

Spirit & Truth

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Sunshine Cathedral

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SunshineCathedral.org
1480 SW Ninth Ave
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315
USA



Contents

- 3... Showing Us the Way (Spiritual Heroes)
- 10... Daily Reflection & Prayer
- 56... About Sunshine Cathedral

**Sunday worship:
9 am & 10:30 am**

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Showing Us the Way...

Spiritual Heroes

April 4: Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)—Apostle of freedom and renewer of society. Martin earned first a Bachelor's degree from Morehouse College, then a Master's degree from Crozier Divinity School, and finally a Ph.D. in Theology from Boston University. Later he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He was the spiritual leader of the modern Civil Rights movement. Inspired by the example of Gandhi, he led a campaign of nonviolent resistance to racial segregation, racism and poverty. He is best remembered for his famous "I Have a Dream" speech given at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. He was repeatedly jailed and in 1968 he was assassinated in Memphis.

April 7: Ernest Holmes (1887-1960) – Founder of Religious Science. Holmes was an influential figure in the New Thought movement. After studying philosophy and world religions independently, working with his brother who was a Congregational minister, and becoming ordained in the Divine Science movement, Holmes wrote *The Science of Mind* (among several books) and started the Religious Science Church. In his *The Art of Life*, Holmes instructed, "**When you pray or affirm your good, close the door of your consciousness to everything which denies this good and state your needs, not as a supplication but as an affirmation of acceptance...We shall not gain happiness by continuing to repeat mental patterns of unhappiness.**"

Fenwicke Holmes (1883 – 1973) - earned a B.A. from Colby College and attended Hartford Seminary and was ordained a Congregationalist minister (and later, a Divine Science minister). In addition to assisting his brother (Ernest Holmes) in the Science of Mind movement, he also served as the pastor of a Divine Science church. He was helpful in spreading New Thought philosophy in Japan through his collaboration with Seicho-No-Ie's founder, Masaharu Taniguchi. Fenwicke's books include: *Being & Becoming* (1925), *The Law of Mind in Action* (1926), and *The Truth About Matter* (1944).

April 8: Sidhartha Gautama, the Buddha (circa 560 – 480 BCE) – *Buddha* means "Awakened." He was born in what is today Nepal and he died in India. The Buddha is said to have had a dramatic experience whereby he became "awake" (or enlightened), and then set about teaching others how they, too, could learn to live as fully awake beings. Many Buddhists speak of the "Buddha Nature" that is latent within all of us; as we achieve enlightenment (or awakening), we express that Buddha Nature. The Buddha is regarded as the model, or supreme Buddha, but others have

been thought to achieve enlightenment. Compare this to the belief that some have that Jesus demonstrates the Christ Principle that is latent within all people. The Buddha taught that suffering is caused by ignorance. Attachment and craving are symptoms of ignorance. By learning the Truth (and practicing what we learn), we can change our thoughts and attitudes, that is, we can control our cravings and thereby limit suffering. Buddha taught and practiced meditation and gave an 8-fold righteous path to follow, which included right understanding, right thinking, right speech, and right action.

April 9: Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)—Theologian and martyr. Bonhoeffer was deeply committed to the ideals of Christian community. He helped organize resistance to the Nazi takeover of German churches. When the Confessing Church movement was snuffed out he was imprisoned for his participation in the plot to kill Hitler. Influenced by the Social Gospel movement in America, he later wrote in prison of the need for a “religionless Christianity.” His writings have been a major influence on Christian Ethics in our time. Some have speculated that Bonhoeffer’s well known affection for his dear friend Eberhard Behge suggests a possible gay orientation.

James Dillet Freeman (1912-2003) – the “Poet Laureate” of the Unity School of Christianity. He composed the prayer: “**The Light of God surrounds us; the love of God enfolds us. The power of God protects us; the presence of God watches over us. Wherever we are, God is!**” That prayer was taken to the moon in 1969!

April 10: Kahlil Gibran (1883 – 1931) - was born in Ottoman Syria (now Lebanon) and was the grandson of a Maronite Catholic priest. The Gibran family moved from the Middle East to Boston (USA) where he flourished as a poet, artist, and philosopher. He later studied in Paris and lived in NYC where he wrote and painted. His most famous work is *The Prophet*. His writings were very popular in the counter-cultural movement of the 1960s. Here are some of his inspiring words:

“**All that spirits desire, spirits attain**”,

“**An eye for an eye, and the whole world would be blind**”,

“**Beauty is eternity gazing at itself in a mirror**”,

“**Faith is a knowledge within the heart, beyond the reach of proof**”, and

“**I existed from all eternity and, behold, I am here; and I shall exist till the end of time, for my being has no end.**”

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955)—Mystic and scientist. A French Jesuit priest, Teilhard was both one of the most creative theological minds of the 20th century and an eminent scientist. He did extensive work in geology and paleontology in China, helping to discover the remains of “Peking Man.” He sought to develop a synthesis of science and religion, integrating the theory of evolution with a cosmic vision of Christ at the heart of the cosmos. His writings, seminal to the development of Process Theology, were suppressed by the Vatican during his lifetime.

April 13: Frederick Bailes (1889-1970) - Was a medical student from New Zealand. He had to drop out of medical school because he was diagnosed with diabetes (at the time considered to be untreatable). He found the writings of Thomas Troward and with the help of spiritual principles, found himself cured of

his diabetes. He returned to medical school. He found that encouraging his patients made a noticeable difference in their recovery. He went on to become a Religious Science minister. He wrote, “**Our world will change as our ideas concerning ourselves change. So never be afraid to think highly of your value.**”

April 14: Origen (185-254) - a theologian in the early church. He taught universal salvation (no one is ultimately rejected by God). He believed that any idea of eternal damnation was unworthy of a good God, the God Jesus knew and shared. He thought only an insane deity would punish someone for all eternity, and he did not believe God to be insane. He allowed for biblical literalism for those “at that level” of understanding, but encouraged people to seek “higher” understandings of scripture.

April 17: Lillian DeWaters (1883 – 1964) – a Christian Scientist who expanded into broader New Thought. She was known as a spiritual healer. She lectured widely and gave private instruction at the Astor Hotel in NYC. She wrote over 40 books on spirituality.

April 20: Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein (1889 – 1938) – building on the ideas of Rabbi A. G. Moses (who believed the healing philosophy of Christian Science was compatible with Judaism and could be offered in a Jewish context), Lichtenstein and his wife Tehilla co-founded the Society for Jewish Science. Jewish Science sees God as a “force” or “energy”, practices visualization and affirmations in its healing work, and believes religion has a role to play in healing of mind and body. Unlike Christian Science, Jewish Science does not oppose the use of medicine when it is needed. Some of the Jewish Science beliefs were, overtime, embraced by other branches of Judaism. SJS still offers services in their own building in NYC.

April 21: Thomas Parker Boyd (1864 – 1936) – Episcopal priest and psychologist. Founded the Society of the Healing Christ. Believed healing was part of the gospel message and should be practiced by the Church. Throughout his life he prayed for the sick and they would often recover. He was a member of the International New Thought Alliance.

April 27: Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 – 1882) - American essayist, philosopher, poet, and leader of the Transcendentalist movement in the early 19th century. His teachings directly influenced the growing New Thought movement of the mid-1800s. Emerson declared, “**the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part and parcel of God.**”

April 30: Pseudo-Dionysius (5th or 6th century) – mystical theologian who influenced later mystics, theologians, and philosophers. He understood “god-talk” to always be symbolic, that is, divine Transcendence necessitates speaking of the Divine in symbols, but whatever we say about God must fall short of all that God is. He believed “evil” is temporary and has no real substance to it.

May 4: David S. Alkins (1922 – 2015) – was an Episcopal priest (graduate of both New England Conservatory of Music and Berkeley Divinity School at Yale University) who served parishes in Texas and Washington state as well as working with various non-profit agencies. In 1979 he became the Dean of Brooks Divinity School (named for Nona Brooks, it was a Divine Science ministry

school in Denver) and received an honorary doctorate in 1987. His two small publications were “Bridge Builders of Truth” and *Jesus the Way Shower*.

May 6: Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)—Naturalist and social critic. While his writings were largely ignored in his lifetime, Thoreau’s thoughts on social justice, freedom, and civil disobedience were to later influence Tolstoy, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King. A fiercely independent nonconformist, he followed no particular religion, but has been described as something of a Taoist sage. His mystical rapture with nature speaks to us today in our ecological concerns. Some historians speculate that Thoreau may have been gay.

May 8: Blessed Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)—Mystic. Few details are known of the life of Dame Julian, a recluse who was famed as a spiritual counselor. She is best known for writing *Revelations of Love Divine*, the first book written in English by a woman. At the age of 30 she became gravely ill, but recovered following a series of visions of Christ. She spoke of God as our Creator, Protector, and Lover, and wrote of the motherhood of both God and of Jesus, emphasizing the goodness of creation and God’s mercy toward the weak. **“As truly as God is our Father, so truly is God our Mother.”** She is often called “Blessed” even though she was never formally beatified.

May 12: J. Krishnamurti (1895 – 1986) - born in India and adopted by Theosophist Dr. Annie Besant. Dr. Besant declared that Krishnamurti would become a global teacher. He traveled around the world speaking to large audiences about the need for a change in humankind. Rather than promoting any particular religion, he simply spoke of our universal longing for happiness and the need to release internal anger and fear which keep that happiness from us. He understood both the power of the mind and of contemplative spirituality.

May 16: Thomas Troward (1847-1916) – Judge (in India) and New Thought pioneer, Troward influenced such thinkers as Emmet Fox and Religious Science founder Ernest Holmes. Troward believed that **“Belief in limitation is the one and only thing that causes limitation.”**

May 17: Blessed Josephine Bakhita (1869-1947)—Ex-slave and nun. Born in the African nation of Sudan, at the age of nine Bakhita was kidnapped and sold into slavery. Eventually she was bought by a family who took her back to Italy. Upon hearing the gospel she understood that God meant for her to be free. She went to court to gain her freedom, and then discovered that slavery was illegal in Italy! She was then baptized and took religious vows as a nun. She spent her life serving others, and became famous for her quiet faith.

May 20: Tehilla Lichtenstein (1893 – 1973) – co-founder with her husband, Morris, of the Society for Jewish Science (a metaphysical interpretation and application of Judaism). She was born in Jerusalem and immigrated to the U.S. when she was eleven. After her husband, a rabbi, died, Tehilla took over the leadership of the Society for Jewish Science, making her the first Jewish woman in the U.S. with her own pulpit, even though she was never ordained a rabbi.

May 22: Rabbi Baal Shem Tov (1700-1760)—Founder of Hasidism. He proclaimed a mysticism of the everyday. In each task and moment there is a spark of the divine holiness of God. The spirit in which one lives is more

important than following a set of laws. Although most were murdered by the Nazis, vibrant Hasidic communities thrive today in Israel and the US.

