



The Messenger

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

After Easter

EASTER WAS THE ORIGINAL Christian holiday. Long before the stories and traditions around Christmas were formulated and worked into the church calendar Easter stood alone as the holy day of the Christian movement. Followers of "the Way", as the early Jesus movement was known, would gather to remember the stories of his final trip to Jerusalem, his martyrdom and his resurrection. One would presume that these early gatherings were small and simple. They probably stayed small for many decades as the religious and political situation in Judea and Jerusalem deteriorated.

Later as the gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John were being compiled in the late first and early second century an idea emerged that shaped the future of Christianity. The idea was this, Jesus wasn't just a prophet and martyr; he was an atoning sacrifice to God. Never mind that according to the Jewish Torah only the heathen nations would practice abominations like human sacrifice. Never mind that the valley outside Jerusalem which Jesus calls Gahanna (sometimes translated as Hell) was considered unfit for habitation because it had been a place where former nations had practiced human sacrifice. Putting facts and history aside, as we often do, the followers of Jesus who compiled our gospels and filled them with commentary decided that Jesus must have been an atoning sacrifice, just like the sheep and animals that were ritually slaughtered at the Jerusalem Temple.

It is important to remember that the messiah the Jewish people of Jesus' time were looking for was a warrior-priest, someone to drive the Romans from the land and reestablish the Hebrew nation. Some scholars speculate that Judas' reason for turning Jesus in was not for money as the gospels state but to force his hand in confronting the Romans. Jesus was clearly a God connected man, a man with spiritual power. Wouldn't God come to his rescue? Perhaps Jesus would use his God-connection to call together

the many revolutionary groups who were already active in Judea at the time? Within a few decades after Jesus some of these revolutionary groups did attempt to overthrow the Romans which led to the demise of the Temple in Jerusalem. When we read our gospels it is important to remember that this was the social and political situation taking place just before our gospels were compiled.



By Rev. Jim Fuller

So Jesus was not a warrior-priest, nor was he like the judges or kings of the Old Testament. But clearly Jesus was more than just another martyred prophet. And while some people saw and experienced him after the resurrection, he was no longer readily present as he had been before Easter. What could all this mean? The theology of "God's atoning sacrifice" was the meaning that the compilers of our gospels came up with. Since other competing gospels were later destroyed we don't know if there were alternative opinions. Early Christian theologians went on to expand the sacrifice idea to include the idea of redemptive suffering. A century or so later this was merged with another concept, that of original sin. Finally Christianity had created a "solid reason" for a special human sacrifice, a way to justify what to Jesus would have seemed unjustifiable.

The notions (and they are simply notions) of inherent or inherited sin and the virtue of atoning suffering and sacrifice has shaped western culture ever since this unholy alliance of ideas took place. It is woven not just into our religious holy-days but also into our basic understanding of the human condition. We perceive humanity as broken or fallen people, lost souls. We imagine that suffering and dying are our just due for our individual and collective mistakes. We are reminded that Jesus suffered for us (Is that really true?) and so why shouldn't we expect to suffer along as well, accepting our collective fate? Brokenness, guilt, sin, suffering, suffering and sacrifice are very present

Continued on page 3

Ex-President's Corner

It is with a great mixture of feelings that I write this last newsletter article. After two terms on the Board of Trustees of Unity Church in Albany, I am constrained from serving another consecutive term.

Thank You, God! :-)

Wiser minds than mine long ago saw the wisdom of "rotating service" so that people did not become entrenched in positions of "authority" but also so that others could step up as Spirit called them to fill in positions of service. A stagnant stream is soon brackish; while a stream that is constantly replenished remains vital and life-giving.

Serving on the Board has been a Joy and a Blessing. It has been a powerful vehicle for enhancing, developing and learning Spiritual Truths.....a practical way to sharpen Spiritual skills of compassion, listening, discerning, allowing, communing, praying, giving and receiving.

