

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



By Rev. Jim Fuller

Bringer of Light

LIGHT IS OFTEN USED as a metaphor for Spirit or God. In Genesis God calls light forth from within the dark void of the unformed Cosmos. The Gospel of John tells of "the light that shines in the darkness" and reminds that "the darkness did not overcome it." Later in John Jesus says, "I am

the light of the world. Whoever follows me (my teachings) will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." None of these are references to literal light, the kind we can turn on or off with the flip of a switch or block by closing the drapes. Yet for most the image of light as metaphor for Spirit or God resonates strongly, as does the contrast between darkness or emptiness and the presence of light.

It is no accident that we celebrate the birth of Jesus at the time of year when, at least in the northern hemisphere, days begin to lengthen and darkness starts to recede. Festivals and rituals acknowledging the "return of light" are known in many cultures and religions. Christianity links the return of light to the birth of a person, a human being rather than a celestial deity. While later groups of Christians eventually did deify Jesus that was not always the case. Jesus' original message was that God was the light. Jesus himself was a "Bringer of Light" a prophet, messenger or teacher of God.

Throughout my life I have encountered a number of people who have been Bringers of Light for me; people who have helped me sense and connect with the presence of Spirit. While there have also been times when the light showed up all by itself on many occasions some messenger or bringer of light was involved. These were people who had made a connection with the Spirit or Light within themselves and then either intentionally or unintentionally shared it with me. For me in that moment each of these persons was a Bringer of the Light of God.

As we can see from the example of Jesus that a Bringer of Light does not need to come from a prominent family, have a big organization, or even a long or comfortable career in order to be successful in his or her mission. As a person anchors the Light of Spirit in his or her mind, that light, truth or understanding begins to radiate through that person. The person radiating this Light of Spirit does not need to will the light to shine in them; it is simply present there and radiates all by itself. People who see, meet or even hear about the person are touched by that light. While some may notice this light immediately others may seem to miss it completely.

I have experienced this Spiritual Light as a radiant energy of peace or healing in a number of people I have met. For a time I knew one man who felt a very strong Jesus connection. When he prayed with others they felt the Spiritual Light moving through him. Many experienced deep peace and some had physical healings. I often noticed a powerful prayer energy and even physical heat as he prayed. Yet some people told me they felt nothing. Were they untouched or did they simply not notice the effects of this radiant energy as it moved through them? Other people found themselves experiencing peace or healing days or weeks after the prayer ended. The man's explanation was simply that he was continuing in the tradition of the disciples, allowing the Spirit and Light of God to move through him as he prayed.

There have been many Bringers of Light throughout history, Jesus being one whose significance is noted not just by Christians but by people of many faiths. Interestingly his message to us was that we all have the capacity to both experience that Light of Spirit and to share it with others. In the Gospel of Thomas Jesus is quoted as saying, "Whoever drinks from my mouth (*learns from my teachings*) will become like me; I myself shall become that person, and the hidden things will be revealed to him." (Thomas 108) In the Course in Miracles he teaches, "If you want to be like me I will help you, knowing that we are alike. If you want to be different, I will wait until you change your mind.



President's Corner

by, Dottie Frament

Hear ye, Hear ye: Opportunities to provide service to Unity church abound.

Do you feel you have found a home at Unity? Do you want Unity to stay a vibrant, diverse, caring, spiritual community?

Have you ever found yourself uplifted and your heart overflowing with gratitude as a result of a worship service, a class, a conversation with another congregant, or participation in a Unity event? If you answered yes to any of these questions, consider asking yourself if you are ready to give back to keep your abundance and gratitude flowing. As WAMC says: If you hear something, give something. You will receive more than you give.

Need some ideas of where to jump in? Here's a few ideas and the name of the Board member who supports the ministry. You may also contact any one of us to offer other gifts or talents or ideas you have that would benefit us.

<u>Prosperity:</u> (Rob Geyer 439-4564): Prosperity visioning, Sunday tellers (offering counters)

Education: (Debbie Singer 286-9990) Sunday school teaching or assisting for elementary, middle or high school kids; working in the bookstore on Sundays, assisting with our annual book sale. Occasional help with infants and toddlers in the nursery on Sunday mornings.

