

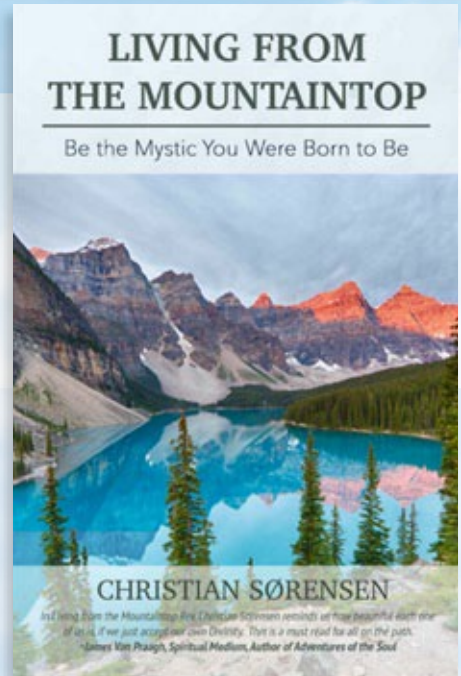
Faith in Action

2020

Inspiring Spiritual Growth and Abundant Living

October 4 through November 8, 2020

- ❖ Sunday talk series with **Rev. Steve Colladay**
- ❖ Weekly **SpiritGroups** Zoom meetings for small group book study
- ❖ Calling for Zoom Hosts – host a group and you pick the day and time for others to join you!



Available on www.amazon.com
in Paperback and Kindle Formats

HOST GUIDE



21 King Ave Albany, NY 12206

Online: www.unityalbany.org Email: office@unityalbany.org

Sunday Services: 11:00 am Fall to Spring 10:00 am Summer Months

Our mission is to awaken to and embrace the Divine essence of all beings
through prayer and service.

LIVING FROM THE MOUNTAINTOP

Be the Mystic You Were Born to Be



CHRISTIAN SØRENSEN

In Living From the Mountaintop, Christian Sørensen reminds us how beautiful each one of us is, if we just accept our own Divinity. This is a must read for all on the path.
—James Van Praagh, Spiritual Medium, Author of *Adventures of the Soul*

“After your mountaintop experience, you’ll find yourself more at home in your body. You’ll stop looking elsewhere for your true Self and perceive as much life force ‘within’ as ‘out there.’ You’ll come to know **where you are** is where **It** all is.”

Christian Sørensen,
Living From the Mountaintop

*Welcome to your
Faith in Action 2020*



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- **WHAT ARE SPIRITGROUPS?**

SpiritGroups are zoom online meetings of eight to twelve people who meet to enhance their spiritual practice, to make friends, to build strong and lasting relationships, and to share in caring for each other. Each group usually lasts two hours.

- **WHAT HAPPENS IN A SPIRITGROUP?**

When you attend a SpiritGroup meeting there will be some combination of prayer, fellowship, sharing and discussion of spiritual issues as applied to daily living.

- **WHY ARE SPIRITGROUPS IMPORTANT?**

Building meaningful relationships is important in today's world. SpiritGroups help build a solid relationship with our Creator and healthy relationships with family, friends, acquaintances, and co-workers.

- **WHERE DO SPIRITGROUPS MEET?**

Ideally, SpiritGroups meet in person but with COVID-19 we meet on zoom where there is a safe, welcoming, relaxed atmosphere.

- **HOW ARE THE SPIRITGROUPS ORGANIZED?**

Each SpiritGroup has a host who moderates and leads each meeting.

- **WHY LIMIT THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS?**

A SpiritGroup has no more than 10 participants because a smaller environment enables people to get to know each other, develop relationships and share at a deeper level. A large gathering does not always support this purpose.



- **HOW WILL I BENEFIT FROM BEING IN A SPIRITGROUP?**

You will gain a more authentic spiritual practice and a genuine feeling that you are not alone in life. You will build more loving and lasting relationships with others. You will benefit from spiritual practices applied in everyday life for building your own dreams and aspirations.

- **IS THERE A COST TO BE IN A SPIRITGROUP?**

There is no cost to participate in a SpiritGroup, though we do invite members to contribute to Unity Church in Albany as a source of spiritual growth. Consider the benefits of this program and give accordingly. Many people also commit to expand their usual tithe to the ministry during this spiritually inspired adventure.

