

Spirit & Truth
A Samaritan Press Publication

Happy New Year!



January-February 2016



www.sunshinecathedral.org

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2016 Spirit & Truth

Spirit & Truth has been "reimagined" for 2016. Readers of *Spirit & Truth* will spend 2016 going through the bible. Of course, simple reflections and prayers won't cover every word in or every story of the bible, but what this year's reflections will do is take some passages from every book of the bible and use those passages for contemplation and prayer. Hopefully, readers will be inspired to read more of the bible on their own, but even if they do not, they will still have been exposed to some thoughts from every single book of the bible, and they will have used ideas inspired by biblical passages as part of their affirmative prayers.

The scriptural quotes for the daily reflections are paraphrased by Rev Dr Durrell Watkins. The *Spirit & Truth* reflections for 2016 began as a book project (and may wind up as a book yet), but first will be our *Spirit & Truth* prayer aid throughout this year.

Enjoy praying your way through the bible in 2016!

The daily prayers were written by Durrell Watkins. Photos and art are taken from the Internet (and all believed to be in the public domain) unless otherwise noted.

Leadership Academy: The Soul of Leadership

The Sunshine Cathedral 2016 Leadership Academy is a one day training retreat where Sunshine Cathedral leaders (staff, deacons, board, practitioners, key volunteers, and anyone who is interested in leadership) re-energize, develop new skills, and recommit to servant-leadership.

Leaders of other Progressive churches are always welcome to join us.

The fee is only **\$10** for the day and lunch is provided. This year's Leadership Academy's theme is: **The Soul of Leadership**. Deepak Chopra's book, *The Soul of Leadership*, is recommended reading before the retreat, but is not required. The Leadership Academy will be offered on March 5th from 9 am to 4 pm at the Sunshine Cathedral.

The Grace of Giving

by Durrell Watkins

“Grant us, God, the grace of giving with a spirit large and free, that ourselves and all our living we may offer faithfully.”

“Grant Us, God, the Grace of Giving”

Author: Anonymous

Tune: STUTTGART

We support the ministries of our church with our faithful giving. The church is entirely dependent on the generosity of those who call it their spiritual home. The more we give, the more the church can achieve in the community and in the world; and, obviously, the more we contribute to the health of the church the more the church will be able to be a supportive presence in our own lives.

The truth is that the local parish is a spiritual community that works together, plays together, prays together, dreams together, and supports the shared vision of reaching more and more people with a message of hope and healing. So, the local church is **us**.

The church can only be to us what we are to it; it can never be more than our volunteer efforts, positive attitudes and speech, and financial contributions make possible.

There may be fundraisers throughout the year to help support the ministries of the church, and we can support the church by remembering it in our planned giving (our wills and/or life-insurance policies), but the primary means of support is our regular giving and it is our giving that also adds joy to our own lives.

Of course we need every member and friend of the church to be as consistently generous as possible in order to do all that we feel passionate about doing in the world, but not only does the work of the church need our gifts, *we need* to be the kind of people who are generous. As we intentionally build a culture of generosity and gratitude we find ourselves growing spiritually and we discover that there is great joy in sharing.

FAQ

1. Why do churches always ask for money?

Why does anyone? We never ask why mechanics, caterers, restaurants, bakeries, supermarkets, book stores, gyms, barbers, or any other business or service provider asks for our support so they can continue to serve us.

Public television is always asking for financial donations (they get some government support and some corporate sponsorships, but mostly, they are supported by their viewers). And every charity asks people to donate to their good work. Political organizations ask for donations, arts organizations asks for financial gifts, colleges ask their alumni to continue supporting them, and even the government asks us to support it with taxes (well, they do more than ask, but still, they need some of the money we earn in order to provide us with the services we need to thrive as a society).

Why do churches ask for money? Because money is needed to operate, and since we don't charge admission, don't charge membership dues, don't charge for parking, we must ask people to give generously, consistently, and lovingly to make sure the church can be all it is meant to be and do all it is called to do.

When we respond to the requests for financial support then the work of the church can thrive; moreover, when we know that we are integral to the church's success, we feel good about being part of building up the community that seeks constantly to build us and others up as well.

2. *What's in it for me?*

This is probably where I am expected to chastise the questioner for having selfish motives, but in our society, it is a natural enough question.

We pay for dinner and we expect delicious food and good service in a pleasant environment. We pay our taxes and we expect an effective military, clean water, garbage pickup, good schools, care for the elderly, assistance for the poor, etc. We employ someone and for the wages we pay we expect competence, even excellence. So, we have been conditioned to think of money as a power that we wield to get something we want.

This is exactly why we should discipline ourselves to give *without* expecting anything in return. We are unaccustomed to thinking of money as something we can bless others with; that's why it is expanding for us to simply give for the joy of giving and not demand some service, privilege, or honor in return. It's too easy to forget that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (*Acts 20.35*), and sharing a portion of our resources lovingly while expecting nothing in return is a way of rediscovering the blessing of giving.

3. *Do you teach that giving to ministry can make the giver wealthy?*

No, not if by wealth we mean unlimited financial resources.

We teach that giving makes the giver more aware of how fortunate he or she really is and how once we realize we are blessed we then discover more joy when we share our blessings.