<u>Building/Maintenance</u>: (Nancy Wells 783-8528), handyman skills as needed, helping maintain the shrubs, and gardens in the planting and growing season.

Sunday Worship: (Heather Diddel 475-9604) volunteer to: help with Sunday lights and sound, be a regular or substitute usher, assist with set-up or clean-up of coffee and snacks for hospitality after our 11:00 service. If you have talent as a singer or musician offer your services to Roger Mock for holiday choirs.

Special Events: (Dottie Frament 364-7940) Decorate, bring food, help plan, lend a hand for Christmas party. Help with: Adopt A family for Christmas. Our annual Church in the Park, Pot luck Sundays, Coffeehouses, Circulation Day, Small Business Fair

In-Reach/Outreach: (Leslie Coffaro 465-3399): Publicity/ promotion: help distribute flyers/bookmarks and man booths at events such as the Pride Festival or African American Family Day. Help with food pantry collections. Unity Church Cares volunteers give rides, visit the sick, make/ deliver meals, and offer general congregant support.

By Anthony Antonecchia

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23)

Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; each of these inner and Universal core values are like pure fruits from the orchard of the heart. Each of these virtue fruits are available within, abundantly and diversely, in our heart orchard. They are within our heart orchard inherently since birth like wild fruits which grew naturally. Our being came into being in "Original Goodness," as Christian mystic Matthew Fox affirms. We are made in the image of, and we are reflections of God/Goddess Goodness.

Yet if one is not so much inclined as a forager of the inner wild fruits growing along the edges of heart's orchard, each virtue can be planted in the center. Fruits of the Spirit can be grown from a seed of thought or intention, and then nurtured, cultivated, and cared for over time through our spiritual practice in co-creation with Universe Heart's pruning care. Each of these fruit trees can be cultivates in our hearts orchard for infinity, for there is endless opportunity and infinite potential for each virtue's expression, for our growth expansion, for Spirit fruit's fruition.

Both tuning into our natural qualities and cultivating or promoting positive qualities will be appreciated by all as are many fruits by many people. Whatever our approach may be, we may find ourselves metaphorically, brushing through the thorns or traversing through the dew with wet shoes for forage, or weeding and pruning in the orchard, our efforts will surely nourish and healthily feed ourselves, our communities, and society.

Affirmation: "May I be loving, joyful, peaceful, longsuffering, gentle, good, faithful, met, moderate and self-controlled."

The Sign of Christmas

The sign of Christmas is a star, a light in darkness. See it not outside yourself, but shining in the Heaven within, and accept it as the sign the time of Christ has come. He comes demanding nothing. No sacrifice of any kind, of anyone, is asked by Him. In His Presence the whole idea of sacrifice loses all meaning. For He is Host to God. And you need but invite Him in Who is there already, by recognizing that His Host is One, and no thought alien to His Oneness can abide with Him there. Love must be total to give Him welcome, for the Presence of Holiness creates the holiness that surrounds it. No fear can touch the Host Who cradles God in the time of Christ, for the Host is as holy as the perfect Innocence which He protects, and Whose power protects Him. (ACIM 15,XI,2)

Bringer of Light, continued —

I can teach you, but only you can choose to listen to my teaching. How else can it be, if God's Kingdom is freedom?" (ACIM 8:IV:6) I offer these quotes to remind us that we each have within us the capacity to be a Bringer of Light. We live in a world that often seems to be stuck in darkness and ignorance. What we need are more Bringers of Light. Jesus and others have demonstrated that it is possible to awaken fully and to become channels for Divine Light to pour into our world. And we see other contemporary teachers who, while not fully awakened, are clearly allowing this same Light to move through them.

We are moving toward Christmas, a time when we celebrate the Light of Spirit entering into our world through the person of Jesus. What better way could there be for us to remember his teachings and honor his contributions to the world than by beginning to consciously invite that same Light of Spirit to move freely through us?