- **HOW TO SIGN UP FOR A SPIRITGROUP?**

Send us and email with your name, phone and email address to office@unityalbany.org



“In such small, intimate groups, people are finding themselves, finding each other, and finding God.”

— George Gallup, Jr.

SpiritGroups are non-judgmental, accepting, encouraging, and supportive of the individual on his or her spiritual journey. SpiritGroup members hold each other in affirmative prayer throughout the duration of the program fostering a spiritual bond.

Unlike a class setting, there are no teachers in SpiritGroups. The groups are led by one member (the host), with the help of the other members. We are all spiritual teachers for each other.

SpiritGroups give us the space to “check-in” with each other, to be authentic, to share.

SpiritGroups meet three essential needs:

- **LISTENING**

To be heard; to know that there is someone who is willing to listen to what we have to say.

- **ACCEPTANCE**

To be accepted, appreciated, and valued for who we are.

- **CARE**

To experience the love and care of people with whom we share some common affinity.

“Small groups (SpiritGroups) are where people gather and really care for one another. It is belonging and being loved by others who come into the SpiritGroup. It is where heart-to-heart fellowship takes place.”

— Dale Galloway



- *Create a safe environment that allows others to express feelings.*
- *Listen & uphold confidentiality.*
- *Are concerned with the well-being of all participants.*
- *Promote awareness by the participants.*
- *Are able to hold space for others to express intense emotion.*
- *Accept participants as they are.*
- *Act as monitors and keep the group focused.*

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SPIRITGROUP HOSTS

- Guide and lead the discussion in the small group—be accountable to the minister and host trainer.
- Pray daily for members of the SpiritGroup.
- Know the materials, be centered, and prepared for the role of host.
- Talk in an audible, positive tone; maintain good eye contact; refer to members by their first names; encourage members to address each other by name.
- Attend Sunday services and group meetings during the program.
- Between meetings, make any appropriate contacts with group members.
- Make certain the room is ready for group meetings
- Use the group Sacred Commitments as the basis of guiding the group meeting.
- Open the meeting by leading a prayer.
- Arrange for any group business to be taken care of.
- Give ample opportunity and encouragement for members to participate openly with each other.
- Close the meeting with prayer.
- Take care of yourself by remembering —

*Be tuned in,
turned on spiritually.*

*Keep learning, no one
has all the answers!*

*Hang loose; maintain a relaxed
attitude in the group.*

*Trust the Holy Spirit to do
the work.*

*Maintain a sense of humor—
see Proverbs 17:22.*

*You are a person of worth!
Do not be afraid or hesitant
to communicate that! It will
encourage others to believe
the same about themselves.*

Live by the Sacred Commitments.



- 🌀 Opening Prayer
- 🌀 Check-in Round
- 🌀 Review Commitments, Sacred Agreements & Five Disciplines
- 🌀 Weekly Affirmation
- 🌀 Discussion Questions
- 🌀 Mindfulness Exercise/Meditation
- 🌀 Challenge
- 🌀 Closing Round

“Living from the Mountaintop will give you an opportunity to experience joy and happiness beyond words and logic, while folding beautifully into your soul’s expansion, evolution and spiritual maturation. All of your interactions within this world will come to be recognized as purely spiritual experiences.”

Christian Sørensen,
Living From the Mountaintop



Commitment transforms promise into reality. It is fueled by words that speak boldly of our intentions and the actions which speak louder than words. It is making time where there is none. It is following through. It is the power that transforms our lives and our world. It is the daily triumph of integrity and empowerment over skepticism.

- 🌐 I commit myself to this process of spiritual exploration, of fulfilling my soul's longing to understand and express the divine to the best of my ability with my thoughts, words and actions.
- 🌐 I go to my heart and invite other Spirit Group members to do the same. I believe in the connecting power of God that dwells in the one heart of which we are all a part.
- 🌐 I celebrate the greatness in myself and in you. Our lives are filled with infinite possibilities woven together in Oneness.
- 🌐 I love and accept you just the way you are, and I respect your right to be different and to think differently than I do.
- 🌐 I openly share my thoughts, feelings and beliefs. I care enough to share my personal experiences authentically and to lovingly listen with intention to your truth.
- 🌐 I choose words of kindness, encouragement, appreciation and gratitude to build a strong foundation of mutual support.