May 24: Julia Seton Sears (1862-1950) - Founder of the New Civilization Church. She was a metaphysical teacher known to both Ernest and Fenwick Holmes. She was both a metaphysical healer and also a medical doctor. Her books include *Helpful Thoughts*, *The Science of Success*, *The Mystic's Goal*, and *The Key to Health, Wealth, and Love*. She stated, “**There is nothing in all the world but life! Even Death itself is only life acting inversely.**”

May 27: Prentice Mulford (1834 - 1891) - One of the earliest New Thought pioneers. Mulford was a mystic who believed each person must discover Truth for himself or herself. His insights came more from reflection than from study. Some of his insights include: “**To say a thing ‘must be’ is the very power that makes it**” and “**Every thought of yours is a real thing - a force.**” At only 57 he died peacefully without any apparent illness or pain.

May 28: John Macquarrie (1919 – 2007) – a former Presbyterian turned Anglican priest and theologian. He has been described as the most distinguished Anglican theologian of the second half of the 20th century. He loved and was fully committed to the Christian tradition while also affirming the legitimacy of other traditions and the need to learn from them (though he did not favor syncretism). About non-Christian religions he said, “I do not deny for a moment that the truth of God has reached others through other channels...”

Charles Ludlam (1943 – 1987) – Off-Broadway director, playwright, and actor who founded the Ridiculous Theatre Company in New York City in 1967. Not really religious, Ludlam all the same had a religious like devotion to his art and found spiritual strength, honesty, and empowerment from sharing his art. He was an openly gay man and in 1987 he died from AIDS related complications.

May 29: Baha'u'llah (1817-1892) – founder of the Baha'i Faith which focuses on the unity of God, religion, and humankind. Baha'is affirm the dignity of all people and the validity of most religions. They place a high value on peace and justice and oppose racism and nationalism. Baha'u'llah believed God became especially present in various ages in the lives of select prophets, including Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammad. Baha'u'llah believed himself to be a prophet (and the one specifically foretold by the Bab), which would make him, also, a divine manifestation. He and his followers were persecuted for their beliefs and Baha'u'llah died in prison.

June 1: Lao Tzu (circa 600 BCE, China) - believed simplicity to be the path to freedom and happiness. He taught people to learn from the laws of nature, to develop intuition, to be loving, and to avoid using force. The teachings attributed to Lao Tzu (an honorary title, meaning something like “Wise Old Teacher”) are found in the *Tao te Ching*.

June 3: St. John XXIII (1881-1963)—Modernizer of the Church. When John was elected Pope he was expected to be no more than a transitional figure. In a brief pontificate of less than five years, John was able to bring about sweeping

changes by opening the church up to positive dialogue with the modern world. John convened Vatican II (only the 2nd council since the 16th century) to address Christian unity, world peace, and the needs of the poor.

July 4: W. Frederic Keeler (1874 - 1943) - Noted healer and metaphysician (Divine Science minister). Most of his work was published posthumously. Of the power of prayer, Keeler said, **"We drop our worldly worries in prayer. They do not exist in prayer...To face the facts of one's life without worry while being in the consciousness of God is to solve every problem, and to heal."**

June 12: Anne Frank (1929-1945)—Witness of the Holocaust. During the Nazi occupation of Amsterdam, Ann Frank's family remained in hiding for two years. At the age of 13 she took her school books and a diary into captivity with her. There she recorded not only their day to day struggle for survival, but her personal growth as a young woman who could find hope in the face of hopelessness. Shortly after turning 15 they were discovered and she was sent to her death in the concentration camps.

Martyrs of Pulse – (2016) A mass shooter killed 49 people and left 53 wounded at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. Pulse was an establishment catering to the LGBTQ community. The attack was the deadliest act of violence against LGBTQ people in U.S. history (surpassing the 1973 mass killing of people in a gay bar in New Orleans). It was also America's deadliest mass shooting by a single shooter — until the record was broken in Las Vegas in 2017.

June 15: Evelyn Underhill (1875 – 1941) – Anglo-Catholic writer and pacifist who focused on spiritual practice and Christian mysticism. She wrote, **"Beauty is simply reality seen with the eyes of love."** And of the practicality of communion with the Divine she wrote, **"After all it is those who have a deep and real inner life who are best able to deal with the irritating details of outer life."**

June 17: Joel Goldsmith (1892 – 1964) – Goldsmith was reared in a secular Jewish family, but both he and his father (at different times) experienced healing with the aid of Christian Science practitioners. Goldsmith discovered that he seemed to have a gift for spiritual healing. He became a Christian Scientist and later started the Infinite Way movement. He stressed the practice of contemplative meditation. Goldsmith believed healing occurred from conscious contact with God. He wrote, **"God is felt as a divine Presence or Influence within."**

Masaharu Taniguchi (1893 – 1985) - founded Seicho-No-Ie in Japan where it has over 5 million members. SNI has become a world-wide New Thought movement. SNI doesn't ask people to give up any religious affiliation to be part of their system; in that way, they are inter-religious and transdenominational. Taniguchi came to realize: **"All evil things are nothingness. They could never be the product of Divine Will but of [the human] deluded mind", "The Phenomena are non-existent. That which is truly real and eternal is only God and [God's] manifestations. [The human-being] is truly a child of God [and] is already immaculate and redeemed."** SNI calls the impermanent and ever-changing world of appearances the "phenomenal world." Shinsokan is the meditation technique taught to help people experience the Universal Reality commonly called "God." "True Image" is what SNI calls one's true Self, one's Real identify, the harmonious and divine essence of All That Is.

June 21: St. Aloysius (1568 – 1591) - an Italian aristocrat and Jesuit who died as a result of caring for people suffering from an epidemic. During the early days of the AIDS crisis, many thought of him as a patron saint of people living with AIDS. It is said that his last word in life was, “Jesus.”

June 22: St. Alban (d. 304) - Britain’s first Christian martyr. He was a pagan who gave shelter and aid to a Christian fleeing persecution. He was impressed by the Christian’s faith and was baptized by him. Later when the authorities came looking for the Christian he was hiding, Alban claimed to be the person and was taken captive. He was beheaded. It is said that his executioner converted to the Christian faith after his brief encounter with Alban.

St. Paulinus (354 - 431) – the Bishop of Nola was apparently in love with a man, Ausonius, to whom he wrote passionate love poems.

Upstairs Martyrs – On June 24, 1973, a New Orleans gay bar, the Upstairs Lounge (that also served as a worship location for a local gay friendly church), was firebombed while people were inside. Until 2016, it was the deadliest attack on LGBTQ people in US history. 32 people were killed. Some churches refused to do funerals for the victims. The crime was never solved. Four bodies went unclaimed. It remains a painful memory of how same-gender loving and gender non-conforming people have been dehumanized in our society.

June 25: Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929)—Indian Christian mystic. Sundar Singh came from a wealthy family in northern India which followed the Sikh faith. As a teenager he had a mystical vision of Christ addressing him in Hindustani. For becoming a Christian he was turned out into the streets. He wore the robes of an Indian holy man, wandering across the country preaching the Gospel. He often taught in parables, and like Jesus attracted large crowds.

June 27: Righteous Warriors of the Stonewall Uprising

“...The Stonewall Uprising began in the early hours of June 28, 1969 when NYC police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay club located in Greenwich Village. The raid sparked a riot among bar patrons and neighborhood residents as police roughly hauled employees and patrons out of the bar, leading to six days of protests on Christopher Street, in neighboring streets and in nearby Christopher Park. The Stonewall Riots served as a catalyst for the gay rights movement in the U.S and around the world.

“The 1960s and preceding decades were not welcoming times for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans. For instance, solicitation of same-sex relations was illegal in New York City. For such reasons, LGBT individuals flocked to gay bars and clubs, places of refuge where they could express themselves openly and socialize without worry. However, the New York State Liquor Authority penalized and shut down establishments that served alcohol to known or suspected LGBT individuals, arguing that the mere gathering of homosexuals was ‘disorderly.’

“These regulations were overturned in 1966, but engaging in gay behavior in public (holding hands, kissing or dancing with someone of the same sex) was still illegal, so police harassment of gay bars continued.” (history.com)

Daily Reflection & Prayer

April 1 – **Following Jesus**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The Jesus Movement: We’re following Jesus into loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with God, with each other, and with creation.”

The Most Reverend Michael Curry

I am by culture, accident of birth, baptism, confirmation, education, ordination, and profession a Christian. But that doesn’t say much about my spiritual journey. What is more important than the title of “Christian” are my attempts (however botched they may sometimes be) to follow Jesus’ example of trusting God, loving my neighbor, remembering that all people are my neighbor, and showing my love of neighbor by being generous, compassionate, and committed to justice. I happen to be Christian, which is fine, but my journey is following Jesus, which isn’t necessarily the same thing.

I will follow Jesus in the ways of love and liberation. Amen.

April 2 – **For today**

Rev. Anne R. Atwell

“These moments of pleasure, of epiphany, of focus, of being there, in their instantaneous way can actually feel like a little nudge that’s telling you, ‘By the way, this is why you’re alive. And this is not going to last, but never mind that for now.’” *Teju Cole*

I sometimes find myself waiting for the next big thing to occur in my life. Or I may think that I will be happy when I reach a very specific point. Sound familiar? What if we are intentional about being content in our place right now? What if, instead of holding out for the next big thing, we focus on what is good today? Hope and joy can be an integral part of our daily lives if we purposely focus on the here and now. Letting go of the past and setting aside expectations for the future invites us to be very present to this day.

Divine Goodness, I give thanks for today. Amen.

April 3 – Confession

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

We acknowledge, O God, that we have let fear win over love too many times.

On occasion we have been selfish rather than Self- Realized.

We have withheld kindnesses we were meant to offer.

We have not always spoken out for justice.

We have not always loved ourselves, and when we didn't love ourselves, we could hardly love others enough.

We have fallen short of our highest ideals, and yet we know our potential is great.

We long to live into and express the goodness that you have placed within us.

Heal and renew us and help us be our better selves.

Let us live joyfully, compassionately, and generously as the children of God.

Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

"Read a little, meditate more, and think of God all the time."

Paramahansa Yogananda

April 4 – Indwelling power

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

"Since we are children of God, the life of God lies within us. Because God's life is infinite perfection, it is health itself, and although we may for some reason lose our health, we have the power to restore our health from within. The more we recognize this mysterious power we have...the more quickly our fatigue will be healed, our energy replenished, and we can recover to become our healthy selves...We should...meditate and focus on the healing power of God which permeates throughout the entire universe..." *Masahuru Taniguchi*

God's life and light indwell me. Divine power flows through me.

As I focus on this inward power, my hope is renewed, my joy is increased, and I begin to feel secure as if I am sheltered in a safe place full of love. May divine life bless my life, and be expressed in and through my life. May I be well and happy. May I bless others. Amen.

April 5 – **Recognition, affirmation, and gratitude**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 16:

“O God, you are our portion and our cup; it is you who uphold our lot. Our hearts are glad and our spirits rejoice. You will never abandon us. You will show us the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your hand are pleasures forevermore.”

And so it is.

Notice the prayer above.

God is acknowledged, and trust in God is affirmed.

Blessings are expected.

Gratitude is expressed.

Recognition, affirmation, gratitude. Try this method of praying throughout the day.

JUST A THOUGHT

“There is not one realm of God and one realm of matter; there is only the increasing realm of God.” <i>Martin Buber</i>

April 6 – **Praise and confidence**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 30:

“We praise you, God, because you raise us up! We cry out to you and you send healing. You are merciful. You will always be our helper. You change mourning into dancing. You clothe us with gladness. With all that we are we will sing endless praise to you. O God, we will forever be grateful.” Amen.