Jesus invited his disciples (his disciplined students) to learn from him, follow his example, and to become like him. He reminded them that the Spirit of God was already present with them and that as they trusted into God more fully nothing would be impossible to them. I believe that each of us is ultimately destined to function as a Bringer of Light just like Jesus, whose birth we will soon celebrate. We see evidence of this beginning to happen today as we notice people around us who seem to shine with an inner light. The only question now is when we will allow this to happen in us. This Christmas let's not just be outside observers of the coming of the Light into our world. Let's commit to allowing ourselves to become the Bringers of Light. That is what we were created to be and therefore what we must become. As we consciously move in that direction we will sense "a great unseen support" for even the smallest of our efforts. Let us join together with the other Bringers of Light by welcoming God's healing Light of Spirit into our hearts, minds and lives that it might shine brightly through us.

May the Light of Spirit shine brightly in me this Christmas. May I be a channel for God's love, peace and wisdom to shine into my family, my community and my world.

Introduction to Unity Wednesdays, January 8th & 15th at 7:15 PM

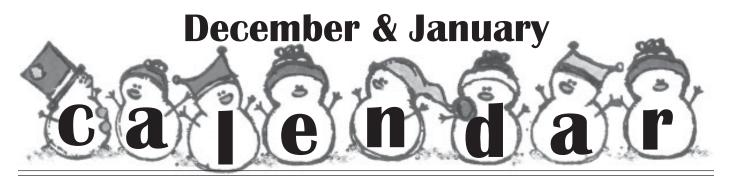
Join Rev Jim as he leads us through a two-part Introduction to Unity. Each evening will include talks on Unity history, videos of Unity current and past, and information about Unity today. There will also be time for questions and discussion. The class is free and open to all.

Christmas is coming
It's a secret
Go tell everyone
Mary is in Nazareth
She's pregnant again, already showing
Yet another Christ Child
All the other women in Nazareth
They're pregnant too; and the men
Too many Christs to count

Christmas is coming
It's a secret
Go tell everyone
Wise men are everywhere
Falling down before babies left and right
Bringing golden gifts of praise
They come from the east
They come from west, north and south
From next door and down the street

Christmas is coming
It's a secret
Go tell everyone
Gifts are hidden everywhere
Stashed in every closet and attic
In dark cellars and in plain sight
There are already so many gifts
That Santa gets a year off
All the Elves are in Miami

Christmas is coming
It's a secret
Go tell everyone
Peace is born across the Earth
In stables and high-rises
On farms and in apartments
Go tell it on the mountain
God tell it at the Laundromat
Go shout it in your mirror
Christmas is coming
And the secret is
It's already here



Church Christmas Party Saturday, December 7th at 7:00 PM

Join your Unity friends for an evening of fellowship, carols and games. Everyone is invited, so feel free to bring family and friends. Light refreshments will be provided. This is a free event.



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Tuesday, December 24th, 5:30 PM

Rekindle the Christ light in your heart this Christmas. Join Reverend Jim and our Unity musicians as we sing and celebrate the birth of Christ Consciousness into our world. We have scheduled our service at 5:30 PM so that you can participate and still have the evening free for family and friends. Join us as we listen to the Christmas story, share prayers, songs, and light our Christmas candles together. What a wonderful gift to give the Christ child in you!

Christmas Day Pot Luck Lunch Wednesday, December 25th, 1:00-5:00 PM

Reverend Jim and Kay invite you to join them for a pot luck lunch and time of fellowship on Christmas Day. We gather to prepare for the meal at 1:00 PM; the meal begins around 2:00 PM. No reservation or sign up needed, just bring a dish to share and come on over. Family, friends and last minute drop-ins are always welcome. Christmas is a wonderful time to gather in friendship and community, won't you join us?

New Year's Eve Burning Bowl Service

Tuesday, December 31st, 5:30 PM

Clear out the closets of your mind and make room for the

life your soul desires. Open your imagination and heart to the blessings God is offering you. This is our traditional ritual of releasing to the burning bowl those things that no longer serve us and writing our letter to God claiming our vision of good for the coming year. We will sing, pray and step forward into a New Year filled with wonderful possibilities for all.

