



Spiritual Light Center

Newsletter--August 2013

MESSAGE FROM JIM

Dear SLC Family and Friends:

The theme of this month's newsletter is "Prayer." Accordingly, I'd like to say a couple of words about that topic, which is better addressed in the pages that follow. It's my opinion that too much of the prayer offered today turns out to be in the nature of begging God to provide or fix or cure something. This is sometimes called "petitionary prayer" because in it we petition God to make some magical change in our circumstances. I tend to favor affirmative prayer (or spiritual mind treatment) as explained by Ernest Holmes and others, in which we first establish a connection with God and then affirm that the conditions that we seek exist now, in the present moment. Finally we release our word, and give thanks, simply knowing that what we desire is ours. Many people see this as being less than reverent, or not properly subservient. I think they are missing the point. An omniscient God does not need flattery or condescension or confession of sins, as the content of our minds would have to be already known. In the book *It Is About You*, Kathy Juline says that "The more you conform your own mind with the wholeness of Spirit, aligning your thinking with the truth, the more you experience wholeness in your life" (p. 6). (Meister Eckhart, who lived about 1260 - 1327, is reputed to have said "If the only prayer you pray is thank you, it is more than enough." New Thought was alive and well in the 12th century!)

Our Annual Meeting is near! It will be held on August 18 at 11 a.m., in Fellowship Hall. We must fill 4 vacancies on our Board of Trustees, as Clark Kell, Richard Kimball, and I are not eligible to be re-elected, and Carol Murley has

resigned her position. Any member who is otherwise eligible can stand for election. To be a member, you must have submitted a request for membership, a form for which is available in the Chapel and in the Fellowship Hall. We only ask that you agree with our Vision and Mission statements. You do not have to give up any religious affiliation you now hold, nor do you have to make any "promises" nor accept any doctrine. We seek to support your spiritual growth and development. However, in order to vote in the Annual Meeting your request for membership must be received no later than Sunday, August 11th to give us time for processing.

My term of office will expire at adjournment of the Annual Meeting. It has been a generally good ride, with a couple of serious bumps from which we have emerged energized and forward-looking. I appreciate all the help you have given me. Thank you! With the synergism displayed by the SLC membership, we can move ahead as a vital force in our community. Let's do it!!
Namasté! Jim Swanson, President

OUR VISION STATEMENT

The Spiritual Light Center is a peaceful and joyful fellowship of individuals, centered in love, dedicated to the God within, and honoring the many paths to truth.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We seek to develop our highest selves by continuous sharing of spiritual ideas, in an environment of unconditional love and respect for others.

ONGOING EVENTS in Fellowship Hall

Every Tuesday at 5:15 pm - Join our insightful group as we watch a selected film of a spiritual nature, followed by discussion to develop our evolution. Afterward we choose a restaurant and go out to eat!

Every other Thursday, August 8 & 22, at 5:00 pm (usually 5:15) - Please join us for our meditation group led by Dr Richard Kimball. He begins with an informative discussion on the practice of meditation followed by walking and then sitting meditation. Call Richard at 371-3425 for details.

Every Thursday at 6:30pm - Come to a group discussion studying the workbook of A Course in Miracles. This has a powerful message, expertly led by Arthur Cataldo.

Last Sunday of each Month - Join us following our Sunday Celebration for a pot luck lunch. Bring a covered dish and join us for food and enjoyment.

UPCOMING SPEAKERS

August 4, 11 a.m.

Nancy Hicks, a natural health consultant, and energy worker, will be sharing with us on FREEDOM...I Just want to be free.

August 11, 11 a.m

Rev. Jack Rodber, Science of Mind minister and one of our favorite speakers, will share a talk entitled "The 'Or' House". Gotta hear this.

August 18, 11 a.m.

Annual Membership Meeting. There will no regular service. We will meet in the Fellowship hall to discuss and vote on important issues ahead for the Spiritual Light Center.

August 25, 11 a.m.

Sandra Bear Davis, The Appalachian Medicine Woman, is a 5th generational folk medicine practitioner. She will talk on Sacred Seed Savers and Honey Bee Haven Keepers.