Notice the prayer above.

It assumes that God is near, good, and able to lend aid. The Psalmist begins with praise and then launches into a series of affirmations. “You raise us up...You send healing...You will always be our helper...You change mourning into dancing.” And then the writer offers more praise. Praise and confidence are the main ingredients of this prayer. Make the prayer above your own today.

April 7 – **Pray for others**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 56:

“Have mercy on those who are troubled, O God.

In you, God, we trust and because of you, we are not afraid.” *Amen.*

Notice the prayer above.

It begins with concern for others. It could be prayed for one’s community, or the nation, or a family, or a neighbor, or maybe for anyone (or even everyone) in the world who might be facing hardship or difficulty. The Psalmist begins the prayer with concern for others and then affirms the goodness of God as well as human resilience.

Pray for someone today, and as you do so, remember that God is good and the one for whom you are praying is stronger than they may even realize.

I pray for those who are facing trouble. I know that divine Love enfolds them. I know that they are resilient. And so it is.

JUST A THOUGHT

“You are a spiritual being living in a limitless Reality that has a pure essence and an expressive aspect that emanates universes and everything that is in them.” *Roy Eugene Davis*

April 8 - **Cling to hope**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 57:

“Have mercy on us, O God. In you we seek shelter. When we call to God, God provides. May God send help from heaven to keep us safe. Let our hearts now be steadfast and let us sing praise to God.” *Amen.*

Notice the prayer above.

This prayer seems to be less confident than other psalms, and yet, still optimistic. The one praying pushes past anxiety and doubt to affirm hope and to ask God for help. Sometimes the best we can do is stubbornly cling to hope and ask God to help us do what we otherwise could not. Sometimes, our best prayer is, “God, help. I’m trying to cling to hope. I know you’re with me, and so I am thankful.” Even when we and our prayers seem small, they can make a big difference.

April 9 – Hanging out with god

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“[God], in thy presence, in my intimate feeling of oneness with thee, is fullness of joy...Amen.” *Elsie MacKay*

Sometimes, our prayers are wishes, “may my friend get well” or “let there be peace” or “God, help us!” Sometimes our prayers are expressions of gratitude, “Thank God!” or “Hallelujah!” Sometimes our prayers are a search for wisdom, “What can I do?” or “what would be best?” And sometimes our prayers are simply sweet communion with the divine presence of perfect Love. All the forms of prayer are good, but the best may be to simply acknowledge and relish the presence of infinite Goodness. We can always ask God for guidance and we can thank God for blessings, but let’s remember to just be with God and enjoy that dear presence.

In your presence there is great joy. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

“I am the child of God...so I have no fear. I am surrounded by the Peace of God and all is well.” *Emmet Fox*

April 10 – God is good

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 62:

“Our souls find rest in God, our liberator.

God is our Rock and our security. God will not let us fall.

God is the Source of our hope. Let us trust God at all times.”

And so it is.

Notice the prayer above.

This prayer is an affirmation of faith. It declares God to be a liberating power, a secure home, a source of hope, a loving presence that will not and cannot let us go. And, if all of that is true, then we can “trust God at all times.” The prayer affirms attributes of God, and then pledges to trust those attributes. Let us pray in just such a way today.

God, you are good, and so it is that all is well. Amen.

April 11 – **Wait and see**

Rev. Marian Cavagnaro

“Patience is not simply the ability to wait, it’s how we behave while we’re waiting.” *Joyce Meyer*

I love the time I get to spend at the fishing pier in Dania Beach, Florida. I remember when my mom and dad would go there to enjoy the sunshine and the ocean breezes. Maybe, if my parents were lucky, they would catch a few bait fish. They were joyful and patient, and as they cast their lines out, they would just wait and see. I notice the same joy and patience in the men, women and children who cast their lines and nets out into the ocean each time I visit the pier. I see fishing challenging one to silence the mind and to wait for the possibilities. Nature writer, Harry Middleton suggests that “Fishing is not an escape from life, but often a deeper immersion into it.”

Holy One, may we be patient in waiting, and as we go deeper inside may we see infinite possibilities.

April 12 – **Resurrection**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Out of the dusk a shadow, then, a spark.
Out of the cloud a silence, then, a lark.
Out of the heart a rapture, then, a pain.
Out of the dead, cold ashes, Life again.” *John Banister Tabb*

I was recently asked (for about thousandth time in my ministry) if I believed Jesus’ resurrection was “true.” When I was younger, I would give a long, detailed answer about the power of myth, and truth that was beyond fact, and how something could be true without being historic, and how imagination and creativity and story all were conduits of truth. Not this time. This time when someone asked if I believed it was true, I just said, “yes.” Life is more than earthly years, hope will not stay buried, love cannot die. Golgotha isn’t the end of Jesus’ story, and pain and disappointment aren’t how our stories will end. Oh, I believe in Resurrection – not because it “did” happen, but because it does. Resurrection is my lived and cherished truth.

April 13 – **Praying for the world**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 85:

“Surely the Lord will proclaim peace to those who seek holiness. Wholeness and good fortune must be near. Love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss. God will surely grant abundance.”

And so it is.

Notice the prayer above.

It is a prayer for justice, peace, and prosperity. Let us today be intentional in praying for justice and peace, and for prosperity for all people. Is it possible for every person to have safe shelter, good nutrition, medical care when it is needed, access to education, and clean water to drink? Every person? It is not only possible, it is how things ought to be. Such prosperity would be just and it would contribute to peace. Let’s pray for our world today. Every good act, every kind wish, every positive thought is needed.

God bless the whole world. Amen.

April 14 – **Shifting**

Rev. Kevin Tisdol

“The world is full of a lot of fear and a lot of negativity, and a lot of judgment. I just think people need to start shifting into joy and happiness. As corny as it sounds, we need to make a shift.”

Ellen DeGeneres

On this date in 1997, Ellen DeGeneres came out as gay in a Time Magazine interview. Reactions to the interview scared her TV network and Ellen endured a three-year period where she could not find work. She said of that period, “I’m really grateful that I had that experience and it made me a stronger person.” You can be more like Ellen; stop and take a breath before reacting to a problem, look at it as a chance to do something positive. Make the event a life-enriching teaching moment. Like with exercise, the more you do it, the better you become at making shifting into joy and happiness a natural part of your life.

Eternal Spirit, I am shifting into joy and happiness. Amen.

April 15 – Get your shout on!

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 98:

“Sing a new song to the Eternal, who has done marvelous deeds.
Shout with joy to the Eternal, all the earth; break into song; sing praise.”

Shout with joy. That’s really good advice. It isn’t that an egocentric deity requires “subjects” to offer copious amounts of shallow flattery. Not at all! The praise isn’t really “for” God. The praise lifts *us* up. Do you remember high school pep rallies? How exciting were they?! Lots of singing and chanting and arm waving. It lifted everyone’s spirits, and that was the purpose. It is good for us to express appreciation and gratitude, and sometimes, it’s even good just to get our shout on. God doesn’t need us to get loud, but the joy in us needs to be expressed. So, “break into song; sing praise.”

Alleluia!

JUST A THOUGHT

<p>“I am energy. I am strength. I am power. I am filled with omnipotent life. The vitality of God permeates every fiber of my being.” <i>Emmet Fox</i></p>
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April 16 – There is only love

Rev. Anne R. Atwell

“Bless the poets, the workers for justice, the dancers of ceremony, the singers of heartache, the visionaries, all makers and carriers of fresh meaning – We will all make it through, despite politics and wars, despite failures and misunderstandings. There is only love.” *Joy Harjo*

For days when everything seems a struggle, remember that difficulties are temporary and better days are ahead. For days when life seems dreary and pointless, remember the care that others share. For days when love seems out of reach, remember the abiding love of the Divine. For days that just seem too much, remember that *you are God’s miracle and not God’s mistake*. For days that are heavy with grief and loss, remember to be gentle with yourself. Take time every day to bless yourself with affirmation and love.

Holy One, I can bless myself as I bless others. Amen.

April 17 – Healing prayer

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“May the One who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, bless and heal those who are ill [especially those we now name]. May the Blessed Holy One be filled with compassion for their health to be restored and their strength to be revived. May God swiftly send them a complete renewal of body and spirit, and let us say, Amen.” *Mishkan T’filah: A Reform Siddur*

In times of uncertainty, we often turn to prayer for comfort and insight. When loved ones are facing hardship, of course we do what we can to help them and we also add to our efforts the power of prayer. Prayer renews our hope as we lend aid. Prayer renews our spirits as we face challenges or disappointments. Prayer reminds us that there is a loving Presence available to offer comfort and encouragement in all circumstances. Prayer is a resource we always have, and sometimes, it is our very best resource.

April 18 – Living wopida

Rev. Margarita Rodriguez

“When we strive to make our lives, every thought, word and action, a living Wopida, we are given a great spiritual gift. For whenever our soul and the inmost chambers of our heart are filled with thanksgiving and gratitude it also naturally becomes filled with compassion, love understanding, forgiveness, joy, happiness and oneness.”

Hereditary Chief Phil Lane, Jr.

Four years ago, Native American tribes along with other groups across the world joined the Standing Rock protest standing for the connection with all living things. *Wopida* is a Dakota ceremony of gratitude; it is the consciousness of oneness with all living things. *Wopida* continues to be relevant today as it was four years ago not only for the land, the water, the air but also for our human connections. There is a profound need for healing in our minds, to live with more compassion and be opened to forgiveness. Today we make a contribution to this healing by practicing gratitude and thanksgiving.

I remember my connection with all and give thanks.

April 19 – Our divine shield

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 3:

“You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, the One who holds my head high...Deliverance is the LORD’s; your blessing be upon your people!”

The coronavirus really gave us a good shaking up, didn’t it? We became very hygiene conscious, and learned to slow down a bit, and in our periods of quarantine we became reflective. We became intentional about checking in with loved ones, and became concerned with the welfare of people all over the world. C19 changed the way we live for a while, maybe permanently. Such major shifts can be upsetting because we didn’t see them coming and we aren’t sure where they will leave us, but in those uncertain times we can pray. We know that God is with us and will bless us even in the midst of challenges. There are always unknowns, and, there is always the comforting power of prayer.

*God, you are a shield about me. You are with me always.
You bless me continuously. Thank you very much. Amen.*

JUST A THOUGHT

“In my spiritual identity I am God’s perfect Self-expression. God is Love. I am the child of Love...God is All, and God is Good...” *Robert Winterhalter*

April 20 – Give peace a chance

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 4:

“In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O God, make me dwell in safety.”

Sometimes, we just need to breathe. Sometimes, we need to rest. Sometimes, we need to sleep in, or take a nap, or enjoy some television binge watching. When we are feeling exhausted or overwhelmed or anxious, a time to gather our thoughts, relax, and remember that God is with us can be just what is needed to renew and recharge. As the prayer goes: *wherever I am, God is, and all is well.* Taking a moment to remember and embrace that truth can do us a world of good.

April 21 – **We are human first before we put on the cloaks of religion**
Deacon Sue Gallagher, Ed.D.