Grow in Understanding of Spiritual Things Sunday Prayer & Meditation with Rev Jackie



Unity's co-founder, Myrtle Fillmore, once said "if you would grow in understanding of spiritual things, become as a little child and let the universal Spirit of Good teach you." The one sure way of following our co-founder's guidance is through the practice of meditation. Meditation is listening to God or as Myrtle referred to the Divine

"the universal Spirit of Good".

The practice of meditation allows us to connect with the Divine in perfect union. The practice can bring us to that place of calm and perfect peace that cultivates our soul. We can then experience more clarity of thoughts and direction in our lives. Again, as our co-founder said in How to Let God Help You, "if you would know the perfect relation of all things in the universe, cultivate the soul. It is Intelligence Itself and will reveal to you, in the silence of meditation, glories and beauties of which you have not dreamed."

Beginning the first Sunday in January 2014, we will add to our Sunday morning experience a time dedicated to the practice of meditation. Rev. Jackie Hawkins will lead the practice from 10:15 to 10:45 in the large upstairs class room (Garden Room.) Space is limited to 10. The practice will start promptly at 10:15, and it will end accordingly, so that it will not interfere with either the 9:00 or the 11:00 Sunday morning services.

Metaphysical Interpretation of Bible Stories for Children (& Big People)

Sundays, January 12 & 16, February 9 & 23, March 9 Time: 12:30pm to 2:30pm **Location: Garden Room**

Instructor: Jane Bloom, MSEd.

This class will explore selected Bible stories from both the Old and New Testament using metaphysics to interpret the story beyond the story. Class members will learn to use the maieutic technique for interpretation and will use and become familiar with The Revealing Word and the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, both by Charles Fillmore. They will be introduced to the website TruthUnity.net as a tool to aid in Bible interpretation.

Jane Bloom has been a teacher for all of her adult life and holds a Master degree in Education. At her previous Unity Center, Jane was on the Leadership Team, was team leader for Hospitality, served as Sunday Service coordinator and managed the church software. She has been with Unity since 2004 and joined Unity of Albany in spring of 2012 when she moved to Vermont. She currently coordinates our Youth Program and is on the path to becoming a Licensed Unity Teacher.

For more info contact Jane at: janeb915@gmail.com or 802-430-4490



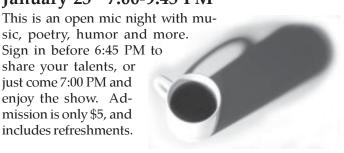
Even Mystics Have Bills to Pay Follow-up Class Wednesday, January 22nd at 7:15 PM

This class is open to anyone who participated in last fall's Wednesday class series. It will be of particular interest for those who have been working with the 40 day Guide to Prosperous Living.

Coffee House

January 25th 7:00-9:45 PM

sic, poetry, humor and more. Sign in before 6:45 PM to share your talents, or just come 7:00 PM and enjoy the show. Admission is only \$5, and includes refreshments.





What are the pitfalls of prayer? What is the inner process of prayer? What comes after prayer?

Based on Eric Butterworth's book "The Universe Is Calling", this eight-week class will help open up your prayer life. Prayer has always been at the heart of the Unity movement and who better to share Unity's understanding of prayer than Eric Butterworth, protégé of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. You will learn to develop the inner intention needed to give power to your prayers. You will also learn how to pray with others and hold others in prayer. Prayer is about connecting with the always present power of the Universe and allowing that connection to heal and empower your life. We all experience the natural urge to pray, and we all have the innate capacity to get results from our prayers.

Are You Interested In **Becoming A Unity** Prayer Chaplain?

Prayer Chaplains are people who pray with others at the end of our Sunday services. If you are interested we ask that you first complete



the winter Prayer Class "The Universe Is Calling: Opening To The Divine Through Prayer." In May Rev Jim will offer additional training for those who wish to become Prayer Chaplains.