Sept 1, 11 a.m. Rev. Christina Bowman

Sept 8, 11a.m. Rev. Christina Bowman 2

Sept 15, 11 a.m. Rev. Barbara Jefferys

Sept. 22, 11 a.m. Jimmy Landry

Sept. 29, 11 a.m. Barbara Ross

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Reiki I Training has been rescheduled to Sat. Aug 10 from 10-6 and Sun. Aug 11 from 1-6 in the fellowship hall. Please preregister with Arthur Cataldo at a.cataldo@morrisbb.net. \$150 includes certification.

Lost Child Support Group meets the last Sunday of each month at 7pm in the fellowship hall. Contact Paulette Cloutier for further information at 371-8963.



"Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart." **Mahatma Gandhi**

SPIRITUAL LIGHT CENTER INFORMATION

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Prayer of an Anonymous Aging Abbess

Lord, thou knowest better than myself that I am growing older and will soon be old.

Keep me from becoming too talkative, and especially from the unfortunate habit of thinking that I must say something on every subject and at every opportunity.

Release me from the idea that I must straighten out other peoples' affairs. With my immense treasure of experience and wisdom, it seems a pity not to let everybody partake of it.

Keep me from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point.

Grant me the patience to listen to the complaints of others; help me to endure them with charity. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains -- they increase with the increasing years and my inclination to recount them is also increasing.

I will not ask thee for improved memory, only for a little more humility and less self-assurance when my own memory doesn't agree with that of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong.

Keep me reasonably gentle. I do not have the ambition to become a saint -- it is so hard to live with some of them -- but a harsh old person is one of the devil's masterpieces.

Make me sympathetic without being sentimental, helpful but not bossy. Let me discover merits where I had not expected them, and talents in people whom I had not thought to possess any. And, Lord, give me the grace to tell them so. *Amen*

Thoughts on Prayer

Prayer is perfect quietness of heart. It is to have a blessed home in the Lord, where I can go and shut the door, and kneel to my Father in secret, and be at peace as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and above is trouble. — *Andrew Murray*

When I pray for another person, I am praying for God to open my eyes so that I can see that person as God does, and then enter into the stream of love that God already directs toward that person. — *Philip Yancey*

Why is it that when we talk to God we're said to be praying, but when God talks to us we're schizophrenic? — *Lily Tomlin*

Prayer by Mary-Alice and Richard Jafolla

Since the beginning of time, people of all civilizations have prayed. From prayer beads to prayer wheels, from solemn Gregorian chants to foot-stomping gospel music, from the fervent worshipers flogging their backs with ropes to the seeker quietly sitting cross-legged atop a mountain, there are as many ways of praying as there are people who pray.

When human circumstances seem overwhelming, we instinctively turn to prayer. There is something comforting about taking time out to commune with a Higher Power—to savor the sweet luxury of special moments of conscious awareness of God. The soul seeks the experience of raising itself to a spiritual level, where it can think and feel from its innate divinity. It is these heightened moments which satisfy—which give us the strength to go forward, the joy to warm our hearts, the comfort to ease our sorrows.

What Is Prayer?

Prayer in its simplest form is any conscious attempt to experience the presence of God. Prayer is a deliberate activity—one of seeking to recognize our oneness with God, of opening ourselves to the power of God as it moves through us in new and wonderful ways. Once this happens, however, prayer becomes something even more. As our awareness of the presence of God expands, prayer becomes the experience of being part of God, of centering ourselves directly in the creative flow of the universe, of perceiving things not with human eyes or human ears or human minds but from the divinity within us. We pray not to God or for God, as something separate from us, but from that sacred presence which is our very essence.

And so we come to see that the purpose of prayer is not to fill an earthly need—new car, better relationship, healing—but to satisfy the natural longing in our souls not only to experience our Creator but actually to live from that experience. Even if we pray for specific things, the underlying need is really the need to experience our spirituality, to feel our oneness with God, to sense the comfort and the guidance and the healing that rise up out of opening ourselves to God.