“Before becoming a Sikh, a Muslim, a Hindu or a Christian, let’s become a human first.” *Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji*

Born in the 15th Century, Guru Nanak founded the Sikh religion – a religion that has been under siege since 9/11. His core teachings sought to embody and impart these three things: sharing with others and helping the ones in need (Vand Chakko), making a living honestly without exploiting anyone and without any fraud (Kirat Karo) and meditating on the name of God and controlling our evils (Naam Japna). The heart of Guru Nanak’s message and the core of the Sikh religion shines light on how to be a human being in our service, work and worship. A message that aligns with the Christian and Jewish visions of being human.

Compassionate God of Many Names, may we see and love you in the best of our humanity and in the many religions that reveal your truths.

JUST A THOUGHT

“Oh, Beloved Presence...you gladden the whole earth...
You are the breathing of the world.” *Hafiz*

April 22 – **Help!**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 12:

“LORD! Help!”

I know we want to be people of profound faith. We want to “know” that our Good is at hand, regardless of appearances. We want to be fearless, serene, and living models of trust in divine goodness. *And*, the facts are that we sometimes are afraid, disappointed, uncertain, or sad. We’ll get our confidence back. We’ll recharge our optimism. We’ll once again be rock solid paragons of faith; but in the meantime, it’s okay to just say to the God of our understanding, “Help!” We can even make it a rush order, “Help, now!” And, to help us believe that our prayer has been heard, we can add, “Thank you.” There’s nothing wrong with needing or asking for help. Sometimes our most honest and heartfelt prayer might be, “Help. Help, now! Thank you.”

April 23 – Love & goodness are chasing us

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 23:

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...”

That famous line from the 23rd Psalm (King James Version) affirms that goodness pursues us.

The International Standard Version puts it this way: “Truly, goodness and gracious love will pursue me all the days of my life.”

The Message states: “Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life.”

The New American Bible: “Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me all the days of my life.”

And The Jewish Study Bible: “Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me all the days of my life.”

We spend a lot of time looking for happiness, love, and well-being. The good news is, those same blessings are looking for us! And apparently, they will pursue us “all the days of our lives.” *Alleluia!*

JUST A THOUGHT

<p>“What is important is how you perceive yourself... See and praise your perfect, real self.” <i>Masaharu Taniguchi</i></p>
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April 24 – Lessons from the trees

Rev. Lynda Pantoja

“When you go out into the woods, and you look at trees, you see all these different trees. And some of them are bent, and some of them are straight, and some of them are evergreens, and some of them are whatever. And you look at the tree and you allow it. You see why it is the way it is. You sort of understand that it didn’t get enough light, and so it turned that way. And you don’t get all emotional about it. You just allow it. You appreciate the tree. The minute you get near humans, you lose all that. And you are constantly saying ‘You are too this, or I’m too this.’ That judgment mind comes in. And so, I practice turning people into trees. Which means appreciating them just the way they are.” *Ram Dass*

*Today I stop judging and begin accepting, recognizing and honoring
the sacred value of ALL humankind. And I thank every tree
I encounter for its holy reminder! Amen.*

April 25 – **Strength & well-being**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 29:

“May the LORD grant strength to the people; may the LORD bestow on the people wellbeing.”

9/11. The outbreak of AIDS. Wildfires. Floods. Hurricanes. Wars. The coronavirus. Difficulties and challenges happen. Even if we avoid them, others do not, and we care about their well-being even as we care about our own. We are either impacted directly by these occurrences, or we are impacted because of empathy, because we care about others, and their pain causes us pain. So, we pray for strength. We ask God to strengthen us and others who are facing troubles or who are trying to recover from disappointments. Our loving prayers can produce tangible blessings. Never think that you have nothing to offer in a time of crisis. You have love, and prayer is a way of expressing love, and love makes us all stronger.

God give us strength and well-being. Amen.

April 26 – **One**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Self-Knowledge has always been the theme of the Illumined, who know and teach God and the Self to be One.” *Lillian deWaters*

We are told that God is All-in-all, and we respond to that because we intuit it to be true. We feel God’s presence. We turn to God in prayer and sense that we are connected. Even in our doubts, there is Something that will not let us go. It doesn’t judge us or condemn us or abandon us. We know there is one Presence and one Power, and being one, we must be part of it. The Life and Love that I call “God” must include me. In sacred moments when I know this beyond what words can express, I have peace and know that all is well.

*There is one Presence, one Power: It is God and I am forever one with It.
Alleluia! And so it is.*

April 27 – Our divine truth

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“We are sparks of the Divine and therefore gods in embryo...Fundamentally and in our true nature we are all one with God.” *Emmet Fox*

God is the ONE Presence, the ONE Life, the ONE Power. We all share It. It expresses through us to the degree that we allow it to do so. Jesus is the example of what letting God express through us can look like. We are still learning just how great our divine potential is, but even when we don’t demonstrate it fully, it remains the truth of our being. We are in God, of God, forever part of God. Thanks be to God!

Dear God, I rejoice in the knowledge that you are my very life. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

“Just as all elements of the ocean are in one drop of ocean water, all that God is, is in you.” *William Warch*

April 28 – Trust

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Excerpt from Psalm 70:

“Quickly lend aid, O God.

May those who seek your help always glorify you.

You are our helper and deliverer.

Please do not delay in sending your blessings.” *Amen.*

Notice the prayer above.

It is clear in its intention. The one praying needs guidance or insight or hope or courage, *immediately*. “Quickly lend aid, O God.” The one praying not only is specific in what s/he needs (help ASAP) but then affirms that God is in the helping business. We can pray for or about anything. We can even say, “And God, I kind of need this in a hurry.” It’s okay to be honest about our needs and feelings. Now, how things play out after that may not be easy to predict, but what is important is that we can trust God with our every thought and feeling.

April 29 – **The power within**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“...instead of looking for the solution [to a problem] outside yourself, turn within. In the quiet and calm of your own mind, let the answer to your problem unfold itself.” *Joel Goldsmith*

When I want someone to rescue me, I often am disappointed. When I let myself believe that anything beyond my Self could make me happy, again, I wind up disappointed. When I worry about a problem instead of trying to understand it, when I fret about what could go wrong instead of trusting that a solution is possible, when I focus more on what I don't like than on what I love, then disappointment flourishes! But when I finally remember to calm my thoughts, relax my body, follow my breath, and sit in the Silence, the calm assurance almost always comes and things begin to improve. That Which is in me is greater than what appears to be “out there” in the world (1 John 4.4).

*The Divine Power within me is greater than any perceived problem.
I trust this Power now and allow It to show me the way.*

April 30 – **Demonstration**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“I am a Knight of Heaven and this is the shrine, yours and mine, to prove it.” *H.H. the Dalai Seng Shih*

We don't need religion to make us feel guilty; we could do that without religion. We don't need religion to make us feel afraid; we could be fearful without religion. We don't need religion to make us feel alone; we could entertain that illusion without religion's help. Religion at its best calls us to be our best, reminding us of how good, in Truth, we really are. Religion, at its best, calls us to demonstrate the Good that is within us, to manifest blessings of peace, joy, and fulfillment. Today let's answer religion's truest and highest call.

*God in me is all-powerful! I AM ready to demonstrate divine power
in every area of my life. I call forth blessings now. Amen.*

May 1 – Saved by grace

Rev. Dr. Nancy Davis

“For in grace you see a light that covers all the world in love...”

ACIM, W-pl.168.4:3

In college, I was the woman’s leader of Campus Crusade for Christ. One week-end after a Campus Crusade retreat, I was driving back to college with a car full of students who were sleeping. As I drove along, I was contemplating, “What really is grace?” The next thing I remembered, was waking up on an exit ramp. I know I was saved that day by grace, along with all my passengers. Today, I still feel that protective enveloping love and am deeply grateful.

When the Dalai Lama was asked how his monks were trained, he replied. “We first train them, while sleeping, to awaken in their dreams. They then realize they can change their experience while dreaming. We then teach them all they see during the day, is a dream. They then learn to change that experience” (*paraphrased*). ACIM teaches, “You travel but in dreams, while safe at home” (T-13.VII.17:7).

May we all awaken into grace, today.

JUST A THOUGHT

“Fear exhausts life energy; it is one of the greatest enemies of dynamic will power.” *Paramahansa Yogananda*

May 2 – New life

Rev. Dr. Robert Griffin

“You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.”

C. S. Lewis

What is the sound of new life? Better yet, what are signs of new life in you? Is it awakening to a new reality? Is it seeing something different after looking at the same thing day in and day out? Is it simply changing how you think about something or someone? Sounds and signs of new life are around us all the time. All we have to do is pay attention to how we respond to that start of newness in our lives. What we focus on is what grows.

Today I will focus on that which brings newness into my life.

May 3 – God can

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“When conditions get completely out of hand, put them into God’s hands...Say to yourself, ‘If it is to be done, the Lord will have to do it.’ Then wait with cheerful expectancy for the right solution.” *Irwin Gregg*

I had a friend who kept a coffee can (remember those?) which she called her “God Can.” Whenever she had a problem she couldn’t solve, she’d write it down on a bit of paper and drop it in her God Can. When she released the paper into the can she would say, “When I can’t, God can.” It was a way of “letting go and letting God.” She released the matter (and with it, her anxieties). She would feel better almost instantly every time. We don’t have to have the physical prop, but we could all benefit from having a mental “God Can.”

When I can’t, God can. Alleluia! Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

<p>“All shall be well, all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” <i>Julian of Norwich</i></p>

May 4 – Affirmations for various occasions

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Happiness

I deserve and accept happiness in my life.

Health

I deserve and accept health and vitality in my life.

Prosperity

I deserve and accept prosperity in my life.

Peace

I deserve and accept a life of peace and harmony.

Guidance

I deserve and accept divine guidance in every area of my life.

May 5 – Inner peace

Deacon Michael Karban

“Do not let the behavior of others destroy your inner peace.”

HH The Dalai Lama

To me, inner peace is one of the keys to helping maintain a balanced life. Sometimes the actions or behavior of others can overwhelm us or impact our “inner peace”. Maintaining inner peace can be challenging and difficult in those situations. Our response can impact that inner peace. A couple of positive ways that can help us is either by stepping back and taking a deep breath or repeating a positive affirmation about ourselves.

*As a child of God, I know that I’m loved and filled with peace.
I will not allow the actions/behaviors of others to destroy that peace.*

JUST A THOUGHT

“Look forward. Every regret, every mournful thought,
takes so much out of your life.” *Prentice Mulford*

May 6 – Be blessed

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“You want to enjoy life and liberty...and it is natural that you should.”

Genevieve Behrend

I’ve often said that for me religion isn’t about securing comfort in the after-life (or avoiding after-life torment). Religion should be more than controlling people’s behaviors and beliefs with threats of punishment or promises of rewards. Religion, at its best, will promote healthy spirituality – the experience of hope, joy, fulfillment and empowerment. These blessings are available to us right now. They may well last throughout all eternity, but why wait to start enjoying them. Happiness, hope, and wholeness are the gifts of Life that we are meant to experience today, and we can!

*It is good and right that I should be happy, creative, and full of life!
I give thanks for all my blessings.*

May 7 – I can be happy

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

"When all is said and done, happiness is the one thing which every human being wants..." *Genevieve Behrend*

"I've told you these things so that my joy might be in you and so that your joy will be complete" (Jesus, John 15.11). "The joy of God is your strength" (Nehemiah 8.10). "My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to God in song" (Psalm 28.7). "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace..." (St. Paul, Galatians 5.22). We really do deserve happiness and healthy spirituality should help us experience it. Joy is our hearts' desire, our right, and our inheritance.