The people with whom I have been blessed to serve have all given so much of their time, talent and treasure to the Board meetings, to the process of governing the church, to uplifting and supporting each others' ideas and projects, to seeing things from a higher vantage point. Thank you one and all for all of the Gifts you have bestowed on me!

Truly, the small amount I have given has been repaid to me many, many times over. Truly, I have changed and grown and become more of who I Am in Spirit as a result of our Board meetings and interactions. There is more to do.....and there are people serving with Joy and Zeal, continuing on the path of Board membership.

I could list accomplishments, and things still "needed", but that would be to miss the larger point of serving, whether on the church Board or in any capacity: Service is among the most powerful ways to Spiritual growth — both personal and community — in order to achieve all that God has promised us.

I Am Grateful for my Time on Unity Church in Albany's Board of Directors and thank everyone for their Love and Support.

Best and Blessings,

John Frederick

Wordsmiths Welcomed! —

Articles for the June/July edition of the newsletter can be submitted to Denise Klein at katzr3@nycap.rr.com by Sunday, May 19th. Your news articles, spiritual thoughts, poetry, photos, humor or suggestions are always welcomed. Don't be shy!

New Trustees and Officers

We are delighted to welcome Debbie Singer and Rob Geyer to our church board.

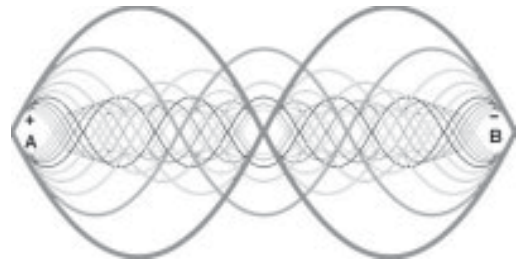
The primary focus of our March 21st board meeting was the prayerful discerning of officers.

Our officers for 2013 are: Dottie Frament, President; Heather Diddel, Vice President; Debbie Singer, Secretary; Rob Geyer, Treasurer. Nancy Wells and Leslie Coffaro will serve as general trustees.

We also acknowledge two outgoing trustees for their time and dedication to Unity Church; John Frederick for six years of service and Sheila Healy for three years. During their terms on the board John and Sheila contributed many helpful ideas and spearheaded many projects and events. We appreciate their many good works and look forward to their ongoing leadership in our church community.

The Law of Vibration

By Eric Butterworth



If you are facing a physical challenge and someone asks, "How are you?" instead of responding with an "organ recital," let something good be said! You can say that you know that you are in the flow of life and that you are getting stronger every day. Or if you are on the verge of saying something negative about yourself, or wanting to pass on a choice bit of gossip, let something good be said!

There may be a time when you yearn for some word of Truth from a counselor or teacher, some specific answer to your need. Actually, you may more importantly need the contagion of a triumphant spirit. In a Sunday worship service, you may not receive the answer to your need in so many words, but you may experience a heightened consciousness in which you will unfold your own answer. It is the finest way, the only unailing way.

Take a moment right now to get into the vibration of your own inner sanctuary. Be very still. Let your heart sing its song of joy. As the cells of your body clap their hands in ecstasy, your whole being is now synchronized with the rhythm of the universe. You are now ready to go forth into your world with the healing, harmonizing, and projecting vibration going before you to make safe, joyous, and successful your way.

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After Easter, continued

in all aspects of western culture; legal, social, moral, religious.

Since we now understand that the beliefs and expectation we hold in our creative and powerful minds must show up in our lives in one way or another, is it any wonder that we experience ourselves living in a world filled with sinful, suffering, unworthy creatures? Is it any wonder that we cower in fear of some "final judgment" which will naturally result in yet more suffering and sacrifice? Can you see the emerging pattern here? Was this really the "good news" that Jesus came to share?