Share your thoughts

Articles for the February/March edition of the newsletter can be submitted to Denise Klein at katzr3@nycap.rr.com by Sunday, January 19th. Your news articles, spiritual thoughts, poetry, photos, humor or suggestions are always welcomed.

Unity Book Club

Daring Greatly By Brené Brown



(November-December selection)

Discussion with Rev Jim: January 5th at 12:30 PM

Every day we experience the uncertainty, risks, and emotional exposure that define what it means to be vulnerable, or to dare greatly. The arena may be a new relationship, an important meeting, our creative process, or a difficult family conversation. In Daring Greatly, Dr. Brown challenges everything we think we know about vulnerability. Based on twelve years of research, she argues that vulnerability is not weakness, but rather our clearest path to courage, engagement, and meaningful connection. Daring Greatly offers both a powerful vision and clear practice for letting our true selves show up.

Dr. Brené Brown is a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. She has spent the past twelve years studying vulnerability, courage, worthiness, and shame. Her groundbreaking research has been featured on PBS, NPR, CNN, The Washington Post, and The New York Times. Her 2010 TEDxHouston talk "The Power of Vulnerability" is one of the top ten most viewed TED talks on TED.com.

Unity Book Club

Teach Us To Pray By Charles & Cora Fillmore (January-February selection)

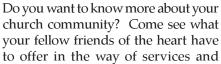
Discussion with Rev Jim: March 9th at 12:30 PM

Teach Us To Pray introduces itself in part with the following. "We have been so persistently taught that prayer consists in asking God for some human need that we have lost sight of our spiritual identity and have become a race of praying beggars. God is Spirit in whom we 'live, and move, and have our being.' We are the offspring of this Spirit and can make conscious contact with it by turning our attention away from material things and thinking about Spirit. As we practice this kind of prayer our innate Spirit showers its life energies into our conscious mind and a great soul expansion follows. 'Whenever you pray, go into your closet and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.'"

The book consists of short articles on prayer written by Charles Fillmore. It was compiled and edited by his second wife, Cora. It offers a unique glimpse into Unity's original teachings about healing prayer.

\$mall Business Fair

February 9th & 16th 10:00 AM – 1:00PM





products at our annual \$mall Business Fair. The event will warm you in this cold winter month! Because of overwhelming participation in the past, the event will include two Sundays, February 9th and 16th. The fair will take place in the fellowship hall between services and after the 11:00 service. It is open to anyone with a small business who attends Unity Church. For information on showcasing your small business, contact Bonnie Kriss at 373-2135 or at tedandbonkriss@hotmail.com.

Collecting *Gently* Used Books, Music, DVD's for January 2014 Sale! Donate: Sundays January 5th and 12th

We invite your donations of gently used books on spirituality, hobbies (e.g. gardening, crafts), novels, children's books, CDs, DVDs etc.

Donations gratefully accepted at the Unity Bookstore

Used Book Sale

January 19 - 26

It's time to clear out your old books and make room for some new treasures. From January 5 - 18 will be collecting "gently used" books, along with CDs and DVDs for our sale. Donated books will go on sale starting Sunday the 19, at very low prices. Proceeds from the sale will help support church projects and activities. Thanks in advance for helping support our church and making this our best used book sale ever.

Sunday Service Volunteers- -and Wannabe Volunteers - - UNITE!

On January 12 at 12:30, all the wonderful people who have volunteered - - or would like to find out about volunteering - - as ushers, hospitality creators, and/or sound and light board techies, are invited to meet in the choir room for a Dream Team Meeting. Something edible and drink-able will be provided along with an opportunity to brainstorm about 2014, and the fun we will co-create. Heather Diddel will be sending out an email as a reminder. Any questions, please give Heather a call at 51-8475-9604 or email her at https://diddelowoh.com or grab her any time before or after the Sunday service.