Sacred Agreements help create a safe and healthy environment for the group. It is important that the group review these agreements and reach consensus.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We honor confidentiality. We do not share another person's story, even good news, without permission. What is shared here, stays here. If there is something you hope to share, ask permission and honor the response.

COMPASSION

We relate to each other with unconditional, compassionate acceptance. Judgmental comments, even unspoken judgmental thoughts are toxic to the group. When we need to process, we ask our host or minister for sacred and confidential support.

TRUTH & INTEGRITY

We are encouraged and supported by one another to honestly and authentically be ourselves. Although it involves risk, speaking our personal truth can occur safely in a compassionate environment.

RESPECT

We show respect for each other and the group by attending each week, arriving on time, not interrupting others and allowing everyone to participate.

CONFLICT

When people come together and speak truthfully, the potential for hurt feelings, triangulation and misunderstanding exists. When left unresolved, these are toxic to the sacred safety of the environment. We encourage speaking *with* people, not *about* them and we refrain from talking about people when they are not present.

GROUP PROCESS

This process is for our own personal and spiritual growth, not group therapy. When discussing program related material, use "I" statements to deepen your sharing and avoid advising, coaching or problem-solving for other members.

PARTICIPATION

We agree to prepare for and participate in discussions and group activities; however, each person has the right to modify his or her participation.



Communion, Connection, Compassion, Community, Challenge.

COMMUNION

Each SpiritGroup includes some form of practice for “communion” with Spirit. Usually, this means affirmative prayer, mindfulness, and/or meditation.

CONNECTION

Each SpiritGroup devotes time during each meeting to building authentic, quality connections with one another.

COMPASSION

Each SpiritGroup member is called to support others in the group by checking in on each other and holding one another in prayer during the week. When we sense that pastoral care might be helpful, we encourage that member to seek guidance and support from our ministers.

COMMUNITY

Each SpiritGroup participates in some form of community service during their commitment to be together.

CHALLENGE

Each SpiritGroup member is invited to select an area of “challenge” or growth during our time together. Individuals support one another in that growth by serving as accountability partners.



GUIDELINES FOR DO'S AND DON'TS

DON'T:

-
- ❗ Be an authority figure or an expert.
 - ❗ Let people interrupt each other.
 - ❗ Let participants attack or judge other participants.
 - ❗ Permit anyone (including yourself) to put words in another's mouth or answer questions for someone else.
 - ❗ Say, "I know how you feel!" (Even if you are absolutely certain that you do!)
 - ❗ Use euphemisms when discussing painful subjects.
 - ❗ Minimize any emotional reaction, pain or grief.
 - ❗ Imply that any feeling or response to stress is abnormal, good or bad.
 - ❗ Say, "Look on the bright side."
 - ❗ Give advice. (It is important to discourage participants from giving advice unless the advice is focused on dealing with bureaucracy or red tape about a specific topic and is welcomed by the recipient as helpful.)

DO:

-
- ❗ Check out participants "I" needs and expectations.
 - ❗ Model skills for participants. (I'm feeling _____ right now.)
 - ❗ Set limits. (It is okay to confront in a loving way.)
 - ❗ Identify common feelings in the group.
 - ❗ Identify underlying themes.
 - ❗ Ask for feedback and clarification.
 - ❗ Share personal experience to make a point.
 - ❗ Be vulnerable.
 - ❗ Encourage participants to know she/he has a choice. (Sample question: Does this work for you?)
 - ❗ Allow others to be where they are, without judgment.
 - ❗ Direct group focus to the issues at hand.
 - ❗ Help make things manageable by taking on a small piece of the big picture.
 - ❗ Use detached involvement and get support for yourself outside the group.
 - ❗ Try to control the tendency of participants to assume roles (dominator, observer, fixer, critic, organizer, etc.). Work within these guidelines to minimize destructive effects of role-playing.
 - ❗ Acknowledge progress in participants over time.
 - ❗ Operate on the principle, "One Day at a Time".
 - ❗ Have fun and relax.