Easter has come and gone. The Jesus of the Easter story has walked quietly through what the worshipers of suffering saw as injustice, death and disgrace. But was that how Jesus saw it or experienced it? Today you and I have the opportunity to walk quietly through something much less dramatic yet equally frightening to us; the dense cloud of man-made ideas, of theologies of sin and suffering and sacrifice. The good news is that only truth is true, no matter what cultures or religions may teach, no matter what appearances may seem to show. Only love is real, no matter how loudly we may individually or collectively proclaim otherwise. We are not inherently broken or evil; none of us. We are not capable of damaging or destroying God or God's creation, not any part of it.

The only loss you and I will ever face is the loss of our stories, our precious rituals of suffering and sadness. The real Jesus of the gospels is still with us as inspiration, imagination and support to guide us through the Easter process we must complete; the releasing, letting go and forgiving all that is not true, not of God. When we have walked quietly through our own letting go of the un-true, when we have forgiven and released our un-Godly thoughts, what will remain for us to experience but God and God's whole, innocent and perfect creation?

May we accept Jesus' Easter invitation to release all unholy ideas of sin, suffering and sacrifice and welcome the truth of our holiness and perfection. May our minds and lives be healed this day. Amen.

Unity Bookstore News

By Debbie Singer

Have you visited our Bookstore lately? It is a lovely place to browse the selections for purchase or borrowing, chat, listen to music or just enjoy the peaceful atmosphere.

The Bookstore is staffed with volunteers following the 11 a.m. service. Should you wish to make a purchase when the Bookstore is open but not staffed, a pink card with instructions for self-service is located on the desk and there is a white mailbox for payment as you exit the Bookstore (cash or check). We stock Unity authors as well as materials used for Unity classes/study such as the works of Louise Hay, Eckard Tolle, Marianne Williamson, Wayne Dyer, etc. Drop by and see what piques your interest!

There will be a meeting of current and potential volunteers on *Sunday, May 5th* after the 11 a.m. service. We will be brainstorming how the space and activities might further support you and our community. We would love to bring additional volunteers onto our team and encourage you to consider this as a way to deepen your connection to Unity.

AND, please take a look around your home and vehicle for any materials (books, DVD's) that were borrowed and forgotten! We'd like to get them back for recirculation!

Being new to the position of Bookstore Chairperson, I would LOVE to hear your thoughts and suggestions! I can be reached at (H) 286-9990. My email address is debsing17@yahoo.com

Give Thanks by Giving: The Food Pantry Needs You

As always, thanks in advance for your generous giving!

Week #1

WOMEN'S WEEK! Needed are feminine pads, tampons, washes, shampoo, conditioner, tooth brushes & toothpaste, deodorants & soap.

Week #2

MEN'S WEEK! Needed are shaving creme, razors, deodorants, shampoo & soap, toothbrushes & toothpaste.

Week #3

BABY WEEK! Disposable diapers, baby wipes, lotions & shampoos.

Week #4

HOUSEHOLD WEEK! Toilet Paper, laundry soap, paper towels, household cleansers.



Unity Book Club

April-May selection

Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time

By, Marcus J. Borg

In *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, Marcus Borg addresses the yearnings of those who want a fully contemporary faith that welcomes rather than oppresses our critical intelligence and openness to the best of historical scholarship. Borg looks at the major findings of modern Jesus scholarship from the perspective of faith, bringing alive the many levels of Jesus' character: spirit person, teacher of alternative wisdom, social prophet, and movement founder. He also reexamines the major stories of the Old Testament vital to an authentic understanding of Jesus, showing how an enriched understanding of these stories can uncover new truths and new pathways to faith. Borg notes, "Ultimately, Jesus is not simply a figure of the past, but a figure of the present. Meeting that Jesus—the living one who comes to us even now—will be like meeting Jesus again for the first time."

Rev Jim will lead a discussion on the book Sunday May 26th at noon.