Giving to ministry isn't playing the cosmic lottery or the angelic slot machines. We aren't betting a small amount in hopes of winning a large amount. That being said, there are many blessings we discover when we invest our talents, energy, hopes, and money into work that feeds our souls.

Furthermore, the discipline it takes to make regular giving a part of our daily lives can, obviously, also help us be smarter with our money. The discipline of giving can inspire the discipline of saving, wise investing, and wise spending, and that's the kind of discipline that can add to our prosperity.

A good practice is to give a percentage of your net income to the church, a percentage of your income to a savings or retirement account for yourself, and even a little extra to various charities, and then practice living within your remaining means. *That* style of living is a prospering one.

To be sure, there are people who say that as they intentionally practice generosity they seem to experience an increase of blessings whether as greater happiness, less fear about money, or somehow experiencing increased opportunities for success. There may be psychological reasons that when we give happily we often seem to receive more abundantly; there may even be spiritual/energetic reasons that when we give the open place left by our giving is then seemingly filled by a universal Source.

Nevertheless, even though it feels good to give and may even prove to be in some ways beneficial to us when we give, our motives for giving should be to serve, to help, to build up, to bless. And maybe that's the magic...when we give selflessly we actually get our small, ego-selves out of the way so that more blessings can be experienced. In any case, we aren't giving to get something in particular; we give for the sheer of joy of it and to support what we believe in.

4. *What is tithing?*

Tithing is very simply percentage giving. "Tithe" literally means a tenth, and it is true that if every person gave 10% of their income (net or gross, there is no value in splitting those hairs) to the church, the church would never have any unmet needs. But in reality, even if every person gave 5% of their income to the church, the church would be able to do most of what it wishes to do in the world.

As an example of how much only 5% could mean to ministry, if only 400 people earned an average of \$40,000 annually and each of them gave 5% to the church that would be \$800,000 being given for ministry each year!

A smaller number of people making less money but giving as much as 10% could do almost as much. 200 people earning an average of \$35,000 who tithed 10% would amount to \$700,000 a year for ministry. So you see, one need not be rich to be generous, and a few generous people can make a big difference.

Even someone making \$23,000 (about \$11 per hour, full time) giving 5% would be giving over \$1,000 per year. The Sunshine Cathedral 2014 Ministry Plan (aka "budget") was \$535,000...if 500 people annually gave \$1,000 each (just 5% of a \$23,000 income) to support Sunshine Cathedral ministry, that would amount to half a million dollars for ministry (without overburdening any contributor).

So you see how percentage giving adds up and makes a difference for the church without being onerous for the giver (in fact, there are some real blessings for the giver!).

Everyone has something to give and when everyone gives what she or he can, the combined giving seems to multiply and amazing work gets done and more people are blessed because of that work.

If the concept of percentage giving is new to you, then start at an amount that feels safe, such as 3%, and then try to increase by 1% every year until you are at 5%, 7%, or even 10%.

If you give a definite, planned, intentional percent of your net income to the church and put some away into a savings or retirement account for yourself and give a little extra to other charities, and if you add to that pattern of generosity volunteer service to the church or another worthy organization and support church fundraisers when you can, then you will know yourself to be demonstrating the spirit of tithing and you will be part of making good things happen for others.

5. *Why is giving sometimes called "stewardship"?*

Probably the two most common understandings of a steward are (a) someone who tends to travelers, especially on a train, aircraft, or ship, and (b) someone who manages the property of another. Sometimes we will hear about environmental stewardship, suggesting that we are only borrowing the planet while we live here and it is our responsibility to care for it so that future generations will have a healthy world to call home.

These same ideas apply to stewardship in ministry. We are, in a sense, “borrowing” the church, making use of it during our time, but we are also responsible for keeping it safe and flourishing so that future generations can benefit from a progressive, nurturing, challenging, empowering faith community.

And, not only are we travelers through life, we are also travelers on an on-going spiritual journey, and those of us who have pledged to support the ministry of the church are providing refreshment for fellow travelers.

By sharing our resources to make the shared ministry of the church as healthy as possible, we are not only sustaining something that can help us along the way, but we are also preserving something that will bless people for generations to come.

6. *What is meant by “time, talent, and treasure”?*

We are asked to give time, talent, and treasure to the building up of our wonderful ministry.

We give *time* by simply showing up. Just being on the church property, welcoming newcomers, smiling at those around us, or sharing in the rituals of worship shows with our presence that we value our church; being present for its events adds energy to the life of the church, and that is a useful contribution.

Talent is another way of saying we are each expected to *do* something (we are to be *doers* of ministry and not just *hearers* of the message, *James 1.22*). We share our abilities by volunteering them in service to the vision and the cause. One might sing in the choir, serve as a lector or Eucharistic minister in worship, serve on a board or ministry team, volunteer with the hospitality or garden ministries, help our facilities manager clean areas of the property, or volunteer sporadically to staff a booth at a special event or help organize an activity. When we give our talent, our skills, our efforts, we are offering a great treasure to benefit others.

And speaking of *treasure*, when we say “give treasure” we usually mean to make financial contributions, those frequent and generous offerings that keep the church financially healthy.

