dismissed and I was not required to speak unless I was moved to do so.

I was introduced to service at a young age. Being the youngest and not yet in school, I remember being with my Mother when she was registering voters. A weekend visit with my

Grandmother always involved preparing the church altar on Saturday night for Sunday morning’s service. My parents and family were very active in their church doing service in many different ways: putting on fundraising dinners, church “clean-up and fix-it days”, and community outreach programs. Mom and Dad served as Elders, Trustees and officers in the various church organizations. I was involved as a dishwasher, waitress, gardener, ticket seller, money counter and thrift store clerk and manager.

Naturally, upon my arrival at Unity it was easy to fall into some type of service. Since gardening is one of my favorite activities, I was glad to have a chance to help those who were taking part in maintaining Unity’s gardens. Gardening and prayer are a natural pair. For the last three years I have assisted in coordinating the Christmas Adopt-a-Family program. Having been a treasurer for community organizations, I decided to join the Unity “Teller staff” last year. When asked to consider a nomination for Trustee this year, I gladly accepted knowing this was the perfect time for me to fulfill that roll. I retired last year and had planned to do more volunteer work.

Why? ...because I desire to have a purpose on a daily basis, and because the stimulation and joy I receive from helping others is an amazing grace. A recent study by psychologists has confirmed what I had discovered on my own: Helping others produces endorphins, that contribute to my feeling of wellness and joy while my life is moving towards that *Christ Light* that we all seek.

I often visit Unity churches when I travel. Recently I was introduced to a woman’s program developed in Florida called *Uni-Tea*. I plan on introducing this in Albany on September 16th after the 11:00 service. I am hoping to recruit a few women to assist in creating monthly programs focused on promoting healthy Minds, Bodies and Spirits as well as fostering networking and leadership opportunities.

Webster’s defines service in many ways. As a noun it is defined as “contribution to the welfare of others” and “useful labor that does not produce a tangible commodity”. As a verb it states “to repair or provide maintenance for.” Service at Unity can take many shapes. The most important may be the one we think of least often: “being there”. We would not exist if people didn’t show up! The part of our service that welcomes new comers and has us greet our neighbors fulfills the human longing for connections and spreads love to those around us. Therefore we all do service when we think of those around us. The more traditional service jobs at Unity seem to be filled by inspiration and the desire of our members to “give back” what has so freely been given to them. I and many others would be glad to talk with you about opportunities that would help you work towards your personal service goals. I can guarantee the rewards will surprise and delight you!”





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Web page: www.unitychurchinalbany.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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!*

REMINDER!

The Unity Church Board meets once each month. Our next meeting is Thursday, August 9th at 6:00 PM in the church Library.

The Board Agenda always holds a place for "Congregant Requests" at the start of each meeting. Any congregant is invited to attend a board meeting to observe or to bring a request or suggestion to the board.

2012 Board of Trustees

President	John Frederick ('13)	486-5689
Vice Pres.	Nancy Wells ('15)	783-8528
Secretary	Leslie Coffaro ('14)	465-3399
Treasurer	Heather Diddel ('14)	475-9604
Trustee	Sheila Healy ('13)	434-1517
Trustee	Dottie Frament ('15)	346-7940

Sunday, September 9th
Fall Worship Schedule
begins with
Sunday Services at
9 & 11 AM