Spring Mini-Classes with Rev Jim Tithing as Spiritual Practice

Wednesdays April 10 – 24 at 7:15 PM

In biblical times tithing was basically a tax, not a voluntary offering. In modern times it is often presented as a religious obligation to God. *But ask yourself, does God need your money? Isn't God actually the source from which your money originates?*

Join Rev Jim as he explores tithing as a spiritual practice, a way of connecting with God rather than an obligation to or requirement from God. He will also explore some of our old beliefs and fears about tithing and money in general. (No book needed)

How to Pray & Meditate

Wednesdays May 8 – 22 at 7:15 PM

Each spiritual or religious tradition encourages us to pray and meditate. *What prayer methods might be most effective you? How long should you sit in meditation? How might you go about praying for others? Are your old ideas about prayer and meditation working for you or are they in need of a tune up?*

Join Rev Jim as he shares a variety of prayer and meditation techniques to help you find your best pathways to peace, wholeness and God-connection. (No book needed)

“One Song” Multi-Faith Music Services

Sundays, April 7th & May 5th

6:00 - 7:00 PM

Looking for some end of the weekend inspiration? Try our new “One Song” Multi-Faith Music Service. Services take place the first Sunday of every month at 6:00 PM. Patterned after the Kirtan gatherings of the Hindu and Sikh traditions, these services incorporate devotional music from various faith traditions. Expect meditative chanting, gospel songs, traditional and contemporary Kirtan and a Unity favorite or two. Each service also includes prayer and meditation along with readings and reflections from various sacred writings by Rev Jim and others.

Monthly services will continue through the summer and then expand into a weekly format in the fall. If you know someone who is looking for a spiritual home but can't make it in on Sunday mornings, please tell them about this new service. If you are that someone please join us as we build our Sunday evening congregation. We are a spiritual community that is committed to growing in new and dynamic ways. We have a vision to serve and to inspire. We have talented leaders and great musicians. All we need is you.



“Misspent Youth” Live in Concert

Saturday, April 13th 7:00 PM

Misspent Youth is the official “garage band” of Unity Church. (Actually they practice in the fellowship hall.) John Daubney, Gary Allocco, John Reith and Joe Caffaro are all members of our congregation. They along with their friend Mark Goldman make up the band Misspent Youth. You can hear them at our coffee house open mic nights. (They actually organize and host the coffee houses.) On April 13th you can hear them in a full evening concert. Joining them for this concert will be Pete Furlong of our Sunday morning ensemble. You can expect music from the 60's, 70's, 80's and beyond. Admission is only \$5 and children under 14 are free.

Stay Fit / Get Fit at Unity

Yoga with Deborah Foss

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

Pilates with Kay Fuller

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

Yoga with Megan Green

Saturdays at 10:30 AM • (248-3866 for info)



Share Your Vision!

Sunday, April 14th at 1:00 PM

By Heather Diddel

Come join us on Sunday, April 14 at 1:00 as we gather together to discern our community's vision for Unity Church in Albany as we move forward together on our spiritual path.

Some of you may recall that several months ago, in my role as the Board Liaison for our Prosperity Ministry, I extended an invitation to our community to participate in a time of prayer and visioning for our church if they felt called to do so. A lively, diverse group volunteered to participate and met for a time of discernment and visioning one Sunday afternoon. It was a most remarkable time as members of the group (now called the Prosperity Team) went into a time of prayer and discernment, and gave voice to the images and ideas that emerged.

As you might expect, our time of discernment produced a multi-faceted array of potential pathways and expressions of the Church community on a going forward basis. The visioning ranged from ideas about the sanctuary and the building, to spiritual education, the wonderful ever-growing diversity of our congregation, ways to connect and care for one another within the community, the deepening of Unity consciousness within all who call Unity their spiritual home, and more...

On Sunday, April 14 at 1:00, we will take the next step in the visioning process: Rev. Jim will lead us into a time of prayerful discernment during which we will examine our individual visions, review the Prosperity Team's visions, and invite Spirit's guidance for our community's new vision. This gathering is open to everyone who attends Unity, members and non-members. Come and join in this special, fun time together!

Looking forward to our time together on April 14!

Faces At The Small Business Fair



Who Is Jesus Christ And What's He To Me?