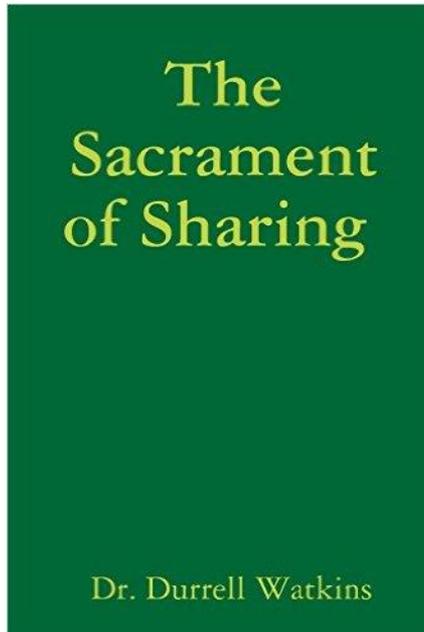
To give time, talent, and treasure is whole life stewardship and when we are giving that much of ourselves we are giving our best gifts, and no one can ever ask us for more than our best.

7. *Why are you calling sharing, or giving, a “sacrament”?*

A sacrament is an outward sign of inward grace. What is grace? Grace can be a prayer of gratitude (as in expressing thanks for food before eating it), it can be an expression of honor or dignity (as to grace someone with your presence), it can indicate beauty or elegance (as when one moves with grace), and in religious settings it often means unmerited, divine favor (love freely given that can neither be earned nor lost). ALL of these definitions are appropriate when we speak of sacramental grace.

Any act of worship (baptism, communion, singing, praying, listening to words of comfort or challenge, or the joyful offering of tithes and donations to support the ministry of the church) is an expression of gratitude, integrity, beauty, and unconditional love. So, our joyous giving is an expression of grace in the many ways it can be understood. As giving is an outward expression of this grace that flows from the heart of the giver, it is rightly considered a sacramental act of worship.

“The Grace of Giving” is the opening essay
in *The Sacrament of Sharing* by Durrell Watkins
(Lulu Press, available at Amazon.com)



JANUARY
Genesis - Exodus

Prayer for the New Year
by Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

Dear God,

I give thanks for the year that is now past and I give thanks for this New Year that is dawning. I declare that this year will be for me one of opportunities, possibilities, goodwill, love, peace, happiness, strength, and achievement.

If there should be difficulties, your grace will sustain me.

When choices must be made, your wisdom will guide me.

When blessings come, as I know they will, my heart will receive them gladly and with gratitude.

And if life should seem uncertain, I will dare to hope and that hope will keep me focused on the good and moving always toward it.

This is a new year and it will offer new blessings for me and for all who are dear to me; and by faith I call it done! Amen.

Daily Reflections: January

1 – It's All Good

"God looked at everything...It was all very good."

Genesis 1.31

I am part of God's good creation. God's goodness is mine to experience and express. And so it is!

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

2 – Like God

"God created humankind in the divine image."

Genesis 5.1

I don't always see myself as being in your image, God, and yet you are perfect Power and are the Substance of my being, so I must be like you even when I don't act like it or remember that to be true. Today I will try to remember to live a bit more into my divinity. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

3 – *Never Too Late*

“Noah was 600 years old when the flood came.”

Genesis 7.11

As long as we live, we have something to contribute. It’s never too late. And for that, I am grateful.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

4 – *Always Loved*

“God did not forget...”

Genesis 8.1

Sometimes I’m tempted to believe that I’m all alone and no one cares; but then I remember that the Universal Presence never excludes me and certainly never forgets me. I am forever loved. Alleluia!

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

5 – *Blessed*

“God said...‘I am giving you my blessing...’”

Genesis 9.1

I am blessed.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

6 – *Newness*

“Abram was seventy-five when God told him to leave the city.”

Genesis 12.5

I’m never too old and it’s never too late to learn, experience, or do something new. Thank you, God, for leading me in the paths of newness. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

7 – *Opportunities*

“Is not the whole land before you?”

Genesis 13.9

There are opportunities before me. If I haven’t allowed myself to see them, then today, may I remove my mental blinders so that I can behold all the good that is possible for me to experience. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

“I am not alone, for a Presence goes with me and daily accompanies me on my travels. Always, I shall find this Divine Companion with me. [It] will not desert nor allow me to go alone [but] will always be with and near me, and will always provide for every want.”

Ernest Holmes

8 – Power of Prayer

“I bless you in the name of God.”

Genesis 14.19

Prayer isn't passive. It really is action. It is my thought activated. It is my emotion directed. It is energy flowing. When I bless others, they are blessed indeed. Today I give my blessing of love freely.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

9 – I Behold the Divine

“Have I really seen God?”

Genesis 16.13

Everywhere I look, I behold the Divine, because “there's not a spot where God is not.” I behold divinity everywhere today, and every time I recognize It, divine Love smiles back at me. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

10 – Choose to be Fearless

“...Why are you worried? Don't be afraid...”

Genesis 21.17

I know that anxiety robs me of my innate power. When there is nothing to fear, worry creates suffering where none was necessary. When there is danger, premature anxiety robs me of strength so that I'm less likely to face the difficulty with poise and confidence. In every case, it is better to avoid fear. I can choose to be fearless. And today, I do.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

11 – Doing Well

“Abraham...had done many things very well.”