THE ART OF LISTENING

You are NOT listening to me when:

- You do not care about me.
- You say you understand before you know me well enough.
- You have an answer for my problem before I've finished telling you what my problem is.
- You cut me off before I've finished speaking.
- You finish my sentence for me.
- You feel critical of my vocabulary, grammar or accent.
- You are dying to tell me something.
- You tell me about your experience making mine seem unimportant.
- You are communicating to someone else in the room.
- You refuse my thanks by saying you haven't really done anything.

You ARE listening to me when:

- You come quietly into my private world and let me be me.
- You really try to understand me even if I'm not making much sense.
- You grasp my point of view even when it's against your own sincere convictions.
- You have given me your positive energy.
- You allow me the dignity of making my own decisions even though you think they might be wrong.
- You do not take my problem from me, but allow me to deal with it in my own way.
- You hold back your desire to give me good advice.
- You do not offer me religious solace when you sense I am not ready for it.
- You give me enough room to discover for myself what is really going on.
- You accept my gift of gratitude by telling me how good it makes you feel to know you have been helpful.



HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

General tips:

- Create a supportive, non-defensive climate that maintains all participant's self-esteem.
- Start with the lowest level of intervention.
- Describe what you are seeing.
- Don't take the reactions of participants personally.

Things to remember:

- "I" messages have three parts:
 - Behavior* — describe the situation.
 - Feelings* — state how the situation makes you feel.
 - Effects* — describe the impact or the results of the situation.
- Helpful "I" message formula:
 - When...*
 - I feel...*
 - Because...*
- Examples:
 - When* you make side comments to your neighbor *I get* upset *because* it makes it difficult for me to hear what the speaker who has the floor is saying.
 - When* Joan makes a suggestion, you groaned audibly. You did the same thing when Bill made a suggestion. *I feel* concerned *because* your groaning may discourage others from participating.

Establish sacred agreements:

- Establish ground rules in the beginning to eliminate any potential problems.
- Examples:
 - Keep an open mind..*
 - No interrupting / honor the person sharing.*
 - Balance time between those sharing.*
 - Stick to the agenda.*
- If a problem occurs you can refer back to the sacred agreements.



If side conversations occur:

- Repeat the sacred agreements.
- Say, “_____ (name of main speaker) has the floor now.”
- Use humor (e.g. “Am I hearing voices?”)

If the topic gets side tracked:

- Ask how this issue is tied to the topic.
- Ask the speaker to help you put their thought into a bullet point.
- Remind the speaker of the time limits.

Honor the one sharing:

- Remind the group who has the floor.
- Refer back to the ground rules.

Staying focused on the topic of conversation:

- Ask the speaker to be specific, e.g. “How is that similar to what we are discussing?”
-

Curtail repetitive sharing or story telling:

Use active listening to paraphrase their thought.

Honor time agreements:

- Get time commitment from everyone up front.
- No disruptive behavior during the meeting.
- Start on time, and end on time.

Speak of personal experience and use feeling words:

- Rather than re-telling the stories of others, share firsthand information and insight.
- Ask, “Is that my story to share?”

If someone becomes critical of the group process:

- If your facilitation style is being criticized, point out that there are lots of different styles of facilitation and many ways to approach a problem; that there is no one right way. Ask the person to give your approach a chance to work.
-

When all else fails:

- Speak to the individual at the break.
- Pause for prayer.
- Use “I” messages to specifically state what the problem is and what impact it is having on the group from your perspective.
-



🌐 In which areas are you feeling effective?

🌐 In which areas are you feeling ineffective?

🌐 Are you feeling supported?

🌐 What is working for you?

🌐 What is not working for you?

🌐 What personal values are you experiencing through facilitating your group?



🌀 **Are you feeling valued for your work? How?**

🌀 **If you are not feeling valued for your work, why not?**

🌀 **Is your ministry unfolding in the way you expected it would?**

🌀 **How is this manifesting?**

🌀 **If it is not unfolding as you expected, how can we be of assistance?**



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