Spotlight on Service

By John Daubney

Patricia Hunt-Perry



Unity of Albany is blessed to have Patricia choose our church as her spiritual home at this particular stage of her spiritual journey. Patricia's passionate pursuit of Truth and spiritual fulfillment along with her spiritual curiosity and a desire to serve others in ways that satisfy her soul

make her a loving and creative presence and a role model for all of us. If you have not made Patricia's acquaintance as yet, I encourage you to spend a few minutes chatting with her. Her positivity is catchy!!

"I'm in the right place at the right time,
"I'm just where I'm supposed to be,
'My soul is welcome here."

This song written and performed by Daniel Nahmod expresses exactly how I felt about Unity from the first day I arrived shortly after moving to the Albany area. Just before moving here from the mid-Hudson Valley I had dinner with Scott Kalechstein, a musician who had recently performed at Unity, and he said emphatically, "If you are moving to the Albany area, go to Unity!" I had never heard of Unity Church, but on his recommendation came here first although I had previously made a list of spiritual places to visit. Since that first visit I have never left Unity nor visited the other places on that list!

The first service I attended was just before Thanksgiving in two thousand eight. Rev. Jim asked people to stand up and say what they were thankful for. Much to my surprise I found myself on my feet expressing how thankful I was for being at Unity; to me it felt like I was coming home. I "got" Unity immediately although I had been here only thirty-five minutes. Then at the end of the service we sang, "Let There Be Peace on Earth and Let It Begin with Me." This was the theme song of a Martin Luther King organization I had just left behind in my move here. I had been active in that organization for 15 years and had even served on the Board. The song brought tears to my eyes, Spirit moved within me, and I again knew I was home, and surely in the right place.

I immediately felt the energy field of Unity and experienced it not just through the mind but also deeply within my heart, my being, and my essence.

I am at a delicious point in my life where there is nothing that I am obligated to do, so I do only what "calls" me. I was not drawn to service because of any single person, although Rev. Jim's dedication in the many ways he serves the church from maintenance to his inspirational offerings on Sunday mornings was a strong guide. So was his invitation to everyone to find something they love to do and serve there. Yes! That was an invitation I could relate to and far different than any organization I had ever been in previously! What also stood out for me was Rev. Jim's obvious delight in his own service and the service of so many people performing tasks they felt called to do because it wasn't "work" in the traditional sense. Service done in this manner creates a joyful community.

Among the avenues where I have been able to serve are: being on the nominating committee, introducing spiritual teacher John Welshons to our community and hosting him and others. I also host various meetings in the meditation room at my home. Ushering and greeting people as they enter church on Sunday mornings especially called me. Since I had worked in the field of Death, Dying and Grief for over 30 years, it was a joy to offer the One Year to Live class, once a month, for a full year with Paul Barnard and Sandesh Naik. Since January I have been co-facilitating a monthly video satsang by the spiritual leader, Mooji. I have introduced a number of new folks to Unity and have served on the Unity Cares Committee. In little informal ways I see something that needs some attention, like publicity for example, and just help out in the moment.

I have been very blessed over my lifetime to have spent time with, attended retreats with, and received teachings from gifted spiritual teachers such as Ram Dass , Krishnamurti, Thich Nhat Hanh, Flora Courtois, the Dalai Lama, Mother Serena, Mooji and others. In both formal (i.e. showing and leading a discussion on the Ram Dass film, Fierce Grace) and in many informal ways I have shared some of those teachings with my brothers and sisters at Unity.

I have given some consideration to offering a workshop, if there is enough interest, on Illness as an Opportunity for Awakening and how that can facilitate a deeper healing connection with Spirit. Any crisis can pull back the veils of our lives to assist us in going deeper into Spirit and Understanding. I have also considered offering a workshop on Aging as an Exquisite Opportunity for Spiritual Growth.

So what service are you called to do? Why not follow Rev Jim's invitation to do what you love and also this insight from the Indian poet, Tagore:

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and behold, service was joy."



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You Are Welcome Here

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!

Our Worship Schedule

Sunday Morning with services at 9:00 & 11:00 a.m. & Music & Meditation Service every Sunday at 6:00 p.m.

Youth Education classes at 11:00 a.m.

Nursery Care available at 11:00 a.m.