By John Daubney

I had been seeking an answer to this vexing question for years, and the harder I tried the more the answer eluded me. I was just too thick to “get it” while others seemed to understand and appeared to be very comfortable in their worship of, and in their relationship to Jesus. I remember during a sermon many years ago, a very kindly pastor said that we should see Jesus in the homeless street person, the drunk, and the less-fortunate of all stripes, and then act toward them as we would toward Jesus. That seemed a nice thing to do and a terribly sinful act if I didn't step up. I had come to see Jesus as the only son of God and as God-made-man, and also as someone to emulate, which seemed impossible for me, since I was quite flawed and sinful and no matter how hard I tried, I would fail miserably and feel hopelessly deficient. .

Born into a traditional religion, I experienced a certain adolescent security and emotional nurturing there, yet my life was so unstable day-to-day that the whole idea of praying to Jesus didn't make any more sense to me than looking to God to stop my parents from fighting and drinking and scaring the hell out of me night after night. Jesus seemed to be a beautiful man and someone to look up to, yet beyond emulation I couldn't figure out my relationship to him. Should I be capitalizing the h in him or his when I speak of Jesus? Who was more powerful ... Jesus or God? If I focused more on Jesus, would God get angry? While these questions might seem sophomoric and childlike, they were actually the questions that would rumble around in the mind of this fully-grown adult male.

As an adult, I would take a religious hiatus from time to time, because church attendance didn't seem to create any positive difference in my life. The question of who Jesus was to me, however, would continue to haunt me. Whenever Easter would roll around, guilt would arise when the passion and crucifixion of Christ was read. It would always remind me of how unworthy I was, and how I could never stand up for anything in the way Jesus did.

In an effort to figure this relationship out, I attended church retreats and even took on various volunteer roles in church, thinking that if I was more self-forgetting like Jesus I would find the answer and be more like him. Well, long-story-short, after many years of frustration and failing to connect to this Jesus of the church, I decided I would give myself permission to explore other religions.



A few of my friends had been attending a church called Unity, and often spoke of the warmth and welcoming community they were experiencing there. So after sampling a number of different traditional churches I attended my first service at Unity in 1992,. I will never forget the eerie feeling of entering a brownstone building - that was not a church - for my first Sunday service. I had never been in a church that was not a traditional church building. I entered feeling scared, disloyal to my old church, but curious and excited at the prospect of something new. Arthur Wells, the minister, welcomed me warmly at the door, and then I quickly scooted over to sit with some friends I recognized.

As I sat there, listening to the old radiator pipes rattling while the room heated up, I chatted a bit with my friend who sat next to me, and nervously looked around the room checking out the people who were entering and taking their place in the wooden folding chairs that served as seating. Shortly it was time for the service to begin, and after the opening hymn and announcements, Rev. Wells, began his talk. The topic of his talk escapes my memory, but within the first 5 minutes of his talk, he spoke of the Christ Presence - the Divine Potential within us all - and Jesus as the way-shower. He recited a gospel verse which I will probably be paraphrasing here, where Jesus told his disciples in response to their praise of his miracles that “you shall do even greater things.” I was dumbfounded, shocked, and giddy at these simple revelations because I just knew these statements to be true. It had to be so. Everything else I'd learned about my relationship to this biblical Jesus made no sense to me, yet here I was connecting to a truth that resonated throughout my being as peace and amazement and best of all truth. I was so happy!

I guess the old adages, Knock and the door will open and Ask and ye shall find certainly proved true for me. My desire and my search had led me to the answers to my question, and as result gave me a powerful resource and a new self-image. I and everyone else had this Christ potential within us; therefore the possibilities for my life were unlimited. This Jesus that I have found is an inner source of strength, direction, and Divine wisdom whenever I choose to remember who I am beyond my ego. My gratitude overflows for Spirit leading me to Unity Church and for the words I heard Arthur Wells speak that day.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Summer Worship Schedule

One Sunday Service at 10:00 AM
May 26th through September 1st
(Memorial Day – Labor Day)

First Sunday Evening
Services (6:00 PM)
continue throughout the summer



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!*