Can “things” ever really satisfy our souls? Sooner or later we realize that true satisfaction comes only from finding God. As Charles Fillmore, cofounder of Unity, declared, “The real search of all people is for God. They may think they are looking for other things, but they must eventually admit that it is God they seek.”

While historically we may have prayed to a Higher Power outside ourselves, imploring for things and outer changes in our lives, we are now discovering that this Power is omnipresent and dwells within each of us.

As a separated drop of ocean water eventually makes its way back to the sea, we are inexorably drawn back into the awareness of our oneness with God. The drop of water may evaporate and be drawn into the clouds to be blown by wind and fall as snow on the highest mountain. Eventually the snow will melt and the drop will become part of a trickle and then a stream and then a river until finally it returns to the sea. If we could suspend reason for a moment, it might seem that at various points in its journey, the drop may pray to melt or to be part of the trickle, or it may pray to join a stream or a river. But what it really “wants” is to find the ocean again.

Our prayers are to find God again—to be lifted by Spirit as It speaks and thinks and acts as us.

The Purpose of Prayer

Virtually every religion embraces some form of prayer, and followers of each religion are told to pray. But seldom are they taught how to pray, so most people are troubled by doubts about whether they have been praying correctly.

Since the purpose of prayer is to know God, the highest use of prayer, then, is to announce our intention of opening ourselves to the presence of God. It is our endeavor to merge with and accept all the qualities of God—a heartfelt invitation to allow God's life to be lived through us.

Therefore, we don't have to pray specifically to change people or circumstances. Our prayers are for the purpose of knowing God. Yet, interestingly, when we pray to experience God, the people and circumstances in our lives do change! Why? Because prayer has changed us. Centered in God's presence, we then deal with the people and the circumstances of our lives in more loving ways. Prayer—seeking more of an awareness of God—changes us, and in changing us changes all aspects of our lives. It's been said that prayer doesn't change things; prayer changes people, and people change things. And this is so.

There is no need to beg God for anything, because we already have access to all that God is. So prayer becomes the way to express our thanks for life and its blessings—those we already have and those still to come. This is sometimes referred to as “affirmative prayer.” It acknowledges the truth that God is present in us and in every situation, and therefore the potential for us is beyond anything we can humanly imagine.

Thus, if we are praying specifically for more prosperity, for instance, we may attain it simply because we are focusing our energy on prosperity and making it a priority in our lives. Such attention may yield the results we are looking for. But that is opening ourselves to only part of what there is for us to experience. We have limited ourselves and may not be fully open to all the rest – health, love, joy, peace and the teeming font of absolute soul satisfaction that is available simply because we are filled with the presence of God.

How to Pray

What exactly is the right method of prayer? There are as many “right” methods of praying as there are people who pray! More important than the method of praying is the reason for praying. Prayers are not to change God. They are to change us—to lift us into the experience of the presence of God. The Creator cares about, sustains, maintains and expresses Itself through the created. God is waiting for us to open ourselves to the sacred Presence being lived through us. God is waiting for us to express our willingness to be guided and nurtured. Therefore, one of our prayers might be to express this willingness: “Here I am, God. Live Your life through me”.

By opening our hearts to the love already there, by expressing our willingness to let the sacred Presence live through us, we take a big step in getting into a prayer mode. We each will do this in our own unique ways, of course, but a helpful means of preparing for our prayer experience is to relax the body, breathe easily and turn the attention inward. While there is no one “secret” method of prayer, the acknowledgment of the presence of

God is always a meaningful way to begin. This may take the form of words, aloud or silent.

What kinds of words? Whatever is in our hearts. Praying is a very simple activity and requires no special words—only the willingness, the hunger, to know God. Whatever phrases, in any language, that help move us into the place deep within our souls where we can begin to feel our oneness with God—these are prayers. (Some prayers are included below.)