Genesis 24.1

I want my motives to be good, my actions to be wise, my words to be powerful, my thoughts to be pleasant, and my life to be continuously blessed. May it be so. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

12 – Abundant Living

“Abraham was one hundred and seventy-five years old when he died.”

Genesis 25.7

I wish to be fully alive for as long as I live. May I enjoy my days and sleep well throughout the nights. May love flow freely from me and to me. May my every need be perfectly met. I pray for an abundant

**and joyous life; and what I wish for myself, I wish for all people.
Amen.**

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

13 – God is With Me

“God said...‘I will be with you to bless you.’”

Genesis 26.24

Could it be that God is with me, and if with me, then able to fill me with peace, hope, and happiness? I believe and now affirm that it is so: God is with me and is blessing me. Thank you, God. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

14 – Watching

“Wherever you go, I will watch over you.”

Genesis 28.15

Thank you, Goddess/God, for always watching over me. Your embrace is my everlasting comfort. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

15 – Answered Prayer

“God answered Rachel’s prayer.”

Genesis 30.22

I thank you, Omnipresence, for receiving my every prayer and responding with grace in the perfect way and perfect time. The answer will come. May I recognize the answer and never say “no” to your “yes.” Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

16 – Help

“Please rescue me...”

Genesis 32.11

Dear God, what you do for us you do through us, and yet, sometimes we just don’t know where to turn or what to do. When I cry for help, please respond from my depths where you dwell in power, and give me divine ideas, courage, hope, and peace to deal with the situation at hand. You have all the answers. Share them with me as I need them. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

“...when a difficulty suddenly arises, the important thing is to switch [our] thought immediately from the difficulty to the Presence of God.” Emmet Fox

17 – Restored to Wholeness

“Dinah was assaulted...”

Genesis 34.2

It seems odd to think about violence in the bible, except, of course, there is so much of it! But then, there is violence in our world: war, crime, character assassination, child abuse, animal abuse, even violent storms that hurt entire communities.

When pain strikes, enfold those who are hurting in your healing embrace, Goddess of life, Lord of love, and restore them to wholeness and return to them a zest for living. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

18 – Dreaming

“One day Joseph told his family his dreams...”

Genesis 37.5

Joseph’s siblings didn’t appreciate or support his dreams, but still he dreamed them, and he believed in them, even when things weren’t easy, and in time his dreams came true.

God in me, give me the courage to believe in my dreams and to not give up on them too soon. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

19 – In Charge

“I am putting you in charge of my house.”

Genesis 41.40

I am in charge of my mental house. Only positive thoughts are welcome in my mind.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

20 – Coming Out

“I am Joseph.”

Genesis 45.1

It takes great courage to come out as the person one really is. May I always have the courage to be my best self, and to be proud of who I Am. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins



“The Heart of knows of Thee, O Most High within.”

Ernest Holmes

21 – *Good Life*

“When Joseph died...they put him in a coffin.”

Genesis 50.26

Physical life comes to an end. The energy of life is without beginning or end, but our bodies will one day run out of steam. Divine Life flowing through and expressing as me, help me to not only have a long life in this body, but a good life, a life of purpose and joy in this earthly realm and may my light shine brightly throughout eternity. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

22 – *God Knows*

“I have seen the people’s suffering.”

Exodus 3.7

God, you know when we are sad, lonely, afraid, or confused. You also know how we can lift ourselves up and experience better days. Remind us, now, that we deserve the very best. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

23 – *Thinking Big*

“Pour water from the river on the ground and it will transform into blood.”

Exodus 4.9

Sometimes, God, I feel the need to try something big, bizarre, out of the ordinary. Sometimes, it seems too big to accomplish, and yet, I feel the need to try. Give me the courage to try big things, and let me receive big rewards as well. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

24 – *Freedom*

“Let us go.”

Exodus 5.1

When negative thinking is holding me back, I will say to it, “Let me go!” When fears are trying to sabotage success, I will say to them, “Let me go!” And when self-doubt attempts to keep me from doing my best, I will say to it, “Let me go!” I am free to move forward and accomplish great things. And I will, starting now.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

<p><i>“Always continue the climb. It is possible for you to do whatever you choose, if you first get to know who you are and are willing to work with a power that is greater than ourselves to do it.”</i></p>

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

25 – *Good Things Are Coming*
“You’ll see what I intend to do.”

Exodus 6.1

There are great things ahead. Something wonderful may happen today! I’m watching for the good that is on its way. With gratitude, I receive it. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

26 – *Miracles*
“...Tell people about...miracles...”

Exodus 10.2

I believe in miracles. I’ve even experienced a few. As I recount them, my faith is stirred, and I know that more are on the way. And so it is!

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

27 – *On the Job*
“...God kept watch...”

Exodus 12.42

The spirit of Life is always on the job, expressing through and as all life, ready and able to accomplish amazing things. Divine Life is keeping watch, so my life is very blessed; and I give thanks. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

28 – *Moving Forward*
“We’d rather be in bondage than die in the wilderness.” Exodus 14.12

I confess that I have sometimes thought it would have been better, or at least easier, to not move forward. I have foolishly believed that being stuck in the past was better than trying new things or learning new ways. But the wilderness is something we move through on the way to the Land of Promise. We need never settle for bondage to the past. The future offers infinite possibilities, and if moving toward the future takes us through some rough patches, there are blessings to be discovered in the wilderness too! Bondage is not good enough, and today, I recommit to moving forward toward promise and possibilities.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins



*“Tis the set of the sail that sets the goal, and not the storm of life.”
Ella Wheeler Wilcox*

29 – Grateful
“I sing praises!”