Joy is Life's gift to me. I accept it with gratitude.

JUST A THOUGHT

"It's of no use to look back and say, 'I should have been different.' At any given moment, we are the way we are, and we see what we're able to see. For that reason, guilt is always inappropriate." *Charlotte Joko Beck*

May 8 – Connection

Rev. Anne R. Atwell

"Racism destroys kinship. Sexism destroys kinship. Classism destroys kinship. Homophobia destroys kinship. When human beings exile other human beings from the circle of life, they are breaking the hoop of the human nation, tearing apart what God has created."

Bishop Steven Charleston

Now more than ever, we need to appreciate our connectedness as part of a spiritual practice. When we consider the connection that we have with all living beings, it can bring us closer to the Divine. What affects one does affect all. And every impact we create, either positive or negative, impacts others. We may think we live in a bubble, focusing on our self and our needs, when in reality our connections are unbreakable. Consider others in your acts of kindness. Consider others in your acts of generosity. Consider others in your love for the world.

*Holy One, I live mindfully as I am connected to you
and to all living beings. And so it is.*

May 9 – **God within**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

"My God must rule within." *Goethe*

When I was a child, I thought God was a magical super-person who lived very far away above the sky but who somehow could see everything I did, hear everything I said, and even know what I was thinking. This God was always trying to catch me misbehaving, and was willing to punish me for my misdeeds. But, like St. Paul said, "When I was a child I spoke like a child, [and] thought like a child...but when I became an adult, I put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13.11). Now, God is for me the loving, benevolent Presence that is always with and within me. I wish you a similarly uplifting experience of the divine.

God isn't a puppet-master making everything happen, nor is God a harsh judge. God is Love and this Love is always in my heart.

JUST A THOUGHT

"Don't worry. You belong to God, and God is Love; so why fret?"

Emmet Fox

May 10 – **Unity**

Rev. Dr. Robert Griffin

"...that they may be one..." *Jesus' prayer, John 17.11*

We live in a time when unity is needed throughout our world. However, I am a firm believer that what is needed in our world most often needs to begin with the individual. For example, if we want peace and unity, it begins with us. When we allow ourselves to center, focus and give energy to the thought of global unity, we find ourselves being at one with ourselves and feeling our unity with all life. When you take steps to allow love, peace and unity to come out of you to others, you take the first step in helping to bring all of this and much more to the world. We create our world by extending our true selves.

Today I will work toward all the positive things that I want to reflect in my life and my community.

May 11 – **All things divine are in me**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

"Each and every one of us was created in God's image; there is nothing in God that does not exist in [us]..." *Bishop Bernard Jordan*

"In the beginning God created..." Of course, Eternity doesn't have a beginning, just as it doesn't have an end. But our material world must have had a beginning. What was that beginning? We can talk about a Big Bang, but still, what really caused it? What ignited the bang? God is Spirit and Spirit (energy) is really all there is. What did God create from? God-stuff! God created from God's Self. Our world (and every world) is how God knows Herself. We are God's expression. We are created by God and from God which means we have always been and always will be part of and with (within) God. What "Good" could ever be beyond our grasp?

*I am made in God's image and all that God is, is within me!
I now allow my God-power to bless me abundantly. Alleluia! Amen.*

May 12 —**Then and now**

Deacon Ed Huckemeyer, D.D.

"Let us no longer fight the old; let us no longer remember that we were once on the outer rim; let us forget the past and live in the eternal present of God's happy smile." *Ernest Holmes*

These words of wisdom encourage us to let go of thoughts that obscure our true nature, our sacred selves. It involves a decision to disempower those old tapes of fear, doubt and unworthiness which may replay in our minds from time to time, and replace them with positive, life-giving attitudes. We should expect joy, love and well-being because we deserve these gifts. Who we are, just as we are, is right and perfect and manifests the Divine expressing in, through and as us. Soon, we will celebrate Pride month. Filled with potential and possibilities, it is an opportunity to demonstrate these as we remind ourselves of how special, wonderful and blessed we are.

I am what I am! Thanks be to God.

May 13 – Even more affirmative prayers for various occasions

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

Healing

I relax and calm my mind, allowing mighty currents of healing energy to flow through my body. Good health is being restored.

Prosperity

I relax and calm my mind, allowing mighty currents of prospering energy to flow into my life. I am abundantly blessed.

Happiness

I relax and calm my mind, allowing mighty currents of harmonizing love to fill me with inner peace and joy.

Those Dear to Us

I relax and calm my mind, allowing mighty currents of divine power to reach, touch, enfold, and bless my loved ones now.

Peace

I relax and calm my mind, allowing mighty currents of peace to flow throughout the world. Peace is possible for our planet.

May 14 – Recognizing oneness

Rev. Dr. Nancy Davis

“If you were one with God and recognized this oneness, you would know [God’s] power is yours. But you will not remember this while you believe attack of any kind means anything.” *ACIM, T-22.VI.12:1-2*

Our desire to attack or judge others, even in our thoughts, separates us from recognizing our oneness with each other as well as God. “You do not see that...every condemnation that you perceive and justify, is an attack upon your [God]” (T-22.VI.11:3). Jesus not only encouraged us to love our neighbors, but also our enemies (Matthew 5). Why? Jesus clearly knew that without choosing this kind of inclusive love, we will never recognize our oneness with God. We have the power within our minds, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to choose Christ’s vision or judgment. But we cannot have both at the same time. What will you choose today?

Holy Spirit, I choose your vision today. I release all forms of attack so that I may recognize Oneness with God and all others. Amen.

May 15 – **Doing our best**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“It doesn’t matter what other people say or do. What matters is how you choose to react and what you choose to believe about yourself.”

Louise Hay

Jesus tells us that God is glorified when we bear much fruit (John 15.8). When we do our best that is actually a form of worship. When we give our best that is worship. When we show up, honor our commitments, make an honest effort, we are glorifying the divine Presence. When we learn, share, and grow we are honoring that which is Holy. Regardless of what has been done, we are free to believe in ourselves and do our best now; and as we do our best, we are worshiping with all that we are.

I believe in my potential. I believe that God, through and as me, can do amazing things. I’ll do my best and expect the best from now on. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

“Giving and receiving are the two halves the law of prosperity, as exhaling and inhaling are halves of the process of breathing...”

Ernest C. Wilson

May 16 – **Power surge**

Rev. Margarita Rodriguez

“It is hard to recognize that thought and belief combine into a power surge that can literally move mountains.” *ACIM T-2.VI.8*

“There are no idle thoughts. All thinking produces form at some level.” *ACIM T-2.VI.13-14*

Every day we are given an opportunity to create our own experience. Every emotion starts at the level of the mind, no matter what happens around us we have free will to choose how we respond to it. Do we respond with love or fear? If our thoughts are filled with anger, jealousy, pain, sorrow then we will see the manifestation of those feelings around us. On the other hand if we choose loving, compassionate, peaceful, joyful thoughts then we will see its manifestation. To start training our mind it is helpful to engage in positive discourse, read uplifting literature, listen to joyful music and pray with a heart of gratitude; we have the power, we can make the difference.

I am a blessed child of God, perfect, whole and complete!

May 17 – We have stuff to do

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Where there is so much to be done . . . there must be something for me to do.” *Dorothea Dix*

Dorothea Dix (1802-1887) spent her adult life advocating for the poor, the mentally ill, and prisoners. Whether she was lobbying state legislatures to help the disadvantaged, writing letters of encouragement, or working as a wartime nurse, she always felt that there was something she could do, something she should do to help those in need of assistance. We each have something to offer the world, and we and the world are better when we share it. “Be doers of the word and not hearers only” (James 1.22).

I will do what I can to bring hope and healing to my world.

JUST A THOUGHT

“We are part of a web of life that makes us one with all humanity, one with all the universe.” *Frederick. E. Gillis*

May 18 – The spiritual path

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The spiritual path is simply the journey of living our lives. Everyone is on a spiritual path; most people just don’t know it.”

Marianne Williamson

Spirituality isn’t a great mystery. It doesn’t require creeds or complex formulas. Spirituality is just conscious living. Spirit is the energy of life, the substance of life, so when we live intentionally and with awareness, we are being profoundly spiritual. Every smile, every kindness, every expressed hope, every experience of love, every act of generosity, every moment of courage or honesty is a sacrament, an outward expression of inward grace, an experience of communion with the Sacred.

My life is a spiritual experience, a journey into the depths of holiness.

Amen.

May 19 – Who is blessed?

Rev. Anne R. Atwell

“Blessed are those who no one else notices. The kids who sit alone at middle-school lunch tables. The laundry guys at the hospital. The sex-workers and the night shift street sweepers. Blessed are the forgotten. Blessed are the closeted. Blessed are the unemployed, the unimpressive, the underrepresented.” *Nadia Bolz-Weber*

In the holy and divine Universe, there is no one that goes unnoticed by God. Our culture often defines people by the clothes they wear, by their body type, by their gender. But truly all people are of God, part of God, created and cared for by God. As we say often, “You are God’s miracle, not God’s mistake.” And that goes for all people, as well. As we are blessed, all people are blessed.

Holy God, as I am blessed, I honor the sacred value of all people. Amen!

JUST A THOUGHT

“You hold in your hand an invitation: to remember the transforming power of forgiveness and loving kindness, to remember that no matter where you are and what you face, within your heart peace is possible.” *Jack Kornfield*

May 20 – Sacred texts

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The [Bhagavad] Gita is the greatest gospel of spiritual works ever yet given to the human race.” *Sri Aurobindo*

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) apparently was so moved by the sacred, epic poem about a spiritual encounter between Arjuna and Lord Krishna that he believed it to be the greatest spiritual text ever. I enjoy the Gita, but the Heart Sutra, the Tao te Ching, the Gospel of Mark, the Song of Songs, Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, and the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson are also very powerful texts for me. I’m not sure I’m entirely comfortable labeling any text as THE text for humankind, but I do find reading the wise words of spiritual heroes to be enriching. I hope you find a story, song, or poem that brings hope and joy to life within you.

*Sacred messages fill my heart and help me experience hope and joy;
and so I am grateful. Amen.*

May 21 – Love

Rev. Kevin Tisdol

“Out of the farthest precincts and outpost of God’s creation, love is central. I do not know how far ten billion light-years are located in distance, but God’s love touches that part of God’s creation, for God first loved us.” *Rev. Dr. Gardner C. Taylor*

Everything I know about God begins and ends with the knowledge that God loves us just as we are. There is nothing we can do to gain more of God’s love and, just as important, there is nothing we can do to lose one drop of that love. When we fall short of our goals, God is there encouraging us to try again. Let’s resolve today to act as God’s hands and do God’s work because what God does for us God does through us.