Beyond Words

Eventually, however, we move beyond words—beyond thoughts—into the vaster realm of pure Spirit. This is what is sometimes called “the silence.” During our times of prayer, we discover what is waiting in the silence to be discovered. We dip into the eternal well-spring of divine life that exists within us. And there, in the absolute stillness, we simply rest in the exquisite sense of the presence of God.

During our times of prayer, we want to let go of any preconceived ideas, any doubts, any desired outcomes, and surrender ourselves completely to God. If we find a parade of thoughts marching by as we sit in the stillness, we can merely become indifferent to them. We can just allow them to pass through and then gently bring our focus back to the inner silence. Nonresistance is the key here, so that we remain tranquil and able to savor the experience.

“The secret place of the Most High” is an inner space, a very personal place of total silence, which no one else can ever enter or disturb. It is that eternal, changeless part of us that waits like a safe harbor to welcome us in calm or storm, in peace or turmoil. It is in the silence that we feel infused with God. It is in the silence that we find our peace and our strength, our joy and our healing.

A few moments in utter stillness will quickly bring us back to the realization that we are part of our Creator, part of the universe, and that truly we are not alone.

Always Available

There are numerous opportunities every day to still the body and quiet the mind, allowing us to slip between the cracks of our outer world and into the inner one of silence. It might be in the quiet of the early morning or during some wordless moments of a prayer service or even during those brief times when we sit in noisy traffic waiting for the light to turn green! The stillness, in other words, is always available.

If we are newcomers to prayer and communion with God and are harassed by thoughts, feelings and memories during times of prayer, it is important not to give up. By making it a daily habit to become consciously aware of the presence of God, we find that this activity becomes easier and easier. Each prayer experience builds upon the previous one, having a cumulative effect. Ultimately, through prayer, we will be transformed into the God-centered beings we are meant to be. Our “joy will be full,” for we will be experiencing the unimaginable wonder of God's presence expressing through our lives.

What of Miracles?

Sometimes things happen as a result of prayer that are far beyond what we would have expected, and we call them “miracles.” They happen when we get ourselves out of the way so that the activity of God can work freely. It is like removing the dam in a brook so

that the water can tumble and flow where it will. These miracles are really natural outworkings of the activity of God, even when they take place instantaneously.

If we believe that we need a miracle in order to have something change in our lives (or someone else's), if we feel that only a miracle can help, then we are automatically limiting the power of our prayer. In focusing too specifically, we are ignoring the fact that the very nature of God is wholeness, abundance and love. As part of God's creation, we already have access to all that. To tap into these attributes is natural, not miraculous. To pray for a miracle is to see wholeness, abundance and love as the exceptions and not the rule.

☞ Praying for Others

Often we find ourselves wanting to help someone else through prayer. This is good, for love and caring are built into our hearts and it is natural to want to help those who appear to be going through difficult times in their lives. But how do we do this?

Once again we come back to the premise that it is the experience of God which is the real need of all people. Humanly, we are limited in the level of help we can give, but we can step up to a higher level. By living God-centered lives, we lift others by our mere presence. We become that unwavering bulwark of faith which sees the sacred Presence in everyone and every circumstance—even the ones which might be deemed needing “help.” When we live this way, we serve as blessings to everyone who touches our lives. Praying for others, therefore, becomes a matter of releasing those people to the activity of God and continually strengthening our own awareness of this activity in them.

☞ A Holy Time

Prayer is a holy time within our hearts—a time of worship, joy and thanksgiving deep inside ourselves. It is a time of lying down in green pastures, being led beside the still waters and having our souls restored. We come away from prayer renewed in body and mind and at peace with ourselves and our world. Let us take time to pray, for it is the highest blessing we can give ourselves and others.

from [The Gift of Prayer](#), a Unity publication



☞ When I cannot read, when I cannot think, when I cannot even pray, I can trust.

-J. Hudson Taylor

☞ The goal of prayer is to live all of my life and speak all of my words in the joyful awareness of the presence of God. Prayer becomes real when we grasp the reality and goodness of God's constant presence with 'the real me.' Jesus lived his everyday life in conscious awareness of his Father.

-John Ortberg Jr.

☞ Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts.

- Mother Teresa