Exodus 15.1

I am thankful for the blessings that Life has offered, is offering, and will offer. I am and will continue to be abundantly blessed. Alleluia!

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

30 – Flow of Blessings
“...water will pour out for the people...”

Exodus 17.6

The Ocean of Life is omnipresent and eternal, and in It the waves of blessings are huge and they are crashing against the shore of my life every day. Blessings are pouring into my experience, and it is with gratitude that I receive them. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

31 – Leadership
“Appoint leaders of groups...”

Exodus 18.21

Leadership is influence, and we all can have positive influence. Working together, encouraging one another, we can make a difference. Let it be so!

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins



DIVINE UNITY

by Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

Sikh scripture teaches, "The One God is pervading and permeating each and every heart..."

The Mundaka Upanishad reveals, "...This universe springs from the deathless Self, the source of life."

Sufi poet and philosopher Rumi said, "You are not a drop in the ocean; you are the entire ocean in a drop."

The Apostle Paul quoted the Greek poet Epiminides, saying, "It is in God that we live and move and have our being."

A Jewish psalmist affirmed the omnipresence of divine Love when he or she wrote, "I can never escape from your Spirit; I can never get away from your presence!" (NLT).

We cannot be separated from our Source. Divine Life is the Substance of our individual lives. As God is the Life expressing in, through, and as our lives, we are always capable of improvement. We always have access to peace, to joy, to wisdom, to seeing past a challenge or difficulty to a field of unlimited possibilities. We always can be assured that come what may, we are forever part of a perfect Life that has no end.

Remembering our oneness with God, I affirm that today is a day of blessings, and so it is that I am thankful!

(originally written for
Divine Science Federation
International's
Daily At-One-Ment)



Sunshine Cathedral Lectionary for January

The Readings used in Sunday worship at the Sunshine Cathedral

Scripture readings come from various translations

Jan 3

The Wisdom of Carley Dawson

“The all-wise, omnipresent Spirit is a Spirit of Love. It guides me into all good. It will never leave me. I no longer live in ignorance of who and what I am. I am a spiritual being. I live in a Life that is constant and on-going and continually expanding in Light and Love. Gratefully, I shall grow in it and with it eternally.”

John 1.2-5, 10

The Word was with God in the beginning,
Everything came into being through the Word,
and without the Word
nothing came into being.
What came into being
through the Word was life,
and the life was the light for all people.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.
The light was in the world,
and the world came into being through the light,
but the world didn't recognize the light.

Jan 10

Isaiah 60.1-2

Arise! Shine! Your light has come;
divine glory has shone upon you.
Though darkness covers the earth
and gloom the nations,
God will shine upon you;
God's glory will appear over you.

Matthew 2.1-5, 7-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem...during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. 2 They asked, “Where is the newborn Jewish king? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him.”
3 When King Herod heard this, he was troubled... 4 He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Anointed One was to be born. 5 They said, “In Bethlehem of Judea, according to the prophecy...”
7 Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him.” 9 When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place

where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. 11 They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

Jan 17

The wisdom of Pliny the elder

“In wine, there is truth.”

The wisdom of Marty Rubin

“Drink freely the wine life offers you and don’t worry how much you spill.”

The wisdom of Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”

John 2.2-11

There was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. When the wine ran out, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They don’t have any wine.”

Jesus replied, “Woman, what does that have to do with me? My time hasn’t come yet.”

His mother told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Nearby were six stone water jars used for the Jewish cleansing ritual, each able to hold about twenty or thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water,” and they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some from them and take it to the headwaiter,” and they did. The headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine. He didn’t know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.

The headwaiter called the groom and said, “Everyone serves the good wine first. They bring out the second-rate wine only when the guests are drinking freely. You kept the good wine until now.”

This was the first miraculous sign that Jesus did in Cana of Galilee...

Jan 24

The wisdom of Vida Reed Stone

“The entire concept of cosmic living lies in the eternal fact that God is all. There is but One Power, moving for good, throughout the entire universe. When our divine nature is fully awakened, we will know this and live in harmonious relationship with all people.

Only as we realize the depth and wonder of this concept shall we have a strong incentive for cosmic living. Dwelling in consciousness upon the oneness of all life and our inter-relatedness with all that is, we naturally and spontaneously express a spirit of understanding and good will.

As we recognize that God's power and strength are present at every point of space, as we desire sincerely to live a cosmic life, the life of wholeness, balance, and in peace, we shall receive all the inspiration and support we need from the great storehouse of universal Life."

Luke 4.14-21

Jesus came to Nazareth where he had been reared. As he always did on the Sabbath, he went to the meeting place. When he stood up to read, he was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written,

God's Spirit is on me;

God has chosen me to preach the Message of good news to the poor,

Sent me to announce pardon to prisoners and
recovery of sight to the blind,

To set the burdened and battered free,

to announce, "This is God's year to act!"