Dear God, I pray today that I am able to do your work by recklessly sharing your love and reminding my fellow travelers that we are never alone, you are always there. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

“If you want the truth, I will tell you the truth...
the God whom I love is inside.” *Kabir*

May 22 – Interbeing

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Awakened beings feel compassion for all other beings because they have felt, in the very marrow of their InterBeing, that they...are inter-connected and part of all beings. One can’t love oneself unless one is loving other selves. But it also works the other way around: you can’t love other selves unless you are loving yourself!” *Paul Knitter*

Western Christianity can seem self-focused, “My gifts, My calling, My relationship with God.” It may be helpful for Christians to think about Ultimate Reality through the lens of inter-connectedness, oneness. If we are all part of the same Reality, if we are all connected, if we all share one Life, then when I am kind to myself, you also benefit, and when I am kind to you, I also benefit. It’s easier, perhaps, to love others if we don’t seem them as other, but as part of the one Life that is the life of all lives.

I am still learning to love myself better, and to love my neighbor as myself. May love bless all living beings. Amen.

May 23 – Divine guidance

Rev. Lynda Pantoja

“I was in my thirteenth year when I heard a voice from God to help me ... And the first time I was very much afraid.” *St. Joan of Arc*

On this day in 1431, military leader Joan of Arc was captured. The English then put her on trial for witchcraft & heresy because she insisted she was acting on divine guidance. Specifically, she said she received visions from Archangel Michael, and Saints Margaret and Catherine of Alexandria to lead France to recover from English domination. Twenty years after her execution she was declared innocent and on May 16, 1920 canonized. Joan once said “help yourself and God will help you”.

Divine guidance is available to each of us. We find it in the silence, in dreams, in readings, in actions of some who came before us, in the voices of the unheard. Are we listening? Are we helping ourselves allowing the Divine help us?

I overcome fear and trustingly pay attention to the voice of Spirit. Amen.

May 24 – Courageous, liberating honesty

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Loyalty to petrified opinions never yet broke a chain.” *Mark Twain*

There is an old debate among religious leaders. For over a century and a half, discoveries in biological sciences, archeology, psychology, and even biblical scholarship have all called into question some ancient assumptions that have been enshrined in religion. Theologically educated religious leaders know this, and some share their knowledge for the good of their congregations and communities. Others say their congregants aren't “ready” for such information and so they must withhold what they know to be true. In other words, they have decided that lies of omission will serve their parishes better than honesty; but we must remember it is truth that offers freedom; lies (even of omission) never do.

*Wherever it leads, and from wherever it may come,
I will honor truth and so it is that I will continue to grow and thrive.
Amen.*

May 25 – I hope, i know, i believe

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy.” The Apostle Paul

This is what I hope. I hope you and I will laugh more than we cry, that every day will offer us opportunities to thrive, that health of mind and body will embrace us as earnestly as we seek it, and that love will bless our lives daily.

This is what I know. I know that you and I are resilient, strong, powerful. We are survivors. We have within us deep wells of courage and wisdom. I know that we can handle whatever comes our way, and that we deserve the best even when it seems to hide from us.

This is what I believe. I believe today offers healing energy and tomorrow holds a wealth of possibilities.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

“May I wish for every person’s happiness...” *Eusebius*

May 26 – I make my world

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The world is only in the mind of its maker. Do not believe it is outside of yourself.” A Course in Miracles

You and I probably see the same trees, the same sky, the same people walking around, the same television programs, the same movies, the same magazine covers; but we do not necessarily live in the same world. The images may be the same for most of us, but what we decide they mean and how we choose to respond to them and what we believe about ourselves may not be the same. Our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and choices make up the world of our experience, and we can change that world with our very next thought.

I choose the thoughts and attitudes that create my world.

May I choose wisely today! Amen.

May 27 – **Happy Shavuot!**

Rev. Lynda Pantoja

“The Lord descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So, Moses went up...” *Exodus 19.20*

Our Jewish sisters and brothers are celebrating Shavuot; this two-day holiday coincides with the date that Moses received the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai more than 3,300 years ago. It is celebrated by lighting candles, staying up all night to learn the Torah, hearing the reading of the Ten Commandments in synagogue and decorating homes and synagogues with flowers and sweet-smelling plants. As on other Jewish holidays special meals are eaten, feasting on dairy foods because the Torah is likened to nourishing milk. The giving of the Torah is compared to a wedding between G-d and the Jewish people and considered a far-reaching spiritual event, described as having touched the essence of their souls for all times.

*Today I reflect upon the Holy messages I have received
in my lifetime and how they help me live a life where
kindness and love rule daily. Shalom. Amen.*

May 28 – **Possibilities**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“A clash of doctrines is not a disaster; it is an opportunity.”

Alfred North Whitehead

Whitehead (1861-1947) was the defining figure in process philosophy, the idea that change is the foundation of reality, that *being* is basically always *becoming*. Process *theology* is influenced by process philosophy and embraces panentheism, the understanding that the divine Presence encompasses and transcends all experiences, that we are “in” God but God is not necessarily omnipotent; instead, God participates in evolution and offers possibilities which we may embrace, ignore, or reject (so, basically, what God does for us God does through us, or perhaps, God gives us metaphysical tools for us to do things for ourselves). No wonder Whitehead saw doctrinal dialogue as an opportunity. In process thinking, life is a series of opportunities and potential and we can make as much of them as we dare.

I give thanks for infinite possibilities! Amen.

May 29 – Catch the wave

Rev. Marian Cavagnaro

“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.” *John Kabat-Zinn*

Oceans are majestic, everlasting, massive, smooth, choppy, variable, and ever changing. I love spending time watching ocean waves. I also love to watch people, on surf boards or boogie boards, surfing the waves. Whether seeing them on the beaches of Florida or Hawaii, on television or in a movie, there is something about surfing that fills me with awe and energizes me. Surfing is both meditative and physical. Surfers are passionate and determined. Surfers are in the moment, not thinking about anything else but surfing. Surfers are creative on the waves. Surfers fall off and get back up. This is my take away. Life comes in waves; we need to learn to ride them and sometimes we just have to go with the waves. Surf’s up! Let’s catch the wave.

*Loving God, with joy and awe we thank you for being
with us in all the waves of our lives.*

JUST A THOUGHT

“Verily, that which is indestructible is your *real self*...that which fills the whole universe is your *real self*.” *Seicho-No-Ie Holy Sutras*

May 30 – Faith

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Fanaticism is always a compensation for hidden doubt.” *Carl Jung*

The oft’ misquoted line from *Hamlet*, “The lady doth protest too much, methinks” may be applicable to those who cling to dogmatic certainty. Faith is trust, and if we trust life, trust ourselves, trust the web of existence, trust the spirit within us, if we have *faith* then we don’t need all the answers. Faith isn’t unquestioned belief; faith is trust (“we live by faith, NOT by sight”) and trust doesn’t need everything spelled out in advance. If we had faith, we wouldn’t be disturbed by honest doubts and sincere questions. If we feel threatened when others don’t buy into our dogmas, then maybe we aren’t as certain about them as we claim (and maybe, we shouldn’t be).

Life is more mystery than magic, more search than certainty. I give thanks for my questions, for the freedom to explore, and for the ability to trust that life is good even when I don’t have all the answers. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

“May the light around us guide our footsteps and hold us fast to the best and most righteous that we seek.” *Kathleen McTigue*

May 31 - **The gift of inadequacy** (2009)

Rev. Dr. Mona West

“I will be with you.” *God to Moses, Exodus 3.12*

In the burning bush story God speaks thirteen times to Moses, mostly in response to Moses’ objections about not being adequate for the job God has called him to do. In this conversation that we ‘overhear’ between Moses and God, we learn something very important about God. By working through Moses’ inadequacies God risks something. God didn’t just swoop down and liberate the Hebrews. God risked by trusting this not so perfect Moses with the divine plan of deliverance for a whole people. Our inadequacies are the basis for partnership with God. Because of them we cannot do the work of liberation alone, we need God’s help. And because of who God is, God can’t do the work of liberation alone. God needs our help.

*God, may our conversations with you never cease.
May the speaking shape us into your willing partners. Amen.*

June 1 – **Generosity**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Those who give in charity have lent to Allah a goodly loan.”

Muslim teaching

Generosity is a spiritual discipline. Indeed, I don’t believe one can grow or mature spiritually without being generous; likewise, I don’t believe one can be consistently generous without growing. Giving to earn a reward isn’t generosity. Giving to achieve influence or status isn’t generosity. Giving in hope that the Universe will notice and repay us with wealth isn’t generosity (it’s more like playing a Cosmic slot machine). But giving for the joy of giving, giving to make sure causes we believe in can flourish, giving in gratitude for the blessings we have, giving to bless others, this is true generosity, it’s an expression of love, and love freely given always blesses the giver.

For the sake of divine Love, I choose to be generous. Amen.

June 2 – **Divine love will never let me go**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“God is concealed in every heart.” *Sikh teaching*

“The spirit of God dwells in you.” *Christian teaching (The Apostle Paul)*

“God is seated in the hearts of all.” *Hindu teaching*

“The heart...is the throne of God.” *Muslim teaching*

Some people have asked Jesus (representing God-filled human life) to come into their lives, or to be the “lord” of their lives. Some have prayed to be “spirit-filled.” Others believe that that divinity occupies consecrated bread, and they reverently eat the blessed morsel to feel connected to the holy One. There’s nothing wrong with these traditions (as long as we don’t use them suggest that only those traditions can help one experience the Divine). I think these traditions are ways of reminding ourselves that Holiness is already part of us; we are one with the Source of all life; we cannot ever be separated from divine Omnipresence. The ritual acts or words are not nearly as important as the Truth to which they point: *divine Love will never let us go.*

June 3 – **God’s life is my life**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“God’s being is my life...then what is God’s must be mine, and what is mine, God’s.” *Meister Eckhart*

Christian mystic Meister Eckhart experienced divine Life as his life. This life-changing Truth is the key to our spiritual unfoldment, and yet, it seems contradictory to the secular view that God is non-existent. It also contradicts the view that God is somehow in charge, separate from us, judging us, punishing us, sometimes rewarding us. But what if God is the Life that is living Itself through us? Suddenly the possibilities open up for us, hope springs forth, and we know that there is peace that no circumstance can take away, and the worst of situations can improve. We can learn to see God as the Substance of our lives, and then we can change our thinking and attitudes to experience life in a much more positive and satisfying way.

I am an expression of divine Life. What hope and joy this offers. Alleluia!

JUST A THOUGHT

“I promise myself...to think only of the best, to work only for the best, and to expect only the best.” *Christian D. Larson*

June 4 – **There still may be a way**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“May I not be held back today by illusions of lack...” *Marianne Williamson*

So many times, the brick walls in the way of my happiness or fulfillment were not as real as they seemed to be in my moment of despair or frustration. I couldn't see the way around, over, or through the difficulty, and I felt overwhelmed and hopeless, and I accepted that as the reality of the situation. But eventually, I met someone who had wisdom to share, or a new idea popped into my head, or a path that I had previously overlooked suddenly became apparent, and I got through the difficulty and sometimes even thrived because of the lessons I learned along the way. When things look bad, remember, there may be more to the story. “I can't see the way now” isn't necessarily the same as “there is no way.”

*There must be a way for me to be happy, serene, and optimistic.
Dear God, show me the way. Amen.*

June 5 - **The power of prayer**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“...prayer is a force, a medium of miracles...I pray as a way of harnessing God's love and using it to work miracles in the lives of others. As I do so, I too shall be blessed.” *Marianne Williamson*

Prayer is most powerful when we stop thinking of it as petitioning a faraway deity on a cosmic throne to do what He or She wouldn't do if we hadn't begged so eloquently. Prayer is most powerful when we think of it as plugging into the Power of Life, and allowing that Power to flow through us into the world. God is showering unconditional Love on all of us; that is, God is sharing All That God is with all of us. Prayer is remembering that, affirming that, being thankful for that, and allowing that Truth to manifest in ways that are highest and best.