He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the place was on him, intent. Then he started in, "You've just heard Scripture make history. It came true just now in this place."

Jan 31

The wisdom of Vernon Shields

Jesus lived in the awareness of his oneness with God, in the awareness that God responds and provides when faith is expressed.

You have faith. Use it. Direct it toward God, toward the highest and best.

Affirm now with feeling: "I have faith in God, the Good, and my faith draws to me an abundance of every good thing. Thank you, [God]."

The wisdom of Grace L. Faus

When we find within ourselves the Spirit of the Living God, life becomes more thrilling than it ever was. Living with God is a great adventure, living, we might almost say, as God. For when we realize that "I and the Divine are one," we realize that our life is God living through us, and this becomes tremendous and exciting.

Luke 4.22-30

Those who [heard Jesus speak] said, "Isn't this Joseph's son, the one we've known since he was a youngster?"

...Jesus answered: "No prophet is ever welcomed in his or her hometown. Isn't it a fact that there were many widows in Israel at the time of Elijah during that three and a half years of drought when famine devastated the land, but the only widow to whom Elijah was sent was in Sarepta in Sidon? And there were many lepers in Israel at the time of the prophet Elisha but the only one cleansed was Naaman the Syrian." That set everyone in the meeting place seething with anger. They threw him out, banishing him from the village, then took him to a mountain cliff at the edge of the village to throw him to his doom, but he gave them the slip and was on his way.

FEBRUARY
Exodus – 1 Samuel

Prayer for the February
by Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

Universal and divine Life,

I receive from your cosmic bounty blessing upon blessing. There is joy, abundance, strength, courage, peace, health, harmony, achievement, and fulfillment in store for me. Indeed, all the good I can imagine is just a fragment of the good you have to offer. The blessings I receive will be as big as I allow myself to be.

And so, holy One with which I Am one, prosper my life now. Bless me to be a blessing and let me always remember that all good things are possible. Thank you, thank you, thank you for the avalanche of good that is now flowing into my life. And so it is.



Photo by Robert Griffin

Good Friday Altar, Sunshine Cathedral, 2013

Daily Reflections: February

1 – *I Am Free*

“I brought you out of slavery.”

Exodus 20.2

I don't have to be enslaved by fear, ignorance, or the past. I am free to experience joy, success, and love of life. I will use my freedom wisely, always for the good!

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

2 – *Something to Give*

“Do not hold back your gifts.”

Exodus 22.29

I have gifts to share, and as I offer them freely, blessings flow into my life in return. I share those blessings as well, and the cycle of good continues.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

3 – *Divine Guidance*

“I am sending an angel to guide and guard you.”

Exodus 23.20

I am thankful for guardian angels. I am safe and well. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

4 – *The Mountain Top*

“God said to Moses, ‘Come to me on the mountain.’”

Exodus 24.12

Mountains represent the dwelling place of the gods. Divine Love is always inviting us to be aware of Its presence in our lives. Today, I am choosing to be in communion with the divine. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

5 – *Offerings*

“Tell them to bring offerings.”

Exodus 25.2

As I support with gifts of time, talent and treasure that which I believe in and am nurtured by, I am uplifted, blessed, and part of something wonderful.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins



“Abundance flows into my life in surprising and miraculous ways every day.”

Cheryl Richardson

6 – *Reject the Idols*

“They have made an idol in the form of a bull.”

Exodus 32.8

Whenever we try to limit God to a particular book, sacrament, tradition, religion, ritual, or name, we have tried to limit the Universal, we have tried to make the Infinite seem finite. God is always bigger and better than any image we could have. I allow God to be bigger in my life today; I will be bigger as a result.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

7 – *Resting*

“I will give you rest.”

Exodus 33.14

Dear God, when I feel tired, weary, afraid, or alone, please remind me that you are with me and your healing presence offers every blessing I need. Thank you, God. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

8 – *Wow!*

“...I will work marvels...”

Exodus 34.10

God in me, working through me, can do amazing things. I expect and allow miracles! Alleluia!

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

9 – *Generosity*

“All tithes...are sacred.”

Leviticus 27.30

As I bless my church with consistent generosity, as I contribute to causes that are meaningful to me, as I offer help to my friends, as I care about the planet, as I give my time, volunteer my talent, and even share words of hope and comfort with others, I am sowing seeds of love and the harvest is bound to be abundant. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins



“When the creative mind is unleashed and understands its true nature, it's unlimited. There's nothing you cannot do.”

Byron Katie

10 – *Expelling the Negative Thoughts*

“...they are not to defile the camp in which I dwell.”

Numbers 5.3

Fear thoughts, prejudice, attitudes of scarcity, pessimism...these “diseased” occupants of our mental camp must be expelled. When these negative thoughts aren’t allowed to hang around, our experience of life tends to improve.

For the power to choose positive thoughts, I give thanks to Divine Mind in which nothing negative can dwell. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

11 – *Glory*

“...Divine glory appeared at the meeting.”

Numbers 14.10

When I gather with like-minded seekers of Truth, I am uplifted, filled with hope and joy, and divine glory shines all around me. For the illumination that grows as seekers gather together, I am thankful.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

12 – *Powerful Presence*

“Balaam finally saw the angel too.”

Numbers 22.31

Sometimes we don’t see divine power even though it is right where we are. But even if I can’t see the power yet, I affirm that it is very present, always. And so it is.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

13 – *God is Good*

“They began to worship Baal.”

Numbers 25.2

When we think of God as petty, vile, punishing, available only to certain groups, bigoted, angry, or far removed from us, we are embracing a false god, or a flawed concept of divinity. Today, I turn from all idols and false deities and remember that divine Love is unconditional, all-inclusive, and omnipresent. And so it is.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

14 – *Divine Mother*

“As a mother eagle cares for her eaglets, God spread Her wings over the people and lifted them up.”

Deuteronomy 32.11

Mother God, please lift me up today, help me feel safe, and let me remember that I can soar on the winds of divine grace. Thank you, God. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

15 – Home

“...Everywhere you go can be home for you.”

Joshua 1.2

Dear God, since you are everywhere fully present and it is in you that I live and move and have my being, I am always at home, and at home, there is always love, comfort, abundance, and well-being. Thank you, God. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

16 – All is Well

“With divine help, you will be successful.”

Joshua 6.2

O God, you are my constant help, and because of your help, all is well in my world. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

17 – Plenty of Time

“Joshua prayed, ‘May time stand still!’”

Joshua 10.12

May I remember today that I have all the time I need to make a difference, to bless others, and to be blessed. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

18 – Rejecting Worry

“Don’t be afraid.”

Joshua 11.6

How much joy have I sacrificed to worry? Well, not today! Today, I choose hope! Today I know myself to be resilient. Today I expect the best and I allow the best to take place in my life. I reject worry in every form today.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

“The Divine Plan for me is Perfect. I am held in the Mind of God as a Complete and Perfect Expression of Life and Truth. No power can hinder nor mar this Inner Image of Reality, for It is God-given and God-kept.”

Ernest Holmes

19 – Faithfulness

“...You were faithful...”

Joshua 14.9

Faith isn't belief (opinion); faith is trust. When I trust I have something to share, I am faithful – I share. When I trust I am worthy, I am faithful – I allow myself to be supported or helped. When I trust that Omnipresence cannot possibly exclude me, I am faithful – I feel safe and know my connection to all life. Faith is trust, and trust manifests as faithfulness, and faithfulness makes a big difference in the world. Today, let me be faithful! Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

20 – Exploration

“Explore the land...”

Joshua 18.8

Jesus said, “Seek and you will find.” Exploration is fun, and it is an openness to learn, discover, and experience new things that leads to powerful change, even miracles. I am a holy explorer! Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

21 – Ministry of Angels

“An angel brought a message...”

Judges 2.1

Angels, bringers of sacred messages – flashes of insights, kind words from a stranger, a hug from a friend, a song on the radio with the perfect encouragement for the present moment, a beautiful memory, a breath-taking sunset – are all around and are always trying to affirm us, comfort us, guide us, and bless us. For the ministry of angels, I give thanks. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

22 – Help is on the Way

“They asked God for help...”

Judges 3.15

Thank you, God, for always being with and within me. When I ask for help, you hear me. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins



“No matter what I pray about, or how I pray about it, the result I always get is comfort.”
Iyanla Vanzant

23– *God is Peace*

“God is peace.”

Judges 6.24

Peaceful Presence, in this moment I breathe, I sit quietly, I allow your peace to wash over me and fill me. And so it is.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

24– *God is There, Even in the Bad Times*

“For eighteen years the people suffered.”

Judges 10.8

Dear God, I do wish the hard times were fewer, shorter, and more seldom. And I am learning how to maximize the good, minimize the bad, and always hope for the best. But even when things are difficult and healing is taking longer than I would like, I know that you are with me, giving me strength and courage, and sustaining me until the better days arrive. Suffering will be relieved, and until it is, I am still comforted by your presence. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

25– *Divine Love is Free; It Can't Be Earned nor Can It Be Lost*

“I must keep my promise to God.”

Judges 11.35

Jephthah tried to earn God's favor by promising to do violence. That promise did not need to be kept because it never needed to be made. We don't have to hurt others, or even ourselves, to please God. God is Love.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

26– *Divine Consistency*

“God, you helped me before; please help me again.”

Judges 15.18

God, when I remember all the times and all the ways you've inspired me, strengthened me, brought the right people into my life, or helped me move through pain toward better circumstances, then I can be certain that you are able and willing to help me still. And so I am thankful. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

“My life is in God; it cannot be hurt nor hindered in its expression.”

Ernest Holmes

27 – *Channels of Blessing*

“God bless whoever treated you kindly.”

Ruth 2.19

The Universe is inclined to sustain me when I am in harmony with it. Good comes to me through many channels and I bless those channels and with gratitude receive my good. Amen.

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

28 – *The Silence*

“Hannah prayed silently...”

1 Samuel 1.12

Sometimes the words don't come, but the need to pray is powerful. In such times, I can just sit in the Silence and know that communion with my Higher Power is taking place. I trust that something good will happen as I now enter into the Silence...

Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

29 (Leap Year) – *Hannah's Prayer*

Excerpt from 1 Samuel 2 (AV)

“My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged...because I rejoice in thy salvation.

There is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God...

[God] raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's...

[God] will keep the feet of [the] saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no [one] prevail.