*Divine Love is embracing every person on my heart today,
and so it is that blessings abound. Alleluia!*

June 6 – **Breathe**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The Spirit is the infinite ‘breath’ of God, the life essence of Being...to be ‘filled with the holy Spirit’ is to realize the activities of Spirit in individual consciousness.” *Charles Fillmore*

In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus breathes on his disciples and says, “Receive the holy Breath.” It’s usually translated as, “Receive the holy Spirit.” In meditation, we simply follow our breathing, and we find ourselves very calm, relaxed, and experiencing a sense of well-being. In anxious times, we’re told to breathe, and then we actually do calm down. Breath, obviously, is essential for living, and we can even learn to use the breath in ways that seem healing. When we tap into the Breath of Life, the spirit of God, we find we have the gifts of the Spirit and with such divine gifts, our lives become enriched immeasurably.

*The divine Breath of Life flows through me, blessing me now.
Filled with peace and joy, I give thanks. Amen.*

JUST A THOUGHT

“When you have made up your mind what you want to do,
say to yourself a thousand times a day that you will do it.
The best way will soon open.” *Christian D. Larson*

June 7 – **We’ve got the power**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“When stress is the basic state of mind, even good things stress us out. We have to learn to let go.” *Sakyong Mipham*

When our default position is to look for the worst, to expect disaster, to assume that good breaks actually come with high, hidden costs...then we are never really happy. When something bad happens, we say, “I knew it would.” And when something good happens, we say, “It’s bound to blow up in our faces before long.” We create a double bind, a no-win environment. It is much more liberating to respond to difficulties with, “I will get through this and things will get better” and to blessings with, “Hallelujah! I’m so grateful for this good fortune.” We can go from creating “no-win” mind-sets to creating “can’t lose” mind-sets. We really do have that power.

I am wise, resilient, and optimistic. I can overcome challenges as they arise, and I will appreciate blessings as they come. All is well. Amen.

June 8 – **Our divine life**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“...our individual lives [are like] drops of water cascading over the edge of a waterfall, separated by falling but finally rejoining the limitless flow of existence.” *Michael C. Hyman*

We should never forget that we are one with All Life. Indeed, the Source of Life is expressing in, through and as us. Let us never forget our sacred value, our innate dignity, our enormous potential. We are, just as we are, spiritual beings, divinely blessed. We get to claim this, to know this, to live in the power of this truth. The fears or prejudices of others do not define us; we are the ones to affirm and validate our own goodness. And once we trust our goodness, nothing will ever be able to persuade us that we are less than we are.

Divine Life is my life and I trust the goodness that I Am.

JUST A THOUGHT

“No [one] ever prayed heartily without learning something.” *Emerson*

June 9 – **Mantra meditation**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Om muni muni mahamuni Shakyamuni svaha.”

Shakyamuni Buddha Mantra

Mantras are good for getting us beyond discursive thinking. They help us relax and experience a centeredness that is essential to spiritual vitality. Mantras can be scripture verses, song lyrics, or sacred sounds from various traditions. The words of a mantra usually convey something positive, but the real purpose of a mantra is to help us focus and be fully present in the moment.

“Om” is the essence of the universe, the vibration of the Life Force (and can be a mantra by itself). The rest of the above mantra just means, “Hail, wise one!” It recognizes the awakened nature of the Buddha and calls forth a similar awakening in the practitioner. Choose your own mantra; just say it over and over for a period of time or a number of repetitions (108 is a sacred number in Buddhism) and experience the peace of being fully present with only the sounds of your mantra.

Om.

June 10 – Changing the inner monologue

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“All that a [person] believes and consents to as true reveals itself in his [or her] inner speech.” *Neville*

Stop. Notice, right now, what the inner monologue in your head is saying. Is it positive? Does it feel good? Is it happy? Is it affirming? If not, that inner chatter is what we need to work on changing. Once that becomes more positive, our beliefs will be more positive; and when we believe in goodness, joy, and empowerment we are more likely to experience those wonderful conditions. St. Paul said, “faith comes by hearing...” The one sure way we can hear good things is to say them. So, let’s affirm ourselves over and over, day after day, until our inner monologue is doing it automatically. Once we believe in ourselves, our lives will be forever improved.

*I love myself. I am exactly who I ought to be.
I am wonderful, just as I am. And so it is.*

June 11 – Two Paths

Rev. Dr. Nancy Davis

“There are two eternal paths. One is light, the other is dark. The first leads to freedom from the wheel of death and rebirth. The other leads you here again. The Real never is not. The unreal never is.”

Bhagavad Gita

I have often commented to counseling clients that we cannot have two thoughts at the same time. The same is true of our eternal paths. The *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Course in Miracles* describe these two paths: light versus dark, Real versus unreal. The *Course* also describes these paths as right or wrong mindedness. Our wrong-minded path is guided by our ego. On this path, “...you will see yourself as tiny, vulnerable and afraid. You will experience depression, a sense of worthlessness...impermanence and unreality” (T-21.V.2:3-4). Fortunately, the *Course* also teaches us that we can learn to experience right-mindedness, the path of light. When we choose the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we recognize that, “Reality brings only perfect peace” (W-pl.52.1:4).

May I awaken to the eternal path of light, peace and freedom, today.

June 12 – *One less idol*
Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“It is time we stopped making an idol out of the bible.”

Rev. Dr. Mona West, “The Bible and Homosexuality”

Too many people have allowed the bible to be a sort of deity in and of itself. When we use the “hard” and social sciences, philosophy, reason, and experience as tools to help us understand the bible, we see that we will not be able to agree with every word. We can value, love, and use the bible, but let’s never be oppressed by it. It belongs to us; we don’t belong to it. We can question it, try on new understandings of it, and remember that it is not the final word on any subject. The bible should not be used to condemn, exclude, vilify, or torment anyone.

I can question any text that has been used to frighten, control, or dismiss me. I affirm my sacred value as I read my sacred texts. Amen.

June 13 – **The path**
Rev. Margarita Rodriguez

*“A lot of times people think, *Someday my path will start.* But whatever is happening in this moment is the path. You’re already on it.”*

Marianne Williamson

Have you ever taken a moment to observe how many hours of the day you invest in thoughts about the past or the future? Most of our time is spent in both places leaving little time for the now. Part may be spent thinking about what we will do when a condition is met in the future to start living fully. The present is the gift of today. It is in the present moment guidance and intuition show up. It is in the present moment that Divine Grace whispers. If we block this moment with thoughts about the past or future we miss the enjoyment of the path. Being present in whatever circumstance of our live will allow us to be more connected to those around us and see how clear is the path.

Today is a gift; I stay present in joy.

JUST A THOUGHT

“You must practice faith with abundant gratitude, deeply appreciative of even the slightest improvement!” *Josei Toda*

June 14 – **Lifting up what has been kept down**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Cruelty, wherever it occurs, is never right or permissible among those who are striving to live in God, the Sacred Spirit of mutuality.”

Rev. Dr. Carter Heyward

Heyward was one of the “Philadelphia Eleven” who forced the Episcopal Church in the 1970s to end its sexist practice of only ordaining men. She shows us that we can stand up to oppression and we can lift up what has been kept down. She extends her concern to our mother the earth and the various creatures that inhabit the earth with us. In her book, *Keep Your Courage: A Radical Christian Feminist Speaks*, Carter offers this beautiful prayer:

“Elephant God, forgive us. Holy mountain, shelter us. Sister spirit stream, carry us on. Tiny sparrow, sing to us your favorite hymn. Pelican brother Jesus, cover us with your wings. Bid us goodnight and raise us in the morning in your christic power to recreate the world. Amen.”

JUST A THOUGHT

“...God is continuously assuring us of [God’s] great love and care and provision.” *Rebecca MacKenzie Odegaard*

June 15 – **Spirit work**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“O Father and Mother of all humankind, may we redeem our failings by the good work that we do.” *Khasi Prayer*

When we allow the Spirit of Life to *enliven* our faith community, then we find ourselves reaching out to include more kinds of people and to offer hope and healing to people’s lives through the arts, literature, worship, social gatherings, education, and human services. By demonstrating our progressive, positive, and practical spirituality through efforts to liberate, comfort, empower, and inform people, we find that we are giving body to the divine Spirit in our world.

Filled with the spirit of exuberant life, I find myself being generous with my resources, committed to acts of justice, dedicated to the cause of peace, and a channel through which hope flows. Amen.

June 16 – Healing silence

Brother Mandus, 20th century New Thought Healer

One begins to realize something of the experiences of the saints and mystics down the ages, in that they found they had to become still, to meditate, which really means to become still in God's Presence... [God] now naturally manifests [God's]...Peace and...Perfection throughout your being, as you allow [God] to take charge of your mind...and body. This meditation, this being still in God, is a fundamental. And yet, even amongst Christians, there isn't one in ten thousand who seriously practices meditation as a fundamental need of the Christian Way of Life. We talk our way to God - yes - in many prayers. We try to understand the infinite by definition. We listen to dogma and creed...But very seldom do we close down our thinking and say, "Here Lord. Here am I. Take me as I am. You know what to do with me..." And to be still, receptive and listening to all that God will pour forth. It can only happen when we become absolutely convinced that the Great [God] will do these things in the Silence. It can only happen when we are absolutely sure that the greatest activity that can ever happen in a human being comes when we become still and stop *doing*..."

June 17 – Do your best

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

"After we pray for something, we need to struggle with all our might to actualize it. This is true faith." *Daisaku Ikeda*

"The gods help those who help themselves." *Aesop*

"Leap and the net will appear." *John Burroughs*

"Trust God but tether your camel." *Arab proverb*

Sometimes we need to try harder, *and* sometimes we need to *let go and let God*. God does for us what God does through us, *and*, sometimes we need a boost of energy, a new idea, a new opportunity that comes from something other than our willpower. This may be one of those both/*and* situations. We must do our best, *and* trust God with the rest. Our best is all we can give anyway, and once we've done what we can, releasing our worries to God at least lightens our emotional burden, which will allow us to do even more.

With God's help, I will do my best. God bless my efforts. Amen.

June 18 – **The spirit of new thought**

Horatio Dresser, 19th century New Thought writer

The term "New Thought" was first used as the name of a little periodical issued in Melrose, Mass., in 1894, and later by representatives of the rational wing of the mental-healing movement in general in place of the term formerly employed, "Mental Science." The theory was essentially a "new" thought for most of its devotees, a new attitude towards life...Let us endeavor to discover the underlying principles which have most widely appealed to its devotees, making as little as possible of the variations. The New Thought is a theory and method of mental life with special reference to healing, and the fostering of attitudes, modes of conduct and beliefs which make for health and general welfare. The theory in brief is that [we lead] an essentially mental life, influenced, shaped and controlled by anticipations, hopes and suggestions. If one is downhearted, depressed and inactive, one meets the circumstances of life in a negative manner, weakening before them, inviting failure. If one is hopeful, courageous, energetic, one may meet essentially the same circumstances in such a way as to turn them into success. Thus, the event which might otherwise be a...source of misery and pain, is turned into one of joy and blessing. Life is largely what we make of it, what we bring to and call out of it...Beliefs lead to attitudes and these determine conduct.

June 19 —**After Juneteenth**

Rev. Kevin Tisdol

"It is evident that it is the belief of Christian people in this country and in all other enlightened portions of the world that as a nation, we have passed through a severe ordeal – that severe judgments have been poured out upon us on account of the manner in which a poor, oppressed race was treated in this country." *Hiram Rhodes Revels*

Today, we commemorate the moment in 1865, over two years after the effective date of the Emancipation Proclamation, that Galveston Island, Texas found out that slavery was abolished. After the Civil War ended, attempts to reunite America began in earnest and in 1870 the Mississippi Senate elected Hiram Revels to fill an open US Senate seat. Since his election, only nine other Blacks have either been elected or selected to serve in the US Senate. I am hopeful that if Mississippi could elect, six years after the end of the war, a Black person to the Senate, we can do even better. Let's start today.

Dear God, we're ready to do the hard work needed to heal our land. Amen.

June 20 – **Thinking of others**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“One of my favorite sayings is ‘If you want to be miserable, think of yourself. If you want to be happy, think of others.’” *Sakyong Mipham*

When I am beating myself up for weight gain, I’m not very happy in those moments. When I am worried about someone’s opinion of me, I’m not very happy in those moments. But when I am making one of my husband’s favorite dishes, or joking with our foster-son, or giving our fur baby one of her cherished ear scratches, or praying for a church member, or when I make a contribution to a worthy cause, or when I call my mother who is 77 today...when I do these things, I usually am happy. It’s true, thinking of others contributes to happiness, much more so than self-centeredness ever could.

*God bless every person who comes to my mind today. I send love to people all over the world. I wish everyone happiness and well-being.
Amen.*

JUST A THOUGHT

“By praying...we can push everything in the direction of happiness.”

Daisaku Ikeda

June 21 – **Prayer is...**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Prayers are invisible, but if we pray steadfastly, they will definitely effect clear results in our lives and surroundings over time.”

Daisaku Ikeda

Prayer isn’t for me trying to persuade God to do something God was not already inclined to do. Prayer isn’t a way of buttering God up. Prayer isn’t an exact science or magical formula that results in every wish being fulfilled. Prayer is communion, *conscious union with*, the Web of existence. Prayer is experiencing my unity with All Life. Prayer is tapping into hope and peace and joy. Prayer is letting go of needless burdens and facing unavoidable difficulties with courage and strength. Prayer is gratitude. Prayer is plugging into universal power. It is the experience of grace. Prayer is love expressed. Prayer is a way of life.

My prayers bless me and others. I am so grateful. Amen.

June 22 – Go to peace instead of to pieces

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Nothing can harm you as much as your own thoughts unguarded.”

Buddha

I have proven to myself many times over that worrying about a thing is very often worse than experiencing the thing itself. First of all, the thing I worried about sometimes doesn't even happen, or if it does, it's not as bad as I feared it would be, or if it is as bad as I had feared, I wind up being totally capable of handling it. Worrying doesn't seem to make many things better, and it often makes us miserable long before we needed to be, or miserable when there was never *any* need to be. As the saying goes, FEAR is often just “False Evidence Appearing Real.”

*Dear God, give me hope. Give me courage. Give me joy.
Give me peace. Thank you. Amen.*

June 23 – Antidote to power corrupting absolutely: empathy and sharing

Deacon Sue Gallagher, Ed.D.

“The experience of power propels the individual forward in one of two directions: toward the abuse of power and impulsive and unethical actions, or toward benevolent behavior that advances the greater good.” *Dacher Keltner*

Psychologist Dacher Keltner's research shows that people gain power by other people giving their power to them when they trust and believe in them. One's power endures by focusing on empathy and sharing with others. The Lamb power of Jesus in the Book of Revelation is not power over others in abusive or unethical ways but rather the power of one's compassion, sharing and centering the well-being of others in big and small ways. Lamb power requires the strength of enduring suffering, standing against evil and patiently nurturing new life for the healing and freedom of others and ourselves.

*May we grow and sustain our God given power through empathy,
compassion, generosity and care for the other and self.*

June 24 – **Living with pride**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The only way [same-gender loving people were welcome and accepted in churches] in the past was under the unacknowledged ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy...This was another way that the soul was murdered...choked to death by the lack of fresh air in the closet.”

Rev. Irene Travis

Gay Pride isn’t mere acceptance. Pride isn’t merely admitting the truth to ourselves or a small number of friends. Pride means being truly happy with who we are. Pride means enjoying our gifts and never being embarrassed or afraid to celebrate our Truth. When we find a worshiping community that encourages us to be proud, we have found something wonderful indeed. Let’s choose to be proud, and let’s be grateful for churches that are proud of us.

Dear God, I give thanks for who and what I am. I give thanks for the diversity of my community. I give thanks for the opportunity to bring all of who I am into your presence. I’m glad to be me.

June 25 – **We say ‘thank you’**

Rev. Dr. Robert Griffin

“We are the Stonewall girls; we wear our hair in curls...we wear our dungarees above our nelly knees.” *Stonewall Riot Chant*

On this night, June 27, 1969, something happened that would forever change history. When police officers raided the Stonewall Inn in New York, drag queens, transgenders, and butch lesbians fought back. Chants of “Gay Power” were cheered as well as “We are the Stonewall girls; we wear our hair in curls. We wear no underwear; we show our pubic hair. We wear our dungarees, above our nelly knees!” Now before someone says, “that’s not appropriate for *Spirit & Truth*, let me ask, had it not been for the spirit of this group, where would the Gay Rights movement be today? So, let us remember to be grateful for those who were there, who stood up so that we can now stand tall.

*Today, I will say to the pioneers of LGBTQI History,
“Thank you for your courage.”*

June 26 – **Divine communion**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Do you know that you are a child of the Great Light? Therefore, YOU ARE LIGHT. That Great Light is vaster than all the suns, more powerful than the atom set free. Let thy light shine...You are the will of the Eternal Light made manifest...You did come from the Great Light, as the spark comes from the fire, for you are a part of the Great Light.” *Herman Adrian Spruit*

Are we starting to get it? Are we beginning to trust that we are in God, from God, part of God, held by God, filled with God? Do we yet trust that God is the one Presence and there is no other? Do we sense, at least on occasion, that God is closer than light or air or thought to us, always? This is the goal of the spiritual path.

*Omnipresent Love, I rejoice in the knowledge that communion,
union with you, is my inheritance. Alleluia! And so it is.*

JUST A THOUGHT

“If you wish to pray for one who is weighed down with sorrow and despondency, visualize him [or her] in your prayer as being filled with divine rays of hope and cheer. See the disheartened one before you filled with self-confidence and joy.” *Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein*

June 27 – **Go with the flow**

Rev. Marian Cavagnaro

“I keep sailing on in this middle passage. I am sailing into the wind and the dark. But I am doing my best to keep my boat steady and my sails full.”

Arthur Ashe

Have you ever been sailing? When I was a teenager, I spent summers with my family vacationing by Webster Lake in Massachusetts. A neighbor had asked if I would like to accompany him on his catamaran for a sailing race. I had to quickly learn terminology so I could offer assistance. I can't remember if we won or lost the race, but here is what I learned: Getting the right wind is key. Whether you choose to tack or jibe depends on the situation, what is around you and the direction of the wind. You cannot change the circumstance of the wind, but you can change yourself, and how you respond.

*Loving Spirit, fill me with the wind to do my best and
to embrace change by going with the flow.*

June 28 – **Let your light shine**

Rev. Anne R. Atwell

“You are the light of the world. You don’t build a city on a hill, then try to hide it, do you? You don’t like a lamp, then put it under a bushel basket, do you? No, you set it on a stand where it gives light to all in the house.” *Matthew 5.14-15, The Inclusive Bible*

I have been under the mistaken impression that I must wait until I have everything in proper order, then I can let my light shine for others to see. Though I have discovered over time that sharing my vulnerability and pain actually gives others permission to share when they’re not feeling their best. There is no one who has it all together, including me. Yet, I will let my light shine!

Holy One, I let my light shine to guide myself and others. And so it is!

JUST A THOUGHT

<p>"The universe is a universe of constant increase, and I am a child of the universe." <i>Marianne Williamson</i></p>
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June 29 – **What religion is really about**

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The whole purpose of religion is to facilitate love and compassion, patience, tolerance, humility, and forgiveness.” *The Dalai Lama*

Religion is not an argument against science. Religion is not meant to force other people to conform to our desires. Religion isn’t even your ticket to an afterlife banquet. Religion can build community, offer comfort and encouragement, and provide space, ritual, and vocabulary to search for meaning. Healthy religion helps us grow into the best versions of ourselves.

May my religious practices be healthy, positive, joyous, and kind.

June 30 - I am like my source

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“All that the Universal is belongs to each individual. I am like my Source.” *Fannie James*

I am a child of God – I have divine DNA. I am part of the creation that God calls very good. I am made in the divine image. I am animated by the very Breath of God. God is my Source and Substance. Since I am from, in, and of God, I am also, essentially, like God. All that is good and holy and divine is mine to embrace. When I forget or doubt this Truth, I can gently return to it with the simple affirmation: *I am like my Source*. And then, my joy returns.

I am like my Source, and so it is that I am glad and grateful. Amen.

JUST A THOUGHT

“...this Here, this Now, is...swollen with Eternity, it is the dwelling place of God...Prayer becomes not hysterical cries to a distant God, but gentle uplifting and faint whispers, in which it is not easy to say *who* is speaking, we, or an Other through us. Perhaps we can only say: Praying is taking place. *Power* flows through us, from the Eternal into the rivulets of Time. Amazed, yet *not* amazed, we stride the stride of the tender giant who dwells within us, and wonders are performed.” *Thomas Kelly*

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About Sunshine Cathedral

The Sunshine Cathedral Affirmation

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

The Sunshine Cathedral Mission

To rescue religion from irrelevance,
practice positive thinking,
be justice workers,
build community, value diversity, and
help people experience peace, hope, and joy in their lives.

The Sunshine Cathedral Prayer of Purpose

*May we follow Jesus, our great example,
and thus love and serve others,
seek justice,
live in awareness of God's omnipresence,
and affirm the sacred value of all people.
Amen.*

The Sunshine Cathedral Prayer of Intercession

*Mother-Father God, we affirm blessings for all who are on the Cathedral's
prayer list and for all who are on our hearts.*

*We trust you to lead, guide, and direct each of us in the ways of happiness,
well-being, and right action.*

*We pray for those who hold authority in the nations of the world that they
may be guided by wisdom and motivated by a love of justice and peace.*

*We pray for our departed loved ones, (+) let light perpetual shine upon
them.*

And with people all over the world we pray, "May peace prevail on earth!"

Sunshine Cathedral Board of Directors' Prayer

Dear God, we give thanks for the uplifting power of prayer.

*We ask you to bless our congregation, our leaders, our worship services,
our outreach efforts, our programming, our finances, and all
who are on our prayer list. Help us to be our best, to do our best, and to
help more and more people accept, trust, and rejoice in your all-inclusive
and unconditional love; it's in your many names that we pray. Amen.*