...the LORD shall...give strength unto [those who lead in God's name], and exalt the horn of [God's] anointed.”



A TRUSTWORTHY WITNESS

by Rev Dr Durrell Watkins

The Roman poet Virgil said, "Trust one who has gone through it."

What I love about New Thought in general, and Divine Science in particular, is that it is investigative and experiential. New Thought spirituality is non-dogmatic. We aren't asked to believe what we can't, or to recite creeds from antiquity that do not reflect the cosmology or science of our day. We aren't asked to accept things uncritically, nor are we asked to embrace any belief out of fear. On the contrary, we are encouraged to contemplate the Omnipresence that God is, and to find hope, courage, joy and peace in that Reality. We deny that fear has any power over us, and we affirm that blessings are ours by right of consciousness. We give thanks for all the good we've experienced and even for good that has not yet shown up, but that exists in the realm of endless possibilities.

And so, as [people influenced by Divine Science], we have explored the power of Mind, the truth of Love, and the benefits of realizing our unity with God. We have our lived experiences of healing, insights, breakthroughs, and joy. And having demonstrated these blessings, ours is a trustworthy witness.

(originally written for
Divine Science Federation
International's
Daily At-One-Ment)



Sunshine Cathedral Lectionary for February

The Readings used in Sunday worship at the Sunshine Cathedral
Scripture readings come from various translations unless identified as paraphrased.

Feb 7th

The Wisdom of Desmond Tutu

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”

The Wisdom of Albert Schweitzer

“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.”

Luke 9.32-34

Peter and those with him were slumped over in sleep. When they came to, rubbing their eyes, they saw Jesus in his glory and two people [Moses & Elijah] standing with him. When Moses and Elijah had left, Peter said to Jesus, “Teacher, this is a great moment! Let’s build three memorials: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He blurted this out without thinking. While he was babbling on like this, a light-radiant cloud enveloped them. As they found themselves buried in the cloud, they became deeply aware of God.”

Ash Wednesday

Matthew 6.1-3, 5-6, 14, 16-21 (Durrell Watkins’ paraphrase)

Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them...

“So whenever you give monetary offerings, do not sound a trumpet before you to get recognition for it...But when you give, do so discretely. God knows your heart and will bless you for being truly generous.

“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in public places so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, do so privately...Only God needs to know you are praying, and God does, and God will bless you.

”Forgive others for their mistakes and poor judgments. You’ve needed second chances, so be willing to offer them as well.

“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like those who disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, freshen up, so that your fasting will be for true devotion and not for recognition from others. God will bless you for your private devotion.

“Do not be overly materialistic. Things can be stolen or destroyed; but store up for yourselves spiritual treasures that cannot lose their value nor be taken or destroyed. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Feb 14th

The Wisdom of Tia Walker

“Affirmations are our mental vitamins, providing the supplementary positive thoughts we need to balance the barrage of negative events and thoughts we experience daily.”

Luke 4.4, 8, 13 (*Durrell Watkins' paraphrase*)

Jesus was fasting, and was tempted to end his fast early. But then, reflecting on the Torah, Jesus said, 'It takes more than bread to really live.'

Jesus felt called to challenge oppression and serve the hurting, but he considered that other kinds of work would be much more profitable. Then, again reflecting on the Torah, he reminded himself, 'I am meant to be faithful to my purpose. I will serve God as wholeheartedly as I can.'

Finally, distracting temptations left him, at least for a while.

Feb 21st

The Wisdom of Eleanor Roosevelt

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.'"

The Wisdom of Cicero

"Not for ourselves alone are we born."

Luke 13.31-32 (*Durrell Watkins' paraphrase*)

Pharisees came to Jesus to warn him, "You need to go far, far away from here! Herod wants to kill you." Jesus answered them, "Go and tell that old fox that I don't have time to worry about him. Today and tomorrow and the day after that I'm busy ministering to people who suffer in mind and body."

Feb 28th

Isaiah 55.1, 10-13

All you people who are thirsty, come! Here is water for you to drink.

Don't worry if you have no money. Come, eat and drink until you are full!

You don't need money. The milk and wine are free.

Rain and snow fall from the sky and don't return until they have watered the ground. Then the ground causes the plants to sprout and grow, and they produce seeds for the farmer and food for people to eat.

In the same way, my words leave my mouth, and they don't come back without results. My words make the things happen that I want to happen. They succeed in doing what I send them to do.

So you will go out with joy. You will be led out in peace. When you come to the mountains and hills, they will begin singing. All the trees in the fields will clap their hands.

Luke 13.6-9

Jesus told this story: "A homeowner had a fig tree in the garden. The homeowner came looking for some fruit on it, but found none. The homeowner said to the gardener, 'I have been looking for fruit on this tree for three years, but I never find any. Cut it down! It's useless. But the gardener answered, 'Let the tree have one more year to produce fruit. Let me dig up the dirt around it and fertilize it. Maybe the tree will have fruit on it next year. If it still does not produce, then you can cut it down.'"



*Sunshine Cathedral is a different kind of church,
where the past is past and the future has infinite possibilities!*

www.SunshineCathedral.org

Sunshine Cathedral is a progressive Metropolitan Community Church (MCC)
affiliated with Divine Science Federation International (DSFI)